

Read-aloud Books to Illustrate Lifeskills

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[Most of these books are picture books, with the exception of a few short chapter books aimed at 4th and 5th grades. All are intended as read-alouds for class discussion.]

Thanks to Amazon.com for providing the source for most of these annotations!

5 LIFELONG GUIDELINES

Trustworthiness

PreK

Cookies, by Amy Krouse Rosenthal (HarperCollins)

Using the activity of making and eating cookies, the author defines some important concepts for young children, such as respect, trustworthiness, patience, politeness, loyalty.

K

Being Trustworthy, by Mary Small (Picture Window Books)

Explains many different ways that children demonstrate trust and be trustworthy.

1st

A Bargain for Frances, by Russell Hoban (HarperCollins)

Thelma always seems to get Frances into trouble. When she tricks Frances into buying her tea set, it's the last straw. Can Frances show her that it's better to lose a bargain than lose a friend?

2nd

Too Many Tamales, by Gary Soto (G. P. Putnam's Sons)

While preparing dough for her family's Christmas tamales, Maria discovers that she has lost her mother's prized diamond ring somewhere in the dough and sets out to eat her way through the many finished tamales to find the missing ring.

3rd

Inger's Promise, by Jami Parkinson (MarshMedia)

With his white fur and mountain of antlers, Inger is a standout in the reindeer herd, so it's no surprise that he is chosen to pull the wedding sled and to run in the Alta River Race. But when Inger twice disappoints his fans, everyone begins to agree

with Old Moss: Inger just isn't trustworthy. Will Inger get a third chance to prove that she can be counted upon?

4th

Twenty and Ten, by Claire Huchet Bishop (Perfection Learning)
Twenty school children hide ten Jewish children from the Nazis occupying France during World War II.

5th

On My Honor, by Marion Dane Bauer (Clarion Books)
Joel's best friend Tony drowns while they are swimming in the forbidden, treacherous Vermilion River. Joel is terrified at having to tell of his disobedience and overwhelmed by his feelings of guilt.

Truthfulness

PreK

Benji Promises to Tell the Truth, by Joe Camp (14 Hands Press)
The stories (this is the first of a series) place Benji the dog in the role of being a conscience of sorts. Each book focuses on a single value like Truth, Love, Hope, Trust, or Courage (to say no to your peers).

K

Ruthie and the (Not So) Teeny Tiny Lie, by Laura Rankin (Bloomsbury USA)
Ruthie the fox *loves* little things--the smaller, the better. When she finds a teeny tiny toy on the school playground, she can hardly believe her luck. There's just one problem: it belongs to somebody else! Ruthie insists the toy is hers, but deep down, she knows better.

1st

Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire, by Diane deGroat (Sea Star)
When Gilbert the opossum takes on the part of George Washington in a play about the cherry tree, he is determined to do a good job. "I cannot tell a lie," he practices continuously. But when he borrows the hat from his costume to practice at home and forgets to bring it back, he is quick to blurt out, "I didn't take it!" only to be caught in the lie.

2nd

Tell the Truth, B. B. Wolf, by Judy Sierra (Knopf Books)
The Big Bad Wolf accepts an invitation to his library to tell how he met the three little pigs. Advised by his pals at the Villain Villa Senior Center, he retells the tale with himself as the misunderstood hero only to face a hostile, no-nonsense audience: the three pigs themselves.

3rd

The Honest-to-Goodness Truth, by Patricia McKissack (Atheneum)

When Libby is caught in her first lie to her mama, she makes a decision: "From now on, only the truth." Unfortunately, telling the unvarnished and uncomfortable truth alienates all her friends.

4th

Juan Verdades: The Man Who Couldn't Tell a Lie, by Joe Hayes (Orchard Books)

Don Ignacio, a wealthy rancher and owner of the finest apple tree in the area, implicitly trusts his foreman, Juan Valdez. When a friend claims that no employee should be trusted, don Ignacio declares openly that Juan can't tell a lie and in fact has been nicknamed Juan Verdades because of his honesty. Don Arturo then bets his entire ranch that he can get the man to tell a lie.

5th

True Lies, by George Shannon (Greenwillow Books)

These 18 stories tell "true lies" and encourage readers to seek the truth behind what seems to be fallacy. For example, in "The Donkey and the Carrots," a donkey tied to an eight-foot rope manages to devour carrots from a cart 30 feet away. How? Sources for the tales are cited and range from the folk literature of Nigeria, Finland, the Jews of Kurdistan, to the reigns of British kings.

Active Listening

PreK

Listen, Listen! by Phyllis Gershator (Barefoot Books)

In this ode to the seasons, the sights and sounds of a picturesque country village are artfully evoked. Under the summer sun, "Leaves rustle, hammocks sway. Splish, splash, children play." In autumn, "Pumpkins ripen, quick, quick. Apples, corn pick, pick." During winter, "Crunch, crunch, boots clomp. Grown-ups shovel, children romp. Skaters spin, skiers glide. Zip, zoom, slip, slide." When spring arrives, "Pop, pop, bulbs sprout. Leaves grow, flowers shout."

K

Listen, Buddy, by Helen Lester (Houghton Mifflin)

A hilarious romp about a bunny who just can't seem to listen. He is constantly confusing instructions. For example, when his parents ask for a slice of bread, he saws off a piece of his bed. But everything changes when he takes a wrong turn and meets up with Scruffy Varmint.

1st

Howard B. Wigglebottom Learns to Listen, by Howard Binkow (Lerner)

The story unfolds in a series of humorous illustrations depicting Howard the rabbit, who can't seem to focus on one thing at a time and is always distracted. His antics earn him the displeasure of his teacher, and cause his friends to become annoyed

and frustrated. When Howard finds himself all alone, he comes to the realization that he needs to change.

2nd

Listen, Rabbit, by Aileen Fisher (Crowell)

A young boy wishes for a pet of his own. (Sister has mama cat which provides ALL the pets Mama will allow) He silently sits and tries to make the wild rabbit hear his thoughts.

3rd

What Charlie Heard, by Mordecai Gerstein (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

A prominent 20th-century American composer is brought to life through this biography in picture-book form. Young Charlie always listened to the sounds around him and tried to re-create them as he started writing music, whether it was a cheering crowd or a brass band parading through the town on the Fourth of July. However, his work wasn't taken seriously until late in his life when it was accepted as a new form of music called Art Music.

4th

Listen to the Wind, by Greg Mortensen (Dial)

After getting lost while mountain climbing in Pakistan, Mortenson, a nurse, stumbled into a small village and learned of the dire circumstances in which local people lived. While recovering, Dr. Greg met the children of Korphe, who were eager to learn but were forced to write their lessons with sticks on the ground. Wanting to do something special for the village, he was encouraged by wise man Haji Ali to "listen to the wind." Dr. Greg listened, heard the eager voices of students at their lessons, and promised to return to build a school.

5th

The Other Way to Listen, by Byrd Baylor (Perfection Learning)

When you know "the other way to listen," you can hear wildflower seeds breaking open. You can hear rocks murmuring and hills singing, and it seems like the most natural thing in the world. This is the story of an old man and a child who hoped to learn his secrets.

No Put-Downs

Prek

Charlie the Caterpillar, by Don Deluise (Simon & Schuster)

As Charlie the Caterpillar meets one group of animals after another playing together and having fun, he asks if he can join in. But each time he's told not welcome -- because he's ugly.

K

Ella the Elegant Elephant, by Carmela D'amico (Arthur A. Levine Books)

On the Elephant Islands, shy little elephant Ella, new to town, worries about school and making friends. Ella loves her big red hat, a special gift from Grandma, but wearing it the first day of school brings teasing, especially from big bully Belinda.

1st

Big Bad Bruce, by Bill Peet (Houghton Mifflin)

Bruce, a bear bully, never picks on anyone his own size until he is diminished in more ways than one by a small but very independent witch.

2nd

Rag Coat, by Lauren Mills (Little, Brown)

Minna, a young Appalachian girl, wants very badly to attend school, but she doesn't have a coat. Her father has just died and her family cannot afford one. When a group of mothers who gather at her house regularly to make quilts hear of her problem, they decide to help her. Minna is thrilled, but when the new coat is finished and she wears it to the one-room schoolhouse, she is teased by her classmates for wearing rags.

