



The Golden Triangle:

Helping K-8 School Librarians and Educators Understand Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar (Burma) Histories, Cultures, and Literature



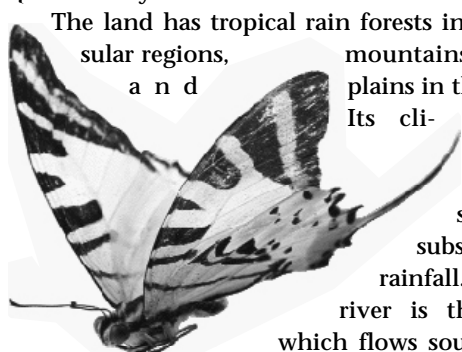
By Frank Alan Bruno and Patricia F. Beilke

The Golden Triangle is the area where Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), and Laos touch. It gets its name from this highland region's notoriety for growing bright golden and other colorful poppies. The poppies' lucrative byproduct, opium, is manufactured into morphine and heroin and sold illegally throughout the world. The Golden Triangle is known for its lovely forests, spectacular mountain scenery, pretty waterfalls, steaming hot springs, and many different hill tribe people.

THAILAND

Thailand, formerly called Siam, is known as *Muang Thai* or "land of the free." During much of its history it has avoided foreign domination and is currently ruled by Thai kings in a constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system. Thailand is bordered by Myanmar (Burma) to the west and northwest, Laos to the east and northeast, Cambodia to the southeast, and Malaysia to the south. The population is approximately 61 million.

The land has tropical rain forests in the south peninsular regions, and mountains in the north, plains in the central regions. Its climate is moderate, with three different monsoon seasons producing a substantial amount of rainfall. Thailand's main river is the Chao Phraya, which flows south to the Gulf of



Thailand. The Mekong River runs along its eastern border, dividing it from Laos.

People in this predominantly Theravada Buddhist country (less than five percent of the population is Muslim and Catholic) practice deeds that will lead to being reborn closer to *nirvana*, a state of heavenly habitation. The Buddhist practice of making merit through *tum bun* includes works of noble value, such as building temples or becoming monks and nuns as well as doing kind acts for others. Because of this practice the country is informally known as Land of Smiles. The most important thing is for each person to live in peace and harmony.

There are several major holidays: *Songkran*, or Thai New Year (April 13), *Visahka* (mid-May), and Rain Retreat (late July). Festivals include the Royal Ploughing Festival, the Rocket Festival, the King and Queen's Birthdays, *Ngan Duan Sib*, *Loy Krathong*, and the *Chiang Mai Flower Festival*.

Thais celebrate the New Year twice, on January 1 and on April 13. In preparation for *Songkran* people clean their houses thoroughly, discard worn-out clothing, and burn rubbish. Statues of Buddha are bathed in water as are people walking in the streets. Wet people are sometimes soaked with flour to make them look like ghosts. During the festival caged birds and other living creatures are released as examples of good merit. Buddhists also give food to monks and make offerings at the temples.

The Royal Ploughing Festival begins the rice planting season on May 16. The *Phya Raek Nah* (Lord of the Festival) performs a ceremony that predicts the upcoming year's rainfall. Later, he scatters buckets of rice seed. Farmers rush onto

the field and carry away a seed to mix later with their own for good luck.

During *Visakha*, Thais make offerings to Buddha of candles, incense, and lotus blossoms, and participants walk clockwise around the temple holding them. *Loy Krathong*, celebrated on the first full moon in November, is a ceremony in which colorful floating *krathongs* decorated like lotus flowers are set adrift on every river in Thailand. Children make the boats out of banana leaves. Inside are a lighted candle, an incense stick, candy, a coin, and a sprig of manila blossoms. The festival is held at the end of the monsoon season to thank the goddess *Mae Khongkha* (Mother Water) for the rice season and to make up for having used or polluted the water.

Ngan Duan Sib is like Halloween in that thousands of ghosts supposedly visit the Earth in the town of Nakhon Si Thammarat. The *phii prët* are released from Hell and are fed by the local people to keep them from causing trouble. Floats are made out of food, mostly candy.

In mid-November an interesting annual elephant round-up happens near the Cambodia border in the Thai town of Surin. More than a hundred elephants participate in various activities like elephant soccer, tug-of-war, and elephant racing.

While many Thais continue to support themselves through agriculture, tourism is one of the leading revenue producers for the country. Foreign firms have also located factories in Thailand because of cheap labor and lax environmental protection laws.

There are nearly 400,000 Thais in the United States and Canada. Many live on the west coast in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Vancouver. Nearly two-thirds own small businesses such as grocery stores, restaurants, and cleaners.

The literature included below presents the geography, history, and culture of Thailand and the diverse experiences of the Thai. Readers will learn of the folklore and history of the Thai people, their daily lives in Thailand, and the experiences of Thai Americans.

ANNOTATED THAI BIBLIOGRAPHY

Folklore

Hamada, Cheryl. *Kao and the Golden Fish*. Chicago: Children's Press, 1993. Unp. Illus. by Monica Liu. ISBN 0-516-05145-8. Gr. K-2.

This picture book can be used as an easy reader. A brief story text is included in the back on two pages. The plot involves Kao, a young girl whose mother and father die, leaving her alone and sad. She goes to a lake, and her mother, who is reincarnated as a fish, begins to talk to her. As the story progresses, her mother comes back in various forms.

Loy Krathong, celebrated on the first full moon in November, is a ceremony in which colorful floating krathongs decorated like lotus flowers are set adrift on every river in Thailand. Children make the boats out of banana leaves. Inside are a lighted candle, an incense stick, candy, a coin, and a sprig of manila blossoms.

Chinese brush paintings illustrate the book in pleasing shades of pink, brown, and green.

Ho, Minfong. *Hush! A Thai Lullaby*. New York: Orchard Books, 1996. Unp. Illus. by Holly Meade. ISBN 0-531-09500-2. Gr. K-2.

In this Caldecott Award-winning book, a mother asks a mosquito, a black cat, a gray mouse, a green frog, a fat pig, a white duck, a big elephant, and a monkey to be quiet while her baby is sleeping. The mother finally has a chance to rest, but of course baby has other ideas. Somber shades of black, brown, and green adorn the illustrations during the various night scenes.

Krudop, Walter Lyon. *The Man Who Caught Fish*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000. 32 pp. Illus. by the author. ISBN 0-374-34786-7. Gr. K-2.

A stranger hands out fish, one to a customer. The greedy and dissatisfied king wants a whole basket at once. He tries to outmaneuver the stranger, who sticks to his principles. In the end the king is taught a hard lesson. Soft impressionistic watercolors give the story a dreamlike quality.

