

2003 Notable Children's Books

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Younger readers

Carle, Eric. "Slowly, Slowly, Slowly," said the Sloth. Illus. Putnam/ Philomel. (0-399-23954-5)
A gentle message about accepting yourself is conveyed in this story of a sloth whose placid ways appear lazy to other rain forest animals. Paper collage in luminous jewel tones brings the lush jungle vibrantly to life.

Dillon, Leo and Dillon, Diane. Rap a Tap Tap: Here's Bojangles – Think of That! Illus. Scholastic/Blue Sky. (0-590-47883-4)
A spritely text punctuated by an exuberant refrain provides a glimpse into the life of Mr. Bojangles Robinson. Lively paintings convey a strong sense of movement and rhythm as he dances across the pages. **A 2003 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Honor Book**

Dunrea, Olivier. Gossie & Gertie. Illus. Houghton. (0-618-17676-4)
Short sentences combine with delightful, crisp illustrations to tell the sweet and funny story of the friendship between two goslings.

Fleming, Candace. Muncha! Muncha! Muncha! Illus. by G. Brian Karas. Simon & Schuster/ Atheneum. (0-689-83152-8)
Three mischievous bunnies outsmart Mr. McGreely and nibble the yummy veggies from his garden, no matter how he barricades it. Repetitive refrains and child-appealing illustrations make this a rollicking good read and read-aloud.

Fleming, Denise. Alphabet Under Construction. Illus. Holt. (0-8050-6848-1)
From airbrushing the A to zipping the Z, a playful mouse literally constructs the alphabet. Each bold letter fills the page in this imaginative and clever picture book.

Gerstein, Mordicai. What Charlie Heard. Illus. Farrar/Frances Foster. (0-374-38292-1)
Composer Charles Ives took everyday sounds and made a new kind of music. This picture biography entices the reader to tap, drum, whistle, and toot right along.

Johansen, Hanna. Henrietta and the Golden Eggs. Illus. by Käthi Bhend. Translated by John Barrett. David R. Godine. (1567922104)
An innovative book design captures the heart of this allegorical tale of a persistent and clever hen that pursues dreams leading to better conditions for the 3,333 chickens on a poultry farm. **A 2003 Batchelder Honor Book**

Lowry, Lois. *Gooney Bird Greene*. Illus. by Middy Thomas. Houghton Mifflin/Walter Lorraine. (0-618-23848-4)

Exuberant second grader Gooney Bird Greene bursts into her classroom and immediately demands attention as she shares her seemingly unbelievable stories. This multi-layered book will encourage the storyteller in everyone.

McCarty, Peter. *Hondo & Fabian*. Illus. Henry Holt & Company, LLC (0-8050-6352-8)

A beach outing for the dog and a full day at home for the cat are skillfully interwoven in this quiet tale of friendship. Spare text describes the day's events while soft, glowing illustrations tell the real story of parallel activities with subtle humor. McCarty's design choices from font and page layout to size and inviting cover art show great attention to detail in this masterfully executed picture book. When the day ends, we see 'Hondo and Fabian,' full and fat in their favorite places once again. **A 2003 Caldecott Honor Book**

McMullan, Kate. *I Stink!* Illus. by Jim McMullan. HarperCollins/Joanna Cotler. (0-06-029848-0)

A guzzling garbage truck with plenty of personality converses with readers as he makes his nightly rounds. Bold, bright illustrations and onomatopoeic text combine to create one of the most endearing machines since Mike Mulligan's steam shovel.

Mills, Claudia. *7 X 9 = Trouble!* Illus. by G. Brian Karas. Farrar. (0-374-36746-9)

Third grader Wilson Williams struggles to learn his multiplication tables, stay ahead of his math whiz kindergarten brother, and convince his parents that he needs a pet. Comical illustrations complete this gentle and funny package.

Paye, Won-Ldy and Lippert, Margaret H. *Head, Body, Legs: A Story from Liberia*. Illus. by Julie Paschkis. Holt. (0-8050-6570-9)

All the parts of the body learn to work together in an hilarious creation story from the Dan people of Africa. Bold gouache art work adds to the fun.

