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Claire Irene McGuire  
Name of Author (please print)  
28/07/04  
Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

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Department of School of Library, Archival & Information Studies  
The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, BC Canada
Abstract

Canada is a country built on immigration and it continues to grow with the arrival of new immigrants from many lands. Children, who arrive as immigrants, experience many challenges that the citizens of the host country are unaware of or fail to recognize. In the analysis of informational accounts, the challenges faced by immigrant children fall into six major categories: language barriers and communication difficulties, maintaining ethnic culture, culture shock, intergenerational conflict, uprooting and separation issues, and prejudice and racism. These challenges having been determined, fictional accounts of the newcomers’ experiences were analyzed to determine the authenticity of the portrayal of these challenges. It was found that characters experienced the isolation resulting from being unable to communicate in the host country’s language. Loneliness due to uprooting was experienced by all the protagonists and the importance of memories and maintaining cultural traditions concerned most newcomers. Immigrant children in these narratives suffered from bullying and prejudice as well as conflicts within the family because of clashes between heritage culture and the culture of the host country. Canadian books do present these fictional accounts with empathy and realism; although the quantity of titles is small, the quality is certainly high!
This thesis is dedicated to my family, Ken, Jason, Neil, and Alison, who encouraged me through thick and thin and never lost faith in me and my ability to reach my goal. It has been a long, time-consuming undertaking that I could never have accomplished without their love, patience and support. Thanks and much love!
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Introduction

Canada is a country built on immigration (Jamieson 11, Granalsteen and Rawlinson 23). Over three hundred years ago, the first colonists emigrated from France and England to establish the New World. Newcomers continue to increase Canada’s population and will continue to do so in the foreseeable future (Ferguson 41). Regardless of whether they come as immigrants or refugees, they all face the same experience of adapting to a new country, a new culture and unknown people.

Many newcomers arrive as families, nuclear or extended. Some children within these families come as unwilling or chance immigrants because the decision to emigrate has been made by the parents and not by them. Whether emigration is by choice or by chance, the school becomes the setting in which immigrant children spend a great deal of time and it is in this social environment that children learn to adapt to Canada and the Canadian way of life (Ziegler 264).

Within the school setting immigrant children encounter a different language, new customs and strangers. To help them survive these challenges, they often build “invisible walls” around themselves as insulation and protection. These “invisible walls” shield them as they gradually adjust during their period of adaptation to a new world. Casey, a child protagonist in Child of the Owl by Lawrence Yep, refers to these walls when she talks about her Chinese heritage and Chinatown, San Francisco:

I realized that it all depends on how I looked at myself – if there were invisible walls around Chinatown for PawPaw [her grandmother], they were like the walls of a turtle, walls behind which you could remain warm and alive, and for someone like me, those walls didn’t have to be any more
a trap than I let them. They could be something to give me shape and form 
and when I couldn't grow anymore inside them, I could break out of these 
invisible walls. (92)

These challenges facing immigrant children within the school setting have 
fascinated me during my thirty years of teaching. I am intrigued by how these newcomers 
have been approached and handled in the various educational institutions in which I have 
taught, in both Quebec and British Columbia.

In 1966, when I first started teaching in Quebec, immigrant children were placed 
within their own age-appropriate class and were simply immersed in the language and 
expected to “pick it up” (Ziegler 265). It was basically a sink-or-swim proposition. Most 
teachers were not trained to deal with these newcomers. Consequently, recess and 
lunchtime often provided the only opportunity when a concerned teacher could give 
individual “help” to these children in acquiring English language competency. The rest of 
their language acquisition would be what they absorbed incidentally from classroom 
activities and interaction with their fellow students. The end of the 70’s saw the creation 
of the “classe d’acceuil” to help these newcomers, placing immigrant children of 
different ages together in a special class to learn basic language competency. When 
children developed sufficient language proficiency they were placed back in a 
mainstream class with their peers.

During the same time frame, in British Columbia, newcomers were dealt with in a 
similar way using ESL classes. These classes were at different levels of language 
proficiency and helped the immigrant children acquire enough English language 
competencies to enter a class of their peers. As Mary Ashworth pointed out, the English
these segregated students heard was the teacher’s and their own attempts. The latter resulted in a poor quality of spoken English.

These approaches to immigrant children, *classe d’acceuil* and ESL classes, indicate that the major concern has been with basic language mastery. Little attention has been given to the children themselves and few attempts have been made to understand the difficulties experienced during this period of adaptation. Newcomers not only suffer the painful uprooting from their homeland, leaving family and friends as they immigrate to a foreign country, but they face additional difficulties. Isolation, frustration with a new language, strange geography and climate all make this period of adjustment a difficult and traumatic time for immigrant children.

This study will examine the world of newly arrived immigrant children to discover their needs as newcomers in the school setting. Published accounts of first-person interviews with immigrants reveal the “bricks” that go into the construction of invisible walls during this period of adjustment. These accounts demonstrate that the isolation of not knowing the host language and the shock of being among strangers often results in many newcomers’ retreating within themselves.

Children’s literature has produced a wealth of material in both the fictional and informational areas dealing with the difficult and complicated situation of immigrant children. Teachers and fellow students of these newcomers may gain understanding and empathy as they read these books and learn about this difficult period of adjustment. Immigrant children themselves may feel understood and not alone as they read these accounts of newcomers, often experiencing similar adaptation experiences to their own.
Together, teachers, students and immigrant children, with understanding and empathy, can break down some of these “invisible walls”.
Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which the portrayal of newly arrived immigrant children in books written for young people is consistent with the facts presented in informational sources. What are the adjustment and adaptation challenges experienced by newcomers? Do the experiences of these newcomers, as presented through book accounts, offer an authentic representation when compared to informational resources? These informational resources will include such published accounts as memoirs, recorded interviews, conference reports, journal articles, documents, case studies, biographies, and information books.
Thesis Questions

1. What are the experiences of newly arrived immigrant children as evidenced in published accounts such as: memoirs, recorded interviews, conference reports, journal articles, documents, case studies, biographies, and information books?

2. To what extent do fictional accounts, written for children and young people, reflect the reality of these experiences in the newcomers' lives?

3. Which fiction books for young readers give a realistic, empathetic insight into the experiences of newly arrived immigrant children?
Literature Review

Migration is a part of human history! The ability to move from place to place on earth is a human characteristic. “All countries are made of newcomers,” writes Jamieson, coming “to their present homes from somewhere else” (11). Canada is a country that shows the reality of this statement, as it is a nation that has grown in population over the past centuries through the significant numbers of immigrants arriving from many different countries. As each new wave of immigrants becomes part of our growing nation, one must consider the immigrant children within the bigger picture of immigration and their experiences within the narrower confines of the school setting.

History of Canadian Immigration

Anthropologists and historians speculate that the prehistoric ancestors of Canada’s present-day Aboriginal peoples became this country’s first immigrants when they traveled over a land bridge to North America by way of the Bering Strait. This connection between the Asian and American continents has since vanished. Munro, Knowles and Ferguson postulate that by the year 1500, approximately 222,000 Native and Inuit people populated Canada’s ten and half million square kilometers (Ferguson 5).

Around the year 1000, newcomers (Norse/Vikings) landed and settled in what is now Newfoundland. L’Anse aux Meadows contains remains of their houses and tools. However, these Norse settlements disappeared in a few years and it was another 500 years before Europeans returned to Canada.

The next known explorer to arrive on Canada’s east coast was the Italian Giovanni Cabota, sent by England and known as John Cabot. In 1497 he landed
somewhere on Canada's eastern coast and reported an abundance of fish. However, he never returned from his second expedition to the New World and no settlement was established.

The search for a shortcut to Asia motivated many of the explorers of this period. In 1534 Jacques Cartier was sent by France to join in the search for riches and new land. Gaspe was the site of his first landing. On his second expedition Cartier entered the Saint Lawrence River and went as far as present-day Montreal. His third voyage was to establish a colony for France. Roberval was to be the leader but his colony failed and the first attempt to establish a settlement in Canada turned into a disaster.

After this unsuccessful attempt at establishing a settlement in the New World, it was almost 100 years before Samuel de Champlain set out in 1606 and successfully founded the first French colony at Port Royal in Acadia, present day Nova Scotia. It was Champlain who was determined to build a "New France" in Canada. He made 29 trips across the Atlantic and explored the Saint Lawrence River, the Great Lakes and as far as Georgian Bay. The cities of Quebec City and Montreal were established and Marguerite Bourgeoys, a missionary sister, opened the first public school in Canada in 1658.

However, building New France was a slow process. From the founding of Quebec in 1608 to the fall of New France in 1759, only some 10,000 people came to colonize this area of North America. Included among these first immigrants were merchants, professional men, landless nobles (looking for property), and skilled workers such as blacksmiths, coopers, joiners, and carpenters. Soldiers and religious men and women were also included among these newcomers. Many settlers were lured to New France with the promise of free tracts of land if they agreed to clear and settle the land. Since
there were a disproportionate number of men to women in the new colony, unmarried women were recruited for New France. A husband was promised to these "filles du roi" (daughters of the king) at the end of their journey.

The abundance of fish reported off the coast of Newfoundland attracted many fishing vessels from England. Ships loaded with fish returning from these voyages fueled England's interest in The New World. In the early years few fishermen (fewer than one in six) remained all year in Newfoundland. When the fishing season ended most returned to England. However, as the fishing industry grew, more men began to stay year round and settle in the harbours along the coast. By 1720, the largest settlement at St. John's had over 2,700 people.

The settlement pattern of these two colonizing countries was quite different. The French settled in towns and on farms along the St. Lawrence River and the English settled in tiny villages around the coast of Newfoundland. In Nova Scotia, both colonizing countries formed settlements: Halifax – England and Port Royal – France. A peace treaty signed in 1713 gave English supremacy over the whole area of present-day Nova Scotia except for Cape Breton Island. The French governed this area and built their fortress, Louisbourg, the largest fortress in North America.

The fur trade attracted both English and French to The New World. As this enterprise grew and prospered, the exploration and settlement of Canada pushed further west with trading posts and routes moving through the Great Lakes and Hudson Bay to the Pacific Ocean.

France and England seemed to be constantly at war and their existence together in Canada was anything but peaceful. Skirmishes were constantly being fought and both
sides won victories. However, with the fall of Louisbourg in 1758, the tide turned in favor of the British. The Battle of the Plains of Abraham (1759) in Quebec City saw the defeat of the French. By the spring of 1760 all of Canada was claimed by England.

The American colonies south of New France were unhappy with British rule and taxation policies. The Americans wanted the Canadians to join their revolution against the British but were unsuccessful. The American Revolution began in 1775 and on July 4th, 1776, they declared their independence from England.

