

# Skipping Stones

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**A Multicultural Literary Magazine**

Reviews of the 2016  
Multicultural & Nature Books



Nature Haiku • 2016 Book Awards • Celebrate America

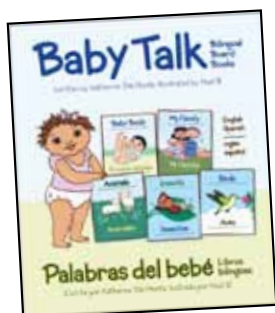
# The 2016 Skipping Stones Honor Awards



Each year, the **Skipping Stones Honor Awards** recognize outstanding multicultural, international, and nature awareness books, and teaching resources. For this 23rd year of the awards program, we recommend 27 books and three teaching resources. These books promote an understanding of cultures, cultivate cooperation, and encourage a deeper understanding of the world's diversity. Many of these books also encourage ecological richness, respect for multiple viewpoints, and closer relationships within human societies. These unique titles offer an exciting way to explore and understand diverse cultures, places, societies, and their histories.

We wish to thank the many readers and reviewers who helped us select and review these great reading adventures and learning experiences for readers of all ages.

## Multicultural & International Books



**Baby Talk Bilingual Board Books/ Palabras del bebé Libros Bilingües**, by Katherine Del Monte, illustr. Noël Ill. A set of five books. [LecturaBooks.com](http://LecturaBooks.com)

This collection of board books introduces the English and Spanish language through the use of first words for babies. There are five books in the collection, covering topics that are always of interest to little ones: Baby Body—*El Cuerpo del Bebé*; Animals—*Animales*; My Family—*Mi Familia*; Birds—*Aves*; and Insects—*Insectos*. The big, brightly colored illustrations are cute, and definitely grab the attention. The translations are precise and literal, allowing for ease in word identification and language comparison. The use of board book pages indicates that this collection is for very young ones. Some of the books in the collection work with full sentences, which is in contrast to the majority of the books that work with single words. Despite this minor inconsistency, the collection is overall an excellent resource for parents wanting their children to have a bilingual reading experience.

—Diana Lynne Hoffman, parent and author.

**I am Hapa!** by Crystal Smith; photos: Michael Satoshi Garcia. *English/Spanish/Chinese*. [Eastwestdiscovery.com](http://Eastwestdiscovery.com).

This delightful trilingual picture book focuses on loving yourself as a unique being. The close ups of happy faces make smiles contagious. The phonetic spelling of Chinese makes it exceptionally accessible for ALL read-

ers. This portal to a third language breaks us free of binary thinking and unleashes a confidence for learning new word sounds. The theme of love and acceptance of differences helps kids take pride in their unique version of self and family, particularly for multiracial children. You'll want to read this book with your young ones over and over as the acceptance and love radiates from the pages.

—Michelle Barnes, parent and educator.



**Lo que mi abuela me dijo/ What My Grandmother Told Me: Practical Wisdom from Spanish Proverbs and Sayings** by Maria Paz Eleizegui Weir, illustr. Mahala Urrea. All ages. [www.unmpress.com](http://www.unmpress.com).

As a student in India, I was always intrigued by the many proverbs I heard in Marathi and Hindi, the two languages I grew up with. They have been etched in my memory permanently. Proverbs are much like photographs; they convey a wealth of information in an easy to understand manner. Naturally, when I saw this wonderful collection of Spanish proverbs and sayings, I fell in love with it. I am well-versed with Spanish, so I have read the book many times, both the *dichos* in Spanish and their English versions, and I have enjoyed browsing through the pages





each time. I think proverbs are like windows that shine a bright light on the culture and life of a community.

These Spanish proverbs and their English translations are presented in six chapters: Childhood, Friendship, Manners, Work and Strife, Wisdom, and Love and Destiny. There are also two chapters, in the beginning and at the end, that offer a context as well as an epilogue to the book. The author grew up in the city of Manila (in the tropical country of the Philippines in Asia). Most of her childhood until the age of 13 was spent with her Spanish grandmother (*abuelita*) who spoke Spanish with her. It is during this time when the author was living with her *abuelita* that she learned these *dichos*—and the essential truths of living with, and relating to, others contained in these colloquial sayings.

*“Del dicho al hecho, hay mucho trecho,”* reminded her *abuelita* often, “It’s a long way between what you say and what you do.”

Comic illustrations on each spread add color to the bilingual text. Recommended for all students of life!

—Arun N. Toké, executive editor.

**El Día de los Muertos/The Remembering Day** by/por Pat Mora, illustr. Robert Casilla. Ages 7–9. [www.artepublicopress.com](http://www.artepublicopress.com)

Mama Alma, Bella’s grandmother, teaches Bella from the time she is a baby. As Bella grows up she learns to garden, to weave, to identify and collect medicinal plants, and much other wisdom from Mama Alma. And she begins to teach others. As Mama Alma grows older, she reminisces with Bella about all their special times together. And she repeatedly asks Bella to plan a special remembering day for her when she is gone. Most importantly, Mama Alma often tells Bella that she will always be with her, even when she cannot see or touch her anymore. In this way she prepares Bella for her death. This book has both English and Spanish on each page. It beautifully imparts both the importance of family in the Mexican culture, and the custom of honoring the ancestors on The Day of the Dead.

—Yvonne Young, storyteller, grandmother and retired teacher.



**My Tata’s Remedies/Los remedios de mi tata** by Roni Capin Rivera-Ashford, illustr. Antonio Castro L. Ages 7–11. [www.cinco-puntos.com](http://www.cinco-puntos.com)

Aaron’s *Tata* has been helping people feel better for as long as he can remember. This includes his family, Aaron, and even the neighbors, if they ask! His healing power comes from his shed, shelves filled to the top with jars of medicinal plants and flowers that Tata has gathered. Aaron asks him one day to teach him about his remedies, and Tata is more than happy to oblige.

