Japanese Children's Books

2022
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JBBY Book Selection and Review Team

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Children's literature critic. A former high school teacher in Tokyo, she owns the children's specialty bookshop Huckleberry Books and serves as an adjunct lecturer at Shirayuri and Nishogakusha Universities. She has authored 'Story' Wavering: Children's Books in an Unclear Age (Kurosio Publishers) and Lessons in Layeredness (Ryou Shuppan) as well as co-authored A Guide to World Children's Literature Based on Time (Hara Shobo). She edits the journal Japanese Children's Literature (Japanese Children's Literature Association). JBBY member.

SAKAGUCHI Mikako
Member of the Japanese Society of Science Books for Children. With the motto “science books and experiences play catch,” she teaches some 270 sessions annually from play-with-science times, to elementary/middle school and university classes, to workshops targeted to library and children’s center staff. She has authored the books Science Mysteries (Froebel-kan) and The Price of Life and Welfare (Otsuki Shoten), translated Michael Faraday and Electricity by Brian Bowers (Tamagawa University Press), and contributed to the volume Let’s Start Science Reading (Iwanami Shoten) among others. JBBY member.

SHIOZAKI Junko
Researcher, part-time lecturer at Keio University, and a member of the steering committee of the Association of Children's Libraries (Jitoken). She obtained her PhD in Library and Information Science after working as a librarian in school and public libraries. She now researches children’s books and reading while also teaching theory of children’s library service at multiple universities, educating future librarians. Her publications include The History of Library Services to Children—Development of Public Library Services to Children in Postwar Japan (Sogensha), JBBY board member.

NOGAMI Akira
At Shogakukan, served as editor of First Grader monthly magazine, head of children’s books, company director, and finally president and CEO of Shogakukan Creative. Taught children’s literature and culture at Shirayuri University and Tokyo Saitoku University. His writings in Japanese include To the Modern Children’s Literature of Japan (Parorusha), Children’s Literature Crossing Borders (Nagasaki Shuppan), and Contemporary History of Children’s Culture (Otsuki Shoten). Coeditor of When I Was a Child, There Was a War (Rironsha) among others. Managing director of Japan PEN Club. JBBY vice president.

For each selected title in this catalog, we provide the following:
Title in English
Title in Japanese (Title in Romanized Japanese) | Author/Illustrator | Publisher | Publication Year | Number of Pages | Trim Size | ISBN | Target Age | Keywords
Basic Book Description (Last Name of Reviewer)

Cover illustration
ARAI Ryoji
Born in Yamagata prefecture in 1956, graduated from the Nihon University College of Art. Ryoji Arai has received many honors, including the 1st JBBY Award for Taiyo orugan (A Sound of Taiyo-Organ; Arton/Kaiseisha) in 2008; the 59th Sankei Children’s Book Award for Asa ni natto node mado o akemasu yo (It’s Morning So I Will Open the Window) in 2012; and the 22nd Japan Picture Book Award for Kyo wa sora ni marui tsuki (A Full Moon in the Sky Tonight; Kaiseisha) in 2016. He was the winner of the 3rd Book Award for So I Will Open the Window) in 2012; and the 22nd Japan Picture Book Award for Taiyo orugan (A Sound of Taiyo-Organ; Arton/Kaiseisha) in 2008; the 59th Sankei Children’s Book Award for Kyo wa sora ni marui tsuki (A Full Moon in the Sky Tonight; Kaiseisha) in 2016. He was the winner of the 3rd Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award in 2005, the first winner from Asia, and was shortlisted for the 2022 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Illustration.
About JBBY and This Catalog

The Japanese Board on Books for Young People (JBBY) was founded in 1974 as the Japanese Section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY).

JBBY is dedicated to enhancing international understanding, and to providing information on children’s books to people around the world. We promote IBBY’s mission in a broad range of ways. Our international network allows us to take advantage of the prolific information generated by IBBY and to encourage mutual understanding. Our mission is to create a peaceful future for children worldwide through books.

JBBY hosts international book exhibitions in Japan that provide information about global titles to Japanese readers. In addition, we provide information on Japanese children’s books to people around the world. We nominate titles for international recognition, as a means to deepen global understanding towards Japan.

In this catalog, we provide information about recent Japanese books recommended by a JBBY book selection and review team in several categories: picture books, chapter books and novels, and nonfiction. In addition, we introduce Japanese winners of and nominees for the Hans Christian Andersen Award; books selected for the IBBY Honour List from Japan; and recent translations into Japanese recommended by JBBY.

We list the recent Japanese books by category and in order of target age, including cover images and synopses along with bibliographic information. We hope you will enjoy reading about these books. For further information, please contact us: info@jbby.org

SAKUMA Yumiko, JBBY President
Little Pumpkin Can’t Sleep, Can’t Sleep
ねられん ねられん かぼちゃのこ (Neraren neraren kabocha no ko) | Text/Ill. YAGYU Genichiro | Fukuinkan Shoten | 2020 | 24pp | 22x21cm | ISBN978-4-8340-8567-9 | 0+ | Pumpkin, Sleep, Moon

A picture book that encourages sleep through a dialogue between the moon and a small pumpkin. One evening, Moon says, “Time to sleep, Little Pumpkin!” And Little Pumpkin replies, “Can’t sleep, can’t sleep!” Little Pumpkin has lots of reasons: there’s a frog on top of her, or a hornworm is stuck to her. When Moon points out that there is also a drone beetle stuck to her, Little Pumpkin says, “I can’t sleep without Asa-chan!” At last, Little Pumpkin falls asleep. The back-and-forth between Moon and Little Pumpkin is humorous and evokes the feelings of a child who has many reasons not to go to sleep. The text is rhythmical, and orange and yellow circles stand out strikingly against the blue of night. (Doi)

Hat On
ぼうしだぶって (Boshi kabutte) | Text/Ill. MIURA Taro | Doshinsha | 2020 | 28pp | 18x18cm | ISBN978-4-494-00715-8 | Ages: 0+ | Vegetables, Hat, Family, Outing

On page 1, a purple eggplant father in glasses and a necktie runs along, carrying his satchel. “Eggplant father, ta-ta-ta-ta-ta!” says the text. Turn the page, and the father has donned his hat—the eggplant’s calyx. “Hat on, and I’m off!” says the text. Next, a pineapple big brother, a persimmon big sister, and some peapod siblings similarly put on their “hats” and head out. Finally, a tomato mother and roly-poly cherry tomato baby put on their “hats” and leave for an outing. This picture book’s repetition is delightful, as are the transformations of brightly colored vegetables and fruits by the addition of their “hats.” (Doi)

The Tree Flogs’ Adventure

Three little tree frogs, Ratta, Chimo, and Arno, go exploring the forest for the first time. To begin with they are excited and enjoying themselves, but there are all kinds of insects and creatures in the forest, and the principle of the survival of the fittest prevails there. They narrowly escape being caught and eaten by a bush cricket, a toad, and an owl. Eventually they realize that running away and hiding is not cowardly but a weapon for survival, and they feast themselves on small insects and then fall asleep in the hollow of a tree. This is a fun adventure story with illustrations, based on a good understanding of the way frogs live and the things they do. (Sakuma)

All Kind of Flogs
いろいろかえる (Iroiro kaeru) | Text/Ill. KIKUCHI Chiki | Kaiseisha | 2021 | 24pp | 31x24cm | ISBN978-4-8340-8567-9 | 0+ | Frogs, Colors, Parents and children

A green frog that likes eating is catching insects in the grass when a yellow frog that likes jumping comes bounding over. One by one they are joined by a pink frog that likes dancing, a blue frog that likes swimming, and an orange frog that likes singing, and they all play happily together. The illustrations filling the entire double-page spreads are full of energy. The clear and simple text makes use of repetition and is rhythmical. It is fun to follow the changes as a new color is introduced into the picture every time you turn the page. Eventually a black mother and a silver father appear and it is time for bed, with a sweet picture of everyone sleeping together. (Fukumoto)

Vodnik’s Water House: A Czech Folktale
ヴォドニークの水の館 (Vodoniku no mizu no yakata) | Text: MAKI Atsuko | Ill. FURIYA Nana | BL Shuppan | 2021 | 32pp | 29x22cm | ISBN978-4-7764-0929-8 | Ages: 3+ | Czech Republic, Folktale, Monster

Vodnik is a water monster who makes mischief and even drowns people. One night, a penniless girl throws herself into the river, and Vodnik spirits her into his house on the river bottom. While helping in the house, the girls learns that many people’s souls have been been trapped in jars there—including the soul of her younger brother, who had gone missing. The girl releases all the souls from the jars and determines to leave and return to her own house. An illustrator based in the Czech Republic powerfully portrays Vodnik and the beautiful underwater world, in this retelling of a long-shared legend. (Shiozaki)
Mountaineering on a Cow

Yoshihei is out fishing one day when he catches a young jellyfish. He tries to return it to the sea, but it shouts “No!” and begs him not to, because it’ll be teased by all the other fish. And so the little jellyfish goes to live happily with Yoshihei, until one full-moon night its mother turns up to take it home. She tells her child how worried she’s been all month. Even after it came out, whenever I tried to get close its fur stood on end and it hissed angrily at me. This made me sad, as I thought perhaps it didn’t really like me at all. Still, I kept patiently telling it not to worry. And finally, in winter it came into bed with me! The illustrations depict the cat’s soft fur using ink painting techniques on Japanese washi paper, and realistically depict the cat gradually beginning to trust the first-person protagonist and closing the distance between them, teaching us the importance of taking time to befriend animals that have had a traumatic experience. (Shiozaki)

