

## Literary Genre Bibliography: Historical Fiction

### Grades K-3



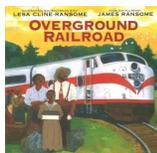
Bernstrom, Daniel. **Big Papa and the Time Machine**. Harper, 2020. ISBN-13: 978-0-06-246331-9.

**Summary:** (Excerpt from *School Library Journal*, January 1, 2020). Bernstrom's book digs deep, with a story about a child facing fears by discovering a grandfather's difficult past. An unnamed, ungendered child is nervous about starting school, so they're taken for a ride with Big Papa in his old blue car. As they move through the grandfather's past, leaving the South in the 1950's as a young man and eventually becoming the caregiver of the child, it is revealed that Big Papa was never able to attend school. In the first-person narrative, written largely in dialogue that features African American Vernacular English, the child poses questions, and the knowing grandparent responds with sage, though not preachy, one-liners. The underlying thread is an encouraging message of facing one's fear, and a constant presence of familial love.



Charles, Tami. **Freedom Soup**. Candlewick Press, 2019. ISBN-13: 978-0-7636-8977-3.

**Summary:** (Excerpt from *Kirkus Reviews*, starred, December 1, 2019). A Haitian grandmother and granddaughter share a holiday, a family recipe, and a story of freedom. It's New Year's Day, and Belle and Ti Gran are sharing in the annual tradition of making Freedom Soup. Though Belle jokes that the dish is named because "It's free," Ti Gran informs her that it is anything but. What follows is a breathless recounting of family slave history before the Haitian rebellion, with Freedom Soup as the conduit between the historical past and present day. This tale features characters for whom cooking is an elaborate dance as well as family bonding, and the soup looks so tempting readers will swear they smell it.



Cline-Ransome, Lesa. **Overground Railroad**. Holiday House, 2020. ISBN-13: 978-0-8234-3873-0.

**Summary:** (Excerpt from *Booklist*, starred, (February 1, 2020 (Vol. 116, No. 11)) Leaving in secret, "before Daddy's boss knew, / before our lease was up," Ruth Ellen and her parents rise before dawn, bid their relatives goodbye, and board the Silver Meteor, an early morning train bound for New York. The "colored car" grows more crowded at each stop, but north of Washington, D.C., they can legally sit in any car. They move to another, ignoring certain passengers' silent hostility. Every mile carries this family toward "The Promised Land." Reading a biography of Frederick Douglass, who had traveled north long ago, Ruth Ellen reflects, "We all running from / and running to / at the same time." The free-verse text reads aloud gracefully, telling one family's story with concise, resonant phrases and sensory details, while including allusions to history, religion, and culture, which a parent or teacher could discuss further.



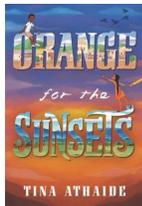
Ward, Lindsay. **Rosie: Stronger than Steel**. Two Lions, 2020. ISBN-13: 978-1-54201-794-7.

**Summary:** (Excerpt from *Kirkus Reviews*, starred, January 1, 2020) Cross-cultural feminist history goes down easy in this kid-friendly story. Factual details about female factory workers in the United States and the Women's Land Army in England merge in this fictional tale of a sunny little tractor. When readers first meet Rosie, she's being constructed by racially diverse Rosie the Riveter–esque women in response to FDR's Lend-Lease Act. Built with care, the tractor receives a final rose painted on her nose and then she's shipped off to England. There, women tend the fields while the men fight in World War II. Rosie is determined to do her

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part, repeating, “I plow and I dig. / I dig and I plow. / No matter the job, / this is my vow.” The war ends but not her purpose—there’s a happy ending in store for the little tractor that could. Ample backmatter tells the true story behind tractors like Rosie.

### Grades 3+



Athaide, Tina. **Orange for the Sunsets**. Katherine Tegen Books, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-71373-385-0.

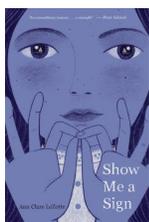
**Summary:** (Excerpt from *Kirkus Reviews*, starred, January 15, 2019) In 1972, the president of Uganda, Idi Amin, ordered the expulsion of the country’s “foreign Indians,” giving them 90 days to leave the country. In alternating chapters, Athaide tells the story of best friends Asha, who is Indian, and Yesofu, who is African and whose mother is a servant in Asha’s home, as they navigate this xenophobic, nationalist chaos. Yesofu is influenced by Mamma’s words—“You and Asha are from different worlds,” she warns him—but Asha is determined to prove him wrong: “Black. Brown. Indian. African. She’d...[s]how him these differences didn’t matter.” Yet when Asha sees Yesofu “cheering, waving, and hollering” at an anti-Indian rally, she is hurt and confused. When, shortly after, at school during a heated argument, Yesofu snarls at her, “Don’t [my family] deserve more than being your slaves—don’t I?” Asha is incredulous. As the novel progresses, however, Yesofu, too, has misgivings about this Ugandan nationalism and the possible loss of his dearest friend.



Lee, Julie. **Brother’s Keeper**. Holiday House, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-.8234-4494-6

**Summary:** (Excerpt from *Booklist*, starred, May 15, 2020 (Vol. 116, No. 18)) Life in North Korea for 12-year-old Sora and her family has been hard since the Russians “liberated” it from Japanese rule. Enticed by tales of their grandfather who had lived in America, Sora and her younger brother, Youngsoo, dream of living away from the rigid controls and brainwashing of the Communist regime. When war erupts, Sora’s family flees toward the freedom of South Korea. But soon, she and Youngsoo become separated from their parents, who are seemingly killed in an explosion. Sora and her brother continue their journey alone to Busan on the southern coast of South Korea, which is still in American hands. To make it, they must avoid capture, scramble for food, and rely on the kindness of other refugees. Through her journey, Sora transforms from a precocious girl into a courageous and intelligent hero. Lee captures Sora’s internal journey alongside the physical one, and in the process details the struggles of a refugee from the ground level. Even after Sora arrives at her destination, her battles do not end, as she still must combat the social norms that deny her agency simply for being female.

