Annotated Bibliography of Minority Images
In Children’s Literature
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Latino Children’s Books


Pablo is a young boy from Oaxaca, Mexico, who prepares for the Day of the Dead with his family. For three days, beginning on October 31, the family prepares the altars and special foods to welcome the spirits of their departed loved ones who will visit briefly during the celebration. This book would be an excellent addition for an interdisciplinary study involving social studies, language arts, Spanish, and art. The photographs by the author capture the excitement and beauty of the fiesta. Ages 4-8.


George Ancona chronicles Tío Rico’s craft of piñata making with vibrant photographs accompanied by informative text. As he creates first a swan and then a traditional star piñata, the reader is lead through the process step by step. At the end of the book, the author shares the hint that the reader can make piñatas using a cardboard box rather than the usual clay pot; the photographs and the text are explicit enough that they could be used as instructions for the amateur piñata maker. The text appears in both English and Spanish on each page. This is another book that would be an excellent addition for an interdisciplinary study involving social studies, language arts, Spanish, and art. Ages 4-8.


This powerful picture book about the Los Angeles riots presents the events through the eyes of a young boy who is watching the action with his mother from the window of his apartment. It captures the fear and the apprehension of the boy, while at the same time providing a cinematographic description of the evening. The narration is told in first person, making the horror personal, especially when his cat disappears after the apartment building is evacuated due to a fire. The illustrations by David Díaz are reminiscent of the later Mexican muralists, framed on each page by a dark black line, and resting on a collage of everyday items. The colors are deep and vibrant, providing a foil for the emotion- and action-packed book. Ages 4-8.


When José and his mother return home from a Christmas visit with Grandmother, they find their village deserted. A neighbor advises them to go, telling them that the soldiers came, and everyone left to escape the gunfire. José feels empty, just as he did when his father was taken away to prison. He and his mother manage to sneak over the border,
getting to the city where they were given permission to be in the United States. Through José’s eyes, the reader feels the fear of being a refugee in a strange country where the customs are so different and the language so alien. José and his mother adapt to their new life. José’s transition is complete when he receives a dog for his birthday in his new home. The warmth of Luis Garay’s paintings and text present a moving story of his experiences in leaving Nicaragua. Ages 4-8.


Diane González Bertrand has captured the spirit of a Latino family that has become assimilated into American culture but yet retains a strong sense of its heritage as she describes the family reunion of the González-Bertand clan in Texas. At first, Daniel is hesitant about meeting all the relatives he has never seen before. After he meets his blonde-haired cousin Brian, he finds they share the same interests. The family names include MacRae as well as Martinez; the foods include apple pies as well as arroz con frijoles. This book breaks the stereotypes, choosing to emphasize the celebration of a family rooted in Hispanic traditions but yet open to the culture around it. The text is bilingual, with the Spanish version on top and the English on the bottom. The soft watercolors of Pauline Rodriguez Howard illustrate the unity and love that bind this big family together. Ages 4-8.


In this charming book about the Tarascan Indians in Mexico, Antonio Hernández Madrigal tell the story of Erandi whose seventh birthday will be tomorrow. She is excited to learn that she is getting a dress for her birthday, but she is also surprised because she knows there is no money. When Máma finds a hole in the fishing net, Erandi fears that a birthday present will not be possible. The hair buyers are in the village of Pátzcuaro, and when Erandi’s mother leads her to the village square, Erandi knows that her mother is going to try and sell her hair for the hair buyers to use for wigs, eyelashes and braids. However, Mamá’s hair is not long enough, so Erandi volunteers her hair. Since her hair is so long and beautiful, Mamá gets enough money to buy a new net and a doll for Erandi’s birthday in addition to the dress Mamá had already promised. The beautiful illustrations by Tomie dePaola enhance this story based on the hair buyers who used to visit Michoacan in the ‘40’s and ‘50’s.


