



But Franca kept going, and Carmela and Tomasina had no choice but to follow.
 "Come and join us, little girls! We eat everything we catch!"
 If I'm not afraid, they can't scare me, Franca told herself.

If I decide that they're good, then they'll be good, thought Carmela.
 Don't look them in the eyes, don't look them in the eyes, Tomasina repeated to herself.

THE QUEEN IN THE CAVE. Text and illustrations © 2021 Júlia Sardà. Reproduced with permission of the publisher, Candlewick Press, Somerville, MA on behalf of Walker Books, London.

The Beauty of Bridges

Excellent international books invite readers to explore the world around them

THE UNITED STATES BOARD OF BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE'S (USBBY) MISSION IS TO "[build] bridges of international understanding through children's and young adult books" (usbby.org). The annual Outstanding International Books List recommends approximately 40 titles for readers, preschool through high school. Selected by a committee of people who love and study children's and young adult literature, these books represent the outstanding

bridges authors, illustrators, and translators from around the world create each year.

One of the many reasons people become lovers of literature is the ability books have to teach us. To reach us. They teach us to understand people better, see our world differently, or examine our place within it. They reach places in our minds and hearts that we, as readers, never expect. Books build bridges.

**By the Outstanding International Books Committee,
 with introduction by Committee Chair Bettie Parsons Barger**

This year, 40 titles comprise USBBY's Outstanding International Books List. Each one of these unique books extends an invitation to cross a bridge. Some provide views of meaningful connections—with grandparents, friends, nature. Others encourage readers to traverse through family memories, familiar stories that twist and turn, and celebrations within communities.

Other bridges present a more challenging crossing—like the books that explore emotions or reflect on history and the impact it has on our present. These bridges encourage readers to open their minds, find a connection with a character or a story, and explore what's on the other side. These narratives spark curiosity about the world, leaving readers inspired to create solutions, ask questions, and learn more about people, history, and culture.

The Outstanding International Books list represents why we love literature—it highlights books that appeal to our hearts and minds and leave us wanting more.

Preschool – Grade 2

HOWDEN, Sarah. *The Tunnel*. illus. by Erika Rodriguez Medina. Owlkids. (Canada)

A child, having experienced “something bad,” digs a tunnel beneath his room into the backyard to create a space to grieve. Medina depicts the complexities of the child’s heavy, dark emotions through the use of grayscale drawings with touches of red.

JIHYUN, Kim. *The Depth of the Lake and the Height of the Sky*. tr. from Korean. illus. by author. Floris Bks. (South Korea)

A young boy escapes the city to visit the countryside. Jihyun’s immersive illustrations in hues of black, white, and gray depict him diving into the depths of the lake, swimming with fish, and emerging on the dock, taking in the vastness of the sky.

LEE, Gee-eun. *My GrandMom*. tr. from Korean by Sophie Bowman. illus. by author. Amazon Crossing. (South Korea)

A young girl, angry she is left to spend the day with her grandmother while her parents work, discovers that her Halmoni has many talents. The humorous pencil-and-paint-illustrations portray a fierce, strong, resourceful grandmother sharing food and play with the delighted child.

MAHIOUT, Anouk. *A Place for Pauline*. tr. from French. illus. by Marjolaine Perreten. Groundwood. (Canada)

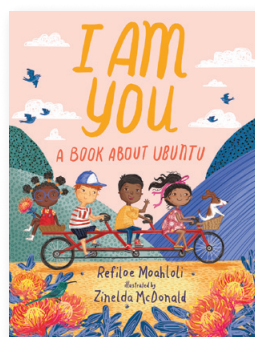
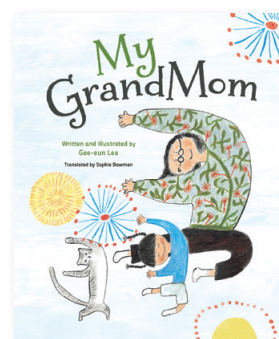
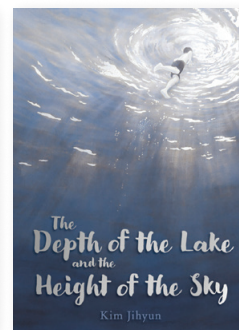
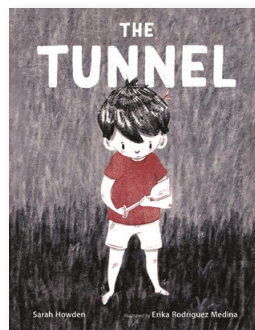
As the oldest child in a lively, large family, Pauline longs to escape. Using imaginative, cartoonlike drawings, Perreten illustrates how the busy-ness of the house and expecting a new sibling overwhelm Pauline. Mahiout expertly crafts the search for one’s place in a family.

