

Skipping Stones

Vol. 25, No. 3
May-Aug. 2013

A Multicultural Literary Magazine

US: \$6; CAN: \$6

松下問童子言
師采藥去只在
此山中雲深不
知處
賈島詩

項佳因畫

Haikus • Best Multicultural & Nature Books • Bolivia

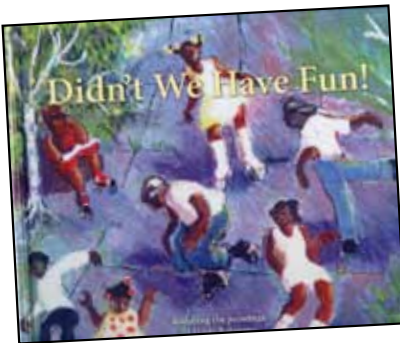
The 2013 Skipping Stones Honor Awards



In the year of our 25th Anniversary, we recognize 25 outstanding books and teaching resources with the **Skipping Stones Honor Awards**. The honored 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 close relationships within human societies. These great reading adventures offer a variety of learning experiences for readers of all ages.

The winners are listed in three categories—**Multicultural and International Books, Nature and Ecology Books, and Teaching Resources**. Our special thanks go to the many readers and reviewers who helped us select these 22 books and 3 DVDs. We believe these unique titles offer an exciting way to explore and understand cultures, places, societies and their histories. The reviews of winning titles follow:

Multicultural and International Books



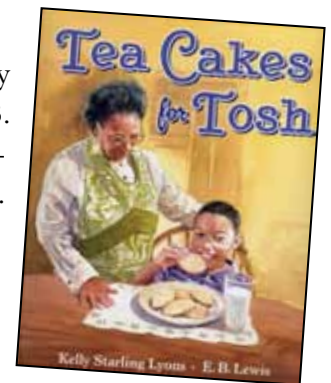
Didn't We Have Fun!
By Hilda Robinson & Jeff Kunkel, illustr. Hilda Robinson (CrickhollowBooks.com). Picture book. Elementary grades. ISBN: 978-1-933987-17-0

In *Didn't We Have Fun*, Hilda Robinson goes back to her roots, detailing life in a world before television. The narrator shares what it was like being raised in an African-American family with six siblings in 1940's Philadelphia.

Children spent their time learning to play instruments, reading poetry, playing outside, listening to the radio for entertainment, and studying. Travelling through time, Robinson notes the role of significant historical figures in daily life such as poet Paul Laurence Dunbar and boxing champion Joe Louis, as well as popular movies such as "Sleeping Beauty" and "Shirley Temple."

From holidays to cuddling with her mother, to school, playground games, and family picnics, the story is filled with an appreciation for the simple things in life and joys of being raised in a tight-knit family. This book is a light-hearted and insightful read about the value of spending quality time with family in African-American culture.

—Kamiiya Williams, *African American, Univ. of Oregon*.



Tea Cakes for Tosh by Kelly Starling Lyons, illustr. E. B. Lewis (penguin.com/youngreaders). Elementary grades. Picture book. ISBN: 978-0-399-25213-6

This heart-tugging book tells the story of a young boy named Tosh who loves to spend time with his grandmother, Honey. Each time Tosh visits, he looks forward to having another serving of Honey's delicious tea cakes, which smell like "vanilla mixed with sunshine" and provide a taste that "warms his heart." Along with her delightful treats, Honey never forgets to tell Tosh the story of how she became acquainted with their remarkable taste.

Ida, Honey's grandmother, worked on a slave plantation as a cook. A talented baker, Ida's tea cakes were regarded as "the best around." However, as a slave, she could never share any of her famous dishes with her children and was only permitted to cook for her master's family. Occasionally, Ida would slip a few tea cakes in her pocket and sneak them to the small outhouse where she and her children lived. Their young faces "beamed with hope," as Honey recalls it. Honey tells this story to Tosh each time.

As the story progresses, Honey's age takes a toll on her memory. She begins to forget many things such as where she parked her car and her sister's phone number. More importantly to Tosh, she forgets how to

Multicultural and International Books

make tea cakes! Disturbed by his grandmother's loss of memory, Tosh decides to do something special. With the help of his mother, he makes a batch of tea cakes, using the same ingredients and following the same steps just as he has seen his grandmother do many times. The next day, he surprises Honey with his own plate of tea cakes and reminds her of how the tasty cookies came to be.

This book nicely illustrates how history is passed down from one generation to the next in African-American culture. Like many children, Tosh learns to associate a specific food with storytelling, and by the end of the story, readers can see how the two intimately relate. As Grandma Honey's memory fades away, the stories of the plantation and Grandma Ida's tea cakes are preserved through Tosh, who will likely share the same stories with his children. *Tea Cakes for Tosh* is a great read for any child, as it colorfully celebrates the relationship between family, food, and stories.

—Kamiiya Williams, *African American, Univ. of Oregon.*

Unspoken: A Story from the Underground Railroad by Henry Cole (scholastic.com). Picture book without words. Elementary grades. ISBN: 978-0-545-39997-5

On the back cover of this book is a drawing of a girl's face. She is looking straight ahead with a serious expression. She is holding up a lantern. There is a question written on the drawing: "What would you do if you had the chance to help a person find freedom?" That question is the only writing found in the book, except for a wanted poster and the Author's Notes at the very end.

