

CCBC

Choices

2012

# CCBC

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## 2012

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with

Carling Febry

Cooperative Children's Book Center

School of Education

University of Wisconsin–Madison

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*Kathleen T. Horning, Merri V. Lindgren, and Megan Schliesman*

# Introduction

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*CCBC Choices* is created by librarians at the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), a library of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison (see Appendix II for more about the CCBC).

The CCBC receives review copies of roughly 3,400 new books for children and young adults annually, including most of the trade books published in English by corporate publishers in the United States. Our goal in creating *CCBC Choices* is to highlight some of the outstanding titles published for children and young adults among the thousands we receive.

Reading everything that comes into the library would be impossible, especially as most of the reading we do is after the work day ends. But every book is examined by a librarian, and many of them are subsequently read by one or more of us. Throughout the year we maintain a log where we note the titles we think are worthy of inclusion in our next best-of-the-year list. Sometimes, we're all equally excited about a book. Sometimes, one of us needs convincing. Often, we have questions. We talk about those questions, along with our concerns, and differences of opinion. Ultimately, the books we agree on are the books that make it into *CCBC Choices*.

We are often asked about our criteria for including a book in *Choices*. We don't have a bulleted list of criteria we consider. But there are things each of us responds to as readers that inform our opinions and ultimately the selection of books that become *Choices*. We want to recommend books we are excited about. But what excites us?

First and foremost, it's literary and artistic quality: broad concepts that are not only somewhat subjective, but can mean different things in different types of books. A terrific picture book may feature a well-written, well-paced narrative and understated art that is perfectly matched to the story. A wonderful work of non-fiction is not only well-written, but well-organized, sharing information and, ideally, inspiring fascination. A notable novel may be quiet or raucous, funny or funereal.

We are also looking for books that are accurate and authentic. Sometimes we find ourselves lamenting a stereotypical character, or a missing but essential piece of information in a book that we otherwise greatly appreciate. We often discuss questions of credibility, especially in works of fiction. If we have questions that we can't answer but someone else can, we may seek out content reviews, especially with regard to the depiction of race, culture, and other dimensions of experience.

We weigh other things as well. We may include a book because it offers unique or unusual content, especially when we know there is a need and interest in books on that topic based on our discussions with teachers, librarians, and others who work directly with children and teens. We also consider what we know about children and teens as readers.

We can't guarantee every book in this edition of *Choices* will be a hit with every child or every teen. But we can guarantee there is something for everyone here among the 246 titles we have chosen, books that showcase the incredible talent and creativity among authors and illustrators, and commitment among editors and publishers, to providing children and teens books that will engage, entertain, enlighten, and inspire.

# Organization of *CCBC Choices 2012*

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The organization of the books in *CCBC Choices* into thematic and format categories has been developed over the years to help teachers, school and public librarians, and others who work with children quickly find books that meet their needs. We often make refinements from year to year in the organization, in part due to our ever-growing understanding of what our colleagues who work directly with children want and need, and in part to reflect the books we have chosen in a particular year.

Books have been placed into one of the following thematic categories when appropriate:

- The Natural World
- Seasons and Celebrations
- Historical People, Places, and Events
- Contemporary People, Places, and Events
- Issues in Today's World
- Understanding Oneself and Others
- The Arts

The remaining books have been placed into one of the following genre or format categories:

- Folklore, Mythology, and Traditional Literature
- Biography and Autobiography
- Poetry
- Concept Books
- Picture Books for Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers
- Picture Books for School-Age Children
- Books for Beginning Readers
- Books for Newly Independent Readers
- Fiction for Children
- Fiction for Young Adults

Picture books about people who actually lived have been placed in the Historical People, Places, and Events section or the Biography and Autobiography section. Novels set in the past have been placed in one of the Fiction categories. Graphic novels are assessed individually based on content and placed in the category that best suits each individual title.

The subject index can be used to find books across all of the categories about specific topics and in specific genres and formats ("Graphic Novels," "Historical Fiction," "Fantasy," etc.).

## Age Recommendations

We provide suggested age ranges for each title. These are meant to be general guidelines based on appeal and age-appropriateness of the content. We know that some children and teens are ready for and will enjoy books recommended

for older readers. Our suggested age recommendations cannot substitute for professional judgment and personal knowledge of individual readers, classrooms, and communities.

There is considerable overlap of ages in the two picture book categories as well as in the fiction categories. Given the wide range of individual variation among readers, we encourage you to look through both age categories for each genre. For consistency of organization, we have divided the books as follows:

- Picture Books for Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers: younger age recommendation is three or younger (e.g., Ages 1–4, Ages 3–6)
- Picture Books for School-Age Children: younger age recommendation is four or older (e.g., Ages 4–7, Ages 6–10)
- Fiction for Children: younger age recommendation is 10 or younger (e.g., Ages 9–12, Ages 10–14)
- Fiction for Young Adults: younger age recommendation is 11 or older (e.g., Ages 11–15, Age 13 and older)

## Publication Information

The books in *CCBC Choices 2012* have a 2011 publication date (with the exception of one book with a 2010 copyright date released at the end of December, 2010). The citation for each book includes the current price and thirteen-digit international standard book number (ISBN) for any edition we were able to find in print in late 2011. Most of the books are available in hardcover trade editions. Some are also or only available in library editions with reinforced bindings. A few are only, or also, available in paperback. This information will be helpful when looking for the books in *CCBC Choices* at your public library, school library media center, or bookseller.



## The Charlotte Zolotow Award

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The Charlotte Zolotow Award is given annually to the author of the best picture book text published in the United States in the preceding year. Established in 1997, the award is named to honor the work of Charlotte Zolotow, a distinguished children's literature editor for thirty-eight years with Harper Junior Books and an author of more than seventy picture-book stories, including such classic works as *Mr. Rabbit and the Lovely Present* (Harper, 1962) and *William's Doll* (Harper, 1972). Ms. Zolotow attended the University of Wisconsin in Madison on a writing scholarship from 1933 to 1936. She studied with Professor Helen C. White.

The award is administered by the CCBC. Each year, a committee of children's literature experts selects the winner from the books published in the preceding year. The committee works with a shortlist of titles they develop along with input from the CCBC professional staff. All titles are subject to the approval of the CCBC professional staff.

Any picture book for young children (birth through age seven) originally written in English and published in the United States in the preceding year is eligible for consideration for the Charlotte Zolotow Award. The book may be fiction, nonfiction, or folklore, as long as it is presented in picture book form and aimed at the birth through seven age range. Easy readers and poetry collections are not eligible. Books written by Charlotte Zolotow are also not eligible for the award.

In addition to choosing the award-winning title, the committee may select up to five Honor Books and up to ten titles to be included on a Highly Commended list that will call attention to outstanding writing in picture books.

The selection committee is comprised of five members who are appointed to a two-year term by the CCBC professional staff. These appointments are based on knowledge of children's books, demonstrated ability to evaluate children's books and discuss them critically, and/or direct experience working professionally with children from birth through age seven.

Members of the 2012 Zolotow Award committee were: Merri Lindgren, chair (Librarian, Cooperative Children's Book Center, Madison, Wisconsin); Amy Alt (Early Childhood Specialist, 4-C, Community Coordinated Child Care, Madison, Wisconsin); Suzy Grindrod (Kindergarten Teacher, Emerson Elementary School, Madison, Wisconsin); Maryann H. Owen (Youth Services Librarian, Racine Public Library, Racine, Wisconsin); and Kristine Wildner (Librarian, Holy Apostles School, New Berlin, Wisconsin).



## 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award

**Winner:** *Me ... Jane*  
Written and illustrated by Patrick McDonnell.  
Little, Brown, 2011

**Honor Books:** *Apple Pie ABC*  
written and illustrated by Alison Murray.  
Disney / Hyperion, 2011

*Meet the Dogs of Bedlam Farm*  
written and photographed by Jon Katz.  
Henry Holt, 2011

*Naamah and the Ark at Night*  
written by Susan Campbell Bartoletti.  
Illustrated by Holly Meade. Candlewick Press, 2011

### Highly Commended Titles:

*All the Water in the World* written by George Ella Lyon.  
Illustrated by Katherine Tillotson. A Richard Jackson Book / Atheneum, 2011

*Balloons Over Broadway: The True Story of the Puppeteer of Macy's Parade*  
Written and illustrated by Melissa Sweet. Houghton Mifflin, 2011

*Fortune Cookies* written by Albert Bitterman.  
Illustrated by Chris Raschka. Beach Lane Books, 2011

*Nothing Like a Puffin* written by Sue Soltis.  
Illustrated by Bob Kolar. Candlewick Press, 2011

*Samantha on a Roll* written by Linda Ashman.  
Illustrated by Christine Davenier.  
Margaret Ferguson Books / Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011

*Swirl by Swirl: Spirals in Nature* written by Joyce Sidman.  
Illustrated by Beth Krommes. Houghton Mifflin, 2011

*These Hands* written by Margaret H. Mason.  
Illustrated by Floyd Cooper. Houghton Mifflin, 2011

*Three by the Sea* written and illustrated by Mini Grey.  
U.S. edition: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011

*Tia Isa Wants a Car* written by Meg Medina.  
Illustrated by Claudio Muñoz. Candlewick Press, 2011

*The Twins' Blanket* written and illustrated by Hyewon Yum.  
Frances Foster Books / Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011

## Observations on Publishing in 2011

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During 2011, we saw more changes in *how* books were being published rather than *what* was being published. Audiobooks for children and teens are flourishing, and are often released simultaneously with print editions of titles; likewise, publishers are moving into simultaneous release of print and e-book formats of titles for older children and teens, including e-galleys for reviewers' preview copies.

With the ever-growing globalization of publishing, this year we saw many publishers in the United States distributing English-language books from Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom in their original form—with prices listed on the covers of some in pounds and pence rather than dollars and cents—rather than bringing out separate American print editions. Even book promotion is changing, or rather, continuing to evolve as a variety of social media is being used to promote books directly to young readers, as well as to librarians, teachers, and parents.

In terms of content and form, books published in 2011 looked much like the books from 2010, with young adult novels featuring paranormal love interests or antagonists and futuristic dystopian novels occupying much of our current shelf space. Everyone who is scrambling to publish the “next big thing” seems instead to be publishing the last big thing.

Amidst all the sameness, we are always happy to see publishers taking risks, whether it's on first-time authors, such as 2011 National Book Award winner Thanhha Lai; on hot-button nonfiction topics like evolution, as in Laurence Pringle's *Billions of Years, Amazing Changes*; or on GLBTQ-inclusive books for all ages. We also were pleased to see so much literary middle-grade fiction in 2011. And to see picture books. Period.

The demise of the picture book has been discussed much of late in person, online, and in print. Once the staple of every publisher's list, it seems there are fewer and fewer published each year. We don't see the same level of risk-taking in them that we see in young adult novels, and that's a shame considering the number of truly ingenious artists and authors in the field. What we do see are plenty of adult-oriented, sentimental picture books that are best described as safely mediocre; and plenty of silly stories that may get a laugh but don't hold up to literary scrutiny. Yes, the quality of the writing matters. So, too, does the quality of the art.

The good news is that every year we continue to see some great picture books published, and 2011 was no exception, as the 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award books and other titles you'll find in *Choices* demonstrate. We would just like to see more of them, and know that there is no lack of talent among authors and artists—those already known, and those waiting to be discovered.

## Meaningful Multicultural Literature

We continue to pay close attention to books by and about people of color, and were surprised to note how many multicultural picture books published in 2011 were written by celebrity authors—and we don't mean authors who achieved “celebrity” for their writing. We mean individuals who achieved fame in other

fields. If you are a person of color who wants to get a picture book published, it apparently helps to already be famous for something else. (It can also help to be related to someone famous, whether it's Barack Obama, Martin Luther King, Jr., or Jackie Robinson.) Five of the twenty-one 2011 picture books by African American authors we received, for example, were written by people from the sports world or entertainment industry: Taye Diggs, Tony Dungy, Spike Lee, Justin Tuck, and Dionne Warwick. Just imagine how many celebrity titles there would be if we saw a similar proportion among books by white authors.

We know publishing is a business, and we know celebrity books may sell. And they certainly are not without merit on a case by case basis. But we also know the talent pool for authors and artists of color is rich and deep. We hope publishers' commitment to multicultural literature remains first and foremost one that nurtures and supports the careers of writers and illustrators seeking opportunities to create outstanding books for children and teens.

Each year in *CCBC Choices* we include statistics on the number of books by and about people of color that we received at the CCBC the previous year. We continue to do this because it's important to pay attention to the way books and book publishing reflect—or fail to reflect—the diversity of our nation and the realities of the lives of children and teenagers today.

We received approximately 3,400 books at the CCBC in 2011. Of those,

- **123** books had significant African or African American content
- **79** books were by Black authors and/or illustrators
- **28** books had American Indian themes, topics, or characters
- **12** books were by American Indian authors and/or illustrators
- **91** books had significant Asian/Pacific or Asian/Pacific American content
- **76** books were by authors and/or illustrators of Asian/Pacific heritage
- **58** books had significant Latino content
- **52** books were by Latino authors and/or illustrators

These numbers include both stand-alone trade books and books that are published as part of a formulaic nonfiction series, and many individual authors and illustrators of color wrote or illustrated more than one book.

The number of books by people of color has plateaued for the past decade or so with one exception: books by Asian Pacific American authors. We were pleased to see first novels from Cara Chow, Wendy Wang-Long Shang, and the afore-mentioned Thanhha Lai, as well as new novels from Jenny Han, Uma Krishnaswami, Grace Lin, Malinda Lo, Lenore Look, Padma Venkatraman, Lisa Yee, and Laurence Yep, among others. These writers not only represent diverse ethnicities in their backgrounds but also diverse literary forms in works that are helping to enrich all of contemporary literature for children and teens.

## **Timely, Timeless Books for All**

Books are a reflection of the time in which they are published. We saw evidence of that in more than one 2011 novel that showed families struggling to make

ends meet. *Angry Young Man* by Chris Lynch, *Camo Girl* by Kekla Magoon, and *Bluefish* by Pat Schmatz are all examples of works that showed economic strife as part of the reality of their characters' lives without it being a central focus of their stories. Children and teens facing an uncertain future can still find their realities—or their escapes from reality—in picture books, novels, and nonfiction.

The times in which books are published can also give greater meaning to the timeless topics they address. Social justice, for example, can be looked at through a variety of lenses, from the personal to the political, contemporary to historical. One of the outstanding works of non-fiction in 2011 was Albert Marrin's *Flesh & Blood So Cheap*, about the tragic Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire and the union organizing and labor law changes that resulted from it. "Which side are you on?" asks the pro-union song written by Florence Reece in 1931 that was re-envisioned as a picture book eighty years later by George Ella Lyon and Christopher Cardinale and published by Cinco Puntos in 2011. Who could have predicted when these books were being created just how timely they would prove to be in 2011, offering historical insight into issues children and teens could watch playing out on the national news, and in their local communities.

*Which side are you on?* For us here at the CCBC, the answer is easy: We're on the side of good books for all children and teens.

# The *Choices*

# The Natural World

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**Barry, Frances.** *Let's Look at Dinosaurs: A Flip-the-Flap Book.* Candlewick Press, 2011. 26 pages (trade 978-0-7636-5354-5, \$12.99)

Each double-page spread of this square-sized picture book introduces one of twelve species of dinosaurs with a statement that begins with, "I wonder ...". The answer is found when one lifts the flap hidden somewhere on the page, in the setting or on the dinosaur itself. The text provides simple facts and theories about dinosaurs—what they ate, how they moved, how big they were—while the structure of the narrative models and inspires scientific inquiry on the part of young children. The search-and-reveal aspect of the illustrations will also encourage their active participation. Boldly colored collage illustrations are stylized and yet realistic enough to satisfy budding paleontologists. The endpapers show the relative size of all twelve dinosaurs in silhouette, accompanied by a pronunciation guide in the front and added facts in the back. (Ages 2–6)

**Dowson, Nick.** *North: The Amazing Story of Arctic Migration.* Illustrated by Patrick Benson. Candlewick Press, 2011. 55 pages (trade 978-0-7636-5271-5, \$16.99)

Although few animals other than polar bears and arctic foxes remain in the Arctic through the winter, they are joined by many other species that migrate to the region during the milder seasons. Whales travel from Mexican lagoons, cranes fly from China, caribou come from Canada, and terns begin their migration in far-away Antarctica. Lyrical language and sweeping vistas captured in icy-toned, realistic illustrations celebrate the diversity of creatures making the journey north each year. A map of the Arctic and a page of information about the region conclude this handsome, generously-sized volume. (Ages 5–10)

**Jenkins, Martin.** *Can We Save the Tiger?* Illustrated by Vicky White. U.S. edition: Candlewick Press, 2011. 50 pages (trade 978-0-7636-4909-8, \$16.99)

Gorgeous art—detailed drawings of endangered species—is only one of the striking elements of this oversize (10 x 12 inches) volume. The open, engaging tone of the narrative is just as compelling. Author Martin Jenkins shares information about a variety of endangered creatures, from where those remaining can be found to how and why they have become endangered. His casual, conversational style conveys both appreciation and urgency, and is not without hope. But he makes clear that hope is rooted in action. "If we stop trying, the chances are pretty soon we'll end up with a world where there are no tigers or elephants ... And I think that would be a shame, don't you?" Vicky White's stunning pencil and oil paint illustrations are primarily in black and white, though some are softly colored. (Age 8 and older)

**Jenkins, Steve and Robin Page.** *Time for a Bath.* Houghton Mifflin, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-0-547-25037-3, \$12.99)

**Jenkins, Steve and Robin Page.** *Time to Eat.* Houghton Mifflin, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-0-547-25032-8, \$12.99)

**Jenkins, Steve and Robin Page.** *Time to Sleep.* Houghton Mifflin, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-0-547-25040-3, \$12.99)

Three easy, accessible books about animals' habits and behavior are full of fascinating facts. *Time to Sleep* looks at how a variety of creatures catch some zzz's. *Time to Eat* focuses on food and eating. *Time for a Bath* is about getting clean ... and getting dirty, too (it's how some creatures cool off). Collaborators Steve Jenkins and Robin Page bring their trademark approach that blends dynamic visuals, via Jenkins's vivid, detailed collage images, with a witty, informative narrative. A new creature is introduced on each page or double-page of each volume, with a catchy phrase and a sentence or two describing the trait that relates to the book's theme: "A slimy sleeping bag" describes the parrotfish, which produces a mucus cocoon that masks its scent from predators while it sleeps. "Get the point?" captions the warthog, which wriggles backward into a cave or crevice to sleep, with its sharp tusk facing outward. It's all fascinating, and in one case, really gross. (Intrigued?) A visual index at the end of each book provides more detailed information about each of the creatures profiled in three volumes that are small in size but huge in appeal. (Ages 4-9)

**Lyon, George Ella.** *All the Water in the World.* Illustrated by Katherine Tillotson. A Richard Jackson Book / Atheneum, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-4169-7130-6, \$15.99)

A poetic, informative, and thought-provoking picture book looks at water from a global/environmental perspective but never loses sight of the personal for children: "It wobbles in blue pools. It fills your cup up." George Ella Lyon's lyrical narrative begins with the water cycle: rain to river to ocean to clouds to rain again. Some places have a wealth of rain and water, while others have little or none. "Living things dream of water .... This wet wonder / means grow / means life will flow / through tigers / through trees. / Through you and through me." Katherine Tillotson matches Lyon's lively prose with lovely illustrations showing water abstractly—swirls and swaths of blue—and also a very real presence—or absence—in scenes from life on earth: a rain-washed neighborhood of houses, a dry savanna village, a lush tropical forest, and the cycle of life that water makes possible. *Highly Commended, 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 4-8)

**Markle, Sandra.** *Family Pack.* Illustrated by Alan Marks. Charlesbridge, 2011. 32 pages (lib. 978-1-58089-217-9, \$15.95)

A young female wolf, transplanted from her Canadian home to Yellowstone Park, "roams, like a castaway, in a land that is pure unknown." After an unsuccessful elk hunt, she howls in a way that would have once drawn her family to her, but now is answered only by an owl's hoot. Seasons pass and the wolf grows into a two-year-old adult, fully integrated into her



Yellowstone habitat. She meets a male, and the two become a mated pair, producing a litter of pups and the start of their own family pack. This first-rate text conveys drama without anthropomorphizing the wolves, while the watercolor, pen, and pencil illustrations capture the beauty of the animals and the setting. A concise author's note provides background context with a summary of the wolf reintroduction program at Yellowstone. In fact, the wolves of the story are modeled after Female 7 and Male 2, the founders of the Leopold Pack, the first naturally formed wolf pack in Yellowstone following reintroduction. (Ages 5–9)

**Marrin, Albert.** *Little Monsters: The Creatures That Live on Us and in Us.* **Dutton, 2011. 152 pages (trade 978-0-525-42262-4, \$19.99)**

Horrifying rumors about the number of dust mites found in a typical pillow abound, but this volume on parasites provides the official science behind those stories: pillows that are two or more years old owe ten percent of their weight to mite feces and dead mites. Dust mites are one of several parasites profiled in this fascinating work, which also covers mosquitoes, fleas, lice, and worms, both historically and in our contemporary world. Threats to humans and animals posed by parasites are examined in depth, but information is also included on positive parasitic associations, such as hookworms' ameliorative effect on symptoms associated with inflammatory bowel disease. Concise explanations, memorable anecdotes, and numerous black-and-white photographs and illustrations (some satisfyingly disgusting for those who relish that element of the topic) combine in this thorough volume which includes titles for further reading, a bibliography, and internet resources. (Ages 10–14)

**Pringle, Laurence.** *Billions of Years, Amazing Changes: The Story of Evolution.* **Illustrated by Steve Jenkins. With a foreword by Jerry A. Coyne, Ph.D. Boyds Mills Press, 2011. 102 pages (trade 978-1-59078-723-6, \$17.95)**

Laurence Pringle's explanation of the theory of evolution and related scientific principles unfolds in a work that is both understandable and intriguing. Pringle gives readers the big picture by focusing chapters on individual but essential components all of which relate: evolution, variation, competition, natural selection, genetics, missing links, continental shift, and coevolution are presented along with information on how scientists date fossils and other evidence found in nature. Throughout the book Pringle introduces a number of scientists whose discoveries advanced our understanding of the origin and development of life on earth, including, of course, Charles Darwin. He also points to the many fascinating examples in nature of the principles he discusses. And early on, he provides a clear explanation of why evolution is called a "theory" when in science it is generally accepted as fact, explaining that the scientific use of the word "theory" is different than the way we might use it in daily life. This clear, thorough, groundbreaking work for older children and teens is illustrated with vivid color photographs and occasional collage images. (Ages 9–14)

**Sidman, Joyce. *Swirl by Swirl: Spirals in Nature*. Illustrated by Beth Krommes. Houghton Mifflin, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-547-31583-6, \$16.99)**

“A spiral is a snuggling shape ... a growing shape ... a strong shape ... a clever shape.” Joyce Sidman describes the traits of spirals found in nature in a beautifully choreographed, lyrical narrative. Sidman’s words dance hand in hand with Beth Krommes’s gorgeous scratchboard illustrations, which reveal many kinds of spirals in nature, from the small and snug (the curled body of a chipmunk in its nest) to the expansive (the galaxy’s spiral of stars). Krommes’s striking palette and images spanning the page spreads are riveting, while Sidman’s exceptional language is arresting. Together, words and pictures mimic the furling and unfurling qualities of their subject, starting small, growing larger, and eventually curling back inward again. Although it reads like a poem, this picture book also works as a book of information, and the end matter provides additional details about some of nature’s spirals referenced in the narrative and illustrations. *Highly Commended, 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 3–9)

**Webb, Sophie. *Far from Shore: Chronicles of an Open Ocean Voyage*. Houghton Mifflin, 2011. 80 pages (trade 978-0-618-59729-1, \$17.99)**

Field biologist and bird naturalist Sophie Webb uses a journal format to record her four-month stint aboard a science vessel in the Eastern Tropical Pacific Ocean while on the job for the Southwest Fisheries Science Center. While the trip’s primary focus was the impact of tuna purse-seine fishing on the dolphin population, Webb’s log includes observations of a whole host of deep sea animals and birds, as well as fascinating details about life aboard ship and in port. Watercolor illustrations on every page add a strong visual component to the quiet tone of the written narrative. This snapshot of a contemporary scientist at work clearly captures her passion for her field, especially evident by the way she spends her free time in port: bird-watching. (Ages 9–13)

**Yezerki, Thomas F. *Meadowlands: A Wetlands Survival Story*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-374-34913-4, \$17.99)**

The wetlands area of New Jersey where the Hackensack River meets Newark Bay is known as the Meadowlands. Lovely watercolor illustrations with border details and a straightforward text describe the state of this region hundreds of years ago, when it’s “20,000 acres of marshes, swamps, and bog . . . were home to many different plants and animals.” The Leni Lenape lived there for thousands of years, before European settlers arrived in the early 1600s. Human activity directly contributed to the misuse of the Meadowlands, which became increasingly polluted and abused until it was cleaned up and revitalization began in the 1960s. The final page looks at an optimistic future, describing the Meadowlands as “inspiring people in urban wetlands all over the world to look for hope in this flat, wet, beautiful place.” (Ages 7–10)

***A Zeal of Zebras: An Alphabet of Collective Nouns.* By Woop Studios. Chronicle, 2011. 56 pages (trade 978-1-4521-0492-8, \$17.99)**

Beautiful book design takes center stage in this artful, alphabetic gathering of collective nouns about animals, birds, and other beasts. From an Aurora of polar bears to a Zeal of zebras, each page spread features a different group of creatures and a collective noun specific to that gathering: an Ostentation of peacocks, a Pandemonium of parrots, a Shiver of sharks! The playful descriptive words are incorporated into the handsome full-page illustrations that showcase why graphic design is an art form: Color, design, and composition are beautifully balanced in each illustration. A single element from each full-page illustration is repeated on the facing page of text, adding to the overall elegance of the volume. Each page spread includes brief factual information about the creatures shown. (Ages 4–12)

## Seasons and Celebrations

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**Buzzeo, Toni. *Lighthouse Christmas.* Illustrated by Nancy Carpenter. Dial, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-8037-3053-3, \$16.99)**

Frances and her younger brother Peter face a lonely Christmas with their father in the island lighthouse where they live. Peter is eager to accept an invitation to spend Christmas with their aunt, even though their father will have to stay behind to keep the light burning. Frances is torn, but agrees. Then weather prevents Frances and Peter from leaving, and a rescued fisherman turns up as an unexpected guest. Frances is determined they will still have Christmas, making the most of what they have on hand to inspire a humble but welcome celebration that turns to one filled with surprise with the sudden sound of a small airplane overhead. The pilot drops a small package containing treats and gifts from “The Flying Santa.” An author’s note describing the Flying Santa Service, begun in 1929 to honor Penobscot Bay lighthouse keepers and their families, concludes this compelling and cozy holiday story. Illustrations gracefully capture both the historic setting and the characters’ feelings, including the love in their home. (Ages 4–8)

**Cole, Brock. *The Money We’ll Save.* Margaret Ferguson Books / Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-374-35011-6, \$16.99)**

Ma gives Pa clear directions when he heads to market: Buy two eggs and a half pound of flour. Nothing more; Christmas is near and they need to watch every penny if the family is to have a special holiday dinner. But susceptible Pa arrives home with a turkey poult. “It will fatten up into a fine bird, and we can have it for Christmas dinner. Think of the money we’ll save!” The complications of raising a turkey in a tenement apartment soon become clear, as the growing bird (christened Alfred) makes a mess, needs more than table scraps in his diet, and gets in everyone’s way. But Pa always has a solution: first a pen on the fire escape, then a pen hung on the clothesline, and finally Alfred in the bedroom while the family moves into the kitchen and parlor.

At last Christmas arrives, and the problem can be solved once and for all by putting Alfred on the menu . . . or can it? This cumulative story with a clever and satisfying conclusion is brought to humorous life by illustrations of a working family living in nineteenth-century New York City. (Ages 4–8)

**Ray, Jane.** *The Twelve Days of Christmas.* Candlewick Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-7636-5735-2, \$16.99)

Jane Ray playfully captures the romance and impossibility of the well-known holiday song in a volume that opens with an inviting streetscape of artful row houses along a canal. Snow gently falls and a delivery is being made to the red-haired woman living at number 4: a partridge in a pair tree. Each item from the song is showcased in turn in a variety of imaginative scenarios featuring a multicultural cast. The children on the street play with the five gold rings (hoops) as the woman watches from her door, surrounded by the bevy of birds she's already received. The nine ladies dancing sail by in a boat along the canal in flapper-inspired garments. The eleven pipers piping represent a variety of cultural traditions as they surround the woman on her staircase. Through it all the woman's expressions (surprise, delight, dismay) are a treat. There is much to notice on every page of Ray's mixed-media illustrations, not the least of which is the young man who lives next door: the woman's true love. Ray's images balance rich colors and details with a wonderful sense of warmth and whimsy. (Ages 4–9)

**Mackall, Dandi Daley.** *Listen to the Silent Night.* Illustrated by Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher. Dutton, 2011. 28 pages (trade 978-0-525-42276-1, \$16.99)

"In our hearts, find a silence in the middle of the noise, / With the bustling of our Christmas and the clattering of toys. / Help us slip into the silence, filled with hallelujah joys / On not such a silent night." This Nativity Christmas story goes on to explain why it was indeed not such a silent night when Jesus was born: Owls were hooting, Joseph gave a "tap, tap, tap" on the inn's door, Mary groaned in pain, and of course there were all those animals in the barn at the birth, making their many animal noises. Dandi Daley Mackall's original take on the Nativity stays true to the Biblical version's outline but adds a new, down-to-earth dimension in the details. Luminous illustrations show a deep, dark, star-filled sky as the backdrop for the unfolding drama involving humans and animals alike. (Ages 3–8)

**Park, Linda Sue.** *The Third Gift.* Illustrated by Bagram Ibatoulline. Clarion, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-547-20195-5, \$16.99)

An original narrative builds to an unexpected conclusion that connects it to one of the most beloved stories in Christianity. A boy's father is teaching him how to collect "tears" of sap, the bubbles that rise up and harden when the bark of a tree is cut. Under his skilled father's guidance the boy collects his first one. "On the way home, I look at it again and again." They usually sell their tears to a spice merchant, who sells them in turn to people wanting them for medicine, or to grind up and add to oil to anoint the body of someone who has died. On their next trip to the market the spice merchant

is waiting for them with three customers who have come looking for a special gift: they already have gold and frankincense, with the selection of the boy's tear, they add myrrh to their offerings for a baby. "I watch the three men mount their camels. I watch them leave the marketplace. I watch as they ride into the desert. And I wonder about the baby." Linda Sue Park's stirring, satisfying tale concludes with an author's note providing a brief summary of accounts of the Wise Men. (Ages 4–9)

**Sneve, Virginia Driving Hawk. *The Christmas Coat: Memories of My Sioux Childhood*. Illustrated by Ellen Beier. Holiday House, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-8234-2134-3, \$16.95)**

In a story based on the author's childhood, young Virginia is in need of a new winter coat—something her family can't afford. Instead, she has to wait and see if there's a coat in the "Theast" boxes—clothing donated from New England ("the East") churches. And when the boxes finally arrive, there is! It's made of animal fur, and Virginia longs for it. But because she is the minister's daughter, she has to wait until the rest of the congregation families have chosen what they need. Inevitably, the coat is taken. To make matters worse, it's taken by a girl whom Virginia can't stand. Young Virginia's authentically childlike feelings of disappointment and jealousy as she struggles to uphold the values of selflessness stressed by her parents are wonderfully realized. And her effort is sweetly rewarded, most notably when Christmas brings an unexpected surprise in this picture book that offers a realistic look at economic hardship in the context of a warm and loving family. Aspects of Native (Sneve is Sioux) culture are subtle elements of the story, and occasionally stand out in the illustrations. (Ages 4–8)

## Folklore, Mythology, and Traditional Literature

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**Bartoletti, Susan Campbell. *Naamah and the Ark at Night*. Illustrated by Holly Meade. Candlewick Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-7636-4242-6, \$16.99)**

Susan Campbell Bartoletti's lyrical lullaby imagines the creatures on Noah's Ark being soothed by the singing of Naamah, Noah's wife. "She sings and strokes their hair at night; / She sings a bedtime prayer at night. / She sings for moon to fill the night; / She sings for stars to thrill the night." Bartoletti's entrancing narrative is based on a *ghazal*, an Arabic poetic structure in which a pair of rhyming words in each couplet precedes the ending word, which is the same for every line in the poem. The transition from restlessness to ease described in the narrative is echoed in Holly Meade's lovely collage illustrations spanning each page spread, which show animals and people on the Ark in Naamah's care. An author's note shares more on the origins of

the story in Bartoletti's imagination and the mysteries of Noah's wife among scholars. *Honor Book, 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 3–7)

**Burkert, Rand. *Mouse & Lion*. Illustrated by Nancy Ekholm Burkert. Michael di Capua Books / Scholastic, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-545-10147-9, \$17.95)**

An unlikely partnership, staunch loyalty, and the reward for an act of generosity all receive gorgeous treatment in this new version of Aesop's familiar tale. Rand Burkert's retelling allows the animals' characters to emerge through the narrative, while Nancy Ekholm Burkert's meticulous, beautifully rendered illustrations add depth and the visual realism of the natural world to the tale. Both reteller and artist bring background to the construction of this work in their notes, including the rationale for bucking tradition by listing Mouse first in the book's title; the smaller animal earned that honor by "clearly perform[ing] the lion's share of the work." (Ages 4–8)

**dePaola, Tomie. *Let the Whole Earth Sing Praise*. Putnam, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-0-399-25478-9, \$15.99)**

In this celebratory volume author/illustrator Tomie dePaola weaves lines and language from "Canticle of the Three Young Men" (also known as the Benedicite from the "Book of Daniel") and "Psalm 148" into a lyrical praise song that begins "Sun and Moon, Stars and Comets in the Heavens. Praise God." The words dance on sepia-toned page spreads decorated with graceful, naïve images of the catalog of praise-singers mentioned in the verse. As the song progresses, the pages become more crowded as birds, animals, and people join other elements of the natural world in praising and blessing God. The result is a sense of joy brimming from the pages of this intimately sized volume. dePaola's illustrations were inspired by the folk art embroideries of the Otomi people around San Pablito in Puebla, Mexico. (Ages 2–5)

**Manna, Anthony L. and Soula Mitakidou. *The Orphan: A Cinderella Story from Greece*. Illustrated by Giselle Potter. Schwartz & Wade, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-375-86691-3, \$16.99)**

The cruel stepmother, misplaced shoe, and worthy prince will all be familiar to readers of European Cinderella stories, but elements unique to this Greek version offer a rich contrast. This girl (considered an orphan although her father still lives) doesn't have a fairy godmother, but instead receives aid from the spirit of her dead mother, as well as Mother Nature, the Sun, Moon, Dawn, and the Morning Star. Rather than a royal ball, the orphan meets the prince at a service in her village church. After departing hastily in compliance with her mother's instructions, the orphan leaves behind a prince desperate to track down the enchanting stranger. The following Sunday the prince's guards pour honey and wax on the church's threshold, successfully capturing one of the orphan's tiny shoes when she flees the building. None of the village maidens fit the shoe until the orphan makes her own way to the palace and reveals her identity. An informative note details the authors' decision to incorporate elements of traditional Greek Cinderella tales while opting for a

contemporary twist by making the heroine an active participant in the search for her prince. (Ages 5–9)

***Nursery Rhyme Comics. With an introduction by Leonard S. Marcus. First Second, 2011. 119 pages (trade 978–1–59643–600–8, \$18.99)***

Fifty nursery rhymes have been given visual treatment by fifty different artists from the world of comics and graphic novels, picture books, and cartooning in this scintillating volume. Some artists take a literal approach and others take familiar verses to unexpected places. Cyril Pedrosa’s “This Little Piggy” is darkly funny, Drew Weing’s “Baa Baa Black Sheep” delightfully surprising, Mo Oh’s “Hush Little Baby” comic and tender. Craig Thompson heightens the sensuality and romance of “The Owl and the Pussycat” with his visual storytelling. And who knew “The Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe” was an aging, guitar playing hippie running a daycare? Artist Lucy Knisley did. Leonard S. Marcus’s introduction and Chris Duffy’s editor’s note offer insightful commentary on the nursery rhyme’s place in both literature and literacy (although suggesting the text of this particular volume is accessible to beginning readers is a stretch with the varied fonts and nonlinear layout on many pages). Despite the nursery rhyme theme, older children and teens will find pleasure and inspiration in the pages of this singular, brilliant work. (Age 7 and older)

***Paterson, Katherine. Brother Sun, Sister Moon: Saint Francis of Assisi’s Canticle of the Creatures. Illustrated by Pamela Dalton. Handprint Books / Chronicle, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978–0–8118-7734–3, \$17.99)***

Katherine Paterson was inspired by Pamela Dalton’s extraordinary papercuts to take on the challenge of “reimagining” St. Francis of Assisi’s “Praise Song of the Creatures” (often known as “Canticle of the Sun”). Paterson has voiced St. Francis’s hymn in beautiful, accessible language, a lyrical poem of appreciation for God and nature, human experience, and the cycle of life, death, and renewal. “For all your gifts—for this wondrous universe in which we live, for family, for friends, for work and play, for this life and the life to come, we sing our praise to you.” Dalton’s astonishing papercut illustrations frame Paterson’s words. She cut out each intricate design incorporating people, plants, animals and other elements of the natural world from a single sheet of paper, hand-painting them with watercolor to add detail. Black page backgrounds showcase their intricacy, beauty, and harmony in a breathtaking visual display. (Ages 5–10)

## Historical People, Places, and Events

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**Blumenthal, Karen.** *Bootleg: Murder, Moonshine, and the Lawless Years of Prohibition.* Roaring Brook Press, 2011. 160 pages (trade 978-1-59643-449-3, \$18.99)

There was an irony to the reality of Prohibition. When the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution banning alcohol production and sales was passed, supporters, who saw alcohol as the root of all evil, believed “crime would soon disappear, jails would close, and hospitals would lose patients. Families would flourish and America would prosper as never before.” Instead, Prohibition resulted in the rise of unlawful behavior among everyday citizens, and violent crime among those who saw the opportunity to profit from illegal alcohol production and sales, including infamous Al Capone. Karen Blumenthal takes a look at the decades-long battle for temperance leading up to Prohibition before documenting its impact as even the most distinguished of citizens blithely ignored the law. In families where illegal alcohol production provided income, even children were involved in deceiving authorities. From big cities to rural America, Prohibition proved ineffective, and sometimes disastrous. Blumenthal’s account includes black-and-white photographs, a glossary, and a lengthy bibliography and list of sources.

