

# Resource Links

CONNECTING CLASSROOMS, LIBRARIES & CANADIAN LEARNING RESOURCES

## Editor's Comments

*Hello Everyone*

Welcome to volume 22 of *Resource Links*. I hope everyone had an enjoyable and relaxing summer with lots of time to read some of the great books which our Canadian authors and publishers are bringing to our children and young adults.

This issue is full of new titles which our reviewers have been busy reading and reviewing over the summer months. We have quite a number of books for the youngest readers and pre-readers as well as many books with contemporary topics - bullying, LGBTQ, eating disorders, sexual abuse, self-esteem, etc. - for the more mature audience. There are also quite a large number of

French titles reviewed in this issue which will be of great use to our French first language and French immersion clientele.

I want to welcome Gail Sidonie Sobat to this issue. Gail is the new editor of our October feature column *2016 Contemporary Adult Titles for Strong Readers*. She has taken over from Margaret Mackey who started the column many years ago, and is bringing us the same quality reviews of these adult titles which we have grown to expect. Thanks to Gail and her committee of reviewers.

Now that the Canadian Library Association has disbanded we have a new school library association being established. *Canadian School Libraries* is a new organization dedicated to fostering the

growth of the school library learning commons in Canada and to developing a national network of school library practitioners and supporters. For more information check out the website at <http://www.canadianschoollibraries.ca/>

Also replacing the CLA we have the new *Canadian Federation of Library Associations* which is being established to provide a united voice for Canadian libraries. For more information on this group check out their website at <https://librarianship.ca/news/cfla-fcab-2016-07/>

As we settle into the fall and winter months, I hope you have a chance to take a look at some of the titles reviewed in this issue and share them with your readers.

*Vicki*

## Resource Links

P. O. Box 9  
Pouch Cove, NL  
A0A 3L0  
Tel: 709-335-2394  
Fax: 709-335-2978  
E-mail: [resourcelinks@nl.rogers.com](mailto:resourcelinks@nl.rogers.com)

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## Picture Books

ALLENBY, Victoria  
*Rhino Rumpus*  
Illustrated by Tara Anderson. Pajama Press, 2016. 24p. Gr. Preschool. 978-1-927485-96-5. Hdbk. \$16.95



Three little rhinos just can't seem to behave. Whether they're at

the dinner table or in the tub, the three little rhinos keep pushing, fighting, tussling, and butting heads until it turns into a full-blown RHINO RIOT! Mama Rhino is getting tired. Will the three little rhinos ever get along?

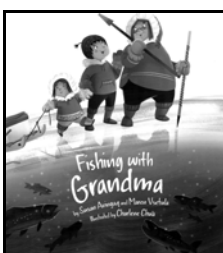
Thanks to its bubbly rhythm, *Rhino Rumpus* is a great candidate for story time with toddlers. The energetic language and

rhymes are made to be read aloud and the illustrations are equally as exciting and expressive. Preschoolers with siblings (or parents with rambunctious little rhinos of their own) will relate to this story and have a lot of fun reading together.

**Thematic Links:** Rhinos; Siblings; Misbehaving

*Alice Albarda*

AVINGAQ, Susan and Maren Vsetula  
*Fishing with Grandma*



Inhabit Media, 2016. 29p. Illus. Gr. 1 - 3. 978-1-772270846. Pbk. \$10.95

Visiting with

Grandma - Anaanatsiaq - is always a fun treat for Jeela and her older brother. The siblings are thrilled when Anaanatsiaq tells them she is going to teach them the art of ice fishing. She instructs them on how to dress, how to prepare the ice holes with a special chisel, and how to use the traditional Inuit jigging stick.

Since they have an extremely successful fishing session - catching more Arctic char than they could possibly eat - Anaanatsiaq tells the children about another important Inuit lesson. She brings them around the town to deliver the fish to the many people who are unable to go fishing for themselves. Then, with pride at their success and feeling grateful that they could share with so many others, the children return home to prepare a feast for themselves of the remaining fish.

Sharing and passing down their

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traditions is an important part of Inuit culture, and this book is a wonderful example of a family taking joy in doing just that. The book's illustrations and writing style are somewhat less traditional than other recent picture books about the Inuit culture. This doesn't take away from the story at all, and since the illustrations are fun, animated, and colourful, it will actually have a much broader appeal while still showcasing the cultural traditions in an exemplary fashion.

**Thematic Links:** Ice Fishing; Inuit People; Grandmothers; Traditions

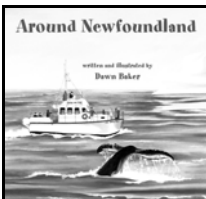
Nicole Rowlinson

BAKER, Dawn

### ***Around Newfoundland***

Pennywell Books/Flanker Press, 2016.

Unp. Illus. Gr. K-3. 978-1-77117-530-2. Pbk. \$12.95



In her latest book Dawn Baker takes us on a tour of Newfoundland. Beginning with the ferry ride across the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Gary and Peter and their families continue up the northern peninsula and across the island portion of the province stopping at many of the tourist areas along the way. They visit places such as Gros Morne National Park, L'Anse aux Meadows, the Newfoundland Insectarium at Deer Lake, the Salmonid Interpretation Centre in Grand Fall-Windsor, the Miawpukek Powwow at Conne River, Twillingate, the Bonavista Lighthouse, and the Rooms, the Johnson Geo Centre and Signal Hill in St. John's. All of these places are portrayed in the wonderful full-page colour illustrations by Dawn Baker, renowned Newfoundland artist.

This book gives a great introduction to many of the tourist attractions in the island of New-

foundland. It would be a great asset to families visiting the province and wondering where they should visit. It is also a great resource to use with primary children when learning about their province or country in social studies curricula.

**Thematic Links:** Newfoundland - Tourism; Art

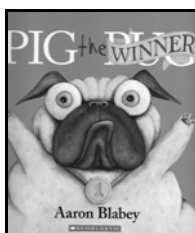
Victoria Pennell

BLABEY, Aaron

### ***Pig the Winner (Pig the Pug Series)***

Scholastic Canada, 2016. 32p. Illus.

Gr. Preschool - 1. 978-1-4431-4891-7. Hdbk. \$14.99



Blabey contrasts the good (Trevor the loyal dachshund) with the bad (Pig the selfish Pug) in his hilarious rhyming picture books. In this third story, poor sportsmanship is the quality Pig exhibits whenever he and Trevor are running, playing, or eating. Pig kicks Trevor in the face to slow him down during a race. He throws a temper tantrum when he loses to Trevor, and he brags when he wins a game Trevor didn't even want to play. On the day he yells "GO!" at mealtime, Pig swallows all his food, and his over-sized bowl. "*Lucky for Pig, Trevor knew what to do. He squeezed out the bowl before Pig could turn blue.*" Does Pig thank his friend? No. He says, "*I win!*" Pig will never learn to be good, but his bad behaviour momentarily slows down by the end of each book because of injuries that result in him looking like a mummy.

Children and adults have enjoyed these books when I read them aloud at story time. One teacher I know even went out and bought the books because they remind her of her pug.

Also available in French. See p. 43.

**Thematic Links:** Dogs (Pugs and Dachshunds); Winning and Losing; Competition; Poor Sportsmanship; Friends

Tanya Boudreau

BLABEY, Aaron

### ***Thelma the Unicorn***

Scholastic Canada, 2016. 32p. Illus.

Gr. Preschool - 1. 978-1-4431-4810-8. Hdbk. \$14.99

Thelma the pony has short legs, bland fur, and a round belly. She longs to look like a beautiful unicorn even though her friend Otis likes her as she is. When she finds a carrot on the ground, her transformation begins. She coats herself in pink paint and glitter and enjoys all the attention she receives when she becomes a celebrity. She poses for the media and travels aboard yachts. For the first time, the acrylic, pen and pencil illustrations show Thelma smiling and standing confidently. But when she loses her privacy and her sense of self by spending all her time pleasing people who love her only because she looks like a unicorn, she gets rid of everything but the carrot because that is for her and Otis to eat; together, as horses.

This rhyming picture book features a sparkly cover and a clear, simple message about the importance of being kind to yourself and others. Fans of Blabey's *Pig the Pug Series* of picture books will recognize his rhythmic humour and his wide-open eyed characters.

**Thematic Links:** Horses; Unicorn; Identity; Self-Acceptance; Friends; Appearances

Tanya Boudreau



# Resource Links

CONNECTING CLASSROOMS, LIBRARIES & CANADIAN LEARNING RESOURCES

Promoting an awareness of the availability and use of Canadian learning resources, in print, electronic and other media, in schools and libraries, to sustain and enhance Canada's unique cultural heritage and perspective.

EDITOR

Victoria Pennell

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### **Resource Links**

P. O. Box 9,

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Tel: 709-335-2394; Fax: 709-335-2978

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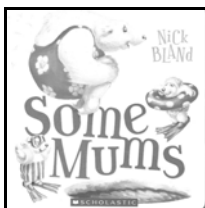
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Subscriptions \$45.00 + 5% GST per year for non-members. Bulk subscription rates available upon request.

BLAND, Nick

**Some Mums**

Scholastic Canada, 2016. Unp. Illus. Gr. Preschool. 978-1-4431-4835-1. Bdbk. \$9.99



When anthropomorphism is central to a book's success, it sometimes works brilliantly and sometimes it doesn't. In this delightful board book of animal mothers with all too human characteristics,

it works both beautifully and delightfully. With less than sixty-five words - a few of them rhyming - Australian author and illustrator Nick Bland has produced a lovely lap book for the very young. His gentle illustrations are both witty and wise and cover a wide notion of what a mother is to a child.

**Some Mums** is highly recommended for purchase but probably does not belong in the average primary or elementary school collection. It should be bought for nursery schools and day care centers, and for any mother or grandmother on Mother's Day! It could be a secondary purchase in a parenting collection.

It is a gift for mothers of all ages and any small children they adore.

Also available in French. See p. 43.

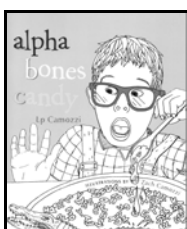
**Thematic Links:** Mothers and Children

Anne Letain

CAMOZZI, Lp

**Alpha Bones Candy: ABC Tanka Poetry for Tots**

Illustrated by Zach Camozzi. LP Creative, 2016. Unp. Gr. Preschool - 3. 978-0-9737367-2-4. Pbk. \$14.95



**Alpha Bones Candy**, a collection of Lp Camozzi's modern tanka, is presented as an ABC book but also a concept book. Each poem features one letter of the alphabet, and the accompanying illustration invites the reader or listener to examine

the picture for hidden objects whose names begin with the same letter. Some of these objects are unusual and may be unfamiliar to young readers, so help may be required.

Tanka poems, if you haven't explored the form, are similar to haiku but differ in that they contain more syllables and more lines. As the author explains, his tanka are modern tanka, in which the syllable count doesn't matter as much as the idea and the music of the poem.

Camozzi has a good sense of the world from a child's point of view and creates some lovely, unexpected connections in his brief lines. Read-

E

ers young and old should enjoy the clever intertextual references, but a few of the poems' concepts may be too sophisticated for a pre-literate audience.

There's much to like in this book. It could be read by a new independent reader (although some of the words will be challenging) or read to an eager listener. The author also encourages readers to create their own tanka poetry and to extend their engagement with the illustrations - in fact, some readers may be inclined to colour in the black-and-white art. **Alpha Bones Candy** is a good basic introduction to tanka poetry and poetic appreciation.

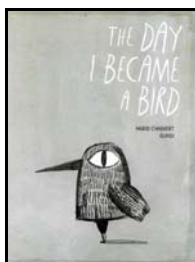
**Thematic Links:** Poetry; Alphabet Books; Young Readers; Pre-Readers

Leslie Vermeer

CHABBERT, Ingrid

**The Day I Became a Bird**

Illustrated by Raul Nieto Guridi. Kids Can Press, 2016. 40p. 978-1-77138-621-0. Hdbk. \$17.95



When a young boy starts school he falls in love with a girl named Sylvia. She does not notice him and only thinks of the birds she loves. Finally the boy decides to get her attention by dressing up as a bird. Carefully he creates a life size costume that covers his body. Even though the other children in school laugh at him, he does not care. He even wears his costume while playing soccer or climbing trees. Then one day Sylvia actually sees him in his slightly bedraggled bird suit. She removes his costume and hugs him.

This gentle tale of love mingled with touches of humour demonstrates how love can sometimes conquer all. The simple and occasionally complex drawings are done with pencil and Photoshop. They ably echo the humour and the longing of our young hero.

**Thematic Links:** Love; Birds; Persistence; Humour

Isobel Lang

CHRISTOPHER, Neil

**Those That Cause Fear**

Illustrated by Germaine Arnaktauyok. Inhabit Media, 2016. 40p Illus. Gr. 3-6. 978-1-77227-085-3. Hdbk. \$16.95

**Those That Cause Fear** is a collaboration between Nunavut author Neil Christopher and Inuit artist and illustrator Germaine Arnaktauyok. The duo's picture book *Way Back Then* (2015) also focussed on the traditional stories

of the Inuit. This book briefly introduces twenty mysterious and scary creatures from Inuit mythology. In the introduction, the author lets us know that the stories have come from elders, hunters, and the journals of explorers. The scare factor is ramped up with the knowledge that though many of the creatures are long extinct, some are perhaps still roaming the land in the North. Some live in ponds and rivers, others inhabit the sea, and some reside on ice and islands. Most are cruel and mischievous, and all of the creatures cause fear.

Each mythological being has a two-page spread with a detailed illustration and short description. I was left wanting to know more about each creature and would have liked some more details. There is a helpful pronunciation guide at the end of this fun book.

**Thematic Links:** Folklore; Mythology; Canada; North; Inuit

Erin Hansen

CLANTON, Ben

**Narwhal: Unicorn of the Sea!**

Tundra Books, 2016. 64p. Gr. 1-3. 978-1-101-91871-5. Pbk. \$10.99

**Narwhal: Unicorn of the Sea!** is a delightful graphic novel for young readers about silly, imaginative Narwhal and his friend Jelly. The book contains three stories. In "Narwhal is Really Awesome," Narwhal and Jelly meet for the first time and try to decide if they are real or imaginary. In "Narwhal's Pod of Awesomeness," Narwhal



E Excellent, enduring, everyone should see it!

G Good, even great at times, generally useful!

A Average, all right, has its applications

P Problematic, puzzling, poorly presented

decides that he needs to start his own pod with all of his ocean friends. Finally, in “*Narwhal and the Best Book Ever*,” Narwhal and Jelly use their imaginations to come up with, well, the best book ever. A page of fun facts and a narwhal song are included between the stories.

The fast-paced format of the book, with its three short stories and the “bonus” content between them, is reminiscent of a children’s animated television show and is sure to capture the attention of readers. The book is well-designed and is a good introduction to comics for younger readers. Narwhal and Jelly are two colourful and extremely cute characters and the three stories are full of the type of silly humour that will have children giggling.

Hopefully this book is only the beginning of a series of stories about these bright and funny characters.

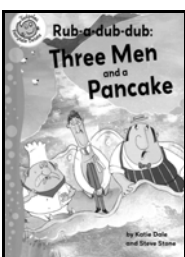
**Thematic Links:** Narwhals; Jellyfish; Sea Creatures; Friendship; Imagination; Graphic Novels; Comics

Alice Albarda

DALE, Katie

**Rub-A-Dub-Dub: Three Men and a Pancake (Tadpoles Fairytale Twists Series)**

Illustrated by Steve Stone. Crabtree Publishing, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-0-7787-2463-6. Hdbk. \$20.76



Dale’s latest book combines nursery rhymes with fairytales. The runaway pancake in this story is uncooked and happy to be free. He can’t roll up hills, but he can roll down hills, and because he’s so sticky he catches everything he rolls over, which in this version

of the story are the three men who are chasing him; the Butcher, the Baker, and the Candlestick Maker. They don’t mind though because this protects them from the hungry giant who likes “MANcakes”. After they escape down the river in their pancake shaped boat, the men scoop him up in a wheelbarrow and thank him by patching him up with small pancakes that the whole town helps cook. The pancake rolls past picturesque scenery which includes mountains, castles, cobblestone streets, and pastures of sheep. References to other fairytales and nursery rhymes include the giant’s words “Fee-fi-fum”, characters that resemble Humpty Dumpty, Hansel and Gretel, and the dog from Hey Diddle Diddle.

I would read this story at preschool story-time, or suggest it to children who are beginning to read on their own because there are only one or two sentences on each double page spread, and the illustrations match the actions

described in the story. Back material contains two puzzle pages that ask the reader to put scenes in order and to match dialogue with characters. This book, which is one of over twenty titles in the series, will delight children familiar with the original stories, and intrigue those children who are hearing them for the first time.

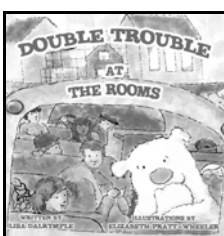
**Thematic Links:** Fractured Fairy Tales; Pancakes; Rescue; Chase; Giant; Nursery Rhyme

Tanya Boudreau

DALRYMPLE, Lisa

**Double Trouble at the Rooms**

Illustrated by Elizabeth Pratt-Wheeler. Tuckamore Books/Creative Publishing, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 1. 978-1-77103-079-3. Pbk. \$12.95



When Nat goes on a class trip to “The Rooms” in St. John’s Newfoundland, she decides to bring her polar bear along. Her mother warns her that they may not let her bear in because he is so large. To her utter delight they let Bear in. Bear immediately makes a friend with a black bear named Peter who is one of the displays. Nat has a wild adventure escorting two energetic large bears throughout the museum. They get into lots of mischief together and have so much fun, Bear decides to stay with Peter in the museum and make it his new home. The rhyming text is rollicking and full of fun and good humour. The illustrations reflect the atmosphere of St. John’s and the playfulness of the story as well as the antics of two very silly bears.

**Thematic Links:** St. John’s, Newfoundland; Polar Bears; Black Bears; Bears; Class Trips; The Rooms; Museums

Isobel Lang

DAVIDSON, Leslie A.

**In The Red Canoe**

Illustrated by Laura Biafano. Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-1-459809734. Hdbk. \$19.95



A young girl goes on a canoe ride with her grandpa and explores the nature around her on a lake near their cabin. The rich illustrations and rhyming quatrains move the story along throughout the ad-

venturous day. The girl and her grandfather chase frogs, watch an osprey catch fish, and paddle past several water ecosystems, among many other events.

This would be a perfect story to read before bedtime or a quiet time with its rhythmic, soothing language. It concludes with the girl falling asleep under the stars on the glassy lake. The illustration and description made me feel as if I was there with them in the canoe. This story clearly depicts Canadian lake life and would be an excellent addition to a school library and for a read-aloud.

**Thematic Links:** Nature; Grandparents; Rhyme; Lake; Animals; Cabin

Erin Hansen

DUBUC, Marianne

**Lucy & Company**

Kids Can Press, 2016. Unp. Illus. Gr. K-1. 978-1-77138-662-3. Hdbk. \$17.95



A collection of three stories about a small girl and her three friends, turtle, hare and mouse. The themes are gentle and represent situations that are age appropriate for young readers; sharing snacks, hunting for treasure and caring for baby birds are all common experiences in life or literature.

The illustrations are particularly appealing, and mirror the mood of the stories with the use of pastel shades and uncluttered, clearly understood images, which leave the reader open to discuss the story. For example the buried treasure is a beautifully wrapped birthday present for Henry but what is in the box, or who the donor might be are not mentioned in the text. Each of the stories contain a “surprise” which could be used as a theme for sharing the book.

**Thematic Links:** Friendship; Surprises

Mavis Holder

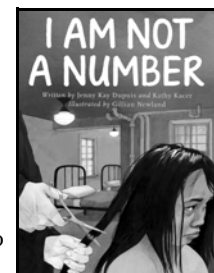
DUPUIS, Jenny Kay

**I Am Not a Number**

Second Story Press, 2016. Unp. Illus. Gr. 2-5. 978-1-927583944. Hdbk. \$18.95

Based on a true story of the author’s grandmother, *I Am Not a Number* is an essential retelling of a year in a young girl’s life in an Ontario residential school.

In 1928, Irene and two of her brothers were



taken from their family, and forced to move to a residential school run by nuns, where they would be shamed into renouncing everything about their Ojibway heritage. As she was leaving, Irene's parents pleaded with her not to forget who she is and where she came from. Although she suffered from neglect and abuse at the hands of the nuns, Irene's spirit persevered and she was able to keep her promise to remember her truth. She was fortunate enough, as few were, to have a family who were willing to fight to keep her out of the school, hiding the children away when it was time to return for their second year. However, the memory of her single year in the school was haunting enough to stay with Irene, and be passed down to her granddaughter, who very eloquently wove it into this remarkable story.

