

FEATURE

Seeking Accurate Cultural Representation Mahjong, World War II, and Ethnic Chinese in Multicultural Youth Literature, Part II

By Minjie Chen

a 2010 Virginia Hamilton Essay
Award-Winning Article

Juvenile books about China and ethnic Chinese serve several purposes. They cater to young people's need for information about China—whether that “need” is spontaneous or imposed (at school, for example). They expose young readers to the culture and experiences of ethnic Chinese people in order to promote cross-cultural understanding.

PART II

Publication Patterns

In my list, the first juvenile fiction published about the Sino-Japanese War was dated 1938. A publication date chart (see Table 1) of these 31 titles reveals how the output has fluctuated over the past seven decades.

About half of the 31 books were published within an extremely short span of six years from 1940 to 1946. When a person named Jeannette Hill asked *The Horn Book Magazine* in 1945 for titles of books about “the children in China during the war,” the magazine recommended four chapter books and a short story published during this time period (English, 1945, p. 374). Interest in the war in China seemed to rapidly die down after that—at least publishers of youth literature turned away from this topic. Only three novels were published in the next three decades, with the number of titles hitting the



bottom during the 1960s. The number has climbed up only slightly since the 1980s.

Shaped by Pearl Buck

The 15 war novels produced during the 1940s are quite “abnormal.” Unlike what later researchers lamented about the excessive attention paid to ancient China and cultural traditions in fictional writing for youth, the limited number of wartime titles constitutes a unique body of juvenile novels with intense focus on contemporary Chinese issues, a phenomenon not occurring again.

Pearl Buck, who contributed to three titles on my list, must be credited with helping to shape Americans’ more positive perceptions of China and with demonstrating to American publishers the marketability of a “real” and “new” China by her bestselling success with *The Good Earth* in the 1930s (Leong, 2005). It is debatable, however, how much longer a single woman’s literary talent could have swayed the taste of a larger society “knowing” Chinese as heathen, uncivilized, backward, and amoral, if the Sino-Japanese War had not increasingly entangled the self-interest of the United States into a Chinese crisis.

In 1935, after two of her novels met with positive review but unimpressive sales, “Buck suspected public interest in stories about China

would begin to wane, and she felt she should start writing stories set in America” (Bitonti, 2007). She proceeded to published two biographies of her parents and a novel set in America. When she once again switched back to a Chinese setting in *The Patriot*, chronicling a Chinese protagonist’s life during the war between China and Japan in the 1930s, it was in 1939. Her biographer commented, “In a sense, the war came to Pearl’s rescue as a writer, by authorizing her to return to the Chinese material she knew best” (Conn, 1996, p. 221).

This is not totally precise. The Sino-Japanese War itself was not enough to ensure a market in the U.S. for novels of this topic. As it turned out, in the realm of juvenile fiction, the trajectory of yearly publications about the war in China is compatible with America’s lessening distance from the conflict—from neutrality to intervention to full participation. Thus, even though the full-fledged war between Japan and China broke out in 1937, only three titles were published before 1941, and another 13 mushroomed from 1942 through 1946, which was part of the boom of juvenile novels, including many popular series of battle stories, set in the Pacific theatre.

A Decline after 1946

After 1946, juvenile novels focusing on the Sino-Japanese War all but disappeared. It was as if the moment China finished its short-term role as an American ally in war, it became much less interesting and worthwhile to help American young people imagine Chinese experience during World War II. On the other hand, during these early postwar years, American publishers continued to provide juvenile literature—fiction and nonfiction—about World War II set in the American home front, in some other parts of the Asia Pacific, and in Europe.

Five Chimneys, a memoir of a Hungarian woman who was imprisoned in Auschwitz, was translated and published for a young audience in 1947; Anne Frank’s diary was published in English in 1952, with an introduction by Eleanor

Roosevelt; and the same year, Claire Huchet Bishop published *Twenty and Ten*, a juvenile novel about ten Jewish children in hiding in France during the war.

If the Sino-Japanese War had ceased to be an interesting topic, the first half of the 1950s also created an especially disagreeable climate for this and other topics relating to modern China. One of the political consequences of the Sino-Japanese conflict was that the Chinese Communist Party was able to expand its membership and power during the years of World War II (Van Slyke, 2001). In the subsequent civil war (1946-49), it defeated Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist Party, and became the ruling party of the current Chinese government.

