

Readings in Social Studies

Levels—Young adult fiction (Y) or adult (A)

Fiction

Colonial:

The Witch of Blackbird Pond by Elizabeth Speare (Y)

The Crucible by Arthur Miller (Y/A)

The Scarlet Letter by Hawthorne (Y/A)

Revolutionary War:

Drums Along the Mohawk by Walter D. Edmonds—The hardy settlers of the Mohawk Valley fight both British regulars and Iroquois Indians during the war for independence. (Y/A)

The Fighting Ground by Avi (Y)

Civil War:

Andersonville by MacKinlay Kantor—vivid portrayal of life in the shocking Andersonville POW camp during the Civil War. (Y/A)

Friendly Persuasion by Jessamyn West—Story of Birdwell family who were 19th century Quakers who lived during the period following the Civil War. (Y/A)

Slave Dancer by Paula Fox (Y)

The Whipping Boy by Sid Fleischman (Y)

Bull Run by Paul Fleischman—In this multi-award winning novel, Fleischman relies on individual voices to give a human face to history. Learn about the civil through the voices of those who were there; In this case, sixteen persons, black and white, male and female, from both sides of the conflict. (Y)

Soldier's Heart by Gary Paulsen—This book is part fiction, part historical fact. Though not every event happened just as told, the basic events of the Civil War are recounted as they occurred, and the primary character was a real person. He lied about his age in order to enlist in the first Minnesota Volunteers at the age of 15, fought most of the war, and survived it. He died shortly after this experience, at the age of 23, from stress. He had what has come to known as “soldier’s heart.” An excellent introduction to any study of the Civil War. (Y)

The Red Badge of Courage by Stephen Crane (A)

World War I and II:

Summer of my German Soldier by Bette Greene (Y)

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry (Y)

All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Marie Remarque—Paul Baumer enlists in the German Army during WWI after graduating from school, urged on by the ideas of teachers and friends in his small town. He finds that war reduces men to fighting for mere survival. (A)

A Bell for Adano by John Hersey—This novel about Americans in Italy tells of the Italian-American major who tried to rebuild an occupied town along the lines of his own good instincts and democracy.(A)

Bridge Over the River Kwai by Pierre Boulle—When his troops are confined to a Japanese prisoner-of-war, Colonel Nicholson proves he is a disciplinarian and perfectionist by leading his men in the building of a railroad bridge over the River Kwai. (A)

Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway—Frederic Henry experiences love and war in the tragic story of an American lieutenant in the Italian ambulance corps during World War I. (A)

For Whom the Bell Tolls by Ernest Hemingway—Robert Jordan, an American, goes to Spain to fight in the Spanish Civil War. He experiences terror in battle and pleasure in love, only to meet death with his guerrilla comrades.(A)

Johnny Got His Gun by Dalton Trumbo—Published before World War II but only gaining recognition in the 1960's, this unflinching antiwar novel is about Johnny, his entrance into the war, and his life-in-death as a hopeless vegetable in a veteran's hospital.(A)

The Wall by John Hersey—This is a novel of Jewish life and revolt in the murderous Warsaw Ghetto during World War II. (A/Y)

Battle Cry by Leon Uris—This novel is the author's tribute to the Sixth Division of the United States Marine Corps. Made up of ordinary men from all levels of American life, the unit played a vital part in the campaign against the Japanese during WWII. (A/Y)

The West:

The Big Sky by A. Guthrie—Taciturn, blood-thirsty, unwashed, Boone Caudill is the prototype of the Mountain Man who won the west. (A)

The Virginian by Owen Wister—This is an epic saga of the Old West. (A)

The Way West—A.B.Guthrie, Jr.—The trail to Oregon is taken by several kinds of persons—the old mountain man, the power-hungry leader, the quiet but forceful true leader—and by Brownie, who grows up as the caravan winds its way west from Independence. (A)

Green Dolphin Street by Elizabeth Goudge—This is the epic nineteenth century adventure of one man, William Ozanne, and the story of his relationship with two sisters, Marianne and Marguerite La Patourel. An exciting saga of pioneer settlement and personal survival, this book makes excellent reading. (Y)

My Antonia by Willa Cather—This novel is set on the prairies of Nebraska at the turn of the twentieth century as Jim Burden recalls his childhood sweetheart, Antonia. (A)

The Depression:

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred Taylor (Y)

Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck—Victims of the Dust Bowl of the Thirties, the Joad family join thousands of farmers in the great migration to California, the promised land, where they hope to find a new life.(A)(This is a great movie, as well.)

