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## An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Historical Fiction about the American Frontier from 1840-1899 for Children and Young Adults

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## **An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Historical Fiction about the American Frontier from 1840-1899 for Children and Young Adults**

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**An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Historical Fiction  
about the American Frontier from 1840-1899  
for Children and Young Adults**

**A Graduate Research Project  
Submitted to the  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction  
Division of School Library Media Studies  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts**

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

**by**

**Karen Keller**

**December 2, 1996**

This Research Project by: Karen Keller  
Titled: An Annotated Bibliography of Selected Historical Fiction about the  
American Frontier from 1840-1899 for Children and Young Adults

has been approved as meeting the research paper requirements for the Degree  
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## Abstract

This project was to produce a bibliography of historical fiction requested by teachers in Johnston Middle School, Johnston, Iowa, that can be used by the eighth-grade classes so that students may choose from a selected list of historical fiction books about the American West that will encompass both their literature theme of the will to survive and the historical setting of the American frontier as it moves West between 1840 and 1899. The fifty books annotated were chosen through criteria selected so as to produce a list of books that would meet the needs of the teachers of this unit. These criteria included genre, availability, reading level range, setting, and challenge to survival. Selection sources used yielded a mix of available titles that included both those recently published as well as older titles. As new titles are published that fit the stated criteria, they will be purchased and added to this bibliography and the collection at the Johnston Middle School Library Media Center. Thus, this bibliography will continue to evolve as long as it is useful to the teachers and students at this school.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Historical fiction is a genre that can be successfully used to make the study of history come alive for middle grade students. Many students perceive history as being irrelevant to them because it is not of the present time. One way to help students see the importance of history is through the magic of fiction. Elizabeth Howard (1988) has said that when students are able to think of history first of all as story, then they will realize that they, too, are part of the story and that history is alive (p. xi). According to Mingshui Cai (1992), "this knowledge of the past will help the younger generation to understand and appreciate traditional values and also understand why they are who they are" (p. 113).

Linda Levstik points out that the difference between textbook history and fictional history is imagination. The textbook history to which students are accustomed is often presented in a boring, factual fashion that excites very little imagination. This is partly because textbooks attempt to be objective. But students need the subjectivity of seeing themselves as part of history in the making, both in the present and vicariously in the past (1989a, p.136). One way of accomplishing this is for them to read historical fiction. Marion Lockheed (1961) declares that:

history, whether in learned treatise or enticing novel, whether written for scholars or for children, must answer two questions: 'What happened then?' and 'What were they like?'--the kings and queens, the leaders and warriors, the great and the common folk, old and young in this century or that: the people who caused or who witnessed events. Historical fiction should perhaps answer the second question even more fully than the first . . .(p. 241)

When students read historical fiction, their imagination is captured by the action,



suspense, mystery, settings, and human relationships that are not only part of the story but also part of the history.

Accounts of the settling of the American frontier during the 19th century have fascinated the public from the moment it began. The West has been the setting of numerous true and fictionalized newspaper articles, stories, novels, movies, and television programs about the vast and beautiful land and the challenges of surviving there. But, according to Mary Hurlbut Cordier (1989), “for many children, the history of the American West remains an intriguing mystery that may begin with Laura Ingalls’ family in their ‘little house’ somewhere near the frontier where there are Indians, settlers, outlaws, and soldiers” (p. 1). Cordier asserts that through realistic historical fiction set in the West, children can begin to see that it was not only the famous persons often portrayed in social studies textbooks, but also “people much like themselves that actually were the community builders, the planners and dreamers, and the protagonists in the actual drama of the West” (p. 4).

With this connection, students can begin to understand the struggle and sacrifice that those settlers made and expand their historical understanding. The challenges to the settlers’ survival, both physical and emotional, will come alive for students in historical fiction in which “the story line involves realistic human conflicts and problems, joys and sorrows, successes and failures, loves and hates” (p. 3). Seeing history as a story about these challenges of the American West helps students develop deeper historical perspectives than is possible with textbook recitation of history as facts (Howard, p. xi).

This view of history through fiction is one that fits well with the concept of interdisciplinary studies, which emphasize the connections between various bodies of knowledge. In this case, when the study of the history of the American

West is linked with the study of historical fiction, the connection is between the school disciplines of social studies and language arts. Gordon F. Vars (1993) states that effective interdisciplinary units immerse students in a stimulating environment in which students tie all the threads together and develop an overview of the unit (p. 75). Such an approach is “more compatible with the way the brain works” and stresses connections and meaningfulness rather than memorization and rote learning (p. 7).

According to Vars (1993), interdisciplinary teaching can be approached in two ways of organization and three ways of curriculum design. It may be organized around either one teacher who is responsible for teaching content from two or more subject areas in a self-contained block-time or core pattern; or several teachers may work together in that planning. An interdisciplinary unit in this curriculum may “correlate content and skills from several subject areas, fuse them, or draw from those areas whatever content and skills apply to a problem” (p. 27).

With the start of the 1996-97 school year at the Johnston Middle School, Johnston, Iowa, team teaching and block scheduling have been implemented in the seventh and eighth grades. This follows three years of reading, studying, and learning by the staff through assigned study groups, workshops, seminars, conferences, and school visitations, as well as studying recent research on the needs of middle school students. The Johnston Middle School Proposed Program Improvements for the 1996-1997 School Year (1996) states that “based on those findings, we believe that our planned program improvements will do the following:

1. Increase instructional time in 7th and 8th grade core areas
2. Reduce the amount of ability grouping
3. Reduce the number of teachers that an individual student sees daily

4. Provide for a 'community of learners' at all grades
5. Allow for more curriculum connections, themes, and integration
6. Increase exploratory options
7. Provide team and individual planning time for teachers
8. Provide a more positive school climate
9. Provide large blocks of instructional time to replace single 43 minute periods
10. Provide the structure for interdisciplinary team teaching
11. Eliminate study halls for all 7th and 8th graders
12. Better meet the intellectual, social, physical, and emotional and moral needs of middle school students (p. 6)

Teaching teams of two teachers are responsible for the core curriculum content which includes the areas of language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics. There are ten core teachers in each grade and, therefore, five two-person teaching teams at each grade level. Each teacher is responsible for two curricular areas, either language arts and social studies or math and science. Rooms assigned for teaching teams are located in grade level wings of the building, and each teaching team's rooms are adjacent to each other with an adjoining door or across a hallway from each other. Each teacher also teaches one exploratory course during a period outside the core time, and each teaching team has a common planning time and an individual planning time daily.

The common planning time is designed for the teaching teams to coordinate their efforts to effectively use the block of time designated for the core subjects. No bells ring during the block core instructional time. Each teaching team decides when students move from room to room and from content area to content area. This allows for instructional flexibility as determined by the teaching teams. It also provides for more opportunities for teams to design activities and instruction that are based on instructional needs and research regarding the use of time, and not on a particular time schedule.

The block schedule is designed to allow students and teachers to have longer periods of uninterrupted time together in a block. This allows for flexibility in designing learning activities, for bringing outside experts into the classrooms, for taking field trips, and for making learning more activity based.

In the two-hour time block that the eighth grade curriculum sets aside for language arts and social studies, the Literature and Language: Green Level textbook (McDougal, Littell) is the basis of the language arts portion. Unit Five in this text is entitled "The Will to Survive", which is described in the Teacher's Edition as

an ability to undergo great pain and hardship, a determination to endure danger and overcome death in order to live and succeed. . . . [This theme suggests] that people can overcome any obstacles and survive any danger . . . [through] an inner courage and strength, a person's will. . . . [It includes] selections about individuals who struggle against all odds to stay alive, selections that involve risk and adventure, and selections in which people's courage and resolve are tested. (1994, p. 491)

To integrate the theme of this unit, the teachers are incorporating their social studies unit of the American West by using fiction set in that period.

This project is to produce a bibliography so that students may choose from a selected list of historical fiction books about the American West that will provide this link from history seen as something static and separate from the students' experience to history seen as something that is perpetual and of the students' experience. At this time, the eighth-grade language arts/American history core teachers have requested a bibliography of books that encompass both their literature theme of the will to survive and the historical setting of the American frontier as it moves West between 1840 and 1899. Therefore, the themes of the books in this bibliography will include both physical and emotional challenges to survival and the settings will include such places as

the Mississippi River valley, the Midwest prairie, the western cattle country, and finally Pacific coast settlements.

### Purpose Statement

Specifically, the purpose of this study is to produce a bibliography of historical fiction that can be used by the eighth-grade classes in Johnston Middle School, Johnston, Iowa, which is in its first year of changing from single-subject teachers who see 125 or more students per day to a teaming approach in which each teacher teaches two subjects to 50 students each day. The language arts/American history teachers will now be able to combine many units, such as the history unit on Native Americans with the literature unit on folklore or the study of the Constitution with a writing project. This teaming approach will facilitate the transformation of the curriculum into a true interdisciplinary curriculum in which each two-teacher team of a language arts/American history teacher and science/math teacher will work toward integrating the entire curriculum.

The books for this bibliography will be selected from those sources listed in Appendix A. These sources are selective and authoritative, and emphasize books with the criteria of realism, good literary qualities, and historical accuracy. VanMeter (1990) also includes “old standbys” (p. xi); Cordier (1989) strives to include multicultural and non-sexist perspectives (p. 2); Adamson (1994) includes 200 award winners (p. xi); and The Horn Book Guide will cover anything new since the publication of the other sources. While this bibliography will not consider these criteria separately, it is an advantage that they are considered in the sources used, in that this will ensure that this bibliography will not only meet the class needs of genre, setting, and theme, but also be of high literary quality.

The books will need to represent varying reading levels so all students in the class will have access to a book, or books, appropriate to their personal reading levels. Because the teachers of this class have structured the unit so that not more than two classes of approximately 25 students each will be studying this unit at any one time, 50 titles will be an acceptable number for this bibliography because multiple copies of these books will be available at the Johnston Middle School Library Media Center, through inter-library loan at this media center, and/or the area public libraries. The titles selected will form a core collection for further collection building.

### Assumptions

The basic assumptions underlying this study are:

1. these 50 books will be available to students at the local public libraries, at their school library, or through inter-library loan,
2. it will be possible for the school library media specialist to purchase some of the titles that are not now available at these places,
3. the eighth grade integrated language arts teachers will incorporate this bibliography into the curriculum.

### Significance

This selective tool will fill teachers' needs for materials to enhance instruction in a unit that integrates language arts, reading, and American history classes studying the opening of the American western frontier during the 1840's to 1899 through literature that has a theme of the will to survive. Using this bibliography in the structure of an interdisciplinary unit to help teach one of the themes in the eighth grade curriculum will allow for the curriculum connection and integration that is an intellectual need of middle school students. Students

will be steeped in the social customs of the time and learn the relevance of the time to their own through historical fiction. They will empathize with the characters, thus absorbing the fabric of society as it was in the American West and becoming more responsible citizens in the larger society of humanity today through this important connection.

### Limitations

The books of historical fiction included in this study will be set in the American frontier between the years of 1840 and 1899 and will have a theme of the will to survive. Only those books available at the Johnston Middle School Library Media Center, in Johnston, Iowa, either directly or through the Heartland Area 11 Education Agency Comcat inter-library loan system, as well as the Urbandale/Johnston Public Libraries (which have a union catalog) will be included. Additionally, only those books which are reviewed in at least one of the sources named in Appendix A and have a grade/reading range between 4.0 and adult as indicated in those sources will be included. Only full-length books, not short stories, will be considered.

