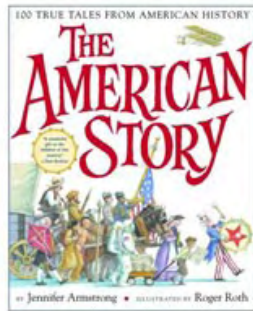


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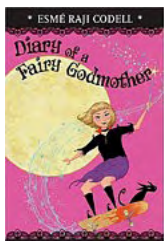
# Book Banter

**The American Story** (Knopf, '06) is a treasury of 100 true tales written by Jennifer Armstrong and illustrated by Roger Roth. This *American Story* begins with the very first permanent “new world” city in 1565 (St. Augustine, Florida), and ends 350 pages later with the quirky election issues surrounding the Bush/Gore presidential race in Florida, 2000.



Following the 1851 story about Sojourner Truth there is a note indicating that the reader can find more information on women’s suffrage in the 1920 story. This cross-referencing is an outstanding concept and should not only introduce children to the process of research but also help make them history lovers. The one hundred stories are varied in length and texture; many are quite good. At the end of the stories are three pages of possible story arcs that might be used. The very complete bibliography includes about fifteen reliable websites. All in all, this is an extremely well executed book. It’s an interesting read, a friendly instrument to attract students to American history, and an informative resource to keep on the library shelf. It also provides an absorbing cross-section of five centuries of American life.

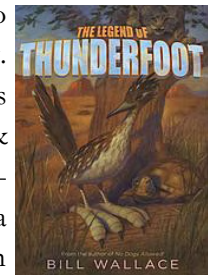
*Beware, the wicked, wicked witch!!* But what happens when a witch decides she just doesn’t want to be wicked?



This is the problem facing Ms. Hunky Dory in **Diary of a Fairy Godmother**, by Esmee Raji Codell (Hyperion Books, '06). Hunky is at the top in her class at Harbinger’s Charm School for Young Witches, and everyone predicts she will be the “wickedest witch wherever the four winds

blow.” Her mother is so proud of her! However, Hunky finds that she is more interested in granting peoples’ wishes than in casting spells. While spending time at the bottom of a well, waiting to grant wishes, she meets Cinderella. What happens next is a very different version from the ones you’ve heard before! This book provides a great twist on some old, familiar stories. It also stands well on its own feet as a “human” interest story. Children will enjoy discussing the options open to Ms. Friendly Witch Dory.

*Always Look Before You Leap* introduces an important lesson for young roadrunners to learn, before their Naming Ceremony. One young roadrunner in Bill Wallace’s **The Legend of Thunderfoot** (Simon & Schuster Books, '06) forgets the old adage and when he leaps first, is bitten by a rattlesnake. His feet swell, so he’s given the embarrassing name Thunderfoot. Through the course of the story Thunderfoot comes to understand that by hard work he can overcome his disability; he also realizes that what makes him different, also makes him special. Underlying themes woven subtly through the story are the value of friendship, the importance of being true to one’s own heart, and that even roadrunners must honor their promises to others. This heartwarming story can be read and enjoyed by a variety of ages; each will take away a different meaning.



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## Picture Books

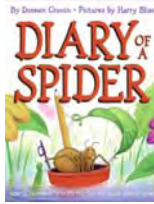
**D Is For Dragon Dance** (Holiday House, Inc., '06) by Ying Chang Compestine describes in great detail how Chinese families celebrate their culture’s holidays.



The magnificent illustrations are by Yongsheng Xuan. This is a complex picture book with large amounts of information, best for **children over 10**. It’s also an absorbing introduction to the Chinese way of life, via their special days and rites. **(continued on pg. 8)**

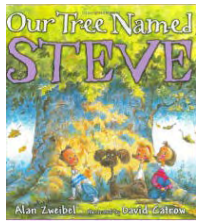
**Wolf! Wolf!** (Hyperion, '07) is a first book by Brooklyn-born John Rocco that offers a real twist on the old tale *'The Boy Who Cried Wolf.'*

**Diary of a Spider** (Harper, Collins, '05) by Doreen Cronin is the account of a spider who attends school. Great illustrations by Harry Bliss.



ful old tree in their front yard. David Catrow's illustrations are outstanding.

**My Pop And Me** (Little Brown & Co., '06) by Irene Smalls is the joyous story of a boy and his grandfather—baking. The love the two share is obvious in the delightful illustrations by Cathy Ann Johnson. The story is written in rhyme and is appropriate for 6 to 12 year-olds.



**Our Tree Named Steve** (Putnam, '05) is a charming book about how a family grows and ages around the beauti-

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P.O. Box 874  
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