

The Literary Equation; USBBY's Outstanding International Books connect kids worldwide

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Body

Stories connect people who live in different places, during different times, or who have different interests. Books tell stories in words, pictures, or both all the world over.

The titles on the 2013 Outstanding International Books List will remind readers that heroism can look different in different places, but that its essence is the same regardless of where you live. These stories show us that being different is sometimes painful but may be a cause for celebration; that looking closely at the past helps children understand their current lives a bit better. These books also remind us that laughter is potent around the world. Readers will find books from France, India, Norway, The Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Australia, and more.

All of the titles originated or were first published in a country other than the United States and were subsequently published or distributed in the U.S. These books not only represent the best in children's literature from around the globe, but also introduce American readers to other perspectives. Their originality and appeal, and the quality of the presentations make them outstanding choices for most collections.

Kindergarten—Grade 2

COAT, Janik. *Hippopposites*. illus. by author. Abrams/Applesseed. BD \$14.95. ISBN 978-1-4197-0151-1. France.

Each spread introduces both predictable and surprising contrasting concepts with a hint of humor as a hippo is the focus; an unexpected tactile experience is also added. Bold colors and shapes bring fresh thinking about the world of opposites.

DALY, Niki. *The Herd Boy*. illus. by author. Eerdmans. Tr \$17. ISBN 978-0-8028-5417-9. UK.

Muted shades of green and brown with occasional oranges and reds reflect the South African world of young Malusi, the good shepherd who takes his grandfather's herd of goats from the kraal to pasture, protecting them while dreaming of one day becoming president of his country.

DAVIES, Nicola. *Just Ducks!* illus. by Salvatore Rubbino. Candlewick. RTE \$15.95 ISBN 978-0-7636-5936-3. UK.

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"Quack-quuuuack" begins this story of a young girl's daylong observations of mallard ducks—with information points about them juxtaposed throughout fluid mixed-media illustrations—until she imagines the next morning's cacophony of quacking.

DUBUC, Marianne. *Animal Masquerade*. illus. by author. Kids Can. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-1-55453-782-2. Canada.

More than three dozen animals accept an invitation to a masquerade party. As each guest arrives, they are portrayed individually in their cleverly designed costumes, which suggest the next arrival. Childlike illustrations will have readers guessing who will show up next.

GRAHAM, Bob. *A Bus Called Heaven*. illus. by author. Candlewick. RTE \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-7636-5893-9. Australia.

Young Stella discovers an abandoned bus with a sign that says "Heaven" and with the help of neighbors transforms it into a vibrant community center. Droll watercolor and ink illustrations enlarge the celebration of diversity and neighborliness.

HOVLAND, Henrik. *John Jensen Feels Different*. tr. from Norwegian by Don Dartlett. illus. by Torill Kove. Eerdmans. Tr \$16. ISBN 978-0-8028-5399-8. Norway.

John Jensen is not sure why he feels out of place, perhaps because he is an alligator in a world of humans, but his elephant doctor helps him celebrate his differences. Told with a light touch and expressive illustrations, this book might help readers rethink dissimilarities.

KRISHNASWAMI, Uma. *Out of the Way! Out of the Way!* illus. by Uma Krishnaswamy. Groundwood. Tr \$17.95. ISBN 978-1-55498-130-4. India.

The lively text chronicles the changes over the years as a village path becomes a busy city road. In the middle of the path a tiny sapling grows into a giant tree that nurtures the people who gather under it. The colorful folk art captures the diversity of life in India.

MACLEAR, Kyo. *Virginia Wolf*. illus. by Isabelle Arsenault. Kids Can. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-1-55453-649-8. Canada.

When Virginia is feeling particularly glum and wolfish, her sister Vanessa resorts to painting the imaginative garden Virginia describes as Bloomsberry. Digitally assembled art conveys the emotional swings and love the girls feel toward each other; loosely inspired by the lives of writer Virginia Woolf and her sister, Vanessa Bell.

MACKINTOSH, David. *The Frank Show*. illus. by author. Abrams. RTE \$16.95. ISBN 978-1-4197-0393-5. UK.

Grandpa Frank is uninteresting to his grandson, until Frank becomes the center of attention at a school show-and-tell telling tales of leading an army and his tattoo. Frank and his grandson are alternately depicted in gray and colorful images, to signal distance and acceptance.

MILLARD, Glenda. *Isabella's Garden*. illus. by Rebecca Cool. Candlewick. RTE \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-7636-6016-1. Australia.

Explore the seasonal growth cycle of a garden with lyrical language, rhythm, and rhyme in a cadence reminiscent of "This Is the House That Jack Built." Each page is energized with mixed-media folk art in bright colors and a touch of Picasso-like children's faces.

ROGERS, Gregory. *The Hero of Little Street*. illus. by author. Roaring Brook/Neal Porter. Tr \$17.99. ISBN 978-0-59643-729-6. Australia.

A young boy dodges some bullies by entering the National Art Gallery. When a dog escapes from inside a van Eyck painting, the boy follows the pup into the 17th century through another canvas. Their adventure is told in lively, wordless cartoon style.

