

## Literary Genre Bibliography: Nonfiction

### Grades K-2

Barton, Bethany. **I'm Trying to Love Rocks**. Viking, 2020. ISBN: 9780451480958.

**Summary:** This metafictional picture book about the science of rocks is saved by a child who jumps in to convince readers—and the book itself—that rocks are fascinating. “This is a book about geology!” the first spread exclaims. A rock is declared “so rock-like” and “hard” before the narrator realizes that rocks “don’t really do much” and gives up, announcing “THE END.” But before readers can shut the book, a black girl with frizzy hair and large eyes calls out from the white space, “Wait!” In a back and forth with the narrator, the young scientist keeps the book going by pointing out that all the exciting topics the narrator is ready to move on to (volcanoes, diamonds, or fossils) are all a part of geology. The girl, who happens to be president of the rock club, takes on the challenge of making the narrator love rocks. Their humorous, tongue-in-cheek interaction will keep children entertained, all while educating readers about the science of geology, from the rock cycle to the process by which gemstones are formed. Chock full of facts, diagrams, and examples, including fun end pages, this book will reward readers who return to it frequently. Bold lines, lively colors, and clever use of white space make for an eye-catching read. Playfully persuades the most rock-averse readers to love rocks. Kirkus Reviews starred (April 1,2020).

**Curricular use:** This is an entertaining introduction to the world of rocks.

**Audience:** K-2nd Grade

Langley, Sharon and Nathan, Amy. **A Ride to Remember**. Abrams Books, 2020. ISBN: 9781419736858.

**Summary:** In 1963, segregation was still the norm in many public places, including the Gwynn Oak Amusement Park in Baltimore, Maryland. Author Langley narrates, recounting events from her childhood, in which both Blacks and whites peacefully protested this injustice on July 4 and 7, 1963, resulting in negotiations that eventually opened the park to all on August 28, 1963. On opening day (the same day as Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington and "I Have a Dream" speech), Langley and her father were the first African Americans to legally enter Gwynn Oak, where Langley rode the carousel. The text is simple, direct, and heartfelt, offering readers a clear sense of the frustrations felt by African Americans leading up to these events. Cooper's signature oil erasure illustrations feature sepia tones and expressive faces that support and extend the poignant text. Appended with an extensive author's note (explaining, among other things, that the carousel still operates today on the National Mall), this is a moving tribute to a little-known civil rights event. Booklist (November 1, 2019 (Vol. 116, No. 5).

### Grades 3-4

Barton, Chris. **All of a Sudden and Forever**. Carolrhoda Books, 2020. ISBN: 9781541526693.

**Summary:** The Oklahoma City bombing in 1995 killed 168 people, “but the awfulness of that moment is not the end of the story.” A man parks a truck in front of a big building and walks away. The bomb

explodes. And “all of a sudden—and forever—so much was ruined.” Barton tells exactly what happened and how it affected so many people. Xu’s illustrations, created with ink and Photoshop, are dark and eerie, capturing the mood of loss. Grief knows no boundaries, and white and brown-skinned people walk through misty landscapes, as if the dust from the bombing is still in the air. But an American elm near the blast survives, and its roots entwine scenes from page to page, as if wrapping those still living in its embrace. The tree itself is featured on the cover, its branches outstretched, welcoming all who gather. This Survivor Tree is a generous one, offering seeds for remembrance, a place for gathering, even a spot for a wedding. A touching final double-page spread represents the many people—black and white, young and old, those who stand and those who use wheelchairs—who assemble there. They hold hands, their shadows reflected as if in a misty gray-blue pool, the Survivor Tree’s roots swirling underneath. And the final words: “We will remember.” An affecting story of loss rooted in one specific tragedy. (author’s note, illustrator’s note, interview subjects, bibliography) Kirkus Reviews, starred, (November 15, 2019)

Fleming, Candace. **Honeybee: The Busy Life of Apis Mellifera**. Neal Porter Books, 2020. ISBN: 9780823442850.

