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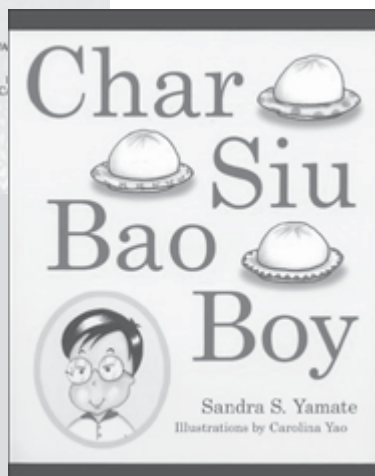
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Books that teach about the Asian and Pacific Island peoples of Hawaii

As an elementary and high school student, I remember all too well wondering why I didn't come from "normal" families like the characters in the books I read. I wondered about such things as: Why didn't my mother dress and sound like the mothers in books? Why did my father have to work nights and go overseas? Why didn't my family celebrate the holidays like the families I read about?

What is sad about my thinking at that time, is that even though I was born and raised in Hawaii, an interracial, multicultural environment, and the children in the islands basically looked like me, dressed like me, talked like me, ate the same kinds of food as me, and could even code switch and speak haole English (standard English) and pidgin English (the local dialect), I felt embarrassed by my home situation and wished so much that I was a white child from a middle class family like the characters I met in the books I read. While I loved reading the



Hawaiian and Asian folktales I found in the public library, it wasn't enough. I still longed to read books (other than folk literature) that reflected my current life and situation, as well as help me understand the history of my peoples. I needed books that have characters and situations with which I could identify and feel emotionally satisfied.

But, before discussing some of the wonderful Asian and Pacific Island literature reflective of the peoples of Hawaii that are available, it is important to understand who Asians and Pacific Islanders are, for they encompass a huge variety of peoples.

WHO ARE ASIANS AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS?

According to the 2000 United States Census, the Asian and Pacific Islander count was 10.9 million people or 4 percent of the total population in March, 1999. The United States Census Bureau defines the "Asian" population in the United States as those having roots with any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent including Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Island, Thailand, and Vietnam. "Pacific Islander" refers to those whose heritage begins with any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.

Not a homogeneous group, the twenty-nine distinct Asian and Pacific Islander sub-groups are diverse in terms of national affiliation, histories, culture, heritages, and religious beliefs, and speak over a hundred different languages. For example, some of the Asian-American groups, such as the Chinese and Japanese have been in the United States for five generations, while others such as the Hmong, Vietnamese, Laotians, and Cambodians are comparatively recent immigrants to the United States.

Most Pacific islanders, on the other hand, have been United States citizens ever since their homelands were annexed as territories over forty years ago or, as in the case of the Hawaiian Islands—the 50th State in the Union.

THE CURRENT STATUS

Although more Asian and Pacific Island literature is being published, large gaps continue. Thus, there still is a need for books that accurately portray Asian and Pacific Islanders. One positive trend over the past ten years, however, is that more stories are being written and illustrated by authors

and illustrators of the culture than before. Also small presses such as Island Heritage Native Books, Mutual Publishing, Island Paradise Publishing, Press Pacifica, Bess Press, Palila Books, and Hawaiian Island Concepts publish books about Asian and Pacific Islanders and their culture. Another positive trend is that more publishers on the continental United States are publishing books about Asian and Pacific Island peoples and their culture by renowned authors and newer ones.

For this article, I have chosen to limit my discussion to more current informational and realistic books representative of the Asian and Pacific Island peoples of Hawaii, and could actually have occurred there. Consequently, there is neither folk literature nor a good representation of all the various Asian and Pacific Island peoples in this review.

Those interested in learning more about some of the notable Asian and Pacific Island Literature published in 1999, 2000, 2001 may also want to read the chapter on Asian and Pacific Island literature by Yvonne Siu-Runyan and Shelby Wolf in the 2002 edition of **Adventuring with Books** edited by Janice Kristo and Amy McClure, published by the National Council of Teachers of English.

