Annotated Bibliography of Children's Literature
Resources on War, Terrorism, and Disaster Since 1945:
By Continents/Countries for Grades K-8

GENERAL

Dunmore, H. (2002). *Amina's blanket.* Ill. by P. Dainton. New York: Crabtree. Although not the most artful of children's literature, this transitional book nevertheless tells a touching story of a girl, Josie, who, along with her class, knitting a blanket to send to those suffering because of war. Josie dreams of a girl, Amina, whom she later sees in a photograph and so discovers she is real. Gr. K-3

Ellis, D. (2008). *Off to war: Voices of soldiers' children.* Toronto: Groundwood. Ellis interviews the children of soldiers in Canada and the United States. The theme of military families helping each other is prevalent. The children also discuss the hardship of living with a parent who has posttraumatic stress disorder, as well as their ideas for ending war. Gr. 4-8


AFRICA

Wilkes, S. (1994). *One day we had to run! Refugee children tell their stories in words and paintings.* Brookfield, CT: Millbrook. Stories from the Sudan, Somalia, Ethiopia, and Rwanda, powerfully told. Gr. 4-8

AIDS in Africa

Ellis, D. (2004). *The heaven shop.* Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside. In this novel, Binti, a teen actress in AIDS education plays and radio in Malawi, loses her mother and then her father to AIDS. She and her siblings are split up among relatives, who treat them harshly. Because the relatives live far away and she must move, Binti loses her acting job. She is eventually reunited with her loving grandmother, who has taken in many orphans. While not graphically described, rape and prostitution for survival may make this an inappropriate book for some. Gr. 6-8

Ellis, D. (2005). *Our stories, our songs: African children talk about AIDS.* Toronto: Fitzhenry & Whiteside. Despite the hardships, children find ways to create art and make meaning of their lives. Their narratives are interspersed with helpful information about the disease. Gr. 4-8

Angola

Flegg, A. (2000). *The cinnamon tree: A novel set in Africa.* Dublin, Ireland: O'Brien Press. While Flegg's choice to create an imaginary country set in Africa, loosely based on Angola, may unintentionally imply that all African countries are alike, his novel honors the experience of child landmine victims. Yola, who travels to Ireland for her prosthetic, is a believable character dealing with her loss. Gr. 4-8

Ethiopia

Asgedom, M. (2001). *Of beetles and angels: A boy's remarkable journey from a refugee camp to Harvard.* Boston: Little, Brown. Asgedom, a refugee from Ethiopia who received a scholarship to Harvard, chronicles his journey in this autobiography and describes the misunderstandings people experience when moving from one culture to another. Gr. 4-8


Kenya

Mwangi, M. (2005). *The Mzungu boy.* Toronto: Groundwood/House of Anansi. (Original work published 1990). This novel is about the Mau Mau rebellion of the 1950s, when British colonialists killed over 12,000 Kenyans. The young protagonist exercises bravery and faces conflict as family members respond differently to the situation. Gr. 4-8

Mozambique

two sisters, Maria and Sofia. After fleeing their Mozambique home during civil war, Sofia and Maria are told at their new shelter that they must always stay on the path when walking. One day, in a playful moment, Sofia strays and sets off a landmine. Maria is killed, and Sofia loses both of her legs. The remainder of the book recounts Sofia’s painful adjustment, and her sorrow at losing her sister. Gr. 4-8

**Rwanda**
Cornwell, N. (2006). *Christophe’s story*. Ill. by Karin Littlewood. London: Frances Lincoln. Christophe, who left Rwanda for the United Kingdom, bears a bullet wound from Rwanda’s genocidal conflict. With the encouragement of a kind and understanding teacher, Christophe eventually is able to use storytelling to move past his difficulties, and to talk with others about the origin of his scar. Gr. 2-8

Jansen, H. (2002). *Over a thousand hills I walk with you* (Elizabeth D. Crawford, Trans.). Minneapolis, MN: Carolrhoda. This story, written by the adoptive mother of a Rwandan girl who lost everyone dear to her, contains interludes in which the author breaks from the narrative and poignantly speaks directly to her adopted daughter. Gr. 4-8


