

Great Historical Fiction Books at the Pleasanton Public Library: 20th Century

Compiled by the Pleasanton Library Children's Staff



Books are shelved in **Children's Fiction** by author's last name and/or **Children's Paperbacks** by first letter of author's last name (unless otherwise noted).

Please ask at the Children's Desk if you need help.

1900 to 1930

Dovey Coe by Frances O'Roark Dowell
Grades 5-8 (181 p)
When accused of murder in her North Carolina mountain town in 1928, Dovey Coe, a strong-willed twelve-year-old girl, comes to a new understanding of others, including her deaf brother.

Dave at Night by Gail Carson Levine
Grades 4-8 (281 p) *Audiobook available*
When orphaned Dave is sent to the Hebrew Home for Boys where he is treated cruelly, he sneaks out at night and is welcomed into the music—and culture-filled world of the Harlem Renaissance.

Letters from Rifka by Karen Hesse
Grades 5-8 (148 p)
In letters to her cousin, a young Jewish girl chronicles her family's flight from Russia in 1919 and her own experiences when she must be left in Belgium for a while when the others emigrate to America.

Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse
Grades 6-9 (227 p)
In a series of poems, fifteen-year-old Billie Jo relates the hardships of living on her family's wheat farm in Oklahoma during the dust bowl years of the Depression.

Into the Firestorm by Deborah Hopkinson
Grades 5-8 (200 p)
Days after arriving in San Francisco from Texas, eleven-year-old orphan Nicholas Dray tries to help his new neighbors survive the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and the subsequent fires.

Journey to the River Sea by Eva Ibbotson
Grades 5-8 (298 p)
Sent with her governess to live with the dreadful Carter family in exotic Brazil in 1910, Maia endures many hardships before fulfilling her dream of exploring the Amazon River.

Black Duck by Janet Taylor Lisle
Grades 6-9 (252 p) *Audiobook available*
Years afterwards, Ruben Hart tells the story of how, in 1929 Newport, Rhode Island, his family and his best friend's family were caught up in the violent competition among groups trying to control the local rum-smuggling trade.

Fire at the Triangle Factory by Holly Littlefield
Shelved in Children's Moving Up
Grades 3-5 (48 p)
Two fourteen-year-old girls, sewing machine operators at the Triangle Shirtwaist Company, are caught in the famous Triangle fire of 1911.

Shackleton's Stowaway by Victoria McKernan
Grades 6-9 (317 p)
A fictionalized account of the adventures of eighteen-year-old Perce Blackborow, a stowaway on the ship Endurance during the 1914 Shackleton Antarctic expedition. He lived through the ship being crushed by ice, and experienced additional hardships, including the loss of the toes of his left foot to frostbite, during the nearly two-year return journey across sea and ice.

Bread and Roses, Too by Katherine Paterson
Grades 5-8 (275 p)
Jake and Rosa, two children, form an unlikely friendship as they try to survive and understand the 1912 Bread and Roses strike of mill workers in Lawrence, Massachusetts.

The Teacher's Funeral by Richard Peck
Grades 6-8 (190 p) *Audiobook available*
In rural Indiana in 1904, fifteen-year-old Russell's dreams of quitting school and joining a wheat threshing crew are disrupted when his older sister takes over the teaching at his one-room schoolhouse after mean old Myrt Arbuckle "hauls off and dies."

Soup by Robert Newton Peck
Grades 4-7 (96 p) *Audiobook available*
Soup series
The adventures and misadventures are told of two boys growing up in 1920's rural Vermont.

Esperanza Rising by Pam Munoz Ryan
Grades 5-8 (262 p)
Esperanza and her mother are forced to leave the life of wealth and privilege in Mexico to go work in the labor camps of Southern California, where they must adapt to the harsh circumstances facing Mexican farm workers on the eve of the Great Depression.

A Drowned Maiden's Hair by Laura Amy Schlitz
Grades 5-8 (389 p) *Audiobook available*
At the Barbary Asylum for Female Orphans, eleven-year-old Maud is adopted by three spinster sisters who take her home and reveal to her the role she will play in their unique "family business."

