

Life in America between the World Wars

Fiction:



Al Capone Does My Shirts by Jennifer Choldenko (Grades 5-9—J/T Choldenko/book on CD)

Moose is halfway through 7th grade when he moves to Alcatraz Island in 1935 where his father has taken a job as a guard/electrician. As if that isn't bad enough, he has to look after his "10-year-old" sister Natalie.

The trouble is Natalie has been 10 for five or six years now, his Mom's idea because Natalie is different. Just when it looks like baseball will be his way into friendship with some regular guys at school, his mother makes him spend more time looking after Natalie. This is a great

family story about a brother caring for a sister he loves while, at the same time, resenting his lack of freedom. (2005 Newbery Honor)

Missy Violet and Me by Barbara Hathaway (Grades 4-8—J Hathaway)

Viney is 11 years old when her father arranges for her to work the summer for Miss Violet, the county's midwife. The ordinary lives of the people in a small southern community in the 1930s are portrayed through Viney's eyes in this gentle story of family and of friends. (Coretta Scott King/John Steptoe New Talent Award)

Sky Boys: How They Built the Empire State Building by Deborah Hopkinson.

Illustrations by James E. Ransome. (Grades 2-6—P Hopkinson)

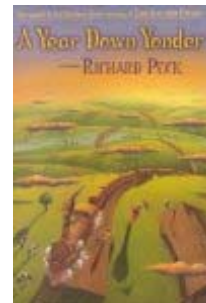
This picture book about the engineering marvel of the Empire State Building emphasizes the workers in the 1930s depression. The danger of the work is compared with no work at all for the thousands of unemployed men willing to take the place of any worker. The materials and the tasks are described in poetic language, from the beginnings of construction to the elevator ride at completion. Photographs of the actual construction are on the end sheets. The illustrations are oil paintings.

A Long Way from Chicago by Richard Peck (Grades 4 & up—J/T Peck)

This novel is made up of a series of adventures as each summer Joey and his sister travel from Chicago to their grandmother's small town during the 1930s. Joey is telling the story, but the real character is Grandma Dowdel. Expect to laugh. (1999 Newbery Honor)

A Year Down Yonder by Richard Peck (Grades 6 & up—J/T Peck)

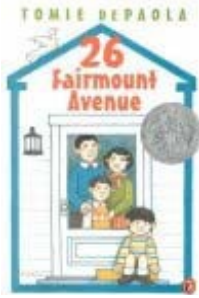
Times are hard in 1937. Joey is off planting trees with Civilian Conservation Corps and his sister Mary Alice is sent to live with Grandma Dowdel. Straight from the train, Grandma marches her to the little country school. Mary Alice is 15 and very much the outsider. But Grandma deals with any serious problems that come along, and with a vengeance. (2001 Newbery Award)



Becoming Joe DiMaggio by Maria Testa (Grades 5-8—J 811 T286)

This is a sketch in poems of the growing-up years of an Italian American living in New York. It begins with “Dreams 1936” and concludes in 1951. It is rich in characterization, especially the boy and his grandfather, Papa Angelo. The two of them spend time together at the radio listening to the Yankee games and cheering for the great Joe DiMaggio.

Nonfiction:



26 Fairmount Avenue by Tomie dePaola (Grades 2-4—J 921 dePaola)
26 Fairmount Avenue is the name of the first book and also the series name for these easy-to-read autobiographical sketches of dePaola’s life. In the thirties, dePaola’s family moves to the house on Fairmount Avenue. In the first book, Tomie starts school and goes to see the new Disney movie, “Snow White” He is very annoyed when the plot isn’t what he expected.

Children of the Great Depression by Russell Freedman (Grades 5-8—J 305.2309 F8757)
Smooth writing, excellent information, and intriguing period photographs combine to make this a great book about how children lived, worked and played during the 1930s. It includes chapter notes, a selected bibliography, and an index.

Stompin’ at the Savoy by Norma Miller. Collected and Edited by Alan Govenar. Illustrated by Martin French. (Grades 5 & up—J 921 Miller)
The breezy first-person narrative all but swings in this life story of Norma Miller who got her professional start as a Lindy Hop dancer from Harlem. Govenar wrote the book from transcriptions of multiple interviews with Miller but it reads as if one is listening to Norma seamlessly relating her extraordinary life. The book makes for a feel-good read about a person who found a dream and pursued it. A parting line is “Try to live your life right the first time.”

