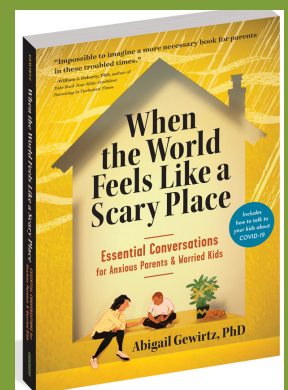
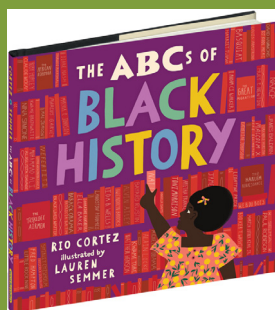
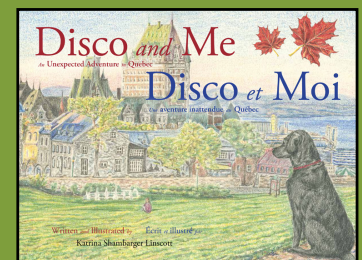
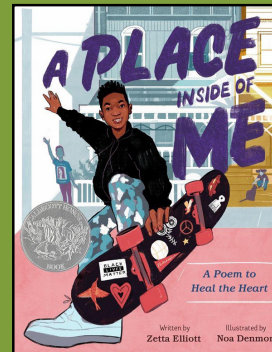
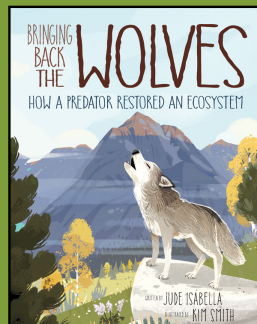
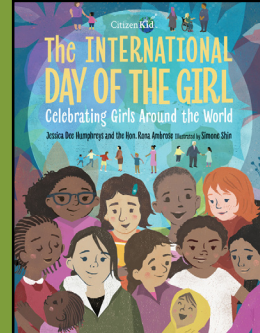
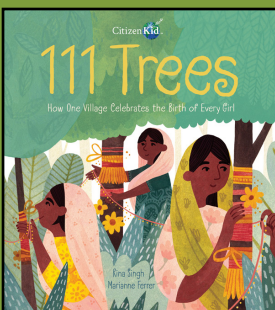
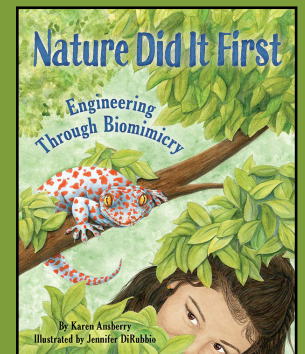
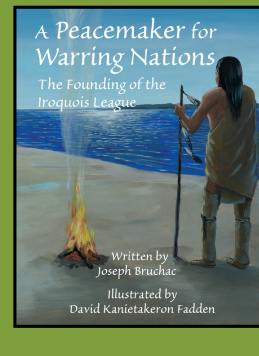
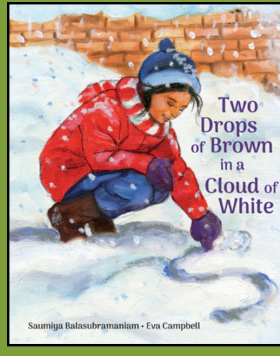
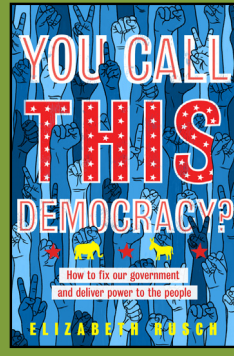
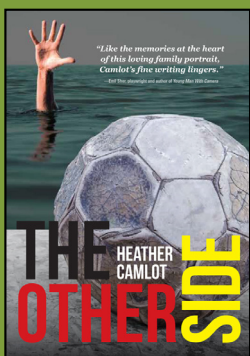
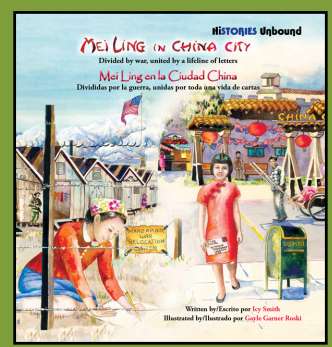
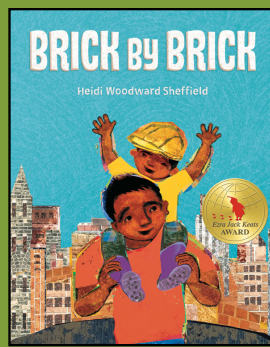
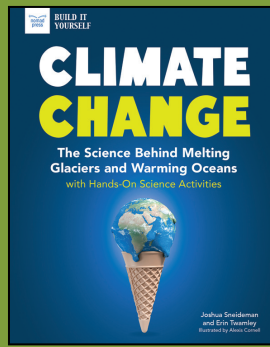


Skipping Stones

Summer 2021

A Multicultural Literary Magazine



Reviews of 2021 Multicultural & Nature Award Winners

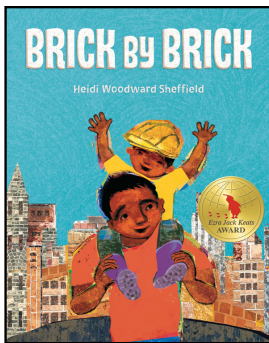
The 2021 Skipping Stones Honor Awards



This year we recommend 34 outstanding books and three teaching resources as the winners of our **2021 Skipping Stones Honor Awards**. These books promote an understanding of cultures, cultivate cooperation and/or encourage a deeper awareness of nature, ecology, and diversity. They foster respect for multiple viewpoints and closer relationships within human societies. The honored titles offer many ways to explore and understand families, cultures, places, societies and their histories for readers of all ages—from the very young readers to high school seniors and adults.

With special thanks to all our readers and reviewers, here are the book reviews:

Multicultural & International Books



Brick by Brick by Heidi Woodward Sheffield. Penguin Random House. Ages 3-7.

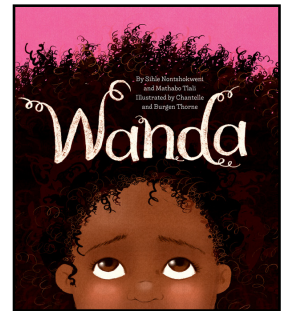
The author-cum-artist of this outstanding book does a great job of presenting an apparently simple story of a Mexican family where the father is a bricklayer.

He's strong, hard working and loving to his family. Bricklaying requires hard, patient work just like so many other jobs. Reading and getting a good education is also very important for all children. Young readers will enjoy this story with a happy ending and strikingly bold illustrations representing tasks familiar to them. The metaphors used by the author and artist do an amazing job of communicating the intent, which also includes imparting a positive image of Mexican Americans living amongst us. So many of the construction jobs, as well as other manual labor jobs, like gardening, for example, are performed by hard-working Mexican Americans in our country. And we all have similar dreams like living in a *nuestra casa para siempre*—our always house, even if it's simple and small.

While the book is not bilingual, it still introduces many simple Spanish words and phrases throughout the book. An award-winning artist, Ms. Sheffield created the illustrations for this book with photographs, cut outs, and textiles as art collages. I found that it is fun for the very young ones to identify the various materials used in creating the collages.

—Esther Celis, grandmother and Skipping Stones Board President.

Wanda by Sihle Nontshokweni & Mathabo Tlali, Illustr. Chantelle and Burgen Thorne. Crocodile Books. Ages 3-8.



This is a beautifully illustrated story with a very important message: African hair is beautiful. This hair can be worn in a great variety of different styles and it is still beautiful! Because of centuries of systematic racism, too many African and African Americans have been conditioned to believe that their hair is nappy, ugly and unacceptable in society as it is. To be acceptable, it must be pressed, permed, or straightened in some way to look like Caucasian hair.

Eight-year-old Wanda, living in South Africa, is lucky to have a mother and grandmother at home who keep telling her that her hair is beautiful, especially when she wears it as a tall crown. This is called a *fro* or *Afro* hairstyle today. In America today, a child can still be teased and talked about for wearing a tall *Afro*—the taller it is, the more unacceptable—on his or her head. This ridicule comes from students and staff.

It would have been wonderful if Wanda's mother and/or grandmother would have gone to Wanda's classroom and had a conversation with her teacher, which would eventually lead to all students and staff being able to wear *Afros* if they chose to. This did not happen in the story. There was no father-figure to encourage Wanda either. You can see from the colorful illustrations that this is a "uniform required" school and that includes a neat, acceptable hairstyle, a style Wanda's teacher, Mrs. Stone calls "neat and clean for a lady in

green.” Every morning before entering at the classroom, Wanda tries to change her hair into an acceptable style for her teacher and classmates. Then she must puff it out again before entering the door of her home. Finally, realizing the pressure Wanda is under, her grandmother combs and braids (just a few short rows in front) Wanda’s hair into a style where everyone could be happy.

