

Children's Historical Understanding Picture Book List

Note: This list was compiled by A. von Heyking in March, 2005. The listed books have not been reviewed or authorized by Alberta Education.

1.2 Moving Forward with the Past: My Family, My History and My Community

Family Stories/Memories:

Ackerman, Karen. *Song and Dance Man* (1988)

Grandpa demonstrates for his visiting grandchildren some of the songs, dances, and jokes he performed when he was a vaudeville entertainer.

Bahr, Mary. *The Memory Box* (1992)

Zach is looking forward to a wonderful summer with his grandparents at the lake. But as he fishes and spends time with Gramps, he begins to suspect that something is wrong. When he discovers that Gramps has Alzheimer's he creates a memory box to capture all the special times they have spent together. Zach realizes that there are changes ahead for the family, but the love they have for each other will never change.

Blumenthal, Deborah. *Aunt Claire's Yellow Beehive Hair* (2001)

When the extended family gathers for celebrations, Annie hears all about the people in the photographs on her grandmother's mantel. This piques her interest, so one rainy day she sits down with her grandmother and makes a family album, complete with artifacts, photos and stories – good and not so good – about family members. This is a nice introduction to the use of family photos and artifacts and also makes the point that we remember the past in order to make our way into the future.

Bourgeois, Paulette. *Oma's Quilt* (2001)

Emily's grandmother must leave her home on Maple Street. At the retirement home she complains about everything. When Emily and her mother begin to sort through Oma's possessions, they think of a wonderful way to preserve all the memories she is afraid of losing.

Bradby, Marie. *Momma, Where are You From?* (2000)

An African-American mother shares her memories of growing up in segregated America with her daughter. A nice message introduction to an activity on parents' memories as well as an interesting illustration of how times change.

Brisson, Pat. *Star Blanket* (2003)

When Laura goes to bed, she loves to hear her father's story of her star blanket. The blanket was his and the stars represent members of the extended family. One by one, they name the relatives represented by the stars and in the process, emphasize the connection they have to relatives in the past, present and future.

Bunting, Eve. *The Memory String* (2000)

Each button on Laura's memory string represents a piece of her family's history. The buttons she cherishes the most are those that belonged to her mother, especially the one from the nightgown she was wearing on the night she died. When the string breaks and the buttons lost, Laura's new stepmother consoles her and helps her look for the buttons, just like her mother would have. But Jane isn't her mother. Can Jane help Laura understand that buttons can be added to the string and that the family will make new memories?

Fox, Mem. Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge (1984)
Young Wilfrid tries to help his friend, elderly Miss Cooper, find her lost memories.

Galbraith, Kathryn O. *Laura Charlotte* (1997)
A mother tells her daughter the story about the gray flannel elephant she played with as a child – the one that the daughter now loves. A well-illustrated book that emphasizes the importance of family story telling and the way objects can spark those stories.

Johnson, Angela. *Tell Me a Story, Mama* (1989)
A young girl and her mother remember together all the girl's favourite stories about her mother's childhood. A natural introduction to an interview with parents.

Koutsky, Jan Dale. *My Grandma, My Pen Pal* (2002)
A scrapbook-like treatment of the correspondence between a grandmother and grandchild that illustrates the changing and yet enduring bond between generations.

Lasky, Kathryn. *Before I was Your Mother* (2003)
A mother tells her daughter about the things she liked to do when she was young.

MacDonald, Anne Louise. *The Memory Stone* (1998)
Laura is not having much fun during her first overnight visit to her aunt Pat, until Pat teaches her how memories are made and preserved.

Root, Phyllis. *The Name Quilt* (2003)
Every summer, Grandma tells Sadie the stories of the relatives named on her special quilt. One day the quilt is lost in a storm. Does that mean that their stories will be lost too?

Rylant, Cynthia. *The Relatives Came* (1993)
The relatives come to visit from Virginia and everyone has a wonderful time.

Scrimger, Richard. *Bun Bun's Birthday* (2001)
Winifred is delighted to see the house decorated and all the preparations made for a birthday celebration, until she realizes that it is not her birthday that the family is celebrating today. Her baby sister, Bun Bun, is turning one and all the fuss is for her. Winifred says, "That's not fair," until her mother explains what her special role in the celebration will be: remembering all the details so she can tell Bun Bun about her first birthday in the years to come. See also *Eugene's Story* (2003) to get another perspective on the same family.