This is a story told with drawings, and it is well told. The main character is young girl who lives with her family on a farm during the Civil War. As she goes around the farm feeding the chickens, gathering and storing vegetables, and caring for the animals, she witnesses historical events, such as soldiers riding across her family's land and bounty hunters looking for slaves. One day she senses the presence



of a person hiding in an outbuilding on the farm. She realizes the person is a slave, running for his life in hopes of freedom.

The girl decides to help the runaway, and her family looks the other way. The silence of the story reminds me of the Quakers, a religious group who have always tried to help those in trouble. Many of the houses on the Underground Railroad, where runaway slaves found refuge, belonged to Quakers. They helped thousands of slaves escape, moving in secret from one safe house to another until they reached the North and freedom.

The silence encourages the reader to delve deeper, to notice emotions on faces and meanings behind actions. The last drawing, showing the girl gazing out her bedroom window at the Big Dipper, brought tears to my eyes. To so many frightened people, those stars meant hope and freedom.

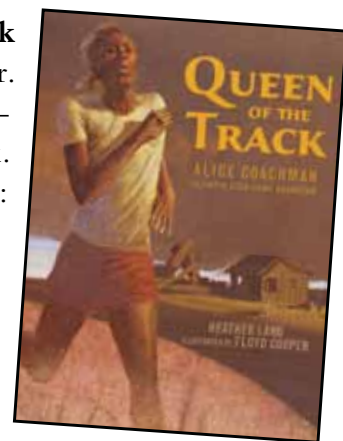
—Mary Meredith Drew, *writer and educator, Oregon*

Queen of the Track by Heather Lang, illustr. Floyd Cooper (boydsmillpress.com). Picture book. Elementary grades. ISBN: 978-1-59078-850-9

Queen of the Track tells the inspiring story of Alice Coachman, the first African-American woman to win an Olympic gold medal. While most girls of her time were settled on washing clothes and cooking, Coachman loved to run, jump, and "play with the boys."

Born and raised in segregated rural Georgia, where there were no gyms, parks, or tracks available to African-Americans, Coachman ran barefoot on dirt roads and tied together sticks with rags to make her own high jumps. The talented novice wasn't overlooked, and in the seventh grade, she was given the opportunity to run for the well-regarded Tuskegee Institute, an all-black school known for its academic and athletic programs.

Coachman finished high school at Tuskegee where

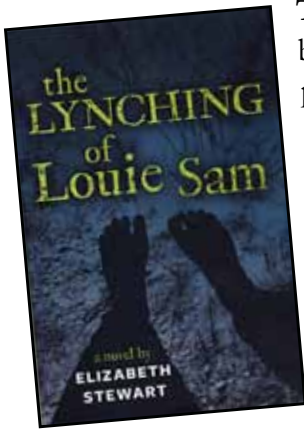


Multicultural and International Books

she was able to compete in track and field and basketball against athletes of her own age as well as college students. By the time she graduated, she made her mark as the best high-jumper in the country and one of the fastest runners.

Soon after that, the talented young star set her eyes on the world stage of athletics. After years of training, Coachman qualified to high-jump in the 1948 Olympics held in England and walked away with a shiny gold medal and record breaking performance. This story is a definite must-read as it reinforces the power of human resilience, hard work, and big dreams.

—Kamiiya Williams, African American, Univ. of Oregon.



The Lynching of Louie Sam by Elizabeth Stewart (annickpress.com). Novel. Middle and Upper grades. ISBN: 978-1-55451-438-0

A narrative of one of the most disturbing injustices in the days of American westward expansion, author Elizabeth Stewart provides *The Lynching of Louie Sam*, a powerful story of racial conflict, greed, and the struggle for righteousness. Based on true events that took place in 1884 in the newly settled Washington Territory, the story unfolds as fifteen-year-old George Gillies and his siblings discover the corpse of a local settler and soon realize that he has been murdered. What ensues is a tragic tale of injustice as George follows the vengeful townspeople in pursuit of a suspicious-looking Native American, Louie Sam, all the way across the border to Canada where the angry mob lynches Sam in revenge.

Young, innocent, and free from the racial prejudices that the majority of the settlers possess, George is the first to formulate doubts about the actions of the townspeople, especially after witnessing the face of the accused murder: a fourteen-year-old boy. Could the young Louie Sam be the murderer, or were the mob leaders wrong? Perhaps an even more shocking question, did the men purposely frame an innocent Native American child? As George attempts to uncover the truth, he must come to terms with his own actions and

pursue the moral high ground against the unfettered denial and opposition of his fellow settlers.

The Lynching of Louie Sam is a powerfully written narrative: gripping, fluidly presented, and thought-provoking throughout. The story is a poignant recount of one of the major historical injustices in American history, as well as a window into the thoughts and views of a period marked by the hardships of expansion and severe racial strife. Stewart's novel is a brilliantly told, strikingly realistic piece of America's conflicted past.

—Julian Mullins, student intern, grade 11, Oregon.

The Poet Upstairs by Judith Ortiz Cofer, illustr. Oscar Ortiz (artepublicopress.com). Picture book. Elementary grades. ISBN: 978-1-55885-704-9

Juliana is home sick, missing her first day of school. Looking out her apartment window, she sees a tall woman wearing a red sweater and hat, carrying boxes of books into the building.



"I hear she is a famous poet, that she lived on an island just like me," Mami tells her. Juliana is thrilled that a poet will be living upstairs, and Juliana can hear her moving around and even typing on her typewriter.

Slipping in and out of vibrant dreams of islands and rivers while a cold snow falls outside her window, Juliana is comforted and inspired by the sounds of the typewriter upstairs. When she wakes up, she draws pictures of what she imagines the poems might say. She slides a drawing under the poet's door.

