

Connections 2012

Thematic Reading List

From these lists, teachers and facilitators can select books and themes that enhance your curriculum or connect to your students' goals and interests. We list books on a wide range of themes in the humanities; these include books about New Hampshire and U.S. history, multicultural books to connect readers to the wider world and immigrants to familiar images of home, and themes such as Planting the Earth with books that cross culture, level, and genre. You might read four picture books over the four *Connections* sessions. Or you might read a novel over the sessions, along with one or two related picture books. Participants keep copies of their books to share with their families.

On reading levels: Books are labeled Picture book, Early chapter book (gr. 2 – 4) Novel (gr. 4 and up), Nonfiction, and Biography. Picture books vary widely in reading level, but illustrations tell the story visually and support readers in understanding the meaning. Often if a book is on a familiar subject or of high interest, it could be a winner with students even if they are challenged by the reading level. You can preview the books on our list at public libraries.

Families Around the World *Stories of families from Guatemala, the U.S., Australia, and more and what families bring with them on their journey from one country to another.*

Boundless Grace by Mary Hoffman. A girl and her grandmother travel to Africa where the girl's father now lives with a new wife. Picture book.

Circle of Gold by Candy Dawson Boyd. A short novel about an American family facing a loss and trying to re-make itself. A teacher suggests to the main character: "If you live your life based on only what you think you can do well, you won't achieve much." Themes include resolving conflict and problem solving. Novel.

The Day of Ahmed's Secret by Florence Parry Heide, illus. by Ted Lewin. Set in Cairo, the story and illustrations recreate the sound, scent, and images of the city. "Life goes on in the hectic, noisy cities of the world regardless of a day's news and yet, the boundless energy and promise of youth reinforce the ideal that anything is possible. Ahmed's story is a joyful celebration of that spirit."- *School Library Journal*. Picture book.

Granny Torrelli Makes Soup by Sharon Creech. "In this endearing novel by Newberry Medal-winner Sharon Creech, a wise old Italian grandmother skillfully imparts life advice (and cooking lessons) to her winning but sometimes obstinate granddaughter." Adapted from flap copy. Themes include family, food and love, grandparents. Novel.

Habibi by Naomi Shihab Nye. An American girl moves with her family to Palestine and into the Arab heritage of her father's family in this novel of reaching out across cultures and divides. Themes include cross cultural families and peacebuilding. Novel.

Himalaya by Jan Reynolds. The story of a Nepalese Sherpa family with photographs by Reynolds, a *National Geographic* photographer. Nonfiction picture book.

The House on Mango Street by Sandra Cisneros. Small adult novel in short vignettes. Cisneros writes about growing up in a Latino family. Themes include identity, immigrant neighborhoods, home, living in two cultures, courage. Novel.

I Lost My Tooth in Africa by Penda Diakité, illus. by Baba Wagué Diakité. What happens in a family when child loses a tooth in Mali? Picture book.

Mirror by Jeannie Baker. In a nearly wordless picture book, Baker portrays two parallel stories with many commonalities, one about a family in urban Australia and the other about a family in rural Morocco. Picture book.

The Most Beautiful Place in the World by Ann Cameron. In a small, first chapter book, a Guatemalan grandmother and grandson make the boy's dream to go to school come true. Cameron is a master of spare, emotionally true stories and presents social issues that lead to rich discussions. Themes include education, poverty, child labor. Early chapter book.

Food and Love *These books explore traditions of family life and culture around food and cooking.*

Everybody Cooks Rice by Norah Dooley, illus. by Peter J. Thornton. A tour through an American neighborhood finds families from many nationalities cooking their country's rice recipes. Vietnam, Puerto Rico, Barbados, India, China, Haiti, and Italy are represented. Picture book.

Everybody Bakes Bread by Norah Dooley, illus. by Peter J. Thornton. A tour through a multiethnic neighborhood finds families making bread in a variety of traditions. Lebanon, El Salvador, Italy, Barbados, and South Carolina are represented. Picture book.

Granny Torrelli Makes Soup by Sharon Creech. "In this endearing novel by Newberry Medal-winner Sharon Creech, a wise old Italian grandmother skillfully imparts life advice (and cooking lessons) to her winning but sometimes obstinate granddaughter." - adapted from flap copy. Themes include family, food and love, grandparents. Novel.

