



# Good History Reads for Kids



## [Parents' Version]

Dear Parents: This is not intended as a comprehensive listing, but rather as a representative smattering of good books as they have come to our attention or occurred to us. At this point, most of the entries relate to American history of the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, though there are a few books dealing with other times and topics. Entries are organized first into broad categories of either historical fiction or non-fiction, and then by historical period or topic. Each entry is also noted for age appropriateness. If you have your own recommendations we would love to hear from you. In fact, the list is meant to be added to. Please feel free to e-mail us at [curasst@mercermuseum.org](mailto:curasst@mercermuseum.org) and tell us why you (or your child) thinks a book should be placed on this list!

## Historical Fiction

### ***American History, General:***

Lyon, George Ella. *Who Came Down That Road?* (Orchard Books, 1996).

While out for a walk, a child's simple question to his mother leads the reader back in time, covering all who may have traveled down a country road over the centuries. With illustrations featuring Civil War soldiers, pioneers, Native hunters, and prehistoric creatures, this slim book provides a great introduction to the idea of historical time and change for young children. Ages 4-7.

### ***The Seventeenth Century:***

Speare, Elizabeth George. *The Witch of Blackbird Pond.* (Houghton Mifflin, 1958).

Set during the era of the height of the New England witchcraft mania, this novel tells the story of a relatively free-spirited teen, Kit Tyler, who finds herself in Connecticut Colony in the late 1680s. Having been uprooted from her home in the Caribbean, Kit is ill-equipped to deal with the narrowly religious and suspicious Puritans of Connecticut. An outsider herself, she finds common ground with an old Quaker woman who locals consider to be a witch. This is dangerous territory, and Kit's own life is in danger as she, too, is accused of witchcraft. Newbery medalist for 1958. Ages 10 and up.

### **Native American History:**

Bruchac, Joseph. *A Boy Called Slow*. (Philomel, 1995).

A picture book biography of the boyhood of Lakota Sioux warrior Sitting Bull, classed here as historical fiction since little of the dialogue of the book can truly be documented. Nonetheless, the text and pictures offer a nice portrayal of Native American life on the plains, and attempt to correct certain myths or stereotypes. Younger children will enjoy the pictures and general depiction of Native life, but book can be read for greater depth by older kids. Ages 4-10.

### **The Eighteenth Century:**

Dalgliesh, Alice. *The Courage of Sarah Noble*. (Athenaeum, 1987).

While this book is a little dated, the story of a young girl's journey into the New England wilderness in 1707 holds up fairly well. The ability of Sarah to conquer her fears of what may lie beyond the boundaries of settlement and all that she has known can still resonate with young girls today. A Newberry Honor book for 1955. Ages 4-8.

Edmonds, Walter D. *The Matchlock Gun*. (St. Louis, Mo.: Turtleback Books, 1998 – orig. pub. 1941)

Ten-year-old Edward is the protector of his family during his father's absence in this story set on the New York frontier during the Seven Years, or French and Indian War. His weapon? An outmoded Spanish musket, larger than himself. A classic and Newberry medalist for 1942. Ages 8-10.

### **The American Revolution:**

Benchley, Nathaniel. *Sam the Minuteman*. (HarperCollins, 1987).

Young Sam joins his father and friends on Lexington Green to face the British, and becomes a witness to the first shots of the American Revolution. As the subject matter would imply, book does portray battle, death and injury. Ages 4-8.

Brady, Esther Wood. *Toliver's Secret*. (Yearling Press, 1993)

A shy, timid girl must deliver a message to General George Washington, hidden in a loaf of bread. Along the way she learns to overcome her fears, and readers learn some Revolutionary War history as well. Ages 9-12.

Forbes, Esther. *Johnny Tremain*. (Houghton Mifflin, 1943)

Set in Boston, Forbes' beloved novel recounts the stirring events leading up to and including the first shots of the American Revolution as seen through the eyes of an observant young apprentice silversmith. Newbery medalist for 1944. Ages 10-14.

### ***The Early National Period:***

Blos, Joan W. *A Gathering of Days: A New England Girl's Journal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979)

Through her diary entries, fourteen-year-old Catherine Hill tells the story of a year in her life, growing up on a New Hampshire Farm in the early 1800s. Book offers a window into the everyday life of an early American adolescent, as well as the timeless experiences of heartbreak and loss. Newbery medalist for 1980. Ages 9-12.

