

1996 Notable Children's Books

Librarians throughout the U.S. helped select these titles from the several thousand children's books published during 1995. Included are books of especially commendable quality, books of particular creativity, and books of fiction, information, poetry, and pictures--all of special interest and value to children through age 14.

1996 Committee Members included: Chair Sally Anne M. Thompson, Adele R. Bennett, Celia Holm, Carole J. McCollough, Celia P. McGowan, John E. Peters, Carol K. Phillips, Amy E. Spaulding, Cynthia Woodruff.

Younger readers

Adoff, Arnold. **Street Music: City Poems.** Illus. by Karen Barbour. HarperCollins.
A collection of poems celebrating, but not romanticizing city life.

Baker, Jeannie. **The Story of Rosy Dock.** Illus. Greenwillow.
Stunning collage constructions illustrate this look at Australia's weather cycles and its ecological lessons.

Bradby, Marie. **More Than Anything Else.** Illus. by Chris K. Soentpiet. Orchard.
Young Booker T. Washington hungers to learn how to read in the post-Civil War South.

Froehlich, Margaret Walden. **That Kookoory!** Illus. by Marla Frazee. Browndeer/Harcourt Brace.
Kookoory, a rooster, sets off for the fair, waking all his friends along the way and attracting the notice of a weasel.

Gray, Libba Moore. **My Mama Had a Dancing Heart.** Illus. by Raúl Colón. Orchard.
A ballet dancer remembers how she and her mother welcomed each season with a joyful dance, in this collection of graceful and exuberant illustrations.

Han, Suzanne Crowder. **The Rabbit's Escape.** Illus. by Yumi Heo. Holt.
Clever Rabbit, tricked into visiting the underwater kingdom of the Dragon King of the East Sea, manages to escape in this bilingual edition of a Korean tale.

Hughes, Shirley. **Rhymes for Annie Rose.** Illus. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.
A collection of poems about toddler Annie Rose celebrating the joys of childhood.

Lewis, J. Patrick. **Black Swan White Crow.** Illus. by Chris Manson. Atheneum.
The colors and shapes of nature are honored in this collection of contemporary Haiku.

Lowery, Linda. **Twist with a Burger, Jitter with a Bug.** Illus. by Pat Dypold. Houghton.
A bouncing, rhyming text joins colorful and contemporary collages to celebrate many kinds of dancing.

Manushkin, Fran. **The Matzah That Papa Brought Home.** Illus. by Ned Bittinger. Scholastic.
A story in cumulative rhyme describes the Passover Seder, and magnificent oil paintings show one family's joyful celebration.

McBratney, Sam. **Guess How Much I Love You.** Illus. by Anita Jeram. Candlewick.
Big Nutbrown Hare tenderly "bests" each of Little Nutbrown Hare's declarations of love in this simple bedtime game between father and son.

Moss, Lloyd. **Zin! Zin! Zin! A Violin.** Illus. by Marjorie Priceman. Simon & Schuster.
Poetry, music, counting, and brilliant colors guide, dance, blend, and sway their way across the pages as Moss introduces ten musical instruments and their sounds. A 1996 Caldecott Honor Book.

Palatini, Margie. **Piggie Pie!** Illus. by Howard Fine. Clarion.
Witch Gritch takes a trip to find eight plump piggies to put in her favorite pie. Alas, there are no pigs in sight--not her sight, anyway!

Rathmann, Peggy. **Officer Buckle and Gloria.** Illus. Putnam.
Officer Buckle is hilariously upstaged by his canine partner Gloria when they team up to give safety tips to children. The 1996 Caldecott Medal Winner.

Rylant, Cynthia. **Mr. Putter and Tabby Pick the Pears.** Illus. by Arthur Howard. Harcourt Brace.
Mr. Putter and his cat Tabby are too old and creaky to climb ladders but still find a way to enjoy pear jelly!

Schertle, Alice. **Down the Road.** Illus. by E.B. Lewis. Browndeer/Harcourt Brace.
Hetty finds walking to town for eggs and returning home with them intact is harder than she anticipated.

Schroeder, Alan. **Carolina Shout!** Illus. by Bernie Fuchs. Dial.
Young Delia hears music all around her, in frog calls, raindrops, and the wonderful singing shouts of the vendors near her home in pre-World II Charleston, South Carolina.

Soto, Gary. **Chato's Kitchen.** Illus. by Susan Guevara. Putnam.
Chato, a real cool cat from East L.A., expects his mouse neighbors for dinner in this slyly humorous tale.