The Jungle by Upton Sinclair—Poverty, disease, and despair depicted in this story of the barbarous working conditions in the slaughter houses of Chicago in 1900. (A)

Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse—the story of how a young girl deals with growing on an Oklahoma farm during the Depression. (Y)

World History:

The Once and Future King by T. White—The romance and chivalry of medieval England is transported to the modern world. (Y)

The Midwife's Apprentice by Karen Cushman—story of a young girl who becomes a midwife in England during the Middle Ages. (Y)

The Mask of Apollo by Mary Renault—Set in Greece in the fourth century B.C., this novel is told by Nikeratos, a tragic actor during the Golden Age of Greek theater. He finds himself in the eye of a political hurricane as he experiences drama both on-stage and off. The inspiration of Niko's life becomes an ancient mask of Apollo, the god of this profession. (Y)

The Jewel in the Crown by Paul Scott—This sweeping novel depicts India during the last years of British rule. It is also the tragic personal story of Daphne and her Indian lover Hari Kuman. This novel gives an excellent fictional view of a significant era in modern history. (Y/A)

The Agony and Ecstasy by Irving Stone—Irving Stone's portrait of Michelangelo, a great artist, also brings to life the exciting Renaissance world in which one man was a painter, sculptor, engineer, poet, and statesman. (A)

The Peacock Spring by Rumer Godden—Set in lush, romantic India in the 1930's, this novel is the romance between a young poet and a British diplomat's daughter. (Y/A)

Racism:

Julia Singing Bear by Jewel Grutman—this fictional journal was created in consultation with Lakota Sioux tribal member and Lakota Studies professor Arthur Amoitte. Julia's journal tells of her early life with her people, notably her grandparents, and her later efforts (after her parents are killed) to bridge the gap between white and Native American cultures at the Carlisle Indian School. Gorgeous, authentic illustrations. (Y)

Once on This River by Sharon Wyeth—Eleven-year-old Monday de Groot knows little of the horrors of slavery when she embarks on a journey with her mother from Madagascar to New York in the mid 1700's. Monday's mother, however, has numerous secrets to be uncovered, including an intimate knowledge of slavery and passionate desire to free her own enslaved brother. Her journey is a quest. It is both dangerous and fascination. An excellent read. (Y)

Only Earth and Sky Last Forever by Nathaniel Benchley—Dark Elk, a Cheyenne boy who has been adopted by the Sioux, longs for a chance to prove himself a warrior and an opportunity to win the love of Lashuka by outwitting his rival. Benchley has defined the nobility of the Indian warrior who will die for his people. This moving narrative presents western history from the Indian point of view. (A/Y)

When the Legends Die by Hal Borland—a compelling story of a young Native American boy who is “Americanized” by the government. (Y)

I Always Wanted to be Somebody by Althea Gibson—As she paved the way for other black athletes in the 1950s and 1960s, tennis champion Althea Gibson made the long journey from the streets of Harlem to the center court at Wimbledon, England. (Y)

Go Tell it on the Mountain by James Baldwin—this book is the story of the Grimes family of Harlem in the 1930's. Growing up black is felt through the soul of the sensitive son.

Kaffir Boy by Mark Mathabane—A strikingly telling account of the author's childhood growing up in South Africa under Apartheid. (Y)

Picture Books:

The Wall by Eve Bunting—Vietnam

White Socks Only by Evelyn Coleman—civil rights

Smoky Night by Eve Bunting—L.A. Riots

Now Let Me Fly, The Story of a Slave Family by Dolores Johnson—The fictionalized account of the life of Minna, kidnapped as a girl in Africa, as she endures the harsh life of a slave on a southern plantation in the 1800's.