After the war ended, those people who had remained loyal to England (Loyalists) were not welcomed in the new “United States”. They fled as refugees to Canada: Nova Scotia, Quebec, Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island. With the arrival of English-speaking Loyalists in Quebec, conflict broke out based on language differences. In 1791, to please these new arrivals, England split the colony in two. The Ottawa River divided Upper Canada from Lower Canada.

Settling Upper Canada (present-day Ontario) required hard work and perseverance. The Loyalists were among these first pioneers. They cleared the land and grew crops; slowly villages and towns appeared. For a village to prosper, local farmers had to succeed and its position had to be conducive to trade, ease of transportation and access to power. A harbour on the shores of Lake Ontario opened markets in the United States and Britain for produce and products. York, renamed Toronto in 1834, had all these advantages and prospered. By 1799 York was a bustling town and the governmental center of Upper Canada.

Around 1820 there was a large movement of people in Europe, often referred to as the Great Migration. These people left their homes and moved to North America.
Although most of these immigrants went to the United States, a large number came to Canada. These newcomers came primarily from England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland. Poverty, political unrest, and persecution pushed these individuals toward North America and the hope for a better future for themselves and their families.

Around 1870 immigration expanded to take in people from Iceland, Central and Eastern Europe. By the turn of the century the newcomers were also arriving from southern Europe and Asia. Knowles reports that between 1901 and 1911, the Canadian population increased by 43 percent and of this number 22 percent was foreign-born (96). Almost overnight Canada had taken on the makeup of a nation whose population was comprised of individuals from many different countries.

Immigration slowed down during the Great Depression and the Second World War. However, the Post-War period (1947-1957) saw a boom in immigration once again. This was due in a large part to the changes in Canadian Immigration policy brought about by Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King (1921-1926, 1926-1930, 1935-1948). He felt that Canada’s population, without immigration, was too small to “hold so great a heritage as ours” (Samuels 69). These policy changes gave special consideration to relatives of Canadians and used immigration to bring families together. Refugees, people seeking safety and freedom, were also given special consideration. After World War II Canada took in many refugees – Jewish people, Poles, Czechs, Slovaks, Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Ukrainians and others. By the 1950’s many barriers to immigration were removed. Since this time, immigrants and refugees have come from all parts of the world and Canada’s population continues to grow.
By the 1980's and into the 1990's an increasing number of newcomers came from the Far East and non-European countries. By 1986, Knowles points out that Asian-born immigrants made up the largest group of arrivals, accounting for 40 percent of all immigrants in Canada (207). Many were “tired, poor, wretched” (Stewart 1) but others were skilled, educated and even the well to do of other countries.

At the start of the Twenty-First Century, immigration and population growth in Canada continue to be inter-dependent. Canada is a nation built on immigration and depends on newcomers for its continuing growth.

**Reasons for Immigrating**

There have been many different motivations for immigrating to Canada. The “push” factors or reasons for leaving a homeland were many and varied. Some individuals were uprooted by wars and revolutions (Gumbert 3). They were forced to serve in armies against their will (Kurelek 6). Others were driven by poverty, political persecution, hardships, and cruelty (Horton 9). Crops failed and the land they lived on could no longer feed them. There was too little land to divide among all the children and still support the family (Kurelek 6). Many could not worship God as they wished or were denied rights as members of a minority.

Not only “push” factors but also a variety of “pull” factors drew immigrants to Canada, searching for a land of opportunity, promise, and freedom (Horton 4). Many came with the hope of establishing successful businesses and a chance to earn a better living (Munro 64). Cheap land was advertised and families wanted the opportunity to start a new life as independent landowners. Freedom, religious and political, drew a large
number of newcomers to North America (Gumbert 3). Finally, adventure and the unknown attracted some individuals to Canada. These adventurous individuals hoped to be part of the excitement involved in building a new country.

Individuals and family units immigrated to Canada motivated by one or several of these “push” or “pull” factors, to fulfill personal dreams or remove unbearable difficulties.

**Immigrant Adaptation and Adjustment**

Regardless of how well prepared an immigrant is, he or she will find the initial period of adaptation and adjustment difficult. This adaptation includes adjustment to living in a new country with a new culture (Samuels 17). The newcomer must face a new environment (climate, geography, rural/urban), new type of work, new language, new school system, and new lifestyle (Dubois 241). Daily life is lived in a strange environment far from the support of family and friends (Kraut 50).

For young people this new environment has them living in two sometimes-conflicting worlds, the home and the school. Children at home maintain their culture, customs and values while at school they behave like their peers. These school values and customs often conflict with those practiced at home. Immigrant children sometimes become ashamed of the way their parents talk and dress and resent the rules their parents set (Kurelek 31). The success of the young person’s adaptation often depends on the decreasing influence of the family and the increasing influence of formal education, peer group pressure, and mass communication media (Gumbert 27).
Many immigrant children, as they learn English, experience an added pressure as they are expected to be the translators for their non-English speaking parents. This reversal of roles between the child and adult is a difficult responsibility because the young person is often forced to make the decision for the adult and he/she worries that he/she might make the wrong decision. For example, a teenager from Laos expresses his insecurity and discomfort with this dual role when he says, “They [parents] depend on me because they do not speak good English, so I am going in two directions” (Burgan 66).

The degree of difficulty of adaptation depends to some extent upon how different the cultural origins of the newcomers are from those of the receiving society (Richmond 429). This period is often one of compromising some of the newcomers’ values and customs to the demands of the host country. This adaptation is a struggle to “reconcile the ways of the Old World with life in the New” (Kraut 113).

It is natural for a minority group to look for security and comfort in numbers and fellowship. Ethnic communities have sprung up in most urban settings to help ease the newcomer through the difficult initial period of adaptation and adjustment. Many newly arrived immigrants settle in these ethnic neighborhoods (Lowery 45). They provide an oasis, a place where newcomers can speak and hear their own language, communicate with others, and share a common culture. In this way they can experience a feeling of comfort and safety (Burgan 67). These neighborhoods also provide newly arrived immigrants and their children a supportive, reassuring, comfortable, stable environment until they feel more confident and able to interact with the native-borns and other ethnic groups (Kraut 114).
Transition from the old world to the new world is easier in this ethnic milieu, a bridge between old and new (Richmond 194; Fitzpatrick 127). These ethnic neighborhoods are a continued source of strength and confidence, making it possible to move into a relationship with the receiving society.

For the immigrant, the ethnic community helps the transition from the heritage culture to the culture of the receiving society. However, the newcomer will eventually have to adapt to living and working among people of other nationalities as well as the host culture (Ferguson 5). For the children of these newcomers, this transition and socialization will be accomplished, to a great extent, within the school setting.

While the family is recognized as essential in developing the personality and value systems of its children, the school is of utmost importance because of the amount of time a child spends there, as well as the effect the interaction among the students and teachers may create. School is one place outside the family and ethnic community in which immigrant children have no choice but to come in contact with their North American peers and peers of other nationalities (Lowery 45).

At the turn of the Twentieth Century, the school taught not only the 3R's but was responsible for socializing the child and indirectly, the family (Kraut113; Mallea 270; Caplan 169). There were civic classes that taught and emphasized cleanliness, hard work, perseverance, individualism, and patriotism. Assimilation into the mainstream culture was the goal. The immigrant would be "absorbed" (Barber 282) and the school was largely responsible for this assimilation. The newcomer was expected to adopt the language, cultural patterns, and institutions of English or French Canada. School was the
“social environment in which they were expected to adapt to Canada and Canadian institutions” (Ziegler 265).

Today, the school is still the location where newcomers come in contact with residents of the receiving country and other nationalities. Hopefully, in this daily contact, they learn what it means to be Canadian. This world at school may create changes in culture, language, emotions, and attachments because of the frequent interaction with other students and teachers (Kovacs 1). Schools can help children to think of themselves as possessing a “cultural” identity that is built on their family heritage (Mallea 422). Schools can foster an appreciation of diversity, promote positive attitudes towards all cultures, and teach that the freedom to maintain one’s language, values and customs is an essential part of Canadian cultural plurality. This multiculturalism is a positive and distinctive feature of Canadian life (Barber 283).

Challenges for Immigrant Children

There are many challenges that immigrant children must deal with and of which their teachers need to be aware. Firstly, immigrant children suffer from the “wounds of separation” (Igoa, Inner World viii). The move has uprooted them from their familiar homeland containing their family, friends, support network, and social status (Mansfield 27; Wolfgang 47). They have had to sort through their belongings to decide what to leave behind and they have had to say sad good-byes to many relatives and friends (Kraut 43). They miss the secure feeling of belonging to their hometown, city or village where they had an identity.
In addition to the “uprooting” trauma, immigrant children often experience culture shock on their arrival at their new home. They listen to the strange sounds of a new language and see unfamiliar people and places. They feel isolated and lonely in their inability to communicate in the host language.

Newcomers experience a feeling of vulnerability and fear of ridicule when they enter the school setting and can neither understand nor communicate with teachers or peers. Being alone at school, without the support of family, adds to this sense of helplessness. Sometimes, an unreceptive, cold classroom or unkind behaviour of peers has newcomers feeling frightened, disliked and unwelcome.

Customs are unfamiliar. A handshake, a kiss on the cheek, what do they mean? The uncertainty of acceptable behaviour and social customs has immigrant children feeling awkward, confused, inadequate or embarrassed.

To cope with these issues, many immigrant children withdraw behind invisible walls. This withdrawal helps them survive during this initial period of adaptation to a new receiving society.
Methodology

Introduction

In this study the researcher has set out to examine the experiences of newly arrived immigrant children during their initial period of adaptation to a new society, as reflected in books written for children and young people. Children’s literature examines many difficult themes and issues within its realm and effectively presents these issues and challenges for the young reader’s perusal; the immigrant experience is one such theme. The main thrust of the research will concentrate on picture books and novels. These will be examined so as to determine the quality of the written narrative, the inclusion of cultural markers, themes covered and whether an authentic immigrant experience is portrayed.

The Sample

The sample of books for this thesis consists of two segments; factual representations of the immigrant experience, and fictional narratives dealing with individual experiences. In the first segment, published informational accounts will be examined for evidence of real-life challenges experienced by immigrant children as newcomers in North America. The many issues and challenges of adaptation for newcomers include the multiple adjustments to a strange land, language, customs and the uprooting trauma of leaving their familiar homeland, family, and friends. Sources for these accounts are journal articles, published interviews, case studies, academic papers, and books.

In the second segment, recently published fiction books written for children and young people about newly arrived immigrant children will be examined and analyzed.
For the purpose of this thesis a sample of convenience will be employed. This sample will be composed of books reflecting the experiences of immigrant children within the Canadian setting, presenting either their personal point of view or that of an observer of their situation. The focus will be on the experiences and challenges resulting from assimilation and adaptation issues for these newcomers. The authenticity of the representation and unique experiential entity of distinctive individuals will be studied. It will include both picture books and novels that are to be found in the collections of the Vancouver Public Library, the District of North Vancouver Public Library, or the University of British Columbia Library. Subject keywords for searching will include: immigration-Canada- children-fiction, immigrants- Canada- school-fiction, assimilation-fiction, education-fiction, and adjustment-fiction.