3rd

Just Kidding, by Trudy Ludwig (Tricycle Press)

D.J. is tired of Vince's mean-spirited comments at school. Vince knows which buttons to push, using the "I was just kidding" defense when he goes too far. Unsure how to handle the situation, D.J. talks with his father and his teacher and learns a few strategies to help him deal with putdowns.

4th

Alley Oops! by Janice Levy (Flashlight Press)

This story relates the painful and embarrassing aftermath of name-calling and bullying from the perspective of the bully. J. J. Jax has been tormenting an overweight boy named Patrick, calling him Pig-Pen and Porky, to the point that Patrick is now afraid to go to school. Learning of his son's behavior, J. J.'s father lectures him to stop bullying Patrick. When that approach fails, Mr. Jax tries another tack and shares an experience he had as a youthful bully and the consequences he recently faced as a result of his actions.

5th

The Hundred Dresses, by Eleanor Estes (Harcourt)

At the heart of the story is Wanda Petronski, a Polish girl in a Connecticut school who is ridiculed by her classmates for wearing the same faded blue dress every day. Wanda claims she has one hundred dresses at home, but everyone knows she doesn't and bullies her mercilessly.

Personal Best

PreK

This Little Light of Mine, illustrated by E. B. Lewis (Simon & Schuster)

A visual interpretation of an African-American spiritual. It is morning when the book opens, and readers are greeted by a smiling boy. Throughout the day, he spreads his own special brand of joy wherever he goes.

K

Have You Filled a Bucket Today? by Carol McCloud (Nelson Publishing)

The concept of bucket filling is an effective metaphor for encouraging kind and considerate behavior and for teaching the benefits of positive relationships.

1st

Samuel Eaton's Day, by Kate Waters (Perfection Learning)

Young Samuel Eaton (a historical character in 1627 Plymouth) is looking forward to his first chance to help his father bring in the crops. He finds the work incredibly hard and the coarse grain raises bad blisters on his hands. But he perseveres, and at the end of the day when his father tells him "you did a man's work today, Samuel," we feel his pride.

2nd

Nim and the War Effort, by Millie Lee (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

"It's the last day of the newspaper drive and Nim, a Chinese-American girl in San Francisco during World War II, is determined to win. Her nearest rival has cheated. Undaunted, she leaves Chinatown and walks up Nob Hill after school, determined to find more scrap newspaper.

3rd

Peppe the Lamplighter, by Elisa Bartone (Lothrop)

Peppe, a young immigrant, lives in a tenement in Little Italy (New York City) in the early 1900s. His mother is dead, his father is ill, and the boy must help support his eight sisters. The street lamplighter offers him a temporary job, and Peppe accepts with pride and excitement. His father disapproves, but the girls encourage him. Peppe imagines each light to be "a small flame of promise for the future" and makes a wish for those he loves at each lamp.

4th

The Three Questions, by Jon Muth (Scholastic) [*Adapted from Leo Tolstoy*]

Yearning to be a good person, Nikolai asks, "When is the best time to do things? Who is the most important one? What is the right thing to do?" He visits Leo, an old turtle who lives in the mountains. While there, he helps Leo with his garden and rescues an injured panda and her cub, and in so doing, finds the answers he seeks. As Leo explains, "There is only one important time, and that time is now. The most important one is always the one you are with. And the most important thing is to do good for the one who is standing at your side."

5th

Wilma Unlimited, by Kathleen Krull (Harcourt)

Before Wilma was five years old, polio had paralyzed her left leg. Everyone said she would never walk again. But Wilma refused to believe it. Not only would she walk again, she vowed, she'd run. And she did run--all the way to the Olympics, where she became the first American woman to earn three gold medals in a single Olympiad.

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Caring

PreK

A Mother for Choco, by Keiko Kasza (Putnam)

A lonely, little bird goes in search of a mother. He asks all kinds of animals about his mother, but unfortunately, nobody looks just like him. Eventually, he finds Mrs. Bear who is just like a mother to him, even though she doesn't look like Choco, and he is very happy. This book does an excellent job of explaining the touchy subject of foster/adopted children.

K

Now One Foot, Now the Other, by Tomie dePaola (Putnam)

When Bobby is 5 years old, Bob has a stroke, and the little boy is frightened by the changes in his grandfather. Once Bob finally gets home from the hospital, he doesn't seem to recognize Bobby. The first sound Bob tries to make "sounds like a monster" to Bobby, but Bobby learns to understand Bob and, through love and persistence, is instrumental in Bob's recovery.

1st

Boxes for Katje, by Candace Fleming (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

In May 1945, a Dutch girl named Katje is thrilled to receive a letter and a package of socks, soap, and chocolate from Rosie, a girl she doesn't know who lives in Mayfield, Indiana. The kids start to exchange letters, and when Rosie's family members learn of Holland's severe post-war deprivations, they enlist Mayfield residents to send food and clothes to Katje, who generously shares the gifts with others in her community.

2nd

Thy Friend, Obadiah, by Brinton Turkle (Viking Press)

A six-year-old Quaker boy on Nantucket Island is followed around by a seagull. At first the bird annoys him, especially when his brothers and sisters tease him about his "friend." But when the bird disappears for a time, Obadiah begins to realize how much he misses its company, and when it returns, injured, he takes care of it, and appreciates the friendship it has given him.

3rd

Zen Ties, by Jon Muth (Scholastic)

Stillwater, the giant panda from *Zen Shorts*, continues to combine his slow-moving grace with genuine spiritual tranquility. This time, Michael faces a daunting spelling bee, and Stillwater introduces the three children to Miss Whitaker, an elderly neighbor whose crabby outbursts have frightened them. Stillwater's inward eye sees through her anger to her fear and loneliness. She turns out to be a marvelous spelling coach, and when Michael wins a red ribbon, the pictures show the whole group sharing his victory.

4th

Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen, by Dyanne Disalvo-Ryan (HarperCollins)

Can a soup kitchen be warm and inviting? It can when Uncle Willie works there. When his nephew has a day off from school, Uncle Willie invites him to spend the day helping him at the soup kitchen. Although hesitant at first, the young boy discovers that, in Uncle Willie's eyes, the food collected from his neighborhood is not just food, but preparation for a feast. To Uncle Willie, the soup kitchen visitors aren't strangers. They are his guests.

5th

Planting the Trees of Kenya, by Claire Nivola (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

Kenyan activist Wangari Maathai was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her environmental and human rights achievements. Founder of the Green Belt Movement, she has encouraged people to repair their economy, land, and health with simple, environmentally friendly acts, such as planting more trees.

Common Sense

PreK

Henny Penny, by Paul Galdone (Houghton Mifflin)

The dramatic call "The sky is falling!" and the frantic gathering of friends to tell the king that some kind of barnyard Armageddon has hit begins the story. Henny Penny, not realizing an acorn bounced off her head, overreacts. Presuming the worst, she takes on the responsibility of being the bearer of bad news. In the end, all the fowl become a memorable treat for Foxy Loxy and his large family!

K

Frog and Toad Together, by Arnold Lobel (HarperCollins)

Five adventures of two best friends who don't always exhibit common sense, but always come through with caring and ingenuity.

1st

Amelia Bedelia, by Peggy Parish (HarperCollins)

Amelia Bedelia is the cheerful but inept maid who takes everything literally. We accompany her while she goes about her day--putting out the lights, dusting the furniture, drawing the curtains when the sun shines through the windows, and making

a special treat for her new employers: a luscious lemon meringue pie, which saves her job.

2nd

It Could Always Be Worse, by Margot Zemach (Macmillan)

In this retelling of a classic Yiddish tale, the poor protagonist visits the local Rabbi with a complaint. His house is too crowded and family members are constantly getting in one another's way. As the Rabbi instructs the man to add more and more animals to his hut, the scene within turns from mildly disruptive to one of complete and utter pandemonium. When the Rabbi at last tells the man to release all his farm animals from the hut, the man is delighted to find himself living a state of complete and utter peacefulness.

3rd

Epossumondas, by Coleen Salley (Harcourt)

Variation on the traditional noodlehead story of the boy who keeps following directions, but they invariably are applied to the wrong situation, with disastrous results. In this case, Epossumondas is a baby opossum!

4th

Noodlehead Stories, by Martha Hamilton (August House)

23 tales from nearly as many countries that take readers to Gotham and Chelm and introduce Juan Bobo, Giufa, and a bevy of unnamed ninnyhammers. This collection was designed to be told, not read, but will work well either way.

