CCBC
Choices
2000

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Cooperative Children's Book Center
School of Education
University of Wisconsin–Madison
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(ISBN 0–931641–10–1)


CCBC Choices was produced by University Publications, University of Wisconsin–Madison. Cover design: Lois Ehlert

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to Friends of the CCBC member Tana Elias for creating the index for this edition of CCBC Choices. Thank you also to Friends member Lois Ehlert, who created the cover design five years ago.

We value the responses and insights of participants in CCBC Book Discussions throughout 1999.

Cheers to all participants in the annual CCBC Award Discussions of books published during 1999: the Randolph Caldecott, John Newbery, and Coretta Scott King Award discussions during November and December, 1999. Special thanks to Madge Klais, who coordinated Madison Metropolitan School District staff participation in the Coretta Scott King discussions.

Many thanks to participants in the CCBC-Net community for sharing comments about some of their favorite books of the year and the outcomes of regional or local award book discussions.

Great appreciation to the individuals with specialized interests and expertise who—at our request—evaluated one or more books or volunteered their comments, especially Anne Altshuler, Philip Hamilton, Dianne Hopkins, Helen Julius, John Kruse, Patricia Kuntz, Patty Schultz, and Mariamne Whatley.

The Friends of the CCBC, Inc., is a membership organization that sponsors programs to develop public appreciation for children's literature and supports special projects at the CCBC. Membership is open to all. Information about membership can be found in Appendix V.

The Friends of the CCBC underwrote the professional design, typesetting, layout, printing, and binding of CCBC Choices 2000. Members of the 1999–2000 Friends of the CCBC, Inc., Board of Directors are: President Kate Odahowski, Vice-President Margaret Jensen, Recording Secretary Renée Hoxie, Treasurer Pam Nibbe, and Directors-at-Large Val Edwards and Tana Elias. Committee chairs include Nancy Beck and Don Crary. The CCBC Advisory Board Liaison is Lois Emberson. The Newsletter editor is Tana Elias.

We appreciate the Friends' ongoing commitment to providing university students and faculty, teachers, school library media specialists, public librarians, and others with an attractive, easy-to-use edition of this publication. All of our reading, selection, and writing for CCBC Choices occurs during evenings and weekends throughout the year. In this respect, the three of us created CCBC Choices 2000 as members of the Friends of the CCBC, Inc.

Kathleen T. Horning, Ginny Moore Kruse, and Megan Schliesman
Introduction

Many perspectives on books for children and young adults are available to those associated with the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), a library of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Additional information about the CCBC can be found near the end of this publication.

We created *CCBC Choices* within the environment of the Cooperative Children's Book Center. As a book examination center and research library, the CCBC receives review copies of almost all of the trade and alternative press books published in English in the United States for children and young adults during the year. Each week during 1999, we examined newly published books. We subsequently read many of them. We discussed hundreds formally or informally with other librarians and educators in Wisconsin and elsewhere in the nation. Many were also discussed on *CCBC-Net*, the national electronic book discussion group moderated by the CCBC.

The CCBC receives daily requests for information about contemporary and historical books for children and young adults. We know firsthand from teachers and librarians, from university faculty, and from students who are studying to become teachers and librarians that they want to find books with accurate information on matters important to the young people in their classrooms, schools, and libraries. The people we meet know that today's children and young adults have many questions and need information in order to better understand their society, the people they know, and even themselves. Our colleagues are looking for books that are commended for these reasons.

Book discussion is an important factor in our process of choosing books for *CCBC Choices*. We hold monthly discussions, open to any adult who would like to attend, to look critically at some of the new books we have received at the CCBC. Generally, these books are so new that they have not yet been reviewed in the professional journals. We strive through discussion to articulate our first critical responses to the books in question, using CCBC Book Discussion Guidelines (see Appendix III).

In addition to these monthly discussions, we host annual awards discussions, using the criteria for eligibility and excellence established by national book award committees. The awards discussions provide an opportunity to look critically at some of the year's outstanding children's books. In late 1999, we held discussions of books eligible for the Caldecott Medal, the Coretta Scott King Award, and the Newbery Award.

In *CCBC Choices*, we bring a wide range of books to our colleagues' attention. We hope everyone who uses this publication is aware that each book recommended here is not necessarily for every child, every classroom, or every family. We are confident, however, that everyone using *CCBC Choices* will find a significant number of books that will delight, inform, or stimulate the innate curiosity of many of the children and young teenagers for whom our colleagues have some level of professional, academic, or career responsibility.
Results of the
CCBC Award Discussions

CCBC Caldecott Award Discussion (Distinguished illustration by a U.S. citizen or resident)


CCBC Coretta Scott King Award Discussion: Author (Distinguished writing by an African American author)


CCBC Coretta Scott King Award Discussion: Illustrator (Distinguished illustration by an African-American artist)


CCBC Newbery Award Discussion (Distinguished writing for children by a U.S. citizen or resident)


The Charlotte Zolotow Award

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 38 years with Harper Junior Books and an author of more than 65 picture 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, where she studied with Professor Helen C. White.

The award is administered by the Cooperative Children’s Book Center, a children’s literature library of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Each year, a committee of children’s literature experts selects the winner from the books published in the preceding year. The winning author receives a cash prize and a bronze medal designed by UW-Madison Art professor Philip Hamilton and based on an original drawing by Harriett Barton of HarperCollins. The award is formally presented in the fall, prior to the annual Charlotte Zolotow Lecture on the UW-Madison campus.

Any picture book for young children (birth through age seven) that is first published in the United States and is written by a U.S. citizen or resident is eligible for consideration for the Charlotte Zolotow Award. The book may fall into any genre of writing (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, or folklore) as long as it is presented in a picture book form and aimed at an audience of young children. The committee works with a shortlist of titles selected by the CCBC professional staff. Committee members may suggest additional titles they think should be included on the shortlist; however, all titles are subject to the approval of the CCBC professional staff. Books written by Charlotte Zolotow are not eligible for the award.

In addition to choosing the award-winning title, the committee may select up to three 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 second annual Charlotte Zolotow Award Committee were: Joan Thron (assistant professor, Department of Curriculum & Instruction, UW–Green Bay); Patricia Bakula (children’s librarian, retired, Glendale, Wisconsin); Geri Ceci Cupery (librarian, Madison Public Library, Madison, Wisconsin); Tana Elias (librarian, Madison Public Library, Madison, Wisconsin); Ginny Moore Kruse (director, Cooperative Children’s Book Center, UW–Madison); and Kathleen T. Horning, ex officio (librarian, Cooperative Children’s Book Center, UW–Madison).
Charlotte Zolotow Award, 2000

Winner: Molly Bang
for
When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry...
(Blue Sky/Scholastic, 1999)

Honor Books:

Cari Best for *Three Cheers for Catherine the Great*.
Illustrated by Giselle Potter.
(Melanie Kroupa/DK Ink, 1999)

Jules Feiffer for *Bark, George*.
(Michael di Capua/HarperCollins, 1999)

Highly Commended:

Diakité, Baba Wagué. *The Hatseller and the Monkeys*.
(Scholastic, 1999)

George, Kristine O'Connell. *Little Dog Poems*.
Illustrated by June Otani.
(Clarion, 1999)

Graham, Joan Bransfield. *Flicker Flash*.
Illustrated by Nancy Davis.
(Houghton Mifflin, 1999)

Howard, Elizabeth Fitzgerald. *When Will Sarah Come?*
Illustrated by Nina Crews.
(Greenwillow, 1999)

Schwartz, Amy. *How to Catch an Elephant*.
(DK Ink, 1999)

Thomas, Joyce Carol. *You Are My Perfect Baby*.
Illustrated by Nneka Bennett.
(Harper Growing Tree/HarperCollins, 1999)
Observations about Publishing in 1999

How Many Books Were Available for Sale During 1999?

The most recent edition of *Children's Books in Print* (R.R. Bowker, 1999) states that there are 150,500 books from 8,600 U.S. publishers currently available for purchase in the United States. This number represents an increase of 11,650 books from one year ago. The 1990–91 edition of *Children's Books in Print* (R.R. Bowker, 1990) cited a total of 66,268 books in print, which means there are nearly twice as many books available now than a decade ago.

Clearly, there is an abundance of books written, edited, and published especially for the children and young teenagers of this nation, as well as an abundance of choices for individuals seeking out books for the young—whether for personal or professional reasons.

How Many Books Were Published During 1999?

During calendar year 1999, we estimate that at least 4,500 to 5,000 new trade books for children and young adults were published in the United States. This is a number similar to our estimates for each of the past five years.

Estimates of the number of new books vary according to who is counting and which new books are included in the totals. CCBC estimates are typically conservative. We do not include reprints, paperback editions of titles published earlier, large-print books, book-club editions, novelty books, and other categories often reflected in the numbers provided by the book industry—most or all of which are included in the 150,500 books currently available for purchase. In addition, the CCBC number represents the work of 75 to 100 trade-book and alternative-press publishers—nowhere near the 8,600 publishers represented in the *Children's Books in Print* statistic. As a result, our estimate of the number of new books has remained steady in recent years.

Collections of children's and young adult literature at the CCBC generally do not include books published for adults, even though some books published for adults do appeal to (and occasionally are claimed by) teenagers.

How Many Books Are in *CCBC Choices 2000*?

There are 223 books listed in *CCBC Choices 2000*. Of these, 44 represent the first published works of 29 authors and 17 illustrators; 21 were originally published outside the United States (eight of these are translations); 8 were published by five small, independently owned and operated publishers. To our knowledge, 115 of the books we recommend in *CCBC Choices 2000* have not appeared on any of the other nationally distributed lists of the year’s best books as of January 25, 1999.

Most of the books in *CCBC Choices 2000* are published for an audience ranging in age from infancy to 14 years—the upper age in the definition of “children” used by the book awards committees of the Association for Library
Service to Children of the American Library Association (ALA). A few of the books in this edition of *CCBC Choices* are recommended for older ages as well.

As we comment on some of the books published in 1999 on the following few pages, please note that not every book we discuss has been selected as a *CCBC Choice*. Books that are not recommended *CCBC Choices* are designated by the inclusion of publisher information after their titles.

**Searching for Multicultural Literature**

Currently there is no agreement in the children’s literature community on a single definition for the word “multicultural.” Nor is a single definition necessary. At the CCBC, we designate books by and about people of color as multicultural literature.

Multicultural literature continued to be highly visible in 1999 in terms of overall numbers. For the eighth consecutive year, many children’s book publishers released new books by and about people of color. One publisher has started an imprint devoted to this type of publishing. However, the special flyers, catalogs, and mailings so common earlier in the decade have almost vanished, and it is important to realize that these numbers still represent only a very small percentage of the total number of new books published for children and young adults each year. Still, we are hopeful that publishers recognize that the continued creation of high-quality multicultural literature is important for all children, and that the Coretta Scott King, Américas, and Pura Belpré awards (and their honor books and commended lists) are formal acknowledgments of excellence in multicultural publishing that certainly matter to teachers, librarians, and parents.

Most of the literature journals, book review magazines, and other professional publications concerning education, librarianship, books for children and young adults, and/or reading featured reviews, interviews, bibliographies, and articles about multicultural literature—continuing a trend of the 1990s. We continue to worry, however, that the collective interest of American teachers, librarians, parents, publishers, and booksellers who are outsiders to specific cultural and ethnic groups is moving away from multicultural literature. It is critical that multicultural literature be viewed as a substantial component of children’s book publishing, rather than as a passing fad or as a so-called “politically correct” phenomenon. Only then will its past be honored and its future as an integral part of children’s and young adult literature be guaranteed.

If individuals and groups within the children’s and young adult literature community begin to operate under the premise that they have all the multicultural books they need, the publishing of excellent new books will dwindle, new writers and artists will not be nurtured, and the perspectives on multicultural experience in our country will be lost. The continued—and increased—publication of a wide range of voices from a wide range of cultural perspectives will help ensure that all children and young teenagers will find validation in what they read, as well as a stronger understanding of what it means to be citizens of their communities, their nation, and the world.
Books by and about Africans and African Americans

The number of books created by Black authors and illustrators dropped slightly in 1999. (The CCBC's designation “Black” includes book creators from the Caribbean, England, and other countries if their works are produced by U.S. publishers. Some books with topics related to Caribbean countries are also designated as Latino.)

CCBC statistics also include books by Black book creators regardless of whether the book contains cultural substance. Of the roughly 4,500 to 5,000 books for young people published in the United States in 1999, the CCBC documented 81 that were created by Black authors and/or illustrators. (The CCBC documented 92 in this category in 1998, 88 in 1997, 92 in 1996, 100 in 1995, 82 in 1994, 74 in 1993, 94 in 1992, and 70 in 1991.) The 81 titles represent the published work of 75 individual authors and illustrators.

Approximately 150 books specifically about African and/or African American history, culture, and/or peoples were documented at the CCBC during 1999, compared to 183 in 1998, 216 in 1997, 172 in 1996, 167 in 1995, and 166 in 1994.

History was made in 1999 when Christopher Paul Curtis won both the Coretta Scott King Award and the Newbery Medal for his novel, Bud, Not Buddy, making him the first author to win both awards for the same book. It is important to note that Bud, Not Buddy is the first book by an African American writer to have won the Newbery since Mildred Taylor won it in 1977 for Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry (Dial, 1976). Also this year, Walter Dean Myers won the first Michael L. Printz Award for outstanding writing for young adults with his novel, Monster, which was shortlisted for the National Book Award as well.

Two important collections of poetry by African American poets from earlier generations were published in 1999. Andrea Davis Pinkney and Ashley Bryan selected some of Paul Laurence Dunbar's best-known poems for children in their dazzling collection, Jump Back, Honey, which is illustrated by six well-known contemporary African American artists. Rudine Sims Bishop's collection of poems by Effie Lee Newsome brings a lesser-known poet to the forefront in Wonders: The Best Children's Poems of Effie Lee Newsome. The editors of both volumes have provided excellent introductions, which focus on the importance of these writers in the lives of past generations of African American children. In contrast to these two collections, Lydia Omolola Okutoro has pulled together a cutting-edge anthology of poems by African American poets between the ages of 13 and 14 in Quiet Storm: Voices of Young Black Poets. Okutoro pays tribute to previous generations by opening each section of her collection with poems by the likes of Langston Hughes, Lucille Clifton, and Maya Angelou.

Books by and about Latinos

At the CCBC, we try to keep track of all that is published for young people and to notice trends and changes. This project often proves a greater challenge for us than one might expect. Typically, we have not been able to provide reliable documentation about the number of books by other racial or ethnic groups that compares to what we can provide on Black book creators.
However, an increased number of books by Latinos and about Latino themes and topics since 1993 encouraged us, beginning in 1994, to make a concerted effort to document the number of such titles. In 1999, we counted 64 new titles by Latinos and/or about Latino topics. In 1998, there were 66 titles; in 1997, there were 88; in 1996, there were 103; in 1995, there were 70; and in 1994, we counted 90 Latino titles.

It is discouraging to see this number decrease for the third year in a row, especially since there were only 26 titles in 1999 that were produced by Latino authors and artists. Moreover, we would expect that the two awards established in the 1990s to draw attention to outstanding Latino books for children and young adults would be encouraging publishers to seek out works to add to this important body of literature. The Americas Award, with its mission to provide visibility for excellent books about Latin America and Latinos in the United States, was established in 1993 and is administered through the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s Center for Latin America. The Pura Belpré Award was established by REFORMA and the Association of Library Services for Children, a division of the American Library Association, to formally acknowledge outstanding writing for youth by a Latino writer. This biannual award was first given out in 1996.

This year, for the first time since its inception in 1995, the CCBC was unable to hold its annual Americas Award discussion, as we decided there were too few books eligible to make a discussion worthwhile. We would, however, like to call attention to the few outstanding Latino books of the year. Victor Montejo and Luis Garay collaborated on a children’s edition of Popul Vuh, making one of the oldest published books in the Americas accessible to children for the first time. D. H. Figueredo emerged as a talented new writer for the young with the publication of his first picture book, When This World Was New. And poet Juan Felipe Herrera demonstrated his consummate skill at writing for teenagers in his outstanding novel in verse, CrashBoomLove. Notably, two of these three books were published by small presses. And the third was published by the same university press that first published The (kuit by Francisco Jiménez in 1997. Jiménez’s book was reissued in a new edition from Houghton Mifflin in 1999.

Books by and about American Indians

The overall growth in the number and quality of new books about contemporary Native people since 1992 is a welcome change. Unfortunately, the numbers of books published each year has recently declined. In 1999, we documented 41 books on American Indian themes and topics—down from the 54 we counted in 1998. In 1997, we counted 64 books. In 1996, there were 50 books. And in 1995, we found 83 that fell into this category.

The overall quality of the books continues to improve, however. Source notes and specificity about a book’s content are always an aid to evaluating books of information; they are especially valuable in books by American Indians and about American Indian themes. An increasing number of books now designate the specific Indian nation that is the source of a topic or the subject of a story. More books are also recognizing the importance of nomenclature and are using the names by which specific American Indian
peoples refer to themselves. We are optimistic that such specificity will continue to be seen in future books of fiction, information, and folklore concerning American Indian topics, and we are hopeful that the number of such books will again increase in future years.

Our records show that 14 specific Indian nations were represented among the 41 books about American Indian themes and topics documented at the CCBC during 1999. Twenty-four nations were noted in the 55 books published in 1998, 37 nations in the 64 books published in 1997, 22 nations in the 50 books documented in 1996, and 32 nations in the 83 books published in 1995.

Of the books we documented in 1999, very few are written or illustrated by Native authors and artists. Joseph Bruchac continues to add to his impressive body of work in several genres. In 1999, his autobiography for young readers, *Seeing the Circle*, shows that excellent writing is possible even within the confines of formula nonfiction. World-renowned dancer Maria Tallchief also published a memoir of her childhood and adolescence this year, with the assistance of Rosemary Wells. *Tallchief: America's Prima Ballerina* will appeal to many aspiring young dancers; in addition, it breaks the stereotypes of reservation life so often seen in the popular culture. Louise Erdrich's first novel for children, *The Birchbark House*, which takes place on Madeline Island in the mid-19th century and features an Ojibwe family, was shortlisted for the National Book Award. It's sure to become a standard among children in Wisconsin, as well as throughout the nation. *The Birchbark House* is Erdrich's second published book for children. We hope to see many more from her in the years to come.

**Books by and about Asians and Asian Americans**

Perhaps the most hopeful sign in multicultural literature in 1999 was in the area of books by and about Asian Americans. This year, we counted 61 children's books with Asian and Asian American themes. In 1998, there were 50 books; in 1997, there were 66; in 1996, there were 49; in 1995, there were 91; and in 1994, there were 65. While the numbers continue to spike up and down, for the first time we are beginning to see more of a balance between books about contemporary Asian American children and the more typical topics of children's books about Asians: war and folklore.

Both *Little Dog Poems* by Kristine O'Connell George and *Hey, Little Baby* by Nola Buck feature Asian American children in universal stories that will appeal to young readers. This is such a rare occurrence that it cannot be taken for granted. Yumi Heo created a companion book to *One Afternoon* (Orchard, 1994) with *One Sunday Morning*. In the latter, little Minho takes a noisy city excursion with his dad. We were very excited to see two new Asian American writers publish their first picture books in 1999: Soyung Pak's *Dear Juno* is an excellent picture story about a Korean American boy growing up in a bicultural family. Grace Lin's *The Ugly Vegetables* is based on her own childhood experiences as the only Chinese American child in her neighborhood.
Books of International Interest

Forty-six books first published in the United States in English after being translated from other languages were documented at the CCBC during 1999. Of these translated books, only six were of a length substantial enough to make them eligible for the Batchelder Award. Eight translated books were selected for this edition of CCBC Choices. These range from a hard-hitting Dutch novel about street kids in Brazil (Asphalt Angels) to an Italian picture-book biography about the artist Giotto (A Boy Named Giotto), to an endearing Swedish picture book about parent-child conflict (Benny's Had Enough!)

This edition of CCBC Choices contains 21 books published elsewhere in English before being published in the United States or becoming available here through distributors. We continue to appreciate the Canadian "In My Neighborhood" series published by Kids Can Press. This year's Police Officers and Postal Workers are welcome additions to these engaging and informative picture stories about community helpers. Pierre Yves Njeng's Vacation in the Village, originally published in Cameroon, offers U.S. children a rare glimpse into the lives of contemporary children of West Africa. Two books in CCBC Choices 2000 were originally published in Ireland: The Good Liar by Gregory Maguire and A Hive for the Honeybee by Soinbhe Lally. David Almond's excellent novel Skellig, first published in Great Britain, has been a critical success on both sides of the Atlantic, even though it's been overshadowed by the runaway success of another British author: J. K. Rowling, of Harry Potter fame.

Fiction: The Year of the Orphan

It would be impossible to write about children's and young adult literature in 1999 without mentioning the Harry Potter books by J. K. Rowling. Rowling's second and third volumes were published this year: Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets and Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban. Along with the first book in the series, Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone (Scholastic, 1998), all have maintained top positions on the New York Times Bestseller List throughout the year. Remarkably, Sorcerer's Stone has remained in the top five bestselling books for more than a year.

The continuing saga of a relatively nerdy young orphan who discovers he has special powers has captivated children and adults alike throughout the world. Aside from Rowling's outstanding plotting and characterization, the author's playful use of humor seems to feed a deep need in children and young teens at the turn of the century. After a decade or more of fairly gloomy, depressing (albeit well-written) books, children seem hungry for literature that can make them laugh.

In addition to Harry Potter, in 1999 we saw two more engaging orphans caught up in funny, over-the-top plots. Christopher Paul Curtis's Bud, Not Buddy is a Depression-era tale of a likeable, witty, ten-year-old orphan searching for a father he has never known. Meanwhile, back in Manhattan, in Gail Carson Levine's Dave at Night, 11-year-old Dave manages to survive at the Hebrew Home for Boys by figuring ways to sneak out at night. Like the
Harry Potter novels, both of these orphan stories are, above all, funny—although beneath the surface one may also find psychological depth.

*CCBC Choices 2000* also includes two realistic novels with orphaned protagonists. *Theo*, an exceptional first novel by Barbara Harrison, is set in Greece during World War II. *Asphalt Angels* is set in contemporary Brazil and written from the point of view of a 13-year-old street kid named Alex. The lives of both Theo and Alex are far from romantic and funny. Survival is a moment-by-moment struggle for both in a world where violence is a constant threat.

Authors of young adult fiction continue to experiment with style and form, something that becomes evident when one merely looks inside such stand-outs as *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson, *Hard Love* by Ellen Wittlinger, and *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers. In the latter two, design and typography figure into the storytelling by giving readers clues about who is talking to whom and when. *Speak* is told in a series of first-person sound bites from the point of view of a high school freshman who becomes increasingly withdrawn as the novel progresses. While none of the characters in these three books are orphans in the literal sense, each has been orphaned in a metaphorical sense because the adult world has failed them.

We applaud authors such as Myers, Anderson, and Wittlinger for taking risks with their approaches to fiction. We were also pleased to see established authors for the young trying new kinds of writing. Lynne Rae Perkins, known as an author and illustrator of picture books, branched into fiction with her first novel, *All Alone in the Universe*. Susan Campbell Bartoletti, who has written outstanding nonfiction related to child labor, tried her hand at a novel this year. The result was *No Man's Land*, a powerful historical fiction set during the U.S. Civil War. One of the most exciting first novels of the year came from Karen English, whose book *Francie* deals with an African American girl growing up in Alabama in the 1930s. Another Depression-era novel, *Goodbye, Walter Malinski*, introduces readers to an eloquent, understated story and to a promising new writer, Helen Recorvits.

**Picture Books: Playful and Inventive**

It was an exceptional year for picture books, in terms of quality and variety. We were happy to see publishers shifting their focus a bit back to books for young children. While in the past several years we have appreciated the creation of picture books for older children and young teens, it seemed that literature for preschoolers was being forgotten. Now it seems to be back at full strength. We especially admire the books being published for babies and toddlers by Harper Growing Tree. With *You Are My Perfect Baby*, Joyce Carol Thomas provides an excellent example of outstanding writing for babies. This board book is one of the six highly commended for the Charlotte Zolotow Award for outstanding writing in a picture book.

Other picture books for young children that zero right in on their interests include *Eyes, Nose, Fingers, Toes: A First Book All about You* by Judy Hindley, which speaks directly to toddlers about all the things they can do;
Trucks, Trucks, Trucks by Peter Sís, This Train by Paul Collicut, and Trashy Town by Andrea Zimmerman and David Clemesha, three books that take a creative approach to the preschooler's perennially favorite topic—transportation; and When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry... by Molly Bang, a remarkable picture book that pulls drama out of everyday life and makes it meaningful to young readers.

Of the picture books listed above, no two are visually alike. Just as young-adult authors are experimenting with form and style in their writing, so, too, are picture book artists experimenting with different styles and media. Aki Sogabe excels, for example, in her use of cut-paper technique in Aesop's Fox, while Simms Taback playfully uses die-cut pages to represent worn clothing in Joseph Had a Little Overcoat. The inventive use of photography was especially notable in picture books of 1999—from the photographs of Nina Crews in When Will Sarah Come? to Christopher Myers's mixed-media assemblages in Black Cat, Leslie Jean-Bart's scratchboard and photo collages in Strong to the Hoop, and Saxton Freymann's and Joost Elffers's hilarious photos of emoting vegetables in How Are You Peeling? All of these artists are developing styles made possible by technology at the end of the 20th century.

Several excellent picture books developed out of authors' reminiscences of childhood were published in 1999. These include Last Licks by Cari Best, a thoroughly delightful tale. The author, who grew up in New York City, recalls her childhood fascination with pink rubber balls called spaldeens. Tololwa M. Mollel's My Rows and Piles of Coins, the story of a boy who saves up his money to buy a bicycle, is based on a memory from the author's youth in Tanzania in the early 1960s. Although both of these appealing books are clearly rooted in the past, they avoid nostalgia and demonstrate that children in all times and places have common characteristics.

Children with bicultural lives continue to be a theme in the books of 1999. Eve Bunting's I Have an Olive Tree features a young Greek American girl who learns about her heritage on a trip to her mother's island birthplace; Dear Juno by Soyung Pak shows the relationship a Korean American boy shares with his grandmother, even though the two don't speak the same language; and D. H. Figueredo's When This World Was New tells of an immigrant child's first experience with snow after he and his family move from an island in the Caribbean to the United States.

