

The Outstanding International Booklist is just the ticket to take readers to some faraway places

Librarians are always looking for quality international books for children. After all, books from around the world can transport readers beyond our borders. But of the thousands of books published in our country each year, few are international titles. To highlight titles from other nations, the United States Board on Books for Young People and the Council on Books for Children created their first annual Outstanding International Booklist last year. In addition to providing young readers with appealing selections (many with a distinct cultural flavor), the list aims to introduce kids to outstanding writers and illustrators from other countries, help them see the world through others' eyes, and address topics that are missing from children's literature in the United States.

Although U.S. publishers tend to acquire international books that originally appeared in English-like those from the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand-this year's list also features books from Ireland, India, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Thailand, Malaysia, Vietnam, and South Africa. What's conspicuously missing? Books from Canadian publishers aren't eligible for the list. As for Latin America's many fine offerings, U.S. publishers aren't, unfortunately, buying them. And there aren't many books from Asia and only one from Africa. Despite those omissions, teachers, librarians, and booksellers who are searching for tantalizing new titles for children and teens will still find plenty to choose from. Our committee is proud to present its selection of the best international books published in 2006.

ALMOND, David. Clay. Delacorte. Tr \$15.95. ISBN 0-385-73171-X; PLB \$17.99. ISBN 0-385-90208-5. U.K.

Gr 9 Up-- When Davie, an altar boy, meets the slightly older Stephen Rose, a talented sculptor who believes he can breathe life into his figures and make a monster, the 13-year-old finds evil within himself for the first time. A haunting and extraordinarily well-crafted novel by a master of atmosphere.

BARTH-GRÜZINGER, Inge. Something Remains. tr. from German by Anthea Bell. Hyperion. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 0-7868-3880-9. Germany.

Gr 6-8-- This powerful narrative is based on research the author and her students did into their town's Jewish community during the 1930s. As the Nazi Party gains strength in the small German town, life changes drastically for Erich and his family. The author's note makes the story even more meaningful.

BONDOUX, Anne-Laure. The Killer's Tears. tr. from French by Y. Maudet. Delacorte. Tr \$15.95. ISBN 0-385-73293-7; PLB \$17.99. ISBN 0-385-90314-6. France.

Gr 9 Up-- When Angel Allegria murders young Paolo Poloverdo's parents on their secluded farm in remote southern Chile, the pair continue to live together in what becomes a caring "father-and-son" relationship. Winner of France's Prix Sorcières, this beautifully written, thought-provoking, and disturbing novel explores important questions about the very essence of humanity.

BROWNE, Anthony. *Silly Billy*. illus. by author. Candlewick. RTE \$15.99. ISBN 0-7636-3124-8. U.K.

K-Gr 2-- Worrying about everything keeps Billy awake until Grandma gives him some Guatemalan worry dolls to help manage his anxieties. More complications develop as Billy begins to worry about the worries of the worry dolls. Browne's vividly colored surreal artwork and varied page layouts are extra-special treats for the eye.

BUTTERWORTH, Chris. *Sea Horse: The Shyest Fish in the Sea*. illus. by John Lawrence. Candlewick. RTE \$16.99. ISBN 0-7636-2989-8. U.K.

K-Gr 2-- A brief text covers the physical characteristics of the Barbour's sea horse and its food habits, movement, predators, and life cycle, including mating and the role of the male in carrying the eggs. Using vinyl engravings, printed wood textures, and watercolor washes, Lawrence creates a wonderfully detailed undersea setting.

DALY, Niki. *Happy Birthday, Jamela!* illus. by author. Farrar. Tr \$16. ISBN 0-374-32842-0. U.K. by arrangement with The Inkman, Cape Town, South Africa.

K-Gr 2-- Jamela's disappointment at having to buy practical school shoes instead of glittery princess ones presents a universal dilemma with a clever and satisfying solution provided. The illustrations sparkle with the energy of life in a modern, urban Cape Town setting.

D'HARCOURT, Claire. *Masterpieces Up Close: Western Painting from the 14th to 20th Centuries*. tr. from French by Shoshanna Kirk. Chronicle. Tr \$22.95. ISBN 0-8118-5403-5. France.

Gr 6-8-- An exquisitely crafted look at 21 of the most famous paintings created between 1305 and 1964. Masterpieces are introduced to young readers in ways that will make them engage critically with art. Brief author biographies and end matter that includes a list of where the originals can be found help contextualize the works.

FALLER, Régis. *The Adventures of Polo*. illus. by author. Roaring Brook/A Neal Porter Bk. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 1-59643-160-1. France.

K-Gr 2-- The episodic, imaginative voyages of Polo the dog are retold in this graphic novel from France. Polo travels by spaceship, boat, and balloon. He fries sausages on lava and frees a captive polar bear all in a vibrant wordless narrative that will appeal to readers of all ages.