The illustrations are on every page, usually beginning on the left edge, extending to the far right edge of the page. The color ad deep browns, greens, yellow, and orange. A few of the background colors are pink, gold, blue and turquoise. This is an enjoyable read and good teaching tool

—Paulette Ansari, *African American storyteller and retired librarian.*

Aspire! ¡Aspirar! (Spanish/English) by Patty York Raymond; Illustr. Chiara Savarese. Translator: Dr. Isaias Rodriguez. *Mascot Books.* Ages 5-9.



Early childhood educator and administrator Patty York Raymond is famous as well for being an author of

award-winning children’s books, the latest being *Aspire! ¡Aspirar!*. Like her other works, this book includes an original song which teachers will find useful for including music and movement in their curriculum along with the literature, vocabulary-building, spelling and free reading time inherent in the book itself.

Parents will like it for its ability to hold their children’s attention, whether the child is English-speaking or Spanish-speaking. I would recommend this book for children age eight and older. However, I would not recommend it to a learner whose sole focus is that acquisition of the second language, unless only looking for direct translation of nouns for vocabulary building. The Spanish, translated by Dr. Isaias C. Rodriguez, is thankfully written as a native speaker would say it rather than a “word for word” translation. The illustrations, by Chiara Savarese, are delightful throughout. The

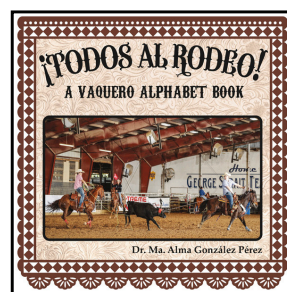
Careers/*Carreras* pages are charming and here one can count on the careers named as direct translations if that is one of your foci.

Overall, this book will promote thought and expand horizons for girls. It is a book that warrants being purchased rather than borrowed, so the child can return to it often. The illustrations are also engaging throughout and promote the types of mother-daughter activities often overlooked in our busy world.

—Sharon Stirtz, *retired Spanish teacher.*

¡Todos al rodeo! *A Vaquero Alphabet Book (Spanish/English)* by Dr. Ma. Alma González Pérez. *Del Alma Publications.* Ages 6-9.

Alphabet books feel sometimes awkward, but not this bilingual (Spanish/English) one (or the others in the series) by Dr. Gonzalez. It is so much fun to learn about *vaqueros* (cowboys) and their activities pertaining to raising the cattle, while we see photos of children—both boys and girls—who are living a vaquero family life and learning the work and skills of *vaqueros*. They learn to domesticate horses, take care of them, and team up with them, for example in a *charrería*, the Mexican rodeo. Did you know that there is an event called *escaramuza* especially for women in a Mexican rodeo? A team of eight women performs a music routine as they ride sidesaddle during the competition.

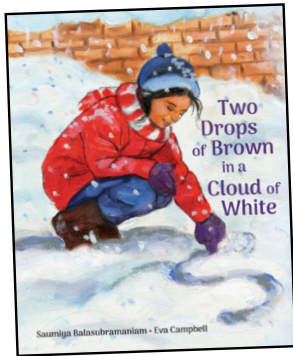


The horses and the cattle were brought to the Americas by the Spaniards (Spanish people) and the people living in the New World learned to work with these beautiful animals. The book, with its real-life photographs of children by Maricia Rodriguez and Teresa Estrada, teaches us to appreciate the *vaquero* life and culture that includes the horse, as a working partner, and even as a dancing partner. I recommend the book for all ages, and especially for those interested in learning about the life and cultures of the *vaqueros* of the Southwest

—Esther Celis, *grandmother and Skipping Stones Board President.*

Two Drops of Brown in a Cloud of White by Saumiya Balasubramaniam; Illustr. Eva Campbell. *Groundwood Books*. Ages 6-10.

Imagine it is December, and you live in the North. There is snow everywhere—snow hats on birdhouses and mailboxes, snow hills on cars and rooftops...and new snow is falling. Imagine you were born in a tropical climate country, and now you have settled in a cold place like Canada or Scandinavia. And now you have a school age daughter or son who was born in your new



home country. You feel out of place in the bitter cold climate but your daughter who grew up here, loves the snow and ice and is at home in the snow country. You miss the sunshine and the warmth and the lush green vegetation with swaying palm trees of your coastal south Indian village. Your daughter is excited by the

new falling snow and wants to lick it with her tongue.

Two Drops of Brown in a Cloud of White is a sensitively written and beautifully illustrated picture book for any family with young children. Short and sweet exchanges between a mother and her daughter, as they walk home in deep snow, should make this a wonderful read aloud bed-time story, especially on a cold winter night.

As someone who was born in the tropics and transplanted to the North, just like the author of this book, I found the book touching and meaningful. We can decide to be happy wherever we are—snow or sand, sun or rain, green or gray. Happiness is making the best in any situation. Love, understanding each other's points of view, and compassionate communication between parents and children were a few of my take-aways from this heart-warming book.

—Arun Narayan Toké, editor.

A Place Inside of Me: A Poem to Heal the Heart by Zetta Elliott; Illustr. Noa Denmon. *F.S.G.* Ages 5-9.

In the form of a poem, this book tells the story of a Black boy who navigates the emotions and seasons of the year. In the beginning, he is joyfully playing bas-

ketball and skateboarding, until a shooting brings up feelings of sorrow, fear and anger. However, he describes a 'hunger' inside of himself that yearns for freedom. This desire leads him to feelings of peace, compassion and hope.

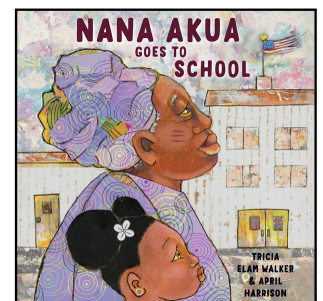
In the drawings, we see an urban landscape filled with smiles and community turn into a place of sadness and images of protest. However, the boy's pride in his own identity is depicted in images of legendary African-Americans, as well as in drawings of his own community. Images of children mediating and comforting each other and the community holding a candlelight vigil movingly illustrate his love for his people and community.

In the end, we, the readers, understand how much he cares for his own community, and it makes us care about it, too.

Mattias states: "This book is a powerful poem about an African-American boy, his emotions and black lives matter. Of course, black lives matter. He has a bunch of different kinds of emotions. For example, he feels joy, anger, fear, love, and more. Even though he experiences anger, fear, and sadness, compassion, love and hope are stronger. I liked the painted illustrations."

—Nicole Barajas, associate editor and her son, Mattias Barajas, age 10.

Nana Akua Goes to School by Tricia Elam Walker and April Harrison. *Random House Kids*. Ages 6-10.



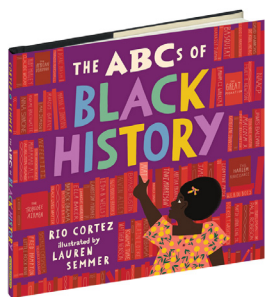
Zura, a kindergartener, is concerned about the upcoming Grandparents' Day. She doesn't understand what makes her grandmother, Akua, special. Nana Akua was born in a little African village. When she was very young, her parents had special marks painted on her face. These marks never go away. Zura loves her grandmother dearly, but she is afraid others will not understand and make fun of her. It is Grandparents' Day, and Zura's turn to introduce Nana Akua to her classmates

and the other grandparents. Zura and Nana Akua are wearing beautiful African dresses that Akua made.

Akua begins with, “I am from Ghana, a country in West Africa.” She explains that the marks on her face are a gift from her parents and the symbols stand for important things like power, unity, energy, and strength. Akua talks about how proud she is to wear these symbols as she walks around the children so each child can examine her face up close. Then Zura unfolds the quilt Nana Akua sewed together and painted for her. On the quilt, all of the symbols are displayed for everyone to see. Using paint that could be easily washed off, Nana Akua invites children to choose his/her favorite symbol and she paints it on their cheek. The other grandparents have a chosen symbol painted on their cheek as well. Zura didn’t need others to tell her that Nana Akua was the best grandparent of all.

This is a large picture book. All the pages are done in warm pastels. Pictures are from the far left to the far right edge of the page. The book includes a glossary of all African words used, and two pages of all the Adinkra symbols. The African name, how to pronounce it, and its meaning is printed under each symbol. This is an outstanding book which would enhance any library collection.

—Paulette Ansari, *African American storyteller and retired librarian.*



The ABCs of Black History
by Rio Cortez; Illustr. Lauren Semmer. *Workman Publishing.* Ages 5-99.

What an outstanding book! The poetic words are profound, yet simple. The language covers many of the experiences and history of African Americans, while connecting all people of color, forced through slavery from Africa’s shores. Every page is delightful, not only for the depth of each sentence, but also for the outstanding illustrations. The pictures explain the story for non-readers. This is an alphabet book with full-spread illustrations in deep, beautiful colors. In the entire book, except for one page with a white background, each background is in rich cooler shades of

red, blue, green, yellow, pink, gray and purple. As in life, the people are different shades of brown.

Each spread can be appreciated on many different levels. For example:

“F is for food, grown and farmed with our hands,
Worked and tilled and pulled from the land.
For fried fish, ham hocks, warm buttermilk bread,
Or maybe the sharp taste of mustards instead.
F is for folklore by light of the moon,
for family, for freedom, for jumping the broom.”

