

# Skipping Stones

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A Multicultural Literary Magazine

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Reviews of the 2015 Multicultural & Nature Books

Nature Haiku  
Best Books for 2015  
Children of the Americas  
2015 Celebrate America Contest

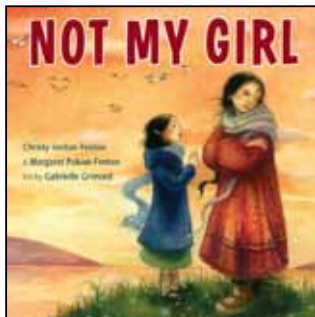
# The 2015 Skipping Stones Honor Awards



Each year, the **Skipping Stones Honor Awards** recognize outstanding multicultural, international and nature awareness books and teaching resources. This year, we are recommending 25 books and five teaching resources. These books promote an understanding of cultures, cultivate cooperation and encourage a deeper understanding of the world's diversity. They 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 and International Books



**Not My Girl** by Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton, illustr. Gabrielle Grimard. Annick Press, Ages 5-9. [www.annickpress.com](http://www.annickpress.com). ISBN: 9781554516247

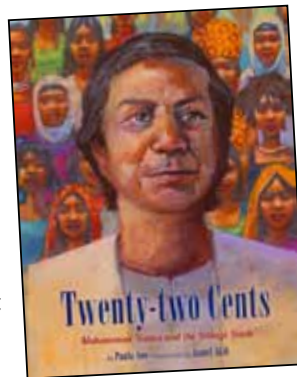
**Not My Girl** is a picture book that excellently explains the struggles of an Inuit girl named Margaret who was forced to leave her home for an Indian boarding school in northern Canada. This is a true story from the author Margaret Pokiak-Fenton's childhood, and begins with her arriving home to her family after a two-year separation. At the boarding school she learned how to recite verses and make her bed, but she forgot many of the skills valued by her family, such as setting traps, skinning hares, plucking geese, and most importantly, their own language.

The story begins with Margaret hopping off of a boat and reuniting with her family, only to have her mother harshly say: "Not my girl." This statement sets the precedent that she is not one of her family any more. Even the family dog will not come near her because she does not have a familiar scent, and she is not allowed to play with the neighboring children.

The majority of the story details Margaret's path to being re-accepted by her family and Inuit culture. She has to re-learn the language and customs of her people, as well as convince her family that she is once again one of them. This re-acceptance is clear when

her father trusts her to control a team of sled dogs. **Not My Girl** clearly shows the consequences of separating Inuit children from their families to go to school, and expecting them to easily assimilate back into the Inuit culture. This book is recommended for all children, so they can gain a better perspective on the hardships that were experienced by countless Native people as a dominant white culture was forced upon them.

—Molly K Zaninovich, student intern, Univ. of Oregon.



**Twenty-Two Cents: Muhammad Yunus and the Village Bank** by Paula Yoo, illustr. Jamel Akib. Ages 6-9. *Lee & Low*, [www.leeandlow.com](http://www.leeandlow.com). ISBN 978-1-60060-658-8

This inspiring book shows what one human being can accomplish to make a difference in the lives of many people in the world. **Twenty-two Cents** was written by Paula Yoo, who met and interviewed Muhammad Yunus in 2009. Jamel Akib's beautiful paintings help us understand the circumstances in both the life of Muhammad Yunus and those he helped.

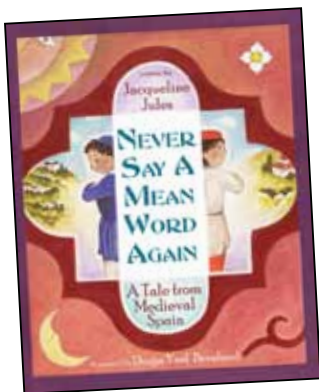
From childhood Yunus wanted to help those who lived in poverty. He became a university professor of economics in Bangladesh, hoping to find a way out for people trapped in the cycle of poverty. In 1976, he met Sufiya Begum, who wove beautiful bamboo stools to feed her children. But each time she created these stools, she had to borrow twenty-two cents for the

materials from a *mahajon*—money lender—and after selling the stool, she had to pay it back with high interest. The two cents profit that remained did not allow her to buy food and materials, forcing her to borrow more money.

Sufiya's predicament prompted Yunus to approach banks to help her and other women. When these attempts failed, Yunus launched Grameen Bank (Villagers' Bank) to offer women like Sufiya small, low-interest loans. After overcoming the difficulties of persuading the women to sign up for the program, Grameen Bank flourished. Over the years, such micro-credit from Grameen Banks have helped nearly twelve million people worldwide.

The 2006 Nobel Peace Prize was jointly awarded to Mohammed Yunus and Grameen Bank. Yunus still envisions a world without poverty and works tirelessly to achieve that goal.

—Yvonne Young, storyteller, grandmother and educator.

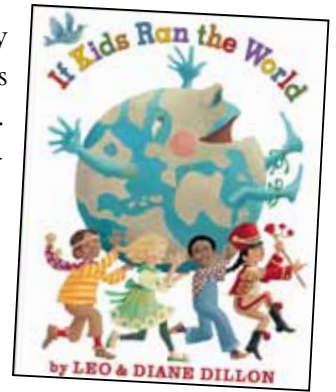


**Never Say A Mean Word Again:** *A Tale from Medieval Spain* by Jacqueline Jules, illustr. Durga Yael Bernhard. Ages 5-9. Wisdom Tales, www.wisdomtalespress.com. ISBN 978-1-937786-20-5

**Never Say A Mean Word Again** is a delightful picture book which models conflict resolution, and cross-cultural and cross-class friendship for children. Samuel, the Muslim Vazier's (minister's) son, accidentally bumps into Hamza, the son of a Jewish tax collector, in the courtyard. This spills water which sloshes into Hamza's dinner plate, soiling his white tunic with lamb sauce. When Samuel tries to apologize, Hamza calls him names and runs away. Samuel asks his father to punish Hamza, but the vazier tells Samuel he must settle this himself so that Hamza never says a mean word again. Samuel makes several plans, but none of them work out. However, the surprise ending shows the vazier that Samuel had indeed settled the problem.

