

See the U.S.A. through Books

Plan a summer-long adventure with books that celebrate the many and diverse regions of this great land. **By Pat Scales**

The state of our nation's economy is causing many families to postpone vacations. Some are opting to visit nearby state parks and museums, and others are planning backyard campouts. But there is a "free" place that families can visit that promises a vacation filled with adventure. That place is the public library. Encourage parents to enroll their children in the summer reading program sponsored by their local library system or to simply plan a summer-long trip through books. This summer may be a good time for children to get to know the five regions of the United States. Introduce them to the books in this bibliography, or allow them to develop their own reading list.

Print a map of the United States from the Internet at www.50states.com/us.htm and give it to students on the last day of class. Ask them to track their progress as they travel the nation, marking each state they visit, or suggest that they keep a "travel" journal.



General Books about the United States

Adèle and Simon in America. By Barbara McClintock. 2008. 40p. Farrar/Frances Foster, \$16.95 (9780374399245).

Preschool–Gr. 3. French siblings Adèle and her younger brother,

Simon, arrive in New York to visit their aunt and embark on a train journey across America, where they see such places as Boston Public Garden and San Francisco's Chinatown. Readers who want to know more will enjoy illustrated endnotes that offer facts about the locations.

Babar's U.S.A. By Laurent de Brunhoff. 2008. 48p. Abrams, \$17.95 (9780810970960).

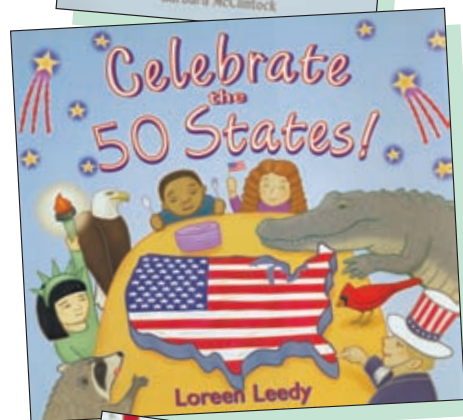
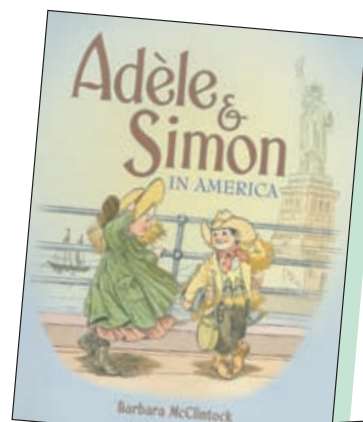
Preschool–Gr. 3. Babar and his family travel across the United States and take in such iconic sites as the Brooklyn Bridge, Graceland in Memphis, the beach in Key West, Yellowstone National Park, and the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco.

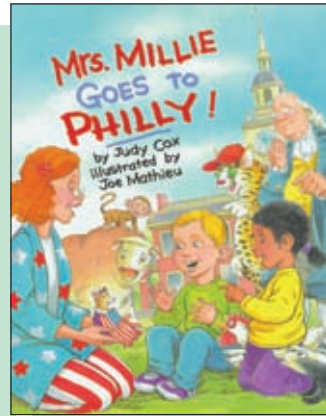
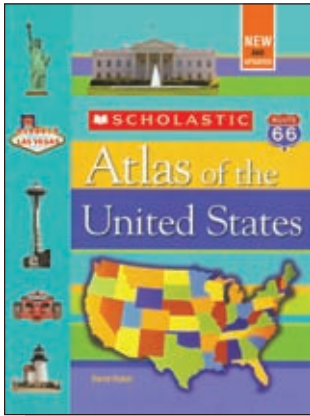
Building America. By Janice Weaver. Illus. by Bonnie Shemie. 2002. 56p. Random, \$17.95 (9780887766060).

Gr. 3–6. Weaver uses such buildings as Monticello in Virginia, the Chrysler Building in New York, and Bernard Maybeck's First Church of Christ, Scientist in Berkeley, California, to tell the story of architecture in America.

Celebrate the 50 States! By Loreen Leedy. 1999. 32p. Holiday, \$17.95 (9780823414314); paper, \$6.95 (9780823416318).

Preschool–Gr. 3. This simple





geography book features two states on each page with bits of state lore and information scattered about. Maps label capitals, large cities, and important places to visit, as well as the year the state entered the Union and the state bird, flower, river, or lake. The book also includes information on the District of Columbia and U.S. territories.

