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Booklist Online - Lasting Connections of 2009, by Laura Tillotson (FEATURE)



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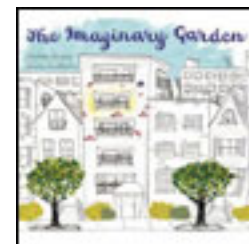
For this year's "Lasting Connections" list of the 30 picture books, novels, and nonfiction books that most effectively connect to the K–8 curriculum, I tried as always to choose an interesting group of titles (including some especially worthy books that I worried might be missed otherwise). On this year's list the books are organized by curricular area—science, language arts, social studies, the arts, and math. Hopefully this new organizational framework will be useful as you decide where to spend your (perhaps tighter-than-ever) collection-building budget, whether you're in a classroom or a school library, or beefing up the children's collection in a public library.

Deciding where some of the titles belonged was a challenge, since many of them could easily go under more than one heading. Should a novel in verse about World War I go under Language Arts or Social Studies? What about a picture-book biography of a painter who explored Yellowstone, or a folktale with math themes? I gave it my best shot and trust that the books' cross-curricular potential will be obvious.

The Arts

[The Imaginary Garden](#). By Andrew Larsen. Illus. by Irene Luxbacher. 2009. 32p. Kids Can, \$16.95 (9781554532797). PreS–Gr. 1.

With brightly colored collages, this story about a young girl and her grandfather painting an imaginary garden together explores the power of art to transform a space and also touches on themes of family and moving.



The Vermeer Interviews: Conversations with Seven Works of Art. By Bob Raczka. 2009. 32p. illus. Millbrook, lib. ed., \$25.26 (9780822594024). 759.9492. Gr. 2–5.

In this creative, accessible art history title, Raczka conducts imaginary interviews with the subjects of Jan Vermeer's exquisite paintings, inviting readers to look and look again and gain appreciation for the complexities of creating art.



Yellowstone Moran: Painting the American West. By Lita Judge. Illus. by the author. 2009. 32p. Viking, \$16.99 (9780670011322). 759.13. Gr. 1–4.

In this picture-book biography, Judge uses sweeping illustrations and journal excerpts to tell the story of artist Thomas Moran, who in the 1870s braved the wilderness to paint the untold beauties of Yellowstone.

Language Arts

The Dream Stealer. By Sid Fleischman. Illus. by Peter Sís. 2009. 96p. Greenwillow, \$16.99 (9780061755637); lib. ed., \$17.89 (9780061755644). Gr. 2–5.

Fleischman’s carefully tuned storyteller’s voice makes this tale inspired by Mexican folklore perfect for reading aloud. As portrayed in Sís’ fantastical black-and-white drawings, young Susana bravely confronts the magical Dream Stealer and tries to retrieve her pilfered dream.

Ernest Hemingway: A Writer’s Life. By Catherine Reef. 2009. 192p. illus. Clarion, \$20 (9780618987054). 813. Gr. 7–12.

Reef effectively shows how Hemingway’s life inspired his work in this revealing biography. Compellingly written, extensively sourced, and featuring black-and-white photos throughout, this will deepen readers’ understanding of this pioneering author.

Falling down the Page: A Book of List Poems. Edited by Georgia Heard. 2009. 48p. Roaring Brook, \$16.95 (9781596432208). 811. Gr. 3–6.

Accessible and appealing and featuring work by a wide range of children’s poets, this anthology of list poetry focuses on school themes and is designed to open vertically, accentuating the “narrowness” of the poems.

Harper Lee. By Kerry Madden. 2009. 224p. illus. Viking, \$16.99 (9780670010950). 813. Gr. 7–12.

In this thoughtful entry in the Up Close biography series, Madden gives readers insight into Lee’s longtime friendship with Truman Capote, the sensational success of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and Lee’s eventual decision to retire from public life.

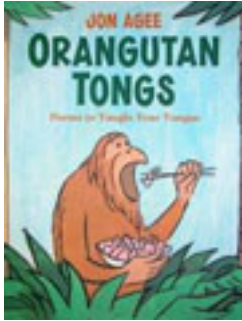
The Magical Ms. Plum. By Bonny Becker. Illus. by Amy Portnoy. 2009. 104p. Knopf, \$12.99 (9780375856372); lib. ed., \$15.99 (9780375956379). Gr. 2–4.

The students in Ms. Plum’s third-grade class find just the animals they need in the magical supply closet, from a mind-reading parrot to a ferocious alligator, and learn something about themselves in the process. A perfect book to share with Betty MacDonald’s *Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle* (1947).

Messing around on the Monkey Bars and Other School Poems for Two Voices. By Betsy Franco. Illus. by Jessie Hartland. 2009. 48p. Candlewick, \$17.99 (9780763631741). 811. Gr. 2–4.

