

Skipping Stones

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A Multicultural Literary Magazine



Boats Docked in a Quiet lagoon in Cuba, Central America. Photo by Paul Dix, Oregon

Reviews of the 2014 Multicultural & Nature Books

The 2014 Skipping Stones Honor Awards



Each year, we recognize 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 closer relationships within human societies.

The 22 winners are listed in three categories: **Multicultural & International Books**, **Nature & Ecology Books**, and **Teaching Resources**. These unique titles offer an exciting way to explore and understand diverse cultures, places, societies and their histories. We'd like to thank the many readers and reviewers who helped us choose these great reading adventures and learning experiences for readers of all ages.

The reviews of the winning titles follow:

Multicultural and International Books

As Fast As Words Could Fly by Pamela M. Tuck, illust. Eric Velasquez (leeandlow.com). Ages 7-12. ISBN: 978-1-60060-348-8

Mason is the youngest of three brothers in the Steele family. Nearly every evening his father comes home upset over some new civil rights incident. This story takes place in the early sixties in Greenville, North Carolina. Mr. Steele is determined to do all he can to speed up desegregation of the south, and Mason, a gifted writer, writes several letters for his father's civil rights group. The small organization buys Mason a manual typewriter as a thank-you gift, from which Mason teaches himself to type quickly. After considerable protest, Mason and his brothers are admitted into the all-white high school. There, Mason is able to take a typing class and becomes the fastest typist in his school. He later wins an award but does not receive the honors he is owed because of his race. This story is a picture book completely illustrated in beautiful, deep colors. A family story which demonstrates perseverance in the struggle for civil rights.

—Paulette Ansari, librarian, African American storyteller

If I Ever Get Out of Here by Eric Gansworth (scholastic.com). Novel. Grades 8-12. ISBN 978-0-545-41730-3

If I Ever Get Out of Here is a novel about the life of an American Indian boy growing up dirt-poor on a reservation. Because he is the only Indian in a gifted program in a public high school, few other students talk to him. The boy makes friends with a new

kid in town, but doesn't want to bring him to his house because it is falling apart.

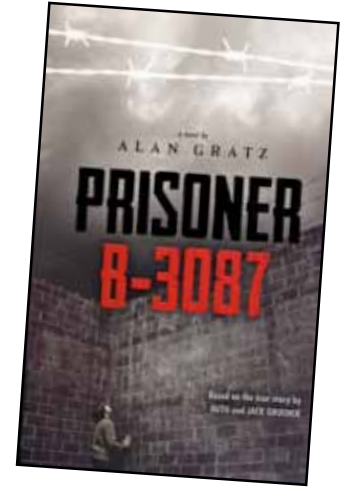
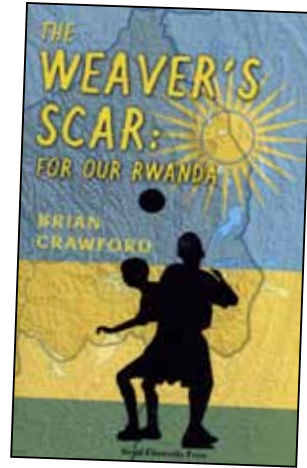
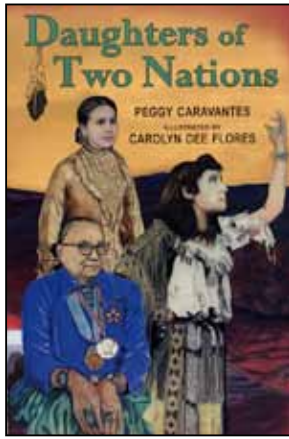
The book is a delightful, well-written depiction of growing up and trying to stay true to oneself while maneuvering around others with more resources and opportunities, and whose cultural privilege keeps them from being held accountable. When the horrible behaviors of the white bully are ignored because his parents are financial contributors to the school, the main character tells the school that he will not go back until they guarantee the school provides a safe environment.

The boy's favorite band is the Beatles, and that preference again sets him apart from the other students at his school. It also provides a clever use of Beatles lyrics in dialog throughout the story.

—Charlotte Behm, educator.

Prisoner B-3087 (Based on the true story by Ruth and Jack Gruener) by Alan Gratz (scholastic.com). Novel. Grades 7-11. ISBN: 978-0-545-45901-3

Yanek Gruener tells the story himself, beginning in Krakow, Poland in 1939. Yanek was a ten year old Jewish boy living happily with his parents just before Hitler's army entered Poland. Life at that point was normal, but if he had only known what the next six years of his life would be like he and his entire family would have run for the woods. As you read about the horrors Yanek Gruener suffered through in ten different concentration camps during World War II you are



compelled to ask yourself, “could I have survived it?” This painful story is written so well that the reader can visualize, feel, and almost taste his pain. This 260-page chapter book should be required reading for all high school students.

