

2 War and Resilience

Carolyn W. Jackson and Kipchoge Kirkland

In times of war, many of us, young and old, wrestle with the tensions of and threats to justice, freedom, and humanity. We may draw on our deepest held philosophical values and spiritual/moral foundations to help us make sense of the tragedies that begin and end in battle. Developing an understanding of war may also help readers develop a keen sense of democracy, political reality, and perhaps a critical understanding of what it takes to encourage or destroy human dignity. *Fighting for Honor: Japanese Americans and World War II* (Cooper, 2000), for instance, demonstrates that while facing the ironies and contradictions of social discrimination and a governmental policy that betrayed them, many Japanese Americans remained valiant. In essence, confronting war however it is presented is no easy task. The depth of the human spirit, however, continues to reveal itself in the many ways in which diverse cultural groups have been resilient in times of conflict, tragedy, and loss. Reading literature about these experiences can certainly help us learn from the past in order to positively influence the future.

Choosing literature about war and resilience for children and young adults is a daunting responsibility. Authors treat war in different literal and metaphoric ways, which makes selecting such material a challenge to find texts that are engaging, honest, fair, thought-provoking, and, more important, developmentally appropriate. Nancy Day's *Your Travel Guide to Civil War America* (2001), for example, which presents an important, literal, and graphic journey through the historic conflict between North and South, is written so that any middle school student can successfully embark on the historical trek to gain deeper insight into the impact of civil war on the United States. A book that incorporates both metaphoric and literal tensions of war is *The War Within: A Novel of the Civil War* (Matas, 2001). Hannah is a Jewish girl who wrestles with the consequences of her belief that African Americans are inferior. She struggles to make sense of the war and abolitionists while the Jews in her community are targeted and discriminated against by the government. This Civil War novel demonstrates the blurred line between the enemy we imagine and the actual enemy, when we are forced to examine our own perspectives, roles, actions, and contributions to society.

The daughters of an Ojibway family in *The Birchbark House* (Erdrich, 1999) experience a metaphorical war when they grapple with a smallpox epidemic and find their true identities, inner strength, and destinies. In these kinds of war stories, characters' resilience is evident in what they endure, what they embrace, what they leave behind, and what they find. In other instances, war and resilience are demonstrated in the poetic rhythms of children's songs, such as those shared in Alice McGill's *In the Hollow of Your Hand: Slave Lullabies* (2000). In this euphonic book, McGill's generational family songs reflect an emerging resilience of strength, courage, and laughter, and a bold pride that has endured battles of slavery, discrimination, and both physical and psychological warfare.

The purpose of choosing war and resilience literature for children and young adults is to help them confront different perspectives in a manner that does not prevent them from asking the question "Why?" No child should be prohibited from challenging our practices of justice, equality, and democracy when they see for themselves that these ideals are not being realized. Children are our most important investment in the future. Their sense of fairness in our darkest moments of struggle may mean the difference between building a collective community and living forever divided in isolation. It is our hope that the material presented in this chapter of *Kaleidoscope* will challenge readers to maintain their commitment to justice and freedom while simultaneously recognizing that being resilient is one of our childhood attributes that may help us deal with both the interior and exterior realities of war.

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- 2.1 Alshalabi, Firyal. **Summer of 1990**. Aunt Strawberry, 1999. ISBN 0-9669988-0-4. 138 pp. Intermediate. Fiction, World.

Danah realizes her dream to leave Kuwait for a short summer visit to a beloved uncle. Her joyful time in New York is cut short by the terror of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the uncertain status of her family. Danah begins her quest to find and be reunited with her mother, father, brother, and sister. From the perspective of a teenager, the Gulf War has an immediacy that takes readers into the tragic realities faced by too many of our world's adolescents. (Social Responsibility; Families, Friends, and Community)
NHK

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- 2.2 Asgedom, Mawi. **Of Beetles and Angels: A True Story of the American Dream.** Megadee, 2001. ISBN 0-9704982-6-8. 148 pp. Middle school. Nonfiction, Ethnic specific.