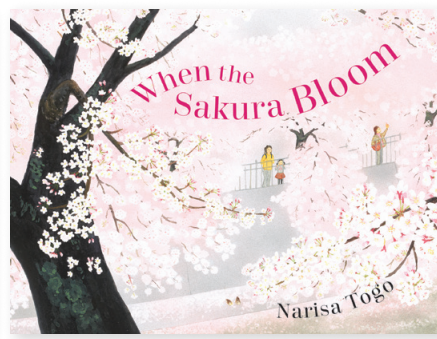
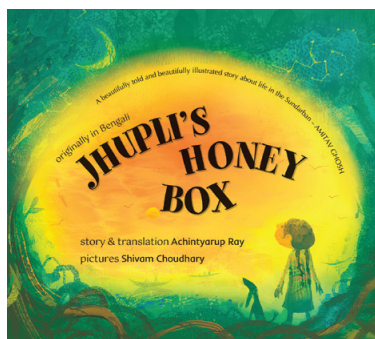
MOAHLOLI, Refiloe. *I Am You: A Book About Ubuntu*. illus. by Zinelda McDonald. Amazon Crossing. (South Africa)

This colorful picture book makes the complex concept of ubuntu (shared humanity, compassion, and oneness) accessible for young readers. McDonald’s bold illustrations, set distinctly in South Africa, bring Moahloli’s examples to life by showing the impact our interactions have on others and ourselves.

NAINY, Mamta. *Rainbow Hands*. illus. by Jo Loring-Fisher. Lantana. (India)

Choosing from a wide palette of colors, a boy paints his nails depending on his mood and surroundings. His mother and Dadadji (grandfather) support his form of expression and later, his father comes around, recog-





nizing his son—and his choices—are worth celebrating.

PARAPPUKKARAN, Sandhya. *The Boy Who Tried to Shrink His Name.* illus. by Michelle Pereira. Abrams. (Australia)

Through curated metaphors of color, nature, tradition, and place, Zimdalamashkermishkada's name becomes a physical expression of his quest to bridge the worlds he inhabits. A vivid story of how friendships uncover self-acceptance.

RAY, Achintyarup. *Jhupli's Honey Box.* tr. from Bengali by author. illus. by Shivam Choudhary. Tulika Pub. (India)

When Jhupli's father doesn't come home when expected, she struggles to focus on school. What if he never comes back? This heartwarming story, detailing honey harvesting near India's Sundarban forest, showcases the power of innovative thinking to keep families safe and closer to home.

RODARI, Gianni. *Telling Stories Wrong.* tr. from Italian by Antony Shugaar. illus. by Beatrice Alemagna. Enchanted Lion. (Italy)

With lively language, a grandfather tells the story of Little Red Riding Hood, only to have his granddaughter correct the tale's details that he playfully tells wrong. Alemagna's whimsical watercolor illustrations, depicting the thoughts of each character, complement the imaginative, joyous storytelling.

SKOMSVOLD, Kjersti Annesdatter. *Bedtime for Bo.* tr. from Norwegian by Kari Dickson. illus. by Mari Kanstad Johnsen. Enchanted Lion. (Norway)

Readers follow a young boy as he playfully transforms into different animals while getting ready for bedtime. Skomsvold's gentle narrative expresses a universal childhood experience that, when combined with Kanstad Johnsen's exceptionally perceptive artwork, captures a child's wonderful imaginative play with his mother.



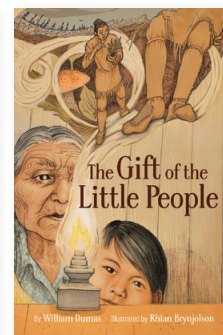
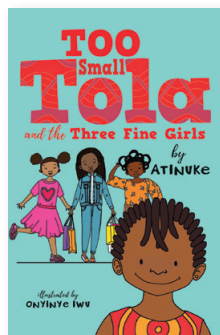
TOGO, Narisa. *When the Sakura Bloom.* tr. from Japanese by Michael Sedunary. Berbay Pub. (Japan)

In this beautifully illustrated book, the Sakura trees bloom amid the rush of urban life.

