What Is the Teachers’ Choices Project?

The Teachers’ Choices logo that Chris Van Allsburg created (see below) 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 exceptional for curriculum use. Parents, also, will find here books good for reading aloud and for help answering questions prompted by tours to a farm, aquarium, or museum or by other shared family activities such as television viewing. The participants who wrote the annotations are identified by their initials following the review. Their full names can be found in the sidebar at the end of the Choices list.
Bird, Butterfly, Eel

Bird, Butterfly, and Eel live on a farm during the summer, and as fall begins, it is time for each to leave the farm and travel to very different places where the weather is warm. Bird and Butterfly prepare their young for migration, and Eel stores up energy for the journey. The beautiful, painted illustrations by the author introduce young readers to the basic elements of bird, fish, and insect migration. CV

Finding Lincoln

Louis, a young African American boy, must do a report on Abraham Lincoln's boyhood. The resources Louis needs are in the public library, which displays a “Whites Only” sign at the door. Readers empathize with Louis as his frustration builds until a librarian risks her job, allowing Louis to check out books after hours. Supported with beautiful illustrations, this book gives a glimpse into Alabama life in the 1950s along with interesting facts from Lincoln's childhood. Use with Richard Wright and the Library Card by William Miller and Goin' Someplace Special by Patricia McKissack. ST

How Many Baby Pandas?

This nonfiction counting book uses beautiful photographs to detail the stages of a baby panda's life. Photographs depict the inhabitants of the Wolong Giant Panda Breeding Center in China. Each set of pages includes a question about the appealing picture and important factual information relating to pandas. At the back of the book, there is a list of more panda facts, a glossary/index, an author's note, and a list of books and websites for further reading. BL

Listen to the Wind: The Story of Dr. Greg & Three Cups of Tea

After a failed attempt to climb K2 in the Himalayan mountain range, American Greg Mortenson became lost. Ill and delirious, he stumbled into a remote Himalayan village. The villagers saved his life, and Mortenson vowed to return and build a school for them. His efforts have grown into the Central Asia Institute, now providing education for 25,000 children. His remarkable story of a promise kept is told in this book. Beautifully illustrated with colorful collage pictures, this makes a great read-aloud. JM

Marsupials

Bishop's amazing color photography can make the most vicious predators look adorable, so these animals make his job easy. The text gives insightful information and will encourage geography buffs to find marsupial habitats on a world map. Some marsupials highlighted in the book have familiar names: kangaroo, koala, and possum. Others, such as bilby, dunnart, and hairy-nosed wombat, are not so familiar. The book expands in the middle to show sugar gliders in motion, which is a delightful surprise. In the back of the book, Bishop recounts his personal experiences with marsupials. CLD

One World, One Day

Simple, powerful text and brilliant photographs featuring the daily routines of children around the globe are captured in this timeless read-aloud. One of the most intriguing sections of the book is the information in the concluding notes about each photograph. The notes offer thumbnail images and detailed photographers' notes. These explanations and the world map will entice the reader to explore the cultural and geographical contexts of the photos. The universal message “we're all the same” is a good springboard for class discussions on gender, race, and culture. LJA
**Peace Week in Miss Fox’s Class**

After weeks and weeks of squabbling in the classroom, Miss Fox decides to lead her students in a “Peace Week” exercise. During the week, students learn not to squabble, both in school and outside of school. At the end of the week, the students and Miss Fox decide every week should be Peace Week. This is an excellent book to promote integrity, manners, and compassion in younger students. JH

**The Plot Chickens**

Henrietta the chicken loved to read and thought it would be “eggshilarating” to write her own book. Henrietta’s writing rules model the writing process for children. The lively illustrations and word clouds add to the story. Henrietta does create a book, only to be disappointed with rejections from a publisher and *The Corn Book* magazine. However, she gets approving votes from the children at the library. Teachers who use *The Plot Chickens* to teach the writing process will get approval and good results from their students as well. TC

**What’s the Difference Between a Butterfly and a Moth?**

Making the most of Bandelin and Dacey’s vibrant colored illustrations that leap off the page, Koontz clearly explains to the reader the differences between a butterfly and a moth. The differences are shown by comparing metamorphic phases, diurnal and nocturnal habits, and physical characteristics. Additional features of the book include fun facts, a glossary, an index, and more books and Internet sites to read. Close-up illustrations will enhance the science curriculum for primary students and older reluctant readers. CLR

**A Whiff of Pine, a Hint of Skunk: A Forest of Poems**

Travel through the forest and the four seasons with 23 short, lively, and quaint poems about the forest friends who live there. Meet a love-struck badger, an insulted turkey, a simpleminded turtle, a carefree squirrel, and even a sick toad. Children will be amused while learning basic zoological facts, and teachers will love the cross-curricular ideas. This picture book with beautiful, stunning, and amusing ink-and-watercolor artwork will become a favorite for all ages. LN
Ashley Bryan: Words to My Life’s Song

