

TEACHERS' CHOICES for 2007

A project of the
International Reading Association
Logo illustration by Chris Van Allsburg

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' re-

actions 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 2006-2007 field test were Jeanie H. Burnett, Kutztown, Pennsylvania; Nan



From **Across the Alley** by Richard Michelson with illustrations by E.B. Lewis. Reprinted by permission of Penguin Young Readers Group.



From **Brothers** by Yin with paintings by Chris Soentpiet. Reprinted by permission of Penguin Young Readers Group.

Brandenbergerpayne, Cordova, Tennessee; Gary Willhite, Carbondale, Illinois (trainee: Linda J. Graves, Ottawa, Ohio); Cathy Nelson, Eden Prairie, Minnesota (trainee: Patrice Kraus, West Des Moines, Iowa); Marjie Podzielinski and Lois Buckman, The Woodlands and Conroe, Texas (trainee: Marci Mitchell, Mission, Texas); Tammy Langeberg, Boulder, Colorado; and Jesus Cortez, Chico, California (trainee: Tonya Freeman,

Eagle River, Alaska). Joyce Hamon, Evansville, Indiana, coordinated the project.

Annotations describe each book; entries contain the publisher, the number of pages, and the price. Publishers furnished price information as of late spring 2007; 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

3-D ABC: A Sculptural Alphabet

Bob Raczka.

*A deliciously ripe cherry on a smiling spoon attracts readers into this whimsical alphabet book. Raczka presents the alphabet sequentially while teaching important concepts about different types of easily recognizable sculpture. From abstract to ready-made, three-dimensional to relief, and indoor to outdoor, every piece of sculpture prompts genuine emotions. Fluent text supports artistically brilliant photography. Readers of all ages will be able to stay within the pages to explore meaning. **CU:** The variety of sculpture connects well to units in social studies, creative writing, art, math, and science. **JB***

First Avenue Editions. 32 pp. US\$9.95.

Across the Alley

Richard Michelson. Ill. E.B. Lewis.

*Abe, a Jewish boy, has a secret friendship with Willie, the African American boy who lives across the alley. While Abe is being groomed as a violinist, Willie's father is training his son to be a baseball player. The boys' friendship grows as they teach each other their skills, and, to the families' surprise, each boy is more suited to the other's pursuit. Beautiful illustrations enhance the text. **CU:** Related topics include diversity, acceptance, family relationships, stereotypes, and friendship. **NB***

Putnam Juvenile. 32 pp. US\$16.99; CAN\$22.50.

Brothers

Yin. Ill. Chris Soentpiet.

*Ming, a young Chinese boy, sails to America to help tend the family's failing store. Ming befriends Patrick, a young Irish lad. An unlikely friendship grows, and the two cultures unite to save one family's business. This is the rarely told story of the first Chinese immigrants and the timeless message of what happens when differences are put aside. **CU:** The book links well to a study of immigra-*

tion in the United States, cultural differences, friendship, and the theme of perseverance. **GW**

Philomel. 32 pp. US\$16.99; CAN\$22.50.

Cookies: Bite-Size Life Lessons

Amy Krouse Rosenthal. Ill. Jane Dyer.

Through a clever mix of nostalgic illustrations, impish children, engaging explanations, and scrumptious cookies, this book defines important concepts such as respect, loyalty, optimism, and cooperation. Each life lesson is a guide to etiquette and goodwill toward one's neighbors. This timeless book can be read again and again as a child grows, and the values become more meaningful.

CU: Counselors and teachers could use this book for creative writing, character development, and multicultural studies. **LG**

HarperCollins. 40 pp. US\$12.99; CAN\$16.99.

For You Are a Kenyan Child

Kelly Cunnane. Ill. Ana Juan.

*Full-page images and vivid lyrical text take the reader through a typical day with a young boy in Kenya. This is a story of family, responsibility, and acceptance of diversity. Short Swahili sentences throughout the text create a sense of place where we can watch quiet cows roaming and a curious little boy on a beautiful summer day. The helpful glossary explains pronunciations. **CU:** This book will fit in a social studies unit on Africa, family structures, and discussions of responsibility. **CN***

Atheneum. 40 pp. US\$16.95; CAN\$23.50.

