

CRISSCROSSING THE GLOBE



A WORLD OF INTERNATIONAL BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE By Elizabeth Poe

2010 marks the fifth year the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBYP) has selected an honor list of international books. Once again, titles on the list crisscross the globe. They have been published in Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, India, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The books are set in Australia, Canada, Carthage, China, Denmark, Guatemala, England, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Malawi, Mexico, Mongolia, the Netherlands, Norway, Rwanda, Scotland, Sweden, Tanzania, and as well as in the land of story. They have been translated from Danish, Dutch, French, German, Japanese, and Swedish. Two titles are bilingual publications: one in Spanish and English and the other in Inuktitut and English. One appears in Chinese calligraphy and chop marks along with the English text.

The 41 books on this year's list were chosen from well over 300 titles. Outstanding literary quality was a top priority, as we were looking for the *crème de la crème* of children's and young adult literature originating outside the U.S. and subsequently or simultaneously published here in 2009. The committee was also interested in finding books that introduce American readers to outstanding artists and writers from other countries, help American children see the world from other points of view, provide a perspective or address a topic otherwise missing from children's literature in the U.S., exhibit a distinct cultural flavor, and are accessible to American readers. We considered both content and presentation. This included artistic and literary merit, originality or creativity of approach, distinctiveness of topic, uniqueness of origin, and qualities that engage and appeal to children. Lists of previous USBYP Outstanding International Books can be found at www.usbyp.org.

Illustration above from *Flags of the World* (Abrams) by Sylvie Bednar.

Grades K-2

ARGUETA, Jorge. *Sopa de frijoles: Un poema para cocinar/Bean Soup: A Cooking Poem.* illus. by Rafael Yockteng. Groundwood. Tr \$18.95. ISBN 978-0-88899-881-1. Canada.

This bilingual poem about making black bean soup offers a warm, culturally authentic portrayal of cooking and eating as a family affair. The Salvadoran poet's lyrical language, in both Spanish and English, makes this book a great read-aloud.

BAASANSUREN, Bolormaa. *My Little Round House.* adapt. by Helen Mixer. illus. by author. Groundwood. Tr \$18.95. ISBN 978-0-88899-934-4. Japan.

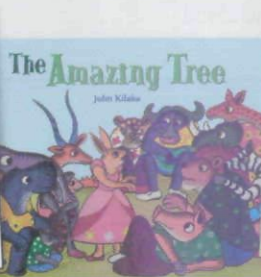
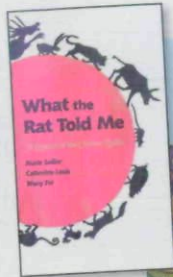
Rich with cultural details of life in a Mongolian *ger* (or yurt), this book depicts a newborn's first year as he journeys seasonally in a nomadic family. Exquisite illustrations vividly convey the community's customs and traditions.

KILAKA, John. *The Amazing Tree.* illus. by author. NorthSouth. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-0-7358-2254-2. Switzerland.

To get the fruit of a magic tree to fall during a drought, the animals must discover and call the tree's name. They each travel to the wise tortoise to learn the name, but only little rabbit succeeds. This well-told, humorously illustrated Tanzanian folktale is perfect for group sharing.

LARSEN, Andrew. *The Imaginary Garden.* illus. by Irene Luxbacher. Kids Can. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-1-55453-279-7. Canada.

When Poppa moves to an apartment, he and his granddaughter create a colorful garden on canvas for his balcony. The loving relationship between child and grandparent provides a positive portrayal of changes that can occur for older adults when they give up their home.



MAHY, Margaret. *Bubble Trouble.* illus. by Polly Dunbar. Clarion. RTE \$16. ISBN 978-0-547-07421-4. UK.

Mabel's bubble "bobbed across the table. Where it bobbed over Baby, and it wafted him away." Rollicking rhymes follow Baby's ascent inside the bubble until a slingshot pebble pops it, and Mabel and her friends save Baby with "calculated catchwork!" Lighthearted art perfectly fits this zany tale.

NAYAR, Nandini. *What Should I Make?* illus. by Proiti Roy. Tricycle. Tr \$12.99.

