

2015 Notable Books by American Library Association

Younger Readers

The Adventures of Beekle: The Unimaginary Friend. By Dan Santat. Illus. by the author. Little Brown. In four delightful chapters, Beekle, an imaginary friend, undergoes an emotional journey looking for his human. Vibrant illustrations add to the fun. (2015 Caldecott Medal Book)

The Baby Tree. By Sophie Blackall. Illus. by the author. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen. Where do babies come from? This question is delicately handled in Blackall's gentle and charming book. After asking around with amusing results, a boy finally learns the true facts from his parents. With a page of tips for "the conversation."

Beautiful Moon: A Child's Prayer. By Tonya Bolden. Illus. by Eric Velasquez. Abrams. A gorgeous full moon shines on a young boy praying for the homeless, the hungry, those at war and his family. The stunning illustrations set a reverent tone that reflects the thoughtful and universal text.

Blizzard. By John Rocco. Illus. by the author. Disney-Hyperion. A young boy's experience in a blizzard and the adventure of going to the market are vividly portrayed through Norman Rockwell-like illustrations that give personality to the child and the weather.

A Boy and a Jaguar. By Alan Rabinowitz. Illus. by CáTia Chien. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Alan Rabinowitz's story of feeling broken as a child yet experiencing great empathy for animals kept in cages at the zoo. He went on to become a zoologist and conservationist known around the world.

The Chicken Squad: The First Misadventure. By Doreen Cronin. Illus. by Kevin Cornell. Simon & Schuster/Atheneum. Tail, a scaredy-squirrel, seeks refuge and help from the Chicken Squad, four problem-solving chicks. This illustrated chapter book brings each chicken's zany personality to life.

A Dance Like Starlight: One Ballerina's Dream. By Kristy Dempsey. Illus. by Floyd Cooper. Penguin/Philomel. An inspirational message told in lyrical language about the power of dreams and one young girl's desire to dance. Soft colorful images support the poignant text.

Dory Fantasmagory. By Abby Hanlon. Illus. by the author. Penguin/Dial. In this charming take on family life, irrepressible Dory drives her siblings crazy with her wild imagination until she finally gets them to join in on the fun.

Draw! By Raúl Colón. Illus. by the author. Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman. Colón celebrates the power of imagination and creativity to heal a bedridden boy. The lush illustrations need no words as the boy goes on an artistic and exciting adventure.

Early Bird. By Toni Yuly. Illus. by the author. Feiwel and Friends/Macmillan. Early bird rises before the sun to find breakfast. He's tired after so much activity, so he and a surprising friend--early worm--enjoy what he's found.

The Farmer and the Clown. By Marla Frazee. Illus. by the author. Simon & Schuster\Beach Lane. Muted browns and grays permeate the farmer's world until a small child falls off a circus train, bringing with him color and light. No words are needed in this quiet story of an unlikely friendship.

The Farmer's Away! Baa! Neigh! By Anne Vittur Kennedy. Illus. by the author. Candlewick. Energetic barnyard animals use rollicking nonsense words to amusingly bring the farm to life.

Feathers: Not Just for Flying. By Melissa Stewart. Illus. by Sarah S. Brannen. Charlesbridge. Feathers fulfill a number of different purposes. Lovely watercolor paintings illustrate a variety of birds and the many roles their feathers play.

Firebird. By Misty Copeland. Illus. by Christopher Myers. Penguin/G.P. Putnam's. Famed ballerina Misty Copeland encourages a young African-American girl to follow her dreams to be a prima ballerina in this poetic text vividly illustrated with evocative collages.

Firefly July: A Year of Very Short Poems. Selected by Paul B. Janeczko. Illus. by Melissa Sweet. Candlewick. The four seasons are explored in short poems from both famed and newer poets and enhanced by Sweet's exquisite illustrations.

Flashlight. By Lizi Boyd. Illus. by the author. Chronicle. In mostly black and white illustrations, a young child with a flashlight discovers many of the mysteries and joys of the night, then suddenly the tables are turned. Cut outs add to the fun of this highly imaginative book.

Fox's Garden. By Princesse Camcam. Illus. by the author. Enchanted Lion Books. A young boy's kindness to a fox and how that fox repays him are at the heart of this wordless book. Cut paper images in subtle tones bring warmth to a cold winter night.