**Summary:** As they did in *Giant Squid* (2016), Fleming and Rohmann give readers a deep dive into the biology of a creature so alien from humans it’s hard to imagine we all live on the same planet. The long, free-verse poem begins to unfold in the front matter when the protagonist emerges from the wax cell that protected her during metamorphosis “into... / a teeming, trembling flurry. / Hummmmm!” Naming her subject Apis for her genus, Fleming describes in meticulous detail many of the myriad roles a worker honeybee plays in the colony, from cell preparation through nursing, queen tending, comb building, nectar receiving, honey curing, guarding, and scouting to, finally, foraging. She maintains narrative tension through artfully deployed delayed gratification, ending each topical spread by hinting that Apis’ “new job” might involve “flying?” only to reveal a different nest-bound activity for Apis with a page turn. Rohmann rises to the challenge of a story set mostly in dark, confined quarters and a limited palette of black, brown, and honey yellow with stunning views of Apis and her sisters, each tiny hair and segment lovingly delineated. Neither text nor illustrations anthropomorphize their subject; Apis never complains. But an astonishing double gatefold depicts her finally flying over a field of purple and yellow wildflowers into an endless blue sky, liberating bee, creators, and readers alike. Several pages of backmatter offer further information about honeybees, online resources, and child-appropriate books. Like its subject, a wonder to behold.

## Grades 5-6

Dionne, Evette. **Lifting as We Climb**. Penguin Random House, 2020. ISBN: 9780451481542.

**Summary:** In 1904, the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs (NACWC) established the motto "lifting as we climb." Though the NACWC's goals included suffrage for Black women, the vote was just one piece of the puzzle; they saw it as a tool they could use to improve the lives of all African Americans. It's from this movement that Dionne, a culture writer, editor, and former teacher, takes the title of her book, which traces Black women's fight for voting rights in America. Dionne demonstrates how the suffrage movement was rooted in the abolitionist movement, profiling Black women who were crucial to the fight for the vote (both familiar and lesser-known figures are represented) and showing how the shock waves from these movements have reverberated through

the Jim Crow South and present-day. Throughout, Dionne highlights how the stories of Black women have routinely been systemically buried. The white women who led the suffrage movement did not treat them as equals and were willing to deny or overlook the rights of Black women if it meant a quicker road to their own goals. And though many movements and stories were closely intertwined, few of these narratives are taught in history classrooms today. Dionne pulls back the veil on these stories, offering up an essential work for middle graders that helps to fill a gaping void. Booklist starred (April 15, 1010 (Vol. 116, No.16))

Soontornvat, Christina. **All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys' Soccer Team.** Candlewick Press, 2020. ISBN: 9781536209457.

**Summary:** In summer 2018, the eyes of the world were on Tham Luang cave in northern Thailand, where the coach and 12 members of a boys' soccer team, the Wild Boars, became trapped in a flooding cavern. Through a chronological narrative as thrilling as any fiction, Soontornvat (*A Wish in the Dark*, 2020) recounts the 18-day saga, from the team's carefree excursion to their harrowing captivity and miraculous rescue, which involved an international coalition of thousands, led—and this is key—by Thai civilians, soldiers, and engineers. The staggering scope of contributions is organized with perfect clarity, integrated seamlessly into the tale. As readers are guided through all the factoring risks, technologies, and strategies, they will get to know several key players, whose interactions are contextualized by precisely timed asides illuminating Thai culture, from Buddhism to soccer to social etiquette, all critical to understanding the complexities of the operation. Soontornvat selects details and measures her pacing with the practiced hand of a master storyteller, and while everything is supported by meticulous research, the prose never suffers from information density; rather, every aside—whether on hypothermia, ketamine, or Navy SEAL training—adds tension through understanding. Readers who already know the outcome will nonetheless be enthralled by this singular tale that captures the importance of STEM education, the beauty of Thailand, and the best of humanity—collaboration, innovation, sacrifice, family, and love. Booklist starred (August 2020 (Vol. 116, No. 22))