

Books You and Your Students Need To 'Check Out'!

BY CHRISTINE A. DRAPER

For the past 3 years I have sat on the Notable Children's Books in the English Language Arts (NCBLA) Book Award Committee. To receive this award, books must:

- explicitly deal with language, such as play on words, word origins, or the history of language;
- demonstrate uniqueness in the use of language or styles;
- invite child response or participation;
- have an appealing format;
- be of enduring quality;
- meet generally accepted criteria of quality for the genre in which they are written.

This column includes several award winning titles from the 2015 NCBLA list that you may want to add to your reading list. Listed below are a few of my favorites:

Voices from the March on Washington

Written by J. Patrick Lewis and George Ella Lyon
WordSong, 2014, 114 pp., ISBN 978-1620917855

Lewis and Lyon share the experience of the historic March on Washington in 1963 through a series of riveting poems by six fictional characters. Although many students know about this momentous day solely by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s famous speech, there were many more perspectives that are not often addressed in history classrooms. This book gives readers a feel for the history and emotions of the March that they may not understand from typical history textbooks. The poets' introduction, a guide to the historical figures found throughout the book, plus additional lists of resources and websites are included that extend the reading experience.

Shooting at the Stars: The Christmas Truce of 1914

Written and Illustrated by John Hendrix
Abrams Books, 2014, 40 pp., ISBN 978-1419711756

Shooting at the Stars intertwines fact and fiction while presenting a moving account of the actual "Christmas truce" that spontaneously occurred in 1914. Hendrix based the story on letters from actual English soldiers of the time, who wrote home and shared stories about their Christmas Day Truce with the Germans. Despite the brutal fighting both Allied and German soldiers ceased fighting on Christmas Eve and came together on the battlefield to celebrate the holiday by singing carols, exchanging gifts, and even lighting Christmas trees. Hendrix's story truly shows the human side of war. The author's back notes also speak to some of

the negative ramifications that came later from the soldiers' actions that day. A bibliography, index, and glossary are included to provide further historical information.

Rhyme Schemer

Written by K.A. Holt
Chronicle, 2014, 167 pp., ISBN 978-1452127002

Kevin James is the school bully. Holt's novel told in the stream of consciousness of a middle school boy's thoughts reminds us that bullies may not always be what they seem. The tables turn when Kevin's brother throws his secret poetry notebook through a car window and Robin, a boy Kevin has bullied, finds it and uses it to blackmail his former tormentor. To gain back some of his lost power, Kevin posts a series of found poems around the school that drive the teachers and principal crazy—and turn him into somewhat of a legend. Readers will enjoy Holt's powerful novel in verse which highlights one boy's transition from bully to the victim.

Silver People: Voices from the Panama Canal

Written by Margarita Engle
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014, 272 pp., ISBN 978-0544109414

Margarita Engle tells the story of the building of the Panama Canal, and the human and environmental costs of this feat. In poetic prose, Engle follows three characters recruited to work on the project, and a young native herb girl, all of whom are witness to the harsh, dangerous, and discriminatory situations due to skin colors and ethnicities. Readers also hear the voices of the trees and howler monkeys who suffer devastating losses to their species and habitats. The different characters and cultures are strikingly etched in this story infused with culture, history, and beauty.

Take Away the A

Written by Michaël Escoffier
Illustrated by Kris Di Giacomo
Enchanted Lion, 2014, unpagged, ISBN 978-1592701568

Escoffier's Take Away the A is a delightfully imaginative approach to the traditional alphabet book. Within our language there are words that can change and become a different word with the subtraction of a single letter. For example, the beast is best if you take away the

A, or the chair has hair when one takes away the C. Young readers will laugh at the pictures and enjoy puzzling over the words that appear when a letter from the alphabet is taken away. Readers young and old are encouraged to take a look beyond the pages and to create even more crazy word pairs that change by simply removing one letter.

If you would like to view the entire list of award winners for 2015, please visit the Notable Children's Books in the English Language Arts webpage on the Children's Literature Assembly website at <http://www.childrensliteratureassembly.org/notables.html>

Children's Literature Cited

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GEORGIA JOURNAL OF READING CALL FOR MANUSCRIPTS

As editors of the *Georgia Journal of Reading*, a refereed journal of the Georgia Reading Association, we invite those interested in improving reading and language arts instruction at all levels to submit manuscripts for publication in future issues. *The Georgia Journal of Reading* is published twice yearly in Spring and Fall.

We request articles that are grounded in current theory and research, book reviews, or creative teaching strategies that address all levels from elementary to college. Three types of manuscripts are currently being solicited.

Full-length Articles

These articles should deal with research, current issues, and recent trends in reading or literacy programs. Appropriate topics for the Journal include project descriptions, research or theoretical reports that address pedagogical implications or issues in reading education at the local, state or national level. Preference is given to articles focusing on topics that impact Georgia's students.

Articles for the Exchange Column

Articles for this column should describe creative teaching ideas and strategies that can be implemented in the classroom. These articles are shorter than full-length and may or may not require references.

Book and Resource Reviews

Reviews should describe and critique children's books, professional books, or reading resources that are appropriate for use by teachers and reading professionals. Complete bibliographic information, the

address of the publisher, and the cost of the resource should be included.

Manuscript Guidelines

Manuscripts should be submitted electronically in Microsoft Word, double-spaced, and the format should conform to the guidelines presented in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (6th Ed.). Manuscripts should not exceed twenty double-spaced typed pages. The author's name, full address, telephone number, email address, and school/affiliation, and a brief statement on professional experience should be submitted on a separate cover page. The author's name or any reference that would enable a reviewer to know who the author is should not appear on the manuscript. Manuscripts will not be sent out for peer review until this information is provided. All manuscripts will undergo a blind review by at least two members of the editorial board. Decisions will be made within 8-12 weeks of publication of the journal for which the submission was made. Only electronic submissions will be accepted.

Please submit all manuscripts to the co-editors:

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