Adan, growing up in New York City, thinks that vegetables grow in panel trucks until he goes to Puerto Rico for a visit with his family. He is puzzled by everyone’s constant reference to "yagua days," but his attention is diverted when he meets his huge family who come in all colors and sizes and who live in a variety of brightly colored houses. A visit to his uncle Ulise’s farm shows him that vegetables don’t grow in panel trucks, and a rainy day shows him that a yagua day is a rainy day when people can use huge yagua leaves to slide through the wet grass to the river. The black and white illustrations by Jerry Pinkney are interesting, and the frequent use of Spanish adds richness of culture to
this Reading Rainbow selection. There is a glossary of Spanish words at the back of the book. Ages 4-8.


In this poignant tale of a migrant child, Pat Mora tells a story based on the life of Tomás Rivera who became a “writer, a professor, a university administrator, and a national education leader.” Tomás travels to Iowa with his family in the summer and to Texas in the winter as they pick fruits and vegetables. His grandfather is the storyteller who encourages Tomás to visit the library so that he can find more stories to read. There Tomás meets the library lady who helps him to find exciting books to read; he often spends the day reading in the library. She even checks books out in her name so he can take them home to read to his family. The sad day that he tells her, "Adiós," she gives him a book to take with him as they make their way back to Texas. The illustrations by Raúl Colón are reminiscent of the paintings of Diego Rivera with their use of texture and their soft treatment of people. Ages 4-8.


This celebration of color and language written by Gary Paulsen and illustrated by his wife Ruth Wright Paulsen is a glorious tribute to the making and eating of tortillas. In simple alliterative language, the reader is drawn into the world of brown hands that till the fields and make the delicious tortillas. The readers should be cautioned that by the end of the book, they may have a craving for a golden tortilla wrapped around juicy beans. Ages 4-8.


As Maria helps her mother to make the special tamales for Christmas Eve, she feels very grown-up. All that could make her feel more grown-up would be to wear Mom’s diamond ring to complement the lipstick and perfume she has been permitted to wear tonight. Mom has placed the ring on the counter while she kneads the sticky masa for the tamales, and when Mom goes to answer the doorbell, Maria can’t resist the temptation to try on the ring. The ring slips into the masa, but Maria is distracted by having to go get her father to cook the tamales. Only after the family arrived does Maria realize the ring was gone. In a panic, she has her cousins help her to eat the twenty-four tamales in an attempt to find the ring which she is convinced got cooked into the tamales. After the four cousins have eaten all the tamales, Maria goes to confess when she suddenly sees the ring on her mother’s finger. The whole family is then enlisted to make the second batch of tamales. Ed Martínez’s paintings create an ambience of warmth and Christmas spirit. This book will become a favorite that has to be read every Christmas. Ages 4-8.

**African American Young Children’s Books**

Every afternoon Curtis goes to his Grandpa’s gym where he practices boxing after he does his homework. Grandpa trains boxers for the Golden Gloves, an amateur boxing tournament. Curtis hopes to win the championship, but Grandpa tells him that he needs to learn to stay cool rather than losing his temper. E.B. Lewis’ watercolors show the close relationship between a boy and his grandfather. Ages 4-8.


This gentle story of the special relationship that exists between a small boy and his grandfather is perfect for slowing down the pace of a hectic world. Living in a world inhabited by people who are always in a hurry, the oldest and youngest members of this African American family take pleasure in each other’s company, taking time to enjoy the small pleasures of life. The details are sparse in Ormerod’s watercolors, and the child sometimes appears sad or angry in situations where his expression seems incongruous, but otherwise, the illustrations are lovely and nostalgic.


*Hoops* is a series of short, explosive word bursts that express the excitement and speed of playing basketball. The alliterative language cries out to be read aloud, to be spewed forth like buckshot on a backboard. The language is so evocative that by the end of the book, the reader is prone to sigh in exhaustion from the pace and exhilaration of the fast-paced game. The soft strong pastels by Caldecott Honor artist Stephen T. Johnson vary from framed glimpses of specific moments or players to full-page action that literally moves right off the page. Ages 4-8.


