




---

### **Page Turners: Books for Children**

Carla K. Meyer<sup>a</sup>, Michelle J. Sobolak<sup>b</sup>, Patricia Crawford<sup>c</sup>, Maria Genest<sup>d</sup>, Katrina Bartow Jacobs<sup>e</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Duquesne University, <sup>b</sup>University of Pittsburgh, <sup>c</sup>University of Pittsburgh, <sup>d</sup>Endicott College, <sup>e</sup>University of Pittsburgh

#### **Blast Off! How Mary Sherman Morgan Fueled America into Space**

Written by **Suzanne Slade**

Illustrated by **Sally Wern Comport**

Calkins Creek, 2022

ISBN 9781684372416

Engaging and detailed illustrations highlight the life of Mary Sherman Morgan in this notable biography. Slade's text makes the complex idea of inventing rocket fuel accessible to young readers. The compelling story of this hard-working female scientist includes moments of failure and insecurity, while Morgan continues to try to support the United States Space program in its early days of innovation. With time, readers witness the results of her efforts and brilliance with the successful launch of the first satellite into space. This informational text will invite readers into the age of space exploration and the ways in which women such as Morgan defied the odds to be a successful scientist. Ages 7-10.

#### **Little Houses**

Written by **Kevin Henkes**

Illustrated by **Laura Dronzek**

Greenwillow, 2022

ISBN 9780062965721

There's much to savor when a young girl visits the beach with her grandparents. Surrounded by the sights and sounds of the ocean, the girl discovers a never-ending treasure trove of unique and beautiful seashells. When Grandma says that the shells were little houses where creatures have lived, the girl takes extra care to treasure and respect these homes. Her mind fills with many questions of the shell's former inhabitants, which leads to bigger questions about the natural world. This lovely intergenerational tale celebrates the power of wonder, the beauty of nature, and the joy of engaging with loved ones. The poetic text and beautiful acrylic illustrations make for a story well told by a beloved author-illustrator team. Ages 4-8.

**Memory Jars**Written and Illustrated by **Vera Brosgol**

Roaring Book Press, 2021

ISBN 9781250314871

After picking the tastiest blueberries with her Gran, Freda is faced with the reality that the blueberries will not last forever. Drawing on how her Gran makes delicious blueberry jam from the extra blueberries and warmed by the memories of her grandfather who used to eat the jam daily, Freda sets out to save all her favorite things and people in jars. She realizes that while she can look at her growing number of jars, her favorite things and people are missing from her life when they are tucked away. Caldecott Honoree, Vera Brosgol, charms readers with her colorful illustrations that expertly use white space to highlight the characters and story while readers learn along with Freda that some memories are best saved in our hearts and minds. Ages 4-8.

**Once Upon A Book**Written by **Grace Lin and Kate Messner**Illustrated by **Grace Lin**

Little, Brown and Company, 2023

ISBN 9780316541077

Like many young children when feeling bored, Alice wishes she could be someplace, anyplace else. In this whimsical tale, books take her to faraway places where she can experience the amazing world around her. Through the pages of the book, she engages with animals from faraway places as they invite her into their worlds. After traveling as far as into the clouds and to outer space, Alice longs for the familiarity and warmth of home where she is welcomed back by her mother and the smell of home cooking. Not only will the reader be enchanted with the faraway places that Alice visits through reading, but the illustrations also hold surprises and treasures to discover. Ages 4-8.

**Salat in Secret**Written by **Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow**Illustrated by **Hatem Aly**

Random House, 2023

ISBN 9781984848093

Muhammad has just turned seven and with his new salat rug, he is now old enough to pray five times a day, like his father. The intricate blue and gold rug, elegantly depicted in Aly's illustrations, is the focal point for Salat's story about how to proudly engage in one's religious traditions. Salat is trying to work up the courage to ask his kind teacher, Mrs. Baker, for a quiet place to pray during the school day. The reader witnesses his nervousness and bravery as he navigates through this experience and finds his voice. Thompkins-Bigelow's text and Aly's illustrations complement each other beautifully and young readers will not only get a glimpse into the facets of this important prayer ritual in the Islamic faith but also see that we all share moments of uncertainty and fear around sharing our stories with others. This text provides educators and parents with a powerful tool to launch those discussions around family traditions and feelings of belonging. Ages 4-8.

