

**GREAT BOOKS FOR KIDS
ANNOTATED LIST
2005**

AA - African American Interest

AS - Asian Interest

DO - Diversity (Other issues besides ethnicity)

HISP - Hispanic Interest

MC - Multicultural-several or many ethnic groups

The annotations below are collected from the following professional journals: Booklist, BCCB, Children's Literature, Horn Book, Kirkus, Publisher's Weekly, and School Library Journal.

Alexander, Lloyd **Dream-of-Jade**

In a fictional ancient Chinese empire, a cat named Dream-of-Jade befriends the lonely and badly advised Celestial Emperor. Little by little, Dream-of-Jade intervenes between the Emperor and his courtiers, lifting the weight of stifling tradition and meaningless ceremony from his shoulders and allowing honesty and common sense to prevail. This fancy feast of delicious satire begs to be read aloud to children. Ages 8-10 AS

Amato, Mary **Naked Mole Rat Letters**

When Frankie's father begins a long-distance romance with a Washington, D.C. keeper of mole-rats at the zoo, the 12-year-old sends fabricated e-mail letters to the zookeeper in an attempt to end the relationship. Through the e-mails to the zookeeper and her own diary entries, Frankie expresses her struggles with disappointment, anger and loss. The story provides solid relationships and refreshing characterizations. Ages 10-12

Anderson, M.T. **Whales On Stilts**

Lily and her two best friends, Jasper and Katie, use all their smarts to outwit Lily's dad's boss, Larry, a mysterious man who wears a bag over his head, has rubbery blue skin, and pours brine over himself! Written in the style of old-fashioned pulp adventure novels, Lily must rely on her wits and brains to save the world. Ages 9-13

Armstrong, Alan W. **Whittington**

A battered cat Whittington, a feline descendant of Dick Whittington's famous cat of English folklore, appears at a rundown barnyard with a community of outcast animals. He proves to be a welcome addition to the motley crew and the owner's grandchildren, most notably for his skill as a storyteller as well as for the fascinating story that he has to tell. An adventuresome, exotic tale. Ages 10-12

Auch, Mary Jane **Wing Nut**

Since Grady's father died, the 12-year-old and his mom, Lila, have lived in a lot of dead-end places. But maybe Charlie Fernwald's Pennsylvania farm, where Lila has been hired to cook for the old farmer, mechanic, and purple martin enthusiast, will be different. Then Grady makes a terrible mistake. Auch tells the story of the slowly developing friendship between a lonely boy and an elderly man. This is a good book for reluctant boy readers. Ages 10-12

Baskin, Nora Raleigh **Basketball (or Something Like It)**

Four 6th grade students form a lasting friendship during the difficulties of the basketball season. The dynamics between players, coaches, parents, family, and fans are explored as each player has a difficult situation to deal with that affects their game tremendously. Ages 10-12

Bauer, Marion Dane **A Bear Named Trouble**

Based on an actual incident, and told in alternating chapters from the points of view of a bear and a boy, this is both an involving animal story and a thought-provoking investigation into the consequences of one's actions. Ages 8-10

Birdsall, Jeanne **The Penderwicks**

Meet the Penderwicks - a delightful family of four sisters, a father and a dog as they head off to a cottage on an estate for summer vacation and find themselves involved with romance, rabbits, the young son of the snooty lady of the mansion, and a bull. The comforting story warms the heart and leads you through childish antics and choices. Ages 9-12

Blacker, Terence **Boy2Girl**

After his mother's death, Sam, 13, leaves California to live with British relatives. He takes on his cousin's dare and attends his new English school with a fresh identity-as a girl. Sitcomlike high jinks ensue; Sam(antha) isn't just a new girl on campus-"she" teaches the (real) girls how to fight, and the most popular boy falls for "her." The reader constantly wonders what will come next. An easy, amusing read, this book will attract both boys and girls. Ages 10-12

Blumenthal, Karen **Let Me Play**

Explores the history, struggle, and passage of Title IX, the law that allowed girls the freedom to pursue sports of their choosing, and the effects this law has had on society since its inception, such as the increased enrollment of women in law schools and the development of one of the best soccer teams in the world today. The book is filled with period photos and cartoons, plus anecdotes from the people who never gave up on the measure. Ages 9-11

Broach, Elise **Shakespeare's Secret**

Hero, who hates her Shakespearean name, moves to Maryland in time to start sixth grade. Aided by a popular eighth grade boy, she becomes involved in a search for a diamond missing from a 500-year old necklace that may have belonged to Anne Boleyn. The diamond is rumored to be hidden in Hero's new house and the necklace may hold clues to both a mystery dating back to Shakespeare's time and a modern day mystery. Ages 10-12