Bohner, Charles. *Bold Journey: West with Lewis and Clark*. (Houghton Mifflin, 1985)

Though based on the actual journey of Lewis and Clark through American west to the Pacific Ocean, this is a fictionalized account told from the perspective of Hugh McNeal, one of the youngest members of the "Corps of Discovery." The expedition faces numerous hardships but with some timely assistance and good fortune overcomes all obstacles to reach the Pacific, and return with a wealth of information. Ages 10-14.

Sanders, Scott Russell. *Warm as Wool*. (Aladdin, 1998).

A pioneer family travels from Connecticut to the Ohio frontier in 1803, with limited personal possessions, livestock and other resources. But Betsy Ward, the family's mother, has determination and a stash of coins with which she buys a small flock of sheep. Though some of the sheep die, enough survive to provide wool for the family, from which Betsy can spin yarn, weave cloth and make new clothing to keep her children warm. A good introduction for young children to pioneer life and to some of the domestic work required for frontier survival. Ages 4-8.

### ***Slavery and Emancipation:***

Fox, Paula. *The Slave Dancer*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001)

A thirteen-year-old white boy is kidnapped and impressed into service on slave ship bound for Africa. His job? To play the flute during exercise time for the ship's human cargo. Along the way he experiences the brutality, humiliation and greed of the slave trade. Some graphic violence, descriptions of nudity, strong language (especially the "n" word), and anti-social behavior, though all within the context of the story and the time. Newbery medalist for 1974. Ages 10-14 (though more sensitive younger children may find content disturbing).

Whelan, Gloria. *Friend on Freedom River*. (Sleeping Bear Press, 2005).

With his father away, a twelve-year-old Michigan boy must decide what to do when a family of slaves journeying to freedom on the Underground Railroad seeks his help in crossing the river into Canada. On a dark, dangerous night in 1850, young Louis finds the courage and conviction to make the trip. Ages 4-8.

### ***The American Civil War/Civil War Era:***

Alphin, Elaine Marie. *Ghost Cadet*. (Henry Holth & Co., 1991).

Though offering a romanticized view of the Civil War, this story of a Virginia Military Institute cadet killed at the Battle of New Market whose ghost befriends a shy youth of today will appeal to many young readers. The main character, Benjy Stark, is in New Market visiting his grandmother when, through her stories, he becomes so immersed in Civil War history that he encounters his phantom friend. Story is told largely from the southern point of view. Ages 9-12. [Recommended by "Jake"]

Beatty, Patricia. *Wait for Me, Watch for Me, Eula Bee*. (Wm. Morrow & Co., 1978).

A young boy and his sister are captured in a bloody attack by Comanches in Civil War-era Texas. Though he takes to life among his capturers, and learns their ways, he longs to escape back home. He succeeds, but has to leave his sister, Eula Bee, behind. Eventually he finds a way to rescue her as well. Ages 10-14.

Hunt, Irene. *Across Five Aprils*. (Perfection Learning, 1986).

A classic story of a family torn by the Civil War, and dealing with all of the War's political, social and economic affects. The central figure is nine-year-old Jethro Creighton, who comes of age during the war years. Author uses authentic dialect in the dialogue between characters which may make the going difficult for some readers, but the story is considered excellent. A Newbery Honor book for 1965. Ages 11-15.

Keith, Harold. *Rifles for Watie* (HarperCollins, 1987 – reprint).

Civil War-era tale set in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma) and Kansas, where Cherokee leader and Confederate general Stand Watie led raids against Union outposts and troops. Newbery medalist in 1958. Ages 10-14.

Paulsen, Gary. *Soldiers' Heart: Being the Story of the Enlistment and Due Service of the Boy Charley Goddard in the First Minnesota Volunteers*. (Delacorte Books, 1998)

A striking, memorable book in which the title character's dreams of glory and adventure in going off to war are turned into a nightmare of fear, agony and terror by his actual experiences on the battlefield. Reminiscent of Stephen Crane's, *The Red Badge of Courage*, the novel offers a more complex view of a Civil War soldier than that usually found in literature for youth. Ages 12-15.

Peck, Richard. *The River Between Us*. (Dial Press, 2003).

