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English 112b  
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### Overcoming Culture Clash:

#### Making Connections Through World and Historical Literature

This annotated bibliography is designed for teachers in preparing lesson plans and for book recommendations for students that foster global understanding through learning about world history and culture. I have included short stories, poems, and novels that are take place in Australia, Japan, Mexico, and Africa, as well as books that explore the diverse history of the United States. Despite being from different points on a timeline and thousands of miles apart both Mexico-United States oriented *La Linea* and Australian *Rabbit-Proof Fence* feature a barrier to freedom represented by a man-made border. The protagonists are different: a Mexican boy, Miguel, and an Aboriginal girl, Daisy, respectively, but they face similar issues trying to live in a world where they are separated from their families by circumstances beyond their control.

World and historical literature help students gain perspective on modern issues by reading about these issues from a distance that these genres provide inherently. For students of Latino, Asian, or Native American descent or who have experienced similar issues as these marginalized cultures this literature is representative of their lived experiences. I hesitate to make a direct parallel between the African literature I have included and the experiences of African-American students because African-American students also have a distinctly American history in addition to their ancestral origins in Africa. Despite this I think that dispelling the notion of Africa as a monolith is important for all students because it is not representative of the rich diversity of the many countries in Africa. To that end, I have included Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*

and South African author J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Both of these novels deal with issues of identity and the effects of colonization which are still felt today. Coetzee's allegorical novel is especially useful because it is not necessarily about Africa, but is certainly influenced by Coetzee's South African heritage.

For students of color, seeing themselves represented in the literature they are studying and discussing is crucial to the identity issues that high students face. For insulated American students reading about other places and times exposes students to differing life experiences and cultures, an important lesson in today's ultra connected world. *One World: A Global Anthology of Short Stories* is a compilation of works by authors from Nigeria, Malaysia, the United States, Bangladesh, and other countries with the goal "to involve and move the reader" (Brazier). There are many novels written for young adults that feature white suburban high school students because of the outdated assumption that the majority of "good" students are precisely these students. Even great young adult authors like Chris Crutcher or Laurie Halse Anderson can not change the fact that their lived experiences, and therefore their source material, is, at least partly, the product of a white privileged worldview.

Throughout history many voices that speak from experience have been ignored or worse, silenced. With the proliferation of young adult literature written by members of historically ignored groups, previously oppressed voices can tell their own stories. For example Aunty Bubby and Aunty Boo in Australian Aborigine Jeanine Leane's *Purple Threads* and Mexican-American Francisco Jiménez's characters in *The Circuit: Stories From the Life of a Migrant Child*. Many issues that American young adults face today reflect the conflict between oppressor and oppressed as evidenced by recent police brutality, the ideological conflict over immigration, and the persistence of racism. These issues have roots

in history and across continents. Being confronted with the unfamiliar environments in these books invites students to reconsider their perspectives. The goal of this annotated bibliography is to foster common understanding from diverse experience. Especially American students on the lower socioeconomic scale or of historically oppressed origin or gender need to see both protagonists and authors that represent themselves overcoming massive challenges to help students cope with the issues of identity, belonging, and adversity.

1) Adichie, Chimamanda Ngozi. *Purple Hibiscus: A Novel*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin of Chapel Hill, 2003. Print.

“Fifteen-year-old Kambili’s world is circumscribed by the high walls and frangipani trees of her family compound. Her wealthy Catholic father, under whose shadow Kambili lives, while generous and politically active in the community, is repressive and fanatically religious at home. When Nigeria begins to fall apart under a military coup, Kambili’s father sends her and her brother away to stay with their aunt, a University professor whose house is noisy and full of laughter. There Kambili and her brother discover a life and love beyond the confines of their father’s authority” (*“Purple Hibiscus: A Novel”*)

This book provides insight into a specific country, Nigeria, rather than reinforcing the idea that Africa is one monolithic nation. Kambili deals with issues of identity, generational conflict, and politics that have a direct effect on her life. Many American students face similar issues, and lessons can be drawn from Kambili’s story without entering into the dangerous zone of preaching at students.

2) Brazier, Chris, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Chimamanda Adichie. *One World: A Global Anthology of Short Stories*. Oxford: New Internationalist, 2009. Print.

