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 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 field test in the United States of over 300 newly published books submitted by North American 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. The bulleted examples illustrate selection criteria.

• 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 2001–2002 field test were Leslie Disbrow, Anchorage, Alaska; Janelle Mathis, Denton, Texas; Mary Shoop, Manhattan, Kansas; Joyce Hamon, Evansville, Indiana; Carole Monlux, Missoula, Montana (trainee: Stan Steiner, Boise, Idaho); Margaret Deitrich, Clarksville, Tennessee; and Andrea Davis, Charlestown, Rhode Island (trainee: William Glazerman, New Castle, Delaware). Gwen Taylor, Lewiston, Idaho, coordinated the project.

Annotations contain bibliographic data, including ISBN (International Standard Book Number), number of pages, and price. If a book 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 2002 but is forthcoming. Publishers furnished price information as of late spring 2002; 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.
Beatrice’s Goat
Page McBrier. Ill. by Lori Lohstoeter.
This is the story of a young Ugandan girl who realizes her dream of attending school through the gift of a goat. The rich illustrations evoke the colors and lushness of the Ugandan countryside. A heartwarming story that encourages family interaction, goal setting, and caring for all living things is even more poignant because it’s true. An added benefit is the postscript by Hillary Rodham Clinton, which describes Heifer Project International, an organization that provides help for families in developing countries. A portion of the publisher’s proceeds will go to HPI. CU: The book links well to a study of the world’s cultures, caring for animals, and family dynamics, as well as the overall theme of perseverance and cooperation. AD

Freedom School, Yes!
Amy Littlesugar. Ill. by Floyd Cooper.
This is a well-crafted fictionalized account of events in the United States during the Mississippi Summer Project of 1964 when hundreds of volunteers put their lives in danger to teach black children in the deep South. Young Jolie expresses concern over having 19-year-old Annie, a white teacher from up North, live at her home that summer. Jolie’s fears are realized when violence erupts in her small town. She learns that in order to win true freedom one’s fears must be met head-on. The highly textured oil washes effectively depict the varied emotions of the townspeople. CU: This story offers a lesser known chapter in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and would greatly add to that historical study. Jolie’s dilemma would be an excellent subject for grand conversations about conquering fear, the importance of education, and understanding racial prejudice from both sides. WG

Freedom Summer
Deborah Wiles. Ill. by Jerome Lagarrigue.
True friendship is what Joe and John Henry share, in spite of their living in the United States during the difficult days of segregation. These two boys, one white and the other black, defy racism to become fast friends. They enjoy each other’s company whether they are shooting marbles, swimming in the creek, or going to the store for a cold treat. CU: Vivid descriptions (e.g., the boys’ appearance: “one cinnamon colored and the other pale and washed out looking”) make this book an excellent model for teaching word choice in writing. It is also a fine addition to any library and would be valuable for teachers developing units about friendship or black history. LD

Giraffes Can’t Dance
Giles Andreae. Ill. by Guy Parker-Rees.
Amidst waltzing warthogs and rock ‘n’ rolling rhinos, Gerald the giraffe feels clumsy and useless until a tiny cricket reminds him, “sometimes when you’re different you just need a different song.” With soothing rhythm and rhyme, readers discover with Gerald that we must find our own music to guide our dance. Colorful, bold illustrations add energy to the notion of dance and discovery. CU: This book begs to be read aloud, and its theme of using unique interests and abilities to accomplish goals provides discussion opportunities for building self-esteem. Talking about valuing
diversity can add to the creation of classroom community. JM

Me and Mr. Mah
Andrea Spalding. Ill. by Janet Wilson.
As a young boy from the prairie adjusts to life in a city and his parents’ divorce, he finds an unlikely friend in Mr. Mah, a Chinese immigrant neighbor who loves to garden. Mr. Mah and the young boy share their special boxes of treasured items that bring back vivid memories of home. Both learn to value their new experiences and friends as well. CU: Students might create their own shoebox of things they would value most if they had to leave everything else behind. Ask an immigrant to the United States or someone who has moved a great distance to speak to your class and share items they treasure that remind them of home. Discuss monetary versus sentimental value. MS