**Brown, Don.** *America Is Under Attack: September 11, 2001: The Day the Towers Fell.* Flash Point / Roaring Brook Press, 2011. 64 pages (trade 978-1-59643-694-7, \$16.99)

The events of September 11, 2001, unfold in Don Brown’s stirring picture book account of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon and the crash of Flight 93 over Pennsylvania. Brown’s narrative has a notably restrained presentation, but that doesn’t mean it lacks power. He has unearthed individual stories that convey the scope of the tragedy on an intimate human scale, presenting them in a straightforward manner so that poignancy, heroism, and human decency shine. Brown’s illustrations are also remarkable, full of ever-changing perspectives that not only convey dramatic scenes such as a plane heading toward the Twin Towers, but also depict over and over again the response of people caught up in or witnessing the events, showing shock, fear, and despair as well as dignity, compassion, and bravery. An author’s note summarizing the events of 9/11 and the losses that day, a bibliography, and source notes conclude this essential volume designed to help children understand the scope of what happened on a day that the adults in their lives will never forget. (Age 8 and older)

**Burleigh, Robert.** *Night Flight: Amelia Earhart Crosses the Atlantic.* Illustrated by Wendell Minor. A Paula Wiseman Book / Simon & Schuster, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-4169-6733-0, \$16.99)

Amelia Earhart became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic in her flight from Newfoundland, Canada, to Northern Ireland in May 1932. Robert Burleigh captures that historic event in this dramatic picture book



account. “It is 3:00 a.m. Hour of drowse and snap-awake. / Hour of white knuckles. / Hour of flame streaming out of the cracked exhaust pipe. / Hour of being tested by the dark gods.” Burleigh and illustrator Wendell Minor take readers into the night, over the ocean, and toward the dawn with Amelia. Minor’s full-page paintings capture sea and sky, star and cloud, and the bright red plane and its solitary pilot, as well as the welcome green landscape of Ireland. “Two thousand and twenty-six miles. Fourteen hours and fifty-six minutes. / Alone.” A brief summary of Amelia’s accomplishments, quotes from her about being a woman pilot, a bibliography and Internet resources are included in the end matter. (Ages 7–10)

**de la Peña, Matt. *A Nation’s Hope: The Story of Boxing Legend Joe Louis*. Illustrated by Kadir Nelson. Dial, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978-0-8037-3167-7, \$17.99)**

Joe Louis’s second encounter with German boxer Max Schmeling frames this account of Louis’s life and rise to boxing fame. As a child, Joe had a stammer and was ridiculed. He found refuge in the ring, where defeat made him work even harder. A hero to African Americans, who “danced his every triumph in the streets,” Joe’s loss in his first fight with Schmeling left “Harlem streets struck silent.” Before the second meeting between Louis and Schmeling, “Word leaked that the Nazis / were filling concentration camps in Europe ... It was now more than just blacks who needed a hero / it was all of America, and color was set aside.” Matt de la Peña’s narrative dances with the grace of a boxer in a ring as it builds to Louis’s victory over Schmeling. Kadir Nelson’s beautifully composed oil on wood paintings make a dramatic, sometimes haunting accompaniment to the words, reflecting the power and dignity of Louis as an athlete and a human being. (Ages 8–12)

**Evans, Shane W. *Underground*. A Neal Porter Book / Roaring Brook Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-59643-538-4, \$16.99)**

“We run. We crawl. We rest.” Spare text and stirring images document the escape of a group of African Americans from slavery. Only a handful of words on each page accompany illustrations that show faces of people moving forward through dark nights in spite of their fear. At times their figures are huddled and hiding from slave hunters; in the end, not everyone makes it. But some do, and author/illustrator Shane W. Evans shows the night sky beginning to brighten, and then faces full of relief emerging into the light of the sun—and of freedom. Literal and symbolic merge in this picture book that evokes powerful feelings. A terrific volume for use with older children, it invites response to the simple statements and powerful illustrations through discussion, writing, or drawing. (Ages 8–12)

**Griffith, Victoria. *The Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont*. Illustrated by Eva Montanari. Abrams, 2011. 28 pages (trade 978-1-4197-0011-8, \$16.95)**

In 1903 when Brazilian Alberto Santos-Dumont predicted the eventual popularity of flying machines, he imagined that they’d bring about the end of war as air travel would make it that much easier to visit other countries and

realize how much all humans have in common. Sadly, his optimistic outlook hasn't been realized, but Alberto did play a vital role in the development of aviation. In November of 1906 in a field outside Paris, he became the first to fly a self-propelled airplane, with a flight of twenty-one seconds. An author's note discusses Alberto's title as the "Father of Flight" versus the achievements of the Wright Brothers: Although the Wrights flew an airplane in 1903, their vehicle required the assistance of a rail system and high winds to lift off the ground, whereas Santos-Dumont's airplane took off under its own power. Santos-Dumont's ebullient personality shines through in a story that also details the invention of the first men's wristwatch by his friend, jeweler Louis Cartier. Cartier developed the wearable watch in order to free both of Santos-Dumont's hands for steering. An impressionistic feel to the art helps capture the place and time of these events, while the tall and narrow book design suggests loftiness. (Ages 4–8)

**Marrin, Albert. *Flesh & Blood So Cheap: The Triangle Fire and Its Legacy*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2011. 182 pages (trade 978-0-375-86889-4, \$19.99)**

On March 25, 1911, a fire broke out on the eighth floor of the Asch Building in Manhattan, where the Triangle Waist Company occupied three floors. Some of the workers on the eighth and tenth floors escaped, but the workers on the crowded ninth floor, mostly young Italian and Russian Jewish immigrants, were trapped by a door that had been locked to prevent workers from leaving early. In all, 146 women died as a result, either from burning or jumping from the ninth floor windows in an attempt to escape the flames. Using many first-person accounts and historic photographs, Albert Marrin provides young readers with a solid background about immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as the sorts of working conditions that led to the tragedy. He also describes the rise of the labor movement and formation of unions prior to the fire and shows how the fire changed public opinion, paving the way for legislation that provided better working conditions, higher wages, and the right to unionize. He concludes with a look at modern-day working conditions overseas and here in the United States where people continue to work in situations not much better than those in the Triangle Waist Company. (Age 12 and older)

**McClafferty, Carla Killough. *The Many Faces of George Washington: Remaking a Presidential Icon*. Carolrhoda, 2011. 120 pages (trade 978-0-7613-5608-0, \$20.95)**

History and forensic science are brought together in a fascinating account of efforts to determine exactly what George Washington looked like at three different ages representing key eras in his life: age 19 (just as he was starting his military career), age 45 (when he was General of the colonial army), and age 57 (when he was elected President). The team of historians, scientists, and artists began working together in 2005, using existing clues (a bust, a life mask, Washington's clothing, his own journal entries, and descriptions of him by his contemporaries) to create their three reconstructions. For each one, Carla Killough McClafferty provides historical context by recounting what was going on in Washington's life at that time, drawing from a combination

of primary and secondary sources. The accompanying illustrations add real depth to the informational narrative, and what ultimately emerges is not just the answer to what Washington really looked like, but the sort of man he was. (Age 11 and older)

**Moss, Marissa. *The Bravest Woman in America*. Illustrated by Andrea U'Ren. Tricycle Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-58246-369-8, \$16.99)**

Young Ida Lewis loved the sea and longed to go with her father, a lighthouse keeper, to check the light. He would only take her if she could row the distance from shore, so the stubborn, determined girl set out to prove she could. “It was slow. It was hard. Her shoulders ached and her hands blistered.” But she did it. From that day on she regularly accompanied him, often rowing to improve her strength and skill. She was fifteen when her family moved to the Lime Rock Lighthouse. When her father became ill, Ida and her mother took over the light, and Ida kept watch for boats in distress. When she saw a sailboat capsize, sending four boys into the ice cold water, Ida enacted a dramatic rescue, rowing out and hauling them all safely into her boat. In an author’s note following this account, Marissa Moss notes this was the first of a number of rescues with which Ida was credited over her lifetime. Moss’s lively narrative is illustrated by Andrea U’Ren, whose illustrations are particularly adept at capturing land- and seascapes. (Ages 5–8)

**Moss, Marissa. *Nurse, Soldier, Spy: The Story of Sarah Edmonds, A Civil War Hero*. Illustrated by John Hendrix. Abrams, 2011. 48 pages (trade 978-0-8109-9735-6, \$18.95)**

The first time Sarah Emma Edmonds tried to join the Union Army as Frank Thompson, she was rejected for being too young. But a month later, “Frank” was accepted into the Michigan Volunteer Infantry. Frank’s skills were equal—and in some cases better—than many men’s, but small feet earned him the nickname “Our Little Woman.” Frank served as a soldier and nurse, and then began to spy behind enemy lines, a role he continued for multiple missions. Marissa Moss’s lively account of this Civil War soldier and spy who passed as a man for the duration of her service recounts Frank’s early days as a soldier and first mission as a spy, posing as a freed slave. Frank’s success was due in no small part to Sarah’s intelligence. Moss’s author’s note providing an overview of Sarah’s life after this story concludes is followed by a list of resources used by Moss and illustrator John Hendrix, and two photographs: one of Sarah Edmonds, and one of Sarah Edmonds as Frank Thompson. (Ages 6–10)

**Nelson, Kadir. *Heart and Soul: The Story of America and African Americans*. Balzer + Bray / HarperCollins, 2011. 108 pages (trade 978-0-06-173074-0, \$19.99)**

“Most folks my age and complexion don’t speak much about the past. Sometimes it’s just too hard to talk about— nothing we want to share with you young folk.” As the unnamed narrator of Kadir Nelson’s stirring work continues, she bares her heart and soul to recount the oral history that’s been passed down in her own family from pre-slavery times to the present day, and

in doing so traces the history of African Americans. The narrative technique gives readers a view of history that is both sweeping and intimate. Every page of text is accompanied by a full-page, hauntingly realistic painting. Some are of well-known historical figures such as Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln, and others are anonymous men and women who represent the scope of African American lives. Each one shows determination in facial expression and body posture, a resolve to move their families forward. The personal story culminates with the elderly narrator voting in 2008 for the man who would become the first African American president. (Ages 8–14)

**Nivola, Claire A. *Orani: My Father's Village*. Frances Foster Books / Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978–0–374–35657–6, \$16.99)**

Appealing details and a sense of delight distinguish author/illustrator Claire Nivola's childhood memories of visiting Orani—the Mediterranean village on the island of Sardinia where her father grew up. “We ran to see a baby newly born to a neighbor, to eat ice cream at a café owned by an uncle, to ask the miller to grind a bag of wheat into flour, to watch the tailor stitch jackets for the shepherds, out of thick velvet ...” A festival, a wedding, and the rituals of mourning are woven into an account that also includes the everyday adventure of roaming the village streets, or watching the women bake in the middle of the night to avoid the day's heat. While Nivola's memories seem gathered from a collection of years, her inviting illustrations set them over the course of a single trip. Her younger self is shown among the people and the places of Orani in images awash in deep blues, sun-drenched whites, and sun-baked reds. Nivola's author's note discusses her family connection to a place that has, she notes, undergone inevitable change since her childhood. (Ages 5–9)

**Phelan, Matt. *Around the World*. Candlewick Press, 2011. 235 pages (trade 978–0–7636–3619–7, \$24.99)**

A quiet, thought-provoking graphic novel traces the journeys of three real-life individuals who traveled around the world at the end of the nineteenth century. Like many, they may have been inspired by Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*, but each singular personality here had his or her own motivating factor for embarking on such an undertaking. In 1884, Thomas Stevens set off on his land journey via bicycle as a means of promoting cycling as more than mere fad. Journalist Nellie Bly set out in 1889, originally as a publicity gimmick to improve newspaper sales; ultimately her journey demonstrated that women were as capable and adventurous as men. Joshua Slocum's 1895 journey was a more personal one. The retired sea captain retraced a journey he had taken a few years earlier with his wife, who had died on the voyage (a story recounted in gold-toned flashbacks). Haunted by her death and disturbed by hallucinations of other seafaring men, from Christopher Columbus to pirates, his journey is by far the most complex one depicted in Matt Phelan's ambitious work as Slocum travels across the seas, and through grief and despair. There's a lot here for teen readers who take the time to travel along, and who will see the contrasts among the three extraordinary voyages. (Age 12 and older)

**Russo, Marisabina.** *I Will Come Back for You: A Family in Hiding During World War II.* Schwartz & Wade, 2011. 36 pages (trade 978-0-375-86695-1, \$17.99)

A little girl learns about the bracelet her Nonna never takes off: Each charm represents a piece of the story telling what happened to Nonna's family, Jews living in Italy, during World War II. They left Rome to stay with friends in the county and be near Nonna's father, who'd been detained nearby by the Nazis. When word came that Jews were going to be sent away, the family escaped with the help of friends. Nonna, her mother, and brother spent most of the war in hiding on a farm. Nonna's father joined the resistance and was later killed. Nonna conveys the events to her granddaughter with honest sensitivity in Marisabina Russo's tender story based on the experiences of her mother, who became a partisan like her husband—the father in the story. Russo provides more details about her mother's real story in an afterword that, along with the family photographs gracing the endpapers, heightens the poignancy of this picture book. (Ages 5–9)

**Sweet, Melissa.** *Balloons over Broadway: The True Story of the Puppeteer of Macy's Parade.* Houghton Mifflin, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-547-19945-0, \$16.99)

Tony Sarg was fascinated by puppets. In 1924, Macy's department store in New York City asked Tony to help put on a parade for their employees, many of whom were immigrants and missed the holiday traditions from their homelands. It was such a hit that Macy's decided to make it an annual Thanksgiving Day event. When Macy's asked Tony to incorporate animals into the parade (live tigers proved too frightening for some parade watchers!), he immediately thought of puppets. Through trial and error, he developed what has become one of the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade's mainstays: the playful, eye-catching, larger-than-life balloons. Melissa Sweet's captivating picture book showcases Sarg's lively mind and creative and mechanical processes. Sweet uses a variety of illustration styles in the delightful, multilayered collage art that includes schematics and plans, photographs of toys she constructed to reflect Sarg's own creations, scenes from Sarg's life, and of course images of the parade balloons bobbing through the streets of New York. A bibliography and source notes; Sweet's own commentary on researching, writing, and illustrating the book; more on Sarg's career and legacy; and even a letter written to Sarg by a young fan round out this singular, inspiring work. *Highly Commended, 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 6–10)

**Thomson, Ruth.** *Terezín: Voices from the Holocaust.* Candlewick Press, 2011. 64 pages (trade 978-0-7636-4963-0, \$18.99)

An account of the concentration camp Terezín (known as Theresienstadt under the Nazis) provides a look at life at the camp chronologically during the war years, drawing heavily on primary source material. Many artists were held in Terezín. Small text vignettes describe various aspects of camp history and camp life, while ample captioned photographs of people and artwork created in the camp deepen readers' understanding. The "official" drawings

and paintings the artists were forced to do for the Nazis showed an ideal camp environment. But many of the artists secretly drew and painted scenes that told the real story. The contrast between these is profound, not only in terms of content, but often in terms of a single artist's stylistic approach. Abundant quotes are part of this visually inviting presentation that also takes a close look at how the Nazis duped the Danish Red Cross into thinking Terezín was a labor camp where prisoners were well cared for. Details about how the Nazis literally staged the Red Cross tour, constructing model housing and parks and feeding selected prisoners in advance so that they could pose along streets designated for the tour, were also the subjects of the artists, who mocked the false reality in revealing works. Ruth Thomson's compelling history concludes with a timeline, glossary, and sources. (Age 11 and older)

**Van Allsburg, Chris. *Queen of the Falls*. Houghton Mifflin, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978-0-547-31581-2, \$18.99)**

In 1901, in an effort to supplement her meager finances, sixty-two-year-old Annie Edison Taylor, a retired charm school teacher, decided to become the first person to go over Niagara Falls in a barrel. Annie assumed she'd reap fiscal rewards for her stunt, and to increase her chances of survival she designed the barrel herself, supervised its construction, and found a manager to promote her daring deed. After her amazing feat in 1901, however, Taylor faced one disappointment after another, from a public seemingly uninterested in a sixty-two-year-old female celebrity to unsavory opportunists looking to capitalize on her accomplishment (e.g., one hired a younger, more attractive woman to pose as Annie; two others stole the barrel). Chris Van Allsburg's tale of derring-do and the sexism and ageism it exposes comes in a beautifully designed package. Full-page black-and-white illustrations brim with marvelous details, not the least of which are the memorable expressions on Annie's face. He elevates her name and her story from the footnote of history with both whimsy and compassion. (Ages 6–10)

**Vaughan, Marcia. *Irena's Jars of Secrets*. Illustrated by Ron Mazellan. Lee & Low, 2011. 36 pages (trade 978-1-60060-439-3, \$18.95)**

Irena Sendler's father was the only doctor who would treat impoverished Jewish patients suffering from typhus in a Warsaw epidemic. He contracted the disease, too, but before he died he told seven-year-old Irena that "if she ever saw someone drowning, she must jump in and try to save that person, even if she could not swim." Irena took those words to heart. As an adult, she smuggled supplies into the Warsaw Ghetto for two years before becoming head of the children's department of Zegota, a secret organization that helped persecuted Jews in Poland escape during World War II. In 1943 Irena was arrested by the German Gestapo and refused to reveal the names of those she helped, or of others who assisted her efforts, despite torture. Sentenced to death, Irena was freed after Zegota officials paid a bribe. In hiding and with an assumed identity, she continued her resistance work throughout the war. Irena buried lists of the children she helped smuggle out of the ghetto—recording both their real and new, false identities—in glass jars. There were

over 2,500 names on the lists by the time the war ended. An afterword tells of the recognition Irena received for her brave deeds, including a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2007. (Ages 7–11)

**Watkins, Angela Farris, Ph.D.** *My Uncle Martin's Words for America: Martin Luther King Jr.'s Niece Tells How He Made a Difference.* Illustrated by Eric Velasquez. Abrams, 2011. 39 pages (trade 978-1-4197-0022-4, \$19.95)

A graceful, intimate text written by the niece of Martin Luther King, Jr., uses King's key ideas (nonviolence, freedom, justice, equality, brotherhood, etc.) to show the impact his leadership had on the United States mid-century. Watkins does an excellent job providing context, using language young readers will understand. Eric Velasquez's realistic illustrations include several portraits of Dr. King, as well as paintings of ordinary Americans engaged in the struggle for Civil Rights and, later on, living out the dream articulated by Dr. King. (Ages 7–11)

## Biography and Autobiography

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**Brown, Monica.** *Pablo Neruda: Poet of the People.* Illustrated by Julie Paschkis. Henry Holt, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-8050-9198-4, \$16.99)

"Once there was a little boy named Neftali, who loved wild things wildly and quiet things quietly." Neftali grew up to become the poet Pablo Neruda. In this picture book account of Neruda's life and work, Monica Brown describe this "poet of the people's" love of small things and big ideas, of people and places in a lyrical narrative featuring scenes from Neruda's life and poems. Brown also shows how Neruda's gift as a poet was matched by his courage in refusing to be silenced when he spoke out against the government and for peace and justice in his native land of Chile, ideas that, like his poems, were embraced by people around the world. Julie Paschkis brings a colorful palette and bold vision to illustrations that incorporate Spanish words into the lush images. (Ages 5–10)

**Fleming, Candace.** *Amelia Lost: The Life and Disappearance of Amelia Earhart.* Schwartz & Wade, 2011. 118 pages (trade 978-0-375-84198-9, \$18.99)

The final minutes of Amelia Earhart's last flight and the search that followed her disappearance are seamlessly integrated with a biographical account of her life in this meticulously crafted volume. In the opening pages, the crew of the Coast Guard cutter *Itasca* stands by to help guide Earhart to Howland Island for refueling during the final segment of her famous attempt to circle the globe. They receive occasional radio messages from Amelia but never establish visual contact. The plane's disappearance and the ensuing search are interspersed throughout the rest of the book, with reports of fleeting radio contact with Amelia and her navigator, Fred Noonan, creating tension

and poignant moments of hope. The account of Amelia's life begins with her privileged childhood and early school days. Her father's growing alcohol use and the family's downward economic slide shadowed her young adulthood. She began flying lessons in 1921 after a brief stint in college. She made her share of mistakes as a young pilot but always demonstrated extraordinary determination and courage. She also understood the importance of publicity and carefully crafted the perception of her image to build ongoing financial support for her endeavors. Amelia Earhart served as an inspiration to many girls and women, encouraging them "to challenge themselves and seize their dreams. And she did it with zest, boldness and courage." (Ages 10–14)

**McCarthy, Meghan. *The Incredible Life of Balto*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-375-84460-7, \$16.99)**

Meghan McCarthy offers a compelling expansion on the usual story of Balto, the sled dog leader of the team that completed the famed delivery of Diphtherium serum to Nome in 1925. From an exhilarating description of the final leg of the serum run, McCarthy goes on to describe Balto's celebrity status after the event (he even starred in a movie!), and then his decline from fame into life as a side-show attraction. Eventually money was raised in a public effort in Cleveland to purchase Balto and his teammates from the sideshow owner. The dogs were donated to the Brookside Zoo, where "Balto could relax and enjoy the rest of his life." A lengthy section in the afterword titled "Detective Work" is a fascinating account of the author's efforts to track down Balto's history and accurate physical description, separating rumor and error from fact. McCarthy's distinctive art style offers up an endearingly googly-eyed Balto, which seems fitting for a dog considered an unlikely choice for a hero. (Ages 5–8)

**McDonnell, Patrick. *Me ... Jane*. Little, Brown, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978-0-316-04546-9, \$15.99)**

Patrick McDonnell's picture book about chimpanzee researcher Jane Goodall as a child depicts her as a curious, scientific-minded young girl whose favorite stuffed animal was a chimpanzee named Jubilee. She took the stuffed chimp everywhere as she explored and carefully observed the natural world of her childhood ... and dreamed of someday going to Africa. McDonnell's spare and skillful text is set against beautiful, soft-toned illustrations that have a sense of playfulness even while conveying Goodall's focus and determination. Occasional double-page spreads represent young Jane's detailed scientific notebook full of drawings and notes. A stirring transition from illustrated story to Goodall's adult life comes with the final page of the story, incorporating a photo of Goodall as a young woman reaching out to touch a real chimpanzee. An author's note about Jane Goodall and a message from Goodall herself round out this distinctive volume. *Winner, 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 5–8)



**Reef, Catherine.** *Jane Austen: A Life Revealed.* Clarion, 2011. 192 pages (trade 978-0-547-37021-7, \$18.99)

Catherine Reef's lively biography of nineteenth-century novelist Jane Austen is a perfect accompaniment to Austen's novels. Reef draws on Austen's letters and other primary and secondary sources to create a portrait that also incorporates discussion of characters and scenes from Austen's fictional works. In doing so, Reef showcases how Austen's books offered sly, perceptive commentary on society and gender even as society and her own gender dictated many elements of her life as an unmarried woman. Source notes and an extensive bibliography round out a volume illustrated with occasional black-and-white reproductions of letters, photographs, and illustrations of early nineteenth-century British life. Teens who have already discovered the wit and wisdom of Austen's writing will appreciate this insightful look at her life and her fictional worlds. (Age 13 and older)

**Robbins, Trina.** *Lily Renée, Escape Artist: From Holocaust Survivor to Comic Book Pioneer.* Illustrated by Anne Timmons and Mo Oh. Graphic Universe / Lerner, 2011. 96 pages (lib. 978-0-7613-6010-0, \$27.27; pbk. 978-0-7613-8114-3, \$7.95)

Lily Renée Wilhelm is a Jewish teen living in Vienna in the late 1930s. As the Nazis take control of her country, her parents are able to get Lily Renée onto one of the last Kindertransports to England. She is placed with her English pen pal's family, but relief is short-lived: Her pen pal's mother is cruel and uncaring, expecting Lily Renée to act like a servant and depriving her of food. Lily Renée runs away, finding work as a nurse's aide in England before emigrating to the United States after the war. There, her interest in and talent for drawing eventually land her a job as a comic book artist. This swiftly moving graphic novel about the early life and start of a female pioneer's career in the comics field will have many teens clamoring to know more about this groundbreaking artist. The end matter comprises short vignettes providing additional historical context for some elements of the narrative (including "The Fighting Femmes of Wartime Comic Books") and photographs of Lily Renée. (Age 12 and older)

**Say, Allen.** *Drawing from Memory.* Scholastic Press, 2011. 64 pages (trade 978-0-545-17686-6, \$17.99)

Allen Say's arresting autobiography focuses on his childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood in Japan, when his desire to be an artist was counter to his father's expectations. After World War II (details of which are notably restrained), Say lived with his grandmother and then, remarkably, in an apartment on his own in Tokyo at age twelve after he was accepted into a private art school. Reading about another young, aspiring artist in the newspaper, Say sought the teen out and ended up meeting not only the boy, Tokida, but his sensei, Noro Shinpei, a noted cartoonist, who became Say's teacher, too. Say details the next three years spent apprenticing with Shinpei and attending art school, a phase of his life that draws to a close, like this book, as he prepares to depart for the United States at age fifteen. Say's fascinating personal history unfolds through both the prose narrative

and the many illustrations, including black-and-white drawings, cartoons, and photographs and full-color paintings and panel illustrations. An author's note includes additional photographs accompanying a narrative in which Say writes more about his relationship with Shinpei, "this man who had become my spiritual father." (Age 10 and older)

**Winter, Jeanette. *The Watcher: Jane Goodall's Life with the Chimps*. Schwartz & Wade, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978-0-375-86774-3, \$17.99)**

Jeanette Winter's quietly alluring picture book account of researcher Jane Goodall's work with chimpanzees in Tanzania pairs a brief, accessible text with lovely, colorful naïve style illustrations detailing scenes from Goodall's life and work. Goodall's passion, patience ("You have to be patient if you want to learn about animals," she wrote), and love for the chimpanzees and the natural world come through strongly in a work that incorporates some of the observations Jane made about her subjects into the narrative ("Jane watched the chimps when they were happy. She saw them hold hands and hug and kiss and laugh—just like us.") Winter's art has a touch of whimsy and a strong sense of Goodall's deep connection to her work. (Ages 5-9)

**Young, Ed. *The House Baba Built: An Artist's Childhood in China*. Text as told to Libby Koponen. Little, Brown, 2011. 48 pages (trade 978-0-316-07628-9, \$17.99)**

An autobiographical picture book offers an account of the artist's childhood growing up in Shanghai during World War II. Knowing that war was pending, Young's father (Baba), an engineer, sought the safest place to build a house, selecting the area of the city closest to the foreign embassies. Since he couldn't afford to buy the land, he made a deal: the house would revert to the landowner in twenty years. The house Baba built was massive, with multiple floors, many rooms, courtyards, gardens, and even a skating rink on the roof. It was a child's paradise for Young and his four siblings. But it was also a safe haven for their extended family, and others as well. The fascinating story is accompanied by amazing art: Richly textured illustrations use a stunning combination of drawing, painting, collage, and photographs, and include some fold-out pages to give a sense of roominess, especially when considered from the perspective of the child Young was. The book concludes with photos of the house today, a timeline, and, best of all, detailed floor plans of the dwelling. (Ages 7-14)

## Contemporary People, Places, and Events

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**Amir. *Zahra's Paradise*. Illustrated by Khalil. First Second, 2011. 255 pages (trade 978-1-59643-642-8, \$19.99)**

Hassan and his mother are searching for Hassan's nineteen-year-old younger brother, Mehdi. He disappeared during the massive public demonstrations in Iran after the rigged elections in 2009. Their search takes them to the morgue, the courts, the frightening Kahrizak Detention Center, and eventually to a secret government plot in Zahra's Paradise, a massive cemetery. As they struggle to cope with uncertainty, fear, and grief, they find support from family, friends, and strangers who challenge the government in ways both subtle and overt. This harsh, eye-opening graphic novel illuminates the fear and oppression that cloud and sometimes pour down upon the lives of citizens in Iran. The creators of this fictional story (writing and illustrating under pseudonyms) drew on the experience of many people, and many real individuals are referenced throughout, including Iranian government officials and victims of government violence. From the opening pages—a vignette showing puppies being bashed and drowned in a sack (a slaughter of the innocents that is visually referenced throughout the story)—the content of this graphic novel is unsettling and mature, including rape by prison interrogators, other violence, and sex. The well-organized back matter provides more information about real people, places, and events referenced, including the 2009 demonstrations, and executions in Iran and elsewhere. It also describes the Omid Memorial Project, which documents the 16,901 individuals killed in Iran since 1979. Every one of those names is listed in small type with tremendous impact on the final pages of a volume providing critical insight for western readers. (Age 16 and older)

**Gerszak, Rafal with Dawn Hunter. *Beyond Bullets: A Photo Journal of Afghanistan*. Annick Press, 2011. 127 pages (trade 978-1-55451-293-5, \$19.95)**

The complexity of photojournalist Rafal Gerszak's feelings about Afghanistan is connected to his experiences there among both soldiers and Afghan civilians. A year spent imbedded with an infantry platoon showed Gerszak the Afghan war from a military perspective. He was among soldiers facing tense, sometimes life-threatening situations, whether the Humvee in which they were riding was under fire from Taliban soldiers, or the platoon was raiding houses suspected to be hiding insurgents. He saw medical personnel doing their best to help anyone in need of aide, whether soldier, Taliban, or civilian. After a brief respite, Gerszak returned to Afghanistan, wanting to spend time among the Afghan people. There he experienced the war—and the country—from a different perspective, seeing people trying to live their lives in spite of the war, or whose lives have been cruelly disrupted because of it. "In spite of everything, Afghans stay strong and hopeful. And as long

as they have stories they want to tell, I'll keep going back." Sidebars provide additional information on elements of Afghan culture, politics, and the conflicts raging there. (Age 11 and older)

**Hodge, Deborah.** *Watch Me Grow! A Down-to-Earth Look at Growing Food in the City.* Photographs by Brian Harris. Kids Can Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-55453-618-4, \$16.95)

Gardening in the city can present unique challenges. But with those challenges come many creative solutions. From backyard chicken coops to rooftop beehives to lush community gardens to the apple tree in the front yard, urban agriculture can thrive. A narrative that begins with a section highlighting different ways and places that food is being grown or raised in the city goes on to describe the rewards of doing so, from eating the tasty results to sharing good food with others. Lively photographs—all taken in Vancouver, British Columbia—show a variety of children engaged in gardening and food-related activities in an appealing, well-organized volume. (Ages 6–10)

**Roth, Susan L. and Cindy Trumbore.** *The Mangrove Tree: Planting Trees to Feed Families.* Illustrated by Susan L. Roth. Lee & Low, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-60060-459-1, \$19.95)

"These are the trees, / Mangrove trees, / That were planted by the sea. / These are the seedlings / That grew into trees, / Mangrove trees, / That were planted by the sea." A cumulative narrative is one dimension of this picture book that tells how a project planting mangrove trees in the village of Hargigo, Eritrea, resulted in vibrant resource renewal. A more detailed narrative on the facing page of each spread describes how the trees were planted and their positive impact on the ecology and economy. They improve air quality. They provide food for animals and habitat for sea creatures, which in turn means food for the people to eat and sell. This inspired account is set against Susan L. Roth's marvelous collage artwork. An afterword illustrated with photographs provides information about Japanese American scientist Dr. Gorton Sato's work helping the people of Hargigo combat hunger with the mangrove tree project. Sato believes mangrove forests are one of the answers to poverty and hunger in the world. (Ages 6–10)

## Issues in Today's World

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**Davies, Nicola.** *Gaia Warriors.* With an afterword by James Lovelock. U.S. edition: Candlewick Press, 2011. 192 pages (pbk. 978-0-7636-4808-4, \$14.99)

A clear explanation of the science of global warming—with terrific metaphors and comparisons related in a conversational tone—grounds this volume profiling people engaged in initiatives that reduce energy consumption or combat global warming. In highlighting a wide variety of

activities—some on a small scale, some on a global scale—author Nicola Davies successfully underscores two things: (1) There is no single solution that will solve the problem of global warming, and (2) Every solution starts with human creativity, which means global warming is a problem that also presents exciting opportunities. The creative thinkers Davies introduces range from a hip fashion designer whose works are made from recycled clothing to a green-design architect to young adults committed to lobbying for political change. Collectively, the profiles underscore that the way we eat, travel, live, dress—in short, everything we do—offers opportunities to think outside the box in this engagingly designed volume. An afterword by “Gaia Theorist” James Lovelock concludes the book on a somewhat grim tone, although Lovelock looks to the distant future with optimism. (Age 11 and older)

