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AN INITIATIVE OF
TATA TRUSTS

Parag Honour List 2021

A curated collection
of outstanding books
in English and in Hindi
for children and
young adults



A curated collection of outstanding books in English and in Hindi, for children and young adults, by the Parag Initiative of Tata Trusts. This list, published annually, comprises noteworthy books of the year with brief information about each title. It has been created with careful screening and multiple reviews by experts in the children’s literature sector. The list aims to promote access to a comprehensive curated list of good quality children’s literature that librarians, teachers, parents and children can refer to and read.

As per this year’s criteria, we received original writings in the category of picture books, young readers and young adults, in fiction, non-fiction and poetry, from 26 Indian publishers, published between October, 2019 to September, 2020.

We hope this list will enable a wider readership to some of the best Indian children’s books!

FICTION

Picture Book



A Saree for Ammi

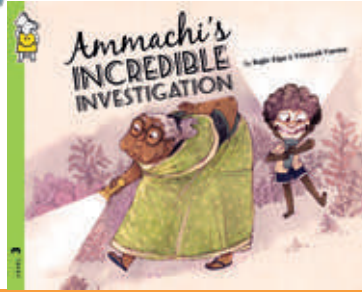
Publisher Tulika Publishers

Published 2019

Author Mamta Nainy

Illustrator Sandhya Prabhat

This is a heart-warming story of two sisters who take up several odd jobs to get a surprise gift for their mother. The colourful illustrations place the story among the Muslim community who weave sarees in Kota.



Ammachi's Incredible Investigation

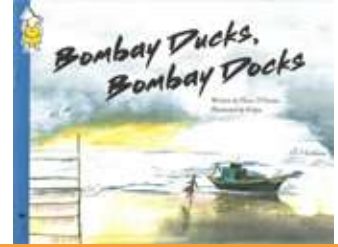
Publisher Pratham Books

Published 2019

Author Vinayak Varma

Illustrator Rajiv Eipe

The tasty uniappams disappear. Who could have stolen and eaten them? There are three possible suspects - the civet cat, grandfather and the dog? Ammachi, the clever grandmother, lays three different traps to catch the prospective thief. A lovable story which all small children will adore.



Bombay Ducks, Bombay Docks

Publisher Pratham Books

Published 2019

Author Fleur D'Souza

Illustrator Kripa

This book describes the lives of the traditional Koli fisherman of Bombay. Grandmother Aaji tells the story about the Kolis - the original inhabitants of Bombay. Their favorite food is a local fish, Bombil, also called Bombay Duck. How did the fish get this name? This fascinating story tells how the lives of the Koli fishermen got integrated to a megapolis. The book is adorned with lovely water color illustrations.



Tail Tale

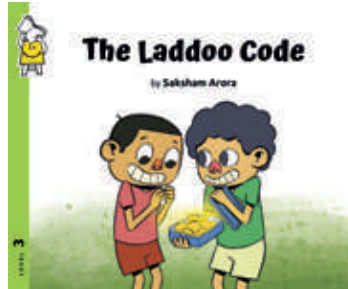
Publisher Tara Books

Published 2019

Author Anushka Ravishankar

Illustrator Tushar Vayeda and
Mayur Vayeda

Gorgeous illustrations matched with rhythmic nonsense verse that ends up making sense and reaffirms a sense of being comfortable in one's own body. It is a lot of fun and children will surely like it.



The Laddoo Code

Publisher Pratham Books

Published 2019

Author Saksham Arora

Illustrator Saksham Arora

Two friends who want to share laddoos. They pass a note in class from one end to the other. The other children read the note and eagerly wait to eat the laddoos. So next day one friend writes the note in a special code which only his friend is able to decipher. Later both enjoy the treat without having to share it with others!



The Miracle on Sunderbaag Street

Publisher Kalpavriksh

Published 2020

Author Nandita Da Cunha

Illustrator Priya Kuriyan

This is a lovely, layered story of children's connections with their lived environment. The story portrays the relationship between a child and an adult in a gentle manner, conveying warmth without becoming syrupy-sweet. The illustrations are evocative with each character being unique in its detail, and the garden stunningly coming alive through the pages.

NON FICTION



Zakir and His Tabla: Dha Dhin Na

Publisher Tulika Publishers

Published 2020

Author Sandhya Rao

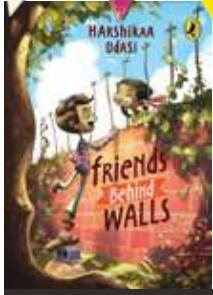
Illustrator Priya Kuriyan

The story of Ustad Zakir Hussain's childhood as he learns to play the tabla from his strict and famous father, Allarakha. The animated illustrations take us into the world of Indian music and we can almost hear the tabla beats, with young Zakir's hands and hair flying as he plays the tabla.