Bryan invites readers to walk with him as he shares his life, his art, his thoughts, and his home. Each page is filled with sketches, artwork, photographs, and rich words describing memories of childhood, family, friends, school, art, hopes, and dreams. His final words are taken from a standard ending for Ashanti African tales: “This is my story. Whether it be bitter or whether it be sweet, take some of it elsewhere and let the rest come back to me.” CLD

Big George: How a Shy Boy Became President Washington

Vibrant illustrations and simple, engaging text portray George Washington from his early years through his presidency. He was a shy boy with a temper who longed to be a soldier like his older brother. After experiencing the tragedy of war, he preferred to be a farmer, but when called upon, he agreed to serve his new country as a general and president. A note from the author adds additional information. This is a perfect read-aloud to introduce a study of George Washington or Colonial America. ST

Crow Call

In her first picture book, based on her own childhood, Lowry writes a beautiful, powerful, and sensitive narrative about a young girl reconnecting with her father, who has just returned from the war after a very long absence. Both are unsure of themselves, but they form a bond while walking through farmlands searching for crows. The gorgeous and stunning artwork is simply amazing and realistic. Any parent, child, or family member who has experienced separation needs to read this down-to-earth, realistic, and enduring story. LN

14 Cows for America

This poignant story reveals special insight into the far-reaching effects of the events of September 11, 2001. Naiyomah returns to the Kenyan village where he grew up to share the horrific events of that particular day with his people. Later, the Maasai decide to offer Americans the remarkable gift of 14 cows. This picture book invites readers to consider the significance of this symbolic gift through accessible text, stunning illustrations, and an author’s note. This text provides support for historical units on the topics of culture and conflict. LJA

How to Get Rich on the Oregon Trail: My Adventures Among Cows, Crooks & Heroes on the Road to Fame & Fortune by William Reed

A fictional journal is the basis for this historical account of a family’s journey toward a new life of opportunity in Oregon. William Reed shares the adventure through words, drawings, photographs, maps, and even an account ledger of his family’s financial status. Some illustrations are historically accurate, and others are fictional sketches. This book would make a great companion read to American studies of this time period. TC

Neo Leo: The Ageless Ideas of Leonardo da Vinci

This book gives unique insight into Leonardo da Vinci’s original ideas and how they resulted in modern-day inventions. An interesting feature that will hook students is that da Vinci’s notes are written in mirror writing, but his reasons for doing so remain a mystery. His designs could be placed on a timeline of world inventions. The book would appeal to art teachers and be helpful in teaching
units on inventions. The end of the book includes a complete bibliography. CLR

**Operation Redwood**


After intercepting an e-mail meant for his high-powered businessman uncle, Julian Carter-Li spends his summer trying to save a redwood forest. This adventure takes the 12-year-old to a part of the country he has never been, compels him to lie about his whereabouts, and inspires him to live secretly in a tree house. A wonderful book about conservation, friendship, and the power one person can have in this world, readers will love the adventurous plot line and the e-mail correspondence that happens between the characters as the story unfolds. JH

**Punctuation Celebration**


This book’s 14 poems celebrate punctuation! From periods and question marks to dashes and hyphens, Bruno effectively uses poetry to show how punctuation is used. Each catchy poem highlights a different form of punctuation. Colorful illustrations add to the content. This must-have title for the classroom and library would be an excellent resource for introducing, teaching, or reinforcing the use of punctuation. BL

**Where Else in the Wild? More Camouflaged Creatures Concealed… and Revealed**


Simple, beautiful poetry, classic photography, and detailed information combine to create this dynamic and multilayered book. The poetry and photography work well together to present camouflaged animals. The left-hand side of each spread features a poem written from a creature’s point of view, while on the right, a photo shows a scene from the natural world. Each photograph folds out to reveal the highlighted figure of the animal against a shaded view of the first scene. This book will be useful for both literature and science curricula. JM

**Where the Mountain Meets the Moon**


A young girl named Minli lives in a hut with her parents. In the evenings, her father shares old folk tales of the Jade Dragon and the Old Man on the Moon. These stories imply the answers to all of life’s questions. This is a beautiful adventure story of faith and friendship. Minli meets various characters and magical creatures as she journeys toward the ultimate answer. The full-color illustrations are lovely and take the reader through Minli’s adventure. CV
After Ghandi: One Hundred Years of Nonviolent Resistance
This book follows the events that impacted and influenced the worldwide history of nonviolent resistance. The authors do a wonderful job detailing complex conflicts faced by brave people across the world who have taken a stand against violence and oppression. Many examples of courageous leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Desmond Tutu are included. The authors explain that as a way to learn about each individual and explore each person’s life, they read an autobiography of each.

Almost Astronauts: 13 Women Who Dared To Dream
This book tells the stories of a group of women referred to as the “Mercury 13,” who challenged NASA and the government in order to prove they were as suited as any man to become astronauts. Also included is an incredible collection of photos, historical documents, and correspondence. This book is an inspiring example of what it means to follow your dreams.

