

## Historical Fiction Picture Books: The Tensions Between Genre and Format

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### Abstract

Historical fiction picture books represent a small subset of titles in the broader scope of the format. However, these books are important to both readers and educators. As books are used in educational settings it is critical to assess their effectiveness in helping teach children. This is especially true of historical fiction which generates its own unique challenges. To deeply assess historical fiction picture books, we gathered and analyzed a sampling of 126 titles to assess trends in the genre. We found that there were multiple conflicts between the genre and format. There were many books in the sample that struggled with directing the content to a young audience, giving accurate portrayal of race issues, and maintaining general authenticity and accuracy in the writing. There were also some notable examples of historical picture books that did not display these faults, showing that with the right content and approach, historical fiction picture books have the potential to be invaluable tools for teaching children.

Keywords: Historical fiction, Picture books, Social studies education, Literary analysis

### Introduction

Teachers use books as tools for instruction almost every day. For social studies education, both fiction and nonfiction books have become staples of the curriculum. Short (2012, p. 9) asserts that stories “are the way our minds make sense of our lives and world. We work at understanding events and people by constructing stories to interpret what is occurring around us. In turn, these stories create our views of the world and the lens through which we construct meaning about ourselves and others.” Recently, we have seen more historical content included in books, films, television shows, and general popular culture (Howell, 2014). This popularization has led many to reevaluate the use of historical fiction in a wide variety of

mediums in the classroom, especially since these discussions have shown just how polarizing history can be. Within this conversation we must also assess how historical fiction is used in the social studies curriculum as a tool to help students learn historical content while at the same time helping students to empathize and connect with what it would have been like for people living in the past. Gilbert (2014, p. 18) notes that educators need to be “teaching with our eyes wide open to all of the resources we have at hand, as well as to how our young students are responding.” To effectively integrate literature as a part of children’s educational experience, it becomes significantly important for educators to look critically at these tools.

Research has shown that children are able to learn from historical fiction. Egan (1982) posits that while young children lack a concept of historical causality, they do understand the causality that holds a story together. Thus, it seems that historical fiction would be an ideal way to develop children’s historical understanding through their existing understanding of story structure. Additionally, the value of young children being exposed to history through historical fiction has been clearly demonstrated as it, among other things, allows students to grapple with complex ideas with details that are often left out of traditional textbooks (Rycik & Rosler, 2009). While its usefulness is clear there are also challenges with the genre. With a blend of fact and fiction it can be challenging for readers to discern between the two (Kiefer, Hepler, & Hickman, 2007). There are also challenges when readers don’t have enough background knowledge to navigate the historical context and vocabulary contained in these texts (Youngs & Serafini, 2011). These issues become especially critical when addressing the needs of early childhood education. For it is with the youngest who have the least background knowledge where misrepresentation or stereotype could become the most damaging.

In the classroom in order to engage the expressed benefits of historical fiction while addressing the many challenges it is critical to not only assess the genre of historical fiction but also how it is expressed in the form of a picture book. The focus of the study was to take a critical look at the intersection of genre and format with the hope of finding a stronger understanding of how professionals can evaluate historical fiction picture books and their applications in the classroom. Our research used a comprehensive overview of the genre and format to determine if a collective structure would reveal itself that could then be used to assess the quality range of historical fiction picture books. To this end we gathered a large sample of historical fiction picture books and analyzed each in order to find common trends that might make these books more or less effective for use in classrooms. Our study revealed a number of themes and ideas that help us to articulate a range of challenges that come with the writing and educational use of historical fiction picture books. We found that many books struggled with directing the content to a young audience, in giving an accurate portrayal of critical issues, and in maintaining general authenticity and accuracy in the writing. These three main aspects that emerged address key areas that can be significant for teachers to understand as they assess and use historical fiction picture books in their classrooms.

## Method

In order to better understand the scope of historical fiction picture books we began by gathering a large enough sample to be representative. We first defined the limits of the scope

of texts we desired to include. Only books categorized as both picture books and historical fiction were included in this project. We defined a picture book as a book containing full page illustrations meant for children. That does not include chapter books that contain some illustrations that were meant for an older audience. Historical fiction was defined as a book where the story takes place in the past with an imaginative reconstruction of events. That does not include books that are entirely historical such as a biography or books that are entirely fictional such as fantasy.