**Delaunoy, Angèle. *The Little Yellow Bottle*. Illustrated by Christine Delezenne. Second Story Press, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-1-926920-34-4, \$15.95)**

A remarkably straightforward first-person account tells of two children in an unnamed Middle Eastern nation who are playing soccer in the days following a bombing when one of them picks up a shiny yellow bottle that catches his eye. It turns out to be a bomb, and it explodes. The narrator, Marwa, is injured, but not as badly as her friend Ahmad, who loses a leg and a hand. The tone of the narrative conveys a childlike perception of the dangers of war: “One day, like a cloud of angry wasps, airplanes flew over our houses ... At first, we were terrified. We held our breath. And then, after a few days, as all children do, we forgot a little.” Ahmad “forgot how to smile” when he learns the extent of his injuries. Then a visitor with injuries like Ahmad’s comes to visit. “He told him of his pain, his sorrow, his anger. He also taught Ahmad that having hope and living life to the fullest are more powerful than those yellow bottles.” A purposeful narrative giving readers a sense of the grim reality faced by many children in other parts of the world is accompanied by striking collage illustrations that include a final montage of photos of children who have been injured by bombs. (Ages 7–11)

## Understanding Oneself and Others

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**Katz, Jon. *Meet the Dogs of Bedlam Farm*. Henry Holt, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-8050-9219-6, \$16.99)**

Four dogs live on the Katz farm in upstate New York, and all have important and unique jobs to do. Each dog is introduced in turn as the text describes a bit about its history, personality, and work. Rose herds sheep, Izzy visits sick people, and Frieda guards the farm. At the end of each animal’s section, readers are asked “What is Lenore’s job?” Eventually Lenore takes center stage: she “looks for disgusting things to eat, mud to roll in, and people and animals to love.” Lenore may not have traditional work in the same way as

her canine companions, but she does have a job of “loving and accepting and having patience. And that may be the greatest work of all.” The personality of each dog shines through the excellent color photographs in a book that celebrates the value of all contributions to a society. *Honor Book, 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 4–9)

**Kilodavis, Cheryl. *My Princess Boy*. Illustrated by Suzanne DeSimone. Aladdin / Simon & Schuster, 2011. 28 pages (trade 978-1-4424-2988-8, \$14.99)**

“My princess boy is four years old. He likes pretty things. Pink is his favorite color.” A quietly pointed and affirming text in a mother’s voice describes a little boy who loves wearing dresses and playing princess. The acceptance of the little boy’s family—his mom, dad, and older brother—is not always matched by the acceptance of children and adults around him. “But a princess boy can wear a dress at his school and I will not laugh at him ... Will you laugh at him? Will you call him a name? Will you play with him? Will you like him for who he is?” Cheryl Kilodavis’s story was inspired by one of her own children. Suzanne DeSimone’s fanciful illustrations about a brown-skinned boy lack realism but capture the boy’s joy and pleasure in being himself. (Ages 3–7)

**Matthies, Janna. *The Goodbye Cancer Garden*. Illustrated by Kristi Valiant. Albert Whitman, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-8075-2994-2, \$16.99)**

In January, Janie’s mother is diagnosed with breast cancer. When the doctor says, “We’re working very hard to make her better—probably by pumpkin time,” Janie gets an idea: a garden! “Watching it grow, and eating healthy veggies, will remind us Mom’s getting better.” In February her mom has surgery. In March, they dig the soil and plan what to plant. In April Janie’s mom starts chemotherapy. May brings weather warm enough for planting. Throughout the summer there are ups and downs for Janie’s mom, but the garden takes root and grows. In August, “We celebrated the end of chemo with a picnic and invited everyone who had helped us.” They eat food from the garden, and continue to share its bounty in September, when Janie’s mom has radiation, on into October. By the time the pumpkins are ripe, her mom’s treatments are finally done. Janna Matthies’s picture book offering an upbeat look at a family coping with illness while acknowledging the difficulties faced along the way is based on her own family’s experiences when she was being treated for breast cancer. (Ages 3–8)

**Moundlic, Charlotte. *The Scar*. Illustrated by Olivier Tallec. U.S. edition: Candlewick Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-7636-5341-5, \$14.99)**

“Yesterday, my mom was still alive.” During the night, a little boy’s terminally ill mother has died. Over the course of the coming days, the boy is filled with anger, sadness, and questions. “I know very well that dying means that you’re never going to come back ... How will Dad know how to make my toast the way I like it, cut in half with the honey in a zigzag?” He’s worried about forgetting his mom, he’s worried about taking care of his dad, and he’s worried

his Grandma will think he's crazy after he cries and screams when she opens the windows he closed for fear his mother's smell would disappear. "She's there," his grandma tells him, "in your heart, and she's not going anywhere." A skinned knee that starts to heal provides an understandable metaphor in Charlotte Moundlic's raw, honest look at a child's grief. Illustrator Olivier Tallec's illustrations are spare, tender, and full of feeling. (Ages 4–8)

**Ogburn, Jacqueline K. *Little Treasures: Endearments from Around the World*. Illustrated by Chris Raschka. Houghton Mifflin, 2011. 32 pages (978-0-547-42862-8, \$16.99)**

All around the world, parents use terms of endearments for their children to show how much they love them. In Ethiopia, for example, Amharic-speaking parents call their children *yeinay filiklik* ("my bubble of joy") and in Australia, they are called *lambchop*. Three or four terms of endearment are given for fourteen different nations and languages. For the languages other than English, the terms are given in their native language, accompanied by a pronunciation guide, and written in their native script, if it differs from the Western alphabet. Chris Raschka's paintings show the loving parents looking adoringly at their wide-eyed flower buds, dumplings, and mischievous peas, reinforcing the message that parental love is universal and children everywhere are loved and cherished. (Ages 3–6)

**Reynolds, Peter H. *I'm Here*. Atheneum, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-4169-9649-1, \$15.99)**

"Can you hear it? Voices. Splashes upon splashes of sound. I hear it all like one big noise . . . Boom. Boom. Boom. Boom." A child on a playground sits apart from all of the other children while they play. "They are there. I am here." The child turns a piece of paper into a paper airplane and launches it on an imaginary journey, riding the plane up into the clouds before coming back down to find the other children ready to catch the plane: "We've got you!" Eventually the paper airplane is noticed in the real world by one other child. But one is enough. "I'm here," says the girl's smile." Peter H. Reynolds imagines the interior world and external experience of a child on the autism spectrum—or any child who has felt her- or himself to be an outsider—in this spare, graceful picture book featuring softly colored, uncluttered illustrations surrounded by ample white space. (Ages 4–9)

## The Arts

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**Celenza, Anna Harwell. *Duke Ellington's Nutcracker Suite*. Illustrated by Don Tate. Charlesbridge, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-57091-700-4, \$19.95)**

Composer Billy Strayhorn takes center stage alongside jazz legend Duke Ellington in this dynamic picture book account of the composition and recording of their re-imagined *Nutcracker Suite*. Strayhorn originated the

concept and worked with ideas he and Duke generated together as he wrote. “... don’t forget our cats on bass and drums,” said Duke. “They’ll keep the pulse of our *Nutcracker* jumpin’.” Once the music was composed, Duke and Strayhorn still had work to do convincing the musicians in Duke’s band that this new *Nutcracker* would jive. Movement by movement, they succeeded, creating music “beyond category” as the barriers between classical and jazz dissolved. Anna Harwell Celenza takes readers on a lively and fascinating musical journey in a picture book account set against Don Tate’s expressive illustrations that are filled with energy and movement. Harwell, a musicologist, provides an author’s note making clear that much of the actual dialogue in her account is made up, citing sources for the overall sensibility she sought to capture in this work that comes with a CD. (Ages 6–9)

**Christensen, Bonnie.** *Fabulous! A Portrait of Andy Warhol.* Christy Ottaviano Books / Henry Holt, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978–0–8050–8753–6, \$16.99)

“Wow! See that guy with the wild silver wig and the white white skin?” A picture book introduction to Andy Warhol and his art does a remarkable job providing an overview of his life and explaining how his distinctive style developed. Most page spreads feature a paragraph or two of text on a particular aspect of Warhol’s life and work in a narrative that moves forward chronologically and covers significant periods or turning points (e.g., “Illness, Third Grade,” “High School Years,” “College,” “The ‘Cockroach’ Period,” “Campbell’s Soup Cans”). Warhol’s offbeat approach to both life and art make for fascinating reading in an engaging volume featuring mixed media illustrations that give a strong sense of time and place. A bibliography and timeline, along with an author’s note, conclude this “fabulous” work. (Age 8–11)

**Golio, Gary.** *When Bob Met Woody: The Story of the Young Bob Dylan.* Illustrated by Marc Burckhardt. Little, Brown, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978–0–316–11299–4, \$17.99)

Bob Dylan (born Bob Zimmerman) loved music and was inspired by many different types of songs and singers, from blues to country, Muddy Waters to Hank Williams, Elvis Presley to Odetta, folk to rock ‘n’ roll. He started performing around town, and later at college. But when Bob heard the music of Woody Guthrie and read Woody’s story of traveling and writing songs, “it was like finding the North Star in the night sky.” He hit the road, heading for New York City to meet Woody, who was in the hospital. Bob sang Woody’s songs to Woody, and then sang a song he’d written for Woody himself. “He was ready to blaze a trail of his own, to set down his thoughts and feelings in song.” In an author’s note, Gary Golio discusses the challenges of finding wholly reliable and agreeing accounts of this period of Bob Dylan’s life but concludes, “To learn more about Bob and Woody, just listen to their songs. It’s all there in the music.” Mark Burckhardt’s warm, acrylic and oil illustrations capture significant moments and influences in young Bob Dylan’s life. (Ages 8–11)



**Intriago, Patricia. *Dot. Margaret Ferguson Books / Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978-0-374-31835-2, \$14.99)***

A playful primer on graphic design, or simply lots of fun, Patricia Intriago's picture book showcases the versatility of a simple shape. A yellow dot becomes something new when it changes color to red ("Stop dot") or green ("Go dot"). It becomes an object in motion with the addition of one ("Slow dot") or more ("Fast dot") lines. Alter its size or shape a bit, add a touch of color, remove its shading, or let it multiply, and meanings continue to morph. Younger children will find delight in the suggested meanings in a book that could work for a preschool or early elementary storytime; older children may be fascinated or inspired by the artfulness that goes into these small changes with big results. (Ages 4–10)

**Lyon, George Ella. *Which Side Are You On? The Story of a Song. Illustrated by Christopher Cardinale. Cinco Puntos, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978-1-933693-96-5, \$17.95)***

Florence Reece penned the now-famous pro-union song "Which Side Are You On?" in Harlan County, Kentucky, in 1931 as gun thugs fired bullets into her home and her seven children hid under the bed. George Ella Lyon's inspiring account of these events makes for an informative and dramatic picture book. "My Pa is a miner. Earns our dinner deep in the mountain blasting and loading coal." The young narrator's Pa is also a union organizer. Ma sends word to Pa not to come home when she learns the sheriff is after him. Lyon skillfully and succinctly lays out the reasons for joining a union in the child narrator's voice, which is full of doubt and fear as well as admiration as events unfold. "When the thugs finally quit shooting and we crawl out of hiding we're sore and hungry, and our house is busted up, but Ma has written us a song." Dialogue is incorporated into Christopher Cardinale's striking, digitally colored scratchboard illustrations that heighten the story's emotional power. ("I ain't on any side. I'm under the bed and I want Pa!") An informative author's note, touching on labor history and telling more about the song, and a bibliography round out this stirring work. (Ages 7–11)

**Parot, Annelore. *Kimonos. Chronicle, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-1-4521-0493-5, \$17.99)***

Small Japanese wooden dolls called Kokeshi populate the pages of this irresistible look-and-find picture book. With a "*Konnichiwa*," seven Kokeshi introduce themselves and then invite readers to closely examine the illustrations with an engaging question or observation. Whether it's figuring out which of twelve balconies belong to Yumi's apartment, pondering Sen'Jo's fantastic array of hairstyles, or matching Mizuko and her friends' *yukata* (robes) to their bath towels, these charming illustrations incorporate flap-lifts and die-cuts. Beautiful book design invites readers to a tactile experience, with a lush padded cover sporting eye-catching glossy elements. (Ages 4–9)

**Pinkney, Jerry. *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*. Little, Brown, 2011. 36 pages (trade 978-0-316-05696-0, \$16.99)**

Acclaimed illustrator Jerry Pinkney's richly detailed watercolor illustrations turn a beloved song into a story. Pinkney's images open with a curious chipmunk exploring its world. At first, the "star" that captures its attention is a twirling white seed pod. The blossoms of a flowering tree, a spider's web, and the glow of fireflies are other star-like images it discovers. As the day draws to a close, the chipmunk climbs into its nest and enters a dreamtime fantasy, setting sail in a boat through the darkened sky. Gliding past nighttime creatures and personified clouds and moon, the chipmunk eventually falls overboard, landing in a water lily's starry embrace. A series of underwater encounters concludes with a ride on the back of star-white swan, before a final image shows the chipmunk curled up cozily in its nest, toy boat and white feathers—the stuff of which dreams are made?—tucked alongside. Pinkney has created a mix of wordless page spreads and pages illustrating lyrics from the song in this lovely offering providing children with many opportunities to create their own meaning and make their own discoveries. (Ages 2–6)

**Tonatiuh, Duncan. *Diego Rivera: His World and Ours*. Abrams, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-8109-9731-8, \$16.95)**

Duncan Tonatiuh's picture book account of Mexican painter Diego Rivera's life and work as an artist begins by looking at the painter's education, artistic influences, and desire to make art about and for the people of Mexico. "He wanted to celebrate the things that were special to Mexico and wanted Mexicans, from all distant parts of the land, to learn about their culture and feel proud." Tonatiuh then imagines what Rivera might choose to paint if he were alive today, connecting the possibilities to the art for which he is known. "Would he paint the big city ... as he painted the ancient Aztec city of Tenochtitlán? ... Maybe Diego would paint shops at the mall ... as he painted street vendors selling *flores*." He notes that Rivera's dream of a better future for "the common people" is something the painter celebrated in his art, and today "it is up to us to make our own murals and bring them to life." Tonatiuh's arresting and distinctive visual style is inspired in part by ancient Mexican art. A glossary defines terms relating to art and to Mexican heritage, and an author's note provides more details on Rivera's life, as well as Tonatiuh's own artistic influences. (Ages 6–9)

**Wolf, Gita. *Following My Paint Brush*. Text by Gita Wolf based on Dulari Devi's oral narrative. Illustrated by Dulari Devi. Tara Books, 2011, c2010. 32 pages (trade 978-93-80340-11-1, \$17.50)**

Dulari Devi worked as a cleaning lady for an artist in India. After watching the artist painting, she went home to find "my hands were itching to make something beautiful too." With no paper or paints, Devi used the mud outside her home to make a bird. She was so thrilled that she found the courage to ask the artist if she could learn to paint. "She said ... yes!" Devi began by learning how to hold a paintbrush and draw a line, and went on to master the "rules of painting" in order to create her own original works.

“I couldn’t imagine a single day without painting. It was part of my life.” Devi has gone on to become one of a small number of women artists who have adapted the Mithila style of Indian art, which draws on traditional and Shamanic designs, to depict contemporary themes. Here, an engaging, first-person narrative is accompanied by Devi’s intricate paintings depicting scenes from her life. There is a pleasing sense of color and balance, not to mention a spirited playfulness, in Devi’s distinctive work. “My way of telling stories is through painting, so I’ve painted my story for you here.” (Ages 8–12)

## Poetry

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**Adoff, Arnold. *Roots and Blues: A Celebration*. Illustrated by R. Gregory Christie. Clarion, 2011. 86 pages (trade 978–0–547-23554–7, \$17.99)**

“Each Word a Hammer Hit. Each Word The Solid Tip / of finger hitting squarely on the center of the ivory / yellow piano key.” Poet Arnold Adoff reveals pain and poignancy, strength and stories of African American history and experiences through poems and vignettes that celebrate both blues music and an enduring spirit finding ways to stay alive, survive, and thrive. “Sometimes: / It is only the insistent cry out of the mouth / of this beautiful baby that gives me strength / to turn the other cheek and work to buy the milk” (from “Sometimes”). Adoff’s poems have rhythms that pulse and pierce, glide and surprise. They are accompanied by full-page, full-color paintings by R. Gregory Christie that further illuminate the heart-rending and the hopeful in this masterful work. (Age 12 and older)

**Engle, Margarita. *Hurricane Dancers: The First Caribbean Pirate Shipwreck*. Henry Holt, 2011. 145 pages (trade 978–0–8050-9240–0, \$16.99)**

Margarita Engle recounts the often brutal relationship between indigenous people and conquistadors in a multilayered story built around a Caribbean pirate shipwreck in 1509. Quebrado (the broken one) is a boy of mixed blood—part indigenous Taíno and part Spanish—who was taken from his (Cuban) island home and enslaved. He is on the pirate ship with the captain, Talavera, and the pirate’s hostage, Ojeda, both conquistadors, when it’s caught in a storm. Quebrado is rescued by Naridó, a young fisherman in love with Caucubú, daughter of his island village’s chieftan. Quebrado befriends the young lovers, who run away because the chief has promised his daughter to another. Meanwhile, Talavera and Ojeda make it to the island and are found by the villagers who took in Quebrado. They can’t speak the Taíno language so must rely on Quebrado to speak for them. Quebrado shares his painful history as he speaks to the men’s fate. “After dancing and sphere games / the village cacique is willing / to execute my enemies / or banish them forever. / The choice is mine.” Engle’s poems in multiple voices pulse

with feeling, whether it's the passion of the star-crossed lovers, Quebrado's desire for a place to belong, or the dismissiveness, arrogance, and eventual desperation of the two men who thought they were destined to conquer them all in a story woven from fact and fiction. Only Quebrado is a wholly fictional character. (Age 12 and older)

**Gibson, Amy. *Around the World on Eighty Legs*. Illustrated by Daniel Salmieri. Scholastic Press, 2011. 56 pages (trade 978-0-439-58755-6, \$18.99)**

"When ostrich runs / on two-toed legs, / he speeds across / the grass. / But stretching out / his puny wings, / it's up, UP, and— / alas!" (from "Ostrich"). Playful poems introduce animals, birds, and reptiles unique to various parts of the world. Amy Gibson's poems manage to be both informative and silly, using humor to convey one or two distinguishing facts about each subject. Daniel Salmieri's amusing illustrations are well-matched to Gibson's words. The poems are organized by continent, with a "Menagerie of Facts" at volume's end providing a pronunciation guide and a few more intriguing details about each creature. (Ages 4-8)

**George, Kristine O'Connell. *Emma Dilemma: Big Sister Poems*. Illustrated by Nancy Carpenter. Clarion, 2011. 47 pages (trade 978-0-618-42842-7, \$16.99)**

"Emma copies / everything I do, / and sometimes / I don't do / something / I might do / or really / want to do / because / I know / she is / *always* / watching / every single thing I do" ("Rode Model"). Slice-of-life poems catalog the ups and downs of a sibling relationship from big sister Jessica's perspective. Jessica can be embarrassed or annoyed or angered by Emma, but those moments find balance—in this collection as in life—by Emma's companionship, not to mention her appreciation and even adulation for her big sister. There's a definite sense of story-making as the poems progress, with "Role Model" foreshadowing later events when Emma's desire to be like her big sister results in a broken arm for Emma and a heavy heart for Jess, until her parents reassure her: "It was an accident." Kristine O'Connell George deftly reveals the many sides of a sibling relationship, while the pen-and-ink and digital illustrations by Nancy Carpenter make fine use of facial expressions and body language to extend the feelings expressed in the poems. (Ages 5-9)

**Greenfield, Eloise. *The Great Migration: Journey to the North*. Illustrated by Jan Spivey Gilchrist. Amistad / HarperCollins, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-06-125921-0, \$16.99)**

The Great Migration of African Americans from the South to the North between 1915 and 1930 is the subject of moving poems that chronicle different dimensions of the journey. In "The News," southern Blacks hear about the possibilities for a better life up north. "Goodbyes" features the voices of various individuals bidding farewell to people, places, and attitudes

in the South. (“...Goodbye, / work all day for almost no pay, / enemy cotton fields, trying / to break my back, my spirit”) “The Trip” chronicles the journey by train to northern cities. “Question” asks and then answers if a good life awaits at the end of the journey. “Up North” documents the arrival: “... the people keep coming, / keep coming, keep on coming, / filling up the cities with / their hopes and their courage. / And their dreams.” Author Eloise Greenfield provides an opening commentary explaining the Great Migration, and her closing poem, “My Family,” touches on her own family’s move from North Carolina to Washington, D.C., when she was four months old. The poems are weighted with the emotions associated with goodbyes and new beginnings: sadness, relief, trepidation, and hope. Jan Spivey Gilchrist’s collage artwork blends paintings, news clippings, and photographs in images full of tenderness for her subjects and the gravity and hope that the journey embodies. (Ages 9–14)

**McKissack, Patricia C. *Never Forgotten*. Illustrated by Leo & Diane Dillon. Schwartz & Wade, 2011. 48 pages (trade 978-0-375-84384-6, \$18.99)**

Patricia C. McKissack draws on history and folklore to weave a stirring original tale told through poems about a West African (Mende) child whose father, a gifted blacksmith, raises him after his mother dies during childbirth. The boy’s father calls upon the four elements, Mother Earth, Mother Fire, Mother Water, and Mother Wind, for assistance, and young Mustafa grows well and strong. He is just starting to learn his father’s craft when he disappears while on an errand, captured by slavers. Each of his Mothers uses her powers and gifts to track him across the Middle Passage, but none can rescue him and he is sold. After many years, Wind journeys across the ocean and finds him, now a young man, working for a white blacksmith, making beautiful things with his gift. McKissack’s story resonates with love and loss and grief, and ultimately hope, all of which are echoed in Leo and Diane Dillon’s exquisite illustrations. McKissack describes the origins of her idea as well as the history and folklore elements she drew upon as she wrote a story that “addresses the question all of us who are descendants of the Taken ask: ‘Were we missed?’ I answer with a resounding ‘Yes! We were *never forgotten*.’” (Age 10 and older)

**Myers, Walter Dean. *We Are America: A Tribute from the Heart*. Illustrated by Christopher Myers. Collins / HarperCollins, 2011. 36 pages (trade 978-0-06-052308-4, \$16.99)**

A history of America that acknowledges both the ideal and the imperfections of our nation starts in the voice of a Lakota Indian speaking of the span of time Native peoples have occupied this land, and ends with expressions of the meaning of America for all people and generations. Walter Dean Myers’s narrative can be read as a single poem or multiple offerings, each one exploring a different facet of America from past to present. Myers moves chronologically forward in time as he reveals defining events in the history of a nation still emerging. Christopher Myers’s illustrations appear like murals on each page spread, offering a stunning panorama of the nation’s history juxtaposed with images of who we are today. “And from the tensions, / From

the struggle between conscience / And human frailty / Between the great hope of tomorrow / And the forever hunger of today / We have found our nation.” The opening author’s and illustrator’s notes are as insightful and inspired as the words and images that follow them in a book that offers riches from cover to cover. (Age 12 and older)

**Raczka, Bob. *Lemonade and Other Poems Squeezed from a Single Word*. Illustrated by Nancy Doniger. Roaring Brook Press, 2011. 43 pages (trade 978-1-59643-541-4, \$16.99)**

In this inventive poetry book, author Bob Raczka builds poems around single words. Each poem bears a one-word title, with the letters in the title word rearranged to form new words that comprise the text of the poem. The poem itself describes the object or idea represented by the poem’s title, as in “set is on / I sit” (“Television”) and “fred / finds / ed” (“Friends”). The poems appear twice: first with the letters of each word lined up beneath their corresponding letters in the title, making for visual intrigue but a challenging read, and then, with a turn of the page, in lines that are laid out traditionally from left to right. Nancy Doniger’s spare red, black, and gray illustrations accompany an entertaining and interactive text that will puzzle and delight. (Ages 8–12)

**Rasmussen, Halfdan. *A Little Bitty Man and Other Poems for the Very Young*. Translated from the Danish by Marilyn Nelson and Pamela Espeland. Illustrated by Kevin Hawkes. Candlewick Press, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-0-7636-2379-1, \$15.99)**

“Nails are to pound on / and hammers to pound with / Paths are to walk on / and friends are to walk with / ... Feet are to jump on, / drums are to thump on. / Tiptoes to snoop on, / and potties to poop on!” (from “What Things Are For”) Thirteen silly yet shrewd nonsense poems, reminiscent of Shel Silverstein but for a younger audience, comprise this collection of verse from the late, well-known Danish children’s poet Halfdan Rasmussen. U.S. poet Marilyn Nelson and Pamela Espeland translated them into English, gifting young children here with pleasing word play and humor. Kevin Hawke lends just the right touch of whimsy to illustrations featuring delicate lines and soft bursts of color. (Ages 3–6)

**Wardlaw, Lee. *Won Ton: A Cat Tale Told in Haiku*. Illustrated by Eugene Yelchin. Henry Holt, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-8050-8995-0, \$16.99)**

“Won Ton? How can I / be soup? Some day, I’ll tell you / my real name. Maybe.” A cat given the undignified name Won Ton after he is adopted begins his narrative by describing life at the shelter before he is chosen by a boy and adapts to life in his new home. Lee Wardlaw’s cleverly told story is written as a series of haiku divided into sections that mark the animal’s progress (“The Shelter,” “The Choosing,” “The Car Ride,” “The Naming,” “The Adjustment”). Marvelous details of catlike behavior and attitude are showcased in a story about one particular cat who is thrilled to have found a home and, above all, someone to love. “Eavesdropping, I hear: / ‘My cat.’ Great Rats! Don’t you know / yet that you’re ‘My Boy?’” The slightly comical edge to Eugene Yelchin’s gouache and watercolor illustrations is well matched to Wardlaw’s narrative. (Ages 5–9)

## Concept Books

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**Ada, Alma Flor and F. Isabel Campoy.** *Ten Little Puppies = Diez perritos.* Translated from the Spanish by Rosalma Zubizarreta. Illustrated by Ulises Wensell. Rayo / HarperCollins, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-06-147043-1, \$16.99)

Writing team Alma Flor Ada and F. Isabel Campoy bring to life this traditional Spanish nursery rhyme through a bilingual English/Spanish picture book. A little girl begins with ten puppies of ten different breeds, but one by one they leave the group: One takes off to chase a cat, one comes down with the flu, and another leaves to sing with Juan. The result is one less puppy at the turn of each page. Before long only one is left—the pup that will never go “‘cause he knows I love him so.” Rhyming, repetition, and the inclusion of musical notation make this a rhyme to be sung, and explanations of each puppy offer more information on various dog breeds. Gentle color illustrations by Ulises Wensell accompany this simple yet engaging nursery rhyme. (Ages birth–6)

**Fleming, Denise.** *Shout! Shout It Out!* Henry Holt, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-8050-9237-0, \$16.99)

“Everybody loves to shout. So if you know it, shout it out!” A clever—and noisy!—concept book encourages young children to share what they know as numbers from 1 to 10, the letters of the alphabet, colors, animals, and various vehicles are featured in turn. The vibrant illustrations include a group of diverse, energetic children with wide open mouths. Items represented by pictures, such as individual animals and types of vehicles, are labeled with their corresponding words. A visual subplot shows a little mouse who occasionally pipes up with a quiet comment (distinguished by small type). The penultimate page spread gives Mouse a chance to show his stuff, however, as he shouts out everything one more time in a spirited book for storytimes or lap time (but probably not bedtime). (Ages 2–5)

**Jenkins, Emily.** *Small Medium Large: A Book about Relative Sizes.* Illustrated by Tomek Bogacki. Star Bright Books, 2011. 28 pages (pbk. 978-1-59572-299-7, \$12.95)

Mouselike creatures decked out in brightly colored outfits demonstrate a visual range of relative size, while a rich selection of adjectives spices up the narrative of comparison. “This one is teeny. (Which is short for teeny-weeny.) This one is miniature. This one is minuscule. And this little one is smaller than teeny-weeny, miniature, or minuscule. So small, you might not even notice it. It’s itty-bitty!” Two fold-out pages near the book’s end show the summation of all the different sized creatures end-to-end, creating a poster-sized tower that can only be termed “Colossal!” (Ages 3–6)

**McGuirk, Leslie. *If Rocks Could Sing: A Discovered Alphabet*. Tricycle Press, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978-1-58246-370-4, \$15.99)**

A distinctive and whimsical alphabet concept book uses unaltered rocks that form the shape of each letter and also illustrate the associated word. On the “e is for elephant” page, for example, a rock shaped like a lowercase “e” is shown along with a rock that looks—astonishingly!—like an elephant’s head. Occasional props (the rabbit-shaped rock on the “r is for rabbit” page is nosing an orange carrot) add to the sense of fun in this unusual concept book. (Ages 2–5)

**Murray, Alison. *Apple Pie ABC*. U.S. edition: Disney / Hyperion, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-1-4231-3694-1, \$16.99)**

It’s unusual to find an alphabet book that tells a good story, but together the narrative and artful illustrations in Alison Murray’s picture book do just that. Murray’s stylized prints, in a subdued but striking palette of red, orange, and blue with splashes of yellow, black, and white on cream, show a small girl making an apple pie, and her small black-and-white dog, who longs for a bit, a bite, or every last crumb. Each alphabet letter is presented like a quilt block on a page in which the narrative details the dog’s continuing quest for the coveted pie with a significant word or phrase that starts with the letter featured. When the pie is done, the dog must “[L] leave without it” but later is “[Q] quietly determined” to return. “[Y] yum yum ... [Z] zzzzzzzz ... go to sleep and dream of it.” Terrific word choice in the brief text, and delightful images of the dog in action and his interactions with the often admonishing girl, add to the fun of this handsomely designed, appealing volume. *Honor Book, 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 2–5)

**Young, Cybèle. *Ten Birds*. Kids Can Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-55453-568-2, \$16.95)**

A visually striking black-and-white book showcases counting backwards, problem-solving, and thinking outside the box. Ten birds are trying to cross a river (and no, using their wings never occurs to them). The first nine birds each come up with a technical solution: a parasail, a wheel-and-pulley, mechanical wings, a catapult, and more. As each bird gets to the other side, the number of birds still waiting to go is highlighted in a narrative that also identifies the bird by its given name: “The one they called ‘Brilliant’ knew how to cross. Marching [on stilts] he left nine behind.” Finally, there is only one bird left. His name is “Needs Improvement.” And his solution is elegantly simple: He simply walks across the bridge that all the others have ignored. The intricate black pen-and-ink illustrations manage to be both serious and playful in this oversize picture book that not only affirms there are many different ways to arrive at a single destination but also illuminates the shortcomings of labels when it comes to identifying ability or potential. (Ages 4–9)



## Picture Books for Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers

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**Atinuke. *Anna Hibiscus' Song*. Illustrated by Lauren Tobia. U.S. edition: Kane Miller, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-61067-040-1, \$15.99)**

“Anna Hibiscus lives in Africa. Amazing Africa.” And she is feeling happy, “so happy, she almost floats out of the tree” in which she is sitting. Anna asks the members of her large and loving extended family what to do with all her happiness, and as she acts on each suggestion her happiness grows and grows. But only when Anna is sitting quietly in the tree again does she come up with something that is her own special way of expressing happiness: Her feelings pour out in a happiness song. Author Atinuke offers up an ebullient picture book story featuring the little girl she first introduced in the newly independent reader *Anna Hibiscus* (U.S. edition: Kane / Miller, 2010), set in a distinct but unspecified African nation. Lauren Tobia’s joyful illustrations reflect specific details of contemporary life in Africa for this biracial (Black/white) child. (Ages 3–6)

**Balouch, Kristen. *The Little Little Girl with the Big Big Voice*. Little Simon / Simon & Schuster, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-4424-0808-1, \$12.99)**

Bright, distinctively stylized illustrations perfectly convey the dynamic volume of this picture book’s young protagonist. The little girl “came upon an elephant blowing bubbles in the water. But *something* scared the elephant away.” It’s the little girl’s big voice, which also scares a snake and a crocodile, but when she encounters a lion the little girl meets her match! Not to worry, though. The lion just roars, which makes the little girl laugh, and the two play until day’s end. Author/illustrator Kristen Balouch uses color, shape, and composition to marvelous effect, with bright, bold arcs of color radiating from the girl’s wide pink mouth when she’s loud, and the same mouth a slim pink crescent when she isn’t. The unusual palette and energetic design of this refreshingly *uncautionary* tale is a celebration of a small girl’s big way of being in the world. (Ages 2–5)

**Battut, Éric. *Little Mouse’s Big Secret*. U.S. edition: Sterling, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-1-4027-7462-1, \$12.95)**

Mouse is excited to find a small red fruit and decides to keep it a secret, burying it in the ground. Bird is the first to ask what he’s hiding. “It’s my secret and I’ll never tell,” Mouse answers. Turtle, Hedgehog, Rabbit, and Frog ask in turn what Mouse is hiding, and his reply is always the same. But something does change with each turn of the page in this beautifully designed picture book: A seed inside the fruit Mouse buried sprouts and begins to grow. A seedling becomes a small tree that grows branches, sparse leaves become a full green canopy, and ripe fruit appears. Mouse, whose back is to the growing tree, is oblivious to all that’s taking place behind him until apples start falling. “‘Uh-oh! My secret is out!’ But sometimes ... secrets are even better when you share them.” Éric Battut’s spare, simple text is a perfect

match for the small figures and delicate whimsy of his visual storytelling in an understated picture book that invites young children to participate. They can join in on Mouse's repeated refrain, and no doubt they will notice and discuss—with delight!—the tree taking shape behind Mouse. (Ages 3–6)

**Bently, Peter. *King Jack and the Dragon*. Illustrated by Helen Oxenbury. U.S. edition: Dial, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978–0–8037-3698–6, \$17.99)**

“Jack, Zack, and Caspar were making a den—a mighty great fort for King Jack and his men.” Three children—two preschoolers and one barely toddling—engage in extended imaginary play in this whimsical picture book that has them turning everyday objects into the stuff of which royal adventures are made. The king and two knights fight dragons, giants, and beasts until ... “a giant came by and went home with Sir Zack ... Then another giant came and took Caspar to bed.” Left alone, King Jack finds his courage waning as the daylight fades and the sound of a dragon draws nearer: “Mommy! Dad! Help!” Peter Bently's already sprightly narrative is enhanced by terrific illustrations. No one draws children like Helen Oxenbury, who wonderfully depicts their small, stalwart bodies in action, as well as the amusingly scary creatures of their imagination. (Ages 2–5)

**Bernhard, Durga. *While You Are Sleeping: A Lift-the-Flap Book of Time Around the World*. Charlesbridge, 2011. 20 pages (trade 978–1–57091–473–7, \$14.95)**

