

CCBC

Choices

2006

# CCBC

## Choices 2006

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with

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School of Education

University of Wisconsin—Madison

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## Acknowledgments

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For most of its history, *CCBC Choices* has been distributed at no cost to Wisconsin librarians and teachers and interested others because of the support of the Friends of the CCBC, Inc., who underwrite the costs of publishing *CCBC Choices* each year. (For more information about the Friends of the CCBC, see Appendix IV.) We thank the current Friends board of directors as well as everyone who has served on past boards. And we are grateful to everyone who supports the work of the CCBC through their Friends membership.

This is the eleventh year that Friends member Tana Elias has created the index for *CCBC Choices* as a volunteer. This is also the eleventh year that we have enjoyed Lois Ehler's dynamic cover design for *CCBC Choices*. Over the years, we have adapted Lois's design concept as the CCBC's "logo," which we use on our business cards, letterhead, and, most recently, in our redesigned website.

A number of individuals with specialized interests and expertise evaluated one or more books at our request, or volunteered their comments for this edition of *Choices*. We thank Barry Hartup and Ginny Moore Kruse for contributing to our work in this way. We also thank Ginny for suggesting many books for us to consider for this edition of *Choices*.

Thank you to all who attended CCBC monthly book discussions in 2005—your participation gave us insightful perspectives on a number of the books published throughout the year. The same is true of members of our online book discussion community, *CCBC-Net*.

We continue to work with a terrific staff of the Creative Services Department of University Communications at UW–Madison and appreciate the coordination, oversight, and guidance provided by Nancy Brower; the creative design work of Barry Roal Carlsen; and the production work of Kent Hamale.

The wonderful CCBC student staff that helps the library function all year long also makes it possible for us to focus almost exclusively on writing *Choices* in the frantic final days before deadline. And our various families—partners and assorted children—not only support our work but also offer their own insightful comments on many of the books we bring home to read throughout the year.

Kathleen T. Horning, Merri V. Lindgren, Hollis Rudiger, and  
Megan Schliesman

## Introduction

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The first edition of *CCBC Choices* was created by then-CCBC librarians Ginny Moore Kruse and Susan C. Griffith in 1981. It was four stapled 8-1/2 x 11" sheets with one-to-three-sentence descriptions of 105 outstanding titles.

It is interesting to look back at how much it has changed since that first modest publication (modest in production at least; the effort was still considerable). *Choices* went from stapled pages to a simple booklet in its second year. In 1983, an extremely brief commentary on the publishing year was added. With the 1986 edition, covering the 1985 publishing year, we added professional production and the booklet took on a much more identifiable look.

We began our annual documentation of multicultural books in the 1986 edition by including statistics on the number of books by and about Africans and African Americans. We expanded this to include books by and about American Indians, Asian Americans, and Latinos in 1994. And since 1995, thanks to the efforts of a professional indexer who volunteers her time, we've also been able to provide subject access to the books we recommend.

There have been other changes, too. Our publishing commentary and annotations have gotten longer and more comprehensive. And the number of books we highlight has increased more than two-fold. In recent years, we've typically had 200 titles or more in the annual *Choices* publications.

But many things haven't changed. *CCBC Choices* is still created by librarians at the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), which is a library of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (see Appendix I for more about the CCBC). Although the names and faces of the CCBC librarians have changed over the years, we continue to have the same goal in creating *Choices*: to draw attention to some of the best in literature created each year for children and teenagers.

Publishing has changed a lot over the years, too. There are many more books being published for children today than in the past. In 1981, we estimated 2,500 new books were available; today, we put that estimate at 5,000. Among them are books about people and issues that were invisible in children's literature twenty-five years ago, welcome books that mean more children and teenagers and their families can see their lives reflected among the books that they have to choose from at their library or bookstore. These are books that help teachers and librarians create environments of inclusiveness that honor the diversity of our communities, our society, and the world. Small, alternative presses have forged the way in multicultural publishing, as well as by publishing books about gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning youth, and families with same-sex parents. They now have been joined by mainstream publishing—in fits and starts and waves—over the past 2-1/2 decades.

We've seen explosions in other types of publishing, too, from TV tie-ins (such as *Blues Clues* and *Sponge Bob*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and, yes, even *Survivor*) to repackaged versions of beloved favorites. Remember the *Little House* board books? Or the hefty single-volume compilations of the complete works of picture book artists such as Leo Lionni, Eric Carle, and George Marshall?

But some things in publishing remain the same. First and foremost among them are the dedicated individuals—editors, publishers and others—who are drawn to the field by their love of children’s and young adult literature and by their desire to bring the best they can find to young readers today.

The CCBC receives review copies of about 3,000 new books for children and young adults annually, including most of the trade books published in English by corporate publishers in the United States. The quality has always varied widely. Our goal in creating *CCBC Choices* is to highlight some of the outstanding titles published for children and young adults that are among the 3,000 or more we receive. In choosing titles, we look for book that are well-written and that will appeal to the needs and reading interests of a children and teenagers, as well as of teachers, librarians, and others who use books with children and teens. It is a highly subjective process in many respects. As we look for books that are accurate, interesting, and engaging, we often agree on titles to include. But sometimes we disagree. We talk about our differences and determine where consensus lies. *Choices* is a reflection of that consensus.

Of course there are always outstanding titles we miss. We make an effort to draw attention to those books in other ways and are pleased to see they often are included some of the other annual best-of-the-year lists created by professionals in the library and education fields.

We know that not every book we have recommended in *Choices* will appeal—or be appropriate—for every child or teenager. But we are confident that among the 237 titles we have singled out for inclusion in *CCBC Choices 2006*, there is something for everyone: books that offer contemporary readers entertaining, enlightening, challenging, and stimulating choices.



## Organization of *CCBC Choices 2006*

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

Books in *CCBC Choices 2006* have been placed into one of the following thematic categories when appropriate:

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

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

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

Picture books about people who actually lived have been placed into the Historical People, Places, and Events section. Historical Fiction is found in one of the two Fiction categories. Graphic novels are assessed individually and placed in whichever category a title best fits.

The subject index can be used to find books across all of the categories about specific topics and in additional formats (for example, there is a "Graphic Novels" subject heading).

### *Age Recommendations*

We provide suggested age ranges for each title. These are meant to be general guidelines based on appeal and age appropriateness of the content. We know that some children and teens are ready for and will enjoy books recommended for older readers. Our suggested age recommendations cannot substitute for professional judgment and personal knowledge of individual readers, classrooms, and communities.

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

- Picture Books for Toddlers and Preschoolers : *upper* age recommendation is five or under
- Picture Book for School-Aged Children: *lower* age recommendation is four or older
- Fiction for Children: *lower* age recommendation is eleven or under
- Fiction for Young Adults: *lower* age recommendation is twelve or older.

## ***Publication Information***

The citation for each book in *CCBC Choices 2006* includes the prices and ten-digit international standard book number (ISBN) for any edition we were able to find in print in late 2005. Most of the books are available in hardcover trade editions. Some are also or only available in library editions with reinforced binding. A few are only, or also, available in paperback. Whether or not hardcover-only titles eventually make it into paperback is influenced by a number of factors, including sales of the hardcover edition.

This information will be helpful when looking for the books in *CCBC Choices* at your public library, school library media center, or bookstore.

One of the books in *CCBC Choices 2006* has a 2006 copyright date. We included it because it had a January 1, 2006, release date.

## The Charlotte Zolotow Award

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The Charlotte Zolotow Award is given annually to the author of the best picture book text published in the United States in the preceding year. Established in 1997, the award is named to honor the work of Charlotte Zolotow, a distinguished children's literature editor for 38 years with Harper Junior Books and an author of more than 70 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. She studied with Professor Helen C. White.

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

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

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

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

Members of the eighth annual Charlotte Zolotow Award Committee were Merri V. Lindgren, chair (Librarian, Cooperative Children's Book Center, UW-Madison); Peggy Kelbel (day care provider, Madison, Wisconsin); Stacey Pipson (elementary school librarian, Madison Metropolitan School District, Madison, Wisconsin); Susan Santner (children's librarian, Sun Prairie Public Library, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin); and Kelley Williams (first grade teacher, Baraboo Public Schools, Baraboo, Wisconsin).

The 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Committee was supported in its work by the Charlotte Zolotow Student Advisory Committee. This group of graduate students in the School of Library and Information Studies at UW-Madison helped manage the incoming books, attended committee meetings, and participated in committee discussions. Members of the Charlotte Zolotow Student Advisory Committee were: Elsworth Rockefeller, Lynn Schneider, and Meg Taylor.



## 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award

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**Winner:** *My Best Friend.*  
Written by Mary Ann Rodman.  
Illustrated by E. B. Lewis. Viking, 2005

**Honor Books:** *Precious and the Boo Hag.* Written by Patricia C. McKissack and Onawumi Jean Moss.  
Illustrated by Kyrsten Brooker.  
An Anne Schwartz Book / Atheneum, 2005

*Zen Shorts.* Written and illustrated by Jon J Muth.  
Scholastic Press, 2005

### Highly Commended Titles:

*Binky.* Written and illustrated by Leslie Patricelli. Candlewick Press, 2005  
*Cool Cat, Hot Dog.* Written and illustrated by Sandy Turner. Atheneum, 2005  
*The Hello, Goodbye Window.* Written by Norton Juster. Illustrated by Chris Raschka. Michael di Capua Books / Hyperion, 2005  
*Leonardo the Terrible Monster.* Written and illustrated by Mo Willems. Hyperion, 2005  
*Mutt Dog!* Written and illustrated by Stephen Michael King. U.S. edition: Harcourt, 2005  
*No Haircut Today!* Written and illustrated by Elivia Savadier. A Neal Porter Book / Roaring Brook Press, 2005  
*Oscar's Half Birthday.* Written and illustrated by Bob Graham. U.S. edition: Candlewick Press, 2005  
*Snip, Snap! What's That?* Written by Mara Bergman. Illustrated by Nick Maland. U.S. edition: Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005  
*Whatever.* Written and illustrated by William Bee. U. S. edition: Candlewick Press, 2005

## Publishing in 2005

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*Note: In the comments that follow, we include the publisher in parentheses after the title of any book mentioned that isn't part of this year's Choices listing.*

In recent years, we've estimated approximately 5,000 new books are published annually for children and young adults.

Here at the CCBC, we received approximately 3,000 new books published in 2005. They included most of the books published by large trade publishers, many of which are separate divisions of the same publishing house, as well as books from some of the publishers specializing in informational books for the young, often developed specifically with curricular needs in mind, and many of which are formula series. We also received books from a small number of independent publishers.

### Into the Mainstream: GLBTQ Teens and Families

One of the most encouraging trends we noticed in 2005 was publishers continuing to expand the quality and number of books available on subjects once all but invisible in literature for youth, whether it's parts of the world too rarely seen in the past, such as the Middle East, or books that reflect the lives of individuals in our very own communities.

Among the 3,000 or so books we received in 2005, we noted more than thirty titles, including over twenty novels, about gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (GLBTQ) youth and gay- or lesbian-parented families. Of course the numbers are all relative, and this subject, like so many others, demands even greater visibility. But given the fact that even five years ago it was possible to count the number of books with GLBTQ subjects on two hands (and on just one hand not long before that) these numbers represent a virtual explosion.

More and more we are seeing books in which characters are not defined solely by their sexual identity. From titles such as Ron Koertge's *Boy Girl Boy* (Harcourt), about three best friends, one of whom happens to be gay, navigating the inevitable changes that the end of high school will bring to their relationships, to David Larochelle's *Absolutely, Positively Not . . .* which takes a poignant and hilarious look at a teen coming to terms with his sexual identity, rich and real characters are now the norm.

James Howe's *Totally Joe* is notable for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that it features a happy, *young* gay protagonist. Joe is twelve and has no doubts about his sexuality. He has a crush on Colin, who isn't so sure about his. Howe magnificently captures the range of feelings about relationships among young adolescents in his novel, which is innocent and sweet and affirming.

There is still a woeful lack of picture books showing families with same-sex parents. But one exceptionally bright—and unusual—exception in 2005 is *And Tango Makes Three* by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell. This book that

recounts how two male penguins in New York's Central Park Zoo chose each other as mates, successfully cared for an egg given to them by the zookeeper and then raised the chick—named Tango—that hatched is, first and foremost, a terrifically told story. The bilingual picture book *Antonio's Card* by Rigoberto Gonzalez (Children's Book Press) is much more typical of the picture books that have been published in the past as it seeks to raise sensitivity toward children in gay- or lesbian-parented families. The story, about a child who is teased when he makes a mother's day card for each of his two moms, stands out, however, for its Latino protagonist and text in both Spanish and English.

## On a Plateau? Multicultural Publishing

The CCBC uses the term “multicultural literature” to mean books by and about people of color. Many distinct cultural experiences are implied by these four broad groupings. Multicultural books in this edition of *CCBC Choices* are identified by specific cultural affiliation in the subject index.

In 1985, the CCBC began to document the number of books for children and young adults by and about African Americans each year, fueled by the shockingly low number of books eligible for the American Library Association's Coretta Scott King Awards. In 1994, we expanded our recordkeeping to include books by and about all people of color. A complete archive of the statistics we have compiled over the years is available on the CCBC website at: <http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/books/pstats.htm>

There has been a huge increase in the number of multicultural books published over the past twenty years, but, again, we note again that the numbers are relative. We can get excited about many individual books, but the fact is that we still have yet to see multicultural literature make up more than 10 percent of the total number of new books published annually. This percentage drops to less than 5 percent when it includes only titles written and/or illustrated by people of color.

## CCBC Statistics in 2005

Of the nearly 3,000 titles we received at the CCBC in 2005, we documented the following with regard to books by and about people of color:

- 149 books had significant African or African American content. 75 books were by Black book creators, either authors and/or illustrators (most, but not all, were among the 149 titles with African or African American content).
- 34 books featured American Indian themes, topics, or characters. Of these, only 4 were created by individuals identified as American Indian authors and/or artists. Nine additional Native writers were featured in a single short story collection.
- 64 books were about or significantly featured Asians/Pacifics or Asian/Pacific Americans. 60 books were specifically by book creators of Asian/Pacific heritage (more than 20 of these did not have specific cultural content and are not among the 64 titles noted).

- 76 were on Latino themes and topics. 50 books were created by Latino authors and/or artists (most, but not all, were among the 76 books with Latino content).

It should be noted that these statistics represent only quantity, not quality or authenticity.

Why do these numbers matter? Because children and teens of color need to see themselves in books. Because all children and teens need literature to illuminate the nation and the world in which they live. Because there is no such thing as “the” African American experience or “the” Mexican American experience. There is a multiplicity of experiences within and across cultural groups and racial and ethnic lines. We hope publishers will not only remain vigilant but increase their commitment to publishing books that truly reflect the world in which children and young adults today are growing up.

### *Laughter and Tears*

Among the multicultural books we especially appreciated this year were some of the funniest books we read. They include *Mr. Chickee's Funny Money* by Christopher Paul Curtis, *Precious and the Boo Hag* by Patricia C. McKissack and Onawumi Jean Moss, and *Red Ridin' in the Hood and Other Cuentos* by Patricia Santos Marcantonio.

Other books present terrific humor in a deeper context, from *Lies and Other Tall Tales*, adapted and illustrated by Christopher Myers from the work of Zora Neale Hurston and *Stanford Wong Flunks Big-Time* by Lisa Yee.

At the same time, there were several outstanding titles that courageously addressed the difficult issues present in the lives of many children and teens today. Among the most notable were Walter Dean Myers's *Autobiography of My Dead Brother* and Sharon G. Flake's *Bang!*, both of which deal with the threat of urban violence. We appreciated the fine writing in the short story collection *Moccasin Thunder: American Indian Stories for Today*, edited by Lori Marie Carlson (HarperCollins) even as we struggled with the question of whether the collection as a whole runs the risk of reinforcing rather than dismantling some stereotypes. The fault is not in the stories themselves but rather the collective effect of the ten pieces, rife with alcoholism, drug use, and abuse.

### *Pondering the Future/Recovering the Past*

Books like *Bang!* and *Autobiography of My Dead Brother* are titles that challenge readers—teen and adult alike—to think about the future being created today. The picture book *Brothers in Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan* by Mary Williams (Lee & Low, 2005) illuminates the mid-to-late twentieth century civil war that has seen thousands of children orphaned in that country, as well as some of the positive outcomes that have come from such terrible tragedy. Deborah Ellis's *Our Stories, Our Songs: African Children Talk about AIDS* shows not only courage and kindness but also huge gaps in the response to the AIDS crisis in Africa. These are books that ask difficult questions about our collective humanity—questions that cannot be ignored.

Other books offer illuminating perspectives on the past. Ana Maria Machado's novel *From Another World*, a translated book originally published in Brazil, is a contemporary ghost story that addresses the slave history of that

country. One of the most powerful and affecting books of the year is also about slavery: Julius Lester's *Day of Tears: A Novel in Dialogue* looks at the human toll of the largest single slave auction in U.S. history.

The picture book *Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain* by Katrina Saltonstall Currier offers a fresh look at the immigrant experience by focusing on Angel Island, the intake center near San Francisco that processed thousands of newcomers from Asia. Marilyn Nelson's *A Wreath for Emmett Till* is an extraordinary work of poetry—a heroic crown of sonnets in which the pain ignited by fourteen-year-old Emmett's murder in 1955 is palpable in a reading experience that is also transcendent.

Additional multicultural books from the 2005 publishing year are among those highlighted in the sections that follow.

## Extraordinary Nonfiction

We continue to see authors and editors pay closer and closer attention to the importance of documentation in books of information for youth, and more and more writers are including primary sources in their research. The American Library Association's Sibert Award is surely drawing even more attention to these critical aspects of excellence in nonfiction.

Outstanding works of nonfiction were among the most engaging books we read in 2005. Susan Campbell Bartoletti's *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow* is a chilling and provocative look at children and teens who marched for Hitler and, in some cases, later rejected his ideas and ideals. James Cross Giblin's *Good Brother, Bad Brother: The Story of Edwin Booth and John Wilkes Booth* sheds new light for older children and teens on personal and family history of the man who shot Abraham Lincoln. *Let Me Play: The Story of Title IX* by Karen Blumenthal will amaze contemporary readers with a look at how opportunities for girls and women over the past thirty years have changed dramatically because of this little law that could. One woman breaking all sorts of barriers long before Title IX was Eleanor Roosevelt, the subject of Candace Fleming's *Our Eleanor*.

Tonya Bolden's fascinating look at the political wheeling and dealing in the United States just after the Civil War makes for captivating reading in *Cause: Reconstruction America, 1863–1877*. Bolden also wrote a biography of a free black girl growing up in the nineteenth century before, during, and after the Civil War in *Maritcha: A Nineteenth-Century American Girl*.

We were sorry to have missed Sally M. Walker's *Secrets of a Civil War Submarine: Solving the Mysteries of the H.L. Hunley* (Carolrhoda), an outstanding work that blends history and science as it chronicles efforts to recover the wreck of the first battle submarine, built during the Civil War, and to piece together the story of its crew and its one and only mission. This book came to our attention too late to be included in *CCBC Choices 2006*.

Like most other young adults in Isreal, at eighteen, Valérie Zenatti served two years in the Israeli army. Her fascinating memoir of that time is *When I Was a Soldier*, which was originally published in France. Journalist Mitch Frank takes a comprehensive look at many elements that have contributed to the



conflict in the Middle East in the astonishingly balanced *Understanding the Holy Land*.

We read a number of engaging works of nonfiction for younger children as well, including April Pulley Sayre's *The Stars Beneath Your Bed: The Surprising Story of Dust*, astonishingly lyrical as well as informative; Jonah Winter's picture book biography *Roberto Clemente: Pride of the Pittsburgh Pirates*; Margot Theis Raven's *Let Them Play*, about an African American Little League team in South Carolina denied the right to play in the state and national championships in 1955; and Jeanette Winter's *The Librarian of Basra*, about Alia Muhammad Baker, who feverishly worked to save the books in the library of Basra as U.S. bombs fell in 2002.

## Picture Book Lows and Highs

Continuing the trend of the last few years, the number of newly published picture books, especially those of first-time authors and illustrators, was down in 2005 from recent all-time highs. Among the first-time book creators that were published, we especially appreciated Onawumi Jean Moss's *Precious and the Boo Hag*, a collaboration with far-from-first-time author Patricia C. McKissack. The funny, pleasingly scary story, told mostly in lively dialogue recounts an African American girl's efforts to keep the witchy Pruella the Boo Hag at bay.

Becky Birtha (*Grandmama's Pride*) was another exciting newcomer to the children's publishing scene. Ed Briant (*Seven Stories*) and Elivia Savadier (*No Haircut Today!*) are two previously published illustrators who made fine debuts as authors in 2005.

Mary Ann Rodman, author of the novel *Yankee Girl* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), made an impressive entry into the picture book arena with *My Best Friend*, winner of the 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award. With a style that captures the genuine voices of young children traveling the sometimes bumpy road to friendship, Rodman creates a story that rings true from start to finish. E.B. Lewis's illustrations of the African American girls of Rodman's book give real faces to their distinctive voices.

More realistic characters are brought to life with Bob Graham's inspired language in *Oscar's Half Birthday*. We welcome his humorous and tender portrayal of a biracial family celebrating their child's first six months of life. Elivia Savadier gives voice to another recognizable family moment—although it's not a joyful one—when Dominic steadfastly insists that he will have *No Haircut Today!*

In *Zen Shorts*, Jon J Muth seamlessly melds everyday experiences of three human children with the impossible: a huge talking panda named Stillwater. Text and illustrations work together to incorporate three traditional Zen meditations into the children's visits to their new panda neighbor.

*Siesta* by Ginger Foglesong Guy stands out among books for the very youngest children, as it introduces color concepts via an easy integrated Spanish and English text. *Quinito's Neighborhood*, another bilingual book for preschoolers, written by Ina Cumpiano, offers an overview of diverse community workers. And Linda Sue Park goes far beyond the bilingual norm in

*Yum! Yuck! A Foldout Book of People Sounds.* Universal verbal expressions in a multitude of languages are cleverly paired with a story told in pictures.

## *Pushing Boundaries*

Edgy fiction for teenagers has been in the spotlight quite a bit in recent years, but a few notable books for younger audiences also nudged the envelope of what some think of as “acceptable” topics or treatments. When the frog hero of *Tadpole’s Promise* eats his former love interest for lunch, first-time audiences of all ages are inevitably stunned. The author’s sly send-up of the typical picture book message of acceptance and loyalty is unexpected, and guaranteed to provoke a reaction. Reminiscent of the response triggered by Chris Raschka’s *Arlene Sardine* (Orchard, 1998), readers tend to fall into two camps: disgust and horror, or laugh-out-loud appreciation for the book’s unapologetic conclusion. An unscientific sampling has indicated that age is an indicator of response, with children more likely than adults to appreciate the irreverent ending.

Similarly, the lack of any redeeming qualities in the beasts of Meg Rosoff’s *Meet Wild Boars* either tickles the funny bone or leaves readers and listeners in need of assurance in a book featuring four main characters with—the author firmly professes—no redeeming qualities whatsoever.

While Willis and Rosoff offer unusual humor, Michael Rosen is at the opposite end of the edginess scale with *Michael Rosen’s Sad Book*. This picture book in which the author describes the sadness he felt, and sometimes still feels, in the aftermath of the death of his son offers both children and teens validation of the intensity of emotions that they all sometimes feel for a range of reasons.

These books remind us that adults are often quick to underestimate the depth of children’s feelings, or their ability to understand and appreciate sophisticated humor.

## *Easy Does It*

The first Theodor Seuss Geisel Award for excellence in beginning readers was given by the American Library Association in January, 2006. We are excited—and hopeful—that this award will have the same positive impact on this type of publishing as other awards, from the Coretta Scott King to the Printz and Sibert, have had on literature for youth over the years.

Even without the Geisel Award, we have seen the number of beginning and transitional readers grow significantly over the past five years. Now we hope that in addition to quantity, we will see increased quality among such books. Children just learning to read deserve more than books that are easy, they deserve books that offer them great stories, or intriguing information.

We were thrilled to see stories such as Bethany Roberts’s fresh and funny *Ogre Eats Everything* and Susan Hill’s simple, sweet *Ruby Paints a Picture*. And for those young readers who’ve already developed a fascination with horses, Erica Silverman’s *Cowgirl Kate and Cocoa* (Harcourt) will delight.

We also know that many children learning to read already show a decided preference for certain kinds of literature, so we appreciate publishers’ efforts to

create books to meet the diverse tastes and interests of young children in this accessible format. *Amazing Sharks!*, *Amazing Whales!* and *Amazing Gorillas!* (HarperCollins), are three informational books written by Sarah Thomson that are part of Harper's *I Can Read Series*. And Deborah Hopkinson, who has already created many wonderful picture books about historical people and events, is now creating historical fiction in an easy reader format. Her two fine debut efforts are *Billy and the Rebel* and *From Slave to Soldier*.

## Fantasy, Fangs and Sci-Fi

The phenomenal success of Harry Potter continues to exert a huge influence over the publication of fiction, as evidenced by the continued proliferation of fantasy trilogies, series, and stand-alone works. Although the sheer mass of new books with the words "apprentice" and "volume 1" on the cover might be off-putting to many adult readers, some excellent new fantasy deserves recognition. In this edition of *CCBC Choices*, the combined genres of fantasy, horror, and science fiction make up almost one quarter of the 79 titles in our fiction categories—an all-time high.

Among the very best of the new fantasy is Rick Riordan's creative story of twelve-year-old Percy Jackson's interactions with the Olympic gods in *The Lightning Thief*, marking an impressive introduction to a new series. Choosing between the practice of magic and an early death or inevitable insanity is the prospect facing the protagonist of *Magic or Madness*, volume one in a series by Justine Larbalestier. While both Riordan and Larbalestier have published other books, neither has written for a youth audience before.

Two other series with strong debuts this year are *Revenge of the Witch* by Joseph Delaney and *The Ruins of Gorlan* by John Flanagan, both first books and both centered around boys entering apprenticeships.

Maintaining the high quality of a promising first book is a challenge many writers attempt but often find elusive. We are delighted to see Suzanne Collins continuing her fine Underland Chronicles into volume three, *Gregor and the Curse of the Warmbloods*. Catherine Fisher also keeps to a high standard in *The Sphere of Secrets*, the second of The Oracle Prophecies trilogy.

Not all new fantasy is multi-volume. *The Witch's Boy* uses a fractured fairytale format to give new insight into familiar figures in a stellar story of love, anger, and forgiveness by Michael Gruber.

Vampire fans will be thrilled with two standout works for young adults. Stephenie Meyer's fresh take on the classic dilemma of a human-vampire romance sizzles with the intense connection between the two main characters of *Twilight*. The science-thriller-romance combo in *Peeps* by Scott Westerfeld brings a unique twist to vampire mythology.

Although not as prevalent as fantasy, science fiction also experienced a surge in 2005, with outstanding work for both younger (*Siberia*) and older teens (*The Secret Under My Skin*, *Spacer and Rat*, *The Fourth World*).

## From Innocence to Experience

One highly noticeable trend that is relatively recent and continued to grow in 2005 is the explosion in the number of original paperbacks published for young adult readers. These titles range from truly literary efforts to pulp offerings designed to appeal to the steamier side of teen interests (or publishers' perceptions of teen interests). One title that received quite a bit of media attention over the summer of 2005 was *Rainbow Party* by Paul Ruditis (Simon Pulse), about a teenage sex party. While not a great literary endeavor, the book pulls no punches regarding the potential repercussions of sexual encounters.

Perhaps not surprisingly, this title and others that touch on edgy topics were the subject of a number of media articles in 2005 in which the overall tone was one of sensationalism as writers expressed shock and horror at the content of young adult literature today. Rarely did the articles or reports offer an unbiased look at the books they highlighted. And rarely did they mention any of the examples of truly fine writing for children and teenagers that, edgy or not, would have provided a much more balanced look at literature for youth today.

We certainly read many exceptional novels for both teens and children in 2005, many of which we've already mentioned. Among others were crossover fiction—a label some have coined for young adult books at the high end of the age spectrum. The books' protagonists—usually in their late teens or early twenties—stand, often uneasily, at the juncture between adolescence and adulthood.

Several crossover titles offered some of the finest and most provocative reading of the year. Two of the most outstanding we read were *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf* by Australian author Sonya Hartnett, and *I Am the Messenger* by Markus Zusak, also an Australian. Both books deal with young men beyond high school who are struggling with the present and disconnected from the future. Tammar Stein's debut novel, *Light Years*, is about a twenty-year-old Israeli woman who has completed her service in the Israeli army and has come to college in the United States to study and to heal: her boyfriend was killed in a suicide bombing.

Among the standouts for younger teens and children are Lynne Rae Perkins's *Criss Cross*, a literary effort so intricate and understated that it's difficult to describe but a joy to read as it uses narrative prose, poetry, and illustration and to capture the interior lives and interactions among five fourteen-year-old teens who are refreshingly, and perhaps realistically, innocent in their encounters. It is a novel that could easily be read by older children as well as younger teens.

Thoughtful readers will relish Laura Gallego Garcia's *The Legend of the Wandering King*. Originally published in Spain, Garcia's story makes unexpected turns as it follows the journey of a young man who finds redemption in the power of love and kindness. And *The Game of Silence*, Louise Erdrich's sequel to *The Birchbark House* (Hyperion), continues the story of young Omakayas, a young Objibwe girl who, with her family, struggles with the inevitable changes to their way of life in the nineteenth century as white settlement expands.

## Going Graphic

Five years ago, there were a mere handful of libraries collecting graphic novels. Today, graphic novels have become standard in many public library collections, and in many school libraries, too. And as educators become more attuned to the graphic novel format's many potential classroom applications, these books are making their way into some classrooms as well.

Many children's and young adult literature review journals now include regular or periodic reviews of graphic novels. At the American Library Association's annual meeting in June, 2005, the Young Adult Library Services Association announced the creation of an annual graphic novels list, which will first come out in 2007.

Publishers of children's and young adult books are paying attention. In 2005, Scholastic launched its Graphix imprint with the rerelease of Jeff Smith's wonderful *Bone* (Graphix, 2005). Roaring Brook Press is scheduled to launch its graphic novel imprint, First Second, in 2006. And two of our favorite graphic novels of 2005 came from Random House: Jennifer and Matthew Holm's delightful *Babymouse* series. Perfect for elementary-age children, the stories feature an irrepressible young female rodent who deals with decidedly childlike issues in her two debut volumes.

Interestingly, children's literature is also influencing graphic novels. NBM, in independent comics publisher, launched an imprint called Papercutz with several graphic novel adventures featuring either the Hardy Boys or Nancy Drew. Who can resist a title like *Nancy Drew and the Demon of River Heights* (Papercutz), whatever the format?

Traditional comics and graphic novel publishers are still the biggest source for graphic novels for teens and children. Among those we especially appreciated this year are Kazu Kibuishi's *Daisy Cutter*, an intriguing fusion of classic western and science fiction with a gun-slinging, emotionally guarded female protagonist up against the bad guys; and Guy Delisle's *Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea*, his sadly funny account of the time he spent in that highly repressive country.

## I Can Do That!

We are among the first to acknowledge that celebrity publishing gets way too much attention. And yet we feel compelled to comment on it yet again. While few in number, these titles written by (or ghostwritten for) actors, politicians, musicians, and others outside the realm of children's literature often claim a great deal of attention or resources, from marketing budgets to display space in large bookstores. Almost always picture books, their quality, as is to be expected, varies, but it is often easy to tell that the author has not spent a lot of time reading books for children, let alone working on the craft of writing one. As we've noted in the past, the assumption seems to be that writing a picture book is easy, an understandable impression if they are reading one another's books in preparation to writing their own. While they are often heartfelt and well-meaning, it is rare to find a celebrity book that doesn't hit the reader over the head with a lesson, or tug at the heartstrings in a way that is more attuned to the emotions of adults rather than children.

A new twist in celebrity publishing this year was Billy Joel's *New York State of Mind* (Scholastic, 2005), which didn't require much new effort at all on the author's part, since the text is the lyrics of his old song of the same name. Rather than being moralistic or saccharine, Joel's words, while fine in a song for adults, turn out to be far too abstract for a picture book audience, even those who actually live in New York City.

It's not that a book by a celebrity is *necessarily* a bad book; but of those we've seen over the years, there are so many better books that aren't as highly promoted and don't stand nearly the chance of capturing the attention of many consumers—the parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, or other well-intentioned adults who aren't familiar with children's literature, walk into a megastore, and are immediately overwhelmed. A familiar name can be comforting in the midst of too many (or too few) choices. There is certainly nothing wrong with appreciating a book with a moral, or that touches one's emotions. The sad thing is what *isn't* being seen, or bought, or shared with children. It's a shame that the highly visible and heavily promoted celebrity books, along with the TV tie-ins and holiday books also prominently displayed, are the primary impression some have of children's literature today.

Occasionally, a book from a "name" outside the field of children's and young adult literature is worthy of all the attention it gets. An example from 2005 is Caroline Kennedy's *A Family of Poems: My Favorite Poetry for Children*. This outstanding anthology's depth, breadth, and range are exemplary.

We also continue to see established writers for adults try their hand at writing for youth. These celebrities in the adult publishing world have already proven they have skill and talent. But not everyone makes the shift to writing for a younger audience with ease. Among those that did in 2005 were Peter Abrahams, a noted writer of thrillers for adults whose children's literature debut—*Down the Rabbit Hole*—is a fast-paced, captivating mystery for older children and young teens with all the elements of a classic whodunnit. Carl Hiaasen's second novel for youth is the funny *Flush*, also a mystery of sorts. Hiaasen's writing for children and teens monopolizes on the same traits that have made his witty adult books so successful: Florida setting, environmental theme, and offbeat, memorable characters.

Chilean author and playwright Ariel Dorfman, whose personal history makes him a citizen of the world, teamed with his son, Joaquin, to write *Burning City*, a young adult novel that looks at the global culture of New York City. Finally, Louise Erdrich's much-awaited follow-up to *The Birchbark House* (Hyperion, 1999), *The Game of Silence*, reinforces what has been clear since her first picture book: Erdrich is extraordinarily attuned to and highly skilled at writing for a wide range of audiences.

There are many dedicated authors, illustrators, editors, and publishers striving to give children and teens terrific literature. But publishing is a business and dedicated individuals can only do so much. Publishing companies will support creative efforts to provide more multicultural titles, to seek out more new talent, to translate more books from other languages, to take more risks with books that defy expectations or reflect our society in all its diversity, when they see that such books can have a positive impact on the bottom line. And we have

the power to be that positive impact—librarians, teachers, child care providers, parents—all of us who are dedicated to making sure children and teenagers not only have books, but *great* books in their lives.