**Somalia**

**Sudan: The Civil War (1983-2005)**
Bok, F., with Tivnan, T. (2003). *Escape from slavery: The true story of my ten years in captivity—and my journey to freedom in America*. New York: St. Martin’s Griffin. This is the autobiography of Bok from the Dinka tribe in Sudan, who was captured and lived in slavery for 10 years. Gr. 6-8


Deng, B., Deng, A., & Ajak, B., with Bernstein, J. A. (2005). *They poured fire on us from the sky: The true story of three lost boys from Sudan*. New York: Public Affairs. With Judy Bernstein, a passionate advocate about the tragedy in Sudan, three young men who now reside in the U.S. recall the events that led up to their immigration. Gr. 4-8

Mead, A. (2003). *Year of no rain*. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux. This novel tells the story of young boys who are separated from their families because of war and who undergo great difficulties in search of humanitarian aid. Some members of their families are killed; others live and are reunited. Gr. 4-8


Williams, M. (2005). *Brothers in hope: The story of the lost boys of Sudan*. Ill. by R. G. Christie. New York: Lee & Low. In this picture book, illustrated by the brilliant, expressionistic artist R. Gregory Christie, Williams tells of the thousands of boys orphaned and made homeless in the world’s longest civil war. On their own and in order to survive, they organized themselves into smaller groups, with some of the older boys serving as stand-in parents for younger children. Gr. K-8

**Sudan: The Genocide in Darfur**
Levy, J. (2009). *Genocide in Darfur*. New York: Rosen. One of the few informational books for young readers about Darfur. There is a brief history of genocide in general (and of genocide in Darfur in particular) and an account of the world’s response to it. The photographs, while enhancing the text, will not overwhelm young readers. Gr. 4-8

Orr, T. (2009). *George Clooney and the crisis in Darfur*. New York: Rosen. As part of a new series called *Celebrity Activists*, this book gives a brief biography of Clooney, then describes the situation in Darfur and Clooney’s involvement and leadership. The book also lists suggestions for becoming an advocate for Darfur. Gr. 4-8

**ASIA**

**Afghanistan**

Ellis, D. (2000, 2002, 2003). *The breadwinner*. *Parvana’s journey. Mud city*. Toronto: Groundwood. In 1998, Ellis worked in an Afghan refugee camp along the Pakistan border. There, she learned of girls who, under the repressive dictatorship of the Taliban, had to dress up as boys to forage a living for their families. Their fathers and brothers were either dead, conscripted into the Taliban army, or in prison. Their mothers and older sisters were not allowed outside their homes without a male escort. In *The Breadwinner*, Parvana tries to make a living in Kabul masquerading as a boy. Parvana and her friend Shauzia, who also dresses as a boy, enter a stadium expecting to sell cigarettes and gum to sports spectators. Instead they see the Taliban chop off the hands of so-called criminals. In *Parvana’s Journey*, Parvana sets out to find her mother and sister, from whom she was separated after her father’s death. Along the way, she bands together with other forsaken
children, including an infant. Later, a landmine explosion kills one of the children. Mud City focuses on Parvana's friend Shauzia, who endures difficult conditions in and out of a refugee camp in Pakistan. Gr. 4-8


Zoya, with Folllain, J., & Cristofari, R. (2002). Zoya's story: An Afghan woman's struggle for freedom. New York: Morrow. Zoya (a pseudonym) recounts her story of growing up under Islamic fundamentalism in Afghanistan. After her parents are murdered, Zoya and her grandmother flee to Pakistan, where she joins the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA). She returns to Afghanistan wearing the burqa in seeming compliance to Taliban rules; in fact, the burqa hides the cameras that Zoya uses to photograph Taliban atrocities. Gr. 6-8