“This book is made up of twenty-three stories, each from a different author from across the globe. All belong to one world, united in their diversity and ethnicity. And together they have one aim: to involve and move the reader...’One World’ goes beyond the everyday notion of the globe as a physical geographic entity. Rather, we understand it as a universal idea, one that transcends national boundaries to comment on the most prevailing aspects of the human condition. This attempt to redefine the borders of the world we live in through the short story recognizes the many conflicting issues of race, language, economy, gender and ethnicity, which separate and limit us. We readily acknowledge, however, that regardless of our differences or the disparities in our stories, we are united by our humanity” (Brazier).

One World is an ambitious anthology, and while it does not -truly can not- represent global literature in only twenty-three stories, it succeeds at being an excellent introduction to world literature through the eyes of both established and new authors of diverse nationalities.. If Adichie’s *Purple Hibiscus* is too long, either her short story in this anthology or Jhumpa Lahiri’s contribution “The Third and Final Continent” provide vivid narratives of life and images of their respective countries.

3) Bryson, Bill. *In a Sunburned Country*. New York: Penguin Random House, 2001. Print.

“In a Sunburned Country is his report on what he found in an entirely different place: Australia, the country that doubles as a continent, and a place with the friendliest inhabitants, the hottest driest weather, and the most peculiar and lethal wildlife to be found on the planet. The result is a deliciously funny, fact-filled, and adventurous performance by a writer who combines humor, wonder, and unflagging curiosity.” (Bryson)

While it is undeniable that Bill Bryson is a white American male who has enough money to travel comfortable for pleasure and material for his writing, his book is an

excellent introduction to travel writing through familiar eyes. Visiting Australia as an American can be a bit like going through the looking glass where everything is familiar enough to be recognizable, but different enough to be disconcerting. One criticism is that except for a short passage on Australian Aboriginal peoples, he does not represent lived experiences of these historically oppressed people. Recommended for students with wanderlust or an initial exploration into travel literature.

4) Coetzee, J. M. *Waiting for the Barbarians*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1982. Print.

“Amidst the conflict between Security Forces of the Third Bureau and ‘Barbarians’ in some imaginary land- which could be South Africa or Yugoslavia or Iraq or Cambodia- South African writer J.M. Coetzee places an aging, nameless Magistrate who would like nothing better than ‘a quiet life in quiet times.’ A modern Everyman repelled by the horrors of statist torture, murder, and conquest, the Magistrate tries to decipher the marks, physical and psychological, that such barbarisms inflict on both victims and perpetrators...For finally it is the haunted characters and appalling violence in an Orwellian world of allegorical ambiguities that dominate Coetzee’s slim novel, a primer on the timeless problems of man’s inhumanity to man- and woman” (Woolman, "Books Worth Teaching Even Though They Have Proven Controversial").

With a 930L Lexile Level this is a challenging text, but the allegorical style is a great starting point for students form connections to the “real world” with guidance. This novel explores the nature of power and oppression and can fit into either a historical unit or a dystopian literature section. Coetzee won a Nobel Prize in Literature for *Waiting for the Barbarians*.

5) Jaramillo, Ann. *La Línea*. New York: Roaring Brook, 2006. Print.

“Six years ago, Miguel and Elena’s mother and father left Mexico and crossed la línea into California. On the morning of Miguel’s 15th birthday, he receives a note from his father telling him that it is time for him to join them...Unbeknownst to Miguel, Elena, 13, disguises herself and joins him on the difficult journey. They are robbed, threatened, and almost perish in a desperate trek across the desert. The pacing of the plot is quick and driven, and the characters are realistically drawn... Cultural and geographical background information is expertly woven into the novel. The author creates a mood of desperation and anxiety as the story unfolds and Miguel and Elena discover that crossing la línea will forever change the way they look at themselves and the world” (Buron, “La Linea”).

This book is not a travelogue, but focuses on the journey that many migrants from south of the border make in search of a better life. It accurately reflects the lived experiences of migrants because it does not idealize their journey, but focuses on the necessity. This would be suitable for a unit regarding the history of immigration in America or cultural identity as a vivid portrait of the challenges that many contemporary young migrants face.