ISBN 978-1-58246-294-3. India.

The universal experience of a child playing with dough while mother is baking is depicted in this book. Bright, clear illustrations show a young boy in India pulling dough into various shapes while his mother makes chapitis, Indian flatbread. Instructions for making chapitis are provided at the end.

SELLIER, Marie. *What the Rat Told Me: A Legend of the Chinese Zodiac.* illus. by Catherine Louie. calligraphy and chop marks by Wang Fei. NorthSouth. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-0-7358-2220-7. France.

How the Great Emperor of Heaven chose the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac is related in a distinctively designed book with striking linoleum prints. Why rats and cats are enemies is also explained. Young readers can find their signs at the back of the book.

TEEVEE, Ningeokuluk. *Alego.* tr. by Nina Manning-Toonoo. illus. by author. Groundwood. Tr \$17.95. ISBN 978-0-88899-943-6. Canada.

An Inuit child discovers shoreline treasures as she and her grandmother dig for clams in the tide pools of the Canadian Arctic. The text is written in Inuktitut and English. Graphite and colored pencil illustrations lend an innocence and simplicity to this unique tale.

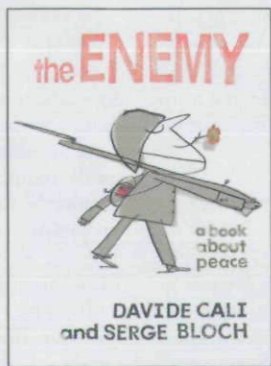
Grades 3-5

BEDNAR, Sylvie. *Flags of the World.* tr. by Gita Daneshjoo. illus. by author. Abrams. Tr \$19.95. ISBN 978-0-8109-8010-5. France.

This highly informative work features all of the world's flags and explains the significance of their colors and symbols, often relating them to other nations' flags.

BRESDORFF, Bodil. *Eidi.* tr. by Kathryn Mahaffy. (The Children of Crow Cove Series). Farrar. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-374-31267-1. Denmark.

Feeling left out when her mother and stepfather have a baby, Eidi leaves Crow Cove to work as a weaver. Her departure turns into a journey of self-discovery. The harsh but beautiful Danish countryside and



the taciturn people who live there are described in lyrical yet unsentimental prose.

CALI, Davide. *The Enemy: A Book About Peace.* illus. by Serge Bloch. Random House/Schwartz & Wade Bks. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-375-84500-0; PLB \$18.99. ISBN 978-0-375-93752-1. France.

A lone soldier in his foxhole waits for the enemy to attack—only to discover that the enemy is not the beast the soldier had been led to believe. Spare text and mixed-media images deliver a strong message about the power of wartime propaganda.

GAIMAN, Neil. *Odd and the Frost Giants.* illus. by Brett Helquist. HarperCollins. Tr \$14.99. ISBN 978-0-06-167173-9. UK.

A Norwegian boy leads a talking fox, hawk, and bear, actually Norse gods Thor, Odin, and Loki, to outwit

the evil Frost Giants. Although physically disabled, Odd uses his brain to save his community. Grounded in Norse mythology, this compelling story is beautifully illustrated with pen-and-ink drawings.

HOF, Marjolijn. *Against the Odds.* tr. by Johanna H. Prins & Johanna W. Prins. Groundwood. Tr \$17.95. ISBN 978-0-88899-935-1. The Netherlands.

Kiki's father is declared missing during one of his medical relief trips to a war zone, and Kiki copes by trying to reduce the odds of his having been harmed. This is a sensitive and honest portrayal of a family during a time of great stress.

MILLARD, Glenda. *The Naming of Tishkin Silk.* illus. by Patrice Barton. Farrar. Tr \$15.99. ISBN 978-0-374-35481-7. Australia.

Ever since his mother has "gone away," six-year-old Griffin Silk has been unable to accept the death of his infant sister, whom he secretly names Tishkin. A new school friend gives him the courage to cope.

Gentle, appealing characters embody empathy, creativity, and the healing power of love.

ROBERTS, Ken. *Thumb and the Bad Guys.* illus. by Leanne Franson. Groundwood. Tr \$18.95. ISBN 978-0-88899-916-0. Canada.