Froodle. By Antoinette Portis. Illus. by the author. Roaring Brook/Neal Porter. Brown Bird is tired of his song so he makes up new words. The other animals follow suit and the neighborhood is never the same.

Gaston. By Kelly DiPucchio. Illus. by Christian Robinson. Simon & Schuster/Atheneum. Gaston looks and acts different from his poodle sisters and a brief encounter in the park reveals the reason why. A lively and rhyming text is emphasized by the stylish illustrations.

Green Is a Chile Pepper. By Roseanne Greenfield Thong. Illus. by John Parra. Chronicle. This lively color-concept book presents a slice of Latino culture through food and fun. Vibrant folk art perfectly complements the text. (2015 Belpré Illustrator Honor Book)

Handle with Care: An Unusual Butterfly Journey, By Loree Griffin Burns. Photographs by Ellen Harasimowicz. Millbrook/Lerner. In this handsome book with glorious photographs, children can follow the life cycle of a butterfly from a farm in Costa Rica to a live museum exhibit in the U. S.

Have You Seen My Dragon? By Steve Light. Illus. by the author. Candlewick. Join a little boy on a journey through the city in search of his dragon. Against a black-and-white background, colorful icons of city life help him on his adventure.

Hi, Koo!: A Year of Seasons. By Jon J. Muth. Illus. by the author. Scholastic. An exuberant journey through the alphabet with panda bear, Koo. This investigates the seasons through watercolor illustrations and haiku poems.

The Iridescence of Birds: A Book about Henri Matisse. By Patricia MacLachlan. Illus. by Hadley Hooper. Roaring Brook/Neal Porter. Using only two evocative sentences, MacLachlan's gentle and engaging portrait supports Hooper's stunning visual homage to the boy who would become a famous painter.

Little Melba and Her Big Trombone. By Katheryn Russell-Brown. Illus. by Frank Morrison. Lee & Low. A little known story of a self-taught prodigy and world-class trombone player, composer, and arranger whose music mirrors the black musical sounds of the 20th century.

Little Roja Riding Hood. By Susan Middleton Elya. Illus. by Susan Guevara. Penguin/G.P. Putnam's Sons. This spin on the classic fairy tale provides glimpses into a contemporary Hispanic family. Guevara's illustrations are a visual treat full of suspense and humor. (2015 Belpré Illustrator Honor Book)

Mama Built a Little Nest. By Jennifer Ward. Illus. by Steve Jenkins. Simon & Schuster/Beach Lane. Lively couplets describe birds and the nests they build for their young, while beautiful cut-paper collages are a feast for children's natural curiosity.

The Most Magnificent Thing. By Ashley Spires. Illus. by the author. Kids Can. A little girl, with the help of her dog, tries to build a magnificent thing. But it is harder than expected! See how her persistence pays off.

Mr. Putter & Tabby Turn the Page. By Cynthia Rylant. Illus. by Arthur Howard. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Mr. Putter and his cat Tabby are excited to participate in a library read-aloud program, but they are nervous when Mrs. Teaberry and her unpredictable dog Zeke want to join. (2015 Geisel Honor Book)

My Teacher is a Monster! (No, I am Not). By Peter Brown. Illus. by the author. Little, Brown. Bobby thinks his teacher is the worst...that is until he accidentally meets her in the park. This hilarious book will tickle the funny bones of children (and their monstrous teachers).

Nana in the City. By Lauren Castillo. Illus. by the author. Clarion. The story of a young boy's visit to his grandmother, and the reassuring way she helps him to lose his fear and experience the loud, busy city in a new way. (2015 Caldecott Honor Book)

Naptime. By Iris De Moüy. Illus. by the author. Tr. by Shelley Tanaka. Groundwood/House of Anansi. When naptime arrives on the Savannah, a little girl knows just how to get all the grumpy

animals to go to sleep. Colorful images, and the use of bold and black outlines help animals stand out on each page.

The Noisy Paint Box: The Colors and Sounds of Kandinsky's Abstract Art. By Barb Rosenstock, Illus. by Mary Grandpré. Knopf/Random House. The story of abstract artist Vasily Kandinsky, who experienced colors as sounds and sounds as colors and created work that was bold and groundbreaking. (2015 Caldecott Honor Book)

The Pigeon Needs a Bath! By Mo Willems. Illus. by the author. Disney-Hyperion. Pigeon returns--this time he needs a bath but has other things to do. When he is finally convinced, he won't get out of the tub. It's a pleasure to join pigeon in another of his wild adventures.

