

# GREAT BOOKS

## Book Reviews for Adult Reading and Writing Programs

*by the*

Readers to Leaders Project

*of*



Alameda County Library ■ Adult Literacy Program

## Introduction:

As a teacher in a small group adult literacy program, I am constantly looking for good reading materials to use with students. In our program, students enjoy working in small groups. Our students are not separated into skill levels, so everyone can learn and teach each other. As a program, we have found that reading a book together, chapter by chapter, works well for the groups. Students say they feel they get a better understanding of a book when they continue with the same book each week. They feel they can really “get into” the story, and understand what an author is saying. Reading aloud and discussing the chapter together in class helps with word attack skills as well as comprehension. Discussions about the book often lead to writing prompts that we work on together in the class. In the past, the teacher usually brought in a few choices of books on the first day of class, students read part of the first chapter and voted for their choice.

Unfortunately, it has been hard to find materials that we, the teachers, thought students would like and that would appeal to our multi-level groups. The process involved a lot of guess work. We usually brought in books that we thought students would be interested in discussing and that are considered between a 4th and 8th grade reading level. But I wondered if maybe some books we passed up would actually be interesting to students, and I wanted to hear more about students’ own criteria for choosing books. My colleague suggested that we do a project where we ask students in our program to pick out books that we could use in classes. I thought that other programs might also find a list of recommended books helpful for their own students. So the Readers to Leaders Project was born.

In our project, a team of 6 students who volunteered to be participants met once a week for 4 months to work on choosing books that can be used as reading material in adult literacy programs. The students and I started with a discussion of what factors contributed to the students enjoying a book in a past class, and what made a book uninteresting or too difficult. They came up with a list of criteria, which I then used in selecting many books from lists of recommended reading from a variety of sources (see resource list for more information). I brought in a wide selection of books, and pairs of students chose one

that appealed to them. They read the first chapter or so to decide if they thought it would be interesting and a good level for adult literacy students. So most of the recommendations in this booklet are based on only the first chapters of the books, not the whole book. The students have also included some books that they have read and finished in past classes.

Each book review tells a little about what the beginning of the book is about and why the students liked it. They also listed the things they liked and didn't like about the book based on their original criteria. For example something the students liked was when a book encouraged them to think about their lives. An example of something they didn't like was when the book had small size print. The group also rated the difficulty level of the book on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 as very easy and 5 very hard. All this information is provided to you along with the book review.

You can use this booklet if your program works with small groups or does one-to-one tutoring. The group and I recommend that students read these reviews and lists to help them decide for themselves what book they want to read. We recommend that students be given choices of a few different books to read so that they can pick one that they like. In a group setting, they can pick the one that most of them are interested in reading and discussing together. Most of these books should be easily available through your local library or book seller. More information about how to get these books is included at the end of this booklet. We hope that you find the reviews helpful, and that they inspire other students to read some of these great books!

*Kiran Malavade  
January 2006*

**The Readers to Leaders Project Participants:**

*Robert Abron*

*Marie Bernal*

*Arthur Dokes, Jr.*

*Natividad Moramay Gonzalez*

*Bruce Larson*

*Lacy Peters*

## *The Shaman's Nephew: A Life in the Far North*

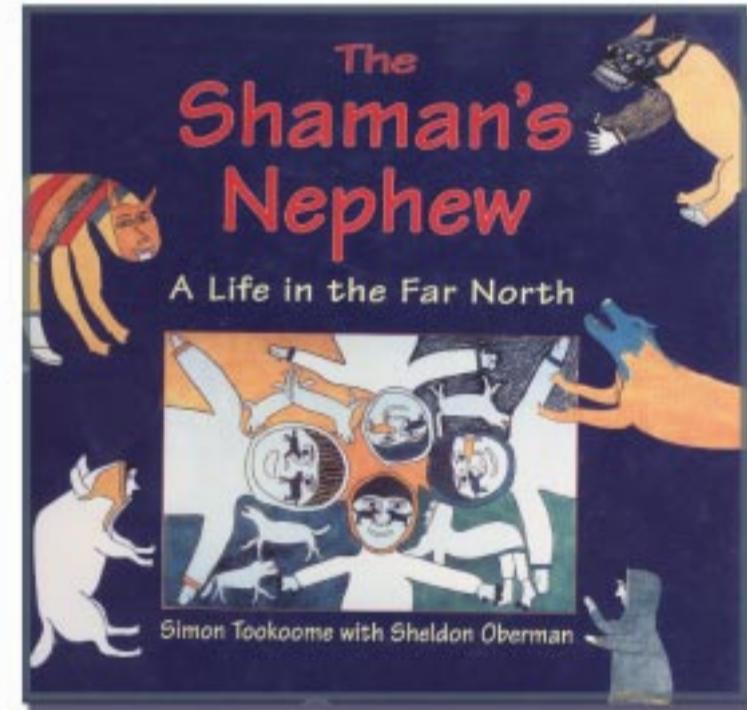
by Simon Tookoome with Sheldon Oberman

### *Difficulty Level: 1-2*

This book is about an Inuit named Simon Tookoome born in 1934. Tookoome is an artist who lived with his people in the far North Arctic. We know them as Eskimos. Eskimos name their children after an elder. It's believed that the spirit of the elder enters and shapes the child's character. He talks about the customs of his people and how they survive in the far north. The Church came and gave everyone Christian names. Tookoome's name was Simon. Simon did not have school. He learned everything from the land, sky, moon and stars. He learned to draw from a generation of great Eskimo artists. Simon drew his first picture in 1971 and sold it for \$5. Today he is the leading artist of Eskimo paintings. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because we would learn a lot about a culture most of us don't know much about. Something that may be challenging about this book is pronouncing the names.

### **What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets out attention
- It's like real life
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It teaches about history
- It describes the place really well
- It's not depressing or sad
- It doesn't use too much slang
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- It has good size print
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has pictures



### **What we didn't like about this book**

- It doesn't take place somewhere we can relate to
- The names are difficult to read

## *Martin Luther King*

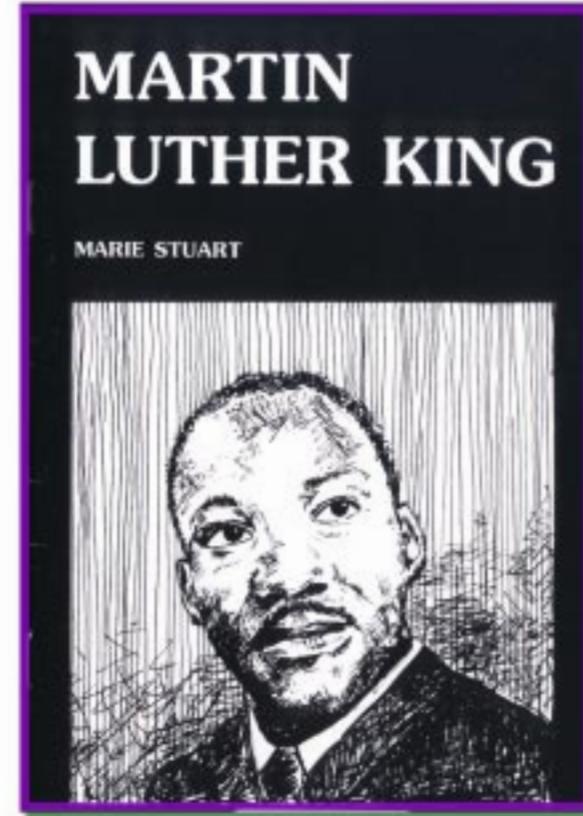
by Mary Stuart

### *Difficulty Level: 1*

This book is about Martin Luther King, and the struggle for all people's rights. He was born in the deep South, and he went to Connecticut to work in the tobacco fields. His family was well to do, but he worked in the fields to see how poor people lived on so little pay. He learned from his family that he is just as good as any man, white or black. This book take place in 1935, when he was 6 years old, till 1968, when he died. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because this is a easy book to read. For a person who is just getting in the program and needs easy reading, this is the one.