We saw several playful fantasies in the picture books of 1999, including How to Catch an Elephant by Amy Schwartz, an amusing story that uses hyperbole and childlike plot twists to get young imaginations rolling; Weslandia by Paul Fleischman, based on every child's dream of becoming completely independent and self-sufficient without leaving the backyard; and David Wiesner's amusing, wordless picture story, Sector 7, which takes a young aspiring artist from the top of the Empire State Building to a realm where clouds are shaped and launched into the sky.
Books of Information: They Just Keep Getting Better

Over the past decade, we have seen a steady increase in both the quantity and quality of nonfiction for children and teens. The books of information this year were, for the most part, creatively designed, carefully edited, and skillfully written.

Nonfiction for all ages continues to be highly visual. The use of color photographs has become commonplace. Still, we can’t help but be impressed by the clarity and the beauty of Nic Bishop’s photographs in both Red-Eyed Tree Frog and The Snake Scientist. Photo essays about contemporary children continue to be produced in great quantity. This year, we especially appreciated Jim Varriale’s book about Ballet Tech High School in New York City, as described and photographed in Kids Dance, and Bernard Wolf’s timely photo essay about life in contemporary Havana, Cuba: After the Revolution.

Historic photographs illustrate several outstanding works about the past, including the excellent Through My Eyes by Ruby Bridges, the six-year-old who was the first student to cross the color line when the New Orleans public schools were integrated in 1960. Haunting photographs taken in 1914 by the ship’s staff photographer illustrate the compelling account of Shackleton’s failed voyage to Antarctica in Ice Story by Elizabeth Cody Kimmel. Kimmel is one of several writers to do extensive primary research for her book for young readers.

We were pleased to see the care and attention being given to original source material in such outstanding books as The Perilous Journey of the Donner Party by Marian Calabro, Kids on Strike! by Susan Campbell Bartoletti, and The Wild Colorado by Richard Maurer. Each of these authors used first-person accounts from letters, diaries, and interviews, in addition to news accounts of the time. The same level of attention and care was given to biographies for the young, including At Her Majesty’s Request by Walter Dean Myers, Clara Schumann by Susanna Reich, and Babe Didrikson Zaharias by Russell Freedman, who has set the standard for biographies written for children and teens in recent years.

As with creators of fiction and picture books, creators of nonfiction are also taking innovative approaches to book design. Perhaps the best reflection of this among the books published in 1999 is Aliki’s William Shakespeare and the Globe. In this book, the artist skillfully integrates comic-strip conventions into an informative book that is divided into acts and scenes, rather like a mini-drama of Shakespeare’s life. Another playful visual approach to presenting information to children appears in It’s So Amazing!, Robie Harris and Michael Emberly’s follow-up to It’s Perfectly Normal (Candlewick, 1994). The new book has been created in a similar style, using a conversational tone and light-hearted, yet realistic illustrations to make children feel comfortable with the subject matter.

Interracial families and relationships, a topic rarely seen in books for children and teens, appeared in no less than four books in 1999. Forbidden Love: The Secret History of Mixed-Race America by Gary Nash provides a comprehensive history for older teens, while What Are You? Voices of Mixed-Race
Young People by Pearl Fyo Gaskins presents the views of contemporary teens. We commend Henry Holt for publishing both books in the same publishing year, without false worries of “glutting the market.” Trina Schart Hyman matter-of-factly illustrates a new edition of John Updike’s A Child’s Calendar with members of her own mixed-race, multigenerational family as characters. Molly Bannaky by Alice McGill recounts the story of a British prisoner and an African captive who married after obtaining freedom in the American colonies, raised a family, and prospered (they were the grandparents of astronomer Benjamin Banneker).

Another topic we saw presented in several different ways in books of information this year was how books are written, illustrated, and produced. We see, for example, the importance of journal-keeping for many writers in Speaking of Journals by Wisconsin writer Paula W. Graham. Graham interviewed more than two-dozen children’s authors. Pat Cummings issued a third volume of her ever-popular Talking with Artists, based on interviews with children’s book illustrators. As a companion to What Do Authors Do? (Clarion, 1995), Eileen Christelow turns her attention to picture book artists in What Do Illustrators Do? We find out about the specific events that inspired Beatrix Potter’s beloved classic Peter Rabbit in My Dear Noel and learn everything we wanted to know about the mechanics of pop-up books in The Elements of Pop-Up. Perhaps the most ambitious work of this nature is David Macaulay’s Building the Book “Cathedral,” which concerns the creation of his first book, Cathedral, published back in 1973. All of these books are testaments to the splendid creative powers that go into the production of books for children and young adults.

Book Publishing and Book Buying:
So Many Choices

The increase in the number of books published during the last decade of the 20th century represents decisions made by U.S. publishers to invest in children’s books. Such investments are made with the expectation that, in all parts of the nation, people are eager and ready to buy books for the young. Indeed, much evidence continues to indicate that store sales of children’s books support much of the children’s and young adult book-publishing industry (as well as books for adults in several publishing houses) in the United States at this time.

The increase also represents an overwhelming number of choices. These choices begin with publishers, who decide which manuscripts to produce, which illustrators to employ, which books to advertise heavily, which authors to send on tour, and so on. Book industry representatives make decisions about paperback editions and reprints with specific consumers in mind. All of these decisions have an impact on the book-buying public: they determine what books we will ever see in print and, once books are published, which ones most book buyers are likely to hear about. At the same time, the book industry must expect that potential consumers will buy more than the best-sellers, the most heavily promoted books, or the most familiar authors. Otherwise, they would not invest in the hundreds and hundreds of other titles they produce.
Commercial sales in bookstores are driven by parents and other adults, and by young people themselves—in the case of popular books that older children are eager to obtain for their own recreational reading. The other significant group of children's book consumers is the so-called institutional market—the public librarians, school library media specialists, classroom teachers, child care providers, and academic librarians responsible for collections of literature for the young. Individuals within these groups select and purchase books for use by more than one child, family, or student. Institutional sales most often utilize public funding and are responsible for building collections that represent the diverse needs and interests of their users.

Consumers of books for children and young adults have the luxury—and the difficulty—of making choices because of the large number of titles available. Whether their decisions are spontaneous and unplanned or based upon complex judgments, total amount of money available for book buying, comparisons, special interests, or unique needs, the fact that choices do exist cannot be overvalued among those who are committed to seeking out high-quality books for the young.

The Cooperative Children's Book Center offers an environment for discovery and learning, for making up one's own mind about the new books published each year, and for making comparisons to books from other years and decades. We create *CCBC Choices* to identify the outstanding titles of the current publishing year in the hope that it will provide librarians, teachers, parents, and others with assistance in navigating the wide and exciting array of choices available to them.

*CCBC Choices* is a guide, not a rule book. While we certainly have made an effort to find as many of the outstanding books of the year as possible, inevitably, other books will come to our attention in the coming months and years. We will wish that we had included them. Likewise, as mentioned earlier, not every book is for every child. The purpose of *CCBC Choices* is to offer a wide variety of books for a wide variety of individuals. We have attempted to compile a guide that provides choices of high quality for everyone, not a core selection for all.
The Choices
The Natural World


The mesmerizing format of the Magic School Bus books has become familiar, but Joanna Cole and Bruce Degen continue to keep the series fresh. In this latest offering, the school's assistant principal gets behind the wheel of the magic school bus completely unaware of the amazing possibilities in store. The students accompany Mr. Wilde, who is tracking down Ms. Frizzle after school, and when he presses the little green button on the dashboard of the bus, the class is off on another impossible adventure in the blink of an eye—literally. Their trip turns into a firsthand look at the workings of sensory systems—sight, smell, taste, touch and hearing. They even take a journey into the brain of The Friz herself, all the while getting a glimpse of what is perhaps one of the greatest mystery of all to children—what teachers do after school. Like the other books in The Magic Schoolbus series, this one is packed with reliable science in the framework of fantastic occurrences. (Ages 6-9)


When evening comes to the rain forest, the macaw and the toucan go to sleep, but the red-eyed tree frog awakens, ready for action. He is both the hunter and the hunted in the natural cycle of the forest. Joy Cowley’s spare text is geared toward the very young: “Here is an iguana. Frogs do not eat iguanas. / Do iguanas eat frogs? The red-eyed tree frog does not wait to find out. / It hops onto another branch.” Throughout she maintains a scientific perspective as she recounts the daily drama of the natural world: eat or be eaten. Nic Bishop’s exquisitely vivid color photos heighten the drama by using close-ups and freeze-frame photography. (Ages 2-6)


The earth is turning. Across the country the sun arcs from east to west, and the natural world responds. "Good morning, the dawn. . . . Good morning, the morning. . . . Good noon, the noon. . . . Good afternoon, the afternoon / The birds stop singing. The antelopes doze. The lizard hides." Jean Craighead George's narrative of the cycle of dawn to darkness and back again across the continent is as awe-inspiring as nature itself, and just as paradoxical: simple yet complex, powerful yet peaceful. Her brief and exquisite text marks the passage of the sun across the continent, and Wendell Minor echoes this progression in full-page, richly rendered paintings that show the flora and fauna of various regions of the country. Endnotes provide specific information about the region and natural life depicted in each illustration of singular volume. (Ages 4-8)


After explaining briefly how ducks waterproof themselves by preening their feathers with oil, this clear, concise text goes on to discuss how and why ducks live near water, with particular attention to how different species find food under water. Children who have an opportunity to observe ducks firsthand in the wild will now be able to recognize and understand various aspects of their behavior, and may even start distinguishing between species, thanks to Helen K. Davie’s accurate, realistic watercolor paintings. The book concludes with an easy experiment using vegetable oil, water and feathers (or a brown paper bag if no feathers are available) to show how waterproofing works. (Ages 3-7)


Every spring 18,000 red-sided garter snakes emerge from their eight-month hibernation underground at the Narcisse Wildlife Area in Manitoba, Canada. Scientists such as Bob Mason see this as a prime opportunity for experimentation to try to unlock some of the mysteries of snake behavior. His work will prove intrinsically interesting to many young readers, but it’s made all the more intriguing through Sy
Montgomery’s excellent prose and Nic Bishop’s stunning color photographs. Together they describe the basics of Bob Mason’s work with these garter snakes, as well as the ways in which community members get involved to help the scientists out. (Ages 7-11)


Naturalist Stephen R. Swinburne traces the development of scientific knowledge about the behavior of wolves in the wild and describes the efforts of contemporary wildlife biologists who are introducing the gray wolf back into Yellowstone National Park. This movement, begun by Aldo Leopold in the 1930s, has always faced strong opposition from area ranchers and from others who hold to the longstanding human hatred of wolves. Dramatic color photographs by Jim Brandenburg illustrate the narrative by showing the scientists at work and the wolves in their natural habitat. (Ages 7-14)

Wright-Frierson, Virginia. *A North American Rain Forest Scrapbook.* Walker, 1999. 36 pages (0-8027-8679-0) $15.95

Lushly detailed watercolor paintings capture the the light and life within the temperate rain forest that makes up Olympic National Park in Washington state. Wright-Frierson’s conversational tone and varied page layouts give readers a sense that she’s sharing the things she observed and learned on a day-long walk through the forest, including information about the animals she sees such as salmon, slugs and elk, and the natural life cycle of the majestic trees. She occasionally adds further background information she has learned from reading books and from talking to naturalist Mike Daniels, an employee at the National Park -- the differences between a tropical and a temperate rain forest, for example, and details about life in the forest canopy and underground. (Ages 8-14)

*See Also:* *A Is for... *; *Be Blest; Frightful’s Mountain; My Goose Betsy; Top of the World*

**Seasons and Celebrations**

Carrier, Lark. *On Halloween.* HarperCollins, 1999. 38 pages (0-694-01292-0) $7.95

A cheerful 7 1/4 x 8 1/4” volume offers eight easy riddles with hints suggested by clues to such obvious Halloween conventions such as ghosts, carved pumpkins, bats, and costumed children shown in boldly colored and stylized images, short rhymes, and die-cut stiff pages. The youngest trick-or-treaters will be able to guess these riddles, and the most excited of them can repeatedly enjoy this little book without having the book or its pages fall apart. ( Ages 3-5)


(Anne-Marie: the quoted sections are capitalized and punctuated as they are in the book)

Twenty-one life-the-flap riddles play with preschoolers’ awareness of visual elements within the Christmas observance. This tall, narrow book contains three written riddles on one side of each stiff page and three sturdy square flaps on the opposite side. The book begins with the words “I become a / special tree / when you trim / and decorate me” and then asks “What am I?” Across the page, one sees a flap bearing a green triangle with two colored spheres on it. Open the flap to discover a Christmas tree. The second riddle states “snuggly fur / Red and white / I keep Santa warm / on a cold winter’s night” and repeats the question. A bright red flap with three brown vertical circles opens to show Santa’s brown-buttoned jacket. Secular, except for two riddles referring to a star and to an angel, this wonderfully designed book measures 10 7/8 x 4 1/4” in size and has a pricetag that’s a gift in itself.


Nadia is going to be a flower girl for Auntie Laila’s wedding. For little Nadia this means having her hands decorated with *mehndi,* something about which her relatives are much more excited than she is. She knows
the markings will still be there on Monday when she goes to school. Even though Auntie Amina sings in Urdu while she creates the mehndi, it’s difficult for Nadia to have the patience her family calls sabr. Her hands now look as if they belong to someone else. After the ceremony her grandmother comments that she’s looking at her past and future at the same time when she sees the intricate red markings on her granddaughter’s hands. Nadia senses the deep cultural connection. She will claims it for herself - even on Monday. Weiner’s full-color, full page illustrations done in oil pastel complement English’s fictional glimpse into a contemporary Pakistani-American girl’s brief struggle with the meaning of a traditional Pakistani practice. A brief glossary ends the picture book story. (Ages 5-8)

Hildebrandt, Ziporah. *This Is Our Seder.* Illustrated by Robin Roraback. Holiday House, 1999. 32 pages (0-8234-1436-1) $15.95

The title page and next page spread illustrations show people of varying ages arriving at a home and being welcomed by the host family. “This is our night for coming together. / This is the plate for teaching, the wine for tasting...” states a young narrator in a simple picture book with minimal text and pictures. Although there is a one-page note at the back containing some facts about the Passover Seder, the strength of Hildebrandt’s rests in its simplicity. Rather than answering questions for someone unfamiliar with Seder foods and customs, this modest book can serve as a visual summary for the youngest - before, during and after the Seder. (Ages 2-4)


“In the west the sky was bright with stars as a young woman stayed up late, baking bread...Way down in the south, where countries are hotter, another woman sat up late at night, rocking her child... Far away in the southeast an old woman was telling stories to her grandchildren by the dying light of a cooking fire...” In her original variation of the Magi tale, Hoffman uses few words as she effectively introduces women from three different locales and generations. According to her story, each woman followed a mysterious star. “They met on a path of starlight, not knowing how long or far they had traveled. They were not hungry or thirsty or tired, so each supposed her journey had been short.” They walked together and came upon a thatched dwelling where they found an infant surrounded by presents of gold. Their gifts suggest this infant’s future: star-bread, a story, and a spontaneous expression of genuine love. Russell’s art evokes rather than specifies cultural and geographical details; her illustrations suggest the diversity of the characters she affectionately portrayed using oil pastel. (Ages 4-8)


“In the hills was sudden music / Come see / Come and see / the sheep and shepherds heard.” So opens a fresh retelling of the traditional Christmas Eve story illustrated with exceptionally expressive full-color paintings. Schuett’s illustrations is particularly memorable in that her artwork emphasizes the people who lived in the region near Bethlehem nearly two thousand years ago. The text suggests dialogue between a child who witnesses the star: “Mother, Father, come and see!” and her parents, “Come where? See what?” The child responds, “Come see the world made new. / the same old world, but new.” The “townsfolk crowd behind,” but it’s the children who circle the babe while “shepherds lay down skins of milk. The innkeeper brings out bread and wine.” Ordinary folk of all ages join hands to dance around the stable, around the sleeping baby within. A joyous version of the Child’s birth features people rather than angels and royalty, and most of all, it features children. (Ages 4-8)


In a friendly two-page introduction Langstaff explains how centuries ago some of the farmers in England thought that dancing and singing “energetically” would help newly planted seeds to grow. Dressed as creatures, the farmers acted out agricultural routines of their time. He tells readers that “a woman Lucy Broadwood learned this from a farmer who sang about it for her more than one hundred years ago.” In his
version of a song depicting rural customs, a pig went out to dig, a cow to plow, a sparrow to harrow, a crow
to sow, a sheep to reap, a drake to rake and a minnow to winnow - all on Christmas Day in the morning.
Sweet’s hilarious watercolors depict these creatures in action and invite all to sing along encouraged, if
necessary, by use of the simple music notation at the book’s end. Her end paper “map” pictures an
imagined rural region, a drawing represents each creature, and nature symbols bring additional historical
detail. Sweet’s superb composition and sophisticated understanding of how to make a unified whole out of
many parts results in a handsome book with pages edged in gold. Langstaff suggests making up additional
rhymes on the spot to go with the traditional ones, and he claims it’s easy to do. This book edition of the
song makes it even easier. Children of today are shown throughout the book reveling with those costumed
as creatures. They’re gentle visual reminders that participation keeps traditions alive as well as making
them new. (Ages 3-8)

$16.00

“With this book I celebrate the creative power that pervades the natural world and my connection to it.” So
writes Owens as she introduces twelve poetic tributes to the birds and beasts of latitudes where both snow
and heat round out each year. In April, “Sing Praise with peepers all night long / beside the sprouting /
cattail pond, / while mallard nests / with watchful eye / and wood frogs sing / their lullaby.” On one side of
that page this poem is swathed in a small visual wreath of cattail leaves and peepers. On the other a
detailed, full page illustration represents a pond where turtles, frogs eggs, a duck sitting on eggs, and other
creatures in nature’s camouflage can be discovered. Children will enjoy finding and then naming the
creatures almost hidden in every pair of circles and pictures. Original music on the final page suggests
another way for families to use Owens’s lovely book. (Ages 5-8)

(0-689-82370-3) $14.00

“Bless the houses / snug and tight,/ Bless the kitties / day and night / Bless the trees / and bless the snow, /
Bless us all / when cold winds blow!” Thus begins a series of twelve two-page spreads, one of which bears
Rylant’s written appreciation of tangible elements of daily life indoors and outside within a latitude
experiencing snow in January. The other page for each month contains her full-color expressionistic
artwork occasionally completed with fabric but always bordered in photographed patchwork. The January
illustration contains a small red snowbound house with a cat in the window. The September art illustrates a
child boarding a school bus. In December the art involves an abstract painting of the planet Earth guarded
by four angels in a flower-filled outer space. “Bless the earth / and those who love it, / Bless the angels / up
above it, / Bless the wonders, / bless the glories, / Bless the world / and all its stories.” Four angels. An
idyllic appreciation of the seasons for some families who, after repeated readings of the monthly rhyme,
might find themselves repeating some of these rhymes at mealtime or bedtime. (Ages 3-7)

$15.00

Twenty-six short poems describe aspects of the season of rebirth and renewal with subjects that are
sometimes pleasingly familiar and sometimes surprisingly fresh. Many readers will get the immediate
connection between spring and poem topics such as April, Buds, Kites, and Seeds, but among the more
original offerings are Dawn, Hopscotch, Ladder and Venus, and Umpire is sure to bring a smile to some.
Each poem is an acrostic, in which the first letter of the lines can be read vertically to spell out whatever is
being described, and in each the connection to the season is made lyrically clear. Colored type is used to set
the vertical word apart from the rest of the poem. Each page features a single boxed poem set on a richly
colored, bordered linoleum cut. The handsome design is given even greater unity by the artist's depiction of
the same family and diverse group of children throughout the illustrations of this book that is sure to inspire
some poem-making among readers. (Ages 7-11)

Teague, Mark. One Halloween Night. Scholastic, 1999. 32 pages (0-590-84625-6) $14.95

Halloween starts out all wrong for three contemporary kids when Wendell discovers his “mad scientist”
costume turned pink in the wash, Floyd finds out that he has to take his “bunny” sister along for trick-or-treating (“Pirates don’t have little sisters, he complained.”) and Mona’s mother insists that she be dressed as a fairy princess. Things can get worse. The treats are sometimes awful, and occasionally there are tricks, instead. Things do get worse when the four kids run into Leona Fleebish and her nasty friends. Anything can happen on Halloween, even to the villains. Teague’s fast-moving story illustrated in full color with paintings rendered in acrylics is just scary enough, just magical enough, and original in its utilization of conventional Halloween elements. (Ages 4-8)

**Zolotow, Charlotte. The Beautiful Christmas Tree. Illustrated by Yan Nascimbene. Houghton Mifflin, 1999. 32 pages (0-395-91365-9) $15.00**

All the houses on a certain fashionable city street were lived in except one, until unfashionable Mr. Crockett moved in. He fixed up the run-down brownstone, and the following spring he planted a dismal little tree in front of it. “Beauty is as beauty does,” he had told the neighborhood florist from whom he bought the plant on the previous Christmas Eve. Years passed. Mr. Crockett’s bread crumbs encouraged birds to come to the tree. Seeing the birds flock there was encouragement for young brown-skinned David join Mr. Crockett on the stoop to enjoy them. More years passed. A small miracle occurred, the kind of small secular miracle occasioned by gentle acts and the possibility of wonder. First published as a picture book in 1972, Nascimbene’s subdued watercolor palette and stylized forms are a perfect new complement to Zolotow’s understated, timeless fable. (Ages 4-8)

**See Also: A Child’s Calendar; Journeys with Elijah; Oh!; Morris’s Disappearing Bag; River Town; Spring; When This World Was New; Winter Eyes**

**Folklore, Mythology and Traditional Literature**


A funny modern retelling of “The Twelve Dancing Princesses,” set in contemprary Harlem, is based on a stage version that was performed at Kennedy Center in 1998. Here the family dog narrates the story about the twelve boisterous sons of the Reverend Knight who sneak out every evening to go dancing and then blame the wear and tear on their shoes on their porr loyal mutt. A succession of housekeepers are unable to keep up with the boys, untilisweet Sunday arrives. She proves herself as more than a match for the twelve high-steppers. Kadir Nelson’s cartoon-style color illustrations add detail and whimsy to an appealing urban folktale. (Age 5-9)

**Bryan, Ashley. The Night Has Ears: African Proverbs. A Jean Karl Book / Atheneum, 1999. 32 pages (0-689-82427-0) $16.00**

In his introduction, Ashley Bryan tells us that he grew up hearing proverbs from his parents so they’ve always been a part of his life, as is common with many people. As a scholar of traditional literature, he began to collect proverbs he found in African sources and for this volume he has selected 26 from several cultural groups on the African continent. His selections are both culturally specific and universal: e.g. “Treat your guest as a guest for two days; on the third day, give him a hoe.” (Swahili) Some are a bit more mysterious and will inspire children to think about their meaning: “Never try to catch a black cat at night.” (Krahn) Each proverb is illustrated with a tempera and gouache painting that uses brightly colored geometric shapes outlined in white for a stained-glass effect. (Ages 5-9)

**Diakité, Baba Wagué. The Hatseller and the Monkeys: A West African Folktale. Scholastic, 1999. 32 pages (0-590-96069-5) $15.95**

BaMusa the hatseller is alarmed when he wakes up from a nap beneath a mango tree and discovers all of his hats are gone. "Hee Manun! Hee Manun!" he cries, and voices from high in the tree answer "Hoo, hoo-hoo! Hoo, hoo-hoo!" The tree is full of monkeys, each one wearing one of BaMusa's colorful hats. BaMusa tries to frighten the monkeys way, but they only imitate his every sound and action. Faint with hunger, BaMusa cannot think clearly about what to do Finally, he takes a rest and eats a meal of mango fruit, and it is then that the solution comes to him. "And so it as that BaMusa learned from the monkeys: It
is with a full stomach that one thinks best. For an empty satchel cannot stand." Elements of this delightful West African tale will be recognizable to children who know the story Caps for Sale. This version from Mali is illustrated with great wit and charm by reteller Diakité, who created distinctive, hand-painted ceramic tiles as a visual accompaniment to the story. Each crisp, double-page spread features a full-page color tile illustration and a playful black-and-white border design of active, mischievous monkeys. A fine author's note on the origins of this particular version, a bibliography of variant versions of the tale in other nations, and a pronunciation note round out this appealing and amusing story. (Ages 4-8)


Elijah the Prophet is significant to Jews around the world all year round. This famous prophet is also important in the writings and folklore of Christianity and Islam. Elijah stories have roots in numerous locations around the globe and during many periods of human history. Barbara Diamond Goldin's collection of eight Elijah tales backed by evidence of scholarly sources and interpreted in lay language for children clarifies and interprets Elijah's universality and timelessness. Settings for these tales range from North Africa where during the 3rd century C.E. Elijah meets Rabbi Joshua; Argentina in which the 19th century farmers Julio and Mina encounter the prophet; to the 20th century community of Yemenite Jews in Israel. Goldin retells Elijah tales about weavers in 12th century Persia, three Jewish brothers in 17th century Curaçao, a 3rd century rabbi in Babylonia, a 17th century Jewish family in China, and a late 19th century rabbi in eastern Europe. Varying in emotional tone and humor, the tales come to life to contemporary young readers and families because of Jerry Pinkney's extraordinary illustrations done with graphite, colored pencil, pastel and watercolor. Rarely has any artist so completely taken measure of the time, place, culture, and people represented to illustrate a children's book. Pinkney is famous for his attention to historical detail, his fascination with pattern, and his skill at depicting flora and fauna. In 26 illustrations, some of which are double-page spreads, Pinkney has surpassed even himself in his superb renderings of people from eight different times, places and cultures. His art perfectly complements Goldin's eight Elijah tales, because he, too, understands Elijah as a universal symbol of compassion and hope. According to Goldin, Elijah "stands for what is just and good in the world. He is a helper and friend to those in need, a teacher of many lessons, a master of disguises and surprises. He is immortal, able to appear at any time, in any place, to any person." Pinkney visually communicates all this, and he also subtly suggests these times by painting one contemporary home with an open door. This pleasing volume represents sheer excellence in all respects, promising deep satisfaction for all whose figurative doors are open to everything it offers. (Ages 7-14)