# The *Choices*



# The Natural World

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**Collard, Sneed B. III. *Prairie Builders: Reconstructing America's Lost Grasslands*. (Scientists in the Field) Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 72 pages (trade 0-618-39687-X, \$17.00)**

"By the early 1900s, more than 96 percent of America's tallgrass prairie had been turned into farms and grazing lands." Sneed B. Collard III documents efforts to reclaim a piece of America's lost landscape as he describes the work to restore tallgrass prairie on the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge in Iowa. The comprehensive project has involved the work of scientists, rangers, and numerous volunteers who have all worked to establish and maintain the ecosystem that now supports many prairie flora and fauna. Collard's highly readable narrative is focused around the work of two specific scientists: biologist Pauline Drobney, who manages the prairie project, and Diane Debinski, who saw the project as a chance to try to bring the rare Regal Fritillary butterfly back to Iowa. Collard's captivating pictures show the restoration work in progress and also capture the sweeping beauty of the prairie lands. (Ages 7-10)

**Cowley, Joy. *Chameleon, Chameleon*. Photographs by Nic Bishop. Scholastic Press, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-439-66653-8, \$16.95)**

Stunning, clear photographs and a succinct text follow a chameleon in search of a meal. Along the way he encounters geckos, scorpions, a tree frog, and another chameleon. He also comes across his meal, in the form of a big caterpillar. An especially memorable photo captures the split second the chameleon nabs the caterpillar with his fully extended tongue. Employing a narrative voice that is closer to storytelling than science text ("Is something hiding there? A gecko! The gecko looks scary, but it will not hurt the chameleon.") *Chameleon, Chameleon* will appeal to young children with an affinity for reptiles. (Ages 2-5)

**Dendy, Leslie and Mel Boring. *Guinea Pig Scientists: Bold Self-Experimenters in Science and Medicine*. Illustrated by C.B. Mordan. Henry Holt, 2005. 213 pages (trade 0-8050-7316-7, \$19.95)**

Scientists whose passion for research motivated them to use their own bodies in a quest for answers make high-interest subjects for this compelling volume. The element of danger that each voluntarily faced, which sometimes resulted in injury or death, prompts a cautionary sentence in the book's introduction that discourages readers from taking risks with their own bodies ("leave the medical self-experiments to professionals"). Vivid details of Lazzaro Spallanzani's exploration into the workings of the digestive tract make it hard to imagine anyone wanting to follow in his footsteps, however. His research required him to swallow a wooden tube filled with food and enclosed in a linen bag. He then examined the contents of the tube after it had passed through his body. He seemed unfazed, however, and reported that the package "exited happily at the end of 22 hours." His digestive juices did their job, and this self-

inflicted investigation furthered scientific understanding of a bodily function. Spallanzani's chapter is one of ten stories presented, spanning research of men and women from six different countries, from the late 1700s to the present day. The scientists highlighted share a bold, pioneering attitude and a willingness to risk all in the pursuit of knowledge. (Ages 10–15)

**Gibbons, Gail. *Dinosaur Discoveries*. Holiday House, 2005. 33 pages (lib. 0-8234-1971-1, \$16.95)**

Gail Gibbons beings at the end in *Dinosaur Discoveries*, describing the most common theory concerning the dinosaurs' demise: that a giant meteor hit the earth 65 million years ago. She goes on to explain that the only way we know they existed is through the fossil record. "The discovery of each dinosaur fossil is often an important event. Who knows? With each find, a new kind of dinosaur could be discovered." Each subsequent double-page spread is devoted to a group of dinosaurs, arranged in order of chronological appearance—prosauro pods, theropods, sauropods, etc. For each group, Gibbons provides a concise paragraph detailing the qualities that made it distinctive. Detailed watercolor illustrations show dinosaurs in their natural habitat, accompanied by captions that identify the species, give a phonetic pronunciation of its name, and provide one interesting fact about it. Each of these larger pictures is also labeled with the name of the era in which the dinosaurs lived. The book concludes with three theories about dinosaurs put forward by paleontologists, based on discoveries in the fossil record, including the always intriguing idea that modern birds are descended from dinosaurs. A world map on the endpapers pinpoints the places where fossils have been found. (Ages 4–7)

**Gibbons, Gail. *Owls*. Holiday House, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-8234-1880-4, \$16.95)**

Gibbons conveys a wealth of information about owls in this picture book that covers types of owls, anatomy, hunting, mating, raising young, and more. Her clear, concise narrative is paired with simple, informative illustrations incorporating definitions of important terms. A page of additional owl-related facts (e.g., "a group of owls is called a parliament") rounds out this volume. (Ages 4–8)

**Markle, Sandra. *A Mother's Journey*. Illustrated by Alan Marks. Charlesbridge, 2005. 32 pages (trade 1-57091-621-7, \$15.95; pbk. 1-57091-622-5, \$6.95)**

After laying her first egg, a young female emperor penguin sets off for open sea—and food. Once there, she travels more than 930 miles as she hunts and feeds to build up her reserves. "Then one day, at the beginning of August, as the ruby red sun peeks above the horizon, the young female leaves the sea. A feeling deep inside her tells her it is time to go." Sandra Markle chronicles a female emperor's journey from the time she lays her egg to the moment she returns and is reunited with her mate and now-

hatched chick. Her poetic narrative admirably refrains from giving the penguins human emotions. Instead, she applies her artfulness to wonderful imagery of the environment they inhabit, which are in turn reflected in Alan Marks's watercolor and ink illustrations. (Ages 4–7)

**Sabuda, Robert and Matthew Reinhart. *Encyclopedia Prehistorica: Dinosaurs*. Candlewick Press, 2005. 12 pages (trade 0-7636-2228-1, \$26.99)**

It's all about design—almost. Robert Sabuda's collaboration with Matthew Reinhart contains a lot of basic facts about dinosaurs, but it's the three-dimensional pictures that make it a truly distinctive dinosaur book. In addition to the large dinosaur that emerges with the turn of each page, each two-page spread includes one to three smaller book-within-a-book sections, with additional pop-ups and more information. Sabuda and Reinhart also write with a great deal of humor, labeling a section on the Jurassic period, for example, "Is It Getting Warm in Here?" and showing a modern day chicken sitting on a dinosaur egg to show scale. (Ages 5–10)

**Sayre, April Pulley. *Stars Beneath Your Bed: The Surprising Story of Dust*. Illustrated by Ann Jonas. Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 24 pages (trade 0-06-057188-8, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-057189-6, \$16.89)**

Poetry and science grace one another in a lyrical picture book about dust. Sayre's narrative begins with reference to a fire-painted sky in the morning—the result of dust in the atmosphere scattering light. It ends by describing the pink, orange, and red palette of sunset—also the result of dust. In between, she examines many of the ways dust is created: dirt flies when we ride our bikes, when a meerkat digs, when cheetahs chase gazelles; cotton rubs off our jeans and becomes dust; so does the smoke from burning toast or the eyelash of a seal. "Old dust stays around . . . That dusty film on your computer screen / might have muddled a dinosaur." And there is dust that comes from outer space: "The dust beneath your bed might be from Mars . . . or a bit of the moon." Who knew? Dust may be small, but Sayre invites readers to consider it as an extraordinary element in the grand scheme of nature. Additional information about dust is provided in a short prose narrative at the end of the book that provides additional scientific information about dust and expands on information referenced in the poetic text. Ann Jonas's bright water-color illustrations are a simple, strong backdrop for the words. (Ages 5–8)

**Simon, Seymour. *Guts: Our Digestive System*. HarperCollins, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-06-054651-4, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-054652-2, \$16.89)**

Have you ever considered what happens to food after you swallow it? Wonder no more, as Seymour Simon turns his considerable science-writing skills to answering that question. A clear explanation follows food from ingestion to elimination, tracking its passage through the esophagus, stomach, small intestine, large intestine, and rectum. Full-page color endoscopic photographs, x-rays, and computer-generated images give

visual access to the internal landscape, including bacterial plaque, stomach mucus, and a dissected pancreas. The author offers concise and comprehensible information, while generating a high level of interest ("The inner lining of the small intestine is about 2,700 square feet, . . . almost the size of a basketball court.") in a perfect book for medical and science buffs, or any kid with the guts to face the graphic details of their inner workings. (Ages 8–12)

**Sturges, Philemon. *I Love Bugs!* Illustrated by Shari Halpern. HarperCollins, 2005. 24 pages (trade 0-06-056168-8, \$12.99; lib. 0-06-056169-6, \$14.89)**

This book for budding entomologists uses brief, declarative sentences, and catchy rhymes to catalog a few of the reasons insects are intriguing. "These bugs paddle. / This one weaves. / Some make honey. / Some chew leaves." Bold illustrations show a child observing and photographing bugs hiding under rocks, swooping through the air, clinging to tree bark, and flitting "round the back porch light." The intrepid naturalist even finds a bug to love at home, as he snaps a shot of his toddler sister, outfitted in a ladybug sleeper. Drawings of the child's "photographs" of the insects encountered throughout the book are shown on the endpapers, with each bug identified by name and captioned with a fun fact ("Some ants can carry more than twenty times their own weight!"). (Ages 2–5)

**Turner, Pamela S. *Gorilla Doctors: Saving Endangered Great Apes. (Scientists in the Field)* Houghton Mifflin, 2005 64 pages (trade 0-618-44555-2, \$17.00)**

Houghton Mifflin's outstanding "Scientists in the Field" series provides readers with a window into the lives and work of contemporary scientists. This new title features the staff of the Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project (MGVP) working with mountain gorillas in Rwanda and Uganda. African and North American scientists, including veterinarians, epidemiologists, and veterinary technicians, work together to protect gorillas threatened by poaching and disease. Pathogens passed between species are a current hot topic in the medical field and the news media, and the text relates how both measles and scabies—illnesses that originated with humans—have recently been discovered in gorillas. In addition to disease research in the field and in the lab, the MGVP works within local schools to educate children about the gorillas and the issues surrounding their welfare. Large color photographs on nearly every page provide visual interest, and a brief resource list of books and web sites suggests ways to find more information. Although this addition to the series doesn't offer the intimate look at an individual scientist found in earlier volumes, it does give a credible sense of the team work and cooperation required to mount a large-scale conservation medicine project. (Ages 9–13)

**Wallace, Karen. *I Am an Ankylosaurus*. Illustrated by Mike Bostock. U.S. edition: Atheneum, 2005. 24 pages (trade 0-689-87318-2, \$15.95)**

What might the day-to-day life of an akkylosaurus dinosaur have been like? Author Karen Wallace and illustrator Mike Bostock imagine the answer to that question. Wallace's narrative incorporates scientific information into character description. "A watchful ankylosaurus stands by her nest. She's huge like a tank. She is covered in armor. Bony plates join together under her skin. Stubby spikes grow all over her body. Her spiky tail ends in a club made of bones." The mother's armor comes in handy, as she must fight off predators to protect her young. The battle scenes between mother ankylosaurus and a trodon and, later, between her and a tyranonosaurus, provide enough dramatic tension and action to satisfy even the wiggliest young listeners of this informative book. (Ages 4-7)

## Seasons and Celebrations

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**Ehlert, Lois. *Leaf Man*. Harcourt, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-15-205304-2, \$16.00)**

The beauty and variety of leaves are the central showpiece of this highly visual book for young children. A very brief text introduces the idea of a "Leaf Man," shown as an artful arrangement of fall leaves, with acorns for eyes and a sweet gum fruit mouth. Leaf Man is always on the move, as the wind blows him first toward the marsh and then over the farm fields, past orchards and through meadows. As Leaf Man travels at the wind's whim, each new setting shows leaves arranged in collages recognizable as birds, butterflies, fish, turtles, and even a turkey and a cow. Lois Ehlert's design for this oversize book includes pages of varying trim sizes, with the top edge of each page cut in a different pattern. These range from shallow scallops to gentle swoops, small zigzags to sharp points, each one suggesting the edge of one or more leaves in nature. The end result is a wonderful layering effect that reveals a dynamic blend of color and texture on every page spread, while hinting at the landscape to come. Ehlert relates her lifelong fascination with leaves in an author's note. Her appreciation for her subject is evident throughout this tribute to the natural world, presented in a manner destined to capture young imaginations. (Ages 2-5)

**Fleming, Denise. *First Day of Winter*. Henry Holt, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-8050-7384-1, \$15.95)**

"On the first day of winter my best friend gave to me . . . a red cap with a gold snap." New words to a familiar holiday tune list building materials for a snowman with each stanza: "4 prickly pinecones, 3 striped scarves, 2 bright blue mittens," and so on. Fleming's textured illustrations offer varying perspectives of the snowman during all stages of construction, until the snow figure is completed, much to the delight of the brown-skinned child who looks proudly at his creation. (Ages 3-7)

**Hopkins, Lee Bennett.** *Days to Celebrate: A Full Year of Poetry, People, Holidays, History, Fascinating Facts, and More.* Illustrated by Stephen Alcorn. Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 112 pages (trade 0-06-000765-6, \$17.99; lib. 0-06-000766-4, \$18.89)

There's something to celebrate every day of the year with Lee Bennett Hopkins's anthology that pays particular attention to the birthdays of poets and other writers. Each month begins with a calendar that notes at least one significant event to mark each day. The calendar is followed by a selection of poems that relates to the holidays, celebrations, or birthdays noted for the month. Snippets of history and intriguing facts are also included. Did you know that the patent of the first pencil with an attached eraser was registered on March 30, 1858? This tidbit is followed by the poem "Pencils" by Beverly McLoughland. (Ages 5-10)

**McDonnell, Patrick.** *The Gift of Nothing.* Little, Brown, 2005. 48 pages (trade 0-316-11488-X, \$14.99)

What do you give the dog who has everything? For Mooch the cat it's a difficult question because he wants to give his friend Earl a gift. Then he hits on the perfect solution: nothing! But finding nothing is quite a challenge. Even though he hears "There's nothing on TV" or "There's nothing to do" a lot, it seems there's always something on TV, and everybody is always doing something. Shopping for nothing leads him to far too many somethings. Discouraged, Mooch goes home and lies quietly on his pillow. And *that's* when he finally finds what he was looking for. He wraps nothing up in a box, and then a bigger box, because "Earl deserves more than this." And Earl understands perfectly when he opens the box and Mooch explains that there's "Nothing . . . but me and you." Everything about Patrick McDonnell's sweetly funny story underscores the idea that less is more, especially when it means slowing down to enjoy each moment along with whatever, or whoever, it brings. The intimately sized book features spare black-and-white line drawings softly accented with red. (Ages 5-9)

**Palatini, Margie.** *Three French Hens.* Illustrated by Richard Egelski. Hyperion, 2005. 36 pages (trade 0-7868-5167-8, \$15.99)

Coulette, Poulette, and Fifi are three French hens who have been sent by a woman in Paris to her true love, Philippe Renard, in New York. When they end up in New York City's unclaimed mail office, the three enterprising birds set off to find Philippe on their own. Quickly concluding that they must translate the French name "Philippe Renard" into English in order to find their intended recipient, they are soon knocking on the door of one down-on-his luck Phil Fox. Phil hasn't had a square meal in ages. Now three square meals are standing at his door. He welcomes them in without mentioning that he's not who they are looking for. Not to worry. Phil's cunning is no match for his conscience, especially when he's faced with the overwhelming good will and charm of Coulette, Poulette, and Fifi in Margie Palatini's hilarious holiday story featuring Richard Egelski's comical illustrations. By book's end, the foursome are

sharing a joint Christmas and Hanukkah celebration (it turns out they are kosher chickens). (Ages 5–8)

**Quattlebaum, Mary.** *Winter Friends*. Illustrated by Hiroe Nakata. Doubleday, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-385-74626-1, \$15.95; lib. 0-385-90868-7, \$17.99)

Just after a snowstorm, a little girl and her mother get ready to go outside, and then take a walk through their snow-covered neighborhood to the park and go sledding with friends. That simple storyline unfolds through a series of lively poems from Mary Quattlebaum that fill it with marvelous details and lyrical descriptions of the child's experiences and observations. Hiroe Nakata's buoyant, expressive paintings feature bright colors on winter-white streets and capture the childlike excitement that comes with newly fallen snow. (Ages 3–6)

## Folklore, Mythology, and Traditional Literature

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**Del Negro, Janice M.** *Willi and the Wind*. Illustrated by Heather Solomon. Marshall Cavendish, 2005. 40 pages (trade 0-7614-5232-X, \$16.95)

When the north wind takes a holiday, the resulting drought brings hard times to Willi and her big sister. After a mischievous gust blows the last of the cornmeal from her bowl, Willi takes things into her own hands. Boldly paying a visit to Old Windy, Willi insists that the capricious wind return her cornmeal. Instead, Old Windy offers a trade: in place of the cornmeal he gives Willi a magical handkerchief that provides all the food and drink one could need. Unknown to Willi, a thieving innkeeper steals the hanky during her return trip. Assuming the wind has tried to cheat her, Willi marches straight back to his door and demands fair play. Again the wind gives Willi a magical item, and again the greedy innkeeper nabs it on the sly. It's not until the third cycle of visits that Willi wises up to the innkeeper's tricks, and cleverly turns the table on the crook. Based on the Norwegian folktale "The Lad Who Went to the North Wind," Janice Del Negro's new version is a satisfying tale of one girl's brave problem-solving, enhanced by Heather Solomon's whimsical mixed-media illustrations. (Ages 5–8)

**Hurston, Zora Neale.** *Lies and Other Tall Tales*. Adapted and illustrated by Christopher Myers. HarperCollins, 2005. 40 pages (trade 0-06-000655-2, \$15.99; lib 0-06-000656-0, \$16.89)

From the first words of its scintillating introduction, *Lies and Other Tall Tales* is a linguistic delight. Back in the day when liars "could tell a lie so good, you didn't even want to know the truth" Zora Neale Hurston's work as an anthropologist took her back to her roots in the south, where she collected, among other things, the unique comparative lies told in African

American communities in a tradition called “playing the dozens.” Today, playing the dozens “includes mama jokes and humorous dissing” Christopher Myers explains in his artist’s note that concludes this collection of some of those distinctive and funny turns of phrase Hurston gathered. “I seen a man so ugly he can go behind a jimson weed and hatch monkeys. . . The tallest man I ever seen could stand knee deep in hell and shake hands with Gabriel.” In addition to his lively verbal contributions in the introduction and artist’s note, Myers provide a distinctive visual interpretation to each of the lies and tall tales presented in a singular volume that grounds exchanges familiar to many older children and young adults today in historical and cultural traditon. (Ages 10–15)

**Johnson-Davies, Denys. *Goha the Wise Fool. Sewing by Hany El Saed Ahmed from drawings by Hag Hamdy Mohamed Fattouh. U. S. edition: Philomel, 2005. 40 pages (trade 0–399–24222–8, \$16.99)***

Across the Middle East, stories are told about Goha, a little man who is sometimes foolish, sometimes wise, sometimes a trickster. They have been passed down for centuries. Writer and translator Denys Johnson-Davies retells fifteen classic Goha stories in this witty, amusing collection. When a friend sees Goha riding his donkey while carrying a basket laden with fruit on his shoulders, he asks why Goha does not rest the basket in front of him on the donkey. “Isn’t it enough that the poor animal is carrying me?” Goha replies. “The least I can do is to carry the basket.” Often Goha’s comments convey truths about living a good and honest life. At other times he uses humor and humility to get the best of those who would trick him or do him wrong. The illustrations for this delightful, handsome volume are hand-sewn tapestries drawn by Ham Hamdy Mohamed Fattouh and sewn by his nephew, Hany El Saed Ahmed. Both are tentmakers in Cairo’s Old Islamic Quarter. Their work captures both Goha’s innocence and also his droll sense of humor. (Ages 8–14)

**Marcantonio, Patricia Santos. *Red Ridin’ in the Hood and Other Cuentos. Illustrated by Renato Alarcão. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. 185 pages (0–374–36241–6, \$16.00)***

Eleven well-known folk and fairy tales get a Latino look and feel in Patricia Santos Marcantonio’s delightful retellings. In “Red Ridin’ in the Hood,” smart young Roja is taking a shortcut down Forest Street when “Up rolled a glossy brown low-rider Chevy with licks of flame painted on the hood. It jolted up and down, the hydraulics making the driver’s large, hairy ears bounce.” “Emperor’s New Clothes” is set at Emiliano Zapata high school, where the coolest senior, Emperador Gómez, delights in putting others down for their lack of style. And when the “Three Chicharrones” go into real estate, a hungry dealmaker named Dinero Martinez is determined to cheat each one in turn out of everything he has. Many of Marcantonio’s fresh, lively stories are funny, but there are touching tales as well, and all remain true to the spirit of the originals. Each story features several mood-enhancing black-and-white illustrations by Renato Alarcão. (Ages 8–12)



**Taback, Simms.** *Kibitzers and Fools: Tales My Zayda Told Me.* Viking, 2005. 40 pages (0-670-05955-2, \$16.99)

Thirteen stories have everything from mild, tongue-in-cheek humor to laugh-out-loud outrageousness in Simms Taback's entertaining collection of Yiddish tales. Taback uses Yiddish words and phrases to liberally flavor his retellings. Some of the Yiddish words may prove surprisingly familiar, from "kibitzer" to "klutz" to "cockamamie." Oy vey! Taback manages to playfully define each Yiddish word in context without interrupting the flow of his storytelling. All seriousness aside, he matches the tone of his narrative with humorous illustrations that both pay tribute to and poke lighthearted fun at the Eastern European culture out of which these spirited stories came. (Ages 6-9)

## Historical People, Places, and Events

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**Bartoletti, Susan Campbell.** *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow.* Scholastic Nonfiction, 2005. 176 pages (trade 0-439-35379-3, \$19.95)

Adolf Hitler not only saw youth as Germany's future but knew they could play an important role in the present. The Hitler Youth was formed in 1926, offering children and teens in a struggling Germany a sense of purpose, as well as "excitement, adventure, and new heroes to worship." Author Susan Campbell Bartoletti looks at the lives of twelve children and teens who were members of the Hitler Youth. Some of them joined in spite of their parents' misgivings or disapproval: it was the thing to do (as long as you weren't Jewish or otherwise excluded). To *not* join was a stigma difficult to overcome. As she follows each of the twelve youth, Bartoletti shows how some remained loyal to Hitler, even turning in family members, while others, as they matured, began to question the Nazis and even to work actively against them, joining existing resistance efforts or establishing their own. Among the latter were Inge, Hans, and Sophie Scholl of the White Rose Movement, and Rudi Wobbe, who secretly listened to foreign broadcasts and distributed anti-Nazi leaflets. Bartoletti's carefully researched, fascinating narrative is a compelling work of non-fiction. She provides extensive documentation in a volume that not only informs but also inspires readers to ask difficult questions about choices they may face in their own lives. (Ages 13-18)

**Blumenthal, Karen.** *Let Me Play: The Story of Title IX, the Law that Changed the Future of Girls in America.* Atheneum, 2005. 152 pages (trade 0-689-85957-0, \$17.95)

With so many girls and young women today playing competitive sports or pursuing whatever field of study that interests them, it's no doubt difficult for them to fathom how different their lives would have been had they been growing up in the United States before the law called Title IX. Passed in 1972, Title IX bans educational institutions that receive federal funding from treating boys and girls differently. Karen Blumenthal's fascinating,

well-researched history of Title IX is packed with engaging personal stories of athletes, politicians, and everyday girls and women who grew up before, during, and after the fight to legislate and enforce it. Blumenthal relates how this “modest little law” has become a force to be reckoned with thanks to advocates who have fought for the chance to show how much muscle it really has. In doing so, she shows how Title IX was both the result of and fueled by sweeping social change that continues to be inspiring. (Ages 11–18)

**Bolden, Tonya.** *Cause: Reconstruction America, 1863–1877.* Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. 144 pages (trade 0–375–82795–1, \$19.95; lib. 0–375–92795–6, \$21.99)

The period known as Reconstruction that followed the U.S. Civil War saw a nation that had been torn in two struggling with the question of how its disparate halves could be politically reunited. It was a question complicated by myriad viewpoints of politicians and others in power on issues as divergent as civil and voting rights for African Americans, suffrage for women, and the treatment of Native peoples as westward expansion continued. At its heart, it was a question complicated by the bigotry, racism, and sexism that in large part defined predominant attitudes of the day. There were heroes, from some of the black politicians who eagerly and courageously ran successfully for elected office in the South, to a handful of elected leaders and activists in the North who fought for reforms that are progressive even today. And there were scoundrels, from President Andrew Johnson, who had no love for the idea of free blacks, to those who established local and regional vigilante groups that would eventually morph into the Ku Klux Klan. Writing about President Johnson stumping for Democratic Congressional candidates, in which his speech touched on the “evils” of the Fourteenth Amendment, author Tonya Bolden notes, “Back then, it was tacky for the president to engage in overtly political campaign speeches.” Bolden’s animated account of the political and social upheaval of that time is fascinating. She enlivens her already compelling subject matter with prose that is refreshingly lively, expressive, and revealing. (Ages 12–16)

**Bryant, Jen.** *Music for the End of Time.* Illustrated by Beth Peck. Eerdmans, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–8028–5229–7, \$17.00)

During World War II, composer Olivier Messiaen was a soldier in the French army when he was captured by the Germans and held as a prisoner of war. When he learned of Olivier’s occupation, the young German officer in charge of the camp gave him permission to work on his music, eventually providing him with a broken-down piano. Three other prisoners were also musicians, and when Olivier completed the composition on which he had been working the four of them performed it for 5,000 fellow prisoners on January 15, 1941. Jen Bryant’s eloquent picture book account of the events surrounding the composition and debut performance of Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time* is set against Wisconsin artist Beth Peck’s lyrical charcoal and pastel illustrations that

beautifully balance somber tones of prison life with soaring scenes in which the music is symbolized by sweeping swaths of warm yellow and the freedom of birds in flight. (Ages 6–9)

**Currier, Katrina Saltonstall. *Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain*. Illustrated by Gabhor Utomo. Angel Island Association, 2005. 39 pages (trade 0-9667352-7-7, \$16.95; pbk. 0-9667352-4-2, \$10.95)**

Published by the Angel Island Association, *Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain* is based loosely on the life Albert Kai Chong, who traveled here from China on the S.S. *Hoover* in 1934 to join his father, who had been in America for four years and wanted Kai to benefit from the opportunities he saw. Just as many immigrants who came through Ellis Island feared being sent back before ever stepping foot on the U.S. mainland, the same was true for those arriving at Angel Island on the west coast. On the boat, young Kai worries about what will happen when he arrives in America, where his father is waiting. His fears are well-grounded: he is detained for six weeks on Angel Island near San Francisco before he is finally granted an interview and cleared to join his father. It is a tense and difficult time for the boy, aptly echoed by the somber tone of the watercolor illustrations. Like so many thousands of others, Kai's hopes rest on making it all the way to the mainland and into America. An informative afterword provides additional information on Angel Island and on Albert Kai Chong, including photographs. (Ages 8–12)

**Deem, James M. *Bodies From the Ash: Life and Death in Ancient Pompeii*. Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 50 pages (trade 0-618-47308-4, \$16.00)**

The eruption of Mt. Vesuvius and the destruction of the bustling city of Pompeii are brought to life in this fascinating exploration of the bodies that have been found and the stories they tell. Unlike other Pompeii stories, which explain the tectonics involved in the great disaster, *Bodies from the Ash* focuses on human and cultural life in Pompeii. It documents the painstaking recovery and interpretation of artifacts that were ironically preserved by the very heat that killed the citizens. James Deem's book is stuffed with photos of archaeological sites and artifacts, as well as maps and artwork that serve as primary source documents. He explains how plaster casts are made of preserved bodies and some of the basic science that goes into the identifying and cataloging remains. Based on the location of certain bodies, the clothes that they were wearing, and the angle at which their bones were crushed, archaeologists and historians can tell an amazing amount of information about the homes and the people in them, including their class, their health, and exactly what they might have been doing at the moment the volcano blew. (Ages 9–14)

**Giblin, James Cross. *Good Brother, Bad Brother: The Story of Edwin Booth and John Wilkes Booth*. Clarion, 2005. 256 pages (trade 0-618-09642-6, \$22.00)**

John Wilkes Booth was the man who killed Abraham Lincoln. Edwin Booth was the brother of the man who killed Lincoln. While this may be

historically true, it is also incomplete shorthand. James Cross Giblin spells out the lives of these two fascinating brothers in this captivating volume. Both were actors, the sons of a legendary figure in American theater. One would follow his father's footsteps and become a theater legend in his own right; the other would become one of the greatest villains in U.S. history. Giblin follows each of the brothers across America as they pursued their acting careers. While both displayed dramatic and sometimes impulsive behavior in their youth, Edwin, much older than John, went from generally reliable to steadfast as he aged. John went from impulsive to hotheaded to irrational as tensions between the North and South mounted prior to and during the Civil War. While not political, Edwin was a quiet supporter of Lincoln and the North; John a vehement defender of the South. How did two brothers turn out so differently? Giblin doesn't answer what is, perhaps, an unanswerable question, but through his exhaustive research that draws on many primary sources, he does give some insight into the lives and minds of these two influential men. (Ages 12–7)

**Giovanni, Nikki. *Rosa*. Illustrated by Bryan Collier. Henry Holt, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–8050–7106–7, \$16.95)**

Nikki Giovanni's tribute to Rosa Parks grounds Parks's legendary stand against racism in believable details that reveal a hardworking woman who was ready for change. The story opens with Rosa at work at her seamstress job. "Some days she would skip lunch to finish on time." But she left early on December 1, 1955, and at the bus stop "she fiddled in her pocket for the dime so that she would not have to ask for change." Giovanni's narrative covers the tense moments that saw Rosa refusing to give up her seat and then waiting for the arrest that she knew was inevitable. And it describes what happened next when the black people of Montgomery heard about Rosa's arrest: the members of the Women's Political Council who used the stencil maker, printer, and paper of Alabama State University without permission to make posters, and the boycott that thrust Martin Luther King, Jr., into the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement. Bryan Collier's distinctive paintings are full of powerful images, not the least of which is the light-filled face of Rosa Parks. (Ages 6–10)

**Jurmain, Suzanne. *The Forbidden Schoolhouse: The True and Dramatic Story of Prudence Crandall and Her Students*. Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 150 pages (trade 0–618–47302–5, \$18.00)**

In 1831, Prudence Crandall opened a boarding school for girls in Canterbury, Connecticut. Around the same time, she happened to read a copy of William Lloyd Garrison's abolitionist newspaper the *Liberator* and was so horrified by its accounts of slavery that she was determined to do something to make a difference. That something, she decided, would be to educate young black women in the north so they could become teachers and help others. Prudence made the decision to accept black pupils at her school without realizing what an uproar it would cause in her

community and state, but her commitment never wavered as she battled over the next four years to keep her school open. Laws were passed to try to stop her. She was threatened and jailed. But she triumphed over the law and ignored the threats, continuing to teach the young black women who came from surrounding states for the opportunity to learn. It was only when the racism and bigotry led to violence that put her students in danger that Prudence finally relented, closing her school in May, 1835. Suzanne Jurmain's riveting account of this steadfast woman and the students who were brave enough to study with her is inspiring. Jurmain mistakenly fails to clarify that the Fifteenth Amendment only gave suffrage to black men and not black women as well, but that unfortunate oversight doesn't detract from the overall value of this fascinating account. Final chapters tell what happened to Prudence after she left Connecticut, and of the state's official recognition in recent years of her important work. (Ages 12–15)

**Krinitz, Esther Nisenthal and Bernice Steinhardt. *Memories of Survival*. Hyperion, 2005. 64 pages (trade 0-7868-5126-0, \$15.99)**

Esther Nisenthal Krinitz was a Jewish girl living in Poland when the Nazis invaded her country. She and her sister were able to go into hiding, but not before they witnessed terrible brutality. They spent the duration of the war posing as Polish Catholics, always in danger in being discovered. No one else in their family survived. After the war, Esther came to America. At the age of fifty, she began to embroider scenes that illustrated the stories about her childhood and the war, which she had been telling her two daughters for as long as they could remember. She eventually created 36 panels of astonishing depth and detail, often including a brief narrative to describe the scene. Esther's embroideries and words are the heart and soul of this extraordinary book. They begin with her pastoral childhood and move through the harrowing events of the war, ending with an image of Esther, her husband, and baby daughter standing on a ship in front of the Statue of Liberty. Esther was an untrained artist with an eye for composition and a commitment to honoring memory, giving her work both beauty and great emotional weight. Esther's daughter, Bernice Steinhardt, provides an introduction to her mother's life and work as well as an additional narrative to accompany each scene. (Ages 10–18)

**Raven, Margot Theis. *Let Them Play*. Illustrated by Chris Ellison. Sleeping Bear Press, 2005. 32 pages (trade 1-58536-260-3, \$16.95)**

In Charleston, South Carolina, in 1955, there were fourteen boys eager to prove their worth on the Little League playing field. They were the Cannon Street All-Stars, the first all-black Little League All-Star team in South Carolina. The team became the South Carolina state champions and Southeastern regional champions, but by default. No white team had been willing to play them. The Cannon Street team was invited to attend—but not to play in—the Little League World Series in Pennsylvania that year. Allowed only a brief warm-up on the field, they had already won the hearts of a crowd that had read their story in the

papers and a rousing chant grew in the stands: "Let them play! Let them play!" But they weren't allowed to play. Forty-seven years later, in August, 2002, the team was welcomed back to receive the South Carolina Championship banner they'd never received. One of the Cannon Street players, now almost 60, stepped up to the plate and took a pitch, hitting a home run. He ran around the bases, "tears flowing down his face . . . for the boys they once were and the fine men they had become." Margot Theis Raven's stirring story recounts an episode from history that underscores the unfairness and injustice of racism, and illuminates the joy of triumph and change. (Ages 6–9)

**Reef, Catherine. *Alone in the World: Orphans and Orphanages in America*. Clarion, 2005. 135 pages (trade 0–618–35670–3, \$18.00)**

Catherine Reef's history of orphanages in the United States, at times heartbreaking and difficult to imagine from a contemporary perspective, is always compelling. The author tracks gradual changes in the orphanage format, from eighteenth-century almshouses for children and adults, through the demands for orphanages created by the Civil War, to the more current mission to keep children within a home environment when possible. Among the things Reef examines are evolving societal attitudes toward orphans, beginning with the desire to hide "undesirable" members of society. As the years passed, many Americans felt a moral imperative to care for the offspring of soldiers killed in combat. A firm belief that parents had the absolute right to raise their children without interference gave way to the opinion that government should intervene in the case of abuse or neglect. She describes how poverty, race, and religion played huge roles in the treatment of orphans and homeless children. A closing chapter describes the trend towards placing orphaned, neglected, and homeless children in foster care, and the implementation of systems to provide financial assistance to poor families. Despite advances, the author outlines clear deficiencies still present in modern society. A fascinating afterword describes the adult lives of seven of the orphans whose childhoods were included within the book. Frequent photographs and archival reproductions supplement the text. Detailed endnotes and a selected bibliography document the author's research. (Ages 11–15)

**Rubin, Susan Goldman. *The Flag with Fifty-Six Stars: A Gift from the Survivors of Mauthausen*. Illustrated by Bill Farnsworth. Holiday House, 2005. 40 pages (trade 0–8234–1653–4, \$16.95; pbk. 0–8234–2019–1, \$6.95)**

In early May of 1945, SS guards began fleeing Mauthausen, a Nazi concentration camp in Austria. The starving prisoners knew the Americans must be near, and a small group of them began working on a surprise for their liberators. They took white from sheets, red from Nazi banners, and blue from their own tattered jackets. They located a sewing machine and scavenged needles and thread. When Colonel Richard R. Seibel of the American forces entered Mauthausen on May 6, he was presented with their gift: an American flag. The prisoners hadn't been

certain how many stars to put on the flag, so they settled on 56. Susan Goldman Rubin did extensive research to write this moving, detailed account. In an author's note she indicates what is known for certain and what is still debated about the liberation of Mauthausen and the creation of the flag, which now is held at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. A photograph of the flag at the end of Rubin's narrative serves as a tangible reminder of how the human spirit can endure, as long as there is hope. (Ages 7–10)

**Stotts, Stuart. *Books in a Box: Lutie Stearns and the Traveling Libraries of Wisconsin*. Big Valley Press, 2005. 94 pages (trade 0-9765372-0-6, \$17.95)**

Lutie Stearns is a name that most Wisconsinites probably don't know. But she is a woman to whom we all owe a debt of gratitude for her enduring work to establish libraries for citizens across Wisconsin in the early 1900s. In this fictionalized biography, Madison author Stuart Stotts introduces young readers to this passionate and compassionate woman who was a crusader and advocate for libraries, books, and, above all, people. Working as one of the first two staff members of the Wisconsin Free Library Commission, Lutie established traveling libraries—trunks packed with a variety of reading materials for small communities that had no public library. Traveling in the sticky heat of summer or the frigid cold of winter, she went from town to town. Lutie spoke with lumberjacks and miners, farmers and store owners, men and women and children, offering each place she visited a traveling library: a revolving collection of books for anyone to borrow and return—at no cost. Stuart Stotts has imagined vivid scenes to convey aspects of Lutie's childhood in Milwaukee, when she first developed the stutter that she had all of her life, as well as scenes of her professional life, when she traveled Wisconsin and worked toward the ideal of free public libraries for all. In an author's note for young readers, Stotts talks about the questions he faced in writing a fictionalized biography, inviting children to contemplate the challenges of balancing fact and fiction. And at the story's end, he writes, "Next time you go into a library, remember Lutie Stearns. Whisper her name." Occasional archival photographs illustrate this lively volume. (Ages 8–11)

**Tavares, Matt. *Mudball*. Candlewick Press, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-7636-2387-3, \$15.99)**

In 1903, Andy Oyler was not only the shortest player on the Minneapolis Millers, he was the shortest player in the entire league. He was not a great player and would probably have been completely forgotten had it not been for the grand slam homerun he hit on a rainy day. Not much was expected of Andy Oyler but he was the last hope for the Millers, who were losing 3–0 to the St. Paul Saints in the bottom of the ninth with two outs and three men on base. But, because of the heavy rain, when Andy hit the ball, no one could see where it went, and Andy had driven in three runs and rounded the bases himself before the second baseman found the ball in a mud puddle—just two feet in front of home plate. Andy's hit—the

shortest homerun on record—has become the stuff of legends, a story passed down from generation to generation by baseball enthusiasts. Matt Tavares aptly captures both the excitement of the game and the muddiness of the field in a colorful, humorous tale from the annals of baseball. An author's note at the end documents his research into the story, which, interestingly, was not mentioned in print until 1966. (Ages 4–8)

**White, Linda Arms. *I Could Do That! Esther Morris Gets Women the Vote*. Illustrated by Nancy Carpenter. Melanie Kroupa Books / Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–374–33527–3, \$16.00)**

Esther Morris was instrumental in the fight for women's suffrage in Wyoming. An unverified story about Morris hosting a tea party in order to press the issue among influential men in Wyoming is the launching point for this captivating fictionalized account of Morris's accomplishments. The story opens in 1820, with six-year-old Esther watching her mother making tea. "I could do that," Esther says. It's a refrain repeated with variations throughout the rest of the story. Esther learns to sew a fine seam at age eight, opens her own dress shop as a young woman, and becomes a midwife when she moves to Wyoming ("I can do that."). She opposes a throng who tried to stop abolitionist meetings ("You can't do that."). She reads a proclamation encouraging all men 21 and older to vote ("It's time I did that."). And she becomes the first woman judge in the country after her local justice of the peace resigns in opposition to women's suffrage (" 'Mama, you could do that,' said her sons."). Linda Arms White's playful text is perfectly matched by Nancy Carpenter's illustrations, which include a repeated teapot motif on the endpapers. An author's note provides additional information about Esther Morris. (Ages 5–8)

## Biography and Autobiography

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**Bolden, Tonya. *Maritcha: A Nineteenth-Century American Girl*. Harry N. Abrams, 2005. 47 pages (trade 0–8109–5045–6, \$17.95)**

