Association of Children’s Librarians of Northern California

Distinguished Books

2009
Association of Children’s Librarians of Northern California

Distinguished Books

2009

Titles have been selected from those reviewed in BayViews for their outstanding literary merit, high quality of illustration and design, and contribution to a child’s understanding of the world.
Distinguished Books reviewed by ACL:

Non-fiction
Folklore
Poetry
Biography
Graphic Novels
Fiction
Picture Books
Readers
Professional

ACL DISTINGUISHED BOOKS
2009

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ACL has been serving librarians, teachers, and booksellers in Northern California since the 1930s. Members meet monthly to review books for young people and discuss related issues. ACL’s book review journal, BayViews, is published 11 times a year.

Membership in ACL offers:

- subscription to BayViews, which prints reviews of more than 1,800 new books each year
- annual annotated Distinguished Books list
- opportunity to review and discuss current children’s books
- special bibliographies
- notices of job opportunities
- opportunity to discuss current issues in library service to children
- discounted attendance at the annual Performers’ Showcase
- discounted attendance at the annual Institute
- professional development and networking opportunities

Meetings are held from 9 a.m. to noon on the second Friday of each month, excluding the month of the annual Institute, at an area library. Check the website for meeting locations. In the Spring, ACL sponsors an Institute about library service to children and topics of interest to librarians and teachers.

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Please mail to: ACL Membership, P. O. Box 12471, Berkeley, CA 94712
Lange, Karen E.
_The Porcelain Dog: In Search of_ 
_Faience from the Mediterranean_ 
_National Geographic, 2009_ $19.95 Grades 5-9
Dramatic blue-tinted photos, period artwork, quotations from Poe, and a striking book design combine with a clear narrative to describe the tragic life of 19th century author Edgar Allan Poe.

Marrin, Albert
_The Dust Bowl: The Story of the Dust Bowl_ 
_Dutton, 2009_ $22.99 Grades 5-12
More than a simple history, Marrin provides background ecological, sociological, and historical perspectives accented with personal stories and photographs from Dorothea Lange and others of the era.

National Children’s Book and Literacy Alliance
_Our White House: Looking In, Looking Out_ 
Featuring everything from imagined conversations to excerpts from the 9/11 Commission report, this is a dynamic collection of short stories, essays, poems, and artwork from some of the most notable children’s authors and illustrators celebrating 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Nelson, Jon
_The Story of Snow: The Science of Winter’s Wonder_ 
Fascinating close-up photography of ice crystals highlights this clear, yet detailed, explanation of how snowflakes develop.

Osborne, Linda Barrett
_Traveling the Freedom Road_ 
_Abrams, 2009_ $24.95 Grades 5-11
By focusing on young people who were slaves, Osborne writes a fascinating history of slavery in the United States. While featuring photos, maps, and period artwork, the text quotes heavily from primary sources.

Partridge, Elizabeth
_Marching for Freedom: Walk Together, Children, and Don’t You Grow Weary_ 
_Viking, 2009_ $19.99 Grades 5-9
Elizabeth Partridge describes the Selma-Montgomery March through vibrant photographs and the narratives of the children and young adults who traveled the road to bring change beginning in 1963 through 1965.

Acknowledgements

Books are designated as “distinguished” through a process of nomination, discussion, and voting by members of the Association of Children’s Librarians.

Grade designations in the annotations are approximate.
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The Distinguished Books Committee for 2009 was chaired by:

Eric Barbus, San Francisco Public Library
Kathryn Shepler, Aurora School

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<table>
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| **Pennac, Daniel**  
*Rights of the Reader*  
Illus. by Quentin Blake  
Candlewick, 2008  $16.99  Prof  
Originally published in France in 1992, Pennac’s essay on reading for pleasure is a tonic for children’s librarians and teachers. The text includes several lists as well as humorous anecdotes on the joy of reading. |

| Reynolds, Jan  
*Cycle of Rice, Cycle of Life: A Story of Sustainable Farming*  
Lee & Low, 2009  $19.95  Grades 4-Adult  
Basic concepts of sustainability are introduced through this story of rice farming in Bali. Reynolds shows the interwoven social, spiritual, and ecological aspects of the traditional Balinese farming culture with a combination of clear accessible text and excellent color photographs. |

