

# TRIANGLE

NATIONAL ENGLISH HONOR SOCIETY  
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*NEHS Triangle No. 1*

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NEHS Membership Information

Please email the NEHS Central Office to find out more about membership: [nehs@niu.edu](mailto:nehs@niu.edu)

## FOREWORD

The National English Honor Society (NEHS) is proud to announce the launch of the *NEHS Triangle*, the first of what we envision to be a series of student-driven literary journals. We chose to call the journal the *Triangle* not only to reflect existing English Honor Society publications, such as the *Sigma Tau Delta Rectangle*, published by Sigma Tau Delta, but also because triangles symbolize the powerful, energetic, and stable foundation of the NEHS community.

This first edition of the *Triangle* demonstrates literature's powerful ability to transcend borders and bridge cultural divides. By featuring texts authored by writers from outside the United States and from beyond the traditional Western canon, we aim to share a little of the vast cultural tapestry that encompasses global literature. Our journal showcases contributions from authors in Africa, Asia, Europe, North America, and South America, underscoring the diverse perspectives and narratives that literature provides—and just how much we all have to learn about other places and other cultures.

The content within this publication reflects the boundless energy and creativity of our student members worldwide. With NEHS chapters in more than 35 countries and territories, the Society links together a mosaic of nationalities and cultural backgrounds. It is truly inspiring to see our international student members' deep engagement with the literature of the places they call home. They take immense pride in the literary accomplishments of their countries, and their enthusiasm to share these works with our global community speaks volumes about their commitment to and passion for our organization.

At a time when the study of English and access to literary resources in schools and public libraries is facing increasing scrutiny, the *Triangle* stands as a testament to the enduring stability provided by NEHS, its Chapter Advisors, and its student members. Their dedication to exploring, sharing, and celebrating literature ensures that the English language arts continue to thrive. As long as our members remain fervent in their literary pursuits and open to the diverse voices of those from both within and outside of their communities, the future of English studies remains bright.



Christopher Lockwood  
Director of the National English Honor Society

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National English Honor Society would like to extend its thanks to all those who contributed to the creation of this edition of the *Triangle*.

First and foremost, thanks go to our NEHS student members. Their passion for literature and dedication to sharing the works of diverse authors have been the driving force behind this publication. Their contributions showcase the richness and variety of global literature and will, hopefully, inspire us all to read more widely.

The amazing work our student members submitted to the journal has been supported and guided by their wonderful Chapter Advisors. It is their commitment to fostering a love of literature and encouraging their students to engage with texts from around the world that has led to this publication. Thank you.

A special thank you goes to Katie Mudd, our Director of Marketing and Communications, who served as the editor for this publication. Her sharp editorial eye and perfectionism have ensured that this edition of the *Triangle* is a publication of the highest quality.

Thank you, also, to Jessica McCole, our Program Coordinator, who served as the typesetter and designer. Her creativity and attention to detail have given the *Triangle* its professional appearance.

This publication would not have been possible without the efforts of our global NEHS community. Thank you all for your determination, enthusiasm, and commitment to promoting the power of literature.

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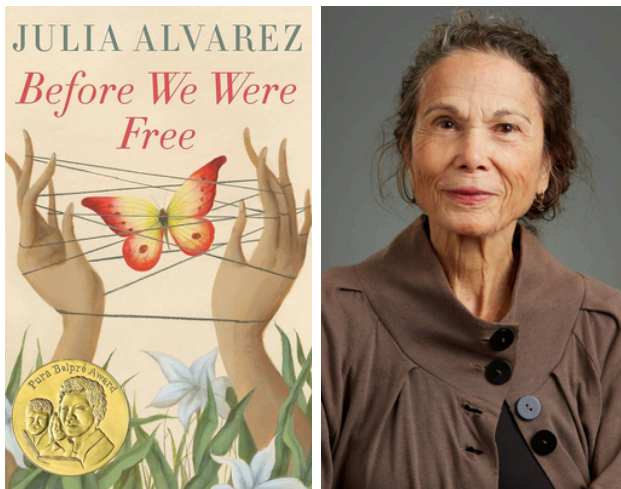
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Why you should read Julia Alvarez's

# Before We Were Free

by Mariel Kamil Núñez Rodríguez & Sofía Victoria Lulo Alba  
Santiago Christian School, Dominican Republic



The fascinating book *Before We Were Free* by Julia Alvarez explores the challenges of independence, governmental oppression, and the importance of being resilient. The novel offers an intriguing introduction to the meaning of freedom and the finding of one's identity. The story is set during a troublesome time for the Dominican Republic, when Rafael Leonidas Trujillo ascended to power and established a strong dictatorial hold over the country. By incorporating historical events into the story, Julia Alvarez gives readers a complete understanding of how political persecution impacts people individually and in families.

The novel follows Anita de la Torre, a young and innocent girl living in the Dominican Republic during the era of Trujillo's dictatorship. She struggles to balance her personal aspirations with the expectations of her family and the constraints of the political environment. The exploration of identity in *Before We Were Free* becomes a universal theme, allowing readers to connect with the characters on a personal level and encouraging reflection about their own sense of identity and belonging.

In the novel, Julia Alvarez retells the heartbreaking story of the Mirabal sisters or, as they are called in the book, Las Mariposas. They were strong and independent women who were heavily mistreated and abused during the Trujillo regime. They helped to dismantle the dictatorship and became the faces of hope for the nation.

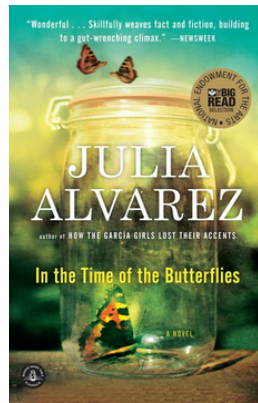
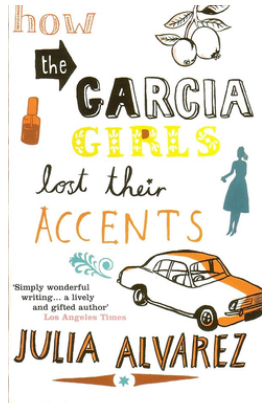
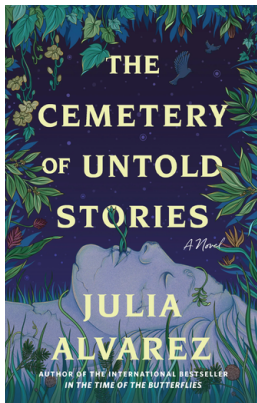
Reading this book enhances cultural education, allowing readers to appreciate the nature and diversity of Dominican

culture. The story not only captures the historical struggles of individuals living under oppressive regimes but also cultivates a sense of empathy and understanding in the readers.

This book reminds us that historical events should not be forgotten and does so by echoing the tale of the Dominican Republic and its fight for independence. History

preserves our cultural heritage and identity. It tells the stories of our ancestors, the struggles they faced, and the successes they achieved. Forgetting history risks losing a sense of continuity and connection with our roots, impacting our collective understanding of who we are as individuals and as a society. This story of the Dominican Republic, and its struggle for freedom, reminds us clearly of that.

### Other notable works by Julia Alvarez



Why you should read Hanan Al-Shaykh's

# Beirut Blues

by Yasmina Achkar

International College, Lebanon



Written by Hanan Al-Shaykh and published in 1992 just two years after the end of the Lebanese civil war, *Beirut Blues* is an epistolary mirror of mourning, loss, and lament. The novel follows the young and independent Asmahan's life, as the war pushes her to think about the next step to take in war-torn Beirut: to leave for France or to stay in her home, ravaged by war?

Revolving around the idea of home, *Beirut Blues* describes the need for belonging that is at the core of human life and existence. A heartwarming novel, it never fails to remind readers of what's important, paving the way for a more loving and equal world. *Beirut Blues* also follows Asmahan's life during both chaos and demise. This reflects the personal and shared emotional milestone

that marked Lebanese people during the years of the civil war (1975-1990). However, al Shaykh centralizes the motifs of Lebanese beauty and magic, providing the world with a multifaceted insight into Lebanese history, and how people always hold onto faith.

The protagonist writes letters to Lebanon, and its people, about the experiences that marked her life. Even amidst terrible destruction, Beirut is a place many struggle to leave. At the time the novel was written, means of communication were limited. The novel itself and its metaphoric letters create a link between an isolated country and the outside world, spreading hope among the chaos, inviting the world to see those in exile and those still at home.

Al Shaykh criticizes her nation's readiness to plunge into war. She portrays how Beirut was split into West and East Beirut and mirrors the ways in which humanity splits and is influenced by perceived power imbalances. The protagonist, Asmahan, is psychologically exhausted during this devastating separation, and says that actions and events hold deep power in molding both an individual and their identity. She thus

calls for a more just, care-filled, and united world, one in which the Lebanese will not deny their trauma but rather embody their trauma in their lives.

Of course, no war novel would be complete without a lover. Asmahan's lover in Paris epitomizes the temptation she feels to escape the pain and trauma of war. However, as Asmahan resists love and chooses to remain in Beirut, Al-Shaykh yet

again shows how attachment to one's homeland is indelible.

Reading this 1992 novel not only introduces the world to an often-disregarded small country but also explores important ideas including nationalism, love, identity, and the way a deep attachment to one's roots trumps the savagery of war and the temptation of departure.

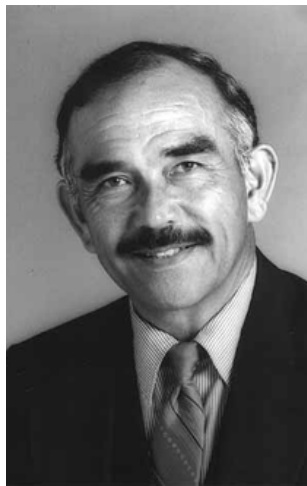
### Other notable works by Hanan Al-Shaykh



Why you should read Ben Blaz's

# Bisita Guam: Let Us Remember (Nihi Ta Hasso)

by Isabella Maria Kono Mundo McKinnon  
Guahan Academy Charter School, Guam



works include *A Special Place in the Sun*, *Bisita Guam*, and *Nihi Ta Bisita*.

The book, *Bisita Guam*, tells of the story of how Blaz and the Chamorro were affected by World War II. The occupation of Guam by enemy forces during World War II caused our elders to split the periods of modern Guam history into three parts: prior to when the war began, during the war, and after the war.

*Bisita Guam: Let Us Remember (Nihi Ta Hasso)* by Ben Blaz was written in remembrance of the World War II occupation years in Guam. The author, Ben Blaz was 13 years old when Japan attacked and occupied Guam. After graduating from the University of Notre Dame in 1951, he was motivated by the valiant attitude of the US Marines, who had liberated Guam, and became a Marine himself. Ben Blaz is a highly recognized, decorated citizen of Guam.

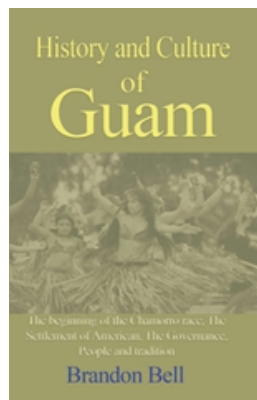
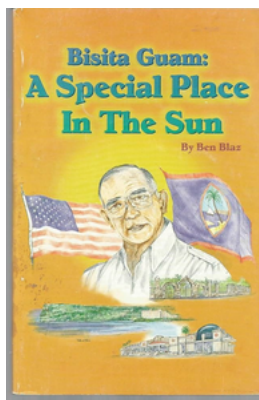
After retiring from the Marine Corps in 1980, Ben dedicated his time to protecting the Chamorro language and culture and has written many books about Guam. His

During the occupation, the native Chamorro comprised around 22,000 people, or nearly 99% of the overall population of Guam. Major shifts in the island's population during the next 50 years meant that the Chamorros would never again be the major population group they were during the occupation. The spirit of the Chamorros is truly amazing and it is inspirational how our people came together in the face of challenges, shared their few possessions including food and shelter, and remained completely devoted to their country. I enjoyed this book because Blaz really goes into detail about the struggles he and his countrymen went through. Though

there are more complete books about the war and how the Chamorros coped, Blaz's story stood out to me. My friends and family had read his book and held it in high regard. It is important to read this

book because you will learn not only about history but also loss and fear. Blaz shared it with the world so those who went through that experience are not alone and those who did not can learn about it.

### Other works about Guam and CHamoru culture

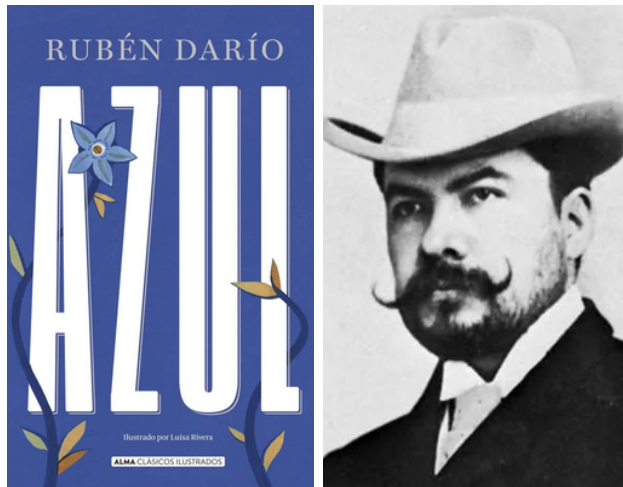


## Why you should read Ruben Darió's

# Blue

by Hyein Hong

American Nicaraguan School, Nicaragua



Ruben Darió is one of the most famous authors from Nicaragua. He is known as the “father of modernism” and has written many important texts throughout his life. His first and most important book is *Blue . . . (Azul . . .)*. This book, an anthology to be more specific, includes several short stories and poems divided in two sections. But, to understand why he is so well-known among poets of the same era and why this book is of such critical importance to Spanish literature, we have to know what modernism means.

Modernism is a literary movement that took place in the late 19th century and early 20th centuries. Texts written at this time make audacious use of metaphors and rhythmic meters. While Darió didn't

intend to do so, the publication of *Azul* removed Naturalism (an extreme form of realism influenced by Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, founded by Émile Zola) from people's minds. His style of writing is in complete contrast to Naturalism. This is why he received a lot of attention from literary critics in different parts of the world. He forged a new literary path, and paved the way for other writers, too.

After his book and the idea of Modernism became famous, Darió started to travel around the world to promote Modernism. This was when *La Revista Moderna*, considered to be the second most important Modernism journal, was first published. It was available, mainly in Mexico, from 1903 to 1911. It is characterized by its focus on decadence, sexuality, and eroticism. Dozens of poets and writers from around the world wrote for this publication, including poets from France, Japan, the United States, and Russia. An interpreter was hired to translate the various languages. The fact that the poets from countries located on the opposite side of the Earth showed interest in participating in this project was clear evidence that Modernism had truly become a world-wide phenomenon.

This revolution happened as a result of power imbalances. The protagonist, Ruben Darío and his first book, which is still cherished as a valuable historical treasure. I highly recommend it and think everybody

who is interested in Latin American history, or literature in general, should read it. Reading this book is an interesting opportunity to learn more about the key that unlocked the door of Modernism.

### Other notable works by Ruben Darío



Why you should read Lalita Iyer's

# The Boy Who Swallowed a Nail

by Rehaan Iyer-Agarwal

Kodaikanal International School, India



*The Boy Who Swallowed A Nail and Other Stories* is an enticing and exhilarating collection of short stories centering on childhood and family. This book stands out as it depicts the rustic yet charming and unique family dynamics and stories surrounding an Indian family in the cosmopolitan city of Mumbai. It perfectly portrays the struggles of wealth and comfort the middle class often faces, in comforting and humorous tones. The portrayal of culture and folklore is both accurate and amusing, and is a great read for anyone interested in classic Indian anecdotes and campfire tales. The family dynamics are stretched out and played with even more

when there are unique and shocking events, such as Lalita's brother swallowing a carpenter's nail.

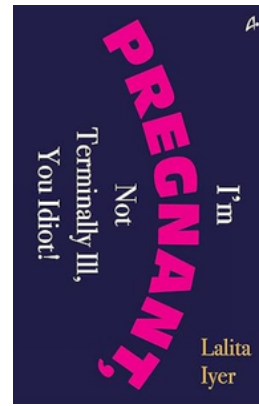
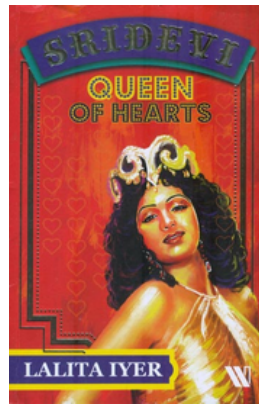
Its sequel, *The Girl Who Ironed Her Hair and Other Stories* also captivates these unique and captivating stories, like when a schoolgirl is faced with the everlasting challenge of her frizzy, curly hair. While this seems juvenile and unimportant, most young women in India with curly hair can relate to the absolute banter and criticism they receive from their teachers and friends. This controversy behind the hair type guided by misinformation along with the aspiration for poker-straight, lustrous locks makes Lalli go to any measure to straighten her hair. Even if that means using a flat iron at home.

Lalita Iyer is one of the most refined and skilled writers at telling these Indian Narratives, and though they are very personal and intertwined with her childhood, they still are very much relevant and relatable to her generation and future generations. In her books, she appeals to

children’s curiosity and wonder as well as letting the parents have a smirk or a chuckle. Children’s books do not have to be one-sided or under-complex in any way, and Lalita Iyer is a perfect example of this. Whether a parent looking for a book you

can enjoy with your child, a Westerner learning about Indian culture, or a laugh-a-holic longing for a hilarious twist, her works should definitely be on your reading list.

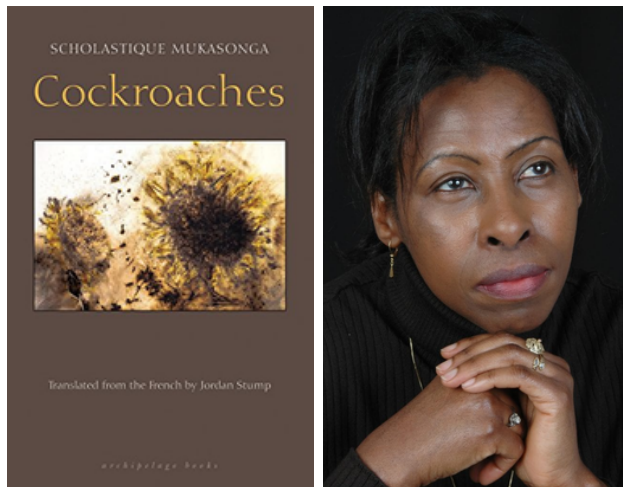
### Other notable works by Lalita Iyer



Why you should read Scholastique Mukasonga's

# Cockroaches

by Sallim Mohamadullah Azimi  
International School of Kigali, Rwanda



Scholastique Mukasonga, a Rwandan writer, occupies a significant place and stance in today's literary world, especially in Africa, emerging as a potent and strong voice that shines a light on Rwanda's heart-breaking and incredibly powerful history as well as showcasing the indomitable and unbeatable spirit of the Rwandan population. The Book I will discuss here is *Cockroaches*, a memoir. The narrative explores Mukasonga's past and how it has affected her up to the present day as well. The book also sheds light on Mukasonga's family, and their life before and during the Rwandan Genocide.