To assemble the sample, we searched through the several local library catalogs along with the Caldecott, Newberry, Belpre, Scott King, and Children's Notable Award Lists from the last 20 years for every book which met the aforementioned criteria. The resulting list contained 162 books which we then found in the local library's collection. The entire group of sample texts came from a single collection that was expressly designed for pre-service teachers. Since central to our focus was that the books should connect to the classroom drawing books from a collection that was designed for curricular integration makes it uniquely suited to this type of study. This is a sampling so it does not include every possible text, but we feel it is was large enough to show us important trends that are generalizable to the whole genre.

Once the books were selected we generated a list of data points that would then be collected through deep readings of each of the books. For each book three researchers performed three different in-depth readings and the data for each reader was recorded on separate spreadsheets. After each reader completed their coding all the data points were combined into one sheet so as to more easily comparable. Readers were drawn from a pool of students and faculty at the researcher's institution. The readers represented a range of ages, genders, and professional experience. While some aspects of diversity may not have been fully represented in the readers' backgrounds, we designed the research so that multiple readings for each book could provide a more diverse range than just one reader could provide.

The variables on which data was gathered included: True Story, Famous Figure, Author's Note, Categories, and Assessment of Book Quality. For the variable True Story, the reader was to mark "yes" if the plot was based on something that actually happened to someone and "no" or if the story was more fictional but still included other historical attributes. This fact was often mentioned in the author's note or book description. For the variable Famous Figure, the reader was to mark "yes" if the book includes a known historical figure as one of the characters and "no" if none of the characters were well known or famous historically. For the Author's Note the reader was to mark "yes" if the author included any further information or historical explanations before or after the story. For the Categories variable the reader was asked to place the book within one of nine common subjects developed by the researchers. These categories are Historical Experience, War Time, Slavery, Racial Discrimination, Immigration, Cultural Awareness, Rural America, Great Depression, and the Holocaust. It is the researchers experience that these were common subjects among historical fiction picture books. Historical Experience was designed to be a general option while the other areas were designed to be more specific.

The Assessment of Book Quality served as an open variable where readers would write a note giving their impressions of the authenticity of the book, the topics it covers, and the ages it is best targeted towards. This data was designed to give us a qualitative overview of each readers' impression of the book so as to provide us with information about an individual's assessment of the quality of books included in the sample. The main limitation of this aspect of the data is that it was open to each reader's interpretation. While this data proved useful as readers picked up on trends and identified outliers there was also some conflicting notes about the same books. While assessments of quality can certainly be a matter of individual taste overall, this data proved insightful as we looked for trends within the data we collected.

## Findings

### *Struggles Addressing a Young Audience*

Historical fiction is often under scrutiny for addressing topics in ways that were not appropriate for the audience (Bruner, 1988; Carver, 1988). When books fictionalize history there are even greater problems with representation and accuracy. These problems are especially in the forefront when looking at picture books since this format is often associated with the youngest readers. These children may not have the historical literacy or background knowledge to be able to really navigate issues of representation and accuracy. Some researchers even note that "history is a subject whose meaning is properly appreciated only in our maturity." (Egan, 1982, p. 439). Our findings seem to bear out this claim since we found a significant mismatch between what we perceive to be the expectations of the format of the picture book and the historical genre content. In our sample we found that the majority of the books were targeted towards a somewhat older audience of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders and up. We expected that we could find a range of books even for the youngest children. Anticipating that this format is often associated with preschoolers and writers would want to expose this age group to historical topics in order to start building a sense of social justice, it was interesting to see that there are few books that really target this age.

