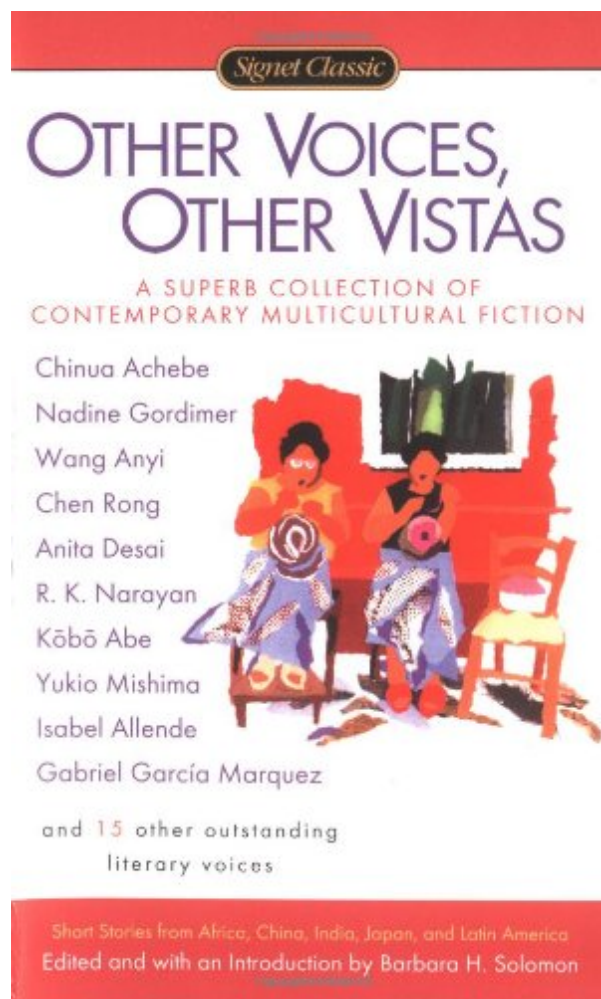


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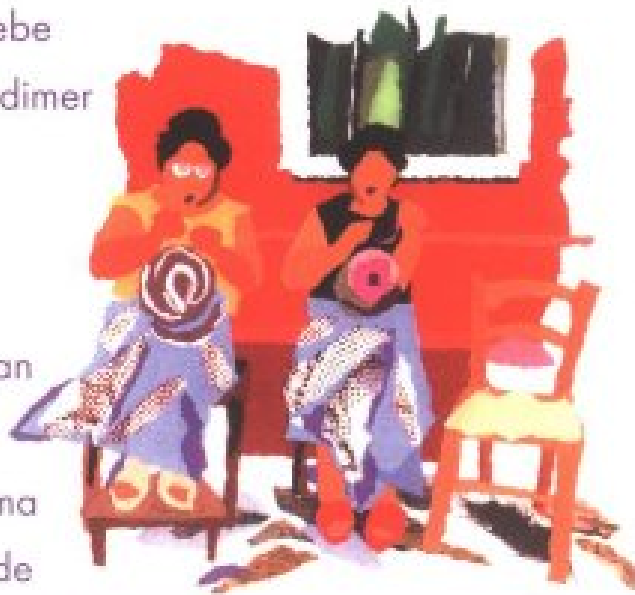
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and 15 other outstanding
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Short Stories from Africa, China, India, Japan, and Latin America
Edited and with an Introduction by Barbara H. Solomon

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About the Author

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- Sales Rank: #196352 in Books
- Brand: Signet Classics
- Published on: 2002-06-01
- Released on: 2002-06-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 6.89" h x 1.23" w x 4.16" l, .52 pounds
- Binding: Mass Market Paperback
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Most helpful customer reviews

13 of 13 people found the following review helpful.

Around the world in 25 stories

By Michael J. Mazza

"Other Voices, Other Vistas," edited by Barbara H. Solomon, is a wonderful anthology of stories. The selections in the book are grouped by geographic region into 5 sections, each containing 5 stories. The regions represented are Africa, China, India, Japan, and Latin America. In her introduction, Solomon notes that all of the stories are written by major authors who had published fiction after World War II.

The group of 25 authors is full of noteworthy names: Chinua Achebe, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Jorge Luis Borges, and more. The themes in the anthology include love, marriage, parenthood, oppressive governments, art, religion, economic struggle, ideological conflict, and cultural dislocation. The modes range from fantasy to stark reality--there is violence and serenity, beauty and grotesqueness, sorrow and humor.

