

# Skipping Stones



A Multicultural Literary Magazine

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Book Reviews of 2020 Multicultural & Nature Books

Art: Kelly Lin, grade 11, Eugene, Oregon.



# The 2020 Skipping Stones Honor Awards



This year we recommend 33 outstanding books and three teaching resources as the winners of our 28th Annual Skipping Stones 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.

## Multicultural & International Books

**Language Together Spanish for Kids:** *Story-based Learning, Set 2.* [www.languagetogether.com](http://www.languagetogether.com). Ages 3–8.

**Language Together** is not just a packet of booklets, but a system to help children to learn the basics of a foreign language (Spanish, Chinese, French). The English/Spanish version Set 2 that I reviewed is attractive, effective and fun.



Paired with the website, [www.languagetogether.net](http://www.languagetogether.net), a child or a child-parent team (depending on the child's age) can get going immediately, even if their experience with the language is null. There is color-coding of key words, and a natural immersion

into the grammar, that feels intuitive and is fun. The illustrations are to the point and attractive. Also, because each booklet is small enough, there is motivation to go through each and all of them. My grandchildren insisted we finish the set in one sitting. Keep reading and in no time you will have an understanding of basic vocabulary and structure of a new language!

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

**Mango Moon** (*Also available in Spanish*) by Diane de Anda, illustr. Sue Cornelison. Albert Whitman. Ages 5–8.

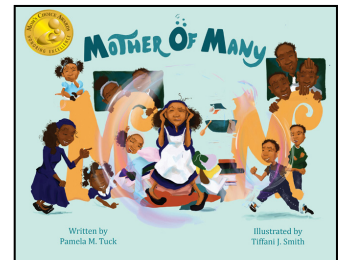


**Mango Moon** is a much needed book in these troubled times. A father without legal documentation is taken away from his family for deportation. Both the story written by Diane de Anda and the lovely

illustrations by Sue Cornelison beautifully portray the heartbreak and difficulties caused by the breakup of a family. Marciela misses her father in many ways. Watching the mango colored moon as she once did with her father, and hoping he too is now watching the moon from wherever he is, helps her understand they can still love each other even while separated. My hope is that elementary school teachers with immigrant children in their classrooms will read this story aloud.

—*Yvonne Young, retired elementary teacher and storyteller.*

**Mother of Many** by Pamela M. Tuck, illustr. Tiffani J. Smith. Mascot Books. Ages 5–8.

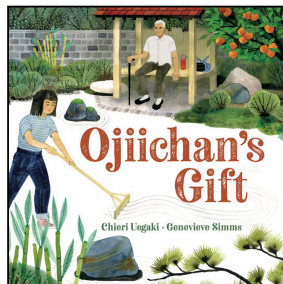


This is a splendid take off of the nursery rhyme, “The Little Ole Woman Who Lived in a Shoe.” Unlike the woman who lived in a shoe, this African American mother knows just what to do. She gets her lists and assigns chores to ten of her 11 children, the baby being the only two, had nothing to do. Some of the children get busy and start on their chores but others wander off, and start playing, as kids will do. Every other line rhymes and fits perfectly with the illustrations.

The illustrations are done in deep pastels, mostly shades of brown, blues, and greens. The family scenes are very touching and they make you laugh. These people look like a family you would want to know and love. Every child is mentioned by name and their facial features show lots of personality, which draws the reader into the story. There are many full spread illustrations. Each page is illustrated in this wonderful picture book. This

will be a favorite of children and adults alike for many years to come.

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



**Ojiichan's Gift** by Chieri Uegaki & Genevieve Simms. Kids Can Press. Ages 3-7.

Receiving this book to read was a gift. Already loving Japanese gardens, I was intrigued as I looked at the book's cover with the picture

of the little girl and the elder man together in a garden.

From the beginning the story told me of the connecting of an American-Japanese family with their Japanese heritage and how little Mayumi and her grandfather built their friendship during her visits to Japan.

Throughout this sensitively illustrated picture book, the author introduces Japanese words important for the reader to learn in order to appreciate the story more. Having visited Japanese gardens as described and shown in the story I found it was a pleasure to see and learn about Ojiichan's garden.

The illustrator gave such clear images of the garden and the characters!

In the beginning I learned that her Ojiichan had built her a garden at her birth. It was so fitting that when he must move out of his house in his elder years she would honor him by using her *bento* box to make a little garden for him to take along to his new home. I loved the closure of the story when she took the sand, rocks and leaves home with her to also remember her time with her Japanese grandfather.

Perhaps I will make a little garden of Hawaiian sand and shells and rocks to honor my grandchildren of Japanese/Hawaiian heritage!

—Ann Brown, *grandmother, Oregon.*

**Alitaptap: A Philippine Myth of the Firefly** by Mylene Leumin, illustr. Stephanie Richoll. talesofpotos.com. Ages 5-10.

**Alitaptap** is a new rendition of an age-old creation myth from the Philippines. Long, long ago, this Asian

country was a tropical paradise where all living beings lived in harmony and happiness. There was no greed, jealousy, selfishness, anger, or malice. The God Bathala chose Apong (the wise man) as the ruler of the island and gave him a magical amulet to help him rule. One day, when Apong misplaced the amulet, he summoned all living creatures to come and help him find it. A little creature, a fly, discovered the amulet stuck in Apong's hat.

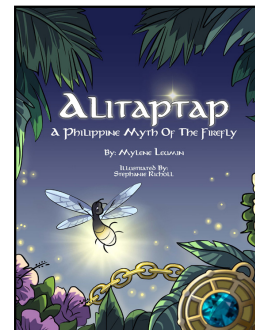
The now-pleased Apong offered the fly a wish that would come true. What did the selfless fly ask for? A light that he could use to see things in the dark so he could work even at night! The magical amulet fulfilled the wish, and that's how from that day on the fly and his offspring have a self-contained light that can't be put out by the wind or the rain. And, it is now called a firefly.

The author, who was born in the northern part of the Philippines by the sea, infuses the book with her first-hand knowledge of the traditional culture and values such as hard work, selflessness, and humility in this well-illustrated story.

—Arun N. Toké, *editor.*

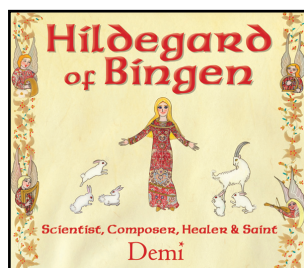
**Welcome to Jazz: A Swing-Along Celebration of America's Music** by Carolyn Sloan, illustr. Jessica Gibson. Workman Publishing. Ages 4-8.

