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 2005–2006 field test of potential Teachers’ Choices selections were Marion DePierro, Billerica, Massachusetts (trainee: Jeanie H. Burnett, Kutztown, Pennsylvania); C. Denise Johnson, Williamsburg, Virginia (trainee: Nan Brandenbergerpayne, Cordova, Tennessee); Gary L. Willhite, Carbondale, Illinois; Cathy Nelson, Eden Prairie, Minnesota; Marjie Podzielniski and Lois Buckman, The Woodlands and Conroe, Texas; Lynda Hawkes, Rexburg, Idaho (trainee: Tammy Langeberg, Boulder, Colorado); and Jesus Cortez, Chico, California. Diane C. Nielsen, Lawrence, Kansas, and Joyce Hamon, Evansville, Indiana, coordinated the project.

Annotations describe each book; entries also contain bibliographic data, 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 2006 but is forthcoming. Publishers furnished price information as of late spring 2006; prices are subject to change without notice. The letters CU indicate suggestions for Curriculum Use in various content areas. Regional coordinators and trainees who wrote the annotations are identified by their initials following the review.

Primary

Army Ants
Sandra Markle. Ill. with photos by the author.

Everything readers want to know about army ants is in this vividly photographed Animal Scavengers series book. The cycle of life is presented through the world of scavenger insects in this chronicle of the complexities and intimate society of ants surviving and thriving in nature. CU: Students can use this book to challenge their understanding of insects, nature, science, and geography. The easy-to-read text provides a rich resource for the science teacher and science curriculum. JC

Bearcub and Mama
Sharon Jennings. Ill. Melanie Watt.

Bearcub accompanies Mama wherever she goes. From Mama, he learns how to fish, dig for grubs, and climb a tree to find honey. When caught in a storm alone, however, he must rely on himself and all that Mama taught him to survive. CU: This book would lend itself to science discussions about animal habitats and seasonal changes. It also could be used to encourage students to develop independence. CDJ

Beyond the Great Mountains: A Visual Poem About China
Ed Young. Ill. by the author.

Everything about this book is captivating. Opening from the bottom rather than the side, the book’s vertical format and graduated pages visually present the author’s poetic tribute to China. The lyrical beauty of the poem is more than matched by the rich colors and abstract beauty of the paper collages, which evoke the Chinese characters included on each page to denote key words in the text. This book will draw children and adults back many times, and they’ll find something new to delight in with each visit. CU: In addition to its use in a poetry unit, this book would be helpful for studying collage. CN

Can You Find It Inside?
Jessica Schulte. Ill. with photos by the Metropolitan Museum of Art Photograph Studio.

This innovative book opens up the world of art to young children. Thirteen paintings of indoor scenes are accompanied by simple rhymes that engage readers in a game of seek-and-find. Additional clues at the bottom of each page involve young readers in each painting and encourage them to appreciate aspects of classical art. CU: Teachers will appreciate...
this book when they introduce young children to careful observation of works of art. GLW

Dad, Jackie, and Me
It is 1947 in Brooklyn, New York, and a boy and his father are brought closer together by their shared admiration for Jackie Robinson, the new first baseman for the Brooklyn Dodgers. At first the boy is embarrassed by his father’s deafness when they attend baseball games. But that summer, as he patiently teaches his father about the game and how to play it, the boy learns something from Robinson. The legendary athlete’s show of courage and skill as he broke the racial barrier in sports is a lesson for us all. CU: Use this story in discussions about courage and accepting yourself. LB

Edith Ellen Eddy
Told in poetry form, this story introduces Edith, a tomboy with frogs for friends and “dirt between her toes.” When her family members try to change Edith, they find that the house is really “dull and gray.” In this clever tale, the author reminds us to accept children for who they really are. CU: Counselors and teachers could use this book to celebrate each person’s unique character and talents. MP