—Yvonne Young, storyteller, grandmother and educator.

**If Kids Ran the World** by Leo and Diane Dillon. Ages 4-8. Blue Sky Press, www.scholastic.com. ISBN 978-0-545-44196-4



What if children had the power to rule the world? The book **If Kids Ran the World** seeks to answer this question along with encouraging children to participate in their community. The book outlines the ways in which kids would make the world a better place, with ideas ranging from building tree houses to making sure everyone receives proper medical attention. It also promotes cultural acceptance among individuals of different backgrounds, beliefs, and ethnicities by depicting children of different nationalities playing together. These illustrations use soft watercolor, with each image emphasizing teamwork and collaboration. **If Kids Ran the World** is great for teaching children the importance of cooperation, and introduces them to different ways they can become more involved in their society. This heart-warming book ultimately reminds readers how the innocence of childhood can be a tool to create peace and to make the world a more exciting place.

—Sima Anekonda, student intern, Univ. of Oregon.

**Lighting the Earth** by Diana Lynne Hoffman, illustr. Karen Brough. Ages 5-10. Aurora Books, www.ecojusticepress.com. ISBN 978-0-9891296-4-0

In **Lighting the Earth**, a little girl named Sashi grows up in the dry terrains of Africa with her mother near a beautiful river. In this story, Sashi's mother tells her that everyone's purpose in life is to be a "light on Earth." Upon hearing this, Sashi is forced to figure out what that means and how to become a bright light that illuminates the world.

When her mother first tells her to be a light on Earth, Sashi thinks of the brightest light she knows of: the sun. She stares at the sun all day, trying to find ways of capturing its light to make her

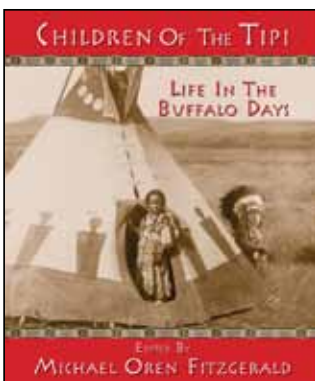


mother proud. But once her mother explains that the light must come from within, like a flame burning inside one's soul, Sashi starts to dream of swallowing fire, causing her to wake up with bellyaches. The only way she can get rid of these aches is by jumping into the river near her home in order to cool off. Since Sashi still misunderstands how to be a light on Earth, her mother continues to explain that one's light is brightest when they are doing something they love, because that is the truest expression of who they are. After some thinking, Sashi finally realizes that her biggest passion and source of joy comes from being in the river. Her love for water causes her to dedicate her life to preserving the beauty of different rivers around the world.

This book includes images that use watercolor and sketches to depict Sashi and her mother near the river. These illustrations bring life to the idea that pursuing one's passion can lead to a lifetime of happiness. For Sashi that meant protecting rivers, but the overall moral of the story teaches readers to take action and do something they care about. This beautiful coming of age story is a short read that holds a great message for kids who are still trying to find what they love to do.

—*Sima Anekonda, student intern, Univ. of Oregon.*

**Children Of The Tipi:** *Life In The Buffalo Days*, Michael Oren Fitzgerald, ed. Ages 4-8. Wisdom Tales, www.wisdomtalespress.com. ISBN 978-1-937786-09-0



Through the combination of historical photographs and quotations from real people, Michael Oren Fitzgerald brings to life the American West of the early 20th century, educating the reader on

a variety of subjects relevant to the lives of Native Americans. From children's games and toys to the roles of mothers and fathers in a tribal community, these elements of Native American life are embellished with the values and traditions that make their culture unique. Elders are to be respected by young ones. Storytelling is both an educational tool and a way of keeping tradition

alive. Mothers keep the family together. Nature and humanity are inextricably linked.

Young readers might find the book very interesting. It is like a visual diary, where kids can observe old photographs and read informative quotes from people with experiences this book chronicles. In today's technological world, it is important to analyze the past and to view how people from different cultures used to lead their lives, especially from the rich Native Americans culture. Most importantly, however, readers can look at these past cultural experiences and trace patterns of them within their own lives today. Fitzgerald does a great job making the past accessible to modern readers through the wide array of photos and accompanying quotes, and as a result the book is relatable for any reader.

—*Brianna Persons, student intern, Univ. of Oregon*



**Escape from Tibet** by Nick Gray and Laura Scandiffio. Grades 6-9. Annick Press, www.annickpress.com. ISBN 978-1-55451-662-9

Two brothers, ages 19 and 11, cross over the Himalayan Mountains to make a new life for themselves as monks. Being raised by a single mom with one younger sibling, the eldest first escapes on his own experience

how good life is away from the reign of Chinese Imperialism forced upon their land of Tibet. After several years he sneaks back into the country to visit his mother and siblings.

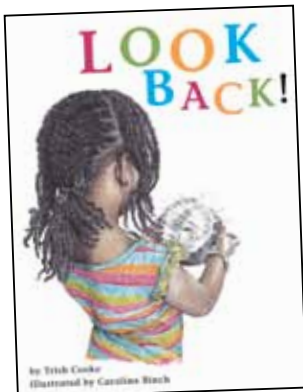
Because his mother is barely surviving, she asks him to take his 11-year-old brother back with him to live in the good land, even though she can't guarantee they will ever see each other again. In the good land, she knows her boys can get an education, have enough to eat and a safe place to sleep.

Putting aside her desires to have them close by and knowing they would have no future if they stayed, she chooses instead to demonstrate the purest form of love and allowed them to go on their way to a better life that she knows she could never provide for them.

The story is riveting—the danger, fear, and even betrayal by the guide who leads the boys and several others over the mountains. The boys’ strength and commitment to keep going is inspirational. The inner resources gained from living under China’s oppressive government contributes to their success in crossing over to a safe land.

This is a must read for students in grades 6 through 8. Students will understand the people of Tibet better. It shows the love they have for their country and culture, even though they must live in an environment where they are constantly beat down by a Chinese authoritarian rule based on shame and abuse. Students reading this book will learn to be more grateful for what they have, to stand up for what they believe in, and to use their own inner resources to make difficult but life-changing decisions. It will inspire anyone to take steps towards leading a good life in spite of obstacles, discouragement, or cruelty.