MacDonald, Margaret Read, with Thai text by Supaporn Vathanaprida. *The Girl Who Wore Too Much*. Little Rock, Ark.: August House, 1998. Unp. Illus. by Yvonne Lebrun Davis. ISBN 0-87483-503-8. Gr. K-2.

Wealthy girl Aree can't decide which of her many jewels to wear to a party. She decides to wear all of them, producing some interesting results. The story is written in parallel English/Thai text. The watercolor illustrations employ beautiful, bright silk colors. The girl is characterized with rosy cheeks and a continuous smile. Buddhist symbols border each panel and influence both text and illustration.

MacDonald, Margaret Read, ed. *Thai Tales: Folktales of Thailand*. Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1994. 153 pp. Illus. by Boonsoong Rahitasuke. Retold by Supaporn Vathanaprida. ISBN 1-56308-096-6. Gr. 7-8.

More than 45 folktales are related, the most interesting "The Liars Contest of the King," "Sri Thanonchai and the Two Moons," "Tiger Seeks Wisdom," "The Honest Woodcut-ter," "The Pious Son-in-Law," "The Good Boy," "Kaeo the Horse Face Girl," and "The Daughters of Thao Kabin-larphron." The final chapter introduces Buddhist concepts such as making merit, self-reliance, consideration, humility, gentleness, and respect for elders. There are scattered photographs and

line drawings throughout the text.

Oliviero, Jamie. **Som See and the Magic Elephant.** New York: Hyperion, 1995. Unp. Illus. by JoAnne Kelly. ISBN 0-7868-0025-9. Gr. K-2.

Som See, a young girl, helps her elderly great-aunt Pa Nang ready herself for the next life. Her aunt tells her that when she was Som's age she found a white elephant and touched its trunk for good luck. Som embarks on a quest to find the elephant before her aunt dies. She encounters many interesting things in fulfilling the aunt's final request. Illustrator Kelly uses silk dyeing techniques that display vibrant pink, blue, and green colors in the various panels. She masterfully depicts the girl among flowers and lush green vegetation or while talking to animals or her aunt.

Fiction

Giles, Gail. **Breath of the Dragon.** New York: Clarion, 1997. 104 pp. Illus. by June Otani. ISBN 0-395-76476-9. Gr. 4-6.

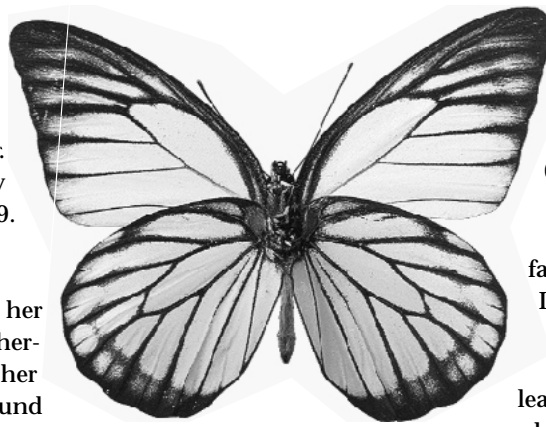
Malila's mother and sister go the United States to make a new life and save up to send for her. She stays behind in Thailand with her grandmother and begins to experience cruel behavior by neighbors and schoolmates. She is able to overcome the "breath of the dragon" through patience and kind deeds. While living with her grandmother she learns of her Thai culture and heritage. Pencil drawings show her with her grandmother or they depict the events she is learning. A list of Thai words and names are included after the story.

Glass, Tom. **Even a Little Is Something: Stories of Nong.** North Haven, Conn.: Linnet Books, 1997. 119 pp. Illus. by Elena Gerard. ISBN 0-208-02457-3. Gr. 5-8.

Eleven-year-old Nong learns the hard lessons of life as she tries to earn money to help her family survive. In 23 short episodes she encounters people in her village who teach her something about cultural values and human nature. A few line drawings complement the stories.

Ho, Minfong. **Rice without Rain.** New York: Lothrop, 1990. 236 pp. ISBN 0-688-06355-1. Gr. 7-8.

Students from universities throughout Thailand go into the country to learn about the ways of poor farmers. A few students request permission to stay in a small village in the highlands. The student rebels convince Inthorn, a village chief, to resist paying a land rent imposed on small farmers of up to half of their rice crop. His daughter Jinda, the main character, describes the results of the students' visit and her romance with one of them. The fictional story is based on the author's own experiences in the 1970s.



o, Minfong. **Sing to the Dawn.** New York: William Morrow, 1975. 160 pp. Illus. by Kwonejan Ho. ISBN 0-6884-1690-X. Gr. 7-8.

Dawan is reluctant to defy her father and take a scholarship in the city. In the end she is able to help her father get over his stereotypical beliefs and accept her going. Her brother also learns to make peace with her and overcomes his jealousy when she gets the opportunity to improve herself that he does not receive. In this autobiographical novel, the author shows the oppression women must overcome in Thai culture.

Marsden, Carolyn. **The Gold-Threaded Dress.** Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 2002. 73 pp. ISBN 0-7636-1569-2. Gr. 2-4.

This first chapter book features Oy, a fourth grader who has recently immigrated from Thailand to the United States. Trying to fit into a predominantly Latino school, she brings a ceremonial Thai dress to impress the other girls. They ruin the dress, and Oy must face the consequences both at school and at home.

Marsden, Carolyn. **Silk Umbrellas.** Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 2004. 135 pp. ISBN 0-7636-2257-5. Gr. 4-6.

Eleven-year-old Noi and her older sister, Ting, are learning to paint silk umbrellas to sell at the tourist market near their jungle village. But when the landlord sells the land on which the family's farm is located to a developer of resort houses, Ting must go to work in a factory. The same fate awaits Noi unless her painting is good enough for the tourists. The moment of truth comes during the harvest festival of Loy Krathong. A brief glossary follows the story.

Richardson, Judith. **First Came the Owl.** New York: Dell, 1996. 160 pp. ISBN 0-440-41392-3. Gr. 3-5.

Nita Orson, a fifth grader, is a biracial child of a white father and a Thai mother. Her mother suffers a bout of depression after visiting her homeland. Her father institutionalizes her mother and goes on a long trip. Nita learns to cope with her life and takes comfort in seeing snow owls, who give her hope that her life will return back to the way it was before.

Rogers, Richard and Hammerstein, Oscar II. **The King and I.** New York: Scholastic, 1999. 32 pp. Adapted and illustrated by Helen Perelman. ISBN 0-590-68064-1. Gr. K-2.

This is the classic rendition of Anna, who teaches the King's children in exchange for a house outside the palace

walls for her son Louis. The ending deviates from other versions and will be a pleasant surprise to readers who know the story. Bright colorful illustrations make this an attractive edition.

