

## STRUGGLES OF THE WORLD'S CHILDREN AND YOUTH

### Annotated References

Recommendations:

- Take a literature circle approach to reading several novels on a particular place: Afghanistan, Israeli/Palestinian conflict. (Note that many of these texts have electronic teachers' guides.)
- Follow up with a media awareness current event exploration: Who is represented, and how, in the news? How is this different from/same as novels?

Clinton, Cathryn. *A stone in my Hand*. Candlewick Press, 2002.

An edgy exploration, written from the perspective of an eleven-year-old Palestinian Arabic girl during the Intifada (1987). Malaak's father goes missing as violence and fear of life in Gaza increases. Her brother, bitter about his family and community's crisis, is increasingly attracted to the Islamic Jihad.

D'Adamo, Francesco. *Iqbal*. Simon & Schuster, 2001.

Appropriate for ages 10-14. Mid-level ESL. Many short, simple sentences. Commemorates and is based on the true story of 13-year-old Pakistani child labour activist Iqbal Massif, who was murdered for his attempts to help children escape from their overlords. Told from the perspective of the pre-adolescent Fatima, a female carpet weaver who, like Iqbal, and many other children, has been enslaved to pay off her parents' debts, locked inside, working long hours, not allowed to play or to go to school. Iqbal's honesty about child labourers' situation and defiant acts help the others to resist their situation and, led by Iqbal, to ultimately escape it. The life of child labourers is described vividly but not sensationally.

Ellis, Deborah. *The Breadwinner*. Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2000. (Grades 5 – 9)  
Life for a young girl and her family under the Taliban.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Parvana's Journey*. Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2002. (Gr. 6-10)  
Continues the story begun in *The Breadwinner*. Parvana, who disguised herself as a boy to feed her family in *The Breadwinner*, is now 13. As the sequel opens, Parvana's father has suddenly died and she is on her own for the first time. She can't even trust the kindness of strangers for fear that they will discover the secret of her gender.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Mud City*. Toronto: Groundwood Books. 2003.  
The final novel in Ellis' *Breadwinner* trilogy. The focus is on Parvana's friend Shauzia. "Where Parvana represents the child workers of Kabul and the Afghan IDPs (internally displaced persons) made homeless by civil conflict, Shauzia enables Ellis to tell the story of Afghans living as refugees in Pakistan and surviving as beggars and scavengers in the mean streets of Peshawar. This one child's story takes place against the backdrop of world events—in the days following September 11, 2001, and preceding the launching of 'Operation Enduring Freedom.'"

Hendry, Frances Mary. *Chandra*. Oxford, 1995. (Gr. 7-10 content; higher level ESL)

The non-Indian author is able to create a detailed portrait of certain traditional misogynistic aspects of Indian life and culture in this “problem novel.” Eleven-year-old Chandra is sent away by her family to an arranged marriage with a stranger. Immediately she finds herself a widow. The novel explores the treatment that many such hapless Indian women suffer. Chandra looks to escape her circumscribed and oppressive situation, which requires her ultimately to leave India altogether. It would be valuable to pair this novel with a viewing of Deepa Mehta’s *Water*.

Jiang, Ji-li. *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*. Harper Trophy, 1997  
Just as she reaches adolescence in 1966, Ji-li Jiang and her student peers become caught up in Mao’s devastating Cultural Revolution. She relates the story of her middle-class family’s increasing ostracism as the cultural revolution continues and her struggle to make sense of how she and her family can be seen as “traitors” because of their class background.

Teacher’s Guide:

<http://www.harperchildrens.com/schoolhouse/teachersguides/redscarf.htm>

Nye, Naomi Shihab. *Habibi*. Simon & Schuster, 1997. (Gr. 7-10)

The Arab-American author has taken on the challenge of relating a difficult but gentle tale of Palestinian-Israeli relations. Liyana, who grows up in a secular context in St. Louis, Missouri, returns with her Arab doctor father and family to the West Bank, where she experiences the radical cultural shift of relating to an extended family with very traditional cultural values, living nearby a refugee camp, and going to school in Jerusalem. When she befriends Omer, a Jew, her life becomes even more complicated. This is not a Romeo and Juliet tale, however. Nye provides wonderfully complex representations of all of her characters without evading references to the fraught encounters between Jews and Arabs. *Habibi* means “beloved” or “cherished” and the main characters are cherished by each other, despite what might tear them apart. Faith in reason plays a large role in the author’s attempts to make the novel do its work (e.g., “Any kind of fundamentalism gives [Liyana’s father] the shivers.”). At the end, Nye charts a course that suggests that “finding doors in the walls of misunderstanding is possible.” This novel provides a valuable starting point for exploring Israel’s conflict from an adolescent perspective, albeit from a position of privilege and its consequent power.

Sheth, Kashmira. *Blue Jasmine*. Hyperion, 2004. Gr. 5-8. Middle level ESL.

Twelve-year-old Seema, an urban Indian girl with supportive parents, relates her experiences adjusting to immigrating to Iowa City. The book is gentle in terms of the problems it describes. Seema learns how to practise kindness in order to overcome the mild prejudices she experiences and to address her own. Very different in tone from everything else on this list, but could be quite resonant with young, recently arrived immigrants.

Teacher’s Guide:

<http://www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com/data/books/dgpdf/07868185571350.pdf>

Stratton, Allan. *Chanda’s Secret*. Annick, 2004.

(Gr. 9+. Easy reading level, very mature content)

Told from the perspective of Chanda, who possesses and learns many secrets as her family and community breaks apart due to the AIDS crisis. Though

Stratton is not African, his novel is a very complex exploration of how AIDS is understood in a fictitious sub-Saharan country. Provides a non-sentimental but sympathetic representation of cultural practices. Explores how shame works to perpetuate AIDS.

Teacher's Guide:

Includes background on Africa in all its complexity, AIDS information, and guided questions informed by critical literacy:

<http://www.annickpress.com/forteachers/chandassecrets.html>