Through evocative text and a palette reflecting the blooms themselves, Togo introduces readers to concepts particularly valued in Japanese culture: mindfulness and observing the fleeting and fragile beauty of nature.

YAGE, Wang. *Playing with Lanterns.* tr. from Simplified Chinese by Helen Wang. illus. by Zhu Chengliang. Amazon Crossing. (China)

A little girl is excited to go out at night with her multicolored paper lantern to celebrate Chinese New Year with her friends. Accompanied by Chengliang's vibrant, colorful illustrations, Yage shares the excitement of the holiday and traditions of the Shaanxi province in northwest China.



Grades 3–5

ATINUKE. *Too Small Tola and the Three Fine Girls.*

illus. by Onyinye Iwu. Candlewick. (Nigeria)
In the busy city of Lagos, Tola perseveres despite setbacks, using spunk and ingenuity to face and solve problems like jealousy, a sick grandmother, and a lost earring. Atinuke presents a setting that is distinctly Nigerian, conveyed through colloquialisms and cultural references.

ÁVILA, Pilar López. *With a Butterfly's Wings.* tr. from Spanish by Jon Brokenbrow. illus. by Zuzanna Celej. Cuento de Luz. (Spain)

A girl learns the songs of birds, the spirit of butterflies, and the magic of the seasons from her grandmother. After her grandmother passes, she retells those tender stories in remembrance. The narrative, interweaving the natural and human world, is accompanied by exquisite, translucent watercolor illustrations.

DUMAS, William. *The Gift of the Little People.* illus. by Rhian Brynjolson. HighWater Pr. (Rocky Cree/Canada)

This illustrated short story by a Rocky Cree storyteller centers Indigenous ways of knowing in a story about how the community came together to survive a devastating ill-

ness through a quest for medicine from the Little People. Dumas integrates Asiniskaw Ithiniwak words and includes a glossary.

EARLE, Phil. *When the Sky Falls.* Bloomsbury. (England)

As WWII rages, Joseph is sent to live with Mrs. F., who manages a run-down city zoo. Their shared love for a great silverback gorilla helps them find redemption and belonging amid the devastation of war. The events are inspired by a news story.

GURIDI, Raúl Nieto. *It's So Difficult.* tr. from Spanish by Lawrence Schimel. illus. by author. Eerdmans. (Spain)

Guridi deftly conveys the inner thoughts of a child who has an unnamed psychosocial disability as he interacts within different environments. White text against a black back-

ground, accompanied by pencil sketches with swaths of color, invite readers to "live through" the character's experiences.

MONTAÑÉS, Mónica. *Different: A Story of the Spanish Civil War.* tr. from Spanish by Lawrence Schimel. illus. by Eva Sánchez Gómez. Eerdmans. (Spain)

Through shared snapshots of visual narratives, two siblings detail their varied perspectives living through the Spanish Civil War. They describe separation from their family members, day-to-day challenges, the cruelty of war, their loss of freedom, and immigration to a new and unfamiliar country.

MOUNTFORD, Karl James. *The Circles in the Sky.* illus. by author. Candlewick Studio. (UK) Mountford explores the complexity of death, grief, and hope through sensitive

prose in this modern folktale. The intriguing illustrations juxtapose geometric, static backgrounds in warm colors with fluid, sharp depictions of animals as Fox and Moth journey towards understanding the circle of death and life.

OZIEWICZ, Tina. *What Feelings Do When No One's Looking.* tr. from Polish by Jennifer Croft. illus. by Aleksandra Zajac. Elsewhere Editions. (Poland)

This gentle book explores feelings ranging from joy and anger, nostalgia and compassion, longing and bliss. Oziewicz's thought-provoking text paired with Zajac's softly rendered troupe of creatures encourage readers to identify their complex feelings and consider what feelings do to and for us.

SARDÀ, Júlia. *The Queen in the Cave.* illus. by author. Candlewick. (Spain)

Franca leads her two sisters on a magical adventure to find a queen in a cave that she saw in her dreams. A fairy-tale, a coming-of-age story, and a fantastical adventure, the layered text is matched only by the rich, overflowing artwork.

