

### **Immigration Fiction for High School Teachers and College Professors**

*The synopses provided below have been adapted from the books' publishers' sites, library databases, book reviews in the New York Times as well as other sources. This list is by no means exhaustive. We look forward to adding your suggestions!*

Abu-Jaber, Diana (1993). *Arabian Jazz*.

Synopsis: Set in a small poor-white community in upstate New York, where "ethnics" are few and far between, it is the story of the Ramoud family: Matussem, his two daughters, Melvina and Jemorah, his sister, Fatima, and her husband, Zaeed. Matussem loves American jazz standards, Arab folktales, lawn ornaments, and - above all else in the world - his daughters. Fatima is obsessed with joining the social committee of the local Syrian Orthodox Church and with seeing her nieces married.

Alvarez, Julia (1991). *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*.

Synopsis: The novel is divided in three parts: Part I (1989–1972), is centered around the adult lives of the García sisters; Part II (1970–1960), describes their immigration to the United States and their adolescence, and Part III (1960–1956) recollects their early childhood on the island, in the Dominican Republic.

Anaya, Rudolfo (1994). *Bless Me, Ultima*.

Synopsis: Set in New Mexico in the 1940s, this novel follows the story of young Antonio who becomes obsessed with questions about destiny, life and death, and good and evil. When elderly folk healer Ultima moves in with his family to live out her last days, Antonio turns to her for guidance when he loses confidence in parental viewpoints and Catholicism. *Bless Me, Ultima* is the first of a trilogy.

Antin, Mary (1912). *The Promised Land*.

Synopsis: In this book, Mary Antin tells of moving from Polotzk, Russia, to Boston, Massachusetts, when she was around thirteen years old. In her new country, she felt that she had all the freedom she lacked in the Old World. In her book, Antin says that if she could accomplish so much, so can all immigrants. She admits that her father, because of an inability to master the English language and because of bad luck, did not prosper in the New World, but she still remains optimistic about America and about the possibilities of total assimilation for America's immigrant population. Whereas the Old World represents, for her, lack of freedom and a predetermined identity, she sees the New World as representing freedom and the ability to choose her own identity.

Arana, Marie (2002). *American Chica: Two Worlds, One Childhood*.

Synopsis: In her father's Peruvian family, Arana learned to be a proper lady while in her mother's American family she learned to shoot a gun and snap a chicken's neck for dinner. Arana shuttled easily between these deeply separate cultures for years. But only when she immigrated with her family to the United States at the age of ten did she come to understand that she was a hybrid American whose cultural identity was split in half. Coming to terms with this split is at the heart of this story.

Arkin, Frieda (2005). *Hedwig and Berti*.

Synopsis: The novel follows a family of refugees from Nazi Germany as they flee from Berlin to London and then on to the United States. Hedwig, statuesque and commanding, is toting along her most prized possession—a trunk full of books documenting the genealogy and achievements of her adored extended family, the Kesslers, who excel at all things artistic, intellectual and athletic—at least according to Hedwig. Her husband Berti is so retiring and overshadowed by his imposing wife that he fades nearly entirely into the background. All who know the couple are confounded when they produce a dark, elfin changeling of a child—daughter Gerda, who develops into a world-class pianist by early adolescence (which does nothing to improve her stormy disposition). The Kesslers move from New York to Kansas while Gerda travels the concert halls of Europe; though they have escaped the ovens at Auschwitz, tragedy catches up with them.

Bayoumi, Moustafa (2008). *How Does it Feel to Be a Problem: Being Young and Arab in America*.

Synopsis: Bayoumi introduces us to the individual lives of seven twenty-something men and women living in Brooklyn, home to the largest number of Arab Americans in the United States. Through telling real stories about young people in Brooklyn, Bayoumi jettisons the stereotypes and clichés that constantly surround Arabs and Muslims and allows us instead to enter their worlds and experience their lives.

Bell, Thomas (1941). *Out of This Furnace*.

Synopsis: The novel focuses on the story of three generations of an immigrant Slovak family, the Dobrejcaks. It opens with Djuro Kracha's arrival to the United States in the mid-1880s from Eastern Europe to work in the steel mills in Pennsylvania. Shifting focus on the second generation, the novel tells the story of Kracha's daughter, Mary to Mike Dobrejcak, a steel worker. Their decent lives, made desperate by the inhuman working conditions of the mills, were held together by the warm bonds of their family life, and Mike's political idealism set example for the children. Dobie Dobrejcak, the third generation, came of age in the 1920s determined not to be sacrificed to the mills. His involvement in the successful unionization of the steel industry climaxed a half-century struggle to establish economic justice for the workers.