Of special note is the author's ability to portray the devastating environment that Irene lived in, in a heartfelt and authentic way that is very much appropriate for the intended age. Children will no doubt have questions, and may struggle to comprehend the horror of the system, but most will not find the story too disturbing to get through.

As an important, albeit tragic, part of Canadian history, this story will resonate with teachers and students in a school setting as well. Few stories exist about the residential school system that are aimed at a younger age group, and this one is an absolute must for classrooms and libraries. An afterword about the system as well as one about Irene are included and, along with the story itself, will provide children and classrooms with a lot to think about.

Highly recommended.

**Thematic Links:** Residential Schools; First Nations People; Ojibway; Abuse; Family; Canadian History

Nicole Rowlinson

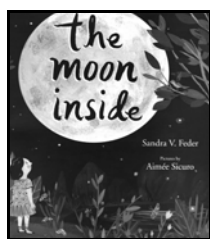
FEDER, Sandra V.

**The Moon Inside**

Illustrated by Aimée Sicuro.

Groundwood Books, 2016. 32p. Illus.

Gr. Preschool - K. 978-1-55498-823-5. Hdbk. \$17.95



As the sun sets every night, Ella starts to worry because she is afraid of the dark. She much prefers the daytime because yellow is her favourite colour and she loves the sun. One evening, as Ella starts to become afraid, her mother leads her outside. Together, they observe the moon, search for fireflies, and listen to the quiet sounds of night time. Ella discovers that she

has nothing to be afraid of - and in fact - comes to love the moon as much as the sun.

Feder's gentle story uses nature as a lovely tool to sooth children's fears of darkness. Like Ella, children who read this book will understand that night time is beautiful and entirely non-threatening. Feder describes the natural world in poignantly simple terms, highlighting all five senses as Ella listens and watches the evening world unfold around her. Sicuro's illustrations vividly bring this world to life. Rendered in mixed media, gouache and ink, Sicuro depicts the night with warmth and in great detail. Different shades of yellow appear on every page, lending visual cohesion to the story. Also, the stars, the moon, plants and many different animals surround Ella throughout the book, showcasing to young readers the array of interesting things they can observe outside at night time. In this way, the illustrations help demystify darkness.

This gentle book is as a wonderful tool to help children overcome their fear of darkness, and is highly recommended as a visually appealing read aloud title for librarians and teachers to add to their collections.

**Thematic Links:** Daytime; Night Time; Bedtime; Sun; Moon; Emotions; Feelings; Dreams

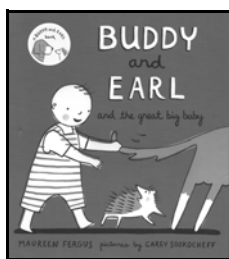
Chloe Humphreys

FERGUS, Maureen

**Buddy and Earl and the Great Big Baby (Buddy and Earl Series # 3)**

Illustrated by Carey Sookocheff.

Groundwood Books, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 1. 978-1-55498-716-0. Hdbk. \$16.95



Earl is a hedgehog who doesn't know much about babies but he thinks he will like them because hedgehogs and babies have two things in common; they both like to eat things off the floor, and they both smell interesting. But when Earl sees the visiting baby tear Meredith's favourite doll, and take Buddy's chew toy, he thinks babies are big, horrible things that should live in cages. Earl changes his mind though when the baby blows him a kiss and gives him "a great, gummy smile" between the bars of the playpen.

This third picture book in the *Buddy and Earl Series* highlights Earl's imagination (he sees lava in the red clothes and snakes under the bed) and his loyalty to his best friend Buddy (a dog) and the family they live with. They keep the baby safe when he escapes from his playpen, and they behave as friends do when they realize something about one another. The acrylic gouache and Photoshop illustrations show the

baby acting like a baby but Earl's dialogue adds humour to the pale coloured pages. When Meredith's two pets see the baby putting her dad's shoe in the toilet, Earl says, "Now, go find something else for the baby to wash. We need to keep him busy until help arrives." Splashes of red connect the scenes together as the characters wander throughout the house.

This book may help alleviate concerns children may have about encountering a baby for the first time because Earl makes comparisons and draws conclusions that would make sense to young children, or make older children laugh.

**Thematic Links:** Dog; Hedgehog; Baby; Comparisons; Friends; Pets

Tanya Boudreau

FIELDING, L.A.

**The X-Tails Series: Ski at Spider Ride (2014. 978-0-993713590); Surf at Shark Bay (2015, 978-1-928199038); BMX at Thunder Track (2015, 978-1-928199007)**

Illustrated by Victor Guiza. X-Tails Enterprises. 40p. Illus. Gr. K-1. Pbk. \$15.00 ea.

The X-Tails are a group of friendly animals who play sports. They promote play and sportsmanship in their six high-energy stories. Each book in this self-published series begins with the same four page introduction to the animals, and ends with a four page Trick-tory that explains the sport stunts performed in that story. Their names hint at their personalities (Wisdom the lion is good at solving problems and fixing things), and they travel from adventure to adventure in their black, sporty X-Van. When they are excited, they let out their natural animal sounds and made-up words that begin with "zoober" (zoobertubular, zoober-rocking, zoober-radical).

In *BMX at Thunder Track*, Charm the kangaroo is injured right before the big Thunder Track BMX race. Although she loses her confidence because of lost practice time, her friends encourage her to do her best and they help her compete for a chance to win the golden bike prize. She does not win the bike, but she finishes the race and wins something far greater than a prize.

In *Surf at Shark Bay*, the friends have to swim with sharks. Known as the Razors, the shark bullies knock Dazzle the bear and Wisdom the lion off their surfboards. When the friends ignore the name



calling, all the bullies, except one, leave them alone. And that shark, named Skulk, needs their help when he becomes stuck in the sand. When the animals talk amongst themselves about if he could be their new friend, they scream in unison, "Fur Sure!"



When the six friends travel into the mountains in the book *Ski at Spider Ridge*, they decide to ski down Tarantula, "the hairiest ski run in the world". While on the slopes, they learn to sit-ski and they meet a talented skier who's in a wheelchair.

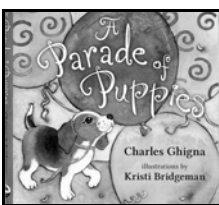
The bright illustrations, which look digital, highlight some of the fun that girls and boys can have outside on skis, on a surfboard, or on a BMX bike. They are safety conscious, but they do perform tricks that many readers may dream about emulating. The stories contain word art and sound effects that appear in different colours and font sizes. Children will enjoy seeing the same characters in each story, but I found the stories too predictable and didactic because the messages about inclusion, self-confidence, and teamwork are very overt. When a shark's teeth grow back one of the X-tails says, "That must be what happens when you're kind, not snarky!" These books may appeal to children who love sport themed picture books because the covers are quite eye-catching in design.

**Thematic Links:** Skiing; Surfing; BMX Racing; Animals; Friends; Adventure

Tanya Boudreau

GHIGNA, Charles  
*A Parade of Puppies*

Illustrated by Kristi Bridgeman. Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 26p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 1. 978-1-4598-0963-5. Bdbk. \$9.95



A small boy goes to an Animal Rescue Shelter to get a new dog. He views several different breeds. The reader gets to guess what breed of dog he is looking at with a partial view of each dog only to have the whole dog revealed on the next page. In the end he adopts a mixed breed dog

The simple rhyming text is perfect for the story. Who can resist a parade of different equally adorable puppies. The illustrations are skilfully done in sepia ink, watercolour and wax resist on paper. The colours are rich and the pictures rendered with great flare and humour. The book has excellent design. The pic-

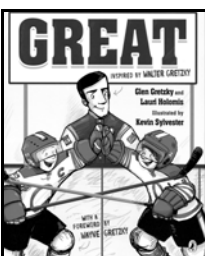
ture of a pug in a red and black shirt, red and black balloons and surrounded by flying red and black lady bugs is a keeper! Babies, Toddlers and all dog lovers will enjoy both story and illustrations.

**Thematic Links:** Dogs; Animal Rescue; Puppies

Isobel Lang

GRETZKY, Glen Gretzky and Lauri Holomis  
*Great*

Illustrated by Kevin Sylvester. Puffin Books, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-0-670069903. Hdbk. \$21.99



Coach Wally has chosen Taylor to be on "the best team in the world". He's excited and full of confidence but he plays badly in practice because he's nervous to be playing with a young Wayne Gretzky. He's already been nicknamed the Great One. Although his coach and his dad encourage him to practice he does it in anger. His focus and confidence are off especially during the games. He misses passes and stops skating. When his focus shifts from being the star to being a part of the team, his playing and attitude improve. The coach compliments him and his team-mates congratulate him for stealing a puck that helped the team win the game. The boys and girls on the hockey team have the letter O on the front of their red and white jerseys. Wayne is easy to spot because his hair is long and blonde and he wears the number 99.

Most of the story takes place on the ice in an indoor arena, but the first couple of illustrations include scenes from a hockey family. There are the early morning practices, drives to and from the rink, and a hockey themed bedroom. The foreword by Wayne Gretzky includes his signature and a summary of why we should encourage children to be Great. This is a hockey book but the message about what it takes to be 'Great' can be extended to other activities in a child's life.

**Thematic Links:** Children's Hockey; Wayne Gretzky; Practice; Sportsmanship; Teamwork; Confidence Building; Coaching

Tanya Boudreau

HERAS, Theo  
*Hat On, Hat Off*

Illustrated by Renné Benoit. Pajama Press, 2016. 24p. Illus. Gr. Preschool. 978-1-92748-534-7. Hdbk. \$15.95

In *Hat On, Hat Off*, a little toddler plays the universally loved game of taking pieces of clothing on and off while getting ready to go outside with his big sister. With a large basket of different



hats to choose from, the toddler happily switches hats between putting his shoes on, buttoning up his jacket, picking up a pail and shovel, and going potty. Once the siblings are ready, the two finally go outside to play in the autumn sunshine.

Theo Heras writes in simple, short sentences that are geared perfectly towards a toddler audience (*Hats in basket / Red hat, green hat, striped hat / Which hat?*). In addition to the clear writing style, the storyline is wonderfully relatable for most toddlers who have experienced getting dressed and undressed daily with the help of a family member. Renné Benoit's soft, pastel illustrations draw readers further into the story, as cozy scenes of knitted clothing and toys exude warmth and comfort, visually soothing young readers. The illustrations also feature a number of important household objects like a potty and a stroller which will be recognizable to toddlers.

*Hat On, Hat Off* is a wonderful read-a-loud title for young children that should be incorporated into library and classroom collections without hesitation.

**Thematic Links:** Hats; Clothes; Getting Dressed; Getting Undressed; Colours

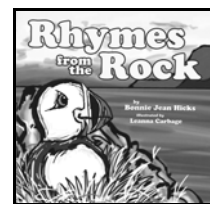
Chloe Humphreys

HICKS, Bonnie Jean  
*Rhymes From the Rock*

Illustrated by Leanna Carbage. James Lane Publishing, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 1. 978-1-895109-85-6. Pbk. \$9.95

*Georgie Porgie, peas pudding, pie  
greens with Jiggs dinner, oh my!  
Carrots, turnip, spuds and salt meat,  
lots of gravy, what a treat!*

In this book of rhymes Bonnie Jean Hicks has given a Newfoundland and Labrador flavour to some of the traditional Mother Goose rhymes. She presents twelve poems which young children will enjoy as they compare these new rhymes with the originals. While the rhyme is a little stilted at times, Hicks has done a good job of portraying the Newfoundland landscape and culture. This is further enhanced by the bold, colourful full-page illustrations of Leanna Carbage which accompany the text.



Young children will enjoy this new approach to the traditional rhymes they already know and hopefully will also learn some new things about the traditional Newfoundland and Labrador way of life. While the appeal may be somewhat localized I would recommend it to all Canadians so that they can experience some of our east coast culture.

**Thematic Links:** Nursery Rhymes - Newfoundland and Labrador

Victoria Pennell

HODGE, Deborah

**Bear's Winter Party**

Illustrated by Lisa Cinar. Groundwood Books, 2016. 40p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 1. 978-1-55498-853-2. Hdbk. \$18.95

G



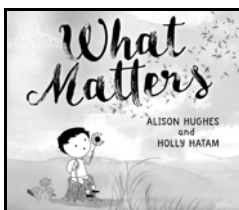
Bear has given himself a deadline. Make friends before hibernation season or endure another unbearable year of loneliness. Bear never gets to talk with the other forest animals because they run away in fear when they see his sharp teeth and long claws, so he strategically places party invitations where they are sure to see them, (but not him) and proceeds to make his home welcoming with a warm fire, homemade food and colourful decorations of holly and berries. The bravest animal in this story is also the smallest. Chickadee is the first to go to the party, then Squirrel, Hare, Fox and Beaver follow. Small talk segues into dancing and singing and gift-giving. The animals say good night to bear and promise to visit in the spring.

The watercolour, coloured pencil, and Photo-shop illustrations appear against a backdrop of trees and snow covered mountains. Bear's loneliness is obvious because he doesn't smile and mixed in with his brown fur is the colour blue. When he finally falls asleep at the end of the book he's smiling and the stars are shining in the sky and on his blanket.

Hodge's latest picture book, which equates bravery with happiness, ends with an illustrated Honey-Ginger cookie recipe.

**Thematic Links:** Bear; Forest; Loneliness; Friends; Neighbours; Party; Cookies

Tanya Boudreau



HUGHES, Alison  
**What Matters**  
Orca Book Publishers, 2016. Unp. Illus. Gr. K-3. 978-1-459809109. Hdbk. \$19.95

G

In a modest, gentle format, Alison Hughes and Holly Hatam have created an impactful look at the ripple effects of one small, thoughtful action. When a young boy, almost without thought, picks up a soda can lying on the ground and happily deposits it in a recycle bin, he unknowingly sets in motion a string of natural consequences that make a large impact on the environment around him.

Because of his good deed, the boy has made a difference in the world, from seemingly small effects such as improving the quality of life of the little ants running around, to helping a cute pup whose inquisitive nature may have gotten him in trouble, to aiding a free-running stream to flow to a river, and eventually an ocean.

The prose flows very nicely, and the progression of the far-reaching positive consequences of the boy's actions will be easy for even the youngest of children to follow. Illustrations are mixed media, presented in calming blues and greens, and incorporating an eclectic mix of watercolours, ink, and photographic elements.

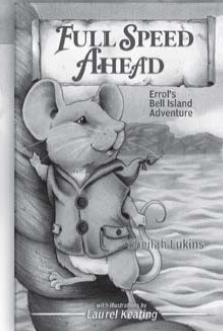
*"Picking up that crumpled can was only a little thing. A small, small thing. But it mattered. More than the boy ever knew."*

**Thematic Links:** Environment; Recycling; Nature; Natural Consequences; Conservation;

# Fall Reading from Creative Book Publishing



**Jack and the Magnificent Ugly Stick**  
Joshua Goudie  
Children's | \$16.95



**Full Speed Ahead:  
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Littering; Making a Difference

Nicole Rowlinson

HUGHES, Susan

**Maggie McGillicuddy's Eye for Trouble**

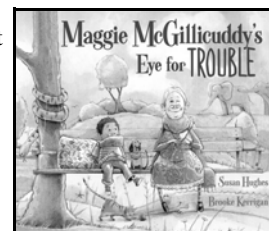
Illustrated by Brooke Kerrigan. Kids Can Press, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-1-77138-291-5. Hdbk. \$18.95.

Maggie McGillicuddy has a talent for seeing trouble on her street. She easily banishes the trouble with a "Tickety, tickety, tack!" of her knitting needles or a "Whickety, whickety, whack!" of her walking stick.

She is able to see a hungry tiger or a huge snake or a soaring mailman chasing an eagle. However, nothing is too difficult for Maggie to banish.

Then a new neighbour child, named Charlie gets into real trouble. He runs towards the street into the path of a car. Maggie shouts out a warning and Charlie stops in time.

From that day on, Charlie visits Maggie



E

every day and both share their ability to see trouble, whether it is from a herd of elephants or a hungry crocodile. The rollicking tale describes how much fun the imagination can be. It is a warm story of intergenerational friendship. The wonderful detailed and delightful illustrations are in watercolour, pencil crayon, gouache and collage. They reveal more details of the story if you look closely. The author and illustrator are both award winning in their respective fields. Great fun for everyone.

**Thematic Links:** Imagination; Friendship; Intergenerational Friendship; Neighbours

Isobel Lang

LANTHIER, Jennifer

***Hurry Up, Henry***

Illustrated by Isabelle Malenfant.

Penguin Random House, 2016. 32p.

Illus. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-0-670-06837-1.

Hdbk. \$21.99



People are constantly telling Henry to hurry up. His family is always saying, "we're going to be late," or "we don't have time for this, Henry." All Henry wants is to snatch a few moments throughout his hectic day to observe the

world around him, and to let his imagination wander. To Henry's delight, his wish is granted in honour of his birthday, and Henry's entire family spends a blissful morning exploring the small joys of stopping to smell the flowers, playing with a dog or two, and creating art with side-walk-chalk. This new experience brings them closer together.

Using simple, poetic language, Lanthier captures Henry's gentle soul in a way that will speak to quiet and contemplative children everywhere. Henry sees the beauty in everything, and his keen eye for detail is celebrated. As a result, Lanthier succeeds in championing acceptance for everyone's unique approach to life, be it fast or slow. Isabelle Malenfant's pastel illustrations lend a soft and dreamy atmosphere to the text; visually emphasizing

what can be gained from living in the moment and appreciating the world around us. A small patch of flowers transforms into a colourful jungle of purple, pink and green when seen through Henry's eyes. In addition to enjoying the beautiful colours, children will adore searching for a comical caterpillar on certain pages. Finally, Malenfant's illustrations depict a diverse ethnic array of characters, ensuring that children from many backgrounds will connect to ***Hurry Up, Henry***.

This beautiful book is a welcome addition to any library or classroom collection. It stands as a wonderful story that validates the experiences of all quiet, introverted children.

**Thematic Links:** Moving Fast; Moving Slow; Family; Imagination; Nature; Appreciation

Chloe Humphreys

LARSEN, Andrew

***A Squiggly Story***

Illustrated by Mike Lowery. Kids Can

Press, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. 1-2. 978-1-

77138-016-4. Hdbk. \$18.95



When a young boy sees his sister reading and writing, he wishes that he could do the same. Like any good creative writing coach, she encourages his interest and leads him through the steps to writing his own story.

The children in the book are unnamed but obviously not white, attend a multi racial school with a Mrs Singh as the kindergarten teacher, and grow up in a home surrounded by books. Perhaps this book will encourage immigrant children to write their own stories.

My only small criticism is that much of the text is written in a spidery upper case, a habit many Grade One teachers have to spend time breaking.

**Thematic Links:** Creative Writing

Mavis Holder

LARSEN, Andrew

***The Not-so-Faraway Adventure***

Illustrated by Irene Luxbacher. Kids

Can Press, 2016. Unp. Illus. Gr. K-3.

978-1-771380973. Hdbk. \$18.95

Andrew Larsen and Irene Luxbacher have collaborated before on an earlier adventure of Theo and her Poppa called ***The Imaginary Garden***.

In this new trip the pair take a journey to the lake to celebrate Poppa's birthday where they explore the beach together, and have lunch out. The memories of the day are recorded with photographs, a map that Theo draws and a special stone from the beach. All of these are carefully stored in Poppa's trunk and Theo's memory, before the family party.

The full page coloured illustrations are delightful and extend the text. The language and pace of the text is matched so well with the pictures, I think this will be a much loved book.

Also available in French. See p. 49.

**Thematic Links:** Grandparents; Birthday Celebrations

Mavis Holder

MACAM, Acree Graham

***The King of the Birds***

Illustrated by Natalie Nelson.

Groundwood Books, 2016. 40p. Illus.

Gr. K-2. 978-1-55498-851-8. Hdbk. \$17.95

This story, inspired by the life and writing of Flannery O'Connor, begins on a note of pure intrigue, as readers discover: "It all started with a chicken who could walk backwards." The book goes on to introduce Flannery, a young girl with a particularly strong interest in birds, and who hates when life gets "a little



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too quiet.” To remedy this problem, Flannery buys one of every type of bird she can find, including a magnificent peacock she dubs the king of the birds. However, to Flannery’s dismay, the peacock refuses to fan his beautiful tail. She puzzles and puzzles over how to motivate him; until she brainstorms the perfect solution. The peacock king needs a peahen queen!