### Definition of Terms

**“Historical fiction,” “American frontier,” and “the will to survive”** are all phrases that need to be defined for this study. Huck, Hepler, and Hickman (1993) explain **“historical fiction”** as a term that “can be used to designate all realistic stories that are set in the past” (p. 601) whether they are fictional stories that include actual events and people of the past or stories that have no real people or events but do have an historical basis “for how the characters live and make their living; what they wear, eat, study, or play; and what conflicts they must resolve” (p. 602). Lynn G. Adamson (1994) states that

**“historical fiction** recreates a particular historical period with or without historical figures as incidental characters . . . [and occurs] no more recently than one generation before its composition” (p. xix).

The pertinent definition of **“frontier”** in Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary (1991) is “a region that forms the margin of settled or developed territory” (p. 495). Therefore, the **American frontier** was that geographical area beyond which there were few permanent settlements. It moved ever westward from the original thirteen colonies as more settlers and immigrants (mostly European) moved into undeveloped areas and settled them. For the purposes of this study, the **American frontier** will be confined to that part of what would become the United States that was as yet not developed between 1840 as the migration west of the Mississippi River began to intensify and 1899, the end of the decade during which the last large area of the contiguous 48 United States, the Oklahoma Territory, was opened for settlement

The McDougal Littell Company has used **“the will to survive”** as one of the themes in their eighth grade reading textbook, McDougal Littell Literature and Language: Green Level (1994, p. xv). This textbook defines **“the will to survive”** as the human instinct and/or internal strength that a person relies on in situations that require great mental and physical alertness (p. 492). It distinguishes between two kinds of struggle that can occur when a person is caught in circumstances beyond their control: the struggle for physical survival and for emotional survival (p. 581). The conflicts in the books annotated can be of either kind, but pioneer life is a challenge to survival in itself, inherent in settlement of a frontier, and undoubtedly will be included in nearly all of the books selected.



Classroom teachers from Johnston Middle School requested a bibliography of **historical fiction** set in the **American frontier** that would express the theme of the **will to survive**. By using these definitions as part of the criteria for the choice of books for this bibliography, it will meet these teachers' curriculum needs and be the basis for further collection building in the library. These definitions clarify that criteria and assure the relevance and usefulness of this bibliography.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

This literature review focuses on what constitutes good historical fiction, its use in the classroom, and the role of interdisciplinary teaching at the middle school level.

### Good Historical Fiction Defined

Good historical fiction for children, written by reputable authors, can be trusted to teach not only history but also historical significance because these authors are meticulous about their research so that the details of daily life in the era, as well as major historical events, are accurate. The English author and historian Geoffrey Trease (1977) has stated that he has “rewritten whole chapters to correct a slight inaccuracy, belatedly discovered” (p. 26). Many writers are also able to show parallels of contemporary relevance. Even though one of Trease’s books is set in the thirteenth century, its “implicit plea for racial and religious toleration” (p. 25) is as meaningful today as it is in its setting. Through such tales, students learn the social mores of the time, why these mores prevailed in that society, and more importantly, how they compare to those of our own society.

In order to be classified as good children’s historical fiction, books must meet certain criteria that balance fiction with fact. Huck, Hepler, and Hickman (1993) say that it must “be accurate and authentic . . . , making details appear as an essential part of the story, not tacked on for effect. [Furthermore, an author must not break] the unwritten contract between author and child reader [by offering] misinformation in any form” (p. 603). If the Shawnee Indian chief Tecumseh died in 1813, he cannot appear on the Kansas plains in 1840.

Good historical fiction also conveys to children “the spirit and values of the times, as well as the events. . . .Historical fiction can’t be made to conform to today’s more enlightened point of view concerning women or minorities or knowledge” (p. 603). So that children will learn and understand about the values and mores of an era, historical fiction must present an accurate and true picture of life in that era, even if it includes stereotypical views. However, librarians and teachers can provide books which give alternative treatments to such topics. Good historical fiction “should illuminate the problems of today by examining those of other times” (p. 605).

### Historical Fiction in the Classroom

Much has been written about historical fiction in general and for youth in particular. Even though its writers have a subjective view of history and that of historians is objective, historians, authors, and teachers all seem to come to much the same conclusions: historical fiction is a fitting means of building critical thinking skills that help children vicariously experience and learn from the past and discover their connection to it. Some authors build bibliographies into their works, and others content themselves with an explanation of the ways reading historical fiction benefit children.

As Huck, Hepler, and Hickman (1993) noted, the increased use of books across the curriculum has necessitated the use of more historical fiction in the social studies curriculum for well-written “historical novels for children help a child to experience the past--to enter into the conflicts, the suffering, the joys, and the despair of those who lived before us” (p. 600). This vicarious experience encourages critical thinking and judgment in comparisons with the present and in providing conflicting views of issues. In historical fiction, children can recognize the mistakes of the past and understand the universal human

needs of belonging, love, freedom, security and the interdependence of humans which makes them a part of the larger human community (p. 601). They include a short bibliography of recommended historical fiction with this chapter in their book.

For Trease (1977), contemporary relevance lays at the heart of the historical novel, but that is not why children read historical fiction for “the main thing must always be the story itself; the joy in action and suspense and mystery; the interest in human relationships . . . , in colorful settings and, above all, in language” (p. 25). Children’s textbooks depict material things but not the psychological truths that help children draw modern parallels as historical novels do (p. 26, 28). Trease gives several examples from his own works for children.

Historian Christopher Collier (1982), who with his brother James Lincoln Collier, has written several books of American historical fiction, expands on Trease’s theory with four criteria by which he judges historical fiction:

1. focus on an important historical theme an understanding of which helps us to deal with the present
2. center on an episode in which the theme inheres in fact
3. attend to the historiographic elements
4. present accurate detail. (p. 33)

In his book, The American Historical Novel (1950), Earnest E. Leisy wrote an introductory chapter entitled “History Vivified” that has been an enduring reference point for both historians and authors. In it he says:

Historical fiction is an excellent introduction to history, biography, and travel. It is an enrichment of our experience, an enlargement of our interests. We feel at one with all that has happened. . . . In the final analysis, however, the value of the historical novel . . . rests on a valid hypothesis of human nature. . . . If the historical novel enlarges our understanding of the character of

human life and of human institutions, it justifies itself beyond the point of therapy and entertainment. (p. 4)

The body of this work by Leisy is a narrative annotation of historical novels in America from colonial times through the national expansion movement up to World War I. An appendix lists chronologically additional historical novels written from 1822 through 1949. He concludes that the historical novelists that have mastered the art “have told an important story superbly, . . . intelligently, . . . perceptively. . . .In short, they have written good novels” (p. 217).

In a short article, Lillian Webb (1989) gives several examples of using historical fiction for the dual purpose of teaching literature and history in the intermediate grades. She states, “Historical fiction contains an abundance of stories in which the main characters exhibit strength in times of adversity; often characters mature during the course of a story” (p. 147). Students can identify with these subtle role models who are responding to challenge and see in them the universality of the human condition.

Linda S. Levstik has written a number of articles in which she asserts that historical fiction creates a living past for children by helping them interpret the human experience by figuratively entering and interpreting the past. The method that she advocates in “A Child’s Approach to History” (1983) is a resource folder built around a theme such as the Depression or the Civil War (p. 232). The folder combines the use of primary sources, such as a copy of a Civil War diary and photographs, with a Civil War historical fiction book as a literature source. In “Recreating the Past: Historical Fiction in the Social Studies Curriculum” (1988), written with Evelyn B. Freeman, Levstik gives specific examples of how both primary and intermediate teachers can use historical fiction to connect “students with the human implications of historical events, providing young readers with the seeds for later, more mature historical

understanding” (p. 332). “Historical Narrative and the Young Reader” (1989b) is Levstik’s “year-long case study of a fifth-grade child’s developing historical understanding and interaction with historical narrative” (p. 114) in which the subject discusses moralizing, judgment, interpretations, and subjectivity as she perceives it in certain historical novels that she read during the study. In these and other articles, Levstik puts forth the idea that children develop a better historical understanding when their study of history is combined with historical fiction. Levstik does not appear to have yet compiled a bibliography of historical fiction to complement her extensive writings.

### Interdisciplinary Teaching in the Middle School

The views of people such as Huck, Hepler, and Hickman, Webb, and Levstik about the value of historical fiction in the classroom as a teaching tool mesh well with the concept of interdisciplinary studies in the middle school. According to Vars (1993),

‘interdisciplinary teaching’ is instruction that emphasizes the connections, the interrelations, among various areas of knowledge. In its broadest sense it is designed to help students to ‘see life whole,’ to integrate and make sense out of the myriad experiences they have, both in school and in the world at large. (p. 3)

Thus, using historical fiction to teach both history and literature will give students a real “feel” for the history of the time period that only a good story can do.

As children become adolescents and start to question the authority and knowledge of adults, one of the things that inevitably arises is the idea of the relevance of anything and everything that they are taught in school to their own personal lives. Heidi Hayes Jacobs (1989) suggests that because “in the real

world, we do not wake up in the morning and do social studies for 50 minutes” (p. 1), schools “need to create learning experiences that periodically demonstrate the relationship of the disciplines, thus heightening their relevancy” (p. 5). But she adds that integrating the curriculum should not be an “interesting diversion” but include a connection between subjects that is a more effective means of presenting the curriculum and making it more relevant (p. 5).

David B. Ackerman (1989) suggests criteria for assuring that an interdisciplinary unit is useful as a valid means of instruction and not merely just such a diversion. His intellectual criteria include:

1. validity within the disciplines, . . . [which] requires teachers representing each discipline to verify that the concepts identified are not merely related to their subject but are important to them (p. 27);
2. validity for the disciplines, . . . [in which a unit is] mutually beneficial to teachers bent on pursuing their own subject goals (p. 28);
3. validity beyond the disciplines, . . . [in which] the central idea itself may be valuable for students to think about (p. 29); and
4. contribution to broader outcomes, . . . [which] may help shape the learner’s overall approach to knowledge (p. 30).

Susan Kovalik (1994) suggests that the value of interdisciplinary teaching lies in its ability to provide choices, “the ultimate determiner of success” (p. 53). It is not the curriculum content about which schools and teachers can allow students to have a choice, but the way that that content is taught and learned. According to recent brain research, when given the power to choose to learn in the style that their own brains use best, students will experience more success. When using that individual way to learn, students are better able to establish patterns and relationships between new information and existing learning; there is less frustration due to failure; it heightens interest levels in the learning, increasing the chance that it will be stored in long-term

memory; and the learner becomes more independent and creative (p. 54). Thus, choice is the essential ingredient in developing lifelong learners, and interdisciplinary teaching makes choice much more possible than traditional teaching methods.

### Summary

Because good historical fiction for children is factually accurate and conveys a sense of connection with times past and because it can be successfully used in the classroom to teach both history and literature, it can be used effectively in middle school interdisciplinary units which integrate the two disciplines and often make their study more relevant to students.

### Procedures

The eighth grade language arts/social studies team teachers at Johnston Middle School, Johnston, Iowa have requested this critical annotated bibliography of historical fiction set in the American West frontier of 1840-1899. It is for eighth graders at Johnston Middle School, Johnston, Iowa, and support the integrated language arts unit theme of "the will to survive" (both physically and emotionally) that is included in their McDougal Littell Literature and Language (1994) textbook.

