

## AMELIA BLOOMER PROJECT 2006 INTRODUCTION

*“Feminist activism... doesn’t begin or end with my uterus: this is about my whole body, my life, and the lives of my children. We are women who redefine ‘Women’s Issues,’ and say that all issues are women’s issues.”*

*(Xiv) Grassroots Baumgardner.*

*“This is what feminism is all about—for women to be able to act together to combat the abuse of their rights and to build better relationships with their partners (male or female), their communities, and the world.”*

*(p. ) No-Nonsense Van der Gaag.*

In an era and country in which feminism is declared by the media to be a dead or stagnant cause and women are being encouraged by the media and the government to give up the rights that previous generations have fought for, the feminist movement is facing a tremendous backlash. As publishers continue the trend of taking the safe route of publishing books about strong women without recognizing the struggles and accomplishments, how can we stop the current hemorrhage of women’s rights? When books detailing the feminist movement conclude that women now have equal opportunities in education and employment, we must be more vigilant than ever in selecting materials for young readers.

After searching through hundreds of current titles, the Amelia Bloomer Project of the Feminist Task Force of the Social Responsibilities Round Table of the American Library Association honors 30 titles for the fifth annual Amelia Bloomer list. The criteria used by the Amelia Bloomer Committee in selecting books include:

- Significant feminist content
- Excellence in writing
- Appealing format
- Age appropriateness for young readers

Through the course of the Amelia Bloomer Project, several key markers helped the group determine what is feminist and what is considered appropriate for the list. Among these are the following questions:

- Would the story [for fiction] change if the protagonist were male instead of female?
- Does the material show an awareness of gender-based inequalities with action to change these?
- Do females blaze new trails for themselves and those who follow them?
- Do females use power for purposeful action and empowering others?
- Is the character [or subject of informational books] true to herself?
- Do girls and women take on nontraditional roles?

The titles selected for the 2006 Amelia Bloomer List recognizes our past while examining the future of the movement, including guides to the feminist movement and biographies of those who carry the fight for equality, high fantasy showcasing women who take charge of their situation; contemporary fiction tackling the issues of body issues, sexism, gender roles, and other issues defining the feminist movement of today.

We applaud authors, illustrators, editors and publishers with the courage to publish feminist books accessible to young readers. We challenge publishers to move beyond merely 'spunky' and 'feisty' young women. We encourage publishers to understand that feminism is more than friendship and make-up. We need books that represent the world in which we live, as well as the world that we hope to achieve. We hunger for books that portray females who exemplify personal empowerment while still being aware of the global challenges and opportunities.

Bloomer Project members: Jenny Baltes (WI), Chair; Marilyn Ackerman, Brooklyn Public Library (NY); Amy Cheney, Alameda County Library, Juvenile Hall (CA); Jane Cothron, Lincoln County Library District (OR); Christie Gibrich, Dallas Public Library (TX); Helma Hawkins, Kansas City Public Library (MO); Brenda Kilmer, Felix Varela Senior High School (FL); Gay Ann Loesch, Sun Valley Middle School (NC); Nel Ward, (OR); and Ilene Cooper, *Booklist*, consultant.

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2006

## Recommended Titles

### Picture Book

#### Fiction

**Faulkner, Matt.** *The Pirate Meets the Queen.* 2005. unpaginated. Philomel, \$15.99 (0-399-24038-1). Grades K-2. Sail through the life of Irish pirate Granuaile “Granny” O'Malley, from sneaking aboard her father's ship to confronting Queen Elizabeth after “Granny's” son is captured by the English.

**Hill, Susanna Leonard.** *Punxsutawney Phyllis.* Illustrated by Jeffrey Ebbeler. 2005. Holiday House, \$16.95 (0-8234-1872-3). Preschool-Grade 2. Courageous woodchuck Phyllis aspires to be the next official weather-predicting groundhog despite the fact that it's always been a male job.

**Karr, Kathleen.** *Mama Went to Jail for the Vote.* Illustrated by Malene Laugeson. 2005. unpaginated. Hyperion Books for Children, \$16.95 (0-7868-0593-5). Grades 2-4. Susan Elizabeth watches her mother protest for women's suffrage by picketing, being jailed, and then telling President Wilson that women could be better citizens through voting than being in jail.

**Newman, Leslea.** *A Fire Engine for Ruthie.* Illustrated by Cyd Moore. 2004. unpaginated. Clarion Books. \$16.00 (0-618-15989-4). PreSchool-Grade 2. Ruthie's eagerness to play with trains and fire engines rather than have tea parties and dress up causes Nana to re-think her cultural stereotypes and enjoy her granddaughter's choices.

