

## A Few of My Favorite Books

An Annotated Bibliography Created by Laura Patton

### A word about Lexiles...

The Lexile® Framework for Reading is a scientific approach to measuring both the ability of a reader and the difficulty of a particular text using the same scale, called the Lexile scale. The Lexile scale ranges from 200L for beginning readers to above 1700L for advanced text. A large number of academic and popular texts have now been evaluated using the Lexile scale. Therefore, once you know your Lexile Range, you can more easily choose books that are appropriately challenging for your current reading ability.

Before you can use the Lexile Framework effectively, you will need to know your Lexile range. Many Johnson County public schools use a standardized test called the MAP – Measures of Academic Progress. The reading test on the MAP reports scores several ways; one of these is a Lexile range of 150 points. Ask your teacher, counselor, or school administrator for the Lexile range on your two most recent MAP tests. Use whichever range is the highest.

To determine the Lexile score of a book, go to [www.lexile.com](http://www.lexile.com). In the upper right-hand corner you may type in the title or author of a book in the “Quick Book Search” box. There is also a place in that box to click on “Advanced Search.” You might try clicking on “Lexile Tools” in the blue band; then, click on “Find a Book.” From this page, you may search for books by title, author, or by Lexile range and keyword. This is a powerful tool that you can use to help yourself find books that you might enjoy reading. Be sure to try the “World Cat” feature to see if the books you find are available in a nearby library. There is a lot of information about Lexiles and how to use them on this website; I encourage you to explore.

### Literature Awards Mentioned On This List:

- The Newbery Medal was named for eighteenth-century British bookseller John Newbery. It is awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children.
- The Caldecott Medal was named in honor of nineteenth-century English illustrator Randolph Caldecott. It is awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, to the artist of the most distinguished American picture book for children.
- The Michael L. Printz Award is an award for a book that exemplifies literary excellence in young adult literature. It is named for a Topeka, Kansas school librarian who was a long-time active member of the Young Adult Library Services Association.
- Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award, established by the Association for Library Service to Children in 2001 with support from Bound to Stay Bound Books, Inc., is awarded annually to the author(s) and illustrator(s) of the most distinguished informational book published in English during the preceding year. The award is named in honor of Robert F. Sibert, the long-time President of Bound to Stay Bound Books, Inc. of Jacksonville, Illinois. ALSC administers the award.
- Given to African American authors and illustrator for outstanding inspirational and educational contributions, the Coretta Scott King Book Award titles promote understanding and appreciation of the culture of all peoples and their contribution to the realization of the American dream. The award is designed to commemorate the life and works of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and to honor Mrs. Coretta Scott King for her courage and determination to continue the work for peace and world brotherhood.

- The Pura Belpré Award, established in 1996, is presented to a Latino/Latina writer and illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms, and celebrates the Latino cultural experience in an outstanding work of literature for children and youth.

A key to the codes I will use...

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1 = Author's Name

2= Title of the Book

3= Fiction (F) or Non-Fiction (NF) or Poetry (P)

4= Lexile score of the book if available.

5= The code "JCL" means that the book is available at the Johnson Co. Library

Abercrombie, Barbara	Charlie Anderson	F	480L	JCL
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This is a delightful illustrated book about two sisters who adopt a cat with mysterious habits. The morning after their cat, Charlie, goes missing for a whole night, Elizabeth and Sarah look for him and make an amazing discovery. This book has a nice message for children whose parents live in different homes. It is also a wonderful book for teaching children to make connections, ask questions, and draw inferences. Recommended for elementary.

Adler, David A.	A Hero and the Holocaust: The Story of Janusz Korczak and His Children	NF	---	JCL
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I completed a research project about Janusz Korczak for a graduate course about ten years ago. Adler's book was published after my project was completed, so of course it caught my eye. I love this illustrated book because it makes Korczak's story accessible for elementary and middle school kids. Korczak was a Polish Jew. He was a doctor who was famous all around Poland because he had a radio program which gave child-care and medical advice. He wrote books for children. He also directed an orphanage for Jewish children in Warsaw. When the Nazis invaded Poland, forced the Jews into ghettos, and ultimately deported them to death camps, Korczak had offers of rescue from his Christian friends. He refused them. Today there are stones on the site of the Treblinka death camp that represent the entire villages of people who were murdered there. Only one bears the name of a single person; it is a stone dedicated to Korczak and his children. Read this book. Recommended for middle school and older.

Alexie, Sherman	The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian	F	600L	JCL
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Based on the experiences of the author, this novel is about a Spokane Indian teen named Arnold Spirit. When Arnold decides to attend high school in the "white" town twenty-two miles away, he not only has to deal with racism and making friends at his new school, he is shunned by the Indians on the reservation. Arnold's diary is illustrated with his cartoons and filled with humor and wisdom – teenage boy style. In the words of Erica Kurta, the library aide at my school, "This book has everything." Winner of the 2007 National Book Award for Young People's Literature. Recommended for very mature middle school students; excellent for high school students.

Avi	Crispin: The Cross of Lead	F	780L	JCL
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This story is set in 14<sup>th</sup> century medieval England. The main character is a boy who is so insignificant, he does not even have a name; he is simply known as “Asta’s son.” Within the first nine pages of the novel, his mother dies and he learns that men are trying to kill him. But why? How could he possibly be important enough to murder? The boy must solve the mystery of his own identity while he flees from those who wish to harm him. This is a thriller! Winner of the Newbery Medal. There is now a sequel titled, *Crispin: At the Edge of the World*.

Bartoletti, Susan Campbell	The Boy Who Dared: A Novel Based on the True Story of a Hitler Youth	F	760L	JCL
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When Bartoletti was doing research for her award-winning non-fiction book, *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler’s Shadow*, she came across Helmuth Hübener’s amazing story. Hubener was convicted of treason against the Nazi government and executed at age 17. This novel is meticulously-researched historical fiction. Gripping; I couldn’t put it down. Recommended for 8<sup>th</sup> grade and older.

Brashares, Ann	The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants	F	600L	JCL
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Four childhood friends – Lena, Tibby, Bridget, and Carmen – are about to spend their first summer apart from each other. One magical pair of blue jeans keeps them connected. This novel is about the very best kind of friendship girls can have. I’ve recommended this book to several of my women friends who loved it as much as my students have. There are now four books in the “Sisterhood” saga (See below.) Recommended for mature middle school students and older.

Brashares, Ann	The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants	F	600L	JCL
	The Second Summer of the Sisterhood		610L	
	Girls in Pants		670L	
	Forever in Blue		640L	

During the summer of 2008, I read the whole series end-to-end. The four teens in these books get themselves into the sorts of situations that teenaged girls have to face in the real world. (Moms, you might want to read along with your daughters; there are good discussion starters in these books!) What holds Tibby, Carmen, Lena, and Bridget together through thick and thin is each other; these girls have the very best kind of friendship. I enjoyed the time I spent with them!

Bretholz, Leo with Michael Olesker	Leap Into Darkness: Seven Years On the Run in Wartime Europe	NF	---	JCL
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Leo Bretholz was a Jewish teenager living in Vienna when the Nazis annexed Austria in 1938. Not long afterward, his mother insisted that he leave home because she feared for his fate under Hitler’s rule. Little did she know that most of Europe who soon become a death trap for Jews. Leo spent the years of the WW II living in Jewish transit camps, hiding in attics, and literally running for his life. This memoir is as action-packed as suspense novel. Leo Bretholz visited Kansas City in 2000. One of my students accepted my offer of extra credit and went to hear Leo speak at the Johnson County Public Library. He read Leo’s book afterward and loved it. Recommended for 8<sup>th</sup> grade and older.

Buller, Beverly Olson	From Emporia: The Story of William Allen White	NF	---	---
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As a language arts teacher, I heard about the William Allen White Children's Book Award shortly after I moved to Kansas. However, I didn't know much about White or why the book award was named for him. This biography, published last year by Kansas City Star Books, is a fascinating read. Kansans should know about this man! The book has tons of illustrations. Since reading this book, I've put a day-trip to White's Emporia home on my summer "to-do" list. Recommended for middle school and up.

Bunting, Eve	A Day's Work	F	350L	JCL
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A grandfather and grandson accept a day labor job with a landscaping company. When things go awry, the grandson learns valuable lessons from his grandfather about honesty and integrity. A great book for teaching readers to infer. Recommended for elementary and middle school.

Bunting, Eve	Fly Away Home	F	450L	JCL
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Tough times have forced a boy and his father to live in the airport. An excellent book for practicing questioning and inference skills. A powerful look at homelessness. Recommended for elementary and middle school.

Bunting, Eve	Gleam and Glow	F	450L	JCL
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Viktor, his sister, and his mother must leave their home to escape a war that is approaching their home. Viktor is worried about the many things that lie ahead of him on the road (both figuratively and literally) that he and the other refugees are walking along. He is also worried about the things he left behind – especially his pet fish which he released into a pond before his departure. A moving story. Recommended for elementary and middle school.