5th

Stories to Solve, by George Shannon (HarperCollins)

How can a thirsty crow drink from an almost-empty pitcher? How does arresting a stone help a judge find a boy's stolen money? This book presents fourteen intriguing mysteries from world folklore. Each brain-teasing tale is followed by a simple explanation of the solution, while notes at the back of the book describe the origins of these classic mysteries.

Cooperation

PreK

Swimmy, by Leo Lionni (Knopf)

A little black fish is left alone when his entire school of fish is eaten. He still enjoys the ocean but is overjoyed to find another school of little red fish. However, they won't come out and play for fear of being eaten. He devises a plan that requires each to "swim in its own place" and form the outline of a gigantic fish in order to chase the big fish away.

K

Grandma Lena's Big Ol' Turnip, by Denia Hester (Albert Whitman)

When Grandma Lena is ready to pick her gargantuan vegetable, it will not budge. One by one, she enlists the help of her relatives, but it is only when Baby Pearl pitches in that the turnip is harvested, and then lovingly made into a soul-food feast for the neighborhood.

1st

Anansi the Spider, by Gerald McDermott (Henry Holt)

When Anansi sets out on a dangerous journey and gets into all sorts of trouble, each of his six sons does one thing to help, and all their efforts together save him.

2nd

A Chair for My Mother, by Vera Williams (Greenwillow)

After a fire destroys their home and possessions, Rosa, her mother, and grandmother save and save until they can afford to buy one big, comfortable chair that all three of them can enjoy.

3rd

A New Coat for Anna, by Harriet Ziefert (Alfred A. Knopf)

Tells of a mother's dedication to acquire a coat for her daughter in post-World War II hard times. Anna's mother decides to trade the few valuables she has left for wool and for the services of a spinner, a weaver, and a tailor, all of whom end up having a part in Anna's new coat.

4th

Stone Soup, by Jon Muth (Scholastic)

Three strangers, hungry and tired, pass through a war-torn village in China. Embittered and suspicious from the war, the people hide their food and close their windows tight. That is, until the clever strangers suggest making a soup from stones. Intrigued by the idea, everyone brings what they have until-- together, they have made a feast fit for a king!

5th

Ryan and Jimmy, by Herb Shoveller (Kids Can Press)

When Ryan Hreljac's first-grade teacher told his class about countries where people did not have access to clean drinking water, the boy became determined to change things. This true account follows his efforts from what began as one child committed to building one well, and grew over several years into an international network of fundraising, educating, and well-drilling that extended far beyond anyone's expectations.

Courage

PreK

Little Quack, by Lauren Thompson (Simon & Schuster)

It's time to learn to swim and take that first dip in the pond. All the little ducklings are very anxious, especially Little Quack. But one by one, with a lot of encouragement from Mama, they conquer their fear and take the plunge.

K

Bravery Soup, by Maryann Cocca-Leffler (Whitman)

Carlin the raccoon is afraid of everything. Then he meets Big Bear who tells him that there is a way to get courage. Alone, Carlin must make a perilous journey and bring back the secret ingredient for Big Bear's Bravery Soup.

1st

Say Something, by Peggy Moss (Tilbury House)

At this school, there are some children who push and tease and bully. Sometimes they hurt other kids by just ignoring them. The girl in this story sees it happening, but she would never do these mean things herself. Then one day something happens that shows her that being a silent bystander isn't enough.

2nd

Teaspoon of Courage for Kids, by Bradley Grieve (Andrews McMeel Publishing)

The world can be a scary place. But if you believe in yourself and carry with you just a teaspoon of courage, nothing will stand in your way. Illustrated with humorous

3rd

Sojourner Truth's Step-Stomp Stride, by Andrea Pinkney (Hyperion)

Born into slavery, Belle had to endure the cruelty of several masters before she escaped to freedom. That's when she changed her name to Sojourner and began traveling across the country, demanding equal rights for black people and for women. Many people weren't ready for her message, but Sojourner was brave, and her truth was powerful.

4th

The Man Who Walked Between the Towers, by Mordecai Gerstein (Roaring Brook Press)

In 1974, French aerialist Philippe Petit threw a tightrope between the two towers of the World Trade Center and spent an hour walking, dancing, and performing high-wire tricks a quarter mile in the sky. This picture book captures the poetry and magic of the event with a poetry of its own: lyrical words and lovely paintings that present the detail, daring, and drama of Petit's feat.

5th

Pink and Say, by Patricia Polacco (Philomel)

Based on a true incident in the author's own family history. It's a story of interracial friendship during the Civil War between two 15-year-old Union soldiers. Saylor, who is white and poor, tells how he is rescued by Pinkus, who carries the wounded Say back to the Georgia home where Pink's black family were slaves. Pink and

his mother nurse Say back to health, and Pink's mother sets Say's fears about his own courage to rest, but before they can leave, marauders kill Pink's mother and drag the boys to Andersonville prison. Pink is hanged, but Say survives to tell the story and pass it on across generations.

Creativity

PreK

Lola Loves Stories, by Anna McQuinn (Charlesbridge Publishing)

Lola loves to go to the library with her daddy. Every night she reads a new story, and the next day, she acts it out.

K

Bored—Nothing to Do, by Peter Spier (Doubleday)

Two very bored boys can't find anything to do until one of them decides that they should build an airplane. They take a bunch of their parents' important things and build a high flying airplane and fly all across town. But when their parents notice that their windows, car engine, sheets and many other things have gone missing, they decide to go find their kids. That's when see them flying in the sky!

1st

Ladybug Girl and Bumblebee Boy, by Jacky Davis (Dial)

At the playground, Lulu asks her friend Sam if he wants to play with her. As Ladybug Girl and Bumblebee Boy, Lulu and Sam save the playground from hairy monsters and big mean robots, and have their very own parade on the bouncy dinosaurs. They figure out that when they work together, they can create fun games that they both like to play.

2nd

Library Mouse, by Daniel Kirk (Harry N. Abrams)

Sam's home was in a little hole in the wall in the children's reference books section, and he thought that life was very good indeed, for Sam loved to read. Sam read so much that finally one day he decided to write books himself!

3rd

Balloons Over Broadway, by Melissa Sweet (Houghton Mifflin)

Every Thanksgiving morning for more than eighty years, mammoth-size balloons have risen to the skies to wobble and sway, sally and shimmy, up and down the canyons of New York City. Just how did this beloved tradition come to Broadway? Who first invented these wondrous 'upside down marionettes'? This book tells the story of the imaginative inventor Tony Sarg.

4th

The Secret World of Walter Anderson, by Hester Bass (Candlewick)

Beautifully illustrated biography of the reclusive painter Walter Anderson who captured the Mississippi Gulf Coast in watercolors.

5th

Marguerite Makes a Book, by Bruce Robertson (J. Paul Getty Museum)

In Paris in the 1400s, a young girl named Marguerite delights in assisting her father in his craft of illuminating manuscripts for the nobility of France. His current commission is a splendid book of hours for his patron, Lady Isabelle. In this richly illustrated tale, Marguerite journeys all over Paris buying goose feathers for quills, eggs for mixing paints, dried plants and ground minerals for pigments. Then she expertly finishes the illumination of Lady Isabelle's book. This book was inspired by an illuminated manuscript in the collection of the Getty Museum.

Curiosity

PreK

Small Green Snake, by Libba Moore Gray (Orchard Books)

While his sisters and brother are quick to heed their mama's advice and stay close to home, Small Green Snake's curiosity gets the best of him, and he soon finds himself trapped in a glass jelly jar. Playful sounds, toe-tapping rhythms, and strikingly bold illustrations in torn paper make this an irresistible read-aloud.

K

Tweak, Tweak, by Eve Bunting (Clarion Books)

When Little Elephant and Mama Elephant take a walk, Little Elephant asks all sorts of questions about the other animals that they see. Curious Little Elephant learns all kinds of things about the other animals in his habitat, while also learning what it means to be an elephant.

1st

Kitten's First Full Moon, by Kevin Henkes (Greenwillow)

Kitten is very curious about that "little bowl of milk" in the sky! And she is determined to get it!

2nd

The Dark at the Top of the Stairs, by Sam McBratney (Candlewick)

Though their wise old mentor tries to entice them outdoors to play, three young mice insist on seeing what lives behind the dark at the top of the stairs. Its single word "MEOW" sends them "bumpety-bump and slippity-slide and tumble-thump" all the way back down. This book invites youngsters to venture out into the unknown, offering the reassurance of a haven at the end, and the exhilaration of a mad scramble to get there.

