

Carter G. Woodson Book Awards



In an effort to promote cultural literacy in children and young adults, the Racism and Social Justice Committee of the National Council for the Social Studies created the Carter G. Woodson Book Award. This award, given annually since 1974, seeks to recognize authors, illustrators, and publishers of outstanding books that increase understanding of ethnicity in the United States. The award was named in honor of an African American educator who pioneered the field of black studies: Dr. Carter G. Woodson.

Dr. Woodson, called the “Father of Black History,” earned a Ph.D. in history from Harvard in 1912 and dedicated his life to research, writing, and publishing works that increased the literary resources available regarding black history and important contributions made by black Americans. In 1926, he established “Negro History Week,” an early version of what would become today’s widely celebrated “Black History Month.”

The National Council for the Social Studies and the Carter G. Woodson Book Award Committee are pleased to announce the book award winners at the elementary (K–6), middle (5–8), and secondary (7–12) levels for 2007. These award and honor books have been determined to be outstanding examples of books that focus on individual or collective experiences of ethnic minorities in the United States. Reviews will provide a summary of each book along with specific NCSS thematic strands identified for curriculum development and classroom use.

—Dr. Carrie Sorensen

2007 Carter G. Woodson Awards Committee Chair

2007 Carter G. Woodson Award Book: Elementary Level



John Lewis in the Lead: A Story of the Civil Rights Movement, by Jim Haskins and Kathleen Benson, illustrations by Benny Andrews. New York, N.Y.: Lee & Low Books, Inc.

Reviewed by Amy Camardese, assistant professor, Department of Education, Westminster College, New Wilmington, Pennsylvania.

From his humble beginnings in an Alabama sharecropping family, his activism in the civil rights movement, to his present day career as a U.S. representative from Georgia, the story of John Lewis serves as a great inspiration. In this book about Lewis’s life, extraordinary folk art illustrations by Benny Andrews chronicle how the young Lewis learned the value of unity, the importance of responsibility, and the stark inequity of segregation. These lessons were precursors to his involvement in the civil rights movement under the tutelage of Martin Luther King Jr. and his future service in Congress. Lewis was 15 at the time of his first overt action against segregation. He asked for and was refused a library card, and he wrote the library a letter of protest. At 23, Lewis was the youngest

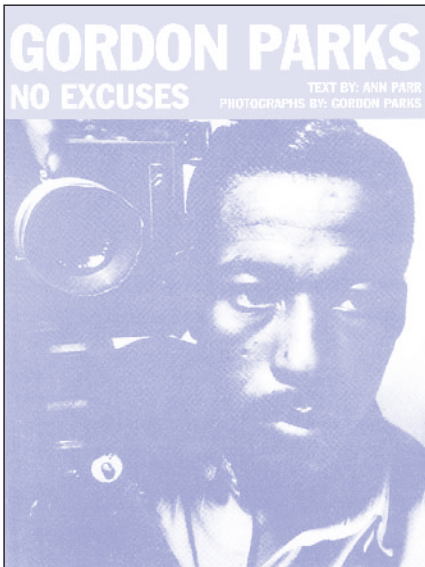
speaker at the Lincoln Memorial during the historic 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Jim Haskins and Kathleen Benson’s succinct, clear language chronicle John Lewis’s story, but also the injustices committed against the Freedom Riders, efforts to register black voters in Selma, the atrocities of Black Sunday, and the march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama. A photographic timeline profiles the life and times of John Lewis.

2007 Carter G. Woodson Honor Book: Elementary Level

Gordon Parks: No Excuses, by Ann Parr, photographs by Gordon Parks, illustrations by Kathryn Breidenthal. Gretna, La.: Pelican Publishing.

Reviewed by Denise B. Geier, Ed.D., Educational Consultant, New Jersey.

Though raised in poverty during segregated times in Fort Scott, Kansas,



Gordon Parks overcame all obstacles by following his mother’s advice: “What a white boy can do, you can too”—and no excuses.” These words propelled him forward and eventually he became the first black photographer for *Life* magazine. Parks’s beautiful and moving photographs illustrate Ann Parr’s text, giving the reader a firsthand appreciation of his talent. After photographing models in Paris, gangs in Harlem, and the civil rights movement of the 1960s, Parks went on to teach himself to paint, wrote 24 books, and continued as a *Life* photographer for 25 years. This story of perseverance and character, and its message of “no excuses,” is extremely motivating and should both inspire and interest young readers.