FICTION

Young Reader



Friends Behind Walls

Publisher Puffin Books by Penguin Random House India
Published 2020
Author Harshikaa Udasi
Illustrator Krishna Bala Shenoi

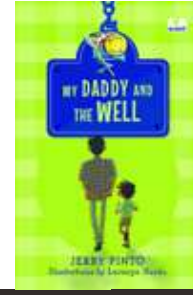
The book talks about the charm of small towns, making new friends, repairing old friendships. The child character explains the complicated words in an organic way in the narrative - a great device that will help enhance the vocabulary of children.



Mini's Questions

Publisher HarperCollins Publishers India
Published 2020
Author Nandini Nayar
Illustrator Isha Nagar

Do you ask too many questions? If you don't, then maybe you should. This is what Ritu Miss tells Mini in the delightfully written story in which Mini's questions solve a mystery. This book will put a smile on your face and inspire you to ask many questions of your own!



My Daddy and the Well

Publisher Duckbill Books by Penguin Random House India
Published 2020
Author Jerry Pinto
Illustrator Lavanya Naidu

As a child, Jerry's father worked hard to water the banana fields. He used a long bamboo to lift water and often jumped into the well. Years later, a hand operated pump was used for watering. But when people migrated to greener pastures, the village stopped growing red bananas. One day daddy takes little Jerry to his village. On seeing the unused well and rusted hand pump he remembers the good old days and jumps into the well for a good swim!



Nadya

Publisher Scholastic India Pvt Ltd

Published 2019

Author Debasmitta Dasgupta

Illustrator Debasmitta Dasgupta

The book takes up an idea that is important – how children cope when parents separate. This graphic novel sensitively deals with the issue and urges to build their lives moving on. The illustrations are softly bold and the child's joys and sorrows are beautifully conveyed.



The Piano: Story of a Friendship

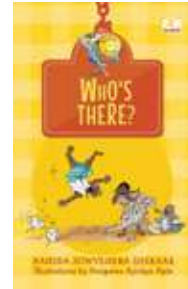
Publisher Duckbill Books by Penguin Random House India

Published 2020

Author Nandita Basu

Illustrator Nandita Basu

A graphic novel is an unusual form in children's literature and this one uses the form well to tell a poignant story about creativity and the connection between an artist and her tools. The layering of history, with the piano being passed down to owners in different countries, is a skillful narrative device. It conveys the universality of these ideas and of human beings coping with similar issues across space and time.



Who's There?

Publisher Duckbill Books by Penguin Random House India

Published 2020

Author Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar

Illustrator Anupama Ajinkya Apte

A folktale from Jharkhand. A Bhoot and a Bhootni take temporary shelter in a farmer's attic where the Bhootni gives birth to a dozen little ones. Later they find a permanent shelter in a tamarind tree at the end of the farmer's field. The quirkiness of the idea and the setting of the story are very engaging. The charming and playful illustrations reinforce the text.

NON FICTION



Girl Power!

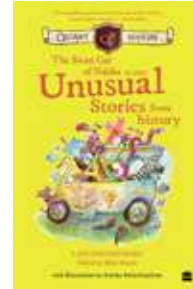
Publisher Scholastic India Pvt Ltd

Published 2019

Author Neha J Hiranandani

Illustrator Niloufer Wadia

This book profiles the lives of 50 inspiring and legendary women – some alive, some no more. The text is easy to read and the illustrations by Niloufer Wadia are beautiful. This book presents many role models for young readers to aspire to.



The Swan Car of Nabha and other Unusual Stories from History

Publisher HarperCollins Publishers India

Published 2020

Author Live History India

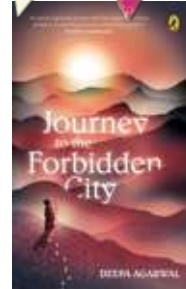
Illustrator Anitha Balachandran

This is a fascinating book which places history outside textbooks, with dates and question-answers. This is a book telling us that history can be fun! You will meet Barapasaurus, the desi dinosaurs who lived in Telangana. You will discover that Emperor Jehangir once had a zebra and that the game of Ludo was invented in India.



