



First Crossing: Stories About Teen Immigrants Edited by Donald R. Gallo

First Crossing, edited by Donald R. Gallo, includes many award-winning authors, all of whom shine a light on what it's like to be a teen immigrant in the United States--the positive aspects as well as the struggles. It is an invaluable resource for the contemporary high school classroom. The stories explore the challenges and possibilities faced by young people as their first cultures collide with the dominant American culture, and it offers a clear sense of empathy and shared humanity. This collection offers realistic situations and characters and should help contemporary adolescents better understand complex cultural dynamics

Covering a wide range of cultural and economical backgrounds, the contemporary teen immigrants in Gallo's newest story collection hail from a mix of countries--Cambodia, Haiti, Kazakhstan, Mexico, South Korea--reflective of current immigration trends. The stories by eleven well-known authors touch on a variety of teen experiences, with enough attitude and heartfelt angst to speak to young adults anywhere. Parents play a major role in many of this compilation's stories, as well as, peer conflict, cultural misconceptions and miscommunications,

Readers will encounter teens that have left homelands behind for reasons not so different from those of earlier generations; others' circumstances are more distinctly modern, such as the Korean-born girl adopted by white parents and the Swedish teen uprooted from his home by his father's globetrotting career. Overtly tolerance-promoting tales are well balanced with irreverent ones: Lensey Namioka reflects on Chinese etiquette and David Lubar takes a comic look at a Transylvanian immigrant who finds unexpected friends among his school's vampire-obsessed Goths. In Pam Muñoz Ryan's "First Crossing," a boy experiences the risks of being smuggled across the Mexican border. Marie G. Lee's "The Rose of Sharon" describes a spoiled girl's animosity toward her adoptive parents and her desire to return to Korea to find her birth family. In Jean Davies Okimoto's "My Favorite Chaperone," an immigrant from Kazakhstan describes her relationship with her conservative parents, who rely on her to translate for them but still limit her freedom. Many of the stories open with a brief description of the country the family is leaving, or the lifestyle they flee; details that set a foundation for the teens' achievements and relationships. There's the chronic irony of children shrugging off anchors from their homeland while laden with guilt to respect the traditions that their parents cling to; they're caught in a conflict of change, assuming responsibility while remaining obediently subordinate. These selections

will provide teachers with a wealth of material to use in multicultural literature units

Among the 10 stories, newly transplanted teens will find the voices represented in this collection far more relevant than those echoing forth from the huddled masses of Ellis Island, and American-born readers will gain insight from the palpable depictions of what it's like to be thrust into "the middle of a game where [you] don't know the players, the rules, or even the object."

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