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SCOTT, Nathan Kumar, retel. *The Great Race*. illus. by Jagdish Chitara. Tara Books. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-9-3803-4015-9. India.

This Indonesian trickster tale of an overly confident mouse deer who challenges fellow jungle creatures to a race has highly stylized illustrations and a surprise but satisfying ending. The back matter provides information and photographs explaining the traditional art from the state of Gujarat in India.

SERRES, Alain. *I Have the Right to Be a Child*. tr. from French by Helen Mixer. illus. by Aurélia Fronty. Groundwood. Tr \$18.95. ISBN 978-1-5549-8149-6. France.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child's code of rights for children is explored in stunning naïf acrylic illustrations and easy-to-read text. The child narrator's voice, clear and straightforward, brings this important document to life for the youngest reader.

SIF, Birgitta. *Oliver*. illus. by author. Candlewick. RTE \$16.95. ISBN 978-0-7636-6247-9. UK.

Oliver, a bespectacled loner, is happy playing alone or with his puppets. Quirky illustrations in muted browns and greens, with a mouse and future buddy, Olivia, hidden in most spreads, invite multiple readings.

TOLMAN, Marije & Ronald Tolman. *The Island*. illus. by authors. Lemniscaat. Tr \$17.95. ISBN 978-1-9359-5419-4. Netherlands.

Luminescent wordless spreads depict a questing bear setting out, swimming from one extravagant island to another, meeting and traveling with a variety of animal friends until finally finding a violin-playing soul mate.

Grades 3–5

HARTNETT, Sonya. *Sadie and Ratz*. illus. by Ann James. Candlewick. Tr \$14.99. ISBN 978-0-7636-5315-6. Australia.

Young Hannah calls one of her hands Sadie and the other Ratz. Brief chapters and black line drawings reveal Hannah and her hands' mischief, especially when they behave badly with her brother. The unexpected conclusion is humorous and satisfying.

I SAW A PEACOCK WITH A FIERY TALE. illus. by Ramsingh Urveti. Tara Books. Tr \$18.50. ISBN 978-9-38034-014-2. India.

A 17th-century English poem is given new life with multiple meanings through brilliant illustrations and graphic design. Die cuts on each page carry viewers forward and encourage predictions as black-and-white textured drawings offer different perspectives that engage readers.

IBBOTSON, Eva. *One Dog and His Boy*. Scholastic. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-545-35196-6. UK.

In this riveting survival adventure, a boy, his beloved dog, and an endearing cast of homeless animals journey across England to find safe homes. The exciting tale is full of slapstick humor, hair-raising chases, and a satisfying conclusion.

LAIRD, Elizabeth, retel. *Shahnameh: The Persian Book of Kings*. illus. by Shirin Adl. Frances Lincoln. Tr \$24.99. ISBN 978-1-84780-253-8. UK.

A retelling of the classic 10th-century epic poem written over a period of 30 years by the poet Ferdowsi, with its legendary heroes, kings, warriors, demons, and princesses, is made accessible to children in this beautifully designed and illustrated book.

LANTHIER, Jennifer. *The Stamp Collector*. illus. by François Thisdale. Fitzhenry & Whiteside. Tr \$18.95. ISBN 978-1-55455-218-4. Canada.

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Inspired by two Chinese writers, a young prisoner and a guard transcend their circumstances and form a friendship. Inspired by foreign stamps on letters received by the prisoner, they hope for freedom and discover the strength of their stories.

MCKAY, Hilary. *Lulu and the Duck in the Park*. illus. by Priscilla Lamont. Albert Whitman. Tr \$13.99. ISBN 978-0-8075-4808-0. UK.

Lulu sneaks an abandoned duck egg into class knowing her teacher has a strict rule against animals. When the egg begins to hatch, Lulu worries about the consequences. This is a gentle school story generously illustrated, adding to the drama and humor.

MORPURGO, Michael. *Shadow*. Feiwel & Friends. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-312-60659-6. UK.

A man and his mother escape the Taliban in Afghanistan and seek asylum in England but are arrested. While awaiting deportation, Aman's friend Matt, Matt's grandfather, and a courageous spaniel, Shadow, work together to rescue them. This story provides hope for civilians entangled in the complexities and horrors of war.

ROSEN, Michael. *Bananas in My Ears: A Collection of Nonsense Stories, Poems, Riddles, and Rhymes*. illus. by Quentin Blake. Candlewick. RTE \$15.95. ISBN 978-0-7636-6248-6. UK.

Hilarious bits of nonsense about siblings Nat and Anna are divided into sections: Breakfast, Seaside, Doctor, and Bedtime and enhanced by comical illustrations. Children will enjoy getting to know the author and illustrator, both former British Children's Laureates.

THEMERSON, Stefan. *The Table that Ran Away to the Woods*. tr. from Polish. illus. by Franciszka Themerson. Tate. Tr \$10.95. ISBN 978-1-84976-057-7. Poland.

Textured images complement the rhymed and fluidly placed verse about a writing table that escapes and returns to the woods where it takes root. A note explains the historical background of the fable, originally written in Polish and published in Paris.

