Notable Children’s Books 2012

Younger

**All the Water in the World.** By George Ella Lyon, Illus. by Katherine Tillotson, Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

From deserts to the kitchen sink, the water cycle is lyrically yet economically described in Lyon’s poem emphasizing the importance of water conservation. Katherine Tillotson’s digital paintings splash, surge and drip off the page.

**A Ball for Daisy.** By Chris Raschka, Illus. by the author, Schwartz & Wade Books,

A wordless tale of an irrepressible little dog whose most prized possession is accidently destroyed. A buoyant tale of loss, recovery, and friendship. (2012 Caldecott Medal Book)

**Blackout.** By John Rocco, Illus. by the author. Disney/Hyperion Books.

A summer power outage draws an urban family up to their building’s roof and then down to the street for an impromptu block party. (A 2012 Caldecott Honor Book)

**Bring on the Birds.** By Susan Stockdale, Illus. by the author. Peachtree.

Rhyming couplets and clear, identifiable illustrations remind readers that birds vary in many ways, but all have feathers and are hatched from eggs. Colorful acrylics help provide just the right of information for preschool ornithologists.

**The Cazuela that the Farm Maiden Stirred.** By Samantha R. Vamos, Illus. by Rafael López. Charlesbridge.

Nothing is better than a delicious bowl of arroz con leche unless, of course, a host of farm animals have a hand in the preparation! (A 2012 Belpre Illustrator Honor Book)

**Chirchir Is Singing.** By Kelly Cunnane, Illus. by Jude Daly. Schwartz & Wade Books.

In this cumulative story set in Kenya, Chirchir sings as she tries to help with family chores. Acrylic folk art highlights the activities of daily life in this rural setting.


This book playfully challenges children’s concepts of the growth capacity of living vs. non-living things in a fun and engaging way.

**Dot.** By Patricia Intriago, Illus. by the author. Farrar Straus Giroux.
To a child’s delight, bright dots and brief rhyming verses cleverly demonstrate antonyms and synonyms in this clever picture book.

**Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site.** By Sherri Duskey Rinker, Illus. by Tom Lichtenheld. Chronicle Books.

Truck-loving toddlers will be willingly tucked into bed along with the vehicles in this superbly constructed goodnight poem.

**Grandpa Green.** By Lane Smith, Illus. by the author. Roaring Brook Press.

Elaborate topiary sculptures give visual form to memories in a wildly fanciful garden tended by a child and his beloved great-grandfather. (A 2012 Caldecott Honor Book)

**Harry and Hopper.** By Margaret Wild, Illus. by Freya Blackwood. Feiwel & Friends.

A poignant depiction of grief and acceptance at the loss of a beloved pet is relayed in this quietly moving story whose illustrations add emotional depth.


Piggie is very concerned about his best friend, Gerald the Elephant, who has broken his trunk, and Gerald tells him a long, rambling story about how it happened. (A 2012 Geisel Honor Book)

**I Want My Hat Back.** By Jon Klassen, Illus. by the author. Candlewick Press.

After losing his hat, Bear politely and patiently questions his fellow forest dwellers as to the whereabouts of his “red pointy hat.” (A 2012 Geisel Honor Book)

**King Jack and the Dragon.** By Peter Bently, Illus. by Helen Oxenbury. Dial Books for Young Readers.

Enhanced by whimsical illustrations, this story of the wonders and terrors created by a child’s imagination, shows the power of playtime and the magic of make-believe.


Raschka’s pictures give distinct personalities to the subjects of these endearments and the book is a reminder of how much children are loved in every language and culture. Translations and pronunciation guides are included.

**Little White Rabbit.** By Kevin Henkes, Illus. by the author. Greenwillow Books.

Little white rabbit explores the springtime world wondering what it would be like to be different - green, tall, solid, or able to fly - but when he comes home he knows who loves him.