Author/illustrator Durga Bernhard explores the concept of time zones through this colorful and interactive lift-the-flap book. Describing daily activities—getting dressed, dozing, washing, climbing a tree, watching the sun rise, reading at bedtime and going to sleep—Bernhard compares what children in countries around the world are doing at the same moment. “While you are carrying, someone is walking home with a friend.” This statement spanning a page spread is accompanied by a large circular image of a child in Nigeria at 9 a.m. carrying bread and fruit in her arms, while a smaller circular flap illustration shows two children walking down a road in Japan. Lifting the flap reveals a close-up of the two Japanese children and a clock showing the time in Japan: 5 p.m. Maps clearly identify each country in which the children live. The second country on each spread becomes the first country on the subsequent one, so that the narrative is linked from one place—and child—to the next. This circularity, represented both visually and textually, imparts a logical sequence to the narrative, with a beginning and end at bedtime in Alaska. Bernhard's vibrant illustrations connect children from around the world in this engaging read-aloud. (Ages 3–6)

**Bitterman, Albert. *Fortune Cookies*. Illustrated by Chris Raschka. Beach Lane, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978–1–4169-6814–6, \$14.99)**

A little girl receives a box in the mail with seven fortune cookies. “On Sunday my fortune said: ‘Today you will lose something you don't need.’ ... My tooth came out!” She opens a cookie each subsequent day of the week, and each time the fortune comes true. “Try to find the good with the bad,” says her fortune on Tuesday, and she loses her kite (bought with

tooth fairy money) but finds a cat. Each double-page spread features a life-size fortune cookie with a pull-tab that reveals the fortune inside. And each of the fortunes foreshadows another event in the story of the little girl's week—a story of things lost, things found, and unexpected surprises, all interconnected in a full-circle tale. Albert Bitterman's whimsical days-of-the-week concept book features a strongly patterned text and expressive, beautifully understated watercolor illustrations by Chris Raschka. *Highly Commended, 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 3–6)

**Clement, Nathan.** *Job Site.* Boyds Mills Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-59078-769-4, \$16.95)

A simple, appealing picture book shows different machines engaged in work at a construction site. Page spreads alternate between an African American foreman giving a simple command (“Boss says, ‘Dump some gravel here’”) and various machines carrying out the desired action (“And the dump truck lifts its bed and dumps its gravel”). When the job is finally done, “the bulldozer, excavator, loader, dump truck compactor, mixer, and crane roll away to the next job site.” Each of the tantalizing machines fills the span of the page spread on which it is featured in colorful, computer-rendered illustrations. A final image shows people enjoying the pond, fountain, and tower that were being built. (Ages 2–5)

**Costello, David Hyde.** *Little Pig Joins the Band.* Charlesbridge, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-58089-264-3, \$14.95)

Little Pig suffers the fate of being the youngest in his family, and he doesn't like it. As a matter of fact, he doesn't even like being called Little Pig (his name is Jacob). A familiar scenario plays out when Grandpa unpacks his old marching-band instruments: Little Pig is too little to play the drum, the trombone, the trumpet, and especially the tuba. His older siblings seem to be running the show as they practice the instruments, until an unfortunate musical move causes chaos when they tumble over one another. Little Pig astutely assesses the situation and takes on the role that is missing: a band leader. Under Jacob's confident direction, the band marches on. The brief text highlights Little Pig's frustration, a feeling common to young children everywhere, and provides a clever resolution. Dialogue incorporated into the fresh ink and watercolor art adds an extra layer of interest to this upbeat tale. (Ages 2–5)

**Craig, Lindsey.** *Farmyard Beat.* Illustrated by Marc Brown. Alfred A. Knopf, 2011. 28 pages (trade 978-0-375-86455-1, \$15.99)

The sun has set, but this farmyard full of animals is anything but sleepy. Why? They can't stop dancing because they've got that beat. It all starts with the chicks, which are soon joined by the sheep, cat, cows, dog, and finally Farmer Sue herself. The tireless crew rocks to the irresistible rhythm, eventually waking rooster, who gets the beat just as the sun rises. A repetitive refrain employs sound effects from peeps to woofs that are sure to invite listener participation. Boldly colored, stylized illustrations using hand-painted papers and collage add to the fun. (Ages 18 months to 5 years)

**Crum, Shutta. *Mine!* Illustrated by Patrice Barton. Alfred A. Knopf, 2011. 28 pages (trade 978-0-375-86711-8, \$16.99)**

A familiar and repeated refrain of early childhood is the inspiration for this hilarious picture book. A toddler stakes claim to almost every toy surrounding its younger sibling with a simple declaration: "Mine. Mine. Mine." The baby is nonplussed. The same can't be said for the toddler after the baby has the audacity to pick up one unclaimed item. "Mine!" the toddler proclaims. The other toys in the toddler's arms go flying in an attempt to grab it. A small dog gives chase. Oh-oh ... Oh! What fun! It's a gleeful, not quite wordless romp in which illustrator Patrice Barton provides much of the narrative through images of the baby/toddler/dog/toy frenzy. Toys are dumped in the dog's water bowl, then thrown for the dog, who chases them joyfully, to the children's delight. But author Shutta Crum brings the story full circle with a twist as the baby takes its first toddling steps and throws its arms around the toddler at story's end: "Mine!" The sibling interactions ring wonderfully true in this delightful outing. (Ages 2-4)

**Cunnane, Kelly. *Chirchir Is Singing.* Illustrated by Jude Daly. Schwartz & Wade, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-375-86198-7, \$17.99)**

Chirchir starts the day eager to help Mama at the well. "But—oh-ohh! The rope slips, water splashes, Chirchir sprawls. 'Little one, this work is not for you,' says Mama." Chirchir helps Kogo make a fire. "But—oh-ohh! The fire leaps too high ... 'Littlest granddaughter, this work is not for you.'" Chirchir approaches each new task with a ready song and willing heart, but each time she is sent away after a mishap. Dejected, she returns home to discover baby brother Kip-rop crying. This time, "Chirchir's soft sweet sound soothes Little Brother." Kelly Cunnane's musical narrative is full of pleasing elements, from lyrical language to judicious use of repetition to a consistently childlike perspective. Jude Daly's folk art illustrations match the grace and flow of the story with their gently curving lines and soft, soothing palette. In an author's note, Cunnane specifies that Chirchir and her family are members of the Kalenjin tribe and their daily routines are typical of a contemporary Kelanjin family living in the western highlands of Kenya's Great Rift Valley. (Ages 3-7)

**Cyrus, Kurt. *The Voyage of Turtle Rex.* Harcourt, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-547-42924-3, \$16.99)**

"Deep in the dunes of a long-ago shore, / the leathery shell of a turtle egg tore. / Out popped a flipper. Then two. Then four. / They scabbled and scooped, and scabbled some more." The little hatchling, a primeval sea turtle called an archelon, soon scuttles from the beach to the water of its ocean home. Evading underwater predators, the archelon grows to its adult weight of two tons, and eventually returns to the beach where she was born to lay her own eggs. The archelon is extinct, but its characteristics are still evident, as "shells of all fashions continue to girdle / the middle of many a tortoise and turtle." A rhyming and repetitive text with an easy flow conveys equal parts entertainment and information. Oversize pages with boldly outlined illustrations add drama to the ancient creature's story. (Ages 3-8)

**de Roo, Elena. *The Rain Train*. Illustrated by Brian Lovelock. U.S. edition: Candlewick Press, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-0-7636-5313-2, \$15.99)**

“When the rain fingers drum out a dance on the pane, / When the windows are foggy enough for my name, / A pitter-pat-pat, a pitter-pat-pat, / A pittery-pittery-pittery-pat.” A brown-skinned boy imagines that the rain on his window is a train arriving in his neighborhood. All the children emerge from their homes and climb on board for a journey that surely owes at least some of its inspiration to Chris Van Allsburg’s *Polar Express*. Author Elena deRoo makes this a story all her own with a sound- and rhythm-rich narrative that masterfully uses onomatopoeia. Brian Lovelock capitalizes on a dark, colorful nighttime palette as the fanciful, soothing story plays out in lovely illustrations that feature a diverse group of children. “Storm past the stations, no one alights. / Safe in my sleeper, I steam through the night. / Sshhhhhhhhh.” (Ages 2–5)

**Dunklee, Annika. *My Name Is Elizabeth!* Illustrated by Matthew Forsythe. Kids Can Press, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-1-55453-560-6, \$14.95)**

Elizabeth loves her name—in its entirety. She likes that it has nine letters. She likes that there is a queen named after her. And she likes “all the neat things my mouth does when I say it.” Fed up with those who dare to call her Lizzy, Liz, Beth, or Betsy, Elizabeth finally declares in no uncertain terms exactly what she wants to be called in Annika Dunklee’s amusing picture book story. Matthew Forsythe incorporates additional humor into illustrations showing Elizabeth, her family, her pet duck, and all the hapless individuals who learn to call her by her given name. His distinctive aqua, orange, and white palette is perfect for illustrating this book about a singular, spirited girl. (Ages 3–6)

**Durand, Hallie. *Mitchell’s License*. Illustrated by Tony Fucile. Candlewick Press, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978-0-7636-4496-3, \$15.99)**

With dad playing the role of a car, Mitchell’s nighttime routine starts with inspecting the tires (dad’s feet) and checking the engine (dad’s belly), before hopping into the driver’s seat (on dad’s shoulders). After cleaning the spotty windshield (dad’s glasses), Mitchell and his car zoom around the house on their way to Mitchell’s bed. Sometimes Mitchell does a little extra maintenance before he takes off, and sometimes the car conks out before Mitchell’s ready to stop, or puts its foot down when Mitchell tries to take things too far (no fill-up—cookies—right before bedtime), but all-in-all, Mitchell is one happy camper ... er, driver, in Hallie Durand’s warm, funny, spirited picture book about a parent and child engaged in imaginary play. (Ages 2–5)

**Ehlert, Lois. *Rrralph*. Beach Lane, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-4424-1305-4, \$17.99)**

“I bet you won’t believe me, but our dog can talk.” Lois Ehlert’s playful picture book about a black-and-white pooch is doggedly humorous, with silliness perfect for the toddler and preschool set. What is the dog’s name? “Rrralph Ralph.” Where does he sit? “Roof Roof” (of his doghouse). What’s on the tree where the birds can be found? “Bark Bark.” Ehlert’s

smile-inducing narrative is paired with whimsical illustrations made from a variety of items, including zippers, wood, buttons, twine, hand-painted and handmade papers, and more. Almost every page spread features exuberant Ralph frolicking (or sitting, or climbing) in a composition set against a brightly colored background. Carefully composed and crafted, the illustrations look deceptively simple and will surely inspire some kids to create their own waggish art projects from torn or cut paper and found objects. (Ages 2–5)

**Evans, Kristina.** *What's Special about Me, Mama?* Illustrated by **Javaka Steptoe.** **Jump at the Sun Books / Disney, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-7868-5274-1, \$16.99)**

An affirming, purposeful picture book is told through dialogue between a mother and child, who asks, “What’s special about me, Mama?” For each thing the mother names—amazing eyes, beautiful skin, springy hair, joyful laugh, helpful hands, and more—the child counters with a reason why he doesn’t think it makes him special. His skin, for example, is just like Daddy’s. His hair is just like Grammy’s. And his helpful hands are “too little to use the stove. I can only mix.” He even thinks the hugs and kisses his mother finds so wonderful are only little things. But, she points out, they are “two of God’s greatest gifts.” Finally, she notes, “What makes you special, Love, is that you are loved more than anybody in the whole wide world—by me!” Kristina Evans’s warm narrative is set against Javaka Steptoe’s joyful images of a dark-skinned mother and a freckled, light-skinned African American boy. (Ages 3–8)

**George, Lucy M.** *Back to School Tortoise.* Illustrated by **Merel Eyckerman.** **U.S. edition: Albert Whitman, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-0-8075-0510-6, \$15.99)**

A tortoise starting school worries about what might go wrong. “What if ... he tripped and fell? Or he didn’t like lunch? Or the kids were mean to him?” But the tortoise considers the positive possibilities, too. “What if ... it was fun?” The potential for delight outweighs the potential for disaster, and the tortoise enters the classroom. That’s when an already charming story takes an unexpected and hilarious turn: It turns out kids aren’t the only ones with first-day jitters. Lucy M. George’s witty twist on a typical back-to-school theme gains additional charm with Merel Eyckerman’s blithe illustrations. (Ages 3–6)

**Goodrich, Carter.** *Say Hello to Zorro!* **Simon & Schuster, 2011. 36 pages (trade 978-1-4169-3893-4, \$15.99)**

Mister Bud is a contented dog. His life is defined by routine and predictability, just the way he likes it. From Wake-Up Time through Nap Time (followed by Shift-Position-and-Nap-Some-More Time) to Greet and Make a Fuss Time, all the way to Movie, Then Bed Time, Mister Bud and his humans stick to the schedule without exception. That is, until the day Greet and Make a Fuss Time is altered by the arrival of a stranger: Zorro. Zorro and Mister Bud are immediately hostile to one another and the results are predictable. Bossiness,

grumpiness, snapping, and barking ensue. The milestone moment of their relationship occurs the day both dogs simultaneously reach an epiphany: they have the same schedule! Walks, naps, and even bed become Better Times when shared with a friend. Mister Bud and Zorro are hysterical, both in the words and art, with larger than life personalities that leap from the page. (Ages 3–6)

**Gormley, Greg. *Dog in Boots*. Illustrated by Roberta Angaramo. Holiday House, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-0-8234-2347-7, \$17.95)**

After reading *Puss in Boots*, a small, gregarious dog goes in search of fine footwear. A helpful shopkeeper has just what he wants. “But the new boots were not at all splendid or magnificent for digging ... So dog took them back to the shop.” Dog asks for something he can dig in, and the shopkeeper suggests rain boots. Perfect! But they fill up with water when dog goes for a swim. “Dog took them back to the shop.” And so it goes. The dog gets flippers for swimming, but can’t dig in them. High heels for digging, but then he can’t go fast. And the skis he tries don’t work at all—there isn’t any snow. Finally, dog recites the list of everything he’s looking for in the perfect footwear. And the shopkeeper has the perfect solution: paws! Greg Gormley’s pleasingly silly picture book story will make a terrific preschool read-aloud, and Roberta Angaramo’s appealing illustrations add to the fun. (Ages 2–5)

**Griffin, Molly Beth. *Loon Baby*. Illustrated by Anne Hunter. Houghton Mifflin, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-547-25487-6, \$16.99)**

“In the great north woods / by a little round lake / in a soft, warm nest / a baby loon lived with his mother.” When the little loon’s mother goes off in search of food one evening, the baby bides his time. “...he waited / and floated / and paddled in circles. The breeze ruffled his fluff.” He doesn’t know how to dive—although he tries. He does know how to imagine: Maybe his mother met a moose. Maybe she had an encounter with a snapping turtle. Why has she been gone so long? Tired and hungry, he decides to paddle home to their nest, but which way is home? Debut author Mary Beth Griffin’s finely paced, lyrical story builds to a dramatic intensity of feeling when the forlorn baby cries out in despair. But hope and happiness are just a turn of the page away in a picture book that ends with a joyful reunion, a triumphant milestone, and a return to the loving comfort of home. This quietly charged story about a universal childhood anxiety is winningly illustrated by Anne Hunter. Her captivating watercolor and ink illustrations inspire tenderness and heighten emotions from the first page to the last. (Ages 2–5)

**Henkes, Kevin. *Little White Rabbit*. Greenwillow Books / HarperCollins, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-06-200642-4, \$16.99)**

As Little White Rabbit hops through various settings, he speculates what it would be like to emulate the objects and scenes he encounters. High grass makes him wonder about being green; fir trees make him wonder about being tall; a rock makes him wonder about being unable to move. After each page of text describing Little White Rabbit’s wonderings, a corresponding two-page spread shows him being or doing each of the things that sparked

his curiosity. An encounter with butterflies is followed by a page spread in which Little White Rabbit lifts off the ground as his ears flap rapidly like wings—a scene full of charm and child appeal. When he returns home, Little White Rabbit doesn't need to wonder who loves him: An adult rabbit is waiting to welcome him. Kevin Henkes combines the simple text of a childlike voice with soft pastels to illustrate the power of imagination, and the comfort and safety a child feels from the unconditional love of an adult. (Ages 2–5)

**Jocelyn, Marthe. *Ones and Twos*. Illustrated by Nell Jocelyn. Tundra Books, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-1-77049-220-2, \$15.95)**

A minimalist text uses few words to great effect, as illustrations and text work together in an exploration of number concepts “one” and “two.” A mother bird with her filled nest and a girl walking alone are paired with the description “One bird, two eggs, / One girl, two legs.” The girl and a friend spend time together on the following pages, flying kites (“one cloud, two kites”) and sharing a snack (“one bun, two bites”). Their paths intersect with the mother bird, as “One swoops, two walk, / One sings, two talk.” The number order reverses for the remainder of the book, with the bird flying off (“Two wave, one flies”) and the friends sharing the feather gift she leaves behind (“Two share / one prize”). Charming collage art and a cozy size contribute to the intimate ambiance. (Ages 2–5)

**Judge, Lita. *Red Sled*. Atheneum, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-4424-2007-6, \$16.99)**

“Scrinch scrunch scrinch scrunch scrinch scrunch.” The spare narrative of this delightful picture book is composed entirely of sounds. The story unfolds through author/illustrator Lita Judge's bold, whimsical pencil and watercolor illustrations, which open with a boy crossing a snowy expanse toward a cozy-looking home. He leaves his red sled propped against the house when he goes inside. A big brown bear can't resist the sled's appeal and borrows it for a moonlit outing. But other animals can't resist either, and eventually the bear, a moose, a rabbit, a possum, two raccoons, a porcupine, and a mouse plummet down the snowy hills—one big pile of fun on the small red sled (“Wheeeeeeeeeee”)! (Ages 2–4)

**Kimura, Ken. *999 Tadpoles*. Illustrated by Yasunari Murakami. Translated from the Japanese. U.S. edition: NorthSouth, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978-0-7358-4013-3, \$16.95)**

The 999 tadpoles introduced on the first page spread quickly become 999 young frogs whose small pond has become far too crowded. “We can't move! ... We can't breathe! ... Don't push!” The long line of young frogs (sometimes identifiable as amphibians, sometimes represented by green dots on the page) follows Mother and Father in search of a bigger pond. “When will we get there? ... I'm hungry ... I'm tired.” The search is long and fraught with danger: first a snake (“Run for your lives!”), then a hungry hawk, who snatches Father. Mother grabs on, trying to save him, and the 999 young frogs grab on trying to save them both. “Wheeeee!” The hawk is thrilled



to have a year's worth of dinner in its talons, until the load gets too heavy. "Splash! ... Mother and Father and 999 young frogs fell into a pond. A BIG pond." A story originally published in Japan features playfully appealing text and illustrations that are rendered with deft use of simple shapes, line, and color. (Ages 3–6)

**Kohuth, Jane. *Estie the Mensch*. Illustrated by Rosanne Litzinger. Random House, 2011. 28 pages (trade 978–0–375–86778–1, \$16.99)**

Estie prefers animals to humans. In fact, she is so shy that she pretends to be an animal whenever she's around people, a behavior that frequently causes her parents and grandmother to remind her to "be a mensch," a word that means *person*, specifically a good one, in Yiddish. But Estie finds reasons to be animals instead wherever she goes. She pretends to be a chimpanzee at the grocery store, a seagull at the beach, and an octopus at the swimming pool. When her grandma takes Estie to the zoo with her friend and her friend's grandson, Estie's animal imitations delight and entertain little Petie, much to Estie's surprise. This inspires her to do something nice for Petie, prompting her grandma to say, "She's a real mensch." The whimsical stylized illustrations underscore the childlike humor of a well-paced story about a singular child who has figured out an unusual way to cope with shyness. (Ages 3–7)

**Könnecke, Ole. *Anton Can Do Magic*. Translated from the German by Catherine Chidgey. U.S. edition: Gecko Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978–1–877467–37–0, \$17.95)**

Convinced he can do magic when he puts on his orange turban, Anton goes from excitement to alarm after making first a bird and then a boy disappear. In truth, the bird and boy only moved when Anton's too-big turban fell over his eyes. But Anton's concern—where did the boy go?—leads him to conclude he turned the boy into a bird. Now what should he do? The interplay between Ole Könnecke's simple, straightforward narrative and the pleasing, cartoonlike illustrations showing what is really happening makes for a funny story that is all the more pleasing when it reaches a surprising and satisfying resolution. (Ages 3–6)

**Levine, Arthur A. *Monday Is One Day*. Illustrated by Julian Hector. Scholastic Press, 2011. 28 pages (trade 978–0–439–78924–0, \$16.99)**

Parents and children in five distinctive families count off the days from Monday through Friday as each parent leaves for a 9-to-5 job. Everyone looks forward to the weekend when they can be together for some quality time. A rhyming text reassures young children that parents love them and think about them even when they are apart, and all of the "fun day" Sunday activities reiterate the small gestures of affection we have seen throughout the week. The colorful illustrations show a variety of families, including a single mom, a single dad, gay dads, a mom and dad, and grandparents as primary caregivers, and a family with twins. (Ages 2–4)

**Martin, Bill, Jr. *Ten Little Caterpillars*. Illustrated by Lois Ehlert. Beach Lane, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-4424-3385-4, \$17.99)**

Ten little caterpillars make their way through the world as enumerated in this simple story. One wriggles up a flower, another climbs a cabbage head, and yet another is taken off to school inside a jar. The last in the series achieves its goal after it “scaled an apple tree . . . / and hung there patiently . . . / until by and by, the tenth little caterpillar . . . / became a butterfly.” Ehlert’s trademark vibrant watercolor collage illustrations meticulously document each insect’s activity, and in five concluding pages identifies the ten types of caterpillar and what each eats, and shows all in both larval and butterfly forms. (Ages 18 months to 4 years)

**Messner, Kate. *Over and Under the Snow*. Illustrated by Christopher Silas Neal. Chronicle, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978-0-8118-6784-9, \$16.99)**

“Over the snow I glide past beech trees rattling leftover leaves . . . Under the snow, a tiny shrew dodges columns of ice; it follows a cool tunnel along the moss, out of sight.” As a girl skis through the woods with her dad, she reflects on the many creatures that are busy—or not—beneath the snow: a vole searches for food, a bullfrog sleeps, a mouse scuttles along under a drift while a keen-eared red fox above the ground gets ready to pounce. These and other revelations in Kate Messner’s exploration of the often unseen activity of the winter world are set against Christopher Silas Neal’s lovely mixed media illustrations showing both the human and nonhuman activity the girl describes. Neal beautifully evokes the winter woods with his subdued palette and stylized images that are reminiscent of woodcut prints. (Ages 3–7)

**Moore, Inga. *A House in the Woods*. Candlewick Press, 2011. 42 pages (trade 978-0-7636-5277-7, \$16.99)**

A group of animal friends (two pigs, a bear, and a moose) decide to build a house big enough for all of them to live together. They bring in Beaver Builders (the Beavers request payment in peanut butter sandwiches), and work begins with everyone pitching in. Walls go up, windows and doors are fitted, and a trip to the junkyard yields everything needed inside. Inga Moore’s whimsical picture book is light on plot but heavy on charm. Cozy, appealing illustrations invite young readers and listeners right into the forest clearing where the timber house rises. The soft, soothing palette of the art is a perfect match for a quietly detailed narrative, and both words and pictures offer a few delightful surprises. A picture book perfectly pitched for bedtime sharing ends with the four friends snugly ensconced in their new home. “Good night, Bear. Good night, Moose. Good night, Little Pigs.” (Ages 2–5)

**Morales, Melita. *Jam & Honey*. Illustrated by Laura J. Bryant. Tricycle Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-58246-299-8, \$15.99)**

While gathering berries in excited anticipation of making jam, a little girl encounters a bee. She’s scared but follows her Mama’s advice: “. . . hold still, they will fly away. Bees want nectar, so I’ll be okay!” Perspective shifts in the second half of the book from the girl to the bee. Collecting nectar all on her own, the bee worries about the people she might come upon. Fortunately,

her mama has instructed her, too: "... fly high, they will move away. People want berries, so I'll be okay!" Both girl and bee successfully gather their goods while defusing their fears and figuring out how to peacefully co-exist. Repeated refrains urge listeners to chime in, while gentle watercolor illustrations extend the mood of safety and celebrate a job well done. (Ages 3–6)

**Raschka, Chris. *A Ball for Daisy*. Schwartz & Wade, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-375-85861-1, \$16.99)**

A wordless picture book begins with a black and white dog playing joyfully with a red ball. Daisy can't even bear to sleep at the opposite end of the couch from her treasure and scrambles her way closer to cuddle it while she rests. A trip to the park offers the opportunity for more exuberant play with her toy, until an interloper intrudes: A brown dog takes her ball and then accidentally pops it. The double-page spread in which Daisy gradually realizes her ball is not going to achieve its full round bloom again is heartbreaking, as is Daisy's woeful demeanor in its aftermath. But a subsequent trip to the park offers up a surprise: a blue ball, proffered by the brown dog's owner. All is well. Chris Raschka's extraordinarily expressive ink, watercolor, and gouache illustrations not only clearly convey the storyline through a mix of full-page and borderless panel illustrations but also exude emotion, giving young children ample opportunities to follow, articulate, and interpret the events unfolding on the pages. (Ages 2–5)

**Ray, Mary Lin. *Stars*. Illustrated by Marla Frazee. Beach Lane, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-4424-2249-0, \$16.99)**

"A star is how you know it's almost night. / As soon as you see one, there's another, and another. / And the dark that comes doesn't feel so dark." From opening pages that show the first evening star appearing in a dusky blue sky to the final image of a dark night sky strewn with an array of stars, Mary Lin Ray's lyrical words and Marla Frazee's luminous illustrations describe the stars all around us. A star cut from shiny paper and pinned to shirt designates a sheriff, or can convert a stick to a wand ideal for wish-making. There are days when you can feel "shiny as a star," and days when the opposite is true. And stars can be found in many places: in the white flowers of strawberry plants before they bear fruit, in falling snowflakes, and as dandelion seeds blown into the air. Illustrations show a diverse cast of children and families finding the stars in their world in a child-centered picture book that ends with them gathered as a group watching nighttime stars appear in the sky above. These are temporarily obscured by the bloom of firework stars before reappearing as they always do, "every night. Everywhere." (Ages 2–6)

**Root, Phyllis. *Scrawny Cat*. Illustrated by Alison Friend. Candlewick Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-7636-4164-1, \$16.99)**

A homeless cat remembers what it was like to belong to someone while he wanders the street on his own. When a dog chases him all the way to the waterfront, the scrawny cat takes refuge under the seat of a dinghy tied to the dock. Storm winds and water snap the boat's rope, and the cat becomes

an unintentional passenger as the dinghy rides out the rough weather before drifting ashore on a small island. Emma, the woman who lives alone there, dries and feeds the cat she names Skipper, in honor of his sailing prowess. An immediate bond between Emma and Skipper is forged in this satisfying tale of friendship, grounded throughout in the perspective of one small cat. Gouache paintings highlight Skipper's transformation from skinny waif to hearty sailing companion. (Ages 3–6)

**Rosenthal, Eileen. *I Must Have Bobo!* Illustrated by Marc Rosenthal. Atheneum, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-4424-0377-2, \$14.99)**

Willy's stuffed animal monkey, Bobo, is the little boy's constant companion. Or rather, Bobo would be were it not for one small problem: Earl the cat loves Bobo, too. Every time Bobo is missing, Earl is the culprit. Much of the humor in this pleasing picture book plays out in Marc Rosenthal's delightful cartoon-style illustrations that show Earl the cat watchfully waiting for opportunities to make off with the hapless monkey. Eileen Rosenthal's skillfully spare text has just the right touch as well, punctuating the visual action and establishing Willy's relationship with Bobo—and revealing a bit about Willy himself—with very few words. (“Bobo doesn't like raisins in his oatmeal.”) This relatable story full of childlike (and catlike) behavior is brimming with humor and appeal. (Ages 2–5)

**Savage, Stephen. *Where's Walrus?* Scholastic Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-439-70049-8, \$16.99)**

A wordless picture book stars a walrus who escapes from his small pool at the zoo and ventures into town, followed by a harried-looking zookeeper wielding a butterfly net. Walrus finds several venues into which he blends with ease—a stone fountain, a lunch counter, a store window, and a chorus line, among others—while the zookeeper watches from the wings, always a beat too late to net his escapee. When Walrus performs a spectacular dive off the high board as an incognito member of the human dive team, the judges award him a perfect 10, the crowd goes wild with applause, and the zookeeper is struck with inspiration. The final page shows the walrus back at the zoo, happily executing a similar dive into his own newly constructed large pool, complete with diving board. Illustrations with a clean and simple style, created in Adobe Illustrator, bring a vintage feel to the humorous antics of a walrus searching for fulfillment. (Ages 2–6)

**Shaskan, Stephen. *A Dog Is a Dog*. Chronicle, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-8118-7896-8, \$14.99)**

A dog is a dog ... isn't it? In this circular story, categorization and labels aren't that straightforward. “A dog is a dog, / whether it's naughty ... / ... or nice, / whether it suns on the beach, / or glides on the ice. / A dog is a dog, if it's skinny or fat. / A dog is a dog, unless it's a ... / CAT!” On the final page turn in that rhyming sequence, the plump brown and white dog of the previous scenes is shown unzipping its dog costume and emerging as a cat. Or is it a cat? The unveiling of a series of costumed creatures continues, much like revealing a set of nesting dolls. Simple enough for very young children,

the well-paced text contains some pleasingly surprising revelations (who'd have expected squid?), while the uncluttered, flat illustrations lend an old-fashioned sensibility. (Ages 2–5)

**Soltis, Sue. *Nothing Like a Puffin*. Illustrated by Bob Kolar. Candlewick Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-7636-3617-3, \$15.99)**

A ladder is nothing like a puffin. Neither is a house. Nor a newspaper. Although—on second thought—newspapers are black and white, and “a puffin is black and white, too! What are the chances? A newspaper is something like a puffin, after all.” An inquisitive puffin rampages through the pages as text and illustrations encourage contrast and comparisons of a number of things. Readers will discover that both a pair of jeans and puffins have two legs, a shovel and puffin’s feet are both used for digging, and helicopters and puffins both can fly. And finally, while puffins and penguins at first glance seem much alike (black and white, dive and swim, feathers, wings, beaks, and feet) they are, in one way, opposites: puffins can fly, but penguins cannot. Humor and a conversational tone combine in this appealing look at similarity and difference. *Highly Commended, 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 3–6)

**Tullet, Hervé. *Press Here*. Translated from the French by Christopher Franceschelli. U.S. edition: Handprint Books / Chronicle, 2011. 60 pages (trade 978-0-8118-7954-5, \$14.99)**

A single, vivid yellow painted dot sits perfectly centered on a bright white page. The accompanying text reads, “Press here and turn the page.” Press and turn and now there are two yellow dots. Follow the directions and press the yellow dot again. Voila!—there are now three dots. “Rub the dot on the left gently.” Wow! It turned red! This delightful low-tech, tongue-in-cheek twist on interactive gaming makes for an elegant picture book. Dots multiply, change color (yellow, red, blue), rearrange, and get bigger and smaller, all as a result of the reader or listener following the narrative instructions to press, rub, tap, or blow on the dots; clap their hands; and even shake the book. It’s hilarious. And irresistible. Toddlers and children will love its playfulness; teens will love its playfulness too, and also its invitation to consider the place of the book in our high-tech world. (All ages)

**van Genechten, Guido. *The Big Baby Book*. Translated from the Dutch. U.S. edition: Clavis, 2011. 20 pages (trade 978-1-60537-079-8, \$12.95)**

The pending arrival of a new baby in Josh’s family prompts a look at baby traits among different kinds of animals. Some are born naked and pink (mice); others have curly hair (sheep). All babies are born hungry or thirsty (birds, cows). Some babies can only lie down (dogs), while others can stand (horses) and even jump and run (chickens). As for Josh—he was a baby once too, “but now he is a big brother!” Pleasing illustrations of appealing but not overly cute animals distinguish this oversize board book perfect for animal-loving toddlers, as well as those who are poised to become a big brother or sister themselves. (Ages 1–3)

**Wadham, Tim.** *The Queen of France.* Illustrated by Kady MacDonald Denton. Candlewick Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-7636-4102-3, \$16.99)

There's no pretending to be a princess in this book in which pink is the predominant color: Rose likes being a *queen*. In fact, when Rose plays dress-up, she imagines herself as the Queen of France. Her parents are clearly used to their daughter's imagination, and they converse with the Queen while going about their household chores. It turns out the Queen is looking for Rose, and Rose, once she emerges from her room transformed back into a little girl, is looking for the Queen. This leads to another costume change, and the back-and-forth continues. The banter between Rose's parents and Rose (as both Queen and their daughter) is wonderful in this picture book that showcases creative play; loving, attentive parents; and a little girl who determines that being a Queen is okay for awhile, but being Rose is even better. Tim Wadham's lively story full of engaging dialogue and details of each transformation is paired with Kady MacDonald Denton's blithe illustrations in which Rose is spirited but not overly cute and precocious. (Ages 3-7)

**Yum, Hyewon.** *The Twins' Blanket.* Frances Foster Books / Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-374-37972-8, \$16.99)

Two Korean American sisters are "look-alike twins" who share everything, including the striped blanket they've had since they were babies. Now that they're five and the blanket is too small to cover them both, they argue fiercely—if briefly—over who should own it before Mommy says it's time for new blankets, and separate beds. Each girl picks a different, distinct fabric. There's a bit more arguing over whose blanket Mommy should make first, but in the end all is well ... almost. It turns out it's hard to sleep in separate beds, until each finds the other's hand. Hyewon Yum's delightful, pitch-perfect picture book is masterful in every way. Page spreads place one twin on each side, making it clear which is which and who is saying what. The sibling relationship is wonderfully realized. And children will delight in the many visual discoveries to be made, from the things that distinguish each girl or underscore their feelings, to the way the old blanket is incorporated into the new one, to the marvelous end papers that repeat the new blanket fabrics, one inside the front cover, one inside the back. *Highly Commended, 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 3-6)

## Picture Books for School-Age Children

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**Ashman, Linda. *Samantha on a Roll*. Illustrated by Christine Davenier. Margaret Ferguson Books / Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011. 32 pages (978-0-374-36399-4, \$16.99)**

Samantha is eager to try her new roller skates, but her mother is too busy to help. “But Samantha cannot wait. Straps herself into a skate. Straps herself into the other. Tries them on despite her mother.” She starts out simply rolling down the hall, which leads to the door, then the sidewalk, and then the street. Soon Sammy is at the top of Hawthorn Hill, where the amazing view distracts her from what’s ahead—a very steep, very long, downhill slope. Sammy picks up speed as she descends, careening out of control and inadvertently picking up accessories from those she encounters on her way: a butterfly net, a baseball bat, a kite, and a bridal veil from a wedding in progress. After launching from a skateboard ramp, Sammy fortuitously sails through the air back toward home, arriving just in time to greet her mom, who’s now available to help her out with those new skates. “Sammy sighs. ‘Oh, that’s okay. I’ll try them on another day.’” The roller-skating rhythm of the text is complemented by watercolor illustrations humorously capturing the erosion of Sammy’s confidence as her skating debut rockets out of control. *Highly Commended, 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award (Ages 4–8)*

**Austen, Catherine. *My Cat Isis*. Illustrated by Virginie Egger. Kids Can Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-55453-413-5, \$16.95)**