Shannon, George. *Heart to Heart* (1995)
Squirrel creates a very special card to represent the memories he has made with his friend Mole.

Personal Change:

Curtis, Jamie Lee. *When I Was Little: a Four-Year-Old's Memoir of Her Youth* (1993)
A four-year-old girl explains how much she has changed and how much she has grown since she was a baby.

French, Simon. *Guess the Baby* (2002)
A class of young students realizes just how much they've grown and changed since they were babies.

McPhail, David. *Pig Pig Grows Up* (1980)
Only when faced with a dire emergency does Pig Pig finally react like a grown-up and admit he is not a baby any more

Rylant, Cynthia. *Birthday Presents* (1987)
Her parents tell a little girl about every one of her birthdays, from birth to age six.

Waddell, Martin. *Once There Were Giants* (1989)
A girl grows from infancy to adulthood.

Zolotow, Charlotte. *This Quiet Lady* (1992)
A daughter looks through her mother's photo album and discovers how much she has changed over the years.

Family Changes:

Ballard, Robin. *I Used to be the Baby* (2002)
Written in very simple language that some children would be able to read themselves, this picture book shows how a young boy adjusts to being a big brother.

Barron, T.A. *Where is Grandpa?* (2000)
Grandpa has just died and his family talk about their personal memories. When the narrator asks where Grandpa-heaven is, the answer is "anyplace where people who love each other have shared some time together."

Best, Cari. *Getting Used to Harry* (1996)
When her mother marries Harry, Cynthia finds that she has to adjust to changes in her life at home. An effective and humorous look at stepfamilies.

Bogart, Jo Ellen. *Daniel's Dog* (1990)
When Daniel's baby sister comes home from the hospital, he feels left out. With the help of an imaginary dog, however, he comes to accept this change in the family and his new responsibilities.

Bourgeois, Paulette. *Franklin and Harriet* (2001)
Everybody's favourite turtle has some hard lessons to learn about being an older brother, like the importance of sharing.

Boyden, Linda. *The Blue Roses* (2002)
On the day Rosalie is born, Papa (her grandfather) plants a rose bush under her bedroom window. Over the years Papa teaches her about gardening, nurturing plants and about accepting change. When Papa dies, Rosalie discovers how hard, and how rewarding, those lessons can be. This story won a New Voices Award for its lovely portrayal of the close relationship between a Native American girl and her grandfather.

Brown, Marc. *Arthur's Baby* (1987)
Arthur isn't sure he is happy about the new baby in the family, but when his sister asks for his help in handling the baby, Arthur feels much better.

Browne, Anthony. *Changes* (1990)
As he waits at home for his parents to return, a young boy ponders his father's remark "Things are going to change around here" and begins to imagine all kinds of changes in the world around him.

Bunting, Eve. *Jin Woo* (2001)
A family is adopting a Korean boy, but this story, told from the point of view of the soon-to-be older brother, focuses on the range of emotions the members of the family feel. Chris Soentpiet's illustrations capture the body language and expressions of the family expertly.

Cooke, Trish. *The Grandad Tree* (2000)

An apple tree is the inspiration for a young child's memories about her grandfather. The message of the book is that even though her grandfather has died, he lives on in his children and grandchildren and in the memories they share.

Cooper, Helen. *Little Monster Did It!* (1999)

Amy was a sweet child and well-behaved, but that was before her baby brother was born. Now all sorts of bizarre things start happening around the house, all the work of a little monster – at least that's what Amy tells her parents.

Daly, Niki. *Where's Jamela?* (2004)

The third book in a series about a young girl and her family in South Africa. In this book Jamela's mother has just gotten a new job. That means the family is moving, and that does not please Jamela.

Greenfield, Eloise. *She Come Bringing Me That Little Baby Girl* (1993)

Kevin asks for a baby brother from the hospital but his mother brings a girl instead. A touching story about an African-American family.

Henkes, Kevin. *Julius, the Baby of the World* (1990)

Lilly is convinced that the arrival of her new baby brother is the worst thing that has happened in their house, until Cousin Garland comes to visit.

Johnson, Gillian. *My Sister Gracie* (2000)

Fabio the dog really wants a little brother to play with. Instead the new addition to the family is an old, smelly, female (!) dog from the pound. Fabio, however, soon learns that families and love come in many different shapes and sizes.