Who Belongs Here? An American Story by Margy Burns Knight—Describes the new life of Nary, a Cambodian refugee in America as well as his encounters with prejudice. Includes some general history of U.S. immigration.

Faithful Elephants by Tsuchiya Yukio—a sad and moving true story of the bombing of Japan during WWII. Shows the destruction and pain associated with war.

Star of Fear, Star of Hope by Jo Hoest-landtt—WWII

Rose Blanche by Roberto Innocenti—WWII

Hiroshima No Pika by Toshi Maruki—WWII

Baseball Saved Us by Ken Mochizuki—WWII

The Lily Cupboard by Shulamith Levey Oppenheim--WWII

The Bracelet by Yoshiko Ucnida--WWII

Let the Celebration BEGIN! By Margaret Wild—WWII

Talking Walls and Talking Walls: The Stories Continue by Margy Burns—introduce readers to diverse cultures by showing them walls around the world—from the Great Wall of China and the Vietnam Memorial to the Lascaux Cave and Nelson Mandel’s prison wall, from the Prayer wheel walls of Tibet and India to the Anti-Graffiti Network in Philadelphia. All 31 of the walls included tell important stories, not only about the people who built them, but about those who are unified or divided by them.

Barefoot: Escape on the Underground Railroad by Pamela Duncan Edwards—A brilliant book for illustrating the concept of perspective, with chillingly realistic insight about how it must feel to be a slave on run with death at your heels.

Through My Eyes by Ruby Bridges – This is the story of a pivotal event in history as Ruby Bridges saw it unfold around her. Ruby’s poignant words, quotation from writers and from other adults who observed her, and dramatic photographs recreate an amazing story of innocence, courage, and forgiveness.

D is for Doufu: An Alphabet Book of Chinese Culture by Maywan Shen Krach – This beautifully illustrated alphabet book is a must when studying Chinese culture.

Non-fiction

Young Adult Series:

Dear America Series—a series of young adult novels that deal with U.S. history. Excellent reading—interesting and accurate.

Royal Diary Series—a series of young adult novels dealing with world history from the perspective of the participants. Includes books on famous kings and queens and other characters throughout history.

Young American Voices—another series of young adult novels written from the perspective of the participants. This series concentrates on American history and is written in letter and journal format.

Letters to Presidents—young adult series that uses letters written by fictional characters— young people—to some of our most famous presidents. Although the characters writing the letters are fictional, the series is very well researched and all the information is accurate.

A Young Patriot: The American Revolution as Experienced by One Boy by Jim Murphy – Murphy tells the story of the American Revolution through the eyes of Joseph Plumb Martin, who enlisted in the army in 1776, at the age of 15. The lively quotations give Murphy’s account a feeling of immediacy, heightened by the many details of life in the army. Young readers researching the military and social history of the American Revolution will find this an excellent resource. (Y)

Civil War:

For Home and Country: A Civil War Scrapbook by Bolotin and Herb (Y/A)

A Separate Battle: Women and the Civil War by Chang (A)

The Boy’s War: Confederate and Union Soldiers Talk About the Civil War by Murphy The Boy’s War by Jim Murphy—this is a non-fiction story with all the excitement of fiction. Helps to provide a human context for the horrors of the Civil War. (Y)

Behind the Blue and Gray: The Soldier’s Life in the Civil War by Ray
Behind the Lines: A Sourcebook on the Civil War by Smith

Shiloh by Shelby Foote- The first of a trilogy of books on the American Civil War. This book is considered by critics to not only be a piece of first-rate history, but also a marvelous work of literature.

Racism:

Biko by Donald Woods - The life, imprisonment, and unsatisfactory inquest into the death of Biko, the charismatic Black South African leader. Woods, a newspaper editor, risks his life and career to expose the truth about Kiko’s death.

