

STORIES WITHIN STORIES

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A Selected Annotated Bibliography of Children's Literature

Theme: Literature reflects the value of cherished stories in our lives.

Picture Books

Bahr, Mary. *The Memory Box*. Illus. by David Cunningham. 1992. 32p. Albert Whitman, \$14.95 (0-8075-5032-3); paper, \$5.95 (0-8075-5053-1). While visiting his grandparents one summer, a boy learns of the devastating effects of Alzheimer's disease. Along with his grandmother, he creates a "memory box" filled with family artifacts to help his ailing grandfather remember the important events of his life.

Belton, Sandra. *May'naise Sandwiches & Sunshine Tea*. Illus. by Gail Gordon Carter. 1994. 32p. Simon & Schuster, \$14.95 (0-02-709035-3). "There's a story wrapped around these pictures," says Big Mama. As she turns the pages of her scrapbook, she shares family stories with her granddaughter. Big Mama tells about making friends with a rich black girl, reciprocating a lunch invitation, and serving Bettie Jean may'naise sandwiches and sunshine tea. The story is told in the first person by the granddaughter who learns the value of imagination and dreams. "You see, that's the secret of may'naise sandwiches and sunshine tea. There's nothing much in either to keep your mind on what you're eating."

Bunting, Eve. *One Candle*. Illus. by K. Wendy Popp. 2002. 32p. Harper Collins, \$15.99 (0-06-028115-4). It is Hanukkah and the family has gathered for their annual dinner and candle lighting. At the same point in the ritual each year, Grandma tells how she lit a Hanukkah candle made from a potato and stolen butter in a concentration camp where she and her sister were prisoners. Told from the point of view of one of the listening children, this poignant story tells how faith and courage – and the ritual candle lighting – lifted the minds and hearts of the persecuted woman in the camp. "L'chayim," Grandma says. "To life." . . . "And in that moment we were lifted to the stars."

Buzzeo, Toni. *The Sea Chest*. Illus. by Mary GrandPré. 2002. 32p. Dial, \$16.99 (0-8037-2703-8). Based on an 1870's legend about a baby who was washed up on shore after a fierce storm, this story is told by Aunt Maita to her grandniece while they wait for the child's parents to return from "across the sea" where they are adopting a baby. Maita was once the only child of a lighthouse keeper and his wife. She tells about how lonely she was until, after a fearsome storm, the family found a live baby inside a leather sea chest. Tied to the baby's wrist was a note from her desperate parents asking that God save her. Maita named the baby Seaborne, who grew up to be the niece's great-grandmother.

Dengler, Marianna. *The Worry Stone*. 1996. 32p. Northland, \$14.95 (0-87358-642-5). This book contains a story within a story within a story. An elderly woman meets an outcast young boy on a park bench. The boy's worries remind the woman of how her grandfather once gave her a "worry stone" and with it a Chumash Indian story. That Native story tells of how a young woman's husband died on their wedding day. Tokatu never remarried and cried each year on the anniversary of Akima's death/their marriage at her husband's gravesite. When Tokatu died an old woman, the women of the village buried her next to Akima. On his grave, they found small, smooth stones, "Tears of Tokatu," and the Chumash came to believe that these stones had the power to ease people's troubles. The now elderly woman had used her worry stone for comfort when her storyteller grandfather died. Now she passes the stone and her stories on to the boy in the park that he might be comforted, too.

Fleischman, Paul. *Lost! A Story in String*. Illus. by C. B. Mordan. 2000. 32p. Holt, \$15.95 (0-8050-5583-5). An electrical storm leaves a young girl without television, radio, or her computer – her preferred entertainment. Her resourceful grandmother tells the child a string story about her childhood in the mountains. Using her knitting yarn, she tells about being lost in a snowstorm while rescuing her injured dog. Directions for making the string figures are found at the end of the story.

Harrison, Troon. *The Memory Horse*. Illus. by Eugenie Fernances. 1999. 32p. Tundra, \$15.95 (0-88776-440-1) A young girl and her family have moved to Grandpa's farm. Grandpa takes the child to the village to see the carousel her deceased grandmother enjoyed riding when she was a young girl. When the community comes together to restore the carousel, Grandpa buys "Starflyer," Grandmother's favorite horse. While he paints it with images that evoke stories from his wife's life, he shares those stories with his granddaughter.

