

# The Carter G. Woodson Book Awards



National Council for the Social Studies has sponsored the Carter G. Woodson Book Awards for more than 30 years. The idea evolved out of the Committee on Racism and Social Justice in 1973 and has since grown into a nationally recognized children's nonfiction book award, prized by many authors and publishers.

The award was created and named to honor Carter G. Woodson, the distinguished African American writer, scholar, and educator. Woodson, often regarded as the "father of Negro history," was the second African American to receive a doctorate from Harvard University. In 1926, he created "Negro History Week," which was held during the second week of February to coincide with the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. This celebration later developed into African American History Month.

With the Carter G. Woodson Award, NCSS recognizes the outstanding efforts of authors and publishers to provide quality social studies books for children that focus on all areas of diversity in the United States. Books are chosen for their sensitivity, accuracy, and quality in dealing with many issues in U.S. history.

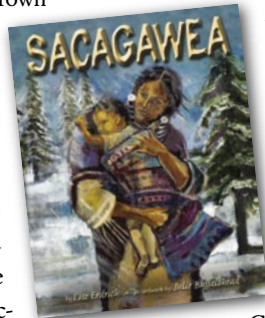
This year's choices were announced at the awards ceremony in Baltimore at the National Council for Social Studies Annual Conference. The books selected mirror the diversity of the population of the United States and reflect an ever-growing area of children's books. The authors who received the award or honor distinction in the 2004 competition are listed below, along with brief reviews of the works.

*Brenda Smith, 2004 Carter G. Woodson Awards Committee Chair*

## 2004 Carter G. Woodson Award Book: Elementary Level

*Sacagawea*, by Lise Erdrich, illustrated by Julie Buffalohead. Minneapolis, Minn.: Carolrhoda Books, Inc., a division of Lerner Publishing Group.

*Reviewed by Barbara Stanley, assistant professor, Department of Middle Grades and Secondary Education at Valdosta State University, Valdosta, Georgia.*



Lise Erdrich's *Sacagawea* offers a vibrantly illustrated, detailed narrative about a woman who had a significant impact on the exploration of the American West. The story begins when Hidatsa warriors capture a young Sacagawea from her Shoshone tribe.

The Hidatsa people gave her the name Sacagawea, meaning, "bird woman." They taught her the ways of cultivation, as practiced by their permanent settlements; the Shoshone, on the other hand, were gatherers. When she was 16, her husband, Toussaint Charbonneau, was contracted to guide members of the

Corps of Discovery, led by Captain Meriwether Lewis and Captain William Clark. Sacagawea and her infant Pomp traveled with the party.

Sacagawea's skills and resourcefulness helped the group through many challenging times. As she carried her two-month-old son, she gathered plants to keep the crew healthy, saved the captain's valuable expedition supplies after a river mishap, was familiar with trails through the mountains, and translated for Clark with the Shoshone to obtain horses for travel through the Rockies. The book portrays Sacagawea as a heroine, depicting her success as a result of her own efforts and cleverness, and not as a woman dependant upon the men she accompanied.

Julie Buffalohead's illustrations and Erdrich's attention to historical details makes this an ideal picture book for both the elementary and middle grades. The author offers interesting contrasts of various Native American tribes. An afterword, a timeline, and detailed map are included to detail what is known about Sacagawea after Lewis and Clark returned to St. Louis in 1806.

## 2004 Carter G. Woodson Honor Book: Elementary Level

*Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez*, by Kathleen Krull, illustrated by Yuyi Morales. New York: Harcourt Inc.

*Reviewed by Dena G. Beeghly, West Chester University, Pennsylvania.*

As a boy, Cesar Chavez worked alongside his family harvesting crops for pennies a day. As a man, he helped grow a reform movement that would change the way migrant workers lived and worked.

In *Harvesting Hope: The Story of Cesar Chavez*, Kathleen Krull does an excellent job of portraying



Chavez as an ordinary person who accomplishes extraordinary things. As a child, Chavez enjoys summer and playing with his brother, and as an adult he is shy and unimposing. At first, he doesn't believe life in the fields can change for the better. When he does begin to have hope and to work for change, few are willing to join him. But Chavez is persistent, and little by little others begin to have hope as well. The message is clear: when we work together for change, we can make a difference.

### 2004 Carter G. Woodson Award Book: Middle Level

*In America's Shadow*, by Kimberly and Kaleigh Komatsu. Los Angeles: Thomas George Books.