Not much happens on the island of New Auckland, off British Columbia, but when Thumb and Susan spy on Kirk McKenna, the only suspicious person they can think of, they uncover a remarkable secret. A strong sense of place and an elderly



teacher with new ideas distinguish this lighthearted book.

UMANSKY, Kaye. *Clover Twig and the Magical Cottage.* illus. by Johanna Wright. Roaring Brook. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-1-59643-507-0. UK.

A poor but self-confident girl who accepts a job cleaning for an old woman finds herself swept up in an ongoing feud between a witch and her evil sister. Funny, zany, and full of original characters, this rollicking fantasy makes a terrific read-aloud.

poignant, the intrigue weaves together historical and contemporary details of Japanese life along with a surprising Australian connection.

METSELAAR, Menno & Ruud van der Rol. *Anne Frank: Her Life in Words and Pictures.* tr. by Arnold J. Pomerans. Roaring Brook/Flash Point. Tr \$19.99. ISBN 978-1-59643-546-9; pap. \$12.99. ISBN 978-1-59643-547-6. The Netherlands.

Period photographs and excerpts from Anne's diary document the Frank family before they went into hiding, their life in the Secret Annex, and the war's aftermath. Background on the individuals who aided them and camp survivors provides further context for readers.

MICHAEL, Jan. *City Boy.* Clarion. Tr \$16. ISBN 978-0-547-22310-0. UK.

Orphaned by AIDS, Sam has a difficult time adjusting to Malawi village life with his aunt's family after growing up in the city. This is a powerful story of adjustment and working through grief.

MORDECAI, Martin. *Blue Mountain Trouble.* Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Bks. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-545-04156-0. Canada.

Twins Pollyread and Jackson cope with changes: preparing for the exams that will determine their high school; discovering that the squatter on their land, growing an illegal crop, is their cousin; and having a duppy goat appear to them just before they learn that their mother is pregnant. The rural Jamaican setting and characters are vividly depicted.

PELLEGRINO, Marge. *Journey of Dreams.* Frances Lincoln. Tr \$15.95. ISBN 978-1-84507-061-9. UK.

A 13-year-old Mayan girl recounts the harrowing story of her family's escape from their Guatemalan mountain village in the face of civil war in 1984. Details of village life, the journey across national borders, the power of storytelling, and the resilience of the human spirit are all vividly portrayed.

SLADE, Arthur. *Jolted: Newton Starker's Rules for Survival.* Random/Wendy Lamb Bks. Tr \$15.99. ISBN 978-0-385-74700-4; PLB \$18.99. ISBN 978-0-385-90944-0. Canada.

A student at a Saskatchewan boarding school dedicated to survival skills learns that getting along with others is as much a part of surviving as avoiding the lightning that seeks out his family members. One of Canada's leading authors, Slade uses an unusual and humorous premise to deliver a strong message.

TAN, Shaun. *Tales from Outer Suburbia.* illus. by author. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Bks. Tr \$19.99. ISBN 978-0-545-05587-1. Australia.

Grades 6-8



CLAYTON, Emma. *The Roar.* Scholastic/Chicken House. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 978-0-439-92593-8. UK.

In futuristic London, twins with supernaturally powerful eyes are manipulated by an evil leader who plots to use them to conquer the world. A compelling page-turner, this video game-style story conveys a strong environmental message and a warning about the use of excessive power.

DONALDSON, Julia. *Running on the Cracks.* Holt. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-8050-9054-3. UK.

When a recently orphaned, biracial teen runs away from her uncle's family, she finds refuge in Glasgow with an elderly woman and a group of eccentric characters. A new friend helps her search for her Chinese grandparents. This is a tightly wrought, tense novel of a young girl finding self-confidence and friendship.

ELLIS, Deborah. *Children of War: Voices of Iraqi Refugees.* Groundwood. Tr \$15.95. ISBN 978-0-88899-907-8; pap. \$12.95. ISBN 978-0-88899-908-5. Canada.