The profound importance and significance of *Cockroaches* lies in its ability to understand and humanize the victims of the

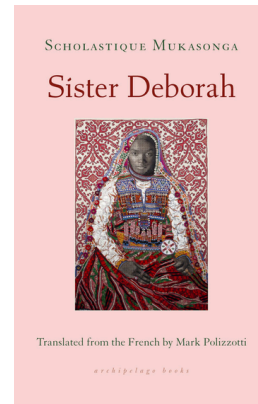
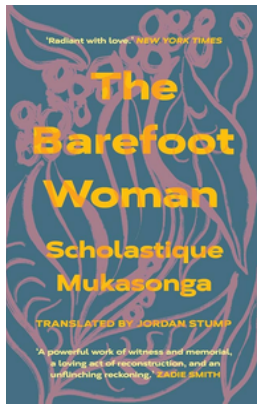
Rwandan genocide, a certain population whose voices have often been silenced. Mukasonga's narrative serves as a conduit for the Rwandan community as it transports readers into the heart of Rwanda and the lives of Rwandans. As part of the Tutsi minority, Mukasonga and her family were forced to endure the brutality of the genocide. This was portrayed through her vivid and natural storytelling.

The effects of *Cockroaches* reaches beyond the book itself, advocating for readers to think about, and face, the harsh truths of genocide. Mukasonga shows the victims as real, living people not just numbers. This allows the reader to grieve over real individuals. The story reminds us of the terrible things that happened and why it's vital to remember and learn from them, so we can create a solution or prevent problems occurring in the future. Furthermore, Mukasonga's writings show how storytelling can help heal and bring people together. It makes people think about Rwanda's difficult past and what the future might bring. *Cockroaches* is important for anyone who wants to understand Rwanda better and learn from its history to make the world a fairer and kinder place.

Scholastique Mukasonga was born in Rwanda in 1956. As a Tutsi, she was a victim of ethnic conflicts and had to leave for Burundi in 1959 like many Tutsi Rwandans at that time. Afterward, she moved to France, where she worked in

social services and started writing. Her writing about Rwanda's past and culture has earned her awards, like the Prix Renaudot for her book *Our Lady of the Nile*.

### Other notable works by Scholastique Mukasonga

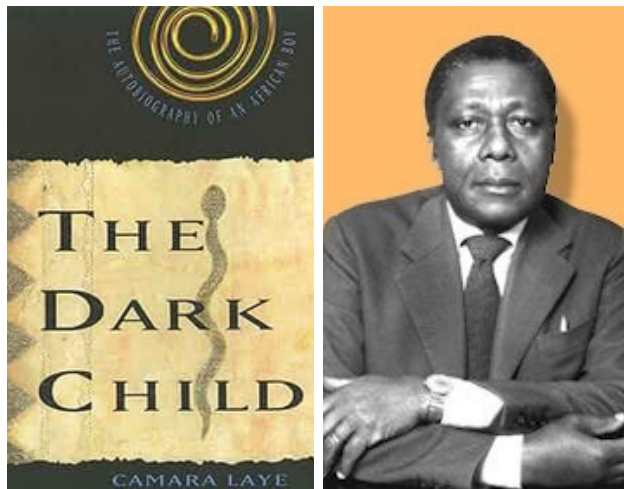


Why you should read Camara Laye's

# The Dark Child

by Adeline Paula Joshua

American International School of Conakry, Guinea



Camara Laye's *The Dark Child* is a beautiful and powerful memoir that explores the significance of cultural roots and the impact of societal shifts on personal identity. The book is a coming-of-age story that follows Laye's childhood in Upper Guinea, his quest for individuality, and an understanding of cultural heritage. Through his vivid descriptions of daily life and traditional customs, Laye provides readers with a glimpse into a world that is both different and familiar.

The narrative reveals a vivid tapestry of Laye's early life in Guinea, immersing the reader in the rich traditions that shaped his upbringing. Laye masterfully captures the essence of cultural heritage, painting a detailed portrait of rituals, ceremonies, and

community values. The music, mystical beliefs, and traditional practices echo the profound impact of culture in Laye's early years, which he speaks of with great vulnerability.

Laye's story is much like any other memoir in that his life experiences are universal but also truly special as they are unique to him and the Guinean culture. From the mystifying magic powers of the unforeseen world to the simplicity of young children playing, Laye's story captivates readers. Moreover, Laye's writing style is simple yet profound, making the book accessible to anyone of any background.

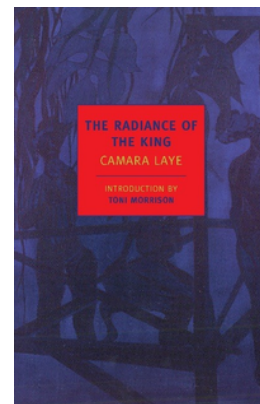
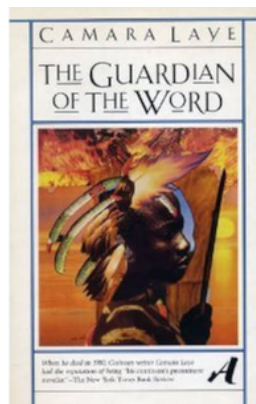
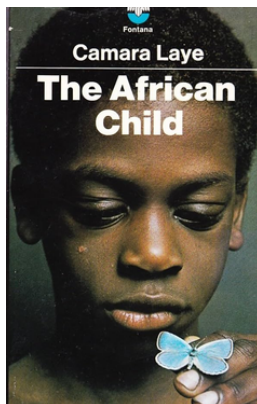
A recurrent motif is the dissonance between traditional values and modern-day life. The freedoms of the Western World present a tangible threat to safeguarding cultural identity. This struggle extends beyond personal conflicts, representing a more significant challenge to harmonize deeply rooted traditions with the rapidly changing world around him. Torn between two worlds, not knowing where he stands, Laye states, "It was true that I had been daydreaming: my life did not lie here . . .

and I had no life in my father's forge. But where was my life?"

Another theme that appears at some point in the narrative is love. Laye depicts a heartfelt connection with Marie, underscored by the poignant reality of their love remaining unfulfilled. Their deep affection takes a poignant twist as Laye departs for France, resulting in an irreversible separation. The narrative skillfully conveys the emotional weight of unresolved love, emphasizing the lasting consequences of choices in personal relationships. Laye left Guinea for a brighter future, a quest for self-fulfillment and individuality, leaving behind his lover.

The Dark Child is a timeless and universal memoir that profoundly speaks to the human experience. It is a powerful testament to the resilience of African cultures and the importance of preserving traditional knowledge and values in the face of modernity. The clash between old and new, portrayed with eloquence and introspection, invites the readers to reflect on the different challenges of cultural preservation in the face of societal evolution. Laye's work is evidence of the enduring importance of cultural roots, providing a unique perspective on the intricate balance between tradition and progress.

### Other notable works by Camara Laye



# Why you should read Reyna Grande's **The Distance between Us**

by Ana Sofía Moreno López  
PrepaTec Sonora Norte, Mexico



*The Distance between Us* is a book written by the Mexican American author Reyna Grande. In this book, she narrates the intricate story of her life in two different countries, Mexico and the United States. The main focus of the book is immigration; however, issues like divorce, adultery, domestic violence, and discrimination feature throughout her story.

The novel works to explode many of the negative stereotypes often attributed to immigrants. The book provides a clear description of the characters backgrounds and social and economic context. It narrates the difficult circumstances many people in

Mexico face, and reveals the often-harsh reality of our country. This is key to understanding the reasons why people decide to migrate and to keeping an open mind in order to overcome the prejudices that many face.

Similarly, getting to know the characters eliminates any immediately negative stereotypes, and humanizes the issue of migration. By getting to understand the circumstances around migration from a first-person perspective, the reader is able to empathize with the characters and understand the challenges and difficulties they go through. The reader is able to get a glimpse into what these people undergo and how much they have to sacrifice just to have the chance of a better quality of life.

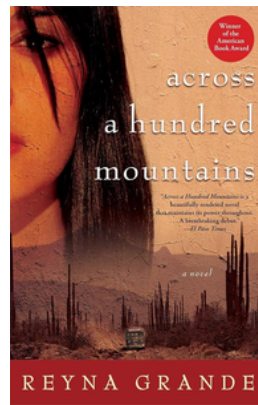
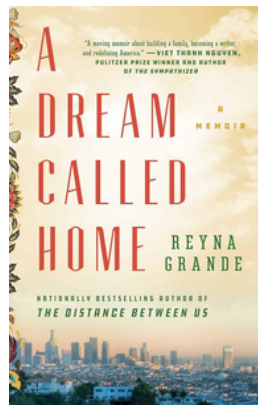
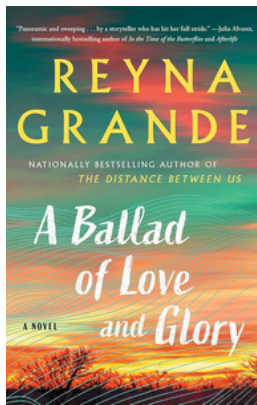
Finally, the plot takes you through myriad aspects of migration. It is a very complex topic, but this book explains and presents all the factors involved in a way that is easy to understand. Readers gain a new, and discerning, perspective of the issues surrounding migration, and the empathy

they develop about this topic may also allow them to have a more open mind about other situations happening around them.

I cannot stress the importance of reading this eye-opening book enough. I read it when I was in primary school, but I vividly remember the story because of how much I

cried while I imagined myself, or a loved one, having to go through horrific situations on the way to what may or may not be a better life. A few years later, I read it again and the new perspective it gave me completely changed the way I perceived the issues. Every well-rounded reader should read this book.

### Other notable works by Reyna Grande



Why you should read Arundhati Roy's

# The God of Small Things

by Mohammed Faraz Ibrahim  
Kodaikanal International School, India



In the vast tapestry of world literature, certain works stand apart as classics, some not only for their literary brilliance but also for their profound impact on their reader's hearts and minds. Among these, stands *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy as the epitome of storytelling and social commentary. The piece's unparalleled literary significance is evident not just in its immersive narrative but also in the various insights it offers its readers into society's complexities and the modern socio-political landscape of India, plagued immensely by casteism.

Arundhati Roy's novel is a tour de force that

dives deep into the intricacies of relationships, love, loss, and societal norms. Set against the picturesque backdrop of Kerala, the narrative follows the lives of twins, Rahel and Estha, whose journeys are shaped immensely by tradition, family heritage, and the stormy political landscape of India.

One of the distinguishing aspects of the novel is its staunch and opinionated portrayal of the social hierarchies and injustices that persist widely in Indian society. Through the lens of the unconventional love story between Ammu and Velutha, Roy exposes the deep-rooted social prejudices and systematic oppression that continue to shape lives and destinations. By confronting uncomfortable truths about caste, privilege, and social classification, Roy compels the readers to examine their own biases and perspectives on the matter.

Additionally, Roy's rich narrative technique, with its evident non-linear structure, mirrors the fragmented nature of human memory and the contrasting

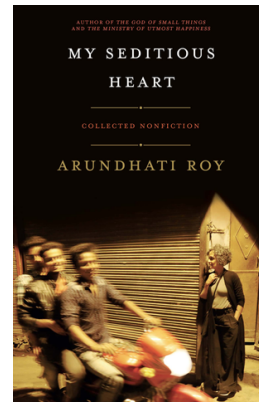
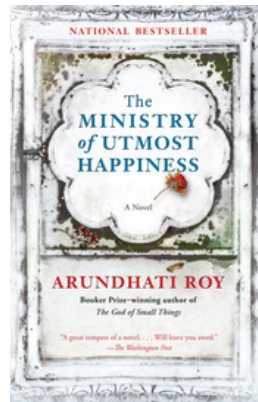
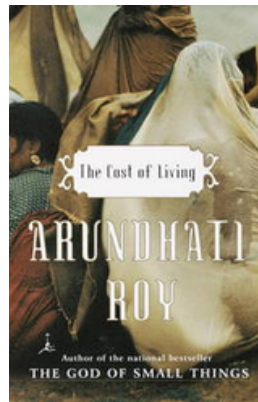
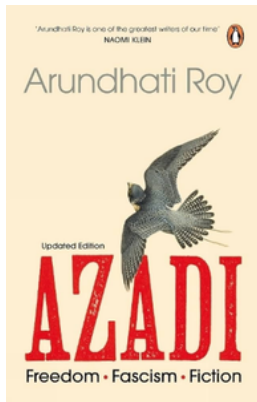
experiences and perspectives on life itself. The novel's vivid incorporation of devices such as irony, black humor and parody reflects Roy's diverse introspection and her well-opinionated perspective on life and its purpose. Furthermore, through her unconventional work, Roy challenges traditional methods of storytelling and invites the readers to actively engage with the text and question their own perspectives on life and its purpose.

*The God of Small Things* stands as a witness to the resilience of human intimacy and the unwavering strength of love to transcend the boundaries of caste, color, and tradition. Despite the various tragedies that befall the characters, there is an evident sense of hope and optimism throughout the story, reminding readers

about their capability to find happiness even in the “smallest of things” amidst the chaos of life.

*The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy is essential reading for anybody wishing to better comprehend the perks and perils that lie within Indian society and casteism. The piece serves as a literary classic in its rightful genre, through its unconventional narration technique, along with its vivid incorporation of devices such as irony, black humor, and parody. Lastly, through its compelling narrative, in-depth social commentary, and use of language, the piece leaves a profound final impression challenging its readers to confront uncomfortable truths about life and inspiring them to find pleasure in even “the smallest things” in life.

### Other notable works by Arundhati Roy

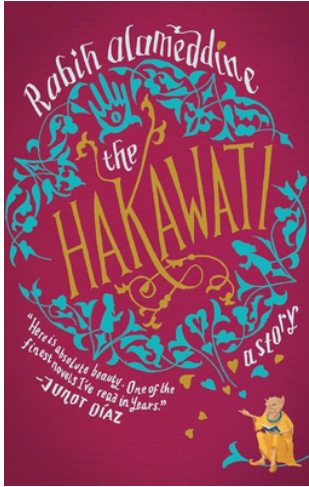


Why you should read Rabih Alameddine's

# The Hakawati

by Francesca Obeid

International College, Lebanon



Everyone loves storytelling, intricately weaving a tapestry of tales with a skilled and steady hand. In our Arab culture, the storyteller is usually an old *teta* or *jedo*, lounging comfortably on a traditional *divan*, a cup of Turkish coffee warm in their hand, with eager grandchildren settled on their knees. They might have razor-sharp wrinkles etched deep in their skin, and their beaming smiles might be missing a few teeth, but these *Hakawatis* (storytellers) are the most respected people in the room.

Lebanese writer Rabih Alameddine has embraced the term *Hakawati* and given it a well-deserved life, even going as far as writing a well-loved novel about it titled *The Hakawati*. Published in 2008, this novel introduces readers to a captivating world of

storytelling, where the *Hakawati* becomes the central figure in connecting generations through the art of oral narration. By delving deep into the stories within stories, readers are left pondering how narratives influence their cultural and individual identities.

Alameddine's novel serves as a reminder of the timeless role storytelling plays in preserving traditions, transmitting knowledge, and fostering a sense of belonging within a community.

Furthermore, universal themes such as love, loss, identity, and the search for meaning are depicted through the diverse characters, hilarious tales, and cliffhangers. Any reader, no matter their background, will be able to resonate with the shared human experiences found in the novel.

In a world where technology is dominant, looming fearlessly over traditional communication, the *Hakawati* emerge as a poignant reminder of the importance of cultural preservation and oral tradition. Booming laughter ringing around a room has been replaced with laughing emojis, and tales of the olden days told by the fireplace have been replaced with a text message summarizing an event. Family dinners once consisted of relatives crowded around the

dinner table, chattering uncontrollably as they fought for second helpings. Now, forks and knives have been replaced with cellphones, and a dreadful silence echoes around the dining table, the laughs of the past mere ghosts. By celebrating the art of storytelling, Alameddine encourages readers to value and embrace their cultural heritage and sheds light on the importance of preserving our traditions and customs. A Hakawati's greatest joy is offering a glimpse into the past and the wonders of the Arab world, a world filled to the brim with laughter, food, love, and hummus.

With his intricate style, relatable characters, exploration of the truth and fiction, and innovative narrative structure, Alameddine highlights the significance of storytelling in shaping individual and collective identities, fostering cultural understanding, and connecting people across time and space. Alameddine embodies the notion that "stories have to be told or they die, and when they die, we can't remember who we are or why we're here" (Sue Monk Kidd).

### Other notable works by Rabih Alameddine

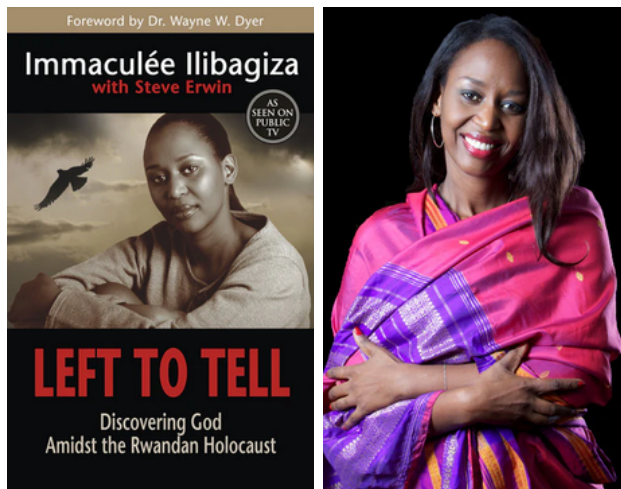


Why you should read Immaculée Ilibagiza's

# Left to Tell

by Robeal Yacob

International School of Kigali, Rwanda



*Left to Tell*, Immaculée Ilibagiza's autobiography, exposes many people to the experiences that Rwandan genocide victims have lived through. Yet this story is not just a book—it is a wonderful autobiography that takes readers through a difficult part of Rwandan history. It is also a lesson in faith, love, and forgiveness. Readers are bound to learn about different aspects of the Rwandan Genocide, and about the Rwandan people, through the lens of Immaculée's story and views.

*Left to Tell* can also be seen as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and an illustration of the importance of hope. Immaculée had to experience unimaginable pain and tragedy throughout the genocide. However, she was able to forgive with

heartfelt strength and determination. By telling her story she shows readers that there is hope for forgiveness even in the midst of suffering.