**Grimes, Nikki.** *At Break of Day.* Illustrated by Paul Morin. Eerdmans, 1999. 32 pages (0-8028-5104-5) $17.00

An unusual retelling of the scriptural creation story links the prologue to the Gospel of John and the Book of Hebrews with the first chapter of Genesis. “Once upon a time there was no time...There was no earth, or sky, or sea. There was only darkness and the waters of the deep and a father and son who watched over them. The son, knowing exactly what was in his father’s heart, asked, ‘Now, Father?’ And the father said, ‘Yes, Son. Now.’ ” Canadian artist Paul Morin’s richly hued collage assemblages invite awe and reflection, just as Grimes suggests in her writing. The exciting combination of gifts inspires further thought. (Ages 9-12)

**Lamm, C. Drew.** *The Frog Prince: A Mixed-Up Tale.* Illustrated by Barbara McClintock. Orchard, 1999. 32 pages (0-531-30135-4) $16.95

Jane doesn’t believe in talking frogs. “Unfortunate,” says the frog whom she finds in her pocket where a dime–Jane’s muffin money–used to be. The dime is now the frog’s hat. Jane doesn’t believe in fairy tales, either. But the frog has a fondness for one in particular, about a stable girl and young prince whose love is thwarted by a potion that takes away the stable girl’s imagination and memory and turns the prince into a frog. “If you think I’m going to kiss an amphibian, a slimy green frog, and forget about my muffin money–” Jane warns the frog as she listens to the story. This spirited fractured fairy tale features fine comic banter between two strong-willed characters, one stubbornly single-minded, the other persistently carefree. There
is a twist at the penultimate moment before the tale slides playfully to its expected but wholly satisfying conclusion. Illustrations done in pen-and-ink and watercolor capture an old-fashioned fairy tale setting and mood while capitalizing on the humor of the text and the quirks of the characters’ personalities in this pleasingly skewed tale. (Ages 6-9)


When a monkey rushes into a cave to seek shelter from the rain, he finds it already crowded with other animals: a lion, a jackal, a turtle and a dove. The animals begin to bicker until a small stone statue of Buddha suddenly speaks to them, telling stories of his past lives. Each of the six Jataka tales he tells them is somehow related to the various animals sharing the same cave and each one has a strong moral lesson about tolerance, truthfulness, generosity, or endurance. Taken as a whole, the overall message of these tales is of compassion, and by the time the rain lets up, each of the animals is feeling far more friendly toward the others. The distinctive linocut illustrations appear in black and white to show the cave scenes and in full color to illustrate the stories themselves. (Ages 4-8)

Lester, Julius. *When the Beginning Began: Stories about God, the Creatures, and Us.* Illustrated by Emily Lisker. Silver Whistle / Harcourt Brace, 1999. 100 pages (0-15-201238-9) $17.00

“Making the world was not easy. If God hadn’t been careful, there might be fish that bard, alligators walking into grocery stores and buying kosher hot dogs, and people sitting on nests and laying eggs. However, we do have mosquitoes, hay fever, cold sheets, brussels sprouts, and hiccups. Maybe god was not as careful as he could have been. / God would not have gotten into the creation business if he had had something to do. But there was just him and the angels siting in the dark...” In his playful retelling of 17 Jewish legends about creation, Lester applies imagination to his scholarship. He says that “through imagination sacred text can come alive in ways not possible otherwise.” Lester known for other such works, beginning with *Black Folktales* first published in 1969. Eighteen of Lisker’s paintings reproduced in full-color on full pages accompany Lester’s tales based on traditional literature. A pronunciation guide, source notes and bibliography end the collection. (Ages 11-14)


In the midst of a bitter winter storm, a brave young girl ventures out to a neighboring village to get the healing herbs her family needs to recover from a disease. Her journey is long and hard but she manages to get there and back, even though she loses her moccasins in the snow. Now each spring, flowers that resemble her moccasins, called *ma-ki-sin waa-big-waan* by the Ojibwe people and *ladyslippers* by the European settlers, grow along the path the young girl walked many years ago. An appealing pourquoi tale features a plucky young heroine living in envrons that will look very familiar to children in the upper Midwest. (Ages 4-8)

Lunge-Larsen, Lise. *The Troll with No Heart in His Body and Other Tales of Trolls from Norway.* Illustrated by Betsy Bowen. Houghton Mifflin, 1999. 96 pages (0-395-91371-3) $18.00

The nine troll tales in this collection include “The Three Billy Goats Gruff,” “The Boy and the North Wind,” and the title story. Each is written in a style perfectly suited for reading alone, reading aloud or telling. Each incorporates with sly humor and just enough scary detail to keep anyone alert and ready to read or hear the next. Lunge-Larsen is exceptional in her skill at retelling the troll stories handed down over centuries, and her affection for them and for the children who will read them is evident throughout. Betsy Bowen’s elegant woodcuts printed in cool blues, greens, and browns are exceptionally handsome, and their visual appeal is enhanced by the fine production of this handsome 8 x 12” volume. Lunge-Larsen’s opening note relates that trolls are “giants shaped by the ancient Norse mythology and by the towering Scandinavian landscape,” and she points out that in troll stories “right and wrong are kept steadily in sight.” Her affirmation of the value of storytelling concludes the opening section. The concluding material contains a bibliography, source notes from the author and an illustrator’s comment. Readers who venture into the information at the end will discover one final, humorous troll story requiring very few words and
several pages of space. Perhaps it’s troll humor. Maybe it’s an encore concluding a completely satisfying entertainment. (Ages 7-11)

Mayer, Marianna. *Young Jesus of Nazareth.* Morrow Junior Books, 1999. 32 pages (0-688-16728-4) $16.00
Mayer employs a narrative style readers will find comfortable, quoting explicitly from Scripture only at the conclusion of her account by repeating the King James version of the Beatitudes. More than two dozen paintings and other early works from museum collections are beautifully reproduced to accompany Mayer’s collection of legends and tales about young Jesus. Many are the work of James Tissot. In Mayer’s note at the end, she discusses sources of the birth stories. (Ages 5-9)

By adapting one of the oldest known books of the Americas, Victor Montejo has made the Mayan creation stories available to children for the first time. In the tradition of most sacred mythology, the stories tell of gods and demi-gods creating the world we know today. One especially distinctive feature of the Mayan creation myth is the importance the creator places on language: he has several false starts, creating many species before he is satisfied with the speaking ability of the Men of Corn. Children may be particularly captivated by the tales involving the Hero Twins, wise, athletic tricksters who defeat the gods of the underworld by winning a ballgame, and who later become the sun and the moon. They will also be intrigued by Luis Garay’s marvelously detailed paintings which depict the gods and goddesses for the most part as ordinary-looking human beings. This elegantly produced volume is also available in its original Spanish-language edition, *Popol Vuj: Libro Sagrado de los Maya* (Groundwood, 1999). (Age 9 and up)

Doris Orgel sets the stage for her creative approach to Greek mythology in her introduction in which she writes about the role of women in Greek society, as well as the characters of goddesses in Greek mythology. She also explains why she chose to focus on stories about Athena, Aphrodite and Hera in this collection. Each of these three goddesses is then accorded her own section in which the individual goddesses recount some of their own stories. Orgel’s conversational style will make the classical myths more widely accessible to young readers, as will her frequent marginal notes which provide definitions and pronunciations for many of the unfamiliar terms used in the text. (Ages 8-14)

Sogabe’s creative and effective retelling of several of Aesop’s fables with fox as protagonist places the tales in the context of a single day in Fox’s life. Soon after setting out in the morning, he tries to snatch a rooster from a barnyard but is outsmarted by a farmer. Next he runs into a boar who gives him a bit of proverbial wisdom. And, then, of course, there’s that grape vine with fruit just a little ways out of reach. The artist’s use of the cut-paper technique is so masterful it does not call attention to itself. She has painted over the paper cut outs with crisp colors, assuring that the orange fox stands out clearly in each picture. (Ages 4-8)

The Yiddish folksong about resourcefulness and resilience is brought to life in Simms Taback’s wonderfully inventive watercolor, gouache and collage illustrations. As Joseph’s overcoat is worn to an increasingly smaller and smaller piece of fabric, he recreates it, first as a jacket, then a vest, a scarf, a tie, and handkerchief, a button and, finally, a song. Taback cleverly uses die-cut pages to show each bit of the garment in its new form and style. Set against the backdrop of an Eastern European village, the paintings are filled with Yiddish cultural references that add depth and humor to the story overall. An author’s note at the book’s end explains why Taback chose to reillustrate a story he first published in 1977. (Ages 3-8)

When the farmer grows a turnip that’s so big, he’s not strong enough to pull it out of the ground, he has to enlist all of the farm animals to help. One by one, they add their might to an ever-growing conga line of harvesters until a tiny mouse who joins in provides just the right amount of needed muscle. Niamh Sharkey’s stylized drawings add zesty humor to the tale, a favorite for dramatic play among the preschool set. (Ages 3-6)

Wiesel, Elie. *King Solomon and His Magic Ring.* Illustrated by Mark Podwal. Greenwillow, 1999. 51 pages (0-688-16959-7) $16.00

“Come, children. Come and listen. I want to share with you strange yet marvelous tales of a very great king whom the world admired. Only the demons were jealous of him...” Wiesel’s opens his expertly developed legendary tales about King Solomon with words demanding attention. Placed on stark white pages, the sparsely retold dramatic tales are interconnected. Like Wiesel’s words, Podell’s palette is understated. His sophisticated full-color paintings illustrate every each page spread. Using gouache, acrylics and colored pencils he suggests the people and deeds of Solomon’s life. “...What remains of King Solomon’s legacy? His heirs became enemies. His Temple? It lay in ruins...But one thing remains. His wisdom. In his books. Come, children. Come and read.” (Ages 9-12)

See Also: *Peddler’s Gift*

Historical People, Places and Events


Bartoletti’s history of the child labor movement in the U.S. has as its focus the child activists who were at the forefront. She begins in 1836 with eleven-year-old Harriet Hanson who was one of the first to “turn out” or strike at the Lowell Textile Mill and ends with 15-year-old Camella Teoli who testified before Congress during the 1912 Lawrence Mill Strike, a time in which growing awareness of deplorable conditions began to turn the tide of public opinion. The author describes the typical working conditions of children in mills, coal mines, and factories; on city streets as newsies, messengers and bootblacks; and in rural areas as sharecroppers and fieldhands. Each type of work and organized protest is personalized with her accounts of the efforts if young workers, typically teenage girls, who helped to organize their co-workers to strike for better working conditions. Black-and-white documentary drawings and photographs, many by Winslow Homer and Lewis Hine, further illustrate the working lives of these young people. (Age 11-16)


Primary documents from survivor Virginia Reed make up the core of this compelling account of the disastrous journey from Springfield, Illinois, to California. Just 12 years old when she was a member of the Donner Party, Virginia’s voice never lost the spirited resilience that served her well throughout the ordeal. Her observations about other members of the party are direct and nonjudgmental, even when she mentions the cannibalism people engaged in to survive. Calabro fills in Virginia’s account with the accounts of other members who frequently bickered with one another and whose stories sometimes conflict. Her research into primary documents included letters, diaries, autobiographical narratives, and news accounts from the time, in addition to photographs, drawings and maps. Appended items include a complete list of names and ages of the Donner Party; a list of those who died; a chronology of events, and a selective bibliography for children which includes books, videos, and web sites. She also includes the complete unaltered text of Virginia Reed’s 1847 letter to her cousin back home in Springfield which described the journey in detail and concluded with the poignant line “...never take no cutoffs and hurry along as fast as you can...”


As in their earlier *Prairie Town,* Arthur and Bonnie Geisert chronicle activity across the seasons in a small Midwest town, this time one situated on a great river. Life in the unnamed *River Town* is linked
inextricably to the river throughout the year. Grain grown by local farmers is shipped out on the river in the fall. In winter, the river becomes a playground for children and source of food for ice fishers. Spring brings the threat of floods to the whole community, and summer means boating and fishing, as well as the return of river commerce. The detailed etchings, inked in full-color, offer a wealth of activity for observant young eyes to notice in illustrations that are nostalgic without being sweet, depicting life in a still-recognizable time in the twentieth century. (Ages 7-10)


“From time to time, as the world turns, something different happens...a kind of brightening...No one knows why it starts, or why it ends, but the echoes of it last and last. A brightening like this happened a thousand years ago in Baghdad.” Although Western history typically names these centuries as the Dark Ages, a highly advanced culture flourished in Baghdad and throughout much of the Arabic-speaking Islamic Empire. At the time of this well-researched story, the ruler of Baghdad built a great library to hold the books brought with other treasures to Baghdad. The story features Ishaq, the son of a renowned translator in the “enormous edifice serving as a learning institution, library and translation bureau.” His father tells Ishaq that although the boy might not understand the languages of people he sees in Baghdad’s marketplace, “that does not mean they have nothing to say.” After Ishaq travels widely and reads what Aristotle wrote a thousand years earlier, he determines he will become one of the links to “someone from another land, speaking another language...searching as I am.” Illustrated by GrandPré’s paintings created with pastel to suggest the palette and patterns of Islamic images and followed by a reliable bibliography, this story moves Ishaq’s dream one step toward possibility. (Ages 9-12)


As Aunt Beth tells it, great-great grandmother Ella who had been born into slavery knew at age fourteen that she could go to a new school for freed slaves in Nashville. After arriving at Fisk School, she found out that her savings would last only three weeks. Like other students, she worked at several jobs in order to stay in school. Once she and her friends in the Fisk Chorus found out how desperate Fisk’s financial situation also was, they agreed to travel up North and sing to earn money for the school to which they had brought their dreams. To please Northern audiences, their first concerts featured popular white songs, but few people came to hear them until the students began singing “old songs,” spirituals from their own tradition. In later years, the Jubilee Singers became famous, even singing at the White House and in England for Queen Victoria. The fictional story is based on facts associated with the Jubilee Singers of Fisk University. Members of the original Jubilee Singers received honorary degrees in 1978 from the college for which they had shared so much time and talent. The end pages feature Colón’s captioned portraits of these singers in 1871, and his artwork throughout was rendered in watercolor and colored pencil. (Ages 6-11)

Hopkinson, Deborah. Maria’s Comet. Illustrated by Deborah Lanino. An Anne Schwartz Book / Atheneum, 1999. 32 pages (0-689-81501-8) $16.00

A lyrical picture story based on the childhood of astronomer Maria Mitchell who shared her father’s interest in looking at stars through a telescope. Although women scientists were uncommon in the early 19th century, Maria’s parents always encouraged her interest in science and math, and supported her educational efforts. In her fictional story, Hopkinson has imagined what might have happened in Mitchell’s early childhood when she was first allowed to look through her father’s telescope. Lanino’s acrylic paintings aptly capture the first stirrings of a young child’s sense of wonder. (Ages 4-7)

Kimmel, Elizabeth Cody. Ice Story: Shackleton’s Lost Expedition. Clarion, 1999. 120 pages (0-395-91524-4) $18.00

Kimmel’s riveting account of the Shackleton expedition adds to the growing body of work about the doomed 1914 voyage of the Endurance. Here we get a well-rounded portrait of Sir Ernest Shackleton, whose life dream was to cross Antarctica but whose 27-member crew got stuck in ice just a few weeks into the expedition. Exactly how Shackleton and his crew survived and found their way home again reads like
a good adventure story. The handsomely designed volume includes numerous black-and-white photographs taken by the ship’s photographer, many of which are quite haunting in retrospect. (Age 9-14)

This unusual slice of U.S. history deals with Molly Walsh, the grandmother of famed African-American astronomer, Benjamin Banneker. In late 17th century England, 17-year-old Molly was accused of stealing milk from her landowner and was thus sentenced to seven years of bondage in the American colonies. At the end of her sentence, she started her own small farm and soon earned enough to enable her to purchase an African slave to help her, planning to set him free once her land was cleared. He told her his name was Bannaky. Molly and Bannaky soon fell in love, married, and raised a family. The story of their success is carried through through the next two generations, as Molly lived long enough to teach her eldest grandson, Benjamin Banneker, to read and write English, and to tell him what she knew of his grandfather’s life in Africa. The dramatic realistic watercolor paintings frequently use fire, candlelight or the setting sun as a light source in this 13 1/2 x 9 3/4” volume. (Ages 7-11)

Previously little known history unfolds as the authors relate the workings of the 19th century whaling industry and its dependence upon the skill and knowledge of its workers, including African American whalers. They document the connection of the East Coast whalers to the abolitionist movement, the Underground Railroad, and the Civil War. A quote from Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* opens the account which contains black-and-white reproductions of archival documents, selected artwork, and historic photographs. This important account includes information about the whaling towns in New England, along with a description of what it was like to sail on a whaling ship and how it must have felt to be a first-time whaler. Scrimshaw is briefly discussed, as are sea shanties. The appendix includes information about various types of whales, important dates and an index. (Ages 12-16)

Growing up in the mid-19th century, Frank Dellenbaugh longed for adventure and, as luck would have it, when he was just 17, he was selected to accompany Major John Wesley Powell on his second expedition into the Grand Canyon in 1871. Frank went along as the staff artist and his drawings, along with the expedition’s official photographs, illustrate his exciting true-life adventures, the details of which were largely drawn from Frank’s own journal. (Ages 9-14)

A picture book story based on true railroad history involves a teenage girl left to take care of her eight brothers and sisters after her parents’ death from typhus in 1893. At first 16-year-old Bee took in laundry. After she found out that railroad work paid better, she got a job loading freight for Union Pacific. It wasn't easy for her to get the job, and then it was difficult for her to ignore the taunts of fellow workers who had never worked along side a female, but Bee established herself as a reliable worker. She actually loved the trains and the names of their destinations. She enjoyed imagining where the passengers were traveling, and why, and she wanted to take them there herself. Sometimes she was allowed to back up the engine and couple it to cars on side tracks. Now and then Ole Pete, one of the engineers, let Bee drive all the way to the next station. Train robberies weren't uncommon in those years; during a robbery one day Ole Pete and the coal feeder were wounded. The delayed passengers let it be known that all they wanted was to get going, even with a substitute engineer who was a young woman, at that. Bee later established herself as an engineer, and her favorite engine to drive had the official name,“True Heart.” Although Bee's own true heart and life are fictional, at the back of the book one can see the black-and-white archival photograph of a female train crew that supports Moss's personal research into the role of women as workers within U.S.
railroad history. The illustrations were done in mixed media by Payne in this, his first book for children, although he has a long, distinguished career as an artist in other areas. His beautiful work shows a clear understanding of the story, landscapes, trains, and time period. Although the events of the story itself may seem coincidental, it brings to life a fragment of the hidden history of women laborers as well as of railroad history. As Moss writes at the end of her notes: "...there's truth in fiction, and there's truth in the many stories of people like Bee - whose names we'll never know but can only imagine - people who had the determination to live out their dreams." True Heart is a uniquely inspirational historical story representing some of the young women of America's past, girls who had to become breadwinners and who worked hard at manual labor to realize their dreams. (Ages 6-9)

The author’s introduction to his challenging subject acknowledges that the history within it is upsetting. He points out that writing such a history required the recounting of certain appalling ordeals and - in historical context - the use of distressing words. Nash’s approach is that of a scholar. The actual reading of his work in itself demands skill, and the subject requires an openness to finding out what Nash himself learned. All but one of the nine chapters ends with a biographical profile: Paul Cuffe, Mary Musgrove, Lemuel Haynes, Edmonia Lewis, Frances Fitzpatrick Osato, Peggy Rusk, and Eldrick “Tiger” Woods. Occasional archival illustrations and photographs are reproduced in black and white. Extensive chapter notes document Nash’s sources, and an index offers wide access to topics within the book. (Age 14 and older)

Ryan, Pam Muñoz. Amelia and Eleanor Go for a Ride. Illustrated by Brian Selznick. Scholastic, 1999. 40 pages (0-590-96075-X) $16.95
Two of the strongest American women of the 20th century come face to face in a wonderfully exuberant picture story based on an actual event. Mrs. Roosevelt, it seems, loved flying and by 1933 had logged more passenger miles than any other woman in the world. When Amelia Earhart came as a guest to the White House on April 20, 1933, it would seem only natural that the two women would do what they both loved best -- go for a spin in an airplane, and in formal gowns and white gloves, no less! Pam Muñoz Ryan has fictionalized the story just a bit by allowing the two to make the flight alone. (In reality others came along with them.) Brian Selznick’s pencil drawings illustrate the momentous occasion, appropriately, in black and white. (Ages 7-10)

The “deeps” were the coal mines of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, a virtual city under the waters of the Atlantic Ocean. James is the boy, and like many boys working in mines across the globe, his childhood is actually behind him. Each day James now goes underground to work with his father in the deeps. He started out above ground as a breaker boy, doing the difficult job of sorting pieces of sharp slate from coal. He’s now headed regularly a thousand feet underground to the tedious, dangerous, health-robbing, rat-filled environment where boys and men work side by side to mine the rich coal deposit under the sea. Wallace’s story captures the ominous nature of this work, as well as the life-threatening event James’ father experiences one day. He ingeniously created sources of light for the acrylic paintings he developed to illustrate a story set mostly in dark, dank places. Wallace’s picture book story is based on his grandfather’s experiences as a boy working in a coal mine in England. The Cape Breton coal field was still in production at the time this book was published. (Ages 8-11)

See Also: Big Cheese for the White House; Goodbye, Walter Malinski; In the Time of the Drums; King of Shadows; Kindle Me a Riddle; Mimmy & Sophie; My Dear Noel; No Man’s Land; Ties that Bind, Ties that Break; William Shakespeare & the Globe

Biography/Autobiography

Bridges, Ruby. Through My Eyes. Scholastic, 1999. 63 pages (0-590-18923-9) $16.95
In 1960, six-year-old Ruby Bridges became the first African American student to attend an all-white school in New Orleans, Louisiana. Federal marshals accompanied this tiny girl so that she could make her way through the crowd of hateful protestors who wanted to block her progress specifically, and integration in general. Although these events reported around the world, Bridges reveals that she was scarcely aware of what was going on. She was so young that she did not even find it particularly unusual that she was the only student in her first-grade class. Her memoir of the time the innocent perspective of her as a child, as well as her adult understanding of the significant role she played in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement. Her engrossing narrative is accompanied by news photographs reproduced as browntones. (Ages 9 and older)

Bruchac, Joseph. Seeing the Circle. Photographs by John Christopher Fine. (Meet the Author) Richard K. Owen, 1999. 32 pages (1-57274-327-1) $14.95
Joseph Bruchac, who has already written an excellent autobiography for teen readers with Bowman’s Store (Dial, 1997), tries his hand here at wiring for younger readers. The result is one of the best autobiographies thus far in the Meet the Author series. In simple language, Bruchac honestly describes himself as a child: “I was a little know-it-all with glasses. I was scared of being beaten up, and I was also a tattletale. I think you wouldn’t have liked me.” He also describes his day-to-day adult life as an author for children and teens, and as an activist/storyteller from the Abenaki Indian community. Color photographs of Bruchac today, and black-and-white photos from his past are included throughout. (Age 7-10)

An autobiographical easy chapter book details dePaola’s life in 1938 at age five when he and his family were preparing to move from an apartment building to a house that they were having built for them. Frequent black-and-white line drawings and short, episodic chapters will encourage newly independent readers, who are likely to enjoy this as a story, even if they aren’t familiar with dePaola himself. But for those familiar with his picture books, this will be a happy step up into the next level of books and reading. (Ages 7-9)

“Okay, Babe’s here! Now who’s gonna finish second?” The standard opening line spoken by the remarkable athlete whenever she entered the playing field reflected both her self-confidence and her sense of humor. Whether it was basketball, track and field, or golf, Mildred Didrikson excelled in whatever sport she tried her hand at, in a time when women were not encouraged to be athletic. In this generously illustrated biography of the athlete, Freedman focuses on her accomplishments and the means by which she managed to make a living in sports, something few women can do even today. (Age 11 and older)

An assemblage of writings offers homage to forty-seven men about whom tributes appear in a variety of narratives, poems and occasional drawings. The writers span the generations and regions of America. They include Kwami Alexander, Marina Badhos, Lori Marie Carlson, Pearl Cleage, Rita Dove, Mari Evans, Dolores H. Fridge, Haki R. Madhubuti, Sterling Plump, Liz Rosenberg, and Jessie Carney Smith. According to Giovanni this “gaggle of grandfathers” gave the writers a chance to realize that “...it is grandfathers more than any other males who let us see what loving relationships should be.” A fine companion to the similarly organized volume Grand Mothers (Henry Holt, 1994), both are treats to read from beginning to end or to sample. (Age 14 - adult)

Hodges’s spare, matter-of-fact account of one of history’s more complicated characters offers a unique contribution to the growing body of children’s books about her. The author does not try to interpret the more mysterious events -- she simply reports, for example, that the voice of Saint Michael spoke to her. Rayevsky specifically used the printmaking techniques of dry point and etching in a successful attempt to
give his illustrations the appearance of those that would have appeared in a medieval manuscript created
during Joan’s lifetime. (Ages 7-11)

In the opening section Mulvihill defines saints as “exceptional men and women who managed to come
close to god in their own lifetimes.” She discusses briefly how saints are named and divides the main body
of information chronologically: Early Days, Roman Empire, Middle Ages to the Reformation, and Modern
Saints. “Every saint has a story, and there is a story and a saint for every human circumstance,” states the
author, prior to relating the stories of more than three dozen individuals including Martin of Tours,
Nicholas, Basil, Wenceslas, Hildegard, Thomas À Becket, Rose of Lima, Vincent de Paul, and Elizabeth
Seton. The book is abundantly illustrated with reproductions of fine art intriguingly arranged on each page.
A glossary, index and calendar of saints add to the value of this visually elegant volume. (Ages 7-12)