—*Jakki Staat McDonald, former regional consultant to families of children with special needs, Oregon.*

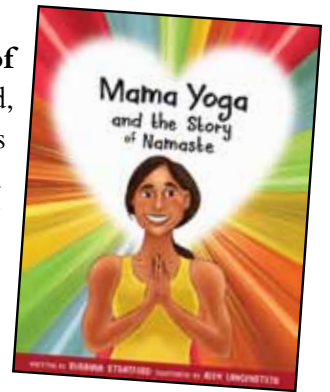


**Look Back!** by Trish Cooke, illustr. Caroline Binch. Ages 4-8. Crocodile Books, www.interlinkbooks.com. ISBN 978-1-56656-980-4

This book evokes the rich storytelling tradition of Dominican culture through the telling of the story of Ti Bolom, which connects young Christopher to his grandmother. As his grandmother tells the story of Ti Bolom, she involves Christopher in the telling through a unique call and response, and she makes creative sound effects to make her story come to life. The illustrations are wonderful portraits of the characters, and they capture all of their emotions, from curiosity to fear, to determination. As we get the story of Grannie’s youth, we see how her retelling strengthens her relationship with her grandson, and how the story connects them across generations.

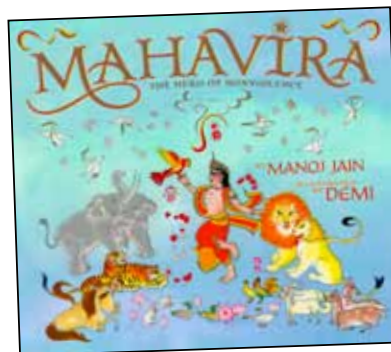
*Charlotte Rheingold is a senior at University of Oregon.*

**Mama Yoga and the Story of Namaste** by Susanna Stratford, illustr. Alex Langenstein. Ages 5-9. Mama Yoga’s Kids, www.mamayogaskid.com. ISBN 978-0-9961062-0-7



**Mama Yoga** is a bright and fun story that incorporates basic yoga skills and provides a brief overview of the long history of yoga. Mrs. Uddanwiker, or Mama Yoga, is a teacher in elementary grades where she integrates yoga into her teaching. It is not just poses that are practiced—Mama Yoga teaches the children about the strength and wholeness that is within them through the concept of *Namaste*. Accompanied with colorful illustrations and a glossary of various yoga poses.

—*Sasha P. Martczyanov is a senior at Univ. of Oregon.*



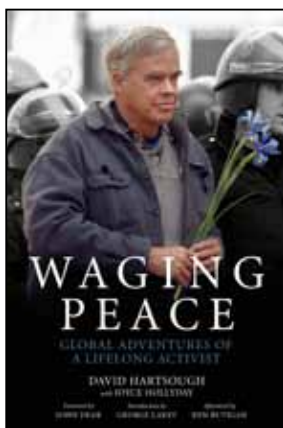
**Mahavira: The Hero of Nonviolence** by Manoj Jain, illustr. Demi. Ages 6-9. Wisdom Tales, www.wisdomtalespress.com. ISBN 978-1-937786-21-2

**Mahavira** is a modern rendition of the ancient Indian tale of a young prince turned spiritual leader who advocated non-violence. Mahavira craved a life deeper than what the palace had to offer, so he left to embark on a spiritual journey that lasted many years. Mahavira began spreading goodness through his teachings of the Jain way. This picture book, with engaging illustrations by the famous Mexican artist, Demi, is about seeking a deeper meaning of life.

—*Sasha P. Martczyanov is a senior at Univ. of Oregon.*

**Waging Peace: Global Adventures of a Lifelong Activist** by David Hartsough with Joyce Hollyday PM Press 2014 ISBN 978-1-62963-034-2

David Hartsough has been a peace activist all of his life, and this book tells his story. Born in 1940, he participated in many of the major peace movements in the U.S. and around the world. His recounting of various



nonviolent protests make this book more than his personal story. It also chronicles a history of peace activism that Mr. Hartsough witnessed.

Both of his parents were activists, and the childhood memories he includes in the book present an interesting perspective on the early makings of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1940s and 1950s. He remembers challenging his teacher over a patriotic march around the flag to support the military draft when he was in fifth grade. He also met Dr. Martin Luther King briefly as a teenager, which proved to be an influential experience.

He recalls, when he was only twenty, sitting at a segregated lunch counter all day in Arlington, Virginia with other black and white college students. He heard a voice behind him say, “Get out of this store in two seconds, or I’m going to stab this through your heart.” An evil looking man was holding a switchblade about an inch from his heart. David was grateful for his many hours of nonviolent role playing just days before. Still, it took all the courage he could muster to put a smile on his face, turn and say, “Friend, do what you believe is right, and I will still try to love you.” The man lowered his arm, turned and walked out of the store. This single event proved the awesome power of God’s love.

Hartsough’s work took him from Cuba to Yugoslavia to Germany and back to America. He also went to Kosovo, El Salvador, Palestine, Iran and elsewhere. He continues to protest against war, racism, and militarization in nonviolent ways.

Hartsough is a Quaker and his sense of faith clearly sustains his work. He has witnessed much injustice—most chilling is his descriptions of the accident his friend Brian Wilson suffered in 1987 during a peaceful blockade of a military train carrying weapons. Yet Hartsough has maintained a deep sense of compassion and a reverence for life that is evident in his writing.

This book shows what made Hartsough into a peace activist, and it chronicles the major achievements, as well as setbacks, in his life’s work. All together, this

book is an excellent resource to help inspire those who will come after him.

—Daemion Lee, *Returned Peace Corps Volunteer and Paulette Ansari, educator and storyteller.*

**Cecilia and Miguel Are Best Friends/Cecilia y Miguel son mejores amigos** by/por Diane Gonzales Bertrand, illustr. Thelma Muraida. Ages 4–7. Piñata Books, [artepublicopress.com](http://artepublicopress.com) ISBN 978-1-55885-794-0



**Cecilia and Miguel Are Best Friends** tells a story of the enduring nature of friendship in a manner accessible for young readers. The picture book shows a pair of best friends growing up together. In a repetitive

language pattern that makes it easy for beginning readers to understand, the audience is made privy to snapshots of the duo’s childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. These images are ones that many children of Latino heritage may recognize, including cracking the *piñata* at a birthday party and dancing at a *quinceñera*.

