1991

***LAJM* Bibliography: Multi-cultural Sources for the Study of Historical Fiction and Non-fiction**

Miriam Bat-Ami

Amy Birman

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/lajm>

Recommended Citation

Bat-Ami, Miriam and Birman, Amy (1991) "*LAJM* Bibliography: Multi-cultural Sources for the Study of Historical Fiction and Non-fiction," *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*: Vol. 7: Iss. 2, Article 8.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.9707/2168-149X.1639>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Language Arts Journal of Michigan* by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

LA/JM BIBLIOGRAPHY: MULTI-CULTURAL SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF HISTORICAL FICTION AND NON- FICTION

Miriam Bat-Ami and Amy Birman

The following annotated bibliography has been compiled from a variety of bibliographies and from personal sources. It is by no means a comprehensive listing. Rather, readers should see this list as a good starter. Included are picture books not traditionally used in 4th through 8th grade classrooms. Ways these texts can be incorporated into upper grades are described in an accompanying article.

The following bibliographies are particularly useful for teachers seeking historical and non-fiction resources for their classrooms:

Adamson, Lynda. *A Reference Guide to Historical Fiction for Children and Young Adults*. New York: Greenwood, 1987.

Jeff-Simpson, Mary, ed. *Adventures with Books: A Booklist for Pre K-Grade 6*. 9th ed. Urbana, IL: NCTE, 1989.

The April/May yearly issues of *Social Education* which include an annotated bibliography of "Notable Children's Trade Books in the Field of Social Studies."

The annotated bibliography of children's and young adult books with a multicultural emphasis published by the Cooperative Children's Book Center (herein referred to as CCBC), University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Cobblestone (an entertaining and educational children's monthly magazine devoted to history studies).

When I have used an annotated entry from one of these texts in the following bibliography, I have notated accordingly.

Ackerman, Karen. *Song and Dance Man*. [Picture Book, K-3] New York: Alfred Knopf, 1988.

A story about an old vaudeville star who, as a warm Grandfather, performs before his grandchildren. The book offers a child a glimpse into "the good old days" while it explains vaudeville. Illustrations by Stephen Gammell (Caldecott winner) convey the colorful charm of performance, while their hazy effect reminds one of memories. This is a wonderful book for giving children a sense of history and the joy that comes from intimacy between grandchildren and grandparents. **Suggested activities:** Research on vaudeville, personal interviews with those who saw vaudeville, creation of a vaudeville piece for performance.

Adoff, Arnold. *All the Colors of the Race: Poems*. [K-8] New York: Lothrop, 1982.

"A collection of free form poems written from the point of view of a biracial child is a celebration of heritage, identity and individuality. The poems, which can either be read separately or as a continuous narrative, are accompanied by striking brown-tone illustration" (CCBC). **Companion Piece:** *How My Parents Learned to Eat*.

Armstrong, Nancy M. *Navajo Long Walk*. [4-7] Billings, Montana: Council for Indian Education, 1983.

"The story of the Navajo's forced march to Fort Sumner is told by a Navajo boy" (Cobblestone, July '89). **Companion pieces:** *Sing Down the Moon* and *Little House on the Prairie*. **Suggested activities:** Finding and discussing the differences and similarities between the forced march from a girl's point of view and a boy's point of view; discussing differences in books themselves and what the authors want to show about history; examining ways Indians are perceived from an outsider's point of view.

Ashabranner, Brent. *To Live in Two Worlds: American Indian Youth Today*. [5 and up] New York: Dodd, Mead, 1984.

"Thirteen Native American men and women speak about their lives and challenges they face trying to assimilate into mainstream society without rejecting their cultural heritage and history" (CCBC). **Companion pieces:** Books by Freedman, Mckissack, and Goble or Speare's *Sign of the Beaver*. **Suggested activities:** Students explore changes to Native American culture

brought about by westward expansion, enforced assimilation, and modern day remedies/problems. This makes students see that history has consequences which influence American society today.

Baylor, Byrd. *They Put on Masks*. [Picture Book, Language Level 5-8] New York: Scribner, 1974.

