

# Book Voyagers

## Catalog of Themes & Books



Reading Adventures  
for Families & Children  
in Connecticut Libraries

# Connecticut Humanities Council

*...to provide opportunities for all the people of Connecticut to rediscover the joy of lifelong learning, to see themselves in the full context of their history and heritage, and to explore the infinite varieties of human thought and experience contained in our literature and expressed in our arts that give shape and direction to our lives.*

## Book Voyagers

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### **CATALOG OF THEMES AND BOOKS**

Reading Adventures  
for families and children

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[www.ctculture.org](http://www.ctculture.org)

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# Book Voyagers

“Read for Meaning”

## What is Book Voyagers?

**Book Voyagers** is the Connecticut Humanities Council’s “read for meaning” book discussion program that invites families, children and teens to explore important life development themes through award winning literature under the guidance of a skilled discussion leader. The program typically consists of 4 sessions, each organized around a related theme and age appropriate readings selected for their appeal, literary value, and thematic content. The discussion leaders who facilitate **Book Voyagers** series come from a wide range of backgrounds and include storytellers, children’s librarians, and teachers.

The goal of **Book Voyagers** is to help children and adolescents ages 5 through 14 develop an appreciation for the ideas and themes inherent in good literature, sharpen their critical thinking skills through the analysis and discussion of good books and stories, and incorporate reading into their daily lives.

Most **Book Voyagers** programs consist of a series of four one-hour sessions. **Book Voyagers** also offers single discussions. Families are encouraged to do reading together before joining in a group discussion. The discussion leader, using the **Book Voyagers** program guide, asks open-ended questions to help participants explore key themes and concepts intrinsic to the readings, engage in a healthy dialogue, and share ideas in a group environment.

**Book Voyagers** has been a successful and valuable component of Children’s programming at public libraries since 1999 and its flexible format makes it a great choice for any structured gathering of children, such as after school programs, Boys and Girls Clubs and other children’s services organizations. The program’s diverse menu of themes enables host organizations to make choices that meet programming needs while ensuring that repeating organizations can offer fresh material to their audiences.

**Book Voyagers** has been enthusiastically embraced by librarians, teachers and others, who find it an invaluable resource in providing high-quality literature programs for young constituents. Parents and children praise **Book Voyagers** as well, noting that it offers a rare chance to spend time together in an educational, but relaxed, environment while demonstrating to kids that reading for pleasure and insight is a worthwhile and rewarding experience. **Book Voyagers** received the 2003 Faith Hektoen Award from the Connecticut Library Association for its contributions to children’s programming.

Most of the series in this catalog have been developed by our discussion leaders, who have selected the books, developed the discussion guides, provided additional reading lists, and often include related activities. **Book Voyagers** is made possible through the generous support of many state and national corporations and foundations.

## How To Use This Catalog

This catalog is intended as a resource for Connecticut public libraries, schools and community agencies interested in hosting **Book Voyagers** discussion series.

The Council’s four-session series are listed by category: Family; Adventure and Fantasy; and Parent/Child. A selection of titles available for one-session discussions is also included.

## How to Apply

**Book Voyagers** are offered seasonally – summer, fall and winter.

Summer – June 15<sup>th</sup> – August 15<sup>th</sup>  
 Fall – September 15<sup>th</sup> – December 15<sup>th</sup>  
 Winter/Spring – January 15<sup>th</sup> – May 15<sup>th</sup>

A **LIBRARY INTEREST FORM** is mailed to all Connecticut libraries in September to solicit program interest for the following fiscal year. (You may also find a copy of this form on our website – [www.ctculture.org](http://www.ctculture.org)). Other interested agencies should contact our office (information below). All programs are contingent upon grant funding and the partner’s ability to host a successful program.

Once selected for a grant-funded discussion, the participating organization chooses a series or title and submits their preferences for dates and times. Council staff matches the program with an experienced **Book Voyagers** discussion leader and ships 30 copies of each book for a four-session series and 20 copies for a one-session program; 300 publicity flyers, as well as other materials such as bookmarks and posters. Hosts are responsible for local publicity; recruiting their audience (**a minimum of 12 per session is required**); distributing and collecting evaluation forms after the last session; and for contributing a cash cost-share, based on their annual budget.

<b>Annual Budget</b>	<b>Cost Share Contributions</b>
\$0-\$200,000	\$150
\$200,000-\$1,000,000	\$300
\$1,000,000 +	\$400

(Cost-share for one-sessions are calculated at 25%)

Series are available on a first-come, first served basis.

## Books and Materials

Books and materials are shipped approximately six weeks before the series begins, and are due back to the Connecticut Humanities Council within two weeks after the last program.

Please note: **Book Voyagers** materials may be available to borrow independently. Please call the office for availability. The fee is \$75.00 per series or \$20.00 per title and includes a discussion guide. The borrower is responsible for the cost of return shipping.