—Paulette Ansari, librarian, African American storyteller.

Pay It Forward Kids: Small Acts, Big Change by Nancy Runstedler (www.fitzhenry.ca). Nonfiction. Middle grades. ISBN: 978-1-55455-301-3

This is a chapter book presenting fourteen amazing, young entrepreneurs who just want to make life better for as many people as possible. At the tender age of five, Hannah Taylor notices a homeless man eating out of a garbage can. By the time she is six, she is raising money with other 1st graders to help a homeless shelter in Winnipeg. Yash Gupta, a high school student, living in Irvine, California breaks his eyeglasses, and is forced to attend school without them for an entire week. Yash then learns that many children all around the world are denied a proper education because they can't afford to buy a pair of glasses. He begins collecting gently used glasses, leading to the launch of his own website and nonprofit organization called Sight Learning. This organization has distributed more than 8,500 pairs of glasses to the needy.

The chapters are filled with colorful pictures which include photographs, drawings, and sub-headings. The message is very clear: no act of kindness is ever wasted. No one is too young or too old to begin paying forward acts of kindness.

—Paulette Ansari, librarian, African American storyteller.

Infinito 9 por Verónica Coello Game (*Alfaguara Juvenil*). Spanish. Grades 4-8. ISBN: 978-9942-12015-1

Es apenas fines de abril y el calor ya es casi insoportable en la ciudad donde vive Carlos, un niño de 8 o 9 años de edad. Él y su familia saben que es el calentamiento global, el responsable por los cambios radicales en todo el mundo: calor, tormentas, nieve, todo en extremo. Pero los humanos no se ponen de acuerdo en los pasos a seguir para resolver el problema —hasta que...

Extraterrestres con una sociedad y tecnología más avanzada que la terrestre aparecen y ofrecen limpiar la tierra. Todos los terrícolas deben viajar a otro planeta mientras los mares y la tierra se limpian. De paso los humanos tendrán tiempo para re-valorar su planeta.

El libro ofrece una oportunidad para aprender y reflexionar acerca del medio ambiente y la ecología de nuestra tierra. Una oportunidad para organizar nuestras prioridades poniendo, nuestra salud y la de nuestra tierra en el lugar principal.

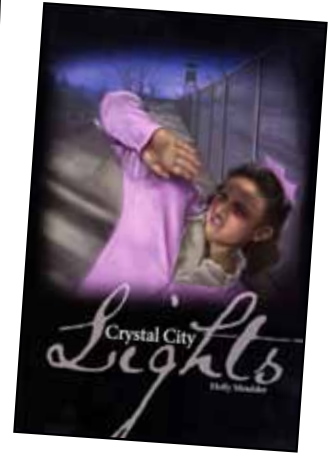
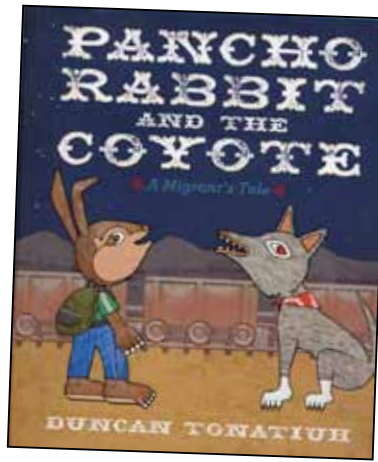
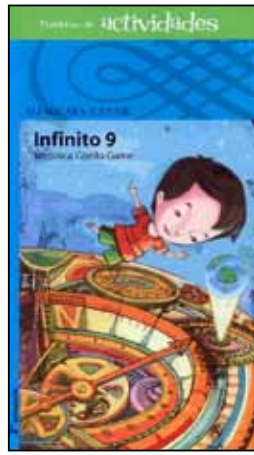
Es toda una aventura de ciencia ficción. El libro de trabajo que lo acompaña estimula la imaginación, y es divertido. Lo recomiendo.

—Esther Celis, Mexican American, is our board member,

Barbed Wire Baseball by Marissa Moss, illust. Yuko Shimizu (www.abramsbooks.com). Picture book. Grades 3-6. ISBN: 978-1-4197-0521-2

As a boy, Kenichi “Zeni” Zenimura’s dream was to become a major league baseball player, and that’s exactly what he did. Zeni led a remarkable career as a player, excelling in all nine positions, managing teams and serving as an ambassador for the sport in his home country, Japan. This book takes the readers to the time when all of that ends.