This book helps you understand and appreciate jazz. And the two characters in the book, who explain exactly what jazz is, are all cool cats. African Americans created Jazz to express how they feel about life. In this book, African Americans are playing the different instruments, which make up Jazz. The music is explained in words and colorful pictures. The sound of each instrument can be heard by pressing a button on the right side of the page. The book is designed for non-readers as well, for example, the word "tube" is printed under its picture, and to the right of the picture is the button. This large, beautifully illustrated picture book is



filled with full-spread illustrations. Lots of dark pastels are used with yellow and gold colors, highlighting each page. Beginning in the front and finishing in the back of the book is an explanation of how jazz began in the United States. There is also a glossary of jazz terms used in the text. This book would be an asset to any elementary collection.

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



**Hildegard of Bingen:** *Scientist, Composer, Healer and Saint* by Demi. Wisdom Tales. Ages 6-10.

Demi, the author and illustrator of this beautiful book, has written a number of award-winning biographies of figures from the Christian religious tradition, including Jesus, Mary, Saint Francis of Assisi, and Joan of Arc. This one tells the story of Hildegard, a German-born mystic whose visions of heaven began when she was young. As the abbess of a convent, Hildegard wrote books, composed music, invented a language, and became an influential teacher in 11th-century Europe. The simple yet expressive illustrations seem to float in a realm halfway between earth and heaven. They combine European conceptions of Jesus and the angels with images of country life: bringing in the harvest, herding sheep, beekeeping and baking bread. Hildegard's reputation as a composer of early music and a student of natural history and the healing arts makes her story one of interest beyond her status as a Christian saint.

—Pat Bryan, *retired educator.*

**Okinawan Princess:** *Da Legend of Hajichi Tattoos.* (Bilingual Japanese & Okinawan) by Lee Tonouchi, illustr. Laura Kina. Bess Press. Ages 6-10.



The first thing you notice upon opening **Okinawan Princess** is the incredible art. The vibrant colors and childlike style dazzle the eye and drags you into the story from the get-go.

A young girl asks her grandmother about how to be pretty like the supermodels she sees on TV, and her grandmother tells her two beautiful stories of the origin of Okinawan tattoos. The first of which tells of her great grandmother's tattoos and how society reacted to them. The second story tells of an Okinawan princess, and how the tradition of the tattoos came to be. The second story explores the importance and value of one's wit and intelligence. The artwork in this section of the book is strikingly beautiful, sometimes taking up as much as two whole pages. The style of the art switches into a collage-like style and one image may contain many hidden details.

In addition to being visually and creatively pleasing, the book provides information about cultural context, including an entire section of education on the Okinawan tattoos and their history in addition to the explanation of other cultural elements. Also, there are several sections giving specific explanations for the tattoos themselves and what they might potentially mean. The entire book is trilingual—English, Japanese, and Okinawan—allowing the beautiful story to be enjoyed across more cultures.

—Emma Merwin, *high school intern.*

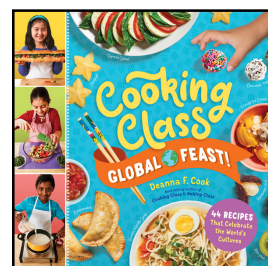
**Cooking Class Global Feast!**

*44 Recipes that Celebrate the World's Cultures* by Deanna F. Cook. Storey.com. Ages 7-11.

**Cooking Class: Global Feast!**

is a wonderfully fun and educational cookbook designed to spark joy in cooking at a young age. The beautifully colorful book is divided into six chapters: Hello!, Breakfast, Snacks & Drinks, Lunch, Dinner, and everyone's favorite, Dessert. Don't understand a certain cooking term or need help learning about kitchen safety? The author provides helpful tips and tricks on a multitude of cooking-related topics as well as easy to understand definitions to cooking terms.

Cooking is a key component within cultures all over the world, and childhood is the perfect time to start learning! This book is chock-full of fun and delicious recipes from all over the planet. Korea, Spain, Tonga, Germany, Ireland, and Japan, are a few of the countries



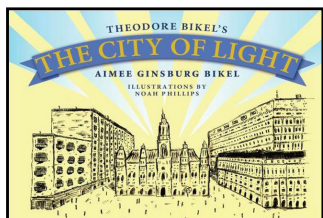


and culinary origins explored throughout the book. The recipes are easy to understand and follow, and are accompanied by stories from young chefs all over the world.

Preparing food and knowing how to create amazing-tasting delicacies and desserts is an international skill, and one can begin by learning and practicing cooking even as a child. With it comes the ability to provide for others, cross cultural barriers, and unlock a different kind of creativity. Encouraging kids of young ages to begin experimenting with food can lead to a discovery of one's life passion. Even if you discover that cooking is not for you, the results along the way to finding out are delicious! With this cookbook in the hands of a curious, information-seeking, and ambitious child, the possibilities are endless.

—Emma Merwin, *high school intern.*

**The City of Light** by Aimee Ginsburg Bikel, illustr. Noah Phillips. Mandel Vilar Press. Ages 9–16.



Theodore Bikel, beloved actor and folk singer, was born in Vienna but had to flee the city with his parents to escape Nazi atrocities. This little book with its sepia-toned images is filled

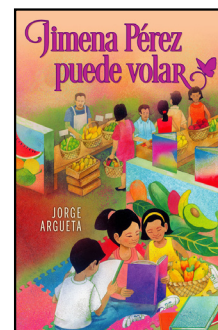
with personal memories of family life, glimpses of Jewish culture in mid-century Vienna, and details of the Nazi occupation as it affected Te'o, his parents and beloved grandmother. As told by Bikel's wife, the story captures the confusion, heroic fantasies, fear and heartbreak of a teenage boy caught up in a period of overt anti-Semitism. As we are now in a period when anti-Semitism is again on the rise, **The City of Light** can serve as an introduction to the human cost of this hateful ideology. The prose is at once straightforward and poetic. I enjoyed this lovingly written book, which includes a little glossary of Yiddish words and a recipe for Theodore's grandmother's honey cake.