For more information on the Book Voyagers Program:

Visit us at [www.ctculture.org](http://www.ctculture.org)  
 Call our office at 860- 685-7590  
 Fax to (860) 685-7569  
 Email Program Director Susan Muro  
[susan@ctculture.org](mailto:susan@ctculture.org) or  
 Program Assistant Rachel Pollak  
[Rachel@ctculture.org](mailto:Rachel@ctculture.org)

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# FAMILY PROGRAMS

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## Family Book Voyage I

A library-based family reading program serving families (targeting children ages 6 - 10 and a parent or caregiver) by teaching them how to talk about books and by encouraging voluntary reading. Developed and tested by the Louisiana Humanities Council, the program encourages parents and children to read and talk about books as a family activity; shows families how to identify and discuss ideas and values in children's books; and helps parents and children feel comfortable in the library and use it as a resource.

### Session 1 - Oral Tradition

After introductions, an overview of the series, and receipt of the materials, a discussion leader begins with an ice breaker and introduces participants to the rich tradition of oral literature. This will include counting rhymes, jump rope rhymes, hand clapping rhymes, tongue twisters, schoolyard rhymes and games. Handouts with a sampling of the above selections of oral literature will be available for participants before the first session.

### Session 2 - Fairness: *Do the Right Thing*

Verna Aardema, WHY MOSQUITOES BUZZ IN PEOPLE'S EARS

Jon Scieszka, THE TRUE STORY OF THE THREE LITTLE PIGS

Judith Viorst, ALEXANDER AND THE TERRIBLE, HORRIBLE, NO GOOD, VERY BAD DAY

### Session 3 - Greed: *What's in it for Me?*

Retold by Eric Kimmel, ANANSI AND THE MOSS-COVERED ROCK

Robert San Souci, THE TALKING EGGS

John Steptoe, MUFARO'S BEAUTIFUL DAUGHTERS

### Session 4 - Courage: *No Guts, No Glory*

Pete Seeger, ABIYOYO

Maurice Sendak, WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

Ed Young, LON PO PO

## Family Book Voyage II

This series can either be scheduled as a follow-up to Part I or as a stand-alone series.

### Session 1 - Dreams: *Dare to Dream*

Barbara Brenner, WAGON WHEELS

Caralyn Buehner, FANNY'S DREAM

Mary Hoffman, AMAZING GRACE

### Session 2 - Cleverness: *Find a Way*

Adapted by Molly Bang, WILEY AND THE HAIRY MAN

Pat McKissack, FLOSSIE AND THE FOX

William Steig, DOCTOR DE SOTO

### Session 3 - Coping: *Deal With It*

Shel Silverstein, THE GIVING TREE

Bernard Waber, IRA SLEEPS OVER

Mem Fox, WILFRID GORDON MCDONALD PARTRIDGE

### Session 4 - Determination: *Just Do It*

Ruth Lercher Bornstein, THE DANCING MAN

Margaret Wild, THE VERY BEST OF FRIENDS

Jeanette Winter, FOLLOW THE DRINKING GOURD

## **My Brothers' and Sisters' Keeper (Aligned with CMT reading comprehension strands)**

Offering a rich and varied literacy experience for ages 6-10, this series facilitates positive social development by highlighting books in which the characters demonstrate empathy and good interpersonal skills. The discussion enables students to explore the deep structure of a story, engage in meaningful dialogue with peers, and make text to text, text to self, and text- to- world connections, as well as examine the authors' style of writing.

### **Session 1: *A Caring Community***

Vera B. Williams, *A CHAIR FOR MOTHER*  
Patricia Polacco, *MRS. KATZ AND TUSH*

### **Session 2: *Family Memories***

Ezra Jack Keats, *PETER'S CHAIR*  
Tomie dePaola, *THE LEGEND OF THE BLUEBONNET*

### **Session 3: *Helping a Friend***

James Marshall, *WINGS: A TALE OF TWO CHICKENS*  
Alexander Stadler, *BEVERLY BILLINGSLEY TAKES A BOW*

### **Session 4: *Caring for Those in Need***

Dr. Seuss, *HORTON HEARS A WHO*  
Bob Graham, *MAX*

## **Turning Obstacles Into Opportunity (Aligned with CMT reading comprehension strands)**

This series explores the theme of turning obstacles into opportunity, making the most of a bad situation. These books highlight the benefits of problem solving, being optimistic and having tenacity. Often-times when bad things happen to people, or when problems arise, people give up hope. They believe that things or situations won't get better. In reality, people must work to make things better and attitude plays a major part in solving life's problems. For ages 6-10.

Arnold Lobel, *MING LO MOVES THE MOUNTAIN*  
Harriet Rhomer, *UNCLE NACHO'S HAT*  
Albert Blanco, *ANGEL'S KITE*  
Pete Seeger, *ABIYOYO*  
Pete Seeger, *ABIYOYO RETURNS*  
William Steig, *SYLVESTER & THE MAGIC PEBBLES*  
Baba Wagué Diakité, *THE HATSELLER AND THE MONKEYS*  
Margot Zemach, *IT COULD ALWAYS BE WORSE*

## **Villains in the Valley (Aligned with CMT reading comprehension strands)**

This series explores the theme of good overcoming evil in four books. Through the genre of folktales, the authors provide lessons on the rewards of demonstrating patience, compassion, kindness, hard work and courage. They also depict the consequences of greed, selfishness, and laziness. Folktales have been told throughout many generations and have a common language; which is repetitive, filled with imagery and figurative language and setting. The characters include animals that are personified through their ability to perform human actions.