Surviving genocide in one's own country is remarkable enough, but in this story a young man tells about how his family escaped certain death by making the incredible trek from Ethiopia to a refugee camp in the Sudan. After years in the camp, the family immigrated to the United States. Life was only somewhat safer once his family reached the United States, yet the author never loses faith in the future. The success he achieves through determination, hope, resilience, and family love culminates in his graduation from Harvard. This is an inspiring story for all readers. (Social Responsibility; Families, Friends, and Community; Visibility) NHK

- 2.3 Burrowes, Adjoa J. **Grandma's Purple Flowers.** Illustrated by Adjoa J. Burrowes. Lee & Low, 2000. ISBN 1-880000-73-3. Unpaged. Primary. Fiction, Ethnic specific.

A little girl visits her beloved grandmother and celebrates the beauty of nature with her. With seasonal changes, the grandmother falters. When she dies, the little girl grieves but eventually celebrates grandmother's memory with spring's first purple flowers. The gentle story opens up opportunities for adults to talk about death and dying with curious or worried children. (Families, Friends, and Community) NHK

- 2.4 Chen, Da. **China's Son: Growing Up in the Cultural Revolution.** Delacorte, 2001. ISBN 0-385-72929-4. 213 pp. Upper elementary. Autobiography, World.

As difficult as it may have been to achieve, Chen has written a breezy account of his young life during and after the Cultural Revolution in China. As he notes, this is just one of many first-person accounts of that period in China's history. For a balanced picture of that time, some of those other accounts should be included, because Chen's narrative doesn't touch on the extreme danger and suffering that many Chinese experienced during the Cultural Revolution. NHK

- 2.5 Coleman, Evelyn. **Born in Sin.** Atheneum, 2001. ISBN 0-689-83833-6. 234 pp. Middle school. Fiction, Ethnic specific.
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Resilient describes Keisha, her family, and many of her friends. Coleman unfailingly entrances readers of any age by the authenticity of her characters and the lives they lead. She neither demonizes nor lionizes any one ethnic group while carefully laying bare the conflicts that many African American youngsters encounter on a daily basis. Keisha fights for her right to an education and for her future even after she is labeled an “at risk” student. She is not alone in this fight, for she is loved and cared for. This is a superior book for a read-aloud and discussion. (Families, Friends, and Community) NHK

- 2.6 Coleman, Evelyn. **Circle of Fire**. Pleasant Company, 2001. ISBN 1-58485-339-5. 150 pp. Ages 8–13. Fiction, Ethnic specific.

The author notes in the afterword “Looking Back: 1958” that she drew from a true story in creating the lives of African American and European American families during the violence visited on African American families by the Ku Klux Klan. Mendy, the protagonist, has a strong and happy friendship with a White boy, which sets the conflict of the story. Add to this mix the Klan’s plan to raid a meeting at which former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt is to speak, and you have a story sure to captivate. This would be an excellent book for literature circles in classrooms studying U.S. history. (Social Responsibility; Families, Friends, and Community) NHK

- 2.7 Collier, Christopher, and James Lincoln Collier. **Slavery and the Coming of the Civil War, 1831–1861**. Benchmark, 2000. ISBN 0-7614-0817-7. 81 pp. Intermediate–Middle school. Nonfiction.

The Colliers discuss pivotal events and pervasive sentiments leading up to the Civil War, as well as key players who planted the seeds for war and articulated the justification for the institution of slavery. The authors have included various examples of contemporary anti–African American sentiment, such as cartoons and posters that demanded the return of free African Americans to slavery. This text also includes information about slave trade routes, a bibliography, and an index. (Social Responsibility; Informative and Educational Books) CWJ

- 2.8 Cooper, Michael L. **Fighting for Honor: Japanese Americans and World War II**. Clarion, 2000. ISBN 0-395-91375-6. 104 pp. Middle school. Nonfiction, Cross-cultural.
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Cooper taps a variety of resources such as personal diaries and national, state, military, and Library of Congress archives to examine the unfair treatment and relocation of Japanese Americans to internment camps during World War II. He also features the frequently overlooked role of Japanese Americans who valiantly served in the U.S. military despite American propaganda that dehumanized and justified poor treatment of Japanese Americans. This book contains a chronology of events, endnotes, bibliographical references, and an index. (Social Responsibility; Informative and Educational Books) CWJ

- 2.9 Cox, Clinton. **Come All You Brave Soldiers: Blacks in the Revolutionary War.** Scholastic, 1999. ISBN 0-590-47576-2. 182 pp. Middle school. Nonfiction.