Bunting, Eve	Going Home	F	480L	JCL
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Carlos and his family are going "home" to Mexico for Christmas. However, it doesn't seem like home to Carlos because he doesn't really remember it. To him, home is where his family lives in the United States. A powerful story about the meaning of home and why people would leave their homes to start a new life in a new country. Recommended for elementary and middle school.

Bunting, Eve	Your Move	F	230L	JCL
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Two young brothers, one ten and one six, often have to take care of themselves while their mom works. The older brother, James, is tempted to join a gang. Will he take the dare and go through with his initiation into the K-Bones? A look into the harsh reality and adult responsibilities many young kids face. Recommended for elementary and middle school.

Bunting, Eve	The Wall	F	AD270L	JCL
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*The Wall* is about a boy and his father who visits the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and find the name of the boy's grandfather on the wall. Both the prose and the artwork are haunting. You will feel like you are at the Wall yourself when you read this book. Recommended for elementary and middle school.

Chbosky, Stacy	Who Owns the Sun?	F	AD640L	JCL
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The author wrote and illustrated this book when she was fourteen years old. It is a powerful and poetic story of a young boy, his father, and a hard lesson learned about the injustice of slavery. Recommended for all ages.

Coerr, Eleanor	Sadako	F	AD500L	JCL
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This picture book is based upon the true story of Sadako Sasaki, a Japanese girl. At the age of twelve, ten years after Hiroshima was bombed, Sadako became ill with leukemia. Her friends and family work to fulfill a Japanese legend in order that her life might be spared. Beautiful illustrations by Ed Young. Recommended for elementary through middle school. See also *Shin's Tricycle* by Tatsuharu Kaodama.

Collins, Gail	When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women from 1960 to the Present	NF	---	JCL
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This book was well-written, fascinating, and ought to be required reading for any female above the tenth grade. It may be a testament to the work of the women that came before us that women have so much freedom now and can take so much for granted. However, it may not be wise to take so much for granted. What is the adage about people who don't know their history? I highly recommend this book.

Collins, Suzanne	The Hunger Games Catching Fire Mockingjay	F	810L 820L 800L	JCL
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It took a long time for me to get around to reading this trilogy. I found the premise offensive. When my church book club chose *Hunger Games* as one of its selections, one of the book club regulars asked me to read the book and attend the discussion. She said she wanted a middle school teacher's perspective on the novel. I was hooked and read all three books in short order. The books have a strong female protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, who demonstrates love, courage, and selflessness in the decisions she makes throughout the books. Katniss lives in a dystopian society called Panem, recognizable as the former United States. Each year the districts of Panem must send a boy and girl to the "Hunger Games" where they must fight each other to the death. A child will have the ability to read these books before s/he has the social-emotional maturity to read these books. I recommend them for 7<sup>th</sup> grade and older. Older students who have learned about totalitarian governments could make many connections between the books and historical events. These would be great books to read along and discuss with kids. (If you like these, try Veronica Roth's series; see below.)

Colman, Penny	Corpses, Coffins, and Crypts: A History of Burial	NF	1190L	JCL
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When I first start talking about this book with people, their initial reaction is "Ooo gross." I promise – Colman's treatment of this subject is not gross. She deals with death and burial practices in a matter-of-fact and dignified way, but that is not to say boring; the book is fascinating. Colman answers a lot of questions that kids and adults might be curious about but are afraid to ask. Lavishly illustrated with photographs. Includes a chapter about the gravesites of famous people and a chapter about epitaphs. Recommended for middle school and up.

Creech, Sharon	Love That Dog	F	1010L	JCL
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This is a great book for practicing inference; read it along with your kids. You will fall in love with Jack as he learns to not only appreciate the poetry he reads but learns to write his own poems. In the back, there is an appendix with the poems Jack refers to in his journal. This book is worth two reads. The first time you will need to discuss the poems and the inferences. The second time you can read it straight through in about half an hour. Recommended for 5<sup>th</sup> grade and up.

Crutcher, Chris	King of the Mild Frontier: An Ill-Advised Autobiography	NF	1180L	JCL
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Chris Crutcher has a wickedly self-deprecating sense of humor, and he doesn't spare himself anything in this autobiography. You may need Kleenex – for laughing so hard that you cry. There are also just a few moments when you might actually cry. Crutcher spent many years as a community mental health counselor; those experiences give him the motivation to write his novels for young adults. These books are frequently banned in schools. If you have concerns about Crutcher's novels, I urge you to read his autobiography; it would help you understand the perspective he brings to his novels. I recommend this book for mature middle-schoolers, high school students, and adults.

Crutcher, Chris	The Sledding Hill	F	1010L	JCL
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*The Sledding Hill* is fairly short, the paperback edition is only 230 pages, but Crutcher manages to pack an amazing amount into this gem. The story is about Eddie, a boy whose father and best friend, Billy, both die in the first chapter. Billy – the dead guy - is the narrator of the story. When Eddie starts high school, he is assigned a book in his literature class with which he makes a strong connection and finds comforting. However, the book runs afoul of the town's preacher, who also happens to be a teacher at the high school. Eddie finds himself in the middle of a full-force fight between those who do and do not want the book to be banned. The book deals with serious subjects, but Crutcher manages to work in plenty of his characteristic humor. This is not only a good novel, it is an important novel – one intended to get people talking. Recommended for middle school and older. This would be a great book for an adult to read WITH a kid.

DiCamillo, Kate	Because of Winn Dixie	F	610L	JCL
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Opal and her father, a preacher, move to a new town during the summer. Opal has no mother and no friends. A stray dog changes her life. I've taught this novel in my middle school classroom, and both boys and girls love it. Fabulous for teaching kids to make pictures in their minds (visualize) while they read. Recommended for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and older. I don't recommend the movie based on this book; it strays from the story in significant ways.

DiCamillo, Kate	The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane	F	700L	JCL
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The narrator of this story is Edward Tulane, a china rabbit. Edward is deeply loved by a girl named Abilene, but he is lost at sea on a voyage to England. Thus begins Edwards "miraculous" journey through the lives of an amazing number of people. I haven't stopped thinking about it since I read it two years ago; I want to know what happened to Bryce! My youngest son and I read this aloud together when he was in second grade; he loved it as much as I did. Recommended for all ages. Illustrated, including colored plates.

DiCamillo, Kate	The Tale of Despereaux	F	670L	JCL
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Despereaux is a mouse who falls in love with a princess. Just in case that sounds too "girly" for you, I taught an 8<sup>th</sup> grade boy last year who loved this book and read everything else DiCamillo has written thus far. Recommended for all ages. A wonderful book to read aloud to a younger child. Illustrated.

Dowell, Frances O’Roark	Dovey Coe	F	980L	JCL
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Usually all I have to do to sell this book to my student is read the first paragraph to them: “My name is Dovey Coe, and I reckon it don’t matter if you like me or not. I’m here to lay the record straight, to let you know them folks saying I done a terrible thing are liars. I aim to prove it, too. I hated Parnell Caraway as much as the next person, but I didn’t kill him.” So did Dovey kill Parnell or not? You’ll have to read the book to find out. An excellent example of voice in writing. Recommended for middle school and up.

Dowell, Frances O’Roark	Shooting the Moon	F	---	JCL
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Jamie Dexter is an army brat; she bleeds red, white, and blue. When her big brother joins the Army during the Vietnam War, Jamie can’t understand why her father, “the Colonel”, isn’t enthusiastic about TJ’s decision. TJ doesn’t send Jamie letters from the war; he sends her rolls of undeveloped film. As Jamie develops TJ’s photos, her feelings about the war begin to change. Recommended for middle school and up.

Fleischman, Paul	Seedfolks	F	710L	JCL
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Fleischman is a master at weaving together separate stories into one whole. He is like a quilter using scraps of left-over cloth to make a beautiful new design. In *Seedfolks*, he tells the stories of 13 individuals who live in a blighted area of inner-city Cleveland. These 13 people are different ages and have different ethnic backgrounds. They seem to have nothing at all in common. Their lives are transformed by a garden that begins when a young Vietnamese girl plants six lima bean seeds. Little by little, these people become connected to each other and create a community. This is a powerful 69-page gem. Recommended for middle school through adult.