James Marshall, *GOLDILOCKS AND THE THREE BEARS*  
Pat McKissack, *FLOSSIE AND THE FOX*  
Robert San Souci, *THE TALKING EGGS*  
Paul Galdone, *THE THREE BILLY GOATS GRUFF*

## **The World We Build**

Children, ages 6-9 years, accompanied by a parent or caregiver are invited to attend this family book discussion program on ecology. Read and discuss children's literature that expresses an appreciation and concern for all aspects of nature. This collection of literature, which includes fantasy, realistic fiction and non-fiction, gives us the opportunity to discuss and react to the challenges and pleasures of protecting the environment.

### **Session 1 – Every Little Thing**

Susan Jeffers, *BROTHER EAGLE, SISTER SKY*  
Dr. Seuss, *THE LORAX*

### **Session 2 – The Rainforest and Protecting Nature**

Kristen Joy Pratt, A WALK IN THE RAINFOREST  
Lynne Cherry, THE GREAT KAPOK TREE

**Session 3 — Reduce, Reuse, Recycle**

Linda Lowery, EARTH DAY  
Phoebe Gilman, SOMETHING FROM NOTHING

**Session 4 — Change**

Chris Van Allsburg, JUST A DREAM  
Jane Yolen, LETTING SWIFT RIVER GO

# ADVENTURE AND FANTASY PROGRAMS

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## Dimwood Forest

The Tales from the Dimwood Forest by Avi captures the readers' attention from the beginning. The characters have a wide range of appeal from the adventurous Ragweed, to the courageous Poppy, the irritable Ereth, to the cunning Marty the fisher. The animals in this series have their own identities and readers will find their own favorites. The plots are not complicated, but offer a wide variety of themes that engage the reader as he or she follows the adventures of Ragweed, Poppy and Ereth as they overcome the obstacles Avi has presented for them.

*(For grades 3-5.)*

Avi, RAGWEED  
Avi, POPPY  
Avi, POPPY AND RYE  
Avi, ERETH'S BIRTHDAY

## Fantastic Fantasies

Fantasy has always been one of the most popular genres of children's fiction. The overwhelming success of the *Harry Potter* books proves that children will flock to well-written fantasy over and over again. With its unique mix of the surreal and the real, fantasy stimulates imagination and simultaneously addresses real-life issues that children can relate to their own lives. This discussion series will introduce children to four critically-acclaimed fantasy series. Two classic series which have been read by generations of fantasy lovers: **The Time Quartet** by Madeleine L'Engle and **The Prydain Chronicles** by Lloyd Alexander. The other two series are fast-becoming contemporary fantasy favorites: and **Artemis Fowl** by Eoin Colfer and **A Series of Unfortunate Events** by Lemony Snicket. Each session will focus on one series' first installment. Themes covered will include the universal struggle between good and evil, courage, loyalty, and love. *(For grades 4-6.)*

**Session 1:** Madeleine L'Engle, **The Time Quartet**  
**Book 1:** A WRINKLE IN TIME

**Session 2:** Lloyd Alexander, **The Prydain Chronicles**  
**Book 1:** THE BOOK OF THREE

**Session 3:** Eoin Colfer, **Artemis Fowl**  
**Book 1:** ARTEMIS FOWL

**Session 4:** Lemony Snicket, **A Series of Unfortunate Events**  
**Book 1:** THE BAD BEGINNING

## School Stories I: Everyday is an Adventure

The books in this series are from the realistic fiction genre. They all have characters that are young children in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade and take place within the school setting. The characters encounter problems in school that, while are not life threatening, are very real and serious to many children in school. These books show positive relationships between children and adults in both the home and school. It is through these relationships and the positive problem solving skills of these young students that their problems are solved. You will first meet Horrible Harry, a third grader, and full of mischief. After all he is horrible, or is he? In addition you will meet Lucas Cott, the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade Class Clown. No doubt great discussions will arise as the children debate how these two characters change and evolve over the course of the story. Our young readers may relate to Robbie who is trying desperately to be cool as he is starting third grade. He has some obstacles though, including his mom, who wants to keep kissing him good-bye at the bus stop and his teacher who assigns him to be a reading buddy with the class bully. Finally, Jake Drake, the teacher's pet, will help explore the teacher/student relationship from the perspective of a pretty incredible fourth grader.

Suzy Kline, HORRIBLE HARRY MOVES UP TO THIRD GRADE  
Johanna Hurwitz, CLASS CLOWN  
Betsy Duffy, HOW TO BE COOL IN THE THIRD GRADE  
Andrew Clements, JAKE DRAKE TEACHER'S PET

## **School Stories II: Everyday is an Adventure**

This series also takes place within the school setting and explores the common situations that children in elementary school face. The emphasis is on positive relationships between children and adults, both at home and at school, and how these relationships help kids solve their problems. First you will meet Song Lee, an immigrant from Korea who has moved to America with her family. She is very shy and doesn't speak English well yet, which makes the oral report her teacher assigns the class very difficult. Next, third grader, Jake Drake, is determined to win the science fair. In order to do this, he has to become a know-it-all and keep a secret from his best friend. Is winning really worth it? Jake figures it out in the end. Then you will meet third grader Maggie Schultz, who doesn't like being told what to do. When her teacher makes learning cursive mandatory, Maggie revolts and things get really exciting! Finally, Marvin Redpost, another third grader, gets an unexpected chance of a lifetime when the President of the United States visits his classroom. With all the excitement this creates, Marvin forgets to meet his mom right after school and instead stays late to play with his friends. Wow, is he in trouble when he gets home – but not to worry, the President steps in to help Marvin out of this jam.