Boyle, T. C. (1996). *The Tortilla Curtain*.

Synopsis: In Southern California's Topanga Canyon, two couples live in close proximity and yet are worlds apart. High atop a hill overlooking the canyon, nature writer Delaney Mossbacher and his wife, real estate agent Kyra Menaker-Mossbacher, reside in an exclusive, secluded housing development with their son, Jordan. The Mossbachers are agnostic liberals with a passion for recycling and fitness. Camped out in a ravine at the bottom of the canyon are Cándido and América Rincón, a Mexican couple who have crossed the border illegally. On the edge of starvation, they search desperately for work in the hope of moving into an apartment before their baby is born. They cling to their vision of the American dream, which, no matter how hard they try to achieve it, manages to elude their grasp at every turn. A chance, violent encounter brings together Delaney and Cándido, instigating a chain of events that eventually culminates in a harrowing confrontation.

Cahan, Abraham (1917). *The Rise of David Levinsky*.

Synopsis: In 1913, in response to a request from the popular *McClure's* magazine for articles describing the success of Eastern European immigrants in the U.S. garment trade, Abraham

Cahan, editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward* and also a successful English-language novelist, wrote several short stories instead. Subsequently published as a novel, these pieces of fiction permitted Cahan to explore problematic aspects of the process of Americanization, produce vignettes of immigrant Jewish life, and describe the development of a major American industry.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Yekl and The Imported Bridegroom and Other Stories of Yiddish New York*.

Synopsis: The inspiration for the much acclaimed film *Hester Street*, this was probably the first novel in English that had a New York East Side immigrant as its hero. In *Yekl*, the central problem derives from a social condition: the urgent desire of the hero to become a real American, to be less a "greenhorn," but the play of events is around an emotional crisis: *Yekl* no longer loves the wife he left behind, who has now rejoined him in the new land, and who seems to him shockingly European.

Cather, Willa (1918). *My Ántonia*.

Synopsis: *Ántonia* Shimerda arrives with her family to Black Hawk, Nebraska, from Bohemia. Not long after, her father, during the first hard Nebraskan winter conflicts with the seller of the house, shoots himself in the family's barn. At the beginning of the second book, *The Hired Girls*, Jim moves with his grandparents to Black Hawk, who encourage their neighbors, the Harling family, to take *Ántonia* on as a maid. Jim, four years younger than *Ántonia*, falls in love with her, only to realize that she still considers him a child. Jim eventually goes away to college, and largely forgets his past in Black Hawk. Jim ultimately returns to Black Hawk after some 20 years, and visits *Ántonia*. She is now married with 10 children, and Jim finds himself affectionate toward the whole family.

Chabon, Michael (2000). *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*.

Synopsis: It is New York City in 1939. Joe Kavalier, a young artist who has also been trained in the art of Houdini-esque escape, has just pulled off his greatest feat to date: smuggling himself out of Nazi-occupied Prague. He is looking to make big money, fast, so that he can bring his family to freedom. His cousin, Brooklyn's own Sammy Clay, is looking for a collaborator to create the heroes, stories, and art for the latest novelty to hit the American dreamscape: the comic book. Out of their fantasies, fears, and dreams, Joe and Sammy weave the legend of that unforgettable champion the Escapist. And inspired by the beautiful and elusive Rosa Saks, a woman who will be linked to both men by powerful ties of desire, love, and shame, they create the otherworldly mistress of the night, Luna Moth. As the shadow of Hitler falls across Europe and the world, the Golden Age of comic books has begun.

Choi, Susan (2008). *A Person of Interest*.

