

## Stranger in a Strange Land – Book List

*Books that are insightful portrayals of cultures seen through the eyes of someone not from those cultures, or books that represent an interaction of contrasting cultures due to immigration, colonization, travel, and other experiences.*



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Compiled by Patti Digh, with input from members of the Intercultural Insights list serve and others...

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**"Small Island"** by Andrea Levy. (set before and around 1948. It is written from different view points, Jamaican and British and is a very enjoyable and insightful read.)

**"The Zulu and the Zeide,"** a short story by Don Jacobson, from a collection of the same name published in 1959. (An amazing piece about a young man arriving in Johannesburg from his village and becoming the servant of an elderly Lithuanian Jewish man in apartheid South Africa. Two strangers lost in the same strange land who can't even communicate with each other. Excellent and heartbreaking on many levels.

**1984** by George Orwell

**A Blessing On The Moon** by Joseph Skibel

**A Martyr's Crossing** by Amy Wilentz (American Jew marries an Israeli Jew and finds herself crossing the border between Israel and Palestine with a desperately ill son while her husband is in prison for political activity.)

**A Street in Marrakech** by Elizabeth Fernea (an anthropologist who lived in the Arabic quarters of Marrakech for a year. Wonderful insights into women in an Arabic country.

**A Year in Provence, Toujours Provence and French Lessons** – all by Peter Mayle

**All God's Children Need Traveling Shoes** by Maya Angelou (About her pilgrimage to Ghana and her experience there as an African-American)

**Peripheral Visions Learning Along the Way** by Mary Catherine Bateson

**The Best American Travel Writing** edited by Pico Iyer

**Almost French: Love and a New Life in Paris** by Sarah Turnbull (a light-hearted and insightful look at the experiences of an Australian reporter who goes to Paris to live with a Frenchman she met on holiday.)

**An American Brat** by Bapsi Sidhwa. (An adolescent is sent from Pakistan to the US for an education & confronts US values, etc.)

**Audrey Hepburn's Neck** by Alan Brown (unique perspective into modern Japan and its wartime past, also a shrewd study of cross-cultural obsessions, and of erotic, romantic and familial love.)

**Flatland** by Edwin A. Abbott (published in 1880, imagines a two-dimensional world inhabited by sentient geometric shapes who think their planar world is all there is.)

**Becoming American: Personal Essays By First Generation Immigrant Women** by Meri Nana-Ama Danquah

**Blindness** by Jose Saramago (A grim but incredible story about what happens when a man becomes blind and the blindness becomes contagious.... A different culture, living without sight -- but also fascinating in what people do when they fear they, too, may become blind).

**Brave New World** by Aldous Huxley

**Ciao Pratola, Hello America** by Elsa S. Cavallaro (A family of Italians in the U.S.)

**Cousins** by Patricia Grace. (Three Maori women negotiating in different ways the modern world and their Maori heritage).

**Darkness at Noon** by Arthur Koestler

**Fear and Trembling** by Amelie Nothomb (European Woman in Japan)

**Giphantie** by de la Roche (1720)

**Global Soul** by Pico Iyer

**I'm a Stranger Here Myself** by Bill Bryson (Describes his return to the U.S. after 20 yrs in the U.K.)

**American Chica** by Marie Arana

**True North** by Jill Ker Conway (Includes her move from Australia to the US to study and then to Canada. She observes particularly gender and academic cultural differences.)

**The Shadow of the Sun**, by Ryszard Kapuscinski (Polish journalist who spent his career in Africa)

**A Poet's Bazaar** by Hans Christian Andersen (His travels in Turkey and up the Danube in 1840.)

**Edge of Daylight** by Eddie Askew. (His memoirs of years he (a Brit) spent with his family working with a leprosy mission in India.)

**The Devil that Danced on the Water** by Aminatta Forna. This book is many things: a daughter's search for the truth, a family's memoirs, a history of Sierra Leone, a political science lesson on Africa, a story.

**Gulliver's Travels** by Dafoe

**Heaven Lake** by John Dalton (Young missionary in Taiwan and China)

**House of Sand & Fog** by Andre Dubus III (Each chapter told from culturally influenced perspectives on the same situation).

**Interpreter of Maladies** by Jhumpa Lahri (Indians living in the U.S.)

**La Davina Comedia** by Dante Alighieri

**Land Below The Wind** by Agnes Newton Keith

(The story of American born Agnes and her British, Parks Department husband. It covers the first years, pre-WW2, of their life in Sabah, Borneo - her two subsequent novels: 'Three Came Home' and 'Return of the White Man' are also wonderfully compelling).

