



2009  
Jefferson Cup

AWARD

U.S. HISTORY  
HISTORICAL FICTION  
BIOGRAPHY

*Presented by  
Youth Services Forum  
of the Virginia Library Association*



## 2009 JEFFERSON CUP AWARD

### George Washington Carver

*By Tonya Bolden • Abrams Books for Young Readers • Grades 3-6*

George Washington Carver is now so well known for his pioneering work with the by-products and uses of the peanut, that his multitude of other accomplishments are sometimes overlooked or unknown. This biography by Tonya Bolden brings the man, his times, and his accomplishments to life in a way guaranteed to fascinate the reader.

Carver is in every sense an American marvel. Born into slavery, his meteoric rise to national prominence was entirely of his own engineering. Raised by a kind German-American couple, he was a sickly child who nevertheless learned the lessons of farm life in the Ozarks. As did virtually all farmers of that era, the Carvers were a self sustaining family. Young George showed early unusual ingenuity in creating products from the woods and gardens that surrounded their cabin.

The one thing he could not create from nature was a formal education, which was denied to most black children. At age twelve, he left home to attend school in a nearby town, beginning his irregular course of formal and vocational education that culminated in a Master's degree in 1896. When Booker T. Washington approached him about joining the just developing Tuskegee Institute, Carver accepted the post. He flourished as a professor, researcher, inventor, author, speaker, and mentor to thousands until his death in 1943. His accomplishments in horticulture and botany became nationally known and changed agriculture of the South to more practical and economical crops. Carver testified before Congress, met FDR, and became a household name for promoting cultivation of the versatile peanut.

Tonya Bolden's charming and informative biography gives insight and depth in the study of this American genius. Beautifully illustrated, Carver's photographs and time appropriate drawings represent different eras of his eventful life. Ms. Bolden's work is authoritatively cited with primary sources and prominent previous biographies. Bolden has done children's literature an excellent turn with this informative look at a great American.

## HONOR B

### The Erie Canal

*By Martha E. Kendall • National Geographic, 2008 (1817-1825) • Grades 4-6*

The building of the Erie Canal in the 1820s combines history, politics, and engineering. New York Governor Clinton advocated for this remarkable passageway to the west despite some harsh criticism and many skeptics. Measuring 363 miles with 83 locks, this technological marvel, which joined Lake Erie to the Atlantic Ocean, involved all levels of society from Irish laborers to wealthy passengers.

Fascinating facts are interspersed in the chronological narrative of the building of the Erie Canal. For example, a school principal designed the series of locks to get the Canal over a 66-foot rock cliff. The Canal, part of the Underground Railroad, also collected \$750,000 in tolls its first year of operation.

This well-researched book is both informative and enjoyable, enhanced with black and white illustrations. A chronology and a list of websites and places to visit contribute to the success of this excellent work of non-fiction. What better testimonial to a book than that it encourages further reading and perhaps even inspires a ride on the Erie Canal.

### Helen's Eyes: A Photobiography of Annie Sullivan, Helen Keller's Teacher

*By Marfé Ferguson Delano • National Geographic • Grades 5-9*

Twenty-years-old, with no work experience and little tact, Anne Mansfield Sullivan first saw the six-year-old Helen Keller in March, 1887 on the porch of Helen's home in Alabama. Annie would spend the remaining fifty years of her life as "Helen's Eyes". Despite having two teeth knocked out, she kept the job with Helen because she was afraid of returning to the poorhouse and "never gave up a fight."

*Helen's Eyes* focuses on this prickly, tenacious Irishwoman who earned medals, an honorary degree, and was the first teacher (and woman) to be interred at the National Cathedral. All of which could have never been predicted by her bleak beginnings.

Delano's narrative is poignant and smooth, woven handsomely and effectively around illuminating quotes from Annie, Helen, and others who knew them. With the aid of elegantly muted photographs, *Helen's Eyes* will introduce these fascinating women to a new generation of readers and will complete the post-pump story for the rest of us.