A long prose poem devoted to the Plains Indians and the masks they wore. The poem examines when and why masks were used. It also has wonderful illustrations of the kinds of masks used and in what region one would find these masks. Also, this book allows students to see what Indians felt, giving them an added perspective. **Companion pieces:** *Sign of the Beaver* and any of Goble's texts. **Suggested activities:** Students can explore modern talismans and their meaning; they can explore masks used on American holidays, the cultural influence on masks, TV influence on masks, and what masks may say of a culture and its values. Students can also be encouraged to make their own masks and write poetry to them.

Caines, Jeanette. *Just Us Women*. [Picture Book, K-3] New York: Harper, 1982.

A young black girl documents the trip she makes with her Aunt Martha to North Carolina. Because there are "no boys and no men, just us women" (7), the trip is not something the girl and aunt do to get someplace; it's a trip done with the purpose of enjoying the mere traveling: seeing wonderful places, stopping to pick up peaches and buy at junk sales, picking mushrooms along the way, etc. **Companion pieces:** *Cassie's Journey* and *Aurora Means Dawn*. **Suggested activities:** Students can explore how they make trips—family customs on trips, special things eaten because of the traveling, inconveniences, the mode of transportation and how it affects traveling, things worn on trips, etc. This also is a wonderful jump-off point for books which explore ways people traveled out West (see "Companion pieces" above). Students can write about their journeys, ideal and real—or both.

Clifton, Lucille. *The Boy Who Didn't Believe in Spring*. [Picture Book, K-3] New York: Dutton, 1973.

King Shabazz is a boy who doesn't believe in Spring. From his tenement window he simply doesn't see signs of it. One day he and his friend Tony Polio decide to find out if Spring is "just round the corner" the way everyone says it is. They pass by outdoor markets, zooming traffic, signs,

abandoned buildings, etc. They almost give up on spring until they find flowers growing out of stone, dirt, and garbage, and a bird's nest built inside a junk car. **Suggested activities:** Students can study environment, discuss environmental issues; they can discuss how we all have our forms of spring. They can chart what they see on their walks. They can take a field trip away from their neighborhood and talk of this. They can discuss the Indian's perception of nature and how Indians may have felt that Spring was being destroyed.

Cohen, Barbara. *Gooseberries to Oranges*. [Picture Book, K-5] New York: Lothrop, 1982.

A personalized fictional account of a girl's immigration from a European village called Rohatyn to America. This book is based on an actual story told. Pictures done by Barbara Brodsky are lovely and give a real flavor of the ship taking hundreds of people to Ellis Island as well as Jewish life in New York. In Europe the girl narrator ate gooseberries. When she comes to America, she tastes oranges. The taste of newness and rich juiciness define her experiences. **Suggested activities:** Students can get accounts of Ellis Island; they can talk about picture book versions as opposed to versions for older children. They can discuss changing points of view.

Crowder, Jack L. *Tonibah and the Rainbow*. [3-6] Bernalillo, New Mexico: Upper Strata Ink, Inc., 1986.

"This story of a Navajo girl and her family is told in both Navajo and English and illustrated with color photographs. It includes a Navajo word list and illustrated Navajo alphabet" (*Cobblestone*).

Flournoy, Valerie. *The Patchwork Quilt*. [Picture Book, K-3] New York: Dial, 1985.

Tanya, a young black girl, is taught the value of her family history when she helps her grandmother make a quilt from scraps of the family's old clothing. This story shows how each member in the family is held in place by other members and has a story to tell. **Suggested activities:** This text can introduce a unit on American history. America is a patchwork quilt. Each student's family composes part of that quilt. Students should be encouraged to create their written patches: stories their parents tell them about their pasts, stories of their grandparents, stories from their own personal histories

and how they fit into the woven threads. This book could also be looked at as a good stepping stone to Belinda Hurmence's *A Girl Called Boy*.

Freedman, Florence B. *Two Tickets to Freedom: The True Story of Ellen and William Craft, Fugitive Slaves*. [4 and above] New York: P. Bedrick Books, 1989.