If You Decide to Go to the Moon
Faith McNulty. Ill. Steven Kellogg.
The author depicts what it would be like to travel to the moon. She mingles fact with fiction to discuss weightlessness, landing the rocket, and the surface of the moon and includes information about the first lunar landing. Bright, vibrant illustrations support the descriptions. CU: This book would be perfect in science to teach about the moon and its environment or to support ecology units. It could also help to demonstrate the use of adjectives, metaphors, and compare-and-contrast strategies. MD

I’m a Super Hero
Daxton Wilde (and Sherry Wilde). Ill. by the author.
This is a heartfelt story by a 4-year-old boy who has cancer. He wrote the book with his mother to help other children who are battling the disease. Daxton created the illustrations to show what to expect and how to keep a positive attitude during chemotherapy treatments. CU: This is a wonderful book for anyone who has a family member with cancer. The very young patient demonstrates a positive attitude, tolerance, love, and gratitude. LH

On Earth
G. Brian Karas. Ill. by the author.
Opened wide, the cover of this colorful picture book invites readers to accompany the young characters into a story about planet Earth. Clear, poetic language explains how Earth revolves around the sun and spins on its axis. Bold, warm, double-page illustrations and diagrams capture ideas about light and other complex concepts (such as time and gravity) in a child-friendly style. CU: Share this book in science discussions about seasons, night and day, and space. JHB

Seeds
Ken Robbins. Ill. with photos by the author.
Clear, colorful photos show the many types, sizes, and origins of seeds, and simple text tells readers how a variety of seeds are dispersed and grow. CU: The book is useful in teaching about dispersal and growth patterns, and it’s great for generating discussions about the plant–seed connection. NB


Teachers’ Choices for 2006
Intermdeiate

Always Remember Me: How One Family Survived World War II
Marisabina Russo. Ill. by the author.
Rachel visits “Oma” every Sunday and looks forward to seeing family photo albums, but her grandmother always stops at what she calls the “sad part.” Finally Rachel is old enough to see what makes her grandmother sad and learns about her Jewish family’s journey through the life-altering times of war. Viewing photos and hearing Oma’s recollections, Rachel learns of the hardships, heartbreak, and triumph her family faced during World War II. CU: Teachers can use this picture book to introduce the Holocaust. TL

Anna’s Blizzard
Alison Hart. Ill. Paul Bachem.
A tale of historical fiction is told through the eyes of Anna, who lives in Nebraska during the late 1880s. Anna’s love for her pony, Top Hat, intensifies as they team up to save neighboring children and Anna’s teacher during a whiteout blizzard. CU: This book demonstrates the pluck and fortitude needed for self-preservation during this time in U.S. history. Use for discussions about prairie schooling, friendships, family, and surviving the elements. JC

The First Americans: The Story of Where They Came From and Who They Became
The first Americans followed caribou herds and crossed a land bridge from East Asia into North...
America. The author details the culture of these people by looking at the Taino, the Iroquois, the Adena, the Anasazi, the Kwakiutl, and the Timucua. **CU:** This book would spur discussions about different cultures and be useful during studies of Native Americans. **CDJ**


**Galileo’s Universe**

J. Patrick Lewis. Ill. Tom Curry.

In accessible rhymed verse, the author sparks young readers’ interest in Galileo’s life and accomplishments. Each pop-up page depicts one of Galileo’s scientific discoveries, and pull-out tabs make the book interactive and help visual learners comprehend the highly informative text. The timeline at the end neatly summarizes Galileo’s life and discoveries. **CU:** This book could inspire readers to further investigate Galileo and other early scientists’ contributions to today’s world. **CN**

Creative Editions/The Creative Company. 18 pp. US$17.95; CAN$25.95.

**Grandmama’s Pride**


In this fictional story based on U.S. race relations in the 1950s, two sisters (ages 5 and 6) spend every summer with their Grandmama in the South. Her stories of how their family chose to approach the unfairness of racial prejudice help readers understand this period in American history. **CU:** In addition to provoking discussion about the treatment of others, this picture book could help teachers to introduce the U.S. Civil Rights era. **GLW**


**Let It Begin Here! Lexington and Concord: First Battles of the American Revolution.**

Dennis Brindell Fradin. Ill. Larry Day.

