



EVALUATING AND SELECTING LITERATURE FOR CHILDREN

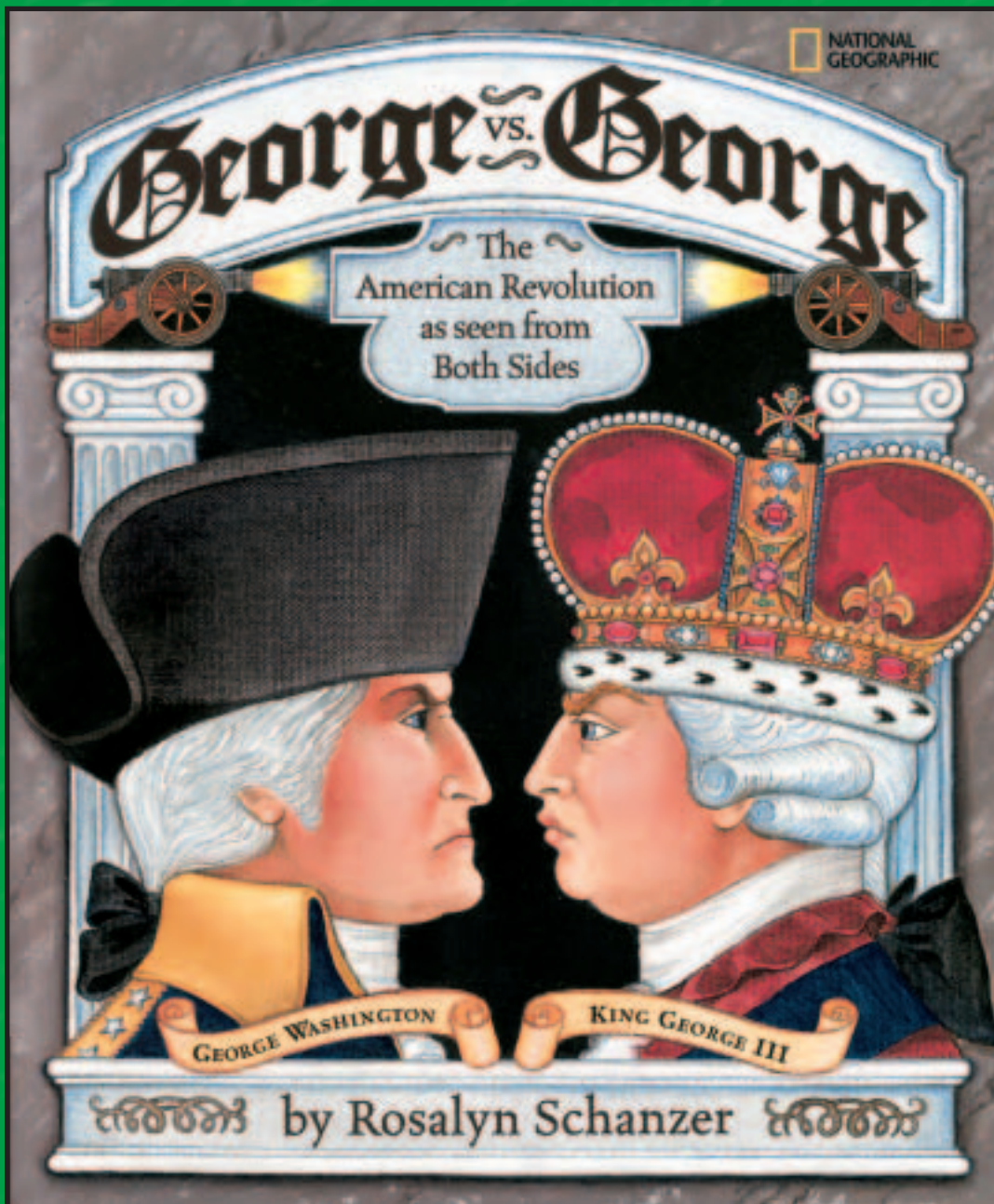


Illustration from Golem by David Wisniewski. Copyright © 1996 by David Wisniewski. Reprinted by permission of Clarion books/Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Standards, Literary Elements, and Book Selection

- *Standards for Evaluating Books and Literary Criticism*
- *Standards for Evaluating Multicultural Literature*
- *Literary Elements*
- *The Right Book for Each Child*
- *The Child as Critic*

Teaching With Literary Elements

- *Involving Children in Plot*
- *Involving Children in Characterization*
- *Involving Children in Setting*
- *Involving Children in Theme*
- *Involving Children in Style*
- *Webbing the Literary Elements*



Because thousands of books have been published for children, selecting books appropriate to the needs of children can be difficult. Teachers and librarians, who share books with

groups of children as well as with individual children, should select books that provide balance in a school or public library. The objectives of literature programs also affect educators' selections of children's books.

A literature program should have five objectives. First, a literature program should help students realize that literature is for entertainment and can be enjoyed throughout their lives. Literature should cater to children's interests as well as create interest in new topics. Consequently, educators must know these interests and understand ways to stimulate new ones.

Second, a literature program should acquaint children with their literary heritage. To accomplish this, literature should foster the preservation of knowledge and allow its transmission to future generations. Therefore, educators must be familiar with fine literature from the past and must share it with children.

Third, a literature program should help students understand the formal elements of literature and lead them to prefer the best that our literature has to offer. Children need to hear and read fine literature and to appreciate authors who not only have something to say but also say it extremely well. Educators must be able to identify the best books in literature and share these books with children.

Fourth, a literature program should help children grow up understanding themselves and the rest of humanity. Children who identify with literary characters confronting and overcoming problems like their own learn ways to cope with their own problems. Educators should provide literature that introduces children to people from other times and nations and that encourages children to see both themselves and their world in a new perspective.

Fifth, a literature program should help children evaluate what they read. Literature programs should extend children's appreciation of literature and their imaginations. Therefore, educators should help students learn how to compare, question, and evaluate the books they read.

Rosenblatt (1991) adds an important sixth objective, encouraging "readers to pay attention to their own literary experiences as the basis for self-understanding or for comparison with others' evocations. This implies a new, collaborative relationship between teacher and student. Emphasis on the reader need not exclude application of various approaches, literary and social, to the process of critical interpretation and evaluation" (p. 61). Children need many opportunities to respond to literature.

Susan Wise Bauer (2003) presents a powerful objective for a literature study that encourages readers to understand, evaluate, and express opinions about what is read. This final objective of a literature program, as recommended by Bauer, is to train readers' minds by teach-

ing them how to learn. To accomplish this objective, she recommends a study of literature that progresses from first reading a book to get a general sense of the story and the characters; to rereading the book to analyze the story, discover the author's techniques, and analyze any arguments the author developed; and, finally, to deciding such questions as Did I sympathize with the characters? Why or why not? Did I agree or disagree with the ideas in the book?

If children are to gain enjoyment, knowledge of their heritage, recognition and appreciation of good literature, and understanding of themselves and others, they must explore balanced selections of literature. A literature program thus should include classics and contemporary stories, fanciful stories as well as realistic ones, prose as well as poetry, biographies, and books containing factual information. To provide this balance, educators must know about many kinds of literature. Alan Purves (1991) identifies basic groups of items usually found in literature programs: literary works, background information, literary terminology and theory, and cultural information. He states that some curricula also include the responses of the readers themselves.

This chapter provides information about numerous types of books written for children, and looks at standards for evaluating books written for children. It presents and discusses the literary elements of plot, characterization, setting, theme, style, and point of view. It also discusses children's literature interests, characteristics of literature found in books chosen by children, and procedures to help children evaluate literature.



Standards for Evaluating Books and Literary Criticism

According to Jean Karl (1987), in true literature, "there are ideas that go beyond the plot of a novel or picture book story or the basic theme of a nonfiction book, but they are presented subtly and gently; good books do not preach; their ideas are wound into the substance of the book and are clearly a part of the life of the book itself" (p. 507). Karl maintains that in contrast, mediocre books overemphasize their messages or they oversimplify or distort life; mediocre books contain visions that are too obvious and can be put aside too easily. If literature is to help develop children's potential, merit rather than mediocrity must be part of children's experiences with literature. Both children and adults need opportunities to evaluate literature. They also need supporting context to help them make accurate judgments about quality.

Literary critic Anita Silvey (1993) provides both a useful list for the qualities of a reviewer and questions for the reviewer to consider. She first identifies the characteristics of fine reviewers and fine reviews; these include a sense of children and how they will respond to the book as well as an evaluation that, if the book is good, will make readers want to read the book. The review should evalu-

Evaluation Criteria



Literary Criticism: Questions to Ask Myself When I Judge a Book

1. Is this a good story?
 2. Is the story about something I think could really happen? Is the plot believable?
 3. Did the main character overcome the problem, but not too easily?
 4. Did the climax seem natural?
 5. Did the characters seem real? Did I understand the characters' personalities and the reasons for their actions?
 6. Did the characters in the story grow?
 7. Did I find out about more than one side of the characters? Did the characters have both strengths and weaknesses?
 8. Did the setting present what is actually known about that time or place?
 9. Did the characters fit into the setting?
 10. Did I feel that I was really in that time or place?
 11. What did the author want to tell me in the story?
 12. Was the theme worthwhile?
 13. When I read the book aloud, did the characters sound like real people actually talking?
 14. Did the rest of the language sound natural?
- (Norton, 1993)

ate the literary capabilities of the author and also be written in an enjoyable style. The reviewer needs a sense of the history of the genre and must be able to make comparisons with past books of the author or illustrator. This sense of genre also requires knowledge of contemporary adult literature, art, and film so that the reviewer is able to place the book in the wider context of adult literature and art. The review should also include a balance between a discussion of plot and critical commentary. A sense of audience requires that the reviewer understand what the audience knows about books. Finally, Silvey recommends that a reviewer have a sense of humor; especially when evaluating books that are themselves humorous.

Silvey's list of questions that the reviewer should consider is divided according to literary questions (How effective is the development of the various literary elements?), artistic questions (How effective are the illustrations and the illustrator's techniques?), pragmatic questions (How accurate and logical is the material?), philosophical questions (Will the book enrich a reader's life?), and personal questions (Does the book appeal to me?).

Northrop Frye, Sheridan Baker, and George Perkins (1985) identify five focuses of all literary criticism, two or more of which are usually emphasized in an evaluation of a literary text:

(1) The work in isolation; with primary focus on its form, as opposed to its content; (2) its relationship to its own time and place, including the writer; the social, economic, and intellectual milieu surrounding it; the method of its printing or other dissemination; and the assumptions of the audience that first received it; (3) its relationship to literary and social history before its time, as it repeats, extends, or departs from the traditions that preceded it; (4) its relationship to the future, as represented by those works and events that come after it, as it forms a part of the large body of literature, influencing the reading, writing, and thinking of later generations; (5) its relationship to some eternal concept of being, absolute standards of art, or immutable truths of existence. (p. 130)

The relative importance of each of the preceding areas to a particular critic depends on the critic's degree of concern with the work itself, the author, the subject matter, and the audience.

Book reviews and longer critical analyses of books in the major literature journals are valuable sources for librarians, teachers, parents, and other students of children's literature. As might be expected from the five focuses of Frye, Baker, and Perkins, reviews emphasize different aspects of evaluation and criticism. Phyllis K. Kennemer (1984) identified three categories of book reviews and longer book analyses: (1) descriptive, (2) analytical, and (3) sociological. Descriptive reviews report factual information about the story and illustrations of a book. Analytical reviews discuss, compare, and evaluate literary elements (plot, characterization, setting, theme, style, and point of view), the illustrations, and relationships with other books. Sociological reviews emphasize the social context of a book, concerning themselves with characterizations of particular social groups, distinguishable ethnic characteristics, moral values, possible controversy, and potential popularity.

Although a review may contain all three types of information, Kennemer concludes that the major sources of information on children's literature emphasize one type of evaluation. For example, reviews in the *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* tend to be descriptive, but they also mention literary elements. Reviews in *Booklist*, *The Horn Book*, *Kirkus Reviews*, and *The School Library Journal* chiefly analyze literary elements. *The School Library Journal* also places great emphasis on sociological analysis.

The "Annual Policy Statement" for *The School Library Journal* (Jones, 2005) states the selection and evaluation criteria for the journal: "SLJ's reviews are written by librarians working directly with children and young adults in schools or public libraries, library-school educators, teachers of children's literature, and subject specialists. They evaluate books in terms of literary quality, artistic merit, clarity of presentation, and appeal to the intended audience. They also make comparisons between new titles

and materials already available in most collections and mention curriculum connections" (p. 84).

For example, the following analysis for Uri Schulevitz's *The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela: Through Three Continents in the Twelfth Century* was written by Margaret A. Chang (April 2005). As you read this analysis of a book that merited a starred review, notice the type of information the reviewer provides: "Grade 4–8—Benjamin, a Spanish Jew, left his native town of Tudela in 1159 to embark on a 14-year journey across the Middle East. His *Book of Travels*, written in Hebrew, recounts his grueling, often-dangerous journey through what is modern-day France, Italy, Greece, Cyprus, Israel, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Egypt. Encounters with warring Crusaders and Muslims, rapacious pirates, and bandits added to his hardships. Shulevitz recreates this epic journey in a picture book of epic proportions, adapting Benjamin's account into a detailed, first-person narrative, accompanied by large, ambitious illustrations that evoke the landscapes, people, architecture, and history of the places that Benjamin saw. Darker, freer, and more impressionistic than Shulevitz's familiar work, the art is often indebted to medieval manuscript painting and Persian miniatures. Meticulously researched, with a long bibliography, lengthy author's note, and brief insets containing information that complements Benjamin's descriptions, this oversized picture book is obviously a labor of love. Wherever he went, Benjamin visited Jewish communities. Shulevitz's retelling stands as a testimony to the history, wisdom, and fortitude of those medieval Jews living precariously under Christian or Muslim rule. Both art and text will help readers imagine life during that time, and perhaps provide a context for the contemporary turmoil in the lands Benjamin visited so long ago" (p. 142).

Selection criteria and reviews in specific journals also emphasize the particular content and viewpoints of the group that publishes the journal. For example, each year, the National Council for the Social Studies selects books for grades 4–8 that emphasize human relations and are sensitive to cultural experiences, present an original theme, are of high literary quality, and have a pleasing format and illustrations that enrich the text.

Reading and discussing excellent books as well as analyzing book reviews and literary criticism can increase one's ability to recognize and recommend excellent literature for children. Those of us who work with students of children's literature are rewarded when for the first time people see literature with a new awareness, discover the techniques that an author uses to create a believable plot or memorable characters, and discover that they can provide rationales for why a book is excellent, mediocre, or poor: Ideally, reading and discussing excellent literature can help each student of children's literature become a worthy critic. The Evaluation Criteria presented on page 000 suggest the type of criteria that are useful for both teachers and librarians when selecting books and for students when they are criticizing the books they read.

Technology Resources

You can use the CD-ROM that accompanies this text to print a list of Carnegie award winners: Simply search under Awards, type in “Crn” (award name abbreviations are listed under Field Information on the Help menu).

In addition to books that are chosen for various literary awards such as the Newbery, the Carnegie, and the Hans Christian Andersen Award, students of children’s literature can consider and discuss the merits of books identified by Karen Breen, Ellen Fader, Kathleen Odean, and Zena Sutherland (2000) on their list of the 100 books that they believe were the most significant for children and young adults in terms of shaping the 20th century. When citing their criteria for these books, they state: “We decided that our list should include books with literary and artistic merit, as well as books that are perennially popular with young readers, books that have blazed new trails, and books that have exerted a lasting influence on the world of children’s book publishing” (p. 50).

Of the 100 books on the list, 23 were selected unanimously by all four of the experts on the first round of balloting: these 23 are listed in Chart 3.1. As you may notice when you read this list, the books range from pic-

CHART 3.1 Twenty-three significant children’s books that shaped the 20th century

Author	Book Title
Natalle Babbitt	<i>Tuck Everlasting</i>
Ludwig Bemelmans	<i>Madeline</i>
Judy Blume	<i>Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret</i>
Margaret Wise Brown	<i>Goodnight Moon</i>
Robert Cormier	<i>The Chocolate War</i>
Louise Fitzhugh	<i>Harriet the Spy</i>
Anne Frank	<i>Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl</i>
Russell Freedman	<i>Lincoln: A Photobiography</i>
Jean Craighead George	<i>Julie of the Wolves</i>
Ezra Jack Keats	<i>The Snowy Day</i>
E. L. Konigsburg	<i>From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler</i>
Madeleine L’Engle	<i>A Wrinkle in Time</i>
C. S. Lewis	<i>The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe</i>
Arnold Lobel	<i>Frog and Toad Are Friends</i>
Patricia MacLachlan	<i>Sarah, Plain and Tall</i>
A. A. Milne	<i>Winnie-the-Pooh</i>
Scott O’Dell	<i>Island of the Blue Dolphins</i>
Katherine Paterson	<i>Bridge to Terabithia</i>
Beatrix Potter	<i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i>
Maurice Sendak	<i>Where the Wild Things Are</i>
Dr. Seuss	<i>The Cat in the Hat</i>
E. B. White	<i>Charlotte’s Web</i>
Laura Ingalls Wilder	<i>Little House in the Big Woods</i>

ture storybooks for young children to novels for older readers. They also include all of the various genres of literature that are discussed in this textbook. The list provides an interesting discussion for literary elements: Why are these particular books included on such a distinguished list?

Alleen Pace Nilsen and Kenneth L. Donelson (2001) warn that adults add another element when evaluating literature: “We should caution, however, that books are selected as ‘the best’ on the basis of many different criteria, and one person’s best is not necessarily yours or that of the young people with whom you work. We hope that you will read many books, so that you can recommend them not because you saw them on a list, but because you enjoyed them and believe they will appeal to a particular student” (p. 11).

Standards for Evaluating Multicultural Literature

Multicultural literature is literature about racial or ethnic minority groups that are culturally and socially different from the white Anglo-Saxon majority in the United States, whose largely middle-class values and customs are most represented in American literature. Violet Harris (1992) defines multicultural literature as “literature that focuses on people of color, on religious minorities, on regional cultures, on the disabled, and on the aged” (p. 9).

Values of Multicultural Literature

Many of the goals for multicultural education can be developed through multicultural literature. For example, Rena Lewis and Donald Doorlag (1987) state that multicultural education can restore cultural rights by emphasizing cultural equality and respect, enhance the self-concepts of students, and teach respect for various cultures while teaching basic skills. These goals for multicultural education are similar to the following goals of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and cited by Doni Kwolek Kobus (1992):

1. understanding and respect for each child’s cultural group identities;
2. respect for and tolerance of cultural differences, including differences of gender, language, race, ethnicity, religion, region, and disabilities;
3. understanding of and respect for universal human rights and fundamental freedoms;
4. preparation of children for responsible life in a free society; and
5. knowledge of cross-cultural communication strategies, perspective taking, and conflict management skills to ensure understanding, peace, tolerance, and friendship among all peoples and groups. (p. 224)

Through multicultural literature, children who are members of racial or ethnic minority groups realize that they have a cultural heritage of which they can be proud, and that their culture has made important contributions to the United States and to the world. Pride in their heritage helps children who are members of minority groups improve their self-concepts and develop cultural identity. Learning about other cultures allows children to understand that people who belong to racial or ethnic groups other than theirs are individuals with feelings, emotions, and needs similar to their own—individual human beings, not stereotypes. Through multicultural literature, children discover that although not all people share their personal beliefs and values, individuals can and must learn to live in harmony.

Multicultural literature teaches children of the majority culture to respect the values and contributions of minority groups in the United States and those of people in other parts of the world. In addition, children broaden their understanding of history, geography, and natural history when they read about cultural groups living in various regions of their country and the world. The wide range of multicultural themes also helps children develop an understanding of social change. Finally, reading about members of minority groups who have successfully solved their own problems and made notable achievements helps raise the aspirations of children who belong to a minority group.

Literary Criticism: Evaluating Multicultural Literature

To develop positive attitudes about and respect for individuals in all cultures, children need many opportunities to read and listen to literature that presents accurate and respectful images of everyone. Because fewer children's books in the United States are written from the perspective of racial or cultural minorities and because many stories perpetuate negative stereotypes, you should carefully evaluate books containing nonwhite characters. Outstanding multicultural literature meets the literary criteria applied to any fine book, but other criteria apply to the treatment of cultural and racial minorities. The following criteria related to literature that represents African Americans, Native Americans,* Latino Americans, and Asian Americans reflect the recommendations of the research studies and evaluations compiled by Donna Norton (2005):

Are African, Native, Latino, and Asian Americans portrayed as unique individuals, with their own thoughts, emotions, and philosophies, instead of as representatives of particular racial or cultural groups?

Does a book transcend stereotypes in the appearance, behavior, and character traits of its nonwhite characters? Does the depiction of nonwhite characters and lifestyles imply any stigma? Does a book suggest that all members of an ethnic or racial group live in poverty? Are the characters from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, educational levels, and occupations? Does the author avoid depicting Asian Americans as workers in restaurants and laundries, Latinos as illegal alien unskilled laborers, Native Americans as bloodthirsty warriors, African Americans as menial service employees, and so forth? Does the author avoid the “model minority” and “bad minority” syndrome? Are nonwhite characters respected for themselves, or must they display outstanding abilities to gain approval from white characters?

Is the physical diversity within a particular racial or cultural minority group accurately portrayed in the text and the illustrations? Do nonwhite characters have stereotypically exaggerated facial features or physiques that make them all look alike?

Will children be able to recognize the characters in the text and the illustrations as African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, or Native Americans and not mistake them for white? Are people of color shown as gray—that is, as simply darker versions of Caucasian-featured people?

Is the culture of a racial or ethnic minority group accurately portrayed? Is it treated with respect, or is it depicted as inferior to the majority white culture? Does the author believe the culture worthy of preservation? Is the cultural diversity within African American, Asian American, Latino, and Native American life clearly demonstrated? Are the customs and values of those diverse groups accurately portrayed? Must nonwhite characters fit into a cultural image acceptable to white characters? Is a nonwhite culture shown in an overexotic or romanticized way instead of being placed within the context of everyday activities familiar to all people?

Are social issues and problems related to minority group status depicted frankly and accurately, without oversimplification? Must characters who are members of racial and cultural minority groups exercise all of the understanding and forgiveness?

Do nonwhite characters handle their problems individually, through their own efforts, or with the assistance of close family and friends, or are problems solved through the intervention of whites? Are nonwhite characters shown as the equals of white characters? Are some characters placed in submissive or inferior positions? Are white people always the benefactors?

Are nonwhite characters glamorized or glorified, especially in biography? (Both excessive praise and excessive deprecation of nonwhite characters result in unreal and unbalanced characterizations.) If the book is a biography, are both the personality and the accomplishments of the main character shown in accurate detail and not oversimplified?

*This book primarily uses the term *Native Americans* to denote the people historically referred to as *American Indians*. The term *Indian* is sometimes used interchangeably with *Native American* and in some contexts is used to name certain tribes of Native Americans.

Evaluation Criteria



Literary Criticism: Multicultural Literature

1. Are the characters portrayed as individuals instead of as representatives of a group?
2. Does the book transcend stereotypes?
3. Does the book portray physical diversity?
4. Will children be able to recognize the characters in the text and illustrations?
5. Is the culture accurately portrayed?
6. Are social issues and problems depicted frankly, accurately, and without oversimplification?
7. Do nonwhite characters solve their problems without intervention by whites?
8. Are nonwhite characters shown as equals of white characters?
9. Does the author avoid glamorizing or glorifying nonwhite characters?
10. Is the setting authentic?
11. Are the factual and historical details accurate?
12. Does the author accurately describe contemporary settings?
13. Does the book rectify historical distortions or omissions?
14. Does dialect have a legitimate purpose, and does it ring true?
15. Does the author avoid offensive or degrading vocabulary?
16. Are the illustrations authentic and nonstereotypical?
17. Does the book reflect an awareness of the changed status of females?