VAN LEEUWEN, Joke. *Eep!* tr. from Dutch by Bill Nagelkerke. illus. by author. Gecko. pap. \$7.95. ISBN 978-1-877579-07-3. Netherlands.

A birdwatcher and his wife raise an abandoned child who has wings instead of arms. When the bird-child flies off without saying good-bye, the couple search for her and meet other people who have been touched by this unusual creature. Black-and-white drawings add to the book's charm.

VOAKE, Steve. *Hooey Higgins and the Shark*. illus. by Emma Dodson. Candlewick. RTE \$14.99. ISBN 978-0-7636-5782-6. UK.

What better way to earn money than to capture a shark using ketchup. Or display the world's biggest sea urchin masquerading as a World War II mine. Hilarious happenings augmented with exaggerated drawings seem to be the realm of Hooey and his best friend, Twig.

Grades 6–8

ABIRACHED, Zeina. *A Game for Swallows: To Die, to Leave, to Return*. tr. from French by Edward Gauvin. illus. by author. Lerner/Graphic Universe. PLB \$29.27. ISBN 978-0-7613-8568-4. France.

Set in an apartment foyer during the civil war in Lebanon, this story follows Zeini and her brother, who are supported by their neighbors, while they wait for their parents to return home. The black-and-white graphic setting subtly explores the universal effect of conflict, especially on children.

CHADDA, Sarwat. *Savage Fortress*. Scholastic/Arthur Levine. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-545-38516-9. UK.

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When Londoner Ash and his younger sister vacation in India, a powerful, magical gold arrowhead causes them to become involved with demons battling to take over the world. This action-packed adventure novel is woven together with rich Hindu mythology and ancient history.

DE GRAAF, Anne. *Son of a Gun*. tr from Dutch. Eerdmans. pap. \$8. ISBN 978-0-8028-5406-3. Netherlands.

In alternating voices, siblings Nopi and Lucky tell their harrowing stories of abduction and enslavement as child soldiers in Liberia's civil war. Supported by back matter including artwork and writings of former child soldiers, this fast-paced novel holds fast to children's point of view.

DOYLE, Roddy. *Greyhound of a Girl*. Abrams/Amulet. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 978-1-4197-0168-9. UK.

This unusual ghost story involves four generations of women in one family who come together to take a dramatic midnight journey into their past. The distinctive writing with its lilt of Irish dialogue lends authenticity to this haunting family story.

ELLIS, Deborah. *My Name Is Parvana*. Groundwood. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-1-55498-297-4. Canada.

In the last book from "The Breadwinner" series, Parvana, now 15, is helping in a school for girls in Afghanistan. Her fate is revealed as she is imprisoned and interrogated at a Coalition military base. This compelling story provides insight into personal loss during conflicts.

GLEITZMAN, Morris. *Now*. Holt. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-0-8050-9378-0. Australia.

Felix, now 80, is caring for his granddaughter Zelda. She, coping with abandonment and bullying, and he, trying to come to terms with his past, must together face a modern holocaust. A satisfying conclusion to Felix's story started in *Once* and continued in *Then* (though this title stands alone).

SERRANO, Francisco. *La Malinche: The Princess Who Helped Cortés Conquer the Aztec Empire*. tr. from Spanish by Susan Ouriou. illus. by Pablo Serrano. Groundwood. Tr \$18.95. ISBN 978-1-55498-111-3. Canada.

Hernán Cortés gained an advantage during his conquest of the Aztecs when an indigenous slave woman became his translator and ally. What is known of this controversial woman who played a pivotal role is presented in brief chapters with culturally reflective illustrations.

TANAKA, Shelley. *Nobody Knows*. photos by Hirokazu Kore-eda & Kawauchi Rinko. Groundwood. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 978-1-55498-140-3. Canada.

Twelve-year-old Akira must care for his three siblings after they are abandoned by their mother. Invisible to the people around them, forced to exist on the edge of society, they have only one another to turn to for support and hope when tragedy strikes. Illustrated with stills from the film.

Grades 9–12

ELLIS, Deborah. *Kids of Kabul: Living Bravely Through a Never-Ending War*. Groundwood. Tr \$15.95. ISBN 978-1-55498-181-6. Canada.

This informational book includes interviews and photos of Afghan youth since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, a country continually at war. The stories told to the author show how these people have survived with courage and hope even when living with violence and oppression.

MASTER, Irfan. *A Beautiful Lie*. Albert Whitman. Tr \$15.99. ISBN 978-0-8075-0597-7. UK.

Set against the backdrop of the partition of India in 1947, 13-year-old Bilal lies to his dying father, an ardent supporter of a united India, about the impending separation. In spite of the time's violence, Bilal's affection for his father and his supportive community are uplifting.

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WEIN, Elizabeth. *Code Name Verity*. Hyperion/Disney. RTE \$ 16.99. ISBN 978-1-4231-5219-4. UK.

War and espionage, friendship and loyalty are explored in this story of Julie, fighting for her life after being captured by the Nazis, and Maddie, trying to find and save her. Their final meeting tests the verisimilitude and depth of trust and loyalty and love.