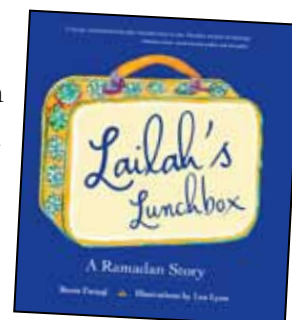
As the day goes on, Aaron finds that there is always a cure for every patient, which there seem to be a lot of today! People come from all over the neighborhood for help. Aaron’s brother’s itchy feet, the neighbor’s baby with diaper rash, the mailman with a cold, another neighbor with a burn, Aaron’s sister with a fever, and even a cut from a knife. While many of these are cured with flowers, medicinal plants, and even fruit, sometimes, Tata tells Aaron, a hug can be enough too. Through all this Aaron realizes how lucky he is to learn all this from Tata, and is inspired to improve to be a great healer, just like him.

While many cultural remedies are only passed down by oral tradition, **My Tata’s Remedies** presents a unique and long lasting way to keep these traditions alive through its lively watercolor paintings. In the back is a comprehensive list of all the medicinal plants used, giving the book even more practical use. This book offers a wonderful opportunity to bond while helping others.

—Elizabeth Ponce Del Valle, student intern.

**Lailah’s Lunchbox: A Ramadan Story** by Reem Faruqi, illustr. Lea Lyon. Ages 5–9. [Tilburyhouse.com](http://Tilburyhouse.com)

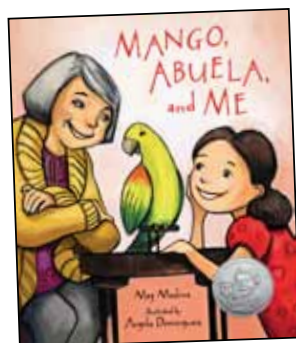
Last year, Lailah made the big move from Abu Dhabi to Peachtree City, Georgia, with her family. Now her mom says she is old enough to fast for Ramadan, but there is one problem. No one else in her class is fasting. Her classmates don’t even



know what Ramadan is. Lailah's mom writes a note for her teacher, but Lailah is too embarrassed to show it to anyone. She wishes her friends, Hend and Ishrat, were with her, because they would know what to do. Ultimately, Lailah has to learn to accept herself, a message relevant not only for children fasting at Ramadan, but anyone who has struggled to fit in.

The story of Lailah's Lunchbox, the author explains at the end, is in fact based on the author's own experiences. And the beautiful watercolor illustrations bring the story to life for even the youngest readers.

—Daemion Lee, *Returned PCV and editorial staff.*



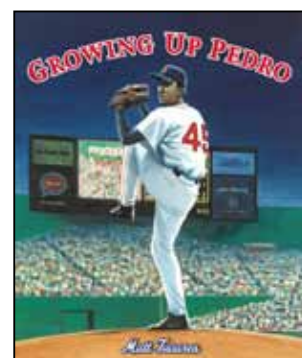
**Mango, Abuela, and Me** by Meg Medina, illustr. Angela Dominguez. Ages 5–8. [www.candlewick.com](http://www.candlewick.com)

This cheerfully illustrated book outlines the trajectory of when a person moves to a new land and learns a new language. When the grandmother first comes to live

with them, the little girl is unsure how to communicate with her, and feels shy with the “far-away grandmother.” The expressive faces of the illustrations show the frustration and occasional sadness that can accompany that transition. Soon the little girl uses her experience with her best friend at school, who used to speak no English, to draw her grandmother into the family and sharing their two cultures. The granddaughter becomes her English teacher and tells her the words for everything surrounding them, and even goes so far as to put a sign on everything like they did in class for her friend. The joy that erupts when they can finally communicate takes the form of a pet parrot, providing a meta-experience as they teach the new pet words from both languages! The thoughtful, colorful illustrations mirror the hope and accomplishment of this new family member finding her place in a new land.

—Michelle Barnes, *parent and educator*

**Growing up Pedro: How the Martinez Brothers Made It from the Dominican Republic All the Way to the Major Leagues** by Matt Tavares. Ages 8–12. Candlewick Press.



This is a very inspiring true story about a boy who is born in the Dominican Republic, and he and his older brother Ramon both grow up to be pitchers on Major-League Baseball teams. The Dominican Republic is a very poor country, and their family couldn't afford much. So Ramon and Pedro practiced pitching baseballs at mangoes! Because of their shared passion for baseball, the two brothers helped each other to become successful and famous.

Their hard work and determination paid off, literally and figuratively. When Ramon and Pedro retired from baseball as multi-millionaires, they came back to the Dominican Republic to be with their family, and to help improve the lives of kids there. They founded the Pedro Martinez and Brothers Foundation in 1988, and together they have built schools, baseball fields, and other structures to benefit young people and communities.

I thought this story was a great example of working towards a goal and achieving it. It inspired me to work harder at the things I'm good at and passionate about. This story also reminded me of myself and my brother, because we both share a love of chess. I would recommend this book for ages 8+ and especially for people that follow baseball.

—Owen McCoy, *13, homeschooler.*

**The Green Musician** by Mahvash Shahegh, illustr. Claire Ewart. Ages 6–9. [www.wisdomtalespress.com](http://www.wisdomtalespress.com).