THE BOOKS

From the following books, many facts and concepts about Hawaii and its peoples are illuminated. Dress, foods, plants, celebrations, geography and setting of Hawaii are shown in the photographs and illustrations. What the people value—family and love, fun and laughter, food and celebrations, animals and nature, diversity and multiculturalism—are also shown in the stories. For example, from Guback's **Luka's Quilt**, we learn that in the traditional Hawaiian quilts only two colors can be used and one of them should be white. And from **Baby Honu Saves the Day** by Tammy Yee, we learn about some of the creatures that live in the ocean off Hawaii. And then from **Surf's Up for Kimo** by Kerry Germaine, we learn about the plants typical in Hawaii. And in many of the books, language is important and sets the mood and tone for the story. So, as you and your students read the books, do notice and discuss the various languages used in the stories as well as all that you learn about Hawaii's peoples and their cultures.

Please note that while ages are given for each book discussed, all of the books would be of interest to older students who are learning about Hawaii and its peoples, even picture books meant for younger readers.

FINDING ONE'S POWER & COMING OF AGE

Yee, Tammy. (2001). **Baby Honu Saves the Day**. Illustrated by author. Island Heritage. 36pp. ISBN 0-89610-327-7. Ages 5-8.

Baby Honu, a tiny turtle, is very shy and very careful. How he wishes he were big and strong as Kohola, the whale, then he would make a real difference. One day when Baby Honu is nibbling on some sea grass, he hears a distressful cry from Mama Nai'a calling to her keiki (baby) dolphin, who is washed up on the beach. Baby Honu tries to push Keiki Nai'a into the ocean, but try as he may, he cannot move Keiki Nai'a. So off he swims back into the sea to get some help. Baby Honu asks Kohola, the humpback whale; Mano, the great white shark; Hinimanu, the sting ray; Kokala, the porcupinefish; Puhi, the eel for help. But none could help him. What was Baby Honu to do? Then from the coral reefs, Baby Honu hears, "Don't give up. We can all make a difference." Baby Honu cannot believe his eyes when he peers down and sees a teeny creature on the reef who encourages, "I am tiny, but I am important. My friends and I have built this magnificent reef for all the creatures of the sea to enjoy." Baby Honu is amazed, and wonders, "Could this tiny animal have built this great reef? Could a little turtle really make a difference?" He thinks and thinks and finally comes up with a solution involving five of the sea creatures who said they could not help. In the end, Keiki Nai'a is back at sea with his mother, and Baby Honu never doubts himself again.

Children love this story. The vibrant, lively illustrations dance across the page giving one the feeling of playing in the ocean. The Hawaiian words used throughout the text works well and their English meanings are explained in the glossary and definitely gives authenticity and cultural relevance to the story. After reading this story, children naturally engage in discussions about their accomplishments and how they worked through their difficulties.

Germain, Kerry. **Surf's Up for Kimo**. Illustrated by Keoni Montes. Island Paradise Publishing, 2000. ISBN 0-9705889-0-9. Ages 5-8.

Beautifully illustrated by Hawaiian artist Keoni Montes, this easy going story tells of how five-year-

old Kimo learns how to surf on the North shore of Oahu. First he has to become a strong swimmer and learn how the waves break on the shore. After days of swimming and watching waves break, Kimo's mother tells him of the time she was a little girl and wanted to learn how to surf, too. Kimo's mother explains that one day, when a wave came to her, she knew it was hers and said, "I can catch this wave, I can catch this wave, and ride it all the way." That night Kimo dreams about gliding across the waves as he had dreamed many times. The next morning Kimo awakes and jumps out of bed, throws on his swimming trunks, and runs to the beach. When he arrives at the beach, Kimo's brothers had him an old surfboard. Kimo paddles hard, but the waves are rough and his arms ache. Finally, when he reaches the spot where the waves are breaking, though he tries, he keeps missing the waves. Then Kimo hears another surfer say, "Hey, kid, that one's got your name on it." Then he remembers his mother's words and before he knew it he was riding the wave just like his brothers.

This book is a feast for one's eyes. Not only are the colors vibrant and bold, but the illustrations provide information about Hawaii's native plants and animals. At the end of the book, a glossary of terms describing the various plants that adorn the bottom of each page adds a nice touch to this lovely story.

Salisbury, Graham. (2001). **Lord of the Deep**. Delacorte. ISBN 0-385-72918-9. 182 pp. Ages 10-14.