Although warned by Paul Revere, the citizens of Lexington, Massachusetts, were not prepared for the large invasion of British soldiers, and the battle ended in just 10 minutes. The overconfident British made their way to Concord expecting the same results, but this time they were the ones to retreat, and the American Revolutionary War had begun. **CU:** Here is an excellent introduction to the American Revolution. **LB**


**Midnight Forests: A Story of Gifford Pinchot and Our National Forests**

Gary Hines. Ill. Robert Casilla.

The U.S. Forest Service, an agency within the Department of Agriculture, employs more than 30,000 people, yet few Americans know the story of its founder. Gifford Pinchot, a conservationist, believed that trees could be forested, soil erosion controlled, and society’s demand for wood met without destroying the forests. This picture biography details Pinchot’s partnership with President Theodore Roosevelt to establish the 16 million acres of land designated as national forests. **CU:** Use for lessons on Earth Day and conservation. **MP**


**Once Upon a Cool Motorcycle Dude**

Kevin O’Malley. Ill. by the author, Carol Heyer, and Scott Goto.

How different are boys and girls? Through a fairy tale genre take-off, this book illuminates just how different they can be. These boys and girls each take turns telling the same story, and their different perspectives on character and action are obvious. **CU:** The story could prompt rich discussions about point-of-view; gender differences; tolerance; and listening to understand, not to debate. **LH**


**Peace One Day: The Making of World Peace Day**


In this picture book, the author describes how he established a World Peace Day. He wanted to have one

day when all fighting would cease around the world. Readers experience his trials and tribulations through his words, photos, and other illustrations. The photos, captions, and collages show the author’s passion and persistence in creating World Peace Day. CU: This book could provide the stimulus for discussing how one person can make a difference, writing letters to change something, researching famous people and countries, learning about the United Nations, and having a peace day in class.

MD

Rosa
Nikki Giovanni. Ill. by Bryan Collier.
Exquisite watercolors and a conversational style illuminate the larger-than-life story of a U.S. heroine. Centering on Rosa Parks’s life as a hard-working, talented seamstress in Montgomery, Alabama, the author ingeniously provides the background to the famous bus incident of 1955. In celebration of Parks’s contributions as an activist for human dignity and political strength, readers are invited to explore other events of the U.S. Civil Rights movement. CU: An important book to use in studies of the life of this famous American, it also recreates a key event in the history of civil rights. JHB

Henry Holt. 36 pp. US$16.95; CAN$22.95.

Advanced

Broken Song
Kathryn Lasky.
The persecution and harsh existence of Russian Jews during the beginning of the Russian Revolution in the early 1900s becomes personal through the story of Reuven Bloom. He is a key character in The Night Journey (2005, Viking Juvenile) by the same author. Reuven, a prodigy violinist, and his family exist in the Russian Pale during a violent anti-Semitic time. He witnesses the death of his family during a pogrom and escapes with his baby sister across Russia and, eventually, to America. CU: This book offers an understanding of life as a Russian Jew under the tsar’s brutal rule and of what it’s like to be an immigrant escaping from a country at war.

JHB

Children of the Great Depression
Russell Freedman. Ill. with photos.
Vivid photographs by noted photographers reflect self-respect, prejudice, poverty, homelessness, and pride in this award-winning book. The Great Depression in the United States is candidly portrayed from Black Tuesday in 1930 to the recovery of the 1950s. The stark reality of life for children during that time is depicted in this powerful book punctuated with poignant and intimate photography. CU: Use this book in a history class to help students understand the Depression from the perspective of children living through it.

JC

Our Eleanor
Candace Fleming.
The author forms a scrapbook of Eleanor Roosevelt’s life through anecdotes, direct quotes, photographs, handwritten letters, diary entries, and magazine and newspaper clippings. She balances Roosevelt’s successes with controversial topics from the time. CU: Roosevelt was an influential woman who lived during a difficult period in U.S. history. This biography could spur discussions about that period.