“Isis was one of 1500 gods and goddesses worshipped by the ancient Egyptians. My Isis is the one and only cat in our family.” A boy’s clever comparison of the Egyptian goddess and his family cat who shares the same name constitutes the narrative of a picture book full of laugh-out-loud humor and brimming with feeling. The goddess Isis ruled over the hour of two o’clock in the afternoon. The cat Isis “is usually sleeping at two o’clock in the afternoon.” The goddess Isis guarded the living and the dead. The cat Isis guards the seeds in the bird feeder. The goddess received gifts of “food, flowers and trinkets.” The cat can count a wind-up mouse among its offerings. Facts about the Egyptian goddess unfold through the comparisons, but the heart of the story is in the humor and in the obvious love the boy feels for his pet—she may not be “Ruler in Heaven and Queen on Earth,” but she clearly rules the heart of her young owner. Catherine Austen’s witty, warm picture book is accompanied by Virginie Egger’s striking collage illustrations pairing art in the style of classical Egypt with multimedia collage images portraying the feline Isis and her immediate world. (Ages 4–8)

**Campbell, Nicola I. *Grandpa's Girls*. Illustrated by Kim LaFave. Greenwood, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-55498-084-0, \$16.95)**

On a visit to her grandpa's house, a little girl and her cousins run through the farm fields, play among the chickens, investigate the root cellar, swing in the barn, tease the neighbor's pig, and try to figure out what the grown-ups are saying when they speak Interior Salish. The kids also explore the attic ("We step sneaky steps on tiptoe across the creaky floor"), hunt for the candy jar ("We suck until our lips turn colors: red, blue and green"), and ask Grandpa to tell them about Yayah (Grandma), whom they don't remember. Most of all the visit is filled with love for the man who is "our everything: elder, gardener, chef, businessman, rancher, cowboy ... But best of all, he's Grandpa." Nicola I. Campbell's lively tribute to her grandfather brims with delightful details while Kim LaFave's blithe illustrations capture the spirited warmth and fun. (Ages 4-8)

**Chabon, Michael. *The Astonishing Secret of Awesome Man*. Illustrated by Jake Parker. Balzer + Bray / HarperCollins, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-06-191462-1, \$17.99)**

Superhero Awesome Man has "a cape as red as a rocket, a mask as black as midnight, and a stylin' letter A on my chest." His superpowers are spectacular, too, what with his positronic eyeball rays, ability to cross the time barrier, and trademark Awesome Power Grip. But when Professor Von Evil's Flaming Eyeball gets away, Awesome Man has to get a grip of a different sort: A tantrum simply will not do. Who is Awesome Man really? Kids might be surprised, although observant readers and listeners may not only have figured out Awesome Man's secret identity from clues in the art, but Professor Von Evil's too. This fresh, funny take on imaginative play features stylized illustrations in perfect synch with the comics-style sensibility of the story. (Ages 4-8)

**Compstine, Ying Chang. *Crouching Tiger*. Illustrated by Yan Nascimbene. Candlewick Press, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978-0-7636-4642-4, \$16.99)**

A young boy is excited to learn *tai chi* when his grandpa, who's visiting from China, explains it's a martial art. But at the first lesson, all his grandpa tells him to do is stand with his arms out. This is the first of a string of disappointments that leave the boy feeling resentful, not to mention embarrassed: His grandpa insists on calling him Ming Da, his Chinese name, rather than Vinson, his American name. Things turn around with the arrival of Chinese New Year. His grandpa has been training the lion dancers, and now he has a role for Ming Da—one that all that standing with arms out has prepared him for! Ying Chang Compstine's beautifully nuanced story is perfectly paired with Yan Nascimbene's wonderfully composed pen-and-ink and watercolor illustrations. The art offers a great range of perspectives and many details to notice, while reflecting both the grandfather's serenity and the excitement of the New Year festival. (Ages 4-8)



**DiPucchio, Kelly. *Clink*. Illustrated by Matthew Myers. Balzer + Bray / HarperCollins, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-06-192928-1, \$16.99)**

Clink is an outdated robot whose only skills are playing music and making toast (usually burnt). He can't compete with the other trendy robots in the shop, so no one has any interest in buying him. Watching his robot friends depart with their new owners, Clink "leaked rusty tears every time"—until the day when a new customer, Milton, browses unimpressed through the robot ranks. He's headed out the door without making a purchase when an inspired Clink spontaneously belts out "a head-boppin', toast-poppin', showstoppin' tune. The song was old-fashioned and crackled with static, but there was pure joy in every note." Milton loves to dance, and so a perfect match is made. (He doesn't even mind burnt toast.) Details in the colorful illustrations add humor to the tale of an endearing robot who deserves his happily-ever-after ending. (Ages 4–8)

**Gleeson, Libby. *Clancy & Millie and the Very Fine House*. Illustrated by Freya Blackwood. Little Hare, 2011, c2009. 32 pages (trade 978-1-9215-4119-3, \$16.99)**

Clancy's family has just moved from a small house to a city apartment, and he's filled with anxiety about how different—and big—everything is. The boxes from the move are stacked in the yard behind his building, and he's sitting inside the cozy, contained space of one when Millie appears. "Can I play too?" Soon the two are transforming the empty boxes into extraordinary structures as they pretend to be the Three Little Pigs. Libby Gleeson's spot-on understanding of a child's anxiety is perfectly matched by Freya Blackwood's imaginative illustrations, in which the fantastic box structures—while impossible in reality—echo Clancy's distorted perception of how big and unwelcoming he felt his new home to be. Clancy's new, urban environment gains more and more color in the illustrations as his feelings transform, thanks to the warmth and reassurance of a new friendship. (Ages 4–7)

**Grey, Mini. *Three by the Sea*. U.S. edition: Alfred A. Knopf, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-375-86784-2, \$17.99)**

"On a pebbly stretch of shore in a beach hut by the sea, there lived a black cat, a white dog, and a little gray mouse." Dog gardens, Cat cleans, and Mouse cooks in their harmonious household. Then a dapperly dressed Stranger—a fox from the Winds of Change Trading Company—arrives and slyly turns their lives upside down. He pulls Mouse aside and points out Dog's questionable gardening skills. He pulls Dog aside and points out Cat asleep on the job. And he pulls Cat aside to query Mouse's culinary repertoire. The next meal turns into a riotous squabble among the three. Late that evening Mouse silently slips away, "planning to travel to somewhere where his cooking was appreciated." Friendship proves stronger than strife in this tale that takes a turn involving peril at sea and a dramatic water rescue. In the aftermath, the three decide the Stranger has outworn his welcome only to discover he's already gone. But the seeds of change have been left behind and refreshing new routines are born. Mini Grey's clever, captivating story offers myriad humorous details in the perfectly paired art and narrative.

And the ambiguity about the fox's nature and intent will give readers and listeners plenty to discuss. *Highly Commended, 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 4–9)

**Heller, Linda.** *How Dalia Put a Big Yellow Comforter Inside a Tiny Blue Box and Other Wonders of Tzedakah.* Illustrated by Stacey Dressen McQueen. Tricycle Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978–1–58246–378–0, \$16.99)

Dalia's little brother Yossi doesn't believe her when she tells him there is a big yellow comforter inside the small box she made and decorated at the community center. It's a tzedakah box, and all week Dalia puts money she earns inside it. By week's end, she tells Yossi that the box holds a big yellow comforter, a butterfly bush, and a banana cream pie, along with kisses and wishes and hugs. Yossi wants to believe his big sister, but when he rattles the box all he hears are coins. "It's just a bank," he says. So Dalia takes Yossi along when she and her class combine the money in all of their tzedakah boxes and go shopping. They buy a big yellow comforter, a butterfly bush, and a banana cream pie, and give them to an elderly woman in their neighborhood, along with their companionship. Linda Heller's lively story about the Jewish tradition of charity and caring has terrific dialogue and a wonderful sibling relationship. Stacey Dressen McQueen's warm, colorful illustrations show a multicultural neighborhood and numerous details specific to the Jewish tradition of tzedakah. (Ages 4–7)

**Highway, Tomson.** *Fox on the Ice = Maageesees Maskwameek Kaapit.* Illustrated by Brian Deines. U.S. edition: Fifth House, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978–1–897252–65–9, \$19.95)

A bilingual (Cree/English) story tells of unexpected drama one winter afternoon when a contemporary Cree family goes ice fishing. Cody and Joe accompany Mama and Papa on the dog sled. They family picnics by the side of the lake and the boys play. Then a tired Joe snuggles with Mama in the sled while Cody goes off with Papa to set the net. That's when the sled dogs catch whiff of a fox and take off running across the lake. "Mama dug her heels into the snow on both sides of the sled. Joe squealed with glee. 'Whoa!' Mama screamed to the dogs. 'Whoa, whoa, whoa!' But the dogs didn't listen." Papa must abandon the net and race after the sled to help stop it. But Cody's dog Ootsie saves the net, to everyone's surprise and delight. The overall soothing tone of this picture book narrative is punctuated by brief high suspense in a welcome story illustrated by oil paintings that beautifully evoke the cold winter landscape. (Ages 5–8)

**Klassen, Jon.** *I Want My Hat Back.* Candlewick Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978–0–7636–5598–3, \$15.99)

"My hat is gone. I want it back." A bear's quest for his missing hat has him asking one animal after another. "Have you seen my hat?" The fox hasn't seen it. The frog hasn't seen it. Turtle, snake, possum—no one has seen his hat. And then, there's the rabbit. "I haven't seen it. I haven't seen any hats anywhere. I would not steal a hat. Don't ask me any more questions." It's

obvious to readers and listeners, even if it isn't to the bear, that the rabbit is wearing his hat. But the realization hits bear a few pages later, and he races back to find the rabbit. An accusation on one page spread is followed by a wordless face-off on the next. One more turn of the page reveals the bear happily wearing his hat. Enter a squirrel: "Excuse me. Have you seen a rabbit wearing a hat?" The bear's response suggests the rabbit did not fare well in this comical picture book perfect for teaching inference. Jon Klassen's muted palette and elegantly simple, distinctive illustrations are a perfect match for his offbeat story. (Ages 4–9)

**Look, Lenore. *Polka Dot Penguin Pottery*. Illustrated by Yumi Heo. Schwartz & Wade, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-375-86332-5, \$16.99)**

When young author Aspen faces writer's block, her grandparents, GungGung and PohPoh, suggest she take a break and a trip to the Polka Dot Penguin Pottery store to paint unfinished pottery. This seems just the thing. But when Aspen looks at the blank egg she's chosen, she feels a familiar frustration. "I think I have Pottery Block." Then she accidentally drips paint onto the egg. She's sure it's ruined when her friend Olivia says, "You can only make a masterpiece if you're willing to make a mess." So Aspen adds more paint, and more, and soon the ideas are flowing from her brush to the egg. "This feels like writing, too—when you put down one word and—surprise!—more words follow." Lenore Look explores the downs and ups of creativity in the energetic, observant voice of a young Korean American writer who turns out to be pretty good with a paintbrush, too. Yumi Heo's colorful and playfully detailed illustrations take a creative turn with images that use the horizontal page spreads vertically, requiring the book to be held at a ninety-degree angle to read the narrative and follow the art. (Ages 4–8)

**Mason, Margaret H. *These Hands*. Illustrated by Floyd Cooper. Houghton Mifflin, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-547-21566-2, \$16.99)**

An African American grandfather tells his grandson about his own accomplishments and struggles while teaching the boy new things in an engaging picture book that gracefully traverses personal and social history. "Did you know these hands used to tie a triple bowline knot in three seconds flat?" asks the grandfather as he teaches young Joseph how to tie his shoes. "These hands" could also play piano, "pluck an ace of spades out of thin air," and throw a fast curveball. But "these hands were not allowed to mix the bread dough at the Wonder Bread factory," until they joined with other hands and voices in a movement for change. Margaret H. Mason's story comes full circle as Joseph tells his grandfather all the things his own hands can now do. "Anything at all," his grandfather affirms. Mason's warm, lively narrative is set against Floyd Cooper's sepia-toned illustrations, which show the passage of several years in Joseph's life as well as an earlier era of social change. An author's note provides more information on Black workers in bakeries in the 1950s and early 1960s. *Highly Commended, 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 5–9)

**Medina, Meg.** *Tía Isa Wants a Car.* Illustrated by Claudio Muñoz. Candlewick Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-7636-4156-6, \$15.99)

“Tía Isa wants a car.” But there’s no quick gratification for either Tía Isa or her niece, the young narrator of this satisfying story. Even though Tía Isa has been saving, she doesn’t yet have enough money for the car she dreams of buying: “‘The same shiny green as the ocean that lapped outside my bedroom window,’ she says. When Tía Isa was a girl, the air on her island smelled of wet palm fronds and mud.” Tía Isa keeps saving, and eventually her niece gets odd jobs in the neighborhood and starts saving, too. In the end, enough time has passed that not only does Tía Isa get her car, but the girl’s parents are finally home again from their native country, where they’d been caring for her ill *abuela*. Wonderful descriptions and an abundance of warmth distinguish this story of family, community, love, and longing eventually fulfilled. Spanish words are woven seamlessly into the narrative and defined in context, while the illustrations extend the sense of warmth and add cultural details to the story. *Highly Commended, 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 4–8)

**Nargi, Lela.** *The Honeybee Man.* Illustrated by Kyrsten Brooker. Schwartz & Wade, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-375-84980-0, \$17.99)

Fred maintains three beehives on the rooftop of his apartment building—a city for bees within the larger human city of Brooklyn. Early on a summer morning, Fred visits his bee city, calling greetings to his queen bees, Mab, Nefertiti, and Boadicea, and the thousands of other hive inhabitants. Fred observes bees that “zip out of the hives and throw themselves at the air, embracing it with their wings,” and imagines their flights through the neighborhood gathering nectar. He knows the bees inside the hive are working, too, as queens lay eggs and others build wax rooms, feed young bees, tidy the hive, and care for the nectar. Later, Fred harvests honeycomb, extracts honey, and gives full jars to his neighbors, filled with honey flavored from their own backyards—sweet pea flowers, linden tree blossoms, and blueberry bushes. Rich language describes the process of maintaining an apiary while capturing the beekeeper’s passion for his task. Charm and accuracy both are hallmarks of the collage and oil paint illustrations, while detailed end papers offer diagrams of bees, flowers, and hives. (Ages 5–9)

**Nolan, Dennis.** *Sea of Dreams.* A Neal Porter Book / Roaring Brook Press, 2011. 36 pages (trade 978-1-59643-470-7, \$16.99)

A handsomely illustrated wordless fantasy begins with a young, brown-skinned girl on a beach starting a sand castle. When the sun sets hours later, the girl must leave her extraordinary creation behind. The castle is at the mercy of the tide, but it’s not just the structure that’s in danger. From a turret window an aging man and two children watch the rising water before they and others escape in a boat tossed and tumbled by the waves. A boy falls overboard and makes some startling discoveries about life beneath the sea (in what is certainly an homage to David Wiesner’s *Floam*) before he’s returned to the boat by mermaids. After making landfall on a rocky island (the outcrop seen from the beach in the opening pages), the small inhabitants

find shelter. Meanwhile, a new day arrives on back on shore, and the young girl returns to the beach and begins building ... Dennis Nolan leaves room for children to bring their own meaning to the story's concluding pages when a light is seen in the new castle's window at nightfall in this imaginative outing. (Ages 4–9)

**Rocco, John. *Blackout*. Disney / Hyperion, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978-1-4231-2190-9, \$16.99)**

Each older member of a family is too busy to play a game with the youngest child. Then: blackout! Not just their apartment but the whole city is dark. The family gathers in the kitchen with flashlights and candles (shadow puppets, anyone?) but it's hot, so "we went up and up and up to the rooftop and found ... the lights." Stars span the sky of the cityscape. Soon more and more neighbors make their way up, their forms silhouetted against the night as a spontaneous rooftop block party breaks out. By the time the lights come back on, family priorities have shifted, although it's much more fun to play the game in the dark! John Rocco blends a strong yet subtle narrative with striking illustrations that capture a city neighborhood, from its diverse inhabitants to watertower-topped buildings and graffiti, as well as the surprise and wonder of sudden darkness. Rocco uses comic-style conventions (panels, word bubbles, art/text interplay) in this story featuring a biracial (Black/white) family. (Ages 4–8)

**Rodriguez, Béatrice. *Fox and Hen Together*. U.S. edition: Enchanted Lion Books, 2011. 24 pages (trade 978-1-59270-109-4, \$14.95)**

Hen's romance with Fox, introduced in the breathless picture book *The Chicken Thief* (U.S. edition: Enchanted Lion, 2010), is maturing nicely, and the couple has reached the next milestone in their life together: Hen is with child—or, with egg. But the cupboard is bare, and she passes the egg off to Fox for some bonding time while she and Crab venture out with a fishing pole. What starts out as a calm day at sea turns into a monumental Big Fish Story, as the duo is carried aloft by a raptor and dropped into its nest of Big Baby Birds with gaping maws. An escape immediately plunges them into an epic sea battle with something that looks a bit like the Loch Ness Monster, but Hen, victorious, eventually arrives home toting the dead sea creature. Her success is stifled when she discovers a broken egg shell next to a frying pan on the kitchen table. About to bean the infanticidal Fox with the frying pan, she sees in the nick of time that he's cuddling a hybrid fox-chicken baby. Clever illustrations carry this amusing wordless sequel. (Ages 4–8)

**Rohmann, Eric. *Bone Dog*. Roaring Brook Press, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-59643-150-8, \$16.99)**

Gus and his dog Ella "had been friends for a long, long time." Ella is old and knows she won't be around long. "But no matter what happens, I'll always be with you." After Ella is gone, Gus doesn't want to do much of anything. He's a reluctant trick-or-treater on Halloween, and as he makes his way home through the graveyard in his skeleton costume he's surrounded by the real thing—skeletons who want him to join their revelry. When Gus removes his

mask and explain he's a boy, the skeletons turn threatening. Enter ... Ella! Now a skeleton dog, she swoops in and saves the day ... with a little help from the real dogs she calls with her howling. Eric Rohmann's picture book works on one level as a terrifically entertaining—and just a little bit scary—Halloween story, but it's also a sensitive approach to the death of a pet, making it a book to share any time of the year. Rohmann's black-bordered, richly hued illustrations are superb, heightening both the humor and the poignancy, and hinting at drama that's happening off stage. (Ages 4–8)

**Ruddra, Anshumani. *Dorje's Stripes*. Illustrated by Gwangjo and Jung-a Park. U.S. edition: Kane Miller, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978–1–935279–98–3, \$15.99)**

A community of Buddhist monks, young and old, share their Tibetan monastery with a Royal Bengal tiger named Dorje. Master Wu tells the story of the tiger's arrival at the monastery, and how by entering the animal's dream he learned why Dorje has no stripes. Once part of a healthy population of tigers in Bengal, Dorje once had a beautifully striped coat. But Dorje began to lose a stripe for each tiger that died at the hands of sport hunters and those collecting hides. When his survival was threatened, Dorje escaped to the sanctuary of the monastery. But the appearance of a new stripe on Dorje heralds hope for the Bengal tigers, and Master Wu later reports seeing a female Royal Bengal tiger in the forest nearby. Lovely watercolor art creates a dreamy feeling for this purposeful tale. A final note states that the book was produced to draw attention to the vulnerable state of the threatened Bengal species, now numbering fewer than 1,500. (Ages 6–9)

**Sarcone-Roach, Julia. *Subway Story*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2011. 36 pages (trade 978–0–375–85859–8, \$16.99)**

A New York City subway car called Jessie has a busy life from her first day on the job in the 1960s. She carries passengers and their cargo safely from place to place as the years pass by. Jessie is occasionally repaired and updated, with new lights, doors, and paint, as the city around her changes and grows through the decades. Eventually, a worn-out Jessie is retired to the train yard before being washed and stripped of lights, signs, and brakes. In 2001, along with other old Redbird subway cars, Jessie is taken out of the harbor on a barge and sunk to the ocean floor. A fascinating author's note relates that Jessie's personified story is based on a real subway car that was one of many used to create artificial reefs in the Atlantic Ocean to "provide homes to generations of underwater creatures and new fishing grounds for both people and fish." Child-friendly sound effects and illustrations that convey the motion of the subway provide access to an unusual story. (Ages 4–8)

**Schimel, Lawrence. *Let's Go See Papá!* Translated from the Spanish by Elisa Amado. Illustrated by Alba Marina Rivera. Groundwood, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978–1–55498–106–9, \$18.95)**

A young Latina girl who hasn't seen her papá in "one year, eight months and twenty-two days" is excited to learn in his weekly phone call that she and her mamá will be going to live with him in the United States. As time passes and

they prepare to leave, it never occurs to the girl that her dog Kika won't be coming. It's heartbreak when she discovers the truth: Kika, like Abuela, will stay behind. Lawrence Schimel's child-centered story about immigration is full of small, revealing details that bring the girl's family and feelings into full relief. In the end, the girl's grief at saying goodbye to Kika and her Abuela is tempered by knowing she'll soon see her papá. And the journal she starts on the plane—to tell Abuela about everything that's happening—mirrors the one she kept for her papá. A mix of sophisticated and childlike elements in the illustrations provide additional background details in a story that children can relate to on many levels. (Ages 5–9)

**Simpson, Lesley. *Yuvi's Candy Tree*. Illustrated by Janice Lee Porter. Karben, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978–0–7613–5651–6, \$17.95)**

Yuvi is a young Ethiopian Jewish girl whose family is leaving their native land for Israel. They are robbed several times during their journey to a refugee camp until Yuvi thinks to hide their money in her curls. Despite her worries, Yuvi dreams of Jerusalem, their ultimate destination, where there will be food and clothes, games and “candy.” Once they arrive at a refugee camp, they board a plane for Jerusalem, where Yuvi sees orange trees—the “candy” she has been dreaming about during her journey. Lesley Simpson uses child-centered details to make this short, first-person narrative accessible and intriguing to children. An author's note provides context for this fictional story based on the experiences of an Ethiopian Jew the author met who was airlifted to Israel as part of Operation Moses, “one of several Israeli rescue operations of Ethiopian Jews in the 1980s and 1990s.” (Ages 5–8)

**Uhlberg, Myron. *A Storm Called Katrina*. Illustrated by Colin Bootman. Peachtree, 2011. 40 pages (trade 978–1–56145–591–1, \$17.95)**

When the waters start rising in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, ten-year-old Louis Daniel and his parents flee through the flooded streets on a makeshift raft. They take refuge at the Superdome, and when he and his mom become separated from his dad in the chaos there, Louis Daniel takes out his cornet, stands in the center of the football field, and blows. His dad knows exactly who's making that music! Author Myron Uhlberg references a few of the grimmer aspects of the Katrina tragedy in this picture book ably illustrated by Colin Bootman, but does so with restraint. A pile of clothes Louis Daniel sees in the water suggests a body. “Mama covered my eyes. ‘Don't look, Baby.’” At the Superdome, it's noisy and smelly, and tempers often flare. But Uhlberg stays true to Louis Daniel's perspective, including his ongoing concern for a black-and-white dog he saw floating on a bunch of boards. His reunion with the dog at story's end may be a bit unrealistic, but it's a welcome conclusion to a story that is admirable for its child-centered presentation of difficult events. (Ages 6–10)

**Vamos, Samantha R.** *The Cazuela That the Farm Maiden Stirred.* Illustrated by Rafael López. Charlesbridge, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-1-58089-242-1, \$17.95)

“This is the pot that the farm maiden stirred,” begins Samantha R. Vamos’s playful representation of a recipe for *arroz con leche*—rice pudding. Following the basic structure of “This Is the House That Jack Built,” ingredients, utensils, and participants are added to demonstrate the process, which becomes more complex as the pudding cooks. To add to the fun, each turn of the page repeats the previous phrases, but with key words first introduced in English now in Spanish: The pot becomes the *cazuela*, the cow becomes the *vaca*, and the sugar becomes the *azúcar*. By the end of the sequence, when the *cazuela* is finally ready, everyone involved in its creation says thanks and celebrates the dish they all worked hard to make. Patterned language, rhythm, and repetition, coupled with illustrator Rafael López’s brilliantly hued acrylic paintings, capture the excitement of this lively story. A recipe for *arroz con leche* and glossary with a pronunciation guide for Spanish words are also included. (Ages 4–8)

## Books for Beginning Readers

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**Chaconas, Dori.** *Cork & Fuzz: The Swimming Lesson.* Illustrated by Lisa McCue. Viking, 2011. 32 pages (trade 978-0-670-01281-7, \$13.99)

Best friends Cork (muskrat) and Fuzz (possum) are back in their seventh entertaining outing for beginning readers. Here, Cork sets out to teach Fuzz “a muskrat thing”—how to swim—so he can visit Cork’s house in the middle of the pond. But Fuzz is a reluctant student. Convinced he knows a better way to get to Cork’s house, Fuzz climbs out on a branching hanging over the pond, only to be startled by a bird and fall in. As Cork calls instructions from the shore (“Paddle! ... Kick!”), Fuzz responds, and discovers he can swim! “Tomorrow I will teach you a possum thing,” he tells Cork. “One wet muskrat and one wet possum. They sat on top of Cork’s house and talked. It was a best friend kind of thing.” Dori Chaconas’s lively narrative and Lisa McCue’s charming illustrations continue to bring two winning characters to life. (Ages 4–7)

**Willems, Mo.** *Should I Share My Ice Cream? (An Elephant & Piggie Book)* Hyperion, 2011. 57 pages (trade 978-1-4231-4343-7, \$8.99)

Decisions, decisions ... Should elephant share his ice cream cone with best friend Piggie? Or should he eat it all himself? Maybe Piggie wouldn’t like this flavor ice cream. Of course she’d like it! Then again, Piggie doesn’t know he has ice cream. But if Piggie is having a sad day, ice cream might cheer her up. Definitely share it. Decision made at last, the inevitable follows when the scoop of ice cream falls off the cone. “Noooooooooooo!” Luckily, Elephant wasn’t the only one who bought ice cream, and Piggie is happy to share hers. Mo Willems offers up another delightful Elephant and Piggie outing, again showing mastery of minimalist drawings and speech bubble dialogue to tell a story, and kid-friendly humor to delight. (Ages 4–7)



## Books for Newly Independent Readers

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**Atinuke. *Good Luck Anna Hibiscus!* Illustrated by Lauren Tobia. U.S. edition: Kane Miller, 2011. 110 pages (pbk 978–1–61067–007–4, \$5.99)**

**Atinuke. *Have Fun Anna Hibiscus!* Illustrated by Lauren Tobia. U.S. edition: Kane Miller, 2011. 109 pages (pbk 978–1–61067–008–1, \$5.99)**

Anna Hibiscus is back in two more unique and engaging chapter books about a young biracial (Black/white) African girl and her family. *Good Luck Anna Hibiscus!* opens with a drought in Anna's city. (The specific African country and city in which Anna lives are intentionally not revealed.) It has not affected her family's well, but Anna and her parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins realize they can and should share the water they have with others. In other chapters, Anna's twin baby brothers, Double and Trouble, engage in antics worthy of their names. And running through the book is increasing anticipation for Anna's upcoming visit to her maternal grandmother, Granny Canada. She must have warm winter clothes, and this means a trip to the shops. There are tears and disappointment for Anna before some delightful haggling between Grandmother and one of the vendors leads to success. In *Have Fun Anna Hibiscus!*, the time for Anna's trip to Canada finally arrives. A last-minute complication at the airport is overcome with good fortune, but despite her warm clothes, Anna is unprepared for other dimensions of the visit. These include Granny Canada's dog, Qimmiq, and the attitudes of some children in Granny's neighborhood after Anna proves a disaster at ice skating but, with Qimmiq's help, a great success at sledding. "Africans can't do that!" one boy shouts. Anna replies, "I could not skate because it was my first time. Not because I am African ... I only want to be friends with people who want to be friends with me, Anna. Not because I am African." Author Atinuke, who introduced Anna in *Anna Hibiscus* and *Hooray for Anna Hibiscus!* (U.S. editions: Kane/Miller, 2010), continues to reveal rich dimensions of childhood, family, and culture in this delightful series. (Ages 4–8)

**Atinuke. *The No. 1 Car Spotter.* Illustrated by Warwick Johnson Cadwell. U.S. edition: Kane Miller, 2011. 110 pages (pbk 978–1–61067–051–7, \$5.99)**

Oluwalase Babatunde Benson can identify the make and model of most vehicles that pass on the road by his village by sound alone—a skill he clearly has learned at his grandfather's side. Hence his nickname: No. 1 Car Spotter. Many of the adults from No. 1's village, including his father, have gone to the city to earn money to help support their families. No. 1 lives with his mother, aunt, and grandparents in his family's compound. Like the other children in his village, he helps tend goats, sell goods at market, and does many other chores. Still, No. 1 is happy to avoid work when he can. But when a crisis strikes, No. 1's creative problem-solving fuels a delightful series

of events comprising this short novel that showcases aspects of contemporary life in a rural African village, including the strong web of relationships among the people living there. (The specific country in which the story is set is referenced but never named.) Author Atinuke brings her lively storytelling voice and plenty of warmth and humor to the first book in this new series. (Ages 6–9)

**Cameron, Ann. *Spunky Tells All*. Illustrated by Lauren Castillo. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011. 105 pages (trade 978–0–374–38000–7, \$15.99)**

Spunky belongs to brothers Huey and Julian Bates, whom author Ann Cameron has written about in several other appealing easy chapter books. This terrifically engaging dog’s-eye view of life with the Bates family is laugh-out-loud funny as Spunky describes human personalities and dynamics and provides plenty of riffs (or is that woofs?) on life as their canine companion. Too often Spunky’s family can’t understand what he says, and sometimes what he has to say is really important: “Hot Tamale Sauce Flavored Tortilla Chips! They’re soooo good!” When a standoffish cat named Fiona joins the family, Spunky is more than a little jealous (not that he’d admit it). Spunky’s nose knows all. Fiona, he determines, smells like Foolish. But Spunky comes through for Fiona at a dramatic, life-or-death moment involving her foray into the terrifying place that smells of Nothing—the freezer. Cameron’s story is full of waggish antics and wonderful warmth. (Ages 5–8)

**Han, Jenny. *Clara Lee and the Apple Pie Dream*. Illustrated by Julia Kuo. Little, Brown, 2011. 149 pages (trade 978–0–316–07038–6, \$14.99)**

Jenny Han’s entertaining short novel offers a nuanced look at identity issues in the context of an engaging story about family and friends. Korean American Clara Lee has decided to enter the contest at school to choose who will be “Little Miss Apple Pie” in her town’s annual fall festival. Her friends are supportive, but her classmate Dionne is convinced she herself is destined to be Little Miss Apple Pie, just like her mother before her. At home, Clara Lee is especially close to her Grandpa, who lives with her family, and especially annoyed by her little sister, Emmeline, who has a gift for bringing out the worst in Clara Lee, as their sibling interactions prove more than once. An argument with her friend Max (again showcasing Clara Lee’s realistically less-than-stellar behavior) has Clara Lee thinking the good luck her Grandpa predicted after she told him about one of her dreams is changing. But Clara Lee’s speech about the things that make their town special proves to be the only luck she needs in this lighthearted but not unsubstantial treat for independent readers. (Ages 6–9)

## Fiction for Children

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**Almond, David.** *My Name Is Mina and I Love the Night: Anything Seems Possible at Night When the Rest of the World Has Gone to Sleep.* U.S. edition: Delacorte, 2011. 304 pages (trade 978-0-385-74073-9, \$15.99)

Mina is a writer, storyteller, and poet for whom school was a box of conformity into which she didn't fit. Now she's homeschooled. It's not just Mina's abilities—she's extraordinarily gifted with language—but also her intense sensitivity, compounded by the death of her father, that has made navigating the everyday world so challenging. David Almond's novel about a precocious child unfolds through singular first-person narrative that includes stories Mina writes, most of them revealing events that happened in the past. Mina approaches the things she has to tell in her own time, exposing a bit more of the truth once she is ready to reveal it. She is a child who sees herself as separate from others because of her gifts, and she uses this as a means of protecting herself: There's no chance of rejection when she doesn't risk connection. Recognizing this, and taking the first step toward moving beyond it, is the biggest challenge Mina faces. So when she approaches the new boy who has moved in next door and says, "Hello, my name is Mina," it's a true act of courage. This companion novel to *Skellig* (U.S. edition: Delacorte Press, 1999), in which Mina was a secondary character, stands on its own. (Ages 9–12)

**Boyce, Frank Cottrell.** *The Unforgotten Coat.* Candlewick Press, 2011. 112 pages (trade 978-0-7636-5729-1, \$15.99)

Chingis and his younger brother, Nergui, stand out for many reasons in the school they attend in a small town near Liverpool. They have come to England from Mongolia, and they both wear big furry coats, even in warm weather. Chingis insists that Nergui be in his class, although he's too young. Everything about them seems mysterious and fascinating, especially to Julie O'Connor, the classmate whom Chingis has hand-picked to serve as their Good Guide. Julie takes her duties seriously by introducing them to football rules and other important things they need to know in order to survive in England. She also studies up on Mongolia, to better understand where they came from, and eagerly listens to Chingis's stories about his photographs: Polaroids he's brought of his homeland. These photographs are an integral part of Frank Cottrell Boyce's brilliant short novel told from Julie's perspective, and the truth about them is only one of several stunning revelations in a story that balances humor and depth. When Chingis reveals that Nergui is being pursued by a demon who wants to make him vanish, Julie gets involved in helping to protect him. And when the true identity of the demon is revealed, it cements the impact this brief acquaintance has on Julie's life as she begins to understand her own world through their eyes. In an author's note, Boyce tells about the real-life Mongolian immigrant who inspired this story after he saw the amazing impact her presence had on other students in her class. (Ages 9–12)

**Conkling, Winifred. *Sylvia & Aki*. Tricycle Press, 2011. 151 pages (trade 978-1-58246-337-7, \$16.99)**

Sylvia Mendez's family is renting an asparagus farm owned by a Japanese American family sent to an internment camp in the months following the bombing of Pearl Harbor. When Sylvia finds a traditional Japanese doll in her closet, she compares it to her own beloved doll and begins to wonder about the girl who once lived in her room. Flashbacks tell how that girl, Aki Munemitsu, came to be living in the Poston Relocation Center in Arizona. In alternating chapters, author Winifred Conkling follows the two girls, who eventually meet when Sylvia accompanies her father to Poston to pay the rent on the farm. Sylvia and her brothers are not able to attend the well-funded elementary school closest to their home because the district insists they go to the one designated for Mexican American children, which is clearly inferior. Eventually, Sylvia's family sues. The court case—*Mendez vs. Westminster School District*—ultimately desegregated California schools. Meanwhile, Aki and her family face the difficulties of separation (her father was arrested before they left home and is being held elsewhere), internment camp life, and questions about their loyalty to America. The narrative, firmly grounded in each girl's experience, is woven with childlike details and feelings, creating a compelling portrait of two warm, loving families in a fictionalized account of real people and events. (Ages 9–12)

**Coulombis, Audrey. *Lexie*. Illustrated by Julia Denos. Random House, 2011. 199 pages (trade 978-0-375-85632-7, \$15.99)**

Ten-year-old Lexie is feeling unsettled, and a little guilty, about going on her family's annual beach vacation without her mom. Her parents were still together last summer, but now they are divorced. She already knows that her dad's girlfriend, Vicky, will be joining them, but it isn't until Vicky arrives—a day earlier than Lexie expected—that she discovers Vicky's two sons, three-year-old Harris and fourteen-year-old Ben, are along. Lexie is angry her dad didn't tell her, and worries she's fated to be a guest in the summer home she's always known. On top of that, she finds the boys annoying ... when she isn't having fun with them. Despite Lexie's wild swings of emotion, her feelings are explored with great subtlety and nuance in Audrey Coulombis's terrific middle grade novel. Lexie gradually develops a relationship with each of the two boys—surprised to discover how much she can enjoy their company—and finds unexpected support from Vicky when she finally confronts her dad about his failure to communicate or to think about her feelings. The realistic complexities and foibles of all of the characters are part of what make this story so very satisfying. (Ages 8–11)

**Ellis, Deborah. *No Ordinary Day*. Groundwood, 2011. 159 pages (trade 978-1-55498-134-2, \$16.95)**

Like the other children in her village, Valli has always been repulsed by the “monsters”—the people living over the tracks. “Some had no noses. Some had hands without fingers that they waved in the air as they tried to protect their heads from our rocks.” Valli lives with an affectionless aunt and uncle who expect her to contribute to the family income, usually by gathering coal.