*The Piano Man* moves through a nostalgic history of the author’s grandfather as he played the piano for silent movies, medicine shows, vaudeville and Broadway. The story is grounded in a true story, so the mention of her grandfather’s relationships with Jelly Roll Morton, Scott Joplin, and Ziegfield is fascinating. It is also the story of the author’s close relationship with her grandfather; using first person adds to the personal nature of the narrative. The pastels by Eric Velásquez are soft and evocative, creating a sympathetic look into the past of an African American musician.


This early book by Lucille Clifton, winner of the Coretta Scott King Award, NCTE Teacher’s Choice, and Reading Rainbow feature for *Everett Anderson’s Good-bye*, is a charmingly simple tale of a young boy’s fears as he faces a move. His sister Janice allays his fears, poignantly reassuring him that his teacher will love him for who he is. The
collage-style illustrations by Stephanie Douglas are lively and bright, reinforcing the simplicity of the story. Age 4-8.


A small girl accompanies her grandfather into the African bush in search of honey. Jamina plays hunter and wanders off from her grandfather. She realizes that she is alone and lost, but she finds a baby elephant whose mother has just been shot. She leads him through the bush, realizing that he cannot survive without his mother unless someone cares for him. Eventually he is reunited with the herd, and Jamina’s mother finds her and takes her home. She knows that she will never be a hunter. The dramatic illustrations by the author create a mood of mystery and a sense of the bush. Ages 4-8.


Tyree is a young African American boy who wants to stay in his special hiding place under the chair in the living room. His father has been away for a month, and he wants to wait for him and surprise him when he first comes in the front door. His mother finally convinces him to sit in the chair, and the addition of a pillow and a blanket entice him to go to sleep. He awakens when his father comes to carry him to bed. The gouache and pastels of artist Jan Spivey Gilchrist will delight both the young child having a good-night story, and the adult reading it. Ages 4-8.


Every Sunday afternoon, Susan and Sarah go to visit Aunt Flossie who lives in a big beautiful home crowded with interesting things, especially her many boxes of hats. After tea and cookies, the girls try on the hats as Aunt Flossie tells the story of each hat. The special end to every visit is a trip to get crab cakes. The jewel-tone illustrations by James Ransome create the cozy atmosphere. Ages 4-8.


After asking her mother to tell her a story, a child remembers and retells the stories that her mother has told her many times before. The stories range from reminiscences of the mother’s childhood to those of the little girl’s more recent memories of her own mother. The pastel watercolors by David Soman are evocative of feelings of nostalgia. Ages 4-8.


This African American poem sings through the days of the week, identifying a special activity for each day. As the title suggests, the most important day is Sunday, and the recreation of a family Sunday is delightful. The pastels by Tyrone Geter are impressionistic and flowing, helping to create the dream world where people still go on Sunday drives. Ages 4-8.

Written and illustrated by Ezra Jack Keats, this book tells the story of a small boy who speaks to a cat and finds himself with the cat following him wherever he goes. He pretends to be a gran’pa, and when he puts on a show for his friends, the cat spoils the performance. He realizes that the cat just liked him. Ages 4-8.


Ezra Jack Keats creates a slice of childhood memory in this Reading Rainbow Feature, helping the reader to remember the childish desire to learn to whistle. The ordinariness of childhood as presented in the life of a small boy is charming. The author is also the illustrator, so the harmony between text and pictures is perfect. Ages 4-8.


As Sarah Jean’s Uncle Jed traveled around the county cutting hair, he had a dream of opening his own barbershop. In a time of segregation and sharecropping, the thought of an African American having his own barbershop seemed unattainable, but Uncle Jed never gave up hope. When Sarah Jean became very sick and Uncle Jed used his savings, the dream seemed remote. He saved again, only to be faced with the Great Depression when he lost all his money with the collapse of the banks. When he finally opened his own shop at the age of 79, Sarah Jean realized that dreams do come true. The warm and richly detailed and colored illustrations by James Ransome won the Coretta Scott King Honor Award for Illustration. Ages 4-8.