**Lord of the Flies** by William Golding

**Metropolis** by Fritz Lang

**Mona in the Promised Land** by Gish Jen (Chinese in America)

**Nein** by Walter Jens

**Nervous Conditions** by Tsitsi Dangarembga (Rhodesian girls caught between two cultures)

**Not Without My Daughter** by Betty Mahmood, William Hoffer (An American woman marries an Islamic Iranian and her and her daughter fight to get out of Iran (illegally). Not

uplifting—and could reinforce stereotypes about fundamental Islam so would use it carefully.)

**Ourika** by Claire de Duras (Set in France during the French Revolution, published in 1923. Based on a true account of a Senegalese girl rescued from slavery and raised by an aristocratic French family.)

**Passage to India** by E.M. Forster

**Pnin** by Vladimir Nabokov (Russian immigrant to the U.S.)

**Poisonwood Bible** by Barbara Kingsolver (Southern Baptist missionary family in the Congo in 1959)

**Polite Lies: On Being a Woman Caught Between Cultures** by Kyoko Mori (Japanese woman in U.S. culture)

**Postville** by Stephen Bloom (a Kosher slaughterhouse run by ultra-religious Jews sets up shop in the middle of Iowa - true story)

**R.U.R.** by Karel Capek (a play - introduced the word "robot" into English and looks to a future in which all workers are automatons. They revolt when they acquire souls (i.e., when they gain the ability to hate) and the resulting catastrophe make for a powerful and deeply moving theatrical experience.)

**Second Class Citizen** by Erica Bauermeister (An autobiographical novel, Second Class Citizen follows its main character, Adah, through her years in Nigeria and England.)

**She's Not There: A Life in Two Genders** by Jennifer Finney Boylan (Biographical story by a professor at Colby College about living life in a man's body, but feeling that s/he is really a woman inside - a different angle of immersion in another culture)

**The Aleph** by Jorge Borges

**The Bend in the River** by V S Naipaul (Indians in Africa)

**The Chosen** by Chaim Potok (Orthodox Jews living in the U.S., where their religious ways clash with the ways of other American Jewish communities, e.g. the Reform and Conservative Jews).

**The Enigma of Arrival** by V. S. Naipaul (a journey across cultural borders, a journey from

one of the more marginal outposts of a former empire to the once-imperial center)

**The Innocents Abroad, Roughing It** by Mark Twain. Also by Mark Twain: "Tom Sawyer Abroad: By Huck Finn", "A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (A Yankee at the Court of King Arthur)", "A Tramp Abroad", and "Following the Equator"

**The Inscrutable Americans** by Anurag Mathur (Indian student in the U.S.)

**The Life of Pi** by Yann Martel (thought provoking prose on a different cross cultural experience that can occur in our own minds)

**The Names** by Don De Lillo (The book that seemed to me the most realistically intercultural – at least with regard to US expatriates. Also a curiously rambling mystery in a mystery and, as the title indicates, a reflection on language, languages and identity. None of this is too explicit but it's all there. The novel also contains a nice and suitably ambiguous mix of business and politics. Places concerned: Greece, Israel and India.)

**The Pickup** by Nadine Gordimer (White African woman/Black African man. She picks him up and their worlds collide...)

**The Stranger** by Alfred Schutz

**Time Machine** by Jules Verne

**Typical American** by Gish Jen (Chinese in America)

**Utopia** by Sir Thomas More



## A list of 80 books that portray cultures in fiction from Marcella Simon

([www.peraltaassociates.com/resources](http://www.peraltaassociates.com/resources))

### USA

#### African American/ Caribbean American

1. Terry Mc Millan, *Mama*
2. Marita Golden, *A Long Distance Life*
3. Nathan McCall, *Makes Me Wanna Holler* (memoirs)
4. Gloria Naylor, *Mama Day*
5. Breena Clarke, *River Cross My Heart* (family in DC)
6. Bebe Moore Campbell, *Brothers and Sisters* (interracial relationships)
7. Toni Cade Bambara, *These Bones Are Not My Child* (Atlanta child murders)
8. Eric Jerome Dickey, *Milk in My Coffee* (interracial romance)
9. Nelson George, *Urban Romance* (Buppies in NYC)
10. Jamaica Kincaid, *Lucy* (West Indian immigrant to US)

#### Latino-American

11. Sandra Cisneros, *House on Mango Street*
12. Cristina Garcia, *Dreaming in Cuban* (Cubans in NY, Miami)
13. Julia Alvarez, *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* (Dominicans in US)
14. Ana Castillo, *So Far From God*
15. Daniel Revelez, *Salsa and Chips*
16. Francisco Jimenez, *The Circuit: Stories of a Migrant Child*
17. Marcos McPeck Villatoro, *The Holy Spirit of My Uncle's Cojones*
18. John Nichols, *The Milagro Beanfield War* (SW US)

