

# Carter G. Woodson Book Awards, 2012

The Carter G. Woodson Book Committee presents its reviews for the 2012 book award winners. The award, created in 1974 to honor African American scholar Dr. Carter G. Woodson, selects outstanding non-fiction social science books for young readers that depict ethnicity in the United States. Dr. Woodson, who earned his Ph.D. in history from Harvard in 1912 and was one of the first African Americans to do so, dedicated his life to promoting the study of African American history in schools and collecting artifacts and publications in order to preserve that history. He established “Negro History Week” in 1926, a precursor to our present day “Black History Month.”

The book selections were made by a hard-working committee of 13 members, consisting of professors, teachers, and advocates for diversity in the social studies. These members read and reviewed a large number of books submitted by publishers to determine the most distinguished selections based on traits such as respect and value for ethnic and racial differences and groups, insight into the experiences of racial and ethnic groups, focus on the interactions among racial/ethnic groups, and portrayal of groups through text and illustrations. The committee also considered readability, style, age appropriateness, curricular enhancement, and depiction of pluralistic values. Members of the committee communicated regularly and held a meeting at the NCSS Annual Conference to select the best books. We urge educators to share these excellent books with other teachers and students!

—Paige Lilley Schulte  
Chair, Carter G. Woodson Committee

## Elementary Winner

*Red Bird Sings: The Story of Zitkala-Ša, Native American Author, Musician, and Activist*, adapted by Gina Capaldi and Q.L. Pearce. Carolrhoda Books, a division of Lerner Publishing Group, Inc.

Reviewed by Theresa Johnson, assistant professor at the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University in St. Joseph, Minnesota.



Born in 1876 on the Yankton Sioux Reservation, Zitkala-Ša, named Gertrude Simmons at birth, was eight years old when she boarded a train for a Quaker-run boarding school in Indiana. Life as a boarding school student is painful for Zitkala-Ša, as she is forced to

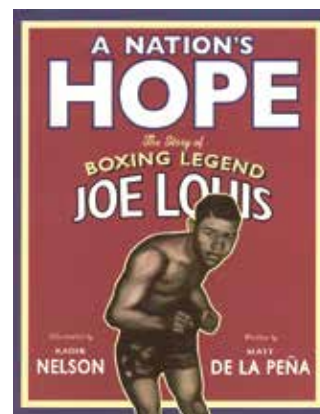
adhere to cultural traditions, values, and beliefs markedly different from those with which she was raised. During this time, she discovers comfort in books, writing, and music and begins to consider issues of social justice. As readers progress through this text, they will see how Zitkala-Ša's childhood served as a foundation for her later work as a teacher, musician, activist, writer, and agent of change.

This text is an adaptation of a three-part semiautobiographical series written by Zitkala-Ša for the *Atlantic Monthly* in the early 1900s. Capaldi and Pearce integrate material from this series with other sources, at times modifying phrases to enhance clarity. Beautifully constructed multimedia images further support readers' understanding of Zitkala-Ša's life. This text may be used to explore a number of complex and controversial social studies concepts, while also enhancing students' critical reading skills. ❶ CULTURE; ❷ TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE; ❸ PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS; ❹ INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS.

## Elementary Honor

*A Nation's Hope: The Story of Boxing Legend Joe Louis*, by Matt De La Peña,

illustrated by Kadir Nelson. Dial Books for Young Readers.



Reviewed by Derrick Kimbrough, 4th and 5th grade literacy and social studies teacher, Skinner North Classical School (Chicago Public Schools) Chicago, Illinois.

*Ears glued to radio  
in every home, in every city  
The entire world stopping  
Its fate seemingly all in Joe's hands*

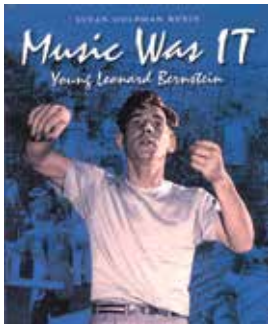
Excerpt  
from *A Nation's Hope*

While many are familiar with sports hero Joe Louis, *A Nation's Hope* takes this

familiarity to a deeper level by educating readers about World War II through the eyes of African American boxer Louis and his German heavyweight opponent Max Schmeling. The picture book offers lessons on race relations through a historical perspective. Author Matt De La Peña and illustrator Kadir Nelson collaborate successfully with breathtaking pictures and vivid words that jump out from every page. ① CULTURE; ④ INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY; ⑤ INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS AND INSTITUTIONS; ② TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE.