Synopsis: Professor Lee, an Asian-born mathematician nearing retirement age, would seem the last person likely to attract the attention of FBI agents. Yet after a popular young colleague becomes the latest victim of a serial bomber, Lee's detached response and maladroit behavior lead the FBI, the national news media, and even his own neighbors to regard him with damning suspicion. Amid campus-wide grief over the murder, Lee receives a cryptic letter from a figure out of his past. The letter unearths a lifetime of shortcomings – toward his dead wife, his estranged only daughter, and a long-denied son. Caught between his guilty recollections and the scrutiny of the murder investigation, determined to face his tormentor and exonerate himself, Lee

sets off on a journey that will bring him face-to-face with his past – and that might even win him redemption.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1998). *The Foreign Student*.

Synopsis: In 1955, a new student arrives at a small college in the Tennessee mountains. Chuck is shy, speaks English haltingly, and on the subject of his earlier life in Korea will not speak at all. Then he meets Katherine, a beautiful and solitary young woman haunted by an episode in her past. Without knowing why, these two outsiders are drawn together, each sensing in the other the possibility of salvation.

Chu, Louis (1986). *Eat a Bowl of Tea*.

Synopsis: In this compelling tale of marriage, adultery, and retribution, Chus presents a rich portrait of the life in the Chinese-American community of New York City. Mei Oi dreams of the day she might marry and go to the Golden Mountain to live. It was a dream come true when Ben Loy arrived in her village from the United States to choose a bride. To Ben Loy, Mei's beauty is enchanting, their marriage rites wonderful, and their honeymoon exquisite until he mysteriously loses his sexual powers. When Mei Oi becomes pregnant by Ah Song, a gambler and notorious seducer of other men's wives, Ben Loy must find a way to avenge the cuckoldry and to survive the humiliation the event has brought them. Caught between the old ways and the modern mores of their adopted country, the couple struggles with tension, turmoil, and frustration in their marriage until they discover that the help they need may come in the form of an ancient Chinese remedy.

Cisneros, Sandra (1984). *House on Mango Street*.

Synopsis: A coming-of-age novel, it tells the story of a young Latina girl, Esperanza Cordero, growing up in a Chicago ghetto. Esperanza's age is never told to the reader, but it is implied she is about twelve. She begins to write as a way of expressing herself and as a way to escape the suffocating effect of the neighborhood. The novella also includes the stories of many of Esperanza's neighbors, giving a full picture of the neighborhood and showing the many influences surrounding her. Esperanza quickly befriends Lucy and Rachel, two Texan girls who live across the street. Lucy, Rachel, Esperanza, and Esperanza's little sister, Nenny, have many adventures in the small space of their neighborhood. Esperanza later slips into puberty and begins to like it when boys watch her dance. Esperanza's newfound views lead her to become friends with Sally, a girl her age who wears seductive clothes and uses boys as an escape from her abusive father. Esperanza is not completely comfortable with Sally's sexuality. Their friendship is compromised when Sally ditches Esperanza for a boy at a carnival. As a result Esperanza is sexually assaulted by a group of men at the carnival. Earlier at her first job, an elderly man tricked her into kissing him. Esperanza's traumatic experiences and observations of the women in her neighborhood cement her desire to escape Mango Street. She later realizes that she will never fully be able to leave Mango Street behind. She vows that after she leaves she will return to help the people she has left behind.

Cruz, Angie (2005). *Let It Rain Coffee*.

Synopsis: The novel centers around the proud members of the Colón family and the dreams, love, and heartbreak that bind them to their past and the future. Esperanza risked her life fleeing the Dominican Republic for the glittering dream she saw on television, but years later she is still

stuck in a cramped tenement with her husband, Santo, and their two children, Bobby and Dallas. She works as a home aide and, at night, hides unopened bills from the credit card company where Santo won't find them when he returns from driving his livery cab. When Santo's mother dies and his father, Don Chan, comes to Nueva York to live out his twilight years with the Colóns, nothing will ever be the same. Don Chan remembers fighting together with Santo in the revolution against Trujillo's cruel regime, the promise of who his son might have been, had he not fallen under Esperanza's spell.

Danticat, Edwidge (1994). *Breath, Eyes, Memory*.

Synopsis: At the age of twelve, Sophie Caco is sent from her impoverished village of Croix-des-Rosets to New York, to be reunited with a mother she barely remembers. There she discovers secrets that no child should ever know, and a legacy of shame that can be healed only when she returns to Haiti--to the women who first reared her. What ensues is a passionate journey through a landscape charged with the supernatural and scarred by political violence, in a novel that bears witness to the traditions, suffering, and wisdom of an entire people.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2005). *The Dew Breaker*.