This story tells of the search for freedom by a black husband and wife who travel to Boston and eventually to England after their escape from slavery in Georgia. **Companion pieces:** *To Be a Slave*, *A Girl Called Boy*, *Slave Dancer*.

Freedman, Russell. *Children of the Wild West*. [5-9] New York: Clarion, 1983.

A photo-history of the Wild West. An excellent look at history through photography. Of special note is the chapter on "The American Indians." There are several pictures taken of Indians just arriving at a boarding school and months later. Freedman notes, "The purpose of Carlisle and similar schools was to train young Indians in 'the ways of civilization'" (52). **Companion piece:** *Dragonwings*. **Suggested activities:** Students could explore what civilization meant in the late eighteen hundreds and how civilization changes according to who defines the word and who has the power to implement subjective perceptions. Students can also explore their own assumptions about civilization. See also suggested activities under *Scenes from Childhood*.

Friedman, Ina. *How My Parents Learned to Eat*. [Picture Book K-3] New York: Houghton, 1984.

A girl who has a Japanese mother and an American father tells the humorous story about how her parents overcame shyness about their eating habits and asked each other out to eat. The illustrations on the front page and back page indicate how the child has become a product of two cultures and integrates them both. Sometimes she eats with chop sticks; sometimes she uses a fork, knife, and spoon.

Fritz, Jean. *What's the Big Idea, Benjamin Franklin?* [Picture Book, 2-5] New York: Coward-McCann, 1976.

A very personalized version of the life of Mr. Franklin. Language is intimate and speaks directly to a child. By reading this book children can see that Benjamin Franklin wasn't simply some historical figure. He had a life

which could be compared to most children's lives. **Suggested activities:** students can be asked to speculate on how they would write their own biographies; they can write up inventions or their obituaries— thoughts about their lives written by someone else upon their deaths.

Fritz, Jean. *The Double Life of Pocahontas*.. [7-9] New York: Puffin, 1987.

John Smith's coming to Virginia is seen through the eyes of the daughter of Indian chief Powhatan. The text allows a reader to see how an Indian girl perceives the English settlement. **Companion piece:** *Sing Down the Moon*. **Suggested activities:** Students can examine how history is documented when the writer of history is a girl, is the daughter of an Indian chief, and also ends up becoming a token for John Smith.

Goble, Paul. *Death of the Iron Horse*. [Picture Book - More advanced language for upper grades] New York: Bradbury, 1987.

A fictionalized account of the only actual train derailment made by the Cheyenne Indian Tribe. The book illustrates how the tribe felt threatened by the progress of the white man and how they took great pride in their success on August 7, 1876, when they stopped the Union Pacific freight from invading their territory. This book is a good springboard for the examination of cultural myths about progress and multiple perspective re: How the West was 'Won'. Who defines winning? Other texts written by Goble for an Indian perspective: *The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses*, *Buffalo Woman*, and (with D. Goble) *Red hawk's Account of the Fetterman Fight* and *Lone Bull's Horse Rain*.

Greenfield, Eloise. *Nathaniel Talking*. [Picture Book - 2 and above] New York: Black Butterfly Children's Books, 1988.

This book is a collection of modern day raps from the imagination of a young black boy named Nathaniel. The last page of the book includes an interactive activity. Students are instructed on how to create their own twelve-bar blues poem. Besides a good source for getting students to create poems, this book can easily be used as a model for students to create a text of themselves talking. By this they examine their views, their language as it is influenced by their families and friends, ways where they make individual statements, etc. Language as a cultural signpost can be examined at length. Another good springboard for *A Girl Called Boy*.

Giffalconi, Ann. *The Village of Round and Square Houses*. [Picture Book K-3] Boston: Little, Brown, 1986.