Scholastic Press, 1999. 140 pages (0-590-48669-1) $15.95
When author Walter Dean Myers came across a packet of old letters in an antiquarian bookstore several
years ago he wanted to know more about the person who had written them. His careful research into
documents at the Royal Archives at Windsor Castle, newspapers of the time, diaries and letters, provided
the pieces he needed to retell the intriguing true story of this remarkable young woman. Known to the
Western world as Sarah Forbes Bonetta, she had been born into one of the ruling families of the Egbado
people in West Africa in the mid-19th century. At age five, after witnessing the brutal murder of her
parents during a raid by their Dahomian enemies, she was taken prisoner and marked for ritual sacrifice. A
British Commander, Frederick Forbes, convinced Dahomian leader, King Gezo, to spare the child's life by
sending her to England as a gift to Queen Victoria. Enchanted by the small girl from the beginning, Queen
Victoria saw to it that she was well educated and that she enjoyed a life of material wealth and privilege. As
a child, Sarah played with Queen Victoria's children and she maintained close ties to the British royal
family throughout her short life. She was something of a celebrity in her own time, although she has been
largely forgotten today -- until now. This elegantly designed volume, illustrated with numerous brown-tone
photos and drawings from the Victorian era, provides an intimate portrait of Sarah and her times through
letters penned by her and her friends, and through Queen Victoria's own journal entries. (Ages 10-14)

Knopf, Inc., 1999. 276 pages (0-679-89181-6) $18.00
Irene was seventeen when the Nazis bombed the city where she was a student nurse and eliminating contact
with her family. She was imprisoned and forced to work for the Germans. Her blond hair and blue eyes
gave her access to situations where she could also find ways to resist. She became a partisan fighter, risking
her life on behalf of Jewish workers. Significant moral dilemmas were raised, and a great personal cost was
required. The moving account of the World War Two experiences of this amazing young Polish Catholic
woman was developed into poweful prose by Armstrong following extensive interviews. Opdyke now
lectures nationally, and her story is part of the permanent exhibit in the U.S. Holocaust Museum. Her
impressive story is now also part of the growing body of first-hand accounts of survivors who recall their
youth for readers who are almost the same age as they themselves were during the war. Opdyke’s personal
commitment today to “love, not hate” is as strong as her insistence that all she tells did happen to her - and
to others. (Age 12 - adult)

When Clara Wieck was born in Leipzig, Germany, in 1819 her father, who was an acclaimed piano teacher,
announced his intentions to make her the best pianist in the entire world. From the time she was a small
child, she spent hours practicing every day and by age nine she was ready for her professional debut. While
she was still a child, she met another gifted musician, Robert Schumann, whom she would one day marry.
Her life, defined by music, has also been well documented, including here own diary that was started when
Clara was seven years old. This meticulously researched biography is based mostly on primary documents:
letters, diaries, concert programs, and newspapers from Schumann’s own time. (Age 11 and older)

Tallchief, Maria and Rosemary Wells. *Tallchief: America’s Prima Ballerina*. Illustrated by Gary Kelley. 32 pages (0-670-88756-0) $15.99

Maria Tallchief was born on an Osage Indian Reservation in Oklahoma in 1925 to an Osage Indian father and a Scots-Irish mother. Both of her parents encouraged her early interest in music and arranged for her to study both piano and ballet. By 1933 it have become so clear to her parents that Maria was gifted that they moved the entire family to Los Angeles so she could get a better education in music and dance. Told in a direct, first-person narrative, this autobiographical account of Tallchief’s childhood and adolescence stresses her bicultural heritage, as well as the influences of her childhood dance teachers. Many of Gary Kelley’s pastel paintings pay tribute to Degas. (Ages 5-10)

See Also: *Boy Named Giotto; In Search of the Spirit; Talking with Artists; Speaking of Journals; William Shakespeare & the Globe*

Contemporary People, Places and Events


Elementary school-aged Vendela and her father travel from their Stockholm home for a week in Venice. They’ve done some careful planning about what they want to visit and see, but they’re also open to new possibilities. Their highly visual fictional trip is part story and part travelogue. Accompanying Vendela’s lively dialogue-filled firstly person narrative are full-color illustrations of them riding in a vaporetto, noticing recurring images of lions, going to St. Mark’s Square, visiting the glassblowers’ island of Murano and - finally - seeing the famous horses. Other types of visual information includes reproductions of maps, building cross-sections, reproductions of works of art, and images of posters and tickets. The guidebook-style advice at the end is hardly needed because fictional Vendela and her father offer lots of ideas for actual travel or an armchair trip while reading this unusual book. (Ages 7-10)


When Natalie hears suspicious noises outside her house at night, her mother calls the police. Two officers come to investigate and fill out a report. Natalie’s tip eventually leads to the arrest of two bicycle thieves and we briefly see the process they undergo once they are taken into custody. Day-to-day responsibilities of different kinds of police officers are touched upon, as are some safety tips for kids who are sometimes left home alone without an adult. An emphasis on criminal investigation (rather than giving directions to lost children) make this introduction to police work especially notable. (Ages 4-8)


The birthday card Gordon sends to his grandma must travel all the way across the country in just a few days. Here we trace its route through the postal system from the time he buys a stamp and mails it until the time the letter carrier places it in Grandma’s mailbox. Obvious changes (the use of zip codes and the style of public mailboxes, for example) have been made for the U.S. edition. (Ages 4-8)


A thoughtful collection of profiles of teenagers from countries around the world who have emigrated to the United States is drawn from interviews conducted by author Marina Budhos, who clearly approached each interview as a meeting with a distinct individual rather than forcing common threads and themes to emerge. As the teens talk about themselves, the struggles, the challenges and the benefits of life in their new home are revealed along with their personalities. Each also talks about the cultural clash that they inevitably face
in one more ways: between life in their native land and life in America, between their new ways of doing things and traditions their parents hold dear, between cultures and groups within the communities in which they are living. If there is one thing that connects them all-to one another and to teenagers everywhere—it is the mixture of innocence and wisdom, hope and pain, that characterizes their personalities and their lives. They are hardened by experience and tenderly naïve. In her introduction, Budhos writes, "In music, a remix is a composite of different musical styles. These teenagers I met are creating their own remix, piecing together the ruptures and pain, the challenges and excitement of their journeys." Budhos weaves the portraits with her own observations about each of the teens, offering acute commentary on the feelings that may sometimes lurk behind the words. One of the teens profiled, originally from Laos, lives in Madison. (Age 14 and up)


Twenty-three short chapters relate the street life of 13-year-old Alex. They also tell the stories of some of teenagers and children he meets while living on the streets of Rio de Janeiro. Sometimes readers find out how or why certain young people get to the point of sleeping on cardboard, begging, selling their bodies or their souls. The personal stories are no prettier than the street life, reflecting almost countless varieties of violence, sexual abuse and poverty. To youth attempting to survive such situations, it sometimes seems safer to try and survive on the street than at home. Sometimes they form what might be called families in their attempts to stay alive. Their gritty lives are not sensationalized, nor are they glamorized. Holtwijk’s note tells a bit about the shelter for homeless street children where Alex ends up, and he reasons why it can be difficult for street children accustomed to independence to adjust to shelter rules. Not a book for the faint-hearted, this book provides depth to news accounts of communities of street children the world over. (Age 14 - 18)


Dramatic cut-paper collage illustrates this fact-filled book about climbing Mt. Everest. Jenkins describes the mountain’s geography and its ever-changing terrain as he takes readers on an expedition to the summit. Each single- or two-page spread of information features the short main narrative describing aspects of the ascent, such as the role of the Sherpas, crossing the icefall, and the danger of avalanche and high winds, along with related facts that appear on the pages in separate blocks of text. One two-page spread is devoted to a description of much of the equipment that climbers require. The collage artwork depicting aspects of the climb provides the backdrop for text, making this a highly visual book great for reluctant readers or for any child who enjoys exploring a subject visually. (Ages 9-12)

Macy, Sue and Jane Gottesman, editors. Play Like a Girl: A Celebration of Women in Sports. Henry Holt, 1999. 32 pages (0-8050-6071-5) $15.95

Full-color action photographs of today's female athletes burst with energy, exertion and excitement. Their photographs are accompanied by brief quotes that are as daringly placed on brightly colored page backgrounds as the visual images of the girls and women involved in basketball, swimming, skiing, softball, rowing, track & field, soccer, volleyball, tennis -- and more. "Movement rather than words should be the prime communicator in any sport," says Mary Jo Peppler, volleyball player and coach. From other quotes by Michelle Akers and Tara VanDerveer to a short description of the "winning maidens" in the second century Olympic Games, the words in this lively book complement vigorous contemporary images of movement witnessing to the roles of female athletes. Yes, play just like these girls and women! Move beyond the insult so cleverly reversed in the book title and on every page. Celebrate the hard work of learning a skill, working to improve, playing to compete. "Trying to articulate the zone is not easy because it's such an indescribable feeling. That moment doesn't happen often..." writes Chris Evert. Neither do exhilarating books such as this by Gottesman, a sports reporter, and Macy, author of the fine histories for young teens Winning Ways: A Photohistory of American Women in Sports (1996) and A Whole New Ball Game: The Story of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League (1993), both also first published
by Holt. One of the athletes represented is a marathoner and MS activist who is quoted as saying that "yes" is "one of the smallest words in the English language but also one of the largest. It is a word of infinite power and possibility." Yes, to the power and possibility of this inspired and inspiring slim volume. (Ages 8-14)


Originally published in Cameroon by an organization of writers and artists who strive to give African children stories of lives that will seem familiar to them, this picture story features a city boy named Nwemb who spends his summer vacation in the small village where his grandparents. At first Nwemb is worried that there won't be anything to do there, but soon he makes friends with a cousin named Masso, who shows him the ways village kids spend their leisure time: fishing, playing games, climbing trees, and listening to the stories Grandfather tells about their ancestors. An unusual glimpse into the life of a contemporary West African child is illustrated with brightly colored illustrations rendered in a naive style. (Ages 6-9)

Schwager, Tina and Michele Schuerger. *Gutsy Girls: Young Women Who Dare.* Free Spirit (400 First Avenue North, Suite 616, Minneapolis, MN 55401), 1999. 261 pages (1-57542-059-7) $14.95, paperback

A book built around biographical accounts of 25 young women whose accomplishments can encourage young people to dream and even act upon their dreams - even if those aspirations are quite different than those of these role models - and it's also a unique reference book. Profiles averaging nine pages in length introduce a skydiver, naval academy graduate, athlete who competes after a partially disabling car accident, ocean sailor, college football player, BMX and mountain bike racer, rock climber, judo competitor, fossil hunter, vaulter, wakeboarder, drag racer, snowboarder, circus performer, home-builder, open-water marathon swimmer, kickboxer, surfer, mountain climber, cycling adventurer, aggressive in-line skater, and Antarctic researcher. Each person's account includes two black-and-white photographs, birthdate, hometown, school, ages/names of siblings and names of parents, hobbies and an inspirational quote. Most accounts also have a section containing notes on how she got started, other accomplishments, how she stays motivated, and her thoughts about her future. Each person's account end with a short section titled “Go Exploring,” containing annotated book, magazine and URL recommendations. Eighteen of these racially diverse “gutsy girls” were born between 1980 and 1984, while the others were born no earlier than 1974. Twelve chronologically organized statistical lists cite the 20th century accomplishments of dozens of other gutsy girls and women. (Ages 9-16)


Photojournalist Bernard Wolf offers a glimpse of contemporary life in Havana that few people living in the United States have ever seen. He documents his recent trip to Cuba’s capital city in color photographs accompanying brief descriptions of what he saw and learned about the lives of people there. While he doesn’t avoid pointing out the poverty and challenges faced by most Cuban citizens today, he balances this with the positive aspects of life in Havana: racial tolerance, a low crime rate, a high literacy rate, and an appreciation for the arts. After giving some general information as background, Wolf then zeros in on a specific Havanan child: twelve-year-old Ana Moreira, an aspiring ballet dancer and the only child of two artists. We see Ana at home, at school, with friends and in her ballet class, as Wolf gives us a sense of what her life is like. Although her parents are celebrated artists, for example, they still earn average salaries and must wait in long lines at the market to buy their food. Still the Moreira family is obviously happy, healthy and has more in common with other families in the Americas than children here might imagine. (Ages 8-14)

See Also: I’m José and I’m Okay; In Search of the Spirit

Understanding Oneself and Others

Gaskins, Pearl Fyo. *What Are You?: Voices of Mixed-Race Young People.* Henry Holt, 1999. 273 pages (0-
First person statements by 45 mixed-race youngsters from ages 14 to 26 reveal recurring themes and concerns: feeling rejected rather than accepted by one or more racial groups, the pressure to choose one part of their racial heritage over another, and an unwillingness to be pigeonholed. Although feelings of frustration are frequently evident, overall the voices are upbeat and give the impression that they’re patiently waiting for the rest of society to catch up with the progressive attitudes of these kids’ parents. A list of advocacy groups, magazines, e-zines, books, videos, and family organizations appear at the end of the book. (Age 13 and older)


This fact-filled book comes with its own bird and a bee, cartoon characters whose responses and questions throughout echo those young readers might have as they dip into this information. The book is organized into 22 sections picturing widely diverse families of children and adults as illustrated by Emberly’s artwork rendered in color pencil and watercolor. In addition to the predictable topics, other subjects covered include “twins and more,” chromosomes and genes, “lots of kinds of love,” adoption, “okay and not okay touches,” and essential information about HIV. Harris and Emberly created the book for an age group desperately in need of such information due to the limited number of books about this subject for children of elementary school age. Harris and Emberly respect the ways children learn, what they want to know and how they want to get this information. In an opening section they report that science can change, not all scientists agree, there are questions without answers and there can be more than one answer to some questions. As they planned and prepared the book they talked with teachers, librarians, scientists, doctors, nurses, and clergy members. Readers with questions are encouraged to talk with their parent or someone in or more of these specializations. (Ages 7-10)


Author Sonya Sones was thirteen when her oldest sister had a nervous breakdown on Christmas Eve. Now an adult, Sones revisits the events and emotions surrounding her sister's illness (which was diagnosed as manic-depression) in poems that are notable for their unblinking honesty. She courageously captures-or recaptures-her adolescent self, baring her own shame and embarrassment at having a sister who was "crazy," her feelings of devastation and jealousy at having a sister who was "crazy," her feelings of devastation and jealousy as her family struggled to cope, the rare moments of joy when the big sister she desperately missed would briefly reveal herself. Hope is her final offering—both in the cycle of poems, which end with the teenage Sones's growing acceptance of her sister's condition and the sure sign of her sister's and her family's improvement, and in her author's note, in which she briefly chronicles the productive life her sister has lead. (Age 14 and older)

See Also: *When Sophie Gets Angry -- Really, Really Angry...; When This World Was New*

Activities


Beginning with a short paragraph describing what makes pop-ups work (it’s kinetic energy), and another pointing out that most paper engineers learn how to make dimensional and movable cards and books by dissecting the published works of others, Carter and Diaz proceed to demonstrate the basics of pop-ups. Apprentice pop-up makers are encouraged to practice the components of paper engineering before attempting to create original pop-ups. Anyone opening to page one can get busy with the literal business at hand, because the single example of the authors’ virtuosity is accompanied there by a dimensional glossary. They then provide a small three-dimensional example to accompany brief written directions for 18 kinds of parallel folds, 12 examples of angle folds, four types of wheels and eight varieties of pull tabs. All examples are carefully described regarding relative scale. They invite manipulation, because they are glued
right into the book. The placement of information titled “How a Pop-Up Is Made” on the final two pages underscores the intent of this wonderfully organized, one-of-a-kind guide, which is to start by practicing the fundamentals. A URL is provided for anyone wanting to download the die-drawings for the pop-ups in the book. (Age 12 - adult)


A visually inviting, down-to-earth cookbook developed as a result of Katzen’s sessions with fledgling cooks begins with a section in which Katzen emphasizes for child readers their many roles, such as recipe reader and leader of “what happens,” and the importance of “setting up” steps. She insists that a nearby adult be part of the cooking team, and she guarantees that food preparation can be pleasurable. Recipes are divided into five sections: Breakfast Specials; Soups, Sandwiches, and Salads for Lunch or Dinner; Main and Side Dishes; Helping with Dinner for Real; Desserts and a Few Baked Things; and Snacks and a Few Special Drinks.” Cooking steps are boxed, minimally illustrated and written in a voice directed to a young cook. Bold-faced type indicates emphasizes the “ask an adult” cooking steps. Katzen’s introduction for adults refers to her positive experiences with children’s “earnest concentration” when they’re allowed to “really get involved in the project at hand.” She enumerates skills and other things kids get out of cooking, suggestions for becoming a genuine team, working with more than one young cook at a time, safety issues, tips for streamlining the process, and basic adult jobs. *Honest Pretzels* is not a “junior” *Moosewood Cookbook*, Katzen’s book with which many adults are familiar. Instead, it picks up where her *Pretend Soup and Other Real Recipes: A Cookbook for Preschoolers & Up* (Tricycle Press, 1994) left off. This invitingly designed and indexed cooking primer was developed to “stimulate children’s curiosity” and make it possible for them to feel “genuinely useful.” It’s also possible that adults open to following matter-of-fact directions addressed to children can practice cooking by using *Honest Pretzels*. (Ages 8-14)


This companion to the book *Magic Windows - Ventanas mágicas* contains directions for beginners wanting to learn how to create Mexican cut-paper art. Everything in the visual image must be connected in papel picado. Here is basic information about paper and scissors with suggestions for safely and productively holding the scissors, examples of projects (four cardinal points, stars, flowers, diamonds, leaves, tiles, the fan, the zigzag) and directions for hanging the papel picado art. Directions for advanced artists ready to use a craft-knife are included. Lomas Garza has used these directions and patterns in workshops she’s given for children and adults for more than twenty years. (Age 9 and older)

The Arts


“This is the story of Will Shakespeare and the Globe - and the dream of a boy of our own time.” Sooner or later just about everyone learns the name of "one of the greatest storytellers who ever lived." Very few young people - or adults - familiar with that name have actually been able to grasp the interconnection of random facts about Shakespeare with information about Elizabethan times, London places, actors and the playhouses where they performed. Aliki provides contexts on several visual and written levels within which to enjoy biographical facts about the Bard through lively prose and meticulously executed drawings and paintings. Some of the visual images are linear, designed almost like those in a comic book; others range from portraiture, to recreations of photographs and maps, to renditions of characters from the plays. At one point in the book, readers learning about the way the new Globe was constructed might be reminded of David Macaulay's early dissections of how buildings are created. Readers do not become confused within the "acts" and "scenes" around which Aliki organized her material. Sam Wanamaker's late-20th century campaign to rebuild the original Globe playhouse and the serendipitous excavation of the nearby original site of the former Rose playhouse offer another level of vitality to the book, encouraging future travelers to understand London from that perspective. A fresh, sometimes amusing, always intriguing look at William
Shakespeare and Sam Wanamaker - two men of widely different centuries and lives - but each with rare genius. Aliki's tribute to them both is certain to become a family classic. (Ages 8-12)

Christelow, Eileen. What Do Illustrators Do? Clarion, 1999. 40 pages (0-395-90230-4) $15.00
Using a tale familiar to some children, Christelow uses her own full color illustrations to demonstrate how two artists might make entirely different decisions while developing illustrations for “Jack and the Beanstalk.” Her fictional artists work in separate studios in the same building and she’s given each a pet, making it possible for her to personify the pets and provide them dialogue concerning the artistic process. One of the artists is a brown-skinned man who explains his book dummy and rough sketches, while thinking about beanstalks in general, what Jack might look like and the overall design of his book. A white-skinned woman is the other artist character who transforms Jack into “Jacqueline,” along with pondering literal point of view and perspective. Life models are discussed briefly, as are differences in style and approaches to book jacket illustration. Each artist ultimately shows preliminary plans to an editor and then to a designer in separate publishing houses. Only then does each begin the labor-intensive creation of finished illustrations. A fine companion to Christelow’s What Do Authors Do? (Clarion, 1995) developed using similar comic strip conventions. (Ages 6-10)

Following the same format used in the highly engaging first two volumes of this series, Pat Cummings has interviewed 13 illustrators of children’s books and asked them each to respond to the same questions. The result is 13 distinctive profiles that will give young readers insight into the artists as individuals, the work each one does, and the field of book illustration. Among the questions the artists answer: Where do you get your ideas? What is a normal day like for you? Where do you work? Do you have any children? Any pets? What do you enjoy drawing the most? Do you ever put people you know in the pictures? What do you use to make your pictures? How did you get to do your first book? Each profile begins with a brief narrative by the artist titled “My Story.” Photographs of each artist as a child and as an adult accompany each profile, along with a reproduction of a piece of their artwork from childhood and one of their children’s book illustrations. A listing of four or five of each artist’s favorite examples of their own work in children’s book illustration rounds out this fine collection of profiles that Cummings, herself a children’s book illustrator and author, has compiled. (Ages 8-12)

In this humorous book version of an Appalachian lullaby, the perennial wailing infant who cannot be calmed is given an exaggerated, round head. Frazee develops the theme of exaggeration in that and other ways within her pencil and pen and ink art. She invents several characters who fit perfectly into the lyrics. An very cross older sister is seen on the title page, and on the dedication page observant readers can catch Sister in the act of shoving, rather than rocking the cradle. As the song has always implied, Mother and Father seem curiously inept at quieting their wee one, resorting to acquiring various objects to placate the unconsolable babe. Frazee redeems Sister’s earlier naughtiness by letting her have the idea to locate a peddler the family had noticed on a visit to town earlier the same day. Readers and singers may or may not notice that scenario on a single wordless page the first time they open the book. By the time the morning sun rises, the hapless peddler has given most of his wares to the cause: caged mockingbird, “diamond” ring, looking glass, billy goat, (toy) cart and bull, dog named Rover, and even his horse and cart. The artist’s gifts to the song also include staging it between dusk and dawn in a fictional rural setting, possibly near the West Virginia site where Frazee did research. An oversized typeface anchors each page spread, suggesting the exact pace for the song’s pattern. Simple music notation and all verses are listed on the final page where Frazee’s final exaggeration hints that her fictional peddler originated the song.

Scholastic, 1999. 44 pages (0-439-10431-9) $15.95
Ever seen an angry orange? A timid radish? A jealous tomato? You will here, in a hilarious book about moods and emotions which uses photographs of real fruits and vegetables to show the range of emotional expressions formerly associated with humans only. Freymann and Elfers create this moody mixed salad by selecting fruits and vegetables predispositioned by shape and size, and then by using an exacto-knife, black-eyed peas and beet juice to wrench the emotions out of them. Funny as this all appears, you are still bound to feel sorry for a very sad little onion that appears near the end of the book. But then, onions have always had the capacity to make us cry. (Ages 4 and up)

Many writers keep journals and, of the 27 children’s writers interviewed here, most started the habit in childhood. Each entry in Paula Graham’s fascinating book includes a black-and-white photograph of the author (often a childhood picture), an brief introduction and a more in-depth interview in which the author reveals his or her journal-keeping practices: size and shape of the actual journal, how many are kept simultaneously, what kinds of notes are made, and how a journal helps them in their work as writers. Many of the entries also include a photograph of the actual interior of writers’ journals, lending an even greater sense of intimacy. Graham has selected a good variety of different types of writers, including Jim Arnosky, Barbara Bash, Marion Dane Bauer, Bruce Coville, Jack Gantos, Jean Craighead George, James Cross Giblin, Gretchen Will Mayo, Naomi Shihab Nye, Graham Salisbury, and Jacqueline Woodson. (Age 8 and older)

A visually enticing picture book imagines how the pre-Renaissance painter Giotto “might have met his teacher Cimabue” when he was a child. Author Paolo Guarieri portrays the young Giotto as a sensitive boy with a secret, passionate wish to paint. Giotto’s father sees his son as an inattentive daydreamer, an idea confirmed when Giotto’s single-minded sketching result in his losing track of a young lamb from his father’s flock. Giotto meets the famous painter Cimabue after seeing the artist’s Madonna and Child. The painter explains how pigments are created and shares some of his precious colored powders with the boy. When Giotto paints a sheep on a large pasture stone, the missing lamb mistakes the image for his mother and is found. Giotto’s efforts impress both Cimabue and his father, who agrees to send Giotto to Florence to apprentice with the painter when the boy is older. Written in the present tense, the text unfolds with a sense of something magical in the making, and that magic is clearly in the heart and mind of the young artist. Bimba Landmann’s inspired illustrations reflect pre-Renaissance style and cast a spell all of their own, imbued with tones of burnt umber, sienna and gold. A biographical note would have been a helpful addition for establishing facts about Giotto’s life, but its absence does not detract from the story’s fine depiction of an artist’s gift and passion. (Ages 7-10)

During World War II, Japan lost many of its national monuments and ancient works of art, the authors explain. In the industrialization that followed many of the age-old traditions of artisans were disappearing. In response, during the 1950s the country began to honor “elders who had devoted their lives to traditional crafts and performing arts….Today, over one hundred men and women have been given the title Bearers of Important Intangible Cultural Assets.” Six of those individuals, all of who are male, are profiled here: a yuzen dyer, a bamboo weaver, a bunraku puppet master, a sword maker, a noh actor, and a potter. Each of the profiles includes background on the artform as well as information on how the artisan took up his craft and his philosophy with regard to his art. Color photographs of the artists (all of who are male) at work also accompany the portraits of these individuals who embody “the spirit of Japan’s unique culture.” (Ages 10-14)
The Moore family of London, England, were good friends with artist Beatrix Potter, but it was their eldest son, Noel, who felt especially close to her. When Noel fell ill at age five and was bedridden for quite some time, Potter sent him an illustrated letter to cheer him up. The story and illustrations became the basis for her now classic children’s book, *Peter Rabbit*. Jane Johnson’s detailed pen-and-ink and watercolor illustrations are filled with period details, but also show the lively, busy Moore family contrasted with the staid, quiet life of Beatrix Potter, shown in brownstone paintings. An author’s note provides background about the real Noel Moore and the early publishing history of *Peter Rabbit*. And, best of all, the endpapers show a facsimile of the original letter in its entirety.  (Ages 4-8)

Illustrations using *papel picado*, or cut-paper art, demonstrate what Lomas Garza’s words say to young readers about her Mexican American heritage. Readers find out about her work as an artist through the subjects she chose to interpret here, from turkeys and cacti to dancing and Day of the Dead to a stunning visual tribute to her gardening grandfather. Lomas Garza’s pride in her Aztec roots and birth family inform the artistry and experience she brought to the creation of the *papel picado* reproduced in this slim bilingual volume. Information about *papel picado* in which cutting must be literally connected and examples of this exacting medium are contained here. This book about culture and art differs greatly from the paintings in her earlier autobiographical books *Family Pictures / Cuadros de familia* (1990) and *In My Family / En mi familia* (1996) also published by Children’s Book Press.  (Ages 9-12)