| Schwartz, David M. and Yael Schy  
*Where Else in the Wild? More Camouflaged Creatures Concealed…and Revealed*  
Photos by Dwight Kuhn  
Poems present clues to the identity of animals hidden in luscious color photographs. The combination of science, poetry, eye-popping photography, and puzzle-like challenges make this especially welcome in classrooms. |

| Stone, Tanya Lee  
*Almost Astronauts: 13 Women Who Dared to Dream*  
Candlewick, 2009  $24.99  Grades 5-12  
Tracing the earliest recruitment, testing, and training of female astronauts, this inspiring and compelling history describes attitudes, assumptions, and prejudices that blocked these “almost astronauts” from NASA’s early years of space exploration. |

| Turner, Pamela  
*The Frog Scientist*  
Photos by Andy Comins  
Scientist in the Field Series.  
Houghton, 2009  $18.00  Grades 4-8  
Young readers can follow the activities of UC Berkeley researcher Tyrone Hayes and his diverse team of students as they study the effects of pesticides on amphibians both in the field and in the laboratory. |

| Walker, Sally  
*Written In Bone: Buried Lives Of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland*  
Carolrhoda, 2009  $22.95  Grades 6-10  
Walker’s riveting account describes the meticulous work of forensic scientists who study skeletal remains to better understand the people who lived in the Chesapeake Bay area in the 17th and 18th centuries. |
Weitzman, David
Pharaoh’s Boat
Illus. by the author
Houghton, 2009  $18.00  Grades 4-8
This slim, pictorial history tells two awe-inspiring, intertwined stories—that of the actual reconstruction of an ancient Egyptian boat from 1,224 fragments and that of the remarkable Ahmed Youssef Moustafa, who painstakingly directed the project.

Winter, Jonah
You Never Heard of Sandy Koufax?!
Illus. by Andre Carrilho
Schwartz & Wade, 2009 $17.99  Grades 2-5
Narrated in the colloquial Brooklynese voice of a fellow Dodger teammate, Winter vividly brings to life both the man and baseball while the movement, excitement, and elegance of the game are captured in stylized graphite illustrations.

Folklore
Kajikawa, Kimiko
Tsunami!
Illus. by Ed Young
Philomel, 2009  $16.99  Grades 2-4
Ojiisan watches the people of his village celebrate the harvest festival and, when he sees a monster wave pulling away from the ocean, sets fire to his rice fields in order to get their attention.

Poetry
Franco, Betsy
A Curious Collection of Cats
Illus. by Michael Wertz
Tricycle, 2009  $16.99  Grades K-6
Splattered with vibrant color, these 34 visual cat poems are keenly observant of real cats. The text of each poem is part of the illustration with the words pouncing around the pages like cats themselves.

Hansen, Doug
Mother Goose in California
Illus. by the author
Heyday, 2009  $16.95  Grades Pre-2
Combining Mother Goose nursery rhymes with the alphabet, Hansen melds Old World sensibilities with the landscapes of California. Except for the now extinct grizzly bear, all of the buildings, flora, and fauna depicted are found in California.

Scanlon, Liz Garton
All the World
Illus. by Marla Frazee
Beach Lane, 2009  $17.99  Grades Pre-2
A child’s place in the world is depicted with Marla Frazee’s soft colored pencil illustrations and Scanlon’s simple but soothing rhyming text. The mission church, coastal scenes, and multicultural families are all things that Northern California families will recognize. (2010 Caldecott Honor.)

Sierra, Judy
The Sleepy Little Alphabet
Illus. by Melissa Sweet
Knopf, 2009  $16.99  Grades Tod-1
Twenty-six lowercase letters, mostly troublemakers, don’t want to go to bed. Sweet’s illustrations are full of jumping, tipping, and rocking wild movement in this tale that focuses on actions rather than objects that begin with each letter.

Waddell, Martin
The Super Hungry Dinosaur
Illus. by Leonie Lord
Dial, 2009  $16.99  Grades Pre-1
A hungry dinosaur threatens to eat Hal and his parents, but Hal verbally defends his family, eventually wrestling the dinosaur into submission. The illustrations resemble a child’s crayon drawings increasing the appeal to young viewers.