How to Make a Cherry Pie and See the U.S.A. By Marjorie Priceman. 2008. 40p. Knopf, \$16.99 (9780375812552).

Preschool–Gr. 3. A young baker and her dog travel by riverboat, taxi, train, and plane across the nation to collect coal, cotton, clay, and granite to make baking tools. Along the way, there are many landmarks to observe, and readers get a sense of the breadth and scope of the country.

Scholastic Atlas of the United States. By David Rubel. 2000; revised 2003. 144p. Scholastic, paper, \$8.99 (9780439474368).

Gr. 3–6. This revised atlas has a detailed map of each state and an information page with photos, graphics, and fun facts that reveal the unique aspects of each state. Other information includes major cities, bodies of water, national parks, and such interesting facts as the state motto, flower, tree, and so on.

The Scrambled States of America. By Laurie Keller. 1998. 40p. Holt, \$17.95 (9780805058024); paper, \$7.95 (9780805068313).

Preschool–Gr. 3. The states are bored with their positions on the map, so they work out a hilarious plan to switch places, but it's not long before they become lonely for their old geographic spots. The mixed-up fun continues in the sequel, *The Scrambled States of America Talent Show* (Holt, 2008).

The United States of America: A State-by-State Guide. By Millie Miller and Cyndi Nelson. 2006. 64p. Scholastic, paper, \$7.99 (9780439827652).

Gr. 3–6. This scrapbook reveals how the states collectively form one nation and gives enough information for young readers to grasp the unique aspects of each state.

Northeast

The Book of One Hundred Truths. By Julie Schumacher. 2006. 192p. Delacorte, \$15.95 (9780385732901); Yearling, paper, \$5.99 (9780440420859).

Gr. 4–6. Every year since she was six years old, Thea has spent the summer with her grandparents and extended family on the Jersey Shore. This summer, in an effort to break Thea from her habit of lying, her mother sends her to New Jersey with

a new notebook and instructs her to record 100 truths.

Manuel and the Lobsterman. By Catherine Urbain. Illus. by Layne Johnson. 2008. 112p. Front Street, \$16.95 (9781590785164).

Gr. 4–6. Thirteen-year-old Manuel anticipates a boring summer on the coast of Maine, but when he meets Zeke, a grumpy old lobsterman, he gets sucked into an adventure that could change his future.

Mrs. Millie Goes to Philly! By Judy Cox. Illus. by Joe Mathieu. 2008. 32p. Marshall Cavendish, \$15.99 (9780761453727).

Preschool–Gr. 2. Mrs. Millie is a silly teacher who likes to amuse her students by playing with words. On a field trip to Philadelphia, she takes her class to see the Liberty “Bull” and Betsy Ross’ “Mouse.”

Next Stop, New York City! The Polk Street Kids on Tour. By Patricia Reilly Giff. Illus. by Blanche L. Sims. 1997. 128p. Yearling, paper, \$4.50 (9780440413622).

K–Gr. 3. Ms. Rooney names Emily the “New York City expert” and the official guide for the Polk Street kids on their trip to the Big Apple, but a problem develops when it is revealed that Emily’s knowledge of the city is limited to her aunt Caroline’s neighborhood in the Bronx.

Sand Dollar Summer. By Kimberly K. Jones. 2006. 224p. Simon & Schuster/Margaret K. McElderry, \$15.95 (9781416903628); Aladdin, paper, \$5.99 (9781416958345).

Gr. 4–6. Twelve-year-old Lise has never been to the ocean, and she is unsure of what to expect when her single mother, who is recovering from an automobile accident, decides to recuperate in her hometown on the coast of Maine. Lise comes of age as she discovers not only the mysteries of the land and the ocean but a missing link in her family background.

Southeast

Autumn Winifred Oliver Does Things Different. By Kristin O'Donnell Tubb. 2008. 224p. Delacorte, \$15.99 (9780385735698).

Gr. 4–6. In Cades Cove, Tennessee, in the heart of the Great Smoky Mountains, Autumn Winifred Oliver is conflicted about a plan to turn nearby land into a national park—a move that will allow residents to cash in on tourism, but also puts the jobs of the town's loggers in jeopardy.

Belle Prater's Boy. By Ruth White. 1996. 208p. Farrar, \$17.50 (9780374306687); Yearling, paper, \$6.99 (9780440413721). Available in an audio edition from Listening Library.

