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**PROMOTING STUDENT INTEREST IN THE WHOLE LANGUAGE
READING PROGRAM FOR GRADES 4-6 IN
SOMERS POINT, NJ, INCLUDING AN
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

by
Diane M. Drayer

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Masters of Arts Degree in the Graduate School
of Rowan University
May, 1997

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved May 8, 1997

ABSTRACT

Diane M. Drayer, Promoting Student Interest in the Whole Language Reading Program for Grades 4-6 in Somers Point, NJ, Including an Annotated Bibliography.
1997, Dr. Lynne Levy, School and Public Librarianship.

A reading interest survey was conducted in an attempt to evaluate the whole language reading program in the intermediate grades 4-6. The survey was distributed to seventeen 4-6 grade classes, and students were asked to record their favorite books of the past year. Novels that are a part of our whole language reading program overwhelmingly ranked as student favorites. The survey resulted in the conclusion that literature in our reading program interested students the most.

Based on this information, an annotated bibliography was created for each novel read as part of our whole language program in Somers Point. Thematically-related complementary literature of read-alouds, picture books, nonfiction, and supplementary novels of an easy as well as a challenging level were included in each list. This created a useful reference resource for classroom, gifted, and basic skills teachers as well as librarians in recommending books to students who find a particular interest in the classroom reading novels.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Diane M. Drayer, Promoting Student Interest in The Whole Language Reading Program for Grades 4-6 in Somers Point, NJ, Including an Annotated Bibliography.
1997, Dr. Lynne Levy, School and Public Librarianship.

A reading interest survey was conducted in an attempt to evaluate the whole language reading program in the intermediate grades 4-6. The survey resulted in the conclusion that literature in our reading program interested students the most. An annotated bibliography of thematically-related literature was created for each novel to be used as a reference source.

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Chapter 1 Introducing and Defining the Problem

Statement of the Problem

As a teacher of fifth grade in a suburban school district serving grades kindergarten through eight, I am conscious of the reading material my students choose to read on their own. During the past several years, I have noticed that students seem to read less and less as they become more socially involved with clubs, sports and activities. I notice students reading trendy popular fiction during their sustained silent reading time, yet immensely enjoying the novels we read in our whole language program. I found myself wondering which books were truly their favorites? I thought perhaps it was what we were reading in class, but I couldn't be sure without further investigation.

I realize that the teacher's power of suggestion is very effective in promoting quality literature. As I have progressed through the graduate program in School and Public Librarianship, I have become more aware of literature that I could personally and confidently recommend to students. The average teacher, not having received this type of training, nor having an interest in children's literature, may not be aware of new literature as it is published and may not be comfortable in recommending books to students.

I wanted to survey students in grades 4-6 to find out what their favorite books were. If they were books from our novel reading program, I could formulate an annotated bibliography of related books that could be recommended by teachers to promote and

enhance the classroom novels, as well as facilitate thematically the independent reading habits of our students inside and outside the classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine student interests in literature and support the whole language curriculum. First, a comprehensive review of the literature relating to whole language and the characteristics of student interests in literature will be made. Secondly, a description of the survey I conducted and the results will be shared. Finally, an annotated bibliography of literature to supplement and extend reading selections will be included to promote literature appreciation and integrate reading throughout the curriculum.

Hopefully this research will be used by other teachers and librarians in the Somers Point School District. I think my research will help the librarians with suggestions in new literature for them to add to our aging intermediate library collection. Once teachers have seen the results of the survey and what I have done in the production of the annotated bibliography, they will use it and add to it, while being more confident in promoting quality literature.

Methods of Investigation

Current information on literature and student interest will be researched for the literature survey, relying on periodicals and books.

In the survey I conducted in the Spring of 1996, students of grades 4-6 were asked

to name their ten favorite books that they had read in the last year. The survey results will be shared, and an annotated bibliography will be included based on the survey results.

Limitations of the Study

This study will be limited to the reading interests of the intermediate grades 4-6 due to my familiarity with the intermediate student and the library literature available to support the very habit librarians and good teachers are trying to promote.

The student survey has limitations because it was given in school and students had no prompts or books in front of them to help them remember their favorites. They were asked to write the titles of their top ten favorite books, and the authors if they could remember them. Certain answers may have been written because students felt it was expected due to the school setting, or because the books were read and focused on so much during classroom use.

Books chosen for the annotated bibliographies had a minimum of two reviews by professional periodicals, and may or may not be award-winning or best noted books. Numerous resources were researched in forming the annotated bibliographies. The overall majority of titles are currently in print, however it is obvious that as time passes, some books may not be available or may become outdated. Certainly the purpose in compiling these bibliographies is to create a beginning, rather than an exhaustive end, for the promotion of quality literature. It is my hope that librarians and teachers alike will add and expand the listings I have begun.

Chapter 2 Literature Search

In 1958, nearly 100% of all teachers in the United States taught reading with a skills driven basal reading program; in 1980, 80-90% still did (Koeller, 1981). However, today, in the late 1990s, using trade books, novels or literature to teach reading in the classroom has become a way of life for most American teachers. Kenneth Goodman, co-director of the Program in Language and Literacy at the University of Arizona, has long been an advocate of literature use. "Basal readers, workbooks, skills sequences, and practice materials that fragment the process are unacceptable to whole language teachers. Their presentation of language phenomena is unscientific, and they steal teachers' and learners' time away from productive reading and writing. Many whole language teachers don't use basals at all, but build their programs around children's literature, often in thematic units" (Goodman, 1986, p.29). While literature groups do not focus specifically on reading skills, the use of novels significantly raises reading ability (Tunmel and Jacobs, 1989). Using literature in a holistic fashion not only increases student achievement, but more importantly increases and improves student interest in reading (Ekdredge and Butterfield, 1986).

This transformation has occurred none too soon. In *Illiterate America* (1985), Jonathan Kozol, quoting 1979 Ford Foundation figures, estimated that sixty million Americans were at least functionally illiterate, and quoted UN statistics to the effect that

the United States ranked as low as 49th in literacy levels among 158 UN countries. According to the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress report, the NAEP Reading Report Card, reading scores have been in a serious decline. This has been the case in every area of the country, and across every demographic group (Leonhardt, 1996).

At present, only 34% of high school seniors test at a level of proficiency or above in reading. These figures are even worse for eighth grade, and by twelfth grade, a large percentage of poor readers have dropped out (Leonhardt, 1996).

The latest National Assessment of Educational Progress (Leonhardt, 1996) shows a marked decline in inferential comprehension among secondary-level readers, and a significant decline in the degree to which students value and enjoy reading by the time they reach high school.

Educators consider this a crisis, while at the same time scholars note that the level of literacy required to function in American society is steadily increasing (Atwell, 1987). Larry Mikulecky, a researcher at Indiana University, observed that "Up through World War II newspapers were written at about the sixth grade level. Now wire service articles come out on the eleventh grade level, and even sports pages are around the ninth or tenth" (Fiske, 1983, p.87).

As children grow older, their parents stop reading aloud to them and their interest in reading wanes, as does their enjoyment of it. The second AFT-Chrysler Report on "Kids, Parenting and Reading" was based on a nationwide survey of young people aged nine to seventeen (Chrysler Learning Connection, 1994). To determine the level of their interest in reading, youngsters were asked which of five activities would be the hardest to

give up for a week. Nine to eleven-year-olds put playing sports first, while reading came in second. Fifteen to seventeen-year-olds, conversely, put reading at the very end of their lists. Their preferences included playing sports, talking on the phone, listening to music, and playing video games. Reading is usually a solitary activity, and as children get older, their interest in being socially interactive is more important. For older students, social activities dominate the list.

Enjoyment of reading, like interest in reading, tends to taper off as students age. Seventy-one percent of the youngest children in the Chrysler study stated that they enjoyed reading. Less than half (forty-four percent) of the oldest children expressed the same enthusiasm for the printed word (Chrysler Learning Connection, 1994). While conducting the study, Dr. Hartwig did find some encouraging news among the disheartening news above: most of the young people in the survey stated that they did read mainly for pleasure. One key to increasing young students' reading, Dr. Hartwig concluded, is to put students in touch with reading materials that promise to provide them with an enjoyable experience (Chrysler Learning Connection, 1994).

Several studies have focused on how children's interest in reading material influences their comprehension of that material. Early studies show that elementary school children better comprehend high-interest than low-interest material (Baker, Afflerback, et al., 1996). Studies of fifth and sixth graders (Reminger, 1992) show that student interest in materials read enhanced comprehension, even if these materials were more difficult for the children, in spite of some gender differences. It appears that the level of students' interest in reading material clearly corresponds to their level of attention and motivation,

the level in which they use effective learning strategies, and their level of comprehension (Baker, Afflerbach, et al., 1996).

The idea of gender differences in student reading interests is not new, and in fact is substantiated by many studies. One such study, assessing preschool children's preferences, conducted in 1979 by Jerri J. Kropp and Charles F. Halverson at the University of Georgia (as cited in Langerman, 1990, p.133), found that "Girls preferred the story with a female character and a 'feminine activity' and least preferred the story with a male character and a masculine activity. For the boys, the reverse was true." Mary Watson, in her May of 1985 study (as cited in Langerman, 1990, p.133), noted that this preference seems to extend into the middle years of childhood as well, although there were more similarities among reading selections than before, such as students tend to read less nonfiction as they grew older, and boys were reading more family stories and historical fiction than before, yet still not more than girls.

In a study by Joan T. Feeley in 1982 (as cited in Langerman, 1990, p. 133), societal changes were noted to have influenced reading interest. She surveyed fourth and fifth graders in the same school district at the beginning and the end of the 1970s. Feeley observed that in both studies the subject of sports headed the boys' list, and the middle position was held by nonfiction informational material. Books regarding people with everyday problems and the arts came in last on the list. Girls' interests changed most dramatically. The "sports" subject area moved up to the middle position from last place, reversing positions with social studies and science, which fell to the last position. Feeley attributed this to the women's liberation movement of the 1970s, when girls became more

active sports participants.

The common ingredient for interest in all books is action, and it is in the preferential type of action where divergent interests lie. Students seem to have a permanent interest for one of two main types of action (Leonhart, 1996). Solving personal problems and learning about life can be classified thematically as interpersonal action. Action involving fighting someone or something outside one's friends' and family's immediate bond, such as monsters, wars and killers, provide a good versus evil action theme. So much of recent nonfiction literature combines both types of interests, where global concerns are mixed in with interpersonal issues of growth and problem-solving. Books combining interpersonal relationship action with adventure and action are loved by almost all readers (Leonhardt, 1996). Novels that involve the reader in a realistic situation with problems that could have happened to them, and books whose author's style creates an exciting, fast-paced story that sweeps them up in the action, appeal to readers most often (Leonhardt, 1996).

Dr. Howard Gardner, the author of *Multiple Intelligences* (Basic Books, 1993) desires parents and teachers to help children grow beyond the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic. "A very important kind of intelligence is understanding other people" (Chrysler Learning Connection, 1994, p.A1). Reading books about interpersonal relationships and problem solving involve the reader through psychological thought processes of the author or the main character, lending a point of view that might otherwise not be considered. This in turn allows students to develop a more empathetic attitude socially.

More good news for overall student development is that in regard to school reading, everything from student's early fantasy, espionage, and science-fiction has given action/adventure readers an understanding and interest in political science and history. They have developed an understanding of power, manipulation, and an interest in monarchies. Even more important is the developing capacity and appreciation for detail that becomes necessary for any serious historical study (Leonhardt, 1996).

According to Mary Leonhardt, a teacher-turned-author whose specialty is reading, "Special interest books are often the earliest, easiest hook to get kids reading, and it is an incredibly effective way to build a love and a habit of reading" (Leonhardt, 1996, p.130). Leonhardt is a strong advocate of books that hook. "If we can find books that seem to capture and illuminate the individual experiences of our children, they will be pulled forever into reading as a way of understanding their world" (1996, p.124). Finding books that parallel cultural backgrounds, appeal to fantasy wishes, or appeal to special interests are ways to sink in hooks. Books that fall into categories such as sports, fantasy, magic, science fiction, psycho-killer, horror, war, romance mysteries, animals, and local settings are just a few of the many things that could hook a reader. If the book is written with a comic tone, so much the better. Comedy is really a universal hook, probably because funny stories are usually happy stories, or perhaps because poor readers might first need a book that makes them laugh to help them see that the dreaded chore of reading can actually be a happy and fulfilling experience (Leonhardt, 1996).

Using this knowledge to our advantage, and ultimately the advantage of our students, makes complete sense. There are many resources available to media specialists

and teachers that group fiction and nonfiction books together by genre, themes, age levels, reading interests, and even "hooks." Literature can be incorporated across the curriculum into all classroom activities. Every attempt to interrelate reading, writing, speaking and listening while at the same time integrating units or curriculum content areas will enhance learning (Fogarty, 1992). Student's resistant attitudes toward reading can be alleviated if teachers use resources to complement and supplement the textbook or reading novel. Not only will the text or novel be viewed in a less threatening way, it may also give the student a choice in what to read that may prove to be more interesting and relevant, and thus bridge the gap between what we choose to teach and what students desire to learn.

Chapter 3 Description of School

The Jordan Road School is the largest and newest of the three elementary schools in Somers Point, New Jersey, having been built in 1967. Since then, it has had two additions to upgrade existing facilities and to accommodate growth. It houses students from kindergarten through grade 8, whereas the other two schools facilitate grades kindergarten through 6. Mainland Regional High School in Linwood accepts students from the sending districts of Somers Point, Linwood and Northfield to accommodate grades 9 through 12.

Somers Point is a mainland community at the southern end of Atlantic County. It is bordered by a bay area of the Atlantic Ocean, opposite the island of Ocean City. The Great Egg Harbor forms the southwestern border. The population of the city of Somers Point serves the tourism, casino, and service industries, as well as local businesses that form the economic base. To obtain an idea of what type of student we serve, a look at the school setting is needed.

The family structure of our students is diverse. It ranges from single parent households living transiently in motels to two parent family households in large sprawling homes overlooking the bay and the Ocean City skyline. These home situations contain the usual gamut of student intellectual ability: those who come to school to be fed and "escape" from home life, and those who come fed and challenged to nourish their inquisitive minds. Consequently, there is an educational support staff in the way of special

education and basic skills personnel, as well as a program for "gifted and talented" students who excel over and above the bright learner.