Part of my Soul Went With Him by Winnie Mandela - Battered but unyielding, Winnie Mandela reveals brutal facts about apartheid through her personal account of life in South Africa.

All God’s Children Need Traveling Shoes by Maya Angelou - The experience of finding a home where she has never lived before becomes the catalyst for insights about African and American blackness.

Never To Forget: The Jews of the Holocaust by Milton Meltzer - History of the extermination of six million Jews with many eyewitness accounts, maps, etc.

Smoke and Ashes by Bartara Rogasky - Begins with the roots of anti-semitism and then tells the entire story of the Holocaust; illustrated with eight photographs.

Night by Elie Weisel—A boy and his father’s vivid account of being incarcerated in a concentration camp during world War II>

Why We Can't Wait by Martin Luther King, Jr. - a description of the fight of blacks for civil rights through the eyes of their greatest leader.

Eyes on the Prize by Juan Williams - The story of the American Civil Rights Movement from 1954-1965 with all the people and events featured.

Racism 101 by Nikki Giovanni - A collection of up-to-date essays on topics such as Malcolm X, campus racism, Black Literature, Toni Morrison, and her own personal experiences.

Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families by Anthony Lukas - A remarkable, intensive analysis of the lives of three families - one black, one Irish, and one Yankee - who clash in the violent climate of prejudice and racism that erupted in the 1968 Boston school integration crisis

Barrio Boy by Ernesto Galarza - The story of a Mexican boy who make the journey form his mountain village to the barrio of Sacramento. (A)

The Autobiography of Malcolm X by Malcolm X - An important document of black history, this is Malcolm X's revealing personal account of life in the ghetto, in prison, and as a black Muslim. (A)

Hunger of Memory by Richard Rodriquez - The author describes his experience as a Mexican-American growing up in the Sacramento of the 1950's. (A)

My Traitor’s Heart by Malan—A gut-wrenching nonfiction account of a white man’s life in the heart of Apartheid South Africa. (A)

WWII, the bomb, and the Japanese:

Hiroshima by John Hersey - using the experiences of six victims of the first atomic bombs, Hersey created a classic work. (Y)

Enola Gay by Gordon Thomas - the story of the crew who dropped the first atomic bomb. (A)

Day One: Before Hiroshima and After by Peter Wyden - The race to develop the atomic bomb and the aftermath of its first use are covered in this account of the birth of the atomic age. (A)

Profiles in Courage by John F. Kennedy - Tales of brave and daring American heroes. (A)

Farewell to Manzanar by Jeanne Wakatuski and James Houston - Evacuees begin to arrive at Manzanar, the first comp in Owens Valley on March 25, 1942, thus separating these Japanese-Americans from their homes and communities for the duration of WWII. (Y)

The Making of the Atomic Bomb by Richard Rhodes - an excellent Pulitzer Prize winning

account of the history of the atomic bomb. (A)

The Diversity of America:

In Cold Blood by Truman Capote - the story of a cold-blooded unrepentant murderer and his victims. (A)

Blue Highways: A Journey into America by William Least Heat Moon - Traveling miles along the small backroads of the United States allows the author to introduce a series of diverse and unique Americans. (A)

Travels with Charley by John Steinbeck - Published in 1962, this is an account of Steinbeck's trip across the United States in the company of an elderly poodle.(A)

Woody Guthrie: A Life by Joe Klein - A celebration of an American folk hero who was haunted by family tragedy, misery, and illness. (A)

The American Language by H.L. Mencken (A)

A Woman's Struggle:

The Inn of the Sixth Happiness by Alan Burgess—This biography of Gladys Aylward, English missionary in northern rural China from 1930 until 1940 celebrates faith which shines as a light in the darkness of evil and despair. Gladys Aylward personified Hemingway's definition of courage as "grace under pressure." (this is also a great movie!) (Y/A)

