The Teachers’ Choices logo that Chris Van Allsburg created (see above) illuminates the idea that good books reach out and tap us on the shoulder to get our attention.

Each year since 1989 the International Reading Association’s Teachers’ Choices project has identified outstanding U.S. trade books published for children and adolescents that teachers find to be exceptional in curriculum use. Parents, also, will find books from the Teachers’ Choices list good for reading aloud at home and for background information on questions that arise from tours to a farm, aquarium, or museum and from other shared family events such as television viewing.

The selection is accomplished through a national field test of over 300 newly published books submitted by U.S. trade book publishers. Seven teams, made up of a regional coordinator, field leaders, teacher reviewers, and trainees for the project, try out the books in classrooms and libraries to select those that meet the established criteria. Regional coordinators circulate copies of the books among teachers and librarians who use them with students.

The coordinators record educators’ reactions to each book and tabulate their final ratings. Each book is read by a minimum of six teachers or librarians in each region, although some books have been read by as many as 200 people in a single region.

Ratings from the seven regions are collated to produce the national list. Books are grouped into Primary (K–2, ages 5–8), Intermediate (Grades 3–5, ages 8–11), and Advanced (Grades 6–8, ages 11–14) levels.

Criteria for selection include:

• Books that reflect high literary quality in style, content, structure, beauty of language, and presentation.
• Books that might not be discovered or fully appreciated by children without introduction by a knowledgeable educator or other adult.
• Books that have potential for use across the curriculum. Teachers incorporate such strategies as reading aloud, displays, group projects, and art/music/drama productions. All curriculum areas are covered in the selections.

Regional coordinators for the 1997–98 field test were Cyndi Giorgis, Las Vegas, Nevada; Teri S. Lesesne, Huntsville, Texas; Kimberly J. Young, Topeka, Kansas; Pamela J. Farris, DeKalb, Illinois; Gwen Taylor, Lewiston, Idaho (trainee: Betsy A. Barnett); Thelma Nelson, Raleigh, North Carolina (trainee: Pamela J. Dunston); and Suzanne G. Curry (trainee: Mary Ellen Redden). Sandra J. Imdieke, Marquette, Michigan, coordinated the project.

Annotations contain bibliographic data, including ISBN (International Standard Book Number), number of pages, and price. If a publisher has both a library and trade edition, the ISBN for the library edition is included. Information about paperback editions is provided when known. The letter F indicates that the paperback edition is not available in 1998 but is forthcoming. Publishers furnished price information as of late spring 1998; prices are subject to change without notice. The letters CU indicate suggestions for Curriculum Use. Regional coordinators and trainees who wrote the annotations are identified by their initials following the review.
Primary

Big Blue Whale
Nicola Davies. Ill. by Nick Maland.
The text is simple and the pages uncluttered, but this book is not just for the youngest students. Between the covers are many facts about the blue whale, beginning and ending with the relative size of this large mammal. Readers can savor the quiet yet detailed illustrations as they learn about the whale’s eating and migratory habits. CU: Certainly the science classroom would benefit from this book. However, teachers should also consider it as a model for making research information interesting. Social studies teachers could use this book for a geography or map-reading activity. TSL

The Gardener
Sarah Stewart. Ill. by David Small.
Lydia Grace must leave the family farm during the Depression to stay with her uncle in the city. With her seeds and flowers she brightens the physical environment and the emotional condition of all she encounters over the course of a year. CU: The story in this 1998 Caldecott Honor book is conveyed through beautiful pictures and letters written by Lydia Grace. It is an excellent model for letter writing in elementary classrooms. Numerous thematic possibilities include studying the Depression era, maintaining positive attitudes, and gardening. GT

Granddaddy’s Gift
Margaree King Mitchell. Ill. by Larry Johnson.
This moving portrayal of a southern black man who stands up for his right to vote is seen through the eyes of his granddaughter, Little Joe. Her grandfather is encouraged by his friends and family, but he is criticized by the town’s white citizens. One day, not feeling like going to school, Little Joe skips the bus. Granddaddy finds out and takes her anyway, because he feels it is her responsibility to attend school; a right that was earned and must be taken seriously. CU: The importance of equal rights to all and the responsibility needed to live as a citizen in the world today are themes of this book. It is an excellent resource for a unit on civil rights and the struggle for the right to vote. KY