### Middle Level Winner

*Music Was IT: Young Leonard Bernstein*, by Susan Goldman Rubin. Charlesbridge.



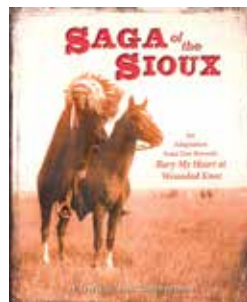
Reviewed by Marilyn J. Ward, professor, Department of Education, Carthage College, Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Susan Goldman Rubin has written a well-researched and engaging biography of one of the greatest American composers, conductors, and pianists of the twentieth century. The book opens with a touching forward by his daughter Jamie, and a quote from Bernstein, “Life without music would be unthinkable.” Drawing from personal interviews, Rubin chronicles Bernstein’s early life in Massachusetts, as a Russian Jew who came to love and study music, despite anti-Semitism and his father’s resistance to his musical career. Simple writing and short readable chapters bring Bernstein and his achievements to life, aided by the illuminating quotations and more than 75 photographs of his family, friends, and colleagues, mostly from the Leonard

Bernstein Collection at the Library of Congress. The book ends with his pivotal conducting debut with the New York Philharmonic at Carnegie Hall, in 1943, at the age of 25. A timeline, a partial list of CDs that readers would enjoy (including *West Side Story*), a bibliography, quotation sources, an index, and brief biographies of individuals important in Bernstein’s life provide useful information. ① INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY; ⑤ INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS AND INSTITUTIONS; ③ PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS; ② TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE.

### Middle Level Honor

*Saga of the Sioux*, An Adaptation from Dee Brown’s *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*, by Dwight Jon Zimmerman. Henry Holt and Company, LLC.



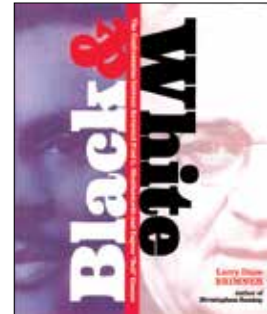
Reviewed by Dr. Terrence A. James, Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.

This book focuses on the Sioux nation who, of all the Native American Nations, waged the longest and most successful fight against U.S. government policies of land takeover. The book explores the Sioux struggle against assimilation to sustain their culture and identity and their fights against the U.S. military and its citizens from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century. Zimmerman chronicles the history of the Sioux, presenting the Sioux perspective about major broken land treaties and mistreatment, their most famous sages, leaders, warriors (men and women), and infamous battles with the U.S. Calvary (the Fetterman massacre, the Battle of Little Bighorn, the Ghost Dance and Massacre at Wounded Knee).

① CULTURE; ③ PEOPLE, PLACES AND ENVIRONMENTS; ④ INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY; ⑥ POWER, AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE; ⑩ CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES.

### Secondary Winner

*Black and White: The Confrontation between Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth and Eugene “Bull” Connor* by Larry Dane Brimmer. Calkins Creek



Reviewed by Barbara Gallo, honors social studies teacher and National History Day Club advisor, Marlboro Middle School, New Jersey.

In *Black and White*, Larry Dane Brimmer chronicles Fred Shuttlesworth’s courage as he stood up to intimidation and violence in the fight for racial equality in the 1950s and 1960s. This beautifully designed book describes the civil rights movement in the context of the events in Birmingham, Alabama, where Shuttlesworth was the head of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and Bethel Baptist Church. In a well-researched account, Brimmer captures the heart of the conflict between equal rights and entrenched segregation of the Old South in the struggle between Shuttlesworth and the Birmingham Commissioner of Public Safety, “Bull” Connor. This book provides added perspective and dimension to understanding the civil rights movement by providing an intimate portrayal of one city and the confrontation between two men. ① CULTURE; ④ INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY; ⑥ POWER, AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE; ⑩ CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES. ② TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE. ③