This book tells the story of a small real-life village in the remote Cameroons of Central Africa. The curious thing about this village is that the women live in round houses and the men live in square houses. A young girl tells the story of how this came to be. An excellent springboard for cultural legends and for habits which are defined by culture—ways of dressing, the design of homes, ways of eating, ways of paying respect or honoring grandparents. **Companion pieces:** *How My Parents Learned to Eat* [Picture Book] and *Dragonwings* (the segment where the boy drinks milk). **Suggested activities:** Students should be encouraged to explore habits of their families which are purely personal and which have ethnic roots. Students can set a typical dinner table and talk about typical American beliefs regarding milk, beef, vegetables, etc.

Haldane, Suzanne. *Painting Faces*. [K-8] New York: Dutton, 1988.

"Full-color, well-labeled photographs and a brief, easy-to-understand text convey substantial information about the face painting of Southeast Nuba people of the Sudan; native Americans in North and Central America; opera and theater performers in India, China, and Japan; and clowns. Specific supplies and directions are listed" (CCBC). **Companion piece:** *They Put on Masks*. **Suggested activities:** See Baylor, *They Put on Masks*.

Harlan, Judith. *American Indians Today: Issues and Conflicts*. [6-12] New York: Franklin Watts, 1987.

"A historical overview of Indian tribes describes the changes brought by white people and sets the background for this report on Native Americans in the twentieth century" (Cobblestone). **Companion piece:** *To Live in Two Worlds: American Indian Youth Today*.

Hall, Donald. *Ox-Cart Man*. [Picture Book, K-3] New York: Viking, 1979.

A wonderful depiction of the day-to-day life throughout the changing seasons of an early 19th-century New England family. The book illustrates the role of each family member and the importance of home-made goods in the lives of the early settlers. **Suggested activities:** Students might be encouraged to write and dramatize a scene where two parties are engaged in exchanging goods or, as Evelyn Freeman and Linda Levstik suggest in their

"Recreating the Past: Historical Fiction in the Social Studies Curriculum" In *The Elementary School Journal*, March 1988, pp. 329-337, students can write an experience chart of similarities and differences between the book's time and today. This would lead to teacher-guided activities on products and marketing in both the book's time and the present, as well as visits to museums.

Harvey, Brett. *Cassie's Journey: Going West in the 1860's*. [Picture Book, 3-5] New York: Holiday House, 1988.

Cassie, a pioneer girl, tells the story of her wagon train's journey to California. The narrative is diary/journal-like, and, in fact, the author's note tells the reader that actual accounts were used. **Suggested activities:** Since there is a map in the book, students can trace Cassie's journey. They can compare this journey to Laura's in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* or Matt's in *The Sign of the Beaver*. They can examine why people went West, what conceptions they had about what lay ahead, and what they found. This can be ultimately compared to how Indians perceived American expansion. Again, *The Sign of the Beaver* is important here.

Hendershot, Judith. *In Coal Country*. [Picture Book K-3] New York: Knopf, 1987.

This book is a product of the author's memories of growing up in a small Ohio coal town in the 1930's. It is told from the point of view of a young girl, and it focuses on different aspects of her childhood. The author takes pride in her heritage, so that children reading the book are encouraged to do so as well. **Companion piece:** *Shaker Lane*. **Suggested activities:** Students can discuss life on their blocks; they can also document how a street might talk if it were to tell of life on its streets; they might interview people on the block in order to learn about the history of their blocks and changes that have occurred. They can also visit city offices and learn about political decisions which made for shifts in the blocks. They might be asked to draw maps as they study streets in relation to a city as a whole. Finally, they can document perceptions outside-the-block people have about blocks and how it differs from the perceptions of those who actually live on the blocks.

Hirschfelder, Arlene. *Happily May I Walk: American Indians and Alaska Natives Today*. [5-8] New York: Scribners, 1986.

"Comparisons and contrasts among distinct cultural groups are made as each chapter outlines one aspect of contemporary Native American life, such as language, religion, elders, dance, music, etc. The text describes life in the cities as well as on reservations and offers clear explanations of the complex relations between tribal authority and the U. S. government" (CCBC).

Hurmen, Belinda. *A Girl Called Boy*. [4-8] New York: Clarion, 1982.

