

Teachers'

Choices

2011



Logo illustration © by Chris Van Allsburg

## 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.

See  
page 7 for the  
Teachers' Choices  
2011 Reading List  
bookmark!

# Primary Readers

Grades K-2, Ages 5-8

## *Back of the Bus*

Aaron Reynolds. Ill. Floyd Cooper. Philomel.

Told from a young boy's point of view, we hear the story of Rosa Parks and her determination to keep her seat on the bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955. The language is authentic. Oil painting illustrations magnify the story.

## *The Brothers Kennedy: John, Robert, Edward*

Kathleen Krull. Ill. Amy June Bates. Simon & Schuster.

Three ordinary brothers led three extraordinary lives. The Kennedys were raised to believe that they could change things for the better and with their tireless efforts, they did.

## *Chalk*

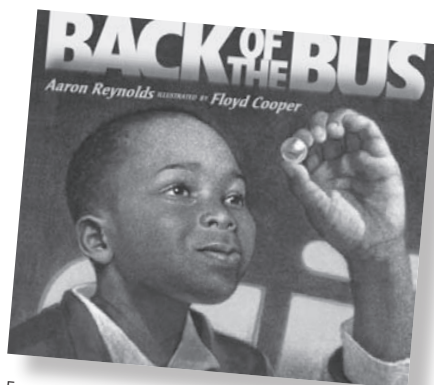
Bill Thomson. Marshall Cavendish.

An incredible wordless picture book comes to life when children find a bag of chalk at the park and begin to draw. Each illustration is meticulously painted by hand. The magic chalk will surprise all "readers" who can create their own words with the story.

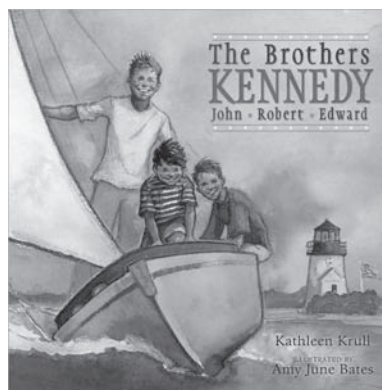
## *The Falling Raindrop*

Neil Johnson and Joel Chin. Tricycle.

This is a simple story to explain the science of the water cycle. One little raindrop is falling to earth and is excited to be alive. However, he then worries about crashing. This story demonstrates how one should live life to the fullest.



From *Back of the Bus* by Aaron Reynolds. Ill. Floyd Cooper. Philomel.



From *The Brothers Kennedy: John, Robert, Edward* by Kathleen Krull. Ill. Amy June Bates. Simon & Schuster.



From *Chalk* by Bill Thomson. Marshall Cavendish.

### ***How Rocket Learned to Read***

Tad Hills. Schwartz & Wade.

A little, yellow bird is determined to get a dog named Rocket to read. This story allows the readers to see and hear the progress of reading. It reminds us that everything takes time. This book makes learning to read very appealing.

### ***Lily's Victory Garden***

Helen L. Wilbur. Ill. Robert Gantt Steele. Sleeping Bear.

This World War II story emphasizes how one girl takes action in her own community by growing a vegetable garden. She asks a neighbor for a plot of land to use. Friendship is bestowed on a woman who has lost her son in the war and working in the garden heals her sorrow. The seed packet artwork adds to the story and shows that one person, no matter how young, can truly make a difference.

### ***Miss Brooks Loves Books! (And I Don't)***

Barbara Bottner. Ill. Michael Emberley. Knopf.

A librarian is challenged when one of her patrons does not like books. Miss Brooks does not give up and is determined to make the match with this young reader.

### ***My Brother Charlie***

Holly Robinson Peete and Ryan Elizabeth Peete. Ill. Shane W. Evans. Scholastic.

Told from a little girl's point of view, we see what it is like for her twin brother to have autism: "Kids with autism are valuable human beings with real feelings even though they can't always express them." This heartwarming story can be shared with children of all ages.

