Spiritual Themes and Virtues in Children's Literature

Kathleen Riggins

This is a very brief overview of recently published children's literature that are related to spiritual values, virtues and Japanese culture. Many of these titles are available in both English and Japanese. Children's literature can be used in the family, in schools, and community events. They can supplement regular Baha'i Children's Classes. Appropriate literature contributes to children's appreciation of Japan's rich spiritual heritage.

About the organization of schools:

“...They must be constantly encouraged and made eager to gain all the summits of human accomplishment, so that from their earliest years they will be taught to have high aims, to conduct themselves well, to be chaste, pure and undefiled, and will learn to be of powerful resolve and firm purpose in all things.” (Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, 110, page 135)

About joyfulness:

“Joy gives us wings! In times of joy our strength is more vital, our intellect keener, and our understanding less clouded. We seem better able to cope with the world and to find our sphere of usefulness.” (Paris Talks, Abdu’l-Baha, Pain and Sorrow, page 109.)

Picture Books


Amy and Ken Visit Grandma, by Akiko Hayashi (trans. Peter Howlett and Richard

*Basho and the River Stones*, by Tim Myers
Illustrator - Oki S. Han
Marshall Cavendish, 2004
Honor and Creativity

*Gifts from a Mailbox*, by Yoriko Tsutsui
Illustrator - Akiko Hayashi
Translators - Jaylene Mary and Susan Howlett
R.I.C. Publications, 2004
Friendliness & Courage

*Grandfather’s Journey*, by Allen Say
Scholastic Inc., 1995
*(The Bicycle Man, Milk with Tea, Tree of Cranes)*
Confidence

*Honda: The Boy who Dreamed of Cars*, by Mark Weston
Lee & Low, 2008
Determination and Creativity

*In the Eyes of the Cat: Japanese Poetry for All Seasons*
Selected and Illustrated by Demi
Translator - Tze-si Huang
Henry Holt, 1992
Excellence

*The Magic Fan*, by Keith Baker
Idealism and Creativity

*The Origami Master*, by Nathaniel Lachenmeyer
Albert Whitman & Co., 2008
Excellence and Humility

*Passage to Freedom: The Sugihara Story*, by Ken Mochizuki
Lee & Low Books, Inc., 1997

Compassion and Idealism

*The Perfect Sword*, by Scott Goto
Charlesbridge, 2008

Excellence and Justice

*The Pet Dragon: The Story about Adventure, Friendship and Chinese Characters*, by Christoph Niemann
Greenwillow Books, 2008

Loyalty

*Sudsy Mom’s Washing Spree*, by Wakiko Sato
Translator - Sako Laughlin
R.I.C. Publications, 2006

Enthusiasm and Joyfulness

*The Two Bullies*, by Junko Morimoto
Red Fox-A Mark Macleod Book, 1997

Humility

*Wabi Sabi*, by Mark Reibstein
Little, Brown & Co., 2008

Peacefulness

*The Wakame Gatherers*, by Holly Thompson
Shen’s Books, 2007

Understanding

*Yoshi’s Feast*, by Kimiko Kajikawa
Cooperation

Chapter Books

*Guardian of the Spirit (Moribito), by* Nahoko Uehashi  
  Translator - Cathy Hirano  
  (Guardian Of The Darkness (Moribito) Book 2, 2009)  
  Trustworthiness and Loyalty

*Kazunomiya: Prisoner of Heaven, Japan 1858, by* Kathryn Lasky  
  Scholastic Inc., 2004 - Series: The Royal Diaries  
  Self-Discipline and Assertiveness

*Shipwrecked!: The True Adventures of a Japanese Boy, by* Rhoda Blumberg  
  HarperCollins, 2001  
  True biography - Older readers  
  Diligence and Loyalty