Thelma Muraida captures the nature of the story in her illustrations, which use warm colors and soft edges, depicting the playfully chaotic scenes of childhood. The latter half of the book shows the possibilities for what friendship can develop into, as Cecilia and Miguel end up getting married and starting a family together, the cycle of life repeating. Each spread has the dual language text so that readers can read the book in English, Spanish, or both.

—Megan Knox, *student intern, Univ. of Oregon.*

**Letters from Heaven/Cartas del Cielo** by/por Lydia Gil. Grades 4–8. Piñata Books/Arte Público Press. [artepublicopress.com](http://artepublicopress.com) ISBN 978-1-55885-798-8

Celeste is very sad. Her grandma has just passed away and even though she feels hurt, life goes on. But it does not go on without adding to her hardships. Because Grandma has died, Celeste and her mother are put into financial strain. Without Grandma’s social security check, it becomes difficult to make ends meet.



Her mother immediately has to get another job, causing her to come home exhausted, too tired to cook for them both (even though she could hardly cook in the first place). Despite all the work, she can no longer afford the dance lessons Celeste loves so much.

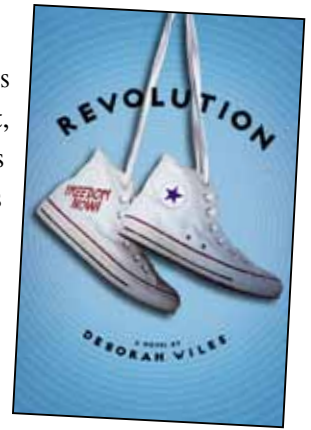
But in all the sadness, something incredible happens. Celeste begins to receive letters in the mail with no return address, causing her to believe her Grandma is sending letters from beyond. Celeste keeps her thoughts a secret since there is no way anyone would believe her.

Each letter contains one of Grandma's special recipes from where her family used to live, in Cuba. The once kitchen-shy middle-school student soon finds herself embracing the kitchen in loving memory of her grandma, remembering her with love...and flavor! This short bilingual story will get almost anyone itching to get in the kitchen. With the recipes printed out in easy to understand instructions, readers can follow along at home and make the delicious food Celeste cooks, too.

—Elizabeth Ponce del Valle, high school intern, Oregon.

**Revolution** by Deborah Wiles. Scholastic Press, www.scholastic.com. Grades 8 and up. ISBN 978-0-545-10607-8

It is June 1964 in a little town called Greenwood, Mississippi. Sunny Fairchild, nearly twelve, experiences many changes. She was only just beginning to warm-up to her new step-mother, Annabelle, who has been married to her father for over a year. Annabelle was a package deal, who came with two children of her own, Gillette, nearly 14 and Audrey, age 5. Sunny reads the newspaper headlines, about Greenwood being invaded. Their pastor talked about college students coming from the north and west ends of the United States to help the Negroes (African Americans is the preferred term these days) register to vote and how they should be treated with Christian love. Sunny is trying to understand the many changes in her life, and if she is forced to choose sides, just who's side should she be on?



This historical novel covers the turmoil, ugliness, excitement, and confusion within families during "Freedom Summer." This 500 page fiction book includes hundreds of black & white photographs of actual picketers, photos of protesters being harassed by white bystanders, and peaceful picketers arrested by policemen. These photographs are spread throughout the entire novel. They include newspaper headlines, song lyrics, picket signs, segregation signs, protest meetings (which includes instructions on non-violent behavior), etc.

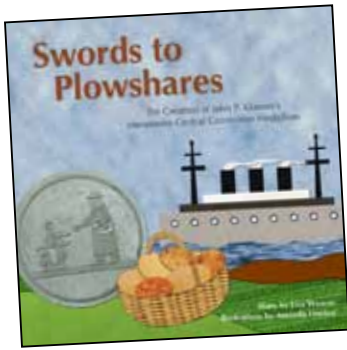
Everything that was occurring during the early 1960s is represented either in the behavior of the people of Greenwood or in the photographed documents. The book discusses the viewpoints of African American families and their confusion and the fear of losing their jobs, having their houses burned down and/or being killed. When the story changes to the perspective of an African American family, the pages are gray, helping the reader know who is speaking.

The author weaves Sunny's personal life so smoothly into the daily life of the period that every sentence feels profoundly real. There are so many different stories being told, each one impacting the other. This is a story that you could read several times and still find something new to ponder.

If the Civil Right Laws in 1964 were never signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson, and if Freedom Summer never occurred in towns & cities throughout the United States of America (especially the southern states where segregation was rampant), we would not have the first African American president, Barack Obama in the White House today. Change is often very painful but oh so necessary for individuals as well as nations. This should be required reading for every American.

—Paulette Ansari, storyteller and grandmother.

**Swords to Plowshares: The Creation of John P. Klassen's Mennonite Central Committee Medallion** by Lisa Weaver, illustr. Amanda Huston. Grades 3-6. The Lion



and Lamb Peace Arts Center,  
www.bluffton.edu/lionlamb.  
ISBN 978-0-615-95157-7

### **Swords to Plowshares**

is a picture book narrated through the eyes of young Isaak. It is a fictionalized recounting of how art teacher

John P. Klassen collected bullets scattered throughout his village after the Russian Revolution and civil war in 1917, melted them down, and molded them into a lead medallion. Isaak assists Klassen with the creation of the medallion. They made it to present to the Mennonite Central Committee workers as a token of appreciation for sending food and relief supplies overseas to their village and others after the war had devastated crops, livestock, and many innocent people. Through Klassen's art, he shares the message of transforming what had been used for violence into something of good will.

—Elizabeth Ponce del Valle, just finished high school.



### **Mystery of the Giant Masks of Sanxingdui**

by Icy Smith, illustr. Gayle Garner Roski. Ages 7-10. East West Discovery Press, www.eastwestdiscovery.com. ISBN 978-099134548-9

This book imagines the story behind the mysterious culture of Sanxingdui, an ancient Chinese civilization dating

back approximately 1300 BCE.