Is the setting of a story authentic, whether past, present, or future? Will children be able to recognize the setting as urban, rural, or fantasy? If a story deals with factual information or historical events, are the details accurate? If the setting is contemporary, does the author accurately describe the situations of nonwhite people in the United States and elsewhere today? Does a book rectify historical distortions and omissions?

If dialect is used, does it have a legitimate purpose? Does it ring true and blend in naturally with the story in a nonstereotypical way, or is it simply used as an example of substandard English? If non-English words are used, are they spelled and used correctly? Is offensive or degrading vocabulary used to describe the characters, their actions, their customs, or their lifestyles?

Are the illustrations authentic and nonstereotypical in every detail?

Does a book reflect an awareness of the changing status of females in all racial and cultural groups today? Does the author provide role models for girls other than subservient females?

Notice in the Evaluation Criteria for multicultural literature that in addition to specific concerns about evaluating cultural content, there is also an evaluation of the literary elements of plot, conflict, characterization, setting, theme, style, and point of view. Also notice that several of the In-Depth Analysis features in this text are about multicultural titles.

Literary Elements



To effectively evaluate literature readers must look at the ways in which authors of children's books use plot, characterization, setting, theme, style, and point of view to create memorable stories.

Plot

Plot is important in stories, whether the stories reflect the oral storytelling style of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* or the complex interactions in a mystery. When asked to tell about a favorite story, children usually recount the plot, or plan of action. Children want a book to have a good plot: enough action, excitement, suspense, and conflict to develop interest. A good plot also allows children to become involved in the action, feel the conflict developing, recognize the climax when it occurs, and respond to a satisfactory ending. Children's expectations and enjoyment of conflict vary according to their ages: Young children are satisfied with simple plots that deal with everyday happenings, but as children mature, they expect and enjoy more complex plots.

Following the plot of a story is like following a path winding through it; the action develops naturally. If the plot is well developed, a book will be difficult to put down unfinished; if the plot is not well developed, the book will not sustain interest or will be so prematurely predictable that the story ends long before it should. The author's development of action should help children enjoy the story.

Developing the Order of Events. Readers expect a story to have a good beginning, one that introduces the action and characters in an enticing way; a good middle section, one that develops the conflict: a recognizable climax; and an appropriate ending. If any element is missing, children consider a book unsatisfactory and a waste of time. Authors can choose from any of several approaches for presenting the events in a credible plot. In children's literature, events usually happen in chronological order. The author reveals the plot by presenting the first happening, followed by the second happening, and so forth, until the story is completed. Illustrations reinforce

the chronological order in picture storybooks for younger children.

Very strong and obvious chronological order is found in cumulative folktales. Actions and characters are related to each other in sequential order, and each is mentioned again when new action or a new character is introduced. Children who enjoy the cumulative style of the nursery rhyme “The House That Jack Built” also enjoy a similar cumulative rhythm in Verna Aardema’s *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain: A Nandi Tale*. Cumulative, sequential action may also be developed in reverse, from last event to first, as in Verna Aardema’s *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears*.

Authors of biographies frequently use chronological life events to develop plot. Jean Fritz, for example, traces the life of a famous president and constitutional leader in *The Great Little Madison*. In *Lincoln: A Photobiography*, Russell Freedman begins with Lincoln’s childhood and continues through his life as president. In *The Wright Brothers: How They Invented the Airplane*, Freedman follows the lives of the Wright brothers and emphasizes major changes in aeronautics, and in *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery*, Freedman follows the life of one of the great women in American history. Dates in these texts help readers follow the chronological order.

The events in a story also may follow the maturing process of the main character. In *The Borning Room*, Paul Fleischman begins with the birth of the heroine in a borning room on a farm in Ohio in 1851. The plot then develops according to major events that occurred in the borning room as the family uses the special room at times of births and deaths. The book concludes as the heroine, after years of a rewarding life, is herself waiting in the borning room for her probable death.

Books written for older readers sometimes use flashbacks in addition to chronological order. At the point when readers have many questions about a character’s background or wonder why a character is acting in a certain way, the author may interrupt the order of the story to reveal information about a previous time or experience. For example, memories of a beloved aunt allow readers to understand the character and the conflict in Cynthia Rylant’s *Missing May*. The memories of 12-year-old Summer allow readers to understand the grief following the aunt’s death and to follow Summer and her uncle as they try to overcome the grief and begin a new life for themselves. Without the memories, readers would not understand May’s character.

Developing Conflict. Excitement in a story occurs when the main characters experience a struggle or overcome conflict. Conflict is the usual source of plots in literature. According to Rebecca J. Lukens (1999), children’s literature contains four kinds of conflict: (1) person against person, (2) person against society, (3) person against nature, and (4) person against self. Plots written

for younger children usually develop only one kind of conflict, but many of the stories for older children use several conflicting situations.

Person Against Person. One person-against-person conflict that young children enjoy is the tale of that famous bunny, Peter Rabbit, by Beatrix Potter. In this story, Peter’s disobedience and greed quickly bring him into conflict with the owner of the garden, Mr. McGregor, who has sworn to put Peter into a pie. Excitement and suspense develop as Peter and Mr. McGregor proceed through a series of life-and-death encounters: Mr. McGregor chases Peter with a rake, Peter becomes tangled in a gooseberry net, and Mr. McGregor tries to trap Peter inside a sieve. Knowledge of Peter’s possible fate increases the suspense of these adventures. The excitement intensifies each time Peter narrowly misses being caught, and young readers’ relief is great when Peter escapes for good. Children also sympathize with Peter when his disobedience results in a stomachache and a dose of chamomile tea.

Conflicts between animals and humans, or animals and animals, or humans and humans are common in children’s literature, including many popular folktales. Both Little Red Riding Hood and the three little pigs confront a wicked wolf, Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty are among the fairytale heroines mistreated by stepmothers, and Hansel and Gretel are imprisoned by a witch.

A humorous person-against-person conflict provides the story line in Beverly Cleary’s *Ramona and Her Father*. Seven-year-old Ramona’s life changes drastically when her father loses his job and her mother must work full-time. Ramona’s new time with her father is not as enjoyable as she had hoped it would be, however: Her father becomes tense and irritable as his period of unemployment lengthens. Ramona and her father survive their experience, and by the end of the story, they have returned to their normal, warm relationship.

Katherine Paterson develops a more complex person-against-person conflict for older children in *Jacob Have I Loved*. In this story, one twin believes that she is like the despised Esau in the Old Testament, whereas her sister is the adored favorite of the family. The unhappy heroine’s descriptions of her early experiences with her sister, her growing independence as she works with her father, and her final discovery that she, not her sister, is the strong twin create an engrossing plot and memorable characters.

Person Against Society. Conflicts also develop when the main character’s actions, desires, or values differ from those of the surrounding society. This society may consist of groups of children who cannot tolerate children who are different from themselves. In Brock Cole’s *The Goats*, a boy and a girl who are considered social outcasts by their peers at camp are stripped of their clothing and marooned on a deserted island. The author reveals the social attitudes of this camp when girls are classified as queens,

An In-Depth Analysis of the Plot and Conflict in One Book

Christopher Paul Curtis's *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*, a 1996 Newbery Honor book, provides an excellent source for both literary analysis and historical authenticity. It is a book that changes mood at about the halfway point in the story. At the beginning of the book, the author depicts a typical African American family who lives and works in Flint, Michigan. The problems of the various characters are typical for many families. The main character, 10-year-old Kenny, is a bright boy who reads very well. Kenny's scholastic achievements frequently place him in conflict with his older brother, Bryon, whose escapades vary from the humorous to the more serious. At the point in which the parents decide that Bryon is heading for a life of delinquency, they decide that he should spend time with his strict grandmother in Birmingham.

When they decide to travel to Alabama, the tone of the book changes. In this time of racial tension, person-against-society conflict is the most prominent. The racial conflict is developed early in the story when the mother wants to go from Flint to Birmingham because life is slower in Alabama and the people are friendlier. Dad responds, "Oh yeah, they're a laugh a minute down there. Let's see, where was that 'Coloreds Only' bathroom downtown?" (p. 5). The culmination of this person-against-society conflict results toward the end of the book when a church is bombed and several African American children are killed.

Curtis develops parallels between the person-against-society and person-against-self conflicts. As Kenny tries to understand the hatred that could cause such deaths he also, with the help of his older brother, reaches a point where he releases his personal feelings and begins to cry. The author shows the impact of this release in the following quote: "He knew that was some real embarrassing stuff so he closed the bathroom door and sat on the tub and waited for me to stop, but I couldn't. I felt like someone had pulled a plug on me and every tear inside was rushing out" (p. 199).

At the moment of complete self-understanding, Kenny admits to his brother that he was no longer afraid of the bombing incident; instead, he was ashamed of himself because he ran from the church rather than try to find his sister, who he believed was inside the church. His older brother helps him clarify the situation and makes him realize that he has no reason for embarrassment.

The themes and language in the book also relate to the person-against-society and person-against-self conflicts. Through the actions of various characters, we learn that prejudice and hatred are harmful and destructive forces. To increase understanding of these conflicts, Curtis effectively uses comparative language and symbolism. For example, he compares the steering of a big car to being grown up when the father tells Kenny that both are scary at first, but that with a lot of practice, the car and life are under control. The symbolism of the Wool Pooh (Winnie-the-Pooh's evil twin brother) is of particular interest: When Kenny swims in dangerous waters, he almost drowns. He believes it is the Wool Pooh who is trying to kill him. Later, in the bombed church, he believes he sees this same faceless monster. Students of literature may find interesting comparisons for discussion as they analyze the possible significance of this evil symbolism as it relates to both the conflicts and themes developed in the book.

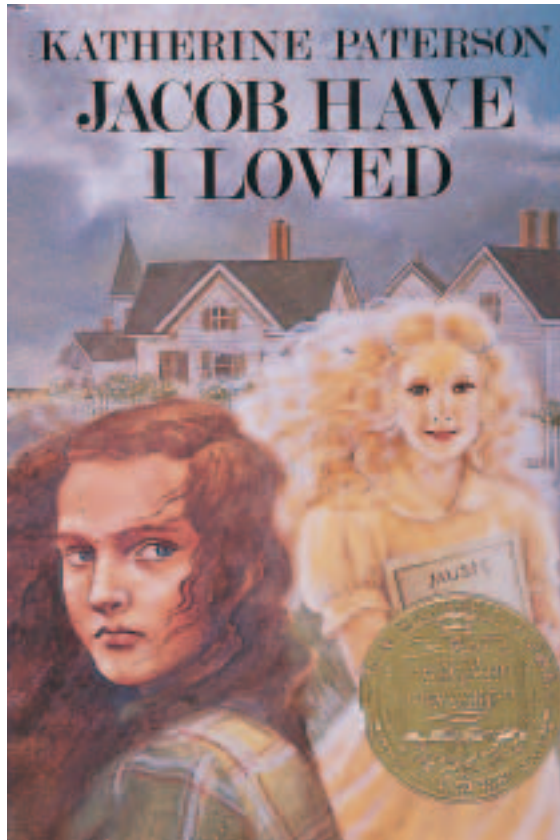
When using this book with older students, adults can ask them to trace the parallels between person-against-society and person-against-self conflicts, conduct historical studies to analyze the 1963 setting and conflicts for authenticity and to relate them to the church bombings in 1996, and trace the emergence of the themes. Curtis's text provides an interesting discussion to show the relationships among conflict, theme, and author's style. Students then can read Janice N. Harrington's *Going North* to compare the experiences of an African American family who decides to leave Alabama in the 1960s and move north to Nebraska.

princesses, dogs, and real dogs; the girl on the island is considered a real dog. Cole reveals the feelings of the children through their ordeal when he uses terms such as *they* and *them* to identify the society. When the girl wants the boy to leave her, his actions, thoughts, and dialogue reveal the strength of his dislike for the society that placed him in this isolation: "I'm afraid. Maybe you'd better go without me.' 'No,' he said. He didn't try to explain. He knew he was afraid to leave her alone, but even more important, it wouldn't be good enough. He wanted them both to disappear. To disappear completely" (p. 16).

Children's books often portray person-against-society conflicts that result from being different from the majority in terms of race, religion, or physical characteristics. Gary

Paulsen's *Nightjohn* develops the brutality of a society that mistreats slaves. Life for 12-year-old Sarney becomes even more miserable when Nightjohn secretly teaches her how to read and both of them are punished for this action. Judy Blume's *Blubber* shows the cruelty to which a fat child is subjected by her peers. For the conflict between person and society in such books to be believable, the social setting and its values must be presented in accurate detail.

Numerous survival stories set in wartime develop person-against-society conflicts. In Uri Orlev's *The Island on Bird Street*, the conflict is between a Jewish boy and the society that forces him to live in loneliness and starvation rather than surrender. Throughout the story, Orlev describes the boy's fear and the society that causes him to



Complex person-against-person conflict develops between twin sisters in *Jacob Have I Loved* by Katherine Paterson. (Jacket by Kinoko Craft, Thomas Y. Crowell Co. Copyright © 1980 by Katherine Paterson.)

feel and respond in this way. For example, in the following quote, notice how Orlev describes the actions of the society and the boy's responses to that society when a group of Jewish people are found living in a hidden bunker:

Its inhabitants began to come out. It took a long while for the last of them to emerge. The Germans and the policemen kept shouting and footsteps kept crossing the ruins from the cellar to the front gate. Now and then someone stumbled. . . . Somebody fell once or maybe twice. A shot rang out. Nobody screamed, though. Even the children had stopped crying. The last footsteps left the building. I heard voices in the street and an order to line up in threes. The same as had been given us. Then they were marched away. A few more shots. Finally, the car started up and drove away. . . . It was strange to think that all those people had been hiding with me in one house without us even knowing about each other. . . . They'd never take me away like that. (p. 81)

Holocaust stories with their strong anti-Semitism create some of the strongest person-against-society conflicts. In *Daniel Half Human and the Good Nazi*, David Chotjewitz creates a believable antagonist through reactions of the family toward knowledge that Daniel is half Jewish. The mother declares: "She was terrified. . . . She could feel how her son, at this very moment; would be distancing himself from her" (p. 60). The author uses news-

paper headlines that call upon the nation to boycott Jewish businesses, class essays from students in which they express their hatred of the Jews, attitudes of Nazi officers toward the Jews, and descriptions of such experiences as the Knight of the Broken Glass to encourage readers to visualize the society.

The author uses statements of Daniel's mother to describe the changes in the society: "A pestilence had broken out, a terrible disease, and no one had noticed. It has infected everyone, and now it's an epidemic. . . . It was as though the Germany she'd known had vanished. No, worse—as though it had decided to obliterate itself. The strength and the spirit that had once created art, poetry, and science were now spent creating the worst of all possible worlds" (pp. 159–160).

Person Against Nature. Nature—not society or another person—is the antagonist in many memorable books for older children. When the author thoroughly describes the natural environment, readers vicariously travel into a world ruled by nature's harsh laws of survival. This is the case in Jean Craighead George's *Julie of the Wolves*. Miyax, a 13-year-old Eskimo girl also called by the English name Julie, is lost and without food on the North Slope of Alaska. She is introduced lying on her stomach, peering at a pack of wolves. The wolves are not her enemy, however. Her adversary is the vast, cold tundra that stretches for hundreds of miles without human presence, a land so harsh that no berry bushes point to the south, no birds fly overhead so that she can follow, and continuous summer daylight blots out the North Star that might guide her home:

No roads cross it; ponds and lakes freckle its immensity. Winds scream across it, and the view in every direction is exactly the same. Somewhere in this cosmos was Miyax; and the very life in her body, its spark and warmth, depended upon these wolves for survival. And she was not so sure they would help. (p. 6)

The constant wind; the empty sky; and the cold, deserted earth are ever present as Miyax crosses the Arctic searching for food, protecting herself from the elements, and making friends with the wolves, who bring her food. The author encourages readers to visualize the power and beauty of this harsh landscape and to share the girl's sorrow over human destruction of this land, its animals, and the Eskimo way of life.

Another book that pits a young person against the elements of nature is Armstrong Sperry's *Call It Courage*. The hero's conflict with nature begins when the crashing, stormy sea—"a monster livid and hungry"—capsizes Mafatu's canoe during a hurricane:

Higher and higher it rose, until it seemed that it must scrape at the low-hanging clouds. Its crest heaved over with a vast sigh. The boy saw it coming. He tried to cry out. No sound issued from his throat. Suddenly the wave was upon him. Down it crashed. Chaos! Mafatu felt the paddle torn from his hands. Thunder in his ears. Water strangled him. Terror in his soul. (p. 24)

The preceding quote makes clear that there are two adversaries in the story: The hero is in conflict with nature and also in conflict with himself. The two adversaries are interwoven in the plot as Mafatu sails away from his island in order to prove that he is not a coward. Each time the boy wins a victory over nature, he also comes closer to his main goal, victory over his own fear. Without victory over fear, the boy cannot be called by his rightful name, Mafatu, “Stout Heart.” nor can he have the respect of his father, his Polynesian people, and himself.

In *A Girl Named Disaster*, Nancy Farmer develops a survival story set in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. As the heroine struggles to escape starvation on her lonely journey, she discovers that the spirits of her ancestors help both her physical and her emotional survival.

You can compare Farmer’s story of survival with Anton Quintana’s *The Baboon King*, set in the African land of the Kikuyu and the Masai. Quintana also depicts the need for both physical and emotional survival after a young man is banished by his people. The author describes not only the physical geography of the landscape but also the predators that might attack a lone hunter. The need for emotional survival is developed as the young man joins a baboon troop in order to regain the companionship that he lost.

Authors who write strong person-against-nature conflicts use many of the techniques shown in the quotes by George and Sperry. Personification gives human actions to nature, vivid descriptions show that characters are in a life-and-death struggle, sentences become shorter to show increasing danger, and actions reveal that characters know they are in serious conflict with nature.

Person Against Self. In *Hatchet* Gary Paulsen develops person-against-self and person-against-nature conflicts for his major character, 13-year-old Brian, these two major conflicts are intertwined throughout the book. For example, Paulsen creates an excellent transition between unconsciousness at the end of Chapter 3 and consciousness at the beginning of Chapter 4. In the following quote, notice how Paulsen ties together the two most destructive experiences in Brian’s life: the plane crash that could have killed him and the secret about his mother that caused his parents’ divorce.

Without knowing anything. Pulling until his hands caught at weeds and muck, pulling and screaming until his hands caught at last in grass and brush and he felt his chest on land, felt his face in the coarse blades of grass and he stopped; everything stopped. A color came that he had never seen before, a color that exploded in his mind with the pain and he was gone, gone from it all, spiraling out into the world, spiraling out into nothing. Nothing. (p. 30, end of chapter 3)

The Memory was like a knife cutting into him. Slicing deep into him with hate. The Secret (p. 31, beginning of chapter 4)

Symbolically, the secret is the first thing Brian remembers after waking from unconsciousness. Paulsen re-

veals the destructive nature of the secret through flashbacks, as Brian’s memory returns, and through comparisons between the hate that cut him like a knife and the sharp pain caused by the crash. As Brian gains confidence and ability to survive in the Canadian wilderness, he gains understanding about his parents’ conflict and his ability to face his own person-against-self conflict.

The main character in Michael Morpurgo’s young adult novel *Private Peaceful* faces an even more dramatic person-against-self secret. Notice in the following quote how the author uses the symbolism of the burial and the drifting away from the cemetery to reveal a terrible secret: “The earth thuds and thumps down on the coffin behind us as we drift away, leaving him. We walk home together along the deep lanes, Big Joe plucking at the foxgloves and the honeysuckle, filling Mother’s hands with flowers, and none of us has any tears to cry or words to say. Me least of all. For I have inside me a secret so horrible, a secret I can never tell anyone, not even Charlie. Father needn’t have died that morning in Ford’s Cleave Wood. He was trying to save me. If only I had tried to save myself, if I had run, he would not now be lying dead in his coffin. As Mother smooths my hair and Big Joe offers her yet another foxglove, all I can think is that I have caused this. I have killed my own father” (p. 12).

Although few children face the extreme personal challenges described in *Hatchet*, *Call it Courage*, and *Julie of the Wolves*, all children must overcome fears and personal problems while growing up. Person-against-self conflict is a popular plot device in children’s literature. Authors of contemporary realistic fiction often develop plots around children who face and overcome problems related to family disturbances. For example, the cause of the person-against-self conflict in Jerry Spinelli’s *Wringer* is a boy’s realization that if he does not accept the violence associated with killing pigeons, he must find the courage to oppose the actions and attitudes expressed by both his friends and the town. In Ruth White’s *Belle Prater’s Boy*, the characters struggle to understand the suicide of the girl’s father and desertion by the boy’s mother.

Good plots do not rely on contrivance or coincidence; they are credible to young readers because many of the same conflicts occur in the children’s own lives. Credibility is an important consideration in evaluating plot in children’s books. Although authors of adult books often rely on sensational conflict to create interest, writers of children’s books like to focus on the characters and the ways in which they overcome problems.

Pete Hautman’s character in his young adult novel *Godless* faces person-against-self and person-against-society issues related to faith. In this National Book Award winner, the main character, Jason Bock, overcomes his lack of belief in organized religion by inventing a new god—the town’s water tower. He and a few recruits develop their own religious doctrine complete with rules for worship. Jason faces his worst person-against-self dilemma when things

Through the Eyes of an AUTHOR

David Wisniewski

Visit the CD-ROM that accompanies this text to generate a complete list of David Wisniewski titles.



Selected Titles by David Wisniewski:

- Golem
- Sundiata, Lion King of Mali
- Rain Player
- The Warrior and the Wise Man
- The Secret Knowledge of Grown-Ups: The Second File

The world of children's literature lost an inspired writer and remarkable illustrator in 2002 when Caldecott winner David Wisniewski died in his Maryland home. Creator of stunningly crafted folktales, such as the award-winning Golem and Sundiata, Lion King of Mali, as well as clever comic pieces, exemplified by his two-part series, The Secret Knowledge of Grown-Ups, Wisniewski made an indelible mark on publishing. His painstaking and inspired illustrative style of layered cut paper became his unmistakable calling card, drawing attention to a wonderful body of work to be shared with children for generations.

Being in contact with kids and performing for them give you a sense of what they want in a story. *The Warrior and The Wise Man*, which was my first book, came out of my background in puppetry doing folktales it seemed only natural to use a folktale or a folkloric tale to capitalize on that familiarity. And I also did not want to do anything trivial. I wanted to do something that had a point but I also knew enough from puppetry that if you are going to make a point, it has to be demonstrated by the story plot and character. It cannot be laid on top.

I learned from the puppetry that if you are going to have a point, it has to be organically built into the tale and demonstrated by the tale, not preached at you. So with *The Warrior and The Wise Man*, I started off with the point that it's better to think your way through a problem than fight your way through a problem. Knowing that, I knew I could set the story in Japan, because they had two classes: They had the Samurai and they had the Shinto monks coming into Japanese history at the same time. So I could have a dichotomy already set up there. By making my characters twins, I start them off evenly. By making them sons of the emperor vying for the throne, then I've got what Alfred Hitchcock called "the maguffin." I had the point of the story set up.

Because it is a nature-oriented religion, the Shinto religion provided my wind/water/fire—all those elements required by the twins in order to gain the throne. And then the final inspiration was the kids game of "Scissors/Paper/Rock," which was one element canceling out another element. And then the twist at the end was really not something I had planned. That was a bright idea that came to me. What I like about this story is that the warrior is not evil. He simply has what has proved to be an inferior way of doing things. And that's brought up at the very end—being strong is nice, but unless that strength is directed intelligently, it's worthless.

So that is what got me started on the culturally entrenched tales with a sensible way of working. I came up with the idea that I needed to know what point I wanted the story to make. Where is the culture that supports the point of my story? What culture could this story have happened in? And then I do research from there to make sure that I'm not breaking any cultural norms that would preclude the use of my original tale in it.