STRIDSBERG, Sara. *The Summer of Diving.* tr. from Swedish by B.J. Woodstein. illus. by Sara Lundberg. Seven Stories/Triangle Square. (Sweden)

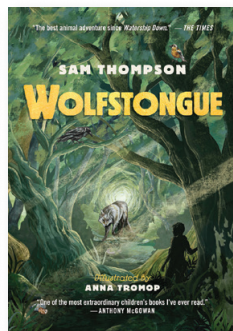
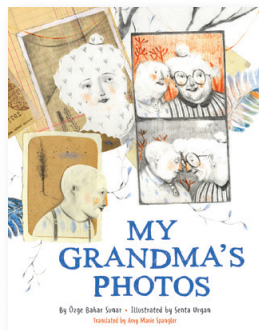
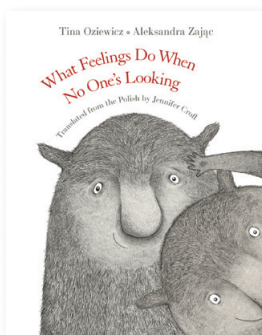
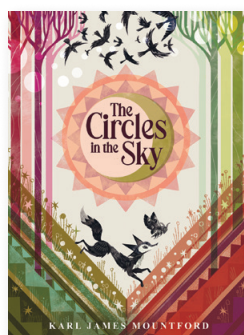
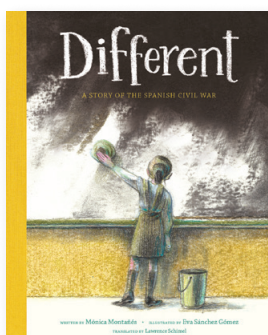
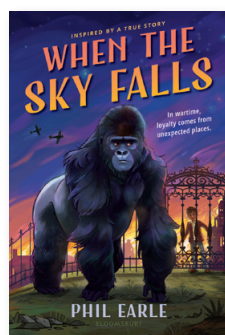
The year Zoe's father is hospitalized for depression is a lonely one. At the hospital she meets Sabina, who takes her swimming across the world. Their imaginative play helps validate Zoe's feelings of loss and longing for her father, as captured in Lundberg's lush paintings.

SUNAR, Özge Bahar. *My Grandma's Photos.* illus. by Senta Urgan. tr. from Turkish by Amy Marie Spangler. Amazon Crossing. (Turkey)

As Ali explores old photographs with his grandmother, he sparks memories. Together, they travel back in time to relive family gatherings, time with friends, and special occasions. Dreamlike pastel drawings, with interspersed photographs, foster a tender intergenerational connection.

THOMPSON, Sam. *Wolfstongue.* illus. by Anna Tromop. Little Island Bks. (Ireland)

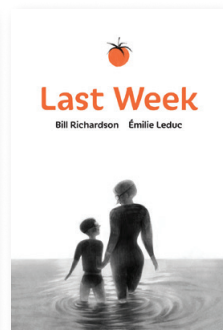
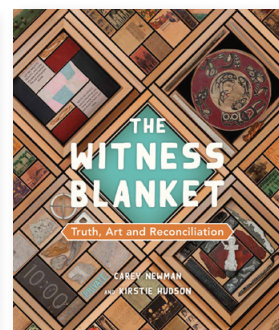
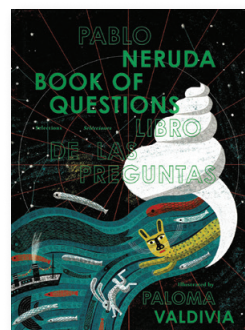
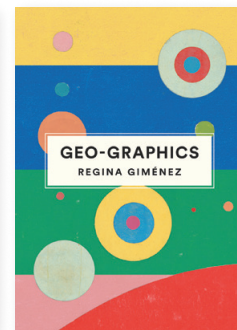
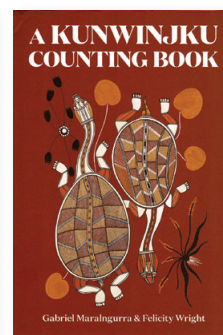
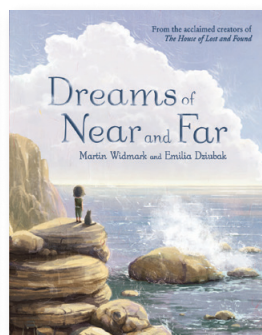
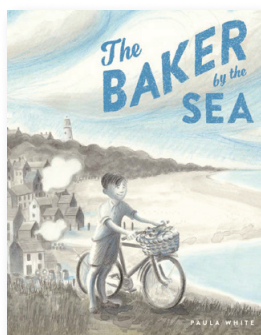
Silas enters a hidden parallel world where wolves are enslaved by scheming foxes and faces his own struggle with words to help the wolves win back their freedom. This fantasy explores the power of language to hurt and heal, to uplift and to entrap.