Boy Yancey, whose real name is Blanche Overtha Yancey, after her two grandmothers, is on a picnic with her family near ancestor ground in the mountains of western North Carolina. When her father talks about his conjure bird, a pocket piece made of African soapstone which was passed down from father to son and finally to him, Boy says, "Oh, Daddy, you're not African—you're 'American'" (3). Boy doesn't care to hear slave stories; she thinks slaves were stupid not to free themselves. Suddenly, Boy finds herself hurtled back in time to slavery days. She experiences slave life, the temptations of being pampered by a patronizing mistress, and the agonies and joys of escaping. She grows to love her ancestors who sang and toiled and cared amidst amazing hardships. **Suggested activities:** See under Lester, *To Be a Slave*. Also, this is a wonderful jump-off book for students to imagine themselves thrust back into other times. In order to understand how they might behave, they'd have to get facts about those times.

Lester, Julius. *To Be a Slave*. [7-9] New York: Scholastic, 1968.

The book begins with the following quote: "In all the books that you have studied you never have studied Negro history, have you? You studied about the Indian and the white folks, but what did they tell you about the Negro? If you want Negro history, you will have to get it from somebody who wore the shoe, and by and by from one to the other, you will get a book." This was said by an ex-slave in Tennessee. Julius Lester takes just such advice. The book is documentation from slaves about their experiences. Lester adds commentary and organizes the text by dividing the experiences into categories: the auction block, the plantation, resistance to slavery, etc. **Suggested activities:** Students can compare traditional history book information with these narratives. They can see how personal narratives are important to the

understanding of what actually happened. They can also compare this to two fictionalized histories around slavery, *Slave Dancer* and *A Girl Named Boy*.

Martel, Cruz. *Yagua Days*. [Picture Book, K-3] New York: Dial, 1976.

A young Puerto Rican boy named Adam, who was born and lives in New York, finally gets to visit his parents' homeland and discovers what a "Yagua Day" is. The story emphasizes Puerto Rican tradition and language. The book also provides a Spanish dictionary of the words used in the narrative. **Suggested activities:** Children can be encouraged to explore their own family traditions and popular recreational activities of the U. S.

McGovern, Ann. . . . *If You Lived with the Sioux Indians*. [3-5] New York: Four Winds Press, 1974.

An excellent question and answer book dispelling misconceptions about Indians. One of the first answers addresses "redskin" and talks about the origin of this term. **Companion Pieces** from Native American Texts: See under Goble; also any of Patricia McKissack's texts— *The Apache*, *The Aztec Indians*, and *The Inca*. **Suggested activities:** Examine prejudicial names given to people by others. *Dragonwings* also explores this. Students can speculate on names they still hear and their implications. This text also is good for a "KWL" activity (What do I *know*? What do I *want* to know? What have I *learned*?) beginning a unit on Indians. After reading texts on this unit, students can flesh out the sheet.

Mendez, Phil. *The Black Snowman*. [Picture Book, K-8] New York: Scholastic, 1989.

This book tells a story that weaves old African lore into the life of a modern day boy named Jacob who states, "I hate being black . . ." With the help of a snowman, a magic cloth, and the spirit of his ancestors, Jacob comes to accept and take pride in his heritage and himself. Dialogue is the real oral speech of this boy. This book can be a starter for *A Girl Called Boy*. **Suggested activities:** Junior High students in particular might examine how our friends and foes influence our self-perception. What do we do in order to "survive" in school. How do we present ourselves? How does the way we make ourselves appear to others influence the way we feel about ourselves? Students can write about themselves as if they were somebody else talking about them. How would their mothers or fathers write histories of them? What would their best friends write?

Native American History. Filmstrip/Cassettes. Opportunities for Learning, Inc., 20417 Nordhoff Street, Dept. CTW 80, Chatsworth, CA 91311.

"The history of Native Americans after the coming of Europeans is explored in four filmstrips with cassettes. Historical photographs, art, writings, and songs are used. Teacher's manuals are supplied" (*Cobblestone*).

Provensen, Alice and Martin. *Shaker Lane*. [Picture Book, K-3] New York: Viking, 1987.

