

The Humor in Multicultural Literature

Prepared by the EMIERT Children's Services Committee
June 27, 2005 Chicago Annual Conference

This selected bibliography represents a sample of humorous or light hearted picture books and fiction for children. Books selected for this list include multicultural and multi-racial literature. Stories with animals as main characters and folklore are not included.

Allie, Debora. *The Meanest Girl*. Roaring Brook, 2005.

Starting a new school year, Alyssa has a lot on her mind in this humorous story of love and friendship in sixth grade.

Alvarez, Julia. *How Tia Lola Came to (Visit) Stay*. Knopf, 2001.

"Ten-year-old Miguel is at first embarrassed by his colorful aunt when she comes to Vermont from the Dominican Republic."

Banerjee, Anjali. *Maya Running*. Wendy Lamb Books, 2005.

"Maya, a Canadian of East Indian descent, struggles with her ethnic identity, infatuation with a classmate, and the presence of her beautiful Bengali cousin, Pinky."

Bruchac, Joseph. *Eagle Song*. Dial, 1997.

"After moving from a Mohawk reservation to Brooklyn, New York, eight-year-old Danny Bigtree encounters stereotypes about his Native American heritage."

Cameron, Ann. *Gloria's Way*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000.

Julian and Huey's friend Gloria gets the attention in these six spirited stories.

Cameron, Ann. *Julian, Secret Agent*. Random House, 1988.

"When Julian, his little brother Huey and their friend Gloria decide to be crime busters, they find themselves in one adventure after another."

Carlson, Lori. *Moccasin Thunder: American Indian Stories for Today*. Harper, 2005.

Ten short stories about contemporary Native American teens by members of tribes of the United States and Canada..

Castellucci, Cecil. *Boy Proof*. Candlewick, 2005.

"Feeling alienated from everyone around her, Los Angeles high school senior Victoria Denton hides behind the identity of a favorite movie character until a new boy arrives at school and helps her realize that there is more to life than just the movies."

Codell, Esmé Raji. *Sahara Special*. Hyperion, 2003.

"Struggling with school and her feelings since her father left, Sahara gets a fresh start with a new and unique teacher who supports her writing talents and the individuality of each of her classmates."

Cohen, Miriam. *Down in the Subway*. Star Bright Books, 2003, 2001.

On a hot day on the subway, Oscar spies the "Island Lady," who proceeds to pull an island breeze, Caribbean foods, and even a steel drum band out of her bag to share with her fellow travelers.

Crutcher, Chris. *Whale Talk*. HarperCollins, 2001.

"Intellectually and athletically gifted, T.J., a multiracial, adopted teenager, shuns organized sports and the gung-ho athletes at his high school, until he agrees to form a swimming team and recruits some of the school's less popular students."

Curtis, Christopher Paul. *The Watson's Go To Birmingham—1963*. Delacorte, 1995.

“The ordinary interactions and everyday routines of the Watson’s, an African- American family living in Flint, Michigan, are drastically changed after they go to visit Grandma in Alabama in the summer of 1963.”

Dhami, Narinder. *Bindi Babes*. Delacorte, 2003.

“Three Indian-British sisters team up to marry off their traditional, nosy aunt and get her out of the house.”

Fleming, Candice. *Lowji Discovers America*. Atheneum, 2005.

“A nine-year-old East Indian boy tries to adjust to his new life in suburban America.”

Garfinkle, D.L. *Storky: How I Lost My Nickname and Won the Girl*. Putnam, 2005.

“Fourteen-year-old high school student Michael "Storky" Pomerantz's journal describes freshman year, from dealing with his mother's dating his dentist to attempting to win the heart of the girl he loves.”

Gordon, Ruth. *Feathers*. Maxwell Macmillan International, 1993.

When the town bath house burns down, the foolish citizens of Chelm worry about the safety of the money they must collect to build a new one.

Hartinger, Brent. *Geography Club*. Harper, 2003.

“A group of gay and lesbian teenagers finds mutual support when they form the ‘Geography Club’ at their high school.”

Herman, Gail. *Just Like Mike*. Delacorte Press, 2000.

Michael adjusts to a new school, a new town and a new name when his mother marries Mr. Jordan in this funny, lighthearted story.

Herron, Carolivia. *Nappy Hair*. Knopf, 1997.

“Various people at a backyard picnic offer their comments on a young girl's tightly curled, ‘nappy’ hair.”

Hoffman, Mary. *Starring Grace*. Phyllis Fogelman Books, 2000.

“Grace and her friends have all sorts of adventures during their summer vacation--going to the circus, taking an imaginary safari, pretending to be astronauts, calling the paramedics when her grandmother has an accident, and more.”

Jeyaveeran, Ruth. *The Road to Mumbai*. Houghton Mifflin, 2004.

“Shoba and her pet monkey, Fuzzy Patel, set out overnight by flying bed to attend Fuzzy's cousin's wonderful wedding in Mumbai, India.”

Khan, Rukshana. *Silly Chicken*. Hoopoe Books, 2000.

“A Sufi teaching tale of a chicken that has learned to speak as people do and spreads an alarming warning, which causes the townspeople to panic without first considering the messenger.”

Korman, Gordon. *Son of the Mob*. Hyperion, 2002.

Seventeen-year-old Vince's life is constantly complicated by the fact that he is the son of a powerful Mafia boss, a relationship that threatens to destroy his romance with the daughter of an FBI agent.

Krishnaswami, Uma. *The Happiest Tree*. Illustrated by Ruth Jeyaveeran, Lee & Low, August 2005.