**Me...Jane.** By Patrick McDonnell, Illus. by the author. Little, Brown.
Watching birds and squirrels in her yard, a young girl discovers the joy and wonder of nature. A glimpse of the childhood of renowned primatologist Jane Goodall. (A 2012 Caldecott Honor Book)

**Mouse & Lion.** By Rand Burkert, Illus. by Nancy Ekholm Burkert. di Capua/Scholastic.

Mouse is the center of this retelling of a familiar Aesop’s fable. Elegant illustrations place the story solidly in the natural world of Africa.

**Naamah and the Ark at Night.** By Susan Campbell Bartoletti, Illus. by Holly Meade. Candlewick Press.

As the waters rage, this lullaby reveals Noah's wife as a nurturer of diverse creatures aboard the ark. Watercolor and collage illustrations amplify the text, a form of lyrical Arabic poetry, called ghazal.

**A New Year's Reunion: A Chinese Story.** By Yu Li-Qiong, Illus. by Zhu Cheng-Liang, Candlewick Press.

Vibrant illustrations highlight a young girl's joy when her father makes his annual visit for Chinese New Year in this tender story.

**Over and Under the Snow.** By Kate Messner, Illus. by Christopher Silas Neal. Chronicle Books.

While skiing cross-country with her father, a girl envisions the “secret kingdom” under the snow, where small forest animals shelter in winter. Neal's bright, snowy landscapes contrast with his depictions of shadowed, subterranean nests.

**Prudence Wants a Pet.** By Cathleen Daly, Illus. by Stephen Michael King. Roaring Brook Press.

In this quietly humorous picture book illustrated in soft colors, Prudence tries out a branch, a twig, a shoe, her little brother, a tire, and sea buddies until her parents finally give her a kitten as a pet.

**See Me Run.** By Paul Meisel, Illus. by the author. Holiday House.

Dogs and more dogs are everywhere: running, sliding, jumping, splashing, and having fun. (A 2012 Geisel Honor Book)

**Should I Share My Ice Cream?** By Mo Willems, Illus. by the author. Hyperion Books for Children.

A common human problem is posed and solved with Willems’ minimal illustration and graceful humor.

**Stars.** By Mary Lyn Ray, Illus. by Marla Frazee. Beach Lane Books.

A duet of spare, poetic observations and ethereal illustrations explore the realities and possibilities of many kinds of stars, embracing the immediacy of a child’s experiences. A great read aloud.

**Tales for Very Picky Eaters.** By Josh Schneider, Illus. by the author, Clarion Books.

Five chapters recount James’ refusal to eat yet another disgusting, smelly, repulsive, lumpy, or slimy food. (2012 Geisel Medal Book)
**Tell Me the Day Backwards.** By Albert Lamb, Illus. by David McPhail, Candlewick Press.

Mama bear and child reflect on the day, recounting its events in reverse order. Gentle and reassuring, this book wonderfully illustrates a sometimes difficult concept: the flow of time.

**Ten Little Caterpillars.** By Bill Martin, Jr., Illus. by Lois Ehlert. Beach Lane Books.

Ten different caterpillars inch their ways across vibrantly-illustrated environs in this newly-illustrated, rhyming story. Supplemental facts widen the book’s appeal and usefulness. Ehlert's watercolor collages are remarkably entomologically accurate.

**These Hands.** By Margaret H. Mason, Illus. by Floyd Cooper. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Both an affirmation of a nurturing relationship between grandfather and grandson and an explanation of one reason labor unions fought for workers’ rights, the brief text and warm illustrations tell an uplifting American story.

**Tia Isa Wants a Car.** By Meg Medina, Illus. by Claudio Muñoz. Candlewick Press.

Using a cheerful positive tone, Medina depicts a warm relationship between Tia Isa and her niece and shows the strength of community as a life-long dream is realized.

**Where’s Walrus?** By Stephen Savage, Illus. by the author. Scholastic.

Walrus escapes from the zoo and cleverly disguises himself around the city; the zookeeper and the children reading the book search for him on each bold, bright page of this wordless book.


In a cheerful, easy tone, Harris explains who’s got what body parts, their similarities of differences. Girls, boys and adults of many ethnicities – even animals – are included in the loose-lined illustrations depicting the “bare” facts.