Fleischman, Paul	Whirligig	F	760L	JCL
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Brent Bishop is the kind of kid you can see every day walking the halls of Johnson County’s high schools. He has all the “stuff” he could possibly want, but he is not particularly happy. He has just moved to a new school, and he desperately wants to fit in with the popular crowd. When he gets publicly snubbed by the girl of his dreams, he drinks too much and attempts to kill himself in a car crash. Brent doesn’t succeed in killing himself, but he does kill Lea, another teen who happens to be on the highway that night. Lea’s mother asks Brent to complete a task that will ease her pain and keep her daughter’s spirit alive. As Brent strives to complete this quest, he discovers himself along the way and fulfills his mission in ways that neither he nor Lea’s mother could have predicted. Once again, a brilliant novel that demonstrates Fleischman’s knack for showing how the actions of one person affect the whole. We are all connected in unexpected and unimagined ways. Recommended for 8<sup>th</sup> grade and older.

Follett, Ken	The Pillars of the Earth	F	---	JCL
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Three very different people in my life recommended this book to me. When I heard about it the third time, I took that as a message and went out and bought it. It is rather long; my paperback copy has 973 pages. Therefore, I waited until Winter Break to start it. One I began, I could not put it down. Follett weaves together the stories of several characters spanning the years 1123 through 1174 and focuses the action around construction of the cathedral at Kingsbridge. This novel of medieval England has everything you could want – kings and bishops, lords and ladies, murder, destruction, intrigue, war, love, lust, and a mystery to solve.

Freedman, Russell	The Voice That Challenged a Nation: Marion Anderson and the Struggle for	NF	1180L	JCL
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	Equal Rights			
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Marian Anderson did not set out to be a Civil Rights leader; she just wanted to be an opera singer. Her voice earned her access to the best concert halls throughout Europe. However, when she returned to the United States, she was denied the right to perform in Constitution Hall in Washington D.C. Freedman tells the story of this gracious woman who became a symbol for all African-American people who struggled to do the things that the Constitution was supposed to guarantee them the right to do. Winner of the Robert F. Sibert Medal. Recommended for middle school and older.

Friedrich, Elizabeth	Leah's Pony	F	580L	JCL
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When times were good, Leah's papa bought her a pony. Leah loves her pony – the finest pony in the whole county. But then the drought years of the “Dust Bowl” came and Leah's parents have to auction the farm – and everything on it - to pay their debt to the bank. Leah makes a tough decision to help her family. A great book for introducing kids to this period of history; be sure to read the author's note at the end. Recommended for 4<sup>th</sup> grade and older.

Fox, Mem	Tough Boris	F	190L	JCL
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Tough Boris is a pirate, and all pirates are tough. Or are they? A charming picture book with vivid adjectives. Recommended for pre-school through elementary.

Fox, Mem	Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge	F	AD760L	JCL
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A little boy with a long name helps an elderly woman search for her lost memory. Charming and bittersweet. Beautiful illustrations. Recommended for elementary.

Giblin, James Cross	The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler	NF	1100L	
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This is a complete and balanced biography of Adolf Hitler – from his childhood to his suicide. The final chapter deals with the Nuremberg trials and the rise of neo-Nazi groups in modern times. The book answers the questions that students always ask about Hitler whenever they study the Holocaust, but does not glamorize him in any way. Winner of the Robert F. Sibert Medal. Recommended for middle school and older.

Going, K.L.	The Liberation of Gabriel King	F	780L	JCL
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Gabriel King is afraid of going to 5<sup>th</sup> grade at the end of the summer. Gabriel King is afraid of a lot of things – 38 things in fact. Fortunately, Gabe's best friend is Frita Wilson, who is determined to liberate Gabe from his fears. This story takes place in Georgia in 1976 – a time and a place where racism is not quite dead. Racism becomes a central theme in the story because Gabe is white, and Frita is black. Many of the children's fears are things that make grown-ups afraid also. This book made me laugh out loud frequently, and it even caused me to get teary-eyed once. Recommended for 4<sup>th</sup> grade through adult.

Green, John	The Fault in Our Stars	F	850L	JCL
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This novel is about two teenagers who fall in love. Problem: Both Hazel and Augustus have cancer. Sounds tragic? Yep, it is. Are you gonna cry? Yep, you probably will; have tissue handy. That was the reason I didn't want to read the book when I first heard about it, but I am glad I did. John Green has managed to write a two-teens-who-have-cancer story that is funny, and smart, and not maudlin, and has an ending that I didn't expect. Recommended for eighth grade and over.

Golenbock, Peter	Teammates	NF	930L	JCL
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This book is about Jackie Robinson's integration of major league baseball. It is also about "Pee Wee" Reese, a fellow Dodger who supported Jackie in several important ways during his first season when many people were not happy that Jackie was playing for the team. For parents who want to talk with kids about the variety of ways a person can show courage, this book would be a great conversation starter. Recommended for elementary through middle school.

Grimes, Nikki	Bronx Masquerade	F	670L	JCL
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I love this book so much I have taught it in my classroom. My students love it too – even the reluctant readers. Eighteen students in a high school English class learn, by sharing their poems at "Open Mike Fridays," that maybe that aren't as different from each other as they first thought. Winner of the Coretta Scott King Award. Recommended for 8<sup>th</sup> grade and over.

Grimes, Nikki	Dark Sons	F	740L	JCL
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This novel weaves together the stories of two sons in alternating chapters. The first son is Ishmael, the Biblical son of Abraham and his slave woman. The second son is Sam, a modern teenager who has to cope with his father's departure from the family. These boys have more in common than you might think! This novel sent me running for my Bible to refresh my memory about the details of Abraham's story. This would be a great choice for a church youth group book club. Recommended for mature middle schoolers through adult.

Grimes, Nikki	My Man Blue	P	NP	JCL
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This is a great book for kids who are beginning to move beyond poems written specifically for children. Together the poems form a narrative about a young, African-American boy named Damon who finds a friend in a man named Blue. On the tough, inner-city streets where Damon lives, any kid could use a friend like Blue. Recommended for middle elementary and older.

Grimes, Nikki	The Road to Paris	F	700L	JCL
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Paris and her brother Malcolm have a mother who drinks too much and doesn't choose husbands well. Their first foster family abused them. Can Paris learn to trust her new foster family, the Lincolns? This novel is a Coretta Scott King Honor Winner. Recommended for 5<sup>th</sup> grade and up.

Hannigan, Katherine	Ida B	F	970L	JCL
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Ida B is a joyful, precocious girl who has been home-schooled by her loving parents. During her 4<sup>th</sup> grade year, the family faces a crisis that turns Ida B's world on end in several ways. Because her parents can't continue her education at home, Ida B is sent to school, and she is MAD about it. This novel addresses adult-size problems from a child's point-of-view with warmth, lots of humor, and searing honesty. This would be a great choice for a read-along or read-aloud. Recommended for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade through middle school and older people who like to laugh.

Henkes, Kevin	Chrysanthemum	F	460L	JCL
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Chrysanthemum is confident little girl until she starts school and the kids make fun of her name. Don't worry; Mrs. Twinkle comes to the rescue! Recommended for pre-school through early elementary.

Henkes, Kevin	Owen	F	370L	JCL
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What will Owen do? He takes his fuzzy yellow blanket EVERYWHERE. But the first day of school is approaching, and lots of people don't think that boys should take their blankets to school. A Caldecott Honor Book. Recommended for pre-school through early elementary.

Henkes, Kevin	Wemberly Worried	F	170L	JCL
Wemberly worries about everything – big things and small things. She especially worries about starting school. Will Wemberly survive her first day? Recommended for pre-school through early elementary.				
Hesse, Karen	Out of the Dust	P/F	NP	JCL
This book created a new genre; it is a novel told entirely in poems. There are now several young adult novels like this, but <i>Out of the Dust</i> was the first. Billie Jo, her father, and her mother are farmers struggling to survive the desperate Dust Bowl years on the Oklahoma panhandle. The story raises important questions: How do you regain hope after you've lost it? How can you forgive the people who have hurt you? How do you forgive yourself when you have done the hurting? There is a point in this novel where you might want to stop reading because the situation looks pretty desperate and depressing. Don't stop; you will miss the redemption if you quit. Winner of the Newbery Medal. Recommended for middle school through adult. Use Elizabeth Partridge's book <i>Restless Spirit</i> or Jerry Stanley's <i>Children of the Dust Bowl</i> (both reviewed below) to add background knowledge and visual images for readers who have not learned about the Dust Bowl yet.				
Hillenbrand, Laura	Seabiscuit	NF	990L	JCL
The first paragraph of Hillenbrand's preface reads as follows: "In 1938, near the end of a decade of monumental turmoil, the year's number-one newsmaker was not Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Hitler, or Mussolini. It wasn't Pope Pius XI, nor was it Lou Gehrig, Howard Hughes, or Clark Gable. The subject of the most newspaper column inches in 1938 wasn't even a person. It was an under-sized, crooked-legged racehorse named Seabiscuit." This book tells the story of that horse and the three men whose lives converged around him. Hillenbrand's research is meticulous, and her writing is so elegant and engaging. The racing scenes are so vivid that I felt I was Seabiscuit's jockey. Recommended for middle school readers and above.				
Hillenbrand, Laura	Unbroken	NF	---	JCL
This is Hillenbrand's second book. It is as thoroughly researched and beautifully written as the first. <i>Unbroken</i> tells the story of Louis Zamperini, a distance runner who competed in the Berlin Olympics. While he was training for the 1940 Tokyo Games, Pearl Harbor was bombed and the United States entered WWII. Louie entered the Army Air Corps and became a bombardier. While on a mission over the Pacific, his plane went down; Louie and two other surviving crewmates were presumed dead. <i>Unbroken</i> tells how Louie survived being lost at sea, captured by the Japanese, and how he coped with the post-traumatic stress of his imprisonment. The book is a testament to Louie's courage and serves as a memorial to the many soldiers and sailors who served with him but did not survive. Highly recommended for high school readers and above.				
Horowitz, Anthony	Stormbreaker	F	670L	JCL
I love James Bond movies. I love the British accent, the action, the gadgets, and the getting out of tight-spots-suspense. Alex Rider, the main character of this novel, is like a teenaged James Bond. In chapter one, his uncle – the man who has been his guardian since his parents died - is killed in a car accident. Alex discovers that it really wasn't a car accident; his uncle was murdered. When he sets out to discover why, Alex gets tangled into the British government's spy agency. <i>Stormbreaker</i> is the first of Horowitz's Alex Rider Series. The other titles are <i>Point Blank</i> , <i>Skeleton Key</i> , <i>Eagle Strike</i> , <i>Scorpius</i> , <i>Ark Angel</i> , and <i>Snake Head</i> . My son Caleb and I recommend the series for 4 <sup>th</sup> grade and older.				
Isay, Dave	Listening Is an Act of Love: A Celebration of American Life From the StoryCorps	NF	---	JCL

