

Annotated Bibliography for Children's Literature

1. *Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox (empathy)
Florida: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1997

Beautiful picture book presents the message that children all over the world have similar hearts, emotions and dreams despite differences of geography, race or religion. This is a great book to discuss the things that make human beings similar, beyond basic needs and wants.

2. *Fly Away Home* by Eve Bunting (community)
New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991

A young boy describes life with his father living in an airport undetected and how they meet their basic needs. The story presents both a child and father's emotional responses to homelessness. The book provides an example of how homeless families try to survive and meet basic needs as well as a unique sense of community built in challenging circumstances.

3. *Sam and the Lucky Money* by Karen Chinn (compassion, kindness)
New York: Lee & Low Books Inc., 1995

Sam wants to spend his Chinese New Year money gift but after looking at many expensive or unnecessary items, he chooses instead to give it to a homeless man in need of shoes. Since it is a small amount, Sam tells the man it might not be enough for him to buy shoes but it might buy him some warm socks. This book illustrates a child's natural desire to consume but also how his decision to make small financial contribution can make a big difference for a homeless man.

4. *The Rag Coat* by Lauren Mills (community, happiness)
Little, Brown and Company, 1991

The story provides insight into the conditions of North American poverty that would prevent a child from attending school. This is the story of a girl in the Appalachian Mountains who did not initially attend school because her family needed to make money to survive. She eventually is able to attend but does not have a coat to wear. Women in the community work together to sew one with left over pieces of cloth but the little girl is mocked by her new classmates. This book provides an opportunity to explore multiple points of view, perspective and the tendency for people to misjudge those who live in poverty.

5. *The Lady in the Box* by Ann McGovern (compassion)
New York: Turtle Books, 1997

Two sisters discover a homeless woman living near their home in the winter. They are concerned about her ability to survive the cold winter so they secretly take items from their home to give to her. They finally tell their mother who joins their effort and they all befriend the woman. The

book provides insight into the North American experience of poverty. Children are presented as problem-solvers who take small actions to help

- 6. *It's Okay to be Different* by Todd Parr (empathy development)**
Singapore: Little Brown and Co., 2001

This colourful book presents physical differences to young children (3-6) in a funny and appealing way. It can be a great way to start a conversation about how people may have visible differences but have similarities too. This book offers a nice segue to the book, *Whoever You Are*, by Mem Fox.

- 7. *Love You Forever* by Robert Munch (love, interdependence)**
Willowdale, New York: Firefly Books, 1986

This is one of the best-selling books in Canadian history. It is a beautiful story of love between a parent and child and how the cycle of love and commitment comes full circle as the child takes on a caretaking role of the parent as they age.

- 8. *Something Beautiful* by Sharon Dennis Wyeth (happiness, community)**
New York: Bantam Double Day, 1998

Living in a poor neighborhood, a young girl is discouraged by litter, graffiti and homelessness. She visits people in her neighborhood to understand beauty. Each one tries to show her that beauty is what you have already rather than what you lack. She decides to take action and begins to clean graffiti off her apartment door.

- 9. *A Chair For My Mother* by Vera B. Williams (community, happiness)**
New York: Greenwillow Books, 1982

After losing all of their possessions in a fire, a young girl and her mother are enveloped by the love and generosity of friends and relatives who help them rebuild. Hoping to purchase one new piece of furniture, the girl and her mother begin to save money in a jar and when they have enough money they purchase a chair that they can share. This book demonstrates the resilience of people to overcome a crisis and the power of community to reach out to help others in need.

- 10. *Edward the "Crazy Man"* by Marie Day (compassion, kindness, happiness)**
Toronto: Annick Press, 2002

This is the story of a boy named Charlie who helps an eccentric homeless man. The homeless man saves the boy from being hit by a car then disappears. As an adult, Charlie still thinks about the homeless man and tries to find him. He eventually finds him and offers him a job. The homeless man had been suffering from schizophrenia. It is a gentle story to introduce the idea of how we often misjudge homeless people and shows how kindness and opportunities can change the lives of both the needy and the ones who help.