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**Middle**


A straightforward account of the September 11th tragedy, Brown’s restrained watercolors and sensitive text focuses on small stories of those who were in the Towers and the people who responded to the disaster.


This story of Tony Sarg, the artistic inventor who conceived the huge balloons that float through New York City each Thanksgiving, joyously celebrates his life’s creative process. (2012 Sibert Medal Book)
**Breaking Stalin’s Nose.** By Eugene Yelchin, Illus. by the author, Henry Holt.

On the eve of his induction into the Young Pioneers, Sasha’s world is overturned when his father is arrested by Stalin’s guard. (A 2012 Newbery Honor Book)


Alley-cat Skilley finds a perfect home, gets help from a friend to return an injured raven to the Tower of London and saves all the Cheshire Cheese Inn mice from the evil Pinch.

**Diego Rivera: His World and Ours.** By Duncan Tonatiuh, Illus. by the author, Abrams Books for Young Readers

The accomplishments of Mexican painter, activist, and muralist Diego Rivera are highlighted in stylized illustrations. (2012 Bélpré Illustrator Medal Book)


The human desire to make a mark is celebrated in this fictionalized account of Simon Rodia’s process in building the Watts Towers – a singular, eccentric, artistic creation now recognized as a National Landmark.


When the letter ‘E’ falls down the stairs and hurts her leg, the rest of the alphabet must do the best it can to limp along without its most-used letter. Puns aplenty pack every page.


Sisterhood is complicated: partly embarrassing, partly affectionate, partly competitive, partly supportive, partly confining, partly empowering. The many facets of the relationship are deftly described by George’s poems and Carpenter’s pen and ink drawings.


Muted mixed media illustrations set the tone for somber yet hopeful free verse honoring the author’s family as they journeyed north from the Jim Crow South. A haunting view of a pivotal moment in U.S. history. (A 2012 Coretta Scott King Author Honor Book)


Hà and her family flee war-torn Vietnam for the American South. In spare, vivid verse, she chronicles her struggle to find her place in a new world. (A 2012 Newbery Honor Book)

**Junonia.** By Kevin Henkes. Greenwillow Books.
Alice knows just how her vacation on Sanibel Island should be: the same as the previous nine, except that this year she hopes to find a rare junonia shell. Alice's tenth birthday, however, brings unexpected changes.

**Lemonade, and Other Poems Squeezed from a Single Word.** By Bob Raczka, Illus. by Nancy Doniger. Roaring Brook Press.

Think of a word, then compose a poem using only the letters in that word. Amusing challenges for poet and reader alike, these poem-puzzles are illustrated with similarly playful brush-paintings. Great fun for classroom or budding poets.


This sequel to “A Faraway Island” continues the story of thirteen-year-old Stephie Steiner, a Jewish refugee whose parents have sent her from Nazi-occupied Vienna to Sweden. (2012 Batchelder Honor Book)


Through a “This is the House That Jack Built” formula, the story of an ecological and environmental triumph is told so that even very young children can understand the interrelationships between plants, animals and people.

**Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match /Marisol McDonald no combina.** By Monica Brown, Illus. by Sara Palacios. Children's Book Press, an imprint of Lee and Low Books.

Bright, vivacious Marisol, a Peruvian-Scottish-American girl, loves peanut butter and jelly burritos and speaks both English and Spanish, but her teacher and classmates do not appreciate Marisol's mashing of cultures. (A 2012 Belpré Illustrator Honor Book)


Eleven-year-old Max discovers that his favorite Lucha Libre wrestler is coming to town and might have a strange connection with his own family. (A 2012 Belpré Author Honor Book)

**Migrant.** By Maxine Trottier, Illus. by Isabelle Arsenault. Groundwood Books.

This unique story about a group of migrant workers – Mennonites – is told through the eyes of young Anna, who reflects upon their peripatetic life and the hardships it creates.


Sit with Amelia Earhart in her red Vega as she flies across the Atlantic and startles a farmer in Northern Ireland by landing in his field.