The Journey: Stories of Migration

Cynthia Rylant. Ill. Lambert Davis.

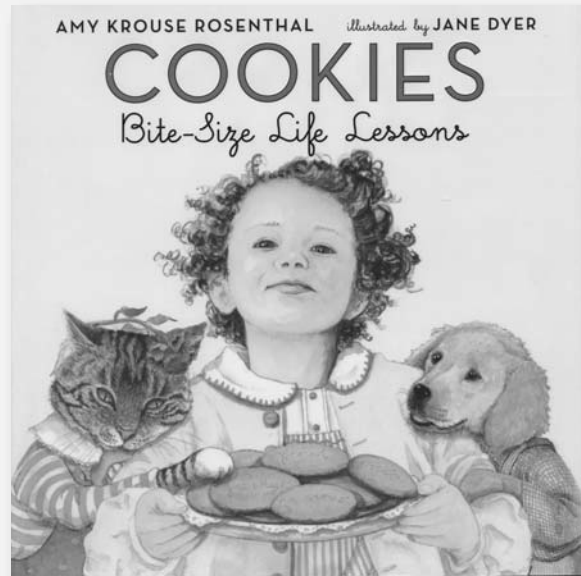
*Poetic prose and vibrant, dramatic illustrations provide a wondrous and awe-inspiring look at six migratory animals. The mysterious reasons for their journeys and the details of the strength and endurance required for their success fill each chapter. The remarkable travelers are artfully described with words of respect and wonderment, and the images depict different life stages and habitats. **CU:** This book would be a perfect read-aloud to accompany the study of migration, animal habits, and habitats. **PK***

The Blue Sky Press. 48 pp. US\$16.99.

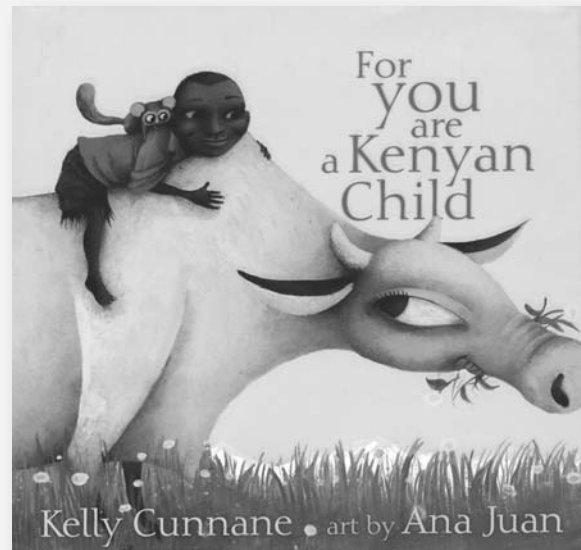
Night Boat to Freedom

Margot Theis Raven. Ill. E.B. Lewis.

Christmas John risks his life to row other slaves across the river to Ohio under the cover of night, and with each trip his grandmother creates a quilt to represent the freedom they seek. Eventually, they, too, elude the slave catchers and their dogs to find their way to freedom on the night boat. Granny Judith's quilt becomes the sym-



Jacket by Jane Dyer from *Cookies: Bite-Size Life Lessons* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal. © 2006 by Jane Dyer. Used by permission of HarperCollins Children's Books.