As the author Icy Smith gives life to these lost people, she teaches many valuable lessons about family, bravery, cooperation, and wisdom. Through the protagonist, a young girl named Wei, the reader is introduced to an advanced and thriving culture, well known for their bronze making abilities, and who rely on the river for their way of life. Many details about day-to-day life are included, like what people ate, what their daily activities were like, and their spiritual beliefs.

The illustrations are done in water color and guide readers to imagine this ancient civilization. At the back of the book, there is more historical information about

the town of Sanxingdui and their incredible bronze work. There is also a glossary of the characters' Chinese names that explains what they mean in English. This book explores the particular details of one culture, and at the same time, it teaches values important to everyone, across cultures and across time.

—Charlotte Rheingold is a senior at University of Oregon.

### **Gabi, a Girl in Pieces**

by Isabel Quintero. Upper grades. Cinco Puntos Press, www.cincopuntos.com. ISBN 978-1-935955-95-5

### **Gabi, A Girl in Pieces**

is a novel about a Mexican-American Girl named Gabi who is a senior in high school. In spite of the many hardships she encounters, Gabi is a poetic

writer with a rich sense of humor and a beautiful zest for life. Written in diary format, this book is a honest, as well as eye-opening, representation of the unique struggles that plague second-generation Mexican-American young women.

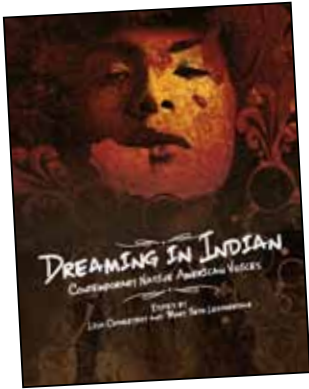
Through her writing, she expresses frustration because her mother often criticizes her for being overweight, and believes she is becoming "too white." Gabi struggles with growing up as an American teenager, while also staying true to her Mexican heritage that she is so proud of. To cope with this she writes poems that are included within the diary entries.

While this book certainly offers a uniquely multicultural perspective on being a teenager in America, it touches on topics that are relatable for teenagers across many nationalities. Gabi deals with college applications, having a boyfriend, as well as her friends and family, just like many girls her age. This book is recommended for an older audience because of serious topics that are touched on throughout the story, such as teenage-pregnancy, rape, sexuality, and drug abuse. It is a very important story, which delves into the multi-faceted ways it is difficult to be a Mexican-American girl growing up in America.

—Molly K Zaninovich, student intern, Univ. of Oregon.







**Dreaming In Indian:** *Contemporary Native American Voices* edited by Lisa Charleyboy and Mary Beth Leatherdale. Ages 12 +. Annick Press, www.annickpress.com. ISBN 978-1-55451-687-2

**Dreaming In Indian** is a collection of short stories, poems, photos and artwork that masterfully illustrates the struggles that the indigenous people of North America endure growing up in a country that has worked so hard to oppress their culture. This book showcases the beauty of Native American culture and makes it clear that the artists who contributed are incredibly proud of their heritage.

The artwork included throughout the book makes it an incredibly eye-pleasing read. Super Indian, a comic by Arigon Starr, is an example of artwork in this book that aims to provide cultural awareness. Native Americans are extremely underrepresented in mainstream media, and Starr is working to change that. Another example of cultural awareness being emphasized through the artwork displayed in this book is the graffiti by Tom Greyeyes, “that challenge[s] the stereotypical ideas of native peoples in America.”

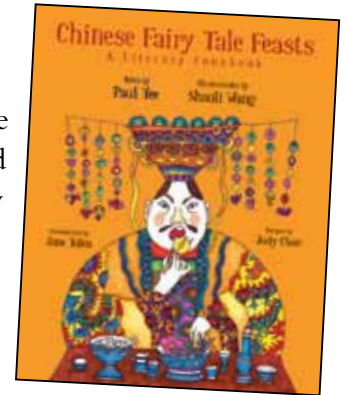
Native Americans must face many stereotypes on a daily basis that misrepresent and belittle their culture. *Dreaming in Indian* deconstructs those misleading stereotypes, and instead offers a truthful representation of what it means to be Native American this day in age. Students of all cultural backgrounds are encouraged to read this book, so as to garner a better understanding of a culture that is so often mistaken for something that it is not.

—Molly K Zaninovich, student intern, Univ. of Oregon.

**Chinese Fairy Tale Feasts:** *A Literary Cookbook* by Paul Yee, illustr. Shaoli Wang, recipes: Judy Chan. Ages 6-12. Crocodile Books, ISBN 978-1-56656-993-4

**Chinese Fairy Tale Feasts** is triply delicious! The thirteen Chinese fairy tales retold by Paul Yee are delicious for storytellers, and anyone who savors good stories. Shaoli Wang’s colorful illustrations are delicious for anyone who appreciates beautiful art. Gourmet

cooks and all those who love to eat Chinese food will find the recipes provided by Judy Chan following each tale worth trying out. This collaboration by Yee, Wang and Chan is indeed a feast.



Each tale is enriched by cultural information relevant to it and a pertinent Chinese proverb. The stories themselves run the gamut of human experience, with characters often found in tales from other cultures as well. Inherent in each narrative is a moral worth discussing.

Both parents and teachers will find **Chinese Fairy Tale Feasts** a useful tool. Preparing the recipe after reading each story will add to the enjoyment.

—Yvonne Young, storyteller, grandmother, and educator.

## Nature and Ecology Books



**Please Don't Paint Our Planet Pink!** *A Story About Climate Change for Kids and their Adults* by Gregg Kleiner, illustr. Laurel Thompson. Ages 6-12. Cloudburst Creative, www.cloudburstcreative.com. ISBN 978-0-9906373-0-1.

What would our world be like if carbon emissions were visible? How would people look at the growing issue of climate change on our planet? Gregg Kleiner explores this issue through **Please Don't Paint Our Planet Pink!**, a story featuring a father and son who explore the topic together with the hypothetical question of “what if carbon emissions were the color pink?” It is an interesting concept, and one that young readers can understand and enjoy through the colorful illustrations.