Mr. Lincoln’s Way
Patricia Polacco. Ill. by the author.
Here is another Polacco book that encourages readers to find the best in others. With the help of the principal, Mr. Lincoln, Mean Gene finds someone who is interested in him and willing to help him change his bullying ways. Building the school’s atrium gives Gene a positive way to channel his behavior. CU: Study local birds plus the best way to attract and care for them. Role-play situations dealing with a bully. Write stories about grandparents, focusing on the things students do with theirs. Write letters to grandparents telling them what students are doing at school and home. Study authors and illustration techniques: pencil outlining, colored markers, acrylic, oil, pastels, and inks. MD

The Name Jar
Yangsook Choi. Ill. by the author.
Unhei has just moved from Korea to the United States and is embarrassed by her name because the other children cannot pronounce it. She decides to select an American name, and the other children offer suggestions on slips of paper that they put in a “name jar.” When one boy becomes “Chinku” (friend) Unhei realizes her Korean name fits her best. CU: An excellent read-aloud for the beginning of the year, this book could be a springboard for students’ research on the meaning and history of their own names. JH

One Tiny Turtle
Nicola Davies. Ill. by Jane Chapman.
The life journey of a loggerhead turtle unfolds. The turtle swims the oceans for 30 years, eventually returning to lay her eggs on the beach where she was born. Realistic illustrations and informational text make this a valuable addition to the science bookshelf. An index adds to its value as a research tool. CU: An outstanding read-aloud book to enhance a reptile or sea-life unit. It would also be valuable for life cycle and environmental studies and vocabulary development. CM

The Other Side
Jacqueline Woodson. Ill. by E.B. Lewis.
In this warmhearted story, two racially different girls in the United States are destined to play with each
other despite their mothers’ warnings to not cross the fence. The fence becomes a metaphor for racial barriers, and the author’s brilliant word choice leaves readers pondering possibilities. **CU:** This book is excellent when discussing community behaviors that reflect segregation. Students and teachers can compare and contrast this story with the past and present stories of their community. SS


You Read to Me, I’ll Read to You: Very Short Stories to Read Together

Mary Ann Hoberman. Ill. by Michael Emberley.

The author’s work with Literacy Volunteers of America inspired the format and purpose of this book. (A portion of the proceeds from its sale will go to LVA.) Cartoon characters done in pen, watercolor, and pastel entice two readers to share 13 short stories. These stories are arranged on the page for “two voices” to read aloud the rhyme, rhythm, and repetition of the text. Each story ends with a slight variation of “I’ll read to you. You’ll read to me.” **CU:** The format encourages two individuals to read aloud to each other, one reading the left column, the other the right. This book fosters reading with a friend for pleasure, performance, or practice, and it promotes “the joy of reading.” MD


**Intermediate**

**Animals Nobody Loves**

Seymour Simon. Ill. with photographs.

Twenty not-so-beloved creatures are briefly examined in this attractive volume. The author allows young readers to examine their prejudices about such animals as vultures, hyenas, fire ants, and piranhas. Some have unusual abilities, while others truly deserve their reputations. Readers learn that the octopus is shy, but that the man-of-war can sting after it’s dead. The double-paged spreads and glossy full-color photographs will make this book a favorite with teachers and students. **CU:** The information on each creature should be a springboard to find out more about a particular “favorite.” Taking the author’s suggestion, children might make their own lists of animals that they do not love, think about why, and then do research on their own, perhaps contributing to a class book. WG


**50 American Heroes Every Kid Should Meet**

Dennis Denenberg and Lorraine Roscoe. Ill. with photographs.

This book gives a brief overview of 50 Americans who share a wide variety of successes and “heroics.” From Jane Addams, the first lady of peace, to Walt Disney, the famous animator, the subjects will appeal on a wide variety of interest levels. The text is short and to the point, and the casual conversational tone will appeal to young readers. “Explore Some More” and “Dive In!” sections for each entry provide opportunities for further independent investigation. The text layout and accompanying photos make for an appealing and accessible reading experience. **CU:** Use for biography study, for research, and as a resource for answering common questions about famous people. AD


**Fly High! The Story of Bessie Coleman**

Louise Borden and Mary Kay Kroeger. Ill. by Teresa Flavin.

