

**What's New in Children's Literature for the Children of Louisiana?
A Selected Annotated Bibliography with Readability Levels (Selected) and
Associated Louisiana Content Standards**

Elizabeth C. Webre

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Abstract

An annotated list of children's books published within the last 15 years and related to Louisiana culture, environment, and economics are linked to the Louisiana Content Standards. Readability levels of selected books are included. The thirty-three books listed are categorized as either appropriate for grades K-5 or grades 6-8. Bulleted comments are included in some annotations to alert the teacher to interesting/useful specific content, inaccuracies/misinformation, or appropriateness of content for the intended grade levels.

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Books for Grades K-5

Describing and comparing land forms

- 1) Hyde, J. (2007). *Louisiana (Rookie read-about geography series)*. New York: Children's Press.
Enhanced with photographs, the text is explicit in explanations of the state's three geographical regions: the East Coastal Plain, the Mississippi Alluvial Plain, and the West Gulf Coastal Plain, as well as its other physical features, major cities and its flora and fauna. At the end, important words are highlighted with additional photographs, and an index is included. RL 9.0

Defining and differentiating regions by using physical characteristics and human characteristics

- 2) Heinrichs, A. (2006). *Welcome to U.S.A.: Louisiana*. Chanhassen, MN: The Child's World.
The text, a travelogue, describes "Our Louisiana Trip", including descriptions of experiences in cities, bayous, and historic sites like Poverty Point. Signs with interesting facts are at the bottom of several pages, e.g. the number of National Park Service sites in Louisiana. RL 3
 - On page 18 describing Houma's Downtown on the Bayou Festival, the text accompanying the photograph states "People are paddling around in pirogues. They are Cajun canoes. They're made of hollowed out logs." The canoes pictured are modern-day canoes – not hollowed out logs.

Identifying and comparing the cultural characteristics of different regions and people

- 3) Downing, J. (2006). *Today Is Monday in Louisiana*. Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company.
Collage illustrations and cumulative, rhythmic text for each day of the week celebrate edible treats that characterize Louisiana culture, complemented with a refrain. A recipe for red beans and rice is at the book's end.
- 4) Heinrichs, A. (2006). *Mardi Gras*. Illus. by J. Bryan-Hunt. Chanhassen, MN: The Child's World.
This colorfully-illustrated book includes brief descriptions of Mardi Gras-related topics. Although Mardi Gras in New Orleans is highlighted, carnival around the world is mentioned. Lyrics of the song "If I Ever Ceased to Love," a recipe for king cake, and directions for creating a Mardi Gras necklace are included. RL 4.0
- 5) Hirshberg, J.L., (2001). *Nicky the swamp dog*. Lafayette, LA: Acadian House Publishing.
This true story of Nicky, an accomplished retriever, scout, and "assistant" swamp guide, befriends human visitors to the Atchafalaya River Basin and rescues and nurtures injured or lost animals. Includes a one-page glossary and photos of a beaver den, swamp egret, rare osprey....
- 6) MacMillan, D. (1997). *Mardi Gras*. Springfield, NY: Enslow Publishing Inc.

This 48-page book, illustrated with photographs, explains the history and customs of Mardi Gras, the significance of the holiday, the many ways it is celebrated and how the celebrations vary by location: New Orleans, Mobile, Galveston, and Quebec.

- 7) Prieto, A. C. (2009). *Timothy Hubble and Mardi Gras Cake*. Gretna: Pelican Publishing Company.
Timothy discovers new experiences can be enjoyable as he learns about Mardi Gras and the king cake tradition. An easy King Cake recipe is included.
- 8) Regard, J. (2006). *Born to be a Ragin' Cajun*. New Iberia, LA: Slice of Lime Publishing.
Born to Be a Ragin' Cajun is the story of a family attending their first home football game for UL Lafayette's Ragin' Cajuns. The story begins with a visit to the university's Cypress Lake and describes tailgating and the traditional Pride of Louisiana Marching Band arrival at the stadium. It includes the team's fight song.

Describing how natural resources, human resources, and man-made resources have been used and combined in the production of goods and services

- 9) La Doux, R. (2002). *Louisiana: Hello, U.S.A.* Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Co. (Jenny Giraffe Series)
This 58-page book includes 5 chapters: "The Land", "The History", "People", "The Environment", and "All about Louisiana". Included are websites, a pronunciation guide, glossary, and index. Its diverse content includes mention of the oil business and coastal restoration.