With a great deal of spunk, Macam celebrates the life of a great American writer and essayist, introducing Flannery O’Connor to a new generation of young readers. Macam’s writing style is simple and uncluttered. Also, she peppers the text with wry humour that highlights Flannery’s positive and no-nonsense approach that will win the hearts of both children and adult readers. Nelson’s colourful illustrations are rendered using hand-painted paper, drawings and found photography, compiled into vibrant collage. This unique mix-media approach is visually engaging, contrasting bright colours with black and white photographs. As a result, the illustrations lend the book a fun comic book feel. Children will enjoy combing through the illustrations and looking at Flannery’s menagerie of birds that include yellow ducks, blue quails, and large pink and green chickens. The peacock himself is striking, as he struts across each page with plenty of attitude.

This unique title is highly recommended for all library and classroom collections as a wonderful introduction to the work and life of Flannery O’Connor. It also stands as a fun, engaging and interesting read.

**Thematic Links:** Flannery O’Connor; Birds; Peacocks; Pets; Collecting

Chloe Humphreys

MCLAUGHLIN, Lauren  
**Mitzi Tulane, Preschool Detective in What’s That Smell?**

Illustrated by Debbie Ridpath Ohi.  
Random House, 2016. 24p. Gr. Preschool-K. 978-0-449-81915-9. Hdbk. \$21.99



around her house that tell her that there is something strange going on. First of all, Mommy is up to something unusual in the kitchen. Next, Daddy is getting oddly dressed up for a Sunday. What could be going on? When all of her aunts, uncles, and cousins arrive at her house and start singing “Happy Birthday,” Mitzi starts to piece together the

This is the first book about Mitzi Tulane, Preschool Detective, a three-year-old girl who solves mysteries. In *What’s That Smell?*, Mitzi

finds lots of clues

clues and solves the mystery.

**What’s That Smell?** is a funny take on a mystery because the clues are very obvious to the reader. Very young readers may enjoy figuring out the mystery before Mitzi, or helping Mitzi solve the case.

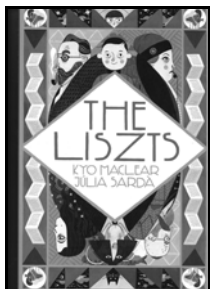
**Thematic Links:** Mysteries; Family; Birthdays

Alice Albarda

MACLEAR, Kyo

**The Liszts**

Illustrated by Julia Sarda. Tundra Books, 2016. 40p. Gr. 1-adult. 978-1-77049-496-1. Hdbk. \$21.99



The Liszt family is very unusual. Like their name they spend all their time making lists. Among their favourite lists are Mama’s lists of ghastly illnesses, Papa’s lists of dreaded chores, Frederick’s lists of fun things to do and so on. We never learn what the

cat’s favourite lists are just that he is busying doing them along with his family. Then one day something new and different happens. A visitor arrives and some things change.

A very unusual look at a family of eccentrics and how the middle child opens his mind to the world of imagination and the possibilities of the unexpected rather than the expected. The illustrations are rendered digitally. They are utterly fascinating and clever, evoking the style of the 1920’s. The lists are humorous, whimsical and ridiculous. The illustrations perfectly reflect the text. Children will enjoy the strange lists and adults will enjoy the pictorial jokes sprinkled throughout every page.

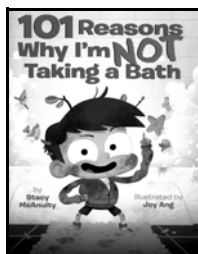
**Thematic Links:** Imagination; Middle Child; Family

Isobel Lang

MCNULTY, Stacy

**101 Reasons Why I’m Not Taking a Bath**

Illustrated by Joy Ang. Random House, 2016. 40p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-0-385-39189-4. Hdbk. \$23.99



With humour and a bit of mischief, readers are introduced to a little boy with a vendetta against baths. Throughout the book, he shares a hundred and one emphatic reasons why taking a bath is not for him. These include: “I’m

allergic to water,” “Aliens might attack while I’m in the bath,” and “I can’t take a bath on an empty stomach. I need a cupcake.” Finally, when excuses and griping are exhausted, the little boy ends up having a change of heart once in the bath tub. With toys and bubbles, maybe baths aren’t so bad after all!

What child hasn’t made an excuse or two to avoid taking a bath? Stacy McNulty understands the universality of her protagonist’s predicament, and plays up the humour to great effect. The little boy energetically makes his case by offering excuses that are smart and often delightfully unexpected. Young readers will be kept on their toes. To match the boy’s passion and vigour, Joy Ang’s illustrations are teaming with colour and movement, as he runs around the colourful neighbourhood trying to win the battle against bath time. The boy’s facial expressions are also priceless, rendering his predicament even more dramatic and laugh-worthy.

This book is fun read-a-loud title that will surely make children giggle. It is a recommended addition to both library and classroom collections.

**Thematic Links:** Humour; Baths; Dirt; Excuses; Procrastinating

Chloe Humphreys

MESSIER, Mireille

**The Branch**

Illustrated by Pierre Pratt. Kids Can Press, 2016. 32p. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-1-77138-564-0. Hdbk. \$18.95

A terrible ice storm covers the city in sheets of ice. One little girl is both intrigued and frightened by the storm until she learns that her favourite branch from her tree has broken and fallen to the ground. This was the very branch she



would sit on and pretend was her castle or her spy base etc. She decides that she has to keep her branch and guards it. All around her, the neighbours are carrying broken branches to the curb. Then her next door neighbour Mr. Frank tells her, “*That branch is full of potential*”. From that moment on, she is comforted. Together, she and Mr. Frank go on to make her branch into something new.

The text makes the aftermath of ice storms in the city very real, reflecting the beauty and destruction produced by such storms. The vibrantly coloured illustrations complement the story and the warm friendship that grows between the grandfatherly Mr. Frank and the girl.

A positive approach to helping children

cope with loss and change.

**Thematic Links:** Ice Storm; Friendship; Trees; Cities; Intergenerational Friendship

Isobel Lang

MIKE, Nadia

**Leah's Mustache Party**

Illustrated by Charlene Chua. Inhabit Media, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool-K. 978-1-77227-081-5. Hdbk. \$16.95



Ever since dressing up as a pirate for Halloween, Leah has loved nothing more than mustaches. Whenever she feels like it, Leah asks her mother to draw a big

colourful mustache on her face. When it is time for Leah's birthday, of course she chooses to have a mustache-themed birthday party instead of a princess-themed one like her friends usually have! This story is inspired by Nadia Mike's own daughter Leah, who is shown wearing her own teal mustache in the back of the book.

**Leah's Mustache Party** is a light-hearted and endearing story about a kid expressing her individuality. Charlene Chua's illustrations match the cheerfulness and uniqueness of the story perfectly, right down to all the silly and colourful mustaches that Leah wears. An added bonus to this book is the suggestion of a northern Canadian setting. Mike is from Nunavut, and northern readers will appreciate the snowy backdrops and bundled-up Halloween costumes!

Overall this book is a lovely story about individuality which many children will giggle at and many parents will appreciate. This is a book that will appeal to readers while delivering a positive message.

**Thematic Links:** Birthdays; Mustaches; Parties; Individuality

Alice Albarda

NORMAN, Kim

**Still a Gorilla**

Illustrated by Chad Geran. Orchard Books/Scholastic Canada, 2016. 32p. Gr. Preschool - 1. 978-0-545757911. Hdbk. \$21.99



After reading a red book entitled *Zoo* while hanging upside down, a young gorilla decides he wants to be another animal. He goes into several zoo enclosures to mimic

five other wild animals. When he sees the walrus in the water, he dives in the pool with two banana tusks sticking out of his mouth. He tries to be a billy goat and a lion but no matter his disguise (a leafy mane) or his behaviour (butting heads) he is "*Still a gorilla*", except now he has a sore head. After failing to be a kangaroo and an alligator, Willy discovers he likes being a monkey because he can be silly.

A double page spread shows Willy re-enacting scenes from the previous pages. The rhymes and alliteration in sentences such as "*Willy thumps and jumps over plum-tree stumps*," and "*Willy creeps and chomps in slimy swamps*" will make this a fun read aloud.

The large, uncluttered illustrations in this story will appeal to toddlers and preschoolers because they include humorous falls and spills, and characters with just as much energy as them.

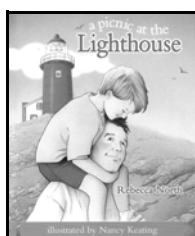
**Thematic Links:** Gorillas; Identity; Zoo Animals; Disguises

Tanya Boudreau

NORTH, Rebecca

**A Picnic at the Lighthouse**

Illustrated by Nancy Keating. Tuckamore Books/Creative Book Publishing, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-1-77103-082-3. Pbk. \$12.95



This book about the depth of a parent's love describes the special moments shared between a small boy and his father on an outing to a local lighthouse. I really wanted to love this book, but the heart-warming story suffers

from poor graphic design decisions. I was put off by the 1950's reading primer-inspired illustrations and awkwardly placed text (way at the bottom of the pages and stretched across the whole page rather than in an easy-to read block). Given the large size of the pages (8x10 portrait style), the font could have been bigger to better catch the eye. I found that the text was too wordy in places, and at times, redundant.

On the whole, it does convey a very positive message about the importance of spending quality time with children and the deep love that parents have for their kids. It might be a good story to use when trying to discuss the difficult topic of divorce and children not getting to spend as much time as they would like with a significant adult - the importance of making the most of the time we do have together with loved ones.

**Thematic Links:** Parent/Child Relationships; Lighthouse

Erin Hansen

O'LEARY, Sara

**A Family is a Family is a Family**

Illustrated by Qin Leng. Groundwood Books, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. Pre-school - 2. 978-55498-794-8. Hdbk. \$18.95

E



It's easy to define family after reading O'Leary's (*You are One*) latest picture book. When an elementary school teacher asks her thirteen students what makes their family special, she gets thirteen different answers revolving around love and acceptance. The child from a divorced family says, "*One week Moms gets me. The next week Dad does. Fair's fair*". The child with two fathers says, "*One of my dads is tall and one is short. They both give good hugs*", and an only child recalls how her parents met, "*My mom and dad have been best friends since first grade. They really like each other. It's kind of gross*".

The ink and digital painting illustrations show the families doing fun indoor and outdoor activities together. There is a family who utilizes a clothesline for a soccer net, and another who eats out in fancy dining establishments. A large blended family enjoy a picnic in the park and a family of four enjoys riding their bikes in the countryside. The shy student who wasn't able to answer the question at the beginning of the book is able to share her answer with the class after she hears about everyone else's family. Her answer, and the double page spread of all the students' family artwork will help young readers realize all families are unique, especially those with concerns about their own family.

The drawings that children could produce after this story is read could be used in discussions about self, family and love.

**Thematic Links:** Families; Sharing; Differences; Love; Acceptance

Tanya Boudreau

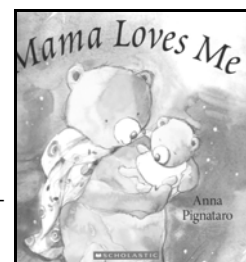
PIGNATARO, Anna

**Mama Loves Me**

Scholastic Canada, 2016. 96p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - K. 978-1-4431-4833-7. Hdbk. \$12.99

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Pignataro's previously published stories, *Always* (2006), *Together* (2009), and *Forever* (2012), have been re-released under new titles in this one picture book entitled, *Mama Loves Me*. In the first story,



*Mama, How Long Will You Love Me?* a mother bear compares her love for her son Sammy to giant trees, magical nights, and deep seas. Reliable as day and night, her love will always be there making her son happy. As they walk through the forest, they gather flowers and berries and daydream about activities they can enjoy together such as fishing and watching falling stars. In *Mama, Will You Hold My Hand?*, Sammy and his mom walk through the same forest, but they are seen holding hands throughout the story. Neither lets go of the other, even when they are in a hot air balloon or flying a kite. Sometimes she is holding him for comfort; other times for support. The last story, *Mama Will I Be Yours Forever?*, shows the same two bears enjoying the changes they see happening around them. Butterflies emerge, the sun comes up, and flowers blossom. Sammy ventures out on a boat by himself and leaves his mother when he chases after a butterfly. But no matter how much he changes, he finds comfort knowing he will be his mom's "little bear forever".

The illustrations in all three stories are heart-warming. The bears look cuddly and at times, their clothes match. Time passes with the changing of the seasons, and because the stories are set entirely outside, the scenes include raindrops and puddles, falling leaves, insects and birds and big, fluffy snowflakes.

This book benefits readers and listeners. Reading this book to a child will help the child feel loved, especially during times when there is separation or change happening in their life, and reading this book aloud to a child helps shy parents express their love to their child too.

**Thematic Links:** Bears; Mothers and Sons; Love; Reassurance; Comforting Words

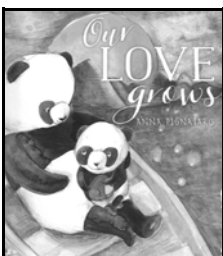
Tanya Boudreau

PIGNATARO, Anna

***Our Love Grows***

Scholastic Canada., 2016. 24p. Illus.

Gr. Preschool - K. 978-1-4431-4811-5. Hdbk. \$14.99



Pip asks his panda mother "Mama, when will I be big?" She explains in very simple and clear terms that he has been growing all along just as a tree begins small and grows into a large tree. She continues to illustrate

how he is growing by using imagery that is transparent such as how his paw print was once tiny in the snow and every step was far to go. She describes how his toy owl was once new and his small blankly once covered him

all over.

She ends her tale by saying that just as he has grown so has her love for him. The story's message answers a common question that preschoolers have who are anxious to grow bigger as soon as possible and at the same time presents the second reassuring revelation that a mother's love only grows stronger as time goes by.

The gentle rhyming tale is set in lovely pastoral scenes of pine and bamboo forests with snow and on a lake complete with a boat & lantern surrounded by majestic mountains. It is a perfect bedtime story of love and reassurance.

The illustrations are charming and evocative of the beauty of nature. The pandas charm the reader and listener just as their real life counterparts do.

**Thematic Links:** Pandas; Mothers; Growing Up

Isobel Lang

REYNOLDS, Peter H.

***Playing From the Heart***

Candlewick Press, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr.

Preschool - 2. 978-0-7636-7892-0.

Hdbk. \$20.00



When Raj is very young he discovers the family piano. He loves plunking on the keys. As he grows older and his legs are able to reach the pedals, he begins to make beautiful

music without any lessons. His very proud father hires a piano teacher. Raj learns to play better and better but with practice comes a loss of joy. He becomes tired and stops playing. Long after, when Raj has grown up and moved away, he learns that his father is ill. He goes home and asks his father what he can do for him. His father tells him the only thing he wants is for him to play the song he used to play before he took lessons. Raj begins to play that long ago song and the joy returns to his playing and he plays from the heart.

This tale is about how creativity should be joyous not perfect. It is so easy for creativity to be stifled. The moving illustrations are done in ink, pen, watercolour, gouache and tea. They are charming and evoke the innocence of childhood. Anyone who has taken piano lessons can relate to this fable.

**Thematic Links:** Music; Piano; Fathers; Sons; Creativity

Isobel Lang

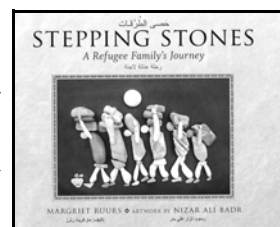
RUURS, Margaret

***Stepping Stones: A Refugee***

***Family's Journey***

Illustrated by Nizar Ali Badr. Orca Book Publishers, 2016. Unp. Illus. Gr. K-6. 979-1-4598-1490-5. Hdbk. \$20.00

What a wonderful book! Margaret Ruurs has brought us a wonderful view of the refugee crisis which is currently happening in the Middle East. In



free verse style, a child tells of the experience of having lived a free life and then having to flee her homeland due to the war which was happening and causing so much despair. The story is very simply told in both English and Arabic, yet it has a lasting impact as it follows the family on their journey out of what is familiar and into a strange land. Accompanying the story line are the wonderful illustrations all created in stone by Syrian artist Nizar Ali Badr. Actually it was when Ruurs first saw his artistic creations on Facebook that she knew she had to contact this man and have him illustrate a book she wanted to write about current day refugees. The illustrations are amazing, created totally from stones which Nizar Ali Badr collects on the beach. They poignantly display the plight of this family as they leave all they have known behind to seek a new life.

Ruurs includes an extensive introduction in the book which conveys how the book came about and the inspiration she found in Nizar Ali Badr's illustrations.

This book would be a wonderful way to introduce young children to the refugee crisis that is happening in other parts of the world. Especially now when we have some of these refugee children in our own classrooms throughout the country, the book might inspire some of these children to share their experiences.

I would highly recommend this book for every primary and elementary school in the country.

Partial proceeds from the sale of this book will be donated to resettlement agencies by the publisher and the author will be donating her royalties to help settle more refugees.

**Thematic Links:** Refugees; Middle East

Victoria Pennell



SHARFE, Elaine  
***My Good Friend, Grandpa***

Illustrated by Karen Sim. Your Nickel's Worth Publishing,

2016. 24p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 3. 978-1-927756-71-3. Pbk. \$9.95

This touching book begins by introducing young Noah and Grandpa Ed who have “been good friends” from the day Noah was born. Together, they goof around at Grandpa Ed’s car dealership, garden side-by-side at the cottage, build sand castles at the beach, and eat junk food at football games. Grandpa Ed even takes a day off work to accompany Noah to his first day of kindergarten. The two are inseparable. Until, to Noah’s dismay, Grandpa Ed gets sick. Undaunted, Noah continues to visit his grandpa, supporting him throughout his illness by offering love and companionship.

Author Elaine Sharfe effortlessly captures the close bond between a grandfather and his grandson, while Karen Sim’s colourful illustrations vibrantly depict both happy and sad moments shared throughout their relationship. Readers quickly understand that, for Noah and Grandpa Ed, being a “good friend” involves a great deal of love and an unspoken promise to be there for one another no matter the circumstances. In this gentle way, the book champions strong intergenerational relationships as integral guiding forces throughout the process of growing up. For young readers without grandparents, the book’s themes can easily resonate in the context of other important familial relationships.

*My Good Friend, Grandpa* is a welcome addition to any library or classroom collection.

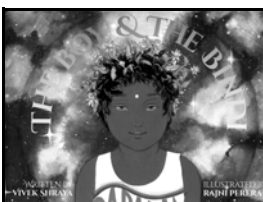
**Thematic Links:** Grandfathers; Grandsons; Friendship; Family; Sickness; Love; Support

Chloe Humphreys

SHRAYA, Vivek

*The Boy & the Bindi*

Arsenal Pulp Press, 2016. Unp. Illus. Gr. K - 3. 978-1-551526683. Hdbk. \$17.95



In this beautiful and inspiring treasure, a young boy finds himself fascinated and mesmerized by his mother’s bindi, the dot often worn above the nose of South Asian women. He is so enamoured of its beauty, and the way his Ammi wears it in all different hues, that he decides he very much wants one of his own. He learns that the bindi instills in its wearer a sense of one’s self, one’s culture, and one’s truth. His mother welcomes his desire to express himself and his culture in the same way she has chosen to do, and allows him to wear a bindi of his own.

The boy wears his new, bright yellow bindi to school and, despite being questioned by his peers, allows it to fill him with an intense peace and sense of freedom. With conviction, he decides he is going to wear the bindi regularly, as to him it represents bringing beauty into his world by allowing him to express everything he feels he is.

This is a remarkable tale not only of having the strength of spirit to be yourself, but also of the importance of being supported in that expression by the core people around you. Not once is this boy chastised or even questioned over the appropriateness of his desire, in spite of it being very contrary to his culture’s norms. His Ammi is not only accepting, but encouraging. His choice is not simply tolerated - it is celebrated.

Without appearing naïve or overly-simplistic, this offering successfully illustrates the strength of a child’s need for self-expression, in spite of it being at odds with both his gender and his culture, and the power of being supported in that choice.