Readers
Hayes, Geoffrey
Benny and Penny series
Illus. by Geoffrey Hayes
Toon, 2008/2009 $12.95  Grades K-3
Using colorful, detailed panels paired with simple sentences, the Benny and Penny series about brother and sister mouse siblings grab the very beginning reader and teach reading skills with graphic novel techniques. (2010 Theodor Seuss Geisel Award.)

Smith, Jeff
Little Mouse Gets Ready: A Toon Book
Illus. by the author
RAW Junior, 2009  $12.95  Grades Pre-1
Starting with his underpants, Little Mouse methodically puts on all of his clothes only to discover he is overdressed. Silly yet charming, this comic book is for “brand new readers.” (2010 Theodor Seuss Geisel Honor.)
Lucas, David  
*The Robot and the Bluebird*  
Illus. by the author  
Farrar, 2008 $16.95 Grades K-3

A robot with an irreparable broken heart offers shelter in the space where his heart used to be to a bluebird on its way to a warmer locale.

McElligott, Matthew  
*The Lion’s Share: A Tale of Halving Cake and Eating It, Too*  
Illus. by the author  

Ant’s first dinner with lion’s charismatic—but greedy—animal friends is hilariously and handsomely illustrated in this ambitious fable. This highlights the theme of generosity while clearly depicting simple mathematical concepts through the slicing and baking of cakes.

Pinkney, Jerry  
*The Lion and the Mouse*  
Illus. by the author  
Little, 2009 $16.99 Grades Pre-3

Nearly wordless adaptation of Aesop’s fable about the King of the Jungle being later rewarded for the kindness shown to one of the smallest creatures. Stunning landscapes bring the Serengeti to life. (2010 Caldecott Award.)

Rex, Michael  
*The Runaway Mummy: A Petrifying Parody*  
Illus. by Michael Rex  
Putnam, 2009 $15.99 Grades K-2

A parody of Margaret Wise Brown’s *Runaway Bunny* (1942) which features a rotten little mummy boy who threatens to become a series of terrifying creatures while running away from his mother mummy.

Rosenthal, Amy Krouse  
*Duck! Rabbit!*  
Illus. by Tom Lichtenheld  
Chronicle, 2009 $16.99 Grades Pre-1

Ink, watercolor, and colored pencil drawings illuminate an argument between two unknown characters about the nature of the animal depicted. Is it a duck or a rabbit? Final determination is up to the reader.

Harley, Avis  
*African Acrostics: A Word in Edgeways*  
Photos by Deborah Noyes  
Candlewick, 2009 $17.99 Grades 1–5

Inventive acrostic poems featuring African animals spell out words using the initial letters of each line, but Harley’s poems exceed this simple form. Each poem is accompanied by a full-page color photograph that shows the featured animal.

Hughes, Langston  
*My People*  
Photos by Charles R. Smith Jr.  
Atheneum, 2009 $17.99 Grades K-3

Luminous b/w photographs of African-Americans reflect the joy and tenderness of Langston Hughes’s short poem. The elegant book design and soulful portraits perfectly complement the eloquent, stirring verse.

Hughes, Langston  
*The Negro Speaks of Rivers*  
Illus. by E. B. Lewis  
Disney/Jump at the Sun, 2009 $16.99 Grades K-6

E. B. Lewis’s lush, expressive watercolor paintings illustrate the Langston Hughes poem line by line. Reverent, powerful, and beautiful images of African-Americans reveal the innocence, pain, travail, and wisdom of their history.

McKissack, Patricia  
*Stitchin’ and Pullin’: A Gee’s Bend Quilt*  
Illus. by Cozbi A. Cabrera  
Random, 2008 $17.99 Grades K-8

Twenty-two poems intricately weave together the Gee’s Bend, Alabama quilt-making communities’ proud history, their struggle for civil rights, and the personal narrative of a child who makes her first quilt.

Nelson, Marilyn  
*Sweethearts of Rhythm*  
Illus. by Jerry Pinkney  
Dial, 2009 $21.99 Grades 5-9

Poems tell the true story of an all-girl, all African-American traveling dance and jazz band during WW II. Pinkney’s brightly-colored Impressionistic paintings add life, and many poems are told from the point of view of a musical instrument.
Sidman, Joyce  
*Red Sings From Treetops: A Year In Colors*  
Illus. by Pamela Zagarenski  
Houghton, 2009  $16.00  Grades K-3  
Poetry about colors as they vary with the seasons is illustrated with colorful, eponymous fonts and detailed illustrations that will entice the reader to search pages carefully as the year evolves. (2010 Caldecott Honor.)

