



Children's Cultural Fiction Book List

Fictional stories that depict different cultures.

1001 Cranes – Naomi Hirahara – With her parents on the verge of separating, a devastated twelve-year-old Japanese American girl spends the summer in Los Angeles with her grandparents, where she folds paper cranes into wedding displays, becomes involved with a young skateboarder, and learns how complicated relationships can be.

*United States

JF Hirahara
Ages 8-12

Akimbo and the Crocodile Man – Alexander McCall Smith – Akimbo goes to the rescue of a zoologist who is injured on his father's game preserve.

*Africa

JF McCall
Ages 7-9

Akimbo and the Elephants – Alexander McCall Smith – On the African game preserve where his father works, Akimbo devises a dangerous plan to capture a ring of elephant poachers.

*Africa

JF McCall
Ages 7-9

Anahita's Woven Riddle – Meghan Nuttall Sayres – In Iran, more than 100 years ago, a young girl with three suitors gets permission from her father and a holy man to weave into her wedding rug a riddle to be solved by her future husband, which will ensure that he has wit to match hers.

*Iran

YA F Sayres
Ages 12-17

Anne of Green Gables – L.M. Montgomery – Anne, an eleven-year-old orphan, is sent by mistake to live with a lonely middle-aged brother and sister on a Prince Edward Island farm and proceeds to make an indelible impression on everyone around her.

*Canada

YA F Montgomery
Ages 10-13

Between Shades of Gray – Ruta Sepetys – In 1941, fifteen-year-old Lina, her mother, and brother are pulled from their Lithuanian home by Soviet guards and sent to Siberia, where her father is sentenced to death in a prison camp while she fights for her life, vowing to honor her family and the thousands like hers by burying her story in a jar on Lithuanian soil.

*Lithuania, Russia

YA F Sepetys
Ages 12-17

The Birchbark House – Louise Erdrich – Omakayas, a seven-year-old Native American girl of the Ojibwa tribe, lives through the joys of summer and the perils of winter on an island in Lake Superior in 1847.

*United States

JF Erdrich
Ages 9-12

Blue Fingers – Cheryl Aylward Whitesel – Having failed apprenticeship as a dye maker, Koji is captured and forced to train as a ninja, where he remains disloyal until he discovers samurai have burned his former village.

*Japan

JF Whitesel
Ages 9-12

Bog Child – Siobhan Dowd – In 1981, the height of Ireland's "Troubles," eighteen-year-old Fergus is distracted from his upcoming A-level exams by his imprisoned brother's hunger strike, the stress of being a courier for Sinn Fein, and dreams of a murdered girl whose body he discovered in a bog.

*Ireland

YA F Dowd
Ages 12-17

Bound – Donna Jo Napoli – In a novel based on Chinese Cinderella tales, fourteen-year-old stepchild Xing-Xing endures a life of neglect and servitude, as her stepmother cruelly mutilates her own child's feet so that she alone might marry well.

*China

JF Napoli
Ages 10-17

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas – John Boyne – Bored and lonely after his family moves from Berlin to a place called "Out-With" in 1942, Bruno, the son of a Nazi officer, befriends a boy in striped pajamas who lives behind a wire fence.

*Poland

YA F Boyne
Ages 12-17

Broken Moon – Kim Antineau – When her little brother is kidnapped and taken from Pakistan to race camels in the desert, eighteen-year-old Nadira overcomes her own past abuse and, dressed as a boy and armed with knowledge of the powerful storytelling of the legendary Scheherazade, is determined to find and rescue him.

*Pakistan

YA F Antineau
Ages 14-17

Bud, Not Buddy – Christopher Paul Curtis – Ten-year-old Bud, a motherless boy living in Flint, Michigan, during the Great Depression, escapes a bad foster home and sets out in search of the man he believes to be his father--the renowned bandleader, H.E. Calloway of Grand Rapids.

*United States

JF Curtis
Ages 9-12

Canyons – Gary Paulsen – Finding a skull on a camping trip in the canyons outside El Paso, Texas, Brennan becomes involved with the fate of a young Apache Indian who lived in the late 1800s.

