

THE APOLOGY

A film by Tiffany Hsuing



This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Lydia Bringerud of the San Diego Public Library, explores many viewpoints on and topics related to the POV documentary *The Apology*.

The Apology follows three former “comfort women” who were among the 200,000 girls and young women kidnapped and forced into military sexual slavery by the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II. Seventy years after their imprisonment and after decades of living in silence and shame, the survivors give their first-hand accounts of the truth for the record, seeking apology and the hope that this horrific chapter of history not be forgotten.

ADULT NONFICTION

Giu, Pei Pei. *Chinese Comfort Women: Testimonies from Imperial Japan’s Sex Slaves*. Oxford University Press, 2014.

Accountability and redress for Imperial Japan’s wartime “comfort women” have provoked international debate in the past two decades. Yet there has been a dearth of first-hand accounts available in English from the women abducted and enslaved by the Japanese military in Mainland China -- the major theatre of the Asia-Pacific War. *Chinese Comfort Women* features the personal stories of the survivors of this devastating system of sexual enslavement. Offering insight into the conditions of these women’s lives prior to and after the war, it points to the social, cultural, and political environments that prolonged their suffering.

Soh, Chunghee Sarah. *The Comfort Women: Sexual Violence and Postcolonial Memory in Korea and Japan*. University of Chicago Press, 2008.

In an era marked by atrocities perpetrated on a grand scale, the tragedy of the so-called comfort women—mostly Korean women forced into prostitution by the Japanese army—endures as one of the darkest events of World War II. These women have usually been labeled victims of a war crime, a simplistic view that makes it easy to pin blame on the policies of imperial Japan and therefore easier to consign the episode to a war-torn past. In this revelatory study, C. Sarah Soh provocatively disputes this master narrative. Soh reveals that the forces of Japanese colonialism and Korean patriarchy together shaped the fate of Korean comfort women—a double bind made strikingly apparent in the cases of women cast into sexual slavery after fleeing abuse at home.

Yoshimi, Yoshiaki. *Comfort Women: Sexual Slavery in the Japanese Military During WWII*. Columbia University Press, 2000.

Available for the first time in English, this is the definitive account of the practice of sexual slavery the Japanese military perpetrated during World War II by the researcher

principally responsible for exposing the Japanese government’s responsibility for these atrocities. The large scale imprisonment and rape of thousands of women, who were euphemistically called “comfort women” by the Japanese military, first seized public attention in 1991 when three Korean women filed suit in a Toyko District Court stating that they had been forced into sexual servitude and demanding compensation.

Henson, Maria Rosa. *Comfort Woman: a Filipina’s Story of Prostitution and Slavery by the Japanese Military*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1995.

In April 1943, 15-year-old Maria Rosa Henson was taken by Japanese soldiers occupying the Philippines and forced into prostitution as a comfort woman. In this autobiography, Rosa recalls her childhood as the illegitimate daughter of a wealthy landowner, her work for Huk guerrillas, her wartime ordeal, and her marriage to a rebel leader who left her to raise their children alone.

O’Herne, Jan Ruff. *Fifty Years of Silence*. Sydney: Penguin Random House Australia, 2011.

Jan Ruff O’Herne’s idyllic childhood in Dutch colonial Indonesia ended when the Japanese invaded Java in 1942. She was interned in Ambarawa Prison Camp along with her mother and two younger sisters. In February 1944, when Jan was just twenty-one years old, she was taken from the camp and forced into sexual slavery in a military brothel. Jan was repeatedly beaten and raped for a period of three months, after which she was returned to prison camp with threats that her family would be killed if she revealed the truth about the atrocities inflicted upon her. For fifty years, Jan told no one what had happened to her, but in 1992, after seeing Korean war rape victims making appeals for justice on television, she decided to speak out and support them.

ADULT FICTION

Keller, Nora Okja. *Comfort Woman*. Penguin, 1998.

Comfort Woman is the story of Akiko, a Korean refugee of World War II, and Beccah, her daughter by an American missionary. The two women are living on the edge of society—and sanity—in Honolulu, plagued by Akiko’s periodic encounters with the spirits of the dead, and by Beccah’s struggles to reclaim her mother from her past. Slowly and painfully Akiko reveals her tragic story and the horrifying years she was forced to serve as a “comfort woman” to Japanese soldiers. As Beccah uncovers these truths, she discovers her own strength and the secret of the powers she herself possessed—the precious gifts her mother has given her.

Andrews, William. *Daughters of the Dragon: A Comfort Woman's Story*. Madhouse Press, 2014.

During World War II the Japanese forced 200,000 young Korean women to be sex slaves or “comfort women” for their soldiers. This is one woman’s riveting story of strength, courage, and promises kept.