Though it was clear most of the books in the sample were better suited towards older audiences there were still select examples of books that suited the needs of preschoolers. An important aspect of these books is that they are able to tell the story in few enough words so as to be able to keep a small child's attention while at the same time presenting the content in an age appropriate way. One of these books was *Ox-cart Man* (Hall, 1979), a short narration of a farmer going to town to sell some goods. It contains beautiful and informative illustrations alongside a few lines of text that is often repetitive and uses simple words a young child would understand. The author, Donald Hall, is a well-known poet who says he based the story on an oral tradition of farmers in New Hampshire. In its simplicity the book does an excellent job helping children to experience what it was like to be self-sufficient while living on a small farm in America centuries ago.

In contrast to this fine example, there were many books that readers deemed inappropriate for young children because of advanced vocabulary or large amounts of text that could be boring and difficult to understand. One example, that staggers under the weight of line upon line of

text is *The 5,000 Year-old Puzzle* (Logan, 2002). Written as a boy's journal while at an excavation site, this book has small realistic looking postcards, reports, and contracts in the corner of each page. One reader reported that this book was "chock-full of information about ancient Egypt and archaeology in the 1900s, very informative, [but it] would take some time for children to acknowledge all the details, better for older readers." Yet another example is *Quest for the West in Search of Gold* (Kent, 2007), where each page is written in numbered stages like a "How to Guide." Accompanied by "I Spy" type illustrations this book had a strange fixation on all the different ways that travelers could die. One reader noted, "a Bohemian family journeys all the way to California -very thick text and detailed illustrations, older children could spend some time pouring over it, younger children would likely be bored by it." A review of this book in *Booklist* (Weisman, 1997) mentions how tough it is to place this book within the genre, "The only problem with this book is deciding where to shelve it; CIP data suggests fiction, but with its oversize, picture-book format and emphasis on visual historical details, this will probably find more takers on the nonfiction shelves." Both of these books then seem more like textbooks or school lecture notes that are crammed in beside children illustrations. This style was found to be ill-suited to both the informational needs of the historical fiction genre as well as the readers' expectations for the picture book format.

Another aspect of several books that made them less appropriate for younger audiences was mature emotional content. One example was *Danger at Sand Cave* (Ransom, 2000), a book about a boy's childish admiration for the famous Floyd Collins and cave exploration. For most of the story Floyd is trapped in a cave in and the boy fetches coffee for the workers trying to free him. In the end, they finally break in and find Floyd dead. A resolution that is summed up in a few halting lines, "On Monday, the diggers broke into Floyd's tunnel. Everyone shouted for joy. But Floyd Collins was dead. Arly cried." Readers were left wondering what deeper meaning children are supposed to take from such a statement or from the rest of the story in general. One reader remarked, "Good paced story, but the end is sad and unexpected with feeble resolution." An even more stark example of a book that contains a sense of hopelessness not usually found in literature meant for young children is *Mississippi Morning* (Zee, 2014). This book has a boy talking about why he loves his father and expresses his worries about the KKK terrorizing his black friends. In the end the boy finds out that his father is a KKK member. The ending feels quite hopeless and the boy never resolves anything with his father. The last few lines say, "I still loved my pa. But I never really looked into his eyes again. And he never really looked into mine." History is rarely clean and topics are not always child appropriate, but by trying to glaze over the grittier details many of these books make tragedies seem all the more shocking without providing much meaning or real context to help the reader process it. The *Booklist* (Rochman, 2004) review of *Mississippi Morning* confirms this assessment when it notes that this book may be best used in teaching young teens is in a format meant for young children. "The picture-book format may keep older readers from picking up the book on their own, but the subject will spark classroom discussion even among some young teens." (\*\*)

In contrast an example of a book that presented a tragic historical event without heavy or overwhelming emotional content is *Benno and the Night of Broken Glass* (Wivott, 2010). The book features a cat in Germany who watches his friends all over the neighborhood. One night his Jewish friends have their businesses destroyed and they eventually leave. The *Booklist*

(Rochman, 2010) reviewer wrote, "It is not easy to tell young kids the horrifying truth about the Holocaust, but this picture book is a good place to start. Using the fictionalized viewpoint of a cat, Benno, it shows what happened to families in one Berlin community." Since the cat is such an impartial observer the terrible facts are presented without being emotionally charged or overly distressing. The story ends with the line, "but life on Rosenstrasse would never be the same." Readers feel the connection the cat has to friends and it is easy to empathize with the sadness and tragedy he experiences. One reader commented, "it [makes] it easier to read to younger children by telling the story of Kristallnacht through the perspective of a cat." A tragic emotionally charged event is presented in an emotionally authentic way that is appropriate for children to be able to understand and appreciate. Finding texts that accurately cover important topics without oversimplifying or trivializing them is especially important when we consider the difficulty of covering topics such as racism and slavery.