Children can appreciate a good meal and a good story, while surrounded by family and friends. Adults can appreciate all the hard work that goes into farming, raising and preparing your own foods. The present and the past are woven together with the words freedom and “jumping the broom.” Jumping the broom is something slaves did when they wanted to marry. The illustrations on these two pages show adults and children gathering food, storytelling, having a picnic, and a couple jumping the broom. There are nine pages in the back of the book that further explain the words behind each letter of the alphabet. The print is smaller here but laid out in an attractive manner, color is used for sub-headings and there are small, colorful illustrations on each page. The background color is gold for all nine pages. This book is a treasure which would enhance any library collection.

—Paulette Ansari, *African American storyteller and retired librarian.*

21 Cousins by Diane de Anda.
Illustrated by Isabel Muñoz. *Star Bright Books.* Ages 5-8.

Diane de Anda is a third-generation Latina reared in Los Angeles, now retired from UCLA’s department of Social Welfare. She has authored several articles on adolescent issues and four books on multicultural social work. Seeing a need for children’s books in which they themselves are the main characters, Ms. de Anda has composed eight award-winning children’s books, and **21 Cousins** is one of the latest.



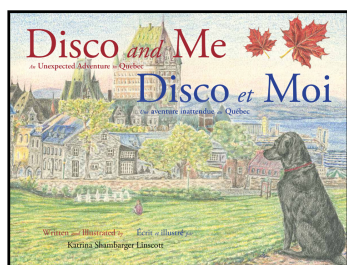
In this delightful book, Isabel Muñoz illustrates each page not only with the appropriate cousins and their corresponding activities but also scatters representations of cultural notes such as bright colors, flowers, cacti, tropical vegetation, the use of fruit for desert and the famous “*papel picado*” at their party on the last two pages and the front cover of the book.

In the beginning of this book, we are introduced to what constitutes a *familia* and to other Spanish words such *primo hermano*, *prima hermana*, *primos*, *primas*, and *mestizo*—one of the most important words of all because it explains the Mexican physiognomy. In essence, she explains how the greater family is comprised of blonds, brunettes and all the shades in between!

Throughout the pages devoted to the cousins, we learn about their custom of assigning nicknames to people and the use of descriptive words such as “Teenie,” “Baldy,” “Little Button Nose,” “Blondy,” or “Darky” which capture a physical characteristic of the person and is used instead of their name. Just imagine “Baldy” when he becomes a teen with a head of full wavy hair? Well, chances are his friends and family will still call him “Baldy”!

The other thing you notice throughout is the togetherness of the family. They go to each other’s contests, they support each other and just love being with each other.

—Sharon Stirtz, retired Spanish teacher.



Disco and Me: *An Unexpected Adventure in Quebec* / **Disco et Moi:** *Une aventure inattendue au Québec* (French/English) by Katrina Shambarger Linscott. Indie Author Books. Ages 7-12.

Told from the perspective of a young boy, this book tells the story of a French-speaking dog named Disco, who takes the unnamed narrator, a child, on a tour of Quebec. Rich color pencil illustrations help bring their journey to life. Many of the pages focus on scenes in Quebec City, like European-style St. Louis Street, lined with old-fashioned buildings, and the Chateau

Frontenac, the iconic hotel that towers over Quebec City. The tour ends with a sweet snack of hot maple syrup cooled in the snow.

The French founded the colony of Quebec in the 17th century as a center for fur trading, having been claimed for France the century before, by explorer Jacques Cartier. The name of the settlement comes from an Algonquin term meaning, “Where the river narrows,” a reference to the high cliffs that line the St. Lawrence River near Quebec City. In the 18th century, the British took control of the colony, though they gave considerable latitude to French customs and traditions.

Author Katrina Shambarger Linscott writes the book in both English and French, helping to capture the influence of French language and culture on Quebec. At the end of the book a short glossary contains English translations of some of the French phrases used in the book, as well as how the phrases are said in the Quebec dialect of French.

—Daemion Lee, special education teacher & associate editor.

Seven Golden Rings: *A Tale of Music and Math* by Rajani LaRocca; Illustr. Archana Sreenivasan. Lee & Low. Ages 7-10.



This picture book is about a young boy, Bhagat, who is a smart thinker and a musician. He travels to audition to be a musician for the king. To pay for his lodging, his mother gives him a single rupee and a chain of seven gold rings. Each night costs one link, and so Bhagat must use his problem-solving skills to figure out how to pay for each night without giving the entire link away.

Seeing Bhagat’s clever way of dividing the rings, the king decides that rather than inviting him to become a singer in the court, he will invite Bhagat to manage the king’s treasury instead.

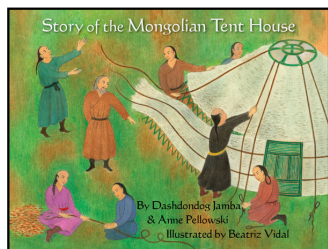
Marianne notes, “Kids can learn from math in a fun way from this book. Also, Bhagat is very nice to his mom, and she is nice to him.

I like how the kingdom didn’t have much at the

start of the story but at the end, Bhagat made it so everyone had enough. In the end, everything was right.”

—Nicole Barajas, associate editor and her daughter,
Marianne Barajas, age 7.

Story of the Mongolian Tent House by Dashdondog Jamba and Anne Pellowski; Illustr. Beatrice Vidal. *Wisdom Tales*. Ages 6–10.



This book starts with a sort of creation story, explaining how each creature of the Earth found or built its own dwelling place. The animals of the Earth come into conflict and therefore must go their separate ways to create their own homes. Humans, although lacking in claws to dig or wings to fly, nonetheless had intellect to use to create their own dwellings. Thus, an old man creates a house with his seven sons with willow poles, animal fleeces and ropes from animal hair. This type of house is known as a ger in Mongolian and a yurt in Turkish.

When the father dies, the house falls apart, and they each go their own separate ways. Each son leaves with a part of the house, but finds that he can build nothing with just a piece. It is not until the seven sons reunite that they are able to build the house again.

Through the vivid illustrations, readers are able to experience the vast Mongolian landscape, its greenery, its animals, as well as the careful process of building a Mongolian tent house.

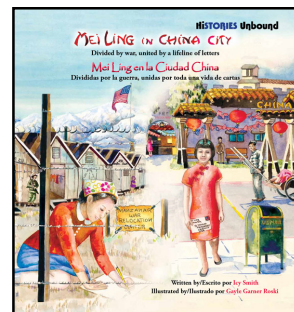
Mattias says, “This book is about seven sons together, then apart, then together again. I liked how the old man describes the parts of the tent house as parts of the earth and the way the house was illustrated.”

—Nicole Barajas, associate editor and her son, Mattias, 10.

Mei Ling in China City/Mei Ling en la Ciudad China (English/Spanish) by Icy Smith; Illustr. Gayle Garner Roski. *East West Discovery Press*. Ages 8–13.

Originally published in English, this is now a bilingual English/Spanish book. The story is so important that its historic content should be known and understood far and wide.

Icy Smith tells the story of a friendship between Mei Ling, a young American girl of Chinese descent, and Yayeko, her best friend, American of Japanese descent. They meet in California close to Los Angeles, right at the time when the Americans enter the second World War.



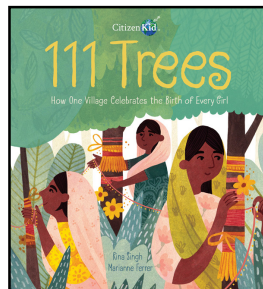
Yayeko and her family are uprooted from their home, along with thousands of other Japanese-American families and sent to internment camps where they are watched and threatened day in and day out. The girls continue their relationship through letters. Yayeko is bored, worried about her studies, and very unhappy due to the injustice of this internment. Mei Ling tries to be supportive in her letters, describing some of her activities during the Moon Festival in China City where she lives.

The breathtaking watercolor illustrations by artist Gayle Garner Roski show life and celebrations in China City. They are full of life, color and detail.

The context of the story is incredibly significant. At the time of this friendship, the Japanese were brutally attacking the Chinese in their own country. Mei Ling writes to Yayeko how she is collecting money to help the Chinese people in war-ravaged places like Nanking. The book also gives us a historic perspective of the life of Chinese minorities in Southern California at that time. I recommend it highly.

—Esther Celis, grandmother and Skipping Stones Board President.

111 Trees: How One Village Celebrates the Birth of Every Girl by Rina Singh; Illustr. Marianne Ferrer. *Kids Can Press*. Ages 6–9.



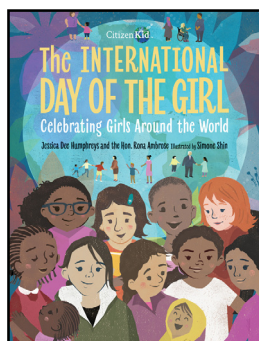
Do you care about the environment? Do you want to live an eco-friendly life? Do you believe boys and girls should be treated equally?