The text is also essential to understanding the impact of the genocide through the lens of the Rwandan people. She gives her readers a deeper understanding of the Rwandan genocide and experiences, and illustrates the emotions of those who were there through the use of her imagination. Thus, reading *Left to Tell* can be beneficial as it encourages both empathy and understanding. Through her story, Immaculée encourages readers to reflect on the importance of compassion and forgiveness, as well as to have empathy for the victims of genocide.

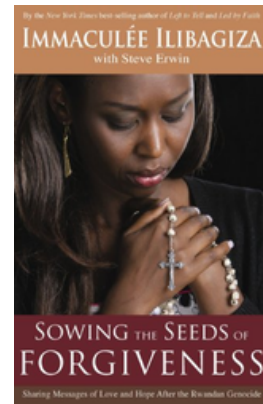
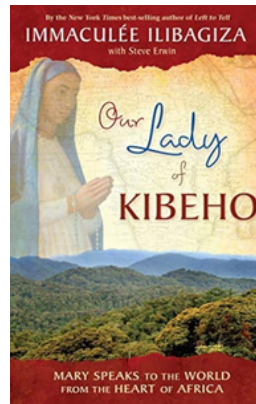
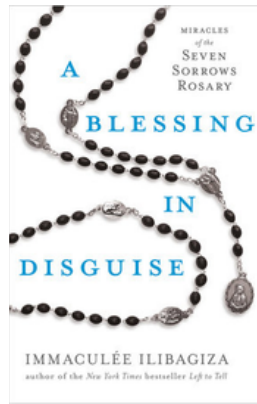
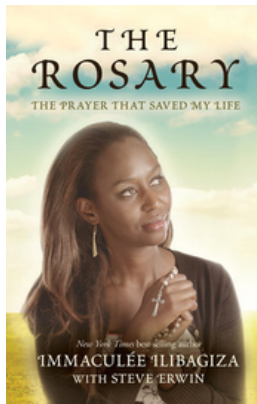
Her narrative throughout the memoir inspires readers to look past differences and see the humanity in others, strengthening and encouraging their sense of unity and connection. It is important to remember the past, learn lessons from it, and use that knowledge so atrocities like this never happen again. Immaculée's powerful story reminds readers to acknowledge the reality of genocide and strive toward a more

compassionate and understanding world as the memoir acts as a powerful reminder of the effects of hatred and division.

*Left to Tell* by Immaculée Ilibagiza is a classic book and one of the few Rwandan Genocide memoirs that has stood out to me over the years of my academic study because it is both engaging and memorable.

Immaculée's story captures the interest of readers and stays with them, allowing them to not only learn about, hear from, and feel for her and others, but to gain an intimate experience of life through her story. If you want to develop a conceptual understanding of human nature and, specifically, the Rwandan genocide, this is a book you should read.

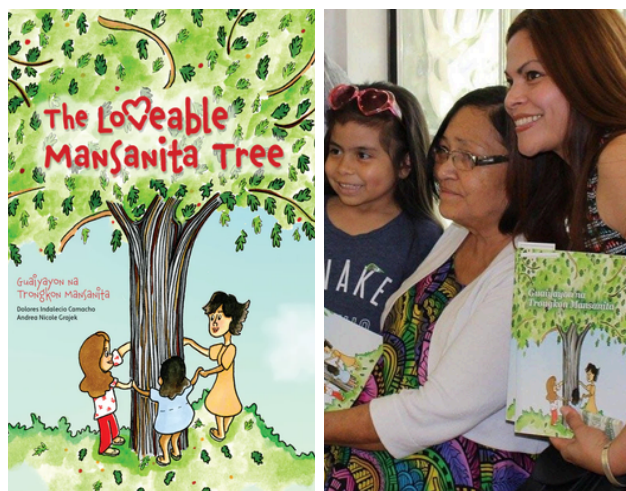
### Other notable works by Immaculée Ilibagiza



Why you should read Dolores Indalecio Camacho's

# The Loveable Mansanita Tree

by Maeghan Juana Taivero  
Guahan Academy Charter School, Guam



*The Loveable Mansanita Tree (Guaiyayon na Trongkon Mansanita)* is a children's book written by Dolores Indalecio Camacho from Guam. The entire book is written in Chamorro, the native language of the island.

My mom bought this book for me to practice reading and speaking in Chamorro. Even though Chamorro was a language I grew up with, I stopped speaking it when I started school because my grandparents stopped talking to me in the language. Growing up, I felt very disconnected from my culture because I could not speak the language. When I moved to Guam, I could barely understand when the elders were

speaking in Chamorro. Even to this day, I cannot speak confidently in Chamorro and have to really pay attention when the elders are speaking.

The history of the island is why the Chamorro language is disappearing. Chamorros were unable to speak their language during Spanish colonization, it was the same situation during the Japanese times, and became even more obvious when the Americans occupied Guam. The forced assimilation that was happening to the locals back then has had a major impact on the young people of Guam in today's society. Many children have no desire to learn the language or have no one to teach them as some parents are not fluent as well.

Therefore, books like *The Loveable Mansanita Tree* are important to help revive our language and keep our culture alive. Although Chamorro class is a requirement in Guam's public schools, the students do not speak the language outside of the class because it is normally not practiced at home. Chamorro does not have a written form; the

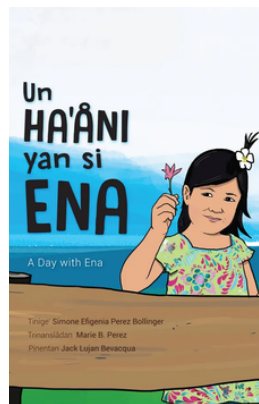
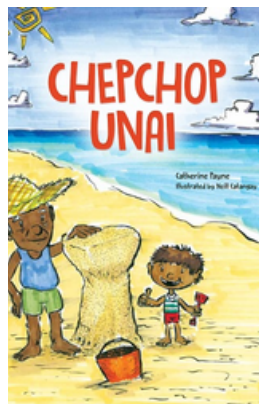
alphabet and spellings of words were created by sounding the words. It is easier to learn when speaking or hearing people converse in Chamorro every day.

Being exposed to two or more languages at a young age can help with becoming fluent in the language later in life. I have seen this with my two nieces as they both understand Chamorro, English, and Carolinian, which are the main languages in Saipan. Either because English is the primary language on Guam or because younger generations have no interest in learning how to speak it, the

Chamorro language is fading every single day.

A teacher once told me, “If you lose your language, then you lose your culture.” Cultures have many similarities, but what differentiates them is the languages. Our language is what connects us as people, it is what connects the past to the present, and helps us to understand our roots better. This book is a symbol to many young Chamorro children and even adults that it is never too late to learn. It is never too late to embrace who you are.

### Other children’s books preserving CHamoru culture

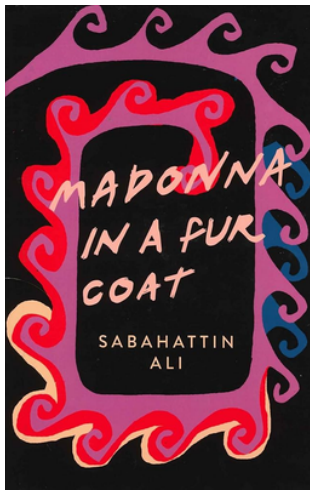


Why you should read Sabahattin Ali's

# Madonna in a Fur Coat

by Mina Atak

The American Robert College of Istanbul, Turkiye



Sabahattin Ali's *Madonna in a Fur Coat* is a novel about love and regret and tells of a romance that started because of a painting. With its intriguing plot and the meaningful themes that lie behind it, the book is one of the classic pieces of Turkish literature I would recommend to everyone.

This repeated bestseller is composed of two intertwined narratives: one centered on the isolation and alienation of the main character, the other focused on the reason behind this isolation, which happens to be his relationship with a woman he met in an art gallery. I find it inspiring that the love story, in particular, tells of two characters

representing different cities, perspectives, and cultures. Readers are encouraged to think about the freedom and monotony of life; and how a silent person can have a loud and powerful narrative.

Sabahattin Ali (1907-1948) integrates romanticism and idealism into *Madonna in a Fur Coat*, telling a story that connects the protagonist's past to his present. With his distinctive and concise language, Ali composes the main plot, which explains Maria and Raif's relationship, in a way that it is told through the pages of Raif's notebook.

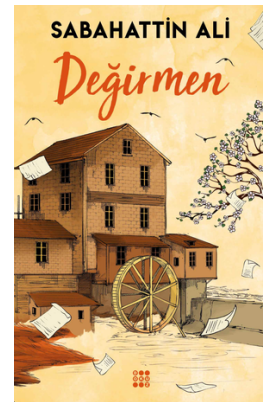
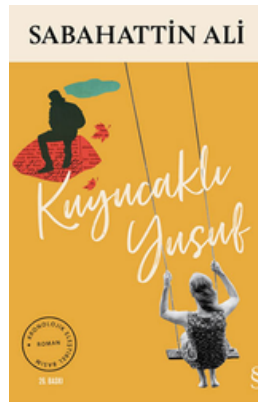
Although the plot is focused on the relationship of the two characters, the book is not a love story. In fact, it approaches the themes of loneliness and isolation from society. What makes the book memorable is the opportunity to discover the inner world of the characters and realize how their common isolation actually connects them. Rather than centering the plot on the outer world, Ali decided to focus on the characters' own silent but powerful worlds.

This choice urges the reader to associate with Maria's and Raif's search for the correct person, whom they happen to find in each other.

Throughout the book, Raif's calmness is opposed to Maria's dominance; her confidence also attracts attention. This contrast in personalities, when combined with the differences in cultures, creates an engaging plot a reader can easily connect with. In addition, the book has its focus centered on a relationship in which Raif falls in love first with the portrait of Maria, and then with the person. The artwork has the power to connect not only two people but also bring together two different worlds and narratives.

*Madonna in a Fur Coat* provides a unique opportunity for readers interested in thinking about how contrary terms such as love and regret and past and present relate to each other. One can discover a classical piece of Turkish literature while connecting with the inner worlds of Ali's characters. Throughout the book, readers realize that even silence can carry a million stories and are encouraged to think about their own stories. I find the reading experience this novel provides highly meaningful and wish readers from all over the world will read it, too.

### Other notable works by Sabahattin Ali

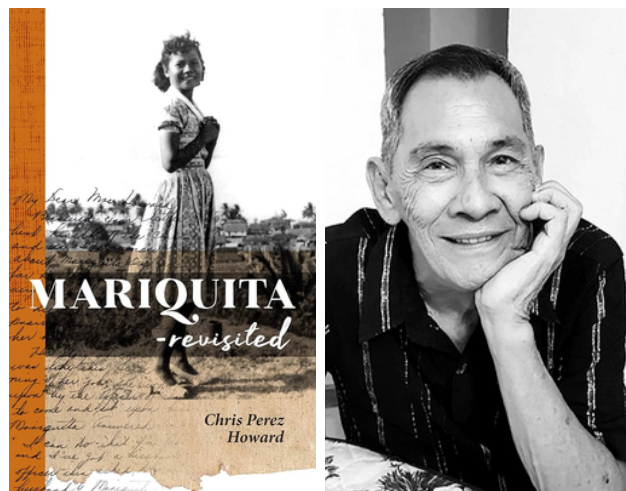


Why you should read Chris Perez Howard's

# Mariquita— Revisited

by Teuila Keresoma

Guahan Academy Charter School, Guam



Even though I am a person of CHamoru (Chamorro) descent, I have never truly felt connected to my CHamoru identity. Truth be told, I have never felt a genuine sense of belonging to any of my ethnic identities. Although I indulge in the customs and uphold the values of my cultures, they have never truly resonated with me. It was not until I finally plucked up the courage to register for a library card that I would come across a book that would profoundly alter my perspective on many things, specifically regarding my relationship with CHamoru culture. I walked out of the library that day with only one book in my hands, *Mariquita-Revisited* by Chris Perez Howard.

Howard was renowned on the island of Guam for his work *Mariquita: A Tragedy on Guam* (*Mariquita- Revisited* is the updated, republished edition). Reading this book, I did not expect to relate to the characters as much as I did. The author articulated emotions and experiences in a way that resonated deeply with me, creating a sense of personal recognition and validation. Through his storytelling, I was prompted to reflect on my own experiences, which led to a newfound self-awareness and a deeper understanding of both myself and my CHamoru heritage.

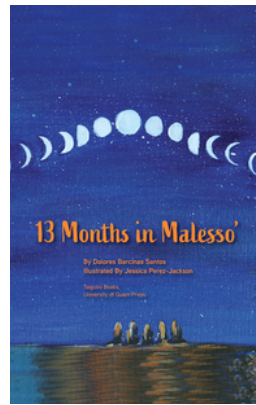
*Mariquita- Revisited* is widely loved throughout the island. The significance of decolonization runs through the book and struck a chord with many of Guam's residents, including myself. The colonization of our island stretches back centuries and has subjected the CHamoru people to cultural obliteration. Our ancestors were assimilated into cultures that were not theirs, even being punished for speaking their own language. As a result, the CHamoru culture has become increasingly

distant, and is now lost within the younger generations. It is also why such a large number of young individuals, like me, are unable to connect with their ethnic identities. We have slowly gotten lost in the tide of imperialism that has swept over our island.

I found that this book aligns with the experiences of indigenous people all over the world. Within its pages, the voices of

many groups affected by colonialism are given expression. Their struggles echo the resilience of my own community. Reading *Mariquita- Revisited* served as a beautiful reminder to me and many others grappling with issues of cultural identity that true connection with one's roots stems from the depths of one's heart. It is not merely about external factors, but about embracing and understanding one's heritage on a personal level.

### Other work by Perez and about CHamoru culture

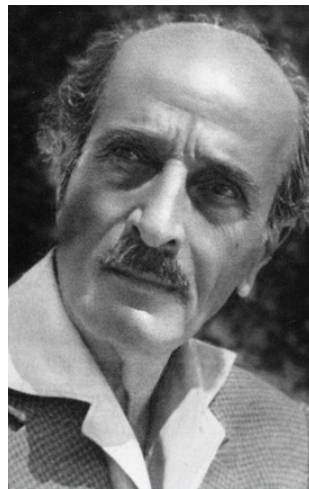
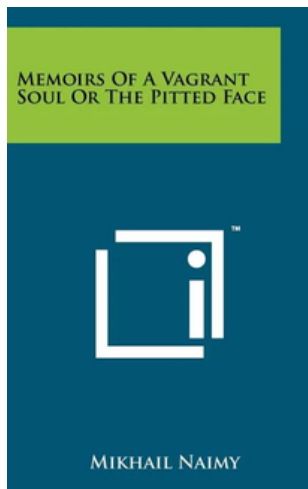


Why you should read Mikhail Naimy's

# Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul

by Adam Moussa

International College, Lebanon



In *Memoirs of a Vagrant Soul*, Lebanese writer Naimy delves into existential themes such as the search for identity, the meaning of life, and the nature of existence. These themes are universal and timeless, resonating with readers across different cultures and eras. The contemplative nature of the book encourages readers to reflect on their own lives, beliefs, and purpose, fostering a deeper understanding of their personal journey.

As a Lebanese writer, Naimy provides a unique perspective that blends Eastern and Western philosophical thoughts. This cross-cultural aspect enriches the reader's

understanding of different worldviews and historical contexts, especially relating to the Middle East in the early twentieth century. He bridges cultural gaps, promoting a greater appreciation of and empathy for diverse experiences and traditions.

Naimy's writing style is quite lyrical and poetic, which not only makes the book a pleasure to read but also illustrates the power of language in conveying complex emotions and ideas. His use of metaphor and symbolism enhances the narrative, allowing readers to engage with the text on multiple levels. This quality can inspire a love for language and literature, encouraging readers to explore other literary works.

Moreover, the book offers profound philosophical and spiritual insights, reflecting Naimy's own involvement with mystical and transcendental ideologies. These insights can be particularly impactful for readers seeking spiritual growth or philosophical understanding. It challenges conventional beliefs about Lebanon and

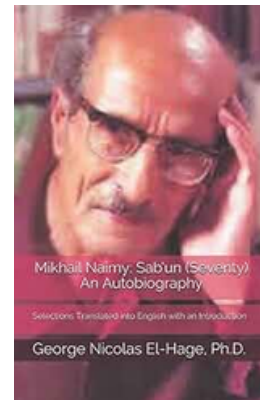
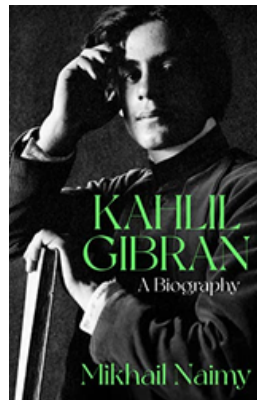
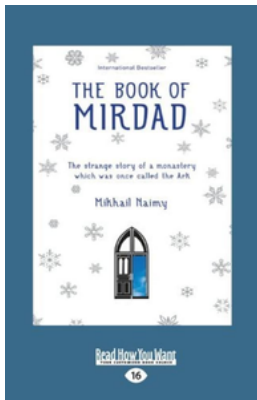
encourages readers to contemplate deeper existential questions.

Naimy has been very influential in Arab literature and thought. Understanding his work provides context to contemporary literary and philosophical discussions in the Arab world. For readers interested in global literary trends and thought movements, this book is a critical piece of the puzzle.

Naimy's subtle exploration of the human psyche and emotions is profound. The book explores themes of love, loss, joy, and

sorrow, making it deeply relatable to readers from diverse cultures. This emotional depth fosters empathy and a deeper understanding of the human experience, which is essential in Reading this novel can be a transformative experience as it encourages introspection and self-examination, leading to personal growth. The narrative's focus on the journey of the soul resonates with the inner quest of many readers, providing guidance and inspiration for those on a path of self-discovery.

### Other notable works by and about Mikhail Naimy



# Why you should read Lin Hai Yin's *Memories of Peking*

by Angel Wu

QSI International School Shenzhen, China



Possessing both a sense of universality and cultural distinction, Lin Hai Yin's *Memories of Peking* (城南旧事) has often been placed on the mandatory reading lists of elementary-school Chinese students.

*Memories of Peking* is a re-telling of the author Lin Hai Yin's own childhood experiences, and her simplistic writing style wonderfully captures the innocent perspective and thoughts of a child. Her nostalgia-filled narration conveys a deep sense of wistfulness and longing, and it makes the narrator's (and often readers') naivete seem infinitely more valuable. As one reads it, one truly realizes how irreplaceable and meaningful one's unique

lived experiences have been, and comes too, to appreciate the lives of others.

The seemingly simple stories contained in *Memories of Peking* include profound and painful experiences that one can relate with no matter how old one is, including the experience of losing loved ones, growing up, and gradually learning about how deeply embedded and pre-established beliefs may do harm as one clings to them. These issues are presented through many lifelike characters and their struggles feel genuine to readers. From thieves to fathers, to wronged mothers and wives, to nannies and childhood friends, each character has a story to tell. Yet, despite the well-meaning efforts of child protagonist, Yingzi, each character has spun themselves so deep into the cracks and faults of society, that they inevitably play into the hands of tragedy, lending the story a certain bittersweetness.