**No Ordinary Day.** By Deborah Ellis. Groundwood Books.
Valli, a resourceful homeless nine-year-old, learns she has leprosy. An encounter with a kind doctor gives her the chance to heal and find a home. Illuminates harsh realities in contemporary India.

*Nursery Rhyme Comics: 50 Timeless Rhymes from 50 Celebrated Cartoonists.* Ed. by Chris Duffy, Illus. by various artists. First Second.

A lively compilation of 50 nursery rhymes interpreted and illustrated in diverse and distinctive styles by a different cartoonist or graphic artists. The introduction by Leonard Marcus puts it all in focus.

*Soldier Bear.* By Bibi Dumon Tak, Illus. by Philip Hopman. Trans. by Laura Watkinson. Eerdmans Books for Young Readers.

Based on a true story and set during World War II, the novel follows the journey of refugee Polish soldiers and the mischievous young bear they acquire in the Iranian desert. (2012 Batchelder Award Book)


Ibatoulline’s sumptuous, highly finished gouaches invite the reader into a distant time and landscape where a young Arab boy and his father harvest myrrh for three mysterious strangers.


Arnosky describes and illustrates the qualities of magnificent raptors. Distinctive acrylic and chalk paintings depict birds gazing at readers from their natural environments. Four large fold out pages shows some birds in actual size.


From the chaos that spawned Gaia to the horrors of the Trojan War, this is the most comprehensive and lavishly illustrated compendium of Greek mythology since the D’Aulaires’ offering. Timeline, cast of characters, map appended.

*The Trouble with May Amelia.* By Jennifer L. Holm. Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

May Amelia is always in trouble but never more than when she translates an offer from a con man for her father. A companion to My Only May Amelia, it stands sturdily on its own.

*Underground.* By Shane Evans, Illus. by Shane Evans. Roaring Brook Press.

Spare text describes a long dangerous night time journey on the Underground Railroad. The striking illustrations with their dark palette burst into light as the travelers reach freedom. (The 2012 Coretta Scott King Illustrator Medal Book)


Julie recalls her sixth year classmates Chingis and Nergui, two Mongolian brothers, their strange polaroid photographs, sketchy descriptions of Mongolia, and their very real fear of demons in this offbeat, haunting story.

Winter presents inquisitive and independent Goodall from girlhood to the Gombe Stream and beyond in her search to understand chimpanzees. Stylized acrylics show scientist and animals in the abundant foliage of Africa.


Two parallel stories set 50 years apart converge in this textual and visual story of adventurous Ben and Rose as it explores topics of deafness, silence, wolves, and museums. (A 2012 Schneider Family Award Book)


From animal shelter cage to a loving home, Won Ton’s experience is told from his point of view in senryu, a form of Japanese poetry similar to Haiku.


Exiled from his home in the pantry, Fredle, a mouse with a sweet tooth and unusual curiosity, discovers the wonders and dangers of the outside world. He learns to question the rules and returns home a changed mouse.

Zita the Spacegirl. By Ben Hatke, Illus. by the author. First Second.

When a little red button crashes to earth any self-respecting graphic novel character would push it. When Joseph is whisked through an inter-dimensional portal to an alien planet, Zita follows to rescue him.

Older


In her clear, readable style, Fleming shows how Earhart captured the public imagination. Chapters of background information alternate with the chilling account of her final flight. Enhanced with maps, archival documents, news photos, and other contemporary sources.

Anya’s Ghost. By Vera Brosgol. First Second.

This graphic novel tells the story of Anya, a Russian immigrant, whose lack of self-esteem changes when her life is almost taken over by a determined ghost.


Stalin’s deportation and imprisonment of Lithuanian families in Siberia is brought to vivid life in Sepetys’ searing novel, narrated by Lina, a 15-year-old who writes, “They took me in my nightgown.” (A YALSA Morris Award Finalist)

Pringle looks at the evidence from geology, biology, botany, and scientific reason to explain evolution. Readable text, pertinent illustrations matter of factly clarify concepts and the meaning of theory.


