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 2004–2005 field test were Marion DePierro, Billerica, Massachusetts; Sharon Olson, The Dalles, Oregon (trainee: Jesus Cortez, Chico, California); Ally McArdle, Stoughton, Wisconsin (trainee: Gary Willhite, Carbondale, Illinois); Suzanne Jensen, Shawnee Mission, Kansas (trainee: Cathy Nelson, Eden Prairie, Minnesota); C. Denise Johnson, Williamsburg, Virginia; Gudrun Godare, Tucson, Arizona (trainees: Marjie Podzielinski and Lois Buckman, The Woodlands, Texas); and Lynda Hawkes, Rexburg, Idaho. Diane C. Nielsen, Lawrence, Kansas, coordinated the project.

Annotations contain bibliographic data, including ISBN (International Standard Book Number), number of pages, and price. Information about paperback editions is provided when known. The letter F indicates that the paperback edition is not available in 2005 but is forthcoming. Publishers furnished price information as of late spring 2005; 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

The Firekeeper’s Son
Linda Sue Park. Ill. Julie Downing.
A young boy faces a difficult decision and the ramifications of his actions in this novel, which is set in Korea in the early 1800s. When Sang-hee’s father cannot light a bonfire to signal to his king that all is well, the responsibility falls to Sang-hee, who contemplates not lighting the fire so that he can see the king’s mighty soldiers. CU: Based on a historical Korean signal system used to warn of enemy invasion, the story is a valuable resource for classroom discussions about the impact of choices. AM

The Giant and the Beanstalk
Diane Stanley. Ill. by the author.
In this innovative version of a traditional tale, Otto the Giant climbs down the beanstalk in pursuit of Jack and the hen that lays the golden egg. As Otto searches for the boy who stole his hen, he encounters other Jacks from traditional nursery rhymes. CU: It’s a terrific addition to any lesson on traditional or fractured tales. Otto, the not-so-typical giant, would make an interesting study of character traits. SJ

The Goat Lady
Jane Bregoli. Ill. by the author.
By befriending an elderly neighbor in Dartmouth, Massachusetts, two children see beyond her rundown house and unruly pets. They learn how Noelie Houle cares for her goats, provides milk to those in need, and donates kids to Heifer International. The children are intrigued by neighbor Noelie’s life and encourage their mother to paint portraits of her. These portraits help community members look beyond Noelie’s odd clothes and eccentric ways to recognize her humble and charitable nature. CU: This true story powerfully illustrates empathy, tolerance, and intergenerational relationships. GG

Hachiko: The True Story of a Loyal Dog
Hachiko was a dog that became a Japanese folk hero. Hachiko faithfully greeted his master, Dr. Ueno, every day at the Shibuya train station in Tokyo. For 10 years after Dr. Ueno’s death, Hachiko continued to visit the station daily, awaiting his master’s...
return. The afterword tells of a statue erected in Hachiko’s honor. **CU:** Here is a historical glimpse of Japan in the 1930s and a story that will stimulate discussion of loyalty. **SO**


**High as a Hawk: A Brave Girl’s Historic Climb**


Based on the true story of the youngest person to climb to the 14,255-foot summit of Longs Peak in Colorado, this book tells how a young climber battled steep slopes, blizzards, and the desire to quit. Beautiful pictures and a poetic text motivate and inspire readers. **CU:** Use this book to open discussions about setting goals and overcoming obstacles. **LH**


**Let’s Eat! What Children Eat Around the World**

Beatrice Hollyer. Ill. with photos.

This book about international cuisine provides a glimpse of the different cultures and lifestyles in South Africa, Mexico, Thailand, France, and India. Colorful photographs capture the varied foods, homes, families, and traditions of these countries. Each section explores the life of a child on a special day in his or her culture and the role that food plays on that day. **CU:** It’s a great tool for discussing the similarities and differences among cultures. **CDJ**


**Mighty Jackie: The Strike-Out Queen**

Marissa Moss. Ill. C.F. Payne.

A well-crafted read-aloud about Jackie Mitchell tells of the woman who struck out baseball greats Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig on April 2, 1931, at an exhibition game in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Illustrations are bright and bold to intrigue younger readers. The story and author’s note will also capture older readers. **CU:** The brief bibliography included should spur students to do research about Jackie Mitchell and other women baseball players. **MD**


Illustration copyright © 2004 by Jane Bregoli. Used by permission of Tilbury House from *The Goat Lady* by Jane Bregoli.
Mr. George Baker
Amy Hest. Ill. Jon J. Muth
In a small town somewhere in the United States, an unlikely friendship develops between a young boy, Harry, and 100-year-old George Baker as they both learn to read. Primary-grade readers will be captivated by this intergenerational story about unlikely friends who realize that they have a lot in common. Universal themes of friendship, love, and respect are enhanced by descriptive language and multiculturally sensitive illustrations. **CU:** Use this story to prompt classroom discussions about reading and lifelong learning. **JC**