6) Jiménez, Francisco. *The Circuit: Stories From the Life of a Migrant Child*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1997. Print.

“These independent but intertwined stories follow a migrant family through their circuit, from picking cotton and strawberries to topping carrots - and back again - over a number of years. As it moves from one labor camp to the next, the little family of four grows into ten. Impermanence and poverty define their lives. But with faith, hope, and back-breaking work, the family endures” (“The Circuit”).

Jiménez’s book being several short stories makes it especially useful in the classroom as an example of personal narrative coupled with the history of agricultural

migrant work in mid 20th century United States. This book could also be taught on its own because of the unity of the stories as a unit on migration's influence on identity.

7) Leane, Jeanine. *Purple Threads*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland, 2011. Print.

"Jeanine Leane grew up on a sheep farm near Gundagai, and the stories are based on her childhood experiences in a house full of fiercely independent women. In between Aunty Boo's surveillance of the local farmers' sheep dip alliance and Aunty Bubby's fireside tales of the Punic Wars, the women offer sage advice to their nieces on growing up as Indigenous girls in a white country town" ("*Purple Threads*").

This book is just as humorous, if not more than Bryson's travelogue and is written by an Aboriginal woman which demonstrates that texts that deal with serious issues of identity and racism need not be dry. This text is episodic and each chapter can stand on its own, making it suitable for using in the classroom as an additional resource for units on racism, world literature and history, and identity.

8) Nothomb, Amélie, and Timothy Bent. *The Character of Rain: A Novel*. New York: St.

Martin's, 2002. Print.

"The Japanese believe that until the age of three children, whether Japanese or not, are gods, each one an okosama, or 'lord child.' On their third birthday they fall from grace and join the rest of the human race" (Nothomb). The conceit of the novel is that it is a memoir of the first three years of the protagonist's life which take place in Japan. Her father is a diplomat stationed in Japan post World War II from Belgium. Rain's astute observations are at times laugh out loud funny and others incredibly sad and invite reflection on the formation of identity and the power of language.

Adolescence is a period of rapid confusing change and the only other time that humans grow as fast is from birth to three. Rain is experiencing the existential questions

that come with periods of growth. Like many high school students she believes herself invincibly powerful, and the realization that growing up isn't all unicorns and lollipops can be a shock. This is a strangely delightful novel that is suitable for classrooms for units covering Japan, identity, and unique narrative voices.

9) Pilkington, Doris, and Nugi Garamara. *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. New York: Miramax, 2002. Print.

"Daisy Kadibil was a small child when she was taken away from her family as part of the Stolen Generations. She and her sisters, Molly and Gracie, used the rabbit-proof fence to find their way back home to Jigalong from Moore River Native Settlement north of Perth, a journey of about 1600 kilometres. Molly's daughter, Doris Pilkington (Nugi Garimara), wrote *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence* after several years of interviewing her mother and Aunt Daisy." ("Daisy Kadabil")

*Rabbit-Proof Fence* uses many historical excerpts from 1930's news articles and government edicts throughout the narrative of the three girls escape from the government facility designed to indoctrinate into white Australian society. This mirrors the actions of the United States regarding Native American children in the 1800-1900s, resulting in modern laws that prohibit forced adoptions of Native American children. Pilkington's novel is also useful to tie World history back to American history by pairing it with Sui Sin Far's "In the Land of the Free".

10) Shuler, Brandon D., Rob Johnson, and Erika Garza-Johnson. *New Border Voices: An Anthology*. Texas A&M University Press, 2014. Print.

"When the 'counter-canon' itself becomes canonized, it's time to reload. This is the notion that animates *New Border Voices*, an anthology of recent and rarely seen writing by Borderlands artists from El Paso to Brownsville—and a hundred miles on either side.



Challenging the assumption that borderlands writing is the privileged product of the 1970s and '80s, the vibrant community represented in this collection offers tasty bits of regional fare that will appeal to a wide range of readers and students" (Shuler).