Our Cat

This spring, a stray cat turned up at our house. It hid under the sofa and didn’t come out for a whole month. Even after it came out, whenever I tried to get close its fur stood on end and it hissed angrily at me. This made me sad, as I thought perhaps it didn’t really like me at all. Still, I kept patiently telling it not to worry. And finally, in winter it came into bed with me! The illustrations depict the cat’s soft fur using ink painting techniques on Japanese washi paper, and realistically depict the cat gradually beginning to trust the first-person protagonist and closing the distance between them, teaching us the importance of taking time to befriend animals that have had a traumatic experience. (Shiozaki)

Riding the Large Candle Cart

Nico, a little person, and Dada-kun, a small robot, skilfully use ropes and pulleys to make a single beeswax candle. They load the candle onto a horse-drawn cart and drive leisurely along the seaside road, the horse’s hooves clip-clopping as they go, passing by ships carrying fruit and cocoa beans, and a train carrying little-people patissier chefs. Arriving at their destination, they see a ginormous cake. Nico’s candle is lit on the top of the cake and the moon blows it out, marking the start of Children’s Day celebrations! It’s a fun story with lots of things happening along the leisurely journey, and scenes of many little people making and sharing the cake. (Okuyama)

The Talkative Jellyfish

Yoshihei is out fishing one day when he catches a young jellyfish. He tries to return it to the sea, but it shouts “No!” and begs him not to, because it’ll be teased by all the other fish. And so the little jellyfish goes to live happily with Yoshihei, until one full-moon night its mother turns up to take it home. She tells her child how worried she’s been and that you shouldn’t decide your own actions just because of what others think of you. Yoshihei gives up fishing and sometimes goes to the sea to call on the little jellyfish. We see the little jellyfish’s daily life along with his relationship with his mother, and the various fish are humorously depicted in the embroidered illustrations. (Doi)

Kyukyu the Cleaning Robot

This story is about a much-loved cleaning robot who works in a vending machine corner in a city suburb occupied by robots. He is an outdated model and is named Kyukyu after the squeaking sound he makes as he walks. From early morning he washes the row of vending machines, counts the number of drinks sold and places orders for more, crushes empty cans and takes them to the recycling truck. Unfortunately, though, he is sensitive to water and has to be sent for repair when he breaks down after a sudden rainstorm. The various robots and vending machines are all unique, and we can enjoy the details in their carefully depicted facial expressions and gestures. The use of papier mâché to create chib, subdued scenes is also charming. (Nogami)

Kotatsu

On the morning of December 31, Kota slips into the kotatsu, a heated table with a quilt, and announces that he plans to stay up until midnight to greet the New Year. The story depicts this special day in the family’s life, with the kotatsu at the center. The artist takes an aerial view, gazing down from the ceiling as he follows the family’s year-end housecleaning, the preparation of traditional New Year’s dishes, and such customs as eating buckwheat noodles on New Year’s Eve. Although we can only see the top of each person’s head, the vivid paintings conjure up images of everyone’s expressions and the warm bonds that unite this family circle. The humorous illustrations contain many subtle details that are fun to discover. (Shiozaki)
The Kitten Brothers’ Bathtime Counting Song

This picture book takes an entertaining peek at three scruffy kittens enjoying bathtime. As they get ready, the kittens sing a merry counting song with plenty of alliteration to describe each step of the process, from undressing to hopping into the tub. When their father calls them, they stop frolicking and rush eagerly to join him in the bath, each clutching a favorite toy (a rubber duck, a boat, and a ball). They wash themselves squeaky clean, then soak in the hot tub. The rhythmical text and expressive artwork make this simple story an enjoyable read. The series also includes a book about snack time and another about bedtime. (Sakuma)

Cherry Lalala

It’s April in Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan’s four main islands, and the mountains are still covered in snow. “I’m here,” whispers a cherry tree, but it is only when the snow melts in May that it reveals its shape. It grows so low to the ground that its many branches seem to rise from the earth. Birds flock to its branches and flowers bloom nearby, until at last the tree bursts into blossom. Beautiful photos are accompanied by the gentle narration of the Chishima-zakura cherry tree, named after the Chishima or Kuril Islands north of Hokkaido. Trees of this species are the last cherry trees in the country to bloom. “I decide when to blossom,” the tree declares, demonstrating both harmony with the natural environment and positive self-determination. (Okuyama)

Bullet Train!

A little boy takes his first solo trip on a bullet train. His mother sees him off at the station. Aboard the train, the boy starts feeling anxious when he realizes there are only strangers around him. He eats his packed lunch, sees Mount Fuji, goes to the washroom, and falls asleep, dreaming that he is the train driver. Before he knows it, he has reached the station where his grandparents wait for him. The ingenious illustrations use geometric shapes, such as circles, squares, and triangles, to express the characters and scenery, while parallel lines convey the speed of the train. Although at first the other passengers are nebulus black shapes, they gradually take on color, revealing the change in the boy’s feelings and perspective. (Sakuma)

The Sun Is Laughing

On a southern island reminiscent of Okinawa, flowers, trees, and insects smile in the brilliant sunshine. Even the sun is laughing. Suddenly a typhoon races towards the island, whipping up the sea. Fish of all kinds rain down from the sky, to the astonishment of two boys. The fish are a gift from the typhoon, and the boys enjoy a hearty breakfast under the beaming sun. Its dazzling rays light up the boys’ faces with smiles that keep shining even after nightfall. Painted with vivid, energetic brushstrokes, the illustrations burst with the untamed power and vitality of nature. This is a recent work by mirocomachiko, winner of the Golden Apple at the Biennial of Illustrations Bratislava. (Nogami)

Monkey Guardian

An old woodcutter goes into the forest to gather firewood. Pausing to eat some rice cakes, he nods off with white rice flour stuck to his face. A group of monkeys carry him off to a temple on the opposite bank, believing him to be a statue of a guardian deity. They leave offerings of money, and when the old man awakes, he is overjoyed by his good fortune. After hearing this story, the woodcutter’s jealous neighbor pretends to be a sacred statue too, but his attempt goes horribly wrong. The comical illustrations capture the humor of the monkeys carrying the old man across the river. Similar tales are found throughout Japan. This one is based on a folktale from Yamagata prefecture. (Fukumoto)
Grandmother bakes a big cake. Since Grandfather loves to eat, she makes sure he knows to leave half of it left over. Then, she goes out. Grandfather eats half as he was told: “Chomp, chomp, half!” Then, a dog named John comes along and eats up half of what’s left: “Chomp, chomp, half!” Soon a cat, a hen, a squirrel, a praying mantis, and a honeybee all do the same, and when Grandmother comes home, she’s surprised to find the cake very tiny! The repetitive rhythm and various developments are fun; this book makes readers want to turn the pages. Drawn in rough lines, the duped expressions of Grandfather, Grandmother, the animals and the insects are humorous and distinctive. (Shiozaki)

“Ready, set, go!” Five children take off running. One boy keeps running even after completing the race, going around town, between buildings, and even into a forest! Along the way, a dog joins him. Eventually, the boy ends up where he started. The four children who began running with him are cheering, holding flags numbered 1 through 4 based on the order they crossed the finish line. When the boy crosses the line, the dog beats him by a hair to win 5th place, while the boy wins 6th. The scenery where the boy runs and the activities of the different people he sees are a delight. This book conveys the author’s playful attitude toward competition and the individuality of a boy who doesn’t worry about winning, just runs! (Nogami)

Today is a big sale day in the Fully Tummy Alley shopping street, and a girl goes with her grandfather to shop. She sees places to buy dumplings, senbei, yakitori, fruit, oden, side dishes, ramen, curry, meat, fish, pickles, medicine, clothing, flowers, antiques, eyeglasses . . . and she sees that a raccoon dog deity is being honored. When she places a skewer of dumplings as an offering, some little raccoon dogs come and pick it up. Peeking into their hole, the girl can see that the raccoon dogs are having a market day too. In this book, many small shops along a narrow arcade have been illustrated in fine detail. The bustle of people on market day comes through. (Sakuma)

A two-page spread shows an animal in nature: “See.” The next two-page spread shows a close-up of the animal looking this way. “Be seen.” A cat, a praying mantis, some cows, a squirrel . . . each pair of spreads offers the sequence of “see” and “be seen,” with some occasional changes introduced. The spread after the cow’s “be seen” spread has onomatopoeia for the cow coming over here to lick! The giant flying squirrel pops into the air with some more onomatopoeia. The joy of the picture book medium and the page turns are fully felt. Dynamic, multicolored woodblock prints create the strong impression that animals are unique and alive. (Okuyama)
A duck father and mother live with their three children in a house in the mountains, but the trouble is that they are all incredibly forgetful. One day, the mother asks them to go shopping, so the father takes the children into town, but as usual they cannot remember what they are supposed to buy. Thinking it is something square they buy a block of tofu, then they think it is something heavy and buy a stone, and end up making one ludicrous purchase after another. In the last picture there is a hint what they should have bought. The illustrations show the family’s absent-minded facial expressions drawn in loose lines, and it is really funny how their bad memories lead to more and more odd purchases. (Fukumoto)