**Analysis of Data**

A modified content analysis approach will be used to examine the books dealing with challenges experienced by immigrant children. As content analysis is “an analysis of the written or visual contents of a document, the conscious and unconscious beliefs, attitudes, values and ideas of people or groups are often revealed in the things they write” (Wallen and Frankel 408). Content analysis may also be considered as:

any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages . . . The focus . . . is often on the message but may also involve inferences about the other parts of the communication process. The classic questions are, ‘who says what, to whom, how, with what effect?’ and also ‘Why’. (Gross 6).
A content analysis approach will examine juvenile fiction for authentic portrayal of the immigrant experience with its challenges and issues of adaptation and adjustment. It will also include cultural markers such as visual indicators, implied indicators and language patterns (Jobe 24-25). This examination will make the sample demonstrably relevant (Anderson 64) and give clarity and a better understanding of a group of individuals within a specific situation: that of the newcomer to North America. From these studies, lessons can be learned to allow the possibility of generalization regarding other individuals in similar settings (Anderson 76).

As part of the analysis, a case study approach will be used with each of the eleven titles obtained that meet the criteria of the sample of convenience. Each title will be examined for authentic immigrant experience portrayal, themes included in the narrative, quality of writing, relevance of material and events, and cultural markers.

A supplementary bibliography of informational resources written for young people, as well as international picture books and novels will also be included.

Summary

In this study the authentic experiences of the immigrant child will be examined, including the many challenges of adaptation and adjustment. This information, being used as a point of reference, the fictional representation of the immigrant child in picture and chapter books will then be examined and compared to this reality. The validity of these narratives will be discussed and evaluated, resulting in a recommended list of titles stating the themes and challenges covered in each title. A supplementary bibliography of picture books and novels will be compiled of other than Canadian titles and will also include information books, poetry, and biographies.
In conclusion, it is hoped that the immigrant child's experience and its complexity will be viewed with greater understanding and awareness. The desire for acceptance, understanding, and belonging that each newcomer brings to his/her new school and classroom deserves respect, recognition, and patience from the receiving community.
Findings

The objective of this study is to examine the experiences of newly arrived immigrant children during their initial period of adaptation to a new society as portrayed in books written for young people. What are the adjustment and adaptation challenges experienced by newcomers? Are the fictional representations of these challenges authentic portrayals when compared to informational accounts?

The first sample of books consisted of factual accounts of the immigrant experience. These included: journal articles, research reports and papers documenting the challenges experienced by immigrant children living in two cultures and within the school setting; memoirs of newcomers such as Mary Antin, Katie Wiebe, Ernest Hiller, Laurence Yep, William Kurelek and Yoshiko Uchida providing a first-person perspective; as well as, personal interviews and conversations edited by Robert Livesey, Janet Bode, and Yale Strom presenting the issues of adaptation and adjustment experienced by recent immigrants in the voices of these individuals.

These published informational accounts were analyzed for evidence of real-life challenges experienced by immigrant children as newcomers in North America. A content analysis revealed issues and challenges experienced by the newcomer during this complex and many-layered period of adaptation and adjustment to their new home. Six major issues and challenges were evident: language and communication difficulties, ethnic communities and maintaining heritage culture, trauma of culture shock, intergenerational conflict centering around home and school, uprooting trauma, and experiences of racism and prejudice.

The major finding of the analysis evidencing a challenge for the immigrant child
was that of the language barrier and of difficulty communicating (Ziegler 265; Jadhav 6; Wiebe 30; Norrid-Lacey 4). Of the 72 resources examined, 57 titles (79%) mentioned the challenge of learning a new language. This inability to speak the language of the adopted country as well as not being able to be understood in their traditional language proved a stressful challenge for newcomers. “The experience of total immersion in a foreign language environment is nothing short of devastating” (Ziegler 265). The older the child the more serious and traumatic this challenge became. “A sense of shame is associated with being a recent arrival for whom English was obviously a second language” (Norrid-Lacey 6). Language deficiency was a difficulty for communicating with the native speakers but it was also a problem for students in higher grades with regard to their studies and scholastic advancement. The inability to understand or be understood proved frightening, frustrating and increased the newcomer’s feelings of being a “stranger in a strange land” (Education of Immigrants 6).

Another frequently mentioned issue for the immigrant child was the importance of the ethnic community and the need for preserving and maintaining a connection with this heritage. Fifty-one (71%) of the resources analyzed dealt with the newcomer, a stranger in a new world, feeling at home in an enclave where, as Fitzpatrick commented, the newcomer hears his own language and experiences the culture of the old country (127). The newcomers experienced a feeling of security and positive self-esteem within this ethnic community, feeling accepted, proud of their traditional culture and language (Ashworth, Blessed with Bilingual Brains 77), sharing common beliefs and ways of doing things. “The immigrant community was a source of strength from which the immigrant moved, with confidence, slowly but surely, into a relationship with the new
world” (Fitzpatrick 127), a bridge between the old and the new worlds. This traditional culture “provided a sense of identity, a source of comfort, a feeling of pride in a unique heritage” (Burgan 67). Yoshiko Uchida, in her memoir *The Silver Thread*, states “it is important for each of us to cherish our own special heritage” (131).

Another real-life challenge newcomers encountered and mentioned in 46 (64%) of the informational resources was culture shock (Bode 18; Caplan 132). A correlation was evident between the extent of the culture shock and the degree of difference between the home country and the new country, the greater the differences the greater the trauma (Richmond 429; Neidle 28). Newcomers found school, classroom situations, and interaction between students and teacher confusing and discomforting. In *The Inner World of the Immigrant Child*, Christina Igoa noted that when an immigrant child encounters an unexplained cultural difference (kiss on the cheek, hand shake, tap on the head) he/she feels, “awkward, confused, ashamed or inadequate” (16). There are a tremendous number of adjustments and pressures to conform to which every immigrant child is faced with as part and parcel of culture shock: new environment (country, urban/rural, climate), language, school system, lifestyle (food, clothing, values) and customs (Dubois 241). In his memoir, *Small Mercies*, Ernest Hillen expressed his concern and wishes to be the same as every other child, “I … [wanted] to be like the boys at school, not different, not special” (117).

A fourth challenge for newcomers, appearing in 32 (44%) of the informational resources analyzed, was inter-generational conflict. This conflict arose, dividing child and parent, because of the many differences between heritage and host cultures. These differences were magnified because of the two words in which the child lived; the school
with its values, customs and attitudes clashing with the traditional values, customs and attitudes lived in the home (Bhadha 3). Many children found their parents' "foreignness" embarrassing (Burgan 65) and felt that people made fun of their foreign accent and lack of North American culture. Also, children, learning the language more quickly than their parents, often identified with the host culture and many times rejected the values of their parents (Wolfgang 15). Frequently, the inability of parents to communicate in the host country's language forced the child, with greater knowledge of English, to assume the difficult responsibility of being the translator, taking on tasks and making decisions usually reserved for the adult member of the family (Jackson 99). Thus, a teenager from Laos states, "They depend on me because they do not speak good English, so I am going in two directions" (Burgan 66). The role reversal between immigrant child and parent resulted in misunderstanding and conflict between the generations and left the parents feeling inadequate, dependent and frustrated (Chud 50).

A further finding in the analysis of the sample was the significant impact of feelings of loneliness and isolation resulting from the trauma of uprooting (Strom 47; Igoa, Language and Psychological dimensions 2). This trauma, affecting newcomers irrespective of age, appeared in 26 (36%) of the informational resources examined and included the pain of separation from homeland, community, family, friends, and familiar surroundings. They "left behind all things dear and familiar to them- their homes, relatives and friends, church and their way of life" (Palmer 85). Gone were their long-term relationships, social support networks, customs, cultural observances and family rituals (Hanning 9). In Quilted Landscape: Conversations With Young Immigrants, eleven-year-old Vica Berman states it quite simply, "I miss everything there, especially
my friends and school and the way of living.” (39).

A final identifiable challenge, appearing in 24 (33%) of the informational resources, was the suffering experienced by newcomers from prejudice, harassment, and ridicule. On the playground, immigrant children were subjected to “little discomforts at the hands of the other children” (Ashworth, *Forces Which Shaped Them* 59). It was evident that language difficulties, different clothes, food, and cultural activities caused immigrant children to stand out and made them the brunt of unkind ethnic remarks. The first day at school contained many bitter memories as immigrant children mention being ridiculed, humiliated, made fun of, laughed at, and called derogatory names (Bode 18; Gaskins 6). William Kurelek discussed the “embarrassment of language”, being heard speaking his mother tongue and being reprimanded and ridiculed for this slip (31). Ernest Hillen talks about how important it was to dress and speak like a Canadian so as to fit in and appear no different from everyone else. He says that he desperately wanted, “in everybody’s eyes – that I was just one of them, no different” (121).

The sample of convenience from which these findings were collected consisted of 72 factual titles including journal articles, reports, research papers, memoirs, and interviews. From the analysis of the data collected, it was shown that the issues and challenges most frequently mentioned were the following six, listed in order of frequency: language barrier and communication difficulties, retention of traditional culture, culture shock, intergenerational conflict, uprooting trauma, and prejudice and racism. This period of adaptation and adjustment for the immigrant child is a complex and difficult time requiring understanding, empathy, and patience from the receiving community.
The second sample of books in this study examined fictional representations of the immigrant child’s experience in Canada. A commonality of adjustment challenges appeared in the eleven books analyzed (six novels and five picture books) in spite of the different time frames and various locations across Canada. This sample of fictional accounts of the immigrant experience was analyzed to determine its representation of the challenges and issues children faced as newcomers to Canada.

Three facts stood out immediately; firstly, there were surprisingly few Canadian titles published after 1990 dealing with the subject of immigration; secondly, most titles focused on refugees rather than willing immigrants; and thirdly, the majority of protagonists in these narratives were female (nine females/three males).

A significant finding was that uprooting, with its accompanying trauma of loneliness and isolation, was experienced by all the protagonists in the six (100%) novels and by the main characters in three (60%) of the picture books. Memories of what was left behind; home, village, family and friends were ever present in the characters’ minds. In Promises to Come, Kim longs for the sound of Vietnamese voices and when she hears fishermen speaking Vietnamese, she hears “all the things she had been missing” (Heneghan 148). Similarly, the celebration of Diwali in Gilmore’s Lights for Gita reminds Gita of her grandparents back in New Delhi and how the feast was celebrated with all the family members together. In the same way, as she tries to settle in Vancouver, “Lin Lin [wants] to keep the village in her memory forever” (Thien, The Chinese Violin 7).