WHITE, Paula. *The Baker by the Sea.* illus. by author. Templar Bks. (England)
In softly drawn images in hues of blue and gray, members of a small coastal village work together. A young boy realizes his father, a baker, plays an essential part in the everyday life of the town, along with those who work directly with the sea.

WIDMARK, Martin. *Dreams of Near and Far.* tr. from Swedish by Polly Lawson. illus. by Emilia Dziubak. Floris Bks. (Sweden)
After losing his beloved dog, neither the sea nor life holds any appeal for Noah. Meanwhile, Mia and her cat escape danger in search of safety. These emotional and parallel stories intersect when the three stumble upon one another—together they find hope and home.

WRIGHT, Felicity & Gabriel Marlangurra. *A Kunwinjku Counting Book.* illus. by Gabriel Marlangurra. Enchanted Lion. (Bininj/Australia)
A counting book about Aboriginal art focused on native Australian animals found in the land, water, and air. The simple text, introducing readers to the Kunwinjku language, accompanies the images based on intricate Indigenous designs and patterns.



Grade 6–8

CLEY, Amanda. *The Pack.* tr. from Italian by Eerdmans. illus. by Cecilia Ferri. Eerdmans. (Italy)
In this haunting story, expressively rendered in colored pencil, a boy grapples with the decision of whether or not to blend in with the pack, who might protect him. Does he assimilate or does he become a lone wolf? Both come at a cost.

GIMÉNEZ, Regina. *Geo-Graphics.* tr. from Catalan by Alexis Romay and Valerie Block. illus. by author. Levine Querido. (Spain)
Giménez takes readers on a stylish trip across our planet and the wider universe through infographics. The use of primary colors, simple geographic shapes, and negative space give readers a new way to learn about earth and space science.

NANNESAD, Katrina. *We Are Wolves.* illus. by Martina Heiduczek. S. & S./Atheneum. (Prussia/Australia)
When Russians invade East Prussia towards the end of WWII, three German children are

separated from their mother. They become Wolfskinder, left to fend for themselves in the wild. This lesser-known historical story combines survival and adventure with memorable characters and a vivid setting.

NERUDA, Pablo. *Book of Questions: Selections/ Libros de las preguntas: Selecciones.* tr. from Spanish by Sara Lissa Paulson. illus. by Paloma Valdivia. Enchanted Lion. (Chile)
A bilingual collection of unanswerable questions from Neruda's final work, this book will stimulate engaging thought in readers. The whimsical folk art-style illustrations are captivating and ask as many questions as the text in this ineffable and uncategorizable work.

NEWMAN, Carey & Kirstie Hudson. *The Witness Blanket: Truth, Art and Reconciliation.* Orca. (Canada)
This book honors the lives and memories

of Indigenous children from across Canada who were forced to live in residential schools. Photographic images chronicle the creation and installation processes followed by the authors. Resources are provided throughout to support further exploration.

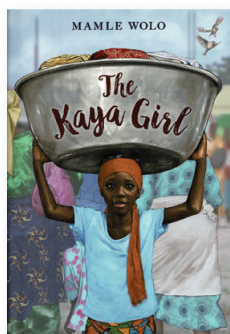
RICHARDSON, Bill. *Last Week.* illus. by Emilie Leduc. Groundwood. (Canada)
“Make every second count” is Flippa’s motto, which is just what her grandchild does during Flippa’s last week before her medically assisted death. Black-and-white illustrations depict the grief of Flippa’s family and friends as they say farewell and cherish small moments together.

SPENCER, Kim. *Weird Rules to Follow.* Orca. (Ts’msyen Nation/Canada)
Mia, an Indigenous tween in British Columbia, enjoys life with her best friend, compar-

ing crushes and dreaming of their futures. However, Mia knows her life is very different from her non-Indigenous friend and people don't treat them the same way. Short chapters describe her culture and quest of identity.