The Korean War (1950-53) saw Chinese and American soldiers fighting each other and eventually led to the establishment of yet another Communist regime in North Korea. In 1951 and 1952, the U.S. signed several peace treaties with Japan, making it a much needed collaborator to contain the communist threat in Asia (Barnhart, 1999). Meanwhile, during the McCarthy era, writers, filmmakers, and scholars, as well as working-class people, could be persecuted if they were suspected of being Communists or Communist sympathizers.

Youth materials were not left out of this ideological combat zone. As Jenkins’ investigation (2001) of Cold War censorship in the years from 1946 to 1955 showed, American librarians serving young people had to adopt various strategies to defend their choice of allegedly pro-Communist books. The Sino-Japanese War, which invites sympathy to China, became a risky topic. Children’s novels set in China were still published, but they tended to be charming stories in a China which is devoid of political conflicts and commotions.

The only three books published during this time period listed in Liu’s (1993) study, *Li Lun, Lad of Courage* (1947), *Su-mei’s Golden Year* (1950), *Little Wu and the Watermelons* (1954), share the theme of farming or growing

food. The civil war and the ensuing radical changes in Chinese society were nowhere to be seen. The trend of distancing young readers from China's political reality in fictional writing had been established once and for all.

Newbery-Winning Authors

Only two juvenile novels set in wartime China were published in the 1950s, by Newbery-winning authors Elizabeth Foreman Lewis and Meindert DeJong respectively. The timing of the two books is intriguing. According to the *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, DeJong wrote *The House of Sixty Fathers* in China, where he spent three years during World War II as historian for the American Composite Wing of the Fourteenth Air Force, but did not get it published until 1956. The reason quoted was that "the story was considered too realistic and too harsh for a children's book" (Kibler, 1986).

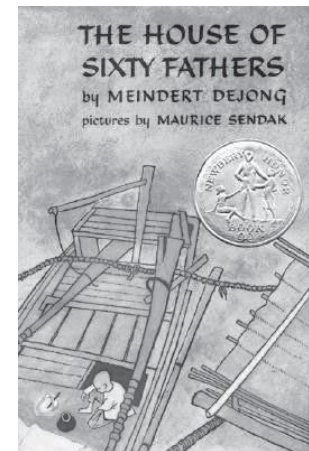
The cruelty and horror of the war in China was not totally absent in works of the 1940s published for youth, although few could tell it as grippingly as DeJong did. Could it also be that, after missing the "golden time" for the Sino-Japanese War novels, his publisher had to wait for a "safer" moment? Harper & Brothers announced the title under "A preview of Harper highlights for 1952" in *The Horn Book Magazine* as early as February 1952: "[DeJong] is working on *The House of Sixty Fathers*, the moving and beautiful story of a boy caught up in war. Tien Pao happens to be Chinese, but his story is a universal one" ("A Preview," 1952, emphasis mine). Notice how the wording suggests an attempt to distract us from the specific identity of Tien Pao as a Chinese.

It is unclear if Lewis, too, had to wait for many years before *To Beat a Tiger, One Needs a Brother's Help* (1953), a young adult novel about refugee boys in wartime Shanghai, could be published. There was an 11 years' gap between the publication date of this new title and that of her last work—*When the Typhoon Blows*, another war novel set in China and published in 1942. On the last page of the book, one boy who survives

the war makes a vague anti-Communist comment, which I suppose gave the book a passport to publication in the middle of the McCarthy era.

The Contemporary Period

DeJong's critical and commercial success with *The House of Sixty Fathers*, a Newbery Honor winner still in print today, should have reopened space for the Sino-Japanese War novels and anticipated a new surge of interest in this topic and possibly in realistic Chinese topics as well. This was not what happened. For several decades to come, the brilliance of *The House* was the last light shone on ethnic Chinese experience during World War II for young American readers.



DeJong's book was wedged between the end of the McCarthy era and new, rising tensions between the United States and countries of the Communist camp (Sputnik was launched by the Soviet Union in 1957). The Sino-U.S. relationship continued to worsen, and America signed a new U.S.-Japan security agreement in 1960 to strengthen the mutual tie.