**Thematic Links:** Self-expression; Diversity; Acceptance; Gender Roles; Cultural Normativity; Hinduism; South Asian Culture

Nicole Rowlinson

SNITSELAAR, Nicole

*Little Fox, Lost*

Illustrated by Alicia Padrón. Pajama Press, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 1. 978-1-77278-004-8. Hdbk. \$16.95



While Mama Fox and Little Fox are out walking together on a crisp winter morning, Little Fox gets bored. To liven things up, he decides “to find some fun of his own.” Excited by his paw prints in the snow, Little Fox hops through the trees with great joy, not realizing he is running further and further away from his mother. Suddenly, Little Fox discovers that he is lost. Scared and disoriented, he is tempted to seek help from several kind strangers, but remembers Mama Fox’s instructions to stay still and wait patiently until she can locate him. To aid Mama Fox in her search, Little Fox creatively decides to sing so his mother can hear him. With the help of other forest animals, his plan works, and a relieved Mama Fox finds her child.

Originally published in French, this non-threatening story acts as an important conversation starter for children about strangers and getting lost. Snitselaar’s text explores negative emotions like fear, anxiety and uncertainty that children may associate with being separated from a caregiver. As such, caregivers are prompted to discuss the strategies Little Fox

uses to cope with his situation. Most significantly, children are reminded that they should not automatically trust strangers, but that seeking help can be a positive thing. The story also champions ingenuity, emphasizing that it is important to be creative when faced with a problem. In support of the gentle tone of the text, Padrón’s soft, pastel illustrations convey a sense of warmth and safety despite Little Fox’s predicament. As a result, young readers will not become afraid, but instead, will come away from the story feeling reassured and empowered.

*Little Fox, Lost* is an effective and compassionate way to begin a discussion about strangers with young children, making it a recommended addition to classroom and library collections.

**Thematic Links:** Winter; Foxes; Mother; Child; Being Lost; Being Found; Strangers; Emotions

Chloe Humphreys

SWINBURNE, Stephen R.

*Safe in a Storm*

Illustrated by Jennifer A. Bell.

Cartwheel Books/Scholastic, 2016. 32p.

Illus. Gr. Preschool - 1. 978-0-545-86792-4.

Hdbk. \$13.99

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While a storm rages, animal mothers reassure their babies that everything will be all right and that they will be safe. Every scene is a cozy vignette of reassurance and mother love. Each animal mother keeps her baby or babies secure and warm despite the storm.

The text is comforting from start to finish. The illustrations are quite wonderful whether they depict moles, giraffes, sloths, sheep, chimpanzees or brown bears. This tale is consoling to any child who has ever been frightened by a storm or by anything else for that matter.

**Thematic Links:** Storms; Mothers; Fear; Animals

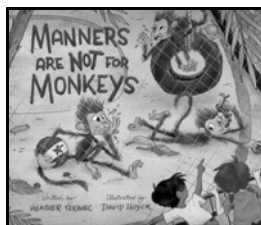
Isobel Lang

TEKAVEC, Heather

*Manners are not for Monkeys*

Illustrated by David Huyck.

Kids Can Press, 2016. Unp. Illus. Gr. K-3. 978-1-771380515. Hdbk. \$18.95



E

(cont'd on p. 55)

# Fiction: Grades 3-6

AGNEW, Sheila

## *Evie Brooks In Central Park Showdown*

Pajama Press, 2016. 236p. Gr. 4-7.  
978-1-927485-94-1 Pbk. \$12.95



Twelve-year old Evie Brooks is starting a new life in Manhattan. After her mother's death in Dublin, Evie must cross the ocean to live with her veterinarian uncle Scott in Manhattan. She soon makes two friends, Greg and Kylie, who both attend her new school, St.

Sebastian's. On the first day of school, Evie meets Lorcan, another student from Ireland, and they immediately become friends. However, Evie's life is now complicated by the fact that Michael Carey, her biological father, has turned up wanting to see her. He ran off before Evie was born, so she has never met him. How will this change her life?

Evie is a delightful heroine who enjoys getting involved in the lives of her friends and family. She loves to help her uncle and his partner Joanna in their veterinary clinic. Since Evie and her uncle live upstairs, she is constantly involved with the animals in the clinic. Evie is aware that Joanna and her uncle Scott share a connection which is much more than just professional. However, their constant bickering prevents any kind of romance from developing despite Evie's efforts. Evie loves reading novels like *The Golden Compass* and enjoys riding horses competitively. Her social life takes a turn for the better when she starts dating Lorcan, but she also has strong feelings for Greg's older brother Finn.

This is the second novel in Sheila Agnew's *Evie Series*. The first book introduced Evie, her uncle Scott, and the vibrant Manhattan setting. In this second novel, there are several new characters including Evie's biological father, Lorcan, and her teachers at St. Sebastian's.

This novel will definitely appeal to young female readers who love animals. They will be able to relate to Evie's everyday issues at school and at the veterinary clinic, as well as her complicated relationships. The Manhattan location and Central Park play an important role in the storyline. Agnew's novel also deals with different kinds of families. Evie lives with her uncle Scott, but her biological father is suing to get custody. Greg and Finn go back and forth between their divorced parents. Lorcan has two dads. As the novel ends, Evie looks forward to her future. "*Being fourteen could be very interesting.*" (p. 236). Readers will definitely look forward to the next edition

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of Edie's adventures in New York!

**Thematic Links:** Veterinary Medicine; Family Relationships; Caring for Animals; Drugs; Child Custody Hearings; Friendship; Dating; Central Park

Myra Junyk

BAUER, Michael Gerard

## *Eric Vale Super Male*

Scholastic Canada, 2015. 201p. Illus.  
Gr. 3-5. 978-1-4431-3935-9. Pbk. \$7.99



In the style of the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Timmy Failure Series*, this novel will appeal to reluctant readers and readers looking for quick humorous stories.

Eric Vale is an underdog in his school, and along with his sidekick best friend

Chewie, is obsessed with superheroes. His imagination is rife with stories about his alter ego - Secret Agent Derek Dale, and he definitely uses this to his advantage when his teacher assigns a superhero week.

Eric's life is consumed with problems with bullies and annoying girls at school, as well as his bothersome little sister, and he clearly uses his imagination to escape from these unpleasanties. There's not a lot here to differentiate this novel from other popular series using the multi-font, doodles-on-each-page style, particularly since it features a down-on-his-luck, underdog boy with an odd best friend, an exasperating sibling, and trouble at school. However, if these types of stories are impossible to keep on the shelf, this one will fit the bill equally well.

**Thematic Links:** Humorous Stories; Super Heroes

Nicole Rowlinson

CASSIDY, Sara

## *A Boy Named Queen*

Groundwood Books, 2016. 80p. Gr. 3-5.  
978-1-554989058. Hdbk. \$14.95



Everything about Evelyn is ordered and organized. Being an only child of kind but strict parents, her life is routine and regulated. When a new student arrives in her grade five class she is intrigued by this boy who seems to be exactly the opposite but quite the most

interesting person she has ever met. The fact that his name is Queen makes him "different" and the butt of jokes by the class bullies. This does not bother Queen one bit and that too makes Evelyn respect him. The friendship that develops between these two makes for interesting reading and a starting point for discussions about first impressions and friendship.

This is a good book to read aloud to elementary classes, or to talk about at the dinner table.

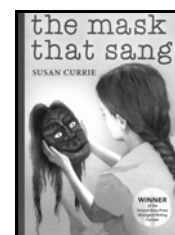
**Thematic Links:** Friendship; Bullying; School Stories; Grade 5

Mavis Holder

CURRIE, Susan

## *The Mask that Sang*

Second Story Press, 2016. 190p. Gr. 5-7. 978-1-77260-013-1. Pbk. \$9.95



Cass's life is complicated by many things: she lives in near-poverty with her single mother, she is bullied at school, she has imbibed her mother's distrust of authority, and she feels herself to be a nobody. Cass's mother, Denise, has "been in over twenty foster homes" since she was given up by her young mother at birth (p.10); as a teen mother herself, Denise chose not to make that decision and has raised Cass in an emotional security that transcends their poverty. When her dead mother's lawyers track Denise down, she is adamant that she will have nothing to do with the house and money she has been left. Cass, however, does not carry the same emotional baggage, and talks her mother into accepting the legacy. Wrapped in tissue in one of the drawers in her new home, Cass finds an Iroquois false-face mask, the source of the soft voices Cass has been hearing, humming with a "mischievous purr," (p. 22) telling her how happy she will be in the house.

The mask sings to her; it hums in approval when she stands up for a Native classmate, Degan Hill; it "vibrated with regret, with sorrow" (p.56) when she inadvertently hurts him; it gives her strength to stand up for what she knows is right. Befriending Degan brings Cass into the lives of his Native family, where she learns the stories of false-face masks, and their power. When her mother unknowingly sells it with other unwanted household items, Cass and Degan struggle to retrieve it, first from a pawn shop, then from its purchaser, and ultimately from the school bully, Ellis, who turns out (stereotypically) to be dealing with issues of his own.

Despite the trope of the privileged-yet-

bullied bully, the ingenuity of Cass and Degan, and their strength in standing up to Ellis's father's racism and illogical position vis-à-vis the mask, gives readers a sense both of the powerlessness of the child against unreasonable adults and the need to stand for what you believe in, regardless. In a rather simplistic and idealized dénouement, *their* strength gives the abused Ellis strength; he returns the mask to its rightful home, and "generations of voices sang that it was home at last" (p.185).

Its rightful home, of course, is with someone from the Cayuga Nation, where it was created. That the mask sings to Cass is the first obvious clue. The method of delivery of the truth of Cass's heritage, rather like Denise's fortuitous inheritance, though, feels contrived. A letter that had been left to Denise tells the story of Denise's mother, a Cayuga girl neglected by her widowed father and sent to Residential school. The letter reads more like an outline from a history lesson about Native abuses than a letter from a caring nurse. Incongruently, despite being raised in poverty and abuse, Denise's mother "*traveled in search of answers, working as she went ... she visited other countries and sought out quiet, holy places. She learned to meditate. She studied about great religions, and explored what it felt like to practice them. When she finally came home, she was ready to look at her own traditions...*" (p. 174). This passage, especially, rang false for me, "working as she went" notwithstanding.

What I find troubling is that the Turtle Island Healing Centre that Denise's fictional mother founded could possibly exist. There is a Turtle Island Healing Center in Flagstaff, Arizona, and Turtle Island Healing and Wellness, part of the Turtle Island Native Network online, (<http://turtleisland.org/>) is a Canadian organization. As "Turtle Island" is a term for the world in some First Nations' creation myths, though, it is possible that the author has created a generic title for a Native healing centre. If the story of Denise's mother is based on the founder of the Canadian program, on the other hand, a more careful description of her past - and perhaps an afterword explaining the historical reality - would be greatly helpful. As it stands, the lecturing tone of the historical aspects overshadows the delightful story of Ciss's life, and we are left wanting.

**Thematic Links:** Bullying; Turtle Island; False Face Masks; *Orenda*

Karyn Huenemann

DEEN, Natasha

***Lark Holds the Key (Orca Echoes Series)***

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 74p. Illus. Gr. 2-4. 978-1-459807273. Pbk. \$6.95



open the library for the day. Lark, being a self-declared rookie detective, is immediately determined to track down the missing key and save the day.

During the hunt, Lark comes across her classmate Sophie, who is usually up to no good, and realizes that she is an eyewitness to the mystery, as Mrs. Robinson had stopped to help her on her way to the library. Lark wisely decides to re-enact Mrs. Robinson's day in order to determine what could have possibly happened to the key. After all, that is what all good Private Investigators would do.

There are enough clues in this engaging novel to allow readers to solve the mystery on their own, and astute detectives will be able to figure it out even before Lark does. Lark is a very likable and relatable character, with some quirkiness about her that children will find humorous. Deen uses Lark's vocabulary to create teachable moments in a way that children won't even realize they are learning, and the spelling and word-use mistakes that Lark makes in the story are amusing. A dash of Korean vocabulary is included as well.

There are a perfect amount of illustrations, which are extremely appealing and perfectly enhance the story. This offering in the *Orca Echoes Series* of beginning chapter books is one that most libraries will see circulate, and other books will be forthcoming in the *Lark Ba Detective Series*.

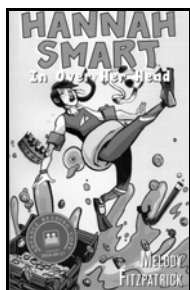
**Thematic Links:** Detective Stories; Libraries; Twins; Early Chapter Books; Summer Vacation

Nicole Rowlinson

FITZPATRICK, Melody

***In Over Her Head (Hannah Smart: Book 3)***

Dundurn, 2016. 183p. Gr. 4 - 6. 978-1-45973-160-8. Pbk. \$12.99



Plucky teen protagonist Hannah Smart is back. This time she's aboard a massive boat, taking part in a reality TV series about searching for sunken treasure. On board with her is Piper, a girl with a perfect life, and A.J., Hannah's current crush. Of course, exploring the ocean means scuba diving,

seasickness, even sharks! Hannah's not sure this is her ideal summer job, and Piper is determined to prove her right, whatever it takes.

Although it's the third book in a series, *In Over Her Head* stands alone just fine. The *Hannah Smart* books are a gentle, positively toned series intended to provide accessible, realistic lessons for girls struggling with the multiple and sometimes conflicting messages they receive from peers, family, and media. Friendship, loyalty, bullying, boyfriends, money, and responsibility are some of the themes the series has explored so far, and this volume continues this exploration. Hannah is a very young teen, someone elementary-age readers can easily read up to, but she has matured since her first adventure. She's a little less impetuous and a little more reflective. Still, she isn't a substantial character, nor are her friends or her frenemy, Piper.

Everything that happens in this book is larger than life. The adult characters, for instance, are exaggerated figures: the Captain is unteably fierce; Massimo, the chef, is implausibly meek; Piper's mother is an Olympic coach; and so on. Hannah's slip-ups veer close to physical comedy and her successes are too good to believe. Such plots are common fodder in movies and TV for tweens, so will satisfy readers familiar with those conventions, as well as those looking for simple happy endings and an easy read. Only some girls will see themselves reflected in Hannah's happy-go-lucky, middle-class world, though.

There's certainly nothing wrong with this book; it's high gloss and happy, and even the unhappy families and messed-up characters are easily redeemed. However, despite how strongly the author's intentions appeal to my girl-positive values, the book's sugary sweetness just doesn't satisfy.

**Thematic Links:** Friendship; Rivalry; Families; Boating; Summer Jobs

Leslie Vermeer

GARDNER, Lyn, and Ros Asquith  
***Fright in the Night (The Ghastly McNastys Series)***

Kids Can Press, 2016. 148p. Gr. 2 - 5. 978-1-77138-130-7. Hdbk. \$16.95



The Ghastly McNastys begin their third adventure deep inside the unfortunate shark that swallowed them at the end of *Raiders of the Lost Shark*, but readers know they won't be there for long. Sure enough, Gruesome and Grisly are soon back on land and up to their terribly piratical tricks once more.



They're determined to find treasure in Little Snoring and prepared to do away with our heroes Tat and Hetty, who put them in the shark's way in the first place. Of course, before the McNastys can claim the treasure, they will have to evade Inspector Haddock, the ghostly Captain Syd, and some highly irritable sea creatures. Only an absurd imagination could guess what happens next.

***Fright in the Night*** is a funny, accessible book well suited to readers gaining confidence with independent reading. It will also appeal to readers fascinated by gross-out standbys: slime, snot, sweat, vomit, and other bodily functions. It's all good-natured, over-the-top fun. Writer and illustrator both invite readers to join the silliness with a great big wink. The snarky editorial asides and lively illustrations add to the comedy - and someone's pet terrapin has quite an attitude!

Have Tat and Hetty finally outsmarted the McNastys? You'll have to read the book to find out.

**Thematic Links:** Comedy; Pirates; Friendship

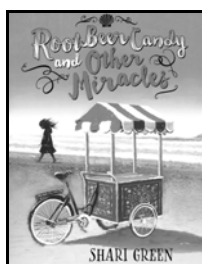
Leslie Vermeer

GREEN, Shari

***Root Beer Candy and Other Miracles***

Pajama Press, 2016. 240p. Gr. 3 -6.

978-1-77278-007-9. Pbk. \$11.95



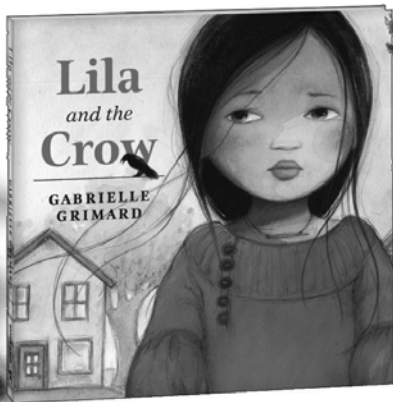

***Root Beer Candy and Other Miracles*** is a gentle verse novel for middle-grade readers. Bailey, the sensitive, perceptive narrator, is living on a West Coast island with her little brother and her estranged grandmother for the summer while her parents try

to repair their marriage. She soon meets Jasper, a man who was once a village leader but is now an outsider, and Daniel, a boy with a camera and a secret. One day Jasper locks eyes with Bailey as he utters one of his prophecies. His words set the villagers gossiping and push Bailey to search for miracles.

***Root Beer Candy and Other Miracles*** tackles some serious problems common among kids today. Its resolution is gentle and hopeful, but also realistic. When Bailey asks for help, people - even people she believes dislike her - come to her aid. From the climactic event Bailey discovers personal resilience and the value of expressing her feelings and her fears. Not everything can be fixed, but sharing a problem with someone who loves us makes it easier to bear. This is a message middle-graders cannot hear too often.

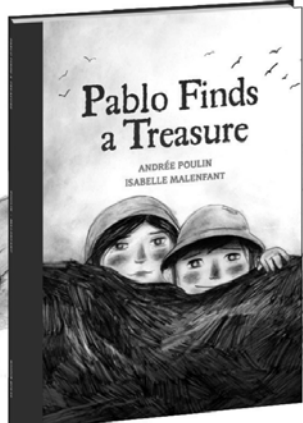

I really enjoyed this book. It's an excellent choice for thoughtful middle-grade readers and would make a valuable addition to a school or

# Smart Kids = Smart Solutions


**Lila is bullied because of her dark skin, but the crows have a solution for that!**

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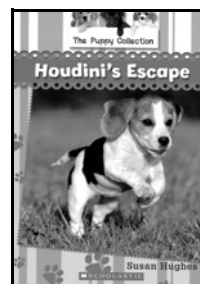
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classroom library. It's also a fine complement to the verse novels of K.A. Holt, and a stepping stone to the work of authors like Sonya Sones, Virginia Euwer Wolff, and Martine Leavitt. ***Root Beer Candy and Other Miracles*** is also a physically beautiful book, generously designed and appealing in the hand. Watch for this one!

**Thematic Links:** Poetry; Families; Friendship; Emotions; Faith; Serious Illness; Imagination

Leslie Vermeer

HUGHES, Susan



***Houdini's Escape (The Puppy Collection)***

Scholastic Canada, 2015. 88p. Illus. Gr. 2-4. 978-1-443146500. Pbk. \$5.99

*The Puppy Collection Series* by Susan Hughes features not only adorable



# Awards and Announcements

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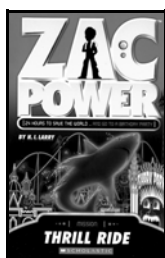
will hopefully encourage readers to stand up for what they believe in and recognize that even though they are too young to vote, they can still make a difference in their communities.

**Thematic Links:** Lending Libraries; Reading; Community Activism; Politics; Elections

Alice Albarda

LARRY, H. I.

**Thrill Ride (Zac Power Series)**  
Scholastic Canada, 2009/2016. 91p.  
Gr. 2-4. 978-1-4431-4635-7. Pbk. \$5.99



In his latest adventure, the perfectly titled *Thrill Ride*, Zac has to single-handedly infiltrate a nefarious plot by a rival spy group, all while surviving the world's scariest theme park.

Being a top secret agent for the Government Investigation Bureau (GIB) means Zac occasionally has to drop everything - this time a concert by his favourite rock band Axe Grinder - to attend to a mission. Shark Park seems to have been overtaken by rival BIG agents and Zac must go undercover to gather intelligence on their secret conference.

What begins as a simple mission turns into a full-blown dangerous operation. With James Bond style gadgets in hand, Zac must stop rogue BIG agents from the revenge they seek against the entire BIG organization.

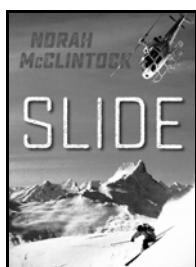
This remains a very well-written series, which offers thrilling escapades, and humour, in a fairly easy chapter book format. Children will be thrilled to see detailed diagrams of Zac's gadgets, and this story is sure to inspire them to do a little spying of their own.