### ***Seed Soil Sun***

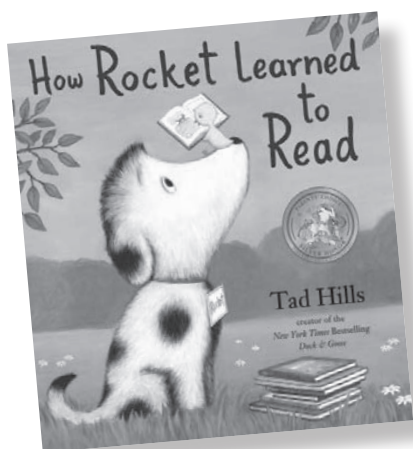
Cris Peterson. Photog. David R. Lundquist. Boyds Mills.

This book has vibrant photographs with lots of details for children to see. It opens with hands showing a wide variety of seeds. We then watch corn grow. This book complements science curricula and demonstrates where food actually comes from rather than just the grocery store.

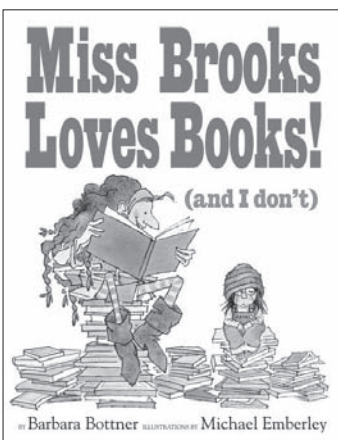
### ***The Tooth Fairy Meets El Ratón Pérez***

René Colato Láznez. Ill. Tom Lintern. Tricycle.

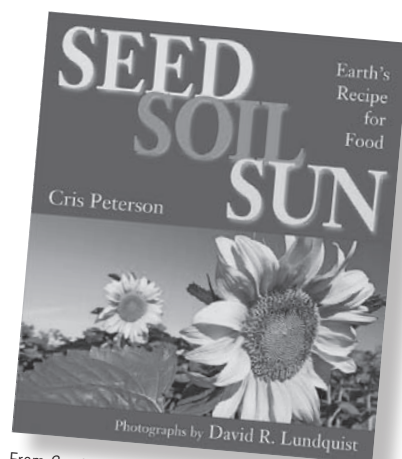
Two cultures collide when a young boy loses his tooth. Will the tooth fairy take the tooth? Or will the Ratón Pérez? The two team up to capture the tooth and decide to share their bounty. This book offers a unique view with which to compare and contrast traditions in other countries.



From *How Rocket Learned to Read* by Tad Hills. Schwartz & Wade.



From *Miss Brooks Loves Books! (And I Don't)* by Barbara Bottner. Ill. Michael Emberley. Knopf.



From *Seed Soil Sun* by Cris Peterson. Photog. David R. Lundquist. Boyds Mills.

# Intermediate Readers

Grades 3-5, Ages 8-11

## *Bag in the Wind*

Ted Kooser. Ill. Barry Root. Candlewick.

This book showcases environmental awareness through the travels of a plastic shopping bag. People in the United States use 100 billion plastic shopping bags per year. This book could be used for sequence lessons. After reading this story, you will definitely think differently about using plastic shopping bags.

## *The Buffalo Are Back*

Jean Craighead George. Ill. with paintings Wendell Minor. Dutton.

Incorporating history and environmental awareness, we learn what happens when the prairie environment is decimated and nearly all buffalo are killed. A herd of 300 buffalo survive to begin the renewal of the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve, a protected patch of land, in Kansas. Thanks to this assertive effort, there are more than 200,000 buffalo in existence today. Brilliant watercolor illustrations illustrate this story.

## *Mockingbird*

Kathryn Erskine. Philomel.

Told from the point of view of 10-year-old Caitlin, we learn firsthand what it is like to deal with Asperger's syndrome. A shooting in middle school took the life of her beloved older brother. Now Caitlin searches for closure for herself and her dad.