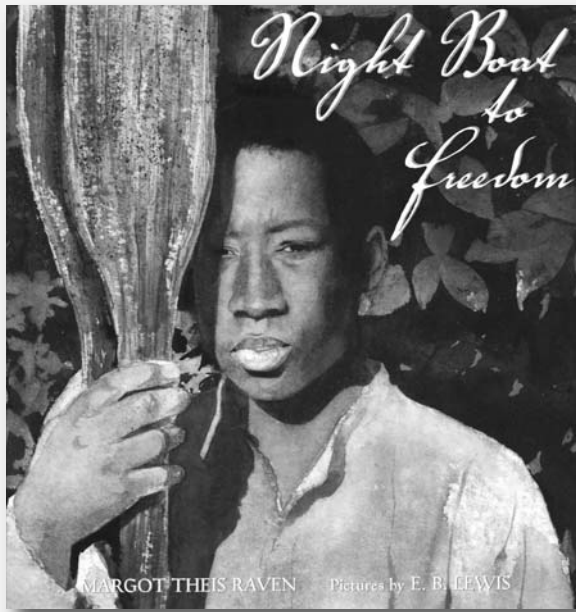


For You Are a Kenyan Child by Kelly Cunnane, illustrated by Ana Juan. Copyright © 2006. Used by permission of Atheneum Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Division.

bol of freedom for every slave who made the journey.

CU: Use this book in multiple grade levels for a study of the Underground Railroad. **LB**

Farrar, Straus and Giroux. 40 pp. US\$16.00; CAN\$21.50.



Night Boat to Freedom © 2006 by Margot Theis Raven. Used with the permission of Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

One Green Apple

Eve Bunting. Ill. Ted Lewin.

Bunting has captured one immigrant girl's experiences and emotions on her second day at an American school. The class is enjoying an outing at an apple farm. The blending together of each child's apples to make cider is a metaphor for the meshing of the students' cultures. Lewin's watercolor illustrations add to the beauty of the text. CU: This book would be a great starter for discussions on dealing with feelings of fitting in and understanding one another's heritage. MP

Clarion Books. 32 pp. \$US16.00.

Thanks a Million

Nikki Grimes. Ill. Cozbi A. Cabrera.

Through an engaging array of poetry from traditional to haiku, rebus, and riddle, Grimes inspires the reader to adopt an attitude of gratitude. Students and teachers alike can affirm the blessings to be found in everyday life. The odes expound on everything from being thankful for shoes to a homeless child counting the blessings of not being alone. Cabrera's colorful and folksy artwork adds a palette of joy. CU: This text provides wonderful models of poetry for children to emulate. MM

Amistad. 32 pp. US\$15.99; CAN\$21.99.

Why Do You Cry? Not a Sob Story

Kate Klise. Ill M. Sarah Klise.

Little Rabbit has decided that he is too old to cry, and he declares that no criers will be included in his birthday par-

ty. Much to his surprise, all of his friends—and even his mother—decline his invitation because they freely admit to crying on occasion. Their honesty helps Rabbit realize that crying is a healthy part of life. CU: Teachers and parents could use this book to remind children of the importance of sharing your emotions. TL

Henry Holt. 32 pp. US\$16.95; CAN\$22.95.

Intermediate

Anne Frank and the Children of the Holocaust

Carol Ann Lee.

Using new research, photographs, and first-person interviews, readers learn the horror of war. Historically accurate accounts chronicle the rise and fall of Nazism and engulf the reader in personal stories of the Holocaust. With an almost impossible story of war and destruction, the author carefully guides the reader to learn that children will always aspire to hope and survival. CU: Themes of diversity, perseverance, and humanity are at the core of this book. Use it in advanced social studies, language arts, and history classrooms. JC

Viking Juvenile. 256 pp. US\$16.99.

Christmas in the Trenches

John McCutcheon. Ill. Henri Sørensen.

This story is inspired by a true event from World War I and McCutcheon's 1984 song of the same name. A grandfather recounts the memory of his "favorite Christmas" when enemies and allies suspended hostilities for a few brief hours to celebrate Christmas on a common field called No Man's Land. This timeless book offers beautiful double-page illustrations, a narrated CD (with songs), and a historical note at the end. CU: Educators might use this more compassionate aspect of war for enhancing World War I studies. TF

Peachtree Publishers. 32 pp. US\$18.95.

Hearts of Iron

Kathleen Benner Duble.