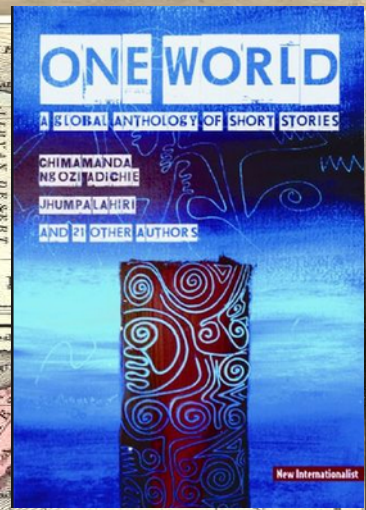
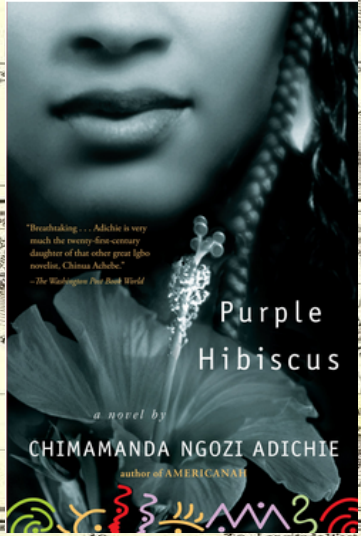
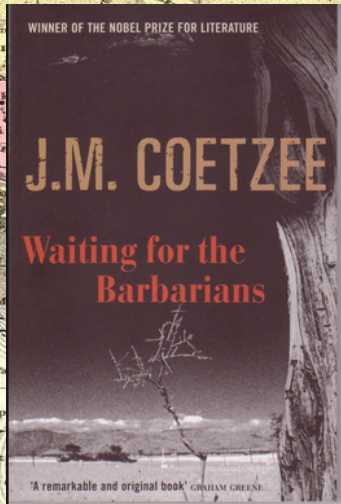
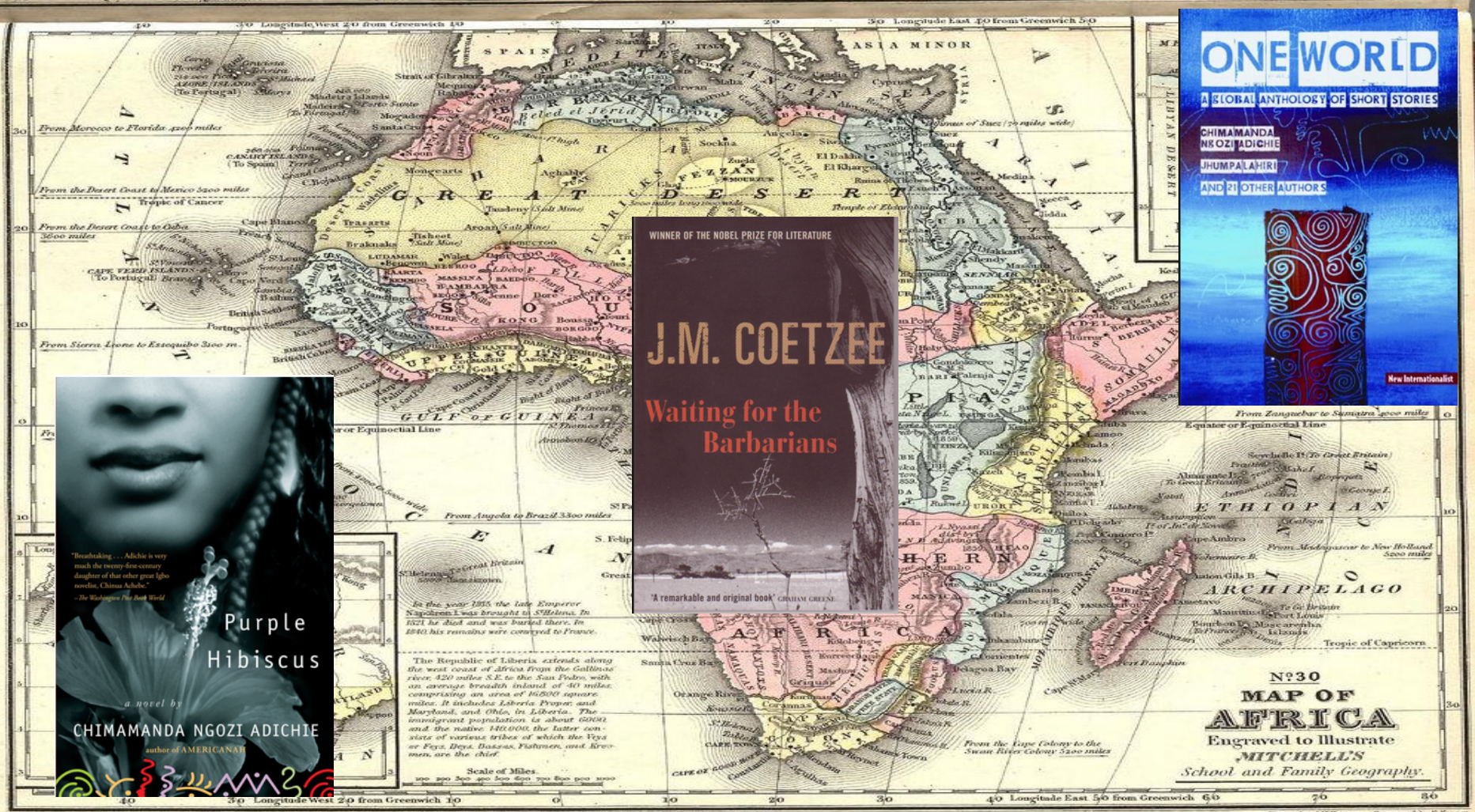
Focused on authors from the Texas/Mexico border this anthology is limited in scope and does not include other border states like California or Arizona. Despite this narrowness there is a rich variety of short stories, poems, and novellas included. "Stupids" by Christine Granados is notable for the use of stream of consciousness while exploring hybrid identity through the experiences of Latino students attending High School in Texas.