### Grades 4+



LeZotte, Ann Clare. **Show Me a Sign**. Scholastic Press, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-71376-493-9.

**Summary:** (Excerpt from *Kirkus Reviews*, starred, November 15, 2019) A young girl living on Martha’s Vineyard in 1805 doesn’t think her community of Deaf and hearing signers is special until the day the hearing world violently intrudes. In present-tense narrator Mary Lambert’s life, it is easy to forget who is Deaf and who is hearing. Everyone she knows uses sign language, and a quarter of her village is Deaf. Mary only learns how different her community is when a young scientist with disdain for the Deaf and no understanding of their culture arrives, seeking to discover the cause of their “infirmity”—using Mary as an experimental subject. LeZotte weaves threads of adventure, family tragedy, community, racism, and hearing people’s negative assumptions about Deaf people into a beautiful and complex whole. Mary overcomes her own

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ordeal with the support of her community, but in the process she discovers that there is no silver bullet for the problems and prejudices of the world.



Wolk, Lauren. **Echo Mountain**. Dutton Children's Books, 2020.

ISBN: 78-1-71376-397-0

**Summary:** (Excerpt from *Kirkus Reviews*, starred, February 1, 2020) After losing almost everything in the Great Depression, Ellie's family moves to the Maine woods on Echo Mountain to start a farm—then tragedy strikes. Not long after getting them established in their new life, Ellie's father is struck on the head by a falling tree and lapses into a monthslong coma, his recovery unlikely. Never feeling threatened by the wilderness the way her mother and older sister, Esther, do, Ellie takes over many of her beloved father's chores, finding comfort and confidence in the forest. She's fully mindful of her place in the natural world and her impact on the plants and animals she shares it with. After she becomes determined to use the resources of the woods, however novel and imaginative the application, to save her father, conflict with her mother and Esther increases sharply. Led by a dog, Ellie discovers elderly Cate—called "hag" and shunned as a witch—badly injured, living alone in a cabin on the mountaintop. Cate fully understands the 12-year-old's slightly supernatural sense. Cate's grandson, Larkin, Ellie's age, flits in and out of the tale before finally claiming his place in this magnificently related story of the wide arc of responsibility, acceptance, and, ultimately, connectedness.

### Grades 5+



Pinkney, Andrea Davis. **Loretta Little Looks Back: Three Voices Go Tell It**. Little, Brown and Company, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-316-53677-6.

**Summary:** (Excerpt from *School Library Journal*, starred, September 1, 2020) Loretta, Roly, and Aggie B., members of the Little family, recount their lives through original first-person narratives, poetry, and spiritual hymns. The first to tell her story is Loretta Little, who is as strong as any adult and can box cotton with the best of them. Her life as a sharecropper's daughter imbues her with great strength, but is not without sacrifice. Next up is Roly, whose story begins when Loretta and her sisters find him abandoned in a field as a baby and raise him. He grows up with an affinity for nature and an intuition for what the farm animals and crops need. The last to tell her story is Aggie B., Roly's daughter, and the B stands for "bold." Even though she is young, she stands by her beliefs and feels it is her duty to help African Americans exercise their right to vote. Every character has a unique voice and an engaging presence. From the first page, readers are invested in these characters' journeys as they navigate fantastic triumphs and devastating lows. The members of the Little family meld well with each other and realistically portray a close-knit family dynamic.



Stone, Nic. **Clean Getaway**. Crown Books for Young Readers, 2020.

ISBN: 978-1-71373-958-6.

**Summary:** (Excerpt from *Booklist*, starred, October 15, 2019 (Vol. 116, No. 4)) Black middle-schooler and computer whiz William "Scoob" Lamar is looking forward to being grounded for the entirety of spring break when his grandmother, an octogenarian white woman, whisks him away in a brand-new Winnebago on a trip to retrace her history. The ways in which G'ma's days of old dovetail with the American civil rights movement do more than teach Scoob about the injustices of Jim Crow and the fight for equality; each stop provides clues to

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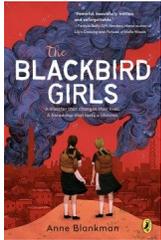
deciphering the mystery surrounding his grandfather's life in prison and estrangement from Scoob's father. Adding Scoob's wry conversational observations about the odyssey to maps and a Green Book, an essential travel guide for African Americans designed to help them find accommodations willing to admit them and avoid towns known for terrorizing Black people, contributes levity and realism to what could have been a topic too emotionally heavy for middle-grade readers. Instead, it explores an integral part of America's past through the lens of one family's journey to mutual understanding and eventual generational acceptance.

### Other titles to consider - highly reviewed and starred; unable to finish reading.



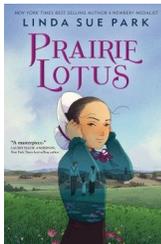
*Booklist* starred (November 15, 2019 (Vol. 116, No. 6))

Billet, Julia. **Catherine's War**. Harper Alley, 2020. ISBN: 978-0-06-291559-7  
Grades 4-7



*Kirkus Reviews* starred (December 15, 2019)

Blankman, Anne. **The Blackbird Girls**. Viking, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-984837-35-6  
Grades 4-7.



*Booklist* starred (March 1, 2020 (Vol. 116, No. 13))

Park, Linda Sue. **Prairie Lotus**. Clarion Books, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2020. ISBN: 978-1-32878150-5  
Grades 5-7