**Biography**

Bernier-Grand, Carmen T.  
*Diego: Bigger than Life*  
Illus. by David Diaz  
M. Cavendish, 2009  $18.99  Grades 5-8  
The life of Diego Rivera is celebrated through poetry and Diaz’s luminous mixed-media illustrations. Source notes, glossary, and a chronology of Rivera’s life are included. (2010 Pura Belpre Honor.)

Bogacki, Tomek  
*The Champion of Children: The Story of Janusz Korczak*  
Illus. by the author  
Farrar/Frances Foster, 2009 $17.99  Grades 4-7  
When the Nazis invaded Poland, Dr. Korczak, his staff, and the children from the “progressive” orphanage he had established traveled from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka. Acrylic illustrations show old Warsaw and make this book understandable, human, and important.

Christensen, Bonnie  
*Django: World’s Greatest Jazz Guitarist*  
Illus. by the author  
Roaring Brook, 2009 $17.99  Grades 1-4  
Christensen’s non-fiction picture book tells the little-heard story of jazz guitarist Django Reinhardt. Free verse text and rich oil paintings aptly depict Django’s successes and setbacks. Extensive notes, a bibliography, and a discography are included.

Fleming, Candace  
*The Great and Only Barnum: The Tremendous, Stupendous Life of Showman P. T. Barnum*  
Illus. by Ray Fenwick  
Schwartz & Wade, 2009 $18.99  Grades 3-8  
Fleming brings the public and private Barnum to life, warts and all, and deepens the value of her writing by placing Barnum’s actions and beliefs in historical context, contrasting them with modern day mores.

Barnett, Mac  
*Billy Twitters and His Blue Whale Problem*  
Illus. by Adam Rex  
Hyperion, 2009  $16.99  Grades K-3  
When Billy Twitters disobeyes, his mother follows through on the threat to get him a whale with the impossible task that Billy must care for his pet. Rex’s full-color illustrations add humor and depict the hilly streets of San Francisco.

Dewdney, Anna  
*Llama Llama Misses Mama*  
Illus. by Anna Dewdney  
Viking, 2009  $16.99  Grades Tod-K  
Satisfying rhymes and joyful paintings convey the excitement, loneliness, and eventual comfort of Llama Llama’s emotional first day at preschool. This addresses the topic of separation anxiety with entertaining rhythm that begs to be read aloud.

Ericsson, Jennifer  
*Who Goes There?*  
Illus. by Bert Kitchen  
Roaring Brook, 2009  $17.99  Grades Pre-2  
A curious owl investigates forest sounds to find supper in this cumulative tale. Kitchen’s watercolor illustrations capture night moving into dawn through intricate details while abundant animal sounds make for an excellent storytime selection.

Fleischman, Paul  
*The Dunderheads*  
Illus. by David Roberts  
Candlewick, 2009  $16.99  Grades 2-5  
A short, thrilling, and ingenious tale of revenge by a class on their Trunchbullian teacher, brilliantly complemented with funky illustrations. A tongue-in-cheek picture book for older readers about the power of imagination and friendship.

Heide, Florence Parry  
*Princess Hyacinth: The Surprising Tale of a Girl Who Floated*  
Illus. by Lane Smith  
Schwartz & Wade, 2009 $17.99  Grades Pre-2  
A whimsical and enchanting fairy tale in which lighter-than-air Princess Hyacinth would like nothing more than to float up like a balloon. Featuring Lane Smith’s expressive illustrations, this is sure to be a storytime favorite.
Taylor, Laini
*Lips Touch: Three Times*
Illus. by Jim Di Bartolo
Arthur A. Levine, 2009 $17.99 Grades 8–12
This collection of three short stories explores the consequences of a first kiss and the dark longing that can sometimes result. Taylor’s richly layered writing develops vivid imagery and intricate worlds, intertwining elements of folklore, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and fantasy.

Werlin, Nancy
*Impossible*
Dial, 2008 $17.99 Grades 8-12
The ballad “Scarborough Fair” becomes the foundation for an engaging story that reads like an original fairy tale. Seventeen-year-old Lucy discovers she is one of a long line of women in her family cursed with madness unless she can perform three impossible tasks.