**Thematic Links:** Spies; Adventure Stories; Theme Parks

Nicole Rowlinson

MCCLINTOCK, Norah

**Slide (The Seven Prequels Series)**  
Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 182p. Gr. 6-8. 978-1-459811676. Pbk. \$9.95



14-year-old Rennie and his grandma are skiing in the California Sierra Nevada mountains where Rennie becomes friends with Annie who's working at the ski chalet's kitchen before she goes off to pre-med studies at Harvard with boyfriend Derek.

Blinded by his crush on Annie, Rennie immediately dislikes Derek but is even more suspicious of Annie's uncle Raj who appears from India demanding that Annie return there as her grandmother is ill. A call to her grandmother confirms that she is not sick at all, so Annie refuses his demands as she knows her trust fund will revert to her uncle Raj should she die or marry. When the avaricious park ranger Chuck conspires with Annie's uncle in an honour killing to kill Annie in a planned avalanche explosion, Rennie rescues Annie from the avalanche and with Grandma's help calls the police in enough time to have Chuck and Raj arrested. In the end the reader discovers that chalet owner Rod had had a crush on Grandma when they were younger, and that she's still involved with David McLean, Rennie's grandfather.

Clever, resourceful and self-deprecating Rennie is only too thankful to see his rigid, judgemental father off on a military mission. While profoundly missing his mother who died in a car accident for which Rennie believes he is at least partly responsible, Rennie adores his Grandma and cheerfully ditches boring school to ski with her. Although often overcome with the loss of his mother, Rennie typifies the growing, always hungry young teen, grounded in the present with little thought to the future. Sharp and wise, Grandma knows that Rennie will benefit from the outdoor skiing and trusts him to be on his own after she breaks her ankle. Even secondary characters Derek, Rod, Raj and Chuck are artfully drawn - their characters clear in their words and actions. Annie is a powerful, strong young woman with clear goals who challenges traditional Indian values.

In spite of the beautiful setting of the Sierra Nevada ski area, the plot could easily have taken place in Canada and will engage Canadian readers. Ski and avalanche scenes are believable and thrilling. Dialogue flows naturally and moves the action along as Rennie's inner voice reveals his feelings, questions and beliefs. The theme of honour killings will intrigue both boys and girls while all readers will sympathize with Rennie's grief and admire his courage.

**Thematic Links:** Honour Killings; Grief; Love; Skiing; Avalanches

Joan Marshall

MLYNOWSKI, Sarah

**Once Upon A Frog (Whatever After #8)**  
Scholastic Canada, 2016. 159p. Gr. 3-6. 978-0-545746601. Hdbk. \$19.99



In this eighth instalment of the *Whatever After Fractured Fairy Tale Series*, Sarah Mlynowski has once again offered up a fun and

clever read.

Ever since Abby and Jonah returned from their last adventure through their magic mirror, Jonah has been plagued with memories belonging to the fairy who lives in the mirror, Maryrose. It's becoming such a problem that Jonah can't concentrate on school work, and is in danger of failing grade 2. The two siblings had vowed to not go through their mirror to a fairy tale land again, but they do need Maryrose's help to rid Jonah of his false memories and pass his grade.

Inadvertently, Abby and Jonah do end up getting pulled in, and quickly determine they are in the world of the Princess and the Frog fairy tale, but with some interesting twists. The princess who is supposed to turn the frog back into a prince has no interest in helping, so Abby and Jonah must figure out how to do it themselves. The frog, and therefore the prince, turns out to be an evil jerk, and Maryrose is in grave danger! Abby and Jonah need to find Maryrose in order to remove her memories from Jonah's mind, and discover in the process that there is a special reason why he had them in the first place.

Sarah Mlynowski is a wonderful writer, and despite this being the 8<sup>th</sup> book in the series, it remains fresh, funny, and well-written. Readers will easily stay engaged, and the short chapters are of benefit to reluctant readers and great for a read-aloud.

This light-hearted fractured tale stands out from other similar offerings, making it, and the rest of the series, a must have for school libraries.

**Thematic Links:** Fairy Tales; Fractured Fairy Tales; The Princess and the Frog; Siblings; Magic

Nicole Rowlinson

MLYNOWSKI, Sarah, Lauren Miracle, and Emily Jenkins

**Upside-Down Magic: Sticks & Stones**  
Scholastic Press, 2016. 193p. Gr. 3-7. 978-0-545-80049-5. Hdbk. \$14.99



Nory Horace's magic began bubbling up when she was 10. Unlike many other kids, Nory doesn't do ordinary magic. Sometimes she transforms into a kitten. At others, she turns into a dritten (half dragon, half kitten) or even a mitten (half mosquito, half kitten). That's why she's in the UDM or Upside-Down Magic class at Dunwiddle Magic School. Her classmates also do wonky magic. There's Bax, who frequently fluxes into a rock, Andres who floats upside down, Marigold,



who shrinks things, Elliott, who turns things into ice, and Willa, who makes it rain inside. When weird things start happening at Dunwidle Magic School, attention focuses on the UDM class. Who else but Bax could change the contents of the entire Pennies for Potions jar into tiny rocks? Students saw Marigold shrink Lacey, the school bully. Who's going to be next? Then the contents of lockers turn to stone and everything in the stadium during a Kittenball Game does the same. Bax says he didn't do it - but who believes him?

Will the UDM class be kicked out of the school? Readers will anxiously keep reading to find out. Young readers will enjoy this quirky novel about middle grade students who have similar problems to their own, as well as some unusual differences.

**Thematic Links:** Fantasy; Individual Differences; Loyalty; Friendship; Cooperation; Bullying

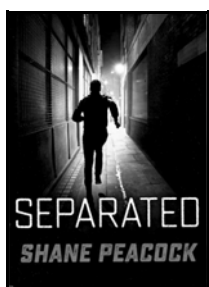
Helen Mason

PEACOCK, Shane

**Separated (The Seven Prequels)**

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 144p. Gr. 4 up. 978-1-459811645. Pbk. \$9.95

A



After the success of *The Seven Series*, and the subsequent *The Seven Sequels*, Orca has decided to continue with *The Seven Prequels*. This may have jumped the shark.

Adam's mysterious grandfather has decided to take the twelve-year-

old with him on a business/pleasure trip to Stockholm. Adam is a nervous flyer, and a "sensitive" young man, but he soon settles in to a good routine: when his grandfather is away in the mornings, Adam plays cool video games and eats room service in their luxury hotel, and then in the afternoon and evenings they explore the city. Adam is particularly excited about attending a Swedish professional league hockey game. But at the game's end he becomes separated from his grandfather. He has researched enough about Sweden to learn of its reputation for violent crime fiction, and the assassinations of two political leaders. Frozen with uncertainty as to how to proceed, he is challenged by a young girl who bears a striking resemblance to Pippi Longstocking. She encourages him to overcome his fears, and believe in himself. He is safely reunited with his grandfather, and better prepared for future challenges.

Peacock uses the usual literary gambits of cliff-hanger chapter endings and first person narration to create an ominous tone. Adam's

internal monologue expresses his nervousness in dealing with his predicament. And Greta (Pippi) is so unbelievable that even Adam doubts whether she is real. *Separated* is presumably effective back story for the character of Adam in *The Seven Series*. The problem with this book is that nothing of importance happens. Only fans of *The Seven* will find Adam's adventure satisfying.

**Thematic Links:** Stockholm, Sweden - Travel; Suspense

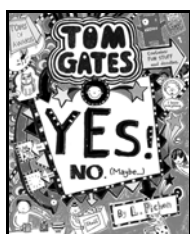
Patricia Jermy

PICHON, L.

**Yes! no. (maybe...) (Tom Gates Series)**

Scholastic Canada, 2015. 257p. Illus. Gr. 3-6. 978-1-4431-4828-3. Pbk. \$8.99

G



In this eighth instalment of the popular, and consistently funny, *Tom Gates Series*, Tom's on a mission to stop his mum from selling all his prized possessions in her boot sale (although he would like money to buy a new scooter), and he's got

Business Day at school to worry about. To top it off, his grandparents, aka "The Fossils", are coming, Tom's sister Delia is as grumpy as ever, and he got switched from his chosen project group at school for getting caught doodling.

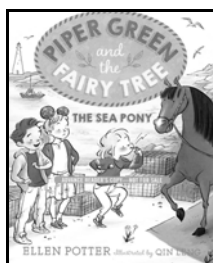
Liz Pichon is a master at combining her multi-font text with her picture doodles, and the result is a very appealing visual novel. Comparisons to the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid Series* are inevitable, but Tom is a much more light-hearted, less whiny and manipulative version of Gregg Heffley, and the illustrations are fantastic.

Reluctant readers, and children looking for a humorous but realistic view of the troubles and tribulations of a continually distracted boy, and his penchant for poking fun at the adults in his life, will find much to love here, as in the other books in this award-winning series.

**Thematic Links:** Humorous Stories; Family Dynamics; Mischief

Nicole Rowlinson

POTTER, Ellen



**Piper Green and the Fairy Tree: The Sea Pony**

Illustrated by Qin Leng. Alfred A. Knopf Books for Young Readers/ Penguin, 2016. 128p. Gr. 2-5. 978-0-553-49934-6. Pbk. \$7.99

E

This is the third book in the *Piper Green and the Fairy Tree Series*, which is about a girl named Piper who lives on Peek-a-Boo Island, rides a lobster boat to school, and has a Fairy Tree in her front yard. When Piper leaves a treasure in the Fairy Tree, the fairies leave one for her in return, but only something that she *really* needs. In this instalment of the series, the fairies leave piper a necklace with a bosun's whistle on it. When a horse arrives on Peek-a-Boo island on the ferry, Piper tries to trade her whistle in for a horse of her own... for emergencies, of course. To her disappointment, the whistle is still there when she comes back to check. Why did the fairies give her this whistle?

Piper Green is a spunky character who readers will love. The small lobster-fishing community of Peek-a-Boo Island is almost like the second main character of the series, and makes the story different from other chapter book series. Peek-a-Boo Island, which is probably inspired by the author's hometown of Maine, will seem familiar to readers from the Maritimes and the inclusion of a map of the island makes the setting all the more engaging. Qin Leng's illustrations portray feisty Piper and her Atlantic hometown very well. Overall this is a well-crafted addition to a series that young readers will find exciting and funny.

**Thematic Links:** Fishing Communities; Island Communities; Adventure; Fairies; Horses

Alice Albarda

PRIEST, Robert

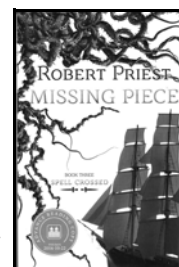
**Missing Piece (Spell Crossed Series)**

Dundurn Press, 2016. 334p. Gr. 4-8. 978-1-4597-3043-4. Pbk. \$12.99

A

*Missing Piece* is the third book in the *Spell Crossed Series*. Priest provides a foreword, in which he tells the reader, "There are lots of missing pieces in this story but deliberately so... there are plenty of other vanished bits, removed fragments, and even unwanted extra fragments, all of which seem to be actively intent on finding their way back to whatever totality they were once part of."

Tharfen, the captain of the *Dawnrider*, has returned to the Phaer Isle to repair her ship. When she arrives she realizes that the city of Ulde is woefully unprepared for the revengeful return of the Cyclopes. She also realizes that she and Xemion had exchanged pieces in an earlier adventure, and if they are both willing they could be returned to whole. Xemion has been caring for the body of Saheli, but she is also missing a piece due to an entanglement with Tharfen's brother Torgee. In addition to



these four, the entire city is still trying to recover from the results of being spellcrossed, as the Great Kone continues to spin. The villainous Montither and his kwislings, along with Prince Icrix and his Cyclopes brethren, backed by mercenary Kagars, threaten both the citizens of the Phaer Isle and their quest for literacy.

As with the previous novel, the large number of characters, the inventive use of magic, and the fantasy setting and creatures make this a complex book to follow, even if there weren't deliberately confusing pieces and fragments. The narration moves rapidly between points of view, in very short chapters. As a result the reader's challenge is to assemble the pieces, and in the end the whole is not greater than the parts.

**Thematic Links:** Fantasy; Adventure; Fairy Tales and Folk Lore

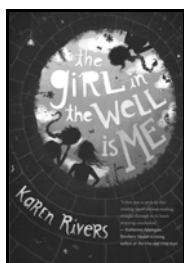
Patricia Jerney

RIVERS, Karen

***The Girl in the Well is Me***

Dancing Cat Books, 2016. 156 p. Gr. 5-7. 978-1-770864641. Pbk. \$12.95

E



All 11-year-old Kammie Summers wanted when she approached Mandy, Kandy, and Sandy (aka the popular girls) at her new school was to start feeling like her life was actually beginning to look up. She had faced an extremely difficult blow when her dad was arrested

for embezzling funds from the charitable organization he worked for. With an older brother who seems to hate her, and a mother who is just desperately trying to keep it together on her own, Kammie only wants a bright spot in her life.

Instead, the three girls she hopes to befriend turn out to be some of the worst examples of horrible bullies that have been put on the page (read: sociopathic). As an initiation to their exclusive club, the girls lead Kammie to an abandoned well that she ends up falling into. Stuck in the well, unable to move her hands, Kammie spends the next several hours facing intense fear and anger, which eventually leads (due in part to a lack of oxygen) to desperate hallucinations and reliving of past memories.

Rivers has woven an incredibly heartbreaking tale of a tragic, unforgettable event in a young girl's life, told in a powerfully moving way. An unexpected element within the story is the dash of surrealism that is evident when we delve into the recesses of Kammie's traumatized mind. Her brain is determined that she confront all of the experiences that have plagued her over the last year of her life, and it

conjures up zombie goats and a French speaking coyote to help her deal with her distress.

River's strength is in the extraordinary language she uses to weave the story, and Kammie is written with brilliant insight. The prose is sometimes funny, but in a wry way, that may make readers want to laugh-cry, and it is full of so many quotable passages.

Although written for children, the novel is full of masterful language that would engage adults, but still somehow remains accessible to the age group at which it is aimed. It delivers very intense suspense, both emotionally and physically, as Kammie wages war with her environs and her oxygen deprived mind.

Karen Rivers is an extraordinary writer, with a rare and beautiful way of using her prose to both evoke deep emotion, and paint an extremely realistic picture. This is the type of novel that will stay with readers long after they close the book.

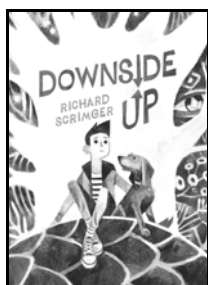
**Thematic Links:** Empathy; Bullying; Family Problems; Mental Trauma; Suspense

Nicole Rowlinson

SCRIMGER, Richard

***Downside Up***

Tundra Books, 2016. 256p. Gr. 4 - 6. 978-1-77049-845-7. Hdbk. \$19.99



there, playing with Casey, talking with his other-world self, Freddie, and observing his family and classmates from a new angle.

*Downside Up* is a fantasy novel embedded in a realistic novel about emotional trauma. We are well into it before we learn that the story is about much more than Fred and Casey, as this passage suggests: "There's lots we can't control," I said. "Bad things happen. Accidents, luck, whatever - these things are not our decision. But we can decide what we do about the bad luck, about the accidents. We can't stop the dragon coming after us. But we can decide to get away."

Although grief and depression are the dominant emotional themes, the book is really about resilience. (And dragons, by the way, are real in the Downside world.) Sensitive readers - especially readers who have experienced trauma or loss in their own lives - will appreciate the gentle unspooling of this narrative and the message of courage it conveys.

Richard Scrimger's new novel opens with an intriguing premise: there's a parallel world, just like this one, except the things we have lost remain there. Fred has recently lost his dog, Casey. When he finds an entryway to the Downside world, he begins spending much of his time

This tender, thoughtful novel is deeply moving. Its scenes and images will stay with me for a long time, and it's a book that will reward reflection and re-reading. It is sweet and sad, and funny, and touching without being treacly. It deserves to be cherished. I hope adults will put *Downside Up* in the hands of younger readers who need it and will love it.

**Thematic Links:** Dogs; Pets; Loss; Grieving; Friendship; Families; Feelings

Leslie Vermeer

SCRIMGER, Richard

***Weerdest Day Ever! (The Seven Prequels Series)***

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 198p. Grades 3 - 6. 978-1-45981155-3. Pbk. \$9.95

G



In *Weerdest Day Ever!*,

Bunny (his grandfather prefers Bernard), his brother Spencer, and their grandfather David McLean go on a weekend camping trip. Bunny discovers that a war is about to break out between Canada and America, and somehow the man

who's stolen Spencer's cell phone has something to do with it. Can Bunny retrieve the phone and stop a war? Well, if anyone can, it's Richard Scrimger's Bunny, a fascinating, quirky character whose view of the world is unconventional but delightful.

I have to state up front that I deeply enjoy Richard Scrimger's books and have been following his writing since *The Nose from Jupiter* (1998). So I was pleased to learn about the *Seven Prequels*. In this series, the writers of *Seven (the Series)* and the *Seven Sequels* reach back in time. The framing story of *Weerdest Day Ever!* introduces Bunny as a teenager writing down his story as an English assignment; in the story itself he is only twelve. The story is told in Bunny's inimitable way, self-conscious spelling errors and all.

What makes *Weerdest Day Ever!* work is its sense of play. The book is genuinely laugh-out-loud funny. Scrimger has a great sense of comedy, amplified by Bunny's wobbly spelling and unusual way of making sense. Bunny lurches from scene to scene in a chain of near-misses with Spencer, Grandpa, and the man Bunny is chasing. Along the way he meets Tyler and Beth, whose own issues add depth and poignancy to the plot. Everything turns out, of course. (Readers who want another take on the weekend can read *Speed* by Ted Staunton, which recounts the story from the perspective of Bunny's brother Spencer.)

*Weerdest Day Ever!* invites readers inside a sly joke and tells an absurd tale of mystery, courage, and friendship. It's wonderful fun.

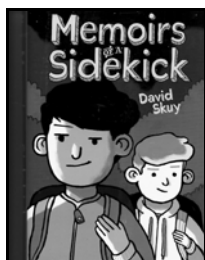
**Thematic Links:** Friendship; Families; Camping; War of 1812

Leslie Vermeer

SKUY, David

***Memoirs of a Sidekick***

Kids Can Press, 2016, 238p. Gr. 4 - 6. 978-1-77138-568-8. Hdbk. \$17.95



Adrian has been Boris Snodbuckle's sidekick for years. As a faithful underling, Adrian has supported Boris through numerous (mis)adventures - Operation Feel the Wheel, or the ill-fated helium balloon experiment, for instance. Now Adrian and Boris are in grade seven, and Boris wants to become school president in order to leave a legacy of school improvement. Adrian leaps to campaign for him. If only all the cool kids weren't ranged against Boris.

In Adrian, David Skuy has perfectly captured the voice of the loyal but long-suffering sidekick, a quirky cross between the narration of Dr Watson and *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* for middle-grade readers. Boris is an unlikely mastermind, and Adrian's dogged support produces ironic humour. Still, Adrian's relationship with Boris takes an unexpected turn when the roles for the school play, *The Lion King*, are announced. Little by little, Adrian's sweetly nerdy persona gives way to a more self-aware, more confident boy. Both Boris and Adrian have grown stronger by the conclusion.

*Memoirs of a Sidekick* is very funny, loaded with comedy and screwball action; it also features several clueless adult authority figures. Fans of Gordon Korman's books should love this book. It would make a great choice to read aloud to a class at grade four or five, and also offers an unobtrusive way for teachers to talk about bullying and difference. The story structure (each Operation is told in several short chapters) makes this long book accessible, but reflective readers are likely to take away much more than the plot. *Memoirs of a Sidekick* is a winner.

**Thematic Links:** School; Friendship; Loyalty; Elections; Comedy

Leslie Vermeer

STAUNTON, Ted

***Speed (The Seven Prequels Series)***

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 146p. Gr. 4-6. 978-1-459811614. Pbk. \$9.95



Speed is the prequel to Staunton's successful *Jump Cut* (part of *The Sevens Series*).



Grandpa David McLean takes his grandsons Bernard (aka Bun) and Spencer camping for a weekend in a provincial park where students are re-enacting the Battle of 1812 and filming it for an assignment. 12-year-old Spencer, a total non-camper, attaches himself to the film crew who coerce him into playing the part of Laura Secord. Spencer suspects Luther, one of the American re-enactors, of nefarious doings, and eventually catches him trying to steal the replica of Laura Secord's cowbell that belongs to Grandpa's friend Irene. Meanwhile 11-year-old Bun goes missing, which escapes Grandpa's attention.

