2015 Notable Children’s Books

Younger Readers


In four delightful chapters, Beekle, an imaginary friend, undergoes an emotional journey looking for his human. Vibrant illustrations add to the fun. (2015 Caldecott Medal Book)


Where do babies come from? This question is delicately handled in Blackall’s gentle and charming book. After asking around with amusing results, a boy finally learns the true facts from his parents. With a page of tips for “the conversation.”


A gorgeous full moon shines on a young boy praying for the homeless, the hungry, those at war and his family. The stunning illustrations set a reverent tone that reflects the thoughtful and universal text.


A young boy’s experience in a blizzard and the adventure of going to the market are vividly portrayed through Norman Rockwell-like illustrations that give personality to the child and the weather.


Alan Rabinowitz’s story of feeling broken as a child yet experiencing great empathy for animals kept in cages at the zoo. He went on to become a zoologist and conservationist known around the world.


Tail, a scaredy-squirrel, seeks refuge and help from the Chicken Squad, four problem-solving chicks. This illustrated chapter book brings each chicken’s zany personality to life.


An inspirational message told in lyrical language about the power of dreams and one young girl’s desire to dance. Soft colorful images support the poignant text.


In this charming take on family life, irrepressible Dory drives her siblings crazy with her wild imagination until she finally gets them to join in on the fun.

Colón celebrates the power of imagination and creativity to heal a bedridden boy. The lush illustrations need no words as the boy goes on an artistic and exciting adventure.


Early bird rises before the sun to find breakfast. He's tired after so much activity, so he and a surprising friend--early worm--enjoy what he's found.


Muted browns and grays permeate the farmer's world until a small child falls off a circus train, bringing with him color and light. No words are needed in this quiet story of an unlikely friendship.


Energetic barnyard animals use rollicking nonsense words to amusingly bring the farm to life.


Feathers fulfill a number of different purposes. Lovely watercolor paintings illustrate a variety of birds and the many roles their feathers play.


Famed ballerina Misty Copeland encourages a young African-American girl to follow her dreams to be a prima ballerina in this poetic text vividly illustrated with evocative collages.


The four seasons are explored in short poems from both famed and newer poets and enhanced by Sweet's exquisite illustrations.


In mostly black and white illustrations, a young child with a flashlight discovers many of the mysteries and joys of the night, then suddenly the tables are turned. Cut outs add to the fun of this highly imaginative book.


A young boy's kindness to a fox and how that fox repays him are at the heart of this wordless book. Cut paper images in subtle tones bring warmth to a cold winter night.


Brown Bird is tired of his song so he makes up new words. The other animals follow suit and the neighborhood is never the same.

Gaston looks and acts different from his poodle sisters and a brief encounter in the park reveals the reason why. A lively and rhyming text is emphasized by the stylish illustrations.


This lively color-concept book presents a slice of Latino culture through food and fun. Vibrant folk art perfectly complements the text. (2015 Belpre Illustrator Honor Book)

*Handle with Care: An Unusual Butterfly Journey*, By Loree Griffin Burns. Photographs by Ellen Harasimowicz. Millbrook/Lerner.

In this handsome book with glorious photographs, children can follow the life cycle of a butterfly from a farm in Costa Rica to a live museum exhibit in the U. S.


Join a little boy on a journey through the city in search of his dragon. Against a black-and-white background, colorful icons of city life help him on his adventure.


An exuberant journey through the alphabet with panda bear, Koo. This investigates the seasons through watercolor illustrations and haiku poems.


Using only two evocative sentences, MacLachlan's gentle and engaging portrait supports Hooper's stunning visual homage to the boy who would become a famous painter.


A little known story of a self-taught prodigy and world-class trombone player, composer, and arranger whose music mirrors the black musical sounds of the 20th century.


This spin on the classic fairy tale provides glimpses into a contemporary Hispanic family. Guevara's illustrations are a visual treat full of suspense and humor. (2015 Belpre Illustrator Honor Book)


Lively couplets describe birds and the nests they build for their young, while beautiful cut-paper collages are a feast for children's natural curiosity.


A little girl, with the help of her dog, tries to build a magnificent thing. But it is harder than expected! See how her persistence pays off.
**Mr. Putter & Tabby Turn the Page.** By Cynthia Rylant. Illus. by Arthur Howard. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

Mr. Putter and his cat Tabby are excited to participate in a library read-aloud program, but they are nervous when Mrs. Teaberry and her unpredictable dog Zeke want to join. (2015 Geisel Honor Book)

**My Teacher is a Monster! (No, I am Not).** By Peter Brown. Illus. by the author. Little, Brown.

Bobby thinks his teacher is the worst...that is until he accidentally meets her in the park. This hilarious book will tickle the funny bones of children (and their monstrous teachers).