The poet invites Juliana upstairs, and they write a poem together, a poem that comes alive to Juliana as they work. Her world melts into the world of the poem, with rivers, mountains, palm trees, seagulls, parrots and nightingales. Flowers are everywhere, and the sun is bright and warm. Soon the poet says the poem is finished, and they return to the world of the apartment, where it is still snowing, and Juliana sees only tall buildings all around.

The poet tells Juliana that she can write her own

Multicultural and International Books

poems now. She needs only to believe that words can change the world. The poet has brought richness and possibility into Juliana's world, and now she can write a poem whenever she wishes to inhabit her dreams.

Magical, muted yet colorful illustrations evoke the dreamlike quality of this lovely story. The author invites everyone into the world of poetry and helps us believe that words can change the world.

—Mary Meredith Drew, writer and educator, Oregon



Los pájaros no tienen fronteras: Leyendas y mitos de América Latina by Edna Iturralde, illustr. Andrezzinho (librosalfaguarainfantil.com/co). In Spanish only. Grades 6-9. ISBN: 978-958-758-494-3

Ecuadoran author, Edna Iturralde, has masterfully taken 40 legends and myths from 20 Latin American countries and presented them to us in a new light full of mischief, humor and wisdom. While some of us may have already heard some of these folktales, such as the well-known story of *La Llorona* from Mexico, the way they are re-written may make us feel like we are reading them for the first time. Also included are lesser-known but equally touching tales.

The short and entertaining stories offer us a glimpse of the rich oral traditions of each country. They take us on a journey through historical times and help us feel connected with our past and our brothers and sisters all over the American continent.

This book is suitable for middle school children with advanced Spanish skills. It is also appropriate for native speakers of Spanish at all grade levels. I recommended it highly.

—Esther Celis, our board member, Oregon.

Finders Keepers? A True Story in India and its Spanish translation, ¿Es Mio? Una historia verdadera en la India by Robert Arnett, illustr. Smita Turakhia (www.AtmanPress.com). Picture books. Grades 1-6. ISBN: 978-0-96529008-1 and 978-0-96529000-5

Finders Keepers? A True Story in India is a color-

ful and exciting book based on a young man's travels through Rajasthan, India. With detailed illustrations and valuable lessons in honesty and freedom, this book has something for all ages.



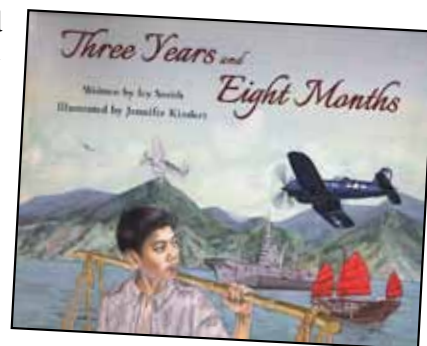
The story is set in a little red bus piled high with luggage and crammed with people from all over. It is bursting with festivity. The bus takes the passengers on a tour of Rajasthan, a trip that is bound to be even more sensational than anticipated. The readers discover Indian cultural tidbits such as the nuns of the Jain temple, the Hindu religion, Indian foods like naan, Indian milkshakes and chutney, and some extravagant customs and delicacies along the way. Characters learn valuable lessons in honesty, courage and doing what's right.

Overall, this book is a great pick. It combines fact and recollection to communicate information and experiences in a friendly and exciting way. The explosive illustrations will spark the imagination of younger people, while the facts, tidbits, and multicultural references will interest older readers. This book is enjoyable and interesting. I would recommend it for children ages seven and up.

—Jane Brinkley, age 11, student, Oregon.

NOTE: ¿Es Mio? Una historia verdadera en la India is a Spanish version of **Finders Keepers?** and provides an additional intercultural aspect to it especially for Spanish language learners and speakers.

Three Years and Eight Months by Icy Smith, illustr. Jennifer Kindert (eastwestdiscovery.com). Picture book. Elem. and middle grades. ISBN: 978-0-98562378-4.



Three Years and Eight Months takes us back to Hong Kong in 1941. From the eyes of a 10-year-old Chinese American boy, we witness the horrors faced by millions

Multicultural and International Books

of Hong Kong natives when the Japanese army invaded their city. Villages were burned down, families torn apart, and everyone who wasn't a Japanese soldier was treated like a slave. For three years and eight months, Japanese soldiers walked the streets of Hong Kong, changing lives for generations to come.

Early on in the story, the main character—Choi—befriends a kind-hearted Japanese soldier named Wantabe-san. Wantabe-san gives Choi and his uncle extra food in exchange for firewood. After a year in Hong Kong, the Japanese stop giving food rations, and people are living off of tree bark and various plants. Choi, his uncle, and his friend are kept alive by the kindness of one soldier who helps them. Choi also learns some Japanese with the help of Wantabe-san and is eventually able to work at a Japanese military station. Here, he observes the inner-workings of the Japanese army and uses his findings this to his advantage.

Upon his uncle's request, Choi and his friend begin stealing medicine and first-aid supplies to help the wounded. Their bravery saves millions of lives.

This book is a well written, easy-to-understand account of historical events. Keeping a light and factual tone, the author paints a picture of what life was like for Choi. With beautiful illustrations throughout, *Three Years and Eight Months* is hard to put down. The reader will constantly want to know what happens next.