In folktale style, this call and response poem by native Nigerian Isaac Olaleye, tells the story of young Yusif who lives in an African village. His favorite drink is palm sap, and what he doesn’t drink, he takes to the market to sell to help his parents. He manages to outwit the baboons whom he catches stealing his palm sap. The intricate cut-paper illustrations by Caldecott Medal and Caldecott Honor Award are vivid and jewel-like, adding to the excitement of the book. Ages 4-8.


This fanciful telling of the tale of Harriet Tubman’s underground railroad allows the child to give rein to the imagination, but at the same time, the actual facts are grounded in history. As Cassie and her baby brother Be Be fly through the sky, Aunt Harriet tells Cassie the story of slavery, giving her a time travel trip back to the days of slavery. Many of the horrors are shared in a folktale style, making them palatable to young readers. The illustrations are vivid, painted in the style of an appliquéd quilt. The author/illustrator is the winner of a Caldecott Honor Award and the Coretta Scott King Award for Illustration.
for her first picture book, *Tar Beach*, also a Reading Rainbow feature. It truly is a celebration of freedom. Ages 4-8.


Although this history of Rosa Parks and her contribution to the Civil Rights Movement is classified as appropriate for younger children, the style and the content both stretch the age classification to include much older children. Marcie boards a talking bus on Rosa Parks’ birthday, thereby learning the story of the courageous woman who is honored as the mother of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960’s. The illustrations by the author are detailed in their depiction of a time in history that changed the life of the African Americans living in the United States forever. Ages 4 and up.


Toto is a little boy who can never get enough to eat. When his grandmother takes him to the market so she can buy the meat and sweet potatoes for the egussi soup, Toto is so busy swiping food from all the vendors that Big Mami has trouble making her own purchases. Colin Bootman’s vibrant water colors bring the text to life, helping the reader to understand the words that are common to Cameroonian Pidgin English. Ages 4-8.

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**Asian American Young Children’s Books**


Yoshi lived in a seaside village in Japan. He loved to build everything that people needed, but one day he quit building. He wanted to build new things that he had never built before, so he listened to the waves and watched the moon seeking inspiration. Then a fan floated toward him, and when he opened it, he saw a boat with a golden sail chasing the moon. Yoshi decided the fan was magic, so he began to build the boat. He folded the fan and put it under his belt. After he finished the boat, he sent it out to sea to catch the moon. He then built a kite to reach the clouds he had seen on the fan then he released it to chase the clouds. A rainbow appeared and he opened the fan to find something to stretch across the sky like a rainbow. Following the fan, he built a bridge to span the village. The villagers fussed about the bridge because it made the sky dark, but when the tsunami came, Yoshi was able to lead them to safely over the bridge. Everything in the village was destroyed, including the magic fan. When Yoshi realized that he knew how to rebuild the village, he knew the magic lay within him. The illustrations by the author include fan-shaped cut-out pages that open to show the results of Yoshi’s work. Ages 4-8.

The author began this book one year after he returned from China with An Mei, his adopted Chinese daughter. An Mei tells the story of her birth on a train as it passed through a tunnel. She saw her birth mother’s face and the blue swan on her blouse. After a walk through the village, An Mei’s mother paints a red dot on her forehead and leaves her on the doorstep of the Wuhan orphanage. Life in the orphanage goes on until a man with a bushy black beard comes and picks up An Mei, speaking foreign words that had no shape. There followed a trip over the blue water on a plane. At the end of the journey, a woman waited, and An Mei went to her new home. An Mei grew and grew, until finally one day she called the woman Mommy and the man became Daddy. This book should be a must read for every family participating in cross-cultural adoptions. The hauntingly beautiful illustrations by Vivienne Flesher help to weave a magical spell over the reader. Ages 4-8.