In some cultures, boys get preferential treatment and girls get treated unfairly. Imagine a village where each time

a girl is born, the residents plant 111 trees to welcome her birth! Read the true story behind this brilliant decision by the leader of a village in Rajasthan, India. This eco-friendly act helped improve the life of a whole community that was deforested, dry and dusty. In a matter of years, as the trees began to grow, they provided the community with not just fruits and firewood, but also shade during hot season, and the water table rose, birds found a home, and the village life improved tremendously for everyone. Now there are over 250,000 trees in this village!

Artistically illustrated by an international team of author and illustrator, this picture book from Canada is a treat waiting to be opened and shared.

—Arun Narayan Toké, editor



The International Day of the Girl: Celebrating Girls Around the World by Jessica Dee Humphreys and the Hon. Rona Ambrose; Illustr. Simone Shin. *Kids Can Press*. Ages 7-10.

Ms. Humphreys began her career at the United Nations Development Fund for Women.

The Honorable Rona Ambrose is a Canadian politician who is a passionate advocate for gender equality around the world and led the global movement to create the International Day of the Girl.

October 11th, is now celebrated as a United Nations Day, dedicated to championing the rights and achievements of girls everywhere. The book features nine girls whose stories reflect the reality of issues that affect girls such as lack of education, gender based violence, malnutrition, child marriage and lack of political representation.

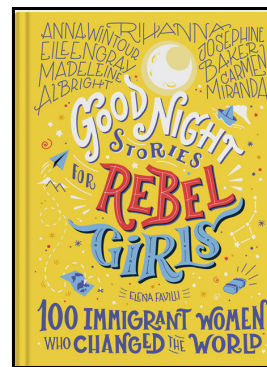
This is an uplifting and inspiring book, easy to read, and illustrates the need for systemic changes to promote gender equality of girls everywhere.

—Anita Stelling, Oregon.

Good Night Stories for Rebel Girls: 100 Immigrant Women Who Changed the World by Elena Favilli. *Rebel Girls*. Ages 8-12.

Ever wonder what's the point of reading bedtime

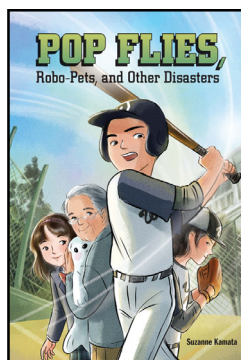
stories to anyone older than a toddler? **Goodnight Stories for Rebel Girls** is a classic example of the benefits of reading aloud to young children and beginners: it enriches their language development on multiple levels, grows their imagination and problem-solving skills, gives them expression for empathy for other characters in difficult situations, and encourages engagement and conversation.



The 100 short stories of these remarkable 'sisters-in-exodus' will engage your girls' imaginations and perhaps inspire them to cross boundaries and make their mark. In just a few paragraphs, each one-page narrative informs the reader about how the featured immigrant became interested in her area of expertise, and why she chose to emigrate. On the adjacent page is an illustration of, and a quote by, the heroine. Two of my favorite quotes were "People respond well to someone who is sure of what they want" by Anna Wintour, Editor-in-Chief and Philanthropist; and "Try to innovate. Nothing will be easy, but it is all worth it to discover something new" by Sau La Wu, Physicist.

There is a glossary at the end and a couple of pages for the child to write her own story and draw a picture of herself. By whom and how will she be inspired to march across barriers?

—Eileen Hanna, grandmother and storyteller.



Pop Flies, Robo-Pets, and Other Disasters by Suzanne Kamata. *Red Chair Press*. Ages 9-14.

Pop Flies, Robo-Pets, and Other Disasters follows a middle school baseball player named Satoshi who has returned to his hometown in rural Japan to once again play for his hometown's middle school team. The story is set in Japan. Satoshi compares the life and customs in Japan to what he had experienced in the United States.

The author introduces Japanese words and sayings in different situations. We are exposed to the many dif-

ferences between American and Japanese cultures as experienced by Satoshi. For example, in the baseball games, we learn that after game, the losing team will openly cry to show their disappointment.

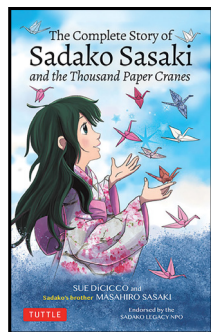
The characters in this story are typical Japanese students, somewhat boring. Satoshi's grandfather adds much to the story including some comic relief. Satoshi's rival Shintaro offers a typical villain archetype. The plot keeps readers focused by accentuating things like teamwork which provide valuable lessons that the reader can take away.

The book has many black and white illustrations scattered throughout the story. It helps visualize some scenes and get a better grasp on what is happening in the story.

The story, penned by Suzanne Kamata, a seasoned American author who has lived in Japan for a long time, offers a glimpse into Japanese culture and life.

—Mitchell Dennick, high school student intern.

The Complete Story of Sadako Sasaki: And the Thousand Paper Cranes by Sue DiCicco and Masahiro Sasaki. Tuttle Publishing. Ages 10-14.



You may have heard about Sadako who contracted the radiation sickness (leukemia) after being exposed to the intense radiation when the United States dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan on August 6, 1945. Sadako was only two then. She and her immediate family survived, but her grandmother who lived with them died in the intense fires that spread after the blast.

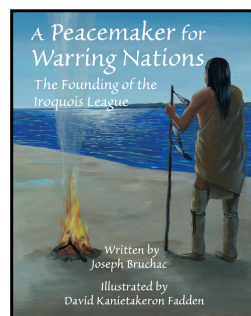
Sadako's family, like others, had to rebuild their life. She and her brother, Masahiro, seemed to have good health. She was a wonderful athlete and excelled in running and even won her elementary school a relay race. But then at age twelve she developed symptoms of leukemia and was hospitalized after a series of tests. In spite of the good care she received, her health continued to deteriorate. She succumbed to the illness on Oct. 25, 1955 at a young age of 12. She was one of the 140,000 people who died as a result of *pikadon* (the bomb) and the radiation illness.

This book is a “complete” story because the author collaborated with Sadako's older brother, Masahiro, who survived the bomb. We learn about Sadako's medical treatment, her heroic journey, and her family's struggles. She had learned the big lessons in life: she was compassionate, wise, strong, and had a giving nature. She made over a thousand origami peace cranes.

Each chapter opens with illustrations of peace cranes. There are numerous black and white photos of Sadako growing up, as well as sketches to fill the gaps when actual photos were not available. Epilogue notes from the authors and instructions on how to fold peace cranes bring a closure to Sadako's inspiring story. A must read for all teenagers!

—Arun Narayan Toké, editor

A Peacemaker for Warring Nations: The Founding of the Iroquois League by Joseph Bruchac; Illustr. David K. Fadden. Wisdom Tales. Ages 10-14.



This book tells the story of Tekana:wita, who was called Peacemaker, and how he helped unify the Iroquois people into an alliance known as the Iroquois League. It is a retelling of a story passed down by oral tradition and it grants readers a glimpse into a past almost lost to time. Various authorities dispute the time period during which these events took place, with estimates ranging from 1190 to 1451 A.D. Regardless, it describes a time long before the arrival of Europeans; as by the time Europeans arrived in North America, the Iroquois League was a well-established institution.

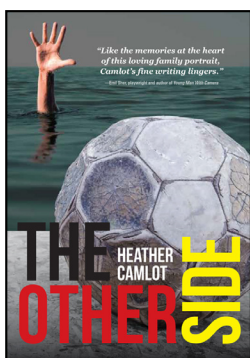
Surreal plot turns and spare characterization give this the feel of a story told long ago. The birth of Tekana:wita was ominous, for his mother, She Walks Ahead, seemed to become pregnant spontaneously, without a husband. Tadena:wita's grandmother, concerned about the safety of her family, tried to destroy the infant, but each time he would reappear in his mother's arms, unharmed. It was clear that Takana:wita would have an extraordinary life. As a young man he set out to confront the leaders of the five Iroquois nations, the Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga,

and Seneca, armed only with his resolve and his wits. He was not received warmly; at one point, the leaders of one group forced him onto a tree, and cut off the branch so he fell into the river below, and was swept down a waterfall, all as a test of the authenticity of his message of peace.

A woman, Jigonhsaseh, plays an important role in Tekana:wita's quest and the formation of the Iroquois League. Jigonhsaseh had her own oral tradition, passed down among women, that complimented the story of Tekana:wita. However, when European anthropologists first interviewed storytellers and committed the oral tradition to paper, they only interviewed men. And so the women's version of the story, focused on Jigonhsaseh, was lost to time. For this reason, perhaps, the book only alludes to the central role women had in Iroquois culture.

Joseph Bruchac, a member of the Nulhegan Abenaki Tribe, is a renowned author and storyteller, well-known for his advocacy for Native American culture. He masterfully brings to life the tale of Tekana:wita for younger readers of upper-elementary school age. David Kanietakeron Fadden, an Akwesasne Mohawk artist, author, and storyteller, created beautiful illustrations that complement the text. Highly recommended.

—Daemion Lee, special education teacher & associate editor.



The Other Side, a novel by Heather Camlot. Red Deer Press. Ages 11-16.

The Other Side, a middle-grade novel, is a mystery story combined with a coming of age tale. Liam Reimold, twelve-years old, is a committed soccer goalie, playing both on a school and an exhibition team. Focus on his game is interrupted when he discovers the body of a teenage girl on the shore of the lake near his grandfather's house. Authorities deem the death an accident, but Liam has his doubts.