Private and Confidential: A Story About Braille
Marion Ripley. Ill. Colin Backhouse.
Laura becomes concerned when she doesn’t hear from Malcolm, her pen pal in Australia. She discovers that Malcolm’s eye surgery is related to his limited sight and he must correspond in Braille. Laura gains access to a Braille typewriter and writes to her pen pal. Students can read Malcolm’s letter to Laura using the Braille alphabet included. **CU:** For units on communication, particularly Braille and letter writing, this is a useful resource. **CN**


You Read to Me, I’ll Read to You: Very Short Fairy Tales to Read Together
Mary Ann Hoberman. Ill. Michael Emberley.
Here’s a companion volume to You Read to Me, I’ll Read to You: Very Short Stories to Read Together (2001, Megan Tingley Books), with updated versions of eight familiar fairy tales. Two colors of print easily distinguish the paired reading parts, and rhymes help to convey the story. Comical illustrations add a touch of whimsy. **CU:** Compare and contrast these versions with the original stories or use during a unit on fractured fairy tales. **MP**


Intermediate

Free at Last! Stories and Songs of Emancipation
Doreen Rappaport. Ill. Shane W. Evans.
Using stories, brief biographies, poems, songs, and illustrations, the author poignantly portrays the long journey to freedom for African Americans after emancipation. Though many students may believe that emancipation ended slavery, this book relates the atrocities that continued for nearly a century longer. The struggle for true freedom took the effort of countless individuals, some heralded in history books, others less well known. **CU:** This book would enhance any study of slavery or civil rights. **LB**


Ida B...and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World
Katherine Hannigan.
Young Ida B dislikes school, her peers, and her neighbors in Lawson’s Grove, Wisconsin. And she balks at helping her parents. As her story unfolds, readers may find a connection to Ida B that is both emotional and realistic. Her love of nature is echoed in her journey of personal growth, a journey to which young people will relate. **CU:** A good springboard to
a discussion of environmental issues, this novel would also be well suited to discussions of the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs of middle-level students. GW


Jim Thorpe’s Bright Path
This picture biography of the early life of athlete Jim Thorpe shows how he coped with childhood struggles. Stressing the importance of education, his father sent him to an Indian boarding school, where he was isolated from his Native American culture and made to fit into white society. Eventually Thorpe developed his talents and achieved worldwide fame. 
CU: The author gives a vivid portrayal of the life of Native American children in the early 1900s. AM


Keeping the Promise: A Torah’s Journey
Tami Lehman-Wilzig. Ill. Craig Orback.
When Rabbi Dasberg was sent to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in Germany during World War II, he was able to keep a tiny Torah scroll. At Bergen-Belsen, Dasberg befriended a young boy, Joachim Joseph. Using the Torah, he secretly prepared Joachim for his bar mitzvah ceremony and entrusted him with the scroll so that the story of the Torah would live on. Years later, an Israeli astronaut, Ilan Ramon, met Joachim and was so moved by the Torah’s history that he took the scroll with him on his last trip into space. CU: This excellent read-aloud contains ties to literature and world history. SJ


The Kids Book of the Night Sky
Through a rich mix of facts, stargazing fundamentals, myths, historical connections, science projects, and art activities, the authors help students deepen their knowledge of the night sky. Pencil drawings enhance the text. CU: Use this informative guide to the study of astronomy to help students understand (a) how myths and legends create cultural explanations for natural phenomena and (b) the importance of making observations. GG


The Scarlet Stockings Spy
Oil paintings superbly depict Philadelphia life during the U.S. Revolutionary War. After her father is killed in battle and her brother leaves to fight with General George Washington’s army, Maddy Rose helps her mother at home and her brother at war by sending signals with the laundry she hangs out to dry. CU: The story will stimulate discussion of the devotion, sacrifice, and patriotism of individuals, including children, during times of war. SO


Tree of Life: The Incredible Biodiversity of Life on Earth
Through brilliant illustrations, this engaging book shows the beauty, grandeur, and diversity of life on Earth. The valuable information it contains will capture the interest of children and adults alike. CU: Use this text to enrich discussions of animal and plant life. An index provides quick access to topics. LH

Unwitting Wisdom: An Anthology of Aesop’s Fables
Retold and ill. by Helen Ward.
Twelve of the traditional fables of Aesop (and the moral to each one) are eloquently conveyed using clear language, beautiful script, and luminous watercolors. CU: A wonderful addition to a unit on traditional tales or study of author word choice, this book would also be a good model for writing instruction. DJ

When Washington Crossed the Delaware: A Wintertime Story for Young Patriots
Lynne Cheney. Ill. Peter M. Fiore.
This rendition of General George Washington leading his troops across the Delaware River is enhanced by vivid paintings and quotes from those who fought in the U.S. Revolutionary War. Readers will be moved by the bitter conditions that faced the young patriots defending their new country. CU: This helpful text will whet students’ interest in researching U.S. history. MD

