



# The Booklist Project



Focus: Culturally-Responsive Author Study  
Booklist

Uma Krisnaswami

Developed by: Cassie Souto

Fall, 2011



"I READ ALL THE TIME, EVEN THOUGH NO ONE AT THE TIME WROTE ANYTHING ABOUT THE WORLD I LIVED IN."

# \*Uma Krishnaswami\*

## **About the Author:**

Uma Krishnaswami was born in New Delhi, India. With a father working for the government, Krishnaswami moved often. During her frequent moves, Krishnaswami would substitute typical childhood friendships with reading and imagining stories. From her personal biography, Krishnaswami writes, "And I read all the time, even though no one at the time wrote anything about the world I lived in. I read everything I could lay my hands on. I read and reread Hans Christian Andersen, A.A.Milne, Beatrix Potter, Noel Streatfield, a couple of books by E. Nesbit, and old copies of Life magazine and the Reader's Digest Junior Treasury. And like so many kids in India then, I read Enid Blyton. There was a lot in Blyton's books that mystified me. I didn't know what scones were, or heather. Eventually I got disillusioned with her books, but I still have fond Blyton memories. She taught me to race through stories, breathless, heading into the drama, reading for context and clue. Maybe it was all just practice for the writer I'd end up becoming."

The author now spends her time teaching and writing in New Mexico, where she invents stories that she explains "cross from one place into the other and back again, just like me."

## **Possible Themes for Instruction:**

\* Uma Krishnaswami uses her writing to subtly introduce their reader to both Indian and American cultures. Many of Krishnaswami's books focus on the passing of culture through story. These books would be great to use in a classroom of children from different cultures who can celebrate their unique traditions and family stories. Books such as Stories of the Flood and The Broken Tusk: Stories of the Hindu God Ganesha are children's anthologies of classic stories from different cultures, while Chachaji's Cup, Closet Ghosts, Bringing Asha Home, Monsoon, The Happiest Tree: A Yoga Story, Remembering Grampa, and Naming Maya feature a theme of family and tradition.

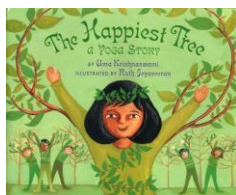
Many of Krishnaswami's books also tackle the feelings of apprehension a child can experience when they are faced with the unfamiliar. The Happiest Tree, Bringing Asha Home, Remembering Grandpa, Closet Ghosts, The Grand Plan to Fix Everything, and Monsoon showcase characters who are faced with a difficult situation that they must overcome.

## **UM's website & supplementary materials:**

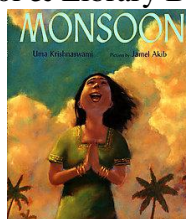
1. <http://www.umakrishnaswami.com/>  
Displayed on Krishnaswami's website are her biography, list of books that she has authored, a writer's resource page, her dedication to the need for the portrayal of peace in literature, a background of South Asian culture, a question-and-answer page about writing and publishing, news on Krishnaswami's writing and upcoming appearances, blogging, and contact information.
2. Krishnaswami's website also offers a "links" page to other authors that she recommends, as well as links to articles, interviews, and related material for teachers to use when using this author's books in the classroom. One of the links include a musical piece from "Tea with Chachaji," the theatre production based off of Krishnaswami's Chachaji's Cup (<http://www.adhesivetheater.com/tea/TeaWithChachaji.html>)

3. Krishnaswami is also the author of several other books that can be used in the classroom including: Out of the Way! Out of the Way! published in both Hindi and English (ISBN: 978-8181467928 & 978-1554981304), Holi (Rookie Read-About Holidays) (ISBN: 978-0516277646), and Shower of Gold: Girls and Women in the Stories of India (ISBN: 978-0208024848).
4. Other useful links to support Krishnaswami's stories in the classroom include:
- \* <http://www.fromthemixedupfiles.com/2011/06/interview-uma-krishnaswamis-grand-plans/>  
An interview with Krishnaswami about her newest book, The Grand Plan to Fix Everything."
  - \* <http://www.colorincolorado.org/read/forkids/asianpacific/heritage/>  
This site is Colorin Colorado's book list for Asian Pacific American culture, organized by theme, including Krishnaswami's Monsoon.
  - \* <http://www.lessonplanspage.com/asianpacificamericanheritagemonth-htm>
  - <http://www2.scholastic.com/browse/collection.jsp?id=266>
  - [http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/resource\\_library/asian\\_american\\_resources.html](http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/educators/resource_library/asian_american_resources.html)
- These sites offer several lesson ideas for teachers looking to teach about Asian Pacific culture, as well as how to celebrate Asian Pacific American Heritage month.

