Ruelle, Karen Gray
The Tree

This is a wonderfully illustrated story about a 250-year-old tree in New York City. The author does an exceptional job of describing the life of a tree. The seed is transported by wind to its final resting spot, where it takes root and grows into a wonderful icon for the city. The book includes a timeline of the tree’s life and all of the history happening around it. For example, Madison Square Park was once home to a poster’s field, a circus, and two different sports arenas. Color illustrations and the historical connections make this a wonderful picture book for all ages. It can be used to teach history in a new and creative way and can inspire students to find a historical icon in their own community. Recommended. Kiji L. Kanagy, Library Media Specialist, S. Christa McAuliffe Elementary School, Windsor, Colorado

Sierra, Judy
Born to Read

If you liked Wild About Books (Knopf, 2004), then you will love Born to Read. Sierra has written a poetic picture book that will excite the most reluctant readers, even boys. The book is all about Sam and everything he can do because he knows how to read. Sam helps himself, his family, his doctor, and even his whole town; and he teaches others important lessons along the way, even beyond the importance of reading. For those just learning to read, or even being read to, the illustrations by Brown tell the story beautifully. The illustrations often depict some other kid favorites such as Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin (Simon & Schuster, 1989), The Cat in the Hat by Dr. Seuss, and The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle (Philomel Books, 1975). Readers will fall in love with Sam and reading and learn that “readers win and winners read.” Recommended. Stacy Ruenenthal, Librarian, Council Rock High School South, Holland, Pennsylvania

Sharratt, Nick
The Foggy, Foggy Forest

Beginning with the question “What can this be?” presented in a cute and simple rhyme, listeners will fall under the spell of each unknown shadowy silhouette on the transparent vellum pages. They will delight as the cloud of suspense lifts when the page is turned and the mystery image appears in color, revealing the answer. Surprise fairy tale characters are often in funny situations. The book ends abruptly, which is disappointing. The final page reveals a traveling fair, but if listeners look closely, they’ll find some of the characters who were revealed earlier in the book. The idea of the book is good, but the ending doesn’t make much sense. Additional pages would help bring the book to a more satisfying conclusion. Additional Selection. Susan Shaver, K-12 Library Media Specialist, Hemingford (Nebraska) Public Schools

Sheth, Kashmira
Monsoon Afternoon

As the dark clouds roll in and the raindrops start to fall, a young boy asks everyone in his family to go out and play with him, but they are all busy with their own activities. It isn’t until the boy asks his grandfather, his dadaji, that he finds his playmate. Together they build paper boats to float in the washbath. They quietly approach a peacock that rewards them with a show of his beautiful feathers. Dadaji helps the boy swing from the roots of the banyan tree and pick the last of the mangoes. While they play, the boy’s grandfather tells him that he too did all of these things when he was a boy. Soaked and tired, they return home only to find they have one more thing to do together: clean their muddy footprints off of the floor. Soft watercolor illustrations depict the wetty playground that the summer rains create. While set in the beautiful summer months in India, children everywhere will recognize the pull of the rain and mud and the desire for connection with their families. Recommended. Heather Hepler, Assistant Professor, University of Maine at Machias

Sierra, Judy
The Sleeping Porch

On a sultry summer night, Brando and his family sleep out on their back porch hoping to catch a breeze. At midnight, the Graveyard Cat slips through the screens and lands on Brando’s cot. The cat, a Maine coon cat that has been dead since the War of 1812, invites Brando on a nighttime adventure. The two embark on an imaginary trip where they glide past luminous ponds and a city “that was melting in the heat.” The illustrations, rendered in watercolor, mirror the text. The double-page spreads show Brando and the Graveyard Cat somersaulting past Saturn’s rings and flying over the ocean where fish swim below and whales bristle north, on their way north. They land on an iceberg where the weary travelers take a nap. When danger threatens the adventurers, Dad’s reassuring voice soothes Brando back to sleep. The language carries a gentle rhythm that will lull readers into this dream fantasy, and, hopefully, to sleep. Recommended. Louise A. Capizzo, Children’s Librarian, Falmouth (Maine) Memorial Library

Wax, Wendy
City Witch, Country Switch

A clever take on the traditional City Mouse, Country Mouse story, this book features two witch cousins who venture into each other’s neighborhoods with disastrous results. The country witch must deal with smog and the noises of the city at night; the city witch must find a way to cope with a leaky roof and a slimy swimming hole that sets off her hay fever. How can these two very different cousins find a way to live together? By casting a variety of wacky spells! This story would find a home in any story hour no matter the season, and it will appeal to all readers because the witches and their spells are silly, not scary. Told in rollicking, lyrical, rhyming text and featuring bright, colorful illustrations, this book may serve as an introduction to a lesson on poetry or rhyme. Children will want to check this book out again and again. Highly Recommended. Kristen Albright, Elementary Librarian, Penn Valley Area School District, Spring Mills, Pennsylvania

Winnick, Karen B.
Lucy’s Cave: A Story of Vicksburg, 1863

Under cannonball fire from Union gunboats, Lucy and her mother flee to the manmade caves in the hills surrounding Vicksburg. There they must share space with many other families while Lucy’s father protects their house in town, and her brothers fight in the Confederate Army. Lucy’s greatest trial is Liddy, who is constantly asking questions. Gradually, Lucy’s aggravation gives way to acceptance of a friend she is glad to have when a shell explosion causes a cave wall to collapse on her. After 47 days, there is news that the city has surrendered to General Grant, and it is time to go home. Loosely based on a true account published in Harper’s Weekly, this story is told in simple language. It is filled with details of living under siege that will fascinate young readers. The Civil War context is left for others to explain, however. Illustrations in oil are painted in a stiff, primitive style meant to reflect the art of the period, while eye-catching endpapers reproduce an issue of the Vicksburg Daily Citizen printed on wallpaper, just as a newspaper shortage occurred during the war. The book includes an author’s note. Recommended. Jan Aldrich Selub, School Library Media Specialist, A. Scott Crossfield Elementary School, Herndon, Virginia

Wolff, Ferida and Harriet May Savitz
The Story Blanket

In a remote village, children gather on Baba Zarrah’s woven story blanket to hear her tell her stories. One day Baba Zarrah notices that one of the children needs...