Johnny Appleseed, a poem by Reeve Lindbergh, illus. by Kathy Jakobsen. The story of pioneer John Chapman who traveled from Massachusetts to Indiana planting apples is enriched with Jakobsen's detailed and vivid illustrations and map. Picture book.

Let's Eat by Ana Zamorano, illus. by Julie Vivas. The lives and wonderful meals of a large Spanish family about to have a new baby. Picture book.

Pumpkins by Ken Robbins. Naturalistic color photos and spare text tell the life cycle of pumpkins and New England traditions around them. Nonfiction picture book.

It Takes a Village by Jane Cowen-Fletcher. Depicts social life and market day for a family in a Benin village. Picture book.

When I Was Young in the Mountains by Cynthia Rylant, illus. by Diane Goode. Memories of growing up in Appalachia. Picture book.

For the Love of Books ...and Libraries *Stories of the transformative power of books.*

Librarian of Basra by Jeanette Winter. Aria Muhammad Baker, the librarian at Basra's Central Library in Iraq, saves books in the library's collection when war threatens. Picture book biography.

Listen to the Wind by Greg Mortensen, illus. by Susan Roth. Told in collage and succinct words, a climber stumbles upon a remote Himalayan village and later helps the people to build a village school. A re-telling of the memoir *Three Cups of Tea*. Picture book.

The Most Beautiful Place in the World by Ann Cameron. In a small, first chapter book, a Guatemalan grandmother and grandson make the boy's dream to go to school come true. Cameron is a master of spare, emotionally true stories, and presents social issues the lead to rich discussions. Themes include family, education, child labor. Early chapter book.

Muktar and the Camels by Janet Graber, illus. by Scott Mack. A library carried on the back of a camel comes to an orphanage on the border between Kenya and Somalia. *Muktar* is a story about love for animals as well as traveling libraries. Picture book.

The Red Book by Barbara Lehman. A magical wordless picture book that lends itself to many interpretations and stories for readers to imagine and tell. Picture book.

Tomás and the Library Lady by Pat Mora. A picture book biography of a child of migrant workers who learns a passion for books at his public library and grows up to become a university chancellor. Picture book biography.

Freedom *These books explore freedom in its many forms: freedom from conflict, freedom to pursue one's dream, freedom to go to school, freedom to make choices.*

The Day of the Pelican by Katherine Paterson. A family who experiences the war in Kosovo in the late 1990s comes to the U.S. to make a new home. Novel.

Grandfather's Journey by Allen Say. A young man follows in his grandfather's footsteps and leaves Japan to explore America. They both face the complexities of feeling loyalties to two countries. Picture book.

Life is So Good by George Dawson and Richard Glaubman. In George Dawson's 98th year, he attended ABE classes in Dallas, Texas and learned to read. A map, historical timelines, and structured small group discussions make this adult book very accessible. Autobiography.

Nasreen's Secret School, a True Story from Afghanistan by Jeanette Winter. Nasreen's grandmother takes her to a secret school in a private home so she can continue her education while the Taliban are in power. Picture book.

Revolution is Not a Dinner Party by Ying Chang Compestine. Compestine fictionalizes her own story of coming of age during China's Cultural Revolution. The book is rich with images of food and cooking. Compestine now lives in California and also wrote *Cooking With an Asian Accent*. Novel.

The Story of Ferdinand by Munro Leaf, illus. by Robert Lawson. The classic story of a bull who follows his own idea of happiness. Picture book.

Friendship *What responsibilities does friendship bear? How do we honor our friends? What do friends mean to us?*

Charlotte's Web by E.B. White, illus. by Garth Williams. E.B. White's classic novel follows the seasons on a New England farm and, through the imagined friendship of a pig and a spider, the seasons of life. Novel.

Chicken Sunday by Patricia Polacco. A story of family life that extends beyond blood, of holiday sharing, and of building trust in a community. Picture book.

Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson. The story explores friendship, people following their own dreams, and steps to healing after a great loss. Novel.

Seedfolks by Paul Fleischman, illus. by Judy Pedersen. A collection of stories of people from around the world who are now neighbors with a common love – growing things in the ground. “Thirteen voices tell one story of the flowering of a Cleveland vacant lot into a neighborhood garden.” Short novel made up of small stories.