Look to the North: A Wolf Pup Diary
Jean Craighead George. Ill. by Lucia Washburn.
A year in the life of three wolf pups is told through George’s fictional yet informational text. In a series of double-page spreads, readers learn about the life of a wolf pup, from birth through full growth at 10½ months. Expressive textured acrylic illustrations depict the wolves and the changing seasons of the alpine tundra. CU: Children will learn about the many experiences of young wolf pups growing up, which may lead to their making comparisons with the birth and growth of other animal babies. Washburn’s delicate paintings will be appreciated for their artistic attention to detail and the realistic depiction of both animals and nature. CG

Lou Gehrig: The Luckiest Man
David A. Adler. Ill. by Terry Widener.
This picture-book biography of U.S. baseball’s hall-of-famer Lou Gehrig is a portrait of strength, stamina, and perseverance. His positive outlook on life; his strength in facing a debilitating, deadly illness; and his humility are well documented in this readable book. CU: This powerful biography could be used in the study of U.S. history and immigration. It well illustrates the character traits of courage, perseverance, and integrity. The book could be used in a writ-
ing and research project to compare and contrast Lou Gehrig with baseball players today. TN

Mailing May
Michael O. Tunnel. Ill. by Ted Rand.
Little May longs to see her grandmother, but the train ticket is more than the family can afford. When parcel post regulations change, cousin Leonard, the railroad mail car clerk, comes to the rescue. With postage stamps stuck to the back of her coat, May is mailed to her grandmother. CU: Children will enjoy this delightful story, which is based on a true incident in Idaho in 1914. A terrific lead-in to study the post office and postal regulations, or to explore the difficulties in travel and transportation at the turn of the century. Having students write pen pals at other schools would be a good accompanying activity. PF

Many Nations: An Alphabet of Native America
Joseph Bruchac. Ill. by Robert F. Goetzl.
Here is an alphabet book that presents the diversity of the Native American population. From the Anishanabe to the Zuni, readers will meet members of the tribal nations scattered across North America. Rich earth tones dominate the illustrations. CU: This book is only an introduction; it begs readers to do more extensive research into each tribe included. Students might consider why for the letters E and F animals are pictured rather than tribes. SC

Sacagawea: The Journey to the West
Dennis Fradin. Ill. by Nora Koerber.
Based on old letters, journals, and historical documents, this is the biography of Sacagawea. This young Native American, a Shoshoni girl, was interpreter, peacemaker, and guide for the Lewis and Clark Expedition to the Northwest in 1805–1806. Sacagawea demonstrates strength of character, courage, and loyalty while facing tragedy in her life. CU: Although a natural link to social studies, this book could also be used to study remarkable women in American history. Many U.S. landmarks honor Sacagawea. Students could investigate local landmarks and their namesakes to learn about their region’s history. SC

Saguaro Cactus
Paul and Shirley Berquist. Ill. by Glenn Quist and with photographs.
Beautiful photographs complement the excellent text explaining the life of a saguaro cactus in the Sonoran Desert. Simple but complete details explain this giant’s ability to survive in a harsh environment, while it supplies a niche for many desert inhabitants. CU: An inviting resource for units on desert ecology and the Sonoran Desert or on life cycles and symbiotic relationships of plants and animals. KY
Barefoot: Escape on the Underground Railroad
Pamela Duncan Edwards. Ill. by Henry Cole.

From a unique point of view—that of animals who help an escaped slave to freedom—the reader is immediately drawn into this story with the dark shadowy illustrations that emphasize the furtive moves of the “Barefoot.” When he tries to reach the next station, the animals warn, protect, and comfort the Barefoot who is fleeing from his pursuers, the “Heavy Boots.” CU: This book is appropriate for all ages, but those unfamiliar with the Underground Railroad may need an introduction and background information. Upper level students could appreciate the writer’s use of inferences. MER

The Beauty of the Beast: Poems From the Animal Kingdom
Selected by Jack Prelutsky. Ill. by Meilo So.