Suzy Kline, SONG LEE IN ROOM 2B  
Andrew Clements, JAKE DRAKE KNOW-IT-ALL  
Beverly Cleary, MUGGIE MAGGIE  
Louis Sachar, MARVIN REDPOST CLASS PRESIDENT

## **Percy Jackson and the Olympians**

Percy Jackson is just your typical teenager, plagued by the ordinary, everyday teenage problems like difficulty in school, girls, friendships, oh, and possibly the fate of the world balancing on his shoulders. Is he the one the prophecies speak of? Unfortunately, he won't know until he turns sixteen and is either the champion of the gods or brings about their total downfall. That's if he can escape being killed by the monsters who hunt him or being used as a pawn by the gods, and, of course, live to see his 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. This series follows young Percy on his quest as he stays loyal to his friends, true to his character and tries to survive all the challenges the gods send him. Join him on his journey as Greek Mythology meets modern times in this action-packed, humorous and well written series.

Rick Riordan, THE LIGHTNING THIEF  
Rick Riordan, THE SEA OF MONSTERS  
Rick Riordan, THE TITAN'S CURSE  
Rick Riordan, THE BATTLE OF THE LABRYINTH

## **A Visit To Narnia**

Magic continues to fascinate us as we find hidden doorways between our world and others. No author has come up with his doorway more perfectly than C. S. Lewis who takes us on amazing adventures in the world of Narnia, an incredible land of talking beasts and challenges everywhere. Join the unique cast as the interaction between the characters and their magical surroundings intrigues and astounds us. This series discusses books 1-4 of the series. (*For grades 4-6.*) NOTE: The anthology, THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA, contains all seven books.

C. S. Lewis, THE MAGICIAN'S NEPHEW  
C. S. Lewis, THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE  
C. S. Lewis, THE HORSE AND HIS BOY  
C. S. Lewis, PRINCE CASPIAN

## **The World Of Harry Potter**

J. K. Rowling's books about a young boy who attends a remarkable school for wizardry have captured the imagination of readers young and old. In this discussion series participants will explore the world of Hogwarts and all of Harry Potter's adventures to discover the underlying themes and reasons for the series' popularity. Each session will concentrate on one book and will explore why Harry Potter has gained a world-wide reputation in just a few years. (*For grades 4 and up.*)

J. K. Rowling, HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE  
J. K. Rowling, HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS  
J. K. Rowling, HARRY POTTER AND THE PRISONER OF AZKABAN  
J. K. Rowling, HARRY POTTER AND THE GOBLET OF FIRE  
J. K. Rowling, HARRY POTTER AND THE ORDER OF THE PHOENIX  
J. K. Rowling, HARRY POTTER AND THE HALF-BLOOD PRINCE  
J. K. Rowling, HARRY POTTER AND THE DEATHLY HALLOWS

# PARENT/CHILD PROGRAMS

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## **Courage Under Fire (Mother/Daughter Series)**

Read and discuss the stories of four girls whose lives are affected by World War II, both during and just after the war. These girls are challenged by changes in their lives, new homes, and new responsibilities. Each girl faces her changing situation with great aplomb and grace, even when things are not particularly easy. These books give mothers and daughters the opportunity to talk about how to meet life's challenges.

*(For grades 3-4.)*

Valerie Tripp, MEET MOLLY: AN AMERICAN GIRL

Amy Hest, LOVE YOU, SOLDIER

Lois Lowry, NUMBER THE STARS

Bette Bao Lord, IN THE YEAR OF THE BOAR AND JACKIE ROBINSON

## **Reading Adventures (Parent/Child Series)**

Kids will be kids, whether they are fighting dragons, boredom at school, bad characters in their neighborhoods, or modern day treasure hunters. These four books offer boys and girls (with their mothers and/or fathers) a chance to talk about how they might face some of the scrapes and challenges in their lives. They also are a lot of fun to read! Each of these boys faces adventure in his own style. Joe relies on his friendships and his cleverness to get back home. Nick creates his own adventure with great wit and good humor. Junebug's sweet nature guides him to do what is right as he faces tough choices. Tony's curiosity does get him into trouble, but his calm thinking helps get him out again!