Mailing May by Michael O. Tunnell
Shelved in Children's Moving Up
Grades 2-4
In 1914, because her family cannot afford a train ticket to her grandmother's town, May gets mailed and rides the mail car on the train to see her grandmother.

Mary on Horseback: Three Mountain Stories by Rosemary Wells
Shelved in Children's Moving Up
Grades 4-6 (53 p)
Tells the stories of three families in 1923 Kentucky who were helped by the work of Mary Breckinridge, the first nurse to go into the Appalachian Mountains and give medical care to the isolated inhabitants. Includes an afterword with facts about Breckinridge and the Frontier Nursing Service she founded.

1930 to 1950

The Night Crossing by Karen Ackerman
Shelved in Children's Paperbacks "A"
Grades 3-5 (56 p)
In 1938, having begun to feel the persecution that all Jews are experiencing in their Austrian city, Clara and her family escape over the mountains into Switzerland.

The Greatest Skating Race: A World War II Story from the Netherlands by Louise Borden
Shelved in Children's Moving Up
Grades 3-5 (44 p)
During World War II in the Netherlands, a ten-year-old boy's dream of skating in a famous race allows him to help two children escape to Belgium by ice skating past German soldiers and other enemies.

For Freedom: The Story of a French Spy by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley
Grades 6-9 (181 p) *Audiobook available*
Despite the horrors of World War II, a French teenager pursues her dream of becoming an opera singer, which takes her to places where she gains information about what the Nazis are doing—information that the French Resistance needs. This book is based on a true story.

A Foreign Field by Gillian Chan
Grades 7-10 (184 p)
Fourteen-year-old Ellen Logan is forced to shoulder many of the family responsibilities, with her country in the Second World War, her brothers in the service and her parents busy supporting the war effort. She then befriends a British pilot whose life is even tougher than hers.

Popular Historical Fiction Series

- American Girl Collection** by various authors
Grades 3-5
- Dear America** by various authors
Grades 5-7
- History Mysteries** by various authors
Grades 4-6
- My America** by various authors
Grades 5-7
- My Name is America** by various authors
Grades 5-7
- Royal Diaries** various authors
Grades 5-7
- Saddles, Stars and Stripes** by Deborah Kent
Grades 4-6

Pleasanton Public Library
Children's Services
400 Old Bernal Ave.
Pleasanton, California 94566

(925) 931-3400

Hours:

Monday-Thursday: 10 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Friday-Saturday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Sunday: 1 p.m. - 5 p.m.



Al Capone Does My Shirts by Jennifer Choldenko

Grades 5-8 (228 p) *Audiobook available*

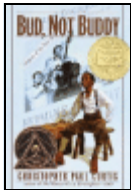
A twelve-year-old boy named Moose moves to Alcatraz Island in 1935 when his father is hired as an electrician there, and has to contend with his new environment in addition to life with his autistic sister.



Bud, Not Buddy by Christopher Paul Curtis

Grades 5-8 (245 p) *Audiobook available*

Ten-year-old Bud, a motherless boy living in Flint, Michigan, during the Great Depression, escapes a bad foster home and sets out in search of the man he believes to be his father—the renowned bandleader, H.E. Calloway of Grand Rapids.



Neela: Victory Song by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni

Grades 5-8 (196 p)

Girls from Many Lands series

In 1939, twelve-year-old Neela meets a young freedom fighter at her sister’s wedding and soon after rely on his help when her father fails to return home from a march in Calcutta against British occupation.

The Entertainer and the Dybbuk by Sid Fleischman

Grades 6-9 (180 p)

A struggling American ventriloquist in post-World War II Europe is possessed by the mischievous spirit of a young Jewish boy killed in the Holocaust. Author’s note details the murder of over one million children by the Nazis during the 1930s and 1940s.



Lily’s Crossing by Patricia Reilly Giff

Grades 5-8 (180 p) *Companion: Willow Run*

During a summer spent at Rockaway Beach in 1944, Lily’s friendship with a young Hungarian refugee causes her to see the war and her own world differently.

Soldier Boys by Dean Hughes

Grades 7-10 (162 p)

Two boys, one German and one American, are eager to join their respective armies during World War II, and their paths cross at the Battle of the Bulge.