The overall student population in the three schools that comprise our district is approximately 1,200 students. The student group from the district's intermediate grades of 4-6 encompassed by this study is approximately 450.

These students all have access to school libraries. The two smaller schools have libraries that service the needs of all grades from K-6. Jordan Road School has had two libraries since 1991, when the most recent expansion included a primary library serving grades K-3. The intermediate library now serves grades 4-8.

Unfortunately, since the new addition on the building, most of the funding has gone to the purchase of technology. All libraries have benefited from this, with pods of three computers and at least one modem to facilitate Internet access in each of the four libraries. It is fortunate that funds have been designated for this, but the print collection has suffered greatly with little or no updating. During my practicum in the spring of 1996, I conducted a selective random sampling of the books in the collection serving grades 4-8 and found the average age to be 27.5 years.

If one of the purposes of the library is to support and supplement our whole language movement and our novel reading program in particular, we need to find funds to update our collection. Some of the books in the annotated bibliography which follows are books that are already part of our collection. The majority of books recommended should be considered for purchase to help update the collection and support the whole language reading program used by the district.

Chapter 4 Methodology

In the spring of 1996 I began my practicum for my library/media degree in the Intermediate Library of Jordan Road School. As I shelved books and checked books for our students, I couldn't help but notice the popularity of the Goosebump and Babysitter books for not only my own fifth grade class, but also many others in grades 4-6.

In 1991 teachers and administrators alike had decided that it was best, in light of changing educational philosophies, to make a break from the basal reading program all together, in favor of teaching reading through novels selected to illustrate important themes. Having served on the district novel selection committee for the advent of reading via the whole language approach in 1992, I was curious as to how these books fared when compared to Goosebumps and Babysitters Club books from the perspective of the students. No research or follow-up had been done to evaluate our novel program thus far, so I began to contemplate how this should be done. After consulting the three library/media specialists and several teachers within grades 4-6, I concluded that the best people to evaluate the progress of our novel program were the students themselves. Student interest would be the best way to evaluate the success of our novel reading program, as I saw it.

Many parents had brought it to my attention at conference time that the majority of literature their children read and collected at home were Goosebumps, Babysitters, and Sweet Valley High books. They, as well as I, were very concerned. How do we get

students to delve into more meaty, substantial books? I know from whole language training that there are many ways to do this. Some begin in the home, but many ways could be addressed in school. Teachers need to set examples by what they personally read, and they need to share that with their students, as well as allowing students to observe them reading. Students need to be read to, even at the ages of 9-12, to introduce more complicated plots, characterization, and vocabulary. Students also need guidance to find books that interest them that are related to the novels read collectively in class. This guidance should be done by the classroom teachers as well as the library/media specialists.

I theorized that if the classroom novels were the students' favorites, a resource packet or annotated bibliography needed to be made for each classroom teacher that would include suggestions for read aloud books, other classroom novels related to one or more themes covered in the classroom novel, and perhaps even more advanced books for the teachers to read themselves and share with the students. If the student favorites were the popular series books, I could develop a listing of other series books that contained increasingly difficult plots along the same lines as the series' themes, to encourage growth toward more challenging material.

The Survey

A "Favorite Books Questionnaire" was formulated, copied, and distributed to all seventeen 4-6 classrooms, with a cover letter for the teacher explaining how the survey would be conducted and when it was due back to me. This questionnaire (see appendix) was very basic, and asked students to recall their five favorite books that they had read

within the past twelve months. They could write the author if they knew it, but it was not necessary.

Survey Results and Subsequent Project

Once the results were in, I tabulated each student's list by grade level to produce a "top ten" list of books for each grade that was posted in all school libraries for everyone to see. The overall favorites, surprisingly enough, were the classroom novels. They accounted for the top six in the fourth grade survey, the top seven in the fifth grade survey, and six were among the top seven in the sixth grade list. This was very rewarding. The Goosebumps books were big favorites, but hadn't proven to outshine the novels we were using in the classroom.

The teachers of grades 4-6 were very happy with the results of the survey. It was the first collective evaluation of our novel program, and it indicated to us that what we were doing in the classroom was as rewarding to the students as it was to us.

The students were very pleased with the results, too. They discussed the survey with their teachers, their library/media specialists, and each other. They were also impressed with the results at the other grade levels. Students looking forward to going into grades 4-6 became curious to discover if they would agree with their peers' interests once they were in their grade. Students that had passed through one or more of grades 4-6 discussed whether they agreed or disagreed with the survey results. The survey stirred up a lot of positive discussion and comparison of literature that I had not anticipated, among students, faculty and administrators alike.

Enthused by these results, I researched reliable sources for suggestions and developed an annotated bibliography for each novel on the district's reading list to enrich classroom and independent reading. I have tried not to repeat any one literature source on two lists, even though some books could be included on more than one list based on content and theme. Literature from various grade levels is included in each listing to facilitate use by "gifted" as well as basic skills students in capturing some of the essence of the feature novel. Picture books are also recommended in some lists for an easy read-aloud to introduce or supplement the novel. Read-alouds on a more advanced level have been included in many of the lists to pique interest, introduce more difficult vocabulary, and carry the theme to a higher level.

Many resources were used to compile the annotations. The Fourth Edition of Best Books for Children lists books by categories. This resource was only moderately helpful because many books listed in it are no longer in print. Jim Trelease's Read Aloud Handbook was also a helpful resource, especially in locating time-tested and time-honored classics. Teachers and library/media specials were even consulted for books that they utilized. Students have even suggested books for me to include that are related to books on the list in one way or another.

The most helpful resource of all was the Fall/Winter 1996 "Titlewave" CD-ROM produced by Follett Library Resources. It is actually the jobber's catalog, but literature can be easily located by subject, author or title. Literature grouped by theme can be narrowed down in field by the number of reviews, reading level, interest level, publishers, and date of publication, among others. Annotations are given for each entry, awards are noted,

periodical reviews are listed, and if a book cannot be located, it is most likely out of print.

The listing that follows includes all the novels currently used in Somers Point's reading program for grades 4-6. The following annotated bibliography is organized by grade level, with each grade level novel listing as its preface. Some of the suggested literature is contained in one or more of the school libraries, and may or may not be in some of the limited classroom collections. The majority of books will be suggested for new purchase to the library/media specialists to update the collection and better facilitate the enrichment and enjoyment of reading.

This is by no means an exhaustive listing. It is intended as a stepping stone to invite teachers and library/media specialists alike to implement, augment and contribute to with additional resources.

Somers Point Whole Language Novel Listing - Grades 4-6

Fourth Grade:

Be a Perfect Person
The Cricket in Times Square
Dear Mr. Henshaw
Harriet the Spy
The Hundred Dresses
Journey to America
Little House in the Big Woods
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe
Phantom Tollbooth
Pippi Longstocking
Sarah, Plain and Tall

Fifth Grade:

Ben and Me
The Borrowers
Bridge to Terabithia
From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler
In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson
Indian in the Cupboard
Island of the Blue Dolphins
Little House on the Prairie
Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH
Number the Stars
Souder

Sixth Grade:

Anne of Green Gables
Divorce Express
The Endless Steppe
The Long Winter
Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry
Sign of the Beaver
The Upstairs Room
Where the Red Fern Grows
The Witch of Blackbird Pond
A Wrinkle in Time

Somers Point Whole Language Novel Listing

Fourth Grade

Be a Perfect Person in Just Three Days

The Cricket in Times Square

Dear Mr. Henshaw

Harriet the Spy

The Hundred Dresses

Journey to America

Little House in the Big Woods

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

Phantom Tollbooth

Pippi Longstocking

Sarah, Plain and Tall

Be a Perfect Person in Three Days
by Stephen Marks

4th Grade Novel



Book summary: Milo, tired of problems with his sister, parents and classmates, finds a book in the library which promises to make him perfect in just three days.

Complementary literature:

Blume, Judy. Freckle Juice. NY: Dell, 1986.

Summary: A gullible second grader pays \$0.50 for a recipe to grow freckles.

Corbett, Scott. The Lemonade Trick. NY: Scholastic, 1988.

Summary: A brew from his magic chemistry set changes Kerby into a perfect gentleman. Unfortunately, it has the opposite effect on good boys.

Gardiner, John Reynolds. Top Secret. NY: Bantam, 1987.

Summary: Allen is convinced he can solve the world's hunger problem, and when no one believes him, he goes to the President of the United States.

Lowry, Lois. Anastasia Krupnick. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1979.

Summary: A lively romp with an intelligent and articulate ten-year-old girl leading the way. Three sequels are:

Anastasia Again!

Anastasia at Your Service

Anastasia, Ask Your Analyst

Merrill, Jean. The Toothpaste Millionaire. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.

Summary: Kate tells the delightful story of her school friend, Rufus, who challenges the entire business community by marketing a cheaper and better toothpaste product. He makes over a million dollars.

The Cricket in Times Square
by George Seldon

4th Grade Novel



Book summary: This is the fanciful story of a cat and mouse living in Times Square. They discover a very talented musical cricket, and help him improve business at the newsstand run by Mario and his family. This is a story of friendship and personal sacrifice.

Complementary literature:

Brown, Margaret Wise. Sneakers: Seven Stories about a Cat. NY: Harper, 1979.

Summary: Sneakers, a cat, has several adventures in this old favorite.

Buchwald, Emilie. Floramel and Esteban. NY: Harper, 1970.

Summary: The story of friendship between an egret and a cow.

Dahl, Roald. Fantastic Mr. Fox. NY: Puffin, 1988.

Summary: Three farmers, each one meaner than the next, try all-out warfare to get rid of the fox and his family.

Erickson, Russell E. Warton and Morton. NY: Lothrop, Lee and Shepard Co., 1976.

Summary: Two brother toads, off on a camping trip, are separated during a flash flood. Before reuniting, they have much more adventure than they bargained for.

Lawson, Robert. Rabbit Hill. NY: Penguin Books, 1978.

Summary: New folks are coming to live in the Big House. The small creatures of a Connecticut countryside, each with a distinct personality, wonder if they will plant a garden and thus be good providers. A Newbery Award Book.

The sequel: The Tough Winter

Steig, William. Abel's Island. NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985.

Summary: Castaway on an uninhabited island, a very civilized mouse named Abel finds his resourcefulness and endurance tested to the limit as he struggles to return to his beloved wife and home.

White, E.B. Charlotte's Web. NY: Harper and Row, 1980.

Summary: The classic, whimsical barnyard fable about a spider who saves the life of Wilbur, the pig.

White, E.B. The Trumpet of the Swan. NY: Harper, 1970.

Summary: Louis, a voiceless trumpeter swan, is befriended by Sam. He learns to play the trumpet, and finds fame, fortune, and fatherhood.

Dear Mr. Henshaw
by Beverly Cleary

4th Grade Novel



Book summary: In his letters to his favorite author, ten-year-old Leigh reveals his problems in coping with his parents' divorce, being the new boy in school, and generally finding his own place in the world. Also by the author: the Ramona the Pest series.

Complementary literature:

Dahl, Roald. Danny, the Champion of the World. NY: Viking Penguin, 1988.

Summary: This is the tender and exciting story of a motherless boy and his father and their great adventure together. Teachers should explain the custom of "poaching" in England before going too deeply into the story. This is a good novel to compare the experiences of the main character with Leigh Botts, the boy in Dear Mr. Henshaw.

Giff, Patricia Reilly. Rat Teeth. NY: Dell, 1985.

Summary: Fifth-grader Cliffie feels that nothing has been right in his life since his parents got their divorce and his front teeth began growing out over his lower lip.

Hurwitz, Johanna. DeDe Takes Charge! NY: Beech Tree Books, 1992.

Summary: A year after her father has left home for good, fifth-grader DeDe helps her mother cope with the realities of life after divorce.

Hurwitz, Johanna. Yellow Blue Jay. NY: Beech Tree Books, 1993.

Summary: A shy, city-boy named Jay finds that two weeks at a Vermont cabin, shared with another family, is not as bad as he feared.

Jukes, Mavis. Getting Even. NY: Knopf, 1989.

Summary: Finding herself the victim of an obnoxious classmate, ten-year-old Maggie receives conflicting advice from her crazy friend Iris and both of her parents, who are still at war two years after their divorce.

Patneau, David. Dark, Starry Morning: Stories of this World and Beyond. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman, 1995.

Summary: A collection of six stories in which young people learn to cope with problems such as death, divorce, and moving; sometimes with the help of supernatural forces.

Pryor, Bonnie. Rats, Spiders, & Love. NY: W. Morrow, 1986.

Summary: Samantha, a middle child who envies certain qualities in her older brother and younger sister, discovers her mother is planning to remarry and schemes to prevent it.

Harriet the Spy
by Louise Fitzhugh

4th Grade Novel



Book summary: Eleven-year-old Harriet keeps notes on her classmates and neighbors in a secret notebook, but when some of the students read the notebook, they seek revenge.

Complementary literature:

Kudlinski, Kathleen V. Lone Star: A Story of the Texas Rangers. NY: Viking, 1994.
Summary: In 1847, eleven-year-old Clay dreams of becoming a Texas Ranger so that he can exact revenge upon the Comanche Indians who attacked his family. Personal experience acquaints him with the brutal reality of Ranger activities.

Rockwell, Thomas. How to Fight a Girl. NY: Dell, 1988.
Summary: Joe and Alan's plan to get revenge on Billy backfires when their secret weapon, the prettiest girl in their fifth grade class, becomes Billy's best friend instead.

Roos, Steven. Never Trust a Sister Over Twelve. NY: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, 1993.
Summary: Feeling rejected and ignored by her twelve-year-old sister Ginger, Suki enlists her best friends in the fourth grade for a grand scheme of revenge.

Scribner, Virginia. Gopher Draws Conclusions. NY: Viking, 1994.
Summary: When Kevin wins an art contest using a drawing that Gopher had given him, Gopher must make a difficult choice between revenge and saving their friendship.

Sharmat, Marjorie Weinman. Getting Something on Maggie. NY: Harper & Row, 1971.
Summary: After Thad embarrasses Maggie and she retaliates by embarrassing him even more; he plots revenge.

The Hundred Dresses
by Eleanor Estes

4th Grade Novel



Book summary: In winning a medal she is no longer there to receive, a tight-lipped little Polish girl teaches her American classmates a lesson.

Complementary literature:

Burnes, Frances Hodgson. Sara Crewe. NY: Scholastic, 1981.