Twenty interviews with young refugees in Jordan and Canada relate the conditions under which they left Iraq following the allied invasion in 2003, the effect of their escapes on their families, their school experiences, and their hopes for the future.

KHAN, Rukhsana. *Wanting Mor.* Groundwood. Tr \$17.95. ISBN 978-0-

88899-858-3. Canada.

After her mother's death in an Afghan village, Jameela and her father move to Kabul where he abandons her. Finding a home in an orphanage, she learns to read and has her cleft palate repaired. Jameela's religious beliefs are carefully integrated into this contemporary novel.

LAWRENCE, L. S. *Escape by Sea.* Holiday House. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-0-8234-2217-3. Australia.

Sara, daughter of a Carthaginian senator and merchant, survives the loss of her brother and father in the ravages of Roman invasions by trading goods in Mediterranean ports and using her practical medical skills. This daring sea adventure is set during the Punic Wars.

MCGOWAN, Anthony. *Jack Tumor.* Farrar. Tr \$17.95. ISBN 978-0-374-32955-6. UK.

The "voice" of 14-year-old Hector's brain tumor is an irreverent, pushy life coach he calls Jack Tumor. Alternating scenes of wild farce and sensitivity shot through with liberal doses of humor show Hector emerging from his comfort zone to risk friendships, take on school bullies, and meet girls.

MEEHAN, Kierin. *Hannah's Winter.* Kane/Miller. Tr \$15.95. ISBN 978-1-933605-98-2. Australia.

When Hannah stays with family friends in Kanazawa so she can improve her Japanese, she is compelled to help lay to rest the ghost of a Samurai boy. By turns humorous and

Fifteen tales challenge the boundaries of suburban life, including a foreign exchange student from another species, intercontinental ballistic missiles in backyards, and an expedition to the Earth's edge. The renowned Australian author/illustrator combines magical graphics and playful texts that juxtapose the everyday with the fantastic.

THOR, Annika. *A Faraway Island.* tr. by Linda Schenck. Delacorte. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-385-73617-6; PLB \$19.99. ISBN 978-0-385-90590-9. Sweden.

Two Jewish sisters escape from Nazi Austria to Sweden, where they are sent to a remote island to live with separate families. As the older

girl faces bullying and prejudice by classmates, she learns about love and respect, and is able to face the unknown fate of her parents.

UEHASHI, Nahoko. *Moribito II: Guardian of the Darkness.* tr. by Cathy Hirano. illus. by Yuko Shimizu. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Bks. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 978-0-545-10295-7. Japan.

Bodyguard Balsa returns to her native Kanbal to try to clear the name of her now-dead childhood protector and teacher, who is considered a traitor. Action with introspection plus a fully realized mythical medieval-style Japanese world make this a thought-provoking adventure.

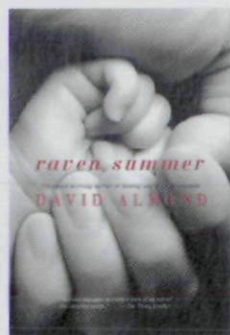
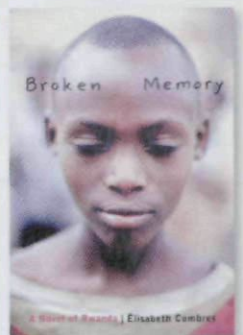
**Members of the 2010 USBBY
Outstanding International
Books Committee**

Elizabeth Poe, Morgantown, WV (chair); Mary Beth Dunhouse, Boston, MA; Kathy East, Perrysburg, OH; Annette Goldsmith, Tallahassee, FL; Nancy Hadaway, Arlington, TX; Marilyn Hollinshead, West Tisbury, MA; Judith Lechner, Auburn, AL; Grace Ruth, San Francisco, CA; Barbara Samuels, Houston, TX.

Grades 9–12

ALMOND, David. *Raven Summer.* Delacorte. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-385-73806-4; PLB \$19.99. ISBN 978-0-385-90715-6. UK.

Fourteen-year-old Liam and his best friend find an abandoned baby that serves as a catalyst for change between him, his friends, and his family. Childhood games turn real when Liam's attempt to help a young African asylum seeker triggers a frightening confrontation. Historic Northumberland provides a vivid backdrop for the story.