Using primary and secondary sources, Cox celebrates the contributions of unsung African American Revolutionary War soldiers such as Lemuel Haynes, Peter Salem, and Sampson Talbert. These men and thousands of other overlooked Black veterans viewed serving in the army as a chance to gain U.S. citizenship and thus equality. Cox shows how these beliefs and efforts were eventually betrayed when many African American soldiers were enslaved or reenslaved after they fought for their country and their freedom. This text also contains illustrations, bibliographic references, and an index. (Visibility; Informative and Educational Books) CWJ

- 2.10 Curtis, Christopher Paul. **Bud, Not Buddy.** Delacorte, 1999. 245 pp. ISBN 0-385-32306-9. Intermediate–Middle school. Fiction, Ethnic specific.

As in his first book, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham*, Curtis makes history come alive. During the Depression, ten-year-old Bud sets out on a quest to find his father, a well-known African American musician. During his search, this resilient boy finds himself. Boys and girls alike will be absorbed in Bud's story. (Friends, Families, and Community) NHK

Newbery Medal and Coretta Scott King Award, 2000; International Reading Association Children's Book Award, 2000

- 2.11 Day, Nancy. **Your Travel Guide to Civil War America.** Runestone, 2001. ISBN 0-8225-3078-3. 96 pp. Middle school. Nonfiction.
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Day takes the reader on a journey back into Civil War times. Based on many firsthand reports and the research of historians, archaeologists, and other experts, this informative text reveals key players, covert operations, and numerous aspects of the social and political climate during this historic period. Readers may be surprised to learn that many women secretly enlisted in the Union and Confederate armies disguised as men. This text also includes activities, bibliographic references, a glossary, and an index. (Informative and Educational Books) MVW

- 2.12 Diouf, Sylviane A. **Growing Up in Slavery**. Millbrook, 2001. ISBN 0-7613-1763-5. 96 pp. Intermediate–Adult. Nonfiction.

This thorough examination of life for child slaves in the United States gives readers a complete overview of the conditions children endured before and during captivity. It is an accurate and vivid portrayal of the abuse, violence, injustice, racism, and separation from family that forced them to learn how to become resilient, physically and mentally strong, and ultimately great contributors to U.S. society. According to the author, “Their abundant creativity gave America gifted poets, writers, inventors, musicians, painters, scholars, and orators. The children who grew up in slavery were hardy survivors and unsung heroes.” MVW

- 2.13 Equiano, Olaudah. Adapted by Ann Cameron. **The Kidnapped Prince: The Life of Olaudah Equiano**. Knopf, 2000. ISBN 0-375-80346-7. 145 pp. Intermediate–Adult. Nonfiction.

This adapted version of one of the first North American slave narratives, by Olaudah Equiano, tells the chilling story of how a young boy struggled through his experiences as a child slave through several owners. He eloquently expresses a life of betrayal and abuse, depression and exhaustion—physical, emotional, and mental—in the fight to gain his freedom. A map and other illustrations of Equiano’s experiences are included and will confirm for readers the reality of his life. The original story, titled *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano*, has been read by people around the world and was a bestseller in the late 1700s. MVW

- 2.14 Erdrich, Louise. **The Birchbark House**. Hyperion, 1999. ISBN 0-7868-0300-2. 239 pp. Intermediate–Middle school. Historical fiction, Ethnic specific.
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In this historical novel, the daughters of an Ojibway family find their true identities through the privation and hardship brought on by a smallpox epidemic. The eldest daughter learns that she needn't depend on her beauty as her only strength as she brings literacy to her family. The younger daughter finds her destiny as a healer. After overcoming the horrors of the epidemic, the villagers rebuild their lives just as they rebuild their birchbark homes. (Social Responsibility; Visibility) NHK

Jane Addams Honor Book, 2000

- 2.15 Fradin, Dennis Brindell, and Judith Bloom Fradin. **Ida B. Wells: Mother of the Civil Rights Movement.** Clarion, 2000. ISBN 0-395-89898-6. 168 pp. Middle school. Nonfiction, Biography.