People have always been fascinated by stories, and bookstores today are always filled with the latest novels. Our collective thirst for stories is a constant, and while the underlying themes may not change much over time, the details of each narrative are what pull us in. But some stories withstand the test of time, compelling readers for centuries or even millennia. The Green Musician relates one such story that first originated over 1,000 years ago, in Persia,



and makes it appealing and accessible to young children.

Mahvash Shahengh, who retells this ancient tale from the “Book of Kings,” was inspired by her grandchildren to share this cultural treasure with young readers. As an expert in Persian literature, she has skillfully adapted the story of Barbad, which is based on a historical figure who served a king named Khosrow Parvez. The story begins with Barbad as a young man growing up far from the king’s palace, dreaming of playing his music for the king. He soon realizes that his greatest obstacle is the king’s current musician, Sarkash, who prevents Barbad from meeting the king. Fortunately, Barbad finds an ally who helps him to get the king’s attention in a creative way. While the truth underlying this charming tale makes it even more entertaining for the reader, the personal qualities of Barbad are what really stand out: his enthusiasm for sharing his gift of music, his unfailing optimism, and his perseverance in overcoming his adversary.

Since many young children may never get the opportunity to travel internationally, a book like this helps them to imagine far away places, and to appreciate their classmates who have a different cultural heritage than their own. Some kids may even be inspired by this book to explore other cultures and languages in more depth, and perhaps even to travel to the mid-East someday. And for American children with Persian heritage, this book helps to connect them with the cultural legacy of their ancestors. With enchanting illustrations, timeless themes, and a likeable main character, readers are sure to enjoy *The Green Musician*!

—Sarah Mendonca, educator and parent.

**Pine and the Winter Sparrow** Retold by Alexis York Lumbard, illustr. Beatriz Vidal. Ages 4-8. [www.wisdomtalespress.com](http://www.wisdomtalespress.com).



When Sparrow’s family flies south for the winter he must stay behind because of an injured wing. Creator rewards Pine, the only tree willing to help Sparrow after his family leaves.

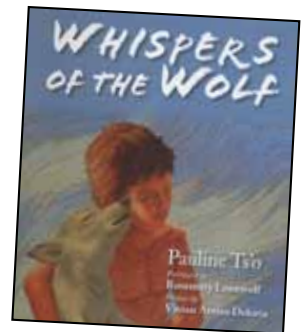
Beautiful illustrations by Betriz Vidal enhance the story

and make this book a visual delight.

The book was inspired by a Native American tale “Why the Trees Lose Their Leaves.” Cherokee storyteller and community and school specialist Robert Louis gave his blessing to this retelling of the story, which was probably told in different versions by several east coast tribes. **Pine and the Winter Sparrow** would be a desirable addition to any children’s library.

—Yvonne Young, storyteller, retired teacher.

**Whispers of the Wolf** by Pauline Ts’o, illustr. Pauline Ts’o. Ages 5 and up. [www.wisdomtalespress.com](http://www.wisdomtalespress.com).



Two Birds is a young Pueblo boy, quiet and shy, and he avoids participating in the footraces with the other boys. One day, Two Birds finds a tiny wolf pup, weak and sick, and he brings it home to feed and care for it. Gradually, the young wolf grows stronger. Now, the strongest runner among all the boys, Gray Bear, begins to go out hunting with Two Birds and his wolf. The two boys, opposite in temperament as they may be, establish an unlikely friendship.

But at night, Two Bird’s canine companion hears the cries of other wolves in the distance. Two Bird needs to make a decision. And he wonders if his friendship with Gray Bear will last.

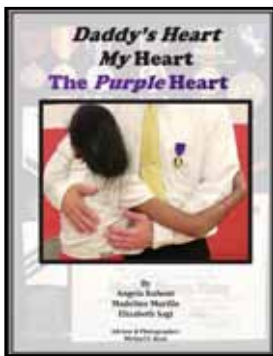
Set in the American Southwest 500 years in the past, this book has remarkable illustrations, bringing alive the light and color of the arid desert landscapes.

—Daemion Lee, Returned PCV, editorial staff.

**Daddy’s Heart, My Heart, The Purple Heart** by Angela Kohout, Madeline Murillo and Elizabeth Sagi. Ages 8-13. Available at [wwwcreatespace.com](http://wwwcreatespace.com)

The story is told from the perspective of Jewel, a shy girl preparing for her first day in a new school. Meanwhile, her dad has just returned from serving in the war. Unfortunately, Jewel’s dad is not the same when he comes home. He is highly reactive, paranoid, and nervous. Jewel ends up running into problems when trying to make new friends, for they are





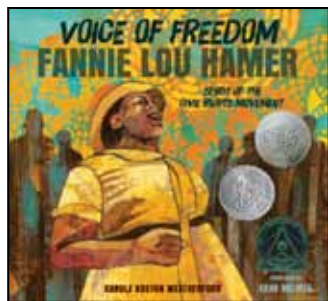
afraid of her dad and constantly tease Jewel about it. After seeing how miserable Jewel has become, her teacher invites her father to speak at the Veteran's Day school assembly about why he is the way he is.

This short story does a very good job of teaching readers about the impact of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). It explains the disorder in a way that is easy for young children to understand. Not only does this story educate kids on PTSD, it also encourages them to appreciate all of the war veterans that have risked their lives for their country.

**Daddy's Heart, My Heart, The Purple Heart** is a heartwarming tale showing the love between a father and his daughter as well as the strength and courage of a war veteran dealing with a weakening condition.

—Aiyanna Baker, high school student intern.

**Voice of Freedom, Fannie Lou Hamer: Spirit of the Civil Rights Movement** by Carole Boston Weatherford, illustr. Ekua Holmes. Ages 9–13. [www.candlewick.com](http://www.candlewick.com)



**Voice of Freedom, Fannie Lou Hamer** captures the spirit of Fannie Lou Hamer, who became nationally known as the spirit of the civil rights movement.