FICTION

Young Adult



Journey to the Forbidden City

Publisher Puffin Books by Penguin Random House India

Published 2020

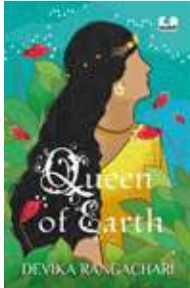
Author Deepa Agarwal

Illustrator Meghna Menon

The year is 1865, Nain Singh Rawat has set out to map Lhasa in Tibet and the seat of the Dalai Lama. This magical story takes us to land still undiscovered, as Nain Singh braves dangers, fights the extreme cold in disguise and does the impossible. It blends history with biography and keeps us on the edge of our seats.



NON FICTION



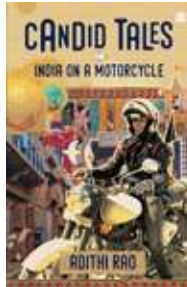
Queen of Earth

Publisher Duckbill Books by Penguin Random House India

Published 2020

Author Devika Rangachari

This is a brilliant historical fiction grounded in thorough research. The narrative is engaging and layered. While the focus remains on a queen ruling at a time when women were not documented in historical records, the story makes room for emotional relationships as well as complex details of lifestyle from that period.



Candid Tales – India on a Motorcycle

Publisher HarperCollins Publishers India

Published 2020

Author Adithi Rao

Illustrator Ruchi Shah

Imagine, an intrepid girl! On a motorcycle! Travelling solo across India for five months. Candida Louis follows her dream as she rides her Royal Enfield bike through Kashmir, through Ladakh and a village of three huts! Her journey of 32,000 kms will make you feel the wind in your hair.



Unearthed – An Environmental History of Independent India

Publisher Puffin Books by Penguin Random House India

Published 2020

Author Meghaa Gupta

Illustrator Aditi Shastri

This book presents a range of complex environmental issues in an easy to understand manner. It frames India's environmental challenges, from the Green Revolution to climate change, by contextualizing how Partition and the drawing of political borders impacted our environment. This rare approach sets the tone right from the beginning of the book.



First Katha Book of Haiku, Senryu, Tanka and Haibun

Publisher Katha

Published 2019

Author Various Poets

Illustrator Surabhi Singh

This is a lovely poetry collection that can introduce young readers to lesser-known poetic forms of Japan. What is special about the book is how the spare quality of these forms is adapted beautifully in the Indian context. The strong imagery of these poems reflects that of the Indian world full of textures. The endnotes provide useful ways of understanding these forms and poems.





Jury Speaks

ARVIND GUPTA

Arvind Gupta did B.Tech from IIT Kanpur in 1975. He is primarily a toy maker but has an abiding interest in children's books. He has won several awards for popularizing science including the Padma Shri. He shares his passion for books and toys through his popular website www.arvindguptatoys.com

“ There are very few inspiring picture biographies for children on Indian icons. I would like to see more picture books depicting the differently abled, marginalized, and communal harmony. Finally, I would like all Caldecott and Newbery Medal books to be translated in all Indian languages.

PRACHI KALRA

Prachi Kalra is a teacher educator at Delhi University. She also teaches a course on children's literature and storytelling. She grew up listening to stories from her mother and grandmother, stories of Sheikh Chilli and birds drowning in poop. Prachi has a PhD in storytelling from Delhi University and lives in Delhi. She has a sizeable collection of children's books, built by scouring book fairs and second-hand book shops. Prachi's dream is to open a public library for children.

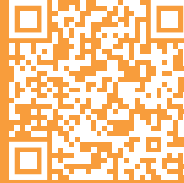
“ For me, there is nothing like a children's book. A good book is enjoyed by everyone, adults and children alike. From picture books to ghost stories to fantasies to reflective, philosophical books – libraries and classrooms need to have a whole range. Somehow, wordless picture books are my favourite; because there is magic in the illustrations which carries the story forward.

SAMINA MISHRA

Samina Mishra is a documentary filmmaker, writer, and teacher based in New Delhi, with a special interest in media for and about children. Her work uses the lens of childhood, identity and education to reflect the experiences of growing up in India. She also runs The Magic Key Centre for the Arts and Childhood.

“ What I look for most in children’s books is children’s voices and their agency in the world - characters that actively experience, reflect and take on decision-making. I like stories with layered meanings, open to readers’ diverse interpretations, rather than a flat message. I also look for beauty in writing and art that captures the whimsy and wonder of children’s worlds, and lets readers find both, a bit of themselves and a bit of something new.





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Parag Initiative of Tata Trusts is driven by a belief in the transformative power of reading, working to ensure that children across India can appreciate and enjoy reading, especially in diverse languages. Parag's three pronged model for sourcing, publishing and disseminating children's literature has catalysed the children's literature, reading and literacy ecosystem towards encouraging joyful reading among children and youth.

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