Sleator, William. *Dangerous Wishes*. New York: Puffin, 1997. 192 pp. ISBN 0-14-038174-0. Gr. 7-8.

Dom Kamen, a cool teenager, moves to Bangkok with his parents. His sister had lost a jade necklace while she was traveling to Thailand that he hopes to recover. The first day he meets another boy, Lek, who has some unusual supernatural powers. The new house is purported to be haunted. The story takes on some twists involving his new friend and the creative way Dom overcomes the family's bad luck. This surreal novel is sure to interest even the most reluctant of readers.

Culture and History

Bailey, Donna. *Thailand*. Austin, Tex.: Steck-Vaughn, 1991. 32 pp. Series: Where We Live. ISBN 0-8114-2570-3. Gr. K-2.

A photographic depiction of a little girl, Chula, and what she encounters while living in Bangkok. The color photos show her and other children in various daily settings, from riding in a *tuk-tuk* (motorized bike) to going to market to attending festivals. Indexed.

Borass, Tracy. *Thailand*. Mankato, Minn.: Bridgestone Books, 2003. 64 pp. ISBN 0-7368-0940-6. Gr. 4-8.

The chapters include information about the land, climate, wildlife, history, government, economy, culture, and daily life. Fast facts are interspersed throughout the sections, giving information about such topics as life expectancy, literacy rate, and population distribution. Colorful photos help the reader to visualize people and places. Indexed.

Brittan, Dolly. *The People of Thailand*. New York: Rosen/PowerKids, 1997. 24 pp. ISBN 0-8239-5126-X. Gr. 2-4.

A basic guide that covers a few simple terms such as Thailand, Bangkok, temples, culture, *klongs*, Buddhism, and looms. A pronunciation guide is given as the child encounters the word in its context. Only one or two words are explained per page. A glossary in the back lists all the words. Bright, colorful photos show people in interesting poses. Indexed.

Campbell, Geoffrey A. *Thailand*. San Diego: Lucent, 2002. 112 pp. Series: Modern Nations of the World. ISBN 1-56006-866-3. Gr. 7-8.

With its higher vocabulary and use of research notes, this guide is written for an upper-grade audience. The book examines the history of the country, its resources, its political process, diversity of the people, arts, culture, and challenges facing Thailand in a global perspective. The author treats a

few sensitive issues such as prostitution, drug use, and AIDS. The occasional black-and-white photos are interesting and depict people and places realistically. Includes facts about Thailand, notes, a chronology, suggestions for further reading, works consulted, web sites (mostly U.S. government sites), and an index.

Cherry, Ronald. *Thailand*. Milwaukee, Wis.: Gareth Stevens, 2000. 96 pp. Series: Countries of the World. ISBN 0-8368-2327-3. Gr. 4-8.

This brief treatment includes an overview of the country, a look at the people and culture, and relations with North America. Topics covered include geography, history, government, lifestyle, language, literature, arts, festivals, food, architecture, refugees, music, and tourism. Following the text is an information section with an index and additional sources. The selected photos feature bright reds and greens in clothing and objects.

Darling, Kathy. *The Elephant Hospital*. Brookfield, Conn.: Millbrook, 2002. Illus. with photos by Tara Darling. 40 pp. ISBN 0-7613-1723-6. Gr. 4-6.

This photo essay describes veterinarians in Lampang, Thailand, who take care of pregnant and newborn elephants and work on elephants who have been abused in logging operations. The reader learns about the work of the clinic and about the gray elephant's life and struggle. Color photos show us both the veterinarians treating the elephants and what the elephant's life is like in the logging camps.

Ericson, Alex. *Thailand*. Chanhassen, Minn.: The Child's World, 2002. 32 pp. Series: Faces and Places. ISBN 1-56766-913-1. Gr. 2-4.

In addition to basic facts about the country and trivia, this attractive early reader includes vocabulary terms for such concepts as plants, animals, city life, country life, schools, language, work, food, pastimes, and holidays. A glossary, a list of web sites, and an index conclude the volume. The few color photos included are unique to this title.

Goodman, Jim. *Thailand*. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 2000. 128 pp. Series: Cultures of the World. ISBN 1-85435-402-7. Gr. 4-8.

This brief history covers geography, history, government, economy, lifestyle, religion, language, art, leisure, festivals, and foods. Many attractive photos, almost one per page, are helpful in understanding the culture and the people portrayed. Quick notes, a glossary, and a bibliography are in the back.

Hill, Valerie. *Thailand*. Broomall, Pa.: Mason Crest Publishers, 2002. 47 pp. Series: Ask About Asia. ISBN 1-59084-205-7. Gr. 4-6.

An excellent guide filled with useful information and his-

tory. There are numerous interesting color photos with complete captions that offer facts about the country and people. Indexed.

Holland, Cecilia. ***Anna and the King***. Collingdale, Pa.: DIANE Pub. Co., 2001. 137 pp. ISBN 0-7881-9840-8. Gr. 6-8.

Holland narrates the true history behind Anna Leonowens and the Siamese royal family, as well as the political and cultural rise and fall of Siam.

Hossell, Karen Price. ***Thai Americans***. Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2004. 32 pp. Series: We Are America. ISBN 1-4034-5025-0. Gr. 2-4.

This overview of Thai immigration to the United States features copious photos and maps. Chapters cover history of immigration, adjustment to American life, jobs, family life, food, festivals, and illegal immigrants. Key concepts are boldfaced in the text and defined in a glossary. Indexed.

Komar, Vitaly and Melamid, Alexander, with Mia Fineman. ***When Elephants Paint: The Quest of Two Russian Artists to Save the Elephants of Thailand***. New York: HarperCollins, 2000. 99 pp. Introduction by David Eggers. ISBN 0-06-0955965-1. Gr. 7-8.

In an effort to preserve the Thai elephant, Komar and Melamid go to Thailand and set up a school of elephant painters, in which the elephants are the artists. The book is divided into an explanation of the school, the plight of the elephants, and a description of their work. The photos are plentiful and fascinating.

McNair, Sylvia. ***Bangkok***. New York: Children's Press, 1999. 64 pp. Series: Cities of the World. ISBN 0-516-21195-1. Gr. 2-4.

In this book about Thailand's capital, McNair offers concise information about the Chao Phraya River, family life, the city's history, touring Bangkok, neighborhoods, and famous landmarks. In the back there are fast facts, a map, a glossary, and an index. The photos are interesting and colorful, above the usual fare of children's travel guides.

McNair, Sylvia. ***Thailand***. New York: Children's Press, 1998. Series: Enchantment of the World, Second Series. ISBN 0-516-21100-5. Gr. 4-6.