Refugees were the main characters in six of the eleven (55%) titles included in the study sample and from their perspective the uprooting experience was not only difficult
emotionally but dangerous physically. When fleeing from the enemy (World War II, the Hungarian Revolution, the wars in Vietnam and Lebanon) the characters had little time to plan what to take with them or even the physical ability to carry anything other than the clothes on their backs. Memories of their losses, the terrors of war, and the uncertainty of survival or the whereabouts of family members or friends added another dimension to the suffering and trauma of uprooting. This was the case in Promises to Come. When the smoke alarm goes off in her new Canadian home; terrified, Kim flings herself from the bed onto the floor “crouching, arms held protectively over her head, and screaming without pause while the smoke alarm shrieked along with her in ear-splitting harmony” (Heneghan 29).

Learning a new language and the difficulty communicating were serious challenges for the newcomer in 73% of the sample. Six-year-old Saousssan, in From Far Away, comments, “I was good and listened to my teacher, only I didn’t know what she was saying because she did not know how to talk right” (Munsch 8). All the novels dealt with learning a new language and for the older students there was the added difficulty of poor academic progress until they had mastered the new language. In The Old Brown Suitcase Slava expresses her feelings, “Even though I was making progress, I often felt ridiculous, being the oldest girl in my grade-nine class” (Boraks-Nemetz 132).

Culture shock affected all the protagonists in the fictional accounts but to varying degrees. Pettranella (Pettranella) and Gita have settled happily in their new environment and the culture shock they experience is one of wonderment and excitement rather than confusion and disorientation. Pettranella is amazed by the vastness of the country while Gita is fascinated by the different ways traditional holidays are celebrated. In the novels,
the protagonists find the many cultural differences baffling, unsettling, difficult to understand and to incorporate into their daily lives. When sixteen year old Karim (The Road to Chlifa) stands up in class to answer his teacher’s question, his actions result in contemptuous laughter from the other students and advice from his teacher, “Stay seated when you answer and call me Robert (not Sir). That will keep certain people from cackling like a clutch of dizzy hens, okay?” (Marineau 12). Similarly, Nelly (A Place Not Home) is dumbfounded to find a food counter in a pharmacy! In the same way, being confronted by unfamiliar city streets and different architecture emphasizes being a stranger in a strange country for both the Petersons in Between Two Worlds and Slava in The Old Brown Suitcase.

Experiences of prejudice and racism appeared in all the novels but not the picture books. The protagonists in the novels encounter name-calling “DPs”, “Jew girl”, “dirty bohunks”, “ignorant foreigners”, ridicule, snickers at their accents, mockery, bullying from fellow students, as well as unfriendly stares from passers-by on the street. On Nelly’s first day at school in Montreal, Rob comes to her table in the cafeteria and states, “it stinks too much here. . . sitting with the DP. All DPs stink” (Wiseman 165). Similarly, Slava feels humiliated and frightened as students from her class follow her home calling her names and laughing at her. “They stood in a circle above my head, jeering, calling me names” (Boraks-Nemetz 82).

The importance of friendship for the immigrant newcomer was evident in every fictional title. The isolation experienced by the immigrant child within the school setting (language and culture shock) looses its frightening aspect when a friend enters the picture and acts as a liaison between the two disparate cultures. Joshua becomes for Slava (The
Old Brown Suitcase) the one who makes everything possible and endurable, encouraging her in her studies and supporting her through the hard times. “I couldn’t carry on an English conversation with anyone at school except Joshua” (Boraks-Nemetz 66). Similarly, Karim had My-Lan, a fellow immigrant who, as he describes is “my link to the world. She let me build a bridge between there and here” (Marineau 137). Within the realm of picture books the importance of friendship plays a similarly important role. As Saoussan comments, “I learned enough English to make friends, and school started to be fun” (Munsch 18). In the same vein, Pettranella is so excited, dressed in her best pinafore, to finally be able to visit the little girl on the next homestead and hopefully she would become her best friend (Pettranella).

Intergenerational conflict is presented in 83% of the novels but only one picture book contains this challenge for the newcomer. In From Far Away, Saoussan wants to change her name to Susan but her traditionally dressed Muslim mother refuses to allow her to do so. Conflict between parent and child in the novels is similarly the adult not wanting the child to acquire too many North American traditions too quickly. Slava’s parents dislike her change of hairstyle, wearing lipstick or going to dances. When Slava comes home from a school dance with a boy, her father angrily shouts and orders the boy to go home immediately. Slava felt “hurt that Father didn’t trust me. Why had he found it necessary to make fools of both of us with his old-fashioned ways in front of a Canadian boy?” (Boraks-Nemetz 124).

The sample of fictional representations of immigrant children’s experiences as newcomers to Canada contains examples of the many challenges of adjustment lived through by these children. These challenges include: trauma of uprooting, language and
communication, culture shock, prejudice, importance of friendship, and intergenerational conflict.
Discussion

Canada is a country built on immigration and continues to grow, as each new wave of immigrants becomes part of our growing nation. To understand the challenges and issues that immigrants, especially children, encounter as newcomers to Canada, we do well to examine fiction, both novels and picture books. A comparison of these versions of the immigrant child's challenges with the informational resources reveals anticipated and also surprising results.

It is apparent that the fictional accounts in this study are well researched and present realistic authentic representations of immigrant children's challenges. Josepha, Pettranella, and Lesia's Dream present the immigrant experience on the prairies at the beginning of the 20th Century. Authenticity of portrayal is evident in both Josepha and Lesia's Dream with their presentation of homesteading on this seemingly endless expanse of land. The vastness of the prairies strikes Lesia and everyone on the colonist train speechless. "The size silenced us all... It stretched on and on forever. Endless land. Boundless sky" (Langston 23). Kurelek reiterates the same feeling in They Sought a New World, "The single outstanding feature of prairie landscape... just as of the ocean, is expanse" (Kurelek 20). The hardships of the prairie climate, farming, difficulty of learning, not knowing English, and prejudice towards the European peasant, are all included in these narratives. In Worlds Apart, Caplan quotes immigrant John Kurdukis speaking about experienced prejudice, "when I walked the streets with friends, speaking our own language, we would hear some Canadians saying: 'Damn DPs!'... These pejorative remarks hurt"(25).
Pettranella, a picture book written for a younger audience, is far more simplistic, glossing over such major issues as language difficulties and culture shock. Hard work, a positive attitude, and connection with the native land and family give the young reader an uncomplicated image of settling in Manitoba. However, in my opinion, this simplified account diminishes the immigrant experience. It seems less than authentic that a family from central Europe could arrive in Canada in 1900 and experience no difficulty communicating with native Canadians. Similarly, were there no surprises in this new country other than having to wait a long time to have forms completed for travelling? The impression left by this book is that the immigrant experience was without major difficulties and the few setbacks encountered were easily solved in a short time. Nevertheless, being written for a younger audience, this title still has value for presenting the experience of emigrating and retaining a tie with family left in the heritage country.

Escaping from a war-torn country was a major motivation for many immigrants to Canada. Six titles narrate this refugee experience connected with four different wars across the years: World War II, the Hungarian Revolution, and the wars in Vietnam and Lebanon. In all the refugee narratives the war background is realistically documented and vividly described. Historical facts, dates and events add authenticity to the accounts. With this background information, the reader can understand the complexity and challenges facing the refugee as immigrant.

Within this group of titles, the distinction of refugee adds another dimension to that of immigrant. As Caplan remarked, many refugees come with only the clothes on their backs, but with their cultural heritage in their hearts as a most important piece of baggage (Caplan 43). With this in mind, we can understand why the sound of a
Vietnamese voice was so important for Kim (Promises to Come). Similarly, the Petersons celebrated Christmas with Latvian friends, using their heritage language and following their cultural traditions (Between Two Worlds). All around the holiday table everyone raised their glasses and proclaimed the Christmas toast, "Draugiem dzimtene! To absent friends" (Lingard 51), thinking about special friends and wondering where they might be.

Culture shock took on an added dimension for many refugees as something as simple as a fire truck or ambulance siren could remind them of war experiences, leaving them terrified and disoriented. Slava, hearing a siren, is reminded of air raids back in Poland and hysterically runs "past blurred faces and windows, tripping over the holes in the pavement, seeing only dark cellars and faces of frightened children" (Boraks-Nemetz 22). In Promises to Come, Kim is similarly traumatized by the sound of a smoke alarm, curling up into a ball and shrieking. In the picture book, From Far Away, Saoussan sees a Halloween skeleton, thinks that people are going to start shooting in Canada as they did in Lebanon and begins to scream.

The importance of language for communication, self-image, academic progress, and cultural understanding cannot be emphasized enough and appears in the majority of fictional accounts of the immigrant experience. Unable to communicate because of nonexistent English skills, many young newcomers experience feelings of fear, shame, inadequacy, and isolation. For Josepha, an older teenager sitting with the little ones because of his poor command of English, language is an unconquerable challenge, and unable to take the humiliation any longer, leaves school to work in the fields (Josepha: A Prairie Boy's Story).
For teachers within the school setting, it is obvious that language proficiency is necessary scholastically, for academic progress and socially, for making friends and fitting into classroom society. Kottler states, “Students struggle tremendously with the burdens of not only keeping up with their schoolwork and establishing a social network, but also doing so with limited or nonexistent English-speaking skills” (v). The adolescent protagonists in the novels included in this study demonstrate the validity of this three-fold challenge. Isolation in the school cafeteria for Nelly, when she cannot understand the students speaking around her (A Place not Home), and Slava’s inability to do academic subjects because of inadequate English mastery (The Old Brown Suitcase) are situations and challenges exacerbated by the newcomers’ poor or nonexistent English language skills. Slava is informed, “our school curriculum does not accommodate immigrant problems” (Boraks-Nemetz 90). English grammar seems insurmountable but with help from her friend, Joshua, encouragement from her parents, summer school, and hard work, Slava manages to pass all her exams. Similarly, Nelly is confronted with the challenge of not knowing the host language. “The English words whirled around me until I felt that I was drowning in words” (Wiseman 164). Once again it is hard work and the support of a friend that help Nelly accomplish her schoolwork and begin to fit in to the classroom social scene.

Reasons for immigrating to Canada are many and varied, yet within these fictional accounts, the plight of the refugee seems the most common. Resettlement in a new country by willing choice appears in only two titles, The Chinese Violin and Lights for Gita. Both are picture books focussing on young families settling in large urban communities. In Lights for Gita, the young protagonist experiences feelings of loneliness
and sadness, missing both her relatives in New Delhi and the accompanying family celebration of cultural traditions. Lin Lin, in *The Chinese Violin*, suffers from more complex adjustment issues; uprooting, culture shock, language difficulties, and making friends. “The noises of the cars and people and a new language swept over Lin Lin like an ocean. . . . even the sky felt like a stranger” (Thien 8,9). In both picture books, memories of their native lands are happy and carry a longing for retention of these remembrances and culture.

