

Collection Development Bibliography: A Grab Bag of Books

Cao, Wenxuan. **Bronze and Sunflower**. Massachusetts: Candlewick Press, 2017. ISBN: 978-1-53620-637-1. Translated from Chinese by Helen Wang.

Recognition: *Hans Christian Andersen Award*, Winner 2016

Summary: *Bronze and Sunflower* is an epic Chinese story written on a fourth through sixth grade level. Think Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* written for elementary students. It has many elements traditionally associated with Chinese tales: strong connection to nature, poetic interludes, wise elders. However it lacks any hint of magic or mysticism typically found in other middle grade books with Chinese themes like Grace Lin's *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*. This story is grounded in heart wrenching realism and may be a young reader's first experience reading about a family's survival over a longer period of time including death, drought, famine, fire, poverty, and even a locust plague. As bleak as this sounds, the episodes in the chapters are actually bound together with a strong sense of family loyalty, love, selflessness, and grit lending it to character building conversations. The characters are immediately endearing, particularly Buffalo, a water buffalo rescued and raised by Bronze. The author gives Buffalo the unusual role of confidant to Bronze who is unable to speak. Young readers will find commonality in the quieter, everyday experiences of Bronze and Sunflower while receiving a healthy dose of rich vocabulary that may require some adult decoding. This book would be an excellent read aloud for parents and children. (Upper Elementary)

Maier, Brenda. **Little Red Fort**. New York: Scholastic Press, 2018. ISBN: 978-0-54585-919-6. *Also published in Spanish as *El Fuertecito Rojo*.

Recognition: *Chicago Public Library Best of the Best* 2018

Summary: There are so many rich connections wrapped up into Brenda Maier's short tale of Ruby, a Latina maker and little sister of three burly brothers who decides to build a fort. To begin with, the presentation of this book is wonderful. Large, oversized illustrations are full of detail and contextual clues. The text is

stamped out in bold, inky, block letters. Young readers and listeners who are familiar with the tale of *The Little Red Hen* will recognize Ruby's story as a retelling with a predictable pattern. Consistent with other maker and STEM books, Ruby exhibits creativity and determination while easily regrouping when she experiences failure. The ending provides a twist as the lazy brothers seek redemption for not helping Ruby by constructing their own contributions to her fort. Further, the author's note in the back of the book is not to be missed. Maier has some wonderful thoughts to share with readers about oral tradition, story retellings, and comparing versions of a familiar tale. For a final bit of creativity and STEM, readers are left with a chart about different types of forts that they may build themselves. *The Little Red Fort*, which is published in both English and Spanish versions, is a fantastic entry into STEM texts for young readers and offers many teachable moments. This title should be considered for any children's collection and ideally purchased in both languages to increase access for families. (Preschool-2nd)

Saeed, Aisha. ***Bilal Cooks Daal***. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2019. ISBN: 978-1-53441-810-3.

Recognition: *Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature Honor 2020, Kirkus Starred Review, Best of Mackin selection*

Summary: Aisha Saeed, author of the acclaimed middle grade chapter book *Amal Unbound*, brings us a delicious picture book with the sweet story of Bilal and his dad as they cook together and prepare Daal for Bilal's friends. Bilal is a little hesitant to present this fragrant family dish to his friends and he wonders what they will think. Their precious reactions to trying his culinary feast provide readers with the opportunity to talk about new experiences, kindness, and appreciation of the things that make us all culturally unique.

Tarshis, Lauren. *I Survived the Sinking of the Titanic, 1912 (I Survived Graphic Novel)* Georgia: Graphix, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-33812-091-2.

Summary: This is the first graphic novel release of the popular middle grade series, *I Survived*. *I Survived the Shark Attacks of 1916* and *I Survived the Nazi Invasion, 1944* will be the next two releases. (Preschool-2nd)

Tsurumi, Andrea. *Crab Cake: Turning the Tide Together*. Boston: HMHBooks for Young Readers, 2019. ISBN: 978-1-32856-098-8.

Recognition: Kirkus Review Starred, Publishers Weekly Starred, *Best of Mackin*,

Summary: Life is happy on the colorful floor of the sea where creatures play, coral blooms, and crab bakes cakes for all to enjoy. Then one day, a big SPLASH turns life upside down when a load of humans' garbage is dumped on the reef. The friends work together to clean up their home and to send the garbage back to the humans to deal with. After the task is complete, crab bakes another celebratory cake. This is a great book for discussions with young students about conservation and clean water. The feelings of the sea creatures and the disruption of their happy lives draws an empathetic response from young listeners who share the devastation of the trash invasion. (Preschool - 2nd)

Weatherford, Carole Boston. *The Roots of Rap: 16 Bars on the 4 Pillars of Hip-Hop*. New York: Little Bee Books, 2019. ISBN: 978-1-49980-411-9.

Recognition: *Best of Mackin*, SLJ Starred Review, Publishers Weekly Starred, Kirkus Review Starred, Booklist Starred

Summary. The jacket notes for *The Roots of Rap* quote the brilliant author Jason Reynolds saying this book is,

“a resounding testament that hip-hop is a flavorful slice of a larger cultural cake. And to be hip-hop- to truly be it- we must remember that we are also funk, jazz, soul, folktale, and poetry. We must remember that we are who we are!”

Cataloged as 782.42 for songs, this book reads more like a 920 biographical

anthology filled with the who's who of rap music's five decades of existence.

Weatherstone, a Coretta Scott King Honoree, points readers back to the poetry of Langston Hughes, speeches of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and soulful rhythms of James Brown as the origins of the messages and musicality that are at the core of a musical genre reflecting black culture and community. However the art created by Coretta Scott King Award Winner Frank Morrison completely steals the show. His illustrations take readers to the heart of the city where graffiti artists tag subway cars, breakdancers perform on flattened cardboard surrounded by joyful crowds, and a double page spread of a boombox harkens back to a time of cassettes and mixed tapes. The stunning portraits of black community, black artists, and black children make this book a true work of art. Weatherford's writing will give students a new perspective on old familiar beats: "Today, hip-hop intersects not only with the arts, but also with politics, commerce, and pop culture" (p.36). The back of the book contains a glossary and mini biographies of rap artists. It is a must have for any elementary collection- especially a collection committed to valuing the important aspects that contribute to diverse cultural heritage. (All ages)