The author does a thorough job covering the history and daily life of the Thai for her audience. Included are fast facts, a map, a glossary, and an index. Photos are well chosen.

Peterson, David. ***Thailand, A True Book***. New York: Children's Press, 2001. 48 pp. ISBN 0-516-22258-9. Gr. 1-2.

A large-type reader about the Thai people, elephants,

religion, food, and culture. Young readers learn basic Thai phrases. Attractive glossy color photos adorn every other page. In the back are additional resources, a glossary, and an index.

Sipe, Daniel. ***Kickboxing: The Modern Martial Art***. Mankato, Minn.: Capstone, 1994. 48 pp. Series: Action Sports. ISBN 0-51640-203-X. Gr. 7-8.

Sipe portrays this popular Thai sport in a book well suited for reluctant readers. Color photos depict fighters in action.

Townsend, Sue. ***Thailand***. Chicago: Heinemann Library, 2002. Series: A World of Recipes. 48 pp. ISBN 1-58810-612-8. Gr. 3-5.

Children will enjoy learning about the food and customs of Thailand. Color photos illustrate children enjoying themselves in fun culinary activities.

Thomson, Ruth and Thomson, Neil. ***A Family in Thailand***. Minneapolis: Lerner, 1988. 32 pp. ISBN 0-8225-1684-5. Gr. 2-4.

The book follows an 11-year-old and her extended family in the city of Pa Bong in northern Thailand. We see the family making a living and the children going to school, playing after school, and visiting the market in the city. Color photos help the reader visualize daily activities.

Whyte, Harlinah. ***Thailand***. Milwaukee, Wis.: Gareth Stevens, 1998. Series: Festivals of the World. 32 pp. ISBN 0-8368-2009-6. Gr. 4-8.

The Thai take festivals seriously, calling them *ngan phi thee* (work ceremonies) that give them time to rest from agricultural labor. The major Thai festivals of *Songkran*, *Loy Krathong*, and *Ngan Duan Sib* are intricately described. Some activities are included, such as making a *krathong* and watermelon slushes, a favorite treat. Color photos show children in traditional clothing. Indexed.

Wilkins, Frances. ***Thailand***. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 2000. 103 pp. Series: Major World Nations. ISBN 0-7910-5400-4. Gr. 4-8.

This guide covers many different topics, including history, Buddhism, the city of Bangkok, the Hill Tribes, agriculture, industry, education, medicine, transportation, festivals, games, sports, and entertainment. A glossary and an index are included. The black-and-white photos and few color ones are a bit outdated, grainy, and out of focus.

Windham, Jeannette P. ***The Land of Smiles and Royal White Elephants: Let's Travel to Thailand Together***. Tampa, Fla.: Global Age Publishing, 1996. 80 pp. Series: Windows on the World. ISBN 1-887176-08-X. Gr. 5-8.

This travel guide is written from a teacher's perspective for children in middle school. In this account Windham runs into a young girl, Sumran, who guides her through the cultural process. It is a bit preachy but has some interesting information about the country and people as well as tips on etiquette. Includes black-and-white photos and illustrations.

Wynaden, Jo and Cherry, Ronald. **Welcome to Thailand.** Milwaukee, Wis.: Gareth Stevens, 2001. 48 pp. Series: Welcome to My Country. ISBN 0-8368-2527-6. Gr. 2-4.

This basic guide for younger students covers key concepts and terms about the land, history, government, people, lifestyles, language, arts, leisure, and food. In the back are a map, quick facts, a glossary, additional print and nonprint sources, and an index. There is at least one color photo per page.

MYANMAR (BURMA)

Myanmar (Burma) is located along the eastern coasts of the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea in Southeast Asia. Early in its history, its kings built an elaborate capital called Bagan (Pagan), which had more than 4,000 pagodas scattered over 15 square miles in a loop of the Irrawaddy River.

The United States government has officially criticized Myanmar's policy of large-scale repression. Much of the current repression stems from the refusal of the Burmese military to allow the democratic government elected in 1990 to take office. The military junta's government, known as State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), has ruled by force. During the past decade, tens of thousands of SLORC opponents have been brutally killed or disappeared. It is not unusual for dissidents to be pressed into slave labor, where they are literally worked to death. Despite its Buddhist tradition of peaceful living, Myanmar (Burma) has been in turmoil during much of its history. The exiled government and the U.S. government refer to it as Burma, while the government-in-power calls it Myanmar.

Since her election in 1990, Myanmar's president-elect Aung San Suu Kyi has been held under house arrest for more than half of the past decade. Currently she is allowed only limited freedom. In 1991 she won the Nobel Peace Prize and used the prize money to help the families of political prisoners. Singer Bono from U2 dedicated the hit song "Walk On" to her.

There are between 50,000 and 100,000 Burmese refugees in the United States, including Aung San Suu Kyi's brother. The largest community is in Los Angeles. Burmese enclaves exist in Brooklyn, New York, and Manalapan, New Jersey, where the American Burma Buddhist Association holds religious activities. There are also groups in Pomona and Azusa, California, where retreat centers are located, and smaller communities in Illinois, Florida, Nevada, Texas, and Maryland.

In Myanmar it is not uncommon to see ritual dancing in the streets during ceremonies for 37 powerful national spirits, or *nats*, who died tragic deaths. These ceremonies are known as *nat-pwe* (spirit show). The spirit dancers or

mediums, mostly female, dress in prescribed costumes. They bow to the spirit, chant a song, and then begin dancing. *Pwe* ceremonies are often accompanied by games of chance for money. *Pwes* can last all day and night, with audience members napping or munching on snacks of roasted peanuts or spiced fruit.

Pwes are common during *Thingyan*, the Water Festival, a three-day holiday in April to celebrate the Burmese New Year. Revelers douse unsuspecting people with water from squirt guns, water balloons, fire hoses, garden hoses, and buckets to wash away the offenders' past bad deeds. Young people wash the hair of their elders; Buddha images are ceremoniously cleansed; and monks, or *phongyi* (pong-ye), are given special food offerings.

Also in mid-April to mid-May, Buddhist worshippers take part in the Banyan Tree-Watering Ceremony. Every pagoda and monastery has a banyan tree planted to commemorate Buddha receiving enlightenment under the tree; in the ceremony people take turns watering the tree. In mid-June devout Buddhists present monks with special robes to wear during the three-month period of Lent. At the end of Lent is a Festival of Lights when every pagoda, home, and public office is decked out with either candles or electric lights.

Burmese emphasize Buddhist ideals that children should learn proper social and moral values. Books for children include stories of correct behavior, especially compassion and loving-kindness for others. Although the literacy rate is low, when education is possible both boys and girls are encouraged to attend.