### Rationale

All of the selection tools in Appendix A are bibliographies of historical fiction for children and young adults, with the exception of The Horn Book Guide which is included for recency. In each of these, the introductions make it apparent that the authors have read extensively and are in agreement with the ideas put forth in the sources discussed in the literature review, including the



assertion that if historical fiction is integrated with children's study of history, then they will be better able to understand the past and themselves as a part of the continuation of it. Adamson (1994) quotes five different authorities to support her view that:

Historical fiction provides protagonists with whom to identify, family life and social mores for comparison, and quite often a mystery plot to hold interest. . . .Read prior to or simultaneously with a history text, it can provide a base for historical study of an era. . . because it exhibits the qualities expected in good literature and has the added advantage of factual information presented aesthetically.  
(p. xi)

Her contention is that students will feel connected to humanity when they can recognize from historical fiction that society changes but human values do not (pp. xi-xii).

This view is supported by Cordier (1989) who suggests that "children need to know that the ordinary people, much like themselves and their families, were the real people of the American West who carried their traditions to the settings where new ways of life evolved" (p.13). She contends that historical fiction for children can provide a broader and more personalized perspective of the events of the past than can social studies textbooks alone (p. 2).

Elizabeth Howard (1988) asserts that the non-narrative characteristic of textbooks is what leads most students to find them boring. But teachers can lead students to recapture their interest in and enthusiasm for history when they use historical fiction in conjunction with the textbook. Then "students may yet come to see history as the story of real people with feelings, values, needs to which they themselves can relate. . .[and develop a] feeling of connection or relatedness, of participation in the story" which is crucial to their historical understanding (pp. xi-xii).

### Guidelines for Inclusion

The books for this bibliography were filtered by applying the selection form shown in Appendix B. The criteria listed in that form were selected so as to produce a list of books that would meet the needs of the teachers of this unit, as defined both by the textbook and by their personal expertise.

Fifty books were annotated, with library locations given. This number is adequate because no more than 50 students will be using this bibliography at any one time, and the teachers will allow duplicate titles to be read. One or more copies of each of these books are available at the Johnston Middle School Library Media Center (either directly or through the Comcat inter-library loan system of Heartland Area Education Agency 11) or at the Urbandale/Johnston Public Libraries. The fifty-book sample was selected from those books in the selection sources listed in Appendix A that meet the criteria of genre, availability, reading level, setting, and challenge to survival, as listed in Appendix B. Books selected from The Horn Book Guide were chosen from the "intermediate" (grades 4-6) and "older" (grades 7-8, young adult) fiction sections and have a rating of "1" for outstanding, "2" for superior, or "3" for recommended.

Entries are arranged alphabetically by author and include the bibliographic data of title, publisher, date, and number of pages. The title of the recommending source(s) and the grade/reading ranges, as obtained from the selection sources and as judged by this author, is indicated and ranges from 4.0 to adult, to take into account the various reading levels of the students. The brief annotation paragraphs indicate for each book the important characters' names, and ages, as well as the setting, the story line, and the challenge(s) to survival faced by the character(s).

This bibliography is done in a word processing program so that additions for new titles and changes appropriate to any changes in this unit made by the teachers can be easily made. Each entry in the bibliography is approximately one half page long, so that the length of the final product 32 pages. All eighth grade language arts/social studies core teachers in the Johnston Middle School will receive a copy of this bibliography. All eighth grade students will receive a title listing of the books in this bibliography and will hear a book talk done on them by the library media specialist.

In order to assure the continued availability of the titles in this bibliography, a copy will be shared with all area libraries from which these titles can be obtained. This includes the Urbandale/Johnston Public Libraries and all libraries who belong to the Comcat inter-library loan system of Heartland Area Education Agency 11. In this way, those libraries will not inadvertently withdraw a title that is listed here but that may not have been used by their local patrons enough to warrant its continued inventory.

This bibliography will not be static but will serve as a collection building tool. As new titles are published that fit the stated criteria, they will be purchased and added to the collection at the Johnston Middle School Library Media Center. Thus, this bibliography will continue to evolve as long as it is useful to the teachers and students at this school.

## Chapter 3

Annotated Bibliography

This bibliography of historical fiction was requested by teachers at Johnston Middle School, Johnston, Iowa. It is to be used by the eighth-grade classes so that students may choose from a selected list of historical fiction books about the American West that will encompass both their literature theme of the will to survive and the historical setting of the American frontier as it moves West between 1840 and 1899. These fifty books were chosen by the criteria of genre, availability, reading level range, setting, and challenge to survival. The criteria of availability indicates one place at which the title is housed, although others may be located through Comcat, the school interlibrary loan system administered by the Heartland Area Education Agency 11. When it indicates availability at JMS LMC, that book is housed at the Johnston Middle School Library Media Center. The reading range is broad in order to encompass both the reading level (indicated by RL) and the interest level (indicated by IL) of each title. The recommending sources are listed in Appendix A.

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**Item:** Avi. *The Barn*. New York: Orchard, 1994.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library      **Pages:** 106      **RL/IL:** Gr 4-8

**Setting:** 1855, in the Willamette Valley, Oregon Territory

**Summary:** With their oldest brother dead on the trail West and their mother dead of diphtheria, the three surviving children, Nettie, aged 15, Harrison, aged 13, and Ben, aged 9, must decide what to do when their father falls in a sudden fit of palsy and lies for weeks in a near-coma. Ben, who has been at boarding school because of his obvious intelligence, cares for him while Nettie and Harrison finish the planting, and he seems to be able to communicate with Ben through blinks and slight waves of his hand, but he grows weaker by the day. Because their father's last big plan had been to build a barn, Ben convinces himself that if they do that, their father will get well. Nettie and Harrison try to discourage Ben but finally give in to his persistence and together they do it. It becomes not only Ben's gift to his father, but their father's final gift to his children, something strong that will endure, as their love for each other.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Accident

Emotional--Loss of mother, father's fatal illness, feeling of being different

**Recommending Sources:** Horn Book Guide (Spring 1995)

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**Item:** Beatty, Patricia. *Bonanza Girl*. New York: Scholastic, 1962, 1992.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 210

**RL/IL:** Gr 4-8

**Setting:** 1885, Idaho Territory mining towns

**Summary:** Thirteen-year old Ann Katie Scott, along with her 10-year old brother Jemmy and her widowed mother, move from Portland, Oregon to Eagle City, a mining town in the gold fields of Idaho Territory, where Mrs. Scott hopes to teach school. They find themselves traveling with Helga Storkersen, a large, capable Swedish woman whose experience in the gold fields is their salvation. With Helga as their "hired girl" they start not a school (because there are no other children in this untamed area) but the only restaurant with a woman's touch that is soon doing a brisk business. Jemmy acquires a mule, Timothy Clover, from the evil Arrowsmith Farr, who tries but fails to ruin their business. Helga acquires a boyfriend in the smooth-talking but lovable O'Neil O'Neil, hired to help at the restaurant but with gold fever. The discovery of not gold but silver, the reappearance of Farr, and fireworks at a double wedding climax this fast-paced story.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Finding a livelihood, gunmen, snow storms, an avalanche

Emotional--Moving from a civilized, urban frame of mind to a wilderness, basics-of-life frame of mind

**Recommending Sources:** Horn Book Guide (Spring 1993), Smith

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**Item:** Beatty, Patricia. *The Nickel-plated Beauty*. New York: Morrow, 1964.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 256

**RL/IL:** Gr 4-8

**Setting:** 1886, Washington Territory

**Summary:** When their old stove succumbs to rust brought on by living by the ocean, the seven Kimball children decide that they must help their destitute parents buy a new one. It seemed so easy to thirteen-year old Whit, just order it C.O.D. But when they discover what those three letters mean, the Kimball children decide to come up with a plan to pay the \$27

that it costs. The dollar that Whit earns working in Mr. Willard's store each week has to go on their family's store bill so Hester gives in and goes to work in her mean Aunt Rose's Palace Hotel. The younger children have always spent the summer digging clams, picking berries, and gathering oysters to sell to the summer people, but now they will have to work even harder at it.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Polio, boils, constant hard work  
Emotional--Striving to achieve a goal, thieves

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Doll

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**Item:** Beatty, Patricia. *Wait for Me, Watch for Me, Eula Bee*. New York: Morrow, 1978.

**Available:** Des Moines Central Campus **Pages:** 216 **RL/IL:** Gr 6-8

**Setting:** 1861-2, in western Texas, New Mexico, and the plains north

**Summary:** Left behind to defend their land, thirteen-year old Lewallen Collier, along with his mother, elderly uncle, and younger brother and sister watch sadly as his father and brother set out to join Confederate forces in the Civil War. Their farm in Palo Duro County in west Texas is more isolated than those to the east, and the Indian raids that are a real possibility become a reality a few weeks later. All but Lewtie and three-year old Eula Bee are killed and scalped. Eula Bee is claimed by a renegade Kiowa brave since his own child has recently died. Lewallen is spared to be kept as a Comanche slave because he showed bravery in wounding one of the raiding party. On their way back to the tribe, another war party joins them with two of the neighbor children, Tomas and Angelita Cabral, captured and to be kept for the same purposes. Although Lewallen is elevated in status when he saves his foster father during a buffalo hunt, he remains fiercely intent on escape and is finally able to do so just before winter sets in. Spending those cold months at Fort Belknap going to school, he sets forth in April, 1862, with the Cabral children's fierce father, both determined to buy the children's freedom. Finding Angelita dead from disease and seeing Tomas and his father killed by Union troops who attack the Kiowa village as they are bartering for Tomas' freedom, Lewallen seeks the help of Mr. Cabral's older brother, a "Comanchero", or Indian trader in finding his sister. Throughout his quest, Lewallen matures and grows to understand the brutal life of pain, hunger, cold and death that the Indians face and their

life as wanderers, although different from the white man's life as settlers, still beautiful in its own way.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Indian raid, slavery, battle, buffalo hunt,  
Emotional--Seeing family murdered, being kept as a slave

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Cordier, Howard, VanMeter

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**Item:** Benchley, Nathaniel. *Only Earth and Sky Last Forever*. New York: Harper, 1972.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 189

**RL/IL:** Gr 6-10

**Setting:** 1874

**Summary:** Dark Elk is Cheyenne but has lived with the Sioux since his capture at age twelve. Seeing how his adopted family lives on the reservation, with no pride left, little to eat, and fighting among themselves in boredom, he decides to join Crazy Horse and the other hostiles who wish to die fighting instead of suffering that fate. At eighteen, Dark Elk is in love with Lashuka, but he needs to bring honor to himself to win her attention, and he is behind in his training as a warrior because he has been on the reservation. But life in the camp of Crazy Horse soon teaches him many things that he should know. He rides in battles with Crazy Horse and sees much death, but to DarkElk, the freedom is worth the danger.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Battle with Crow Indians and soldiers  
Emotional--Reservation life, love for Lashuka

**Recommending Source:** Howard

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**Item:** Calvert, Patricia. *The Snowbird*. New York: Scribner's, 1980.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 146