COMBRES, Élisabeth. *Broken Memory: A Novel of Rwanda.* tr. by Shelley Tanaka. Groundwood. Tr \$17.95. ISBN 978-0-88899-892-7. France.

A young Tutsi girl hides during the brutal murder of her mother during the 1994 genocide. After fleeing, she is taken in by a Hutu woman who risks her own life to protect the child. The author's endnotes provide context for this fictional examination of the girl's gradual healing.

GINGRAS, Charlotte. *Pieces of Me.* tr. by Susan Ouriou. Kids Can. Tr \$17.95. ISBN 978-1-55453-242-1; pap. \$8.95. ISBN 978-1-55453-432-6. Canada.

Mira struggles with normal adolescent growing pains while living with a mentally

disturbed mother. Her imaginative art focuses on freedom in nature, and her art teacher and a new friend provide encouragement and support. Winner of the Governor General's Literary Award in Quebec, this is a sensitive portrayal of one girl's loneliness and growth.

HERRICK, Steven. *Cold Skin.* Front St. Tr \$18.95. ISBN 978-1-59078-572-0. Australia.

In a poor, post-World War II Australian town where nothing ever happens, Eddie and his father are at odds about working in the coal mines. When a classmate is murdered, everyone comes under suspicion. Multiple narrators guide readers through a series of twists and turns, keeping suspense high in this novel-in-verse.

HIGGINS, F.E. *The Eyeball Collector.* Feiwel & Friends. Tr \$14.99. ISBN 978-0-312-56681-4. UK.

Young Hector plots revenge on the one-eyed blackmailer Gulliver Truepin, who seeks his fortune while collecting richly inlaid false eyeballs. Truepin gets his comeuppance at the Midwinter Feast when deadly butterflies, trained by Hector, and a hairy-back hog prove fatal. This macabre tale of riddles, adventure, and suspense has a riveting conclusion.

MAHY, Margaret. *The Magician of Hoad.* S & S/Margaret K. McElderry Bks. Tr \$18.99. ISBN 978-1-4169-7807-7. New Zealand.

After a boyhood of excruciating headaches and years advising the king, Heriot finally becomes a full-fledged magician. New Zealand's premier author explores the mysterious nature of transformation, freedom, ambition, friendship, and love in this complex fantasy set in the Kingdom of Hoad, where peace is not always desired by all.

MOURLEVAT, Jean-Claude. *Winter's End.* tr. by Anthea Bell. Candlewick. RTE \$17.99. ISBN 978-0-7636-4450-5. France.

Four teens escape from their prisonlike boarding school and join the resistance to the dictatorial Phalange government responsible for murdering their parents 15 years earlier. This is an extraordinary look at love and sacrifice, different kinds of courage, and the humanizing and inspiring value of music.

NESS, Patrick. *The Ask and the Answer.* (Chaos Walking Series). Candlewick. RTE \$18.99. ISBN 978-0-7636-4490-1. UK.

Captured by wicked, manipulative Mayor Prentice, Todd and Violet struggle to resist his efforts to make them part of his plan to control the world. Packed with action and moral dilemmas, this compelling read presents two inspiring, strong characters who act bravely in the face of evil.

THOMPSON, Kate. *Creature of the Night.* Roaring Brook. Tr \$17.95. ISBN 978-1-59643-511-7. UK.

Bobby's life takes some sharp turns when his mother moves the family to the country to get him away from the petty criminals he has been hanging out with in Dublin. His little brother's sightings of a tiny woman add a supernatural quality to this Irish page-turner.

VALENTINE, Jenny. *Broken Soup.* HarperTeen. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-06-085071-5; PLB \$17.89. ISBN 978-0-06-085072-8. UK.

Fifteen-year-old Rowan relates the story of her family's collapse following the unexpected death of her older brother two years earlier. Strong characterizations, unusual plot turns, and thoughtful explorations of love, grief, and responsibility characterize this life-affirming tale.

Elizabeth Poe is a retired professor of children's and young adult literature. She lives in Morgantown, WV.

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