FOREMAN, Michael. *Mia's Story: A Sketchbook of Hopes and Dreams*. illus. by author. Candlewick. Tr \$15.99. ISBN 0-7636-3063-2. U.K.

Gr 3-5-- Mia and her family live next to a recycling dump near the Andes Mountains, and each day her father takes found items into the city to sell. Foreman's illustrations add information and emotion to this tale of how Mia turns personal loss into a flourishing business that helps her family.

GRAVETT, Emily. *Wolves*. illus. by author. S & S. RTE \$15.95. ISBN 1-4169-1491-9. U.K.

K-Gr 2-- Rabbit is unaware that one of the menacing animals he's been reading about in his library book, *Wolves*, is intent on devouring him. In an alternative ending for "more sensitive readers," the wolf is a vegetarian, the two animals share a jam sandwich-and live happily ever after as friends.

GREIF, Jean-Jacques. *The Fighter*. tr. from French by author. Bloomsbury. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 1-58234-891-X. France.

Gr 9 Up-- This hard-hitting narrative based on the life of Maurice Garbarz follows a young Jewish boxer from Warsaw to Paris and finally into the nightmare world of Auschwitz. The authentic, graphic detail makes this a story for the mature reader. A hard novel to put down.

HA, Song. *Indebted as Lord Chom/No Nhu Chua Chom: The Legend of the Forbidden Street*. tr. from Vietnamese by William Smith. illus. by Ly Thu Ha. East West Discovery. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 0-9701654-6-3. Vietnam.

Gr 3-5-- This bilingual telling of a Vietnamese legend develops the universal theme of an infant child disguised in humble surroundings, who is revealed eventually as king. The colorful illustrations introduce readers to traditional Vietnamese rural life.

HAGERUP, Klaus. *Markus and Diana*. tr. from Norwegian by Tara Chace. Front St. Tr \$17.95. ISBN 1-932425-59-4. Norway.

Gr 6-8-- Dubbed Wormster by his classmates, precocious, imaginative Markus, a shy, sixth-grade outsider, writes fan letters to a celebrity while posing as a millionaire playboy. A supporting cast of well-developed characters joins Markus in a coming-of-age story enlivened by the unexpected and liberally laced with humor.

HARTNETT, Sonya. *Surrender*. Candlewick. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 0-7636-2768-2. Australia.

Gr 9 Up-- A psychological thriller for mature readers that's told in two voices-with the focus entirely on Gabriel, a 20-year-old who is dying. The nature of the second character, Finnegan, is left to the reader's own interpretation. This glimpse into a tortured psyche is expertly narrated with language that's both rich and complex.

HENDERSON, Kathy. *Lugalbanda: The Boy Who Got Caught Up in a War*. illus. by Jane Ray. Candlewick. RTE \$16.99. ISBN 0-7636-2782-8. U.K.

Gr 3-5-- Perhaps the oldest known stories, these two combined tales from ancient Iran tell how young prince Lugalbanda follows his seven older brothers to war, falls ill, befriends a bird, and finally helps end the fighting by taking a message to Inanu. Handsomely illustrated, the book includes background information about the Sumerians.

HERRICK, Steven. *By the River*. Front St. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 1-932425-72-1. Australia.

Gr 9 Up-- Fourteen-year-old Harry Hodby's perceptive view on life in a small Australian town in 1962 is presented through a series of rhythmic prose poems. In this exceptional example of the verse novel, time and place are evoked and Harry's youthful voice is authentically rendered in poems notable for their spare beauty.

HINTON, Nigel. *Time Bomb*. Tricycle. Tr \$15.95. ISBN 1-58246-186-4. U.K.

Gr 6-8-- Born in London in 1941 and familiar with bombsites existing after World War II, Hinton has crafted a riveting tale of four friends who discover an unexploded bomb in 1949. Narrated from an adult perspective, this suspenseful coming-of-age story details the traumatic incidents following the boys' discovery.

ICHIKAWA, Satomi. *My Father's Shop*. illus. by author. Kane/Miller. Tr \$15.95. ISBN 1-929132-99-9. France.

K-Gr 2-- In this good-humored book, alive with action rendered in vivid, colorful paintings, Mustafa drapes himself in a rug from his father's Moroccan rug shop and followed by a rooster, parades through the market. Tourists, enjoying the spectacle, delightedly share how roosters sound when they crow in their respective countries.

JANSEN, Hanna. *Over a Thousand Hills I Walk with You*. tr. from German by Elizabeth D. Crawford. Carolrhoda. PLB \$16.95. ISBN 1-57505-927-4. Germany.