**RL/IL:** Gr 5-8

**Setting:** 1883, Dakota Territory

**Summary:** When their parents are killed in a fire at their Tennessee home, fourteen-year old Willanna Bannerman and her six-year old brother TJ are left with only a broken mirror, their mother's dress, and the many

scraps of paper on which Willie has written what she intends to one day be a great novel. Her mother called them “figments of imagination”, but as a newspaper editor, her father knew that dreamers and tellers were to be valued. Sent to live with their Uncle Randall Bannerman and his splashy Irish wife Belle in the Dakota Territory, their arrival coincides with the birth of a white foal, which seems to be a good omen. But it seems that all Willie’s dreams are broken: first her parents’ death, the loss of the crop to drought and the sheep to poison, the loss of Belle’s unborn child, the Snowbird being windbroke in trying to help bring the midwife to save Belle’s child, and finally Belle leaving them. Willie finally comes to understand that although she cannot change any of these events, her gift and legacy is in writing about them so that others may know.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Hail storm, childbirth

Emotional--Loss of parents, loss of horse, loss of aunt

**Recommending Source:** Cordier

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**Item:** Conrad, Pam. *Prairie Songs*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 167

**RL/IL:** Gr 5-8

**Setting:** late 1800’s, on the Nebraska prairie

**Summary:** Happy and content in her Nebraska soddy with her loving and hard-working family, Louisa Downing is enthralled by the new doctor’s citified, delicate wife Emmeline but confused by her denial of the prairie’s beauty and longing to return to New York City. As Emmeline gives Louisa and her brother Lester reading lessons, Louisa grows to love poetry but Emmeline fades away as the rough pioneer life without the refinements of the city that she is used to wears her down to a bewildered, lost creature, unable to cope with the harshness of the prairie and unable to see the land’s wild beauty.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Harshness of seasons, never ending work of survival

Emotional--Isolation, lack of the modern conveniences of the time

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Brodie, Cordier, Howard, VanMeter

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**Item:** Gipson, Fred. *Savage Sam*. New York: Harper, 1962.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 214

**RL/IL:** 4-8

**Setting:** 1870's, East Texas

**Summary:** Along with Lisbeth Seracy, Travis Coates, aged 15, and his brother Little Arliss, aged 6, are kidnapped by a band of Apaches and one Comanche, although their dog Savage Sam fights desperately to stop them until he is hit by a tomahawk. The children try to escape, and Arliss succeeds in biting off the ear of one Apache, but not until they are chased by soldiers is Travis kicked off his horse by the Comanche who needs to flee. Travis is not alone in that wilderness long, for trailing his best buddy Arliss, is Savage Sam, who will not give up the trail. Soon behind him comes Travis' Pa and a party of men searching for the kidnapped children, and led by Sam, they are able to find and rescue them, but not without a gun fight. Travis learns that he can hate an enemy but also have empathy for him.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Apache captives, grueling drive to follow a trail through the wilderness

Emotional--Fear of captors, fear of not escaping

**Recommending Source:** VanMeter

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**Item:** Gregory, Kristiana. *Jenny of the Tetons*. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, 1989.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 115

**RL/IL:** Gr 6-8

**Setting:** 1875-8, Idaho Territory, along the east end of the Snake River

**Summary:** Orphaned in an Indian raid on the wagon train carrying her father Dr. Hill, her mother and two brothers, Carrie Hill is taken in by an English fur trapper, Beaver Dick Leigh, and his family before she realizes that his wife Jenny is an Indian. It takes many months, but gradually Carrie is won over by Jenny's gentle and loving ways, and they become friends as Carrie learns not only how to live off the land but also how to respect and honor it, as Jenny's Shoshone tribe does. Although Carrie's story is fictitious, Dick and Jenny Leigh and their five children were real, and each chapter in this book is begun with an excerpt from the diary of Dick Leigh, lending a reality to the story that few books can match.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Primitive Indian life, blizzards, forest fires, grizzly bears,  
disease

Emotional--Loss of family by murder

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Smith

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**Item:** Gregory, Kristiana. *Jimmy Spoon and the Pony Express*. New York: Scholastic, 1994.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 128 **RL/IL:** Gr 4-8

**Setting:** 1860-1, Pony Express route in Utah and Nevada and Indian lands in Idaho

**Summary:** Jimmy Spoon left home at age twelve to go with two Shoshoni boys overnight and ended up living with their Indian band for three years before he returned to his white family. Now seventeen, Jimmy is overjoyed to leave his father's store in Salt Lake City, where he has been helping out for three years, and joins the Pony Express for a chance to be on his own and be a hero. And a hero he is for such things as stopping a runaway stagecoach, saving a baby who survived an Indian raid, and scaring off raiding Paiutes. But always he yearns to return to his Shoshoni family and the freedom and joy in life they have, and of course, his promised bride Nahanee is never far from his thoughts.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Hostile Paiute Indians, runaway stagecoach, outlaws  
Emotional--Torn between two ways of life, love of an Indian girl

**Recommending Source:** Horn Book Guide (Spring 1995)

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**Item:** Gregory, Kristiana. *The Legend of Jimmy Spoon*. New York: Harcourt, 1990.

**Available:** JMS LMC **Pages:** 182 **RL/IL:** Gr 4-8

**Setting:** 1854-6, Mormon Colony on Great Salt Lake, Utah Territory

**Summary:** When twelve-year old Jimmy Spoon left his parents and nine sisters at home asleep one morning to go with two Shoshoni boys, he thought he would meet one of the boy's mother, get the pony he so desperately desired in exchange, and return home again to help his

father in Spoon's Fancy Store. But they ride for days before joining the Shoshoni band of Chief Washakie where Old Mother wants Jimmy, or Dawii as he is now called, for her own son. Because he is having so much fun and because he does not know the way, he realizes that he cannot return home without help. As winter comes, he slowly learns Indian ways, of men as hunters and women as family caretakers, how to use a bow and arrow, and how to ice fish. But others are jealous of the fine clothes and extra care he gets from Old Mother, and fights break out in camp because his helpful ways are seen as women's work. He has friends, especially pretty Nahanee, but finds himself caught between two worlds. Occasionally, Jimmy feels guilt at causing grief for his family, especially his mother, but he feels that the Indian way of closeness to nature is better, even though they make war on each other, and does not want to leave. When he finally must make the decision to go back to his family, he knows that one day he will return to the Shoshoni who have shown him the best that life has to offer.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Primitive Indian life, grizzly bears, disease, war with other Indian tribes

Emotional--Loss of family, being treated as inferior

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Smith

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**Item:** Hall, Lynn. *Gently Touch the Milkweed*. Chicago: Follett, 1970.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 160

**RL/IL:** Gr 6-10

**Setting:** 1857, Adams County, Iowa

**Summary:** Working in her family's lodging house for those on their way West, seventeen-year-old Janet Borofen has mixed feelings about the feud over what to name their settlement between her father, who wants to name their emerging town after himself, and their new city planner, Jay Zupin, who is using misleading advertisements to try to lure a population. Appreciated by her family only for the work she does, her own dilemma is her feeling that because of her ungainly, large-boned, work-worn physical appearance, she will never find a husband who will appreciate her sensitive side that loves poetry and appreciates beautiful, delicate things. In this coming of age story, a new neighbor slowly helps Janet to see that, like the rough, ugly milkweed pod with its soft, silver fluff inside, her inner beauty would shine if only she would cultivate it and let it show.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Hard labor in a pioneer setting of cooking, cleaning, and keeping up a boarding house that regularly houses 15-20 people  
 Emotional--Misunderstood by unsympathetic, strict family

**Recommending Source:** Howard

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**Item:** Hall, Lynn. *Too Near the Sun*. Chicago, IL: Follett, 1979.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 192

**RL/IL:** Gr 6-10

**Setting:** 1870's, Adams County, Iowa

**Summary:** Does the perfect communal society really wipe out all evil? Perhaps, but as seventeen-year old Armel Dupree, discovers, it can also stifle personal freedom and creative urges as not being good for the whole community. Etienne Cabet and his followers moved from France to the United States, ending up near Corning, Iowa in 1856. This fictionalized account of his Icarian society after 20 years of communal living there, tells of how the young people were drifting away because, as Armel discovers on his first journey to Shenandoah, Iowa, all of the outside world is not evil, as they have been told. Armel longs to be a lawyer, as his father was in France, but his lot is to be a sheep herder. The doubts about whether it is better to have the security from evil that the community provides or to be free to make choices, even if they are bad ones, comes to a head when he is nearly banished from the community for growing watermelons on his own, without approval of the governing committee. It is then that he realizes that the perfect peace and harmony and the philosophy of "each according to his ability, each according to his need" preached at the colony does not allow for the development of individual abilities and leads to the atrophy of such abilities.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Threat of ouster from community  
 Emotional--Misunderstood by unsympathetic, strict community

**Recommending Source:** Hinman

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**Item:** Highwater, Jamake. *Eyes of Darkness*. New York: Lothrop, 1985.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 191

**RL/IL:** Gr 7-10

**Setting:** 1856-1890, Dakota Territory, Canada, Minnesota, Nebraska, Wisconsin

**Summary:** A Santee Sioux boy first called by the name of Hakadah, the pitiful last, because his mother died in childbirth, then called Yesa, winner, a name won in a lacrosse game, and finally Alexander East, a name given him by his father after his conversion to Christianity, is caught in a search for home, family, and race to call his own. Raised by a wise and loving grandmother, Yesa loses first his mother then two brothers and his father through betrayal by a half-breed. His last brother is kidnapped by a Canadian trader, and finally his best friend contracts a disease and dies. Through it all Yesa has the love and protection of his grandmother, who teaches him the ways of their people. His father's sudden reappearance after 10 years of living with the white man means that Yesa must obey his father, leave the life he loves, and go to mission schools, where he excels so greatly that he becomes the first of his race to go to college and become a doctor. But he is caught between the free life of his people and the confined life of white civilization, and seeing the aftermath of the Battle at Wounded Knee makes it impossible for him to ever bridge that gap. Yesa's bittersweet story shows that the opening of the American West for the white man was its bitter end for the Native American.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Prairie fire, blizzards, starvation, hunted by soldiers  
Emotional--Tremendous conflict of cultures in one person

**Recommending Source:** Adamson

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**Item:** Hotze, Sollace. *A Circle Unbroken*. New York: Clarion, 1988.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library      **Pages:** 202      **RL/IL:** 5-9

**Setting:** 1845, Dakota Territory

**Summary:** Called Kata Wi by the Sioux who captured her seven years before, seventeen-year old Rachel Porter thinks of herself as one of them when bounty hunters hired by her minister father recapture her from her Indian family and return her to her white family. She tries for their sakes to fit into their way of life, so foreign to her now, but she grieves at the loss of her Sioux family who adopted her and the Indian way of life. She gets some pleasure in telling the stories that are told around Indian campfires about the way of the world and also in the friendship of her Aunt Sarah, who also had been an Indian captive. But try as she might, the lives of Kata Wi and Rachel are separate parts of her that can never mesh.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Capture by Indians

Emotional--Tremendous conflict of cultures in one person

**Recommending Source:** Cordier**Item:** Irwin, Hadley. *Jim-Dandy*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994.**Available:** JMS LMC**Pages:** 133**RL/IL:** 5-9**Setting:** about 1870, Kansas Territory