Tonya Bolden examines what it was like to be a member of New York City's "striving" class of blacks in the mid-1800s through the life of Maritcha Rémond Lyons. Bolden first learned about Maritcha from the brief memoir, *Memories of Yesterdays*, which the retired principal wrote in 1928. She did extensive research to uncover additional details about Maritcha's life and the times in which she lived. Maritcha was born a free black in New York. While she was growing up, her parents ran a boardinghouse and helped shelter runaway slaves from the south as part of the Underground Railroad. During the Civil War, a riot in New York City saw poor whites, upset at being drafted, turn against blacks in the city. Maritcha's home was ransacked and she and her family fled. Eventually they settled in Providence, Rhode Island. Education had been the emphasis of Maritcha's childhood. In Providence, Maritcha and her



parents had to fight the school district for her right to attend the previously all-white high school. Bolden's narrative provides an important look at the life of free blacks prior to the Civil War, an aspect of African American history that is rarely covered in books for children and teens, while highlighting the life of a remarkable young woman. The volume includes numerous photographs of Maritcha and her extended family as well as reproductions of many other historical materials. (Ages 9–14)

**Chin-Lee, Cynthia. *Amelia to Zora: Twenty-Six Women Who Changed the World*. Illustrated by Megan Halsey and Sean Addy. Charlesbridge, 2005. 32 pages (lib. 1–57091–522–9, \$15.95)**

In twenty-six brief biographical portraits, author Cynthia Chin-Lee offers children the opportunity to learn about accomplished women from many nations in many fields, and to also consider the ways childhood experiences and interests can influence what children grow up to do. Each woman is initially identified by her first name (to correspond to a letter of the alphabet) and a few words summarizing her life's work. ("N is for Nawal, medical doctor, writer, and fighter for women's rights" begins the profile of Nawal Ed Sadaawi.) Each profile starts by touching on one or more aspects of the individual's childhood that can be seen as connecting in one way or another to the work she became known for as an adult. The text then summarizes each woman's accomplishments. In this diverse and dynamic mix, a few of the women chosen have been the subject of works for children (e.g., Amelia Earhart, Helen Keller), but the majority are fresh names and faces. All of them are presented with a lively, engaging blend of Chin-Lee's narrative and Megan Halsey and Sean Addy's fascinating visual interpretation of the women's lives, such as the portrait of architect Maya Lin that includes a rubbing of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial she designed. (Ages 5–10)

**Delano, Marfé Ferguson. *Genius: A Photobiography of Albert Einstein*. National Geographic, 2005. 63 pages (trade 0–7922–9544–7, \$17.95; lib. 0–7922–9545–5, \$27.90)**

"I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious." While many might argue with Albert Einstein's modest assessment of his abilities, Marfé Delano's engaging biography clearly conveys that it was his passionate curiosity that drove him to make extraordinary discoveries about the universe. As a child bored by the rigid, rote learning emphasized in most German schools, Einstein focused his energy on the things he cared about, especially math and science. As a young adult, he worked a job in a patent office and did his scientific research in his spare time. His greatest discoveries—his two theories of relativity (yes, two—clearly explained so that the essence of each is understandable)—were made before he was 40, but he continued to pursue other theories for the rest of his life, always driven by the desire to understand. Other passions drove Einstein as well, among them pacifism and the need for tolerance. Readers will discover how Einstein saw the world, and to some extent how the world saw Einstein, in this beautifully designed volume that features many

black-and-white photographs of Einstein, often accompanied by his inspiring quotes about the nature of his beliefs, or set against the backdrop of his work. (Ages 10–13)

**Fleming, Candace. *Our Eleanor: A Scrapbook Look at Eleanor Roosevelt's Remarkable Life*. An Anne Schwartz Book / Atheneum, 2005. 192 pages (trade 0-689-86544-9, \$19.95)**

In her introduction to this lively, accessible biography, Candace Fleming states that she wanted readers to “be as delighted and intrigued” by Eleanor Roosevelt as she was. Without a doubt, *Our Eleanor* meets that goal again and again. The “loosely chronological” scrapbook style of her narrative, which includes extensive visual material, allows readers to dabble at will or to immerse themselves in this thematic exploration of Eleanor’s life. Fleming offers a host of insightful perspectives as she explores Eleanor’s unsettling childhood; her marriage to Franklin Delano Roosevelt; her years as a mother; her teaching, writing, and radio commitments; her political and diplomatic endeavors; and her post–White House life after Franklin’s death. Eleanor’s passion for social justice could make her seem larger than life, but here a very human portrait emerges. Eleanor was not immune to bitterness, hurt, or confusion, and she was someone who changed over time in both her private and public personas. Fleming doesn’t shy away from subjects such as Franklin’s infidelity, Eleanor’s sexuality, her early anti-Semitism, and her questionable success as a parent. In these and other areas, the author includes commentary from several first-person sources, but always allows room for readers to draw their own conclusions. Eleanor’s own words conclude the book, and underscore the way she lived her life as evidenced repeatedly throughout this engaging volume: “These crowded hours have been interesting and stimulating. They have, I hope, been useful. They have, at least, been lived to the hilt.” (Ages 9–14)

**Maarsen, Jacqueline van. *A Friend Called Anne*. Retold for children by Carol Ann Lee. U.S. edition: Viking, 2005. 163 pages (trade 0-670-05958-7, \$15.99)**

Jacqueline van Maarsen was Anne Frank’s best friend. “Jopie,” as Anne called her, shares memories of Anne that have not been documented previously, and also tells her own story. Jewish on her father’s side, van Maarsen was also a victim of oppression against the Jews. But just before families were being rounded up for deportation to camps, van Maarsen’s Catholic mother managed to get her and her sister removed from the rosters of Jews in living in Amsterdam. She was suddenly not Jewish anymore, and went from a life of fear and restriction to one that was free but tainted with deep sadness. Every day more and more of her friends disappeared without discussion or explanation. After the war, van Maarsen reconnected with Anne’s father, Otto Frank, and he showed her Anne’s diary and told of plans for its publication. The two shared palpable pain and tenderness, and Jacqueline and Otto Frank remained friends until his death. (Ages 10–14)

**Menchú, Rigoberta with Dante Liano. *The Girl from Chimel*. Translated from the Spanish by David Unger. Illustrated by Domi. Groundwood, 2005. 54 pages (trade 0-88899-666-7, \$16.95)**

Rigoberta Menchú is a Nobel Peace Prize winner and human rights activist who has been a critical voice for the Mayan people in Guatemala. But Menchú's focus here is on anecdotes from her childhood in the village of Chimel. "I remember it was a life of peace and harmony. We lived in tune with nature. The river bathed and entertained us. The birds filled our mornings with song." Her engaging stories of growing up paint a vivid picture of the place, the people, and a way of life now lost to her and many others. Menchú occasionally alludes to but never directly references the bitter, brutal events in Guatemala that tore that life apart. Her focus is on happier times: humorous anecdotes, family lore, and traditional tales told by her grandfather. They are memories from a childhood of safety and security and delight. Mexican artist Domi has created vibrant oil paintings imbedded with symbols of Mayan life. (Ages 8–12)

**Millman, Isaac. *Hidden Child*. Frances Foster Books / Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. 73 pages (trade 0-374-33071-9, \$18.00)**

Author/illustrator Isaac Millman and his family were living in France, where they'd emigrated from Poland, in the late 1930s. They were Jewish, and the German invasion of France in 1940 marked the start of frightening and traumatic times for young Isaac. After his father is arrested, his mother makes plans to flee the country. She and Isaac almost make it to the border before they are arrested. After a week or more in jail, Isaac sees his mother give a guard her money and jewelry and whisper something to him. "Isaac . . . go with this nice man," she tells him later. It was the last time he saw her. His mother had arranged for his escape back to Paris, where she'd made prior arrangements with a neighbor to hide him if the need arose. But when Isaac and his escort arrive back in Paris, the fearful neighbor turns Isaac away. The escort abandons him, and the little boy is alone. Isaac survives the war thanks to several kind, courageous strangers who become like family. He dedicates this book in part to one of them, Héna Sztulman, who found him on that Paris street and took him in. Héna then found a place in the country where Isaac was sheltered and loved by a widowed countrywoman for the duration of the war. Millman's gripping, emotional story is illustrated with both black-and-white family photographs and his own paintings, scrapbook-like pages that visually document many of his experiences. (Ages 8–12)

**Partridge, Elizabeth. *John Lennon: All I Want Is the Truth*. Viking, 2005. 256 pages (trade 0-670-05954-4, \$24.99)**

Even twenty-five years after his death, John Lennon's life still fascinate teens. His message of love and hope are as applicable to today's world issues as they were during his lifetime. This beautifully designed book includes an archival photograph on almost every page, some familiar and some that will be new most readers, including pictures of John as a small boy. After an introduction that presents John at the height of his fame and

influence in 1969, the chronological treatment of Lennon's life that follows portrays a boy and later a man who was brilliant and creative but also insecure. Throughout much of his life and through many roles—aspiring musician, member of the Beatles, activist, writer, artist, husband, solo artist—John Lennon's music was a way of trying to get at the essential truth. He dabbled in meditation, drug use, and various forms of psychoanalysis, often for the same reason. Lennon accomplished so many things in his short life, and teen readers will be intrigued by certain facts about him, such as his dyslexia, that have not always been publicized as much as other, more salacious, facts, such as his penchant for drugs. The extensive bibliography, source notes, acknowledgments and other end matter make this an excellent example of a soundly researched piece of nonfiction. The energy that drove John Lennon pulses in Partridge's prose. (Ages 13–17)

**Varmer, Hjørdis. *Hans Christian Andersen: His Fairy Tale Life*. Translated from the Danish by Tiina Nunnally. Illustrated by Lilian Brøgger. Groundwood, 2005. 111 pages (trade 0-88899-690-X, \$19.95)**

This biography of the legendary Danish storyteller is strikingly fresh. Offbeat illustrations, delightful descriptive chapter headings ("Chapter One: In which we hear about stories and superstition, prisoners and lunatics—and a poor boy from Odense"), and an animated narrative distinguish this vivid account of Andersen's life. A poor, awkward, but much-loved boy full of gifts and unrealistic confidence, Andersen pursued his dreams—of being an actor, a dancer, a singer, and a poet—but failed on all counts while enduring countless struggles before achieving unexpected acclaim as a storyteller. Originally published in Denmark, this intriguing volume was given the stamp of approval by the Danish Hans Christian Andersen Bicentennial 2005 committee. (Ages 10–14)

**Winter, Jonah. *Roberto Clemente: Pride of the Pittsburgh Pirates*. Illustrated by Raúl Colón. An Anne Schwartz Book / Atheneum, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-689-85643-1, \$16.95)**

This picture book biography of baseball great Roberto Clemente begins with his Puerto Rican childhood as a boy "who had very little but a fever to play and win at baseball." This drive took him from hitting empty soup cans with a guava tree branch up through the baseball hierarchy to the American major leagues and an invitation to play for the Pittsburgh Pirates. With Roberto's help, the Pirates rose from last place to World Series champions. Goaded by derogatory media remarks, Roberto Clemente pushed himself further, until he achieved the highest batting average in the National League. Even that feat didn't quell the racist insults and "it was starting to seem as if Roberto might never be respected." Clemente went on to lead his team to another World Series victory in 1971. Clemente's death in an airplane crash, while taking aid to victims of a Central American earthquake, underscores the humanitarian spirit of a man lauded as "the greatest all-around baseball player of his time, maybe of all time." Raúl Colón's warm-toned watercolor and

colored pencil illustrations capture both the tropical setting of the Puerto Rico of Clemente's youth, and the drama of the major ballparks of his adulthood. Interspersed pages of black-and-white pencil drawings add texture and visual interest to this lyrical tribute. (Ages 5–10)

**Yolen, Jane. *The Perfect Wizard: Hans Christian Andersen*. Illustrated by Dennis Nolan. Dutton, 2005. 40 pages (trade 0–525–46955–9, \$16.99)**

A picture book biography of Hans Christian Andersen blends lively writing, quotes from Andersen's stories, and artful illustration and design. Yolen weaves revealing descriptions and details into her account of Andersen's life. "Hans' genius put him at the top of the class, his strangeness at the bottom," she writes about awkward, gawky, seventeen-year-old Hans attending grammar school among children. Later, when he took the exam for university, she adds, "He was so nervous, his pen shook ink into the face of one of the examiners." Each two-page spread of this well-designed volume includes a full-page painting by Dennis Nolan illustrating a scene from Hans's life, and a detail illustration to accompany a quote from Andersen's work. (Ages 6–9)

**Yoo, Paula. *Sixteen Years in Sixteen Seconds: The Sammy Lee Story*. Illustrated by Dom Lee. Lee & Low, 2005. 32 pages (trade 1–58430–247–X, \$16.95)**

Twelve-year-old Sammy Lee could only use the public pool on Wednesdays—the one day a week it was open to people who weren't white. Sammy wanted to be an Olympic champion and believed diving was his best chance. But his parents, Korean immigrants, had big dreams for their son. His father wanted him to become a doctor and didn't support Sammy's desire. Paula Yoo's picture book biography chronicles how Sammy successfully pursued both his own and his father's dreams over the next sixteen years, despite the racism that he regularly faced. When he wasn't allowed to train regularly in the public pool, Sammy's coach dug a sand pit in his yard and Sammy dived into that. He also studied hard through high school and college and entered medical school, diving and training on the side. When the 1940 Olympics were cancelled, Sammy was sure his own dream had ended. But at the age of 28, Dr. Sammy Lee qualified for the 1948 Olympics in Helsinki and went on to become an Olympic champion. Dom Lee's sepia-toned illustrations accompany Yoo's inspiring story. (Ages 7–10)

## Contemporary People, Places, and Events

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**Cohen, Sheila.** *Mai Ya's Long Journey.* (Badger Biographies) Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2005. 80 pages (pbk. 0-87020-365-7, \$12.95)

The Wisconsin Historical Society contributes to the slowly growing, important body of literature for children about the Hmong with a profile of Mai Ya Xiong. Born in a Hmong refugee camp in Thailand in 1980, Mai Ya and her family came to the United States—settling in Madison—in 1987. The narrative touches on ways Mai Ya, her family, and other Hmong have adapted many traditional customs and practices to life in the United States. Mai Ya has worked to balance her roles as a Hmong daughter and American teen. She continues that balancing act in her adulthood. She is the first girl in her family to attend and finish college, consciously rejecting the cultural practice of marrying young, but as an adult Mai Ya has also dedicated significant time to helping Hmong children and teens feel connected to and proud of their culture. Author Sheila Cohen was Mai Ya's English as a Second Language teacher in middle school. Her opening chapters provide a concise and helpful summary of the history of the Hmong, including the role they played during the Vietnam War to aid U.S. forces and their harrowing flight from Laos in the years that followed because of the dangers of remaining. While better captioning on some of the small, black-and-white photographs included would have been helpful, and the in-context pronunciation and footnoted definitions of some words feels somewhat intrusive, this is a valuable resource nonetheless. (Ages 8–12)

**Delisle, Guy.** *Pyongyang: A Journey in North Korea.* Translated from the French by Helge Dascher. Drawn & Quarterly Books, 2005. 176 pages (trade 1-896597-89-0, \$19.95)

French Canadian animator Guy Delisle was sent by his company to North Korea to supervise the outsourcing of some artwork for a TV show. The most brilliant aspect of this account of his few months there is the format in which he chose to tell it: as a graphic novel that exposes the hypocrisy and deceit implicit in a communist country being run by a dictator. He is assigned a “guide” who is clearly keeping an eye on him and making sure he says or does no evil, and that he appropriately reveres the thousands of images of Kim Jong Il and his father the late Kim Il Sung. Guy also recognizes that he is seeing a sanitized version of Korean life: the restaurants in which he dines and the spectacles to which he is invited appear to be for Westerners only. His drawings underscore the ridiculousness of the North Korean government's pretenses, as well as its citizens' sobering lack of access to what is happening in the rest of the world. Constant, understated humor keeps the book from feeling oppressive, but the oppression Guy portrays is vivid in a beautifully designed graphic novel. (Ages 13–17)

**Kuklin, Susan. *Families*. Hyperion, 2006. 36 pages (trade 0-7868-0822-5, \$15.99)**

A vibrant photo-essay looks at fifteen diverse families in New York City through the eyes of their children. In her note to readers, author/photographer Susan Kuklin notes that some children chose to be interviewed alone, and some with their siblings or parents present. All had definite opinions about what they wanted to share and also how they wanted their families to be visually portrayed. Kuklin invited each child to also choose one of their existing family photographs "to help describe who they are." The families profiled have both heterosexual and same-sex parent(s); monoracial, biracial, and multiracial heritages; single children and multiple children; and represent a range of religions and religious practices. The voices of the children Kuklin interviewed are fresh, funny, observant, touching, and, above all, honest in this buoyant volume. (Ages 7-11)

**Kyuchukov, Hristo and Ian Hancock. *A History of the Romani People*. Boyds Mills Press, 2005. 32 pages (trade 1-56397-962-4, \$19.95)**

Hristo Kyuchukov and Ian Hancock's collaboration presents an intriguing look at the history of the Romani people as well as their lives in contemporary times. Often known as Gypsies, the Romani's origins have been traced to northern India, and many of their traditional customs still reflect the Indian practices and Hindu beliefs. But across centuries, Romani emigrated throughout Asia and Europe, North and South America, Africa, and Australia. Today the Romani people are on every continent: they are people of many nationalities who practice a range of religions. While some still live in the traditional Romani way, traveling from place to place to make a living, most no longer do. But many, travelers or not, continue to work to keep their language and culture alive. The narrative is divided into brief essays on a range of subjects relating to the Romani, and accompanied by an abundance of photographs featuring both contemporary and historical subjects. (Ages 8-12)

**Ruurs, Margriet. *My Librarian Is a Camel: How Books Are Brought to Children around the World*. Boyds Mills Press, 2005. 32 pages (trade 1-59078-093-0, \$16.95)**

Not just camels, but elephants, buses, bikes, boats, and wheelbarrows are also among the unique way reading materials are delivered to children around the world through library and literacy initiatives in their countries. Margriet Ruurs's fascinating photodocumentary looks at programs in thirteen different countries, including books delivered by wheelbarrow on a beach in Australia, by mail to an Inuit village in Canada, by camels in Kenya, and by elephants in Thailand. There are floating libraries in Finland and Indonesia, a donkey-drawn cart in Zimbabwe, and a truck in Azerbaijan. Each two-page spread features a different country and includes

a narrative about the program, photographs, and a fact box about the nation. (Ages 5–9)

**Winter, Jeanette. *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq*. Harcourt, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–15–205445–6, \$16.00)**

Alia Muhammad Baker is the librarian of Basra, Iraq. “Her library is a meeting place for all who love books. They discuss matters of the world and matters of the spirit. Until now—now they talk only of war.” In 2003, with the U.S. invasion of Iraq imminent, Alia wondered what would happen to the books in Basra’s Central Library if their city was attacked. When the governor refused her request to move the books to a safe place, she began smuggling volumes out of the library each night after work. When the war reached Basra and bombs began to fall, Alia frantically called upon nearby neighbors of the library to help her save more books while buildings in the city burned. Over the course of one night, they packed books in crates, sacks, and curtains, passing them over a seven-foot wall to hide them in the restaurant next door. In all, they saved 30,000 volumes, which Alia later hid in her own house and the houses of friends. There they remain, while Alia dreams of peace, and a new library for Basra. Jeanette Winter’s riveting picture book account of the real-life, heroic efforts of Alia and others to save the books of Basra’s library combines a tense, spare, present-tense narrative with stirring visual images that suggest the panic, destruction, and despair of war, but always in the context of the hope that grows from the actions and dreams of individuals determined to make a positive difference. (Ages 8–11)

**Yan, Ma. *The Diary of Ma Yan: The Struggles and Hopes of a Chinese Schoolgirl*. Edited and introduced by Pierre Haski. Translated from the French by Lisa Appignanesi. Originally translated from the Mandarin by He Yanping. U.S. edition: HarperCollins, 2005. 166 pages (trade 0–06–076496–1, \$15.99; lib. 0–06–076497–X, \$16.89)**

A French journalist originally helped publish the diary of Ma Yan, a fourteen-year-old Chinese girl who struggled to stay in school and receive an education under grueling circumstances. Ma Yan is the first in her family to have a real chance at getting out of the poverty and backbreaking work that has beaten down her family for generations. Her parents go to great lengths to be able to afford to keep her in school, and she lives in constant fear of failing and dishonoring her parents’ sacrifice. Her insight is incredibly astute, her gratitude and love for her parents is powerful. Along with the typical stress of being a student in a rigorous school, Ma Yan also must deal with the guilt that she is not contributing money to the family, and almost constant hunger and cold. American readers will be shocked at how much thinking Ma Yan had to do on so few calories! Photographs of Ma Yan, her family, and the rural Chinese community in which she lives are included in this important volume. Since it’s original publication in a French newspaper, funds have been raised to help children like Ma Yan stay well-fed and clothed and in school. Ma Yan writes in a letter to her French supporters that “I really



understand what joy in this world means: friendship. . . You said that you could help other children from families in need. . . Let them too complete their schooling and fulfill their dreams. All my thanks.” (Ages 9–14)

**Zenatti, Valérie.** *When I Was a Soldier: A Memoir.* Translated from the French by Adriana Hunter. U.S. edition: Bloomsbury, 2005. 235 pages (trade 1–58234–978–9, \$16.95)

Valérie Zenatti’s memoir of her two-year compulsory service in the Israeli army offers contemporary, accessible insight into an experience foreign to most American teenagers. A relatively recent French immigrant to Israel, Valérie approaches her military service with trepidation, as it marks her transition to adulthood and a separation from high school friends. Her experiences in training and on the job in military intelligence are interspersed with details of her personal life, including evolving relationships and a painful breakup with a boyfriend. As Valérie matures, she struggles to balance her ambiguous feelings about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with her dedication to her job. Realistically, she never arrives at a perfect solution. (Ages 15–18)

## Issues in Today’s World

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**Frank, Mitch.** *Understanding the Holy Land: Answering Questions about the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.* Viking, 2005. 152 pages (trade 0–670–06032–1, \$17.99)

Mitch Frank explains the complex issues and history surrounding the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in clear and balanced prose. Using a question-and-answer format, and a generous amount of maps, sidebars, photographs, and end matter, the author offers perspectives that reflect all sides. He explains the history of the region, which is critical to understanding what is happening today, and the religious, political, and economic interests that have driven the two sides further and further into a conflict that, according to Frank, seems to have no fair end in sight. In the final chapter called “Why is peace so hard?” Frank notes that “Understanding why there is a conflict between Israelis and Palestinians does not make it easy to find a solution to the struggle. It only raises more complicated questions.” (Ages 12–17)

**Toft, Kim Michelle.** *The World That We Want.* U.S. edition: Charlesbridge, 2005. 32 pages (trade 1–58089–114–4, \$16.95; pbk. 1–58089–115–2, \$6.95)

“This is the air that circles the world that we want. This is the rain forest that filters the air that circles the world that we want.” Kim Michelle Toft’s cumulative narrative describes the interconnectedness of living things in the natural world. A river weaves through the rain forest, a mangrove follows the river, a beach meets the mangrove, and so on, each one contributing to the overall health and well-being of the others and our

planet as a whole. Toft's stunning illustrations were hand-painted on silk. She uses shining gold and deep, vibrant colors to create lush, idyllic scenes of nature's beauty and bounty, including a sweeping spread spanning four pages in a fold-out. A section following the narrative identifies and defines elements discussed and pictured. (Ages 5–10)

## Understanding Oneself and Others

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**Edwards, Michelle.** *Stinky Stern Forever.* (A Jackson Friends Book) Harcourt, 2005. 49 pages (trade 0–15–216389–1, \$14.00)

Each of the first three volumes in Michelle Edwards's Jackson Friends series has featured a different one of three best friends as the main character: Pa Lia, who is Hmong; Howie, who is African American; and Calliope, who is white. Over the course of all three stories, their classmate Matthew "Stinky" Stern has been the subject of much frustration, and the occasional moment of delightful surprise. Stinky Stern is almost always teasing, taunting, or otherwise annoying someone in their second grade classroom. But at the start of *Stinky Stern Forever*, Stinky is hit by a car after school and killed. In class the next day, Mrs. Fennessy invites the children to share memories or stories or thoughts about what happened if they wish: He had a stuffed hedgehog named Harold in preschool. Remember how he and his mom played the bagpipes in the talent show? His middle name was Velvel and he didn't want anyone to know. For Pa Lia, who witnessed the accident and had been angry at Stinky the day before, listening to her classmates helps her work through her own sad feelings. Readers who have read the other Jackson Friends books may be navigating their way through feelings of loss, just like Pa Lia and the other kids in her class. Regardless, Michelle Edwards's remarkably deft and sensitive story offers room to grieve but also to smile as she acknowledges the many and sometimes conflicting feelings that can arise when someone dies. (Ages 6–8)

**Ellis, Deborah.** *Our Stories, Our Songs: African Children Talk About AIDS.* Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2005. 104 pages (trade 1–55041–913–7, \$18.95)

There are 11.5 million children in sub-Saharan Africa who have been orphaned because of AIDS. Deborah Ellis traveled to Malawi and Zambia to talk to some of them, and the 50 or so voices presented here—of children, teens, and several adults who have stepped in to care for orphaned children—put faces and stories to that staggering number. Through their words so much is revealed: fear and pain and suffering, but also hope and courage and resilience. Many of these children and teens have been managing adult responsibilities for much of their lives—taking care of sick or dying parents, responsible for younger siblings, or completely on their own. Most have benefited from the work of organizations and individuals in their communities who have taken on the

overwhelming challenge of tackling some of the issues that go hand in hand with the AIDS crisis: they provide meals or a safe place to sleep for kids who would otherwise be on the street, or they run support groups and provide AIDS education to battle ignorance and the stigma associated with the disease—a stigma reflected in the comments of many of the children and teens, who often don't know what their parents died from. The children and teens dream of becoming nurses, doctors, teachers, accountants, or actors in the future. They dream of being good people. The clarity and strength of their voices makes this a heartening book, even as the picture it paints of the world in which they live is sobering. Each section of interviews opens with one or more quotes—from politicians, activists, poets, and others—that underscore how this crisis is one that requires not only compassion, but also resources and cooperation on a scale that has yet to be seen. (Ages 11–18)

**Rosen, Michael.** *Michael Rosen's Sad Book*. Illustrated by Quentin Blake. U.S. edition: Candlewick Press, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-7636-2597-3, \$16.99)

Michael Rosen explores sadness and grief in a picture book that validates the intensity and unpredictability of emotions that every child has known to some degree, for one reason or another. In his highly personal narrative, sensitively illustrated by Quentin Blake, Rosen shares how he felt after the death of his son, Eddie. Sadness makes him do crazy things sometimes, or bad things. Sometimes sadness makes him feel bad about himself. Sometimes he wants to talk about his sadness. "Sometimes I don't want to talk about it. Not to anyone. No one. No one at all. I just want to think about it on my own. Because it's mine. And no one else's." Rosen's quietly charged text plumbs the depths of his sadness before turning less somber when he reflects on happier memories, like playing catch with his son. It is courageously honest, and children and teens will recognize that honesty, and find reassurance in knowing that others, too, have felt overwhelmed by the power of difficult emotions. (Ages 6–15)

## The Arts

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**Gogh, Vincent van.** *Vincent's Colors*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art / Chronicle, 2005. 40 pages (trade 0-8118-5099-4, \$14.95)

Among the things Dutch artist Vincent van Gogh described in the many letters he wrote to his brother Theo were his paintings. This book created by the Metropolitan Museum of Art presents sixteen of Vincent van Gogh's works side by side with some of the simple, often eloquent words he used to describe all or part of them in that correspondence. The paintings and their accompanying descriptions—fragments from the letters—have been arranged to create a rhyming narrative that balances his more mundane descriptions ("a window with a green shutter") with

magical ones (“twelve flowers that are light on light . . . and in my head a starry night”). Additional information about each of the paintings—which are never mundane—is provided near the volume’s end. (Ages 6–12)

**Gonyea, Mark. *A Book about Design: Complicated Doesn’t Make It Good*. Henry Holt, 2005. 144 pages (trade 0–8050–7575–5, \$18.95)**

Are you looking for a way to explain to kids why they don’t need to use every available font the next time they are creating a project on the computer? This is the book that’s up to the task. “Design is all about the perception of size, shape, and color,” writes Mark Gonyea at the start of this inviting and enlightening volume. He tackles a different aspect of design in each chapter to underscore his message: keep it simple to make it effective. Gonyea’s highly visual approach teaches basic design concepts by placing the emphasis on showing rather than telling. His primer on design teaches about color, line, shape, ratio, balance, and contrast, blending bold lines and bright colors that illustrate each concept with concise explanations in a conversational tone that implies a friendly relationship with readers. A great book for teaching visual literacy, this volume will be of special interest to art teachers, as well as kids and teens who are aspiring artists and designers. (Ages 8–18)

**Maltbie, P. I. *Picasso and Minou*. Illustrated by Pau Estrada. Charlesbridge, 2005. 32 pages (lib. 1–57091–620–9, \$15.95)**

“Night after night, Pablo Picasso gathered his brushes, paints, and canvases and painted the same thing, over and over again—pictures of sad, blue people living in a cold, blue world.” Watching Picasso is his cat, Minou, who is too diplomatic to share his opinions of the somber works, which aren’t selling. When he can no longer afford to feed Minou, Picasso puts the little cat out on the street to fend for himself. Minou’s search for food leads him to a traveling circus group camped in Montmartre. They seem to love life and gladly share their food with Minou, who makes off with a sausage that he takes back to Picasso. On the day Picasso heads to the store for more blue paint, Minou decides enough is enough and leads Picasso to the circus performers—he wants him to know their joy. In an author’s note that follows her charming story, P. I. Maltbie explains that her tale is drawn from facts blended with her own imagination. Picasso’s cat really did bring home a sausage once, but he did not introduce Picasso to the circus performers that inspired the end of his Blue Period and the start of his Rose Period. Two small reproductions of a painting from each of these periods, as well as a photograph of Picasso with Minou, accompany this fanciful story, which also touches on some of the influences in the life of a major artist. (Ages 6–9)

***Museum Shapes*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Little, Brown, 2005. 48 pages (trade 0–316–05698–7, \$16.99)**

Scenes from paintings held in the collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art feature familiar shapes that children are asked to identify. A full-

page detail from Vincent van Gogh's *Cypresses* is accompanied by the question "What shape is the moon?" A full-page detail from Kitigawa Utamaro's *Mother and Sleepy Child* is accompanied by the question "What shape is on the baby's jumper?" Each introductory question is followed by a two-page spread that features the answer (e.g., Crescent. Diamond) along with details from four additional paintings. The art that was chosen reflects many nations and cultures in a book that also features—not surprisingly—a handsome, artful overall design. (Ages 3–6)

**Orozco, José-Luis. *Rin, Rin, Rin = Do, Re, Mi*. Illustrated by David Diaz. Orchard / Scholastic, 2005. 24 pages (trade 0-439-64941-2, \$16.95; pbk. 0-439-75531-X, \$3.50)**

A young Latino boy wakes up singing and doesn't stop until it's time for bed. This bilingual picture book uses rich artwork to depict the various activities that the preschool child is engaged in: eating a meal, shopping for groceries, playing in the park. Every picture and accompanying rhyme suggests a way to be with books. A song at the end also expresses ways to play with words and sounds. While the English is much more concise than the Spanish, the spirit of fun in learning is maintained. (Ages 3–7)

**Scieszka, Jon. *Seen Art?* Illustrated by Lane Smith. The Museum of Modern Art / Viking, 2005. 48 pages (trade 0-670-05986-2, \$16.99)**

Repeated misunderstandings send a quirky little guy through the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City in search of his friend named Art. "Have you seen Art?" he asks a woman on the corner of Fifty-Third and Fifth, where he was supposed to meet his friend. "You can't miss it," she replies, pointing down the block to the museum. Figuring Art must be inside, he enters, making his way through one gallery after another. There's a lot of art, and a lot of people eager to comment on the art, but no one knows where **Art** is. "Look at that red! Look at that box of crayons inviting us in," a man standing in front of Matisse's *The Red Studio* exclaims. "I see that. No kidding. That is a lot of red. But . . . is ART here?" Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith offer a lighthearted yet informative look at the world of contemporary art in a picture book that features reproductions of more than 50 MOMA paintings and sculptures. (Ages 8–12)

## Poetry

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**Anderson, Sara. *Octopus Oyster Hermit Crab Snail: A Poem of the Sea*. Handprint Books, 2005. 32 pages (trade 1-59354-079-5, \$16.95)**

Inviting and varied shades of blue form the backdrop of Sara Anderson's "panoramic" view of the ocean offered in this picture book. They provide a rich, sometimes mysterious backdrop for the many creatures of the sea that inhabit its pages. "Under indigo swells / in cerulean seas . . ." begins the author/artist's poem cataloging a wide variety of life in the oceans and

on the shore. Short, lyrical bridges introduce each new litany of creatures. An author's note indicates Anderson was not intending to describe any one specific biosphere. Her approach was artful rather than scientific, and she has succeeded in creating a delightful visual and verbal experience for young children. (Ages 3–7)

**Carlson, Lori Marie, editor. *Red Hot Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Being Young and Latino in the United States*. Introduction by Oscar Hijuelos. Henry Holt, 2005. 160 pages (trade 0-8050-7616-6, \$14.95)**

"I'm a grafted flower that didn't / take, a Mexican without being one, / an American without feeling like one" writes poet Raquel Valle Senties in "I Am Who I Am, So What," one of 37 poems in this compelling bilingual collection that looks at many aspects of Latino experience in the United States today. The poets explore themes of language, identity, community, family, struggle, triumph, and love. Most poems are presented in both English and Spanish; a few are written as an intentional blending of the two languages. This companion volume to editor Lori Marie Carlson's outstanding earlier anthology, *Cool Salsa: Bilingual Poems on Growing Up Latino in the United States* (Henry Holt, 1994) offers an even broader perspective on the wide range of Latino voices and experiences in this country. (Ages 12–18)

**Creech, Sharon. *Who's That Baby? New-Baby Songs*. Illustrated by David Diaz. Joanna Cotler books / HarperCollins, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-06-052939-3, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-052940-7, \$16.89)**

"Who are you, baby / newly born / who's this little babe?" The opening, title poem of this picture book collection asks this and many other questions. In response, Sharon Creech offers fifteen perspectives on what much-loved babies *may* see and hear and think and feel as the adults in their lives cuddle them and coo at them, play with them and read to them, sing to them and sway with them, and, above all, surround them with love. Creech's poems, playful and tender, have been illustrated with great warmth and touches of whimsy by David Diaz in this lovely volume. (Ages birth–3)

**Dawes, Kwame. *I Saw Your Face*. Illustrated by Tom Feelings. Afterword by Jerry Pinkney. Dial, 2005. (trade 0-8037-1894-2, \$16.99)**

For years, the late artist Tom Feelings made sketches of the African diaspora as reflected in faces that he saw when he traveled all over the world. A child in Louisiana who looks like a child in Ghana; a face in Birmingham that could be found on the streets in Suriname. One of the last projects before his death in 2003 was a collaboration with the poet Kwame Dawes to create this book, which speaks both visually and verbally to the shared connections and history of people of African descent. Feelings's sketches—line drawings of so many beautiful faces—are reproduced in black, brown, or blue. They are set on pages of blue or tan side by side with Dawes's words. "I see your face look back at me / Full of ancient stories and dreams / That tell me we have traveled far / And

survived the journeys well.” A foreword by Dawes tells the history of his collaboration with Feelings on this project, and an afterword by Jerry Pinkney speaks to Tom Feelings’s contributions to the worlds of art and children’s literature. (Ages 8–14)

**Janeczko, Paul B., selector. *A Kick in the Head: An Everyday Guide to Poetic Forms*. Illustrated by Chris Raschka. Candlewick Press, 2005. 61 pages (trade 0-7636-0662-6, \$17.99)**

“Robert Frost once remarked that poetry without rules would be like tennis without a net,” writes Paul B. Janeczko in the introduction to an informative and irresistible volume that briefly explains and clearly illustrates 29 different poetic forms. There is the simplicity of the couplet (“a two-line poem or stanza, usually rhyming”) and the complexity of the pantoum (“an interlocking series of quatrains, with lines 2 and 4 of each stanza repeated as lines 1 and 3 of the next stanza. The final stanza adds a finishing touch—as lines 2 and 4 repeat lines 1 and 3 of the *opening* stanza. Whew!”). He pairs each short explanation of a form with one or two accessible poems from a wide range of poets. From the ode (Gary Soto’s “Ode to Pablo’s Tennis Shoes”) to sonnets (Shakespeare, and April Halprin Wayland *on* Shakespeare), limericks (Edward Lear and Steven Herrick) to a list poem (Georgia Heard), Janeczko’s selections cover a wide range of poetic terrain and human emotion. Most of the examples follow the rules for each form, but a few playfully alter them. An invaluable resource for classrooms, the 29 types of poetry offer inspiration for readers and writers of any age and temperament. Longer notes on each form are provided at the end of the volume, while Chris Raschka’s breezy watercolor, ink, and torn-paper illustrations provide visual accompaniment to the poem(s) on each page spread. (Age 9 and older)

**Kennedy, Caroline, selector. *A Family of Poems: My Favorite Poetry for Children*. Illustrated by Jon J Muth. Hyperion, 2005. 143 pages (trade 0-7868-5111-2, \$19.95)**

This elegant, accessible anthology offers children and families a rich resource for poetry reading across the years. In her introduction to the volume, Caroline Kennedy shares the importance that poetry played in her own family when she was growing up: she and her brother were encouraged to write a poem or chose a poem to share for holidays and family celebrations, a tradition she continues with her own children. She has included many family favorites in this collection, along with a wide range of others arranged into sections titled “About Me,” “That’s So Silly!” “Animals,” “The Seasons,” “The Seashore,” “Adventure,” and “Bedtime.” Among the poets included are William Blake, Gwendolyn Brooks, Sandra Cisneros, e.e. cummings, Emily Dickinson, Robert Frost, Langston Hughes, A. A. Milne, Pablo Neruda, Christina Rossetti, Wallace Stevens, Dylan Thomas, William Carlos Williams, William Wordsworth, and many others. Jon J Muth’s graceful watercolor illustrations extend the beauty and accessibility of this singular volume. (Ages 5–16)

