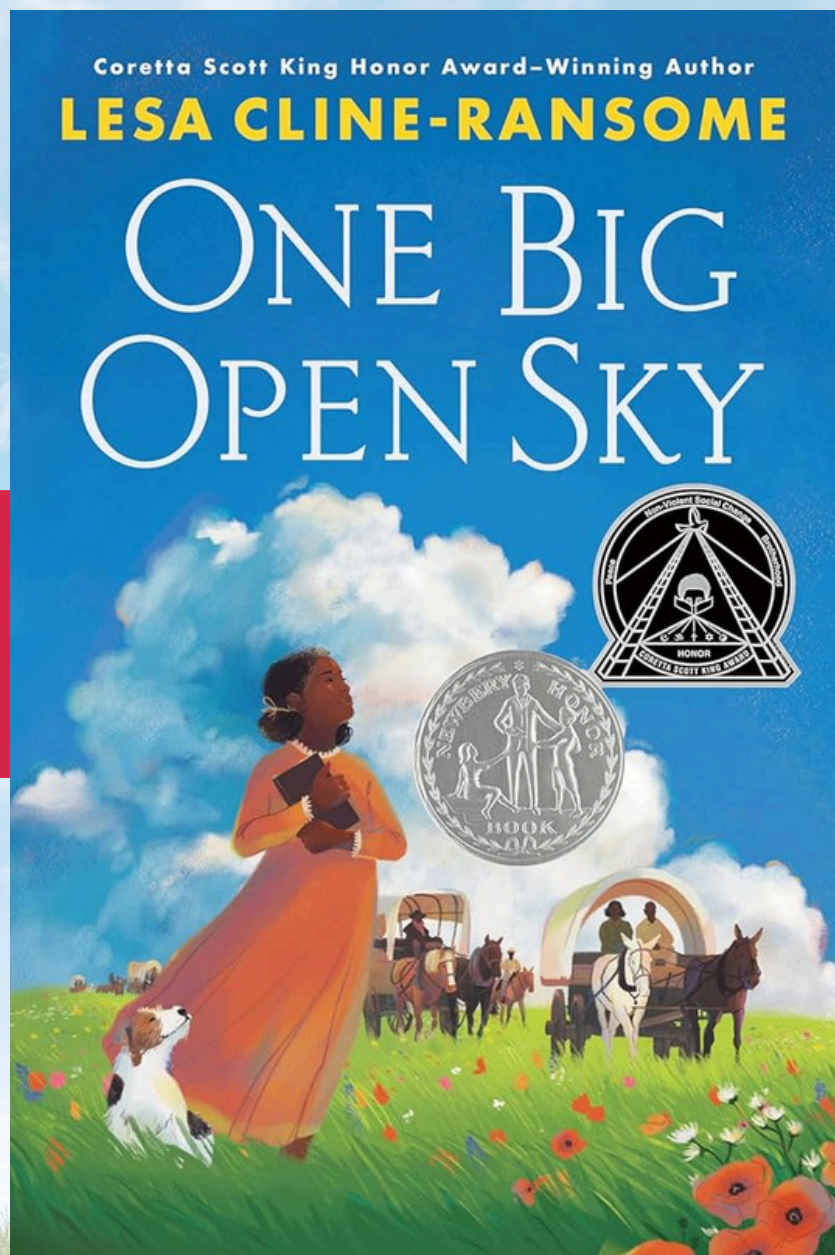
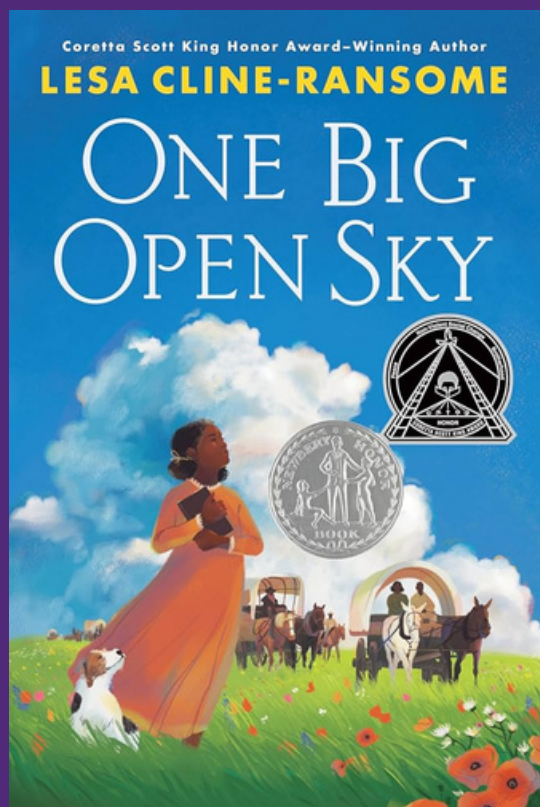