—Pat Bryan, *retired educator.*

**Jimena Pérez puede volar: Jimena Pérez Can Fly** by Jorge Argueta. Arte Público Press. Ages 9–13.

These are two books in one, two front pages, one in

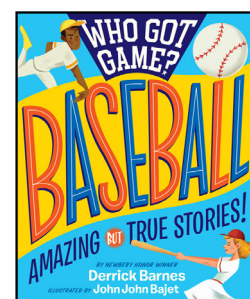
English, and the other in Spanish. Each a translation of the other, the same verse format in both languages. It begins as a thoughtful and sweet story about Jimena living a modest and sheltered life with her parents and friends in El Salvador. Unfortunately, gang members can threaten even young children like Jimena and her friends. Her parents decide she won't be safe; Jimena and her mother risk the long journey north to reunite with family living in the US. Jimena describes the trip; we imagine the danger. She is innocent; we are not. We haven't forgotten the reports of children separated at the border from their parents. We haven't forgotten the thousands of Central Americans forced to stay in the Mexican side of the border while applying for asylum in the U.S. Jimena is brave, she keeps telling us her story, and she keeps living despite the cruelty and sadness around her.



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

**Who Got Game?: Baseball: Amazing but True Stories!** by Derrick Barnes, illustr. J. Bajet. Workman. Ages 8–12.

My dad was die-hard Chicago White Sox fan and later, a New York Yankee fan until the day he died. Dad paid attention to the southpaws (left-handed pitches/batters) because he was also left-handed. He would have loved this book. Not being a real baseball fan myself, I can't help seeing the boom through his eyes.

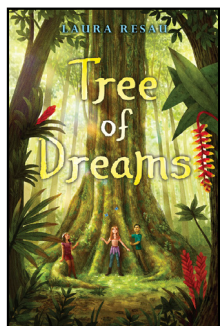


Baseball is more about numbers than any other sport. This book gives us the amazing stories behind the statistics. For example, did you know that, a 17-year-old girl, Jackie Mitchell struck out legendary Babe Ruth first, and then next she struck out Lou Gehrig in an exhibition game on April 2, 1931. The book talks about the famous players who walked away from fame and huge salaries to serve their country during World War II. This book doesn't just talk about famous African Americans like Jackie Robinson but people from a



variety of backgrounds and different ethnic groups. If you made a great contribution to baseball you are included. This is a large paperback, very colorful layout, large print, interesting illustrations, and there is a wonderful two-page glossary in the back.

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



**Tree of Dreams**, a novel by Laura Resau. Scholastic Press. Ages 8-14.

This story begins in a little town in Colorado that attracts tourists who partake of its hot springs. Thirteen-year-old Coco has a love and deep fascination beyond her years for producing fine chocolates. You could say she was born with a gift. She

and her mother operate a chocolate shop, which hasn't shown a profit in over a year. Coco has shared everything she knows about making a chocolate with her best friend Leo. They have been best buds since the age of three. However when they entered middle school their relationship went sour. In middle school, Leo chose friends that made fun of Coco and shut her out.

Now Leo and Coco are competitive enemies after the same treasure. Both teens have similar dreams about finding a treasure in the roots of a Ceiba tree located in the Amazon jungle. After trying in a dessert contest, both of them, with their mothers as chaperones, fly with Gali (a frail old man who secretly set-up the contest) to the Amazon rainforest. This story weaves the culture of the Huaorani people, the destruction of the rainforest, science, magic, and a young romance all together to create a fascinating tale.

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

**The Garden**, a novel by Meghan Ferrari. Red Deer Press. Ages 10-15.

**The Garden** is the kind of story that you devour in an hour, but that sticks with you for days. The novel follows a 15-year-old Syrian teenage named Elias as he attempts to survive the Syrian civil war, and as he begins a new life in Canada. Within the first chapter, you are drawn in and emotionally connected to Elias and each of his family members, especially his 5-year-

old younger brother, Moussa. The story opens with Elias and his brother hiding in a man-made hole in his mother's garden to stay safe from the violence going on around them. Elias distracts Moussa by telling him that they are flower seeds, waiting for the sun to grow into beautiful flowers. Through the chapters, the author switches between the future Elias, living in Canada and making friends in high school, and the past Elias, living in the middle of a gruesome civil war.

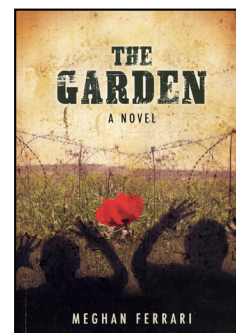
This novel was not designed for the faint of heart, as Meghan Ferrari skillfully sculpts vivid scenes of war violence. With incredible word choices and beautiful story telling skills, Ferrari brings you into the story as if you were one of the characters. You are right there with the main characters as they are bullied, as they create friendships, and as they experience heartbreak and horror. The entire novel is tear-evoking and grief-stricken. We are offered various perspectives. For example the way that Moussa's character reacts to his surroundings speaks to how smaller children might be affected by trauma.

As a 5-year-old, Moussa doesn't fully understand everything going on around him, so when he draws a picture of him and his brother with semi-automatic rifles and his father takes the drawing and crumples it up, he only sees it as a betrayal. Of course, Moussa didn't intend for the image to be striking or heartbreaking to his father,

he simply wanted to show him how he and Elias were going to protect their family. Because of everything his father has experienced, the image produced by his son is incredibly hopeless and brings tears to his eyes. Moussa's utter disappointment and lack of understanding is so apparent that it can't help but pull on your heartstrings.

The novel with its engaging storytelling and vivid imagery can be definitely appreciated by younger readers; and the cultural and historical relevance it offers will be enjoyed by the older age group. This novel became an unexpected favorite of mine.

—*Emma Merwin, high school intern.*





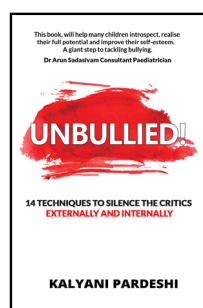


**The Everything I Have Lost**, a novel by Sylvia Zéleny. Cinco Puntos Press. Ages 12-16.

This book was originally written in Spanish. The author tried to translate it to English and felt it was impossible. So she rewrote it in English because she is bilingual. What a gift!