Synopsis: As the book opens, a young Haitian-American sculptor named Ka and her father have traveled from Brooklyn to Miami to deliver the sculpture she has made of him to a famous actress. But this tribute to her father, this permanent representation of him, brings his secret life in Haiti to the surface. As he plunges the statue into a pond, he dredges up his own submerged past. Ka's father was a "dew breaker," one who arrives in the early morning hours to set houses afire, to arrest and torture and kill. The horrible scar on his own face came not from an oppressor, as Ka had believed, but from one of his own victims, a minister he murdered in Haiti many years ago. The identity of that minister is the most stunning revelation in a book filled with revelations. And it is by the most skillful narrative means that Danticat holds this truth in suspension for the length of the book. From the moment of Ka's father's confession in the opening pages to the closing chapter's full account of his final act of violence some thirty years earlier, Danticat explores the complex and intertwined stories of some of the people most deeply and painfully affected by the actions of the "dew breaker."

Diaz, Junot (2007). *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*.

Synopsis: Things have never been easy for Oscar, a sweet but disastrously overweight, lovesick Dominican ghetto nerd. From his home in New Jersey, where he lives with his old-world mother and rebellious sister, Oscar dreams of becoming the Dominican J. R. R. Tolkien and, most of all, of finding love. But he may never get what he wants, thanks to the Fukœ-the curse that has haunted the Oscar's family for generations, dooming them to prison, torture, tragic accidents, and, above all, ill-starred love. Oscar, still waiting for his first kiss, is just its most recent victim.

Di Donato, Pietro (1939). *Christ in Concrete*.

Synopsis: Di Donato looks at the story of a young Italian bricklayer struggling to provide for his family after the death of his father on the job and examines the struggles of Italian immigrant families.

Dubus, Andre (1999). *House of Sand and Fog*.

Synopsis: Colonel Massoud Amir Behrani was once a powerful and respected officer in the Shah

of Iran's air force. Having fled the country with his family, he works by day spearing trash on California highways and by night as a clerk in a convenience store while deceiving his family into believing that he has a loftier job. Now, willing to risk the modest remainder of his fortune to restore his family's dignity, he buys a small house at a county auction, planning to sell it again for three or four times what he paid. But the house has been auctioned because of a bureaucratic error, and Behrani's fragile plans are jeopardized when Kathy Nicolo, the owner of the house, begins to protest the sale. A recovering alcoholic and addict, Kathy is desperate to regain her only tie to stability — her home. In doing so, she enlists the help of Deputy Sheriff Lester Burdon, a married man who has fallen precipitously in love with her. As Kathy and Lester become obsessed with seeking justice by whatever means possible, the three characters converge on an explosive collision course.

Eggers, Dave (2006). *What Is the What: The Autobiography of Valentino Achak Deng*.

Synopsis: A enthralling memoir, this is the story of Valentino Achak Deng the time he was separated from his family in Marial Bai to the thirteen years he spent in Ethiopian and Kenyan refugee camps, to his encounter with vibrant Western cultures beginning in Atlanta, to the generosity and the challenges that he encountered as he tried to adjust to his life in the United States.

Erdrich, Louise (2003). *Master Butchers Singing Club*.

Synopsis: Having survived World War I, Fidelis Waldvogel returns to his quiet German village and marries the pregnant widow of his best friend, killed in action. With a suitcase full of sausages and a master butcher's precious knife set, Fidelis sets out for America. In Argus, North Dakota, he builds a business, a home for his family—which includes Eva and four sons—and a singing club consisting of the best voices in town. When the Old World meets the New—in the person of Delphine Watzka—the great adventure of Fidelis's life begins. Delphine meets Eva and is enchanted. She meets Fidelis, and the ground trembles. These momentous encounters will determine the course of Delphine's life.

Eugenides, Jeffrey (2003). *Middlesex: A Novel*.

Synopsis: This novel presents the breathtaking story of Calliope Stephanides and three generations of the Greek-American Stephanides family who travel from a tiny village overlooking Mount Olympus in Asia Minor to Prohibition-era Detroit, witnessing its glory days as the Motor City, and the race riots of 1967, before they move out to the tree-lined streets of suburban Grosse Pointe, Michigan. To understand why Calliope is not like other girls, she has to uncover a guilty family secret and the astonishing genetic history that turns Callie into Cal.