Allen Say tells the story of his grandfather’s immigration to America from Japan, combining exquisite watercolors and text to capture the mood of his cross-cultural experiences. Grandfather crossed the country, experiencing every terrain from desert to farmland, meeting men of all colors, seeing city and country. He liked California best, so when he returned to Japan to marry his sweetheart, he brought her back to San Francisco. After his daughter was grown, he took her back to see his homeland and his friends. He visited his village but bought a house in the city where his daughter met and married the author’s father. His grandfather told him about California, and planned a trip to take his family there. Just then the war started, and by the end of the war, his grandparents’ house was destroyed and they returned to their village. He never saw California again, but his grandson went to see it for himself. There he married and had his own son, and he returns to Japan when his homesickness is unbearable. He says, "The funny thing is, the moment I am in one country, I am homesick for the other." This is a beautiful book that will be read over and over, as much for the lovely illustrations as for the nostalgic text. Ages 4-8.


Once again Allen Say poses the problem of the cross-cultural person who belongs in two separate cultures, but who always longs for the other side of self. The girl’s parents call her Ma-chan, short for Masako and speak to her in Japanese, but her friends call her May and speak to her in English. Every aspect of her life is a study in contrasts, whether food or dress, furniture or lifestyle. After her graduation from high school, she wanted to go to college in San Francisco, but her parents have already decided to return to Japan. The girl was sad, because everything in Japan was foreign to her. She has to go to high school again to learn Japanese, and there she was laughed at for being foreign. She has to learn the art of being a Japanese lady, under protest. Then her mother hires a matchmaker who pairs her up with a young banker whom she considers to be "charming like a catfish." Rebelliously, she leaves home after donning western clothes, and she goes to the large city of Osaka where she gets a job in a department store. She eventually became a guide for businessmen, and it was there that she met a Japanese man who also spoke English. They became good friends, and then decided to marry. The author was their first child.
This is another book that will be read and reread. Both books by Allen Say should be required reading for those examining cross-cultural families. Ages 4-8.

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**Jewish American Young Children’s Books**


With beautiful detail, Amy Hest tells the story of Jessie who lived with her grandmother in a poor village in a valley in Europe. Her parents had died when she was a baby; all that Jessie had to remember her mother was a wedding band that she kept in a tiny silver box with a tiny lace lining. Jessie studied with the rabbi, and then taught her grandmother at night. Her grandmother, in turn, taught Jessie to make lace in case she might need to earn money some day. When the rabbi chooses Jessie to use the ticket that his brother sent him before his death, Jessie finds herself on the way to America. Both Jessie and her grandmother were heartbroken by the sudden turn of events, but they accepted the rabbi’s wisdom. In New York City, Jessie finds success as a lacemaker, and she is eventually able to send money back to Grandmother. Grandmother brings Jessie her mother’s wedding ring to use in her wedding to Lou, a young man she had met on the ship three years earlier. The warmth of the detailed paintings by P.J.Lynch make this a book to be savored time and again. Ages 4-8.


When influenza strikes Marven’s family and kills his aunt, his Russian Jewish family decides to send him away from the city to the logging camp where he can stay with Papa’s friend Mr. Murray. Since he is good with numbers, Papa is sure that he can keep the books even though he is too small to wield a saw. Preparations are made for the journey; Marven’s mother cuts down clothes to make him warm clothes so he can survive the bitter northern winter. Mama and Papa calm his fears about not speak French, the language spoken in the camp, by reminding him that they only spoke Russian and Yiddish when they arrived in America. Marven makes the train trip by himself and then manages to make friends with the lumberjacks, learning some French as he does so. Finally the long winter is over, and Marven returns home to Duluth where he finds his family safe and healthy. This book is a charming retelling of the true story of the author’s father who was sent away to a logging camp in 1918 to escape the great flu epidemic that ran rampant in the cities. The illustrations by Kevin Hawkes add to the quiet coziness of a winter spent in a snowy logging camp. Ages 4-8.