### *Accurate Portrayals*

In our sample we found a range of books that covered the topics of slavery and racism. These are certainly important issues to address as we help children build a strong sense of social justice. However, these topics can also be challenging to express accurately in that they have to balance historical realities with modern understanding. When these aspects are out of balance then representations can become quite biased or represent inaccurate views that we do not want to perpetuate. Edmonds (1986, p. 30) claims that, "because many psychologists believe that young children perceive racial differences and form racial attitudes at an early age, it seems particularly important to evaluate picture books to see if they are likely to help young children see more than "fragments" of minority characters. And because picture books represent a distinct publishing market, examining them also provides a way to monitor the degree to which publishers present pluralistic images in books for children."

It is a significant struggle to "find age-appropriate ways to help students confront painful stories from the past." (Gilbert, 2014, p. 18). From our sample it would seem that the painful stories from past which American authors wish children would better empathize include the topics of slavery and racial discrimination. 44% of the books included in this project dealt overtly with different racial perspectives in American history (see Table 1).

Many of the books in the sample seemed to do well in their coverage of racism in American history. For example, *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001), was described by one reader as, "a sweet story about two girls, one white and one black, who forge a friendship despite the rules and restrictions based on their interactions together. A good first look at racial discrimination for younger readers." *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001), does a fine job of explaining a difficult topic in an approachable way. Booklist (Rochman, 2001) reports that "the girls sit together on the fence ... then one day Annie Rose jumps down to join Clover and her friends jumping rope. Even young children will understand the fence metaphor and they will enjoy the quiet friendship drama." There is also an overwhelming optimism presented that one day we will be able to overcome the things divide us. On the last page it says, "'Someday somebody's going to come along and knock this old fence down,' Annie said. And I nodded. 'Yeah,' I said. 'Someday.'" *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001) approaches the topic of race so well by not

offering a bigoted character as an easily blamed villain. The adversity our heroin’s face comes from the racism in their society that separates them, symbolized by the fence. Researchers have found that young children are able to understand the moral dilemma brought on by the separation of the races as presented in *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001) as they explore how the characters must feel living that way (Lysacer; Sedberry, 2015). It is clear that *The Other Side* (Woodson, 2001) excellently covers a difficult topic that makes history an accessible for children.

**Table 1**

*Frequency of Topic Categories in Historical Fiction Picture Books*

| Topic                 | Frequency | Percentage |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| War Time              | 31        | 19.1%      |
| Slavery               | 27        | 16.7%      |
| Racial Discrimination | 44        | 27.2%      |
| Immigration           | 17        | 10.5%      |
| Cultural Awareness    | 18        | 11.1%      |
| Rural America         | 37        | 22.8%      |
| Great Depression      | 7         | 4.3%       |
| Holocaust             | 9         | 5.6%       |

There are also historical fiction picture books that much less aptly covered issues of race. We found that books that less accurately depicted racism and slavery seemed to be trying to make these issues simpler for children to understand but in doing so the story actually trivialized them. On example was *The Bus Ride* (Miller, 1998), a story about an African American girl who lives in the segregated south, She gets arrested when she decides to see what she is missing by never riding in the front of the bus. After reading the book one reader remarked, “a good story, but a picture book about the actual Rosa Parks would have been better instead of a loose retelling that didn't actually happen.” The School Library Journal (Greengrass, 1998) confirms our readers’ assessment when it says "the story, in fact, trivializes the entire incident rather than bringing it to life." Rosa parks acted definitely as a symbolic resistance used as peaceful protest. It does not seem as brave when a little girl named Sara does it because she just “wanted to see what was so special. “This book shows that it can be difficult offering a retellings of historical events that are fictionally embellished while remaining authentic.