# CARDINAL CUP 2025 BOOKLIST



# VIRGINIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION CARDINAL CUP AWARD 2025 WINNER



## WINNER

**ONE BIG OPEN SKY  
BY LESA CLINE-RANSOME**

**Holiday House**

**ISBN: 9780823450169**

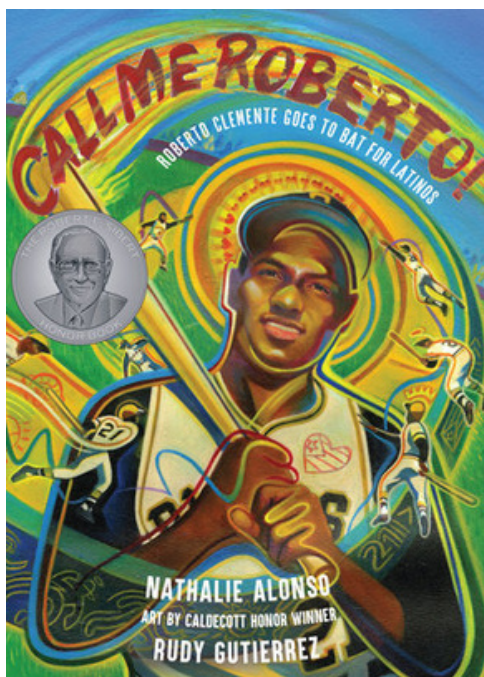


Slavery has ended, but life in Mississippi is still hard. Lettie's father dreams of a better life for his family on their own land in Nebraska. So, Lettie finds herself in a covered wagon, embarking on a perilous journey West. The story is narrated in turns by Lettie, her mother Sylvia, and Philomena, a young teacher who joins the group midway through the journey. This novel in verse does not gloss over the dangers, whether disease, crossing treacherous rivers, facing bandits on the road, or concerns about running out of money and supplies. But families and fellow travelers band together to support each other.

Lettie and her family are part of a larger migration when thousands of black families left the Reconstruction-era South as pioneers seeking a new life in the West when promised freedoms never came. In the end, this is a hopeful story where black families find a freer space to start their lives anew, and the very dangers of pioneer life provide more autonomy for women homesteaders as well. This compelling middle-grade novel in verse shines a light on a little-known chapter of the American pioneer experience.

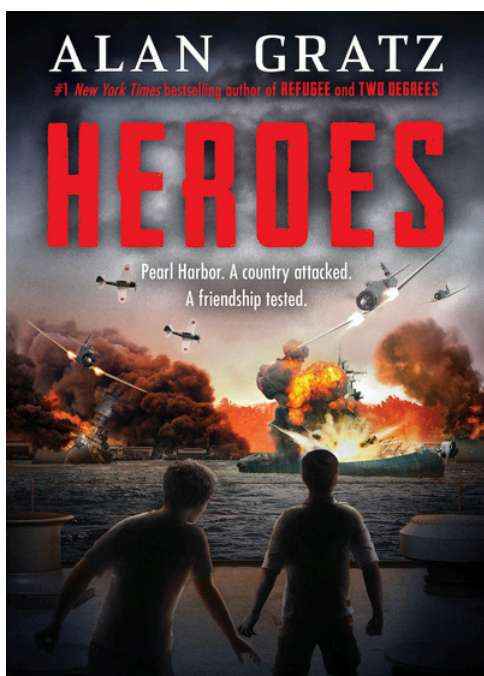


# VIRGINIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION CARDINAL CUP AWARD 2025 HONORS



**CALL ME ROBERTO:  
ROBERTO CLEMENTE GOES TO BAT FOR LATINOS**  
by Nathalie Alonso, Illustrated by Rudy Gutierrez  
Calkins Creek, ISBN: 9781635928112