Bunting, Eve, **The Lambkins**

Kyle Wilson rides his bike to the art studio where his paintings are displayed twice a week. On one of these trips he stops to help the crazy Mrs. Shepard change a flat tire. She injects him with a formula that shrinks him to the size of a coke bottle. He is held captive with three other shrunken children, and they plot to escape. This book places the reader in the children's situation and it's scary and thrilling. Ages 10-12

Codell, Esme Raji **Diary of a Fairy Godmother**

Hunky Dory is the top student in her charm school, but her inner conflict about the purpose of witchcraft plagues her. She wonders if it must always be focused on evil. Hunky becomes interested in the work of fairy godmothers, a group looked down upon by ordinary witches and, after much soul searching, she concludes that she wants to become one. Characters from well-known fairy tales weave in and out of the story. This is a fun read that will have particular appeal to fans of Eva Ibbotson's *Not Just a Witch*. Ages 10-12

Creech, Sharon **Replay**

Leo, while preparing for a role in the school play, finds an autobiography that his father wrote as a teenager, and he stumbles on a family secret and begins to understand that the adults have interior lives and past experiences. The school play is included. Ages 10-12

Delaney, Joseph **Revenge of the Witch: The Last Apprentice**

Delaney grabs readers by the throat and gives them a good shake in a smartly crafted horror story. Thomas, the 12-year-old seventh son of a seventh son, is taken on as an apprentice by the local Spook. It's the Spook's job to keep the surrounding area free from witches, bogarts, and the creepy things. He's in for a series of shocks, though, as the job turns out to be considerably tougher and lonelier than he expects. Ages 10-12

Dendy, Leslie **Guinea Pig Scientists**

Driven by curiosity and ignoring risks to their own safety, the ten scientists featured in this book performed experiments on themselves that led to advances in our scientific knowledge. They tested the human body's tolerance for heat, g-forces and oxygen deprivation. They found the causes of serious diseases and developed surgical procedures and ways to make surgery less painful. Their stories are inspiring and often gruesome. Ages 10-12

Dowell, Frances O'Roark **Chicken Boy**

Tobin's got a near-certifiable grandmother, a pack of juvenile delinquent siblings, a dad who's no prize, and a best friend who thinks raising chickens will reveal the meaning of life. Getting through seventh grade is going to be tough. Tobin's life will resonate with many young people who are struggling to see just where they fit in. Ages 10-12

Erdrich, Louise **Game of Silence**

In this sequel to *The Birchbark House*, a young Ojibwe girl embraces her own talents under the threat of a United States government that has determined to take her people's land for itself. The year is 1850, and although her family has survived smallpox and unforgiving winters, this latest danger seems insurmountable. Ages 10-12 DO

Fleischman, Sid **The Giant Rat of Sumatra**

Fleishman's latest novel features pirates, bandits, romance, and revenge, all set in the lively world of 1846 San Diego. A cabin boy named Shipwreck arrives in town in the company of Captain Gallows, a dashing pirate with a good heart. While waiting to return to his New England home, Shipwreck helps the captain conceal a treasure while the man searches for his long lost love. Filled with adventure, comedy, and high jinks, this tale can be enjoyed by all. Ages 10-12

Frank, Lucy

Lucky Stars

A tender novel centers on a pair of troubled teens who find themselves, and each other, through music and an abandoned duck named Dirk. Kira has a beautiful voice that her unemployed musician father exploits by conning her to sing in the subway with the family ensemble. Jake is a good student, but cuts classes to avoid the embarrassment of his stutter. Together they overcome their obstacles. Although the story touches on some depressing topics, a humorous edge overrides all the gloom. Ages 10-12

Giblin, James Cross

Good Brother, Bad Brother

Set against the backdrop of one of America's most tragic historic events, GBBB is a real life story that combines tragedy, drama, political intrigue, and a family saga in one book. Edwin Booth and John Wilkes Booth, renowned and brilliant actors are brothers torn apart by the Civil War. Filled with first hand accounts from family and other persons who knew them, this book will enthrall you from the first page. Ages 9-12

Giff, Patricia Reilly

Willow Run

During World War II, Meggie moves with her parents to Willow Run because her father gets a job in the B-24 bomber-building factory. Spam and spies, 1940s songs and Victrolas, and a lively cast of characters make wartime America pop to life in this finely wrought story of cowardice and courage. Giff's engrossing, heartwarming story will help readers understand how personally war affects people. Ages 10-12

Going, K.L.