**Summary:** Twelve-year old Caleb dislikes homesteading in Kansas, but after his father died, his mother married stern Webb Cotter, a Quaker who refused to fight in the Civil War and who is now determined to keep his 120 acres and make it profitable, even though a drought has destroyed his chances of producing a crop this year. Now that Caleb's mother has died, he stays with Webb because he has no place else to go. His inheritance from his father was a five-dollar gold piece, which he uses to have Webb's mare bred, and the colt that is born he names Jim-Dandy, or Dandy for short. Determined to gentle it to ride, he gets help from a tomboy neighbor, Athens. But the next year Webb must sell Dandy in order to keep the farm. Dandy is purchased by the Seventh Cavalry as a mount for General Custer's wife, and Caleb runs away and becomes "Dandy's boy", helping take care of all the cavalry horses. He sees enough of Indian battles and of Custer's coldheartedness to last a lifetime and learns that perhaps he, like Webb, suggests that all killing is wrong.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Wind, blizzard, Indian War

Emotional--Loss of mother, indifferent step-father

**Recommending Source:** Horn Book Guide (Fall 1994)**Item:** Jones, Douglas C. *Season of Yellow Leaf*. New York: Tom Doherty, 1983.**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 311**RL/IL:** Gr 8-adult**Setting:** 1838-1858, Texas

**Summary:** After a Comanche raid at Madoc Parry's Fort, there are few survivors but for the half-scalped Bangor Owen and ten-year old Morfydd Parry, who is taken captive. Children are valued among the Comanche as the ones that will continue their bloodline, and Morfydd is taken in as a daughter by Iron Shirt, a Comanche chief, and given the status that his family deserves. Slowly, she accepts the Indian ways and learns to respect them as different but equally as acceptable as those of the white man. At age nineteen Chosen, as she is now called, marries first Wolfs Road, by whom she has a son, Kwahadi, and after Wolfs Road's death, Running Wolf. After living with the Comanches for twenty years, a raid by the Texas Rangers kills almost all the Comanches in her band. One of the few survivors is Kwahadi, who becomes leader of the remnants of the band. Chosen and her infant daughter are returned to her own people where she is taken in by Uncle Bangor and his wife, but her daughter does not survive. Raised for so long as on the The People, Chosen cannot again be comfortable in the life she once knew long ago.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Hard winters, lack of food, smallpox, Indian raids

Emotional--Loss of parents in Indian raid, abduction by Comanches, loss of Indian step parents and infant daughter

**Recommending Source:** Howard

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**Item:** Keith, Harold. *The Obstinate Land*. New York: Crowell, 1977 1991.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library   **Pages:** 214       **RL/IL:** Gr 6-9

**Setting:** 1893-5, in the Cherokee Strip of Oklahoma

**Summary:** When the Romberg family comes from the German settlement at Navasota, Texas in the Sept. 16, 1893, Oklahoma Land Run, they are leaving a place where they have relatives and a church family but where they are sharecroppers who can never hope to own land. Because the original spot Mr. Romberg had picked out is taken over by the Coopers, "Sooners" who settled before the official opening of the land, the place that they find to homestead is not the best land. However, with their German perseverance, common sense, and some luck, they will be able to make their \$16.50 filing fee turn into a 160-acre investment that will be theirs in five years. Their father Frederic comes from a long line of German farmers and is able to supplement their income with winter hauling jobs at Fort Supply until his untimely death from exposure. Their mother Freda, with her talent for playing the organ and singing, takes many months to accept staying in this sometimes forbidden land. Jacob,

aged nine, and Sarah, aged four feel at home there much sooner. But this is really the story of fourteen-year old Fritz Romberg, who is his father's best helper and a willing, hard worker, and who must become head of the family, making farming and business decisions alike. In their feud with the ranchers who hate the "nesters" who are fencing their free range, they have friends in their neighbors, businessmen in Woodward, 27 miles to the east near Santa Fe rail line, and a cowboy who, while knowing that homesteaders are killing his way of life, cannot help but admire and help them. Fritz manages to have some fun, too, at dances and box suppers, and he finally has to choose between two girls to share his ever-more successful farm with. Typically German, Fritz is fiercely independent and loyal to his beliefs, but growing up sometimes leaves him with difficult decisions to make.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Lack of doctor and medicine, quicksand, accidents, dust and hail storms, exposure, robbers, rattlesnakes, hostile ranchers  
Emotional--Loss of father, far from relatives

**Recommending Sources:** Cordier, Sharp

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**Item:** Lampman, Evelyn Sibley. *Squaw Man's Son*. New York: Atheneum, 1978.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 172 **RL/IL:** Gr 5-9

**Setting:** 1870-73, Linkville, Oregon

**Summary:** With a mother who is Modoc Indian and an Irish father, thirteen-year old Billy Morrison is stuck between two worlds. He and his mother have always lived in town with his father, Mose, a hot-tempered giant of a man, and Billy has been working at Mose's Livery Stable every since he grew big enough. But Billy is not accepted in town, and his only friend is Bud, an orphan. When his father is offered the position of deputy sheriff, Mose sends Billy's mother back to her people so that he can take it, has Billy's hair cut like a white boy's, and takes a white wife. But Mrs. Etta refuses to accept Billy as her son, and he is soon living in the stable, little more than a servant without wages. So Billy leaves to live with his mother and her new husband and baby, who welcome him. When the Modoc Indians are moved to a reservation that they must share with the Klamaths, there is trouble that escalates until both some whites and some Modocs are killed, and the Modocs are rounded up in a stockade. Billy is rescued from the group by his father but Moses still cannot make



him fit in the white man's world, and Billy discovers that he is stuck between two worlds so must make his own way.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Pursued by soldiers

Emotional--Being separated from his mother and then his father, being looked down upon by whites as inferior

**Recommending Source:** Cordier

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**Item:** Lane, Rose Wilder. *Young Pioneers*. (Originally published as *Let the Hurricane Roar*) New York: Bantam, 1933, 1976.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 118

**RL/IL:** Gr 6-9

**Setting:** 1850's, in the Dakota Territory

**Summary:** As soon as they are married, shy, quiet Caroline and laughing, daring Charles, both in their teens, set out for the Western prairie. They claim an abandoned homestead in the Dakota Territory and are able to get an early crop of wheat, and on Caroline's seventeenth birthday, their first baby is born. Soon they have the Svenson's from Sweden for neighbors and friends, even if they speak little English. Sure that his wheat crop will bring top dollar, Charles borrows \$2000 for a mowing machine and lumber for a real house to replace their soddy. But a hoard of grasshoppers that eats every green thing in sight for miles, fouls the creek, and spoils the water dash their hopes so that Charles desperately looks for a job to help pay their debt, but there are none to be had. Even the Svenson's eventually give up and go back East, but Caroline knows that to do that would break Charles' spirit forever so finally, he must return to Iowa to find a job for a few months while Caroline stays and protects their homestead. But when Charles is hurt and unable to come home before winter, Caroline must find a way for she and her infant son to survive and to cling to her sanity, alone on the prairie in the killing cold: Like her mother, Laura Ingalls Wilder who wrote the "Little House" series, Rose Wilder Lane has written a straightforward and exciting story of pioneering.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Blizzards, outlaws, accidents, exposure

Emotional--Grasshopper plague, far from relatives, alone all winter

**Recommending Sources:** Cordier, Howard

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**Item:** Lasky, Kathryn. *Beyond the Divide*. New York: Macmillan, 1983.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 254

**RL/IL:** Gr 6-9

**Setting:** 1849, on the trail west from St. Louis, Missouri to California

**Summary:** When her father is shunned by their Pennsylvania Amish community for a small infraction of its rules, fourteen-year old Meribah Simon suddenly realizes that she is not like her severe mother and serene, unquestioning sister, but has a longing for a life beyond the narrow Amish confines. Stealing away in the night, Meribah and her father Will decide to journey west for a new beginning. On this wagon train journey from St. Louis, Missouri to the Sierra Nevada in California in 1849, Meribah makes friends but also learns of the meanness spirit that some humans possess. This culminates when she and her father are unable to keep up with the others, who vote to leave them behind to die. Ultimately, in her personal fight to stay alive and in the drawing which is her emotional outlet, she discovers the person that she is and what it will take for her to be fulfilled and content with herself.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--The wagon train journey itself, abandonment by the wagon train, lack of food, cholera

Emotional--Loneliness in the vastness of prairie and when snowed in in the mountains, retaining human sensitivity and spirit when physical well-being is threatened by gold-hungry men and women, need for self-reliance

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Cordier, Howard, Smith, VanMeter

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**Item:** Lawlor, Laurie. *Addie Across the Prairie*. Morton Grove, IL: Whitman, 1986.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library

**Pages:** 128

**RL/IL:** 4-6

**Setting:** 1883, on a wagon journey from Iowa to the Dakota Territory

**Summary:** Addie Mills and her family have lived in Sabula, Iowa, near the Mississippi River for all of her nine years. While Addie is serious, quiet and careful, her best friend Eleanor is a daring jokester, and leaving her is the hardest thing that Addie has ever had to do. But after a flood in 1880 in which they lost everything but two cows and their house, Addie's family has had a hard time surviving, and so her father has staked a

homestead claim on 160 acres on some of the last free land in the Dakota Territory, one mile from the Yankton Indian Reservation and one mile east of the Missouri River. Here they will make a fresh start, determined to prosper on the virgin land, taming it into a home. Although Addie and her mother are homesick, they meet their new neighbors, the Fency's, who have already been there a year and can give them advise on the best way to survive on the prairie and the support that they need to do it. Through a visit from an Indian family and a prairie fire, Addie rises to the challenge and learns that she is indeed a "sod-busting pioneer-type" who can thrive and be happy in this new land.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Wild animals, Indians, prairie fire, lack of food  
Emotional--Leaving family and friends, loneliness of open prairie

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Brodie

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**Item:** Lawlor, Laurie. *Addie's Dakota Winter*. New York: Pocket Books, 1989.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 160

**RL/IL:** 4-6

**Setting:** 1884, in Hutchinson County, Dakota Territory (now South Dakota)

**Summary:** After a year of helping her family homestead by watching the babies, hanging laundry, hauling water, and twisting grass for the stove, ten-year old Addie Mills, oldest of 5 children, finally gets to go to the new school where she meets Tilla from Sweden , while not her ideal sophisticated friend, will do until she meets another. Addie enjoys playing make-believe with Tilla but doesn't know how much is true of Tilla's stories about trolls, her uncle's 1000 cows and 2000 pigs, and her mother's job as cook for a king. In fact, Tilla never brings a lunch pail to school, and Addie always has to share her lunch with Tilla.. When Addie becomes lost in a raging blizzard, it looks as though she will never find out these things, until she stumbles into a barn and seeks shelter for 2 days with the animals there.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--A two-day blizzard, bullies, everyday pioneer life  
Emotional--The will to fight sleep for two days and not succumb to the cold, ability to apologize for a lie

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Brodie

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**Item:** Lawlor, Laurie. *Addie's Long Summer*. Morton Grove, IL: Whitman, 1992.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 173

**RL/IL:** 4-6

**Setting:** 1886, in Hutchinson County, Dakota Territory (now South Dakota)

**Summary:** Vying with two others for the scholarship to high school in Yankton, twelve-year old Addie Mills is fearful failing the test and letting down her parents, who are sure that she will be the first teacher in their family. But this is June, when her cousins from Iowa come for their first visit since the Mills moved to this homestead in Dakota three years ago, and the test is not until October. Beautiful Elizabeth and her dowdy older sister Maudie are of delicate constitution, finicky eaters, and little used to doing chores since they have hired help to care for their family and near-mansion back in Sabula. While quiet Maudie dives right in and helps with every chore, learning to milk cows, bake bread, and anything else that is needed, self-assured, arrogant, and patronizing Elizabeth tricks Addie into giving her the precious necklace given her by Indians and into sending away Tilla, Addie's one true friend, who is poor and foreign, making her beneath Elizabeth's notice. Not until Elizabeth's self-centeredness finally makes Maudie tell their terrible secret and Elizabeth runs away and falls into quicksand, does her haughtiness finally fade away, and she becomes much easier to live with. After saving Elizabeth, Addie realizes that being afraid to fail is not reason enough to not try for the scholarship to high school.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Escaped murderer, lightning fire, drought, river sinkhole  
Emotional--Long-term, ungrateful guests in a small house, fear of failing