This poignant coming-of-age story reveals two teenagers' struggles to honor their families while also following their hearts. Jesse longs to join the navy and escape the life of an ironworker. Lucy, his best friend, wants to continue their lives together on the mountain. The story offers interesting twists that keep the reader engaged to the end. CU: This book offers the potential for discussion regarding the characters' actions and choices as well as a historical perspective of life in a Connecticut ironworks community in 1820. NB

Margaret K. McElderry. 256 pp. US\$15.95; CAN\$19.99.

Just for Elephants

Carol Berkley. Ill. with photos by the author.

After performing in the circus and living in a zoo, Shirley, an injured and old elephant is released to the Elephant Sanctuary. This tender story gives us insight on elephant behavior as well as the universal topic of making friends and finding a place to belong. Vibrant photographs help the reader relate to the elephants and the setting. The website for the Elephant Sanctuary provides additional information about all of the elephants, downloadable curriculum materials, and videoconference opportunities.

CU: This book fits in with an animal unit. **CN**

Tilbury House Publishers. 32 pp. US\$16.95.

Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom

Carole Boston Weatherford. Ill. Kadir Nelson.

This is a fictional account of Harriet Tubman's spiritual journey as she made her way to freedom. The text, in verse, tells of her conversations with God, whom she calls upon during her journey; the illustrations illuminate Harriet's quest. A short forward explains slavery, and author's notes give the factual account of Harriet's escape.

CU: The text and its breathtaking illustrations give students and teachers a more spiritual view of Harriet Tubman. **LB**

Jump at the Sun. 44 pp. US\$15.99; CAN\$21.99.

A Pair of Polar Bears: Twin Cubs Find a Home at the San Diego Zoo

Joanne Ryder. Photos by the San Diego Zoo.

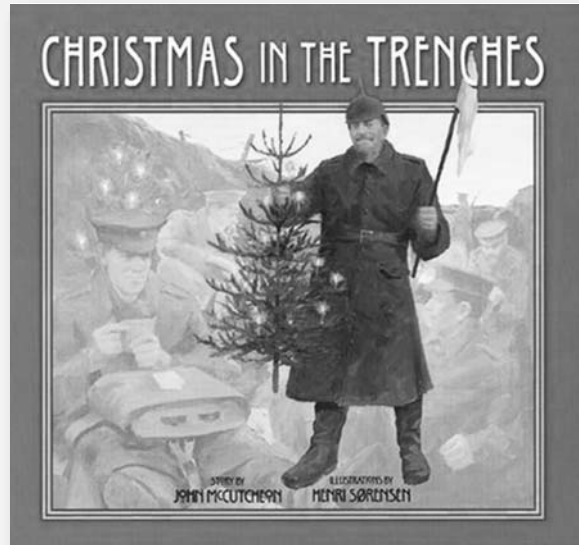
*This photo essay will capture the hearts of students everywhere. It showcases how the San Diego Zoo rescues two orphaned polar bear cubs. Ryder provides two lines of text—one for young readers and further details for those who are older. **CU:** This book could be a resource for an endangered animal or animal rescue unit. It also could trigger a discussion or research on how zoos help endangered animals. **MP***

Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. 32 pp. US\$16.95.

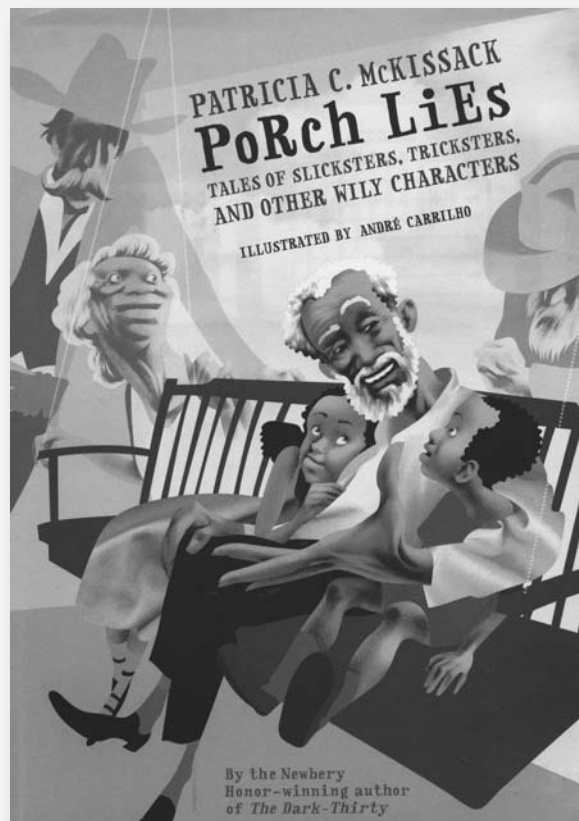
Paths to Peace: People Who Changed the World