### **Lincoln Through the Lens: How Photography Revealed and Shaped an Extraordinary Life**

*By Martin W. Sandler • Walker Books for Young Readers, 2008  
(1860-1865) • Grades 7-9*

*Lincoln Through the Lens* was assembled as a wonderful tribute to our nation's 16th President by combining the historical significance of Lincoln's presidency with the timely introduction of photography. Lincoln was in the first generation of individuals to be photographed and he learned to use photography as a vital tool during his career as a politician.

Formatted according to a timeline of Lincoln's life, Sandler uses an attractive layout, illustrations and beautiful full-page photographs. Included in this work are several stock images of Lincoln, as well as many photographs not often seen.

Using accurate and detailed facts, as well as engaging and unique photographs, Sandler has provided a new way of looking at Lincoln's Presidency. Photography did indeed reveal and shape the extraordinary life of Abraham Lincoln.

### **Ten Cents a Dance**

*By Christine Fletcher • Bloomsbury • Grades 9-12*

Sixteen year old Ruby Jacinski is forced to leave school and take a job in a Chicago meatpacking plant when her mother's health fails. Quitting high school to support her family is no hardship, but the work is unspeakably dreary. Looking for any chance to leave the stockyards, she gets a job at a nightclub, dancing with strange men for "ten cents a dance". While this earns sufficient income, Ruby quickly learns this is not the glamorous job she once thought, and she has to weave a web of deception to protect her respectable mother from the truth. She learns about racism as well as the gritty side of the business. When her dance hall contacts lead her perilously close to crime, she has to make hard decisions to keep from being drawn into the dangerous Chicago underworld.

This not entirely respectable line of work for young women like Ruby is portrayed with imagination and atmospheric detail. Sympathy for the dancers, who had few career choices, is implicit. Chicago life in the 1940s is described with such accuracy in details of speech and slang, clothes, transportation, and clubs as to lend unusual veracity and authority to a work of teen fiction. Ruby is believably portrayed in her time and place as a feisty young woman doing her best with a difficult situation.



## **SERIES WORTHY OF NOTE**

### **Essential Events**

*Published by Abdo Publishing Company • Grades 6-9*

This exceptional series explores historic events around the world and how those events have influenced society, science and politics. Historically significant events such as *Brown v. the Board of Education* and the 1929 stock market crash have been thoroughly researched and are presented in an attractive layout with readable text. Well-chosen photographs accompany the narrative, and sidebars enhance the information in each chapter.

Back information for each volume includes a timeline, date of the event, place of the event, key players, highlights of the event, and quotations. Additional resources feature a select bibliography, further reading, web links, places to visit, a glossary, source notes, and an index. Each book in this series offers an unbiased account and can serve equally well as a starting point for research or as informative recreational reading.

**THE JEFFERSON CUP AWARD** honors a distinguished American biography, historical fiction or history book for young people. The Youth Services Forum of the Virginia Library Association has presented this award annually since the 1982 publishing year. Through the award, the Youth Services Forum seeks 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.

For information about the award or to submit a nomination, please contact:

#### **Sue Trask, 2010 Chair**

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### **Eligibility**

- The book must be an original work published in the year prior to the selection.
- The book must be about U.S. history, an American person, or fiction that highlights the United States' past, 1942 to the present.
- The author must reside in the United States.
- The book must be published for young people.
- The book must be accurate, informative, well researched, unbiased, literate, and give a clear and interesting picture of America's past.

### **Selection**

The Jefferson Cup Committee selects the winning book. The committee has nine members: a chairperson selected by the previous year's committee, six individuals representing the six regions in the state, the outgoing chairperson of the Youth Services Forum (YSF), and the outgoing Jefferson Cup Award Committee chairperson.

### **2009 Jefferson Cup Award Committee**

Connie J. Moore, Chair  
Audrey Mitchell, Outgoing Chair  
Sharon Franklin, VLA Region I  
Shelly Hypes Janosko, VLA Region II  
Sue Trask, VLA Region III  
Donna Betts, VLA Region IV  
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