This story presents a group of colorful characters who collectively make up a community. As the story unfolds, the reader sees how the community changes until Shaker Lane is finally "transformed" into Reservoir Road. Implied is social satire—that the rich lives of the poor succumb to city planning and expansion. **Suggested activities:** Students can examine personalities on their blocks. They can be encouraged to write picture books about their blocks. Also see suggested activities under Hendershot, Judith.

Rylant, Cynthia. *When I Was Young in the Mountains*. [Picture Book, K-3] New York: Dutton, 1982.

A first person point of view account of a young girl growing up in the Appalachian mountains of West Virginia, including favorite people and places. **Suggested activities:** A good starter to examine U.S. regions and cultural perceptions/misconceptions about regions. Also, students can talk about what it's like to visit their grandparents, especially things they do with their grandparents which they don't do with anyone else.

Sanders, Scott Russell. *Aurora Means Dawn*. [Picture Book] New York: Bradbury, 1989.

The history of westward expansion in the early 1800's is told through the movement of a family named Sheldon from Connecticut to Aurora, Ohio. **Suggested activities:** Use as a reference for study on pioneer life. See other references which make note of this book.

Schroeder, Alan. *Ragtime Tumpie*. [Picture Book] Boston: Little, Brown, 1989.

This story is the biographical account of Tumpie, a young black girl growing up in St. Louis in the early 1900's. Tumpie grows up to become the

famous entertainer, Josephine Baker. The book depicts the values and spirit of the time period when ragtime, jazz, and the blues all started. **Suggested activities:** Students could collect music from the period and talk about music as a product of culture. They could compare modern music to ragtime as well as compare American music from different regions and speculate on regional differences.

Seasons of the Navajo. Film. [4 and up] PBS Video, 1230 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314. 60 min.

"The cycle of changing seasons shapes the Navajo lifestyle, which is shown in this portrait of a Navajo couple. They live in a traditional hogan, farming, weaving, and tending sheep, while their children and grandchildren live in modern homes" (*Cobblestone*).

Sharon, Mary Bruce. *Scenes from Childhood.* [Picture Book] New York: Dutton, 1978.

When Mary Bruce Sharon was seventy, she began painting scenes from her childhood. After she died, her daughter, Henrietta Bruce Sharon Aument, put the pictures into a published book. She wrote the narrative to each picture as told to her by her mother. Each picture tells its own story about a way of life in the South as experienced by Sharon in the late 1800's. **Suggested activities:** Students can use the photos in this book as a springboard for studying history. They can compare their lives and write histories from these photos. They can compare their stories about the photos to photos gotten from their parents and bring them in for discussion. They can also use this book in conjunction with Russell Freedman's *Children of the Wild West*. Under the photo of children reading in the mid-1800's, they can put a photo of themselves reading in the classroom. Then they can document changes they see in the photos.

Swann, Brian. *A Basket Full of White Eggs.* [Picture Book, K-3] New York: Orchard Books, 1988.

A wonderful collection of riddles, each from a different country. Hints to the answers can be found in the fully illustrated pages done in watercolor and colored pencils. **Suggested activities:** Students can have fun guessing the answers and studying culture behind the riddles. Students might also try writing their own riddles and drawing pictures to go with them.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls. *Little House on the Prairie*. [3-5] New York: Harper, 1935. rpt. 1953.

Wilder's own fictionalized account of her journey west with Pa, Ma, sister Mary, and Baby Carrie. A good documentation of steps involved in making a prairie house complete with doors and a roof. **Suggested activities:** Students can examine how an author's sense of past tinges historical storytelling. Students might compare this text to *Sign of the Beaver* and *Children of the Wild West*. Also, students can be asked to write a chapter from Mary's point of view. How might Mary write history?

Yolen, Jane. *Owl Moon*. [Picture Book, K and above] New York: Philomel, 1987.

A young girl shares the experience of a night she spent "owling" with her father. The reader feels the same anticipation that the girl must have felt. This story is just a magical piece of writing. **Suggested activities:** Students can reflect upon experiences they have with their families, family traditions, and how traditions are passed down to different members of the family.