3rd

Meteor! by Patricia Polacco (Philomel)

Based on a true event, this book expresses the magic that suddenly pervades a small town when a meteorite lands on a farm. The family cordons off the "rock," and the townspeople soon flock to the

4th

The Elephant's Child, by Rudyard Kipling, illustrated by Tim Raglin (Alfred A. Knopf)

There are numerous editions of Kipling's classic tale. I like the illustrations in this one. This is about the young elephant "in the high and far off times" before elephants had trunks, who keeps getting spanked for his "satiabable curiosity" but goes off anyway to find out what the crocodile has for dinner. In finding out, he acquires a trunk when the crocodile grabs hold of his nose and stretches it out, which he subsequently finds very useful!

5th

For the Birds, by Peggy Thomas (Boyd's Mills Press)

The life of Roger Tory Peterson who turned his overwhelming curiosity about the natural world, especially birds, into a lifelong passion and career as a painter and naturalist.

Effort

PreK

Through Georgia's Eyes, by Rachel Victoria Rodriguez (Henry Holt and Co.)

A simple biography of Georgia O'Keeffe, whose visual voice was unique and bold for a woman born in 1887, describing O'Keeffe's childhood, her goal of becoming an artist, her move from the city to New Mexico, and her bond with the land there.

K

What You Do Is Easy, What I Do Is Hard, by Jake Wolf (Greenwillow)

A supercilious squirrel brags that what he does-gathering nuts-is hard, while the labors of his forest comrades-the bee, the robin, the spider and the ant-are easy. Dared to prove his boast, he of course fails miserably. The story ends with the agreement that everyone's work is challenging.

1st

Nothing Sticks Like a Shadow, by Ann Tompert (Houghton)

The story is about a boastful rabbit who claims he can do anything; his friend challenges him that he can't, and they make a bet that the rabbit can't outrun his shadow. The rabbit tries everything he can, going to dangerous extremes to win this bet, and at the end of the day has to be rescued by his friend. After the rescue he looks down and sees that his shadow is gone (the sun has set) and suddenly realizes that he liked having his shadow with him, and that he hadn't really wanted to win the bet at the loss of his shadow.

2nd

My Great-Aunt Arizona, by Gloria Houston (Perfection Learning)

True story of Arizona Hughes who worked hard as a young girl to earn her teaching degree and taught school in North Carolina for 57 years.

3rd

The Boy Who Invented TV, by Kathleen Krull (Knopf)

Biography of Philo Farnsworth, the unremembered inventor of television. Plowing a potato field in 1920, a 14-year-old farm boy from Idaho saw in the parallel rows of overturned earth a way to “make pictures fly through the air.” This boy was not a magician; he was a scientific genius and just eight years later he made his brainstorm in the potato field a reality by transmitting the world’s first television image. This fascinating picture-book biography of Philo Farnsworth covers his early interest in machines and electricity, leading up to how he put it all together in one of the greatest inventions of the 20th century.

4th

Radio Rescue, by Lynne Barasch (Straus & Giroux)

Back in 1923, a long-distance telephone call took hours to place, and overseas calls weren't possible at all. But a new invention, called wireless radio, permitted instant communication over long distances. A young boy, itching to get involved, buys a secondhand receiver and earphones, and studies hard to learn Morse code so that he can pass the test to qualify as an amateur radio operator and get his own station. Then one night he picks up a distress signal from Florida -- family stranded in flood -- and uses his skill for something more important.

5th

Grand Mosque of Paris, by Karen Gray Ruelle (Holiday House)

During the Nazi occupation of France, Jews were being rounded up and sent to concentration camps. One avenue of refuge was the Grand Mosque in Paris, where Jewish adults and children hid, some briefly until they could be spirited away, others for longer stays. Thanks to the mosque’s rector, and particularly Berbers from Algeria, many lives were saved. The story effectively captures the desperation felt by the victims and the enormous effort made by the resistance.

Flexibility

PreK

Not a Box, by Antoinette Portis (HarperCollins)

Through a series of paired questions and answers, a rabbit is queried about why he is sitting in, standing on, spraying, or wearing a box. Each time, he insists, "It's not a box!" and the opposite page reveals the many things a small child's pretending can make of one: a race car, a mountain, a burning building, a robot.

K

Imogene's Antlers, by David Small (Crown Books)

Imogene wakes up one day to find that she has grown a pair of antlers. These are not small and discrete, but a full spread of them. Imogene has quite a day trying to get dressed, walking through doorways and under chandeliers. And she finds her antlers are useful too, for drying laundry and feeding birds. The next day the antlers are gone as mysteriously as they appeared, but now there is something else to contend with!

1st

Duck! Rabbit! by Amy Krouse Rosenthal (Chronicle Books)

A clever take on the age-old optical illusion: is it a duck or a rabbit? Depends on how you look at it!

2nd

Gates of the Wind, by Kathryn Lasky (Harcourt Brace)

Imaginative story that tells a story of a strong (and strong willed) old woman who needs a change in her life---and decides to 'just do it !' She takes off for the mountains with a donkey and cart with her belongings and overcomes many obstacles.

3rd

Art and Max, by David Wiesner (Clarion Books)

Max and Arthur are friends who share an interest in painting. Arthur is an accomplished painter; Max is a beginner. Max's first attempt at using a paintbrush sends the two friends on a whirlwind trip through various artistic media, which turn out to have unexpected pitfalls. Although Max is inexperienced, he's courageous and a quick learner. His energy and enthusiasm bring the adventure to its triumphant conclusion. Beginners everywhere will take heart.

4th

If You're So Smart, How Come You Can't Spell Mississippi? by Barbara Esham (Mainstream Connections Publishing)

Katie always thought her dad was smart; he is one of the busiest attorneys in town! People are always asking him for advice! She has been a bit confused since asking him for help with her weekly spelling list. How can her very smart dad struggle with one of her spelling words? This is one of a series of books that talks about the way that people with learning disabilities must become flexible in coping with them.

5th

Uncommon Traveler, by Don Brown (Houghton Mifflin)

Mary Kingsley spent her childhood in a small house on a lonely lane outside London, England. Her mother was bedridden, her father rarely home, and Mary served as housekeeper, handyman, nursemaid, and servant. Not until she was thirty years old did Mary get her chance to explore the world she'd read about in her father's library. In 1893, she arrived in West Africa, where she encountered giant insects, crocodiles, hippos, and brutal heat. Mary endured the hardships of the equatorial country—and thrived.

Friendship

PreK

Little Quack's New Friend, by Lauren Thompson (Simon & Schuster)

Little Quack and his four siblings meet Little Ribbit. While the other ducklings are wary of him at first—hes too little, too green, and a FROG!—Little Quack has no such hesitations, and quack, quack, ribbit, ribbit! off they go. As it turns out, the frog's sense of fun perfectly matches that of the ducks. He loves to splash, squish in the mud, bounce on a log, and dunk in the water. As their play moves from one activity to the next, the other ducklings join in the fun one by one.

K

Andy and the Lion, by James Daugherty (Viking)

In this retelling of Androcles and the Lion, Andy meets a lion on the way to school and wins his friendship for life by removing a thorn from his paw.

1st

Best Friends, by Miriam Cohen (Simon & Schuster)

At the beginning of the day, Jim and Paul are almost best friends - and after a series of mix-ups, almost enemies! Then, together, they see an emergency in the classroom, and they band together to set it right...like the best friends they really are.

2nd

Big Al, by Andrew Clements (Perfection Learning)

Poor Big Al! He just wants to make friends. And in the whole wide blue sea you can't find a nicer fish. But because Big Al is large and scary-looking, the little fish are afraid to get to know him. What can he do? He tries everything he can think of -- from disguising himself with seaweed to burrowing under the ocean floor so he'll look smaller. But something always goes wrong, and lonely Big Al wonders if he'll ever have a single friend. Then one frightening day, when a fishing net captures the other fish, Big Al gets the chance to prove what a wonderful friend he can be!

