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I have chosen to talk about 3 books for young adults today. Each one features a female character from three very different backgrounds, who are put into a situation or environment that they are not used to or familiar with. These characters each rise to the challenge of becoming better people.

“Missing Abby” - Lee Weatherly

This morning newspaper headline, stating that Abigail Ryzner, has gone missing, shocks 13-year-old Emma, especially since she knows she may have been the last person to see Abby, her ex-best friend, alive. Worried about her past life with Abby being revealed to her friends at her new school, Emma eventually confides her knowledge of the case to the police. As she becomes more and more involved in the process of finding Abby, Emma retreats further away from her new “normal” life and friends. Rediscovering how much she enjoyed her friendship with Abby leads her to a new set of friends, ones who help her in the mystery of solving Abby’s disappearance.

“A Step from Heaven” – An Na

From four-year-old Young Ju’s perspective, a move to Mi Gook means moving to heaven, a place where you can change your life and become anything you want to be. Instead, the Park family, consisting of Umma (Mother), Apa (Father), Young Ju and soon to be born Joon have emigrated from their native Korean fishing town to southern California. The promise of wealth and success does not find the Park family, who instead struggle with the English language, work several low-income jobs, and live in a small apartment. The hardships they face in America, as well as back in Korea, affect Apa, Young Ju’s father, the hardest, and he turns to alcohol and violence. Will Young Ju beat the odds and find heaven in America?

“Spellbound” – Janet McDonald

Raven and Aisha, both sixteen-year-old unwed mothers and high school dropouts, are living day to day on government assistance in the projects of New York City. Raven, whose own mother and sister have both found success in their careers through hard work and determination, is bound to make something more for herself and the life of her baby, Smokey. After being turned down for a job because of her lack of a high school diploma, Raven finds an exciting opportunity that may allow her to go to college after all. The catch? Raven must win a spelling bee to be accepted into the program. After reconnecting with Smokey’s father, Raven is determined to spell her way to success.

Annotations:

“Missing Abby,” a novel written by Lee Weatherly and published in 2004, is the story of Emma, who has come to the realization that she may have been the last one to see her ex-best friend, Abby, alive. The story not only is the journey to find Abby, but the journey of Emma re-discovering herself.

An Na's first novel, "A Step from Heaven," follows the life of main character Young Ju, who begins as a from a 4-year-old in Korea and ends with a college bound student in California. Read of her struggles to adapt to life in American, as well as dealing with her abusive father in this novel, a 2002 Prinz Award winner for excellence in young adult literature.

The downfalls and success of Raven Jefferson come to life in "Spellbound", a 2001 novel by Janet McDonald. Discover how Raven, a 16-year old mother and high school dropout, changes the course of life and fulfills her dream of becoming college bound.