I Always Wanted to be Somebody by Althea Gibson—As she paved the way for other black athletes in the 1950s and 1960s, tennis champion Althea Gibson made the long journey from the streets of Harlem to the center court at Wimbledon, England. (Y)

The Dream of Water by Kyoko Mori - A personal journey of discovery that is also an exploration of national difference, this autobiography explores intimate emotions that reveal profound cultural truths. (A)

Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life by Alice Wexler - A personal and public account of an immigrant anarchist and labor agitator. (A)

My Life by Golda Meir – This powerful autobiography tells of the Russian immigrant girl who became Prime Minister of Israel. This book for students who are good readers presents the personal history of one woman who has made a great impact on her world. (A)

The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood among Ghosts by Maxine Hong Kingston - The Chinese-American experience is passionately portrayed by a young woman who grew up torn between American life in modern San Francisco and the ancient legends, traditions, and folk beliefs of her Chinese heritage. (A)

In the Beginning by Irina Ratushinskaya - A poignant account of a young Russian poet's life in a

society retarded by repression and confinement; her life as a young woman before and after her imprisonment in a Soviet labor camp. (A)

Life and Death in Shanghai by Nien Cheng - A haunting, beautifully written account of one very patriotic, civilized, and stoic woman's endurance through the Chinese Revolution. (A)

Two Under the Sun by Jon and Rumer Godden - Published in 1966, this memoir is the work of sisters who share their experience of growing up in colonial India. (A)

Out of Africa by Isak Dinesen - In lyrical prose, Dinesen gives an autobiographical account of her life from 1914 to 1931 when she managed a coffee plantation in Kenya. She recounts her profound love for the land, her affection for the fading African culture, and her own personal highs and lows. (A)

Modern War:

The Things They Carried by Tim O'Brien—This has been called the greatest book ever written about Vietnam. Vivid, moving, enlightening, and provocative, it makes you feel that you are right there, living it. (Y)

Chickenhawk by Robert Mason - a vivid and devastating account of what the author, a helicopter pilot, and thousands of other men and women went through during the Vietnam War. This book is graphic! (A)

Nam by Mark Baker - The author interviewed 150 Vietnam veterans and compiled their stories into this moving text. (A)

On Aggression by Konrad Lorenz - A thought-provoking survey of "the fighting instinct in beast and man which is directed against members of the same species." (A).

Shrapnel in the Heart by Laura Palmer - Uses letters and narrative to build an effective and affecting account of the Vietnam conflict. (A)

Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam - A vivid account of the Vietnam conflict as experienced by the men and women who were there. (A)

Vietnam by Mary McCarthy - a Pulitzer Prize winning narrative on Vietnam. (A)

Native Americans:

Indian School: Teaching the White Man's Way by Michael Cooper—this young adult novel presents a concise history of 84 Sioux boys and girls who were uprooted from their culture and transported, body and soul, to the Carlisle Indian School and the world of the whites. (Y)

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee: An Indian History of the American West by Dee Brown - a narrative of the white man's conquest of the American land as the Indian victims experienced it. (A).

Black Elk Speaks by John G. Neihardt - This fascinating account of a Native American Holy Man's interpretations of life, history, and religion has not only become a modern religious/cultural classic, but has also served as a valuable source of information for young Native Americans searching for their roots. (A)

A Century of Dishonor by Helen Hunt Jackson - the devastating account of the conquering of California during the 19th century (A)

The Way to Rainy Mountain by Scott Momaday - Recalls the journey of the Kiowa Indians over 300 years ago. The beautiful book is a reflection in Native art and literature of that historical migration. (A)

Government and Politics:

Queen Dolley by Dorothy Clarke Wilson—A biographical novel of the life and times of Dolley Madison, great first lady and Washington hostess. Dolley's life spanned the administrations of twelve great presidents. However, her loving marriage to fourth President James Madison formed the core of Dolley's life. (Y/A)

The Ugly American by Eugene Burdick—this book unmasks the blundering hypocrisy of top-level diplomats overseas. (A)