## *Muddy as a Duck Puddle and Other American Similes*

Laurie Lawlor. Ill. Ethan Long. Holiday House.

Similes compare two things using *like* or *as*. This ABC format uses a different simile for each letter of the alphabet. The author's note at the back of the book details each expression, many of which have been passed down from one generation to the next.

## *Out of My Mind*

Sharon M. Draper. Simon & Schuster.

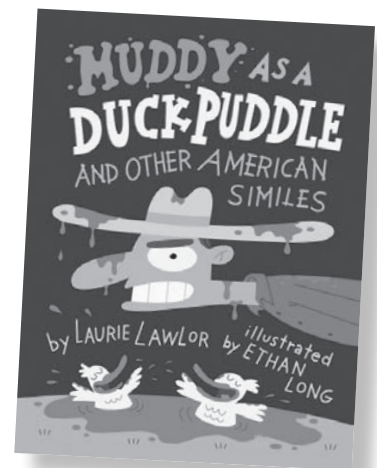
Born with cerebral palsy, 10-year-old Melody has never spoken a word. The author shows Melody



From *The Buffalo Are Back* by Jean Craighead George. Ill. Wendell Minor. Dutton.



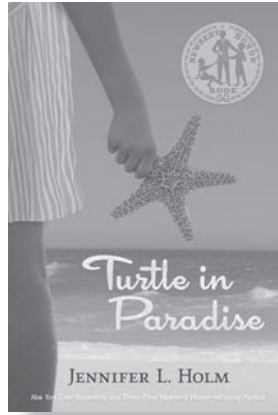
From *Mockingbird* by Kathryn Erskine. Philomel.



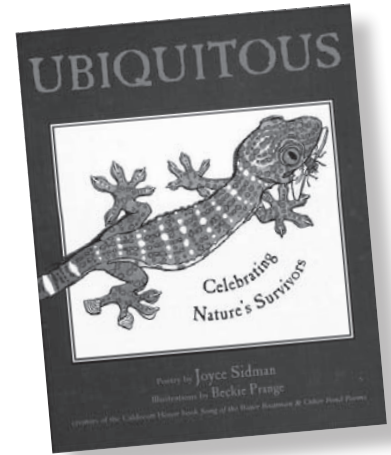
From *Muddy as a Duck Puddle and Other American Similes* by Laurie Lawlor. Ill. Ethan Long. Holiday House.



From *Stand Straight, Ella Kate* by Kate Klise. Ill. Sarah Klise. Dial.



From *Turtle in Paradise* by Jennifer L. Holm. Random House.



From *Ubiquitous: Celebrating Nature's Survivors* by Joyce Sidman. Ill. Beckie Prange. Houghton Mifflin.

making a transition from a special education classroom into a regular classroom. It highlights the misconceptions surrounding students with disabilities.

### *Stand Straight, Ella Kate*

Kate Klise. Ill. M. Sarah Klise. Dial.

This fictionalized picture book, told in first person, shows how one lady deals with being 8 feet tall. At a time when many young women had no opportunities to travel, Ella embraced her height and appeared in museums, exhibitions, traveling circus shows, and even a world's fair. This is an excellent choice for students who have to deal with being "different."

### *Survival at 40 Below*

Debbie S. Miller. Ill. Jon Van Zyle. Walker & Company.

The tundra is fascinating for all—how can anything survive at 40 degrees below zero? Yet a wide variety of animals do. The illustrations bring to life the survival mode for many animals. Global warming is affecting the habitat of these animals. A temperature chart at the back of the book details the highs and lows for this forbidding climate.

### *Turtle in Paradise*

Jennifer L. Holm. Random House.

Turtle's mom finds a job as a live-in housekeeper. When she discovers her employer does not like

children, she sends Turtle away to live with relatives. Set in 1935 during the Depression era in the United States, the humorous family dramas are relevant to families today.

### *Ubiquitous: Celebrating Nature's Survivors*

Joyce Sidman. Ill. Beckie Prange. Houghton Mifflin.