Dressed in special New Year’s kimonos, male and female animal pairs, each representing one of the twelve zodiac signs, wish the reader a “Happy New Year!” The rat pair sets out traditional New Year’s dishes while the ox pair heads off to pray at the shrine and the tiger pair gets drunk on sake. The monkey pair toasts rice cakes and prepares the zoni, a special New Year’s soup, while other creatures enjoy such festive pastimes as spinning tops, flying kites, playing sugoroku (a traditional Japanese board game), and making their first calligraphy of the year, a custom called kakizome. When the zoni is ready, everyone gathers to eat. The bold, humorous woodblock prints present various Japanese New Year’s customs and different types of zoni. (Fukumoto)

One night, an old bus abandoned and forgotten in the forest seems to imbibe the forest’s spirit, and it grows green legs and a tail from its rusty body. It heads into town as the monster Bus-saurus! When it rests at a bus stop, an elderly woman climbs aboard. As Bus-saurus moves about, some moths, bats, rhinoceros beetles, flying squirrels, a deer, and even a bear come along. Eventually, the woman stops riding, the inside of the bus rots away, and the Bus-saurus leaves the lonely night-time townscape behind. In this delicately rendered masterpiece, a popular manga artist and recipient of the Japan Cartoonists Association Award sounds a wake-up call about modern civilization. (Nogami)

This story takes place in a bureau drawer owned by Remi, an old woman living on her own. One day, a small brown box is newly placed in the drawer and welcomed merrily by a glass jar, a prop to decorate a kitten’s neck. But the small box never gets used. It even gets taken away by Remi’s friend, drowns. Hiroshi begins helping the fisherman with his work. The dynamic stenciled illustrations capture the depth of the sea, the horror of war, and the preciousness of life. (Doi)
**The Rabbit and The Hedgehog: Another Good Day**

うさぎとハリネズミ きょうもいいひ (Usagi to harinezumi: kyo mo ii hi)


This easy-to-read book contains four stories depicting the daily lives of a rabbit and a hedgehog who live in the forest. In “Prickly and Fluffy,” the two friends set up a flea market for the hedgehog to sell some of his spines that have fallen out and the rabbit to sell his fluffy hair, but they don’t get any customers. Then the hedgehog sticks nuts on the spines to make them into marking pins, and the rabbit stuffs his hair into empty walnut shells to make pincushions, and all the forest animals flock to buy them. In “What I Want To Tell You,” the pair connect two walnut shells with a long thread to make a telephone, and ask each other, “Can you hear me? Can you hear me?” Then the rabbit tells the hedgehog to say something, and he whispers, “Thank you for being my friend.” In “For Tomorrow,” the hedgehog is moping because nothing good has happened today, but the rabbit cheers him up, saying “Try to remember what made you laugh the most.” In “Dandelion Seed,” there is a happy ending when a dandelion seed that the hedgehog had accidentally blown away when he sneezed ends up sprouting.

The introverted, pessimistic hedgehog and easy-going, cheerful rabbit are not quite on the same wavelength, but they are full of love for each other. The conversations between the two are leisurely, and the black-and-white illustrations on each page well convey the heartwarming atmosphere. This is a perfect book for children who have just learned to read. (Fukumoto)

**The Wild Boar Hospital on Mount Kumotori**

くもとり山のイノシシびょういん (Kumotoriyama no inoshishi byoin)

| Text: KAKO Satoshi | Ill. KAKO Satoshi & NAKAJIMA Kamei | Fukuinkan Shoten | 2021 | 64pp | 20x14cm | ISBN978-4-8340-8589-1 | Ages: 7+ | Wild boar, Hospitals, Doctors

A wild boar doctor and rabbit nurse examine sick animals every day in a small hospital at the foot of a mountain. A young tanuki, who has a stomachache even though he hasn’t eaten anything bad, finds out it was caused by him tapping along on his stomach at the school play. A praying mantis discovers the reason he can’t stop sneezing and sniffing is that he is allergic to buckwheats after telling them he jumped into some plants with small white flowers when he was chased by a goat. A praying mantis discovers the reason he can’t stop sneezing and sniffing is that he is allergic to buckwheats after telling them he jumped into some plants with small white flowers when he was chased by a goat. A greedy bear comes to the hospital with sore claws from turning over a rock while trying to get at hornet larvae in a nest, and has 26 hornet stings removed from his backside. These seven short stories feature the mountain animals that visit the hospital one after another—a tanuki, a goat, a praying mantis, a bear, a deer, a crested kingfisher, a rhinoceros beetle, and a crocodile, each with their own unique characteristics. The doctor is big and scary with disheveled hair, but he gently listens to his patients, who are in pain, and accurately diagnoses their problems. The interactions between the doctor and his patients are humorous and fun, and the illustrations, both the author’s own and those newly added by her grandson, are heartwarming. Even young children will enjoy having it read to them. (Fukumoto)

**The Goodbye Treasure Box**

さよならのたからばこ (Sayonara no takara bako)


Seven-year-old Minami is moving from a little island to Tokyo. The book depicts her last day with Yosei, her best friend and classmate. Disappointed that Yosei didn’t come to her sendoff party, Minami heads for the beach, hoping to find him. She bumps into him on the way. “Looking for Josephine,” he says, crowing the name like a rooster. Minami realizes that Taro the rooster must be looking for his owner, Josephine, and that Yosei wants Minami to join the search. They set off together. Yosei finds a pretty stone and gives it to Minami, then places it on top of a stone wall. They end up walking Auntie Haru’s dog as they search, stopping to ask their neighbors if they have seen Josephine. No one has, but each person shares a memory of Minami, and Auntie Haru gives the two friends some popsicles. They climb onto the roof of a shed at Yosei’s house and look out at the sea and sky. Gazing at a big cloud that looks like cotton candy, Yosei says, “Good things are going to happen in Tokyo. I can feel it.” Minami realizes that her heart, which had felt like an empty hole until she bumped into Yosei, is a treasure box filled with wonderful memories.

A gentle, humorous tale of how friendship relieves the fears of a little island girl. The gorgeous island scenery depicted in the illustrations seems to mirror the rich memories that fill Minami’s heart. (Doi)
Ippei is often on his own at school. If someone praises his drawing, he’ll start making another, but by the time he’s done, everyone is doing something else. Sometimes he trips and falls and gets left behind. One rainy day, Ippei comes home to find the door to his house locked. His knee is scraped from falling, and he’s cold and hungry. Lonely and forlorn, he sets off to find his mother. Realizing that Ippei is lost, the shopkeepers gather round, and a police officer takes care of him until his mother comes. This incident is a turning point after which Ippei connects more with the people around him.

Readers of this book will join Samu in wondering about the mysteries of the family and her longing to see the unknown, wide world. This delightful story of two sisters features illustrations by the author with a pleasing combination of colors. It invites readers to experience how the sisters’ daily life is full of joy.

Samu may look like a regular second-grader, but he carries a sky-blue towel-handkerchief in his pocket that gives him superpowers. Its smell clears his mind so he can solve mysteries! (The hanky is made from a towel he mouthed as a baby.) One morning at school, three boys’ shoes have vanished from the cubbies at the entrance. Samu discovers that yesterday after school, all three boys jumped in puddles and took these shoes home because they were soiled. They forgot to bring them back.

After school, when Samu goes to the park, he finds a little girl who says her doll disappeared from a bench where she had placed it. Samu asks eyewitnesses for information and identifies the culprit. Another day, a third-grade student complains of a dog following her. Samu discovers that the dog is attracted to the smell of the girl’s bag, which she received in a gift box. The photos were taken when Hana was much smaller, and when Meme was still in their mother’s belly. Nonetheless, Meme talks of Paris as if the memories were her own. As she describes even the colors and smells of Paris, Hana almost feels that she could see out through their mother’s belly button! When Hana counters that their mother was wearing clothes, Meme says that she could see out through her mother’s buttonholes, the lace in her slip, and a hole in her underwear! As Hana and Meme continue their back-and-forth, and imagine an eye peering out through an opening in their mother’s clothes, they dissolve in hearty laughter. Meme’s imaginative made-up stories show her wish to be a part of the family and her longing to see the unknown, wide world. This delightful story of two sisters features illustrations by the author with a pleasing combination of colors. It invites readers to experience how the sisters’ daily life is full of joy.
Asahi is in fourth grade. When he finds out that his friend, in punishment for a bad report card, had his New Year’s money deducted by his parents, Asahi wonders what report cards are for. Toki, the top student in their class, confides that she feels bad for her younger sister who always gets low marks no matter how hard she tries. Asahi proposes making a report card for their homeroom teacher, Hashiken, and the whole class gets involved. To find out what report cards are for, they interview a very strict teacher, Mr. Okubo, who teaches the class in the next room. He tells them that report cards are for their parents. The children realize that not every teacher sees report cards in the same way.

The fourth-graders are preparing to present their future dreams at a school event. Asahi, however, doesn’t have a dream. After pondering what to do, he decides to just be honest. At the end of the third term, the children present their teacher, Hashiken, with his report card. They mark his method of teaching, the way he writes on the blackboard, and even the way he eats his lunch, explaining why. Hashiken thanks them for pointing out his strengths.

