Literary Genre Bibliography: Historical Fiction

Grades K-2


**Summary:** When Mae tells her class she wants to be an astronaut, her white teacher says that she would be better suited to be a nurse. Luckily, Mae’s parents believe in their daughter’s dreams, telling her repeatedly that “If you can dream it, if you believe it and work hard for it, anything is possible.” Loosely based on the early life of Mae Jemison, an author’s note gives us the rest of the story.

**Curricular use:** This book can be used as a springboard to discuss any stereotypes/biases and a growth mindset. Could be considered a biography, but it is fictionalized enough to fit historical fiction.

**Audience:** The book would work well in a classroom or for independent or one-on-one reading.


**Summary:** Keeping the lighthouse running is an important charge, but it is a solitary life for the new keeper. Blackall's brilliant illustrations bring to life the inner layout of the lighthouse, the perilous waves that crash violently against its exterior, and the dangers of shipwrecks. Readers see the complex process of bringing supplies, the mail, and even the keeper’s wife to join him. The story concludes with the keeper being dismissed from his charge with the automation of the lighthouse. Author’s notes on the back endpapers offer more details.

**Curricular use:** The illustrations, clearly depicting days gone by, make this an excellent vehicle for introducing historical fiction. The keeper being replaced by automation allows students to consider other things that have changed/improved through technology, with examples in the illustrations.

**Audience:** This book would work well in the classroom, and the pictures would make it an excellent one-on-one read with a Rock & Reader or parent.

Grades 3-4


**Summary:** Beginning on the front endpapers, this book gives an account of the Children’s Crusade of May 1963, in Birmingham, Alabama. When King called the people to march in peaceful protests as a way of demanding freedoms, adults were leary of repercussions from employers. The children stepped up to march for their own freedoms, and Dr. King promised to support them. The harsh realities of the march (fire hoses, police dogs, and jailing minors) are addressed openly and honestly in the story while maintaining sensitivity to a young audience. An empowering look at how a group of exceptionally brave children and courageous parents made a mark on history not to be forgotten.

**Curricular use:** This book is an excellent vehicle for discussing respect, equity, and peaceful ways of solving problems, even in the worst of circumstances.

**Audience:** This book is best accompanied by opportunities for discussions to ensure students’ understanding and to address questions and concerns. It is suitable for grades 3-6.

**Summary:** Langston and his father have moved from rural Alabama to the Bronzeville neighborhood of Chicago. The adjustment is challenging for Langston, who misses home and his mother who recently died. At school, three bullies make the adjustment almost unbearable. Avoiding the bullies, Langston stumbles into a library - a library that welcomes black patrons and celebrates black writers! When he finds a poet who shares his name, the poet’s words ring true and help Langston to find himself again.

**Curricular use:** This novel illustrates the Great Migration, when a number of blacks left the discriminating South to try for a better life working in the new industries of the North. The Langston Hughes poems within are accessible and relatable, complementing the story perfectly.

**Audience:** With its historical topics and the issue of bullying, this would make a terrific oral lit selection or novel unit. Also a thoughtful individual read.

---

**Grades 5-6**


**Summary:** India has just gained independence from Britain, so they should be enjoying freedom, right? Nisha is struggling to understand why it suddenly matters who is Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh. With a Muslim mother (who died birthing Nisha and her twin brother) and a Hindu father who rarely goes to temple, where does she fit in? As tensions escalate, the family's home in Mirpur Khas, within the newly-formed Pakistan, is no longer safe. The family flees for the Indian border, literally running for their lives, and leaving behind their Muslim cook with whom shy Nisha feels she can actually speak. In diary entries written to her deceased mother, Nisha finds a new freedom to speak, to ask her questions and share her observations of this dangerous and tumultuous time.

**Curricular use:** This novel sheds light on a time that elementary students may not know much about, but Nisha’s descriptions are so captivating that the reader is very much along for the ride.

**Audience:** 5-6 grade classes or independent readers.

---


**Summary:** It’s the 1950s, the space race is on and times are changing; except for baseball’s prehistoric no girls policy. Katy Gordon, the best pitcher on her block, is shocked to discover that Little League will not allow her to play America’s favorite pastime because it is “too strenuous” for girls. A great mix of baseball history and 1950s “current” events, this book follows Katy’s quest to uncover the unknown history of women baseball players, set the record straight, and change a few minds along the way!

**Curricular use:** A discussion spark for the evolution of women’s roles over time and an engaging independent read.

**Audience:** My 5-6 grade girls LOVE, LOVE, LOVE this book! Even my girls who will never finish a book have devoured this book!