We can empathize with Julia, the 12-year-old writing her story in a diary form. We empathize with her because she is so true to her feelings, and to the reality around her. She lives in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico with her sweet little brother and her parents. Julia's artistic mother encourages her to write, but she also hides many secrets, especially, the father's comings and goings. Julia writes about school life, early teen romance. She also shares the very real dangers that exist around her and her friends, thanks to the violence of the drug cartels and drug trafficking. The authorities are corrupt as well. She describes the stress of crossing the border to Texas, and the "idyllic" life of her extended family in the "other side" (in El Paso, Texas). She's growing and maturing, gaining understanding of how precarious life is. This book is a page-turner, and at every page you ask yourself: What does this environment do to a developing child? Scary question, indeed!

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



**Unbullied!: 14 Techniques to Silence the Critics, externally & internally** by Kalyani Pardeshi. [www.kalyanispeaks.com](http://www.kalyanispeaks.com). Ages 12-17.

**Unbullied!** is a unique book, part anti-bullying manual and part memoir. It offers concrete, practical techniques for overcoming the effects of

bullying while at the same time it includes reflections on the author's own experiences being bullied. In the introduction, the author writes that she aimed to create a "collection of every technique I have used, personally, to combat bullying" and this goal informs the book's structure: each technique is introduced by bullying-related story from the author's life. Together, the stories create a narrative about the terrible power of bullying, the negative impact it had on her own life and specific

ways she was able to overcome bullying.

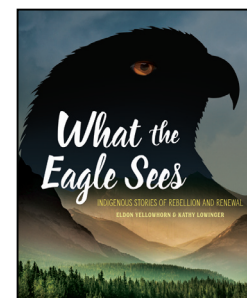
The author uses the benefit of hindsight and adult experience to reflect on some of her most painful experiences as a young person. She describes the name-calling, the physical violence, and more; bullying can be intense at an all-girls boarding school. The recommended techniques range from the "somersault technique", an exercise for countering name calling, to the "flip the switch exercise," for focusing on one's own positive traits. All are journal-based activities. The pairing of the techniques with personal stories helps give context and add meaning; it makes it possible to see how one might use the technique in everyday life. Most satisfying was the tale about how the author used one of her techniques to give a cool-as-a-cucumber, nonchalant answer when her bully tried to provoke her.

One theme of the book is about causes of bullying, and how those people who are bullied often become bullies. Or, as the author puts it, "Hurt people hurt people." The author admits that this began to happen to her, too. After she changed schools and became a little older, she found herself feeling compelled to put others through the same experiences that she had. She began to bully, too, at least for a little while, and she had to learn how to counter this inclination. This honesty about her own experiences lends a sense of authority to the author's story and to her recommended techniques. The book is the sort of resource that all young people should have access to, offering useful advice while at the same time providing the opportunity to hear someone say, "I was there, too."

—Daemion Lee, Associate Editor.

**What the Eagle Sees: Indigenous Stories of Rebellion and Renewal** by Eldon Yellowhorn & Kathy Lowinger. Annick Press. Ages 11-18.

Indigenous history on Turtle Island, aka North America, is portrayed from the Indigenous point of view in **What the Eagle Sees**. Eldon Yellowhorn is a member of the Piikani Nation in Alberta, and a professor of First Nation studies at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia. He and his co-author Kathy Lowinger also co-authored **Turtle Island**.



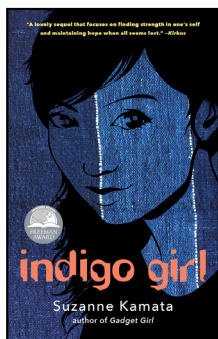


This book tells the story of what Indigenous people did when invaders arrived in their homelands. The chapter titles provide an overview of the content. They are titled: *First Come the Vikings: We Fight Them Off*; *Slavery: Rebellion*; *Old Nations Crumble: We Forge New Ones*; *Invaders' Battles: We Walk the War Road*; *New Days: New Ways*; *They Took Our Land: Victory is Survival*; *Assimilation: We Resist*; *Our Day is Not Over: We Dance*; and *The Eagle Has Landed: Understanding the Past, Soaring Into the Future*. Photographs, maps, and stories from various tribes add additional knowledge to the text. I certainly found this book enlightening.

**What the Eagle Sees** is a valuable resource for high school and college U.S. History classes. I recommend it highly for anyone interested in knowing Indigenous history in North America from the Indigenous perspective.

—Yvonne Young, retired elementary teacher and storyteller.

**Indigo Girl**, a novel by Suzanne Kamata. GemmaMedia. Ages 11-16.



This book is an in-depth tale of a Japanese/Caucasian family. The blending of the lives of the white American mother and Japanese tradition of the teenage girl's biologic father set the stage for her experiences.

As many children are these days Aiko is learning to build a relationship with her stepfather and baby half/sister. She has an artistic love of anime and a desire to visit her Japanese father and family to learn about her family's generations-long growing and processing of indigo. Along with these challenges Aiko also happens to have cerebral palsy.

As I read of her experiences of her blended family in Japan and their memories of the devastating earth quake and tsunami it felt very real and full of the reality of what it must have been like in those times of 2011, not so long ago.

Perhaps anyone would relate to this story, but surely someone with Japanese American heritage will come away from reading it with more understanding of what it is like to live a traditional Japanese life: adhering to

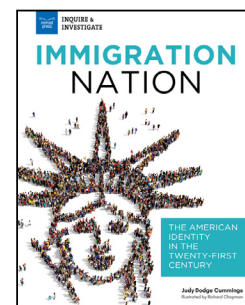
religious observance, learning what each place in the family must commit to.

In the end, Aiko learns that youthful love and family life have many similarities in each culture, found to be true by this visit with her multiple generations in Japan and then returning back to her American mom, step dad and baby half sister.

This was a meaningful message, to read, think about and perhaps pass on to someone of shared heritage.

—Anita Stelling, Oregon.

**Immigration Nation: The American Identity in the 21st Century** by Judy Dodge Cummings. Nomad. Ages 12-15.



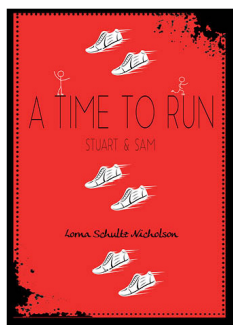
**Immigration Nation** is an informative book that teaches you all about immigration in the United States. It is split up into seven different chapters, each one focusing on various sub-themes. This title is an integral part of the *Inquire & Investigate Social Issues of the 20th Century* set.