#### Nonfiction

**Bower, Tamara.** *How the Amazon Queen Fought the Prince of Egypt.* 2005. 40 pages. Atheneum, \$16.95 (0-689-84434-4). Grades 3-6. Queen Serpot and her women warriors battle against Prince Pedikons and his Egyptian soldiers in this retelling of a little-known tale.

**Chin-Lee, Cynthia.** *Amelia to Zora: Twenty-six Women Who Changed the World.* Illustrated by Megan Halsey and Sean Addy. 2005. 32 pages. Charlesbridge Publishers, \$15.95 (1-57091-522-9). Grades K-4. From well-known Oprah Winfrey to lesser known Nawal El Sadaawi, 26 extraordinary women are spotlighted in this richly illustrated, mixed media picture book.

**Hubbard, Crystal.** *Catching the Moon: The Story of a Young Girl's Baseball Dream.* Illustrated by Randy DuBurke. 2005. 32 pages. Lee and Low, \$16.95 (1-58430-243-7). PreSchool-Grade 3. African-American Marcenia Lyle defies the narrow expectations for young women of her time to become Toni Stone, the first woman to play for a professional baseball team.

**White, Linda Arms.** *I Could Do That! Esther Morris Gets Women the Vote.* Illustrated by Nancy Carpenter. 2005. unpaginated. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, \$16.00. (0-374335273). Grades 2-4. “I could do that,” said Esther Morris and she did that—from helping women gain the right to vote in Wyoming to being the first woman to hold public office in the United States.

**Winter, Jeanette.** *The Librarian of Basra: A True Story of Basra.* 2005. unpaginated. Harcourt, \$16.00 (0-15-205445-6). PreSchool-Grade 2.

Through brilliant illustrations and poetic language, *Winter* portrays the heroic efforts of Chief Librarian Alia Muhammad Baker to rescue the books in the Central library in Basra, Iraq, during the 2003 invasion.

## **Middle Readers**

### **Fiction**

**Beard, Darleen Bailey.** *Operation Clean Sweep*. 2004. 151p. \$16.00. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, \$16.00 (0-374-38034-1). Gr. 3-6.

Should twelve year-old Cornelius support his mother or his father for mayor when early twentieth-century women voters band together to throw out the all-male city government?

**Codell, Esme Raji.** *Diary of a Fairy Godmother*. Illus. by Drazen Kozjen. 2005. 170p. Hyperion, \$14.99 (0-7868-0965-5). Gr. 4-7.

Wanting to excel at “wishcraft” rather than witchcraft, Hunky Dory follows her heart to become a Fairy Godmother.

**Fitzgerald, Dawn.** *Getting in the Game*. 2005. 136p. Roaring Brook Press, \$15.95 (1-59643-044-3). Gr. 4-7.

Joanna fights for her place on the seventh-grade boys hockey team despite being bullied on and off the ice.

**Lantz, Frances Lin.** *The Day Joanie Frankenhouser Became a Boy*. 2005. 151p. Dutton, \$16.99 (0-525-47437-4). Gr. 4-7.

Sick of being expected to be “proper” and to like “girl” things, Joanie takes advantage of a typo to masquerade as a boy at her new school; however, her new role come with its own expectations and problems.

### **Nonfiction**

**Guernsey, JoAnn Bren.** *Hillary Rodham Clinton*. 2005. 112p. Lerner, \$27.93, (0-8225-2372-8). Gr. 4-7. Successes and failures are highlighted in this portrait of the former First Lady and current senator from New York who continues to fight for the interests of children and poor families.

**Hopkinson, Deborah A.** *Susan B. Anthony: A Fighter for Women’s Rights*. Illus. by Amy Bates. 2005. 32p. Aladdin, \$3.99 (0-689-886909-6). Gr. 2-5.

Her education taught Anthony that women should have the same rights as men, above all the right to vote—and that’s what she fought for, her entire life.

**Sills, Leslie.** *From Rags to Riches: A History of Girls’ Clothing in America*. 2005. 48p. Holiday House, \$16.95 (0-8234-1708-5). Gr. 3-7.

A fascinating glimpse into the evolution of girls’ clothing in America, this overview shows how clothing is closely tied to cultural expectations and gender roles.

## **Young Adult**

### **Fiction**

**Cirrone, Dorian.** *Dancing in Red Shoes Will Kill You*. 2005. 213p. HarperCollins, \$16.99 (0-06-055702-8). Gr. 7-10.

Always passed over for the starring roles due to her non-ballerina-esque physique, 16-year-old Kayla must search her heart about body issues, sexism, and conformity to find her true path.