11. *Mr. Lincoln's Way* by Patricia Polacco **(happiness through helping others)**
New York: Philomel Books, 2001

This is the story of a wise school principal who reaches out to a discouraged bully. He discovers that the boy has an interest in birds and puts him in charge of a school atrium set up for birds. While taking care of the birds, the boy discovers his own self-worth and his relationships with classmates begin to change and the boy's self confidence increases. This book shows how kindness, self-esteem and a new sense of purpose can turn discouraged students around.

12. *I Can Make a Difference – a Treasury to Inspire Our Children* by Marian Wright Edelman **(gratitude, kindness, helping others)**
New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2005

This is a collection of quotations, poetry and stories from around the world with themes of helping others, perseverance, peace and courage. Different world references are presented with common belief statements to help others be kind and grateful for what we have.

13. *If The World Were A Village* by David J. Smith **(global community)**
Toronto: Kids Can Press, 2002

This book presents the statistics of the world's six billion people in terms of a village of 100 people. It makes numbers and statistics easier to understand. The pieces of information include nationalities, languages spoken, age, religion, and access to clean air, water and sanitation, education, energy. The author gives a list of suggestions on teaching children about the global village.

14. *The Quilt Makers Gift* by Jeff Brumbeau **(happiness)**
Minnesota: Pfeifer-Hamilton Inc., 2000

This beautifully illustrated book is about a quilt-maker who gives away her handmade quilts to the poor. She agrees to make a quilt for a greedy king with the condition that he give away all his possessions. As he starts to give things away, he undergoes a change in heart and discovers a new sense of happiness by helping others.

15. The following is a series of five books are by Amanda Rondeau: (community service)

- ***Do Something in Your Family***
- ***Do Something in Your Community***
- ***Do Something in Your City***
- ***Do Something in Your Country***
- ***Do Something in Your World***

Minnesota: ABDO Publishing, 2004

This series provides ideas on how young children and grown-ups can help others in their jobs and everyday lives.

- 16. *Circle of Thanks*** by Susi Gregg Fowler (gratitude, community)
New York: Scholastic Press, 1998

This story takes place in the Alaskan tundra where a boy and his mother witness an otter pup fall into deep water. The boy's mother rescues the pup, which starts a cycle of helping by a series of animals. It shows how one act of kindness can have positive affects on others.

- 17. *The People Who Hugged the Trees*** adapted by Deborah Lee Rose (community, happiness)
Colorado: Roberts Rinehart, Inc., 1980

Based on an Indian Folktale, this is a story of how trees protect people from the heat and wind in the desert weather. Then a powerful prince decides to cut all the trees to build his new fortress. A brave girl wraps her arms around a tree, an act that forces the prince to stop the clearing of trees.

- 18. *Journey Through Heartsongs*** by Mattie J.T. Stepanek (peace/hope)
New York: Hyperion books, 2001

This book is an inspirational collection of Mattie Stepanek's poetry. He struggled with a rare form of muscular dystrophy. He began to write poetry from the age of three and appeared in American newspapers, magazines and on television.

- 19. *The Birdman*** by Veronika Martenova Charles (kindness)
Toronto and New York: Tundra Books, 2006

This is the true story of a man from Calcutta who loses his wife and children in a tragic accident. He is overwhelmed with grief until one day when he sees caged-birds in a market. He realizes that nothing will bring his family back but he is able to help small creatures. By helping, he overcomes his grief and learns to live again. He continuedsto buy cages of sickly birds that no one wants, nursing them back to health before freeing them. He comes to be known as the "birdman of Calcutta."

- 20. *The Peace Book*** by Todd Parr (peace)
New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2004

A simple, colourful and powerful message about peace. Parr explains peace in ways such as helping your neighbour, being free, watching it snow. He provides a great way to start discussions about the abstract concept of peace.