**Moore, Lillian. *Mural on Second Avenue and Other City Poems*. Illustrated by Roma Karas. Candlewick Press, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-7636-1987-6, \$16.99)**

Seventeen poems describe sights and sounds in a city neighborhood across the seasons. "Winter dark comes early / mixing afternoon / and night. / Soon / there's a comma of a moon, / and each streetlight / along the / way / puts its period / to the end of the day." (From "Winter Dark.") Lillian Moore's observant poems are filled with child-friendly imagery, while Roma Karas has created deeply hued oil paintings of inviting urban scenes. (Ages 7-10)

**Nelson, Marilyn. *A Wreath for Emmett Till*. Illustrated by Philippe Lardy. Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 40 pages (trade 0-618-39752-3, \$17.00)**

Marilyn Nelson's tremendous achievement in this heroic crown of sonnets is to turn pain beyond words into poetry that minces no words and spares no image of brutality, even as it offers enlightenment. There can be no words to soften the reality of what happened to Emmett Till, the fourteen-year-old African American boy from Chicago who was lynched by whites in Mississippi when he was visiting relatives in 1955. For poet Nelson, choosing a heroic crown of sonnets to write about Emmett Till's death was a way of insulating herself from the pain of that event as she focused on the strict needs of the form. But the pain and horror is there, pouring out in stark and startling images. In one poem, Nelson writes of the tree from which Emmett was hung. It might speak of the "strange fruit that still ghosts its reverie" were it not "slowly dying, / pierced by the screams of a shortened childhood." In others, she writes of Mamie Till as a "mother of sorrows" who sent her chubby cheeked boy off on the train with a note for the conductor, and received a "bloated body" in return. With lines like these, Nelson pierces the hearts of readers. But she also engages their minds. Each sonnet is a fascinating puzzle, providing references to discover and allusions to ponder. The voices of Billie Holiday, William Shakespeare, Walt Whitman, and others echo across the pages, as do other earth-shattering events in history, such as the destruction of the World Trade Center. These extraordinary poems are ripe for discussion and discovery. Young adults can strive to unravel their mysteries (Nelson provides notes on each poem for those who want a little help), and locate their own truths within and beyond the words. In doing so, they may also find those moments where hope merges with despair. Philippe Lardy's visual images are a stunning accompaniment to Nelson's words, offering yet other levels of symbolism to contemplate in this complex and unforgettable volume. (Age 14 and older)

**Nye, Naomi Shihab. *A Maze Me: Poems for Girls*. Illustrated by Terre Maher. Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 128 pages (trade 0-06-058189-1, \$16.99; lib. 0-06-058190-5, \$17.89)**

My mind / is always / open. / I don't think / there's even / a door." Naomi Shihab Nye's original poetry and anthologies published for children and teens always offer a fresh, original, affirming view of life and the world in



which we live. In *A Maze Me*, Nye also acknowledges a deep-seated desire: to be singular but not alone, an idea that is both comfort and contradiction. For many girls on the brink or in the midst of adolescence, it may seem an impossibility to achieve, perhaps even too scary to contemplate. This volume can serve as poems of encouragement to girls for cultivating their own way of being in the world, and as poems of discovery for seeing how many truths they share with others. Nye writes in her introduction that people always ask: "What do you want to be? . . . They don't ask who or how you want to be. . . I wanted to be curious, interested, interesting, hopeful—and a little bit odd was okay too. . . If you have a voice and aren't afraid to spend it . . . if you will ask the questions pressing against your forehead from the inside . . . you'll be okay." The 72 original, accessible poems she presents here are on a wide range of topics, from a first crush to babysitting, to the sadness of leaving childhood behind. There are many moments of revelation, connection, and contemplation prompted by observations of the everyday and the extraordinary, whether it's a pink ribbon found on a hiking trail or waiting expectantly in the hopes that a meteor will blaze across the sky. "We want the stars to surprise us / We want to be / amazed." (Ages 11–15)

**Sidman, Joyce.** *Song of the Water Boatman and Other Pond Poems.* Illustrated by Beckie Prange. Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–618–13547–2, \$16.00)

Spring peeper, wood duck, predaceous diving beetle, green darner dragon fly. These and other creatures (and cattails!) are the stuff that poems are made of in Joyce Sidman's playful, lyrical collection. "Brown velvet plumes / bob jauntily. On command, / our slim, waving arrows / rush toward the sun." (From "The Season's Campaign.") Sidman's keen-eyed poems offer acute descriptions of a world unto itself as she examines a pond ecosystem across the seasons. Beckie Prange's hand-colored woodcuts add to the beauty of this lovely volume. (Ages 5–9)

## Concept Books

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**Freyman, Saxton.** *Food for Thought: The Complete Book of Concepts for Growing Minds.* Arthur A. Levine Books / Scholastic, 2005. 61 pages (trade 0–439–11018–1, \$14.95)

With a few well-placed knife cuts and the addition of black-eyed peas for eyes, the creator of *Food for Thought* transforms fruits and vegetables into a menagerie of animals and everyday objects. Green pepper frogs, banana giraffes, and a sweet potato guinea pig are just a few of the edible sculptures used to illustrate simple concepts for young children. Five chapters highlight shapes, colors, numbers, letters, and opposites, in a format guaranteed to amuse adults while entertaining children. (Ages 2–6)

**Guy, Ginger Foglesong. *Siesta*. Illustrated by René King Moreno. Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-06-056061-4, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-056063-0, \$16.89)**

This bilingual color concept book for preschoolers follows a sister and brother duo as they gather the items necessary for a backyard outing. “¿Qué necesitamos? What do we need? / Mi mochila azul. My blue backpack. / ¿Algo más? Anything else? Mi chaqueta roja. My red jacket.” The alternating Spanish and English sentences are easily readable by speakers of either language. Warm illustrations invite readers to join in the adventure, while visually reinforcing the featured color of each two-page spread. (Ages 2–5)

**Seeger, Laura Vaccaro. *Walter Was Worried*. A Neal Porter Book / Roaring Brook Press, 2005. 32 pages (trade 1-59643-068-0, \$15.95)**

“Walter was worried when . . . the sky grew dark.” Despite the clouds that are gathering, Laura Vaccaro Seeger’s picture book *Walter Was Worried* isn’t really about the weather. But there’s plenty of weather happening in this playful book that features everything from thunder, fog, and rain to snow, blue skies, and sun over the course of 32 pages. Not only is Walter worried, Shirley is shocked, Frederick is frightened, Ursula is upset, Elliot is ecstatic. . . the ever-changing weather elicits a range of (alliterated!) responses among various children. Author/illustrator Seeger turns these into clever visual wordplays: she’s created portraits of each child’s face in which their features (eyes, nose mouth, eyebrows, an occasional wrinkle of concern) are comprised of the letters in the word that describes the way they are feeling. (Ages 3–7)

**Shannon, George. *White Is for Blueberry*. Illustrated by Laura Dronzek. Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-06-029275-X, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-029276-8, \$16.89)**

“Pink is for crow . . . White is for blueberry . . . Yellow is for pine tree . . .” George Shannon and Laura Dronzek’s inspired color concept book is like a playful guessing game that invites young readers and listeners to ponder one puzzling declaration after another. They don’t have to think about it too long, however. A simple turn of the page solves the mystery by finishing each statement, as in “White is for blueberry . . . when the blueberry is still too young to pick.” In an exemplary marriage of text and art, Shannon’s engaging ideas are enhanced and enriched by Laura Dronzek’s superb, color-saturated illustrations. Dronzek borders each statement’s introductory image, such as the plump purple-blue berry, with the color being introduced. A turn of the page reveals a scene that make the connection between color and object clear. In the case of the blueberry, she has painted a young bear cub in the midst of a thicket of green leaves and young, white, unripe berries. These and other details in the art and book design, such as the way the colors emphasized in the book are repeated on the striped endpapers, echo an idea suggested by the words: there are many surprises that the world can reveal—it’s all in how you look at it. Many children will love discovering their own unlikely

connections. Together, Shannon and Dronzek invite children to notice details, and to use their observation skills and creativity to continue to see and express things in new ways long after the covers of this book have been closed. (Ages 2–7)

## Board Books

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**Patricelli, Leslie. *Binky*. Candlewick Press, 2005. 24 pages (trade 0-7636-2364-4, \$6.99)**

**Patricelli, Leslie. *Blankie*. Candlewick Press, 2005. 24 pages (trade 0-7636-2363-6, \$6.99)**

These two engaging board books focus on typical beloved objects of young children. “Where is Binky?” is the increasingly frantic query when a missing pacifier—aka “Binky”—sends its young owner searching all corners of the house. It’s not under the couch or in the potty. Fishy doesn’t have Binky, and neither does Mommy. Tension mounts, tears appear. It’s Daddy to the rescue, finding Binky in the crib, “Just where I like it best.” The same child is featured in *Blankie*. “Blankie comes everywhere with me. To my school . . . to the store . . . even to the doctor. If we ever forget Blankie . . . back we go!” Blankie comforts at bedtime, provides stalwart company during time-outs, and sometimes just “watches” while its owner plays with toys. More than just a security object, Blankie is a companion! Both books feature heavily outlined illustrations on brightly colored board pages. *Highly Commended* (Binky), 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award (Ages 1–3)

**Shannon, David. *David Smells!* (A Diaper David Book) Blue Sky Press / Scholastic, 2005. 12 pages (trade 0-439-69138-9, \$6.99)**

**Shannon, David. *Oh, David!* (A Diaper David Book) Blue Sky Press / Scholastic, 2005. 12 pages (trade 0-439-68881-7, \$6.99)**

**Shannon, David. *Oops!* (A Diaper David Book) Blue Sky Press / Scholastic, 2005. 12 pages (trade 0-439-68882-5, \$6.99)**

Three original board books starring irrepressible Davey highlight some of the realistic (and gritty) moments of young childhood. The inevitable consequences of wearing diapers, nonexistent table manners, and wide-awake bedtimes are just a few of the universal themes presented with humor, honesty, and warmth. Very brief texts, of a word or short phrase per page, accompany the energetic illustrations which are refreshingly far from sweet. (Ages 1–3)

## Picture Books for Toddlers and Preschoolers

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**Baicker, Karen. *You Can Do It Too!* Illustrated by Ken Wilson-Max. Handprint Books, 2005. 16 pages (trade 1-59354-080-9, \$13.95)**

A young, brown-skinned girl revels in the role of big sister as she encourages her toddler brother to copy everything she is doing: playing with toys, painting pictures, counting people, digging a hole, sharing ice cream, brushing teeth, and more over the course of their day and evening. Each line of Karen Baicker's lilting text ends with the same refrain: "You can do it too!" Ken Wilson-Max's trademark bright, boldly colored, naïve illustrations teasingly interpret the story's final lines as a reversal after the little brother, who has been pictured bending upside down peering between his legs in several earlier spreads, has convinced his sister "You can do it too!" (Ages 2-4)

**Bergman, Mara. *Snip, Snap! What's That?* Illustrated by Nick Maland. U.S. edition: Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-06-077754-0, \$15.99)**

"When the alligator came creeping . . . creeping . . . creeping up the stairs . . . were the children scared?" With a build-up like that, and a glimpse of the creature's shadowy profile, teeth clearly visible, how could they NOT be scared? And, indeed, with a turn of the page, the question is answered: "YOU BET THEY WERE!" As the alligator draws nearer, we're asked again and again whether the children were scared, and each time given the same emphatic affirmative answer. It's only after a wordless, double-page spread overflowing with a head-on view of the grinning beast that the tables turn. The children decide enough's enough, and send the reptile packing. "And was the alligator scared? YOU BET IT WAS!" Still big, but no longer menacing, the alligator is last seen diving down a manhole. Just the right degree of satisfying scariness for preschoolers, this is a book that will be demanded again and again, with young listeners chiming in on the repeated refrain. Bergman has concocted a perfect blend of mounting suspense with a reassuring finale, and Maland's comic illustrations balance the tension of the text, creating a comfortable layer of safety. *Highly Commended, 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 3-6)

**Briant, Ed. *Seven Stories*. A Neal Porter Book / Roaring Brook Press, 2005. 32 pages (trade 1-59643-056-7, \$16.95)**

In a book tall and narrow, just like her seven-story apartment building, a young girl battles with insomnia during an eventful night. At eight o'clock, she hears the "fee, fi, foe, fum" of a giant stomping in apartment five; at 11:00 p.m. a handsome young man outside her window rappels up to the seventh floor via some lengthy locks; and at 1:00 a.m. complaints from apartment two suggest that *someone* has been sleeping in the bear family's beds. After each episode the refrain appears: "I turned over once,

turned over twice, and tried to go to sleep.” Each time the girl’s efforts are in vain, thanks to the goings-on of her noisy neighbors. After identifying the familiar fairy tale characters, children will appreciate the book’s clever ending, when the sleepless child thinks to search beneath her mattress and finds—of course—the pea that has kept her up. The brown-skinned heroine of this witty picture book is pictured in a bedroom strewn with books and toys, easily recognizable as the impetus behind her nighttime observations. (Ages 3–6)

**Cooper, Elisha.** *A Good Night Walk.* Orchard / Scholastic, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–439–68783–7, \$16.99)

Elisha Cooper’s eloquently spare story describes the things that are noticed on a walk along the block by an unseen child and adult. A comment is made about something happening at each house they pass. Chasing squirrels are followed over the course of several houses as they skitter along the wires. A black-and-white cat rests in the shade of an apple tree. The smell of apple pie wafts from a window. The story visually unfolds in soft watercolor and pencil illustrations spanning each double-page spread. Each scene shows the house currently in view along with a glimpse of what has just been passed and what is coming next. At the end of the block, the walkers turn around and head for home, passing the same houses again, noticing the things that have changed. The cat is going inside. The squirrels are quiet. The pie is gone. The sky has gradually darkened. It’s time to go inside for bed. Children will also love noticing other details that are shown but never commented upon in this quiet, appealing book. (Ages 3–6)

**Cronin, Doreen.** *Wiggle.* Illustrated by Scott Menchin. Atheneum, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–689–86375–6, \$12.95)

Doreen Cronin makes the most of young children’s natural tendency to squirm by encouraging an all-out wiggle-fest. “First wiggle where your tail would be. Then wiggle all your hair. Feeling extra silly? Wiggle in your underwear!” What preschooler or kindergartner can resist responding to Cronin’s silliness? Her energetic and infectious text is set against Scott Menchin’s kinetic illustrations, which features a high-spirited dog and many other squirming, wiggling, flying, buzzing, busy creatures. (Ages 2–5)

**Cumpiano, Ina.** *Quinito’s Neighborhood / El vecindario de Quinito.* Illustrated by José Ramírez. Children’s Book Press, 2005. 22 pages (trade 0–89239–209–6, \$16.95)

A bilingual book that will make a terrific addition to preschool storytimes or units about work and workers features a young Latino boy, Quinito, describing the jobs done by members of his immediate and extended family as well as others in his neighborhood. “My mami is a carpenter. My papi is a nurse,” begins Quinito. His abuela drives a truck, his abuelo fixes clocks. He has one cousin going to clown school, and another who’s a dentist. Various neighbors bake and sell bread, run a store, and work at the

bank. Quinito knows them all. And his job? Well, his job is keeping track of it all, so he can tell his teacher that “My mami is a carpenter. My papi is a nurse . . .” Puerto Rican author Ina Cumpiano’s busy story is accompanied by José Ramirez’s warm, vibrant acrylic paintings. (Ages 3–5)

**Eriksson, Eva. *A Crash Course for Molly*. Translated from the Swedish by Elisabeth Kallick Dyssegaard. U. S. edition: R&S Books, 2005. 28 pages (91–29–66156–0, \$16.00)**

The young pig Molly has proudly mastered riding a two-wheeler. But whether it’s a pole or a pedestrian, the obstacles in Molly’s path are repeatedly her downfall. No matter how hard she concentrates on missing them . . . crash! Luckily, she crashes right into a driving instructor on the path in the park, and he has an important tip for Molly: never look right at the thing you want to avoid. Instead, focus on the path ahead. Eriksson’s practical lesson is imbedded in a story that is funny, but never at Molly’s expense. The same can’t be said for those who laugh at Molly early on, but Molly’s payback is satisfying without being mean in this lighthearted, funny story from Sweden. (Ages 4–7)

**George, Kristine O’Connell. *Up!* Illustrated by Hiroe Nakata. Clarion, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–618–06489–3, \$15.00)**

“Up? Up! The sun’s up. I’m up. Is Daddy up?” You can be sure Daddy won’t be sleeping for long in this joyful picture book about an energetic toddler who is go-go-go from the moment she opens her eyes. As she and her daddy play at home and in the park, she achieves height or flight in numerous ways: riding (on daddy’s shoulders), bouncing, swinging, climbing . . . whew! Kristine O’Connell George’s high-spirited, rhyming text is accompanied by Hiroe Nakata’s breezy watercolor illustrations. (Ages 1–3)

**Graham, Bob. *Oscar’s Half Birthday*. U.S. edition: Candlewick Press, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–7636–2699–6, \$16.99)**

Oscar’s family celebrates his six-month birthday with a walk to their neighborhood park, a rather lopsided cake, and a rousing chorus of “Happy Birthday,” sung by family members and the strangers who have gathered around to admire baby Oscar. Although the birthday boy is the center of attention, the real star of the show is his three-year-old sister, Millie, who wears coat-hanger fairy wings on her back and a dinosaur puppet on her left hand, symbolic of her dual nature. “A little more fairy and a little less dinosaur,” her mother chides her gently when Millie’s play is a bit too vigorous for little Oscar. Bob Graham’s depiction of a slightly offbeat, interracial family is right on target: Millie, in her behavior and dialogue, is the quintessential three year old, commanding the attention of both her parents and the book’s readers, while Oscar remains, for the most part, completely oblivious to the fuss being made over him. The parents, young and hip, are everything good parents should be: caring, attentive, firm, and, above all, they seem to truly enjoy both of their

children. Graham's trademark pen-and-ink and watercolor paintings show a diverse cast of characters living in a working class neighborhood. *Highly Commended, 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 3–6)

**Henkes, Kevin. *So Happy!* Illustrated by Anita Lobel. Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-06056483-0, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-056484-9, \$16.89)**

Through words and pictures, three divergent storylines converge in a picture book fantasy featuring a magic seed, a little boy, and a small rabbit. "The seed was thirsty. The rabbit was lost. The boy was bored." But change is in the air when rains finally come. The seed begins to grow and a creek begins to swell, trapping the frantic rabbit on one side, and inspiring the boy to *do* something as he eagerly begins to build a bridge across the water (which the rabbit then uses) and picks the gigantic flower that has grown from the magic seed. Kevin Henkes's spare storyline is told in simple, declarative sentences that create a gentle momentum ("The creek ran like a faucet." "The sun sparkled and shone."). Henkes left plenty of room for the imagination of illustrator Anita Lobel, who chose to place the story in a setting that looks as if it could be Mexico in another century. Lobel's art adds wonderful visual details that turn the book into a story about the boy's family as well. Overall, there is a folkloric feel to this picture book that can engage young readers and listeners, who will want to comment on what they observe. (Ages 4–7)

**Horowitz, Dave. *Soon Baboon Soon*. Putnam, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-399-24268-6, \$14.99)**

It's a primate percussion extravaganza! The gorilla plays a gong. The chimpanzees are on timpani. "Orangutans bang *everything*." Each simian strikes a beat in turn as they play "Percussion of the Apes." But to Baboon it seems as if his moment of musical glory will never come. Dave Horowitz's hilarious picture book blends simplicity and silliness with a level of sophistication that will make it a favorite of young children and adults alike. The short, playful text uses rhythm, rhyme, and onomatopoeia to convey the energy and excitement of the performance, while the brightly colored cut-paper, colored pencil, and charcoal illustrations are delightfully absurd but a little bit hip as well. These monkeys are cool cats! (Ages 2–6)

**Jenkins, Emily. *That New Animal*. Illustrated by Pierre Pratt. Frances Foster Books / Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-374-37443-0, \$16.00)**

FudgeFudge and Marshmallow don't like the new animal in their home. Not only does it smell distinctly undoglike, but ever since it arrived, no one thinks to scratch Marshmallow's tummy. And someone is always occupying FudgeFudge's special spot on the couch. As FudgeFudge and Marshmallow strategize about their options (bite it? bury it in the yard?), someone new arrives. He's called "Grandpa." And as annoying as the new animal is, it's even more annoying when Grandpa seems to think the new

animal is his to play with whenever he wants. The new animal is their animal after all. "To hate as much as they want to. And to like, just a little bit." Pierre Pratt's quirky style of drawing figures—both human and animal—are a terrific match for Emily Jenkins's highly unsentimental and wholly amusing story about the arrival of a new baby from two dogs' points of view. (Ages 3–7)

**Juster, Norton. *The Hello, Goodbye Window*. Illustrated by Chris Raschka. Michael di Capua Books / Hyperion, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-7868-0914-0, \$15.95)**

At Nanna and Poppy's house, the Hello, Goodbye Window "looks like a regular window, but it's not." Through the course of an idyllic overnight visit with her grandparents, a young girl outlines the many uses of this special window. She can watch through it for the Pizza Delivery Guy, see her own reflection in the glass after dark, or even use it as inspiration for imagining a visit from someone—or something—unexpected (the Queen of England, or perhaps a Tyrannosaurus Rex). For readers, the window offers a view of a well-loved child's routines with her caring grandparents, all firmly grounded in her perspective ("When I get tired I come in and take my nap and nothing happens until I get up."). From the time she arrives until her parents pick her up the next day, this child engages in everyday activities—coloring pictures, eating meals, and helping in the garden—always under the watchful care of her attentive grandparents. Chris Raschka's bold and vibrant illustrations are especially effective from a distance, making this story about a multigenerational, biracial family a perfect choice for a group read-aloud. *Highly Commended, 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 3–7)

**Keller, Holly. *Pearl's New Skates*. Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 24 pages (trade 0-06-056280-3, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-056281-1, \$16.89)**

Pearl is a young rabbit who can't wait to try out the ice skates she received for her birthday. They are "grownup" skates with a single blade—not baby skates with double-runners like her friend Thistle still has. With visions of sweeping gracefully across the ice in her head, Pearl is disappointed to discover that it's not as easy as she thought it would be, and is humiliated by her failure. She wants nothing more to do with skating until her Uncle Jack takes her out early one morning, when no one else is around, and encourages her work on balancing and staying upright before she tries to glide. Success! Holly Keller's gentle picture book offers a set of circumstances that many children will find recognizable, and ultimately encouraging. (Ages 4–7)

**King, Stephen Michael. *Mutt Dog!* U.S. edition: Harcourt, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-15-205561-4, \$16.00)**

"In the city lived a dog . . . who belonged to no one." The scruffy, brown and white dog wanders his way into a homeless shelter, but it's too crowded with people to have room for him. Not to worry. There's a good home waiting after a woman who works at the shelter takes the dog home



. . . to stay. In a hilarious scene depicting the many sides of the dog's personality and appearance, she and her family try to come up with the perfect name for the new member of their family (Bear? Heathcliff? Errol? Radiator? Picasso?). But they always come back to one in particular: Mutt Dog! Australian author/illustrator Stephen Michael King's picture book is warm and endearing. *Highly Commended, 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 3–7)

**Landry, Leo. *Eat Your Peas, Ivy Louise!* Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-618-44886-1, \$12.00)**

"Presenting the amazing, stupendous Tender Tiny Peas!" cries the pea in the top hat on Ivy Louise's high chair tray. As the voices of Ivy Louise's unseen parents encourage her to eat her vegetables, the little girl is delighted by the roly poly peas and their feats of grace (high dive into Ivy Louise's cup), strength (weight-lifting with Oatey-O's), and silliness (an impromptu clown act). Their final act of extraordinary daring is accomplished with Ivy Louise's help, as the peas pile up on her spoon and are launched through the kitchen window. "All gone!" (Ages 1–4)

**Park, Linda Sue and Julia Durango. *Yum! Yuck! A Foldout Book of People Sounds*. Illustrated by Sue Ramá. Charlesbridge, 2005. (trade 1-57091-659-4, \$9.95)**

Scenes from an international street carnival unfold—literally—on the pages of this picture book, each fold-out, three-page spread revealing another element of the action in order to set up the response of varied children in their native tongues. "Geshmak!" (Yiddish) Leckah! (German) Yum! (English)" are the equivalent words on the first-page spread as children eat ice cream and watermelon. "Wow-wow (Chinese) "Hai-hai (Hindi) Boo-hoo (English)" is the response pages later when the ice cream cones have fallen victim to an accident involving a juggler, a spice cart, and a little black dog, all of which have been pictured on the pages in between. The crayon and ink illustrations create a storyline for the brief, multilingual text. Of course, that story has a happy conclusion. "Eviva! (Italian) Hwan-ho! (Vietnamese) Hooray!" The authors provide a note on the challenge of translating sounds into words. (Ages 3–7)

**Reiser, Lynn. *Two Dogs Swimming*. Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 24 pages (trade 0-06-008647-5, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-008648-3, \$16.89)**

Dog buddies Spot and Whistle are fairly well-matched in their canine abilities. When they run, jump, and fetch, sometimes Spot is faster or higher, and sometimes it is Whistle. But when they race across the pond, the result is always the same. Whistle swims across and back again, while non-swimmer Spot walks in place at the shallow end. "Spot looked like he was swimming . . . but Spot was not swimming. He hoped no one would notice." Finally, caught up in the thrill of chasing an especially high stick toss, Spot finds himself in deep water. He kicks and paddles until "Spot did look like he was swimming—because . . . / he *was* swimming! He hoped everyone would notice— / and everyone did!" Youngsters working

at mastering new skills of their own will identify with these appealingly fuzzy dogs. (Ages 3–6)

**Richardson, Justin and Peter Parnell. *And Tango Makes Three*. Illustrated by Henry Cole. Simon & Schuster, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–689–87845–1, \$14.95)**

This groundbreaking picture book is based on the true story of a penguin chick being raised by two male penguins in the Central Park Zoo. Back in 1998, workers at the zoo noticed that two male penguins, Roy and Silo, had become a couple. They did all of the things that pairs of male and female penguins typically did—building a nest together, sleeping together, and spending all of their time with each other. When zookeeper Rob Gramzay observed that the two were sitting on an egg-shaped rock, he got an idea: he took an abandoned fertilized egg and placed it in Roy and Silo's nest. The two took turns sitting on the egg until it hatched, and then they shared responsibility for taking care of the chick, named Tango by Gramzay. The straightforward simplicity of the narrative lends an understated eloquence to the story, which wisely refrains from humanizing the penguins. Henry Cole's subtle use of ice blue contrasts nicely with the requisite predominance of black and white, and his shifting perspectives underscore the drama inherent in the story. The book concludes with an authors' note that provides some additional information about the key players. (Ages 3–6)

**Rockwell, Anne. *Good Morning, Digger*. Illustrated by Melanie Hope Greenberg. Viking, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–670–05959–5, \$15.99)**

"Good morning, Digger—big and strong and yellow! Early this morning I heard you call. Grrr-clank! Grrr-clank! Grrr-clank-clank!" A young child stands outside the fence at a construction site day after day, describing what he sees and hears as a building slowly rises. Dump Truck, Flatbed, Cement Mixer, Tall Crane—they all have a part to play. "Look what's happened to the hole Digger dug!" the child eventually exclaims as he describes the new community center in his neighborhood, where he is eagerly helping to paint a mural that features—what else—a big yellow digger! Bold, bright illustrations accompany a story certain to please many toddlers and preschoolers. (Ages 2–4)

**Savadier, Elivia. *No Haircut Today! A Neal Porter Book* / Roaring Brook Press, 2005. 32 pages (trade 1–59643–046–X, \$15.95)**

Dominic has remarkable hair. It's simultaneously long and short, curly and straight. Most significant, though, is the fact that Dominic's hair is not about to get cut anytime soon. Like many children, Dominic is terrified of having his hair cut—in fact, "when Dominic sees scissors he screams!" Ironically, his mother is a hair stylist who would love the chance to work on her son's locks. Despite offers of sitting in the special car or airplane chairs, Dominic is not about to let go of his hair-cutting phobia. Understandably frustrated, his Mom is still able to reassure her child that she loves him as they agree to postpone his haircut to another day.

Dominic's humorous story will both entertain and comfort children who suffer from an irrational fear; in spite of their foibles, they'll always be loved. The brief text makes clever use of changing fonts, while the illustrations utilize heavy black lines to capture the unique nature of Dominic's head of hair. *Highly Commended, 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 2–5)

**Steggall, Susan. *On the Road*. U.S. edition: Kane/Miller, 2005. 28 pages (trade 1–929132–70–0, \$14.95)**

In a vehicular extravaganza perfect for car- and truck-crazy toddlers and preschoolers, Susan Steggall follows the journey of a mother and two children in their bright red car. Each two-page spread has a single phrase describing the current part of the trip ("through the roadworks," "down the hill," "into the tunnel"). Steggall's bright collage illustrations locate the red car in the midst of each busy scene, which always includes an exciting array of vehicles, from other cars and trucks to a bike, a bus, a motorcycle, and road construction equipment. The red car makes its way out of the city and into the country, but the final destination isn't revealed until the very last page: "to the sea!" Add boats to the checklist of vehicles to be found in this appealing book for young children that was originally published in Britain and uses several British terms (e.g., "junction" for "intersection"). (Ages 1–4)

**Valckx, Catharina. *Lizette's Green Sock*. U.S. edition: Clarion, 2005. 33 pages (trade 0–618–45298–2, \$15.00)**

Lizette is delighted with a green sock she discovers on the ground. But Tim and Tom, mean-spirited brothers, burst her bubble by declaring that a single sock is no good, because socks come in pairs. She searches, but the other sock is nowhere to be found. The young chicken feels disheartened, until her friend Bert the mouse points out the great potential the green sock has as a cap. Things are looking up when Tim and Tom re-enter, having found the second sock. They lead Lizette and Bert in a chase, only to lose the second sock in the pond, but all is rosy again when Mother comes through with the green sock she has knit to complete the pair. Happily, Lizette and Bert each wear their new sock caps, and in a charming final twist, the third green sock is shown functioning as a "splendid sleeping bag" for a fish. (Ages 3–6)

**Waddell, Martin. *It's Quacking Time!* Illustrated by Jill Barton. Candlewick Press, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–7636–2738–0, \$15.99)**

Duckling is fascinated by the pale blue egg his Mommy laid. He doesn't remember his own egg but Mommy and Daddy and Auntie Duck tell him about it. "You came in one too," he tells an astonished Cousin Small after Grandpa affirms that "all ducks do." Everyone watches and waits for the arrival of the newest duck on the pond, but no one is more eager than Duckling in Martin Waddell's cheerful story that captures the anticipation and excitement that surrounds the arrival of a new family member. (Ages 2–4)

**Whitford, Rebecca. *Little Yoga: A Toddler's First Book of Yoga*. Illustrated by Martina Selway. Henry Holt, 2005. 24 pages (trade 0-8050-7879-7, \$9.95)**

A small-sized picture book to get toddlers and preschoolers moving, *Little Yoga* follows the lead of yoga programs for children by equating various poses with animal actions. "Yoga baby—spreads his arms like a butterfly." Each two-page spread features a different yoga pose with an illustration of a toddler doing the action on the left-hand page, and the animal he or she mirrors on the right. Two pages in the back show photographs of several children in the poses. The author also provides a short explanation of each pose in the back. (Ages 2–4)

**Willems, Mo. *Leonardo the Terrible Monster*. Hyperion, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-7868-5294-1, \$15.99)**

Leonardo, a small furry creature with nublike horns, is a terrible monster. Terrible, that is, because he is totally incapable of scaring anyone. Compared to his monster comrades like Tony (who sports 1,642 teeth) and Eleanor (so huge that only her legs fit on the book's page), Leonardo is a monster failure. Miserable at his incompetence, Leonardo concocts a sure-fire plan: He'll find the "most scaredy-cat kid in the whole world . . . and scare the tuna salad out of him!" Meek-looking Sam, his chosen target, appears to be an ideal candidate. Just as planned, Leonardo launches a full-scale surprise assault and is delighted when Sam obligingly bursts into tears. His success is short-lived, however, when he discovers the real reason for Sam's tears, told in a convincingly detailed torrent of words. It turns out that Sam's brother stole his favorite action figure and broke it, and Sam's day went downhill from there. Little Leonardo makes a hard choice and decides that "instead of being a terrible monster, he would become a wonderful friend." A simple story of frustration and friendship makes a big impression through Mo Willems's deceptively sophisticated artful design. He employs a subdued pastel palette, while the repeated appearance of Leonardo's small figure on the wide open space of the oversized pages underscores the monster's feelings of inadequacy. These are ultimately soothed when he realizes he has the power to choose how he will behave and embraces the idea of friendship. *Highly Commended*, 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award (Ages 3–7)

**Wigersma, Tanneke. *Baby Brother*. Illustrated by Nynke Mare Talsma. Translated from the Dutch. U.S. edition: Front Street, 2005. 28 pages (trade 1-932425-55-1, \$16.95)**

A little girl's letter to her grandmother details recent events in the life of her cat, Stripe, who has had a big belly for weeks. Stripe, of course, is pregnant, and the little girl relates a series of seemingly disconnected events that ends with the arrival of "five little Stripes." But the letter's final line articulates the outcome of a marvelous parallel story that has been told only in the illustrations: "By the way, I also have a new baby brother." There have been visual clues all along, from the pillow the little girl has

strapped around her middle to emulate her mother's largely pregnant belly to the bassinette being prepared to her mother's at-home labor, which is taking place in the background while the girl watches her laboring cat. Always wholly child-centered, Tanneke Wigtersma and Nynke Mare Talsma's terrific picture book never strays from the young girl's viewpoint, and never reveals too much. (Ages 3–6)

**Wong, Janet S. *Hide & Seek*. Illustrated by Margaret Chodos-Irvine. Harcourt, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–15–204934–7, \$16.00)**

"SIX : It might be okay / to hide under the sink / with a bathtub pail / and a boat / and a whale / as long as you hide / that curly dog tail." While the cookies are baking, a small boy plays hide-and-seek with father. But it's hard to decide on the perfect hiding place! As the counting ascends from one to ten, the child and his dog change their minds again and again. Behind a tree? Under the desk? Inside a box? Janet Wong's breezy story features bright, bold illustrations by Margaret Chodos-Irvine. (Ages 2–4)

**Yaccarino, Dan. *The Birthday Fish*. Henry Holt, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–8050–7493–7, \$16.95)**

At every gift-oriented occasion Cynthia wishes for a pony, and each time she is disappointed. Sure enough, this year, yet again, there's no pony among her birthday presents. Instead, she receives a goldfish. Fed up, Cynthia's about to pour the fish down the drain when he begs her to stop. The goldfish announces that he is magical, and that he will give Cynthia whatever she wishes for if she will set him free. As Cynthia carts the goldfish to the lake, she unexpectedly discovers the dangers the world presents to a fish in a glass bowl: a hungry cat, the hot sun, and kids tossing a ball around. By the time they reach the shore, Cynthia has come to care for her new pet, despite his non-pony status, and the two head home together. Stylized illustrations rendered in gouache paint show a 70's-era Cynthia, complete with poncho. (Ages 3–6)

## Picture Books for School-Aged Children

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**Agee, Jon. *Terrific*. Michael di Capua Books / Hyperion, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–7868–5184–8, \$15.95)**

Not your typical picture book hero, middle-aged Eugene has a pessimistic spin for every event and always comes up with the same grumpy observation. He wins an all-expenses-paid trip to Bermuda. " 'Terrific,' he said. 'I'll probably get a really nasty sunburn.' " His cruise boat sinks and he's stranded on a desert island, with pomegranates the only food around. " 'Terrific,' said Eugene. 'I hate pomegranates!' " Even the appearance of an ingenious talking parrot named Lenny, who diagrams and directs construction of an escape boat, doesn't create much of a reaction in

Eugene. The two set sail, and after hours of floating in the hot sun (“‘Terrific,’ said Eugene. ‘We’re going to die of thirst.’”) they run (literally) into a fishing trawler. It’s only when the trawler captain questions Lenny’s intelligence that Eugene is stirred to defend his companion. And when it appears that his avian comrade has left on a departing ship, Eugene fears that he’s lost a true friend. However, all ends well for the duo, and Eugene’s motto is transformed in tone from disparaging to joyful. As an added bonus, all those “terrifics” make this an automatic audience-participation read aloud. (Ages 4–7)

**Bee, William. *Whatever*. U.S. edition: Candlewick Press, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-7636-2886-7, \$12.99)**

“Billy can be very difficult to please. Show him something very **tall** ... and he’ll say ‘... **whatever**.’ Show him something very **small** ... and he’ll say ‘**whatever**.’” The curliest trumpet, the bounciest castle—none of the wonders his father points out draw a reaction from the determinedly unimpressed Billy. Even the world’s hungriest tiger only merits a “whatever”—until the tiger gobbles Billy up. Children will relish the satisfying conclusion, as Billy’s fed-up father retaliates with his own jaded response (you guessed it—“whatever”) to his son’s predicament. William Bee owes a huge debt to Maurice Sendak’s *Pierre* (Harper & Row, 1962), but his cleverly composed digital illustrations and perfect pacing merit the attention of a new generation of children. Substituting the fresh flavor of “whatever” for Pierre’s “I don’t care” gives the timeless story about the price of rudeness an up-to-the-minute sensibility. *Highly Commended*, 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award (Ages 4–7)