3rd

Hickory, by Palmer Brown (HarperCollins)

An indoor mouse ventures into the outside world and finds true friendship. *(Be forewarned: This is a wonderful story of love and friendship, but it does not have a happy-ever-after ending. The message is more in the nature of the idea that true friendship is worth whatever sacrifice you have to make.)*

4th

The Other Side, by Jacqueline Woodson (Putnam)

Clover's mom says it isn't safe to cross the fence that segregates their African-American side of town from the white side where Anna lives. But the two girls strike up a friendship, and get around the grown-ups' rules by sitting on top of the fence together.

5th

Tarra and Bella, by Carol Buckley (Putnam)

After retiring from the circus, Tarra became the first resident of the Elephant Sanctuary in Tennessee. When other elephants moved in and developed close friendships, only Tarra remained independent until the day she met a stray mixed-breed dog named Bella. It was love at first sight as this unlikely duo became inseparable.

Initiative

PreK

Yoko's Paper Cranes, by Rosemary Wells (Hyperion)

Yoko writes weekly to Japan to her beloved grandmother, Obaasan, whose garden is visited each year by migrating cranes. Yoko's grandfather, Ojiisan, inspired by the winged visitors, showed his granddaughter how to fold cranes out of paper. When Obaasan's birthday approaches and Yoko doesn't have the money to buy her a present, she sends her some origami cranes, folded just as Ojiisan had taught her.

K

The Have a Good Day Café, by Frances Park (Lee & Low Books)

Mike's Korean grandmother is still adjusting to her move to the U.S. While Mike helps her learn English, she helps the family, which owns a food cart, beat stiff competition. The family once did a good business serving pizza, bagels, and hot dogs on a busy corner, but now two other carts serving similar fare have moved in. Mike's idea--to serve delicious Korean specialties that only Grandma knows how to make--saves the business and also helps Grandma feel at home.

1st

Miss Dorothy and Her Bookmobile, by Gloria Houston (HarperCollins)

Dorothy's dearest wish is to be a librarian in a fine brick library just like the one she visited when she was small. But her new home in North Carolina has valleys and streams but no libraries, so Miss Dorothy and her neighbors decide to start a bookmobile. Instead of people coming to a fine brick library, Miss Dorothy can now bring the books to them—at school, on the farm, even once in the middle of a river!

2nd

Strange Creatures, by Lita Judge (Hyperion)

Walter Rothschild was born into a family of bankers and was nearly the richest boy in the world. He was also so shy he barely spoke. He had no friends, but he loved every creature that crawled, slithered or flew. At the age of seven, Walter saw his first circus parade. He excitedly declared to his parents: "I'm going to collect animals from all over the world and build a museum!" By the time he was 24, his dream museum had become a reality.

3rd

Boom Town, by Sonia Levitin (Scholastic)

Young Amanda's family has survived the three-week stagecoach trip to California and now the boisterous brood is putting down roots near the gold fields, where Pa pans for a fortune. Eager to make the best of their conditions, Amanda improvises with primitive equipment to turn out pies that she can sell to the miners. When she expands and buys more pans, she recommends to the peddler that he set up a trading post, and the boom begins.

4th

Elizabeth Leads the Way, by Tanya Lee Stone (Henry Holt & Co.)

Elizabeth Cady Stanton stood up and fought for what she believed in. From an early age, she knew that women were not given rights equal to men. But rather than accept her lesser status, Elizabeth went to college and later gathered other like-minded women to challenge the right to vote. Here is the inspiring story of an extraordinary woman who changed America forever because she wouldn't take "no" for an answer.

5th

I Could Do That! by Linda Arms White (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux)

Statues of Esther Morris are found in front of the Wyoming State Capitol and in the United States Capitol, yet she is not as well known as Susan B. Anthony or Elizabeth Cady Stanton. White tells the story of the woman's achievements in helping to gain the vote for women in Wyoming and as the first female judge and the first woman in the United States to hold political office.

Integrity

PreK

Sam Tells Stories, by Thierry Robberecht (Clarion Books)

Sam is so eager to make friends at his new school that he tells them a story that isn't true. After all, he makes up bedtime stories for his little brother, who thinks Sam is the best storyteller ever! But when the truth catches up with him, Sam realizes the difference between telling a story and telling a lie—and he has to face his friends and tell them the truth.

K

A Hen for Izzy Pippik, by Aubrey Davis (Kids Can Press)

When Shaina finds a magnificent hen, she knows that Izzy Pippik, the hen's owner, is sure to return for her. In the meantime, Shaina decides she will care for the animal. But when dozens of eggs hatch and rowdy chickens scatter throughout the village, Shaina must fight the entire town if she has any hope of protecting the birds. Inspired by Jewish and Islamic traditional texts, this is a tale about doing the right thing, even in the face of adversity.

1st

The Trial of Cardigan Jones, by Tim Egan (Houghton Mifflin)

Cardigan the moose was new in town. When Mrs. Brown's fresh apple pie goes missing, witnesses come forward to place Cardigan at the scene of the crime. Finding himself on trial, Cardigan insists to judge and jury that he didn't take the pie—he just wanted to smell it. No one believes him. But despite his assurances, he can't explain what happened to the pie, either.

2nd

The Steel Pan Man of Harlem, by Colin Bootman (Carolrhoda Books)

The city of Harlem is overrun by rats. One day, a mysterious man appears with a steel pan drum, promising to rid the city of its problem...for a price. The mayor has no choice but to agree. The steel pan man plays the sweetest melody anyone has ever heard and dances the rats out of the city. But when the mayor refuses to keep his word, the steel pan man has no choice. He plays the mayor another tune for another purpose. This retelling of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* is set during the Harlem Renaissance.

3rd

The Summer My Father Was Ten, by Pat Brisson (Boyd's Mills Press)

It was the summer that the boys lost a baseball under a tomato plant in Mr. Bellavista's garden. Then someone tossed a tomato back instead of a baseball. A lively battle took place, which seemed like great fun at the time, but in the end Mr. Bellavista's garden had been destroyed. In a touching story of one boy's efforts to make amends, we see the rebuilding of a garden and the forming of a relationship across generations.

4th

A Day's Work, by Eve Bunting (Perfection Learning)

Francisco, trying to find work for his grandfather, or abuelo, who has just arrived from Mexico, acts as a liaison between Abuelo, who doesn't speak English, and Ben, who wants to hire a gardener for a day's work. Eager to earn the badly needed pay, Francisco assures Ben that his grandfather is a skilled gardener (Abuelo is in fact a carpenter). Returning at the end of the day, Ben is shocked to discover that Francisco and Abuelo stripped his field of the plants and left the weeds. Abuelo is also angered, learning only now that Francisco had lied to Ben, and refuses payment until they have done the job correctly. Recognizing the older man's integrity, Ben rewards Abuelo and Francisco with the promise of "more than just one day's work."

5th

Rosa, by Nikki Giovanni (Henry Holt & Co.)

Fifty years after her refusal to give up her seat on a Montgomery, Alabama, city bus, Mrs. Rosa Parks is still one of the most important figures in the American civil rights movement. This tribute to Mrs. Parks is a celebration of her courageous action and the events that followed.

Organization

PreK

One Smart Cookie, by Amy Krouse Rosenthal (HarperCollins)

This book uses sweet confections to explore creative ways to approach a challenge, think of others, and work hard. A brief illustrated glossary serves up a batch of essential life lessons through the collaborative activity of making cookies. The words themselves aren't always simple—e.g., "prompt," "organized," "prepared," "compromise," "empathy," "integrity"—but the explanations hit close to the heart and simplify the definition for younger readers.

K

The Bag I'm Taking to Grandma's, by Shirley Neitzel (Greenwillow)

A familiar story of differing viewpoints between mother and child is presented in charmingly simple cumulative verse and rebuses. A young boy is packing for a trip to visit his grandmother. He fills a shopping bag with his mitt, cars, space ship, wooden animals, his favorite stuffed rabbit, his pillow, a book a flashlight. But then along comes mom with ideas of her own!

1st

Click, Clack, Moo, by Doreen Cronin (Atheneum)

The literacy rate in Farmer Brown's barn goes up considerably once his cows find an old typewriter and begin typing. To the harassed farmer's dismay, his communicative cows quickly become contentious:

Dear Farmer Brown,

The barn is very cold at night. We'd like some electric blankets.

Sincerely,

The Cows

When he refuses to comply with their demands, the cows take action. Farmer Brown finds another note on the barn door: "Sorry. We're closed. No milk today." Soon the striking cows and Farmer Brown are forced to reach a mutually agreeable compromise, with the help of an impartial party--the duck. But this poor, beleaguered farmer's "atypical" troubles are not over yet!