A better take on these important events is *Back of the Bus* (Reynolds, 2010) about an African American boy sitting in the back of the bus with his mother who sees when Rosa Parks gets arrested. He still feels the fear of the moment yet knows how empowering such a protest was. The boy remarks, “Don’t know why. But instead of feelin’ all shaky, I feel a little strong.” The Children’s Literature (Courtot, 2010) review states that, “Reynolds and Cooper bring a new interpretation ... that will certainly start discussions about prejudice, Jim Crow Laws, and more.” The contrast between these two books demonstrate that even a single aspect of a book can make the coverage of a topic like racism much more effective.

### *Authenticity and Accuracy*

Gilbert (2014, p. 18) notes that teachers need to “present authentic stories ... [of] real people and lived experiences.” But this can get tricky and all muddled up when you present fictional stories. The line between fiction and authenticity is hard to draw, and especially for young children it may be even more difficult to navigate. So, when presenting historical fiction, we must “consider the ways in which our life experiences and our identities today affect how we relate to ... history ... realizing that our experiences and identities influence the teaching and learning that happens in our classrooms (Gilbert, 2014, p. 19).”

Reading an inauthentic story is uncomfortable at best and it could even be very harmful. One book we found to be unauthentic in our sample was *Escape from Pompeii* (Balit, 2003). Kirkus (Review, 2003) describes *Escape from Pompeii* as, “A sketchily told, if more elaborately illustrated, tale of Pompeii's destruction as witnessed by two young natives.” The intent of this book is introduce children to this horrific event and the illustrations really are impressively elaborate. The story feels inauthentic with its heavy handed foreshadowing and slow moving introspective narration. Lines drip with irony. The protagonist reflects, “Could any place feel safer then [Pompeii]” or when he remarks that his favorite song is “Rumble down, tumble down.” One of our readers remarked critically that, “the foreshadowing in the book was painful and juvenilized the intended age group more than it should have. Although the art was interesting and reflected the period, the story telling lacked any true emotion or empathy with the characters. In all honesty, the book insulted children's emotional and literary intelligence by half-heartedly depicting the fictional characters of a truly traumatic and historical event.” In this same way, many of the books in the sample seemed to trivialize events and characters to the extent that they were emotionally inauthentic leaving little for children to connect or empathize with.

Another book found to be inauthentic was *Hallelujah Handel* (Cowling, 2002). The book was described in the Kirkus (Review, 2003) to be a “leadenly earnest rewrite of Cowling's same-named audio drama, a London street child finds healing in music-specifically Handel's music-as he's wrested from the clutches of a villain dubbed The Keeper by two young compatriots and the composer himself.” One reader wrote, “probably one of the worst children's books I've ever read - so many weird logical jumps, awkward storytelling, limp characters - the illustrations are pretty nice, but it reads like a crappy Netflix rip-off of a Disney movie.” The book is over romanticized. When Handel speaks to the “ragged street boys” it is described as “growled playfully.” When one of them faints and falls from the stage Handel catches him. The moment shows Handel holding his “trembling body in a safe embrace”. The heavy handed attempt to overemphasize Handel's benevolence feels wrong because he is an unknown man speaking to these boys he does not know. This meshed with an evil villain who in the end “slipped into the darkness” and a composer whose music alone is so magical that it can keep the boys safe makes the story feel fake.

In addition to these examples of inauthentic representations we also found in our sample books that were inaccurate. Accuracy is a critical aspect of historical fiction and is one of the most often mentioned criteria for assessment in research (Brown, 1998; Freeman & Levstik, 1988;

Harms & Lettow, 1994). Determining accuracy is especially critical when assessing works for young children who may have difficulty discerning between fact and fiction. One example of inaccuracy we found in our sample was, *Milly and the Macy's Parade* (Corey, 2002). This is the story of the first Macy's Parade. By including Mr. Macy as one of the characters though he died long before the first parade the book represented inaccurate facts. The first paragraph of the author's note was devoted to pointing out why artistic license was taken in that regard. Throughout the sample we found that author's notes are extremely important in the genre often for the author to disclose how much of the story is historical and which aspects are not. In fact, 86% of the books in the sample included an author's note. However, as teachers we question if authors notes are sufficient to address blatant or even hidden inaccuracies for young readers.