Haunted by the discovery, Liam has his world further complicated by his relationship with his grandfather, who is terminally ill. Liam has a loving rela-

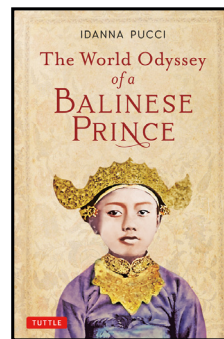
tionship with him, but struggles to reconcile his own Jewish identity with the fact that his Grandfather fought on the side of Germany in World War II.

The novel is set in Prince Edward County, not a county at all but a city, located in southern Ontario, Canada, on an island along the shore of Lake Ontario. This setting figures prominently in the discovery of the body with which the story opens.

Engaging first-person narration draws the reader in, as Liam navigates a series of challenges that disrupt his straight-forward soccer-centric life and as he tries to come to terms with his family's past and discover the truth about what left a young girl dead next to the lake.

—Daemion Lee, special education teacher & associate editor.

The World Odyssey of a Balinese Prince by Idanna Pucci. Tuttle Publishing. Ages 12-18.



The World Odyssey of a Balinese Prince is a wonderful story that recounts the life of Madé Djelantik. The author takes on the role of a narrator by offering us short excerpts from his long life. The story is very carefully woven to engage your attention while reading.

Since this is a retelling of events that the author heard directly from the man who experienced these events himself, the reader is satisfied in knowing that the recounts are authentic, and that gives a personal feeling to the narrative as a whole. We learn to appreciate the abundance of different cultures and ways of life that are shared. It is very interesting to see Dr. Djelantik's different interpretations and fondness for all the different places he visited.

Throughout the story, there are a multitude of watercolor paintings made by Dr. Djelantik himself to illustrate the writing. They help us how he viewed the world and his memories of the events he experienced. The use of these watercolor paintings is brilliant as they help readers feel connected to the events that happened decades ago. The paintings make the life journey of Dr. Djelantik a wonderful and interesting read.

All chapters stand on their own but they are all part

of one man's life, so it still has the overarching storyline that accompanies them. The medical doctor who helps people in three different regions of the world is a very likable person and he approaches every situation in his own unique way. This helps the reader grow attached to him very quickly and rooting for him.

This book offers a great example of how to retell someone's life in a novel format. Instead of taking a linear path, it offers glimpses of the most interesting events in the hero's life. The story comes alive and you feel as if you are standing right there with him on his odyssey through life.

—Mitchell Dennick, high school student intern.

Beyond Me by Annie Donwerth-Chikamatsu. Atheneum/Simon & Schuster. Ages 9-12.



Earthquake aftershocks that seem to last for months, a tsunami, and 11-year-old Maya learning to cope with the terrifying disasters. That's Annie Donwerth-Chikamatsu's heartwarming poetic novel, **Beyond Me**. It takes place in Japan in 2011, based on true events. This novel educates youth on the impact that nature has on the country, and provides a real life perspective from the author, who lived in Tokyo at the time. She wrote poems, took notes, looked back at Facebook posts, emails, photographs, and memories of the horrible events after the earthquake and the resulting tsunami. Along with extra research to relive the events of 2011, these notes eventually became this novel. The story dives into the real and raw emotions that surface in Maya and her friends and family.

Reading these poems genuinely gives the reader a new international and cultural view. The author includes details of the Japanese ways of living, such as going to cram school, wearing different shoes for inside and outside, foods grown on farms and sold at vegetable stands, taking trains, doing origami, and even patching broken dishes with shining gold filling. We also learn interesting Japanese vocabulary as we read the poems. Intercultural cooperation is brought in by Maya creating paper cranes with her best friend for Northeast

Japan, where people are struggling much more. The international viewpoint truly helps to appreciate different cultures and how they cope with problems. It gives us hope that there is a lot of good in the world.

The language is comprehensive and clear, and poems are easy to read. The author brings to life the Japanese culture and language effectively. The novel helped me visualize the events during and after that major earthquake and feeling empathy with the people living through the disaster.

There are no photographs or illustrations in the book, except for the one on the very last page. I believe this illustration was a nicely-tied ribbon on the story. It connected to a main event in the ending of the book. It helped me to understand the central message and what the author was trying to convey by this.

I felt that this book was very interesting visually. First, the cover was beautiful and after reading the story, it seemed to represent the message shared in the book. The inside layout of the story, however, was something I had never seen before.

What I loved was how during the first large earthquake, the author uses ragged font and red symbols over the entire page to show how terrifying the shakes were to Maya. Also used was a large font placed in "T" shapes and different sizes. Another nice detail is the timestamps next to the words indicating when each event was happening along with the days. All these details are very eye-catching and make the book hard to put down. It definitely came alive to me because I am interested in different cultures and natural disasters.

The main character, a girl named Maya, shows a positive attitude during the disaster, although she is very scared during the earthquake and its aftermath. She has creative responses to the natural calamity, such as folding the paper cranes, fixing her broken teacup, or dealing with her newly adopted cat. The conflicts promote good decision making in times of stress and worry. I loved that Maya was trying her best to take action and improve the lives of those in Northeast Japan. It inspires me to have a more positive outlook on situations and know that a little kindness can go a long way. Another take away for me was that sometimes life will shake you a bit, but if you just stay grounded and

rooted where you are, you will bloom into someone wonderful.

This was a compelling story for teens and kids alike. It educates about the Japanese culture, and offers a real life situation during and after a natural disaster. The reading level recommended is ages 9-12, so it was an easy-read for me, a 15-year-old. But, I still enjoyed reading *Beyond Me* very much. I recommend this heartwarming poetic novel highly because it is a very child-friendly book. It will give you a new perspective on the world and relationships, and at the same time, offers an effective way of dealing with scary situations.

—Grace Kidd, High school student intern.

Boy, Everywhere by A. M. Dassu. *Tu Books*. Ages 9-14.



Boy, Everywhere is a middle-grade novel about Sami, an eighth grade who lives in Damascus, Syria. A bombing happens in town, upending the lives of Sami's family and so many others. The opening pages capture this sense of disrupted normalcy. Sami is in class, just having received a note from a friend asking if he is going to go ice skating

at the mall the next day. Suddenly the principal interrupts the class; "This is not a drill, eighth grade," he says, announcing news of the bombing at the mall.

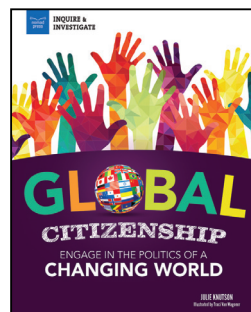
Sami's mother and sister had been at the mall, and only later does he learn that they were injured. In this wake of this terrible turn of events, Sami's family decides to escape the encroaching violence of war and emigrate to the United Kingdom as refugees. **Boy, Everywhere** tells the story of this journey, the challenges they faced as well as the hope they refused to relinquish.

The author, A.M. Dassu, based in the U.K., is a well-known advocate for diverse voices in literature, including directing the organization Inclusive Minds, which supports efforts at inclusion, diversity, equality, and accessibility in children's literature. Dassu was born in England but notes in interviews that her family originally came from Iraq; her great-great grandfather

left the country in search of a new life. She recalls that when her mother first came to the U.K., she had to take a job as a factory worker, as her credentials did not transfer to the new country. It took considerable time to re-establish her career. Dassu identifies her family's past experience with displacement and relocation as key inspiration for writing **Boy, Everywhere**. Meticulous research informed the writing of the book; Dassu sought to detail the modern experience of Syrian refugees as truthfully, accurately, and honestly as possible.

—Daemion Lee, special education teacher & associate editor.

Global Citizenship: Engage in the Politics of a Changing World by Julie Knutson; Illustr. Traci Van Wagoner. *Nomad Press*. Ages 12-15.



Global Citizenship: Engage in the Politics of a Changing World investigates human rights issues and global concerns, and asks the question, "What does it mean to be a good global citizen?" The book is specifically designed for teenagers, informing them of global problems and how to

make a difference. It also includes personal experiences in the form of short biographies of people who are advocating for positive human rights work. It describes real world problems. Knutson gives many examples of ways that various people are contributing to conserve nature and help make the world hospitable for others. For example, bringing reusable bags, knowing what brands utilize, child labor, alternative energy and packing materials that are renewable and biodegradable, or global warming. I learned a lot about the major world problems and what we can do to help make an impact.

If you are interested in social issues or current world events, or if you want to learn how to help the community and the world, the book will appeal to you. Reading the book made me think about sustainability as well as my human rights. We have the right to speak up for what we believe and make a difference. The book provides a lot of encouragement to take positive actions and be a good "global citizen." Showing good ways of living and promoting community was a big

theme of the book. I gravitate towards having reusable grocery bags or simply loving everyone for who they are. However there are so many little things one can do to contribute.

