

# Fostering Curiosity

On a global scale, the USBBY hopes these books develop an awareness of the world and its people

**W**HAT MAKES A BOOK OUTSTANDING? Is it the ability to transport readers? Or to tell a powerful story that breaks and mends hearts? Does it help us develop a deeper understanding of the world in which we live? The Outstanding International Books (OIB) committee explores these questions and more when selecting the best children's books from other countries. According

to the criteria set by the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY), eligible books should help U.S. children see the world from other points of view, exhibit a distinct cultural flavor, and be published originally or simultaneously in another country during 2021. The OIB committee selected 42 outstanding titles from over 500 books submitted from around the world.

At the heart of this list are the authors, illustrators, translators, and publishers who bring curiosity, joy, and awareness to readers through these international stories.

These particular selections introduce children to stellar bookmakers from 23 countries, including Australia, Canada, France, Japan, Nigeria, South Korea, and Venezuela, all of whom use a variety

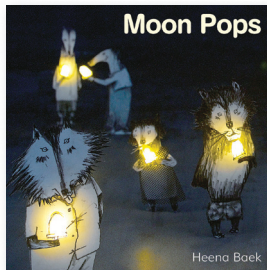
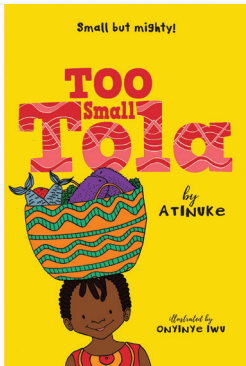


*We Dream Medicine Dreams* (Boivin)

By Bettie Parsons Barger



**Moon Pops (Baek)**



of genres to explore the nuances of life. Some of the books ground us in stories of our ancestors, families, friends, and aspirations. Others invite readers to explore familiar concepts and history in new ways. Fantastical adventures, reimagined folklore, and historical escapades whisk us away from reality. Whether journeying toward self-discovery, addressing sensitive topics, or pushing us to see things differently, these books draw readers into magnificent tales with fascinating and accessible characters and content. Readers of all ages will find that these selections foster curiosity and inquiry, evoke emotional responses, or develop an awareness of the world and its people. Happy reading to all.

## Preschool to Grade 2

**ATINUKE. *Too Small Tola*.** illus. by Onyinye Iwu. Candlewick. (Nigeria)

Tola may be a little girl in the large city of Lagos, but she is as spunky and mighty as her grandmommy. Iwu's charming illustrations interspersed among stories of shopping, water pump conversations, and preparations for Easter and Eid depict a richness of cultures and relationships.

**BAEK, Heena. *Moon Pops*.** tr. from Korean by Jieun Kiaer. illus. by author. Owlkids. (South Korea)

This masterfully reimagined folktale invites a closer look at oral traditions. Vibrant, multidimensional, mixed-media collages reveal a fantastical community living through a heat wave. Enduring themes include the wisdom of elders, caring for neighbors, and the interconnectedness of the Earth and moon.

**FLETT, Julie. *We All Play/ kimētawānaw*.** tr. by the Cree Literacy Network. illus. by author. Greystone Kids. (Canada)

This bilingual (English and Cree) book depicts animals and children mirroring each other in play. The simple, rhythmic text and bold illustrations create a delightful and playful read-aloud for young children. Back matter includes an author's note and a comprehensive glossary of Cree terms.

**KONTOLEON, Anna & Manos Kontoleon. *Comings and Goings*.** illus. by Fotini Tikkou. Star Bright. (Greece)

Two branches of a busy, far-flung family prepare, in parallel, for a holiday reunion. The juxtaposition of experiences attests to human relationships facilitated through modern global communication and transit, and builds toward the arrival at the destination.

**LAM, Thao. *Thao*.** illus. by author. Owlkids. (Vietnam/Canada)

In this beautifully rendered picture book, Lam instructs readers on how to pronounce her name correctly after decades of having it mispronounced. Photographs of Lam, who immigrated from Vietnam to Canada as a child, are integrated among paper-cut collage

illustrations, driving home the message that names matter.