American children's authors may be said to have steered clear of the topic of the Sino-Japanese War until 1990. *Tiger, Lion, Hawk: A Story of the Flying Tigers* (1977), the only title we have in the 1970s, is a quick-read combat story featuring U.S. fighter pilots in the China-Burma-India theatre during World War II. If it was the author's intention to divert readers' attention from China and from the Sino-Japanese War, he reached his goal quite well. *Tiger, Lion, Hawk* gives so little information about Chinese involvement in the war that young readers with no background knowledge could finish this book

without realizing that China was at war against Japan.

The beginning of the book, for example, mentions the *Panay* Incident, in which Japanese warplanes sank the U.S. Navy's gunboat in 1937, but manages to avoid providing the location of the Incident, Nanjing, China, and the context of the incident—it happened during the bloody Sino-Japanese War, on the day before China's capital city fell.

Of the four titles in the 1980s, *Little Red* was originally a short story written by Pearl Buck in 1945, and illustrated and republished in 1988. Three other titles were all by non-American authors. J.G. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* (1984) and Michael Morpurgo's *King of the Cloud Forests* (1988) were first published in Britain, and *The Bombers' Moon* (1985) was written by Betty Vander Els, a Canadian author.

All three books share one theme: White children, whose parents were missionaries or businessmen, got caught in the Sino-Japanese War/Pacific War in a turbulent China. The protagonists were all separated from parents, forced to start journeys and adventures, sometimes with adult protection and other times having to fend for themselves, until the final rescue and reunion. Though Chinese characters are peripheral in these three stories, the books at least give glimpses into a wartime China where threats of death, journeys of escape, and loss became part of daily business.

The Long Silence

The long silence about Chinese experience during World War II in juvenile fiction is not only sustained by an apathy in mainstream society towards an uncomfortable topic which reminds Americans of the "betrayal" of Red China, but which is unfortunately not anti-Communist, it was also bracketed between a period when White people told most of the stories about ethnic Chinese and a later period when a limited number of Chinese Americans finally found their literary voice.

Until 1990 Chinese Americans had barely produced novels about the Sino-Japanese War for American youth. The first Chinese author who appeared in my list was Yee Chiang (1903-77), a painter and prolific author best known for his travel writings. He spent the war years in Britain and first published his book *The Men of the Burma Road* in London in 1942.

Chinese Americans have been latecomers to the world of youth literature. The pattern of authorship revealed in studies (Lin, 1999; Liu, 1993) about youth literature featuring Chinese and Chinese Americans is that White authors dominated the writing of juvenile books about China and ethnic Chinese in early times, and gradually Chinese Americans authors were allowed access to the creation of juvenile books and were granted opportunities to tell their own stories.

Although a few Chinese American authors or illustrators such as Ed Young published as early as the 1960s, for reasons that defy a simple explanation, novel writing has been a much rarer endeavor among them. Until 1990, Laurence Yep, Lensey Namioka, and Raymond Chang were among the few Chinese American authors who had published historical and contemporary fiction (for youth) featuring Chinese in mainland China.

Chang's novel *In the Eye of War* (1990), which he co-authored with his wife Margaret Scrogin Chang, was based on his childhood experience in wartime Shanghai. Namioka is the author of a recent young adult novel, *Mismatch* (2006), reflecting the impact of the Sino-Japanese War on two contemporary Asian American families. Except for some of the early White authors who had first-hand



knowledge of China and even of the Sino-Japanese War, non-Chinese Americans lost touch with China when it closed its door to Westerners from 1950 till the end of the 1970s, and they grew up in a society which provided little information in popular culture and school curriculum to trigger their interest in the topic. When they thought of obtaining, second-hand, information from people who had experienced the war, as we have seen in *Remember World War II: Kids Who Survived Tell Their Story*, it does not seem to have occurred to them to ask Chinese Americans.

Iris Chang's Influence

Iris Chang's bestselling adult nonfiction account of the Nanking massacre has left marks on the juvenile novels relating to the Sino-Japanese War published after 1997, even though the number of books is small and none has accepted the challenge of telling a story about Japanese war atrocities to a young audience in an honest and sensitive manner. *Chinese Cinderella and the Secret Dragon Society* (Mah, 2005) makes a brief mention in the "Historical Note" of Japanese biological warfare, a topic to which Chang also draws the public attention. One protagonist in *Mismatch* (Namioka, 2006) even speaks of Iris Chang's book in conversation.