Stevens, Janet. **Tops and Bottoms.** Illus. Harcourt Brace.
A traditional Southern folktale provides a hilarious lesson about work, ingenuity, and resourcefulness. A 1996 Caldecott Honor Book.

Van Allsburg, Chris. **Bad Day at Riverbend.** Illus. Houghton.
A shiny, greasy slime is invading the quiet little town of Riverbend and folks are worried--then readers see the perspective change!

Vaughan, Marcia. **Whistling Dixie.** Illus. by Barry Moser. HarperCollins.
Dixie Lee brings home critters from the Hokey Pokey Swamp to protect her family from the bogeyman, the churn turners, and the mist sisters in this delightful regional tale. Moser's toothy realistically rendered creatures will have readers howling with laughter.

Wojciechowski, Susan. **The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey.** Illus. by P.J. Lynch. Candlewick.
An isolated woodcarver finds healing and hope as he carves a wooden creche for a widow and her seven-year-old son.

Wolff, Patricia Rae. **The Toll-Bridge Troll**. Illus. by Kimberly Bulcken Root. Browndeer/Harcourt Brace.

Every time the troll tries to keep Trigg from crossing the bridge to get to school, Trigg outwits him with a riddle--until the troll's mother decides that he too should go to school and get smart.

Zolotow, Charlotte. **When the Wind Stops**. Illus. by Stefano Vitale. HarperCollins.

Richly colored scenes incorporating the grain of their rough wood backgrounds, show a wise and lyrical journey across lands and seasons in response to a child's questions.

Middle-grade readers

Avi. **Poppy**. Illus. by Brian Floca. Orchard/Richard Jackson.

After seeing her intended gobbled up by the local resident bully owl, Poppy conquers her fear and sets out to find a new home for her entire mouse family.

Bruchac, Joseph. **A Boy Called Slow**. Illus. by Rocco Baviera. Philomel.

True story of a child so deliberate and methodical he was laughingly called "Slow." Deeply shadowed paintings complement Bruchac's dignified telling of the story of Sitting Bull, the Lakota's greatest leader.

Bruchac, Joseph. **The Boy Who Lived with the Bears and Other Iroquois Stories**. Illus. by Murv Jacob. HarperCollins.

A richly detailed collection of six Iroquois stories, illustrated with dramatic scratchboard.

Cummings, Pat, comp. **Talking with Artists: Volume Two**. Illus. Simon & Schuster.

In tones ranging from grave to goofy, thirteen renowned picture book illustrators describe their childhoods, working methods, and sources of inspiration, offering sage advice for budding artists.

Cushman, Karen. **The Midwife's Apprentice**. Clarion.

An apprenticeship with the local midwife enables a nameless medieval orphan with no past and no future to get her heart's desire, a "full belly, a contented heart, and a place in this world." The 1996 Newbery Medal Book.

Curtis, Christopher Paul. **The Watsons Go to Birmingham--1963**. Delacorte.

A family story, both comic and moving, touches on the frightening times of the early civil rights movement. A 1996 Newbery Honor Book.

Engel, Dean and Florence B. Freedman. **Ezra Jack Keats: A Biography with Illustrations**. Illus. Silver Moon.

Rich insights into the life of an internationally acclaimed author and illustrator, with full color reproductions of his early work and of his children's books.

Fletcher, Ralph. **Fig Pudding**. Clarion.

A year in the life of a big family, its joys and its sorrows, is told through the words of twelve-year-old Cliff.

Fritz, Jean. **You Want Women to Vote, Lizzie Stanton?** Illus. by DyAnne DiSalvo-Ryan. Putnam.

This engaging historical biography of Elizabeth Cady Stanton presents a lively look at this impatient, outspoken personality as she fought for women's suffrage.

Gray, Luli. **Falcon's Egg**. Houghton.

Keeping a dragon in a New York City apartment tests young Falcon's ingenuity and resources to the utmost in this beguiling story.

Griffith, Helen V. **Granddaddy's Stars**. Illus. by James Stevenson. Greenwillow.

When Granddaddy travels from his Georgia farm for his first visit to Baltimore, Janetta is concerned he will be bored by the things she wants to share with him.

Hoestlandt, Jo. **Star of Fear, Star of Hope**. Illus. by Johanna Kang. Tr. from the French by Mark Polizzotti. Walker.

Stark paintings reflect Helen's feelings of abandonment when her best friend, a Jewish girl, disappears after they have quarreled during the German occupation of Paris. A 1996 Mildred L. Batchelder Honor Book.