Farrell, James T. (1935). *Studs Lonigan: A Trilogy*.

Synopsis: In this relentlessly naturalistic portrait of the youth, early manhood, and death of Studs Lonigan, Studs starts out his life full of vigor and ambition, qualities that are crushed by the Chicago youth's limited social and economic environment. Studs's swaggering and vicious comrades, his narrow family, and his educational and religious background lead him to a life of futile dissipation.

Foer, Jonathan Safran (2003). *Everything is Illuminated*.

Synopsis: With only a yellowing photograph in hand, a young man - also named Jonathan Safran

Foer - sets out to find the woman who might or might not have saved his grandfather from the Nazis. Accompanied by an old man haunted by memories of the war, an amorous dog named Sammy Davis, Junior, Junior, and the unforgettable Alex, a young Ukrainian translator who speaks in a sublimely butchered English, Jonathan is led on a quixotic journey over a devastated landscape and into an unexpected past. As their adventure unfolds, Jonathan imagines the history of his grandfather's village, conjuring a magical fable of startling symmetries that unite generations across time.

Garcia, Cristina (1992). *Dreaming in Cuban*.

Synopsis: This novel follows the life of Celia del Pino and her family from the mid-1930s to 1980 both in Cuba and in the United States. Caught in the midst of the Cuban revolution, the novel explores the family's response to the Cuban Revolution, to life in exile, and to separation with Cuba's beauty, poverty, idealism, and corruption in the background.

Gardner, Mary (1997). *Boat People*.

Synopsis: At the center of this story is the arrival of Vietnamese immigrants to Galveston, Texas. The novel focuses on their struggles in the new country, their ties with their home country and their past, and their life in a tri-racial culture (Vietnamese, Black, and American).

Hagedorn, Jessica (1997). *The Gangster of Love*.

Synopsis: This novel focuses on the story of Rocky Rivera and her family, as they adjust to their life in the United States they arrive from the Philippines in the 1960s, cope with the memory of their homeland, and grapple with the sadness of having left the father behind. The family consists of Rocky, a teenager who adores her boyfriend, is unsure about sex, and struggles to fit in; Milagros, her mother who abruptly left her father and left for the United States with her two children; and Voltaire, her brother who struggles with depression and is prone to strange friendships with strangers.

Hemon, Aleksander (2004). *Nowhere Man*.

Synopsis: Living in Sarajevo, teenager Josef Pronek spends his time trying to become the Bosnian John Lennon until he decides to leave for the United States in 1992. He arrives in Chicago right before the outbreak of a civil war in his country. Unable to go back to Bosnia because of the war, Josef straddles between two worlds and captured in a series of interesting adventures, including a hilarious encounter with President Bush Senior.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2008). *The Lazarus Project*.

Synopsis: Stranded in the United States after the outbreak of a civil war in Bosnia in 1992, Sarajevo-born Brisk struggles "through permanent confusion." Married to a successful American neurosurgeon, Brisk, unable to overcome the memory of his homeland and in search of identity, finds solace in reconstructing the life of another immigrant who had lived long before him. Brisk begins researching the story of Lazarus Averbuch who, in 1903, moved to Chicago after surviving a pogrom in Eastern Europe. In 1908, Lazarus, a real historical figure, is arrested and dies while in police custody.

Hijuelos, Oscar (1999). *Empress of the Splendid Season*.

Synopsis: Lydia Espana, a Cuban émigré who was once a wealthy woman in Cuba, now works as a cleaning lady in New York City. Lydia's story of frustrations, joys, disappointments, and dreams intertwines with the secret lives of the clients for whom she works.

Hoffman, Eva (1990). *Lost in Translation: A Life in a New Language*.

Synopsis: The daughter of Holocaust survivors, Eva Hoffman recounts her struggles with her feelings of loss and lack of identity after she emigrated from Communist Poland to Vancouver, British Columbia, in 1959 at the age of thirteen. The memoir explores her search for identity and meaning through her adolescent years in Canada, her university years in Texas and Massachusetts, and her move to New York City, where she becomes a writer and, eventually, an editor for the Times Book Review.

Hosseini, Khaled (2003). *The Kite Runner*.

