

Presenting the **2016 USBBY Outstanding International Books** List



Welcome Disruptions

BY TERRY HONG

AS THE DOMESTIC PUBLISHING INDUSTRY continues to respond to the resounding battle cry of “We Need Diverse Books,” the United States Board on Books for Young People (USBBY) has been working assiduously for over a decade to promote international titles among librarians, educators, parents, and readers. The 2016 Outstanding International Books (OIB) list moves far beyond our United States borders—geographically, culturally, ethnically—with 42 extraordinary titles from around the globe, with stories from or set in India, Italy, Korea, Laos, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, Turkey, and more.

This year’s OIB list is all about disruption—in all the best ways. So many of these books refuse to be predictable, disrupting expectations of characters, settings, and narratives. From a boy who teaches his father the power of kindness, to new friends who explore deep below the surface, to war mementos that hold surprising truths, to unfamiliar myths and legends, to walls that reveal almost a millennium of history, perspectives are challenged, subverted, and broadened in unanticipated new ways. Humor, empathy, and creativity all pave the way toward encouraging readers to search beyond boundaries, become more engaged global citizens, and just enjoy good books.

While reading levels are suggested throughout, never let those guidelines deter you from enjoying all sorts of stories. Explore, experiment, discover, disrupt...and grow. Outstanding International Books can do all that and more.

Book illustration by Sydney Smith from *Sidewalk Flowers*, ©2015 by JonArno Lawson, illustrations ©2015 by Sydney Smith. Reprinted with permission of Groundwood Books Ltd.



PreS–Gr2

DALY, Niki. *Thank You, Jackson: How One Little Boy Makes a BIG Difference.* illus. by Jude Daly. Frances Lincoln. UK/set in an unnamed African country.

Jackson the donkey refuses to move his load no matter how much the farmer threatens him. The farmer's son interrupts his father's violent intentions and shows how kindness begets cooperative results.

DE KINDER, Jan. *Red.* tr. from Dutch by Laura Watkinson. illus. by author. Eerdmans. Belgium.

Striking red, white, and black illustrations mirror the emotions created by an innocuous comment that escalates into bullying within a school community. The students' choices when confronted with their behavior create a sensitive and hopeful narrative.

DEACON, Alexis. *I Am Henry Finch.* illus. by Viviane Schwartz. Candlewick. UK. With colorful illustrations that showcase birds' bodies using human fingerprints—a clever statement about uniquely individual identity—adorable Henry's existential forays exploring greatness invite both simple enjoyment and deeper investigation.

DUBUC, Marianne. *The Bus Ride.* tr. from French by Yvette Ghione. illus. by author. Kids Can. Canada.

Clara's bus ride to her grandmother's house becomes a thrilling adventure as she meets all manner of animals and makes several friends in this wonderfully whimsical, slyly playful tale.

DUMONT, Jean-François. *I Am a Bear.* tr. from French by Leslie Matthews. illus. by author. Eerdmans. France.

A homeless bear is either invisible to or ignored by those within the hustling, bustling city until his gloomy outlook is disrupted by a young girl who sees and recognizes him—as a teddy bear—which is no small thing.

ELSCHNER, Géraldine. *Like a Wolf.* tr. from French. illus. by Antoine Guilloppé. Minedition. Hong Kong/orig. Germany. Portrayed through stark laser-cut black-and-white illustrations, the fate of a large dog hangs in the balance between human kindness and human fear. Will the dog remain in a shelter for life, or will someone look beyond appearances to see the waiting friend beneath?

KOBALD, Irena. *My Two Blankets.* illus. by Freya Blackwood. HMH. Australia. After moving to a new country, the young protagonist feels that the language of her home is like a warm, soft blanket, while the new language falls on her like a cold waterfall. As familiarity grows, she realizes that her past and present both envelop her like two blankets.

LAWSON, JonArno. *Sidewalk Flowers.* illus. by Sydney Smith. Groundwood. Canada. A girl in red gathers flowers from the most

unlikely spots as she walks the city streets. While her accompanying father is oblivious to the world around them, she shares her blooms in random acts of kindness. An evocative, wordless reminder of how compassion brings color to the world.

LEE, JiHyeon. *Pool.* illus. by author. Chronicle. Korea.

Swimming has never been more glorious than in this oversize, wordless display about the enchanting world two new friends discover when they meet at a crowded pool. By diving in, they share the breathtaking haven below the water's surface.

MESCHENMOSER, Sebastian. *Mr. Squirrel and the Moon.* tr. from German by David Henry Wilson. illus. by author. North-South. Germany.

A bizarre chain of events ensue when Mr. Squirrel becomes convinced that the moon has somehow fallen from the sky and perched on his tree. A superbly illustrated, wonderfully clever, ridiculously hilarious story.