*United States

YA F Paulsen
Ages 12-17

Climbing the Stairs – Padma Venkatraman – In India, in 1941, when her father becomes brain-damaged in a non-violent protest march, fifteen-year-old Vidya and her family are forced to move in with her father's extended family and become accustomed to a totally different way of life.

*India

YA F Venkatraman
Ages 12-17

Copper Sun – Sharon M. Draper
– Two fifteen-year-old girls--one a slave and the other an indentured servant--escape their Carolina plantation and try to make their way to Fort Moses, Florida, a Spanish colony that gives sanctuary to slaves.
*United States
YA F Daper
Ages 14-17

Darkness Be My Friend – John Marsden
– As survivors of an enemy invasion of their homeland, Ellie and her friends return to Australia as guides for soldiers from New Zealand who plan an attack on the Wirrawee airfield.
*Australia, New Zealand
YA F Marsden
Ages 12-17

The Devil's Arithmetic –Jane Yolen
– Hannah resents the traditions of her Jewish heritage until time travel places her in the middle of a small Jewish village in Nazi-occupied Poland.
*Poland
YA F Yolen
Ages 10-14

The Disappeared – Gloria Whelan
– Silvia tries to save her brother, Eduardo, after he is captured by the military government in 1970s Argentina.
*Argentina
YA F Whelan
Ages 12-17

The Doll with the Yellow Star
– Yona Zeldis McDonough – When France falls to Germany at the start of World War II, nine-year-old Claudine must leave her beloved parents and friends to stay with relatives in America, accompanied by her doll, Violette.
*France, Germany
JF McDonough
Ages 7-10

Elijah of Buxton – Christopher Paul Curtis
– In 1859, eleven-year-old Elijah Freeman, the first free-born child in Buxton, Canada, which is a haven for slaves fleeing the American South, uses his wits and skills to try to bring to justice the lying preacher who has stolen money that was to be used to buy a family's freedom.
*Canada
JF Buxton
Ages 8-12

Endymion Spring – Matthew Skelton
– Having reluctantly accompanied his academic mother and pesky younger sister to Oxford, twelve-year-old Blake Winters is at loose ends until he stumbles across an ancient and magical book, secretly brought to England in 1453 by Gutenberg's mute apprentice to save it from evil forces, and which now draws Blake into a dangerous and life-threatening quest.
*England
JF Skelton
Ages 12-17

Esperanza Rising –Pam Munoz Ryan
– Esperanza and her mother are forced to leave their life of wealth and privilege in Mexico to go work in the labor camps of Southern California, where they must adapt to the harsh circumstances facing Mexican farm workers on the eve of the Great Depression.
*Mexico, United States
JF Ryan
Ages 8-12

Extra Credit – Andrew Clements
– As letters flow back and forth--between the prairies of Illinois and the mountains of Afghanistan, across cultural and religious divides--sixth-grader Abby, ten-year-old Amira, and eleven-year-old Sadeed begin to speak and listen to each other.
*Afghanistan, United States
JF Clements
Ages 8-12

The Friendship – Mildred D. Taylor
– Four children witness a confrontation between an elderly black man and a white storekeeper in rural Mississippi in the 1930s.
*United States
JF Taylor
Ages 8-12

A Girl Named Disaster – Nancy Farmer
– While fleeing from Mozambique to Zimbabwe to escape an unwanted marriage, Nhamo, an eleven-year-old Shona girl, struggles to escape drowning and starvation and in so doing comes close to the luminous world of the African spirits.
*Africa
YA F Farmer
Ages 8-12

Golden Goblet – Eloise Jarvis McGraw
– A young Egyptian boy struggles to reveal a hideous crime and reshape his own destiny.
*Egypt
JF McGraw
Ages 9-12

Homeless Bird – Gloria Whelan
– When thirteen-year-old Koly enters into an ill-fated arranged marriage, she must either suffer a destiny dictated by India's tradition or find the courage to oppose it.
*India
JF Whelan
Ages 8-12

Home of the Brave – Katherine Applegate
– Kek, an African refugee, is confronted by many strange things at the Minneapolis home of his aunt and cousin, as well as in his fifth grade classroom, and longs for his missing mother, but finds comfort in the company of a cow and her owner.
*United States
JF Applegate
Ages 10-14