The most effective part about Kleiner’s story is how he makes the issue of climate change accessible to young readers. Environmental issues can be difficult to explain to children because they often contain many variables that are not immediately understandable. However, Kleiner is able to avoid this through

using the color pink to explain how something, despite its lack of appearance, can have such a serious effect on the world. In addition to promoting awareness of environmental issues, the book also shows the important role parents play in educating their children in order to increase awareness, people must talk to each other. Wilbur and his father Harold discuss, brainstorm, and ask questions about how and what causes climate change, and through this process Wilbur learns that much of problem-solving can be done with a little creativity and imagination.

—Brianna Persons, student intern, Univ. of Oregon.



**The Prairie That Nature Built** by Marybeth Lorbiecki, illustr. Cathy Morrison. Ages 4-10. Dawn Publications, www.dawnpub.com. ISBN 978-1-58469-492-2

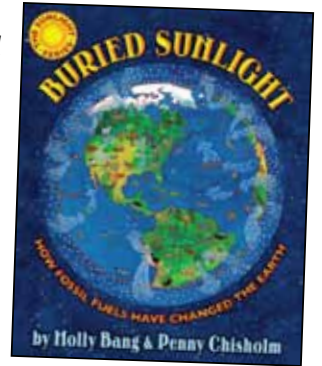
This book is full of information about prairies from start to finish. Each page has detailed illustrations bursting with every imaginable form

of life, from insects in the soil, to prairie dogs, and grasses on the ground, to birds in the sky. Each is equally represented and discussed, which highlights the important role each species plays in the unique ecosystem of the prairie.

The writing is simple to complement the intricacy of the colorful illustrations. This helps to direct the reader to all of the features in the illustrations. This book also does not shy away from more serious events, like the danger of wildfire and the fierce prowess of carnivorous hunters. At the end, there is a comprehensive list of all the animals represented, organized by categories such as scavengers, grazers, etc. There is also a helpful section with more information about prairies around the world, for more advanced readers to enjoy, and enrich the already abundant information provided by this book. From the text to the illustrations to the extra sections in the back, this book is good for a wide range of ages to familiarize children with the complexities of an ecosystem, and to make them aware of the countless species that need to live together to survive.

—Charlotte Rheingold is a senior at University of Oregon.

**Buried Sunlight: How Fossil Fuels Have Changed The Earth** by Molly Bang and Penny Chisholm. Ages 4-8. Blue Sky Press, www.scholastic.com. ISBN 978-0-545-57785-4

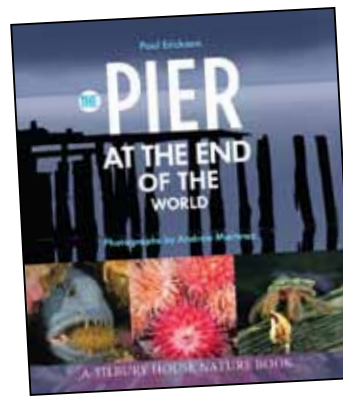


This beautifully illustrated book tells the story of how energy from the sun was trapped underground as fossils and how this trapped sunlight is contributing to climate change today.

Using accessible language and detailed drawings, this book explains how animal life and plant life balance each other and regulate the amount of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. Through a series of drawings and diagrams, the authors show that burning ancient fossils, such as coal and oil, is contributing to climate change because it releases “buried sunlight.” A two page diagram shows a graph of how temperatures and vegetation has changed over thousands of years—and how the warming in the last hundred years is the happening more rapidly than ever before.

The narrator of the book is the sun, which is an interesting perspective that makes the explanations more lively. Some of these scientific concepts are complicated, but the authors explain them in an easy-to-understand way. Molly Bang is an experienced author/illustrator while co-author Penny Chisholm is a professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

—Daemion Lee, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer.



**The Pier at the End of the World** by Paul Erickson, photos by Andrew Martinez. Ages 8-12. Tilbury House, Publishers, www.tilbury-house.com. ISBN 978-0-88448-382-3.

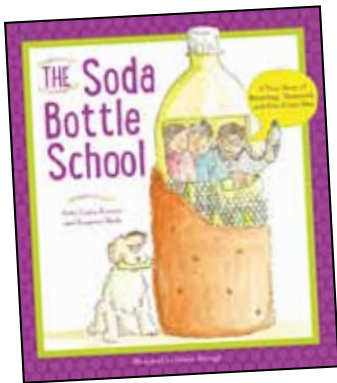
What if you could go underwater next to a pier by the ocean and stay there all day and all night watching what goes on? That is what it is like to read **Pier at the End of the World**.

Beautiful color photos bring this underwater world to life, with vivid images of everything from wolf fish to sea stars to hermit crabs. The photos of certain animals attacking other animals are particularly impressive.

The text gives simple explanations, with definitions or pronunciation keys for the more difficult words. And the book shows how the undersea environment changes over the course of the day, which makes the book seem almost like a story.

There is plenty to learn about life in the ocean from this book. Who is the king under the pier? (lobster) Who is the best dad? (radiated shanny) Who has the worst table manners? (the sea star) The combination of pictures and information will help readers understand and appreciate an undersea world that few people ever get the chance to see.

—Daemion Lee, *Returned Peace Corps Volunteer.*



**The Soda Bottle School:** *A True Story of Recycling, Teamwork, and One Crazy Idea* by Seño Laura Kutner and Suzanne Slade, illustr. Aileen Darragh. Ages 6-12. Tilbury House, Publishers, [www.tilburyhouse.com](http://www.tilburyhouse.com). ISBN 978-0-88448-371-7

**The Soda Bottle School** teaches youth about finding ways to solve community issues in an environmentally friendly manner. The narrative revolves around an idea fostered by a Guatemalan village to build a school using their abundant trash and plastic bottles as building materials. Real life school teacher (and the book's co-author) Seño Laura and an eager student, Fernando, notice that their plastic soda bottles are the same diameters as the metal poles in the frame of the village's unfinished school buildings, which was abandoned due to lack of funding. This sparks the idea to create "eco-ladrillos" or eco-bricks out of the old bottles stuffed with trash, and use them to construct the walls. Soon the whole town mobilizes around the project, devoting hours of their days collecting bottles and trash, cleaning up the community.

