“Picture Books for Peace and Social Justice”

Robin Roots

Bibliography List


This book is a picture biography of Rosa Parks and shows how she was someone ordinary but did something extraordinary for the right of everyone to be treated fairly and with respect.


This book starts with the assumption that hate is taught, and that, when children aren’t so well taught, hate can dissolve.


In this book, the protagonist discusses his mama’s “zooming machine” and how much he loves her wheelchair.


This celebration of heritage and family focuses on two important women in the author’s life, her Japanese mother and her African American grandmother.


This book tells MLK Jr.’s story through the eyes of his older sister.


This book explores the nature of patriotism and the immigrant experience.

This powerful book is probably inappropriate for young children, as it depicts aspects of the slave experience, from the auction block to the fight for freedom, in a very personal way.


This book is useful to contrast with *Encounter* by Jane Yolen. It tells the story of European arrival in the Americas from the perspective of Columbus and his crew, glossing over some of the less-pretty aspects of U.S. history.


This book introduces a family of bottles (yes, I know it’s weird) who face discrimination until their unique talents make them town heroes.


This book tells the real-life story of migrant worker family and the special relationship that develops between a boy and a librarian. Winner of the Tomas Rivera Mexican American Children’s Book Award.


Myers, an accomplished novelist for young adults, here tells the story of a young G.I. in Vietnam and the personal-ness that war takes on.


This book introduces a key figure in the Harlem Renaissance and an American cultural hero.

This humorous book follows a little Korean girl as she struggles to form a bicultural identity.


This book tells the true story of the two male penguins at the Central Park Zoo in New York who decided to raise a penguin chick together.


This book, beautifully illustrated with pictures of an intricate quilt, tells the story of a girl imagining herself flying over her Harlem neighborhood. A Caldecott Honor Book and winner of the Coretta Scott King Award.


This book attempts to explain peace to kids and suggests that the only way peace can exist is for everyone to be treated fairly.


Lucy is asked to create a family tree, but she’s adopted from Mexico and feels too “different.” Her adopted family help her to understand that every family is different and that their relationships can be represented in special ways.


Though this book is not one of Seuss’s most famous, its story of the silliness of war (fighting over whether characters prefer to eat their bread butter-side-up or butter-side-down) has a universal message.

Sharra, a graduate of Michigan State University, wrote this story for a competition in Malawi. It tells the story of young Malawi boys meeting and sheltering refugees from war-torn Mozambique.


This book tells, from a child’s perspective, of an important day in South African history.


This book, which seems to be self-published (?), begins with an elf refusing to make war toys for Santa to take with him and designing a learning toy instead.


This beautifully-illustrated book follows a young girl as she learns to embrace aspects of her African American identity.


This book was included on an American Library Association list of Best Books for Young Adults. It follows the language of “The house that Jack built” but instead explores the economics of the drug trade.


This book puts beautiful pictures to the beautiful rights laid out in the United Nations Declaration of Rights of the Child.


This book tells the true story of the risks a librarian in Iraq took to salvage the books in a library. Proceeds from its sale have rebuilt the library.