Mikey is a thirteen-year-old deckhand who works with his step dad, Bill, on his charter boat, the Crystal-C, off the Kona coast on the big island of Hawaii. When Bill takes Mikey with him on a charter, Mikey finds himself in a difficult situation. Mikey wonders how Bill could demean himself for the charter, and must deal with his conflicting feelings towards himself and Bill. Should he approach Bill and if he does, what should he say? Finally, when Mikey has the courage to approach Bill, his response is not what Mikey expects. In a fit of emotion, Mikey jumps off the Crystal-C. Swimming back to shore, he feels restless and empty. As he thinks about other charters, Mikey realizes that not all of them have been like this one, not even once. With this realization, Mikey is flooded with understanding and calls out to Bill, "I'll be there to clean up when you get in, okay?"

NUMBER CONCEPTS AND MONEY

Kaopuiki, Stacey. (1991). **Bring Me What I Ask: A Hawaiian Story About Numbers.** Illustrated by author. Hawaiian Island Concepts. Unpaged. ISBN 1-878498-03-7. Ages 3-6.

Children love learning to speak in another language! From this book, children will learn how to count from one to ten in Hawaiian. In **Bring Me What I Ask**, Kapuiki counts items typical in the culture of the people who live in Hawaii, such as black azuke beans, or the lauhala mats the island people bring to the beach to lay on while bathing in the sun.

When I read this book to young children, they were fascinated with the Hawaiian number words and the items counted. We spent time discussing what each item is and learning the Hawaiian words. Following this discussion, we then counted in Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, German, French, and Dutch. We adults were, of course, limited by the languages we know. Teachers may want to develop a chart about how to count the different languages, and then extend this activity by learning how to say hello, goodbye, thank-you, and so on in languages other than English.

Endicott, Jodi. (1999). **I Had A Dollar in Hawai'i.** Illustrated by Hans Loffel. Palila Books. Unpaged. ISBN 0-9674183-0-5. Ages 6-9.

If you are interested in teaching children about the value of money as well as the culture of Hawaii, this book is a charm. **I Had A Dollar in Hawai'i** takes its readers on a journey to the various islands that make up our 50th state and shows some of the typical things on which the people of the islands spend money, such as shaved-ice (snow cones), preserved sweet and sour plums (also called see mui or cracked seeds), manapua (Chinese bun with sweet meat in the middle, also called char siu bao), pineapples, mangoes, bananas. On each page, the photos and captions of various island scenes and landscapes provide accurate images of Hawaii and give the readers a “local” understanding, instead of a “tourist” one, of the peoples. This book, a Pele Award of Excellence winner, ends with information about the dollar bill. I highly recommend this informational book for it is one that children will read over and over again.

APPRECIATING ONE'S CULTURE & CELEBRATIONS

When I read the following books, so much of my own childhood memories came back to me. I remembered Waikiki when it was not crowded with hotels and tourists and Diamond Head loomed in the background majestically reaching to the sky. I remembered the Japanese Bon dances that my brothers would attend to meet girls. I remembered the smell of a freshly baked char siu bao and the delicious first bite into this wonderful Chinese bun. I remembered the Chinese New Year's celebrations—the flurry of activities that filled this holiday, the many times I saw the dragon dance sitting on the shoulders of one of my uncles in Chinatown. And I remembered all the luaus and Chinese nine-course dinner parties I attended to celebrate a child's one-year old birthday.

These three books typify the blending of races and cultures in Hawaii. We certainly need more books like these for Hawaii is much more than hula girls and surfing.

Kapono, Henry. (2000). **A Beautiful Hawaiian Day.** Illustrated by Susan Szabo. Mutual Publishing. Unpaged. ISBN 1-56647-346-2. Ages 5-10.

This lavishly illustrated story with two-page spreads, tells of Kaleo who finds a magical sea shell as she walks along the shoreline. When she puts the seashell to her ear, she closes her eyes and hears a most beautiful sound. Suddenly Kaleo is swept back into a time and meets the young King Kamehameha. The young King takes Kaleo to his favorite spot at the top of a steep cliff. As Kaleo looks at the magnificent beauty that surrounds her, she tells the young King of her home—the tall buildings, pollution, homeless population, and crime. Young King Kamehameha takes Kaleo to a sacred place where two waterfall cascade into a pond. He tells her a legend of the waterfall and that it represents eternal love. When the young King returns Kaleo to her time, she realizes the importance of respecting and honoring the ocean, the land, the sky, and the peoples of Hawaii.