- 21. *Bone Button Borscht*** by Aubrey Davis (community/poverty)
Toronto: Kids Can Press, 1995

A hungry man enters a poor village one cold, snowy evening. When no one opens their door for this poor beggar, he enters the synagogue. He takes five buttons off his coat and asks the shamas for one more in order to make Bone Button Borscht. How do you make borscht from buttons? In order to find out, the shamas goes door to door asking for not only a button, but also the other

ingredients for the soup. As the villagers gather and provide the ingredients, something happens in that village that hasn't happened in a long time. The beggar teaches the townspeople what can be achieved with a little cooperation.

22. *Jeremiah Learns to Read* by Jo Ellen Bogard **(education)**
Ontario: North Winds Press, 1997

This book highlights the ways we can learn from each other. Jeremiah is a wise man and he knows how to do many amazing things but he doesn't know how to read. When no one in his immediate circle can help him, he presents himself at a one room school with other 'students'. Without making it a big deal that an adult is seeking to learn, the teacher simply points him to an empty seat and introduces him to the rest of the class.

23. *Somewhere Today* by Shelly Moore Thomas **(helping others/peace)**
Illinois: Albert Whitman & Company, 1998

In this poetic book, the notion is that through helping others all around the world, people create a better world and thereby bring peace. The book gives examples of doing simple things such as "someone is being a friend instead of fighting" or "someone is fixing old toys to give to new friends" to show how peace can be brought through simple actions.

24. *Bagels from Benny* by Aubrey Davis **(generosity/helping others/community)**
Toronto: Kids Can Press, Ltd., 2003

Benny, a young Jewish boy, loves to help in the bakery where his Grandpa makes the best bagels in town. He wants to say thanks to God, and so he takes a bagful of bagels, for God to taste, to the synagogue and places them in the Holy Ark at the end of each week. Only he discovers that it's not God who is eating them, but rather a poor, hungry man. This man thanks God for feeding him, that he has found work and will now promise to help others. His grandpa explains to Benny that in doing so, he has helped spread the goodness of helping others.

25. *The Mitten Tree* by Candace Christiansen **(community/helping others/generosity)**
Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 1997

Sarah, a lonely, old woman, notices a young boy without any mittens. She decides that she will knit a pair for him and leave them on the tree near the bus stop. She notices that there are other children who need mittens as well, and so secretly knits mittens for those who needs them and leaves them on the tree. One day, she finds a basket of yarn on her doorstep. As Sarah continues to make mittens, yarn continues to appear on her doorstep.

26. *Lila and the Secret of Rain* by David Conway & Judy Daly **(hope/poverty)**
London: Frances Lincoln Limited, 2007

Lila, a little girl, lives in a village in Kenya. It is too hot to do anything, milk the cows, gather wood and weed the garden. The sun is too strong that the wells have dried up, and if it doesn't

rain soon, everything in Lila's village will die. Lila's grandfather tells her the secret of rain. So Lila goes up to the highest mountain and finds a way to help her village.

27. *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein **(generosity)**
Harper Collins Publishers, 1964

This is a classic story about a friendship between a boy and a tree. The boy and tree are very happy playing together and being the best of friends until the boy starts growing up. The tree continuously gives as the boy becomes a man. As this boy grows up, his needs keep changing, and the tree keeps giving until one day, there seems to be nothing left to give.

28. *The Dragon and the Unicorn* by Lynne Cherry **(environment/hope)**
Florida: Harcourt Trade Publishers, 1995

Valerio, the dragon, and Allegra, the unicorn live happily in an ancient forest with many other animals, until they are driven into hiding when humans begin to destroy their natural habitat. King Orlando has a castle built for him in the middle of the forest destroying trees and homes of many animals. But Valerio and Allegra receive hope when they befriend Arianna, the king's daughter. She learns the wisdom from the Allegra to love, respect and preserve the natural environment, in turn, sharing her knowledge with her father.

29. *The Three Questions* by Jon J. Muth **(helping others/happiness)**
New York: Scholastic Press, 2002

Nikolai, a young boy, believes that if he can find the answers to his three questions, he will always know how to be a good person. "When is the best time to do things? Who is the most important one? What is the right thing to do?" He asks his friends – Sonya, a heron, Gogal, a monkey, and Pushkin, a dog – for help, and though they try to help him the best they could, he felt their answers didn't seem quite right for him. Nikolai decides to seek out Leo, the wise old turtle, for help. While visiting Leo, Nikolai stumbles upon an opportunity to help a stranger in distress. It is only once Nikolai helps this stranger that he is able to discover the answers to his questions and concludes what it means to be a good person.