*(For grades 3-4.)*

Jon Scieszka, KNIGHTS OF THE KITCHEN TABLE

Andrew Clements, FRINDLE

Alice Mead, JUNEBUG

Avi, WINDCATCHER

## **We Are Family (Parent/Child Series)**

Ina R. Friedman, HOW MY PARENTS LEARNED TO EAT

Riki Levinson, WATCH THE STARS COME OUT

Gloria Jean Pinkney, BACK HOME

Chih-Yuan Chen, GUJI GUJI

Margaree King Mitchell, UNCLE JED'S BARBERSHOP

Patricia Polacco, THE KEEPING QUILT

Cynthia Rylant, WHEN I WAS YOUNG IN THE MOUNTAINS

Leslie Connor, MISS BRIDIE CHOSE A SHOVEL

## **Wings To Fly (Mother/Daughter Series)**

The books in this series were chosen because of the strength displayed by the young female characters as they face danger and learn to conquer their fears. Abbie Burgess and Sarah Noble were real little girls. Abbie Burgess was the daughter of a lighthouse keeper in Matinicus Rock, Maine in 1853. She is left in charge of the lights when a tremendous storm challenged Abbie to muster all of her strength and courage as she struggled to keep the lights burning. Sarah lived in New Milford, Connecticut in the early 1700's and faced dangers inherent to undeveloped areas. Amber Brown and Ramona Quimby are modern day girls who face fears which are more psychological, but nevertheless very real, as they move into new schools and family situations. Guided interpretive questioning encourages dialogue about these books. The questions will focus on the strengths of the female characters and the methods they used to master their fears.

*(For grades 3-4.)*

Peter and Connie Roop, KEEP THE LIGHTS BURNING, ABBIE

Alice Dalgliesh, THE COURAGE OF SARAH NOBLE

Paula Danziger, AMBER BROWN GOES FOURTH

Beverly Cleary, RAMONA QUIMBY, AGE 8

# ONE - SESSION BOOK DISCUSSIONS

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## **AL CAPONE DOES MY SHIRTS, Gennifer Choldenko**

Moose Flanagan's dad takes a job as a prison guard and moves the family to Alcatraz so his sister, who is autistic, can go to a special school in San Francisco. When Natalie is not accepted, they must rethink their plans. Moose becomes Natalie's afternoon caretaker and finds he has to look beyond his own needs to help meet hers. The story really heats up when Piper, the prison warden's daughter, involves Moose in a money-making laundry scheme, attracting business by telling folks that Al Capone is washing their clothes. This gives Moose an idea and he secretly writes asking Al Capone to help Natalie. Four weeks later, she is accepted to a brand-new school for autistic children. Compiled of Moose's diary entries dated January 4 through June 12, 1935, we see how this twelve-year-old boy adjusts to his new life and the responsibility of his sister.

## **ATHLETIC SHORTS, Chris Crutcher**

In *Athletic Shorts*, Chris Crutcher gives further insight into the lives of five characters who have appeared previously in his novels, and one character who is entirely new. As Crutcher says in his introduction to the book, "Some of these stories take place before the time of the book in which the characters appeared, some after, but all are enriched, in my mind, by that character's history in fiction". The stories included deal with some of the tough issues both teens and adults face today: homosexuality, death, revenge, racism, and bigotry, among others. They are a reflection of life as Chris Crutcher sees it, combining humor with difficult and serious situations, with athletics always playing an important part in the story and in the lives of his characters.

## **A BEAR NAMED TROUBLE, Marion Dane Bauer**

Jonathan, a ten year old with a passion for animals, is devastated when a brown bear kills his favorite animal at the zoo in Anchorage, Alaska. He vows to get even with the bear, and then finds revenge isn't all it's cracked up to be.

## **BLOOD ON THE RIVER, Elisa Carbone**

When 11-year old Samuel Collier is chosen to be Captain John Smith's page aboard the *Susan Constant* bound for the New World, it is the chance of a lifetime! He's heard that gold washes ashore with every tide, just there for the taking! But beginning with a stormy crossing, the experience of living in the cramped "tween deck with the gentlemen recruited for the journey, and his first encounter with the native people, Samuel realizes that this New World is nothing like what he imagined. When the summer of 1607 brings a mysterious illness and winter brings starvation, it's soon clear to Samuel that the settlers need to adapt new ways if they are to survive. As he matures and observes Captain Smith's wise diplomacy, Samuel begins to see that he can be whoever he wants to be in the new land. (For grades 4-8.)

## **BOOK OF DRAGONS, Michael Hague**

For thousands of years, the legendary dragon has inspired awe and wonder in cultures the world over. Now Michael Hague, one of America's most beloved painters of fantasy, boldly captures seventeen classic dragon tales. Within these pages are the stories of heroic dragon slayers such as Perseus, St. George, and Sigurd, as well as the magical writings of J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis. The mythical dragon will be very real indeed for all who read these enchanting tales.

## **BUD, NOT BUDDY, Christopher Paul Curtis**

In this Newbery Award winning book we are asked to believe that a ten-year-old boy, without resources other than his own self-constructed list of rules "To Have a Funner Life and Make a Better Liar Out of Yourself", will find love, a home and a real family. Such is the skill of Christopher Paul Curtis that we take all that and more with hardly a nod toward the percentages. Meet Bud, not Buddy, one of the most delightful young people you'll ever know. He belongs right in there with Maniac Magee and others of their ilk who enlighten the human experience for readers and make us wish we could step into the action to help.

## **THE CITY OF EMBER, Jeanne Duprau**

The city of Ember was built as a last refuge for the human race. Two hundred years later, the great lamps that light the city are beginning to flicker. When Lina finds part of an ancient message, she's sure it holds a secret that will save the city. She and her friend Doon must decipher the message before the lights go out on Ember forever!