2nd

Paperboy, by Dav Pilkey (Perfection Learning)

The story of a young paperboy (and his dog) who has organized his day so that he can successfully carry out his job. A gentle story, totally unlike Pilkey's usual outrageous slapstick.

3rd

The Berenstain Bears and the Messy Room, by Stan and Jan Berenstain (Random House)

The Bear children have made such a mess of their room that Mama Bear starts throwing out their toys. Papa Bear intervenes to build shelves and boxes and help the cubs organize their things.

4th

The Cats in Krasinsky Square, by Karen Hesse (Scholastic)

Set in Warsaw in 1942, this picture book brings to life a little-known incident of Jewish resistance. A young girl who has escaped the Ghetto lives with her older sister who, with friends, plans to smuggle food to those still there. Somehow the Gestapo has heard of the plan and has designs of its own—dogs to sniff out the bundles of food arriving with the resisters on a train. With quick thinking, the friends gather all of the cats living in Krasinski Square into baskets and head for the station. Just as the train pulls in, the felines are let loose, the dogs chase the cats, chaos erupts, and eventually the contraband is passed through the chinks in the Ghetto wall.

5th

Irena Sendler and the Children of the Warsaw Ghetto, by Susan Goldman Rubin (Holiday House)

Sendler, a young Catholic social worker, did her best to tend to the wounded and bring bread to the hungry; but as soon as Poland surrendered to Germany, she joined Zegota, a resistance movement that helped rescue Jews. Infiltrating the ghetto disguised as a nurse, she saw starvation and sickness, and as the Nazis began to empty the ghetto, she began to smuggle out the children.

Patience

PreK

Leo the Late Bloomer, by Robert Kraus (Perfection Learning)

Leo the tiger isn't reading, or writing, or drawing, or even speaking, and his father is concerned. But Leo's mother isn't. She knows her son will do all those things, and more, when he's ready.

K

Wait Till the Moon Is Full, by Margaret Wise Brown (HarperCollins)

There was once a little raccoon who wanted to go out in the night -- to know an owl, to see if the moon is a rabbit, and to find out how dark is the dark. But his mother said, "Wait. Wait till the moon is full." So the little raccoon waited and wondered, while the moon got bigger and bigger and bigger. Until at last, on a very special evening, the moon was full.

1st

The Pea Blossom, by Amy Lowry Poole (Holiday House)

Poole has taken Hans Christian Andersen's "Five Peas from One Pod" and pared down the text, eliminating the religious overtones but retaining the humor and poignancy of the original. Five peas sit dreaming in their pod in a small garden outside the city of Beijing. The first four make grandiose plans, anticipating flights to the sun or moon, or dining with the emperor. The fifth and smallest pea is content to wait and see.

2nd

Feivel's Flying Horses, Heidi Smith Heide (Kar-Ben Publishing)

Feivel leaves his wife and four children behind in the Old Country when he comes to New York. A wood carver by trade, he is hired to create carousel horses for a Coney Island amusement park. Thinking of the family he has left behind, Feivel fashions steeds for his wife and children, inscribing each masterpiece with a name. By the time the carousel is complete, Fievel has earned enough money to bring his family to America. When they are finally reunited, the happy family rides the carousel together.

3rd

Silver Packages, by Cynthia Rylant (Scholastic)

Rylant traces the origins of an Appalachian "Christmas Train" that travels through the mountains each year on December 23 to a rich man who wished to repay a debt of kindness he had received many years before. He faithfully returns and tosses silver packages from the caboose to the coal-town children who wait by the tracks. One such child is Frankie, who longs for a doctor's kit every year; instead he gets much-needed socks or mittens along with small toys. As an adult, he moves back to the town to live and work, having fulfilled his dream of becoming a doctor.

4th

Salt in His Shoes, by Deloris Jordan (Simon & Schuster)

The mere mention of the name conjures up visions of basketball played at its absolute best. But as a child, Michael Jordan almost gave up on his hoop dreams, all because he feared he'd never grow tall enough to play the game that would one day make him famous. That's when his mother and father stepped in and shared the invaluable lesson of what really goes into the making of a champion -- patience, determination, and hard work.

5th

Albert, by Donna Jo Napoli (Harcourt)

Every day Albert sticks his hand out the window of his apartment to check the weather. Every day he decides it's too cold, too hot, too wet, too breezy, and goes back to sitting at his table, drinking tomato juice, doing card tricks, or listening to baseball games on the radio. Until one day when he works his hand out through the grillwork over his window--plop! A cardinal drops a twig in his palm. Before he knows it, Albert is stranded, holding a brand new nest in his hand. The days go by, eggs are laid, the papa cardinal starts feeding berries to Albert, and, inevitably, chicks hatch. Meanwhile, Albert is slowly developing a different take on life. His previously protected world opens up as he witnesses the highs and lows of nature's course.

Perseverance

PreK

Duck On a Bike, by David Shannon (Blue Sky Publishers)

When Duck gets the zany idea to ride a bike one day, each animal on the farm has a reaction. "M-o-o-o," says Cow. But what she's really thinking is, "A duck on a bike? That's the silliest thing I've ever seen!" Pig and Pig say "Oink," thinking all the

while, "Duck is such a show-off!" Duck perseveres with his bike riding even in the face of disapproval, but it's not until a crew of kids shows up and leaves their bikes lying about that the true feelings of all the animals come to light, and for one brief, glorious moment, the farm is a mad, mad world of two-wheeling road hogs (and chickens and horses and goats).

K

Franklin Rides a Bike, by Paulett Bourgeois (Kids Can Press)

Franklin the turtle thinks his friends will make fun of him since he still has his training wheels on his bike. Franklin then remembers that his friends all had trouble learning new things as well. The overall message of the book is "don't give up, not everything comes so easily."

1st

D. W. Flips, by Marc Brown (Perfection Learning)

D. W., Arthur's self-assured little sister, is the central character here. It's D. W.'s first day in gymnastics class, and she knows it all. For D. W., touching toes and skipping in circles is easy, but when she is called upon to do a forward roll, she can't. After a long week of practice, D. W. masters the forward roll only to discover the new task at hand is the backward roll. There's always something more to work on!

2nd

Brave Irene, by William Steig (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

Brave Irene is Irene Bobbin, the dressmaker's daughter. Her mother isn't feeling so well and can't possibly deliver the beautiful ball gown she's made for the duchess to wear that very evening. So plucky Irene volunteers to get the gown to the palace on time, in spite of the fierce snowstorm that's brewing-- quite an errand for a little girl. But where there's a will, there's a way, as Irene proves in the danger-fraught adventure that follows.

3rd

Uncle Jed's Barbershop, by Margaree King Mitchell (Simon & Schuster)

As the only black barber in a county of sharecroppers during the 1920s, Uncle Jed traveled for miles to tend to his customers. Saving his money to build his very own barbershop was a dream that had to be postponed because of his generous heart and the Depression. Then one glorious day, his 79th birthday, Uncle Jed finally opened the doors of his new shop.

4th

Leonardo's Horse, by Jean Fritz (Putnam)

Leonardo da Vinci had a dream. When he heard that the Duke of Milan was planning to honor his father with the statue of a bronze horse, he knew he had to be the artist for the job. "This would be his mark on history." Unfortunately, because of events often beyond his control, the sculpture was never completed, and it is said that Leonardo died in 1519, grieving for his horse. Hundreds of years later, in 1977, an artist and art lover, Charlie Dent, read a story about Leonardo's horse, and it became his dream

too. He decided to complete the project, and give the horse to Italy as a gift from the American people. Charlie studied horses just as Leonardo had, and worked tirelessly on the project, but he too became ill, and died in 1994, before its completion. Friends of Charlie's wanted to see his dream fulfilled, and so they contacted a talented sculptor, Nina Akamu, to finish the project, and soon it became her dream too. On September 10, 1999, Leonardo's and Charlie's dream was finally unveiled in Milan.