30. *The Teddy Bear* by David McPhail **(compassion)**
New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2002

A little boy and his teddy bear went everywhere together until one day the teddy bear was left behind. The boy and the bear slowly learn to adjust without each other. A lonely homeless old man finds the bear and it becomes his companion. The bear misses the boy, but feels loved by the old man. And the boy gets new toys and friends to occupy him. One day, the boy finds his bear on a park bench and is thrilled but then notices the homeless man's despair and willingly gives him the bear.

- 31. *Just a Dream*** by Chris Van Allsburg (environment)
New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1990

Walter is a young boy who is not environmentally friendly. He is a litterbug, doesn't believe in sorting out garbage and can't understand why getting a tree is a valuable gift. Like every child, Walter believes the future is bright and that his actions today have little or no consequence on the future. While asleep one night, Walter has a dream about a future Earth devastated by pollution, only then does Walter begin to understand the importance of taking care of the environment

- 32. *Josias, Hold the Book*** by Jennifer Riesmeyer Elvgren (poverty/education)
Pennsylvania: Boyds Mills Press, 2006

Josias lives in Haiti. Not everyone has the privilege to go to school. He tends the garden from which his family gets food. But the garden is not growing anymore. He tries to give it more water and more manure, but his garden doesn't grow. His friend asks him everyday when he'll join school. Josias asks his friend if he may find the answer to his problem in books. Josias now attends school in the day and he attends his garden in the evening. It's a story that tells of poverty holding children back from education.

- 33. *The Elders are Watching*** by David Bouchard (environment)
Summer Wild Productions, 1990

The spectacular illustrations go beautifully with the poetically written story of the ways people carelessly treat our environment. It's a message from the aboriginal people of the past to the people of today.

- 34. *Lily and the Paper Man*** by Rebecca Upjohn (homeless/compassion)
Toronto: Second Story Press, 2007

Lily enjoys walking home with her mother, until one day she sees the paper man. She is afraid of the poor man in raggedy clothes and avoids walking past him. As the rain turns into snow, she begins to see the paper man differently. He wears the same tattered coat, and the same worn-out shoes. As she is warm in her bed, she thinks of a way to keep the paper man warm.

- 35. *Johnny and the Old Oak Tree*** by R. P Paulson (environment)
Texas: Crestmont Publishing, 1995

Johnny's best friend is an old oak tree. Johnny's dream comes true when the tree begins to talk to him about the earth. The tree explains that it is really sad because of the amount of trash that is filling our lands. This book teaches how people can help our environment by recycling.

36. Children Around the World by Donata Montanari
Toronto: Kids Can Press, 2001

(global community)

This informational picture book explores the themes of commonality and diversity from the perspective of 12 children from different parts of the world. They discuss things such as how their homes are built, the language they speak, how and where they get the food they eat, clothing, school, daily routines. It's an excellent book for sharing and discussing similarities and differences.

37. *The Carpet Boy's Gift* by Pegi Deitz Shea
Tilbury House, 2003

(hope/freedom)

Nadeem is forced to work in a carpet factory in Pakistan to pay off loans on behalf of his parents to the factory owner. He and other children yearn to have time to play and go to school, but instead feel trapped. Inspired by Iqbal Masih, a real boy who had escaped from a factory, he finds the courage to escape and lead other children to freedom.

38. *Brother's in Hope: the story of the lost boys of Sudan* by Mary Williams
New York: Lee & Low Books Inc., 2005

(hope)

Garang, an eight-year-old boy, tells the true story of how everything – his family, his home – was taken from him by a civil war in Sudan. He finds thousands of boys also lost. With the words that his father once told him – "Garang, be brave. Your heart and mind are strong. There is nothing you cannot do." – Garang finds strength to lead himself and the boys to safety.