**LARSEN, Marit. *Agnes's Place*.** tr. from Norwegian by Kari Dickson. illus. by Jenny Løvlie. Amazon Crossing Kids. (Norway)

Agnes deeply desires a best friend, so when Anna moves into her apartment building, she can't understand why the friendship doesn't just happen. Suddenly, they connect, creating magic and sharing precious secrets. The compelling illustrations and end papers provide charming details of their apartments.

**LUBY, Brittany. *Mii maanda ezhi-gkendmaan: This Is How I Know*.** tr. from Anishinaabemowin by Alvin Ted Corbiere & Alan Corbiere. illus. by Joshua Mangeshig Pawis-Steckley. Groundwood. (Canada: Anishinaabewaking)

A child and grandmother explore the wonder of each season in relation to the natural world. Inspired by childhood memories, Luby describes how animals and plants indicate the passing of time. Rich, digitally created illustrations by Ojibwe woodland artist Pawis-Steckley illuminate this bilingual (Anishinaabemowin and English) story-poem.

**MORGAN, Sally. *Little Bird's Day*.** illus. by Johnny Warrkatja Malibirr. Blue Dot Kids. (Australia)

Grounded in memories of exploring the bush, Morgan, a renowned Aboriginal (Palyku) author, writes of Little Bird's flight from dusk-to-dawn. Malibirr's Yolnu-influenced illustrations in earth-tone colors (red, yellow ochre, black, and white) depict this silver-crowned friarbird awakening Australian native plants and animals and weather patterns.

**MOTUM, Markus. *Ducks Overboard!*** illus. by author. Candlewick. (England)

Motum's playful narrative delicately balances

the magnitude of the global plastic waste issue (detailed in back matter) with a hopeful, simple message. The vibrant, uncomplicated mixed-media illustrations chronicle one plastic duck's journey from the factory to a child's bathtub, aided by thousands of miles of trash-laden ocean currents.

**PEARSON, Debora. *My Words Flew Away Like Birds*.** illus. by Shrija Jain. Kids Can. (Canada)

Preparing to move to a new country, a little girl learns some words in a new language, but when she arrives "all her words fly away like birds." With time and friends, she gains confidence. Pen-and-ink hand lettering and digitally colored illustrations capture the story's challenges and emotions.

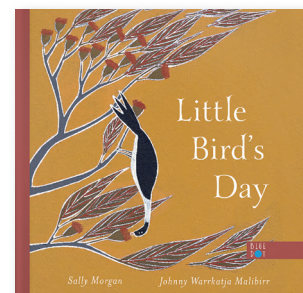
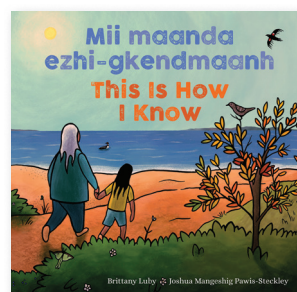
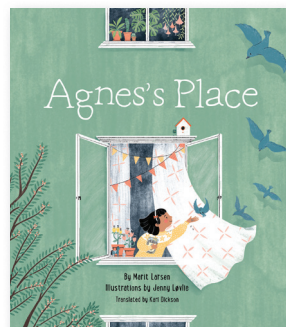
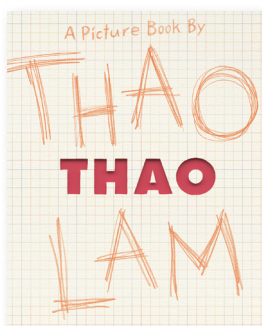
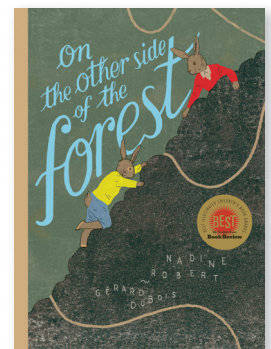
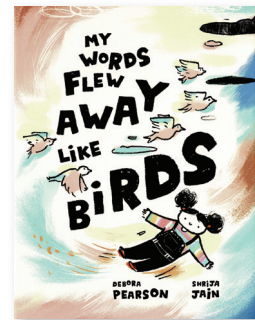
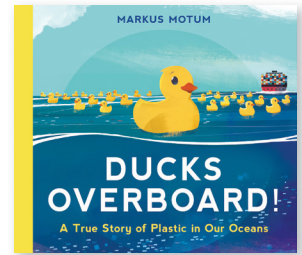
**PERRIN, Clotilde. *Inside the Suitcase*.** tr. from French by Daniel Hahn. illus. by author. Gecko. (France)