Gr. 4–6. Sixth-grader Gypsy Leemaster has a fairly normal life in Coal Station, Virginia, until her first cousin, Woodrow Prater, comes to live with their grandparents after his mother's mysterious disappearance. Also see the sequel, *The Search for Belle Prater* (Farrar, 2005).

Greetings from Nowhere. By Barbara O'Connor. 2008. 208p. Farrar/Frances Foster, \$16 (9780374399375).

Gr. 5–8. Set in the Great Smoky Mountains of North Carolina, the rundown Sleepy Time Motel is completely vacant until a troubled boy and his mother, an adventure-seeking family, and a man and his daughter

all converge on the motel one night in search of shelter.

The Last Wild Place. By Rosa Jordan. 2008. 256p. Peachtree, \$15.95 (9781561454587).

Gr. 4–7. Sixth-grader Chip Martin discovers a family of displaced panthers living in the marshy Florida woods behind an abandoned farm. When Chip learns that a new building development may level the farm and put the panthers in danger, he sets out on a mission to save them, and in the process discovers that he has more friends than he thought.

Scat. By Carl Hiaasen. 2009. 384p. Knopf, \$16.99 (9780375834868). Also available in an audio edition from Listening Library.

Gr. 5–8. In Florida, Nick and Marta look forward to a school field trip to the Black Vine Swamp, but a fire cuts their excursion short. When they return to school, their teacher, Mrs. Bunny Starch, isn't with them. Although there is no evidence of foul play, Nick and Marta smell "a rat" and are determined to get to the bottom of Mrs. Starch's disappearance. Also see Hiaasen's *Hoot* (Knopf, 2002) and *Flush* (Knopf, 2005).

Stitchin' and Pullin': A Gee's Bend Quilt. By Patricia C. McKissack. Illus. by Cozbi A. Cabrera. 2008. 48p. Random, \$17.99 (9780375831638).

Gr. 2–5. Set in Gee's Bend, Alabama, where generations of African Americans have shared stories

as they pieced together quilts, this story follows a little girl as she works on her first quilt and learns family stories as she stitches.

Midwest

The Beef Princess of Practical County. By Michelle Houts. 2009. 240p. Delacorte, \$16.99 (9780385735841).

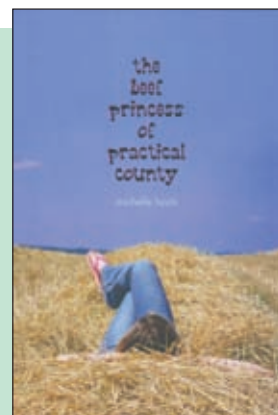
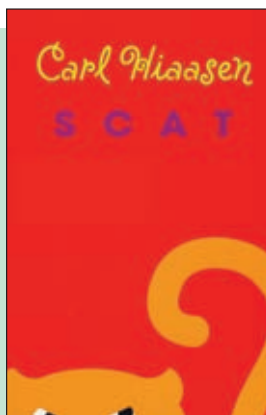
Gr. 4–8. On a cattle farm in Indiana, Libby Ryan raises two calves with the dream of winning the annual steer competition at the Practical County Fair. Despite her father's warning, Libby becomes attached to the steers and must grapple with the reality that they will be auctioned off at the fair.

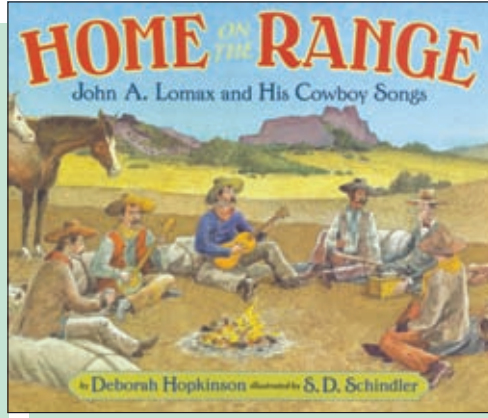
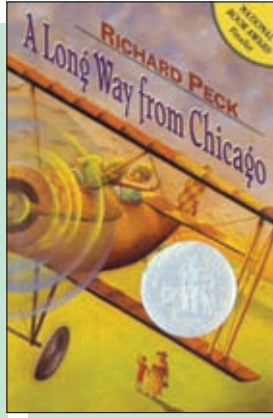
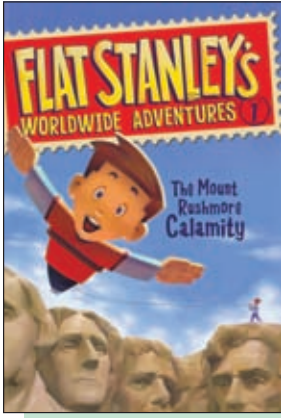
A Long Way from Chicago: A Novel in Stories. By Richard Peck. 1998. 192p. Dial, \$16.99 (9780803722903); Puffin, paper, \$6.99 (9780141303529). Also available in an audio edition from Listening Library.