Summary: When she is orphaned, the star pupil of Miss Minchin's boarding school in London becomes a penniless, friendless, ward of the cruel Miss Minchin. This is a good read-aloud to compare to The Hundred Dresses.

Byars, Betsy C. The 18th Emergency. NY: Puffin Books, 1981.

Summary: When the toughest boy in school swears to kill him, twelve-year-old Mouse finds little help from friends and must prepare for this emergency alone.

DeClements, Barthe. Nothing's Fair in Fifth Grade. NY Puffin Books, 1990.

Summary: Initially repelled by an overweight new student who has serious home problems, the fifth grade class finally learns to accept her.

Holmes, Mary Z. For Bread. Austin, TX: Raintree Steck-Vaughn Publishing, Inc., 1992.

Summary: In 1893 in Buffalo, New York, thirteen-year-old Stefan helps his financially troubled Polish American family survive hard times by making and selling drawings.

Mazer, Norma Fox. Mrs. Fish, Ape and Me, the Dump. NY: Avon, 1984

Summary: A friendless girl, teased mercilessly at school because her uncle manages the town dump, finds a friend in Mr Fish, the school custodian, and gradually life becomes more bearable. A great read-aloud companion book to the feature title.

Mills, Lauren A. The Rag Coat. Boston, MA: Little Brown, 1991.

Summary: Minna proudly wears her new coat made of clothing scraps to school, where the other children laugh at her until she tells them the stories behind the scraps.

Park, Barbara. The Kid in the Red Jacket. NY: Knopf, 1987.

Summary: When ten-year-old Howard has to move with his family to a distant state, he is forced to live on a street named Chester Pewe. He adjusts to a new school, and gets used to being shadowed by the little girl in a nearby house.

Slote, Alfred. My Robot Buddy. NY: Harper & Row, 1986.

Summary: For his tenth birthday, Jack wants a robot so he'll have someone to play with. A Harper Trophy Book.

Journey to America
by Sonia Levitin

4th Grade Novel



Book summary: A Jewish family fleeing Nazi Germany in 1938 endures innumerable separations before they are once again united.

Complementary literature:

Ackerman, Karen. The Night Crossing. NY: Random House Publishing, 1994.

Summary: When Clara hears her father's fearful words, she knows her life will change forever. It's 1938 in Austria, and Jews are no longer safe. Clara and her family must leave their homeland and travel to a new country, taking only what they can carry. Clara chooses two straw dolls that once belonged to her grandmother. She never imagines that these old dolls and her own incredible courage will bring her family to safety.

Adler, David A. Child of the Warsaw Ghetto. NY: Holiday House Publishing, 1995.

Summary: The story of the Warsaw Ghetto is told through the eyes of Froim Baum, who was born in Warsaw on April 15, 1936. He was sent from one death camp to another before finally being liberated at Dachau by American soldiers.

Adler, David A. Hilde and Eli: Children of the Holocaust. NY: Holiday House Publishing, 1994.

Summary: Hilde, who was born in Germany, and Eli, who was born in Czechoslovakia, both share something in common. They were both victims of the Holocaust and they share their stories in this book.

Adler, David A. One Yellow Daffodil - A Hanukkah Story. NY: Harcourt Brace Publishing Company.

Summary: Morris is invited to celebrate the Sabbath with Jonathan and Hana. It has been a long time since he celebrated Hanukkah as a boy with his family in Poland, a period of history he would like to forget. Through Jonathan and Hana's loving family, Morris is able to embrace the family tradition once again.

Adler, David A. The Number on My Grandfather's Arm. NY: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1987.

Summary: A little girl questions a number printed on her grandfather's arm. He explains how he received the tattoo in a Nazi concentration camp during World War II, and he tells her the story behind it.

Beatty, Patricia. Lupita Manana. NY: Beech Tree Books, 1992.

Summary: To help her poverty-stricken family, thirteen-year-old Lupita enters California as an illegal alien and starts to work while constantly on the watch for "la migra."

Cech, John. My Grandmother's Journey. NY: Bradbury, 1991.

Summary: A grandmother tells the story of her eventful life in early twentieth-century Europe and her arrival in the United States after World War II.

Drucker, Malkam and Halperin, Michael. Jacob's Rescue - A Holocaust Story. NY: Dell Yearling Publishing Company, 1993.

Summary: One afternoon, eight-year-old Jacob slipped through a hole in the ghetto wall to meet Alex Roslan. The Roslan family, at the risk of their own lives, kept Jacob's identity as a Jew hidden.

Freedman, Russell. Immigrant Kids. NY: Puffin Books, 1995.

Summary: The text and photographs chronicle the life of immigrant children at home, school, work, and play during the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Friedman, Ina R. Escape or Die: True Stories of Young People. NY: J.B. Lippincott Publishing, 1985.

Summary: These personal stories illustrate the increasing danger and the many routes chosen by young people in their efforts to escape from the Nazis. A short history of the Jews in each country is given before each story. Although each of the stories tells of a survivor, the horrors of the Holocaust are not minimized. Friedman interviewed Gypsies, Jehovah Witnesses, and other religious figures, as well as the disabled and members of other victim groups.

Harvey, Brett. Immigrant Girl: Becky of Eldridge Street. NY: Holiday House, 1987.

Summary: Becky, whose family has emigrated from Russia to avoid being persecuted as Jews, finds growing up in New York City in 1910 a vivid and exciting experience.

Hest, Amy. Love You, Soldier. NY: Puffin Books, 1993.

Summary: Katie, a young Jewish girl living in New York City during World War II, sees many unforgettable changes in her world as she waits three years for her father to return home from fighting in the war.

Hoestlandt, Jo. Star of Fear, Star of Hope. NY: Walker Publishing, 1995.

Summary: Set during the German occupation of Paris, a young girl named Helen is confused by the disappearance of her Jewish friend.

Huynh, Quang Nhuong. The Land I Lost: Adventures of a Boy in Vietnam. NY: Harper & Row, 1982.

Summary: A collection of personal reminiscences, the author's youth is revealed as it was lived in a hamlet on the central highlands of Vietnam.

Jules, Jacqueline. The Grey Striped Shirt: How Grandma and Grandpa Survived the Holocaust. Los Angeles: Alef Design Group, 1993.

Summary: Frannie discovers a patched and stained grey striped shirt made of rough material in a box in her grandparents' closet. This leads to the unraveling of the story of their past, and the horrible facts of their imprisonment in Nazi concentration camps are disclosed.

Kroll, Steven. Mary McLean and the St. Patrick's Day Parade. NY: Scholastic, 1991.

Summary: In order to march with Mr. Finnigan in the St. Patrick's Day Parade, Mary must find a perfect shamrock in Manhattan in the middle of winter.

Kuklin, Susan. How My Family Lives in America. NY: Bradbury Press, 1992.

Summary: African-American, Asian-American, and Hispanic-American children describe their families' cultural traditions.

Lasky, Kathryn. The Night Journey. NY: Puffin Books, 1986.

Summary: A terrific read-aloud choice, this book tells the story of thirteen-year-old Rachel, who dreads the brief daily visits with her great-grandmother, Nana Sashie. Everything changes when she convinces her great-grandmother to share the story of her escape from Russia when she was just a girl.

Levitin, Sonia. Silver Days. NY: Aladdin Books, 1992.

Summary: In this sequel to Journey to America, the reunited Platt family works hard at settling in to America, but the spectre of the war in Europe continues to affect their lives.

Mayerson, Evelyn Wilde. The Cat Who Escaped from Steerage. NY: Scribner, 1990.

Summary: Living in the steerage section of a steamship bound for America, Chanah tries to keep her newly found cat a secret.

Rosenberg, Maxine B. Making a New Home in America. NY: Lothrop, 1986.

Summary: The text and photographs in this book present the stories of five children who have come to the United States as immigrants or resident aliens from Japan, Cuba, India, Guyana, and Vietnam.

Little House in the Big Woods
by Laura Ingalls Wilder

4th Grade Novel



Book summary: This autobiographical novel depicts a year in the life of Laura Ingalls and her family when they lived in a little log house in Wisconsin in 1872. They help with the daily chores, enjoy their father's stories and singing, and share special occasions when they get together with relatives or neighbors.

Complementary literature:

Bunting, Eve. Dandelions. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace, 1995.

Summary: Zoe and her family find strength in each other as they make a new home in the Nebraska territory. A tender story of inexpressible emotions related to the transplanting of a family. Beautifully illustrated, this picture book shows the happy sense of adventure that men felt, and the sadness and hardships the women endured heading out west on a wagon pulled by oxen.

Dalglish, Alice. The Courage of Sarah Noble. NY: Aladdin Books, 1991.

Summary: An eight-year-old girl finds courage to go alone with her father to build a new home in the Connecticut wilderness, and to stay with the Indians when her father goes back to bring the rest of the family. A Newbery Honor Book.

Fritz, Jean. The Cabin Faced West. NY: Cowan McCann, 1958.

Summary: Ten-year-old Ann Hamilton finds herself to be the only girl and is lonesome, yet learns to appreciate her role in settling the wilderness of western Pennsylvania.

Giff, Patricia Reilly. Laura Ingalls Wilder. NY: Puffin, 1988.

Summary: From the series *A Woman of our Time*, this biography of the author of the "Little House" books includes the years of her marriage to Almonzo Wilder.

Kimsey-Warnock, Natalie. Wilderness Cat. NY: Cobblehill Books/Dutton, 1992.

Summary: When Serena's family moves fifty miles to a wilderness area in Canada, they think that they have left their cat Moses behind, but then they receive a surprise visitor.

Lasky, Kathryn. Searching for Laura Ingalls: a Reader's Journey. NY: Macmillan, 1993.

Summary: A young girl's fascination with Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little House" books leads her family on a trip to see some of the places featured in the novels.

Love, D. Anne. Bess's Log Cabin Quilt. NY: Holiday House, 1995.

Summary: With her father away and her mother ill with fever, ten-year-old Bess works hard on a log cabin quilt to save the family farm.

MacBride, Roger Lea. Little House on Rocky Ridge. NY: Harper Collins, 1993.

Summary: In 1894, Laura Ingalls Wilder, her husband, and her seven-year-old daughter Rose leave the Ingalls family in Dakota and make the long and difficult journey to Missouri to start a new life.

Van Leeuwen, Jean. Going West. NY: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1991.

Summary: This picture book follows a family's emigration by prairie schooner from the East, across the plains to Kansas.

Welch, Catherine A. Clouds of Terror. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda Books, 1994.

Summary: Living on a farm in southwestern Minnesota in the 1970's, a brother and sister try to help their family cope with invading grasshoppers that threaten to destroy their crops.

Whelan, Gloria. Night of the Full Moon. NY: Knopf, 1993.

Summary: When she sneaks away to visit her friend, a young girl living on the Michigan frontier is caught up in the forced evacuation of a group of Potawatomi Indians from their tribal lands in the 1840s.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls. The Long Winter. NY: Harper & Row, 1981.

Summary: The Ingalls family moves their store in town during the terrible winter of 1880, when food is scarce and they face starvation.

Other books in the Little House Series are:

Little House on the Prairie

Farmer Boy

On the Banks of Plum Creek

By the Shores of Silver Lake

Little Town on the Prairie

These Happy Golden Years

The First Four Years

Wilder, Laura Ingalls. Winter Days in the Big Woods. NY: Harper Collins, 1994.

Summary: A little pioneer girl and her family spend the winter in their log cabin in the Big Woods of Wisconsin (adapted from the Little House books).

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe
by C.S. Lewis

4th Grade Novel



Book summary: Four English school children find their way through the back of a wardrobe closet into the magic land of Narnia. They assist Aslan, the golden lion, to triumph over the White Witch, who has cursed the land with eternal winter.

Complementary literature:

Banks, Lynne Reid. The Fairy Rebel. NY: Avon, 1989.

Summary: A rebellious fairy named Tiki, already in trouble for breaking the rule against wearing jeans, risks the further wrath of the Fairy Queen by trying to fulfill a human's special request for help.

Baum, Roger S. Dorothy of Oz. NY: Books of Wonder, 1989.

Summary: With the aid of Lion, Scarecrow, the Tin Man, and Tugg, the talking boat, Dorothy battles Jester, who is using the dead wicked witch's magic wand to turn the citizens of Oz into porcelain dolls.

Dahl, Roald. The Witches. NY: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983.

Summary: A young boy and his Norwegian grandmother, who is an expert on witches, together foil a witches' plot to destroy the world's children by turning them into mice.

Lewis, C.S. The Chronicles of Narnia Series. NY: Harper Collins, 1994.

Other books following The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe:

Prince Caspian

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader

The Silver Chair

The Horse and his Boy

The Magician's Nephew

The Last Battle

Lisle, Janet Taylor. Forest. NY: Scholastic, 1993.

Summary: Twelve-year-old Amber's invasion of an organized forest community of squirrels starts a war between humans and beasts, despite the protests of an unconventional and imaginative squirrel named Woodbine.

Norton, Mary. Bed-Knob and Broomstick. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990.

Summary: With the combined powers they acquire from a spinster who is studying to be a witch, three children go on a number of exciting and gruesome trips. This is a combined edition of "The Magic Bed-Knob" and "Bonfires and Broomsticks."

Saur, Julia L. Fog Magic. NY: Viking Penquin, 1986.

Summary: A child of Nova Scotia who loves the fog is transported by it to a secret world of her own (reprint: original published by Viking in 1943).

The Phantom Tollbooth
by Norton Juster

4th Grade Novel



Book summary: Milo drives his car past a tollbooth and discovers The Lands Beyond, a strange world of words and numbers.

Complementary literature:

Dahl, Roald. Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. NY: Puffin Books, 1988.

Summary: Each of five children lucky enough to discover an entry ticket into Mr. Willy Wonka's mysterious chocolate factory takes advantage of the situation in his own way.

Dahl, Roald. Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator: The Further Adventures of Charlie Bucket and Willy Wonka, Chocolate-Maker Extraordinary. NY: Puffin Books, 1988.

Summary: Taking up where Charlie and the Chocolate Factory leaves off, Charlie, his family, and Mr. Wonka find themselves launched into space in the great glass elevator.

Dahl, Roald. James and the Giant Peach. NY: Puffin Books, 1988.

Summary: James tripped and spilled the magic crystals by the old peach tree. A large peach grew, and when James crawled inside, he met a houseful of friends. As it rolled away, he was finally escaping his hideous aunts, and beginning a wonderful adventure.