Embark on an inquiry-oriented, lift-the-flaps-adventure with a young boy as he crosses oceans, explores islands, scales mountains, and hikes through forests, all while encountering unexpected troubles and treasures. Unpacking becomes quite an enjoyable experience in this interactive narrative of creative discovery and fantastical frolicking.

**ROBERT, Nadine. *On the Other Side of the Forest*.** tr. from French by Paula Ayer. illus. by Gérard Dubois. Greystone Kids. (Canada)

What is beyond the dense forest? A father and son's quest to discover the unknown results in a community effort to find out. Dubois's bold, primary colors set against subdued surroundings accentuate the villagers' energy and anticipation as they seek to satisfy their curiosity.

**SOUNDAR, Chitra. *Sona Sharma, Very Best Big Sister?*** illus. by Jen Khatun. Candlewick. (India)





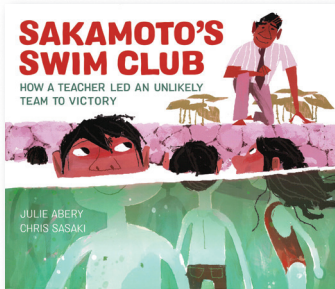
Sona is about to be a big sister and feels anxious about her new sibling's arrival. Amid her multigenerational Hindu family, she relies on her beloved Elephant and Thatha as she grapples with change and anticipates the naming ceremony. Lively illustrations enrich this universal story.

## Grades 3–5

**ABERY, Julie. *Sakamoto's Swim Club: How a Teacher Led an Unlikely Team to Victory.*** illus.

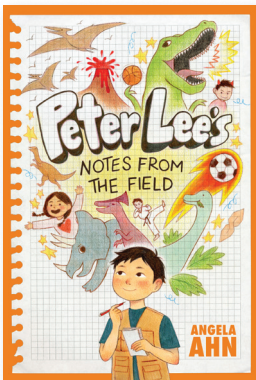
by Chris Sasaki. Kids Can. (Canada)

Soichi Sakamoto, a science teacher (and novice swimmer), uses scientific processes to help children of sugar plantation workers evolve from beginner swimmers to national champions and Olympic contenders. This inspiring biography is told in rhyming couplets. Sasaki's spirited, imaginative illustrations capture the arduous but joy-filled journey to the Olympic podium.



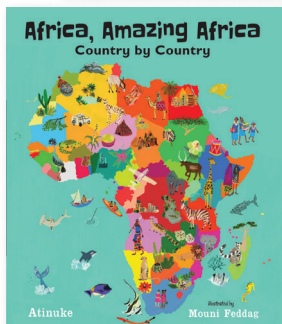
**AHN, Angela. *Peter Lee's Notes from the Field.*** illus. by Julie Kwon. Tundra. (Canada)

Peter pursues his dream of becoming a paleontologist. Upon the realization that he may not be cut out for digging (his asthma and dust do not get along), Peter shifts his careful observations to his grandmother's health. Can he use his skills differently?



**ATINUKE. *Africa, Amazing Africa: Country by Country.*** illus. by Mouni Feddag. Candlewick. (African continent)

Award-winning Nigerian writer Atinuke creates a celebration of all 55 countries in Africa, offering lively and comprehensive information on science, food, sports, music, wildlife, landscape features, and even snippets of local languages. Vivid patterned illustrations and valuable back matter accompany this highly browsable book.