5th

They Never Gave Up, by Hoyt R. Wilson (Resource Publishing)

This book tells the dramatic events in the lives of six individuals who overcame great difficulties to become American heroes who continue to inspire us today. Susan Anthony was arrested for voting and found guilty by a directed verdict written before the trial began, but she continued to work to gain for women the right to vote. George W. Carver born as a slave, kidnapped as an infant, overcame life long hardships to become a world-class botanist who changed the way of life for the poor Southern farmer. Thomas A. Edison was called a failure when thousands of his experiments were unsuccessful. He refused to give up and is now recognized as the world's greatest inventor. Abraham Lincoln endured many personal disappointments but preserved the Union during the Civil War and proved to the world that democracy works. Sequoyah worked entirely alone, rejected even by his own family but developed an alphabet so his Cherokee nation could learn to read and write. Harriet Tubman escaped slavery and risked her life using the Underground Railroad to escort more than 300 Southern slaves to freedom in the North.

Pride

PreK

When I Feel Good About Myself, by Cornelia Maude Spelman (Albert Whitman)

This simple treatise on self-esteem doesn't tell a story per se, but instead serves as a pep talk that connects a number of platitudes: "Somebody loves me just as I am"; "Some things are hard. But that's OK"; "I feel good when I can help"; etc. The central character is a plump, spunky guinea pig.

K

Jack's Talent, by Maryann Cocca-Leffler (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

On the first day of school, Miss Lucinda asks the students to introduce themselves and share a special talent. Going around the circle, it seems everyone's good at something. But Jack can't think of anything, listing instead what he is not good at, by reciting back—in order—the names and activities of the children before him. Miss Lucinda tells the class that the way Jack can remember things is a special talent itself, and she gives him the responsibility of handing out name tags.

1st

Me I Am! by Jack Prelutsky (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

Prelutsky's classic poem celebrates self-esteem, "no other ME I AM can fit precisely in my skin" and is brought to life in a splendid pairing with Christine Davenier's lively illustrations that portray three children in animated movement: leaping, jumping, riding a bike, ballet dancing and many other effervescent or thoughtful activities.

2nd

The Best Bug to Be, by Claire M. Johnson (Atheneum)

This book demonstrates that the show must go on--even if one doesn't get the leading role. An overzealous Kelly confidently volunteers her singing and dancing skills for the school play, but to her great dismay she lands only the part of a bumblebee. While ladybugs, toads and the Queen of the Butterflies rehearse all around her, Kelly's parents help the girl realize her own special talent for being a good bee.

3rd

Proud As a Peacock, Brave As a Lion, by Jane Barclay (Tundra Books)

Much has been written about war and remembrance, but very little of it has been for young children. As questions come from a young grandchild, his grandpa talks about how, as a very young man, he was as proud as a peacock in uniform, busy as a beaver on his Atlantic crossing, and brave as a lion charging into battle. Soon, the old man's room is filled with an imaginary menagerie as the child thinks about different aspects of wartime. But as he pins medals on his grandpa's blazer and receives his own red poppy in return, the mood becomes more somber. Outside, the crowd gathered for the veterans' parade grows as quiet as a mouse, while men and women--old and young--march past in the rain. A trumpet plays and Grandpa lays a wreath in memory of his lost friend. Just then, the child imagines an elephant in the mist. "Elephants never forget," he whispers to his grandpa. "Then let's be elephants," says the old man, as he wipes water from his eyes and takes his grandson's hand.

4th

Grandmama's Pride, by Becky Birtha (Albert Whitman)

Every summer Mama, Sister, and Sarah Marie take the bus from their home in the North to the South to see Grandmama. This year, 1956, will be different; when Sarah Marie's aunt teaches her to read, the child discovers the consequences of the signs that say "Whites only" and "Colored People," and learns the import of civil rights. The straightforward text and arresting watercolor illustrations (the evocative cover says it all, showing the determination on Grandmama's face) bring home the fierce pride, the dignity, and the emotional impact of the times: "Grandmama's pride" was "too tall to fit in the back of the bus."

5th

Junkyard Wonders, by Patricia Polacco (Philomel)

When young Trisha finds out her class at the new school is known as "The Junkyard," she is devastated. She moved from her old town so she wouldn't be in a special class anymore! But then she meets her teacher, the quirky and invincible Mrs. Peterson, and her classmates, an oddly brilliant group of students each with his or her

own unique talent. And it is here in The Junkyard that Trisha learns the true meaning of genius, and that this group of misfits are, in fact, wonders, all of them.

Problem Solving

PreK

Lucy Anna and the Finders, by Sarah Hayes (Candlewick)

In this modern-day fairy tale, two Finders (striped elephantlike creatures) come from the woods near Lucy Anna's house, find her red toy horse, and take it with them. The child sets out to get it back, outwitting the Finders at every turn to achieve her goal.

K

Inch by Inch, by Leo Lionni (Knopf)

A small green inchworm is proud of his skill at measuring anything—a robin's tail, a flamingo's neck, a toucan's beak. Then one day a nightingale threatens to eat him if he cannot measure his song. Children will enjoy the clever inchworm's solution and delight in finding the tiny hero on every page.

1st

Five Chinese Brothers, by Claire Huchet Bishop (Putnam)

The beloved story of five brothers who use their special powers to rescue the First Brother from being unfairly put to death. (*I love this story, but I have always had a problem with the oven stuffed with whipped cream—the picture should not have depicted smoke and flame if it was stuffed with whipped cream! Still, this is a great book on using your talents to solve a problem.*)

2nd

Bootsie Barker Bites, by Barbara Bottner (Puffin)

The narrator hates playing with Bootsie, but she has to, because Bootsie's mother is her mother's best friend. Bootsie is mean--she treats the narrator very badly, breaks her toys, tries to hurt her pet lizard, and claims she is a dinosaur who will eat the narrator right up. The narrator grits her teeth and bears it until she discovers Bootsie will be staying at her house for the night; then she thinks up a plan that turns the tables on her unpleasant playmate.

3rd

The Pepins and Their Problems, by Polly Horvath (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

Using the omniscient narrator to solicit advice from "dear reader," Horvath spins a delightful yarn introducing the Pepins, a family unable to solve even the most obvious problem. Faced with the dilemma of toads in their shoes, the Pepins decide to follow the suggestion of a Kalamazoo reader, who recommends finding toadstools for the toads to sit on. When the family cow gives lemonade instead of milk, the Pepins serve lemonade-cheese to their very fine neighbor, Mr. Bradshaw. The chapters are episodic, but the story does reach a climax of sorts: the Pepins seem finally able to manage their

own difficulties--prompting a family vacation to visit and thank those dear readers for all their suggestions.

4th

Snow Treasure, by Marie McSwigan (Perfection Learning)

In the bleak winter of 1940, Nazi troops parachuted into Peter Lindstrom's tiny Norwegian village and held it captive. Nobody thought the Nazis could be defeated until Uncle Victor told Peter how the children could fool the enemy. It was a dangerous plan. They had to slip past Nazi guards with nine million dollars in gold hidden on their sleds. It meant risking their country's treasure and their lives. Based on a true incident.

5th

The Book of Think, by Marilyn Burns (Little, Brown and Co.)

The authors strive to develop the art of thinking by demonstrating all that we have right in front of us and miss. By learning to frankly observe both oneself and the world, the reader discovers that he or she really can solve problems, big or small, with far less effort than imagined! In brief: The focus is on problem *solving*, not "finding the right answer."

Resourcefulness

PreK

Whose Mouse Are You?, by Robert Kraus (Simon & Schuster)

A small grey mouse with enormous ears is asked by the narrator who he belongs to. Why, he's nobody's mouse! Where's his mother? Inside the cat! Where's his father? Inside a trap! What about his sister? She's lost, far, far away... My goodness! Well, what is he going to DO about it, then?

K

Paper Bag Princess, by Robert Munsch (Annick Press)

The Princess Elizabeth is slated to marry Prince Ronald when a dragon attacks the castle and kidnaps Ronald. In resourceful and humorous fashion, Elizabeth finds the dragon, outsmarts him, and rescues Ronald, who is less than pleased at her un-princess-like appearance.

1st

Jam and Jelly by Holly and Nellie, by Gloria Whelan (Sleeping Bear Press)

Nellie is determined to buy her daughter a good winter coat and boots in order to get to school throughout the northern Michigan winter. She is adamant about coming up with the money because she often had to stay home as a child and feels that her "learning's got big holes in it" as a result. Nellie is nevertheless a wonderful teacher, showing Holly not only the importance of an education, but also teaching her about the various woodland animals and birds they encounter as they gather berries for jams to sell. Holly's father shows his love and support by building a roadside stand to display their wares.

