

A SELECTED BOOKLIST

How War Affects Kids, Their Families, Their Communities

Picture books for young children (0-5 years old)

I Miss You Every Day—Simms Taback. When you miss someone you love so much—miss them every day—there’s only one thing to do: wrap yourself up, jump in a box, and send yourself for a visit. This book has great illustrations and ideas and can be used for any young child missing a loved one. (Viking, 2007)

Love Lizzie: Letters to a Military Mom—Lisa Tucker McElroy. This picture book expresses how Lizzie misses her mom, wants to remain connected to her, and wishes she could be at home with the family. It also shows how Lizzie’s mom offers reassurances about safety, about keeping her child in mind and heart, and gives Lizzie information about her job without frightening her child. Colorful maps and drawings also describe Lizzie, her dad and brother doing everyday things and by sending them to mom, keep her connected to their life at home. (Albert Whitman, 2005)

Red, White and Blue Goodbye—Sarah Wones Tomp. A small child helps her soldier dad to pack, hides his books, sneaks into his duffle bag, and tells him the time ahead is “too long” for her. Her daddy scoops her up and takes her for ice cream, to the park, and finds other ways to create special memories for her to fall back on. (Walker & Co., 2005)

We Serve Too! A Child’s Deployment Book—Kathleen Edick and Paula J. Johnson. This book will help small children give voice to “I don’t like it” when daddy or mom is away. The child expresses and wonders about anger, sadness, distances and the meaning of war in a small person’s voice. The value of service to the country and of patriotism is stressed within the context of the stresses of separation. (We Serve Too, 2007)

Books for kids 6-10 years

Baseball Saved Us--Ken Mochizuki. This picture book for ages 4-7 is about Shorty, a Japanese American boy who learns to play baseball when his family is forced into an internment camp in the desert during World War II. Another benefit is that being able to play baseball helps him overcome prejudice and racism against Japanese Americans when the war is over. (Lee & Low, 1993)

Coming on Home Soon—Jacqueline Woodson. This picture book evokes the waiting, the longing, and the sadness in everyday living while a parent is away. Ada Ruth’s mother is working “Up North” cleaning railroad cars in place of men who have gone off to World War II. She finds comfort in her grandmother’s company and home. (Putnam’s, 2004)

100 Days and 99 Nights—Alan Madison. Being in the army is a male tradition in Esme's family. Her dad is a sergeant, and mostly he is away. Many times, the family follows him to a new base. The book, told from Esme's point of view, is full of humor and poignancy as she describes moving to strange and interesting cities, meeting new friends, going to new schools and being lonely. (Little, Brown, 2008)

The Impossible Patriotism Project—Linda Skeers. Caleb must create a school project representing patriotism. He is stumped until he thinks about his dad, fighting in a war far away, and how difficult it is to be without him. (Dial, 2007)

Almost Forever—Maria Testa. This book relates the ups and downs in a child's life during a one year deployment, including the joy of receiving and sending letters, the fear of loss when daddy is missing, and the worry that he will forget his little girl. Daddy returns and forever is finally at an end. (Candlewick, 2003)

Why? The War Years—Tomie dePaola. The author shares his memories of the WWII era in this 7th segment of his 26 Fairmont Avenue series. He reflects on how the war changed his life and his family, especially when Cousin Blacky is killed in action. The book celebrates daily poignant and happy events and considers the bleakness of loss. (Putnam's, 2007)

Books for middle school readers, ages 11-14

Annie's War-- Jacqueline Levering Sullivan. This is an outstanding chapter book for middle readers. Annie works out her questions about her father-missing in action; her mother-a severely grieving spouse; her uncle-an angry returning veteran -through imaginary discussions with President Truman, who is commander-in-chief. In this process, she eloquently speaks the profound concerns of her family, her neighbors, her friends, about the effects of war on each of them. (Eerdman's, 2007)

Bat 6 –Virginia Euwer Wolff. The author uses the voices of sixth grade girls, members of rival softball teams in two Oregon towns, to tell the story of their communities' attitudes and prejudices surrounding World War II, and to share their love of the game. (Scholastic, 1999)

On the Wings of Heroes --Richard Peck A tender and humorous tale of the WW II home front, a boy's love and adoration for his dad, a WWI vet who never talks about it, and his brother, who goes off to fly B-17s. This is a fine book, especially for boys who look for heroes and to their dads for guidance. (Dial, 2007)

Patrol: An American Soldier in Vietnam—Walter Dean Myers. The author joined the army on his seventeenth birthday, at the beginning of US involvement in Vietnam. In this story-poem, he takes readers into the heart and mind of a frightened young soldier coming face to face with the enemy in an alien place. Collage illustrations by Ann Grifalconi evoke the darkness and mystery of the jungle and the fragile humanity of the soldier and his foe. (Harper Collins, 2002)

Park's Quest--Katherine Paterson. Park can't figure out why his mother refuses to talk about his father who died in Vietnam when Park was a baby. He has no memory of his father but is determined to find out the answers to his questions. (Lodestar, 1988)