The literature included below presents the geography, history, and culture of Myanmar (Burma) and the diverse experiences of Burmese. Readers will learn of the folklore and history of the Burmese people, their daily lives in Burma and life in exile, their extended families, and their struggles for independence, freedom, and social justice.

ANNOTATED MYANMAR (BURMA) BIBLIOGRAPHY

Folklore

Froese, Deborah. **The Wise Washerman: A Folktale from Burma.** New York: Hyperion, 1996. Unp. Illus. by Wang Kui. ISBN 0-7868-2232-5. Gr. K-2.

Naranthu, a lazy potter jealous of the success of his neighbor Aung Kyaing, tries to destroy him by forcing him to wash an elephant. Aung cleverly turns the tables, causing his nemesis to be banished. A useful "Author's Note" discusses the country's background and New Year celebrations. Gouache and watercolor illustrations employ rich colors to draw our attention to the characters and objects in the story; the backgrounds are muted and dreamlike, with traditional symbols as borders.

Ledgard, Edna. **The Snake Prince and Other Stories: Burmese Folk Tales.** Northampton, Mass.: Interlink, 2000. 231 pp. ISBN 1-56656-313-5. Gr. 5-8.

The book is divided into five parts: Tales of Wonder and Romance; Crafty Villains, Clever Opponents and Fools; Wise Judges and Fair Decisions; the Creatures of Jambudipa; and Jataka Tales. Each section has five stories, for 25 tales in all. A few more popular ones include "The Snake Prince," "The Tickling Nat," "Four Foolish Brothers," "Ma Chit Su," "The Magic Mango," and "How Turtle Saved His Life." A chronology of Burmese history, a glossary, and a bibliography follow the stories.

Fiction

Baillie, Allan. *Rebel*. New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1994. Unp. Illustrated by Di Wu. ISBN 0-395-69250-4. Gr. K-4.

A tyrannical general orders tanks to roll over a school's fence, slides, swings, and monkey bars. The schoolchildren and their family are frightened as he declares that everything belongs to him and that he will take half of all their crops. An anonymous hero flings a thong out the school's window in protest; it knocks off the general's hat and causes everyone to laugh. The general orders everyone outside to find the rebel, but none of the teachers or students is wearing shoes. The book is based on a true story. Illustrations are soft watercolors and colored pencil drawings.

Brookes, Stephen. *Through the Jungle of Death: A Boy's Escape from Wartime Burma*. New York: Wiley, 2000. 261 pp. ISBN 0-471-41569-3. Gr. 7-8.

This book includes an excellent "Prologue" that includes unusual historical details about the history of Burma/Myanmar leading up to World War II. The author was 11 years old when his family was forced to flee to India as a result of the Japanese invasion. The family was posted to in Maymyo, a pretty hill station, where retired military and government officers spent their last days in plush green gardens eating strawberries, which grew in abundance. His father, born in India of British descent, was a major and a medical surgeon in the Indian army. His mother was Burmese. Told in the first person, this well-detailed story is both emotional and filled with adventure. The family struggles to survive the ravishing effects of the Japanese occupation, which included cholera and starvation, as they make their way to freedom and safety.

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Glass Palace*. New York: Random House, 2001. 474 pp. ISBN 0-375-50687-X. Gr. 8-up.

This interesting and provocative love story is set in Mandalay in 1885, where British troops have taken the Burmese royal family into exile. Eleven-year-old Rajkumar, who has lost his family to illness in India, encounters lovely 10-year-old Dolly, an orphan who serves the queen. He vows to someday meet her again when he is grown up. Nearly 20 years later Rajkumar, wealthy from the teak business, and Dolly, now head of the royal household, meet and marry.

Through friendship and marriage, their family becomes involved with two other families, and all are seen in the context of the political conflicts and events of the time in Burma, India, and Malaysia. The story traces their interactions through three generations until the present day.

Biography

Benge, Janet Hazel and Benge, Geoffrey Francis. *Adoniram Judson: Bound for Burma*. Edmonds, Wash.: YWAM, 2000. 192 pp. Series: Christian Heroes. ISBN 1-57658-161-6. Gr. 5-8.

The Benges tell the story of Judson, one of the earliest Christian missionaries, who went to Burma and started a mission. He not only mastered the language but also translated the Bible into Burmese for the first time.

Jackson, Dave and Jackson, Neta. *Imprisoned in the Golden City: Adoniram and Ann Judson*. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1993. 160 pp. Series: Trailblazer Books. ISBN 1-55661-269-9. Gr. 3-5.

Two young Burmese girls are rescued from danger by an American missionary couple, Adoniram and Ann Judson. The girls had become separated from their father by a dangerous 350-mile river trip. After taking in the girls as foster children, the two missionaries are accused of being British spies and cast into prison. How the couple is released and returns the girls to their father is an exciting story.

Ling, Bettina. *Aung San Suu Kyi: Standing Up for Democracy in Burma*. New York: Feminist Press, 1999. 112 pp. Series: Women Changing the World. Foreword by Charlotte Bunch. ISBN 1-55861-197-5. Gr. 6-8.

This biography relates details that humanize the rights activist. Kyi's personal reflections on family members and experiences help the reader understand her feelings. Thirty-two photos help us visualize her major life events. A glossary, chronology, and "Further Readings" section as well as a few Internet sites for more in-depth research are included. This exceptionally well-written and illustrated biography is recommended for middle school and up.

Stewart, Whitney. *Aung San Suu Kyi: Fearless Voice of Burma*. Minneapolis: Lerner, 1997. ISBN 0-8225-4931-X. Gr. 5-8.

Stewart's style is balanced, and she adds many personal details gleaned while visiting Burma/Myanmar with Kyi and Kyi's close friends/acquaintances. The author covers Kyi's political life in great detail, especially the sacrifices she made sending her family to England and how she remained behind to help her fellow Burmese even under dangerous circumstances. Stewart captures the essence of Kyi on the last page where she quotes her: "The future of course is democracy for Burma. It is going to happen, and I'm going to be

here when it happens.” The crisp narrative sets a standard for other biographies on her life. Stewart’s choice of photos includes many not seen in the few other works available.
Culture and History

Khng, Pauline. **Myanmar**. Milwaukee: Gareth Stevens, 2000. 96 pp. Series: Countries of the World. ISBN 0-8368-2320-6. Gr. 4-8.

The first section of this book covers geography, history, government and economy, people and lifestyle, language and literature, arts, leisure and festivals, and food. The second section addresses cultural topics such as hill minorities, the human rights struggle, Lacquer ware, Land of the Pagodas, urban centers, vanishing forests, and the war against drugs. In the back are basic facts, a glossary, books, videos, web sites, and an index. Large color photos attractively illustrate the text.