Grit *Why do some people endure? What does it mean to have power?*

Amazing Grace by Mary Hoffman. Can a black girl play the role of Peter Pan? Themes include identity, race, stereotypes, imagination, staying power. Picture book.

Beautiful Warrior by Emily Arnold McCully. Enter seventeenth century China and the legend of Wu Mei who builds her inner strength- her qi -with the help of her kung fu master. Picture book.

Frederick by Leo Lionni. Frederick reveals the power of poems. Picture book.

Hatchet by Gary Paulsen. A fast-paced novel of a boy's survival in the wilderness. Themes include courage, self-discovery, adventure, family. Novel.

Holes by Louis Sachar. Novel of grit, dark humor, and courage. Here's a line that captures the voice: "If you take a bad boy and make him dig a hole every day in the hot sun, it will turn him into a good boy. That's what some people thought." Themes include dark humor, crime and punishment, justice, courage, staying power. Novel.

The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes. Themes include bullying, moral dilemmas, prejudice, and compassion in this classic story about a Polish immigrant family. Short novel.

Odd Boy Out: Young Albert Einstein by Don Brown. Fascinating story about a little boy, in some ways ordinary who his teachers don't praise, who becomes the man we know Einstein to be. Picture book.

The Hero and the Journey *Classic stories of the hero's journey as told in many cultures.*

Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendack. Classic tale of a boy who crosses into a dark and mystical world, conquers, and returns home with new knowledge. Picture book.

Vasilisa the Brave by Marianna Mayer, illus. by Kinuko Craft. A gorgeous-to-look-at Russian tale incorporating the witch Baba Yaga as well as the Cinderella story. The heroine succeeds by her wits. Picture book.

Storm Boy by Paul Lewis. A Pacific Northwest Native American tale of the spiritual journey of the young hero.

Theme is a work in progress.

History of the U.S. *The story of America in stories, facts, illustrations, and photographs.*

Immigrant Kids by Russell Freedman, with many historical photos of children from 1800s to early 1900s. Nonfiction.

Follow the Drinking Gourd by Jeanette Winter. A telling of the story of the underground railroad. Picture book.

The Barn by Avi. A family survival novel set in frontier Oregon. A spare novel described: "As a tribute to hope and resourcefulness it is timeless." Themes include American history, family, hope, resourcefulness. Short novel.

Night Boat to Freedom by Margot Theis Raven. Award-winning illustrated book based on slave narratives collected by the Federal Writers' Project. Picture book.

Indian Captive by Lois Lenski. A novel based on a true account of a girl who grew up with Seneca Indians in New York state in the 1700s. Novel.

Lyddie by Katherine Paterson. A girl leaves her family's failing farm in Vermont to work in the textile mills of Lowell, Massachusetts. Novel.

Squanto's Journey by Joseph Bruchac, illus. by Greg Shed. A story of the first Thanksgiving. Picture book.

Midnight Ride of Paul Revere by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, illus. by Jeffrey Thompson. An illustrated telling of the classic poem. Picture book.

Journeys *Imagine they many kinds of journeys. How can journeys change the course of a life?*

Esperanza Rising by Pam Muñoz Ryan. A courageous girl must move from Mexico to work among the farm laborers in California during the Great Depression. Novel.

Grandfather's Journey by Allen Say. A man lives in two cultures, and when he is in one, he yearns for the other. Picture book.

Home of the Brave by Katherine Applegate. The story of a young boy who leaves war in central Africa to come to America. Novel.

Owl Moon by Jane Yolen, illus. by John Schoenherr. A family follows the call of the owl through the woods on a winter night. Picture book.

Peppe the Lamplighter by Elisa Bartone, illus. by Ted Lewin. An immigrant family seeks work and self respect in New York City's Little Italy. Picture book.

When Jessie Came Across the Sea by Amy Hest, illus. by P.J. Lynch. Jessie immigrates from Eastern Europe to New York City at the turn of the 20th century. Picture book.

Life Stories *Stories of men and women who define our world.*

The Amazing Life of Ben Franklin by James Giblin, illus. by Michael Dooling. Biography of Ben Franklin. Nonfiction.

Harvesting Hope, the Story of Cesar Chavez by Kathleen Krull, illus. by Yuyi Morales. Chavez leads a revolt to bring the first labor reforms to migrant farm workers. Picture book biography.

Inventing the Future: A Photobiography of Thomas Alva Edison by Marfe Ferguson Delano. A fact-filled biography of Thomas Edison with documentary photographs. Nonfiction.