Win One for the Gipper: America’s Football Hero
Kathy-Jo Wargin. Ill. Bruce Langton.
The author draws from sports history to tell the story of all-American football hero George Gipp, whose courage and determination were the inspiration for the saying “Win one for the Gipper.” Vibrant artwork illustrates that sportsmanship involves the body, mind, and spirit. CU: As a supplement to social studies and physical education units, this book draws readers into a real-life sports drama. JC

Advanced

Annie, Between the States
L.M. Elliott.
Set during the U.S. Civil War, this fictional account of a young girl who is loyal to her Southern roots but torn by her love for a Union soldier helps readers grapple with the complexities of war. Reluctant readers may shy away from the book’s length, but history buffs will be intrigued. CU: Here is a valuable supplement to studies of the U.S. Civil War. CN

Chu Ju’s House
Gloria Whelan.
When her baby sister Hua is born, 14-year-old Chu Ju leaves home to protect her sister’s uncertain future. (Chinese law dictates two children per rural family, and tradition favors having at least one boy.) After finding sporadic work, Chu Ju is taken in by an aging farmer and learns to run his rice paddy, which she eventually inherits. CU: This book provides insight about traditional values in modern Chinese culture. MP

First Crossing: Stories About Teen Immigrants
Edited by Donald R. Gallo.
The stories in this collection examine what it is like to be “different” as teenagers who have left their homes in other countries confront new customs and cultures. Whether the teens are fleeing with their parents from a repressive regime or trying to adapt to a new culture with different rules, the stories come alive for readers. CU: Immigration, culture, and customs are presented in terms accessible to adolescents. LB
The Golden Hour
Maiya Williams.
Readers will love this believable fantasy filled with time travel, intrigue, and psychic phenomena. After their mother dies, 13-year-old Rowan and his younger sister are sent to Owatannauk, a small town in Maine, to stay with their eccentric aunts. While the siblings attempt to unravel Owatannauk’s mysteries, they find an abandoned hotel that transports them to a different time. **CU:** It’s a great novel for introducing the French Revolution or for a study of the genre of fantasy. **GW**

Harlem Stomp! A Cultural History of the Harlem Renaissance
Laban Carrick Hill.
The author offers an in-depth look at the artistic, political, and intellectual world of Harlem from 1900 to 1935. A wealth of background information about individuals, such as Langston Hughes and Jean Toomer, and the events that formed Harlem make this an invaluable resource. **CU:** Margins include photographs and paintings as well as quotes from poems, speeches, and articles that vividly document African American culture in the early 20th century. **AM**

Madam President: The Extraordinary, True (and Evolving) Story of Women in Politics
Catherine Thimmesh. Ill. Douglas B. Jones.
This book portrays 23 women—from leaders of various countries to influential wives of U.S. presidents—who have made political history. The role each one played in furthering women’s political rights is highlighted with quotes, unique information, and handsome caricatures. It’s an inspiring read for the leaders of tomorrow. **CU:** Use this excellent resource for the study of women’s rights. **SJ**

Tree Girl
Ben Mikaelsen.
After watching soldiers murder her teacher and finding her Mayan village ransacked and her family dead, 14-year-old Gabriela Flores flees north to Mexican refugee camps. She enters a village not yet touched by unrest and seeks sanctuary in the largest tree where, during the next several days, she must watch soldiers kill the village inhabitants. **CU:** Based on a true story, this work of historical fiction provides insight about an ugly chapter in Guatemala’s history. It could facilitate discussions of human rights and the abuse of political power. **GG**

The Truth About Sparrows
Marian Hale.
Twelve-year-old Sadie and her family are forced from their home in Missouri by drought and the U.S. Depression to start a new life on the Texas coast. Despite a plot that includes a pregnant mother and a father crippled by polio, this story of a working-poor family is surprisingly upbeat. Accurate descriptions of time and place are informative, and the colloquial language is enjoyable. **CU:** Rich with social history, this novel illuminates aspects of a difficult era as characters struggle with how to let go of their past and begin anew. **SO**
The Voice That Challenged a Nation: Marion Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights
Russell Freedman. Ill. with photos.
This biography of singer Marian Anderson depicts the events in her life leading to her 1939 Easter concert at the Lincoln Memorial, which has been hailed as a milestone in musical and civil rights history in the United States. Anderson’s talent and career were an inspiration at a time when black performers faced daunting professional limitations. CU: Teachers will appreciate the photographs and authentic text from Anderson’s songs and speeches that reflect such important events in history. LH

Wake Up Our Souls: A Celebration of Black American Artists
Tonya Bolden.
Produced in conjunction with the Smithsonian’s American Art Museum, this book uses poetic writing and rich illustrations to celebrate the role of African American art in U.S. culture. The author puts artistic movements into historical context and highlights influential 20th-century African American artists from Faith Ringgold to Gordon Parks. CU: The book is a valuable addition to any study of history and art. DJ