The book starts off with a time line of the history of immigration in the U.S. and then goes over many important aspects such as the process of legal immigration. It doesn't skip a beat as it goes from detail to detail. It also offers some personal stories of immigrants and how they view their own experiences in the U.S. Millions of immigrants from just about every corner of the world have knocked on the doors... sailing the Atlantic or Pacific, crossing the Sonoran desert at the southern border, and more recently, flying the skies. Did you know that our country has more entry level jobs for immigrants than in the E.U.? The book also explores immigration further and explains the many flaws our system has today and how they could be fixed.

The book uses tools such as Vocab Lab and asks readers to take on activities with guided questions to investigate selected topics further. With its many engaging illustrations, historical photographs, mini comic strips, pie charts, and sidebars, etc. the book is definitely a must-read for anyone who wants to learn about our country and its immigration process.

—Mitchell Dennick, student intern & Arun N. Toké, editor.





**A Time to Run: *Stuart & Sam***, a novel by Lorna Schultz Nicholson. Clockwise Press. Ages 13-17.

Stuart's best friend in the whole world was Sam, the captain of the basketball team. When Sam collapsed during the game and didn't get up right away, Stuart went a little berserk. Paramedics carried

Sam away on a stretcher. This happened while his father's strong arms were holding Stuart back. Stuart is fourteen and because he has FASD (Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder) he is often chaotic, like a hurricane, quick to run. Stuart's adopted mom and dad are trained to care for him, and his older brother. His parents and the counselors at school are teaching him to control his emotions and his body by giving him new ways to think.

Sam and Stuart belong to the "Best Buddies Club." Sam has been running and shooting baskets with Stuart. He is teaching him how to be a team player on the basketball team. Their relationship is strong and solid until Sam is told that his heart has a hole in it and he can never play basketball again. Sam was seriously thinking about playing on a university varsity team, maybe become a professional player.

This is a touching coming-of-age story for both teens. Sam must learn that his life has great purpose without basketball. Stuart must learn how to tell a real friend from someone who is using him. Both boys must learn that change is not always a bad thing. Often it should be embraced

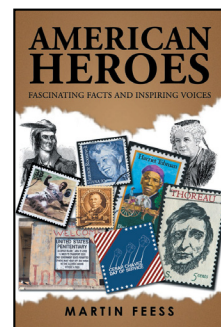
—Paulette Ansari, *African American storyteller & retired librarian.*

**American Heroes: *Fascinating Facts and Inspiring Voices*** by Martin Feess. iUniverse. Ages 11-18.

**American Heroes** provides a different look at American History, from the beginnings in the 17th century to the present. In it, the author introduces scores of well-known and not-so-well-known Americans of diverse racial backgrounds, both men and women, with a summary of their important contributions as well as many quotes attributed to them.

The book is divided in four parts. The Part one deals

with the formation of the nation from 1600s to the Civil War. Part two touches the post-Civil War era through the First World War. Part three focuses on 1920 through 1945—birth of a new world super-power in a changing world, and finally, part four is devoted to the post World War Two era.



There are 17 chapters, each with an interesting theme, that bring to focus the work of a number of "American heroes." For example, the Chapter 7 on the Rise of African-Americans introduces Booker T. Washington, Ida B. Wells and W.E.B. DuBois and the NAACP. In Chapter 8, on the struggle of the Indigenous people in the Western U.S., we learn about Oglala Sioux chiefs Red Cloud and Sitting Bull among other equally important Native American leaders and warriors. Chapter 12 focuses on the Jazz age, the Harlem Renaissance and the economic crash that began in the 1920s. Similarly, Chapter 15 summarizes the modern Civil Rights movement during the period 1945-1970 as it introduces many of the leaders in the movement, both women and men.

Each chapter has thought-provoking quotes from the politicians, statesmen, visionaries, literary figures as well as musicians and artists, such as this famous quote by Langston Hughes, "Hold fast to dreams, for if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly."

In addition to the well-known founding fathers, presidents and politicians, **American Heroes** also celebrates the courage of our sports-heroes such as Jackie Robinson and Muhammad Ali, and journalist like Ida Wells. One chapter focuses on Women's rights and suffrage movement. We read about the work of humanist Jane Addams and media mogul Oprah Winfrey, and many others. We meet a number of famous literary figures like Hemmingway and civil rights leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Cesar Chavez.

A concise history of the great nation—America, a work in progress—this book celebrates both its heroes and sheroes for their leadership and inspiration. The author has produced a well-researched work!

—Arun N. Toké, *editor.*



## Nature and Ecology Books



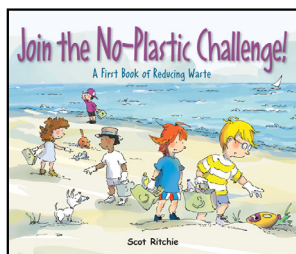
**Put On Your Owl Eyes** by Devin Franklin. Storey Publishing. Ages 8–13.

Devin Franklin, director of Flying Deer Nature Center in New York, has packed this book for children with mapping, tracking, and journaling activities. Although it is

designed for use in nature center classes, **Put on Your Owl Eyes** is a valuable resource for elementary teachers. Even if the book is not available to students, many of the activities can be adapted for use in environmental education and/or science instruction.

Certainly the suggested lessons entitled Finding a Sit Spot, and Adopting a Tree, and journaling about observations in those places are worthwhile learning activities for all students. Photographs, drawings, and stories of experiences various nature instructors have had enhance the visual appeal of this book. It would also be an appealing gift for a self-motivated child interested in nature.

—Yvonne Young, retired elementary teacher and storyteller.



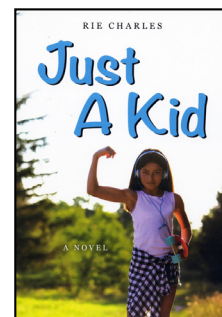
**Join the No-Plastic Challenge!**: *A First Book of Reducing Waste* by Scot Ritchie. Kids Can Press. Ages 4–7.

**Join the No-Plastic Challenge!** is a book for elementary school students. Four

children at Nick's birthday party celebrate a No-Plastic Day. In the process they learn what they and their families can do to reduce plastic waste. Among other things they also learn how much plastic surrounds us, and how it is poisoning our environment and our food chain. I believe this book belongs in every elementary school classroom library. When read aloud by a teacher it will be a catalyst for meaningful classroom discussion. As an addition to a classroom library **Join the No-Plastic Challenge!** will inspire and energize students to do what they can, and encourage them to discourage non-essential plastic use by their families.