Video Profiles: The accompanying video contains conversations from such authors and illustrators as Roland Smith, the late Paula Danziger, and E. B. Lewis.

begin to get out of hand and very dangerous: The new congregation climbs to the top of the water tower, everyone jumps into the water in the tank, and one member is seriously hurt. Now Jason faces both society's outrage in the form of his father, the church, and the police department and his own inner conflicts as he debates what has happened to his friends because of his actions. He battles within himself as he debates what he will do in his need to have faith in something.

Characterization

A believable, enjoyable story needs main characters who seem lifelike and who develop throughout the story. Characterization is one of the most powerful of the literary elements, whether the story is a contemporary tale in which characters face realistic problems or an adaptation of classic literature.

The characters whom we remember fondly from our childhood reading usually have several sides; like real people, they are not all good or all bad, and they change as they confront and overcome their problems. Laura, from the various "Little House" books by Laura Ingalls Wilder, typifies a rounded character in literature: She is honest,

trustworthy, and courageous, but she can also be jealous, frightened, or angry. Her character not only is fully developed in the story but also changes during its course.

One child who enjoyed Wilder's books described Laura this way. "I would like Laura for my best friend. She would be fun to play with but she would also understand when I was hurt or angry. I could tell Laura my secrets without being afraid she would laugh at me or tell them to someone else." Any writer who can create such a friend for children is very skilled at characterization.

Rosemary Chance (1999) reported on a study analyzing that the characteristics of novels that were on the list of young adult choices, and she found that characterization was the most important criterion. Protagonists in these books are dynamic and well developed. The majority of the novels included conflicts that center on people, including person-against-self and person-against-person conflicts. It would appear from such studies and comments from readers that memorable characterization is one of the most important literary elements.

How does an author develop a memorable character? How can an author show the many sides of a character as well as demonstrate believable change as this character

An In-Depth Analysis of Characterization in One Book

Carol Fenner, the author of one of the 1996 Newbery Honor books, *Yolonda's Genius*, uses several techniques to develop the characteristics of two African American children, bright, fifth-grade Yolonda and her slower younger brother, Andrew. For example, the author reveals both Yolonda's intelligence and her strategy for retaliation after she is teased about her size by being called a whale: Yolonda tells her fellow bus rider that he knows nothing about whales because "whales are the most remarkable mammals in the ocean—all five oceans" (p. 16). She then provides information about whales, such as "The whales sank, lifting their tails high above the water like a signal. Deep in the ocean, their voices sent out a high swelling cry, sharing their message of victory for a hundred miles" (p. 17). We learn later that Yolonda goes to the library each week to learn new facts.

Yolonda's positive attitudes and Andrew's possible musical genius are developed as Yolonda shares Andrew's abilities. She reviews what Andrew can do and not what he cannot do when she thinks, "If there was music on the TV or the blaster, he could keep it company by beating out a rhythm on anything—his knees, a table, a wall. Or he could play a sweet line of sound on his harmonica just underneath the music, like water under a bridge. He played people's voices—an argument, cries of surprise, hushed conversation. The harmonica lived in his pocket. He fell asleep with it in his hand" (p. 38).

Later, Yolonda's actions show both her respect for Andrew's talents and her dislike for those who torment her younger brother because he is a slower learner in school and gains his enjoyment from playing his harmonica. Yolonda takes vengeance on the three boys who destroy Andrew's harmonica. She does this while Andrew is watching because she wants it to be Andrew's vengeance as well as her own.

The author continues to show characterization through the symbolism of music. Andrew makes discoveries about people through sounds, he learns the alphabet after a teacher relates the alphabet to the instruments, and he eventually plays his harmonica to reveal the character of Yolonda. As you read the following quote, analyze how the author describes Yolonda through Andrew's music: "Yolonda walking, a steady, strong beat—great big moves, slow, making waves of air pass by. Yolonda eating a chocolate éclair—full mouth—soft and happy. Yolonda reading to him, voice purring around the big words, Yolonda dancing. This is the sound of Yolonda's body—large, gobbling, space, powerful and protecting—great like a queen, frightening everyone with a scowl and a swelling of her shoulders" (p. 203).

Notice in this example how the author uses several different techniques to develop the characterizations of Yolonda and her brother. After reading the book, readers understand that both characters have well-rounded personalities.

matures? The credibility of a character depends on the writer's ability to reveal that character's full nature, including strengths and weaknesses. An author can achieve such a three-dimensional character by describing the character's physical appearance, recording the conversations of the character, revealing the character's thoughts, revealing the perceptions of other characters, and showing the character in action.

In *Call It Courage*, Armstrong Sperry uses all of these methods to reveal Mafatu's character and the changes that occur in him as he overcomes his fears. Sperry first tells readers that Mafatu fears the sea. Then, through narration, Sperry shows the young child clinging to his mother's back as a stormy sea and sharks almost end their lives. Mafatu's memories of this experience, revealed in his thoughts and actions, make him useless in the eyes of his Polynesian tribe, as Sperry reveals through the dialogue of other characters: "That is woman's work. Mafatu is afraid of the sea. He will never be a warrior" (p. 12).

The laughter of the tribe follows, and Sperry then describes Mafatu's inner feelings:

Suddenly a fierce resentment stormed through him. He knew in that instant what he must do: he must prove his courage to himself, and to the others, or he could no longer live in their midst. He must face Moana, the Sea God—face him and conquer him. (p. 13)

Sperry portrays Mafatu's battle for courage through a combination of actions and thoughts: Terror and elation follow each other repeatedly as Mafatu lands on a forbidden island used for human sacrifice, dares to take a ceremonial spear even though doing so may mean death, confronts a hammerhead shark that circles his raft, and then overcomes his fear and attacks the shark to save his dog. Mafatu celebrates a final victory when he kills a wild boar, whose teeth symbolize courage. Mafatu's tremendous victory over fear is signified by his father's statement of pride: "Here is my son come home from the sea. Mafatu, Stout Heart. A brave name for a brave boy" (p. 115).

In *The Moves Make the Man*, Bruce Brooks develops character through basketball terminology. Brooks uses the words of Jerome Foxworthy, a talented black student, to express these thoughts about his own character:

Moves were all I cared about last summer. I got them down, and I liked not just the fun of doing them, but having them too, like a little definition of Jerome. Reverse spin, triple jump, reverse dribble. . . . These are me. The moves make the man, the moves make me. I thought, until Mama noticed they were making me something else. (p. 44)

Brooks uses contrasting attitudes toward fake moves in basketball to reveal important differences between Jerome and Bix Rivers, a talented but disturbed white athlete.

Through the Eyes of a CHILD

Andersen

Grade 2

Author: David Wisniewski
 Title: the warrior and the wise man
 I like this book because it
 is a interesting book. My favorite
 part is when they go to
 the wind demend because I
 like wind. My favorite character
 is Toemon because he's nice. The
 demends are not scary at all! They
 are nice if your nice to them!
 There is a big twist at the
 end but I'm not gunna tell you!
 You should read it some time!

ANDERSEN

In *The Wonderer*, Sharon, Creech introduces the main character by emphasizing the girl's father's description of her as a person who has many sides. Notice in the following quote how Creech describes both the father's and the girl's interpretation of her character:

I am not always such a dreamy girl, listening to the sea calling me. My father calls me Three-Sided Sophie: One side is dreamy and romantic: one is logical and down-to-earth; and the third side is hardheaded and impulsive. He says I am either in dreamland or earthland or mule-land, and if I ever get the three together, I'll be set, though I wonder where I will be then. If I'm not in dreamland or earthland or mule-land, where will I be? (p. 3).

By the end of the book, the author shows the main character's progression through these same three characteristics. She now answers her own question when she realizes: "I'm not in dreamland or earthland or mule-land. I'm just right here, right now. When I close my eyes, I can still smell the sea, but I feel as if I've been dunked

in the clear cool water and I've come out all clean and new." (p. 305).

This textbook discusses many memorable characters in children's literature. Some of these characters—such as the faithful spider Charlotte and a terrific pig named Wilbur, in E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, Max, in Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*, and Karana, in Scott O'Dell's *Island of the Blue Dolphins*—are old favorites who have been capturing children's imaginations for decades. Others—such as Harry Potter, in J. K. Rowling's fantasy series, Ida B, from Katherine Hannigan's *Ida B . . . and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World*, and Margaret Rose Kane, in E. L. Konigsburg's *The Outcasts of 19 Schuyler Place*—are more recent arrivals in the world of children's books. Authors of picture storybooks, historical fiction, science fiction, fantasy, and contemporary realistic fiction have created characters who are likely to be remembered long after the details of their stories have been forgotten.

Setting

The setting of a story—its location in time and place—helps readers share what the characters see, smell, hear, and touch, and also makes the characters' values, actions, and conflicts more understandable. For example, notice in the following description of setting how Gary D. Schmidt, in the 2005 Newbery Honor book *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy*, allows readers to experience the setting: “Turner Buckminster had lived in Phippsburg, Maine, for fifteen minutes shy of six hours. He had dipped his hand in its waves and licked the salt from his fingers. He had smelled the sharp resin of the pines. He had heard the low rhythm of the bells on the buoys that balanced on the ridges of the sea. He had seen the fine clapboard parsonage beside the church where he was to live. . . . He didn't know how much longer he could stand it” (p. 1). Whether a story takes place in the past, present, or future, its overall credibility may depend on how well the plot, characterizations, and setting support one another. Different types of literature—picture storybooks, fantasy, historical

fiction, and contemporary realistic fiction—have their own requirements as far as setting is concerned. When a story is set in an identifiable historical period or geographical location, details should be accurate.

Jean Craighead George (1991), author of numerous survival stories, emphasizes the setting for a book. To do this, George walks through the setting, smells the environment, looks at the world to see careful details, and searches for protagonists. During her final writing, she closes her eyes and re-creates in her imagination the land, the people, and the animals. George states:

I strive to put the reader on the scene. I want to make each child feel that he is under a hemlock tree with Sam Gibley in *My Side of the Mountain* or on his hands and knees talking to the tundra wolves in *Julie of the Wolves*. I want my reader to hear and see the ice on the Arctic Ocean in *Water Sky*. (p. 70)

In some books, setting is such an important part of the story that the characters and plot cannot be developed without understanding the time and place. In other stories, however, the setting provides only a background.

An In-Depth Analysis of Setting in One Book

The settings in Philip Pullman's award-winning fantasy from England, *The Golden Compass*, reveal several purposes for setting that can be found in the same book. For example, in the beginning of the book, notice how the author creates a suspenseful setting through the following quote showing the characters' actions: “Behind the chair—quick!” whispered Pantalaimon, and in a flash Lyra was out of the armchair and crouching behind it. It wasn't the best one for hiding behind: she'd chose one in the very center of the room, and unless she kept very quiet . . .” (p. 4).

On the pages that follow, readers discover how dangerous this setting might be for Lyra: “What she saw next, however, changed things completely. The Master took from his pocket a folded paper and laid it on the table beside the wine. He took the stopper out of the mouth of a decanter containing a rich golden wine, unfolded the paper, and poured a thin stream of white powder into the decanter before crumpling the paper and throwing it into the fire. Then he took a pencil from his pocket, stirred the wine until the powder had dissolved, and replaced the stopper” (p. 6).

As the story moves from England to the far north, the setting frequently becomes an antagonist as Lyra faces both the cold and the fear found in the wilderness. Pullman creates both of these moods in quotes such as the following: “The other girls went on talking, but Lyra and Pantalaimon nestled down deep in the bed and tried to get warm, knowing that for hundreds of miles all around her little bed there was nothing but fear” (p. 246).

Pullman's settings both create a realistic background and suggest the fantasy settings of other worlds. For example, the fol-

lowing quote provides realistic background for a small town in the far north; it also allows readers to visualize, hear, and even smell the setting: “Directly ahead of the ship a mountain rose, green flanked and snowcapped, and a little town and harbor lay below it: wooden houses with steep roofs, an oratory spire, cranes in the harbor, and clouds of gulls wheeling and crying. The smell was of fish, but mixed with it came land smells too: pine resin and earth and something animal and musky, and something else that was cold and blank and wild: it might have been snow. It was the smell of the North” (p. 168).

Many of Pullman's settings also reflect a universe inhabited by witches and supernatural beings, and incorporation parallel worlds. Pullman describes this parallel world in this way: “The city hanging there so empty and silent looked new-made, waiting to be occupied; or asleep, waiting to be woken. The sun of that world was shining into this, making Lyra's hands golden, melting the ice on Roger's wolfskin hood, making his pale cheeks transparent, glistening in his open sightless eyes” (p. 397).

Pullman concludes his fantasy in a way that prepares readers for the next book in the series by summarizing some of the moods found in the previous settings and foreshadowing the fantasy to come: “She turned away. Behind them lay pain and death and fear; ahead of them lay doubt, and danger, and fathomless mysteries. But they weren't alone. So Lyra and her demon turned away from the world they were born in, and looked toward the sun, and walked into the sky” (p. 399). To continue analyzing Pullman's fantasy setting, read *The Subtle Knife* and *The Amber Spyglass*, sequels to *The Golden Compass*.

In fact, some settings are so well known that just a few words place readers immediately into the expected location. “Once upon a time,” for example, is a mythical time in days of yore when it was possible for magical spells to transform princes into beasts or to change pumpkins into glittering carriages. Thirty of the 37 traditional fairy tales in Andrew Lang’s *The Red Fairy Book* begin with “Once upon a time.” Magical spells cannot happen everywhere; they usually occur in “a certain kingdom,” “deep in the forest,” in “the humble hut of a wise and good peasant,” or “far, far away, in a warm and pleasant land.” Children become so familiar with such phrases—and the visualizations of setting that they trigger—that additional details and descriptions are not necessary.

Even a setting that is described briefly can serve several purposes: It can create a mood, provide an antagonist, establish historical background, or supply symbolic meanings.

Setting as Mood. Authors of children’s literature and adult literature alike use settings to create moods that add credibility to characters and plot. Readers would probably be a bit skeptical, for example, if a vampire appeared in a sunny American kitchen on a weekday morning while a family was preparing to leave for school and work; the same vampire would seem more believable in a moldy castle in Transylvania at midnight. The illustrations and text can create the mood of a location. Readers can infer the author’s and illustrator’s feelings about the setting. For example, Cynthia Rylant’s text and Barry Moser’s illustrations for *Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds* provide a setting that radiates warm feelings about the varied people, their strengths, and their way of life.



The illustrations create a nostalgic look at childhood in *In Coal Country*. (From *In Coal Country* by Judith Hendershot, illustrated by Thomas B. Allen. Illustration copyright © 1987 by Thomas B. Allen. Reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf.)

The mood in David Almond’s *The Fire-Eaters*, 2003 winner of the Whitbread Children’s Book Award, matches the strong antiwar theme in this story set in 1962 at the time of the Cuban missile crisis. Notice how Almond develops a frightening mood and sets the stage for a person-against-society conflict in the following quote:

The air grew cold. Dad threw more sea coal and lumps of driftwood onto the fire. I sat with him and watched TV. There’d been more nuclear bomb tests in Russia and the US. President Kennedy stood at a lectern, whispered to a general, shuffled some papers and spoke of his resolution, our growing strength. He said there were no limits to the steps we’d take if we were pushed. Khrushchev made a fist, thumped a table and glared. Then came the pictures that accompanied such reports: the missiles that would be launched, the planes that would take off, the mushroom clouds, the howling winds, the devastated cities. (p. 19)

What mood did Almond develop with the reference to the nuclear bomb tests, the mushroom clouds, and the devastated cities? What is the significance of the air growing colder and the thumping of fists?

In the following quote found in the first paragraph of *From the Lighthouse*, Liz Chipman shows the mood of her character by describing the unhappy impact of a beautiful autumn season:

Autumn used to be my favorite time of year. I don’t like it so much anymore. It’s lost some of its luster. Autumn leaves on the Hudson weren’t enough to make Ma stay. And what am I, compared to the bright yellow-orange-red of an October riverbank, the sun lighting up the sky, shining warm love on the whole entire earth? Not much: A knobby-kneed thirteen-year-old girl with black hair and the two biggest front teeth in the entire town of Hudson, New York. Foolish to think I could be enough to make Ma want to stay if the leaves couldn’t. (p. 5)

A setting that would normally reflect a happy mood becomes one of loss. The mood of the character also introduces a major person-against-self conflict as the girl tries to understand what caused her mother to leave her, her three brothers, her father, and the lighthouse that is home to the family.

Setting as Antagonist. Setting can be an antagonist in plots based on person-against-society or person-against-nature conflict. The descriptions of the Arctic in Jean Craighead George’s *Julie of the Wolves* are essential; without them, readers would have difficulty understanding the life-and-death peril facing Miyax. These descriptions make it possible to comprehend Miyax’s love for the Arctic, her admiration of and dependence on the wolves, and her preference for the old Eskimo ways.

Sharon Creech’s descriptions of the ocean during a storm in *The Wanderer* provide a vivid antagonist. For example, notice how Creech uses descriptive language and frightening similes in the following quotes: “Now the waves are more fierce, cresting and toppling over, like leering drooling monsters spewing heavy streaks of foam



The paintings depict the terrible destruction associated with a tornado in Irene Trivas's illustrations for George Ella Lyon's *One Lucky Girl*. (From *One Lucky Girl* by George Ella Lyon. Copyright © 2000 by Dorling Kindersley Limited, London. Reprinted by permission of Dorling Kindersley.)

through the air" (p. 185) and "But this wave was unlike any other. It had a curl, a distinct high curl. I watched it growing up behind us, higher and higher, and then curled over *The Wanderer*, thousands of gallons of water, white and lashing" (p. 208).

The setting in Ida Vos's *Hide and Seek* provides the antagonist, the Netherlands during German occupation. In the foreword to the text, Vos introduces the setting for the story and helps readers understand that the setting is the antagonist:

Come with me to a small country in Western Europe. To the Netherlands, a land also known as Holland. Come with me, back to the year 1940. I am eight years old. German soldiers are parading through the Dutch streets. They have helmets on their heads and they are wearing black boots. They are marching and singing songs that have words I don't understand. "They're going to kill all the Jews!" shouts my mother. I am afraid, I have a stomachache. I am Jewish. (p. vii)

The reactions of the characters and the descriptions of the occupation in the remainder of the book leave no doubt that this setting is an antagonist. Vos based *Hide and Seek* on her family's life during World War II.

Authors of nonfiction who write about horrific periods in history may also introduce their subjects with the setting as the antagonist. For example, notice how Jim Murphy prepares readers for the turmoil to come in *An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793*: "Saturday, August 3, 1793. The sun came up, as it had every day since the end of May, bright, hot, and unrelenting. The swamps and marshes south of Philadelphia had already lost a great deal of wa-

ter to the intense heat, while the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers had receded to reveal long stretches of their muddy, root-choked banks. Dead fish and gooey vegetable matter were exposed and rotted, while swarms of insects droned in the heavy, humid air. . . . Mosquitoes were everywhere, though their high-pitched whirring was particularly loud near rain barrels, gutters, and open sewers" (p. 1).

Illustrated picture books also may develop the setting as antagonist. For example, Irene Trivas's illustrations for George Ella Lyon's *One Lucky Girl* depict the destruction associated with a tornado.

Setting as Historical Background. Accuracy in setting is extremely important in historical fiction and in biography. Conflict in the story and the actions of the characters may be influenced by the time period and the geographical location. However, unless authors describe settings carefully, children cannot comprehend unfamiliar historical periods or the stories that unfold in them. *A Gathering of Days*, by Joan W. Blos, is an example of historical fiction that carefully depicts setting—in this case, a small New Hampshire farm in the 1830s. Blos brings rural 19th-century America to life through descriptions of little things, such as home remedies, country pleasures, and country hardships.

Blos describes in detail the preparation of a cold remedy: The character goes to the pump for water, blows up the fire, heats a kettle of water over the flames, wrings out a flannel in hot water, sprinkles the flannel with turpentine, and places it on the patient's chest. Blos also describes discipline and school life in the 1830s. Disobedience can result in a thrashing. Because of their sex, girls are excused from all but the simplest arithmetic. Readers vicariously join the characters in breaking out of the snow with a team of oxen, tapping the maple sugar trees, and collecting nuts. Of this last experience, the narrator says, "O, I do think, as has been said, that if getting in the corn and potatoes are the prose of a farm child's life, then nutting's the poetry" (p. 131).

The setting in Joëlle Stolz's *The Shadows of Ghadames* is 19th-century Libya. The author develops a historical background for this Muslim country by focusing on the very traditional and often hidden lives of women in Ghadames, where "the men are often away on the desert tracks while the women wait for them on the rooftops" (p. 3). The author makes this a believable setting by describing cultural details such as the rooftop world of the women where they cook and weave, the belief in spirits, the treatment for illnesses, the authority of men in the family and in the culture, the women's baths, and the conflict caused by two wives living in the same family. The author concludes with a theme that suggests that changes are coming to this Islamic world. An interesting cultural comparison to this book is Suzanne Fisher Staples's *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind*, a story of a Muslim family



Lois Lowry develops a setting that is historically accurate for World War II Denmark. (From *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry, copyright © 1989. Reproduced with permission of Houghton Mifflin Co.)

who lives in the Cholistan Desert in Pakistan. Staples's novel is discussed in Chapter 9, "Contemporary Realistic Fiction."

In *Number the Stars*, set in Copenhagen during the 1940s, Lois Lowry develops a fictional story around the actions of the Danish Resistance. Actions of King Christian add to the historical accuracy of the time period. In addition to depicting historically accurate backgrounds, Lowry develops the attitudes of the Danish people. Consequently, readers understand why many Danes risked their lives to relocate the Jewish residents of Denmark.

Detailed illustrations by Steve Noon for Anne Milard's *A Street Through Time: A 12,000-Year Walk Through History* allow viewers to identify many aspects of life as it would appear in the same setting beginning in 10,000 B.C. and progressing into a modern town. Text covering early periods such as "Roman Times," "Viking Raiders," and "Medieval Village" provide numerous details that could clarify nonillustrated books of historical fiction.

The authors of historical fiction and biography must not only depict the time and location but also be aware of values, vocabulary, and other speech patterns consistent with the time and location. To do this, the authors must be immersed in the past and do extensive research. For ex-

ample, Joan Blos researched her subject at the New York Public Library, libraries on the University of Michigan campus, and the town library of Holderness, New Hampshire. She also consulted town and county records in New Hampshire and discussed the story with professional historians. Lois Lowry visited Copenhagen and researched documents about the leaders of the Danish Resistance.

Setting as Symbolism. Settings often have symbolic meanings that underscore what is happening in the story. Symbolism is common in traditional folktales, where frightening adventures and magical transformations occur in the deep, dark woods, and splendid castles are the sites of "happily ever after." Modern authors of fantasy and science fiction for children often borrow symbolic settings from old folktales to establish moods of strangeness and enchantment, such as the parallel universes created in the high fantasies by authors such as J. K. Rowling in *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* and Philip Pullman in *The Golden Compass*, but authors of realistic fiction also use subtly symbolic settings to accentuate plot or help develop characters.

In one children's classic, *The Secret Garden*, by Frances Hodgson Burnett, a garden that has been locked behind a wall for 10 years symbolizes a father's grief after the death of his wife, his son's illness, and the emotional estrangement of the father and son from each other. The first positive change in the life of a lonely, unhappy girl occurs when she discovers the buried key to the garden and opens the vine-covered door: "It was the sweetest, most mysterious-looking place anyone could imagine. The high walls which shut it in were covered with the leafless stems of climbing roses which were so thick that they were matted together" (p. 76). Finding the garden, working in it, and watching its beauty return bring happiness to the girl, restore health to the sick boy, and reunite the father and son. The good magic that causes emotional and physical healing in this secret kingdom is symbolized by tiny new shoots emerging from the soil and the rosy color that the garden's fresh air brings to the cheeks of two pale children.

In a later book, Katherine Paterson's *Bridge to Terabithia*, a secret kingdom in the woods is the "other world" shared by two young people who do not conform to the values of rural Virginia. The boy, Jess, would rather be an artist than follow the more masculine aspirations of his father, who accuses him of being a sissy. Schoolmates taunt the girl, Leslie, because she loves books and has no television. Jess and Leslie find that they have much in common, so they create a domain of their own, in which a beautiful setting symbolizes their growing sense of comradeship, belongingness, and self-love.

