

2-1-1998

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Lauren Freedman

Western Michigan University, lauren.freedman@wmich.edu

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Recommended Citation

Freedman, L. (1998). Children's Literature: What's on the Horizons. *Reading Horizons*, 38 (3). Retrieved from https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/reading_horizons/vol38/iss3/6

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Children's literature: What's on the horizons

Lauren Freedman

Western Michigan University

Chapter Books

King, Casey, & Osborne, Linda Barrett. 1997. *Oh, Freedom!: Kids Talk About the Civil Rights Movement with the People Who Made it Happen*. Illustrated by Joe Brooks. NY: Scholastic. ISBN: 0-590-67529-X. 138 pp.

Oh, Freedom! is a non-fiction book that offers children a wealth of information as well as the impetus for initiating their own inquiries and gathering stories from their own communities.

As Rosa Parks says in her foreword, it "...is a powerful and intensely personal oral history of ordinary people. It is unique because the voices of the children themselves can be heard as they respond to their elders' moving descriptions of segregation, protest marches, and tragic assassinations." *Oh, Freedom!* chronicles the civil rights movement through a series of interviews done by children with some of the people who actually participated. Each of the book's three parts begins with a preface that offers general background for the experiences discussed in the interviews. The first part entitled "Life Under Segregation," contains nine interviews. Part two entitled "The Movement to End Legalized Segregation" contains eleven interviews. And, part three entitled, "The Movement Shifts: The Struggle to End Poverty and Discrimination" contains eleven interviews. On the pages of each interview there is a photographic portrait of the young person and their interviewee(s) as well as photographs of the times and events described in the interview.

McKinley, Robin. 1997. *Rose Daughter*. NY: Greenwillow, \$16.00 hb. ISBN: 0-688-15439-5. 306 pp.

Once again, Robin McKinley takes the Beauty and the Beast fairy tale and uses it to tell an intriguing story of courage and love. The power of love resonates throughout the relationships between and among Beauty, her two sisters Lionheart and Jeweltongue, their father and the beast as she is duty-bound to live in his castle. The story be-

gins with Beauty's family being reduced to poverty and moving to the country. Lionheart finds she has an affinity for horses and disguises herself as a stable boy in order to get work. Jeweltongue realizes she is a fine seamstress and sews for the wealthy of the town. Beauty finds she has an almost magical gift for gardening. Their father is distraught with both his financial loss and the loss of his wife and on one of his trips to the city becomes lost and must seek shelter in the beast's castle. In return for her father's safe passage, Beauty must go and live with the Beast who wants her to restore his garden and to marry him. Through several twists in the story, McKinley does, indeed, add freshness and intensity to this much loved tale.

Stevenson, James. 1997. *The Unprotected Witness*. NY: Greenwillow, \$15.00 hb. ISBN: 0-688-15133-7. 170 pp.

In this first person narrative, Pete tells the harrowing sequel to *The Bones in the Cliff*. Following the death of his father who has been in the federal witness protection program, Pete, his long time friend Rootie (short for Rosalie) and his new, rather odd friend Moosh Marshman must escape from the sinister men who are after Pete. These men think Pete's father gave him information as to the whereabouts of a large sum of money. This is a fast paced story of betrayal, intrigue, danger, suspense and friendship. Stevenson does an excellent job of keeping even the most reluctant reader involved and intent on knowing what happens.

Tillage, Leon Walter, 1977. *Leon's Story*. Illustrated by Susan L. Roth, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$14.00 hb. ISBN: 0-374-34379-9. 107 pp.

This is a book that should be required reading of everyone in this country as it powerfully reinforces why we must continue to work diligently to assure an equitable and just reality for all of America's citizens.

Leon's Story is the autobiography of Leon Walter Tillage who was born the son of a black sharecropper on January 19, 1936 in a small, rural town in North Carolina. In sharing his story, Mr. Tillage chronicles his experiences with the hatred and racism that shadowed every aspect of his life growing up as well as his participation in the early civil rights movement when dogs and firehoses were used to discourage the protest marches. While the tone and style of this short memoir are straightforward and matter of fact, the substance is profoundly disturbing and thought provoking. In sharing one experience, he talks of a young white boy who was ordered by his father to kick Leon instead of saying "pardon me" (as he at first had done) as he walked around Leon. "IN fact he kicked me twice. He started walking off and looked back at me with his blue eyes and he had a sad look on his face as though he was sorry. I'll never forget the look

on that kid's face as long as I live." After hearing Leon speak at the school in Baltimore where he currently works as a custodian, Susan Roth encouraged him to tell his story for a wider audience which led to the publication of this book. Her collage art illustrates the chapter title pages.