Bracht, Mary Lynn. *White Chrysanthemum*. Penguin Random House, 2018.

Korea, 1943: Hana has lived her entire life under Japanese occupation. As a *haenyeo*, a female diver of the sea, she enjoys an independence that few other Koreans can still claim. Until the day Hana saves her younger sister from a Japanese soldier and is herself captured and transported to Manchuria. There she is forced to become a “comfort woman” in a Japanese military brothel. But *haenyeo* are women of power and strength. She will find her way home. *South Korea, 2011*: Emi has spent more than sixty years trying to forget the sacrifice her sister made, but she must confront the past to discover peace. Seeing the healing of her children and her country, can Emi move beyond the legacy of war to find forgiveness?

Lee, Chang-rae. *A Gesture Life*. Wheeler Publishing, 2002.

Franklin Hata, born to Korean parents, raised by an adoptive family in Japan and settled in America, is a 30-year resident of the respectable and traditional New York hamlet of Bedley Run. Doc Hata is recently retired and plagued by real estate agents asking if he would consider putting his house on the market. He has enjoyed success as a businessman and a neighbor in his community, but his carefully constructed façade of politeness and prosperity mask a dark and secretive past. The return of his estranged adopted daughter and her young son cause Hata to re-examine his past while trying to keep his current life from unravelling.

NONFICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

Starishevsky, Jill. *My Body Belongs to Me*. Free Spirit Publishing, 2014.

Speaking to children on their own terms, this critically acclaimed book sensitively establishes boundaries for youngsters. In a non-threatening, engaging manner, this guide teaches kids that when it comes to their body, there are some parts that are for “no one else to see” and empowers them to tell a parent or teacher if someone touches them inappropriately. Telling the story of a gender-neutral child who is inappropriately touched by an uncle’s friend, this tale delivers a powerful moral when the youngster reveals the offender and the parents praise the child’s bravery.

Lohmann, Raychelle Cassada. *The Sexual Trauma Workbook for Teen Girls*. Instant Help Books, 2016.

The Sexual Trauma Workbook for Teen Girls offers healing, real-life stories from survivors and powerful, evidence-based tools to help you reclaim your life after sexual abuse or trauma.

Stalfelt, Pernilla. *The Death Book*. Distributed by Publishers Group West, 2002.

Through drawings and simple text, this book addresses various questions about death, including why people die, whether ghosts exist, and what happens at a funeral.

FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

Polonsky, Ami. *Threads*. Disney-Hyperion, 2016.

To Whom It May Concern: Please, we need help! When twelve-year-old Clara finds a note and a photograph inside a purse in the mall, she can’t stop thinking about the girl—Yuming—who made the purse and wrote the message. Like two kites flying side by side, Clara’s and Yuming’s journeys weave, bob, and become entangled in this story about the importance of connections and the power of hope.

Andersen, Laurie Halse. *Speak*. Square Fish, 1999.

“Speak up for yourself—we want to know what you have to say.” From the first moment of her freshman year at Merryweather High, Melinda knows this is a big fat lie, part of the nonsense of high school. She is friendless, outcast, because she busted an end-of-summer party by calling the cops, so now nobody will talk to her, let alone listen to her. As time passes, she becomes increasingly isolated and practically stops talking altogether. Only her art class offers any solace, and it is through her work on an art project that she is finally able to face what really happened at that terrible party: she was raped by an upperclassman, a guy who still attends Merryweather and is still a threat to her.

McCormick, Patricia. *Sold*. Hyperion, 2006.

Lakshmi is a thirteen-year-old girl who lives with her family in a small hut on a mountain in Nepal. Though she is desperately poor, her life is full of simple pleasures, like playing hopscotch with her best friend from school, and having her mother brush her hair by the light of an oil lamp. But when the harsh Himalayan monsoons wash away all that remains of the family’s crops, Lakshmi’s stepfather says she must leave home and take a job to support her family. He introduces her to a glamorous stranger who tells her she will find her a job as a maid in the city. Glad to be able to help, Lakshmi journeys to India and arrives at “Happiness House” full of hope. But she soon learns the unthinkable truth: she has been sold into prostitution.

LaCour, Nina. *We Are Okay*. Dutton Books, 2017.

Marin hasn’t spoken to anyone from her old life since the day she left everything behind. No one knows the truth about those final weeks. Not even her best friend Mabel. But even thousands of miles away from the California coast, at college in New York, Marin still feels the pull of the life and tragedy she’s tried to outrun. Now, months later, alone in an emptied dorm for winter break, Marin waits. Mabel is coming to visit and Marin will be forced to face everything that’s been left unsaid and finally confront the loneliness that has made a home in her heart.