

older sister of Martin Luther King, Jr., who has put her memories down in this fine little narrative, the events of one family's childhood years that molded, inspired, entertained, and sometimes frightened its three children—the human things we seldom find in the history books but that make heroes real to children.

**ODD BOY OUT: YOUNG ALBERT EINSTEIN** BY DON BROWN

*Gr. 2-7 30 pages Houghton, 2004*

In this simple but insightful biography of the great scientist, the author offers hope for every child who marches to a different drummer, who doesn't blossom on time, who isn't good at sports, who believes in daydreaming about things that no one else can even imagine, and who is the class outsider. Also by the author: *American Boy: The Adventures of Mark Twain; Uncommon Traveler: Mary Kinlsley in Africa; Rare Treasure: Mary Anning and Her Remarkable Discoveries; Alice Ramsey's Grand Adventure; and Ruth Law Thrills a Nation.*

**PINK AND SAY** BY PATRICIA POLACCO

*Gr. 3 and up 48 pages Philomel, 1994*

Based on an incident in the life of the author-illustrator's great-great grandfather, this is the tale of two fifteen-year-old Union soldiers—one white, one black. The former was wounded while deserting his company, the latter has been separated from his black company and stumbles upon the left-for-dead white soldier. The pages that follow trace this sad chapter in American history about as well as it's ever been told for children, beginning with a visit to the black soldier's mother, who is living on a nearby plantation.

**STAND TALL, ABE LINCOLN (SERIES)**

BY JUDITH ST. GEORGE; MATT FAULKNER, ILLUSTRATOR

*Gr. K-4 48 pages Philomel, 2008*

Several years ago, Judith St. George began a series of children's picture book built around "turning points" in the childhoods of historical figures, including: *Take the Lead, George Washington; Make Your Mark, Franklin Roosevelt; You're on Your Way Teddy Roosevelt; and Make Your Mark, Franklin Roosevelt. Stand Tall, Abe Lincoln* is every bit as good as the others. St. George is one of America's most respected children's historians and she lives up to that label by jamming a ton of information into these pages without once making it feel as though you are reading a textbook.

**THANK YOU, SARAH: THE WOMAN WHO SAVED THANKSGIVING**

BY LAURIE HALSE ANDERSON; MATT FAULKNER, ILLUSTRATOR

*Gr. K-3 40 pages Scholastic, 2002*

By the middle of the 1800s, only New England states were observing Thanksgiving, to the chagrin of Sarah Hale, widowed mother of five and the editor of America's most popular women's magazine. So she began a campaign to make the day a national holiday, an effort that fell on the deaf ears of four straight Presidents. Hale not only wrote them letters, but also urged her readers to do the same — and they did, by the tens of thousands. All to no avail. And then came the fifth President, a man carrying a great a sorrow in his heart but still aware of how much he and we should be grateful for — Abraham Lincoln.

A list of several hundred other titles can be found in the Treasury of Read-Alouds in *The Read-Aloud Handbook* by Jim Trelease

(Penguin)

See also the author's Web site:

[www.trelease-on-reading.com](http://www.trelease-on-reading.com) © Jim Trelease 2009.

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# HISTORY THROUGH PICTURE BOOKS

## READ-ALoud BOOKLIST

BY JIM TRELEASE

Author of New York Times Bestseller  
*The Read-Aloud Handbook*



**T**he last two decades have seen an unprecedented blossoming of the historical picture book in American children's literature. No longer are they dull or "textbookie," but instead read like life itself — just like history.

Nowadays books stay in print only a few years. But even an out-of-print (OP) title can be freely borrowed from your local library (or your library can borrow it from other libraries). If you wish to own the book, inexpensive used-copies (including OP) can be found at Web sites like bookfinder.com or Amazon. Of course, new copies (but not OP) can be purchased at bookstores.