Queen Victoria's Bathing Machine. By Gloria Whelan. Illus. by Nancy Carpenter, Simon & Schuster. A playful rhyming text brings us to Victorian times and a queen who cannot be seen by her subjects when partaking of such an indelicate activity as swimming. Amusing illustrations partner well with the tone of the book.

Sam and Dave Dig a Hole. By Mac Barnett. Illus. by Jon Klassen. Candlewick. Two boys, accompanied by their dog, set out to dig a hole. Readers will find an unexpected treasure and be challenged to ponder the meaning of "spectacular." (2015 Caldecott Honor Book)

Shh! We Have a Plan. By Chris Haughton. Illus. by the author. Candlewick. Four friends creep through the woods on a search for prey. Vibrant illustrations help tell the story of how even carefully laid plans can go awry.

Star Stuff: Carl Sagan and the Mysteries of the Cosmos. By Stephanie Roth Sisson. Illus. by the author. Roaring Brook. The simple text describes how Sagan's childhood curiosity and persistence eventually lead to his involvement in the Voyager mission. Lively images and design reflect this notable life.

Tap Tap Boom Boom. By Elizabeth Bluemle. Illus. by G. Brian Karas. Candlewick. When a spring storm pops up in New York City, lots of people seek refuge in the subway station. Dogs, children and adults young and old enjoy a brief moment of community that ends with a surprise in the sky.

Telephone. By Mac Barnett. Illus. by Jen Corace. Chronicle. Clever page turns, hilarious details, and delightful wordplay abound in the bird world's version of the classic game of telephone. Colorful illustrations give each bird's personality its due.

Tiny Creatures: The World of Microbes. By Nicola Davies, Illus. by Emily Sutton. Candlewick. This straightforward narrative introduces young readers to microbes through simple descriptions, colorful examples, and concise writing. Watercolor images illustrate the examples and create a nostalgic feel.

Viva Frida. By Yuyi Morales. Illus. by the author. Roaring Brook/Neal Porter. Vibrant photographs and minimal, evocative text beautifully portray the unique imagination and creativity of iconic artist Frida Kahlo. (2015 Belpré Illustrator Medal Book & Caldecott Honor Book)

Waiting Is Not Easy! By Mo Willems. Illus. by the author. Disney-Hyperion. Piggie has a big surprise for Gerald, but does he have the patience to wait? As the day wears on, Piggie remains calm while Gerald experiences a roller coaster of emotions, anticipating his reward. As night falls, their patience pays off with a breathtaking conclusion. (2015 Geisel Honor Book)

Water Rolls, Water Rises: El agua rueda, el agua sube. By Pat Mora. Illus. by Meilo So. Tr. by Adriana Domínguez & Pat Mora. Lee & Low/Children's Book Press. In a series of short poems (in English and Spanish) partnered with dramatic illustrations, the power, beauty, and value of water are celebrated.

Weeds Find a Way. By Cindy Jenson-Elliott. Illus. by Carolyn Fisher. Simon & Schuster/Beach Lane. These often overlooked plants take center stage in this touching tribute to weeds. Jenson-Elliott highlights weeds' resilience with a catchy text full of attention. Fisher uses mixed media and digital collage to create bold, vibrant illustrations.

Winter Bees & Other Poems of the Cold. By Joyce Sidman. Illus. by Rick Allen. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. A collection of 12 poems about northern tundra wildlife uses a variety of poetic structures and includes additional information on each creature. Vivid linoleum-cut illustrations.

Work, An Occupational ABC. By Kellen Hatanaka. Illus. by the author. House of Anansi/Groundwood. This visually appealing look at some unusual careers opens readers eyes to possibilities for their futures.

You Are (Not) Small. By Anna Kang. Illus. by Christopher Weyant. Two Lions. A heated debate quickly ensues when two furry creatures can't agree on who is big and who is small. Expressive illustrations and cleverly simple text come together to provide a humorous tale with an unexpected and satisfying conclusion. (2015 Geisel Medal Book)

Middle Readers

Absolutely Almost. By Lisa Graff. Penguin/Philomel. In this relatable tale, fifth grader Albie is not very good at a lot of things, but with a little help from a new babysitter, he finds out that being himself is the most important thing.

