



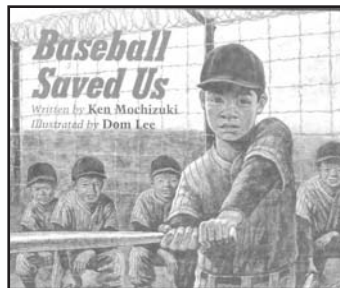
We are all different

Books help kids and grownups talk about race and racism

BY BEN PETERSON

As children grow up, they are forced to encounter racism in many ways, from bigoted insults to hurtful stereotypes. The following children's books offer stories that will help children understand the harm that racism causes and the importance of empathy and understanding in dealing with it.

BASEBALL SAVED US, story by Ken Mochizuki, illustrations by Dom Lee. During WWII, the young Japanese American narrator and his family are placed in an internment camp in the US. Realizing the frustrations growing within the camp, his father builds a camp baseball diamond and organizes games. The narrator describes how playing baseball helps him deal with his frustrations both in the camp and when confronted by racism after the war. Besides teaching children a powerful history lesson, Mochizuki's story helps them realize the effects of racism from the eyes of one of its young victims. Ages five to seven. (Lee & Low Books, 1993)



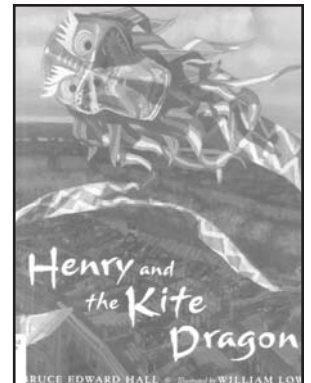
FREEDOM SUMMER, story by Deborah Wiles, illustrations by Jerome Lagarrigue. In this Coretta Scott King Award-winning story about the American South in the 1960s, Joe, who is white, spends his summer playing with his best friend, John Henry, shooting marbles and swimming in Fiddler's Creek. But when they get ice pops, John Henry is not allowed in the store because he is black. Midway through the summer, Joe's dad tells them that the town pool will be integrated. Excited, the two friends go to swim but find out that the town has filled

the pool with tar rather than integrate it. Crushed, the two boys skip swimming but can finally go into the



store together. Wiles' story of the not-too-distant past provides an excellent lesson about the everyday ways racism played into the lives of children. Ages five to seven. (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2001)

HENRY AND THE KITE DRAGON, story by Bruce Edward Hall, illustrations by William Low. Based on a true story from New York's Chinatown in the 1920s, Henry Chu, the eight-year-old narrator, grows up making and flying kites off the rooftop with his neighbor, Mr. Chin. One day, when their kite flies over the nearby park in neighboring Little Italy, a group of boys, lead by Tony Guglione, throw rocks and tear it to bits. When this happens to two more kites, Henry gets angry and heads over to the park with his friends to confront the Italian boys. At first the two sides hurl racial epithets at each other, but then Henry realizes the reason Tony is throwing the rocks and empathizes with him. With better understanding, the two groups come up with a friendly compromise. Ages five to seven. (Philomel Books, 2004)



LOUDMOUTH GEORGE AND THE NEW NEIGHBORS, story and illustrations by Nancy Carlson. When George, a rabbit, finds out that his new neighbors are pigs, he does not want to meet them because pigs are dirty and eat garbage. Even when his friends Harriet and Ralph start playing, he refuses to join. Finally, after a week, he relents and ends up having a terrific time. Then, when a family of cats moves in next door, the friends decide to ignore their fears (cats have claws and hiss) and head over to meet them. Carlson's story demonstrates the importance of ignoring stereotypes and taking the time to get to know one another. Ages four to six. (Carolrhoda Books Inc, 1983)