Honey Cake – Joan Betty Stuchner
– David and his family live in Denmark during the Nazi occupation, until September 1943 when their neighbors help smuggle them to Sweden to escape Hitler's orders to send the Danish Jews to concentration camps. Includes a recipe for honey cake, typically made to celebrate the Jewish New Year.
*Denmark
JF Stuchner
Ages 6-9

The Hundred Dresses – Eleanor Estes
– In winning a medal she is no longer there to receive, a tight-lipped little Polish girl teaches her classmates a lesson.
*United States
JF Estes
Ages 6-10

Ice Drift – Theodore Taylor
– Two Inuit brothers must fend for themselves while stranded on an ice floe that is adrift in the Greenland Strait.
*Greenland
JF Taylor
Ages 10-14

In Darkness – Nick Lake
– In the aftermath of the Haitian earthquake, fifteen-year-old Shorty, a poor gang member from the slums of Site Soleil, is trapped in the rubble of a ruined hospital, and as he grows weaker he has visions and memories of his life of violence, his lost twin sister, and of Toussaint L'Ouverture, who liberated Haiti from French rule in the 1804.
*Haiti
YA F Lake
Ages 14-17

The Indian in the Cupboard – Lynn Reid Banks – A nine-year-old boy receives a plastic Indian, a cupboard, and a little key for his birthday and finds himself involved in adventure when the Indian comes to life in the cupboard and befriends him. First in a series.

*United States

JF Banks
Ages 8-12

The Ink Keepers Apprentice – Allen Say – A fourteen-year-old boy lives on his own in Tokyo and becomes apprenticed to a famous Japanese cartoonist.

*Japan

JF Say
Ages 9-12

An Innocent Soldier – Josef Holub – A sixteen-year-old farmhand is tricked into fighting in the Napoleonic Wars by the farmer for whom he works, who secretly substitutes him for the farmer's own son.

*Russia

YA F Holub
Ages 12-17

Jazmin's Notebook – Nikki Grimes – Jazmin, an African-American teenager who lives with her older sister in a small Harlem apartment in the 1960s, finds strength in writing poetry and keeping a record of the events in her sometimes difficult life.

*United States

JF Grimes
Ages 10-14

Julie of the Wolves – Jean Craighead George – While running away from home and an unwanted marriage, a thirteen-year-old Eskimo girl becomes lost on the North Slope of Alaska and is befriended by a wolf pack.

*United States

JF George
Ages 8-12

Keeper – Mal Peet – In an interview with a young journalist, World Cup hero, El Gato, describes his youth in the Brazilian rain forest and the events, experiences, and people that helped make him a great goalkeeper and renowned soccer star.

*Brazil

YA F Peet
Ages 10-17

The Killers Tears – Anne-Laure Bondoux – A young boy, Paolo, and the man who murdered his parents, Angel, gradually become like father and son as they live and work together on the remote Chilean farm where Paolo was born.

*Chile

YA F Bondoux
Ages 12-17

Kira-Kira – Cynthia Kadohata – Chronicles the close friendship between two Japanese-American sisters growing up in rural Georgia during the late 1950s and early 1960s, and the despair when one sister becomes terminally ill.

*United States

YA F Kadohata
Ages 10-14

Light in the Forest – Conrad Richter – Returned to his white family, Indian captive John Cameron Butler wants to go back to his Indian family whom he respects and loves.

*United States

JF Richter
Ages 8-12

Little Leap Forward: a Boy in Beijing – Guo Yue – In Communist China in 1966, eight-year-old Leap Forward learns about freedom while flying kites with his best friend, by trying to get a caged wild bird to sing, and through the music he is learning to play on a bamboo flute. Includes author's notes on his childhood in Beijing, life under Mao Zedong, and the Cultural Revolution.

*China

JF Yue
Ages 8-12

A Little Princess – Frances Hodgson Burnett – Sara Crewe, a pupil at Miss Minchin's London school, is left in poverty when her father dies but is later rescued by a mysterious benefactor.

*England

JF Burnett
Ages 9-12

Matilda Bone – Karen Cushman – Fourteen-year-old Matilda, an apprentice bonesetter and practitioner of medicine in a village in medieval England, tries to reconcile the various aspects of her life, both spiritual and practical.