It is spring time which means time for Passover in the Pinsky family. Miriam and her brother Elijah always help with the preparations for the Seder. Elijah’s special duty is to polish Elijah’s cup, a responsibility that the undertakes with pride at having been named
for the great prophet. This year, however, Mama has a box wrapped in gold for Miriam. Before Miriam can open the box, however, Mama tells her the story of Miriam, the prophet for whom she was named. This is a beautiful and fresh retelling of the story of Miriam and Moses and their part in the Passover story. When Miriam Pinsky unwraps the gold paper from the box that her mother hands her to find Miriam’s cup, she hopes that the prophet will cup to sip water at their table every year in commemoration of the prophet’s bravery during a difficult time. Bob Dacey’s paintings bring the story to life. Ages 4-8.


In this beautifully crafted book, Patricia Polacco links an elderly Jewish woman with a small African American boy, creating a combination that is at once warm and human. Larnell goes with his mother to visit Mrs. Katz whose husband recently died. Realizing that Mrs. Katz is lost without her Myron, Larnell presents her with a kitten produced by a stray cat in the building. She agrees to take the kitten only if Larnell will help her with its care. Mrs. Katz is overcome by loneliness at the thought of spending Hannukah and Passover alone, so it comes as no surprise that by the end of the story, she and Larnell love each other to the point that Mrs. Katz will lovingly share her holidays with her neighbor. Larnell and Mrs. Katz discover all that they have in common, as she tells him about the discrimination that she and Mr. Katz experienced when they went to the Catskills on vacation, similar to the discrimination Larnell’s grandmother knew as an African American. The cycle of life is complete as Larnell takes his children to the cemetery to place a rock on Mrs. Katz’s tombstone, just as she had taken him as a child to place a rock on her husband’s grave, a rock of remembrance. This Reading Rainbow selection is a celebration of similarities and differences, highlighted by the detailed, delicate watercolors rendered by the author. (Ages 4-8)


Using great detail to sketch the story for those who are not familiar with the celebration of the bar mitzvah, Richard Rosenblum tells the tale of his own bar mitzvah in 1941 in New York City. He describes every aspect of the bar mitzvah, starting with the gathering of the huckleberries to make the special wine for the bar mitzvah and ending with the giant party held in his honor following the actual ceremony in the synagogue. Pen-and-ink drawings by the author add to the sense of a far away time being remembered. Ages 4-8.


Yossel Zissel was such a wise man that he wore his boots on his ears in the winter so he wouldn’t leave footprints in the snow. On Passover, he nailed the matzo balls to the plates so they wouldn’t roll off. Therefore, it was no surprise that when he inherited a fortune from his uncle in Warsaw, he would find a creative way to claim it and bring it
home. On his way to Warsaw, he made many plans for using the money, but he was not prepared for the many sacks of gold that he found. The weight of the sacks was more than he could manage to carry, so he solved the problem by trading the sacks of gold for animals. Finding that they were also heavy, he traded them for feathers, because what could be lighter? The mayor of the town happily traded all the feathers in the town for the many feathers, and once more, Yossel had the dilemma of how to get them all home. He decided to let the wind carry them home, and the sky became white with feathers as he released them into the wind. They never arrived, and Yossel had a dream that it was an omen that the townspeople should leave and populate the world like the feathers. The illustrations by the author add to the charm of this story about people who considered themselves to be the wise people of the world. Ages 4-8.


Based on the story of the author’s mother’s journey to America at the age of thirteen, this story of immigration is written in first person singular, drawing the reader into the world of Annushka and her sister Tanya as they plan to join their widowed father in America. Finally the steamship tickets arrive from Papa, and the girls are ready to start the long journey. Grandma prepares a final Sabbath supper, and then she gives each of the girls a Sabbath candlestick. They leave Russia, and after a stop in Holland, they are on the ship that will carry them to America. The realistic details of the trip sketch the loneliness and hardship that immigrants in the early part of the century suffered. After an arduous journey, the girls arrive on Ellis Island where they eventually join their father. The story is complete when Annushka and Tanya place their Sabbath candlesticks on the table to celebrate the Sabbath supper Papa has prepared for them. The detailed illustrations by Bulgarian-born Lydia Dabcovich help the reader to be a part of the journey. Ages 4-8.