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StoryCorps began in October 2003. The first recording booth was and still is in New York City's Grand Central Station. A second recording booth has since been added at Ground Zero and there are now mobile recording booths that travel the country. The central belief underlying StoryCorps is that ordinary people have extraordinary stories. Two people – most often friends or relatives – enter a recording booth for a 40 minute session. One person acts as the interviewer and one as the interviewee. They talk about all sorts of topics – the vast range of human experience. At the end of the interview they have their picture taken together, and they go home with a CD copy of their interview. A second copy of the CD is stored in the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. This book is a collection of some of the transcripts of StoryCorps interviews. This is a beautiful book to read and re-read. By the way, you can listen to StoryCorps on NPR on Friday mornings or subscribe to StoryCorps podcasts.

Jansen, Hanna	<i>Over a Thousand Hills I Walk With You</i>	F	790L	
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This is a novel based on the true story of Jeanne d'Arc Umubyeyi. Now, in 2008, Jeanne is a 22-year-old woman living in Germany with the author of the book - Hanna Jansen, her adoptive mother. Jeanne also has an adoptive father and twelve siblings. This novel is about Jeanne's first family in an African country called Rwanda. It is the story of the genocide that happened there in 1994 when Jeanne was only eight years old. Jeanne was the only person in her first family to survive. There are some parts of this story that are not easy to read, but it is an important story to read. Overwhelmingly, the theme that shines through the book is love - the love that Jeanne's first family shared and the love she found once again with her adoptive family.

Jiménez, Francisco	<i>The Circuit: Stories From the Life of a Migrant Child</i>	F	880L	JCL
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*The Circuit* is a collection of short stories, told in chronological order, based on the life experiences of Francisco Jiménez and his family. Throughout Francisco's childhood, the family traveled back and forth – mostly across California – following the seasons of planting and harvesting fruit and vegetable crops. They struggle with poverty, poor living conditions, lack of health care, prejudice, and the challenges of obtaining education. Through all obstacles, the family is held together by love, loyalty, and faith. The prose is spare and elegant. Recommended for middle school and older.

Jiménez, Francisco	<i>Breaking Through</i>	F	750L	JCL
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*Breaking Through* is the sequel to *The Circuit*. It begins when the family is arrested by immigration officials and some of the members are deported back to Mexico. This is only one of the challenges Francisco must face. *Breaking Through* is primarily about Francisco's search for his American dream, specifically his desire to obtain an education. The work Francisco is willing to do to accomplish his goal is awe-inspiring. A Pura Belpré Honor Book. Recommended for middle school and older.

Jordan, Hillary	Mudbound	F	---	JCL
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*Mudbound* is the story of two families – the McAllans and the Jacksons – whose lives intertwine in rural Mississippi in 1946. The McAllan family is white. Henry has just moved his city-bred and well-educated wife, Laura, away from her family and into a shack with no plumbing or electricity. When it rains, they cannot cross the bridge into town and are “mudbound.” Laura, Henry, and their young children live with Henry’s racist father and Henry’s brother, Jamie, who has just returned from the war. The Jacksons are black sharecroppers on the McAllan’s land. Their son Ronsel has also recently returned from war. Ronsel discovers that despite being treated as a hero for fighting the Nazis in Europe, he still faces the bigotry of his own countrymen. In her first novel, Hillary Jordan has created a powder keg situation among these characters. I was amazed at the way in which it finally blew apart. Jordan won the Bellwether Prize for Fiction for *Mudbound*; this prize is given biennially to a first literary novel that addresses issues of social justice. I highly recommend this novel but caution that the subject matter is appropriate for mature 11<sup>th</sup> graders and above.

Kadohata, Cynthia	Kira-Kira	F	740L	JCL
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*Kira-kira* means “glittering” in Japanese. Katie’s big sister, Lynn, is a person who sees beauty everywhere – everything is *kira-kira*. Lynn is Katie’s protector, guide, and best friend. They depend on each other when the family moves from Iowa to Georgia and both of their parents are working full time. Then Lynn gets sick. Can Katie learn to be the big sister? Can she learn to see the world as *kira-kira*? Deftly deals with prejudice as one of its themes. Winner of the Newbery Medal. Recommended for 5<sup>th</sup> grade and up.

Kehret, Peg	Small Steps: The Year I Got Polio	NF	890L	JCL
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Peg Kehret is the author of many books for young adults. My son, Caleb, has read and enjoyed several of them. This book is autobiographical. It tells about the year, 1949, that Peg was twelve and contracted polio. With humor and perseverance, Peg battled her way back on her feet – literally! This is an inspiring story. Recommended for 4<sup>th</sup> grade and older.

Kidd, Sue Monk	The Secret Life of Bees	F	840L	JCL
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This story is set in South Carolina in 1964. The main character is Lily Owens, a young teenager who is haunted by the thought that she may be responsible for her mother’s death when she was only four years old. Lily’s father is a hard man who has little love to spare for Lily. After Lily’s “stand-in-mother” Rosaleen angers three racist men, Lily and Rosaleen run away from home. There are not many places where a young white girl and a black woman can find refuge together, but by following a clue left behind by Lily’s mother, they find themselves at the home of the Boatwright sisters. In this place Lily learns the secrets of bee-keeping, the secrets of her own past, and finds a home in the true sense of the word.

Klein, Gerda Weissmann	All But My Life: A Memoir	NF	---	JCL
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Gerda Weissman Klein’s memoir of her Holocaust experience is remarkable because of the eloquence of her language. This book is a beautiful piece of writing in addition to being a powerful and important story. This is the book upon which the Academy Award Winning documentary *One Survivor Remembers* is based. In my work for the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education, I have helped develop book club materials for *All But My Life*. If you would like to check out a book club bag for your group to use, please contact MCHE ([www.mchekc.org](http://www.mchekc.org)). Recommended for high school through adult readers.

Klein, Gerda Weissmann and Kurt Klein	The Hours After: Letters of Love and Longing in War's Aftermath	NF	---	JCL
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This book continues the story of Gerda Weissman and Kurt Klein where *All But My Life* ends. Kurt and Gerda decided that he should return to the United States with his military unit and then send for Gerda as soon as possible so that they can be married. *The Hours After* is a collection of Kurt and Gerda's love letters exchanged during the year they spent apart from each other. The book tells many of the details of their romance that are left out of *All But My Life*. Getting Gerda to the United States was no easy feat. As a Holocaust survivor, she was a stateless person with no documents to prove her identity. The book provides a fascinating look into the lives of survivors immediately following the war. *The Hours After* has romance, heartache, angst, a daring escape, and a happy ending. What more could a reader want? Recommended for high school through adult readers.

Kodama, Tatsuharu	Shin's Tricycle	NF	---	JCL
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This picture book is based on the true story of a little boy named Shin who died because of the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. An eloquent but simple plea for peace. Powerful illustrations. Recommended for upper elementary and middle school. See also *Sadako* by Eleanor Coerr.