ORAL, Feridun. *The Red Apple.* illus. by author. Minedition. Hong Kong/orig. Turkey. Amid the muted colors of the woods in win-





ter, a hungry rabbit finds a red apple too high in a tree to reach. It is joined by a mouse, a bear, and a fox, and this unlikely menagerie uses teamwork to reach—and share—the juicy reward.

ROBERTON, Fiona. *A Tale of Two Beasts.* illus. by author. Kane Miller. UK.
Just who is the beast? In part 1, a girl rescues a squirrel and cares for him, but in part 2, the squirrel escapes and tells his version of his captivity. This funny, thought-provoking British story exquisitely demonstrates the importance of understanding multiple perspectives.

STEVEN, Kenneth. *Why Dogs Have Wet Noses.* tr. from Norwegian by author. illus. by Øyvind Torseter. Enchanted Lion. Norway.
This clever retelling of a familiar tale offers a humorous twist that explains why dogs have such wet noses. Innovative Noah fills his ark with animals during a massive flood, but the boat spouts a leak, and the dog's nose provides the fitting solution.

GRADES 3–5

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL UK. *Dreams of Freedom: In Words and Pictures.* illus. by various artists. Frances Lincoln. UK.
What does freedom mean? Powerful quotations from international human rights champions are accompanied by dazzling double-spread illustrations from 18 internationally acclaimed artists. The result is a feast for the senses that also inspires self-actualization.

BARMAN, Adrienne. *Creaturepedia: Welcome to the Greatest Show on Earth.* illus. by author. Wide-Eyed. Switzerland.
Diverse creatures from all over the world are categorized in ingenious, unexpected ways: by various physical attributes, abili-

ties to live in some particular environment, family relationships, and more.

BUITRAGO, Jairo. *Two White Rabbits.* tr. from Spanish by Elisa Amado. illus. by Rafael Yockteng. Groundwood. Canada/set in Mexico.

Hope and hardship coexist in this perilous trek of an immigrant man and his young daughter in search of a better life across the border. Haunting, digitally rendered illustrations in shades of blue and brown achingly depict the harsh journey ahead.

CHANCHANI, Vishakha. *The House That Sonabai Built.* photos by Stephen P. Huyler. Tulika. India.

Out of lonely isolation, Sonabai, a woman in rural India, creates her own community—in clay. Decades later, she is recognized as an innovative sculptor, inspiring and teaching her unusual methods to new generations of artists. Full-color photographs showcase Sonabai's extraordinary work.

FOREMAN, Michael. *The Tortoise and the Soldier: A Story of Courage and Friendship in World War I.* illus. by author. Holt. UK.

While serving in the Royal Navy during World War I, Henry Friston adopts a tortoise that becomes the ship's secret mascot and Henry's lifelong companion. Photos, watercolor paintings, and Henry's diary entries enhance this personal story of courage and survival.

ISABELLA, Jude. *The Red Bicycle: The Extraordinary Story of One Ordinary Bicycle.* illus. by Simone Shin. Kids Can. Canada/set in Canada and West Africa.

A Canadian boy donates "Big Red," his beloved but outgrown bicycle, which then gets shipped to West Africa, where it embarks on a unique journey that changes the lives of its many subsequent owners.

NIIMI, Nankichi. *Gon, the Little Fox.* tr. from Japanese by Mariko Shii Gharbi. illus. by Genjiro Mita. Museyon. Japan.

In this nuanced retelling of a Japanese folktale, Gon the Little Fox finds that even his best intentions can't prevent what his actions have put into motion as his theft of an eel results in tragedy.

PARR, Maria. *Adventures with Waffles.* tr. from Norwegian by Guy Puzey. illus. by Kate Forrester. Candlewick. Norway.

Cautious Trille and his fearlessly independent best friend Lena, both nine, share poignant and hilarious adventures as next-door neighbors in a small Norwegian village. Amid all the pranks and the plates of waffles they consume, their love for one another shines through.

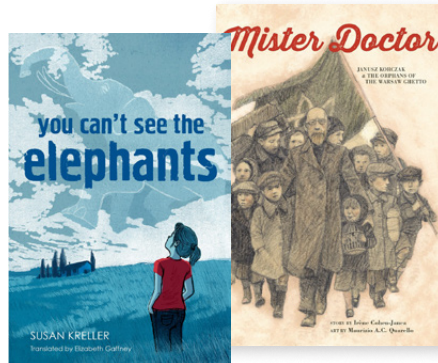
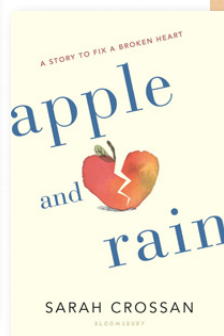
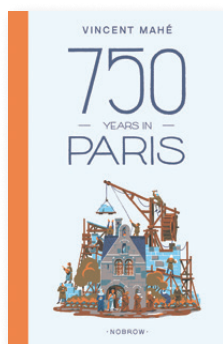
PRÉVOT, Franck. *Wangari Maathai: The Woman Who Planted Millions of Trees.* tr. from French by Dominique Clément. illus. by Aurélia Fronty. Charlesbridge. France/set in Kenya.