Its identity as a distinct cultural snapshot of early 20th century China, makes it a fascinating revelation of Chinese history. The depiction of a struggling society

between modernity and tradition, change and stagnation, presents a situation that countless Chinese people have experienced. The casual, immersive references to artifacts and traditions that weave across time and space truly aid in painting a realistic picture of the Beijing streets. Be it the sweet and soft consistency of a “Beijing Donkey Roll,” or the lilting tune of “Song Bie (Farewell)” ringing through a graduation hall, these are experiences that Chinese children continue to be familiar with, and many of these details can serve as a great cultural gateway for readers beyond China.

These are the stories that Chinese people hear from their grandparents: tales of suffering and hardship, but yet also hope and resilience. As *Memories of Peking* portrays a number of meaningfully distinct cultural experiences from the universally relatable perspective of a child, it serves as an excellent means of understanding the makings of Chinese culture and society. Thus, such a novel is a must-read piece of Chinese literature!

### Other works by Lin Hai Yin or about Chinese culture

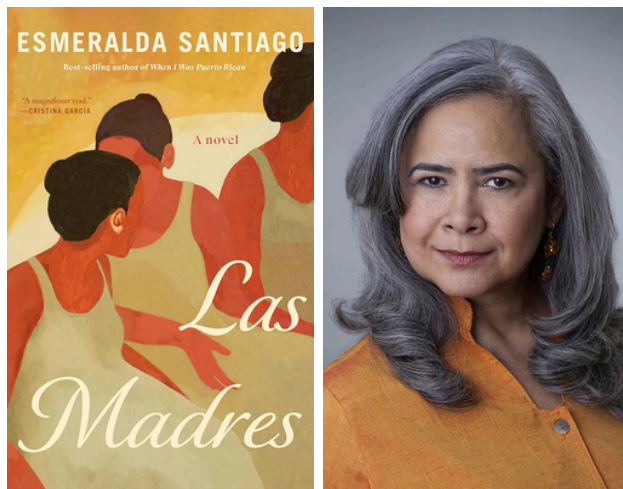


Why you should read Esmeralda Santiago's

# The Mothers

by Neishalis Caraballo

Antilles High School, Puerto Rico



Esmeralda Santiago's *The Mothers* (*Las Madres*) is an engrossing and moving examination of the nuances of parenting, culture, and identity. With Puerto Rico as the setting in the middle of the 20th century, Santiago crafts a gripping story that appeals to readers' deepest emotions. The fact that Santiago can develop complex, multifaceted characters that come to life on the pages makes *Las Madres* an engaging read. Through her journey, and the ups and downs of parenthood, the protagonist offers a complex and realistic portrait of the human condition. The complexities of maternal love, sacrifice, and the eternal power of mothers are masterfully explored by Santiago.

In addition, *The Mothers* immerses readers in the colorful and varied culture of Puerto

Rico by acting as a cultural tapestry. The island's landscapes, customs, and social mores are vividly depicted by Santiago through her detailed descriptions and sensitivity to cultural nuances. Readers learn about the historical and cultural background that influenced Puerto Rican identity during a time of profound social change via the protagonist's experiences. The work also touches on universal themes of overcoming adversity to pursue one's aspirations and perseverance. The core of the human spirit and its ability to overcome adversity are captured in Santiago's storytelling. The protagonist's path, which combines achieving personal goals with navigating the challenges of parenting, is likely to inspire readers.

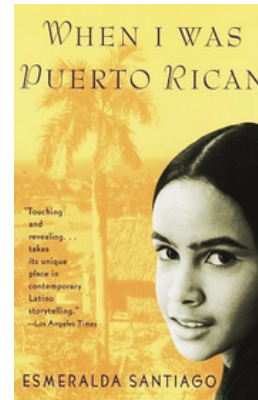
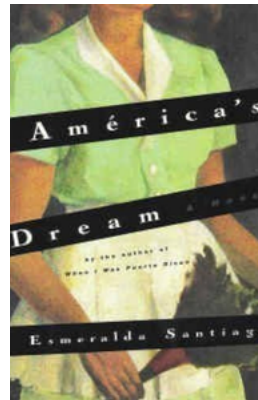
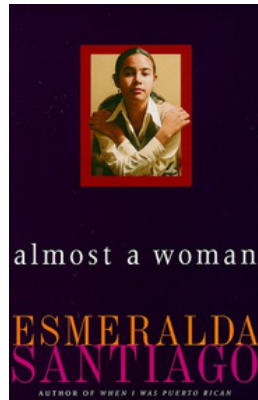
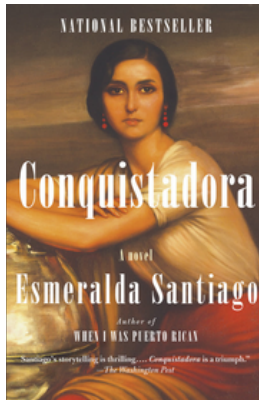
Beyond its literary merits, *The Mothers* adds to the continuing conversation on cultural expectations, gender roles, and the changing dynamics of families. Through her examination of these subjects, Santiago gives readers provocative insights into the difficulties women encounter in traditional societies as well as how they defy and negotiate social norms.

*The Mothers* is a gripping story that tackles the universal themes of love, family, and

self-discovery, making it an ideal read for anybody looking for something thought-provoking and emotionally impacting. The novel's ethnic diversity and in-depth examination of complicated human

emotions, along with Esmeralda Santiago's skillful storytelling, make it highly recommended for readers who are drawn to writing that crosses boundaries and speaks to humanity's common experiences.

### Other notable works by Esmeralda Santiago

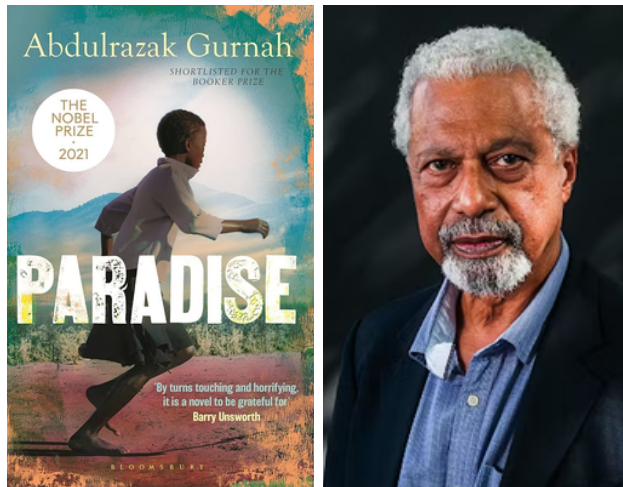


Why you should read Abdulrazak Gurnah's

# Paradise

by Sitti-Naila Mwinyi

International School of Zanzibar, Tanzania



Abdulrazak Gurnah's *Paradise* is a captivating novel that transcends the boundaries of time and space, weaving a tapestry of historical intricacies and personal narratives. Set against the backdrop of colonial Zanzibar in the late 19th century, the story follows the life of Yusuf, a young man caught in the overwhelming currents of love, loss, and cultural upheaval.

As a Year 12 (junior) student, delving into Yusuf's world was a transformative experience. Gurnah's meticulous portrayal of Yusuf's inner struggles, aspirations, and dilemmas resonated deeply with me. Through his eyes, I found myself navigating the complexities of identity, belonging, and agency: themes that echoed my own journey as a teenager on the cusp of adulthood.

Yusuf's journey of self-awareness and liberation resonated with my own aspiration to create my own way in a world that is constantly changing. His journey from youth to experience, from ignorance to wisdom, paralleled my own difficult journey from adolescence to maturity. His struggles with social standards, family responsibilities, and the attraction of forbidden love made me feel as though I was reading a mirror of my own emotions and doubts.

Gurnah's vivid prose paints a portrait of Zanzibar, evoking its sights, sounds, and smells with such clarity that I felt transported to its bustling streets and tranquil shores. Through Yusuf's encounters with a colorful cast of characters—from the enigmatic Aziz to the spirited Amina—I gained a deeper understanding of the cultural melting pot that was colonial Zanzibar and the intricate web of relationships that defined its social fabric.

I was most impressed by Yusuf's ability to stay positive in the face of difficulty. He overcame countless challenges, such as the death of his family and the brutal realities of slavery, yet he never lost sight of his

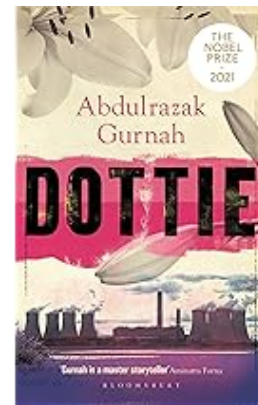
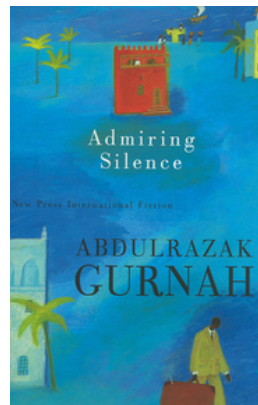
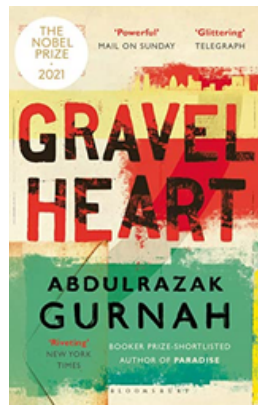
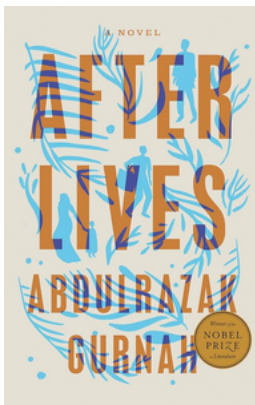
compassion or his goals. His unshakeable faith in the potential for a brighter future gave me the courage and will to face my own obstacles head-on.

*Paradise* is more than just a novel; it's a soulful journey that resonates across generations. Through Yusuf's eyes, I

discovered truths about love, loss, and the human condition that will stay with me long after I've turned the final page.

Abdulrazak Gurnah has crafted a masterpiece that speaks to the universal experiences of hope, longing, and redemption—making it a timeless classic that every NEHS student should read.

### Other notable works by Abdulrazak Gurnah

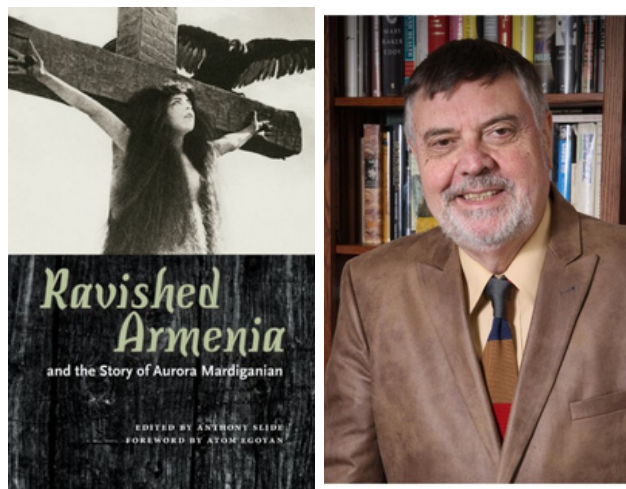


Why you should read Anthony Slide's

# Ravished Armenia: The Story of Aurora Mardiganian

by Michelle Khorozyan

QSI International School Yerevan, Armenia



*Ravished Armenia: The Story of Aurora Mardiganian* is a collection of memoirs by one of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide. The collection of memoirs tells the story of a young Christian girl, Aurora Mardiganian, who survived the genocide, and it is an important book to read for any reader who wishes to have a better grasp of world history.

The Armenian Genocide (1915-1923) was the greatest ethnic cleansing of Armenians in history, with over 1.5 million Armenians being massacred or individually killed. The genocide was conducted by Turkey and started during World War I. Armenians were forcibly deported and denied food and

water, which led to their deaths. Some Armenians were also literally crucified during the genocide because Armenia was the first Christian nation in the world.

The book highlights the Turkish government's treatment of Christian Armenians during that period, showing the large role religion played in the genocide. Personally, this speaks to me as I have often been told that being Christian here gives me more privileges, but this text goes to show that where I live, in a war zone and conflict-ridden region, this has not been and is not currently the case.

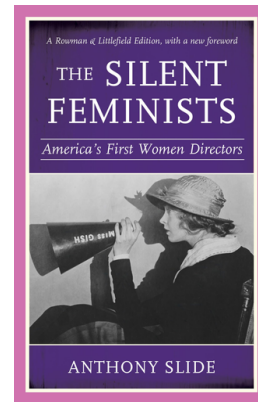
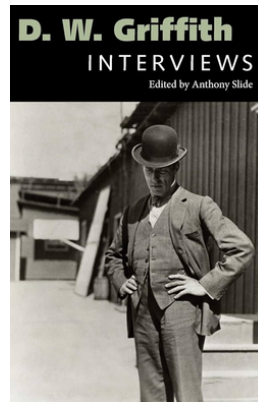
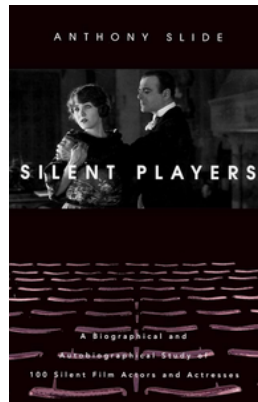
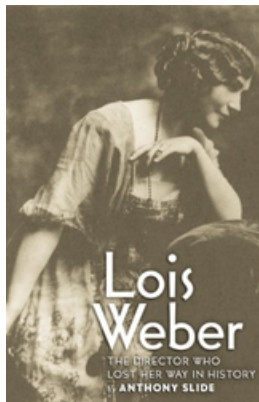
Armenia has been attacked by Azerbaijan, one of Turkey's greatest allies, multiple times since 2020, with the country going as far as to threaten another ethnic cleansing of Armenians. In 2023, citizens of Artsakh, a region that was inhabited by ethnic Armenians, were driven out of their homeland by Azerbaijan and feared being killed. Watching another ethnic cleansing before my eyes showed me how important it is to learn about history so that it does not repeat itself.

As of 2024, the governments of only 34 countries have recognized the Armenian Genocide, although it happened over a century ago. If the international community were more exposed to Armenian literature, the history of the ancient country would be better known and one of the most spiritually and historically relevant parts of the world would be recognized.

This collection of memoirs is a perfect way to start as it includes real life stories from

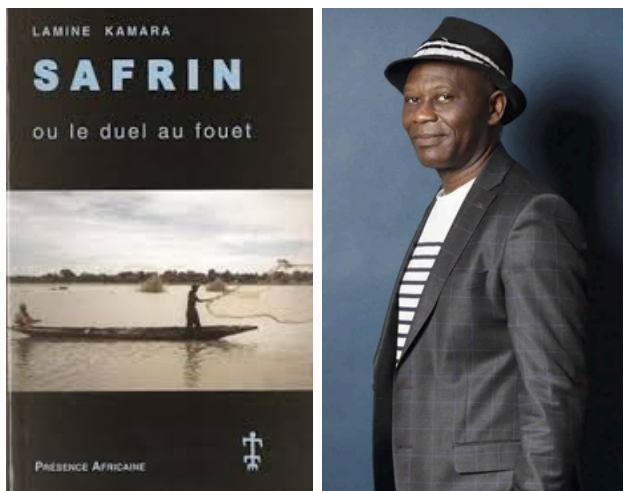
someone who went through the tragedy of the genocide, giving readers a glimpse into what it was like during that time. The story would pique the interest of the international community, perhaps leading to further research and understanding about Armenia. As many people have not even heard of the country, starting with reading the real-life experiences of those who went through one of the greatest tragedies in history would be a good way to inform the international community about Armenia.

### Other notable works by Anthony Slide



# Why you should read Lamine Kamara's **Safrin, Or the Whip Duel**

by Augustin Djoa Assomption Kacou  
American International School of Conakry, Guinea



*Safrin, Or the Whip Duel (Safrin ou le duel au fouet)* is a book by the Guinean author Lamine Kamara. Born in 1940, he is the author of several books, this one being the most famous. This book captivates the audience's attention and is a must-read for readers looking to know more about Guinean culture.

*Safrin, Or the Whip Duel* is set in the heart of the Mandingo in the northeast of the country. It explores the city of Diomabanan near the Milo River. The setting plays a vital role throughout the story. It showcases how one's place and group in society affect how they are perceived. The themes of hard

work, love, and betrayal accentuated by cliffhangers and unanticipated events can be found within this book. Those who read this work will be able to learn about family values and the power of having a family name.

Safrin, the protagonist, goes on different exciting adventures. The text submerges the reader in the life of a chief of a Guinean tribe, how it feels to be chief, and what it means. Readers are exposed to the sense of hierarchy of the people in the heart of the Mandingo and what each of their roles means to them and the people around them. Safrin experiences everything, from failures to successes, learning many valuable lessons from those experiences. Fascinating duels take place with expected and unexpected events. Trials of strength and ego also appear throughout the book and are among its main themes.

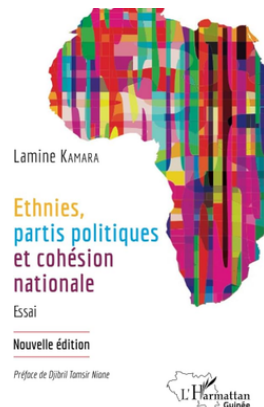
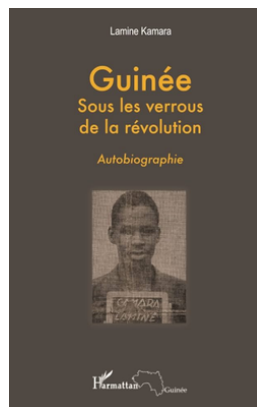
Readers follow the entertaining love triangle among the three main characters, Safrin, Karinkan, and Nyalen, which keeps them intrigued throughout the novel. It is a love

triangle that impacts their lives forever. It is full of touching moments and events that keep the reader engaged.

This book reminds us that historical events should not be forgotten and does so by echoing the tale of the Dominican Republic and its fight for independence. History preserves our cultural heritage and identity.

If NEHS student members are searching for a book full of emotions, shocking turn of events, and battling forces, this is the perfect book to read. It allows the reader to dive deep into Guinean culture and its values.