Rohmann, Eric. *My Friend Rabbit*. Illus. The Millbrook Press/Roaring Brook Press. (0-7613-1535-7)

Mouse shares his brand-new toy airplane with his friend Rabbit, and no one can predict the disastrous-but hilarious-results. When the airplane lands in a tree, the chaos only builds as Rabbit drags, pushes and carries the whole neighborhood, including Elephant, Hippo and Crocodile, to the rescue. It's a lighthearted celebration of a friendship that will last - even if whatever Rabbit does and wherever he goes, trouble follows. **The 2003 Caldecott Medal Book**

Shannon, David. *Duck on a Bike*. Illus. Scholastic/Blue Sky. (0-439-05023-5)

Dramatic perspectives, expressive illustrations, and an appealingly predictable text chronicle duck's precarious barnyard ride. Shannon expertly renders the horse's hauteur, the cat's aloofness, and the chicken's panic as duck inspires others to follow suit.

Sis, Peter. *Madlenka's Dog*. Illus. Farrar/Frances Foster. (0-374-34699-2)

Madlenka's walk around the block with her newly imagined dog is richly detailed through Sis' cross-hatched ink drawing, bird's-eye perspectives, and color-coded index. A visual feast and not so typical child gets a dog story.

Thomas, Shelley Moore. *Get Well, Good Knight*. Illus. by Jennifer Plecas. Dutton. (0-525-46914-1)

"Fear not," the good knight has returned to care for three sick dragons in this appealing easy reader. Repeated phrases and words that mimic the action ("chat-chat-chattering") make it an excellent choice for reading aloud.

Wilson, Karma. *Bear Snores On*. Illus. by Jane Chapman. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry. (0-689-83187-0)

With rollicking rhythm and a memorable refrain, this cozy story features a bear who slumbers as a number of forest animals use his lair for an impromptu party.

Winter, Jonah. *Frida*. Illus. by Ana Juan. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine. (0-590-20320-7)

This intimate look at a woman who overcame suffering to become a gifted artist combines a simple yet powerful text with rich paintings that echo the folk art of Mexico.

Middle readers

Andrews-Goebel, Nancy. *The Pot that Juan Built*. Illus. by David Diaz. Lee & Low. (1-58430-038-8)

Noted Mexican potter Juan Quezada's work is highlighted in this inventive book that fairly glows with desert colors. A cumulative, rhyming story for younger readers is paired with informative prose further detailing Quezada's technique.

Bauer, Joan. *Stand Tall*. Putnam. (0-399-23473-X)

Standing 6'3", Tree is the tallest seventh grader in the history of his middle school. His story of struggle and triumph in the face of family changes, school pressures, and natural disaster is told with humor and compassion.

Blake, Robert J. *Togo*. Illus. Putnam/ Philomel. (0-399-23381-4)

The compelling story of Togo, the lead dog in the harrowing 1925 diphtheria serum run is told in fast-paced text and broad painterly illustrations that capture the snowy desolation of their desperate race.

Creech, Sharon. *Ruby Holler*. HarperCollins/Joanna Cotler (0-06-027732-7)

The so-called trouble twins eventually find home in this funny, modern tall tale. Elements of mystery pervade this story distinguished by exceptional use of language, extraordinary recipes like "beat the blues" broccoli, and poignant longing for acceptance.

Delano, Marfe Ferguson. *Inventing the Future: A Photobiography of Thomas Alva Edison*. National Geographic. (0-7922-6721-4)

This biography of the inventor of the light bulb, the phonograph, and the motion picture emphasizes his devotion to hard work and his belief that, "genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration." Handsomely designed and including many historic photographs.

Denslow, Sharon Phillips. *Georgie Lee*. Illus. by Lynne Rae Perkins. Greenwillow. (0-688-17940-1)

In this pleasing early chapter book, nine-year-old J.D. shares a birthday and a surprisingly unquiet summer on the farm with his grandmother, her intelligent cow Georgie Lee, and Boots the cat.

Ferris, Jean. *Once Upon a Marigold*. Harcourt. (0-15-216791-9)

Full of bad jokes, endearing characters, and wacky hardships this original fairytale with modern sensibilities chronicles Chris' madcap adventures as he sets off to meet the girl next door (who just happens to be a princess).

Fine, Anne. *Up On Cloud Nine*. Random House/Delacorte. (0-385-73009-8)

Ian reflects on his friendship with best buddy, Stolly, who lies comatose in the hospital following a near fatal fall. Told with wry humor, irony, and compassion, Ian helps Stolly realize to his family and friends.

Fradin, Dennis Brindell. *The Signers: The 56 Stories Behind the Declaration of Independence*. Illus. by Michael McCurdy. Walker. (0-8027-8849-1)

Profiles of the signers of the document that established a new country are presented in short, readable, and carefully illustrated essays organized by colony. Black and white scratchboard illustrations complete the portrait and help place each individual in an historical context.