Gr 9 Up-- A personal account of genocide in Rwanda, framed by the patient encouragement of the author to help her adopted daughter, Jeanne d'Arc Umubyeyi, come to terms with memories of the world she lost in April, 1994, when she was eight and Hutu neighbors massacred her family and destroyed her home.

KELLEHER, Victor. *Dogboy*. Front St. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 1-932425-76-4. Australia.

Gr 9 Up-- The Boy, raised by a dog and shunned by people, lives in two worlds and embarks on a quest to discover who he really is. His gift of divining water sources offers moral choices and insight into the value of friendship and loyalty over riches and fame.

KUIJER, Guus. *The Book of Everything*. tr. from Dutch by John Nieuwenhuizen. Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Bks. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 0-439-74918-2. The Netherlands.

Gr 6-8-- Thomas's deeply religious father is also demanding and downright abusive. But chats with Jesus and loving neighbors help Thomas as he, his mother, and his sister slowly begin to take charge of their situation. Set in postwar 1951, the healing country is a perfect background to this poignant yet upbeat tale.

LAIRD, Elizabeth & Sonia Nimr. *A Little Piece of Ground*. Haymarket. pap. \$9.95. ISBN 1-931859-38-8. U.K.

Gr 9 Up-- Details of life in Israeli-occupied Ramallah are told through the eyes of 12-year-old Karim, whose Palestinian family chafes at being cooped up in its apartment during curfews that last for days. Even playing soccer turns dangerous when an unexpected curfew catches Karim too far from home.

LANAGAN, Margo. *White Time*. HarperCollins/Eos. Tr \$15.99. ISBN 0-06-074393-X; PLB \$16.89. ISBN 0-06-074394-8. Australia.

Gr 9 Up-- Ten provocative and surreal short stories explore a variety of other worlds, dimensions, and states of being. A range of emotions and experiences are deftly woven into the themes of each story. Glorious, compelling prose proves challenging yet unforgettable.

LAT. *Kampung Boy*. illus. by author. Roaring Brook/First Second. pap. \$12.95. ISBN 1-59643-121-0. Malaysia.

Gr 6-8-- A free-spirited boy grows up in a remote Malaysian village, fishing and swimming in the river, going to Arabic school, caring for his younger brother and sister, and running wild with his friends. Humorous, but with its dark sides, too, this graphic novel reflects the cartoonist's own childhood.

MAHY, Margaret. *Down the Back of the Chair*. illus. by Polly Dunbar. Clarion. RTE \$16. ISBN 0-618-69395-5. U.K.

K-Gr 2-- Unexpected mayhem ensues when father looks "down the back of the chair" for his lost keys. Detailed illustrations fairly burst off the page as increasingly unbelievable items pop out from the chair, with "Uncle Bill's long lost will" providing quite a satisfactory ending to this rollicking rhyme from New Zealand.

NAIDOO, Beverley. *Web of Lies*. HarperCollins/Amistad. Tr \$15.99. ISBN 0-06-076075-3; PLB \$16.89. ISBN 0-06-076077-X. U.K.

Gr 6-8-- Femi and Sade, Nigerian political refugees, make their way in urban London, struggling with the universal issues of fitting in, resisting bullying, yet feeling invisible in their school and neighborhood. Strong modern realism examines issues of asylum.

PARKINSON, Siobhán. *Something Invisible*. Roaring Brook. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 1-59643-123-7. Ireland.

Gr 6-8-- Jake, 11, is just coming to terms with being a stepson, a big brother, and a friend when tragedy unbalances his world. This finely drawn story of family and community by an important Irish writer transcends its setting to appeal to readers anywhere.

PAUSEWANG, Gudrun. *Traitor*. tr. from German by Rachel Ward. Carolrhoda. PLB \$16.95. ISBN 0-8225-6195-6. Germany.

Gr 9 Up-- Toward the end of World War II, Anna hides a Russian prisoner of war near her rural German house. Personal struggles (is she a traitor?) and family loyalties (her older brother is a soldier; the younger, a member of Hitler Youth) torment her as she offers lifesaving care to the enemy soldier.

PIENKOWSKI, Jan. *The Fairy Tales*. tr. from French & German by David Walser. illus. by Jan Pienkowski. Viking. Tr \$19.99. ISBN 0-670-06189-1. U.K.

Gr 3-5-- Intricate silhouette paper cuts with occasional bits of background color illustrate four tales of Grimm and Perrault in their traditional versions: "Sleeping Beauty," "Snow White," "Hansel and Gretel," and "Cinderella." Smoothly told and presented in a gorgeously designed package, this is an ideal gift edition.

PIN, Isabel. *When I Grow Up, I Will Win the Nobel Peace Prize*. tr. from German by Nancy Seitz. illus. by author. Farrar. Tr \$16. ISBN 0-374-38313-8. Germany.