### Other notable works by Lamine Kamara

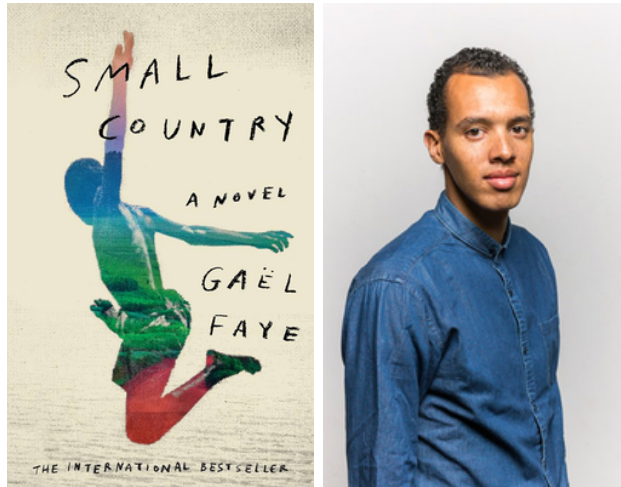


Why you should read Gaël Faye's

# Small Country

by Camilo Restrepo

International School of Kigali, Rwanda



Gaël Faye's *Small Country* (*Petit Pays*) is much more than a novel. It contains a much deeper meaning and reflection on humanity, a poignant exploration of identity issues and a reminder of the residual consequences of war. Set in Burundi during the 1990s, this book tells the story of Gabriel's journey into manhood through the landmines of ethnic tensions and political instability.

At its heart, *Small Country* is an intimate tale that immerses readers in the characters' worlds—their joys and sorrows, dreams, and anxieties. Through Gabriel's eyes, we can watch his community deteriorate with the gradual elimination of long-term ethnic differences resulting from violence and mass murder. Faye employs a language that compels readers into his vividly portrayed yet immediate and timeless world.

One of the most striking accomplishments of this novel is its ability to make those caught up in conflict look human again. When Gabriel interacts with his kin, friends, or other people around him, it becomes apparent how serious violence can be for any ordinary person. Faye has given the characters of *Small Country* an imperfect life, throughout which they must grapple with the circumstances that have been thrust upon them.

More than anything else, this novel shows how changeable and complicated identities can be. Gabriel, trying to come to terms with his mixed blood and the changing loyalties of those around him, urges us to think about our own experiences of being insiders or outsiders. Faye's work deftly handles the intricate aspects of racial and ethnic identity, revealing how social structures and historical roots shape individual self-perception and community.

This aside, *Small Country* is a powerful reminder that political violence comes at a heavy human cost. Using Gabriel's narrative, Faye brings to light the horrific toll that children bear in wars, which make them the most vulnerable casualties. This brave record of despair, suffering, loss and

bouncing back from trauma attests to the incredible toughness of humankind in times when life seems unbearable.

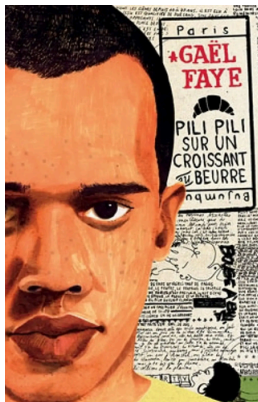
Additionally, through its immediate storytelling impact, *Small Country* exposes readers to modern society and forces them to grapple with complex realities about lingering colonial effects, apartheid divisions based on tribes' affiliation, and geopolitics. Faye meshes the lives of individuals with their politics so that readers think critically about issues relating to a fair distribution of resources and power struggles between communities with varied notions regarding justice.

In *Small Country*, Faye doesn't just narrate a story: He immerses the audience in grappling with deep inquiries on identity,

post-conflict legacies, and possibilities for reconciliation and healing. Gabriel's journey forces readers to contemplate their experiences and how the world influences them.

Ultimately, *Small Country* affirms how literature can illuminate human complexity. With sympathy and insight, Faye investigates general human themes, creating a narrative that traverses all boundaries and addresses universal problems that connect us all. It is an unmatched piece of writing that must be read and confronted. Through its heartrending depiction of issues surrounding identity and resistance, this novel gives readers a profound reading experience that will not fade after closing its last page.

### Other notable works by Gaël Faye



Why you should read Moussa Doumbouya's

# The Valley of Hope

by Cheick N'famara Camara

American International School of Conakry, Guinea



*The Valley of Hope (La Vallée de l'espoir)* is a novel written by a Guinean author named Moussa Doumbouya, known as “Petit Tonton.” *The Valley of Hope* is an important book because it presents four different stories that captivate and touch readers and bring them into contact with the stories of our African ancestors.

The compelling stories come from the heart and demonstrate the ups and downs of life. The challenging times and disappointments we face are often the result of unhappiness, failing to keep one’s word, and dangerous desires. Each story explores different

human relationships. The book offers a unique perspective on the human condition and can provoke deep thought in readers. It can also awaken varied emotions and feelings, allowing readers to connect to the characters and become immersed in the stories.

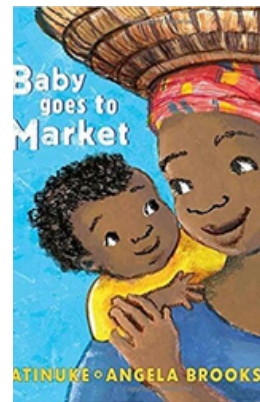
Moreover, the book’s impact on the reader depends on their experience and how they interpret and connect with the stories. *The Valley of Hope* offers a variety of experiences and perspectives. It is a book that inspires and motivates; it is a perfect opportunity for readers to look forward and reflect upon their own experiences.

One unique thing about Petit Tonton’s novel is that it explores captivating stories set in Guinea. It allows readers to authentically delve into the culture and landscapes of the country. The stories are also told from the perspective of a young boy, which adds a different point of view, and allows the reader to experience the world through his eyes.

In addition, each story can inspire and touch readers in different ways. By sharing them, readers can discuss and analyze themes such as hope, determination, dreams, and challenges. This will also allow other ethnic

groups and cultures in Africa and worldwide to discover the richness of Guinean culture and promote African literature. It is an enriching experience to discover because it is full of life experiences and moral lessons.

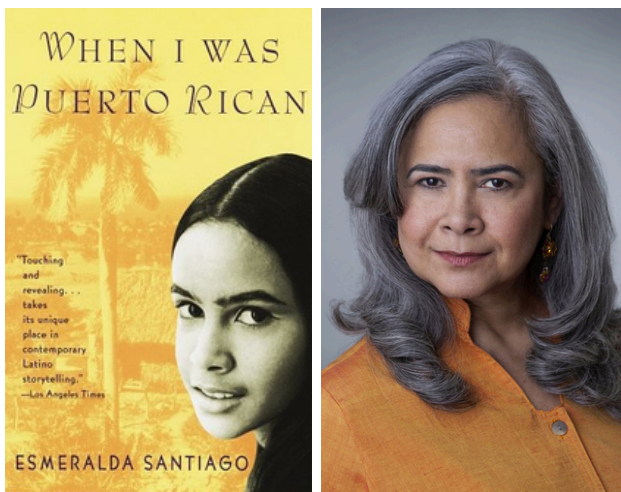
### Other work by Moussa Doumbouya and about African culture



Why you should read Esmeralda Santiago's

# When I Was Puerto Rican

by Miasarah Arzon Robles  
Antilles High School, Puerto Rico



*When I Was Puerto Rican* (*Cuando era Puertorriqueña*) by Esmeralda Santiago is an inspiring text on how Puerto Ricans in the 1950s lived their day-to-day lives. It allows the reader to view the mindset of Puerto Ricans in the 50s. As a reader, it has given me a different perspective on how my grandparents and great-grandparents lived. After reading it, when I look at my grandparents, I can understand what they lived through and how they have become the people they are now. It provides the reader with a different view of how our world has advanced.

As you delve into the book, it provides

anecdotal reportage about different situations that all Puerto Rican kids live through. As a reader, it gives you a sense of relatability and inclusion. It also explores the theme of immigration and particularly how people from countries all over the world have traveled to America to find the “American Dream.” It's often difficult for migrant kids to fit in, learn the language, and become accustomed to the culture. Many dream of returning to their homeland with money in their pockets, but almost all are never able to.

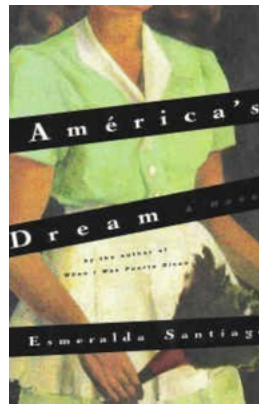
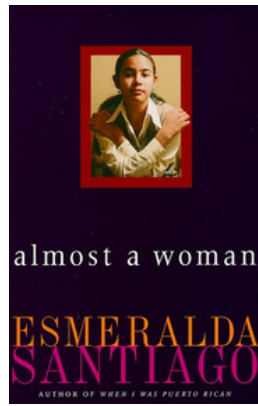
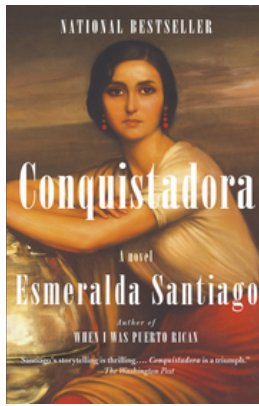
Although time has gone by, some things never change. The Puerto Rican community has preserved and continued its customs, traditions, and culture. As I read the book, I felt amazed at how my family still celebrates these traditions. The many thousands of Puerto Ricans who have moved abroad in the search of better opportunities have taken their culture with them.

NEHS student members should read *When I Was Puerto Rican* because they may be

able to empathize with issues discussed in the text such as poverty, trouble between parents, and loss. NEHS students around the world should read this book because it unveils different cultures, families, living situations, and most importantly a young

person's perspective. Readers who do not face these issues are made aware that a large percentage of the world does. You might even be inspired to try and help respond to these issues by donating to charity or volunteering.

### Other notable works by Esmeralda Santiago

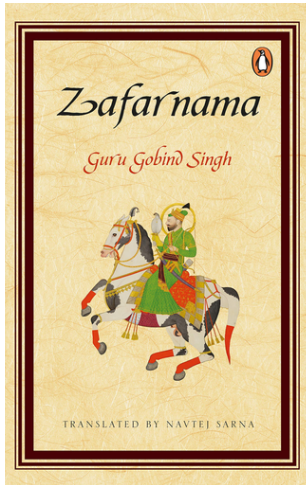


Why you should read Guru Gobind Singh's

# Zafarnāma

by Joydeep Kaur

Kodaikanal International School, India



*Zafarnāma* (epistle of victory) was a victory letter of 111 verses in Persian penned by Guru Gobind Singh in 1705 to Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor, after the Battle of Chamkaur. This battle might have the largest last stand ever, with a battle between a million Mughal commanders and only 40 Sikhs. Not only does the letter vividly describe the events of the Battle of Chamkaur but laments Aurangzeb for breaking his promises. He is said to have taken an oath over the Holy book of Qur'ān and promised the Sikhs safe passage, but ended up attacking their army. During these wars, Guru Gobind Singh's four sons were killed and his mother died out of shock, and many Sikhs sacrificed their lives to uphold their Sikh faith.

It's January 5, 1707, the last day of

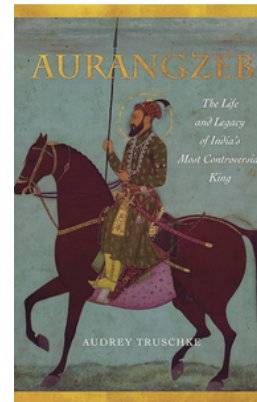
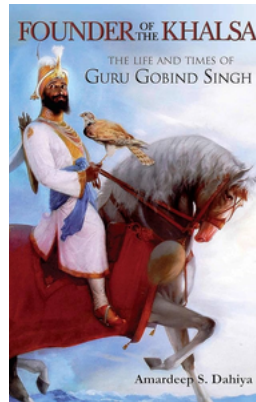
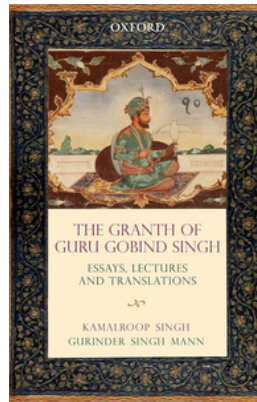
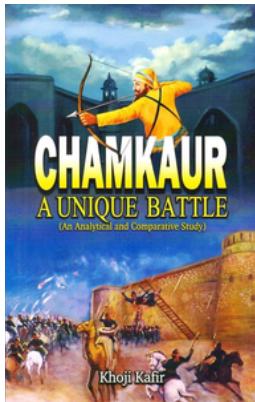
Ramadan that year. Naib Subedar Haji Sardar Shah hands over a mysterious letter to Aurangzeb. The Emperor reads the letter highlighting his wrongdoings and his face turns pale. He gets so traumatized that he passes away soon after. That is how the legend goes. *Zafarnāma* focuses solely on the importance of truth, humanity, and morality. It is one text a criminal cannot read without having spirits haunt them. This might sound a bit exaggerated, but everybody I know who's read it agrees. Here's another good one. Guru Gobind emphasizes in the text that people who violate the law shall be *nipunsik*, meaning they cannot produce successful heirs. It is said that Aurangzeb was the last of the great Mughal Emperors and his policies ultimately led to the dissolution of the empire.

The Guru remarks that no matter how successful one might be, if they are not kind to others and not a good citizen, all their success amounts to nothing. One issue that easily arises to any reader's mind by now might be the religious conflict embedded in the text between the Sikhs and the Muslims. The Indian Subcontinent is one geographical location where many religions have mingled. It's the birthplace for

Sikhism, Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. One interesting thing about this text, just like other religious texts from India, is the insight it provides on religion politics. Today, India is a secular country, but for most of its history it was not. The *Zafarnāma* is a source of inspiration for all

individuals who value courage and standing up for one's beliefs. Thousands of Sikhs gave up their lives to protect their faith and that of the Hindus too. Reading the *Zafarnāma* can help readers reflect on themes of justice and faith and apply these lessons to their own lives.

### Other works about Guru Gobind Singh and the Chamkaur Battle



Why you should read

# Julian Aguon

by Saunte Maratita

Guahan Academy Charter School, Guam



Literature is fundamental to the growth of any culture, society, and country. Julian Aguon, a queer and indigenous author who comes from the beautiful island of Guam is not only a Chamorro human rights author but also a human rights lawyer. It is evident that his writing plays a key role in understanding the island of Guam and how literature can help preserve the environment.

Aguon's expertise in law supports his stance, which centralizes the preservation of Guam's environment and culture. While the culture of Guam is often preserved by the locals, the environment has been affected by years of pollution, climate change, and harmful incidents. "To Hell With Drowning," an essay by Aguon, is one of his works dedicated to the problems faced by our island.

Not only does Aguon strive for the rights of the indigenous Chamorro and the culture, but he has also incorporated his own Queerness in his activist writing. *No Country for Eight-Spot Butterflies* is a collection of lyrical essays, a coming-of-age story, detailing the trials of growing up queer and indigenous on an island, and which also discusses climate change and its effects. This is a one-of-a-kind piece of writing which we, as readers, rarely ever see any representation of in media or literature. Representation of the Indigenous is an essential part of keeping a culture and society alive, and that is the importance of Aguon's writing.

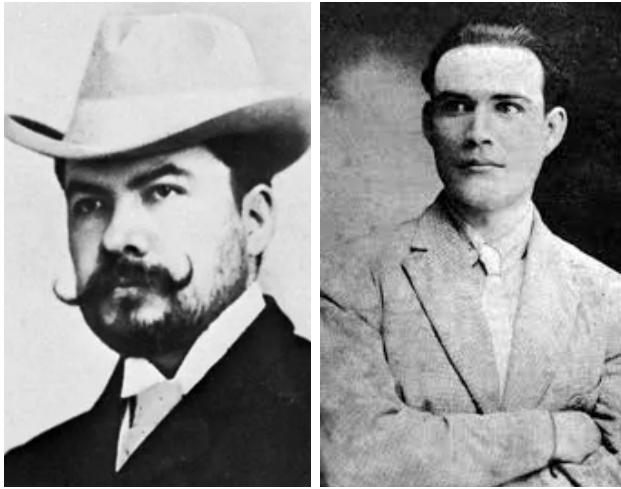
Aguon's works have helped him develop a name globally as an Author-Attorney. He has been invited to teach at various universities and institutions, such as the University of California School of Law, the Yale Law School, Brown University, and the National Center for the Preservation of Democracy. Inducted into the Global Advisory Council of Progressive International, Aguon is also globally recognized as a representative of Micronesia.

Why you should read

# Rubén Darío and Alfonso Cortés

by Lily Stephens

American Nicaraguan School, Nicaragua



From all of the talented authors Nicaragua has to offer, there are two who deserve international recognition: Rubén Darío and Alfonso Cortés.

Rubén Darío is the epitome of a Nicaraguan poet, as he is often the first person that comes to mind when asked to name a famous or important author from Nicaragua. This fame of his is not unjustifiable, either. Darío was a talented individual since childhood and a precocious reader. His first works were written when he was still a child and, at the age of 13, he was published in a newspaper. This publication is what began his lifelong and outstanding career.

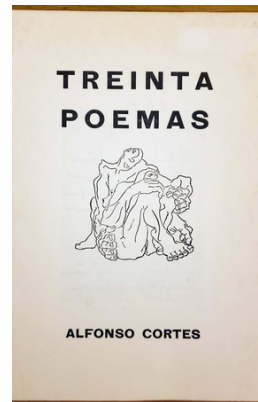
In Nicaragua, Darío is known as “The Prince of Castilian letters” and as a precursor of modernism in Latin America. These titles are definitely well founded, as he was an incredibly skilled poet whose works were not only beautiful, but also filled with strong technique and universal understanding. The first poem I read of his, as many other Nicaraguan kids do, is “To Margarita Debayle” (“A Margarita Debayle”). This poem highlights important themes in a way that a child can understand but does so in a manner that adults can also enjoy.

As I grew older, and was introduced to his other works, I was astonished at the level of artistry and capacity that Darío possessed. His poems were short, yet encapsulated emotions like no others, and in an eight-word sentence you could find plenty of literary techniques. Some of his other books I feel deserve recognition, and that have formed part of my literary education, are *Blue (Azul)*, *Profane Hymns and Other Poems (Prosas Profanas)*, and *Songs of Life and Hope (Cantos de Vida y Esperanza)*.

Although less is known about Alfonso Cortés than Darío, his brilliant and profound texts merit recognition. Funnily enough, Cortés was a child prodigy much like Darío, but his Nicaraguan fame came much later in life after he developed schizophrenia while living in Darío’s childhood home. Cortés had written poems since he was young, but it was his increasing madness and isolation that inspired his most acknowledged work, “Ventana.” I first came across this author

through this poem, and how I first indulged in his poems “La Odisea del Istmo,” “Tardes de Oro,” and “Poesías y Poemas Eleusinos.” Finally, the main reason Cortés calls out to me is because his mind has no limits and, as he is the center of most of his poems, he becomes a free spirit where he feels he is the entire universe. At the same time, however, he is aware that he is restricted to earth, which limits his existence and confines him within his madness.