## **CRASH, Jerry Spinelli**

John Patrick “Crash” Coogan got his nickname when he was a toddler by crashing into everything, including his cousin Bridget. Now in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade and on the football team, Crash still mows down everything in his path, including Penn Webb, his “nerdy,” vegetarian neighbor. When Penn becomes a cheerleader, and starts campaigning to halt the construction of a new mall, Crash and his best buddy, Mike Deluca, decide to make his life miserable. Crash, however, begins to question what they are doing, and ultimately, has to choose which side he’s on and who he really wants to be.

## **DAY OF TEARS, Julius Lester**

Based on the largest slave auction in American history known as “The Weeping Time”, *Day of Tears* takes you into the minds of the slaves and masters. Their tragic stories are tied together through the central character Emma who journeys from slavery to freedom, and lives to tell her grandchildren the story of “The Weeping Time”. (For grades 4-8.)

## **DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE, Peter Abrahams**

Welcome to Echo Falls. Home of a thousand secrets, where Ingrid Levin-Hill, super sleuth, never knows what will happen next. Ingrid is in the wrong place at the wrong time. Or at least her shoes are. Getting them back means getting involved in a murder investigation rivaling those solved by her idol, Sherlock Holmes, and Ingrid has enough on her plate with club soccer, school, and the plum role of Alice in the Echo Falls production of Alice in Wonderland. Echo Falls has turned into a nightmare, and Ingrid is determined to wake up.

## **EAGER, Helen Fox**

It’s the end of the 21st century and Gavin Bell and his teenage sister, Fleur, take it for granted that robots care for their every need. Robots wake you in the morning, turn on the lights, clean the house, baby sit and even talk to you. When their much-loved, old fashioned robot is slowing down, a family friend loans them EGR3, known as Eager, a brand-new, experimental robot. But when a new generation of ultra-high-tech, eerily human robots begin to act suspiciously, the Bells and Eager are drawn into a great adventure which test Eager’s abilities to the limit and has him questioning what it means to be alive. (For grades 4-8.)

## **THE FRIENDS, Kazumi Yumoto**

Sixth-graders Kiyama and his friends Kawabe and Yamashita become curious about death when Yamashita’s grandmother dies. Hoping to see death firsthand, they spy on an old man who looks like he will die soon. When the old man notices them, their curiosity turns into friendship, and they learn valuable lessons that will change their lives forever.

## **THE GATHERING, Virginia Hamilton**

The First Unit – Justice, the Watcher and balance of the unit’s strength; her identical twin brothers, Thomas, the magician, and Levi, the sufferer; and Dorian, the healer – return to the oppressive Dustland, a place in the distant future, to lead the thirsty Slakers from the desert. In doing so, they discover other life-forms gathered at the water hole and lead them all out of Dustland and into a high-tech city of domes, where, while battling an evil force known as Mal, the unit learns the ultimate fate of the earth and discovers the purpose of their journey.

## **THE GIVER, Lois Lowry**

In her Newbery Award-winning science fiction novel, *The Giver*, Lois Lowry imagines a future without conflict, where everything, even fear and pain, are nonexistent. Utopian-like in feel, this future world offers its inhabitants no choices, and even assigns them roles in the community --- roles to which they are consigned for a lifetime. When Jonas, Lowry's main protagonist, reaches the age of 12, he is chosen by the Committee of Elders to receive special training. In his role as The Receiver, he is to take on all the memories of his society, past and present. In his sessions with The Giver, a man he grows to love, Jonas soon learns his society's horrible secrets and must make one of the most important decisions of his young life

## **HALF AND HALF, Lensey Namioka**

Fiona is half and half: her father is Chinese and her mother is Scottish. Since Fiona looks more like her father, people expect her to be more interested in her Chinese heritage. But what about her Scottish half? When both pairs of grandparents visit at the same time, things really get complicated. And when forced to choose between dancing the Highland Reel or appearing with her father as the Chinese heroine of one of his children’s books, Fiona becomes confused about whom she really is. How do you balance being “half and half” and still feel like yourself? Come celebrate the diversity of cultures that blend together to make each of us so special.

(For grades 4-6.)

### **HOOT, Carl Hiaasen**

Middle Schooler Roy Eberhardt and his family have just moved to Coconut Grove, Florida. As the “new kid,” Roy is fresh prey for the local bully, who decides to attack him on the school bus. With his face mashed up against the window, Roy sees a curious sight-- a boy running away from the bus, not carrying books and not wearing shoes. Sensing intrigue, Roy sets himself on the boy’s trail uncovering the plight of miniature owls whose lives are endangered when a restaurant is scheduled to be built over their burrows. Join us as Roy and his two friends try their best to save the owls, which leads to the adventure of a lifetime. (Grades 4-8)

### **THE HOMEWORK MACHINE, Dan Gutman**

Four 5th graders at the Grand Canyon School are bound together by one very big secret: the homework machine! But when the machine, code-named Belch, does all their homework, these students suddenly have too much time on their hands which attracts a lot of attention - and attention is just what you don’t want when you are trying to keep a secret! Can these four unlikely friends keep their secret when the going gets rough? Join us for a lively discussion of this 2009 Nutmeg Award Nominee! (For kids in grades 4-6.)