Zanzarella, Marianne. 1997. *The Good Housekeeping Illustrated Children's Cookbook*. Photographs by Tom Eckerle. NY: Morrow Junior Books, \$17.95 hb. ISBN: 0-688-13375-4. 166 pp.

This is an excellent resource for teachers, parents and kids who want to make cooking an integral aspect of learning in and/or out of the classroom. The photographs and the text work well together to offer children the information they need in a format that is straight forward and interesting. The text is divided into three major sections: Cooking Basics, Recipes, and Glossaries which include both cooking terms and utensils (which are both pictured and named). There is also an index for easy reference.

Picture Books

Lears, Laurie. 1998. *Ian's Walk: A Story About Autism*. Illustrated by Karen Ritz. Morton Grove IL: Albert Whitman & Co., \$14.95. ISBN: 0-8075-3480-3. 32 pp.

Ian's Walk portrays a sensitive and realistic look at both the life of an autistic child and the lives of his two siblings who live with him. The story follows Ian and his two sisters as they walk to the park and become separated. The detailed watercolor illustrations reinforce the characters' enactment of the plot and their feelings as the sisters search for and find Ian and then walk home with him. The book also includes a preface written by professionals who work with families with autistic children. This book is an excellent story of sibling caring as well as an excellent resource for making children aware of peers who might be autistic or live with an autistic child.

Pomeranc, Marion Hess. 1998. *The American Wei*. Illustrated by DyAnne Disalvo-Ryan. Morton Grove IL: Albert Whitman & Co., \$15.95. ISBN: 0-8075-0312-6. 32 pp.

This is a book about the naturalization process. Wei Fong is a Chinese boy whose family is going to be part of a naturalization ceremony and he is excited about becoming an American citizen. He is also excited about losing his first tooth. The story follows Wei and his family as they leave their apartment and wend their way to the federal courthouse. Near the courthouse, Wei loses his tooth and many of the other soon-to-be citizens help his family and him search for it. The gouache and pencil illustrations add depth to this delightful story

giving children an emotional as well as a factual sense of what it means to immigrate to the United States and become a naturalized citizen.

Spelman, Cornelia. 1997. *Your Body Belongs to You*. Illustrated by Teri Weidner. Morton Grove IL: Albert Whitman & Co. ISBN: 0-8075-9474-1. 28 pp.

This is a very simple and straightforward book that reinforces for young children that their bodies are theirs and that they have the right to decide who touches them and under what circumstances. It also differentiates between acceptable and unacceptable touches. The illustrations are soft and inviting and accurately depict the messages in the text. There is a preface addressed to parents which offers suggestions for using the book.

Thomas, Shelley Moore. 1998. *Somewhere Today: A Book of Peace*. Photography by Eric Futran. Morton Grove IL: Albert Whitman & Co., \$14.95. ISBN: 0-8075-7545-3. 24 pp.

Warm and filled with hope, this book offers a list of things children (and adults) do to bring peace into the world. The list is written in poetic form accompanied by descriptive photographs that both highlight the actions taken and the people involved. The refrain of "Somewhere today" which appears in large, bold type on each page adds to this upbeat look at how much joy there already is. It is also a reminder of how each person has a tremendous impact on whether or not his/her own life is peaceful and how this may (or may not) add to the peace on the planet. This book could also serve as an excellent model for children to create their own books about peace and other connected issues.

Williams, Vera B. 1997. *Lucky Song*. NY: Greenwillow, \$15.00. ISBN: 0-688-14459-4. 24 pp.

Vera Williams' playful illustrations accompany the "lyrics" to this delightful *Lucky Song* about "Little Evie" who, when she wanted to fly her kite, the wind cooperated, and when she wanted to eat her supper, her grandmother had it ready to eat, and "when she wanted her blanket; her sister wrapped it around her." Evie is a lucky little girl and the illustrations and words combine to bring her limitless fun to life.