



FOR KIDS AND TEENS

STORIES BEYOND BORDERS

A Chinese American and
Diasporic Reading List

Created to commemorate the Chinese American Librarians Association's 50th Anniversary, *Stories Beyond Borders* features children's, middle grade, and young adult books centering Chinese American and diasporic voices. Rooted in different parts of the world, these empowering stories transcend borders and reflect the multifaceted experiences of our communities, leading us toward a brighter future full of hope, harmony, and unchecked possibilities. Dive in!

ABOUT THE LIST

This celebratory reading list is formed through a collaboration between the Chinese American Librarians Association (CALA) and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) in consultation with the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC). The CALA/YALSA Taskforce members are Crystal Chen, Melody Leung, Jen Woo, Cathy Andronik, Christy Lau, Susen Shi, and Amy Chow.

Books are selected based on their authenticity, accuracy, appeal, and creativity. Recent publications between 2020–2022 are prioritized due to their relevance. Some older books are included due to their historical influence and continued significance to Chinese American youth literature and are marked with an asterisk (*). The Taskforce recognizes the deep complexity of a Chinese American and diasporic experience across geopolitical boundaries and thus took an inclusive approach to selection whenever possible.



CHILDREN'S BOOKS

Amah Faraway

MARGARET CHIU GREANIAS,
TRACY SUBISAK

Kylie is nervous to visit Taiwan and meet her grandmother Amah, whom she's seen only in video chats from her home in San Francisco. But as she slowly gets to know Amah, the two become closer and Kylie becomes braver in her explorations of the city.

Amy Wu and the Perfect Bao Amy Wu and the Patchwork Dragon

**Amy Wu and the Warm
Welcome**

KAT ZHANG,
CHARLENE CHUA

Amy is learning all about being Chinese American. Throughout this series, she learns how "imperfect" is actually perfect when it comes to folding baos, how having different ideas than her peers (like what a dragon is) is worth advocating for, and how to be an ally in making her world an inclusive place for everyone.

The Best Kind of Mooncake

PEARL AUYEUNG

When a stranger from a faraway land arrives hungry, a child's mother gives him their precious double yolk mooncake. This act of kindness prompts other vendors to give enough to help the man get on his feet. With kindness, the favor is returned

in a cycle of giving in a story inspired by the author's own family shop in Hong Kong.

Eyes that Kiss in the Corners Eyes that Speak to the Stars

JOANNA HO, DUNG HO

Children of Asian descent are empowered to be proud of who they are through striking illustrations and poetic affirming text. Each book goes beyond cultural specifics and focuses on how that strength gives the child a more bright and autonomous future.

The Fearless Flights of Hazel Ying Lee

JULIE LEUNG, JULIE KWON

Despite both gender and racial barriers during her time, Hazel Ying Lee was determined to fly. This charmingly illustrated and moving account details how Lee became one of the first Chinese American women to fly for the U.S. Women Airforce Service during WWII.

The Flamingo: A Graphic Novel Chapter Book

GUOJING

A little girl visits her Lao Lao and builds fun and fantastical memories during their beach vacation in this beautifully rendered, nearly wordless graphic novel.

Grandpa Grumps

KATRINA MOORE, XINDI YAN

Daisy's got big plans for when she finally meets her Yeh-Yeh who is visiting from China! But when he arrives, he's grumpy and becomes grumpier with each plan she shares. This delightfully illustrated picture book will have you cheering Daisy on as she tries to make her Yeh-Yeh smile.

I Dream of Popo

LIVIA BLACKBURNE, JULIA KUO

A child in Taiwan loves spending time with her Popo. When the family immigrates to San Diego, the connection between the child and Popo is separated by a vast ocean. Mandarin phrases are featured throughout this story about finding expressions of love that supersede language and distance.

Let's Do Everything and Nothing

JULIA KUO

Surrounded by shades of peaceful blue punctuated by radiating reds and yellows, the relationship of a mother and daughter is portrayed against a backdrop of limitless sky, adventurous seas, and sweet domesticity. The mother and daughter's warmth and love are palpable in this quiet, comforting read-along.