Before Columbus: The Americas of 1491
Mann has masterfully repackaged his adult book 1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus for children. He explains that newer technology and discoveries about ancient societies have scientists and archaeologists revising some previously taught theories. Mann addresses many topics such as the origins of Mesoamerican and North and South American peoples, the impact on these societies of European exploration and settlement, and how the natives in the Americas engineered their environment. Students and teachers should consider this an important book for accurately understanding this time period.

The Day of the Pelican
When Serbian soldiers brutally force 10-year-old Meli and her family to flee their homeland of war-torn Kosovo, they quickly become homeless and end up in a Macedonian refugee camp. With the help of church sponsors, they relocate to a small city in Vermont to face new challenges and hardships. Throughout their struggle to survive, the family is determined to stick together and grow closer. Paterson expertly weaves complex political and national contexts into the gripping narrative. Important discussion topics include immigration, refugees, camps, hunger, homelessness, conflict, war, bullying, stereotyping, oppression, tolerance, and perseverance.

Denied, Detained, Deported: The Dark Side of American Immigration
The foreword of this book provides a contrast between the poetic words of Emma Lazarus, written about the Statue of Liberty in 1883, and Naomi Shihab Nye’s prose on Lady Liberty, written in 2008. Stories of prejudice toward Chinese immigrants, the deportation of Russian immigrants, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and the denial of entry into the United States for German Jews are thought-provoking, disturbing, and part of U.S. history. This would make an excellent social studies resource to spark discussion and inquiry.

The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate
In 1899, girls were supposed to be learning to cook and sew from their mothers. However, 11-year-old Calpurnia would rather investigate the world with her grandfather. Their scientific studies and experimentations often tie into today’s science classroom. This story gives a clear, accurate, and, at times, humorous look at life in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Boys and girls alike will enjoy Calpurnia’s adventures and explorations and relate to the challenges of adolescence. Use with studies...
of this American time period. This is Kelly’s first novel. TC

**January’s Sparrow**
The Crosswhite family’s escape from Kentucky after their adopted older brother, January, was beaten and left for dead is based on a true story. The Crosswhites traveled the Underground Railroad to Marshall, Michigan, where they lived for four years before discovery by their owners. Citizens of Marshall, both black and white, protected them and jailed the slave catchers, so the family could escape to Canada. The text and artwork accurately capture the range of emotions as the family struggles for freedom. This well-researched story gives an accurate picture of life as a runaway slave. ST

**Kaleidoscope Eyes**
A novel in verse, this captivating mystery is written in a unique and intriguing style. The story begins when 13-year-old Lyza discovers three maps and a letter in her late grandfather’s attic that are addressed to her. Set in 1968 during the Vietnam War, the story describes how Lyza and her friends discover what her grandfather had been researching, a 300-year-old pirate treasure and the possibility that it could be buried in their New Jersey town. In the author’s note, Bryant includes further information about the factual people and places featured in this work of fiction. BL

**Marching for Freedom: Walk Together, Children, and Don’t You Grow Weary**
In 1965, the world watched Selma, Alabama, as its black citizens fought for their right to vote. Marches, often led by children, faced brutal and sometimes deadly attacks. As the march from Selma to Montgomery gathered strength, citizens and clergy joined together with black and white supporters from around the country. The march resulted in the Voting Rights Act of 1965, giving black citizens the right to vote. Illustrated by powerful black-and-white photographs, this book is an excellent resource on the Civil Rights Movement. JM

**Under Siege! Three Children at the Civil War Battle for Vicksburg**
Readers interested in history and the Civil War will be fascinated with this well-researched, chronological account leading up to the 47-day siege of Vicksburg. Historical details and descriptions of daily lives give the reader a detailed look at this event through the eyes of three young children. Period photographs add depth to the powerful and heartrending story. The extensive information in the back of the book includes a selected bibliography, recommended booklist, films, Internet sites, source notes, and further information about individuals in the book. LN
Thank You to the Teachers’ Choices Coordinators and Trainees

The books that make the Teachers’ Choices list are selected through a field test in the United States of more than 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. Ratings from the seven regions are collated to produce the national list.

Regional coordinators for the 2009–2010 field test were:

- Susan Thompson-White, Wilmington, Delaware
- Cathy L. Denman, Titusville, Florida
- trainee, Linda J. Armstrong, Muscle Shoals, Alabama
- Cathy Voelker, Evansville, Indiana
- Jan McConnell, Shawnee, Kansas
- Cheryl Lynn Roberts, Overland Park, Kansas
- Tanna Clark, Hot Springs, Arkansas
- Jessica Hollon, Douglas, Wyoming
- trainee, Lynne Nevrviv, Malta, Montana
- Barbara Low, Medford, Oregon

Suzanne Jensen, Leawood, Kansas, and Marjie J. Podzielinski, The Woodlands, Texas, coordinated the project.

For more information on the Teachers’ Choices list or to learn how to become involved, visit www.reading.org/Resources/Booklists/TeachersChoices.aspx.