Weedflower by Cynthia Kadohata

Grades 6-9 (260 p) *Audiobook available*

After twelve-year-old Sumiko and her Japanese-American family are relocated from their flower farm in southern California to an interment camp on a Mojave Indian reservation in Arizona, she helps her family and neighbors, becomes friends with a local Indian boy, and tries to hold on to her dream of owning a flower shop.



The Green Glass Sea by Ellen Klages

Grades 5-8 (321 p) *Audiobook available*

Sequel: White Sands, Red Menace

In 1943, having joined her father at Los Alamos, where he and other scientists are working on a secret project to end World War II, eleven-year-old Dewey Kerrigan starts working on her own science project.

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry

Grades 5-8 (137 p) *Audiobook available*

In 1943, during the German occupation of Denmark, ten-year-old Annemarie learns how to be brave and courageous when she helps shelter her Jewish friend from the Nazis.



Borrowed Children by George Ella Lyon

Grades 5-8 (154 p)

Having been forced to act as mother and housekeeper during Mama’s illness, twelve-year-old Amanda has a holiday in Memphis, far removed from the Depression drudgery of her Kentucky family, and finds her world expanding even as she grows to understand and appreciate her own background.

A Boy at War: A Novel of Pearl Harbor by Harry Mazer

Grades 7-10 (184 p) *Sequels: A Boy No More and Heroes Don’t Run*

While fishing with his friends off Honolulu on December 7, 1941, teenaged Adam is caught in the midst of the Japanese attack and through the chaos of the subsequent days tries to find his father, a naval officer who was serving on the U.S.S. Arizona when the bombs fell.

Good Night, Maman by Norma Fox Mazer

Grades 6-9 (185 p)

After spending years fleeing from the Nazis in war-torn Europe, twelve-year-old Karin Levi and her older brother Marc find a new home in a refugee camp in Oswego, New York.



Baseball Saved Us by Ken Mochizuki

Shelved in Children’s Moving Up

Grades 2-4

A Japanese American Boy learns to play baseball when he and his family are forced to live in an internment camp during World War II, and his ability to play helps him after the war is over.



Stones in Water by Donna Jo Napoli

Grades 5-8 (209 p)

After being taken by German soldiers from a local movie theater along with other Italian boys including his Jewish friend, Roberto is forced to work in Germany, escapes into the Ukrainian winter, before desperately trying to make his way back home to Venice.

A Year Down Yonder by Richard Peck

Grades 5-7 (130 p) *Sequel: A Long Way to Chicago*

In 1937, during the Depression, fifteen-year-old Mary Alice, initially apprehensive about leaving Chicago to spend a year with her fearsome, larger-than-life grandmother in rural Illinois, gradually begins to better understand and admire her grandmother’s unusual qualities.



The Boys from St. Petri by Bjarne Reuter

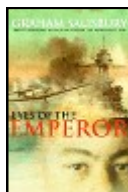
Grades 7-10 (215 p)

In 1942, a group of young men begin a series of increasingly dangerous protests against the German invaders of their Danish homeland.

Eyes of the Emperor by Graham Salisbury

Grades 8-10 (229 p)

Following orders from the United States Army, several young Japanese American men train K-9 units to hunt Asians during World War II.



The Invention of Hugo Cabret by Brian Selznick

Grades 4-9 (533 p) *Audiobook available*

When twelve-year-old Hugo, an orphan living and repairing clocks with the walls of a Paris train station in 1931, meets a mysterious toy seller and his goddaughter, his undercover life and his biggest secret are jeopardized.

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry by Mildred D. Taylor

Grades 5-8 (276 p) *Audiobook available*

Sequel: Let the Circle be Unbroken

A black family living in the South during the 1930’s are faced with prejudice and discrimination which their children don’t understand.

Wingwalker by Rosemary Wells

Shelved in Children’s Moving Up

Grades 3-5 (63 p)

During the Depression, Reuben and his out-of-work parents move from Oklahoma to Minnesota, where his father gets a job as a carnival wingwalker and Reuben has a chance to overcome his terror of flying.