Korman, Gordon	Swindle	F	---	On order
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When Griffin Bing finds a rare Babe Ruth baseball card, he hopes that it might be worth enough money to solve his parents' money troubles. He is disappointed when S. Wendell Palomino is willing to give him only \$150 for the card. He is outright mad when he finds out on the TV news that Palomino is planning to auction the card for as much as \$1 million! Not one to give up easily, Griffin launches the plan of all plans to steal the card back from Palomino. Fast moving; clever plot with twists; humorous. Adults – think *Oceans 11* rated for middle school. Recommended for 4<sup>th</sup> grade and up.

Krull, Kathleen	Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez	NF	AD800L	JCL
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Cesar Chavez, like his heroes Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., brought about social change through non-violent action. He fought for better wages and working conditions for migrant farmworkers from the 1960's until the early 1990's. This illustrated book is an excellent way to introduce elementary and middle school children to this American hero. A Pura Belpré Honor Book.

Lasky, Kathryn	The Librarian Who Measured the Earth	NF	AD840L	JCL
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This is a picture book biography about Eratosthenes, a Greek man who eventually became the director of the ancient library at Alexandria, Egypt. Eratosthenes figured out a way to calculate the circumference of the Earth. When his measurements were checked using modern technology, they were found to be amazingly accurate. This is a fabulous story about math, problem solving, and the passion to learn. Recommended for upper elementary and middle school.

Levine, Karen	Hana's Suitcase: A True Story	NF	730L	JCL
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In March 2000, a suitcase from Auschwitz arrived at the Tokyo Holocaust Education Center. Working with only the few clues painted on the outside of the suitcase and a long list of questions from the children who visit the center, Fumiko Ishioka sets out to discover as much as she can about Hanna Brady. This book tells the story of her discoveries and how they bring together people from three continents and rekindle the memory of a young girl who perished in the Holocaust. A wonderful book for introducing the Holocaust to middle school students.

Lewis, Paul Owen	Storm Boy	F	---	JCL
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A boy goes fishing at sea and a storm washes him out of his canoe. He is cared for by another tribe of "people" on an unfamiliar coastline with unfamiliar customs. This story, based on the myths of the Native Tribes of the Pacific Northwest Coast, is told in both text and illustrations. I use this book in my middle school classroom to teach questioning and inference skills. Recommended for elementary and up. Adults – Do not miss the "Author's Note" in the back! There is a similar book titled *Frog Girl* (AD240L) by this same author. It is also good, but *Storm Boy* is my favorite of the two.

Lovell, Jim and Jeffrey Kluger	Lost Moon: The Perilous Voyage of Apollo 13	NF	---	JCL
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This is the book from which the film *Apollo 13* was made. The film is good; the book is even better. I read it in one Saturday afternoon because I could not put it down. It is a science mystery, problem-solving adventure, suspense-thriller. (That's a new category; I just made it up!) Recommended for middle school through adult.

Martin, Jacqueline Briggs	Snowflake Bentley	NF	AD830L	JCL
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Wilson Bentley was born in Vermont in 1865. This book tells about his fascination with the natural world – especially snow. Once he was able to look at snowflakes through a microscope, he learned that each was unique. He drew the snowflake designs he saw through the microscope. When he was seventeen, his parents bought him a camera with its own microscope. For the rest of his life, Bentley continued to photograph snowflakes and other miracles of nature. Mary Azarian won the Caldecott Medal for the illustrations in this book. Recommended for elementary and up.

Millard, Candice	Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine, and the Murder of a President	NF	---	JCL
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The only thing I knew about James Garfield before reading this book is that he died shortly after becoming President. I am very glad I read this book. Millard tells a fascinating tale from history about how Garfield came to be President and why his murderer, Charles Guiteau, conspired against him. While Alexander Graham Bell worked furiously on an invention to locate the bullet lodged inside Garfield's body, a legion of doctors attending to the President argued over the best way to care for him. Some of those doctors believed in Joseph Lister's discovery of germs and sterilization procedures; others regarded Lister as a quack. Millard reveals a cast of political characters who have motives that will determine the "destiny of the republic." Everything depends upon whether Garfield lives or dies. This history book reads like a suspense thriller and left me with enormous appreciation for Garfield's intellect and integrity. This book is intended for an adult audience; however, I book-talked this in my 8<sup>th</sup> grade class and had several students who read the book and enjoyed it. Eighth grade is typically where this portion of American history is studied in school.

Muth, Jon J.	The Three Questions	F	AD410L	JCL
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*The Three Questions* is based on a story by Leo Tolstoy. It is about a young boy who is seeking the answers to three questions: When is the best time to do things? Who is the most important one? What is the right thing to do? Aren't these questions for which we all seek answers? This book has wisdom to benefit young and old alike. Beautiful illustrations.

Myers, Walter Dean	Bad Boy: A Memoir	NF	970L	JCL
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Walter Dean Myers is one of the most popular, prolific, and highly respected authors writing for young adults today. This book is his autobiography. Like most authors, Myers writes what he knows. He grew up on the streets of Harlem. He loved basketball and he loved reading. One of those things was cool and the other was not. So he shot hoops with his friends and carried books around in brown paper sacks to avoid being harassed. As he grew older, he became more aware of the class and race struggles that posed obstacles to his success. He began ditching his high school classes and seemed headed to a bad end. Myers uses these hard-knock experiences in his writing for teens. His books speak to kids because they are gritty and honest. Myers' autobiography is a fascinating read because of the insight it gives to the rest of his writing.

Myers, Walter Dean	The Greatest: Muhammad Ali	NF	1030L	JCL
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I am not a boxing fan and didn't know or care very much about Muhammad Ali when I picked this book up to read it. My intention was to skim enough of it that I could sell it to some of the boys in my class. Myers' writing style pulled me in; I got hooked and read the whole thing. The book has many photographs and follows Ali's life all the way through his diagnosis with Parkinson's disease and participation in the opening ceremony of the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta. Recommended for middle school and older.

Myron, Vicki	Dewey: The Small-Town Library Cat Who Touched the World	NF	820L	JCL
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On a bitterly cold January morning in 1988, the librarians of Spencer, Iowa found a very dirty and cold kitten in the book drop box. This book is that kitten's story. It is also the story of the librarians who loved him and how Dewey Readmore Books transformed the library into a meeting place that brought the community together. If you love books, libraries, and animals, you will love this book. Recommended for middle schoolers through adults.

Nelson, Kadir	We Are the Ship: The Story of Negro League Baseball	NF	---	JCL
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This book is non-fiction, but it is told as a story from the point-of-view of a player in the Negro Leagues. Kadir Nelson revealed in an interview that he chose Buck O'Neil's voice for the narrator. If you ever had the chance to hear Buck speak or if you have read Buck's autobiography, *I Was Right On Time*, you can hear how well Nelson captured Buck's voice in *We Are the Ship*. Nelson spent seven years writing the text and painting the brilliant oil paintings that illustrate this book. This is my pick for the 2009 Caldecott Medal. Recommended for middle-schoolers through adults.

Nelson, Marilyn	Carver: A Life in Poems	P	890L	JCL
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This book is a biography of George Washington Carver told in poems! Carver was born near Diamond Grove, Missouri, not too far from the Kansas City area. He earned a B.A. and M.A. from Iowa State College and then accepted a job at the Tuskegee Institute, where he stayed until the end of his life. Carver was a scientist, an inventor, a teacher, an artist, a needlecrafter – a fascinating man! I have taught this book in my classroom with great success. Because of the poetic form, there is not space for elaboration and detail. You may find yourself wanting more information about Carver. There are lots of photos with captions in the book that are helpful. In addition, both Iowa State and Tuskegee University have information about Carver on their websites. In fact, Tuskegee has an excellent online exhibit based on their campus museum devoted to Carver. I recently purchased a book about Carver that looks very good; it is *The Groundbreaking, chance-taking life of George Washington Carver and science & invention in America* by Cheryl Harness. I think it will be a good companion book to Marilyn Nelson’s poems. *Carver: A Life in Poems* is a Newbery Honor book and a Coretta Scott King Honor Book. Recommended for middle schoolers with help and high school through adult.

Nelson, Marilyn	Fortune’s Bones: The Manumission Requiem	P	NP	JCL
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The Mattatuck Museum in Connecticut has a skeleton that has been in the town for more than 200 years. In 1996, community members decided to find out what they could about it. They learned that the bones were those of a slave named Fortune who had died in 1798. *Manumission* means *the release of someone who has been a slave*. Fortune was released from slavery only by his death. *A requiem* is *words and music created to honor the dead*. Marilyn Nelson created this requiem in honor of Fortune. Juxtaposed with the poetry of the requiem are photographs, maps, paintings, and drawings along with text – all of which tell Fortune’s story. This is a slim volume; it is only 31 pages long, but it is powerful. A Coretta Scott King Honor Book. Recommended for advanced middle schoolers and older.