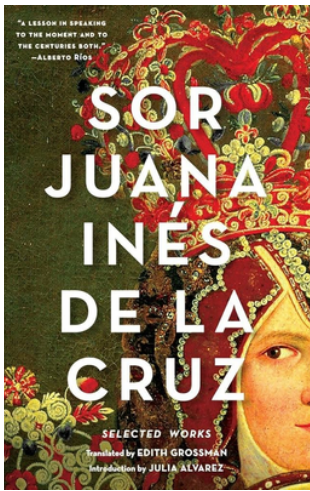
### Other works by Rubén Darío and Alfonso Cortés



Why you should read

# Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz

by Manuel Alejandro Martínez Morales  
PrepaTec Eugenio Garza Sada, Mexico



Juana Inés de Asbaje y Ramírez, later known as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695) was born in San Miguel de Nepantla, México, and was an important figure in the Spanish Baroque period. She embodied a great talent, wielding her skills as a nun, woman, and poet with deep intellect and curiosity for knowledge. She wrote, “I don’t study to know more, but to be less ignorant” and her life evidences a desire to pursue an unwavering commitment to seek truth over feelings and vain assumptions, going beyond the baseless status quo of the seventeenth century.

Juana de Asbaje possessed a notable

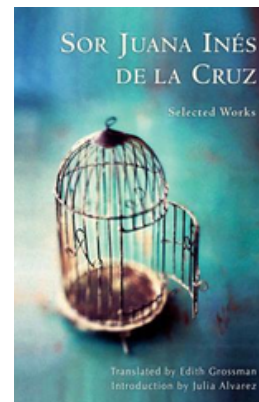
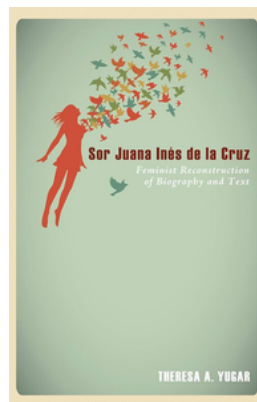
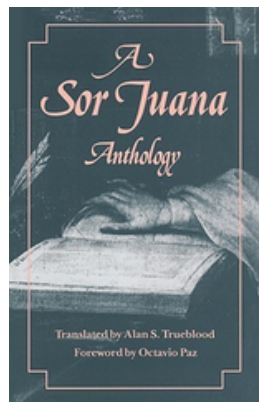
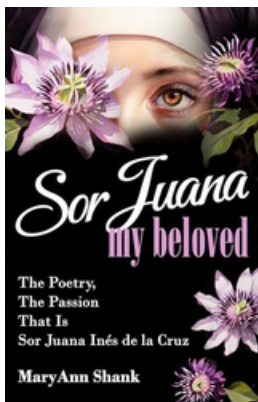
erudition and a revolutionary mindset, which is clearly conveyed through the richness of her literary texts. Delving into part of her lyric poetry, I was captivated by the complexity and beauty of the ideas portrayed in each verse. Throughout her life, Sor Juana crafted a variety of compositions, ranging from poetry to theatrical comedies, religious works, and carols. Her poetic repertoire addresses different topics such as philosophy, morality, love, and hope, each providing an impactful insight into her beliefs. What characterizes Sor Juana particularly is her perspective as a brave woman amidst the conventional norms and ideas of the century she lived in. Sor Juana repeatedly emphasized her use of reason over anything else, echoing contemporaries such as John Locke, Descartes, and Francis Bacon.

Furthermore, exploring Sor Juana’s work is crucial due to her ability to integrate literary figures and techniques, meticulously chosen and placed in the right spot, into her work. One important example is her firm critique to the posture of one prominent Portuguese

priest throughout an entire stanza, which reveals the point of view of a fearless, although cloistered, Catholic nun who even dared to question church authority. She claims that the priest “whose reason strays” should not be making ethical and moral judgements. She even questions whether “To you God has committed / The judgment of the case?” Sor Juana’s literary work is also characterized by questioning the role of many things that were given a divine significance and had practically remained unchanged for centuries. It is important for the reader to understand that she was writing during the inquisition of the seventeenth century, when her unique voice could easily have been silenced by the Catholic church.

The importance of delving into Sor Juana’s literary work also lies in analyzing her unique perspective as a creole woman amidst a milieu dominated by Spanish colonizers, the Church, and men. She is very critical of men, writing, “You foolish men who lay the guilt on women, / not seeing you’re the cause of the very thing you blame.” She was one of the few women with access to literature at that time, and faced many challenges throughout her life, not least of which was her femininity. Sor Juana has a powerful voice, and one that stands for the many women whose voices were erased from the pages of history.

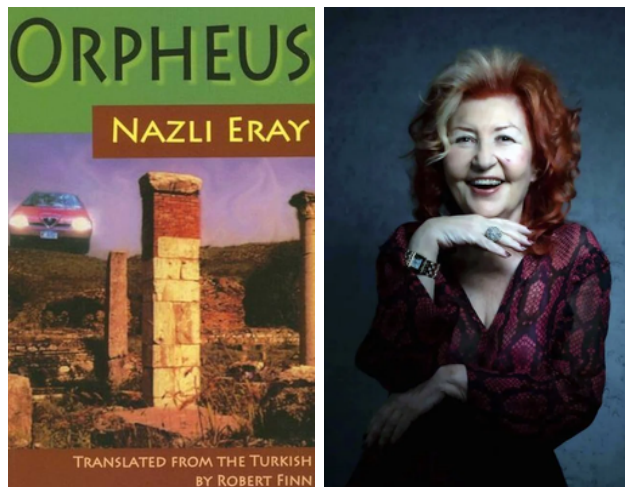
### Other works by and about Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz



Why you should read

# Nazlı Eray

by Kerem Babaoğlu & İrem Büyükdeveci  
The American Robert College of Istanbul, Türkiye



The first author to come to our minds when we first heard about the opportunity to introduce a Turkish author to the global NEHS community was Nazlı Eray, who also happens to be a graduate of our school. We, Kerem and İrem, decided to introduce her together in two different paragraphs to show you how an author can affect two different people in ways that are both very similar yet unique.

İrem: One of the most important writers in Turkish history is Nazlı Eray. She was born in 1945, in Ankara. Some of her books are considered modern literature, some of them postmodern. I didn't know this when I first started reading her books in the first grade. What I did know was that she had an unbelievable imagination. With every page I

found myself in a unique dream world: would Nazlı—the main character in most of Nazlı Eray's books—be able to find the key? Could she solve the mystery? Now, why was Osman a cockroach? That's right, there was a Kafka reference in the first ever book that I read. It was years before I eventually read *Metamorphosis*. What I want to say is, Nazlı Eray introduced me to literature in a way that meant I would be tangled in it forever, and I could never, under any circumstances, untangle myself. She introduced me to a haven that I would never want to leave. I'm forever grateful to her.

Kerem: One of things that fascinates me about Nazlı Eray's works is that they are perfect examples of the concepts of Magical Realism. In her books, she first creates a world that includes some aspects of a Turkish person's daily life. She describes a *mahalle*—a cozy word for neighborhood in Turkish—with the elderly women chatting on their balcony and kids playing between the apartments. Then, she gradually introduces unreal elements, which are seen as totally normal by the characters in her books. Sometimes, they fly over Istanbul on a carpet, or a crow might fall in love with a

statue! This may sound like I'm just defining magical realism, but the way Eray builds a bridge across dimensions makes me feel like I'm observing both sides of that structure at the same time. In addition to that, I think that Eray crafts her pieces in a unique way so that they arouse curiosity and passion in her readers' minds. The main characters are ready to explore and

experience the world standing in front of them, which carries the reader along with them. When I bring these two features of Eray's works together, I realize that her works actually present a view of real life to her audience, while helping young literature enthusiasts like myself to have a better grasp of literary techniques that are influential in today's world.

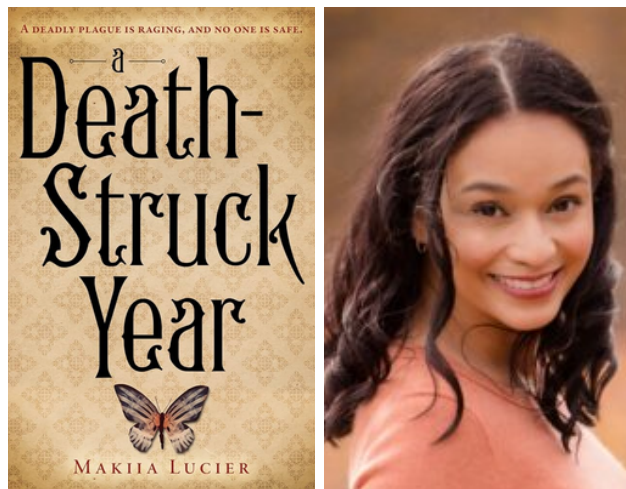
### Other works by Nazlı Eray



Why you should read

# Makiia Lucier

by Enrique Jude Taitano-Williams  
Guahan Academy Charter School, Guam



Imagine your city facing a devastating plague, or your family members suddenly going missing. What would you do? These thrilling scenarios are written into novels by author Makiia Lucier. These novels share captivating tales and themes that can entice a reader to enjoy the same book again and again. Despite having published only five novels, Makiia Lucier does a great job at catching the reader's attention with her unique stories.

Born on the island of Guam, Makiia Lucier currently lives with her family in Portland, OR, where she continues her work of creating mainly stand-alone novels. Makiia Lucier draws her inspiration from popular tales and history, and she is particularly interested in writing young adult fantasies.

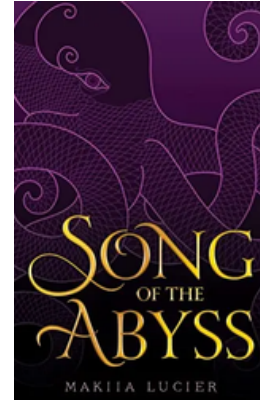
Her novels have received positive reviews from numerous readers, publishers, and other authors as well. She often begins writing her stories using a pencil and notebook. Some of Makiia Lucier's novels are Year of the Reaper, Isle of Blood and Stone, Song of the Abyss, A Death-Struck Year, and an upcoming book called Dragonfruit.

One of Makiia Lucier's more well-known books, a young adult fantasy and historical fiction published in 2021 and titled Year of the Reaper, centers around Lord Cassia, an apprentice who finds himself in a terrible situation after a disaster sweeps over his kingdom. After facing hardship, he counts his days in his broken kingdom and wants only to find a home elsewhere. However, he seems to end up with even more problems as he goes about his journey. The story builds on themes such as sorrow, loss, and moral conflict.

Makiia Lucier writes truly excellent novels. There is no doubt that Makiia Lucier will continue to create imaginative books. She has a distinct style of storytelling, which includes sudden twists to her plots. Due to this, readers who enjoy exploring stand-

alone novels may enjoy Makiia Lucier. Her works should be read by individuals who are looking for entertaining stories featuring complex characters and relationships and amazing world-building.

### Other works by Makiia Lucier

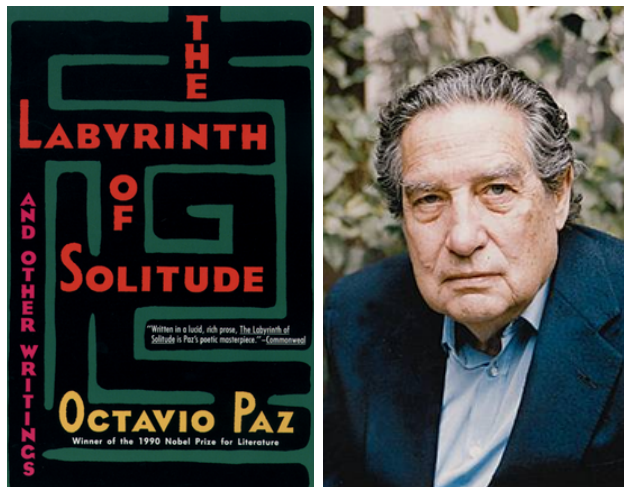


Why you should read

# Octavio Paz

by Arantza Rodriguez Aguilar

PrepaTec Esmeralda, Mexico



Octavio Paz's work, particularly *Mexican Masks*, warrants attention from those who grapple with Mexican stereotypes and those who associate Mexican identity solely with revelry. Through his writing, Paz constructs a historical tapestry infused with passion, fervor, and ambition. His oeuvre beckons readers seeking cultural encounters, debates, and critical engagement, inviting them to explore Mexico's rich pre-Hispanic and Spanish heritage.

Paz's significance transcends mere accolades. Rather, it lies in his distinctive perspective—a social vision forged through a nuanced examination of Mexican culture. With modern and incisive insight, Paz unveils the true essence of the nation, exposing the illusions and nationalistic

fervor that often obscure our identity. Right up until his final days, Paz maintained a childlike curiosity, framing his thoughts within the labyrinth of his mind.

His true legacy lies in his immortalization. As writers, we strive to etch our presence into the collective memory. Readers, in turn, breathe life into our words, ensuring our continued relevance. Whether Paz resides in hell for his sins or in heaven for his fame matters little; what endures are his ideas' ability to resonate with Mexican culture, challenging us to confront our origins, as children of the Malinche.

Paz embodies myriad facets of Mexican life—the colors, flavors, people, governments, and struggles—critiquing societal inequality while illuminating the hidden psychology of our nation. We are not merely the masks we wear. Paz's voice pierces through the veneer, revitalizing poetry and championing a culture often overlooked or misunderstood, one which he defended with his pen.

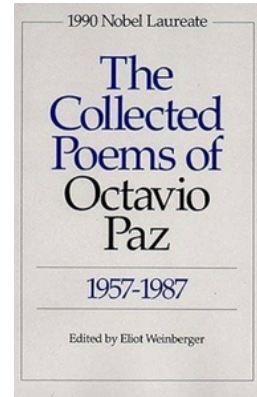
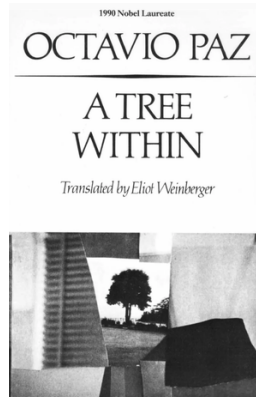
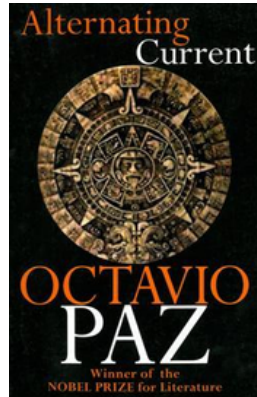
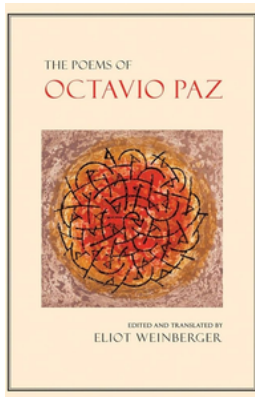
His impact reverberates through a fractured society, dismantling stereotypes and leaving an indelible mark on generations past and

present. Paz's ability to internationalize the Latin experience, infused with stark realism and unwavering love for his homeland, ensures that future generations grasp the complexities of the 20th century.

Octavio Paz's name echoes through time, a testament to his enduring legacy. His thoughts serve as cultural teachings,

offering insights into the lived reality of Mexican identity and compelling us to challenge societal norms. Through his writings, Paz beckons us to emancipate ourselves from the social constructs that shackle us, empowering us to reclaim our agency in a world where conformity reigns supreme.

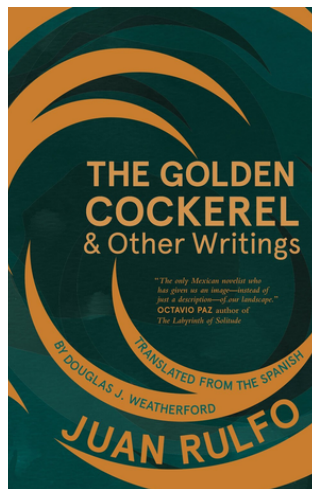
### Other works by Octavio Paz



Why you should read

# Juan Rulfo

by Antonio Ley Calderón  
PrepaTec Sinaloa, Mexico



Juan Rulfo's father was killed when he was four years old. His mother died six years later. The Mexican Revolution and the Cristero war took both his family and his early years away from him. Schools were closed, and Guadalajara University could not continue teaching. Everything in the country had stopped but the guns. All the fighting, all the violence was for the dream of a country free of tyrants and religion, a goal that was a long way from being achieved. Was it worth it? Why were people living like this? What was the purpose of all the bloodshed and the bodies lying in the Mexican fields? The answers were not clear for Rulfo.

Born in 1917, in Jalisco, Juan Nepomuceno Pérez Rulfo Vizcaíno revolutionized

modern literature. His books, although short, are filled with images of a Mexico desolated by civil wars. He revealed the loneliness of a generation whose fathers were killed during the war, a generation that would only hear about what was happening long after the fact, that was unable to have a childhood, and who were expected to grow up quickly, take care of their families, and continue the fight.

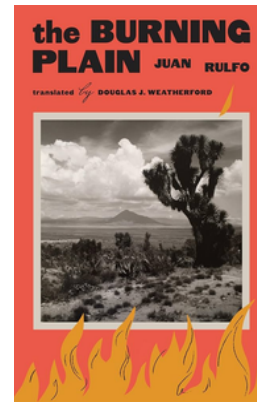
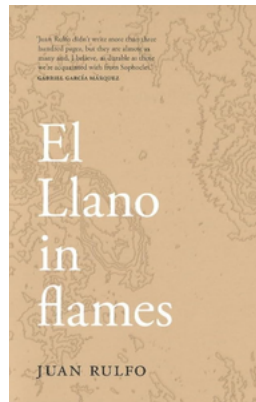
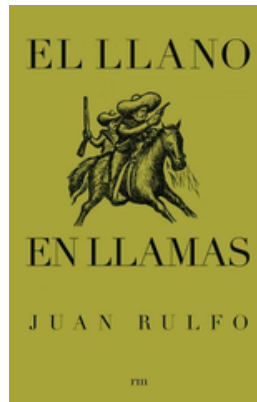
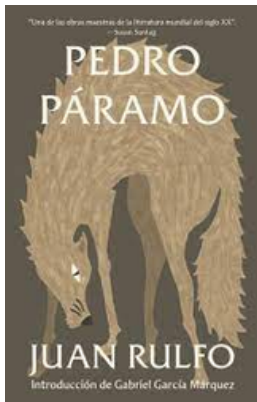
All these ideas were condensed in two key works. These would be enough to title him “the father of Magical Realism” and provide inspiration to the authors of the Latin American Boom (the period around 1970 when Latin American writers were very popular). His works were literary gamechangers and provided a solid basis for the next generation of writers to create, experiment, and share all aspects of Latin America for the world to see.