Little Audrey by Ruth White

Grades 5-8 (146 p)

In 1948, eleven-year-old Audrey lives with her father, mother, and younger sisters in Jewell Valley, a coal mining camp in Southwest Virginia, where her mother mourns the death of a baby, her father goes on drinking binges on paydays, and Audrey tries to recover from the scarlet fever that has left her skinny and needing to wear glasses.

Bat 6 by Virginia Euwer Wolff

Grades 5-7 (230 p)

In small town, post-World War Oregon, twenty-one 6th grade girls recount the story of an annual softball game, during which one girl’s bigotry comes to the surface.



The Book Thief by Markus Zusak

Grades 8-10 (552 p) *Audiobook available*

Trying to make sense of the horrors of World War II, Death narrates the story of Liesel—a young German girl whose book stealing and story-telling talents help sustain her family and the Jewish man they are hiding, as well as their neighbors.



1950 to 1975

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes

by Eleanor Coerr

Shelved in Children’s Moving Up

Grades 4-7 (64 p)

Hospitalized with the dreaded atom bomb disease, leukemia, a child in Hiroshima races against time to fold one thousand paper cranes to verify the legend that by doing so a sick person will become healthy.

Revolution is Not a Dinner Party

by Ying Chang Compestine

Grades 5-8 (248 p) *Audiobook available*

Starting in 1972 when she is nine years old, Ling, the daughter of two doctors, struggles to make sense of the communists’ Cultural Revolution, which empties stores of food, homes of appliances deemed “bourgeois,” and people of laughter.



The Watsons Go to Birmingham

by Christopher Paul Curtis

Grades 5-8 (210 p) *Audiobook available*

The ordinary interactions and everyday routines of the Watsons, an African American family living in Flint, Michigan, are drastically changed after they go to visit Grandma in Alabama in the summer of 1963.



Fire from the Rock by Sharon M. Draper

Grades 7-10 (231 p)

In 1957, Sylvia Patterson’s life—that of a normal African American teenager—is disrupted by the impending integration of Little Rock’s Central High when she is selected as one of the first black students to attend the previously all white school.



Penny from Heaven by Jennifer Holm

Grades 5-8 (274 p) *Audiobook available*

As she turns twelve during the summer of 1953, Penny gains new insights into herself and her family while also learning a secret about her father’s death.

Kira-Kira by Cynthia Kadohata

Grades 5-8 (244 p) *Audiobook available*

This story chronicles the close friendship between two Japanese-American sisters growing up in rural Georgia during the late 1950s and early 1960s.

Patrol: An American Soldier in Vietnam

by Walter Dean Myers

Grades 4-7

A frightened American soldier faces combat in the lush forests of Vietnam. The story is told in verse with detailed illustrations.



Wednesday Wars by Gary D. Schmidt

Grades 6-9 (119 p) *Audiobook available*

During the 1967 school year, on Wednesday afternoons when all his classmates go to either Catechism or Hebrew school, seventh-grader Holling Hoodhood stays in Mrs. Baker’s classroom where they read the plays of William Shakespeare and Holling learns much of value about the world he lives in.

Letters from Wolfie by Patti Sherlock

Grades 6-9 (228 p)

Certain that he is doing the right thing by donating his dog, Wolfie, to the Army’s scout program in Vietnam, thirteen-year-old Mark begins to have second thoughts when the Army refuses to say when and if Wolfie will ever return.



Feathers by Jacqueline Woodson

Grades 5-8 (118 p)

When a new, white student nicknamed “The Jesus Boy” joins her sixth grade class in the winter of 1971, Frannie’s growing friendship with him makes her start to see some things in a new light.

Rex Zero and the End of the World by Tim Wynne-Jones

Grades 5-8 (186 p)

In the summer of 1962 with everyone nervous about possible nuclear war, ten-nearly-eleven-year-old Rex, having just moved to Ottawa from Vancouver with his parents and five siblings, faces his own personal challenges as he discovers new friends and a new understanding of the world around him.

Little Leap Forward: A Boy in Beijing by Guo Yue

Grades 4-6 (126 p)

In Communist China in 1966, eight-year-old Leap Forward learns about freedom while flying kites with his best friend, by trying to get a caged wild bird to sing, and through the music he is learning to play on a bamboo flute.

