This children’s literature review column showcases the winners of the 2017 NCTE Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children.

**2017 Orbis Pictus Award Winner**

**Some Writer! The Story of E. B. White**

Written and illustrated by Melissa Sweet


Melissa Sweet’s captivating biography of children’s book author Elwyn Brooks (E. B.) White offers insights into the beloved writer’s life and process. Sweet incorporates original and archival realia, including letters, photographs, and manuscripts, alongside her creative and remarkable collage illustrations. White was scrappy and fearful as a child, but loved words. He crafted words into short pieces submitted to magazines and used them to highlight his love of nature, dogs, and his family. Some of these early essays,
Honor Books

**Animals by the Numbers: A Book of Animal Infographics**

*Written and illustrated by Steve Jenkins*


When thinking about animals, numbers usually don’t come to mind, but they do for author/illustrator Steve Jenkins. Jenkins cleverly uses numbers to highlight amazing feats and features of the animal kingdom. By combining his signature paper-cut collage illustrations with eye-popping infographics, Jenkins compares animal size, speed, sound, and factual curiosities through compelling charts and graphs that will tap into readers’ sense of wonder. Who knew the total biomass of insects outweighs any other animal on the planet? Or that animals exist 37,000 ft. above sea level and 36,070 ft. below? Or that the longest tongue of any animal—relative to its body length—belongs to a moth? Each visually arresting infographic is as varied as the animals themselves. Jenkins’s use of pie charts, bar graphs, timelines, cluster maps, and a flow chart inform readers about complex concepts and animal adaptations. His creative layouts, captivating visuals, and explanatory captions invite readers to linger in awe. Not only is

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this book a valuable resource for fact-mining and infographic analysis, it is also an exquisite work of art. (SR)

**The First Step: How One Girl Put Segregation on Trial**
*Written by Susan E. Goodman  
Illustrated by E. B. Lewis  

The first legal challenge to segregation in the United States took place in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1848 when the Roberts family sued the city to demand equal access. Initially, Sarah Roberts attended the all-White Otis School in her neighborhood “with more books than most kids had ever seen.” When the authorities discovered that Sarah was attending the wrong school, she was forced to attend the all-Black Smith School, a long walk from home and underfunded: no yard, just one book. Sarah’s family hired Robert Morris, the second African American lawyer in the country who collaborated with abolitionist Charles Sumner, to argue Sarah’s case. The family worked tirelessly, traveling the state with petitions in support of neighborhood schools. In 1855, “Boston stepped into the history books as the first major American city to officially integrate its schools.” Lewis’s exquisite watercolor illustrations, Goodman’s crisp language, and an engaging book format fully immerse readers in history. Extensive back matter offers readers a deeper exploration. In a nation where schools remain unofficially segregated, this book demonstrates to children and their teachers that change does not happen overnight, nor are causes lost or won with one single effort, but many. (MAC)

**Giant Squid**
*Written by Candace Fleming  
Illustrated by Eric Rohmann  
Roaring Brook, 2016, unpaged, ISBN 978-1-59643-599-5*

“Down, down in the depths of the sunless sea, deep, deep in the cold, cold dark, creatures, strange and fearsome, lurk.” In the depths of the ocean lives the giant squid. The giant squid is mysterious. Its tentacles powerfully grip its prey, then its beak pierces and slices the skin of the sperm whale. Its tongue uses sharp blades, ultimately turning its prey into “pasty sludge.” Its eye is enormous and round, and it inexplicably shifts colors from pinkish purple to yellow or gray. It is even able to purposely unleash ink to throw
off its enemy—barracuda. Fleming meticulously describes the secrecy of the squid. Her well-written and researched text invites readers to learn about the squid’s largely unknown features. Rohmann’s full-color paintings vividly display the giant squid across the book’s large and bold pages. The story is informative and captivating while conveying knowledge to readers. Back matter includes a diagram explaining the squid’s body parts, an author’s note providing additional information about this mysterious creature, and an extensive source list. (JGF)

**¡Olinguito, de la A a la Z!**
**Descubriendo el bosque nublado:**
**Olinguito, from A to Z!**
**Unveiling the Cloud Forest**
Written and illustrated by Lulu Delacre