Without these followers, a lonely voice, however eloquent, beautiful, and passionate, would eventually be forgotten. In social studies classrooms, thus far, her success with awakening the American public to a forgotten history has not been translated into the teaching of World War II atrocities in Asia for middle and high school students (Zhao & Hoge, 2006).

The impact of Chang's book on many Chinese Americans should not be underestimated. Her coverage of a history to which the mainstream society was oblivious has facilitated the healing process of those Asian Americans who were victims of Imperial Japan's aggression and atrocities. A New York Times article wrote,

At virtually every reading or book signing [of Iris Chang], someone

recounts a horrific tale about Japan's brutal march across the Pacific six decades ago.

To Ms. Chang, it is as if "The Rape of Nanking" has opened an emotional relief valve for thousands of surviving victims of Japan's wartime aggression, people whose raw frustration at being overlooked in popular culture and academic histories has been simmering for years. (Dao, 1998)

The public attention which Chang helped bring to Chinese experience during World War II has had an unforeseen impact upon young Chinese Americans who did not experience the war. Although Chang's book, with its grim and graphic portrayal of atrocities, is not for the faint heart and *not suitable for young readers*, Chinese American high school and college students who finished reading the book (with difficulty, as many admitted) and participated in the 2006 Iris Chang Memorial Essay Contest expressed a sense of confusion and ambiguity about their ethnic/cultural identity. What does being Chinese mean?

An Indonesia-born Chinese, a college student whose family immigrated to the U.S., wrote,

Neither my parents nor grandparents spoke, wrote, or read a single character of Mandarin. We had no relatives who were born in China. We were neither Buddhists nor members of any prominent Chinese religion, nor did we celebrate any Chinese holidays.

...[A]t Chinese school, I realized just how un-Chinese I was. ...[My teachers] believed I was a rebellious child: they viewed my inability to speak Chinese...an indicator of being uncultured. I began to see myself as a cultural non-entity. (Oka, 2006)

Another doctoral student, who was born in northeastern China and came to the U.S. at a

young age, described a feeling of ambivalence about Chinese identity:

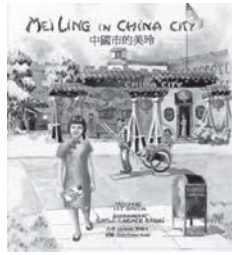
On the surface, I walk, talk, and speak like an American, but underneath, a big part of my identity is still rooted in the land I left at the age of four. But just as much of American culture remains alien to me, so too does the part of me which is Chinese. (Wang, 2006)

Chinese Americans

The group of Americans defined as “Chinese Americans” have immigrated to this country at different time periods from the gold rush in the mid-19th century to as recent as yesterday, from different geographical areas including mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan as well as other parts of the world where the Chinese Diaspora first settled before moving again. The distance between each individual Chinese American and what we understand and promote as a common Chinese root culture may run the entire spectrum from little to great identification.

This great intra-ethnic diversity weakens the cohesive power of traditional cultural characteristics to give people a true sense of who they are and where they belong. At this point, it is perhaps of little help to the identity quest of these Chinese Americans to give them books about what Chinese people were dressed like a thousand years ago, what Chinese characters written in brush and ink look like, and what is the typical procedure for celebrating a traditional festival. Part of their puzzle comes from the disconnection between what Chinese culture is supposed to be according to such books and what

real experience they have had as Chinese growing up in America.



... the history of World War II, with its profound impact on all parts of the world ... they will not find it in school learning which focuses on World War II history in Europe and neglects to investigate ...the vast Asian populations that have been affected by the war; they will miss it in popular culture and youth literature which tells stories about the courage, conspiracy, loss, and trauma ...”

Conclusion

Unsurprisingly, the history of World War II, with its profound impact on all parts of the world, can render the cohesive power of a common ancestral experience the young Chinese Americans in our schools need to claim as theirs. But they will not find it in school learning which focuses on World War II history in Europe and neglects to investigate how or if the vast Asian populations have been affected by the war; they will miss it in popular culture and youth literature which tells stories about the courage, conspiracy, loss, and trauma of White people in this war and occasionally about the pain of survivors of the atomic bombs.