Spencer is a typical young boy: self-conscious, open to suggestion (even suspicious), impulsive, unromantic, loyal to his brother and nostalgic about his past activities with his grandpa. His genuine attraction to the filming rings true.

Bun's problems with reading, writing and thinking are clearly documented. Spencer's love for him and his desire to involve Bun in the filming activities showcase a touching brotherly relationship between the two of them.

Grandpa is an easy-going, cheerful older man whose laid-back behaviour masks a sharp mind except when it comes to keeping track of his grandchildren. Irene is an outgoing, quick thinker whose past may have been quite outrageous and whose present day behaviour is not much calmer.

Older readers will be able to pick up clues that both Grandpa and Irene are former spies, perhaps still working as they discuss how they might produce and sell caltrops, star-shaped metal devices scattered on battlefields to deter foes. And what is that computer chip hidden inside the replica of Laura Secord's cowbell, wrapped in a halved caltrop?

The work on the re-enactment of the Battle of 1812 is very well done indeed, complete with the hardcore pioneer village and the smoke and noise of the battle scenes. From Tracey and the kind film crew who adopt Spencer, to Luther the Rochester dentist determined to eliminate farb (non-authentic) behaviour in the re-enactment, the engrossing re-enactment scenes will engage readers, especially those who think they may like to act one day.

It's unfortunate that Bun's disappearance doesn't generate more worry on Spencer's part, not to mention that of Grandpa! Nor is his disappearance resolved in any way by the end of the book, which leaves huge questions for readers. Where is he? Why does Grandpa not supervise more closely, especially when he must know about Bun's disabilities? Why isn't

Spencer more worried about Bun? This will leave readers irritated and unsatisfied even as they follow Spencer's adventures with glee.

**Thematic Links:** Camping; Sibling Relationships; Re-enactments; Battle of 1812

Joan Marshall

WALTERS, Eric

***Batcat and the Seven Squirrels (Orca Echoes Series)***

Illustrated by Kasia Charko. Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 62p. Illus. Gr. 2-4. 978-1-459812550. Pbk. \$6.95



This prolific author of children's books has based this book on an experience he had as a child. When it appears that a family of young squirrels is orphaned, Nathan and his parents decide to take responsibility for the babies and care for them, with the help of a neighbourhood tomcat. The artwork is quite delightful and complements the warmth of the story.

This book is one of the *Orca Echoes Series* for young readers.

**Thematic Links:** Pets; Family Life

Mavis Holder

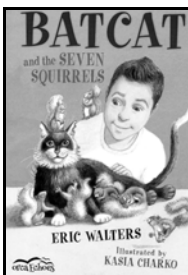
WALTERS, Eric

***Jungle Land (The Seven Prequels Series)*** 2016.

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 153p. Gr. 5-7. 978-1-459811492. Pbk. \$9.95.



Grandpa David McLean flies his oldest grandson 12-year-old DJ down to Central America where they visit with Grandpa's extremely wealthy friend Juan de Carlos and his granddaughter Alejandra at their heavily guarded jungle weekend retreat where servants provide their every need. When a medical emergency takes the two grandfathers away, DJ and Alejandra hear gunfire and suspect kidnappers. She takes DJ to the safe room from which they run into the jungle, taking a motorboat down the river to escape. Rapids damage the boat but they are rescued by the police before the boat sinks into the caiman-filled river. Back with their grandfathers, they are chagrined to discover that what they thought was gunfire was a fireworks surprise for them. Their grandfathers keep them busy zip-lining, parasailing, snorkelling, hiking and riding Sea-Doos for the rest of



the week.

DJ is a typical young boy, competitive with his twin brother Steve, grateful for his grandpa's presence in his life as his own father has died, and just beginning to wonder what it would be like to kiss a girl. His good manners and ability to hold his tongue help him to make friends with Alejandra when he would have much preferred a boy to visit with. His courage in the face of danger (from jumping into a jungle pool from a high cliff, to managing the harrowing boat trip down the river) will attract readers and the adventure will have them on the edge of their seats as potential kidnappers, jaguars and poisonous snakes lurk in the jungle. Alejandra is the privileged granddaughter in a wealthy family with political influence but even as she lives with the daily fear of kidnapping, she remains cool in the face of danger and follows all the escape plans that she has had to memorize. Her fire-arms training and knowledge impress DJ who as a typical Canadian knows nothing about guns. As she shoots the caimans, fierce alligator-like reptiles, DJ is even more thankful that he has made such a good friend. More details of Grandpa McLean's past life are revealed as he tells DJ that in his import/export business he often flew in to Juan's country where the fluid borders allowed for smuggling. Grandpa is also more than fluent in Spanish and apparently knew and loved Juan's wife before she married Juan. And so the intrigue continues...

Although students will be shocked by the kidnapping danger Alejandra endures, the so well described jungle settings, the description of the frantic river rapids and the natural dialogue between the two initially prickly young adolescents demonstrate author Walters' considerable skill as he sets up a compelling short novel perfect for middle school students.

**Thematic Links;** Central America; Jungles; Friendship; Flying; Boating; Kidnapping

Joan Marshall

WEBER, Lori  
*Lightning Lou*

Dancing Cat Books, 2016. 207p. Gr. 4-6. 978-1-77086-462-7. Pbk. \$12.95



All 12-year-old Lou and his brother Georges have ever wanted to do is play hockey. But the year is 1917 and Georges is away fighting World War I. With so many men gone to the front, Quebec's bush hockey leagues have been cancelled. What can an avid hockey player do?

Lou swipes a skirt from a neighbour's clothesline. Wearing that and using the name

Lou Lou, he tries out for the Bakers, a new girls' hockey team based in Montreal. Winning a place is only the first of many hurdles the young player has to face. How can he convince his mother to let him go? Will his father play along with the fact that this 12-year-old is a girl?

Once Lou gets to Montreal, his trouble deepens. He shares a room with a young girl named Claire. He has to dress and act enough like a girl to convince her, as well as the other team members. Then there's his place on the team. Lou had no idea that girls could play hockey so well - nor that he'd come face to face with Albertine Lapensée, the Miracle Maid from Cornwall who skates faster and hits harder than any player Lou has ever encountered. Can he develop enough skill to help his team defeat Lapensée and her team?

Then there are Lou's self-doubts. Is it fair for him to steal the place of a girl who might have his spot on the team? Should he play hockey when others are facing who-knows-what dangers on the front? What will his brother think when he hears?

Based on the true story of Ada Lalonde, a 17-year-old who tried to do what Lou succeeded in doing, this novel will fascinate avid hockey fans, kids interested in a good adventure story, and those with a sense of humour.

**Thematic Links:** Hockey; Hockey History; Women's Hockey; Montreal Canadians; Female Roles; World War I; Soldier Rehabilitation; PTSD; Personal Ethics

Helen Mason

WILSON, John  
*The Missing Skull (The Seven Prequels Series)*

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 156p. Gr. 4-6. 978-1-459811584. Pbk. \$9.95



drowned in 1917.

After telling Steve the puzzling story of Thomson's death, Grandpa implies that Thomson's skull may be in the garden shed of a local man, Jim Davis, who kept it after he was tasked with re-burying the bones that had been sent to Toronto for examination. Steve's trip with Grandpa has been designed around Steve working out where the skull may be, uncovering clues that Grandpa has set for him.

Continuing in the well-written and well-planned series about the seven grandsons of David McLean, Grandpa David McLean takes his 12-year-old grandson Steve out to Canoe Lake, a sparsely populated northern Ontario lake where famous Canadian artist Tom Thomson

When Steve trespasses his way past clue number one, he ends up in the locked room of Yuri Koval, an elderly man living at a nearby sumptuous resort, a man who knows Grandpa. Suspecting Grandpa has been kidnapped by Sophie and Jason, two suspicious characters, Steve sets out to find him but rapidly runs into bad weather and dumps the canoe, only to be apprehended by a mysterious man named Carl who leads Steve to an abandoned cabin where he finally finds Grandpa. Grandpa explains his elaborate plot and praises Steve's sleuthing. As they leave the lake, Grandpa has Steve take two old books over to his friend Yuri.

Steve is a clever, thoughtful boy who is initially disappointed with his trip to the lake with Grandpa. However, he thrills to the idea of a mystery to be solved and bravely perseveres when things go wrong.

Grandpa is his usual enigmatic, cheerful, persuasive self. Astute older readers will begin to suspect that Grandpa's days as a spy are not over and that he may have used this trip with Steve to deliver valuable books to Yuri who could use the money from them to escape from his remote prison.

Mystery buffs will enjoy the mysterious tale of Thomson's death and the trail of clues set up by Grandpa, even when Steve misinterprets the clues and mayhem ensues.

The remote northern Ontario landscape, complete with cold lake, rocks and bush along with the cabin lacking electricity and water highlights the real camping experience unfamiliar to so many urban students.

Dialogue is modern and up to date with Steve's friend Sam's computer googling and their cell phone chats grounding the story in the present day.

**Thematic Links:** Tom Thomson; Camping; Canoeing

Joan Marshall

WISHINSKY, Frieda  
*Hurricane! The Fury of Hurricane Hazel (Survival Series)*

Illustrated by Don Kilby.  
Scholastic Canada, 2016. 112p. Gr. 4-7. 978-1-4431-4644-9. Pbk. \$6.99

Rain drums on the roof of Michael's house. The floors creak. Winds howl. Michael climbs out the attic window. If he can get to the television aerial, he'll be safe. Before he reaches it, however, his feet begin to slide. Unable to stop himself, he slithers off the roof and splashes



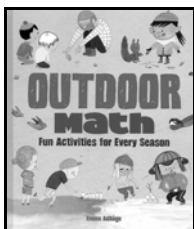
(cont'd on p. 64)

# Non-Fiction: Preschool - Grade 6

ADBAGE, Emma

## **Outdoor Math: Fun Activities for Every Season**

Kids Can Press, 2016. 24p. Illus. Gr. K-3. 978-1-771386128. Hdbk. \$16.95



The 24 activities shown in this book could be used for any group of young children, indoors or outside, and although they are divided into seasonal groups, only those requiring snow would be limited to one season.

For tactile and kinaesthetic learners some of these ideas will help reinforce concepts and the explanation of Addition, Subtraction, Multiplication and Division may be adaptable for kindergarten classes.

The coloured illustrations are simple but show the reader the concept, or process, that is the point of the exercise. There is an index at the back of the book, in which the activities are arranged by concept, which may be useful for teachers and parents

The text is not readily accessible for the age of the children shown in the pictures, and would require explanation by a leader.

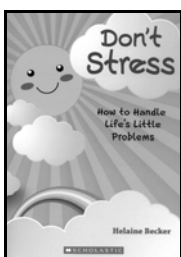
**Thematic Links:** Mathematical Concepts; Numbers; Patterns

Mavis Holder

BECKER, Helaine

## **Don't Stress: How to Handle Life's Little Problems**

Scholastic Canada, 2016. 96p. Gr. 2-6. 978-1-4431-4842-9. Pbk. \$6.99



**Don't Stress: How to Handle Life's Little Problems** is a book of tips for dealing with stress in your everyday life. Each page of the book has a different tip for managing stress, stopping yourself from worrying, or simply relaxing. The reader can flip through it and find

one that works for them. Some of the tips are very simple, like getting up and playing a sport, and some are more involved, like instructions for progressive relaxation.

This book doesn't go in depth about any of the topics it discusses, and it is very simply designed and written. However, **Don't Stress** does provide a lot of different tips which readers can easily browse through when they are feeling stressed or worried. In a world where life is becoming more stressful for children, it is

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nice to see a collection of ideas that kids could use to help themselves feel better.

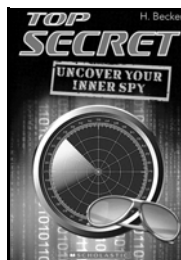
**Thematic Links:** Stress; Worrying; Self-Help

Alice Albarda

BECKER, Helaine

## **Top Secret: Uncover Your Inner Spy**

Scholastic Canada, 2016. 96p. Gr 3-7. 978-1-4431-4820-7. Pbk. \$5.99



Have you always wondered what it would be like to be a spy? Find out in this highly entertaining book which includes quizzes and exercises that will help you discover the spy within. Start by checking out your observation skills.

Test how good you are at Parentspeak. Then learn some codes and how well you can decode each one.

What real-life spy do you resemble? Are you Laura Secord, a Canadian who risked her life to deliver information about the American plans during the War of 1812? Or would you make a better Hedy Lamarr, a glamorous Hollywood star who invented a way to jam radio signals so that the enemy couldn't intercept American messages during World War II?

This title provides numerous amusing tests, quizzes, puzzles, and missions readers will enjoy as they learn both about spying and themselves. Intended for a female audience, the book will entertain readers in grades 3 to 7. It's recommended for junior level girls.

**Thematic Links:** Spies; Spying; Famous Spies; Personality; Sleeper Agent; Memory; Codes; Logic

Helen Mason

DALRYMPLE, Lisa

## **Cultural Traditions in South Korea (Cultural Traditions in our World Series)**



Crabtree Publishing, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. 2-4. 978-0-7787-8088-5. Hdbk. \$10.76

This title is a new addition to the *Cultural Traditions in My World Series* by Crabtree designed for young readers and fo-

G

cussing on the ways that people in each country celebrate their culture with holidays and celebrations. This book about South Korea includes information about celebrations such as New Year, birthdays, love, independence and liberation days, children's day, Buddah's birthday, teacher's day, memorial day, Korean thanksgiving, national foundation day, Christmas day and some local festivals and games. Arranged in colourful 2-page spreads each chapter gives basic information about why and how various cultural days are celebrated in the country. The text is interspersed with colourful captioned photographs and illustrations as well as text boxes and Did you Know? boxes which give additional information. Words in bold type are defined in the glossary at the end of the book. The books also contains a Table of Contents and an Index.

These books provide quite a bit of information about the cultural traditions of a variety of countries for young readers. They are presented in a very accessible style with large print and many illustrations which will appeal to the younger set. This series could be paired with the *Celebrations in Our World Series* also from Crabtree and the title *Lighting Our World; A Year of Celebrations* by Catherine Rondina from Kids Can Press to form the basis for a study of world cultures and celebrations in a primary social studies program.

**Thematic Links:** Festivals; Holidays; Culture; South Korea

Victoria Pennell

EAMER, Claire

## **Inside your Insides**

Illustrated by Marie-Eve Tremblay. Kids Can Press, 2016. 36p. Illus. Gr. 3-6. 978-1-77138-332-5. Hdbk. \$18.95

E

Microbiology is an unlikely topic for a younger reader, however, this book describes in detail, and with much humour, the many microbes that live in, on and around us every day. Young scientists will enjoy that the information is presented in a straightforward manner that can be accessed from chapter headings or by a very comprehensive index. Many pages have side bars with quick facts and some (groaner) puns that would sit well with the intended reader!

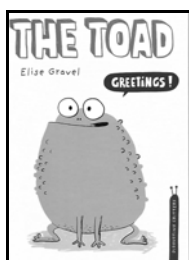
**Thematic Links:** Microbiology; Health Units; Medicines; Vaccinations

Mavis Holder



GRAVEL, Elise  
***The Toad (Disgusting Critters Series)***  
 Tundra Books, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. K-4. 978-1-77049-667-5. Hdbk. \$12.99

E



This is the latest title Elise Gravel has created in a series of off-beat science books which combine scientific facts with humorous cartoons and dialogues.

In each book, Gravel covers the special features of each animal as well as its habitat, food, reproduction and other interesting facts. Everyday language is combined with scientific terms, making it more readable than typical non-fiction texts. Gravel livens up her scientific text with hilarious responses from the critters on each double page spread.

***The Toad*** covers the topics of toad habitat, different kinds of toads, anatomy, eating habits, parenting and their use to humans.

The humour and grossness of these books will attract many young readers who need library books that are of a high interest, easy readability level and well supported by engaging pictures.

Highly recommended for the school library.

**Thematic Links:** Toads

Victoria Pennell

JOHNSON, Robin  
***What is a Hurricane? (Severe Weather Close-up Series)***  
 Crabtree Publishing, 2016. 24p. Illus. Gr. K-3. 978-0-7787-2398-1. Hdbk. \$18.36

E



Before segueing into the topic of strong winds and hurricanes, this easy non-fiction book in the *Severe Weather Close-Up Series* by Johnson begins by getting the reader thinking about how

wind feels and why it moves objects. In the next two pages, she shows children enjoying themselves in stormy weather, whether they are indoors admiring it, or outside playing in it. A real photograph of a hurricane appears on the following page, along with examples of the damage it causes around cities and towns. A weather map helps illustrate how hurricanes form and where they are likely to happen. Children who are interested in weather will learn about meteorologists who earn a living by studying (and naming) storms.

There are three "What Do You Think" questions that appear in sidebars throughout the book, and directions for an activity where chil-

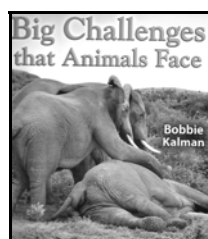
dren can make their own weather report. Back material has one page of hurricane books and website listings, a ten word glossary, and a small index. Children will find this book useful for elementary school reports or for general information.

**Thematic Links:** Hurricanes; Weather; Natural Disaster; Storms

Tanya Boudreau

KALMAN, Bobbie  
***Big Challenges That Animals Face (Big Science Ideas Series)***  
 Crabtree Publishing, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. 2-4. 978-0-7787-2781-1. Hdbk. 20.76

G



This book is another addition to the *Big Science Ideas Series* from Crabtree Publishing which focuses on a variety of science topics of interest to young readers. This book concentrates on some of the challenges that animals in the wild face in today's world - habitat loss, climate change, non-native species invading their habitat, pollution, over-fishing, poaching, collisions with cars and boats, and human disease. It also shows some of the efforts which scientists are making to counteract these problems.

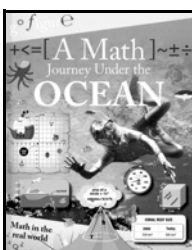
The text is done in large print with lots of coloured captioned photographs which will hold the interest of young readers. Information boxes are included on some pages. The book contains a Table of Contents, a list of additional resources, a glossary and an index. This would be a good resource for young readers doing some introductory research on endangered animals.

**Thematic Links:** Endangered Animals

Victoria Pennell

KOLL, Hilary and Steve Mills  
***Go Figure: A Math Journey Under the Ocean (Go Figure Series)***  
 Crabtree Publishing Company, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. 4-8. 978-0-7787-2315-8. Hdbk. \$21.56

G/A



Part of Crabtree's *Go Figure Series*, this title provides math problems related to underwater exploration. Each two-page spread focuses on one aspect of the underwater world, such as learning to dive, exploring ship-

wrecks, calculating the dimensions of sunken ruins, and measuring the size of an underwater volcano. Readers are given a mission, provided with the math skills to help them with that mission, and then challenged to solve problems related to it.

Skills include working with negative numbers, percentage, coordinate grids, graphs, averages, reading gages, speed, proportions, area, perimeter, surface area, volume, exponents, circles, and cones. Some of the mathematics seems very abstract and high level for this grade range. Many of the explanations focus on formulae rather than understanding.

The title includes answers, a Math Glossary, Learning More section, and index. Although colourful, the book is text-dense, with few photographs. Because of the format, it is likely to interest readers who are already proficient in mathematics and both readily understand and can work with abstract concepts and large numbers.

**Thematic Links:** Ocean Diving; Under the Ocean; Negative Numbers; Percentage; Coordinate Grids; Graphs; Averages; Reading Gages; Speed; Proportions; Area; Perimeter; Surface Area; Volume; Exponents; Circles; Cones

Helen Mason

KOPP, Megan  
***What Do You Find in a Backyard? (Ecosystems Close-up Series)***  
 Crabtree Publishing, 2016. 24p. Illus. Gr. K-3. 978-0-7787-2255-7. Hdbk. \$18.36

E

This book is one of six easy non-fiction books in the *Ecosystems Close-up Series* by Crabtree Publishing. Kopp's focus in this book is the North American backyard.

After a general definition, she describes the living and non-living things that can be found there (animals, plants, people) and how they depend on one another to grow and change. Ecosystem is one of the words that appears in bold typeface in the short paragraphs, and in the back of the book in the glossary. Topics about shelter, air, food chains, and energy are two pages in length and include colour photographs and drawings. After reading each section, children can answer the questions posed by a cartoon owl (How do bluebirds depend on backyard flowers to live?)