Set in a Mississippi River town in Illinois in 1861, this story focuses more on the home front experience of the Civil War than on the battlefield – though the impact of battle is keenly felt. The drama centers on members of the Pruitt family, and two mysterious boarders from New Orleans who bring with them some of the War's central issues. A highly realistic portrayal of war and its devastation. Parents' Choice Award for 2003. Ages 12 and up.

Philbrick, Rodman. *Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg*. (Blue Sky Press, 2009).

In strong contrast to the Paulsen and Peck books, this Civil War story is a rollicking adventure, filled with comic calamities and tall tales. In searching for his brother, hired as a substitute for a rich man's son in the Union army, the title character gets himself into and out of a series of scrapes – often with the aid of a well-timed fib or whopper of a tale. Even with the book's generally lighter tone, Homer is forced to confront the darker side of the war as well, from the aftermath of Gettysburg to the injustice of slavery.

Steele, William O. *The Perilous Road*. (Harcourt Press, 2004).

Set in Civil War Tennessee, in an area with particularly divided loyalties between Confederacy and Union. A young man, Chris Babson, is convinced from past experience that all Yankees are evil, only to have his views turned upside down when his own brother enlists on the Union side. What follows leads him to question many of his own beliefs and attitudes about the War. A Newbery Honor book for 1959. Ages 10-14.

### ***Labor and Immigration History:***

Auch, Mary Jane. *Ashes of Roses*. (Henry Holt & Co., 2002).

A novel that provides a window into immigration and labor conditions in New York in the early 1900s. A young Irish girl, Rose, and her sister remain behind after her parents return to Ireland, following their immigration to New York. There they room with a Jewish family (the father is a union organizer) and Rose finds work at the Triangle Shirt Waist Company. When the building catches fire in one of the greatest industrial disasters ever to strike America, Rose must flee for her life along with her friend, Gussie. Ages 12-15.

McCully, Emily Arnold. *The Bobbin Girl*. (Dial Books, 1996).

A fictionalized account of the Lowell, Massachusetts "Mill Girls," young women and girls as young as ten who were drawn to the textile mills to earn money for their families and for themselves, and who also learned to band together to fight for their rights as workers. Ages 6-9.

Paterson, Katherine. *Bread and Roses, Too*. (Clarion Books, 2006).

Story set during the 1912 strike at the textile mills in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Remembered in the poem and song, "Bread and Roses," this was their strike in which workers struggled for better working conditions, wages *and* dignity while they were forced to send their children away to ensure their safety. The author weaves together real events and historical figures along with fictionalized characters to create a moving tale. Ages 11-14.

### **Late Nineteenth Century:**

Kelly, Jacqueline. *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate*. (Henry Holt and Co., 2009)  
Callie Tate is an intelligent, inquisitive eleven-year-old with a burgeoning interest in science and nature. Unfortunately for her it is 1899 and those traits are not especially looked for in young women of her era. Resistant to learning needlework, cooking and other conventional domestic skills, she has an ally in her grandfather, who presents her with Charles Darwin's book, *The Origin of Species*. Her struggle to find her own path in a constrictive environment is the focus of Kelly's novel. A Newbery Honor book for 2010. Ages 10-14.

### **History of Science and Technology:**

Gutman, Dan. *Back in Time with Benjamin Franklin: Qwerty Stevens Adventures*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002)

One of two books in this "series," with thirteen-year-old Robert "Qwerty" Stevens finding himself traveling to another time to meet and share quality time with a famous American inventor and innovator (see the other citation below). Lots of historical intersections, not just with the main character, and kids will enjoy the comic adventures. Ages 9-12.

Gutman, Dan. *Back in Time with Thomas Edison: Qwerty Stevens Adventures* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002)

In this story, Qwerty ends up in 1879 with Edison trying to come up with a workable light bulb. Edison not only has to come through on that invention, he also has to find a way to help get the young time traveler back to his own era. Ages 9-12.

Latham, Jean Lee. *Carry On, Mr. Bowditch*. (Houghton Mifflin, 1955).

Fictionalized account of mathematician and seafarer Nathaniel Bowditch, who wrote an important early text on marine navigation that is still in use today. Newberry medalist in 1956. Ages 10-14.

Lester, Julius. *John Henry*. (Puffin, 1999).