**Birtha, Becky. *Grandmama’s Pride*. Illustrated by Colin Bootman. Albert Whitman, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-8075-3028-X, \$16.95)**

“The back seat is the best on the bus,” Mama explains. “It’s big and wide and roomy.” Two young African American sisters who live in the north have come south with their mama to stay with her family for the summer. “Wait until we get home,” their grandmother tells them as they eye the public water fountain on a hot day. “Grandmama’s going to fix you ice-cold, lemon mint tea.” The adults want to protect the girls from the sting of segregation for as long as they can. But the story’s narrator, who is six, is also learning to read. By summer’s end, she’s able to comprehend all the signs that she’d never noticed before, such as “Whites Only” on the water fountain and “Colored Waiting Room” in the shabbiest part of the bus station. It’s a hurtful awakening. In Becky Birtha’s touching story of a proud and loving family, the girl’s pain is eased a little by the knowledge that she can help protect her younger sister, for awhile longer at least; and lightened greatly the following year, when the laws have started to change. (Ages 6–9)

**Choi, Yangsook. *Peach Heaven*. Frances Foster Books / Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. 28 pages (trade 0-374-35761-7, \$16.00)**

Puchon, South Korea, where author/illustrator Yangsook Choi grew up, is an area renowned for its peach growing. A flood in 1976 led to an event still vivid in the author's mind: peaches raining from the sky. "The heavy rains had carried them all the way from the mountain orchards, Grandma told me. But who could explain why they were not battered or bruised?" After feasting on the heavenly peaches until she could eat no more, young Yangsook thinks about the farmers who had worked so hard to raise the fruit. That leads her to organize her community into doing a kind turn for the farmers, and cart after cart full of peaches are returned to their orchards. Choi's story tells of an extraordinary event in nature, and a compassionate human response. (Ages 4-7)

**Geisert, Arthur. *Lights Out*. Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-618-47892-2, \$16.00)**

Creative and inventive minds can make even the simplest task complicated and time-consuming. That's the premise behind this picture book in which a young pig has set up an extravagant chain reaction in order to turn off his nightstand light. There is a method—or reason—behind his madness: his parents want the lights off at eight, but he doesn't like falling asleep in the dark. So when he pulls the light cord string that hangs above his bed, it sets off an extended kinetic response that covers all four stories (basement to attic) of his house. When the last step involving a pulley, fulcrum, and sand is finally executed, the light switches off next to a pig that is peacefully asleep. Arthur Geisert's delightful, detailed illustrations lay out each and every step of the process, which features a wealth of everyday objects used in highly original ways. (Ages 5-9)

**Grey, Mini. *Traction Man Is Here!* Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-375-83191-6, \$15.95)**

On his box, Traction Man is described as a "generic action figure with dazzle-painted battle pants." A square-jawed hero up for any challenge, Traction Man guards the toast at breakfast, volunteers for special duty in a sink full of dirty dishes (where he acquires a brave sidekick, Scrubbing Brush), and crawls through the rugged backyard terrain to rescue a trio of unfortunate dolls. Mini Grey's story is firmly rooted in a young boy's imaginative play, in which he recasts a wealth of everyday objects and incidences as the props for his beloved new toy's adventures. Traction Man's toughest challenge yet comes when Grandma makes him an "all-in-one knitted green romper suit and matching bonnet!" How will his ego ever survive? Clad in the knitted green nightmare, the usually confident superhero looks woefully worried. Traction Man's story winds down to a perfect conclusion, but many readers will want to go right back to the beginning to look again. There is so much to discover, from the small moments of humor to the way Traction Man's adventures are distinguished from what is happening in the boy's real-world life both through the way the use of different fonts and in the style of the illustrations. (Ages 5-9)

**Hopkinson, Deborah.** *Saving Strawberry Farm.* Illustrated by Rachel Isadora. Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-688-17400-0, \$16.99; lib. 0-688-17401-9, \$17.89)

A picture book set during the Great Depression tells how difficult times can bring out the best in friends and neighbors. Young Davey's neighbor, Elsie Elkins, is about to lose her farm. She can't pay the bank what she owes. The day before the Fourth of July, Davey's mom sends him to the store for some ice to make lemonade, as a special treat. While Davey's holding the penny Miss Elsie gave him for carrying her groceries to her old car, the storekeeper, Mr. Russell, gets an idea: they can try a penny auction for Miss Elsie. Participants agree to keep the bidding low so Miss Elsie can afford to buy the farm back from the bank herself. Deborah Hopkinson's story is not based on a specific incident but it is grounded in fact with regard to penny auctions and many other details that give a sense of life during the Depression. (Ages 5-8)

**Isadora, Rachel.** *Luke Goes to Bat.* Putnam, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-399-23604-X, \$15.99)

Luke spends a lot of time watching his brother and friends play stickball in the streets of their 1950s Brooklyn neighborhood. He wants to play too, but the big boys think Luke's too young to be part of their game. So instead, he watches and works, throwing the ball against the wall, practicing his swing, and racing up and down the sidewalk as fast as he can. "He wanted to be ready when it was time." And, whenever the Dodgers play a nighttime game at nearby Ebbets Field, Luke watches the lights from the roof of his apartment building. Hearing the crowd roar, he imagines that his idol, Jackie Robinson, has hit a home run. When Luke finally is invited to join the stickball game, he strikes out. At first dejected, a special outing to a Dodger's game makes Luke realize that everyone needs to keep trying, even heroes like Jackie Robinson. Bright watercolor illustrations convey the young African American ballplayer's determination and drive. (Ages 4-8)

**Johnson, Angela.** *A Sweet Smell of Roses.* Illustrated by Eric Velasquez. Simon & Schuster, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-689-83252-4, \$16.95)

Two young African American girls run "Past the early-morning milkman, over the cobbled bridge, and through the curb market . . . to where everybody waits to march." They are joining the march for freedom and for equality. They are marching with Dr. King. Told in the voice of one of the girls, Johnson's spare, stirring story beautifully conveys the children's soaring knowledge that they have become part of something bigger than their own lives, and then grounds them again in childlike joy. "He [Dr. King] talks about peace, / love, / nonviolence, / and change for everybody. / And the sun gets higher in the sky. / When it's time to go, / we skip back hand in hand. / Minnie and me. / Singing freedom songs along / the streets." In an author's note, Johnson explains that for every famous name associated with the Civil Rights Movement, there are tens of thousands of unknown names. "And some of those overlooked names belong to



children.” She wrote the story in tribute to them. Eric Velasquez’s emotionally charged black-and-white illustrations feature occasional, carefully chosen touches of red. (Ages 6–9)

**Kelly, Irene. *A Small Dog’s Big Life: Around the World with Owney*. Holiday House, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–8234–1863–4, \$16.95)**

In 1889, a stray dog drifted into the post office in Albany, New York. For the next eight years, Owney acted as a mascot of the U.S. Postal Service, traveling with mail bags by train through the country, and eventually sailing around the globe. His adventures were closely tracked by newspapers of the time, making Owney a popular canine worldwide. Based on her research at the National Postal Museum of the Smithsonian Institute, author Irene Kelly has recreated the story of Owney’s unique life, presented through invented letters, postcards, and newspaper articles. Watercolor illustrations depict a scruffy brown mutt gleefully living out his wanderlust, whether from the top of the Statue of Liberty or beside an Egyptian pyramid. (Ages 5–8)

**Krishnaswami, Uma. *The Happiest Tree: A Yoga Story*. Illustrated by Ruth Jeyaveeran. Lee & Low, 2005. 32 pages. (trade 1–58430–237–2, \$16.95)**

Meena loves working on her school play. But when it comes time to choosing roles, she doesn’t want any part of it. Self-conscious about her clumsiness, Meena can’t imagine getting up in front of everyone only to trip and embarrass herself. Her teacher encourages her to be a tree, but standing still proves harder than it looks. A children’s yoga class at the Indian grocery her family frequents gives Meena the chance to learn skills that help her quiet her mind and still her body. Author Uma Krishnaswami has written a child-centered story that integrates the yoga elements of the plot naturally into the narrative. The things Meena is learning don’t come easily—she often struggles in yoga class, and still gets her limbs in a tangle, right up to the moments before the class play begins. But as the curtain rises, she remembers to breathe deeply and slowly, and vows to “grow her own yoga tree roots, right into the floor of the forest.” Ruth Jeyaveeran’s colorful acrylic illustrations are a perfect accompaniment to this story, which features a girl of Indian descent. Meena’s anxieties will be recognizable to many children. Likewise, her experience taking yoga is one that will resonate with many children and families today. (Ages 5–8)

**Lester, Alison. *Are We There Yet? A Journey around Australia*. Kane / Miller, 2005. 32 pages (trade 1–929132–73–5, \$15.95)**

In a once-in-a-lifetime family adventure, young Grace, her two brothers, and their parents embark on a trip by car around Australia. Australian author Alison Lester’s irresistible travel story is full of delightful details of the places they see and the things they do, from walking around the astonishing red rock known as Uluru—the “heart of Australia”—to playing Monopoly in the camper when it’s raining outside. Each page is an appealing blend of detailed, full-color borderless panel illustrations and

accompanying narrative in Grace's lively first-person voice. Geography buffs will especially appreciate the many real places that are shown and described, as well as how the family's progress is noted on a map that details how far they've gone around the continent every few pages. Australian terminology has not been changed for the U.S. audience, so in addition to researching the places Grace and her family visit, some readers will enjoy figuring out references to things such as "witchetty grubs," "footy" and "a Ned Kelly helmet." Warm family dynamics are at the heart of a story that stands on its own, but has many wonderful implications for classroom use. (Ages 5–9)

**Markham, Beryl. *The Good Lion*. Adapted and illustrated by Don Brown. Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–618–56306–7, \$16.00)**

A story adapted from aviator Beryl Markham's autobiography, *West with the Night*, relates a breathtaking incident from her childhood in Africa when she was attacked by a lion. The fully grown male lion named Paddy lives on a neighbor's land on the edge of the Kikuyu Reserve near Nairobi. He is tame, but young Beryl is always careful around him. One day, she comes upon him by surprise and he follows her. "There was no sound or wind. Even the lion made no sound as he came up swiftly behind me . . . He roared, an immense roar that dissolved me in it." Beryl is saved by a man who saw the lion stalking her. The lion is captured and lives out the rest of his days in a cage. "He was a good lion, and he had done what he could about being a tame lion. Who thinks it is fair to be judged by a single mistake? I do not begrudge him his moment." The drama of Markham's riveting narrative is heightened by Don Brown's superb watercolor illustrations. (Ages 6–9)

**McKissack, Patricia C. and Onawumi Jean Moss. *Precious and the Boo Hag*. Illustrated by Kyrsten Brooker. An Anne Schwartz Book / Atheneum, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–689–85194–4, \$16.95)**

Like any good sibling, Precious's brother is only too happy to clue her in to the dangers of Pruella the Boo Hag, a tricky and scary creature who'll "do most *anything* to get inside" the house. Then he and Mama head off to the fields, while Precious, recovering from a nighttime stomachache, stays home alone. Sure enough, Pruella soon shows up in a variety of tricky forms: as a stranger needing a drink, as Pruella's best friend Addie Louise, and even as a sparkling new penny. Each time Precious sees through Pruella's disguise by using her wits and remembering Mama's orders to not let anyone inside the house. Even the tempting penny doesn't make it through the door, after clever Precious notices that George Washington is on the front, not Abraham Lincoln. Engaging dialogue and just enough of a spine-tingling edge (including a deliciously scary finale) make Precious's story a guaranteed crowd pleaser. Kyrsten Brooker's collage and oil paint illustrations imaginatively capture the Boo Hag in all her incarnations. *Honor Book, 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 5–8)

**Muth, Jon J. *Zen Shorts*. Scholastic Press, 2005. 40 pages (trade 0-439-33911-1, \$16.95)**

Jon J Muth introduces three short Zen meditations (which he describes as “ideas to puzzle over” in his clear, concise author’s note) in a playful, contemplative book that does indeed gently encourage children to think more deeply about how they can choose to perceive and respond to what happens in their lives. The meditations are offered as entertaining stories rooted in both Zen Buddhism and Taoism. The stories are told to three contemporary children—Addy, Michael, and Karl—who have made friends with Stillwater, a Giant Panda who showed up in their yard one day, in pursuit of an umbrella carried off by the wind. Each of the three children makes a separate visit to Stillwater’s home, and he offers each in turn a story perfectly suited to that child in the moment at hand. When young Karl arrives angry over how bossy his older brother can be, and continues to fret after a day of play, Stillwater tells him a story called “A Heavy Load,” in which an older monk helps a selfish woman across a puddle without thanks. The young monk who is his companion can’t stop brooding over the woman’s rudeness. Finally the older monk says, “I set that woman down hours ago . . . Why are *you* still carrying her?” Stillwater’s wise and benevolent spirit offers both comfort and gentle challenge in an entertaining book that inspires contemplation. His trademark soothing watercolor illustrations (including the teasing visual pun on the cover showing Stillwater dancing on rooftops in boxer shorts) are juxtaposed with black-and-white line drawings that illustrate each of the three traditional stories. *Honor Book, 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 4–8)

**Park, Frances and Ginger Park. *The Have a Good Day Cafe*. Illustrated by Katherine Potter. Lee & Low, 2005. 32 pages (trade 1-58430-171-6, \$16.95)**

Mike’s grandma has recently come from Korea to live with his family. Mike’s parents run a food cart, selling hot dogs and pizza on a busy corner near the park. When new food carts start selling similar food on nearby corners, their once-thriving business begins to suffer. Then Mike hits on an idea to help both his parents, who are worrying about money, and his grandma, who misses her homeland. Instead of pizza and hot dogs, they can sell *bulgogi*, *mandoo*, *bibim bap*, *chop chae* and *jijim*: the Korean food that Grandma likes to cook! Grandma loves the idea, and so do their customers in this upbeat picture book. (Ages 4–7)

**Priceman, Marjorie. *Hot Air: The (Mostly) True Story of the First Hot-Air Balloon Ride*. An Anne Schwartz Book / Atheneum, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-689-82642-7, \$16.95)**

The first hot air balloon ride took place on September 19, 1783, launched from the palace of Versailles in France. There were three passengers in the balloon’s basket: a duck, a sheep, and a rooster. Those are the only facts you can believe in this fanciful picture book that illustrates what *might* have happened on their eight-minute, two-mile journey as Marjorie

Priceman's imagination takes off right along with the barnyard passengers of that historic event. Panels and pictures on each two-page spread show the wide and sometimes wild-eyed animals as the trio is alternately delighted by the experience and besieged by a series of mishaps involving windblown laundry, divebombing birds, and other unexpected hazards. Priceman's use of facial expressions and varied perspectives are delightful as her trio ascends—and descends—its way into history. (Ages 5–8)

**Rodman, Mary Ann. *My Best Friend*. Illustrated by E. B. Lewis. Viking, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-670-05989-7, \$15.99)**

Six-year-old Lily has a best friend named Tamika. Tamika is seven years old, has beaded cornrows, and wears “a two-piece bathing suit with pink butterflies and three rows of ruffles” to the neighborhood pool. Tamika is just about perfect, except that she doesn't know she's Lily's best friend. In fact, she's not interested in being Lily's friend at all; she's much too busy playing with Shanice. Determined to win Tamika over, Lily offers her floating noodle, and tries to share her Popsicle. She even gets a two-piece bathing suit just like Tamika's. Nothing seems to work until the day Shanice isn't at the pool. Finally Tamika has time for Lily. They play mermaids, split Popsicles, and use the slide. Lily is “so happy I think I will pop”—but her joy is shortlived. The next pool day Shanice is back and Tamika ignores Lily once again. After many painful rejections, Lily at last opens her eyes to the friend who was there all along: Keesha. A first grader like herself, Keesha “is nice. Who cares if she's not Tamika?” With a sure touch, Mary Ann Rodman uses the realistic voices of six- and seven-year-olds to bring to life an honest story about friendship. Whether they've played the part of Lily, or Tamika, or both at one time or another, young listeners resonate with Lily's believable predicament and determination. Watercolor illustrations capture the African American children working out their relationships poolside, in light-filled pages where one can almost hear the splashing and feel the sun's heat. *Winner, 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 5–8)

**Rosoff, Meg. *Meet Wild Boars*. Illustrated by Sophie Blackall. Henry Holt, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-8050-7488-0, \$15.95)**

They are rude. They are naughty. They are horrid. They are boars. Wild boars. Boris, Morris, Horace, and Doris have few redeeming qualities . . . they have none, actually. “If you share your treats with Morris he will stomp on them with his beastly feet. STOMP STOMP STOMP. If you try to help Horace with his mittens he will make a nasty smell and snort with laughter. SNORT SNORT SNORT.” Perhaps the most surprising thing about Meg Rosoff's story is that it never arrives at what we've come to expect as an inevitable resolution—one that will show the boars in a better and sweeter light. “Perhaps it is best if we all agree that there is no such thing as a nice wild boar. Then if you happen to run across one that is fluffy and sweet . . . you will be pleasantly amazed. But not at all fooled.” Boars will be boars, after all. And there are some readers and listeners who wouldn't want it any other way. (Ages 4–8)

**Russo, Marisabina. *Always Remember Me: How One Family Survived World War II. An Anne Schwartz Book* / Atheneum, 2005. 48 pages (trade 0-689-86920-7, \$16.95)**

Each Sunday Rachel and her family go to her grandmother Oma's for dinner. After the "hugs and hellos" and "chicken and challah," Rachel and Oma always look at Oma's photo albums. The photos and stories that tell of Oma's life in Germany before coming to America are part of the weekly ritual. But this Sunday is different. This Sunday, Oma doesn't close the album where she usually does. " 'I think you are old enough to hear the rest of the story now,' she says, and pulls me closer." Oma tells of what happened when the Nazis came into power in Germany. Of how she and her family members began to fear for their safety, and their lives. Of how some fled and others were not able to. Of how some survived, and others did not. A dramatically different and highly personal book from author/artist Marisabina Russo is based on Russo's own family history: she was the little girl in the story. Russo uses muted tones to recreate some of her family photographs as the album pictures in the story. Some of those actual photographs are reproduced on the endpapers of an affecting picture book that is told with both honesty and the restraint required in covering this topic for younger children. (Ages 7-10)

**Say, Allen. *Kamishibai Man*. Walter Lorraine Books / Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-618-47954-6, \$17.00)**

"Kamishibai" means "paper theater" in Japan. The kamishibai man once traveled by bicycle with his theater and homemade sweets, telling stories to the crowds of children who would gather around when they heard him call. Allen Say's story opens with an elderly kamishibai man who takes his long unused theater down into the city for the first time in years. In his mind he can still recall how the children were once always eager for treats and the latest installment of his story. The old man is young again as Allen Say's paintings flash back to those times when the children still came to his call. Then television antennas started to appear on rooftops, and children lost interest in his tales. As the kamishibai man ends his reminiscences, he hears applause and looks up to find a crowd has gathered once again. It is a crowd of adults, and they begin excitedly recalling those childhood visits from the kamishibai man, and are eager to hear his stories once again. (Ages 5-8)

**Spirin, Gennady. *Martha*. Philomel, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-399-23980-4, \$14.99)**

When five-year-old Ilya and his mother discover a crow with a broken wing during a walk in a Moscow park, the boy is convinced they can nurse the bird back to health. The veterinarian advises euthanizing the injured crow, predicting she'll never fly again. Despite the poor prognosis, Ilya and his parents decide to adopt the bird they've named Martha, in hopes that she will recover. Martha overcomes the odds and after a time convalescing begins to fly again, making short flights from bookcase to dresser, and occasionally landing on a convenient human head. Although she feels like

part of the family, Martha eventually flies out the window on a beautiful spring day. Later, Ilya spots a crow's nest in a nearby tree, and believes that Martha has chosen to stay near her human home. Gennady Spirin's accomplished watercolor illustrations pay tribute to his retelling of an actual event experienced by his family many years ago. (Ages 4–8)

**Sweet, Melissa.** *Carmine: A Little More Red.* Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–618–38794–3, \$16.00)

Alphabet book meets fairy tale in this sophisticated twist on the story of Little Red Riding Hood, called Carmine in this incarnation. For each letter of the alphabet, a quirky (and, for many children, probably unfamiliar) word, is highlighted and incorporated within the text of the story. Despite warnings to head straight to Granny's house, Carmine stops to write a **haiku**, and encounters a wolf **lurking** behind a **knoll**. As well as being a creative writer, Carmine has **pluck**, and with the help of her dog Rufus, and his **surreal** ability to understand wolf language, she uncovers the predator's intentions. When the danger has passed, Carmine resolves to never again dawdle on her way to visit Grandma. Mixed media and collage illustrations add visual humor to a clever retelling of a familiar tale. (Ages 6–9)

**Tauss, Marc.** *Superhero.* Scholastic Press, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0–439–62734–6, \$16.99)

A visually dynamic picture book uses black-and-white, digitally manipulated photographs to turn a young African American boy's love of comics into his own superhero adventure. The city parks and playgrounds have disappeared overnight, but Maleek and his robotic sidekick, Marvyn, are up to the task of making things right. The storyline and text aren't nearly as strong as the striking photographic illustrations, but many kids will enjoy Marc Tauss's playful book regardless. (Ages 5–8)

**Turner, Sandy.** *Cool Cat, Hot Dog.* Atheneum, 2005. 40 pages (trade 0–689–84946–X, \$16.95)

Clever wordplay and sophisticated collage art turn *Cool Cat, Hot Dog* into much more than a laundry list of pet characteristics. Beginning with "I'm Cat. I'm feline. / I'm Dog. I'm canine. / You're as ugly as a Pekingese. / You sure ain't no Siamese," the stage is set to showcase two distinctive individuals. Pictured on opposing pages, the two compare and contrast their personalities and habits, sometimes commiserating over shared concerns ("I've got fleas. / Mine are itchier."). The deceptively simple looking animals appear to be constructed from paper and cardboard, with paper fasteners at the joints. Added layers of humor and meaning are rife throughout the illustrations, as when the dog is shown riding a scooter above the statement "I roll around in the park." Although the text on each page is brief and will be enjoyed by young children, this smart picture book begs to be shared with older kids as well. *Highly Commended, 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award* (Ages 5–10)

**Willis, Jeanne. *Tadpole's Promise*. Illustrated by Tony Ross. An Anne Schwartz Book / Atheneum, 2005. 28 pages (trade 0-689-86524-4, \$15.95)**

It's love at first sight when a tadpole and a caterpillar meet. They adore everything about each other. " 'Promise you'll never change,' " begs the caterpillar. And—rather shortsightedly—the tadpole promises. Of course, change is inevitable. First the tadpole grows legs, and then arms, and finally, he loses his tail. With each transformation, the caterpillar grows angrier and angrier at her beloved's betrayal, finally stalking off to a willow branch to sulk. When she awakens later, she's undergone a change herself—she's now a butterfly. Realizing she still cares for the tadpole, she flies off in search of her love, only to meet up with a frog (formerly her tadpole). She approaches to ask if he's seen her tadpole, but in mid-sentence, the frog leaps up and swallows her down in one gulp. The totally unexpected climax leaves most readers stunned, and then laughing as they appreciate the cynical and hilarious departure from the anticipated lesson about eternal friendship. Tony Ross's clever design orients the book spine up, and uses the gutter as the boundary between water and sky. Visual clues hint that this is not a match made in heaven long before the text's dramatic demonstration of a food chain in action. (Ages 5–10)

**Woodson, Jacqueline. *Show Way*. Illustrated by Hudson Talbott. Putnam, 2005. 40 pages (trade 0-399-23749-6, \$16.99)**

As author Jacqueline Woodson traces her family history from the times of slavery to today, she celebrates the resilience of each successive generation as embodied by a woman or girl who courageously strived for more—for herself, her family, and her people. Each woman or girl is known by her spirit and accomplishments if not always by her name. Connecting each generation in Woodson's stirring, beautifully written narrative are the sewing skills that were passed down from mother to daughter, along with their stories and the quilt that had mapped the way to freedom: patches and stitches forming the pattern that showed the way. Woodson's moving tribute to past, present, and future is sewn from the stitches *she* creates with words, carrying on the tradition in her own way. This moving and uplifting picture book features stunning illustrations by Hudson Talbott that integrate quilt motifs with other images from African American history. (Ages 5–9)

## Books for Beginning and Newly Independent Readers

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**Bauer, Marion Dane. *The Blue Ghost*. Illustrated by Suling Wang. (A Stepping Stone Book) Random House, 2005. 85 pages (trade 0-375-83179-7, \$11.95; lib. 0-375-93179-1, \$13.99)**

Nine-year-old Liz has strong connections to her family's past. Her grandmother still owns a cottage that has been in their family for generations and she has always shared stories about its past inhabitants with Liz, who is one in a long line of girls in her family named Elizabeth. So when she sees a ghostly blue woman beckon to her and call her name in the middle of the night, she's not afraid. She readily follows her right through the wall, into the next room. There she meets a girl about her age who is caring for a sick baby. How this girl connects to Liz's past and how Liz plays a part in assuring her family's future is part of the eerily satisfying resolution to a gripping, easy-to-read novel. (Ages 7–10)

**Cooper, Susan. *The Magician's Boy*. Illustrated by Serena Riglietti. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2005. 100 pages (trade 0-689-87622-X, \$14.95)**

The Magician's Boy wants to learn magic. But the Magician says the Boy must wait until the time is right. When the Magician's Saint George puppet disappears at the start of a performance of *Saint George and the Dragon* during a party, he orders the boy into the Land of Story to retrieve it. Bewildered, the Boy finds himself at the party one moment and in a strange woods the next. He has a series of seemingly impossible encounters—first with a bossy signpost who becomes his constant, uninvited companion, and then with one fabled character after another: the Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe and her brood, Peter Piper, Pinocchio, Jack and the Giant, and others. Their stories are all intertwined, and while each encounter demands courage or ingenuity from the Boy, none of them seem to be leading him any closer to Saint George—or are they? Susan Cooper's short, breezy adventure story is about a boy who has a very surprising discovery in store. Serena Riglietti's full-page, black-and-white illustrations are a whimsical addition to this fanciful story. (Ages 7–9; younger for reading aloud)

**Haas, Jessie. *Jigsaw Pony*. Illustrated by Ying-Hwa Hu. Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 128 pages (trade 0-06-078245-5, \$14.99; lib. 0-06-078250-1, \$15.89)**

Twins Fran and Kiera fight about everything. So it's no surprise that when their father brings home an aging pony in need of a home, Fran insists on calling him Midnight (because his eyelashes are black) and Kiera insists on calling him Snowflake (because his whiskers are white). And that's just the start of their disagreements about the black-and-white pony that, it turns out, already came with a name: Jigsaw. Their best friend, Jody, spends a



lot of time listening to the twins argue. Like everyone else, she wishes they could just get along. In Jessie Haas's easy, satisfying chapter book for independent readers, Fran and Kiera not only learn to agree for the sake of their pony, they discover they enjoy it, too—at least sometimes. (Ages 6–8)

**Hill, Susan.** *Ruby Paints a Picture.* Illustrated by Margie Moore. (An I Can Read Book) HarperCollins, 2005. 32 pages (trade 0-06-008978-4, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-008980-6, \$16.89)

Ruby is a little raccoon trying to paint a picture of a big tree. In turns, her friends the fox, the bunny, the duck, and the crow come by and beg her to include them in her painting. But each one is critical of her effort, claiming she forgot to paint their red tail, long ears, webbed feet, or wide wings, respectively. Ruby replies that she painted the best part of each of them. Readers must rely on the final illustration to judge for themselves: Ruby has painted the face of each of her friends next to the trunk of the big tree, her original subject. Hill's outstanding writing features very simple words and sentence structure, and the plot itself is built on repetition. The predictability of each encounter makes the text accessible to beginning readers; the visual ending adds an element of suspense and surprise. Even seasoned readers will be eager to see Ruby's finished picture. (Ages 4–7)

**Hopkinson, Deborah.** *Billy and the Rebel: Based on a True Civil War Story.* Illustrated by Brian Floca. (Ready-to-Read) Atheneum, 2005. 48 pages (trade 0-689-83964-2, \$14.95; pbk. 0-689-83396-2, \$3.99)

**Hopkinson, Deborah.** *From Slave to Soldier: Based on a True Civil War Story.* Illustrated by Brian Floca. (Ready-to-Read) Atheneum, 2005. 44 pages (trade 0-689-83965-0, \$14.95)

Hopkinson's two *Ready to Read* books are works of historical fiction based on actual people and events. *Billy and the Rebel* tells the story of two boys during the Battle of Gettysburg in the Civil War, one from the North, the other from the South. Thirteen-year-old Billy Bayly was living on a farm not far from Gettysburg when the battle took place. A knock at the door in the middle of the night reveals a frightened Confederate soldier who is just about Billy's age. Billy and his mother take the young Rebel in. Later, the boy intervenes when a retreating Confederate soldier threatens Billy, even though he risks revealing his identity as a deserter in doing so. *From Slave to Soldier* is based on an incident in the life of John McCline, who, at age eleven, ran away from his master's home to join a regiment of Union soldiers marching on the road that ran alongside the plantation where he worked. John's skill at handling mules made him a valuable member of the regiment. Each of these two compelling seven-chapter stories includes a brief author's note to explain more about their subjects. (Ages 6–8)

**Horowitz, Ruth. *Big Surprise in the Bug Tank*. Illustrated by Joan Holub. (Dial Easy-to-Read) Dial, 2005. 48 pages (trade 0-8037-2874-3, \$14.99)**

What could be cooler than having a scientist mom who studies bugs? Bringing those bugs home, of course, which is just what Sam and Leo do with their favorite giant hissing cockroaches, Lumpy and Buzz. Soon Lumpy and Buzz are the proud parents of six baby cockroaches, and the boys must do some creative problem solving before they are overrun with bugs. Despite their best efforts, Sam and Leo don't find many willing to open their homes to adopted roaches. With a little coaching from Mom, they discover the solution to their problem in a library book: by identifying and separating males and females, they pull the plug on the population explosion. This humorous story is a perfect match for newly independent readers with an entomological inclination, or any child who can't resist big bugs. Sam and Leo's enthusiasm for their unique pets is contagious, and the underlying message of combining research with ingenuity is a welcome one. (Ages 4-7)

**Richardson, Charisse. *The Real Lucky Charm*. Illustrated by Eric Velasquez. Dial, 2005. 76 pages (trade 0-8037-3105-1, \$16.99; pbk. 0-14-240431-4, \$4.99)**

**Richardson, Charisse. *The Real Slam Dunk*. Illustrated by Kadir Nelson. Dial, 2005. 80 pages (trade 0-8037-3050-0, \$15.99; pbk. 0-14-240212-5, \$4.99)**

Two short novels for independent readers feature African American twins Mia and Marcus Robinson. Marcus loves basketball and math. Mia's newspaper, *Mia's World*, is one of her favorite expressive outlets. In *The Real Slam Dunk*, Marcus and Mia get the opportunity to meet an NBA basketball star. Marcus wants to play in the NBA someday and can't wait to talk to Jason Carter. Much to his surprise, Jason challenges him on his plans for the future. "Lots of great players tried out for the Giants this year. But only four were picked . . . What if you don't become a pro basketball player?" Jason, it turns out, has not given up his interest in chemistry and still thinks of pursuing it as a career after basketball. He encourages Marcus to pursue his interest in math along with his basketball dreams. In *The Real Lucky Charm* Mia faces challenges both on and off the basketball court after she and Marcus end up playing together on a co-ed team. She's pretty good for a new player, sometimes even outshining her brother, but she's convinced it's due more to her lucky bracelet than skill. When she loses her bracelet, her game falls apart and she quits, disappointing her coach and teammates until she finds the courage to return. Occasional black-and-white illustrations are included in each of these stories, which feature two likeable elementary-age characters and enough high-interest, kid-friendly action to make the overt positive messages easy to take. (Ages 6-9)

**Roberts, Bethany.** *Ogre Eats Everything.* Illustrated by Marsha Winborn. Dutton, 2005. 46 pages (trade 0-525-47291-6, \$14.99)

May Belle is not nearly as dainty and feminine looking as her name would suggest and, to top it off, her best friend is an ogre. He's a kindhearted ogre but he has some serious behavior problems: he wants to eat everything in sight. When he eats the flowers in May Belle's garden, she exacts retribution by making him help her plant a new garden, this time a vegetable garden that he will be encouraged to eat. When he eats the note she writes inviting him to come to a tea party, she teaches him how to read. When he eats the picture of a bee as soon as he finishes painting it, he himself comes up with the solution: he paints a picture of himself with May Belle and gives it to her as a gift. Both text and illustrations are filled with touches of real humor, much of it coming from the predictability of Ogre's inherent desire to eat things that humans regard as inedible. His naughty behavior is sure to strike a chord of recognition with many child readers who will nevertheless identify with the ever-patient and resourceful May Belle in this story told over three chapters. (Ages 4-8)

## Fiction for Children

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**Abrahams, Peter.** *Down the Rabbit Hole: An Echo Falls Mystery.* Laura Geringer Books / HarperCollins, 2005. 375 pages (trade 0-06-073701-8, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-073702-6, \$16.89)

Peter Abrahams is a noted writer of thrillers for adults, and with *Down the Rabbit Hole* he proves he can pen a terrific book for children, too. Thirteen-year-old Ingrid Levin-Hill finds herself in the midst of unsettling circumstances when she realizes she may have been the last person to see a murder victim alive. No one knows Ingrid was at the woman's house, where she was borrowing the phone, but Ingrid realizes she's left her soccer shoes at the scene of the crime, and that the men arrested are most likely innocent. Trying to cover her tracks and set things right, Ingrid gets caught up in events as full of twists and turns as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. And it's no wonder: the local theater group is mounting a production of *Alice*, and Ingrid has been cast in the lead. Abrahams combines humor and suspense in a story for children that has all the elements of a classic murder mystery. Ingrid is a fresh, smart protagonist whose insecurities will make her all the more appealing to young readers. From its intriguing and sometimes hilarious subplots (including one involving Ingrid's grandfather, who is tenaciously determined to prevent developers from getting his land) to the ongoing theater production and the satisfying discovery of the sinister murderer, *Down the Rabbit Hole* is a delight. This is the first of a planned series of Echo Falls Mysteries, and it offers intriguing hints of stories to come. (Ages 9-13)

**Chantler, Scott. *North West Passage. Volume 1. OniPress, 2005. 70 pages* (pbk. 1-932664-23-8, \$5.95)**

Scott Chantler's graphic novel is a historical adventure set in western Canada in 1755. Charles Lord, formerly a respected and admired British adventurer, has decided to retire from his job as the governor of a frontier trading post in what was then called Rupert's Land and return to England. Or so he tells his friends. In truth, he wants to head to England to raise support for one more voyage in search of the fabled Northwest passage, which explorers have been chasing since Columbus's days. Before he leaves, an old Cree Shaman, Eagle Eye, arrives with injuries; apparently he was wounded by the Blackfoot. Rupert's Land is in a tenuous position now as the already sensitive transition from Charles Lord to a more "British" governor is complicated by potential fights between Indian Nations in a story that is the first volume in a proposed three volume series. Chantler's story shows what happens when cultures collide and peace is threatened as leaders come and go. The artwork, while cartoony in style, captures the feeling of the frontier and of the shipping industry. An author's note relate the sources artist/writer Chantler used to tell his story. (Ages 10-17)

**Clarke, Judith. *Kalpana's Dream. U.S. edition: Front Street, 2005. 164 pages* (trade 1-932425-22-5, \$16.95)**

Neema can't figure out why Gull Oliver, the boy she keeps noticing at school, makes her think of shepherds and lambs. Gull, in the meantime, can't stop thinking about Neema, and has taken to flying by her house on his skateboard. Far away in India, Neema's great grandmother, Kalpana, dreams of flying. Soon after she decides it's time to visit her great-granddaughter in Australia. In the midst of Kalpana's visit, rife with language barriers and painful misunderstandings, Neema and her best friend, Kate, are struggling with their assigned essay topic for Ms. Dallimore's 7B English class: Who am I? To Kate's mind writing is akin to wallowing through heavy mud, until a moment of inspiration: Isn't explaining why you hate someone one way to answer the question of who you are? As Ms. Dallimore's high hopes for what her students can achieve rapidly dwindle, rumors circulate that Ms. Dallimore's boyfriend is Count Dracula. All Ms. Dallimore knows is that Vladimir's unusual sensitivity to light makes for dark and sometimes dismal meals. Australian author Judith Clarke's extraordinary novel weaves the stories of five different characters on the verge or in the midst of changes both small and large. Clarke portrays each of their lives with a deft touch as she reveals how moments of understanding can be subtle or even anticlimactic but still have tremendous, transformative power in a narrative that also features marvelous secondary characters, from the mysterious Vladimir to Neema's parents, Kalpana's close friend in India to Kate's little sister. With a sure hand, the author seamlessly shifts from realism into fantasy, sometimes blurring the lines but always grounding her story in the ultimately kind and caring hearts of her characters. (Ages 10-14)

**Collins, Suzanne. *Gregor and the Curse of the Warmbloods*. (Book Three in the Underland Chronicles) Scholastic Press, 2005. 358 pages (trade 0-439-65623-0, \$16.95**