Jane Breskin Zalben. Ill. by the author.

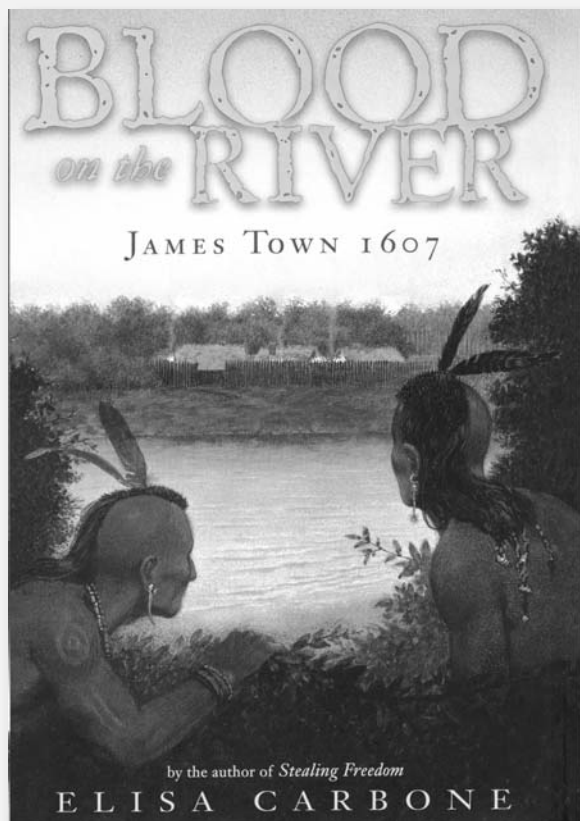
*Using quotes from the notable people who are showcased in the book and multimedia artwork, the author shares the lives of individuals who have changed the world. From well-known history makers such as Martin Luther King, Jr. to Wangari Maathai, who fought to replant forests in Kenya, the reader learns the background of 16 peacemakers. **CU:** These vignettes tell the stories of people who have changed history—from Albert*



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Porch Lies: Tales of Slicksters, Tricksters, and Other Wily Characters by Patricia C. McKissack; illustrated by André Carrilho, published by Schwartz & Wade Books, an imprint of Random House Children's Books.



From *Blood on the River: James Town 1607* by Elisa Carbone. Reprinted by permission of Penguin Young Readers Group.

Einstein's discoveries to César Chávez's battle for farm worker rights. **TL**

Dutton Children's Books. 48 pp. US\$18.99; CAN\$26.50.

Porch Lies: Tales of Slicksters, Tricksters, and Other Willy Characters

Patricia C. McKissack. Ill. André Carrilho.

Readers will experience a time when families shared stories on their porches through this collection of African American tales. The stories, which can be read aloud or acted out, spark the imagination and reflect life lessons and family values. The author recounts these tales with humor and exaggeration; the illustrator punctuates them with poignant cartoon-like characterizations. **CU:** This book is a resource for storytellers and teachers in social studies, English, and multicultural classrooms. **JC**

Schwartz & Wade. 160 pp. US\$18.95; CAN\$24.95.

Tour America: A Journey Through Poems and Art

Diane Siebert. Ill. Stephen T. Johnson.