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**Native American and Canadian Children’s Books**


Eva Padlyat lives in an Inuit village in northern Canada. This description of life on the tundra depicts the loneliness and isolation of the winter. For years, Eva has been walking the bottom of the seabed with her mother in search of mussels to provide food during the long winter months. This will be the first time for Eva to walk alone. When the tide is out, there will be room for her to climb under the thick ice to wander about on the seabed. Using candles for illumination, Eva uses her knife to scrape the mussels off the rocks. After her pail is full, she begins to explore, fascinated by the wonders that exist beneath the ice. When she hears the tide returning, she realizes that her candles have burned down, and she doesn’t know how to get out of the darkness that surrounds her. In her fright, she can’t find her spare candles, but at last, she finds her mussel pan and the hole in the ice. The moonlight shining through the opening assuages her fears, and she dances until her mother comes to take the mussel pan and to help her out. She says, "That was
my very first-my very last first time for walking alone on the bottom of the sea." Ages 4-8.


In the retelling of this ancient boy-hero story from the Skidi band of the Pawnee Indians of the American Plains, the author captures the ethos of a young boy who wanted a pony more than anything else in the world. In his sadness, he went to the creek where fashioned a pony from mud. While he was gone from the camp on one of his daily trips to take care of the mud pony, scouts arrived in the camp to tell the people that buffalo had been sighted in the west. The boy’s parents looked for him, but unable to find him, they left. The pony appeared to the boy in a dream, saying that she was part of Mother Earth. When he awakened, she told him to follow her so that he could one day be chief of his people. He eventually joined his people, riding into camp on the pony. He was recognized as one with special powers, and he led his people to victory against the enemy, in the process capturing more buffalo than the adults. As the years passed, the boy continued to be led by his pony, until he finally became chief. The mystical watercolors by Shonto Begay bring the story to life.

Ages 4-8.


The author put her own twist on the Missisauaga legend of the discovery of maple syrup. This year, the snows have arrived early. The children of the clearing love the snow, with the exception of one eight-year-old boy whom the some of the children call Limping Leg. The other children call him the name his mother gave him, Rides the Wind, because of the way he travels on the sled his father made for him. This winter is different; the drifts are so high that the sled dog Nimoosh can’t pull him through. The hunters can’t find meat, and the people are hungry. Unable to play with the other children, Rides the Wind went into the forest. He saw Red Squirrel licking the bark of the maple tree, so he cut into the bark and tasted the clear liquid seeping from the tree. He gathered the "sweet water" and took it back to his mother. Having been worried about him all day, she sent him to the teepee for punishment, throwing one of the buckets of clear liquid on the thin buck roasting on the fire. When people discovered the delicious flavor, the chief asked him to show them where he had obtained the sweet water. The chief recognizes the gift the young boy found, and in honor of the discovery, he renames Rides the Wind as Wise Little Raven. Scott Cameron’s illustrations add depth to the story with their warm earth tones and contrasts of light and dark. Ages 4-8.


This delightful retelling of the Lakota tale about Iktomi the trickster blends the timelessness of the Native American story with Paul Goble’s offbeat contemporary attitude. Iktomi tricks the prairie dogs so that he can cook and eat them. Unfortunately, he goes on to be tricked by the coyote, whose trick wins him the prairie dogs. The use of
audience participation and commentary by the main character along with labeled illustrations cause the reader to become involved in the story. The illustrations by the author are bright and witty, adding to the overall upbeat tone of the book. Ages 4-8.


This story about Iktomi the trickster continues the tradition of audience participation and character commentary. This contemporary version of Iktomi dons the dress of his ancestors to irreverently act out his warlike mood. He sees a man who can will his eyes to leave his body, and he can’t rest until he tries to find out how to do that trick. The man teaches him but warns him that he can only do the trick four times a day without having something disastrous happen to his eyes. Eager to practice the trick, he sends his eyes flying four times, but he tells himself that the fourth time doesn’t count because he was practicing. When he shows off to his friends, his eyes don’t return, and he is blinded. He wrangles an eye out of a mouse, and another from a buffalo. His wife tosses him out because of his unsightly appearance, so Iktomi leaves, stumbling along with his less than perfect eyes. The illustrations are charming as usual in Goble’s work.