McCoy, Karen Kawamoto. (2000). **Bon Odori Dancer.** Illustrated by Carolina Yao. Polychrome. Unpaged. ISBN 1-879965-16-X. Ages 7-10.

Keiko has high hopes for performing the traditional dance at the Obon festival, but she can't get her feet to move correctly. With the help of an understanding teacher and good friends the performance goes well, despite one small mishap with the kachi-kachi sticks. The importance of honoring our ancestors, the beauty of the Obon celebration, and the value of friendship are all depicted in this whimsical book with an important message.

The illustrations are lighthearted and convey the beauty of the festival and the dancers' colorful kimonos. This book is an excellent read aloud for young children interested in the celebrations and traditional clothing of Asian cultures as well as how friends can help each other. After hearing this story, some students commented on the beautiful costumes and many expressed that they would love to see a real Obon celebration.

Yamate, Sandra S. (2000). **Char Siu Bao Boy**. Illustrated by Carolina Yao. Polychrome. ISBN 1-879965-19-4. All ages.

Charlie loves char siu bao (Chinese barbecued pork buns). He brings it to school for lunch every day, but the other children tease him. They wonder how he can eat it and think it looks terrible. Charlie tries eating what the other kids eat, but misses eating char siu bao. Then Charlie has an idea. He asks his grandmother to make char siu baos to share with his friends. The boys and girls sniff and poke at their baos. Then Mike, Charlie's best friend, tentatively takes a bite, and announces, "Hey, this is good!" Before long everyone is eating char siu baos. Now Charlie brings extra char siu baos to share with his friends.

This tender story portrays tension between conformity and individuality as well as pride in culture. This book stimulates children to talk about the kinds of foods unique to their cultures. At the end, there is a recipe for making char siu bao.

Wong, Janet S. (2000). **This Next New Year**. Illustrated by Yangsook Choi. Farrar, Straus and Giroux. ISBN 0-374-35503-7. Ages 5-8.

In lyrical, lilting verse, Wong tells about Chinese New Year preparations in his Chinese-Korean house. The house is swept clean of last year's dust, food is prepared for the celebration, and clothes are washed and pressed for wearing. The double-page, animated, energetic illustrations by Choi cap-

ture the spirit of this important celebration using vibrant and bold colors. The author note at the end of the book describes Chinese New Year preparations and symbols in the Wong family.

Since Chinese New Year is a holiday celebrated by almost all Chinese-Americans, this story is perfect to read to young children. They will learn that people make new beginnings with the start of the Lunar New Year, just like the regular New Year typically celebrated in America on January 1st. After reading this book, children can discuss the similarities and differences between these two celebrations.

One confusion children might face relates to the fact that this story is about a Chinese-Korean American family. Teachers would be wise to point out to the students that the oriental text/words shown in the illustrations are Korean, not Chinese, and that though both Korean and Chinese written languages may look alike, they are in fact different.

Look, Lenore. (2001). **Henry's First-Moon Birthday**. Illustrated by Yumi Heo. Antheneum ISBN 0-689-82294-4. Ages 5-9.

Jenny's baby brother is having his first moon or one-month birthday, a traditional Chinese celebration to welcome the newborn. Together, Jenny and her Gnin Gnin, parental grandmother, handle all the preparations—dyeing eggs with the lucky color red, making pigs' feet and ginger soup, cleaning the house. Heo's lively and colorful pencil, oil, and collage illustrations capture the spirit of the text and give the impression that Jenny actually drew the pictures herself.

It might be wise for teachers to point out that the Chinese dialect used throughout the text is Cantonese, not Mandarin. Discussing dialect used is important because there are many dialects of Chinese spoken throughout Asia and all of them are different.

After hearing this story, the children talked and wrote about the celebrations their families have to welcome newborns. Discussions like these open doors of understanding and appreciation for the many ways all cultures celebrate important events.

FAMILIES/BETWEEN GENERATIONS

Guback, Georgia. (1994). **Luka's Quilt**. Illustrated by author. Greenwillow. ISBN 0-688-12154-3 (trade). Ages 5-9.