There are a few discrepancies apparent from the comparison of these fictional accounts to the informational resources. It is noted that a great deal of emphasis is placed on the importance of friendship and the difficulty of making friends among the fictional narratives. The desire to fit in, to be no different from anyone else, to belong and to be accepted as an equal fellow student fills the thoughts and wishes of the protagonists in the fictional titles. Saoussan wants to change her name to the North American version, Susan (*From Far Away*) while Slava (*The Old Brown Suitcase*) is encouraged to change her name to Elizabeth so as to be more easily assimilated into the classroom situation. Will the newcomers make new friends in Canada? This worry enters their thoughts as they prepare to enter their new schools. Tomas, Astra and Hugo (*Between Two Worlds*) remember their friends left back in Europe and wonder if they will ever make new friends or if native Canadians will like them.

However, this challenge for newcomers barely appears in the informational resources. The memoirs provide the single source containing mention of making friends as an issue for the immigrant child. Hillen (*Small Mercies*) talks about going to movies and listening to the radio so as to learn inflection of the voice, common expressions,
clothing styles, and body postures so as to be as much like a native Canadian as possible. This way he hopes to fit in and become one of the group, "Watch and listen and learn. I would fit in fine" (Hillen 118).

Another unexpected discrepancy was the interpretation of intergenerational conflict and the frequency of its appearance. This challenge is evidenced in 44% of the informational resources and yet was included in less than 35% of the fictional accounts. The role-reversal challenge is not a major issue within the intergenerational conflict in the fictional narratives of the sample. The titles analysed do not include situations in which the child acts as translator for the adult. In the one book where this challenge could have arisen, Lesia’s Dream, the father and older brother are interned as political prisoners and Lesia takes over the adult roles for the rest of the family: farmer, translator, and breadwinner.

Intergenerational conflict, however, is present in the titles and arises from parental misunderstanding and lack of acceptance of the child’s growing Canadian image and loss of the traditional culture. For example, Father reprimands Slava (The Old Brown Suitcase) for going to a school dance without permission, wearing lipstick, and cutting her hair into a North American style. Similarly, Nelly’s mother (A Place not Home) is unaware of the discomfort and bullying she is enduring because of her non-Canadian clothes and hairstyle. Nelly’s friend intercedes, describing the situation, and Mother begins to understand and is more than willing to help in any way she can.

A final discrepancy was the large number (54%) of immigrant narratives dealing with refugees and how few (1.8%) dealt with freely chosen resettlement. This I feel is a weakness in the portrayal of the immigrant experience because the simple newcomer is
overlooked or diminished by the more dramatic refugee situation in spite of the fact that many of their needs are the same. The modern young reader’s desire for excitement and adventure may be the motivation of authors to tell the more action packed refugee story. However, this is not necessarily true since the resettlement situation is the theme of The Yang series (Yang the Youngest and His Terrible Ear) set in Seattle, Washington and it is popular and well received by a youthful audience. Unfortunately, there is no equivalent series in Canadian children’s literature.

To summarize, fictional narratives about the immigrant child’s challenges as newcomer to Canada give an authentic portrayal when compared to the informational resources. Challenges of language barriers, uprooting, culture shock, intergenerational conflict, prejudice, and ethnic heritage retention all appear within the fictional resources in a greater or lesser degree. Children, through reading about the experiences of immigrants, can learn to empathize with these newcomers as they go through this difficult period of adaptation to a new country. Immigrant children themselves can feel understood and recognized as they read the accounts of others going through like experiences. The quantity of titles recounting these challenges and issues for the newcomer may not be large but the quality is certainly high!
Conclusion and Implications of the Study

Canada is a nation of immigrants, built on immigration and continuing to grow with newcomers from all over the world. This study was undertaken to determine the challenges faced by newly arrived immigrant children as evidenced in informational resources such as memoirs, recorded interviews, conference reports, journal articles, documents, case studies, biographies, and information books. From analysis of the findings, six major challenges were identified: language barriers and communication difficulties, maintaining heritage culture, culture shock, intergenerational conflict, the trauma of uprooting and separation from homeland, and the suffering of prejudice and racism.

Fictional accounts, written for children and young people, were analyzed to determine to what extent they reflect the reality of these challenges in the newcomers' lives. It is apparent that the fictional narratives in this study are well researched and present authentic representations of the difficulties experienced by immigrant children. Isolated by nonexistent English skills, newcomers suffer from confusion, disorientation, and loneliness. Missing their homeland, children cling to items brought from home that remind them of their loved ones left behind. At least one of the six major challenges identified in the informational resources (language barriers, maintaining heritage culture, culture shock, intergenerational conflict, uprooting, and racism) appears in each and every title examined. One title, The Old Brown Suitcase, includes all six of the challenges.

From this analysis a few unexpected findings need be mentioned. Firstly, there are surprisingly few, recently published, fictional accounts relating the challenges
for newcomers in Canada. For a country with a large population of immigrants, both historically and presently, the number of fictional accounts is proportionately small. Secondly, among these titles there are an astonishingly large number of refugee stories compared to the accounts of resettlement by choice. Thirdly, the protagonists in these accounts are in most cases female.

An examination of Canadian books about immigrant children reveals a limited number of titles that can be easily located in public libraries or bookstores. Notwithstanding the limited number of titles, the quality of these narratives is excellent! A listing, including case studies, of these books that give an empathetic, realistic insight into the challenges facing the immigrant child as a newcomer to Canada is included in the appendix.

It appears evident from the analysis of this study that challenges for the immigrant child in Canada are authentically portrayed in fictional accounts written for children and young people. However, these accounts are not numerous and few relate the challenges for the newcomer resettling in Canada by choice.

Implications:

The findings of this study show that there are authentic portrayals of the challenges for the immigrant child in Canadian children’s literature. However, there are several implications for educators, publishers, and authors.

Recently published fictional accounts of these challenges are fairly limited in number within the Canadian publishing world. The quality of these accounts is very good in spite of the limited number of titles. Nonetheless, there is a need for a larger selection
of titles dealing with the issues and challenges experienced by immigrant children during their period of adaptation and adjustment to a new land.

A large percentage of these fictional narratives deal with the refugee as immigrant, yet narratives of the newcomer resettling by choice are few and far between. There are some excellent stories set in the United States that deal with this situation (The Yang series, F is for Fabuloso) but few within the Canadian milieu. More titles are needed dealing with the everyday lives and challenges for resettling immigrant children.

Females appear most often as the protagonists, and therefore, a portion of readers may consider these as “girl” books. To reach a wider audience there is a need for more robust boys who are caught in the immigrant experience in these fictional accounts.

Books are mirrors for the reader, reflecting life, events and situations. They are windows through which the reader views the challenges an immigrant child experiences. Teachers and students, including newcomers, are encouraged to read and share these books, so as to understand the challenges newcomers are experiencing. Hopefully, newcomers themselves will feel less alone reading about the immigrant experience and seeing it recognized as the challenge that it is.
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**Genre**: Fiction

Fourteen-year-old Slava feels out-of-place, lonely and disoriented as a newly arrived Polish immigrant to Montreal after the Second World War because she observes so many differences between Canada and her homeland: the streets seem emptier of people and there are so few apartments. The strangeness of Montreal compared to prewar Warsaw has the whole family experiencing loneliness, isolation, and disorientation. Her father, a lawyer in Poland, is now a shopkeeper, an obvious step down socially. Slava feels humiliated and belittled, "like some other person" (8), when she is encouraged to change her name to Elizabeth.

Through her experiences in St. Adele, Rockville and Montreal, Slava slowly begins to improve her English and makes a few good friends despite encountering prejudice and bullying from non-Jewish classmates. Her academic progress is poor and parental conflict arises as Slava tries to model on her Canadian classmates, preferring to wear lipstick and change her hairstyle.

Flashbacks to Poland and the Warsaw Ghetto illustrate the horrors of war experienced by Slava and her family. Description of the construction of the wall confining them within the "Ghetto", the star sewn on armbands marking them as Jewish, and the constant sound of guns and sirens give the reader a sense of their humiliation, fear, and helplessness. Although Slava and her parents escape the Ghetto, Basia, the younger daughter, disappears and is presumed dead.
These sad memories haunt Slava as she constantly questions the attitude of Canadians with their seeming lack of understanding of the war and its horrors for the Jewish people. However, writing her essay, “The Gardener of Children”, which tells the story of Dr. Korczak and his orphanage in Warsaw, proves cathartic for Slava. Not only does this effort win a prize and peer recognition, it also helps her accept the past and look forward to a positive future.

Critique

Lillian Boraks-Nemetz relates a powerful, first-person account of war and resettlement in a new land for a young Jewish girl and her family. Slava’s authentic voice relates her experiences in Montreal adapting to a new country (1947-1949) and, through flashbacks, her life in Poland during the war (1938-1946). Nemetz’s descriptions of Slava’s war experiences and escape from the Warsaw Ghetto have readers holding their breath, looking over their shoulders and feeling the hunger, fear of capture, cattle cars, and camps.

Slava is a strong believable young woman. Her growth from an insecure, frightened child to a confident young lady is effectively presented. During her first days in Montreal, the sirens of the fire trucks terrify Slava because she fears that the war has followed her family to Canada. She feels insecure about her clothes and her inability to understand enough English to keep up with the other students in her class. In contrast, a self-confident Slava reads her winning essay in front of the students and their parents.

The reader is placed in the time frame of the novel and given a background to help understand references, names and events that come up as part of the narrative by the presence of a foreword and historical introduction.
Cultural Markers

Poland and Jewish culture are presented within this narrative. Poland, Warsaw, and the Ghetto during WWII are vividly described placing the reader within that time frame and location. The author uses Polish names (Pyza, Basia, Slava), identifies cities and towns in Poland (Warsaw, Zalesie, Gloskow), and sprinkles Polish words casually and incidentally throughout the narrative: “Babuska” (grandmother), “Masha” (nanny), “Oberek” (Polish national dance). The Jewish faith also enters the story as a cultural indicator: Shabbat dinner (Friday night Sabbath supper), Chanukuh, the menorah, and Hebrew prayers.

Canadian culture is apparent throughout Slava’s description of her experiences after her immigration to Canada. She tastes new foods such as pancakes and maple syrup. Marie, her first Canadian friend introduces Slava to Catholicism. The two languages, French and English, are heard when Slava and her family first arrive in Montreal and the multicultural nature of St. Laurence Blvd. is described with its many different languages and foods.

Themes

A Jewish Polish family experiences many difficulties during WWII and as new immigrants to Canada including:

- Persecution suffered as Jews in Poland
- Trauma of being uprooted and separated from one’s homeland
- Experience of culture shock in a new country
- Difficulties of not knowing the new country’s language
- Suffering from prejudice and bullying
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Importance of friendship

Lillian Boraks-Nemetz relates the experiences of a Jewish family during WWII in the Warsaw Ghetto and their subsequent settlement in Canada with authenticity and realism. Her account of the horrors and atrocities experienced during this time emotes feelings of anger, sadness, empathy, sympathy, and hope. Adjusting to a new country, language, and culture is presented with empathy and straightforwardness. The author has succeeded in presenting both a portrait of a family but also of a time and place.