Even the entrance to their secret country is symbolic "It could be a magic country like Narnia, and the only way you can get in is by swinging across on this enchanted rope" (p. 39). They grab the old rope, swing across the creek, and enter their stronghold, where streams of light



A boy and girl create a secret kingdom in which they can escape the problems of the real world. (Illustration by Donna Diamond from *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson. Copyright © 1977 by Katherine Paterson. A Newbery Medal winner. By permission of Thomas Y. Crowell, Publishers.)

dance through the leaves of dogwood, oak, and evergreen, fears and enemies do not exist, and anything they want is possible. Paterson develops credible settings as Jess and Leslie go from the world of school and home to the world they make for themselves in Terabithia.

A dilapidated house, with its uncared-for backyard, becomes a symbolic setting in Janet Taylor Lisle's *Afternoon of the Elves*. In this setting, two girls, Hillary and Sara-Kate, make discoveries about each other and the importance of accepting people who are different. The girls work together in a miniature village that Sara-Kate maintains was built by elves. Like Paterson, Lisle creates two credible settings: (1) Hillary's normal world of school and home and (2) the almost otherworldly existence of a yard that is entered through a thick hedge. Like many other authors of books that have symbolic settings, Lisle relates the settings to the theme.

Theme

The theme of a story is the underlying idea that ties the plot, characters, and setting together into a meaningful whole. When evaluating themes in children's books, consider what the author wanted to convey about life or society and whether that theme is worthwhile for children. A memorable book has a theme—or several themes—that children can understand because of their own needs. Laurence Perrine (1983) states:

There is no prescribed method for discovering theme. Sometimes we can best get at it by asking in what way the main character has changed in the course of a story and what, if anything, the character has learned before its end. Sometimes the best approach is to explore the nature of the central conflict and its outcome. Sometimes the title will provide an important clue. (p. 110)

Authors of children's books often directly state the theme of a book, rather than imply it as authors commonly do in books for adults. For example, Wendy Anderson Halperin's *Love Is . . .* develops various definitions of love, such as "Love is kind." On one side of the double page, the artist depicts the consequences when that type of love is not present; the facing page depicts the consequences when that love is added. Theme may be stated by characters or through the author's narrative. The characters' actions and the outcome of the story usually develop and support the theme in children's literature. Picture storybooks, with their shorter texts and fewer themes, allow readers to analyze, trace, and discuss evidence of theme in a briefer, whole story. For example, many readers identify the theme in Patricia Polacco's *Appelmando's Dreams* as "It is important to dream." The following evidence from the book supports this theme:

1. The boy who does not have anything to do in a drab village makes his life interesting by dreaming about magic chariots pulled by galloping hues of color.
2. Appelmando shares his beautiful colored dreams with his friends and makes them happy.
3. The friends try to capture Appelmando's dreams on paper so that they can keep them forever.
4. The children fear that they will lose Appelmando's dreams after the villagers angrily make them wash the dreams off the village walls.
5. The dreams allow the children to be found after they lose their way in the forest.
6. The villagers weep for joy after they follow Appelmando's vision and find the children.
7. The villagers conclude, "Never again would they question the importance of dreams" (p. 28, unnumbered).
8. The village becomes a colorful and dreamy place that people enjoy visiting.

An In-Depth Analysis of Theme in One Book

Sharon Creech's 1995 Newbery Medal winner, *Walk Two Moons*, allows readers to analyze the effectiveness of the author's use of theme and to consider how it relates to 13-year-old Sal, her grandparents, her friend, her father, and her mother, who has left home. The themes in Creech's book tie the plot, characters, and setting together into a meaningful whole. For example, Creech uses mysterious messages left by a stranger to tie together the plot, characters' actions, and motivation. The messages are also written in the form of themes.

The first message is "Don't judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins" (p. 51). Father then interprets the meaning of the message on page 61. The second message is "Everyone has his own agenda" (p. 60). This message is tied to Gramps's interpretation of the message (p. 60). Prudence's and Sal's actions (p. 104), and Phoebe's thoughts about her agenda (p. 140). The third message is "In the course of a lifetime what does it matter" (p. 105). This message is related to Sal's thoughts about the meaning of the message (p. 106). The fourth message is "You can't keep the birds of sadness from flying over your head, but you can keep them from nesting in your hair" (p. 154). This message is related to Phoebe's story (p. 155), Phoebe's father's response (p. 162), Phoebe's crying and Sal's response (p. 169), hope related to the story of Pandora's box (pp. 174–175), the birds of sadness around Phoebe's family (p. 189), and the birds of sadness around Mrs. Cadaver (p. 220). The fifth message is "We never know the worth of water until the well runs dry" (p. 198). This message is related to the discussion about Mrs. Cadaver's and Sal's realization that the messages have changed the way they look at life.

The final and sixth message is the same as the first: "Don't judge a man until you have walked two moons in his moccasins" (p. 252). The importance of this message is developed when Gramps and Sal play the moccasin game in which they take turns pretending they are walking in someone else's moccasins (p. 275) and when Gramps's gift to Sal is to let her walk in her mother's moccasins. This book provides an interesting source for tracing the emergence of themes and the relation of those themes to various characters and conflicts developed in the text.

Themes in books written for younger children frequently develop around experiences and emotions that are important to the younger readers. For example, James Howe's *Horace and Morris But Mostly Dolores* develops the very understandable theme that friendship is important. The theme in Douglas Wood's *What Dads Can't Do* devel-

ops the importance of a father's love by showing numerous father-and-child relationships.

In contrast, themes developed in books written for older readers frequently focus on human development and the consequences that may result from choices. For example, Suzanne Fisher Staples's heroine in *Shiva's Fire* discovers "'That is a basic human frailty—we always want to know what will happen if we do one thing rather than another. Not knowing is the mystery of destiny. If you are still for a moment, no doubt you will hear your heart tell you what you must do'" (p. 264). Human frailty is also revealed in the concluding volume to Philip Pullman's trilogy, *The Amber Spyglass*.

Theme Revealed by Changes in Characters. In *The Whipping Boy*, Sid Fleischman develops the theme that friendship is important. He shows how the main characters change in their attitudes toward each other. For example, the names that the main characters call each other progress from hostility to comradeship. At the beginning of the story, Jemmy thinks of the prince as "Your Royal Awfulness." Likewise, the prince refers to Jemmy as "Jemmy-from-the-Street" and "contrary rascal." As the story progresses and the two characters learn to respect and admire each other, Jemmy refers to the prince as "friend" and the prince calls himself "Friend-o-Jemmy's."

Theme and the Nature of Conflict. Stories set in other time periods frequently develop themes by revealing how the main characters respond to conflicts caused by society. For example, Rudolf Frank's *No Hero for the Kaiser*, set in World War I, develops several antiwar themes. Frank depicts the harsh nature of war by exploring the actions and responses of a boy who is unwittingly drawn into battle. Through the viewpoint of the boy, Frank reveals that it takes more courage not to fight than to fight, that it is important to respect oneself, and that "guns never go off by themselves" (p. 13). Frank reinforces these themes through symbolism, similes, and contrasts. The contrasts are especially effective as Frank compares the same soldiers at home and on the battlefield and contrasts peacetime and wartime meanings for terms such as *bull's-eye*, *shot*, and *field*.

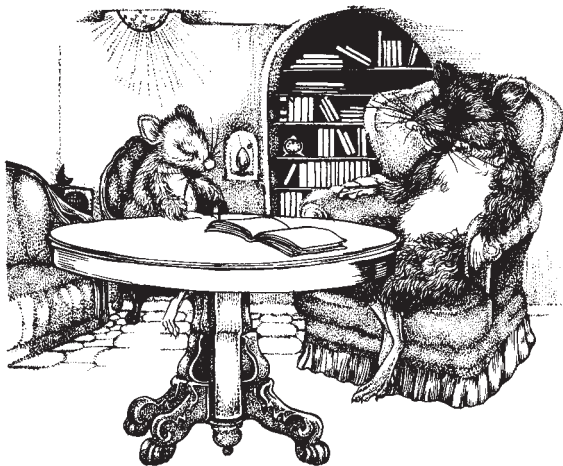
Prejudice is a harmful force in historical fiction, such as Elizabeth George Speare's *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, Paula Fox's *The Slave Dancer*, Mary Stolz's *Cezanne Pinto: A Memoir*, Uri Orlev's *The Island on Bird Street*, and Mildred D. Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. The theme of prejudice as a harmful force is also found in biographies such as Russell Freedman's *The Voice That Challenged a Nation: Marian Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights* and in informational books such as Diane McWhorter's *A Dream of Freedom: The Civil Rights Movement From 1954 to 1968*.

The Theme of Personal Development. Literature offers children opportunities to identify with other people's experiences and thus better understand their own growing

up. Consequently, the themes of many children's books deal with developing self-understanding. In an early study, Gretchen Purtell Hayden (1969) concluded that the following themes related to personal development are predominant in children's books that had received the Newbery Medal up to that time: difficulties in establishing good relationships between adults and children, the need for morality to guide one's actions, the importance of support from other people, an acceptance of oneself and others, a respect for authority, the ability to handle problems, and the necessity of cooperation. As you read more current books, search to see if these themes are still found in the literature.

In Robert O'Brien's *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*, intellectually superior rats search for a moral code to guide their actions. They have studied the human race and do not wish to make the same mistakes, but they soon realize how easy it is to slip into dishonest behavior. Some equipment that they find allows them to steal electricity, food, and water from human society, which then makes their lives seem too easy and pointless. Eventually, the rats choose a more difficult course of action, moving into an isolated valley and working to develop their own civilization.

One book that develops the importance of support from another human being is Theodore Taylor's *The Cay*. When Phillip and his mother leave Curaçao to find safety in the United States, their boat is torpedoed by a German submarine. Phillip, a white boy, and Timothy, a black West Indian, become isolated first on a life raft and then on a tiny Caribbean island. Their need for each other is increased when Phillip becomes blind after a blow to the head and, in spite of his racial prejudice, must rely on Timothy to survive. Phillip's superior attitudes gradually van-



Superior rats consider the morality of their actions in a complex plot. (Illustration by Zena Bernstein from *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* by Robert C. O'Brien. Copyright © 1971 by Robert C. O'Brien. [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971]. Reprinted with the permission of Atheneum Publishers.)

Technology Resources

The *Bulletin of the Centre for Children's Books* is a review journal, providing starred reviews, editorials, and author/illustrator profiles. You can link to this valuable site from the Companion Website at www.prenhall.com/norton

ish, as he becomes totally dependent on another person. When Phillip is finally rescued. He treasures the way in which a wonderful friend has helped change his life for the better.

The Cay also stresses the theme of accepting oneself and others, as does Joan W. Blos's *A Gathering of Days*, in which Catherine experiences injustice for the first time when she and her friends secretly help a runaway slave. Catherine learns to respect authority as well when after years of responsibility for her widowed father and little sister, she must trust and obey her new stepmother.

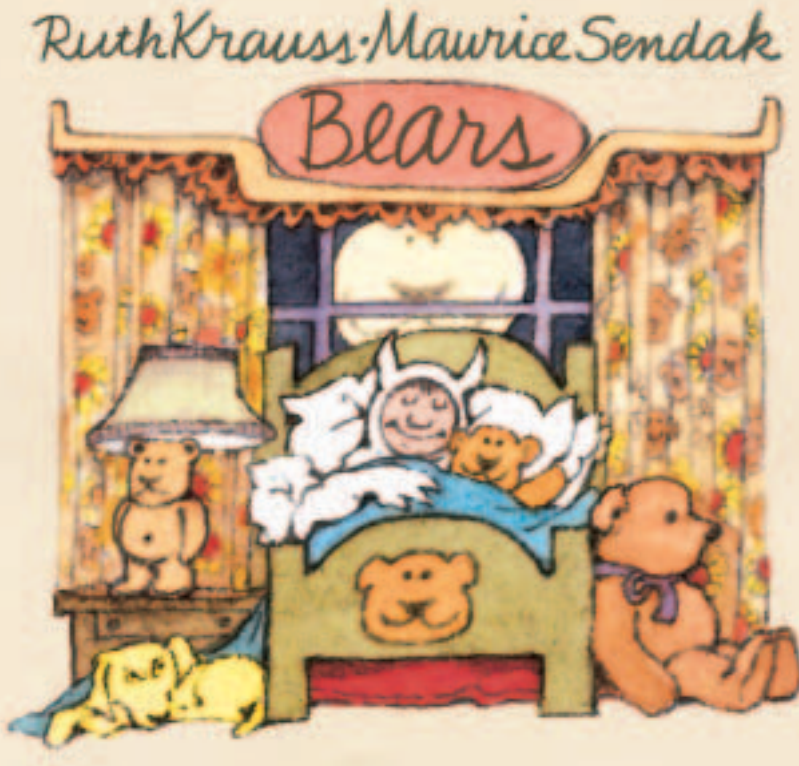
Many children's books deal in some way with the necessity of overcoming problems. Characters may confront problems within themselves or in their relationships with others, or problems caused by society or nature. Memorable characters face their adversaries, and through a maturing process, they learn to handle their difficulties. Handling problems may be as dramatic and planned as Mafatu's search for courage in Armstrong Sperry's *Call It Courage* or may result from accident, as in Theodore Taylor's *The Cay*.

Cooperation, the importance of personal growth, and the need for kindness and sharing are all themes in E. L. Konigsburg's *The View From Saturday*. These themes are developed as a group of sixth graders form a winning team for the Academic Bowl.

Style

Authors have a wide choice of words to select from and numerous ways to arrange words to create plots, characters, and settings and to express themes. Many authors use words and sentences in creative ways. To evaluate style, read a piece of literature aloud; the sound of a story should appeal to your senses and be appropriate to the content of the story. The language should help develop the plot, bring the characters to life, and create a mood. For example, Ruth Krauss's *Bears* uses an appealing rhyming text, as bears are in such locations as on the stairs and under the chairs.

The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses, by Paul Goble, was a Children's Choice selection. The most frequent reason that children give for choosing this book is the author's use of language. Goble uses precise similes to evoke a landscape of cliffs and canyons, beautiful wild horses, and the high-spirited Indian girl who loves them. One stallion's eyes are "cold stars," and his floating mane and tail are "wispy clouds." During a storm, the horses gallop "faster and faster, pursued by thunder and lightning . . .



Caption

Caption

like a brown flood across hills and through valleys” (p. 12, unnumbered).

Sid Fleischman uses many metaphors and similes to create the setting in *The Midnight Horse*, such as “It was raining bullfrogs. The coach lurched and swayed along the river road like a ship in rough seas. Inside clung three passengers like unlash cargo. One was a blacksmith, another was a thief, and the third was an orphan boy named Touch” (p. 1).

Fleischman also uses similes to develop characters. For example, Touch, the orphan, is described as “skinny and bareheaded, with hair as curly as wood shavings” (p. 1), and “he chose to bring himself up, free as a sail to catch any chance wind that came along” (p. 29). Compare these similes with those for Otis Cratt, the thief, who is described as a long-armed man who looked “like a loosely wrapped mummy” (p. 3), was drawn to the blacksmith’s billfold “like a compass needle to true north” (p. 4), and ran “like a wolf returning to its den” (p. 29). Fleischman uses similes that relate to the actions of each character within the story.

Figurative language also helps develop characters, plot, and setting in Jan Hudson’s *Sweetgrass*, a historical novel about the Blackfoot, set on the Canadian prairies. Early in the story, for example, sweet berries symbolize a

young girl’s happiness and hopes: “Promises hung shimmering in the future like glowing berries above sandy soil as we gathered our bags for the walk home” (p. 12). Later, the same girl’s acceptance of a disillusioning reality is symbolized again by berries, which are then bitter.

Authors also may select words and sentence structures with rhythms evoking different moods. Armstrong Sperry creates two distinct moods for Mafatu in *Call It Courage*. As Mafatu goes through the jungle, he is preoccupied and moves leisurely. Sperry uses long sentences to set this mood: “His mind was not in this business at all: he was thinking about the rigging of his canoe, planning how he could strengthen it here, tighten it there” (p. 77). This dreamy preoccupation changes rapidly as Mafatu senses danger. Sperry’s verbs become harsh and his sentences short and choppy as Mafatu’s tension builds: “The boar charged. Over the ground it tore. Foam flew back from its tusks. The boy braced himself” (p. 78).

Kate DiCamillo, winner of the 2004 Newbery Medal for *The Tale of Despereaux*, uses an unusual style in which the narrator interjects comments by talking to the reader; this usually happens at the end of a chapter. For example, after the father declares that the mouse, Despereaux, cannot live, the narrator states, “But reader, he did live. This is his story” (p. 15). Or, the narrator may intervene when readers should think about a word meaning, such as, “At least Lester had the decency to weep at his act of perfidy. Reader, do you know what ‘perfidy’ means? I have a feeling you do, based on the little scene that has just unfolded here But you should look up the word in your dictionary, just to be sure” (p. 45).

DiCamillo reveals her purpose for writing in this style in an interview when she states that she uses it so the narrator can help readers navigate the complexity of the plot with its multiple story lines (Horning, 2004): “When Despereaux goes down to the dungeon both times, you as the reader don’t feel abandoned because the narrator is there with you. It’s kind of like somebody who’s taking the journey with you but who knows a little bit more than you do, and implicitly says, ‘It’s going to be all right.’ Kids seem to enjoy it” (p. 46).

Linda Sue Park also interjects the voice of the author in her *Project Mulberry*. At the end of each chapter, she inserts a dialogue between the main character, Julia Song, and herself as author, Ms. Park. Julia states: “If you’re interested in learning about how this book was written—background information, mistakes, maybe even a secret or

An In-Depth Analysis of Author's Use of Style in One Book

Gloria Whelan, the author of a National Book Award winner, *Homeless Bird*, develops a strong heroine who must overcome the traditional life dictated for her by India's tradition of arranged marriages and lower esteem for women. One of the strengths of Whelan's book is her use of figurative language through similes, metaphors, and symbolism; this is especially important in the references to birds and the title of the book. Notice in the following quote how Koly uses positive comparisons to describe her father's writing: "I watched as the spoken words were written down to become like caged birds, caught forever by my clever baap" (p. 2). In another place, the author uses a comparison with caged animals to reveal Koly's feelings of being trapped: "As I lay there in the strange house, I felt like a newly caged animal that rushes about looking for the open door that isn't there" (p. 24). The theme of the lonely and trapped feelings associated with a homeless bird is developed throughout the book to describe Koly's emotions until at the end of the book, she finds happiness at last and the homeless bird is allowed to fly to its home.

The author also uses very descriptive similes and metaphors to portray Koly's feelings as the time of her arranged marriage approaches. When she realizes that the family of her prospective bridegroom is more interested in her dowry than in her, the author uses a simile that foreshadows Koly's future. Now she thinks, "Was my marriage to be like the buying of a sack of yams in the marketplace?" (p. 13). After her marriage, the author again uses a reference to the marketplace as her mother-in-law holds her arm "as I have seen women in the marketplace holding a chicken's neck before they killed it" (p. 22).

When Koly realizes fully the disastrous consequences of her marriage, the author compares her feelings to those of a small fly caught in the web of a cunning spider. After Koly discovers that her husband has tuberculosis and will probably die, the author again describes her feelings through a vivid simile: "My hope slipped away like a frightened mouse into a dark hole" (p. 42). After Koly's husband dies, the author uses numerous comparisons to develop characterizations: Koly's mother-in-law is suspicious of books, and she treats them like scorpions that might

sting. Later, her mother-in-law is compared to little red ants that swarm all over you and continually bite. When her mother-in-law deserts her in a town filled with begging widows, Koly feels like a kitten who has been dropped down a well.

The mood, developed through figurative language, changes after Koly discovers hope in a home for widows that is founded to help people like her gain respect and an ability to earn a living. Notice how the mood of the comparisons changes as Koly also discovers hope: When with relief she takes off her widow's sari, she feels like the snake that rids itself of its confining skin. Later, the author uses Koly's considerable ability with embroidery to show that if we use our talents, life can be like a beautiful tapestry.

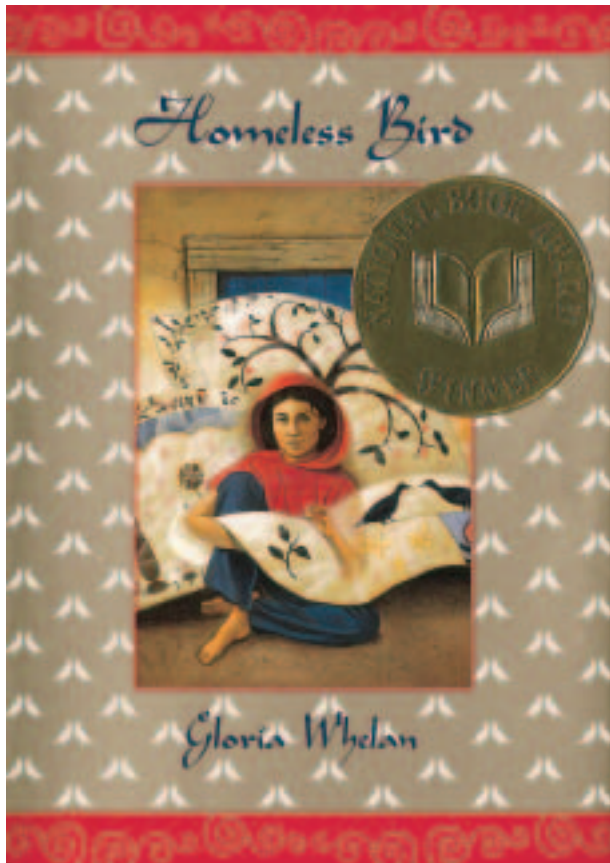
The idea for a tapestry also becomes symbolic for the changes in Koly's life. In the following quote, the author uses the symbolism of quilting to show the changes in Koly's life as she progresses from sadness to happiness: "Once again I began to quilt for my dowry. My first quilt was stitched as I worried about my marriage to Hari, the second in sorrow at Hari's death. Chandra's quilt was stitched to celebrate her happiness. This time as I embroidered, I thought only of my own joy. 'When it's finished,' I wrote Raji, 'we'll be married.' In the middle of the quilt, spreading its branches in all directions, I put a tamarind tree to remind me of the tree in my maa and baap's courtyard and the tree in the home I was going to. . . . I stitched a rickshaw and Raji in the fields and me embroidering in the room Raji had made for me. Around the quilt for a border I put the Yamuna Rier, the reeds and herons beside it" (pp. 207–208).

In addition to the symbolism found in embroidery, the author uses references to Indian poetry and mythology to develop the story's style. As students of children's literature, you might consider the importance of the author's references to this poetry. In the author's note, the poet is identified as Rabindranath Tagor, who lived between 1861 and 1941 and was considered one of India's greatest poets who also wrote plays and stories, composed music, and was an advocate for India's independence from Great Britain. In 1913, he received the Nobel Prize for literature.

two—you've come to the right place. Some people like that sort of thing. It's mostly conversations between me and the author, Ms. Park. We had a lot of discussions while she was writing. Here we go" (p. 12).

Both Nikki Grimes and Marilyn Nelson adopt a style that effectively uses poetry to develop characterization. In *Bronx Masquerade*, Grimes develops the power of poetry as African American students expand a poetry assignment and use poetry for self-evaluation. In this fictional story, the author gives a short introduction to a character who attends a Bronx high school, presents a poem that this student might have written as part of a poetry assignment,

and then includes peer responses to the poetry. For example, following a section about Janelle Battle and a poem, "Inside," that she might have written, Grimes includes this reaction by Tyrone after he hears the poem: "You never think other folks got feelings. Like Janelle. I must've cracked wise a hundred times about her weight. Never even thought about it. It was just something I did for a laugh. Listen to her now, it doesn't seem all that funny" (p. 50). In *Carver: A Life in Poems*, Marilyn Nelson uses poetry to tell segments of George Washington Carver's life as an African American poet, painter, musician, botanist, and naturalist.



