

Picture Books

For each selected title, we provide the following:

Title in English

Title in Japanese (romanization) | Author/Illustrator | Publisher | Publication Year | Number of Pages |

Trim Size | ISBN | Target Age | Keywords

Basic Book Description (Last Name of Reviewer)

* Information on this material comes from data bases, such as that of the National Diet Library, Japan.

1



I Am Little Bear

くまくんです。 (Kuma kun desu.)

Text/Ill. MURAKAMI Yasunari | Hisakata Child | 2024 | 32pp | 25×22cm | ISBN978-4-8654-9316-0 | Ages : 3+ | *Bear, Nature, Coexistence, Growth*

It's spring! Little Bear wakes up from hibernation and, leaving his mother's side, bursts from the den, shouting "Yoo-hoo!" He gobbles up wild plants, leaf buds, and berries, and learns how to survive, growing bigger day by day. In early summer, his mother leaves him in a wild berry patch and disappears. The story depicts the mother-cub separation process, known in Japan as ichigo-otoshi (strawberry dumping), that takes

place when a female black bear comes into estrus. It vividly conveys nature's providence and the joy of life within nature's embrace as the initially dependent cub learns to live on its own and meets many other creatures. The minimalist illustrations capture the breath of the natural world. (Hiromatsu)

2



KURO-A Little Dog at the Christmas Market

クリスマス マーケット ちいさなクロのおはなし (Kurisumasu maketto chiisana kuro no ohanashi)

Text/Ill. FURIYA Nana | Fukuinkan Shoten | 2023 | 40pp | 26×27cm | ISBN978-4-8340-8739-0 | Ages: 3+ | *Christmas, Dog, Adventure, Slovakia*

In December, a market springs up in town. One morning, a stray dog turns up at the foot of a Christmas tree in the town square. Its owner is nowhere to be found, and the people name it Kuro. When Na-chan comes to the market with her mother, she drops her white stuffed dog toy. Kuro picks it up and runs after her,

weaving through the market and drawing readers eagerly along from page to page. The author, who has lived in Slovakia for thirty years, depicts the seasonal traditions of that country with a loving eye. The colorful illustrations, with their richly varied composition, bring to life the bustling market, evoking people's emotions, as well as light and smells. (Hiromatsu)

3

Let's Eat! Let's Eat!

たべるぞ たべるぞ (Taberuzo taberuzo)

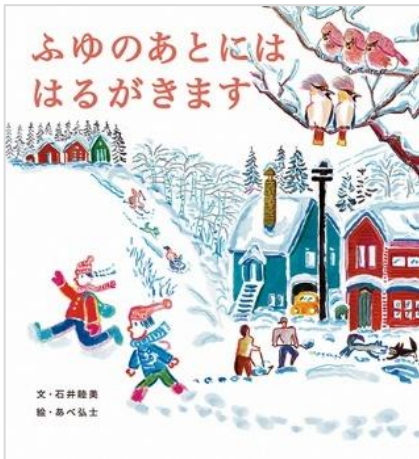


Text/Ill. TASHIMA Seizo | Kosei Shuppansha | 2023 | 38pp | 24×25cm | ISBN978-4-6522-0597-6 | Ages: 3+ | *Food, Vitality, Living creatures, Seasons*

A baby goat guzzles its mother's milk, families picnic under the cherry blossoms, little chicks open their mouths, begging for worms from the mother bird. Connected by the key phrase "Let's Eat! Let's Eat!", scenes of various creatures enjoying food unfold along with the gentle flow of the seasons. Animals, birds, fish, and insects, all eat to survive on this same planet Earth. Although eating brings us pleasure, it is also a life-and-death matter. The author, who has led Japan's picture book field for over six decades, conveys in

his powerful, humorous way that to eat is to live. His bold, vigorous brush strokes brim with vitality. (Hiromatsu)

4



After Winter, Spring Comes

ふゆのあとにははるがきます (Fuyu no ato niwa haru ga kimasu)

