Books about Third Culture Kids

Recommended by author LeAnne Hardy

Third culture kids (TCKs) are those who spend a significant part of their growing up years in a culture different from their parents’ home culture. Like Cristina Larson in *Between Two Worlds*, they often find that they belong to neither one culture nor the other. They make up a ‘third culture’ of those who move among different worlds. These books will help you to understand more about that third culture.

**Fiction:**

*When Africa Was Home* by Karen Lynn Williams, illustrated by Floyd Cooper (1991). New York, Orchard.

My own daughter’s strongly identified with this picture book about a family missing Africa when they have returned to the United States.

*Homesick; My Own Story* by Jean Fritz (1982). New York, Putnam.

Popular children’s author Jean Fritz was born in China in the 1920s. In this fictionalized version of her life she describes how she thought she was American until she got there and realized she didn’t fit in.

*Bloomability* by Sharon Creech (1998). New York, Harper Trophy.

Thirteen-year-old Dinnie has no intention of enjoying boarding school in Switzerland, but she discovers the richness of cross-cultural living.

*Jakarta Missing* by Jane Kurtz (2001). New York, Greenwillow.

Dakar isn’t the only one in her family to long for Africa during the year they spend in Cottonwood, North Dakota. Although I found the ending unsettling, the struggles are all too real.

*The Real Plato Jones* by Nina Bawden (1994). London, Hamish Hamilton.

With a Welsh father and a Greek mother, Plato Jones feels “all mixed up... When I’m there, I want to be here, and when I’m here I want to be there! It’s as if I were split in two. And I don’t know which half is me.” (p.93) It takes helping his Greek grandfather’s village in a major emergency to make Plato feel at home with the two sides of his heritage.

**Non-fiction for adults:**

*Third Culture Kids; the Experience of Growing up Among Worlds*, 2nd ed. rev. by David Pollock and Ruth van Reken (2001) Nicholas Brealey

Pollock and van Reken take a balanced look at the challenges and rewards of living cross culturally. This book is a must for anyone raising children between worlds or trying to fit in as an adult TCK.

*Letters Never Sent; One Woman’s Journey from Hurt to Wholeness* by Ruth Van Reken (1995). Indianapolis, IN, Letters.

Van Reken examines significant struggles in her own TCK experience in fictional letters to her family. They are enlightening, but painful to read.