Kyi, Aung San Suu. **Burma (Myanmar)**. Broomall, Pa.: Chelsea House, 1988. 120 pp. Series: Let’s Visit Places and People of the World. ISBN 0-222-00979-9. Gr. 6-8.

The noted leader and activist gives a personal history and description of the people of her country. Color photos illustrate her account.

Singer, Noel F. **Burmese Puppets**. Gartmore, Stirlingshire, Scotland: Kiscadale Publications, 1993. 98 pp. ISBN 0-19588-589-9. Gr. 5-8.

Youq-the pwe, Burmese Marionette Theater, uses large colorful marionettes in plays that reenact Buddhist moral themes. Most marionettes are made from cotton using colored beads and sequins and are colored with natural dyes. The book traces the history of these puppets.

Smith, Roland and Schmidt, Michael J. **In the Forest with the Elephants**. San Diego: Harcourt, 1998. ISBN 0-15-201289-3. Gr. 5-8.

This is a descriptive account of a day in the life of elephants trained to work in the timber camps where teak is harvested. Color photos show a few different elephants with their *oozies* (trainers). Various Burmese work commands are explained. The book includes a discussion of the teak industry, how teak is harvested and conserved, and the fact that the Asian elephant is an endangered species. Schmidt travels regularly to Burma/Myanmar to conduct field research.

Wright, David K. **Burma**. Chicago: Children’s Press, 1991. 121 pp. Series: Enchantment of the World. ISBN 0-516-02725-5. Gr. 5-8.

This series title covers geography, history, government, economy, social problems, religion, culture, and daily life. Chapters offer interesting details, facts, and descriptions.

Color photos complement the text and show important historical figures as well as people in their daily lives. An index and a section of “Mini-Facts” are included.

Yin, Saw Myat. **Burma**. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1993. 128 pp. Series: Cultures of the World. ISBN 1-85435-299-1. Gr. 4-8.

Noted Burmese scholar Yin discusses geography, history, government, economy, food, lifestyle, religion, language, arts, leisure, festivals, and people. Included are “Quick Notes,” a glossary, and a bibliography. Color photos add perspective.

Yip, Dora and Khng, Pauline. **Welcome to Myanmar**. Milwaukee, Wis.: Gareth Stevens, 2001. 48 pp. Series: Welcome to My Country. ISBN 0-8368-2520-9. Gr. 2-4.

The authors give an overview of the geography, history, government, economy, people, and culture. Color photos help us visualize the lives of the Burmese people and the land of great hornbills and golden pagodas.

LAOS

Although Laos has existed as a country for 700 years, it has been open for tourism and unrestricted foreign travel only for the past decade. Mountains keep the country isolated along most of its borders except at Thailand’s Korat Plateau. Most cities of any size are near the Mekong River and its tributaries, which run along the western border of the country. The closest outlet to the ocean is hundreds of miles south down the Mekong in Cambodia.

Laos’s population is approximately 5.5 million. The official language is Lao, with secondary languages of French, English, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Russian. The four major ethnic groups are the Lao Theung, Lao Sung, Lao Loum, and the Yao. Lao Loum comprise more than half the population (68 percent) and live in the Mekong delta growing sticky rice. Lao Loum practice Theravada Buddhism, which is considered the state religion. Lao Theung make up slightly less than a quarter of the population and are mostly hill tribes who practice animism or spirit worship. About ten percent of the population are Lao Sung, who live in the high mountains. The two better-known groups of the Lao Sung are the Mien and the Hmong, many of whom have migrated to the United States. The Yao descended from the Chinese and are the smallest percentage of the group. In addition, there are thousands of Han Chinese, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Thais, and Burmese in the country.

Although Theravada Buddhism is considered the dominant religion, animism has a strong influence. In rural areas many rituals and beliefs contain elements of ancestral or spirit worship. Many villages have not only Buddhist monks but also a shaman who practices magic healing.

Laos has been caught in the middle of conflicts between neighboring countries throughout its history. Past occupiers include Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar (Burma), France, and

Because of their conflicts with the communists, alliance with American forces during the war, and subsequent immigration to the United States, the Hmong are the best known of Laos's ethnic groups.

Japan. The United States fought battles there in the 1970s. The country was able to gain self-rule in December 1975 when the Pathet Lao, a Communist group, formed a coalition government.

The country encounters challenges from the weather, as seasonal monsoons drop an average of 100 inches of rain between May and October. Monsoons cause considerable damage from flooding along the Mekong River and its tributaries. Predominantly rural and isolated, with its economy based on subsistence farming, Laos is one of the poorest countries in the world.

Because of their conflicts with the communists, alliance with American forces during the war, and subsequent immigration to the United States, the Hmong are the best known of Laos's ethnic groups. The tribe is divided into subgroups such as Striped Hmong, Flowery Hmong, White Hmong, and Blue/Green Hmong. There are about 18 or 19 different clans within the subgroups who bear the same last name.

About 200,000 Hmong live in the United States today, concentrated in Minnesota's Twin Cities area and in various cities in the Central Valley of California. About 150,000 other people of Laotian descent live in the United States, the vast majority of these in California. Other Hmong and Laotian communities may be found in Texas and in the city of Seattle.

Major holidays are *Pi Mai Lao* (the Lao New Year) in mid-April, *Bun Bang Fai* (the Rocket Festival) in May, *Bun Pai* (the Water Festival) in October, and National Day on December 2.

During the New Year all are targeted to be drenched with water to bring them good luck. People clean out their houses to rid them of bad spirits. The local statue of Buddha is washed and shined up. Birds and small animals are set free as a gesture of freeing the soul to do well throughout the year.

The Rocket Festival celebrates the life of Buddha and a primitive rainmaking practice that predates Buddhism. Rockets are launched to seek divine favor and in hopes of producing rain. Villages compete in firing the most colorful and complex rockets. The Water Festival is marked by boat races all over the country. National Day commemorates the birth of the Lao People's Democratic Republic and is celebrated with speeches and parades.

The literature included below presents the geography, history, and culture of Laos and the diverse experiences of Laotians, both in the country and in exile. Many of the books are products of Hmong presses in the United States.

ANNOTATED LAOTIAN BIBLIOGRAPHY

Folklore

Coburn, Jewell Reinhart. *Encircled Kingdom: Legends and Folktales of Laos*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Burn, Hart

and Co., 1994. 108 pp. Illus. by Nena Grigorian Ullberg. ISBN 0-918060-06-0. Gr. 5-8.

The author has chosen 23 well-known Laotian folktales. She includes detailed notes explaining history and descriptions of cultural practices among various tribes. Although only pencil sketches, the illustrations are quite attractive and well done. A longer bilingual tale, *The Rooster and the Jewel*, has parallel English/Laotian text. A teachers' guide is included.