Tutu (grandmother) lives with Luka and her family. They spend a lot of time together, and they both like that. Luka and Tutu are best friends! But then the quilt came along, and everything changed. One morning, Tutu tells Luka that she had a dream and in this dream she is in a beautiful garden. Tutu says, “It gave me an idea for a quilt. This quilt will be for you, Luka. I made a quilt for your mom. Now it’s your turn.” But the traditional Hawaiian quilt that Tutu makes for Luka is not at all what Luka expects. Luka is disappointed that there aren’t colorful flowers on the quilt. Tutu explains that in a traditional Hawaiian quilt only two colors are used, that this is the island tradition.

Using vibrant colors typical in Hawaii, Guback uses cut-paper collage for the illustrations. The clothing, foods, flowers, and scenes typify Hawaii and brought back so many wonderful memories of my own childhood.

Mower, Nancy Mower. (1988). **My Tutu Kane and Grandpa**. Illustrated by Patricia A. Wozniak. Press Pacifica. ISBN 0-916630-66-8. Unpaged. Ages 3-7.

This heart warming book shows how children of Hawaii navigate two cultures—their mother’s and father’s. The backdrop for this story is a one-year old lu’au celebration. As preparations are being made, the young girl whose name is not given, tells us about the day of celebration. As the young girl takes us through the day’s events and the party itself, readers learn much about a typical Hawaiian lu’au—such as gathering and cleaning the opihi (limpets), opae (shrimp), and limo-koku (red seaweed), preparing the ulu (breadfruit), ‘uala (sweet potatoes), and pua’a (pig) for the imu (underground oven), and cooking lu’au moa (chicken stew). While family and friends eat, dancers from the hula halau (hula school) entertain the guests. After the dancing, everybody sings while Tutu (grandmother) plays her guitar and Tutu Kane (grandfather) plays his ‘ukulele. Everyone is happy and the party goes on and on.

When I found this book, I couldn’t help but remember the lu’aus my family threw for various reasons. With excitement, I used to watch my uncles prepare the pig by putting hot lava rocks into the pig’s belly and then covering it with tea leaves, burlap, and dirt. What fond memories this book brought back to me!

LIVING AND LEARNING HISTORY

Salisbury, Graham. (1994). **Under the Blood-Red Sky**. Delacorte Press. ISBN 0-385-32099-X. 246 pp. Ages 10-14.

Even though my family—parents, uncles, and aunts—experienced first-hand the Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor, most of what I knew about this event, I learned from history books and films. So, when I found this book, I excitedly cracked open the covers and read the book non-stop. Salisbury’s well-researched book, tells the story of how life drastically changes for eighth grader, Tomikazu Nakaji (Tomi), a boy whose life until December 7, 1941 concerned only playing baseball, going to school and doing homework, and surviving the local bully. But when Pearl Harbor is attacked by the Japanese, the United States declares war on Japan. In Hawaii like on the mainland, Japanese men were rounded up, arrested, and taken away by FBI agents. So, now Tomi must be the man of the family and help his little sister and mother survive. It’s a terrifying time to be of Japanese ancestry in America. But, with perseverance and courage, the family survives. Filled with determination to continue without father, mother says to Timo, “I came to this islands to make new life, and with your good papa, that’s what I did. I could survive then, and we can survive now” (p. 219). And so, the family waits until papa and grampa finally come home.

The last chapter of this book is an epilogue giving specific data about Hawaiian Japanese who had been interned or relocated and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team of the United States Army comprised mostly of Japanese-Americans.

Besides all the historical information, I thoroughly enjoyed the use of pidgin English (local dialect) throughout the story.

White, Ellen Emerson. **The Royal Diaries: Kaiulani, The People’s Princess**. Scholastic. 2001. ISBN 0-439-12909-5. 238 pp. Ages 10 and up.

In this well-researched book written in diary form, White has captured the events as well as the mood and feelings of Princess Kaiulani. White’s expert use of Hawaiian words throughout this book brings authenticity to the text and teaches something about the Hawaiian language. One passage which stands out is as follows.

As my mother mysteriously declined, it was said that this could only be anaana, being performed by a very powerful kahuna. A kahuna is nothing more than an expert in some particular profession, but the work is often used to describe a witch-doctor (p. 42).

Students will learn a lot about the history of the Hawaii Islands by reading this diary. At the end of the book, the author provides a family tree of the Kalákaua family with pictures as well as information about the Hawaiian language. This book is a must read for anyone studying about the history of the Hawaii Islands. (YSR)

REFERENCE

The U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Reports, Series P20-5529. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000.

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