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Brodie

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**Item:** Lawlor, Laurie. *George on His Own*. Morton Grove, IL: Whitman, 1993.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 191

**RL/IL:** 4-6

**Setting:** 1887, in Hutchinson County, Dakota Territory (now South Dakota)

**Summary:** After having lived for four years on their 320-acre homestead, the Mills family is prospering, with 300 head of cattle and a new herd of mules. Twelve-year old George is now the oldest at home because his sister Addie won the only scholarship in the county to the boarding school in Yankton, where she is studying to be a teacher. To George's

father, Oak Hollow, their home, is his pride and joy, and it is his hard work and skill that has made it so. But to George, farming is boring, and he longs to be an artist, a musician playing his new trombone in a band. When his family comes down with the measles and his youngest sister dies, George feels responsible for having exposed her to the disease. When his father threatens to return the "useless" trombone to the storekeeper, George runs away from home to join a traveling theatrical group. In the end, both George and his father learn to accept each other's differences and to value the other for those differences.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Measles, snake bite, river crossing, thieves  
Emotional--Loss of sister, lack of parental support

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Horn Book Guide (Fall 93)

**Item:** Lawlor, Laurie. *Gold in the Hills*. New York: Walker, 1995.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 146 **RL/IL:** 4-6

**Setting:** 1882, Colorado

**Summary:** Ten-year old Hattie Proctor and her shy, stuttering, younger brother PHEME have been left with Cousin Tirzah Throckmorton and her four children while their father goes prospecting for gold in the hills of Colorado. With her husband gone for over a year looking for gold, Cousin Tirzah is a solemn, strict Methodist who keeps cabins for hunters and demands that all seven children work to keep them neat. Life is bleak until they befriend the recluse, Old Judge, next door, and he teaches them to hunt and fish and generally entertains them. Disaster strikes when it is learned that Mr. Throckmorton has been killed so that Cousin Tirzah feels that she must hire out PHEME to bail water out of a mine and Hattie to do laundry at a hotel. Then a traveler brings word of the where their father is prospecting and the two children set out to find him but are attacked by a grizzly. Luckily, Old Judge has taught PHEME to shoot, and PHEME proves himself a capable hunter. With the meat he is able to provide, the children are able to avoid going to what would have been grinding hard work until their father can return and gain self-respect under the tutelage of Old Judge.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Thrashings, near drowning, grizzly attack  
Emotional--Loss of mother, absent father, stuttering brother

**Recommending Source:** Horn Book Guide (Fall 1995)

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**Item:** Levitin, Sonia. *The No-Return Trail*. New York: Harcourt, 1978.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 154 **RL/IL:** 7-10

**Setting:** 1841, on a wagon train from Kentucky to California

**Summary:** Based on the journey of a real person, Nancy Kelsey, who as a seventeen-year old wife and mother, became the first woman to make the trip by wagon train to California, this book is a fictional account of the hardships she must have endured. Her husband Ben, his brothers, and their families join a rag-tag group that fights among themselves about who is to lead and that does not have a map to show where they are going. As the journey progresses and becomes ever more difficult, Nancy begins to doubt her reasons for following her husband and even her love for him, but finally, in the darkest hour, Nancy is able to come to terms with her life and find hope and meaning in everything around her. This ill-fated journey does have a happy ending for Nancy, her husband, and their baby Ann, as well as 20 or so other men, but not before the Rocky Mountains wears them down so that they have to abandon their wagons, eat their oxen and horses then bugs and acorns, bury their remaining goods, and stagger into California and civilization looking and feeling as rough and rugged as savages.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Quicksand, river crossings, disease, Indian attack, buffalo stampede

Emotional--Uncertainty of a journey without a good plan, lack of faith in husband and other leaders, isolation from other women

**Recommending Sources:** Cordier, Howard

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**Item:** Love, D. Anne. *Bess's Log Cabin Quilt*. New York: Holiday, 1995.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 123 **RL/IL:** 4-6

**Setting:** 1840's, Oregon

**Summary:** One year ago, ten-year old Bess Morgan's father Joe, a newspaper editor, decided to move the family to Oregon for a new start. Now he has gone back with Marcus Whitman to help another wagon train of 300 people join them, but they are two months late in returning,

and Bess is afraid that she will never see him again. When her mother Sarah falls ill with swamp fever, Bess is able to ride into Salem and bring the doctor, but when an evil loan shark threatens to take their farm in one month if they do not pay off the \$100 loan her father has made, Bess does not know what to do. Then she hears of the prize being given at the quilt contest at the fair--just enough to save the farm, if only she can finish her quilt and do a fine enough job to win.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Swamp fever, hostile Indians

Emotional--Absent father, impending loss of home

**Recommending Source:** Horn Book Guide (Fall 1995)

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**Item:** McGraw, Eloise Jarvis. *Moccasin Trail*. New York: Puffin, 1952, 1986.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 247

**RL/IL:** 4-8

**Setting:** 1850's, Oregon

**Summary:** At age eleven, Jim Keath ran away from his Missouri farm home to follow his trapper uncle back into the western wilderness. The next year their camp was attacked by a grizzly that Jim killed but not before being badly wounded by it. Rescued by Crow Indians, Jim lived six years as one of them, until he felt the sudden longing to be with white men again and teamed up with the white beaver trapper. Then out of the blue, he receives a letter from his family. His father has been dead three years and his mother has died on the Oregon Trail. Now his seventeen-year old brother Jonnie, his fifteen-year old sister Sally, and his eleven-year old brother Daniel need his help to complete their journey through Oregon to Willamette Valley and, as the only Keath of legal age, help them claim their land. He means to stay, but the white man's ways of taming the land are foreign to him now, and he despairs of ever being comfortable with them again until he finally learns that his Indian medicine has basis in white man's religion.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Starvation in the mountains, capture by renegade Indians

Emotional--Strain of trying to bridge two vastly different societies

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Doll

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**Item:** Moeri, Louise. *Save the Queen of Sheba*. New York: Avon, 1981.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 107

**RL/IL:** 5-8

**Setting:** Nebraska Territory on the trail to Oregon

**Summary:** The only two survivors of an attack by the Sioux on their wagon train, King David, aged 12, and Queen of Sheba, aged 6, must find away to survive until they can learn if their parents in the wagons behind them escaped. But first they must rest for King David has been half-scalped and is too weak and dizzy to travel. Finding a horse from their wagon train and following the trail of the wagons his parents were in, King David is able to take of himself even though he is injured, but comforting, feeding, and entertaining his willful sister also is a real challenge, one that he repeatedly wishes that he did not have, but also one that he knows he must meet if he is to live with himself.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Indian attack, head injury, hunger, alone in the wilderness  
Emotional--Shock of the Indian attack, separated from parents

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Cordier, Smith

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**Item:** Morrow, Honore. *On to Oregon!* New York: Morrow, 1926, 1954.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 239

**RL/IL:** 5-8

**Setting:** 1844, on a wagon train from Missouri to Oregon

**Summary:** The oldest of six children, sullen and unruly John Sager at age thirteen still has not learned to be responsible, but soon into his family's journey in a wagon train of 1400 people bound for Oregon in 1844, responsibility was thrust on him. First his father died of dysentery before they reach Fort Bridger and then his mother of pneumonia before they reach Fort Hall, but not before giving birth to another girl, whom she bequeathed to John with her dying breath. With the experience of being the oldest, he is able to care for Henrietta and is also suddenly able to follow all the orders of his parents that he had routinely disobeyed. Through raging rivers, freezing snow, and thieving Indians, John forces them to march on for 1000 miles, determined to honor their father's wish for them to homestead in Williamette Valley and their mother's wish that they not be separated. Turned away as too many for their aunt and uncle to take care of, they come at last to the Indian mission of Marcus and



Narcissa Whitman, who take them all, from the tiny baby to John, now as mature as a grown man.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Indian attack, illness, hunger, alone in the wilderness  
Emotional--Shock of the Indian attack, death of parents, burden of responsibility for six siblings

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Doll

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**Item:** Murrow, Liza Ketchum. *West Against the Wind*. New York: Holiday House, 1987.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages;** 232 **RL/IL:** 6-10

**Setting:** 1850, wagon train from Independence, Missouri to Yuba Valley, California

**Summary:** Following a year behind her gold-seeking father, fourteen-year old Abby Parker and her family leave their Ohio home and her married sister to seek a new life in California. Their party, which includes her mother, sixteen-year old brother Will, Uncle Joseph, and his new bride Emma, is joined in Missouri by secretive Matthew Reed, hired to drive the third wagon. Red-haired and impetuous, Abby has her own secret desire, beyond her longing to find her father, and that is to stake her own claim in California and become a land owner. Abby records their progress by noting in her diary, or "river scrapbook", each river that they ford and the circumstances and surrounding landmarks, including Chimney Rock by the Platte River which Abby, Will, and Matthew climb looking for the names of their loved ones in the many carved there by settlers who have traveled before them. When they finally succeed in crossing Truckee Pass in September, and frantically try to beat the approaching winter and snows, Abby and Matthew must leave the others, too weak with hunger to keep moving, and make a desperate attempt to bring help. By taking responsibility for both herself and others on her journey, Abby finds herself and comes to terms with what she wants out of life.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Raging river crossings, hail storm, oxen stampede, mosquitoes, broken arm, dysentery, cholera, broken rib, hunger, malnutrition, lack of water

Emotional: Not knowing if her father is dead or alive, falling in love

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Cordier

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**Item:** Nixon, Joan Lowery. *Caught in the Act: The Orphan Train Quartet Two*. New York: Bantam, 1988.

**Available:** Johnston Public Library    **Pages:** 150    **RL/IL:** 4-6

**Setting:** 1860, Missouri

**Summary:** When his family is separated after being sent West on the orphan train by their mother who hopes for a better life for them than she can provide in New York City, eleven-year old Michael Kelly does not have the good luck of his other brothers and sisters who are sent to loving homes. Instead, the Friedrichs expect him to work hard on their Missouri farm and blame him for things that are actually the fault of their own son Gunter. After he learns that one of the secrets that this family holds may involve murder, he is able to escape to the care of a cavalryman and his wife that he met on the orphan train and go West with them as he always wanted to do.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Poor treatment by his foster family

Emotional--Separation from the security of a loving family, falsely accused of stealing

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Brodie, Cordier,

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**Item:** Nixon, Joan Lowery. *A Deadly Promise*. New York: Bantam, 1992.