The contrast between Hashiken, who cares deeply about his students, and the more authoritarian Okubo is relatable, reflecting contradictions within the school system. The students’ exploration of what would make a report card meaningful for them and how to grade their teacher are convincing and intriguing. (Doi)

Asahi is in fourth grade. When he finds out that his friend, in punishment for a bad report card, had his New Year’s money deducted by his parents, Asahi wonders what report cards are for. Toki, the top student in their class, confides that she feels bad for her younger sister who always gets low marks no matter how hard she tries. Asahi proposes making a report card for their homeroom teacher, Hashiken, and the whole class gets involved. To find out what report cards are for, they interview a very strict teacher, Mr. Okubo, who teaches the class in the next room. He tells them that report cards are for their parents. The children realize that not every teacher sees report cards in the same way.

The fourth-graders are preparing to present their future dreams at a school event. Asahi, however, doesn’t have a dream. After pondering what to do, he decides to just be honest. At the end of the third term, the children present their teacher, Hashiken, with his report card. They mark his method of teaching, the way he writes on the blackboard, and even the way he eats his lunch, explaining why. Hashiken thanks them for pointing out his strengths.

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Tanochin (short for Ranta Tanoe) is a fourth-grade boy whose class is working in small groups to make original encyclopedias, which they will present when parents visit. Tanochin’s group works on a “sigh encyclopedia,” about the reasons and situations that cause their classmates to sigh.

Tanochin’s group includes a boy named Koshiro, a girl named Koyuki, a girl named Nanaho, and a girl named Yura who spends her days in the school nurse’s office. As a way of coaxing Yura back to class, Tanochin asks her to draw the encyclopedia’s illustrations, but Koyuki declares she will do the illustrations and refuses to back down. She and Yura seem to have trouble getting along.

The person Tanochin ends up consulting is Sigh Boy, a mini-version of him wearing a kimono, which Yura drew on a piece of paper to depict Tanochin’s sigh. Sigh Boy now jumps out of Tanochin’s backpack every time he gets home from school. At Sigh Boy’s urging, Tanochin goes to a “Sigh Festival” and finds the mini version of all the other children! Tanochin learns from mini Koyuki and Yura what happened between them in the past, and he finds a clue to help their relationship.

The five classmates’ conversation unfolds in up-tempo Kansai dialect, and while they have their hard times, it’s fun to watch them solve their problems their own way. The realistic story transitions smoothly to fantasy with the entrance of Sigh Boy, who adds a perfect dash of humor. The end of the book features the group’s finished Encyclopedia of Sighs. (Fukumoto)

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The grandfather of the main character had a very old silk tree in his garden. Birds always flock to it, and the grandfather used to boast that it was a gift from the birds. Now, however, it seems that the grownups want to cut it down because it’s too big, taller than the roof. It’s dangerous, they say. This makes the boy cry. “Grandpa always told me it was a good tree,” he tells his friends. “But they’re talking about cutting it.”

“Did they cut it down?” his friends ask.

“No, but they chopped off lots of branches,” the boy replies. Even that makes him feel sad for the tree.

Rumors are circulating that a ghost is haunting the garden where a veterinarian once lived. The boy becomes acutely aware that countless creatures, some so small we don’t even see them, are all born to die. Although this grieves him, he decides that he doesn’t ever want to forget this fact. The author eloquently conveys the emotions of this sensitive child whose heart is touched and troubled by the deaths of every living thing and who struggles with the difficulty of expressing these feelings in words. Instead, his feelings permeate the heart of the reader. The author has won well-deserved acclaim for her empathy for children and for her ability to portray their subtle emotions along with the questions that trouble their minds and their annoyance with the way grownups behave. She was nominated for the 2022 Hans Christian Andersen Award for Writing. (Nogami)

A collection of eight stories on the theme of how thoughtless words can be extremely hurtful and damage a relationship. “On The Way Home” is about a boy who is upset with his friend for interrupting him while they’re chatting with five classmates during the lunch break. They are walking home together in silence when it suddenly starts raining, and they are finally able to clear up the misunderstanding. “I Can’t Stand That Girl” relates how one girl dislikes Maki, who is popular with boys, but is able to make friends with her after a word from a friend. In “An E-mail to Tomita,” Misato is freaked out when Tomita, the captain of her softball team, whispers “You’re dead!” in her ear. “风 and Rain” is about two fifth-grade girls, Fuka (whose name includes the kanji for wind) and her friend Ru (with the kanji for rain), who have been in the same class since starting school, but Ru confides that she feels bad for her younger sister who always gets low marks in silence when it suddenly starts raining, and they are finally able to clear up the misunderstanding. “I Can’t Stand That Girl” relates how one girl dislikes Maki, who is popular with boys, but is able to make friends with her after a word from a friend. In “An E-mail to Tomita,” Misato is freaked out when Tomita, the captain of her softball team, whispers “You’re dead!” in her ear. “风 and Rain” is about two fifth-grade girls, Fuka (whose name includes the kanji for wind) and her friend Ru (with the kanji for rain), who have been in the same class since starting school, but Ru confides that she feels bad for her younger sister who always gets low marks in silence when it suddenly starts raining, and they are finally able to clear up the misunderstanding. “I Can’t Stand That Girl” relates how one girl dislikes Maki, who is popular with boys, but is able to make friends with her after a word from a friend. In “An E-mail to Tomita,” Misato is freaked out when Tomita, the captain of her softball team, whispers “You’re dead!” in her ear. “风 and Rain” is about two fifth-grade girls, Fuka (whose name includes the kanji for wind) and her friend Ru (with the kanji for rain), who have been in the same class since starting school, but Ru confides that she feels bad for her younger sister who always gets low marks
Eleven-year-old Mamekichi moved from the countryside to Edo (now Tokyo) to work as a live-in employee at Tsurukameya, a confectionery shop with a good reputation. The master and mistress and the other employees were all kind, but he had a hard time with twenty-three-year-old Yonezo, the short-tempered and quarrelsome young master. Yonezo was tall and scary. One day, furious with Yonezo for getting into a big fight with a customer, the master rented a small store for him in Asakusa and told him not to come back until he’d made a success of it. And of all things, he sent Mamekichi to keep an eye on him!

Mamekichi wanted to cry, but living and working with Yonezo, he gradually came to understand his personality and learned how to treat him. Yonezo was still quarrelsome, but he was extremely good at making sweets. He also gave credit to Mamekichi and told him to try making his own confections. Mamekichi couldn’t make the elegant thin rice cakes Yonezo was known for, but he came up with his own version of daifuku rice cakes filled with sweet bean paste. These proved especially popular with Tatsugoro, the customer with whom Yonezo had quarreled, and they were soon dubbed “quarrel rice cakes” and sold alongside Yonezo’s rice cakes as a store specialty.

This work depicts the daily life of spirited, quick-tempered Edoites. The fast-paced dialogue between the young master, Mamekichi, and the people around them is delightful, vividly conveying the liveliness of Edo. The text boxes entitled “Mamekichi’s Edo Trivia” are also interesting. (Shiozaki)

In the third trimester of grade five, Tadashi Sakakibara’s parents divorce, and he moves from Tokyo with his mother to her hometown in Aomori in northern Japan. Tadashi finds it hard to bridge the gap between himself and his classmates. The northern winter is bitterly cold, freezing the water pipes if they’re not careful. They live in a house that is more like a shed without even a flush toilet. Snow falls endlessly, burying their house. One day, as Tadashi waits alone at home, shivering with cold, his mother’s friend Taeko drops in. She helps him buy fuel for the heater and tells him he should help out at home instead of depending on his mother to do everything for him. Later, a classmate passes by, and he and Tadashi have a snowball fight. Tadashi’s mindset begins to change. He starts doing chores like cleaning the toilet and in. She helps him buy fuel for the heater and tells him he should help out at home instead of depending on his mother to do everything for him. Later, a classmate passes by, and he and Tadashi have a snowball fight. Tadashi’s mindset begins to change. He starts doing chores like cleaning the toilet and

Sixth-grader Keiichi’s best friend Shoma is a cross-dresser who wears skirts and loves fashion. He is also a strong fighter, and doesn’t care when someone makes fun of him. Keiichi, on the other hand, lost his mother in an accident five years ago and always gives up right away. When Shoma asks him to help him fight to get their junior high school to make school uniforms genderless, Keiichi tells him he should just follow the rules.

One day, however, he happens to touch a box with a ribbon around it in the school’s stationery supply room. This causes the memories of a girl named Hana Takanashi to enter his consciousness. In her memories, Hana is attracted to a girl in her class, Ei, and her singing voice. However, when the other children tease her about their relationship, Hana rejects Ei, denying that there’s anything between them. She had prepared the box as a gift to Ei to make up with her, but had been unable to give it to her. Shoma notices that something is bothering Keiichi, and together they figure out the meaning of the memories and plan to reunite Hana and Ei. Through this experience, Keiichi begins to realize Shoma’s pain and how difficult it is for him to live freely with his own preferences.