Fleischman, Sid. The Thirteenth Floor: A Ghost Story. NY: Greenwillow Books, 1995.

Summary: When his older sister disappears, twelve-year-old Buddy Stebbins follows her back in time and finds himself aboard a seventeenth-century pirate ship captained by a distant relative.

Ross, Tony. Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There. NY: Atheneum, 1993.

Summary: Alice goes through a mirror to find a strange world where curious adventures await her.

Wrightson, Patricia. The Nargun and the Stars. NY: Puffin Books, 1988.

Summary: An ancient stone creature threatens the lives of a family on a lonely sheep farm in Australia.

Pippi Longstocking
by Astrid Lindgren

4th Grade Novel



Book summary: Pippi, a wonder girl, lives alone with a horse and a monkey although she is only nine. She does many curious things, such as tying brushes to her feet and skating in suds to scrub a floor, in her life at the edge of a Swedish village. Also among the collection of Pippi books:

Pippi Goes on Board

Pippi in the South Seas

Complementary literature:

Atwater, Richard. Mr. Popper's Penguins. Boston: Little, Brown., 1988.

Summary: Mr. Popper, a house painter with dreams of the Polar region, has to get a penguin to keep his homesick penguin company. The life and fortunes of this man, who becomes the owner of twelve penguins, are humorously changed.

Dahl, Roald. Matilda. NY: Puffin Books, 1990.

Summary: Matilda applies her untapped mental powers to rid the school of the evil, child-hating headmistress, Miss Trunchbull, and restore her nice teacher, Miss Honey, to financial security.

De Groat, Diane. Annie Pitts, Swamp Monster. NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1993

Summary: Third grader Annie Pitts is excited about getting the part of the Swamp Monster in a high school student's low-budget horror movie, until she finds out how much hard work is involved.

Lindgren, Astrid. The Children of Noisy Village. NY: Puffin, 1988.

Summary: Ten-year-old Lisa tells about her brothers and playmates and the happy times they spend at work and at play in their Swedish village.

Lindgren, Astrid. Ronia, the Robber's Daughter. NY: Puffin, 1985.

Summary: Ronia, who lives with her father and his band of robbers in a castle in the woods, causes trouble when she befriends the son of a rival robber chieftain.

MacDonald, Betty Bard. Hello, Mrs. Piggie Wiggle. NY: Harper Collins, 1957.

Summary: Mrs. Piggie Wiggle is a woman with a magic way of curing children's bad habits. She tries her hand with a bully, a whisperer, and a slowpoke, and formulates cures for a show-off and a baby.

Sarah, Plain and Tall
by Patricia MacLachlan

4th Grade Novel



Book summary: When their father invites a mail-order bride to come and live with them in their prairie home, Caleb and Anna are captivated by their new mother and hope she will stay.

Complementary literature:

Antle, Nancy. Beautiful Land: A Story of the Oklahoma Land Rush. NY: Viking, 1994.

Summary: After a two-year wait during which her mother died, twelve-year-old Annie Mae and her family join thousands of hopeful settlers as they race to claim land in the newly-opened Oklahoma Territory.

Durrell, Gerald Malcolm. Marrying Off Mother and Other Stories. NY: Arcade Publishers, 1992.

Summary: A collection of eight short stories by the author, observing the absurdity that abounds in the world: --Esmeralda--Fred, or, A Touch of the Warm South--Marrying Off Mother--Retirement--Ludwig--The Jury--Miss Booth--Wycherly's clothes--A Parrot for the Parsons.

Henkes, Kevin. Two Under Par. NY: Greenwillow Press, 1987.

Summary: When his mother's new marriage takes them into the household of a miniature golf course owner, ten-year-old Wedge struggles with feelings of resentment and dislike for his stepfather.

Lottridge, Celia Barker. Ticket to Canada. Parsippany, NJ: Silver Burdett Press, 1996.

Summary: In 1915, eleven-year-old Sam and his father arrive in an undeveloped part of western Canada and begin to plan a new farm for the family waiting back in Iowa.

Love, D. Anne. Bess's Log Cabin Quilt. NY: Holiday House, 1995.

Summary: With her father away and her mother ill with fever, ten-year-old Bess works hard on a log cabin quilt to save the family farm.

MacLachlan, Patricia. Skylark. NY: Harper Collins, 1994.

Summary: When a drought tests the commitment of a mail-order bride from Maine to her new home on the prairie, her stepchildren hope they will be able to remain a family.

Pryor, Bonnie. Rats, Spiders, and Love. NY: W. Morrow, 1986.

Summary: Samantha, a middle child who envies certain qualities in her older brother and younger sister, discovers her mother is planning to remarry and schemes to prevent it.

Shaw, Janet Beeler. Meet Kirsten: An American Girl. Madison, WI: Pleasant, 1986.

Nine-year-old Kirsten and her family experience many hardships as they travel from Sweden to the Minnesota frontier in 1854.

Waddell, Martin. Little Obie and the Kidnap. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 1994.

Summary: When the old wild woman Mrs. Jumping Joseph adopts two orphans, Little Obie and his family come up with a plan to rescue them.

Wallace, Bill. Red Dog. NY: Holiday House, 1987.

Summary: Living with his family in the rugged, often dangerous Wyoming mountains in the 1860's, twelve-year-old Adam finds his courage put to the test when he is left in charge of the household during his stepfather's absence.

Somers Point Whole Language Novel Listing

Fifth Grade

Ben and Me

The Borrowers

Bridge to Terebithia

From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler

In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson

Indian in the Cupboard

Island of the Blue Dolphins

Little House on the Priarie

Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH

Number the Stars

Souder

Ben and Me
By Robert Lawson

5th Grade Novel



Book summary: Amos, a poor church mouse, goes out into the world to make his living, and establishes himself in the old fur hat of Ben Franklin. Amos makes himself very important to Ben with his advice and information. This humorous story lends itself well to the study of the colonial period of America, and Franklin's inventions.

Complementary literature:

Avi. The Fighting Ground. NY: Harper & Row, 1984.

Summary: Thirteen-year-old Jonathan goes off to fight in the Revolutionary War and discovers the real war is being fought within himself.

Benchley, Nathaniel. George the Drummer Boy. NY: Harper & Row, 1987.

Summary: This 61 page book written on a high second grade level, gives a view of the incidents at Lexington and Concord, Massachusetts, which were the start of the American Revolution, as seen from the eyes of a British drummer boy.

Benchley, Nathaniel. Sam, the Minuteman. NY: Harper & Row, 1969.

Summary: An easy-to-read account of Sam and his father fighting as minutemen against the British in the Battle of Lexington.

Collier, James L. My Brother Sam is Dead. NY: Four Winds Press, 1985.

Summary: This novel recounts the tragedy that strikes the Meeker family during the Revolutionary War when one son joins the rebel forces while the rest of the family tried to stay neutral in a Tory town.

Collier, James L. War Comes to Willy Freeman. NY: Dell, 1987.

Summary: A free thirteen-year-old black girl in Connecticut is caught up in the horror of the Revolutionary War and the danger of being returned to slavery when her patriot father is killed by the British and her mother disappears.

D'Aulaire, Ingri, and Edgar D'Aulaire. Benjamin Franklin. NY: Doubleday, 1977.

Summary: A 48 page picture book written on the fourth grade level, this book contains the story on Benjamin Franklin including his childhood in Boston, his training as a printer in Philadelphia, his marriage and family life, his scientific findings, and his achievements as a statesman.

DeFord, Deborah. An Enemy Among Them. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987.

Summary: A young Hessian soldier questions his loyalty to his king after fighting with the British in America during the Revolutionary War and spending time as a prisoner in the home of a German American family from Pennsylvania.

Forbes, Esther. Johnny Tremain: A Novel for Old and Young. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1971.

Summary: After injuring his hand, a silversmith's apprentice in Boston becomes a messenger for the Sons of Liberty in the days before the American Revolution.

Fritz, Jean. The Cabin Faced West. NY: Coward McCann, 1958.

Summary: Ten-year-old Ann Hamilton finds herself to be the only girl in her settlement, and is lonely until George Washington comes to visit. She learns to appreciate her role in settling the wilderness of western Pennsylvania.

Fritz, Jean. George Washington's Breakfast. NY: Coward McCann, 1969.

Summary: Written on the third grade level, this story is about a young boy with the same name and birthday as George Washington. He wants everything in his life to be just as Washington had it, but he can not find out what Washington ate for breakfast.

Fritz, Jean. What's the Big Idea. Ben Franklin? NY: Coward, McMann, & Geoghegan, 1976.

Summary: A brief, humorous biography of the 18th century printer, inventor, and statesman who played an influential role in the early history of the United States. This is a fun read-aloud before or during the reading of Ben and Me.

Gauche, Patricia L. This Time. Tempe Wick? NY: Putnam's, 1992.

Summary: Everyone knows that Temperance Wick is a most surprising girl, but she exceeds even her own reputation when two mutinous Revolutionary soldiers try to steal her beloved horse after camping on her farm in NJ in 1780.

Greene, Carol. Benjamin Franklin: A Man with Many Jobs. Chicago: Children's Press 1988.

Summary: This 47 page picture book written on a high second grade level traces the life and accomplishments of the printer, philosopher, scientist, inventor and statesman.

Keehn, Sally M. Moon of Two Dark Horses. NY: Philomel Books, 1995.

Summary: At the beginning of the Revolutionary War, hoping to keep bloodshed away from their valley, a twelve-year-old Delaware Indian boy and his white friend search sacred land for the bones of a legendary beast.

Lawson, Robert. Mr. Revere and I: Being an Account of Certain Episodes in the Career of Paul Revere, Esq. as Recently Revealed by his horse, Scheherazade, later pride of his Royal Majesty's 14th regiment of Foot. NY: Little, 1981.

Summary: Written on a high eighth grade level, more advanced readers may appreciate this humorous account of the life and times of the Revere family and the doings of the Sons of Liberty as told from the point of view of Paul Revere's horse.

McGovern, Ann. If You Lived in Colonial Times. NY: Scholastic, 1992.

Summary: This 80 page book with color illustrations is written on the third grade level, in a question and answer format providing information about life in colonial times including clothing, education, and punishment for crimes.

O'Dell, Scott. Sarah Bishop. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1980.

Summary: Left alone after the deaths of her father and brother who take opposite sides in the War for Independence, Sarah flees from the British who seek to arrest her. She struggles to shape a new life for herself in the wilderness.

Rinaldi, Ann. Finishing Becca: a Story About Peggy Shippen and Benedict Arnold. NY: Harcourt Brace, 1994.

Summary: Fourteen-year-old Becca takes a position as a maid in a wealthy Philadelphia Quaker home and witnesses the events that lead to General Benedict Arnold's betrayal of the American forces during the Revolutionary War.

The Borrowers
by Mary Norton

5th Grade Novel



Book Summary: Miniature people who live in an old country house by borrowing things from the humans, are forced to emigrate from their home under the clock. Others in the series include;

The Borrowers Aloft
The Borrowers Avenged

Complementary literature:

Carroll, Lewis. Alice in Wonderland. Newmarket, England: Brimax Books, 1993.

Summary: A little girl ventures down a rabbit hole and embarks on a fantastic journey through Wonderland.

Godden, Rumer. The Doll's House. NY: Viking Press, 1967.

Summary: The activities, sorrows, and joys of a family of dolls living in an old doll house are related from the dolls' point of view.

Kendall, Carol. The Gammage Cup. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1959.

Summary: Threatened with destruction, the Minnipins, a group of tiny people, are saved only by the courage and resourcefulness of a few villagers. This novel is a Newbery/Honor book.

Levy, Robert. Escape from Exile. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

Summary: thirteen-year-old Daniel is transported to the land of Lithia, where he discovers his ability to communicate mentally with the strange native animals makes him a key figure in the civil war there.

Peterson, John L. The Littles. NY: Scholastic, 1964.

Summary: When the Bigs go on a three month vacation, the Littles must contend with a family from the city who moves in and are not very good housekeepers.

Bridge to Terebithia
By Katherine Paterson

5th Grade Novel



Book Summary: The life of a ten-year-old boy in rural Virginia expands when he becomes friends with a newcomer, an imaginative girl from a well-off family, who subsequently meets an untimely death while trying to reach their hideaway.

Complementary literature:

Adler, C.S. Always and Forever Friends. NY: Avon, 1990.

Summary: After her "always and forever friend," Meg, moves away from her, Meg discovers that finding another friend so special will not be easy.

Burnett, Frances Hodgson. The Secret Garden. NY: Knopf, 1993.

Summary: Ten-year-old Mary is not very happy being sent to live in a lonely old house on the Yorkshire moors in England. She discovers an invalid cousin who, with the help of Mary's friendship and the mystery of the locked garden, becomes stronger, happier, and healthier.

Byars, Betsy C. Summer of the Swans. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 1988.

Summary: A teenage girl gains new insights into herself and her family when her mentally handicapped brother gets lost. This is a Newbery/Medal Honor book.

Distad, Audree. The Dream Runner. Canada: Fitzhenvey & Whiteside, 1977.

Summary: A young boy goes into the mountains to seek his inner self in the same manner as Indian boys long ago.

Hurwitz, Johanna. Aldo Applesauce. NY: Morrow, 1979.

Summary: When he and his family move to the suburbs, Aldo has trouble finding new friends.

Nixon, Joan L. And Maggie Makes Three. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986.

Summary: Twelve-year-old Maggie, living with her grandmother in Houston, joins the drama club at school, wins a part in a play, and begins to make friends. She learns how to deal with feelings of loneliness, selfishness, love, and having an unusual family background and life.

Slepian, Jan. The Alfred Summer. NY: MacMillan, 1980.

Summary: Four preteen outcasts, two of them handicapped, learn lessons in courage and perseverance when they join forces with each other to build a boat.

Weber, Judith E. Forbidden Friendship. NY: Silver Moon/August House, 1993.

Summary: A shoe factory strike during 1870 in North Adams, Massachusetts creates the setting for a young Chinese boy and American girl to learn about each other's culture as well as the conflicts that keep them apart.

From the Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil

E. Frankweiler

by E.L. Konisburg

5th Grade Novel



Book summary: Two suburban children run away from their Connecticut home and go to New York City's Metropolitan Museum of Art, where their ingenuity enables them to live in luxury.