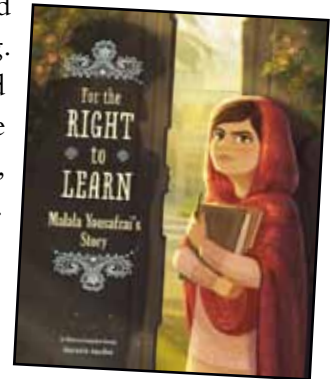
The author's use of the first person enables us to feel the pain and trauma Mrs. Hamer experienced throughout her life. She was the twentieth child of sharecroppers in Mississippi. In sixth grade she dropped out of school to work with her family in the cotton fields. Probably no one was as surprised as she was that she became a national civil rights leader. There are other books about Fannie Lou Hamer, but this one is particularly useful for students and teachers. A timeline in the back details important events in both her life and civil rights in 20th century America. This excellent book is a wonderful tribute to the extraordinary life of Fannie Lou Hamer.

It was selected as a Caldecott Honor Book.

—Yvonne Young, storyteller, retired teacher.

**For The Right to Learn: Malala Yousafzai's Story** by Rebecca Langston-George, illustr. Janna Bock. Ages 9–12. [www.Capstoneyoungreaders.com](http://www.Capstoneyoungreaders.com)

Malala loved to read, loved school, and loved learning. She studied hard and could speak and write her native Pashto, English, and Urdu, Pakistan's national language. But the Taliban who controlled the area were against letting girls go to school. They also forced women to wear the *burqas*. This garment only allowed a woman's eyes and hands to show.



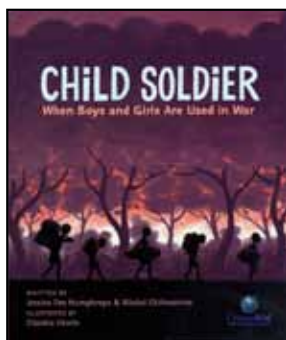
With great courage and determination Malala kept attending school, she continued speaking up for girls' right to an education and against the Taliban. One day while riding the school bus with her classmates, a gunman jumped on the bus and shot her and two of her friends. She would have died, but because she was flown to United Kingdom for medical care and because people all over the world prayed for her, she survived. On December 10, 2014, at age 17 she became the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner.

**For The Right to Learn** is beautifully illustrated in bright watercolors and provides just the right amount of information for younger readers. There is a large photograph of Malala now and current information concerning her activities. This outstanding book includes a tiny glossary and index in the back.

—Paulette Ansari, storyteller and grandmother.

**Child Soldier: When Boys and Girls Are Used in War** by Jessica Dee Humphreys & Michel Chikwanine, illustr. Claudia Dávila. Ages 10–15. [www.kidscanpress.com](http://www.kidscanpress.com)

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a rebel group kidnaps Michel, a five-year-old boy, while he was playing with his friends. The rebels often kidnap innocent children to use as soldiers. Michel, along with many other children, is tortured and drugged. When Michel finally escapes the rebels and returns home to his fam-

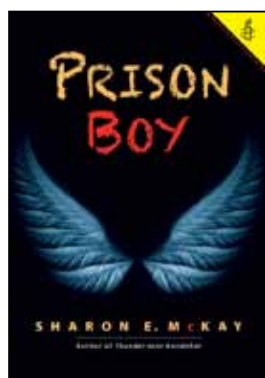


ily, his life never goes back to how it was before. Michel has to figure out how to live his life normally again while he and his father try to stop the rebels and prove their crimes to a court.

This graphic novel reflects the sad truth of the political mis-

haps in other countries. It may inspire readers who live in wealthy countries to take a stand for what they believe will make a world a safer place. The back of the book provides a section on Michel and his current project of raising awareness about poverty and conflict in other countries, as well as a list of organizations that allow people to get involved.

—Aiyanna Baker, high school student intern.



**Prison Boy**, a novel by Sharon E. McKay. Ages 11-17. [www.annickpress.com](http://www.annickpress.com)

In the tear-jerking novel *Prison Boy*, a baby named Kai is thrown into the hands of a poverty-stricken orphanage in an unnamed developing country. He is immediately taken into care by Pax, a seven-year-old boy, and

Bell, the caretaker of the orphanage. As Kai grows up, everyone notices that he has a great amount of intelligence, and is very well ahead of other kids in his age group. Pax wants nothing more than to protect Kai and get him the education he deserves, which leads him to take a risky job with a stranger named Mister. This job leads to the Pax and Kai being set up with a bomb, and then being arrested and charged with being terrorists. The rest of the novel focuses on Pax and Kai trying to escape from the hellish guards and trying to establish a stable life for themselves.

This story brings a powerful message to the readers regarding courage and love. It shows how two young boys have to deal with imprisonment and torture. Unfortunately, this story is not unrealistic, for many countries have no laws that protect children from being subject to punishment in prison. They are unable to fend for themselves, so they just have to deal with the

torture until the guards get what they want to hear out of the children. **Prison Boy** gives a child's perspective to the tragedy of child imprisonment that goes on in other countries.

—Aiyanna Baker, high school student intern.

**Stella by Starlight**, a novel by Sharon M. Draper. Ages 10-14. [Atheneum;kids.Simonandschuster.com](http://Atheneum;kids.Simonandschuster.com).



Stella was in the fifth grade the night she and her younger brother, Jojo, witnessed the Klan burn a cross on the other side of the pond. The year was 1932 in a poor little town called Bumblebee located in North Carolina.