Nelson, Marilyn	A Wreath for Emmett Till	P	NP	JCL
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Emmett Till was a fourteen-year-old African-American boy who was murdered in 1955 while visiting relatives in Mississippi. The brutality of Emmett’s murder, the circumstances of his funeral, and the acquittal of the men tried for the crime drew national media attention. Emmett’s case also helped spark the Civil Rights Movement. Published 50 years later, this poem is a memorial to Emmett. The text is a heroic crown of sonnets – fifteen interlinked sonnets. In the first fourteen poems, the last line of each poem becomes the first line of the next. The fifteenth poem is comprised of the first lines of the previous fourteen poems. Some middle schoolers may be ready for this text. However, adults - don’t just hand this book to your middle school child to read; this is intellectually and emotionally heavy stuff. Read it first, and then read it with your middle schooler. Recommended for high school and adult. (P.S. I have read portions of the following book, but have not read the entire volume: *Getting Away with Murder: The True Story of the Emmett Till Case* by Chris Crowe is a non-fiction text that investigates the events before and after Emmett’s murder. The book explains the details of the court trial and the impact Emmett’s case had on the Civil Rights Movement. This text may be helpful to those who want to read Nelson’s poems about Emmett but are unfamiliar with his story. The Lexile level of Crowe’s book is 1210.)



Nelson, Peter	Left for Dead: A Young Man's Search for Justice for the USS Indianapolis	NF	1260L	JCL
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In 1996, when Hunter Scott was eleven years old, he began doing research for a history fair project about the sinking of the USS Indianapolis and the fate of its crew. In 1999, at the age of fourteen, he was testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee trying to correct an injustice concerning the Indianapolis and its captain. This book tells the fascinating true story of the men who were aboard the Indianapolis the night it was torpedoed by the Japanese during WWII and Hunter Scott's efforts to change the historical record. Recommended for middle school through adult.

Ness, Patrick	A Monster Calls	F	730L	JCL
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This is a novel about a boy named Conor who is dealing with the fact that his mother is dying of cancer. The book was crafted by Ness from a story idea left behind by Siobhan Dowd after she died of cancer at age 47. It is a beautiful book about coming to terms with loss and has illustrations throughout the text. This is not a novel for everyone. However, for an adolescent who was dealing with a loss, this book might bring great comfort that feelings such as anger, grief, isolation, uncertainty, and fear are normal. As an adult, I found the book very powerful and highly recommend it.

Newman, Lesléa	Hachiko Waits	F	770L	JCL
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This is a work of fiction based on a true story about a faithful dog who waits every afternoon for his master, a Japanese professor, to return home on the train. But how do you explain to a dog that his master is not coming home? This is a bittersweet story about the bond between dogs and their humans. It is also about how the love of and admiration for a dog can bring out the best in humankind. If you are a dog-lover, this book is a must-read. Recommended for 4<sup>th</sup> grade and older.

O'Neil, Buck	I Was Right On Time: My Journey From the Negro Leagues to the Majors	NF	---	JCL
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I am not a big baseball fan, but I am a HUGE Buck O'Neil fan. Buck was both a great and humble man; I can think of no finer role model for kids. This is Buck's autobiography; it is written just as if he were sitting across the living room from you telling his story. (Kids know this writing trait as VOICE.) Recommended for middle school through adult.

Oppel, Kenneth	Airborn	F	760L	JCL
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This fantasy-adventure novel is a winner of the Michael L. Printz Honor Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature given by the American Library Association. The main character is a young man named Matt Cruse, a cabin boy on the luxury airship, Aurora. Matt gets caught-up in the quest of a passenger named Kate to redeem the reputation of her grandfather, who spoke his dying words to Matt aboard the Aurora one year earlier. This book has everything – mystery, pirates, murder, adventure, danger, suspense, science, friendship. I could not put it down. I haven't read it yet, but my son Caleb tells me that the sequel, *Skybreaker*, is just as good as *Airborn*.

Park, Linda Sue	A Single Shard	F	920L	JCL
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Tree-ear is an orphan in 12<sup>th</sup> century Korea; thus, he has few prospects for a future beyond begging. He is fascinated by the beautiful pots crafted by Min, the best potter in the village. When he breaks one of Min's pots, Min agrees to let Tree-ear work for him in repayment. Min is cranky and perfectionistic; Tree-ear seldom feels that he can please his master. Yet, Tree-ear knows that he is learning from Min. But will Tree-ear conquer the most difficult challenge of all?

Partridge, Elizabeth	Restless Spirit: The life and Work of Dorothea Lange	NF	970L	JCL
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You may not know Dorothea Lange's name, but you have probably seen her photographs. She was one of the government photographers who recorded the living conditions of the migrant workers during the Great Depression. Lange also documented Southern sharecroppers and the Japanese internment during WWII. A book about a fascinating woman filled with, of course, her photographs. Recommended for middle school and older.

Paschen, Elise (Editor)	Poetry Speaks: Who I Am	P	---	JCL
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The poems in this book were chosen specifically for teens. Among the collection there are classics from Shakespeare, Frost, Poe, and Dickinson, but there are also the works of modern poets such as Billy Collins and Marilyn Nelson. The book comes along with a CD so the reader may hear many of the poems read aloud by the poets themselves. Of all the poetry collections I use in my Creative Writing class, this is my students' favorite. It has poems about baseball, parents' fighting, bra shopping, used bookstores, mothers, bagels, snowmen, and a rip-your-heart-from-your-chest poem titled "A Boy in the Bed in the Dark." I love this book because it helps both boys and girls see that not all poems are boring or silly. Highly recommended for middle school and older.

Pearsall, Shelley	All of the Above	F	1000L	JCL
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This novel was inspired by a group of middle school students from Alexander Hamilton School in Cleveland, Ohio who built a "Stage 7" Sierpinski tetrahedron. Their goal was to win a place in the Guinness Book of World Records. In the novel, Pearsall imagines what the lives of the students in this inner-city school might have been like. The personalities and struggles of the tetrahedron team, their teacher, and their parents come alive as they persevere to build and assemble the 16,384 smaller tetrahedrons needed to construct the larger structure. This was an engaging book; the chapters were short and told from the points-of-view of the various characters. Recommended for middle school and up.

Peck, Richard	A Long Way From Chicago	F	750L	JCL
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Joey and Mary Alice live in Chicago. Every summer between 1929 and 1935 they go to rural Illinois to visit their Grandma Dowdel. Grandma Dowdel's dry sense of humor and keen sense of justice earned this book a Newbery Honor Medal. You will laugh so hard you'll cry or bust ribs. Recommended for middle school through adult.

Peck, Richard	A Year Down Yonder	F	610L	JCL
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The year is 1937 – the height of the Great Depression. Joey has gone to work for the Civilian Conservation Corps. Mary Alice's parents can't afford their Chicago apartment and must move into a smaller space. That means that Mary Alice has "to enroll in the hick-town school where Grandma lived. Me, a city girl, in a town that didn't even have a picture show." This time Grandma Dowdel earned the Newbery Medal. Read the books in order; I didn't the first time and it was a bit confusing. Recommended for middle school through adult.

Peck, Robert Newton	A Day No Pigs Would Die	F	690L	JCL
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If I were asked to list my favorite books and could only choose ten, this book would probably make the list. I first read it when I was in about the 8<sup>th</sup> grade – in bed, late at night because I couldn't put in down and go to sleep. When I arrived in my first classroom, I found a few copies in the back of a cupboard and re-read it. As soon as I could pull together enough copies to teach it, I did. This is an autobiographical novel about the year Rob Peck grows from age 12 to 13 – from a boy to a man. Even more, it is a love story and tribute to his father, Haven. Younger readers may need some help with the dialect used in the story. Recommended for middle school through adult. P.S. There is a sequel to the story titled *A Part of the Sky*.

SPOILER ALERT: Indian Woods Middle School students – This book is still being taught by many teachers in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. If you don't like to read books twice, don't read this book until you find out whether you'll be reading it in class!!!!

Pelzer, Dave	A Child Called "It": One Child's Courage to Survive	NF	850L	JCL
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Dave Pelzer was an abused child. This book is the first part of his story; there are other books that continue from the point where this book leaves off. It is not easy to read, but it is compelling. Most importantly, his story is hopeful because Pelzer survives his abuse and goes on to live a successful life. That is a powerful message for young people. Many of my students who read this book say that it is their favorite book. Recommended for middle school and older.

Perl, Lila & Marion Blumenthal Lazan	Four Perfect Pebbles: A Holocaust Story	NF	1080L	JCL
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*Four Perfect Pebbles* is an excellent book for introducing the Holocaust to middle school students. The Blumenthal's story is very unusual because the family members are able to stay together throughout their imprisonment by the Nazis. As Holocaust stories go, it has a relatively "happy" ending. Because of the family's unusual circumstances, they were able to keep many documents and photographs; these are used liberally to illustrate the book. Please read this memoir along with your child. There are great links to sources of additional information on the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education website ([www.mchekc.org](http://www.mchekc.org)). The Lazans also maintain a website with information about Marion ([www.fourperfectpebbles.com](http://www.fourperfectpebbles.com)).