CDJ
Anne Schwartz/Atheneum/Simon & Schuster. 192 pp. US$19.95; CAN$27.50.
Outbreak: Plagues That Changed History
Bryn Barnard. Ill. by the author.
The cover entices readers to open the book, and once inside they are treated to just the right amount of the macabre blended with a healthy dose of science in this morbidly fascinating and scientifically enlightening text. Maps and numerous full-color illustrations clearly show the widespread diffusion and impact of pandemic disease. CU: The book makes a timely and important contribution to promote young readers’ understanding of the role disease plays in human history. CN

Photo by Brady: A Picture of the Civil War
Jennifer Armstrong. Photos by Matthew Brady.
An introduction to collodion, a yellowish syrupy solution used to close small wounds, hold surgical dressings, and make photographic plates, begins this unlikely pairing of photography with the U.S. Civil War. The text is alive with connections to the past and hauntingly displays the war that ripped a country apart. “Photo by Brady” is the signature on thousands of pictures never actually taken by him. CU: The text and the photos taken by Brady’s photographers provide a visual stimulus for discussion and further study of the U.S. Civil War. GLW

Secrets of a Civil War Submarine: Solving the Mysteries of the H.L. Hunley
Sally M. Walker. Ill. with photos.
A blockade around Charleston Harbor in South Carolina prevents supplies from getting through to the U.S. Confederate troops. A submarine named The Hunley succeeds in breaking the blockade but is lost in the effort. After 130 years and many searches, it finally is discovered. Now archeologists raise and identify the wreckage and its lost crew.
CU: Use to study the history of the first submarines, to do the math necessary to raise a submarine, and for a science lesson in excavation and preservation. LB
Carolrhoda/Lerner. 112 pp. US$18.95; CAN$28.95.

Shadow Life: A Portrait of Anne Frank and Her Family
Barry Denenberg.
Using a unique combination of fiction and historical facts, the author provides an innovative portrayal of Anne Frank. Part one is a narrative that details prewar Frankfurt and Amsterdam. Part two is the invented diary of Frank’s sister, Margot. Actual letters from Margot provide the details for this section. Part three is an oral history of concentration camp survivors. Source notes include a chronology and bibliography. CU: With its use of primary and secondary sources and varied approaches to writing, this book can be compared and contrasted with Frank’s own story. Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl (1993, Bantam), and with informational text about the Holocaust. MP

Shakespeare’s Secret
Elise Broach.
This intriguing novel is full of fun and mystery. Living up to her name, Hero demonstrates all the qualities of her namesake in one of William Shakespeare’s plays. But did Shakespeare really write those plays? A diamond necklace may make the connection for skeptics. CU: Actual dates and events in history are reproduced in this story. Readers could make connections to history and perhaps question some of what they have been taught. LH
Henry Holt. 256 pp. US$16.95; CAN$22.95.
10,000 Days of Thunder: A History of the Vietnam War
Philip Caputo. Ill. with photos.
*The author, a Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist, gives readers an accurate, succinct history of the major events and chronology of the Vietnam War. Black-and-white photographs enhance the text, as well as sidebars of “Quick Facts” and a glossary. This book is an excellent thumbnail sketch of a complex, issue-filled war.* **CU:** Use this relevant source of information when studying the history, geography, sociology, cultural anthropology, and political science related to the Vietnam War. **NB**
Byron Priess/Atheneum/Simon & Schuster. 128 pp. US$22.95; CAN$33.50.

Willow Run
Patricia Reilly Giff.
*The author gives Meggie Dillon, a character from Lily’s Crossing (1999, Yearling), her own story. We learn that Meggie is leaving Rockaway, New York, and her grandfather to live in Willow Run, Michigan. When her older brother, Eddie, is reported missing during World War II, Meggie helps anchor her family’s belief that he will return. The story reveals the fears, anxieties, faith, and love of a family during wartime.* **CU:** Use in literature circles with other books that focus on World War II. **MD**
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