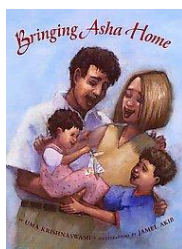
## Book List



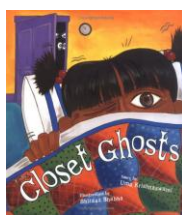
1. Krishnaswami, Uma. (2005). *The Happiest Tree*. New York, New York: Lee & Low Books Inc. [ISBN: 1-58430-237-2]  
Book Summary: A young girl, Meena, is excited to be in her school's rendition of "Little Red Riding Hood," but finds herself to be too clumsy to make her debut on the stage. In this story, Meena finds her muse to concentrate on her role as a tree in the production after taking up children's yoga.  
Grade Level: Ages 4-8; Grades K-3  
WIDA Level: 3 Developing  
Book Formats Available: Hardcover & School & Library Binding



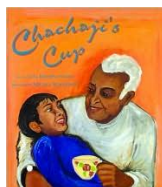
2. Krishnaswami, Uma. (2003). *Monsoon*. New York, New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux. [ISBN: 0-374-35015-9]  
Book Summary: This book describes the summer in northern India as its inhabitants and their surrounding environment anticipate the coming of their great yearly monsoon. The story is told through the wondering eyes of a young girl and is accompanied by a handy "Glossary of Hindi Words" to aid students who may be from cultures other than Hindi culture.  
Grade Level: Ages 4-8; Grades K-3  
WIDA Level: 3/4 Developing to Expanding  
Book Formats Available: Hardcover



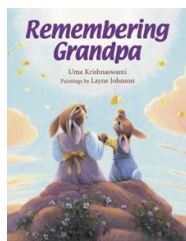
3. Krishnaswami, Uma. (2006). *Bringing Asha Home*. New York, New York: Lee & Low Books Inc. [ISBN: 1-58430-259-3]  
Book Summary: Written around a Hindu holiday tradition, Rakhi, Krishnaswami tells the story of a child who experiences a new addition to his family. Arun meets his newly adopted baby sister, Asha, in this heart-warming story about family.  
Grade Level: Ages 4-8; Grades K-3  
WIDA Level: 3 Developing  
Book Formats Available: Hardcover



4. Krishnaswami, Uma. (2006). *The Closet Ghosts*. San Francisco, California: Children's Book Press. [ISBN: 0-89239-208-8]  
Book Summary: Krishnaswami incorporates Indian mythology in this fun story about a young girl, Anu, who must survive moving to a new house, as well as the ghosts that come with it! Coming to her rescue, the Hindu monkey god, Hanuman, represents Indian cultural icons in a way that can also be identified with by American students.  
Grade Level: Ages 4-8; Grades K-3  
WIDA Level: 3/4 Developing to Expanding  
Book Formats Available: Hardcover



5. Krishnaswami, Uma. (2003). *Chachaji's Cup*. San Francisco, California: Children's Book Press. [ISBN: 0-89239-178-2]  
Book Summary: Like many of her other stories, *Chachaji's Cup* focuses on the bonds of family members, in particular, grandfather and grandson. Krishnaswami tells the story of the Hindu gods and demons through Grandfather Chachaji, as he passes these important tales down to his grandson.  
Grade Level: Ages 4-8; Grades K-3  
WIDA Level: 5 Bridging  
Book Formats Available: Hardcover & Audible Audio Edition, Unabridged



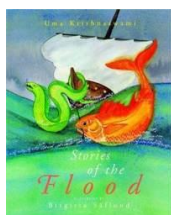
6. Krishnaswami, Uma. (2007). *Remembering Grandpa*. Honesdale, Pennsylvania:Boyd's Mills Press. [ISBN: 1-59078-424-3]

Book Summary: This is the touching story of a young bunny who loses her grandfather, and is saddened by the depression that she witnesses her surviving grandmother experiencing. To help cheer her grandmother up, Daysha collects artifacts to preserve her grandfather's memory. While being a nice story tackling a difficult subject, such as the death of a loved one, it contains the least amount of Hindu cultural content of all of Krishnaswami's books.