**Genre:** Picture book

Gita, a young girl who has recently moved to Canada from New Delhi, India, prepares to celebrate the festival of lights, Divali, with her family. She is excited and her father promises to be home early with fireworks. The weather does not co-operate as an icy rain falls when her father returns from work. The treacherous weather keeps her friends from coming to the celebration and Gita, devastated and crying, sobs that she hates her new home. With her mother’s encouragement, she begins to understand the true spirit of Divali. Lighting the “*diyas*” (little clay pots), the darkness disperses and “their windows blazed with the steady glow of the diyas” (22).

**Critique**

This picture book provides a glimpse of the East Indian culture and stresses the importance of roots and traditions for an immigrant family during its first year in a new country. Gita’s loneliness is evident as she remembers the past celebrations with her relatives in New Delhi. Now, because of the ice storm, she and her family are alone in their apartment in this strange new country.

The text is simple and straightforward, using realistic dialogue to move the story along and to give authentic voice to the characters. The author convincingly conveys the gentleness of Gita’s father and mother as they comfort Gita in her loneliness and disappointment. Gilmore not only introduces the reader to a family who will appear in subsequent books, she also presents the Hindu festival of Divali to many individuals previously unfamiliar with this celebration.
The paintings realistically depict an East Indian family within an urban Canadian setting. Mother smilingly hugs Gita when she returns home from school as Father sits in his stocking feet at the kitchen table. With worried expressions on their faces, Father and Gita watch the blustery, rainy weather from their apartment window. As Gita lights the “diyas”, she seems to lean out of the illustration, her face lit by the match flame, radiating life and warmth. The reflection of Gita’s smiling face in the apartment window exudes happiness and acceptance of her situation and new home.

Cultural Markers

The strength of family love and the importance of cultural traditions interweave throughout the fabric of this picture book. At the beginning of the book, an introduction describing the festival of lights informs the reader who might not be familiar with the meaning of Divali and how it is celebrated.

The depiction of the East Indian Hindu culture as lived by a typical family is reflected in the clothing and jewelry of both Gita and her mother. Mummy wears a colourful red, gold, and orange sari while Gita has a traditional patterned blue tunic and pink pant outfit. Both wear gold bangles and earrings.

The story contains references to the special Indian sweets that Gita’s mother has made (perras and jalebies), the little clay pots filled with mustard oil and cotton wicks (diyas), and fire works (part of the Divali celebration). Gita remembers the incense curling upwards, the adults chanting in the prayer room, and various names from Hindu lore (Prince Ram, Sita and Lakshmi).
Themes

An immigrant child and her family experience challenges as newcomers to Canada including:

- Feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Experience of culture shock in a new country
- Maintaining cultural traditions
- Importance of friendship

Lights for Gita explores one incident in the life of an immigrant child. In spite of the obstacles to her plans, the ice storm and her friends’ being unable to come, the celebration of Divali succeeds in lighting up the darkness in this strange new land.
The Westovers have sponsored a Vietnamese baby into Canada but when Kim arrives, they discover that she is a teenager older than their daughter Becky. The family decides to keep Kim with them. However, Becky’s reaction to shy quiet Kim is not merely one of disappointment and surprise but a reaction of hostility and dislike.

Adjustment is not easy for Kim because everyone and everything seems so big, loud, and daunting to her. She recalls her former life, the family she lost, the horrific experiences escaping from Vietnam, and living in a refugee camp in Thailand. Adjustment is not easy for Becky either as she resents the family’s acceptance and growing attachment to Kim, making a void not only between Becky and Kim but between Becky, her family and her best friend.

Much frightens Kim in Canada, but most people are kind and understanding. With the help of a psychiatrist and his dog, she comes to terms with the guilt and sadness her memories of Vietnam create. She willingly accepts the kindness and help offered by her new family and looks forward to a new life, including Becky as an accepting, understanding, younger sister.

Critique

Heneghan narrates a realistic, sometimes shocking, account of Kim’s life in war-torn Vietnam, the desperate existence in a refugee camp in Thailand, and her culturally disorienting life with her new Canadian family in Vancouver. The sights, sounds, and brutality of war seem all too real, giving the reader a glimpse into the hell that many
innocent civilians live as inhabitants of a country experiencing the throes of political unrest and upheaval.

Characters grow through their experiences and react to individuals and events with authentic emotion and behaviour. They speak with genuine voices, giving their words and actions legitimacy and presenting the reader with a glimpse of both humanity and history.

Cultural Markers

Vietnam and its culture enter into the narrative both in the descriptions of various places during Kim’s life there and also in her comments, reactions, and actions when she’s in Canada. There are names of places and individuals that entered her life before her arrival in Canada: Saigon, Rach Gia, the Kra Isthmus in Thailand and the Songkhla Refugee Camp; “Ba Nam” (woman), “Ong Hai” (boatmaster), “Orang Besu” (the giant). Vietnamese words and sentences also appear throughout the narrative: “cong an” (government security agents), “thay” (schoolteacher), “taels” (Vietnamese money), and “noi” (a curse). Also, the dialogue between two Vietnamese fishermen is written in Vietnamese. Kim acts as a proper Vietnames girl should act, standing straight and bowing her head to her elders, won’t shake hands with Becky’s brother, Connor, since unmarried people of the opposite sex never touch in public.

Canada and Vancouver in particular are described throughout the book: The Lions Gate Bridge, Burrard Inlet, and the seawall in West Vancouver are all featured. The Westovers are an affluent family and their lifestyle is presented vividly: each child having his/her own bedroom, a darkroom in the basement for Connor, a new mountain
bike in the works for Becky, television, golf at the Gleneagles and trips to fast food restaurants.

Themes

A Vietnamese refugee girl experiences many challenges in her adjustment to her new country and family including:

- Traumas of war experiences: loss of family, death, and violence
- Experience of culture shock in a new country
- Difficulties of not knowing the new country’s language
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Trauma of being uprooted and separated from one’s homeland
- Challenges of adapting to a new family

Heneghan has written a believable account of a refugee girl’s experiences in her war-torn native country, her eventual escape, immigration to Canada as a sponsored orphan, and adjustment to a strange new environment. The horrific war experiences which leave Kim alone in the world, realistically present what some refugees have gone through and the culture shock experienced by these individuals when they arrive in their new country.
Sixteen-year-old Laisha seeks the aid of her great grandmother to complete her school assignment on cultural heritage. Great grandmother Lesia relates the story of her emigration from The Ukraine to Canada at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. In recounting her story, Lesia says “memories are seeds” (xi) to be passed on to nourish future generations. Laisha is both Canadian and Ukrainian and “you can be both. Proudly” (208).

In 1914, political unrest and lack of freedom and hope spur the Magus family to look toward Canada as the land of opportunity. Baba, Lesia’s beloved grandmother, will not accompany the family. However, she gives her treasured Ukrainian Bible and carved box to Lesia as her way of being with her granddaughter in The New Land. “When you hold it [Bible] close, you hold me close” (19).

From the moment of their arrival in Canada it becomes apparent that life will not be easy nor are things quite as expected. There is so much noise and confusion, a strange new language and few signs of welcome or acceptance. Even the agents, who are supposed to help them, cheat them out of the little money remaining. Finally, with the help of another Ukrainian immigrant, they purchase land and start a new life. However, with the outbreak of WWI, Canada considers Ukrainians political enemies and hostilities arise. The arrest and imprisonment of Papa and Ivan (her brother) leaves Lesia (sixteen years old) as the head of the family and the sole worker on their land. Living conditions are primitive and the harsh winter arrives with severe cold and shortage of food.
Lesia's hard work, determination, and pride support the Magus family through the first difficult year. With the arrival of spring and a successful day at the local market, hope is rekindled and the dreams of a promising future return.

Critique

This is a moving family-history narrative, one in which Langston presents a clear picture of the first year of the Magus Family in their land of opportunity. The detailed and realistic descriptions allow the reader to experience the weather (cold, snow, wind), living conditions (sod-dwelling, worn-out shoes, wooden box for a cradle), hunger (eating gophers, setting traps, fishing), and discomfort (mosquitoes, walking many miles to town, constant physical labour).

Characters are well drawn, reacting realistically to events, encounters and situations. Lesia is a believable young woman, experiencing feelings of sorrow, doubt, humiliation, and anger as she goes through this first year in The New Land.

The first-person introduction and conclusion of the story adds a sense of oral history and authenticity. Langston has succeeded in bringing to life the immigrant experience including the negative happenings that were part of many newcomers' lives as they settled on the harsh Canadian prairies.

Cultural Markers

The Ukrainian culture is vividly presented throughout the narrative. The Magus family celebrates feasts in the traditional Ukrainian fashion. Ukrainian words: “bozhe, Khrystos rodyvsia” (Christ is born), “Slavim Yoho”! (Let us glorify Him!), “pyrophy”, “Kutia”, “holubtsi”, “borsch” (food), and traditions (Holy Eve feast, woven belts, embroidered shawls and cloths) are described. Many references are made to The Ukraine:
their former peasant life, the Master’s manor and land, males forced into military service, and the lack of schooling for girls.

The Canadian prairies of 1914 are portrayed clearly in Langston’s narrative. The reader can visualize the vast emptiness, boundless land and sky, harsh winters followed by insect-ridden summers. The native Canadians’ distrust of immigrants and the superiority felt towards these displaced people come across in the internment of the Ukrainian men during WWI. It is also seen in the treatment of Lesia in the general store in Hazeltown where she is ignored, frowned upon, and even called a derogatory name.

Town life at the beginning of the Twentieth Century is contained in the descriptions of Hazeltown and Winnipeg. Hazeltown, the nearest town, has its grain elevator, blacksmith, livery, and general store. Jack Scott’s General Store is the gathering place, post office, and supplier of all needs. As the sign over the entrance reads, “If you cannot buy it here, you do not need it” (77). Horses and buggies, carts drawn by oxen or horses are the common mode of transportation. The local produce market, set up in a field, gives the farmers a chance to sell their wares: bread, eggs, butter, honey and handicrafts.

Pawnshops exist in the larger cities, such as Winnipeg. People who need money sell their valuable possessions to get the necessary funds. If they don’t buy the items back within a certain length of time the items are sold cheaply. Lesia pawns her beloved Bible and carved box to purchase the cow and chickens needed on the farm.

**Themes**

A Ukrainian family immigrates to Canada in 1914 and lives through many experiences including:
- Trauma of being uprooted and separated from one's homeland
- Suffering from prejudice and discrimination
- Difficulties and harshness of the prairies and farming
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Difficulties of not knowing the new country's language
- Maintaining heritage culture
- Importance of faith, hard work, and determination

Langston has written a moving and gripping family history that brings to life the immigrant experience at the turn of the century on the prairies. The author presents the physical and emotional challenges that these newcomers experienced in a straightforward and non-judgemental way.
A Latvian family, Lukas and Kristina Petersons, and their three children, Hugo, Astra, and Tomas arrive in Canada, an “alien land”, as refugees fleeing from the Soviet army.