Readers can feel the color, culture, and texture of the United States while traveling through this book that cele-

brates America via informational text that tells important facts about each site, drawings that map the geographic locations, whimsical as well as serious poetry that expresses meaningful author-to-site connections, and a variety of artistic mediums displayed through innovative paintings. The places highlighted are well selected and creatively presented. **CU:** This book can be integrated with art, social studies, and literacy. **JB**

Chronicle Books. 64 pp. US\$17.95.

Water Street

Patricia Reilly Giff.

This coming of age story is told from the alternating perspectives of two Irish American teens who live on Water Street near the construction site of the Brooklyn Bridge. The story's plot is unique to the time, but it echoes familiar themes of the importance of family, perseverance, and holding on to your dreams. **CU:** This immigrant story could be integrated with U.S. history lessons. The social issues, such as alcoholism, gangs, and family struggles, could be compared with the same issues of today. **NB**

Wendy Lamb Books. 176 pp. US\$15.95; CAN \$21.00.

Advanced

Blood on the River: James Town 1607

Elisa Carbone.

Samuel Collier, a penniless street urchin and orphan, seems headed for the alleys of London until he becomes the page of Captain John Smith and sets sail for the New World. Detailed in this story are the adventures of Samuel, Captain Smith, and the other settlers in Virginia as they sail half way around the world to stake claim and make contact with the native peoples. **CU:** This book links well to American history and provides insight on the clash of two cultures. **GW**

Viking. 256 pp. US\$16.99; CAN\$22.50.

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas

John Boyne.

This story tells about an unlikely friendship between two 9-year-old boys, Bruno, the son of a Nazi officer, and Shmuel, a Polish Jew encamped at Auschwitz. Innocence prevents the boys from realizing why a fence separates them. Wanting to be close to his new companion, Bruno goes under the fence and puts on the striped pajamas. The reader is left with a sense of disbelief as both boys are caught up in the terror of the camp. **CU:** This book would add insight to any Holocaust unit. **LG**

David Fickling Books. 224 pp. US\$15.95; CAN\$21.00.

Dark Water Rising

Marion Hale.

Based on accounts written by survivors, this novel is about the human reaction to a devastating natural disaster at the turn of the 19th century in Galveston, Texas. This coming-of-age story also speaks of race relations at the time and how people pull together in the face of tragedy. Accounts of how victims perished could be upsetting to some readers. CU: This historical fiction book can be paired with nonfiction accounts, science, and social studies. It is also a good fit for reluctant readers. CN

Henry Holt. 240 pp. US\$16.95; CAN\$22.95.

Dear Miss Breed

Joanne Oppenheim.

Clara Breed, the children's librarian at the San Diego Public Library, wanted to make a difference in the lives of Japanese American children sent to internment camps during World War II. She handed out self-addressed, stamped postcards to children so they could correspond with her. For more than two years she wrote letters to them and sent care packages of books. The letters she received in return are excerpted throughout this book. CU: This text provides important evidence of how one person fought oppression and made a difference. PK

Scholastic Nonfiction. 288 pp. US \$22.99.

Freedom Ship

Doreen Rappaport. Ill. Curtis James.

On May 13, 1862, during the northern blockade of Charleston, South Carolina, Samuel risks all when he steals a Confederate boat in order to take his family and several others to the Union ships guarding the harbor. The end pages have a map of Charleston Harbor and its fortifications, which enhances the danger and makes the story real for the reader. CU: This picture book would be an effective text to support the study of the U.S. Civil War. LB