Complementary literature:

Blizzard, Gladys S. Come Look With Me: Enjoying Art with Children. Charlottesville, VA: Thomasson-Grant, 1992.

Summary: This thirty-two page book presents twelve color reproductions of paintings by artists from Holbein to Picasso, with questions to stimulate discussion and background information on each artist and painting.

Blizzard, Gladys S. Come Look With Me: Exploring Landscape Art with Children. Charlottesville, VA: Thomasson-Grant, 1992.

Summary: Following the format of the earlier book of paintings, this book presents twelve color reproductions of landscape paintings by such artists as Vincent Van Gogh, M.C. Escher, and Georgia O'Keeffe.

Cresswell, Helen. The Watchers: A Mystery at Alton Towers. NY: Macmillan, 1994.

Summary: Two runaway children hide out in a theme park and become enmeshed in an unearthly battle between the forces of good and evil.

Hutchins, Hazel J. Within a Painted Past. NY: Annick Press/Firefly, 1994.

Summary: When Allison steps into a painting on the wall, she travels back to the year 1898 and faces the biggest adventure of her life.

Knox, Bob. The Great Art Adventure. NY: Rizzoli, 1993.

Summary: Two children visit the wacky Museum of World Art, where paintings come to life, and they see such works as Egyptian paintings, Roman mosaics, Tibetan scrolls, and American Indian buffalo skin paintings.

Thomson, Peggy. Auks, Rocks, and the Odd Dinosaur. NY: T. Y. Crowell, 1985.

Summary: This book reveals the inner workings of the Museum of Natural History through historical anecdotes and descriptions of how exhibits are researched, prepared, and maintained.

In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson
by Bette Bao Lord

5th Grade Novel



Book Summary: In 1947 a Chinese child with the American nickname "Shirley Temple" comes to Brooklyn, New York where she becomes Americanized at school, in her apartment building, and by her love for baseball. A great introduction to study the baseball hero Jackie Robinson and his entrance into the white major league.

Complementary literature:

Brandt, Keith. Jackie Robinson: A Life of Courage. Mahwah, NJ: Troll Associates, 1992.

Summary: A biography of the first black baseball player to be accepted by a major league team.

Choi, Sook Nyul. Year of Impossible Goodbyes. NY: Dell, 1993.

Summary: A young Korean girl survives the oppressive Japanese and Russian occupation of North Korea during the 1940s, to later escape to freedom in South Korea.

Fritz, Jean. Homesick: My Own Story. Santa Barbara, CA: Cornerstone/ABC-Cllo, 1987.

Summary: The author's fictionalized account of her childhood in China. Interesting read-aloud to gain background cultural information on China. It offers the reverse perspective from Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson: an American girl fondly remembers things about America while she faces daily life in China.

Grabowski, John. Jackie Robinson. NY: Chelsea House Publishing, 1991.

Summary: For more than a half century, Blacks were barred from playing major league baseball. That practice finally changed in 1947 when a very special person, Jackie Robinson, was chosen to break the sport's color line. Robinson was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1962.

Mochizuki, Ken. Baseball Saved Us. NY: Lee & Low, 1993.

Summary: A Japanese American boy learns to play baseball when he and his family are forced to live in an internment camp during World War II, and his ability to play helps him after the war is over.

Namioka, Lensky. Yang the Youngest and his Terrible Ear. NY: Dell, 1992.

Summary: Recently arrived in Seattle from China, musically untalented Yingtao is faced with giving a violin performance to attract new students for his father when he would rather be working on friendships and playing baseball.

Paterson, Katherine. Flip Flop Girl. NY: Dutton, 1994.

Summary: Uprooted following the death of their father, nine-year-old Vinnie and her five-year-old brother, Mason, cope in different ways: one in silence, but both with the help of Lupe, the flip-flop girl.

Surat, Michele M. Angel Child, Dragon Child. NY: Raintree Publications, 1983.

Summary: Ute has just come to the United States from Vietnam, and does not like her new American school. Raymond, a classmate, initially makes fun of the new student, but later helps her deal with missing her mother as well as overcoming the prejudice Ute encounters.

Treffinger, Carolyn Walker. Li Lun, Lad of Courage. USA: Walker, 1995.

Summary: Because of his fear of the sea, a young Chinese boy is sent to a distant mountain where he proves his bravery. A reprint of the Newbery Honor Book in 1947.

Uchida, Yoshiko. The Bracelet. NY: Philomel, 1993.

Summary: Emi, a Japanese American in the second grade, is sent with her family to an internment camp during World War II. She must leave her best friend behind, but the loss of the bracelet she had given to her proves that she does not need a physical reminder of that friendship. This simple read-aloud picture book gives students an idea of what had happened to other Asians in the United States.

Waybill, Marjorie Ann. Chinese Eyes. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1974.

Summary: An adopted Korean girl gets a lesson in how unimportant it is that some people think she is different. An interesting picture book to introduce immigration, prejudice, and tolerance.

Yep, Laurence. Dragon's Gate. NY: Harper Collins, 1993.

Summary: When he accidentally kills a Manchu, a fifteen-year-old Chinese boy is sent to America to join his father, an uncle, and other Chinese working to build a tunnel for the transcontinental railroad through the Sierra Nevada mountains in 1867. A Young Adult book great for more motivated readers.

Yep, Laurence. Dragonwings. Santa Barbara, CA: Cornerstone Books, 1990.

Summary: In the early twentieth century a young Chinese boy joins his father in San Francisco and helps him realize his dream of making a flying machine.

The Indian in the Cupboard
by Lynne Reid Banks

5th Grade Novel



Book summary: A nine-year-old boy receives a plastic Indian, a cupboard, and a little key for his birthday, and finds himself involved in adventure when the Indian comes to life in the cupboard, and befriends him. Other books about the Indian Little Bear and Omri are: The Return of the Indian
The Secret of the Indian
The Secret of the Cupboard

Complementary literature:

Banks, Lynne R. The Adventures of King Midas. NY: Avon, 1993.

Summary: King Midas comes to regret his wish to turn all he touches into gold. He must deal with a magician, a witch, and a dragon as he tries to undo the magic spell.

Banks, Lynne R. The Fairy Rebel. Santa Barbara, CA: Cornerstone Books, 1985.

Summary: A rebellious fairy named Tikl, already in trouble for breaking the rule against wearing jeans, risks the further anger of the Fairy Queen by trying to fulfill a human's special request for help.

Banks, Lynne R. The Magic Hare. NY: Avon, 1994.

Summary: A hare uses his magic to help a lot of people and animals.

Calloway, Colin G. Indians of the Northeast. NY: Facts on File Publishing, 1991.

Summary: This book describes the Native American tribes of the Northeast: the Narraganset, the Abnaki, the Iroquois, and the Nanticoke. It also describes the influence the early European contact had on them.

Coville, Bruce. The Monster's Ring. NY: Pocket, 1987.

Summary: A timid boy, eager to frighten the school bully on Halloween night, acquires a magic ring and the power to change himself into a hideous monster.

Field, Rachael. Hitty. Her First Hundred Years. NY: Dell, 1990.

Summary: Hitty, a doll carved from mountain ash in the nineteenth century, has many adventures as she travels around the world with different owners. A Newbery Medal book.

Goble, Paul. Buffalo Woman. NY: Bradbury Press, 1984.

Summary: A young hunter marries a female buffalo in the form of a beautiful maiden. When his people reject her, she must pass several tests before being allowed to join the buffalo nation. This is a great example of North American Indian folklore.

Peterson, John. The Littles. NY: Scholastic, 1964.

Summary: When the Bigs go on a three month vacation, the Littles must contend with a family from the city who move in and are not very good housekeepers.

Slater, Jim. Grasshopper and the Unwise Owl. NY: Holt, 1979.

Summary: There are numerous great science lessons that revolve around the adventures of a young boy who is mistakenly reduced to the size of a mouse. He tries to save his mother from a dishonest landlord, all the while staying off threatening animals and insects, all of which he is able to use in some fashion by capitalizing on their various natural characteristics. This is a humorous, fantasy adventure that is a terrific read-aloud.

Stearns, Pamela. Into the Painted Bear Lair. NY: Houghton-Mifflin, 1976.

Summary: This humorous, unconventional fantasy-fairy tale is about a young boy who can't find his way back to the toy store, the point where he entered a strange land. A female knight who is involved in a chillingly dangerous mission befriends him, and there is a ferocious bear named Bear, who would like nothing better than to devour them both. Well written, this novel shows that life is a series of choices, and our amount of happiness is how we handle those choices. Friendship and the value placed on it is emphasized in this novel. A wonderful, imaginative, read-aloud.

Island of the Blue Dolphins

By Scott O'Dell

5th Grade Novel



Book summary: This piece of historical fiction records the courage and self-reliance of an Indian girl who lived alone for eighteen years on an isolated island off the California coast. A Newbery Award Winner. Sequel to this story : Zia

Complementary literature:

O'Dell, Scott. Black Star, Bright Dawn. NY: Fawcett Juniper, 1990.

Summary: An Eskimo girl decides to run the challenging 1,197-mile sled dog race called the Iditarod alone when her father is injured.

O'Dell, Scott. Zia. NY: Dell, 1978.

Summary: Zia, a young Indian girl living at the Santa Barbara Mission, dreams of sailing to the Island of the Blue Dolphins to rescue her aunt. After several twists in the plot, Zia and Karana are united. Information on 18th century mission life is well-integrated into the story.

O'Dell, Scott and Elizabeth Hall. Thunder Rolling in the Mountains. Boston, MA: Hutton Mifflin, 1992.

Summary: In the late 19th century a young Nez Perce girl relates how her people were driven off their land by the US Army and forced to retreat north until their eventual surrender. This historical fiction book filled with action tells the story of Chief Joseph and his tribe in their final hours.

Sperry, Armstrong. Call it Courage. NY: Scholastic, 1940.

Summary: In this Newbery Award Winner, a Polynesian boy named Mafatu had nearly drowned at sea when he was a small boy. He must overcome his fear of the ocean or continue being made fun of by the other boys. He musters up all his strength, and, taking his small dog Uri for company, he sails out alone to die or prove his courage.

Little House on the Prairie
by Laura Ingalls Wilder

5th Grade Novel



Book Summary: Laura Ingalls and her family leave their home in the Big Woods of Wisconsin to move to Indian country in frontier Kansas. Other books in this collection of Laura's life story are:

Little House in the Big Woods

Farmer Boy

On the Banks of Plum Creek

By the Shores of Silver Lake

The Long Winter

Little Town on the Prairie

These Happy Golden Years

The First Four Years

Complementary literature:

Bial, Raymond. Frontier Home. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

Summary: This book describes the challenges that American settlers faced when they left the farms and towns in their Conestoga wagons and headed for the prairie. It provides a record of pioneer tools, homes, and daily life that testifies to the unwaning spirit of the early settlers.

Bunting, Eve. Train to Somewhere. NY: Clarion Books, 1996.

Summary: From the mid-1850s through the late 1920s, an estimated 100,000 homeless children were sent by train from New York City to small towns and farms in the Midwest. This is a full color picture book of the story of fourteen orphans, with big dreams of being adopted and finding a better life.

Butruille, Susan G. Women's Voices from the Oregon Trail: The Times that Tried Women's Souls. Boise, ID: Tamarack Books, 1994.

Summary: An excellent read-aloud, even in parts, this book narrates the lives and recalls the voices of the women who traveled the 2,000-mile trail to Oregon 150 years ago. There is an artful blending of women's diary entries, songs, history, poetry, recipes, and quilts. The author first examines where these Midwestern women came from, their brave trek along the trail, and finally the strange and bountiful land where their new home was meant to be. The author concludes with a retracing of the trail as it is today, including where to find markers, landmarks, signposts, and historical sites.

Cox, Clinton. The Forgotten Heroes: The Story of the Buffalo Soldiers. NY: Scholastic, Inc., 1993.

Summary: Recounts the history of the ninth and tenth Cavalry regiments, comprised of African-American soldiers recruited to open the West to settlers and whose deeds included escorting wagon trains, carrying mail, and fighting against Native Americans.

Freeman, Russell. Buffalo Hunt. NY: Holiday House, 1988.

Summary: Examines the importance of the buffalo in the lore and day-to-day life of the Indian tribes of the Great Plains and describes hunting methods and the uses found for each part of the animal that could not be eaten. Uses full color reproductions of western paintings by well-known artists.

Freeman, Russell. An Indian Winter. NY: Holiday House, 1992.

Summary: Relates the experiences of a German prince, his servant, and a young Swiss artist as they traveled through the Missouri River Valley in 1833, learning about the territory and its inhabitants and recording their impressions in words and pictures.

Fry, Annette. The Orphan Trains. NY: New Discovery Books, 1994.

Summary: The text and accompanying photographs present the history of orphaned and abandoned children who were sent from New York City to other states by the Children's Aid Society from 1854 to 1929.

Gerrard, Roy. Wagons West! NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1996.

Summary: A colorful picture book of full color detailed drawings, describing through figurative, rhyming language the uprooting of many families to move to the Oregon Country in 1850.

Gilson, Jamie. Wagon Train 911. NY: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books, 1996.

Summary: As a school project, sixth graders recreate a westward trek to Oregon with all the perils that faced real pioneers. Modern day problems and cooperative interactions make this a humorous, easily read novel, aloud or individually.

Gregory, Kristiana. The Legend of Jimmy Spoon. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1990.

Summary: The adventures of a young white boy living among the Shoshoni Indians during the early frontier days. An attention-grabbing read-aloud.

Katz, William Loren. Black Women of the Old West. NY: Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 1995.

Summary: Traces the history of African American women on the western frontier in their roles as abolitionists, educators, pioneers, and mail-order brides.