In 1942, when the Japanese military attacks



Pearl Harbor, Zeni and his family are sent to internment camps in Arizona. Like thousands of Japanese Americans, he finds himself missing his old life. The camps gives them no entertainment, and Zeni's family spends their hours under a scorching hot sun, waiting to one day return home. But Zeni develops a brilliant idea of bringing baseball to the camp by building his own field! This book is a wonderfully illustrated true story about how one man's love of sport inspired hope in others during hard times.

—Kamiiya Williams, student intern, University of Oregon.

Crystal City Lights by Holly Moulder (*Blue Marlin*). Novel. Grades 6-9. ISBN: 978-0-9885295-0-2

Crystal City Lights is one of those books that you'll love and learn from. A twelve-year old American girl is taken from her home in New Jersey when an advertisement picturing Adolf Hitler is found in her closet. The year is 1943 and the world is four years into the second Great War. The Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) suspects her father, a German, is working with Nazis.

Dottie, the story's protagonist, and her family are sent to an internment camp in Crystal City, Texas. From her comfortable home in New Jersey to barbed wire fences and armed guards, Dottie's story takes us on a historical journey. With a foreword by a real former internee at Crystal City, this book exposes a forgotten part of our history—how thousands of German Americans were imprisoned at the time of the Second World War. If you love history and storytelling, this book is a great choice.

—Kamiiya Williams, student intern, Univ. of Oregon.

Remember Dippy by Shirley Reva Vernick (cinco-puntos.com). Grades 7-12. ISBN: 978-1-935955-58-0

Remember Dippy is a light-hearted book that follows fourteen-year old Johnny through his summer adventures. Johnny originally planned on a summer filled with friends and good times, but his path soon changes as his mother picks up a job out of state, sending him to his Aunt's house. There, he has to take care of his autistic cousin, Remember. Although Johnny is skeptical at first, the boys soon bond over the obstacles and adventures they experience together. Johnny finds himself building a better relationship with cousin Mem, and having one of his best summers.

This novel is a refreshing coming-of-age story that not only shows the changes Johnny goes through, but also the growth of a relationship between him and his autistic cousin. Johnny starts the novel off with a very narrow and negative view of Mem, but soon realizes he is just a regular kid—and an even better partner in crime. I would recommend this novel, as it is a great tool for introducing kids to the idea of special needs and aide in understanding those with conditions such as autism. With the novel's dynamic characters and personalities, young readers will enjoy the story, and learn a great message from it, too.

—Cassandra Brady, student intern, University of Oregon.

The Weaver's Scar: For Our Rwanda by Brian Crawford (*Royal Fireworks Press; rfwf.com*). Novel. Middle and upper grades. ISBN: 978-089824-477-9

Genocide. Civil War. As the tragic events of 1994 unfold in Rwanda, innocent families are caught up in the escalating chaos. **The Weaver's Scar** is the story of life in Rwanda during one of the most violent periods in the country's history, seen through the eyes of young Faustin. Author Brian Crawford retells Rwanda's story through a fictional narrative, successfully demonstrating

the conflict and division between the Tutsis and Hutus, separate Rwandan peoples, and its effect on individuals, families, and the country as a whole.

Young Faustin enjoys playing soccer, chasing goals in the hot African sun with a banana-leaf ball. Fast and agile, Faustin is a superb player. He is also an attentive student in school, and one of only five Tutsis in a class of thirty Hutus. As tension rises, from the soccer field and the classroom to the culminating death of the Hutu president of Burundi, Faustin begins to fear for his safety and the safety of his family. As revenge spreads throughout towns and the countryside, Faustin soon realizes that his only choice is to run and to hide, trusting in the courage of his Hutu friend, in a dangerous effort to reach salvation.

The Weaver's Scar is captivating, with a simple writing style that pulls readers in until the end. A powerful story of bravery, trust, and compassion, this book chronicles an extreme epoch in Rwandan history. Crawford explicitly details the struggles, pain and tragedy that Faustin experiences. While not suitable for younger readers, it gives an impactful and emotionally stirring experience of the tragic Rwandan genocide. **The Weaver's Scar** offers readers a deeper understanding of humanity's global connection and shared history, while providing strong support for a more peaceful, unified future.

—Julian Mullins, high school student intern, Oregon.