How many artists and authors have the opportunity to return in print to an earlier work, not only to explain it but also to tweak and even correct errors in it? Few. How many have the chance to do this with the same editor and publisher? Few, if any. Macaulay’s opportunity offers opportunity for readers of the 1974 Caldecott Honor Book *Cathedral* (Houghton Mifflin, 1973) to find out more about the artistic and design decisions he had to make as he created the first of his many books interpreting architecture to young readers and, often, to their adults, as well. In a volume unusually large in size, 14 1/4 x 10 ½ inches, Macaulay overlays early sketches with his finished drawings, shares some of his first worries and frustrations, and admits to making some mistakes. Macaulay has allowed what has become his signature wit to show more in subsequent volumes than he did in *Cathedral*, but his droll humor isn’t lacking as he relates how he created what became his career-launching volume. The back of the book jacket shows something of the publishing history of *Cathedral* by reproducing four of Macaulay’s publicity photographs since 1973. That book jacket also contains with pictures of editions in the United States and other nations: Japan, Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, The Netherlands, Finland, Taiwan, Denmark, and Brazil. A singular chance to learn more about one artist’s decisions, bookmaking and cathedrals - all at the same time. (Age 9 and older)

(Anne-Marie: JoeSam. always spells his name without a space and with a period at the end)
Each of the artists represented here by personal statements and art have worked with Rohmer in one way or another since the founding of Children’s Book Press in 1975. The artists are Carl Angel, Enrique Chagoya, George Crespo, Mark Dukes, Maya Christina Gonzalez, Caryl Henry, Nancy Hom, Hung Liu, Judith Lowry, Stephen Von Mason, Mira Reisberg, JoeSam., Pattsi Valdez and Helen Zughaib. Their cultural heritages vary, ranging from Native American to African, African American, Chinese, Filipino, Jewish, Lebanese, Mexican, Mexican American and Puerto Rican. Some readers will enjoy reading the one-page first-person essays, and they will notice ways in which a major life influence can be defined. Others will pay attention the works of art created for this highly visual tribute. The index lists the media used by each
artist. Just Like Me: Stories and Portraits by Fourteen Artists (Children’s Book Press, 1997) is a valuable companion to this volume. (Ages 11-16)

Schwartz, Amy. Old MacDonald. Scholastic, 1999. 32 pages (0-590-46189-3) $15.95
Amy Schwartz gives fresh visual treatment to the classic children's song in a lively picture book that shows Old MacDonald and his engaging family working and relaxing on a single day on their farm. Schwartz has depicted Old MacDonald as a middle-aged man who tends toward balding. His red-haired wife is clearly a partner in the work of farm and family, and his red-haired daughter, a girl of about five who looks just like her mother, joins Old MacDonald on his daily round of chores. An infant rounds out the family, but not the farm, which includes all the requisite animals of the song, rendered with charming detail by Schwartz. There is a colorful rooster, numerous cats and kittens, handsome speckled chickens and their chicks, a placid cow, woolly sheep, varied ducks, a dappled horse, playful goats, energetic dogs, and perhaps the cutest pigs to be seen in children's literature in recent years (complete with visual reference to Charlotte's Web for adults or some older children to find). Each colorful two-page spread shows a different detail of the farm family's day, which is more idyllic than realistic but nonetheless wholly appealing. Music and a rebus reference to all of the verses appear on the final page. (Ages 3-7)

Eliot Feld first came up with the idea of a public school for ballet while watching the natural moves of a group of kids on a New York City subway back in 1976. More than 20 years later, Ballet Tech thrives, as it trains students from grade three through high school who show a natural aptitude for dance, including an ability to jump high, stretch their legs, walk backwards with ease, march and skip smoothly. The children who make the cut can choose to attend this special public school where they are trained in classical and modern ballet, in addition to the usual school subjects. A typical school day for Ballet Tech students of different ages is described with a brief text and stunning color photographs that emphasize the hard work of the students, as well as their grace and dignity. (Ages 8-14)

See Also: 26 Fairmount Street; Aneesa Lee and the Weaver’s Gift; Band of Angels; Brothers of the Knight; Elements of Pop-Up; King of Shadows; Making Magic Windows; Swine Lake; The Treasury of Saints and Martyrs; Vendela in Venice

Poetry

Alarcón, Francisco X. Angels Ride Bikes, and Other Fall Poems / Los Ángeles Andan en Bicicleta, y Otros Poemas de Otoño. Illustrated by Maya Christina Gonzalez. Children’s Book Press (246 First St., Suite 101, San Francisco, CA 94105), 1999. 32 pages (0-89239-160-X) $15.95
Alarcón’s third collection of seasonal poems takes a more personal turn, as his poems here relate directly to his own childhood growing up in Los Angeles. The child of Mexican parents, his poetry reflects a bicultural heritage with which many children will identify. The poems, in both English and Spanish, celebrate such things as his grandmother, the market, the ice cream vendor, starting school, Day of the Dead and Thanksgiving. Previous collections by the same author artist include Laughing Tomatoes, and Other Spring Poems (1997) and From the Bellybutton of the Moon, and Other Summer Poems (1998), both published by Children’s Book Press. (Ages 7-10)

Dreena and her brother Delroy are opposites: she is quiet, dreamy and introspective and he is “a dancer-boy explorer.” It stands to reason, then, that the poems written from each of their points of view would be quite different. Dreena writes about her thoughts and observations, Delroy about the things he likes to do. The richly hued illustrations show Dreena and Delroy as members of an active African American family. (Ages 6-10)

As Ashley Bryan and Andrea Pinkney explain in their insightful introduction, the poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar have held special meaning for many African Americans throughout the generations. Many people recall that their first introduction to poetry was having a loving adult recite “Little Brown Baby” to them when they were small. Others recall jumping rope to “Jump Back, Honey” or hearing his poems recited (or performed, as Carole Byard recalls) at family gatherings or at church or memorizing the poems at school. Each of the artists who illustrates poems in this collection comments on his or her own early memories of becoming acquainted with Dunbar’s poetry. The fourteen poems included were selected for their child appeal and to show the range of Dunbar’s styles in both standard English and in dialect. (Ages 4-12)


“Look at winter / with winter eyes...” begins the first poem in this collection of 36 short poems. Florian gives young readers a strong sense of winter through icy images and subdued illustrations rendered in watercolors and colored pencils. His childlike perspective on the snowy season includes poems about sledding, icicles, tracks, snowmen, ice fishing and skating. Two complementary poems “What I Love about Winter” and “What I Hate about Winter” may inspire some budding writers to write their own winter poems. (Ages 4-10)


The thirty short verses without rhyme in this volume are arranged so we see a day from start to finish, from the point of view of a small Asian American girl who loves and is loved by a little Yorkshire terrier. The childlike observations she makes about her dog will apply to many canine pets: he fears the vacuum cleaner, likes to play catch, announces the arrival of the mail, hates to see family members leave the house without him, and looks so much smaller when he’s been bathed. Because of the arrangement and length of the poems, it is possible either to read this aloud as a picture book about a day in the life of a girl and her dog or to read selections from it. Highly Commended, 2000 Charlotte Zolotow Award (Ages 3-7)

Graham, Joan Bransfield. Flicker Flash. Illustrated by Nancy Davis. Houghton Mifflin, 1999. 32 pages (0-395-90501-X) $15.00

Bold graphics enhance the 23 concrete poems included in this picture-book collection that celebrates the many kinds of light, both from natural and artificial sources. From lightning bolts to birthday candles, fireflies to flashlights, crescent moon to campfires, each of the types of light the poet has chosen will be familiar to young children. Her short verses cleverly take on the shape of the object about which she writes: the antennae of the firefly, for example, are formed from the curved tips of the double “f”s and the colorful letters in the poem “Fireworks” arc across a dark blue double-page spread. Aside from the overall visual appeal, the poems themselves speak to the types of experiences young children can easily understand and appreciate. Highly Commended, 2000 Charlotte Zolotow Award (Ages 4-8)


Thirteen poems pay tribute weaving by describing the work of one weaver, Aneesa Lee, whose own multiethnic heritage embodies the universality of this fabric art. Grimes’s poems focus both on the specifics of weaving, as well as some of the dreaming that goes into the choice of colors and pattern. Uplifting as the poems themselves are, Grimes never romanticizes the hard work that goes into it all. Her central metaphor is of connectedness and community of “a people’s art.” Ashley Bryan’s brightly colored illustrations emphasize the many different strands, both literal and metaphorical. (Ages 6-9)

Anne-Marie: The correct title is CrashBoomLove with no spaces between the three words.

In brief narrative poems organized into five sections titled “The Mirror,” “Broken Fingernails,” “Hanging in Space,” “Yellow Room,” and “A Capella” Herrera relates César’s story. It’s a story of a Chicano teenager whose missing his father, who knows he’s an outsider to what his conventional high school offers others, and - most of all - who is more influenced by his peers than by his mother or any other authority. In a powerful work with an inviting, strong graphic design Herrera examines the extremes of peer pressure and some of the consequences, the feelings of a kid who wants to feel hope but finds he cannot, and his slow emergence as the distinctive, talented guy he might become. As well as being riveting reading for teenagers, César’s narrative voice tells a story posing tough questions for adults who read it. Does such growth require previous extremes, such as expulsion from school or an accident fatal to a friend? Who can relate to the Césars who move in and out of all high schools? Herrera’s final juxtaposition of words from “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” with César’s thoughts suggests yet a larger question about the possibility for more than one cultural group to act in harmony. (Ages 14-18)


An appealing anthology includes twenty short easy-to-read poems about baseball, track, swimming, soccer, basketball, football, ice skating and hockey. Poets represented in the collection include Nikki Grimes, J. Patrick Lewis, Myra Cohn Livingston, and Michael Strickland, and most of the poems appear to have been written especially for especially for this volume. The same three boys and two girls appear as teammates and individual athletes in all of the poems, and the emphasis here is on action and the joy of the game, rather than winning or losing. (Ages 5-7)

Lach, William, selector. **Curious Cats in Art and Poetry.** Metropolitan Museum of Art / Atheneum, 1999. 48 pages (0-689-83055-6) $16.00

Artwork from the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of art is matched with a selection of cat poems from a wide range of sources. In his introduction, William Lach points out that while cats have been characterized differently by different artists and poets, throughout the centuries there are certain unmistakeable feline features, easily recognizable whether found in an ancient Egyptian sculpture, a Qing Dynasty scroll or a 20th century Austrian postcard. (Ages 7-14)

Myers, Christopher. **Black Cat.** Scholastic, 1999. 32 pages (0-590-03375-1) $16.95

A book dedicated to "all children of the city" features the urban landscape of concrete and asphalt, chain link and brick, subway and fire escape. These elements of city living and the sights and sounds that go with them are brought to life in Christopher Myers's energetic blend of artwork and poetry as readers follow the travels of a lone black cat through city streets and neighborhoods. "black cat, black cat, we want to know / where's your home, where do you go?" The lone black cat is at home in his urban environment--on basketball courts and rooftops, in the "click-clacking glow of bodega lights," and moving across a fire escape. The illustrations are a blend of photographs, collage, ink and gouache, with the fences so evocative of cityscapes up close repeated in many forms as frames and focal points for the scenes. The urban setting is one that may be familiar to many readers, and jarring to others who have never experienced a large urban environment firsthand. But the black cat's surefooted sense of belonging affirms that this is a place that one can call home. (Ages 4-11)


"Once a class of unruly students came into sudden, clear focus when I entered the room and said, ‘What have you lost? Write it down,’ " Naomi Shihab Nye writes in her superb introduction to this challenging, compelling anthology. "The lists were long and haunted." One of the most universal of human experiences is surely this sense of emptiness and absence we know as loss. It can be a feeling contained in a moment or single object, or as overwhelming and achingly large as childhood, memory, innocence, hope, death, or
even what never was. In this collection of over 125 poems, some of them the first published work of their authors and others the words of well-known poets, Nye gathers together perspectives on loss and frames them with her title question. It is a question that is like an arrow in the heart, sure and straight and true, and it will pierce young adults with its honesty. It also provides a point of entry into more challenging poems in this anthology at the same time it is surely an invitation to self-reflection. These are moving, often remarkable poems, full of the mystery and wonder that fine poetry inevitably inspires. And the theme of loss, distilled to its most intense essence in poetry, becomes something strangely life affirming--each voice that speaks out from the pages is that of a survivor. Indeed, in the book's later pages, the question "What have you found?" is also posed, acknowledging the hope that can eventually emerge from the center of sadness or sorrow. Spaced throughout this collection are evocative black-and-white photographic portraits taken by Michael Nye. The unidentified individuals who look out from the pages are faces young and old, dark and light, and each is an unknown poem or story. What have you lost? the reader wonders of each one, with the ever-growing realization that this is a question that is part of the very essence of who they--and all of us--are. Notes on the contributors include brief comments by each one on loss. Indexes of poems, poets and losses (meant as "a partial compass, another way to scout among these poems and their vast territories," writes Nye) round out this fine collection. (Age 12 and older)

Original poems by young adults from ages 13 to 21 were especially solicited for this volume. Dealing for the most part with Black identity, the poems are divided into the following categories: Black Pride, Oral Tradition, Home, Self, Love, the Fight for Freedom, the Future, and Ancestors. Each section opens with a poem by well-known African American poets such as Langston Hughes, Alexis De Veaux, Lucille Clifton and Maya Angelou. (Ages 12 and up)

Not just gargoyles, but werewolves, vampires, trolls, ogres and other typically scary creatures are given a humorous edge in Prelutsky’s appealing poems. Here you can find the complaints of an aging werewolf who can no longer scare people, the pleadings of some baby gargoyles who want to stay up late to frighten people, and a lonely troll who buys a telephone to keep in touch. Peter Sís’s oil and gouache paintings skilfully balance creepiness and comedy to provide the perfect compliment to Prelutsky’s poems. (Ages 7-12)

"Basketball is a game I have loved since I was a child...Even though I'm not great at the game, I can marvel at those who are...On the streets, I've seen guys do things I didn't think could be done. In college games, I've seen destinies fulfilled and hearts broken--all within a tenth of a second." Photographer/writer Charles Smith Jr.'s love of basketball is one with which many young readers will identify. They may also identify with the many perspectives on the game presented in this energetic collection of photographs and 14 original prose and poetic pieces that are sometimes wry, sometimes euphoric, but always impassioned. From the sardonic "Excuses, Excuses" to the slyly humorous "No Soles" to the soaring "The Sweetest Roll," Smith refreshing celebrates the game as it is played on the street and in high school gymnasiums and college arenas rather than the athletic exploits of superstars. But it is the dynamic text design, in which changing fonts and color are used to suggest the energy and rhythm of the game and the emotions of the players, and Smith's quietly explosive duotone photographs of games on the street, that truly distinguish this collection. All of the photographs and much of the text are focused on male players. The absence of women and girls is
unfortunate; nonetheless this is a book that should appeal to readers—and nonreaders—of many ages. (Age 10 and older)

See Also: At Break of Day; Be Blest; Child’s Calendar; Spring; Circle Song; Grand Fathers; Stop Pretending; You Are My Perfect Baby

Concept Books


Each letter of the alphabet is emphasized in turn as a little girl describes the country ride she takes on her horse, Amos: “B for the bumpety bridge we cross…. sloppity cloppety thumpety thud / Past pigs in a puddle / M is for mud.” The lively text gallops across the pages, offering rhythm and rhyme and adventure. The bold font stands out vividly against Keiko Narahashi’s wonderful double-page spreads, which show a little girl clearly in charge of her world. That it is indeed her world is revealed on the final two pages, where she is seen on her rocking horse surrounded by a toy farm, the inspirations for her journey of the imagination. (Ages 3-5)

Hoban, Tana. *Let’s Count.* Greenwillow, 1999. 32 pages (0-688-16008-5) $16.00

There are two ways to read numbers and two ways to count objects on each double-page spread of this nearly wordless book. Each number appears as both the Arabic number and as the word spelled out in English, e.g. “4 four,” and children can either count four dots or four brightly colored balloons in the full-page color photograph. Numbers from one to fifteen and then by tens from twenty to fifty, and finally one hundred are represented by such objects as flattened soda cans, paper towel rolls, cherries, beads on a necklace, and dandelions. Allow plenty of time for children to count the 100 spools of thread, neatly lined up in a store display. (Ages 3-6)


Size, shape, perspective and angle are employed in exceptionally elegant photographs cropped so viewers can see only one part or angle of the subject. All 26 images are of creatures shown in full in an “A is for... Answers” section at the end. Some of the creatures are more commonly known to children than others, and some images are placed in ways that challenge even adult viewers of this handsomely designed volume. Carefully developed pairings of images on each page spread extend its complex order. Horenstein’s exceptional black and white photographs are reproduced on tinted brown paper, and brown upper case letters throughout extend the mellow mood. The photographer encourages viewers to look carefully at nature as well as at his images in this book that proves to be more demanding than it might first appear to be. (Ages 7-10)


Aside from the engaging mouse adventurers, what makes this version of the classic scary story “In a Dark Dark Room” distinctive, is the addition of colors. “In a dark, dark wood, there was a dark, dark house. (The house is dark brown. I’ll write that down.)” As the observant rodent explorers seek out the beast in the dark purple cupboard, they continually make comments and take notes about the colors of what they are seeing. This device not only turns the familiar story into a color concept book, it also makes it slightly less scary for younger listeners. (Ages 4-7)


A father and son en route to Grandma’s house 100 miles away chart the progress of their car trip by
following along on a road map which is visible to readers of this book as well. Each double-page spread represents 10 miles of their trip, as we count backwards by tens: 90 miles to go, 80 miles, 70 miles, etc. Mileage markers and landmarks are clearly visible on the map inset which appears on each page, as their trip is traced with a bright red line, and children will enjoy seeing the life-size version of these landmarks (a tunnel, an ice cream store, etc) when the boy and his father reach each one. (Ages 4-8)

See Also: Spring; This Train

Board Books


Ahlberg, Janet and Allan. *See the Rabbit*. (The Baby’s Catalogue) U.S. edition: Little, Brown, 1999. 12 pages (0-316-03847-4) $5.95

Two board books pull detail illustrations from *The Baby’s Catalogue* (Little, Brown, 1982). Each new volume uses minimal text and ingeniously organized to offer new perspectives by relying on some of the tried-and-true ways parents use to share books with their babies. Doll and Teddy pairs familiar related objects from a baby’s world: wagon and tricycle, blocks and ball, bird and worm (and ants!), Dad and baby. See the Rabbit shows larger scale pictures and encourages babies to look for a specific detail within the picture: “See the boots. / See the bellybutton.” etc. (Ages 9-18 months)


The very things all parents admire in their babies are the things interesting babies the most: their bodies. This board book pictures a baby and mother who could be almost any race or ethnicity and celebrates “perfect arms and perfect lips / and tiny fingers / and perfect hips... perfect feet and twinkling toes / with tiny ears / and a perfect nose.” Babies and toddlers always enjoy having various parts of their bodies named. This can be done even more affectionately than usual while this book is shared. (Ages 6-18 months)

Tracy, Tom. *Show Me!* Illustrated by Darcia Labrosse. (Harper Growing Tree) HarperCollins, 1999. 12 pages (0-694-01039-1) $5.95

The familiar “Where’s your nose?” game becomes part of the early morning wake-up routine between a mother and her baby through breakfast, a bath, and getting dressed. The mutual delight as they move from nose to cheek, chin to tummy, and knees to toes, culminates in one big hug at the book’s satisfying end. The rhyming text is perfectly paced for the youngest listeners who will no doubt want to get in on all the action. (Ages 9-18 months)


A brief, rhyming text playfully describes a baby’s first steps: “Creepy / crawl / pull up tall. / Giggle / wiggle / waggle / FALL!” The stylized art shows Mom patiently waiting just a few yards away, encouraging every step. The baby’s journey past the end table and chair between them is appropriately made to look as if it’s at least a mile long, reflecting the perspectives of both mother and child. (Ages 9-18 months)

Picture Books for Younger Children

Bang, Molly. *When Sophie Gets Angry -- Really, Really Angry...* Blue Sky / Scholastic, 1999. 36 pages (0-590-18979-4) $15.95

When her sister snatches a stuffed gorilla out of Sophie’s hands, announcing that it’s her turn to play with it, young Sophie gets so angry that she kicks and screams, roars a “red, red roar,” and feels like a volcano, ready to explode. Rather than striking out, however, Sophie dispels her anger by running outside into her
backyard and climbing a treewhere “the wide world comforts her.” Bang’s obvious respect for the intensity of a young child’s emotions comes through in an understated narrative that follows the perfect arc of a tantrum. Little Sophie’s “red, red roar” is followed by some time alone which allows her to put the pieces of her world back together again. A spare, subtly rhyming text varies syntactical patterns to reflect Sophie’s changing mood, offering a quiet contrast to the loud, exaggerated visual depiction of Sophie’s anger and eventual denouement. (Ages 2-7)

Barrett, Mary Brigid. Day Care Days. Illustrated by Patti Beling Murphy. Little, Brown, 1999. 32 pages (0-316-08456-5) $12.95

Children who go to day care centers regularly will feel at home with this rhyming picture story in which a small boy with glasses recounts the typical events of his weekdays, from getting up in the morning and having Daddy help him get dressed to having Mommy tuck him in at night. Most of his day, however, is spent in day care where he plays with friends indoors and outdoors, eats lunch, naps, paints, listens to a story, has a snack and then, one by one, watches his friends go home until Daddy returns to pick him up. While the focus is on the boy’s comfortable day at the day care center, the author does not shy away from the child’s momentary sadness when his Daddy leaves him in the morning, as well as his anxiety when he’s nearly the last one to get picked up in the afternoon. Bold gouache paintings show the details of a busy, diverse day care center, in addition to an active home life in which an older, balding father does his fair share of the cooking and child care. (Ages 3-5)


A little boy who owns several pairs of shoes likes his sandals best of all, even though he needs help with buckling them. When he and his grandpa want to go outside to play, the boy insists on wearing his sandals but where can they be? His patient grandpa helps him search all over for his sandals in this gentle picture story about a small child who wants to do things for himself and a grandpa who is wise enough to let him try. (Ages 3-5)


“My goose Betsy has smooth soft feathers to keep her warm and dry, webby feet to swim with, and a long strong beak for tearing at grass or packing up corn” begins the young narrator of this story set on a contemporary farm. The sorts of observations a farm child might make about what happens when a goose lays eggs form the basis of this gentle narrative which falls halfway between storybook and easy nonfiction. John Bendall-Brunello’s colored pencil and watercolor illustrations are at once realistically accurate and charmingly funny, much in the spirit of Robert McCloskey’s Make Way for Ducklings. There’s lots of good information here (the book even includes an index) and yet the story itself is captivating enough that it will easily hold the attention of young children to whom it is read aloud, either individually or in a group. (Ages 3-6)


A previously unpublished book by the “Laureate of the Nursery” lists, in classic style, the most important characteristics of children from ages one through six: “The important thing about being Two is all the things that you can do.” and “The important thing about being Four is that you are bigger than you were before.” Each one of Margaret Wise Brown’s playful attributes is further expanded in a rhyming text, right on target in terms of child development. Chris Raschka successfully blends a retro slightly faded color palette with contemporary stylized shapes and human figures. (Ages 2-5)


From sun up to sun down, a competent and energetic older sister tells her baby brother all the things she
can do: "I can stomp my feet. I can hop, hop, hop. I can twirl around like a spinning top. / I can put on my coat and play outside. I can swing on the swing and slide down the slide." The charming illustrations show what appears to be an Asian-American family, with the lively narrator always a step or two ahead of her adoring baby brother and somewhat bedraggled mom. The staccato-paced rhyming text will make for a fun read-aloud and children will enjoy the detailed illustrations of a busy, less-than-orderly household. (Ages 2-4)

Rhyme, rhythm, repetition, and the irresistible lure of hide-and-seek combine in a highly engaging book for toddlers. Young Josie, a toddler herself, stays one step ahead of her family as they look for her throughout their home. But observant young children will be able to spot Josie on every page—toes peeking out from under a raincoat, legs and feet under a table, a ribboned braid poking out from behind her brother's back—and they can follow the trail of flower petals from her just-picked garden bouquet throughout the book, which is exactly what her slightly older brother does to find her. The musical text lends itself easily to reading or to singing with whatever tune comes to mind: "Here is Josie's dozy cat, / cozy cat, nosy cat. / Here is Josie's dozy cat. / But where did Josie go?" Once Josie's final hiding spot is found, it's a warm family reunion for the small child, her brother, her father and her expectant mother in this charming and reassuring book. (Ages 1-3)

Collicut, Paul. This Train. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999. 24 pages (0-374-37493-7) $15.00
The fascination that many young children have for trains will find fulfillment in the boldly colored, rail-rich pages of this picture book. The simple, inviting text on each double-page spread invites children to observe contrasting elements in the two pictures, in which trains are the unifying theme. "This train is going uphill. This train is going downhill," reads the text on one pair of pages. "This train is on a bridge. This train is in a tunnel," reads another. But train lovers will notice much more than the contrasting elements of the images. Paul Collicutt's locomotives are colorful and completely enticing, from an old-fashioned steam engine to a high-powered monorail and many others. For the endpapers he has painted portraits of real-life trains and provided information identifying each one. Some children may be frustrated if they want to match the trains on the endpapers with the trains in the pages of the book. It is difficult, if not impossible, to do, and it is unfortunate that there is no clear indication of whether the trains that grace the pages are real or from the artist's imagination. Despite this, there is much for children to take notice of in the book. And for those who love trains, there is much to dream on as well. (Ages 2-6)

"Wrap your arms around me, make a circle, hold me tight. I'll take you spinning through the air, as daylight turns to night." So begins an evening story filled with images of circles and affection. Children will notice the polka-dotted nightwear of the toddler, the round moon, and the circle enclosing each illustration. A smiley faced moon can interest for the youngest who will accept this artistic license along with a more sophisticated text stating that the moon has "circle thumb prints all arranged to watch you from the sky." The care giver can be a woman or a man, and the child a boy or a girl, depending upon how readers wish to interpret Engel's soothing images rendered in pen-and-ink and watercolor. (Ages 1-3 years)