Text: ISHI Mutsumi | Ill. ABE Hiroshi | Alice-kan | 2023 | 32pp | 26×24cm | ISBN978-4-7520-1082-1 | Ages: 3+ | *Snow, Nature, Animals*

A few days after the snow bugs fly, heralding the coming of winter, snow arrives deep in the night. Birds stand silently in the falling snowflakes, which first dance and then swirl thickly. When day dawns, the world is coated in silver. Each scene is beautifully developed, vividly conveying the excitement of the first snowfall. The pages depict the lives of people, birds and animals in Snow Country, a region of

heavy snowfall in Japan. A hibernating mother bear and her cub dream of napping in the sun. The sun's rays grow stronger each day until spring comes and the snow melts. This is a superb depiction of snow and the shift from winter to spring. (Nogami)

5



A Braille Touch Book

Let's Go on an Adventure!

てんじつきさわるえほん ぼうけんしよう! (Tenji tsuki sawaru ehon: boken shiyo!)

Text/Ill. SUGIYAMA Kanayo | Kaseisha | 2023 | 31pp | 20×27cm | ISBN978-4-0322-6170-7 | Ages: 3+ | *Braille, Adventure, Maze*

An accessible book for readers with visual impairments. The reader becomes the character Yubikki, using two fingers as legs to walk along a raised line. With

the other hand, the reader enjoys Yubikki's adventures by exploring the bumps in the page. The text is presented in both Braille and print. Along the way, the reader runs into a dead end, follows a winding path, crosses a river, and finds many holes. An audio version can be accessed by a QR code. The book comes with a paper doll of Yubikki and a hero card. It also includes instructions for making Yubikki using cotton work gloves and an Adventure Handbook. The author is both a picture book creator and the editor-in-chief of a learning magazine for people with visual impairments. (Doi)

6



The Witch's Aquarium

まじょのすいぞくかん (Majo no suizokukan)

Text/III. SASAKI Maki | Fukuinkan Shoten | 2023 | 31pp | 20×27cm | ISBN978-4-8340-8732-1 | Ages: 3+ | *Magic, Aquarium, Nonsense*

A girl and her dog go into the forest. There they find an aquarium in what used to be an empty field. Strange fish swim in tanks marked with such signs as "Amazon Halfbeak," "Longnose Shark," and "Pig Pufferfish." A faint voice cries out, "Help...glug-glug-glug." The girl drains the water from the tanks, and the fish, which were under a spell, turn back into their real forms. Just then, the evil witch who enchanted them arrives. It looks like trouble, but the story takes an entertaining turn. This mysterious and thrilling tale is fun even for young readers, who are sure to enjoy the comical shapes and silly names. The sequel to *Majo no kanzume* (The Witch's Canned Food). (Hiromatsu)

7



Yuki in the Snow

ゆきのゆきちゃん (Yuki no Yuki chan)

Text/III. KIKUCHI Chiki | Mishimasha | 2023 | 32pp | 31×23cm | ISBN978-4-9093-9497-2 | Ages: 3+ | *Cat, Snow, Play*

Yuki means 'snow' in Japanese. A cat named Little Yuki likes taking a walk on a cold day. Watching the falling snow, she wonders why it has the same name as her. She asks this question to the animals she meets. "It's because you're soft like snow," says Squirrel. "It's because you're pretty like snow," says Owl. But Squirrel and Owl are soft and pretty, too. This realization makes them all happy, and together, they make up games in the snow. The dynamic brushstrokes convey the simple joy and excitement of children on a snowy day, while special printing techniques that use silver ink along with the texture of the paper capture the atmosphere. (Hiromatsu)