I especially loved the Chinese stories, which give a vivid portrayal of life under the Communist regime--it's like a real life dystopia. Other strong selections include Yukio Mishima's "Acts of Worship," about a professor's pilgrimage; Isabel Allende's "Clarisa," a colorful character study; and R.K. Narayan's "A Horse and Two Goats," a story of cross-cultural miscommunication. Overall, I would recommend this book both as a classroom text and for individual reading. Recommended companion text: "Caribbean New Wave," a short story anthology edited by Stewart Brown.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Worthwhile

By Reader in Tokyo

This book was published in 1992 and contained 25 short stories, five each from Sub-Saharan Africa, China, India, Japan and Latin America. Most of the works were written or published in the 1970s and 80s, except the stories for Japan, all but one of which came out originally in the 1950s and 60s.

The stories were chosen to showcase major writers from these regions who published after World War II, and whose work was already available in English translation. The compiler was attracted, firstly, to stories that provided insight into the values, pressures, behavior and conflicts of people from other cultures. ("What does it feel like to grow up in Beijing, Bombay, or Buenos Aires? Increasingly, we have become fascinated by the details of daily existence in other cultures and curious about the lives of those whose circumstances and pressures seem so different from our own.") And secondly, to works that transcended individual situations and locations to touch on the shared human condition.

Themes in the stories included relationships between family members, men and women, different social or racial groups in a particular society, and artists and society, and the struggle to find a job or overcome poverty, civil strife, repression or imprisonment. The stories from China showed the impact of the Cultural Revolution: three of them contained main characters either banished to the countryside or imprisoned because of it.

Each region was represented by just five stories, and the quality overall seemed fairly high, even though it was difficult to get more than a glimpse of "what it feels like" in each place. Works that succeeded particularly in communicating atmosphere were, in my opinion, "Civil Peace" by Achebe, about a family struggling to survive the aftermath of civil war; "Africa Emergent" by Gordimer, about the relations between a black artist and a white architect during the time of apartheid and the resulting psychological tensions; "The Destination," by Wang Anyi, about a man returning to Shanghai after years of internal exile; and "The Man from a Peddlers' Family" by Lu Wenfu, about a political cadre's acquaintance with a peddler over many years, through the political shifts in their society, conveyed particularly well in their remarks to each other.

Others included a tale by Kushwant Singh about an Indian civil servant who'd been so Anglicized he could

no longer follow his society's customs; "Papito's Story" by Luisa Valenzuela, in which a neighbor observed passively an incident during the period of military rule in Argentina; Sawako Ariyoshi's "The Tomoshihi," about the inhabitants of a cozy little bar in a Tokyo backstreet; and Yuko Tsushima's "The Silent Traders," about a woman's memories of a particular neighborhood at various stages of her life. The stories set in Japan, though, felt several generations out of date at the least.

It's too bad that a multicultural anthology such as this one, published more than a year after the Gulf War, omitted the Arab world. Major Arab writers whose works were available in English translation before this book was published included 1988 Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz, Yusuf Idris, Alifa Rifaat, Ghassan Kanafani, Zakaria Tamer and Mohamed Choukri. I also wondered why Japan was included instead, since it should've already been comparatively familiar to Americans as a fully industrialized U.S. ally.

The book provided useful lists of fiction anthologies for each region and informed biographies for each author. Though it's a minor point, in the table of contents in the China section the five authors weren't alphabetized correctly (the first author's surname should be Wang, not Anyi, for example), and their stories should've been reordered.

Readers who enjoyed this book might also enjoy *Global Cultures: A Transnational Short Fiction Reader*, a multicultural anthology of some 60 short stories that was published in 1994.

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Many Cultures, One Humanity

By R. Curbelo

The more you read about other cultures, the more you realize how similar we are beneath the surface. "Other Voices, Other Vistas" is a collection of stories that celebrates our differences while bringing us closer together. Some of the more insightful and poignant stories include:

India: "The Interview" by Ruth Praver Jhabvala

India: "A Horse and Two Goats" by R.K. Narayan

Africa: "The Collector of Treasures" by Bessie Head

Africa: "Who Will Stop the Dark?" by Charles Mungoshi

Latin America: "Book of Sand" by Jorge Luis Borges

China: "Sketches from the 'Cattle Shed'" by Ding Ling

China: "Kite Streamers" by Wang Meng

China: "Regarding the Problem of Newborn Piglets in Winter" by Chen Rong

But my absolute favorite story in the entire collection is, without a doubt (drum roll, please):

Japan: "The Magic Chalk" by Kobo Abe.

For my money, "The Magic Chalk" is worth the price of the book. It is a witty, magical tale invoking the apocalyptic outlook of a post Hiroshima/Nagasaki Japan. Should be required reading.

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