"The words GOD BLESS HER is written here on every acre of ground, and on every doorstep, and inside of every home." Readers will fervently echo the sentiment behind this sharecropper's tribute to Ida B. Wells, a major figure of the early civil rights movement, best remembered today as a tireless social activist who helped put an end to lynching. This excellent biography is enriched with passages from Wells's diaries, letters, and newspaper articles. Wells never hesitated to confront any person—from local sheriffs to Booker T. Washington to Woodrow Wilson—who she felt had failed to act for justice. (Social Responsibility; Informative & Educational) NHK

- 2.16 Gottfried, Ted. **Children of the Slaughter: Young People of the Holocaust.** Illustrated by Stephen Alcorn. Twenty-First Century, 2001. ISBN 0-761-31716-3. 112 pp. Middle–High school. Nonfiction.

This nonfiction account of the Holocaust is filled with heart-breaking information on and pictures of child victims, not only Jewish but also German children. Teachers can help students think about what we can learn from the Holocaust and what we can do to prevent anything like it from happening again. The book invites discussion of the consequences of prejudice and what young people can do to combat it in themselves as well as in society. (Social Responsibility; Visibility) IL

- 2.17 Greene, Meg. **Slave Young, Slave Long: The American Slave Experience.** Lerner, 1999. ISBN 0-8225-1739-6. 88 pp. Intermediate. Nonfiction.
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This factual documentation of slavery in the United States details the historical development of Jim Crow laws and practices that African Americans endured for over two hundred years. Primary sources such as personal letters and accounts, famous quotes, original pictures, and slave songs illuminate the daily realities of their struggles for freedom and continued hope for a just society. Also included are advertisements for slave auctions, information about African American Union soldiers and life in slave quarters, and post-Civil War family photos. This book exposes the intimate lives of African Americans throughout the years of Jim Crow and honors the level of strength it took to tolerate overt and insidious discrimination. MVW

- 2.18 Hansen, Joyce. **One True Friend**. Clarion, 2001. ISBN 0-395-84983-7. 154 pp. Upper elementary–Middle school. Fiction, Ethnic specific.

Joyce Hansen and her books are national treasures. Whether fiction or nonfiction, contemporary or stories of the past, Hansen's books draw readers into the hearts, souls, and minds of her characters. In *One True Friend*, she reunites us with Doris and Amir of her earlier *The Gift Giver* and *Yellow Bird and Me*. In this latest story, Doris copes with issues of peer pressure and self-identity. Amir struggles with the complex issues of coping with his little brother's complete absorption into foster care; going to live with the Smiths while also searching for his other brothers and sisters; unearthing true memories of life before his parents' deaths; and, finally, making a choice between foster families. Hansen enters her characters so honestly and completely that readers feel like they're living with them. She has also turned a story that could be sappy and overly sentimental into a tale of resilience in the face of life's obstacles. (Social Responsibility; Families, Friends, and Community) NHK

- 2.19 Hicyilmaz, Gaye. **Smiling for Strangers**. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000. ISBN 0-374-37081-8. 152 pp. Middle school–High school. Fiction, World.

"[War] is about old men . . . sending young men . . . out to kill and be killed" (p. 141). Yet the impact of war devastates the lives of everyone involved. A case in point, fourteen-year-old Nina launches her long, lonely, dangerous, and desperate journey to

find a secure place—England—from her war-torn motherland, Yugoslavia. As Nina searches for her mother’s friend, Paul, who turns out to be Nina’s brother’s father, the story offers little snippets about helping others and being helped, hatred toward foreigners, and ignorance of foreign lands, all issues worth mulling over. (Social Responsibility; Families, Friends, and Community) IL

- 2.20 Holliday, Laurel, compiler. **Dreaming in Color, Living in Black and White: Our Own Stories of Growing Up Black in America.** Pocket, 2000. ISBN 0-671-04127-4. 199 pp. Middle school. Nonfiction, Ethnic specific.