**BIRKJÆR, Betina. *Coffee, Rabbit, Snowdrop, Lost.***

tr. from Danish by Sinéad Quirke Køngerskov. illus. by Anna Margrethe Kjærgaard. Enchanted Lion. (Denmark)

Although Stump can't stop Grandpa from losing his words, lapsing into silence, and sliding into dementia, Stump can see how to help. Cozy pastel interiors turned gray and the tenderly told story describe a reality many children witness. An afterword for adults provides practical suggestions.

**BÖGE, Dieter. *189 Canaries.*** tr. from German by

Laura Watkinson. illus. by Elsa Klever. Eerdmans. (Germany)

Böge's engaging and evocative history of canaries highlights the songbird's adventurous journey from the Harz Mountains in Germany to Poughkeepsie, NY. Enveloped by Klever's lush illustrations, this detailed exploration of the world's beloved songbird is enhanced by intriguing end papers and illustrated back matter.

**BOIVIN, Lisa. *We Dream Medicine Dreams.*** illus.

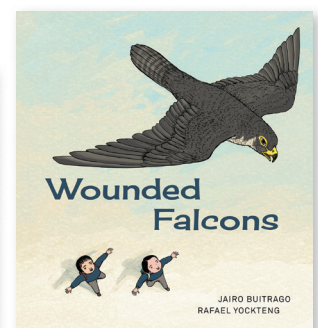
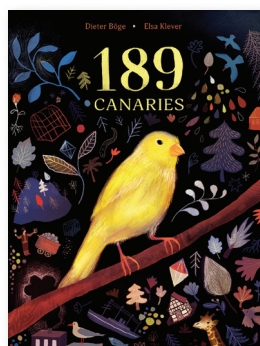
by author. Highwater. (Canada: Northwest Territories)

Boivin shares the wisdom of her Dene ancestors through a grandparent-grandchild story that resonates universally. Bold collage illustrations show a young girl who learns about the teachings of Bear, Hawk, Caribou, and Wolf. Seen through her dreams, these animals offer guidance when her grandfather dies.

**BUITRAGO, Jairo. *Wounded Falcons*** tr. from Spanish by Elisa Amado. illus. by Rafael Yockteng.

Groundwood. (Mexico)

Set in an unnamed country in Latin America, two seemingly different friends come together to rescue a wounded falcon. Buitrago's (Mexico) sparse yet impactful text, complemented



by Yockteng's (Colombia) digitally enhanced drawings, reveal a parallel journey of pain but also hope and healing.

**CARMONA, Hannah. *Anita and the Dragons*.** illus. by Anna Cunha. Lantana. (Dominican Republic)

Transforming into a princesa, Anita prepares to say goodbye to her beloved subjects and island home before the dragon (airplane) whisks her family away to a faraway land. Drawing from her mother's experiences, Carmona captures the emotions, tenderly illustrated in pastel hues, of a young child's emigration.

**FRIÉD, Hédi. *The Story of Bodri*.** tr. from Swedish by Linda Schenck. illus. by Stina Wirsén. Eerdmans. (Sweden)

Reuniting with the family dog was what Holocaust survivor Friéd dreamed of while she endured the camps. Smudges of watercolor and ink, sometimes resembling bruises, adeptly complement the direct, child-centered text. Despite the painful subject, the book adds an important perspective to children's World War II literature.

**FONTAINE, Valérie. *The Big Bad Wolf in My House*.** tr. from French by Shelley Tanaka. illus. by Nathalie Dion. Groundwood. (Canada)

Motifs of huffing and puffing conjure up the three little pigs to play off some well-known tropes as a viscous interloper invades. Spartan images, sometimes cropped, heighten the menace and the rushed departure in this important presentation of domestic violence for the youngest readers.

**HRAB, Naseem. *The Sour Cherry Tree*.** illus. by Nahid Kazemi. Owlkids. (Canada)

A young girl narrates the physical and emotional journey she and her mother take while

processing the recent death of her beloved Baba-joon (grandfather). Cherished memories of special familial routines, beloved household objects, and favorite foods and drinks offer intimate snapshots of intergenerational, transnational love and loss.