—Amanda Johnson, student intern, Oregon

The Whole Story of Half of a Girl by Veera Hirani (randomhouse.com/kids). Novel. Middle grades. ISBN: 978-0-385-74128-6



Sonia, a fifth grader in a private school, is biracial. Her father, a Hindu, is a transplant from India, and mom is Jewish American. They both work and the family has a typical American life on the East Coast. But when her dad loses his job as the head of sales of a college textbook company, Sonia finds herself treading unfamiliar waters of public school without friends, and her family life changes drastically.

Sonia wants to make new friends and belong to the 'cool' group of girls. Kate, one of her new classmates, asks Sonia to be a cheerleader, but Sonia must satisfy herself only as an 'Alternate' or, as she thinks of it, 'Half a cheerleader.'

Readers will enjoy this easy-to-read multicultural novel. While it does not start out as a 'different' story, there are enough twists in the plot to make it enjoyable. We get introduced to both the Jewish and Indian cultures, and when Sonia's father has a serious episode of depression, the story takes another turn. You'll have to read the book to find out how Sonia deals with this challenge in her life.

—Arun Naraayan Toké, editor.

Hope and Tears: Ellis Island Voices by Gwenyth Swain (calkinscreekbooks.com). History. Grades 5-10. ISBN: 978-1-59078-765-6



Hope and Tears is a moving historical depiction of the many people who came through Ellis Island at a time when it was the largest immigration station in the United States. Through a combination of text and photos, Gwenyth Swain successfully portrays the excitement, fear, and hope that was felt by nearly twelve million immigrants who passed through this island on their journey to American citizenship. A unique mixture of historical backgrounds as well as immigrants' personal accounts, poems, and letters to loved ones comes together to form a picture of what it may have been like for people who experienced Ellis Island.

The chapters of the book have titles such as "Arrivals," "Inspections," and "Living and Working," which highlight the different aspects of what it was like to arrive in the United States in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Included are the stories of immigrants such as Annie Moore, a 15-year-old Irish immigrant who was the first person to pass through Ellis Island; Margaret, an English immigrant who writes of the crude and frightening tools used by the health inspectors; and Hubert Julian, a black immigrant detainee

Multicultural and International Books

who waits anxiously for his fate to be determined as he tries to enter a “white” country.

Swain creates a very powerful compilation of experiences that, as she explains in the introduction, may be read silently to oneself or performed out loud like a play. The stories and photos vary greatly; they are sometimes cheerful and sometimes sad, but always touching. This book is sure to enlighten readers.

—Maureen Phenix, student, University of Oregon.



Peace by Wendy Anderson Halperin (drawingchildreninto-peace.com). Picture book. All ages. ISBN: 978-0-689-82552-1

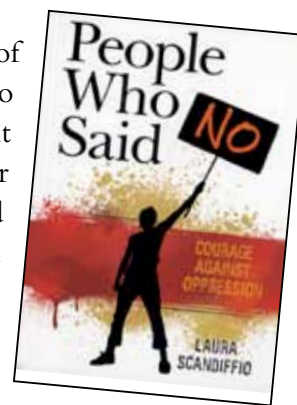
This is a gorgeous book dedicated to one thing: “peace.” It should be read and the ideas practiced by all of human kind. The book begins with what is needed for world peace and continues on to inspire peace in each individual heart. After peace is firmly embedded in each heart it spreads to homes, schools, neighborhoods, cities, nations, until you have peace in the world. Peace comes around full circle.

Each page is covered with different sized and shaped windows of peace. Each window is colored in pastel colors with its own shape and picture of peace. Some windows display human interactions, which demand patience and forgiveness before peace can come inside. In between these windows are quotes concerning peace from famous people such as Plato, Desmond Tutu, Gandhi, Roberto Clemente, Lao Tzu, Mother Teresa, Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. and others. With so many beautiful thoughts to live by it is difficult to choose one favorite saying, but this one from Jeremy Aldana stands out: “It’s not so much the journey that’s important, as is the way that we treat those we encounter and those around us, along the way.”

—Paulette Ansari, President of the Board and African American storyteller, Oregon.

People Who Said No: Courage Against Oppression by Laura Scandiffio (annickpress.com). Grades 6-11. ISBN: 978-1-55451-382-6.

Presented here is the story of seven courageous people who took a stand and did the right thing. It is also the story of their family members, friends, and neighbors who supported them in some cases even until death. The first story is titled, “The White Rose” and refers to the message that Sophie Scholl, her brother, and their friends spread against Hitler and Nazi Germany. They took a brave stance writing and distributing secret pamphlets against Nazism.



The next story is about Rosa Parks and how she had the courage to remain seated on the bus when she was ordered to give her seat to a white passenger. Her story goes on to tell how many people stood behind the bus boycott, which eventually ended segregation in public places across the United States.

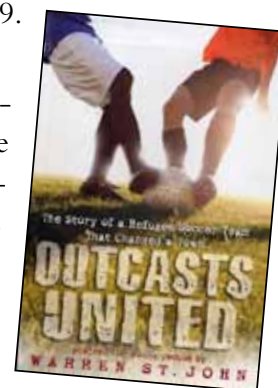
Next we read Andrei Sakharov’s story. He was one of the scientists who invented the Soviet nuclear bomb. He soon realized the problems of pursuing nuclear weapons and dedicated the rest of his life to civil rights and world peace.

The other people included in this book are Helen Suzman, who defied Apartheid in South Africa; Oscar Romero, the Archbishop of San Salvador who supported the poor peasants; Aung San Suu Kyi and her struggles to get fair elections in Burma; and the people at large fighting for their civil rights in Egypt. Each story is well-written, in-depth and inspiring.