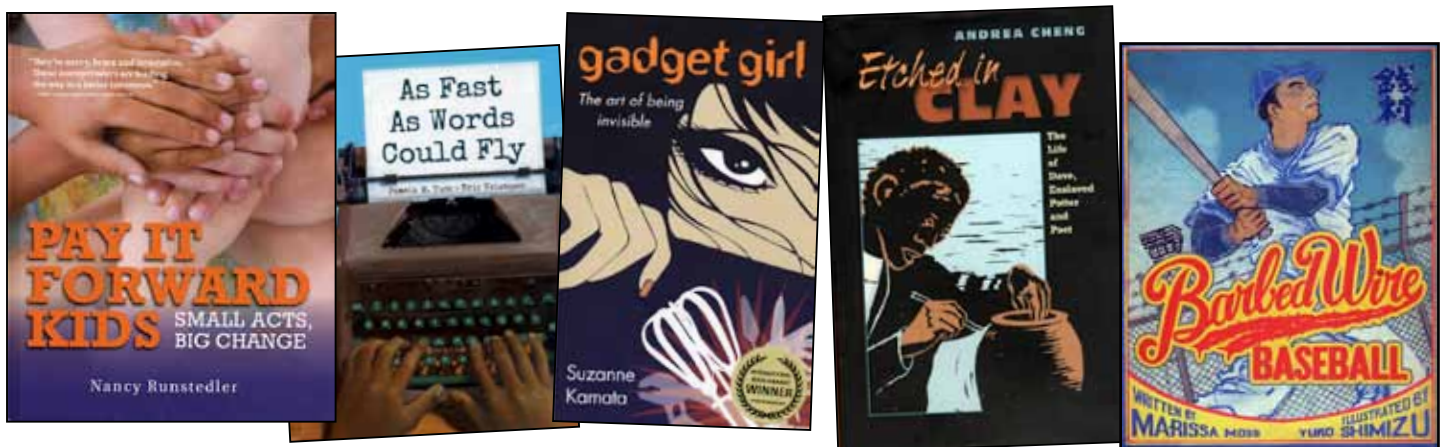
Daughters of Two Nations by Peggy Caravantes, illust. Carolyn Dee Flores (www.mountain-press.com). Biographies. Grades 4–8. ISBN: 978-0-87842-610-2

Daughters of Two Nations by Peggy Caravantes is a series of short biographies of nine Native American and Canadian First Nations women who lived their

lives in both Native and white worlds. Most were born of interracial marriages or had interracial marriages themselves. The paintings by Carolyn Dee Flores enhance the book by illuminating the beauty and strength of these outstanding, talented women. Each woman was remarkable in her own way... some as leaders, others as achievers.

Mary Musgrove, Creek (1700-1765), spoke both Muskogee and English, which helped her smooth relationships between potential enemies to make the colony of Georgia a success. **Nancy Ward** (1738-1822), a Cherokee leader, is revered by all of Tennessee as a Beloved Woman. **Susette La Flesche** (1854-1903), served the Omaha people as a teacher, interpreter, speaker, and writer. **Pauline Johnson**, Mohawk (1861-1913), earned fame for her poetry, writing, and recitation. **Mountain Wolf Woman** (1884-1960), Ho-Chunk, used medicine skills she learned from her grandfather to help her people, and dictated her autobiography, the first ever published by a Native American woman. **Rosebud Yellow Robe**, Lakota Sioux (1907-1992), performed Lakota dances and told Lakota stories, authored two books, and was awarded an honorary doctorate degree.

Annie Dodge Wanneka, Navajo healer, worked tirelessly to improve the health and living conditions of her people. **Maria Tallchief** (1925-2013), an Osage ballerina, danced widely in the U.S. and Europe, was ballet director at Lyric Opera of Chicago, and founded the Chicago City Ballet with her sister Marjorie. And, lastly, **Wilma Mankiller** (1945-2010) became chief of the Cherokee Nation in 1985. Her leadership enabled the Cherokee people to use their extraordinary ability to face adversity and continue moving forward. Wilma



received 18 honorary doctorates.

The lives of these strong extraordinary women are inspiring role models for all young women; and they are particularly empowering for young women of Native American and First Nation heritage. This excellent book belongs in every middle school and high school library.

—Yvonne Young, teacher and storyteller

Etched in Clay: The Life of Dave, Enslaved Potter and Poet by Andrea Cheng (leeandlow.com). Poetry. Ages 9 and up. ISBN: 978-1-60060-451-5

Etched in Clay tells the true story about a young man named Dave, an African American slave, whose poetry can be found inscribed on the surfaces of not paper and journals, but pots and vases.

Dave was brought to South Carolina around 1815 to make pottery for his master and his pottery business. He quickly learned how to turn pots and jars on a potter's wheel, making beautiful pieces to be sold on the market. However, this book remembers more than just his pottery-making skills. Despite southern law's prohibition of slaves learning to read and write, Dave's pottery is famous today because of the short poems found on them. Signed by himself, the words give us small glimpses into the inner life of an American slave. A creative blend of history, poetry and wood-block prints, **Etched in Clay** reminds readers that slaves, too, had minds and hearts.

—Kamiiya Williams, student intern, University of Oregon.

Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote: A Migrant's Tale by Duncan Tonatiuh (www.abramsbooks.com). Picture book for elem. grades. ISBN: 978-1-4197-0583-0

Duncan Tonatiuh wrote **Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote** with the hope that it would help teachers, librarians and parents spark conversations with young people about the critical issues of undocumented migrants from Mexico and Central America living in the United States. His beautiful illustrations of personified animals pull the reader into this straightforward, lovely story. It's very clear that *Papa* went to the United States to work, driven by necessity and love to provide for his family. This valuable book clearly illuminates the plight of millions of migrants living in our country.

As the story shows, many of them have faced extreme danger and hardship.

This wonderful book is also especially important for children of migrants who will see themselves and their families mirrored in its pages. I highly recommend **Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote** for use with children and students, particularly those of Hispanic heritage.

—Yvonne Young, grandmother, teacher and storyteller.

Gadget Girl: The Art of Being Invisible by Suzanne Kamata (www.GemmaMedia.com). Novel. Grades 6-10. ISBN: 978-1-936846-38-2

Gadget Girl is written from the perspective of Aiko, a teenage girl dealing with universal teenage girl issues—she's figuring out how to handle her embarrassing mom, how to deal with having a crush on the most popular guy in school, how to love other people, and, most importantly, how to love herself.

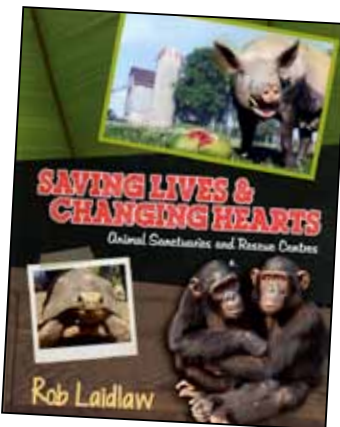
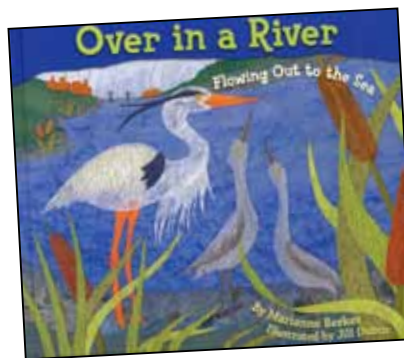
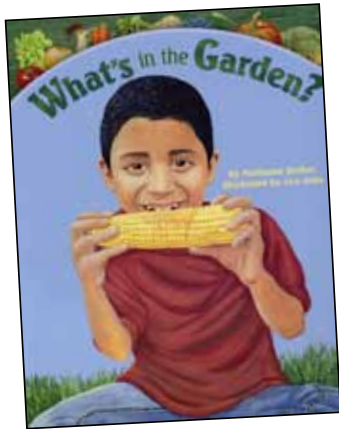
Aiko lives with her American mother in the United States, but has never met her Japanese father. She clings to what knowledge she has of her him; knowing he was an indigo farmer, she grows her own indigo plant and dreams of helping him on his farm in Japan. On top of all of this, Aiko has cerebral palsy. This makes being a biracial high school girl even tougher—she wishes desperately that she could get rid of her disability. She explores her dreams by writing about her super heroine alter ego, Gadget Girl. She publishes the manga in secret, hoping to remain invisible; but when Aiko's mother takes her to Paris, she learns to love every part of herself.

Aiko's problems are real ones, and universal. Her journey is touching and well-handled, tackling important issues in a way that is both believable and mature. Suzanne Kamata has written a novel that is important for all ages.

—Taylor James, student intern, University of Oregon.

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Nature and Ecology Books



What's in the Garden? by Marianne Berkes, illust. Cris Arbo (dawnpub.com). Picture book. ISBN: 978-1-58469-190-7

What's in the Garden? is a book that has rhymes and recipes for fresh fruits and vegetables. The rhyming poems are on one page and the recipes are on another. I think that it is a great book if you like to read good rhymes and also if you enjoy yummy recipes.

The art is realistic, and has many bright vivid colors. The pictures of the plants and food are very beautiful and skillfully drawn. Some of the pictures make you feel like you are there in the garden.

I like this book because I like gardens and the fresh food that comes out of them. I also like to look at pictures of gardens. The recipes all sound delicious. My favorite one is Libby's Blueberry Pie.

—Sage Hoffman age 10, Oregon.

The Secret Pool by Kimberly Ridley, illust. Rebekah Raye (www.tilburyhouse.com). Picture book. ISBN: 978-0-88448-339-7

The Secret Pool, a creative account of vernal pools written by Kimberly Ridley and illustrated by Rebekah Raye, is a gem. Its delightful blend of poetry and prose, mystique and fact, is accompanied by beautifully authentic illustrations. The book takes us on a journey of the vernal pool's cycle from beginning to end and back to beginning with fascinating and sometimes surprising details.