Each of these stories is an individual’s memory of encountering racism as a child or young adult. Both harrowing and truthful, these accounts are personal views of U.S. social history. The African American contributors represent a broad spectrum of socioeconomic and geographical backgrounds, but each shares the trauma and violence of racism, whether they are accused of being “too Black” or of being “too White.” (Social Responsibility) NHK

- 2.21 Littlesugar, Amy. **Tree of Hope.** Illustrated by Floyd Cooper. Philomel, 1999. ISBN 0-399-23300-8. Unpaged. Primary–Intermediate. Historical fiction, Ethnic specific.

In this beautifully written and illustrated work of historical fiction, Florrie’s father is an out-of-work Harlem actor who finally gets a part in Orson Welles’s production of *Macbeth*—cast entirely with African American actors. Littlesugar irresistibly draws readers into this historical fiction through Florrie’s love, pride, and hope in and for her father. (Visibility) NHK

- 2.22 Mah, Adeline Yen. **Chinese Cinderella: The True Story of an Unwanted Daughter.** Delacorte, 1999. ISBN 0-385-32707-2. 205 pp. Intermediate–Middle school. Nonfiction, World.

This children’s version of the adult book *Falling Leaves* is no less harrowing in its honest depiction of life in China before and during the ascendance of the Chinese Communist Party and the Cultural Revolution. It is a story that models strength and courage for all children who feel unwanted and unaccepted. (Families, Friends, and Community) NHK

- 2.23 Marx, Trish. **One Boy from Kosovo.** Photographs by Cindy Karp. HarperCollins, 2000. ISBN 0-688-17733-6. 24 pp. Intermediate–Middle school. Nonfiction, World.

This photo-essay begins before Edi and his family were forced to leave their home in Kosovo: “The things he could do seemed wonderful to Edi. He went to school every day with his cousin and best friend, Shkurta, . . . he played sports, . . . he celebrated his twelfth birthday with his friends.” But war changes Edi’s life, engaging the reader’s empathy with Edi’s fear and loss. The photographs show that courage keeps hope alive even under unimaginable circumstances. *One Boy from Kosovo* is a simple and honorably told story. (Visibility; Families, Friends, and Community) NHK

- 2.24 Matas, Carol. **The War Within: A Novel of the Civil War.** Simon & Schuster, 2001. ISBN 0-689-82935-3. 151 pp. Intermediate–Middle school. Fiction.

The historical setting for this work of fiction is based on the official General Order that accused Jews of violating trade regulations during the Civil War. Hannah and her family are forced to leave their home in the South because they are Jews. Hannah has very strong views about the necessity of slavery and the inferiority of African Americans, but her beliefs are challenged when her sister begins to fall in love with a Union soldier and abolitionist. The clash between the sisters helps Hannah question her fundamental beliefs about the war, slavery, and humanity. (Social Responsibility; Informative and Educational Books) CWJ

- 2.25 McGill, Alice. **In the Hollow of Your Hand: Slave Lullabies.** Illustrated by Michael Cummings. Houghton Mifflin, 2000. ISBN 0-395-85755-4. 35 pp. All ages. Nonfiction.

McGill transcribes and sings songs collected from generations of family oral histories. These songs tell real-life stories and convey hope during times of despair, survival when death is near, and comfort in the belief that better times will come—“if not on earth, then in heaven.” This text also contains sheet music and a CD of the lullabies sung by Alice McGill. (Informative and Educational Books; Families, Friends, and Community) CWJ

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- 2.26 Meltzer, Milton. **They Came in Chains: The Story of the Slave Ships**. Benchmark, 2000. ISBN 0-7614-0967-X. 90 pp. Intermediate–Middle school. Nonfiction, Cross-cultural.