The book depicts LGBTQ+ issues in an upbeat manner, interwoven with fantasy elements and music from YouTube, and featuring unique characters like Keiichi’s father, a hairdresser who has raised him alone since his mother’s death, and Shoma’s childhood friend Ruri. (Okuyama)
**Gift of Chocolates**

After taking a walk in Kobe city, Yuki, a fifth grader, and his aunt, Miko, stop at a bench near the port to eat a box of chocolates and make a story. “It feels like time is melting away,” Miko says and asks Yuki to share all the things he has seen and liked that day. Selecting images from these impressions as material, Miko weaves a story. “A little boy and a rooster lived together in a European-style house on top of a hill,” she begins. Each day, the rooster climbed onto the roof and checked the wind direction so that the boy could choose where to sell balloons. But one day, just on a whim, the rooster lied. The boy didn’t come back for three months, during which time the rooster turned into a weathercock.

“That’s not fair when he only lied once!” Yuki protests and picks up the thread of the story. The little boy, he says, brought the rooster a box of chocolates which, like his aunt had said, “melted time away,” bringing the rooster back to life, and they lived happily ever after.

The author uses the frame narrative to skillfully weave this tale within the humorous dialogue between the boy and his aunt, revealing their different perspectives on life. Every page is adorned with beautiful pencil and watercolor illustrations that conjure up images of Kobe’s townscape with its European influence. (Doi)

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**The Moon and Miso Soup with Pork**

Toru, a sixth grader, belongs to a group of four who call themselves Tetsuyon, the iron four, because they’ve been close friends since kindergarten. The other members are the group’s leader Daiki, Shun, who is good looking and likes to cook, and Machi, a girl who is always cheerful. Toru, who is good at soccer and is sensitive to harmony among his friends, thought that their group would endure forever. When Daiki’s family move far away, however, the relationships among the remaining members become strained. Toru realizes that they each have very different interests. He fears that the bond that holds them together will completely disintegrate, remembering something his grandfather had told him before he died a year ago. “Just like the moon, you have a dark side that we don’t see, but in time, it will become clear, just like fat congealing in miso soup with pork when the soup cools down.” Toru worries that he has only been looking at the surface and has missed the other side hidden within the feelings of his friends. Later, however, he comes to see that the four friends had already begun walking in different directions, and this allows him to step out in a new direction himself. Whereas before the idea that people have a hidden side disturbed him, he begins to think that this is precisely what makes people interesting. The depiction of an adolescent’s dawning understanding and internal development is convincingly real and vibrant. (Sakuma)

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**What She Is to Me, What I Am to Her**

Fifth-grade Aki’s parents are not married, and she lives with her mother, but the family gets along well. They call her father by his first name, Michio. One day, Aki takes a record that Michio gave her to her friend Mocchi’s house to listen to, because unlike Aki, Mocchi has a record player. Aki is a little jealous of Mocchi living in a house with two parents and her brother. Unfortunately, while they are listening to Aki’s record, Mocchi’s little brother Shin shows up and scratches it. Aki, who often speaks without thinking, blames Mocchi for not stopping Shin; and Mocchi, who often struggles to explain her feelings to others, apologizes repeatedly. Aki soon regrets her words and actions, but her friendship with Mocchi grows strained for a while. Then, one day, Shin spikes a high fever while Mocchi’s mother is out, and Mocchi instinctively asks Aki for help. Aki does all she can.

This story’s scenes are narrated from Aki and Mocchi’s alternating points of view. Each girl’s way of feeling things, her struggles, the various misunderstandings, and the gradual recovery of a valued friendship are portrayed with care. Using the everyday interactions of two children who have different personalities and families, this book explores how people can interact and get along together and what friendship means. (Shiozaki)

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**With You**

Yuto is in year three of junior high and has lived with his mother and his brother Naoto, two years older, since his father left. His mother only cares about his talented brother, and Yuto wonders miserably what the point of his own existence is. One October night with the high school entrance exam looming, he goes for a run to take his mind off things and notices Akane sitting on a swing in the park. Akane is a year below him at school, but looks after her sick mother and her elementary school-aged sister all by herself. Her father has been posted to another town for work, and she doesn’t have anyone she can turn to for help. Her only respite is going for a walk after her sick mother and her elementary school-aged sister all by herself. Her father has been posted to another town for work, and she doesn’t have anyone she can turn to for help. Her only respite is going for a walk after her sick mother and her elementary school-aged sister all by herself. Her father has been posted to another town for work, and she doesn’t have anyone she can turn to for help. Her only respite is going for a walk after her sick mother and her elementary school-aged sister all by herself. Her father has been posted to another town for work, and she doesn’t have anyone she can turn to for help. Her only respite is going for a walk after she’s finished the housework and put her little sister to bed. Yuto often sees her on his nightly runs and becomes curious about her. He strikes up a conversation, and eventually they start going for nightly walks together, confiding in each other.

One day, Yuto hears his mother talk about young caregivers, and realizes this applies to Akane. Wanting to help her, he asks his mother, who works in the welfare office, for advice and together they think about possible solutions. Realizing that there are people who need him, Yuto begins to rethink his relationship with his family. This story is a junior high school romance that also focuses on contemporary social issues. It is refreshing to see Yuto and Akane begin living with their sights firmly fixed on the future. (Shiozaki)
Ami is in year two of junior high school. She wants to continue her piano lessons, but is forced to quit when her mother says it’s a waste of time because she’ll never be any good. Her mother always tries to impose her values on her, while her father is indifferent. One day she talks about “Für Elise” with an old lady she doesn’t know, and decides to call her Elise. When Ami tells Elise that her hands are a little too small to play the piano, Elise replies that “You don’t have to have the same hands as everyone else, you know,” and that “If you can’t have nimble hands, then have graceful hands.”

Ami is invited by Paula C, a high school student she meets by chance who likes to play the guitar, to volunteer with her as a singer at a day care center. This gives her an opportunity to learn about the various elderly people and the circumstances they are put in. She also becomes close with Gen Mizuno, a classmate who likes to draw, and through him becomes more broadminded.

The story realistically describes the process of Ami going from feeling crushed by the pressure from her mother to believing she should do what she can in her own way. It’s refreshing to see her eventually reject her mother’s belief that she has to win, and begin to make her own way in life. (Sakuma)

Nana Harada, who is studying abroad at a high school in Pennsylvania, joins a band with her schoolmates, Chloe, Ithan, Nick, and Noel. They plan to go on a graduation trip to Woodstock, the site of a famous music festival. Nick is a year older than the others. Ithan and Chloe are going out together, while Noel is gay and in love with Ithan. Nana plays keyboard, and the band produces many original songs from the poems she writes. In the spring of her senior year, she goes back to Japan to prepare for entrance into a Japanese university. While she is away, Noel is shot and killed at an elementary school where he was performing as a volunteer. The story begins in the summer, one year after his death, when Nana visits America again. Chloe is now living in Manhattan, Ithan works in Hudson, and Nick lives in the town where they all went to high school. Nana visits each of them and learns that they are all struggling with guilt over Noel’s death and the cruel rumors surrounding it. Nana and Nick visit the school where he died to discover the truth. Noel’s mother’s choice to forgive her son’s killer helps them to overcome their grief and to find hope in the renewal of their friendship. Elements such as the song lyrics and a discussion at Nick’s house concerning the death penalty are deftly woven through the story of Nana’s journey, resulting in a harmonious blend of lyricism and logicality. (Okuyama)

Since childhood, first-year high school student Harumi has lived with his brother Migiya, who is two years younger. The two brothers do not know their father, and they also do not know where their mother lives or with whom, though she deposits money and comes home on the odd occasion. Harumi must work two part-time jobs, at a Chinese restaurant and a karaoke place, all while attending school, doing the housework, and looking after Migiya.

Due to the influence of a man named Shin, a childhood friend of their mother who still lives nearby, the brothers have grown up listening to punk rock and dream of forming their own band. Harumi would play base, and Migiya would sing. Harumi doubts he can afford to play in a band when he first starts high school, but when a classmate invites him to the pop music club and a university student at one of his jobs mentions looking for a bassist, he gradually begins to pursue music. Readers follow Harumi as he learns songs by The Clash, Bad Brains, and The Blue Hearts while connecting with various people. Through his encounters, Harumi learns that each seemingly “normal” person may actually be struggling with relationships, or have an amazing talent at guitar or rap. He also sees that despite not having been raised by his parents, he has been looked after by Shin and other adults. Above all, his sweetly innocent brother has supported him. This novel portrays a boy in his teens discovering the wider world. (Okuyama)
SEO Kaito is a university student whose mother asks him to stay with and support his grandmother, who has dementia, over a summer vacation. Every morning, Kaito’s grandmother takes her deceased Shiba Inu dog named Mamezo on a walk, using a leash.

Walking along with her, Kaito offers to take the leash at one point—and Mamezo appears. That’s not all: Kaito encounters his classmate Kosuke Shimada, who died in a car accident in the fall of their second year of high school, and he meets a junior-high girl in a uniform. The leash turns out to be a connection between Kaito and those on the borderline between life and the afterlife. Kaito nicknames the girl Sailor, and in talking with her, he realizes that those he’s meeting have stayed too attached to life to cross to the afterlife. He decides to help them along as a “borderless caregiver.” But is it better to cross to that world or stay in this one? Kaito becomes unable to decide and increasingly attached to Sailor. Investigating her past, he learns that her real name is Natsu, and she is now twenty-two. When Kaito goes to the hospital to see her, she opens her eyes for the first time in seven years. After her real name is revealed, Kaito remains with his grandmother and serves as a real carer along with a hint of darkness in superb prose. (Nogami)

Yashajin River

Yashajin is a people-eating deity that symbolizes the terrible demon-like feelings that lurk in people’s hearts. This collection of five stories unfolds along “Yashajin River,” beginning at its source and gradually heading downstream.