Bessie Coleman was the first African American woman to earn a pilot’s license. Fly High! tells of the many obstacles to Bessie’s becoming a pilot. To accomplish her goal, Bessie had to overcome being poor, having little formal schooling, and the double disadvantage of being a female with dark skin. This story enforces the idea that you can have a dream and that determination and perseverance can make it come true. Sharply focused illustrations offer a slice of U.S. history and bring life to the words, even for the young reader. **CU:** This book would enrich studies of black history, women’s history, and self-esteem. The text is appropriate for intermediate and primary students. LD


**The Grapes of Math: Mind-Stretching Math Riddles**

Greg Tang. Ill. by Harry Briggs.

Rollicking rhyme and lively illustrations provide the setting for math riddles requiring creative and strategic solutions. Numerous real-life scenarios, often dealing with aspects of nature, encourage visual conceptualization through organizing patterns and combining mathematical processes. Each riddle ends with a clue to one way to solve the problem, but answers are also given at the
end. CU: This book provides an enjoyable way to consider word problems as readers go beyond the obvious mathematical process to solve the riddles. After reading each one aloud, invite readers to collaborate on its solution. Students might then enjoy creating similar problems for others to solve. J M


The Hickory Chair
Lisa Rowe Fraustino. Ill. by Benny Andrews.

Using rich and lyrical language, a blind boy describes the special relationship he shares with his Gran. When his grandmother dies, she leaves a note for each grandchild tucked away in one of her favorite things; each note becomes a keepsake. Although he searches high and low, Louis cannot find his own treasured note, but he gets to keep the old hickory chair Gran rocked him to sleep in as a baby. Many years later, as Louis sits rocking his own grandchild on his lap, those little fingers “with blind sight” find the wadded note Gran left him in the old hickory chair. CU: As a reader, consider the meanings implied by the author’s unusual choice of words, phrases, and figurative language. As a writer, explore examples of the fresh and lively way the author uses language as a model to expand word choice. MS


Martin’s Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
Doreen Rappaport. Ill. by Bryan Collier.

This unforgettable book about Martin Luther King Jr.’s life offers some new words and such old familiar ones as “I have a dream....” The stunning collage illustrations combined with text that warms the spirit result in a book with universal appeal. The stained-glass windows, the power of King, the American flag, and the four candles all work to preserve “Martin’s Big Words.” CU: This is an excellent resource for King’s life, the medium of collage, and stained-glass windows. Visits to local churches would enhance the research and study of stained glass and how it is used. MD


Mississippi
Diane Siebert. Ill. by Greg Harlin.

Travel through time with the mighty Mississippi and learn its story from the glaciers that formed the river, to the Native Americans and early settlers who first explored its waters, to the dams and levees that now influence its path. This poem takes you on a journey from the Mississippi’s origin at Lake Itasca, through the plains, past cities, to the Gulf of Mexico. Illuminating illustrations bring the river and its inhabitants to life. CU: The cadence of the verse would lend itself to Readers Theatre or other dramatic interpretation. Social studies and science students could explore the history, geography, ecology, or Native American
Illustration copyright ©2001 by Linda S. Wingerter. Used by permission of Scholastic Press from One Riddle, One Answer by Lauren Thompson.

peoples mentioned in the text. The glossary of “River Words” and a page of facts “About the River” could be used as a basis for further study. JH


One Riddle, One Answer
Lauren Thompson. Ill. by Linda S. Wingerter.

When no suitable husband can be found for Aziza, a Persian princess, she suggests a solution to her father. She will pose a riddle that will have only one answer, and whoever can solve the riddle will be the person that she will be happy to marry. The explanation about the solution at the conclusion of the narrative adds to the value of the book and its math connection. The exquisite illustrations provide a window to life long ago in Persia. CU: Use as an example of how to write story problems and number riddles and for problem solving, prediction, and multicultural awareness. CM


The Secret to Freedom
Marcia Vaughan. Ill. by Larry Johnson.

In this impressionable story, the author weaves the important role different patterned quilts played in U.S. slaves’ escape to freedom. A young African American girl learns a significant piece of family history from her Great Aunt Lucy, a former slave. Information and images of the quilt patterns are included. CU: Without question, this book should be added to the many wonderful books written about the Underground Railroad andquilts. From the study of history to art applications, the possibilities abound for curriculum connections. SS


The Waterfall’s Gift
Joanne Ryder. Ill. by Richard Jesse Watson.