In contrast to these poor examples we did find books in that sample that portrayed more authentic and accurate views. *Across the Blue Pacific* (Bodren, 2006) is a story of a boy living in America during WWII. Publishers Weekly (Review, 2006) writes that, "the free-verse narrative travels easily between Molly's life back home and what she imagines Ted's experience might be like aboard a submarine. This elegant book speaks to the far-reaching effects of war and the healing power of memory." The author trusts in the reader's emotional understanding, especially when the protagonist's neighborhood friend dies at war. The protagonist finds a way to mourn and move on from the tragedy in a healthy way remarking that, "every story we told about Ted Walker became a story we never wanted to forget. Every story seemed important enough to keep." In a way the book is about something terrible, but because it feels so real in actuality it functions a soothing introspective space for children to explore important feelings. Another example of a book that is strikingly authentic is *A Knock at the Door* (Sonderling, 1997). This story is about a girl who escapes from a concentration camp and hides out on an isolated farm with an elderly couple. One reader described the, "beautiful picture [offered a] simple account of a brave girl in a true situation, good for a first exposure to WWII and the Holocaust." The book mentions the raw emotions of the characters on each page so the reader understands the hunger, exhaustion, empathy, kindness, fear, and sadness. The reader can tell how helpless it must feel to hide from Nazi soldiers while presenting events in a way that a child would easily be able to understand.

## Conclusions

Through a review of a large sample of historical fiction picture books we found that when assessing these texts teachers must consider age issues, topic coverage, and authenticity. Our study found that the most common failings of historical fiction picture books is that while trying to target young audiences who lack historical context books are often trivializing what happened or oversimplifying a complex event. It is clear that it is a balancing act to try and present mature historical topics in a way that is appropriate for children while still doing the history justice. The best books are able to simplify events while trusting the readers to be perceptive and emotionally intelligent. We offer a list of the top 55 titles we found to have the best quality as assessed by the criteria above in appendix 1. We have arranged the books by broad categories with the hopes that social studies teachers may find a quality book to fit into their curriculum. Picture books can be used to contextualize and teach about tragic moments

in history, but not if they over simply, take out of context, trivialize, or present inaccuracies. In our view to create the best books authors must be willing to risk creating enough authenticity that children will be able to accurately understand historical events while at the same time building empathy that allows readers to connect with the characters and learn from the experience. In this study we found many titles that did not create the best view of history, but we found many others that did.

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## Appendix 1

### *Top 55 Historical Fiction Picture Books by Topic Categories*

| Category         | Title                                                                   | Author                    | Reading Level | Summary                                                                                     |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| World History    | Little Sap and Monsieur Rodin                                           | Lord, Michelle            | 2/3 Grade     | Girl in the Cambodian dance troupe goes to France and is painted by Auguste Rodin.          |
|                  | My Napoleon                                                             | Brighton, Catherine       | K/1 Grade     | Girl living on the Island of St. Helena meets Napoleon when he is exiled there.             |
|                  | Hana in the Time of the Tulips                                          | Noyes, Deborah            | 2/3 Grade     | Dutch girl and Rembrandt help her father when he is caught up in Tulip Speculation.         |
|                  | Caravan                                                                 | McKay, Lawrence           | K/1 Grade     | Boy in Afghanistan accompanies his father who leads a merchant caravan.                     |
|                  | The Firekeeper's Son                                                    | Park, Linda Sue           | K/1 Grade     | Korean Boy goes in his father's place to light the signal fire to signal that all was well. |
| Colonial America | Redcoats and Petticoats                                                 | Kirkpatrick, Katherine    | 2/3 Grade     | Story of a spy ring on Long Island during the Revolutionary War.                            |
|                  | Ox-Cart Man                                                             | Hall, Donald              | Pre-K         | Describes a New England family's life through the changing seasons.                         |
|                  | Pilgrim Cat                                                             | Peacock, Carol Antoinette | K/1 Grade     | Pilgrim girl discovers a stray cat on the Mayflower.                                        |
|                  | A Big Cheese for the White House: The True Tale of a Tremendous Cheddar | Fleming, Candace          | 2/3 Grade     | A small New England town tries to make the country's biggest cheese for the President.      |
| Slavery          | Ellen's Broom                                                           | Lyons, Kelly Starling     | K/1 Grade     | A young girl 's parents can finally be married in the time of Reconstruction.               |
|                  | Night Boat to Freedom                                                   | Raven, Margot Theis       | 2/3 Grade     | Slave boy rows escaped slaves across the river to freedom.                                  |
|                  | Blacksmith's Song                                                       | Van Steenwyk, Elizabeth   | K/1 Grade     | Enslaved blacksmith signals to travelers on the Underground Railroad                        |