2nd

Painted Dreams, by Karen Lynn Williams (HarperCollins)

An imaginative Haitian girl takes the first step toward becoming an artist. Lacking paints, brushes and paper, Ti Marie uses an orange brick, white stone and black charcoal to draw pictures on the cement wall of her modest house. She admires the vivid paintings created by the local bocor, or voodoo priest, and rummages through his trash to salvage almost empty paint tubes and scrap paper. Then, with goat hairs and chicken feathers for brushes, the child paints pictures on the wall behind her mother's neglected vegetable stand at the marketplace, thereby attracting customers.

3rd

Roxie and the Hooligans, by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor (Perfection Learning)

Lord Thistlebottom's Book of Pitfalls and How to Survive Them has taught Roxie Warbler how to handle all sorts of situations. If Roxie's ever lost in the desert, or buried in an avalanche, or caught in a dust storm, she knows just what to do. But Lord Thistlebottom has no advice to help Roxie deal with Helvetia's Hooligans, the meanest band of bullies in school. Then Roxie finds herself stranded on a deserted island with not only the Hooligans but also a pair of crooks on the lam, and her survival skills may just save the day -- and turn the Hooligans into surprising allies.

4th

Baseball Saved Us, by Ken Mochizuki (Lee & Low Books)

During World War II the author's parents were sent to an internment camp in Idaho. That family history led to this poignant story about a young Japanese-American boy in an internment camp and the baseball diamond that gave the internees a purpose in life and a way of passing the time. The young boy's triumph in a game played while in captivity helps him when he returns home and continues his baseball career.

5th

Boys of Steel, by Marc Tyler Nobleman (Knopf Books)

Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, two misfit teens in Depression-era Cleveland, were more like Clark Kent—meek, mild, and myopic—than his secret identity, Superman. Both boys escaped into the worlds of science fiction and pulp magazine adventure tales. Jerry wrote stories, and Joe illustrated them. In 1934, they created a superhero who was everything they were not. It was four more years before they convinced a publisher to take a chance on their Man of Steel in a new format—the comic book. The author includes a provocative afterword about Jerry and Joe's long struggle with DC Comics when they realized they had made a mistake in selling all rights to Superman for a mere \$130!

Responsibility

PreK

Sam Who Never Forgets, by Eve Rice (Greenwillow)

Sam is a zookeeper in charge of feeding the animals. Every day at lunchtime Sam fills his wagon with food and sets off to care for the animals. Sam never forgets to feed all his friends along the way. Sam's wagon is now empty but one animal is still hungry. Could it be that Sam has forgotten the elephant? No worries, Sam never ever forgets. He is on his way with a whole wagon full of hay just for elephant.

K

It's Not My Fault! by Nancy Carlson (Carolrhoda Books)

Poor George the rabbit is in trouble again. He's been called to the principal's office. But before the principal can tell him why he's there he confesses. He was late to class, didn't finish his math assignment, spilled paint, and set a cage of mice loose. One mishap has led to another and now George is up to his ears in trouble--but it's not his fault! George has an excuse for everything, but as his bad choices catch up with him, George runs out of others to blame.

1st

The Berenstain Bears and the Blame Game, by Stan & Jan Berenstain (Perfection Learning)

Who's to blame? That's what everyone always wants to know. But the kernel of wisdom at the heart of this book is who really cares? Because--let's face it--there's always enough blame to go around. What matters is how we work together to fix the problem.

2nd

The Signmaker's Assistant, by Tedd Arnold (Dial)

Norman, the signmaker's assistant, dreams of having his own shop. But one day while his boss is napping, Norman concocts a very mischievous sign. Soon lots of odd signs appear around town, and Norman is in stitches. But when the old signmaker is blamed for the mischief, Norman realizes the importance not only of good signs, but of honesty too.

3rd

Do I Have To? by Nancy Loewen (Picture Window Books)

This book uses the format of a 13 year old advice columnist who gives advice to younger students. The "letters" cover various topics (a few include): responsibility of pet ownership, forgetting homework, having an irresponsible friend, overscheduling after-school activities, messy bedrooms, and wearing a helmet while bike riding. Teachers may want to pick and choose which "letters" to read to their students to spark discussion.

4th

Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie, by Peter Roop (Carolrhoda Books)

Based on a true story of an 1856 storm off the coast of Maine. When her father, the lighthouse keeper, sails off for supplies, he leaves Abbie in charge of lighting the oil lamps in the twin towers of their lighthouse and making sure that they don't go

out. When a huge storm hits, preventing her father from returning for four weeks, Abbie keeps those lamps burning.

5th

Three Monks, No Water, by Harvey Chan (Annick Press)

The plot illustrates a familiar Chinese proverb, "Three monks, no water," close in meaning to the saying "Let George do it," wryly noting how individuals shirk group responsibilities. One monk living alone in his mountain temple never misses his daily trip down to the nearest stream to fill two buckets with water. When a second monk joins him, they share the task, with diminished efficiency. After the arrival of a third monk, the responsibility for water fetching belongs to no one, and the temple suffers a drought until a disaster frightens the monks into creative negotiation.

Sense of Humor

PreK

A Very Special House, by Ruth Krauss (HarperCollins)

A rollicking singsong tribute to delight, taking the form of a little boy talking and singing to himself about his "very special house" which is in "the middle of my head, head, head!"

K

Silly Fred, by Karen Wagner (Atheneum)

Fred the pig goes through life singing silly songs and doing silly things until he meets a disapproving, non-nonsense beaver who puts down Fred's lifestyle. Fred is devastated to be disliked and tries to reform his ways until he suddenly realizes that life is not much fun without somersaults and song.

1st

No Laughing, No Smiling, No Giggling, by James Stevenson (Farrar, Straus and Giroux)

Mr. Frimdimpy, a crocodile curmudgeon, admonishes Freddy Fafnaffer, a pink pig, that no one is allowed to laugh or giggle. An infraction of the rule results in the wrongdoer having to return to the front of the book. Clever Freddy, however, spies on the crocodile and hears him reveal his secret: "If anybody tickles my tail, I giggle." As readers peruse the ridiculously silly vignettes that follow, Freddy laughs, giggles, and smiles several times, resulting in his return to the beginning of the book. At the end of the story, he sneaks up to a sleeping Mr. Frimdimpy and begins to tickle him. When the larger animal unexpectedly rolls over and Freddy gets caught beneath him, the pig asks the audience to help him tickle Mr. Frimdimpy's tail; the crocodile laughs and must return to the front of the book.

2nd

Pulling My Leg, by Jo Carson (Orchard Books)

A carrot-haired, freckle-faced young girl is sent in search of tools for a tooth "ex-trac-tion" that her leg-pulling Uncle Tom teasingly suggests he will perform for her. When the joking uncle collects hammer, pliers, and screwdriver to help with her loose tooth, the tooth amazingly comes out by itself.

3rd

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs, by Jon Scieszka (Viking)

A spoof on the three little pigs story, this time told from the wolf's point of view. "There has obviously been some kind of mistake," writes Alexander T. Wolf from the pig penitentiary where he's doing time for his alleged crimes of 10 years ago. Here is the "real" story of the three little pigs whose houses are huffed and puffed to smithereens... from the wolf's perspective. This poor, much maligned wolf has gotten a bad rap. He just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, with a sneezy cold, innocently trying to borrow a cup of sugar to make his granny a cake. Is it his fault those ham dinners--rather, pigs--build such flimsy homes? Sheesh.

4th

Weird Stories From the Lonesome Café, by Judy Cox (Harcourt)

Ten-year-old Sam is spending the summer in the middle of Nevada, working at the remote Lonesome Café. And the Help Wanted sign in the window brings some very strange visitors--Bigfoot, Elvis, a jolly fat man from the North Pole, and a young girl and her dog who blow in on a tornado from Kansas. And then there's the spaceship that crashes nearby and its little green passenger. Sam is kept busy distracting the nosy TV news team so they don't discover the identities of the odd visitors, but it's not easy.

5th

Lincoln Tells a Joke, by Kathleen Krull (Harcourt)

Poor Abraham Lincoln! His life was hardly fun at all. A country torn in two by war, citizens who didn't like him as president, a homely appearance—what could there possibly be to laugh about? And yet he did laugh. Lincoln wasn't just one of our greatest presidents. He was a comic storyteller and a person who could lighten a grim situation with a clever quip. This unusual biography of Lincoln highlights his life and presidency, focusing on what made his sense of humor so distinctive—and so necessary to surviving his tough life and times.