Grade Level: Ages 4-8; Grades K-3

WIDA Level: 2/3 Beginning to Developing

Book Formats Available: Hardcover



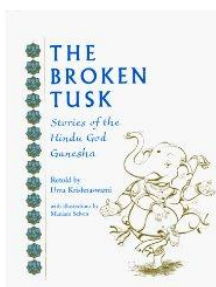
7. Krishnaswami, Uma. (1994). *Stories of The Flood*. Niwot, Colorado: Roberts Rinehart Publishers. [ISBN: 1-57098-007-1]

Book Summary: This book is an excellent children's anthology of flood stories as told all over the world. This is an excellent collection for teachers to show students how people all over the world use story to pass down the history of their culture, and how similar these stories can be.

Grade Level: Ages 9-12; Grades 4-6

WIDA Level: 5 Bridging

Book Formats Available: Hardcover



8. Retold by: Krishnaswami, Uma. (1996). *The Broken Tusk: Stories of the Hindu God Ganesha*. North Haven, Connecticut: Linnnet Books.

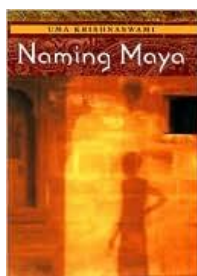
[ISBN: 0-208-02442-5]

Book Summary: Similar to Stories of the Flood, this book is written as an anthology, this time containing stories of the Hindu deities, as introduced by Ganesha, the elephant-headed god. There are very few pictures in this text, lending itself more to read-alouds for younger children.

Grade Level: Age 9-12; Grades 5-8

WIDA Level: 6 Reaching

Book Formats Available: Hardcover, Paperback, & Kindle Edition



9. Krishnaswami, Uma. (2004). *Naming Maya*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux.  
[ISBN: 0-374-35485-5]

Book Summary: Aimed at the middle grades, Krishnaswami writes a novel about a young girl spending her summer in India with her mother to sell her grandfather's house. Over her time in this new place, Maya takes some time to explore the house, as well as the town of Chennai. After becoming friends with the housekeeper and cook, Kamala Mami, Maya begins to collect clues to help her unravel a mysterious family past. This book comes with a glossary of Tamil terms and their pronunciations.

Grade Level: Ages 9-12; Grades 5-8

WIDA Level: 6 Reaching

Book Formats Available: Hardcover & Kindle Edition



10. Krishnaswami, Uma. (2011). *The Grand Plan to Fix Everything*. New York, New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers.  
[ISBN: 978-1-4169-9589-0]

Book Summary: Krishnaswami's newest YA novel, The Grand Plan to Fix Everything, combines Indian and American pop culture in this fun book about a young girl who must leave her best friend to move to India. Connecting her two worlds is her love for Bollywood films that helps her keep in touch with the friend she leaves behind, and the world that she has recently entered.

Grade Level: Ages 9-12; Grades 5-8

WIDA Level: 6 Reaching

Book Formats Available: Hardcover & Kindle Edition

**Books by Asian Pacific American author:  
Uma Krishnaswami**



Cassie Souto  
READ 507  
Dr. Cloud  
Book List Project  
10/05/2011

REACH. INSPIRE. CONNECT.



# The Booklist Project

A Project of the  
M.Ed. In TESL Program,



Feinstein School of Education and Human Development  
Rhode Island College

For Further Information, Contact:

Nancy Cloud, Ed.D., Director

[ncloud@ric.edu](mailto:ncloud@ric.edu)

Rhode Island College

600 Mt. Pleasant Avenue

Providence, RI 02908