Whether read aloud in groups or in pairs, these 19 poems for two speakers will help children see the exciting possibilities of poetry. Accompanied by colorful, whimsical illustrations, the poems depict everyday school happenings.





Orangutan Tongs. By Jon Agee. Illus. by the author. 2009. 32p. Hyperion, \$16.99 (9781423103158). 818. Gr. 1–4. From “Knapsack Straps” to “This Zither,” the author of *Go Hang a Salami! I’m a Lasagna Hog!* (1991) offers a hilarious selection of tongue-twisting poems and accompanying artwork, in this picture book inspired by Alvin Schwartz’s *A Twister of Twists, a Tangler of Tongues* (1972).

Persephone. By Sally Pomme Clayton. Illus. by Virginia Lee. 2009. 28p. Eerdmans, \$18 (9780802853493). 398.2. Gr. 2–5.

This retelling of the Greek myth of Persephone features Lee’s lush, naturalistic double-page illustrations, helping bring the ancient story of death and rebirth to life for young readers and listeners.

The Plot Chickens. By Mary Jane Auch and Herm Auch. Illus. by the authors. 2009. 32p. Holiday, \$16.95 (9780823420872). K–Gr. 3.

In this comic tale about the writing process, Henrietta the chicken is an avid reader and aspires to become a published author. With the help of a librarian and her aunts, she writes, revises, illustrates, and publishes a picture book. Frequent fowl-related puns and exaggerated artwork heighten the humor.

When You Reach Me. By Rebecca Stead. 2009. 208p. Random/Wendy Lamb, \$15.99 (9780385737425); lib. ed., \$18.99 (9780385906647). Gr. 4–7.

This complex, captivating time travel story set in 1970s New York City and starring sixth-grader Miranda pays homage to Madeleine L’Engle’s *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962) and is just as gripping.

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon. By Grace Lin. Illus. by the author. 2009. 288p. Little, Brown, \$16.99 (9780316114271). Gr. 3–6.

A gorgeous example of bookmaking, this fantasy intertwines the magical adventures of a poor girl named Minli with Chinese legends and folktale characters. Lin’s rich full-color paintings appear throughout the story, which would make a superb read-aloud.



Math



The Lion’s Share. By Matthew McElligott. Illus. by the author. 2009. 32p. Walker, \$16.99 (9780802797681). K–Gr. 3. After the other guests eat all the dessert at the lion’s party, the ant offers to bake the host a cake. Not to be outdone, the other animals want to bake as well, each doubling the number of cakes of the previous creature. Witty illustrations enliven this retelling of the classic “Wheat and Chessboard” math problem.

Science

2030: A Day in the Life of Tomorrow’s Kids. By Amy Zuckerman and James Daly. Illus. by John Manders. 2009. 32p. Dutton, \$16.99 (9780525478607). 601. K–Gr. 3.

This intriguing look at life in the future follows a young boy through his day and introduces an amazing array of gadgetry and scientific advances, from virtual

reality baseball to mechanical disease-fighting robots. With oversize cartoonlike illustrations, this will spark interest in science and technology.

Faces of the Moon. By Bob Crelin. Illus. by Leslie Evans. 2009. 36p. Charlesbridge, \$16.95 (9781570917851). 523.3. Gr. 2–4.

This informative picture book about the moon's phases features rhyming poetry, full-page block-print artwork with moon-shaped die cuts, tabs indicating where each of the phases is discussed, and a handy two-page diagram at the end tying it all together.

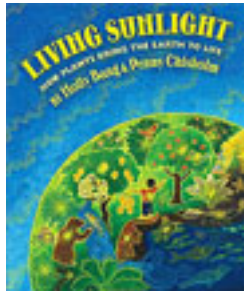


The Frog Scientist. By Pamela S. Turner. Illus. by Andy Comins. 2009. 64p. Houghton, \$18 (9780618717163). 597.8. Gr. 5–9.

Another excellent entry in the Scientists in the Field series, this handsomely illustrated photo-essay profiles an African American amphibian scientist who, with his students, is working to understand how human actions are affecting declining frog populations.

Life in the Boreal Forest. By Brenda Z. Guiberson. Illus. by Gennady Spirin. 2009. 40p. Holt, \$16.99 (9780805077186). 578.73. Gr. 2–5.

Like tropical rainforests, the northern boreal forests of Asia, Europe, and North America are in danger. Here immediate text and gorgeously rendered artwork realistically portray how migratory birds rely on this area of the world as well as how boreal creatures depend on each other.