Ages 4-8.


This story set in Alaska captures the essence of the question that many children ask, but the questions have to do with ptarmigan eggs and mukluks, lemmings and umiaks. No matter how many questions the child asks, the mother’s reply never waivers. She will love her no matter what she says or does. This delightful affirmation of mother-love will charm children and adults alike. The glossary at the back of the book explains the Inuit terms used in the book. The colorful illustrations by Barbara Lavallee add to the celebratory tone of the book. Ages 4-8.


This poignant story about the 1989 oil spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska, tells the story of the wild life that was affected by the oil that covered everything. As Denny’s parents struggle to help with the recovery of the animals found along the coast, she discovers a baby seal who is covered with oil. She takes him home, and she and her mother take him to the rescue center. Luckily, Prince William, as Denny has christened the ten-week-old baby, recovers and is able to be returned to the sea. The story is valuable for its ecological implications as well as for its glimpse of life in Alaska. The illustrations by Ted Rand, husband of the author, contribute to the outrage the reader feels in reading about helpless animals victimized by the oil spills.

Ages 4-8.

Barbara Winslow tells the story of Annie’s first dance, a coming-of-age ceremony that will be her entry into the Alaskan Yupik Eskimo community. She goes to the kashim where people have gathered for a potlatch. Annie overcomes her nervousness to dance to the drums and the singing in honor of her grandmother who taught her to dance before she died. After the dance finishes, her parents give gifts to everyone at the gathering in honor of Annie and her grandmother. The bright and colorful illustrations by Teri Sloat add to the excitement and mysticism of the dance ceremony. Ages 4-8.


The author describes the excitement of the Shiprock Fair held in Shiprock, New Mexico, every year. Nezbah’s Navajo family is coming for the fair, adding to the general excitement of the day. The richness and depth of the descriptions enable the reader to experience the fair. The frequent use of Navajo adds to the flavor of the book; it is used in such a way as to be completely understandable. From food to competitions, music and dancing to powwow, carnival to parade, the senses are touched by the gaiety of the season. Both the author and Anthony Chee Emerson, the illustrator, are Navajo, and the reader has the sense the story could not have been told in the same way by a non-Navajo. The bold, vivid colors of add to the overall excitement of the fair. Ages 4-8.

**Miscellaneous Ethnic Children’s Books**


Sami lives in Beirut, Lebanon during what he calls "the time of troubles," a "time of guns and bombs." For the ten years of his life, Sami has lived in the basement of his uncle’s house with the rest of the family. Only when there is no fighting can they venture upstairs or outside. They have carried many of their treasures to the basement so they can look at nice things to remind them of good days. When the bombs crash all around, the family remembers times of goodness and beauty, times before Sami’s father was killed by a bomb on his way to market. This is a story of the will of the human spirit to survive and to hope for a better tomorrow. Ted Lewin’s exquisite watercolors create a magical world where the norm is to live in a basement with carpets hanging on the walls. Ages 4-8.


This poignant autobiographical story tells of the trauma a small child suffers every time that her mother is sent away to from home to recover from tuberculosis. In 1949, barely four years after the end of the war, Rosa has to go to stay with her Aunt Mookie and cousin Birgit in the Black Forest of Germany. The fascination of farm life provides distractions for a homesick little girl. Rosa soon becomes good friends with Otto, the mailman who brings letters from Mama. With Aunt Mookie’s help, she writes letters to
Mama as well, always including a kiss inside the letter. Finally, Rosa receives an Advent calendar to help mark the days until December 20 when Mr. Kugel will come to take her home for Christmas. After a good-bye party, Rosa sets off for home and Mama, and realizes how much she will miss all the new family and friends. Ages 4-8.