The Cambodian Genocide


Crew, L. (1991). Children of the river. New York: Doubleday. The author, who became acquainted with Cambodian refugees in her native Oregon, writes compassionately in this novel about the cultural conflict that awaits Sundara, who, because of the Khmer Rouge takeover, has had to flee Cambodia with her aunt and uncle without knowing if the rest of her family is dead or alive. Gr. 4-8


Ho, M. (1991). The clay marble. New York: Farrar Straus Giroux. After her father is murdered in the Cambodian genocide, Dara flees with her family to a refugee camp. She begins to make new friends, but her resilience is challenged when the camp is bombed. Gr. 2-8

Koopmans, A. (2005). Pol Pot. New York: Lucent/Thomson Gale. This biography is well-researched and well-written, with many photographs and resources. While relying on the respected Cambodian genocide scholars David Chandler and Ben Kiernan for information, Koopmans also traveled to Cambodia as part of his research. Gr. 4-8

Lord, M. (2008). A song for Cambodia. Ill. by S. Arihara. New York: Lee & Low. This picture book is based on the true story of Arn Chorn-Pond, who was snatched from his family by the Khmer Rouge and made to work in labor camps. His ability to play the khim (a hammered dulcimer) soothes and nurtures him, helping him to survive. Gr. 4-8

China: Cultural Revolution


The Hmong


Pakistan

D'Adamo, F. (2003). Iqbal. Ill. by A. Lenori. New York: Atheneum. Based on the true story of Iqbal Masih, this is a biography of the child labor leader who was assassinated when he was 13 years old. Gr. 4-8

Kuklin, S. (1998). Iqbal Masih and the crusaders against child slavery. New York: Holt. A biography of the Pakistani teenager who was assassinated for his activism. Gr. 4-8

Vietnam


THE CARIBBEAN

Dominican Republic

Alvarez, J. (2002). *Before we were free*. New York: Knopf. This novel subsequently was made into a film about growing up under the dictator Trujillo in the Dominican Republic. Gr. 6-8

Cuba, since 1959


Haiti


CENTRAL AND SOUTH AMERICA

General


El Salvador

Argueta, J. (2003). *Xóchitl and the flowers/Xóchitl, la niña de las flores*. Ill. by C. Angel. San Francisco: Children’s Book Press. After fleeing war-torn El Salvador, a family tries to re-create the beauty and memory of flowers from their country. The community bands together to help a landlord understand that selling flowers on a vacant lot is preferable to what existed before. Gr. K-5


Guatemala

Mikaelsen, B. (2004). *Tree girl*. New York: HarperCollins. Based on a true story, Mikaelsen’s novel depicts the horrors of genocide as experienced by one young teen. Her family is murdered, and she witnesses other murders and acts of rape on her way to a refugee camp in Mexico. Eventually, her love for climbing trees, which saved her life, also helps her gain the perspective that she must continue to live for her remaining younger sibling, and for those who have become her new family. Gr. 6-8

EUROPE

Bosnia and Kosovo

De Groen, E. (1997). *No roof in Bosnia* (P. Crampton, Trans.). Barnstaple, Devon, Great Britain: Spindlewood. In this novel, Aida, lured by apple orchards, meets an older woman, Antonia, who befriends and helps her. Aida soon learns that Antonia has similarly befriended other teens, orphaned by the war. Their goal is, eventually, to find UN peacekeepers to help them. They meet challenges but are sustained by their new friendships. Gr. 4-8

Dorros, A. (2006). *Under the sun: A novel based on true stories of survival during war*. New York: Amulet. Forced to flee Sarajevo, Ehet travels with his mother to the home of relatives in the countryside, leaving his journalist father behind. The Serbs find them and, although not graphically described, the rape of his mother by Serbs is implied. Unable to recover, his mother eventually dies, and Ehet must use all his resources to survive. He makes his way to the Children’s Home in Croatia, where he is reunited with his father. The Children’s Home was a real place, where Serb, Muslim, Croat, and Jew lived peacefully. Gr. 6-8