### **What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- Is not depressing or sad
- It encourages us, makes us think about our life
- It doesn't use too much slang.
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- It's like real life
- We can relate to it
- It teaches about history
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It describes the place really well
- It may have a few difficult words for some people, but not too many
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- It has good size print
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has pictures



### **What we didn't like about this book**

- For some people, it may be too easy to read

## *A Question of Trust*

by Brown and Brown

### *Difficulty Level 1-2*

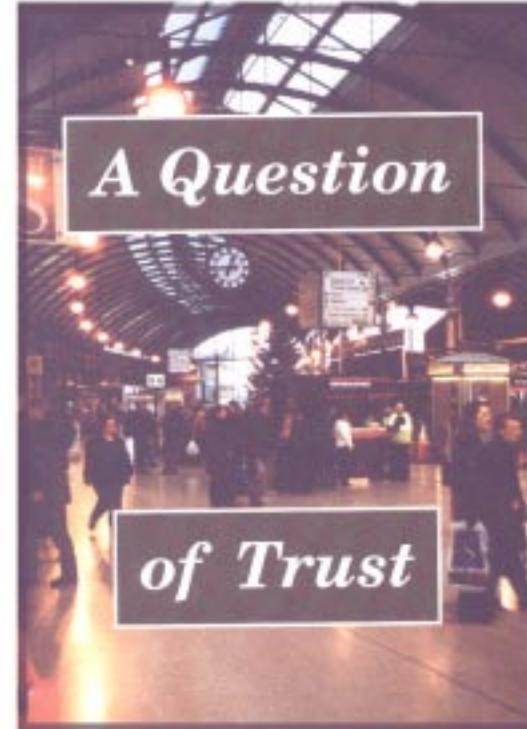
This book is about a married couple who is having problems. One of the problems is trust and Sarah didn't trust Mark. In her surprise she saw Mark in the background on TV. She was watching the news. She assumed he was cheating because she saw Mark in a different part of town. When he came home she asks him how his day was. She didn't like his answer she got from him. She seemed insecure. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it's about thing that could happen in real life and because it keeps you interested in what's going to happen. But if you are not married, you might not understand the story.

#### **What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- Is not depressing or sad
- Most people can relate to it
- It's like real life
- It doesn't use too much slang
- It's for adults
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It takes place somewhere some people can relate to
- It describes the place really well
- It's very easy to read
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- It has good size print
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size

#### **What we didn't like about this book**

- A young kid might not understand it



***Go Free or Die: A Story about Harriet Tubman***

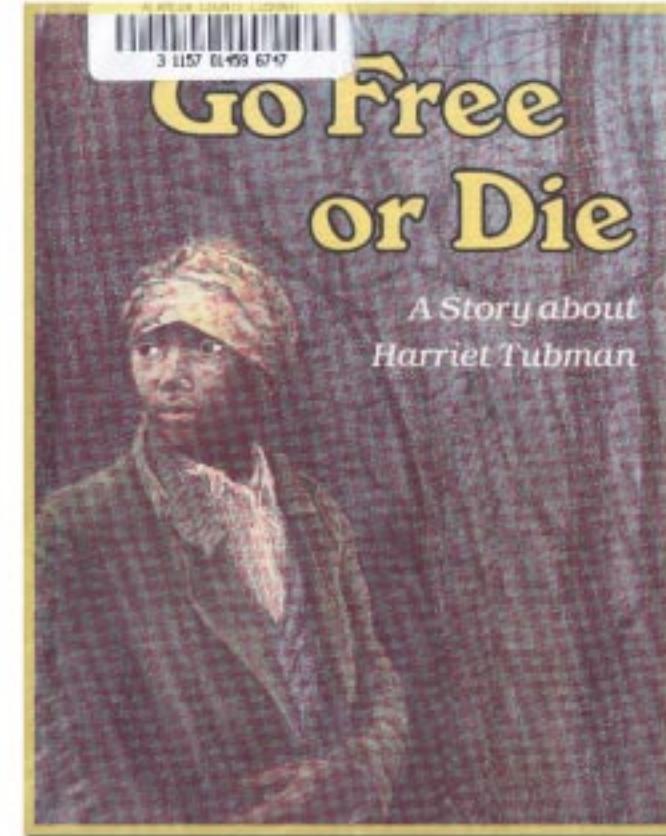
by Jeri Ferris

***Difficulty Level: 2***

This book is about Harriet Tubman. This book takes place in Maryland and the Southern States during slavery times. Harriet was different from most slaves, she believed she had a right to be free or die. She was rented out to work on other plantations starting at the age of six. She ran away and had to live with pigs for a few days but had to go back to the plantation because she ran out of food. When another slave tried to escape, the overseer picked up a heavy weight and threw it as hard as he could at the runaway, but the weight missed him and hit Harriet instead in the head. It caused a sleeping disease, and she could fall asleep at any time. This made it dangerous when she was trying to escape. She met a Quaker, a person who doesn't believe in slavery, who helped her find the underground railroad and escape. She traveled north at night by following the North Star. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because this is a great book to read. It tells you about the history of the slaves and what they went through to be free. It's for all ages. The book also tells you about people willing to do whatever it takes to be free.

**What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets out attention
- It's like real life
- It encourages us, makes us think about our life
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It teaches about history
- It doesn't use too much slang
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- It's very easy to read
- It has good size print
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has pictures