Among this lovely book’s illustrations are many hidden animals to delight readers of all ages. The story, in both words and images, tells of one young girl’s visit to her family’s summer cabin in the woods and her favorite spot by the tumbling falls. The tone is peaceful, and the text is embedded with respect and awe for the natural world. The almost poetic prose draws you into the special sights and sounds of the forest. The illustrations are clearly detailed and stunning in their array of color. CU: This would be an excellent tie-in to any environmental unit of study, especially one with a focus on animal habitats. AD


Advanced

Extraordinary African-Americans: From Colonial to Contemporary Times
Susan Altman. Ill. with photographs.

More than 100 African Americans who have contributed their talents to the United States are ably profiled chronologically in this work. In addition to writers, artists, athletes, and political figures, the book has descriptions of key periods and events in history, such as the Great Northern Migration, allowing for a broader perspective of the African American experience. There is clearly written and organized information on the well known (Booker T. Washington, Maya Angelou) and the lesser known (anthropologist Zora Hurston and inventor Norbert Rillieux). Each entry includes a black-and-white photograph (or drawing) of the subject. CU: Throughout Black History Month in the United States, or the entire year, teachers can use a single vignette as a read-aloud and then place the subject on a class timeline. Students might use these entries as models for research and write about a person of their own choosing. WG


Extraordinary Explorers and Adventurers
Judy Alter. Ill. with photographs.

From Odysseus to Henry Hudson to Sally Ride, this informational book provides snapshots of a wide variety of real-life and literary characters throughout time. User friendly text has just enough information to encourage the middle school student to want to learn more about each person. As a short, quick access for facts, this book works well. There is also a “Find out More” section that lists additional books and websites on the subjects. Entries are listed chronologically. CU: This super classroom resource will get students started on the research process. Use for biography study and topic searches. AD


Flipped
Wendelin Van Draanen.

From second grade to seventh, Juli Baker is crazy about Bryce Loski, but Bryce attempts to avoid any and all interactions with Juli. Then, in eighth grade things change—their views of each other are flipped. This novel includes numerous relationship issues, to which adolescent readers will be able to relate, presented in a sensitive yet humorous
The Land
Mildred D. Taylor.

Powerful writing will capture readers in this prequel to Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry. Set in the Deep South during Reconstruction, this is the story of Paul-Edward Logan, the son of a white plantation owner father and a slave mother. Paul narrates the story, and his relationships with his parents, siblings, and neighbors tell of love, loyalty, cruelty, racism, betrayal, and hope. Paul’s passion for owning land provides the backbone of the story. CU: History teachers will find many salient topics for discussion: the Reconstruction Period, black history, pioneer life, and racism. English teachers will see this powerful coming-of-age story as a logical companion to the other books featuring the Logan family. JH


The Ransom of Mercy Carter
Caroline B. Cooney.

Living in Massachusetts in 1704 has many dangers and hardships. The major danger becomes a reality when settlers are killed or captured by Mohawks and their French allies. The settlers are marched from their homes to Canada in the snow and bitter cold. Some survive and become part of the Mohawk nation, others are adopted by different nations or families in the area. Eleven-year-old Mercy Carter is the protagonist. She helps us understand life with the Mohawks as well as their culture. Hope of being

The Other Side of Truth
Beverley Naidoo.

Sade’s mother is gunned down by soldiers as a threat to silence her father, a courageous journalist speaking out against the corrupt government in Nigeria. Twelve-year-old Sade and her 10-year-old brother, Femi, are immediately smuggled out of the country to England. In Sade’s harrowing account, they are abandoned at Victoria Station in London. Lost and unable to locate their uncle, who has mysteriously disappeared, the two are thrown into the abyss of the foster-care system, at the mercy of the immigration authorities, and bullied by peers at school. Their father eventually gets to England but is immediately put in jail and threatened with deportation. Finally reunited, Sade and Femi find a way to publicize their father’s plight and rally public sentiment to free him. CU: Locate all countries on a world map where governments and the military make life dangerous for citizens. Explore the concept of being a refugee. Write a poem about what it might be like to feel as alone as Sade or Femi. Read about other immigrants who have faced intimidation or discrimination because their language or customs were “different.”