Hershenhorn, Esther. *Chicken Soup by Heart*. Illus. by Rosanne Litzinger. 2002. 32p. Simon & Schuster, \$16.95 (0-689-82665-6). When his babysitter Mrs. Gittel, the Chicken Soup Queen, comes down with the flu, young Rudie Dinkins imitates her recipe and nurses her back to health. With the help of his mom, Rudie uses Mrs. Gittel's soup secret, which he learned during her treatments of his many chest colds. And stories are the important ingredient! In this story seasoned with Yiddish words, Rudie sweetens the soup with stories from his adventures with Mrs. Gittel: counting everything in sight, Rudie shuffling and dealing cards for Mrs. Gittel when her fingers hurt, and watching a parade that cheered him up after his friend moved away. When Mrs. Gittel is well, they make yet another soup with the story of how Rudie saved the Chicken Soup Queen. The last page of the book shares Mrs. Gittel's chicken soup recipe. Don't forget to add the stories!

Kurtz, Jane. *Faraway Home*. Illus. by E. B. Lewis. 2000. 32p. Harcourt, \$15.95 (0-15-500036-4). Desta's father has just learned that his mother back home in Ethiopia is ill. As he prepares for his trip, he tells Desta stories about his childhood home and sings songs in his native language. Lewis's illustrations fill in the cultural and environmental background readers may need to visualize the Ethiopian words and descriptions in the text. In the end, Desta walks home from school barefoot as her father did when he was a child in Africa.

Kurtz, Jane. *In the Small, Small Night*. Illus. by Rachel Isadora. 2005. 32p. Greenwillow, \$16.99 (0-06-623814-5). When Kofi cannot sleep on their first night in America, his older and wiser sister, Abena, illuminates their new flashlight, the moon, and tells him two familiar, favorite folktale from the home they left behind in Ghana. One tells how Anansi threw a pot in anger and spread its contents – wisdom – throughout the world. The other tells about the friendship between eagle and turtle that is characterized by respect and perseverance. In the end, the siblings share some wisdom of their own that will help them adjust to life in their adopted country.

Lewin, Ted. *The Storytellers*. 1998. 32p. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, \$15.95 (0-688-15179-5). Each morning, Abdul and his storyteller grandfather travel through the medina (city) on their way to set up their daily business. Along the way, they pass the people selling goods from their stalls in the marketplace. Near the old gate, they spread their carpet, and Grandfather releases the white pigeon, which perches on Abdul's head. People come, drop their coins on the carpet, and Grandfather plies his trade. Abdul tosses the pigeon into the air and when it returns to his head, it carries with it the story that Grandfather tells. The value of storytellers and their stories in Arab culture is beautifully shared.

Oberman, Sheldon. *The Always Prayer Shawl*. Illus. by Ted Lewin. 1994. 32p. Boyds Mills, \$15.95 (1-878-093-22-3); Viking Penguin, \$5.99 (0-14-056157-9). When Adam was a boy in Russia, he asked his grandfather to tell him why he was named Adam. Adam's family emigrated to the U.S., but grandfather remained in Russia. He gave the boy his prayer shawl which Adam wears each Sabbath throughout his life. Like his grandfather before him, Adam tells family stories and uses the prayer shawl as an artifact, which connects him to his culture and past. One day, his own grandson, also named Adam, will inherit the shawl and the stories.

Polacco, Patricia. *My Ol' Man*. 1995. 32p. Philomel, \$15.95 (0-399-22822-5). Patricia Polacco's father was a traveling salesman who brought home all kinds of stories from the road. One day, after he had lost his job, he came home with the biggest story of all, the story of a magic rock. In nearby Potter's pond was the rock that was sure to change the family's luck.

Rochelle, Belinda. *When Jo Louis Won the Title*. Illus. by Larry Johnson. 1994. 32p. Houghton Mifflin, \$14.95 (0-395-66614-7); paper, \$5.95 (0-395-81657-2). Tomorrow is the first day at a new school for Jo Louis. Her grandfather discovers the real reason Jo is fearful; she's embarrassed by her name. Grandfather tells the child the story of how she got her name, a tribute to her own father and the great African American boxing champion. This tender tale offers inspiration for finding out the significance of our family names and taking pride in our heritage.