Gr. 4–7. Once a year Joey and his younger sister, Mary Alice, leave the hustle and bustle of life in Chicago and go downstate to visit their eccentric grandma. The rural, small-town life is full of surprises, and Grandma Dowdel is usually at the center of it all.

The Mount Rushmore Calamity. By Jeff Brown and Sara Pennypacker. Illus. by Macky Pamintuan. 2009. 96p. Harper, \$15.99 (9780061429910); HarperTrophy, paper, \$4.99 (9780061429903).

Gr. 2–4. The first installment





from Pike,” and “Git Along, Little Dogies.” Line-and-wash illustrations depict believably quirky individuals within nicely composed settings. The book concludes with an author’s note, sources, and a brief bibliography.

Out of the Dust. By Karen Hesse. 1997. 240p. Scholastic,

\$15.95 (9780590376198); paper, \$6.99 (9780590371254). Also available in an audio edition from Listening Library.

Gr. 4–7. In Oklahoma during the Depression, 14-year-old Billie Jo grieves over the death of her mother and struggles through the devastation of the Dust Bowl, which causes many of the nearby farmers to flee their beloved land.

The Truth about Sparrows. By Marian Hale. 2004. 272p. Holt, \$16.95 (9780805075847); Square Fish, paper, \$6.99 (9780312371333).

Gr. 5–8. Sadie Wynn and her family are forced to leave their Missouri home in 1933 and begin a new life on the Gulf Coast of Texas, where her father takes a job in the fishing industry. Sadie goes to work cleaning shrimp at the cannery and embraces everything about her new community, including the sea.

When Zachary Beaver Came to Town. By Kimberly Willis Holt. 1999. 240p. Holt, \$17.95 (9780805061161); Yearling, paper, \$6.99 (9780440229049). Also available in an audio edition from Listening Library.

Gr. 4–7. Thirteen-year-old Toby Wilson thinks that nothing ever happens in his hometown of Antler, Texas, but things change when Zachary Beaver, the fattest boy in the world, comes to town in a trailer decorated

in Flat Stanley’s Worldwide Adventures, inspired by the original Flat Stanley books, finds the Lambchop family on vacation in the Black Hills, where Stanley uses his unique shape to get out of a variety of scrapes.

The Raft. By Jim LaMarche. 2000. 40p. HarperCollins, \$16.99 (9780688139773); HarperTrophy, paper, \$6.99 (9780064438568).

Gr. 2–5. Nicky is reluctant to spend the summer with his grandmother at her riverside cabin in Wisconsin, but everything changes when he discovers a raft that takes him on adventures he never dreamed could happen. The text floats above double-page illustrations filled with animal figures and details of nature.

Up North at the Cabin. By Marsha Wilson Chall. Illus. by Steve Johnson. 1992. 32p. HarperCollins, \$16.99 (9780688097325).

Preschool–Gr. 3. A little girl from the city spends the summer in the north woods of Minnesota where she sees a moose, baits her own fishing line, paddles a canoe, and learns to water ski. Richly colored, unframed paintings offer a stunning contrast of the deep, dark woods and the dazzling light on the wide waters of the nearby lake.

Southwest

Cactus Hotel. By Brenda Z. Guiberson. Illus. by Megan Lloyd. 1993. 32p. Holt, \$17.95 (9780805013337); paper, \$7.95 (9780805029604).

Preschool–Gr. 3. Birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, and insects check into the slow-growing saguaro cactus hotel in the Sonoran Desert in Arizona. Crisp illustrations in colored pencil and watercolor show the desert landscape and its variety of wildlife. A one-page afterword provides additional information about the saguaro.

Coyote and Badger: Desert Hunters of the Southwest. By Bruce Hiscock. 2001. 32p. Boyds Mills, \$15.95 (9781563978487).

Preschool–Gr. 3. In Chaco Canyon, New Mexico, Coyote and Badger form a partnership to search for food in the drought-stricken desert. Realistic watercolor illustrations, including some lovely desert scenes, accompany the lengthy text.

Home on the Range: John A. Lomax and His Cowboy Songs. By Deborah Hopkinson. Illus. by S. D. Schindler. 2009. 40p. Putnam, \$16.99 (9780399239960).