**THE BOBBIN GIRL** BY EMILY ARNOLD MCCULLY

*Gr. 2-4 52 pages Dial, 1996*

The abusive labor practices in American mills toward children and women during the 1830s are depicted here through the eyes of a 10-year-old "bobbin girl" who worked in a Lowell, Massachusetts, textile mill. Here we see the early courage of those women and children to fight the system with work stoppages and walkouts, along with attempts to educate themselves in spite of the harsh and demeaning environment. Also by the author: *Marvelous Mattie: How Margaret E. Knight Became an Inventor*, the woman who invented the square-bottom paper bag used with groceries today.

**BOYS OF STEEL** BY MARC TYLER NOBLEMAN, ROSS MACDONALD, ILLUS.

*Gr. 3-7 52 pages Knopf, 2008*

Jerry and Joe, two nerdy teens in Cleveland, spent their high school years writing and drawing things that couldn't be seen or

experienced any way except in their imaginations. Their peers avoided them and their teachers berated them. The country was mired in the Depression and families were struggling to put bread on the table. Why couldn't these two kids "get real"? What the pair was about to create would very soon become "real"—a real super cultural hit, known the world over as *Superman*.

**ENCOUNTER** BY JANE YOLEN; DAVID SHANNON, ILLUSTRATOR

*Gr. 3-7 48 pages Harcourt, 1992*

Columbus's arrival in the Western Hemisphere is viewed through the eyes of a Taino Indian boy on San Salvador who has a foreboding dream about the newcomers. Unfortunately, the boy's warnings are rejected by the tribe's elders and the rest is history. A thought-provoking book on imperialism and colonialism.

**HARVESTING HOPE: THE STORY OF CESAR CHAVEZ**

BY KATHLEEN KRULL; YUYI MORALES, ILL.

*Gr. 1-4 48 pages Harcourt, 2005*

This is a stunning biography of the man who made some of the richest people in America listen to some of the poorest. Despite the limitations of a picture book, the author and illustrator create a multi-dimensional image of a man who proudly walked in the footsteps of Ghandi and Martin Luther King Jr.

**HENRY'S FREEDOM BOX**

BY ELLEN LEVINE; KADIR NELSON, ILLUS.

*K-5 Scholastic, 2007 40 pages*

Born, raised, and worked as a slave, Henry Brown reached the end of that road when he saw his wife and children sold in the slave market in 1849. No more would he tolerate a

life of slavery and he embarked on the most unusual journey out as ever has been told: He had himself stuffed into a tiny wooden crate and mailed 350 miles from Richmond, Virginia, to the freedom of Philadelphia — 27 hours of travel during which he couldn't cough, sneeze, stretch, or make a sound. Related book: *The Escape of Oney Judge* (Martha Washington's slave) by Emily Arnold McCully

**THE LAST PRINCESS: THE STORY OF PRINCESS KA'ULANI OF HAWAII**

BY FAY STANLEY; DIANE STANLEY, ILLUS.

*Gr. 2-6 36 pages Simon & Schuster, 1991*

The story of the last princess is also the story of America's last state—Hawaii. It is a tragic but important story, showing the proud heritage of the Hawaiian people and one of America's dark historical chapters. Related book: *Encounter* by Jane Yolen.

**MIGHTY JACKIE** BY MARISSA MOSS; C. F. PAYNE, ILLUSTRATOR

*Gr. 1-4 36 pages Simon & Schuster, 2004*

In March, 1931, Jackie Mitchell's dream was finally going to come true: Jackie would get a chance to show the New York Yankees (including Babe Ruth) that a 17-year-old *girl* could throw a pretty mean curveball. All those barnyard practice throws would finally come to something in this little-known piece of Americana via Tennessee.

**MY BROTHER MARTIN** BY CHRISTINE KING FARRIS; CHRIS SOENPIET, ILLUS.

*Gr. 1-5 30 pages Simon & Schuster, 2005*

One unfortunate aspect of heroes and icons is that we put them on such high pedestals, they're out of children's reach and thus children will find little of themselves in our heroes. So along comes Christine King Farris,