—Paulette Ansari, Oregon.

Outcasts United: The Story of a Refugee Soccer Team that Changed a Town by Warren St. John (randomhouse.com/kids). Grades 6-9. ISBN: 9780-385-741941

Outcasts United is an excellent book about the difference one person can make in a community. Clarkston, Georgia was a rather typical Southern town until it was designated a refugee settlement center in the 1990s. It then became the first American



Multicultural and International Books

home for multitudes of families fleeing war zones around the world from countries like Liberia and Sudan to Iraq and Afghanistan. Suddenly Clarkston's streets were filled with women wearing the hijab, the smells of cumin and curry, and kids of all colors playing soccer in any open space they could find. Luma Mufleh, an American-educated Jordanian woman, also finds her way to this town, and settles down to organize a youth soccer team to unify Clarkston's refugee children and keep them off the streets. These kids named themselves the Fugees.

The book follows an important season in the lives of the Fugees and their coach, Luma. As a very diverse group of individuals, they slowly grow close, forming a bond through their shared interest: soccer. Luma is the center of it all, bringing the outcasts together and driving them to success. Throughout the novel, Clarkston evolves from a small rural town to a global community, and the characters radiate strength and the determination it takes to succeed in a world where you're the odd one out.

Well-written and fast-paced, this book is a fun read. It is uplifting and enlightening, as well as entertaining, especially for soccer lovers everywhere.

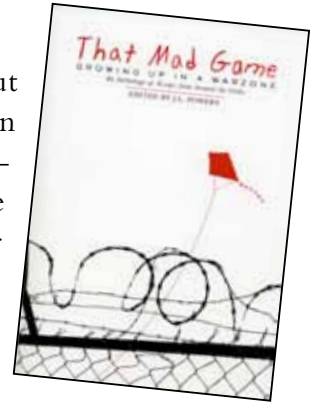
—Hanna Hostick, student intern, Oregon

That Mad Game: Growing Up in a War Zone by J. L. Powers (www.cincopuntos.com). Ages 13 to adults. ISBN: 978-1-935955-22-1

Most North Americans live in an insulated world (unless, of course, they live in an inner-city neighborhood with lots of gun violence, poverty, or crime). They have not really experienced war. Their knowledge and experiences are limited to two-hour war movies or video games, and when they walk out of movie theaters or video arcades, their life is back to business as usual.

Seventeen writers from around the world—male and female—share experiences of the many faces of war in this outstanding book. Each of these first-hand accounts touched my heart. As I moved from one chapter to another, I was transported to different countries and continents—from Afghanistan to Vietnam, from Bosnia to South Africa, Mexico to China.

To read these essays about life in the midst of war, as seen through the eyes of youth affected by war, you might like to take some time for reflection after reading each chapter and thus digest the depth of feelings that each writing evokes. It is not a book that you want to finish in one sitting or one evening. Each writer shares their heart and soul as they tell us what war meant to them and how their lives were transformed as a result.



Many of the memories shared are from the narrators' childhood or formative years. We learn of the modern history of the world, but it is through the lens of young people's eyewitness accounts. Each chapter has a background introduction so readers can connect the dots. We learn about the genocides in Cambodia and Rwanda, cultural revolution in China, overthrow of the Shah in Iran, and the internment of Japanese Americans in the western states during the Second World War.

While most pieces share the heartache and atrocities, there are many parts where the beauty of the human spirit shines through. Jerry Mathes, whose father was a Vietnam veteran, writes about how the war affected his father and the family. From humor in Qais Omar's "A Talib in Love" in Kabul to determination in Fito Avitia's "From Fear to Hope" in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico, to David Griffith's "Symphony No. 1," each essay is a worthy creation that opens up minds and hearts. *That Mad Game* is a compelling read for mature, upper graders (grades 9 to 12) and adults.

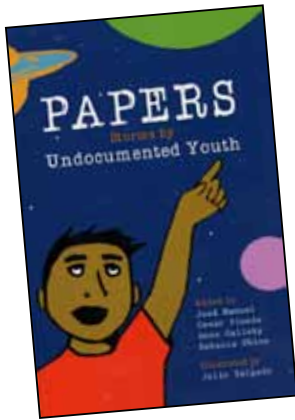
—Arun Narayanan Toké, editor.

Papers: Stories of Undocumented Youth edited by Jose Manuel, et al., illustr. Julio Salgado (papersthemovie.com). Grades 7-11. ISBN: 978-0-9857485-0-0

"Whether America wanted us or not, we became her children."

Many children and young people living in the United States do not feel wanted by this country. They live in fear of being sent away, back to a country they do not know. They might not even know the language spoken in that country.

Nature and Ecology Books



There are at least two million young people currently in the United States who do not have legal documentation or permission to be here. They were brought into the country by their parents, and their status as residents is in limbo. They live in the shadows, unable to be fully

themselves because they cannot tell anyone they are here without permission. But when the time comes to get a driver's license, go to college or get a job, they find out it is impossible for them to live the way their "legal" friends and neighbors do.

Hopefully conditions will change for these youth as the government rethinks its immigration laws. President Obama and others want to change the laws so that the young people brought to the United States by their parents are able to earn their citizenship.

In the meantime, many are experiencing the hardships of living here without documents. Some of their stories have been collected by teachers and friends for this book.

One girl, Eva, says, "When I hear people say 'illegal alien,' I feel like they are referring to me as if I was from another planet, as if I wasn't from the same earth..."