Halilbegovich, N. (2006). *My childhood under fire: A Sarajevo diary*. Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press. Halilbegovich revisits as an adult the diary she kept while a child in Bosnia. Particularly notable are the many outlets she found for herself that also provided encouragement for others: playing her guitar, singing, writing poetry, knitting, drawing, making toys, putting together an exhibition, and publishing a newspaper. Gr. 4-8

Hicilyilmaz, G. (1998). *Smiling for strangers*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. With only a scrap of paper showing the name of someone her parents once knew, 14-year-old Nina flees Yugoslavia for the United Kingdom, where she encounters some surprising twists that eventually lead to a new meaning of family. Gr. 4-8


his legs were badly injured. The novel ends with the NATO rescue. Gr. 4-8


Waterlow, J. (1998). *A family from Bosnia*. Austin, TX: Raintree Steck-Vaughn. The narrative and text of this informational book combine to leave the reader with no doubt of the large-scale ugliness as well as the day-to-day inconveniences of war. Gr. K-6

**Greece**

Aliki. (1998). *Marianthe’s story one: Painted words and Marianthe’s story two: Spoken memories*. New York: Greenwillow. Based on Aliki’s own experiences, a Greek family escapes to the United States. *Story One* depicts Marianthe’s difficulties as an immigrant child in school. She is fortunate to have a teacher who helps her make the adjustment, and who takes note of the girl’s artistic abilities, which help her express and communicate her feelings. *Story Two* gives the historical background of war, explaining why the family sought to emigrate. Gr. K-5

**THE MIDDLE EAST**

**General**


**Iraq**


Bodnarchuk, K. (2001). *Kurdistan: Region under siege*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner. One of the few informational books for young people on the plight of the Kurds, an ethnic group with no identifiable country of their own. Gr. 2-8

Ellis, D. (2009). *Children of war: Voices of Iraqi refugees*. Toronto: Groundwood. Ellis traveled to Jordan to meet with Iraqi children who have fled their homes. She includes children whose parents were members of the Ba’athist party as well Mandeans Christians and others. Iraqi children ask Americans to think how they would feel if Iraqis invaded their country, and ask Americans to elect a “kinder” president. One Iraqi child suggests that everyone should drop their weapons and instead pick up musical instruments and “have battles with music” (p. 124). The children’s stories graphically show how the war disrupted their day-to-day lives. Gr. 4-8


**Palestine and Israel**

Barakat, I. (2007). *Tasting the sky: A Palestinian childhood*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux. This autobiography takes place during the Six-Day War of 1967. For a Palestinian refugee, school and writing become a way to gain an understanding of turbulent times. Gr. 4-8

Ellis, D. (2004). *Three wishes: Palestinian and Israeli children speak*. Toronto: Groundwood. Ellis even-handedly alternates Palestinian and Israeli children’s voices. Yanal, a Palestinian 14-year-old boy, says, “In many ways, I can understand the suicide bombers. When you’ve lost everyone, when you have no one left to rely on, and no hope that things will get better, why stay alive? I heard about a five-year-old boy. He was in school, and he came home to find his family all dead and his house destroyed. What can he do? He will be sad for the rest of his life” (pp. 61-62). Asif, an Israeli 15-year-old boy, says, “To be Jewish in Israel means growing up faster than kids in some other countries. We have to face reality sooner, and be prepared to deal with it. …The war has made me more involved in the world” (p. 96). Gr. 6-8


Mobin-Uddin, A. (2007). *The best Eid ever*. Ill. by L. Jacobsen. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press. In this picture book, Aneesa is lonely when her parents go to Saudi Arabia on the Hajj pilgrimage, although her grandmother is with her. She meets two girls who are refugees from a war-torn country. They do not have the money for new clothes to celebrate Eid; Aneesa secretly gives them hers, along with the food her grandmother has prepared, and discovers that helping others brings its own rewards. Gr. K-5

Nye, N. S. (Sel.). (1998). *The space between our footsteps: Poems and paintings from the Middle East*. New York: Simon and Schuster. This collection features both Israeli and Palestinian contributions. Gr. 4-8