Ling and Ting: Not Exactly the Same*

GRACE LIN

Humor and lightness follow the twins Ling and Ting as they show the reader how alike and different they are to one another. Simple, direct phrases make the story accessible to early readers, and the depiction of the twins in bold colors and outlines draws the eye across the page.

Luli and the Language of Tea

ANDREA WANG, HYEWON YUM

Luli, a five-year-old student joining an English as a Second Language (ESL) class, encounters classmates who speak different languages. In the silence and loneliness of the classroom, Luli devises a plan to make friends over a common bond: tea. Sparse words with impactful illustrations are featured throughout this book about sharing comfort and commonalities.

My Day with Gong Gong

SENAH YEE, ELAINE CHEN

Young May reluctantly spends a day with her Gong Gong, who only speaks Cantonese. Their day is punctuated with conversations May does not understand and glimpses of favorite foods as they run errands in Chinatown. Gong Gong's warmth and care shine through the equally warm and charming illustrations as he surprises May with her favorite dumplings in this wonderful depiction of intergenerational connection.

Paper Son: The Inspiring Story of Tyrus Wong, Immigrant and Artist*

JULIE LEUNG, CHRIS SASAKI

Wong Geng Yeo traveled over a vast ocean from China to America as a paper son. He became Tyrus Wong, an artist

who changed the animation world through his background art in *Bambi*. Though he did not get proper credit for this hard work, his story continues to inspire many artists today.

Ten Blocks to the Big Wok: A Chinatown Counting Book

YING-HWA HU

Mia and her Uncle Eddie have adventures throughout Chinatown as they travel to the Big Wok restaurant for dim sum. Accompanying the lively and colorful illustrations is text in Mandarin and English as Mia, her uncle, and a neighborhood cat journey past common Chinatown sights in this counting book.



Ten Little Dumplings

LARISSA FAN, CINDY WUME

At first glance, readers encounter an auspicious pairing of boys and dumplings, celebrated and revered. But in the shadows, a little girl is always there, learning from the world. Quirky and distinct ink and pencil art speaks volumes about breaking the cycle for future daughters.

The Ugly Vegetables*

GRACE LIN

A young girl wishes her family's garden is full of vibrant flowers like everyone else's. Instead, it's full of bumpy and prickly vegetables. However, when harvest season comes along, the vegetables bring the whole neighborhood together in the form of soup. Vibrant patterns and people fill the pages as themes of community and being proud of your uniqueness shine.

Watercress

ANDREA WANG, JASON CHIN

A young girl is embarrassed when her family stops in the middle of the road to forage wild watercress from a ditch. In Chinese painting-inspired techniques, this heartfelt story bridges the gap between generations and shows that new memories are possible.

MIDDLE GRADE BOOKS**The Dreamweavers**

G.Z. SCHMIDT

Mei and Yun's grandfather is known for his mooncake creations, but when a prince visits and tastes them, grandfather is arrested for how terrible they are! The two twelve-year-old twins must travel through the City of Ashes to the emperor's palace to save their grandfather in this fantasy-folklore adventure.

A Duet for Home

KARINA YAN GLASER

After her dad died, June and her mother must move into Huey House, where she is not allowed to bring a viola gifted by her dad. At the shelter, June meets Tyrell, who knows the best that Huey House offers. When they discover a new policy that

endangers the families there, they must fight to be seen and heard.

**Front Desk
Three Keys
Room to Dream**

KELLY YANG

Mia Tang is the daughter of Chinese immigrants working and living at Calvista Motel. She tries to help her family as they settle into their new home and neighborhood. Mia's kindness, creativity, and courage build community as she confronts bullying and racism affecting her friends, neighbors, and family.

In the Beautiful Country

JANE KUO

Anna is excited to move from Taiwan to America, known as "the beautiful country," in

this novel in verse. But that excitement is challenged by her difficulty in making friends—exacerbated by the "smelly" foods she brings to school—and understanding a new language. With her family's restaurant also struggling, Anna must find her way and discover the true meaning of home.

Living with Viola

ROSENA FUNG

Olivia Tong's anxiety takes the form of a ghostly and mean inner voice named Viola. Viola is there to create self-doubt, feed on Livy's fears, and interfere when Livy begins to make friends. Livy wonders if her parents will understand her requests for help as Viola gains strength and further sabotages Livy's life.