—Yvonne Young, retired elementary teacher and storyteller.

**Just A Kid**, a novel by Rie Charles. Red Deer. Ages 9–12.



Meerin Hoy may be a nine-year-old, but her grit and determination to see things through surprises everyone who hears her story. Carson's field, a play area for all the neighborhood kids, and located right across the street from Meerin's home, is up for sale. The plan is to rezone the field for homes.

Everyone keeps telling Meerin that her petition won't be successful because, "You are just a kid." Meerin works hard getting all of her neighbors to sign it. But the mayor still refuses to see her or consider other options for building homes.

This book gives young readers a wonderful message. Encouraging them to believe that they too can make a difference regardless of their age.

—Paulette Ansari, African American storyteller & retired librarian.

**Outback: The Amazing Animals of Australia** by Dan Kainen and Ella Morton. Workman Publishing. All ages.

This is a unique book utilizing photocular technology, which, as pages are turned creates a movement of animals, as they would move in real life. Having not experienced this technology before, I was fascinated with its movement capability.

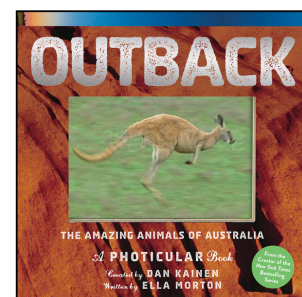
The book pictures eight of Australia's unique animals. The descriptions are brief but explain how each animal fits into the Australian ecosystem. Included are the kangaroo, galah bird, wombat, peacock spider, koala, frilled lizard, echidna and camel (an introduced species).

This is one of a series that would be well suited to elementary and middle school libraries.

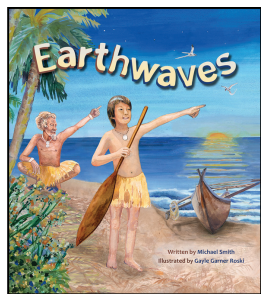
—Anita Stelling, Oregon.

**Earthwaves** by Michael Smith, illustr. Gayle Garner Roski. East West Discovery Press. Ages 7–11.

The cover of the book gives us the idea that the story will involve the boy and an elder in a canoe adventure. Upon opening the book I saw creations of lashed







bamboo sticks and shells in complicated forms. I assumed this would be an important part of the story.

Before the story even begins there is a dedication and acknowledgements page. I felt this told me I would be learning

about real experiences rather than a fictional story.

I was impressed by the story being composed of conversations of the little boy and his grandfather—yet the information the elder shared was real information they would use on their journey to find their intended island far away.

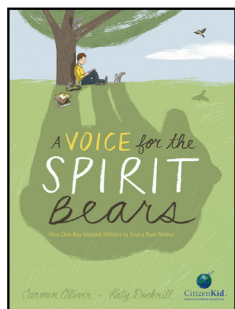
The illustrations were colorful and full of pictures of the tasks to be done to prepare the canoe for their trip. It was fun to see the boys climbing up the coconut trees and the girls catching fresh water to take along.

Precise information was shared about navigating by stars, waves, seabirds and seeing the island in their mind. The grandfather told Akela of the cultural differences he had experienced. Not every island would have friendly inhabitants. In fact, he had met headhunters and people of very different spiritual beliefs. It's a relief to know the journey is a success and they have arrived. The stick forms turn out to be navigation tools!

The story is definitely meant to preserve ancient knowledge and keep cultural traditions alive. I believe readers may well want to do more research and learn even more after they have finished reading and studying the pictures and experiences of this little boy and his island family.

—Ann Brown, grandmother.

**A Voice for the Spirit Bears!** *How One Boy Inspired Millions to Save a Rare Animal* by Carmen Oliver & Katy Dockrill. Kids Can Press. Ages 6-9.



Simon was a young boy growing up in western Canada with a stutter and a great fascination with grizzly bears. He grew up to found an organization with six million members in 85 countries whose

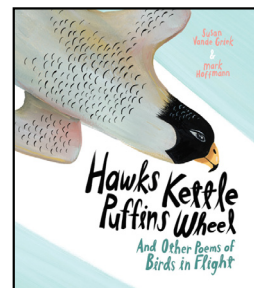
mission is to protect spirit bears, a rare type of black bear that lives on islands off the Pacific Coast. This book is the true story of his journey. It emphasizes how an ordinary person—someone whose hands and knees shake at the thought of giving a speech to his classmates—can inspire action in others and create a safer world for wildlife. The illustrations are sprightly and carry the story along. Simon's story could well inspire young readers to use their voices to make a difference.

—Pat Bryan, retired educator.

**Hawks Kettle, Puffins Wheel:** *And Other Poems of Birds in Flight* by Susan Vande Griek & Mark Hoffmann. Kids Can Press. Ages 6-9.

**Hawks Kettle and Puffins Wheel** is a delightful book of poetry blended elegantly with whimsical drawings and fascinating information about a wide variety of birds.

I've been a bird watcher for many years; I'm not a fanatic, but I like to identify my backyard birds and I occasionally go out to a marsh or into the woods to look for an unusual warbler or flycatcher.



In spite of my long interest in birds, I learned a lot of new information from this book, including a new vocabulary of birding terms. I now know that geese flying in a V-formation are called a skein and the dive of a Peregrine falcon is a stoop. I've watched the erratic maneuvers of a cloud of starlings, but never knew it was called a murmuration.

The charming poems, the segments about each bird, and the ingenious illustrations all combine into an endearing work of art.

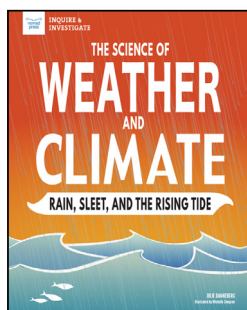
—Paul Dix, author and photographer.

**The Science of Weather and Climate:** *Rain, Sleet, and the Rising Tide* by Julie Danneberg. Nomad Press. Ages 12-15.

**The Science of Weather and Climate** is a well-illustrated book that describes our natural weather systems and more. It offers many details using a variety of means—comics, graphics, photos, tables, maps, etc.—to make it very engaging.