Never has a child been so happy on a rainy day as the energetic young girl in this story who greets the world with buoyant enthusiasm from the time she jumps out of bed in the morning until she jumps back into bed at night. Esbensen's lively rhyming text follows this hoppy-go-lucky character through the day, which includes a gleeful walk to and from school, providing her many opportunities to hop and jump. The illustrations show the protagonist to be an Asian-American girl who shares the house with her mom and her equally exuberant cat. (Ages 3-6)
When a mother dog gives her puppy the command to bark, he meows instead. Then he quacks, oinks, moos, and makes just about every animal noise except barking. His mother takes him to the vet who reaches deep into George's mouth and pulls out a cat, duck, pig, and cow. Feiffer skillfully balances predictability and surprise throughout the story which makes it story funny to children and adults alike. The spare text also leaves the story open to interpretation, particularly the meaning of the delightful twist at the end of the book. *Honor Book, 2000 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 3-8)

Hamanaka, Sheila. *I Look Like a Girl.* Morrow, 1999. 32 pages (0-688-14625-2) $16.00
“I look like a girl / but I’m really a tiger, with a rumble, a roar, and a leap!” With these words we are invited into the imaginary play worlds of several active girls who imagine themselves a dolphin, horse, condor, jaguar and wolf. The strength of these young feminists is reinforced with Hamanaka’s realistic paintings, as well as with her direct statements, such as “If you look twice past the sugar and spice / the eyes of a tiger you’ll see.” The lush oil paintings show all the creatures in their natural environments, be it the jungle, a canyon or a plain kitchen table. (Ages 3-7)

Heo, Yumi. *One Sunday Morning.* Orchard, 1999. 32 pages (0-531-30156-7) $15.95
Minho, who previously spent a noisy afternoon running errands with his mother in *One Afternoon* (Orchard, 1994), now spends an only slightly quieter morning in Central Park with his father. They watch joggers and bicyclists, take a horse-and-buggy ride, take a carousel ride, and then head for the zoo. An idyllic day, to be sure, that’s something that becomes all too clear when Minho awakens in the morning and realizes it was all a dream. Yumi Heo’s colorful, skewed perspectives aptly convey the busy city scenes that serve as a backdrop for this story about a Korean-American father and son. (Ages 3-6)

Henkes, Kevin. *Oh!* Illustrated by Laura Dronzek. Greenwillow, 1999. 24 pages (0-688-17053-6) $15.00
After the snow “falls and falls all night,” everyone wants to get out to play in it the next morning: a squirrel, rabbit, dog, cat, birds, and children. Kevin Henkes’ understated, lyrical text captures all the joy of a fresh snowfall. Readers, too, are invited to experience the wonder by playing with all the possible moods evoked by changing the intonation of the single word, “oh!” The shared experience is exquisitely reflected in Laura Dronzek’s acrylic paintings which use sharply contrasting blue and white to express the bracing cold of a snowy day, contained in small square-shaped frames which give a sense of warmth and intimacy. At the days end, when the “snow turns blue,” we get a satisfying recapitulation of the day before the children rush inside. Through the window their cozy home, the children are pleased to see the snow falling once again, creating a new world of wonder for the next day. (Ages 2-4)

“Hands are to hold and pat / and clap! / Hands are to hide behind your back.” Using the childlike syntax of Ruth Krauss’ classic *A Hole Is to Dig* (Harper, 1952), Judy Hindley’s second-person narrative encourages young children to explore -- and celebrate -- their bodies. Beginning with the features of the face and moving down to the feet, the spirited rhyming text suggests physical activities that most young children can either do or aspire to, such as opening the mouth, moving arms up and down, counting fingers and toes, and stomping feet. The seven toddlers and one baby that interact with each other and the reader throughout the story are of diverse racial backgrounds and appear to be in a day care setting. Their large heads, round bodies and scaled-down features echo the style of illustrator Helen Oxenbury and, like Oxenbury, illustrator Brita Granström manages to capture the playful exuberance of young children with just a few deft lines. The combination of Hindley’s perfectly paced text and Granström’s appealing illustration make this a great selection for toddler story hours, as well as for reading one-on-one with babies and toddlers. (Ages 9 months-3 years)

Crisp color photographs show a preschool-aged African American boy at home during the day, waiting for his sister Sarah to come home from school. Jonathan can be momentarily distracted by tree trimmers outside, the arrival of the morning mail, and a passing garbage truck, but Sarah is never far from his mind as he awaits her return. Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard’s perfectly paced first-person text expresses Jonathan’s anticipation through childlike questions and repetition. Her use of onomatopoeia also adds to the ambiance of the story, as well as to the pleasure of young listeners. (Ages 2-5)


A tuneless, lilting lullabye harbors the soft cadence of sleep as a mother sings to her child about a sailor’s return from the sea. Nancy Jewell’s rhyming text gently rocks and sways to the rhythms of both sea and shore as the sailor’s progress is charted from ocean to land to the “snug little country house” where both mother and child await his return. Stefano Vitale’s oil paintings on wood are finely textured and deeply hued with the colors of sunset and moonlit night. (Ages 6 months – 2 years)

Keller, Holly. *Jacob’s Tree.* Greenwillow, 1999. 24 pages (0-688-15996-6) $15.00

Jacob is the smallest member of his bear family. He is too small to reach the table, see his reflection in the mirror over the bathroom sink, or reach the apples in the tree. Mama tells him to wait and assures him he will grow. Papa takes him outside on a summer day and makes a notch on the elm tree to mark his height. "Now you will be able to see how much your grow." But it's hard for Jacob to be patient. He tries to make himself grow faster, but his head still comes to the same spot on the tree when Papa measures him again in autumn. For Christmas Jacob receives wonderful red overalls from his Grandma, but they're too big to wear. "Wait, Jacob," Mama tells him again. Holly Keller's warmly told story will resonate with many young children who know the frustration of being too small to do the things that big kids can. Her watercolor and pen-and-ink illustrations charmingly capture a loving family setting, the passing of the seasons, and the many moods of a small child, including the joy of a wished for happening finally coming to pass. (Ages 3-5)


A young frog, bored with his existence between two rocks in the garden, decides to venture out one day to see what he can see. His new world, however, is fraught with danger, things about which a busybody dragonfly constantly warns him by saying: "One two three JUMP!" Artist Jan Ormerod very cleverly uses the drama of turning the page to heighten the suspense and surprise with each jump, as she reveals the dangers in the form of a child, a cat and a crow, all of whom are engaging in ordinary activities on a summer day. When a final jump lands the frog in a pond, he and the dragonfly agree that he’s found exactly the right place for his adventure beyond the garden rocks. Lively’s expert pacing in this patterned text, accompanied by Ormerod’s bold illustrations, will make this an excellent selection for preschool storytimes. (Ages 2-5)


Little Bunny walks staunchly past sheep and cows, over train tracks, through trees and across an open field. Nothing can stop him or slow his progress because, as we learn at the book’s conclusion, he has a home with lots of other bunnies waiting for him. The soft silver-tinged illustrations add character and gentle humor to an engaging story of a single-minded character who seems to strike a chord with young children. (Ages 2-7)


"I wish I were a dog. Dogs have all the fun!" voices a boldly striped orange tabby at the opening of this anything-but-wistful picture book. The cat makes some good points on the merits of doggy-ness: dogs get to go to the park, guard the house, and catch crooks, "and they're always the heroes in movies and books." But the little girl to whom the cat belongs knows just what to say to make her cat feel fine. She first points
out the less appealing side of being a dog (at least less appealing to a cat), and then all of the unique things that cats can do that dogs can only dream of. Playfully written and illustrated, there is plenty to make young children smile, and even think about, as they read or listen to the rhyming text and look at the vibrant, not-too-silly illustrations of Lydia Monk’s first book. (Ages 3-6)

**Reiser, Lynn. Earthdance. Greenwillow, 1999. 32 pages (0-688-16326-2) $16.00**

Terra has the lead role as Earth in a class play about the solar system. On the day of the school play, however, Terra’s astronaut mother is far away on the edge of the universe -- will she make it to the school in time to see the play? As she speeds her rocket toward Earth (and Terra), we can trace her progress on the left-hand pages, while, on the right-hand pages, the school play has begun. The action and scenery of the play mirror the action and scenery of the mother’s rocket -- Mom even stops to take a picture at just the right time, when Earth is centerstage. Reiser’s playful tribute to working parents who still find time to make their children the center of the universe has psychological depth and multiple layers of meaning that continue to be revealed on repeated readings. Her collage illustrations which use NASA photographs of the stars and planets will intrigue budding scientists, as well. (Ages 4-8)


When the little gray donkey comes to his stable one evening, he finds that it is occupied by a pig who explains: “I’m in here because somebody else is in my place. And he bites.” So begins a pattern that is carried through with a series of displaced farm animals, including a dog, a hen, a mouse, and finally, a beetle whose burrow had been accidentally stepped on and ruined by the donkey himself. Each boldly painted double-page spread shows a different barnyard scene, with a door to open by lifting a flap to reveal the animal inside. Young readers are given descriptive clues so that they can guess the identity of the next animal before they open the door. The appealing illustrations, strong narrative pattern, and participatory nature of the story make this an excellent choice for early childhood literacy programs, as well as a good read-aloud selection for preschool storytimes. (Ages 2-5)


“Kangaroo and cricket both can jump. Camel and turtle... both have a hump.” Simple rhyming phrases accompanied by stylized watercolor paintings point out shared characteristics of otherwise unrelated animals: whale and walrus, badger and beetle, leopard and lizard, fish and hippo, etc. Clear picture clues give children plenty of opportunity to guess what each pair has in common. (Ages 2-5)

**Sís, Peter. Trucks Trucks Trucks. Greenwillow, 1999. 24 pages (0-688-16276-2) $14.95**

Matt, the imaginative toddler who turned into the object of his affection in last year’s Fire Truck (Greenwillow), has now branched out in his interests. Like many children his age, he has a passion for all kinds of trucks: cranes, bulldozers, backhoes, rollers, street cleaners, tractors, and dump trucks. Matt’s bedroom is filled with toy trucks and, as in the previous volume, he takes his play quite seriously. His imagination really goes into overdrive, however, when a parent asks him to pick up his toy trucks and Matt digs, plows, pushes, rolls, scoops, loads, and hauls his way to cleanliness and order. Each double-page spread zeroes in on a single truck, accompanied by the relevant action word: scooping, for example, accompanies the rubber-tired backhoe, with Matt in the driver’s seat, operating the controls. The trucks get progressively larger with each turn of the page, symbolizing the child’s deep involvement in his work. Sís’s attention to fine mechanical details such as rivets and gears, will delight young truck enthusiasts, while his homage to a child’s imaginary play will strike a chord with even wider audience. (Ages 2-5)

**Stenmark, Victoria. The Singing Chick. Illustrated by Randy Cecil. Henry Holt, 1999. 32 pages (0-8050-5255-0) $15.95**

As soon as he hatches out of his egg, a happy little chick breaks into song: “The sky is so blue! The sun is so yellow! The trees are so green! And I’m a happy fellow!” His song continues even after he is eaten by a hungry fox who then can’t understand why he can’t stop singing. He, in turn, is eaten by a wolf who’s eaten by a bear, and each one mysteriously breaks into song: “The sky is so blue! The sun is so yellow..”
It all comes to a happy and peaceful resolution which is likely to satisfy the youngest listeners. Randy Cecil’s bold, flat illustrations add a humorous tone that matches the light-hearted spirit of the little chick. In both style and content, this is similar to George Shannon’s *Lizard Song* (Greenwillow, 1981), with which it would pair nicely in a preschool or kindergarten storytime. (Ages 3-6)


Young garbage-truck enthusiasts are sure to love amiable Mr. Gilly, who drives his truck around town all day looking for trash to pick up. The repetitive nature of his work is reflected in the phrase repeated on every page: “Dump it in, smash it down, drive around the Trashy Town! Is the trash truck full yet? No! Mr. Gilly drives on.” (Parents, get ready. Early reports indicate that this phrase will quickly begin to haunt you.) Mr. Gilly is surely a direct descendant of Margaret Wise Brown’s Little Fireman and Dan Yaccarino’s art is more than a little reminiscent of the illustrations by Esphyr Slobodkina. Highly Commended, 2000 Charlotte Zolotow Award (Ages 2-6)

See Also: A Is for Amos; Let’s Join In; Old MacDonald; Red-Eyed Tree Frog; Some Things Go Together

**Picture Books for Older Children**

**Best, Cari. Last Licks: A Spaldeen Story.** Illustrated by Diane Palmisciano. A Melanie Kroupa Books / DK Ink, 1999. 32 pages (0-7894-2513-0) $15.95

Annie anxiously awaits the end of the school day so she can get out into the city streets to play ball with her friends Spit, Jay-Jay and Chickie. She's got her own lucky Spaldeen, a Sky-High Super Pinkie -- lucky because it's the only ball in the neighborhood that hasn't been confiscated by the crabby Super who has a collection of unlucky neighbor kids' Spaldeens lined up on display in his window. Everyone looks forward to playing ball on Sunday because it's the day the Super goes to visit his sister in New Jersey and the kids can play freely. At the end of a vigorous game, just as everyone's called home to supper, Annie gets in her last licks, punching the ball so high and so far that it ends up in a very surprising place, leading the story to an extremely satisfying conclusion. While the bouncy, upbeat story is sure to stir nostalgic feelings in many adult readers, the spirited oil pastel illustrations show a fully contemporary cast of characters (right down to Mom's aerobic shoes) in a modern urban setting. As an added treat, the book's endpapers include testimonials to the Spaldeen, from childhood reminiscences by people such as Sandy Koufax, William Steig, Shari Lewis, Stephen Raleigh, and Samantha Kantor, age 8. (Ages 5-9)

**Best, Cari. Three Cheers for Catherine the Great.** Illustrated by Giselle Potter. A Melanie Kroupa Book / DK Ink, 1999. 32 pages (0-7894-2622-6) $16.95

Sara's grandma, who came to America from Russia "a long time ago," has requested no presents for her birthday. When Sara wonders how they can have a borscht and blintzes party for Grandma with no presents, her mother replies, "A good NO PRESENT can be anything from a kiss or a hug to a game of gin rummy-as long as it comes from deep inside you." Sara, her mother and grandma live in a lively city apartment building and everyone comes to Grandma's party with a "no present" to share: Monica and her hairdresser dad style Grandma's hair, dance teacher Mr. Minsky gives her a waltz, and opera fan Mary Caruso has learned Grandma's favorite Russian love song to sing. Sara, who has spent a week carefully observing her Russian-speaking grandma's life, has come up with a special "no present," too: she will teach Grandma to read and write English (and, it turns out, Grandma may teach Sara Russian, too). Cari Best's loving intergenerational family story features a child who loves the sound and playfulness of language. The text is sprinkled with Sara's poem-making, as well as Russian words and phrases. And it is peopled with colorful characters who form a tight-knit community that is delightfully visualized in Giselle Potter's distinctive, quirky illustrative style that is sophisticated rather than sweet but still captures all the warmth in this family and small community. Honor Book, 2000 Charlotte Zolotow Award (Ages 4-8)

Sophia's grandfather gives her an olive tree for her seventh birthday, even though she wanted a skateboard. Stranger yet, the olive tree isn't something she can see—it is back in Greece, on the land her family once owned. When her grandfather dies a year later, he leaves enough money for Sophia and her mother to travel to Greece to hang her grandmother's glass beads in the olive tree. For Sophia, the journey makes no sense—she feels no connection to a place she's never seen. Once on the small island where her mother was born, however, she begins to understand that the tree is more than a thing or a place, it is a part of who she is and where she came from—a connection to the past, represented by her grandparents who have died, and to the future, because she knows that some day she will return. "It had to do with Mama and me and all of us being part of the island. [Grandfather] wanted Mama to remember again, and he wanted me to know." Eve Bunting's skillful narrative is restrained from too much sentiment, making for a satisfying story. Karen Barbour's exquisite illustrations display color with both exuberance and restraint to capture the flavor of Greek culture and the emotional and spiritual landscape of Sophia's journey. (Ages 5-9)


Two young sisters growing up in Brooklyn during the Depression are featured in four short stories, illustrated with detailed pen-and-ink and watercolor illustrations. In “Lucky Popsicles” the two girls are so upset about not getting the Lucky Stick on the Freezy Breeze Popsicles that two inevitable ice cream disasters occur. “The Fight,” refers to a sidewalk chalk war of words and pictures launched by older sister Mimmy who takes her frustration at losing her best friend out on her little sister. The family spends a day having a picnic on Brooklyn Bridge in “The Vacation,” and in what is perhaps the most poignant story, “At Gramma and Grampa’s,” both girls develop a sense of compassion for their Russian-born immigrant grandparents during a Sunday dinner when they see Grampa cry recalling his small Russian hometown. The stories are flavored with historical details but today’s readers will surely identify with the strong sibling relationship portrayed. (Ages 6-9)

Coy, John. *Strong to the Hoop.* Illustrated by Leslie Jean-Bart. Lee & Low Books (95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016), 1999. 32 pages (1-880000-80-6) $16.95

Ten-year-old James thinks he’s too small to participate in a four-on-four basketball game with his older brother and his friends so he’s pleasantly surprised when they do ask him, due to a last-minute injury of one of their teammates. James is assigned to guard Marcus, the biggest, toughest kid on the court. It’s no easy task but he sticks to it and manages to rise to the occasion, with lots of encouragement from a fellow teammate named Zo. A distinctive stream-of-consciousness narrative is accompanied by brown-tone scratchboard and photo collages of African-American kids in an urban setting. (Ages 6-10)


Little Joe enjoys an afternoon at the beach with his mom and dad, even though he’s less enthusiastic about getting into the water than they are. Instead he enjoys playing by himself on the beach, imagining he’s the fearless captain, steering his boat past sharks, storms and, above all, big waves. When Joe suddenly realizes that he’s lost sight of his parents, he panics and then cries until a friendly lifeguard helps him get reunited with his mom and dad. Common childhood fears and experiences are interwoven in a poetic story illustrated with detailed sun-dappled watercolor paintings which feature a Black family. (Ages 4-7)


Lottie is a single-minded little girl who not only insists on wearing her princess dress (Halloween costume) to school one morning, but also manages to talk her mother into wearing her princess dress (evening gown) to work as well. The gentle power struggle between mother and child provides plenty of humor in the story, as do the quirky illustrations of the determined little girl and the remarkably unregal mother who comes across as a good sport rather than as an indulgent parent. (Ages 4-8)
Figueredo, D. H. *When This World Was New*. Illustrated by Enrique O. Sanchez. Lee & Low (95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016), 1999. 32 pages (1-88000-85-5) $15.95

After traveling at night on two planes from his warm island homeland in the Caribbean, Danilito faces his new home in the United States with a combination of excitement and apprehension. Even though he's always been a good student, he worries about going to a school where English will be spoken. And even though his Uncle Berto, a longtime U.S. resident, is helping them get settled in a new house, Danilito worries about his father getting a job and he fears he will never see his mother smile again. The first winter snowfall helps him take his mind off his worries, however, as he dresses in unfamiliar *ropa de invierno* (winter clothes) and goes outside with his father for a walk in newly fallen snow. It's the first snow for both of them, and Danilito's father finally fulfills a life-long dream: to walk up a snowy hillside and then look back on his tracks in the snow. The understated symbolism of their brief journey uphill nicely echoes the longer one they have just made. This first book by author D.H. Figueredo stays remarkably true to a child's perspective; the author's voice is as fresh and pure as a first snowfall. Danilito's fears about facing new experiences are realistic, as is his genuine excitement about snow. The soft edges of Enrique O. Sanchez's muted illustrations perfectly complement the bittersweet tone of the story. His closing picture shows Danilito, some months later, ice skating confidently as his proud parents look on, providing a satisfying visual conclusion to the story. (Ages 4-8)


Wesley’s distinctive tastes make him an outcast at school and in his neighborhood. Even his parents are worried about his distaste for pizza and football. After studying ancient civilizations in school, Wesley gets a brilliant idea: he’ll create his own civilization and live off the land in his own backyard. Throughout the summer his civilization, called Weslandia, thrives: he grows his own food, makes his own clothes, builds a house, and even invents his own sport. Before long, all the other neighborhood kids want to join him. This original story, effectively illustrated in a realistic style, is the ultimate child’s fantasy: to live independently, to make your own rules, to be wildly successful, and to win the respect and admiration of those who had made fun of you. (Ages 6-9)


In 1801, the good people of Cheshire, Massachusetts, were upset to hear the news that President Jefferson was serving cheese from Norton, Connecticut, rather than the better-known Cheshire cheese. Elder John came up with a creative solution: to create a cheese so large that it would last for the rest of Jefferson’s administration. All the townspeople worked together to produce an enormous wheel of cheese weighing 1235 pounds and standing four feet high. And their plan, of course, worked: it’s reported that the cheese was still being eaten in 1805. This little-known, slightly bizarre chapter of U.S. history is brought to life with charm and humor in a picture book that stresses the manner in which the entire community worked together to accomplish a single goal. (Ages 5-9)


Eight-year-old Agnes Peregrine is the daughter of a famous ornithologist, and a talented birdcaller in her own right. Traveling around the world with her mother, Agnes is able to imitate everything from the great hornbill of the African savanna to the sulfur-crested cockatoo of New Guinea to the ruby throated hummingbird found in New York's Central Park. But when Agnes and her mother go the Himalayan Mountains in search of the most elusive bird of all—the pink-headed duck-Colonel Edwin Pittsnap, ruthless bird hunter and collector-is following close behind. He is certain that this is the chance he has been looking for to capture one of these rare birds. Agnes is sure she is up to the challenge of calling the duck, but is she up to facing Colonel Pittsnap? Candace Fleming's over- the-top story of pure morals and dastardly deeds is further given the texture of good old-fashioned melodrama by Giselle Potter's illustrations, which blend a
muted palette with rich, humorous visual characterization and background detail. The endpapers of this handsome picture book show Potter's rendering of each of the bird species mentioned in the text along with factual information about the particular bird's behaviors and habitat. (Ages 7-10)

Frost, Jonathan.  *Gowanus Dogs*.  Frances Foster / Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1999. 46 pages (0-374-31058-0) $15.00

Four puppies live with their mother in an old cement mixing tank along the Gowanus canal. A homeless man lives beneath a nearby bridge. When one of the puppies gets sick, the homeless man takes responsibility for helping her. His action sets off a chain of events that eventually finds three of the four puppies finding homes with workers in the neighborhood and the homeless man finding a job and a place to live with the fourth puppy. The story should not be seen as a wholly realistic portrait of homelessness; despite the difficulties it shows it is far too idealized in its resolution of the issue. But young children will appreciate the drama of the narrative and find resonance and point of discussion in the caring and compassion that is shown in this first book by an author/artist who has illustrated his story with distinctive black-and-white etchings. (Ages 5-7)


Benny the dog is the talented tapdancing assistant of Brillo the Magician. When Benny upstages Brillo in their stage act, Brillo throws him out, and Benny is on his own. So begins the latest story of great charm and wit from Australian author/artist Bob Graham. Little Benny sets off on the road with nothing more than his kerchief and his kit bag—and a personality that doesn’t stop shining from the pages. Even when Benny is sad, he is irresistible, playing his harmonica and singing the doggy blues. Benny moves from place to place in search of a home but never fitting in, growing more and more discouraged. Then, one day, he meets what the author assures us can be nothing less than his destiny: Mary Kelly and her family. “For Benny, and the Kelly’s too, it was love at first sight.” Benny and young Mary and her family are singular personalities and kindred spirits all. Bob Graham celebrates both with great appreciation and humor in a story that begs for an encore. (Ages 4-7)


Bethanne Andersen’s dramatic oil paintings show a pioneer family living in eastern Utah in the mid-19th century to illustrate a warm story which centers on homespun riddles. Papa begins the cycle on a long walk with his daughter by asking “What is a wagon road before it’s a wagon road?” (A buffalo trail, long and deep). His daughter picks up on the game: “What is a log cabin before it’s a log cabin?” (Tall pine trees that sheltered the forest floor) and throughout the rest of the day, the family entertains itself by “kindling riddles” based on their immediate environment. The book concludes with some additional information about the places and objects common in the pioneer existence, all of which are sources for the family’s riddles. (Ages 6-10)


At first, everything about Dad’s new girlfriend seems weird and totally uncool. She plays the tuba, wears sneakers with skirts, and sings opera to her goldfish. The list of her characteristics grows progressively longer as the young narrator gets to know her better and better and, before long, her weirdness becomes an asset: “She listens to me without the TV on ... She waits (and waits) at the finish line ... She doesn’t call my stuff ‘junk.’ Or touch it without asking first.” They may be hope for her yet, the young girl concludes. Quirky, stylized illustrations perfectly suit the characters’ personalities, both Dad’s girlfriend’s unusual personality and the daughter’s initial staunch refusal to accept anyone new in her father’s life. (Ages 4-8)

Lin, Grace.  *The Ugly Vegetables*.  Talewinds/Charlesbridge, 1999. 32 pages (0-88106-336-3) $15.95

Everyone in the neighborhood seems to be planting their spring gardens, none of which are like the garden
planted by the mother of the Chinese-American girl featured in this story. Although she’s originally self-conscious about the differences, come harvest time she is pleasantly surprised by all the attention the neighbors pay the “ugly vegetables” -- her mom’s Chinese vegetable soup is definitely a roaring success enjoyed by all the neighbors who have been invited to share it. Based on the author/artist’s own childhood memories, the story concludes with her family recipe for Ugly Vegetable Soup. (Ages 3-6)


Benny, perhaps the most child-like pig who’s ever graced a picture book, gets fed up when his mother’s cleaning interferes with his playtime. First she irritates him by straightening his toys, then she has the nerve to try to bathe him, and finally she really angers him by insisting on washing his stuffed toy, Little Piggy. Surely Benny could find a better place to live if one of his neighbors would be willing to take him in. When he sets out to find a new home, he quickly realizes that his own home is really the best place for him, and his mother welcomes him back with open hooves. This amusing picture book about parent/child conflict will appeal to adults as well as to children who will no doubt identify strongly with Benny. (Ages 4-7)

Marcellino, Fred. *I, Crocodile.* HarperCollins, 1999. 32 pages (0-06-205168-7) $15.95

