

Puget Sound Parent

June 2006

Summer Reading

Puget Sound Parent Recommends:
Multicultural Books to Begin Summer

By Wenda Reed

Here are three new books by Northwest authors to help your children look at life from a different perspective.

Am I a Color Too?

*People call my dad Black,
Like the dark night sky.
They say my mom is White,
Like the clouds way up high...*

*I'd like to find a word
That fits me like a shoe.
That's why I sometimes wonder
am I a color too?*

A little boy contemplates how people sing, smile, dance and think in every color in this simple book written by Heidi Cole, the mother of multiracial Tyler, and Nancy Vogl, his grandmother. *Am I a Color Too?* is luminously illustrated by Gerald Purnell and published by Bellevue's Illumination Arts (October 2005; \$15.95; ages 4 and older).

A Pen Pal for Max

This involving story is the last collaboration between Mercer Island writer Gloria Rand and her husband, Ted Rand, the dean of Northwest illustrators. Ted Rand died this spring at age 89, having illustrated nearly 80 children's books. Here his signature soft watercolor style and individual attention to detail illustrates a story about a Chilean boy who slips a note into a crate of grapes bound for the United States in hopes of finding a pen pal. When an earthquake scares his family and seriously damages his school, his American friend and her classmates come through for him and his friends. Teachers or parents could use *A Pen Pal for Max* to present a community service project or fundraising idea to children (Henry Holt and Company, October 2005; \$16.95; early elementary age).

Nothing but the Truth (and a few white lies)

I stayed up until 3 a.m. reading this debut novel by Medina writer Justina Headley Chen. The book opens with a Chinese fortune teller reading Patty Ho's belly button and moves from high school to math camp with detours for climbing college buildings, falling in love, being betrayed and enduring hilarious (and wince-inducing) installments of "The Mama Lecture Series." On the way, Patty, who is half Taiwanese and half Caucasian, begins the journey from "I wish to be white" to "The Official Patty Ho Lexicon to Hapa Life." *Nothing but the Truth* is funny, touching and insightful with not a stereotype in sight. Highly recommended (Little, Brown and Company, April 2006; \$16.99; ages 12 and older).