K–Gr. 2. John A. Lomax knew lots of songs when he was a boy, but it took following the trails of the cowboys to find the origin of songs like “Home on the Range,” “Sweet Betsy

with Christmas lights. At first Toby is reluctant to pay the two-dollar fare to see Zachary, but it turns out that his two dollars buy him more than a quick gaze at the overweight boy.

West

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian. By Sherman Alexie. Illus. by Ellen Forney. 2007. 240p. Little, Brown, \$16.99 (9780316013680).

Gr. 7–10. Arnold Spirit spends his time lamenting life on the Spokane Indian Reservation, drawing cartoons (which accompany the narrative) and hanging out with his aptly named pal Rowdy. When Arnold switches to a rich, white school, he immediately becomes as much an outcast in his own community as he is a curiosity in his new one.

Diamond Willow. By Helen Frost. 2008. 128p. Farrar, \$16 (9780374317768). Also available in an audio edition from Recorded Books.

Gr. 6–9. Twelve-year-old Willow has lived her entire life in interior Alaska, helping her father with his sled dogs. She feels old enough to travel the 12 miles to her grandparents' house alone, but her maturity is tested when she has an accident that injures her favorite dog, Roxy.

Heart of a Shepherd. By Rosanne Parry. 2009. 176p. Random, \$15.99 (9780375848025).

Gr. 4–7. Brother appreciates the beauty of eastern Oregon where his family maintains a ranch. When his father is shipped to Iraq with his reserve unit, Brother is determined to help his grandparents maintain the ranch until his father returns.

Jackie's Wild Seattle. By Will Hobbs. 2003. 208p. HarperCollins, \$16.99 (9780688174743); HarperTrophy, paper, \$5.99 (9780380733118).

Gr. 5–8. Shannon and her younger brother, Cody, spend the summer in Seattle with their uncle Neal, who

works at an animal rescue facility. When Neal is injured, Shannon and Cody step in and help rescue an otter, a coyote, a seal, and other area wildlife.

Night of the Howling Dogs. By Graham Salisbury. 2007. 208p. Random/Wendy Lamb, \$16.99 (9780385731225); Laurel-Leaf, paper, \$6.50 (9780440238393). Also available in an audio edition from Recorded Books.

Gr. 4–7. Dylan's scout troop is camping near a volcano on the Big Island of Hawaii when an earthquake rocks the camp and a huge wave sweeps away some of the campers. Dylan and Louie, an older camper, team up to complete a dangerous rescue mission.

Red Rose Box. By Brenda Woods. 2002. 144p. Putnam, \$16.99 (9780399237027); Puffin, paper, \$5.99 (9780142501511).

Gr. 5–8. When 10-year-old Leah and her younger sister, Ruth, travel from Sulphur, Louisiana, to Los Angeles to visit Aunt Olivia in 1953, Leah is amazed that there are no Jim Crow laws and that Aunt Olivia and her husband live in a luxurious home. After tragedy strikes their family, the sisters move permanently to L.A., where they are pulled between freedom and comfort and their deeply felt roots.

Sky. By Pamela Porter. Illus. by Mary Jane Gerber. 1995. 104p. Groundwood, paper, \$5.95 (9780888996077).


Gr. 3–6. In Montana on the edge

of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation, 11-year-old Georgia and her grandparents lose everything in the flood of 1964. While searching through the wreckage, Georgia finds a foal and names her Sky.

When the Sergeant Came Marching Home. By Don Lemna. 2008. 224p. Holiday, \$16.95 (9780823420834).

Gr. 4–7. Set in Montana just after World War II, Lemna's story stars 10-year-old Donald, whose father, "the sergeant," is relocating the family from town to a rundown farm. Spending his days doing endless farm chores is not what Donald had envisioned for summer vacation and after school, but a series of adventures helps him realize that his new life might not be so bad after all.

The Year the Swallows Came Early. By Kathryn Fitzmaurice. 2009. 288p. HarperCollins, \$16.99 (9780061624971).

Gr. 4–6. In San Juan Capistrano, the return of the swallows each year is observed with great interest, but 10-year-old Eleanor, aka Groovy, is more concerned about her father, who has been arrested for stealing her inheritance. Fitzmaurice deftly weaves the historic California seaside setting into the story. 

After 36 years as a school librarian, **Pat Scales** is now a freelance writer, children's literature advocate, and president of the Association for Library Service to Children.