This powerful examination of a crucial dichotomy in the civil rights movement focuses on two polar opposites—one man committed to ending segregation, and one just as determined to see it maintained. (A 2012 Sibert Honor Book)


Clear and compelling description and analysis of scientific evidence and historic events brings this little-known tragedy to life, a history made personal by its focus on five families, some who survived, some who perished.


The significance of reading is personified by two eighth graders, functionally illiterate Travis and feisty, starved-for-affection Velveeta, who come together in a tenuous, prickly relationship.


Lively prose and interesting anecdotes make the history of Prohibition accessible while the examination of unintended consequences make this chronicle relevant to today's political world. (A 2012 YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults Finalist)


An achingly funny romp through a dying New Deal town. While mopping up epic nose bleeds, Jack narrates this screw-ball mystery in an endearing and believable voice. (2012 Newbery Medal Book)


Say, an esteemed children’s book creator, engagingly relays his early training, including the influences of his family and his artistic sensei. (A 2012 Sibert Honor Book)


Power-packed photos and prose transport readers to the dusty world of African elephants and a woman who studies them. (A 2012 Sibert Honor Book)

Three 12-year-olds from different parts of the country participate in the national Youth Scrabble Tournament in Florida. Their discoveries about themselves, their friends and families turn out to be more important than winning in this perceptive story.

*Flyaway.* By Lucy Christopher. Chicken House.

While Isla’s father is in the hospital, she befriends another patient, Harry. In this touching story, Isla tries to help Harry, her father and a swan, all of whom are struggling to survive.


Six years have passed since Darra’s father stole a car in which Wren was hiding. Now 14, Darra and Wren, once again cross paths. A suspenseful verse novel, told in two distinct voices.

*The House Baba Built: An Artist’s Childhood in China.* By Ed Young and Libby Koponen, Illus. by Ed Young. Little, Brown.

With multimedia scrapbook images that intrigue, astonish, and surprise, Ed Young recalls his childhood in war-torn Shanghai, introduces his extended family, and describes their life in the house his father designed.


A wildly humorous collective biography featuring horrifying medical treatments and deaths of nineteen famous men and women, this surprisingly heavily researched compendium is terrific book bait for reluctant readers.


This historical novel in verse is the story of Quebrado, son of a Taíno Indian mother and a Spanish father, who is kidnapped in 1510 from his island village (present-day Cuba) and enslaved on a pirate’s ship. (A 2012 Belpré Author Honor Book)


How did those great explorers travel? What did they wear? Where did they pee? And what did they find on their journeys? Much is revealed in the text and unfolding cross-sections of this fascinating volume.


Told from the point of view of three young slaves, two of them fathered by Thomas Jefferson, this well-researched and moving novel provides insight into their lives as it raises important and difficult questions.

By turns mysterious, dreamlike, nightmarish, goofily endearing, and spookily surreal, these stories by Shaun Tan seemingly transport us to three very different worlds. Each page is a work of art.


Thirteen-year-old Conor deals with a monster who tells him three stories in exchange for facing his greatest fear.


This exemplary, inspiring biography chronicles the life of Leonard Bernstein from early childhood to his triumphant debut at age twenty-five, as conductor of the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall. Engaging social history with appeal beyond music students. (A 2012 YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction for Young Adults Finalist)


Unable to read and abused by his father, 13-year-old Doug befriends spunky Lili and a sensitive librarian who shows him how to draw Audubon's birds. Both make a difference in his previously limited world.


In 1941 Manitoba, Marie-Claire tells the moving story of her coming-of-age as a 16-year-old in a tuberculosis sanitorium.


Steinway on pianos, Zildjian on cymbals, Martin and Fender on guitars...we meet these people and their iconic instruments in this intriguing introduction. Generously illustrated with photographs of the instruments, musicians, and more.

_The Scorpio Races_. By Maggie Stiefvater. Scholastic Press.