Living Sunlight: How Plants Bring the Earth to Life. By Molly Bang and Penny Chisholm. Illus. by Molly Bang. 2009. 40p. Scholastic/Blue Sky, \$16.99 (9780545044226). 572. Also available as a DVD from Nutmeg Media. PreS–Gr. 3.

In this accessible, lyrical picture book marked by glowing double-page illustrations, the concepts of photosynthesis are explained in terms the youngest readers and listeners will understand. Four pages of notes provide additional detail

about the process.

Moonshot: The Flight of Apollo 11. By Brian Floca. Illus. by the author. 2009. 48p. Atheneum, \$17.99 (9781416950462). 629.45. K–Gr. 3.

The author of *Lightship* (2007) offers poetic text and accurate, breathtaking artwork in this oversize picture book depicting the historic Apollo 11 moon mission. Floca presents fascinating information about the making of this book at www.brianfloca.com.

Nic Bishop Butterflies and Moths. By Nic Bishop. Illus. by the author. 2009. 48p. Scholastic, \$17.99 (9780439877572). 595.78. Gr. 2–4.

In another outstanding photo-essay in the Nic Bishop series, the biologist-photographer turns his attention to butterflies and moths. This beautifully designed picture book includes a four-page gatefold of a butterfly taking off as well as an engaging author's note.

The Tree That Time Built: A Celebration of Nature, Science, and Imagination. Ed. by Mary Ann Hoberman and



Linda Winston. 2009. 224p. Sourcebooks/Jabberwocky, \$19.99 (9781402225178). 811. Gr. 3–8.

Inspired by Darwin's theory of evolution, this wide-ranging poetry anthology features both classic and contemporary selections and has strong cross-curricular potential. Includes helpful notes throughout as well as a CD of selected poems, some read by the poets themselves.

Social Studies

Crossing Stones. By Helen Frost. 2009. 184p. Farrar/Frances Foster, \$16.99 (9780374316532). Gr. 7–12.

Frost masterfully tells the intertwined stories of two families on the American homefront during World War I through sonnets and "free-style" poems, exploring woman's suffrage, the influenza epidemic, the pain of wartime, and the teenage characters' own coming of age.



Extra Credit. By Andrew Clements. Illus. by Mark Elliot. 2009. 192p. Atheneum, \$16.99 (9781416949299). Gr. 4–7.

In this illustrated novel about a sixth-grade American girl becoming pen pals with a young villager in Afghanistan, Clements thoughtfully explores cultural expectations and religious and political differences. The shifting narration allows readers to view the story from more than one perspective, deepening their understanding.

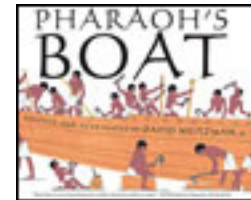
If America Were a Village: A Book about the People of the United States. By David J. Smith. Illus. by Shelagh Armstrong. 2009. 32p. Kids Can, \$18.95 (9781554533442). 304.60973. Gr. 3–6.

In this follow-up to *If the World Were a Village* (2002), Smith invites readers to imagine America as a village of 100 people, offering easy-to-grasp statistics on age, occupation, areas of residence, levels of consumption, and more.

Armstrong's colorful full-page acrylics appear on every spread.

Pharaoh's Boat. By David Weitzman. Illus. by the author. 2009. 48p. Houghton, \$17 (9780547053417). 932. Gr. 4–7.

This fascinating picture book tells of a modern-day Egyptian restorer who took charge of assembling an ancient ship found near the Great Pyramid at Giza. Elegant colored-pencil and pen-and-ink artwork depicts the painstaking process, and a four-page gatefold shows the finished construction.



Riot. By Walter Dean Myers. 2009. 176p. Egmont, \$16.99 (9781606840009). Also available in an audio edition from Listening Library. Gr. 7–12.

As he did in *Monster* (1999), Myers uses a screenplay format to portray the 1863 race riots in New York City. The Civil War, Irish immigration, and racial and class prejudices come into play as 15-year-old Claire struggles with her biracial heritage.



Under Siege: Three Children at the Civil War Battle for Vicksburg. By Andrea Warren. 2009. 176p. illus.

Farrar/Melanie Kroupa, \$21.95 (9780374312558). 973.7. Gr. 5–8.

The lives of three children who survived the horrific siege of Vicksburg—two town residents and the 12-year-old son of Union General Grant—are described in detail in this well-researched account, which includes photographs and other illustrations throughout.

[Years of Dust: The Story of the Dust Bowl](#). By Albert Marrin. 2009. 144p. illus. Dutton, \$22.99 (9780525420774). 978. Gr. 5–8.

With stirring prose and a wealth of memorable photos, Marrin depicts the environmental catastrophe and human calamity of the Dust Bowl, as well as introducing readers to the current challenges of continued desertification.

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