A retelling of the folk tale about John Henry, the African-American railroad worker and tunnel maker who challenged a steam engine with only his hammer and his brawn. Does not necessarily follow the well-know folk song, and updates the story with some contemporary references. Caldecott Honor book for 1995. Ages 4-9.

### **Depression Era:**

Phelan, Matt. *The Storm in the Barn*. (Candlewick Press, 2009)

The setting – Dust Bowl-era Kansas – makes this historical fiction, though the imaginative plot takes the reader into the realm of fantasy or tall tale telling. The central character, 11-year-old Jack Clark, finds that the rain, which has not fallen on the dusty fields for some time, has actually taken up residence in a local barn – and won't come out. Ages 10-14.

Taylor, Mildred. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. (Heinemann Publishers, 1987).  
Powerful novel recounts the trials of an African-American family in Depression-era Mississippi. Not only does the family deal with poverty and illness, but it also must confront the brutal racism of the Jim Crow Era. Sequels to this original story include *Let the Circle Be Unbroken* and *The Road to Memphis*. A prequel, *The Land*, also provides back story on the Logan Family. Newbery medalist for 1977. Ages 10-14.

### **World Wars I and II:**

Mochizuki, Ken. *Baseball Saved Us*. (Lee & Low Books, 1993)

Set in a bleak Japanese internment camp during World War II, the story is told by “Shorty,” a boy who has been sent to the camp with his parents. After telling how his family was forced out of their home and removed to the camp, he explains how he and his fellow internees made the experience somewhat more bearable by building a makeshift baseball diamond and playing the game. Though not much of a ballplayer himself, he achieves success by redirecting his anger at his family’s situation toward hitting the ball. Ages 4-9.

### **Civil Rights Era:**

Curtis, Christopher P. *The Watsons Go to Birmingham, 1963*. (Random House, 1995)

Tells the story of an African-American family from Flint, Michigan and their journey to Birmingham, Alabama in 1963. While in Birmingham, the family experiences the bombing of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church, in which four girls were killed while attending Sunday School. Tone ranges from comic to deeply tragic. Newbery Honors for 1996. Ages 10-12.

### **History Other Than American, Middle Ages to Modern Europe:**

Lowry, Lois. *Number the Stars*. (Houghton Mifflin, 1989).

Tells the story of how 7,000 Danish Jews were swiftly and secretly evacuated to Sweden just before the Nazis intended to march them off to death camps during World War II. This larger tale is recounted through the more intimate experiences of a ten-year-old Danish girl, whose parents shelter and find safe passage out of the country for her best friend, a Jewish girl named Ellen, and Ellen’s family. Newbery medalist for 1990. Ages 9-12.

Schlitz, Laura Amy. *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village*. (Somerville, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 2008)

In this imaginative book, readers meet a cast of memorable characters – all children – who are residents of a fictional English village of 1255. In a series of colorful and historically accurate monologues and dialogues, the children (of varying social classes) tell of their lives and fortunes. Newbery medalist for 2008. Ages 12 and above.

## Historical Non-Fiction

### **American History, General:**

St. George, Judith. *So You Want to Be President?* (Penguin Group, 2000)

Playful, light-hearted look at forty-two of America's presidents, from George Washington through Bill Clinton. Provides fun facts and trivia, along with clever illustrations. Caldecott medalist for 2001. Ages 7-12.

### **The Seventeenth Century:**

Benge, Janet and Geoff. *William Penn: Liberty and Justice for All* (Emerald Books, 2002)

There do not seem to be many good kids' books on the life and times of Penn; this is one of the better ones. Part of the Benge's "Heroes of History" series. Places Penn in the context of the development of American political philosophy, as well as social and religious tolerance, though book may not deal satisfactorily with some inconsistencies, like his ownership of slaves. Ages 9-12.

Walker, Sally M. *Written in Bone: Buried Lives of Jamestown and Colonial Maryland*. (Lerner Publishing Group, 2009).

CSI and history meet in this fascinating study of the human and material remains found in early archeological sites in Virginia and Maryland. The author explains how the careful, scientific study of the skeletons found buried at these sites, along with the artifacts discovered with them, can reveal vast amounts of information from which new histories may be constructed. Text is accompanied by photographs of the archaeological evidence, maps, drawings, reconstructions and re-enactments of daily life the period in which the subjects of the study originally lived. Ages 12-15.