During the Great Depression many people struggled to make ends meet. The colored people survived by helping each other, prayer, gleaning the surrounding woods, and with a heavy use of the barter system. The election was approaching and a few men (Stella's father included) in the colored community decided to register to vote despite the danger.

This story is told through Stella's eyes. She doesn't understand why some white people are so mean, but, because she is supported by loving parents and community, hate does not damage her spirit.

**Stella by Starlight** is a gripping book which addresses adult problems without getting too far into the deep ugliness of segregation, racism, and spousal abuse. This novel is over 300 pages long and difficult to put down once you start reading.

—Paulette Ansari, storyteller and grandmother.

**Give Me Wings: How a Choir of Former Slaves Took on the World** by Kathy Lowinger. Ages 11-17. [www.annickpress.com](http://www.annickpress.com). ISBN 9781554517473

This wonderful history of the Jubilee Singers is a must read for anyone who has ever struggled to make a success of something against the odds. Ella Sheppard, born a slave in 1851 was very lucky to be a student at Fisk Free Colored School. But the school was on the verge of closing for lack of money. Members of the American Missionary Association (AMA), were starting schools all



over the South, believing that blacks could only be truly free if they had an education. This was also Ella's belief. Besides, she was told at an early age that she had "God's work to do." In 1866 there were many who did not want to see black people educated. This is why the Fisk Free Colored School, in Nashville

began in twenty yellowing buildings that had been thrown together during the war to serve as a military hospital. Ella was born with a deep love of music and a beautiful soprano voice. When her father, who was the master's half-brother and a reader himself, presented her with an old upright piano, Ella instinctively knew how to play it. She loved the idea of touring from the start, Ella saw it as God's mission for reaching people's hearts. But she had no idea just how difficult it would be.

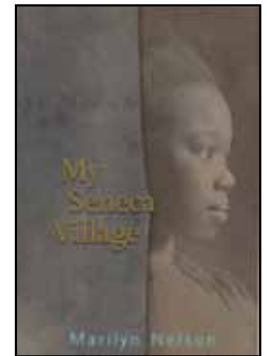
There was heavy opposition to Fisk students going out to sing in order to raise money for the struggling school. Most of the faculty refused to support because they felt it was doomed to fail. The heaviest opposition came from the parents of the teenagers. In the beginning the tour was failing due to poor travel/lodging conditions, no warm clothing, ill singers, little food or rest, public ridicule, and little money raised. Things took a turn for the better when they sang "Steal Away" at the First Church in Oberlin, Ohio. The church gave them \$130. They went on to sing in New York City and they sang for Queen Victoria in Great Britain. Afterwards the Jubilee Singers toured all of Europe, and by the time they returned home in the spring of 1874, they had earned \$50,000 for Fisk. To this very day there are Jubilee Singers representing Fisk University.

This wonderful history includes many portraits, drawings of the people, and the times. Many of the pictures are in deep colors. The book has a timeline, an extensive index, and an afterward section which explains what happened to each member of the original choir.

—Paulette Ansari, storyteller and grandmother.

**My Seneca Village** by Marilyn Nelson. Poetry. Ages 12-18. [www.namelos.com](http://www.namelos.com).

**My Seneca Village** is a unique collection of poetry



by Marilyn Nelson, an acclaimed writer, professor, and former state poet laureate. She conjures up vignettes of a multi-ethnic 19th century Manhattan village that was razed and replaced by Central Park. Each of her poems is a window that opens into a bustling, industrious community of African Americans and a motley collection of immigrant settlers whose futures were scattered to the four winds.

Together the poems form a tapestry of tender reveries, sad longings, and broken dreams that mirror the lives of a strong and self-respecting community that vanished silently in the name of urban progress.

We meet Andrew, a land-owning bootblack who buffs the shoes of well-dressed men, "his face aflame with pride"; neighbors waving flags in a parade or tending their gardens, planting for a future that would change course suddenly; Freddy the schoolboy who wonders about the fathomless skies; Obadiah, Diana, Angelina, and others whose hearts are draped in melancholy musings about freedom and the elusive hope of justice.

This is a spirit-filled journey back in time to a lost enclave of souls who shared lives of honest work, altruism, and modest aspirations. Through their eyes we are allowed a glimpse into a forgotten chapter of American history, a village called Seneca that existed for a single generation under the shadow of a great city that swallowed it without apology. There is a message of sympathy and lost yearning in this book, but we can also hear the sounds of laughter, merry-making, and the sheer joy of living.

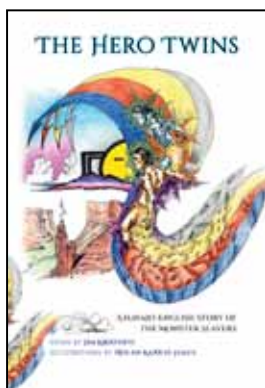
Although the style and diction are best suited for older children and adults, younger readers (ages 12 and up) will be inspired by a guided reading.

—Stephen J. Mendonça, poet, professor, and grandparent.

**The Hero Twins: A Navajo-English Story of the Monster Slayers** by Jim Kristofic, illustr. Nolan Karras James. Ages 11-15. ISBN 978-0-8263-5533-1. University of New Mexico Press. [www.unmpress.com](http://www.unmpress.com)

**The Hero Twins** tells the story of the miraculous birth and coming of age of two brothers, and their





fight against the naayéé', fear-some monsters that constantly attack the Navajo people, the Diné. This story is a re-telling of a traditional Navajo story, passed down through the ages, part of a cycle of stories that tell about the origin of the world and the reasons that things are the way they are.