The hero of the Underland returns in the third volume of what is proving to be an exceptionally reliable fantasy series. Eleven-year-old Gregor and his little sister Boots head down to the realm beneath New York City again, this time in hope of finding a cure for a plague that threatens the animals and people who live there. The danger hits close to home when Gregor's mother—who refuses to let her children return to this perilous subterranean world without her—falls ill from the disease. As he did in *Gregor the Overlander* (Scholastic Press, 2003) and *Gregor and the Prophecy of Bane* (Scholastic Press, 2004), the young warrior must puzzle out the meaning of a cryptic prophecy to divert a crisis in the Underland. In the midst of all the action, Gregor must wrestle with his emerging Berserker characteristics, and work through the complexities of Underland politics. Humor, intrigue, and a growing cast of engaging characters all contribute important elements to this satisfying story about a timely topic—biological warfare. Suzanne Collins continues to demonstrate her skill at fantasy writing for children, and her growing fan club eagerly awaits another excursion to the Underland in Book Four. (Ages 9–14)

**Creech, Sharon. *Replay*. Joanna Cotler Books / HarperCollins, 2005. 240 pages (trade 0-06-054019-2, \$15.99)**

Twelve-year-old Leo feels like a sardine, squashed in the middle of his large bustling family. A practiced daydreamer, Leo is not as flashy as his siblings and he often feels forgotten, but he is about to make his mark: he has just gotten a part in his school play. As Leo rehearses his role, he also rehearses his real-life part, constantly replaying scenes in his head, rewriting his lines to say the things he wished he had said. At the same time, he has just discovered his father's childhood diary in the attic. Reading it leads Leo to a surprising new understanding of his dad and his family. Creech's funny, poignant novel, written in a combination of prose and dialogue, speaks to the power art has in shaping our lives. The complete text of the school play is included at the end of the book. (Ages 8–11)

**Curtis, Christopher Paul. *Mr. Chickee's Funny Money*. Wendy Lamb Books / Random House, 2005. 151 pages (trade 0-385-32772-2, \$15.95; lib. 0-385-90936-5, \$17.99)**

Nine-year-old Steven has never seen money with as many zeroes as are on the bill his elderly neighbor Mr. Chickee gave him. And he's never seen a picture of a black man on currency before, let alone one who looks quite so funky. Steven's dad, a music purist and avid record collector, identifies the man on the money as the Godfather of Soul—James Brown. A hilarious, over-the-top novel follows Steven's determined and highly innovative efforts to find out the truth about this quadrillion-dollar bill (U.S. mint—the real deal) from the Treasury Agent determined to cover it—and the money's very existence—up. Christopher Paul Curtis's story is

brilliantly grounded in how a nine-year-old believes—or wishes—the world really works. So adults do behave like children sometimes, a dog can be a hero, and aspiring detective Steven's various inventions, like the Snoopeze 2000 listening device, really do work. (Ages 8–11)

**Delaney, Joseph. *Revenge of the Witch*. Illustrated by Patrick Arrasmith. (The Last Apprentice: Book One) U.S. edition: Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 343 pages (trade 0-06-076618-2, \$14.99; lib. 0-06-076619-0, \$15.89)**

Thomas Ward is the seventh son of a seventh son—a position often associated with an aptitude for the supernatural. Being the seventh son also means that his father has nothing left to give as an inheritance, and the twelve-year-old must find a trade. With few available options, Thomas becomes an apprentice to the Spook. An intimidating, shadowy man, the Spook has the important, if feared, job of ridding the countryside and villages of pesky “ghouls, boggarts, and all manner of wicked beasts.” Leery, but intrigued, Thomas leaves his farm home to learn a new way of life, which at the very least will be “much more interesting than milking cows and spreading manure.” He’s soon plunged into peril involving a malevolent witch and her niece, Alice, who offers friendship one moment and betrayal the next. As he attempts to balance his ideals with his new knowledge, Thomas worries about the short-lived apprentices who preceded him. Will he be next to die? Confronting one threat after another, Thomas struggles to overcome his realistic fear with instinctual cleverness and deep-seated bravery. The fast pace and well-designed pages with occasional illustrations will have readers racing through this coming-of-age story that feels just right for the audience: not condescendingly mild, nor gratuitously gruesome; rather, a rewarding mix of humor, action, and chills. (Ages 10–14)

**Erdrich, Louise. *The Game of Silence*. HarperCollins, 2005. 256 pages (trade 0-06-029789-1, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-029790-5, \$16.89)**

In *The Birchbark House*, Louise Erdrich introduced young readers to Omakayas, a seven-year-old Ojibwe girl in the mid-nineteenth century living on what is now called Madeleine Island. That lyrical novel chronicled one year in the life of Omakayas, through seasons marked by both harmony and hardship. Now Omakayas is nine winters old. As summer starts, a worn-out group of elders, women, and children from far-off villages arrive on the shores of their island. They were forced from their homes by the *chimookomanag*, the white people. Even as they seek refuge within Omakayas’s community, they warn the adults in the village that they will soon face the same fate. Omakayas cannot begin to comprehend the idea of leaving the land she has always called home. As the cycles of the seasons turn and turn again, the villagers await word from the small group of men who’ve gone off in search of news and answers. Meanwhile, they continue with the rhythm of their lives. For Omakayas, this means working and playing within the context of her immediate family, and the larger family that her community represents. From

mischievous Pinch, Omakaya's younger brother; to spirited, unruly Two-Strike Girl; to fierce, independent Old Tallow; to loving, wise Nokomis, Omakaya's grandmother, the characters live and breathe in a story that is full of humor, richness, and heart. Through it all, Erdrich never strays from the center, where a young girl's growing awareness of change—in herself and in the world around her—both complicate and facilitate her understanding of what is happening as she faces a future filled with uncertainty. (Ages 8–12)

**Flanagan, John.** *The Ruins of Gorlan.* (Ranger's Apprentice: Book One) Philomel, 2005. 249 pages (trade 0-399-24454-9, \$15.99)

On Choosing Day, Will and the other castle wards will request apprenticeship to the craft of their choice. If the Craftmasters agree to their appeal, the teens start immediately on the path to their adult professions. Will is desperate to attend Battleschool, but he worries that his small size will keep him from his dream. His fears prove true when the Battlemaster turns him down. Unexpectedly, Halt, one of the mysterious Rangers, requests him as an apprentice, propelling Will into the hidden ranks of the kingdom's intelligence corp. At first wary, Will discovers that he's naturally gifted at many of the skills required of a Ranger. He absorbs Halt's training quickly, and soon finds himself in battle against fantastical creatures of evil who threaten the kingdom. Will performs heroically and at the story's end is publicly honored for his feat. Descriptions of Will and his peers' training in their respective crafts is captivating, and readers will appreciate seeing the group of friends leave childhood behind on separate paths and then reconnect as their jobs bring them together. This promising introduction to a new series is grounded with sympathetic characters, thoughtful details, vivid settings, and restrained injections of fantasy. (Ages 10–14)

**García, Laura Gallego.** *The Legend of the Wandering King.* Translated from the Spanish by Dan Bellm. U.S. edition: Arthur A. Levine Books / Scholastic, 2005. 213 pages (trade 0-439-58556-2, \$16.95)

Laura Gallego García's magical, mystical story is about fate, choice, redemption, and the power of love in many forms. Set in long ago Arabia, when "anything was possible," it tells of a prince named Walid who aspires to be a great poet. Despite his talent, Walid loses a local poetry competition to a carpetmaker, whose gifts are matched by his humility. Consumed by revenge, when Walid becomes king he refuses to let the carpetmaker return to his family until he has completed seemingly impossible tasks, including the creation of a rug that encompasses all of human history and knowledge. Amazingly, the carpetmaker succeeds, but then dies, his mind and body destroyed by the effort. When the extraordinary carpet is stolen, an obsessed Walid abandons his kingdom to search for it. But as he travels the deserts and cities of Arabia, his perspective begins to change. Three times on his journeys, he is saved from death by the kindness of others. And each time, the identity of his savior illuminates the far-reaching implications of his own cruel behavior

in the past. What is fate telling him? Walid can't undo the terrible things he did, but can he make decisions now that will serve the future better than he served the past? (Ages 11–14)

**Gerstein, Mordicai. *The Old Country*. Roaring Brook Press, 2005. 130 pages (trade 1–59643–047–8, \$14.95)**

In a tale for our time and all times, Mordicai Gerstein offers an entertaining, intriguing, and at times sobering story of a girl-turned-fox, a fox-turned-girl, and the chaos of war that makes the impossible, improbable, and unthinkable a reality. Gisella is a girl in *The Old Country*, a land that Gerstein has drawn from old Europe and folktales alike. Although she's a smart girl, she's not smart enough to outwit the fox who's been stealing her family's chickens. When she makes the mistake of looking too long into the fox's eyes, he steals her body. The fox is now a girl, and Gisella is now a fox. Gisella's determination to reclaim her own skin is thwarted by the war that has just begun in *The Old Country*. It is a war like all wars, with many innocents caught in the middle. The land is ravaged. Roads are crowded with refugees wandering in hopes of finding safety. By the time Gisella gets over the shock of being a fox, her family has fled, the sly fox—in her body—along with them. Over the course of weeks as she follows their trail, Gisella is witness to the havoc war creates. She must use her own wits and the fox's agile body to stay alive. Among the novel's funniest—and most somber—moments are legal trials that underscore the divide that has taken place between nature and humanity, in particular where man has been the cause of such devastation. For Gisella, however, that divide is no longer very clear. After weeks in the fox's body, she's not sure where it ends and she begins in a story that is hilarious, lyrical, and thought-provoking by turn. (Ages 10–14)

**Gruber, Michael. *The Witch's Boy*. HarperTempest / HarperCollins, 2005. 377 pages (trade 0–06–076164–4, \$16.99; lib. 0–06–076165–2, \$17.89) HR**

This fractured fairy tale begins when a witch finds an ugly baby left in a basket on her doorstep. Not sure what else to do, she takes him in and names him Lump. Clearly she knows little about caring for a child. The witch turns Lump over to a bear for nurturing, and a jinni for teaching. She also prevents him from having any contact with the human world. But Lump becomes more and more curious about children in the nearby village as he grows. Eager for playmates, he finally sneaks away to join them, only to discover the cruelty of the human world when he is locked in a basement and tormented because of his looks. Lump feels betrayed not only by the children but by his mother the witch for keeping the truth about his looks a secret. His heartbreak turns to bitterness, and the boy becomes thoughtless, cruel, and self-centered, which in turn leads to tragedy. Lump, the witch, and her familiar, a cat, must flee for their lives before the villagers arrive to burn them. Lump's complete disregard for anyone but himself is stunning; over and over he puts their lives in danger. Finally, as Lump approaches manhood, he and the witch part ways. It is



only when Lump is on his own that life begins to shape him differently. He gradually discovers that love is the only thing more powerful than anger, and forgiveness is a gift that begins inside oneself. It is a startling, transcendent, wholly believable transformation in Michael Gruber's fascinating novel that also breathes intriguing new life into familiar stories as the narrative weaves in fresh perspectives on Hansel and Gretel, Little Red Riding Hood, Rumpelstiltskin, and other classic fairy tales. (Ages 10–14)

**Halam, Ann. *Siberia: A Novel*. Wendy Lamb Books / Random House, 2005. 262 pages (trade 0-385-74650-4, \$16.95; lib. 0-385-90885-7, \$18.99)**

Four-year-old Rosita and her scientist mother are exiled together to a prison camp in a frozen wasteland. At first, despite the changes in her living conditions, Rosita is content to live with her loving mother. By the time she is a teenager, however, Rosita has changed her name to Sloe, and she's been dragged down by the grim realities of her life. It helps to know that Mama has a plan, which somehow involves the "magic" work she secretly does with a complex lab kit. Mama's work will not only free Sloe from their bleak imprisonment, but will somehow bring a great good to all humanity. After Sloe is tricked into betraying her mother's forbidden scientific activity, Mama is removed from their prison home. Left alone, not sure if her parent is dead or alive, Sloe embarks on a dangerous journey across a desolate landscape in search of the safe haven at the other side that her mother has described. She carries the secret lab kit with her, and uses the amazing animals it creates to help her on her perilous course. The futuristic setting, on an Earth that has undergone major climate change and species extinction, unites science, animal welfare, and one girl's brave attempt to make a change. (Ages 11–15)

**Hiaasen, Carl. *Flush*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. 263 pages (trade 0-375-82182-1, \$16.95; lib. 0-375-92182-6, \$18.99)**

Under orders from Dusty Muleman, slimeball owner of a Florida gambling boat, the *Coral Queen* crew furtively flushes the waste of the boat into a coastal tidal basin each night. Dumping waste into open water rather than having it hauled away is illegal, but cheap. Noah's dad has tried to get Dusty caught in the act but failed—clearly, a local official is tipping Dusty off. After his father takes things into his own hands and ends up in jail, Noah and his younger sister, Abbey, carry on the crusade, running increasingly dangerous risks as they try to bust Dusty and vindicate their father. As in *Hoot* (Knopf, 2002), Hiaasen's first novel for children, the adults in this story tend to be seedy, bumbling, or evil, while the clear-thinking kids save the day. A best-selling author for adults, Hiaasen again demonstrates his adaptability at writing for a younger audience, while maintaining the over-the-top plot and south Florida setting that have made his books wildly popular with mature readers. Engaging humor, a persuasive environmental theme, and the human waste gross factor combine to make this a highly appealing page-turner. (Ages 11–14)

**Holm, Jennifer L. and Matthew Holm. *Babymouse: Our Hero*. (Babymouse: Book Two) Random House, 2005. 91 pages (pbk. 0-375-83230-0, \$5.95; lib. 0-375-93230-5, \$12.99)**

**Holm, Jennifer L. and Matthew Holm. *Babymouse: Queen of the World!* (Babymouse: Book One) Random House, 2005. 91 pages (pbk. 0-375-83229-7, \$5.95; lib. 0-375-93229-1, \$12.99)**

Babymouse is suffering from the everyday doldrums. "Where was the glamour? The excitement? The adventure?" Although she can imagine herself as queen of the world, Babymouse knows the incontestable queen of her school is Felicia Furrypaws. In volume one of this new graphic novel series, Felicia and her band of acolytes have no time for Babymouse, or her best friend, Wilson the Weasel. Despite Babymouse's frantic attempts to suck up to Felicia and earn an invitation to her slumber party, Felicia is unimpressed. It's not until Babymouse surrenders her book report to Felicia that she is granted an invite to the big event. The party turns out to be a colossal disappointment, and Babymouse realizes she'd much rather hang with Wilson, eating cupcakes and watching *Attack of the Giant Squid*. In volume two, *Babymouse: Our Hero*, the irrepressible rodent faces—and conquers—the horrors of gym class: dodge ball. As in the first book, Babymouse's imaginative riffs—in which she always plays the leading role, whether it's as Robin Hood, a film noir detective, or an inmate serving a life sentence for failing to understand fractions—showcase daydreams that every child can relate to. A perfect entrée into the land of graphic novels for grade school girls, *Babymouse* brims with humor and imagination. Babymouse insinuates herself into every part of her book, even making an appearance on the verso of the title page to comment on the copyright and CIP information ("What **is** all this stuff?") The uncluttered black, white, and pink comics are easy to follow and show a smooth integration of dialogue and art. Babymouse will be met with open arms by libraries everywhere that are anxious to meet high demand for graphic novels, and especially eager to find good choices for younger readers. (Ages 8–10)

**Howe, James. *Totally Joe*. Ginee Seo Books / Atheneum, 2005. 189 pages (trade 0-689-83957-X, \$15.95)**

"I'm used to being called a girl, but *excuse* me? Is that an insult? . . . Some of my best friends are girls!" Twelve-year-old Joe is irrepressible. Even though he stands out for not fitting the "boy" mold, he has the confidence to be true to himself in almost every situation. Over the course of six months, Joe's essays for a seventh-grade English assignment (write about yourself from A to Z) reveal a lot about him—he's a good friend and has good friends, he's funny and creative, he's picked on by a bully named Kevin Hennessy, he has a crush on a boy named Colin, and the very thought of kissing makes him squirm. Joe's fleeting, innocent romance with Colin is just one of the sweet, tender aspects of this fresh and funny novel by James Howe. Joe has no doubts about his own sexuality, but Colin is uncertain about his. He needs Joe to accept that, just as Colin

accepts and admires Joe for being totally himself. And as confident as Joe is, he still finds it a bit scary when he finally decides to come out to his family and friends: he's never actually said, "I'm gay." Joe's situation may be a little idealized with his totally accepting family and peers—it is because of them that he is able to dwell on the positive rather than the negative when the teasing and bullying Kevin Hennessy plagues him. But it's not out of the realm of possibility, and it's certainly what all the Joes and Colins in real life deserve. (Ages 10–14)

**Lawrence, Iain. *The Convicts*. Delacorte Press, 2005. 208 pages (trade 0–385–73087–X, \$15.95)**

Tom Tin, the son of a sea captain who's fallen on hard times, is falsely accused of murder and sentenced to be transported to New South Wales aboard a convict ship. But because he is just thirteen, he must first work aboard the *Lachesis*, a rotting hulk chained to a riverbed near the Chatham docks that is especially outfitted to hold juvenile convicts until they are old enough for transport. Tom's life on the ship is a living hell: the food is rancid, the living quarters squalid, the work monotonous, and the stronger boys prey upon the weaker ones. To make matters worse, Tom is terribly seasick and afraid of water, something that shames him since his father is a sea captain. Mistaken from the beginning for a tough street kid known as Smasher, Tom becomes the target of the ship's bully, who has an old score to settle with Smasher. The only bright spot in Tom's existence is his friendship with Midgely, a small boy who knows how to relieve his miserable circumstances by using his imagination, which gives both boys the power to envision an escape from the ship. Iain Lawrence's gripping adventure story is filled with sinister characters, dastardly deeds, and surprising plot twists that will keep readers engaged from start to finish. In an author's note, Lawrence writes about the actual ships that held and transported juvenile convicts in the nineteenth century, as well as other historical details that served as a basis for the story. (Ages 11–14)

**Levine, Ellen. *Catch a Tiger By the Toe*. Viking, 2005. 200 pages (trade 0–670–88461–8, \$15.99)**

Growing up during the McCarthy era, thirteen-year-old Jamie has to be careful to not reveal too much about her family to others. Their politically left values have become dangerous. Worried about being bullied or shunned at school, Jamie feels growing anger at her parents. She is afraid to have friends over, lies about what newspapers her family reads, and struggles to understand why they must be so secretive and alert if they are doing nothing illegal. When Jamie is unjustly overlooked for a position on the school paper, apparently because of the rumors about her family, she begins to understand the importance of fighting for civil rights in a very personal way. It becomes even more personal—and frightening—when her father loses his teaching position over his politics and is called to testify and “name names” of colleagues who may be Communists. Through Jamie's gripping story, Ellen Levine captures the tension and fear of a dramatic time in U.S. history. (Ages 9–12)

**Machado, Ana Maria.** *From Another World.* Illustrated by Lúcia Brandão. Translated from the Portuguese by Luisa Baeta. Groundwood, 2005. 136 pages (trade 0-88899-597-0, \$15.95; pbk. 0-8889-9641-1, \$6.95)

Brazilian writer Ana Maria Machado has written a lush historical fantasy that explores the legacy of slavery in Latin America through the eyes of four contemporary children. While their parents work on turning the buildings of an old coffee plantation into a bed-and-breakfast for tourists, Mariano, Leo, Elisa, and Teresa spend time roaming the various barns and outbuildings. One night, the spirit of a young girl appears in their bedroom. She is the ghost of a slave who once lived on the plantation. Rosario died watching her family and hundreds of others perish in a fire caused by the plantation's ruthless owner. As Rosario visits night after night, the children learn what it was like to live as a slave, which leads them to reflect on how race continues to impact their lives. Rosario wants Mariano to write her story down so others understand—and indeed, it is Mariano's hesitant, self-conscious voice that narrates the story. But Rosario also longs to know what happened to her brother, who had escaped the night of the fire. The children must piece together the parts of the story that Rosario can't complete by asking Leo and Elisa's grandmother to talk about their family history. The tension mounts as the details their grandmother reveals connect their own lives to the tragic events in the past. (Ages 9–12)

**Martin, Ann M. and David Levithan, editors.** *Friends: Stories about New Friends, Old Friends, and Unexpectedly True Friends.* Scholastic Press, 2005. 185 pages (trade 0-439-72991-2, \$16.95)

Animosity is the start of friendship in Pam Muñoz Ryan's "The Friend Who Changed My Life." In "My Best Friend" Jennifer L. Holm tells about a girl who has created a friend as a way of coping with the many moves she and her mother make. Virginia Euwer Wolff questions the meaning and motivation behind a seemingly friendly act in "Doll." Tanuja Desai Hidier sets the stage for future friendship in "Shashikala: A Brief History of Love and Khadi." Her story, set against the richly realized backdrop of India's quest for independence in 1946, concludes with two kindred spirits recognizing each other at last—a young boy and girl whose courage binds them in the quest for freedom. These and seven other stories comprise this entertaining, illuminating, and often surprising collection. (Ages 10–14)

**McKay, Hilary.** *Permanent Rose.* U.S. edition: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2005. 234 pages (trade 1-4169-0372-0, \$15.95)

The dazzlingly unconventional Casson family is back in another spirited novel from Hilary McKay. This time youngest sister Rose is at the center of a story that finds the eight-year-old grieving the loss of a friend. Tom didn't die; he's just gone back to America. But to Rose he might as well be dead; they haven't heard a word from him in months. No one seems to realize the depth of Rose's anguish. And it's no surprise, given how wrapped up everyone else is in their own personal dramas. Rose's cousin

Saffy is determined to find her biological father, whoever he may be. Her older sister Caddy is newly engaged and terrified of marriage. Her father breezes in and out from his townhouse in London whenever the fancy suits him or the latest crisis calls. Her mother remains, as always, loving and vague. ("Saint or more or less totally bonkers?" asks Saffy's friend Sarah about Eve Casson, to which Saffy replies, "Probably both.") Rose's brother Indigo, the one most likely to know how Rose is feeling, has been preoccupied with David, a kid who used to beat him up and has now attached himself to Indigo and the Casson family. In fact it is David who realizes something is amiss with Rose when he sees her shoplifting in the village. Sensing a sadness in Rose that he understands without knowing the cause, David begins to watch out for her. It's a new role for this former bully and one that he means to get right in a warm, outrageous, funny story about an unpredictable family and the friends they draw into their fold. (Ages 9–13)

**McKernan, Victoria. *Shackleton's Stowaway*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. 317 pages (trade 0–375–82691–2, \$15.95; lib. 0–375–92691–7, \$17.99)**

Ernest Shackleton's 1914 voyage on his ship, *Endurance*, ranks among the most compelling exploration stories of the last century. In an attempt to cross the Antarctic continent, the *Endurance* became trapped and crushed by the polar ice. Caught in unbearably harsh circumstances, Shackleton and his crew struggled to survive for months with little food and shelter. Author Victoria McKernan layers her novel onto this real-life adventure. Her story is told from the perspective of eighteen-year-old Perce, an actual crew member whom she has here imagined as a stowaway with a lust for adventure. Courage, ingenuity, and conscientious leadership mingle with fear, boredom, and personal ambition in this fictionalized account of what the sailors and their leader endured. From unrelenting meals of penguin to a grizzly amputation of frostbitten toes, vivid details bring history to life. For readers new to the tale of the *Endurance*, McKernan's novel is an exceptional introduction to those events. Those already familiar with Shackleton's exploits will be equally gripped by this account of survival against the odds. A concluding author's note details her careful research and commitment to presenting the story as accurately as possible. A timeline, source bibliography, and further reading list round out a meticulously crafted work. An epilogue relates what happened to the crew after their return from the Antarctic, a particularly welcome feature for those reluctant to leave this richly realized world of polar exploration. (Ages 11–15)

**Mwangi, Meja. *The Mzungu Boy*. Groundwood, 2005. 150 pages (trade 0–88899–653–5, \$15.95)**

Against the backdrop of the struggle for British-ruled Kenya's struggle for independence in the 1950s is a story of an unlikely friendship between two boys, one black and one white. Kariuki's strong bond to nature and his love for the land and landscape of his homeland help him endure a life that is often dismal. His family works for Bwana Ruin, a harsh white

landowner. The pressures of their existence make his parents' lives difficult in ways Kariuki doesn't fully comprehend; what he does know is their anger when it is directed at him. When Bwana Ruin's grandson, Nigel, arrives from Britain, Kariuki and the white boy hit it off. Among the others in Kariuki's village, Nigel is known as *mzungu boy*, or westerner. Nigel's sense of entitlement is not as entrenched as his grandfather's, but his privilege makes him almost wholly oblivious to the fact that their friendship is dangerous for them both. When Nigel is kidnapped by the Mau Mau rebels, Kariuki helps free him, but the Kenyan boy pays an enormous price. Kenyan writer Meja Mwangi's story ends on a hopeful note as it underscores that growth and change are possible, both for individuals and for a nation. (Ages 10–14)

**Napoli, Donna Jo. *The King of Mulberry Street*. Wendy Lamb Books / Random House, 2005. 245 pages (trade 0–385–74653–9, \$15.95; lib. 0–385–90890–3, \$17.99)**

In 1892, nine-year-old Dom becomes a stowaway aboard a ship sailing from Italy to America. All alone, Dom pines for his mother, who he is sure intended to travel with him but was unavoidably left behind. As a Jewish child stranded alone in New York City, Dom must scramble to find food and shelter. At the same time, he tries to avoid the dangers presented by the corrupt *padroni*, adults who provide immigrant boys with passage and basic necessities, and then force them to beg to pay off an inflated debt. In an alliance with two other street boys, Dom begins buying sandwiches, and then dividing and reselling them for a profit in the Wall Street area. Despite setbacks and hard lessons, the trio eventually develops a money-making business. At the same time, Dom must face the reality that his mother intentionally sent him off on his own, wanting to give him a better life, even if it meant a life without her. Donna Jo Napoli created Dom's fictional story out of elements of her grandfathers' experiences, as well as her research into the history of other young Italian immigrants. (Ages 10–14)

**Park, Linda Sue. *Project Mulberry*. Clarion, 2005. 225 pages (trade 0–618–47786–1, \$16.00)**

Julia and Patrick always work together on a project for the state fair. This year, they are having a hard time coming up with an idea that pleases them both. When Julia's mother suggests they raise silkworms, as she did when she was growing up in Korea, Patrick embraces the idea wholeheartedly. Julia's not so happy—raising silkworms doesn't fit with the "all-American" projects usually found at the fair. As a member of the only Korean family in town, she's uncomfortable drawing attention to her ethnicity. And the project isn't easy—just where will they find the mulberry leaves the silkworms require as food? To add to her problems, Julia's neglected to read through all the materials about raising silkworms—that's Patrick's job in their partnership—and she is shocked to discover killing the insects is a necessary component of the project. The absorbing story of the silkworm scheme provides a framework for a more

subtle look at race and identity. By examining Julia's mother's discomfort when the only mulberry tree in town turns up on the lawn of an African American man, Linda Sue Park confronts a topic seldom seen in children's books in this country: prejudice between non-Caucasian Americans. Brief sections between chapters relate a spirited dialogue between the character Julia and the novel's author—an unusual and clever device that allows readers a unique perspective on a writer's creative process. (Ages 9–12)

**Perkins, Lynne Rae. *Criss Cross*. Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 368 pages (trade 0-06-009272-6, \$16.99; lib 0-06-009273-4, \$17.89)**

Debbie, Hector, Lenny, Patty, and Phil live normal fourteen-year-old lives in a normal community, and face normal adolescent issues, including romance, identity, family, and self-actualization. What makes *Criss Cross* remarkable is not high drama but rather the remarkable depth Lynne Cross Perkins has created by revealing her characters through small but significant moments that impact their own—and one another's—lives. The five of them intersect most often sitting in Lenny's dad's truck, where they listen to an old radio show called *Criss Cross*. The title serves as the central metaphor for the rambling intersections of their lives, the meaningful connections and the poignant near misses, which are revealed in many formats throughout the novel, including poetry, anonymous conversations in the dark, and a smattering of unique graphic art drawn and compiled by the author. With lyrical prose and a genuine affection for her characters, Perkins is able to demonstrate the beauty of existential wonderings and wanderings. At times, the characters' insights into themselves and the nuances of teenage life are laugh-out-loud funny, and readers will recognize certain universal truisms, such as Debbie's observation about dragging jeans: "She believed that it was the only way to wear pants that made any sense. That wearing dragging jeans did not actually guarantee that good things would happen to you, but not wearing them could almost guarantee that the good things wouldn't." Or the first song that Hector writes after beginning guitar lessons: "I'm thinkin' 'bout/talkin' 'bout / boys boys boys / talkin' 'bout / girls girls girls." In that short stanza, Hector has summarized teen life. Perkins's narrative focuses most closely on Debbie, a wise and tender character she first introduced in *All Alone in the Universe* (Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 1999). (Ages 11–14)

**Porter, Pamela. *The Crazy Man*. Groundwood, 2005. 214 pages (trade 0-88899-694-2, \$15.95)**

"I was dragging around a lot of mad / when I opened the door / and made my way / into the kitchen." Twelve-year-old Emaline speaks with an open, honest voice in this moving novel set on the Saskatchewan prairie in the mid-1960s. A gruesome farm accident has left Emaline seriously injured—her leg was mangled in the discing mashing after she fell off of the tractor where she was riding behind her father. Wracked by guilt and at odds with farming, her father has now abandoned the family. Her mother has arranged for Angus, who lives at the nearby mental hospital, to stay with them and help with the planting and chores. Some of the

neighbors and townspeople are furious at the thought of a crazy man living freely in their midst. Emaline quickly sees that Angus is more fearful than fearsome, with an abundance of patience and gentle in his ways. Emaline's physical and emotional healing is sustained in part by the new relationships that came out of the tragedy—with Angus, with her teacher, and with Mei, a girl at school. Pamela Porter's free verse novel may be spare in its number of words, but its language is rich and revealing. Emaline's longing for her father can't make him come back when he's not ready. Her growing love for Angus can't protect him from mean-spirited remarks and cruelty. But the ultimate truths revealed in all she so observantly describes are the power of love, and kindness, and of letting go of the things that you cannot change. (Ages 10–13)

**Pullman, Philip.** *The Scarecrow and His Servant.* Illustrated by Peter Bailey. U.S. edition: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. 229 pages (trade 0-375-81531-7, \$15.95; lib. 0-375-91531-1, \$17.99)

Brought to life by a fortuitous lightning strike, a scarecrow engages an orphan named Jack as his servant and the two hit the open road in search of "excitement and glory." The excitement is easy to find as the Scarecrow's spirited ideas (which far exceed his brain power) propel the duo from one dramatic adventure to the next. The Scarecrow obviously creates chaos at every turn, while quick-thinking Jack works feverishly to avert disaster. Much of the story's humor and delight is created by the Scarecrow's uninhibited style, whether he's facing a band of brigands, performing with itinerant actors, or joining a regiment of soldiers in battle. Meanwhile, the Scarecrow and Jack are being pursued by a representative of the Buffaloni family, crooked business owners with a secret motive for wanting to permanently dispose of the Scarecrow. In a hilarious and clever courtroom finale, Jack and a contingent of birds (ironically the very creatures who should be the straw man's enemies) defend the Scarecrow and expose the Buffaloni's scam. Despite one last desperate attempt to poison the Scarecrow with a woodworm infestation, the Buffalonis are defeated, allowing Jack and the Scarecrow to happily live out their days. Pullman's story has all the comfort of a familiar fairy tale, but offers up two fresh and memorable characters. Peter Bailey's line drawings and a generous font size will help draw in newly independent readers. (Ages 8–11, younger for reading aloud)

**Renier, Aaron.** *Spiral-Bound: Top Secret Summer.* Top Shelf, 2005. 178 pages (pbk. 1-891830-50-3, \$14.95)

At first glance, *Spiral-Bound* looks like a child's spiral notebook, complete with cute sketches of animals and an abstract, scary-looking monster etched into the well-worn cover. Inside, cartoonlike drawings are framed by the ruled lines of the notebook. The visual and sensual aspects of the notebook urge the reader on into a story that starts simply but grows increasingly complex. Stucky the Hound invites his shy classmate Turnip the Elephant to art camp after seeing one of Turnip's portraits rendered out of the makings of lunch. At camp they are joined by many other



animal kids geared for a summer of art, music, writing, and rock-and-roll. But if rumors are true, a mysterious pond monster might prevent the artists from showing their work. The art teacher, Ms. Scrimshaw (a whale), must be protected from fearful adults who think she is the real problem, and important sculpture projects must be completed in the face of major self-doubt and destruction. Ana the rabbit is an intrepid cub reporter at the camp's underground newspaper (which really is under ground). With her bird friend Emily, a photographer, she tries to collect evidence of the monster and exonerate Ms. Scrimshaw. Aaron Renier has created an intense, suspenseful yet child-friendly mystery that is full of twists and turns that mirror those in the tunnels that Ana and Emily navigate in their search for evidence (the tunnel map on the endpapers is a terrific visual element). (Ages 8–15)

**Riordan, Rick. *The Lightning Thief*. (Percy Jackson & the Olympians: Book 1) Miramax Books / Hyperion, 2005. 375 pages (trade 0-7868-5629-7, \$17.95)**

It takes a lot to stand out among the multitudes of new fantasy series that seem to be multiplying faster than the proverbial rabbits, but the first volume in *Percy Jackson & the Olympians* succeeds with ease. In an original premise, Rick Riordan offers up the difficulties faced by the twenty-first century offspring of Olympic gods. Percy Jackson, twelve-year-old boarding school renegade, is being asked to exit yet another academic institution as the novel opens. He thought he was a regular kid (even if a bit of a trouble-magnet), but his outlook makes a dramatic turn when he discovers that his best friend has hooves, his mother is annihilated by a Minotaur, and he's the newest inductee to Camp Half-Blood, a safe haven for demigods. Percy misses his mother and struggles with the unknown identity of his father—he must be a god, but which one? And why has he been such a deadbeat dad for the past twelve years? Percy must put aside these questions as he sets out on a quest to track down Zeus's stolen lightning bolt and exonerate himself as the primary suspect. Accompanied by his satyr buddy and a formidable daughter of Athena, Percy travels from Long Island to L.A., battling hostile forces that include Medusa and the god Ares en route. While it holds obvious appeal for the many fans of Harry Potter, *The Lightning Thief* deserves recognition on its own merits, with witty narration, clever plotting, and characters readers will look forward to rejoining in Book 2 of *Percy Jackson & the Olympians*. (Ages 11–15)

**Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*. U.S. edition: Arthur A. Levine Books / Scholastic, 2005. 652 pages (trade 0-439-78454-9, \$29.99)**

Now sixteen and returning to his sixth year at Hogwarts, Harry Potter, along with his friends, finds the school provides some sense of normalcy in the midst of the chaos and fear in the wizarding world since Voldemort's return. For much of *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, building romantic tensions, complete with petty jealousies, insecurities, matches

made and broken, and plenty of snogging, are as demanding of the sixth years' energies as what's happening beyond the gates, on the Quidditch field, or in class. But the pace never lags in this page-turner that juggles multiple surprises and mysteries, along with the usual fair share of sparkling humor. Harry, Ron, Hermione, and others have crossed an invisible line. No longer children, they stand on the brink of adulthood with almost all pretense of innocence gone. Perhaps nothing symbolizes this more than Harry's relationship with Dumbledore. Once the headmaster sought to protect Harry from the truth; now he has made Harry his partner in seeking it out. It is also symbolized by the loss of someone beloved before this volume ends—and Rowling handles that loss with great deftness and great sensitivity to her audience, meeting many young readers, whether or not they have experienced the death of someone close, right where they are at. Many questions will continue to tantalize readers and listeners long after the book has ended, including those that arise in the frantic climax. As in other recent volumes, there are some terrific characters who barely make an appearance here. But while readers can choose to fill in the gaps on missing characters, they can't fill in the gaps on essential plot elements Rowling must reveal. It's a delicate balancing act, to be sure, but Rowling once again gets it right. (Age 9 and older)

**Schmidt, Gary. *First Boy*. Henry Holt, 2005. 197 pages (trade 0-8050-7859-2, \$16.95)**

When fourteen-year-old Cooper Jewett's grandfather dies, Cooper is left an orphan. His love for the land is the only certainty he has left, and he's determined to continue running his grandparents' New Hampshire dairy farm, the only home he's ever known. His seemingly impossible struggle is soon complicated even more by a series of strange and unsettling events: one of the barns burns down, the house is robbed, and men in black sedans have shown up asking questions about Cooper's past. Two neighbors helping to care for Cooper finally tell him a long-hidden truth: no one knows who his parents are. He had been abandoned by strangers on the farm as an infant. But someone knows—or thinks he knows—who Cooper is. The man behind the strong-arm tactics is running for President of the United States, and he believes Cooper is just what he needs to unseat the current President. *First Boy* has all the tension of a good thriller. There are unrealistic plot elements, and some secondary characters—particularly the “bad guys”—who lack dimension, but read as a suspense story rather than realistic fiction, it's not only compelling but wholly satisfying. And at its core is a protagonist whose struggle for self-determination is worthy of any fine novel. (Ages 11–14)

**Tingle, Rebecca. *Far Traveler*. Putnam, 2005. 228 pages (trade 0-399-23890-5, \$17.99)**

Sixteen-year-old Ælfwyn must choose between a distasteful marriage or life in a convent, by the command of her uncle, the West Saxon King Edward. Bookish and reserved, Ælfwyn devises an alternative plan: posing

as a boy, she leaves home disguised as a traveling bard and chooses the new name Widsith, meaning "Far Traveler." She's taken in by King Wilfrid and his company, and soon becomes enmeshed in the Northumbrian King's attempts to regain power from her own uncle. Undeniably attracted to Wil, Widsith is faced with conflicting emotions as she must choose between family loyalty and friendship, or perhaps even love. Rebecca Tingle continues the riveting story she began in *The Edge of the Sword* (Putnam, 2001), based in tenth century English history. (Ages 12–16)

**Vande Velde, Vivian. *Three Good Deeds*. Harcourt, 2005. 147 pages (trade 0–15–205382–4, \$16.00)**

A thoughtless act of mischief—stealing goose eggs, which are broken in the process—lands Howard in the bad graces of a local witch. Deciding to teach him a much-needed lesson, the witch turns Howard into a goose, a spell that will only be reversed when he has performed three good deeds. Howard soon discovers that his new life in the goose community is not easy, especially for one inexperienced in the ways of waterfowl. While learning how to survive as a goose, Howard learns about kindness, too, and, almost despite himself, starts to check off his required good deeds. Howard's plight is cleverly resolved, and the chronicle of his stint in goose-dom makes this humorous novel an ideal classroom read-aloud. (Ages 8–12)

**Winerip, Michael. *Adam Canfield of the Slash*. Candlewick Press, 2005. 326 pages (trade 0–7636–2340–7, \$15.99)**

Adam Canfield is one overscheduled middle schooler. As a result, he is constantly on the move, usually arriving late to his myriad extracurricular activities. These include working as a journalist for the school newspaper, *The Slash*. The action of this novel is as fast-paced as Adam's life as he and his co-editor, Jennifer, work at uncovering stories that reveal the true nature of some of the people in power. There is their principal, who seems to be misappropriating funds at the same time she puts more and more pressure on teachers and students for better test results, and certain members of the city government, who are promoting unfair zoning laws. Because Adam takes his job and himself very seriously, he is irritated when Phoebe, a younger student, begins getting a lot of attention for her reporting. Sometimes it all feels like too much. This over-the-top novel is extremely funny and suspenseful, but at its core are some provocative questions as it explores the misuse of power, ethics in journalism, and the role of standardized testing in American education. (Ages 9–12)

**Yee, Lisa. *Stanford Wong Flunks Big-Time*. Arthur A. Levine Books / Scholastic, Inc., 2005. 296 pages (trade 0–439–62247–6, \$16.99)**

In *Millicent Min, Girl Genius*, Lisa Yee chronicled the trials and tribulations of an eleven-year-old Chinese American girl whose genius-level IQ stands in the way of social success. Millicent's memorable and singular voice describes how her summer is almost ruined by volleyball and Stanford Wong, the brainless Chinese American boy she has to tutor.