When she learns her family is not her family at all—her mother paid them to take her when she was very young—she runs away and ends up on the streets of Kolkata. There she meets a doctor who recognizes the numbness in Valli's feet—she's impervious to pain—as a sign of leprosy, the same disease the “monsters” in her village have. The doctor takes Valli to her clinic, and Valli glimpses possibility—she wonders if she, too, might study medicine some day. But she can't abide the other leprosy patients and walks away from help. Eventually she returns, certain she wants a better future than life on the streets. Both Valli's first-person voice and her story are compelling in Deborah Ellis's eye-opening and accessible novel set in contemporary India. Valli is an appealing child whose ignorance can't mask either her intelligence or the goodness waiting to be uncovered in her heart. By story's end, Valli's future seems to be a hopeful one. (Ages 9–13)

**Grimes, Nikki. *Planet Middle School*. Bloomsbury, 2011. 150 pages (trade 978-1-59990-284-5, \$15.99)**

Joylin is a basketball-loving tomboy whose best friend KeeLee has suddenly become boy crazy at the start of middle school. Joy doesn't understand the sudden interest in girly things and resents the changing dynamic of their friendship. But then Joy develops a crush on a boy named Santiago, and it all begins to make sense. She still loves playing basketball with the guys, but when she starts wearing skirts and using makeup, they begin to treat her differently. Even Joy's long-time friend and basketball buddy Jake criticizes her changing behavior, yet doesn't think twice about making his own appreciative comments about the appearance of other girls. Written in verse, the novel is accessible and right on target for young readers, examining gender roles and expectations within a realistic and entertaining story about an African American girl. (Ages 10–14)

**Henkes, Kevin. *Junonia*. Greenwillow Books / HarperCollins, 2011. 176 pages (trade 978-0-06-196417-6, \$15.99)**

Alice is full of expectation as she and her parents begin their annual spring trip at the Florida coast—she's looking forward to celebrating her tenth birthday surrounded by the people she's always thought of as family. But from the moment they arrive, some things go wrong. It turns out the other family with kids that usually comes can't make it. Then a family friend gets stuck in New York. Mr. Barden, an elderly man with a nearby cabin, seems confused at times and says things to Alice that feel hurtful. And her mom's best friend, Kate—who always comes alone—arrives with a male companion and his young daughter, Mallory. The little girl is a challenge; her mother has left, and Mallory's sadness and uncertainty make for difficult and unpredictable behavior. Even as Alice continues to look forward to the big change of turning ten, these myriad small changes are unsettling. Quiet moments reveal as much as those of high drama in Kevin Henkes's masterful novel, with the thoughtful and particular way Alice sees the world illuminating how important “small” things so often are in the life of a child, for whom they are not small at all. Throughout the week, Alice is on the watch for a rare junonia shell. Accepting that reality won't always fit her idea

of perfection—with the shell, and with life—but that things just might turn out okay regardless, is one of many revelations in this story that superbly conveys the emotional landscape of childhood. (Ages 8–11)

**Hilmo, Tess. *With a Name Like Love*. Margaret Ferguson Books / Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011. 249 pages (trade 978-0-374-38465-4, \$16.99)**

Thirteen-year-old Ollie Love is the oldest of itinerant preacher Everlasting Love's five daughters. When the family stops for a few days in Binder, Arkansas, to preach, Ollie meets a boy named Jimmy Koppel. Jimmy's mother has recently been arrested for killing his father and is about to be sent to the prison after confessing to the crime. No one doubts Jimmy's mother had a reason to kill her abusive husband, but she's been shown no compassion and her rights have been ignored in a town where the Koppel family has always been treated like trash. Ollie, who longs to be in one place more than a few days, convinces her parents to stay awhile longer to try to help Jimmy and his mother, both of whom could benefit from kindness. Tess Hilmo's impressive debut novel defies stereotypes at every turn. Ollie's devoutly religious family is genuine and believable, every member a distinct, well-developed character. Residents of Binder also emerge into full relief over the course of the deftly paced story. Hilmo's portrait of family abuse, and of suspicion and small-mindedness and cruelty, is real, but so, too is the compassion she reveals in the hearts of many of her characters. What could have been an over-the-top spectacle in the hands of a less skilled writer is instead a down-to-earth, ultimately uplifting story. (Ages 10–13)

**Jenkins, Emily. *Invisible Inkling*. Illustrated by Harry Bliss. Balzer + Bray / HarperCollins, 2011. 153 pages (trade 978-0-06-180220-1, \$14.99)**

Nine-year-old Hank discovers an invisible furry creature in his parents' ice cream store—just days after his best friend moves away. "Inkling" soon takes up residence in Hank's room and becomes Hank's confidante, helping him navigate the start of fourth grade without a best friend and with a bully named Bruno making life miserable. There's a lot of humor in this engaging novel in which Inkling, while invisible, is far from imaginary. Inkling discovers the cheesy goodness of pizza, for example, but he needs squash for long-term sustenance. No one in Hank's family eats squash, making for a comical—and slightly alarming—scene in a natural foods store. Hank's frustration at how the adults around him respond to the bullying situation is realistic, as is his sense of satisfaction when Inkling bites Bruno. And the complexity of Hank's feelings when he exploits his knowledge of Bruno's difficult home life helps balance the presence of the bully-has-it-hard-at-home stereotype. But it's Hank's violation of Inkling's trust that proves to be his biggest challenge in this entertaining story about the start of a beautiful friendship. (Ages 7–10)

**Jenkins, Emily.** *Toys Come Home: Being the Early Experiences of an Intelligent Stingray, a Brave Buffalo, and a Brand-New Someone Called Plastic.* Illustrated by Paul O. Zelinsky. Schwartz & Wade, 2011. 144 pages (trade 978-0-375-86200-7, \$16.99)

A prequel to *Toys Go Out* (Schwartz & Wade, 2006) and *Toy Dance Party* (Schwartz & Wade, 2008), *Toys Come Home* will engage readers new to the story, as well as those for whom StingRay, Lumphy, and Plastic are familiar friends. Plush toy StingRay arrives at the Girl's house as a birthday gift. Her earliest days are like those of any newcomer: She must figure out where she fits in and gain understanding of the rules that govern behavior. Rebuffed by attempts to befriend authoritative walrus Bobby Dot, ancient and narcoleptic Sheep, and the tight-knit community of toy mice, unhappy StingRay resolves to run away. She only makes it as far as the basement, and when she's greeted upon her return by an affectionate Girl, StingRay realizes she's found what was missing: "Somebody to love. Somebody who will love her back." As in the previous books, each chapter covers an episode in toy life at the Girl's house. StingRay settles into her new home, jockeying with Bobby Dot for favorite toy status and enduring the indignity of a particularly rambunctious play date. A case of the stomach flu triggers upheaval among the toy population when a vomit-covered Bobby Dot doesn't survive a trip through the dryer. Lumphy the Buffalo makes his entrance, followed soon after by Plastic, and the stage is set for a memorable friendship among three little toys with big personalities. Short chapter lengths and occasional full-page illustrations contribute to the appeal of a book that begs to be read aloud. (Ages 6-8; younger for reading aloud)

**Jukes, Mavis.** *The New Kid.* Alfred A. Knopf, 2011. 277 pages (trade 978-0-375-85879-6, \$14.99)

Carson is moving with his dad to a new city. He's also moving from a private Montessori school to a public school. As Carson gets to know the kids in his new class, he's especially struck by Wes, who is sometimes out of control, seems to be a liar, but has a buoyant spirit that makes him appealing as a potential friend. Is Wes as bad as many of the other kids think? Eight going on nine, Carson is contemplating other big issues, too, most notably, that at nine he thinks he'll be too old to sleep with Moose, the stuffed animal that's been with him since the day his dad adopted Carson as an infant. Mavis Jukes's perceptive story features terrific social interactions among and between kids and adults alike. Carson's warm relationship with his dad unfolds as they talk and do many things together. And Wes is one of several secondary characters whose depths are slowly revealed. Carson, a precocious writer, is part of a classroom community full of well-developed individuals. Jukes has deftly penned a cast of characters who feel real and who provide young readers with opportunities to make connections to themselves and kids they know in a story full of warmth and humor. (Ages 7-9)

**Krishnaswami, Uma. *The Grand Plan to Fix Everything*. Illustrated by Abigail Halpin. Atheneum, 2011. 266 pages (trade 978-1-4169-9589-0, \$16.99)**

Indian American Dini and her best friend, Maddie, are two heartbroken eleven-year-olds after learning Dini's family is moving to India for two years after her mother receives a medical grant to work in the village of Swampnagiri. There's only one bright spot: Dini and Maddie are huge fans of Dolly Singh, star of their favorite Bollywood movies. Dini thinks she can track Dolly down and meet her, despite Bombay (as all the *filmi* people call Mumbai) being far from Swampnagiri. Uma Krishnaswami's lighthearted escapade is plotted like a Bollywood film, meaning the many obstacles that would seem to stand between Dini and Dolly will surely be overcome. There's plenty of coincidence fueling their eventual encounter in a story that not only follows Dini's life in India and her ongoing connection with Maddie via email, but also peeks in on the lives of Dolly and a variety of other characters who all have a role to play in Dini and Dolly's meeting. An over-the-top, movielike happy ending with all the characters' assorted problems clearing up simultaneously is simply part of the charm of this funny and original novel. (Ages 8-11)

**Lai, Thanhha. *Inside Out & Back Again*. Harper / HarperCollins, 2011. 262 pages (trade 978-0-06-196278-3, \$15.99)**

In South Vietnam in 1975, ten-year-old Ha lives with her mother and three older brothers. The violence of the Vietnam War reaches them in the midst of celebrating Tet—Vietnamese New Year. With Saigon falling, Ha's family makes it onto a transport ship. Their journey's ultimate end is the American Deep South: Alabama. Thanhha Lai's novel chronicles Ha's family's flight and adaptation to their new life in poems full of insight and sharp humor. For Ha, it's not just language and food and culture that are foreign, it's the faces and attitudes around her and the feelings she has about herself. While some people in their new community are kind to Ha's Vietnamese family, others are not. When her new teacher tells the class to clap when Ha counts to twenty in English, Ha is "furious / unable to explain / I already learned / fractions / and how to purify / river water. / So this is / what dumb / feels like. / I hate, hate, hate it." Ha's struggle with esteem, and the profound sense of longing in the story for what has been left behind, is balanced by the sense of looking forward to a future of hope as the strange new place begins to feel like home. Lai's writing vividly conveys characters, scenes, and emotions in this compelling debut. (Ages 10-13)

**Magoon, Kekla. *Camo Girl*. Aladdin / Simon & Schuster, 2011. 218 pages (trade 978-1-4169-7804-6, \$15.99)**

Sixth grader Ella is the only African American kid in her class at a school in a community outside Las Vegas. Her face is patches of dark and light, hence the cruel nickname Camo-Face and her unwillingness to believe she could be beautiful. But her status as an outsider is due to the fact that she has stood steadfastly by her best friend, a boy she calls Z, whose behavior is odd and unsettling to other kids. Then Bailey arrives at her school. Also



Black, he immediately fits in among the cool kids, yet he chooses to be Ella's friend, too. Spending time with Bailey and later with other kids jeopardizes Ella's friendship with Z. She's conflicted—she doesn't want to abandon Z but finds him challenging to be with. At the same time, she's unwilling to acknowledge just how far removed from reality he has become; his mind seems trapped in the fantasy world the two of them once created for fun. An over-the-top climactic trip to Las Vegas doesn't detract from the strengths of Kekla Magoon's novel, which offers terrific characterizations and an original, nuanced exploration of racial identity and self-esteem. Magoon also sensitively explores mental illness and the pain of loss—in one way or another, all three children are mourning the absence of their fathers—in a novel that sees Ella beginning to embrace a new understanding of herself as someone who is, indeed, beautiful. (Ages 10–13)

**McDonough, Yona Zeldis. *The Cats in the Doll Shop*. Illustrated by Heather Maione. Viking, 2011. 140 pages (trade 978–0–670–01279–4, \$14.99)**

Anna can't wait for her cousin Tania to arrive from Russia for an extended stay in their apartment above the family's doll shop. Anna even makes a special schoolgirl doll as a gift to welcome Tania to America. But when Tania arrives, she hardly talks to Anna or her sisters and acts strangely, hiding food beneath her pillow. Meanwhile, all the girls are drawn into a drama involving a stray cat who has given birth to kittens on a nearby building's balcony. The man who lives there cruelly sweeps the animals from their perch. Only one kitten and the mother survive. Anna's father doesn't believe in keeping cats inside a home, so he allows the girls to put food out for the mother, but not to bring her or the kitten inside. But Tania bonds with the cats in a way that she can't with the people around her, and they become one of the ways she begins to adjust to her life in America, opening doors to relationships with people, too. This sequel to *The Doll Shop Downstairs* (Viking, 2009) continues the story of Anna, her sisters Sophie and Trudie, and their parents, living on the Lower East Side of New York City during World War I. (Ages 7–9)

**Meloy, Maile. *The Apothecary*. Illustrated by Ian Schoenherr. Putnam, 2011. 368 pages (trade 978–0–399–25627–1, \$16.99)**

An immensely satisfying historical fantasy set during the Cold War opens as fourteen-year-old Janie's family flees to London because her parents, Hollywood writers, were about to be called before the House UnAmerican Activities Committee. Janie's anger at moving soon gives way to curiosity: Benjamin Burrows, a boy at her new school, is convinced that the Soviet diplomat father of one of their classmates is involved in some sort of intrigue and invites Janie to spy on the man with him. But they aren't prepared to see the man pass a note to Benjamin's father. It turns out that Benjamin's dad, an apothecary, is part of a small international group working to counter the nuclear threat to the world by using sophisticated magic to contain a nuclear explosion. Neither Eastern nor Western Bloc governments are happy about this discovery. Janie and Benjamin learn all this while on the run with Pip—a savvy street kid—after Benjamin's father disappears. He has left them *The Pharmacopoeia*, a centuries-old book of magic and potions, and

they use some of its simpler spells—like transforming into birds—to elude capture from agents on all sides. The trio tracks down the members of the nuclear containment group, including Benjamin’s dad, and discover they are planning to test their containment theory when the Soviets detonate a newly developed bomb in a remote area of the North Sea. Maile Meloy’s debut novel for children is a scintillating page-turner featuring wonderfully appealing characters in a story of adventure and mystery firmly grounded in the tense political climate of the 1950s. (Ages 10–14)

**Murphy, Sally. *Pearl Verses the World*. Illustrated by Heather Potter. U.S. edition: Candlewick Press, 2011. 73 pages (trade 978–0–7636–4821–3, \$14.99)**

“There are three people at our house: me, / my mom, / and my granny. / And that is how it has been / for as long as I can remember.” But Pearl’s Granny no longer remembers who Pearl is. Pearl’s feelings about Granny’s illness, and then her death, are at the heart of this tender story in the voice of a young poet. For Pearl, home has always been her haven—the place where she is seen and understood. In the schoolyard she feels invisible. In the classroom, her teacher, Miss Bruff, asks the students to write poems “with lots of rhyme and rhythm . . . there is no rhythm in me. / There is no rhythm in my life.” As she navigates her feelings of sadness and grief, Pearl finds some unexpected connections—with her teacher, with a classmate—and the ability to “feel happy-sad / that life goes on.” Sally Murphy writes about dying, death, and grief with honesty and depth in this short, surprising novel featuring delicate black-and-white illustrations on almost every page. (Ages 8–10)

**Newman, John. *Mimi*. U.S. edition: Candlewick Press, 2011. 192 pages (trade 978–0–7636–5415–3, \$15.99)**

“Monday is Granny’s day . . . Tuesday is Aunt M.’s day.” Mimi’s mom died five months ago, and she and her older siblings, Conor and Sally, would be lost without the support of their wonderful extended family. Her grandparents, aunts, and uncles provide routine and a sense of normalcy while her dad remains in a fog of depression. But even surrounded by so much love, it still hurts. At school, Mimi struggles to stay engaged until a terrific new teacher combines compassion with expectation. At home, she and Sally are often at odds. Mimi has been reading Sally’s diary and discovers Sally has a secret: She’s been stealing from the neighborhood store. When Sally is caught, the resulting drama and chaos shock Mimi’s dad into action, and gradually the family begins to function again. Mimi’s voice is childlike and believable, and the behavior of Mimi and her siblings as well as her lively and loving extended family is utterly real, in John Newman’s honest, tender novel. As an aside, Mimi is adopted from China, while her two older siblings are not. When a classmate makes a nasty comment, saying Mimi hasn’t lost her “real” mother, Mimi’s response powerfully negates that lie and is a cathartic moment in the narrative. (Ages 8–10)

**Okorafor, Nnedi. *Akata Witch*. Viking, 2011. 349 pages (trade 978-0-670-01196-4, \$17.99)**

Sunny, born in the United States to Nigerian parents, returned to Nigeria with her family when she was nine. Now twelve, she's taunted by her peers because she's an albino. Her West African physical features, at odds with her blond hair, hazel eyes, and skin "the color of 'sour milk,'" make her the target of bullies. Then Sunny discovers it's not just her physical appearance that's unusual: She is one of the Leopard people, a "free agent" witch who possesses latent magical skills and the power to work juju. Unlike her classmate Orlu, and Chichi, a neighborhood girl, who both come from magical families, she knows nothing about the world of magic. Orlu and Chichi become Sunny's initial guides, introducing her to their teachers and the community of Leopard people. No one at home knows Sunny is moving back and forth between worlds, let alone that she, Orlu, Chichi, and Sasha, a Leopard boy visiting from Chicago, have become an Oha coven, fated to confront the Black Hat serial killer terrorizing communities in the area. At the heart of Sunny's journey into this distinctive realm of magic that coexists with the everyday world are the friendships she forges with other young Leopard people in Nnedi Okorafor's fresh fantasy novel. The Nigerian setting and culture and well-developed characters have us hoping book two won't be long in coming. (Ages 10-13)

**Oliver, Lauren. *Liesl & Po*. Illustrated by Kei Acedera. Harper / HarperCollins, 2011. 307 pages (trade 978-0-06-201451-1, \$16.99)**

Orphans, magic, alchemy, and ghosts abound in Lauren Oliver's first venture into middle-grade fiction. Liesl's evil stepmother has kept her locked in the attic for months, during which time her father died. Po, a ghost child with no memory of life before dying, and Bundle, a ghost animal, bring Liesl news of her father from the Other Side (a hopeless limbo): He wants to go home. Meanwhile, Will, apprentice to a cruel alchemist, bungles the delivery of an important magical spell when he inadvertently switches it for Liesl's father's ashes. Liesl, determined to bury her father next to her mother's grave at their old home in the mountains, escapes with Po's and Bundle's help, making off with what she thinks are the ashes but in fact is the box filled with powerful magic. Will, on the run from a guard for the Lady Premiere—intended recipient of the magic—eventually meets up with Liesl in a story in which fate is an ever-present player. While the man chasing Will only wants to give him a warm hat, the other adults—nasty through and through—figure out the ashes/magic mix-up and are quickly on the children's trail with far more sinister intentions. The chase, near misses, and last-minute escapes make for exciting reading while Liesl and Will's developing friendship, and Po's and Bundle need to end their aimless wandering, add poignant notes to a story in which all the pieces fall into place like a well-designed puzzle. (Ages 8-12)

**Patron, Susan. *Lucky for Good*. Illustrated by Erin McGuire. Atheneum, 2011. 224 pages (trade 978-1-4169-9058-1, \$16.99)**

Susan Patron takes one more trip back to Hard Pan, California (Pop. 43), the setting for *The Higher Power of Lucky* (2006) and *Lucky Breaks* (2009), both published by Atheneum. Brigitte's Hard Pan Café will have to close unless Brigitte can come up with a kitchen that isn't part of the trailer she and Lucky live in. Everyone in town rallies to make a suggestion turn into a workable solution—even the visiting health inspector who cited Brigitte gets caught up in the spirit of it all. Meanwhile, Lucky and her friend Paloma are on the lookout for irony; Lucky gets in a fight at school; and Justine, mom of Lucky's young friend Miles, has been released from prison and returned to Hard Pan. Justine tells Miles that some of the books he loves to read, about dinosaurs and science, contradict the *Bible*. This is a struggle for Miles, and also for Lucky and her friend Lincoln in their conversations with him. Patron's measured, nuanced novel features a cast of distinct individuals who are characterized with great respect. Justine's love for Miles and his for her are never in doubt, nor is the enduring sense of community in Hard Pan in a story full of big ideas, small moments, warmth, and humor. (Ages 8–11)

**Peck, Richard. *Secrets at Sea*. Illustrated by Kelly Murphy. Dial, 2011. 238 pages (trade 978-0-8037-3455-5, \$16.99)**

The year is 1887, and mouse siblings Helena, Louise, Beatrice, and Lamont are living contentedly in the Cranston household of the Hudson River Valley. Their predictable routine is interrupted when they learn that their human housemates plan to sail to Europe to find a husband for their daughter. Solidarity between mice and their house humans is a longstanding tradition, so despite an aversion to water, the four find themselves heading to England by sea just in time for Queen Victoria's Jubilee. Their shipboard adventures involve new friends (both human and rodent), many close calls and narrow escapes, and a brush with royalty. This lighthearted tale is both lively and humorous, with a sensibility that melds *The Borrowers* with *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*. Gender stereotypes and class roles of the era promote an old-fashioned feeling, which is nicely countered by Helena's take-charge attitude and proactive approach to solving her family's problems. (Ages 8–12)

**Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *Bird in a Box*. Illustrated by Sean Qualls. Little, Brown, 2011. 278 pages (trade 978-0-316-07403-2, \$16.99)**

This novel set primarily in 1937 builds to the historic boxing match between Joe Louis and James Braddock when Louis became Heavyweight champion. But its focus is three African American kids in interconnecting stories. Hibernia is a talented singer who dreams of stardom; Otis was recently orphaned; and Willie fled his home to escape an abusive father. Otis and Willie meet at the Mercy Home for Orphaned Negroes. Hibernia meets them both when her church youth choir performs at the home. Hibernia's

mother abandoned her family to pursue her own dreams of stardom when Hibernia was a baby; now Hibernia's strict preacher father is unsupportive of her desire to sing professionally but she's determined to grab any chance she gets. Otis's father gave him the radio he treasures after finally finding a job; not long after both of Otis's parents were killed in a car accident. Willie's mother sent him to Mercy after his father severely burned the boy's hands; she knew she could no longer protect her son. The two boys draw strength from their friendship—a circle that expands to include Hibernia—and all three, like the larger Black community, draw strength from the hope and promise that Joe Louis represents. Pinkney's engaging narrative is full of vivid details of the Depression era, graced by lively language, and buoyed by a sense of hope and promise represented in her three main characters and the vibrant community of which they are a part. (Ages 8–12)

**Rocklin, Joanne. *One Day and One Amazing Morning on Orange Street. Amulet / Abrams, 2011. 207 pages (trade 978-0-8109-9719-6, \$16.95)***

For the current generation of kids on Orange Street, the single orange tree on their block—all that's left from what was once an entire grove—is a gathering place. As their individual stories unfold in this short, extraordinary novel, so, too, does a sense of the neighborhood and relationships—both within and beyond their families—that are so much a part of their lives. Ali's little brother Edgar is recovering from surgery for a brain tumor; once a lively toddler, he hasn't spoken since. Bunny is as quiet as her name suggests and goes through rituals every time her mom travels for business to make sure her plane will land safely. Leandra is bold and bossy but has been hiding several secret fears since her mom announced her pregnancy. Robert is learning magic so that he can wow everyone with his tricks, especially his dad—and Ali. The stories of other individuals on Orange Street, most notably Mrs. Snoop, who can vividly recall the details of her childhood on the block but not what she did five minutes ago, and a mysterious stranger who, it turns out, has something to do with the orange cone that's been placed on the street near the tree, also unfold in a story that touches on history (the Great Depression, the Vietnam War) while revealing the small miracles of everyday life found in family, friendship, and community. (Ages 9–12)

**Schatz, Pat. *Bluefish. Candlewick Press, 2011. 240 pages (trade 978-0-7636-5334-7, \$15.99)***

Travis lives with his alcoholic grandpa, who is barely making ends meet. When they move to a new town to start over, he feels like an outsider in his new school, until he is befriended by another outsider, a smart, funny girl who has completely embraced the nickname her schoolmates taunt her with: Velveeta. Travis knows what it's like to have a nickname that sticks. His own from his previous school was Bluefish, the name of the lowest reading group he was in during first grade—and, in fact, he has never learned to read. Both Travis and Velveeta are mourning the loss of someone they loved (Travis: his dog; Velveeta: an elderly neighbor who was kind to her), and their stories are told in alternating points of view. A third friend who joins their circle comes from a middle-class family, but he is small for his age and frequently

the target of bullies. Even though Travis's and Velveeta's families are living on the edge of economic survival, just barely scraping by, their resilience and friendship hold them together. Author Pat Schmatz portrays a middle-school student who can't read—and his struggles to learn how under the tutelage of a gifted, caring teacher. Original storytelling, fresh characters, distinctive voices, and a well-realized rural Wisconsin setting make this an engaging and satisfying story. (Ages 10–14)

**Selznick, Brian. *Wonderstruck*. Scholastic Press, 2011. 640 pages (trade 978–0–545–02789–2, \$29.99)**

As he did in *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (Scholastic Press, 2007), Brian Selznick again alternates prose and visual storytelling, in this case weaving two compelling tales into a satisfying whole. In 1977, Ben finds clues to the identity of the father he's never known that lead him to New York City and the American Museum of Natural History. For Ben, who was born deaf in one ear and has recently lost his hearing in the other, running away from his relatives in Minnesota is more than a search for his father; it's also a search for meaningful connection missing since his mother's death. In 1927, Rose is growing up in a wealthy home in New Jersey. She is deaf and defiantly resists her father's demands that she learn to lip-read and speak. Deeply unhappy, she runs away to New York City to see her mother, a silent film star with little interest in Rose. After her mother's rejection, Rose goes to the American Museum of Natural History, where her older brother works. Fifty years later, Ben has found shelter and help at the Museum thanks to Jamie, a lonely boy whose father works there. He also begins to find answers about his father—an artist who worked for the museum—in the exhibits and in the files he explores with Jamie's help. Those answers ultimately connect Ben and Rose in this story that has elements of mystery while offering insight into both friendship and family. Ben's story is told almost entirely through prose, while Rose's unfolds in detailed, dramatic pencil drawings. As the two stories merge, so too do the two narrative mediums. (Ages 8–13)

**Shang, Wendy Wan-Long. *The Great Wall of Lucy Wu*. Scholastic Press, 2011. 312 pages (trade 978–0–545–16215–9, \$17.99)**

Sixth grader Lucy Wu is angry to discover that the long-awaited room she thought she'd finally have to herself once her sister leaves for college is not to be: Great Aunt Yi Po, whom she has never met, is coming from China. Things get worse when her parents decide she has to attend Chinese School on Saturdays. Meanwhile, she's battling with a stuck-up girl named Sloane for captain of the sixth-grade basketball team at middle school. Debut author Wendy Wan-Long Shang balances both family and school stories with unsuspected depth and cultural substance in this middle-grade novel featuring a brisk plot and plenty of humor. Convinced both Yi Po's presence and Chinese school are going to ruin her life, Lucy is in for some surprises, not the least of which is discovering that her great aunt understands and supports her passion for basketball—something her own parents do not. (Ages 9–13)

**Smith, Clete Barrett. *Aliens on Vacation*. Illustrated by Christian Slade. Disney / Hyperion, 2011. 251 pages (trade 978-1-4231-3363-6, \$16.99)**

Scrub's grandma runs the "Intergalactic Bed-and-Breakfast," an inn that caters to science fiction fanatics. At least that's what Scrub has always been told. When he comes to stay with her for the summer, he goes quickly from embarrassment ("The house was jet black, with huge murals of comets and stars and planets on each side, painted on with what looked like glittery nail polish") to dismay when he learns her clientele are the real thing—aliens from other galaxies. In fact, her inn has become a universal vacation destination—literally! The sheriff in the small Washington state town where she lives has been getting suspicious about her unusual guests, and Scrub's grandma is hoping Scrub can help her disguise new arrivals so they better blend in. Scrub deals with the mayhem of his grandma's business, the mounting threat from the sheriff, and his first crush—on the sheriff's daughter, no less—in Clete Barrett Smith's clever, lighthearted offering. (Ages 8–11)

**Spire, Ashley. *Binky Under Pressure*. (A Binky Adventure) Kids Can Press, 2011. 64 pages (trade 978-1-55453-504-0, \$16.95)**

When Binky the cat's space station (i.e., home) is invaded by foster cat Gracie, Binky is at first merely alarmed by the idea of another feline encroaching on his turf. He soon discovers that Gracie is more than just another stray, and he must prove that he's still worthy of F.U.R.S.T. (Felines of the Universe Ready for Space Travel) membership as she puts him through his paces. But when the two discover an invading alien horde (bees), they join forces to battle the threat. This sequel to *Binky the Space Cat* (Kids Can Press, 2009) offers the same blend of quirkiness and charm. Binky is as singular as they come yet wholly catlike in Ashley Spire's hilarious graphic novel. (Ages 7–10)

**Stanley, Diane. *The Silver Bowl*. Harper / HarperCollins, 2011. 307 pages (trade 978-0-06-157543-3, \$16.99)**

Molly is rough and uneducated when she's sent to Dethemere Castle at seven and begins work as a scullery maid. But she's also spirited and intelligent. Years pass and Molly is promoted to polishing silver, and she's soon given care of a large, beautiful hand basin. While working on the bowl's etched interior, Molly has visions of a curse on the royal family. Rumors of a curse have abounded for years; now Molly has proof but she cannot share it: Admitting she has visions would put her in danger. After "seeing" the newly crowned king's death, she confides in her good friend Tobias, who works in the stables. The two are unable to save the king when he is attacked by a band of wolves during a wedding banquet, but they do rescue his brother, Prince Alaric. On the run with the injured prince, they eventually take refuge in a monastery, where plans are made to challenge the usurper who has taken Alaric's place on the throne, and to destroy the silver bowl that holds the curse. Diane Stanley's imaginative fantasy features fast-paced action and a feisty young hero, but Molly isn't the only appealing character. Alaric is a young man whose sense of privilege wanes as he spends time among those with little or nothing and develops a new understanding of what makes a good king, and Tobias is steadfast, smart, and devoted to Molly. The developing relationship

among all three characters is at the heart of a story that includes intrigue, mystery, and the satisfying triumph of good over evil. (Ages 10–14)

**Tan, Shaun. *Lost & Found*. Arthur A. Levine Books / Scholastic Inc., 2011. 128 pages (trade 978–0–545-22924–1, \$21.99)**

A girl's sense of isolation, despair, and disconnection is disrupted by sudden beauty in a seemingly grim world. A strange, lost object's fate takes an unexpected turn after a young man who notices it embarks on a search for where it belongs, instead finding a refuge for oddities—a place where it might be happy. An indigenous voice describes the destruction of land and culture by the rabbits that colonized the region generations before. Three unusual stories—two written by Shaun Tan, the third by John Marsden, and all featuring Tan's distinctive, imaginative art—comprise a collection inviting thought and reflection. “The Red Tree” is emotionally arresting with its stunning visual portrayal of depression into which hope emerges, a tiny offering that suddenly bursts the girl's world of darkness. In “The Lost Thing,” a society's indifference is confounded by an act of compassion. And in “The Rabbits,” the parallel to Australian Aboriginal history in the wake of colonial domination is obvious and intended. All three stories feature Tan's intricate, detailed art depicting worlds that have been consumed, at least in part, by technology in a volume that affirms the value of nature, connection, and caring, and that will be enriched by what each reader brings to his or her understanding of the stories. Tan provides a commentary on each story in an afterword. (Age 10 and older)

**Tak, Bibi Dumon. *Soldier Bear*. Translated from the Dutch by Laura Watkinson. Illustrated by Philip Hopman. Eerdmans, 2011. 145 pages (trade 978–0–8028-5375–2, \$13.00)**

During World War II, a Polish supply unit serving in Iran encountered a young boy who asked if they would trade food and money for what he was carrying in a squirming burlap bag. They opened the bag to reveal a bear cub, and the soldiers readily agreed to the trade. They named the little bear Voytek and took him into their unit as a mascot. Voytek traveled with them everywhere they went, quickly winning over even the most hardened officers with his amusing antics. He was even officially sworn into the Polish Army as a private. As he grew, the bear not only entertained the soldiers by getting into mischief, he also lifted their spirits and raised morale in the midst of war's harsh realities. With a pitch-perfect storytelling voice, this short, poignant novel remarkably recreates a time and a place, and is all the more unusual because it's based on something that actually happened. Black-and-white photographs accompany an author's note at the end, showing us the real Voytek and some of the men with whom he served. (Ages 7–10)

**Ursu, Anne. *Breadcrumbs*. Walden Pond Press / HarperCollins, 2011. 312 pages (trade 978–0–06–201505–1, \$16.99)**

A novel inspired in part by *The Snow Queen* inhabits two wintry worlds: one realistic, the other enchanted. Being brown-skinned and adopted wouldn't be such a problem for Hazel if it didn't underscore the bigger way she's



different: her personality and interests aren't in synch with most other kids. The bright spot since she had to change schools following her dad's departure has been her continuing friendship with Jack, who manages to be loyal to Hazel—the two share a vivid imagination and love of adventure—while maintaining other friendships. Still, a potential new friendship for Hazel leaves her feeling guilty about Jack, whose life is shadowed by his seriously depressed mother. But Jack's dismissive behavior after Hazel hits him with a snowball is so extraordinary that Hazel is sure there's something seriously wrong. And she's right: a small piece of glass embedded in the snowball cut Jack's eye. It came from the Snow Queen's mirror and it's turning Jack's heart to ice. He becomes an easy target when the Snow Queen lures him away, and Hazel enters the woods where Jack was last seen, crossing a veil into a dark, fairy-tale world to find him. Hazel encounters archetypal characters from the world of folklore as she seeks out the Snow Queen's lair, but whom can she trust? There are surprises at every turn in Anne Ursu's deft, immensely satisfying blend of contemporary realistic fiction and fantasy that affirms the powerful bond of friendship. (Ages 9–12)

**Van Allsburg, Chris.** *The Chronicles of Harris Burdick: 14 Amazing Authors Tell the Tales. With an introduction by Lemony Snicket.* Houghton Mifflin, 2011. 195 pages (trade 978-0-547-54810-4, \$24.99)

For years the surreal images in *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* (Houghton Mifflin, 1984) have been used by classroom teachers and others to invite speculation and story-making by children. Here, they have invited speculation and accomplished story-making from fourteen contributing authors. The premise laid out in the introduction is that the drawings of the (fictional) Burdick, who disappeared over twenty-five years ago after leaving his extraordinary images with a (fictional) editor, have led fourteen different authors to spin these wide-ranging, far-reaching tales. (An introduction by Lemony Snicket speculates that Burdick himself is the author, with the contributors only acting as fronts. Snicket offers comic anecdotal evidence to support his theory.) This collection of stories stands out from most anthologies first and foremost for the consistent strength of the writing, although the unsettling, magical, or mysterious tenor of the tales and of course the images themselves are also noteworthy. The contributors are Tabitha King, Jon Scieszka, Sherman Alexie, Gregory Maguire, Cory Doctorow, Jules Feiffer, Linda Sue Park, Walter Dean Myers, Lois Lowry, Kate DiCamillo, M. T. Anderson, Louis Sachar, Chris Van Allsburg, and Stephen King. (Ages 9–13)

**Yee, Lisa.** *Warp Speed.* Arthur A. Levine Books / Scholastic Inc., 2011. 310 pages (trade 978-0-545-12276-4, \$16.99)

Marley considers himself a nobody at his middle school to everyone but his fellow AV club members and the bullies who love to pick on him and his friends. They feel powerless and have learned to roll with it, but then the administration gets involved. "Be a Buddy, Not a Bully!" becomes the motto of the lame campaign that is mocked by bullies and victims alike in Lisa Yee's funny look at the life of a middle schooler learning he's somebody after all.