**The Year We Learned to Fly**  
 Written by **Jacqueline Woodson**  
 Illustrated by **Rafael López**  
 Nancy Paulsen Books, 2022  
 ISBN 9780399545535

In this vibrant text, a brother-sister duo wonder what to do when they find themselves in challenging times. Their grandmother reminds them that no matter what they encounter—boredom, bad weather, misunderstandings, or even maltreatment—someone else has experienced it before. She encourages them to lift their arms, close their eyes, take a deep breath. . . and believe. Soon the children use their minds and imaginations to take them beyond their circumstances to a better place. Their grandmother’s life-sustaining advice has been passed down from those who have gone before. Woodson and López offer readers a beautiful, culturally-sustaining companion text to their previous book, *The Day You Begin*. An author’s note further links the book to Virginia Hamilton’s treasured *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales*. Ages 4-10.

**Across the Tracks: Remembering Greenwood, Black Wall Street, and the Tulsa Race Massacre**

Written by **Alverne Ball**  
 Illustrated by **Stacey Robinson**  
 Harry N. Abrams, 2021  
 ISBN- 9781419755170

*Across the Tracks: Remembering Greenwood, Black Wall Street, and The Tulsa Race Massacre*, is a must have for any American history teacher who works with students in middle or high school. The beautifully illustrated nonfiction graphic novel examines the rise, fall, and rebirth of Greenwood, Oklahoma otherwise known as Black Wall Street. While the author and illustrator do not shy from the horrific destruction of property and loss of life caused by the Tulsa Race Massacre, the text includes the rebirth of Greenwood, an often overlooked aspect of the tragedy. The focus of hope and rebirth provides an entry point for teachers to promote an understanding of the tragedy that focuses on the resiliency of the American people, specifically members of the Black community. The text also includes supplemental materials including a preface, timeline, and an historical essay that can also scaffold students' understanding of a complex and sensitive topic. Ages 12 and up.

**Luminous: Living Things that Light Up the Night**

Written and Illustrated by: **Julia Kuo**  
 Greystone Books, 2022  
 ISBN: 978-1-77164-888-2

What brings us light in the dark of night? This beautifully illustrated non-fiction book offers children a glimpse into the magical world of bioluminescent creatures. Starting with fireflies and moving from the depths of the ocean to the dark quiet of caves, this text provides both a basic narrative in larger lettering, while also providing interesting facts about specific animals, interwoven with breathtaking images on black paper. This book stands alone as a wonderful text

to share with children who are interested in the natural world, but also would provide an excellent introductory text for older students who are starting a unit on bioluminescence or other natural traits and wonders. The illustrations also feature a mother and child exploring the world together, bringing out the awe and amazement at what the world can show us when it grows dark outside. Ages 3-8.

### **My Brother is Away**

Written by: **Sara Greenwood**

Illustrated by: **Luisa Uribe**

Penguin Random House Books, 2022

ISBN: 978-0-593-12716-2

This book opens with a picture of a young child sitting on the steps of her house; the text reads “My brother doesn’t live here. He’s far away.” From this simple beginning the author and illustrator offer a realistic, at times painful, look at the impact a loved one’s imprisonment can have on a family. Through the eyes of a young girl, the book focuses on feelings of shame, anger, forgiveness and love. The book also touches on the diverse ways that families can be impacted, and how comfort can be found in realizing one isn’t alone in this situation. The author shares that the book draws on her own childhood and her brother’s time in prison, bringing a real sense of gentle understanding to the complex topic. This book would be a wonderful way to help children understand the normal range of feelings that can go along with these situations, as well as build empathy and understanding within school communities. Ages 5-10.