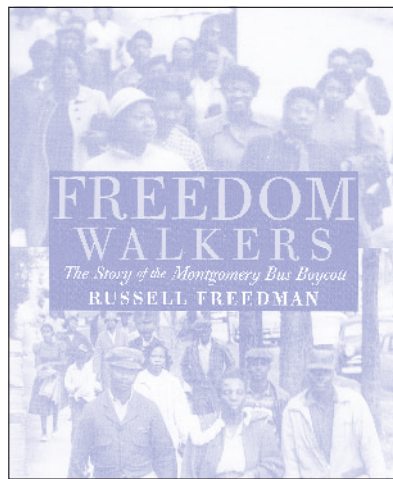
Gordon Parks: No Excuses is an excellent device for supporting NCSS strands, in particular ❶ **Culture**; ❸ **People, Places, and Environments**; ❹ **Individuals, Groups, and Institutions**.



2007 Carter G. Woodson Award Book: Middle Level

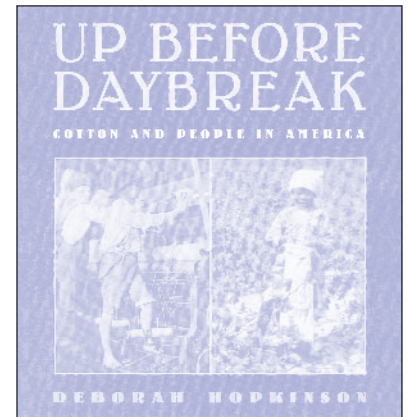
Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, by Russell Freedman. New York, N.Y.: Holiday House Publishers.

Reviewed by Sarah Jewett, assistant professor, University of Delaware, Newark, Delaware.



On December 2, 1955, more than 50,000 leaflets distributed throughout African American communities in Montgomery, Alabama, publicized an urgent call to action: “Don’t ride the buses to work, to town, to school, or anywhere on Monday.” These leaflets helped to launch the Montgomery Bus Boycott that lasted 381 days, striking a mighty blow to segregation. Russell Freedman chronicles this vitally important story about standing up against injustice in *Freedom Walkers: The Story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott*, calling the boycott a “historical drama that changed a nation” (p. 99). Freedman’s narrative is engaging and well written, enhanced by his extensive use of quotes from a range of people actively involved in the boycott (cited in the chapter notes). The multiple photographs are an integral part of the story and help to show the commitment and tireless work involved in planning and sustaining this mass movement—from organizing an elaborate carpool system to supporting the community in the face of threats. In this way, Freedman shares both the contributions and the sacrifices of the courageous “freedom walkers.” At the back of the book, he also includes a selected bibliography for students who are interested in reading more about the boycott. The most salient NCSS themes addressed include ❹ **Power, Authority, and Governance** and ❶ **Civic Ideals and Practices**.

2007 Carter G. Woodson Honor Book: Middle Level



Up Before Daybreak: Cotton and People in America, by Deborah Hopkinson. New York, N.Y.: Scholastic, Inc.

Reviewed by Kathryn A. Clark, fourth grade teacher, Varnum School, Lowell, Massachusetts.

The fiber of cotton is an important part of our everyday lives, yet who among us has thought about the blood, sweat, and tears that have gone into its manufacturing. What we have often taken for granted, author Deborah Hopkinson has put into words. In *Up Before Daybreak Cotton and People in America*, Hopkinson recounts the story of cotton and the men, women, and children who gave their lives working in the cotton industry.

Hopkinson has expertly traced cotton’s history from colonial America through the middle of the twentieth century, chronicled with photographs and the narratives of slaves, sharecroppers, and New England mill girls. Their stories, bound together by the common thread of cotton, are both astounding and poignant. This is a story that all will enjoy. NCSS strands: ❸ **Time, Continuity, and Change**; ❸ **People, Places, and Environments**; ❹ **Production, Distribution, and Consumption**.

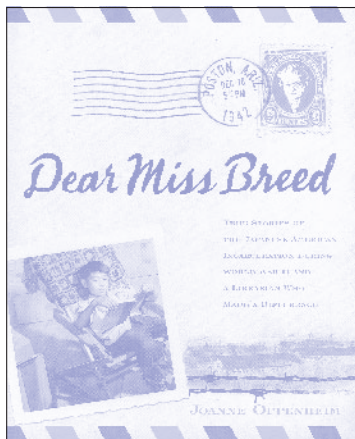


2007 Carter G. Woodson Award Book: Secondary Level

Dear Miss Breed: True Stories of the Japanese American Incarceration during World War II and a Librarian Who Made
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a *Difference*, by Joanne Oppenheim. New York, N.Y.: Scholastic, Inc.