*England

JF Cushman
Ages 8-12

M.C. Higgins, The Great – Virginia Hamilton – As a slag heap, the result of strip mining, creeps closer to his house in the Ohio hills, fifteen-year-old M.C. is torn between trying to get his family away and fighting for the home they love.

*United States

JF Hamilton
Ages 9-12

Millicent Min, Girl Genius – Lisa Yee – In a series of journal entries, eleven-year-old child prodigy Millicent Min records her struggles to learn to play volleyball, tutor her enemy, deal with her grandmother's departure, and make friends over the course of a tumultuous summer.

*United States

JF Yee
Ages 8-12

Mississippi Bridge – Mildred D. Taylor – During a heavy rainstorm in 1930s rural Mississippi, a ten-year-old white boy sees a bus driver order all the black passengers off a crowded bus to make room for late-arriving white passengers and then set off across the raging Rosa Lee River.

*United States

JF Taylor
Ages 7-11

Molly's Pilgrim – Barbara Cohen – Told to make a Pilgrim doll for the Thanksgiving display at school, Molly is embarrassed when her mother tries to help her out by creating a doll dressed as she herself was dressed before leaving Russia to seek religious freedom.

*United States, Russia

JF Cohen in Holiday
Ages 6-10

Morning Girl – Michael Dorris – Morning Girl, who loves the day, and her younger brother Star Boy, who loves the night, take turns describing their life on an island in pre-Columbian America; in Morning Girl's last narrative, she witnesses the arrival of the first Europeans to her world.

*America

JF Dorris
Ages 9-12

The Mozart Question – Michael Morpurgo – A young journalist goes to Venice, Italy, to interview a famous violinist, who tells the story of his parents' incarceration by the Nazis, and explains why they can no longer listen to the music of Mozart.

*Italy

JF Morpurgo
Ages 8-12

Now Is the Time for Running – Michael Williams – When soldiers attack a small village in Zimbabwe, Deo goes on the run with Innocent, his older, mentally disabled brother, carrying little but a leather soccer ball filled with money, and after facing prejudice, poverty, and tragedy, it is in soccer that Deo finds renewed hope.

*Zimbabwe, South Africa

YA F Williams

Ages 12-17

One Crazy Summer – Rita Williams-Garcia – In the summer of 1968, after traveling from Brooklyn to Oakland, California, to spend a month with the mother they barely know, eleven-year-old Delphine and her two younger sisters arrive to a cold welcome as they discover that their mother, a dedicated poet and printer, is resentful of the intrusion of their visit and wants them to attend a nearby Black Panther summer camp.

*United States

JF Williams-Garcia

Ages 9-12

Peiling and the Chicken-Fried Christmas – Pauline Chen – Fifth-grader Peiling Wang wants to celebrate "a real American Christmas," much to the displeasure of her traditional, Taiwanese-born father.

*United States

JF Chen

Ages 8-12

The Penalty – Mal Peet – Paul Faustino, known as the best soccer journalist in the business, reluctantly investigates the disappearance of eighteen-year-old Ricardo, a soccer prodigy known as "El Brujito," while in alternate chapters a slave in old San Juan becomes a powerful voodoo priest.

*Puerto Rico

YA F Peet

Ages 10-17

Pippi Longstocking – Astrid Lindgren – Escapades of a lucky little girl who lives with a horse and a monkey--but without any parents--at the edge of a Swedish village.

*Sweden

JF Lindgren

Ages 8-11

Queen of Water – Laura Resau – Living in a village in Ecuador, a Quechua Indian girl is sent to work as an indentured servant for an upper class "mestizo" family.

*Ecuador

YA F Resau

Ages 12-17

Return to Sender – Julia Alvarez

– After his family hires migrant Mexican workers to help save their Vermont farm from foreclosure, eleven-year-old Tyler befriends the oldest daughter, but when he discovers they may not be in the country legally, he realizes that real friendship knows no borders.