**MANRIQUE, María Eugenia. *The Caiman*.** tr. from Spanish by Amy Brill. illus. by Ramón París. Amazon Crossing Kids. (Venezuela)

When Faoro, a Venezuelan clockmaker, adopts a baby caiman named Night, he renovates his home to accommodate his new reptile. París's whimsical illustrations portray the joy Night brings to Faoro, neighborhood children, and all who met the pet. This seemingly incredible story is confirmed to be true in the back matter.

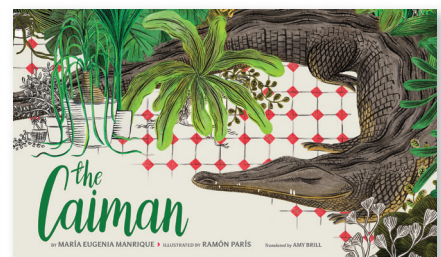
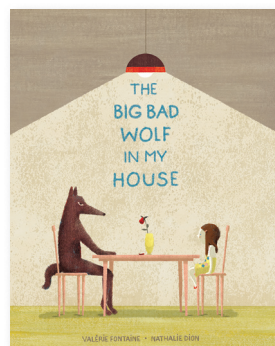
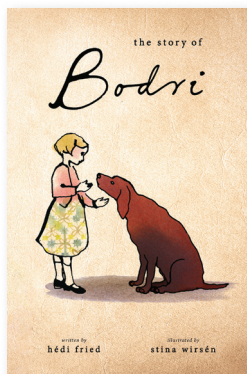
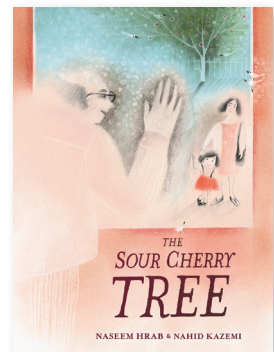
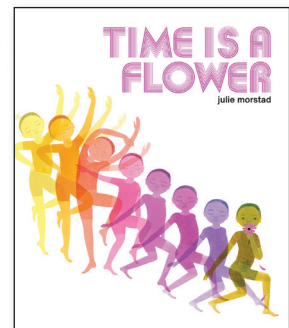
**MORSTAD, Julie. *Time Is a Flower*.** illus. by author. Tundra. (Canada)

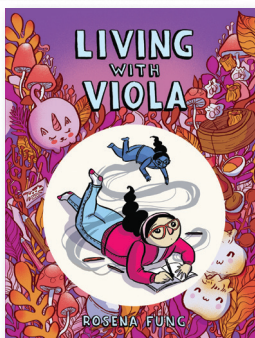
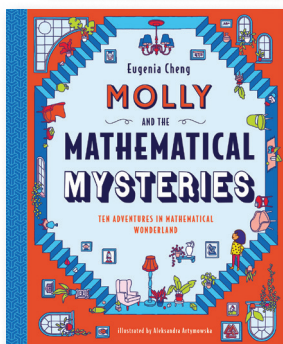
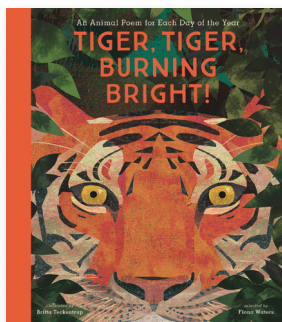
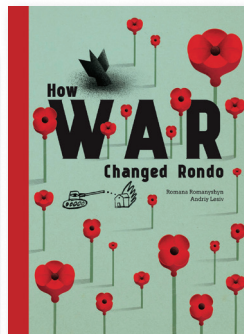
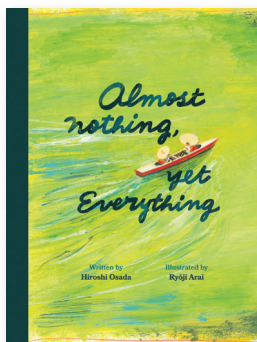
Acclaimed Canadian author/illustrator Morstad explores the idea of time through ordinary life-focused metaphors (e.g., baking bread, washing socks). Lyrical language invites readers to extend their understanding and appreciation of time. Lush illustrations, brushed with magenta, pop with movement, emotion, and energy. This intriguing picture book invites multiple readings.