**What we didn't like about this book**

- Some parts are depressing or sad

## *Life is So Good*

by George Dawson and Richard Gleubman

### *Difficulty Level: 2-3*

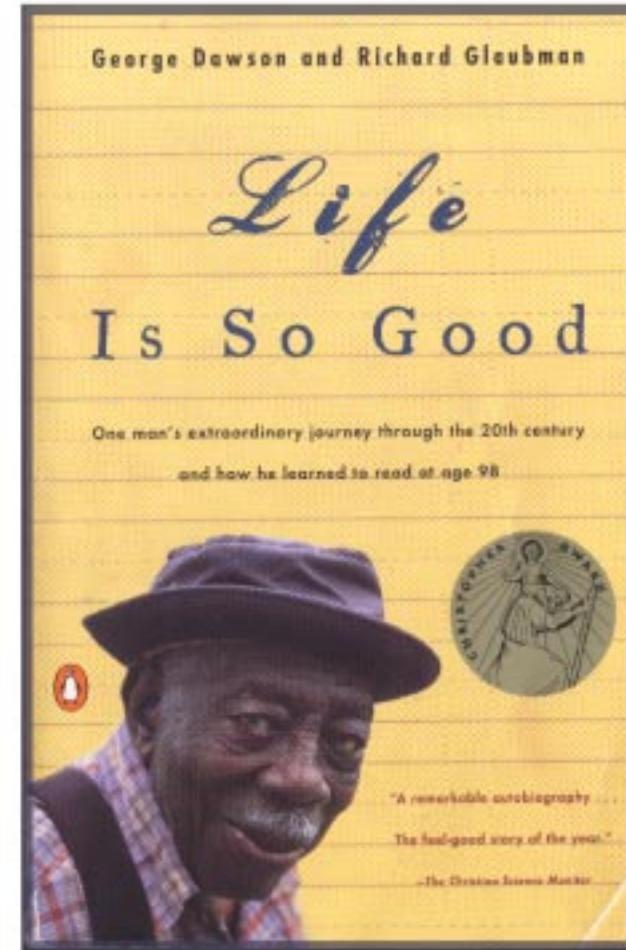
This book is about George Dawson who works in different places around the USA and Mexico. It includes what he learned from the people he was working with and the wisdom that he had to see life. The book showed the courage George had to go to school and learn at age 98. This book covers George's life since 1908 in Texas to 1998. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it is a easy book to read and follow. Some of the challenges to using this book in a class are it may have difficult words for some people, and the print is small.

#### **What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- Is not depressing or sad
- It encourages us, makes us think about our life
- It doesn't use too much slang.
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- It's like real life
- It teaches about history
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It describes the place really well
- It has some difficult words, but not too many
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size

#### **What we didn't like about this book**

- Not everyone can relate to this story
- It has small sized print



***Leon's Story***

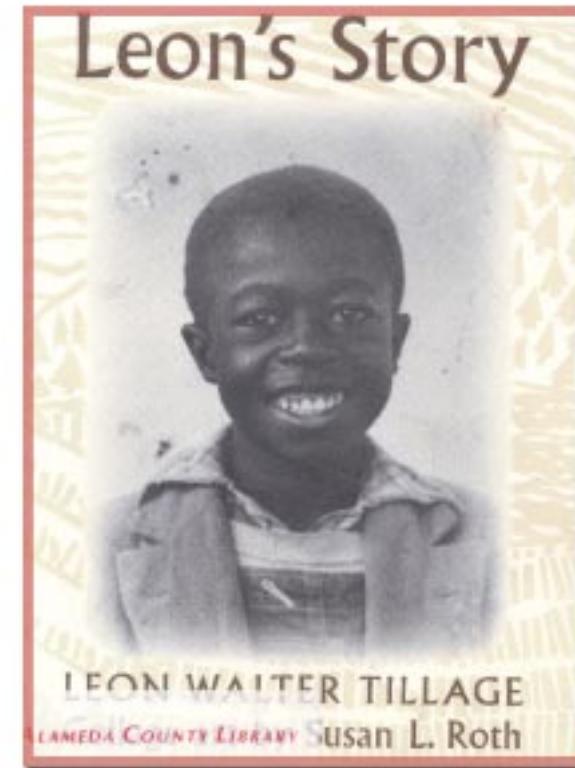
by Leon Walter Tillage

***Difficulty Level: 2***

This book is about Leon. He was born in 1936 in North Carolina. Leon came from a large family. He had 8 brothers and sisters. His family lived on Mr. Johnson's farm in Raleigh, North Carolina. Leon's family worked for Mr. Johnson and he took advantage of them with the debt that they couldn't finish paying off. Leon's father was a sharecropper. The book tells about his family and the hard times they had. They faced discrimination because of segregation. It also tells how the family was happy together. It describes his family's customs on the holidays and in church. It tells about his family's recreation and after dinner how they listened to stories told by the elders. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it tells what black Americans went through during segregation. It's interesting and gets your attention and it's easy to follow what's happening.

**What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- Some people can relate to it
- It's like real life
- It encourages us, makes us think about our life because we can relate to it
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- It teaches about history
- It describes the place really well
- It doesn't use too much slang
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- It has some difficult words
- It has good size print
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size

**What we didn't like about this book**

- Some parts are depressing or sad
- Some people may not be comfortable thinking about the subject of this book

***Just Juice***

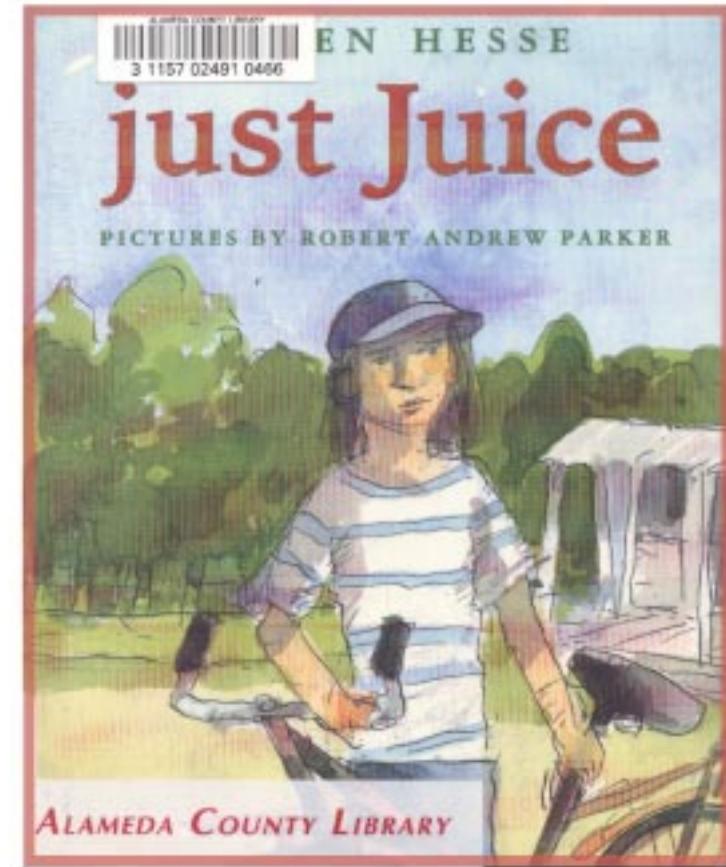
by Karen Hesse

***Difficulty Level: 2***

This book is about a little girl named Juice Faulstich. Juice lived with her parents and four sisters. They moved around a lot between Kentucky, West Virginia and Pennsylvania. Her family is poor, they have no money or food. Juice's Pa keeps getting laid off from jobs. Juice likes to stay home with her Pa and cheer him up and go for long walks together. Juice doesn't like to go to school because school is hard. Juice was held back in the 4th grade because the teacher said she didn't try hard enough. People from the school and truant officers have visited the house looking for Juice. Juice's mom doesn't realize how much school Juice is missing. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it sounds like a good book about a family that needs help. This book was interesting and easy to read. It is about real life and a book for all ages.