On their arrival at Quebec City, the Petersons become immediately aware of language differences, even while they are disembarking from the ship, as well as, waiting for immigration inspection, and travelling by train to Toronto. The resulting confusion of line-ups and long waits brings back haunting memories of frightening experiences in their war-torn homeland. Upon reaching Toronto, Mr. Petersons collapses with a heart attack and things become even more difficult: bills mount, the twins must find jobs, their promised lodgings are no longer available, and they suffer the taunts of unkind individuals.

Slowly, with their hard work and determination, the situation begins to change for the better. The discovery of fellow Latvians gives them support and encouragement and as their grasp of English improves, jobs are found and friendships made. The Petersons decide to work out a balance between their old world, remembering their heritage and traditions, and their new home, by taking part in Canada’s traditions and celebrations. The future appears promising as Aska and Hugo pool their money to invest in a plot of land and begin plans for building a house for the family. Memories remain but acceptance of their new land and plans for the future give the Petersons the feeling of permanence and hope in their new country.
Critique

Lingard narrates a family's initial period of adjustment and adaptation to a new country with realism and authenticity. The characters experience loneliness, confusion, disorientation, and apprehension as they live their daily lives, trying to survive in a sometime hostile environment. Astra is ridiculed for not knowing items on a shopping list and is curtly told she must change her ways if she wants to fit in. An anti-immigrant atmosphere is implied as some men felt jobs were going to immigrants willing to take less pay. Many Canadians didn't know that Latvia had existed or what it had been like in Europe during the war. However, kindness is also experienced as Astra is offered a job in the law office of her friend Drew's father and their landlady helps them adjust and feel welcome in their present community.

Characters are well drawn with depth and sensitivity. Quiet, studious Hugo, hardworking determined Astra, and playful young Tomas express believable feelings and reactions to their various situations. The reader becomes involved and concerned in the life of the Petersons family and its individual members. The family's recovery from the trauma of war and their adjustment to a new land are presented with empathy and realism.

Cultural Markers

Latvian culture appears throughout the narrative. Together, the family speaks Latvian and mentions towns in their homeland in their dialogues and remembrances. Their native culture is kept alive as Christmas is celebrated as it had been in Latvia; roast pork and sauerkraut, traditional pepper cookies, decorations of fir branches and the
Latvian flag. “Draugiem dzimtene” (51), the Christmas toast is proposed to all their absent friends.

On the other hand, Canadian culture is also evident in the description of Tomas’s school experiences in a Toronto public school. Tomas is shocked that a misbehaving student is given the strap. “In Latvian schools children are not beaten” (64). As well as hairstyles, North American clothes, movies and soda fountains, the celebration of Valentine’s Day and Thanksgiving are part of the Petersons’ introduction to Canadian culture.

Themes

A Latvian family experiences many challenges in its adjustment to Canada as refugees including:

- Trauma of being uprooted and separated from one’s homeland
- Experience of culture shock in a new country
- Difficulties of not knowing the new country’s language
- Suffering from prejudice and discrimination
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Importance of friendship

Joan Lingard has written a believable account of a family and its adjustment and adaptation to a new land. The individual members of the family experience different challenges and their reaction to these challenges and coping with them capture the disorientation and difficulties experienced by immigrants starting over in a new land.

**Genre:** Fiction

Karim, a teenage Lebanese refugee, arrives in Montreal and attends a French high school. He is shocked by the many cultural changes and his silence and indifference provoke the other students to mock and bully him. The narrative is presented via two voices: a Canadian student’s journal describes the Montreal scene, and Karim’s diary reveals his former life in Lebanon as well as his feelings about his new life in Canada. His bitterness, guilt, and unhappiness pour out as he describes his flight from war-torn Beirut with eleven-year-old Maka and her infant brother, Jad, the only ones left of Karim’s closest friend’s family. Marauders murder Maka but Karim and Jad arrive at their destination, Chlifa. Together they journey on to Montreal, joining Karim’s family there.

My-Lan, an Asian student and fellow immigrant becomes Karim’s friend. With her, Karim is able to be himself and slowly begins to accept his new life in Canada. Nevertheless, he emphatically states, “I hate and will always hate hockey, peanut butter, soap operas and English class” (142).

**Critique**

*The Road to Chlifa* is a powerful, hard-hitting account of war, uprooting, friendship, immigration, and prejudice. The changing points of view, expressive vernacular language, and vivid descriptions of the escape from Beirut to Chlifa are effectively captivating. Characterization and development are major strengths in this novel. Maka is a tough, gutsy young girl who backs down to no one. On the other hand,
Karim’s struggle with guilt, sorrow, and despair over the misery and unfairness of war are credibly presented in his diary entries. His first person impressions of being a newcomer in a Quebec high school setting appear realistic and credible. Karim changes from an unhappy, guilt-ridden teenager into a more accepting, thoughtful, and hopeful person.

The ravages of war are well described with the rubble-strewn Beirut streets, and the constant bombing and sniper fire that had become a part of everyday life, the only life that Karim can remember. The disruption of routines, interruption of schooling, and loss of friends create a realistic picture of life in a city within a country at war.

Cultural Markers

Lebanon and the Lebanese culture are evident throughout the narrative. Arabic names of towns, streets, and people maintain this cultural image. Vivid descriptions of Beirut and the countryside around Beirut as Karim, Maka, and Jad travel toward Chlifa give a clear picture of the devastation of war in that area. Although life is going on among the ruins of a steadily deteriorating city, inhabitants are fleeing in greater and greater numbers. The time frame of the war (1975-1990) is evident in the description of the warring factions. The Green Line divides Beirut into two parts, the East, the Christian zone and the West, the Muslim zone.

In Canada, the French Canadian culture is evident in the high school setting of Montreal with the more informal interaction between teacher and student. Students call their teachers by their first names and when Karim respectfully stands to answer the teacher’s question, he is mocked by the other students and told to remain seated. The presence of other immigrants from different countries indicates the multicultural
character of Canada. The French Canadian teenagers converse about their interests: TV programs they are watching, the latest styles in hair, clothes, and hockey--insignificant subjects to Karim.

**Themes**

A teenage immigrant boy experiences haunting memories of war and challenges of being a newcomer including:

- Trauma of being uprooted and separated from one's homeland
- Experiences of culture shock in a new country
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Suffering and guilt concerning war and death
- Importance of friendship

This powerful YA novel presents both the experiences of war and of being a newcomer, with authenticity, empathy and clarity. *The Road to Chlifa* is a hard-hitting, thought-provoking novel that leaves the reader asking questions that have no pat answers.

Genre: Picture book

A powerful compelling narrative portrays the experiences of an immigrant teenager, Josepha, on the prairies in the early 1900's. At that time, any new immigrant student who couldn't speak or print English had to sit with the younger students. Hence, Josepha sits like a "blushing bull in primary row" (7), but proves himself a friend to the little ones.

The humiliation and frustration of attempting to learn English proves too much, forcing sensitive Josepha to leave school and work bagging grain, "Dollar day a baggink" (10). Both the teacher and the narrator try to persuade him to stay, but to no avail. The situation for Josepha is the same as for many immigrant teenagers, "... those older ones. One year shamed. Maybe two. And then they'd be gone from class. They'd be gone forever" (20).

As he leaves, Josepha and his young friend exchange prized possessions. Josepha gives his pocketknife, used to carve whistles, dolls, bows and arrows. The young boy gives Josepha his boots, too big still but "the proudest thing I ever owned" (20).

Critique

McGugan portrays an immigrant teenager as seen through the eyes of his young friend, the narrator. A simple event, the development of a friendship and the inevitable good-bye, empathetically shows the difficulties of immigrant adaptation and the failure of some to adjust.
There is a strong sense of the early 1900's on the prairies. Simple language and colloquial idioms give a ring of authenticity and realism to the narrative. The portrayal of the poverty and harshness of farming at that time is evidenced in Josepha's having "twine suspenders" (4) and no boots, and the detail that his home is a dark sod shack with an empty storehouse.

Strong emotions are evidenced in the illustrations. Josepha's humiliation is visible in his hunched shoulders, lowered head and clenched fists (6) as he sits in the primary row amidst the younger and smaller children. His energy and excitement about leaving school are seen as he smacks the ground with his bare feet, raising dust clouds and twirling his sisters around in play. His kindness and generosity in his treatment of the younger students are evidenced as he carefully rubs the narrator's beloved boots clean of grit and dust. He carves little toys for them with his precious pocketknife, protects them from bullies, and teaches them to throw stones.

At the same time, the vast prairie landscape is vividly shown in the expanse of intense blue sky and varying shades of golden countryside. Large clouds roll across the immense sky, placing Josepha's sod shack in darkness while the school stands in the bright golden light.

Clever use of perspective draws the viewer to the point of interest and importance. A row of trees forming a windbreak draws the eye towards the grain elevators in the distance. The illustrator's use of two-page spreads and small black and white sketches, emphasize an important focal point in the opposing colored illustration. These include the narrator's hands holding the pocketknife Josepha has just tossed him in the facing colored illustration.
Cultural Markers

Josepha presents the historical culture of Canada, caught in the 1900's on the prairies. At this point in history many East Europeans immigrated to the prairies, lured by the availability of cheap land. With Josepha’s lack of English, coupled with his depiction as a Caucasian in the illustrations, it can be assumed that he is East European. The endless horizon, vast sky and rolling landscape are undeniably prairie images. A one-room school, pot-bellied stove, slates and ‘Miss’, in her long dress, teaching all ages reflect the reality of the period. The importance of English is evident in the treatment of the students who don’t speak it. They are tolerated, put to the side, until their language mastery allows them to join their peers. The Union Jack flies proudly from the flagpole outside the schoolhouse. The Eaton’s catalog, showing a purchasing method for people living outside of towns at that time, also describes the language used by many of these newcomers. “Language enough to earn a one-dollar wage” (19).

Although Josepha’s cultural background is uncertain, the poverty of his situation is clear and undeniable. Twine suspenders hold up his overalls, he has no shoes and his family lives in a sod shack, eating in the dark to save kerosene. Life in this New Land is portrayed as both difficult and lonely for families during the 1900’s.

Themes

An immigrant teenager experiences the challenges of a newcomer in Canada in the 1900’s including:

- Feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Treatment of older immigrant children in school
- Humiliation by the educational system
- Importance of friendship
- Suffering from prejudice and bullying
- Difficulties of learning a new language

McGugan relates the teenage immigrant experience in a powerful and thought-provoking way, leaving the audience touched and pondering on the difficulty of adaptation to a new and often demanding country.