Coburn, Jewell Reinhart and Lee, Tzexa Cherta. *Jouanah: A Hmong Cinderella*. Arcadia, Calif.: Shen's Books, 1996. Illus. by Anne Sibley O'Brien. Unp. ISBN 1-885008-01-5. Gr. 2-5.

The illustrator shows the decorative style of clothing and items used by the Blue Hmong clan through verdant vibrant greens, rich browns, and deep blues. Her impressionistic style depicts the main character in focus and secondary ones slightly out of focus.

Day, Nancy Raines. *Piecing Earth and Sky Together: A Creation Story from the Mien Tribe of Laos*. Fremont, Calif.: Shen's Books, 2001. Illus. by Genna Penzarella. ISBN 1-885008-19-8. Gr. 2-4.

Faam Koh and Faam Toh have come down from the sky to embroider the world, but when it is finally time to reveal their handiwork to each other, they find that the earth and sky don't fit together. Illustrations in varying shades of blue enhance the story.

Epstein, Steven. *Lao Folktales: Tales of Turtles, Tigers and Toads*. Vientiane, Laos: Vientiane Times, 1999. 58 pp. ISBN 0-9661458-1-X. Gr. 4-6.

A collection of zany Laotian tales about common animals.

Epstein, Steven. *Lao Folktales: Xieng Mieng, The Cleverest Man in the World*. Vientiane, Laos: Vientiane Times, 1998. 58 pp. ISBN Gr. 4-6.

In these 12 trickster tales, the commoner Xieng Mieng uses his wits to outwit the king and other wealthy men.

Giacchino-Baker, Rosalie. *Stories from Laos: Folktales and Cultures of the Lao, Hmong, Khammu, and Lu-Mien*. Covina, Calif.: Pacific Asia Press, 1995. 106 pp. Illus. by Tongsay Phouvong Kamchay, Sakda Bopho Ampalak, and Philom Somsuthi. Trans. by Charlie Chue Chang, Thomas Manokoune, and David B. Cooke. ISBN 1-879600-31-5. Gr. 5-8.

Eight stories from four different ethnic groups help give the reader an appreciation for Laotian culture. Bilingual English/Lao text helps readers adapt to a new language. A brief historical overview and descriptions of places and customs are included as notes after each story. The pencil illustrations are quite detailed, with exceptionally clear expressions.

Giacchino-Baker, Rosalie. *The Story of Mah: A Hmong "Romeo and Juliet."* Los Angeles: Pacific Asia Press, 1997. 30 pp. Illus. by Lillian Shao. ISBN 1-879600-97-8. Gr. 3-4.

Mah falls in love with Leu Xeng. Her family has arranged a marriage with a different young man. Leu becomes sad and dies. Mah cannot contain her grief and soon follows to be with her love in another world, where she believes they can be together. The illustrations are beautifully done, with exquisite borders.

Livio, Norma J. and Cha, Dia. *Folk Stories of the Hmong: Peoples of Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam.* Englewood, Colo.: Libraries Unlimited, 1991. 135 pp. ISBN 0-87287-854-6. Gr. 5-8.

A detailed introduction contains historical information about the Hmong and their culture, including traditional beliefs and customs and Hmong folk art. The folk stories are divided into three sections: In the Beginning; How/Why Folk Stories; and Folk Stories of Love, Magic, and Fun. A Hmong version of Cinderella, "Ngao Nao and Shee Na" is included. Color photographic plates show Hmong women in native dress, including symbolic headdresses.

Lucas, Alice. *Four Champa Trees.* San Francisco: Zellerbach Family Fund, 1990. 13 pp. Told by Issara Katay Sasorith. Retold by Alice Lucas. Illus. by You-Shan Tang. Trans. by Mahn Phongboupha. Gr. K-2.

When a king leaves his queen (who is going to give birth) to save his kingdom, a vengeful second wife snatches the four babies and casts them adrift on the river. The boys grow up, and the second wife learns of their whereabouts. She poisons them, and *Champa* trees grow over their tombs. The second wife has her servants cut down the trees and throw them into the river. A holy prophet finds the blossoms dripping with blood and spills holy water on them, which transforms them back into men. Parallel English/Lao translations are included. Pen-and-ink illustrations add a sense of action to the story.

Snook, Randy, comp. *Many Ideas Open the Way: A Collection of Hmong Proverbs.* Fremont, Calif.: Shen's Books, 2004. 32 pp. Illus. with photos by the author. ISBN 1-885008-23-6, \$16.95. All ages.

Snook's stunning color photos of Hmong people in traditional dress highlight 20 proverbs in English and Lao concerning family relationships, society, and attitudes toward life.

Spagnoli, Cathy. *Thao Kham, the Pebble Shooter.* Bothell, Wash.: The Wright Group, 1997. 32 pp. Illus. by Chi Chung. ISBN 0-7802-1481-1. Gr. K-2.

This humorous story is about Thao Kham, an invalid Lao boy who sits under a banyan tree. After his friends leave, he amuses himself by shooting pebbles. He becomes so adept that he is able to make art out of the leaves he shoots with his pebbles, a skill that attracts the notice of the king. The illustrations use flesh tones and peach colors effectively.

Thao, Cher. *Only a Toad: A Bilingual Hmong Folk Tale.* Green Bay, Wis.: Brian Marchant, 1993. 30 pp. Adapted by Brian and Heather Marchant. Illus. by Ya Lee. ISBN 188529802-1. Gr. K-2.

A discontented toad wishes he could be more powerful, and every time he sees another animal he wishes he could be that animal. In the end he discovers that it is not so bad being a toad. Pencil drawings accompany the text.

Xiong, Bli. *Nine-in-One Grr! Grr! A Folktale from the Hmong People of Laos.* San Francisco: Children's Book Press, 1989. 30 pp. Adapted by Cathy Spagnoli. Illus. by Nancy Hom. ISBN 0-89239-048-4. Gr. K-2.

This delightful story teaches children about the balance of nature. Tiger has been promised by the great God Shao that every year that she remembers his words, "Nine each year," she will have nine baby tigers. A crow, afraid that tigers will become too numerous, tricks tiger into thinking she will have one every nine years. The illustrations are colorful silk screens and watercolors designed in the pattern of embroidered Hmong story cloths. Bright yellow thread draws our attention to the tiger in each panel.

Fiction

Campbell, Rod and Xiong, Bli. *I Won't Bite!/Kuv Tsis Tom!* Union City, Calif.: Pan Asian Publications, 1996. ISBN 0-9072-6476-X. Gr. K-2.

This easy reader includes stories about Southeast Asian animals. The tale of the alligator is especially engaging.