“[E]l olinguito observa a un oso de anteojos. ([T]he olinguito observes a spectacled bear.)” This lyrically written alphabet book invites readers of all ages to visit the Andes cloud forest and examine the illuminating life of the olinguito, a mammal of the raccoon family, in South America. Delacre places poetic Spanish text first on each page and then beckons us to read the lyrical text in English. Delacre does not use a direct translation. Instead, she powerfully utilizes each language to explore the cloud forest and the olinguito’s discovery. The illustrations employ graphic paintings and collage elements to reconstruct the environmental layers while accurately conveying the distinct range of species living within the cloud forest. Back matter includes new information on the discovery of the olinguito and the cloud forest in South America. Detailed information consists of the illustration process, a helpful website that shows the readers specific elements in the book, scientific names and pronunciations in Spanish, and an all-encompassing list of the author’s sources. (JGF)

**I Dissent: Ruth Bader Ginsburg Makes Her Mark**
Written by Debbie Levy
Illustrated by Elizabeth Baddeley

Disagree, protest, object, resist and persist, disapprove. These are words that express dissent, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg knows the power of these words. From an early age, she met prejudice, inequality, and social injustice, but did not fail to speak up. In an era in which women were expected to be homemakers, teachers, or nurses, Ruth Bader chose a different path. After
marrying Martin Ginsburg, they pursued law school together. Graduating first in her class did not immediately translate into a career as a lawyer. Arguing landmark cases, she rose to the top in her profession by becoming the highly respected second female Justice of the Supreme Court in 1993. In her words, “Fight for the things that you care about. But do it in a way that will lead others to join you.” Debbie Levy’s lively account of the remarkable life of Ruth Bader Ginsburg invites young readers to explore the Justice’s quest to secure equal rights for all. Elizabeth Baddeley’s retro-style illustrations are colorful and lively, while cleverly incorporating dissenting words in various fonts. *I Dissent* will enlist readers for the march toward equality and a celebration of the life of this notable female activist. (MR)

**Recommended Books**

**Ada Lovelace, Poet of Science: The First Computer Programmer**  
Written by Diane Stanley  
Illustrated by Jessie Hartland  
Simon & Schuster, 2016, unpaged,  
ISBN 978-1-4814-5249-6

Ada, the Countess of Lovelace, was unique among the young women of her generation and social class. Instead of following in the footsteps of her father, the renowned British poet Lord Byron, Ada studied math and science. She attended London social gatherings where Charles Darwin and Charles Dickens exchanged ideas at the home of inventor Charles Babbage. Fascinated by numbers and machines, Ada was intrigued by the way Babbage’s hand-cranked Difference Engine could automate the time-consuming production of mathematical tables. She imagined that with the necessary calculations, a machine could automate many processes, like playing chess or composing music. So, when Babbage needed help introducing a more sophisticated Analytical Engine, Ada wrote the first computer algorithm—code for the Analytical Engine and developed notes about the machine’s processes. With warm, whimsical illustrations, this inviting biography is sure to inspire young computer programmers of all gender identities. (DD)

**Ada’s Violin: The Story of the Recycled Orchestra of Paraguay**  
Written by Susan Hood  
Illustrated by Sally Wern Comport  
Simon & Schuster, 2016, unpaged,  
ISBN 978-1-4814-3095-1

Cateura, Paraguay, is “a town made of trash.” For generations, life has been challenging for Ada and her family as they search each day through the landfill to find items to sell. Ada’s life changes when Grandma signs her up for Señor Chávez’s music lessons. With instruments too few and children too many, Chávez and friend Nicolás Gómez turn trash into treasure, creating oil drum cellos and water pipe flutes. Guided by Chávez, Ada and the children play music and grow in

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artwork and offers a snapshot into the life of an accomplished graphic novelist in the children’s book publishing industry (e.g., Gene Luen Yang, Cátia Chien, Kazu Kibuishi, and Sara Varon). Marcus pays careful attention to the distinct experiences of the novelists and ensures that each of the chapters is likewise unique and compelling, inviting readers to keep turning pages. With a thoughtful forward by David Small, this anthology would be a welcomed addition to any classroom or library. (DD)

**Comics Confidential! Thirteen Graphic Novelists Talk Story, Craft, and Life outside the Box**
Compiled and edited by Leonard S. Marcus