Philbrick, Rodman	Freak the Mighty	F	1000L	JCL
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This novel is the story of the unlikely friendship between two lonely boys who seem to be polar opposites. Max is large and strong and thinks he is dumb. Kevin is small and crippled and super-smart. Together they are Freak the Mighty. This story is a gem. I've taught it to a class of committed non-readers, and they loved it. The movie is also pretty good. Recommended for 7<sup>th</sup> grade and up.

Polacco, Patricia	The Butterfly	F	430L	JCL
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A true story of saving Jews in France during WWII. Recommended for middle school and older.

Polacco, Patricia	Chicken Sunday	F	650L	JCL
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Can the kids convince Mr. Kodinski that they did not egg his store and earn enough money to buy an Easter hat from him for their grandmother? A wonderful story about earning trust and making friends across generations. Recommended for all ages. Polacco is as gifted an artist as she is a storyteller. Most of her books are based on childhood experiences or family stories.

Polacco, Patricia	The Graves Family	F	720L	On Order
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When the Graves family moves to Union City, the village folk find them rather odd. Will they find a way to fit in? My middle-school students enjoyed this book as a read-aloud on Halloween Day. Recommended for all ages.

Polacco, Patricia	Pink and Say	F	590L	JCL
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Of all Polacco's books, this is my favorite. Pink and Say are boys fighting for the Union Army in the Civil War. One boy saves the other's life. One is black; the other is white. One is from the North; the other is from the South. One is free; one was a slave. One can read; the other cannot. A re-telling of a true story. Beautiful illustrations. Have a Kleenex handy. Recommended for middle-school and older.

Polacco, Patricia	Thank You, Mr. Falker	F	AD650L	JCL
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This is Polacco's own childhood story of the difficulties she had learning how to read. Mr. Falker (a.k.a. George Felker) is the teacher who helped her overcome this obstacle. I suggest having Kleenex handy for this book also. Recommended for elementary and up.

Posnanski, Joe	<i>The Soul of Baseball: A Road Trip Through Buck O'Neil's America</i>	NF	---	
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I am not a big baseball fan, but I am a HUGE Buck O'Neil fan. This book did not disappoint. Posnanski did a fabulous job capturing the gentle spirit, the sense of fun, and the kindness that moved people all over America to love Buck and mourn him when he died.

Rathmann, Peggy	Officer Buckle and Gloria	F	510L	JCL
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This picture book earned Rathmann a Caldecott Medal. It tells the story of Officer Buckle and his very talented police dog, Gloria. The duo gives safety speeches. The person who learns the most important lesson is Officer Buckle himself. This book is laugh-out-loud funny. My sons requested this book over and over again when they were younger. Don't miss the stars inside the front and back covers! Recommended for preschool and elementary.

Roach, Mary	Stiff: The Curious Lives of Human Cadavers	NF	1230L	JCL
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Yes, I realize that you probably think I am nuts, but this is really a good book! I picked it up when it caught my eye as I was walking through a bookstore one evening. Look at the cover on the JCL website, and you'll see why. I stood in the store and started reading. Before I got to the end of the introduction, I was laughing. I figured that any author who could write about this topic and make me laugh was worth reading, so I bought the book. I was not disappointed. Roach (what a name!) succeeds in discussing the topic of dead human bodies with a perfect balance of respect and humor. It never got too gory for me. The topic truly is fascinating. The author got me thinking about a lot of things that people really ought to contemplate before they die. When I looked it up, I noticed that JCL has a book club set for this title. Recommended for high school and older.

Roth, Veronica	Divergent Insurgent Allegiant (publication date 10.22.13)	F	HL700L HL710L	JCL
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If you are a *Hunger Games* fan, you will like this series too. Roth's books also feature a strong female protagonist, Beatrice Prior, living in a dystopian society recognizable as Chicago. The story opens the morning Beatrice must take an aptitude test which will help her decide among which of the five factions she will choose to live during the remainder of her life. Unlike most people who clearly show a preference for one faction or another, Beatrice shows aptitude for multiple factions. She is Divergent – a dangerous thing; although she does not know why. Will Beatrice choose to remain with her parents in Abnegation (the selfless) although their lifestyle does not quite fit her temperament? Will she choose Dauntless or Erudite instead and leave her family forever? Why has Beatrice been warned to keep secret the information that she is Divergent? This novel has plenty of action and suspense, a nice dose of sci-fi fantasy, and a smidge of romance. My only regret is that I read the first two before the third was published and now I have to WAIT ANXIOUSLY for the third! Recommended for middle school and up.

Ryan, Pam Muñoz	When Marion Sang	NF	780L	JCL
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This is Marian Anderson's story told in a fashion accessible to younger children. Anderson was a singer celebrated throughout Europe. However, when she returned to the U.S., she could not perform in Constitution Hall because she was African-American. Adults - don't miss the notes at the end. A Robert F. Sibert Honor book. The illustrator is Brian Selznick, winner of the Caldecott Medal for *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* (see below). Older readers may also want to read Russell Freedman's biography of Anderson, *The Voice That Challenged a Nation: Marion Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights* (see above).

Rylant, Cynthia	Boris	P	NP	
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You will find this book in the poetry section of the Indian Woods Library; the call number is 811 Ryl. It is a slim volume that took only a couple of very enjoyable hours to read. It is about a cat whom Rylant adopted from an animal shelter. Even if you are not a cat lover, Boris' adventures are an entertaining read.

Rylant, Cynthia	Henry & Mudge... (Series)	F	180L- 560L	JCL
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Henry is a young boy, and Mudge is his Great Dane. Together the two have many fun and funny adventures. The books in this series are highly recommended for beginning readers in grades K-2.

Rylant, Cynthia	Mr. Putter & Tabby... (Series)	F	230L- 600L	JCL
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This is another great series for beginning readers by Cynthia Rylant. The main characters in these adventures are Mr. Putter, an elderly gentleman, and his cat, Tabby. Their adventures tend to be a bit slower-paced than Henry and Mudge's adventures but are, nevertheless, quite funny.

Rylant, Cynthia	Poppleton... (Series)	F	250L- 410L	JCL
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Poppleton is a pig who has many animal friends. They find themselves in all sorts of situations that children will understand and be able to connect to their personal experience. Rylant's humor shines through. Recommended for beginning readers.

Rylant, Cynthia	An Angel for Solomon Singer	F	1120L	JCL
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This is a beautiful story about how we can all be angels in the lives of other people. Sometimes making a big difference is a very small thing. Recommended for elementary through adult.

Rylant, Cynthia	The Relatives Came	F	AD940L	JCL
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As the title says, this story is about when the relatives came. We have all had the relatives come. You know... sleeping extra people in the beds and on the floors; cooking that never ends then washing the dishes to start cooking again, the cousins playing together at deafening decibels, the chaos, the joy – both while the relatives are here and when they leave! A perfect text to practice making connections. Recommended for elementary through middle school.

Rylant, Cynthia	Silver Packages	F	830L	JCL
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Rylant grew up in the Appalachian Mountains and draws upon her experiences for many of her books. This text is about a Christmas train and a wealthy man that the children in the mountains depend upon to bring what is often their only Christmas gift. This is a beautiful story about repaying a debt. I know this is primarily a summer reading list; but if you begin your Christmas shopping in July, add this book to your list.

Rylant, Cynthia	Appalachia: The Voices of Singing Birds	F	NC1120L	JCL
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This text is an example of prose that is poetic. The illustrations by Barry Moser are as beautiful as the text. Read this book aloud to your children, but practice first so that you can do it justice. Recommended for elementary through elderly.

Sachar, Louis	Holes	F	660L	JCL
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*Holes* is a clever puzzle of a book. The first time I read it, I had to keep going simply because I had to find out how Sachar was going to wind three seemingly unrelated strands of plot together. It is ingenious! I had to immediately re-read the book to find the clues I missed the first time through. This is a great book for teaching kids to make connections within text, to make inferences, and to be careful readers. Winner of the Newbery Medal. There is now another novel that carries on the story of the characters in *Holes*; it is called *Small Steps* (690L). I've not read it yet, but several of my students have told me that they loved it. I recommend *Holes* for 6<sup>th</sup> grade and older.

Schmidt, Gary D.	Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy	F	1000L	JCL
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Turner Buckminster is the son of the new preacher in Phippsburg, Maine. Not much has gone well during his introduction to the kids in town. The only person who befriends him is Lizzie Bright Griffin, a Black girl who lives on the island just off the Phippsburg coast. When Turner learns that the town fathers (who hired his father) have plans to evict all the residents of Malaga Island, Turner is caught between his loyalty to Lizzie and his obedience to his father. This novel is crafted around the true story of the destruction of the Malaga Island community in 1912. A Newbery Honor Book and a Michael L. Printz Honor Book. Recommended for 5<sup>th</sup> grade and up.