Not only does the soda bottle school address the problem of overcrowding in their existing school, but it helps them dispose waste when they do not have garbage trucks, dumps, or recycling centers. These perspectives can be invaluable in the classroom for educating about different ways of life and levels of affluence. The book also gives insight into Guatemalan culture by incorporating Spanish words into the text, that refer to traditional cuisine, and Mayan songs and dances.

Much of this story's power comes from the fact that it is based on real life events. Seño Laura and the town of Granados did undertake the project of creating a soda bottle school in 2009, and after two years of hard work, they accomplished their goal. The value of teamwork is emphasized, as many community members, from students, to families, to local engineers and masons, pooled their abilities and time to build the school. The impact spreads beyond the boundaries of Granados, inspiring other nearby towns to construct schools and more in this sustainable method. Children in particular are recognized for their social agency, as the students and their enthusiasm are instrumental to the project's success. Ultimately, The Soda Bottle School teaches kids the power they can yield within their communities through perseverance and creativity.

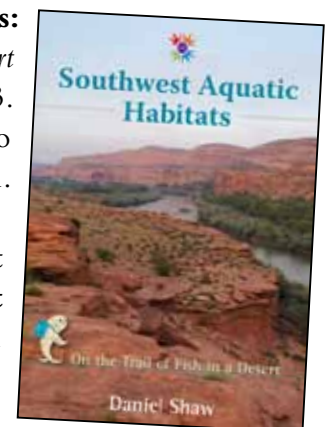
—Megan Knox, *student intern, University of Oregon.*

#### **Southwest Aquatic Habitats:**

*On the Trail of Fish in a Desert* by Daniel Shaw. Ages 9-13. University of New Mexico Press, [www.unmpress.com](http://www.unmpress.com). ISBN 978-0-8263-5309-2

Compared to the text books in the past, **Southwest Aquatic Habitats** is much more engaging, funny, and even exciting. Open-minded teachers everywhere would certainly find themselves delighted to use this book in their classrooms. It is also an excellent source for home-school families.

What can be commended most is the author's talent for interweaving authentic student stories with the



facts he presents. He makes what might otherwise have been very boring facts and figures come alive, which draws readers in and makes the book hard to put down. The illustrations are colorful and easy to read and understand; the photographs are clear, labeled well, and placed on the appropriate page.

The photos of the kids engaged in nature activities is appealing, as enthusiasm for this type of environmental science would surely pique even the smallest bit of interest a student might have.

Every student should have their own copy of this excellent book. Our world is changing and we need the young people to make a difference. This book could be the start of leading them to new discoveries of how to protect our wonderful earth.

—*Jakki Staat McDonald, former regional consultant to families of children with special needs, Oregon.*

## Teaching Resources

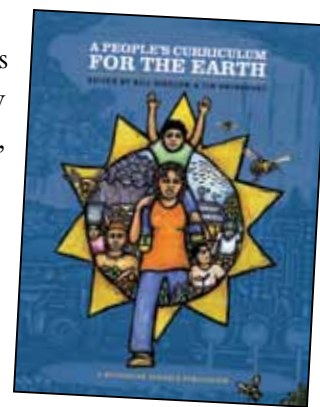
**A People's Curriculum for the Earth** edited by Bill Bigelow and Tim Swinehart. All educators. Rethinking Schools, [www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org). ISBN 978-0-942961-57-7

Climate change is here. In April 2015 the global carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere exceeded 400 parts per million (ppm) everyday for a month, and experts say industrialization is the leading cause.

But leaders are doing little to stop this progression. So that's where **A People's Curriculum for the Earth** comes in. It is an anthology of articles and activities to help today's teachers engage and prepare their students to tackle environmental problems in new, creative, and radical ways.

This book is not a textbook, but an anthology that draws articles from a variety of sources, which means that the writing lacks the dry monotone that characterizes many textbooks. Instead, each chapter shares different voices, with particular attention to activists, youth, educators and indigenous people. It includes some big names in environmentalism, like Vandana Shiva, Bill McKibben and Derrick Jensen, along with Bill Bigelow, a long-time educator and co-

editor of the volume, as well as other passionate authors, many of whom are teachers. In fact, many of the articles include information about environmental issues together with the authors' best-practices trying to teach those issues to their classes. Chapters are grouped thematically, with names like, "Burning the Future," "The Whole Thing is Connected," and "Grounding our Teaching."



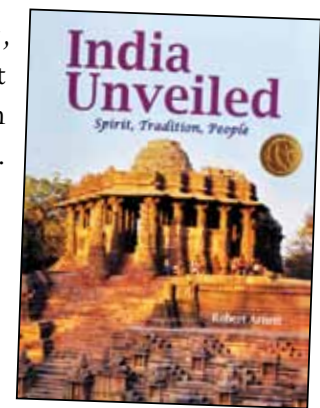
But this book is not just about reading and knowledge. At the end of each chapter is a list of suggested activities for each article in it. These activities aren't so much formal "lessons," but starting points to engage in discussion on the issues raised in each chapter, including questions and suggested websites. Supplementary readings, documentaries, comics, artwork and sample lesson plans are scattered within each chapter as well. Also included are black and white photographs from around the world (though some don't have captions, making it difficult to identify what is happening in the picture).

This is a powerful resource book. In a time of denial and obfuscation, the authors included in this text can be commended for telling the truth. However, this is more than just a collection of depressing facts. The real purpose of this text is to help educators in their work of teaching today's youth, so that they might care for the environment and take action in ways that those who are now in power have failed to do, and that is a cause for hope.

—*Daemion Lee, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer.*

**India Unveiled: Spirit, Tradition, People** by Robert Arnett. Grades 5-12. Atman Press, [www.atmanpress.com](http://www.atmanpress.com). ISBN 978-0-96-529009-8

**India Unveiled** is the perfect book for those who thirst for sights and understanding beyond their own sphere. Not only is it filled

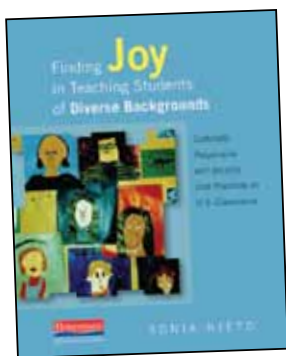


with details of places and culture from one of the countries most rich in diversity and heritage, but it also holds hundreds of photos so breathtaking and timeless they promise enjoyment for any age group.