Knutson describes the various topics in a way young person can understand them easily, yet also provides vocabulary that challenges the reader. The photos and illustrations made the book even more interesting. There are cartoons, almost like comics, which would really appeal to children and help them appreciate the information presented. The photographs are first-person views of difficult situations or things that should be known, such as polluted rivers, trash, suffrage, protests, and teenagers helping the community. The illustrations and words compliment each other in expressing the subject matter effectively. I recommend this book to anyone who wants to find ways of living a sustainable and meaningful life.

—Grace Kidd, *High school student intern.*

Kid Sterling by Christine Welldon.
Red Deer. Ages 12–16.



Sterling Crawford, at age ten, knows how to hustle money by shining shoes, playing his trumpet, and running errands. In 1906 living in New Orleans, it seemed like that's all a black kid needed. After all, he could already read, write, and

count money well enough not to be cheated. He explained to his mother how he would help with the rent money, if only he didn't have to go to school five days a week. A few of Sterling's friends had dropped out and his brother Syl had also dropped out a very long time ago. Syl was only seven years older than Sterling. Sterling is special because he hears music in his head nearly everywhere. The problem was how to transfer the music from his head to his horn. He needed someone to teach him how to do this. King Bolden was Sterling's hero. From the first moment Sterling heard King Bolden hit his notes, he knew he wanted to blow his horn just like Bolden.

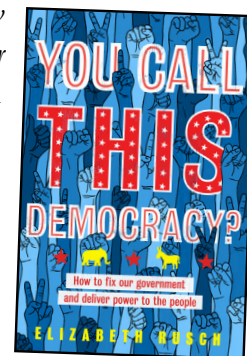
King Bolden, a real person who lived during this period, was one of the early jazz greats. He was rapidly becoming a drug addict and never found the times to

teach Sterling how to “hit some licks”—play the horn well. Sterling finds out that his brother has been making drops of cocaine late at night for the local mafia boss, Paulo di Christiano. Sterling fights his brother often but loves him and would never rat him out. Because he refused to tell on his brother, he ends up doing a year in Captain Joseph Jones' Colored Waif's Home. This place actually existed, and before it was established, young boys were forced to mix with hardened criminals in the prison. He had to work hard there, but a gifted teacher gave him music lessons. She taught him how to play the piano and how to write the music that was in his head onto paper.

Armand Piron (another real person of the period) had begun teaching him how to write his music on paper before he was arrested. Sterling left two of his songs with Armand. Armand polished the music and got the songs published while Sterling was at the boys' home. When Sterling was released from the home, two of Paulo's men jumped him one afternoon and Paulo forced him to take his brother's place making drug drops late at night. This is action-packed, fast-moving historical novel. You won't want to put it down until you find out what happens to Sterling and his music.

—Paulette Ansari, *African American storyteller and retired librarian.*

You Call This Democracy? *How to Fix our Government and Deliver Power to the People* by Elizabeth Rusch. *Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.* Ages 12 and up.



In the U.S., in our history, civics, and history classes, often we are given a sugarcoated, feel-good version of our political system. There are gaps—enormous gaps—in what we are taught, and if we don't become aware of these omissions, it's unlikely they will ever be confronted and corrected.

In **You Call This Democracy?**, the author, Elizabeth Rusch, looks unflinchingly at the reality of this system, without ideologies, opinions, or biases, but rather by looking at some indisputable facts of the fundamental injustices upon which our country is built

and offers ways to correct the system.

The effects of our voting system are extensive and especially impacts minorities, people of color, and low-income families. One person, one vote is, or should be, a basic principal of our representative democracy. Nevertheless, so many of our citizens, because of voter suppression, the Electoral College, the influence of money, and redistricting, have little or no influence on how our country works. Especially pervasive is the influence of money. Money equates into political power and those with millions or billions are going to use this power to push legislation in their favor, not in favor of the poor or even the average working person.

The history of how and why these voter procedures came about can be quite interesting. The word gerrymandering, for example, was coined in 1812 when Massachusetts governor Elbridge Gerry approved a map that included a district that resembled a salamander, thus the name “gerrymander.” Some of the rules that cause an imbalance in political power of the voter, and make it almost impossible to change, date back to the Constitution. The mandate that each state elect two senators is an example. This gives us a totally unrepresentative chamber in Congress since a state such as Wyoming with less than one million is represented by the same number of senators as California with 40 million. And, this is almost impossible to change. Article V of the Constitution states that “...No State, without its consent, shall be deprived of its equal Suffrage in the Senate.”

Although difficult obstacles to remedy these flaws exist, each chapter of this educational book gives us ways to actively work toward a better system. This is a “book of solutions” as is stated in the introduction and how to work toward those solutions are presented as well as websites, organizations, and other resources to encourage one to become proactive in the struggle for a more representative system.

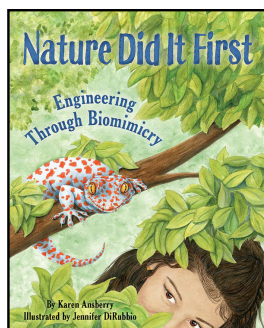
You Call This Democracy? is concise, beautifully presented, and is packed-full of well-documented information. It is a much-needed companion to the textbooks that are used today in studying how our government works.

—Paul Dix, author and photographer, Oregon.

The Autumn 2021 issue of *Skipping Stones* will feature 2021 Youth Honor Awards, the 2021 Book Awards, the 2021 Asian Celebration Haiku Contest, and the 2021 Creative Writing Contest of the American Immigration Lawyer’s Association. The issue will be available 1 Sept. 2021.

You may order it for \$7 (plus \$2 for s & h) on our website, or contact info@skippingstones.org.

Nature and Ecology Books



Nature Did It First: *Engineering Through Biomimicry* by Karen Ansberry; Illustr. Jennifer DiRubbio. *Dawn Publications/Sourcebooks*. Ages 5-11.

Have you ever wondered where certain inventions came from? How did someone think of it? For example, Velcro was invented in 1955 by George deMestral, an engineer who lived in Switzerland. One day after walking his dog, he noticed his dog was covered in burrs. He wondered: What made the burrs stick so well? When he examined a burr with a magnifying glass, he discovered tiny, curved hooks. From this discovery, he developed a new way of fastening things. This is what biomimicry is all about: Studying and copying nature to solve human problems.

This book presents many different examples in an elementary way. By studying how bats use echolocation to function on the darkest night, scientists and engineers were able to invent a special cane for blind people. This cane has a small ball at the end of it, which sends out sounds each time it hits an object. The handle of the cane then vibrates. This helps a blind person navigate around objects. This cane also aids the person to know exactly where they are in a room or while walking city streets.

This book covers seven different products/inventions that some people use every day. The print is large and easy to read. Each product has a catchy poem to begin the story. Many of the illustrations are gorgeous pastels. Several pictures are placed on colored pages, which enhances their beauty. The illustrations and the information are designed to draw the reader in. You will never see nature with the same eyes after reading this book. There is a small glossary in the back, along with more information about biomimicry. The author and illustrator list other science books they have published.

—Paulette Ansari, *African American storyteller & retired librarian.*

The Belize Trash Monster by Sylvia M. Medina with Lady Dixie Bowen; Illustr. Walter Castillo, Ann

Jasperson and Joy Eagle. *Green Kids Club*. Ages 6-10.

Marianne, age 7, writes, “This book is about taking care of the beach in Belize. The children noticed that people were throwing trash at the beach, and that can hurt animals. A bird can get a hook caught on its wing. The children try to stop the evil trash monster by picking up the beach trash. They also protested to help the beach.

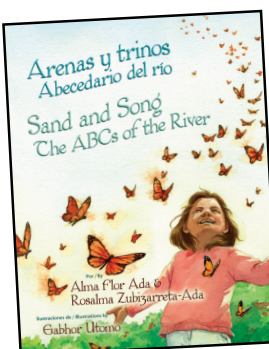
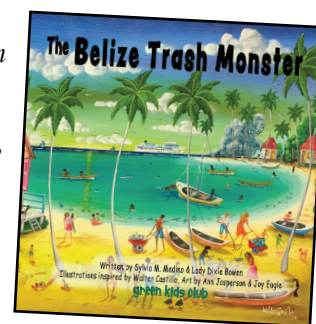
I liked how the children helped the beach and the animals in the water. I also liked the drawings of the toucan—it was pretty. Finally, I liked that there was a happy ending.”

Nicole adds, “Ecologically-minded readers young and old will enjoy this sunny picture book that tackles the very real concern of beach pollution. Kids will feel empowered to solve the problem of beach littering as they watch Maya and her brothers Victor and Tiago take charge of the problem by educating, cleaning up trash and of course participating in a beach clean-up with their parents.

The colorful toucan who speaks to warn about the Trash Monster and the Trash Monster, who is a stormy cloud threatening to dump trash everywhere if the beach does not get cleaned up, enliven the imagination of the reader and elevate the story to the realm of the extraordinary.

In the back, this book also includes information about Belize as well as photos and information about the impact of trash on its eco-system.”