Mandela: From the Life of the South African Statesman by Floyd Cooper. Biography of Nelson Mandela. Picture book biography.

Teammates by Peter Golenbock, illus. by Paul Bacon. Biography of Jackie Robinson with photos and illustrations. "Golenbock has taken a single moment of baseball history, set it

in its social context, and created a simple and moving tribute to courage and brotherhood.” Picture book biography.

Librarian of Basra by Jeanette Winter. Aria Muhammad Baker, the librarian at Basra’s Central Library in Iraq, saves books in the library’s collection when war threatens. Picture book biography.

Music in the Story of Our Lives *Music provides a window on history and a vibrant link to cultures of the past.*

Celia Cruz, Queen of Salsa by Veronica Chambers illus. by Julie Maren. Cuban singer, Celia Cruz, creates the rhythms of salsa from the sounds of the street in her native Havana. Picture book biography.

Georgia Music by Helen Griffith, illus. by James Stevenson. A city girl comes to live with her grandfather over a long Georgia summer. Picture book. Bookbag only

Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse. A girl hopes to escape her family’s poor Oklahoma farm during the time of the Dust Bowl with her wild jazz piano playing. Readers come to know about this region of the country and period of U.S. history. Novel.

Silent Music, a Story of Baghdad by James Rumford. While his city is at war, a boy writes in calligraphy which he describes as “sweeping, leaping, dancing to the silent music in my head.” Picture book.

A Song for Cambodia by Michelle Lord, illus. by Shino Arihara. Biography of Arn Chorn-Pond and the khim he learns to play while he is imprisoned by Khmer Rouge soldiers. Picture book biography.

A Symphony of Whales by Steve Schuch, illus. by Peter Sylvada. New Hampshire musician Steve Schuch writes a fictionalized account of the true event of beluga whales who were trapped in a Siberian strait. The whales respond to the sounds of a classical symphony and follow the music to the open sea. Picture book.

New Hampshire Stories *Stories set in New Hampshire from the past and in our own times.*

Amos Fortune, Free Man by Elizabeth Yates. A classic story set in NH, the novel follows the life of a man who came to the U.S. as a slave from West Africa, becomes a highly skilled tanner, and buys his freedom as well as the freedom of other slaves. Novel.

Birches by Robert Frost, illus. by Ed Young. An illustrated telling of Frost’s classic poem probably written and set in NH. Picture book.

Christmas Farm by Mary Lyn Ray. A picture book by a NH writer and conservationist about growing Christmas trees. Themes include New Hampshire, holidays, Christmas in New England, Planting the Earth. Picture book.

G is for Granite by Marie Harris, illus. by Karen Busch Holman. A journey through NH in poems and illustrations. Nonfiction picture book.

Ox-Cart Man by Donald Hall, illus. by Barbara Cooney. Hall's poem with Cooney's primitive paintings follow the New England seasons through the life of a mid-19th century farmer. Picture book.

A River Ran Wild by Lynne Cherry. A Nashua story about the reclaiming of the Nashua River. Picture book.

Picturing America's Stories "Picturing America," created by the National Endowment for the Humanities, features great American photographs and art. You can see the photographs at picturingamerica@neh.gov. [Picture America Bookshelf](#) features children's books on the topics of the images, some of which are included below. Readers will be able to explore the time in history through both story and image. For higher level students

The Amazing Life of Benjamin Franklin by James Cross Giblin, illus. by Michael Dooling. This illustrated biography is well researched with many historic photos to capture the accomplishments and impact of Franklin's life. Nonfiction, gr. 4 and up.

The Boy Who Drew Birds: A Story of John James Audubon by Jacqueline Davies, illus. by Melissa Sweet. A story of the great student and painter of birds. Nonfiction picture book.

Give Me Liberty! The Story of the Declaration of Independence by Russell Freedman. "Freedman takes a crucial moment in American history and imbues it with living grace and powerful tension." *Booklist*. Nonfiction, gr. 4 and up.

Harvesting Hope, the story of Cesar Chavez by Kathleen Krull, illus. by Yuyi Morales. Chavez leads a revolt to bring the first labor reforms to migrant farm workers. Picture book biography.

Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by Doreen Rappaport, illus. by Bryan Collier. Biography of Martin Luther King illustrated with Collier's water color and collage art. Picture book biography.