It is a bilingual book, and each page has text in both Navajo and English, making it an excellent resource for those learning Navajo and offering a glimpse of how the story sounds in its original language. One interesting feature is that marks in the text show which phrases in the Navajo and English are translations of each other, helping learners identify and remember key phrases.

The story is accompanied by beautiful illustrations. In the preface, the illustrator describes how he chose colors based on the pigments that are used in sand paintings. They part of the ceremonies that traditionally accompany the retelling of these stories.

In the story, the brothers wander far and wide in search of their father, Jó'honaa'éí, the Sun. Through a series of tests, including encounters with snakes, bears, tornados, spikes and poison tobacco, the brothers prove their identities to their father. He then gives them armor and weapons to fight the naayéé', like sheet-lightening arrows, sunbeam arrows and rainbow arrows. Thus prepared, the brothers face Yé'itosh, one of the naayéé', in a final battle to prove whether or not they are able to protect the Diné.

The illustrations, representing a mixture between comic book-style illustrations and Navajo symbolism, depict the two brothers moving through semi-abstract, surreal landscapes, filled with shapes and iconography. The result is dream-like.

This story is truly multicultural, merging Navajo oral tradition with traditional English language written narrative. So this book is something unique, neither strictly belonging to the Navajo tradition or strictly to the European-American tradition. For that reason some young readers accustomed to Western-style books may find the story to be somewhat cryptic. **The**

**Hero Twins** is for grades 5-9, but it is also an excellent resource for people who want to learn more about Navajo stories.

—Daemion Lee, *Returned PCV*

**Enchanted Air:** *Two Cultures, Two Wings* by Margarita Engle. Ages 12-17. Teen.Simonandschuster.com.



**Enchanted Air** is an autobiographical account of a girl named Margarita who lives in Los Angeles but feels a strong connection to Cuba, which is her mother's homeland. The story begins when she is two years old, and ends when she's in high school.

What's unique about this book is that it's written entirely in verse.

It's a collection of poems strung together to tell a story. Sometimes, the poems are hard to understand, but the images and descriptions are very powerful.

In the book, when Margarita boards an airplane, she is in foggy, smoky, gloomy Los Angeles but when she gets off, she sees the dancing plants and sunny blue skies of Cuba. **Enchanted Air** was a really good title, because she felt that the air truly was enchanted.

There is a particular scene in the book that stands out to me, when Margarita's mami is reading to her. Her mami reads a poem by Jose Marti about growing a white rose for his enemy and his friend. Margarita, as a child, does not understand the poem, and her mami explains that it is a simple poem about forgiveness. I thought that was interesting because she wrote the whole book in verse! I guess she understands poetry a little better now.

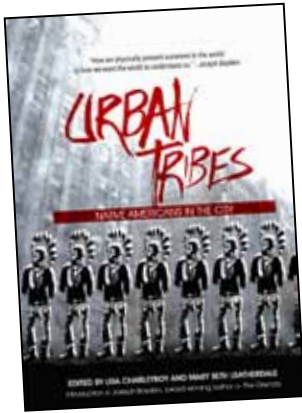
I recommend this book for readers who are 12 years or older, especially for kids who know how it feels to be pulled between two different places.

—Mary McCoy, 10, homeschooler.

**Urban Tribes:** *Native Americans in the City*, edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale. Ages 15 and up. www.annickpress.com

So just how Indian are you? That question is sometimes posed to Native people living in large cities, based

## Nature and Ecology Books



on stereotypes about isolated, rural Indian reservations. In an effort to challenge these stereotypes, the editors of this book reached out to young people 13 to 35 and asked them to share their stories about being Native in a big city. Some of the largest Native populations are in fact located in large urban centers.

The result is this collection of interviews, photographs, poems, visual art, and first-person accounts. Meet Tyson Atleo, the next in line to fill a twenty-seventh-generation Hereditary Chief's seat of the Ahousaht First Nation of the Nuu-chah-nulth people. He was born and raised in downtown Vancouver, British Columbia. And meet Travis Hebert and Craig Edes, the two members of a conscious hip-hop duo, who rap about a variety of contemporary issues from a Native perspective. Michael Woestehoff is Navajo and works as a communications specialist in Washington D.C., and Gabrielle Scrimshaw is a leading business person in Toronto, Canada. Roanna Shebala, a Diné slam poet, shares a poem about cultural appropriation of Native identity, especially via sports mascots. The book is organized in four sections: Tribal Citizens, Shattering Stereotypes, Building Bridges, and Native Renaissance.

**Urban Tribes: Native Americans in the City** is a visually oriented book, filled with photos and digital art, creating a powerful mixture of words and pictures that effectively counters the stereotypes that the editors set out to challenge.

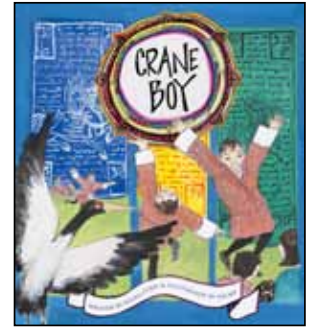
—Daemion Lee, *Returned PCV*, is on our editorial staff.

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**Crane Boy** by Diana Cohn,  
illustr. Youme. Ages 5-9.  
Cincopuntos.com

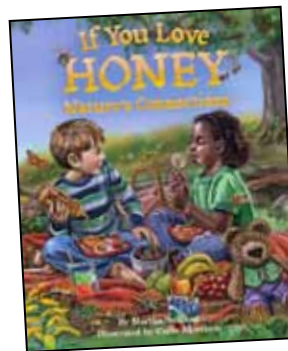


Have you ever looked at animals and just marveled at their gracefulness, beauty, or strength? Kinga has. And he really loves them, especially the cranes.