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| <b>Immigration</b>     | Miss Bridie Chose a Shovel                        | Connor, Leslie        | K/1 Grade | Young Woman goes to America to start a new life.                                       |
|                        | Small Beauties: The Journey of Darcy Heart O'Hara | Woodruff, Elvira      | 2/3 Grade | Girl's family is forced to leave for America during the Irish Potato Famine.           |
| <b>American West</b>   | Ride like the wind                                | Fuchs, Bernie         | K/1 Grade | Orphan Boy and his beloved horse ride the Pony Express.                                |
|                        | The Klondike Cat                                  | Lawson, Julie         | K/1 Grade | Boy secretly brings his cat when they travel to California during the gold rush.       |
|                        | Squirrel and John Muir                            | McCully, Emily ArOld  | K/1 Grade | Daughter of the first man to build a hotel in Yosemite meets the naturalist John Muir. |
|                        | Coolies                                           | Yin                   | K/1 Grade | Chinese brothers work on the transcontinental railroad.                                |
|                        | Coyote School news                                | Sandin, Joan          | 4/5 Grade | Mexican-American boy's life on a ranch in Arizona.                                     |
| <b>Civil War</b>       | Hope's Gift                                       | Lyons, Kelly Starling | 2/3 Grade | Slave Girl's father leaves to fight with the Union Army.                               |
|                        | Freedom Ship                                      | Rappaport, Doreen     | K/1 Grade | Slaves capture a Confederate ship and escape to the Union side.                        |
|                        | Dadblamed Union Army Cow                          | Fletcher, Susan       | K/1 Grade | Cow follows its owner to join the Union Army and march south.                          |
|                        | The Yankee at the Seder                           | Weber, Elka           | 2/3 Grade | Just after the war a Jewish Yankee soldier joins a Southern family's Passover meal.    |
| <b>Native American</b> | I Am Not a Number                                 | Dupuis, Jenny Kay     | 4/5 Grade | First Nation girl is removed from her family and put in a Catholic boarding school.    |
|                        | Home to Medicine Mountain                         | Santiago, Chiori      | 2/3 Grade | Native American boys leave the boarding school to visit their family for the summer.   |
|                        | Priscilla and the Hollyhocks                      | Broyles, Anne         | K/1 Grade | Slave girl sold to a Cherokee family and goes with them on the Trail of Tears.         |
|                        | Crossing Bok Chitto: A Choctaw Tale               | Tingle, Tim           | 2/3 Grade | Choctaw girl helps slaves escape across the river.                                     |