Additional information can be found in the labels appearing next to the photographs (Gills allow fish to take in air from the water). Facts about backyard birds, insects, mammals, and fish can be found in the book, and they can be seen in the day or night, and in the different



seasons. With the pages being bordered with digital illustrations of houses, leaves, and green lawns, this is a beautiful book to learn from.

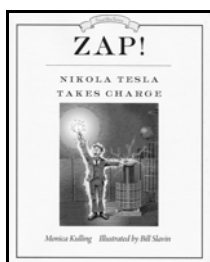
**Thematic Links:** Suburban Animals; Urban Animals; Urban Ecology; Garden Ecology; Backyards; Nature; Connections

Tanya Boudreau

KULLING, Monica

**Zap! Nikola Tesla Takes Charge**  
(Great Ideas Series)

Illustrated by Bill Slavin. Tundra Books, 2016. Unp. Illus. Gr. K-5. 978-1-770495227. Hdbk. \$17.99



With the increased interest in electric cars, the name of Nikola Tesla is becoming more recognisable as the Tesla Company is a major provider of batteries. In this book the author tells the story of a young Croatian immigrant who has a dream of

harnessing the power of the Niagara Falls to provide electricity to New York. His idea was to use alternating current instead of the standard direct current supported by Thomas Edison, and it was not until George Westinghouse backed his plan to light the Chicago World Fair that he was able to build a hydro plant at Niagara.

The outlines of the pictures were drawn in pen and ink and the colours entered digitally.

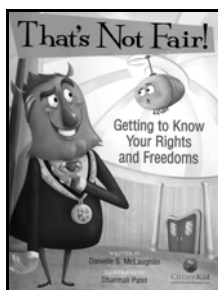
This is another interesting biography from the author, many of the subjects of interest to boys. This book is the most recent from *Tundra's Great Ideas Series*.

**Thematic Links:** Biography; Inventors; Electrical Power

Mavis Holder

MCLAUGHLIN, Danielle  
**That's Not Fair: Getting to Know Your Rights and Freedoms**  
(CitizenKids Series)

Illustrated by Dharmali Patel. Kids Can Press, 2016. 44p. Illus. Gr. 2-6. 978-1-771382083. Hdbk. \$18.95



Councillor Bug protests with the familiar phrase "That's not fair" when the mayor introduces six different motions to council. Each chapter looks at the pros and cons of each idea such as privacy rights, right of religion, right of assembly etc. After each

chapter is a short list of questions for discussion. What was the intent of the law? Did it work? And were there any unexpected results?

This could be a great resource for government studies or even for classroom or household management. Each law is well intentioned, but any law puts limits on the freedom of some individuals

The author is the Director of Education for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and Education Trust. The book is one of the *CitizenKids Series* from Kids Can Press, which encourage children to explore the more complex issues of rights and privileges of citizenship.

**Thematic Links:** Government; Rights and Freedoms

Mavis Holder

MUDLER, Michelle

**Pocket Change: Pitching in for a Better World** (Orca Footprints Series)

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 48p. Illus. Gr. 2-6. 978-1-4598-0966-6. Hdbk. \$19.95



*Pocket Change* is a book which invites readers to question today's consumerism and learn about more sustainable lifestyles. When was money invented? Why do we buy so much stuff? Where does all of this stuff come from?

Author Michelle Mulder tackles the origins of modern consumer culture and explains its effects, like food waste, child labour, and pollution. Mulder also presents alternatives which can help solve these problems, such as microloans, community gardens, trading, sweat equity, and even lending libraries full of kitchen appliances. This book asks big questions about why our society is the way it is, right down to the origins of money.

While readers are introduced to a lot of big and difficult concepts, the tone of the book is easy to understand without feeling dumbed-down. The language is simple enough for younger readers to understand without oversimplifying the topics. Parents and other adult readers will probably be able to learn something new from this book too! The book also presents readers with activities that they can do and organizations that they can learn more about, allowing kids to help solve some of the problems mentioned in this book. Overall, *Pocket Change* is a surprisingly radical book which encourages kids to question why we live the way that we do, and empowers them to make a difference!

**Thematic Links:** Consumerism; Poverty;

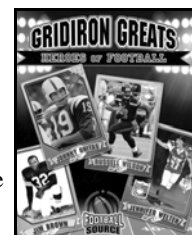
Environmental Issues;

Alice Albarda

RIVKIN, Jennifer

**Gridiron Greats: Heroes of Football**  
(Football Source Series)

Crabtree Publishing 32p. Illus. Gr. 3-6. 978-0-7787-2295-3. Hdbk. \$21.56



For the football fan this will be an up to date, biographical reference to superstars currently playing in the American Football League. There is a reference to the Grey Cup in the biography of "Pinball" Clemons as a remarkable running back who played for the Toronto Argonauts, but this is the single Canadian reference.

The statistics on each player give their date and place of birth, position, height and team. The one page biography gives a brief outline of the player, but there is no uniformity of information. Players are grouped according to the position they have on the field e.g. rushers or linebackers. Information on two coaches, one referee and one female player are among the 45 named athletes featured in this collection.

Fact boxes are included on each page and attributed quotes on the biography of some players. There is an index of the names of the players featured and a glossary of football terms at the back of the book

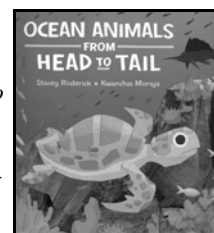
**Thematic Links:** Biography; American Football

Mavis Holder

RODERICK, Stacey

**Ocean Animals From Head to Tail**

Illustrated by Kwanchai Moriya. Kids Can Press, 2016. 36p. Illus. Gr. K-1. 978-1-77138-345-5. Hdbk. \$18.95



This book is a guessing game, similar to the author's previous book, *Dinosaurs From Head to Tail*. The reader is shown a strange body part and is asked to identify the creature. Overleaf is a full double page illustration of the animal and a paragraph giving some basic information. Nine creatures are treated in this way and then there are two pages showing another eight curious sea creatures and a single fact about each. Who knew that starfish have an eye at the end of each arm? Bright paper collage illustrations by Kwanchai Moriya add to the intrigue of the

guessing game.

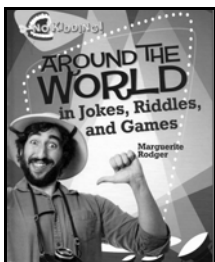
**Thematic Links:** Sea Creatures; Paper Collage

Mavis Holder

RODGER, Marguerite  
***Around the World in Jokes, Riddles, and Games***

Crabtree Publishing Company, 2016.  
32p. Illus. Gr. 3-6. 978-0-7787-2388-2. Hdbk.  
\$21.56

A



***Around the World in Jokes, Riddles, and Games*** is an introduction to humour in its many forms. Each chapter introduces a type of humour, such as puns, and provides definitions and examples. Lots of literary terms, like metaphors and synonyms, are also introduced as tools which can be used in humour. Jokes are interspersed throughout the book as well, which often don't relate to the topic being discussed on the page. Overall, this book is an unusual combination of humour and educational content.

The book's theme of "around the world" is represented by segments about how jokes, idioms, or humour in general can be different in different languages or cultures. These segments prove to be some of the more interesting parts of the book. Unfortunately, these are relatively small segments and sometimes seem to be thrown in as an afterthought. The "around the world" theme could have been more well-integrated into the book.

This book does not really succeed as a joke book (especially because the author often explains *why* a joke is funny), but could succeed as a resource for learning about humour. The inclusion of definitions of literary terms suggests that this book is in fact intended for the English classroom, and that is the context in which this book would be the most successful.

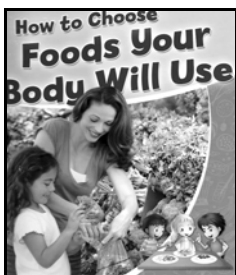
**Thematic Links:** Humour; Riddles; Language

Alice Albarda

SJONGER, Rebecca  
***How to Choose Foods Your Body Will Use (Healthy Habits for a Lifetime Series)***

Crabtree Publishing, 2016. 24p. Illus. Gr. K-3. Hdbk. 978-0-7787-2350-9. \$18.36 ea.

G



This title is one of the latest in the *Healthy Habits for a Lifetime Series* which teaches

children how they can improve their sleep, diet, fitness levels, and coping skills. Coloured stock photographs of children from a variety of backgrounds and cultures appear around the text on every page. The eight to ten words that appear in bold are defined in the glossary in the back of the book. Back material includes a bibliography of websites and books, a quiz, and an index. Colourful chapter headings and picture borders add decoration to the page, as do the thought clouds, and different shaped sidebars that contain tips and routine ideas.

And just as appears on the cover, there are cartoon illustrations in the book as well. These characters, and the rhyming titles, lighten the seriousness of the topics; making them more accessible to readers.

***How to Choose Foods Your Body Will Use*** looks at healthy eating habits such as selecting healthy foods - whole foods as opposed to processed foods and junk food. It also looks at calorie intake, snacks, and outlines steps whereby the readers can make dinner for their families.

This would be a good book to supplement a health unit at the primary level.

**Thematic Links:** Food; Healthy Eating

Victoria Pennell

SJONGER, Rebecca  
***Maker Projects for Kids Who Love Games (Be A Maker! Series)***

Crabtree Publishing, 2016. 32p. Illus.  
Gr 5-8. 978-0-7787-2248-9. Hdbk. \$21.56

G



Part of Crabtree's *Be a Maker! Series*, this title discusses games, game makers, and the maker movement. It encourages kids interested in math and design to develop their own games, either 3-D or electronic ones. The text includes a very brief but interesting history of games and the development of modern board games.

A *Be a Maker* sidebar encourages readers to consider what to include in their games and provides steps makers can follow to develop a useful game. *Makers and Shakers* introduces people who invented popular games - people such as Elizabeth Magie, who developed the game that later became Monopoly.

There are three *Make It!* spreads. *System Hack* explains how to make interesting changes to an existing game. *Materials Mania* encourages readers to brainstorm how to use existing materials in intriguing ways. *Game On!* challenges kids to develop their own idea from scratch.

The book includes a glossary, a list of additional sources, and an index. It will interest

kids and families who enjoy playing games and want to expand their pleasure by making something of their own. Alternatively, it could be used as a starter for a student project related to math, science, technology, or language arts.

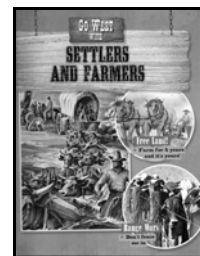
**Thematic Links:** Games; Games History; Game Design; Game Prototypes; Developing Games; Testing Games

Helen Mason

STUCKEY, Rachel  
***Go West With Settlers and Farmers (Go West! Series)***

Crabtree Publishing, 2016. 32p. Illus.  
Gr. 3-6. 978-0-7787-2330-1. Hdbk. \$21.56

G



Part of Crabtree's *Go West! Series*, this title describes the different groups who travelled West, many of them after the American Homestead Act of 1862 allowed settlers to stake a claim to 160 acres (65 hectares) of land. In Canada, a similar promise called the Dominion Lands Act was passed in 1872. These Acts encouraged American settlement West of the Mississippi River despite the presence of Aboriginal groups and Mexican homesteaders. In Canada, immigrants pioneered the area West of modern-day Ontario.

***Go West With Settlers and Farmers*** discusses and maps some of the trails the settlers took, including nine paths across parts of the United States and one in Canada. Historic photographs, sketches, and photos of modern reenactments help readers place themselves in the period. Interesting sidebars include information on what settlers needed to pack, provide questions in My Western Journal, and offer factual Did You Know? boxes.

Given the breadth of the topic, this is a cursory introduction to Western expansion suitable for young readers, who will be interested in many of the visuals, including an historic photograph of Billy the Kid. Although the conflict with Aboriginal groups is handled superficially, the book covers little-known information about Black settlers and has a small section on Chinese workers.

***Go West With Settlers and Farmers*** includes a glossary, a list of additional sources, an index, and a time line. Although it provides some Canadian content, it focuses on the American experience and would be most suited for a survey course in this area.

**Thematic Links:** Settling the West; American

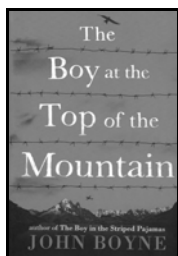
(cont'd on p. 58)

# Fiction: Grades 7 - 12

BOYNE, John

**The Boy at the Top of the Mountain**  
Doubleday Canada 2016. 224p. Gr. 5  
up. 978-0-3851-68766-9. Hdbk. \$22.99

E



**The Boy at the Top of the Mountain** is a small tour de force by Irish author John Boyne who brought the world of children's lit, *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas*. The boy at the top of the mountain is Pierrot/Pieter who through no intent or will of his own finds himself at age eight living

with Adolph Hitler at "Berghof" where the Fuhrer maintains a summer retreat near Salzburg in Austria.

Boyne sets the stage for this terribly dark story when young Pierrot is about seven and living in Paris with his French mother and German father who has been deeply traumatized as a German soldier in The Great War. His best friend in Paris is a young deaf Jewish child called Anshel.

Pierrot's life begins to deteriorate when his father disappears in an alcoholic haze and his mother dies of consumption. Pierrot is orphaned and sent to an orphanage in Southern France. He is happy enough there but events conspire to have him join his father's long lost sister, Beatrix, who is a housekeeper at Berghof and who has received permission from Hitler to bring him to live at Berghof.

At Berghof, Pierrot's transformation to Pieter ensues and his story becomes synonymous with the rise of Hitler and and Nazi Party in Germany during the 1930's. Pieter totally absorbs the Fuhrer's vision for the Fatherland and becomes deeply committed to the cause. The tale becomes dark and disturbing and the reader is drawn into a world of power and betrayal. To keep the tension high, Boyne slyly incorporates well known Nazi personnel and and accurate personal history about Hitler himself. Boyne never shies away from the worst known Nazi activities in any way, and personally pulls Pieter into these atrocities.

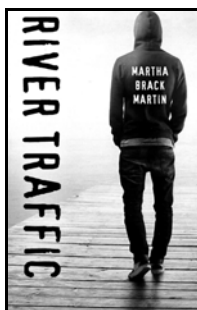
If the book has any obvious shortcomings, it may be that the set-up to the story is strangely awkward and in some ways unconvincing, especially the friendship between Anshel and Pierrot. In the fullness of the narrative, the reader does discover why the plot was constructed in the way it was. As this is a book written for children and young adults, Boyne needed a way to provide some kind of redemption to Pierrot, and to complete the story in a satisfactory way. This is minor quibble, however, and **The Boy at the Top of the Mountain** is highly recommended for readers of all ages.

**Thematic Links:** World War II; Adolph Hitler; Nazis

Anne Letain

BRACK MARTIN, Martha  
**River Traffic (Orca Soundings Series)**  
Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 126p. Gr. 6-11. 978-1-4598-1336-6. Pbk. \$9.95  
(Reviewed from an Advance Reading Copy)

G



Tom's dad feels like their livelihood is in trouble. Their marina isn't as flashy as some of the other ones in the area, but he has a reputation as one heck of a mechanic and that has always put food on their table in the past. Tom does what he can to help his father, but he also has to worry about school

and getting his volunteer hours so that he can graduate.

Tom's volunteer placement is with his best friend, Nate's, father at the police station. Tom likes it because he gets the inside scoop on what is happening in his small town. On his way out one day Nate's father stops him and asks him to "keep his eyes and ears open around the river" (p. 9). This is Tom's first clue that something is brewing that may hit close to home.

After hearing the warning from Nate's father, Tom notices three things: One - a beautiful boat, driven by an even better looking girl, docks at his marina. Tom can't believe his luck. It turns out that Kat is travelling with her father but has a passion for local history, in this case, Tom's small town and its ties to rum-running during Prohibition. Could this be too good to be true? Two - rumours have been floating around school that Dominik Oleg, football quarterback and big-man on campus, has a big payday in the works. What could Dom be involved with? Three - then there is his dad's work in the shed. Tom has been told that the shed is totally 100% off limits. Tom wonders what his dad could be up to - drinking away his sorrows or up to something less than legal. It takes one stormy night for all of the pieces of Tom's puzzle to fall into place. His small river town becomes more exciting than he ever imagined.

As a high-interest low-vocabulary title, **River Traffic** is a tidy little mystery with interesting historical and contemporary details about smuggling, law enforcement, and policing. Brack Martin's characters are believably crafted - teen texting lingo (sadly) included. Happily this title is more mystery than teen-

drama - a refreshing change.

**Thematic Links:** Family Relationships; Human Trafficking; Legal Procedures

Angela Thompson

BROUWER, Sigmund  
**Barracuda (The Seven Prequels Series)**

G

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 174p.  
Gr. 7-9. 978-1-4598-1152-2. Pbk. \$9.95



I first met Jim Webb in Sigmund Brouwer's contributions to Orca Publisher's *Seven Series (The Devil's Pass)* and the *Sevens Sequels (Tin Soldier)*. Of all of the Sevens, I liked Webb the best; Brouwer brings the troubled Webb to life in a way that grabs the reader and pulls them in. As a teenager, Webb has a deep affinity for music and a guitar gifted to him by his dead father. He explores this musical talent not only in the Sevens books, but in two of Orca's *Limelight* novels: shorter novels incorporating teens' experiences of the performing arts. Brouwer, himself a musician and lecturer on the power of music as an educational tool, includes on his website a music video of an older Webb busking on the streets (<http://sigmundbrouwer.com/orca-limelights/>) The actor in the video is remarkably well-cast for Webb as we know him in *The Devil's Pass* and *Tin Soldier*. An accompanying webpage devoted to Barracuda is promised; hopefully it will be live by the time *Barracuda* is released.

In **Barracuda**, a prequel to the other novels, we get a glimpse of Webb at thirteen, vacationing with his grandfather in the Florida keys. Webb, as a character, is almost as engaging in **Barracuda** as in the novels for older readers, and it is enriching to be privy to his relationship with a living David McLean, the grandfather he loved, and who left him the legacy of mystery explored in the two later books.

**Barracuda** melds the song by the 1970's group Heart ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0OX\\_8YvFxA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p0OX_8YvFxA)) with Webb's experience in the Keys, where he meets his grandfather's dying friend and an entrancing young musician named Kristie. Needless to say, Kristie turns out to be the metaphoric barracuda, pumping Webb about the fortune in diamonds David's friend had apparently hidden in his past. The Florida Keys, pirate treasure, fellow young musicians, Webb's first kiss, all com-

bine to allure; in contrast, Webb has to visit a dying man - reminding him of his father's death - and be coerced unwillingly into deep discussions with his grandfather. *"I didn't know this trip was about getting me alone so you could grill me about my life,"* Webb complains (p.19), but David's obvious affection and Webb's love and respect for him open the channels of communication. Spring Break for Webb isn't feeling much like a vacation - there is too much going on, emotionally and socially - but the mystery of the lost diamonds provides a respite from the tensions for both Webb and the reader.

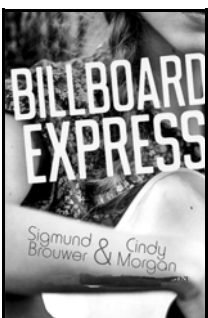
While some of the narration seems a bit trite (unlike Brouwer's writing for older teens), the balance between the development of Webb's newfound maturity and the dangers of the more quickly paced mystery is finely crafted. Webb's discussions with David - and the context for such discussions - are genuine, as are the mixed feelings Webb has for the ultimately deceptive Kristie. You can see from Webb and David in *Barracuda* the foundation of Webb's sorrow at David's death, and the source of the loving memories he has of his grandfather.

**Thematic Links:** Music; Fishing; Florida Keys; Prohibition

Karyn Huenemann

BROUWER, Sigmund, and Cindy Morgan  
*Billboard Express (Orca Limelights Series)*

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 118p. Gr. 6-11. 978-1-4598-1108-9. Pbk. \$9.95



*Billboard Express* could be considered a companion title to Sigmund Brouwer's earlier title *Rock the Boat*. In this novel, we get a more intimate portrait of Elle McWilliam. Elle has an abundance of talent and her father has enough money to support her while she realizes her dreams. She has an agent, Bernie, and a deal with an influential record label. What more could a musician ask for? It rapidly becomes clear, however, that Elle is not good enough. Her "look" just won't sell, so her label tells her. Wanting her to dye her hair blonde is the first of many requests that seem more like ultimatums. Elle is conflicted. Having a music career is what she has always dreamed of, but the emphasis on her image is taking all of the fun out of the experience. It takes sage advice from an industry veteran, Marsha Chapman, to rescue Elle from her self-doubt. With a particularly inspired rant on YouTube, Elle takes back control of her life

and her music.