Maizy Chen's Last Chance

LISA YEE

Twelve-year-old Maizy spends the summer at her grandparents' Chinese restaurant in Minnesota. Along with general summer drama, Maizy also hears Opa's story of Lucky's immigration journey little by little. Maizy learns about her family's secrets and finds community where she least expects it.

The Many Meanings of Meilan

ANDREA WANG

Twelve-year-old Taiwanese American Meilan Hua struggles to fit in when her family moves from Boston's Chinatown to a small town in Ohio. When Meilan discovers the meanings of her Chinese name, she inhabits different personas to deal with her struggles until she's finally able to meld the different aspects of herself together.

New from Here

KELLY YANG

Ten-year-old Knox isn't just the new kid; he and his family had to

leave Hong Kong for California in hopes of staying safe from the pandemic. Worst of all, they had to leave their father behind. This fictional story is based on the author's own pandemic experience.

Ribbons*

LAURENCE YEP

Talented eleven-year-old Robin Lee must quit dance lessons in order to save money and bring Robin's grandmother from China. Frustration mounts when her grandmother arrives and butts heads with Robin while favoring her brother. Her grandmother's stay becomes permanent, and Robin has to fight for her dream to dance.

The Secret Battle of Evan Pao

WENDY WAN-LONG SHANG

Evan Pao and his family move to Haddington, Virginia, a southern town obsessed with their ties to the Civil War. As a Chinese American, Evan searches for a way to fit into the school's

annual Civil War reenactment, leading him to a surprising discovery.

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*

GRACE LIN

In a vivid world based on Chinese folklore, Minli and her parents are barely surviving in the valley of Fruitless Mountain. One day, Minli sets out on a quest to bring good fortune to her family.

Zachary Ying and the Dragon Emperor

XIRAN JAY ZHAO

Hui Chinese American Zack Ying has a mission. With the help of Qin Shi Huang (China's first emperor, brutal tyrant, and Zack's apparent ancestor) in his gaming headset, Zack has to cram a lifetime's worth of cultural knowledge to save himself and the world in this gripping fantasy that's jam-packed with Chinese history and culture.



YOUNG ADULT BOOKS

American Born Chinese*

GENE LUEN YANG

Jin Wang is bullied and alienated at his school for being the only Chinese American student. When a new Taiwanese student enrolls, Jin grapples with complicated feelings. Three stories intertwine in this iconic coming-of-age graphic novel, leading to an unexpected and action-packed finale.

An Arrow to the Moon

EMILY X.R. PAN

Hunter Yee and Luna Chang don't know what the future holds for them, but they do know they want to escape from their parents' expectations and worries. And they know that, no matter how much their family hates one another, there is an unmistakable spark connecting the two.

The Astonishing Color of After*

EMILY X.R. PAN

Leigh Chen Sanders is a biracial teen coping with her mother's suicide. Leigh is convinced her mother has transformed into a bird and is determined to find her during a visit to her maternal grandparents in Taiwan. In their shared grief, Leigh unearths family secrets and becomes closer to her grandparents in

this magical story of a teenager searching for her heritage.

A Clash of Steel: A Treasure Island Remix

C.B. LEE

In 1826, sheltered and obedient Xiang is destined for a submissive life as the wife of a rich businessman. Defying her mother's expectations, Xiang joins a motley crew in search of buried treasure. Family, romance, devotion, and betrayal are explored in this Treasure Island remix inspired by the real pirate queen Zheng Yi Sao.

Continuum

CHELLA MAN

Chella Man chronicles the journey towards awareness, acceptance, and pride in his own identity as an Asian, Jewish, deaf, transgender, genderfluid young adult, activist, and artist. Man's work is featured throughout this brief but impactful memoir.

The Downstairs Girl*

STACEY LEE

Clever, quick-witted, pun-loving Jo Kuan works as a housemaid by day and secretly writes as the town's newspaper advice columnist by night. Everyone wants to discover the identity of the forward-thinking author of "Dear Miss Sweetie," but what

would happen to her if it were revealed she is Chinese?