Arcady's Goal. By Eugene Yelchin. Illus. by the author. Holt. Arcady longs to play for the Red Army Soccer Club. Many obstacles interfere with attaining his goal because his family is considered enemies of the state.

Angel Island: Gateway to Gold Mountain. By Russell Freedman. Illus. Chinese poems Tr. by Evans Chan. Clarion. More than half a million people from 80 countries arrived at Angel Island California between 1910 and 1940. Freedman tells their stories in this well documented and handsomely illustrated book that illuminates a little known piece of history.

Before After. By Anne-Margot Ramstein & Matthias Arégui. Illus. by the authors. Candlewick. A clever wordless picture book that challenges the reader to figure out connections. Each reading reveals something new and different.

Brown Girl Dreaming. By Jacqueline Woodson. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen. Woodson's lyrical memoir chronicles her life as an African-American girl growing up in the 1960s and 1970s. Elegant and evocative stand-alone poems weave a story of her development from a struggling reader and dreamer into a confident young woman and writer. (2015 Newbery Honor Book & Sibert Honor Book)

The Boundless. By Kenneth Oppel. Simon & Schuster. Suspense and adventure race alongside Will through the Canadian wilderness on the Boundless, the largest and fastest train ever built. Middle-grade steampunk filled with intrigue.

The Case of the Vanishing Little Brown Bats: A Scientific Mystery. By Sandra Markle. Illus. Millbrook. Follow the scientific method as a group of researchers notice something wrong with the little brown bat population and search for a way to save them. Stunning photographs make the discovery even more fascinating.

Chasing Cheetahs: The Race to Save Africa's Fastest Cats. By Sy Montgomery. Photographs by Nic Bishop. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Montgomery and Bishop join the Cheetah Conservation Fund in the African wilderness, studying the cheetah's ecological, genetic, and behavioral patterns in order to chase down the fastest animal in the world.

Dare the Wind: The Record-Breaking Voyage of Eleanor Prentiss and the Flying Cloud. By Tracey Fern. Illus. by Emily Arnold McCully. Farrar/Margaret Ferguson. A thrilling, true story of a clipper ship race from New York to San Francisco navigated by Eleanor Prentiss, the first woman to make the journey.

El Deafo. By Cece Bell. Color by David Lasky. Abrams/Amulet. In this insightful and humorous graphic novel memoir, Bell portrays growing up with a giant hearing aid strapped to her chest. Themes of navigating a new school, sleepovers, finding a true friend, and a first crush make this book universal in appeal. (2015 Newbery Honor Book)

Eye to Eye: How Animals See the World. By Steve Jenkins. Illus. by the author. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. With a mixture of extraordinary artistry and jaw-dropping creativity, Jenkins has produced a colorful, large-format volume crafted with vivid, cut-paper collages that provide amazing details about the eyes of animals from bullfrogs to buzzards.

The Fourteenth Goldfish. By Jennifer L. Holm. Random House. With humor and a light tone, eleven-year-old Ellie deals with serious issues related to family relationships, friendships, the cycle of life, and life's possibilities. A great introduction to science fiction.

Freedom Summer: The 1964 Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi. By Susan Goldman Rubin. Illus. Holiday. A well-researched and beautifully written explanation of the attempts to enfranchise

Mississippi blacks. Rubin writes about the murder of three young civil rights workers with a superb sense of suspense and dread.

The Great Greene Heist. By Varian Johnson. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine. Reformed schemer and middle schooler Jackson Greene comes out of retirement, assembling a top-notch team to pull off Maplewood Middle School's biggest con ever in a fast-paced caper.

Half a Chance. By Cynthia Lord. Scholastic. A young girl struggles to determine her place when her family moves to a new community. An authentic story of friendship, loss, and self-identity told through the lens of her interest in photography.

Harlem Hellfighters. By J. Patrick Lewis. Illus. by Gary Kelley. Creative Editions. Poetic vignettes depict the dramatic story of a band of African-American soldiers--who are also jazz musicians--during World War I.

Hello, I'm Johnny Cash. By G. Neri. Illus. by A. G. Ford. Candlewick. This brief overview of Johnny Cash's early life takes him from his harsh but music-filled boyhood to early stardom. Told through intriguing poetry and beautifully expressive illustrations.