The Liberation of Gabriel King

At the start of the summer of 1976, Frita decides she's going to "liberate" best friend Gabe from his fears, so the two of them both make lists of what they're most afraid of. While Gabe's list includes such things as spiders and the 5th grade, Frita's addresses more serious issues such as racist Mr. Evans. The author "deftly balances the ugly face of racism with the more powerful forces of friendship, and family." A heartwarming novel about doing the right thing. Ages 10-12
AA

Haddix, Margaret

Double Identity

When Bethany's overprotective parents drop everything to leave her in the middle of nowhere with an aunt she never knew existed, she uncovers shocking secrets from the past and discovers that she is a clone of an older sister who died. Haddix's timely novel raises provocative issues about what makes an individual unique, with both compassion and clarity. Ages 10-12

Hawass, Zahi A.

Tutankhamun and the Golden Age of the Pharaohs

Through updated CAT scans of the king's mummy and a detailed examination of the contents discovered in his tomb, readers are given a review of the short life of this well-known boy king of Egypt through an informative guide of the period in which he lived and ruled. The book features more than 60 breathtaking photographs and illustrations. Ages 10-12

Keehn, Sally M.

Gnat Stokes and the Foggy Bottom Swamp Queen

Gnat, a spunky young girl in nineteenth century Appalachia, attempts to rescue a long-lost local boy from Zelda, the wicked Foggy Bottom Swamp Queen in this fun, quirky escapade. Gnat's fierce desire to learn the true nature of life and love burns bright throughout this warm, suspenseful, adventure novel that bubbles up with swamp wisdom. Ages 10-12

Kelly, Katy

Lucy Rose: Big on Plans

Lucy Rose is still not crazy about her parents' separation, but she is crazy about her upcoming summer vacation. She is determined to make it "big on fun and big on plans." Will a pack of apricot-hungry squirrels and a rude girl named Ashley ruin Lucy Rose's carefully planned summer, or will she figure out a way to make sure everything goes as planned? Ages 8-10

Klise, Kate

Deliver Us from Normal

Charles glumly records efforts of his hardworking parents to make ends meet, the tumultuous teasing and tears at home among his four siblings and his own unsuccessful efforts to escape the jeering notice of his middle school's in-crowd. Just beneath these seemingly routine trappings, however, lurks a far more rewarding tale, for his family, is one of those uncommon species, a cohesive nuclear family whose members, for all their occasional fallings-out, love and respect each other. Ages 10-12

Laguna, Sofie

Surviving Aunt Marsha

While their parents take their first vacation alone in years, Bettina, Vince, and Aidan stay with Aunt Marsha for three weeks. It won't be easy. Aunt Marsha hates comic books and loves kidney pie. How will the kids survive her for three whole weeks? A tragic event makes them all work together and gain a mutual respect for one another that they never had before. Ages 10-12
DO

Lester, Julius

The Old African

Lester's story is based on a legend about slaves in Georgia, where a group of slaves walked into the water, saying they were walking to Africa. His resulting novella about spirit and freedom shows how hope can live in a people. Lester and Pinkney combine their talents here to create an unusual, complex, and thought-provoking offering in which the Old African is the keeper of a power that brings salvation to his people. Ages 8-10 AA

Sarah Littman

Confessions of a Closet Catholic

Eleven-year-old Justine is questioning the meaning of faith. To be more like her best friend, she decides to give up Judaism to become Catholic, but after her beloved, religious grandmother dies, she fears that God is punishing her. She realizes with the help of a rabbi that she needs to seek her own way of being Jewish. Readers can't help but laugh and cry with this winning protagonist. Ages 9-12

Mackel, Kathy

MadCat

MadCat Campione's fastpitch softball team is going National. But suddenly, half the team is cut to make room for hotshots from other towns, and the parents fire the coach. The team knows nothing can stop them, but are they winning where it counts? Ages 9-10

Mah, Adeline Yen

Chinese Cinderella and the Secret Dragon Society

12-year-old narrator CC (Chinese Cinderella) manages to escape her painful home life with a neglectful father and his tyrannical girlfriend by running away. She joins the Secret Dragon Society and learns about espionage and martial arts allowing her to save lives in WWII. CC emerges as a noble, compassionate heroine. Readers interested in history and cultures will find this selection engrossing. Ages 10-12 AS

Lance, Marcum

The Cottonmouth Club

Eleven-year-old Mitch and his best friend are looking forward to the perfect summer (it is 1962) when his parents announce that he and his family will be spending it in rural Louisiana with his mother's relatives. His immediate despair slowly fades as he comes to appreciate Southern cooking, family stories, adventures with his five boy cousins, and a girl named Skeeter. Ages 10-12