- Kudlinski, Kathleen. Facing West: A Story of the Oregon Trail. NY: Viking, 1994.
 Summary: Easily read novel. As his family sets out from Missouri to Oregon, young Ben wonders whether he will have more trouble with the dangers of the journey, or his debilitating asthma.
- Lavender, David Sievert. The Santa Fe Trail. NY: Holiday House, 1995.
 Summary: Describes the history of the Santa Fe Trail from the encounters with blizzards and Indians, to the effect on trade, and the final demise of the trail caused by the building of the railroad.
- Miller, Brandon Marie. Buffalo Gals: Women of the Old West, Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications, 1995.
 Summary: Text and photographs tell the story of pioneer women: schoolmarmms, ranchers, shopkeepers, doctors, mail-order brides, as well as Native American women.
- O'Dell, Scott, and Elizabeth Hall. Thunder Rolling in the Mountains. NY: Dell, 1992.
 Summary: In the late nineteenth century, a young Nez Perce girl relates how her people were driven off their land by the U.S. Army and forced to retreat north until their eventual surrender.
- Paulsen, Gary. Mr Tucket. NY: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers, 1994.
 Summary: In 1848, while on a wagon train heading west on the Oregon Trail, fourteen-year-old Francis Tucket is kidnapped by Pawnee Indians and then falls in with a one-armed trapper who teaches him how to live in the wild. The sequel to this is: Call Me Francis Tucket. The final book of the trio is a great read-aloud: Tucket's Ride.
- Perl, Lila. Hunter's Stew and Hangtown Fry: What Pioneer America Ate and Why. NY: Clarion Books, 1977.
 Summary: This book examines the diet of nineteenth-century pioneers and the culinary creations brought about by the hard life in the western territories.
- Sandin, John. Pioneer Bear: Based on a True Story. NY: Random House, 1995.
 Summary: An easily read book. Andrew and his family are excited when a photographer comes to take a picture of their dancing bear, but then Bearly can't be found.
- Schlissel, Lillian. Black Frontiers: A History of African American Heroes in the Old West. NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1995.
 Summary: Focuses on the experiences of blacks as mountain men, soldiers, homesteaders, and scouts on the frontiers of the American West.

Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH
By Robert C. O'Brien

5th Grade Novel



Book summary: Having no one to help her with her problems, a widowed mouse visits the rats whose former imprisonment in a laboratory made them wise and contributed to their longevity. Newbery Medal winner.

Complementary literature:

Banks, Lynne Reid. I. Houdini: the Amazing Story of an Escape Artist Hamster. NY: Avon, 1989.

Summary: A boastful hamster with exceptional talent as an escape artist recounts his experiences chewing, wriggling, or squeezing his way out of various closed areas in his quest for the great Outside.

Butterworth, Oliver. The Enormous Egg. Boston: Little Brown, 1984.

Summary: Problems develop when Nate's hen lays an egg that hatches a dinosaur.

Cleary, Beverly. The Mouse and the Motorcycle. NY: Avon, 1965.

Summary: The adventures of a boy and a little mouse who wants to ride his toy motorcycle.

Conly, Jane Leslie. Rasco and the Rats of NIMH. NY: Harper LB, 1986.

Summary: This sequel to the Newbery Medal winner involves once again the smart rodents who wish to live in peace in Thorn Valley.

Du Bois, William Penc. The Twenty-One Balloons. NY: Puffin, 1986.

Summary: This terrific read-aloud relates the incredible adventures of Professor William Waterman Sherman who in 1883 sets off in a balloon across the Pacific, surviving the volcanic eruption of Krakatoa, and is eventually picked up in the Atlantic.

Salten, Felix. Bambi. NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 1992.

Summary: By this age, almost everyone has seen the Disney movie. Now it is time to challenge them to read the original. This book tells the story of that famous young deer, in the forest as he matures and grows into a big stag.

White, E.B. Stuart Little. NY: Harper & Row, 1973.

Summary: The adventures of the debonair mouse, Stuart Little, as he sets out in the world to seek out his dearest friend, a little bird who stayed a few days in his family's garden.

Zelinsky, Paul O. Ralph S. Mouse. Santa Barbara, CA: Cornerstone Books, 1989.

Summary: Presents the adventures of a motorcycle riding mouse who goes to school and becomes the instigator of an investigation of rodents and the peacemaker for two lonely boys.

Number the Stars
By Lois Lowry

5th Grade Novel



Book summary: In 1943, during the German occupation of Denmark, ten-year-old Anne Marie learns how to be brave and courageous when she helps shelter her Jewish friend from the Nazis. This novel of historical fiction shows the Danish underground movement in action in smuggling Jews to safety.

Complementary literature:

Abells, Chana Byers. The Children We Remember: Photographs from the Archives of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority. Jerusalem, Israel. NY: Greenwillow Books, 1986.

Summary: Text and pictures briefly describe the fate of Jewish children after the Nazis began to control their lives.

Ackerman, Karen. The Night Crossing. NY: Bullseye Books, 1995.

Summary: In 1938, having begun to feel the persecution that all Jews are experiencing in their Austrian city, Clara and her family escape over the mountains into Switzerland.

Aaseng, Nathan. Navajo Code Talkers. NY: Walker, 1992.

Summary: Describes how the American military in World War II used a group of Navajo Indians to create an indecipherable code based on their native language. Advanced Young Adult book: good for read aloud and discussion.

Bishop, Claire H. Twenty and Ten. NY: Puffin Book Company, 1988.

Summary: Twenty school children hide ten Jewish children from the Nazis during the occupation of France during World War II.

Drucker, Malka. Jacob's Rescue: A Holocaust Story. NY: Bantam Skylark, 1993.

Summary: In answer to his daughter's questions, a man recalls the terrifying years of his childhood when a brave Polish couple, Alex and Mela Roslan, hid him and other Jewish children from the Nazis. Based on a true story.

Drucker, Olga Levy. Kindertransport. NY: IL Holt, 1992.

Summary: The author describes the circumstances in Germany after Hitler came to power that led to the evacuation of many Jewish children to England. She relates her experiences as a young girl in England during World War II.

- Filipovic, Zlata. Zlata's Diary: A Child's Life in Sarajevo. NY: Penguin Books, 1995.
 Summary: This is the diary of a thirteen-year-old girl living in Sarajevo. She began writing it when there was still peace in her homeland. An interesting contrast can be drawn between her plight and the plight of the Jews.
- Innocenti, Roberto, and Galléz, Christophe. Rose Blanche. Mankato, MN: Creative Ed., 1985.
 Summary: A young German girl's curiosity leads her to discover something far more terrible than the day-to-day hardships that she and her neighbors have experienced. In aiding children of the concentration camp she discovers, she puts her life in danger.
- Kerr, Judith. When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit. NY: Dell, 1987.
 Summary: Based on incidents in the author's life, this is the story of a German-Jewish family and their escape from Nazi Germany to England in the 1930s.
- Leitner, Isabella. The Big Lie: A True Story. NY: Scholastic, 1992.
 Summary: The author describes her experiences as a survivor of the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz during World War II.
- Matas, Carol. Daniel's Story. NY: Scholastic, Inc., 1993.
 Summary: A novel inspired by the experiences of many of the more than one million children who suffered in the Holocaust. As Daniel and his family experience hardships in their life due to Nazi policies against Jews, many around him lose hope in the face of such terror. Daniel, supported by his family, struggles for survival in a concentration camp until they become liberated.
- McSwigan, Marie. Snow Treasure. NY: Scholastic, 1942.
 Summary: This is the 1995 reprinting of the exciting fictionalized account of how a group of Norwegian children carrying bullion to the sea on their sleds, helping their country move its gold reserve to the United States during the German occupation. Makes a super read-aloud.
- Meltzer, Milton. Rescue: The Story of How Gentiles Saved Jews in the Holocaust. NY: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1991.
 Summary: A recounting drawn from historic source material of the many individual acts of heroism performed by righteous gentiles who sought to thwart the extermination of the Jews during the Holocaust.
- Orlev, Uri. The Island on Bird Street. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1984.
 Summary: During World War II a Jewish boy is left on his own for months in a ruined house in the Warsaw Ghetto, where he must learn all the tricks of survival under constantly life-threatening conditions.

Paulsen, Gary. The Cookcamp. NY: Dell, 1991.

Summary: During World War II, a little boy is sent to live with his grandma, a cook in a camp for workers building a road through the wilderness.

Pettit, Jane. A Place to Hide: The Stories of Holocaust Rescues. NY: Scholastic, Inc., 1993.

Summary: This is a collection of stories written for young students. Included in the collection are the stories of Miep Gies, the Schindlers, and Denmark's rescue of its Jews.

Ransom, Candice F. So Young to Die: The Story of Hanna Senesh. NY: Scholastic, 1993.

Summary: This biography tells the life story of a brave, daring young woman, born in Poland, who grew up while Hitler's influence was spreading across Europe. She was executed at the age of twenty-three by the Nazis for her role in a top-secret Allied mission. She had been accepted into the British Air Force to parachute back into enemy territory to rescue Allied pilots and Jews, one of which was her mother.

Savin, Marcia. The Moon Bridge. NY: Scholastic, Inc., 1992.

Summary: The friendship between San Francisco girls Mitzi Fujimoto and Ruthie Fox is changed when World War II begins and Mitzi and her family are forced to go into an internment camp.

Thesman, Jean. Molly Donnelly. NY: Avon, 1994.

Summary: Twelve-year-old Molly, who lives next door to a Japanese American family and whose cousin is a nurse in the Phillipines, experiences many changes in her life when World War II breaks out.

Toll, Nelly S. Behind the Secret Window: A Memoir of a Hidden Childhood During World War II. NY: Dial Books, 1993.

Summary: The author recalls her experiences when she and her mother were hidden from the Nazis by a Gentile couple in Lwow, Poland, during WWII.

Vos, Ida. Anna is Still Here. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Publishing, 1993.

Summary: Thirteen-year-old Anna gradually learns to deal with being a survivor after once being a "hidden child" in Nazi-occupied Holland during World War II.

Vos, Ida. Hide and Seek. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Publishing, 1991.

Summary: Rachel Hartog is only eight when Nazis invade Holland. Life as she knows it will completely halt. Finally, she is forced to wear a yellow star to identify her as a Jew. As the Nazis close in, Rachel and her family go into hiding, moving from house to house in the middle of the night.

Sounder
by William Armstrong

5th Grade Novel



Book summary: Angry and humiliated when his sharecropper father is jailed for stealing food for his hungry family, a young black boy grows in courage and understanding with the help of the devoted dog, Sounder. The boy also accomplishes his goal of learning to read when a schoolteacher befriends him on one of his many journeys searching for his father. A Newbery Medal winner.

Complementary literature:

Blume, Judy. Iggie's House. NY: Dell, 1986.

Summary: When an African-American family with three children moves into the white neighborhood, eleven-year-old Winnie learns the difference between being a good neighbor and being a good friend.

Bradby, Marie. More Than Anything Else. NY: Orchard Books, 1995.

Summary: Nine-year-old Booker works with his father and brother at the saltworks, but dreams of the day when he'll be able to read.

Brandt, Keith. Rosa Parks: Fight for Freedom. Mahwah, NJ: Troll Publishing, 1993.

Summary: This book is a biography of the woman whose actions led to the desegregation of buses in Montgomery, Alabama, in the 1960s. She was an important figure in the early days of the civil rights movement.

Benjamin, Anne. Young Rosa Parks: Civil Rights Heroine. Mahwah, NJ: Troll Associates, 1996.

Summary: This book tells the story of young Rosa Parks, an African-American whose refusal to give up her seat on the bus to a white person in Alabama in 1955 marked the beginning of the end of segregation.

Benjamin, Anne. Young Harriet Tubman: Freedom Fighter. Mahwah, NJ: Troll Associates, 1992.

Summary: A biography, this book portrays the African-American woman who helped over 300 slaves escape through the Underground Railroad, yet was never caught herself.

Carpenter, Eric. Young Thurgood Marshall: Fighter for Equality. Mahwah, NJ: Troll Associates, 1996.

Summary: This book examines the life of the first black man to be appointed an associate justice of the highest court in the country.

- Cleary, Beverly. Ribsy. NY: Avon, 1992.
 Summary: Separated from his owner, Henry Huggins, in a shopping center parking lot, an ordinary city dog begins a series of bewildering adventures.
- Cone, Molly. Mishmash. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962.
 Summary: Another story of how animals can bring people together, Pete's acquaintance with his new home and his fifth-grade class and teacher develops rapidly because of his new hound dog, Mishmash.
- Crofford, Emily. A Place to Belong. Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda, 1994.
 Summary: In 1935, after his family loses their farm and is forced to move onto an Arkansas plantation, sixth grader Talmadge struggles to endure their harsh new life and fights to stay in school against his mother's wishes.
- Gaines, Ernest J. A Long Day in November. NY: Dial Press, 1971.
 Summary: A young black boy living on a cane plantation recounts the events of the day. His parents must separate, but are later reconciled.
- Hamilton, Virginia. The People Could Fly. NY: Knopf Publishing, 1985.
 Summary: Retold African-American folktales of animals, fantasy, the supernatural, and the desire for freedom. These are stories born of the sorrow of the slaves, but passed on in hope.
- Hopkinson, Deborah. Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt. NY: Knopf, 1993.
 Summary: A richly illustrated picture book written on the 4.5 level, this is the story of a young slave who stitches a quilt with a map pattern which guides her to freedom in the North. This gives another perspective of what being a worker in the "Big House" was like.
- Hughes, Langston. A Pictorial History of Black Americans. NY: Crown Publishing, 1983.
 Summary: This book relates black history on the social, political, economic and cultural fronts through over 1,000 illustrations.
- Lester, Julius. The Last Tales of Uncle Remus. NY: Dial Press, 1994.
 Summary: This book is a retelling of the Afro-American tales about the adventures and misadventures of Brer Rabbit and his friends and enemies.
- Lyons, Mary E. Stitching Stars: The Story Quilts of Harriet Powers. NY: Scribner, 1993.
 Summary: Another woman similar to the boy's mother in Souder, with her literary knowledge steeped richly in Biblical stories. This is the illustrated biography of the African-American quilter who made quilts of her favorite Bible stories and folk tales.

Somers Point Whole Language Novel List

Sixth Grade

Anne of Green Gables

Divorce Express

The Endless Steppe

The Long Winter

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry

Sign of the Beaver

The Upstairs Room

Where the Red Fern Grows

The Witch of Blackbird Pond

A Wrinkle in Time

Anne of Green Gables
By Lucy Maud Montgomery

6th Grade Novel



Book summary: Anne, an eleven-year-old orphan, is sent by mistake to live with a lonely middle-aged brother and sister on a Prince Edward Island farm. Other books about Anne include:

Anne of Avonlea
Anne of the Island
Anne of Windy Poplars
Anne's House of Dreams
Anne of Ingleside

Complementary literature:

Alcott, Louisa May. Little Men: Life at Plumfield with Jo's Boys. NY: Puffin, 1994.