Westerfeld, Scott
*Leviathan*
Illus. by Keith Thompson
Simon Pulse, 2009 $18.99 Grades 5-8
An alternate, steampunk take on the events surrounding WW I with a divide between the Clankers, who rely on man-made machines, and the Darwinists, who have aircraft born of genetically combined and modified beasts.

Wilson, N. D.
*Dandelion Fire*
Random, 2009 $16.99 Grades 4-7
Picking up where the first book, *100 Cupboards* (Random, 2007) leaves off, Henry York lays secret plans to go back into other worlds but is suddenly blinded by a vision of a dandelion in a lightning storm.

**Picture Books**

Baasansuren, Bolormaa
*My Little Round House*
Illus. by the author
Translated by Helen Mixter
Groundwood, 2009 $18.95 Grades Pre-8
This thoroughly authentic depiction of life with Mongolian nomads describes a baby boy’s first year of life in the family ger, or little round house, that is re-assembled twice yearly to follow the goats’ grazing habitat.

Heiligman, Deborah
*Charles and Emma: The Darwins’ Leap of Faith*
H. Holt, 2009 $18.95 Grades 8-12
A biography of Charles Darwin and his wife Emma that reads like a tightly-plotted romantic novel while shedding new light on one of science’s most important figures and his work on evolution.

Hoose, Phillip
*Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice*
Farrar, 2009 $19.95 Grades 5-10
A heroic, but largely forgotten, teenage trailblazer’s life is vividly told using primary sources and a compelling, well-organized narrative. The story adds new context and deepens our understanding of the Civil Rights movement. (2010 Newbery Honor.)

Judge, Lita
*Yellowstone Moran: Painting the American West*
Illus. by the author
Viking, 2009 $16.99 Grades 2-5
Thomas Moran was determined to explore the land called the Yellowstone and capture its beauty in his paintings. Readers will be astounded at the sight of steaming hot springs, massive waterfalls, and the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone.

Moss, Marissa
*Sky High: The True Story of Maggie Gee*
Illus. by Carl Angel
Tricycle, 2009 $16.99 Grades 1-5
Maggie Gee, one of only two Chinese-American women who served as an American Women Airforce Service Pilot (WASPS) during WW II, is celebrated with Angel’s acrylic paint and colored pencil illustrations and text told from Gee’s point of view.

Nelson, Vaunda Micheaux
*Bad News for Outlaws: The Remarkable Life of Bass Reeves, Deputy U.S. Marshal*
Illus. by R. Gregory Christie
Carolrhoda, 2009 $17.95 Grades 3-6
The exhilarating adventures of Reeves, a formidable African-American lawman in the real Wild West, leap to life with expressive illustrations and skillful, folksy storytelling. Extensive back matter further details this extraordinary, nearly forgotten hero’s years.
Graphic Novels

Phelan, Matt
Storm in the Barn
Illus. by the author Candlewick, 2009 $24.99 Grades 5-8
The tribulations of the U.S. Dust Bowl in the 1930s are evocatively portrayed in this graphic novel that is part historical fiction, part magical realism, and part tall tale.

Tan, Shaun
Tales from Outer Suburbia
Illus. by the author Arthur A. Levine, 2009 $19.99 Grades 6-Adult
Exceedingly brief and frequently mysterious short stories that beg the reader to provide an ending are told primarily through detailed mixed-media illustrations. Difficult to define in terms of genre but sure to please a wide audience.

Fiction

Almond, David
The Savage
Illus. by Dave McKean Candlewick, 2008 $17.99 Grades 5-8
After the death of his father, Blue starts writing a fictional story about a wild boy, the savage, who lives in some nearby ruins. Reality and fiction intermingle in this ideal choice for reluctant readers.

Anderson, Laurie Halse
Wintergirls
Viking, 2009 $17.99 Grades 8-12
Following the death of her childhood friend, Lia, a troubled teen suffering from anorexia and self-mutilation, descends deeper and deeper into her disease. An intense and relentless portrayal of a terrifying illness that affects many of today’s teens.

Armstrong, Alan
Looking for Marco Polo
Random, 2009 $16.99 Grades 5-9
Mark’s father, following in the footsteps of Marco Polo in the Gobi Desert, goes missing, so Mark and his mother journey to Venice to find him. Many wonderful characters make history come alive in this engaging tale.