Every year Kinga waits patiently for the black-necked cranes to return to Bhutan. When they swoop past each October, they bring color to his simple life. But their numbers are gradually growing smaller. Kinga and his classmates want to protect them—but how?

Then Kinga has an idea. What if they put on a special dance for the cranes? Will that raise awareness and save these wondrous creatures? They ask the monks...and they say yes! Kinga and his classmates work hard to prepare for the big dance. But will their plan work to save the cranes? Read **Crane Boy** to find out!

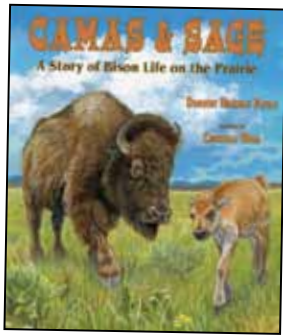
*Reviewed by Mary McCoy, 10, homeschooler.*



**If You Love Honey: Nature's Connections** by Martha Sullivan,  
illustr. Cathy Morrison. Ages  
4-9. www.dawnpub.com

The rhythm of the book “If you love \_\_\_\_\_, then you’ll love\_\_\_\_\_,” makes this book a quick read despite the fact that the pages are packed with interesting tidbits of biodiversity and ecology. The structure of sing-song repetition propels that action forward. The book comes full circle, mimicking the cyclical nature of life by beginning and ending with bees, delving into dirt, worms, and mushrooms along the way. The realistic expressions on the animals’ faces draw the reader into the tiniest facets of the web of life, and make learning their connections easy and fun. The book ends with pictures of children on a picnic in the woods, and places the reader squarely in the middle of the action of the book.

—Michelle Barnes, parent and educator.



**Camas & Sage:** *A Story of Bison Life on the Prairie* by Dorothy Hinshaw Patent, illustr. Christina Wald. Ages 7–10. Mountain Press.

**Camas and Sage.** This factual storybook has lifelike illustrations. The book combines an endearing tale with facts to make an educational sensation. The layout of the book is well done, making it easy to distinguish between the story and factual information. Readers of all ages will learn something new with this book and enjoy the simple explanation of the life of a buffalo in the northern plains.

—Diana Lynne Hoffman, parent and author

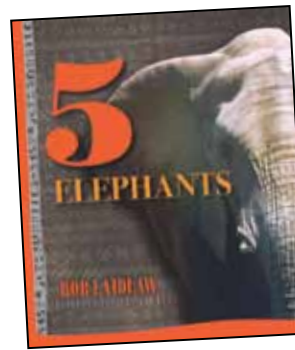


**Animal Hero Kids:** *Voices for the Voiceless* by Susan Hargreaves. Ages 10–15. Animalherokids.org

This wonderful guidebook encourages young readers to help protect the lives of animals who cannot protect themselves. It is complete with countless inspiring stories of kids who have helped save the lives of many animals, as well as promote awareness for the cause. The book is divided in three sections—Companion Animal Hero Kids, Farm Animal Hero Kids, and Wildlife Animal Hero Kids. Readers get to know animal abuse issues, for example, Circus Elephants. Each chapter contains passages and quotes from young animal advocates, suggested activities for kids who want to help spread awareness, did you know facts, and even yummy vegan recipes.

**Animal Hero Kids** is very empowering and will make you want to jump up and run to your nearest animal shelter. Not only do kids contribute to the Animal Hero Kids foundation, but famous animal advocates like Sir Paul McCartney and Russell Simmons also weigh in their messages and offer tips on how to become an animal hero. Readers of all ages can become animal heroes and will want to after reading this guidebook.

—Aiyanna Baker, high school student intern.



**5 Elephants** by Rob Laidlaw. Ages 10–15. [www.fitzhenry.ca](http://www.fitzhenry.ca)

Did you know that one tooth of an adult elephant is as large as a brick and may weigh eleven pounds? Adult elephants have only four teeth in their mouth at a time. This book covers all the known facts about elephants. The personal biographies of several different elephants are told so well that they become friends long before you get to the end of the narrative. Partly because of this research work, today we see the elephant as an endangered species. Poachers who desire to sell ivory on the black market, destruction of their natural habitats, and elephant abuse in general, all have contributed to its endangerment. The first elephant sanctuary was created in Tennessee. This sanctuary has expanded to 2,700 acres, making it the largest natural habitat elephant facility in the world.

There are colorful photographs on every page of this large book. A few black and white photographs are made more attractive by colorful borders. This chapter book has an excellent balance between the past and the present in the fourteen chapters presented. An index, glossary, bibliography, and a list of internet web sites for more information are included in the back of the book.

—Paulette Ansari, storyteller and grandmother.

### *Skipping Stones Multicultural Magazine*

In addition to the annual book awards, each issue of **Skipping Stones** magazine also recommends about a dozen multicultural and nature awareness books for all ages.



## Teaching Resources



### **Rhythm and Resistance:**

*Teaching Poetry for Social Justice*, edited by Linda Christensen and Dyan Watson. All grades. [www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org)

Students often dislike lessons about poetry, although maybe not as much as the teachers who have to teach these resistant students. And the editors

of **Rhythm and Resistance** acknowledge this, commenting that ‘resistance’ in the title was not intended to refer to students’ attitudes about poetry. Rather, it is about resisting accepted notions of teaching poetry, resisting the push to standardize, and resisting the injustice we see in our daily lives, as many outspoken poets have done in the past.

