

Johnny on the Spot by Edward Sorel

Gr. 1-4 28 pages Simon & Schuster, 1998

Young Johnny and his adult neighbor accidentally invent a radio that broadcasts events one day in advance. The conflict arises when Johnny is sworn to secrecy and forbidden to interfere with the future — even if he knows a calamity is about to occur — which puts him in a very tight spot.

Mirabelle by Astrid Lindgren; Pija Lindbaum, illustrated.

K-5 24 pages ReS Books, 2005

Originally published 1949 and now back with new illustrations, the author wastes no time: “I’m going to tell you about the strangest thing that has ever happened to me. It was two years ago, when I was just six. Now I am eight.” We never learn the youngster’s name, which is only fair since she represents all children who dream of dolls or toys that come to life. In this child’s case, more than anything else she wishes for a doll, something her farm family’s meager finances cannot afford. One evening while her parents are in town and she is alone at the farm, she meets an old man in a wagon. When she kindly offers assistance, he rewards her with a pretty gold seed and says that if she plants and waters it, she’ll find a surprise. What she grows is her heart’s desire — a doll, though not an ordinary one.

An Orange for Frankie

by Patricia Polacco

K and up 40 pages Philomel, 2004

Based on the author/artist’s family history, we start with a family of nine, Christmas eve, a father missing in a snowstorm, a boxcar of hungry and freezing hobos, one missing sweater, and a lost Christmas orange — all of it neatly tied into a happy holiday ending.

Polacco’s books offer a deep treasury of critical social issues for thought and discussion, perhaps more than any other author-illustrator. Also by the author: *The Butterfly*; *January’s Sparrow*; and *Thank You, Mr. Falker*.

Rotten Teeth by Laura Simms;

David Catrow, illustrator

K-5 50 pages Houghton, 1998

Melissa is the smallest, quietest person in first grade. And she’s never brought anything for show and tell—until today! Direct from her father’s dental lab comes a bottle of Rotten Teeth, extracted from her father’s patients. To the disgusted astonishment of her teacher, Melissa puts a rotten tooth on each classmate’s desk and suddenly — she’s a class star!

The Whingdingilly by Bill Peet

K-5 60 pages Houghton, 1970

Discontented with his life as a dog, Scamp envies all the attention given to his beribboned neighbor—Palomar the wonder horse. But when a backwoods witch changes Scamp into an animal with the feet of an elephant, the neck of a giraffe, the tail of a zebra, and the nose of a rhinoceros, he gets more attention than he bargained for: He ends up a most unhappy circus freak. But all ends well, and tied into the ending is a subtle lesson for both Scamp and his readers: Be yourself!



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:

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The Book of Beasts by E. Nesbit,
abridged and illustrated by Inga Moore

K-5 54 pages Candlewick, 2001

Young Lionel is suddenly summoned to the palace where, to his amazement, he's crowned king to replace his late great, great, great, great, great grandfather. Although he's warned by court counselors not to open *The Book of Beasts* in the library, he does so, freeing a fierce dragon from its pages that sets about devouring the countryside. Is there something in the book that might save the kingdom from the dragon? Dare he open it again?

Captain Abdul's Pirate School

by Colin McNaughton

Gr. 1-5 32 pages Candlewick, 1994

Hoping to toughen up their children, parents send them off to pirate school—something like a contemporary military or prep school. With tongue-in-cheek humor (some of it scoundrel-crude), the kids shape up and then turn against the pirates. Prequel: *Jolly Roger and the Pirates of Captain Abdul*. Also by the author: *Here Come the Aliens*.

Goin' Someplace Special

By Patricia McKissack; Jerry Pinkney, illus.

Gr. 2-5 34 pages Atheneum, 2001

In the segregated 1950s, a young African-American girl takes her first bus trip into downtown Nashville, to go to her "special place." Enroute with her new sense of maturity (traveling alone for the first time) she must endure a series of racial indignities that nearly wear her down. Her spirit is resurrected, however, by the etched lettering above the door of that special place—"Public Library: All Are Welcome."

Henry and the Kite Dragon

by Bruce Edward Hall; William Low, illus.

K-2 36 pages Philomel, 2004

Set in new York's Chinatown in the 1920s, an elderly Chinese grandfather's hobby, kite-making, puts him at the center of two warring groups of neighborhood boys—one Italian and one Chinese. The Italians' hobby was homing pigeons, which were endangered by the large Chinese kites. Because neither side talked to the other, their conflict would grow into a stone-throwing confrontation until a giant dragon kite forces them to resolve the dispute.

Boys of Steel by Mark Tyler Nobleman;

Ross MacDonald, illustrator

Gr. 3-7 32 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.

Humphrey, Albert, and the Flying Machine by Kathryn Lasky;

John Manders, illustrator

K-5 32 pages Harcourt, 2004

Here's an irrepressible pair of brothers who accidentally are caught in the curse of the "100-year sleep" cast upon the princess and her castle. They're the first to awaken (and they do their hilarious best to awaken everyone else—no luck!), and then recall the part in the story about a "handsome prince" waking the sleeping princess with a kiss. They slash their way through the vines and into town to set up a casting call.

Ira Sleeps Over by Bernard Waber

K-6 48 pages Houghton, 1972

This is a warm, sensitive, and humorous look at a boy's overnight visit to his best friend's house, centering on the child's quandary whether or not to bring his teddy bear. It makes for lively discussion about individual sleeping habits, peer pressure, and the things we all hold on to—even as grown-ups. In the sequel, *Ira Says Goodbye*, the two best friends experience a childhood pain when Reggie moves away.