As Oka (2006) put it, Chang’s book on the Rape of Nanking came as “a beacon of light in the dark seas of self-discovery.” The book awakened Oka’s historical awareness. By inquiring into her family history during World War II and in postwar years, she gained a better sense of her place in a family in migration for several generations from China to Indonesia to the U.S. The growth of historical awareness similarly worked for Wang, who wrote,

In Iris Chang’s book, I finally discovered a piece of myself I didn’t know existed....Iris Chang’s first gift to me was to open my eyes to a painful episode in the history of my people, jolting me out of ignorance into a more difficult but more enlightened place.

Another Chinese American girl’s experience illuminates the way a young child is

prevented from coming to terms with her ancestral land and her ethnic identity when adults' selective teaching of modern Chinese history is determined by how sexy a topic is on an anti-Communist meter, not by how weighty an event really is.

My obsession with fitting in extended far beyond trying to wear cool clothes or hanging out with the "in" crowd. It often extended to my rejection of my family, my heritage, and my identity....

I found myself through Chang's books. No longer ashamed of my heritage, I learned not only to accept my Chinese ancestry but be proud of it...I can be proud to have my cultural roots from a country that has gone through subjugation like during the Cultural Revolution, oppression of freedoms like during the Tiananmen Square massacre, or cruel domination as in the Rape of Nanking—yet still has the spirit to protest about it....

To this day, I proudly tell others I am a Chinese-American and no longer mask my eyes behind heavy make-up. (Yan, 2006)

These authentic voices tell of a troubled sense of identity among a young generation of Chinese Americans and of their enlightenment through a history to which they can genuinely relate. These voices serve as a solid indication of the problematic relationship between multicultural youth literature and the ethnic/cultural identity of Chinese Americans.

Until we give them both stories about Mahjong and stories set in modern history which help them make sense of the lives, choices, perspectives, and biases of their grandparents and parents, as well as stories about themselves, we will continue to raise troubled young people who grow up unsure of who they are, where they belong, and how much respect their people deserve.

References

A preview of Harper highlights for 1952. (1952). *The Horn Book Magazine*, 28(1), 32.

- Barnhart, M. (1999). Japan, Peace Treaty with. In J.W. Chambers II (Ed.), *The Oxford companion to American military history*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Retrieved April 12, 2008, from <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t126.e0435>
- Bitonti, T. S. (2007). *Pearl S. Buck. Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 329(1), 210-234.
- Cai, M. (1994). Images of Chinese and Chinese Americans mirrored in picture books. *Children's Literature in Education*, 25(3), 169-191.
- Child_lit Listserv. (2004). *Discussion archive: Tikki Tikki Tembo and cultural accuracy in folktales*. Retrieved March 29, 2008, from <http://www.fairrosa.info/disc/tikki.html>
- Cole, J., & Degen, B. (2005). *Ms. Frizzle's adventures: Imperial China*. New York: Scholastic.
- Conn, P. J. (1996). *Pearl S. Buck: A cultural biography*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Dao, J. (1998, May 16). Parents' nightmare, children's quest. *The New York Times*, pp. B9.
- English, G. (1945). Hunters fare. *The Horn Book Magazine*, 21(5), 374.
- Foot, M. R. D. (2005). Preface. In I.C.B. Dear & M.R.D. Foot (Eds.), *The Oxford companion to World War II* (New ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Holsinger, M. P. (1995). *The ways of war: The era of World War II in children's and young adult fiction: An annotated bibliography*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow.
- Jenkins, C. (2001). International harmony: Threat or menace? U.S. youth services librarians and Cold War censorship, 1946-1955. *Libraries and Culture*, 36(1), 116-130.
- Kibler, M. (1986). Meindert DeJong. *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, 52, 115-132.
- Krenn, M. L. (2006). *The color of empire: Race and American foreign relations*. Washington, DC: Potomac Books.
- Lai, H. M. (1997). Roles played by Chinese in America during China's resistance to Japanese aggression and during World War II. *Chinese America: History and Perspectives*, 75-128.
- Lam, W. W. (2003, August 18). WWII chemical bombs add to Japan damages call. Retrieved February 26, 2007, from <http://edition.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/east/08/17/china.bombs/>
- Leong, K. J. (2005). *The China mystique: Pearl S. Buck, Anna May Wong, Mayling Soong, and the transformation of American Orientalism*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Lin, S. C. (1998). *Libraries and librarianship in China*. Westport, CT: Greenwood.
- Lin, Y. (1999). *Becoming illustrious: A study of illustrated Chinese American children's literature featuring female protagonists from 1963 to 1997*. (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison).
- Liu, L. (1998). *Images of Chinese people, Chinese-Americans, and Chinese culture in children's and adolescents' fiction (1980-1997)*. (Ed.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts Amherst).
- Liu, M. (1993). *Portrayals of the Chinese in fiction for children, 1925-1991*. (Ph.D. dissertation, The Ohio State University).
- Mo, W., & Shen, W. (1997). Reexamining the issue of authenticity in picture books. *Children's Literature in Education*, 28(2), 85-93.

