

The Service Network for Children of Inmates Book List

October 2009

This list was developed by the Quicklists Consulting Committee of the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association

Ages 0-5

Little Red Bird by Nick Bruel. illus. by the author. Roaring Brook, 2008. ISBN: 978159643397.

Little Red Bird has spent her life in a beautiful cage in a wonderful home, but one day she leaves out an open window. She enjoys her freedom, but she also likes the safety and security of her cage. Children will be able to decide for themselves which they would choose for Little Red Bird.

Mama Will Be Home Soon by Nancy Minchella. illus. by Keiko Narahashi. Scholastic Press/Scholastic, 2003. ISBN: 9780439384919.

Lili spends a few days with her grandmother while her mother is away and thinks she sees her mother's yellow hat everywhere she goes.

Visiting Day by Jacqueline Woodson. illus. by James Ransome. Scholastic Press/Scholastic, 2002. ISBN: 9780590400053.

A girl and her grandma start preparing before the sun rises for the long bus ride to visit the girl's incarcerated father. They have a nice visit and when they leave the grandma assures the girl that it won't always be this way.

Ages 6-9

The Year the Swallows Came Early by Kathryn Fitzmaurice. Bowen Press, 2009. ISBN: 9780061624971.

With her passion for cooking, 11-year-old Eleanor, aka Groovy, dreams of becoming a professional chef. But her father, a compulsive gambler, bets away her inheritance from her great-grandmother, money she had planned to use for culinary school. At first Groovy is as angry as her mother, who has Groovy's father arrested, yet during the next several weeks she learns that broken dreams, and broken families, can be rebuilt.

Finding the Right Spot: When Kids Can't Live with Their Parents by Janice Levy. illus. by Whitney Martin. Magination Press, 2004. ISBN: 9781591470748.

There are many different reasons why children may not be able to live with one or both of their parents. This book explores the situations in which this occurs and the variety of emotions that arise in these circumstances.

Nine Candles by Maria Testa. illus. by Amanda Schaffer. Carolrhoda Books, 1996. ISBN: 9780876149409.

Raymond visits his mother in prison on his seventh birthday, but wishes it were his 9th as that is when his mother will be released.

Amber Was Brave, Essie Was Smart by Vera B. Williams. Greenwillow, 2001. ISBN: 9780060294601.

Told in poems, this pulls from real-life experience and features two sisters dealing with the fallout from having their father go to prison. They have to answer difficult questions from their peers, and they struggle with loving someone who has committed a crime and the fact that their mother has to work more now.

Coming on Home Soon by Jacqueline Woodson. illus. by Earl B. Lewis. Putnam, 2004. ISBN: 9780399237485.

A young girl must deal with the fact that her mother is away looking for jobs in the city, and that contact between them is minimal. Although the mother is not incarcerated, the message of still loving people even when you can't be around them is reinforced.

When a Parent Goes to Jail: A Comprehensive Guide for Counseling Children of Incarcerated Parents by Rebecca M. Yaffe and Lonnie F. Hoade. illus. by Barbara S. Moody. Rayve Productions, 2000. ISBN: 9781877810084.

This explains why a parent might be arrested and what happens during and after an arrest. The title invites the reader to think about how he or she feels about a parent's incarceration. The authors offer advice on how to cope with being at school, at home, and visiting an incarcerated parent. Softly colored illustrations depict multicultural children.

Ages 10-13

I Am a Taxi by Deborah Ellis. Groundwood, 2006. ISBN: 9780888997357.

Twelve-year-old Diego lives in a prison with his family in Cochabamba, Bolivia. His parents were arrested for following their traditional beliefs, and the whole family now lives in jail. As a child, Diego is allowed to come and go from the prison to go to school and run errands, so he winds up being the errand boy for his fellow prisoners.

Jakeman by Deborah Ellis. Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2007. ISBN: 9781550415735.

Four times a year, Jake and Shoshona board a bus that travels through the night to the New York State Prison where their mother is incarcerated. One of these trips goes awry leaving Shoshona driving the bus and Jake confronting the governor about his letters asking for his mother's clemency.

This Place I Know: Poems of Comfort. Edited by Georgia Heard. illus. by various. Candlewick, 2002. ISBN: 9780763619244.

This book features poems to comfort those who have suffered trauma of one kind or another.

Touching Spirit Bear by Ben Mikaelson. HarperCollins, 2001. ISBN: 9780380977444.

A teenage boy is convicted of assaulting another teen, but instead of incarceration he is subjected to "tribal justice" and ordered to serve his sentence living in the wilds of an island in Alaska. It does not involve parents being incarcerated, but it deals directly with making choices and gives insight into the thought process of a teenage boy with anger control issues. It takes the reader through his journey from blaming others for his actions to accepting responsibility and starting to see how consequences affect him.

Street Love by Walter Dean Myers. HarperCollins/Amistad, 2006. ISBN: 9780060280796.

Written with rap beat and rhyme, this is primarily a love story between two teens in Harlem, the female protagonist is dealing with caring for her sister after watching their mother being sentenced to prison for possession of drugs.

The Same Stuff as Stars by Katherine Paterson. Clarion, 2002. ISBN: 9780618247448

When Angel's self-absorbed mother leaves her and her younger brother with their poor great-grandmother, the 11-year-old girl worries not only about her mother and brother, her imprisoned father, and the frail old woman, but also about a mysterious man who begins sharing with her the wonder of the stars.

Harry Sue by Sue Stauffacher. Knopf, 2005. ISBN: 9780375832741.

An 11-year-old girl is determined to go to prison so she can be reunited with her mother who was sent there on a drug charge at the same time the girl's father was sent to prison for throwing her out a seven-story window. Despite her plans for how to become a hardened criminal, and her penchant for "joint jive" or prison slang, she is a person who cares deeply about other people and wants to help and protect them. Despite the grim subject matter and Harry Sue's tough talk, the book is filled with humor and hope, without being saccharine or unbelievable.

Surviving the Applewhites by Stephanie S. Tolan. HarperCollins, 2002. ISBN: 9780066236025.

With both his parents in prison, 13-year-old Jake Semple has become a "budding juvenile delinquent." As a last resort, he is sent for home schooling at the Applewhite's Creative Academy, where this eccentric family helps him discover his true talents.

An Inmate's Daughter by Jan Walker. illus. by Herb Leonhard. Raven, 2006. ISBN: 9780971416192.

During the summer between seventh and eighth grades, Jenna, her mother, and her little brother move in with her grandparents while her father is in a Washington State prison, but as Jenna tries to fit in and make friends it becomes increasingly difficult to comply with her mother's demands for secrecy.