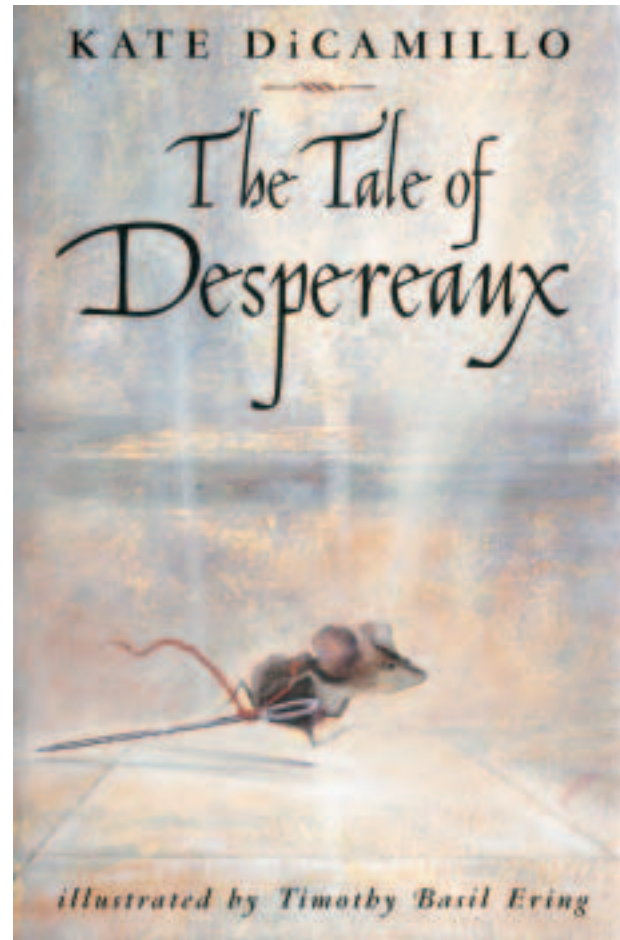
The author's style develops a strong heroine and reflects a vivid setting. (From *Homeless Bird* by Gloria Whelan. Copyright © 2000 by Gloria Whelan. Published by HarperCollins. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Chris Raschka's newly illustrated version of Dylan Thomas's *A Child's Christmas in Wales* provides readers and listeners with a way to enjoy Thomas's vivid language that captures his childhood memories. For example, notice how he uses all the senses in the introduction to his book:

All the Christmases roll down toward the two-tongued sea, like a cold and headlong moon bundling down the sky that was our street; and they stop at the rim of the ice-edged, fish-freezing waves, and I plunge my hands in the snow and bring out whatever I can find. In goes my hand into that wool-white bell-tongued ball of holidays resting at the rim of the carol-singing sea, and out come Mrs. Prothero and the fireman. (unnumbered)

Karen Cushman's style in *Rodzina*, historical fiction set on an orphan train heading west in the 19th century, includes storytelling. The author uses this technique to relate prior experiences and to entertain the worried orphans. Notice in the following quote how the author portrays the historical period and relates a humorous story meant to entertain the orphans:

I'll tell you about the time my papa won a pig in a raffle. He thought he'd lead it home on a string like a dog, but the pig,



Caption

Caption

being no dog, just grunted and sat down. Papa tried to carry it. The pig squealed and squirmed so much, Papa dropped it and had to chase after it through the muddy streets until he caught it again. Papa decided he and the pig would take a streetcar. . . . [to take the pig on the streetcar] he went into a bakery and got a flour sack. He put the pig in the sack, tied it up tight with a string, and waited for a trolley. He paid his nickel, sat down, and shoved the pig underneath his seat. The pig began to squeal, and to cover the noise, Papa began to sing. (p. 77)

The story continues as the children laugh and start to tell their own stories. Many of these stories are exaggerated, such as one about a mother who knitted socks in her sleep or a father who was so lazy that he hired someone to do his snoring. The stories, told in the language of the pioneers, help depict the historical period.

Point of View

Different people may describe an incident in different terms: The feelings they experience, the details they mention, and their judgments about what occurred may vary because of their backgrounds, values, and perspectives.

An In-Depth Analysis of Point of View in One Book

The point of view developed in Richard Peck's 2001 Newbery Medal winner, *A Year Down Yonder*, enables readers to analyze the effectiveness of several of the purposes for establishing a point of view. Readers may also develop an understanding of the techniques the author used to make them care about the characters and what will happen in the story.

First, the author builds on his previous book, *A Long Way From Chicago*, which was a 1999 Newbery Honor book and a National Book Award finalist. In the first book, the author develops the characters of two children who during each summer of the Depression travel from Chicago to a small town in southern Illinois to visit their grandmother. Peck involves readers by making them care about the boy and the girl. Through the details he chooses to describe, we have a strong feeling about the backgrounds, values, and perspectives of the main characters, especially the feisty grandmother.

In *A Year Down Yonder*, Peck focuses on 15-year-old Mary Alice and her grandmother, who spend a year together during the recession of 1937. The book begins as Mary Alice is asked to live with her grandmother after her father loses his job. Let us begin our discussion of point of view with Lauber's (1991) concern that a major purpose of point of view is to make readers care about the characters and how the story will develop. A considerable portion of Peck's novel is told through Mary Alice's point of view. Most readers will immediately sympathize with her and understand her feelings when she thinks: "Oh, didn't I feel sorry for myself when the Wabash Railroad's Blue Bird train steamed into Grandma's town. . . . My trunk thumped out onto the platform from the baggage car ahead. There I stood at the end of the world with all I had left. Bootsie [her cat] and my radio" (p. 4). In the first chapter, Peck develops Mary Alice's point of view about the town as a place where everyone knows everything about you, about going to a school where she knows nobody and where the students do not want to make friends with a new girl they consider a rich city girl, about missing her brother who always stuck up for her, and about her view of her grandmother who has definite opinions of her own and is considered not only feisty but also difficult to get along with.

Tracing how Peck uses Mary Alice's changing point of view about her grandmother is an interesting way to show the im-

portance of point of view. Through Mary Alice's point of view, we understand how she goes from someone who fears her grandmother and does not want to be with her to someone who understands and respects her grandmother's actions, beliefs, and values. Early in the novel, Peck describes Grandma's actions toward Halloween tricksters, her interpretation of being able to gather all the nuts on the ground in a neighbor's yard, and her attitude toward borrowing pumpkins from a neighbor's garden and then baking them into pies to donate to a school function. We discover through Mary Alice's point of view that "to Grandma, Halloween wasn't so much trick-or-treat as it was vittles and vengeance. Though she'd have called it justice" (p. 38).

Peck continues to develop a plot that focuses on Mary Alice's growing understanding of and respect for her feisty grandmother's actions, beliefs, and values. By the end of the book, we as readers care about both Mary Alice and her grandmother and what will happen to them. The closeness of the two characters is revealed when Mary Alice leaves school during a tornado alert because she wants to "come home" and make sure that her grandmother is all right. This closeness is again reinforced when Mary Alice realizes: "Sometimes I thought I was turning into her. I had to watch out not to talk like her. And I was to cook like her for all the years to come" (p. 123). This closeness is again highlighted through Mary Alice's first-person point of view when she declares, "Grandma, I don't want to go back to Chicago. I want to stay here with you" (p. 126).

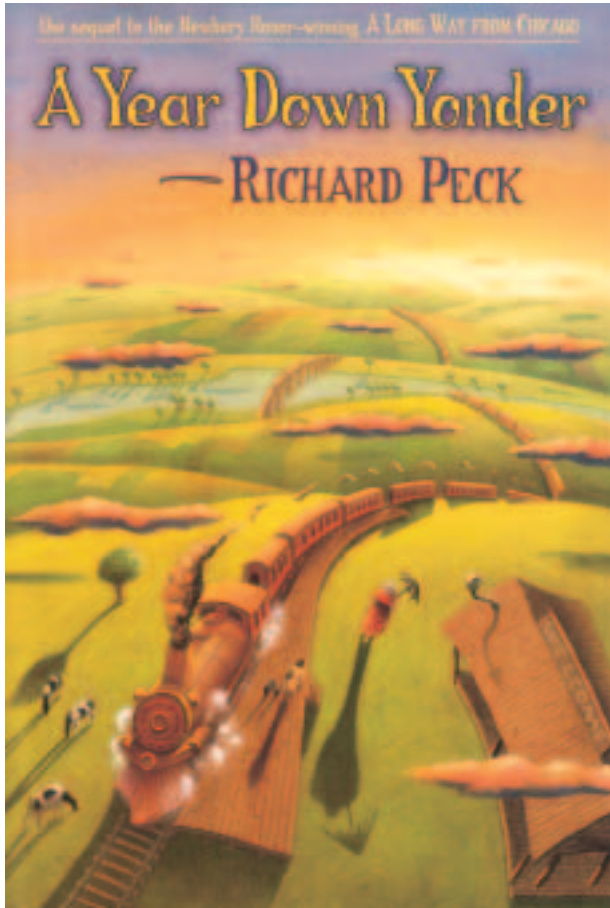
By developing this relationship through Mary Alice's point of view, Peck helps us understand the changes that allow Mary Alice to progress from someone who thought she was at the end of the world with no one to care about her to a character who shows considerable love, respect, and admiration for her grandmother. Peck's last two pages are situated in the future when, years later, Mary Alice returns to her grandmother's house to be married.

As students of children's literature, you may wish to consider how Peck uses point of view to develop characterizations and plot in *A Long Way From Chicago*. Could you predict any of the happenings in *A Year Down Yonder*? Does Peck use any of the same techniques to develop point of view in *A Long Way From Chicago*?

Consequently, the same story may change drastically when told from another point of view. How would Peter Rabbit's story be different if Beatrix Potter had told it from the viewpoint of the mother rabbit? How would Armstrong Sperry's *Call It Courage* differ if told from the viewpoint of a Polynesian tribesman who loves the sea rather than from that of a boy who fears it? Author Patricia Lauber (1991) emphasizes the importance of point of view when she states. "The best stories have a point of view.

They involve readers by making them care—care about the characters, whether people or animals, care about a town, care about an idea, and most of all, care about how it all comes out" (p. 46).

Avi's *Nothing But the Truth: A Documentary Novel* stimulates interesting discussions about point of view and fosters responses to literature. The book, a fictional novel written in documentary format, allows readers to interpret each incident, draw their own conclusions about the



In this book, set in the recession of 1937, the author develops several strong points of view. (Cover Art by Steve Cieslawski, copyright © 2000 by Steve Cieslawski, cover art, from *A Year Down Yonder*, by Richard Peck. Used by permission of *Dial Books for Young Readers*, a division of Penguin Putnam, Inc.

truthfulness of the documents, and decide which characters are changed the most. As a consequence, readers gain insights into how emotions can define and distort the truth.

As children read this novel, they can analyze how Avi documents various reactions to and points of view on the same incident through the use of memos, letters, diary pages, discussions, phone and personal conversations, speeches, and telegrams. Avi also develops characters, conflicts, and various emotional responses through these same documents. Consequently, the book can be used to stimulate personal responses among readers.

Paul Fleischman's *Bull Run* is a story of the first battle of the Civil War. It is unique because Fleischman develops the story around the points of view of 16 people involved in the battle: Eight characters tell their story from the perspective of the Union, and eight others reflect the perspective of the Confederacy. Fleischman's characters range from generals to foot soldiers. Some of the characters tell their stories while waiting for men to return from

battle, and others are artists, photographers, and doctors who observe or play important parts in the battle. By the end of the book, all of the characters reflect the disillusionment and horror associated with this first battle.

Rosalyn Schanzer's *George vs. George: The American Revolution as Seen From Both Sides* is also unique because the author contrasts the point of view of George Washington and King George III. The author shows the different views about topics that led to the Revolutionary War, such as differing beliefs about taxation and forms of government. The text format that alternates between the two sides provides an excellent way for readers to contrast the views and the consequences of the differing viewpoints. The author's use of historical sources shows readers the importance of research when writing about controversy. Readers also discover that there are two sides to most issues.

The resolution of the conflict in Bruce Edward Hall's *Henry and the Kite Dragon* illustrates the importance of understanding another's perspective if conflict is to be eliminated. The story is set in Chinatown in the 1920s. Conflict arises when the boys from Little Italy throw rocks at Grandfather Chin's dragon kite. It is not until Henry and Grandfather discover that the boys from Little Italy raise homing pigeons and the dragon kite frightens the pigeons that the two sides reach a compromise: The kites will fly in the morning and the homing pigeons will fly in the afternoon. After reading this book, students hopefully understand the importance of identifying point of view when solving problems.

An author has several options when selecting point of view. A *first-person* point of view speaks through the "I" of one of the characters. An author who wishes to use a first-person narrative must decide which character's actions and feelings should influence the story. An *objective* point of view lets actions speak for themselves; the author describes only the characters' actions, and readers must infer the characters' thoughts and feelings.

An *omniscient* point of view tells the story in the third person ("they," "he," or "she"). The author is not restricted to the knowledge, experiences, and feelings of one person; the feelings and thoughts of all characters can be revealed. A *limited omniscient* point of view, however, concentrates on the experiences of one character but has the option to be all-knowing about other characters. A limited omniscient point of view may clarify conflicts and actions that would be less understandable in a first-person narrative.

Although no point of view is preferred for all children's literature, an author's choice can affect how much children of certain ages believe and enjoy a story. Contemporary realistic fiction for children age 8 and older often uses a first-person or a limited omniscient point of view that focuses on one child's experiences. Older children often empathize with one character if they have had similar experiences.

Consistency of point of view encourages readers to believe in a story. Such belief is especially crucial in modern fantasy, where readers are introduced to imaginary worlds, unusual characters, and magical incidents. A writer may describe a setting as if it were being viewed by a character only a few inches tall. To be believable, however, the story cannot stray from the viewpoint of the tiny character: The character's actions, the responses of others toward the character, and the setting must be consistent.

The Right Book for Each Child

Because of developmental stages, children have different personal and literary needs at different ages. Children in the same age group or at the same stage of development also have diverse interests and reading abilities that you must consider. Understanding why and what children read is necessary in order to help them select materials that stimulate their interests and enjoyment. Studies show that the most powerful determinants of adult reading are accessibility, readability, and interest; these factors also influence children's reading. If developing enjoyment through literature is a major objective of your reading program for children, you must make available many excellent books, consider children's reading levels, and know how to gain and use information about children's reading interests.

Accessibility

Literature must be readily accessible if children are to read at all. To determine which books interest them, learn about their heritage, recognize and appreciate good literature, and understand themselves and others through literature, children must have opportunities to read and listen to many books. As suggested, a literature program for children should include a wide variety of high-quality literature, both old and new. Unfortunately, as a result of various legislative mandates that vie for classroom time, children may not have enough opportunities to read literature in school.

Accessibility in the home is also important for developing interest in books. In a review of studies of children who read early and who do voluntary reading, Lesley Mandel Morrow (1991) discusses environments that foster children's early interest in books. She concludes that the environments must have a large supply of accessible books, plus parents who read to children regularly and who are responsive to their children's questions about books. In addition, these parents must serve as models by reading a great deal themselves. In a panel discussion on the importance of reading during the summer, educators interviewed by Eden Ross Lipson (2001) stressed the value of reading for pleasure during this time because children gain a love for reading and also return to school as better readers.

Technology Resources

The Children's Literature Web Guide is an excellent site that includes award lists, conference information, and links to sources for parents, teachers, storytellers, writers, and illustrators. If you visit only one site concerning children's literature, this should be it. Link to it from the Companion Website at www.prenhall.com/norton

A survey by Susan Swanton (1984) showed that gifted students owned more books and used public libraries more than did other students. Fifty-five percent of the gifted students whom Swanton surveyed identified the public library as their major source of reading materials, as opposed to only 33% of the other students, most of whom identified the school library as their major source for books. Thirty-five percent of the gifted children owned more than 100 books. Only 19% of other students owned an equal number of books. Swanton made the following recommendations for cooperation between public libraries and schools:

1. Promote students' participation in summer reading programs that are sponsored by public libraries.
2. Inform parents about the value of reading aloud to children, of giving children their own books, and of parents as role models for developing readers.
3. Encourage school librarians to do book talks designed to entice children into reading.
4. Provide field trips to public libraries.
5. Advertise public library programs and services.
6. Make obtaining the first library card a special event.

These recommendations have not changed. Nilsen and Donelson (2001) stress many of the same activities to promote reading by young adults, especially the need to match books with readers, provide book talks, make displays to promote books, and develop programs to interest readers.

Readability

Readability is another major consideration in choosing literature for children: A book must conform to a child's reading level in order for the child to read independently. Children become frustrated when books contain too many words that they don't know. A child is able to read independently when he or she can pronounce about 98–100% of the words in a book and answer 90–100% of the comprehension questions asked about it. Reading abilities in any one age group or grade level range widely, so adults working with children must provide and be familiar with an equally wide range of literature. Many children have reading levels lower than their interest levels. Thus, they need many opportunities to listen to and otherwise interact with, fine literature.

Books listed in the bibliographies at the end of the chapters in this book are identified by grade level and readability, although a book will not be applicable to every child in the grade indicated.

Interest and Reader Response

Interests also are extremely important when developing literature programs. Margaret Early (1992/1993) states, “Decades of experience have shown that children are more likely to develop as thoughtful readers when they are pursuing content that interests them” (p. 307). You can learn about children’s interests from studies of children’s interests and from interest inventories. You should consider information gained from each source.

Dianne Monson and Sam Sebesta (1991) reviewed the research on children’s interests and reading preferences. They conclude, “The results of a good number of studies reveal agreement of types of subject matter that appeal to students of a particular age level and support the notion that interests change with age” (p. 667). However, although research on reader interest can provide some general ideas about what subjects and authors that children of certain ages, sexes, and reading abilities prefer, it is important not to develop stereotyped views about children’s preferences. Without asking questions about interests, there is no way to learn, for example, that a fourth-grade boy is a Shakespeare buff, because research into children’s interests does not indicate that a fourth grader should like Shakespeare’s plays. Or consider a first-grade girl whose favorite subject is dinosaurs, which she can identify by name: Discovering this would be impossible without an interview, because research does not indicate that first-grade girls are interested in factual, scientific subjects. These two cases point to the need to discover children’s interests before helping them select books. Informal conversation is one of the simplest ways to uncover children’s interests: Ask a child to describe what he or she likes to do and read about. Usually, you should record the information when working with a number of children.

Reading Interests of Young Adults

Young adult literature refers to the books that have the widest appeal to older adolescents. These books are usually of interest to students from junior high through high school; the ages are usually from 12 to 18. Alleen Pace Nilsen and Kenneth Donelson (2001) provide the following characteristics of young adult literature that also match young adults’ reading interests: (1) The literature is written from the viewpoint of young people; (2) the main characters frequently overcome problems without the help of their parents; (3) the story lines are fast paced; (4) the literature includes a variety of genres and subjects; (5) many different ethnic and cultural groups are represented in the literature; (6) the books are usually opti-

mistic, and the characters make worthy accomplishments; and (7) the books deal with emotions and problems that are important to young adults.

A study of Canadian Adolescent Boys and Literacy (O’Donnell, 2005) identified several common themes that are of interest to boys and keep them reading: personal interest, action, and success. Notice how these themes are related to many of the characteristics just listed. The authors of the study recommend that teachers use these themes to interest boys in their reading.

Other studies of favorite books identified by young people suggest the range of genres and subject matter that older readers select. For example, an interesting reading promotion and survey of best-loved books was conducted in the United Kingdom by the BBC. This large survey received almost a million votes and resulted in the identification of 200 top books selected by voters. The following books are the top 10 titles listed in order of their popularity (*Reading Today*, February/March 2004):

1. J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*
2. Jane Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*
3. Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*
4. Douglas Adams’s *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*
5. J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*
6. Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*
7. A. A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh*
8. George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*
9. C. S. Lewis’s *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*
10. Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*

A number of these books are discussed in the various genre chapters of this textbook. The books also indicate that the selection criteria associated with conflict, plot, characterization, setting, theme, point of view, and author’s style are just as important when selecting and evaluating books for young adults as they are when selecting literature for younger readers. The range of books also suggests that it is important to select books that match the interests of the readers.

The Child as Critic

Children are the ultimate critics of what they read, and you should consider their preferences when evaluating and selecting books to share with them. For the last few years, a joint project of the International Reading Association and the Children’s Book Council has allowed approximately 10,000 children from around the United States to evaluate children’s books published during a given year. Each year, their reactions are recorded, and a research team uses this information to compile a list called “Children’s Choices” in the following categories: beginning independent reading, younger children, middle grades, older readers, informational books,

ISSUE *The Content of Children's Books: Pleasure Versus the Message*

"Read This, It's Good for You" is the title of a critical evaluation of books. Children's author Natalie Babbitt¹ discusses books that have messages about instructing children in the values of reading. She asks, "What's the use of writing a story for children about the value of reading when it will be read only by those children who are already readers?" (p. 23). She argues that in many books, there is no story. Instead, there is a message about the way life is supposed to be. In place of books whose main purpose is delivering a message, Babbitt wants children to learn to love reading by reading books such as *Millions of Cats*, *Make Way for Ducklings*, and *Where the Wild Things Are*.

Babbitt concludes, "Good stories are always a pleasure to read, and we like pleasure, regardless of our ages. The risk with message books, and message attitudes, is that children's

books will get classed with broccoli and end up shoved under the mashed potatoes of television" (p. 24).

Author John Neufeld² provides a contrasting view for evaluating books in an article titled "Preaching to the Unconverted." He states, "I have often been criticized for being didactic. Sometimes that criticism has been warranted. At other times, I have felt that reviewers were unable to distinguish between information offered—valuable information for young people—and what they perceive as a Message. . . . I may direct a reader's attention to, or help focus it on, an idea or problem, but I can only induce readers to decide whether that story applies to their lives" (p. 36).

Neufeld believes that the stories that last are the ones that encourage readers to think

about what they would do in similar circumstances. Neufeld concludes, "Stories about young people, for young people, are feasts authors serve their youthful readers. I like to think that some of what we offer sticks to their bones" (p. 36).

As you read and evaluate children's literature, consider the impact of the content to bring pleasure and increase joy in reading versus the importance of the message. Which is more important, pleasure or message? Which type of book do you remember from your own childhood? What was the impact of the book on you?

¹Babbitt, Natalie, (1997, May 18). Read this, it's good for you. *The New York Times Book Review*, 23–24.

²Neufeld, John. (1996, July). Preaching to the unconverted. *School Library Journal*, 42, 36.

and poetry. This very useful annotated bibliography is published each year in the October issue of *The Reading Teacher*, and it can be obtained from the Children's Book Council, 67 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003.

A summary of children's reading choices by Christine Hall and Martin Coles (1999) provides an interesting list for discussion. They conclude:

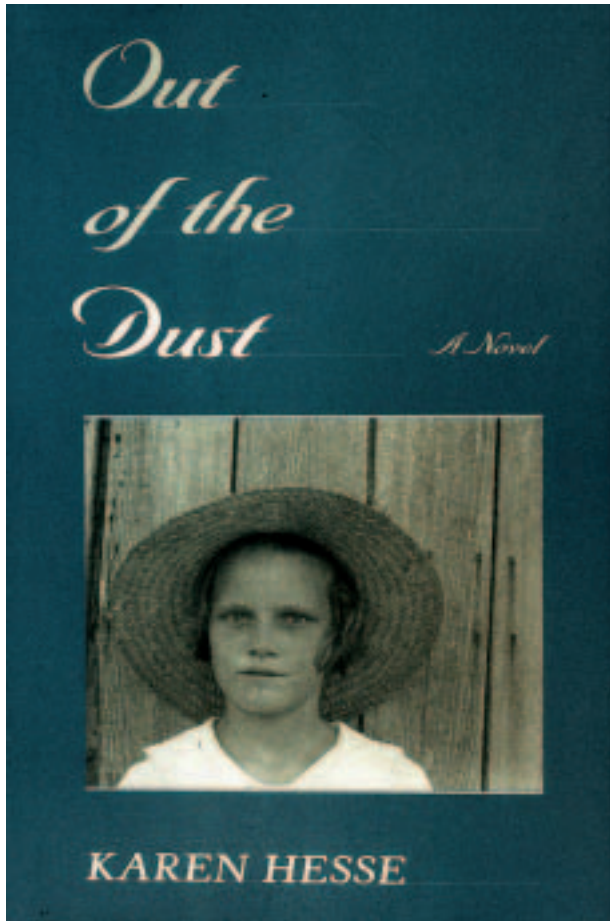
1. Children read fewer books as they grow older.
2. In the Children's Reading Choices Survey, the average number of books read in the month prior to the survey was 2.52.
3. Children at ages 10, 12, and 14 are eclectic in their reading habits.
4. Strongly plotted adventure stories are popular at all ages.
5. Ten-year-olds choose to read poetry, but interest in poetry declines with age.
6. Most children respond positively when asked their views about reading.
7. Younger children spend more of their leisure time reading than do older children.