The book is divided in seven different chapters to dis-





cuss different parts of the weather and climate. You learn many facts that you may have never heard before. Did you know that water is possibly the only substance that occurs naturally in all its three states—liquid, gaseous and solid state (as ice)? While the beginning chapters introduce the foundations of weather and climate, the last two chapters focus on the biggest problem we face in our world today: climate change and how it impacts our natural ecosystems.

This is a must read for any student that wants to learn about the Earth and how the weather and climate systems work. The book also has many sections where you can scan QR codes to take you to different sources of more, original information, the science behind weather and climate change. It is worth noting that the book is part of a series called *Inquire and Investigate Earth Science*.

—Mitchell Dennick, student intern, and Arun N. Toké, editor.

**Something is Bugging Samantha Hansen** by Nancy Viau. Schiffer Kids. Ages 9–13.



Much like her 4th grade classmates, Samantha Hansen is spunky, independent, and often confused by fractions and percentages. However, there is something that sets her apart, she is a scientist! With her persistent list making, collection of insect t-shirts, and plethora of bug facts,

Samantha is just the girl to take on the fight against the closing of the Orchardville bee farm.

In her science class with her favorite teacher, they had just begun the insect unit, and Sam was beyond thrilled. Along with the news of an upcoming field trip to a real bee farm, Sam couldn't have been happier with school. However, upon visiting her grandfather, she learns that the very farm of their scheduled field trip is closing! She draws on her science knowledge, and the support of her friends, her family, and her newfound puppy Kitty to protest the closing of the farm, and even makes it onto the front page of the newspaper! In the midst of this fight for the survival of the bees, Samantha's best

friend, Kelli, has been playing more and more with someone else, and even starts hanging out with Sam's future boyfriend Todd! What will Sam do?

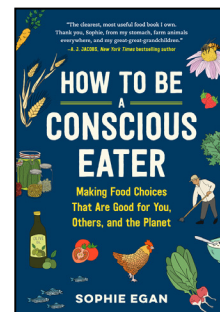
Nancy Viau uses skillful and strategic childlike language to tell this heartfelt story from the perspective of 10-year-old Samantha, thus making the story relatable for younger audiences. Viau explores many rather difficult topics through the eyes of a child, giving them an innocent appearance. For example, she discusses the death of Sam's father in dialect that is sweet, longing, and almost naive. This creates the structure for the rest of the book, and that wholesome feeling persists in all of its 184 pages. Viau also touches on hardships within friendships, as even from a young age, it is common to lose friends and have to learn about forgiveness. This is done beautifully through the subplot about Sam and Kelli's friendship. The girls have been best friends throughout their entire lives, but when Kelli begins taking ballet classes with Ling, Sam senses a distance from her friend and becomes angry with her. In the end, however, the girls reach a resolution and they reestablish their friendship, right along with saving the bees.

Viau also touches on the pressure of trying to fit in as a fourth grader. Sam decides to create a club called the Bug Club. As she waits for her fellow classmates to show up to the first meeting, she must grapple with the realization that besides her friends Kat and Richard, no one else is coming. This speaks to the struggle that comes with attempting to make friends. Overall, Nancy Viau has created a masterfully relatable and immensely fun story that can be enjoyed by young readers with passion and a little bit of spunk of their own.

—Emma Merwin, high school intern.

**How to be a Conscious Eater: Making Food Choices that are good for you, others and the planet** by Sophie Egan. Workman Publishing. Ages 10 and up.

**How To Be A Conscious Eater** offers unbiased advice on a decision most people make on a daily basis: what to eat. Eating involves so much more than food, including culture, traditions, politics, technology and more. The author looks at the issue of food through the lens of public

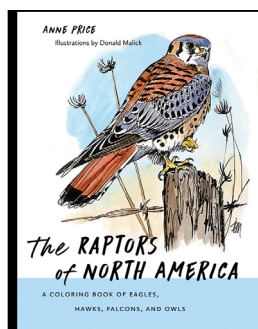


health, which means the basic question that guides the book is this: what kind of eating habits will promote health in the general population and minimize detrimental environmental impact? This public health approach helps to provide an objective look at the issue of food and food consumption. In addition, the author is a journalist and her skills are evident in the book's easy-to-understand distillation of complex scientific and policy matters.

The book is divided into four sections: "Stuff That Comes From the Ground," "Stuff That Comes From Animals," "Stuff That Comes From Factories," and "Stuff That's Made in Restaurant Kitchens." This framework provides the foundation for a systematic approach that probably covers just about any question a curious reader might have about conscious eating. Topics range from the power of legumes and the water footprint of different crops to suggestions about dealing with allergies. The author deals with contentious issues like organic foods by interpreting research and recommendations from experts so that readers can make their own choices. The clear presentation, simple organization and colorful tables and graphics of this book make it an important tool for deciding what to eat.

—Daemion Lee, associate editor.

**The Raptors of North America:** *A Coloring Book of Eagles, Hawks, Falcons, and Owls* by Anne Price, illustr. Donald Malick. UNMpress.com. Ages 9–14.



The new edition of **The Raptors of North America** by Anne Price is far more than a coloring book. It is packed full fascinating and often little-known facts about the lives and habits of raptors. With each species one learns where it can be seen, what it eats, and even picks up some points on how it can be identified.

For each of the featured birds there is a little side bar with a "cool fact." The Swainson Hawk, for example, flies all the way to Argentina to winter. This means that these hawks that live in Canada fly 10,000 miles one way! And, the Barn Owl that can make a high-pitched scream so scary that someone might think they have

seen a ghost as a screaming white Barn Owl flies by them in the dark.

This book was first published way back in 1984 with a foreword by the ornithologist, Roger Tory Peterson. I remember when I was 10 or 11 years old when this famous man came to my town and gave a lecture. Since I was interested in birds I was thrilled to hear him speak and afterwards, equally thrilled when he autographed my "Peterson Field Guide to Eastern Birds."

I highly recommend this book with its scientifically accurate paintings and its fact-filled text and, oh yes, you can color the sketches of the raptors.

—Paul Dix, author and photographer.

**Natural Encounters:** *Biking, Hiking, and Birding Through the Seasons* by Bruce M. Beehler. Yale University Press. Ages 13–adult.