This treasure trove of zoological poetry celebrates all creatures great and small, creepy and cuddly. The positive portrayal of animals discourages misconceptions while enlightening readers. Soft watercolors draw readers in and provide a connective thread between poems. The rhythm and rhyme of language, as well as the use of simile and personification, will delight students and language arts teachers alike. CU: Science teachers can encourage students to check poetic descriptions for accuracy, determine characteristics and attributes of other animals, and use the poems as models for writing to extol the virtues of animals not included in the book. PJD

Disappearing Lake: Nature’s Magic in Denali National Park
Debbie S. Miller. Ill. by Jon Van Zyle.

The vivid description and vibrant illustrations take readers to Alaska’s Denali National Park to experience the ecology of a vernal lake. As the seasons change, the smallest life forms are tracked as well as the largest species that inhabit the area. Field notes provide additional information about the population of this ecosystem. CU: Use Disappearing Lake to enhance the study of environmental science and in the study of cycles of nature, seasons, ecosystems, and food chains. Even if there is no neighborhood vernal lake, study and observe any lake or stream and note the changes throughout a school year. TN

I Have a Dream
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ill. by Coretta Scott King Award and Honor Book artists.

Many children are already familiar with the stirring speech given by King at the March on Washington, D.C. in 1963. Here the speech is presented in sections, each passage illustrated by a different artist. The images are as varied as the artists themselves, and an afterword allows each one to comment on her or his illustration. The combination of stunning illustrations and heartfelt...
words brings to life the work of this important figure in U.S. history for future generations of readers. **CU:** The obvious connection is to the social studies curriculum; however, the illustrations might also be examined in an art classroom in terms of the diversity of style, media, and composition. TSL


**Leon’s Story**
Leon Walter Tillage. Ill. by Susan L. Roth.
In this powerful first-person account of the injustices and segregation of the 1930s–1940s American South, Leon tells of growing up as a black sharecropper’s son. His desire to change the racism and hatred he’s lived with propels Leon to participate in the 1950s Civil Rights movement. Each chapter is a vignette introduced by black-and-white collages of designs and patterns that emphasize the author’s message. **CU:** Read orally in Grades 4–8, this book would make an excellent lead-in to class discussions on racial segregation, prejudice, and the U.S. Civil Rights movement in the 20th century. MER


**Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story**
Ken Mochizuki. Ill. by Dom Lee.
In 1940 Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul to Lithuania, saved the lives of hundreds of Polish Jewish immigrants by personally writing out visas that enabled them to escape the Nazi threat. Through this book, which is told in the first person by the consul’s son, Hiroki, we learn that Sugihara risked his own life in order to save others. Lee’s sepia illustrations give a feeling of old photographs with haunting images of faces filled with despair. **CU:** This stirring tale of courage and compassion provides another perspective of the Holocaust through the eyes of a child. Older students will particularly benefit from hearing the story read aloud and having the opportunity to share ideas, feelings, questions, and predictions. Additional research on Sugihara and other Holocaust heroes and heroines could follow. CG


**Tomás and the Library Lady**
Pat Mora. Ill. by Raul Colón.
Based on the life of Tomás Rivera, former chancellor of the University of California at Riverside, this book demonstrates the value of reading and books and portrays a positive image of migrant farm workers and their families. In spite of the yearly move from Texas to Iowa to pick fruit and vegetables, Tomás’s family shows an appreciation of learning as they listen to Tomás read. A librarian’s compassion further encourages Tomás to read all types of books and share what he discovers within them. **CU:** Students can retell their own family stories, just as Tomás and his grandfather did. Children could be encouraged to visualize images from their reading just as Tomás created images in his mind from the words he read. SC


**Water Dance**
Thomas Locker. Ill. by the author.
"I am one thing, I am many things. I am water. This is my dance through our world." Thomas Locker’s exquisite free verse narrative accom-

Illustration copyright © 1997 by Raul Colón. Used by permission of Knopf, Random House from Tomás and the Library Lady by Pat Mora.
panied by his beautiful landscape and seascape paintings present a rich combination of language and color. Each phase of the water cycle is portrayed in prose and is explained at the end of the book. **CU:** A superb book for introducing the water cycle. **PF**


**Advanced**

**Chasing Redbird**
Sharon Creech.

Thirteen-year-old Zinny Taylor discovers a mysterious trail of historic significance that begins on her family’s farm in Kentucky. As she works throughout the summer to clear the trail from beginning to end, Zinny embarks on a journey of self-discovery and learns that the mysteries of the trail are connected to long-kept family secrets. **CU:** Social studies teachers teaching the westward movement can use the book as a springboard for map-reading activities including orienteering by stars and compass. Students can assume roles of pioneers or outdoor enthusiasts to learn important lessons in wilderness survival and emergency medicine. **PJD**