Mosel, A., & Lent, B. (1968). *Tikki Tikki Tembo*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

Myers, M. (2000). Storying war: A capsule overview. *Lion and the Unicorn: A Critical Journal of Children's Literature*, 24(3), 327-336.

Nicholson, D. M. S. (2005). *Remember World War II: Kids who survived tell their stories*. Washington, DC: National Geographic.

Notable social studies trade books for young people. (2006). *Social Education*, 70(4), S1-S16. Retrieved April 10, 2008, from <http://downloads.ncss.org/notable/notable2006.pdf>

Oka, A. (2006). Un-forgetting. In *Iris Chang Memorial Essay Contest-2006*. Retrieved February 9, 2007, from http://www.irischangmemorialfund.org/Essay_Contest_2006/Essays_1012/A_Oka_06.html

Peffer, G. A. (1999). *If they don't bring their women here: Chinese female immigration before Exclusion*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Rowling, J. K. (1997). *Harry Potter and the sorcerer's stone*. New York: Scholastic.

Rowling, J. K. (2007). *Harry Potter and the deathly hallows*. New York: Arthur A. Levine.

Schlene, V. J. (1992). World War II in the curriculum. *ERIC Digests*. Bloomington, IN: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education. (ED348319)

Scoggin, M. C. (1943). Young people in a world at war. *The Horn Book*, 19(6), 394.

Scott, D. (1974). Chinese stories: A plea for authenticity. *Library Journal*, 99(8), 1183.

Song, J. (2002). Fighting for Chinese American identity. *New York History*, 83(4), 385-403.

Van Slyke, L. P. (2001). China. In I.C.B. Dear & M.R.D. Foot (Eds.), *The Oxford companion to World War II*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. Retrieved March 24, 2006, from <http://www.oxfordreference.com/views/ENTRY.html?subview=Main&entry=t129.e349>

Wang, J. (2006). How has Iris Chang's book, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of WWII*, affected my life and thinking? In *Iris Chang Memorial Essay Contest-2006*. Retrieved October 25, 2006, from http://www.irischangmemorialfund.org/Essay_Contest_2006/Essays_1012/J_Wang_06.html

Yan, L. (2006). The rape that has given me strength. In *Iris Chang Memorial Essay Contest-2006*. Retrieved October 13, 2006, from http://www.irischangmemorialfund.org/Essay_Contest_2006/Essays_1012/L_Yan_06.html

Yu, H. (2001). *Thinking Orientals: Migration, contact, and exoticism in modern America*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Zhao, Y., & Hoge, J. D. (2006). Countering textbook distortion: War atrocities in Asia, 1937-1945. *Social Education*, 70(7), 424-430.