Meltzer describes the rise and decline of the African slave trade through a strong narrative and the use of numerous archival paintings, drawings, sale advertisements, maps, and other documents that reveal how slaves were captured, stowed, treated, and sold as property. He explains how slave traders justified their actions and profited from the mistreatment and sale of kidnapped Africans of all ages. Meltzer also describes the survival rates for slaves and the effects the slave trade had on West Africa, the Americas, and most of Europe. A bibliography and index are included. (Informative and Educational Books; Social Responsibility) CWJ

- 2.27 Miller, William. **The Piano**. Illustrated by Susan Keeter. Lee & Low, 2000. ISBN 1-880000989. Unpaged. Primary. Fiction, Cross-cultural.

Teachers will need to introduce this book carefully because it lends itself to radically different readings. On one level, this can be read as the stereotypical story of the gracious White benefactor who helps a poor little underprivileged girl who wants to hear “different music.” On another level, the story is about friendship, mutual support, self-sacrifice, and generosity. A wealthy, elderly, southern White woman employs an African American child as a servant. The little girl wants to learn to play the piano and the elderly woman wants to teach her, but the woman’s hands are crippled with pain, so the child massages them. When the child’s co-worker, an African American boy, deserts his responsibilities, the little girl willingly assumes his heavy chores. The little girl’s hands become stiff and sore, and the woman massages them. NHK

- 2.28 Noguchi, Rick, and Deneen Jenks. **Flowers from Mariko**. Illustrated by Michelle Reiko Kumata. Lee & Low, 2001. ISBN 1-58430-032-9. Unpaged. All ages. Fiction, Ethnic specific.

Mariko is one of the over 120,000 persons of Japanese heritage forced to live in an internment camp after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Three years after having been interned, she and her family pack to leave the barbed-wire confines. They are free at last to

make the transition back to their former lives. But after first settling into a temporary trailer park established for returning internees, their new lives still remind Mariko of camp. While Mariko's father slowly rebuilds his gardening business using discarded equipment, Mariko plants a flower garden that will give the family the courage and hope to persevere. With the teacher and other texts to provide a historical backdrop, this book can introduce younger students to the Japanese American experience in the United States during and after World War II. (Informative and Educational Books) EMA

- 2.29 Radin, Ruth Yaffe. **Escape to the Forest: Based on a True Story of the Holocaust.** Illustrated by Janet Hamlin. HarperCollins, 2000. ISBN 0-060-28520-6. 90 pp. Intermediate–High school. Fiction, World.

Based on the true story of a ten-year-old Jewish girl named Sarah who survived the German occupation of Lida, Poland, during the beginning of World War II, this fictional account of family ties, discrimination, fear, danger, pain, and hope unfolds as family members and neighbors take great risks to help one another survive. Realizing they will not survive by staying together, Sarah's parents support her escape to the forest, where Tuvia Bielski is secretly leading a mission to save Jewish lives. (Social Responsibility; Informative and Educational Books) CWJ

- 2.30 Schmidt, Gary. **Mara's Stories: Glimmers in the Darkness.** Henry Holt, 2001. ISBN 0-8050-6794-9. 149 pp. Intermediate–Middle school. Fiction, World.

This collection of Jewish stories is brought together through a fictional storyteller. Mara is a young woman being held in a Jewish death camp. Each night in the barracks, as a way of surviving, Mara tells her stories—some are humorous traditional tales, while others tell of miracles. These are stories drawn from deep fear but also from deep faith. Schmidt includes background notes on the stories' origins. TLC

- 2.31 Strangis, Joel. **Lewis Hayden and the War against Slavery.** Linnet, 1999. ISBN 0-208-02430-1. 167 pp. Middle school. Biography.

After escaping with his second wife and son from slavery, Lewis Hayden was behind the scenes in many efforts to put an end to

slavery. In addition to many events not listed here, he assisted slaves journeying to freedom through the Underground Railroad, and he helped fund John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. After the Civil War, Hayden became a prominent politician and was instrumental in establishing a memorial for Crispus Attucks and the other four men murdered by the British at the beginning of the Revolutionary War. (Social Responsibility) PJ