Kraus, Robert. *Little Louie the Baby Bloomer* (1998)

Leo the tiger wonders why his baby brother can't do anything right. His parents encourage him to be patient.

Levy, Janice. *Totally Uncool* (1999)

A girl comes to realize that her father's new girlfriend isn't totally uncool.

L'Engle, Madeleine. *The Other Dog* (2001)

A family poodle wonders why his master and mistress brought home a new "dog" (ie. baby). A clever take on sibling rivalry with charming illustrations.

Pearson, Debora. *Leo's Tree* (2004)

When Leo was small, his father planted a tree. As time passes and as seasons change, Leo and his tree grow and change. Soon the family is planting another tree, and adapting to another change in the family.

Ryan, Pam Muñoz. *A Box of Friends* (2003)

When Annie's family moves to a new community, she misses her friends and worries that she won't make new ones. Her grandmother shows her a special way to make sure her friends are always with her, and gives her the confidence to move on and meet new ones.

Santucci, Barbara. *Loon Summer* (2001)

Rainie and her father are spending their first summer together at the lake without her mother. Their recent separation is confusing and disappointing for Rainie who has trouble understanding why they can't still be a family. Her father helps her see that some things stay the same and that we can find the strength to cope with change. Sensitively done with delicate illustrations.

Taylor, Joanne. *Making Room* (2004)

Based on the experience of a real family that lived in Cape Breton in the 19th century, this book tells the story of John William Smith who clears the land and builds a house for his new bride. As time passes, he must keep adding to his house as his family grows and changes.

Trottier, Maxine. *Alison's House* (1993)

When yet another baby is born into Alison's family her parents decide it's time to move to a new house. But Alison doesn't want to move and decides to stay with the family that buys the house.

Viorst, Judith. *The Tenth Good Thing About Barney* (1971)

When his cat Barney dies, a little boy thinks of the ten best things about him to overcome his sadness.

Woodson, Jacqueline. *Sweet, Sweet Memory* (2000)

When her grandfather dies, a girl is comforted by the memories that members of the family share.

Zolotow, Charlotte. *The Sky Was Blue* (1963)

A girl and her mother turn the pages of a family album and discuss how life has changed and how it has stayed the same for generations of members of the family.

Time:

Maynard, Christopher. *Why do Seasons Change?* (1997)

A book that answers children's questions about seasonal change and time.

McMillan, Bruce. *Time to ...* (1989)

A terrific illustration of a boy's daily routine, hour-by-hour, throughout one day. This book is useful for explaining clock time as well as a sequence of activities.

Older, Jules. *Telling Time: How to Tell Time on Digital and Analog Clocks* (2000)

More engaging than the title might indicate, the book explains the concept of time through humour, from seconds on the clock to millennia on the calendar.

Sweeney, Joan. *Me Counting Time: From Seconds to Centuries* (2000)

A picture book for the younger set explains complex time concepts clearly.

Community Changes Over Time:

Baker, Jeannie. *Home* (2004)

Like *Window* (see below), this is a wordless picture book that illustrates how an urban community is renewed through the efforts of its citizens.

Baker, Jeannie. *Window* (1991)

A wordless book that dramatically illustrates the impact people have on the environment over time.

Booth, David. *The Dust Bowl* (1996)

A young boy hears how his grandparents faced the Dirty Thirties on the prairies and saved their farm. Now, facing the same dangers, the family must pull through again.

Burton, Virginia Lee. *The Little House* (1942)

A country house is unhappy when the city, with all its buildings and traffic, grows up around her.

Cross, Verda. *Great-Grandma Tells of Threshing Day* (1992)

A little girl and her brother help out on threshing day in the early 1900s as the neighbor men arrive to thresh the family's wheat and bring it to the mill, and the neighbor women assist with the huge midday meal.

Dragonwagon, Crescent. *Home Place* (1990)

While out hiking, a family comes upon the site of an old house and finds some clues about the people that once lived there.

Fitz-Gibbon, Sally. *The Patchwork House* (1996)
A house changes over time as various families make it their home.

Fleming, Denise. *Where Once There Was a Wood* (1996)
Illustrates how natural places are changed by development.

Flournoy, Valerie. *The Patchwork Quilt* (1985)
Using scraps cut from the family's old clothing, Tanya helps her grandmother and mother make a beautiful quilt that tells the story of her family's life.