**Available:** Johnston Public Library    **Pages:** 152    **RL/IL:** 4-6

**Setting:** 1879 Leadtown, Colorado

**Summary:** Armed with the clue that her dying father gave her, seventeen-year old Sarah Lindley is determined to expose the scheme to defraud the miners that she discovers. She must outwit the most powerful and wealthy men in town who will stop at nothing to stifle her search for the truth that will clear her murdered father's name. Helped by two young men who are anxious about her safety and also interested in her affections, Susan is joined by her younger sister Susannah from Chicago as they plot to thwart the men who even the Marshall has not been able to stop. At a dance, Susan again meets the man who robbed the train that she took on her journey to Leadville, and he, too, is able to provide

her with help in her quest so that even when her courage seems to fail, Susan is able to draw upon inner reserves and her friends to complete it.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Gunmen sent by evil businessmen to stop search for the truth  
Emotional--Loss of parents, tug of two young men vying for her affections

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Smith

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**Item:** Nixon, Joan Lowery. *A Family Apart: The Orphan Train Quartet One*. New York: Bantam, 1987.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 152 **RL/IL:** 4-6

**Setting:** 1860, New York City to St. Joseph, Missouri

**Summary:** Thirteen-year old Francis Mary Kelly has been her mother's salvation in the year since their Irish immigrant Da died, leaving them and five younger children destitute and on their own in New York City. She works as a scrub woman by her mother's side and is adept at taking care of the younger ones. But when eleven-year old Mike is caught picking pockets and threatened with prison, Mrs. Kelly painfully decides to send her children West on the Orphan Train to new lives where they won't have such temptations and will finally have enough to eat and good clothes to wear. In order to make sure that she is chosen with the youngest, Frances Mary cuts her hair, dons boy's clothing, and becomes "Frankie". She and Petey are taken in by a loving farm couple, and "Frankie" learns how to milk a cow, about the Underground Railroad, and what a sacrifice her mother has made.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Poor housing, little clothing, less food, hard taskmaster  
Emotional--Being separated from the security of a loving family for the unknown charity of others

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Brodie, Cordier

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**Item:** Nixon, Joan Lowery. *High Trail to Danger*. New York: Bantam, 1992.

**Available:** JMS LMC **Pages:** 168 **RL/IL:** 4-6

**Setting:** 1879, from Chicago to Leadtown, Colorado

**Summary:** When their mother dies, Sarah and Susannah Lindley's Aunt Cora and Uncle Amos move in and immediately take over the boarding house that their mother has run for the ten years that her dreamer husband Ben has been traipsing around the West seeking his fortune. When the aunt and uncle take over their mother's bank account then demand to know her secret hiding place, practical fourteen-year old Susannah, who knows where that place is, sends her dramatic, seventeen-year old sister with the money to Colorado to find their father and bring him back. On the train, which is robbed by Jesse James, who seems to know her father, Sarah meets Jeremy Caulfield, whose attentions are almost smothering. On the stagecoach it is the handsome driver Clint Barnes who draws her interest, and the mystery surrounding her father deepens when one passenger takes her aside to tell her that for Sarah to be in Leadville could threaten her father's safety. Once there, Sarah learns that her father is a gambler who has been missing for two weeks and is wanted for murder but it was actually self-defense. Drawing on resources that she never knew she had, Sarah follows the clues that will lead her to her father.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Falling off a cliff, gunmen who want her father dead

Emotional--Loss of her mother, wicked relatives, search for her father

**Recommending Source:** Adamson

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**Item:** Nixon, Joan Lowery. *In the Face of Danger: The Orphan Train Quartet Three*. New York: Bantam, 1988.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 151

**RL/IL:** 4-6

**Setting:** 1860, Kansas Territory

**Summary:** Having traveled West from New York City on the Orphan Train with her five brothers and sisters, twelve-year old Megan Kelly is adopted by a young childless couple, Emma and Ben Browder, homesteading on the Kansas prairie. While she is disparately lonely for her family, including her destitute mother who remained in New York, Megan has little trouble loving the kind and caring couple who have become more like friends than parents to her. She has more to eat and more material possessions than she has ever known, but she is afraid that her long-ago curse as a "bad-luck penny" by a gypsy will bring disaster to them, also. A rattlesnake kills their dog, a sudden blizzard threatens their livestock, and a escaped murderer holds them hostage in their own

home before Megan finally sees that she has many good qualities, too, and hiding behind a curse will not help overcome troubles.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Rattlesnakes, prairie weather, murderer

Emotional--Loneliness for her divided family, poor self-esteem

**Recommending Source:** Adamson

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**Item:** Nixon, Joan Lowery. *A Place to Belong: The Orphan Train Quartet Four*. New York: Bantam, 1989.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 147 **RL/IL:** 4-6

**Setting:** 1860, on a farm near St. Joseph, Missouri

**Summary:** Sent West on an orphan train by their destitute mother, ten-year old Danny and seven-year old Peg are taken in by quiet and kindly Alfrid and Olga Swenson, who are successful farmers. Peg is able to start calling Olga "Mama" almost immediately but Danny has a harder time adjusting to being separated from his mother and other brothers and sisters. They both love being able to go to school for the first time in their lives, and Danny becomes especially attached to Alfrid, whom he idolizes. When sickly Olga dies, Danny hatches another one of his many plans, this time to convince his mother to join them as Alfrid's new wife. However, as usual, Danny's plan does not work out quite as he hoped.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Evil man who tries to harm Danny, fights between abolitionists and antislavery abolitionists

Emotional--Loss of father, two mothers, brothers and sisters

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Brodie

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**Item:** O'Dell, Scott. *Carlota*. Boston: Houghton, 1977.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 153 **RL/IL:** 5-8

**Setting:** 1846, New Spain, later to become California

**Summary:** Sixteen-year old Carlota de Zubaran has been encouraged as a horseman, or vacquero, by her father Don Saturnino on their ranch in southern California, in place of his son who was killed by Plutes. It is the

war between the Mexicans and Americans for California that changes Carlota's quiet ranch life. Her father is wounded at the Battle of San Pasqual and later dies, leaving her in charge of the 47,000-acre ranch. And Carlota realizes after that battle that she does have an interest in more than horses. She has a compassion and feelings that she has never recognized, and with Carlota in charge of the ranch and the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill, things will never be the same.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Diving in a shipwreck, battle  
Emotional--Trying to be someone that she cannot

**Recommending Sources:** Cordier, Doll

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**Item:** O'Dell, Scott. *Sing Down the Moon*. New York: Dell, 1970.

**Available:** JMS LMC                      **Pages:** 137                      **RL/IL:** 5-8

**Setting:** 1863-5, Arizona and New Mexico

**Summary:** Sold into slavery by Spanish captors, Bright Morning escapes and returns home to go through the Womanhood Ceremony and is on the verge of beginning married life when U.S. soldiers come and capture the people of her canyon village, along with over 8000 other Navaho Indians, who are herded hundreds of miles to Ft. Sumner, New Mexico. The tone is somber as many of the Navaho men lose their will while imprisoned there, but the soldiers cannot break the spirit of Bright Morning, who is resolute in her decision to escape with her husband, Tall Boy, and return to their homeland so as not to lose her way of life, based on the Native American reverence for the earth.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Capture by slavers, capture by soldiers, lack of food and shelter on the Long Walk of the Navajo  
Emotional--Separated from family, husband's loss of spirit

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Cordier, Howard, Sharp

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**Item:** Oke, Janette. *Love's Long Journey*. Minneapolis, MN: Bethany, 1982.

**Available:** JMS LMC                      **Pages:** 207                      **RL/IL:** 7-9

**Setting:** Homesteading on the prairie

**Summary:** With Henry Klein, the hired hand, driving their second wagon, Willie and Missie LeHaye, barely out of their teens, have finally started West in a band of 27 wagons to the land that Willie had claimed two years earlier. Delayed by rain and mud and then for four weeks by the high level of Big River, they reach Tettsford Junction later than planned. Even though Willie's claim is only a week away by wagon, he insists that Missie stay in town while he goes ahead because on the trail Missie discovers that she is expecting, and there is a doctor in the town for when her time comes. Fighting against being left behind, Missie finally agrees to stay until their son Nathan is born, with her faith in God and love of her husband to carry her through.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--River crossings, childbirth, croup,  
Emotional--Homesickness

**Recommending Sources:** VanMeter

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**Item:** Paulsen, Gary. *Call Me Francis Tucket*. New York: Delacorte, 1995.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 97

**RL/IL:** 5-8

**Setting:** 1849, somewhere on the prairie east of the Rocky Mountains

**Summary:** After spending a year with mountain man Mr. Grimes, who rescued him from captivity in an Indian village after an attack on his family's wagon train, fifteen-year old Francis Tucket leaves when he experiences the horror of seeing Mr. Grimes scalp an Indian whom he was fighting. Francis now knows well how to take care of himself in the wilderness but realizes that he does not want it to make him as savage as those who live there. He attempts to join a passing wagon train but is separated from them in a buffalo stampede and then left to die by two passing thieves who take everything he has, even his shirt and his horse, and leave him and an old mule to die. After he is able to steal back his possessions, he realizes that he is hopelessly lost, and then he finds two children, left by a previous wagon train with their dying father, and must take on the responsibility of their care as they all attempt to find their way to Oregon, where Francis knows that his family was headed when he was first taken hostage by the Indians.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Buffalo stampede, thieves, hunger, cholera  
Emotional--Constant dependence on only his own resources

**Recommending Source:** Horn Book Guide (Fall 1995)

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**Item:** Paulsen, Gary. *Mr. Tucket*. New York: Delacorte Press, 1994.

**Available:** JMS LMC                      **Pages:** 166                      **RL/IL:** 5-8

**Setting:** 1848, on a wagon train to Oregon

**Summary:** On a wagon train with his family in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, fourteen-year-old Francis Tucket receives a rifle for his birthday but is separated from the wagon train and captured by Pawnees that very day. Kept as a slave at their Black Hill camp, Francis tries for over a month to escape but does not succeed until Mr. Grimes, a one-armed mountain man, wearing a derby and buckskins, arrives and helps him. Mr. Grimes teaches Francis many little tricks that make surviving in the wild easier, and they spend the winter trapping beaver before Francis joins another wagon train to Oregon in search of his family. Knowing Mr. Grimes also teaches Francis that there are many different types of people and lifestyles in the world.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Capture by Indians, Indian raids, snowstorms, living off the land  
Emotional--Separation from family, death of friends, acceptance of other life styles

**Recommending Source:** Horn Book Guide (Spring 1994)

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**Item:** Roberts, Willo Davis. *Jo and the Bandit*. New York: Atheneum, 1992.