Schwalbe, Will	The End of Your Life Book Club	NF	---	JCL
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This is a true story about Will Schwalbe and his mother, Mary Ann. While they wait together as she receives outpatient cancer treatment, they discuss books they are reading. Of course, the conversation leads to talk of life, family, lessons, values, and memories. We, the readers, get a glimpse into the life of an amazing woman. This is Will's love letter to his mother and to reading. Be sure to have a notepad handy; you will get lots of ideas about books to read. Recommended for mature high schoolers and older.

Selznick, Brian	The Invention of Hugo Cabret	F	820L	JCL
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I love this book so much I gave it as a birthday gift to each of my nephews last year. I was absolutely thrilled when it won the Caldecott Medal. This is a picture book; it depends as much on its illustrations as it text to tell the story. However, it is a novel intended for middle schoolers and above. It tells the story of an orphan named Hugo who lives in the Paris train station. It is also a suspenseful mystery novel that will hold you in its magical spell until you get to the very last page. Both the story and the pictures are magnificent.

Shaffer, Ann and Annie Barrows	The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society	F	---	JCL
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Guernsey is a Channel Island between England and France. During World War II it was occupied by the Nazis. For five years the islanders had no shipments of supplies and no print or radio news of the outside world. The Guernsey Literary Society was hatched on the spur-of-the-moment when several islanders are caught out after curfew. In order to make the alibi believable, the members actually begin meeting - thus binding themselves together in friendship and support that will become more meaningful to them than they can ever imagine. After the war, the members of the society begin to correspond with a writer from London named Juliet Ashton. As the letters go back and forth across the English Channel, the story of what happened on Guernsey during the war unfolds. Juliet finds her life forever changed by the people of Guernsey. Adults may enjoy this book most, but there is nothing about it inappropriate for teenagers.

Sís, Peter	The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain	NF	---	JCL
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Peter Sís grew up in Communist Czechoslovakia during the Cold War. This is an autobiography – in both words and drawings – of his experiences. It is a fascinating look at what life was like behind the Iron Curtain for a young, creative person. This would be a great book for parents or teachers to use to explain the concept of totalitarianism. A Caldecott Honor Book and Winner of the Robert F. Sibert Medal. Recommended for middle school and older.

Stanley, Jerry	Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp	NF	1120L	JCL
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Weedpatch Camp was created in 1937 by the U.S. government to house some of the many “Okies” who flooded California during the Dust Bowl years. The residents of Weedpatch Camp faced outright hatred from the surrounding community. In 1940, a brave man named Leo Hart helped create a school with the Weedpatch children. The children learned masonry, carpentry, plumbing, and electrical wiring. They also planted their own garden and raised their own livestock. When the principal had the chance to bring an airplane to the school, the children learned aircraft mechanics. They learned shoe cobbling, sewing, and how to make cosmetics in chemistry class. The students also built the very first public swimming pool in the county. By 1944, the once-hostile residents of Kern County, California were writing letters asking that their children be allowed to transfer to “the Okie school.” This is an amazing book on several levels. It is a wonderful, photo-packed, history of the Dust Bowl years. It is a tribute to the courage and vision of Leo Hart. Most of all, it is a testament to the human spirit. This is a must-read for middle school and up.

Stead, Philip C	A Sick Day for Amos McGee	F	AD760L	JCL
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This is a very sweet picture book that won a Caldecott Medal for its illustrator, Erin E. Stead. It tells the story of a zookeeper named Amos McGee and the animal friends he cares for every day. However, on the day that Amos gets sick, his friends arrive to take care of him instead. Recommended for all ages.

Stockett, Kathryn	The Help	F	730L	JCL
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*The Help* takes place in Jackson, Mississippi during 1962. The main characters of the story are a circle of – except for Skeeter – newly-married white women, their mothers, and their black maids – the help. The Civil Rights Movement may be underway, but segregation is alive and well in Jackson. Skeeter dreams of being a writer but lacks a worthy topic - until she decides to cross the racial divide and interview the maids about their work and their lives. Suspenseful, funny, poignant. Recommended for high school and older.

Tunnell, Michael O.	Mailing May	NF	AD770L	JCL
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In 1914 Charlotte May Pierstorff wanted to travel 75 miles across the mountains from Grangeville to Lewiston, Idaho to visit her grandmother. The only way to get there was on the train, but her parents couldn't afford a ticket. May got to visit her grandmother – thanks to some very creative problem solving. Recommended for elementary and older.

Volponi, Paul	Black and White	F	710L	JCL
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Marcus Brown is Black. Eddie Russo is White. Black and White are best friends, despite their racial differences, and they are the stars of the Long Island City High School basketball team. Everything is going their way during their senior year; both are looking forward to college basketball scholarships. Their families are not wealthy, and they are a little strapped for the cash they need to pay graduation fees. To make matters worse, Nike comes out with a new basketball shoe that every guy on the team is going to be wearing. Black and White live in a tough neighborhood where it is not uncommon to deal some drugs or pull some petty robberies for fast cash. When Eddie sneaks his grandfather's gun out of the house, the plan is to get just the amount of dough they need for the dues and the shoes. But then things go terribly wrong, and everything is on the line for Black and White. Recommended for middle school and older.

Vozar, David	Yo, Hungry Wolf!: A Nursery Rap	F	---	JCL
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*The Three Little Pigs, Little Red Riding Hood, and The Boy Who Cried Wolf* in rap? Wow! Little kids and big kids will like these clever tales.

Warren, Andrea	Surviving Hitler: A Boy in the Nazi Death Camps	NF	820L	JCL
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*Surviving Hitler* is the true story of Jack Mandelbaum, who started his life over again in the Kansas City area after surviving the Holocaust. It is written by Johnson County author, Andrea Warren. Jack's story is compelling and supported by Warren's meticulous research. The text is filled with historical photographs. This is an excellent book for middle school students to begin learning about the Holocaust. Please read this book along with your child. A Robert F. Sibert Honor Book. Those who wish to learn more about Jack after reading the book should contact the Midwest Center for Holocaust Education ( [www.mchekc.org](http://www.mchekc.org) ), which Jack co-founded with fellow survivor Isak Federman.



White, Ruth	Belle Prater's Boy	F	760L	JCL
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When Woodrow's mother, Belle, disappears, he comes to live with his grandparents in a small Virginia town during the 1950's. His cousin Gypsy lives next door. The two begin to spend a lot of time together and become good friends. Woodrow seems able to accept his mother's disappearance. However, Gypsy is struggling with the fact that her father has died. Then Woodrow tells Gypsy a secret he has been keeping about his mother. I loved this story when I first read it many years ago. It's on my list to re-read because there is now a sequel titled *The Search for Belle Prater* (830L). A Newbery Honor Book. Recommended for 4<sup>th</sup> grade and older.

Winter, Jeanette	The Librarian of Basra: A True Story from Iraq	NF	AD640L	JCL
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This illustrated book tells how Alia Muhammad Baker, chief librarian of Basra's Central Library, managed to save seventy percent of the library's collection before the building was burned during the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The story is a testament to the fact that all over the world there are people who value knowledge, intellectual freedom, and the preservation of culture that books represent. Recommended for pre-school through middle school with adult direction.

Woodson, Jacqueline	The Other Side	F	AD300L	JCL
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Clover lives on one side of the fence – the side where the black folks live. Annie moves into a house on the other side of the fence – where the white folks live. One day Annie begins to sit ON the fence; then Clover begins to sit on the fence. Will one of them go over the fence to the other side? A thoughtful treatment of racial tension and prejudice. Beautiful illustrations. Recommended for elementary and older.

Zaslow, Jeffrey	The Girls From Ames	NF	---	JCL
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This is the true story of eleven girls who became friends in Ames, Iowa during the 1960's and 1970's. They are now in their late 40's and live all over the United States. Nevertheless, their bonds of friendship remain strong. They have sustained each other through tragedies and celebrated each other's triumphs. What has kept them together? How are their friendships different from those of men? Why do women need these types of friendships? Zaslow writes an entertaining book about a fascinating group of ordinary women. Reading it will cause you to think about the friendships that are important to you.

Zimmerman, Susan and Hutchins, Chryse	7 Keys to Comprehension: How to Help Your Kids Read It and Get It!	NF	---	---
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The authors of this book are well-respected educators, researchers, and authors. They have written several books for classroom teachers; this book is focused on parents. It has very little educational jargon, is easy to read, explains concepts clearly, provides lots of examples, and gives parents book suggestions for children of various ages. I highly recommend this book for all parents who want their children to be engaged and skillful readers.

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