Life in the vernal pools begins in springtime, and from there we follow species after species through their distinctive life cycles. It is through the poetic passages that we experience the "rainy spring nights," the "jig-

gling and wriggling," and the "shrinking and sinking" of these seasonal pools. Likewise, it is through the more scientific prose that we learn unique particulars about the creatures that depend on the vernal pools for their lives.

The combination of mystique and fact takes us on a scientific adventure. The reader learns a lot of fun information without any effort because of the creative interplay between the writing and illustration. This is a great book for a wide range of readers; from simple animal lovers to serious environmental students, and everyone in between!

—Diana Lynne Hoffman, author and parent.

Saving Lives & Changing Hearts: Animal Sanctuaries and Rescue Centres by Rob Laidlaw (www.fitzhenry.ca). Grades 4-8. ISBN: 978-1-55455-212-2

Saving Lives and Changing Hearts tells hopeful stories of humans from around the world stepping up to rescue animals in bad situations and to give them better lives. This heartening book describes "real sanctuaries," then highlights successful organizations.

Some basic principles of real sanctuaries are that the physical, psychological and social needs of animals are the highest priority. There is no commercial trade or breeding of animals. Real sanctuaries also play a role in helping solve the problems that create the need for sanctuaries in the first place and educating the public.

Among the sanctuaries featured are touching stories about donkeys, elephants, chimpanzees, pigs in Canada, elephants and rhinos in Kenya, bears and raptors in China, lions in Ethiopia, and turtles and pelicans in the United States.

Saving Lives and Changing Hearts was strongly praised by all of the reviewers for the **Skipping Stones Award** because it does a good job of covering an

Nature and Ecology Books

important subject. The book promotes respect for and partnership with animals—an important message for all humans.

—Charlotte Behm, educator

Over in a River: *Flowing Out to the Sea* by Marianne Berkes, illust. Jill Dubin (www.dawnpub.com). Picture book. ISBN: 978-1-58469-330-7

Over in a River: *Flowing Out to Sea* by Marianne Berkes is a delightful, educational picture book for preschool and elementary school children. The lilting, musical language pulls the children into the story immediately, as they learn about various animals and the names for their babies.

Beautiful, colorful collages by Jill Dubin illustrate each animal in its habitat. A map of the United States on each page shows a river where the animal lives. The numbers of animal babies shown on each page progress from one to ten. At the back of the book there are additional facts about both the animals and the rivers mentioned in the book. In addition, tips from both the author and the illustrator are included. This wonderful book teaches biology, ecology, geography, and stimulates language development. And to add to the fun, a hidden animal on each page enables development of observation skills.

—Yvonne Young, teacher and storyteller

On Kiki's Reef by Carol L. Malnor, illust. Trina L. Hunner (www.dawnpub.com). Picture book. ISBN: 978-1-58469-477-9

Are coral reefs marine plants, animals or rocks? A coral reef is an amazing, live habitat, usually found in clear, shallow waters in the tropical regions of the oceans, and colonies of spectacular sea creatures live there. Corals are tiny animals called polyps.

Did you know that an adult green sea turtle is 3 to 5 feet long, weighs between 150 to 350 pounds, and lives to be 75 to 80 years old? Mature female turtles migrate every two years to mate near the same beach where they were born. They lay about 100 golf ball size eggs and cover them with sand.

As you read **On Kiki's Reef**, you will be fascinated by the intricate web of marine life that abounds

in coral reefs, and by the life cycle of Kiki, the giant green sea turtle that lives there for much of its life. For the curious readers,

there are many more details in the “Featured Creatures” and the teaching treasures sections. **On Kiki's Reef** is an outstanding, realistically illustrated, educational book for young readers. Go for it!

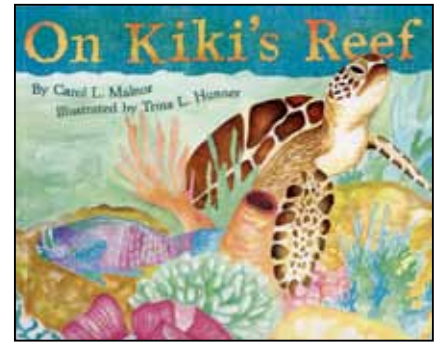
—Arun N. Toké, editor

The Patchwork Garden/*Pedacitos de huerto* by Diane de Anda, illust. Oksana Kemarskaya (*Arte Público*). Bilingual. Gr. 1-5. ISBN: 978-1-55885-763-6

This is a wonderful story written in both English and Spanish. Toña watches Abuela sew on a patchwork quilt, and as Abuela sews she tells Toña about gardening and growing sweet tomatoes when she was a child. Toña longs to grow vegetables in a garden for herself. They live in a city apartment surrounded by cement. But Toña remembered there is a little patch of dirt in front of the church. After speaking with Father Anselmo for permission, they are able to plant seeds and seedlings in the black soil. Soon Toña's friends and the entire neighborhood were asking for little gardens of their own. Toña combed the neighborhood locating all the patches of dirt just growing weeds. After asking the building owners, Toña organized the “The Patchwork Garden Club.” Soon every family was busy tending to their very own gardens. Each family had to promise to share some of their fresh vegetables with the neighbors. This way the entire community benefits.