A wry first-person narrative leisurely spins out a delightfully exaggerated tale about an Egyptian crocodile who was captured by Napoleon and put on display as a curiosity in Paris. The egotistical crocodile hates his new accommodations but, still, is flattered by all the attention he receives. When he becomes old news, however, he manages to escape to the sewers of Paris. True to character, breakfast, lunch and dinner are never far from the crocodile’s mind, no matter where he resides. Marcellino’s watercolor illustrations set the mood both by giving a strong sense of time and place, and by adding flourish to the crocodile’s deliciously beguiling character. (Ages 4-8)


The late James Marshall’s hitherto unpublished manuscript comes to life with the informed humor of Sendak’s artwork for this new tale about a “lean and mangy” wolf’s pursuit of a tasty meal. He is no rural wolf. This one lives in the city where he reads the Arts & Leisure section of “The Daily Bacon,” in an apartment decorated with ballet posters. He is no country boy. As soon as he sees that the Bolshoi Ballet is coming to town, his nostrils quiver. He walks to the New Haarlem Theater where “Swine Lake” featuring stars such as Odile Chitterlings and the Trotter Brothers will open that afternoon. Restraining himself from attacking one of the porcine patrons, the wolf gets tickets and moves to a box seat in the theater so filled with pigs that his self-imposed abstinence almost ends. He is not uncultured. Once the curtain goes up, he’s mesmerized by what he sees and feels during the performance. “The wolf staggered out of the theater in a trance. He had completely forgotten to make his move. He wasn’t even hungry any more.” He is no fool. He returns the next day and takes to the stage himself. Sendak’s hilarious illustrations are filled with sly references to the arts for adults to discover while they read or interpret this very fractured, very funny story to children. (Ages 5-8)

Miller, William. *Night Golf.* Illustrated by Cedric Lucas. Lee & Low (95 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016), 1999. 32 pages (1-880000-79-2) $15.95

An author’s note indicates that “not long ago, professional golf could only be played by white golfers” and that in most parts of the U.S., African Americans were denied the right to play even at public golf courses even though some became caddies. In some places, African American golfers perfected their stokes by practicing on the greens in the moonlight. The story involves young James who finds a golf bag in the trash. Although he’s not allowed to be a play or work as a caddy at the town’s golf course, he’s befriended by a brown-skinned caddy there who recalls his own personal history with golf. The two meet at night so that James can begin learning the game. James stuns some inept white golfers with his skill. As coincidental and unlikely as the story seems to be, an important aspect of African American sports history is spotlighted and Tiger Woods’ current achievements move into a new perspective. Lucas’s pastel and
colored pencil artwork do what it takes to illustrate moonlit scenes. A chronology of African Americans in Golf dated from 1899 to 1997 appears on the final page. (Ages 5-8)

Mollel, Tololwa M. *My Rows and Piles of Coins*. Illustrated by E. B. Lewis. Clarion, 1999. 32 pages (0-395-75186-1) $15.00

Set in a Tanzanian village in the early 1960s, this compelling story is based on a memory from the author’s own childhood. Young Saruni has always helped his parents in the marketplace and they have frequently rewarded him with a ten-cent piece. What his parents don’t know is that Saruni is secretly saving all his coins so that he may one day buy a bicycle to be even more help to his parents. Cultural details come through both in E.B. Lewis’s sun-dappled watercolor illustrations and in the story itself, as we see the busy marketplace and realize that Saruni proudly contributes to his family’s economic well-being. His strong desire to earn his own money to save up for something special, however, will certainly strike a chord of recognition with children in the United States today. (Ages 4-8)


Whenever Juno sees a letter with his name written on it and a special stamp, he knows he’s received a new message from his grandmother in Korea. Although his grandmother can’t read or write English and Juno can’t read or write Korean, they still find ways to communicate directly with each other by sharing pictures, leaves and flowers. This gentle, realistic story about a young bicultural child is the first book by a promising first-time writer. (Ages 4-7)


Our first clue that this is no ordinary married couple comes from their names: Mr. and Mrs. Submarine. The second is comes from the fact that, on this particular rainy morning, they are just preparing to eat their third breakfast. It comes as no surprise, then, that they should invite first a cat and then a dog to come in out of the rain to eat corn muffins, and we barely raise an eyebrow when a horse and a flock of crows are invited in next. As the morning goes on, the list of invitees get more and more outrageous. They include Beethoven, a small European circus, and the United States Marine Band, all of whom are welcomed to make themselves at home in the cozy Submarine family kitchen. It must be something in those corn muffins... (Ages 4-8)


Originally published as *Shnook the Peddler* (Dillon, 1985), Schur’s tender story begins in Korovenko, two days’ journey from Pinsk, in Belarusia at the end of the 19th century on the day when a certain peddler arrives in town with his wares. Villagers still laugh about the strange comments and odd bargains this peddler made during his last visit. This peddler is just so different from all the others. The children who know about that have nicknamed him Shnook. Leibush’s parents treat the peddler with respect, but despite his father’s counsel, the boy doesn’t overlook the gossip of others. Perhaps that’s why Leibush finds it easy to pick up a *dreidel* the peddler carelessly drops during his visit. Later he finds it difficult to sleep. As he seeks to make amends for the theft, Leibush begins to sense more about this man for whom the road is a carpet, the sky is a ceiling, and the stars are lamps. Readers familiar with Jewish folklore will recognize the character of the Prophet Elijah in Shnook. Root’s pencil and watercolor artwork effectively recreates the time and sympathetically convey the mood of a beautifully developed story. (Ages 5-11)

Schwartz, Amy. *How to Catch an Elephant*. DK Ink, 1999. 40 pages (0-789-42579-3) $15.95

Uncle Jack knows exactly how to catch an elephant using three cakes, two raisins, one telescope and lots of imagination. His determined young niece manages to follow his instructions exactly and, sure enough, is able to pop the elephant into her pocket by the book’s end. Amy Schwartz first heard this clever story from her own father. Her boldly colored illustrations leave plenty of room on each page for the humungous
yellow elephant who STOMP! STOMP! STOMP!s his way through the book. Highly Commended, 2000
Charlotte Zolotow Award (Ages 3-8)

32 pages (0-7868-2386-0) $15.99
A picture book based on a tale passed down orally among African Americans on the sea islands off of the
coast of Georgia and South Carolina acknowledges both the tragedy of slavery and the resilience of those
who would remain free in spirit and soul. Mentu is a young island boy being raised by his grandmother,
Twi. "Ibo conjure woman" the islanders call Twi because of the root medicine she knows. Twi explains to
Mentu that the back-breaking field work has made most of the islanders forget the old ways that she still
recalls. Only Mentu is not afraid of this woman who has raised him with love and firmness, who teaches
him the old ways and how to be strong so that he will always know who he is. When a shipload of captives
arrive--an entire village of Ibo people-Twi hears the rhythm of the drums in the beating of their feet. They
are calling out for the water to take them back to Africa. Twi understands and answers the call, leading the
captives into the sea Mentu, an island-born boy whom "the water will not take," is left behind to pass on the
old songs and stories with the certainty that Twi and the other Ibo people did indeed find their way home.
Kim Seigelson's haunting and beautiful rendering of a powerfully affirming story is accompanied by Brian
Pinkney's movingly detailed scratchboard paintings. An author's note provides important background
information on the origins of this story among the coastal island peoples of African descent. (Ages 7-10)

Weisner, David. *Sector 7.* *Clarion, 1999.* 48 pages (0-395-74656-6) $16.00
On a class visit to the Empire State Building, a young boy who gets separated from his class, unknowingly
crosses the line between fantasy and reality while he’s on the top floor, up among the clouds. He’s
befriended by a small cloud, in fact, who whisks him away, up into the sky into a building known as Sector
7. Here stern bureaucrats submit their boring sketches of proper cloud shapes and launch the same old
amorphous, cumulus masses into the skies over Manhattan. Our hero and his cloud friend, however, have
other ideas and his sketches of fish catch on quickly among the clouds, much to the frustration of the
bureaucrats. Weisner’s detailed watercolor paintings tell the whole story in this original, funny wordless
book. (Ages 4-9)

See Also: Bark, George; Beasty Story; Black Cat; Boy of the Deeps; Magic School Bus Explores the Senses; My
Dear Noel; Nadia’s Hands; True Heart; The Ugly Duckling

Easy Fiction

Banks, Kate. *Howie Bowles, Secret Agent.* Illustrated by Isaac Millman. *A Frances Foster Book / Farrar
Straus and Giroux, 1999.* 89 pages (0-374-335000-1) $15.00
When ordinary third-grader Howie Bowles moves to a new house and a new school, he also takes on a new
identity as Secret Agent Bean Burger. His detecting skills impress most of his classmates and gain him lots
of attention, especially when he solves the Case of the Gum in the Drinking Fountain. Two people are
critical of his guise, however: Mary Reily, a smart-alecky classmate who’s not impressed by anything and
Mrs. Beagle, Howie’s wonderful teacher who really prefers ordinary third graders to secret agents. This
easy chapter book deals with tough subjects like moving and popularity with humor and surprising depth.
(Ages 7-9)

Three short stories to share aloud or for newly independent readers offer a lovable, wholly appealing
character with whom many children will be able to relate. Buster is a big dog who feels very small. "Most
people met Buster by accident." That's because Buster usually hides when there are strangers around. But
even though he lacks confidence, Buster has qualities that make him special, as each of the stories reveals.
Through the fresh and funny text and warm, whimsical illustrations, author/artist Lisze Bechtold reveals the
brave heart of her gentle canine character. (Ages 4-7)

Holzwarth, Werner. *I'm José and I'm Okay: Three Stories from Bolivia.* Illustrated by Yatiyawi Studios. 
Translated by Laura McKenna. U.S. edition: Kane/Miller, 1999. 36 pages (0-916291-90-1) $13.95

Eleven-year-old José lives and works with his Uncle Ramos, who owns an auto repair shop in a Sorata, Bolivia. Hard-working, resourceful José also takes time to dream -- of his favorite soccer team and of winning the local bicycle race, even though he’s much smaller than the other contestants. He even dreams of taking revenge on his uncle who sometimes expects José to work harder than he does. Three surprisingly funny and non-judgmental short stories based on the life of a real child are illustrated with a series of panels that not only suit the episodic action but will appeal to reluctant older readers as well. (Ages 7-11)


The fourth volume in LeGuin's engaging series about flying cats involves the youngest family member, Jane, who spreads her wings for greener pastures when she leaves the farm and heads for the excitement of the city. Although she is independent and adventurous, little Jane is also naive and trusting of humans. She ends up, miserably, in the hands of a man who exploits her natural talent by making her perform in public. Although life as a celebrity is at first exciting, Jane soon tires of it and plots her escape. As with other titles in this series, there is enough dramatic action to make this slender, illustrated volume a good candidate for reading aloud to younger children, while at the same time there is enough originality, sophistication and character development to make it appealing to older independent readers, particularly those who like fantasy or cat stories. The story stands perfectly well on its own but followers of the series will be delighted to meet a familiar character in the book's satisfying conclusion. (Ages 5-9)


Dot enjoys showing off her new pet fish to her cat, Fuzzy, who has his own reasons for being interested in the newcomers. When Dot realizes that Fuzzy’s nature makes him a predator, she tries several different things to keep him away from her fish until finally her mother comes up with a solution -- building a high shelf in Dot’s bedroom that Fuzzy can’t reach. Simple vocabulary, repetition, and short sentences makes this humorous four-chapter book especially easy to read. (Age 6-8)

See Also: 26 Fairmount Avenue

**Fiction for Children**


Michael finds a strange old man crouching in a dark corner of the garage after his family moves into a new old house. At first he thinks he’s a homeless man, but then he notices some strange growths protruding from the man’s back -- could they be wings? While his parents are busy caring for their infant daughter who is seriously ill, Michael befriends Skelling, as the man calls himself, as well as Mina, a free-spirited neighbor girl who finds Skellig as mysterious and fascinating as Michael does. Skellig grows stronger each day with Michael and Mina’s fond attention. His recovery mirrors that of Michael’s baby sister, suggesting that Skellig might be in some way the baby’s guardian angel, although David Almond leaves the story open to interpretation. (Ages 9-13)


A collection of short fiction features many authors somewhat or very familiar to today’s young readers. A wide variety of stories ranges from the last days of the Jewish zealots at Masada to future space travel, and
from the Holocaust experience to the dilemma of being a lone Jewish child midst the flurry of Christmas preparations at a public school in the Midwest U.S. Asher’s brief interview with each author follows each story, further illuminating the theme of pride in Jewish heritage and how this might have inspired the writers. The authors represented are Eve B. Feldman, Merrill Joan Gerber, Jacqueline Dunbar Greene, Johanna Hurwitz, Eric A. Kimmel, Sonia Levitan, Carol Matas, Gloria D. Miklowitz, Susan Beth Pfeffer, Ruth Minsky Sender, Phyllis Shalant, Jane Breskin Zalben and Sandy Asher herself. The handsome book jacket features a detail from a Chagall window series. (Ages 10-14)

Bartoletti, Susan. No Man’s Land: A Young Soldier’s Story. Blue Sky Press/Scholastic, 1999. 168 pages (0-590-38371-X) $15.95
Fourteen-year-old Thrasher Magee has never felt that he was man enough in his father’s eyes. Too frightened to help when an alligator attacks Pap, his feelings inadequacy are reinforced. Feeling he can no longer sit at his family’s table, and looking for a way to prove—at least to himself—that he can be strong and brave, Thrasher lies about his age and joins Georgia’s Okefenokee Rifle Company, to fight with the Rebel Army in the Civil War. To Thrasher and many of the others with whom he has enlisted, the politics of slavery mean nothing—they are all too poor to have ever owned slaves themselves—but they will fight for the right of the South to decide its own future. In the boredom of camp, though the comradeship of his fellow soldiers, and on the horrific haze of the battlefield, Thrasher discovers that to be a man has more to do with understanding and compassion that it does with bravery, and that courage itself takes many different forms. An author’s note and bibliography provide historical background on real events and occurrences on which the author based her fictional characters. (Ages 10-13)

Bauer, Marion Dane. An Early Winter. Clarion, 1999. 120 pages (0-395-90372-6) $15.00
Eleven-year-old Tim looks forward to time with Granddad. Tim and his mother have lived with his grandparents in their Wisconsin home, so he’s always been close to his grandfather. Recently Tim and his mom moved to Minneapolis with his new stepfather. Now that his mother and Paul are married, Tim is making the best of the changes, but he loves to go “home.” He’s overheard the whispers about Granddad, and he’s overheard the word Alzheimer’s. Tim refuses to believe that Granddad’s forgetfulness is symptomatic of something serious until they go fishing, or try to. The two move into increasing danger, one step at a time, and then very swiftly. Along with developing one of her trademark fast-paced short novels featuring genuine dialogue and people about whom readers care, Bauer pictures the realistic denial and grief associated with Tim’s anguish. (Ages 9-12)

Butler, Susan. The Hermit Thrush Sings. DK Ink, 1999. 282 pages (0-7894-2489-4) $16.95
It has been over 100 years since the Disaster. Leora lives in Maynor. Once the state of Maine, it is now a country where people are forbidden by the Rulers to travel beyond the gated walls of their segregated villages. Nor do they want to: all have been taught that the wild creatures called birmbas that live “outside” are vicious and deadly. But encounter with a captured baby birmba sets the young girl on a courageous journey to free the creature—and herself. The webbing between her fingers makes Leora a defective,”barely tolerated in her stepmother’s home. Even knowing that her father and older sister never returned from a journey beyond their village walls, Leora escapes, entering a wide open world of danger, fear, and, incredibly,hope. One by one, the lies that the Rulers have been promoting to keep the people under their control are revealed to her. Encountering men, women and children in other villages who are working secretly to overthrow the Rulers, she eventually makes her way to the heart of the resistance—a sea island where a large group of women are preparing to lead the fight for freedom. Leora’s growing realization of her own strength and power are at the heart of a fantasy fueled by feminist and humanist ideals. There are occasional awkward moments in establishing the framework for this story set in a future based on our own gone terribly wrong, but once the author hits her stride the storytelling will keep readers, especially those with a taste for this kind of futuristic fantasy, under its spell. (Ages 9-12)

Cooper, Susan. King of Shadows. Margaret K. McElderry, 1999. 186 pages (0-689-82817-9) $16.00
Young Nat Field travels with a Shakespearean acting troupe from the United States to London to play the
role of Puck in a performance of *Midsummer Night’s Dream* at the newly recreated Globe Theatre. Almost as soon as he arrives in London, Nat begins feeling strange, a condition diagnosed, much to everyone’s surprise, as the Bubonic Plague. But it isn’t really Nat lying in the hospital bed in London, for Nat has somehow slipped through 400 years of time and finds himself playing the same role in the same play in the original Globe Theater back in 1599, opposite the Bard himself. Cooper’s compelling fantasy is filled with details of Shakespeare’s time, as seen through the eyes of a late 20th century boy. Fatherless Nat’s growing relationship with “Will” Shakespeare, who has lost his only son, is made credible given the circumstances of time and place, as well as the psychological needs of both characters. (Ages 12 and older)

**Curtis, Christopher Paul. *Bud, Not Buddy.* Delacorte, 1999. 245 pages (0-385-32306-9) $15.95**

Ever since his mother died four years earlier, ten-year-old Bud Caldwell has been carrying around a small suitcase containing her mementos: a photo of his mother as a child, small stones with dates and places written on them, and a collection of old flyers advertising concerts by Herman E. Calloway’s jazz band. Bud isn’t sure what any of it means but he’s certain that it holds clues to the identity of his father, someone he’s determined to find after he runs away from the miserable foster home in which he was placed. Bud’s adventures on and off the road in Depression-era Michigan are told in a charming hyperbolic narrative, filled with humor and insight. Details of African-American social history are skillfully woven into the action-packed story which is sure to be a hit with young readers. *Honor book: CCBC Coretta Scott King Author Award Discussion.* (Ages 8-13)


Francie Weaver, a 12-year-old African American girl, is growing up in Noble, Alabama, in the 1930s with her Mama and her little brother Prez. Her father, a Pullman porter, has been saving up money so that the family can move to Chicago, and as far as Francie’s concerned, it can’t happen soon enough. In the meantime, she bides her time by attending school, helping her Mama with her work as a domestic and, in her rare free moments, reading Nancy Drew novels while sitting on top of her favorite hill, eating Scooter pies. When Jesse, a 16-year-old friend, is wrongly accused of hitting a white man, Francie and Prez put their family and the entire Black community at risk by helping Jesse hide in the woods behind their house. English greatly enriches this compelling first novel with details of a specific time and place, as well as with well-rounded characters who come to life in the context of a close-knit community. Francie is such a likable young girl that when she leaves for Chicago at the book’s conclusion, we are as sorry as her neighbors to say goodbye to her. (Ages 9-13)


A novel that moves with grace and certainty through the seasons ties the cycle of life, death, and renewal to events in the life of a seven-year-old Objibwa girl and her family during the mid-19th century. It is a time when the continued advance of white traders and settlers into lands once inhabited exclusively by Native peoples is bringing change to the lives of the Ojibwa, including those on the Lake Superior island (today known as Madeleine Island) where Omakayas and family live. Still, Omakayas's world is defined not by changes she is too young to understand but by the daily and seasonal details of life with her mother, father, grandmother, sister and brothers; by her childlike delight in a day unexpectedly free from dreaded chores, an afternoon spent watching her adored baby brother, or the always joyous arrival home of her father from a long fur trading expedition. At the same time, Omakayas's awareness of her spiritual connection to the natural world around her is beginning to mature, seeded by the details of her daily life and nurtured by her grandmother. When two white traders who arrive in the middle of winter carry the devastation of smallpox into her village, Omakayas is physically untouched by the deadly outbreak that follows, but she is emotionally devastated by the magnitude of her loss in its wake—a loss that reaches back farther than she knew. Louise Erdrich’s moving historical novel is an important chronicle of Ojibwa culture and U.S and American Indian history in the context of an appealing, lyrically told story that never strays from a child's understanding of grief and heartbreak, as well as joy and wonder. (Ages 8-12)

Readers first met Sam Gribley in the Newbery Honor Book *My Side of the Mountain* (Dutton, 1959). They met him again along with his sister Alice in a sequel, *On the Far Side of the Mountain* (Dutton, 1990). In that novel, Sam’s peregrine falcon Frightful was confiscated by an environmental conservation officer because he wasn’t old enough to keep the bird in captivity. In this final novel in what has become a trilogy, readers once again are confronted with the specter of organized thievery causing falcons in the wild to be captured and sold. Without personifying Frightful and the other wildlife about which her fast-paced novel focuses, George details one peregrine’s attempts to survive without human intervention midst the dangers and predators of nature and civilization. She again develops an exciting plot based upon her trademark knowledge of and respect for nature. The plot involves dedicated falconers versus ruthless thieves, along with environmental advocacy versus utility company policies and practices. Realistically presented youthful activism and a bit of Sam’s help save Frightful as much as she saves herself. The novel is set in the Catskills, not far from and sometimes in Sam’s self-made, self-sufficient environment. The information about peregrine falcons so adeptly woven into the story is true to fact. The mountains are real, some of the characters are based on actual falconers and experts, and the political scenario and the relentlessly conducted bridge maintenance within the novel actually took place. As central as the bridge becomes to Frightful and her survival, the bridge itself and Frightful herself are products of the author’s imagination. (Ages 9-13)

**Haas, Jessie. *Unbroken*. Illustrated by Deborah Lanino. William Morrow, 1999. 192 pages (0-688-16260-6) $15.00**

After her mother’s death, 13-year-old Harriet (Harry) is sent to live on her aunt and uncle’s farm out in the country. Harry’s spirited mother had filled her daughter’s life with small moments of beauty and an appreciation for the joy in living. But stern Aunt Sarah and mild Uncle Clayton live in a house that seems to have lost all memory of joy. Harry’s adjustment is made even more difficult by the mutual dislike that her mother and aunt had apparently shared for one another, feelings connected to Harry’s father and his death when Harry was a baby. She is also angered and astonished by her aunt’s refusal to let her continue her education in town. The year is 1910, and Aunt Sarah tells Harry that being driven the seven mile trip into town by wagon is too much to expect each day. For Harry, the answer lies in training the colt that she brought with her to the farm. Orphaned in the same accident that killed Harry’s mother, the colt, like Harry, is dependent upon others for its survival. If Harry can break him to ride, she will have a way to attend school, and a way off the farm. But doing so means getting the colt to trust her, and Harry’s impatience and anger, fueled in part by her aunt’s unspoken but ever-present judgment of events from the past that Harry doesn’t fully comprehend, stand in her way. A finely tempered, compelling novel features authentic, emotionally honest characters and a the lure of family secrets being cast into the light. Haas’s portrait of a child and family going through the motions of living while weighted by grief connected to events in both the present and the past is especially notable for its powerful articulation of moments of despair and, ultimately, transcendence. (Ages 10-13)


Dreenie is so intrigued by Bluish, one of her fifth-grade classmates, that she keeps a journal in which she writes down all her observations, thoughts and feelings about her. Called “Bluish” due to a blue tint to her skin caused by chemotherapy, she uses a wheelchair, brings a dog to school, and makes frequent sarcastic comments. Dreenie would like to have her as a friend. Instead, she’s followed around by Tuli, a girl who wants to be Dreenie’s best friend. Tuli’s brash humor and fake Spanish accent irritate most people, except for Dreenie’s little sister, Willie, who finds her fascinating and frequently invites her to come home from school with them, much to Dreenie’s dismay. The complexities of fifth-grade friendship are deftly handled in a short novel told through third-person narrative and Dreenie’s first person journal entries. (Ages 9-12)

**Harrison, Barbara. *Theo*. Clarion, 1999. 166 pages (0-899-19959-3) $15.00**


Because he has a reputation as a rascal and a troublemaker, none of Dave’s relatives are willing to take him in after his father dies suddenly when Dave is just eleven years old. He ends up at the Hebrew Home for Boys in Upper Manhattan, a bleak orphanage with little heat, bad food, and an exceptionally malicious Superintendent whom the boys call “Mr. Doom.” But there are other things about the HHB that Dave soon grows to love: his eccentric art teacher, Mr. Hillinger, who tells Dave he has “a gift” and, most especially, his age mates, “The Elevens,” who call each other “buddy.” They are instrumental in helping Dave lead his double life, as he sneaks out at night to be with an elderly gentleman, Solly, who makes his living by telling fortunes. Pretending to be Solly’s grandson, Dave frequently accompanies him to extravagant parties in Harlem where he mingles with some of the greatest artists of the Harlem Renaissance, including Langston Hughes and Aaron Douglas, a painter Dave recognizes as a kindred spirit. This fast-paced novel set in New York City in 1926 is based in part on the author’s own father’s experiences growing up in the Hebrew Orphan Asylum. Irrepressible Dave embodies all of the novel’s appealing characteristics: humor, action, quirky characters, and an intense longing for a place to belong. (Ages 9-14)


Sam forgot to let his family know about Future Job Day at nursery school until the evening before the other four-year-olds are supposed to dress according to a job they hope to have someday. Sam’s dream job is zookeeper. What the Krupnik family and teacher don’t realize is that Zooman Sam’s sack contains a variety of baseball hats with names such as Tigers, Gators, Bulls, and Timberwolves. Sam’s report goes on for days. Sam surprises even himself by discovering that the hats have helped him to learn to read. Lowry expertly develops Sam and his older sister Anastasia as continuing contemporary characters who grow and change within the respective series in which each is featured. She anchors their ventures into independence by maintaining their parents as minor characters significant to each plot. As Lowry explores one way to show a character as an emergent reader, she does so within the framework of the family her readers have come to know, one to whom she grants large amounts of humor and affection. This easy novel is fun to read aloud to the four-year-olds who recognize that the author likes and understands them, while it’s fine for new readers who want chapter books suited to their new skill. Even though Sam is four, these older readers will enjoy Anastasia’s significant role at one point in the story. (Ages 4-8)


In response to three girls working on a class assignment about World War II, Marcel Delarue recounts his childhood in the French village of Mont-Saint-Martin, beginning in 1940 when France had just fallen to the Germans. At first, the war seems of little consequence to Marcel and his older brothers, Pierre and René, and they continue to play boyish pranks and make up outrageous stories, in an attempt to rate as the best liar. But then it becomes clear that French Jews are suffering when some Jewish friends of the boys’ uncle come to stay with them for a while and the boys are asked to keep some things secret. Then there’s the German soldier Marcel befriends. He’s not evil, as Marcel has been led to believe. Suddenly, it seems, no one is telling the truth anymore. Gregory Maguire uses an innocent child’s voice to tell a gripping story
that deals with the nature of heroism and truth. (Ages 8-11)