Why have some species survived and others have not? Some sharks could be as much as 375 million years old! There are beetles that could be 265 million years old! The combination of poems, dynamic illustrations, and scientific facts makes this a rare book indeed. A sampling of species in sequential order shows the steps of evolution.

### *World War II: Fighting for Freedom, 1939–1945: The Story of the Conflict That Changed the World*

Peter Chrisp. Scholastic.

Peter Chrisp, a British children's author, provides photographs and factoids to give insight on World War II. A glossary at the back of the book details war terminology. This book shows how the war led to advances in medicine and technology. Fantastic photos provide realism as to what it was like to live during this time.

# Advanced Readers

Grades 6-8, Ages 11-14

## *After Ever After*

Jordan Sonnenblick. Scholastic.

Jeffrey and his best friend, Tad, are in eighth grade and dealing with common adolescent issues such as school and girls. What makes these boys unique is that they are both cancer survivors.

## *Bamboo People*

Mitali Perkins. Charlesbridge.

Set in modern day Burma amidst civil and military unrest, this coming-of-age novel tells the story of two boys whose unexpected encounter challenges their loyalties and courage.

## *FDR's Alphabet Soup: New Deal America, 1932-1939*

Tonya Bolden. Knopf.

Filled with primary source material, this reference book reveals an insider's look at Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his plan to bring the United States out of the Great Depression.

## *Forge*

Laurie Halse Anderson. Atheneum.

The sequel to *Chains*, this historical novel of the Revolutionary War follows Curzon to Valley Forge. Graphic details reveal the hardships faced by soldiers.

## *Henry Aaron's Dream*

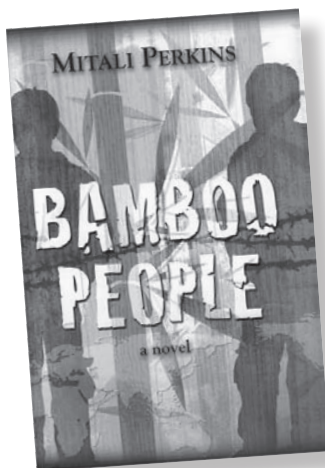
Matt Tavares. Candlewick.

Lavish illustrations accompany this biography of baseball legend, Hank Aaron, from his days of playing sandlot ball to the Negro Leagues to the Atlanta Braves.

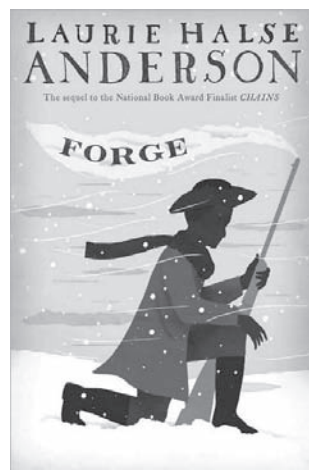
## *Lafayette and the American Revolution*

Russell Freedman. Holiday House.

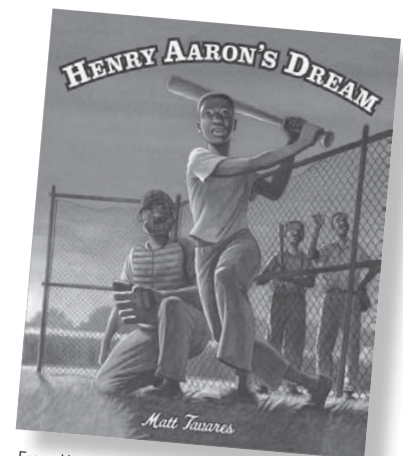
The Marquis de Lafayette was just 19 years old when he defied his family and the king of France to come to the United States to join the patriots.



From *Bamboo People* by Mitali Perkins. Charlesbridge.



From *Forge* by Laurie Halse Anderson. Atheneum.



From *Henry Aaron's Dream* by Matt Tavares. Candlewick.

## *Palace Beautiful*

Sarah DeFord Williams. Putnam.