Hidden: A Child's Story of the Holocaust. By Loïc Dauvillier. Illus. by Marc Lizano. Color by Greg Salsedo. Tr. by Alexis Siegel. First Second. In this evocative graphic novel, a grandmother recounts her childhood experiences hiding from the Nazis in World War II France. (2015 Batchelder Honor Book)

Hope Is a Ferris Wheel. By Robin Herrera. Abrams/Amulet. Fifth grader Star tries to fit in but seems to be failing miserably. To connect with classmates that only seem to care about her trailer-park home, she starts a poetry club. An insightful look at the process of self-discovery.

I Lived on Butterfly Hill. By Marjorie Agosín. Illus. by Lee White. Simon & Schuster/Atheneum. When warships appear and neighbors and friends begin to disappear, 11-year-old Celeste's idyllic life is shattered. She is sent into exile and when she returns home, she works to move her country forward. This Chilean story offers a refreshing perspective on resiliency. (2015 Belpré Medal Book)

Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker. By Patricia Hruby Powell. Illus. by Christian Robinson. Chronicle. A dynamic dance of beautifully written verse and lively illustrations describe the life of the effervescent entertainer Josephine Baker. (2015 Sibert Honor Book)

Kinda Like Brothers. By Coe Booth. Scholastic. Eleven-year-old Jarrett learns the value of friendship when an expected foster baby comes to stay, along with an unexpected big brother.

Lowriders in Space. By Cathy Camper. Illus. by Raúl the Third. Chronicle. Lupe, Flapjack, and Elirio enter a car-detailing contest to fulfill their dream of owning their own garage. This graphic novel celebrates Mexican-American culture and takes readers on a road trip through outer space.

The Luck Uglies. By Paul Durham. Illus. by Pétur Antonsson. HarperCollins. When wicked Bog Noblins threaten her village, Rye turns to a mysterious stranger and the notorious Luck Uglies for help, ending up more involved than she imagined. A fast-paced fantasy.

Mikis and the Donkey. By Bibi Dumon Tak. Illus. by Philip Hopman. Tr. by Laura Watkinson. Eerdmans. Mikis' simple, quiet life on the Greek island of Corfu is upended when his grandfather surprises him by buying a donkey. Mikis' adventures with the donkey show the village what it means to care for one another. (2015 Batchelder Award)

The Misadventures of the Family Fletcher. By Dana Alison Levy. Random House/ Delacorte.

The Fletcher family, with 2 dads, 4 boys, a dog, cat, and invisible cheetah, is always full of adventure. As the school year unfolds, they face many challenges with love and humor.

A Moose Boosh: A Few Choice Words about Food. By Eric-Shabazz Larkin. Readers to Eaters. Readers and eaters are taken on a comical romp through the world of food using poetry and a visual feast of photographs enhanced with playful doodles.

Mysterious Patterns: Finding Fractals in Nature. By Sarah C. Campbell. Photographs by the author and Richard P. Campbell. Boyds Mills. Found everywhere in nature, fractals are shapes that are not perfect but change in the same way over and over. Photographs show where these marvels can be found and clear language will engage readers to be more observant and see the correlation between nature and math.

Neighborhood Sharks: Hunting with the Great Whites of California's Farallon Islands. By Katherine Roy. Illus. by the author. Roaring Brook/David Macaulay. With vivid paintings and clear, accessible text, Roy creates a heart-stopping look at what great white sharks do best—hunt for their next meal. (2015 Sibert Honor Book)

Nest. By Esther Ehrlich. Random House/Wendy Lamb. Chirp's safe, secure home life changes when her mother is diagnosed with a serious disease. As her family works to pick up the pieces, Chirp learns just how much love and friendship can overcome. An emotional story.

Once Upon an Alphabet. By Oliver Jeffers. Illus. by the author. Penguin/Philomel. A creative, fresh take on the alphabet book! Jeffers tells a short story for each letter, giving each one its due glory. Full of humor and whimsy. Complete with distinctive illustrations that are one of a kind.

Rain Reign. By Ann M. Martin. Feiwel and Friends/Macmillan. Rose's obsession with homophones and rules distinguishes her from most other fifth graders, but also provides insights into the world of a child challenged by Asperger's Syndrome. When Rain, Rose's beloved dog, goes missing, readers will be moved by the decisions she makes to find and care for her pet.

The Red Pencil. By Andrea Davis Pinkney. Illus. by Shane W. Evans. Little, Brown. In spite of the limited expectations for the girls in her village, Amira wants to learn and will not be stopped. Told in verse capturing the desperation of the people living in the middle of the Darfur conflict in Sudan.