**What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- It's like real life
- We can relate to it even though we have not personally experienced the same thing
- It takes place somewhere people can relate to
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It encourages us, makes us think about our own lives
- It doesn't use too much slang
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- It's very easy to read
- It has good size print
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has pictures

**What we didn't like about this book**

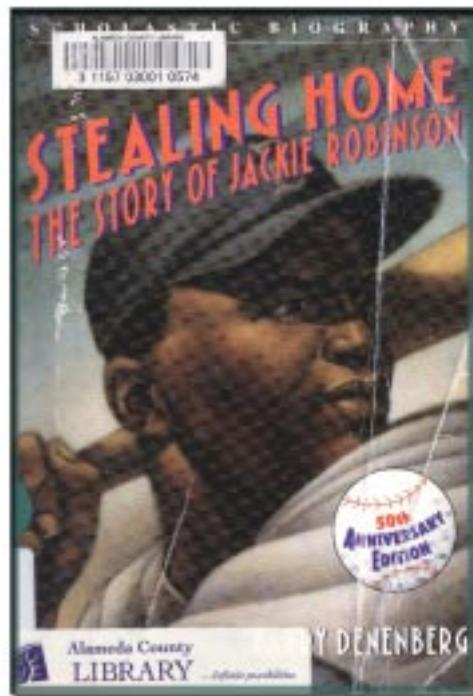
- It's depressing or sad

*Stealing Home: the Story of Jackie Robinson*

by Barry Denenberg

**Difficulty Level : 2**

This book is about Jackie Robinson's life story and his family. He was born on a farm near Cairo, Georgia and later moved to southern California where he struggled with facing racism. He developed a passion for all sports. This book takes place from 1919 when he was born to 1947 when he stepped onto a Major League baseball field. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it is a part of American History. It is easy to read and understand.



**What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- Is not depressing or sad
- It encourages us, makes us think about our life
- Students can relate to it, if you've ever had to struggle with racism in your life, or had to worry about paying bills
- It doesn't use too much slang
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- It's like real life
- It teaches about history
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It has good size print
- It has some difficult words, but not too many
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- It has pictures
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size

**What we didn't like about this book**

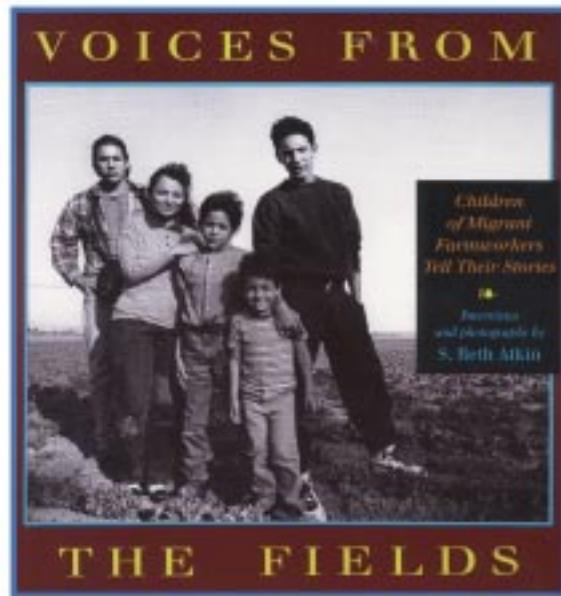
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***Voices from the Fields: Children of Migrant Farmworkers Tell Their Stories***

Interviews and Photographs by S. Beth Atkin

***Difficulty Level: 2-3***

This book is about migrant children who tell about the hardships that they go through in their own words. It takes place in Salinas Valley in California in the 1990's. Nine children tell their stories about the obstacles they go through and what they face. For example, one of them talks about getting into violence, drug, and gangs, and one girl talks getting pregnant and how she kept going to school. It also tells about their parents wanting a better life for their children. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it teaches us about the children and the problems they go through and how they deal with their problems. It gets your attention and is easy to follow. Something that may be challenging about this book is the Spanish names and words.



**What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- It's like real life
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- It encourages us, makes us think about our lives
- We can relate to it
- We can relate to where it takes place
- It describes the place really well
- It doesn't use too much slang
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- It has some difficult words
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has pictures
- It has good size print

**What we didn't like about this book**

- Some people might find it depressing or sad
- Some people may not like the poetry

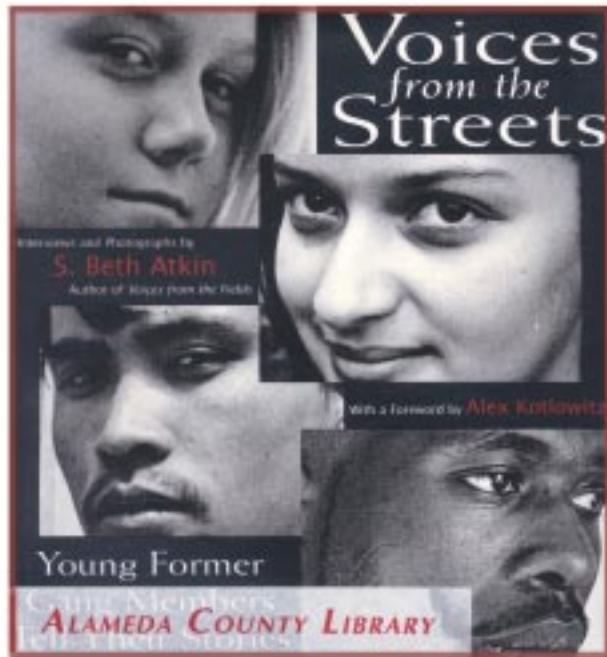
***Voices from the Streets: Young Former Gang Members Tell Their Stories***

Interviews and Photographs  
by S. Beth Atkin

***Difficulty Level: 2-3***

This book is about young former gang members telling their stories, in their own words. Why they get into gangs and drugs is because they are angry about their broken families, racism, and poverty. But the most important part of the book was when it talks about where they got the help to get out of gang life and have a better life. What I really enjoyed was the poems. What I perceive in them was the power of hope.

They put their feelings, minds and heart into the poems. Also it had pictures that showed to me the person in the story. I always asked myself how the teens get into gangs and drugs. In the book they talk about it, so it gives me their point of view. Now I know how I can help teens with the same problems if they are in my family.



**What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- It's like real life
- Is not depressing or sad
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It encourages us, makes us think about our lives
- It doesn't use too much slang
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- It's very easy to read
- It has good size print
- The sentences are not too long.
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has pictures
- Most people can relate to it because there are gangs in every city

**What we didn't like about this book**

- It doesn't teach about history

***Seedfolks***

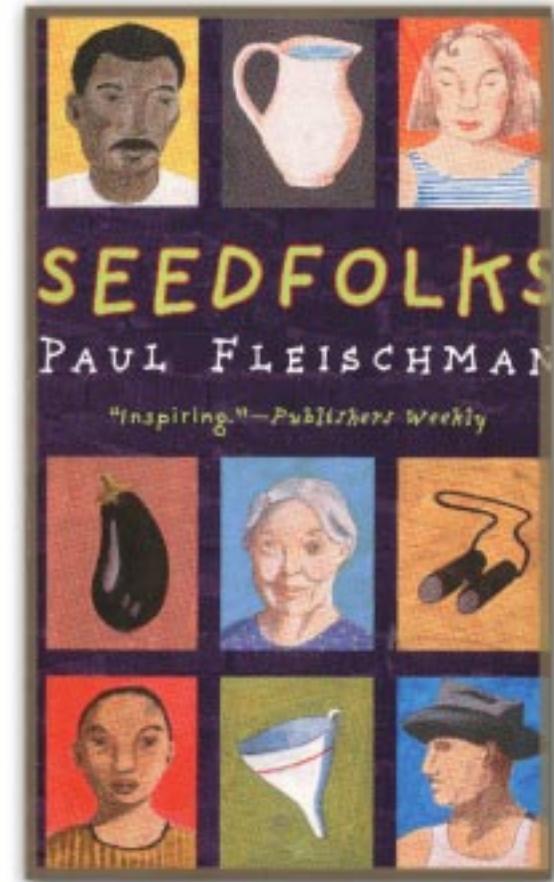
by Paul Fleischman

***Difficulty Level: 2-3***

This book is about a vacant lot in an interracial neighborhood in Cleveland. It talks about how a vacant lot changed when the neighbors started planting fruits and vegetables, and they got to know each other. That made the neighborhood so friendly. Many of the neighbors are from different countries around the world. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it's interesting the way they come together. It is like a real life, it's for all ages, it's not depressing or sad. It invites you to keep reading. It had some difficult names but it has pictures and is funny. The print size is small.