Yolen, Jane, et al. *The Salem Witch Trials: An Unsolved Mystery from History*. (Simon & Schuster, 2004)

Although this book does not provide a complete description of what occurred in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692, its unique approach makes it a great choice for engaging kids in the topic, and stimulating thinking. The author presents the history as a detective case, providing clues and theories and inviting readers to draw their own conclusions at the end of the book. Ages 9-12.

### **Plymouth Colony:**

Bruchac, Joseph. *Squanto's Journey: The Story of the First Thanksgiving*. (Harcourt Press, 2000)

Provides the Native American side of the Thanksgiving tale, especially the story of Squanto, a member of the Patuxet tribe. Kidnapped by a ship captain in New England and taken to Spain, Squanto escaped to England and eventually found his way back to America only to discover that most of his people had died in an epidemic. It was Squanto who surprised the

Pilgrims by greeting them in English, having learned the language during his journey in Europe. A great book to read to children around the Thanksgiving holiday. Ages 4-8.

Grace, Catherine O'Neill, et al. *Mayflower 1620: A New Look at a Pilgrim Voyage*. (National Geographic, 2003)

Developed in collaboration with Plimoth Plantation, the recreated Pilgrim village in Plymouth, Massachusetts, this is a terrific retelling of the story of the voyage of the English Separatists and those who accompanied them to the New World. The book is stunningly illustrated with photographs taken during the journey of the ship, *Mayflower II*, in 2001. Ages 8-12.

Harness, Cheryl. *Three Young Pilgrims*. (Bradbury Press, 1992)

Really a blend of fact and fiction, the story revolves around three real children, Mary, Remember and Bartholomew Allerton, who came aboard the Mayflower to Plymouth Colony. Their mother died in the first year of the Colony, though Mary would be the last of the "first comers" to pass away in old age. The author involves the children in much of the activity of the first year – the fiction part since little is known of the details of their lives. Book provides an opportunity for young children to put themselves in the place of these central characters. Ages 5-10.

McGovern, Ann. *If You Sailed on the Mayflower in 1620*. (Scholastic Press, 1991).

In a question and answer format, young children find out a lot of fun facts about the Pilgrim's voyage to America. Colorful, engaging illustrations complement the text. Ages 4-8.

Penner, Lucille Recht. *The Pilgrims at Plymouth*. (Random House, 1996).

A good overview of the Pilgrim story with colorful illustrations. Covers the experiences of the colonists from their departure from England to the "First Thanksgiving." Also introduces a number of the actual passengers and colonists, both adults and children, while sidebars provide interesting facts about Pilgrim foods, tools, incidents and daily life. Ages 4-8.

### ***Native American History:***

Fritz, Jean. *The Double Life of Pocahontas*. (Perfection Learning, 2002).

An easy to read, historically accurate biography of the life of Pocahontas, daughter of Powhatan, based on the journals of John Smith. Ages 9-12.

### ***The American Revolution:***

Brindell, Dennis. *Let It Begin Here! Lexington and Concord: First Battles of the American Revolution*. (Walker Books, 2005).

From the ride of Paul Revere and others to alert the militias in the countryside surrounding Boston, through the retreat of the British back to the city following their repulse at Concord, *Let It Begin Here!* features

an hour-by-hour account of the action of April 18 and 19, 1775. Large watercolor illustrations punctuate the story. Ages 5-8.

Giblin, James Cross. *The Many Rides of Paul Revere*. (Scholastic Press, 2007).

A good biography of Revere that goes beyond just the “ride” for which he is famous (and which is layered with myth). Covers his role in other aspects of the American Revolution, as well as his metalwork, printmaking and manufacturing pursuits. Ages 9-12.

Harness, Cheryl. *The Revolutionary John Adams*. (National Geographic, 2003).

Good biography of the “forgotten revolutionary,” whose important contributions are sometimes lost those of George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. Ages 9-12.

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth and Ted Rand. *Paul Revere’s Ride*. (Puffin, 1996).

Is this non-fiction or historical fiction? Could be in either category. What is certain is that it is a beautifully illustrated retelling of Longfellow’s “The Landlord’s Tale,” from *Tales of a Wayside Inn*. While the Longfellow poem began and still perpetuates the myth that Revere was the sole rider that fateful April night in 1775 (when actually there was an entire network of riders who sounded the alarm that the British were on the march), every child should be familiar with the contours of the story, and with the poem as great American literature. Ages 4-8.