This is a large picture book with colorful and very interesting illustrations on every page. **The Patchwork Garden** is a wonderful story that can be read in two languages and experienced through the artwork.

—Paulette Ansari is the president of *Skipping Stones*.



Teaching Resources

Teaching About The Wars, edited by Jody Sokolower (www.rethinkingschools.org). For grades 5–11. ISBN: 978-1-9377301-47-5

Teaching About The Wars is brave enough to explore the role of the United States in promoting war and hierarchies around the world. The book notes that it may be controversial to teach these issues, but the authors realize that even though the U.S. values equality, fairness, and justice, the country actually promotes the opposite around the world.

The book links the teaching of the Christopher Columbus myth with children's acceptance of imperial ventures like the Iraq War. The writers are willing to name the American Empire and explain why corporate bullying as well as military maneuvers fuel the kind of hatred that leads to attacks such as the one on September 11.

The section "What is Terrorism? Who Are the Terrorists?" is especially enlightening as it describes behaviors of countries and corporations with fake names and then has the students answer these two questions. Many students will be surprised that the people who we describe as terrorists are actually connected with the United States.

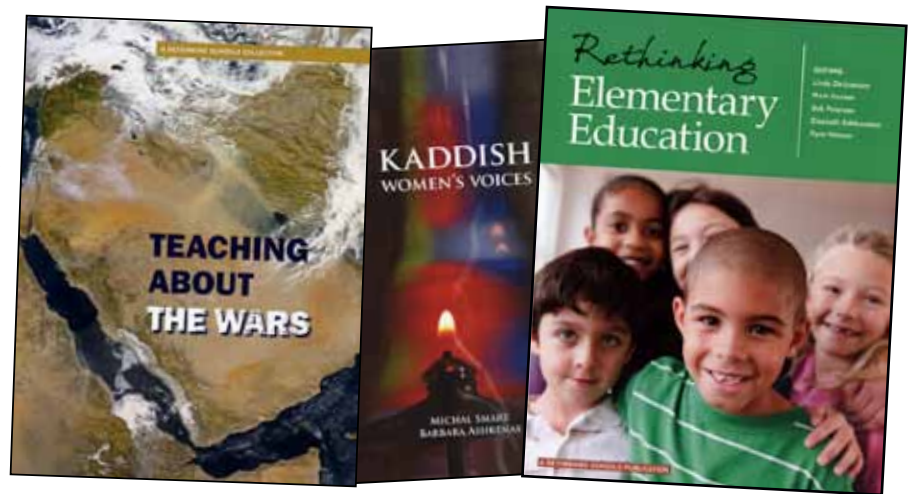
If we want a country of equality, fairness, and justice, we must be willing to teach our children about where we are falling short. **Teaching About The Wars** is an important resource to help the U.S. achieve the goals of its founders.

—Charlotte Behm, educator.

Rethinking Elementary Education, edited by Linda Christensen, Mark Hansen, et. al. (rethinkingschools.org). ISBN: 978-0-942961-52-2

Rethinking Elementary Education has gathered together the finest writing and learning from 25 years of *Rethinking Schools* magazine. The stories, lessons and testimonies in this 310-page resource will surely help all elementary educators do their jobs better.

Teaching elementary grades is one of the most challenging occupations. And the shrinking school budgets, mandated testing, scripted curriculum, and current social climates make it even harder to live up to your own expectations. While it is true that all teaching matters, elementary teachers make lasting impressions



on students that enter our schools.

Rethinking Elementary Education offers many ways to integrate the curriculum—to weave together math and writing, science and reading, social studies and civics. The book offers deeper insights and ideas to implement them in six different sections with themes such as: building a classroom community, using reading and writing to bring social justice awareness in children's world, media literacy, teaching mathematics as much more than the manipulation of numbers, sciences across the curriculum, and how to expand your students' world view.

The authors and editors of this resource book bring in their diverse classroom experiences to make this resource truly wholesome. They have been involved in teacher collectives, have decades of teaching experiences, and some of them have even started innovative public schools. This outstanding collection of over 50 contributions offers great ways to make your student thoughtful, engaged, and caring, and at the same time, it will enhance your teaching skills.