Martino, Carmela

Rosa, Sola

Longing for a sibling in 1966 Chicago, sensitive fourth-grader Rosa is delighted with her mother's pregnancy, until tragedy strikes and her family struggles to deal with its grief. This story has a quiet, touching appeal, including the lives of a recent immigrant Italian-American family. Ages 9-12 DO

Molloy Michael

Peter Raven Under Fire

Peter Raven is a young midshipman in the Royal Navy. Raven, along with the swashbuckling secret agent Commodore Beaumont, uncovers a reckless scheme devised by none other than Napoleon Bonaparte. Eager to add America to his empire, Napoleon has made a wicked pact with a murderous pirate known as Count Vallon. Raven, Beaumont, and a young American heiress, Lucy, must do whatever it takes to put a stop to this audacious plot! Ages 10-12

Moodie, Craig

Sea Singer

After his father and brothers fail to return from a voyage to the west, Finn, a twelve-year-old Viking, stows away on Leif Ericsson's ship and sails to North America to search for them. What began as a quest for adventure and a search for his father becomes an odyssey toward manhood, and the land of promise becomes a "dark realm of doom and mystery," where Finn proves himself a Viking. A rousing sea adventure. Ages 9-12

Moses, Shelia P.

I, Dred Scott

This fictional slave narrative is based on the life and legal precedent of Dred Scott, who became the plaintiff in one of the most important legal cases in American history. The full extent of legal obstacles Dred Scott and his family endured for freedom is explored, and he is brought to life beyond being a name in a history book. Ages 10-12 AA

Papademetriou, Lisa

Sixth-Grade Glommers, Norks, and Me

Allie is starting middle school, and nothing is the same as it was in elementary school. She is about to learn that middle school is a world populated with glommers (girls who cling to each other in groups), norks (combo of nerd and dork), and squashes (crushes to make you feel like your heart's been stepped on). Readers will willingly empathize with Allie, while her journey to self-confidence will serve as inspiration. Ages 10-12

Park, Linda Sue

Project Mulberry

Julia, a Korean-American girl, and her friend Patrick decide to do a silkworm project for the state fair. Julia is reluctant because it is too Korean but she becomes interested in caring for the caterpillars and moths. There are big issues in Park's latest novel—conservation, prejudice, patriotism, biology, and more. A rich work that treats serious issues with respect & humor. Ages 9-12 AS

Paulsen, Gary **The Time Hackers**
Seventh-grader Dorso has a problem in his futurist world. Every time he opens his locker, he finds something from another time or place. He's determined to find out who is messing with the time continuum before a woolly mammoth tramples him, he's shot with an arrow at Wounded Knee, or, worse, the time fiddlers destroy the world. Paulsen again demonstrates his talent for constructing fast-paced adventure, full of boy humor. Ages 11-12

Pearsall, Shelley **Crooked River**
Rebecca lives in Western Ohio in 1812. This is a time when men distrust their Indian neighbors. Why then would Rebecca's family have a Chippewa Indian living in an upstairs room? Indian John is being held there until the circuit Court comes to town. That will be when the captured brave will be tried for the murder of an Ohio trapper. This novel is part coming-of-age story and part courtroom drama. Ages 9-12 MC

Rodowsky, Colby F. **The Next-Door Dogs**
Sara is terrified of dogs. When her new next-door neighbor needs help after a fall, nine-year-old Sara literally has to face her phobia, in the form of the neighbor's two big dogs, head-on! The empathetic support of Sara's family helps her find the strength she needs to grow beyond her fear. Bates' black and white illustrations convey Sara's feelings perfectly. Ages 8-10

Schirripa, Steven R. **Nicky Deuce: Welcome to the Family**
While his parents are on a cruise, twelve-year-old Nicholas spends his summer in Brooklyn with his grandmother and uncle and learns, with unintended results, about his Italian-American heritage. A warm, funny story with memorable characters and enough shady intrigue to keep readers turning the pages. Ages 9-12

Shearer, Alex **Sea Legs**
Motherless twins Clive and Eric stow away on a cruise ship on which their father is a steward to be near him. The twins escape detection on board and through a series of coincidences and good luck save the ship from an attack by thieves. Ages 9-12

Shulevitz, Uri **The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela**
Beginning in 1159, a Jewish man named Benjamin of Spain set out on a 14-year journey to see places named in the Bible. An amazing eye-opener into the Middle East, which was the center of culture and wealth during the Middle Ages. Ages 9-10 DO