**Genre:** Picture book

Seven-year-old Saoussan shares her story of emigration from Lebanon to Canada. Flashbacks to a war-torn land show the family, amidst rubble and chaos, deciding to leave for a better life. Her father leaves first and then tickets to Canada arrive for the rest of the family. As Saoussan says, “I did not know anything about Canada, but the next day I was on a plane going there” (6).

Shortly after her arrival in this new land, Saoussan is taken to school, where, unable to speak English, she cannot understand the teacher or talk to the other children. Confused, frightened and lonely, Soussan doesn’t want to go back to the “crazy” (16) school. A patient family and kind teacher help her adjust to her new situation. Slowly her knowledge of English and Canadian customs improves and now, in grade 2/3 she is “the best reader and speller in the class” (18).

**Critique**

This simple, fast-paced narrative presents the immigrant experience in a straightforward, humorous fashion. Saoussan is a believable character reacting to her strange new environment and its frightening tradition (Halloween) with authentic emotions. The illustrations complement the text showing Saoussan’s bewilderment and the other students’ friendly confusion. Saoussan wants to change her name to Susan and the accompanying illustration shows Mother, dressed in her traditional Middle-Eastern clothes, contrasting to Saoussan’s North Americanized attire and attitude. Hands on hip she stubbornly challenges her mother. However, Saoussan she remains!
The scenes of their war-torn native land are realistic to the point of being understood by a younger audience but not too graphic as to be traumatic: walls are knocked down, furniture is broken and rubble is visible outside their home. The classroom illustrations show Saoussan’s confusion and isolation, as well as the other students’ concern and similar confusion.

The use of humour in the story allows younger readers to be more comfortable with a situation that they don’t quite understand. During Halloween celebrations a skeleton frightens Saoussan, and her fellow students suddenly begin to realize what it must be like to be a newcomer in a strange new land.

Cultural Markers

Cultural markers are present for both the Middle-Eastern and the Canadian cultures. The illustrations present the Eastern culture with the representation of the mother in her traditional long dress and head covering. The Canadian culture is portrayed in both text and illustrations. Halloween, with its decorations, is visible in the classroom and throughout the neighborhood where costumed children trick or treat. The classroom shows decorations on the wall, toys, chalkboard, computer, and one student reading a Robert Munsch book. A North American mall is pictured (escalator, multi-levelled, shopping bags, crowded) when Saoussan meets her former kindergarten teacher out of the school setting.

Themes

A young girl from the Middle East experiences challenges as a newcomer including:

- Trauma of war
- Difficulties of not knowing the new country's language
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Experience of culture shock in a new country
- Importance of friendship

Munsch and Saoussan have effectively presented difficult themes (war, immigration, culture shock, and the language barrier) in a gentle, humorous, child-friendly way. The combination of illustrations and text vividly portray the experience of the newcomer's situation from his/her point of view. A seemingly simple book has successfully dealt with a difficult topic.

**Genre:** Picture book

Lin Lin and her father emigrate from her beloved small village in China to Canada. Overwhelmed by the noise, different language, and strangers, she finds peace and comfort in the sound of her father’s playing the Chinese violin. Times are not easy: the violin is broken, her father has difficulty finding a job, and Lin Lin finds school and English difficult. However, with the help and encouragement of her teacher and her father, Lin Lin perseveres. She receives a new violin, begins to learn English and makes new friends. At a concert before her father and teacher, Lin Lin plays her Chinese violin and “her own heart [was] singing” (31).

**Critique**

A gentle, almost poetic narrative presents a young girl and her father’s immigration to Canada with hopes for a positive future. The characters are realistic and believable, experiencing challenges of adaptation as newcomers to a strange country.

The quiet village in China contrasts with the busy City of Vancouver. This seemingly simple picture book examines the difficulties of adjustment, language, schooling, job finding, and making friends. The Chinese violin becomes the symbolic bridge between the two cultures, old world and new world, China and Canada.

**Cultural Markers**

Cultural markers are evident as a double-page illustration shows a small village in China with its arched bridge, pointed tiled roofs, and people in traditional peasant garb. Lin Lin is dressed throughout the book in a classic Chinese tunic top, hat, shoes and slacks while the violin she plays is a traditional Chinese musical instrument.
Canada is seen in various illustrations picturing houses, cars, large downtown buildings, West Coast totem poles, and log-strewn beaches. A Caucasian teacher helps Lin Lin in a Canadian classroom setting using books, pencils, erasers, and other school paraphernalia. Lin Lin’s father works as a dishwasher and the dishes in the illustration are western crockery; cups, saucers, plates, and casseroles.

Themes

A young girl and her father emigrate from a small village in China to a large urban city in Canada and experience challenges as newcomers including:

- Trauma of uprooting and separation from one’s homeland
- Difficulties of not knowing the new country’s language
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Importance of friendship
- Maintaining heritage culture

The challenges Lin Lin and her father experience as newcomers to Canada are realistically and effectively presented in this sophisticated picture book. Problems and difficulties are not glossed over but rather simply and straightforwardly presented, dealt with, and overcome. Text and illustrations combine to give an authentic picture of some of the possible challenges faced by newcomers to a large Canadian city.
Pettranella lives with her parents in the upstairs of her grandmother's "tall, narrow house" (2) in a European mill town in the late 1900's. A letter from Uncle Gus in Canada raises the hopes of the family for a better life, a homestead of their own with chickens and crops of grain. Grandmother feels that she is too old for such a long journey but gives Pettranella a little bag of flower seeds to plant to remind the little girl of her and the homeland.

Sadness and excitement vie within Pettranella: she is reluctant to say good-bye yet excited to think of the journey across the sea. When they arrive in Canada there are so many people crowded in a huge building that Pettranella fears there will not be enough room for everyone. However, once they are on their way "up a wide river and across the lonely land" (8), Pettranella realizes that there certainly will be room for everyone.

In a settlement "where two rivers met" (10), Winnipeg, the family gets their homestead papers, buys supplies, and continues the journey. When a shaft breaks, they are delayed while father works on a new shaft and Pettranella passes the time looking at her flower seeds. When they are on their way again, Pettranella realizes that she has left her bag of seeds behind and is devastated that she will not be able to grow a flower garden for her grandmother. Nevertheless, arriving at their homestead, they begin the job of "settling" — starting a small cabin, clearing the land for planting and a sowing a garden.

A few weeks later the family heads off to visit their neighbor and passes the spot where the shaft broke. Pettranella points to the log where she had lost the seeds and there
are flowers "blowing gently in the breeze . . . Grandmother's flowers" (26). Pettranella brings some back to their homestead but leaves some beside the road to remind other lonely settlers of their homeland.

Critique

This simple presentation of a family's immigration to Canada at the turn of the century includes the whole process: beginning with the poor conditions in their native town in Europe, the hope of a better life in Canada, their good-byes, sea voyage, land travel and their arrival at their homestead in Manitoba.

The illustrations are "naïve" art and give a clear picture of the various events, settings and people throughout the emigrating and immigrating experience at the turn of the century. Grey stone houses backed by grey cloudy skies give the feeling of darkness encouraging the family's desire to leave and look toward Canada for a brighter future. As they travel from Winnipeg, the vastness of the prairies is evident in the illustrations showing flat land as far as the eye can see with no houses visible.

Cultural Markers

A specific culture is not a part of this story but it is rather the immigrant experience from Europe at the turn of the century. The attachment to and sadness of leaving one's homeland is present but which specific homeland appears to be unimportant. The Canadian prairies are definitely portrayed in the description of the land, particularly its immensity and emptiness. The illustrations show the Canadian geese, birch trees, and rolling land of Manitoba.
Themes

An immigrant family experiences the challenges of being newcomers to Canada including:

- Conditions encouraging emigration
- Trauma of uprooting and separation from one’s homeland
- Experiencing the immensity of Canada
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Importance of connection with the homeland

Pettranella is a simple, touching presentation of a young girl’s immigration to Canada in the late 1900’s. Pettranella’s excitement and sadness during the various stages of this experience are portrayed with authenticity and honesty.

**Genre**: Fiction

This realistic narrative presents the experiences of Nelly and her family as they escape from Hungary during the Hungarian Revolution in 1956 and, as refugees, resettle in Montreal. The languages, cultural differences, cold weather, and loneliness make their initial period in bilingual Montreal confusing, uncomfortable and unhappy. For 13-year-old Nelly, prejudice and bullying make her school life difficult. Mari, Nelly's one friend, helps her realize where some changes might help and encourages her to reach out on her part, creating an optimistic feeling for the future as Nelly accepts her Canadian home and situation.

**Critique**

Wiseman narrates a credible story of a refugee family, fleeing the horrors of war, leaving everything behind, and setting up a new life in a new country, Canada. Adjustment and adaptation enter their lives at all levels: schooling worries, strange foods, cold weather, and unfriendly Canadians.

Nelly presents the story from her 13-year-old viewpoint with her youth, innocence, and naiveté coming through in her observations and reactions to situations and people. Nelly doesn't understand terms like "rock and roll" and is mesmerized by a neon sign that flashes "Red Rose Tea" on and off continuously. Working hard at school and doing well does nothing to remove her differences from Canadians: accent, hairstyle, and clothes. Nelly, Ida, Mari, and the others characters in the narrative, along with the various situations in school and at home, ring true and present an authentic picture of many of the challenges facing newcomers.
Cultural Markers

Politically, Hungary enters the narrative but not culturally. It is rather the Jewish culture that is presented. Nelly talks about the Pogroms in Hungary and the dangers of being Jewish at that time. The celebration of Passover is described and the synagogue is mentioned as the location for observing various Jewish feasts.

The bilingual make up of Montreal is apparent and challenges Nelly and her family as they attempt to interact with the people around them who speak either English or French. Even though the entire family is shocked that a food counter is located in a pharmacy, they all enjoy the experience of eating strange Canadian food (white sandwich bread, hot cocoa topped with marshmallows). Eaton’s, a department store, is described, along with the tradition of having the inexpensive items in the basement. Public schools and students’ wearing uniforms are presented as commonplace in Montreal.

Themes

A Jewish Hungarian family experiences many challenges as refugees and newcomers to Canada including:

- Persecution as Jews in Hungary
- Trauma of being uprooted and separated from one’s homeland
- Experience of culture shock in a new country
- Difficulties of not knowing the new country’s language
- Suffering from prejudice and bullying
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Importance of friendship
Wiseman relates the experiences of Nelly and her family as newly arrived Jewish refugees, fleeing from a war torn Hungary during the Hungarian revolution. Loneliness, culture shock, and language difficulties are presented with authenticity and realism. The author has successfully portrayed a believable family, historical events and a real place.


Namioka, Lensey. *Yang the Third and Her Impossible Family*. Boston: Little Brown,
1995.


Children's Literature Bibliography

Picture Books


Toronto: Scholastic, 1983.