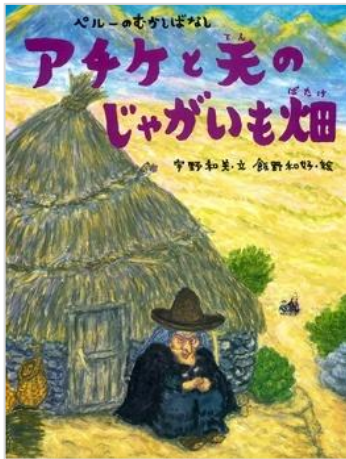
8

Achiqueé and the Potato Field in the Sky

A Peruvian Folktale

アチケと天のじゃがいも畑: ペルーのむかしばなし (Achike to ten no jagaimo: Peru no mukashibanashi)

Text: UNO Kazumi | Ill. IINO Kazuyoshi | BL Shuppan | 2024 | 32pp | 29×21cm | ISBN978-4-7764-1122-2 | Ages: 7+ |



While searching for food, two poor orphans, a sister and brother, run into a witch named Achiqueé. She invites them into her house and tries to eat them, but they escape and, with the help of a condor and a puma, flee into the meadow. In answer to their prayers, a rope appears from the sky. At the top, they find a potato field in the clouds. The witch climbs after them but falls to the ground, turning into a range of steep mountains. This folktale tells the origin of the Andes and the region's native crop, the potato. The animals help the children escape in entertaining ways, and the powerful illustrations augment the thrilling pace. (Sakuma)

9



Night in the Children's Bedroom

こどもべあのよる (Kodomo bea no yoru)

Text/Ill. DEKUNE Iku | Iwanami Shoten | 2024 | 40pp | 22×16cm | ISBN978-4-0011-5406-1 | Ages: 7+ | *Sisters, Angel, Adventure*

When night comes, Itchan is terrified of being swallowed by the Dark. The gentle white face of the moon is the only thing that gives her courage. One night, a large angel doll her father gave her takes Itchan into the sky. Itchan and her sisters sail off into the sea, using their bunkbed as a boat. A whale blows them away, but the angel rescues them.

Through a series of adventures that begin in the bedroom, this picture book helps children feel comfortable at night. A new publication commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Iwanami Children's Book Series, which includes many classics, such as Virginia Lee Burton's *The Little House* and Margret and H.A. Rey's *Curious George*. (Okuyama)

10



I Am a Ship

ぼくはふね (Boku wa fune)

Text/Ill. GOMI Taro | Fukuinkan Shoten | 2024 | 32pp | 25×25cm | ISBN978-4-8340-8773-4 | Ages: 7+ | *Ship, Journey, Self*

The little ship, which narrates its own story, likes to sail wherever it pleases, but larger ships get in the way. "Where are you from?" and "Where are you going?" they ask. Caught in a storm and washed ashore, the ship despairs of ever sailing again until it realizes that just wanting to go somewhere is enough to set it free. Readers can enjoy the playful touches in the semi-abstract illustrations or savor the author's

philosophy. This work is like a soliloquy on being oneself by an author who debuted fifty years ago. The book's design,

with a black case and peep hole, flat binding, and white framed pages, is also outstanding. (Hiromatsu)

11



Water Sings

水はうたいます (Mizu wa utai masu)

Poetry: MADO Michio | Ill. Nakaban | Rironsha | 2023 | 32pp | 28×23cm | ISBN978-4-6522-0597-6 | Ages: 7+ | *Water, Earth, Poetry, Onomatopoeia*

A poet and winner of the 1994 Hans Christian Andersen Award, Mado Michio caught the essence of everything in gentle word images. This is the third in a series of picture books devoted to his poems penned during his 105 years of life. Generous brushstrokes and soft colors depict the rich diversity and wonder of water, which is often taken for granted. The text, which is limited to only a line or two on each spread, resonates with the artwork, allowing the depth of Mado's poetry to penetrate the mind. Creative use of onomatopoeia to convey the sound and movement of such things as the ocean, clouds and rain, stimulates the five senses. Within water, which circles the globe, we glimpse a vast life force and time's eternal flow. (Hiromatsu)

12



Mirai Chocolate

ミライチョコレート (Mirai chokoreto)

Text/Ill. The Cabin Company | Hakusensha | 2024 | 40pp | 26×21cm | ISBN978-4-5927-6338-3 | Ages: 7+ | *Future, Food, Robot*