Amaryllis—Craig Crist-Evans. Amaryllis is a ship which ran aground near Singer Island, Florida, when Jimmy and his older brother, Frank, were bonding as adolescents, before Frank enlists and heads for Vietnam to get away from their father's alcohol-fueled rages. Jimmy is heartbroken in losing the companionship of his brother. The book revolves around his thoughts of Frank, their times surfing around the ship, and the privacy of their letters back and forth. Frank writes honestly about jungle fighting, seeing buddies die, terrorizing villagers, and using drugs to kill his pain. (Candlewick, 2003)

Off to War: Voices of Soldiers' Children--Deborah Ellis. This is a series of brief interviews with kids between the ages of 7 and 17. Most are children of reservists and National Guard members, like the soldiers from Oregon. Their comments are blunt, realistic, and reflective. They talk about being at home when a parent is deployed, the advantages and disadvantages of military life, and how their situations leave them isolated from other kids. (Groundwood, 2008)

Shooting the Moon-- Frances O'Roark Dowell. Jamie thinks that her brother is following in their father's career military footsteps into the Vietnam War. Then he sends home undeveloped film of everyday war scenes which alter Jamie's perceptions, evoking worry and serious questions. (Atheneum, 2008)

Code Talker: A Novel About the Navajo Marines of World War Two--Joseph Bruchac. In the voice of one of the Navajo code talkers, Bruchac tells how the men were recruited to develop and use a secret radio code which was critical to all communications. He also explains how discrimination limited their service and delayed recognition of their significant contributions to the war effort. (Dial, 2005)

Books for teens/young adults-ages 15+

Sunrise Over Fallujah --Walter Dean Myers. Most of what Birdy knows about war, up until now, has been from letters his uncle wrote from Vietnam. As a young recruit from Harlem, he observes that a lot of the fear feels the same, but it's a different time, a different war, and he is in a country whose culture and people he does not understand. The author treats his characters in this fictional account with respect for their roles as soldiers and leaders and, at the same time, allows Birdy to ask authentic questions about what he sees, what he does, and how he can expect to live with those events when he returns. (Scholastic, 2008)

Battle Dress--Amy Efaw. A 1989 graduate of West Point, Efaw describes the rigors and challenges of belonging to an intensely private community of soldiers preparing to be officers. (Harper Collins, 2000)

Soldier's Heart --Gary Paulsen. Charley left the farm at age 15 to fight in the Civil War with the First Minnesota volunteers. He didn't know what war was about; he learns about the horror of combat and the wild luck of survival. When he returned, at 19, Charlie was different. He was a man said to have "soldier's heart," now called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). (Delacorte, 1998)

Hearts of Stone--by Kathleen Ernst. This is a book for older teens struggling with issues about war. It describes how the life of fifteen year old Hannah is torn apart by her father leaving to fight in the Civil War and by her mother's sudden death. A historical novel, it is graphic in its description of what happens along the way on Hannah's journey to a safer home. (Dutton, 2006)

Come in From the Cold-- Marsha Qualy. Jeff's brother, a Marine, is called up to fight in Vietnam. He has lots of questions and he wants to support his brother. His girlfriend, Maud, gets word that her sister, a war protestor, is killed in a bomb blast. Together they look for stability and meaning. (Graphia, 1994)

War Is...soldiers, survivors, storytellers talk about war. Edited by Mark Aronson and Patty Campbell. This young adult anthology contains twenty pieces of fiction and nonfiction designed to provide readers with forthright accounts of the realities of war and the young people who fight them. It is a balanced collection which can generate thoughtful consideration and discussion by adults and young people. (Candlewick, 2008)

Books for families/teachers/librarians/pastors/rabbis

Why War is Never a Good Idea—written and illustrated by Alice Walker. The author uses a picture book format to contain a prose poem about the power and destruction of war. She uses vivid colors and dramatic images. Walker has said her goal was to emphasize not only human but environmental devastation and to provide a valid tool for adults to describe war to children. Middle school children and teens will find this book challenging and thought-provoking. (Harper Collins, 2007)

What Every Person Should Know about War—Chris Hedges. This small book is based on research by the author, a war correspondent for two decades. He presents information in a factual manner, using a question and answer format and military source manuals. Topics include enlistment, weapons, wounds, details of combat, coming home and dying. It is a helpful volume for teens and young adults.(Free Press, 2003)

War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning— Chris Hedges. The author takes a comprehensive look at the reasons nations and peoples continue to use war as a method of problem-solving and identity development. (Public Affairs, 2002)

Tear Soup—Pat Schwiebert and Chuck DeKleyn. This outstanding book about grief is designed for families who have lost a loved one through death. It can be used for reading and discussion by adults and by young readers from ages 7+. The metaphor of soup making includes many helpful ingredients for grieving as well as suggestions for avoiding those ingredients that are not useful in the process. Humor and tenderness abound in the text and illustrations. (GriefWatch, 1999)

Creating the book list:

This book list was prepared by Kaye Exo, editor and publisher of *Grandma's Book Letter*, a newsletter and blog (www.grandmasbookletter.com). The purpose of the list is to recommend a selection of quality reading for children and youth in the United States who are or have been directly affected by war. Kaye Exo is a retired child and family therapist in Portland, Oregon, who has spent many years reading, reviewing, and recommending books to caring adults and kids.

Selection was guided by the following considerations:

- Quality of writing and illustration
- Range of perspectives on military service and war
- Range of perspectives on how war affects children, family & community
- Literature as a means to help children and teens explore their own feelings
- Literature as a means to help adults interpret war and its effects to children

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