Philbrick, Rodman
The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg
Blue Sky/Scholastic, 2009 $16.99 Grades 4-8
In this episodic tale reminiscent of Twain’s Huck Finn, Homer P. Figg gets entangled with grifters, helps a Quaker aiding folks on the Underground Railroad, and witnesses a Civil War battle while looking for his older brother. (2010 Newbery Honor.)

Slayton, Fran Cannon
When the Whistle Blows
Philomel, 2009 $16.99 Grades 5-9
Growing up with her father’s stories of life in the railroad town of Rowlesburg, West Virginia, Slayton creates a historical fiction tribute to the days of the steam engine, her family, change, and approaching adulthood.

Smith, Sherri
Flygirl
Putnam, 2009 $16.99 Grades 7-10
Ida Mae signs up for pilot training during WW II, even though the WASP (Women’s Airforce Service Pilots) bars African-Americans. Her light skin allows her to hide her true identity, but the constant fear of discovery takes a toll.

Stead, Rebecca
When You Reach Me
Random, 2009 $15.99 Grades 4-8
Miranda, a savvy 6th grader, unravels the clues in this intricately constructed puzzler that leaves readers guessing right up until the end. The book crosses genres seamlessly, moving from realistic fiction to something darker and more mysterious. (2010 Newbery Award.)

Stork, Francisco X.
Marcelo in the Real World
Arthur A. Levine/Scholastic, 2009 $17.99 Grades 8-12
Marcelo Sandoval, a 17-year-old boy on the high-functioning end of the autism spectrum, agrees to spend the summer working as a mailroom assistant for his father’s law firm. A fascinating account of how someone with vastly different communication skills forms meaningful relationships in today’s complicated world.

Stroud, Jonathan
Heroes of the Valley
Disney/Hyperion, 2009 $17.99 Grades 5-9
A young man vows to avenge his murdered uncle in an engaging adventure story brimming with action, intrigue, murder, legend, and mystery that borrows heavily from Viking lore.
Ketchum, Liza    
*Newsgirl*    
Viking, 2009  $17.99  Grades 4-8  
Set in San Francisco in 1851, this historical adventure focuses on Amelia, who cuts her hair to get a job as a newsboy. Her mother and the mother’s female partner earn money by sewing, and the subtle reference to the same sex partnership and Amelia’s ethnically diverse friends and acquaintances give this an immediacy without being anachronistic.

Lin, Grace    
*Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*    
Little, 2009  $16.99  Grades 2-5  
Living a poor life in the valley of Fruitless Mountain, Minli is enchanted by her father’s stories which lead her to waste her money on a goldfish. Thus, an adventure is set in motion which gathers threads of various stories into one amazing strand that eventually leads her home. (2010 Newbery Honor.)

Link, Kelly    
*Pretty Monsters: Stories*    
Viking, 2008  $19.99  Grades 9-12  
Ghosts, magic, monsters, blood, and werewolves populate themes of fantasy, horror, and science fiction in Link’s first collection of short stories for young adults. Recommended for those who want fantasy and prefer the unusual.

Magoon, Kekla    
*The Rock and the River*    
Aladdin, 2009  $15.99  Grades 7–10  
Set in 1968 Chicago, this riveting story is about a young African-American boy’s search for identity and brotherhood. Sam is torn between obeying his father, a leader in the non-violent protest movement, and following his older brother who has joined the Black Panthers.

McCormick, Patricia    
*Purple Heart*    
A young U.S. soldier in Iraq suffering from traumatic brain injury feels he doesn’t deserve a Purple Heart: he is sure he shot an Iraqi boy during action and is complicit in a cover-up.

Barnhouse, Rebecca    
*The Book of the Maidservant*    
Random, 2009  $16.99  Grades 5-9  
Johanna, a serving girl to a medieval holy woman, is long suffering because her mistress feels only the misery of the Virgin Mary and Christ. On a pilgrimage to Rome the resourceful girl finds a way to be her own person.

Buzbee, Lewis    
*Steinbeck’s Ghost*    
Feiwel, 2008  $17.95  Grades 5-8  
While his parents work to pay for their new house, Travis visits the Salinas Library and helps fight against budget cuts. As John Steinbeck’s characters come to life around town, Travis wonders what Steinbeck’s ghost is trying to tell him.