Table 1
Juvenile Fiction about Ethnic Chinese Experience during World War II

<i>Date of Publication</i>	<i>Number of Titles</i>
1930s	1
1940s	15
1950s	2
1960s	0
1970s	1
1980s	4
1990s	4
2000-07(including one self-published title)	31

Recommended Titles of Juvenile Fiction Featuring Ethnic Chinese during World War II
(Published prior to 2007)

Chang, Margaret Scrogin, & Raymond Chang. *In the Eye of War*. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1990. *Shao-shao, a ten-year-old boy from an upper-middle-class Chinese family, tells of his much sheltered life in Japanese-occupied Shanghai during the last year of World War II.*

Chiang, Yee. *The Men of the Burma Road*. New York: Transatlantic Arts, 1942. *A fictional account of two Chinese families' participation in the construction of the Burma Road, built by more than 200,000 Chinese laborers, often with the most primitive tools, in the mountains connecting southwest China to Burma after the Japanese army closed all of China's seaports.*

Cormack, Maribelle, & Pavel Bytovetzski; illustrated by Margaret Ayer. *Underground Retreat*. New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1946. *A thrilling story of an American girl, her British boyfriend, and a wealthy Chinese family being stranded in Nanking under Japanese attack. After organizing some sabotage actions against the occupation army, they flee by plane, by boat, by wheelbarrow, on foot, and finally settle down in an area of safety controlled by the Chinese Communist Party.*

DeJong, Meindert; illustrated by Maurice Sendak. *The House of Sixty Fathers*. New York: Harper, 1956. *Tien Pao is separated from his parents when the Japanese attack China. The boy witnesses the horrors of war, saves an American pilot from the Japanese, and finds a substitute family in the airman's barracks—which becomes "house of sixty fathers" to Tien Pao. DeJong's gripping account keeps you on edge until Tien Pao's final reunion with his parents.*

Lee, Milly; illustrated by Yangsook Choi. *Nim and the War Effort*. New York: Frances Foster Books/ Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997. *Set in San Francisco's Chinatown after America has been provoked to join China's fight against Imperial Japan, this is a rare story reflecting the sense of double identity which the Pacific War instilled in the Chinese community. In a busy day, the young protagonist Nim wins the paper drive for the war effort before attending her Chinese school as usual.*

Lewis, Elizabeth Foreman. *To Beat a Tiger, One Needs a Brother's Help*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1953

A group of teenage boys, separated from parents or orphaned, form a gang in wartime Shanghai. Occasionally they receive kind help from adults, but most of the time they survive by their wit, luck, and roughness they acquire over the years.

Mah, Adeline Yen. *Chinese Cinderella and the Secret Dragon Society*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.
After twelve-year-old Ye Xian is kicked out of her father's and stepmother's home in Shanghai, she is taken in by a kung fu academy and trained to secretly fight against the occupying Japanese.

Namioka, Lensey. *Mismatch*. New York: Delacorte, 2006.
A young adult romance novel set not during the war years but in contemporary America. The story illustrates how a war between Japan and China, having ended decades ago, is creating barriers to the relationship between a Chinese American girl and a Japanese American boy—barriers no fewer than those Romeo and Juliet faced.

Ruby, Lois. *Shanghai Shadows*. New York: Holiday House, 2006.
During World War II, Shanghai sheltered over tens of thousands of German, Austrian, and Polish Jewish refugees that escaped the Nazi terror. This book is a rare young adult novel about the survival of a Jewish family in Shanghai.

Sanford, Doris; illustrated by Graci Evans. *My Friend, the Enemy: Surviving a Prison Camp*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 1992.

This is a rare picture book rendition of two siblings' survival in a prison camp in China. Kathy and Dick, two Caucasian children separated from their parents, are among the 1,700 POWs put in this concentration camp by the Japanese. For five years until the war is over, they live on meager and wormy food, and under the threat of diseases and gun shots.

Smith, Icy; illustrated by Gayle Garner Roski. *Mei Ling in China City*. Manhattan Beach, CA: East West Discovery Press, 2008.

In wartime Los Angeles China City, a 12-year-old Mei Ling raises relief funds for refugees in China, while corresponding with her best friend Yayeko Akiyama, who has been taken away to a Japanese American internment camp. Additional facts and rich archival photographs are included at the end.

Vander Els, Betty. *The Bombers' Moon*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1985.
For four years, Ruth and her younger brother Simeon are separated from missionary parents and herded about with their schoolmates on an odyssey of escape from Japanese air attacks. The wartime adventure, narrated matter-of-factly, takes them from central China to India and back to Shanghai, where the family reunites.

###



Minjie Chen is a PhD candidate in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.