Children choose books from a wide variety of genres. Some are on lists of highly recommended children's books; others are not. Many educators and authorities on children's literature are concerned about the quality of books that children read. To improve their ability to make valid judgments about literature, children must experience good books and investigate and discuss the elements that make books memorable. Young children usually just enjoy and talk about books, but older ones can start to evaluate what they do and do not like about literature.

Ted Hipple and Amy B. Maupin (2001) discuss the importance of encouraging students to find the artistry in the details of a novel. They state, "It is a good teaching tactic to ask students to find selections—passages, individual sentences, even single words—they like. When enough students have responded positively to something, that something, even a required novel, may suddenly take on a new significance: peers like it, too" (p. 41). In addition, they recommend that students read Lois Lowry's *The Giver*, Karen Hesse's *Out of the Dust*, and Louis Sachar's *Holes* and compare and contrast the measures of quality in the books using plots, characters, themes, artistry in details, and emotional impact. These books are excellent choices because they have been identified as popular with readers as well as winners of the Newbery award.

One sixth-grade teacher encouraged her students to make literary judgments and to develop a list of criteria for selecting good literature (Norton, 1993); the motivation for this literature study began when the students wondered what favorite books their parents might have read when they were in the same grade. To answer this question, the children interviewed their parents and other adults, asking them which books and characters were their favorites. The children listed the books, characters, and number of people who recommended each book on a large chart.

Each student then read a book that a parent or another respected adult had enjoyed. (Many adults also reread these books.) Following their reading, the children discussed the book with the adult, considering what made or did not make the book memorable for them. At this time, the teacher introduced the concepts of plot, characterization, setting, theme and style. The children searched the books that they had read for examples of



The 1998 Newbery winner, Karen Hesse’s *Out of the Dust*, is the story of 14-year-old Billie Jo’s pain, forgiveness, and growth after the accidental death of her mother in Depression-era Oklahoma. (*Out of the Dust*, by Karen Hesse. Copyright © 1997. New York, Scholastic Press. Reprinted by permission of Scholastic, Inc.)

each element. Finally, they listed questions to ask themselves when evaluating a book; see the Evaluation Criteria at the beginning of the chapter.

A review of 14 questions shows how closely they correspond to the criteria that should be used in evaluating plot, characterization, setting, theme, and style.

There are numerous lists of “Best Books” that can be used to motivate students to read, critically evaluate, and select their own lists of best books. For example, Rick Margolis (2004) asked well-known authors of children’s literature to select current books that they believe will be classics in future years; Chart 3.2 lists his findings. Ask students to read some of those books and discuss how they would rate them. Students also can develop their own lists of books and discuss why they chose them.

Another listing of books that makes interesting sources for students to discuss and evaluate is the “Off the Cuff” awards, in which children’s booksellers vote for their picks of books in various categories. This listing is usually printed in *Publishers Weekly*. For example, Chart 3.3 pre-

CHART 3.2 Best books recommended by authors

Recommending Author	Recommended Book
David Almond	Kevin Henkes’s <i>Lily’s Purple Plastic Purse</i>
Eve Bunting	Katherine Paterson’s <i>Bridge to Terabithia</i>
Susan Cooper	David Almond’s <i>Skellig</i>
Nancy Farmer	Peggy Rathmann’s <i>The Day the Babies Crawled Away</i>
Paul Fleischman	William Steig’s <i>Abel’s Island</i>
Karen Hesse	Richard Mosher’s <i>Zazoo</i>
Polly Horvath	Remembers it was a story about a candy store.
Patrice Kindi	Nancy Farmer’s <i>The Ear, the Eye and the Arm</i>
E. L. Konigsburg	Judith Viorst’s <i>The Tenth Good Thing About Barney</i>
Leonard Marcus	Don Brown’s <i>Uncommon Traveler</i>
Marilyn Singer	Patrice Kindle’s <i>Owl in Love</i>
Peter Sis	William Steig’s <i>Doctor De Soto</i>
Ruth White	Lois Lowry’s <i>The Giver</i>
Virginia Euwer Wolff	Brian Pinkney’s <i>Max Found Two Sticks</i>

CHART 3.3 Examples from the cuffie awards

Award	Title
Picture Book	Sarah Stewart’s <i>The Friend</i>
Novel	Gennifer Choldenko’s <i>Al Capone Does My Shirts</i>
	Melina Marchetta’s <i>Saving Francesca</i>
Vote to Win Newbery	Nancy Farmer’s <i>The Sea of Trolls</i>
Vote to Win Caldecott	Sarah Stewart’s <i>The Friend</i>
Most Memorable Character	Katherine Hannigan’s <i>Ida B . . . and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World</i>
Funniest Book	Jon Scieszka’s <i>Science Verse</i>
Best Nonfiction	Phillip Hoose’s <i>The Race to Save the Lord God Bird</i>
Best Anthology	Helen Ward’s <i>Unwitting Wisdom: An Anthology of Aesop’s Fables</i>

sents a few of those listed for “The 2004 Cuffies,” from the January 10, 2005 issue. (These books are all discussed in the various genre chapters in this text.)

When children are encouraged to share, discuss, and evaluate books and are given opportunities to do so, they are able to expand their reading enjoyment and to select worthwhile stories and characters. Sharing and discussion can take place in the library, in the classroom, or at home.

Teaching With Literary Elements



Whether developing a literature program, developing literature-based reading instruction, or sharing literature on a one-to-one basis, remember the dual roles of literature: providing enjoyment and developing understanding. If you want children

to respond to, love, and appreciate literature, provide them with a varied selection of fine literature and give them many opportunities to read, listen to, share, discuss, and respond to literature.

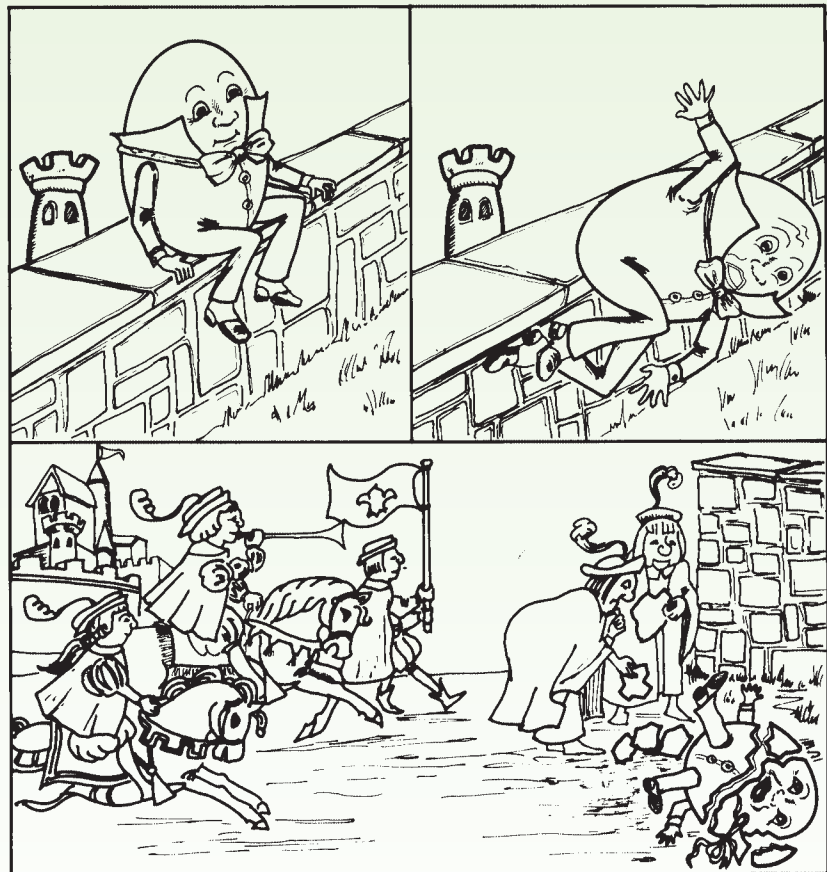
Involving Children in Plot

Creative drama interpretations based on story texts help children expand their imaginations, stimulate their feelings, enhance their language, and clarify their concepts. Through the playmaking process, children discover that plot provides a framework, that there is a beginning in which the conflict is introduced, a middle that moves the action toward a climax, and an end with a resolution to the conflict.

Nursery rhymes are excellent for introducing both younger and older children to the concept that a story has several parts—a beginning, a middle, and an end. The simple plots in many nursery rhymes make them ideal for this purpose. For example, “Humpty Dumpty” contains three definite actions that cannot be interchanged and still retain a logical sequence: (1) a beginning—“Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,” (2) a middle—“Humpty Dumpty had a great fall,” and (3) an end—“All the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t put Humpty Dumpty together again.” Children can listen to the rhyme, identify the actions, discuss the reasons for the order, and finally act out each part. Encourage them to extend their part by adding dialogue or characters to the beginning, middle, or ending incident. Other nursery rhymes illustrating sequential plots include “Jack and Jill,” “Pat-a-Cake, Pat-a-Cake, Baker’s Man,” and “Rock-a-Bye Baby.”

After children understand the importance of plot structure in nursery rhymes, proceed to folktales, such as “Three Billy Goats Gruff,” in which there also is a definite and logical sequence of events. Divide the children according to the beginning incidents, middle incidents, and ending incidents. After each group practices its part, put the groups together into a logical whole. To help children learn the importance of order, have them rearrange the incidents: They will discover that if the ending incidents are acted out first, the story is over and there is no rising action or increasing conflict.

Diagramming plot structures is another activity that helps children appreciate and understand that many stories follow a structure in which the characters and the problems are introduced at the beginning of the story, the conflict increases until a climax or turning point is reached, and then the conflict ends. Have children listen to or read stories and then discuss and identify the



The rhyme “Humpty Dumpty” contains three definite actions that cannot be interchanged and still retain a logical sequence. (From Humpty Dumpty.)

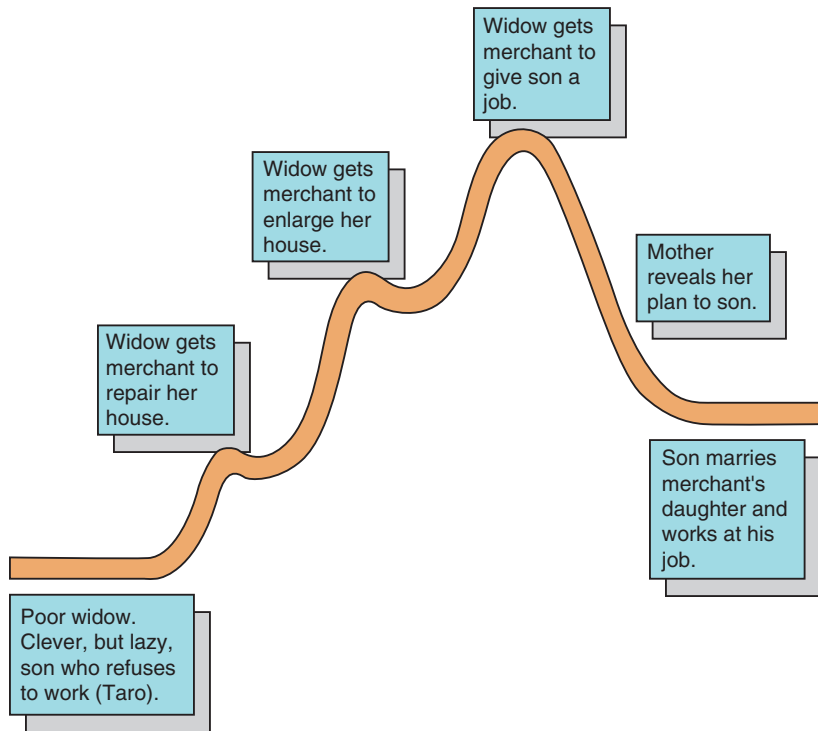


FIGURE 3.1 Plot diagram for Dianne Snyder's *The Boy of the Three-Year Nap*

important incidents. For example, the important incidents in Dianne Snyder's *The Boy of the Three-Year Nap* are placed on the plot diagram in Figure 3.1.

Stories in which the conflict results because characters must overcome problems within themselves can also be placed on plot diagrams. Caron Lee Cohen (1985) identifies four major components in the development of person-against-self conflicts: (1) problem, (2) struggle, (3) self-realization, and (4) achievement of peace or truth. Literature selections such as Marion Dane Bauer's *On My Honor*, in which the author develops struggles within the main characters, are good for this type of discussion and plot diagramming. In this plot structure, identify (1) the problem and the characters, (2) the incidents that reflect increasing struggle with self, (3) the point of self-realization, and (4) the point at which the main character attains peace or truth. Because person-against-self conflicts are frequently complex, lead students in identifying significant incidents and ask them to provide support for these major struggles.

For example, in *On My Honor*, the problem results for Bauer's character Joel because he betrays his parents' trust and swims with his friend in a treacherous river. The struggle continues as Joel feels increasing guilt, tries not to accept his friend's disappearance and probable death, and blames his father for allowing the two boys to go on a bike ride in the first place. Self-realization begins when Joel admits that Tony drowned and realizes that his father is not the cause of his problem: "But even as he slammed

through the door and ran up the stairs to his room, he knew. It wasn't his father he hated. It wasn't his father at all. He was the one. . . . Tony died because of him" (p. 81).

Peace and truth begin, although the seriousness of the problem does not allow complete resolution. After Joel sobbingly tells his father the whole truth, he feels "tired, exhausted, but tinglingly aware" (p. 89). Even though there cannot be a total resolution of the conflict, because Joel's father cannot give him the reassurance he desires or take away his pain, Joel forgives his father and asks him to stay in the room until he (Joel) falls asleep.

Students can compare Bauer's person-against-self conflict with that in Paula Fox's *One-Eyed Cat* (see Chapter 9). Additional person-against-self conflicts for older students include Cynthia Rylant's *A Fine White Dust*, a traumatic story in which a 13-year-old boy becomes involved with an unscrupulous traveling evangelist and struggles to understand his own beliefs, Karen Hesse's

Out of the Dust, a story in which the protagonist blames herself and her father for her mother's accidental death, and Audrey Coulombis's *Getting Near to Baby*, in which the protagonist must overcome her grief and gain insights into the healing process following the death of the baby in the family.

Although many of the books with person-against-self conflicts are written for older students, several books can be used with younger students. For example, Arthur Yorinks's *Hey, Al* is a picture storybook in which Al and his dog, Eddie, overcome dissatisfaction and decide that "Paradise lost is sometimes Heaven found" (p. 27, unnumbered). Evaline Ness's *Sam, Bangs & Moonshine* is a picture storybook in which the main character faces the consequences of her lies.

Involving Children in Characterization

Authors of books with notable characters develop three-dimensional personalities that allow readers to gain insights into those characters' strengths, weaknesses, pasts, hopes, and fears. You can help students understand how authors develop characters by discussing books in which the authors use several characterization techniques. You can also help students understand the often complex nature of inferencing about characters by modeling activities in which you analyze evidence from the text and speculate about the characters.

Characterization Techniques

Have students search for examples in which an author reveals a character through such techniques as narration, thoughts, actions, and dialogue. Have them list examples in which each of these techniques is used and identify what each example reveals. Have the students summarize what they know about a specific character and discuss whether the characterization is flat or rounded.

A group of students led by Diana Vrooman (1989) used this approach to identify and discuss the characterization of Sarah in Patricia MacLachlan's *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. First, Vrooman introduced the story and reviewed the techniques that authors may use to develop characters. Second, she listed on the board the techniques that MacLachlan uses to reveal Sarah's character in *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. Third she read the first chapter aloud and asked students to identify the examples in the chapter and to stipulate what they learned about Sarah from those examples. Fourth, she asked the students to complete the search for other examples of Sarah's characterization in the remaining chapters. Finally, she asked the students to summarize Sarah's characterization and to defend whether they believed that Sarah was a rounded character. Chart 3.4 shows a few of the characterizations and proofs for Sarah.

The students concluded that Sarah was a fully developed, three-dimensional character. In addition, they discovered the techniques that authors use to develop such well-rounded characters. The same book can be used to analyze the characterization of the young boy, Caleb, or the young girl, Anna.

Modeling Inferencing

Some of MacLachlan's characterizations in *Sarah, Plain and Tall* are stated, but others are implied. Students frequently need much assistance in analyzing implied characterizations. Researchers such as Laura Roehler and

Gerald Duffy (1984) and Christine Gordon (1985) have developed modeling approaches that place an adult in an active role with students and that show the adult's thought processing to the students. Modeling is one of the most effective ways to improve comprehension (Dole, Duffy, Roehler, & Pearson, 1991) and to help students understand characterization (Norton, 1992). The following activity demonstrates the modeling process with Patricia MacLachlan's *Sarah, Plain and Tall*.

Requirements for Effective Reasoning. Effective inferencing requires readers to go beyond the information that an author provides in a text. Readers must use clues from the text to hypothesize about a character's emotions, beliefs, actions, hopes, and fears. They must also be aware that authors develop characters through narration, a character's thoughts or the thoughts of others about the character the character's actions, and the dialogue between the characters.

An Introduction to Inferencing. Review characterization by asking students to identify how authors develop three-dimensional, believable characters; share examples of each technique of characterization as part of this review. Also explain that students will listen as you ask a question, answer the question, provide evidence from the story that supports the answer, and share the reasoning process you used to reach the answer. Explain that after students have listened to you proceed through the sequence, they will use the same process to answer questions, identify evidence, and explore their own reasoning processes. As part of this introduction, discuss the meanings of *evidence* and *reasoning*. Encourage the students to identify evidence about a character in the literature and to share how to use this evidence.

The Importance of Inferencing. Ask students to explain why it is important to be able to make inferences

CHART 3.4 Revealing characterization in Patricia MacLachlan's *Sarah, Plain and Tall*

Author's Technique	Characterization	Evidence
Narration	Plain and tall	"She was plain and tall." (p. 19)
	Loved by animals	"The dogs loved Sarah first." (p. 22)
	Loved animals	"The sheep made Sarah smile. . . . She talked to them." (p. 28)
	Intelligent	"Sarah was quick to learn." (p. 52)
Thoughts about the character	Loved the sea	Anna thought: "Sarah loved the sea, I could tell." (p. 12)
	Homesick	Anna thought: "Sarah was not smiling. Sarah was already lonely." (p. 20)
The character's actions	Adventurous	Sarah answers an advertisement asking for a wife. (p. 9)
	Sense of humor	When Sarah finished describing seals, she barked like one. (p. 27)
	Hardworking	Sarah learned how to plow the fields. (p. 33)
Dialogue	Strong	"I am strong and I work hard." (p. 9)
	Independent	Papa tells Sarah that the cat will be good in the barn. Sarah tells Papa that the cat will be good in the house. (p. 19)
	Confident	"I am fast and I am good." (p. 46)

about characters. Encourage them to discuss how inferring characterizations makes a story more exciting, enjoyable, and believable.

An Introduction to the Story. There are two important settings in *Sarah, Plain and Tall*: (1) the pioneer setting in one of the prairie states and (2) the pioneer setting in Maine. To identify students' understandings of these locations and time periods, ask them to pretend that they are sitting on the front porch of a cabin in one of the prairie states in the 1800s, to look away from the cabin, and to describe what they see; make sure that they describe prairie grass, wheat fields, few trees, a dirt road, and flat or gently rolling land. Ask them to tell which colors they see. Then ask them to turn around and describe what they see through the open door of the cabin; make sure that they describe a small space, a fireplace, and characteristic furnishings, such as wooden chairs and a wooden table.

The Maine setting is also important to this story because Sarah's conflict results from love of a very different setting. Ask the students to pretend that they are sitting on the coast of Maine, to look out at the ocean, and to describe what they see. Next, have them turn toward the land and describe the setting. Discuss with students the differences between the prairie and the Maine coast and consider whether the differences in these settings could cause conflicts for a character.

The First Modeling Example. Read orally from the beginning of the book through the line, "That was the worst thing about Caleb," on page 5. Ask, "What was Anna's attitude toward her brother, Caleb, when he was a baby?" Answer, "Anna disliked her brother a great deal. We might even say she hated him." Provide the evidence. Say, "Anna thinks that Caleb is homely, plain, and horrid smelling. She associates Caleb with her mother's death." Provide the reasoning you used to reach the answer. For example, "The words Anna uses, especially *horrid*, are often associated with things that we do not like. I know from the reference to the happy home that Anna loved her mother. When she says that her mother's death was the worst thing about Caleb, I believe that she blamed him for the death."

The Second Modeling Example. At this point, verify that the students understand the procedure. If they do not, continue by completely modeling another example. If the students understand the process, let them join the discussion by providing an answer, the evidence, and the reasoning. It is advisable to have the students jot down brief answers to the questions, evidence, and reasoning; these notes will increase the quality of the discussion that follows each question.

The next logical discussion point occurs at the bottom of page 5. Read through the line, "And Papa didn't sing." Ask students the question, "What is Anna really telling us about her inner feelings?" They should provide

answers similar to this one: "She believes that nothing can replace her lost mother and that the home will not be happy again." Ask the students to provide evidence, such as, "The author tells us that the relatives could not fill the house. The days are compared to long, dark, winter days. The author states that Papa did not sing." Next, ask them to provide reasoning, such as, "The author created a very sad mood. We see a house filled with relatives that do not matter to Anna. I know what long, dark, winter days are like. I can visualize a house without singing. I think Anna is very unhappy, and it may take her a long time to get over her loss."

Continue this process, having the students discuss the many instances of implied characterization in the book. The letters Sarah writes to Mr. Wheaton (p. 9), to Anna (pp. 9–10), and to Caleb (p. 11) are especially good for inferring about the characters because students need to infer what was in the letters written by Anna and Caleb. To help the students infer the contents of those letters, ask them to write the letters themselves.

Longer stories, such as *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, lend themselves to discussions according to chapters. Students can read and discuss several chapters each day. After each session, however, ask the students to summarize what they know about Sarah, Anna, Caleb, and Papa. Ask them, "What do you want to know about these characters?"



Involving Children in Setting

Believable settings place readers in geographic locations and time periods that they can see, hear, and even feel. In literature, authors use settings for four purposes: (1) creating appropriate moods, (2) developing antagonists, (3) developing historical and geographical backgrounds, and (4) suggesting symbolic interpretations.

Settings That Create Moods

Authors use settings to create moods. Through word choices and the visual pictures the words product, authors create moods that range from humorous and happy to frightening and foreboding. Asking students to tell their reactions to words and illustrations and comparing words and illustrations in a text help them understand and evaluate the appropriateness of a mood. For example, students can respond to the frightening, eerie mood created by Marcia Brown's illustrations for Blaise Cendrars's poem *Shadow* and examine the influence in it of words, such as *prowler*, and descriptions, such as "teeming like snakes." When a house sits precariously under a wave, as in Shelley Jackson's *The Old Woman and the Wave*, readers can respond to the frightening mood or the more symbolic fear of the unknown.

Teachers can use illustrated texts, such as Karen Ackerman's *Song and Dance Man*, to show students very dif-

ferent moods. Stephen Gammell's illustrations create a warm, happy mood as children watch their beloved grandfather recreate the joyful days of his youth. The transition from a common, dreary, crowded attic to an uncommon experience is enhanced by the artist's drawing of a brightly colored, shadowy shape.