In the first story, “River Fishing,” a boy gets invited fishing by Tsuji, a popular classmate at the cram school he started attending after entering junior high school. Tsuji abuses some wild creatures at the fishing spot, and when the main character tells him to stop, Tsuji says, “I will exterminate you!” When an eerie voice emanates from the river mist, Tsuji jumps into the river to escape, and the main character saves him from drowning. Tsuji says he has seen a ghost.

In the second story, “Blue Goldfish Bowl,” a sixth-grader no longer able to go to school finds an old fishbowl in her bedroom, and she shuts the spirit of a school bully inside. In “Onigamori Shrine,” a student prays at a shrine near a Yashajin River tributary for a friend’s success auditioning for a theatre company—and curses a rival. In “Snowdrop,” a boy and a dog stop an obdurate old man on a bench near the river from trying to die, as his wife has already done. In “The Last Shore,” a boy living near Yashajin River discovers war’s brutality as it manifested on the southern island of Okinawa. Thoughts that bloom in any human heart, from the wicked to the kind, are explored in detail with a hint of darkness in superb prose. (Nogami)

Yuto Harimiya is in his first year of junior high. He initially joined the soccer team and hid that he enjoys handicrafts, but then he summoned his courage and switched to the sewing club. The only other members are both girls: the president, who is a second-year student, and Yuto’s classmate Itoi. At their advisor’s recommendation, the club members sell accessories they created over Spring Break at a flea market. There, a girl who Yuto first thought was a boy, due to her hair and clothes, buys a pouch; she also joins the club at the beginning of the next term. For some reason, though, she seems upset with Yuto.

When Ogura, the new joiner, goes out to buy supplies to sew costumes for the drama club’s play, she runs into Yuto, and they end up going to the craft shop together. The shop’s owner is an androgynous Gothic Lolita named Momo, and when Ogura sees him, she questions his appearance and calls it “weird.” She and Yuto get into a fight. After that, Ogura sometimes skips meetings, and when the drama club suddenly alters its costume order, the sewing club president skips out as well. Yuto and Itoi struggle to repair the relationships in the club, and Yuto eventually comes to understand Ogura’s feelings.

The second in a series, My Diagonal Stitch is named after a blind stitch that is used in sewing to make seams invisible. By breaking down stereotypes about what is “boyish” and “girlish,” it refreshingly shows the importance of each person’s individuality and interests. (Nogami)
**Tale of The Moose**

*あるヘラジカの物語 (Aru herajika no hanashi)*


In the Alaskan wilderness, a fierce battle unfolds between two male moose for control of their herd. When their antlers get tangled up and they collapse on the ground exhausted, some wolves attack. Then a brown bear turns up and drives the wolves away, stealing their prey. After it leaves, other wild animals appear one after another to help themselves, and lastly the birds peck off the remaining meat. As spring follows winter, an American lark nests in one of the moose’s skulls. She lays her eggs and eventually the chicks fly away. Inspired by a photograph left by HOSHINO Michio, a photographer who lost his life in a brown bear attack, this touching picture book dramatically depicts how the lives of wild animals in nature intersect. (Nogami)

**Do You Wonder About...the Wonders of Toilet Paper?**

*このかみなあに？ (Kono kami nani?)*


This picture book is all about toilet paper, something that we use every day without giving it a second thought. With every turn of the page, we are presented with a surprising and fun photo—for example, nine elementary school students lined up in the schoolyard holding up a long extended roll of toilet paper. We learn about its excellent properties, such as being long, soft, fluffy, thin, strong, easily broken down when wet, and water-absorbent. At the end of the book, a section entitled “Toilet Paper Secrets” covers ten specific topics of interest, including the time it takes to dissolve in water, which is determined by the Japan Industrial Standards for manufactured goods; the differences with overseas toilet paper; the raw materials used; and its history. (Sakaguchi)

**Protecting the Rails: Doctor Yellow**

*せんろをまもる！ドクターエイロー (Senro o mamoru! dokuta iero)*

Draft: (Senro o mamoru! dokuta iero) | Text/Ill. KAMATA Ayumi | Shogakukan | 2021 | 32pp | 19x27cm | ISBN978-4-09-725109-5 | Ages: 3+ | Shinkansen, Safety, Work

Children love the shinkansen, but Doctor Yellow, the car that maintains the bullet train tracks, is the star. Once every ten days, Doctor Yellow speeds along the Sanyo line, covering the 1,175 kilometers between Tokyo and Hakata in southern Japan on the island of Kyushu. It can travel at up to 270 kilometers per hour and carries no passengers. The book depicts a day in Doctor Yellow’s life, while at the same time introducing the jobs performed by such cars as the ballast exchange car and the multi-tie tamper. A fold-out illustration reveals Doctor Yellow’s interior, showing how it can single-handedly undertake a variety of maintenance work. The book offers a fun peek at an unusual train, casting light on many jobs that are done behind the scenes. (Sakaguchi)

**Kitchan Who Befriended an Elephant**

*ゾウともだちになったきっちゃん (Zo to tomodachi ni natta Ki-chan)*

Text: IRIE Naoko | Ill. ABE Hiroshi | Fukuinkan Shoten | 2020 | 48pp | 23x20cm | ISBN978-4-8340-8568-6 | Ages: 3+ | Elephant, Zoo, Gesture

Kitchan regularly visits the zoo with her father where she is particularly attracted by the elephants. She learns to tell them apart by their faces and physiques and notices how they all swish their tail when they’re enjoying good food. The zoo-keeper teaches her how elephants communicate, and Kitchan bonds with a female from Thailand. One day, Kitchan visits after a long absence. Something seems different. Just then, she sees her elephant friend beckoning to her. She wants to show Kitchan her baby. By the end of the book, the reader will want to go to the zoo and observe firsthand the gestures and habits of elephants. The book draws from field observations and research on elephant communication. (Sakaguchi)

**What Kind of Fruit Behind the Window?**

*まどのむこのくだものなあに？ (Mado no mukono kudamono nani?)*

Text/Ill. ARAI Maki | Fukuinkan Shoten | 2020 | 36pp | 27x20cm | ISBN978-4-8340-8568-6 | Ages: 3+ | Fruit, Windows

A small square “window” in a page reveals part of a fruit. Turn the page, and an illustration of the whole fruit appears. Turn the page after that, and see a cross section of the same fruit cut in half. The fruits featured in this book are strawberry, melon, pineapple, watermelon, mikan orange, apple, kiwi, and pomegranate. Because one small part of each fruit is shown before the whole, it is possible to discover beauty and magic in the details our eyes usually miss. Created with plenty of time and detail, the illustrations are realistic yet vibrant—and delicious-looking. This book can also be enjoyed back-to-front and as a fun fruit quiz. (Sakuma)
Welcome to the Sushi Restaurant! From Living Creature to Food

The author of this book runs a sushi restaurant, and here presents photos of a workshop with eight children (from preschool through elementary school) in which he prepares fish including alfonsino, conger eel, and squid, to make sushi. First, the children examine the whole fish, closely observing the fins, eyes, and inside the mouths, and imagining how they lived in the sea. He then removes the stomachs, contents of the intestines, and ink bags, and demonstrates the different ways of cutting, grilling, and seasoning the fish. Finally, they all eat the sushi together. The children’s murmured reactions add to the sense of being present in the workshop, and we can share the sensation of the lives of these creatures becoming part of our own bodies. (Okuyama)

Akbar Loves School!