Gr 3-5-- The ethics we teach young children often contrast with their ordinary, flawed behaviors. The picture book's text and comic illustrations work seamlessly to portray the contrast in talk and action until at the end, the protagonist takes a first step toward working for his ideals.

PRATCHETT, Terry. Wintersmith. (A Tiffany Aching Adventure). HarperTempest. Tr \$16.99. ISBN 0-06-089031-2; PLB \$17.89. ISBN 0-06-089032-0. U.K.

Gr 6-8-- Thirteen-year-old witch-in-training Tiffany Aching unwittingly dances with Winter at the dance of seasons. Winter is love struck and sends an unending winter to the land. Tiffany, aided by veteran witches, the Wee Free Men, and her friend Roland, free imprisoned Summer and seasons return in this highly humorous adventure fantasy.

RAO, Sandhya. My Mother's Sari. illus. by Nina Sabnani. North-South. Tr \$14.95. ISBN 0-7358-2101-1. India.

K-Gr 2-- Indian children playfully use their mothers' beautiful saris as a train, a stage backdrop, a river, a rope, a hiding place, a blanket, or a handkerchief-ultimately, the sari expresses the love of mother and child. Dramatic photographs and acrylics on lightly stylized paper illustrate the simple text. Endpapers demonstrate how to wrap the long sari.

RASMUSSEN, Halfdan. The Ladder. tr. from Danish by Marilyn Nelson. illus. by Pierre Pratt. Candlewick. RTE \$17.99 ISBN 0-7636-2282-6. Denmark.

K-Gr 2-- Nonsense verse from a beloved Danish poet has been skillfully translated into rhyming couplets that relate the ladder's encounters with those who ascend it and disappear. Full-page, vibrant illustrations contain foldout pages that elongate the climbing scenes, and split pages enable all parties to reappear en masse at the end.

REEVE, Philip. Larklight: A Rousing Tale of Dauntless Pluck in the Farthest Reaches of Space. illus. by David Wyatt. Bloomsbury. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 1-59990-020-3. U.K.

Gr 3-5-- Aided by an array of pirates and a variety of otherworldly creatures, Art and Myrtle travel through the universe to save their home and rescue their family. Their fast-paced adventures include the vanquishing of giant spiders and evil villains as they try to save an alternate Victorian London in this fleet, sci-fi adventure.

SEDGWICK, Marcus. The Foreshadowing. Random/Wendy Lamb Bks. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 0-385-74646-6; PLB \$18.99. ISBN 0-385-90881-4. U.K.

Gr 9 Up-- World War I is personal to 17-year-old Sasha, who foresees the deaths of her two brothers. After her older brother dies, Sasha pretends to be a nurse and travels to France to try to prevent the death of her younger brother. Historical fiction with ESP creates a riveting story.

SINGH, Vandana. Younguncle Comes to Town. illus. by B. M. Kamath. Viking. Tr \$14.99. ISBN 0-670-06051-8. India.

Gr 3-5-- Younguncle uses humorous, creative problem-solving techniques to find the stolen cow of a poor milkman, trick the train-station pickpockets, locate Ancient Uncle's stolen horse, and save his sister from an arranged marriage "worse than death." This chapter book introduction to Indian culture and lore includes small black-and-white illustrations.

VEJJAJIVA, Jane. The Happiness of Kati. tr. from Thai by author & Prudence Borthwick. S & S/Atheneum. Tr \$15.95. ISBN 1-4169-1788-8. Thailand.

Gr 6-8-- In this gentle story of love and loss set in contemporary Thailand, nine-year-old Kati is reunited with her mother, who is dying of Lou Gehrig's

disease, and learns why she was left at the age of four to be raised by her grandparents in their ancestral home.

WINTERSON, Jeanette. *Tanglewreck*. Bloomsbury. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 1-58234-919-3. U.K.

Gr 6-8-- Eleven-year-old Silver of Tanglewreck Mansion lost her family and the Timekeeper (clock) in a Time Tornado. Wicked Abel Darkwater and evil Regalia Mason scheme to possess the Timekeeper and become rulers of the Universe; however, they are thwarted by Gabriel and other Throwbacks who save Silver and Time.

ZUSAK, Markus. *The Book Thief*. Knopf. Tr \$16.95. ISBN 0-375-83100-2; PLB \$18.99. ISBN 0-375-93100-7. Australia.

Gr 9 Up-- Liesel, an ordinary girl who lives in Germany during World War II, rises to extraordinary behavior as she helps a Jewish man hide in her cellar and learns to read and love words. She discovers that "without words, the Führer is nothing." Narrated by Death, this entirely original book will find its place in the canon of literature about the Holocaust.

[The Outstanding International Booklist Committee](#)

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By Kathleen Isaacs

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