Describing the people, events, and ideas that were significant to growth and development of the state

- 10) Deinard, J. (2002). *How to draw Louisiana's sights and symbols (A kid's guide to drawing America series)*. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group.
This book explains how to draw some of Louisiana's sights and symbols including the state seal and flower, the state capitol, St. Louis Cathedral, and the French Quarter. A glossary and list of state facts are included. RL 9.0
➤ Highlights Louisiana folk artist Clementine Hunter, pages 8-9.
- 11) Evans, F. (2005). *The Battle of New Orleans: A drummer's story*. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company.
A young boy follows Jordon B. Noble, who served in four American wars, along a parade route as Noble tells of his role drumming and summoning troops to action during the Battle of New Orleans. Affectionately called "Old Jordan," he was a fixture in New Orleans parades, beating his drum and leading other veterans. The book reads the way a parade feels and sounds, with the steady beat of the drum, as it unfolds in rhyming couplets. Included is a glossary of terms related to the Battle of New Orleans.
- 12) Kimmel, E. (2005). *A horn for Louis*. New York: Random House.
The author describes the book (a Stepping Stones Chapter Book) as an inspirational biography. However, it is a fictional work designed to inspire young readers. RL 2.2
- 13) Lantier, P. (2006). *Louisiana (Portraits of the United States)*. Pleasantville, NY: Gareth Stevens Publishing.

This seven-chapter book includes information on the state's history (including Hurricane Katrina), people, economy, and government. It includes a glossary and web sites. RL 6.0

- 14) Rhodes, J. P. (2010). *Ninth Ward*. NY: Little Brown Books for Children.
Lanesha is accustomed to being teased and left out of everything. After all, everyone in New Orleans' Ninth Ward knows she was born with a caul, that she talks to ghosts, and that she has grown up with Mama Ya-ya, who sees the future. Lanesha doesn't let herself mind too much; she still has her beloved school, where she can work out math problems, and she has Mama Ya-ya, who has always loved her. But when the TV newscasters begin talking about Hurricane Katrina, Lanesha begins to get worried. Mama Ya-ya is talking strangely, asking for Lanesha's support instead of the other way around. And when the waters begin rising, Lanesha realizes that she will need to band together with a couple of other outsiders in order to help as many people as possible to get out of the Ninth Ward.
- 15) Strickland, S., & Watson, R. *A place where hurricanes happen*. (2010). NY: Random House.
Free verse picture book about Hurricane Katrina for ages 7-10. The authors, who live in New York, traveled to New Orleans to research and work with children after the storm.

Understanding the alphabetic principle

- 16) Dartez, C. C. (2008). *L is for Louisiana*. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company.
Colorful photos illustrate all things Louisiana in this alphabet book. Interesting facts and trivia, as well as alliteration, are included in the text.

Constructing number meaning

- 17) Mehrtens, J., & Roig, P. (2009). *Counting around the neutral ground*. Illus. by Joanne Mehrtens. Gretna, LA : Pelican Publishing Company.
This counting book set along the New Orleans Street car line includes a refrain (predictable text), a glossary, and dialog bubbles for Ralph and Roxanne (2 roaches) who provide interesting commentary/information e.g. how to tell the age of a tree.

Books for Grades 6-8

Describing the physical characteristics of places/ Describing how the physical characteristics of places change over time

- 18) Barrow, W., & Fontenot, B. (2006). *Vanishing before our eyes: Louisiana cheniere woods and the birds that depend on them*. Thibodaux: Barataria-Terrebonne National Estuary Program.

In this attractive and informative booklet, the key role of chenieres, the wooded habitats situated in coastal Louisiana, are explained. Providing needed rest and food for 60-75 species of migrating songbirds in spring and autumn, they are threatened by increased population, sinking land, salt water intrusion, and hurricanes. RL 10

- 19) Torres, J. (2006). *Hurricane Katrina and the devastation of New Orleans, 2005*. Hockessin, DE: Mitchell Lane Publishers.

The author visited New Orleans in September 2005, researching the disaster and speaking first-hand to survivors. Of interest is a nineteen-month chronology and an illustration of New Orleans area canals and levees. RL 11.0

- Of note is Chapter 4, "Tensions Mount," and the "Author's Note" at the end of the book.

Identifying and comparing the cultural characteristics of different regions and people

- 20) Bial, R. (1998). *Cajun home*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

The title and cover photo may lead the reader astray since the text goes far beyond description of a Cajun house; the text encompasses varied aspects of the Cajun community and culture, beginning with a history of the Acadians and their settlement in Louisiana. RL 12+

- 21) Gravell, K., & Diou, S. (1998). *Growing up in crawfish country: A Cajun childhood*. New York: Franklin Watts.

As part of the Growing Up in America series, the book describes aspects of contemporary life such as special traditions, religious beliefs, music, foods, ways of talking, and languages as experienced by three children living in the Eunice area. Includes an index and a resource list of books, music, etc. RL 7

- 22) Kane, Y. B. (2005). *The adventures of Trobear, a Cajun dog*. Lincoln, NE: Universe.