Additional literature selections that develop warm, happy moods through both illustrations and text are Cynthia Rylant's *When I Was Young in the Mountains*. Kate Banks's *And If the Moon Could Talk*. Margaret Wild's *Our Granny*, and Alexandra Day's *Frank and Ernest Play Ball*. Funny, even absurd, moods are created in both the text and illustrations of Doreen Cronin's *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type*, Simms Taback's *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly*, Patricia Polacco's *Meteor*. Susan Meddaugh's *Martha Speaks*. Kevin Henkes's *Owen*, and Angela Johnson's *Julius*.

Authors of fantasy frequently prepare their readers for the fantastical experiences to come by creating settings and moods in which fantasy seems possible. Sharing and discussing introductions to fantasies allow students to appreciate and understand the techniques that authors use to prepare them for both fantasy and conflict. For example, read and discuss the following introduction to Natalie Babbitt's *Tuck Everlasting*:

The road that led to Treegap had been trod out long before by a herd of cows who were, to say the least, relaxed. It wandered along in curves and easy angles, swayed off and up in a pleasant tangent to the top of a small hill, ambled down again between fringes of bee-hung clover, and then cut sidewise across a meadow. Here its edges blurred. It widened and seemed to pause, suggesting tranquil bovine picnics: slow chewing and thoughtful contemplation of the infinite. And then it went on again and came at last to the wood. But on reaching the shadows of the first trees, it veered sharply, swung out in a wide arc as if, for the first time, it had reason to think where it was going, and passed around.

On the other side of the wood, the sense of easiness dissolved. The road no longer belonged to the cows. It became, instead, and rather abruptly, the property of people. And all at once the sun was uncomfortably hot, the dust oppressive, and the meager grass along its edges somewhat ragged and forlorn. On the left stood the first house, a square and solid cottage with a touch-me-not appearance, surrounded by grass cut painfully to the quick and enclosed by a capable iron fence some four feet high which clearly said, "Move on—we don't want you here." So the road went humbly by and made its way, past cottages more and more frequent but less and less forbidding, into the village. But the village doesn't matter, except for the jailhouse and the gallows. The first house only is important; the first house, the road, and the wood. (pp. 5–6)

After you read this introduction, to enhance personal response, have the students consider the effect of the contrasts Babbitt used, the influence of personification, and the impact of wording such as "tranquil bovine picnics," "veered sharply," "touch-me-not," and "grass cut painfully to the quick." Have the students speculate about the changing mood in the introduction and the type of story

that might follow. Of course, have them read the story to verify their predictions.

Settings That Develop Antagonists

Authors of both historical fiction and contemporary adventure stories frequently develop plots in which nature or society is the antagonist. Vivid descriptions of either nature or society are essential if readers are to understand why and how the setting has created conflicts or even life-and-death perils.

Sharing and discussing quotations will help students identify, respond to, and appreciate vivid descriptions. Kevin Crossley-Holland's *Storm* is written for young readers. The author, however, vividly describes a frightening storm and a girl who fears the storm and faces her fears of a ghostly creature who supposedly roams the English marshlands. Crossley-Holland uses personification and metaphor to develop believable settings. For example, he says that the storm "whistled between its salty lips and gnashed its sharp teeth" (p. 14) and "gave a shriek" (p. 27). Other elements in nature respond: The moon "seemed to be speeding behind grey lumpy clouds, running away from something that was chasing it" (p. 23). The young girl responds in ways that suggest fear: "Annie felt a cold finger slowly moving from the base of her spine up to her neck and then spread out across her shoulders" (p. 12), and she swayed in the saddle as she "thought she could bear it no longer—the furious gallop, the gallop of the storm, the storm of her own fears" (p. 35). By the end of the story, Annie has faced her fears of both the storm and the ghost.

It is more difficult for students to understand the setting if society, and not nature, causes the conflict because they must understand both the larger societal attitudes and the reasons that the characters are in conflict with those attitudes. Thematic studies that allow students to read from several genres are usually best for developing understanding about complex subjects, such as anti-Semitism or slavery. In thematic studies, students can use nonfictional sources to authenticate the settings in historical fiction. For example, a series of books about the Holocaust might include nonfiction, biography, historical fiction, and even time-warp fantasy. Beginning with Barbara Rogasky's nonfictional *Smoke and Ashes: The Story of the Holocaust*, students can discover the historical background of the time period, the roots of anti-Semitism, the development of ghettos and concentration camps, and the tragic consequences. Have the students read Milton Meltzer's nonfictional *Rescue: The Story of How Gentiles Saved Jews in the Holocaust* to provide historical background about heroic people who risked their own lives to save other people, and Michael Leapman's *Witnesses to War: Eight True-Life Stories of Nazi Persecution*. Next, have the students read Albert Marrin's biographical text, *Hitler*. Pages 17–20 are especially revealing: In them, Marrin

discusses the roots of Hitler's anti-Semitism and his developing hatred. For example:

Once Adolph began to hate, it became harder and harder to stop hating. From the age of nineteen, his hatred deepened, grew stronger, until it passed the bounds of sanity. He had only to hear Jews mentioned, to see them or think he saw them, to lose self-control. . . . One day, he vowed, he'd get even with them. They'd pay, every last one of them, for the humiliation they'd caused him. (p. 20)

Have the students read Uri Orlev's historical fiction, *The Island on Bird Street* and *The Man From the Other Side*, Lois Lowry's historical fiction about the Danish resistance, *Number the Stars*, and Jane Yolen's time-warp story, *The Devil's Arithmetic*. Then have the students use the background information from the first three books to evaluate the authenticity of the settings that cause so much conflict in the fictional books.

Settings That Develop Historical and Geographical Backgrounds

Settings in historical fiction and biography should be so integral to the story and so carefully developed that readers can imagine the sights, sounds, and even smells of the environment. For example, have groups of students choose one of the settings developed in Elizabeth George Speare's *The Sign of the Beaver*, such as the log cabin, the wilderness, or the Penobscot village. Lead them to discover as much information as possible about the sights, sounds, and even tastes associated with that environment, and have them identify and analyze quotations that describe the setting.

Students enjoy creating maps and illustrations depicting well-defined settings. Have students use details from historical fiction or fantasy to draw maps, homes, or other settings. Carefully crafted fantasy worlds provide evidence for map locations and show the importance of settings in creating believable worlds. For example, after students read J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, ask them to draw maps of Middle Earth. C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* includes detailed information about Narnia. Likewise, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* provides descriptions of Wonderland.

After students have read literature with well-developed settings, divide the class into groups and ask each group to draw a map so that visitors to the land would be able to travel through it. Ask the students to defend their map locations by providing evidence from the literature. After the maps are completed, ask each group to share its map with the larger group and to defend why it placed landmarks in specific places.

Two sources provide interesting stimulation for these drawing tasks. Alberto Manguel and Gianni Guadalupi's *The Dictionary of Imaginary Places* (2000) includes maps and descriptions of numerous fantasy worlds. Rosalind Ashe and Lisa Tuttle's *Children's Literary Houses: Famous Dwellings in Children's Fiction* (1984) includes interpreta-

tions of the homes found in Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden*, T. H. White's *The Sword in the Stone*, Esther Forbes's *Johnny Tremain*, and Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women*.

Settings That Are Symbolic

The easiest symbolic setting for students to understand is probably the once-upon-a-time setting found in folktales; readers know that "once upon a time" means much more than long ago. When they close their eyes, they often visualize deep woods or majestic castles, where enchantment, magic, and heroic adventures are expected. Folktale settings are excellent introductions to symbolic settings.

Authors of other types of literature also use symbolic settings to develop understanding of plots, characters, and themes. Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* is one of the best literature selections for showing symbolic settings. Students can trace parallel changes that take place in the garden and in the people living in Misselthwaite Manor. For example, the story begins in a cold, dreary mansion surrounded by gardens that are dormant from winter. The characters are equally unresponsive. Mary is "the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen. . . . She had a little thin face and a little thin body, thin light hair and a sour expression" (p. 1). Colin is an unpleasant invalid, Mr. Craven is still in mourning for his dead wife, and Colin and his father are estranged. However, the setting and the people begin to change after Mary finds the door to the secret garden. Finding the key to the garden is the symbolic turning point, after which the characters and the garden are slowly nurtured back to both physical and emotional health.

As students trace the parallel changes in the garden and in the people, they can ask themselves the following questions: Why does the author focus attention on a garden that has been locked and mostly uncared for for 10 years? What is the significance of a key that opens a door? How do the people change, and what happens to the garden? Why does the author draw parallels between nurturing a garden and healing people both physically and emotionally? Does the garden meet Perrine's requirements for symbolism in literature? Is the garden a good symbolic setting for both characterization and plot development? Why or why not?

Students also can explore the symbolism of gardens in Philippa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden* and other books.



Involving Children in Theme

Students need many opportunities to read and discuss literature in order to identify controlling ideas or central concepts in stories. Themes are difficult because they frequently are implied rather than directly stated. Students learn about themes, however, by studying the actions of characters, analyzing the central conflict, and considering the outcome of a story.

When looking for theme, it is important to consider how the main character changes in the story, what conflicts are found in the story, what actions are rewarded or punished, and what the main character has learned as a result. Even the title may provide clues to the theme.

The following sequence of events develops an understanding of theme in Ann Grifalconi's *Darkness and the Butterfly*. First, explain to the students that theme is the controlling idea or central concept in a story. Themes often reveal important beliefs about life, and a story may contain more than one theme. When searching for theme, ask, "What is the author trying to tell us that would make a difference in our lives?" Review some of the ways in which authors reveal themes, such as through conflict, the characters' actions, the characters' thoughts, the outcome of the story, the actions that are rewarded or punished, and narrative. In addition, the title and illustrations may provide clues.

Next, read *Darkness and the Butterfly* aloud. Ask the students, "What is the author trying to tell us that would make a difference in our lives?" They will probably identify two important themes: (1) It is all right to have fears—we all may have fears that cause us problems—and (2) we can and must overcome our fears.

After the students have identified the themes, read them the story a second time. This time, have them search for proof that the author is developing these themes. Their discussion and evidence probably will include some of the following examples:

1. It is all right to have fears; we all may have fears that cause us problems.
 - a. The illustrations show contrasts between the beauty of the world in the day, which is without fear, and the monsters that surface in Osa's mind at night.
 - b. The actions of the mother show that she is understanding. She even gives beads to help Osa feel less fearful.
 - c. The actions of Osa show that she is a normal child during the day but a fearful child at night.
 - d. The wise woman tells Osa that she was once afraid, "specially at night!"
2. We can and must overcome our fears.
 - a. The author tells the story of the yellow butterfly, the smallest of the small, as it flies into the darkness.
 - b. The butterfly story is based on an important African proverb, "Darkness pursues the butterfly."
 - c. The wise woman tells Osa. "You will find your own way."
 - d. The wise woman compares finding your way to the wings of the butterfly.
 - e. The dream sequence reveals the beauties of the night.
 - f. The actions of the butterfly show that it is not afraid.
 - g. Osa reveals her self-realization: "I can go by myself. I'm not afraid anymore."
 - h. The author states that Osa, the smallest of the small, "found the way to carry her own light through the darkness."
 - i. The butterfly symbolizes that the smallest, most fragile being in nature can light up the darkness, trust the night, and not be afraid.
 - j. The title of the book is *Darkness and the Butterfly*.

Folktales, with their easily identifiable conflicts and characterizations, are excellent for developing understanding of theme. For example, when searching for themes in John Steptoe's *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*, students discover that greed and selfishness are harmful and that kindness and generosity are beneficial.



Involving Children in Style

Many of the discussions and activities related to plot, characterization, setting, and theme emphasize an author's style. By selecting words that create visual images and arranging the words to create moods or to increase tension, authors show the power of carefully chosen words and sentence structures. When reading carefully crafted stories, you may not even notice the techniques that authors use. When you read aloud a carefully crafted story and one that is not so well developed, however, the differences become obvious. This section looks at developing students' appreciation for personification through narrative stories and for pleasing style.

Personification

Many of the most enjoyable books read to and by younger children develop characterizations through personification. This is probably so believable because children tend to give human characteristics to their pets and toys. Personification is an excellent introduction to style for younger children because the texts that include personification of objects and animals often are reinforced through illustrations that also personify the subjects.

Virginia Lee Burton's *The Little House* provides an enjoyable introduction to personification. As you read aloud appropriate pages, ask students: What pronoun is used when the author talks about the house? What actions can the house do that are similar to your actions? What feelings does the house express that are similar to your feelings? What causes the house to have each of these feelings? When have you had similar feelings? How do the illustrations help you understand the house's feelings and

character? After the students have discussed the answers to these questions, share with them that the author is giving the house human feelings and behaviors through both the text and the illustrations.

Extend this understanding of personification in *The Little House* by asking the students to use pantomime or creative drama to act out the feelings expressed in the book. For example, have them listen to the text being read and pantomime the feelings expressed by the house. Have them create conversations that might occur between the house and her country or city neighbors. Have them tell the story from the point of view of one of the other objects found in the story.

Use similar discussions with books in which toys are personified, such as Anthony Browne's *Gorilla* and Margery Williams's *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Books in which animals are personified include Alexandra Day's *Frank and Ernest on the Road*, Diana Engel's *Josephina Hates Her Name*, and Lillian Hoban's *Arthur's Great Big Valentine*.

Pleasing Style

Jette Morache (1987) recommends having older students collect and share quotations from literature that they find pleasing or that support other literary elements, such as characterization, setting, and theme. Morache recommends having students work in groups to find quotes that illustrate a certain technique, to compare and discuss the quotes chosen by their group and other groups, to compile a page of quotes that they find particularly appealing, and to develop a list of qualities that make a "quotable quote." This type of activity is appropriate for developing appreciation for any of the literary elements discussed in this chapter. Have students find quotes to support characterization, setting, and theme.

Quotes also can emphasize specific literary techniques, such as personification, symbolism, simile, or metaphor. Older students might read Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's "Hiawatha" and Jamake Highwater's *Anpao; An American Indian Odyssey* to find examples of personification in nature. Jan Hudson's *Sweetgrass* is filled with symbolism, similes, and metaphors. Cynthia Voigt's *Dacey's Song* has many references to music, a sailboat, and a tree as symbols.

Students can also search books to find introductory paragraphs in which the author's style heightens their interest and makes them want to know more about the character and the story. For example, Tomie dePaola provides a vivid setting through words and references to known literature in *26 Fairmount Avenue*.

Webbing the Literary Elements

Webbing is an excellent way to help children understand important characteristics of a story (Norton, 1992). Webbing also helps students increase their appreciation of literature and improve their reading

and writing competencies. In addition, webbing helps students understand the interrelationships among the literary elements. Prior to the webbing experience, introduce the literary elements of setting characterization, conflicts (plot), and themes by including many of the activities previously discussed in this chapter. To introduce the idea of webbing literary elements, first read and discuss folktales with the children. Then, draw simple webs with the title of the book in the center and the elements of setting, characterization, conflicts, and themes on spokes that extend from the center. Lead discussions that help students identify the important characteristics being placed on the web.

Figure 3.2 is a complex web for Karen Cushman's *Catherine, Called Birdy*, a historical fiction novel set in medieval England. Notice on the web that the story takes place in an English manor. It also has strong characterizations, conflicts, and themes. An interesting comparison can be made by also webbing Cushman's *The Midwife's Apprentice*, a tale set in the same time period but with a heroine from the lowest level of society.

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

For more suggested activities for evaluating and selecting children's literature, visit the Companion Website at www.prehall.com/norton

- Find examples of person-against-person, person-against-society, person-against-nature, and person-against-self conflicts in children's literature. Do some books develop more than one type of conflict? What makes the conflict believable? Share these examples with your class.
- Read one of Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little House" books. Do you agree with the child who said that she would like the character Laura for her best friend? How has the author developed Laura into a believable character? Give examples of techniques that Wilder uses to reveal Laura's nature.
- The following five authors or illustrators from the United States have won the Hans Christian Andersen Award: Virginia Hamilton, Paula Fox, Meindert DeJong, Maurice Sendak, and Scott O'Dell. Pretend that you are a member of the worldwide committee. What qualities encourage you to select books of these authors and illustrators?
- Compare the top teachers' choices and the top children's choices ("Going Places," *Reading Today*, 2001). The top adult choices: E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, Chris Van Allsburg's *The Polar Express*, Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham*, Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are*. Robert N. Munsch's *Love You Forever*, Shel Silverstein's *The Giving Tree*, Eric Carle's *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, Wilson Rawls's *Where the Red Fern Grows*, and Jan Brett's *The Mitten*. The top children's choices include J. K. Rowling's "Harry Potter" series, R. L. Stine's "Goosebumps" series, Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham*, Dr. Seuss's *The Cat in the Hat*, Marc Brown's "Arthur" series, E. B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, Phyllis Reynold Naylor's "Shiloh" trilogy, Gary Paulsen's *Hatchet*, Louis Sachar's *Holes*, and Lois Lowry's *The Giver*.

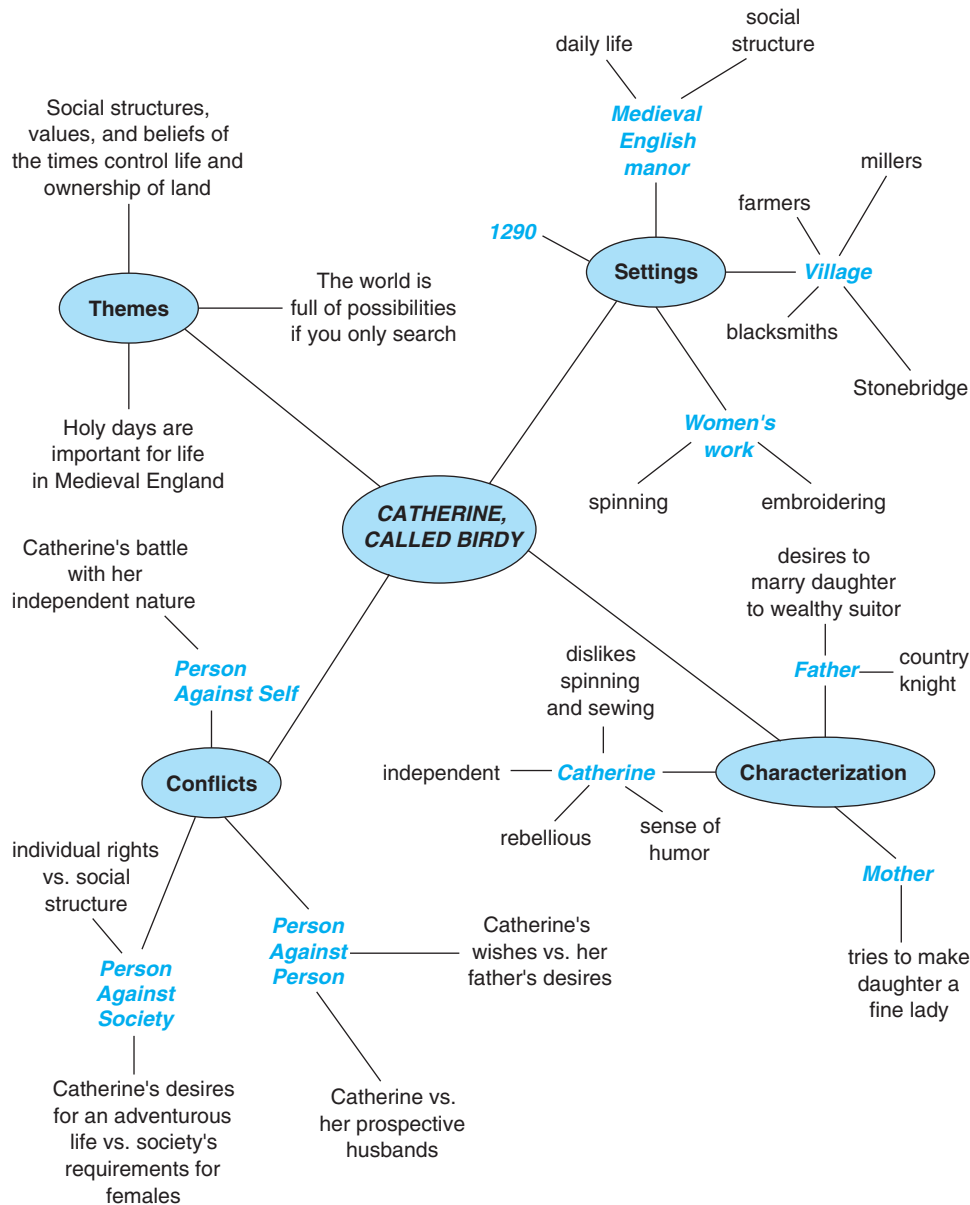


FIGURE 3.2 Web of Catherine, Called Birdy.

Source: Donna E. Norton's *The Effective Teaching of Language Arts*, 6th edition. Merrill, 2004.

Children's Literature

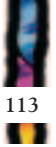
For full descriptions, including plot summaries and award winner notations, of these and other titles for enhancing children's understanding of literary elements, please visit the CD-ROM that accompanies this book.



- Aardema, Verna. *Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain: A Nandi Tale*. Illustrated by Beatriz Vidal. Dial, 1981 (I:5–8 R:6).
 _____. *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears*. Illustrated by Leo Diane Dillon. Dial, 1975 (I:5–9 R:6).
 Ackerman, Karen. *Song and Dance Man*. Illustrated by Stephen Gammell. Knopf, 1988 (I:3–8 R:4).

- Alcott, Louisa May. *Little Women*. Little, Brown, 1868 (I:10+ R:7).
 Alexander, Lloyd. *The Arkadians*. Dutton, 1995 (I:10+ R:6).
 Almond, David. *The Fire-Eaters*. Delacorte, 2003 (I:12–YA R:7).
 Avi. *Nothing but the Truth: A Documentary Novel*. Orchard, 1991 (I:12+).
 _____. *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle*. Orchard, 1990 (I:10+ R:6).
 Babbitt, Natalie. *Tuck Everlasting*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1975 (I:8–12 R:6).
 Banks, Kate. *And If the Moon Could Talk*. Illustrated by Georg Hallensleben. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1998 (I:3–6 R:4).
 Barrett, Tracy. *Anna of Byzantium*. Delacorte, 1999 (I:10+ R:5).
 Barton, Byron. *I Want to Be an Astronaut*. Crowell, 1988 (I:2–6).