**Nana in the City.** By Lauren Castillo. Illus. by the author. Clarion.

The story of a young boy’s visit to his grandmother, and the reassuring way she helps him to lose his fear and experience the loud, busy city in a new way. (2015 Caldecott Honor Book)


When naptime arrives on the Savannah, a little girl knows just how to get all the grumpy animals to go to sleep. Colorful images, and the use of bold and black outlines help animals stand out on each page.


The story of abstract artist Vasily Kandinsky, who experienced colors as sounds and sounds as colors and created work that was bold and groundbreaking. (2015 Caldecott Honor Book)


Pigeon returns--this time he needs a bath but has other things to do. When he is finally convinced, he won't get out of the tub. It's a pleasure to join pigeon in another of his wild adventures.


A playful rhyming text brings us to Victorian times and a queen who cannot be seen by her subjects when partaking of such an indelicate activity as swimming. Amusing illustrations partner well with the tone of the book.

**Sam and Dave Dig a Hole.** By Mac Barnett. Illus. by Jon Klassen. Candlewick.

Two boys, accompanied by their dog, set out to dig a hole. Readers will find an unexpected treasure and be challenged to ponder the meaning of “spectacular.” (2015 Caldecott Honor Book)

**Shh! We Have a Plan.** By Chris Haughton. Illus. by the author. Candlewick.

Four friends creep through the woods on a search for prey. Vibrant illustrations help tell the story of how even carefully laid plans can go awry.

The simple text describes how Sagan's childhood curiosity and persistence eventually lead to his involvement in the Voyager mission. Lively images and design reflect this notable life.


When a spring storm pops up in New York City, lots of people seek refuge in the subway station. Dogs, children and adults young and old enjoy a brief moment of community that ends with a surprise in the sky.


Clever page turns, hilarious details, and delightful wordplay abound in the bird world’s version of the classic game of telephone. Colorful illustrations give each bird’s personality its due.


This straightforward narrative introduces young readers to microbes through simple descriptions, colorful examples, and concise writing. Watercolor images illustrate the examples and create a nostalgic feel.


Vibrant photographs and minimal, evocative text beautifully portray the unique imagination and creativity of iconic artist Frida Kahlo. (2015 Belpré Illustrator Medal Book & Caldecott Honor Book)


Piggie has a big surprise for Gerald, but does he have the patience to wait? As the day wears on, Piggie remains calm while Gerald experiences a roller coaster of emotions, anticipating his reward. As night falls, their patience pays off with a breathtaking conclusion. (2015 Geisel Honor Book)


In a series of short poems (in English and Spanish) partnered with dramatic illustrations, the power, beauty, and value of water are celebrated.


These often overlooked plants take center stage in this touching tribute to weeds. Jenson-Elliott highlights weeds’ resilience with a catchy text full of attention. Fisher uses mixed media and digital collage to create bold, vibrant illustrations.


A collection of 12 poems about northern tundra wildlife uses a variety of poetic structures and includes additional information on each creature. Vivid linoleum-cut illustrations.

This visually appealing look at some unusual careers opens readers eyes to possibilities for their futures.


A heated debate quickly ensues when two furry creatures can't agree on who is big and who is small. Expressive illustrations and cleverly simple text come together to provide a humorous tale with an unexpected and satisfying conclusion. (2015 Geisel Medal Book)

Middle Readers


In this relatable tale, fifth grader Albie is not very good at a lot of things, but with a little help from a new babysitter, he finds out that being himself is the most important thing.


Arcady longs to play for the Red Army Soccer Club. Many obstacles interfere with attaining his goal because his family is considered enemies of the state.


More than half a million people from 80 countries arrived at Angel Island California between 1910 and 1940. Freedman tells their stories in this well documented and handsomely illustrated book that illuminates a little known piece of history.


A clever wordless picture book that challenges the reader to figure out connections. Each reading reveals something new and different.


Woodson’s lyrical memoir chronicles her life as an African-American girl growing up in the 1960s and 1970s. Elegant and evocative stand-alone poems weave a story of her development from a struggling reader and dreamer into a confident young woman and writer. (2015 Newbery Honor Book & Sibert Honor Book)


Suspense and adventure race alongside Will through the Canadian wilderness on the Boundless, the largest and fastest train ever built. Middle-grade steampunk filled with intrigue.

Follow the scientific method as a group of researchers notice something wrong with the little brown bat population and search for a way to save them. Stunning photographs make the discovery even more fascinating.


Montgomery and Bishop join the Cheetah Conservation Fund in the African wilderness, studying the cheetah's ecological, genetic, and behavioral patterns in order to chase down the fastest animal in the world.