**What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- It's like real life
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- It encourages us, makes us think about our lives
- We can relate to it
- It's not depressing or sad
- Some parts are funny
- It describes the place really well
- It doesn't use too much slang
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- It has some difficult words
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has drawings

**What we didn't like about this book**

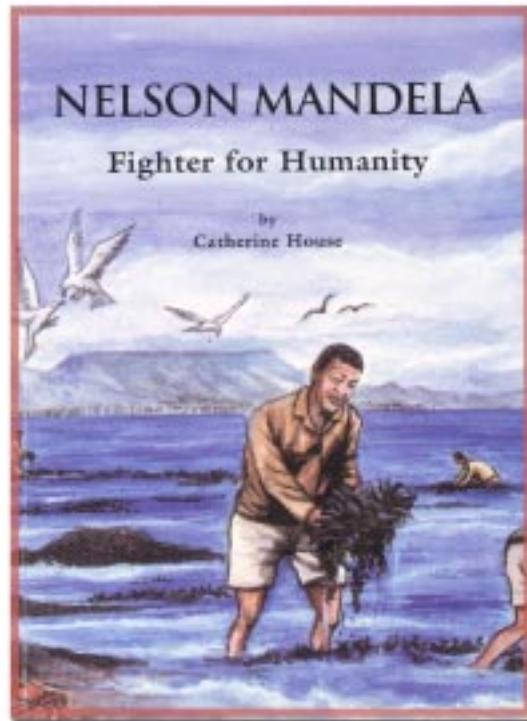
- Not everyone can relate to where it takes place
- It has small size print
- It doesn't teach about history

## *Nelson Mandela: Fighter For Humanity*

by Catherine House

### *Difficulty Level: 3*

This book is about Rolihlahla Mandela and his family. He was born the 18th of July 1918 in South Africa. When he went to school for the first time, the teacher gave him the English name Nelson. His father was a chief of the Thembu people and had four wives. At the end of the first chapter, at the age of 7, he starts a different life because his father died and he went to live with a another family. Later in the book he becomes a lawyer and leader of South Africa and fought for the revolution. One thing that is challenging about this book is some of the names are hard to pronounce. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it is based on a true story, and it is history. It is interesting and easy to follow.



### **What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- It teaches about history
- It's like real life
- Is not depressing or sad
- It describes the place really well
- It's for adults
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- We can relate to it even though we personally didn't go through the same things
- It doesn't use too much slang
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- It has some difficult words, but not too many
- It has good size print
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has pictures

### **What we didn't like about this book**

[nothing]

***Don't Be Afraid Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks from the Heart: the Story of Elvia Alvarado***

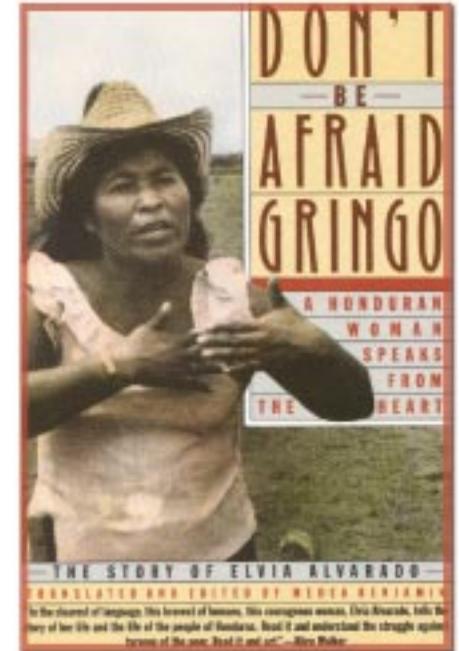
Translated and Edited by Medea Benjamin

***Difficulty Level: 3-4***

This book is about Elvia Alvarado, a poor woman in Honduras. She had a hard childhood. Her brothers worked in the field. She worked in the house. The school that she went to only went to second grade. She repeated second grade 5 times until she was 12 because she really wanted to learn. By the time she was 15 she had a baby. She had six children when she was a teenager. She met Alberto and she lived with him for 15 years, but he drank just like her father. Then she got involved in Church, and it opened her eyes to let her know she had a right to speak up for herself. She started to get more and more involved in helping all poor people fight for their rights. Elvia talks about the struggle of all the campesinos, the poor people who work the land in Honduras. Elvia explains Honduran customs and compares the three social classes in a easy to understand manner. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it is a story about a brave woman who changed her life and worked to help others fight for their rights. It is interesting and this happens today, not just in Honduras, kids having kids and poor people struggling to survive. So we would also recommend this book for teenagers.

**What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- Some people can relate to it
- It's like real life
- It teaches about history
- It encourages us, makes us think about our life
- It doesn't use too much slang
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It describes the place really well
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- It has some difficult words
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has pictures



**What we didn't like about this book**

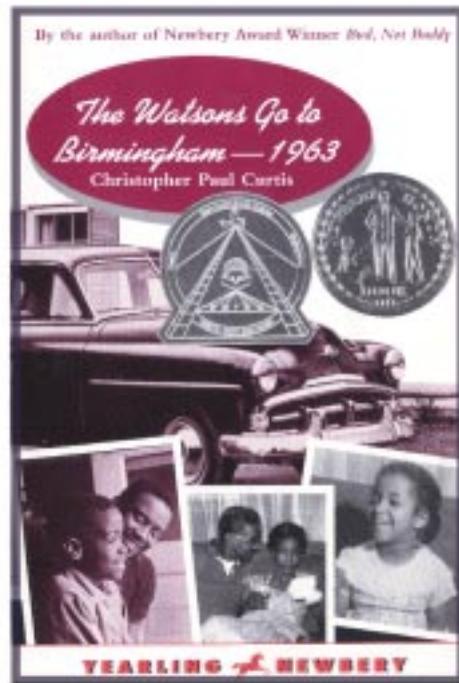
- It's sad
- It has small size print (but you can make a photocopy to make it bigger)

## *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*

by Christopher Paul Curtis

### *Difficulty Level: 3*

This book is about a black family, the Watsons. It's happening in the 1960's. The neighbors think that the family is weird because of what they do. The oldest brother was always getting in trouble. He's out of control. They spend all the summer with their grandmother in Birmingham because she was strict. They learn about what the deep South was like for their mother when she was growing up. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it is a family book and it good for the classes to read. Something that may be challenging about this book is that it has a lot of slang.