Summary: With two sons of her own, and twelve boys at the Plumfield school, Jo March, now Jo Bhaer, couldn't be happier. Despite the help of the whole March family, boys have a habit of getting into scrapes, and there are plenty of troubles and adventures in store.

Alcott, Louisa. Little Women. NY: Grosset & Dunlap, 1947.

Summary: This is a classic story that chronicles the joys and sorrows of the four March sisters (Jo, Meg, Beth, and Amy) as they grow into young ladies in nineteenth century New England. The length of this original version may be intimidating to 6th grade readers (643 pages). To begin, the condensed version, by Lucia Monfried with the same title, might be the best version at 238 pages.

Meigs, Cornelia. Invincible Louisa: the Story of the Author of Little Women. NY: Scholastic, 1933.

Summary: This Newbery/Honor book presents the life of Louisa May Alcott, who was able through the success of her writings to achieve one thing that was very important to her: to be able to take care of her family.

Montgomery, Lucy Maud. Emily of New Moon. NY: Bantam, 1986.

Summary: Beginning when Emily is only eleven, this trilogy continues in Emily Climbs and Emily's Quest, and tells about the making of an author.

Paterson, Katherine. Come Sing, Jimmy Jo. NY: Puffin, 1995.

Summary: When his family becomes a successful country music group and makes him a featured singer, eleven-year-old James has to deal with big changes in all aspects of his life, even his name.

Paterson, Katherine. The Great Gilly Hopkins. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-Cllo, 1987.

Summary: This Newbery Honor Book is about an eleven-year-old foster child who tries to cope with her longings and fears as she schemes against everyone who tries to be friendly and loving. Her dream of being reunited with her real mother carries her through the novel, until the reality of her situation dawns on her.

Paterson, Katherine. Jacob Have I Loved. NY: Crowell, 1980.

Summary: Feeling deprived all her life of schooling, friends, mother, and even her name by her twin sister, Louise finally begins to find her own identity. She moves away and finally finds a new place to call home with a widower and his children.

Paterson, Katherine. Lyddie. NY: Puffin, 1992.

Summary: Another excellent book by an award-winning author. Lyddie Worthen, an impoverished Vermont farm girl, is determined to gain her independence by becoming a factory worker and learning to read in Lowell, Massachusetts in the 1840's.

Divorce Express
By Paula Danziger

6th Grade Novel



Book summary: Resentful of her parents' divorce, a young girl tried to accommodate herself to their new lives and also find a place for herself.

Complementary literature:

Avi. Blue Heron. NY: Avon, 1992.

Summary: Thirteen-year-old Maggie spends the month of August on the Massachusetts shore with her father, stepmother, and their new baby. As her family life unravels around her, she finds beauty in, and draws strength from, a great blue heron.

Blume, Judy. It's Not the End of the World. NY: Dell, 1986.

Summary: When her parents divorce, a sixth grader struggles to understand that sometimes people are unable to live together. This is written on a 4.5 level.

Danziger, Paula. Can You Sue Your Parents for Malpractice? NY: Dell, 1980.

Summary: Confused about her life at home and at school, fourteen-year-old Lauren learns the importance of being her own person.

Duncan, Lois. A Gift of Magic. NY: Pocket, 1972.

Summary: Until she learns to control it, Nancy's gift of extrasensory perception brings her more trouble than she can handle while adjusting to her parents' divorce.

Giff, Patricia Reilly. Rat Teeth. NY: Dell, 1985.

Summary: Fifth-grader Cliffie feels that nothing has been right in his life since his parents got their divorce, and his front teeth have begun to grow out over his lower lip. This book is written on a 4.6 level.

Hurwitz, Johanna. DeDe Takes Charge! NY: Beech Tree Books, 1992.

Summary: A year after her father has left home for good, fifth-grader DeDe helps her mother cope with the realities of life after divorce.

Jukes, Maris. Getting Even. NY: Knopf, 1989.

Summary: Finding herself the victim of an obnoxious classmate, ten-year-old Maggie receives conflicting advice from her crazy friend Iris, and both of her parents, who are still at war two years after their divorce.

Paterson, Katherine. Park's Quest. NY: Lodestar Books, 1988.

Summary: Eleven-year-old Park makes some startling discoveries when he travels to his grandfather's farm in Virginia to learn about his father who died in Vietnam.

Pearson, Kit. A Handful of Time. NY: Puffin, 1988.

Summary: Patricia is ill at ease staying with her aunt and cousins for the summer while her parents are getting divorced. She discovers an old watch hidden under a floorboard, and with it she is taken back in time to the summer when her own mother was twelve.

Fryor, Bonnie. Rats, Spiders, and Love. NY: Morrow, 1986.

Summary: Samantha is a middle child who envies certain qualities in her older brother and younger sister. She discovers her mother's plans to remarry, and schemes to prevent it from happening. Written on a 5.0 level.

The Endless Steppe
By Esther R. Hautzig

6th Grade Novel



Book summary: During World War II, when she was eleven years old, the author and her family were arrested in Poland by the Russians as political enemies and exiled to Siberia. She recounts here the trials of the following five years spent on the harsh Asian steppe.

Complementary literature:

Butterworth, Emma Macalik. As the Waltz was Ending. NY: Macmillan, 1982.

Summary: This book about another interesting life shares another perspective surrounding events of the Holocaust. This book is about growing up in Austria before, during and after World War II.

Choi, Sook N. Echoes of the White Giraffe. NY: Dell Publishing, 1995.

Summary: The sequel to Year of Impossible Goodbyes, fifteen-year-old Sookan has newly arrived in Pusan, a city in the southern province of Korea. The Korean War is raging, and Sookan has been separated from her father and brothers for the second time in her life. She befriends a boy named Junho, but their friendship is one that will be forbidden.

Choi, Sook N. Year of Impossible Goodbyes. NY: Dell Publishing, 1991.

Summary: Ten-year-old Sookan and her family must endure the cruelties of the Japanese military occupying Korea. After the war, they must escape to American-controlled South Korea.

Fuchs, Ellinor, ed. Plays of the Holocaust: an International Collection. NY: Theatre Communications Group, 1987.

Summary: This resource contains plays by six authors, each from a different country, representing a wide range of responses to the horror of the Holocaust. This book includes an annotated bibliography, by country, of Holocaust plays.

Houston, Jeanne Wakatsuki, and James Houston. Farewell to Manzanar. NY: Bantam, 1974.

Summary: This story reveals the shameful treatment of a Japanese American family in the United States during World War II.

- Koehn, Ilse. Mischling. Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany. NY: Greenwillow, 1977.
 Summary: A girl growing up in Nazi Germany is forced to join the Hitler Youth Movement against her will.
- Lingard, Joan. Between Two Worlds. NY: Puffin Books, 1993.
 Summary: Arriving in their new homeland, Canada, after World War II, a family of Latvian refugees is beset by serious illness and financial hardship, and the three children must go out and find jobs. Sequel to Tug of War.
- Marx, Trish. Echoes of World War Two. Minneapolis, MN: Learner Publications, Inc., 1994.
 Summary: Presents the stories of six people from different parts of the world whose childhoods were shaped by their experiences during World War II.
- Reiss, Johanna. The Upstairs Room. NY: Harper, 1972.
 Summary: This is the author's story of the years spent hiding from the Nazis in occupied Holland. The sequel to this is The Journey Back. Books from the separate listing under The Upstairs Room could be used interchangeably with The Endless Steppe's listings.
- Richter, Hans Peter. I Was There. NY: Penguin, 1987.
 Summary: The author tells of his youth in Nazi Germany as a member of Hitler Youth and later in the army. This is an interesting comparison book of a male main character to the female main character in Mischling. Second Degree: My Childhood in Nazi Germany, mentioned above in this listing.
- Seigal, Aranka. Upon the Head of the Goat: A Childhood in Hungary. NY: Farrar, 1980.
 Summary: This novel lends understanding of a childhood in the country of Hungary during Hitler's rise to power. Nine-year-old Piri describes the confusion of being a Jewish child during the 1939-1944 German occupation of her hometown, and relates the ordeal of trying to survive in the ghetto.
- Steinhorn, Harriet, and Edith Lowy. Shadows of the Holocaust: Plays, Readings, and Program Resources. NY: Kar-Ben Copies, 1983.
 Summary: This anthology contains five plays and two readings with songs and suggestions for a meaningful assembly program about the Holocaust. This is an excellent resource to add global perspective to the devastating effects of the Holocaust.

The Long Winter
By Laura Ingalls Wilder

6th Grade Novel



Book summary: The Ingalls family moves their store in town during the terrible winter of 1880, when food is scarce and they face starvation.

Complementary literature:

Buttrille, Susan G. Women's Voices from the Oregon Trail: The Times that Tried Women's Souls. Boise, ID: Tamarack Books, Inc., 1994.

Summary: An artful blending of women's songs, diaries, history, poetry, quilts and recipes from the women who traveled the 2,000 mile journey to Oregon 150 years ago. After acquainting the reader with where the pioneer women came from, their brave and historic trek, and a description of their final destination, the author retraces the trail as it is today. Historical sites, signposts, markers, and landmarks are duly noted.

Paulsen, Gary. The Winter Room. NY: Watts L.B, 1989.

Summary: This is a quiet novel from the award-winning author about an eleven-year-old boy growing up on a farm in Minnesota.

Stiles, Martha Bennett. Kate of Still Waters. NY: Macmillan, 1990.

Summary: Young Kate tries hard as her family struggles hard to maintain their Kentucky farm.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls and Rose Wilder Lane. A Little House Sampler. NY: Harper & Row, 1988.

Summary: This wonderful resource, edited by award-winning historian and author William T. Anderson, contains articles and fictional works by Laura Ingalls Wilder and her daughter Rose Wilder Lane. Some of these articles were published in magazines of an earlier era and create a chronological account of their lives. It is helpful background information, and makes an informative, inspiring read-aloud.

Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry
By Mildred D. Taylor

6th Grade Novel



Book summary: A black family living in the south during the 1930's are faced with prejudice and discrimination which their children don't understand.

Complementary literature:

Armstrong, William Howard. Sour Land. NY: Harper Collins, 1971.

Summary: For Anson Stone and his three motherless children, the quiet black man who enters their lives as teacher and friend fills a lonely void but also brings home a tragic reality.

Collier, James L. Jump Ship to Freedom. NY: Dell, 1987.

Summary: This is the first of three award-winning historical novels that depict the trials and triumphs in the black experience during the Post-Revolutionary War period. By rights, young Daniel Arabus and his mother, slaves in Captain Iver's house in Stratford, Connecticut, should be free. The Captain refuses to honor their agreement, and instead sells Daniel on board a ship heading to the West Indies. The second book, War Comes to Willy Freeman, portrays a young, free black girl, who, disguised as a boy, searches for her mother who has been captured by the British. The third book is Who is Carrie?, about Daniel and Carrie, President Washington's kitchen slave, and their adventures together. Please be advised to read the author's note at each book's end and their remarks regarding the use of the word "nigger." All three novels are fast-paced.

Greene, Bette. Philip Hall Likes Me. I Reckon Maybe. Santa Barbara, CA: Cornerstone ABC-Clio, 1989.

Summary: Eleven-year-old Beth thinks that Phillip Hall likes her, but their shaky relationship sometimes makes her contemplate their fate.

Griffin, John Howard. Black Like Me. NY: New American Library, 1976.

Summary: The author, a white man, recounts his experiences when he darkened his skin and traveled through the South as a black man.

Stickland, Dorothy, ed. Listen Children: An Anthology of Black Literature. NY: Bantam, 1982.

Summary: This collection features twenty-two pieces of literature by African-American authors such as Langston Hughes and Maya Angelou.

Sign of the Beaver
By Elizabeth George Speare

6th Grade Novel



Book summary: Left alone to guard the family's wilderness home in 18th century Maine, a boy is hard pressed to survive until local Indians teach him survival skills. It is an perceptive account of the forced relationship that develops when the starving boy is forced into teaching the reluctant Indian boy how to read. Also by this author: Calico Captive
The Witch of Blackbird Pond

Complementary literature:

Avi. Captain Gray. NY: Beech Tree Books, 1993.

Summary: A great read-aloud for experienced readers, this classic adventure pirate story depicts an eleven-year-old boy's struggle and determination to become free from a group of pirates right off the New Jersey shoreline, shortly after the Revolutionary War. Avi's other books include:

Emily Upham's Revenge
The Fighting Ground
The History of Helpless Harry
A Place Called Ugly
Shadrach's Crossing
Sometimes I Think I Hear My Name

Beatty, Patricia. Wait for Me, Watch for Me, Eula Beg. NY: Beech Tree Books, 1990.

Summary: With his brother and father serving in the Confederate Army and the rest of his family murdered in a Comanche raid on their west Texas farm, thirteen-year-old Lewallen seeks to free himself and his sister from their Indian captivity. A spellbinding, historically precise, portrayal, this novel contains an amazing amount of fascinating data about Indian and frontier life. The author presents both the red and the white perspectives of the Indian wars. A super read-aloud for comparison of Indian treatment. Also by the author:

Hannalee
Lupita Manana
Turn Homeward

Brink, Carol Rytic. Caddie Woodlawn. Santa Barbara, CA: 1988.

Summary: An eleven-year-old tomboy growing up on the Wisconsin frontier in the 1860's has many pranks, daring visits to Indian camps, and one-room schoolhouse fights. Caddie has a wonderful, believable family. This is a good read-aloud for experienced listeners, and is a Newbery Medal/Honor winner. The sequel to this is Magical Melons, relaying more adventures of Caddie and her six siblings.

D'Agliesh, Alice. The Courage of Sarah Noble. NY: Scribner, 1970.

Summary: This is a shorter (54 pages), easier (K-3), novel similar to The Sign of the Beaver. In the early 1700's, an eight-year-old girl follows her father many miles from home into the wilderness. She conquers all her fears of being alone in the dark woods while her father builds their cabin. Her father then asks her to stay in the Indian village while he retrieves the remaining family members. Based on a true incident, this is a solid introduction to a short version of the genre of historical fiction.

O'Dell, Scott. Sarah Bishop. NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1980.

Summary: Alone after the deaths of her father and brother who take opposite sides during the Revolutionary War, Sarah flees into the Connecticut wilderness and finds shelter in a cave to elude the British soldiers trying to arrest her. Based on an actual historical event, it is a story of tremendous courage, as well as another account of the historical period that shaped our nation.