Separate Is Never Equal: Sylvia Mendez & Her Family's Fight for Desegregation. By Duncan Tonatiuh. Illus. by the author. Abrams. Tonatiuh draws upon traditional Mixtec codex art to tell the story of 11-year-old Sylvia Mendez, who helped end school segregation in California seven years before *Brown v. Board of Education*. (2015 Belpré Illustrator Honor Book & Sibert Honor Book)

Sisters. By Raina Telgemeier. Illus. by the author. Scholastic/Graphix. A family car trip highlights the tensions between two sisters, the cause of which is explored through flashback sequences in this comedic graphic novel.

A Snicker of Magic. By Natalie Lloyd. Scholastic. Felicity Pickle, a word collector and poet, hopes Midnight Gulch, Tennessee proves to be a permanent home for her wandering family. She uses her words to restore the town's magic in an endearing story of community.

Three Bird Summer. By Sara St. Antoine. Candlewick. Adam and his new friend spend the summer in the quiet setting of Three Bird Lake, solving the mystery of notes left by his grandmother to a romance of long ago. Gentle and heartfelt.

The Turtle of Oman. By Naomi Shihab Nye. HarperCollins/Greenwillow. Aref is unhappy about leaving Oman to journey to Michigan where his parents will study for three years. In his final days he shares many new experiences with his beloved grandfather, Sidi, and some quiet moments too.

Under the Egg. By Laura Marx Fitzgerald. Penguin/Dial. Theodora must figure out the puzzle of a painting bequeathed to her by her dying grandfather and enlists her neighbors for help. A fun middle grade mystery.

West of the Moon. By Margi Preus. Abrams/Amulet. Folklore and history blend together seamlessly in this mystical story of strong-willed Astri's escape from poverty in Norway to a new life in America.

The Whispering Town. By Jennifer Elvgren. Illus. by Fabio Santomauro. Kar-Ben. During WWII, a Danish family and their village help hide a Jewish family from the Nazis until they can safely escape. The artwork's graphic-novel quality enhances the story.

The Witch's Boy. By Kelly Barnhill. Algonquin/Workman. Follow the adventures of new friends Ned and Aine in this imaginative tale of tricky magic. A complex journey about finding your voice.

Older Readers

Because They Marched: The People's Campaign for Voting Rights That Changed America. By Russell Freedman. Illus. Holiday. The fiftieth anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights March in Alabama is brought back to life in a detailed and moving account of this pivotal event in Civil Rights history.

Caminar. By Skila Brown. Candlewick. During the Guatemalan Civil War, Carlos embarks on a solitary journey. A difficult coming-of-age story told through lyric, emotionally-charged poems.

The Crossover. By Kwame Alexander. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Twelve-year-old narrator Josh uses the rhythms of a poetry jam to emulate the "moving & grooving/popping and rocking" of life on the basketball court. This novel in verse paints an authentic portrait of a closely-knit family on the brink of crisis. (2015 Newbery Medal Book)

The Family Romanov: Murder, Rebellion & the Fall of Imperial Russia. By Candace Fleming. Illus. Schwartz & Wade/Random House. Fleming brilliantly delineates the tragic fall of the Russian royal family, contrasting their opulent lives with primary source voices from the rebellion. (2015 Sibert Honor Book)

How I Discovered Poetry. By Marilyn Nelson. Illus. by Hadley Hooper. Penguin/Dial. Marilyn Nelson powerfully captures glimpses of her life growing up in a military family in the 1950s.

The Night Gardener. By Jonathan Auxier. Abrams/Amulet. As two abandoned siblings try to find their way in Victorian England, they discover the value of storytelling as well as the dark side of greed. A spine-tingling tale.

Nine Open Arms. By Benny Lindelauf. Illus. by Dasha Tolstikova, Tr. by John Nieuwenhuizen. Enchanted Lion. Fing's loving but fractious family moves into a new house outside of town and gradually discovers a "tragical tragedy" concerning the mysterious man living in the hedge. (2015 Batchelder Honor Book)

The Port Chicago 50: Disaster, Mutiny, and the Fight for Civil Rights. By Steve Sheinkin. Illus. Roaring Brook. The bravery of African-American sailors who refused to work in unsafe conditions is recounted in this little known and dramatic World War II story. Their heroism helped desegregate the Navy but not without great sacrifice for the 50 men.