—Nicole Barajas, *associate editor and her daughter, Marianne Barajas, age 7.*



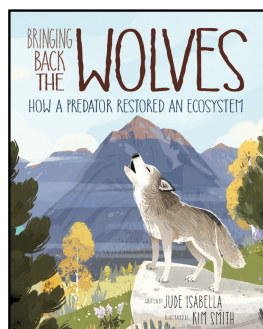
Arenas y trinos: Abecedario del río / Sand and Song: The ABCs of the River by Alma Flor Ada & Rosalma Zubizarreta-Ada; Illustr. Gabhor Utomo. *Arte Público Press*. Ages 6-10.

You can read this bilingual Spanish?English picture book

with young preschoolers (one poem at a time) and you can give it to older children all the way to high school. With poems in English and Spanish, the authors (a mother-daughter team) successfully help us see the beauty of nature that surrounds us—with its mystery and power, and its wonder! The poems are accessible, and the metaphors are clear both in English as well as in Spanish. The book is an excellent tool that would widen young readers' vocabulary in both the languages.

The illustrations accentuate the poems, help us get in the poem's moment, and are fun and beautiful. The illustrator did a splendid job of promoting nature appreciation through her realistic illustrations.

—*Esther Celis, grandmother and Skipping Stones Board President.*



Bringing Back the Wolves: *How a Predator Restored an Ecosystem* by Jude Isabella; Illustr. Kim Smith. Kids Can Press. Ages 8-12.

What is the connection between a wolf, an elk, an aspen tree, and a beetle? And many other plant and animal species in Yellowstone National Park? The book, **Bringing Back the Wolves:** *How a Predator Restored an Ecosystem* is about ecology and the intricate relationship between all living things, as well as their relationship with the physical environment.

Many years ago, almost all the wolves were killed in the lower 48 states of the U.S. and by 1926 there was not a single one left in Yellowstone. By eliminating the wolf, an important link was taken out of the food chain, and many plants and animals suffered. One very obvious impact was the growing numbers of elk that had lost their primary predator and the subsequent loss of young aspens. The overpopulated elk fed on the small saplings which never had a chance to grow into mature trees. Without the aspens, many other creatures were affected such as beavers and songbirds.

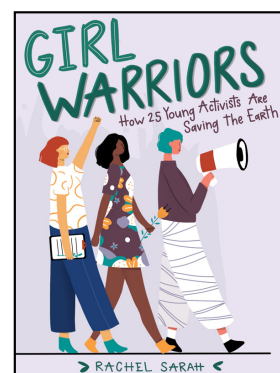
In the 1990s, wolves were reintroduced into the Park. At that time, I lived just 65 miles north of Yellowstone, where it was big news. Many biologists celebrated the event, but at the same time they won-

dered to what extent it would impact the ecosystem. There was a cautious optimism, but the results were more dramatic and positive than expected. The ecology of the park improved, species returned to new habitats, and even more tourists came hoping to spot a wolf.

The link between the wolf and the aspens is just one example of interdependency of species in our natural world. The author, Jude Isabella, traces dozens of other links and the beneficial impacts resulting from the introduction of just this one species, the wolf. I hope both young and old read this book and study its beautiful illustrations (by Kim Smith) and realize we must repair and maintain balances in our natural heritage.

—*Paul Dix, author and photographer, Oregon.*

Girl Warriors: *How 25 Young Activists Are Saving the Earth* by Rachel Sarah. Chicago Review. Ages 9-12.



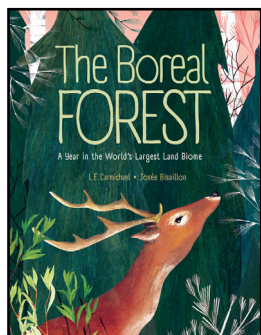
This book covers young activists from different countries, working around the globe to clean up the planet. Some of these girls became activists at the age of eight or nine years old, consumed with a passion to stop climate change, to save the planet from dying. They are bold and go before their government leaders and demand that changes be made. At the tender age of eleven, Haven Coleman went before her congressional representatives at a town hall meeting and told them it was time for leaders to step up and demand that the nation pursue renewable energy. This is energy that comes from sunlight, wind, rain, tides, and waves. Later, Haven heard about Greta Thunberg, who began leaving school on Fridays (she was 15 at the time) to strike outside the Riksdag (parliament in Sweden) so everyone could become aware of climate change and hopefully do something about it. Haven asked for Greta's and her mother's permission to do the same thing in Denver. Many of the young people are leading groups to clean up beaches and woodlands. Others are working to stop deforestation, stop plants and animals from becoming extinct, and stop the killing of animals for expensive delectables like

shark fin soup. Several activists mentioned the COVID-19 pandemic as the reason some demonstrations and protest groups were postponed or called off altogether in 2020. It is hoped that as COVID-19 becomes less of a crisis, these young activists will unite in global coalitions. They have the science behind them and they know what they are about. They will encourage others to form large protest groups to fight for changes which will save our planet for future generations to come.

Each young activist is introduced with three to four pages and also a colorful photograph. The reader is given a lot of information to chew on. In the back of the book are three pages of websites and books to explore.

—Paulette Ansari, *African American storyteller & retired librarian.*

The Boreal Forest: *A Year in the World's Largest Land Biome* by L.E. Carmichael; Illustr. Josée Bisaillon. *Kids Can Press.* Ages 8-12.



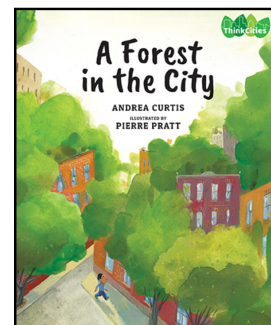
This book is about the boreal forest, which goes from Canada to Japan. More than half of the boreal forest is in Russia. You can learn all about the boreal forest from this book. There are so many interesting animals there. One type of frog survives by almost completely freezing itself during winter.

Nicole adds, “The boreal forest is the world’s largest land biome, yet it is considered young at less than 8,000 years old. It is a delight to become acquainted with the many habitats that make up the vast boreal forest.

The illustrations in this informational book are exquisite. Divided into sections by country, and taking us through all seasons, each page contains snippets about so many diverse aspects of the boreal ecosystem from the animals who inhabit this wooded landscape to the impact of fire to climate change. Readers curious to learn more will appreciate the glossary and additional resources listed at the end.”

—Nicole Barajas, *associate editor and her daughter, Marianne Barajas, age 7.*

A Forest in the City by Andrea Curtis; Illustr. Pierre Pratt. *Groundwood Books.* Ages 8-12.



This book tells about the urban forest—trees in the city. Some of the biggest obstacles city trees face are the polluted and developed ground. Also, different people have good or bad relationships with the trees. **A Forest in the City** also teaches about the different parts of the trees, and I really liked the illustrations.

Nicole adds, “A Forest in the City strives to explore questions many of us have wondered: What is it like to be a tree in the city and how can we nurture the urban forest in our own towns and cities? Answering this question involves the investigation of the types of threats urban forests face, such as Dutch Elm disease, concrete, pollution and poor soil. It also includes considering what benefits we receive from having trees as a part of our cityscape, such as beauty and respite and pollution-resistance.

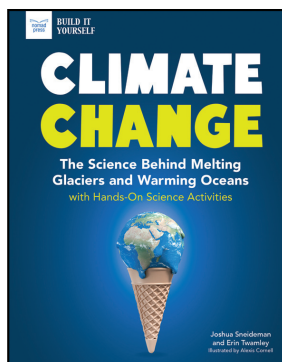
This book also delves into the history of trees in the city. In the end, in the face of climate change and increasing population, we realize that trees in the city are more important than ever!”

—Nicole Barajas, *associate editor & her son, Mattias Barajas, age 10.*

Climate Change: *The Science Behind Melting Glaciers and Warming Oceans* by Joshua Sneideman & Erin Twamley; Illustr. Alexis Cornell. *Nomad.* Ages 9-12.

It’s called global warming or climate change or even climate chaos, and for the past decade, we have been inundated in the media with some aspect of this phenomenon. It might be news about extreme weather patterns, rising oceans, melting glaciers and arctic pack ice, forest fires, CO2 and methane in our atmosphere, or dying coral reefs. It also might be about countries signing climate accords or environmentalists confronting industries to reduce their emissions.

Few of us, however, truly understand the science behind greenhouse gases, the causes of the changes in our atmosphere, and the history of those changes—



and the dangerous trajectory that the planet is heading—unless we do something about it. **Climate Change: The Science Behind Melting Glaciers and Warming Oceans** will give the reader a comprehensive background and understanding of climate change science and what he or she can do to miti-

gate the alarming trend of increased greenhouse gases.

CO₂ levels in the atmosphere are reaching levels not seen in the last 3,000,000 years. Add to this the methane that has a shorter life than CO₂, but absorbs 34 times more solar energy. A lot of methane is produced by the more than 1.5 billion cows that live on the planet. Reducing meat consumption is one of the many ways we can slow global warming. Trees and plants reduce CO₂ all over the earth, but did you realize that phytoplankton in the ocean is also a plant which absorbs CO₂ and produces 50% of the oxygen we breathe? These are just a few examples of the vast storehouse of information in this book.

The book is also loaded with interesting bits about scientists, some from centuries ago, who have played a role in the understanding of our climate and the chemistry of our world.

There are worksheets for interactive learning and “words to know”—definitions of terms used throughout the book. (Example: “Goldilocks planet: a planet that orbits in the habitable zone around a star.”)