Peacock, Louise. *Crossing the Delaware: A History in Many Voices*. (Aladdin, 2007).

Since it happened here in Bucks County, we should have at least one book on the list about George Washington’s decision to cross the Delaware River and attack Trenton in December 1776. Peacock’s book, with its illustrations in tones of gray, blue and brown, conveys the bleak landscape, impossible conditions, and quiet desperation of that moment in time. The text pairs a general narration with actual accounts of the crossing from letters and journals written by those who took part. A group of letters from a fictional soldier rounds out the book. Ages 9-12.

### ***The Early National Period:***

Schanzer, Rosalyn. *How We Crossed the West: The Adventures of Lewis and Clark*. (National Geographic, 1997).

Covers the journey of William Clark and Meriwether Lewis, and the Corps of Discovery, in 1804-1806. The text is taken directly from the diaries of Lewis and Clark, and as such can be used as a reference and to introduce children to the use of primary sources in historical study. But the entries are so vivid, and the illustrations so engaging, that kids will enjoy the sheer adventure of the tale as well. Ages 8-12.

Spier, Peter. *The Erie Canal*. (Doubleday, 1970).

Appealing illustrations accompany the lyrics of the folk song, *The Erie Canal* (“I had an old mule and her name was Sal...”). The book

introduces the canal and its purpose to young children, while adults can enjoy re-learning the song. Ages 4-8.

### **Slavery and Emancipation:**

Hendrix, John. *John Brown: His Fight for Freedom*. (Harry N. Abrams, 2009)

With the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2009 of John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, Virginia, there has been an outpouring of new scholarship and a reassessment of the radical abolitionist's character and legacy. Hendrix's boldly illustrated biography of Brown absorbs some of this new thought, presenting it in an engaging way for young audiences. Ages 8-12.

Levine, Ellen. *Henry's Freedom Box*. (Scholastic Press, 2007)

Recounts the freedom journey of Henry "Box" Brown, a Virginia slave, to Philadelphia in 1849. A true story, Henry found a novel way of reaching the north – he packed himself in a box, addressed it to friendly abolitionists, and shipped himself off to Philadelphia. A Caldecott Honors book for 2008. Ages 4-8.

Pinkney, Andrea Davis. *Sojourner Truth's Step-Stomp Stride*. (Hyperion Books, 2009).

A picture-book biography of the former slave who not only took action to gain her own freedom, but made it her life's work to speak out and agitate for the freedom of others – both African-Americans and women. Ages 5-9.

Sterling, Dorothy. *Freedom Train: The Story of Harriet Tubman*. (Perfection Learning, 1987).

A biography of the former slave and fearless "conductor" on the Underground Railroad. Book also includes a good deal of context on the subject of slavery and the coming of the Civil War. Ages 9-12.

Yates, Elizabeth. *Amos Fortune: Free Man*. (E.P. Dutton, 1950)

Based on the life of an African boy – the son of a king – who is captured, enslaved and taken to America in the early 1700s. Arriving in Massachusetts, he is taught a trade and eventually manages to purchase his own freedom. At the same time, he dedicates his life to aiding other slaves, and those less fortunate. A Newbery medalist for 1951. Ages 10-14.

### **The American Civil War/Civil War Era:**

Cox, Clinton. *Undying Glory: The Story of the Massachusetts 54<sup>th</sup> Regiment*. (Scholastic Press, 1993).

Like the movie, *Glory*, this book recounts the story of the first regiment of African-American troops enlisted to fight for the Union during the Civil War. Though the willingness and ability of blacks to fight was doubted by most whites – even many who favored an end to slavery – the character and heroism of the 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts ended much of the skepticism and paved the way for the enlistment of thousands more African-Americans during the remaining two years of the War. Ages 12 and up.

McPherson, James M. *Fields of Fury: The American Civil War*. (Athenaeum, 2002).

A concise history of the War by a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, known for his ability to make the conflict's complexities accessible for popular audiences. An excellent overview with well-chosen illustrations, designed expressly for young people. Ages 10-14.