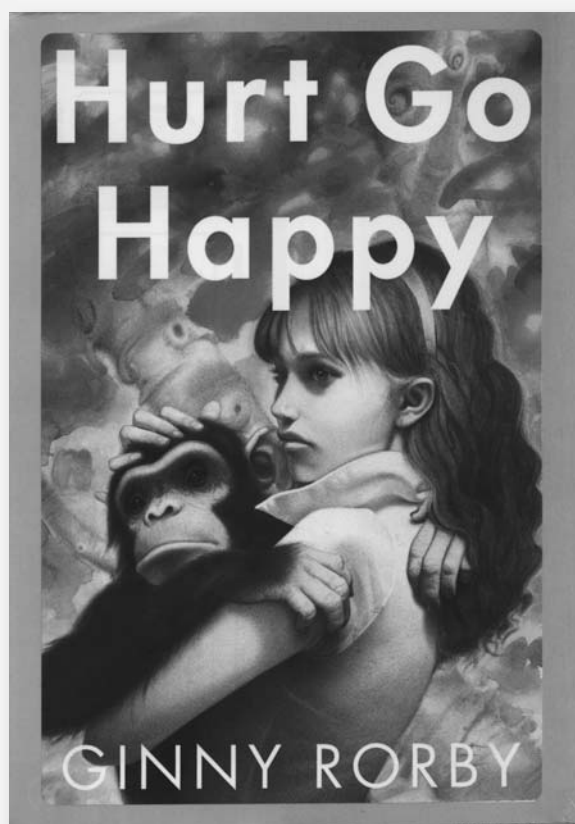
Jump at The Sun. 40 pp. US\$15.99; CAN\$21.99.

Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott

Russell Freedman. Ill. with photos.

Freedman, a historian, depicts life in segregated Montgomery, Alabama. Black-and-white photos along with Freedman's narrative bring the story alive, especially the details about the common people in the struggle as well as chapters on Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. The chapter notes and a bibliography make this a choice for student research. CU: This book links to units on black history, struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, and segregation in the United States. MP

Holiday House. 114 pp. US\$18.95.



Jacket art by Eric Fortune. Jacket design by Howard Grossman/12E Design.

Hearts of Stone

Kathleen Ernst.

Fourteen-year-old Hannah is caught in the conflict of the U.S. Civil War. After her father joins the Union forces and her mother dies during a raid on their home, Hannah becomes the head of the family and leads her siblings on a 200-mile journey to their aunt's house. When Hannah and siblings end up in a refugee camp, they discover the true meaning of family and the blessings that come through sacrifice. CU: This page turner helps readers understand the personal cost of the U.S. Civil War. MM

Dutton Juvenile. 240 pp. US\$16.99; CAN\$21.00.

Hurt Go Happy

Ginny Rorby.

Thirteen-year-old Joey is a lonely and isolated deaf girl until she meets an elderly neighbor who is raising Sukari, a chimpanzee who communicates through sign language. Joey had not been allowed to use sign language, but Sukari opens up to her a new way of connecting with others. As Joey becomes involved in the chimpanzee's care,

issues arise about the treatment of primates in captivity.

CU: This story is a springboard for discussing family issues, ethical treatment of animals, and the pros and cons of sign language versus lip reading. **TL**

Starscape. 272 pp. US\$17.95; CAN\$23.95.

My Last Skirt: The Story of Jennie Hodgers, Union Soldier

Lynda Durrant.

This story of the U.S. Civil War is based on the life of a real “petticoat soldier” from Ireland who decided to live as a man rather than live by men’s rules. She wore her brother’s pants, worked as a shepherd, sailed to America, and eventually fought for the Union. The reality of war grabs at the very essence of life and survival.

CU: Author’s notes and a bibliography could lead to further study in history and literature classrooms. **JC**

Clarion Books. 192 pp. US\$16.00.

The Poet Slave of Cuba: A Biography of Juan Francisco Manzano

Margarita Engle. Ill. Sean Qualls.

*The author uses free-verse poetry to detail the life of Juan Francisco Manzano—a man born into Cuban slavery in 1797. Engle’s skillful use of verse expresses the inhumane treatment of slaves with sensitivity and compassion. Qualls’s compelling black-and-white sketches complete this tribute to the indomitable human spirit. **CU:** This book could be used as an introduction to the subject of slavery or as a model for writing. **TF***

Henry Holt. 192 pp. US\$16.95; CAN\$22.95.