### **What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- It's like real life
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- It's funny
- We can relate to it
- It describes the place really well
- It's not depressing or sad
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It teaches about history
- It has some difficult words
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has good size print

### **What we didn't like about this book**

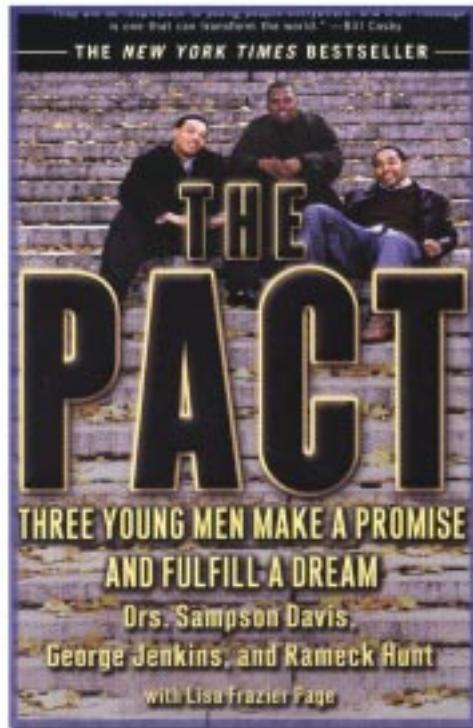
- It uses a lot of slang
- It's not always easy to follow what's happening
- Not everyone can relate to where it takes place

***The Pact: Three Young Men Make a Promise  
and Fulfill a Dream***

by Drs. Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, and Rameck Hunt

***Difficulty Level: 4***

This book is about three young men who grew up as children in the projects. They lived where there was drugs and violence. One of them grew up in a one parent home. Another had a teacher who told him he could be somebody. The third one had a dental appointment. After the visit he was interested in dentistry. So all three made a pact to be somebody. Now they are doctors. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it's a true story. It tells you how you can be successful in a bad situation.



**What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- Is not depressing or sad
- It encourages us, makes us think about our life
- It doesn't use too much slang
- It's for adults
- It's like real life
- It teaches about history
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It takes place somewhere we can relate to
- It describes the place really well
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- The sentences are not too long

**What we didn't like about this book**

- It has small size print
- It has some difficult words
- Not everyone can relate to it
- The paragraphs are long

*Under the Royal Palms: A Childhood in Cuba*

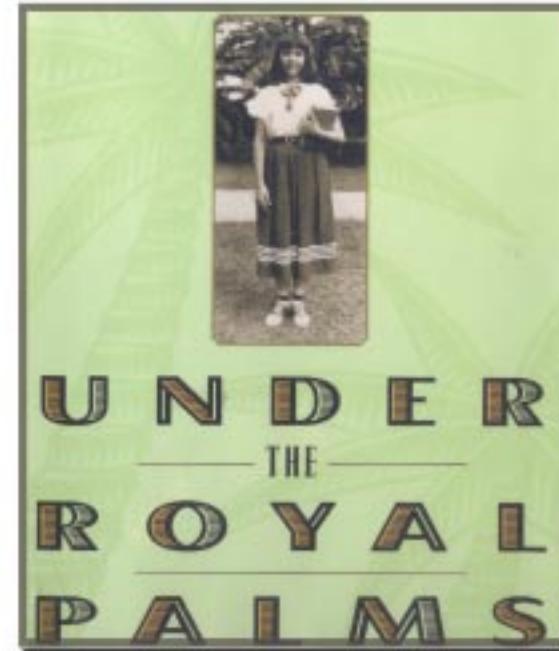
by Alma Flor Ada

**Difficulty Level: 4**

This book is about a young girl growing up in Cuba during the 1940's. She lived with her parents, her uncle, aunt, and her grandmother. She was close to her grandmother. She loved sitting on the porch in the evening listening to her grandmother sing verses of her music. Her family had good jobs and they were well off. She felt bad for people who were not well off as her family. This book was interesting to read because it's about family values and spending time with each other, and about a young girl questioning why some people were poor. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it's about a young girl who loved spending time with her grandmother, and the fun memories she had. Also it tells about Cuban history. Some of the challenges to using this book in a class are there are difficult words and Spanish words for beginning students.

**What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- Is not depressing or sad
- It encourages us, makes us think about our life
- It doesn't use too much slang.
- It's for adults
- It's like real life
- We can relate to it
- It teaches about history
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It describes the place really well
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- It has good size print
- The sentences are not too long.
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has pictures



**What we didn't like about this book**

- It has a lot of difficult words

### *Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years*

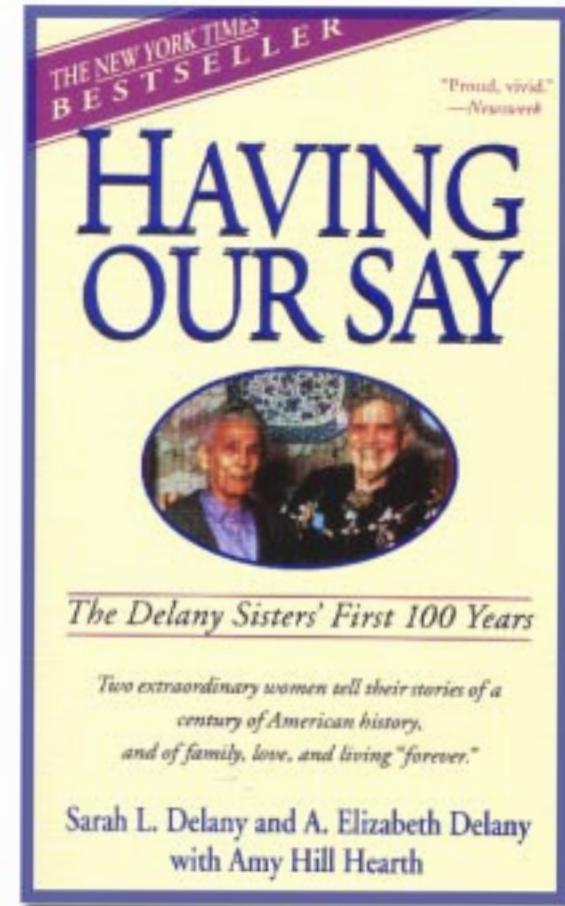
by Sarah L. Delany and A. Elizabeth Delany  
with Amy Hill Hearth

#### **Difficulty Level: 4**

This book is about the Delany sisters. They were African American. They were born in 1889 and 1891. Sadie was a teacher and Bessie was a dentist. They were well brought up young ladies and educated. They never married. Bessie was feisty and Sadie was sweet. The book tells about their life, and their big family and how they got along. They were religious and hard workers. They grew up in Raleigh, N.C. and moved to New York later in life. They wrote the book when they were 102 and 104 years old. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it's about history and their family beliefs. What we like about the book is it's about the courage they had to succeed in life. This book also had humor in it. There are some difficult words and some slang words, but it's not bad, you can still read it. We loved this story.