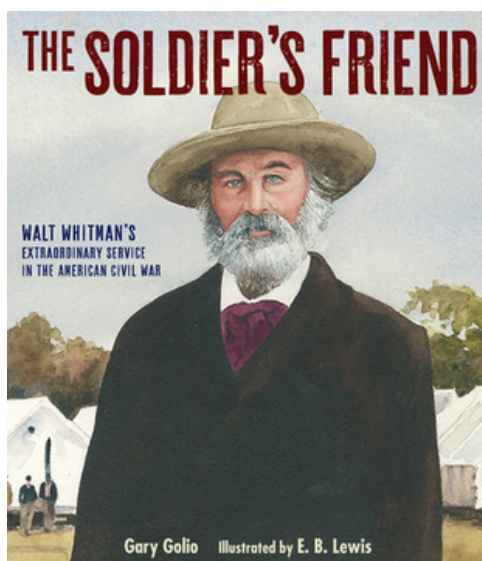
As a boy, Roberto Clemente loved playing baseball, no matter that his bat was a tree branch and a tin can was his ball. He eventually got a chance to play in the Major Leagues but not everyone was happy to see a black man from Puerto Rico, who spoke Spanish, on the baseball field. Reporters mocked his accent, and he was subject to Jim Crow laws, including while at Spring training in Florida. Time and again he pushed back against the prejudice, insisting on being called Roberto and being treated with respect, and became the first Spanish-speaking player named MVP of the World Series. The text in this beautifully-illustrated picture book pays tribute to Roberto's pride in his native language by seamlessly including Spanish words and phrases while celebrating his achievements as one of the most accomplished baseball players of all time.



**HEROES**  
by Alan Gratz  
Scholastic Press, ISBN: 9781338736076

What makes a hero? What does courage look like? Told against the backdrop of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, this gripping middle-grade novel follows two unlikely heroes as they struggle to survive the attack and help those around them. Can Frank overcome his deeply ingrained fears? Why are people suddenly treating his Japanese-American friend, Stanley, differently? Why is Stanley's mother trying to bury all evidence of their Japanese heritage? The two boys find their experiences paralleling the adventures of the comic superhero they've been creating as they avoid torpedoes and bullets while traversing Pearl Harbor in a tiny boat, first to escape and then to transport wounded men to the medical center. Not only is this an exciting and fast-paced adventure, but it is meticulously researched with additional historical information in the author's note and even comes with a bonus comic!

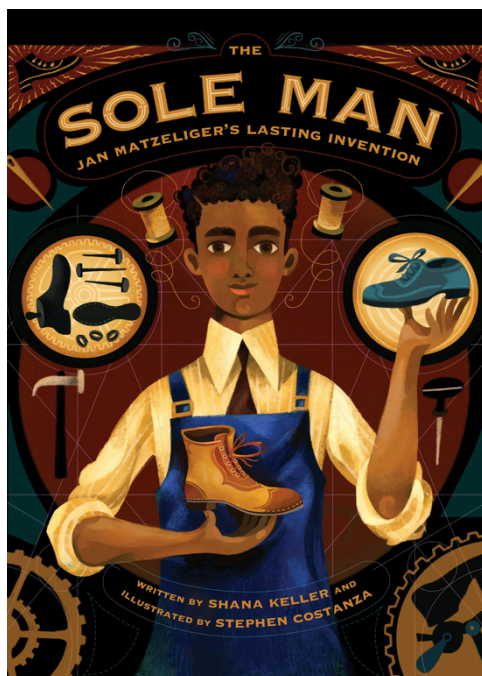
# VIRGINIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION CARDINAL CUP AWARD 2025 HONORS



## **THE SOLDIER'S FRIEND: WALT WHITMAN'S EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR** by Gary Golio, Illustrated by E. B. Lewis

Calkins Creek, ISBN: 9781635925876

Walt Whitman is best known as a poet but this picture book focuses on his extraordinary work as a volunteer in military hospitals in Washington, DC during the Civil War, service that earned him the title "the soldier's friend." When Whitman saw his brother's name on a list of wounded soldiers, he immediately left on a train headed south. While his brother was only slightly wounded, Whitman could not leave behind all of the other soldiers who were suffering. He wrote letters for them, talked with them, and even helped bury those who died. As people around the country learned what he was doing, they sent food and money for supplies for the soldiers. A firm supporter of the Union cause, Whitman came to believe that the truth of war was in the young men who were injured or dying. He cared for all patients, Northern and Southern, looking beyond the uniform to see the humanity of the soldier in front of him. This beautifully illustrated book shows the impact that one person can have on the lives of many.