- Bat-Ami, Miriam. *Two Suns in the Sky*. Front Street, 1999 (I:12+ R:6).
- Bauer, Joan. *Hope Was Here*. Putnam, 2000 (I:10+ R:5).
- Bauer, Marion Dane. *On My Honor*. Clarion, 1986 (I:10+ R:4).
- Bemelmans, Ludwig. *Madeline*. Viking, 1939, 1977 (I:4–9 R:5).
- Ben-Ezer, Ehud. *Hosni the Dreamer*. Illustrated by Uri Shulevitz. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1997 (I:5–9 R:5).
- Benjamin, Carol Lea. *The Wicked Stepdog*. Crowell, 1982 (I:9–12 R:4).
- Berenzy, Alix. *A Frog Prince*. H. Holt, 1989 (I:6–10 R:6).
- Blos, Joan W. *A Gathering of Days*. Scribner, 1979 (I:8–14 R:6).
- Blume, Judy. *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret*. Bradbury, 1970 (I:10+ R:6).
- _____. *Blubber*. Bradbury, 1974 (I:10+ R:4).
- Bober, Natalie. *Countdown to Independence: A Revolution of Ideas in England and Her American Colonies: 1760–1776*. Simon & Schuster, 2001 (I:12+ R:6).
- Brooks, Bruce. *The Moves Make the Man*. Harper & Row, 1984 (I:10+ R:7).
- _____. *What Hearts*. HarperCollins, 1992 (I:10I R:6).
- Brown, Margaret Wise. *Goodnight Moon*. Illustrated by Clement Hurd. Harper, 1947 (I:2–7).
- Browne, Anthony. *Gorilla*. Watts, 1983 (I:3–8 R:4).
- Bunting, Eve. *The Wednesday Surprise*. Illustrated by Donald Carrick. Clarion, 1989 (I:3–9 R:5).
- Burnett, Frances Hodgson. *The Secret Garden*. Illustrated by Tasha Tudor. Lippincott, 1911, 1938, 1962 (I:8–12 R:7).
- Burton, Virginia Lee. *The Little House*. Houghton Mifflin, 1942 (I:3–7 R:3).
- Cadnum, Michael. *In a Dark Wood*. Orchard, 1998 (I:10+ R:6).
- Carrick, Carol. *Stay Away From Simon!* Illustrated by Donald Carrick. Clarion, 1985 (I:7–10 R:3).
- Carroll, Lewis. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Illustrated by John Tenniel. Macmillan, 1866; Knopf, 1984 (I:8+ R:6).
- Cendrars, Blaise. *Shadow*. Illustrated by Marcia Brown. Scribner, 1982 (I:all).
- Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Retold by Barbara Cohen. Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1988 (I:8+ R:5).
- Chipman, Liz. *From the Lighthouse*. Dutton, 2004 (I:12–YA R:6).
- Chotjewitz, David. *Daniel Half Human and the Good Nazi*. Translated by Doris Orgel. Atheneum, 2005 (I:12–YA R:7).
- Cleary, Beverly. *The Mouse and the Motorcycle*. Illustrated by Louis Darling. Morrow, 1965 (I:7–11 R:3).
- _____. *Ramana and Her Father*. Illustrated by Alan Tiegreen. Morrow, 1977 (I:7–12 R:6).
- _____. *Ramana Quimby, Age 8*. Illustrated by Alan Tiegreen. Morrow, 1981 (I:7–12 R:6).
- Cole, Brock. *The Goats*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1987 (I:8+ R:5).
- Cooper, Helen. *Pumpkin Soup*. Doubleday, 1999 (I:3–8).
- Cormier, Robert. *The Chocolate War*. Laureleaf, 1999.
- Coulombis, Audrey. *Getting Near to Baby*. Putnam, 1999 (I:10+ R:4).
- Creech, Sharon. *Heartbeat*. HarperCollins, 2004 (I:10–YA).
- _____. *Walk Two Moons*. HarperCollins, 1994 (I:12+ R:6).
- _____. *The Wanderer*. HarperCollins, 2000 (I:10+ R:6).
- Cronin, Doreen. *Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type*. Illustrated by Betsy Lewin. Simon & Schuster, 2000 (I:4–7).
- Crossley-Holland, Kevin. *Storm*. Illustrated by Alan Marks. Heinemann, 1985 (I:6–12 R:5).
- Curtis, Christopher Paul. *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963*. Delacorte, 1995 (I:10+ R:6).
- Cushman, Karen. *Catherine, Called Birdy*. Clarion, 1994 (I:12+ R:9).
- _____. *The Midwife's Apprentice*. Clarion, 1995.
- _____. *Rodzina*. Houghton Mifflin, 2003 (I:8–12 R:5).
- Dabovich, Lydia. *Sleepy Bear*. Dutton, 1982 (I:3–6 R:1).
- Day, Alexandra. *Frank and Ernest Play Ball*. Scholastic, 1990 (I:5–8 R:5).
- _____. *Frank and Ernest on the Road*. Scholastic, 1994 (I:5–8 R:5).
- dePaola, Tomie. *26 Fairmount Avenue*. Putnam, 1999 (I:6+).
- DiCamillo, Kate. *The Tale of Despereaux*. Illustrated by Timothy Basil Ering. Candlewick, 2003 (I:8+ R:4).
- Dorris, Michael. *Morning Girl*. Hyperion, 1992 (I:8+ R:4).
- Edmonds, Walter D. *The Matchlock Gun*. Dodd, Mead, 1941 (I:8+ R:5).
- Engel, Diana. *Josephina Hates Her Name*. Morrow, 1989 (I:5–8 R:4).
- Farmer, Nancy. *A Girl Named Disaster*. Orchard, 1996 (I:10+ R:6).
- Fenner, Carol. *Yolonda's Genius*. McElderry, 1995 (I:10+ R:3).
- Fitzhugh, Louise. *Harriet the Spy*. Harper & Row, 1964 (I:8–12 R:3).
- Fleischman, Paul. *The Borning Room*. HarperCollins, 1991 (I:10+ R:5).
- _____. *Bull Run*. Illustrated by David Frampton. HarperCollins, 1993 (I:10+ R:5).
- _____. *Dateline: Troy*. Illustrated by Gwen Frankfeldt & Glenn Morrow. Candlewick, 1996 (I:12+ R:7).
- Fleischman, Sid. *The Midnight Horse*. Illustrated by Peter Sís. Greenwillow, 1990 (I:8–12 R:5).
- _____. *The Whipping Boy*. Illustrated by Peter Sís. Greenwillow, 1986 (I:8+ R:5).
- Forbes, Esther. *Johnny Tremain*. Illustrated by Lynd Ward. Houghton Mifflin, 1943 (I:10I R:6).
- Foreman, Michael. *War Boy: A Country Childhood*. Little, Brown, 1990 (I:all R:6).
- Fox, Paula. *Monkey Island*. Orchard, 1991 (I:10+ R:6).
- _____. *One-Eyed Cat*. Bradbury, 1984 (I:10+ R:5).
- _____. *The Slave Dancer*. Illustrated by Eros Keith. Bradbury, 1973 (I:12+ R:7).
- Frank, Anne. *Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl*. Edited by Otto H. Frank & Mirjam Pressler. Translated by Susan Massotty. Doubleday, 1995 (I:12+ R:5).
- Frank, Rudolf. *No Hero for the Kaiser*. Translated by Patricia Crampton. Illustrated by Klaus Steffens. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1986 (I:10+ R:7).
- Freedman, Russell. *Eleanor Roosevelt: A Life of Discovery*. Clarion, 1993 (I:10+ R:6).
- _____. *Lincoln: A Photobiography*. Clarion, 1987 (I:8I R:6).
- _____. *The Voice That Challenged a Nation: Marian Anderson and the Struggle for Equal Rights*. Clarion, 2004 (I:R:).
- _____. *The Wright Brothers: How They Invented the Airplane*. Holiday House, 1991 (I:8+ R:5).



- Fritz, Jean. *Bully for You, Teddy Roosevelt*. Illustrated by Mike Wimmer. Putnam, 1991 (I:8+ R:5).
- _____. *The Cabin Faced West*. Illustrated by Feodor Rojankousky. Coward, McCann, 1958 (I:7–10 R:5).
- _____. *The Great Little Madison*. Putnam, 1989 (I:10+ R:6).
- _____. *Make Way for Sam Houston*. Illustrated by Elise Primavera. Putnam, 1986 (I:9+ R:6).
- _____. *Traitor: The Case of Benedict Arnold*. Putnam, 1981 (I:8+ R:5).
- George, Jean Craighead. *Julie of the Wolves*. Illustrated by John Schoenherr. Harper & Row, 1972 (I:10–13 R:7).
- _____. *My Side of the Mountain*. Dutton, 1959 (I:10+ R:6).
- _____. *Water Sky*. Harper & Row, 1987 (I:10+ R:6).
- Gipson, Fred. *Old Yeller*. Illustrated by Carl Burger. Harper & Row, 1956 (I:10+ R:6).
- Goble, Paul. *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses*. Bradbury, 1978 (I:6–10 R:5).
- Grahame, Kenneth. *Wind in the Willows*. Illustrated by E. H. Shepard. Scribner, 1908 (I:7–12 R:7).
- Grifalconi, Ann. *Darkness and the Butterfly*. Little, Brown, 1987 (I:4–8 R:4).
- Grimes, Nikki. *Bronx Masquerade*. Dial, 2002 (I:10–YA R:5).
- Grimm, Brothers. *Rumpelstiltskin*. Retold and illustrated by Paul O. Zelinsky. Dutton, 1986 (I:all R:5).
- Hall, Bruce Edward. *Henry and the Kite Dragon*. Illustrated by William Low. Philomel, 2004 (I:5–9 R:4).
- Halperin, Wendy Anderson. *Love Is . . .*. Simon & Schuster, 2001 (I:all).
- Hamilton, Virginia. *Anthony Burns: The Defeat and Triumph of a Fugitive Slave*. Knopf, 1988 (I:9+ R:6).
- _____. *Many Thousand Gone: African Americans From Slavery to Freedom*. Illustrated by Leo & Diane Dillon. Knopf, 1993 (I:8+ R:5).
- Hannigan, Katherine. *Ida B . . . and Her Plans to Maximize Fun, Avoid Disaster, and (Possibly) Save the World*. Greenwillow, 2004 (I:8+ R:5).
- Hansen, Joyce. *I Thought My Soul Would Rise and Fly: The Diary of Patsy, A Freed Girl*. Scholastic, 1997 (I:10+ R:4).
- Harrington, Janice N. *Going North*. Illustrated by Jerone Lagarrigue. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2004 (I:8–10 R:4).
- Hastings, Selina, retold by. *Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady*. Illustrated by Juan Wijngaard. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1985 (I:9–12 R:6).
- Hautman, Pete. *Godless*. Simon & Schuster, 2004 (I:14–YA R:6).
- Henkes, Kevin. *Owen*. Greenwillow, 1993 (I:3–7 R:4).
- Hesse, Karen. *Out of the Dust*. Scholastic, 1997 (I:10+ R:6).
- _____. *Stowaway*. Simon & Schuster, 2000 (I:10+ R:6).
- Highwater, Jamake. *Anpao: An American Indian Odyssey*. Illustrated by Fritz Scholder. Lippincott, 1977 (I:12+ R:5).
- Hoban, Lillian. *Arthur's Great Big Valentine*. Harper & Row, 1989 (I:5–7 R:2).
- Howe, James. *Horace and Morris But Mostly Delores*. Illustrated by Amy Waldo. Atheneum, 1999 (I:4–8).
- Hudson, Jan. *Sweetgrass*. Tree Frog, Philomel, 1984, 1989 (I:10+ R:4).
- Hurrence, Belinda. *A Girl Called Boy*. Houghton Mifflin, 1982 (I:10+ R:6).
- Ibbotson, Eve. *Journey to the River Sea*. Dutton, 2002 (I:10+ R:5).
- Jackson, Shelley. *The Old Woman and the Wave*. DK, 1998 (I:4–7 R:4).
- Johnson, Angela. *Julius*. Illustrated by Dav Pilkey. Orchard, 1993 (I:3–7 R:4).
- _____. *Tell Me a Story, Mama*. Illustrated by David Soman. Watts, 1989 (I:3–7 R:4).
- Keats, Ezra Jack. *The Snowy Day*. Viking, 1962 (I:2–6 R:2).
- Konigsburg, E.L. *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. Atheneum, 1967 (I:9–12 R:7).
- _____. *Journey to an 800 Number*. Atheneum, 1982 (I:10+ R:6).
- _____. *The Outcasts of 19 Schuylcr Place*. Atheneum, 2004 (I:8+ R:5).
- _____. *The View From Saturday*. Atheneum, 1996 (I:10+ R:6).
- Lamb, Charles, & Mary Lamb, retold by. *Tales From Shakespeare*. Illustrated by Elizabeth Shippen Green Elliott. Crown, 1988 (I:8+).
- Lang, Andrew. *The Red Fairy Book*. Illustrated by H.J. Ford & Lancelot Speed. McGraw-Hill, 1967 (I:all R:6).
- Leapman, Michael. *Witnesses to War: Eight True-Life Stories of Nazi Persecution*. Puffin, 2000.
- L'Engle, Madeleine. *A Wrinkle in Time*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1962 (I:10+ R:5).
- Levine, Ellen. *Freedom's Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories*. Putnam, 1993 (I:all).
- Levine, Gail Carson. *Ella Enchanted*. HarperCollins, 1997 (I:10+ R:6).
- Lewis, C.S. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Illustrated by Pauline Baynes. Macmillan, 1950 (I:9+ R:7).
- Lisle, Janet Taylor. *Afternoon of the Elves*. Watts, 1989 (I:10+ R:5).
- Lobel, Arnold. *Frog and Toad Are Friends*. Harper & Row, 1970 (I:5–8 R:1).
- Lowry, Lois. *The Giver*. Houghton Mifflin, 1993 (I:10+ R:5).
- _____. *Number the Stars*. Houghton Mifflin, 1989 (I:8–12 R:5).
- Lyon, George Ella. *One Lucky Girl*. Illustrated by Irene Trivas. Dorling Kindersley, 2000 (I:6+ R:4).
- MacLachlan, Patricia. *The Facts and Fictions of Minna Pratt*. Harper & Row, 1988 (I:7–12 R:4).
- _____. *Mama One, Mama Two*. Illustrated by Ruth Lercher Bornstein. Harper & Row, 1982 (I:5–7 R:2).
- _____. *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. Harper & Row, 1985 (I:7–10 R:3).
- Marrin, Albert. *Hitler*. Viking Kestrel, 1987 (I:10+ R:7).
- Maruki, Toshi. *Hiroshima No Pika*. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1982 (I:8–12 R:4).
- McCully, Emily Arnold. *The Ballot Box Battle*. Knopf, 1996 (I:7–9 R:4).
- McKinley, Robin. *The Hero and the Crown*. Greenwillow, 1984 (I:10+ R:7).
- McKissack, Patricia C. *The Dark-Thirty: Southern Tales of the Supernatural*. Illustrated by Brain Pinkney. Knopf, 1992 (I:all R:5).
- McWhorter, Diane. *A Dream of Freedom: The Civil Rights Movement From 1954 to 1968*. Scholastic, 2004 (I: R:).
- Meddaugh, Susan. *Martha Speaks*. Houghton Mifflin, 1992 (I:4–8 R:4).

- Meltzer, Milton. *Rescue: The Story of How Gentiles Saved Jews in the Holocaust*. Harper & Row, 1988 (I:10+ R:6).
- _____. *Thomas Jefferson: The Revolutionary Aristocrat*. Watts, 1991 (I:10+ R:6).
- _____, ed. *The Black Americans: A History in Their Own Words 1619–1983*. Crowell, 1984 (I:10+).
- Merriam, Eve. *Halloween ABC*. Illustrated by Lane Smith. Macmillan, 1987 (I:all).
- Millard, Anne. *A Street Through Time: A 12,000-Year Walk Through History*. Illustrated by Steve Noon. DK, 1998 (I:all).
- Milne, A. A. *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard. Dutton, 1926, 1954 (I:6–10 R:5).
- Morpurgo, Michael. *Kensuke's Kingdom*. Illustrated by Michael Foreman. Mammoth, 2000 (I:8+ R:5).
- _____. *Private Peaceful*. Scholastic, 2003 (I:12–YA R:6).
- Mowat, Farley. *Lost in the Barrens*. Illustrated by Charles Geer. McClelland & Stewart, 1956, 1984 (I:9+ R:6).
- Murphy, Jim. *An American Plague: The True and Terrifying Story of the Yellow Fever Epidemic of 1793*. Clarion, 2004 (I:12+ R:6).
- Myers, Walter Dean. *Now Is Your Time The African-American Struggle for Freedom*. HarperCollins, 1991 (I:10+ R:6).
- Naylor, Phyllis Reynolds. *Shiloh*. Atheneum, 1991 (I:8+ R:5).
- Nelson, Marilyn. *Carver: A Life in Poems*. Front Street, 2001 (I:12–YA R:8).
- Ness, Evaline. *Sam, Bangs & Moonshine*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1966 (I:5–9 R:3).
- North, Sterling. *Rascal*. Dutton, 1963 (I:10+ R:6).
- Noyes, Alfred. *The Highwayman*. Illustrated by Charles Keeping. Oxford, 1981 (I:10+).
- O'Brien, Robert C. *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*. Illustrated by Zena Bernstein. Atheneum, 1971 (I:8–12 R:4).
- O'Dell, Scott. *Island of the Blue Dolphins*. Houghton Mifflin, 1960 (I:10+ R:6).
- Orlev, Uri. *The Island on Bird Street*. Translated by Hillel Halkin. Houghton Mifflin, 1984 (I:10+ R:6).
- _____. *The Man From the Other Side*. Translated by Hillel Halkin. Houghton Mifflin, 1991 (I:10+ R:6).
- Park, Linda Sue. *Project Mulberry*. Clarion, 2005 (I:9–YA R:5).
- Paterson, Katherine. *Bridge to Terabithia*. Illustrated by Donna Diamond. Crowell, 1977 (I:10–14 R:6).
- _____. *Jacob Have I Loved*. Crowell, 1980 (I:10 R:6).
- Paulsen, Gary. *Hatchet*. Bradbury, 1987 (I:10+ R:6).
- _____. *Nightjohn*. Delacorte, 1993 (I:12+ R:6).
- Pearce, Philippa. *Tom's Midnight Garden*. Illustrated by Susan Einzig. Lippincott, 1958 (I:8+ R:6).
- Peck, Richard. *A Long Way From Chicago*. Dial, 1998 (I:10+ R:5).
- _____. *A Year Down Yonder*. Dial, 2000 (I:10+ R:5).
- Plenkowski, Jan. *Haunted House*. Dutton, 1979 (I:all).
- Polacco, Patricia. *Appelmando's Dreams*. Philomel, 1991 (I:6–9 R:5).
- _____. *Meteor!* Dodd, Mead, 1987 (I:6–10 R:7).
- Potter, Beatrix. *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. Warne, 1902 (I:2–7 R:5).
- Pullman, Philip. *The Amber Spyglass*. Knopf, 2000 (I:10+ R:7).
- _____. *The Golden Compass*. Knopf, 1996 (I:10+ R:7).
- _____. *The Subtle Knife*. Knopf, 1997 (I:10+ R:7).
- Quintana, Anton. *The Baboon King*. Translated by John Nieuwenhuizen. Walker, 1999 (I:10+ R:5).
- Raskin, Ellen. *The Westing Game*. Dutton, 1978 (I:10–14 R:5).
- Rathmann, Peggy. *Ruby the Copycat*. Scholastic, 1991 (I:5–8 R:3).
- Rodowsky, Colby. *Sydney Herself*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1989 (I:11+ R:6).
- Rogasky, Barbara. *Smoke and Ashes: The Story of the Holocaust*. Holiday House, 1988 (I:10+ R:6).
- Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*. Scholastic, 2000 (I:all).
- Rylant, Cynthia. *Appalachia: The Voices of Sleeping Birds*. Illustrated by Barry Moser. Harcourt Brace, 1991 (I:all R:5).
- _____. *A Fine White Dust*. Bradbury, 1986 (I:10+ R:6).
- _____. *The Islander*. DK, 1998 (I:10+ R:6).
- _____. *Missing May*. Orchard, 1992 (I:10+ R:6).
- _____. *When I Was Young in the Mountains*. Illustrated by Diane Goode. Dutton, 1982 (I:4–7 R:3).
- Sachar, Louis. *Holes*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1998 (I:10+ R:5).
- Salisbury, Graham. *Under the Blood-Red Sun*. Doubleday, 1995 (I:10+ R:5).
- San Souci, Robert D. *Cendrillon . . . A Caribbean Cinderella*. Illustrated by Brian Pinkney. Simon & Schuster, 1998 (I:all).
- Schanzer, Rosalyn. *George vs. George: The American Revolution as Seen From Both Sides*. National Geographic, 2004 (I:8+ R:5).
- Schmidt, Gary D. *Lizzie Bright and the Buckminster Boy*. Clarion, 2004 (I:10–YA R:6).
- Scieszka, Jon. *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*. Illustrated by Lane Smith. Viking, 1992 (I:all R:4).
- Seeber, Dorothea P. *A Pup Just for Me: A Boy Just for Me*. Illustrated by Ed Young. Philomel, 2000 (I:6+).
- Sendak, Maurice. *Where the Wild Things Are*. Harper & Row, 1963 (I:4–8 R:6).
- Seredy, Kate. *The White Stog*. Viking, 1937; Puffin, 1979 (I:10–14 R:7).
- Seuss, Dr. *The Cat in the Hat*. Random House, 1957 (I:4–7 R:1).
- Shulevitz, Uri. *The Travels of Benjamin of Tudela: Through Three Continents in the Twelfth Century*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005 (I:10–YA R:6).
- Snyder, Dianne. *The Boy of the Three-Year Nap*. Illustrated by Allen Say. Houghton Mifflin, 1988 (I:4–9 R:4).
- Speare, Elizabeth George. *The Sign of the Beaver*. Houghton Mifflin, 1983 (I:8–12 R:5).
- _____. *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*. Houghton Mifflin, 1958 (I:9–14 R:4).
- Sperry, Armstrong. *Call It Courage*. Macmillan, 1940 (I:9–13 R:6).
- Spinelli, Jerry. *Wringer*. HarperCollins, 1997 (I:9+ R:4).
- Staples, Suzanne Fisher. *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996 (I:12+ R:6).
- _____. *Shiva's Fire*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2000 (I:10+).
- Stephens, John. *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters: An African Tale*. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1987 (I:all R:4).
- Stolz, Joëlle. *The Shadows of Ghadames*. Delacorte, 2004 (I:10–YA R:6).
- Stolz, Mary. *Cezanne Pinto: A Memoir*. Knopf, 1994 (I:10+ R:6).
- Strachan, Ian. *Flowed Glass*. Little, Brown, 1990 (I:10+ R:6).
- Taback, Simms. *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly*. Viking, 1997 (I:all).
- Taylor, Mildred D. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. Dial, 1976 (I:10+ R:6).

- Taylor, Theodore. *The Cay*. Doubleday, 1969 (l:8–12 R:6).
- Thomas, Dylan. *A Child's Christmas in Wales*. Illustrated by Chris Raschka. Candlewick, 2004 (l:all).
- Tolkien, J. R. R. *The Hobbit*. Houghton Mifflin, 1938 (l:9–12 R:6).
- Trivizas, Eugene. *The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig*. Illustrated by Helen Oxenbury. Macmillan, 1993 (l:4–8 R:5).
- Turner; Megan Whalen. *The Thief*. Greenwillow, 1996 (l:11 + R:6).
- Voigt, Cynthia. *Bad Girls*. Scholastic, 1996 (l:9+ R:7).
- _____. *Dacey's Song*. Atheneum, 1982 (l:10+ R:5).
- Vos, Ida. *Hide and Seek*. Translated by Terese Edelstein & Inez Smidt. Houghton Mifflin, 1991 (l:8–12 R:5).
- Wells, Rosemary. *Max's Chocolate Chicken*. Dial, 1989 (l:2–6).
- Whelan, Gloria. *Homeless Bird*. HarperCollins, 2000 (l:10+ R:5).
- White, E. B. *Charlotte's Web*. Illustrated by Garth Williams. Harper & Row, 1952 (l:7–11 R:3).
- _____. *Trumpet of the Swan*. Puffin, 1970 (l:7–11 R:5).
- White, Ruth. *Belle Proter's Boy*. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996 (l:10+ R:6).
- White, T.H. *The Sword in the Stone*. Collins, 1938 (l:10+ R:7).
- Wild, Margaret. *Our Granny*. Illustrated by Julie Vivas. Ticknor & Fields, 1994 (l:3–6 R:5).
- Wilder, Laura Ingalls. *Little House in the Big Woods*. Harper & Row, 1932 (l:8–12 R:6).
- Williams, Margery. *The Velveteen Rabbit*. Illustrated by William Nicholson. Doubleday, 1958 (l:6–9 R:5).
- Williams, Vera B. *Stringbean's Trip to the Shining Sea*. Illustrated by Vera B. Williams & Jennifer Williams. Greenwillow, 1988 (l:5–10).
- Wood, Douglas. *What Dads Can't Do*. Illustrated by Doug Cushman. Simon & Schuster, 2000 (l:3–8).
- Yolen, Jane. *The Devil's Arithmetic*. Viking Kestrel, 1988 (l:8 + R:5).
- Yorinks, Arthur. *Hey, Al*. Illustrated by Richard Egielski. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986 (l:all).