#### **What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- It teaches about history
- It's like real life
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- It's funny
- Is not depressing or sad
- It describes the place really well
- It encourages us or makes us think about our life
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book.
- It doesn't use too much slang
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- It has some difficult words, but not too many



- It has good size print
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has pictures

**What we didn't like about this book**  
[nothing]

## *Tuesdays With Morrie*

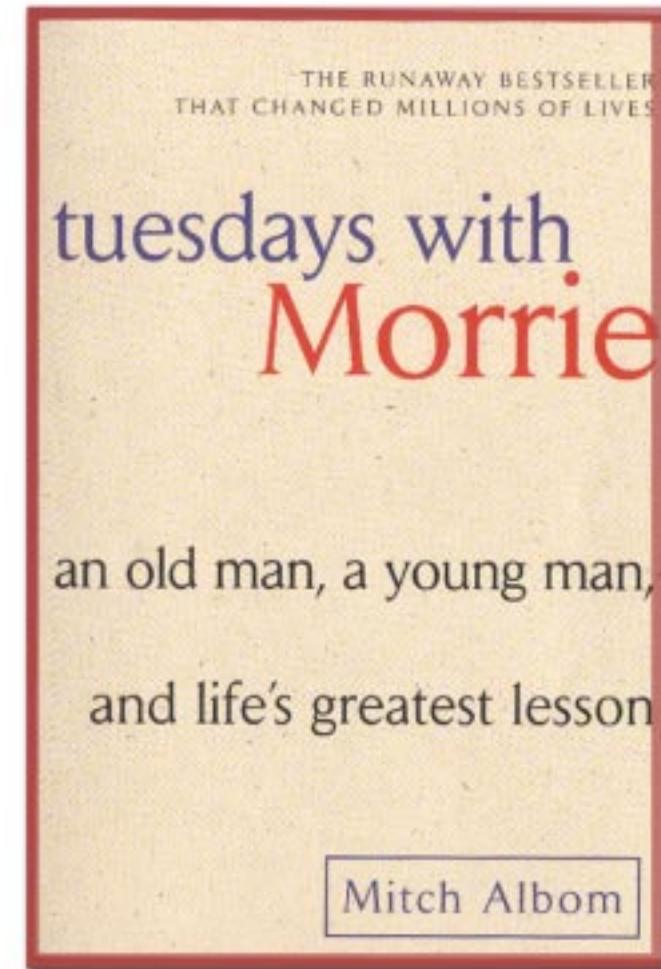
by Mitch Albom

### ***Difficulty Level: 4-5***

Morrie was Mitch's teacher in college, where Mitch called Morrie, "Coach." This book is about Morrie before he died of Lou Gherig's Disease and the Tuesdays that Mitch spends with him since he knows he is going to die. Morrie not only shows Mitch the wise way to live his life, he also makes you think about the way you live yours. It was in some points depressing because it talks about how Morrie gets worse and worse because of his disease. Something that maybe challenging about this book is the deep messages that Morrie gives sometimes, like "When you're in bed you're dead." It's hard to figure out what he means. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it gives you good advice and makes you think about the way you've been living your life.

#### **What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- We can relate to it
- It's like real life
- It encourages us, makes us think about our life
- It's for adults
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book (but some people may not be)
- Some parts are funny
- It describes the place really well
- It doesn't use too much slang
- It has some difficult words
- It has good size print
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size



#### **What we didn't like about this book**

- Some parts are hard to follow what's happening
- Some parts are depressing or sad
- It has small size print
- It doesn't teach about history

***Rosa Parks: My Story***

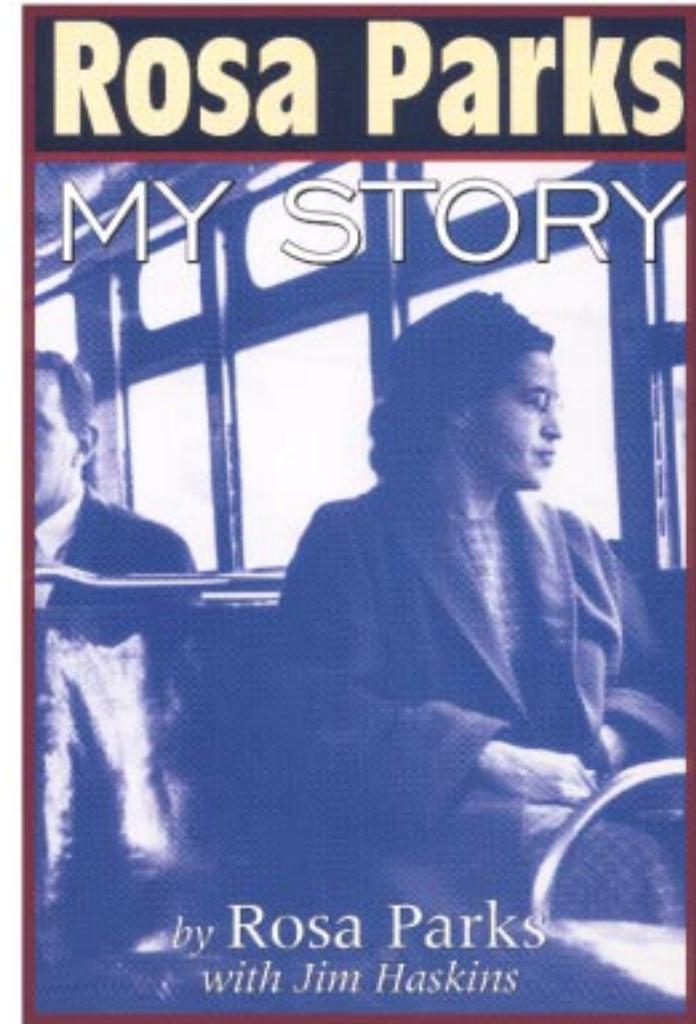
by Rosa Parks

***Difficulty Level: 4***

This book is about Rosa Parks, a black woman who didn't give her bus seat to a white man, so she got arrested. It tells about the struggle for black people's rights, and tells about all the people who fought for those rights like Martin Luther King and others. It takes place down south in the 1950's and 1960's. It's about segregation and how the laws were changed for discriminating against black people. Blacks and whites boycotted the buses. The boycott started in Montgomery and spread to wherever there were segregation laws. They also did the March on Washington. In the end, the laws were changed but it wasn't easy. Rosa Parks died on 10-24-2005 at the age of 92. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it tells about the history and the struggle for all people's rights.