**Available:** JMS LMC                      **Pages:** 185                      **RL/IL:** Gr 5-8

**Setting:** late 1860's, Texas

**Summary:** After their grandmother dies leaving them orphans, twelve-year old Josephina Whitman and her brother Andrew, nine, travel from their home in Alabama to Muddy Wells, Texas, where they are to live with their uncle, Judge Macklin, a gruff "hangin' judge", until their widowed Aunt Harriet in Galveston can move them, with her own three children, back to Alabama and take care of them all. On the way, their stagecoach is held up by five bandits, and Jo, a budding artist, memorizes every detail that she can, just as if she were going to draw them. The Judge begins to soften up some, especially when he learns that Jo is good with numbers



and likes working in his mercantile store. But when she recognizes two of the bandits as customers in the store one day, the Judge decides to use her a bait in their capture. Not only is Jo fearful of the plan, but she is also drawn to one of the robbers, younger than the rest, who secretly returns to her the locket with her parents' pictures that the older ones had insisted he take during the stagecoach robbery. Jo discovers that his name is Rufus, that he is the stepson of the leader of the gang, and that he has been forced to participate in the robberies. But how will she ever convince her hot-tempered uncle of that? Jo knows that she has only her own intelligence to rely on.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Armed robbers, tornado

Emotional--Death of parents and grandmother, being sent to live with an unknown relative

**Recommending Source:** Adamson

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**Item:** Schaefer, Jack. *Shane*. New York: Bantam, 1949.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 119

**RL/IL:** Gr 6-12

**Setting:** 1889, Wyoming range

**Summary:** To young Bob and his parents, Joe and Marian Starrett, the slim man dressed in black who rides into their valley and goes by one name, Shane, is a godsend. And for awhile they are a refuge for him. His background is never openly discussed, but it is obvious that he is a gun fighter, content for a time to work as a hired hand on the Starrett farm, idolized by Bob and loved by his parents. But trouble is brooding in their valley, between the farmers like Starrett who want to fence in the land, and the rancher Fletcher who wants it to remain free range for his huge cattle herd, as it always has been. As summer progresses, Fletcher sends cow hands to taunt and goad the farmers into rash actions until the mounting tension builds in an intolerable crescendo to climax in a fight between Shane and Fletcher's hired gun slinger.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Nervous men with guns

Emotional--Tension of constant harassment by the strong of the weaker

**Recommending Sources:** Howard, Smith

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**Item:** Talbot, Charlene Joy. *The Sodbuster Venture*. New York: Atheneum, 1982.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 194

**RL/IL:** Gr 6-8

**Setting:** 1870, on the Kansas prairie, outside Abilene

**Summary:** Thirteen-year-old Maud McPherson has kept house for the gentlemanly Mr. Nelson for two months when he succumbs to tuberculosis just before his bride-to-be, Belle Warren, arrives at the 160-acre homestead that he has claimed as his, free since he had been a soldier in the Civil War. Before he dies, Mr. Nelson makes Maud promise to convince Belle to claim the homestead as her own and try to make a go of it for at least a year. Glad to be out of her sister and abusive brother-in-law's house, Maud helps Belle make it through the funeral and get to the land office in time to officially register her right to the claim. In the next year they have to battle their evil, drunken neighbors the Coddington brothers, a cattle stampede, a prairie fire, drought, grasshopper infestation, and a blizzard.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Evil men, rigors of prairie life

Emotional--Lack of family support, fear of failure

**Recommending Sources:** Brodie, Cordier, Howard, VanMeter

**Item:** Taylor, Theodore. *Walking up a Rainbow: Being the True Version of the Long and Hazardous Journey of Susan D. Carlisle, Mrs. Myrtle Dessery, Drover Bert Pettit, and Cowboy Clay Carmer and Others*. New York: Delacorte, 1986.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 275

**RL/IL:** Gr 7-10

**Setting:** 1851-2, from Iowa to California by wagon train

**Summary:** To save her home in Kaneshville (later Council Bluffs), Iowa, thirteen-year old Susan Carlisle, only child of the late Dr. and Mrs. Giddings Carlisle, must find a way to pay off the \$15,000 debt that her father owes from his part ownership in a sunken steamboat, the "Missouri Rainbow". Given a thirteen-month grace period in which to come up with the money to pay the notorious gambler and owner of a local saloon and house of ill-repute, G. B. Minzter, Susan and her old, but not elderly, guardian, Indian Myrt Dessery, set out to sell the only thing that she owns outright, nearly 3000 head of sheep that her father had put in her name.

But in order to get enough money from them to pay off her father's debt, she must first sell their wool and then drive them West, where they will fetch a much better price as food the hungry miners. Living by her mottoes, "Meeting emergencies is what life is all about" and "Where the sheep go, I go", and with some tragedy as well as much comedy, the brass, impetuous Susan and her hired drovers start out on a dangerous journey that ends in Sacramento City with a profit of just \$8730. Her ace in the hole, Uncle Roblett Darden, turns out to be a gambler and a thief so her only choice is to have their drover gamble her money for more, by which he is able to raise her fortune to \$14,800. But then there is the problem of returning to Iowa by way of Panama by the November 2, 1852, deadline. Susan's faith in the goodness of man is sorely tested by her journey, but she is able to rely on herself and her Auntie Dessery to overcome all obstacles, even if things do not turn out as she hopes.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Unscrupulous men, armed robbers, gunfights, near-rape,  
rigors of prairie life, Rocky Mountain spotted fever  
Emotional--Loss of family, fear of failure

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Horn Book Guide (Spring 1995)

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**Item:** Turner, Ann. *Grasshopper Summer*. Mahwah, NJ: Troll, 1989.

**Available:** JMS LMC

**Pages:** 166

**RL/IL:** Gr 4-6

**Setting:** 1874, from Kentucky to the Dakota Territory prairie

**Summary:** Samuel T. White, age 12, his brother Billy, age 10, and their parents leave their grandparents' war-ravaged plantation in Kentucky where they have always lived for a wagon journey to the Dakota Territory. While the boys and their mother have mixed emotions about the move, their father longs for a new start that will put the war far behind him. Just as they are getting settled in their sod home and new life in the vast prairie with its endless expanse of quiet, wind, and sky, swarms of grasshoppers invade and eat everything green in sight, even the green stripes off a dress. Should they borrow money and stay or go home in defeat? It is a decision that will affect the rest of their lives.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Rigors of a wagon journey, nature's challenges on the prairie  
Emotional--Loneliness in the wilderness, need to leave the war behind

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Brodie

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**Item:** Turner, Ann. *Third Girl from the Left*. New York: Macmillan, 1986.

**Available:** Urbandale Public Library **Pages:** 153 **RL/IL:** Gr 8-10

**Setting:** 1885, from Dewborne, Maine to Montana

**Summary:** Raised by her father and maiden aunt, eighteen-year old Sarah Goodhue feels penned in by her life on their farm in a small Maine town and recognizes that for her there is more to life than getting married and staying with her friends and neighbors. Desperate to escape that fate, she answers an advertisement for a mail-order bride and travels by train, stagecoach, and wagon to her new home and life in Montana, where she discovers that her new husband, Alex T. Proud, has fibbed as much about his age as she has about being "of docile temper." On a 2000-acre ranch near the mountains that her mother had romanticized, with a 60-year old husband, three ranch hands, and a Chinese cook, Sarah rises to the challenge and matures from a headstrong girl into a capable woman and at last feels at home.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Blizzard, bitter cold, fatal accident

Emotional--Isolation of the prairie, leaving a previous life behind for a new one, without the support of friends, family, or familiar places

**Recommending Sources:** Adamson, Cordier, VanMeter

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**Item:** Woodruff, Elvira. *Dear Levi: Letters from the Overland Trail*. New York: Knopf, 1994.

**Available:** JMS LMC **Pages:** 119 **RL/IL:** Gr 4-8

**Setting:** 1851, wagon train on the Oregon Trail

**Summary:** In a series of letters written by 12-year old Austin to his younger brother Levi, Austin describes a journey by wagon train from Pennsylvania to Oregon in 1851. The boys are orphaned when their father is killed while staking a claim to land in Oregon. Austin's plan is to journey west with the Morrison family, claim his father's land, and work as a logger until he can send for his brother. However, many hardships on the way make it often seem as if this will be impossible. There are wind storms, Indian attacks, a grizzly bear to face, and the grinding hard

work of the journey which some people are not able to bear. But there are good friends and good times, too, to balance out the hard life.

**Challenges to Survival:**

Physical--Weather, overland journey by wagon, Indian attacks, wild animals

Emotional--Death of friends, absence of family support

**Recommending Source:** Horn Book Guide (Spring 1994)

## Chapter 4

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Conclusions

Using historical fiction in the social studies curriculum as a means of humanizing the study of history for children has had well-documented success, as pointed out by such people as Mary Cordier, Elizabeth Howard, and Linda Levstik. The story provided by historical fiction excites students' imaginations and gives them the subjectivity of shared emotions with their forefathers in a way that objective textbooks cannot. Realizing what hardships the pioneers of the American West confronted and what a deep desire for freedom and prosperity drove them onward in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, helps children to see themselves as connected to not only their American ancestors but also as a part of the larger society of humanity.

Thematic units used in an integrated curriculum are recommended by such educational experts as Heidi Jacobs and Susan Kovalik as a way to instill in students a love of learning. In this kind of a learning environment, students are given the freedom to choose from a variety of ways to study a subject in order that they may take advantage of their own best learning style. With the increased success that they then experience from this personalized study, students are encouraged to become lifelong learners and thus more productive citizens.

The team teaching and block scheduling changes that were implemented this year in the eighth grade at the Johnston Middle School, Johnston, Iowa, have made it possible for each eighth-grade teacher to blend the language arts curriculum and social studies curriculum for the group of students that each teacher is instructing in any number of ways, including using

historical fiction for both language arts and social studies. Their literature textbook theme of the will to survive also lends itself handily to this blending of curriculum, in particular in the study of the American West. For those eighth-grade classes, this annotated bibliography of historical fiction that includes stories of adventure, risk, and courage will provide a hook to entice them into real learning. Because the sources from which this bibliography is chosen are selective, it includes only books that have been recommended for their high literary quality, as well as meeting the setting, grade level, and theme criteria that have been set by the eighth grade teachers who will use it. The accessibility criteria is one that the librarians are most familiar with and are able to provide to the teachers and students through this school's library media center, the nearby public libraries, and the school interlibrary loan system administered by the Heartland Area Education Agency.

### Recommendations

In completing this bibliography, the researcher found that there is no lack of books meeting the criteria set forth in this study. It was very satisfying being able to select from numerous well-written titles for inclusion. The selection sources chosen included titles from a range of copyrights so that the books chosen for the bibliography were a variety of both older and contemporary titles. This occasioned some nostalgia in the researcher for the more light-hearted way of writing for children of the researcher's childhood. However, the contemporary titles will one day be nostalgic for the intended audience of this bibliography so it is necessary that they be included. The older titles will always have an audience because children enjoy a happy ending. An additional reason that the resulting bibliography will stand the test of time is that one criterion for the selection sources was that they include only titles of high literary quality.

There are many variations of this study possible. One would be to expand it to include other frontiers, such as the frontier of space. Many others could be suggested by the thematic units of different grade levels. With the example of this bibliography, students could even be encouraged to develop something similar. Such a student-produced project could be a choice provided them in a language or history class for those students who learn better in a self-directed fashion. It would be limited only by their abilities.

In their role as an information specialist, library media specialists should be involved in planning as many of a school's thematic interdisciplinary units as humanly possible. Their expertise in locating sources of information in many formats, including fiction, informational, and non-print, is of invaluable help to the classroom teacher. As an instructional consultant, library media specialists can help classroom teachers discover ways to present information, to locate information, and to provide for students' varied learning styles, as shown by the example of this project. If the library media specialist can provide a means of team planning and teaching to the classroom teacher, a bond will be forged that will enhance children's learning immeasurably.

### Summary

The 50 books that make up this bibliography are by no means an exhaustive list of the the books that meet the criteria chosen. As teachers and students discover possible titles to add to it, either recently published or newly located, they will be included so that the list will remain viable. Similarly, titles that can no longer be obtained by the students will be dropped. In this way, the bibliography should be useful for many years and for many students who will have their appetite for history and learning whetted through literature that will let their imaginations soar.



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## Appendix A

## Selection Tools

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Appendix B  
Selection Form

**Bibliographic Information**

Author

Title

Publisher

Date

Number of Pages

**Criteria**

Challenge to Survival

Physical

Emotional

Other

Setting

Time

Place

Availability

Reading Level Range

**Annotation Elements**

**Recommending Source**