Rethinking Elementary Education is powerful, positive, practical, inspiring and hopeful I recommend it whole-heartedly to every educator!

—Arun N. Toké, editor.

Kaddish, Women's Voices, edited by Michal Smart and Barbara Ashkenas (www.UrimPublications.com). Ages 16 - adults. ISBN: 978-965-524-150-1

Kaddish, Women's Voices pulls at the heart strings. At times painful, at times funny, and always spiritually rich, it presents the views of many Jewish women on this essential Jewish practice for honoring the passing of our loved ones. Traditionally, the *Kaddish Yatom*, the Kaddish said for the dead, is read at every Jewish service in which there is a "minyan" or prayer

assembly of at least ten men. Following the death of parents, we are commanded to say the Kaddish for a full year as we believe it encourages the soul to rise higher and higher on its heavenly course. It says nothing about death, but praises the source of all life. The traditional teaching requires us to say Kaddish for our parents, for whom the longest period to recite the Kaddish is prescribed. This assumes that because parents have had a decisive role in shaping our lives, we must mourn for a full year. For children, however, we are required to recite the Kaddish for only one month. Of course, there are other rituals for honoring the dead that mark the first week, the first month, the first year, and then the memory of our loved one each passing year at the time of “Yahrzeit” or yearly commemoration of the passing as it is marked on the Jewish calendar. More liberal Jews have added the practice of reciting the Kaddish for the deaths of others and to honor those lost in the Holocaust who have no one to say Kaddish for them.

While in Orthodox Jewish practice, women are “relieved” of this commandment or “mitzvah” (good deed), as they are not burdened by any time-bound “mitzvah,” **Kaddish, Women’s Voices** presents what we might call the “other side” of the performance of this “mitzvah.” By other side, I mean at least two different things. First, we recite the Kaddish not only to honor the dead, but to help ourselves heal from the loss. We ritualize our response to death and we do so in community. Among Conservative, Reform, Renewal or Reconstructionist Jews, a community of ten may be made up of women and/or of men, and Kaddish is recited by all concerned regardless of gender. In these congregations, women do perform time-bound holy deeds. Second, as this book shows us so eloquently, women benefit tremendously from being able to participate in this age-old practice. In this book, we meet many women from all branches of Judaism talking about the meaningfulness of this prayer. We read their testimonials and witness the power of this prayer in their lives, in their mourning, and in the healing of the wounds of their losses. Some women speak of parents, some of children. All of them reach deeply into their own hearts and ours.

In some cases, women who identify as Jewish but who have never thought about religious practices come to know the beauty and blessing of prayer. One example in the book is Rachel Mesch, a professor of

French, who had not thought about the Jewish practice too extendedly before her experience with Kaddish. Surrounded by community, she and others come to savor the sound and feeling of the ancient words in their mouths. Saying the Kaddish for ones parents can often lead to more meaningful Jewish practice. It is a doorway into the sacred in our tradition for many people who hail from secular backgrounds. Perhaps even more moving, however, is the story of a female Reform Rabbi who is asked to show up as chaplain at the bedside of an Orthodox Jewish father who has just passed. He is surrounded by his family, daughters and sons. The woman rabbi is immediately rejected by the sons and after offering her services and her prayer book, but seeing she is not wanted, she turns to leave and walks solemnly down the corridor of the hospital. She is feeling both rejected and unable to comfort members of her flock. Unexpectedly, the daughter runs to catch up with her and says, “Please, I am not allowed to say the Kaddish for my father. Do you think you could promise to say it for me instead?” The Rabbi, dismayed, agrees. We, too, pause to try to comprehend the unrequited urge.

With this story, the power as well as the shortsightedness of traditional Jewish practice comes fully to the fore. For me, it had the effect of reminding me of just how fortunate I am to be able to pray and share community, to lead services for those who have suffered loss, to teach and to say the Kaddish for my mother in a Jewish community that does not limit my sacred duties. However, there is a wisdom in all practices that call on the divine to fill our lives with love, light, joy and reminiscence. In other words, all styles of Jewish practice adapt to a variety of different ways or styles of honoring those we love and leading us on a path of comfort. The power and beauty of **Kaddish Women’s Voices** relates to its testimonials from all walks of Jewish women’s lives, Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, and in between. In every testimony, the Kaddish prayer tells a tale of healing.

I can imagine the book to be the perfect bed-side companion at the time of the loss of a loved one when the divine feels at once so far and yet, so very near. I recommend it highly to anyone interested in the healing power of prayer or in the stories of Jewish women forging their own paths of tradition in healing prayer.

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