Synopsis: Set against the backdrop of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s and the subsequent civil war, this novel tells the story of two friends, Amir and Hassan. Amir flees Afghanistan for the United States with his father and adjusts to life in California, while Hassan stays behind in Afghanistan. Years later, as Amir pursues his education to become a writer, he learns his old friend's son needs his help.

Hwang, Caroline (2003). *In Full Bloom*.

Synopsis: This novel centers around the different expectations of a mother and daughter. While Ginger yearns for a promotion at the fashion magazine *À la Mode*, her mother wants her to marry a nice, professional Korean son-in-law. At work, she struggles to obtain her promotion. At home, after trying repeatedly to avoid her pressure, Ginger lets her mother play matchmaker, and she is surprised to discover that a lot of dates her mother she arranges for her are turned off by her even before she has a chance to reject them.

Jen, Gish (1997). *Mona in the Promised Land: A Novel*.

Synopsis: Mona Chang, the youngest daughter of ambitious, hard-working Chinese immigrants, is caught between the world of her parents and the American dream. While most of the times she says that she doesn't remember being Chinese until someone points it out to her, she is often embarrassed by her parents' foreign ways. The novel captures the family efforts to become part of a model minority as the family compares itself to Mona's classmates and neighbors, upwardly mobile Jews from Long Island who had beaten the Chang's to Ellis Island by a generation or two.

\_\_\_\_\_ (2004). *The Love Wife*.

Synopsis: Despite the furious protestations of his mother who wants him to marry a Chinese woman, Carnegie Wong marries the woman he loves, Janie Bailey, the descendant of Scottish and German immigrants. Although Janie immediately accepts the Chinese-American daughter that Carnegie had adopted on his own, Mama Wong never fully accepts her as her daughter-in-law and continues to haunt the life of the happily married couple even after she is long gone.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1992). *Typical American*.

Synopsis: Ralph (an Americanization of Lai Fu) left China for the United States in 1947, after his country's war with Japan. Once in the United States, his dream is to become an engineer in New York City. As his homeland goes through momentous changes and he loses any contact

with his parents, Ralph finds his sister and, through her, meets his future wife. Together they fight to become typical Americans.

Jin, Ha (2007). *A Free Life*.

Synopsis: Nan and Pingping Wu are a Chinese couple who originally come to the United States to study not to stay. After the Tiananmen Square massacre, however, they realize that they cannot go back, as both their country and their selves have changed. After the decision to stay, the two embark upon a legal path to citizenship.

Kahf, Mohja (2006). *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf: A Novel*.

Synopsis: Khadra Shamy is a young Syrian immigrant, who is growing up in a devout and close Muslim family in Indianapolis in the 1970s. She and her Eyad spend entire afternoons exploring on their bikes the streets of Indianapolis with their African-American friends Hakin and Hanifa. When, later in life, her picture-perfect marriage ends, Khadra goes to Syria to rediscover her roots and her religion. Upon returning to the United States, she refuses to return to Indiana until her jobs sends her there to cover a national Islamic conference.

Kingston, Maxine Hong (1989). *China Men*.

Synopsis: The author chronicles the lives of three generations of Chinese men in the United States: the grandfather who slaved away building the transcontinental railroad in the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the father who worked in laundry business in New York City, and the son who came back from China to find solace from the haunting spirit of his dead mother.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1990). *Tripmaster Monkey: His Fake Book*.

Synopsis: Set in the Bay Area of the 1960s, the novel follows the story of Wittman Ah Sing, a Chinese American who has recently graduated from the University of California, Berkley. Conflicted about his heritage and his identity, he grows increasingly bitter as racism against Chinese Americans persists. He becomes obsessed with the similarities between his condition in American society and the character of a monkey king in the Chinese epic novel *Journey to the West*.

Lahiri, Jhumpa (2003). *The Namesake*.

Synopsis: The author recounts the struggles and hardships of Ashoke and Ashima, a young couple who leaves Calcutta, India, to settle in Cambridge, Massachusetts. As they adjust to their life in the United States, they have a child, Gogol, a name acquired through a series of errors but that will shape many aspects of his life.

Law-Yone, Wendy (1983). *The Coffin Tree*.

Synopsis: The novel follows the story of a young Burmese woman and her older half brother who arrive in New York City in October 1969 after their father, a revolutionary, successfully arranged for their departure. Once in the United States, she struggles with the trauma of the separation, the adjustment to life in New York City, the death of her brother, and the time she spends in a psychiatric ward after trying to commit suicide.