Rochelle, Belinda. *Jewels*. Illus. by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu. 1998. 32p. Dutton, \$15.99 (0-525-67502-7). Lea Mae spends the summers with her great-grandparents. 'Ma dear, her great-grandmother, loves to share the family jewels—stories about great-great-great grandfather James who traveled on the Underground Railroad with Harriet Tubman, another who was a Buffalo Soldier during the Civil War and was later sent to protect settlers moving West, a story about meeting jazz greats Count Basie and Duke Ellington. Drawing from her memory, history, and a family album, 'Ma dear weaves family and racial pride into these jewels that Lea Mae vows to write down and retell to her own children one day.

Rossi, Joyce. *The Gullywasher*. 1995. 32p. Northland, \$14.95 (0-87358-607-7). Abuelito, grandfather, tells this humorous story within a story to his granddaughter, Leticia. A storm is coming. Abuelito tells how after a similar storm he became a strong vaquero, cowboy, and how eventually with the help of a hummingbird who stole his brown hair, corn and *chiles* that gave him his round belly, and a horse that caused his bent back, he became the gentle man and adoring grandfather he is now.

Shea, Pegi Deitz. *The Whispering Cloth: A Refugee's Story*. Illus. by Anita Riggio and stitched by Yoa Yang. 1995. 32p. Boyds Mills, \$14.95 (1-563-97-134-8); paper, \$7.95 (1-56399-623-4). Orphaned Mai lives with her grandmother in a refugee camp in Thailand. Her grandmother teaches her to stitch the traditional *pa'ndau* embroidered cloths sold by Hmong women. Mai tells her life story in the stitches on her cloth and then decides it's not for sale. This brave young girl uses the story cloth to make emotional peace with the difficult circumstances of her life.

Tan, Amy. *The Moon Lady*. Illus. by Gretchen Schields. 1992. 32p. Macmillan, \$16.95 (0-02-788830-4); Aladdin, \$5.95 (0-689-80616-7) One rainy day, three sisters are visiting with their grandmother (Nai-nai) who tells them a story from her childhood in China, grandmother's earliest memory. When Nai-nai was seven years old, her mother made her yellow and black clothes to wear to the Moon Festival. She wanted to see the Moon Lady and tell her a secret wish. Nai-nai went out on a boat with her family, fell overboard, was rescued but was separated from her family. By chance, she ended up watching the Moon Lady perform and discovered the Moon Lady was a man! Nai-nai wished to go home and got her wish. After that, Nai-nai believed that the best wishes are those you yourself can make come true.

Chapter Books

Curtis, Christopher Paul. *The Watsons go to Birmingham—1963*. 1995. 210p. Delacorte. ISBN: 0-385-32175-9 Gr. 4-8. This United States Civil Rights era family story is full of wonderful slices of everyday life in the home of the Weird Watsons and ends with an eye-opening, heart-wrenching experience of racism when they travel from Flint, Michigan to visit Grandma Sands in Alabama. The story is told in the first person from the point of view of the Kenny, the ten-year old middle child. All the characters are well-drawn, but Dad is a particularly fine character with a great sense of humor. Early in the book in an effort to help his family take their minds off the freezing temperature inside their home, he tells a tall tale about Moses "Hambone" Henderson who could have been his wife's husband and therefore, the kids' father.

Lowell, Susan. *I Am Lavina Cummings*. Illus. by Paul Mirocha. 1993. 184p. Milkweed. ISBN: 0-915943-39-5 Gr. 3-8. Based on the life of Ms. Lowell's paternal grandmother who was born in the Arizona Territory in 1885, ten-year-old Lavina is sent by rail from the family ranch near Calabasas, Arizona to her aunt's house in Santa Cruz, California where her father intends for Lavina to learn the womanly arts and manners. The book includes family stories and folklore of the Southwest; the stories are integrated into both family and school life.

Park, Linda Sue. *A Single Shard*. 2001. 152p. Clarion. ISBN: 0-395-97827-0 Gr. 4-8. This Newbery Award-winning title contains several stories within the story. The orphan Tree-ear came ten years ago to Ch'ulp'o where he was adopted by Crane-man, a wise and crippled man who lives under a bridge. Crane-Man tells Tree-ear the story of his arrival and many other stories as well. One tell how he came to live under the bridge instead of being cared for by the monks at the temple as was the custom in 12th-century Korea. Another tells of how the potter's trade came to be passed from father to son and the story of a place called the "Rock of the Falling Flowers." Each of Crane-man's stories imparts a bit of wisdom that helps Tree-ear grapple with the decisions he makes as he progresses toward his destiny - to become the "son" of Min, the potter.