WOLO, Mamle. *The Kaya Girl*. Little, Brown. (Ghana)

Wolo welcomes readers into the heart of the Ghanaian marketplace as two girls—the daughter of a wealthy physician and a kayayoo (porter)—cross language and class barriers to become lifelong friends. Descriptions of Accra's diversity enhance the story, reflecting the culture of Ghana.



THE 2023 OUTSTANDING INTERNATIONAL BOOKS COMMITTEE

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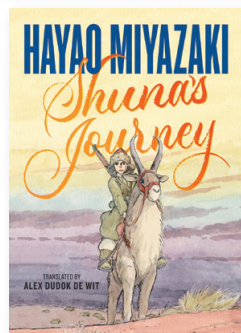
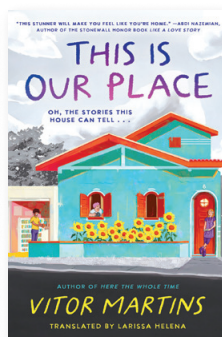
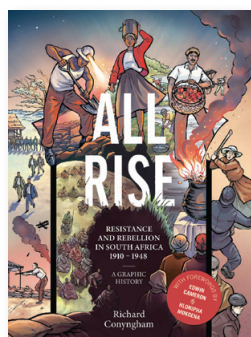
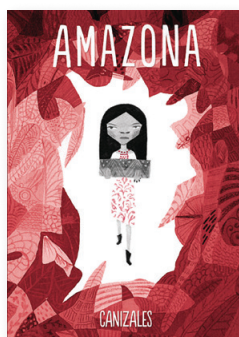
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Each year USBBY, the United States section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY), appoints a committee to select its Outstanding International Books (OIB) list, which celebrates children's literature that U.S. publishers and distributors have brought in from around the world. The list highlights exceptional international children's literature that introduces young people to outstanding authors and illustrators from other countries, helps children and young people in the United States to see the world from diverse perspectives, promotes literature that is accessible to children and young people in the United States, addresses topics that may be missing from U.S. children's and young adult literature, and encourages titles that exhibit distinct cultural flavor. The committee received 492 books published in 2022, of which 40 were chosen as OIB. For additional information and access to all OIB lists, visit www.usbby.org.

Six court cases chronicle the struggle for equality prior to apartheid in South Africa. Each chapter, illustrated by different graphic artists, presents the lives of people living on the margins. Photos, images of newspaper clippings, and other documentary evidence are interspersed among the chapters.

MARTINS, Vitor. *This Is Our Place*. tr. from Brazilian Portuguese by Larissa Helena. Scholastic/PUSH. (Brazil).

Martins tells the story of three queer teenagers from different decades who all spend portions of their lives in the same house in a small town in Brazil. Elegantly crafted, with fully realized characters, this house narrates the teenage experience with heart and insight.

MIYAZAKI, Hayao. *Shuna's Journey*. tr. from Japanese by Alex Dudok de Wit. illus. by the author. First Second. (Japan)

In a lush fantasy, a Tibetan prince searches for a golden grain to save his land, encountering kindness in a severe but beautiful world. This graphic novel, read right to left, is set up with expert staging of panels filled with gorgeous and expressive watercolors.

VAN RIJCKEGHEM, Jean-Claude. *Ironhead or, Once a Young Lady*. tr. from Dutch by Kristen Gehrman. Levine Querido. (Belgium)

Constance bucks 18th-century norms for young ladies, escapes her arranged marriage, and trades places with a baker's son to join the war. Her brother pursues her for his own reasons. In intersecting journeys, they learn to be true to themselves, no matter the cost.

Grades 9 - 12

CANIZALES, Amazona. tr. from Spanish by Sofia Huitrón Martínez. illus. by author. Graphic Universe. (Columbia)

Canizales offers a first-person account of forced displacement involving Indigenous peoples of Colombia. In this YA graphic novel, culturally distinctive illustrations alternate between black and white with carefully added shades of red, evoking a visceral response to issues of human rights and environmental justice.

CONYNGHAM, Richard. *All Rise: Resistance and Rebellion in South Africa 1910-1948: A Graphic History*. illus. by Saaïd Rahbeeni, The Trantraal Brothers, Liz Clarke, Dada Khanyisa, Tumi Mamabolo, & Mark Modimola. Catalyst Pr. (South Africa)

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