Living in a small Vermont town in 1899, ten-year-old Robbie considers himself a free-thinker. A mischievous boy, Robbie rarely behaves in a manner expected of the son of the town’s Congregational minister; in fact, he seems hellbent on breaking the rules whenever he can. But Robbie grows emotionally and morally when he begins to see the consequences of his actions, and can come to grips with the relationship he has with his father. Robbie, who is a great admirer of Mark Twain, seems to have more than a little Huck Finn as he recounts his humorous, yet thought-provoking, story. Paterson’s distinctive use of idiomatic language helps to add comedic flavor, as well as to anchor the novel in a specific time and place. (Ages 10-14)

Perkins, Lynn Rae. *All Alone in the Universe*. Greenwillow, 1999. 133 pages (0-688-16881-7) $16.00

With great sensitivity and tenderness, Lynne Rae Perkins captures the devastation that is inevitable when young girl loses her best friend to someone else. Debbie is a quiet and creative child on the verge of adolescence who sometimes relates to adults more easily than to her peers. She can't quite grasp what has happened between her and her once-best-friend, Maureen. Once it was Debbie and the outgoing Maureen who shared every spare moment; then Glenna entered the picture. "Glenna was small and neat and boring and ordinary and irritating. That's what I thought. I thought Maureen felt sorry for her.". But Debbie can feel that when the three of them are together, she is the one who doesn't fit, not Glenna. She and Maureen are still friendly—there is no anger or fighting. But Debbie feels a growing sense of abandonment and sadness. The understated first-person narrative told in Debbie's observant and honest voice admirably refrains from placing blame. Despite Debbie's own obvious dislike of Glenna, reades are given the opportunity to observe how a friendship can change without anyone necessarily being at fault. Like Debbie, they also discover how the sense of loss can eventually fade, to be replaced by the sweet realization that new friends are waiting to be discovered. (Ages 9-12)


During World War II, eight-year-old Henk had always felt secure growing up as the youngest child in a Dutch farm family. But as soon as the war had ended, his lifewas suddenly turned upside-down when a man and a woman arrivde in a wagon, claiming to be his parents, and took him home to Germany. Although Henk doesn’t initially remember anything about his life as a small Jewish boy named Benjamin, he comes to a gradual understanding of his situation, as will young readers: the family in Holland were actually family friends who had been hiding him from the Nazis. Children will not need to have any prior knowledge of the Holocaust to understand Benjamin’s story. Propp skillfully provides just enough background information, little by little, to unfold this spare novel, based on a true story. (Ages 8-11)


Recorvits is emotionally accessible and not too intense for young readers because the author has skillfully grounded her narrative in ten-year-old Wanda's point of view. The pain Wanda feels when her father berates Walter, her disappointment when her loving mother remains a recluse in their home, is filtered and balanced by both her innocence and her resilience. She maintains a child's delight and appreciation for small surprises, a love for school and her teacher, Miss Rosalie Smith, and the ability to dream a future of better things ("When I grew up, there would be gingersnaps for my ma"). The author's accomplishment at conveying the events and emotions of the novel, which include the tragic accidental death of Walter, and leaving the reader with a feeling of hope is all the more admirable given the narrative's brevity and the concise, straightforward style of the writing. (Ages 8-11)


J. K. Rowling just seems to get better and better with each new entry in the *Harry Potter* series and this
volume, without a doubt, is the most compelling book yet. From the outset we learn that Sirius Black, a notorious criminal that even the Muggles know, has escaped from Azkaban prison. Worse yet, he is after Harry Potter who has just returned to Hogwarts School for a third term. Sinister Azkaban prison guards called Dementors have been placed all around the entrances to Hogwarts, ostensibly to keep Sirius Black away from the school. But to Harry the Dementors seem to pose as much as a threat as the escaped prisoner -- he faints from fright every time he sees one. So concerned is he about the effect they have on him that he seeks out the assistance of Professor Lupin, the new Defense against the Dark Arts teacher, who helps Harry face his fears. We have just as much humor, excellent characterization and intricate plotting in this novel as in the previous two but here Rowling introduces for the first time a layer of psychological depth, as Harry, now age 13, begins to come to terms with the death of his parents. As a result, the novel has a more somber and slightly more mature tone than its predecessors. Still, the rousing story will keep Potter fans turning the pages and the mind-blowing twist at the end of the book is likely to inspire repeated readings, of this volume if not the entire series. And, of course, everyone who reads it will now be anxiously awaiting Book Four. (Ages 9-14)


In his second year at Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry, 12-year-old Harry Potter continues to learn about his destiny as the greatest wizard of his generation. New challenges and Adventure seem to lie in wait for him at every turn of the twisting staircases and corridors of Hogwarts. What is the meaning of the mysterious whispered messages only Harry can hear: “...so hungry...for so long...kill...time to kill...”? Who is attacking the selected students and, one by one, turning them into petrified human pillars? Do all the answers lie in the rumored Chamber of Secrets, if such a place even exists? With his mates, Ron and Hermione, Harry sets out to find solve these mysteries, using intellect, rudimentary magic, and a little bit of luck. Readers of the first volume of this extremely popular series, *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (Levine/Scholastic, 1998), will recognize the setting and many of the characters. In addition, they will be pleased to meet some new cast members, including Dobby, a self-deprecating, gossipy house elf and Gilderoy Lockhart, a self-important best-selling author who’s come to teach Defense Against the Dark Arts at Hogwarts. Ingenious plotting, dazzling humor, and an overall inventive vision are fast becoming the hallmark of J.K. Rowling’s highly appealing novels. (Ages 8-14)


What can a growing boy whose height suggests basketball prowess do when everyone else expects him to play basketball? Xander’s shoe size gains him a nickname he hates. His supportive, involved, middle class family tries to help - all but his sister - but he can’t seem measure up to expectations. His fine arts teacher knows that the student she calls Alexander not only loves to loves to draw, but that he’s good at it. He creates an award winning poster at school, and in doing that he begins to realize a greater significance of hands. From Jeff, an adult male leader at the neighborhood center, Xander finds out he has the excellent hand-eye coordination, one reason why he’s good at drawing and also a reason why he might try pitching a baseball. Jeff tells him about the great pitcher Satchel Paige, and Xander begins to realize that a nickname can also be positive. Affectionately created occasional black and white artwork portrays this likeable African American boy and other characters in this warm and welcome easy-to-read short novel. (Ages 7-10)

*See Also:* House of Wisdom

**Fiction for Teenagers**


Melinda Sordino begins her freshman year in high school as a social outcast. The world has quickly spread that she had called the cops to break up a summer party. The truth is that Melinda had called 911 for
another reason: she had just been raped by a popular senior. Now Melinda is finding it harder and harder to speak about anything at all, and she becomes increasingly withdrawn from her family and her school. Laurie Halse Andersen spins out Melinda’s painful story in acerbic, often witty, first-person sound bites, in which we see the realities of high school social life through Melinda’s eyes. Luckily, she is able to find a means of expression through an art project, with the help of a rather eccentric art teacher who is able to win Melinda’s trust. (Age 14 and older)

Cormier, Robert. *Frenchtown Summer*. Delacorte, 1999. 113 pages (0-385-32704-8) $16.95

“That summer in Frenchtown / in the days / when I knew my name / but did not know who I was, / we lived on the second floor / of the three-decker on Fourth Street.” Crisp, clear memories make events and feelings of long ago palpable and alive in Robert Cormier’s finely honed story of a young boy’s summer of awakening. Frenchtown is the working class urban neighborhood that comprises Eugene's universe: tall tenements peopled with adults of mystery and children who are enemy, friend, or the first object of Eugene's affection. There is the Catholic church and Father Balthazar, who has the power to absolve Eugene of his sins. There is Uncle Med, the "happy uncle," who lives above LaGrande's Ice Cream Parlor ("the smell of chocolate / rising through the floorboards") and whom Eugene sometimes catching staring out his window, a look on his face that is impenetrable to a child. At the center of this universe is Eugene's family—an older brother full of roguish mischief and athletic grace, so unlike Eugene himself; a mother with so much love and sadness; and a father who is "as unknowable as a foreign language," and from whom Eugene longs for attention and notice. There is nothing nostalgic about the short vignettes that comprise this novel: the writing is vivid and sharp, each scene unfolding with exceptional clarity of place and feeling, and the only sweetness comes in those rare moments that were already sweet in the making. (Age 12 and older)


Fifteen-year-old Nicole Sparks has decided to become whatever her newly famous fitness guru mother is not. When her mother leaves for a world tour, Colie is sent to stay with Mira, an aunt she doesn’t know in a North Carolina community far from the environment where she’s developed her current persona aided by jet black hair, a lip ring and inhibited by a constant struggle with her weight. To heighten Colie’s lack of confidence, her singularly dressed aunt seems to be the town’s laughing stock, and there’s unfinished business on more than one level in this relative’s eccentric life. Her emerging friendships with two young women who work at the café where she gets a job and a shy male artist just a bit older than Colie threaten to crash when girls from school show up as tourists. Dessen has written a deeply affecting, humorous novel about appearances and survivors, about people who find out who they want to be and then remember who they are midst the pressures of conformity and a legacy of family expectation.


Written as dialogue in play form, Paul Fleischman’s latest novel is a riveting examination of the power of the imagination. Paralyzed in an accident, sixteen-year-old Courtney feels like a prisoner in her own body, and in the nursing home where her stepfather has recently dumped her. Understandably depressed, she wants nothing more than to be left alone. But Courtney’s roommate has other ideas. Elva is 88, with a frail body but a mind that is sharp and excitable. The former teacher revels in poetry and literature that she recites from memory, since her eyes are too poor to read. Her enthusiasm for literature, and for life, is lost on Courtney, but Elva is relentless. Courtney reluctantly agrees to help Elva play a game from her childhood—a game that takes place entirely in the imagination. Using an old, detailed travel guide from which Courtney reads, the two of them embark on a journey to Italy—a journey of the mind that grows increasingly real for Courtney, whose demons begin to reveal themselves in the action of the narrative that she and Elva are creating. But the game is also one that offers Courtney the opportunity to see that her future may not be as hopeless as she thinks—possibility lies in the power of her mind. Teens may be reluctant to pick up this book on their own, but the format, the rich characters and literary elements, and an ending that is open to interpretation make it a one that has great potential for use in the classroom or other group settings. (Age 14 and older)
Gilmore, Kate. *The Exchange Student.* Houghton Mifflin, 1999. 217 pages (0-39557511-7) $15.00

It’s 2094, seventy years after the environmental crash on Earth. Sixteen-year-old Daria and her family are excited that one of the exchange students from the planet Chela will be coming to live with them. She’s completely wrapped up in her wildlife-conservation work with endangered species. Her room has literally become a menagerie supported but barely tolerated by her family. When seven-foot-tall Fen arrives, he’s different to be sure, and he gives Daria genuine reasons to worry about his ultimate goal during his stay. The novel is written from Daria and Fen’s perspectives, and occasionally those of minor characters. Gilmore’s wild premise about the future and her ability to keep readers guessing combine to provide a complex, absorbing science fiction story full of surprises. (Ages 12-15)


Eleven-year-old Dan gets along well with Lyle, his solid, responsible stepfather, which is a good thing, because Dan’s mom has just left them both. That crisis is exacerbated by the reality that Lyle’s son, Dustin, prefers Dan’s mother as a parent to his own father. Dustin soon joins her after she leaves, and is then injured in a diving accident. Dan addresses his stepbrother, Dustin, throughout this unusual story, and he ponders how Dustin, an accomplished diver could make such a mistake - or series of mistakes. Griffin’s novel challenges readers with its second person narrative and its complex blending of two families. As readers agonize with Dan, they can also feel distressed for each of the individuals whose personal scenarios have come together, come apart and then reshaped themselves. (Ages 12-15)


Fourteen-year-old Louise Keller is astonished and then pleased that her parents have agreed to serve an appointment as Baptist missionaries in the Philippines. At first the Kellers live the somewhat privileged life of Americans in their missionary compound, even if they feel they are making sacrifices. World War II comes to the Philippines, and everyone’s lives change, even theirs. This is no longer an adventure. Readers experience Louise’s worry about her father being detained in Manila and her anguish as she realizes that her mother’s increasingly poor mental health will separate her from that parent, as well. They flee with others to the mountains but are discovered and confined by the Japanese in internment camps. The courage Louise summons to survive the ordeal stays with her until she and her greatly changed family leave the Philippines in 1945. Hertenstein’s first novel based in part upon historic events. (Ages 12-15)

Holm, Jennifer L. *Our Only May Amelia.* HarperCollins, 1999. 251 pages (0-06-027822-6) $15.95

May Amelia Jackson is the youngest and only daughter born to a Finnish American family with eight children living on a farm near a logging camp in Washington state at the end of the 19th Century. At age 12, May is spirited, spunky and downright sassy at times. She enjoys dressing and talking like her older brothers and wants to be a pirate when she grows up. She has absolutely no interest in being the “proper little lady” her Pappa would like her to be. Aside from May’s engaging character, what makes his novel especially outstanding is the detailed description of everyday rural family life 100 years ago and the novel’s distinctive voice: funny, colloquial and pure May Amelia, it reads almost like an oral history. (Age 12 and older)

Holt, Kimberly Willis. *When Zachary Beaver Came to Town.* Henry Holt, 1999. 227 pages (0-8050-6116-9) $16.95

According to 13-year-old Toby Wilson, nothing ever happens in Antler, Texas, so when a man in a trailer suddenly shows up in the Dairy Maid parking lot, charging $2.00 admission to see the “fattest boy in the world,” the townspeople line up. At six-hundred-pounds, Zachary Beaver is used to having people stare at him. “Might as well get paid for it,” he remarks sullenly. The longer Zachary stays in Antler, the better Toby and his friend, Cal, get to know him, until he no longer seems like a curiosity to them at all. And in truth, both Toby and Cal are trying to take their minds off of trouble at home: Toby’s mother has left the family, reportedly to seek her fortune as a country singer, while Cal’s favorite brother is serving on the front lines in Vietnam. In fact, a lot is going on in Antler, Texas. Sometimes it just takes a stranger
coming to town to point things out. Kimberly Willis Holt, who excels at writing about life in a small Southern town, creates as strong a sense of time and place as one can get, without going there in person. (Age 11-14)

Worker bee Thora has never thought to question why things are, she just does her job fanning, clearing and repairing the hive. Then she meets Mo, a young drone and social anarchist who believes heartily in questioning the status quo, and Alfred, an older drone and poet who writes stirring metaphorical descriptions, which none of the other drones understand, about important events in the hive. Mo and Alfred feel sorry for Thora and her friend Belle, who never stop to observe the world around them, ponder the beauty of a flower, or contemplate the existing social and political order that divides roles by gender: the females do all the hive work while the male drones make grandiose rules and wait for the queen to choose whom she will mate. But it turns out that Thora and Belle, along with all the other bees, workers and drones, field bees and queen, are ruled by something more powerful than social and political orders after all: Nature. In Soinbhe Lally's satiric fantasy, human dreams, desires and foibles play out in characters that are still wholly driven by realistic honeybee behavior in a story that is woven with beautiful and fascinating descriptions of hive life and the interactions of bees. While the decorative art at the start of each chapter suggests a story that may appeal to younger teens, it is older readers who will most fully appreciate the humor and social commentary in Lally's witty and touching novel. (Age 12 and older)

**Myers, Walter Dean. Monster.** Illustrated by Christopher Myers. HarperCollins, 1999. 281 pages (0-06-028077-8) $15.95
Walter Dean Myers's striking story of an African American teenage boy on trial for murder is a powerful exploration of innocence as both a state of mind and a matter of perception, as well as a label attached to actions both explicit and implied. Sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon is accused of being an accomplice in a drugstore robbery in which the storekeeper was murdered. While awaiting and then enduring the trial, the teenager is being held in jail with adults. Myers weaves together journal entries that Steve writes in jail with a filmmaker's script chronicling the courtroom events. A talented filmmaking student at his high school, Steve, who feels as if he has walked into the middle of a movie, filters his trial through his filmmaker's eye to put some distance between himself and the out-of-control turn that his life has taken. Only in the journal does he close the distance, and his entries reveal his intense fear. What his journal entries do not reveal is whether or not Steve was actually involved in the robbery, and the action in the courtroom is no more revealing. Was Steve an innocent bystander fingered by others involved to lessen their own sentences, or was he a kid who thought, before his world came crashing down, that it was possible to maintain a mantle of innocence by playing just a small role in a crime that was never supposed to end in murder--acting as an advance lookout rather than actually robbing the store? This riveting, highly discussable novel provides an intense and eye-opening look at both human nature and the criminal justice system, and both are called into question. The prosecutor labels Steve a "monster," and it is an idea--a question about himself--that Steve cannot shake. Nor can readers, not because Steve is a monster but rather because he so clearly is not. (Age 13 and older)

**Namioka, Lensey. Ties That Bind, Ties That Break.** Delacorte, 1999. 154 pages (0-385-32666-1) $15.95
When Ailin's mother makes the decision to bind Ailin's feet, following the practice that is still typical in upperclass families in China in 1911, Ailin resists. Though she is not even five, she understands that footbinding will inhibit her mobility and freedom. She has seen her Second Sister's crippled feet and the grimace on the older girl's face when she recalls what it first felt like to have them bound. Against her mother's wishes, Ailin's father supports his daughter. "She's too young to understand the consequences," said Mother. 'But I understand the consequences,' said Father." The consequences, as both readers and Ailin discover in this compelling novel of a spirited and courageous girl's difficult passage into young adulthood and adulthood, are potentially devastating: Ailin is no longer considered marriagable in the eyes of other upperclass Chinese families, and her own family will not support her either financially or emotionally. The
idea of a young upperclass Chinese woman supporting herself in the early part of the 20th century is almost unheard of. But the same spirit that Ailin possessed at age five when she refused to have her feet bound sustains her as she comes of age and chooses a path that leads her first to a job as a nanny for an American family in China, and eventually to a new life in the United States. It is not the life of luxury and leisure that she might have known, but it is one that she has chosen with no regrets. Author Lensey Namioka provides a note on the tradition of footbinding to give readers context for understanding an individual's struggle with cultural tradition that beats at the heart of this novel. (Age 12 and older)

Paulsen, Gary. *Alida's Song*. Delacorte, 1999. 88 pages (0-385-32586-X) $15.95
This companion to Paulsen’s short autobiographical work *The Cookcamp* (Orchard, 1991) reunites the same young boy, now fourteen, with his grandmother Alida who is now employed by the Nelson’s, cooking and doing housekeeping for two Norwegian bachelor farmers. The youth who just flunked eighth grade joins her for the summer. Because his drunken parents can hardly care for themselves on a regular basis, he’s learned to take care of himself, finding newspaper delivery work to give him some change and even other places to sleep. During this particular season on the farm, he runs into unexpected examples of generosity and expressions of love that move him beyond the bleak school year he just experienced. Paulsen’s facility with memoir, his skill in establishing believable characters about whom to care, and his gift at using few words to establish specific times and locales are evident in this moving story. (Ages 12-16)

Near the end of his junior year in high school, John begins to produce his own ‘zine *Bananafish*, in which he sarcastically pours out his feelings about his miserable suburban life: he has no true friends, and his divorced parents have distanced themselves not only from each other but from their only child. John becomes particularly intrigued with the writing of Marisol Guzman, who publishes a ‘zine called *Escape Velocity*, in which she freely expresses her feelings about being a “Puerto Rican Cuban Yankee Lesbian.” After John arranges to meet Marisol, who turns out to be a high school senior in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the two hit it off -- sort of. Their friendship is always a bit dicey, due to John’s propensity for lying and Marisol’s insistence on always telling the truth, even when it hurts. Opinionated, gutsy and articulate Marisol is unlike anyone John has ever known and before long he begins to fall in love with her, even though he knows a romantic relationship is out of the question. We come to know these intelligent and complex characters through John’s wry narrative and through the poems, essays and letters they write each other through their ‘zines. The latter allows readers to gain a deeper insight into each of the teen characters, which is further enriched by the critiques they give each other’s writings. Wittlinger has brilliantly created a funny/sad young adult novel that has a rare combination of realism and hope. (Age 15 and older)

*See Also:* Asphalt Angels; CrashBoomLove

**New Editions of Old Favorites**

Jerry Pinkney brings his consummate skills as a wildlife artist to bear on this distinguished adaptation of Andersen's classic tale. His realistic watercolor paintings place the reader squarely in the ducks’ environment, at the pond’s edge and at the waterline, allowing them to develop a great deal of empathy for the little duckling as he develops into a swan. The human characters who sometimes enter the picture appear to be members of a 19th century farm family who live near the pond. (Ages 4-8)

There’s an illustration on nearly every double-page spread of this handsome edition that features a modern-day Alice (in tennis shoes, no less!). Oxenbury uses a combination of watercolor paintings and black-and-white pencil drawings to illustrate the children’s classic that has been a favorite for 135 years. Carroll’s original text is complete and unabridged, set in large, clear type, surrounded by plenty of white space. (Age 9-14)


The four stories in this engaging book about a small girl and her baby brother were originally published by Candlewick as four separate volumes: *Bouncing* and *Giving* (both 1993) and *Hiding* and *Chatting* (both 1994). The original stories and illustrations appear here in their entirety and, when gathered together, take on the appearance of one, long episodic picture book. When it comes to depicting toddlers and babies engaged in typical behaviors, Shirley Hughes excels, as is clearly evident in this welcome new edition. (Age 2-4)

**Jiménez, Francisco. The Circuit: Stories from the Life of a Migrant Child.** Houghton Mifflin, 1999. 116 pages (0-395-97902-1) $15.00

Jiménez’s memoir of his childhood and adolescence is presented as a collection of 12 hauntingly spare short stories that can either stand alone or be read as a continuous narrative. A poignant, childlike voice is consistently maintained throughout, even as he writes of the subhuman living conditions and constant fear that were realities for his migrant family. This collection, which won the Américas Award, Boston Globe-Horn Book Fiction Award, and a Jane Addams Honor, was first published as a paperback original by University of New Mexico Press in 1997. (Age 12 and older)


According to the introduction by the African American children’s literature authority Rudine Sims Bishop, “Mary Effie Lee Newsome was possibly the first African American poet whose body of work consisted primarily of poems for children.” As a well educated adult, Newsome wrote poems appearing in W.E.B. DuBois’s magazine, “The Brownies’ Book,” published for “the children of the sun.” Born in 1985, Newsome wrote well over a hundred and fifty poems for children, but her published work from the 1920’s and 1930’s has largely been forgotten until now. Newsome chose nature themes for her children’s, and she wrote from a child’s perspective, wanting to express that African American children were “normal” and “ordinary” in their emotions and appreciations of nature. She wanted to express more than what typically represented African Americans to themselves and in the wider world, in that most published works of the time portrayed African American children as “comical” and “different.” The poems chosen for this slim volume are accompanied by artwork created decades ago by the noted African American critic, teacher and painter Lois Mailou Jones to illustrated some of Newsome’s works. When children are shown in the illustrations, they are African American children. Newsome and/or Jones or who are looking for historical African American children’s literature of which to be proud. (Ages 4-7)

**Sandburg, Carl. The Huckabuck Family, and How They Raised Popcorn in Nebraska and Quit and Came Back. Illustrated by David Small. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999. 32 pages (0-374-33511-7)**

On the book jacket Small launches his version of Sandburg’s literary tall tale from *The Rootabaga Stories* by enclosing the title within a giant ear of corn. Papa Papa and Mama Mama Huckabuck are seen gamely standing in their Nebraska popcorn field with pony-tailed young Pony Pony Huckabuck and her hobby horse. Small captures the Huckabuck’s outrageous optimism, and he also develops Huckabuck livestock as a visual Depression era Greek chorus. He imagines the origin of the fire that popped the Huckabuck’s entire popcorn harvest and sent these cheerful, un-depressed folks forth into the Depression era - to Oskaloosa, Iowa, Paducah, Kentucky, Defiance, Ohio, Peoria, Illinois, Indianapolis, Indiana, and Walla
Walla, Washington. Small shifts the overall emotional mood only as muscle-bound Papa Papa becomes a proud watchman in an Elgin, Illinois, watch factory where he must watch the watches and where a police man watches Pony Pony through the window as she watches Papa Papa. Sandburg’s imaginative language, effective alliteration, and wry social commentary are perfectly matched by Small’s shifting perspectives, droll characterizations and sunny palette. It’s risky to illustrate such rich language, but Small’s humorous vision successfully complements and also extends Sandburg’s classic text. (Ages 4-9)


Caldecott Medal winner Trina Schart Hyman's lovely paintings quietly relate one year in the active life of four contemporary children who live in their extended family somewhere in rural New England. They experience the Fourth of July, an August heat wave at the beach, colorful autumn leaves, and winter snow. Hyman's paintings perfectly accompany John Updike's twelve "calendar" poems - one of each for each month of the year. An earlier edition of these poems was published for children in 1965, an elegant edition long out of print illustrated by Wisconsin artist Nancy Ekholm Burkert. Updike has made a number of changes in his poems for this new edition. Occasionally famous authors from world of adult literature write well for children - not often - but Updike hits it just right in his friendly observations about the seasons. (Ages 5-11)


The charming Christmas favorite first published in 1975 has now been reissued in a larger size and with completely new full-color illustrations. The words remain the same, however, as the tell the story of little Morris whose three older siblings seem to have all gotten the most exciting Christmas gifts, until Morris gets the best gift of all -- a bag into which you can climb and completely disappear. (Ages 4-7)


“Gardens with flowers / Clocks with hours / Moths with screen / Grass with green / Leaves with tree / and you with me.” Zolotow’s soothing text about unconditional love between parent and child was first published thirty years ago and sounds just as fresh today. Ashley Wolff’s appealing color illustrations add to the overall sense of unity by placing two pairs naturally in the same picture (moths behind a screen door, surrounded with green grass, for example). Heavy stock paper and a sturdy binding will help to keep page with book through repeated child with look. (Ages 1-3)

See Also: Beasty Story; Beautiful Christmas Tree; Ducks Don’t Get Wet; Peddler’s Gift; Where Did Josie Go?