Sloan, Christopher **How Dinosaurs Took Flight**
The author considers the ancient creatures, including a Tyrannosaurus with feathers and another dinosaur with four wings. The book focuses on the tough new questions scientists are asking about dinosaurs, the evidence they've gathered, the hypotheses that are developing from the evidence, and the unknowns that still remain. Ages 9-12

Smith, D. James **The Boys of San Joaquin**
In a small California town in 1951, twelve-year-old Paolo and his deaf cousin Billy get caught up in a search for money missing from the church collection, leading them to complicated discoveries about themselves, other family members, and townspeople they thought they knew. Smith makes this novel a read-aloud, laugh-out-loud hit. Ages 10-12

Stauffacher, Sue **Harry Sue**

Harry Sue age 11 survived being thrown out the 7th floor window by her drunken father. With both her parents in jail, she believes that becoming a hardened criminal will reunite her with her mom. However, she finds that she has a heart when she cares for her quadriplegic friend, and Moonie Pie, a child in her grandmothers poorly run daycare program. A cast of strong characters make this a humorous, coming of age story. Ages 10-12

Turner, Pamela S. **Gorilla Doctors**

Through engaging text and stunning photographs, the author delivers a gripping tale of science, nature, and the conservation of life as she follows the Mountain Gorilla Veterinary Project, a group of talented veterinarians. They study the effects of human exposure on the mountain gorillas of Rwanda and Uganda to help preserve this endangered species. Ages 8-10

Wallace-Brodeur, Ruth **Heron Cove**

Feeling somewhat abandoned by her mother, twelve-year-old Sage is sent to spend the summer at the Maine home of her great-aunts, where she learns about and begins to identify with her family's history. Humorous and comforting writing combined with a breezy setting and memorable characters make this an appealing choice. Ages 9-10

Walker, Sally M. **Secrets of a Civil War Submarine**

Mystery, intrigue, wartime heroism, lost gold, and cutting-edge science are all featured in this account of the sinking and recovery of a Confederate submarine, the H. L. Hunley. Divided into chronological chapters complete with pictures, maps, and primary sources, readers get to know the people behind the facts. Walker skillfully combines history, science and storytelling to captivate readers looking to savor a real-life historical mystery. Ages 10-12

Wilson, Jacqueline **The Illustrated Mum**

A portrait of a woman's mental illness and its effects on her children is told by her youngest daughter, 10-year-old Dolphin. Dolphin is determined to stay with her family, no matter what, but when her sister goes to live with her newly-discovered father, sending their mother further into manic-depression, her life becomes full of twists and turns. The author doesn't shy away from the difficulties, but there's humor here, too. Ages 10-12

Whelan, Gloria **Listening for Lions**

Orphaned by the influenza epidemic in British East Africa in 1919, 13-year-old Rachel is sent by conniving neighbors to visit an elderly man in England, passing as their daughter - his granddaughter - to pave the way for their return and the inheritance. Whelan spins a tale full of mystery and intrigue that adds up to a satisfying old-fashioned tale. Ages 10-12

Deborah Wiles **Each Little Bird That Sings**

Ten-year-old Comfort has spent her entire life around death, listening often to her undertaker parents say "We live to serve." But when both her great uncle and great-great aunt die, Comfort begins to see death in a different light. Wiles mixes letters, news reports, recipes and lists such as, "Top Ten Tips for First-Rate Funeral Behavior," into the narrative. The book is both humorous and will also bring tears both for its description of grief but also its celebration of life. Ages 10-12

Wolfson, Jill

What I Call Life

Cal Lavender is placed in a group home after her mother has an “episode” at the library. There are five other girls living in the home run by an elderly lady they call “The Knitting Lady.” She begins the healing process by sharing her love of knitting and telling stories. The girls experience quiet time, reflections and eventually bond. Ages 9-12

Woodson, Jacqueline

Show Way

Soonie’s great-grandma was just seven years old when she was sold to a big plantation without her ma and pa, and with only some fabric and needles to call her own. From slavery to freedom, through segregation, freedom marches and the fight for literacy, the tradition they called “Show Way” has been passed down by the women in Jacqueline Woodson’s family as a way to remember the past. Ages 8-10 AA

Wyatt, Leslie J.

Poor Is Just a Starting Place

Artesia,12, lives in the rural hills of Kentucky during the Great Depression and struggles to help her family put food on the table and complete the harsh chores of a farmer's daughter. She dreams of going to the big city and escaping her poverty-stricken life. A school essay contest gives her the opportunity to win a \$25 savings bond that can only be used on high school. Ages 10-12