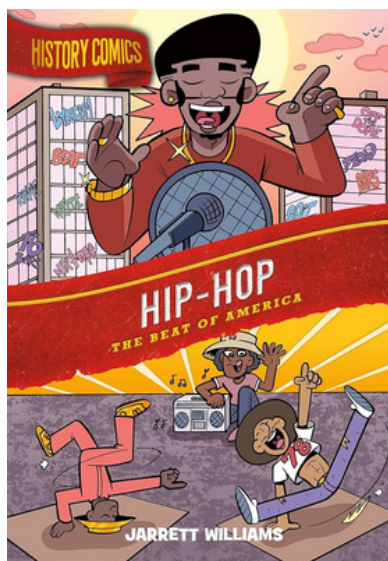
## **THE SOLE MAN: JAN MATZELIGER'S LASTING INVENTION** by Shana Keller, Illustrated by Stephen Costanza

Sleeping Bear Press, ISBN: 9781534113008

Few of us can imagine a time when shoes were a luxury, when a skilled hand laster, who sewed each shoe's sole on by hand, could only make 20 to 30 pairs of shoes in an entire week. When Jan Matzeliger suggested building a machine to mechanize and speed up the process, everyone told him it couldn't be done. Luckily, he didn't listen! This picture book biography is an amazing immigrant story, telling how Matzlinger, a Dutch-speaking Black immigrant from South America, invented a machine to fit a shoe's upper part to the last and sew it to the sole of the shoe. His machine could make up to 700 shoes per day, revolutionizing the shoe industry, and his design is still in use today.



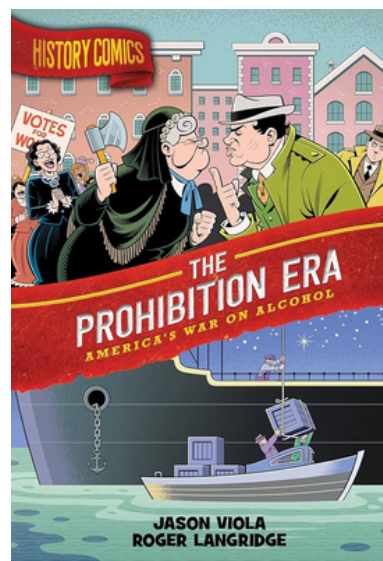
# VIRGINIA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION CARDINAL CUP AWARD 2025 SERIES OF NOTE



## **HIP-HOP: THE BEAT OF AMERICA**

**by Jarrett Williams**

ISBN: 9781250795762



## **THE PROHIBITION ERA: AMERICA'S WAR ON ALCOHOL**

**by Jason Viola and Roger Langridge**

ISBN: 9781250801456

### **HISTORY COMICS** FIRST SECOND

This middle grade nonfiction graphic novel series aims to make history come alive. The committee received two titles from the series: Hip-Hop: The Beat of America by Jarrett Williams and The Prohibition Era: America's War on Alcohol by Jason Viola and Roger Langridge. The graphic format of these well-researched books makes history more engaging for young readers without sacrificing accuracy or a balanced representation of America's past.

# CARDINAL CUP 2025 OVERFLOWETH



## BIOGRAPHY

### **BEST BELIEVE: THE TRES HERMANAS, A SISTERHOOD FOR THE COMMON GOOD**

**by NoNieqa Ramos**

Illustrated by Nicole Medina

Carolrhoda Books

ISBN: 9781728460444

This colorful picture book explores the profound impact of the Tres Hermanas, Three Sisters, a family of activists determined to make life better for their Bronx neighborhood.

### **BIRD GIRL: GENE STRATTON-PORTER SHARES HER LOVE OF NATURE WITH THE WORLD**

**by Jill Esbaum**

Illustrated by Rebecca Gibbon

Calkins Creek

ISBN: 9781635926866

Gene Stratton-Porter was determined to share her love of birds but refused to have her books illustrated with drawings of stuffed birds, instead mastering photography and hauling a 40 lb camera through swamps for stunning photos from nature.

### **GEORGIA JIPP: BLIZZARD PILOT**

**by Laura Beth Dean**

Illustrated by Jeanne Bowman

South Dakota Historical Society Press

ISBN: 9781941813515

Take off with 22-year-old Georgia Jipp as she provides a lifeline to South Dakota residents during the 3-month-long Great Blizzard of 1949, flying over 150 mercy missions, more than any other pilot.

### **SWINGING INTO HISTORY: TONI STONE: BIG-LEAGUE BASEBALL'S FIRST WOMAN PLAYER**

**by Karen L. Swanson**

Illustrated by Laura Freeman

Calkins Creek

ISBN: 9781635928136

Toni Stone was not going to let anyone or anything keep her from her dream to play professional baseball in the Negro League, persevering to become Big-League Baseball's first woman player and eventually being inducted into the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

### **WILDFLOWER EMILY: A STORY ABOUT YOUNG EMILY DICKINSON**

**by Lydia Corry**

Godwin Books

ISBN: 9781250868206

This graphic novel brings to light the famous poet's childhood adventures exploring nature, adventures that profoundly influenced her poetry.