**Harrison, Mette Ivie.** *Mira, Mirror*. 2004. 314p. Viking, \$17.99 (0-670-05923-4). Gr. 7-10.

A single magic spell sets off a chain of events that addresses questions of sisterhood and women's inner sense of power in this sequel to "Snow White," as told by the mirror.

**McNaughton, Janet.** *The Secret Under My Skin*. 2005. 272p. Eos/HarperCollins, \$15.99 (0-06-008989-X). Gr. 7-12.

In the year 2368, when humans exist under dire environmental conditions, one young woman, rescued from a work camp and chosen for a special duty, uses her love of learning to discover the truth about the planet's future and her own dark past.

**Thesman, Jean.** *Singer*. 2005. 280p. Viking, \$17.99 (0-670-05937-4). Gr. 7-10.

In desperate flight from her power-hungry mother, Gwenore takes refuge in an abbey and a women's healing community.

### Nonfiction

**Baumgardner, Jennifer and Amy Richards.** *Grassroots: A Field Guide for Feminist Activism*. 2005. 306p. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, \$14.00 (0-374-52865-9). Gr. 10-12.

This handbook, drawing heavily on individual stories as examples, shows how girls and women can effect change without being highly experienced or morally irreproachable.

**Blumenthal, Karen.** *Let Me Play: The Story of Title IX, The Law that Changed the Future of Girls in America*. 2005. 152p. Atheneum, \$17.95 (0-689-85957-0). Gr. 7-12.

Lives were changed forever after the landmark Title IX legislation, as shown through first person accounts and photographs. Title IX, which banned sex discrimination in U.S. education, granted equal opportunities, particularly in athletics, to girls and women.

**Bryan, Patricia L. & Thomas Wolf.** *Midnight Assassin: A Murder in America's Heartland*. 2005. 278p. Algonquin, \$23.95 (1-56512-306-9). Gr. 9-12.

The 1901 murder trial of an Iowa farm wife and the abuse that led up to it was first chronicled in Susan Glaspell's feminist short story "A Jury of Her Peers" and now in this re-examination of the case.

**Fleming, Candace.** *Our Eleanor: A Scrapbook Look at Eleanor Roosevelt's Remarkable Life*. 2005. 176p. Atheneum/Anne Schwartz Books, \$19.95 (0-689-86544-9). Gr. 8-12.

This "scrap book" biography showing the many roles of Eleanor Roosevelt demystifies the life of a compassionate, complex feminist.

**Goldsmith, Barbara.** *Obsessive Genius: the Inner World of Marie Curie*. 2005. 256p. Atlas Books/Norton, \$23.95 (0-393-0513-4). Gr. 9-12.

Through genius and obsessive persistence, Marie Curie overcame pervasive sexism within society and the scientific community to be the first woman to win not one but two Nobel Prizes.

**Jackson, Buzzy.** *A Bad Woman Feeling Good: Blues and the Women Who Sing Them*. 2005. 319p. Norton, \$25.95 (0-393-05936-7). Gr. 10-12.

From Ma Rainey and Bessie Smith to Tina Turner and Janis Joplin, the blueswomen who transcended not only the old styles but also the gender stereotypes of the twentieth century; these profiles celebrate a new perspective of the genre's "bad women" for the next generation.

**Rehak, Melanie.** *Girl Sleuth: Nancy Drew and the Women Who Created Her*. 2005. 364p. Harcourt, \$25.00 (0-15-101042-2). Gr. 9-12.

Follow the real-life adventures of the creators of the Nancy Drew books, from her creation in 1930 to today when, 76 years later, the bold girl detective is still inspiring generations of girls with her bravery, wit, and intelligence.

**Sickels, Amy.** Adrienne Rich. 2005. 142p. Chelsea House Publishers, \$35.00 (0-7910-8223-7). Gr. 9-12.

Already a celebrated poet, Adrienne Rich struggled to balance her work, health problems, and the exploration of her Jewish heritage with the roles of wife and mother, evolving into one of the one of the foremost lesbian feminist poets of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**van der Gaag, Nikki.** The No-Nonsense Guide to Women's Rights. 2004. 139p. New Internationalist/Versa, \$10.00 (1-84467-502-5). Gr. 8-12.

This report on the status of today's women's movement around the world shows the disturbing reality of women's inequality as past gains are being systematically eroded.

**White, Evelyn C.** Alice Walker: A Life. 2004. 538p. Norton, \$29.95 (0-393-05891-3). Gr. 9-12.

Walker's experiences are richly portrayed from her poor Georgia childhood to her feminist and political activism when she became the first African-American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize.