

Depression Era Fiction for Young People
Compiled by Carol Inskeep, The Urbana Free Library
carolinskeep@yahoo.com

Fiction

Y / Aaron, Chester

Lackawanna: A Novel. 1986. 210 p. (4th – 6th grade?)

A gang of abandoned children, living together during the Depression in order to survive, is galvanized into action when a hobo kidnaps one of its members.

Y / Ayres, Katherine

Macaroni Boy. 2003. 182 p. (4th – 7th grade)

From School Library Journal: "In 1933, as the Great Depression hits his Pittsburgh neighborhood, Mike Costa has a handful of problems to face. The family business is in financial trouble, his grandfather is losing his memory, and he faces bullying and anti-Italian prejudice at school...Mike's actions and his perceptions give readers an involving and informative kid's-eye look at several aspects of city life in the 1930s.."

J / Bornstein, Ruth Lercher

Butterflies and Lizards, Beryl and Me. 2002. 144 p. (4th – 6th grade)

In 1934, eleven-year-old Charlotte and her mother move to tiny Valley Junction, Missouri, where Charlotte befriends an eccentric old woman in spite of her mother's and others' warnings.

J / Cummings, Priscilla

Saving Grace. 2003. 240 p. (4th - 7th grade)

When Grace's family is evicted from their Washington, D.C., apartment just before Christmas 1932, and she and her younger brothers are sent to the Mission, Grace wonders what will become of her sick older brother, her pregnant mother, and her out-of-work father.

J / Curtis, Christopher Paul

Bud, Not Buddy. 1999. 245 p. (3rd – 6th grade)

Ten-year-old Bud, a motherless boy living in Flint, Michigan, during the Great Depression, escapes a bad foster home and sets out in search of the man he believes to be his father--the renowned bandleader, H.E. Calloway of Grand Rapids. Newbery winner.

J / Cochrane, Patricia A.

Purely Rosie Pearl. 1996. 135 p. (4th – 7th?)

In 1936 twelve-year-old Rosie Pearl Bush and her family of migrants endure the hardships of the Great Depression as they find work picking fruit in the California Valley.

J / Dear America (4th – 8th grade)

Survival in the Storm: The Dust Bowl Diary of Grace Edwards, Dalhart, Texas, 1935. 2002. 189 p.

A twelve-year-old girl keeps a journal of her family's and friends' difficult experiences in the Texas panhandle, part of the "Dust Bowl," during the Great Depression. Includes a historical note about life in America in 1935.

J / DeFelice, Cynthia

Nowhere to Call Home. 1999. 200 p. (10 and up)

When her father kills himself after losing his money in the stock market crash, twelve-year-old Frances, now a penniless orphan, decides to hop aboard a freight train and live the life of a hobo.

J / DeYoung, C. Coco

A Letter to Mrs. Roosevelt. 1999. 105 p. (8 – 12 years)

Eleven-year-old Margo fulfills a class assignment by writing a letter to Eleanor Roosevelt asking for help to save her family's home during the Great Depression.

Y / Gutman, Dan

Babe and Me: A Baseball Card Adventure. 2000. 161 p. (3rd – 6th grade)

With their ability to travel through time using vintage baseball cards, Joe and his father have the opportunity to find out whether Babe Ruth really did call his shot when he hit that homerun in the third game of the 1932 World Series against the Chicago Cubs

J / Hale, Marian

The Truth about Sparrows. 2004. 260 p. (5th – 7th grade)

Twelve-year-old Sadie promises that she will always be Wilma's best friend when their families leaves drought-stricken Missouri in 1933, but once in Texas, Sadie learns that she must try to make a new home--and new friends, too. *From School Library Journal: "Zilpha Keatley Snyder's Cat Running (Delacorte, 1994) views the Great Depression through the eyes of the merchant class, Hale highlights the working poor. Rich with social history, this first novel is informative, enjoyable, and evocative.--*

J / Haseley, Dennis

The Amazing Thinking Machine. 2002. 117 p. (4th – 6th grade)

During the Great Depression, while their father is away looking for work, eight-year-old Patrick and thirteen-year-old Roy create a machine to help their mother make ends meet, even as she is helping tramps.

J / Jr High / Hesse, Karen

Out of the Dust. 1997. 227 p. (4th or 5th grade and up)

In a series of poems, fifteen-year-old Billie Jo relates the hardships of living on her family's wheat farm in Oklahoma during the dust bowl years of the Depression.

J / pb / Jr. High / Hunt, Irene

No Promises in the Wind. 1986. 223 p.

A fifteen-year-old boy struggles to survive and come to terms with inner conflicts in the desperate world of the Depression.

F / Hurston, Zora Neale

Their Eyes Were Watching God

Y / Koller, Jackie French

Someday. 2002. 215 p. (5th or 6th grade and up)

In 1938, fourteen-year-old Celie must cope with leaving her Enfield, Massachusetts, home and her life-long friend, Chubby, as the day approaches when the Swift River Valley will be flooded to create a reservoir for Boston.

J / Peck

A Long Way from Chicago. 1998. 148 p. (4th grade and up?)

A boy recounts his annual summer trips to rural Illinois with his sister during the Great Depression to visit their larger-than-life grandmother.

J / Porter, Tracey

Treasures in the Dust. 1997. 148 p. (4th – 8th grade)

Eleven-year-old Annie and her friend Violet tell of the hardships endured by their families when dust storms, drought, and the Great Depression hit rural Oklahoma.

Y / Poupenny, Mollie

Her Father's Daughter. 2000. 245 p. (High School)

During the Depression era of the 1930s, Maggie grows up in the logging camps and small towns of Oregon while living in the midst of a troubled family with an abusive father.

J / Reeder, Carolyn

Grandpa's Mountain. 1991. 171 p. (5th – 8th grade)

During the Depression, eleven-year-old Carrie makes her annual summer visit to her relatives in the Blue Ridge Mountains and watches her determined grandfather fight against the government's attempt to take his farm land for a new national park.

Y / Slade, Arthur G.

Dust. 2003. 183 p. (6th – 9th grade)

Eleven-year-old Robert is the only one who can help when a mysterious stranger arrives, performing tricks and promising to bring rain, at the same time children begin to disappear from a dust bowl farm town in Saskatchewan in the 1930s. *From School Library Journal: "This unusual, well-written story will definitely exercise readers' imaginations. Choose it for science-fiction fans who are ready for something a little different."*

J / Snyder, Zilpha Keatley

Cat Running. 1994. 168 p. (4th – 7th grade)

When eleven-year-old Cat Kinsey builds a secret hideout to escape her unhappy homelife, she slowly gets to know a poor family who has come to California after losing their Texas home to the dust storms of the 1930s.

F / Steinbeck, John

The Grapes of Wrath. 1991. 445 p.

J / Swain, Gwennyth

Chig and the Second Spread. 2003. 199 p. (4th – 6th grade)

Despite her small stature, eight-year-old Chig makes large contributions to her southern Indiana community during the Great Depression. Chapter book with warm, homespun feel.

Y / Taylor, Mildred D.

Let the Circle Be Unbroken. 1981. 394 p.

Four black children growing up in rural Mississippi during the Depression experience racial antagonisms and hard times, but learn from their parents the pride and self-respect they need to survive. (Sequel to *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*)

J / Uchida, Yoshiko

Jar of Dreams. 1981. 131 p. (4th – 6th grade?)

A young girl grows up in a closely-knit Japanese American family in California during the 1930's, a time of great prejudice.

PICTURE BOOKS

E / Bartoletti, Susan

The Christmas Promise. 2001.

J / Hamilton, Virginia

Drylongso. 1992.

E / Kennedy, Frances

The Pickles Patch Bathtub. 2004.

E / Lied, Kate

Potato: A Tale from the Great Depression. 1997.

E / Miller, William

Rent Party Jazz. 2001.

E / Quattlebaum, Mary
The Shine Man: A Christmas Story. 2001.

E / Easy to Read / Turner, Ann
Dust for Dinner. 1995.

J / Wells, Rosemary
Wingwalker. 2002

J / Winter, Jonah
Once Upon a Time in Chicago: The Story of Benny Goodman. 2000.