In this collection of interviews, Leonard S. Marcus asks the questions that graphic novel enthusiasts want to know, such as: What makes graphic novelists tick? How do they think about comics? What were they like as kids? Accessible to readers at varying levels, each chapter features original confidence, composing their destiny with each note. Through compelling narrative, Susan Hood brings the sights and sounds of Cateura and its orchestra to life with vivid and authentic language. Readers are reminded that building hope, like playing instruments, is anything but quick and easy. Sally Wern Comport’s vibrant, contrasting colors in mixed-media collage capture the harsh physical settings and tender orchestral music. An author’s note and related sources offer further information about this truly inspirational journey. (SR)

**Dive! World War II Stories of Sailors & Submarines in the Pacific**
Written by Deborah Hopkinson

Imagine fighting a war “on a liquid chessboard with an area of more than 70 million square miles” (p. 4) without the assistance of other warships for four years. How do you navigate surprising malfunctions and opaque instructions while under attack and without back-up? Who signed up for
this war-time “silent service” and what became of them? Readers will find the answers to these questions and more in this impressive compilation of first-person stories, authentic photographs, and official Naval documents about the sailors and submarines in the Pacific during World War II. Hopkinson’s organization of the meticulously researched narratives greatly contributes to the book’s appeal and accessibility. Her maritime-themed informative breakout within the chapters and her resource-rich back matter further enrich our knowledge of and appreciation for these wartime heroes. Without a doubt, sailors and submarines rise to the surface and join the ranks of pilots and soldiers in this noteworthy and needed account of history. (JMG)

How to Build a Museum:
Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture
Written by Tonya Bolden

“A museum is a treasure trove of things. Things lost then found. Things perennially prized. Objects once deemed worthless” (p. 1). So begins Tonya Bolden’s evocative account of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture’s 100-year-old transformation from a dream to reality. Bolden’s first four chapters offer readers a step-by-step guide to the museum’s development. From vision building and financial backing to artifact collecting and architectural design, these steps culminate in a place rich with memories and memorabilia that reflect “a people’s journey” and “a nation’s story” (https://nmaahc.si.edu/). Bolden’s concluding chapters offer readers a critical overview of the museum’s 11 permanent collections. These collections, “organized around three themes: history, community, culture,” help “bring everything to a human scale” (p. 37). Complete with impressive facts and figures, detailed acknowledgments, and source notes, this literary documentary helps an important museum about life come to life in a magnificent way. (JMG)

Miss Mary Reporting: The True Story of Sportswriter Mary Garber
Written by Sue Macy
Illustrated by C. F. Payne

Today, fans don’t question women reporting on sports such as football, basketball, or soccer, but that was not the case in the 1940s. Growing up, Mary Garber loved participating in and watching

Language Arts, Volume 95, Number 2, November 2017
Sachiko Yasui was six years old when an American plane dropped an atomic bomb on her home city of Nagasaki, Japan. Caren Stelson’s beautifully crafted biography draws upon extensive research and multiple interviews with Sachiko over several years to offer a portrait not just of one life, but of a city in ruins; the long, painful poisoning endured by thousands of Japanese; and the U.S. occupation of Japan. Yet, Sachiko’s story is not one of horror and deprivation, despite the horrors she endured, but one of survival and strength. Sachiko “needed years to crawl out of the dark into the light and find her voice” (p. 106). For the past 20 years, she has been speaking to children all over the world, telling them, “What happened to me must never happen to you” (p. 112). (MAC)

**Step Right Up: How Doc and Jim Key Taught the World about Kindness**

*Written by Donna Janell Bowman*  
*Illustrated by Daniel Minter*  

The enduring message of Doc Key “that each of us should step right up and choose kindness” is the cornerstone of this story about the impact of compassion for each other and for the animal kingdom. Born into slavery, William (Doc) Key

*Sachiko: A Nagasaki Bomb Survivor’s Story*  
*Written by Caren Stelson*  

**Language Arts**, Volume 95, Number 2, November 2017
became a successful free man who taught the world about the power of education and kindness through his remarkable horse, Beautiful Jim Key. Taught by the patient Doc, Jim Key could answer questions, spell words, and write letters on a blackboard. In her debut book, Donna Janell Bowman introduces readers to this self-taught, gentle man who raised a feeble colt to become a marvel. Daniel Minter’s colorful acrylic-painted linoleum block prints bring the story to life. Extensive back matter and archival photos add to the appeal of this story of a man and his horse. (MR)

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