The book begins with an overview of India's religion, culture, language and progression into the modern age. It continues, chapter by chapter to show and explain the marvels to be found in six different regions of India. Photographs depict natural wonders, citizens of the vast country and significant places such as temples and cities.

As explained in the early pages in this masterful view of India, it is one of few countries that have maintained their original language and culture in modern times. It is a river civilization and one of our world's largest democracies. With such a vibrant blend of the old and the new, this culture has unique offerings. For those who are unable to travel, **India Unveiled** allows the reader to dive into the outdoor market at Ajmer where red peppers are sold off massive piles, to the winding streets of Jodhpur built amongst the desert plateaus, to elaborately carved Ajanta Caves where you see ancient wall painting, and thousands of other locations with unparalleled history.

—Emily Carpenter, *journalist, Oregon.*



**Finding Joy in Teaching Students of Diverse Backgrounds: Culturally Responsive and Socially Just Practices in U.S. Classrooms** by Sonia Nieto. All grades. Heinemann, [www.heinemann.com](http://www.heinemann.com). ISBN 978-0-325-02715-9

There are too many teachers who are unprepared and uncomfortable teaching children who are not like them. The standard methods of teaching often do not work within diverse populations. When these methods fail many teachers believe the students cannot learn. This line of thinking causes many problems. Teachers need to maintain positive attitudes about their students. They need to have good relationships with them, know their family, and their background. They must love their

students and maintain a social justice perspective. To have this perspective teachers must be open and flexible, willing to learn, and humble. This author, an experienced educator herself, has interviewed teachers in many different parts of the country. She has presented the best attitudes and methods in this book.

One of the most profound statements is discussed in chapter 4. “If I Haven’t Taught Them How to be Good People, That’s Failure: Teachers’ Perspective on the Moral Dimensions of Teaching. This would be my idea of failure as well. This book should be studied by every teacher and parent.

—Paulette Ansari, *storyteller and grandmother.*

**14: Dred Scott, Wong Kim Ark & Vanessa Lopez** Written and directed by Anne Galisky. 67 mins. Middle grades to College level. Graham Street Productions, [www.14themovie.com](http://www.14themovie.com).



The U.S. has always been a nation of immigrants and the issue of citizenship has always been contentious. Children are often caught in the middle of this debate and for this reason their stories are at the center of **14: Dred Scott, Wong Kim Ark & Vanessa Lopez**.

The documentary focuses on Vanessa Lopez, an elementary school student in California whose mother is an undocumented immigrant from Mexico. Vanessa was born in the U.S., which means she is a U.S. citizen, according to the 14th Amendment. However, the legal status of kids like Vanessa has become increasingly controversial.

The director takes a historical approach to explore the issue, examining the Dred Scott and Wong Kim Ark Supreme Court cases—both important rulings about citizenship in the U.S. The movie brings today's debates into a conversation with the past, through a mixture of interviews with experts, relatives of Dred Scott and Wong Kim Ark, and Vanessa and her friends and family.

The movie is in part a history lesson, at a level

appropriate for upper middle grades to college students. But the candid discussions with Lynn Jackson of Missouri—a descendant of Dred Scott—and Sandra Wong—related to Wong Kim Ark—also bring a personal connection to the issue. These interviews are a powerful demonstration of how citizenship has changed over time. Some groups of people in the past were denied citizenship because of their race—such as African-Americans and Chinese-Americans—but their descendants today are citizens whose legal status would never be questioned.

It is clear which side this movie takes on this very political topic, and it could have used more interviews with people on the other side of the debate. But rather than argue, this movie focuses on giving a voice to those directly affected by the citizenship debate: children and families. And that, perhaps, is more persuasive.

—*Daemion Lee, Returned Peace Corps Volunteer.*



**School's Out:** *Lessons from a Forest Kindergarten*, directed by Lisa Molomot, producer: Rona Richter, 36 mins. All ages. Bullfrog Films, [www.bullfrogfilms.com](http://www.bullfrogfilms.com).

In the United States, a kindergarten student's typical day is inside the classroom sitting at desks, while following a teacher-led structured curriculum that may or may not include outside play. Much time is spent keeping students quiet and seated in their chairs. If there is recess it's limited to 30 mins. at the most because academics are priority and a certain amount of time is required for teaching. Contrast that with the Outdoor School in a suburb of Zurich, Switzerland where kindergarten children (ages 4 to 7) go to school in the woods all year long.

The classroom is in a lush grove of forest trees where shelter from the elements is found underneath a simple hut. That is, if the children want to be sheltered. Many are happiest in the sloppiest rain, slipping and sliding down a mud hill or sledding in the freezing, cold snow.

The students are allowed to go where they want in the selected forest area and know when to meet up with the teacher by the sound of her whistle. Structured academics are not part of the student's learning but might be discussed within the natural environment, i.e. "how many leaves are on that tree?" or "what do you think the temperature is?", etc.

In the beginning some parents were leery of the non-traditional teaching but after a time parents were pleased with their children's growing confidence. They could see that their children were practicing problem solving, improving social skills, and developing sturdy gross motor skills from the daily tree climbing, digging, running, jumping, etc. Parents' enthusiastically got on board with the "play is their work" mindset once they saw it working for their own kids.

The philosophy that "students will learn when they are ready" is controversial. Interviews with parents whose children were enrolled in the school provided empirical proof the technique was not in any way detrimental to their child's growth. A follow up study done a couple of years after the Outdoor School experience showed no remediation was needed for these students once they entered primary/elementary years.

With more school districts in the United States changing to all day kindergarten programs, this documentary is a valuable resource for teachers and school boards alike. Many children are currently being labeled "Nature Deficit," and starting an Outdoor School is a creative way to address this problem.

—*Jakki Staat McDonald, former regional consultant to families of children with special needs, Oregon.*

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