Akbar is in the first grade of elementary school. His school is located high in the mountains, and many children have to walk over an hour to get there. There are 16 students in his class and the new school year has just started. They have language, math, and Koran classes. Akbar writes down words the teacher dictates in his notebook with his precious pencil, and solves math problems counting with his fingers. He plucks up the courage to raise his hand in math class, even though he isn’t too confident. This picture book vividly captures Akbar’s facial expressions, conveying his curiosity and the sheer joy of learning. (Shiozaki)

Scrolls of Frolicking Animals: The Origin of Japanese Comedy

The Chouji jinbutsu giga is a set of picture scrolls which dates back to the twelfth century. Not only are the scrolls designated national treasures, but many consider them to be the origin of Japanese manga. Based on the first scroll which follows the antics of anthropomorphic animals, the book focuses on a comical scene of a rabbit and a frog sumo wrestling and how that came about. Although the originals have no text, the book transforms each scene into a dramatic story. In the appendix, all the scenes from the first scroll are introduced, followed by an explanation of the contents of the second and third scroll as well. The humorous touch allows readers to fully experience the entertainment value of these ancient scrolls. (Nogami)

The Red Fire of Sakurajima

Sakurajima is an active volcano in Kagoshima at the southern end of Kyushu. A postcard photo of its crater glowing red at night inspired the author, a photographer, to capture it on film. He shot the volcano from various locations and angles for the best picture of the red crater against the darkness. This photo picture book also includes shots of it erupting, spewing sparks into the night sky, and of volcanic lightning against a plume of smoke and ash. The text describes the reactions of children to his photos, the mechanism of volcanic eruptions, and the history of Sakurajima. The dynamic images make the reader feel that Earth is alive. (Okuyama)

Icebugs

This book provides dramatic and detailed description of the eight-year life cycle of the icebug. Since these small insects live beneath the rocks that fall from crumbling cliffs, we are also made aware of the impact of environmental changes on nature during time. Over the course of a year, the transparent white larva emerges from a tiny black egg the size of a sesame seed and grows by feeding on small insects underground. It is interesting to see the various creatures that live in the microscopic world of darkness depicted in minute detail. Fifty photographs of these creatures are included at the end of the book. An excellent and ambitious picture book that questions human behavior from the insect’s point of view. (Nogami)

*The Japanese name for the icebug is garoa-mushi, from the genus Galloisiana, named after the French diplomat Galois who discovered it in Japan in 1914.
The Hundred-Year-Old Forest

The lush forest surrounding the Meiji Shrine near Harajuku, Tokyo, was planted by humans a century ago. In this book, a chinquapin tree tells the story of the forest. Initially, broadleaf trees such as beech and oak were placed between tall conifers; eventually, the fast-growing broadleaf trees took over, and the conifers toppled and decayed. Small organisms such as insects and mushrooms took up residence at trees’ bases, and birds, raccoons and other animals began to thrive in this rich forest. The beautiful, true-to-life illustrations portray growth and change and prompt consideration of the forest’s and humanity’s future. Detailed end matter written by the supervising editor fleshes out Meiji Shrine’s history. (Okuyama)

Rhinoceros Are Disappearing from the World

Rhinoceros are hunted by poachers for their horns, and if things continue this way they could be extinct within twenty years. The author is a reporter from Japan’s national broadcaster NHK who covered the story in South Africa. With vivid prose and photos, she tells us how people are trying to prevent poaching and protect the rhinos, how they are protecting and raising rhino orphans, why poachers are so rampant, and how the Black Mamba, a women-only ranger unit that doesn’t carry weapons, works to prevent poaching by gaining the trust of local people. She draws readers attention to the fact that the earth does not belong only to humans, and that various species support each other. (Sakuma)

Fuki’s Encyclopedia of Idea Toys

A professional modeler and mother of two boys introduces more than forty toys that she made while playing with her sons. All are simple to create using familiar materials. Stick a drawing of a ninja to some clear plastic and place it on a train window, and the ninja runs! Draw parts of a face on stacked paper cups, and move the cups to make the face transform! Supplies and steps to construct the toys, as well as ideas for deepening and extending children’s play with them are included. The toys leave room for children’s own innovations, so their play may go on and on! Ideas for fun in the house, the tub, outdoors, and even without toys are included, making the book useful anytime, anywhere. (Sakaguchi)

Diet Member with ALS Goes to the House of Representatives in a Wheelchair

Mr. Yasuhiro Funago, who is fully paralyzed due to the incurable disease ALS, was elected to the Diet in 2019 and goes to work in a wheelchair. This picture book covers the 11 months from the time rhinoceros beetle eggs are laid in the soil through the stages of larva and pupa, until they emerge from the ground. Realistic drawings and detailed explanations show the small larvae silently eating leaf mold, the fat larvae hibernating under the snow, and the process of creating egg-shaped cocoons and becoming pupae. The book also shares interesting research findings, such as how larvae form clusters attracted by the carbon dioxide they each emit, and the way pupae protect themselves from outside enemies by hitting their backs against the wall of the cocoon, causing it to vibrate. Nature’s mechanisms for protecting life are impressive. (Fukumoto)

The Secret of the Flying Water Flea

The author, a wildlife photographer, introduces the ecology of water fleas, which in Japanese are called mijikko meaning “dust child” or “specks”. The author observes water fleas growing in rice paddies, streams and school swimming pools to unravel their secrets, including how their tiny bodies are formed, where they live, and what they eat. When their habitat starts to dry up, water fleas produce ephippia, which are durable dry-season eggs. These may be carried on the wind or by birds to distant places where they generate new life. The book begins with the author seeking answers to certain questions. Through methodical observation, the author reveals the workings of nature along with the basics of scientific research. (Fukumoto)
Creating a Little Satoyama: A Butterfly Garden

The author's work as a photographer focuses on the relationship between nature and humans. He spent thirty years transforming 300 square meters of terraced rice paddies at the foot of Mount Hiei in Kyoto into a satoyama, an area of mixed woodlots, wetland and farmland. Through photographs, he presents how he raised a diverse range of flowers and butterflies, and savors nature's beauty through the changing seasons. (Fukumoto)

Question Box: The What and Why of Animals

The Asahiyama Zoo in Hokkaido is Japan's northernmost zoo. Once threatened with closure, it was revived with creative interactive exhibits. In this book, the former director and the zookeeper were responsible for its revival respond to ten questions from children. Their answers develop in ways that both entertain and deepen the reader's understanding of animal ecology. For example, when asked how giraffes sleep, they cover every-thing from the amount of sleep giraffes need to understand of animal ecology. For example, when asked how giraffes sleep, they cover every-thing from the amount of sleep giraffes need to understand of animal ecology. For example, when asked how giraffes sleep, they cover every-thing from the amount of sleep giraffes need to understand of animal ecology. For example, when asked how giraffes sleep, they cover every-thing from the amount of sleep giraffes need to understand of animal ecology. For example, when asked how giraffes sleep, they cover every-thing from the amount of sleep giraffes need to understand of animal ecology. For example, when asked how giraffes sleep, they cover everything from the amount of sleep giraffes need to human sleeping positions and bed bacteria. (Shiozaki)

In a 2-Square-Meter World

This picture book is based on an essay by Mion, an eight-year-old girl, which won the Grand Prize in the Children's Non-Fiction Contest sponsored by Kita-Kyushu City. The main character lives in a 2-square-meter hospital room. She suffers from the burden she causes her family, the painful medical tests, fasting, and having to give up things like sleeping positions. (Nogami)

Picture Book of Japanese Gardens

The Japanese have always had an appreciation for the beauty of nature and the changing seasons, delighting in an array of flowering plants and landscapes. Traditional Japanese garden designs, which reproduce scenes from nature, along with the culture of admiring them, developed from this pursuit of natural beauty. In this story, an elderly Japanese man introduces a French photographer to Japanese gardens, describing their origins and the different types. (Sakaguchi)

Living in Fukushima: Rin-chan's Ten Years—Home, School, and Town Change, But Life Goes On

This picture book relates the origins of Namahage, a UNESCO intangible cultural heritage from Oga, Akita prefecture, in which men dressed as ogres go from house to house on New Year’s Eve to warn residents to work hard. Although they look terrifying, the Namahage are considered guardian deities that bring good fortune. Once a year, they come down from the snow-covered mountains to visit each home, frightening naughty children and scolding laggards into behaving. This dramatic tale of a family of Namahage who come to Oga and turn the forest into farmland for the villagers is illustrated with compelling woodblock prints on a black base. Included is a thorough, easy-to-read explanation of the origins and meaning of this fascinating tradition. (Nogami)
If They Keep Disappearing, Will They Vanish? Japan’s Salamanders

Forty-five species of salamander are known to live in Japan, and all appear in clear photographs in this book. Recent genetic research shows that salamanders previously thought to be the same species are, in fact, different species, though they may live only one mountain away from each other. Japan’s rich aquatic environments have supported this variety. In the book, the habitat for each species is shown on a map, underlining how narrow its range is. As amphibians, salamanders need both the water and the land where they live to be preserved, and they can easily be pushed to extinction. Close-ups of salamanders’ winsome faces, which humans don’t often get to see, urge us to protect our environment now. (Sakaguchi)

What is Washi Paper? Vols.1-4

This series of four books introduces Japanese washi paper using photographs. The first two books, Washi of Eastern Japan and Washi of Western Japan, show the history, raw materials, production techniques, uses, products, and features of papers made in some 56 regions around the country. The regions’ different washi-related toys, festivals, and ingenuity are also celebrated.