Deadly horses emerge from the sea and collide with island inhabitants in a bloody annual race for prize money and the fulfillment of dreams. Rich language portrays characters, action, and setting leading to an intoxicating climax. (A 2012 YALSA Printz Honor Book)


Using a graphic novel format, this powerful saga of Rama is told from his abducted and mistrusted wife Sita’s point of view.


An intriguing look at the creation and scientific revelations of the Hubble telescope. Complex science, clearly explained and beautifully illustrated with Hubble images.
**Stones for My Father.** By Trilby Kent. Tundra Books.

In evocative prose, Kent creates a compelling survival story of young Corlie Roux, a Boer girl in South Africa during the Anglo-Boer War at the turn of the last century.

**Tall Story.** By Candy Gourlay. David Fickling Books/Random House Children's Books.

Andi’s half brother is finally joining the family from the Philippines. Eight feet tall, it’s obvious that Bernardo is going to have trouble fitting in. A poignant and humorous novel.

**Terezin: Voices from the Holocaust.** By Ruth Thomson. Candlewick Press.

Secret diary entries, excerpts from memoirs, and inmate artwork illuminate the dark story of the Nazi's transit camp Terezin. Young readers will appreciate the oversized, magazine type layout.

**Under the Mesquite.** By Guadalupe Garcia McCall. Lee & Low Books.

The story of fourteen-year-old Lupita, growing up in a bicultural community in Texas and dealing with her mother’s terminal illness, is told in emotionally riveting free verse. (2012 Belpre Author Medal Book and a YALSA Morris Award Finalist)


Readers will be stunned by the research and accusations in this pivotal drama of American history. This work of art presents an account of our past and asks questions of our future. (A 2012 Sibert Honor Book)

**All Ages**

**Can We Save the Tiger?,** By Martin Jenkins, Illus. by Vicky White. Candlewick Press.

White’s cover illustration of a regal tiger pulls readers into a balanced discussion of human interaction with nature and how we affect endangered species. Handsome pencil illustrations make readers care about creatures large and small.


In just 100 pages, Nelson's narrator tells the story of American history through the eyes of African-Americans. Forty-six luminous oil paintings portray iconic and ordinary images and make the history accessible for younger students; older students will find it equally intriguing. (The 2012 Coretta Scott King Author Medal Book and Illustrator Honor Book)


Children and teachers will be inspired by this quirky concept book that uses shaped rocks as letters and objects. An alphabet book like no other.
**Never Forgotten.** By Patricia McKissack, Illus. by Leo and Diane Dillon. Schwartz & Wade Books.

A boy captured by slave traders in 18th Century Africa is brought to the Americas. This verse novel answers the question, “Were we missed?” asked by the descendants of slaves stolen from Africa. (A 2012 Coretta Scott King Author Honor Book)

**Press Here.** By Hervé Tullet, Illus. by the author. Trans. by Christopher Franceschelli. Handprint Books/Chronicle.

A whimsical, interactive picture book that draws readers through its pages by having them tap, clap, and follow other simple but enticing instructions.


A poem about spirals in nature invites close contemplation of the versatile, expansive shape beautifully portrayed from simple snail to coiled snake, or snuggling woodchuck to swimming nautilus in Krommes’ scratchboard illustrations.

**Members of the 2012 Notable Children’s Books Committee were:** Kathleen T. Isaacs, chair, Pasadena, Md.; Meagan Albright, Alvin Sherman Library, Research and Information Technology Center, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.; Miriam Lang Budin, Chappaqua (N.Y.) Library; Dana Buttler, Beaver Acres Elementary School, Beaverton, Ore.; Patricia Carleton, St. Louis (Mo.) Public Library; Rosemary S. Chance, Dept. of Library Science, Sam Houston State University, Huntsville, Texas; Barabara A. Chatton, University of Wyoming, Laramie; Edith Ching, Silver Spring, Md; Betsy Fraser, Calgary (Alberta) Public Library; Maryann H. Owen, Racine (Wis.) Public Library, and Linda A. Perkins, Berkeley (Calif.) Public Library.