**What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- Is not depressing or sad
- We can relate to it
- It's like real life
- It teaches about history
- It encourages us, makes us think about our life
- It doesn't use too much slang.
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book.
- It takes place somewhere we can relate to
- It describes the place really well
- It has some difficult words
- It has good size print
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has pictures

**What we didn't like about this book**

- It's a longer book that may take more than one semester to finish

***Get On Board: The Story of the Underground Railroad***

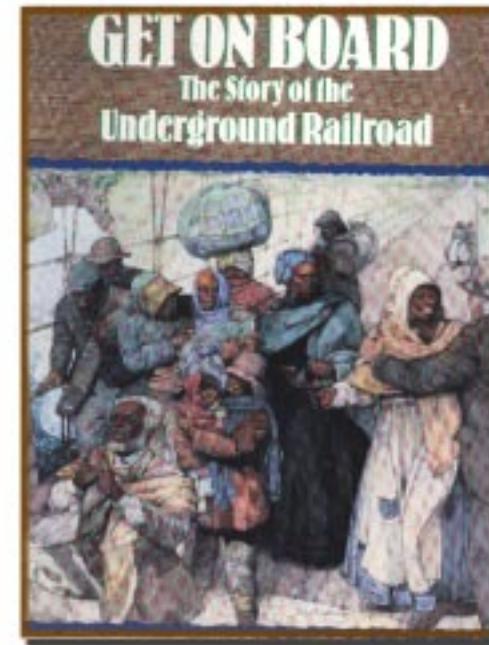
by Jim Haskins

***Difficulty Level: 4-5***

It's about what happened during slavery times and all the slaves who tried to escape to freedom on the underground railroad. They called the slaves who were escaping passengers. The people who helped them were called conductors. Slaves escaped from slave states like Kentucky and they went to free states like Ohio up north. There never was an actual railroad that ran underground and carried escaped slaves to freedom. But they started calling it a railroad because the word fit the way the slaves were escaping. Since this book isn't about just one person, but instead tells more about the general history, this can make it a little bit more challenging to read. Something that may be challenging about his book is maybe some words, but not that many. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because it tells the history about how the black people had to fight for their freedom.

**What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- It's like real life
- It teaches about history
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- We feel comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It describes the place really well
- It's not depressing or sad
- It encourages us, makes us think about our lives
- It doesn't use too much slang
- It has some difficult words
- It has good size print
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has pictures



**What we didn't like about this book**

- It's a little hard to follow what's happening sometimes
- Not everyone can relate to where it takes place

## *Farewell to Manzanar*

by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston

### *Difficulty Level: 5*

This book takes place in California in the year 1941 at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. It talks about one family's pain and suffering in the camps where the US government put the Japanese people after they attacked Pearl Harbor. They have to choose for being on one side-- US side or Japanese side, their family or their nation. It ends in 1947 after all the Japanese left the camps. This book made me think about how it was hard to be a Japanese at that time and how hard was for them to make a decision to be with the US or with the Japanese. It was very, very hard. I'm glad that it's all over now. We recommend this book for reading and writing classes because this book is easy to follow, but it has a small print and has difficult words and names.



### **What we liked about this book**

- It's interesting, gets our attention
- It's like real life
- It teaches about history
- It's for adults
- It's for kids
- It encourages us, makes us think about our lives
- We can relate to where it takes place
- It describes the place really well
- It doesn't use too much slang
- The sentences are not too long
- The paragraphs are a good size

### **What we didn't like about this book**

- It's hard to follow what's happening
- Not everyone can relate to it
- Some people may not be comfortable thinking about the subject of this book
- It's depressing or sad
- It has small size print
- It has a lot of difficult words

***Jessie De La Cruz : a Profile of a United Farm Worker***

by Gary Soto

***Difficulty Level: 5***

This book is about Jessie de la Cruz, Cesar Chavez and farm workers fighting against the growers. They fought for the National Farm Worker's Association, which was what Cesar Chavez called the Union. They went to lots of meetings. They never fought, they used peace marches. Jessie got around 60 to 70 % of Farmworkers in the Union. This was happening in the California fields in 1963 to 1972. One person recommends this book for reading and writing classes because of all the migrant workers of the world, people will understand this book.

One person didn't recommend this book for classes because she thinks you can't learn from this book because it's depressing. Some of the challenges to using this book in a class are that it wasn't funny, it has small size words, and it is hard to read because it has some difficult words.



**What we liked about this book**

- It can encourage some people, make some people think about their life
- It doesn't use too much slang
- It's for adults
- It's like real life
- Some people can relate to it
- It teaches about history
- It describes the place really well
- It's easy to follow what's happening
- The paragraphs are a good size
- It has pictures

**What we didn't like about this book**

- It has a lot of difficult words
- It's depressing or sad
- Some people may not be comfortable thinking about the subject of the book
- It has small size print
- Not everyone can relate to the where it takes place
- It has many difficult words

### How to Get These Books

We were able to find copies of these books through our local library. Publisher information is included if you are interested in purchasing copies.

***Don't Be Afraid Gringo: A Honduran Woman Speaks From the Heart: the Story of Elvia Alvarado***

Translated and Edited by Medea Benjamin  
Published by Harper Perennial

***Farewell to Manzanar***

by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James D. Houston  
Published by Bantam Books

***Get On Board: The Story of the Underground Railroad***

by Jim Haskins  
Published by Scholastic Inc.

***Go Free or Die: A Story about Harriet Tubman***

by Jeri Ferris  
Published by Carolrhoda Books, Inc.

***Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years***

by Sarah L. Delany and A. Elizabeth Delany  
with Amy Hill Hearth  
Published by Dell Books

***Jessie De La Cruz : a Profile of a United Farm Worker***

by Gary Soto  
Published by Persea Books, Inc.

***Just Juice***

by Karen Hesse  
Published by Scholastic Inc.

***Leon's Story***

by Leon Walter Tillage  
Published by Farrar Straus Giroux

***Life is So Good***

by George Dawson and Richard Glaubman  
Published by Penguin Books

***The Pact: Three Young Men Make a Promise and Fulfill a Dream***

by Drs. Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, and Rameck Hunt  
Published by Riverhead Books

***Rosa Parks: My Story***

by Rosa Parks with Jim Haskins  
Published by Puffin Books

***Seedfolks***

by Paul Fleischman  
Published by Harper Trophy

***The Shaman's Newpew: A Life in the Far North***

by Simon Tookoome and Sheldon Oberman  
Published by Stoddart Kids

***Stealing Home: the Story of Jackie Robinson***

by Barry Denenberg  
Published by Scholastic Inc.

***Tuesdays With Morrie***

by Mitch Albom  
Published by Hyperion Books

***Under the Royal Palms: A Childhood in Cuba***

by Alma Flor Ada  
Published by Atheneum Books for Young Readers

*Voices from the Fields: Children of Migrant Farmworkers  
Tell Their Stories*

Interviews and Photographs

by S. Beth Atkin

Published by Little, Brown and Company

*Voices from the Streets: Young Former Gang Members  
Tell Their Stories*

Interviews and Photographs

by S. Beth Atkin

Published by Little, Brown and Company

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham*

by Christopher Paul Curtis

Published by Bantam Doubleday Dell for Young Readers

**Books Available Through Peppercorn Books and Press**

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*Martin Luther King*

by Mary Stuart

*A Question of Trust*

by Brown and Brown

*Nelson Mandela: Fighter for Humanity*

by Catherine House

**Some Recommended Reading Lists**

Print resources:

Weibel, Marguerite Crowley. *Choosing and Using Books with Adult New Readers*. New York: Neal-Schuman, Inc., 1996.

Givens, Archie, ed. *Spirited Minds: African American Books For Our Sons And Our Brothers*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1997.

Givens, Archie, ed. *Strong Souls Singing: African American Books For Our Daughters And Our Sisters*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1998.

**Online resources:**

<http://www.aclibrary.org/readerscorner/readerscorner.asp>  
from Alameda County Library.

<http://www.litwomen.org/complist.html> from WE LEARN:  
Women Expanding / Literacy Education Action Resource Network