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## My Own Private Library: A Peek Inside the Personal Library of a Librarian

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*Jackson-Butts County Public Library*

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## My Own PRIVATE LIBRARY

### A peek inside the personal library of a librarian

by Angela Thornton

If I ever open a bookstore, it will be nothing but escapist literature – cozy mysteries in quaint little villages; romance novels that make you giddy with anticipation; and, most especially, any and all fantasy novels. The more wizards, trolls, vampires and elves the better, I say.

However, for this article, I wanted to cover something different. We're all familiar with the powerhouse authors in the genres listed above. These authors are fabulous and they're successful, but I'm not getting paid a commission by them, so I don't feel obligated to tout their talents in this publication. The ground I want to cover here, and a newly developed interest of mine, is multicultural children's literature.

Now, before you turn the page, thinking this is a minirecure — just wait! I don't want to use this space to preach to the choir about purchasing and promoting multicultural literature in our libraries. We all know the societal challenges we face in developing collections and the skimpy budgets for purchasing materials. What a drag it would be to hash that out here! Instead, I want to share some great books that might get overlooked in the charging rush to get the latest installments to *Eragon* and the *Twilight* series — quiet books with powerful stories that are worth the read but don't always get the hype they deserve.

My interest in multicultural literature sparks from an MLIS graduate class. I was afraid the class would be on the boring side — I absolutely hated slogging through required readings in college. It turns out I was pleasantly surprised! I found many engrossing and highly

entertaining books, titles I would not have previously looked at twice for my personal reading. Also, there were the great plot elements of fantasy books: a hero's journey against adversity, the sense of a greater meaning or higher purpose in the quest of finding one's true self, battling the villains of political tyranny or social rejection. The first one that comes to mind is *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie. It's laugh-out-loud funny and heartbreakingly tragic at the same time. Another great book is *Chanda's Secrets* by Allan Stratton. This one deals with AIDS in Africa, but Chanda's resilience from her surrounding tragedy is amazing.

There's a sequel out now, *Chanda's Wars*, which I'm reading next. *American Born Chinese* by Gene Yang and *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi are both autobiographical accounts told in the format of a graphic novel.

*Jabberwocky* is a fabulous picture book retelling by Christopher Myers of the Lewis Carroll poem — very hip and urban. *Bebe Goes Shopping* by Susan Middleton Elya is adorable, and *Esperanza Rising* by Pam Munoz Ryan is an award-winner I had previously ignored.

I've got an ingrained habit now of searching out multicultural stories when browsing the shelves at a bookstore, despite my overly full basket of escapist choices. I read them, I love them, and many of them go right on my bookshelf next to *The Hobbit* or *Gone With the Wind*. ►►

Angela Thornton is manager of the Flint River Regional Library's Jackson-Butts County Public Library.