Lee, Chang-rae (1999). *A Gesture Life*.

Synopsis: Franklin Hata, a Japanese immigrant of Korean birth, works hard to be a proper man and an upstanding citizen in his New York suburban town. Courteous, honest, hardworking, and impenetrable, Franklin's life begins to unravel as he takes a renewed interest in reestablishing contact with his long lost adopted daughter reappears in his life and as the memory of his forbidden love for a Korean comfort woman when he served as a medic in a Japanese camp during World War II comes back to haunt him.

\_\_\_\_\_ (1995). *Native Speaker*.

Synopsis: According to his wife, who is trying to leave him, Korean American Henry Park is "surreptitious, B+ student of life, illegal alien, emotional alien, Yellow peril: neo-American, stranger, follower, traitor, spy." Constantly unsure of where he belongs, Henry has long seen himself as an interloper looking at American culture from the outside, but he now fears that now he belongs to neither world.

McCourt, Frank (1996). *Angela's Ashes*.

Synopsis: McCourt opens this memoir with a vivid description of his early years in New York City in the 1930s, as his family struggles with poverty and his father's drinking problems. After the death of his youngest sister, his parents decide to move back to Limerick, Ireland. After his father abandons, Frank and his family struggle to make ends meet during the late 1930s and 1940s, but, at 19, he realizes his dreams of returning to the United States.

Marshall, Paule (1996). *Brown Girl, Brownstones*.

Synopsis: Partially inspired by the author's life, the novel centers around the life of Selina and Ina Boyce and their parents, who arrived from the Barbados to live in Brooklyn. The novel follows their experiences, especially Selina's, amid racism and extreme poverty during the Great Depression and World War II.

Mendelsohn, Daniel (2006). *The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million*.

Synopsis: Part memoir, part reportage, part mystery, and part scholarly investigation, this book explores the author's search for the history of the disappearance of six relatives during the Holocaust.

Mengestu, Dinaw (2006) *The Beautiful Things that Heaven Bears*.

Synopsis: Set in Logan Circle in Washington, D.C., Mengestu explores the impact that gentrification has on the lives of immigrants. Sepha, an Ethiopian refugee, tries to come to terms with the changing neighborhood as the convenience store he owns gradually goes under and he falls in love with a white woman who has just moved to the neighborhood.

Narayan, Kirin (1994). *Love, Stars, and All That*.

Synopsis: Gita is a young Indian woman who is at the University of California, Berkeley to pursue a graduate degree in literature. Shy and introvert, Gita's life is a complicated whirl of new friends, culture shocks, subsistence life on a graduate stipend, and love. After consulting a numerologist, Gita's aunt tells her that she is soon to meet her jori or, as they say in America, "Mr. Right."

Núñez, Sigrid (1995). *A Feather on the Breath of God*.

Synopsis: Part memoir, this book centers on the memories of a young woman who remembers the turbulent relationship between her Chinese-Panamanian father and German mother as she grew up in the a housing project in the 1950s and 1960s, the difficult life after her father died and her mother grew distant from her and her siblings, and her obsession with ballet as a form of escape from reality.

Otsuka, Julie (2002). *When the Emperor Was Divine*.

Synopsis: This novel focuses on the story of a Japanese American family's experiences with internment during World War II. After the father is arrested because of his alleged involvement in a conspiracy against the U.S. government, the mother and the two children struggle to maintain their optimism and their identity. After three years in an internment camp in Utah, they family reunites as they cope with their new existence with a ravaged home, the indifference of their neighbors, and the memories of their war experiences.

Ozick, Cynthia (1989). *The Shawl*.

Synopsis: This novel tells the story of Rosa Lublin's life during the Holocaust and her later life in Florida. Tormented by the loss of a very young daughter at the camp, Rosa struggles to create a new life. It is only through a friendship she begins to forge with the unrelenting Simon Persky, also originally from Warsaw, that she may be able to escape the torment of her own experiences.

Quiñonez, Ernesto (2000). *Bodega Dreams*.