Expressionistic paintings beautifully depict the lush setting created by Wangari Maathai and the women of the Green Belt Movement, who planted millions of trees in Kenya. The biography captures Maathai's determination to fight the authoritative government and shows that one person can indeed change the world.

GRADES 6–8

AGARD, John. *Book.* illus. by Neil Packer. Candlewick. UK.

In this "life story" told in a lighthearted tone, Book recounts its development from the pictogram to the codex, ending with a conversation with its friendly rival, the ebook. The inclusion of striking black-and-



white images and bookish quotations help readers envision and appreciate Book's distinguished history.

ALMOND, David et al. *The Great War: Stories Inspired by Items from the First World War.* illus. by Jim Kay. Candlewick. UK.

Authors from around the world respond to 11 focal objects associated with war. The resulting collection—eclectic and resonant—captures the human price of war for those who fought, those who remembered, and those left behind. Black-and-white illustrations by British artist Kay add visual depth to this thoughtful compilation.

COHEN-JANCA, Irène. *Mister Doctor: Janusz Korczak & the Orphans of the Warsaw Ghetto.* tr. from Italian by Paula Ayer. illus. by Maurizio A.C. Quarello. Annick. Italy/set in Poland.

A child narrates the final years of Warsaw's Jewish orphans under the care of Dr. Korczak. As the Holocaust looms, the remarkable doctor uses the arts to keep up the children's spirits despite their horrific circumstances. Softly textured drawings reflect courage and hope.

CROSSAN, Sarah. *Apple and Rain: A Story to Fix a Broken Heart.* Bloomsbury. UK.

Apple was just three when her mother

left her in her grandmother's care. Eleven years later, her mother returns with a surprise—10-year-old sister Rain. As Apple struggles to care for and unite her complicated family, she discovers the healing qualities of writing.

KRELLER, Susan. *You Can't See the Elephants.* tr. from German by Elizabeth Gaffney. Putnam. Germany/set in the U.S.

While spending the summer in her grandparents' small town, 13-year-old Mascha endeavors to protect two abused children from their father, but her faulty plans spiral out of control. This thought-provoking novel arrives stateside with international awards and accolades.

LEWIS, Gill. *Moon Bear.* illus. by Alessandro Gotardo. S. & S./Atheneum. UK/set in Laos. Twelve-year-old Tam is tricked into a city job to support his desperate family: he must milk the bladders of caged bears for their priceless bile. When a new cub arrives, Tam vows to save him. This compelling story of cruelty and compassion provides a nuanced view into Laos and the real-life plight of moon bears.

MAHÉ, Vincent. *750 Years in Paris.* illus. by author. Nobrow. UK/set in France.

A single building in Paris reveals 750 years of French history from the 13th century to the present. If walls could talk, this would be it: a superb concept, remarkably implemented.

MORPURGO, Michael. *Half a Man.* illus. by Gemma O'Callaghan. Candlewick. UK.

A grandson learns how his grandfather came to be horribly disfigured after his Navy ship was torpedoed during World War II in this touching, superbly told tale of the importance of being truly seen.

NIELSEN, Susin. *We Are All Made of Molecules.* Tundra (simultaneous U.S. publication by Random/Wendy Lamb Bks.). Canada.

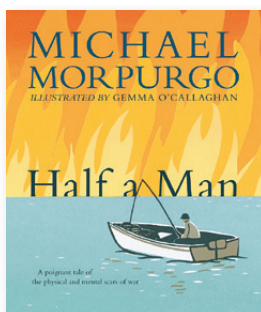
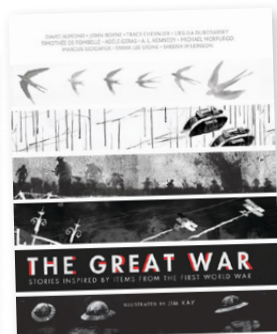
Two families collide when gifted but socially inept 13-year-old Stewart and his father move in with 14-year-old dimwitted but popular Ashley and her mother. Between surviving school, Pavlov's Theory, and a cat named Schrödinger, Stewart finds that the unexpectedly colliding molecules create an unlikely new family.

POWERS, J.L. *Amina (Through My Eyes).* Allen & Unwin (distributed by IPG). Australia/set in Somalia.

For two decades, civil war has raged through Somalia. In 2011 Mogadishu, Amina's world crumbles when the government arrests her artist father and rebel forces kidnap her brother. Amina's own secret art on city walls inspires hope and resistance in this realistic, resonating story.