Meet Abraham Lincoln by Barbara Cary. A fine telling of the life of Abraham Lincoln written in short chapters. First chapter book.

Rosa by Nikki Giovanni, illus. by Bryan Collier. Biography of Rosa Parks by the poet Nikki Giovanni. Picture book biography.

Planting the Earth *Is growing a garden a way of creating one's identity, or, for someone who has moved from home, a way to preserve an identity? These books explore passions for growing and gardens all over the world.*

The Lotus Seed by Sherry Garland, illus. by Tatsuro Kiuchi. Through generations, a family preserves a lotus seed to remember the traditions of their home, Vietnam. Picture book.

Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney. Called by a reviewer, "an oasis of calm and beauty." Themes include flowers, wisdom, New England, and grandparents. Picture book.

Once There Was a Tree by Natalia Romanova, illus. by Gennady Spirin. Celebrates the life of a tree and how it supports animals, insects, and humans. Picture book.

Planting the Trees of Kenya: the Story of Wangari Maathai by Claire A. Nivola. A courageous woman works to protect Kenyan land from deforestation. Nonfiction picture book.

Seedfolks by Paul Fleischman, illus. by Judy Pedersen. A collection of stories of people from around the world who are now neighbors with a common love – growing things. "Thirteen voices tell one story of the flowering of a Cleveland vacant lot into a neighborhood garden." Short novel made up of small stories.

So Much Depends Upon a Red Wheel Barrow: Poems *including illustrated poems and anthologies*

Birches by Robert Frost, illus. by Ed Young. An illustrated telling of Frost's classic poem. Picture book.

Good Poems, selected and introduced by Garrison Keillor. Sophisticated and accessible poems are grouped in topics such as Sons & Daughters, Work, Music, Beasts, and even Yellow. 300-page anthology.

Good Poems for Hard Times, selected by Garrison Keillor. Keillor's second anthology. "What a lovely, consoling book, perfect reading for these days when everyone is struggling with something..." *The Times-Picayun*. 300-page anthology.

My People by Langston Hughes, photos by Charles R. Smith. Hughes' poem accompanied by portraits. The book invites discussion about family, community, culture, love, photo essay as story. Picture book.

This Same Sky: a collection of poems from around the world selected by Naomi Shihab Nye. Anthology.

Wabi Sabi by Mark Reibstein, illus. by Ed Young. Picture book that explores the Japanese idea of wabi sabi - beauty in that which is simple, natural, and imperfect - and haikus, the 17-syllable poem. Picture book.

Stories of Art as Power *Stories for all levels*

Symphony of Whales by Steve Schuch, illus. by Peter Sylvada
Whales stranded near the Bering Strait respond to the sounds of classical music and follow the music to the open sea. Picture book.

The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes. Themes include bullying, dilemmas, prejudice. Short chapter book.

The Keeping Quilt by Patricia Polacco. From a basket of old clothes, an immigrant mother from Russia makes a quilt and connects her family to home. Picture book.

Wabi Sabi by Mark Reibstein, illus. by Ed Young. Picture book that explores the Japanese idea of wabi sabi - beauty in that which is simple, natural, and imperfect - and haikus, the 17-syllable poem. Picture book.

And so many other books on this list.

Triumphs *Here are people who know triumphs of spirit and the human capacity to gain courage.*

Beautiful Warrior by Emily Arnold McCully. Enter seventeenth century China and the legend of Wu Mei who builds her inner strength- her qi -with the help of her kung fu master. Picture book.

Home Run by Robert Burleigh, illus. by Mike Wimmer, Harcourt, 1988. An illustrated biography of Babe Ruth with spare text and full page pictures painted in oil on canvas. Nonfiction picture book.

Teammates by Peter Golenbock, illus. by Paul Bacon, Sandpiper, 1992. Biography of Jackie Robinson with photos and illustrations. "Golenbock has taken a single moment of baseball history, set it in its social context, and created a simple and moving tribute to courage and brotherhood." Nonfiction picture book.

Wilma Unlimited: How Wilma Rudolph Became the World's Fastest Woman by Kathleen Krull, illus. by David Diaz. Harcourt, 1996. An illustrated biography of Wilma Rudolph who overcame polio as a child to become the first woman to win three gold medals in track in an Olympics game. Nonfiction picture book.