Japanese Broth: Blessings of the Sea—Konbu

In 2013, UNESCO designated traditional Japanese cuisine as an intangible cultural heritage. This book is the first of three about dashi, or broth, which is the basis of many Japanese dishes. While this book focuses on konbu seaweed in dashi, the next focuses on katsuobushi (dried bonito) and the third on nissho (dried sardines). Konbu as a seaweed in the ocean, the ins-and-outs of konbu harvesting and processing, types of konbu, how to make konbu broth, ways to eat konbu, the symbolic use of konbu on festive occasions, the influence of environmental destruction on konbu—all are introduced in words and pictures. In nature, konbu protects small fish and serves as food for sea urchins and others. The explanation of how drying brings out its savory flavors is fascinating. (Doi)

Making Mountains: The Tokyo Chainsaws Challenge

Tokyo Chainsaws is a company of modern lumberjacks based in Hinohara village on the western edge of Tokyo. The company’s foresters both maintain company-owned forest and help maintain the forests of Tokyo. The author embedded with them for two years and describes their work in detail, from felling trees in winter, to planting trees in spring, to thinning undergrowth in summer, to removing branches in fall. Their tools are also introduced. The foresters are all young people, including women, who try to create a sustainable forestry industry without relying on national or regional subsidies. They have fans, including a club to enjoy the growth of planted trees over thirty years! This book prompts readers to consider the future of forestry, human lifestyles, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. (Sakaguchi)
Animals Teach Us about Life in the Ocean

This book provides a solid overview of war, especially modern wars, including: what war is; the history, causes, and types of war; Japan’s wars in Asia; the rules under international law; and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Twenty-four text boxes throughout the book provide simple, easy-to-understand explanations of specific terms such as the Strategic Defense Initiative and the Zero fighter. The author also encourages us to take action, with statements like “War is started by human beings... which means human beings can add up to a big power.” Readers can join him in considering how we can ensure that the people’s wish to eliminate war from the world does not end up being just a wish. (Sakaguchi)

I Love Dung Beetles! Chasing Insects that Eat Poo

This book introduces new findings using a method called biologging, in which small recorders are attached to animals for study, and features Weddell seals and king penguins in Antarctica, and sperm whales around the Ogasawara Islands. It explains how these animals have evolved not only in terms of the speed and depth to which they dive, how they swim, and the routes they take, but also in terms of the way they dive to feed most efficiently. Accompanied by illustrations depicting ocean depth in different shades of blue, with frame-by-frame images of the way animals swim, these detailed explanations tell us about discoveries made in a world we cannot see for ourselves. (Sakaguchi)

Out and About with Professor Getcho: Exploring Nature in Okinawa

This book is set during summer vacation when a brother and sister from Tokyo go to visit their uncle in Okinawa, Japan’s southernmost prefecture, and are introduced to the charms of nature as they travel around the islands of Okinawa, Yonaguni, Ishigaki, Iriomote, and Miyako. The author lived among gorillas in an African jungle and has spent 40 years researching gorillas, presenting his thoughts on life and on being human. The ten chapters cover such topics as his first encounters with gorillas and the lessons he has learned from them, and explores how we should live. The author lived among gorillas in an African jungle where he noticed that they peer into each other’s faces to preserve equality and peace in their social group. He introduces their approach to raising the young, male-female relationships, conflict, and friendship, as well as the differences between gorillas and other primates. The book serves as an encouraging message for teenagers struggling to communicate with others, offering insights on how to live. (Sakaguchi)
KADONO Eiko 1935-2018 Author Award
Born in Tokyo, KADONO Eiko moved to Brazil for two years when she was 25, and based on her experiences there she wrote her first book. Since then she has written many books for children of several generations. Her chapter book *Majo no takkyubin* (Kiki’s Delivery Service), written in 1984, won a number of prizes and was included on the IBBY Honour List. This story was adapted into a wildly popular animated film by MIYAZAKI Hayao. Kadono has been decorated by the Emperor of Japan for her significant contributions to children’s literature.

UEHASHI Nahoko 1962-2014 Author Award
Born in Tokyo, UEHASHI Nahoko researched indigenous people in Australia for her PhD in cultural authoropology. Her literary debut came in 1989, when her first book won an award that brought her into the spotlight. In 1996, she began to write her historical fantasy series *Moribito* (Guardian), which became a huge hit and received several literature awards in and outside of Japan, including the IBBY Honour List and the Batchelder Award in the USA. Her series *The Beast Player* is now out in the USA and the UK.

ANNO Mitsumasa 1926-2020 1984 Illustrator Award
Born in Tsuwano, a village located in a valley surrounded by mountains, ANNO Mitsumasa developed a strong desire to experience places beyond those mountains while growing up. This is reflected in his books. He taught art in elementary school for ten years; his first two picture books reflect his love of playing with visual perception, and his drawings, often compared to Escher, not only abound with visual trickery and illusions but also display a playful sense of humour.

MADO Michio 1909-2014 1994 Author Award
MADO Michio was born in Tokuyama. When he was a small child, his family left for Taiwan, leaving him behind with his grandfather. He began to write poetry at the age of 19. In 1934, two of his poems were recognized by KITAHARA Hakushu, the most respected poet of the time. This marked the beginning of Mado’s career as a creator of nursery rhymes, songs and poems for children. *The Animals*, co-published in the USA and Japan as a bilingual book, was translated by then Empress Michiko of Japan.

AKABA Suekichi 1910-1990 1980 Illustrator Award
Born in Tokyo, AKABA Suekichi emigrated to Manchuria at the age of 21. He worked in industry and began to paint while still there. He was awarded special recognition three times at the Manchurian National Art Exhibition. After returning to Japan at the age of 36, Akaba mastered painting techniques on his own; he published his first picture book in 1961. His influences include traditional Japanese painting and Felix Hoffmann.

The Hans Christian Andersen Award
These authors and illustrators, among the finest creators of Japanese children’s literature, were all nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen Award. Five were named winners.

**Nominees since 2000**

ARAII Ryoji  
1956-2022 Illustrator

CHO Shinta  
1927-2005  
1998, 2000 Illustrator

HAYASHI Akiko  
1945-2008, 2010 Illustrator

ISHII Momoko  
1907-2008  
2002 Author

IWASE Joko  
1950-2022 Author

KAKO Satoshi  
1926-2018  
2012 Illustrator

KANZAWA Toshiko  
1924-2000, 2006 Author

KATAYAMA Ken  
1940-2014, 2016 Illustrator

NASU Masamoto  
1942-2021  
2012 Author

OHTA Daihachi  
1918-2016  
1970, 2002-2006 Illustrator

SATO Satoru  
1928-2017  
2004 Author

TANIKAWA Shuntaro  
1931-2008, 2010 Author

TASHIMA Seizo  
1940-2018, 2020 Illustrator

TOMIYASU Yoko  
1959-2020 Author
Japanese Books Selected for the IBBY Honour List

JBBY has selected books for three categories (writing/illustration/translation) of the IBBY Honour List every two years since 1996. Since 2008, JBBY has given these books the JBBY Award.

**Writing**

- **Writing 2018**
  - FURUUCHI Kazue
  - *Hula Boys* - Furadan
  - Komine Shoten

- **Writing 2010**
  - HAMANO Kyoko
  - *Fusion* - Fuyuion
  - Kodansha

- **Writing 2004**
  - UEHASHI Nahoko
  - *Guardian of the God* - Kami no moribito
  - Kaiseisha

- **Writing 1998**
  - OKADA Jun
  - *The Stories of the Kosoado Woods* - Kosoado no mori no monogatari
  - Rironsha

- **Writing 1996**
  - ITO Hiroshi
  - *Hurrah, I'm a Monkey* - Osaru ni naru hi
  - Kodansha

- **Writing 2022**
  - HANAGATA Mitsuru
  - *Tokujiro and I* - Tokujiro to boku
  - Rironsha

- **Writing 2016**
  - IWASE Joko
  - *Since the New One Came* - Atarashii ko ga kite
  - Iwasaki Shoten

- **Writing 2008**
  - TAKADONO Hoko
  - *Let's Be Friends* - Otomodasa ni narimasho
  - Froebel-kan

- **Writing 2006**
  - OGIWARA Noriko
  - *The Tale of the Flute Player* - Fujinhisho
  - Tokuma Shoten

- **Writing 2004**
  - TOMIYASU Yoko
  - *Mokko in Mount Yamamba* - Yamanba yama no Mokko tachi
  - Fukuinkan Shoten

- **Writing 2002**
  - IWASE Joko
  - *Tanikawa Said It’s Not a Lie* - Uso janaiyo to Tanikawa kun wa itta
  - PHP Institute

- **Writing 2000**
  - ITO Yu
  - *A Bridge to the Other World* - Oni no hashi
  - Fukuinkan Shoten

- **Writing 1998**
  - OKADA Jun
  - *The Stories of the Kosoado Woods* - Kosoado no mori no monogatari
  - Rironsha

- **Writing 1996**
  - ITO Hiroshi
  - *Hurrah, I'm a Monkey* - Osaru ni naru hi
  - Kodansha

- **Writing 1994**
  - IWASE Joko
  - *Tanikawa Said It’s Not a Lie* - Uso janaiyo to Tanikawa kun wa itta
  - PHP Institute

**Illustration**

- **Illustration 2022**
  - TASHIMA Seizo
  - *Gotcha!* - Tsukamaeta
  - Kaiseisha

- **Illustration 2018**
  - SUZUKI Koji
  - *Domu gatari* - Text: Arthur Binard
  - Tamagawa University Press

- **Illustration 2016**
  - YOSHIIDA Hisanori
  - *The Ranch of Hope in Fukushima* - Kibo no bokujo
  - Text: MORI Eto
  - Iwasaki Shoten

- **Illustration 2014**
  - ABE Hiroshi
  - *To the New World* - Shin sekai e
  - Kaiseisha
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<td>Please Be Quiet, My Father is Taking a Nap: Jewish Folktales</td>
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<td>by Richard Peck</td>
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<td>by Joan Aiken</td>
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<td>Daido to tochan</td>
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Recent Translations into Japanese Recommended by JBBY

JBBY selected books in three categories (picture books, chapter books and novels, nonfiction) for its recent publication *Translated Children’s Books*. JBBY publishes this catalog every year for Japanese readers.

### Picture Books

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