*United States

JF Alvarez

Ages 8-12

Revolution is not a Dinner Party – Ying Chang Compestine – Starting in 1972 when she is nine years old, Ling, the daughter of two doctors, struggles to make sense of the communists' Cultural Revolution, which empties stores of food, homes of appliances deemed "bourgeois," and people of laughter.

*China

YA F Compestine

Ages 10-15

Rhiannon – Vicki Grove – When tragedy strikes close to home with the discovery of a strange body near their bluff and accusations of murder leveled at one of their residents, Rhiannon knows she has to do something even though it means standing up to the aristocracy.

*England

YA F Grove

Ages 10-17

Rickshaw Girl – Mitali Perkins – In her Bangladesh village, ten-year-old Naimi excels at painting designs called alpanas, but to help her impoverished family financially she would have to be a boy--or disguise herself as one.

*Bangladesh

JF Perkins

Ages 7-10

River Song – Belinda Hollyer – Jessye loves living with her grandmother in a traditional Maori village, but when her free-wheeling mother comes back into her life, Jessye must decide whether to stay or move to the city.

*New Zealand

YA F Hollyer

Ages 9-12

The Road of Bones – Anne Fine – In Russia, during the reign of communism and one of the many purges that sweep the country, Yuri experiences first-hand the social injustices, labor camp, and starvation.

*Russia

JF Fine

Ages 12-17

The Secret Garden – Frances Hodgson Burnett – A ten-year-old orphan comes to live in a lonely house on the Yorkshire moors where she discovers an invalid cousin and the mysteries of a locked garden.

*England

JF Burnett

Ages 8-12

The Secret of the Andes – Ann Nolan Clark – An Indian boy who tends llamas in a hidden valley in Peru learns the traditions and secrets of his Inca ancestors.

*Peru

JF Clark

Ages 8-12

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind – Suzanne Fisher Staples – When eleven-year old Shabanu, the daughter of a nomad in the Cholistan Desert of present-day Pakistan, is pledged in marriage to an older man whose money will bring prestige to the family, she must either accept the decision, as is the custom, or risk the consequences of defying her father's wishes.

*Pakistan

YA F Staples

Ages 12-17

Shadow Spinner – Susan Fletcher – When Marjan, a thirteen-year-old crippled girl, joins the Sultan's harem in ancient Persia, she gathers for Shahrazad the stories which will save the queen's life.

*Persia

YA F Fletcher

Ages 10-14

Shen and the Treasure Fleet – Ray Conlogue – After rebel forces seize the Chinese royal city of Nanjing in 1403, thirteen-year-old Shen and his younger sister Chang take refuge with a traveling acrobat troupe who gains passage on a vast fleet of ships setting sail to explore the world.

*China

YA F Conlogue

Ages 11-17

Sign of the Beaver – Elizabeth George Speare – Left alone to guard the family's wilderness home in eighteenth-century Maine, a boy is hard-pressed to survive until local Indians teach him their skills.

*United States

YA F Speare

Ages 10-14

Sing Down the Moon – Scott O'Dell – A young Navajo girl recounts the events of 1864 when her tribe was forced to march to Fort Sumner as prisoners of the white soldiers.

*Southwest United States

JF O'Dell

Ages 10-13

Single Shard – Linda Sue Park – Tree-ear, a thirteen-year-old orphan in medieval Korea, lives under a bridge in a potters' village, and longs to learn how to throw the delicate celadon ceramics himself.

*Korea

YA F Park

Ages 10-14

The Slave Dancer – Paula Fox – Kidnapped and on an Africa-bound ship, thirteen-year-old Jessie discovers to his horror that he is on a slaver and his job is to play music for the exercise periods of the human cargo.

*Africa

JF Fox

Ages 11-14

Snow Treasure – Marie McSwigan – In 1940, when the Nazi invasion of Norway reaches their village in the far north, twelve-year-old Peter and his friends use their sleds to transport nine million dollars worth of gold bullion past the German soldiers to the secret harbor where Peter's uncle keeps his ship ready to take the gold for safekeeping in the United States.

*Norway

JF McSwigan

Ages 8-12

So Far from the Bamboo Grove – Yoko Kawashima Watkins – Eleven-year-old Yoko escapes from Korea to Japan with her mother and sister at the end of World War II. Though Japanese, eleven-year-old Yoko has lived with her family in northern Korea near the border with China all her life. But when the Second World War comes to an end, Japanese on the Korean peninsula are suddenly in terrible danger. Their journey is terrifying -- and remarkable. It's a true story of courage and survival.