Reviewed by Sydney Bontrager, lecturer for the School of Education, Indiana University South Bend, South Bend, Indiana.

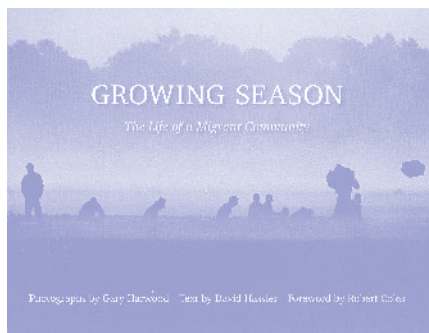


One of the most intriguing parts of *Dear Miss Breed* (and there are many) is that the author stumbled upon the subject by accident. Joanne Oppenheim was searching online for old high school classmates as she planned the class reunion. Intrigued by the story of a Japanese American classmate, she embarked on a journey into a part of history that has had too little attention. Oppenheim delves into a time when, following the bombing of Pearl Harbor, fear caused the U.S. government to forgo its democratic principles. The fear of Japanese people grew so strong that the government issued an order forcing the interment of people of Japanese descent. Rich details of the lives of Japanese living in America, the mood of the country after Pearl Harbor, and the dedication of Miss Clara Breed, a librarian in San Diego, make this book a must read for high school students. The story is recounted through letters, political cartoons, first hand reports, interviews, and black and white photos. Readers get a close look at some of the children and families of the San Diego residents that were sent to a relocation camp in Poston, Arizona. Miss Breed, so moved by the students she had come to know as the librarian at the San Diego Public Library, made sure the children at Poston, received books to keep them

reading. It is through their exchange of letters that the real story of Japanese internment is told. The book serves as a stark reminder of what happens when we allow ourselves to be governed by fear and hatred. NCSS strands: ❶ **Culture**; ❷ **Time, Continuity, and Change**; ❸ **Power, Authority, and Governance**; ❹ **Civic Ideals and Practices**.

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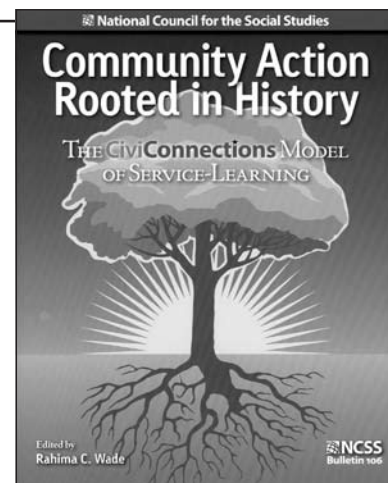
2007 Carter G. Woodson Honor Book: Secondary Level



Growing Season: The Life of a Migrant Community, Photographs by Gary Harwood, text by David Hassler. Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press.

Reviewed by Stephanie Nicole Robinson, professor of education, Ashford University, San Diego, California.

Have you ever wondered where the produce in the grocery store comes from? Migrant farm workers have been planting and harvesting crops in the United States for decades. However, there is very little information regarding their lives. By earning the trust of a migrant farming community, Gary Harwood and David Hassler were able to gain access to the lives and personal stories of its residents. Harwood uses vivid photos to capture the mechanics and conditions of migrant farm work and the relationships between the people who bring the food from the fields into the stores. Hassler, in his captions, adds insight into the motivation, goals, and cultural values of the migrants. Students will enjoy the structure of the book, produced in the style of a family photo album. NCSS strands: ❶ **Culture**; ❷ **People, Places, and Environments**; and ❹ **Civics, Ideals, and Practices**. 🌱



Community Action Rooted in History: The CiviConnections Model of Service-Learning

Edited by Rahima C. Wade
NCSS Bulletin No.106, 78 pp. 2007

This book chronicles exciting projects in which teachers have linked the study of history to service learning initiatives. The result has been to energize students and enable them to improve their local communities through their service learning projects at the same time as they have investigated the local and historical roots of social or environmental problems. This book is based on projects actually carried out by the CiviConnections program, and will help teachers who seek to engage students' enthusiasm, meet community needs, and satisfy local and state curricular requirements.

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