#### Asian American

19. Gus Lee, *China Boy*
20. Gish Jen, *Mona in the Promised Land*
21. Maxine Hong Kingston, *Warrior Woman*
22. Amy Tan, *The Hundred Secret Senses*
23. John Okada, *No-No Boy* (Japanese WWII era)
24. Cynthia Kadohata, *The Floating World* (Japanese)

25. Chang Rae Lee, *Native Speaker*

#### Native American

26. Emily Benedek, *Beyond the 4 Corners of the World* (Navajo)
27. Michael Dorris, *Yellow Raft on Blue Water*
28. Sherman Alexie, *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*
29. Frank Waters, *The Man Who Shot The Deer*
30. Susan Power, *The Grass Dancer*

#### European American

31. Catherine Temma Davidson, *The Priest Fainted* (Greek-American goes to Greece)
32. Frank McCourt, *'Tis* (Irish immigrant in US)
33. Ursula Hegi, *The Vision of Emma Blau* (German immigrants in US)

#### Sub-Saharan Africa

34. Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (Nigerian classic)
35. Buchi Emecheta, *The Moonlight Bride*
36. Ben Okri, *The Famished Road* (Nigeria)
37. Mark Mathabane, *Kaffir Boy or Kaffir Boy in America* (S. African student in US)
38. Maryse Conde, *Segu* (historical drama, pan-Africa)
39. Nazipo Maraire, *Zenzele: A Letter for my Daughter* (Zimbabwean student in UK)

#### Middle East/North Africa

40. Naguib Mafouz, *Midaq Alley* (Egypt)
41. Ahdaf Soueif, *In the Eye of the Sun* (Egyptian student in UK)
42. Yashar Kemal, *Memed, My Hawk* (Turkey)
43. Gina Barkhordar Nahai, *Cry of the Peacock* (Jews in Iran)
44. Hilary Mantel, *Eight Months on Ghazzah Street* (Saudi Arabia)
45. Abdelrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt* (Saudi Arabia)
46. Amos Oz, *Don't Call It Night* (Israel)
47. Batya Goor, *Murder on a Kibbutz* (Israel)

#### Asia

#### Japan

48. Miyuke Miyabe, *All She Was Worth* (Japanese detective novel)
49. Haruki Murakami, *The Windup Bird Chronicle*

50. Banana Yoshimoto, *Kitchen* (younger generation in Japan)
51. Kazuo Ishiguro, *A Pale View of Hills* (Japanese in UK)

#### China

52. Jung Chang, *Wild Swans* (4 generations of Chinese women)
53. Timothy Mo, *Sour Sweet* (Chinese immigrants in UK)
54. Yang Gang, *Daughter*
55. Han Suyin, *Till Morning Comes* (US-China Romance)

#### SE Asia

56. Anthony Burgess, *The Long Day Wanes: Malayan Trilogy* (last days of empire)
57. Pramoedya Ananta Toer, *House of Glass* (Indonesia under Dutch rule)
58. Jessica Hagedorn, *Dogeaters* (Philippines)

#### South Asia

59. Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Pakistani immigrants to UK)
60. Bapsi Sidwa, *An American Brat* (Pakistani student in US)
61. Bharati Mukherjee, *Jasmine* (Indian immigrant to US)
62. Bharti Kirchner, *Sharmila's Book* (Indian-American goes to India)
63. Bhargavi Mandava, *Where the Oceans Meet*

#### Australia/ New Zealand

64. Keri Hulme, *The Bone People* (Maoris in New Zealand)
65. Alan Duff, *Once Were Warriors* (Maoris in New Zealand)
66. Alice Nannup, *When the Pelican Laughed* (Australian natives)
67. Jill Ker Conway, *The Road From Coorain* (memoirs from the outback to the US)

#### Latin America/ Caribbean

68. Ariel Dorfman, *Heading South, Looking North: A Bilingual Journey* (memoirs of a playwright)
69. Harriet Doerr, *Consider This Senora* (US Americans in Mexico)
70. Tony Cohan, *On Mexican Time* (US Americans in Mexico)
71. Francisco Goldman, *The Long Night of White Chickens*

72. Laura Esquivel, *Like Water for Chocolate*
73. Manuel Puig, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*
74. Isabel Allende, *House of the Spirits* (Chile)
75. Jorge Amado, *Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands*
76. Manlio Argueta, *Little Red Riding Hood in the Red Light District*
77. Roberto Quesada, *The Big Banana*
78. Andrea Levy, *Never Far From Nowhere* (West Indians in UK)

#### European

79. Peter Hoeg, *Smilla's Sense of Snow* (Iceland immigrants in Denmark)
80. Eva Hoffman, *Lost in Translation* (memoirs, Polish immigrant to Canada)