### **HUSH, Jacqueline Woodson**

Toswiah Green's life ended the moment her policeman father decided to testify against a fellow officer. The Greens have had to change their identities and move to a different city. Now Toswiah is Evie Thomas, and that is the least of the changes. Her defeated father spends his days sitting by the window. Her mother can no longer work as a teacher, and now puts all her energy into their new church. Her only sister is making secret plans to leave. And Evie, struggling to find her way, wonders who she is now and how she can make her future as bright as her past once was.

### **IN DARKNESS, DEATH, Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler**

In the world of ninjas and the shogun, honor is everything. So when the Samurai Lord Inaba is discovered murdered in his sleep while under the protection of the shogun, the ruler is honor-bound to find the killer. Desperate for justice, he turns to the famous Judge Ooka – the Sherlock Holmes of eighteenth-century Japan – and his fourteen-year-old apprentice, Seikei, to investigate.

### **JOSHUA’S SONG, Joan Hiatt Harlow**

*Joshua’s Song* is the story of 13-year old Joshua who lives in Boston in 1919. As background, the reader is given a brief account of Joshua’s life. He comes from an affluent family and lives in a world of privilege. His entire world, as he knows it, changes when his successful and loving father dies in the influenza pandemic of 1918-1919. We are also told that Joshua, until his father’s death, sang with a boy’s choir. He has not been able to sing since the loss of his father. His mother takes in boarders to make ends meet. Joshua’s circumstances force him to quit his private school and go out to find work. Since his mother is so concerned with what other people will think, Joshua keeps his new job a secret from her, since he knows she would never approve.

### **LOCOMOTION, Jacqueline Woodson**

When Locomotion was seven years old, his life changed forever. Now he’s eleven, and his life is about to change again. His teacher, Ms. Marcus, is showing him ways to put his jumbled feelings on paper. And suddenly, Lonnie has a whole new way to tell the world about his life, his friends, his little sister, Lili, and even his foster mom, Miss Edna, who started out crabby but isn’t so bad after all. Nothing’s the same after you see it through Lonnie’s eyes – and hear it through his words.

### **MY TEACHER IS AN ALIEN, Bruce Coville**

Susan Simmons and the rest of the sixth grade return from spring vacation to find that Mrs. Schwartz, their teacher, has disappeared and they have a new teacher, Mr. John Smith. Mr. Smith, however, is very different; in fact, Susan discovers that he is an alien! At first, only Peter Thompson, the class brain, believes Susan, and the two set out to do something about Mr. Smith who seems to be plotting to kidnap five students. It is up to Susan and Peter to save themselves and the rest of the their classmates.

### **ODDLY ENOUGH, Bruce Coville**

In Bruce Coville’s collection of short fantasies, *Oddly Enough*, readers confront a world in which unicorns and vampires exist, and where it is worth one’s while not to leave things laying around or to create a mess. The stories in this collection unite reality and imagination in a variety of wild, sometimes riotous, sometimes scary ways.

### **ONCE UPON A MARIGOLD, Jean Ferris**

Christian is gaga for Princess Marigold. But he's just a commoner, and no match for royalty. Heck, he lives in a cave with a troll! And now he's discovered another reason to put his love-soggy heart on ice: Queen Olympia is scheming to take over the kingdom--and she'll bump off her own daughter to do it. Can Christian foil her diabolical plans?

### **THE OUTSIDE SHOT, Walter Dean Myers**

Lonnie Jackson has a basketball scholarship to Montclare State College in Indiana, a big chance for a street smart kid from Harlem. College ball, though, is a lot different from the games he's played before. The first thing he discovers is that he has to make the team, something he had assumed he's already done. Then Lonnie meets the Fat Man, a local gambler who tempts him to help fix games. It takes not only Lonnie's own courage, but the support of his friend Sherry and some big time help for Lonnie to make his "outside shot" at a bright future.

### **PROJECT MULBERRY, Linda Sue Park**

Julia Song and her friend Patrick want to team up to win a blue ribbon at the state fair, but they can't agree on the perfect project. Then Julia's mother suggests they raise silkworms as she did years ago in Korea. Julia wants to do something more American, but Patrick is excited by the idea and finally convinces her. They quickly realize that raising silkworms is a lot tougher than they thought. And Julia never suspected that she'd be discussing the fate of her and Patrick's project with Ms. Park, the author of this book!

### **RABBIT HILL, Robert Lawson**

"New Folks coming, Mother—Father, new Folks coming into the Big House!" shouted Little Georgie the Rabbit. All the animals of the Hill were very excited about the news and wondered how things would change. Will the new Folks bring dogs, traps, and guns? Or as George hopes, will they be planting Folks who would care for the land and grow rich crops? It had been years since there had been a garden at the House.

### **THE SECRET GARDEN, Frances Hodgson Burnett**

Mary is an unhappy orphan forced to live in the home of a wealthy guardian—a busy man who has no time at all for her. But when Mary meets her guardian's mysterious son—and discovers a secret garden hidden on the estate—a startling change begins to come over her, and life for everyone is never quite the same!