Synopsis: The novel recounts the story of Chino, a smart and promising young man, who finds himself dealing with Bodega, the king of Spanish Harlem. Drawn to Bodega's street-smart idealism, Chino soon realizes that he is in over his head as he is forced to navigate an underworld of switchblade tempers, turncoat morality, and murder.

Paredes, Américo (1990). *George Washington Gómez*.

Synopsis: This novel focuses on the story of a young Mexican American who witnesses the guerrilla warfare, banditry, land grabs, and abuses of Texas rangers along the Texas-Mexico border during the 1930s.

Puzo, Mario (1964). *The Fortunate Pilgrim*.

Synopsis: This story centers on the Italian American Angeluzzi-Corbos family and their new life in New York City. The head of the family is Lucia Santa, a widow and a mother who finds herself the head of two families. Her formidable will steers the two families through the Great Depression and the early years of World War II, but her leadership cannot avoid the conflict Italian and American values or the violence and bloodshed that might follow.

Roth, Henry (1934). *Call It Sleep*.

Synopsis: This novel recounts the story of an Austrian-Jewish immigrant family in New York at the beginning of the twentieth century. Six-year-old David Schearl has a very close and loving relationship with his mother Genya, but he fears his father Albert who remains aloof, resentful, and angry towards his wife and son. Their family life is further disrupted when Bertha, David's sister, joins the family after she arrives from Austria.

Satyaj, Rakesh (2009). *Blue Boy*.

Synopsis: Set in Cincinnati in the early 1990s, this novel explores the struggles of young Indian American Kiran, whom his parents want to be successful in school, be respectful, find a nice Indian girl, and, above all, to make his parents proud. If only Kiran had anything in common with the other Indian American kids of his age besides the color of his skin. Playing with dolls, choosing ballet over basketball, taking the annual talent show way too seriously, Kiran stands out more than his peers and does not fit in to any group.

Shteyngart, Gary (2003). *The Russian Debutante's Handbook*.

Synopsis: This novel revolves around twenty-five year old Vladimir Girshkin, who was born in Leningrad and dragged to the United States by his parents during the 1970s. According to his high-achieving mother, Vladimir is a little failure because he is a lowly clerk at the bureaucratic Emma Lazarus Immigrant Absorption Society, but he believes he is about to have his first break after he meets a wealthy but psychotic old Russian war hero.

Sinclair, Upton (1906). *The Jungle*.

Synopsis: The novel reveals the dangers of the meatpacking industry for immigrant workers through the story of a Lithuanian family in Chicago, Illinois.

Tan, Amy (1991). *The Joy Luck Club*.

Synopsis: This novel focuses on four Chinese American immigrant families in San Francisco who start a club known as the Joy Luck Club to play games of mahjong as they feast on Chinese foods. As they meet for their games, the three mothers and four daughters share stories about their lives.

Villarreal, Jose Antonio (1970). *Pocho*.

Synopsis: This novel recounts the story of the lives of Juan Rubion, a Mexican migrant farmer worker, his wife, and their nine children as they seek to survive the Depression, stay together, and adjust to American culture. As family bonds fall apart, Richard, the only son, challenges both Mexican and American cultures as he affirms his determination to become a writer.

Wakatsuki Houston, Jeanne (1973). *Farewell to Manzanar*.

Synopsis: This memoir focuses on the author and her family's experiences with internment during World War II. After her father is arrested after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the rest of the family is relocated in the internment camp at Manzanar. Her brother enlists in the army to fight in the war and avenge the family name. As the war ends and they return to California, the family struggles to go back to their former lives.

Wong, Jade Snow (1950). *Fifth Chinese Daughter*.

Synopsis: In her memoir, Jade Snow Wong, the fifth daughter of an austere, large, and formal Chinese family, recounts her determination from a very early age to go to college and become more independent than her family expects her to be. Her decision sets off a balancing act among cultures that she explores with humor, reverence, and philosophical insight.

Yeziarska, Anzia (1925). *Bread Givers*.

Synopsis: The novel describes the coming of age of Sara Smolinski, as she battles with her traditional father as she seeks to embrace American ideals and fit in in American society. Sara

lives with her mother, Shenah, her religious father, Moses, and her three sisters, Bessie, Fania, and Mashah in the Lower East Side tenement of New York City. As the story opens, the Smolinskys are destitute, with the five women struggling for money to simply survive and Moses concerned only with the study of the Jewish sacred texts.

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