**PANG, Hannah. *Seasons: A Year in Nature*.** illus. by Clover Robin. Tiger Tales/360 Degrees. (England)

Using split pages, interesting facts, and poetry, Pang describes the impact various seasons have on the flora and fauna of six geographic locations (Alaska, Arctic Circle, Australia, China, Europe, and Kenya). Robin's rich, intricate, cut-paper collages bring the changing environments to life.

**RAÚF, Onjali Q. *The Star Outside My Window*.** illus. by Pippa Cumick. Delacorte. (England)





A newly discovered star can only mean one thing—Aniyah and Noah’s mother is trying to come back for them. Helped by two boys in their foster home, the children embark on a wild adventure, learning about hope, grief, and love in the process.

**OSADA, Hiroshi.** *Almost Nothing, Yet Everything: A Book About Water.* tr. from Japanese by David Boyd. illus. by Ryōji Arai. Enchanted Lion. (Japan)

The water cycle is celebrated in a series of paintings paired with lyrical, probing text concerned with this necessary resource. Arai’s expressionistic art plays on changeable shapes and colors that characterize this fundamental component of life on Earth.

**WATERS, Fiona, sel.** *Tiger, Tiger, Burning Bright! An Animal Poem for Each Day of the Year.* illus. by Britta Teckentrup. Candlewick/Nosy Crow. (England)

Teckentrup, an award-winning German artist, delights readers with a captivating visual menagerie to accompany 366 animal poems, one for every day of the year (including February 29), selected by Waters. Verses about intriguing animals introduce readers to classic and contemporary poets from around the world.

Each year USBBY, the United States section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), appoints a committee to select its Outstanding International Books (OIB) list, which celebrates children’s literature that U.S. publishers and distributors have brought in from around the world. The list highlights exceptional international children’s literature that introduces young people to outstanding authors and illustrators from other countries, helps children and young people in the United States to see the world from diverse perspectives, promotes literature that is accessible to children and young people in the United States, addresses topics that may be missing from U.S. children’s and young adult literature, and encourages titles that exhibit distinct cultural flavor. The committee received 530 books published in 2021, of which 42 were chosen as OIB. For additional information and access to all OIB lists, visit [www.usbby.org](http://www.usbby.org).

## Grades 6–8

**CHENG, Eugenia.** *Molly and the Mathematical Mysteries: Ten Interactive Adventures in Mathematical Wonderland.* illus. by Aleksandra Artymowska. Candlewick/Big Picture. (United Kingdom)

Molly is a curious explorer on an adventure following mysterious, mathematical clues. Cheng and Artymowska’s vibrant, interactive book encourages readers to join in the exploration through numerous panels, inserts, and paper dials to help Molly solve the mathematical questions posed.

**FUNG, Rosena.** *Living with Viola.* illus. by author. Annick. (Canada)

Told from the perspective of first generation Chinese Canadian sixth grader Livy, this graphic novel offers an insightful portrait of life with an anxiety disorder. Issues of identity and anti-Asian hate exacerbate internal struggles and are represented in the novel as “Viola.” The title also contains Cantonese.

**KUZKI, Shaw.** *Soul Lanterns.* tr. from Japanese by Emily Balistreri. Delacorte. (Japan)

Three Japanese middle school students focus their art festival project around the Hiroshima

bombing 25 years after it happened. Inspired by an annual lantern-floating ceremony honoring those lost in the bombing, they collect family stories and design a creative, compassionate way to share their loved ones' experiences.

**MCKAY, Hilary.** *The Swallows' Flight*. S. & S./Margaret K. McElderry. (England/Germany)  
In this follow-up to *The Skylarks' War*, readers follows four young people as they reach adulthood between World Wars I and II. Vivid depictions of historic events and rich characters make this a poignant look at courage and the effects of war.