Gilman, Phoebe. *Something From Nothing* (1992)
Joseph's grandfather makes him a wonderful blanket to keep him warm. Over time the blanket becomes worn, so Grandpa turns it into a jacket, a vest, a tie, a handkerchief and a button. When Joseph loses the button, even Grandpa can't make something from nothing – but maybe Joseph can.

Igus, Toyomi. *When I Was Little* (1992)
When Noel and his grandfather go fishing, Noel learns what things were like when his grandfather was a boy. Features an African-American family.

Jackson, Ellen. *Turn of the Century*. (1998)
This book travels back in time and introduces us to the lives of children at the dawn of every century over the past one thousand years.

Johnson, Tony. *Yonder* (1988)
As the plum tree changes in the passing seasons so do the lives of a three-generation farm family.

Laurence, Margaret. *The Olden Days Coat* (1982)
While exploring her grandmother's shed, a young girl is transported back into the old woman's childhood.

Litzgus, Hazel. *Where the Meadowlark Sang* (2003)
A nonfiction memoir of the author's childhood spent on a farm near Lloydminster. The short stories are accompanied by her folk art illustrations.

Lyon, George Ella. *Who Came Down That Road?* (1992)
A picture book that shows who came down a country path and takes you back time. From great-grandparents looking for farmland, to Shawnee in search of deer, to the fish that swam in the sea that covered the land thousands of years ago, the book contains magnificent images of historical and geological eras.

MacLachlan, Patricia. *Three Names* (1991)
Great-grandfather tells the story of his dog, Three Names, and what it was like to go to school a hundred years ago.

Morck, Irene. *Old Bird* (2003)
Set in the 1920s in central Alberta, Old Bird is the story of the old mare brothers Archie and Arnfeld ride to school every day.

Polacco, Patricia. *The Keeping Quilt* (1988)
A homemade quilt ties together the lives of four generations of an immigrant Jewish family, remaining a symbol of their enduring love and faith.

Pringle, Laurence. *One Room School* (1998)

A look back at events and the changing of the seasons at a one-room school in rural New York during the last year of the Second World War.

Pryor, Bonnie. *The House on Maple Street* (1987)

Over the course of 300 years, many different people have made their mark on the place now occupied by the house at 107 Maple Street.

Reynolds, Marilyn. *Belle's Journey* (1993)

A young pioneer girl must cross the prairie during a snowstorm.

Reynolds, Marilyn. *A Dog for a Friend* (1994)

Jessie desperately wants a dog but might have to make do with a different kind of pet. The book illustrates all the work that needed to be done on pioneer homesteads.

Reynolds, Marilyn. *The Prairie Fire* (1999)

Percy must prove that he is old enough to help the family when a crisis hits their homestead.

Schaefer, Carole Lexa. *The Copper Tin Cup* (2000)

Beautiful watercolour illustrations blend with simple text in a touching story that traces the ownership of an heirloom cup lovingly made and handed down through four generations.

Shannon, George. *This is the Bird* (1997)

A small carved bird is a symbol of strength for generations of women from the same family.

Shelby, Anne. *Homeplace* (1995)

Illustrates the changes a house undergoes as generations of a family make it a home.

Splear, Elsie L. *Growing Seasons* (2000)

Born into an Illinois farm family in 1906, Elsie Lee Splear describes how she, her parents, and her sisters lived in the early years of the twentieth century and how the changing seasons shaped their existence.

Trottier, Maxine. *There Have Always Been Foxes* (2001)

Though people have come and gone, built forts and fought wars around Fort Louisbourg, the foxes have always been there to watch. Lovely illustrations but the message that the natural world carries on unchanged is overly sentimental.

Turner, Ann. *Dakota Dugout* (1985)

A woman describes her experiences living with her husband in a sod house on the Dakota prairie.

Vizurraga, Susan. *Our Old House* (1997)

A girl living in an old house finds clues inside and out about its history and former occupants.

Waterton, Betty. *Pettranella* (1991)

Faced with a strange new life homesteading in Canada, Pettranella finds that an unusual gift from her grandmother transforms a difficult winter into a spring filled with promise.

Yolen, Jane. *Letting Swift River Go* (1995)

Like Virginia Lee Burton's *Little House*, this story is about modernization and its impact on a community in western Massachusetts. When Boston needs more water, a reservoir is built and the Swift River valley flooded. Many towns and villages were torn down and rebuilt but everyone remembers the communities that once were there.