Blind Ambition by John Dean - The dramatic account of John Dean's, counselor to President Nixon, years in the White House and the truth behind Watergate. (A)

The United States of Ambition by Alan Ehrenhalt - An overview of modern politics and how the pursuit of power has soured democracy. (A)

Who Will Tell the People by William Greider - Exposes corruption and betrayal in a thorough overview of modern democracy. (A)

Free Speech for Me - But Not for Thee by Nat Heatoff - The authority on free speech in a lively discussion of the vulnerability and importance of it. (A)

The Years of Lyndon Johnson; Means of Ascent by Robert A. Caro - The gripping biography of an American president as he rose to power and prepared himself to stay there. (A)

The Making of a President by Theodore White (A)

Abraham Lincoln; The Prairie Years by Carl Sandburg - This first part of Sandburg's work was published in two volumes in 1926. For Sandburg, Lincoln was the archetypal figure of American democracy. (A)

President's Lady by Irving Stone—A biographical novel that shows how Andrew Jackson's love for Rachel influenced the course of American history. (A)

The Prince by Niccolo Machiavelli - Published 1513 as a tribute to Cosimo de Medici, the treatise tells how to acquire power, create a state, and then keep it. Although it was genuinely intended as a guide, Machiavelli's concept that politics has its own rules proved to be so shocking that Machiavellian came to a synonym for political maneuvers of cunning and duplicity (A)

World History:

Horrible Histories: The Awesome Egyptians by Terry Dreary and Peter Hepplewhite—This little book is the only way to learn history—funny and interesting and only 128 pages. A must read! (Y)

Guns, Germs, and Steel: the Fates of Human Societies by Jared Diamond—A sweeping, breathtaking summary of 13,000 years of human history from a brilliant writer who refuses to accept racial explanations for cultural differences. Diamond looks at history through the eyes of the history makers, examining issues from technology to livestock, religion to the spread of disease. (Y/A)

A Distant Mirror-The Clamitous 14th Century by Barbara W. Tuchman - From one of America's most distinguished and widely read historians, a book that recaptures in "a distant mirror"--distant in time but with all the detail and perspective of a true reflection--the Europe of the 14th century, when the whole world seemed to be spinning to its doom, and yet when our modern world was being born. (a very long one—A)

A History of the English Speaking Peoples by Winston Churchill—There are four volumes in this famous historical account of the origins of Britain and the history of her people up to World War II. (A)

Mary, Queen of Scots by Antonia Frasier - A detailed, compelling biography of the daughter of James V of Scotland and mother of James I of England and VI of Scotland. Mary's life (1542-1587) was filled with intrigue and heartbreak. (another long one-A)

Echoes of Greece by Edith Hamilton - The author seeks to show how the Periclean age (5th century B.C. Athens) produced some of the greatest thinkers of all time. Her style is readable and compelling. (A)

Shakespeare Alive! by Joseph Papp - A long-time stage director of New York's "Shakespeare in the Park" presents a cogent and entertaining account of the social history of the Elizabethan period. (A)

Conquest of Mexico by William Prescott - Prescott, after losing most of his sight, devoted himself to being an historian. Published in 1847, this still stands as a definitive history. (A)

Speak, Memory by Vladimir Vladimirovich—The story of famous this Russian author, is an elegant and rich evocation of an exciting life during the 1920s and 1930s in Russia and Europe. (A)

New Frontiers:

The Ox-Bow Incident by Walter Van Tilburg Clark - Clark, a Nevada author, writes an intense study of mob justice in the Old West. (A)

All But the Waltz by Mary Clearman Blew - Blew chronicles her family's struggle for survival on the plains of Montana. She reaches for connections between her personal life and the history of the Big Sky Country. (A)

The Road from Coorain by Jill Conway - This beautifully written narrative tells of Conway's girlhood on an isolated sheep farm in Australia as well as of her efforts to gain an education. Conway, an ambitious young woman facing a constrained female destiny, eventually becomes president of Smith College. (A)