“Embarrassed by her clumsiness, eight-year-old Meena, an Asian Indian American girl, is reluctant to appear in the school play until she gains self-confidence by practicing yoga.”

Lee, Marie G. *F is for Fabuloso*. Avon, 1999.

“Seventh grader Jin-Ha finds her adjustment to life in America complicated by her mother's difficulty in learning to speak English.”

Lester, Julius. *Sam and the Tigers*. Dial, 1996.

“Follows the adventures of a little boy named Sam when he matches wits with several tigers that want to eat him.”

Lester, Julius. *What a Truly Cool World*. Scholastic, 1999.

“Discovering that making a world takes a lot of work, God calls on his secretary Bruce and the angel Shaniqua to help him create bushes, grass, flowers, and butterflies.”

Look, Lenore. *Ruby Lu, Brave and True*. Atheneum, 2004.

“Almost-eight-year-old” Ruby Lu spends time with her baby brother, goes to Chinese school, performs magic tricks and learns to drive, and has adventures with both old and new friends.

Namioka, Lensey. *Yang the Youngest and His Terrible Ear*. Joy Street, 1992.

Recently arrived in Seattle from China, musically untalented Yingtao is faced with giving a violin performance to attract new students for his father when he would rather be working on friendships and playing baseball.

Osa, Nancy. *Cuba 15*. Delacorte, 2003.

Violet Paz, a Chicago high school student, reluctantly prepares for her upcoming “quince,” a Spanish nickname for the celebration of an Hispanic girl's fifteenth birthday.

Perkins, Mitali. *The Not-So Star-Spangled Life of Sunita Sen*. Little Brown, 2005.

“When her grandparents come for a visit from India to California, thirteen-year-old Sunita finds herself resenting her Indian heritage and embarrassed by the differences she feels between herself and her friend.”

Rattigan, Jama Kim. *Truman's Aunt Farm*. Houghton, 1994

Truman sends away for ants, but gets aunts of every size, shape and background instead.

Raschka, Chris. *Yo? Yes!* Orchard, 1993.

“Two lonely characters, one black and one white, meet on the street and become friends.”

Sis, Peter. *A Small Tall Tale from the Far Far North*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1993.

This ironic tale of Jan Welzl, tells of Czech folk hero near demise in the frozen arctic and his rescue by the native peoples.

Smith, Cynthia Leitich. *Indian Shoes*. Harper, 2002.

“Together with Grampa, Ray Halfmoon, a Seminole-Cherokee boy, finds creative and amusing solutions to life's challenges.”

Smith, Cynthia Leitich. *Rain is Not My Indian Name*. HarperCollins, 2001

“Tired of staying in seclusion since the death of her best friend, a fourteen-year-old Native American girl takes on a photographic assignment with her local newspaper to cover events at the Native American summer youth camp.”

Smith, Greg Leitich. *Ninjas, Piranhas and Galileo*. Little Brown, 2003.

“Honorita, Shohei, and Elias, who are “united together against That Which Is the Peshtigo School,” face conflict over their budding romantic interest and a science project gone awry.”

Smith, Greg Leitich. *Tofu and T. rex*. Little Brown, 2005.

“Hans-Peter, who enjoys working in his family's Chicago delicatessen, applies for admission to the prestigious Peshtigo School that his cousin Freddie, a vegan and outspoken animal rights activist, attends.”

Soto, Gary. *Local News*. Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1993.

“A collection of thirteen short stories about the everyday lives of Mexican American young people in California's Central Valley.”

Soto, Gary. *The Skirt*. Dell, 1994.

“When Miata leaves on the school bus the skirt that she is to wear in a dance performance, she needs all her wits to get it back without her parents' finding out that she has lost something yet again.”

Soto, Gary. *Snapshots from the Wedding*. G.P. Putnam's, 1997.

May the flower girl is biting back a smile at the behind the scene events at Isabel's wedding.

Soto, Gary. *Too Many Tamales*. Penguin Putnam, 1996.

“Maria tries on her mother's wedding ring while helping make tamales for a Christmas family get-together. Panic ensues when hours later, she realizes the ring is missing.”

Spinelli, Jerry. *Maniac Magee*. Scholastic, 1990.

“After his parents die, Jeffrey Lionel Magee's life becomes legendary, as he accomplishes athletic and other feats which awe his contemporaries.”

Taback, Simms. *Joseph Had a Little Overcoat*. Viking, 1999.

A very old overcoat is recycled numerous times into a variety of garments.

Tate, Eleanora E. *Don't Split the Pole: Tales of Down-Home Folk Wisdom*. Delacorte, 1997.

This collection of stories reveals the hilarious and illuminating truth behind seven popular sayings.

Taylor, Sydney. *All of a Kind Family*.

The popular series relates the adventures of five sisters growing up in a Jewish family in New York in the early twentieth century.

Walter, Mildred Pitts. *Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World*. Lothrop, 1986

Suffering in a family full of females, ten-year-old Justin feels that cleaning and keeping house are women's work until he spends time on his beloved grandfather's ranch.

Wong, Janet S. *A Suitcase full of Seaweed and Other Poems*. McElderry, 1996.

“A collection of poems that reflect the experiences of Asian Americans, particularly their family relationships.”

Yee, Lisa. *Millicent Min: Girl Genius*. Scholastic, 2003

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.

Yep, Laurence. *Later Gator*. Hyperion, 1995 or *The Imp that Ate My Homework*. HarperCollins, 1998.

When Jim wakes up to find a green, four-armed imp eating his essay about grandpop, he knows its going to be an unusual day.