*Stanford Wong Flunks Big-Time* gives Stanford a chance to speak. In a novel that covers the same time period as *Millicent Min*, Yee covers significant new ground as Stanford details life in his family, including concern about his once feisty grandmother whose memory and lust for life are waning, and tension with a father whom he never seems able to please. Most of his friends share Stanford's obsession with basketball, but none of them play as well as Stanford, whose been chosen for the A-Team at school in the fall, *if* he can make up for a failing English grade. Too embarrassed to admit to even his best friend that he flunked English, Stanford is desperate to keep the fact that he's in summer school, *and* being tutored by stuck-up, brainy Millicent Min, a secret. This is where the two stories overlap, as Yee offers up many of the same events covered in *Millicent Min*, but from Stanford's point of view. Already overwhelmed by pressures and changes at home and tensions with a friend who is jealous of his basketball success, things grow increasingly complicated for Stanford when he develops a crush on Millicent's new friend in town, Emily. Emily has no idea Millicent is a genius. It's something both Stanford and Millie (who likes being perceived as a regular kid for once) would like to keep a secret. And so there is lying, subterfuge, and, inevitably, repercussions that take honesty, courage, and humility to resolve. (Ages 10–13)

## Fiction for Young Adults

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**Adlington, L. J. *The Diary of Pelly D*. U.S. edition: Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 282 pages (trade 0–06–076615–8, \$15.99)**

Tony V is an excavator in a future dystopia. While digging through ruins, he discovers the diary of Pelly D, a girl who must have lived near that spot years before. Her writing offers an explanation of how the world has come to the point it is at, leading Tony to question much of what he has been taught to believe. Wealthy and popular, Pelly was everything Tony is not. But when a required gene test was given to all citizens, Pelly was discovered to have been part of a lower-class line of ancestry, which changes her position in life dramatically. Adlington offers details about Tony's reality in increments that parallel the pace at which Tony discovers things about Pelly's world. While this reverse world-building is disconcerting at first, science fiction fans will appreciate the way it creates a kind of urgency, and how they must hunt for clues to explain strange things like Tony's gills. As it becomes more and more clear that Pelly's fall was due to racism and classism in a culture not altogether unlike our own, *The Diary of Pelly D* begs the question of whether our own society is on a path toward Pelly D's reality, or, worse, Tony's. (Ages 12–15)

**Bechard, Margaret. *Spacer and Rat*. A Deborah Brodie Book / Roaring Brook Press, 2005. 183 pages (trade 1-59643-058-3, \$16.95)**

Freedom Station, a space station in the Asteroid Belt, has been teenage Jack's home his entire life, making him a true Spacer. But now he's ready to make a change. With no family to hold him back, he's looking forward to a new job on Liberty Station, and secretly hopes that he can track down relatives that may be there as well. The last thing he wants is a reason to stay on Freedom, so when Kit—an orphan newly arrived from Earth, labeled by Spacers as a Rat—worms her way into his life, Jack tries to resist the connection. Against his better judgment, he's soon caught up in Kit's plight, as she struggles to stay one step ahead of a menacing Company agent who's searching for Kit's "bot." The bot—an ordinary maintenance robot—was modified by Kit's Dad before his recent death, and now it holds information that could be worth a lot of money. Jack's faced with an ethical dilemma: he could use some money himself but is he willing to turn in Kit? This entertaining science fiction novel explores issues of artificial intelligence and nonhuman rights within the framework of a plot-driven action adventure. (Ages 12–15)

**Black, Holly. *Valiant: A Modern Tale of Faerie*. Simon & Schuster, 2005. 314 pages (trade 0-689-86822-7, \$16.95)**

When Val discovers her boyfriend and her mother are sexually involved, she runs away from her New Jersey home, overwhelmed by feelings of betrayal and humiliation. Alone in New York City, she soon hooks up with other kids living on the street. With their help, Val learns how to eat, sleep, and live as a homeless teenager. Before long Val becomes aware of another layer of life in the city: witches, trolls, faeries, and other magical beings who live unnoticed among the humans, except for the few like her friends who work as errand runners for the supernaturals. They deliver the drug Never to faeries, who use it as a protection from iron, a necessity for survival in an urban environment. When Val uses Never, she experiences euphoria and exploits the drug's side effect, which enables her to control the actions of others. Grippled in a drug addiction, Val also becomes trapped in Faerie conspiracies: faeries who take Never are dying, and no one knows who's behind the murders. Is it Ravus, the troll drug maker to whom Val is very attracted, or someone else? Val must choose between her drug use and her loyalty to Ravus. While making the most of its gothic aura, this dark fantasy doesn't shy away from the downside of Val's life, from drug use and sex, to hunger, dirt, and cold. (Ages 14–17)

**Brooks, Kevin. *Candy*. U.S. edition: *The Chicken House* / Scholastic, 2005. 364 pages (trade 0-439-68327-0, \$16.95)**

Self-proclaimed average guy Joe falls hard and fast for a girl he meets quite by accident on a trip from his suburban home to London. At first Candy is as sweet and charming as her name suggests, but as their relationship progresses, fifteen-year-old Joe learns that her life is far more complicated than he could possibly imagine. She is a heroin addict and a prostitute working for a ruthless pimp named Iggy. Joe also discovers that while he

and Candy now move in totally separate spheres, they began their lives in much the same place: both grew up in similar middle class suburbs. It soon becomes clear that *both* Joe and Candy are fighting addictions: Candy to her drugs, and Joe to Candy. They both vacillate between a conviction to fight against their compulsions and utter resignation. Joe's love for Candy feels so overpowering he can think only of saving her. Taking her to his parents' country cottage, he sits with her while she goes through a brutal detoxification. Meanwhile, Iggy kidnaps Joe's sister, Gina, in order to get Candy back. Brooks's novel is a gritty and horrifying look at the many repercussions of addiction. (Ages 14–17)

**Bruchac, Joseph. *Code Talker: A Novel About the Navajo Marines of World War Two*. Dial, 2005. 231 pages (trade 0-8037-2921-9, \$16.99)**

"Grandchildren, you asked me about this medal of mine." So begins the story of Ned Begay, a Navajo Code Talker who served in World War II. Author Joseph Bruchac uses the strong oral tradition of the Navajo people as a way for his fictional character to pass an important story of culture and pride on to his grandchildren. Ned begins with his life as a child, when he was mistreated and poorly educated in an Indian boarding school run by whites. The message he hears over and over again is "Tradition is the enemy of progress." He and his classmates are robbed of their culture and forbidden from speaking the Navajo language. But when World War II erupts, the U.S. government realizes the Navajo language offers something invaluable: the basis of an unbreakable code for wartime use. The complexities of the language make Navajo soldiers the best suited for developing and then using the code. Ned becomes one of the first code talkers trained and soon finds himself in the midst of the war in the Pacific. The horrors of discrimination and the harrows of battle are never minced in Bruchac's honest novel. An author's note at the end explains more about the real code talkers, whose contributions did not become public until 1969, and a bibliography offers more sources on the topic. (Ages 12–17)

**Coy, John. *Crackback*. Scholastic Press, 2005. 201 pages (trade 0-439-69733-6, \$16.99)**

Sophomore Miles Manning is a gifted defenseman on his high school football team who enjoys playing hard and winning. His dad was a football star himself and Miles can never quite live up to his expectations, but he has a good coach who offsets his father's harsh criticisms of his game. Things change dramatically when his coach suddenly resigns and the assistant coach takes over. Gone is his former coach's steady hand and compassion; now the team is reigned with an iron fist. He works the players so hard that Miles finds it harder and harder to resist the temptation of steroids, which a number of his teammates, including his best friend, are using. There's plenty of exciting football action in John Coy's first novel, but readers will find depth here, too, as Miles deals with ethical issues in his search for himself. (Ages 12–15)

**Dorfman, Ariel and Joaquin Dorfman. *Burning City*. U.S. edition: Random House, 2005. 259 pages (trade 0-375-83203-3, \$15.95; lib. 0-375-93203-8, \$17.95; pbk. 0-375-83204-1, \$7.95)**

At sixteen, Heller Highland is one of the best bicycle messengers New York City has every seen. His company, Soft Tidings, specializes in delivering messages with a personal touch, by reading them aloud to the recipients. And Heller's empathetic spirit makes him especially gifted at delivering bad news. His clients always remember him, and he always remembers his clients, as well as the hidden pain that his messages have brought them. Heller has become especially close to Salim, a Middle Eastern bookseller who continually crosses paths with him. Salim has plenty of wisdom to share with young Heller, particularly about love. Salim's advice comes in handy as Heller tries to win the heart of Silvia, a beautiful woman who works in the coffee shop Heller frequents. While Heller is skilled at being a go-between, he is painfully awkward when it comes to delivering his own messages firsthand. Set in the summer before 9/11, this evocative novel brims with city life and with a strong sense of foreboding for what lies ahead for Heller and those he loves. (Age 14 and older)

**DuPrau, Jeanne. *Car Trouble*. Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 274 pages (trade 0-06-073672-0, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-073674-7, \$16.89)**

Seventeen-year-old Duff Pringle has it all figured out. He's bypassing college for a job in California as a computer programmer. College, after all, would just be four more years of torture among peers who aren't nearly as mature as he. So he's got his first used car, a route mapped out from Richmond, West Virginia, to San Jose, and six days to complete the journey. " 'This isn't some computer program you can control by typing in a bunch of numbers,' his father had said over and over. 'This is *life*.' " Exactly, Duff thinks. And he's about to start living it. Life has a more than a few surprises in store for Duff over the course of the next six days—and several cars—in Jeanne DuPrau's funny story about a teen who thinks he knows it all, and gradually sees it all unravel. Duff is a tenderly honest character—a smart, socially awkward teen who falls back on false ego to bluster his way through situations where he feels lacking. Meeting up with a unique assortment of strangers—those he knows he can trust, those he knows he can't, and those he puts up with while deciding—provides Duff with some of his biggest challenges and most outrageous moments on the road. By journey's end, he's left with nothing, or at least nothing he expected. But in truth he's gained much: a good friend, a bit of humility, and the ability to embrace the unknown. (Ages 13–16)

**Fisher, Catherine. *The Sphere of Secrets*. (The Oracle Prophecies: Book Two) U.S. edition: Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2005. 370 pages (trade 0-06-057161-6, \$16.99; lib. 0-06-057162-4, \$17.89)**

The second book in *The Oracle Prophecies* trilogy picks up shortly after the conclusion of *The Oracle Betrayed* (Greenwillow / HarperCollins, 2004). Parallel plots alternate throughout. They follow Mirany, a priestess

fighting to stay one step ahead of the deadly political intrigue rampant in the city, and ten-year-old Alexos, host body to the god, as he travels with four mismatched companions to find the Well of Songs. Mirany and Alexos's individual stories are clearly distinct, and readers will find both brimming with suspense. As in the first book, the ancient Greek and Egyptian setting is wholly convincing, and character development keeps pace with the action-packed plot. Although *Sphere of Secrets* succeeds as a stand-alone fantasy, addicted readers will be impatiently awaiting the trilogy's conclusion. (Age 13 and older)

**Flake, Sharon G. *Bang! Jump at the Sun / Hyperion*, 2005. 304 pages (trade 0-7868-1844-1, \$16.99)**

Ever since his little brother Jason was killed in a drive-by shooting, Mann has had a hard time. Between his own sadness and unsettled feelings and his parents' grief, his is a house of pain. Life is so treacherous in his urban neighborhood that Mann's best friend, Kee-Lee, keeps a running body count. One of Mann's few outlets for his feelings is painting, but his father wants to make a real man out of Mann. Fiercely determined not to lose another son, he irrationally decides that Mann, and Kee-Lee too, will benefit from an old African tribal ritual in which boys were abandoned to find their own ways home. He takes Mann and Kee-Lee camping and leaves them. It is an exhausting, sometimes terrifying five-day journey home. Mann is not a man when he returns, just a very angry adolescent boy who understandably feels abandoned. He and Kee-Lee run away and are soon drawn into a sordid life of alcohol, drugs, and crime. In trying to save his son, it seems Mann's father has destroyed him. Sharon G. Flake's sobering novel looks unflinchingly at the spiraling tragedies in an African American family caused by guns and violence. As hard and harrowing as her story is, Flake offers hope as well. Mann is smart and knows he needs to break free from the life in which he is trapped. His art provides the first handhold. But Mann begins to realize he won't go much farther without also finding peace, which begins with forgiveness. (Ages 13-16)

**Griffin, Adele. *Where I Want to Be*. Putnam, 2005. 150 pages (0-399-23783-6, \$15.99)**

Two sisters are on either side of a seemingly uncrossable divide. Jane and Lily were close as children but grew apart as they reached adolescence. Never comfortable with social situations, and unable to deal well with change, Jane drew more and more inside herself as she got older while her younger sister moved gracefully through the social minefield of high school. When Lily's boyfriend, Caleb, entered the picture, Jane's already fragile sense of security was threatened even more. At the same time, Lily found her older sister's challenging behavior and constant neediness more than she could sometimes bear. Now Lily is mourning her sister, and agonizing over what she might have done differently to help her be at peace in the world. And Jane is literally a lost soul, wandering the past in hopes of finding the sense of safety that disappeared with the passing of childhood. Told in chapters that alternate between each sister's story in the



present, Adele Griffin's haunting, ethereal novel paints a sensitive portrait of the impact of mental illness on a family as it chronicles the struggles of the two sisters—one living, one now dead—to let go and move on. (Ages 12–15)

**Hartnett, Sonya. *Stripes of the Sidestep Wolf*. U.S. edition: Candlewick Press, 2005. 208 pages (trade 0–7636–2644–9, \$16.99)**

In the mountains near Satchel's home a wild animal is focused on survival: finding its next meal and securing a safe place to sleep. In a narrative that moves back and forth between the life of Satchel—a young man in his early twenties struggling to break free from his oppressive life—and the life of this unknown animal, Sonya Hartnett offers serious questions, extraordinary possibilities, and provocative mysteries to consider. Satchel knows that his future is dependent on leaving his difficult home life and economically depressed Australian town. But he can't bring himself to go, despite his mother's encouragement. Meanwhile, an acquaintance of Satchel's named Chelsea has seen the animal in the mountains and she's convinced it's a thylacine: a wolflike marsupial native to Tasmania. The only problem: thylacines are thought to be extinct, and Chelsea, whose own life hasn't been easy, may just need something to believe in. Chelsea has done some research and it's improbable, but not impossible, that she's right. When the wild animal and Satchel eventually meet at a moment of crisis in Satchel's life, the encounter is transformative. Satchel's outlook—on himself, his life, and even humanity—has shifted just enough that he can see hope where he saw none before. Hartnett is a breathtaking writer, with a gift for language and insight that makes this story, even at its darkest moments, something beautiful to read. (Age 14 and older)

**Hautman, Pete. *Invisible*. Simon & Schuster, 2005. 160 pages (trade 0–689–86800–6, \$15.95)**

"You could say that my railroad, the Madham Line, is almost the most important thing in my life. Next to Andy Morrow, my best friend." Andy and the model railroad on which Doug obsessively works are the two positive elements in Doug's life. He's the bullies' target at school, and spying through her bedroom window at night is clearly the closest he'll ever get to the girl of his dreams. Readers will soon question some of the holes in Doug's unreliable narrative, especially why Andy, a popular athlete and actor, would stay so committed to a boy with whom he has nothing in common. And why does Doug always avoid commenting on what happened a few years ago at the Tuttle Place, an abandoned house where he and Andy used to spend time? Not even his therapist can get him to revisit those events. When Doug's secret is revealed, readers may have seen it coming but will still be shaken by the unsettling reality of Doug's mental illness in this disturbing and gripping story. (Ages 12–15)

**Kibuishi, Kazu. *Daisy Cutter: The Last Train*. Viper Comics, 2005. 192 pages (trade 0-9754193-2-3, \$10.95)**

Daisy Cutter is a reformed bandit in a strange wild west town where robots and cell phones are as common as poker games and shotguns. Her reform is short-lived when she's approached to pull off one last heist. Although she says she "doesn't work with robots," the allure of this job is too much for her, and she partners up with a metallic cowboy against her better judgment. Daisy's ex-partner-in crime and ex-love, Tom, is now the sheriff. He knows Daisy better than anyone. Despite his badge, Tom is on Daisy's side when the going gets rough, whether she likes it or not. When it turns out that the heist is a setup, Tom is there to help Daisy out. But he's the one who needs her help before the action is over in a fascinating graphic novel that blends elements of the rugged western with the eeriness of science fiction. Daisy is an archetype recast: the taciturn cowboy with a gender twist. This graphic novel has everything good visual storytelling requires: a great script that reveals a variety of nuanced characters, and subtle art that conveys the setting and even plot elements. (Ages 12-17)

**Lanagan, Margo. *Black Juice*. Eos / HarperCollins, 2005. 208 pages (trade 0-06074-390-5, \$15.99)**

In ten short stories, Australian writer Margo Lanagan explores more darkness than light, but relief comes in signs of the resiliency of the human spirit. All of the stories have fantastic settings that are not quite of this world as we know it; or perhaps our own world taken to extreme in its bleakness. But the actions of the characters, both human and non-human, are hauntingly real and familiar: they struggle, grieve, question, and long for hope in the midst of despair. Whether dealing with love, isolation, or betrayal, all of the stories reside in emotionally challenging terrain. In the first, a teenage girl has been sentenced to death in the tar pits, and the narrator, her resigned younger brother, describes events as her family participates in the ritual ceremony of "singing her down." Each story is technically perfect. Characters emerge almost immediately through dialogue, which often drifts in and out of English as we know it. And they are rich with language. As a whole, this volume is intense in impact, but the beautiful and economical writing make it truly a fine example of a cohesive collection that is neither hopeful nor altogether despairing. (Ages 14-17)

**Larbaestier, Justine. *Magic or Madness*. Razorbill, 2005. 271 pages (trade 1-59514-022-0, \$16.99)**

Fifteen-year-old Reason is just discovering that she has inherited strong magical abilities. Her mother, Serafina, has always tried to shield her from the knowledge, and from her grandmother, Esmeralda, a powerful witch. Serafina has told Reason that Esmeralda is not to be trusted. But now Serafina has been committed to a mental institution, and Reason has been sent to Sydney to live with the grandmother she's been taught to fear. Esmeralda's next door neighbor, Tom, has a different perspective. A teenage boy who also possesses magic powers, Tom is being tutored by Esmeralda

and sees her as a lifesaver. Reason finds Tom a kindred spirit, but she is determined to free her mother and escape to the bush, where they had been living. Instead, when she unlocks Esmerelda's heavy kitchen door one hot summer day, she finds herself in New York City in the middle of winter. Unable to make her way home again, she is quickly rescued by another teenage girl, Jay-Tee, who seems to have been waiting for her. Jay-Tee introduces Reason to the wonders of Lower Manhattan, and to the world of magic where everyone seems to know her grandmother, including a seemingly sinister man who is at odds with Esmerelda and claims to be Reason's grandfather. Now Reason is not sure whom she should trust. Larbalestier's skill at using alternating points of view will keep readers as uncertain as Reason is about whether her mother is truly mad, and whether her grandmother is good or evil. This gripping novel features rich parallel universes within wholly credible realistic settings in both hemispheres. Larbalestier's novel will appeal to those who enjoy the fantasy works of Margaret Mahy and Diana Wynne Jones. (Ages 12–15)

**Larochelle, David.** *Absolutely, Positively Not . . .* Arthur A. Levine Books / Scholastic Press, 2005. 224 pages (trade 0-439-59109-0, \$16.95)

Sixteen-year-old Steven is harboring a deep secret: he loves to square dance. But Steven has another secret, too: he thinks he might be gay. Steven is sure that both are far from typical for a teenage boy living in his small Minnesota town, which he describes as the hockey stick capital of the world. In truth, Steven knows he is gay, but he doesn't want to believe it. As he navigates these and other challenges of his life in high school, from his crush on a (male) teacher to learning how to drive, Steven tries several questionable tactics to change his sexuality, all to no avail. David Larochelle's extraordinary narrative is an exquisite balancing act with humor as its center point: he takes Steven from denial and aversion to a place of empowerment and self-acceptance in a story that is laugh-out-loud funny—offering witty commentaries on popular culture—even as it shines with moments of poignancy and truth. (Age 12 and older)

**Lester, Julius.** *Day of Tears: A Novel in Dialogue.* Jump at the Sun / Hyperion, 2005. 177 pages (trade 0-7868-0490-4, \$15.99)

The largest slave auction in U.S. history took place on March 2 and 3, 1859. Over 400 human lives were sold, tearing apart families and cruelly separating hearts bound by love. During the auction, it rained so hard that it seemed as if the sky itself was crying. The slaves being sold were owned by Pierce Butler, a Georgia plantation owner. The impetus behind the sale: Butler needed money to pay off his gambling debts. Julius Lester explores the human tragedy behind the statistics of that staggering event in an inventive and powerful narrative that uses both monologue and dialogue, and moves back and forth between the time of the sale and the years that follow. He traces the lives of several of the slaves, including Emma, a young teenager who was sold despite Butler's promise to her parents, his personal house slaves, that he wouldn't let her go. He also follows the lives of Butler's two daughters, Sarah and Frances, who echo the conflicting

view of their parents. Sarah, like her mother, opposes slavery, and eventually becomes an abolitionist. Frances is her father's daughter through and through, sticking by him to his own bitter end. Lester weaves research and historical fact into a narrative that is rife with moments of shocking coldness and heartwrenching despair. They live and breathe side by side in these pages with tenderness, determination, and the will to survive. (Age 12 and older)

**Levithan, David. *Are We There Yet?* Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. 215 pages (trade 0-375-82846-X, \$15.95; lib. 0-375-92846-4, \$17.99)**

Elijah and Danny may be brothers, but blood is just about the only thing they have in common. Sixteen-year-old Elijah is a true free-spirit. Danny is an uptight corporate suit in his twenties. Elijah lives life in the moment. Danny spends the present planning for what comes next, which usually involves work. There was a time when the brothers were closer, when Elijah idolized Danny, but those times are long gone. Tricked by their mother into spending time together, the two find themselves on a nine-day trip to Italy. On their travels, the brothers challenge each other's patience as much as they challenge each other's perceptions of self and one another. Danny's maturity makes him more self-reflective (when he stops thinking about his job), while Elijah's youth makes him more impulsive, which can land him in situations with potentially painful consequences that Danny sees coming but Elijah does not. In a story that reads in part like a travelogue, featuring dazzling descriptions of Italy's landscape and historic and cultural sites, David Levithan chronicles a journey of two hearts and minds that turn out to be more closely bound than either would have thought. (Age 14 and older)

**Lubar, David. *Sleeping Freshmen Never Lie.* Dutton, 2005. 279 pages (0-525-47311-4, \$16.99)**

Starting high school is more than a little intimidating to freshman Scott Hudson. Surviving the ride to and from school on the bus is challenging enough. But his college prep classes require crazy amounts of homework, and he's not sure where he stands with his old friends, who are far less academically oriented than he. When his parents announce that his mom is pregnant, it's almost more than he can take. As a way to cope with the stress, and to preserve some of the lessons he's learned in high school for his unborn sibling to read some day, Scott starts a diary. In entries addressed to the new baby (referred to sometimes as "Smelly," and others as a "fluid-dwelling piece of protoplasm"), he offers tips on what to do and what not to do during freshman year. Scott's sense of humor, often hidden in his interactions with family and peers, comes out fully on the page. His true self emerges through the diary entries, and, as his confidence grows, in daily life as well. English is Scott's favorite subject, so he spends a lot of time writing about the things he learns with Mr. Franka, his favorite teacher. Scott loves playing with grammar and language. Nowhere is he more confident than when he is interpreting Shelley's poetry, writing couplets, or creating his own silly Tom Swifities. (Ages 12-15)

**McNaughton, Janet. *The Secret Under My Skin*. U.S. edition: Eos / HarperCollins, 2005. 264 pages (trade 0-06-008989-X, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-008990-3, \$16.89)**

In the aftermath of a devastating "technocaust" that saw the extermination of scientists, Earth's government has banned technology. Most people unquestioningly follow the dictatorial edicts, which include governmental control over personal occupation, leaving little room for individual choice. Blay Raytee is leading a dismal life in a work camp for orphans when she is unexpectedly given a special mission to assist Marrella, a guardian of the environment. Marrella is in training as a bio-indicator, an elite position in which she will protect society from environmental toxins. Unfortunately, Marrella is unsuited to the academic demands of her post, whereas Blay shows an aptitude and thirst for knowledge. The more she learns, the more Blay finds herself questioning governmental statements disseminated as indisputable truths. She learns she's not alone – others are working in an underground movement to restore the credibility of science and rediscover the positive uses of technology. As she uncovers large-scale facts about life on earth in this dystopic future, Blay unlocks unsettling secrets from her own past. (Ages 12–16)

**Malone, Patricia. *Lady Ilena: Way of the Warrior*. Delacorte Press, 2005. 199 pages (trade 0-385-73225-2, \$15.95; lib. 0-385-90251-4, \$17.99)**

New hereditary chief of Dun Alyn in northern Britain, Ilena is adjusting to her position while desperately missing Durant, her betrothed. When Faolan, a nearby tribal leader, demands Ilena in marriage, stressing the value of their regional alliance, she is unable to ignore his proposal, despite her vow to Durant. And when Durant doesn't return from his travels with King Arthur by the deadline Faolan has set for a reply, her options look grim. Faolan's return visit to claim Ilena as his bride comes in the form of an attack. As warrior chief, Ilena needs to show her strength in the ensuing battle. But at the critical moment she freezes, stunned by the sight of Durant among Faolan's company. Facing disgrace or even death for her lapse of leadership, Ilena is given the chance to regain her honor by leaving Dun Alyn and accomplishing a heroic act while traveling alone. During exile, Ilena demonstrates her bravery, intelligence, and humanity more than once, culminating in her rescue of the kidnapped Arthur. Re-established as Dun Alyn's chief, Ilena must cope with the loss of Durant, who was abducted, bewitched, and eventually killed by Faolan and his cohorts. This sequel to *The Legend of Lady Ilena* (Delacorte, 2002) continues an offshoot of Arthurian legend with a spotlight on the place of women warriors in history. (Ages 12–15)

**Marino, Peter. *Dough Boy*. Holiday House, 2005. 221 pages (trade 0-8234-1873-1, \$16.95)**

As divorces go, fifteen-year-old Tristan's parents have a good one. Tristan is happy living with his mom and her boyfriend, Frank. Like Tristan, Frank is overweight. And like Tristan, he doesn't dwell on it. Tristan also has a good relationship with his dad and his dad's girlfriend, whom he stays

with on weekends. Then Frank's teenage daughter Kelly moves in, and everything starts to spiral downward. Kelly—thin and beautiful and controlling—sets out to “improve” Tristan's appearance at the same time she uses him to cover for her when she wants to see her boyfriend, Marco, against her father's wishes. There is tremendous tension in the house between Kelly and Frank, and Kelly and Tristan's mom. And Marco, who used to be Tristan's best friend, now ignores him to spend time with Kelly. Tristan, once pretty satisfied with himself and his life, grows increasingly more unhappy. That in turn causes friction between his parents. Peter Marino's debut novel features a teen caught in the midst of a misery not of his own making. Determined to find a way out before he falls completely apart, Tristan finally decides to move in with his father, even though he knows it will hurt his mother and Frank. With a little distance, Tristan begins to see that while everyone has been hurting, he, at least, can begin to heal. Marino has created a cast of real, multidimensional characters, people who are good at heart but whose various shortcomings also make for realistically complex—and complicated—relationships and situations. (Ages 12–15)

**Martino, Alfred C. *Pinned*. Harcourt, 2005. 320 pages (trade 0–15–205355–7, \$17.00)**

Ivan Korsche and Bobby Zane are two very different teens with one thing in common: both are exceptional wrestlers with their eyes set on winning the state championship. Alfred Martino's narrative moves back and forth like a wrestling match between them as each boy is the focus of alternating chapters that reveal details about his life and why becoming State Champion is so important to him. Each boy must wrestle with his own internal demons and external pressures, as well as work his body mercilessly in order to achieve success. Each makes sacrifices that cost him friendships, family harmony, and even academic success. Both Bobby and Ivan are flawed characters, and the upper hand is constantly shifting in the mind of the reader regarding whom to root for as these two teens are motivated by very different reasons toward the same goal. Ivan and Bobby do not know each other, and the tension created as the story builds toward the inevitable matchup of Ivan against Bobby in the state finals is both exhausting and exhilarating in a novel that offers a wealth of realistic wrestling-related scenes for sports fans, along with wrestling as a metaphor for coming of age. (Ages 13–16)

**Meyer, Stephenie. *Twilight*. Megan Tingley Books / Little, Brown, 2005. 498 pages (trade 0–316–16017–2, \$17.99)**

It begins like any good romance: new girl in town meets irresistibly handsome boy and the chemistry between them sizzles. But this is no conventional high school love story. When Bella first meets Edward Cullen in Biology class, there is definitely electricity between them—but it is negatively charged. Edward seems unfriendly and angry. Unable to understand his hostile behavior, Bella is hurt, but also intrigued. The more she learns about Edward and his family—all beautiful, graceful, and

detached from the other students—the more she finds herself unable to think of anything else. Eventually Bella uncovers the mystery surrounding the Cullens: they are vampires, a secret they've managed to keep hidden. They possess supernatural powers of strength, speed, agility, and of course, immortality. The Cullens fight their bloodlust daily, and they are able to refrain from feeding on the humans in their small town of Forks, Washington. In truth, Edward doesn't despise Bella. He is intensely attracted to her—and she toward him—a combination Edward knows could be dangerous for them both. The author's handling of this attraction skillfully demonstrates how less can be more with powerfully sensual scenes that refrain from explicit physical descriptions. The implications of their romance are serious: Edward will forever be eighteen, just as he was when he died in 1918, but Bella will age normally, unless both of them can agree to do the one thing could conceivably keep them together forever. If that's not pressure enough, a new family of vampires blows through Forks and Edward must concern himself with controlling more than just his own instincts when one of the visitors shows far too much interest in Bella. Meyer's fresh and breathtaking novel is deeply satisfying both as a love story and a vampire tale. (Ages 14–18)

**Myers, Walter Dean. *Autobiography of My Dead Brother*. Illustrated by Christopher Myers. HarperTempest / HarperCollins, 2005. 212 pages (trade 0-06-058291-X, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-058292-8, \$16.89)**

A novel about violence and death, about family and survival, about gangs and drugs, and the way the seduction of wealth can prey on teens offers hope as well as despair. Walter Dean Myers takes a hard look at what many young black boys face as they enter adolescence in depressed urban environments. Jesse is writing and drawing the "autobiography" of his best friend and blood brother, Rise, whose choices are beginning to take him down a dangerous path. A talented artist, Jesse expresses himself and his anxieties about the boys' deteriorating friendship in striking comic art and doodles (created by Christopher Myers) as well as in his descriptions of the waste that he sees in the streets of Harlem. While the action scenes of the story are strong, the most unique aspect of this novel is the connection between the art and text. Jesse's sketches are moving portraits of the people in his life. His comic panels offer a deeper look at his hopes, fears, and unanswered questions. In addition to Jesse and Rise, Walter Dean Myers has a number of keenly developed secondary characters. The boys who do seem to make it through the minefield of gangs and violence with their lives and identities in tact are those that have something tangible to work for. For Jesse, it is his art. For another boy, CJ, it is his love for music. The Myers's use art to cleverly tell the story of the power of art and passion to sustain. (Ages 13–17)

**Newman, Lesléa. *Jailbait*. Delacorte Press, 2005. 239 pages (trade 0-385-73198-1, \$15.95; lib. 0-385-90230-1, \$17.99)**

Andi is miserable. At fifteen, she feels unpopular, overweight, unattractive, and completely alone at home and at school, where she is bullied mercilessly. Then an older man begins to court her, making her feel special

and beautiful for the first time in her life. The fact that Frank is twice her age makes Andi feel superior and more mature than the classmates who have rejected her. By the time Frank begins to reveal a dark and manipulative side, Andi has fallen hard for him. Eventually, his abuse becomes both physical and emotional as he forces her into oral sex and intercourse. He constantly reminds her that she is “jailbait” because of her age, and expects increasingly more risky behaviors from her. She has neither the self-esteem nor the experience to understand that what he is doing to her is wrong. In the end, despite her capitulation, Frank dumps Andi, and she is humiliated. Newman does not shy away from the gritty legal and emotional ramifications of such a relationship. But in Andi she has also created a character whose vulnerability is revealed with sensitivity and no small amount of sympathy. The brightest spot in this novel is Andi’s relationship with her older brother, Mike, who is away at college. Andi is able to talk to him about her loneliness and frustration with her disaffected parents, eventually sharing the details of her time with Frank. With Mike’s love and support, Andi is able to begin to understand that she did—and does—deserve better. (Ages 14–17)

**Nilsson, Per. *You & You & You*. Translated from the Swedish by Tara Chace. U.S. edition: Front Street, 2005. 301 pages (trade 1-932425-19-5, \$16.95)**

The three “You”s the title of this distinctive novel references are Anon, a dreamy sixth grader completely and obviously out of synch with his peers; Zarah, a beautiful but edgy seventeen year old who is lost and doesn’t know it; and Nils, a young man undergoing an existential crisis. They do not know each other, but as Per Nilsson’s story unfolds in interludes devoted to each one in turn, their individual lives gradually entwine through a series of disparate, often bizarre events. When they finally do meet, the life of each has already been transformed by the others, so that what seemed improbable has become inevitable. Each interlude begins “You. You, Anon.” (or “You. You, Zarah”). The unknown speaker adds to the sense of intimacy and urgency in a story that probes the minds of three unique, memorable, and life-affirming characters. Originally written in Swedish, *You and You and You* contains cultural norms that might be unfamiliar to American readers, including underage drinking and some graphic language. (Ages 14–17)

**Peet, Mal. *Keeper*. U.S. edition: Candlewick Press, 2005. 225 pages (trade 0-7636-2749-6, \$15.99)**

“El Gato” is possibly the best soccer goalie the world has ever seen. In his retirement he has agreed to be interviewed by prizewinning sportswriter Paul Faustino. Holding the actual World Cup in his hands while he talks, El Gato begins with his childhood in a remote village in a South American jungle, where he was awkward and uncoordinated. He played soccer—badly—when not working in the nearby logging camp. But one day in the jungle, he meets the mystical Keeper, who insists El Gato belongs on a soccer field. The Keeper teaches El Gato the ins and outs of goaltending.