Rulfo shared his vision of the world in a compilation of short stories in the 1945 collection *El Llano en Llamas* (*The Plain in Flames*) and a novel, *Pedro Páramo*, in 1955. Then he simply stopped writing. Perhaps, because of the suffering that consumed him while composing, or perhaps

to finally let go of the experiences that changed his life forever. Either way, he would only publish one other novel, *El Gallo de Oro* (*The Golden Cockerel*) in 1980, and only upon the advice of his friends. This final work has not been as highly regarded as the other two.

Juan Rulfo is a must read for anyone who enjoys authors like Gabriel García Márquez, Haruki Murakami, and Isabel Allende, whose works include elements of Magical Realism.

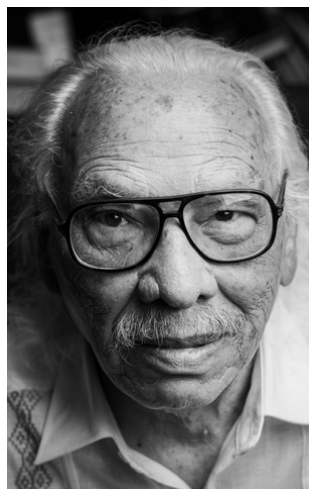
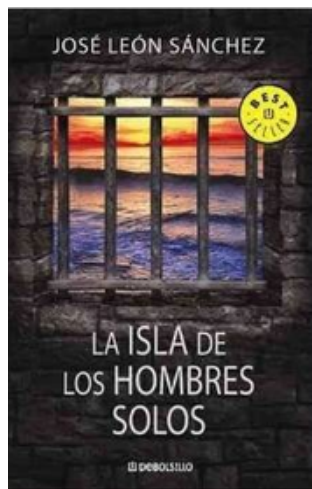
### Other works by Juan Rulfo



Why you should read

# José León Sánchez

by Eliana Feng Feng, Epiphany Lacey Worrell Blanco, & Nicole Fallas Agüero  
International Christian School, Costa Rica



José León Sánchez, a literary luminary from Latin America, merits global recognition not only for his literary prowess but also for the profound life experiences that infuse his work with both authenticity and depth. Born on April 19, 1929, in Costa Rica, he faced the challenges of growing up as an orphan. At the young age of 19, he was falsely accused of a crime, leading to a 20-year imprisonment. Despite this, Sánchez utilized his time behind bars to learn to read and write, eventually publishing many notable literary works. Sánchez's impact on Costa Rica is largely due to his writing about controversial topics that encouraged the public to reflect on their established opinions and change their mindsets.

Two of Sánchez's most recognized works,

*The Island of Lonely Men (La Isla de los Hombres Solos)*, published in 1973, and *Tenochtitlan: The Last Battle of the Aztecs* published in 1984, were both written during his incarceration. *The Island of Lonely Men* explores the harrowing reality of the San Lucas Penitentiary and the inhumane treatment endured by its inmates. Sánchez sheds light on the dehumanization he experienced, depicting how he was stripped of his humanity and reduced to worthlessness. In contrast, *Tenochtitlan: The Last Battle of the Aztecs* is an historical novel, recounting the arrival of Spanish conquistadors in 1519. It traces the fall of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, the capital of the Aztec Empire, which culminated in the collapse of the Aztec civilization in 1521.

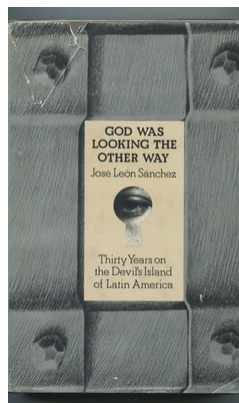
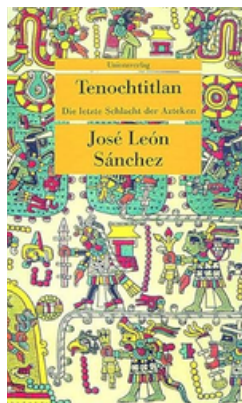
He is also one of the most read and translated Costa Rican authors, with his novel, *The Girl Who Came from the Moon (La Niña Que Vino de la Luna)*, published in 1964, having been translated into over 164 languages. Global recognition and universal accessibility are incredibly rare for Costa Rican authors. Moreover, the profit from the sales of this book were donated to children in need, showing just how much Sanchez cares about his community. He has

won the most prestigious literary award in Costa Rica (El Premio Nacional de Literatura de Costa Rica) five times for his literary works, showing that in Costa Rica, his texts have had an immense impact on its population, literature movements, and overall culture. To solidify this fact, in 2018, Sánchez was awarded the Premio Nacional de Cultura Magón by the Costa Rican government, which is a distinguished award given to a Costa Rican citizen who has dedicated their life's work to the

culture of the country.

José León Sánchez's influential work, which transcends geographical boundaries, invites readers worldwide to engage with the complexities of Latin American history, culture, and society. His legacy lives on as a powerful reminder of the impact that storytelling can have on shaping our understanding of the world and extending our all-around knowledge.

### Other works by José León Sánchez

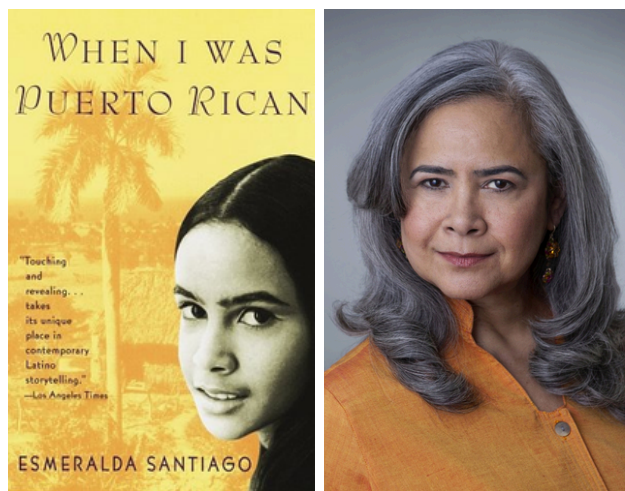


Why you should read

# Esmeralda Santiago

by Fabiola Vega Carmona

Antilles High School, Puerto Rico



Esmeralda Santiago, a prominent author from Puerto Rico, stands as a relentless literary force whose works offer readers a profound exploration of identity, resilience, and the power of storytelling. Her impact is monumental. It extends beyond the writing: she is an advocate not only for herself, but for many Latina women all over the world who face hardships such as racism and sexism. Santiago's journey from a young female immigrant to an accomplished author is echoed in her enthralling and personal narratives.

One of Santiago's most celebrated works is her memoir trilogy, beginning with *When I*

*Was Puerto Rican*. This memoir traces Santiago's childhood in rural Puerto Rico and her sudden move to New York City.

Through vivid and powerful prose, she depicts the challenges of adapting to a new culture, grappling with language barriers, and navigating the complexities of her identity. Santiago's narrative is not just a personal narrative; it unfolds as a universal tale of self-discovery that strikes a chord with readers worldwide.

Beyond her memoirs, Santiago has also contributed significantly to fiction with works like *America's Dream*. This novel bridges together themes of love, ambition, and cultural identity. Set against the backdrop of New York's vibrant Puerto Rico community known as el barrio, the story follows the life of a young woman named America Gonzalez as she pursues her dreams while confronting the challenges posed by societal expectations.

What makes Esmeralda Santiago a noteworthy author is her ability to surpass

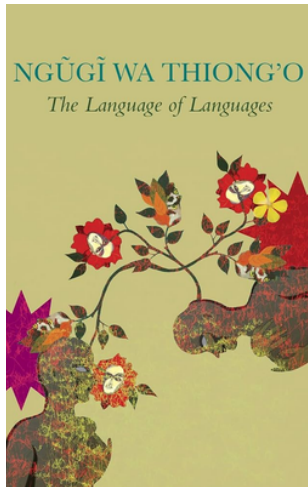


Why you should read

# Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

by Desmun Tehillah Plang

St. Andrews School, Turi, Kenya



Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is an acclaimed Kenyan writer who has produced literature rooted in the cultural and political atmosphere of the post-colonial Kenya that he grew up in. Yet, his writing transcends far beyond Africa into the many countries around the world that have also undergone colonization at some point in history. In his most iconic book, entitled *Decolonizing the Mind* and published in the 1980s, wa Thiong'o creates a universal struggle through consistent and sometimes subtle allusions to colonization, and how colonization has affected a developing region—this is something many people from former or current colonies can relate to.

He discusses issues such as the suppression of one's mother tongue through the western

education that causes school-age children to develop an inferiority complex. He explores how this antagonizes ethnic cultures whilst uplifting the colonizer's culture, and how this continues to manifest itself when children grow up and become the leaders of their countries. My understanding of this is that many African education systems have succeeded in eradicating ethnic languages since they are mostly dominated by western languages. One could argue that colonization forcefully removes mother tongues from our mouths, replacing them with a foreign, unnatural one, and that, therefore, language is a tool for neocolonialism.

This should be alarming to indigenes of former and current colonies because language is the basis of literature, and the literature one consumes determines the kind of mindset they develop. For example, a person who consumes literature that has philosophical themes tends to be more critical whereas one who consumes romantic literature tends to have an idealized view of human relationships. wa Thiong'o exposes the truth that a child who is educated using only western books with an abundance of western ideas will end up

antagonizing their native culture because they are bombarded with the belief that the colonizers' culture is right. Thus, wa Thiong'o recognizes and uplifts the power of literature in shaping the minds of those who consume it, and he attempts to utilize this awareness to reverse the consequences that have been brought to developing regions.

wa Thiong'o's post-colonial Kenya is the main setting for many of his books. He deliberately introduces historical characters such as Jomo Kenyatta and the Kenyan Mau Mau fighters into his work, putting fictitious characters in realistic situations that were happening when his books were published, giving his work more depth. Moreover, his books *Petals of Blood* and *A Grain of Wheat* reflect upon the moral, social, and racial reasons for independence, as well as the exploitation of the poor for international interests, and the economic issues caused by independence. This is significant because it makes his readers aware of the dire situations colonialism has left behind and how many generations suffer from the unrealized potential of many developing regions because of violent conflicts and economic failure.

His social commentary about dysfunctional postcolonial Kenya condemns the contribution of colonization and has helped me better understand the corruption and tribalistic violence that occurs in my home

country, Nigeria. Even though this book is set in a completely different country and at a completely different period in time, it resonates with me as it links to issues associated with religious and tribal clashes. Indeed, one could argue that in other developing countries, such as India, the consequences of colonialism that wa Thiong'o poignantly outlines in his books serve to show that issues such as corruption and violence against women run much deeper than "inferiority" or illiteracy, pointing toward the fact that colonialism was engineered to degenerate countries on the receiving end of it, rather than to uplift them.

One of wa Thiong'o's most significant contributions to literature today is the incorporation of his native language, Gikuyu (or Kikuyu in modern terms), into his writing. This was an especially daring move because few native Gikuyu speakers can read in Gikuyu, and few of his audience at the time this decision was made, even spoke Gikuyu. However, his decision to do this poses an answer to the pervasive question—"What defines African literature?" If it is the author that makes literature African, does this mean that an African who writes about the west writes under the genre solely because they are African? Or if it is the context, can a white European write about Africa and can that qualify as African literature? wa Thiong'o answers this in the most beautiful of ways

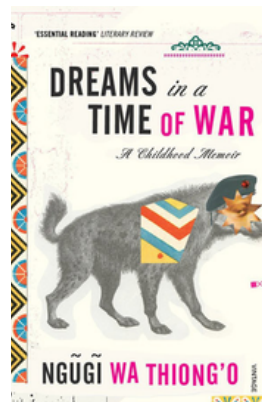
by choosing to write in Gikuyu, to push forward a point that African literature involves the passing down of African culture, and that is what makes literature African. This is because he strongly asserts that language is a means of commanding power, and by reclaiming that power for his own benefit. For this reason, wa Thiong'o has qualified himself as the "leading writer in Kenya."

In his 1977 book *Petals of Blood*, he argues that "education is no longer a tool of liberation; it is a tool for oppression used by the elite to betray their own people." This makes me think of Fela Kuti's line from his song of the same year "Colonial Mentality," in which he sings in Nigerian pidgin, "them go turn air condition and close them country away / them judge him

go put white wig and jail him brothers away." Both highlight that individuals are exposed to the long-term consequences of colonialism that are still present in today's world.

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is an author of interest to a variety of audiences as his work is both universal (in that it is relatable to a wide range of people who have experienced or are still experiencing the consequences of colonization) and it is open to many different interpretations from various lenses —my favorite being from the lens of a Pan Africanist. His work is obviously written to enlighten and empower his readers to demand a changed society. It is for these reasons that every well-rounded reader should know about Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o.

### Other notable works by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o



## CONTRIBUTORS

Sixteen-year-old **Yasmina Achkar** has always had a passion for two things: art and her community. The world of dance, theatre, and music have always been her safe space, inviting her to not only look within but also to push her limits. She is a person who strives to give back to her community: Mahatma Gandhi once said to “be the change [we] want to see in the world,” and it is quotes like this that remind her of the change she can be. Yasmina loves her country, as she has developed a strong bond with its people and culture. She tries to seize any opportunity she gets to show the world how big ambitions can be found within the smallest of places.

**Mina Atak** is a junior at Robert College in Istanbul, Türkiye, and she is an officer at the Mary Mills Patrick Chapter of NEHS. She is interested in mathematics and economics and wishes to pursue a career in these fields. Mina values getting involved in extracurricular activities and community involvement programs such as her own school club Mathematical Economics, Model United Nations, and Rotary Interact. She enjoys playing chess and playing the piano, which she started doing when she was three years old. She also likes reading, writing, and debating; and is currently co-authoring a book on Computer Olympiads and Discrete Mathematics. Mina is very happy to be part of NEHS, a community of students from different cultures and backgrounds.

**Sallim Mohamadullah Azimi** is from Afghanistan in the center of Asia. Despite being only fifteen, Sallim’s writing shows maturity beyond his age and promises much talent in all aspects of his writing. He captures the feelings and thoughts shared by people in Rwanda and talks about important topics like fairness and knowing who you are. Besides writing, Sallim is academically crucial and gifted as he also participates in activities at his international school, using his skills and intellect to improve his surroundings and use his writings to better talk about important issues in society as well as advocating for the betterment of everyone.

**Miasarah Arzon Robles** was born in Humacao, Puerto Rico. She has a very large and loving family. Since she was young she has grown very fond of writing. When she was little, her mom gave her flashcards with words in English and Spanish, so she was able to master both languages from a young age. Currently she enjoys laughing and having fun with her family and friends. During her spare time, she likes to read, to watch TV, and to take pictures of the sunset. She is a dedicated track and field athlete. She is also a Swiftie.

**Kerem Babaoğlu** is an 11th grade student at the Robert College of Istanbul. He was born in Alanya, a coastal town in southern Türkiye. He completed his elementary and middle school education at Bahçeşehir College of Alanya and then moved to Istanbul to study at Robert College. He has been involved in multiple theater productions including *The Bacchae* and *The Drowsy Chaperone Jr.* He is very interested in psychology and humanities and is planning to pursue a career in these fields.

**İrem Büyükdeveci** is a 9th grade student at Robert College. She has been a bookworm for as long as she can remember. She is afraid that one day she might magically turn into an actual bookworm, and get lost between the pages of old and dusty books—her favorite kind. One of her biggest passions is performing in musicals. She finds that musicals combine three of her hobbies into one: acting, singing, and dancing.

# CONTRIBUTORS

**Cheick N’famara Camara** is senior at the American International School of Conakry (AISC). He began studying at AISC in August 2018. He is Guinean and has spent his entire life in Guinea. He was born in Kamsar, Guinea, where he was introduced to the writings of Moussa Doumbouya. Since he was young, he has deeply appreciated Africa’s diverse traditions, arts, literature, and history because he is proud to be African. Guinean authors have revealed the literature, diversity, and cultures of the continent to him.

**Neishalis Caraballo** is a 10th grader at Antilles High School in Puerto Rico. She has been an active member of the student council, JROTC, and National Junior Honor Society (NJHS) since middle school, driven by a desire to contribute to the community. Her leadership abilities were highlighted when she was elected class president last year. Neishalis excitedly joined the National English Honor Society (NEHS) and is thrilled about having the opportunity to broaden her literary knowledge and share her experiences. As a Puerto Rican teenager, she brings a distinct perspective to her work. She wishes to share Puerto Rico's triumphs and shortcomings with the rest of the globe. Neishalis hopes to have a positive impact on their school and classmates through their dedication to study and community involvement.

**Nicole Fallas Agüero** is a 15-year-old student currently attending International Christian School (ICS) in Heredia, Costa Rica. She was born in the United States in 2008, but later moved to Costa Rica in October 2023. She enjoys hanging out with her friends, creating ceramic sculptures, and spending quality time with her family. She joined the first NEHS chapter in Costa Rica in November of 2023, because of her enjoyment of, and interest in, English literature. She helps develop and write for the newsletter published by the Camp Half-Blood Chapter. She hopes to become a biomedical engineer in the future.

**Eliana Feng Feng** is a 16-year-old student attending the International Christian School in Heredia, Costa Rica. She is Chinese-Costa Rican: her nationality is Costa Rican, but her whole family is from China. She lives with and within both cultures, and she likes to be inspired by them. She joined the first NEHS chapter of Costa Rica at her school because of her interest in literature and became the secretary of the Camp Half-Blood Chapter. Eliana has an introverted personality, but she also has a strong feeling of adventure that constantly pushes her out of her comfort zone.

**Hyein Hong** was born in South Korea in the city of Ansan. She lived in Korea until she was 9 years old and moved to Nicaragua in the middle of 3rd grade. It wasn’t easy for her to adapt to the entirely new school with languages she never heard of in her life. Neither English nor Spanish was easy for her. But when she became a 4th grader, she finally made her first friend who taught her English. Thanks to her, she was able to speak and write in English by the end of the year. She also enjoys playing instruments because she likes to explore different subjects she hasn't experienced yet.

**Mohammed Faraz Ibrahim**, 16, is a student at Kodaikanal International School in India. He is a passionate racquet sports player, a rambler, and a travel enthusiast who enjoys exploring cultures and art forms. He holds a profound interest in exploring diverse literary styles and in producing his own. As a member of the founding NEHS chapter in India, he is committed to community engagement. His life's mission is to make a lasting, positive impact on others, drawing inspiration from Mother Teresa’s words: “The good you do today may be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway. Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough. Give your best anyway.”

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Rehaan Iyer-Agarwal** is an Indian-born student who currently studies in the IB world school, Kodaikanal International School. He grew up in Mumbai and was always a voracious reader and storyteller, often using dolls and other toys to express his imagination and create worlds of magic and wonder. When the pandemic hit he moved to the charming and cultural state of Goa where he studied in an International Cambridge School with teachers from every corner of the world. He now resides in the town of Kodaikanal (a town close to his South Indian roots) with his mother and continues to question, inquire, adapt, and learn.

