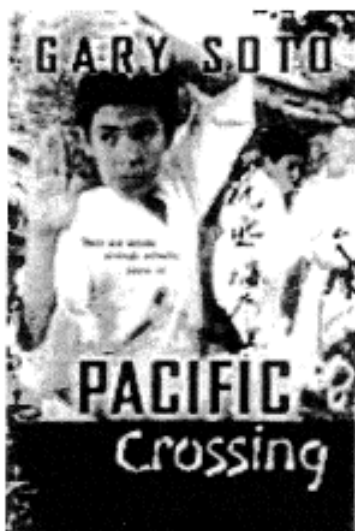


basic conveniences like central heat, hot water or dishwashers. *Do Speak as We Do* is a delightful book, funny and spirited. The characters are full and fresh, so much so that even the stereotypes are unexpected. Although a fun read, it also has moments of sadness and just a touch of lust.

While *Do Speak as We Do* may not be the best advertisement for the *au pair* profession, it certainly does a great job of promoting the United Kingdom as a travel destination.

Pacific Crossing **Soto, Gary**

Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Rolando
Florida 1992
Ages 10 – 14
126 pages



Lincoln Mendoza and his best friend Tony Contreras are best buddies, “barrio brothers” from San Francisco. They are chosen to participate in an exchange to Japan because of their interest in Kempo – a form of Japanese martial art. Lincoln is apprehensive that

his Mexican heritage will confuse his host family, but the Onos turn out to be very accepting.

Lincoln learns about his new family while working with his Japanese brother Mitsuo, on the family “farm”. The field is about one acre and the two boys work with their mother, weeding and tilling by hand. They are a family of labourers who epitomize the industrious ideals of the Japanese society for Lincoln. But Lincoln learns that there are facets to the Japanese people he did not expect, like their sense of humour, their easy going nature and their acceptance of women in traditionally male roles.

Lincoln has only mild culture shock over the public bath houses and getting his long dark hair closely shaved. His family tries to provide him with as much of a Japanese experience as possible, but the camping trip gets cut short, and the Sumo wrestling matches are even shorter.

Pacific Crossing is a straightforward book, but it lacks good descriptions of the landscape, the town or even the home where Lincoln comes to live. The exchange focuses mostly on the way the boys learn to communicate by sharing their language, both traditional and slang. They enjoy bantering back and forth in English, Japanese and Spanish, and there is a glossary at the back that includes both Spanish and Japanese.

The hosts, though humble, are gracious, and they try to infuse as much of the Japanese experience into Lincoln’s visit as possible. But six weeks is a very short time to get a real

feel for a country, and *Pacific Crossing* is a short book. It barely hints at the wonderful sites, the ancient culture and vastly divergent experiences to be enjoyed in Japan.

My Blue Country **Melling, O.R.**

Publisher: Puffin Books, 1996

Age Range: 14+

196 pages



This book recounts Jesse McKinlock's experience as a member of the first Canada World Youth program to Malaysia in 1972-73, when she was 17 years old. She describes the bonding, and the clashes that group work entails, with precise accuracy. She also records her own inevitable transformation as she embarks on the journey to self-discovery that can only be realized through travel.

First, the group spends seven months together in two Canadian camps, one in Ontario and one outside Edmonton, to prepare for life as a group in Malaysia. With two Malay instructors, Jesse takes basic Malay language classes and learns

about the country's customs, climate, and social norms, all the while examining her own reactions to these foreign experiences, and tests her own threshold for ambiguity and suspending judgment of foreign things and people. Although many couples are formed, Jesse remains single, and thus forms friendships with many others in the group. This is also the perfect vantage point from which to observe the many alliances and conflicts that arise. Perhaps most importantly, meetings consist of seminars that explain how the Canada World Youth programs, CUSO programs, etc. help build a bridge between different societies to help foster mutual global understanding, and ultimately, help to promote peace in the world. To help them acclimatize, the group leaders had different activities, such as "Malay day", where everyone was required to speak only Malay or eat with their right hands.

When they arrive in Malaysia, Jesse sees how their preparation work has paid off. Although she experiences culture shock, she quickly adapts to her new surroundings and is fascinated by her new experiences. Despite all the friction among group members during training in Canada, they all adjust and meet their group leader's expectations. Jesse realizes just how valuable this is when she crosses paths with CWY members who had dropped out of the program for various reasons, among them wanting to "experience" Malaysia on their own, while staying at the group leader's house. This is a pivotal point in the book, because it forces her to acknowledge how much she's changed as a result of this experience, and how much she values the organization's work.