Reviewed by Brenda G. Smith, assistant principal, Sabin Middle School, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

This story begins with a married Japanese couple that moves to America to find a new life and fulfill their dream of building a grand hotel. But

the events of World War II would change all of that. This unforgettable story is told from the perspective of the couple's granddaughter, who is forced to leave the world she knows and to create a new life behind the barbed wire of an internment camp. The narrator tries to understand what has happened

to her family and the life that she knew before Pearl Harbor. Her story is one of hope intermingled with undertones of tragedy, injustice, family strength, and an unwavering love of country.

*In America's Shadow* is a hauntingly beautiful book that takes readers through a difficult period in American history. The authors, two charming sisters, have created a very personal story from the Japanese American experience in the Manzanar internment camp. With the help of family stories and pictures, the Komatsu sisters have created an unforgettable addition to a historically significant time in America's past.

This first book published by Kimberly and Kaleigh Komatsu has not only won the Carter G. Woodson Book Award but also the 2004 Children's Book Award Notable, the Benjamin Franklin Award for Best New Voice, and as many as five other national awards. These awards confirm the outstanding quality of the work and its potential impact on students and teachers.

### 2004 Carter G. Woodson Honor Book: Middle Level

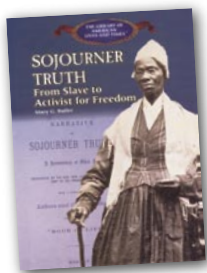
*Sojourner Truth*, by Mary G. Butler. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group.

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

Mary Butler's narrative about Sojourner Truth provides an important

addition to the study of prejudice, slavery, women's rights, and the Civil War. The story depicts Truth's separation from her parents at the age of nine, her experience as she was sold to several owners, and her efforts and triumph in finally earning her freedom. A deeply spiritual and religious woman, Truth gained experience in preaching and was able to use her ability to advance abolition and women's suffrage. One of her

most famous speeches in which she says, "I am [for] woman's rights. I have as much muscle as any man, and can do as much work as any man," is included in the book as well as many photographs, illustrations, and primary documents that enrich the text. This biography shows Sojourner Truth as a woman "who could overcome obstacles and could retain her strength and dignity."



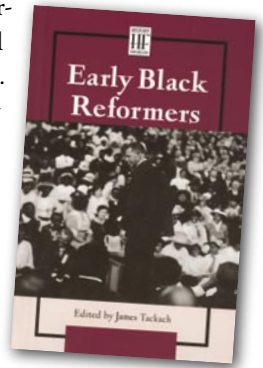
### 2004 Carter G. Woodson Award Book: Secondary Level

*Early Black Reformers*, edited by James Tackach. Farmington Hills, Mich.: Greenhaven Press

Reviewed by Beth Cerulo, ninth grade social studies teacher, McDowell Intermediate High School, Erie, Pennsylvania.

While many students are familiar with the civil rights activists of the 1960s, they often know very little about the earlier civil rights reformers. This secondary level award winner helps to fill in such historical gaps. The book's editor, James Tackach, has skillfully selected primary source documents that provide the reader with an intimate look through first person accounts of the activists who paved the way for later civil right leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr. *Early Black Reformers* takes a close look at contributions made by black women such as Harriet Jacobs, Charlotte Forten Grimke, and Frances Watkins Harper. Readers will also gain an understanding of the post-Civil War civil rights controversies exemplified by Booker T. Washington's position supporting economic independence over social equality, W.E.B. DuBois's stand for full racial equality, and Marcus Garvey's call for a separate black nation.

A valuable classroom resource, *Early Black Reformers'* first person narratives provide students with opportunities to discuss opinions from various time periods and to grapple with the complex issues faced by these reformers. Tackach includes a succinct introduction to each primary source document. These introductions provide a foundation of information needed to better comprehend the document's place in civil rights history. Students using this book as a research text will find helpful the descriptive table of contents, the civil rights chronology, and the bibliography of books suggested for further research.



### 2004 Carter G. Woodson Honor Book: Secondary Level

*Gwendolyn Brooks: Poet from Chicago*, by Martha E. Rhynes. Greensboro, N.C.: Morgan Reynolds Publishing, Inc.

Reviewed by Dean Cristol, associate professor of social studies, Old Dominion University, Norfolk, Virginia.

Part of the World Writers series, *Gwendolyn Brooks: Poet from Chicago* is a concise biography of one of the great twentieth century American poets. Using accessible prose, Martha E. Rhynes introduces young readers to Gwendolyn Brooks who, through her poetry, explores racial identity issues and describes the daily challenges faced by African Americans. Readers learn about Brooks's early life and about the influence those years, specifically the 1960s, had on her later works. Brooks believed many social problems could be solved through the arts and politics, and she tried to encourage young people to explore both of these. At the end of the book, Rhynes provides readers with a timeline of Brooks's life, and lists her major works and honors.