Kerley, Barbara. **Songs of Papa's Island**. Illus. by Katherine Tillotson. Houghton.

This lyrical and loving collection of stories is shared by a mother with her young daughter, who wants to hear, once again, about their island life before she was born.

McKay, Hilary. **Dog Friday**. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry.

A boy, living quietly with his widowed mother who runs a bed and breakfast, finds himself in a series of often hilarious, occasionally dangerous, scrapes, when a wild and eccentric family moves next door.

Olaleye, Isaac. **The Distant Talking Drum: Poems from Nigeria**. Illus. by Frané Lessac.

Wordsong/Boyd's Mills.

Life in the rainforest comes alive in a collection of fifteen original poems brilliantly illustrated with folk art paintings in gouache.

Rosen, Michael J. **A School for Pompey Walker**. Illus. by Aminah Brenda Lynn Robinson. Harcourt Brace.

The true narrative of an escaped slave who returned to the South to raise money for a school by selling himself back into slavery again and again is enhanced by energetic paintings in naif style.

Rylant, Cynthia. **The Van Gogh Cafe**. Harcourt Brace.

Magic occurs at the cafe in Flowers, Kansas, as ten-year-old Clara and her father witness a series of whimsical happenings.

San Souci, Robert D. **The Faithful Friend**. Illus. by Brian Pinkney. Simon & Schuster.

West Indian traditional tale features friends who encounter love, danger, and wizardry. Dramatically illustrated with rich scratchboard and oil art. A 1996 Caldecott Honor Book.

Stevenson, James. **Sweet Corn**. Illus. Greenwillow.

Celebrate summer fun with twenty-eight short poems, brought to life by creative designs that stretch, twist, and accent the text.

Taylor, Mildred D. **The Well: David's Story**. Dial.

Despite the racial prejudice and injustice of the South in the early 1900's, the Logans share their well water until it is poisoned by a vicious neighbor.

Tomlinson, Theresa. **The Forestwife**. Orchard.

Mary, niece and ward of her noble Uncle, runs away to the forest of Sherwood rather than become the wife of an old man and evolves into Maid Marion, the forestwife.

Van Laan, Nancy. **In a Circle Long Ago: A Treasury of Native Lore from North America**. Illus. by Lisa Desimini. Apple Soup/Knopf.

Handsomely designed stories, songs, and poems are gathered from several Native American tribal traditions.

Wynne-Jones, Tim. **The Book of Changes**. Orchard/Melanie Kroupa.

Subtly daffy and inventive stories introduce characters encountering life-changing revelations.

Yolen, Jane. **The Ballad of the Pirate Queens**. Illus. by David Shannon. Harcourt Brace.

Two of history's proudest and most fearless pirates, Bonney and Read, stand boldly in Shannon's swashbuckling paintings, as a renowned storyteller weaves their legends, old and new, into a vigorous celebration in verse.

Older readers

Alexander, Lloyd. **The Arkadians**. Dutton.

Fleeing the palace to save his life, a likeable bean counter is joined along his route by a poet turned jackass and a young priestess in this humorous epic tale that transforms pre-Homeric Greek myths into a multilayered adventure story.

Begay, Shonto. **Navajo: Visions and Voices across the Mesa**. Illus. Scholastic.

Original poetry, prose, and paintings weave intricate patterns of harmony and balance between two cultures.

Cohen, Barbara. **David**. Clarion.

The saga of one of the world's best known heroes, who was a poet, soldier, politician, lover, father, and religious leader.

Colman, Penny. **Rosie the Riveter: Women Working on the Home Front in World War II**. Illus. Crown.

An engrossing chronicle of women in the workforce documents the campaign to get them into industry during World War II and the experiences they had.

Coman, Carolyn. **What Jamie Saw**. Front Street.

Third grader Jamie, his baby sister Nin, and his mother Patty move the night after Jamie's stepfather Van throws Nin across the room. A 1996 Newbery Honor Book.

Conly, Jane Leslie. **Trout Summer**. Holt.

An isolated cabin by the Castle River becomes a summer refuge for siblings Cody and Shana, as they struggle to accept the unexpected changes in their lives.

Feelings, Tom. **The Middle Passage: White Ships/Black Cargo**. Illus. Dial.

Stunning graphic telling of the heartwrenching journey of an enslaved people. This is a tribute to their survival.

Fenner, Carol. **Yolonda's Genius**. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry.
Yolonda, an exceptionally bright fifth grader, proves that her shy younger brother Andrew is not a slow learner but rather a musical genius. A 1996 Newbery Honor Book.