Smith, R. Michael. *The Ringgold Regiment: Based on the True Exploits of the 104th Pennsylvania Volunteers*. (R. Michael Smith, 2008). Relates many of the real experiences of the 104<sup>th</sup> Pennsylvania Infantry, a regiment composed largely of Bucks County men during the Civil War. Their story is told through the eyes of "Matthew," a fictional composite based on the profiles of a number of young soldiers in the unit and covers the period from 1861 to 1864. Ages 12-14.

Swanson, James L. *Chasing Lincoln's Killer*. (Scholastic Press, 2009)

A version for young readers of Swanson's riveting book, *Manhunt: The 12-day Chase for Lincoln's Killer* (HarperCollins, 2006). Reads like fiction, but it is, of course, historical narrative. Book traces the events of the assassination and subsequent hunt for John Wilkes Booth and his co-conspirators through Maryland and Virginia. Ages 10-14.

### ***Westward Expansion:***

Nelson, Vaunda Micheaux. *Bad News for Outlaws: The Remarkable Life of Bass Reeves, Deputy U.S. Marshal*. (Lerner Publishing Group, 2009).

Book tells the little-known story of Reeves, born a slave in 1838. Having escaped bondage in Texas, Reeves fled northward, learned survival skills from Native Americans in "Indian Territory" (today's Oklahoma), and eventually became one of the most successful and effective lawmen on the western frontier. Here's a real-life western hero, complete with a strong moral compass and clear sense of right and wrong. Ages 8-12.

### ***Labor and Immigration History:***

Kraft, Betsy Harvey. *Mother Jones: One Woman's Fight for Labor*. (Clarion Books, 1995).

One of the most fiery labor agitators and organizers of the late 1800s and early 1900s was Mary Harris "Mother" Jones. Born in Ireland, she lost her husband and four children in a Yellow Fever outbreak in Memphis, Tennessee in the 1860s. Attracted to the burgeoning labor movement, her gifts as a orator were noticed and she was invited to speak at rallies around the country. She labored tirelessly and with enormous courage on behalf of worker's interests until her death in 1930s. This is one of the best biographies of her for young people. Ages 9-12.

Stanley, Jerry. *Big Annie of Calumet: A True Story of the Industrial Revolution*. (Knopf, 1996).

Annie Clemenc, or "Clements," was a larger than life character in the copper mining town of Calumet, Michigan, in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In

1913, when miners were out on strike against the Calumet & Hecla Co. she lead daily parades of strikers and sympathizers through the streets carrying a large American flag. At 6' 2" she was an easy figure to spot. Though the book's title focuses on her, the story itself deals more broadly with the strike and the labor issues of the day – better wages, improved working conditions and a shorter work week – this at a time when accidents occurred daily and long hours were common. Ages 10 and up.

Wells, Rosemary. *Streets of Gold*. (Dial Books, 1999).

Picture book biography, adapted from the memoir of Masha, or Mary, Antin, a Russian Jew who immigrated to American in 1894. Recounts the life of Mary and her family from their origins in a village in Czarist Russia, to their journey to America and adjustment to a new life in a tenement in Boston. Illustrated with rich oil paintings. Ages 6-9.

### **Late Nineteenth Century:**

Murphy, Jim. *The Great Fire*. (Scholastic Press, 2006).

In an engrossing style, the author covers the real story of the Chicago Fire (no, Mrs. O'Leary's cow didn't do it). Includes various first-person accounts and historical illustrations. Can be read as a narrative or used as a reference. Ages 9-12.

### **History of Science and Technology:**

Heiligman, Deborah. *Charles and Emma: The Darwins' Leap of Faith*. (Henry Holt and Co., 2008)

Just as Americans today are conflicted over the implications of Evolutionary Theory, Charles and Emma Darwin – the author of *The Origin of Species* and his wife – experienced their own conflicts, as his scientific discoveries challenged her religious beliefs. At its core, this is a love story that shows how strong a relationship can be when two people complement each other, but there is also much to be learned about the history of science. Ages 12 and up.

Krull, Kathleen. *The Boy Who Invented TV: The Story of Philo Farnsworth*. (Random House, 2009).

Philo first envisioned the future of human communication in a potato field at the age of fourteen. He realized that vision just eight years later, beating a major corporation to the punch in inventing television. This picture book biography traces Philo's inspirational story, and his fascination with technology. Ages 5-8.

Macaulay, David. *Mill*. (Graphia, 1989).