SMITH, Dan. *My Brother's Secret.* Scholastic/Chicken House. UK/set in Germany.

Based on the actual existence of Edelweiss Pirates—groups of young people who defied the Hitler Youth—12-year-old Karl discovers that his older brother Stefan wears the Edelweiss badge of membership. Karl's discovery of Stefan's secret creates internal



The 2016 USBBY Outstanding International Books Committee: Terry Hong (Chair), Park City, UT; Olga Bukhina, New York; Debra Gold, Beechwood, OH; Holly Johnson, Cincinnati; Mona Kerby, Westminster, MD; Petros Panaou, Boise, ID; Carol Sibley, Dilworth, MN; Ed Sullivan, Oak Ridge, TN; Barbara Ward, Pullman, WA.



turmoil until he begins to understand how restrictive his country has become.

THOR, Annika. *Deep Sea.* tr. from Swedish by Linda Schenck. Delacorte. Sweden.

Stephie, the older of two Jewish sisters sent from their Viennese home to Sweden during World War II, works hard to continue her education as she worries about her growing estrangement from her younger sibling and their parents' safety in Poland.

TOLSTIKOVA, Dasha. *A Year Without Mom.* illus. by author. Groundwood. Canada/set in Russia.

Set against the backdrop of political upheaval in 1990s Russia, 12-year-old Dasha navigates life in Moscow while her mother spends an unexpected year in the United States. Based on the author's personal experiences, this delightful, spirited saga captures the essence of a girl on the edge of adolescence.

GRADES 9–12

ARNAKTAUYOK, Germaine & Gyu Oh. *My Name Is Arnaktauyok: The Life and Art of Germaine Arnaktauyok.* illus. by Germaine Arnaktauyok. Inhabit. Canada.

Snippets of Inuit artist Arnaktauyok's life accompany her stunning pen and ink, colored pencil, or aquatint etchings, which reflect the values and legends of her people. The book is visually appealing, and Arnaktauyok's revealing reminiscences, as well as comments by professionals familiar with her work, create a remarkable repository of an astounding artist.

BENWELL, Sarah. *The Last Leaves Falling.* S. & S. UK/set in Japan.

Seventeen-year-old Abe Sora, recently diagnosed with ALS (Lou Gehrig's disease), searches for guidance and understanding

through the wisdom of the Japanese samurai and two friends he discovers on the Internet.

DE HEER, Margreet. *Religion: A Discovery in Comics.* tr. from Dutch by Margreet de Heer and Dan Schiff. illus. by author. NBM. Netherlands.

A lively, intelligent, and witty survey of the world's major religions. Dutch comics artist De Heer is openly curious and questioning but remains respectful in this entertaining, informative, and provocative overview.

DRAGT, Tonke. *The Letter for the King.* tr. from Dutch by Laura Watkinson. Scholastic/David Fickling Bks. Netherlands.

Sixteen-year-old Tiuri puts aside his dream of knighthood and ventures across the Great Mountains to deliver a secret letter to King Unauwen. Written by Indonesian-born Dutch author Tonke, this timeless classic about friendship, loyalty, and honor arrives in English translation over half a century after its original 1962 Dutch publication.

LABOUCANE-BENSON, Patti. *The Outside Circle: A Graphic Novel.* illus. by Kelly Mellings. House of Anansi. Canada.

Pete, an Aboriginal Canadian teen, is caught in a destructive downward spiral until he finds hopeful redemption through a special program that relies on role play, traditional ceremonies, and healing circles to address his historical and personal trauma.

MCKAY, Sharon E. *Prison Boy.* Annick. Canada/set in an unnamed developing country.

From the moment Kai arrives at the orphanage, Pax, the oldest, becomes Kai's protector. Forced onto the streets by tragic circumstances, Pax is the unwitting pawn in an act of violence that results in his tortuous imprisonment. Skillfully crafted, this powerful story depicts the victimization of desperate children.

SKRYPUCH, Marsha Forchuk. *Dance of the Banished.* Pajama. Canada/set in Turkey and Canada.

Just before the onset of World War I, a teenage Alevi Kurd couple from Anatolia (modern-day Turkey) is separated in order to survive. Ali goes to Canada for work; both hope Zeynep will eventually join him. Those reading this novel based on actual events will discover that the couple's fate depends on how each is perceived by those around them. ■

The Outstanding International Books (OIB) list debuted in 2006. Each year, books are selected by a committee appointed from the membership of USBBY, the United States section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY). Over 450 books published or released in the United States in 2015 were considered to create the 2016 list, representing exceptional literature from around the world. The list promotes the best of international children's literature, introduces young people to outstanding authors and illustrators from other countries, and helps children and young people in the United States to see the world from diverse perspectives. The list 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. For additional information and to access all OIB lists, visit www.usbby.org.