Carlson, Lori Marie    
*Voices in First Person*    
Illus. by Flavio Morais    
Photos by Manuel Rivera-Ortiz    
Athenaeum, 2008  $16.99  Grades 8-12  
In this collection of intimate vignettes by several Latino authors, among them Sandra Cisneros, Gary Soto, and Oscar Hijuelos, there are glimpses into feelings about love, life, school, and family. Worth considering for that monologue assignment.

Cashore, Kristin    
*Graceling*    
Harcourt, 2008  $17.00  Grades 8-12  
Katsa is graced with a talent for killing and is sent on a rescue mission which is only the beginning of a quest that includes corrupted rulers, a struggle for survival, and surprising revelations about Katsa’s grace.

Choldenko, Gennifer    
*Al Capone Shines My Shoes*    
Dial, 2009  $17.99  Grades 4-8  
After Al Capone gets Moose’s autistic sister into a special school, Moose receives a note in his laundry saying, “Your turn.” The focus is on family relations, friendship, and budding young love in this follow-up to Newbery Honor-winning *Al Capone Does My Shirts* (Putnam, 2004).
Coctwane, Mick
The Girl Who Threw Butterflies
Knopf, 2009 $15.99 Grades 5-9
Having lost her baseball-loving father in a car accident, Molly decides to try out for the boys’ baseball team. With realistically drawn relationships and seamless integration of baseball action, this is a moving and believable tale of life after tragedy.

Collins, Suzanne
Catching Fire
Scholastic, 2009 $17.99 Grades 6-Adult
After surviving the last set of survival games at the conclusion of The Hunger Games (Scholastic, 2008), Katniss and Peeta are blamed by the government for political trouble brewing across the districts in their dystopian society. Let the games begin, again.

Dashner, James
The Maze Runner
Delacorte, 2009 $16.99 Grades 5-10
Thomas wakes to find himself in the middle of a wide glade surrounded by towering, vine-covered walls without any memory of who he is or where he may have come from. Bewildering events and bizarre and intriguing clues make this a page-turning dazzler.

de la Peña, Matt
Mexican White Boy
Delacorte, 2008 $15.99 Grades 7-10
Feeling like a misfit because he is “brown,” half Mexican and half white, Danny struggles to find his father, makes an unexpected friend, improves his baseball skills, and learns Spanish so he may communicate with a very pretty girl.

Dessen, Sarah
Along for the Ride
Viking, 2009 $19.99 Grades 8-12
Auden surprises herself when she accepts her father’s offer to spend the summer with him, his new wife, and baby. Soon, she finds herself navigating many new relationships while also challenging her assumptions about her parents and herself.

Frost, Helen
Crossing Stones
Farrar, 2009 $16.99 Grades 6-12
Set during WW I and told via four voices through concrete poems, this quiet but moving novel shows how war affects teenagers in a way that will change them forever.

Griffin, Paul
The Orange Houses
Dial, 2009 $16.99 Grades 9-12
Three friends (Mik, a hearing-impaired 15-year-old; Jimmi, an 18-year-old suffering post-traumatic stress and struggling with drugs; and Fatima, a 16-year-old illegal immigrant) support each other and fight to survive in a gritty Bronx neighborhood.

Hiaasen, Carl
Scat
Knopf, 2009 $16.99 Grades 5-10
Nick and Marta investigate the disappearance of their biology teacher in Hiaasen’s latest eco-thriller which combines sympathetic protagonists, obnoxious villains, humor, and a thoughtful subplot involving an Iraqi veteran.

Hyde, Catherine Ryan
The Day I Killed James
Knopf, 2008 $16.99 Grades 9-11
Set in California’s San Simeon area, this transformative story of heartbreak and grief centers around 17-year-old Theresa as she battles overwhelming guilt at the loss of James whose love for her was unrequited.

Kelly, Jacqueline
The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate
H. Holt, 2009 $16.99 Grades 4-7
In 1899 Texas, almost-12-year-old Calpurnia Tate is caught between the growing pressure to acquire housewifely skills and her own scientific interests. Kelly captures the excitement of scientific discovery and provides vivid glimpses into the friction and affection of family life. (2010 Newbery Honor.)