**Dare the Wind: The Record-Breaking Voyage of Eleanor Prentiss and the Flying Cloud.** By Tracey Fern. Illus. by Emily Arnold McCully. Farrar/Margaret Ferguson.

A thrilling, true story of a clipper ship race from New York to San Francisco navigated by Eleanor Prentiss, the first woman to make the journey.


In this insightful and humorous graphic novel memoir, Bell portrays growing up with a giant hearing aid strapped to her chest. Themes of navigating a new school, sleepovers, finding a true friend, and a first crush make this book universal in appeal. (2015 Newbery Honor Book)


With a mixture of extraordinary artistry and jaw-dropping creativity, Jenkins has produced a colorful, large-format volume crafted with vivid, cut-paper collages that provide amazing details about the eyes of animals from bullfrogs to buzzards.


With humor and a light tone, eleven-year-old Ellie deals with serious issues related to family relationships, friendships, the cycle of life, and life's possibilities. A great introduction to science fiction.


A well-researched and beautifully written explanation of the attempts to enfranchise Mississippi blacks. Rubin writes about the murder of three young civil rights workers with a superb sense of suspense and dread.

**The Great Greene Heist.** By Varian Johnson. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine.

Reformed schemer and middle schooler Jackson Greene comes out of retirement, assembling a top-notch team to pull off Maplewood Middle School’s biggest con ever in a fast-paced caper.

**Half a Chance.** By Cynthia Lord. Scholastic.

A young girl struggles to determine her place when her family moves to a new community. An authentic story of friendship, loss, and self-identity told through the lens of her interest in photography.

Poetic vignettes depict the dramatic story of a band of African-American soldiers—who are also jazz musicians—during World War I.


This brief overview of Johnny Cash's early life takes him from his harsh but music-filled boyhood to early stardom. Told through intriguing poetry and beautifully expressive illustrations.


In this evocative graphic novel, a grandmother recounts her childhood experiences hiding from the Nazis in World War II France. (2015 Batchelder Honor Book)

**Hope Is a Ferris Wheel.** By Robin Herrera. Abrams/Amulet.

Fifth grader Star tries to fit in but seems to be failing miserably. To connect with classmates that only seem to care about her trailer-park home, she starts a poetry club. An insightful look at the process of self-discovery.


When warships appear and neighbors and friends begin to disappear, 11-year-old Celeste's idyllic life is shattered. She is sent into exile and when she returns home, she works to move her country forward. This Chilean story offers a refreshing perspective on resiliency. (2015 Belpré Medal Book)


A dynamic dance of beautifully written verse and lively illustrations describe the life of the effervescent entertainer Josephine Baker. (2015 Sibert Honor Book)

**Kinda Like Brothers.** By Coe Booth. Scholastic.

Eleven-year-old Jarrett learns the value of friendship when an expected foster baby comes to stay, along with an unexpected big brother.


Lupe, Flapjack, and Elirio enter a car-detailing contest to fulfill their dream of owning their own garage. This graphic novel celebrates Mexican-American culture and takes readers on a road trip through outer space.


When wicked Bog Noblins threaten her village, Rye turns to a mysterious stranger and the notorious Luck Uglies for help, ending up more involved than she imagined. A fast-paced fantasy.

**Mikis and the Donkey.** By Bibi Dumon Tak. Illus. by Philip Hopman. Tr. by Laura Watkinson. Eerdmans.
Mikis’ simple, quiet life on the Greek island of Corfu is upended when his grandfather surprises him by buying a donkey. Mikis’ adventures with the donkey show the village what it means to care for one another. (2015 Batchelder Award)


The Fletcher family, with 2 dads, 4 boys, a dog, cat, and invisible cheetah, is always full of adventure. As the school year unfolds, they face many challenges with love and humor.


Readers and eaters are taken on a comical romp through the world of food using poetry and a visual feast of photographs enhanced with playful doodles.


Found everywhere in nature, fractals are shapes that are not perfect but change in the same way over and over. Photographs show where these marvels can be found and clear language will engage readers to be more observant and see the correlation between nature and math.


With vivid paintings and clear, accessible text, Roy creates a heart-stopping look at what great white sharks do best—hunt for their next meal. (2015 Sibert Honor Book)


Chirp’s safe, secure home life changes when her mother is diagnosed with a serious disease. As her family works to pick up the pieces, Chirp learns just how much love and friendship can overcome. An emotional story.


A creative, fresh take on the alphabet book! Jeffers tells a short story for each letter, giving each one its due glory. Full of humor and whimsy. Complete with distinctive illustrations that are one of a kind.


Rose’s obsession with homophones and rules distinguishes her from most other fifth graders, but also provides insights into the world of a child challenged by Asperger’s Syndrome. When Rain, Rose’s beloved dog, goes missing, readers will be moved by the decisions she makes to find and care for her pet.