### **SHAKESPEARE'S SECRET, Elise Broach**

Sixth-grader Hero is captivated by the stories about her new home, especially the mystery of the missing million-dollar diamond and a 500-year-old necklace. As she searches for clues to their whereabouts she stumbles upon another perplexing question: Who was the real William Shakespeare?

### **THE SIN EATER, Gary D. Schmidt**

Moving to his grandparents' centuries-old New Hampshire farm after the death of his mother, Cole becomes concerned as his father's grief continues to deepen. But the family stories he hears about a mysterious "Sin Eater" enable him to find peace and to connect with his ancestors.

### **SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES, Ray Bradbury**

Will Halloway and Jim Nightshade, both thirteen years old, live in a small, peaceful town where nothing much seems to happen. But floating beneath the surface of the town are unfulfilled wishes and dreams, and when Cooger and Dark's Pandemonium Shadow Show arrives just before Halloween, those wishes and dreams begin to surface. Will, Jim and Will's father, Charles Halloway, who is feeling his age and lost opportunities more and more, seem to be the only ones who can see the evil behind Dark and his ominous show. The three watch as Dark grants wishes and fulfills dreams, trapping their friends in nightmare. When Mr. Dark at last comes for Will and Jim, only Charles Halloway and his love for the boys can save them.

### **STAYING FAT FOR SARAH BYRNES, Chris Crutcher**

Eric "Moby" Calhoun and Sarah Byrnes face the world together because they are both different. Eric sees himself as "twelve pounds of mashed potatoes in an eight pound bag". Although he is big, swimming has toughened and slimmed him down. Sarah is "truly one of the ugliest human beings outside the circus. When she was three...she pulled a pot of boiling spaghetti off the stove onto herself, leaving horrible burn scars covering her face and hands". United by their flaws, they have faced life together since grade school. But Eric's friendship is suddenly no longer enough to support Sarah and he doesn't know why. Sara has withdrawn into a world of silence. As Eric slowly discovers the reasons for this, an ugly picture of child abuse emerges, but with his help and humor, justice finally prevails.

### **TANGERINE, Edward Bloor**

Paul Fisher not only has grown up in the menacing shadow of his football star brother Eric, but has a vision impairment. Paul wears thick glasses, and after the Fisher family moves to Florida, his school bars him from playing soccer because he is classified handicapped. Then a sinkhole swallows part of Paul's school and he must transfer to the middle school in nearby Tangerine. There, he seizes the opportunity to rid himself of the handicap label and play the game he loves. In the process, Paul learns strong lessons about prejudice, the treatment of the environment individual courage, truth, and the nature of evil.

### **TONING THE SWEEP, Angela Johnson**

Emily, who is fourteen years old and her mother, Diane, travel from Cleveland to the California desert to visit Grandma Ola, who has cancer, and bring her back "home". Representing three generations of African-American women, each of them shares their perspectives on life, death, and themselves ("toning the sweep" refers to an old custom Ola remembers from her childhood in North Carolina about striking a "sweep" – a kind of plow – to ring a dead person's soul to heaven).

### **VAMPIRE HIGH, Douglas Rees**

Cody and his family have just moved from California to Massachusetts and he is not happy at all. His plan is to flunk out of school so his parents will realize how miserable he is decide to move back home and all will be well. Simple, right? Wrong! Instead, they send him to Vlad Dracul High School, where the teachers and students are all unusually tall, the principal has a pet wolf, and the school campus is posh beyond belief! When Cody sees a kid's fangs, the truth sinks in: his classmates are vampires! In fact, Cody and a handful of other non-vampires have only been accepted so they can swim on the state required water polo team (vampires are deathly afraid of water). Compete and Cody is guaranteed straight A's. Sounds like a great deal, so why does this cushy arrangement bother Cody so much? Join us as Cody adjusts to this weird school, stands up to bullies, falls in love with a vampire princess and finds a unique solution to a problem that changes things at Vlad Dracul forever. *(For grades 7 and 8.)*

### **WALK TWO MOONS, Sharon Creech**

While 13-year-old Salamanca Tree Hiddle travels from Ohio to Idaho with her eccentric grandparents to visit her mother who left the year before and never returned, she tells them the story of her friend Phoebe, whose mother also left without explanation. Sharing this story is Sal's way of coping with her own sense of loss.

### **Z FOR ZACHARIAH, Robert C. O'Brien**

After a nuclear holocaust destroys much of the United States, fifteen –year-old Ann Burden believes she is the only person left alive. Amazingly, the valley in which she lives has escaped devastation and she has been able to live comfortably alone for over a year. Ann's peaceful, if lonely, existence is interrupted when one day when she notices a column of smoke in the distance moving closer. Uncertain who is approaching, Ann leaves her family home and retreats to a cave in the hills until she can be certain that it is safe to return. From the cave, Ann watches a man wearing a plastic suit enter the valley. She remains in hiding until the stranger becomes ill and she feels compelled to nurse him back to health. Once he is well, he asserts his will almost immediately. Gradually, his behavior becomes increasingly erratic until Ann begins to fear for her life.

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