Fox, Paula. **Eagle Kite**. Orchard/Richard Jackson.
Liam must learn to accept his father's homosexuality as well as his impending death as a result of AIDS in this dramatic and realistic story.

Giblin, James Cross. **When Plague Strikes: The Black Death, Smallpox, AIDS**. Illus by David Frampton. HarperCollins.
Three plagues are examined in the context of history and society, comparing and contrasting their impact on humans of their time.

Hamilton, Virginia. **Her Stories: African American Folktales, Fairy Tales, and True Tales**. Illus. by Leo and Diane Dillon. Scholastic/Blue Sky.
A master storyteller presents ordinary slave women, heroines, she-vampires, and witches in the folktales, oral history accounts, and elaborate fairy tales in this beautiful book.

Haugaard, Erik Christian. **The Revenge of the Forty-Seven Samurai**. Houghton.
A servant boy tells the story of the famous Japanese hero Oishi Kuanosuke, a loyal samurai who avenged his master's dishonorable death by ritualistic suicide. Set in feudal Japan.

Koller, Jackie. **A Place to Call Home**. Simon & Schuster/Atheneum.
When her alcoholic mother commits suicide, 15-year-old Anna is determined to care for her 5-year-old sister and baby brother and keep them together as a family.

Moore, Martha. **Under the Mermaid Angel**. Delacorte.
Jesse doesn't expect exciting neighbors in her trailer park in Ida, Texas, but thirty-year-old Roxanne moves in and supplies the imagination and hope Jesse has learned to do without.

Murphy, Jim. **The Great Fire**. Illus. Scholastic.
Eyewitness accounts and contemporary photographs enhance this vivid account of the devastating Chicago fire of 1871 and its aftermath. A 1996 Newbery Honor Book.

Orlev, Uri. **The Lady with the Hat**. Tr. from the Hebrew by Hillel Halkin. Houghton.
Following World War II survivors as they search for a homeland, for relatives, and for their lives, this eloquent translation from the Hebrew gives voice to various sides of the conflict and its aftermath. The 1996 Mildred L. Batchelder Award Book.

Reef, Catherine. **Walt Whitman**. Illus. Clarion.
A wonderfully insightful introduction to the writer who revolutionized American poetry, well illustrated with photos describing the times in which he lived.

Van Dijk, Lutz. **Damned Strong Love: The True Story of Willi G. and Stephan K**. Tr. from the German by Elizabeth D. Crawford.
In the midst of the increasing horrors of Nazi control over his life, Stefan K. falls in love with a man--a Nazi soldier. Based on a true story and rich in historical detail, this powerful novel illuminates an aspect of the war seldom explored in literature for young people. A 1996 Mildred L. Batchelder Honor Book.

All ages

Fry, Virginia Lynn. **Part of Me Died, Too: Stories of Creative Survival among Bereaved Children and Teenagers.** Illus. Dutton.

Children and families who must cope with the death of a pet, relative, or friend, are given the means to grieve.

Johnson, Stephen T. **Alphabet City.** Illus. Viking.

Letters of the alphabet are seen in the sidewalk cracks, street equipment, building details, and urban scenes and depicted by handsomely-crafted paintings. A 1996 Caldecott Honor Book.

Kindersley, Barnabas and Anabel. **Children Just Like Me.** In association with the United Nation's Children's Fund. Illus. Dorling Kindersley.

In this unique celebration of children all over the world, colorful photographs bring their homelands, families, school, and play to life.

King, Elizabeth. **Chile Fever: A Celebration of Peppers.** Illus. Dutton.

History, anthropology, botany, and cooking are combined in this handsome tribute to the chile pepper.

Macaulay, David. **Shortcut.** Illus. Houghton.

Nine separate, yet interconnected, stories explore the relationship of cause and effect in this offbeat adventure that begins when Albert and his horse set out for market day and toss that coin.

McMillan, Bruce. **Night of the Pufflings.** Illus. Houghton.

For an exciting two weeks a year, children on a tiny Icelandic island rescue newly hatched pufflings and deliver them to the sea.

Schertle, Alice. **Advice for a Frog.** Illus. by Norman Green. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard.

Fourteen animal poems, glowingly illustrated with larger-than-life paintings are by turns humorous and dramatic, and frequently provoke thoughtful reflection among readers.

Scieszka, Jon. **Math Curse.** Illus. by Lane Smith.

Viking. Bold, innovative child-centered design details a student's intense math frustration and the triumphant joy of achieving acceptance.