**POULIN, Andrée.** *Burying the Moon*. illus. by Sonali Zohra. Groundwood. (India)  
In this powerful novel in verse, Latika wishes for moonless nights...and toilets. Beautifully illustrated, the story reveals the challenges women in Latika's village face due to lack of sanitation facilities, as well as one girl's commitment to make a change.

**ROMANYSHYN, Romana & Andriy Lesiv.** *How War Changed Rondo*. tr. from Ukrainian by Oksana Lushchevska. illus. by authors. Enchanted Lion. (Ukraine)  
Startling illustrations of a trio of unconventional characters combine found media and playful visual grammar to punctuate this saga of an uncommon town suffering as war blots out the sun. A sweeping tale of individual injuries, a common cause, and war's role in cultural memory.

## Grades 9–12

**AISATO, Lisa.** *All the Colors of Life*. tr. from Norwegian by Olivia Lasky. illus. by author. W1-Media/Arctis Bks. (Norway)  
Organized into six life stages, this picture book offers readers of all ages an immersive journey constructed by renowned Norwegian artist Aisato. The evocative partnership of contemplative text and full-color, larger-than-life illustrations invite numerous meditations about the self, life, and the human experience.

**Carry On: Poetry by Young Immigrants.** tr. from French by Susan Ouriou. illus. by Rogé Owlkids. (Canada)  
Touchstones like selfies and FaceTime punctuate immigration as an ongoing concern in poems capturing recent teen experiences. Spare language emphasizes sharp transitions between old homes and new; intense, life-size watercol-

## The 2022 Outstanding International Books Committee

Bettie Parsons Barger (Chair), Charlotte, NC  
Jennifer Graff (Asst. Chair), Athens, GA  
Patricia Bloem, Allendale, MI  
Desiree Cueto, Bellingham, WA  
Alison Francis, Wassaic, NY  
Nancy Johnson, Bellingham, WA  
Isaac Willis Larison, Louisville, KY  
Sara Parrish, Cleveland, OH  
Wendy Steadman Stephens, Huntsville, AL

ors of the young poets and other immigrants depict the range of newcomers to Canada.

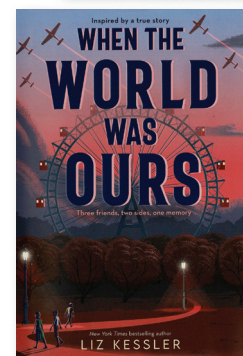
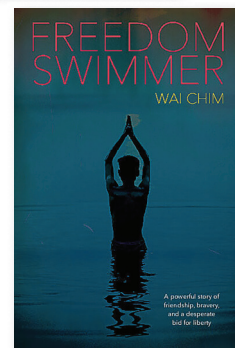
**CHIM, Wai.** *Freedom Swimmer*. Scholastic. (China)  
Orphan Ming befriends Li, who was brought to his village through one of the government's social projects. The two boys plan to swim to Hong Kong to gain their freedom. Set during China's Cultural Revolution, this story is based on the author's father's life.

**KESSLER, Liz.** *When the World Was Ours*. S. & S./Aladdin. (Austria/Poland/England)  
Three best friends see Vienna from new heights in 1936 atop a Ferris Wheel. All three cherish this memory as life becomes darker, crueler, and more complex. As Hitler invades Austria, two try to escape persecution and one joins the Hitler Youth.

**KINEW, Wab.** *Walking in Two Worlds*. Penguin Teen. (Canada)  
A suspenseful, action-oriented story in which teenage Bugz navigates between the challenges of her family and clan and her virtual gaming world. The virtual and Indigenous worlds are adeptly interwoven to provide an engrossing story of family, friendship, and loyalty.

**LETRIA, José Jorge.** *War*. tr. from Portuguese by Elisa Amado. illus. by André Letria. Greystone Kids. (Portugal)  
Created by the father-son team, this poetic picture book conveys war's devastating power. A somber color palette and verbal connotations of disease, deceit, and devastation showcase the physical, emotional, and geographical casualties that linger for generations.

To download this article, go to [slj.com/USBBY2022](http://slj.com/USBBY2022)



Copyright of School Library Journal is the property of Media Source, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.