Portraits of Hispanic American Heroes. By Juan Felipe Herrera. Illus. by Raúl Colón. Penguin/Dial. The lives of 20 Hispanic people are celebrated in poignant biographical sketches that succinctly present the essence of each hero's life and legacy to future generations. (2015 Belpré Author Honor Book)

Revolution: The Sixties Trilogy, Book Two. By Deborah Wiles. Scholastic. The summer of 1964 was known as "Freedom Summer," as civil rights workers, students, and organizers went to Mississippi to help register African-American voters. Twelve-year-old Sunny of Greenwood, Mississippi is caught up in the frightening events between black and white Americans, choosing sides and standing up for themselves. Photographs and memorabilia enhance an understanding of the tumultuous period.

This One Summer. By Mariko Tamaki. Illus. by Jillian Tamaki. First Second. Intricately detailed illustrations and text come together masterfully in this graphic novel. Pacing and strong imagery evoke myriad emotions and ground this poignant, realistic coming-of-age story. (2015 Caldecott Honor Book)

A Time to Dance. By Padma Venkatraman. Penguin/Nancy Paulsen. An emotional novel-in-verse about a young Indian dancer disabled in a freak car accident. With hard work, she adapts to dancing with a prosthesis.

All Ages

The Right Word: Roget and His Thesaurus. By Jen Bryant. Illus. by Melissa Sweet. Eerdmans. With lovely storytelling and intricate illustrations, this picture book biography introduces readers to Peter Mark Roget, whose boyhood passion for list making and finding the right word for every situation, led him to create his “treasure house” of a book, the thesaurus. (2015 Sibert Medal Book & Caldecott Honor Book)

The Scraps Book: Notes from a Colorful Life. By Lois Ehlert. Illus. by the author. Simon & Schuster/Beach Lane. This is a fascinating look into the creative process. Author/illustrator Lois Ehlert shares her story using numerous examples from her picture books as she encourages others to engage in a colorful life.

Take Away the A: An Alphabeast of a Book! By Michaël Escoffier. Illus. by Kris DiGiacomo. Enchanted Lion. Ingenious and fun images introduce the letters of the alphabet by removing one letter at a time to make new words. This clever word-within-a-word alphabetical approach is useful and hilarious. The illustrations add whimsy to the wordplay and language building.

Young Adults

The Carnival at Bray. By Jessie Ann Foley. Elephant Rock. Maggie has only recently moved to Ireland when tragedy strikes and her goal becomes seeing Nirvana perform in Rome.

The Crossover. By Kwame Alexander. Houghton. Josh, aka Filthy, is a twin, a talented basketball star, and a son who adores his father but discovers parents are not infallible.

The Gospel of Winter. By Brendan Kiely. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry. As Aidan’s family disintegrates, he turns to Father Greg for love and comfort, an act that transforms into something dark and unexpected.

I’ll Give You the Sun. By Jandy Nelson. Dial. Artistically gifted twins, Jude and Noah, tell their compelling family story in rich alternating voices.

Jackaby. By William Ritter. Algonquin. Answering an odd help-wanted ad that cautions “Do not stare at the frog,” Abigail finds that her life is about to change in ways she couldn’t have imagined.

Noggin. By John Corey Whaley. Atheneum. Travis Coates has lost his head—literally. Dying of leukemia, he has had his noggin surgically removed and cryogenically frozen. But when he's revived, all is not the same as it once was.

The Story of Owen: Dragon Slayer of Trondheim. By E. K. Johnston. Carolrhoda/Lab. Dragons live everywhere and they're threatening to exterminate a Canadian town unless dragon slayer Owen, and his bard Siobhan, come up with a plan to save them all.

Vango. By Timothee de Fombelle. Candlewick. Moments before his ordination as a priest, 19-year-old Vango, falsely accused of murder, must flee for his life.

We Were Liars. By E. Lockhart. Delacorte. Suffering from serious injuries, Cadence doesn't remember much from the summer of her fifteenth year on Beechwood Island. Two years later, she returns to try to fill in the gaps.

The Young Elites. By Marie Lu. Putnam. An intense fantasy about Adelina, an outsider girl who is rescued by the legendary Reaper, the leader of the Young Elites. But can Adelina keep her friends and sister safe?