A boy named Eric talks about going to a school where everyone made fun of him because he was different. He grew up angry, depressed, and with low self-esteem. But he says he will never give up because there are people and things he cares about.

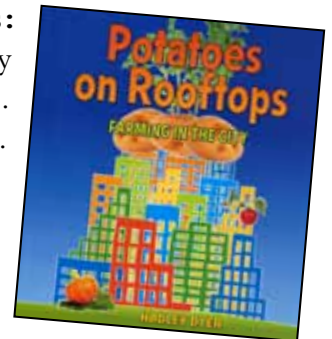
The authors of these essays come from many places. They are black, white, and brown. As Eric says, they are humans, just trying to live their lives and provide for their families.

I am equally as inspired by the strength of these young people as I am angered by the way they are treated and the terrible situation they are living in, by no fault of their own. Through reading this book, you will gain a deeper understanding of their experiences. Hopefully, you will be able to encourage other people to be more tolerant of the undocumented human beings who live among us, and maybe you will want to

help in the struggle for better immigration laws in the United States.

—Mary Meredith Drew, writer and educator, Oregon

Potatoes on Rooftops: Farming in the City by Hadley Dyer (annickpress.com). Elementary and middle grades. ISBN: 978-1-55451-424-3



This informative book is overflowing with inspiring information about urban gardening. Its wealth of creative ideas and engaging photos emphasize that anyone can garden no matter how much space they have, and Dyer proposes easy steps to get the urban gardener started. By covering a wide range of topics, this book examines the many issues cities face in supplying their inhabitants with food. It raises awareness of problems like the lack of availability of fresh foods in low-income urban neighborhoods, how far food travels before it's served to your table, and that not all people are guaranteed good food to eat. In doing so, Dyer challenges readers to reevaluate their relationship to their food and to take control of this relationship by growing their own.

This book, in showing how to take your food interests into your own hands, stresses how urban gardening can help alleviate problems such as those mentioned above. Urban gardens of all sizes can provide a significant amount of fresh food, which is especially important for regions deemed "food deserts" or places where fresh produce is scarcely sold. This allows the urban gardener to add much needed vegetables to their diet that were otherwise difficult to obtain and provides a reliable source of food that doesn't need to be bought. For those living in food deserts, urban gardens empower different groups, ranging from minorities to students, by giving them a chance to have a direct say in where their food comes from.

The photos showcase the ingenuity of many urban farmers from around the world, proving that a little creativity in constructing a compact growing space can go a long way. Dyer shows examples of gardens growing on the rooftops of skyscrapers, underground,

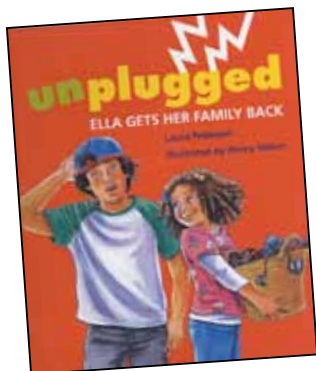
Nature and Ecology Books

in windowsills, up walls, and even in shoes! Pictures of these different types of gardens are included and serve as inspiration for the type of garden that best suits your needs. The technology used by some of these urban gardens is simply incredible and makes the reader wonder why we don't see more of it in our urban lives.

Dyer also stresses the associated benefits of gardening beyond the food. This book shows that gardening is a great way to connect with your neighbors, especially in community plots, and also an enjoyable way to exercise. In addition, not only do gardens make an area look nicer, they can help cool down hot cities in the summertime and certain plants can help leach dangerous chemicals out of the soil.

The can-do attitude of this book will inspire readers from all backgrounds and places, urban or not, to grab some seeds, soil, and sunshine to start a garden of their own.

—Charlotte Rheingold, University of Oregon.



Unplugged: Ella Gets her Family Back by Laura Pedersen, illustr. Penny Weber (tilburyhouse.com). Picture book. Elem. grades. ISBN: 978-0-88448-337-3

This story deals with the overwhelming prevalence of technology in our lives today through the eyes of a young girl, Ella, trying to connect with her family. Ella wants to spend quality time with her family but everyone is always busy, glued to a computer, cell phone, or video game, leaving Ella feeling left out and unappreciated. Yet, Ella finds a creative way to voice her frustrations; she hides all of the chargers that power her family's various electronic devices.

While at first they are angry, Ella's family comes to realize that when they focus their attention on their technological devices instead of on the people around them, they miss out on important face-to-face interactions. As a result of Ella's intervention, her family sets aside specific times during the week, such as Saturday morning and Sunday evening, when technology use is not allowed and Ella and her family will spend quality

time together. Despite being the youngest in her family, Ella was able to help her family recognize a problem in their relationships with each other and provided a simple yet effective solution. This shows that anyone, child or adult, has the ability to help their family decrease their time spent with technology instead of people.

This children's story has relevance to people of all ages, noting that adults have a responsibility to model an appropriate use of technology that balances face-to-face interactions with virtual ones. Ella's challenge of competing with electronics is one many of us face on a daily basis, but have the ability to change by setting the example. This story encourages families to disconnect from the bustling technological world and to give priority to the people in front of us, most importantly our family.

—Charlotte Rheingold, University of Oregon.

Step-by-Step Science Experiments Series by Janice VanCleave (rosenpublishing.com). The six books are: Astronomy, Biology, Chemistry, Earth Science, Ecology, and Energy. Grades 4–8.