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|                              | of Friendship & Freedom                       |                     |           |                                                                                         |
| <b>World War II</b>          | Coming on Home Soon                           | Woodson, Jacqueline | K/1 Grade | Girl's mother needs to go away to Chicago to work during the war.                       |
|                              | Flowers from Mariko                           | Noguchi, Rick       | 2/3 Grade | Girl lifts her father's spirits after the family leaves the internment camp.            |
|                              | Blueberries For The Queen                     | Paterson, John      | K/1 Grade | New England Boy meets the Queen of the Netherlands after her country is invaded.        |
|                              | The Cats in Krasinski Square                  | Hesse, Karen        | 2/3 Grade | Jewish girl's involvement in outsmarting the Gestapo at the train station in Warsaw.    |
|                              | A Knock at the Door                           | Sonderling, Eric    | Pre-K     | Farmer and his wife help hide a girl who has escaped from a Concentration camp.         |
|                              | Benno And the Night of Broken Glass           | Wiviott, Meg        | 2/3 Grade | Neighborhood cat witnesses' changes leading up to the Night of Broken Glass.            |
|                              | The Secret Seder                              | Rappaport, Doreen   | 2/3 Grade | Jews hiding in Nazi-occupied France gather and celebrate the Seder in secret.           |
|                              | The little ships                              | Borden, Louise      | 2/3 Grade | Girl disguises herself as a boy in order to sail with the rescue ships to Dunkirk.      |
|                              | Ruby in the Ruins                             | Hughes, Shirley     | K/1 Grade | Girl lives with her mother during the London Blitz.                                     |
|                              | Across the Blue Pacific: A World War II Story | Borden, Louise      | 4/5 Grade | American girl thinks about her neighbor serving aboard a cruiser in the South Atlantic. |
| <b>Racial Discrimination</b> | Ruth and the Green Book                       | Ramsey, Calvin A.   | 2/3 Grade | African-American girl's family tries to travel through the South in the 1950s.          |
|                              | These Hands                                   | Mason, Margaret H.  | K/1 Grade | African-American workers fight to be allowed to work in a bread factory.                |
|                              | Grandmama's Pride                             | Birtha, Becky       | 2/3 Grade | A Grandmother tries to shield her granddaughters from the prejudice in her town.        |
|                              | Finding Lincoln                               | Malaspina, Ann      | 2/3 Grade | Librarian secretly lets an African-American boy check a book out from the library.      |
|                              | Back of the Bus                               | Reynolds, Aaron     | K/1 Grade | African-American boy sees Rosa Parks get arrested.                                      |

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|                    | The Other Side                                     | Woodson, Jacqueline | K/1 Grade | A black and white girl become friends by sitting on the fence together.                |
| <b>Art/Science</b> | The Amazing Air Balloon                            | Van Leeuwen, Jean   | K/1 Grade | Young boy in Baltimore makes first flight in a hot air balloon.                        |
|                    | Sky Boys: How They Built the Empire State Building | Hopkinson, Deborah  | K/1 Grade | Boy watches the Empire state building be constructed.                                  |
|                    | Lightship                                          | Floca, Brian        | Pre-K     | Learn about a ships that anchored in waters where lighthouses could not be built.      |
|                    | Hello Lighthouse                                   | Blackall, Sophie    | Pre-K     | Describes the life of a lighthouse keeper and his family.                              |
|                    | Vivaldi and the Invisible Orchestra                | Costanza, Stephen   | K/1 Grade | Girl writes Vivaldi's sheet music for the orchestra of orphan girls he taught to play. |
|                    | In the Garden with Dr. Carver                      | Grigsby, Susan      | 2/3 Grade | Dr. Craver teaches a community in the rural south how to restore the soil.             |
| <b>Sports</b>      | Willie And the All-Stars                           | Cooper, Floyd       | K/1 Grade | Boy goes to see the first all-star game between Major Leaguers and Negro Leaguers.     |
|                    | Dirt on their skirts                               | Rappaport, Doreen   | 2/3 Grade | Girl watches a historic game of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League    |
| <b>Adventure</b>   | The Road to Santiago                               | Figueredo, D. H.    | 2/3 Grade | Family tries to travel for Christmas but rebels have kept the train from running.      |
|                    | Pig on the Titanic                                 | Crew, Gary          | K/1 Grade | A musical pig comforts children on a lifeboat.                                         |
|                    | Radio Rescue                                       | Barasch, Lynne      | K/1 Grade | Boy picks up a distress signal with his ham radio.                                     |
|                    | Abbie Against the storm                            | Vaughan, Marcia K.  | 2/3 Grade | Girl keeps the lighthouse burning while her mother is sick and her father is away      |