In spite of the limited expectations for the girls in her village, Amira wants to learn and will not be stopped. Told in verse capturing the desperation of the people living in the middle of the Darfur conflict in Sudan.

Tonatiuh draws upon traditional Mixtec codex art to tell the story of 11-year-old Sylvia Mendez, who helped end school segregation in California seven years before Brown v. Board of Education. (2015 Belpré Illustrator Honor Book & Sibert Honor Book)


A family car trip highlights the tensions between two sisters, the cause of which is explored through flashback sequences in this comedic graphic novel.


Felicity Pickle, a word collector and poet, hopes Midnight Gulch, Tennessee proves to be a permanent home for her wandering family. She uses her words to restore the town's magic in an endearing story of community.

Three Bird Summer. By Sara St. Antoine. Candlewick.

Adam and his new friend spend the summer in the quiet setting of Three Bird Lake, solving the mystery of notes left by his grandmother to a romance of long ago. Gentle and heartfelt.


Aref is unhappy about leaving Oman to journey to Michigan where his parents will study for three years. In his final days he shares many new experiences with his beloved grandfather, Sidi, and some quiet moments too.


Theodora must figure out the puzzle of a painting bequeathed to her by her dying grandfather and enlists her neighbors for help. A fun middle grade mystery.

West of the Moon. By Margi Preus. Abrams/Amulet.

Folklore and history blend together seamlessly in this mystical story of strong-willed Astri's escape from poverty in Norway to a new life in America.


During WWII, a Danish family and their village help hide a Jewish family from the Nazis until they can safely escape. The artwork's graphic-novel quality enhances the story.


Follow the adventures of new friends Ned and Aine in this imaginative tale of tricky magic. A complex journey about finding your voice.

Older Readers

The fiftieth anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights March in Alabama is brought back to life in a detailed and moving account of this pivotal event in Civil Rights history.


During the Guatemalan Civil War, Carlos embarks on a solitary journey. A difficult coming-of-age story told through lyric, emotionally-charged poems.


Twelve-year-old narrator Josh uses the rhythms of a poetry jam to emulate the "moving & grooving/popping and rocking" of life on the basketball court. This novel in verse paints an authentic portrait of a closely-knit family on the brink of crisis. (2015 Newbery Medal Book)


Fleming brilliantly delineates the tragic fall of the Russian royal family, contrasting their opulent lives with primary source voices from the rebellion. (2015 Sibert Honor Book)


Marilyn Nelson powerfully captures glimpses of her life growing up in a military family in the 1950s.


As two abandoned siblings try to find their way in Victorian England, they discover the value of storytelling as well as the dark side of greed. A spine-tingling tale.


Fing’s loving but fractious family moves into a new house outside of town and gradually discovers a “tragical tragedy” concerning the mysterious man living in the hedge. (2015 Batchelder Honor Book)


The bravery of African-American sailors who refused to work in unsafe conditions is recounted in this little known and dramatic World War II story. Their heroism helped desegregate the Navy but not without great sacrifice for the 50 men.


The lives of 20 Hispanic people are celebrated in poignant biographical sketches that succinctly present the essence of each hero’s life and legacy to future generations. (2015 Belpré Author Honor Book)

The summer of 1964 was known as "Freedom Summer," as civil rights workers, students, and organizers went to Mississippi to help register African-American voters. Twelve-year-old Sunny of Greenwood, Mississippi is caught up in the frightening events between black and white Americans, choosing sides and standing up for themselves. Photographs and memorabilia enhance an understanding of the tumultuous period.

This One Summer. By Mariko Tamaki. Illus. by Jillian Tamaki. First Second.

Intricately detailed illustrations and text come together masterfully in this graphic novel. Pacing and strong imagery evoke myriad emotions and ground this poignant, realistic coming-of-age story. (2015 Caldecott Honor Book)


An emotional novel-in-verse about a young Indian dancer disabled in a freak car accident. With hard work, she adapts to dancing with a prosthesis.

All Ages


With lovely storytelling and intricate illustrations, this picture book biography introduces readers to Peter Mark Roget, whose boyhood passion for list making and finding the right word for every situation, led him to create his “treasure house” of a book, the thesaurus. (2015 Sibert Medal Book & Caldecott Honor Book)


This is a fascinating look into the creative process. Author/illustrator Lois Ehlert shares her story using numerous examples from her picture books as she encourages others to engage in a colorful life.


Ingenious and fun images introduce the letters of the alphabet by removing one letter at a time to make new words. This clever word-within-a-word alphabetical approach is useful and hilarious. The illustrations add whimsy to the wordplay and language building.

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