**Honus & Me**
Dan Gutman. Ill. with photographs.

A delightful story full of baseball history, morality issues, and time travel. Joe Stoshack, a typical 1990s boy, is a fanatic about baseball. Although he’s not a very good player, he collects baseball cards. While cleaning out the attic of a kind elderly lady, he comes across a rare Honus Wagner card from the early 1900s. He faces a moral dilemma when he realizes he can become a millionaire with the card, but in truth has stolen it from the unknowing neighbor. The card turns out to be very special when it transports him into the past and face to face with Honus Wagner. **CU:** An excellent book for reluctant readers, who will be pulled in by the time travel and baseball components. The baseball history can lead to studying the 1900s or other time periods. Math could be integrated with this book by using baseball card statistics in various activities. Finally, the topics of morality and choices can be examined. **BB**


**I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly: The Diary of Patsy, a Freed Girl**
Joyce Hansen.

In this well written, engaging addition to the Dear America series, Patsy, a freed slave girl, continues to live on the plantation and faces many challenges in doing so. As a slave she had secretly learned to read and write while serving the master’s children. As a freed slave she assists others in learning to read and write under adverse conditions. **CU:** Since the book is written in diary format, it is an excellent model to encourage children to keep a diary or journal. The book’s realistic depiction of what it meant to be free shortly after the U.S. Civil War can be the basis for discussion about what freedom means in various settings. **GT**


**Lily’s Crossing**
Patricia Reilly Giff.

It is 1944, and Lily Mollahan can’t wait to spend the summer in her family’s cozy oceanfront house, cavorting with her friend Margaret, swimming, and fishing. They won’t have to worry about school or her dreaded piano practice. But war brings changes even to Lily. Margaret’s family moves so that her father can work at the airplane factory. Lily’s father goes overseas, and Albert, a Hungarian refugee, comes to live with Lily’s neighbors. Even the hateful piano is shipped to the summer house! Despite this turmoil and her mischief, Lily finds a true friend in Albert and learns some hard lessons of wartime life. **CU:** Perfect

No Turning Back: A Novel of South Africa
Beverley Naidoo.

Out of the Dust
Karen Hesse.
In her journal of free verse poetry, Billie Jo describes her life in Oklahoma during the Dust Bowl of 1934–1935. The harsh life of the Depression is accentuated when Billie Jo’s mother is killed in an accident caused when her father leaves kerosene near the stove. CU: This book is one of the few novels for sixth to eighth graders on the Depression era. Students could compare the economic and social hardships that Billie Jo faced with those of other periods in history, such as the plight of farm children today as their families face reduced prices for their products. PF

Run Away Home
Patricia C. McKissack.
This story tells of Sarah Jane Crossman and her family who befriend Sky, a runaway Apache boy. Set in rural Alabama during the 1880s, the book depicts the hardships blacks and Native Americans faced. The Crossmans shelter the young Apache and, with his help, fight off the white supremacists who threaten their lives and farm. The book’s appeal lies in its historical accuracy and its portrayal of Sarah and Sky as young people growing up. CU: Thematic connections could include U.S. history, race relations, friendship, black American history, and the Apache Nation. SC Scholastic. 176 pp. ISBN 0-590-46751-4. US$14.95.

Seedfolks
Paul Fleischman. Ill. by Judy Pedersen.
Conveying 13 distinct voices with sparse text, Fleischman’s innovative format depicts characters filled with hope and a sense of pride. Kim, a Vietnamese girl, mourns her father’s death by planting a seed in an empty lot. Slowly, one by one, others nurture their own small plants, and soon a community garden filled with vegetables and flowers is in full bloom. CU: An excellent book to illustrate varied perspectives and opinions of people from a variety of cultures and ethnicities that exist among all of us. Useful in both social studies and language arts classes as a book to read aloud to students, followed by small-group and whole-class discussions. CG Cotler/HarperCollins. 80 pp. ISBN 0-06-027471-9. US$13.95. Library ed., ISBN 0-06-027472-7. US$13.89. Paper ed., Harper Trophy, F.

The Voices of Silence
Bel Mooney.