O'Dell, Scott. Sing Down the Moon. NY: Houghton Mifflin, 1970.

Summary: Through the eyes of a fourteen-year-old Navaho Indian girl, the plight of the American Indian is followed when in 1864 the U.S. government ordered the Navahos from their homeland in Arizona to Fort Sumner, New Mexico. This 300 mile trip, known as "The Long Walk," is a part of every Navaho child's heritage. It shows the courage of the Indians in the face of all the injustices that befell them. An interesting, more current profile of the Navaho nation can be found in the article, "The Navahos," contained in the December 1972 *National Geographic*.

Sperry, Armstrong. Call it Courage. Santa Barbara, CA: Cornerstone Books, 1989.

Summary: In this novel, Mafatu, a young Polynesian boy whose name means "Stout Heart," must overcome his awful fear of the sea and prove his courage to himself and his people.

Taylor, Theodore. The Cay. NY: Avon, 1970.

Summary: This exciting story of a blind white boy and an old black man depicts survival of a shipwreck on a deserted island. After the freighter on which they were traveling was hit by a German submarine during World War II, the twelve-year-old boy is blinded by a blow to his head. The beginning chapters move slowly, but the drama gradually builds to a terrific ending.

The Upstairs Room
By Johanna Reiss

6th Grade Novel



Book summary: A Dutch Jewish girl describes the two and a half years she spent in hiding in the upstairs bedroom of a farmer's house during World War II. The sequel is entitled The Journey Back.

Complementary literature:

Anderson, Rachael. Paper Faces. NY: Holt, 1993.

Summary: Although life in London during World War II has been difficult for Dot and her mother, the young girl is frightened by the changes that the end of the war bring, particularly the impending return of the father she has never known.

Bawden, Nina. The Real Plato Jones. NY: Clarion Publishing, 1993.

Summary: Thirteen-year-old Plato Jones tries to come to terms with his mixed heritage while visiting Greece, as he finds out more about his Welsh grandfather, a World War II hero, and his Greek grandfather, a supposed traitor.

Greenfield, Howard. The Hidden Children. NY: Ticknor & Fields, 1993.

Summary: Text and black and white photographs describe the experiences of those Jewish children who were forced to go into hiding during the Holocaust and survived to tell about it.

Holm, Anne. North to Freedom. NY: Harcourt Brace, 1974.

Summary: A boy who has never known anything except life in a concentration camp makes his way across Europe alone and escapes to freedom in Denmark.

Laird, Christa. Shadow of the Wall. NY: Greenwillow Books, 1990.

Summary: Living with his mother and two sisters in the Warsaw Ghetto, Misha is befriended by the director of the orphanage, Dr. Korczak, and finds a purpose to his life when he joins a resistance organization.

Nolan, Han. If I Should Die Before I Wake. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Publishing, 1994.

Summary: As Hilary, a Neo-Nazi initiate, lies in a coma, she is transported back to Poland at the onset of World War II into the life of a Jewish teenager.

Ransom, Candice F. So Young to Die: The Story of Hannah Senesh. NY: Scholastic, Inc., 1993.

Summary: Hannah Senesh was born in 1921 in Hungary. She grew up while Hitler's influence was spreading across Europe. Twenty-three years later, she parachuted into enemy territory to rescue Allied pilots and Jews, including her mother. For her role in this top secret mission, she was executed by the Nazis.

Reiss, Johanna. The Journey Back. NY: Harper & Row, 1987.

Summary: After spending three years hiding from the Nazis, a Jewish family is reunited and begins the job of rebuilding their country and family. The sequel to The Upstairs Room.

Rosenberg, Maxine B. Hiding to Survive: Stories of Jewish Children Rescued from the Holocaust. NY: Clarion Books, 1994.

Summary: First person accounts of fourteen Holocaust survivors who as children were hidden from the Nazis by non-Jews.

Roth-Hano, Renee. Touch Wood: A Girlhood in Occupied France. NY: Puffin, 1989.

Summary: In this autobiographical novel set in Nazi-occupied France, Renee, a young Jewish girl, and her family flee their home in Alsace and live a precarious existence in Paris until Renee and her sister escape to the shelter of a Catholic woman's residence in Normandy.

Sauvain, Philip A. El Alamein. NY: Discovery Books, 1992.

Summary: A useful resource, this is an illustrated account of the pivotal WWII battle in which the German and Italian forces were defeated by the Allies in North Africa.

Sender, Ruth Minsky. The Cage. NY: Bantam, 1988.

Summary: A teenage girl recounts the suffering and persecution of her family under the Nazis, in a Polish ghetto, during deportation, and in a concentration camp.

Vos, Ida. Anna is Still Here. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1993.

Summary: Thirteen-year-old Anna, who was a "hidden child" in Nazi-occupied Holland during World War II, gradually learns to deal with the realities of being a survivor.

Westall, Robert. Blitzcat. NY: Scholastic, 1989.

Summary: During World War II a black cat journeys all across war-ravaged England in an effort to track down her beloved master.

Yolen, Jane. The Devil's Arithmetic. NY: Puffin Books, 1990.

Summary: Hannah resents the traditions of her Jewish heritage until time travel places her in the middle of a small Jewish village in Nazi-occupied Poland. This book answers those that question why the Holocaust should be remembered.

Where the Red Fern Grows
By Wilson Rawls

6th Grade Novel



Book summary: the adventures of a ten-year-old boy and the two dogs he raised after buying them with money he had earned.

Complementary literature:

Gardiner, John Reynolds. Stone Fox. NY: Crowell, 1980.

Summary: Based on a Rocky Mountain legend, this novel is action-packed, full of emotion and originality. Little Willie, the ten-year-old hero, is determined to save his ailing grandfather's farm by entering a local bobsled race to win the purse. The towering figure of the Indian Stone Fox is favored to win, and is an unusual departure from the Indian stereotype in children's literature. The love of the child for the grandfather and the loyalty of a great dog for his master, are what makes this such a wonderful book, whether it is read or not. Another book by this author is Top Secret.

Peck, Robert Newton. A Day No Pigs Would Die. NY: New Random House, 1994.

Summary: Maturity comes early to a thirteen-year-old boy growing up on a Vermont farm. His father slaughters pigs for a living, and he must face what must be done to his pet pig, who cannot produce a litter.

Stoneley, Jack. Scruffy. NY: Knopf/Random House, 1979.

Summary: The original title of this book is The Tuesday Dog. This dog's adventures are lonely, dangerous and humorous, until a reporter makes her the most famous dog in Britain.

Taylor, Theodore. The Trouble with Tuck. NY: Avon, 1983.

Summary: A young girl trains her blind dog to follow and trust a seeing-eye companion dog.

Wallace, Bill. A Dog Called Kitty. NY: Pocket, 1984.

Summary: The title of this book is misleading, because it is a powerfully moving story of childhood and family. A young boy named Ricky struggles to overcome his deep-seated fear of dogs, stemming from a vicious attack he survived in his early childhood. Ricky resists adopting a homeless puppy that shows up at the farm.

The Witch of Blackbird Pond
By Elizabeth George Speare

6th Grade Novel



Book summary: A sixteen-year-old girl's rebellion against bigotry culminates in a terrifying witch hunt and trial. Having been raised in a free-thinking tropical home, Kit resists the narrow-minded ways of her uncle and aunt, with whom she goes to live after her grandfather dies. Seeking comfort, she befriends a lonely old woman whom the village suspects is a witch. By association, Kit has this suspicion pinned on her as well. An excellent novel about values.

Complementary literature:

Guiley, Rosemarie. The Encyclopedia of Witches and Witchcraft. NY: Facts on File, 1989.

Summary: This collection features over 400 entries and 100 illustrations of the development of the craft, including biographical profiles of leading modern witches.

Rinaldi, Ann. A Break with Charity: A Story about the Salem Witch Trials. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992.

Summary: While waiting for a church meeting in 1706, the daughter of a wealthy Salem merchant, Susannah English, relates the fear, hatred, and accusations of witchcraft that tore her village apart in 1692.

Sebestyen, Ouida. Words by Heart. NY: Bantam, 1986.

Summary: A young black girl struggles to fulfill her father's dream of a better future for their family in the southwestern Texas town where, in 1910, they are the only blacks. This is an unforgettable book due to the child's spunk, the father's enduring patience, and the great faith in God he leaves with her. The first chapter may read slow, but editing it with prereading makes it an excellent choice for a read-aloud. It is an A.L.A. Notable/Best Book. It's sequel is On Fire.

Sivers, Brenda. The Snailman. NY: Little, Brown, 1978.

Summary: A somewhat short (118 pages) novel for grades 3-6, this book deals with overcoming loneliness. A lonely young boy adopts the village's homely eccentric as his friend, he stands alone against immense family and peer pressure to do otherwise.

Yolen, Jane. Here There Be Witches. San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1995.

Summary: This is an illustrated collection of seventeen stories and poems about witches, wizards, and warlocks. An A.L.A. Notable/Best Book.

A Wrinkle in Time
By Madeleine L'Engle

6th Grade Novel



Book summary: Three extraterrestrial beings take Meg Murray, her small brother Charles Wallace, and her friend Calvin O'Keefe to another world.

Newbery Award winner. Other books by the same author are:

An Acceptable Time

And Both Were Young

The Arm of the Starfish

Camilla

Dragons in the Water

A Horse Like a Lotus

Meet the Austins

A Moon by Night

A Ring of Endless Light

A Swiftly Tilting Planet

A Wind in the Door

The Young Unicorns

Complementary literature:

Alexander, Lloyd. Time Cat: the Remarkable Journeys of Jason and Gareth. NY: Puffin Books, 1996.

Summary: Jason and his magic cat Gareth travel through time to visit countries all over the world during different periods of history.

Fleischman, Sid. The 13th Floor: a Ghost Story. NY: Greenwillow Books, 1995.

Summary: When his older sister disappears, twelve-year-old Buddy Stebbins follows her back in time and finds himself aboard a 17th century pirate ship captained by a distant relative.

Gilmore, Kate. Enter Three Witches. NY: Scholastic, 1990.

Summary: An interesting novel of fictional witchcraft, the main character, Bren, is nervous and fearful of having the girl of his dreams meet his family of witches. During a school production of Macbeth, his family, who is in attendance, causes startling effects. He realizes that the meeting has already taken place.

L'Engle, Madeleine. A Swiftly Tilting Planet. NY: Dell Publishing, 1978.

Summary: The third in the series relating to Wrinkle in Time, this novel occurs when Charles Wallace is fifteen. He and the unicorn Gaudior undertake a perilous journey through time in a desperate attempt to stop the destruction of the world by the mad dictator Mad Dog Branzillo. Charles Wallace's sister, who is expecting her first child, but still able to enter her brother's thoughts and emotions, goes with him in spirit to search for a way to avert the tragedy threatening them all.

L'Engle, Madeleine. A Wind in the Door. NY: Dell Publishing, 1973.

Summary: A companion book to the feature title. Charles Wallace becomes seriously ill, and Meg is determined to help him in his troubles at school. Her meeting with the school principal, Mr. Jenkins, a cold dry man that Meg herself has had run-ins with, goes badly. A being far stranger than a dragon appears to Charles Wallace, and the encounter with this alien creature is only the first step that leads Meg, Calvin, and Mr. Jenkins out into galactic space.

APPENDIX

Diane M. Drayer
Jordan Road School
Fifth Grade Teacher



March 21, 1996

Dear Teachers of Grades 4-6;

As part of a project for my library practicum, I would like to take a survey to find out what your students' favorite books are. This should only take a few minutes of your day.

Enclosed please find enough surveys for your entire class to complete. Please have them put their name and your name on the form. The survey results will be tallied and published for the district by the first week in May. These survey results could also be used as a summer reading list.

Please have your class complete their surveys. Stress to them that they should only include books they have read this year. Please collect the surveys and send them back to me through the interoffice mail. I would like to have all class surveys back by April 3.

Thank you in advance for your help and cooperation. The results will be forthcoming!

Sincerely,

Diane M. Drayer

FAVORITE BOOKS QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Name: _____

Teacher's Name: _____

Please list below the names of your five top favorite books that you have read this year. Please include the author's name if you know it.

Book Title #1: _____

Author: _____

Book Title #2: _____

Author: _____

Book Title #3: _____

Author: _____

Book Title #4: _____

Author: _____

Book Title #5: _____

Author: _____

Thank you very much for your participation. I will publish the results via e-mail, and they will also be posted in each school library/media center.

**SOMERS POINT SCHOOLS
FOURTH GRADE FAVORITE BOOKS
SPRING - 1996**

1. Little House in the Big Woods

Laura Ingalls Wilder

2. How to Be a Perfect Person in Just Three Days

Stephen Manes

3. Sarah Plain and Tall

Patricia MacLachlan

4. The Hundred Dresses

Eleanor Estes

5. Dear Mr. Henshaw

Beverly Cleary

6. The Cricket in Times Square

George Sheldon

7. The Barking Ghost

R.L.Stine

8. The Haunted Mask

R.L. Stine

9. The Night of the Living Dummy

R.L.Stine

10. Sav Cheese and Die

R.L. Stine

**SOMERS POINT SCHOOLS
FIFTH GRADE FAVORITE BOOKS
SPRING - 1996**

1. Sounder
William H. Armstrong

2. Island of the Blue Dolphins
Scott O'Dell

3. Bridge to Terabithia
Katherine Paterson

4. Little House on the Prairie
Laura Ingalls Wilder

5. Ben and Me
Robert Lawson

6. Indian in the Cupboard
Lynne Reid Banks

7. Number the Stars
Lois Lowry

8. The Haunted Mask
R.L. Stine

9. Bad Hair Day
R.L. Stine

10. The Barking Ghost
R.L. Stine

**SOMERS POINT SCHOOLS
SIXTH GRADE FAVORITE BOOKS
SPRING - 1996**

1. Where the Red Fern Grows
Wilson Rawls

2. The Endless Steppe
Esther Hautzig

3. Roll of Thunder Hear My Cry
Mildred Taylor

4. The Sign of the Beaver
Elizabeth George Speare

5. The Witch of Blackbird Pond
Elizabeth George Speare

6. The Haunted Mask
R.L. Stine

7. A Wrinkle in Time
Madeleine L'Engle

8. Deep Trouble
R.L. Stine

9. Call of the Wild
Jack London

10. Say Cheese and Die
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