El Gato becomes so good he is recruited away from the local team at the lumberyard and eventually sent to a prestigious academy, a vital stepping stone on the path to his illustrious career. Occasional comments from Faustino give voice to the doubts that such mystical intervention could possibly be real, but El Gato's absolute conviction of the Keeper's influence in his life adds a tantalizing thread of fantasy to an otherwise realistic narrative. Mal Peet's fascinating novel also weaves a strong environmental message about the devastation caused by logging in developing countries into the action-packed sports story. (Ages 12–16)

**Peters, Julie Anne.** *Far from Xanadu*. Megan Tingley Books / Little, Brown, 2005. 282 pages (trade 0–316–15881–X, \$16.99)

Julie Anne Peters takes a wealth of challenging issues and deftly integrates them into a sensitive, compelling, believable story that offers understanding and encouragement. Teenager Mike—short for Mary-Elizabeth—lives in a small Kansas town. Her alcoholic father committed suicide two years before, and she's estranged from her mother. Mike deals with these traumas by focusing her energy and attention on sports. She's a gifted athlete and her community has raised money to send her to a prestigious softball camp, but Mike is resistant to accepting charity. Then Xanadu comes to town. She's a troubled teen who's been living on the edge, and she and Mike strike up a friendship that Mike soon wishes could be something more. Mike, who routinely wears her father's clothes, has never felt anything but accepted for who she is in Coalton; the same is true of her best friend Jamie, a gay teen. But she has always resisted being labeled or pigeonholed as gay. Still, watching from the sidelines as Xanadu starts dating boys is painful, and Mike begins to realize that even a big-hearted town can be too small. Being accepted isn't enough when your heart craves love. Mike is a complicated, realistic character who struggles with questions that will resonate with many teens. (Ages 13–17)

**Pierce, Tamora, and Josepha Sherman, editors.** *Young Warriors: Stories of Strength*. Random House, 2005. 312 pages (trade 0–375–82962–8, \$17.95; lib. 0–375–92962–2, \$19.99)

Fifteen short stories examine the definition of warrior, drawing on history, mythology, fantasy, and science fiction for their framework. The welcome array of warriors, male and female, traditional and unconventional, hail from around the globe, as well as from locations found only in imagination. As in most short story collections the quality is variable, but overall the stories are strong. Original work by popular writers such as Holly Black, Margaret Mahy, Tamora Pierce, and S.M. Stirling is sure to attract readers from their large fan bases. (Ages 12–15)

**Salisbury, Graham.** *Eyes of the Emperor*. Wendy Lamb Books / Random House, 2005. 229 pages (trade 0–385–72971–5, \$15.95; lib. 0–385–90874–1, \$17.99)

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, sixteen-year-old Eddy Okubo lies about his age in order to join the U.S. army. Eddy becomes part of a small

group of Japanese Americans selected for special training. They aren't told the details until they arrive at Cat Island, located near the Gulf Coast on the Mississippi River. There, they discover they are part of a secret mission: dogs are being trained to identify the Japanese enemy by scent. Eddy and the other Japanese American soldiers are paired with dogs and handlers, first to bond with the animals, and then to become the bait as the dogs learn to viciously attack the "enemy." As ludicrous as the idea of the Japanese race having a discernable scent sounds, Graham Salisbury's gripping novel is based on fact. Twenty-six Japanese American soldiers were part of the rigorous, misguided program on Cat Island before the government finally admitted failure. Eddy's believable first-person voice resonates with conflicted feelings: patriotism is complicated by anger; honor and loyalty by a growing disgust for the authority that holds him and other Japanese Americans in such low regard. (Ages 12–15)

**Staples, Suzanne Fisher. *Under the Persimmon Tree*. Frances Foster Books / Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. 275 pages (trade 0–374–38025–2, \$17.00)**

Najmah is a young Afghan girl who helps her family herd goats. When her father and brother are conscripted by the Taliban, Najmah and her mother try to keep Najmah's uncle from claiming their land. But life is achingly hard, and Najmah's mother and newborn brother die. Najmah ends up a refugee, posing as a small boy for safety as she makes a dangerous journey with a group of families to the city of Peshawar. There she finds respite at a small school for refugee children. Nusrat is an American woman who converted to Islam after she met Faiz, an Afghan doctor in New York. They fell and love and married, but her conversion had nothing to do with him and everything to do with her own search for meaning; she feels at home with Islam. They came to Afghanistan together after Faiz felt the need to help people suffering under the Taliban's brutal rule. In Peshawar, Nusrat focuses her energy and attention on the small school she runs for refugee children, saving her worry about Faiz, whom she hasn't heard from, and whose work has taken him into the most dangerous parts of the country, for the times she is alone. In a story that moves back and forth between Najmah's quiet, compelling first-person voice, and a third-person narrative chronicling Nusrat's experiences, Suzanne Fisher Staples gradually weaves these two lives together in her illuminating novel set in Afghanistan at the start of the twenty-first century. It is a story that chronicles the horror of oppression and, ultimately, the strength of the human spirit. While Najmah's story is accessible to children, the adult concerns of Nusrat's life are more likely to engage older readers. (Ages 12–18)

**Stein, Tamar. *Light Years: A Novel*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. 263 pages (trade 0–375–83023–5, \$15.95; lib. 0–375–93023–X, \$17.99) HR**

Maya, a twenty-year-old Israeli woman who has recently finished her service in the Israeli army, is now studying astronomy at the University of Virginia. Haunted by the recent death of her boyfriend in a pipe bombing

attack in Tel Aviv, her grief is compounded by her belief that she was the intended victim, and by the fact that he was opposed to her going to school in America. Now she has come not only to study but to heal. Tammar Stein's novel moves between Maya's current challenges to fit into college and a new culture (which include a sexy TA and a seemingly superficial roommate) and her memories of life in Israel, where the fear of bombs and threat of war were constant. Maya feels light years away from any one place and from most of the people around her. Metaphors that heighten distortion of time and space run throughout this compelling narrative. Things at a distance are not what they appear to be, and Maya's struggle to heal her heart and confront her own feelings about herself and the people around her, as well as community and identity, is powerful and moving. (Age 15 and older)

**Thesman, Jean.** *Singer*. Viking, 2005. 280 pages (trade 0-670-05937-4, \$17.99)

There is a tale about an evil witch who marries a king and turns his beloved children into swans. Remember that story . . . Gwenore's mother, Rhiamon, is a witch. She's treated Gwenore cruelly for as long as the girl can recall. Now Gwenore has escaped, aided by her nurse and a priest who knows more than he's saying about her fate. They take Gwenore to an abbey and for a few years she is safe. But Rhiamon's magic is strong and Gwenore must flee again. This time she is taken to Blessingwood, a community of women who heal. She makes a home there, as she had in the abbey, but again, Rhiamon finds her. Gwenore, now known as Singer, makes a frantic journey across the water to Ireland, and beyond the mists of that land she finds a peaceful land called Lir. There she gets work as nursemaid to the king's four children, whom she quickly grows to love. It is a beautiful life, until the king takes a journey and comes back with a new wife: Rhiamon. A reluctant hero, Gwenore's love and compassion give her the strength and courage to finally meet her destiny in Jean Thesman's riveting fantasy. (Ages 12-15)

**Thompson, Kate.** *Fourth World: Book One of the Missing Link Trilogy*. U.S. edition: Bloomsbury, 2005. 316 pages (trade 1-58234-650-X, \$16.95)

"Living with Danny was like living with a little brother. Except that he wasn't little. He was big. Fifteen. Two years older than me." Christie sometimes gets exasperated with his stepbrother Danny, but never angry. Christie senses how to help Danny when he has violent outbursts, or can't seem to shake a fixation. But when Danny stubbornly decides to set out from their home in Ireland to visit his estranged mother in Scotland, Christie is unable to change his mind. The only option is to go along. A severe oil shortage has put an abrupt end to private vehicle travel in Europe, and the two undergo their journey by bus and on foot, across countries sinking into economic and political chaos. Reality shifts when they are joined by a talking dog and bird. A homeless girl hooks up with the odd group, and together they make their way to Danny's mother's

home, a secret scientific laboratory where she works on mysterious projects. The explanation she offers about Danny's differences stuns Christie, forcing him to reassess everything he believes about his stepbrother. Cloaked in adventure and intrigue, this science-fiction novel grapples with the provocative issue of genetic engineering set in a gripping contemporary timeframe. (Ages 12–15)

**Weaver, Will. *Full Service*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. 231 pages (trade 0–374–32485–9, \$17.00)**

Sixteen-year-old Paul Sutton lives in a small Minnesota town. It's 1965, and while the nation creeps toward further turmoil over the war in Vietnam, nothing ever changes for Paul, whose life is sheltered by family and religion. Then his mother urges him to find a job in town. Paul ends up pumping gas at the local station, and suddenly he's in the midst of a host of dramas both small and large that leave him changed in ways he could never have imagined. He witnesses blatant infidelity and passionate attraction; unabashed bigotry and unfailing kindness. He falls in love. Already at odds in ways he can't fully articulate with the rigid ideals of his own religious upbringing, Paul finds himself more and more uncertain of his willingness to commit to his faith. His father and church leaders frown, but Will knows that even without having the answers, being able to ask questions is essential. Will Weaver's dramatically understated story about a teenage boy's coming of age features characters that are superbly drawn, from Paul's fair but sometimes unyielding father to his quiet but determined mother who knows the world is changing, and wants Paul to be able to think for himself and make his own way. (Ages 12–16)

**Westerfeld, Scott. *Peeps*. Razorbill, 2005. 312 pages (trade 1–59514–031–X, \$16.99)**

Nineteen-year-old Cal Thompson is parasite positive: a peep. But things could be worse. Cal's just a carrier, so unlike full-blown peeps, who crave darkness, desire human blood, and slowly go insane, Cal has kept his wits about him, although he has a voracious appetite, occasional bouts of superhuman strength, and is sexually aroused by just about every female he sees. But Cal's sworn himself to celibacy. It's the only way he can make sure he doesn't spread the disease. In fact, Cal's a peep hunter, the youngest member of the Night Watch, a centuries-old organization dedicated to tracking down peeps. ("I don't use the V-word," Cal explains.) Cal was just a typical college-bound kid when he arrived in New York City the year before, until one too many Bahamalama-Dingdongs at a dingy bar led to a one night stand with the stranger who infected *him*. Now Cal's assignment is to track down that unknown woman in Scott Westerfeld's fast-paced story that is vampire tale, scientific thriller, and mystery all in one. Cal's dry, hilarious first-person narrative chronicles his search, which is complicated when he meets Lace, an uninfected woman unwittingly caught up in the mystery to whom his attraction is more than just physical, making her that much harder to resist. Westerfeld incorporates fascinating scientific information into his

story as each chapter opens with Cal waxing eloquent on the terrifying nature of parasites and disease. Brilliantly structured, the science that is gradually revealed parallels elements of the developing plot as the story unfolds, leading to a dramatic and satisfying conclusion that makes sense in both scientific and literary terms. (Age 13 and older)

**Westerfeld, Scott. *Pretties*. Simon Pulse, 2005. 370 pages (pbk. 0-689-86539-2, \$6.99)**

**Westerfeld, Scott. *Uglies*. Simon Pulse, 2005. 425 pages (pbk. 0-689-86538-4, \$6.99)**

Given the opportunity, who wouldn't choose to be pretty? In this future society, surgery at age sixteen makes everyone attractive, eliminating privilege and bias based on physical appearance. Fifteen-year-old Tally can't wait for her upcoming transformation, and the accompanying move to New Pretty Town where she can join a recently pretty-fied friend and indulge in nonstop partying. When Shay, another "Ugly," tries to convince Tally to bypass the surgery and join up with the radical few—"Crims"—who live an alternative lifestyle in a wilderness community, she's initially horrified at the idea. It slowly gains appeal, especially after Tally begins to question the governmental motives behind the enforced surgeries. When she uncovers the shocking conspiracy about surgical effects, which go far deeper than outward appearance, Tally is determined to continue life as an Ugly. But after unwittingly betraying her new friends, Tally vows to make amends in the only possible way: turning herself in, having the surgery, and testing the effects of an illegal new drug designed to reverse the surgery's more sinister effects. The cliffhanger ending of *Uglies* is picked up in *Pretties*, book two of the intended trilogy, in which newly-beautiful Tally remembers nothing of her recent life as a fugitive Ugly. A small spark of discomfort with the shallow and decadent Pretty lifestyle gradually gains momentum, and triggers Tally to fight to regain her personality and drive. Hoping to re-establish her credibility with the Crims, Tally takes dangerous risks. An unexpected plot twist leaves Tally having to reevaluate, once again, all that she believed true. Loads of action, a little romance, and provocative questions about the value of individual differences and the emphasis on beauty in today's culture all combine in this irresistible teen series. (Ages 13–16)

**Whitcomb, Laura. *A Certain Slant of Light*. Graphia / Houghton Mifflin, 2005. 282 pages (pbk. 0-618-58532-X, \$8.99)**

"Someone was looking at me, a disturbing sensation if you're dead." Helen, who has been dead for more than one hundred years, remains attached to, but not of, the physical world by aligning herself with the soul of a living person. Currently that person is Mr. Brown, a high school English teacher. Helen is startled to realize that one of Mr. Brown's students can see her. Then she learns that James is also a ghost. While Helen has attached herself to a soul, James has occupied the body of Billy, a teen whose soul fled his body during an overdose. Helen and James fall

in love, fueled by a passion they cannot consummate because Helen is only Light. James urges her to become part of the physical world by occupying a body. He explains how it is done: find a person who has been hurt so deeply that her soul has fled. When Helen finally agrees, she ends up in the body of Jenny, a girl from a strict, conservative religious family who has been stifled beyond what her soul could bear. Now Helen is living Jenny's life, which complicates things for her and James. They can express their love physically (although secretly), but they must deal with the consequences for the lives of the bodies they inhabit. Laura Whitcomb's gripping, beautifully written, highly original story is ultimately about healing. For Helen, that not only means making peace with her own traumatic death 130 years before, but also working with James to reunite the bodies of Billy and Jenny with their wandering souls. (Age 13 and older)

**Whyman, Matt. *Boy Kills Man*. HarperTempest / HarperCollins, 2005. 153 pages (trade 0-06-074663-7, \$15.99; lib. 0-06-074664-5, \$16.89)**

Thirteen-year-old Sonny may be small for his age but having grown up on the streets of Medellín, Colombia, he is streetwise and tough. But he and his best friend Alberto have big dreams. They both want to escape poverty and live in a world where their biggest worry is who will win the next soccer match (for which they will, of course, have great seats). Alberto shows up one day with a gun and tells Sonny he has been hired by drug lords to work as an assassin, and it seems that perhaps their dreams will come true: the gun brings Alberto both power and money. When Alberto suddenly disappears, Sonny decides to take his place as an assassin. The grim, uncompromising world of poverty, violence and the international drug trade are brought to life in this gripping novel with an unusual plot and setting. (Age 14 and older)

**Wittlinger, Ellen. *Sandpiper*. Simon & Schuster, 2005. 227 pages (trade 0-689-86802-2, \$16.95)**

"Obviously the way to an eighth grade boy's heart was through the zipper of his jeans. It probably wasn't the only way, but it was the only way we knew." At sixteen, Sandpiper Ragsdale is reflecting upon her early sexual encounters. She has become sexually adventurous and she speaks with the confidence of a much older woman who is aware of her calculated use of sex and power. It's hard to forget that she is still a very young girl and unsure of herself. Her family is preoccupied with her mother's upcoming wedding, leaving Sandy feeling even more isolated and pigeonholed by classmates who won't let her forget her choices. The only thing that offers solace is her writing, and between each chapter, Wittlinger includes one of Sandy's poems, which together form a remarkable book within a book. Sandy finds herself drawn to The Walker, a mysterious boy she sees around town, and while Sandy knows he is not truthful about who he is, both teens find comfort in one another in spite of the secrets they keep. When Sandy is threatened and eventually attacked by a former boyfriend, many people feel she got what she deserved, but it is Walker who protects

her and ultimately helps her put herself back together. Wittlinger confronts the sensitive and often controversial topic of teenage sex by creating realistic characters whose relationships are at once their downfall and their salvation, and whose growth and development as individuals allow them to contribute to others. At its heart, this is a story about what happens when the good of a family persists in spite of the weaknesses of any member, and how the strength of that whole is what will ultimately save the individual. (Ages 15–17)

**Zevin, Gabrielle. *Elsewhere*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005. 275 pages (trade 0–374–32091–8, \$16.00)**

Liz Hall has died. “Elsewhere,” Liz soon learns, is what happens next. Gabrielle Zevin’s quirky, funny, and tender story is about a fifteen-year-old who must mourn the family and friends she has left behind—and the future she has lost—before she is able to notice that life is going on, if not quite as she expected. People in *Elsewhere* continue to age, but in reverse, the years rolling back one by one until they’re infants ready to be reborn. Liz’s grandmother (dead at 50; now 34) died before Liz was born, but now they are getting to know each other. Liz gets a job doing something she loves—working with (recently deceased) animals. Love is even in the air after Liz meets Owen (dead at 26, now 17), who teaches Liz how to drive. Liz and Owen’s budding relationship is temporarily sidetracked when Owen’s beloved wife dies (they’re reunited but it doesn’t work out. Life—and death—has changed them both too much). And so Liz and Owen are free to grow young together as Liz comes to understand that death is another dimension of life, and it, too, is surely worth living. (Ages 12–17)

**Zusak, Markus. *I Am the Messenger*. U.S. edition: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. 368 pages (trade 0–375–83099–5, \$16.95)**

Nineteen-year-old Ed Kennedy is an underage cab driver with no definite plans for the future. He lives in a shack with an aging, flatulent dog. He’s in love with his friend Audrey but can’t bring himself to tell her. And the highlight of his week is playing cards with three other friends who seem as directionless as he. So no one is more surprised than Ed himself when he becomes an unlikely hero during a bank robbery. It helps that the robber was utterly inept. Shortly after, Ed finds an ace of diamonds in his mailbox. On it are written three addresses, each one followed by a time of day. Ed is sure it’s a joke but he takes the bait. Going to the first address at the appointed time—midnight—he sees a man come home and go into his house. Then he hears a woman being brutalized inside. A small child comes out and huddles on the porch, more numb than fearful: clearly this has happened before. At the second address, an elderly woman answers the door. She is living in the past and thinks Ed is her young love, Johnny. At the third address, early in the morning, Ed sees a teenage girl leave her house and go for a run. She is shoeless. Clearly, someone wants Ed to do something in each of these situations . . . but what should he do? And who is that someone? Australian author Markus Zusak’s remarkable novel is provocative, funny, disturbing, tender, hopeful, and, above all, gutsy.

Zusak takes extraordinary risks to create a story that challenges readers to think about what is ethical, what is moral, and what is right regarding the choices Ed makes, and to think about the ways the answers to these questions are far from clear. Each time Ed makes his way—sometimes by instinct, sometimes by agony—to a decision on what to do, there is only a brief respite before another ace arrives. There are four aces in all, each with three addresses and three times of day. Each one raises the stakes on the question of who is the sender, and why he or she has chosen Ed to not only bear witness to the lives around him but to make a difference in them as well. Brilliantly constructed, the novel moves closer and closer to the answer by working its way toward the center of the circle that is Ed's own life. In the end, when the sender of the aces is finally revealed, it is a shocking revelation that leaves Ed having to defend his very existence. He does so, with courage, lust, and defiance, finally embracing the life he once merely let happen in this unforgettable novel. (Age 14 and older)





# Appendices

# Appendix I

## The Cooperative Children's Book Center

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### Vision Statement

All children and young adults deserve excellent literature which reflects their own experience and encourages them to imagine experiences beyond their own, which satisfies their innate curiosity, and which invites them to dream. We believe such literature fosters a fundamental understanding of themselves and one another, stimulates their creativity, and, most importantly, enriches their lives.

At the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC), a library of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, we are committed to identifying excellent literature for children and adolescents and bringing this literature to the attention of those adults who have an academic, professional, or career interest in connecting young readers with books. The identity of the Cooperative Children's Book Center is grounded in literature for children and young adults. This is reflected in its collections, its role as a book examination center and research library, and its staff expertise in book arts, book evaluation, multicultural literature, alternative press publishing, and intellectual freedom. Within each of these areas, the CCBC is acknowledged as a leader and a catalyst for change. We are committed to fulfilling these roles by advocating and actively modeling a philosophy that embraces diversity, promotes understanding and respects the rights of the individual child.

The concepts of access and inclusiveness are vital to the discussion and evaluation of literature for children and young adults. These elements are also central to any discussion of the CCBC itself with regard to its collections and information services. Therefore, the CCBC seeks to expand both the means by which CCBC information is made available and the types of information to which users have access. We will be at the forefront in:

- collecting a wide range of contemporary and historical literature for children and young adults, including literature published by alternative presses and that created by current and former Wisconsin residents;
- encouraging awareness and discussion of issues essential to literature for children and young adults;
- advocating the First Amendment rights of children and young adults by: (1) providing Wisconsin teachers and librarians with in-depth information on literature whenever a minor's access to books is questioned, and (2) preparing Wisconsin teachers and librarians to respond to challenges to intellectual freedom;
- providing educational support for students in higher education and individuals with an interest in literature for children and young adults;

- shaping electronic means of access to and dissemination of information about literature for children and young adults, within the School of Education, across the university, throughout the state of Wisconsin, and beyond; and
- networking nationally and internationally with colleagues in related fields to create coalitions which recognize the importance of high quality materials for all children and young adults.

The CCBC is a unique and vital gathering place for books, ideas and expertise. The CCBC vision for the future is the continued pursuit of excellence in literature for children and young adults by whatever resources are available, unwavering commitment to the First Amendment rights of children and young adults, and the establishment of a national and international network to connect all who share the belief that excellent literature can insure a brighter future for the world's children.

Adopted by the External Advisory Board, September 1994  
Reaffirmed September 1999

## **Intellectual Freedom Information Services Mission Statement**

The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) will provide free, extended information services at the time of any attempt to limit access to a book available for use by a minor in a Wisconsin classroom or library. If additional assistance is requested by a Wisconsin teacher, school library media specialist, public librarian, or school or library administrator, the CCBC professional staff will connect or refer the individual to others in the state who can provide additional types of information.

The CCBC will serve as a first point of contact for professionals responsible for selecting materials to which minors in Wisconsin have access when there are attempts to limit their access to non-print materials, or to non-book print materials.

The CCBC will develop and maintain relationships with other organizations that share the library's commitment to upholding the First Amendment rights of all Wisconsin citizens, including minors.

According to professional ethics exercised in all libraries, all CCBC Intellectual Freedom Information Service interactions are confidential.

Affirmed by the CCBC Advisory Board  
September 20, 2002

## **Purpose**

The Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) is a unique examination, study and research library of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. The CCBC's noncirculating collections include current, retrospective and historical books published for children and young adults.

The CCBC supports teaching, learning, and research related to children's and young adult literature and provides informational and educational services based on its collections to students and faculty on the UW–Madison campus and librarians, teachers, child care providers, researchers and other adults throughout the state of Wisconsin.

A vital gathering place for books, ideas and expertise, the CCBC is committed to identifying excellent literature for children and adolescents and bringing this literature to the attention of those adults who have an academic, professional or career interest in connecting young readers with books.

The CCBC is funded by the UW–Madison School of Education and by an annual contract from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction/Division for Libraries, Technology, and Community Learning. The CCBC was established in 1963.

## Collection

The library collection contains review copies of newly published juvenile trade books; recommended children's and young adult trade books; historical children's books; contemporary and historical reference materials related to children's and young adult literature; children' and young adult books by Wisconsin authors and illustrators; and alternative press books for children.

## Services

- **CCBC collections** are available for use by any adult with an interest in children's and young adult literature.
- **References service** is available in person during the library's public services hours, by phone (608–263–3720) or via e-mail at [ccbinfo@education.wisc.edu](mailto:ccbinfo@education.wisc.edu). Reference service is provided by CCBC librarians and student reference assistants.
- **On-site tours and/or lectures** can be arranged for university classes, Wisconsin library and school book selection groups, early childhood educators and other adults with a professional interest in children's and young adult literature. The CCBC welcomes groups from outside Wisconsin as well.
- **Presentations** on outstanding new books and other topics related to children's and young adult literature are provided for Wisconsin librarians and teachers in Madison and around the state.
- **Book Discussions** apply literary standards and book evaluation techniques to new books and are open to any interested adult.
- **Continuing education opportunities** occur throughout the year, and may include hands-on workshops, or distance education in the form of ITV sessions or online classes.
- **CCBC-Net** is a unique listserv providing opportunities for focused discussion of contemporary children's and young adult literature, including multicultural literature, translated books, outstanding and award-winning books, and various themes and topics in literature.

- Free Public Lectures by Authors and Artists, including the annual Charlotte Zolotow Lecture, bring book creators in the field of children's and young adult literature to the UW–Madison campus several times throughout the year.

For more information about any of these services, visit the CCBC web site at [www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/](http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/) or contact the CCBC at 608–263–3720.

## Governance

**The University of Wisconsin - Madison School of Education** is responsible for policies and funding of the Cooperative Children's Book Center. Julie Underwood is the dean of the School of Education.

The **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Division for Libraries, Technology, and Community Learning**, provides contract support for the CCBC services to Wisconsin libraries and schools. Richard Grobschmidt, Assistant Superintendent of the Division, administers the DPI contract.

**The CCBC Advisory Board** represents CCBC users on the University of Wisconsin–Madison campus and from libraries and schools throughout Wisconsin. Members of the 2005–2006 Advisory Board are:

Tom Hurlburt (Chair), Children's Librarian/Associate Director  
Rhineland District Library

Roxane Bartelt, Head of Children's Services  
Kenosha Public Library

Patti Becker, Children's Services Coordinator  
Barron Public Library

Kate Bugher, Consultant, School Library Media  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Karen Cibula, Special Education Teacher  
Danz Elementary School, Green Bay

Andreal Davis, Title I Reading Teacher  
Lincoln Elementary School, Madison

Linda DeCramer, Children's Librarian  
Ripon Public Library

Blanche Emerick, Director  
Office of Education Outreach, School of Education, UW–Madison

Lynn Evarts, Library Media Specialist (9–12)  
Sauk Prairie High School

Gerhard Fischer, English/Language Arts Consultant  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Patricia A. Fry, 7th Grade Teacher  
Templeton Middle School, Sussex

- Wendy Halverson, Library Media Specialist  
Rice Lake School District
- Dawnene Hassett, Assistant Professor  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction, School of Education,  
UW–Madison
- Marilyn Heifner, Educational Consultant, Title I  
CESA #11, Turtle Lake
- Bridget Hill, Library Media Specialist  
La Crosse School District
- Donald Holmen, Director  
Four Lakes Distance Education Network
- Barbara Huntington, Youth Services/Special Services Consultant  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
- Aimee Jahns, K–5 Literacy Facilitator  
Oak Creek/Franklin School District
- Jacque Karbon, Reading Education Consultant  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
- Madge Klais, Assistant Professor  
School of Library and Information Studies, UW–Madison
- Sue Kling, former Children's Services Librarian  
New London Public Library
- Diane Lee, Family Literacy Coordinator  
Dane County Parent Council (HeadStart/EvenStart)
- Marge Loch-Wouters, Head of Children's Services  
Menasha's Public Library
- Linda Morrissey, Library Media Specialist  
Wausau School District
- Marguerite Parks, Associate Professor, Education Foundations  
UW–Oshkosh
- Greg Streuly, Special Education Teacher  
Waterloo High School
- Geraldine M. Wells, Children's Librarian  
Tomah Public Library
- Kris Adams Wendt, Assistant Director/Children's Librarian  
Rhineland District Library
- Cindy Whitney, 3rd Grade Teacher  
Eagle Elementary School, Eagle

## Staff

In addition to Director Kathleen T. Horning, Librarians Merri V. Lindgren, Hollis Rudiger and Megan Schliesman, the CCBC staff when *CCBC Choices 2006* was being created included students who helped carry out the daily responsibilities of assisting individuals on campus, in schools and in libraries who are working in many ways to meet the interests of all young readers.

The student staff during 2005 and early 2006 included Tracy Jordan (2006), Paul Kellner (2006), Tessa Michaelson (2005), Amanda Moss (2005), Janet Piehl (2005), Kim Powell (2006), Elsworth Rockefeller, Lynn Schneider, Meg Taylor (2005), Lia Vellardita, Michelle Wyler (2006), and Bridget Zinn (2005).

## Public Service Schedule

The CCBC is open for public service 54 hours weekly during the university's Fall and Spring semesters: Monday–Thursday 9 a.m.–7 p.m., Friday 9 a.m.–4 p.m., and Saturday and Sunday 12:30–4 p.m.

During the university Summer Session (mid–June to early August), the CCBC is open weekly Monday–Friday 9 a.m.–4 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday 12:30–4 p.m. During Intersession and University breaks, the CCBC is open Monday–Friday 9 a.m.–4 p.m.

Phone 608/263–3720 to confirm the public service hours and to inquire about the availability of a professional librarian/children's literature specialist at a specified time. Extended public service hours can be arranged to accommodate campus course schedules as well as out-of-town users' arrivals and departures. Requests for extended service must be made more than two weeks in advance and will be accommodated if at all possible according to staff availability.



## Appendix II

# Obtaining CCBC Publications

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### *CCBC Choices*

If you would like an addition copy of *CCBC Choices 2006* and live in Wisconsin, send \$2.75 (made payable to the CCBC) or a self-addressed, stamped manilla envelope with \$2.75 in postage to CCBC Choices, 4290 Helen C. White Hall, 600 N. Park St., Madison, WI 53706-1403 USA. (Wisconsin libraries may request one or more copies be delivered at no cost through the statewide library delivery system.)

If you live outside of Wisconsin, send \$10.00 to the Friends of the CCBC, Inc., P.O. Box 5189, Madison, WI 53705 USA. You may also inquire about the rates for ordering copies of *CCBC Choices 2006* in quantity.

Regardless of where they live, current members of the Friends of the CCBC, Inc., receive a copy of this edition of *CCBC Choices* as one benefit of annual Friends of the CCBC, Inc., membership. To request a membership form, write to the Friends of the CCBC, Inc., at the address noted in the previous paragraph.

Limited quantities of some past editions of *CCBC Choices* are also available. E-mail [ccbcinfo@education.wisc.edu](mailto:ccbcinfo@education.wisc.edu), or call 608-262-9503 to inquire.

### Other CCBC Publications

CCBC librarians have created many recommended booklists that focus on a specific subject, genre, or purpose. Current lists are available full-text on the CCBC's web site. Go to [www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/](http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/) and click on "CCBC Publications" for a complete listing of available CCBC bibliographies and booklists.

## Appendix III

# The Compilers of *CCBC Choices 2006*

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**Kathleen T. Horning** is the director of the Cooperative Children's Book Center of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She coordinates the Charlotte Zolotow Award and Lecture for the CCBC. For nine years she was also a children's librarian at Madison Public Library. She is the author of *From Cover to Cover: Evaluating and Reviewing Children's Books* (HarperCollins, 1997). With Ginny Moore Kruse, she coauthored *Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults, 1980 - 1990*, and with Ginny Moore Kruse and Megan Schliesman, *Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults, 1991–1996*. She is currently a columnist for *Library Sparks* magazine. Kathleen is the vice president/president-elect of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) of the American Library Association (ALA), and a past president of the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY). She has chaired the Américas Award Committee, under the auspices of The Consortium of Latin American Studies Programs (CLASP), University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee; ALA/ALSC's 1997 Mildred Batchelder Award Committee; and ALA/ALSC's 1995 John Newbery Committee. She has served on ALA/ALSC's Notable Children's Books Committee and an earlier Newbery Award Committee. She also chaired USBBY's Hans Christian Andersen Award Committee, which selected U.S. nominees for the international award in 1992. She served on the NCTE Lee Bennett Hopkins Award Committee and the ALA/SRRT Coretta Scott King Award Committee and chaired ALA/ALSC's first Committee on Social Issues in Relationship to Materials and Services for Children. Kathleen frequently lectures to librarians on issues in evaluating literature for children and young adults. She has a B.A. in Linguistics and a Master's Degree in Library and Information Studies, both from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

**Merri V. Lindgren** is a librarian at the Cooperative Children's Book Center of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She coauthored *CCBC Choices* from 1990 through 1993, and since 2002. Merri is a regular contributor to the *Wisconsin State Journal*, writing a monthly column about books for children and young adults. She was the editor of *The Multicolored Mirror: Cultural Substance in Literature for Children and Young Adults* (Highsmith, 1991). She served on the 2001 Charlotte Zolotow Award Committee and chaired the 2002 and 2006 Charlotte Zolotow Award Committees. She also compiled and edited the *CCBC Resource List for Appearances by Wisconsin Book Creators* (2nd edition, 1990, and 3rd edition, 1993). Merri has worked as a youth services librarian at the Helen M. Plum Memorial Library in Lombard, Illinois, and as an instructor of Adolescent and Young Adult Literature at Edgewood College. She is currently a trustee on the board of the Baraboo (Wisconsin) Public Library. Merri graduated from

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

**Hollis Rudiger** is a librarian at the Cooperative Children's Book Center. A former school librarian, she served as the Lower School Librarian at the National Cathedral School in Washington, D.C., from 1998 to 2003. Hollis is currently serving on the Best Books for Young Adults Committee of the American Library Association. She is also known in Wisconsin and nationally for her expertise on graphic novels for children and teens. Hollis speaks extensively on graphic novels in libraries and classrooms, and has written about them for *Horn Book Magazine* and other publications. Hollis worked as a reference librarian at The University of Illinois, and in the Public Service department of the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College. She has taught high school Spanish and English, and middle school technology. She has a B.A. degree in American Literature and Spanish from Middlebury College and a Master of Science in Library Science from Simmons College in Boston, Massachusetts.

**Megan Schliesman** is a librarian at the Cooperative Children's Book Center of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. With Katy and Ginny Moore Kruse, Megan coauthored *Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults, 1991–1996*. She is currently a columnist for *Library Sparks* magazine, and contributes to the CCBC monthly column for the *Wisconsin State Journal*. In the past, she regularly appeared on WISC/TV, the Madison CBS affiliate, to talk about books for children and young adults on their morning news program. Megan served on the 2005 Newbery Award Committee. She has also served on the 1998, 1999 and 2002 Charlotte Zolotow Award committees and chaired the 2003 Charlotte Zolotow Award committee. She was a member of the committee that created the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's *Planning Curriculum in English Language Arts* (DPI, 2001) and created the bibliography for DPI's *Teaching Character Education Using Children's Literature* (DPI, 2001). Megan is a former member of South Central Library System Board of Trustees in Wisconsin. She has a B.A. degree in English from UW–Whitewater and a Master's Degree in Library and Information Studies from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

**Tana Elias**, who created the index for *CCBC Choices 2006*, is a librarian and web designer at Madison Public Library, and a freelance indexer. Tana previously created the index for *Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults, Volume Two: 1991–1996*, and for the annual editions of *CCBC Choices* since 1995. While a student reference assistant at the CCBC, Tana compiled *Children's Books by Wisconsin Authors and Illustrators and Children's Books About Wisconsin: An Identification Record of Titles Published in 1992* (CCBC, 1993). Tana was a member of the 2000 Charlotte Zolotow Award Committee and chaired the 2001 Charlotte Zolotow Award Committee. She was the editor of the Friends of the CCBC newsletter from 1996–2000, and has reviewed books for *School Library Journal*. Tana has a B.A. in History from Hamline University and a Master's Degree in Library and Information Studies from the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

## Appendix IV

### The Friends of the CCBC, Inc.

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This membership organization sponsors programs to develop public appreciation for children's and young adult literature and supports special projects at the CCBC. Members of the 2005–2006 Friends of the CCBC, Inc., Board of Directors are President Emily Jones, Vice-President Erin Meyer, Recording Secretary Meg Rothstein, Membership Secretary Nick Glass, Treasurer Ellen Baum, and Directors-at-Large Andrea O'Brien and Angie Sparks.

In addition to the board volunteers, Friends book sale coordinators are Tana Elias and Meg Rothstein. Susan Herr-Hoyman manages the Friends member database. The *Friends Newsletter* is edited by Andrea O'Brien and Andrea Schmitz.

Friends members receive invitations to events open only to the membership and to other opportunities for adults who share an interest in children's and young adult literature to meet with each other formally and informally. Members receive a quarterly newsletter with children's and young adult literature information as well as advance announcements about CCBC publications and services.

The Friends provide volunteer assistance at the CCBC, and hospitality for CCBC Advisory Board meetings and other special events. Friends provide other volunteer services on behalf of the CCBC, such as promotion and distribution of selected CCBC and Friends' publications and special editions of original notecards. The Friends provide funding for public lectures on the UW–Madison campus. The committee that selects the annual Charlotte Zolotow Award is comprised of Friends members.

Annual membership benefits include a copy of *CCBC Choices* and a limited edition publication of the annual Charlotte Zolotow Lecture. Membership is open to all.

The membership year runs from January through December. Dues paid after October 1st each year apply to membership for the next year. Membership dues are tax deductible to the fullest extent of the law. Individual membership categories are: Student—\$9; Personal—\$20; Sustaining—\$30; Supporting—\$50; and Patron—\$100. Group membership categories are: Honor (2–5 individuals)—\$75; Award (6–10 individuals)—\$150; and Distinguished (11–15 individuals)—\$250. (A printable membership form is available at <http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/friends/membershipform.aspx>)

To join the Friends, send a check payable in U.S. funds to Friends of the CCBC, Inc., to: Treasurer, Friends of the CCBC, Inc., Box 5189, Madison, WI 53705, USA.



# Author/Title/Name Index

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This author/title/name index includes all of the titles and book creators in this edition of *CCBC Choices*. It also includes names of individuals and additional book titles cited in the annotations, introduction, and end matter.

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This subject index provides access to the titles in *CCBC Choices* as well as to information about the CCBC and publishing in 2005 mentioned in the introduction and end matter. While the index is not comprehensive, themes and subjects were chosen with story time, classroom use, and reader's advisory in mind. In keeping with the CCBC's interest in providing access to multicultural literature, the index also includes the ethnic backgrounds of the persons, fictional and real, portrayed in this year's *CCBC Choices* selections. Subject entries are as specific as possible, and include cross-references to point the reader to other subjects of interest. For example, "Asian/Pacifics and Asian/Pacific Americans" includes a cross-reference to "Japanese and Japanese Americans" and other culturally specific sub-groups.

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