MS


Guide to the Human Body:
A Photographic Journey Through the Human Body
Richard Walker.

The complexity of the human body, from individual cells to systems, is intricately described in rich three-dimensional illustrations and text. The many processes and layers of the body are described through computer-enhanced imaging that realistically shows the function and interdependency of each system. Facts are presented in exciting ways that teach about human development and help readers realize the phenomenal daily activities of our bodies. CU: This book is a significant resource to support any focus on human biology and physiology; anatomically correct illustrations are suitable for classroom use. JM


ransomed and returned to their settlement is always present for the many survivors who lead a very different life in French Canada. **CU:** Study the native peoples of the northeastern United States and Canada in 1700 and compare them with present-day nations. Establish the route of travel from the clues in the story. Chart winter temperatures and snowfall in areas of the Northeast during a particular winter. Keep a simulated journal from the viewpoint of Mercy or others in the story. Build a model of the settlement of Deerfield, Massachusetts. MD

**The Secret School**
Avi.

Elk Valley, Colorado, in 1925 is the setting for this fast-paced historical novel. When the teacher at the one-room schoolhouse leaves before the end of the term, 14-year-old Ida Bidson has no choice but to take over and lead the class. The students are sworn to secrecy, and the project will be successful only if they all pass a final exam. Ida and her friend Tom are ideal models of resourceful, tenacious, self-reliant teens. **CU:** Strong characters and a lively plot make this an excellent read-aloud for intermediate and upper grades. Teachers could pair this book with Avi’s True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle for an effective author study and an examination of female protagonists. JH


**We Were There, Too! Young People in U.S. History**
Phillip Hoose. Ill. with photographs and prints.

Primary sources, first-person accounts, journals, and interviews are the basis for this book, which tells the stories of young people who made important contributions to U.S. history. Articles are grouped into nine historical periods—for example, the American Revolution, the Civil War, and the West. Black-and-white illustrations, maps, photographs, and side entries add to the written text. The extensive index is a useful tool for research projects. **CU:** Reading the narratives aloud will increase historical knowledge. Use to introduce autobiographical and biographical writings. CM


**Words With Wings: A Treasury of African-American Poetry and Art**
Selected by Belinda Rochelle. Ill. by various artists.

The combination of poetry and art is astounding. Compelling images of people matched with selected poetry by many well-known poets promote the importance of “being,” living through challenges, making history, and using imagination to continue the struggle toward acceptance and understanding. **CU:** Compare and contrast the history and cultural representation of African American art and poetry over time. Exploring the multitude of works by the variety of artists and poets represented in this book will provide another layer of applications for social studies, art, and language arts. SS


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**Offprints of this annotated 2002 Teachers’ Choices list** (publication 9108) are available from the International Reading Association. The list is available for viewing in PDF format at [http://www.reading.org/choices](http://www.reading.org/choices). Order bulk copies online at [http://bookstore.reading.org](http://bookstore.reading.org) or call with a credit card (in the U.S. and Canada only) 800-336-READ, ext. 266, or send order to Order Department, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 6021, Newark, DE 19714-6021, USA.

**Books named on the 2002 Teachers’ Choices list** can be purchased, by special arrangement, at a significant discount (32% off regular retail prices) from Schoolwide, Inc. A portion of the purchase price benefits the International Reading Association. Download the Schoolwide order form on the Association website [http://www.reading.org/choices](http://www.reading.org/choices). (Books are shipped from Schoolwide’s New York state location. For information on shipping charges to destinations outside the United States, contact Schoolwide directly at the phone or fax numbers provided on the order form.)

**The International Reading Association (IRA)** is a nonprofit, professional organization of classroom teachers, reading specialists, administrators, teacher educators, reading researchers, parents, librarians, psychologists, and others interested in improving reading instruction and promoting literacy worldwide. The Association encourages the study of the reading process, research, and better teacher education. It promotes the development of reading proficiency to the limit of each person’s ability and an awareness of the need for and importance of reading.

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