Freedman, Russell. *Confucius: The Golden Rule*. Illus. by Frederic Clement. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine. (0-439-13957-0)

Confucius comes alive to readers through Freedman's meticulously researched and readable biography. Clement's Chinese-style, old-looking paintings as well as the end notes and supporting materials bring to life this philosopher who lived more than 2500 years ago.

Funke, Cornelia. *The Thief Lord*. Translated by Oliver Latsch. The Chicken House/ Scholastic Inc. (0-439-40437-1)

Two orphaned brothers, Prosper, 12, and Bo, 5, come to Venice on the run from relatives who intend to separate them. A band of street kids, a mysterious Thief Lord, a nosy detective, and a magical carousel are all part of an enchanting story that combines mystery, adventure, and fantasy. **(The 2003 Mildred L. Batchelder Medal Book)**

Gaiman, Neil. *Coraline*. Illus. by Dave McKean. HarperCollins. (0-380-97778-8)

In a chilling tale, rich in atmosphere, Coraline must use her wits to rescue her family and several lost children from the evil force that exists on the other side of the door.

Giff, Patricia Reilly. *Pictures of Hollis Woods*. Random House/Wendy Lamb. (0-385-32655-6)

12-year-old Hollis Woods unfolds her story of foster care and a search for family in images from her sketchbook, which reveal both her memories and her artistic soul. Strong visual imagery, multi-layered structure, and memorable characters create an emotionally satisfying story. **A 2003 Newbery Honor Book**

Grimes, Nikki. *Talkin' about Bessie: The Story of Aviator Elizabeth Coleman*. Illus. by E.B. Lewis. Scholastic/Orchard. (0-439-35243-6)

The story of the early African-American aviator is revealed in snapshots, free verse poetry, and luminous watercolors that create a memorable family album by the people in and around her life. **The 2003 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Award Book and a 2003 Coretta Scott King Author Honor Book**

Ibbotson, Eva. *Journey to the River Sea*. Illus. by Kevin Hawkes. Penguin Putnam/Dutton. (0-525-46739-4)

Maia's life suddenly experiences twists and turns just like the Amazon River as she travels from her post-Victorian private school to meet her relatives in Brazil. Surprises, adventures, tribulations, and new friendships ensue as she realizes her dreams.

Mak, Kam. *My Chinatown: One Year in Poems*. Illus. HarperCollins. (0-06-029190-7)

From one winter to the next, a boy from Hong Kong gradually adjusts to his new life in New York City's Chinatown. Realistic paintings combined with free verse poems evoke universal feelings in a specific locale.

Martin, Ann. *A Corner of the Universe*. Scholastic. (0-439-38880-5)

With the surprising arrival of a mentally disabled uncle, 12-year-old Hattie Owen's world is turned upside down. Ann Martin used her own childhood memories to create a 1960's small town setting, perfectly suited to this poignant story. **A 2003 Newbery Honor Book**

McKay, Hilary. *Saffy's Angel*. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry. (0-689-84933-8)

The search for a mysterious angel sends the members of an eccentric British household on a riotous adventure in this poignant tale of self-discovery.

Old, Wendie. *To Fly: The Story of the Wright Brothers*. Illus. by Robert Andrew Parker. Clarion. (0-618-13347-X)

Each of fifteen warm and easy chapters is illustrated by at least one full page watercolor painting that recreates the early twentieth century and the first airplane flight.

Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *Ella Fitzgerald: The Tale of a Vocal Virtuosa*. Illus. by Brian Pinkney. Hyperion/Jump at the Sun. (0-7868-0568-4)

Illustrations and language swirl and dance to create a rhythmic portrait of a jazz great.

Rubin, Susan Goldman. *Degas and the Dance: The Painter and the Petits Rats, Perfecting their Art*. Harry N. Abrams. (0-8109-0567-1)

Degas' perfectionism, evidenced by his many hours of observing, drawing, and painting young ballerinas at the Paris Opera is compared to the long hours of practice by these young women to master the dance. Illustrated by 30 of Degas' works.

Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson, The Voice of a Century*. Illus. by Brian Selznick. Scholastic. (0-439-26967-9)

A gloriously designed and thoughtfully researched book, "When Marian Sang," encapsulates the life of famed African-American contralto Marian Anderson. Ryan's vibrant text melds perfectly with Selznick's sepia toned illustrations to portray Anderson's passion for singing and her perseverance in overcoming the barriers to both train and perform because of her race. **A 2003 Robert F. Sibert Honor Book**

Stanley, Diane. *Saladin: Noble Prince of Islam*. Illus. HarperCollins. (0-688-17135-4)

Meticulous paintings in a Persian style enhance this sympathetic biography of the great Muslim leader who led his people during the time of the Crusades.