When I read through the *Step-by-Step Science Experiments*, I thought of Albert Einstein's quote, "If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." This series of books on science experiments—Energy, Astronomy, Earth Science, Ecology, Biology, and Chemistry—shows science simply and intuitively.

Each book has 22 experiments with complete illustrations and instructions that are easy to follow, featuring supplies that are mostly common household items. The student is advised not to rush through the activity and to be safe. The young scientists shown in the pictures are from diverse groups and genuinely look like they are having a good time.

The experiments start with one sentence or phrase that explains the purpose of the experiment. After the procedure is shown, the author has a simple **Results** statement that explains what is expected to happen at the end of the experiment. The **Results** section is followed by a



Nature and Ecology Books

Why section that explains the science behind the demonstration.

Even though these experiments appear to be for younger students, I believe they are excellent examples of demonstrations that can enhance a college lecture and lab. These experiments are simple yet powerful, namely because they isolate one phenomena at a time and show how it works.

There have been discussions among college faculty that traditional experiments are too obtuse and complicated for students to really understand them past just following the directions and hoping for the best. High schools and colleges spend large amounts of money on complicated labs that don't really help students understand basic scientific principles. These books provide some excellent, inexpensive ideas that can be immensely valuable to students of any age.

—Charlotte Behm, educator, Oregon.



These Bees Count! by Alison Formento, illustr. Sarah Snow (www.albertwhitman.com). Picture book. Grades 1–4. ISBN: 978-0-8075-7868-1

“Once you keep bees long enough, you start falling in love with them,” reported our local newspaper. Bees are the buzz these days! People are even becoming bee keepers to help the dying bee population.

These Bees Count is the delightful story of the children in Mr. Tate’s class who visit a farm that raises bees and honey. They put on special gear and visit the hives. The author takes us on a counting trip with bees to show where they will land to collect and spread pollen—three wild strawberries bursting with sweetness... five poppies...eight flowering cherry trees. The children learn that without bee pollen, crops wouldn’t grow, and then there would not be food to eat.

At the end of the book is an explanation of colony collapse disorder (CCD), which occurs when bees leave the hives and don’t return. Beekeepers all over the world are working to solve this problem, including here in Oregon, where we’re seeing an increase in the

number of people who are housing bees, even in residential lots.

These Bees Count helps children appreciate why bees are important and may also make children fall in love with these amazing creatures.

—Charlotte Behm, educator, Oregon.



What’s For Lunch? How Schoolchildren Eat Around the World by Andrea Curtis, Photography by Yvonne Duivenvoorden (reddeerpress.com). Grades 4–8. ISBN: 978-0-88995-482-3

This insightful book looks at the role of food in children’s lives around the world. From Japan to France to Kenya and India, the book observes daily meals served at public schools in each of these places. The author begins in Tokyo, Japan, where student lunches consist of mackerel, salmon, and sardines and nearly all students eat with chopsticks. Next, she visits Lucknow, India, where children eat rice and curried lentils for lunch. Each description includes a photograph of the meals and information about the nutritional value of each food item. Background on the country’s food culture is written next to colorful illustrations of children at school enjoying their lunches.

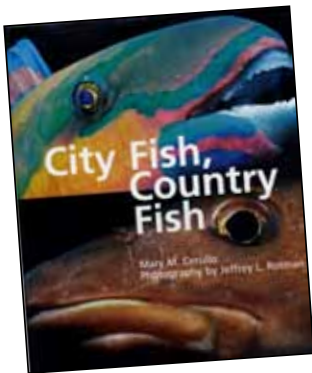
The book also addresses problems within some of the places. For example, in India, ‘midday meal’ at school might be the only meal some children receive during the day. And, two to three thousand children die due to malnutrition every day. While Japan still maintains its traditional diet, as Western foods such as hamburgers and French Fries become popular alternatives, the country has faced increasing obesity and diabetes rates. Contrarily, some countries such as France are much on top of their children’s health. In Nantes, France, students are served a nutritional meal of bread, vegetables, and low-fat meats such as chicken. They are also only served water with every meal and vending machines carrying soda have been banned to discourage excessive consumption of sugary drinks. In the United States, the healthy lunch initiative has just begun to take shape, yet hasn’t been fully realized. The author discusses how demands for more fruits, vegeta-

bles, and diverse foods such as rice, beans, and noodles are increasing in American cafeterias.

In the message for “Parents, Teachers, and Students,” Curtis explains various topics within the conversation of the international food system. These topics include: “Fast-food culture,” “Buying Global,” and “The Consequences of Convenience.” Curtis is particularly interested in issues such as world hunger, diet-related illnesses, and environmental costs of such a system. In a section called “Reclaiming School Lunch” she offers tips to kids on how to effectively change their food system. Suggestions include planting a garden, hosting a food festival, and researching where their food comes from. This book is an easy-to-read and interesting introduction to an issue that affects us all.

—Kamiiya Williams, *African American, Univ. of Oregon.*

City Fish, Country Fish by Mary M. Cerullo, Photography by Jeffery L. Rotman (tilburyhouse.com). Picture book. Grades 1–6. ISBN: 978-0-88448-323-6



Cerullo and Rotman present an engaging and informative exploration of ocean fishes via the premise that tropical waters and cold waters yield very different habitats for their animal and plant dwellers. The clearly written text coupled with close-up photographs is organized around the idea

that the two differing bioregions can be compared as in the metaphor of “city and country” living.