In *Mill*, Macaulay focuses on the technology behind a water-powered cotton mill in Rhode Island in the 1800s. As in his book, *Castle*, however, he also weaves together a story of the mill owners that includes the social and political history of the time, and how it influenced the development of the technology. Ages 10 and up.

Manning, Mick. *What Mr. Darwin Saw*. (Frances Lincoln Books, 2009)

Book recounts the story of the five-year journey of the *HMS Beagle*, the ship on which 22-year-old Charles Darwin was recruited to serve as naturalist in 1831. The voyage resulted in a change of careers for Darwin, inspired his life-long fascination with the natural world, and launched him toward his theory of evolution and eventual publication of *The Origin of Species*. Ages 6-9.

Wood, A.J., et al. *Charles Darwin and the Beagle Adventure*. (Candlewick Press, 2009).

In the form of a scrapbook with inserted documents, this volume retraces Darwin's shipboard travels aboard the *Beagle*, his perceptive observations of the species he encountered, and the development of his theory of evolution. A very good introduction to Darwin and his study of the natural world. Ages 8-12.

### **World Wars I and II:**

Colman, Penny. *Rosie the Riveter: Women Working on the Home Front During World War II*. (Crown Publishers, 1995).

With so many men serving in the armed forces, it became necessary for women to take on industrial and other jobs traditionally closed to them. Thus was born the enduring War-era icon of "Rosie the Riveter." Book is illustrated with some sixty black and white photos. Ages 10-14.

### **Civil Rights Era:**

Hoose, Phillip. *Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice*. (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009)

Before Rosa Parks, there was 15-year-old Claudette Colvin, who also refused to give up her seat to a white woman in the segregated South of the 1950s. Her act of civil disobedience went largely unrecognized at the time, but she later joined a landmark Civil Rights case that helped strike down segregation laws in Alabama and elsewhere. Just as Colvin grew up in an atmosphere of racial violence and intimidation, incidents of rape, lynching and other forms of brutality are recounted in Hoose's book, making it inappropriate, perhaps, for younger readers. Ages 12 and up.

Ryan, Pam Munoz. *When Marian Sang: The True Recital of Marian Anderson*. (New York: Scholastic Press, 2002)

The biography of African-American operatic soprano Marian Anderson in words and pictures. Story deals with her determination to confront and overcome the racism and segregation prevalent during her lifetime. Ages 6-10.

### ***The Twentieth Century:***

Floca, Brian. *Moonshot: The Flight of Apollo 11*. (Simon & Schuster, 2009)

An award-winning, beautifully illustrated picture book detailing the story of the first successful moon mission and landing in the summer of 1969. Ages 4-8.

Heiligman, Deborah. *The Story of the Titanic*. (Random House, 1998)

A simple account of the ill-fated voyage, which also includes the more recent marine archaeology of the wreck. Ages 4-8.

### ***History Other Than American, Pre-history to Modern Europe:***

Macaulay, David. *Castle*. (Graphia, 1982).

Macaulay's books are well-known for their meticulous illustrations, attention to detail, and subtle humor. They are also tremendous introductions to how things work, how things are constructed, and why. In this volume, Macaulay takes up the subject of castles as he traces the planning and construction of a fictional castle in Wales. More than simply a reference, there is also good storytelling here. A Caldecott Honor book for 1978. Ages 10 and up.

Macaulay, David. *Ship*. (Houghton Mifflin, 1993).

The ship in Macaulay's title refers to a fictional early 16<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish Caravel sunk off the Bahamas and discovered, in his story, during a modern-day diving expedition. With his usual flair for both illustration and narrative, Macaulay tells two interrelated tales. One is that of the archaeological investigation into the shipwreck – looking backward in time – and the other is the account of the original design and construction of the ship told through the vision of the owner and master. Ages 10 and up.

Thimmesch, Catherine. *Lucy Long Ago: Uncovering the Mystery of Where We Came From*. (Houghton Mifflin, 2009)

In a pure sense, this book falls outside of the realm of history. Rather, its subject is prehistory and anthropology, as it covers the discovery, analysis and interpretation of a new species of hominid – a human ancestor that lived in Africa more than three million years ago. Terrific illustrations, many recreating features of the hominid species based on the skeletal remains – including a full-body reconstruction. Ages 12 and up.