# HISTORICAL FICTION

## **THE DAY MADEAR VOTED**

**by Wade Hudson**

Illustrated by Don Tate

Nancy Paulsen Books

ISBN: 9780593615744

Experience the family's excitement and hope for the future as Madear goes to vote for the first time thanks to the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

## **FORCE OF NATURE: A NOVEL OF RACHEL CARSON**

**by Ann E. Burg**

Illustrated by Sophie Blackall

Scholastic Press

ISBN: 9781338883381

From her childhood love of nature, to her struggles to support her family, and her groundbreaking books, this novel in verse explores the life and achievements of acclaimed environmental scientist Rachel Carson.

## **JUNIA: THE BOOK MULE OF TROUBLESOME CREEK**

**by Kim Michele Richardson**

Illustrated by David C. Gardner

Sleeping Bear Press

ISBN: 9781534113039

A picture book tribute to the Pack Horse Librarians of Kentucky told from the point of view of Junia, the spunky mule from The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek series.

## **MAMA'S CHICKEN AND DUMPLINGS**

**by Dionna L. Mann**

Margaret Ferguson Books

ISBN: 9780823455553

Life is good in Charlottesville's Vinegar Hill neighborhood except for the empty seat at her family's table, so Allie devises a Man-For-Mama plan, determined to win over her choice with Mama's delicious chicken and dumplings only to have Mama fall for her sworn enemy's uncle.

## **THEY CALL ME TEACH: LESSONS IN FREEDOM**

**by Lesa Cline-Ransome**

Illustrated by James E. Ransome

Candlewick Press

ISBN: 9780763681555

In this powerful story about the role education as a form of resistance to slavery, a young man known as Teach, who has learned to read while growing up with his master's son, shares his knowledge with fellow slaves who eagerly seek to learn despite the dangers.

## **WARRIOR ON THE MOUND**

**by Sandra W. Headen**

Holiday House

ISBN: 9780823453788

Deep in the segregated South of 1939, 12-year-old Cato leads his baseball teammates to trespass on the new, whites-only field triggering a torrent of outrage, but can a whites vs. black baseball game really help heal the racial divides in the community?

# HISTORY

## FIVE STORIES

**by Ellen Weinstein**

Holiday House

ISBN: 9780823451678

Celebrate the history of New York City's Lower East Side across 100 years, with this picture book following five immigrant families from five different cultures and exploring their impact on this vibrant community.

## LEAFY LANDMARKS: TRAVELS WITH TREES

**by Michelle Schaub**

Illustrated by Anne Lambelet

Sleeping Bear Press

ISBN: 9781534112872

Explore American history and poetic forms one tree at a time as this picture book takes you on a cross-country journey exploring the stories behind the trees at 14 historic tree sites.

## MOUNTAIN OF FIRE: THE ERUPTION AND SURVIVORS OF MOUNT ST. HELENS

**by Rebecca E. F. Barone**

Henry Holt and Company

ISBN: 9781250881656

The story of the eruption of the long-dormant Mount St. Helens on May 18, 1980 told from the perspectives of the people involved; those who died, those who survived, and the scientists who tried to warn the public.

## SPIRIT SLEUTHS: HOW MAGICIANS AND DETECTIVES EXPOSED THE GHOST HOAXES

**by Gail Jarrow**

Calkins Creek

ISBN: 9781662680236

As spiritualists took advantage of people's grief and desire to reconnect with lost loved ones after World War I and the influenza pandemic, Harry Houdini and other magicians worked to expose the conjurer's tricks behind the hoaxes.

The Virginia Library Association Cardinal Cup Award is presented to the most outstanding book for young people in the subject of history, biography, or historical fiction. Established in 1982 and presented since 1983, the Cardinal Cup Committee's goal is to promote reading about America's past; to encourage the quality writing of United States history, biography, and historical fiction for young people, and to recognize authors in these disciplines.

In 2025, the Cardinal Cup Committee selected their winner, honors, series of note, and overfloweth selections from 168 submissions. The Cardinal Cup Overfloweth list contains the books recommended by the 2025 Cardinal Cup Committee from publisher submissions. All books were published in 2024.

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The 2025 Cardinal Cup sessions at the annual Virginia Library Association Conference are proudly sponsored by VCU Libraries.



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