

Read Along the Lakeshore 2009
A One Book, One Community Program

Readalikes Books and Film List for *Stealing Buddha's Dinner*

Books

Bento box in the heartland: My Japanese girlhood in whitebread America by by Linda Furiya

When Furiya started eating lunches in the elementary school cafeteria, she was profoundly embarrassed by the rice balls her mom packed instead of a sandwich like all the other kids ate. She was already feeling self-conscious about being the only Japanese family in her 1960s Indiana hometown, and her parents' insistence on continuing to eat their native cuisine was frustrating because it intensified the differences between her and her classmates. But the exotic dishes were also a source of delight, and Furiya ends each chapter with a recipe for one of her favorite meals. There is more to the story than food, though, and she describes the anger she feels when shopkeepers make fun of her father's accent, or the amazement when her mother takes her back to Japan, with the same vividness she applies to recreating the sensations of her first taste of wasabi.

Digging to America by Anne Tyler

Two very different couples are brought together while waiting for their adopted Korean baby girls at the airport. Sami and Ziba Yazdan, Iranian Americans, are nervous and accompanied only by Sami's widowed mother, Maryam; Bitsy and Brad Donaldson are middle-class, confident, boisterous Americans with a large, loud family in attendance. When the babies arrive, Bitsy invites the Yazdans to an impromptu "arrival party." On Bitsy's insistence, the party becomes an elaborate annual event that brings the families closer together.

The Eighth Promise: An American Son's Tribute to His Toisanese Mother by William Poy Lee

The eighth promise bound Poy Jen to the fundamental Toisan ethos, "to live her life in complete compassion" for all people—her family, her Chun clan sisterhood and her larger community. In this remarkable memoir, mother and son, in alternating chapters, tell the story of their life in San Francisco's Chinatown from the 1950s to the present. Between American racism and power struggles in the Chinese community, it's a tribute to Toisan endurance that Poy Jen not only held her family together but also brought her children back to China to fortify their clan connection.

Flight to Freedom: The Story of the Vietnamese of West Michigan by Gordon Olson

This chronicles the lives of families forced to flee their homes after the fall of Saigon, in 1975, and ended up in communities in West Michigan. This volume includes historical documents, photographs and oral histories. One side of the book is written in English and one side in Vietnamese.

Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America by Firoozeh Dumas

This lighthearted memoir chronicles the author's move from Iran to America in 1971 at age seven, the antics of her extended family and her eventual marriage to a Frenchman. The best parts will make readers laugh out loud, as when she arrives in Newport Beach, Calif., "a place where one's tan is a legitimate topic of conversation."

Growing Up Asian American: An Anthology by Maria Hong

A diverse collection of essays, excerpts and short stories about growing up in the U.S., all authored by Americans of Asian descent that address such global issues as parent-child relationships, self-realization and identity and the discovery of cultural heritage.

The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan

Fleeing from China to America in the 1940s, four women form the Joy Luck Club and meet weekly to play mah-jong, tell stories, and keep alive their culture and their memories. Now that one of the women has died, her daughter, Jing-Mei "June" Woo, takes her place. From the episodes recounted by the others, June gains insight about her mother and herself in this first novel.

The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri

Ashoke and Ashima Ganguli emigrate from Calcutta, India, to Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the late 1960s. Ashoke is an engineering graduate student and his wife (their marriage has been arranged, according to tradition) finds the transition to American life more difficult than he does. Much of the novel, which traces the Ganguli family for three generations, follows the experiences of their son, Gogol, who struggles with all the issues common to first-generation immigrants.

Secondhand World by Katherine Min

Isadora Myung Hee Sohn, known as Isa, is caught between two cultures. Her Korean-born parents, who have achieved a measure of success in the United States, disagree on what to call her when she is born.

Yellow: Race in America beyond black and white by Frank Wu

Beginning with a recap of his childhood bewilderment with the paltry selection of appealing Asian characters in 1970s American pop culture, Frank H. Wu, associate professor at the Howard University School of Law, describes the alienation experienced by Asian-Americans in the 20th-century.

Immigration in Films

Everything is illuminated (2005)

A young American man journeys to find the woman who saved his grandfather during World War II in a Ukrainian village, that was ultimately razed by the Nazis, with the help of a local who speaks weirdly broken English.

Gangs of New York (2002)

In 1846, waves of Irish immigrants poured into the New York neighborhood of Five Points. "Billy the Butcher" bands his fellow "Native Americans" into a gang to take on the Irish gang "The Dead Rabbits," organized by Priest Vallon. After a bloody clash Vallon is dead and his son ends up in a brutal reform school. In 1862, that boy returns to seek vengeance against the man that killed his father.

The Kite Runner (2007)

In a divided country on the verge of war, two childhood friends, Amir and Hassan, are about to be torn apart forever. It's a glorious afternoon in Kabul and the skies are bursting with the exhilarating joy of a kite-fighting tournament. But in the aftermath of the day's victory, one boy's fearful act of betrayal will mark their lives forever and set in motion an epic quest for redemption. Now, after twenty years of living in America, Amir returns to a perilous Afghanistan under the Taliban's iron-fisted rule to face the secrets that still haunt him and take one last daring chance to set things right.

Namesake (2006)

The son of Indian immigrants born in America wants to fit in with fellow New Yorkers, but his family is unwilling to let go of their traditional ways.

Saving Face (2004)

Wilhelmina is a Chinese-American lesbian and a young surgeon who has kept her sexual orientation secret from her conservative Chinese community in New

York. But when her widowed mother becomes pregnant and is kicked out by her own parents, Wil suddenly has to juggle her mother's secrets with her own.

Spanglish (2004)

When Flor and her daughter, Christina come to the United States, Flor gets a job as a maid at the home of a successful chef John Clasky, his insecure wife Deborah, their two children, and Deborah's mother. Despite Flor's lack of an English, she does the best she can to assist the Clasky family in more than just house cleaning matters. However, when Flor is forced to live with the family over the summer, she has no choice but to bring Christina along. Deborah, much to Flor's disliking, treats Christina much like her own and at the same time she hurts the feelings of her own daughter, Bernice. When John's dreams begin to unravel, he begins to feel like his whole world is coming down around him. Told through Christina's college letter to Princeton University, Christina learns that things come and go in life, but family is the most important thing a person can have.

Sweet Land: A Love Story (2006)

Inge is a feisty German mail-order bride who has come to Minnesota to marry Olaf, a young Norwegian immigrant farmer of few words. But in a post-WWI, anti-German climate, the local minister openly forbids the marriage. Inge and Olaf fall in love despite the town's disapproval. But when the town banker attempts to foreclose on the farm of his friend Frandsen, Olaf takes a stand.

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