Marley's parents own a classic movie theater that is on the brink of extinction, although Marley and his dad think great films should never go out of style. Meanwhile, Marley and his AV club buddies are engaged in an ongoing battle of their own: Which is coolest—*Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, or *Batman*? (Marley comes down firmly on the side of *Star Trek*; he regularly writes in his "Captain's Log.") Marley's friends and family members (including a mother who happens to be blind) are terrifically characterized and their relationships warm and genuine in a story that features a secondary character from Yee's earlier novels about Millicent Min, Stanford Wong, and Emily Ebers coming into his own. The resolution of Marley's conflict with the main bully falls back on stereotypical plot elements, but that doesn't detract from the book's overall honesty and appeal. (Ages 10–14)

**Yelchin, Eugene. *Breaking Stalin's Nose*. Henry Holt, 2011. 151 pages (trade 978-0-8050-9216-5, \$15.99)**

Growing up in Moscow in the mid-twentieth century, ten-year-old Sasha worships Joseph Stalin and can't wait to take the oath as a Young Pioneer. His father is a member of the secret police, and for the two of them life is good. But everything changes over a two-day period after his father is arrested and friends, neighbors, and even family members turn on Sasha. Initially, he is certain that his father's arrest has been a mistake, but as the day wears on he gets glimpses of a capricious, cruel government he never knew existed; and it's one in which his father played a part prior to his downfall. When Sasha himself accidentally breaks the nose off of a statue of Stalin in his school corridor, he sees two of his innocent classmates accused, furthering his sudden awakening to the reality of Stalin's oppressive regime. Expressive line drawings by the author enhance the sense of time and place of this chilling, fast-paced novel. (Ages 9–12)

**Yep, Laurence. *The Star Maker*. Harper / HarperCollins, 2011. 100 pages (trade 978-0-06-025315-8, \$15.99)**

In the early 1950s, Chinese American Artie is eight, the youngest cousin in his large extended family. Tired of being picked on at the kids' table at a family dinner one day, Artie boldly announces he'll provide fireworks for the Chinese New Year. But Artie has no money, and he isn't even sure how far off Chinese New Year is. Enter Uncle Chester. He has a huge heart but can't hold down a job. He never arrives at family functions on time. He isn't even married, to the dismay of some adults in the family. But Artie loves him, and Uncle Chester promises to help Artie with the fireworks. As the New Year approaches, however, Artie begins to doubt whether Uncle Chester can really come through. Yep wonderfully conveys both the time period and place (San Francisco's Chinatown) while getting the family dynamics just right in a satisfying story that ends—of course!—with a bang. (Ages 7–10)

## Fiction for Young Adults

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**Aronson, Marc and Charles R. Smith Jr., editors. *Pick-Up Game: A Full Day of Full Court*. Candlewick Press, 2011. 170 pages (trade 978-0-7636-4562-5, \$15.99)**

Ten authors create an entire day of full court, pick-up games at the Cage in Greenwich Village, New York City, through this collection of basketball stories. Some characters are out to make some cash—betting on winning—others are there to impress and challenge each other, and a few are there just to watch, hoping to get noticed. The Cage has a reputation for being *the* place to show your skills, and this particular Saturday it's full of action. A different author wrote each story, in order, requiring him or her to work with characters someone else introduced, sometimes moving them to secondary rolls and introducing new ones, and often presenting intriguing new perspectives on insights into individuals. Charles R. Smith Jr.'s photographs and poems, combined with compelling characters and a strong sense of setting, allow even someone without knowledge of basketball to get wrapped up in the Cage scene. (Age 13 and older)

**Beam, Cris. *I Am J*. Little, Brown, 2011. 326 pages (trade 978-0-316-05361-7, \$16.99)**

J is a transgender teen, struggling to come out to those around him. While strangers often recognize him for the boy he is, some respond with name-calling: “faggot.” His best friend, Melissa, thinks he’s a lesbian, and his parents don’t know what to make of J, although his father affirms he’s still “Daddy’s little girl.” Certain his parents will not be able to accept that he isn’t a girl at all, J leaves home, eventually moving in with Melissa and her mother. When J finally tells the truth to his own mother, her response is to pull away. She sees J periodically, but explains that his dad doesn’t want to see J at all (a lie that later leaves J feeling profoundly hurt and angry). Chris Beam’s third-person narrative is especially effective in exploring J’s feeling of being so disconnected from his physical body—which has always contradicted who J knew himself to be—especially when J reached puberty and began developing breasts. Beam also explores J’s ongoing struggle to assert his identity to people who’ve known him all along. Many of them assume J has only recently decided to become a boy. He must repeatedly insist that this is who he has always been. And with trust a fragile thing, J also struggles what to reveal as he navigates a romantic relationship with a girl named Blue. But by novel’s end, with the help of friends and the wider transgender community, J begins the process of transforming his body with testosterone injections in this thought-provoking story with complex and very human characters. (Age 13 and older)

**Billingsley, Franny. *Chime*. Dial, 2011. 361 pages (trade 978-0-8037-3552-1, \$17.99)**

Seventeen-year-old Briony believes she is a witch who has the power to hurt those she loves. She is certain she caused her stepmother's death as well as her twin sister Rose's difficulties—Rose has the mind of a child and is prone to fierce outbursts. But Briony knows she will probably be killed if it's discovered she's a witch, and for all her self-loathing her desire to live is fierce. Briony's passion for life is further fueled by her blossoming romance with Eldric, a young man staying with her family, but she often feels on uncertain ground with him. There is an uneasy balance between the world of witches and magic and the human world in Briony's English village of Swampsea. Briony's stepmother knew about this balance and for years helped Briony curb her true nature—or did she? As Franny Billingsley's psychologically complex tale unfolds, everything Briony believes—about herself, her damaged sister, her beloved stepmother, and her distant father—unravels as years of manipulation by Briony's stepmother gradually come to light. Briony's memorable voice offers up fresh, astonishing, clever descriptions in a story that works as both fantasy and satisfying romance but also speaks powerfully as a portrait of a teen overcoming self-hatred and learning she is worthy of love. (Age 13 and older)

**Bray, Libba. *Beauty Queens*. Scholastic Press, 2011. 396 pages (trade 978-0-439-89597-2, \$18.99)**

An airplane with the 50 Teen Dream beauty contestants has crash landed on a remote tropical island. Ms. Texas puts herself in charge of the small group of survivors with food, shelter, and footwork her priorities. (Of course they should practice their dance routines!) Smart, biting dialogue; witty adaptations of beauty contest skills and supplies for survival; and hilarious commercial vignettes for Corporation (the contest sponsor) beauty products are one dimension of this darkly comic, over-the-top novel. But the young women also begin to reveal dimensions of who they really are beneath the polished veneers: Jennifer is a lesbian and aspiring comics artist, Petra is transgender and a killer clothes designer (not to mention former lead singer of a boy band), Mary Lou has taken a vow of chastity. Shanti and Nicole, the two surviving contestants of color, find friendship in talking honestly about race, culture, and their real dreams. Sosie, who is deaf, teaches Jennifer a about ability, sign language, and love. The young women prove to be capable and competent as they await rescue, unaware that the Corporation has other plans for them. Libba Bray's scathingly funny novel shows immense respect for teen readers as it makes fun of our cultural obsession with beauty, consumerism, and contrived reality TV (did we mention the pirates?) while challenging sexism, stereotypes, and cultural expectations for girls and young women. Bray also provokes thought about the role of corporate America in governance and foreign policy, and gets in more than a few digs at colonialism and the exploitation of developing nations for the benefit of corporate bottom lines, beautifully balancing it all in one of the most entertaining reads of the year. (Age 14 and older)

**Brooks, Martha. *Queen of Hearts*. U.S. edition: Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011. 214 pages (trade 978-0-374-34229-6, \$17.99)**

Marie-Claire lives with her family on the Manitoba prairie during World War II. After Marie-Claire and her younger siblings are diagnosed with tuberculosis, they are sent to a nearby sanatorium, where Marie-Claire meets Signy, another teen in the ward. Signy, already a long-time resident, is happy to know another girl her age and welcomes Marie-Claire enthusiastically. She treats Marie-Claire like a best friend from the start, including sharing gifts sent by her wealthy, seldom-seen parents. Marie-Claire senses Signy's neediness and often resents it, even as she struggles with her own loneliness and fear. Through weeks and months in which endless bed rest is only disrupted by painful setbacks, moments of despair, and occasional happy surprises, Marie-Claire's condition gradually—so, so slowly—improves, while Signy's does not. When Marie-Claire is able to leave the ward and move into one of the cottages on the grounds, she feels guilty. Yet it's easy to not visit Signy, until it's almost too late, and then it's suddenly hard to stay away. It's a revelation for Marie-Claire when both girls finally move beyond pretense, prickliness, and fear and discover fertile ground where a real friendship takes root. Martha Brooks explores a developing, at times uncertain friendship with insight and honesty that will resonate with many teens in a novel that also offers an illuminating look at the devastation of tuberculosis, which still exists in many places today. (Age 13 and older)

**Broskol, Vera. *Anya's Ghost*. First Second, 2011. 221 pages (trade 978-1-59643-713-5, \$19.99; pbk. 978-1-59643-552-0, \$15.99)**

Anya feels disengaged at high school; at odds with her lone friend, Siobhan; annoyed with her Russian mother; and invisible to the popular boy she admires from a distance. Stomping through a park, oblivious to everything but her overwrought emotions, she steps straight into a deep well ... and discovers a skeleton, along with the talkative ghost to whom it belongs. Emily tells Anya that she's been trapped for ninety years, chased to her death by the man who murdered her parents, and bound in place by an inability to leave her bones. When Anya is rescued she unknowingly takes Emily's pinky bone with her, enabling Emily to come along. Once she adjusts to the bizarre prospect of a ghostly companion, Anya starts to enjoy the advantages: her grades improve as invisible Emily scouts classmates' tests and reports the answers; Anya has a conversation with the boy of her dreams; Emily urges her to pursue a relationship with him; and best of all, Anya no longer feels lonely. But it turns out that Emily's hiding a few things, including the truth about her past. As Anya starts to investigate what really happened ninety years before, Emily's malevolent nature is revealed and becomes a threat to Anya and her family, giving Anya new appreciation for things that really matter to her. Vera Broskol's engaging graphic novel blends an insightful, often funny look at adolescence and the immigrant experience with a satisfyingly unsettling ghost story. (Age 12 and older)

**Carson, Rae. *The Girl of Fire and Thorns*. Greenwillow Books / HarperCollins, 2011. 423 pages (trade 978-0-06-202648-4, \$17.99)**

Sixteen-year-old Elisa, second daughter of the King of Oravalle, is the bearer of the Godstone—a jewel in her navel. While she's always been told her destiny is to do something great, it isn't until Elisa arrives in the kingdom of Joya d'Arena as new wife of the king that she discovers an entire prophecy about the Godstone bearer. As she studies the enigmatic legend, she's also navigating an awkward position at court: Her new husband, kind but inattentive, will not publicly acknowledge her as his wife. At a council session to discuss a growing threat from the kingdom of Invernie, Elisa also sees he is plagued by indecision. When members of a desert tribe kidnap Elisa, believing her power as stone bearer can be used against Invernie animagi who kill and maim with magic, Elisa discovers that the Invernie have been attacking them for years while the king did nothing. She becomes devoted to the desert people's struggle and proves to be a master strategist. But the Invernie turn out to be most interested in obtaining Elisa's Godstone, which makes understanding the prophecy more important than ever. A story full of action and intrigue is beautifully weighted by the complexity of its themes (from religion to politics to war) and characters, including a hero who is one of many strong, smart women in Rae Carson's rich debut fantasy. Elisa's physical transformation—she starts out overweight but ends up a fit warrior—is the only predictable plot element in a rewarding novel that rises far above most fantasy offerings. (Ages 12–16)

**Castellucci, Cecil. *First Day on Earth*. Scholastic Press, 2011. 160 pages (trade 978-0-545-06082-0, \$17.99)**

Mal is a teenage loner—the kind of kid, he notes, who others probably think is on the verge of doing something violent. In truth, Mal rescues stray animals and quietly watches over a few stray kids at school, too, as well as his alcoholic mother at home. Mal is also harboring a secret: He was abducted by aliens from space when he was twelve—not long after his dad abandoned their family. Mal knows people will think he's crazy so he's told no one. Then Mal meets Hooper at a support group for alien abductees—the first place Mal finally tells his story. Hooper is another stray, but he's also someone Mal believes might truly understand what happened to him. Yet when Hooper tells Mal his own story—who he is, and where he's from—Mal struggles to believe him, an irony that isn't lost on him. Readers, too, are never quite sure what to believe in Cecil Castellucci's singular and surprising novel. A climactic road trip for Mal, Hooper, and two kids from Mal's school offers up perhaps one too many cathartic revelations, but this doesn't detract from the impact of this riveting, emotionally compelling read. Castellucci not only affirms the hope that is found in connection with others, she also shows much respect for both her characters and her readers by refusing to offer up a definitive, rational explanation for the alien experiences in the story. (Age 13 and older)

**Cofer, Judith Ortiz. *If I Could Fly*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011. 195 pages (trade 978-0-374-33517-5, \$17.99)**

Doris's parents have been focused on their music careers as *salseros* much of her life, so she's used to taking care of herself. But that doesn't lessen the hurt when her mother leaves. It's only later that Doris learns Mami is seriously ill and has gone home to Puerto Rico. Doris resists her father's efforts to be more involved in her life, as well as the attempts of his new girlfriend to befriend her, and grows tired of the sympathetic glances from everyone at high school, where she once excelled. She turns to her best friend, Arturo, for solace and support. But Arturo, who is gay, faces trouble of his own from thugs in the neighborhood. Doris also reconnects with her old friend Yolanda, whose life has taken some hard turns. When Yolanda is arrested for shooting her former boyfriend, Doris flees the inevitable barrage of questions. Taking refuge like her mother at her Abuela's home in Puerto Rico, Doris finds it easy to imagine a future on the island taking care of Mami, and even following in her footsteps as a singer. Judith Ortiz Cofer revisits the some of the characters in the Paterson, New Jersey, barrio neighborhood first introduced in *An Island Like You* (Orchard, 1995) as a teenage girl learns to accept people in spite of their failures. Only then can she truly determine where she belongs. (Age 13 and older)

**Cross, Gillian. *Where I Belong*. U.S. edition: Holiday House, 2011. 245 pages (trade 978-0-8234-2332-3, \$17.95)**

Contemporary Somalia is the subject of this ambitious novel told in the alternating voices of three teens: Abdi, a European-born Somali living in London; Khadija, a Somali-born refugee who has come to London illegally and is posing as Abdi's sister; and Freya, the London-born daughter of a high-power fashion designer. Freya's mother, top-flight fashion designer Sandy Dexter, is inspired by Somalia for her latest collection. She spots Khadija in the Somali community in London and immediately pegs her as the key to the collection's debut—she will be the secret model, Quarsoon (“The Hidden One”). The London couture industry contrasts starkly with snippets of Khadija's family's life back in Somalia, harshly impacted by drought and political turmoil. When Khadija's brother in Somalia is kidnapped and held for \$10,000 ransom, it seems to be tied to her emerging role as Sandy Dexter's newest discovery. But no one is supposed to know the closely held secret of Khadija's modeling, although a Somali friend of the family who runs the internet café where Khadija sends email home is offering to pose as Khadija's father in negotiations with Sandy. Events reach a climax when Sandy insists on debuting her new line in a Somalia village in a show that will be web-streamed to London for fashion week. While Abdi is making the first visit to his cultural homeland, Freya is disillusioned by her mother's seeming exploitation of the Somali people, and Khadija can think only of her brother's safety. The author casts a light on the turmoil in Somalia, set within a broader framework of family connections and intersecting cultures. (Age 13 and older)

**Ferraiolo, Jack D. *Sidekicks. Amulet / Abrams, 2011. 309 pages (trade 978-0-8109-9803-2, \$16.95)***

Bright Boy (Scott Hutchinson) is the sidekick of superhero Phantom Justice (his guardian, Trent Clancy). Now a middle schooler, Scott bristles at the Bright Boy image that Trent won't let him change: The yellow tights and red cape were cute when he was six, but now they make Bright Boy a laughingstock (an erection while rescuing a beautiful woman is his most recent mortification). At school, Scott flies under the radar: No one knows he's Bright Boy, and few people know his name. One night Bright Boy vents his frustration by attacking Monkeywrench—sidekick to Doctor Chaotic, Phantom's most recent arch enemy. Monkeywrench's mask comes off, and Scott recognizes Allison Mendes, one of the most popular girls at school. He and Allison strike up a friendship that soon blossoms into romance. Their relationship challenges them to think about their ideas of justice, and gives Scott the courage to stand up to Trent on the costume front. What Scott doesn't know is that Phantom Justice is motivated by greed rather than goodness. And in his latest scheme, Bright Boy is wholly expendable. In fact, that's part of the plan. A terrifically entertaining novel features a strong and funny first-person voice, delightful banter among the characters, and more than a few surprising twists and turns. (Ages 11–14)

**Fisher, Catherine. *Sapphique. U.S. edition: Dial, 2010. 462 pages (trade 978-0-8037-3397-8, \$17.99)***

The dystopian story of the living prison begun in *Incarceron* (U.S. edition: Dial, 2010) continues with hope having turned to pessimism. Finally free from Incarceron, Finn hates his life in Claudia's luxurious world, and doubts he is actually Giles, the prince destined for the throne. And he's not alone. The appearance of a second young man claiming to be Giles complicates Finn's already tenuous claim. Finn can't remember anything about his life before prison, while the other young man offers sharp and detailed memories of Prince Giles's childhood. It's clear to Finn that even Claudia doubts his identity, although she tries to hide her uncertainty and her disappointment in his lack of princely demeanor. Finn also worries about his friends Keiro and Attia, still trapped in Incarceron. The two have formed a reluctant alliance as they search for the dragon glove that belonged to Sapphique, the legendary figure who escaped the prison long ago. Meanwhile, Incarceron is plotting its own escape—into a human body—and the facades and functions in both the prison and the court begin to crumble. As in *Incarceron*, the narration alternates back and forth between action in prison and Outside, sometimes at a breakneck pace. Parallel interwoven plots converge in the continuation of Catherine Fisher's metallic, futuristic, and suspenseful series. (Age 13 and older)

**Frost, Helen. *Hidden. Frances Foster Books / Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011. 147 pages (trade 978-0-374-38221-6, \$16.99)***

When she was eight years old, Wren was sitting in the back seat of her family's van while her mother ran a quick errand at a convenience store. Wren instinctively hid under a blanket when she heard gunshots, so the man



who ran out of the store and stole the van didn't notice her. Wren stayed hidden and ended up in the man's garage, looking for a way to escape without being noticed. But someone suspected she was there: the man's eight-year-old daughter, Darra, who heard the news reports of the missing girl and knew her father had stolen the van. Darra hid food in the garage for Wren to find. Wren eventually escaped unharmed, and Darra's father was arrested and sent to jail. Six years later, the two girls meet at a summer camp. Neither acknowledges their shared past as their cautious interactions are recounted from both girls' perspectives. Frost's distinctive poetic forms offer insight into each girl's memories and current emotions, both of which remain hidden from each other. In addition, details of the past from fourteen-year-old Darra's point of view are revealed by reading words that stand out at the end of some lines, a poetic form Frost created for this book. The two girls gain deeper understanding of themselves and each other while taking a lifesaving class at the camp—coming to realize that their hidden actions in the past changed one another's lives, and tentatively embracing a friendship. (Ages 11–14)

**Gleitzman, Morris. *Then*. U.S. edition: Henry Holt, 2011. 198 pages (trade 978-0-8050-9027-7, \$16.99)**

In a continuation of the story the author began with *Once* (U.S. edition: Henry Holt, 2010), Felix, a ten-year-old Jewish boy, and six-year-old Zelda, the orphaned daughter of Nazis killed by the Polish resistance, have just escaped a train bound for the death camps. Having seen the atrocities committed by the Nazis, Zelda is so ashamed of her parents that she feels contempt for them, and recognizes Felix as her only true family now. The two are taken in by a Polish farm woman who passes them off as relatives, but they all live in constant fear that Felix's true identity will be revealed. As the narrator, Felix's voice, is both old and innocent. He and Zelda are children, but children who have seen and experienced too many horrible things. The author does not shy away from revealing the horrors experienced by both children and adults during the Holocaust, but along with this is the characters' strong will to survive. This gripping short novel is hard to put down, and hard to forget. (Ages 11–14)

**Goode, Laura. *Sister Mischief*. Candlewick Press, 2011. 367 pages (trade 978-0-7636-4640-0, \$16.99)**

Esme and her three closest friends are Sister Mischief, an all-girl hip-hop group in a predominantly white Minneapolis suburb. Far from posers, the girls embrace hip-hop as an art form blending personal and political expression and musical experimentation. But the principal of their high school thinks hip-hop is gangster music. One dimension of debut novelist Laura Goode's story follows Sister Mischief's ongoing effort to fight the school administration after hip-hop is banned. They form an unsanctioned student group combining discussion of hip-hop music with a Gay-Straight Alliance: Hip Hop for Heteros and Homos (4H). But it's as much personal as political for Esme, who comes out early on in the novel. She falls in love with band mate Rowie and their relationship unfolds with explicit and tender

intimacy, and also great secrecy: Rowie is terrified her parents will find out. Esme is convinced Rowie's progressive mother would be supportive, but for Rowie, who is Bengali, culture and family cannot be separated. Goode's lively writing is full of humor and genuine feeling. Her novel is laced with hip hop slang, including heavy swearing, and buoyed by smart discussions among her intelligent characters about the power of language, sex and sexuality, race, politics, religion, and more. References to hip-hop music makers—present day and in the past—also pepper a narrative whose characters are cast with unapologetic attitude. (Age 14 and older)

**Gulledge, Laura Lee. *Page by Paige*. Amulet / Abrams, 2011. 188 pages (pbk. 978-0-8109-9722-6, \$9.95)**

Teenage Paige dreams of being an artist but is plagued by self-doubt. With her family's recent move from Virginia to New York City, she decides to buy a sketchbook and start drawing seriously. At her new high school, she connects with a few artsy kids but still battles intense periods of low esteem and doubt. It's only when she takes a risk and starts showing her art to others—starting with her friend-becoming-boyfriend Gabe, then a few additional friends, and eventually online—that she begins to believe in her ability. Not that her audience isn't without criticism: She's stung when someone says her art suggests she's very wrapped up in herself. It's true! And it's also part of what makes the characterization of adolescent Paige so authentic. Laura Lee Gulledge captures a young artist's self-discovery with poignancy and humor in this appealing graphic novel. Gulledge's black-and-white drawings include images representing Paige's art, with clever drawings of her inner self which are at once symbolic and literal. (Ages 11–14)

**Hautman, Pete. *The Big Crunch*. Scholastic Press, 2011. 280 pages (trade 978-0-545-24075-8, \$17.99)**

Teenagers Wes and June go from avoidance to starry-eyed romance to love in a novel that moves back and forth between their perspectives, often covering the same events from their differing points of view. They meet in autumn, shortly after June moves to Minneapolis. Her dad's work means she's likely to move again before the year is out, so she has no plans to become close to anyone. Wes recently broke up with his longtime girlfriend because he didn't like being constantly attached. Wes and June sense a connection and spend fall trying to stay away from each other, but fate—often comically—repeatedly intervenes. June starts casually dating Wes's awkward best friend, Jerry, but by winter she and Wes can't ignore their mutual attraction. Then June discovers she has to move, this time to Omaha. A frustrating spring full of unrequited calls and text messages culminates in Wes's impulsive road trip to Omaha. Their romance is renewed, leading to June's summer job in Minneapolis and the chance for the relationship to blossom. Hautman is wonderful at capturing the intensity of both physical and intellectual attraction, as well as the swing between astonishing insight and impulse that is a hallmark of adolescence in this novel featuring two smart, thoughtful teens mindful of parental expectations but also charged with feeling and desire. (Age 14 and older)

**Jones, Traci L. *Silhouetted by the Blue*. Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011. 200 pages (trade 978-0-374-36914-9, \$16.99)**

Seventh grader Serena Shaw bears an incredible load of responsibility as her father's debilitating depression prevents him from doing basic chores like grocery shopping, let alone picking up her younger brother Henry from his second-grade classroom at the end of the day. Serena's dad has always had issues with "the Blues," but since her mother's death there has been no adult to make sure he takes his medication and receives the medical care he sometimes needs. Serena feels overwhelmed with worry about her dad, household tasks that always need attention, caring for Henry, and keeping her own grades up so that she can hang on to her lead role in the school musical, *The Wiz*. She tries to get family members to help, but her grandmother is in a nursing home and her uncle travels for his demanding job, making it hard for him to understand—and easy for him to deny—the seriousness of the situation. Traci L. Jones's compelling novel is grounded by emotional honesty, from Serena's relationships with her dad, brother, and friends to her growing feeling of desperation as she begins searching the Web and finds warning signs for suicide. An almost-too-good-to-be-true romantic interest and an upbeat ending provide relief in a story about a young African American teen struggling with more responsibility than any child should have. (Ages 12–15)

**Link, Kelly and Gavin J. Grant, editors. *Steampunk! An Anthology of Fantastically Rich and Strange Stories*. Candlewick Press, 2011. 420 pages (trade 978-0-7636-4843-5, \$22.99)**

Fourteen authors contributed to this collection of short stories that all play within the boundaries of Steampunk even as they stretch them. While reimagining our relationship to machines, the authors move well beyond the typical setting of Victorian England to a wide-ranging list of genres and times. Past, present, and future are all re-cast with Steampunk fittings among this impressive group of stories. The array shines with Cory Doctorow's cast of unforgettable empowered orphans, Libba Bray's wild women of the American Wild West, and Kelly Link's faerie of contemporary Appalachia, among others. Steampunk aficionados and neophytes will both find much to enjoy in this compelling and consistently strong collection of short stories. (Age 12 and older)

**Littman, Sarah Darer. *Want to Go Private?* Scholastic Press, 2011. 332 pages (trade 978-0-545-15146-7, \$17.99)**

Fourteen-year-old Abby has been struggling socially since starting high school. Then she meets Luke online, and her life and esteem begin to revolve around him. She isn't comfortable when he first asks her to take off her shirt in front of the webcam, but Luke affirms her beauty and how much he cares for her. So she does everything he asks. Part I of this novel is told from Abby's perspective. Part II begins with Abby's disappearance after she runs away with Luke. The frantic search for her is told from the perspectives of Abby's younger sister, Lily, and Abby's best friend, Faith. After Abby is found in a hotel with Luke (who was not as young as Abby thought), her voice rejoins the narrative in Sarah Darer Littman's chilling novel that goes bravely

into uncomfortable territory. Abby's time with Luke is revealed in flashbacks that don't shy away from describing Luke's continuing manipulation and sexual exploitation. Abby's difficulty letting go of her deep-seated belief in Luke's good intentions; the impact of her disappearance and abuse on her family and closest friend; and the ease with which most of her peers blame her for what happened when she finally makes the return to school, are all disturbingly believable. So, too, is Abby's vulnerability, inexperience, and confidence in her own Internet savvy. A climactic scene in which Abby addresses the entire school to share lessons learned feels less authentic but is empowering and cathartic. (Ages 12–16)

**Lu, Marie. *Legend*. Putnam, 2011. 336 pages (trade 978-0-399-25675-2, \$17.99)**

Day is the Republic's most wanted criminal. June is the Republic's most promising student. June goes undercover on the streets of Los Angeles, determined to bring in the notorious teen after he kills her older brother Metias, an army Captain who raised her after her parents' death. Day, attempting to steal plague medicine for his family when Metias was shot, is on the run with twelve-year-old Tess. June takes refuge with the two after a street fight, unaware that he is the boy she is looking for. By the time June figures out Day's identity, she has a hard time reconciling his reputation with reality: Yes, he is highly skilled and wears suspicion like a charm, but he also has great compassion, no matter how much he tries to hide it. Still, she helps arrest him, and then finds everything she's been taught to believe unraveling. Marie Lu's swiftly paced debut novel moves back and forth between the perspectives of these two teens living in a grim future where the government and military wield oppressive control. Each is challenged to trust, and then love, while unraveling truth and fighting for their lives. (Ages 12–15)

**Lyga, Barry. *MangaMan*. Illustrated by Colleen Doran. Houghton Mifflin, 2011. 125 pages (trade 978-0-547-42315-9, \$19.99)**

What would happen if two opposing styles of graphic novel culture met in the same book? Barry Lyga and Colleen Doran brilliantly play with this idea in a cross-cultural graphic novel that brings manga into the American mainstream—literally. Ryoko is a manga character who has come through a Rip from the manga world and is now trapped in the “real” world of an American high school, depicted in a realistic American comics style. Marissa falls for Ryoko in a plot that gives new meaning to the cliché of the doomed romance between lovers from two different worlds. The visual humor of a manga character popped into more realistic comic illustrations, and the “real” characters' reactions to manga conventions (lines that indicate different emotions, bubbles with the character's interior thoughts being visible to everyone) are amusing enough for casual readers, but will no doubt be hysterical for manga enthusiasts. (Age 12 and older)

**Lynch, Chris. *Angry Young Man*. Simon & Schuster, 2011. 167 pages (trade 978-0-689-84790-5, \$16.99)**

“I want you to understand my brother... As far as that goes, I’d like to understand him myself.” Eighteen-year-old Robert’s younger brother, seventeen-year-old Xan, seems to be spiraling into a frightening abyss. Xan is a social outsider and extremely sensitive, and his awakening to social and political injustice results in ever-growing anger and rash actions as he gets drawn into a group of radical activists. Meanwhile, the two boys live with their mom in a household that is financially on the edge, and a loan collector of dubious practices is exerting more and more pressure through harassing phone calls and other means. Robert attends the community college and works part-time, while Xan has dropped out of high school and can’t hold a job. Robert, who has never had trouble fitting in socially, often gives Xan a hard time but doesn’t always know when to stop. Yet he struggles with how to help Xan, and how to help his family, even as he is angry with his mother and brother for their choices and worries about how far Xan will go. The interpersonal family dynamics are achingly real in Chris Lynch’s taut and ultimately hopeful story punctuated by occasional moments of humor and populated with characters that could have walked out of the real world and onto the page. (Age 13 and older)

**McCafferty, Megan. *Bumped*. Balzer + Bray / HarperCollins, 2011. 323 pages (trade 978-0-06-196274-5, \$16.99)**

An unexpectedly funny and understandably provocative science fiction novel is set in the not-too-distant future when a virus has rendered everyone infertile after young adulthood. Teen girls are now encouraged to get pregnant. Identical twins Melody and Harmony were given up for adoption at birth (prior to the virus). Harmony grew up in a conservative religious community where girls are expected to marry at thirteen and quickly become mothers. Melody was raised in Princeton, N.J., by high-achieving college professors who expect great things from their daughter ... on the reproductive front. They’ve engaged a high-power agent who has matched Melody with a couple wanting a baby. Melody is anxiously waiting for the couple to choose a male for her to “bump” with. Meanwhile, Harmony has arrived on her doorstep. Harmony says she wants to help her sister reject the path she’s on and find God. In truth, it’s clear both teens are struggling with the expectations of their families and societies. Alternating between Melody’s and Harmony’s distinctively delightful points of view, Megan McCafferty’s novel sheds light on our present-day cultural fascination with “baby bumps” and celebrity (when Melody’s match is finally chosen, it turns out he’s the most famous sperm donor in the country) while challenging readers to think about issues of free will, privacy, peer pressure, feminism (pretty much nonexistent in this future) and how cultural norms are shaped and can shift. The abrupt final chapter hints at a sequel in the works. (Age 13 and older)

**McCall, Guadalupe Garcia. *Under the Mesquite*. Lee & Low, 2011. 240 pages (trade 978-1-60060-429-4, \$17.95)**

A novel in poems chronicles Lupita's journey through high school, when her family faces the challenges of her mother's cancer diagnoses and treatment. At times, Lupita feels everything in her life is inconsequential compared to her mother's illness, but when friends accuse her of being too white because of her academic achievements, her pain and anger are vivid. While her father cares for her mother, Lupita cares for her younger siblings. But after her mother's death, she must choose between honoring her father's wishes that she stay at home, and following her dream of going to college in a new place. Author Guadalupe Garcia McCall's beautifully written novel in Lupita's first-person voice captures the flow of life on both sides of the border as Lupita's family, which lives in a Texas border town, regularly goes back and forth to visit relatives in Mexico. Deep love for her family grounds Lupita in both places, and that love is what sustains her, and also what challenges her as she thinks about moving beyond grief into a future of her own making. (Ages 12-16)

**McCullough, Kathy. *Don't Expect Magic*. Delacorte, 2011. 256 pages (trade 978-0-385-74012-8, \$17.99)**

Sent to sunny L.A. to live with the dad she hardly knows after her mother's death, teenage Delaney is eager to get back to New Jersey as soon as she can. Her dad is a famous self-help guru (Dr. Hank), but Delaney long ago gave up wishing he'd show more interest in her life. Delaney and her dad are stumbling through their early days together when she discovers the secret to his fame: He's a fairy godfather—yes, the kind with a wand. Although her dad is doubtful she's inherited the gift (fairy godparents are a dying breed) Delaney isn't sure. In fact, she's determined to find her own client and earn her wand as quickly as possible so that she can leave L.A. She chooses Flynn, the geeky yearbook editor. Convinced he has a crush on Cadie, the head cheerleader, Delaney gets wrapped up in trying to bring them together. As it turns out, focusing on others' happiness instead of her own misery is the best thing for Delaney. Author Kathy McCullough blends frothy humor with some welcome substance in a novel that features a developing father-daughter relationship, emerging friendships, a little romance, and one or two twists that may or may not surprise readers. (Ages 11-14)

**Mucha, Corinne. *Freshman: Tales of 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Obsessions, Revelations, and Other Nonsense*. Zest Books, 2011. 112 pages (pbk 978-0-9819733-6-4, \$12.99)**