Two sisters and their new friend learn about the influenza epidemic of 1918 after they find a diary written by a girl who experienced it firsthand.

## *The Red Umbrella*

Christina Diaz Gonzalez. Random House.

Fourteen-year-old Lucia and her younger brother are sent to Nebraska when their parents fear they are in danger in their native Cuba, shortly after Fidel Castro has come into power.

## *Shooting Kabul*

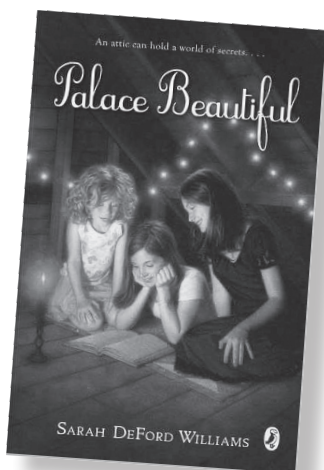
N.H. Senzai. Simon & Schuster.

Fadi's family flees to California from Taliban-ruled Afghanistan just prior to the September 11th attacks in New York City. Fadi must adapt to his new home and find a way to return to Afghanistan to retrieve his sister, who was accidentally left behind.

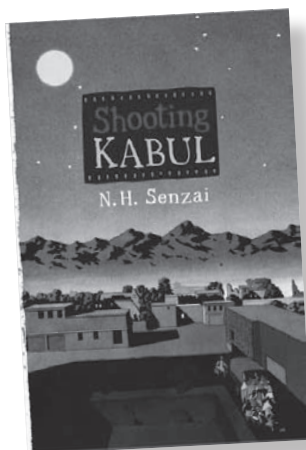
## *Woods Runner*

Gary Paulsen. Random House.

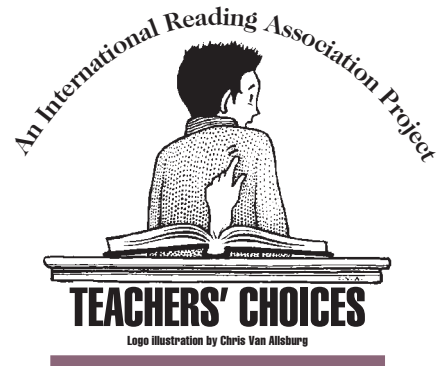
The horrors of the Revolutionary War are seen through the eyes of 13-year-old Samuel, who must rescue his parents after they are kidnapped by British soldiers and Iroquois Indians.



From *Palace Beautiful* by Sarah DeFord Williams. Putnam.



From *Shooting Kabul* by N.H. Senzai. Simon & Schuster.



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***The Tooth Fairy Meets El Ratón Pérez.*** René Colato Láinez. Ill. Tom Lintern. Tricycle.

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## More About Teachers' Choices

Thank you to the 2010–2011 IRA Teachers' Choices Committee and review teams. The committee members were Marjie Podzielinski (Chair), Jesús Cortez, Cathy Denman, Joyce Gulley, Jessica Hollon, and Patrice Kraus. Regional coordinators for the field test were

- East—Janet Shaw and Susan Thompson-White
- Great Lakes—Cathy Voelker, April Wulber (trainee)
- Plains—Jan McConnell, Cheryl Roberts, and Pam Ryan (trainee)
- Rocky Mountains—Lynne Nevriy
- Southeast—Linda Armstrong
- Southwest—Tanna Clark and Jane Marie Dewailly (trainee)
- West—Barbara Low and Belinda Louie (trainee)

For more information on the Teachers' Choices list or to learn how to become involved visit [www.reading.org/Resources/Booklists/TeachersChoices.aspx](http://www.reading.org/Resources/Booklists/TeachersChoices.aspx).

For over 50 years, the International Reading Association has been the trusted provider of ongoing professional development for teachers. IRA is committed to advancing worldwide literacy by improving reading instruction, disseminating research and information about reading, and encouraging the lifetime reading habit. Additional information about IRA can be found at [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org).

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