This nine-chapter book with black and white photos and written in first person describes the adventures of a fun-loving, mischievous dog as he encounters both friends and enemies in the Louisiana swamplands.

Describing the locations, causes, and effects of natural disasters on the environment and society

- 23) Strom, L. L. (2008). *Built below sea level: New Orleans*. New York: Children's Press. (Shockwave Social Studies Series)

New Orleans history and geography, social life and customs, and Hurricane Katrina are described with interesting text and generous illustrations, photographs, and "clip board" facts. One third of the 34 pages is devoted to Katrina's effects on the city the clean-up, and rebuilding. RL 11.0

- The title belies a statement made about the sinking city of New Orleans: "In the 1700s New Orleans was slightly above sea level." p. 22

Identifying and using primary and secondary historical resources to learn about the past

- 24) Gibson, J. (2010). *Spirit Wind*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
The author, a retired anthropology professor who researched the natives and cultures of the Atchafalaya Basin, creates historical fiction, a coming-of age story set in the swamps of South Louisiana.
- 25) Moore, E., & Couvillon, A. (2010). *Ancient mounds of Watson Brake: Oldest earthworks in North America*. Gretna, LA: Pelican Publishing Company.
The earthen mounds near West Monroe are older than the Egyptians. The book is told from the point of view of amateur archeologist Reca Jones who discovered the mounds and who shows her grandchildren the mounds and artifacts found there.

Describing the people, events, and ideas that were significant to growth and development of the state

- 26) Hedlund, S. (2007). *New Orleans (Checkerboard geography library cities series)*. Edina, MN: ABDO Publishing Company.
Photographs illustrate this 32-page book describing the city's history, geography, culture, government, and attractions. A table of contents, an index, and a brief pronunciation guide are included. RL 11.0
➤ Opening photo is of Bourbon Street.
- 27) Hintz, M. (1997). *Destination New Orleans (Port cities of America series)*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications.
The geology, history, economy, and daily life of New Orleans as a port city is presented. Port governance, port facilities, and goods that travel through the port are detailed in the 80-page text. A glossary and index are included. RL 6.0
- 28) King, D. (1998). *New Orleans (Battlefields across America series)*. Brookfield, CT: Twenty-first Century Books.
In its primary focus on the final battle of the War of 1812, the 54-page book describes the context of the entire conflict and examines sites that can be visited today (Note: Pre-Katrina information). A chronology of events and sources for additional investigation are included.
- 29) McCauley, E. (2009). *Louisiana (Sea to shining sea, second series)*. NY: Scholastic.
Full-color photos, maps, and fact-filled side bars compliment the 80-page text which describes the state's geography, history, government, economy, people and culture. Included are related internet sites, books, and addresses.
- 30) Reed, J. (2002). *Louisiana: A ReportLinks.com book*. Berkeley Heights, NJ: Enslow Publishers.
The book has a research emphasis, presenting information about the state's land, climate, economy, government, and history. Pre-evaluated Report links are available to the reader and library that purchased the book (Web site access intends to make the research more efficient. Links to: Louisiana Leaders, Notable Women in History, Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame...) RL 15

- 31) Sakurai, G. (1998). *The Louisiana Purchase (Cornerstones of freedom series)*. New York: The Children's Press.
The 32-page text chronicles the historical background and political maneuvers of the purchase by President Thomas Jefferson in 1803. A map, glossary, index, and timeline are included. RL 15.0
- 32) Thompson, K. (1996). *Louisiana (Portrait of America Series)*. Austin, TX: Steck-Vaughan Company.
The state's history, economy, and culture are presented. A state map, an almanac, the state's flag, motto, seal, and flower are included. A biography of Huey Long is included. RL 6.1
- Dated since on page 17 Hurricane Andrew is described as the worst natural disaster in U.S. history.
- 33) Worth, R. (2005). *Louisiana, 1882-1803(Voices from colonial America)*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society.
Louisiana's history from 1682-1803 is detailed, describing the unique mix of peoples and cultures resulting from the secret treaties between France and Spain and from the plantation economy that also shaped New Orleans as a port. A chapter about the first importation of Africans to the colony is included. RL 12.0

Describing the causes and nature of various movements of large groups of people into and within Louisiana and the United States (/North America)

- 34) Horton, C. (2000). *The French (We came to North America series)*. New York: Crabtree Publishing Company.
The text details the French settlement of North America, but with emphasis on Canada, including, e.g. fur trade, priests and missions, and francophone culture today. Two chapters address the French in Louisiana: "The Acadians" and "The Cajun Lifestyle." Short glossary and index included. RL 9.0