The tropical waters teem densely with a colorful and diverse variety of fishes, whereas the cold waters provide vast expanses where less colorful and less diverse fishes thrive. Brief sections examine warm and clear waters of coral reefs, cold and murky ocean floors, shapes and sizes of fishes, cooperation and specialization among fishes, predation, and rhythms of life in both bioregions. The final pages address the commonalities among all fish and remind us of our role in maintaining healthy seas.

There is also a helpful glossary, and the book jacket gives the publisher’s website in order to access “Teachers Take Note” which has suggestions for using

the title in classrooms. This book would pair well with Molly Bang’s book *Ocean Sunlight: How Tiny Plants Feed the Seas* (Blue Sky Press, 2012), and *Skipping Stones* Vol. 24, No.2, Mar.–Apr. 2012, “Pages from a Snorkeler’s Journal in the Virgin Islands.”

—Hope Crandall, *retired teacher, Oregon.*

Teaching & Parenting Resources, DVDs

Surviving Progress by Mathieu Roy and Harold Crooks (*National Film Board of Canada*; firstrunfeatures.com). 86 min. DVD. Middle and upper grades.



Surviving Progress is a powerfully relevant documentary, a chilling exposition of the modern era and its devastating consequences for the planet and humanity as a whole. The world as we know it now is a drastically different environment than it was thirty years ago. The actions of civilization today have a direct and visible impact on Earth and its limited resources; modern technological and economical advancements are massive influences on the lives of billions of people around the globe. To address such a broad topic as modern “progress” would be a challenge for any filmmaker, yet director and co-director Mathieu Roy and Harold Crooks rise to the occasion with *Surviving Progress*, providing an evocative, illuminating vision of the modern world and its present endangerment.

This enlightening documentary delves into the multi-faceted aspects of our present culture, examining issues such as corporate industry and its heavy control over third-world countries, the high-consumption lifestyle of the Western World, the devastating environmental impacts that modern civilization has on the planet, and the historical foundations that have led to this current crisis. The documentary traverses the world, from China, America and Europe to the Congo and Brazil. Coupled with breathtaking visuals and crisp cinematic design, this documentary makes for a spectacular production. On top of this, visionaries and activists ranging from Margaret Atwood, Jane Goodall, and Stephen Hawking provide deep insight and an

Teaching Resources / DVDs

expansive look into the current state of humanity, and the ways in which civilization must progress in order to achieve a healthy, revitalized global ecosystem.

Inspired by *A Short History of Progress*, this documentary explores such vital concepts as the “progress trap,” the idea that society, in its accelerating advancements, is introducing a variety of problems that it has neither the resources nor the political capabilities to solve. A focus on short-term betterment, rather than on planning for long-term global improvement, is at the heart of our current progress trap. The greed of humanity stretches back to ancient civilizations like the Roman Empire, which fought wars to preserve the wealth of its richest few, a problem that this documentary argues still has many parallels in today’s world.

Filled with probing questions, meaningful exposition, and fascinating visualizations of the global crisis *Surviving Progress* is a truly mind-expanding insight into the flaws in modern society. Like shining a light at the end of a dark tunnel, the documentary also illuminates the ways in which humanity can break free from its vicious cycle of overconsumption and overexpansion and safely progress to a brighter, more promising future.

—Julian Mullins, grade 11, Oregon.

Precious Knowledge: *Arizona’s Battle Over Ethnic Studies*, (54 min. or 70 min. versions) by Ari Luis Palos, dir., Eren Isabel McGinnis, Producer (www.dosvatos.com). Middle and upper grades.

Precious Knowledge is a documentary about a controversial ethnic studies program taught in Tucson, Arizona’s public schools. Even though the program resulted in a significant improvement in graduation rates for those taking the classes, many powerful critics decided that the program was divisive and spreaded revolutionary doctrine. A law banning ethnic studies went into effect at the end of 2010, and was upheld by a federal judge in March 2013.

People in the United States are programmed from childhood to believe that the top group—the whites—represents everyone. Thus the stories we learn are predominantly about white men, but our schools teach American history as the history of everyone in this nation. To study the history of other groups, people have to take separate classes, such as the ethnic studies classes in Tucson. This societal and cultural program-

ming makes it easy for conservative white males—such as the ones in this film—to make decisions because they think they represent the interests of the entire state when, in fact, they predominantly represent only their own experiences and perspectives.

I’ve studied hierarchies for decades and have found this documentary to be an excellent case study for how they operate. I hope that the passion shown in this excellent documentary will keep the ethnic studies proponents motivated to continue their struggle to be able to teach and learn about their own culture, information that is obviously missing from the traditional Tuscon curriculum.

—Charlotte Behm, educator, Oregon

There Once Was An Island (te henua e nnoho) by Lyn Collie and Briar March. (*On the Level Productions*, www.thereoncewasanisland.com; *New Day Films*). 80 min. Grades 5–12.

This is an excellent documentary about the effects of climate change on people. This film records the lives of inhabitants on an island that is being swallowed up by the ocean because of rising sea levels.

Off the coast of Bougainville, near Papua New Guinea, members of the community of Taku, Nukutoa are faced with the reality that there is little they can do to alter the fate of their home. They worry that relocating will cause them to lose the connection they’ve had with traditions, rituals, and a native language that has remained the same for over 1000 years. More importantly, they worry about the pride, history, and way of life that will be lost for their children.

Set in a pristine Pacific island location, *There Once Was An Island* is a moving feature length film that sheds light on the relationships of the inhabitants, and awakens viewers’ feelings of responsibility as earth dwellers on an ever changing planet.

—Nancy Glubka, parent, Oregon.