Students often see poetry as dry and obscure and even boring, which is the opposite of what it should be. It is the teacher’s task to bring poetry to life in the classroom. And that is what **Rhythm and Resistance** is about. It is a collection of essays written by teachers about how to teach poetry in an exciting and socially conscious way. These aren’t theoretical essays; in each one, a teacher shares a lesson plan and their personal reflections on how they go about teaching it.

The trick, as always, is to make poetry relevant to the students. And this is where **Rhythm and Resistance** focuses right from the beginning. For example the chapter “Roots” includes lessons that use poems as models for students to make their own poems, these “model” poems are simple, compelling, easy-to-relate-to, such as “Raised by Woman” by Kelly Norman Ellis and “Where I’m From” by George Ella Lyon. The chapter “Celebrations” includes a lesson called *Aqui y Alla* about writing bilingual poetry. And one teacher uses paint chips from the hardware store with her first and second grade students to start honest discussions about skin tone and self-acceptance.

The chapter “Standing Up in Troubled Times: Creating a culture of conscience” includes lessons that ask serious questions about race and economic inequality. Although these are very political questions, the lessons in this chapter don’t take explicit sides in the culture

wars. Rather, the emphasis is on asking questions about the issues and relating it students’ lives. For example, “Jorge the Church Janitor Finally Quits” by Martin Espada is the starting point for discussing the status of low paid workers in society. And “Forty-One Bullets Off-Broadway” by Willie Perdomo is included in a lesson about white violence against young black men.

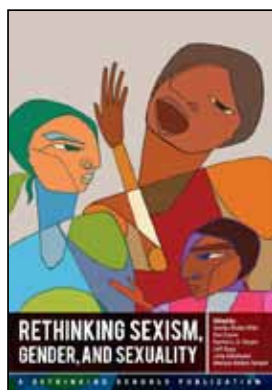
Many of these lessons that the teachers share are personal, which, to a certain extent, is a drawback. These are lessons that work for these teachers, based on their own personalities and their own interests and passions. But whether one decides to use these exact lessons out of the book, or not, **Rhythm and Resistance** has a wealth of ideas about rethinking the ways that teachers teach poetry.

—Daemion Lee, *Returned PCV*, editorial staff.

**Rethinking Sexism, Gender, and Sexuality** edited by Annika Butler-Wall, Kim Cosier, et al. All grades. [www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org)

**Rethinking Sexism, Gender and Sexuality** is a not a textbook with academic jargon, but a series of essays by working educators about how they have addressed a range of thorny issues regarding gender and sexuality. What to do when a male teenager wants to wear a dress to school? How to explain gay marriage? What to do about the girl who everyone thinks is a boy? How to teach LGBTQ issues in extremely conservative communities? What are the options for gay and lesbian teachers? This text does not provide any ultimate answers to these questions. Instead, these authors provide inspiration and advice for engaging more confidently and effectively with these issues. Especially as national discussion over gender and sexuality continue—like the current transgender-and-the-bathroom debate—a book like this is more essential than ever. Most of these essays have a very personal tone, as these educators discuss moments in their careers that have been challenging, eye-opening and heart-breaking and hilarious, sometimes all at the same time.

The main chapters of the book include, “Our Classrooms,” “Our Curriculum,” “When Teachers Come Out,” “Beyond the Classroom,” and “Teacher Education, Continuing Education.” The topics range



far and wide, from a preschool teacher recounting her experiences teaching about relationships in “4-Year-Olds Discuss Love and Marriage,” to a professor of education discussing how to prepare teachers in “It’s Not Appropriate!’ Sexual orientation in teacher preparation curriculum.” Many of the essays have a list of further resources at

the end, for those wishing to learn more about a particular issue. Some of the authors discuss lesson plans, but for the most part the essays focus on the teachers’ own reflections on how to teach effectively and engage with students on these very difficult issues. As noted in the book, some teachers say they struggle with how to move from tacit personal support for students struggling with issues like gender identity, to incorporating such issues in the curriculum. The general aim of this book is exactly that.

Many of these debates about gender and sexuality are often framed in political terms, dividing people into “us and them.” However, regardless of personal beliefs, it is true that the dominant mores of society are changing more quickly than ever before, e.g. the rapid transition of gay marriage from the margins to the law of the land. And the world that children are now learning about is much different than the one that teachers and other educators experienced as young people. For that reason, **Rethinking Sexism, Gender and Sexuality** is vital resource for all educators. As one of the editors notes in the introduction, “It’s a mistake to think that silence is neutral.”

—Daemion Lee, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer.

**A History of Civilization in 50 Disasters** by Gale Eaton; Phillip Hoose, series editor. Upper grades. [www.tilburyhouse.com](http://www.tilburyhouse.com)

When given the choice of which book to review, the title of this one stood out to me. I live in Oregon, and right now there is increasing risk of earthquakes, volcanoes, and tsunamis in the state. If it’s going to happen, I might as well know what to do. (I guess it also counts as studying world history.)

The author did a fantastic job of compiling information and photographs to support the main event of each chapter. It was interesting that several of the events I had never even heard of. The book showed me that government tended to blame foreigners or minorities for the disasters, even when sometimes it was unknowingly of their own doing.

Another thing that surprised me was that the disasters that took more lives were not volcanoes or earthquakes. More often than not, it was sickness, or an outbreak of a disease. (The Bubonic Plague, for example, killed about 1/3 of Europe’s population.)

When the volcanoes and earthquakes did happen, they usually gave weeks or even months of warning, and the most damage happened when people decided not to evacuate. (That’s one piece of information I can use! When they tell me to evacuate, I will!)

I really enjoyed this book, and I hope the reader will, too. I would recommend it for ages 12 and up. It can also be used as a teaching resource in a classroom.

—Owen McCoy, 13, homeschooler.



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