Testa, Maria. *Becoming Joe DiMaggio*. Illus by Scott Hunt. Candlewick. (0-7636-1537-4)

A powerful love story between a boy and his grandfather is told in 24 poems. Small charcoal drawings set off the lyrical and spare writing, which gives a strong sense of the World War II setting.

Tolan, Stephanie S. *Surviving the Applewhites*. HarperCollins. (0-06-623602-9)

Tolan features pierced and spiky-haired Jake, who has been expelled from every possible public school before his unwilling arrival at Wit's End, N.C., and the homeschool run by the chaotic and outrageous Applewhite family. The eccentric characters and fast pace culminate in a hilarious musical production that forces Jake to grow. **A 2003 Newbery Honor Book**

Walker, Sally M. *Fossil Fish Found Alive: Discovering the Coelacanth*. Carolrhoda. (1-57505-536-8)

Thought extinct for 70 million years, this fish was found still swimming in the oceans off Africa and Indonesia. Superior attention to design, organization, and clear language distinguish the story of this startling discovery.

Older readers

Alvarez, Julia. *Before We Were Free*. Knopf. (0-375-81544-9)

In a setting steeped in the ambience of the Dominican Republic, Anita gradually becomes aware of her family's part in a plot to kill the dangerous dictator, Trujillo.

Avi. *Crispin: The Cross of Lead*. Hyperion. (0-7868-0828-4)

Crispin: The Cross of Lead is an action-filled page-turner set in 14th-century England. "Asta's son" is the only name the 13-year-old title character has ever known when he is suddenly orphaned and stripped of home and possessions. Accused of murder and wanted dead or alive, Crispin flees his village and falls in with a juggler, Bear, who becomes his protector and teacher. Relentlessly pursued by Crispin's enemies, the pair flees to solve the mystery of his identity and fight the injustices of feudalism. ***The 2003 Newbery Medal Book***

Blumenthal, Karen. *Six Days in October: The Stock Market Crash of 1929*. Illus. Simon & Schuster/Atheneum. (0-689-84276-7)

A grippingly written account of the chaotic events preceding the 1929 stock market crash. Using numerous primary sources, the text is enhanced with photographs, editorial cartoons, and sidebars explaining terms such as stocks and bonds and the Dow Jones Average. ***A 2003 Robert F. Sibert Honor Book***

Colman, Penny. *Where the Action Was: Women War Correspondents in World War II*. Illus. Crown. (0-517-80075-6)

The extremes dedicated women writers and photographers went to in order to get to "where the action was" makes for exciting reading. The uniqueness of women's perspective provides an important piece of missing history.

Cooney, Caroline. *Goddess of Yesterday*. Delacorte. (0-385-72945-6)

Ancient Greece and its mythology come to life through the voice of 12-year-old Anaxandra in this compelling novel of war, deceit, and false identities.

Farmer, Nancy. *The House of the Scorpion*. Simon & Schuster/Atheneum/Richard Jackson. (0-689-85222-3)

Farmer tackles the provocative topics of cloning, the value of life, illegal immigration, and the drug trade in a coming-of-age novel set in a desolate futuristic desert. ***A 2003 Newbery Honor Book***

Fleischman, John. *Phineas Gage: A Gruesome but True Story about Brain Science*. Houghton. (0-618-05252-6)

A detailed and fascinating look at the 1848 case of a man who lived 11 years after a large iron rod was shot through his brain.

Gantos, Jack. *Hole in My Life*. Farrar. (0-374-39988-3)

Gantos courageously recounts his turbulent youth and young adulthood in this powerful and heart-wrenching memoir. He weaves literary quotes and allusions in superb text to echo the impact of the printed word on his life. The arresting book design mirrors his graphic prison experience and compelling vignettes engage the reader. ***A 2003 Robert F. Sibert Honor Book***

Giblin, James Cross. *The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler*. Clarion. (0-395-90371-8)

Giblin poses and answers three questions in this compelling, accessible account of Hitler, his world, and his legacy. What sort of man could plan and carry out such horrendous schemes, how did he win support for his deadly ventures, and why did no one stop him until it was almost too late? ***The 2003 Robert F. Sibert Medal Book***

Hiaasen, Carl. *Hoot*. Knopf. (0-375-82181-3)

Hiaasen's wildly funny satire features the new kid, Roy, joining forces with tough Beatrice and the elusive Mullet Fingers to defeat a bully, thwart an avaricious corporation, and save a colony of burrowing owls. Hiaasen's work is both a rollicking adventure and a serious examination of values that threaten our environment. **A 2003 Newbery Honor Book**

McCaughrean, Geraldine. *The Kite Rider*. HarperCollins. (0-06-623875-7)

In this fast-paced adventure set in thirteenth century China, 12-year-old Haoyou joins the circus and meets Kublai Khan. Filled with thrills, colorful details, and plenty of humor.