**Natural Encounters** is an outcome of three decades of experiences observing nature in various places on the East Coast of the country, much of it in and around Washington, DC. An avid birder, Bruce Beehler has worked with the National Museum of Natural History as well as with prominent organizations like the Smithsonian Institution, Conservation International, and the Wildlife Conservation Society. He is also a bicyclist and hiker with an eye for the beauty of nature that surrounds us. And, he often infuses his immense scientific knowledge of nature in his descriptions.

"Nature is all around us—to be detected and savored by anyone willing to pause and make the effort. When you are caught in snarled traffic on the Capital Beltway, isn't it nice to look up and see a big and burly Red-tailed Hawk circling in the blue?" writes the author in his introduction to this informative book, a "personal encyclopedia of nature's seasons."

In this poetic prose, we join the author in his observations of nature. At times, they feel like open-air meditations on nature. We take a yearlong journey through the seasons as he describes his encounters with birds, wildlife and natural places. In one chapter, he shares his harrowing hiking experience on Mt. Katahdin, the



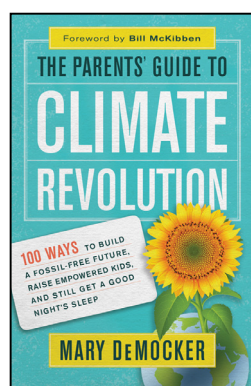
highest peak in Maine where the famous 2,200 mile long Appalachian Trail ends. He writes, “I am feeling some serious humility as well as gratitude. The big mountain has dinged me, teaching me that I need to be more cautious when out alone in the woods... I need to show nature (and this mountain) a full modicum of respect.”

At times, we venture out with the author to visit parts of the Central U.S. as well. *Natural Encounters* offers a dozen chapters (roughly corresponding to the 12 months, starting with late June and July and ending back to June) and they combine diary entries, field trips, photographs, and realistic, black and white illustrations by John C. Anderton.

Nature is in the eyes of the beholder. The book will inspire readers to embrace nature each step of the way, even in their own backyards.

—Arun N. Toké, editor.

## Teaching Resources



**The Parents' Guide to Climate Revolution:** 100 Ways to Build a Fossil-Free Future, Raise Empowered Kids, and Still Get a Good Night's Sleep by Mary DeMocker. New World Library. All educators.

Climate scientists say we have only about a decade left to cut our carbon emissions by half.

And, if we don't act decisively, our planet will be damaged catastrophically and irreversibly. Even though it is possible to drastically cut emissions by 2030, it won't be easy. This worries so many of us!

**The Parents' Guide to Climate Revolution** offers an empowering and practical blueprint for engaging families in the urgent task of climate revolution. The 100 brief chapters discuss wide-ranging ideas—from embracing simplicity, to teaching kids about the power of creative protest, to changing lifestyles in ways that deepen family bonds, improve home climates, and reduce impact on the Earth.

“What's healthy for the climate is also healthy for people and animals. It's good for our bodies to breathe

clean, pure air. It's better to drink clean, pure what water. And clean energy is better for our wallets, because wind and sunshine are abundant and free...”, says author Mary DeMocker.

Engaging and creative, this wonderful resource is for all adults who want to act effectively and at the same time, empower children to do the same.

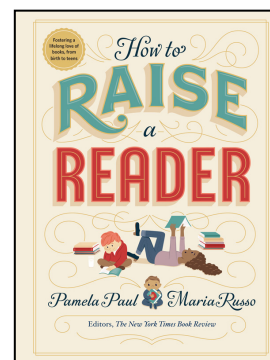
—Arun N. Toké, editor.

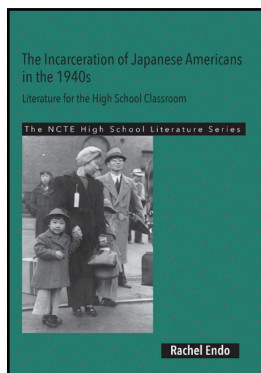
**How to Raise a Reader** by Pamela Paul & Maria Russo. Workman Publishing. All educators.

**How To Raise A Reader** presents a range of suggestions and strategies for helping children of all ages learn to love books and reading. The book is divided into four sections, divided by age, beginning with “Born To Read,” which covers babies and toddlers and ending with “A Reader for Life” with suggestions for parents of teenagers. Each section follows a simple format, starting with a section called “Here's What You Need To Know” followed by suggestions for specific features to look for or avoid when picking books, and concluding with a list of recommended books along with brief descriptions.

The authors are a current and a former children's book editor for a major newspaper, so their experience with writing in easy-to-digest, accessible prose is on full display. They weave together tidbits of research with general advice, as well as anecdotes from their own experiences as parents, giving the book a conversational feel. The book is clearly written for a middle-class audience, for parents who are readers themselves and want to do everything they can to make their children readers as well. This means that much of the advice is devoted to allaying fears, debunking myths and helping parents prioritize their time and energy. For example, disapproving reference is made to parents who brag about their kindergarten student reading *Harry Potter*, while books about video games are encouraged, because all reading should be encouraged. Overall the authors' message is that parents should make reading about fun and enjoyment, and less about work.

—Daemion Lee, associate editor.





**The Incarceration of Japanese Americans in the 1940s:** *Literature for the High School Classroom* by Rachel Endo. [www.NCTE.org](http://www.NCTE.org). High School grades.

**The Incarceration of Japanese Americans in the 1940s** is part of a high school literature series by the National Council of Teachers of English.

This book was clearly written by a teacher for other teachers, with an easy-to-read style and packed with lesson suggestions. The book is short, not much over 150 pages, which is a testament to the author's ability as a teacher and a writer to be able to condense a complex topic down to its essentials. It would be a useful tool to have on hand while lesson planning.

The book centers on the work of three Japanese American authors: Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and her memoir *Farewell to Manzanar* (book and film version); the poetry of Lawson Fuasao Inada, and the short stories of Hisyaye Yamamoto. The chapters about these authors follow a simple formula, beginning with background information about the author and the context of their work, followed by various classroom activities and discussion of thematic elements, and ends with suggested further reading. The author uses the first person and describes the activities that she does in her own classroom, making it clear that the activities she describes have been field tested. The suggested activities are specific, yet still general enough to allow adaptation for teachers' own classrooms.

This book lays the foundation for classroom teaching based on engagement with primary texts written by people who lived through a painful chapter in American history. Rather than a textbook that attempts to explain what happened, this book helps teachers develop lesson plans that interpret and amplify the voices of those who lived through it.

—Daemion Lee, *associate editor*.