Here we are presented with the stark facts of climate change and yet it does not dwell on pessimism or despair. Packed full of information, it provides the tools to make us more effective activists to save the planet.

—Paul Dix, author and photographer.

Teaching Resources



Posters for a Green New Deal: 50 Removable Posters to Inspire Change. Illustrated by the artists of Creative Action Network. Workman Publishing. Grades 7-12.

Get this book and tear out the pages! (The pages are perforated for this reason.)

Activism and art in a book is what Creative Action Network (C.A.N.) gives us with this inspiring book of colorful posters for social change and climate advocacy. See <https://creativeaction.network/pages/>

The artwork in this great primer reminds me of the WPA art of the 1930s, when FDR advanced the original “New Deal,” promoting economic recovery and putting Americans back to work through Federal activism. The New Deal created a huge public works program for the unemployed, and revived a sense of hope in the American people.

In the introduction, C.A.N. states: “Like the artists of the New Deal’s WPA, we rallied our creative community to join this fight and crowdsource art for the Green New Deal. Our Goal is to help the public understand, envision and actualize this exciting new set of policies just as WPA artists helped inform and advocated for the original New Deal’s innovative programs over 80 years ago... The legacy of what we accomplished in the 1930s is a road map to guide us today.”

On the back of each of the 50 stunningly illustrated posters, you’ll find a compact explanation of Green New Deal challenges, goals, and ideas. Dynamic quotes abound throughout the book from authors, visionaries, world leaders, and philosophers. The themes range from Ocean Health to Revitalizing Cities, Public Education, Workforce Development, and Restoring Biodiversity and many more. All of these topics offer the reader plenty of issues to consider, write about, and galvanize around.

Teachers, looking for a way to induce activism in your classroom? Parents, hoping to generate family conversations about climate justice? Share this particularly timely book! The pages aren’t just attractive art or pithy statements; they are meant to be taken out of the

book or photocopied in color, and shared with the public, plastered in classrooms, or used as signs at a rally.

—Eileen Hanna, grandmother and storyteller.

Teacher Unions and Social Justice: *Organizing for the Schools and Communities Our Students Deserve*, edited by Michael Charney, Jesse Hagopian, and Bob Peterson. *Rethinking Schools*.

As long as I can remember, teachers have gotten a bad rap. While painted as loving, comforting, supportive cheerleaders for their students, they were also accused of being insufficiently prepared to teach without administrative oversight.

Nevertheless, during parent conferences, these same teachers supported their students and praised them for their efforts. They encouraged parents to cut back on screen time, read with their children every night, and enforce early bed times. Teachers would help their students enjoy learning, surprise them with an extra recess for a treat, read **The Big Orange Splot** by Daniel Pinkwater, and then brainstorm with them what their own dream houses would look like, pulling out sheets of paper, markers and crayons and sparking their creativity and self expression.

Then came No Child Left Behind and the relentless march into corporate-style education. Scripted curriculum, prescribed reading books, imaginative fiction replaced with fact-based short readings, prewritten mini tests, and oral timings. Despite their years of practice, their Master’s degrees or doctorates, teachers were no longer trusted to teach as they had been trained to do. The undermining of educator expertise spread across the curriculum. Reading, writing, and math were emphasized, and supposedly taught with “rigor,” boring students and teachers alike. Other subjects were ignored, and the learning of geography, history, science, art, and music fell away.

Teachers were herded into “professional development” sessions that denigrated their previous individualized instruction and force fed them regimented strategies, all monocultural. Individual differences and cultural variance were ignored. All students were considered the same, and human differences disregarded.

Districts required that only the approved readings be available to students, preferably delivered in the same

measured language and with the same monotonous timing in every classroom. All teachers in a grade level were expected to be teaching the same lesson on any given day. No time for special interests, no time for student enthusiasm, no room for any kid of creativity. Principals wanted to go into a classroom and be able to predict which text or worksheet the students would be working from, what page they would be on, what planned, canned, precisely managed, and deadly dull lesson the teacher would be delivering.

Then came the testing. Standardized, opaque to the point where teachers were not allowed to see the questions or help individual students. Teachers and schools were not allowed to prepare their students, yet were judged on the test results. And teachers were never told what the students got right or wrong on these tests. There was no opportunity for reteaching, for helping students learn what they had missed.

Over decades of teacher education programs, teachers were already trained to follow their leaders in administration, and not rock the boat. So despite a major dose of cognitive dissonance, there was little initial resistance to the changes. Teacher development gatherings became shame sessions, questioning research-based practices, and frightening many teachers into silence. If the students couldn't pass the tests, or if a teacher questioned the new system, that teacher's job was at risk.

Still, a few determined educators objected. They wanted their students to enjoy learning, to love books, to understand and appreciate math. They talked to each other about what happening. It took awhile, years in fact, for the rumble from below to start shaking things up. Teachers were forbidden to discuss the standardized tests with parents. But some teachers were parents. They talked to other parents. Questions arose. Parents took a closer look. Opting out of tests started being discussed, first in whispers, then out loud.

Teacher's unions, silent on the so-called reforms for years, stretched their arms, built their muscles back up. They knew the kids were unhappy and demoralized. They noticed families and teachers were unhappy. Change was desperately needed.

Finally, with community support, teachers worked

with their unions to resist the cynical sabotage of public education. And Rethinking Schools, an educational publishing group founded by teachers, got busy analyzing how corporate greed had infiltrated the educational system.

The teachers at Rethinking Schools have been working to bring social justice into classrooms for decades. Over 20 years ago, they published the first edition of their teacher unionism book, called **Transforming Teacher Unions: Fighting for Better Schools and Social Justice**. Since then, wealth inequality, poverty, and white supremacy have created unsustainable social conditions and environmental disasters. Black Lives Matter, the Me Too movement, and the fights for immigrant rights and gun control have entered the lives of even the youngest students. It was time to center social justice, anti-racism, and climate justice in the curriculum.

Rethinking Schools editors have revised, expanded, and updated their original book, now titled **Teacher Unions and Social Justice: Organizing for the Schools and Communities Our Students Deserve**. It provides a comprehensive organizing manual for teachers, parents, students, and communities who want to take back their schools from the corporations, the politicians, and the profiteering testing companies. Bettina Love of the University of Georgia describes it as “packed with ideas, strategies, and the voices of change from across the nation from people who are protesting, marching, striking, organizing, creating, and demanding the schools our students deserve.” The educators who contributed the 60+ articles in the anthology are, as Love says, the same people who are in the trenches, teaching the students and also doing the work of change. People like Jesse Hagopian of Seattle, the Garfield High School teacher who started the resistance against MAP testing that spread through the city and eventually throughout the country, and who wrote several articles for the book describing the history and methods of their work to overcome the testing culture of the Seattle School District.



Dense with knowledge, history, and strategy, the book is organized into seven sections. Each section includes articles documenting the history and the basic tenets of social justice unionism, fighting privatization, and creating multiracial alliances. The final section lists myriad resources for organizers. Taken together, they describe the history of teacher union organizing and the burgeoning movement to build multiracial alliances with local communities to defend and transform public education.

It also offers lists of many more resources, enough to provide fodder for a doctorate in union organizing and resistance. Any interested teacher, parent, student, or community organizer will find everything they need right here to fortify their learning and collective action for years to come.

—Mary Meredith Drew, ex-president of *Skipping Stones*, retired educator, and former union president in two Oregon school districts.

When the World Feels Like a Scary Place:
Essential Conversations for Anxious Parents and Worried Kids, by Abigail Gewirtz, Ph.D. Workman Publishing.

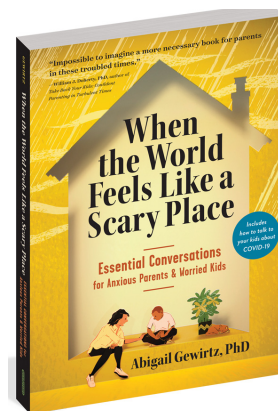
How many parents look forward to difficult, heavy conversations with their anxious children? Maybe some of you do enjoy that scene, but, as for me, I wish I had read this book a long time ago.

This is a smart book, easy to read and understand for us parents and grandparents. It's about how to listen to and talk with our kids, and how to raise them to be independent and confident even when they—or we—may sense danger at every turn. Child Psychologist Abigail Gewirtz gives us much needed guidelines and tools for these “essential conversations”. We don't have to avoid or muddle through these tough encounters; she maps out proven practical approaches for helping our children to navigate a scary world and respond effectively.

Part 1 is about how parents matter now more than ever in these stressful times. Part 2 is about emotions, and helping kids to understand and navigate BIG emotions.

The rest of the book is the special attraction: practical advice and step by step demonstration on how to use the most basic tool—conversation—to

approach hot topics, including but not limited to: violence and bullying, natural disasters, school shootings, social media and other perils of technology. There's a special section for military families, as Dr. Gewirtz has worked extensively with parents who have to deploy overseas. Plus, there's an index of valuable resources in the back.



Read the Introduction and Part 1, and you'll be hooked, because this is a remarkably necessary book for our times.

—Eileen Hanna, grandmother and storyteller.