Nye, Naomi Shihab. *19 Varieties of Gazelle: Poems of the Middle East*. Illus. Greenwillow. (0-06-009765-5)

The small format of this collection contrasts with the powerful, rich, and evocative poetry that explores universal questions of family, people, conflict, and hope.

Park, Linda Sue. *When My Name Was Keoko: A Novel of Korea in World War II*. Clarion. (0-618-13335-6)

In alternating chapters, a young girl and her brother share details of their difficult life in occupied Korea. A strong sense of optimism pervades the text as they gain pride in themselves and their country.

Partridge, Elizabeth. *This Land Was Made for You and Me: The Life and Songs of Woody Guthrie*. Illus. Viking. (0-670-03535-1)

This well-researched and thoughtful biography of a difficult and sad life ultimately shows the triumph of the human spirit. Impressively illustrated with black and white photographs.

All ages

Fink, Sam. *The Declaration of Independence*. Scholastic. (0-439-40700-1)

A visual interpretation helps young readers puzzle out the words and phrases of this pivotal American document, humorously illustrated.

Greenberg, Jan and Jordan, Sandra. *Action Jackson*. Illus. by Robert Andrew Parker. The Millbrook Press/Roaring Brook Press. (0-7613-1682-5)

Greenberg and Jordan capture Jackson Pollock's spirit and artistic style through succinct narrative and purposeful words. Detailed source notes enrich this informational picture book, which superbly portrays a brief period in Pollock's life. Parker's watercolor illustrations splash out of their frames, reflecting the action and movement for which Pollock is renowned. **A 2003 Robert F. Sibert Honor Book**

Howitt, Mary. *The Spider and the Fly*. Illus. by Tony DiTerlizzi. Simon & Schuster. (0-689-85289-4)

DiTerlizzi's wickedly delicious tribute to silent film - based on the cautionary tale penned by Mary Howitt in 1829 - presents an old-fashioned, cackling villain and a naïve damsel in distress in this ambient, moody picture book with all the allure of the flickering silver screen. Skillful use of tone, line and perspective add to the mystery of this melodramatic tale, executed entirely in eerie shades of black and white. Children of all ages will shiver with dread and delight as DiTerlizzi entangles them in his hypnotic web. **A 2003 Caldecott Honor Book**

Kalman, Maira. *Fireboat: The Heroic Adventures of the John J. Harvey*. Illus. Putnam. (0-399-23953-7)

First launched in 1931 in New York City, the fireboat John J. Harvey fought fires once again on September 11, 2001. Vivid paintings and spare text highlight the way people came together after this terrible event.

Karas, G. Brian. *Atlantic*. Illus. Putnam. (0-399-23632-5)

Sweeping double-page illustrations and free flowing verse capture the vastness and fluidity of the Atlantic Ocean.

Martin, Bill Jr. and Sampson, Michael. *I Pledge Allegiance: The Pledge of Allegiance with Commentary*. Illus. by Chris Raschka. Candlewick. (0-7636-1648-6)

Words of the pledge are broken down and explained for children and adults. Raschka's torn-paper collages of stylized children are respectful of the subject and accessible to children.

Pinkney, Jerry. *Noah's Ark*. Illus. North-South/SeaStar. (1-58717-201-1)

In this strikingly beautiful rendition of Noah and the Great Flood, Jerry Pinkney has integrated the well-known story from Genesis with masterful pencil and watercolor illustrations creating a stunning whole. Vibrant paintings evoke the tone of the story from lush, sweeping views of the Earth to intricate details of the massive ark, myriad animals, faithful Noah and his family, and finally to the restoration of the planet. The muted earth-toned colors are enlivened throughout with carefully placed touches of reds, blues, and greens. Pinkney captures the story's joyous yet reverent mood with his vigorous, distinctive illustrations. **A 2003 Caldecott Honor Book**

Zelinsky, Paul O. *Knick-Knack Paddywhack!*. Dutton. (0-525-46908-7)

The familiar song is inventively transformed into an interactive moving parts book in which not one but ten old men cavort through the landscape.