*Japan, Korea, China

JF Watkins

Ages 8-12

A Step from Heaven – An Na – A young Korean girl and her family find it difficult to learn English and adjust to life in America.

*United States

YA F Na

Ages 12-16

Surprising Cecilia – Susan Gonzales Abraham – In the 1930s as she ventures from her small and poor New Mexican farming community to go to high school in the city, teenaged Cecilia finds herself challenged in unexpected ways.

*United States

YA F Abrahamson

Ages 11-15

Thief Lord – Cornelia Caroline Funke – Two brothers, having run away from the aunt who plans to adopt the younger one, are sought by a detective hired by their aunt, but they have found shelter with--and protection from--Venice's "Thief Lord."

*Italy

JF Funke

Ages 8-12

Tomorrow, When the War Began – John Marsden – Seven Australian teenagers return from a camping trip in the bush to discover that their country has been invaded and they must hide to stay alive.

*Australia

YA F Marsden

Ages 12-17

Touching Spirit Bear – Ben Mikaelson – After his anger erupts into violence, Cole, in order to avoid going to prison, agrees to participate in a sentencing alternative based on the native American Circle Justice, and he is sent to a remote Alaskan Island where an encounter with a huge Spirit Bear changes his life.

*United States

JF Mikaelson

Ages 10-14

The Watsons Go to Birmingham –1963 –

Christopher Paul Curtis – The ordinary interactions and everyday routines of the Watsons, an African American family living in Flint, Michigan, are drastically changed after they go to visit Grandma in Alabama in the summer of 1963.

*United States

JF Curtis

Ages 8-12

When the Legends Die – Hal Borland – At the death of his parents, a young Native American boy must enter the world of the white man.

*United States

YA F Borland

Ages 12-17

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon – Grace Lin – Minli, an adventurous girl from a poor village, buys a magical goldfish, and then joins a dragon who cannot fly on a quest to find the Old Man of the Moon in hopes of bringing life to Fruitless Mountain and freshness to Jade River.

*China

JF Lin

Ages 8-12

White Fang – Kathleen Olmstead – An abridged version of the adventures in the northern wilderness of a dog who is part wolf and how he comes to make his peace with man.

*Canada

JF Olmstead

Ages 8-12

The White Giraffe – Lauren St. John – After a fire kills her parents, eleven-year-old Martine must leave England to live with her grandmother on a wildlife game reserve in South Africa, where she befriends a mythical white giraffe.

*England, Africa

JF St. John

Ages 6-8

Wilderness – Roddy Doyle – As Irish teenager Gráinne anxiously prepares for a reunion with her mother, who abandoned the family years before, Gráinne's half-brothers and their mother take a dogsledding vacation in Finland.

*Finland, Ireland

YA F Doyle

Ages 12-17

The Winter Road – Terry

Hokenson – Seventeen-year-old Willa, still grieving over the death of her older brother and the neglect of her father, decides to fly a small plane to fetch her mother from Northern Ontario, but when the plane crashes she is all alone in the snowy wilderness.

*Canada

YA F Hokenson

Ages 12-18

The Year of the Dog – Grace Lin

– Frustrated at her seeming lack of talent for anything, a young Taiwanese American girl sets out to apply the lessons of the Chinese Year of the Dog, those of making best friends and finding oneself, to her own life.

*United States

JF Lin

Ages 8-12

Year of Impossible Goodbyes

– Sook Nyul Choi – A young Korean girl survives the oppressive Japanese and Russian occupation of North Korea during the 1940s, to later escape to freedom in South Korea.

*North and South Korea

YA F Choi

Ages 8-12

The Year the Gypsies Came –

Linzi Alex Glass – In Johannesburg, South Africa, in the late 1960s, twelve-year-old Emily, who longs for affection from her quarreling parents, finds comfort in the stories of a Zulu servant and in her friendship with a young houseguest who has an equally troubled family.

*South Africa

YA F Glass

Ages 12-17