Gold Mountain

BETTY G. YEE

When her brother passes away and her father is jailed for treason, Ling Fan must find a way to save her family. Disguised as her twin brother, Ling Fan travels to America to work for the Central Pacific Railroad Company. However, trouble brews beneath the surface, and the money she desperately needs may be the least of her worries.

Iron Widow

XIRAN JAY ZHAO

Wu Zetian has one goal—to get revenge on the male pilot responsible for the death of her sister. Her revenge, however, leads to the discovery of a conspiracy, one that can break apart the misogyny of the Chrysalis program.

Last Night at the Telegraph Club

MALINDA LO

Seventeen-year-old Chinese American Lily Hu embarks on a journey of self-awakening during the 1950s Red Scare in San Francisco's Chinatown. She develops a tender and romantic relationship with white classmate Kathleen as

they explore and find belonging among San Francisco's LGBTQ community.

The Legend of Auntie Po

SHING YIN KHOR

Mei and her father work in an 1885 Nevada logging camp. Mei enjoys cooking for her camp family, developing feelings for Bee, and telling tall tales of Auntie Po. That is, until the company demands that the camp stops hiring Chinese workers in the wake of the Chinese Exclusion Act. This lively graphic novel is told with watercolor washes over black outlines.

Luck of the Titanic

STACEY LEE

Valora "Val" Luck, a biracial teenager, seeks to reunite with her twin brother Jaime and is convinced that a famous circus founder aboard a new British ocean liner—the Titanic—will hire the siblings for their acrobatic skills. She is determined to skirt the Chinese Exclusion Act and secure their success in America as the Titanic nears its end in this adventurous historical fiction.

A Magic Steeped in Poison

JUDY I. LIN

A tea brewed by Ning leads to the death of her mother and the near demise of her sister. Desperate to save her sister, Ning must compete in a



competition to find the greatest shennong-shi—masters of tea-brewing—and win a favor from the princess. The journey, however, is fraught with deceit, and Ning must watch her every step.

Messy Roots: A Graphic Memoir of a Wuhanese American

LAURA GAO

Laura just wants to join the basketball team and fit in. Weaving fond memories as a child in Wuhan, China, with coming-of-age struggles in Texas, this poignant graphic memoir delves into the nuances of identity and reflects on what it takes to truly untangle messy roots.

Picture Us in the Light*

KELLY LOY GILBERT

Danny Cheng is a senior in high school ready to head off to his

dream college in the fall. When long-held family secrets come to light, Danny must make a journey into his past to accept his future.

The Silence that Binds Us

JOANNA HO

Life turns upside down for May when Danny, her brother, commits suicide. The news sends shockwaves through their community, and whispers soon start blaming May's parents for putting "too much pressure" on Danny. May, adamantly intent on protecting her family and taking back the narrative, fights back.

Six Crimson Cranes The Dragon's Promise

ELIZABETH LIM

When a terrible curse befalls her six brothers, Princess Shiori of Kiata must embrace her magical abilities in order to save them in this folklore-inspired fantasy adventure. Along the way, she meets new friends—and new loves—and learns that not all is what it seems.

Superman Smashes the Klan*

GENE LUEN YANG, GURIHIRU

In 1946, Lan-Shin (Roberta) Lee and her family move out of Chinatown to central Metropolis and attempt to fit in with the neighbors. But when the Klan begins harassing the Lees, Roberta teams up with new friends to help Superman take down the Klan in this smart,

action-packed comic book adventure.

A Taste for Love

JENNIFER YEN

High school senior Liza Yang and her mom can agree on one thing: baking. That is, until Liza realizes that the annual junior baking competition sponsored by her family's bakery is actually a front to find Liza a nice Asian American man to date.

These Violent Delights

CHLOE GONG

The Scarlet Gang and the White Flowers have been at war in Shanghai for generations. When bodies start piling up and a mysterious entity lurks in the shadow, two feuding families must come together to find answers.

This Place Is Still Beautiful

XIXI TIAN

Margaret and Annalie find themselves on opposite sides when a racist slur is written on their garage door. As the sisters navigate their bubbling emotions, the widening gulf between them threatens to upheave their family dynamics.





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