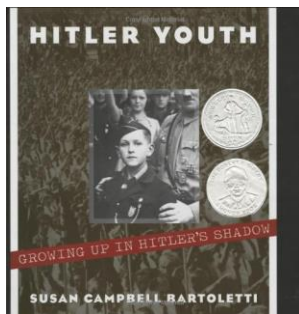


## Evaluation Criteria for Historical Fiction

### **Susan Campbell Bartoletti, *Hitler Youth: growing up in Hitler's Shadow***

Ever wondered how Adolf Hitler got the German people to follow him blindly? Susan Bartoletti's book shows that a large part of his plan was enacted through indoctrination of Germany's youth. *Hitler's Youth* details this period of history in great depth, sharing information gathered through personal interviews, letters, diaries and emails. Photographs on every page show the chilling disparity between Nazi propaganda and the reality of ghettos and concentration camps. Twelve children's lives are followed—some are staunch followers and believers in Hitler's mission; some begin as followers, but become disillusioned; others fight against the Nazi regime from the start. The stories are touching, sad, and sometimes difficult to read, but they are also very real. Bartoletti's dedication to telling the entire story, traveling and corresponding with people around the world to gather primary source documents and interviews with people who grew up in Hitler's shadow, shines through each page, and makes for a fascinating, and often disturbing read.

Bartoletti, S. (2005). *Hitler Youth: Growing up in Hitler's shadow*. New York: Scholastic Nonfiction.



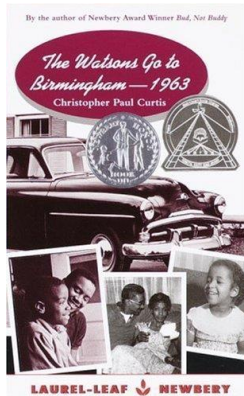
Cover art retrieved from Amazon.com on March 15, 2015.

### **Christopher Paul Curtis, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham--1963***

The Watson family lives in Flint, Michigan, and appears to be relatively sheltered from the civil rights strife in the South during the 1960s. After a bout of trouble with their oldest child, Byron, the “Weird Watsons” decide to take a trip to Birmingham, Alabama, so Byron can live with his grandmother, away from the influences of the city and his gang. While there, it becomes impossible for the Watson's to ignore the reality of the Civil Rights Movement; tragedy strikes too close to home, and our narrator, Kenny, has to come to terms with it. While the book does have its serious moments, most of the novel is full of truly hilarious interactions between the three Watson children and their parents. Readers won't forget the image of Byron's lips frozen to the car mirror, or Joetta (Joey) bundled up so heavily against the cold that she can't quite bend her arms. Kenny tries hard to be a good boy, but even he has his moments, and when he

sees a chance to safely tease his older brother, he zooms ahead full force. When the Watsons decide to take this road trip to Birmingham, it is a ride readers are happy to take with them.

Curtis, C. (1995). *The Watsons go to Birmingham--1963: A novel*. New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers.

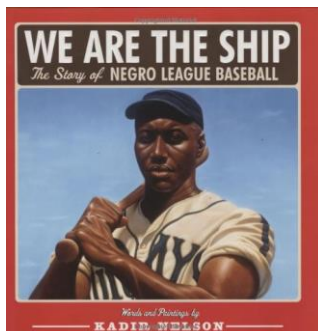


Cover art retrieved from Amazon.com on March 15, 2015.

### **Kadir Nelson, *We are the Ship: the Story of Negro League Baseball***

*We Are the Ship* is the story behind Negro League baseball from its beginning in the 1920s to its demise in the 1960s. Nelson, both author and illustrator of the book, cleverly offers this information through an unnamed narrator who sounds like a knowledgeable gentleman who has lived through all this himself. The book's chapters are broken down into innings, and every page has a full-color painting of an African American baseball legend. Each detailed illustration tells a story of its own, from the grass and mud stains on uniforms to oversized gloves on the hands of children standing next to their idols. Readers learn interesting facts such as it wasn't unusual for these athletes to play several games a day, and since they couldn't always get rooms in a town, they often slept on the bus. The book even details how lighting changed the game. Night games brought in customers who couldn't take off work, but they also meant players might play three to four games a day. While it would be easy for the book to focus only on the injustices of the time, Nelson chooses instead to celebrate men who paved the way for so many athletes today.

Nelson, K. (2008). *We are the ship: The story of Negro League baseball*. New York: Jump at the Sun/Hyperion Books for Children.

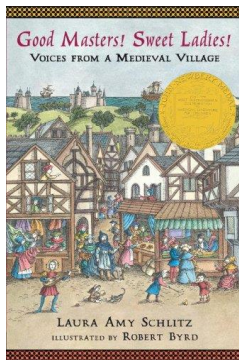


Cover art retrieved from Amazon.com on March 21, 2015.

**Laura Amy Schlitz, *Good Masters! Sweet Ladies!: Voices from a Medieval Village***

This collection of nineteen monologues and two dialogues is set in the year 1255, around a medieval manor in England. Each piece features a different character and gives readers a taste of what that character's life would have been like. Needless to say, some paths were much easier than others. Readers may be surprised to find out that while their lives were different, many teenage troubles remain the same today. For instance, Hugo, the Lord's nephew, is afraid he isn't brave enough, and Taggot, the blacksmith's daughter, is shy and doesn't think she is pretty enough for any boy to like her. Then there is Mogg and her brother Jack—their father was a violent man, but he is dead now, and the children don't miss him. Between many of the poetic monologues are sections titled "A Little Background" which offer more historical information about a particular topic covered in the previous piece. All the stories are cleverly woven together to create a whole image of the time period. Between the lovely vignettes and the striking illustrations, readers will find themselves enjoying this history lesson without the drudgery many have come to expect.

Schlitz, L., & Byrd, R. (2007). *Good masters! Sweet Ladies!: Voices from a medieval village*. Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press.



Cover art retrieved from Amazon.com on March 15, 2015.