



BOOK RESUME: GIRL IN TRANSLATION

BOOK SYNOPSIS

When Kimberly Chang and her mother emigrate from Hong Kong to Brooklyn squalor, she quickly begins a secret double life: exceptional schoolgirl during the day, Chinatown sweatshop worker in the evenings. Disguising the more difficult truths of her life—like the staggering degree of her poverty, the weight of her family’s future resting on her shoulders, or her secret love for a factory boy who shares none of her talent or ambition—Kimberly learns to constantly translate not just her language but herself back and forth between the worlds she straddles.

Title: Girl in Translation
Author: Jean Kwok
Imprint: Riverhead
Publisher: Penguin Publishing Group
On sale date: May 3, 2001
ISBN: 9781594485152
Format: Paperback

Through Kimberly’s story, author Jean Kwok, who also emigrated from Hong Kong as a young girl, brings to the page the lives of countless immigrants who are caught between the pressure to succeed in America, their duty to their family, and their own personal desires, exposing a world that we rarely hear about. Written in an indelible voice that dramatizes the tensions of an immigrant girl growing up between two cultures, surrounded by a language and world only half understood, *Girl in Translation* is an unforgettable and classic novel of an American immigrant—a moving tale of hardship and triumph, heartbreak and love, and all that gets lost in translation.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

“Kimberly Chang, the girl in the title of Jean Kwok’s first novel, comes to New York from Hong Kong in the early 1980s with her mother, chasing a better life. Ms. Kwok, herself an immigrant, renders Kimberly’s confusion seemingly from the inside.” —*The New York Times*

“It is impossible not to fall under the spell of *Girl in Translation’s* tough, plucky narrator as she struggles to make a place for herself in America. Kwok is a natural storyteller who eloquently captures the difficulty of living in two worlds, and the quiet sadness of never feeling quite at home in either. This is an altogether captivating debut shot through with moments of humor and grace.” —Julie Otsuka, author of *When the Emperor Was Divine*

“A moving coming of age story, reminiscent of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. The possibility of Kimberly Chang’s extraordinary struggle and achievement is what makes America a great nation—generous, forgiving and full of hope. Kwok perfectly captures the voice and perspective of a young immigrant, and the result is a powerful work about love, sacrifice and faith.” —Min Jin Lee, author of *Pachinko*

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [Reading Guide](#)

Updated 3-29-2024

Penguin Random House

Contact BannedBooks@penguinrandomhouse.com

*Publisher suggested age range covers the wide range of readers publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate range for their diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book’s intended use.

RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES

- [New Democrat-led board in Central Bucks takes control, reverses controversial policies](#)
- [Q&A: Author Jean Kwok on Her Experiences Defending Her Novel *Girl in Translation* at Central Bucks School District](#)

Updated 3-29-2024

Penguin Random House

Contact BannedBooks@penguinrandomhouse.com

*Publisher suggested age range covers the wide range of readers publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate range for their diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.