**Adeline Paula Joshua** is a Junior at the American International School of Conakry (AISC). She is originally from Chennai, India, but has been raised in Guinea (West Africa) for 16 years. Adeline aspires to make a difference in the world and has been doing so through philanthropic projects facilitated by her NEHS chapter. Her education experience in Guinea has broadened her horizons, and she is grateful to be surrounded by the diversity of her school.

**Augustin Djoa Assomption Kacou** is a tenth grader at the American International School of Conakry. He is French and Ivorian. He has lived in several countries in Africa and has been able to discover different cultures, languages, and tribes. He loves reading books that explore the cultures and identities of Lagos, Dakar, Asmara, Bamako, and now Conakry. He loves to learn about the background of the countries where he lives. This is his third year in Conakry, and *Safrin* has been his favorite book to read.

**Joydeep Kaur**, is an 11th grader from Kodaikanal International School. She chose to write about *Zafarnāma* because she felt it was something people should know about. Also, because her grandpa initially wanted to name her after the mythical bird Huma who is praised about in the letter.

**Teuila Keresoma**, a junior at Guahan Academy Charter School, is a multifaceted individual with a rich cultural heritage spanning Samoan, Chamorro, and Korean descent. As a proud member of her community, Teuila has taken the initiative to embody leadership roles that reflect her dedication to academic excellence and service. Notably, she serves as the President of the inaugural National English Honor Society chapter on the island of Guam, where she actively fosters a love for literature and writing among her peers. Beyond her academic achievements, Teuila has an intense passion for politics and policy, which led her to become the first Guam Youth Congress representative for Guahan Academy Charter School. Through her involvement, Teuila strives to pave the way for future generations of writers and leaders, leaving a lasting impact on her community and beyond.

**Michelle Khorozyan** is a senior at QSI Yerevan and has studied there since first grade. Her love of her home country, Armenia, is what drives her to encourage those around her to learn more about it. At QSIY, Michelle is the President of the National English Honor Society and of the Student Council. In her free time, she enjoys reading and writing, seeking inspiration from the works of her favorite authors including Ottessa Moshfegh and Sylvia Plath, playing basketball, and painting.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Isabella Maria Kono Mundo McKinnon**—better known as “Izzy”—was born on the island of Guam. Izzy is international in origin, of CHamoru, Filipino, and Palawan descent, with some white ancestry. She is currently enrolled at Guahan Academy Charter School (GACS). In middle school, Izzy picked up and learned new musical instruments and developed an interest in band. She is still able to play the guitar, piano, and ukulele. Izzy, a sophomore, has started playing volleyball, beach volleyball, and bowling. She assists with sports after school and serves as the Guahan Academy Charter School’s Acting Student Sports Manager.

**Antonio Ley Calderón** is a senior high school student. Since he was a child, books have been a world of opportunity for his imagination to grow. Although his ability for numbers and the sciences was clear for all to see, his willingness to work on writing has meant that his creative skills have improved drastically. Today, Antonio reads works from the Latin American Boom, fuses his ideas with those that have come before him, and keeps writing fantastic stories.

**Saunte Maratita** was born on the small island of Rota. Saunte’s family moved to the island of Guam in 2013 to pursue a better life, as well as a better education with more opportunities. Growing up, Saunte enveloped themselves into the world of writing, often writing small stories and making up characters based on the dramas they would watch. Passionate to help, Saunte assisted with programs at school and was involved with the Student Council as their former secretary. Aside from their interest in writing, they also have a passion for art and music, incorporating both into their daily routine.

**Manuel Alejandro Martínez Morales**, a junior at PrepaTec Eugenio Garza Sada in Monterrey, Mexico, is currently the Vice President of the NEHS Eugenio Garza Sada Chapter at his high school. He views literature not merely as a means for expressing a text, but as a form of conveying emotions, revealing new horizons, and a way for him to immerse himself within complex worlds and realities.

**Ana Sofía Moreno López** was born in 2006 in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. She loves to read, bake, and listen to music in her free time. Ana Sofía is currently in her senior year of high school. This is her second semester being a member of the National English Honor Society, where she has had many great experiences and created happy memories.

**Adam Moussa** is an IB2 senior who finds meaning in epigraphs and equations. You can often spot him in one of the corners in of International College, hiding behind a book and consuming pages of literature, scientific publications, and even manga. Adam also takes endless pride in his Lebanese roots, and he mixes his ardent love for English and Arabic by reading works of prominent Lebanese writers and poets. Adam argues that reading provides him with “intellectual liberation,” as it transports him into a world of infinite possibilities—all within the turn of a page!

**Sitti-Naila Mwinyi** is currently a year 12 (junior) student at the International School of Zanzibar, Tanzania. Her academic career has been quite the trip, beginning on Tanzania's mainland, before moving to a boarding school in South Africa when she was in fifth grade, and returning to Tanzania in ninth grade. She enjoys and finds comfort in hairstyling and cosmetics, but her passion will always be for reading. She sees reading as an intellectual journey that takes one into uncharted territories. She hopes to major in Business Management and Marketing at university so she can develop her knowledge in these areas and also to ensure that she can make a difference to her community.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Mariel Kamil Núñez Rodriguez** and **Sofía Victoria Lulo Alba** are accomplished Juniors at Santiago Christian School (SCS), where they excel academically and actively contribute to the school. Mariel and Sofía are distinguished members of the National English Honor Society (NEHS), in which they serve as co-chairs of a committee dedicated to building a community library, and the National Honor Society (NHS). They both show exceptional leadership and a passion for literature. Beyond their academic achievements, they are part of the SCS varsity soccer team and enjoy spending time with their teammates. They dedicate significant time to community service because they find it both enriches their own lives, and they love seeing how they can impact others. Mariel and Sofía embody the values of scholarship, leadership, and service.

**Francesca Obeid** is a 16-year-old IB 1 student at International College in Beirut where she studies English, Arabic, Biology, Chemistry, Math, and Psychology, and aspires to become a surgeon. She enjoys reading novels, writing, playing the piano, and drawing and painting. She is also a member of the Ali Ghandour Center for Leadership and Commitment as well as the Model United Nations. Francesca is fond of reading books by Arab authors such as Rabih Alameddine and Khalil Gibran.

**Desmun Tehillah Plang** is a high school student at St Andrew's School in Turi, Kenya. She is an avid lover of philosophy, history, and politics, which she explores through her passion for reading and writing about literature. Desmun's current area of interest is Pan-Africanism, which has been fueled by her privilege of experiencing Africa through the West African and East African lenses from being born and raised in her ethnic Nigeria yet having lived for over four years between Kenya and Uganda. She is influenced by her parents who, from a young age, exposed her to works by the likes of Chinua Achebe, Fela Kuti, and Wole Soyinka.

**Camilo Restrepo** attends the International School of Kigali, Rwanda. He is both Swedish and Colombian. He has lived in Rwanda for almost two years now, and it has been a great opportunity for him. He is interested in politics, especially those related to climate change, and he believes everybody should have a good life, and feel safe and fulfilled.

**Arantza Rodriguez Aguilar** was born in Mexico and is a fourth semester student at PrepaTec Esmeralda. She finds her passion in imagining the world we can create through the power of words. She loves to listen to her dad read aloud and the memories her grandmother shares; being around those people forged her continued interest in literature.

**Lily Stephens** is 17 years old and attends the American Nicaraguan School, located in Managua, Nicaragua. Apart from being an NEHS member, she is president of her school's Environmental Club, vice-president of her school's Poetry Club, a Student Council representative, and a member of NHS & MAT. Some of her favorite activities include puzzles, reading, watching movies, and hanging out with family or friends. Some of the works she recommends are *La Casa de Bernarda Alba*, *Pedro Páramo*, *Hilda Furacão*, *The Book Thief*, *The Story of an Hour*, and *The Curious Garden*.

## CONTRIBUTORS

In 2007, **Enrique Jude Taitano-Williams** was born into a family of five, which later became ten, in Guam. Now sixteen, Enrique is working toward what he wants for his future. What he wants isn't specific, but he is certain that he wants to experience more of what life could offer. Some of his hobbies are reading, playing video games, and drawing. Enrique attends Guahan Academy Charter School, where he is a member of the National English Honor Society.

**Maeghan Juana Taivero** was born on the island of Saipan. She moved to Guam when she was 10 years old. Currently, she is a Junior in high school and attends Guahan Academy Charter School. She is the Vice President of both her class council and the National English Honor Society at her school. She hopes to attend the University of Hawai'i to study Marine Biology and Zoology. Her dream is to work in rehabilitation and recovery for animals and to travel to Australia to work with animals there. She hopes to become a teacher later in her career and wants to teach the next generation of young marine biologists and zoologists. Her interests include photography, biology, and reading.

**Fabiola Vega Carmona**, a sophomore at Antilles High School in Puerto Rico, is a multifaceted student carving out her path with passion and purpose. Beyond school, Fabiola is a passionate reader and constantly has her nose in a book. Apart from her interest in reading, Fabiola loves to write, draw, play basketball (her basketball skills aren't particularly standout), and sing. As the lead singer in the Antilles Jazz Ensemble, she brings melodies to life with her voice and energy. Rehearsing with the band is one of her favorite parts of the week. As a dreamer with ambition, Fabiola aspires to study at Rochester University, aiming to merge her love for medicine and music.

**Epiphany Lacey Worrell Blanco** is a 16-year-old artist from the International Christian School (ICS) with a triple cultural identity—Dominican, Costa Rican, and American. Epiphany has been captivated by art and reading since her childhood and dedicates her time to the vibrant world of webcomic creation. Joining the NEHS chapter in September 2023 because of her love for writing and reading, she has had the opportunity to write articles for the Camp Half-Blood Chapter newsletter. She finds joy in family and friends, balancing her artistic and writing pursuits with playing volleyball as a hobby.

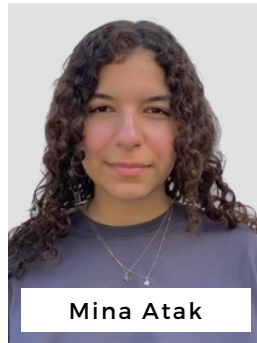
**Angel Wu** is a Chinese senior and the President of the Quality Schools International Shenzhen Chapter of NEHS. Much of her childhood was spent reading, writing, playing in the Chinese countryside, and enjoying media from all around the world. Her hobbies include entertaining her three cats, taking long walks for inspiration, and playing Soulslikes. Her favorite pieces of literature in Chinese and English respectively are 定风波/ "Pacifying a Storm" by Chinese poet Su Shi and "Auguries of Innocence" by William Blake. She hopes to aid in informing others of the beauty of Chinese literature and culture and to carry the voices of others who have stories to tell.

**Robeal Yacob** is a dedicated 10th-grade student at International School of Kigali, Rwanda and is actively partaking in the National English Honor Society. He has a passion for literature and writing and has made contributions to the club's activities. He has real enthusiasm for reading books and it can be seen in many creative writings and projects. Robeal is committed to academic excellence and looks forward to further enhancing his skills and education in language arts through NEHS and beyond.

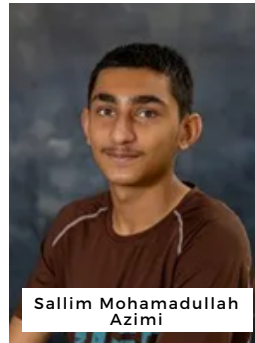
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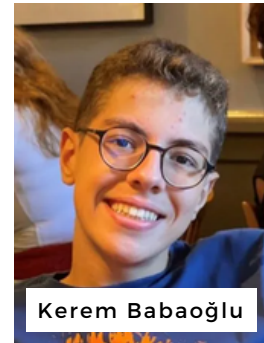
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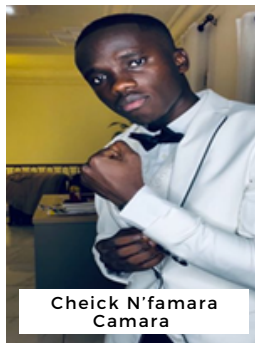
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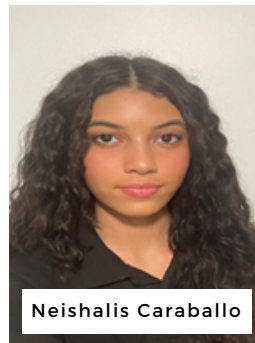
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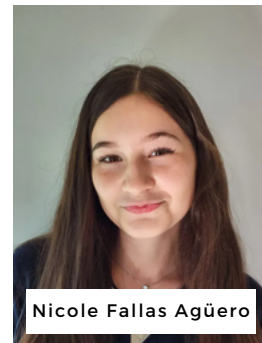
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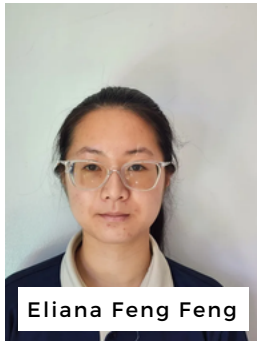
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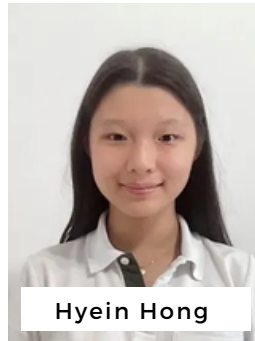
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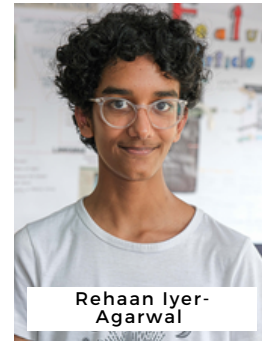
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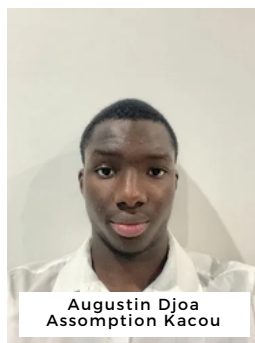
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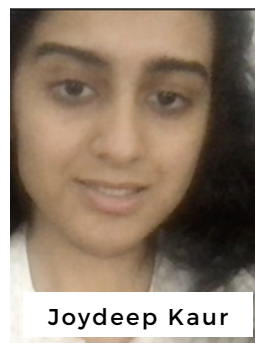
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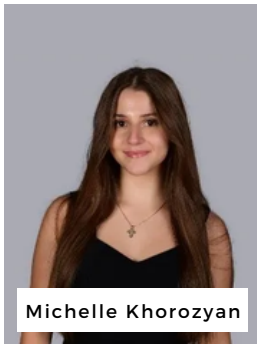


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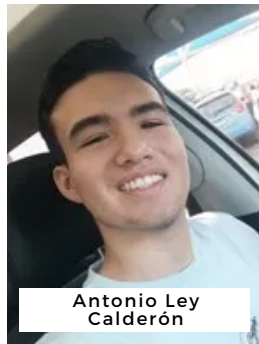


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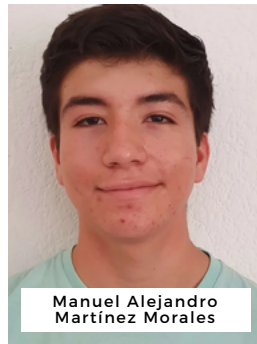
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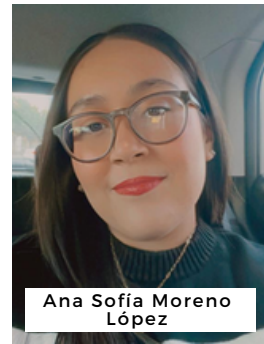
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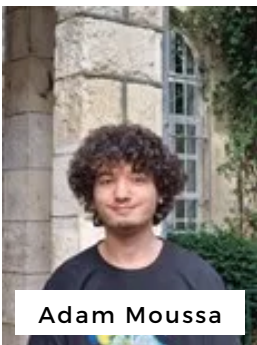
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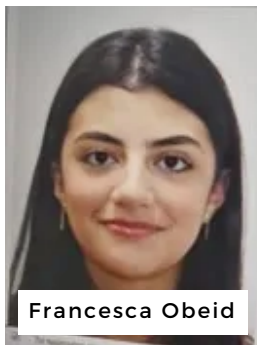
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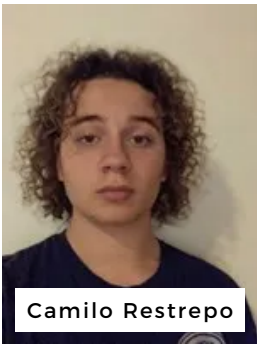
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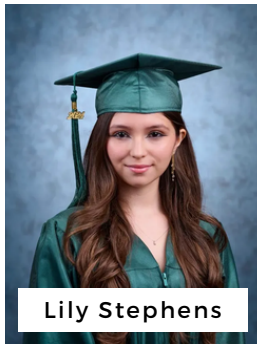
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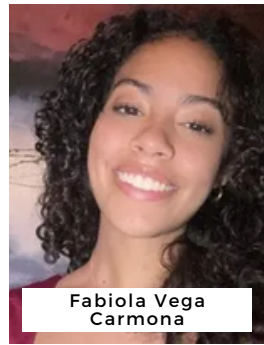
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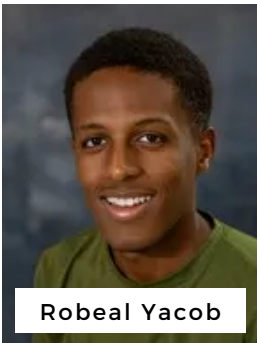
Lily Stephens



Fabiola Vega Carmona



Angel Wu



Robeal Yacob

## ABOUT NEHS

The National English Honor Society (NEHS) is the only discipline-specific high school honor society for students excelling in the English language arts.

NEHS was founded in 2005 by Sigma Tau Delta, the International English Honor Society, marking the beginning of a journey toward academic and cultural enrichment. Since its inception, NEHS has grown to boast over 1,200 chapters across the United States and in 36 countries and territories beyond. This growth reflects the Society's success in increasing recognition of the importance of English language arts in schools. Rooted in the tradition of academic university honor societies, NEHS continues to build a legacy of excellence and community engagement.

NEHS offers a range of programs and activities designed to enhance the educational journey of its student members. Creative Challenges encourage creative expression and allow students to showcase their talents on local, national, and international stages. The NEHS Scholarships program requires student members to submit high-quality piece of critical and analytical writing. Service projects enable members to give back to their communities by promoting literacy and education, thus extending the impact of NEHS beyond the confines of the school.

These activities reveal some of the ways in which NEHS works toward its mission of recognizing and celebrating the achievements of its student members. The Society is committed to nurturing a love for literature, writing, and the arts among its members. By providing a platform for students to excel and showcase their talents, NEHS aims to create a community where academic excellence and creative expression thrive. The NEHS mission is not just about honoring individual achievements; it is about cultivating a collective passion for English language arts that can inspire and influence entire communities.



**NEHS**

NATIONAL ENGLISH  
HONOR SOCIETY  
*for Secondary Schools*