11) Srikanth, Rajini, and Sui Sin Far. "In the Land of the Free." *Bold Words: A Century of Asian American Writing*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001. 140-46. Print.

This short story takes place in late 1800's San Francisco and is about the separation of a child from his parents due to a paperwork issue during immigration to the United States. The bureaucratic nightmare that the mother and father face in retrieving their child reflects issues of racism, intolerance, and forced assimilation through disruption of family bonds. Sui Sin Far was born Edith Maude Eaton and wrote at the turn of the 19th century. She is Chinese-British-American and her hybrid identity gives her a unique perspective on historical life as a minority in San Francisco.

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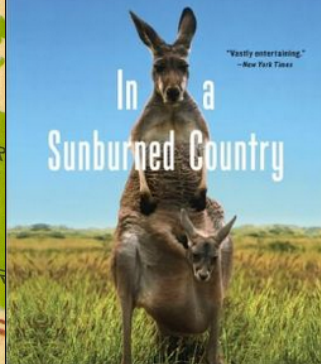


I Come From  
Jigalong They  
Took Me Away  
But I Walked  
All Around Country  
Back To Where  
I Was Born I  
Came Back



ARAFURA SEA

**BILL BRYSON**  
NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER



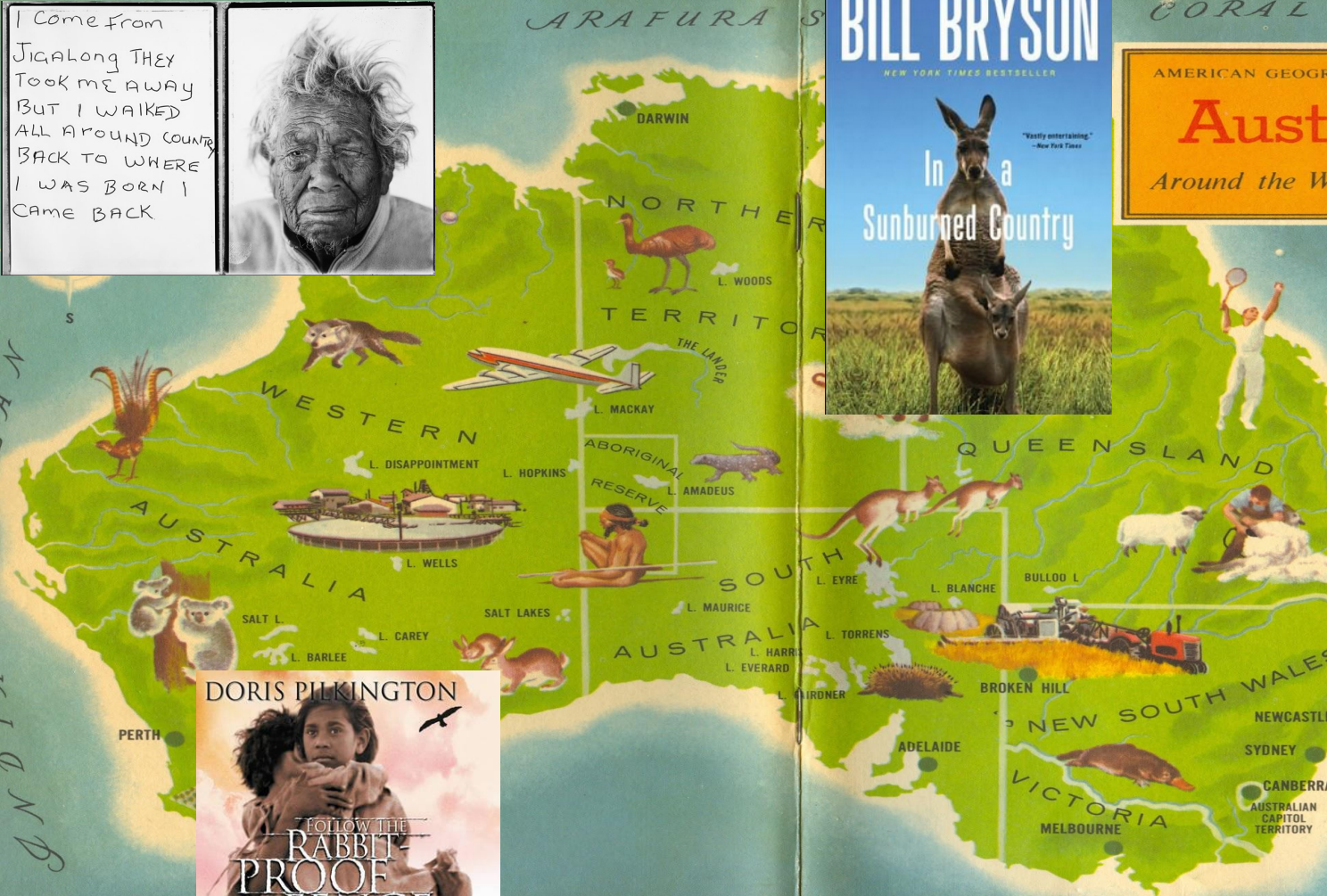
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AMERICAN GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY

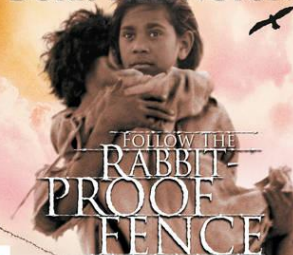
**Australia**

*Around the World Program*

INDIAN OCEAN



DORIS PILKINGTON



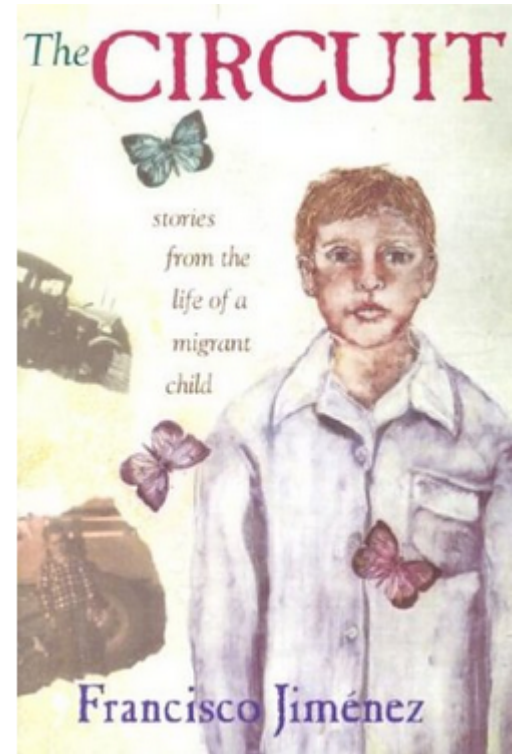
**Purple Threads**

WINNER OF THE DAVID UNAIPON AWARD

JEANINE LEANE

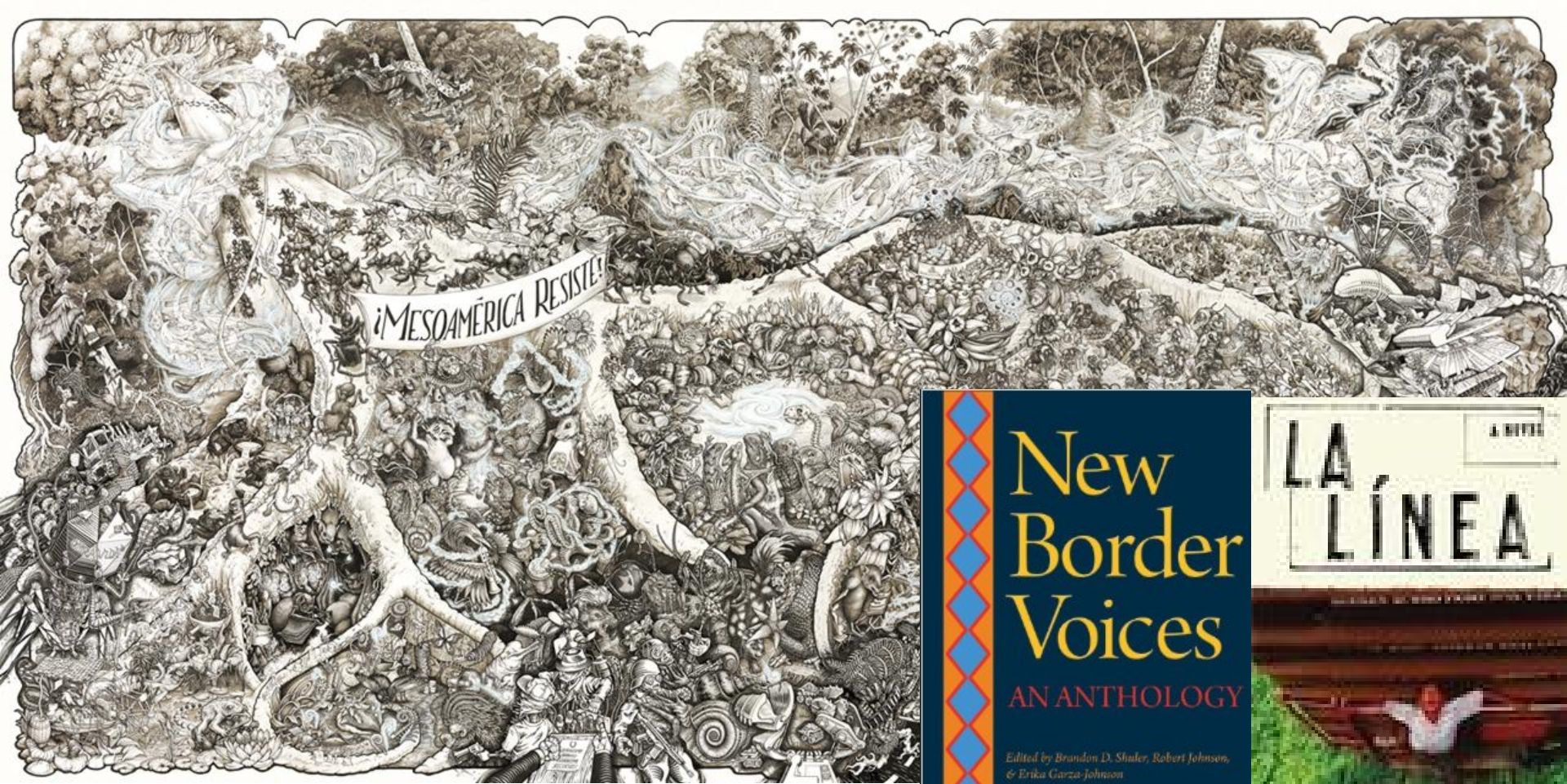






Source: The Beehive Collective  
"Top Down View"





Source: The Beehive Collective “Bottom Up View”