Friends Annie and Richie are starting their freshman year of high school. Annie's stress level isn't helped by her older brother, a senior, whose advice leads her to conclude, "What I do as a freshman says who I am for the rest of high school ... and *that* defines who I am for the rest of my *life*." Corinne Mucha's funny but not fluffy graphic novel nails adolescent anxieties and experiences as it follows Annie and Richie through their freshman year. Individually and together, they deal with stubborn lockers, old friends who have changed, new friends and romances, spirit week, auditioning for the

musical, athletic trials, and forming a band. Even with her light-hearted tone, Mucha provides enough of an edge to maintain credibility. Both newcomers to and seasoned veterans of middle and high school will find a lot to laugh about, and hope as well, in this entertaining outing. Mucha's panel illustrations are outlined in black and colored in two shades of green. (Ages 11–14)

**Ness, Patrick.** *A Monster Calls. Inspired by an idea from Siobhan Dowd. Illustrated by Jim Kay.* Candlewick Press, 2011. 224 pages (trade 978-0-7636-5559-4, \$16.99)

Since his mom's cancer diagnosis, Conor has been having nightmares in which he struggles to rescue her as she dangles from a cliff in a storm. Then a monster shows up in Conor's yard one night, but it's no dream. The fierce and demanding figure insists that Conor listen to three stories in the coming days before telling a fourth story himself. Conor's mother is hospitalized, and he must stay with his stern and rigid grandmother. At school he feels helpless against a boy who bullies him. And over the course of a number of nights, the monster returns, telling tales revealing complexities of human emotion and behavior that make it impossible to clearly judge characters as good or bad. Patrick Ness, completing a story conceived by Siobhan Dowd before her death from cancer, goes well below the surface layer of pain in this intricate exploration of grief. The bully story—and how it reveals Conor's wish to be punished—as well as Conor's feeling of invisibility, are beautifully unveiled, while Conor and the people in his life are richly developed. The monster, an initially menacing figure, ultimately is a comforting one, helping Conor accept the truth that his mom is dying and acknowledge the need to let go in a novel that transcends realistic fiction even as it remains firmly grounded in the emotional, psychological, and physical realities of Conor's life. Jim Kay's haunting black-and-white illustrations masterfully reflect the emotional chaos of the story. (Ages 11–14)

**Nye, Naomi Shihab.** *There Is No Long Distance Now: Very Short Stories.* Greenwillow Books / HarperCollins, 2011. 201 pages (trade 978-0-06-201965-3, \$16.99)

Author Naomi Shihab Nye affirms teens as deep and often original thinkers in this collection of short (sometimes very short!) stories featuring thoughtful teen protagonists who care about people and politics, or who reflect on big questions even as they are caught up in the dramas of their own lives. Nye's respect for teens extends from fictional characters to her real-world readers with stories that invite thinking and discussion, whether it's about the actions of her characters or the ideas they express. Several of the stories follow the same characters, while other are singular visits offering glimpses of the lives, worlds, and outlooks of individual teens who have moved or are moving beyond self-absorption to consider their relationships with others, and even the state of the world. Teen readers who appreciate intelligence among their peers will find kindred spirits among the teens who inhabit these stories. (Age 12 and older)

**Porter, Pamela. *I'll Be Watching*. Groundwood, 2011. 288 pages (trade 978-1-55498-095-6, \$18.95)**

A novel in verse set in a small Canadian town early in World War II centers on the Loney siblings: Nora, Ran, Jim, and Addie. The Loney children, left after their father's death with a stepmother who hates them, find small relief when she abandons them: Their struggle to find food and pay the rent is a bitter one. They are watched over—and their lives sometimes influenced by—the ghosts of their parents, a father trying to redeem himself, a mother who never stopped loving her children. Author Pamela Porter examines facets of human nature—at its best and worst—through the lives and actions of many in the town; told through multiple voices, the story is reminiscent of Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* in the way it peeks into the lives of a variety of individuals within a community. Porter reveals very human dramas with her fine writing; thoughtful teen readers will find struggles, sorrows, and deception, along with caring and compassion that stand out in relief. (Age 14 and older)

**Reedy, Trent. *Words in the Dust*. Arthur A. Levine Books / Scholastic, Inc., 2011. 264 pages (trade 978-0-545-26125-8, \$17.99)**

Author Trent Reedy, a U.S. Army reservist who served in Afghanistan in 2004-2005, has penned a novel set during the first years of the U.S. war in that country and rich with the day-to-day details of young teen Zulaikha's life. A chance spotting by a soldier leads to an offer by the U.S. Army to fix Zulaikha's cleft lip and palate. And a chance meeting with an old friend of her mother's leads to the woman's offer to teach Zulaikha to read, starting with some of the classic Afghan poetry Zulaikha's mother loved. Reedy's story unfolds in Zulaikha's voice, which vividly describes the people and events shaping her life. Zulaikha's mother was killed by the Taliban for being an educated woman. Her father's second wife is stern and demanding, but also, to Zulaikha's surprise, an ally in her desire to get an education. And Zulaikha's beloved older sister is about to be married—a match that is good business for her family. Zulaikha's observations shed light on the difficult circumstances for girls and women in Afghanistan, and also reveal the challenging relationship between U.S. military personnel and Afghan civilians. Even with their well-meaning efforts and attempts to bridge the language and cultural gaps, the soldiers Zulaikha and her family interact with miss the mark so often, and the resulting disconnect is palpable in this vivid account of the people and events. (Ages 12-15)

**Roth, Veronica. *Divergent*. Katherine Tegen Books / HarperCollins, 2011. 496 pages (trade 978-0-06-202402-2, \$17.99)**

In a future time, the city once known as Chicago has been divided into five factions: Abnegation, Candor, Erudite, Amity, and Dauntless. Developed to counter the selfishness, duplicity, ignorance, aggression, and cowardice believed to lead to conflict and war, each faction has a specific societal function. Beatrice has grown up with her family as a member of the selfless Abnegation—the faction designated to make decisions in the interests of all. But as the time approaches for choosing her faction for life, her aptitude test



shows her to be a rare Divergent—someone with equal affinity for multiple factions. Warned to keep the results secret—the government believes Divergents are dangerous—Beatrice weighs the expectation that she will stay in the faction of her birth against her uncertainty and desire before deciding to join Dauntless. Beatrice must adapt quickly to the thrill-seeking and confrontational style of her new community. Starting with a name change to Tris, she works hard to meet the initiation demands, knowing failure means being relegated to the pariah status of Factionless. Tris is surprised at her innate talent even as she struggles to meld expectations of ruthlessness with her ingrained model of selflessness. As she moves deeper into the Dauntless community and a romantic relationship with her initiation instructor, the mysterious Four, Tris becomes aware of secrets and conspiracies that threaten to wreak havoc upon the balance of power among the factions and the population of the city. Equal parts social commentary, action, intrigue, and romance, this dystopian novel is a compelling page turner. (Age 13 and older)

**Sepetyš, Ruta. *Between Shades of Gray*. Philomel, 2011. 344 pages (trade 978-0-399-25412-3, \$17.99)**

Fifteen-year-old Lina, her mother, and her younger brother are dragged from their home and packed into a train car in the opening pages of this harrowing novel that begins in Lithuania on June 14, 1941. After a harsh six-week journey with other political prisoners, they arrive in Siberia, where they spend the next several months working on a beet and potato farm before being moved to a prison camp in the Arctic Circle. Author Ruta Sepetyš examines Joseph Stalin's barbaric campaign against the Baltic peoples through the experiences of a teen and her family in a novel that makes history immediate, intimate, and powerful. The struggle for survival as they face starvation, abuse, and illness contrast with Lina's memories of her life at home, where she dreamed of being an artist and was surrounded by the conversations of her parents and other intellectuals. Desperate for word of her father, who she knows was on another train of prisoners, and in a constant state of fear—for her mother, her brother, herself—Lina is sustained by anger, and by art, creating drawings on anything she can find. The riveting pace and dramatic tension of Sepetyš's narrative is matched by an indelible sense of place and wonderfully drawn secondary characters, each of who reveals another dimension of the tragedy that unfolded across those mid-twentieth-century years in moments that are sometimes cruel, sometimes courageous, and often, simply, so very human. (Age 14 and older)

**Sheinmel, Alyssa B. *The Lucky Kind*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2011. 201 pages (trade 978-0-375-86785-9, \$16.99)**

High school junior Nick's got great parents, a wonderful best friend in Steve, and a promising start on a romance with smart and confident Eden. Despite all this, his emotions are thrown into turmoil when he learns that his dad gave up a baby for adoption twenty-nine years earlier. Nick's growing anger and sense of betrayal are confusing even to him, and his bouts of self-pity prompt him to indulge in some deplorable behavior. He sabotages his relationship with Eden, and while he knows he's behaving badly, he doesn't seem able to

stop himself. Nick's emotional journey feels believable in both its intensity and relentless self-centeredness. The strong support of his friends and family eventually give Nick the ability to see his dad in a new light and to begin to pull himself together again. A meeting with his half-brother, while not easy, offers Nick a glimpse of the upside of having a sibling, even an unexpected one. (Ages 13–16)

**Taylor, Laini. *Daughter of Smoke & Bone*. Little, Brown, 2011. 418 pages (trade 978-0-316-13402-6, \$18.99)**

Independent, artistic Karou lives in Prague, trying to pass for a typical teen. No one knows her indigo hair comes from a wish not a bottle, or that the impossible creatures she draws are real. Karou was nurtured from infancy in the workshop of Brimstone—part human, part lion, part ram. He and his chimaera companions love Karou but give her no answers to questions about her origins. Then a seraph—an angel—tries to stop Karou from returning to Brimstone's workshop through one of the magic portals that connect it to our world. She's saved by her hamsas—the eye tattoos on her palms—which wield a power she knew nothing about. In search of answers, she enters a passage Brimstone has always forbidden and discovers another world before Brimstone catches her and casts her out. Not long after, the portals to his workshop are destroyed by the seraph. Determined to find a way back to those she loves and the world she discovered, Karou puts a plan in motion. But the seraph—Akiva—has come to Prague to find her. He is haunted by Karou—by whom she reminds him of. Tethered in our world but influenced by events in another, Laini Taylor's richly imagined fantasy features a steely, smart protagonist, an anguished angel, and conflict on an epic scale as Karou and Akiva—chimaera and seraph—prove to be a star-crossed duo daring to imagine an end to a centuries old war between their kinds. Taylor's vivid storytelling trades swift pacing for lush details of setting, character, and feeling in a story to be continued. (Age 13 and older)

**Venkatraman, Padma. *Island's End*. Putnam, 2011. 228 pages (trade 978-0-399-25099-6, \$16.99)**

Uido lives in a village on one of the Andaman Islands in the Pacific Ocean, where her people follow a centuries-old way of life—aware of the modern world but unchanged by it. Lah-ame, their spiritual guide and healer, knows that the tribe is facing great challenges, and he chooses Uido, who's had dreams in which she visits the Otherworld most of her life, as his apprentice. As she goes through her training, Uido begins to gain the strength and courage she'll need to help lead her tribe. Uido must provide that leadership sooner than she expected after Lah-ame dies and her younger brother falls ill. She makes the decision to seek help in the outside world after spiritual healing alone does not work. And when she returns, she faces her biggest challenge yet: She has a vision of a great wave wiping out the village and of the need to lead her people to high ground, but some refuse to follow. Author Padma Venkatraman lived for a year on one of the Andaman Islands close to people like Uido's tribe. Her respectful, compelling story captures the way magical elements in the spirit world are very real to Uido and her

people. Venkatraman also presents Western culture as different rather than bad, although Uido's foray into the modern world shows her the importance of her people not losing their spiritual beliefs and values as they are exposed to other ways. Venkatraman's terrific author's note discusses the reasons she chose to create a fictional tribe that is a composite of the Andaman groups remaining and the challenges they face in this unusual glimpse into a world we rarely see. (Ages 12–15)

**Whaley, John Corey. *Where Things Come Back*. Atheneum, 2011. 228 pages (trade 978–1–4424–1333–7, \$16.99)**

Cullen Witter lives in the town of Lily, Arkansas, population 3,947, where, he observes, most “people are complete ass-hats who tried and subsequently failed to leave this place behind.” Cullen's distinctive voice, pessimistic and often funny, pulls readers into a complex and compelling story full of tension and surprise. When an ornithologist reports sighting a Lazarus bird, long believed to be extinct (think Ivory-Billed Woodpecker), Lily suddenly becomes the focus of national attention. Around the same time, Cullen's younger teenage brother, quiet and brilliant Gabriel, vanishes. Cullen is frustrated with the ongoing attention the elusive bird receives while his family struggles to cope with uncertainty and grief. Meanwhile, Benton Sage, a young man filled with missionary zeal and a need to please his rigid father, becomes disenchanted with religion after recognizing his inability to influence the spiritual lives of others during a mission trip to Ethiopia. He returns to the United States, starts college, and shares his interest in the Book of Enoch with his charismatic roommate—all of which has dramatic consequence down the line when these two seemingly disparate storylines eventually intersect. John Corey Whaley's debut novel explores themes of death, resurrection, and redemption; families and friendship; and loss and discovery. Whaley's tightly plotted narrative in which the timeline proves to be critical unfolds through beautifully expressive writing that reveals richly developed characters and thought-provoking insights at every turn. (Age 14 and older)

**Williams, Michael. *Now Is the Time for Running*. U.S. edition: Little, Brown, 2011. 233 pages (trade 978–0–316–07790–3, \$17.99)**

Fifteen-year-old Deo and his older, developmentally disabled brother Innocent barely survive a massacre by government soldiers in their Zimbabwe village. In the aftermath, they head for South Africa, making the dangerous crossing into that nation with a guide and a handful of other refugees. They eventually end up in Johannesburg, where they are taken in by a small group of refugees living inside a bridge. Deo's world is shattered a second time when anger and xenophobia explode in a series of violent attacks against refugees. Jump ahead two years, and Deo is living on the streets of Cape Town, getting high as often as he can to keep memories at bay, when he's spotted by a coach of the South African Street Soccer Team. Soccer had been one of the joys of Deo's life in Zimbabwe. Now he is given a chance to train with and try out for the team that will represent South Africa in the Homeless World Cup. But in order for this group of young

men and women comprising native South Africans and refugees from other African nations to become a South African team, they must revisit their painful pasts together, sharing their stories as a means of understanding how much they have in common. Told in Deo's compelling voice, author Michael Williams's gripping and ultimately uplifting story illuminates the strength and vulnerability of the human spirit while skillfully navigating and ultimately challenging xenophobia in South Africa. Williams provides additional information about xenophobia in South Africa and the Homeless World Cup in author's notes. (Ages 12–15)

**Wolf, Allan. *The Watch That Ends the Night: Voices from the Titanic*. Candlewick Press, 2011. 466 pages (trade 978-0-7636-3703-3, \$21.99)**

Allan Wolf's artful merging of fact and fiction tells the story of the *R.M.S. Titanic* through the voices of a range of individuals who came to be on board, from the ship's captain (E. J. Smith), its designer (Thomas Andrews), and a White Star Line executive (Bruce Ismay), to first-class passengers like John Jacob Astor and Margaret Brown; second-class passengers like young Frankie Goldsmith, a British boy traveling with his working class family; individuals in steerage, including Lebanese teen Jamila Nicola-Yarred and her younger brother, whose family, like many from Syria and Lebanon on the ship, are refugees fleeing the Turkish army; to crew members of many ranks and duties; to a rat on board the vessel. And then there is The Iceberg. Dispassionate, omniscient, and chilling, it speaks of a fate the ship and its passengers cannot avoid even as it reflects on natural history and ponders philosophical questions about humanity. The strength and at times sheer beauty of Wolf's poetry is astonishing as he humanizes the tragedy by revealing and imagining the lives of the real people about whom he writes. By book's end, it's clear the sinking of the *Titanic* was not a single story or single tragedy, it was nearly two thousand. The merits of Wolf's research and the way that research informed his writing are clear in the exemplary Notes following the main narrative; there he provides further details about the ship and each of the individuals to whom he gave voice, documents his many sources, and discusses his approach to melding fact with fiction ("When it comes to historical fiction, history is the bird cage; fiction is the bird."). This moving, memorable volume excels on every front. (Age 13 and older)

**Wynne-Jones, Tim. *Blink & Caution*. Candlewick Press, 2011. 342 pages (trade 978-0-7636-3983-9, \$16.99)**

Runaway Blink has been living on the streets for months when he stumbles onto the staged kidnapping of a wealthy businessman at the swanky hotel where he was stealing breakfast and finds himself in possession of the "victim's" cell phone. Runaway Caution has been living with a controlling drug dealer and is now attempting to escape. Tim Wynne-Jones adroitly moves back and forth between two compelling individual stories, blending them into a single and mesmerizing whole as the two teens eventually meet on a train. Caution is trying to get away from Toronto, while Blink is on the trail of the businessman, persuaded by the man's teenage daughter—whom Blink called to provide assurance her father was okay—to find out if he's

at the remote retreat owned by his company. Blink and Caution form an alliance and find themselves on the trail of a crime that didn't happen but that masks a real crime involving corporate greed. As they journey together, trust, friendship—and something more—begin to form, enabling them to not only reveal dimensions of their personal histories but also to begin a journey of healing. Told in two distinct narrative styles (an insightful and darkly funny second-person voice for Blink, and a third-person voice for Caution), this tense, suspense-filled novel starts out gritty but ends with two teens who believed they had nowhere to turn finding the courage to confront their pasts. In doing so, they gain a sense of hope for their futures. (Age 13 and older)

**Yang, Gene Luen. *Level Up*. Illustrated by Thien Pham. First Second, 2011. 160 pages (pbk 978-1-59643-235-2, \$15.99)**

When he was growing up, Dennis preferred playing video games to anything else. Now that he's in college ... he feels the same way. In fact, he's just flunked out. But Dennis made a promise to his dying father that he would go to medical school and become a gastroenterologist. That promise comes back to haunt him in the form of four annoying little angels, who are determined that Dennis fulfill his destiny. Plagued, nagged, and harassed by the smiling terrors, Dennis turns in his gaming consoles and becomes a model student. Eventually, he finds himself on his first gastroenterology rotation as a med student. He's miserable (not to mention grossed out). Gene Luen Yang's funny and irreverent look at the decisions facing adolescents approaching adulthood acknowledges the very real and often painful moments of misunderstanding that can complicate things as parents' pressures and expectations conflict with personal desires. Yang's culturally specific riff (Dennis is Chinese American) on a universal theme plays out with humor and poignancy in this insightful and entertaining graphic novel. (Age 15 and older)

**Zarr, Sara. *How To Save a Life*. Little, Brown, 2011. 341 pages (trade 978-0-316-03606-1, \$17.99)**

High school senior Jill grew up in an upper middle class home with two great parents. But since her dad's death a year ago, Jill has shut out almost everyone in her life. Eighteen-year-old Mandy grew up the child of a single mother who spent as much time resenting Mandy as providing the bare minimum. A year after her dad's death, Jill's mom Robin has decided to adopt a baby. She found pregnant Mandy on a message board and now the teen is coming to say with them until the baby is born. Mandy's painful neediness, naiveté, and lack of esteem belie a toughness and raw intelligence—she's figuring things out as she goes, but she is determined to make a good life for the baby, and maybe herself, too, even if it means lying. Jill's grief manifests as coldness toward others, and she hates that she's not the person she used to be ... or wants to be. Jill resents Mandy's presence and thinks her mom is crazy, while Mandy is puzzled by Jill, who can't see the good things in front

of her. Gradually, their relationship thaws, but just when Jill finds herself invested in helping Mandy, Mandy feels threatened, believing Jill knows too much about her past. Sara Zarr's main characters reveal themselves in one telling scene after another in a story that succeeds because they are so very real. Between them, Jill and Mandy bear the pain of loss, neglect, and abuse. Together, they find a more hopeful future. Zarr takes pains to set up the story's positive ending as credible, and it comes with sweet relief in a novel that features wonderfully developed secondary characters, too. (Age 13 and older)

**Zevin, Gabrielle. *All These Things I've Done*. (Birthright: Book the First) Farrar Straus Giroux, 2011. 368 pages (trade 978-0-374-30210-8, \$16.99)**

Anya Balanchine is sixteen in 2083, when dwindling financial and natural resources have resulted in several big changes, including the illegalization of chocolate and caffeine. Anya's father was the head of Balanchine Chocolate, a company that became a crime syndicate after chocolate was outlawed. Both of Anya's parents were killed by mob rivals, and Anya has no desire to go into the family business. Her primary interest is keeping her family together. Her older brother, Leo, was seriously injured in the same hit that killed their mother; he has a gentle nature and the mental abilities of an eight-year-old. Her twelve-year-old sister, Natty, like Anya, suffers from nightmares. And her grandmother, their legal guardian, is dying. Then there's this new boy at school... When Win and Anya meet they are attracted to each other, but he's the son of the new, politically ambitious New York City assistant DA, and Win's dad forbids him to date a member of the Balanchine family—an edict Win readily ignores. Meanwhile, Anya's suspicions about a cousin's motives behind giving Leo a job prove well-founded, and Natty's teacher has astonishing news. There's a lot going on in this story: potentially star-crossed lovers, mafia crimes and intrigue, and a first-person narrative that references *David Copperfield* with every chapter title. But Gabrielle Zevin keeps it all beautifully balanced as it moves swiftly forward, with Anya's struggle between personal desires and family demands at its core. (Age 13 and older)



# Appendices



# Appendix I

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## Checklist of Books in CCBC Choices 2012

This quick-reference listing of all of the books recommended in this edition of *CCBC Choices* is alphabetical by main title, followed by the author (just the first author is listed if there are more than one). The *Choices* category in which each book is located is also provided. Full citation information for the books, including publisher and ISBN, is listed with the full entry in the *Choices* categories. Browse the categories (see page locations, below) or use the author/title index to locate the exact page on which the full entry is located.

The Natural World (Natural World): pages **14–18**  
 Seasons and Celebrations (Seasons): pages **18–20**  
 Folklore, Mythology, and Traditional Literature (Folklore): pages **20–22**  
 Historical People, Places, and Events (History): pages **23–30**  
 Biography and Autobiography (Biography): pages **30–33**  
 Contemporary People, Places, and Events (Contemporary): pages **34–35**  
 Issues in Today's World (Issues): pages **35–36**  
 Understanding Oneself and Others (Understanding): pages **36–38**  
 The Arts (Arts): pages **38–42**  
 Poetry (Poetry): pages **42–45**  
 Concept Books (Concept): pages **46–47**  
 Picture Books for Babies, Toddlers, and Preschoolers (PB Preschoolers): pages **48–61**  
 Picture Books for School-Age Children (PB School-Age): pages **62–71**  
 Books for Beginning Readers (Beginning): page **71**  
 Books for Newly Independent Readers (Independent): pages **72–73**  
 Fiction for Children (Fiction Children): pages **74–89**  
 Fiction for Young Adults (Fiction YA): pages **90–109**

- 999 Tadpoles*. Kimura, Ken. (PB Preschoolers)
- Akata Witch*. Okorafor, Nnedi. (Fiction Children)
- Aliens on Vacation*. Smith, Clete Barrett. (Fiction Children)
- All the Water in the World*. Lyon, George Ella. (Natural World)
- All These Things I've Done*. Zevin, Gabrielle. (Fiction YA)
- Amelia Lost*. Fleming, Candace. (Biography)
- America Is Under Attack*. Brown, Don. (History)
- Angry Young Man*. Lynch, Chris. (Fiction YA)
- Anna Hibiscus' Song*. Atinuke. (PB Preschoolers)
- Anton Can Do Magic*. Könnecke, Ole. (PB Preschoolers)
- Anyá's Ghost*. Brosgol, Vera. (Fiction YA)
- Apothecary*. Meloy, Maile. (Fiction Children)
- Apple Pie ABC*. Murray, Alison. (Concept)
- Around the World on Eighty Legs*. Gibson, Amy. (Poetry)
- Around the World*. Phelan, Matt. (History)
- Astonishing Secret of Awesome Man*. Chabon, Michael. (PB School-Age)

- Back to School Tortoise*. George, Lucy M. (PB Preschoolers)
- Ball for Daisy*. Raschka, Chris. (PB Preschoolers)
- Balloons over Broadway*. Sweet, Melissa. (History)
- Beauty Queens*. Bray, Libba. (Fiction YA)
- Between Shades of Gray*. Sepetys, Ruta. (Fiction YA)
- Beyond Bullets*. Gerszak, Rafal. (Contemporary)
- Big Baby Book*. van Genechten, Guido. (PB Preschoolers)
- Big Crunch*. Hautman, Pete. (Fiction YA)
- Billions of Years, Amazing Changes*. Pringle, Laurence. (Natural World)
- Binky Under Pressure*. Spires, Ashley. (Fiction Children)
- Bird in a Box*. Pinkney, Andrea Davis. (Fiction Children)
- Blackout*. Rocco, John. (PB School-Age)
- Blink & Caution*. Wynne-Jones, Tim. (Fiction YA)
- Bluefish*. Schmatz, Pat. (Fiction Children)
- Bone Dog*. Rohmann, Eric. (PB School-Age)
- Bootleg*. Blumenthal, Karen. (History)
- Bravest Woman in America*. Moss, Marissa. (History)
- Breadcrumbs*. Ursu, Anne. (Fiction Children)
- Breaking Stalin's Nose*. Yelchin, Eugene. (Fiction Children)
- Brother Sun, Sister Moon*. Paterson, Katherine. (Folklore)
- Bumped*. McCafferty, Megan. (Fiction YA)
- Camo Girl*. Magoon, Kekla. (Fiction Children)
- Can We Save the Tiger?* Jenkins, Martin. (Natural World)
- Cats in the Doll Shop*. McDonough, Yona Zeldis. (Fiction Children)
- Cazuela That the Farm Maiden Stirred*. Vamos, Samantha R. (PB School-Age)
- Chime*. Billingsley, Franny. (Fiction YA)
- Chirchir Is Singing*. Cunnane, Kelly. (PB Preschoolers)
- Christmas Coat*. Sneve, Virginia Driving Hawk. (Seasons)
- Chronicles of Harris Burdick*. Van Allsburg, Chris. (Fiction Children)
- Clancy & Millie and the Very Fine House*. Gleeson, Libby. (PB School-Age)
- Clara Lee and the Apple Pie Dream*. Han, Jenny. (Independent)
- Clink*. DiPucchio, Kelly. (PB School-Age)
- Cork & Fuzz*. Chaconas, Dori. (Beginning)
- Crouching Tiger*. Compestine, Ying Chang. (PB School-Age)
- Daughter of Smoke & Bone*. Taylor, Laini. (Fiction YA)
- Diego Rivera*. Tonatiuh, Duncan. (Arts)
- Divergent*. Roth, Veronica. (Fiction YA)
- Dog in Boots*. Gormley, Greg. (PB Preschoolers)
- Dog Is a Dog*. Shaskan, Stephen. (PB Preschoolers)
- Don't Expect Magic*. McCullough, Kathy. (Fiction YA)
- Dorje's Stripes*. Ruddra, Anshumani. (PB School-Age)
- Dot*. Intriago, Patricia. (Arts)
- Drawing from Memory*. Say, Allen. (Biography)
- Duke Ellington's Nutcracker Suite*. Celenza, Anna Harwell. (Arts)
- Emma Dilemma*. George, Kristine O'Connell. (Poetry)
- Estie the Mensch*. Kohuth, Jane. (PB Preschoolers)
- Fabulous Flying Machines of Alberto Santos-Dumont*. Griffith, Victoria. (History)
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## Appendix II

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### About the CCBC

The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) is a unique examination, study and research library of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. A vital gathering place for books, ideas and expertise, the CCBC is committed to identifying excellent literature for children and adolescents and bringing this literature to the attention of those adults who have an academic, professional or career interest in connecting young readers with books.

The CCBC is funded to serve students and faculty on the UW–Madison campus, and school and public librarians and teachers across Wisconsin. In addition to the UW–Madison School of Education, the CCBC receives support from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction through its Division for Libraries, Technology, and Community Learning.

The CCBC houses a noncirculating collection of new, retrospective, and historical books published for children and young adults. The library serves as a book examination center for Wisconsin librarians and teachers, and supports teaching, learning, and research by providing informational and educational services related to children's and young adult literature. This work is carried out in many ways, from ongoing evaluation of new books (resulting in the annual *CCBC Choices* publication) to the library's award-winning Intellectual Freedom Information Services, and from reference services to outreach programs across Wisconsin.

You can find out much more about the CCBC, and access many original, thematic bibliographies and a searchable database of CCBC-recommended books, on the library's website at [www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/](http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/)

## Appendix III

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### About the Compilers

**Kathleen T. Horning** is the director of the Cooperative Children's Book Center of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. For nine years she was also a children's librarian at Madison Public Library. She is the author of *From Cover to Cover: Evaluating and Reviewing Children's Books* (revised edition: HarperCollins, 2010). With Ginny Moore Kruse, she coauthored *Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults, 1980–1990*, and with Ginny Moore Kruse and Megan Schliesman, *Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults, 1991–1996*. Kathleen is a past-president of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) of the American Library Association (ALA), and a past president of the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY). She has chaired the Américas Award Committee, under the auspices of the Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP), University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee; ALA/ALSC's 1997 Mildred Batchelder Award Committee; ALA/ALSC's 1995 John Newbery Committee; and three Charlotte Zolotow Award Committees (administered by the CCBC), including the 2010 committee. She also chaired USBBY's Hans Christian Andersen Award Committee, which selected U.S. nominees for the international award in 1992. She has served as a member of many other book award and evaluation committees, including the ALA Rainbow List, the NCTE Lee Bennett Hopkins Awards, the ALA/EMIERT Coretta Scott King Award, ALA Notable Children's Books, and the 1990 Newbery Committee. She received the Scholastic Library Publishing Award from the American Library Association in 2009 for her outstanding leadership in the field of librarianship and children's and young adult literature. Kathleen frequently lectures to librarians on issues in evaluating literature for children and young adults, and she delivered the 2010 May Hill Arbutnot Honor Lecture for ALA/ALSC. She has a B.A. in Linguistics and a Master's Degree in Library and Information Studies, both from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

**Merri V. Lindgren** is a librarian at the Cooperative Children's Book Center of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Merri was the editor of *The Multicolored Mirror: Cultural Substance in Literature for Children and Young Adults* (Highsmith, 1991), and a former columnist for the *Wisconsin State Journal*, writing about children's books. She currently serves on the ALA/ALSC Quicklists Consulting Committee. Merri was a member of the ALA/ALSC 2010 Caldecott Award Committee. She also served on ALA's first Odyssey Award Committee (2008), a joint award of ALSC and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA). She served on the 2001 Charlotte Zolotow Award committee and chaired the 2002, 2006, 2007, and 2012 Charlotte Zolotow Award committees. Merri has worked as a youth services librarian at the Helen M. Plum Memorial Library in Lombard, Illinois, and as an instructor of Adolescent and Young Adult Literature at Edgewood College. She is a former trustee of the Baraboo (Wisconsin) Public Library. Merri graduated from UW–Madison with a



B.A. Degree in Psychology and has a Master's Degree in Library and Information Studies from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

**Megan Schliesman** is a librarian at the Cooperative Children's Book Center of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. With Kathleen Horning and Ginny Moore Kruse, Megan coauthored *Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults, 1991–1996*. She is currently a columnist for *Library Sparks* magazine. Megan currently serves on the ALA/ALSC Intellectual Freedom Committee. She was chair of the ALA/ALSC 2011 Laura Ingalls Wilder Committee, and a member of the ALA/ALSC 2005 Newbery Award Committee. She has also served on the 1998, 1999 and 2002 Charlotte Zolotow Award committees, and chaired the 2003, 2008 and 2009 Zolotow Award committees. She was a member of the committee that created the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's *Planning Curriculum in English Language Arts* (DPI, 2001) and created the bibliography for DPI's *Teaching Character Education Using Children's Literature* (DPI, 2001). Megan manages the CCBC Intellectual Freedom Information Services and "What IF . . . Questions and Answers on Intellectual Freedom" forum and has written articles on intellectual freedom for several library and education journals. She is past chair of the Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association (WEMTA) Intellectual Freedom Special Interest Group, and a past member of the Wisconsin Library Association Intellectual Freedom Roundtable board. She is also a former member of the South Central Library System Board of Trustees in Wisconsin. She has a B.A. degree in English from UW–Whitewater and a Master's Degree in Library and Information Studies from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

**Carling Febry** worked as a librarian at the CCBC from January, 2010 through June, 2011. She also worked as a library media specialist for the Madison Metropolitan School District at Lincoln Elementary School. Carling chaired the 2011 Charlotte Zolotow Award Committee and served as a member of the 2010 Charlotte Zolotow Award Committee. She was a member of the 2012 ALA/ALSC/Reforma Pura Belpré Award Committee. While in Library School, Carling worked at the CCBC as a reference assistant and was an ALA/ALSC student intern for the 2008 ALA Annual Conference. Carling has a B.A. degree in Spanish and Latin American, Caribbean, and Iberian Studies, and a Master's Degree in Library and Information Studies, both from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

## Appendix IV

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### The Friends of the CCBC

**Interested in receiving *CCBC Choices* each year when it's published? Join the Friends of the CCBC!**

The Friends sponsor programs to develop public appreciation for children's and young adult literature and support special projects at the CCBC, including the annual *CCBC Choices* publication. The Friends also cosponsor the annual Charlotte Zolotow lecture that brings a distinguished author of children's books to the UW–Madison campus each fall, and provide funding for other public lectures on the UW–Madison campus.

**Members of the Friends receive a copy of *Choices* each March when it is published.** Other annual membership benefits include a seasonal newsletter and announcements of CCBC news and events through the Friends listserv. Friends members also receive invitations to events open only to the membership. Membership is open to all.

Members of the 2011–2012 Friends of the CCBC, Inc., Board of Directors are President Madge Klais, Vice-President Jean Funcke, Recording Secretary Georgia Beaverson, Membership Secretary Tracy Moore, Treasurer Amanda Struckmeyer, and Directors-at-Large Jacqueline Houtman and Michelle Wylar. In addition to the board volunteers, the Friends book sale coordinator is Angie Sparks. The Friends Newsletter is edited by Janet Piehl and Michael Kress-Russick.

**Please see the next page for a Friends of the CCBC membership form.**

# Join the Friends of the CCBC!

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## Individual Memberships

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- \$75 Honor (2–5 individuals)
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- \$500 Distinguished (11–15 individuals)
- \$1,000+ Corporate

Make check payable to: **Friends of the CCBC, Inc.**

*Mail to:* **Friends of the CCBC, P.O. Box 5189, Madison, WI 53705**

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- Please do NOT add me to the Friends listserv.

# Indexes

# Author/Illustrator/Title Index

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The author/illustrator/title index includes all of the titles and book creators in this edition of *CCBC Choices*, including titles, authors, illustrators, translators, and editors or compilers of *Choices* books; and book titles and book creators cited in the annotations, introduction, and end matter (with the exception of Appendix I).

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# Subject Index

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This subject index provides access to the titles in *CCBC Choices 2012* as well as to information about the CCBC and publishing in 2011 mentioned in the introduction and end matter. While the index is not comprehensive, themes and subjects were chosen with story time, classroom use, and reader's advisory in mind. Additionally, in keeping with the CCBC's interest in providing access to multicultural literature, the index also includes the ethnic backgrounds of the persons, fictional and real, portrayed in this year's *CCBC Choices* selections. Subject entries are as specific as possible, and include cross-references to related subjects. For example, "Africans and African Americans" includes a cross-reference to "Somalis" and other culturally specific sub-groups.

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