Cook, Jennifer. *Flight Across the Mekong.* Toronto: TSAR, 1999. 181 pp. ISBN 0-920661-79-3. Gr. 6-8.

This historical novel is set in 1975, when Laos fell to the communists. Harry and Anna, a couple of Canadian teenagers living in Laos, help a family escape across the border to Thailand.

Fitzpatrick, D. M. *Kaying and Chay: A Hmong Odyssey.* Sparta, Wis.: Prell Publishing, 1998. unpp. ISBN 1-889406-04-X. Gr. 7-8.

After the war in Laos, a young Hmong man and woman are driven from their home and pledge to stay together despite all obstacles. They struggle to overcome both family opposi-

tion and events that keep them from fulfilling their dream of marrying. These include being sent to reeducation camp, time in a refugee camp in Thailand, and eventual emigration to the United States.

Gogol, Sara. *Vatsana's Lucky New Year*. Minneapolis: Lerner, 1992. 156 pp. ISBN 0-8225-0734-X. Gr. 4-6.

Vatsana must stand up to a bully at school who is picking on her newly arrived cousin from Laos. In helping her cousin adjust to the new land, Vatsana confronts her own prejudices and discovers her family's roots.

Marchant, Brian. *A Boy Named Chong*. Green Bay, Wis.: Project Chong, 1992. 32 pp. Illus. by Ya Lee. Gr. 2-4.

A Hmong boy flees from Laos with his grandfather to Thailand and then comes to America. The boy struggles to learn English and fit in. Marchant uses a limerick style to make the story fast moving and light.

Shea, Pegi Dietz. *Tangled Threads: A Hmong Girl's Story*. New York: Clarion, 2003. 236 pp. ISBN 0-618-24748-3, \$15.00.

A 15-year-old orphan emigrates with her grandmother from the refugee camp in Thailand, where they have lived for the past ten years, to Rhode Island, home to her aunt, uncle, and cousins. Shea depicts her protagonist's efforts to learn English, make friends, and resist the peer pressure from her rebellious, assimilated cousins.

Shea, Pegi Dietz. *The Whispering Cloth: A Refugee's Story*. Honesdale, Pa.: Boyds Mills Press, 1995. 32 pp. Illus. by Anita Riggio. ISBN 1-56397-623-4. Gr. 2-4.

Mai, a young Hmong girl, lives in Ban Vinai, a refugee camp in Chiang Khan, Thailand, as she and her family wait for their opportunity to go to America. She likes to watch the women sew *pa'ndau* story cloths that tell their life stories. She learns to tell her own story as she learns the art of stitching.

Xiong, Ia. *The Gift: The Hmong New Year*. Covina, Calif.: Pacific Asia Press, 1996. 29 pp. Illus. by Run-Lin Gou. ISBN 1-87960-044-7. Gr. 2-4.

Dao, a Hmong-American girl, researches her family history for a school project. The project helps her learn from her grandfather about the Hmong New Year.

Biography

Gogol, Sara. *A Mien Family*. Minneapolis: Lerner, 1996. 64 pp. Series: Journey between Two Worlds. ISBN 0-8225-3407-X. Gr. 3-6.

A Laotian refugee family, the Saechoas, is depicted as they move from Laos to Portland, Oregon. The author describes the history of Laos and the persecution that the

Mien endured. The family's ordeal within a refugee camp in Thailand is included, as are their experiences settling in Oregon. Color photos show the family in both Thailand and the United States. A list of books for further reading follows the text.

Moore, David. *Dark Sky, Dark Land: Stories of the Hmong Boy Scouts, Troop 100*. Edina, Minn.: Tessera, 1989. 191 pp. ISBN 0-9623029-0-2. Gr. 6-8.

Moore offers a collection of vignettes about the courage and experience of the boys who are members of the troop and how they left war-torn Laos before coming to America.

Murphy, Nora. *A Hmong Family*. Minneapolis: Lerner, 1997. 64 pp. Series: Journey between Two Worlds. ISBN 0-8225-9756-X. Gr. 3-6.

A Hmong refugee family, the Vangs, move from Laos to Fresno, California, and finally to Minneapolis. Murphy provides a brief history of Laos, the persecution that the Hmong endured, and the time the family spent in a refugee camp in Thailand. Color photos show the family in both Thailand and the United States. A bibliography and a pronunciation guide are included.

Culture and History

Brittan, Dolly. *The People of Laos*. New York: PowerKids Press, 1997. 32 pp. Series: Celebrating the Peoples and Civilizations of Southeast Asia. ISBN 0-8239-5124-3. Gr. 2-4.

This beginning reader covers a few topics about Laos, including its beginning, capital, economy, language, religion and culture, and food. A glossary is included in the back. A color photo accompanies each topic.

Cha, Dia. *Dia's Story Cloth*. New York: Lee & Low, 1996. 32 pp. ISBN 1-880000-34-2. Gr. 3-5.

Dia and her aunt and uncle produce a flowered story cloth or *pa'ndau* that tells of their family's experiences in their native Laos, their relocation to a refugee camp in Thailand, and their subsequent immigration to the United States. Her father fought with the Loyalist army against the Communists, who were later victorious. He disappeared and her village was bombed and raided. Each panel of the story cloth tells part of the family's unique story. The panels are colorful and intricate in detail. A concluding section entitled "Hmong Means Free People" describes the cultural significance of the needlework and places it in historical context.

Laos in Pictures. Minneapolis: Lerner, 1996. 106 pp. Series: Visual Geography Series. ISBN 0-8225-1906-2. Gr. 4-8.

This brief geography covers the land, history and government, people, and economy of Laos. The photos are unique and complement the text.

Luangpraseut, Khamchong. *Laos and the Laotians*. Covina, Calif.: Pacific Asia Press, 1995. 100 pp. ISBN 1-879600-41-2. Gr. 3-4.

A simple history book for young children to understand Lao history and culture, this volume includes some black-and-white illustrations and a map.

Mansfield, Stephen. *Laos*. New York: Marshall Cavendish, 1998. 128 pp. Series: Cultures of the World. ISBN 0-7614-0689-1. Gr. 4-8.

This is a well-written country study that includes the geography, history, government, economy, lifestyle, religion, language, arts, leisure, festivals, and food of Laos. There are quick notes, a glossary, and a bibliography at the end. Color photos show people and places throughout the country.

Zickgraf, Ralph. *Laos*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House, 1999. 110 pp. Second ed. Series: Major World Nations. ISBN 0-7910-4743-1. Gr. 4-8.

This brief history covers Laos in the world, the land, independence, people and culture, village life, and the future. In the front are basic facts. Black-and-white photos are blurry and contribute little. A few color photographs in the "Scenes from Laos" section are of high quality and interesting. A glossary and index are included. 📖



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