Maya, a twelve-year-old girl who lives in Japan in the year 3024, visits a museum. There, she finds an old article about something called 'chocolate' that melts in the mouth. Longing to try it, she sets off on a journey to find some. On the way, she meets an old robot, and together they harvest cacao beans from pods and grind the nibs into a paste to make chocolates. Used to an easy life where people get nourishment from 'nutrient balls' and 'navel energy' and travel by Fly-go (flying cars), Maya discovers the joy of working, thinking and making things herself. The futuristic setting, including clothes and buildings, is also inventive. 'Mirai' means future. (Okuyama)

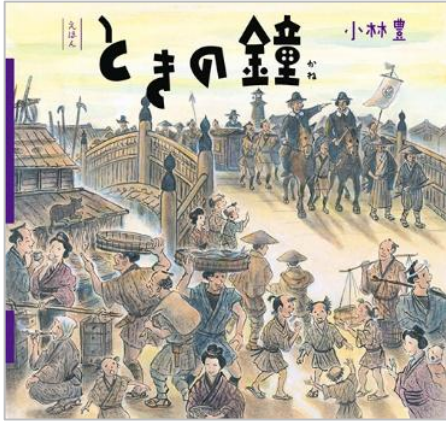
13

Picture Book Bell Clock

えほん ときの鐘 (Ehon toki no kane)

Text/Ill. KOBAYASHI Yutaka | Poplar | 2024 | 40pp | 25×26cm | ISBN978-4-5911-8182-9 | Ages: 9+ | *Edo, Bell clock, Dutch*

This story is about a bell used to tell the time during the Edo period (1603-1867). One day, Shinkichi, the grandson of the bellringer of Edo (now Tokyo), makes friends with Jan, a Dutch botanist. Jan has traveled from Nagasaki to Edo to meet



the shogun. He wants to see a Japanese garden, but he is not allowed to move about freely. Shinkichi gets his friend, a fishmonger, to take them on a secret tour of gardens by boat along rivers and canals. The illustrations brim with meticulous and riveting details of the Edo townscape and its residents. The concept that the bell Shinkichi's grandfather gives to Jan is still ringing in some town in the Netherlands broadens the imagination. (Sakuma)

14



Piano

ピアノ (Piano)

Text/Ill. ISE Hideko | Kaiseisha | 2023 | 40pp | 22×28cm | ISBN978-4-0343-5180-2 | Ages: 9+ | *Music, Moving, Fantasy*

Nonchan has just moved with her family to a new house. At home alone, she finds a toy piano in the closet. It was given to her by her father, who is no longer here. Tentatively, she begins to play a canon. The sound of another piano comes from the forest next door. Following the music, she finds an old

house and meets an elderly pianist. The author, a music lover, uses luminous colors and soft watercolor washes to create fantastical musical visions. This is her first fantasy picture book. In it, she faithfully explores her own way of 'listening' to music and conveys music's ability to encourage the timid to take another step, as well as the joy this brings. (Hiromatsu)

15



Monster Diary

もののけ diary (Mononoke daiari)

Text: KYOGOKU Natsuhiko | Ill. ISHIGURO Ayako | Iwasaki Shoten | 2024 | 88pp | 19×19cm | ISBN978-4-2658-3119-7 | Ages: 11+ | *Yokai, Fear, Edo period*

A picture book version of *Ino mononoke roku*, a collection of strange tales written in the eighteenth century. A young man visits the home of sixteen-year-old Heitaro, who tells him about the yokai (supernatural creatures) that came to him one after the other for thirty days, beginning on July 1st. On the first day, Heitaro meets a hairy cyclops, on the second, a woman with a severed head. But no

matter what kind of yokai appear, he remains unperturbed. In the end, the demon king himself arrives and takes off with his horde of monsters. The tales are written on the lefthand page, with color illustrations on the righthand page. The foldout pages open to reveal unique ink drawings of Heitaro confronted with a yokai. (Doi)