The overarching messages from Sigmund Brouwer and Cindy Morgan's novel *Billboard Express* are: have integrity, believe in yourself, and follow your dreams. This title does stand alone, though the depth of the characters is enhanced if you read the connecting titles (*Rock the Boat* and *Devil's Pass*). This is a feel-good glimpse into the life of a rising star. If you are looking for titles with strong female protagonists that are high-interest/low vocabulary, this title is exactly what you are looking for.

**Thematic Links:** Friendship; Following One's Dreams; Music Industry; Self-Worth; Perseverance; Happiness; Integrity

Angela Thompson

CARTER, Brooke  
*Another Miserable Love Song (Orca Soundings Series)*

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 144p. Gr. 7-12. 978-1-459813120. Pbk. \$9.95

This is Brooke Carter's first novel, and it is particularly suited to the *Orca Soundings Series*. It is contemporary and holds the reader's interest.

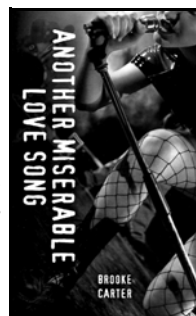
Kallie Echo's father has just died and her mother is not in the picture. Kallie faces life on the street until her friend Jamie, a drummer in an all-girl band, convinces her to join them. Misery Girl, Kallie's nickname, is now the band's new name and she is the new lead singer. What transpires is a thoroughly modern and realistic love story unencumbered by moralizing or politics. One could say the story's basic premise is that loss is evidence that at least there is something in your life *to* lose.

There is depth to this truncated story and the author's edgy delivery saves it from shallow breathiness. The title is a characteristic touch of the book's unadorned view of life balanced by a faith in abiding goodness, regardless of context. The story of the transitioning Jamie and her-then-his involvement with Kallie has a ring of genuine truth about it, although I did find his sudden death a disappointment. It would have been interesting to see how the pair fared musically and personally.

The author's knowledge of the contemporary music scene in Vancouver is exemplary and I won't even begin to presume to describe it.

**Thematic Links:** Music; Punk Rock; Grief; Love; Friendship; Relationships

Lesley Little



CHARLES, Norma  
*Last Chance Island*  
Ronsdale Press, 2016. 228p. Gr. 5 up. 978-1-55380-458-1. Pbk. \$11.95

G/E

This somewhat under-the-radar tale is vintage Norma Charles: a young adult is faced with a complicated situation and must use inner strength he or she did not know was there in order to survive and flourish.

This story begins in Africa, in the midst of a civil war where yet another village is pillaged and burned. The only survivors are two cousins. Kalu is 13 and his cousin Aisha is much younger; she has been traumatized by the events. The two find their way to the coast and then aboard a small launch captained by a smuggler who abandons them on the uninhabited side of an isolated island - Last Chance Island - off the coast of Ireland.

The next narrative involves a young Canadian, Lily (Spike), whose father dies suddenly of a heart attack. "Spike" is sent to Last Chance Island because the elderly woman operating the island lighthouse is her only surviving relative. When a rebellious Spike tries to leave the island in a small launch she discovers the two stowaways and tries to help because Aisha is ill. Spike's efforts are hampered by weather, mechanics, and Immigration officials. Kalu and Aisha face death back in Africa but Immigration officials are actively detaining illegal immigrants. Additionally, the future of the lighthouse is in question and, therefore, Spike's future as well.

The resolution to this impossible situation is both believable and intelligently kind. Almost more important is the unusual combination of protagonists in this very international tale and how each of the characters manages to maintain the best of what makes them different while collaborating on a solution to a situation whose local context reaches beyond the shores of Last Chance Island.

**Thematic Links:** Step Parents; Family Life; Refugees; Lighthouse Maintenance

Lesley Little

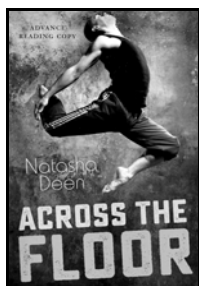
DEEN, Natasha  
*Across the Floor (Orca Limelights Series)*

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 138p. Gr. 5-11. 978-1-4598-0920-8. Pbk. \$9.95 (Reviewed from Advance Reading Copy)

A/G

Luc is a football player. Everything in his life revolves around playing and practicing.





After a knee injury, Luc's coach pulls him aside and insists that if he wants to be considered for the team in the fall, that he'll have to enroll in a dance class over the summer. Dance will keep Luc flexible, help him heal and protect himself from re-injury.

Luc hesitates and his parents are less than thrilled. Luc's father counts on his help with their landscaping business but he grudgingly strikes a deal with Luc that he may take the class but will still do his full load of lawn care jobs.

His first class is a disaster. The class is supposed to be a beginner-level of difficulty, but Luc quickly realizes that never having danced before is a disadvantage. The terminology is foreign and Luc trips over the terms as well as his feet. He also alienates his fellow classmates by being abrasive and generally unfriendly. He is not off to a good start. Luc establishes himself as the classic underdog. It isn't difficult to guess where this novel is going.

The classes are difficult. Between classes and work, his days are long and exhausting. Luc's father is relentless. The smallest mistake or oversight brings a lecture about family responsibility and selfishness. More than once, Luc has interior dialogue about quitting and the consequences. His indecision is realistic though predictable.

If you are looking for a novel that will engage male readers, Luc is flawed though self-aware enough to be identified with. The dance terminology is a bit overwhelming in sections, the effect of which is the reader feeling just as flustered as Luc. Overall, everything plots out as expected with Luc persevering and finding a new dream to follow in the end. The formula may be comforting for some, but underwhelming to others.

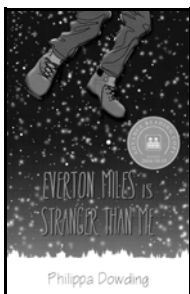
**Thematic Links:** Friendship; Perseverance; Family Relationships; Responsibility; Following One's Dreams

Angela Thompson

DOWDING, Philippa

**Everton Miles Is Stranger than Me**  
(*The Night Flyer's Handbook, Book 2*)

Dundurn Press, 2016.  
232p. Gr. 7-12. 978-1459735279. Pbk. \$9.99



This sequel to Philippa Dowding's fantasy novel *The Strange Gift of Gwendolyn Golden* begins with Gwendolyn entering grade

nine at a new school with a new set of circumstances. Grade nine is a fresh kind of torture, the new boy in town is a Night Flyer like herself but he appears to be dating her nemesis, and Gwendolyn can't bring herself to share her latest misgivings with her best friend, who, by the way, is not a Night Flyer.

Those misgivings concern the appearance of a dark winged stranger who seems to be calling her name whenever she visits the cornfield near her Watcher's cabin in the woods. (According to the Night Flyer's Handbook, a Mentor and Watcher are de rigueur, non-negotiable, and necessary.) She is aware of the danger the stranger represents but she cannot quite stay as far away from him as she should.

As the mystery of the winged stranger intensifies, Gwendolyn finds herself moving closer to the brink of the Shade, the unremitting blackness that swallowed her father who disappeared when she was six years old. This entire segment of the novel assigns to fantasy an adolescent's coming to terms with her father's death. The advantage of this is to de-personalize without diminishing the importance of the sudden loss of a parent when one is still a child. Author Dowding describes her heroine's heart breaking several times until she has to face the powerful darkness of the Shade. It is at that point that she discovers the inner strength borne of her deep affection and sincere joy for those around her and those who are no longer.

Dowding's effective use of magical realism gives this novel the flexibility to reconcile the minutiae of everyday life with the huge events that can derail it, allowing a resolution that neither diminishes nor exaggerates either of these polar opposites.

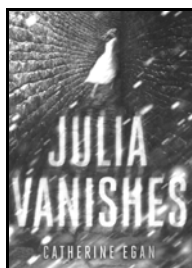
**Thematic Links:** Family Life; Siblings; High School; Friendship; Grief; Self-Respect

Lesley Little

EGAN, Catherine

**Julia Vanishes: The Witch's Child, Book 1**

Doubleday Canada, 2016. 375p. Gr. 6-12. 978-0-385-68465-1. Hdbk. \$21.99



In *Julia Vanishes*, Egan both follows the traditions of fantasy literature, and yet creates a unique landscape and plot. The heroine, Julia, is a very mature teen, forced to grow up quickly to cope with a drug-addicted father and a mother executed for witchcraft. She and her brother, disabled and disfigured by the scourge, have been taken in by Esme, a Fagan-like organizer of a rag-tag criminal group, which will perform any job for pay. Julia's unique skill to temporarily disappear

makes her a valued member, and her brother is a genius at engineering useful weapons and devices for the gang. The current job seems simple enough: Julia is to act as a housemaid in the home of an older wealthy woman, Mrs. Och, and report back any events of interest.

There is much to report: a guest who lives in the basement and appears to be evolving into a wolfman, the rescue and safe passage of a convicted witch, and the harbouring of two academics who are researching various arcane arts. Mrs. Och's status offers protection from the current political mood, which is a reactionary stamping out of all magic and witchcraft through public Cleansings. But Julia learns that Mrs. Och is actually an ancient almost-immortal, now in her final stages of life, who is in a life and death battle with her two brothers for control of the elemental forces.

As Julia is dragged into this battle, she chooses to sell her skills for a good pay day. But despite her professed cynicism about the world, the elegant clothes and rich food that she is finally able to afford don't sit well. A friend of her mother's sees her situation like this: "*Your trouble, my dear, is that you've been born into a time of very few choices for a girl of your talents and character and social class... But I wonder sometimes what kind of life your mother hoped for you. Unlike the rest of us, she never learned to live without hope.*" (p. 278) Julia realizes that her integrity is worth more than the pieces of silver, and along with the combined forces of the criminal gang and Mrs. Och's powerful friends, she hopes to live up to her mother's standards.

Egan's novel is rich in characterization and plot twists. The complex back stories of the characters and the clever variations on magical powers fit well with the geography of Spira City and its Dickensian social issues. She has set up many leads that readers will be eager to follow in the sequels.

**Thematic Links:** Fantasy; Magic; Witchcraft

Patricia Jermy

FISCHER, Breanna

**Small Displays of Chaos**

Coteau Books, 2016. 102p. Gr. 10-12. 978-1-55050-661-7. Pbk. \$12.95

Seventeen-year old Rayanne Timco is in her senior year in high school. "*Rayanne's goal in high school was similar to a criminal's in a heist: get in, get out, and be seen by no one.*" (p. 1) However, now her parents have forced her to see the school guidance counsellor to address her



eating disorder. Even though she loves food such as homemade potato and onion perogies, Rayanne is fanatical about controlling her eating. In Grade 10 Phys Ed, she began counting her calories and food intake as part of an assignment; and now, this habit has become an obsession whose name is Edie.

Despite a supportive family and a vibrant Ukrainian community, Rayanne feels isolated by the imaginary Edie who continually urges her to lose more weight. Edie is hyper-critical of everything that Rayanne does. Rayanne hates her, but follows her instructions to reach ridiculously low weight goals such as 90 pounds. Her twin sister Carina encourages her to talk about her health issues, but is unsuccessful. Her former boyfriend Josh tries to reconnect with her as well. However, Rayanne's life has been hijacked by imaginary Edie. She slowly descends into anorexia. Will she survive?

Rayanne is a dynamic character who deals with incredibly difficult circumstances. She is continually bombarded with the instructions of her imaginary "friend" Edie who harasses her about her weight and her food choices. This obsession has taken over her entire life. She no longer feels part of her family or her community. However, Rayanne does seek help from a trained eating disorder therapist, and eventually learns to deal with her compulsive behaviours.

Readers who have dealt with eating disorders, or who want to know more about them will definitely enjoy this novel. It presents a realistic picture of how a healthy young girl becomes obsessed with her eating habits. The solutions to her problems are not quick or easy. These issues are important to examine in a world fixated on body image where waif-like models serve as media role models for young women.

**Thematic Links:** Anorexia; Obsession; Exercising; Family Relationships; Addiction

Myra Junyk

GEREAUX, Tara  
*Size of a Fist (New Leaf Editions Series)*

Thistledown Press, 2015. 62p. Gr. 11-Adult.  
978-1-77187-059-7. Pbk. \$12.95

This novella is part of the *New Leaf Editions Series*, which promotes first books by emerging



writers. Although the main characters are in their late teens, Gereaux's gritty content makes this work more appropriate to an adult readership.

Addy and her boyfriend Craig have made their plans to leave their small rural community and go to the city. At eighteen, Addy is

the same age her mother was when she became a single parent, and Addy does not want her life to follow her mother's pattern: stuck in a dead-end waitress job and having an affair with the married RCMP officer. But Addy and Craig are convinced by friends to have one last party in the local cemetery, and after a few too many drinks, Addy drives into a fourteen-year-old boy who had been visiting his mother's grave. The boy is not grievously injured, but Addy is conflicted by her feelings of guilt and her compassion for the boy, who is living with his drunk and depressed father. She and Craig visit him to try to offer some hope, and become involved in a sexual threesome. When his father finds them, she and Craig take off, but Addy is convinced that they should take the boy with them to the city. In a fight over the plan, Craig falls from a suspension bridge and dies. Addy puts the boy on the bus, with all their savings and hopes, and awaits her fate.

Although the short length will make this novella appealing for mature teens who are not avid readers, the content and language are relentlessly mature, and therefore questionable for a school library collection.

**Thematic Links:** Child Abuse; Single Parent Family Life; Remote Community Lifestyle

Patricia Jermey

GIRAARD, M-E

*Girl Mans Up*

HarperCollins Canada, 2016. 373p. Gr. 9-12. 978-1-44344-704-1. Hdbk. \$19.99



*Girl Mans Up* is about Penelope Oliveira "Pen" a queer/lesbian teen who becomes certain that the only way she'll get people off her back about who and what she is - is by standing up for herself - even if that means her relationships with her family and friends destruct along

the way. Her story plays out as a gender-nonconforming teen who struggles to be her own kind of girl when she looks and acts like a boy and everyone around her expects her to be one or the other.

While the reader certainly identifies with Pen's personal pain and her gutsiness, the biggest problem with her story is that she's not really a very estimable character - she characterizes herself as "badass" and it's not a poor description of how she behaves with almost everyone in her life. She smokes, she drinks, does a little weed. She's a wicked gamer. She doesn't really care for school. Because she is so self-involved, she has very little empathy for anyone else, including her confused immi-

grant parents. Therefore most situations deteriorate into Pen against everyone, except her burgeoning romance with Blake, a girl she has an overwhelming crush on.

A secondary plot involves a young teen (Olivia) whose pregnancy and quasi friendship with Pen provides the impetus/reason for Pen to finally stand up (or man up) in her personal universe. This relationship appears to have been developed to create what should feel like the climax of the book but instead the lead up is pretty wobbly and unconvincing as the back story is poorly presented.

There is one relationship in the book that works in spades. Girard definitely captured the relationship that Pen has with her older brother, Johnny, correctly. It is very credible and presents the right amount of give and take between siblings. Johnny may be the most likeable person in the book with his constant yet never overstated support of Pen, and his intuitive understanding that she is just perfect the way she is.

If ever a YA novel needed more editing, *Girl Mans Up* qualifies. Very little really happens in fifty-three chapters and 373 pages. While the language is lively and energetic, there's only so many times you can call someone a "douche". "Badass" is not a noun, adverb and adjective and "righteous" can only be employed a few times before it loses emotional impact. So, it becomes a question of deciding whether it is worth it to wade through the tedious overwriting at times.

It's a rainbow world these days, and LGBTQ etc. fiction is very welcome and necessary for young people who are discovering that they may not be hetero-normative. *Girl Mans Up* is a start at providing a story that mirrors and reflects their experiences. Girard demonstrates some talent but she definitely needs some more finesse and perhaps some time reading writers like the magnificent Sarah Waters will show her how to do it better in the future.

**Thematic Links:** LGBT; Contemporary Fiction

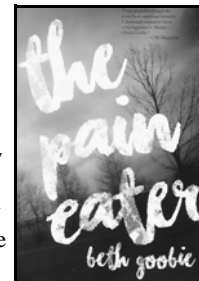
Anne Letain

GOOBIE, Beth

*The Pain Eater*

Second Story Press, 2016. 236p. Gr. 10-12. 978-1-77260-020-9. Pbk. \$12.95 (Reviewed from Advance Reading Copy)

Fourteen-year old Maddy Malone is raped by three boys on her way home from the school play *Our Town*. She tells no one about the rape, but contin-

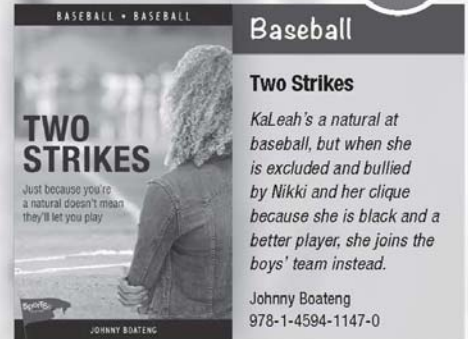
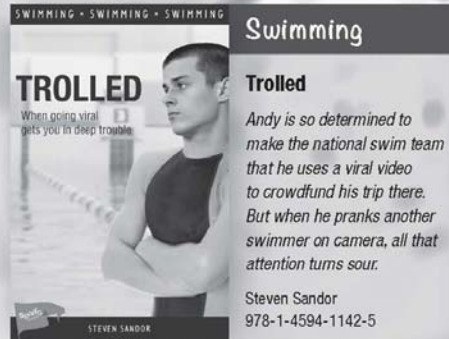
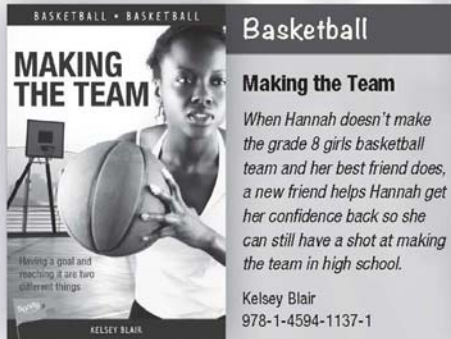


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ues to agonize over the terrifying experience. Her family notices a change in her. She isolates herself and is just not her usual bubbly self. When school begins in September, Maddy is confronted with a massive challenge. One of her attackers, Ken Soong, is in her Grade 10 English class, and the "look-out" David Janklow is there as well. In order to cope, Maddy continually digs her thumbnail into her hand. At home, she resorts to burning her inner thigh with a lit cigarette to deal with the soul destroying memories.

English class also brings another challenge since the teacher, Ms. Mousumi, has presented the class with a unique assignment. The students will participate in a collaborative novel writing project. Each student will write a 300 word chapter in the novel. Their chapter placement will be determined by alphabetical order. The very first chapter, written by Kara Adovasio, introduces the novel entitled *The Pain Eater*. The major character is Farang, a fifteen-year old member of a primitive tribe, who was chosen at birth to become the tribe's "pain eater" under the direction of the high priestess. Once a month, this isolated young woman "eats" the individual pain of each member of her tribe. As the novel evolves, the chapters include psychological analysis, zombies, poisonings and even murders. The novel reflects Maggie's story, but it also moves the plot forward as a stylistic device. Maggie's chapter would normally fall near the middle of the book; however, when the teacher is absent, her chapter ends up at the very end. What will Maggie say in her chapter?

This novel is an exceptional narrative which addresses some very difficult issues including rape, gender stereotypes and cyberbullying. Maggie's silence about the rape is a reflection of her belief that nothing but grief will come

from reporting the rape. The case of Rahteah Parsons in Nova Scotia did not result in vindication after she reported her rape; instead it eventually led to her suicide. The psychological torture that Maddy endures from her rapists when they continually remind her to "keep quiet" is excruciating. However, in the end, with the help of some very strong young women, Maddy manages to deal with her emotional turmoil, and turn it into a new and powerful attitude to life. Beth Goobie has written an excellent novel which should be read by males and females alike because of its honest portrayal of important gender issues in today's world.

**Thematic Links:** Rape; Collaborative Writing; Depression; Cyberbullying; Peer Pressure; Friendship; Family Relationships; Art; Male-Female Relationships; Gender Roles

Myra Junyk

HART, Mix  
*Queen of the Godforsaken*  
Thistledown Press, 2016. 248p. Gr. 7-12. 978-1-77187-063-4. Pbk. \$15.95

This modern take on the essential blistering prairie novel weds lingering memories of the Battle of Batoche with the battling and shockingly neglectful but educated parents of two girls; Lydia, 15, and Victoria, 14, forced to move to the desolate farmland of Saskatchewan so their father can teach a course at the University of Saskatche-



wan in Saskatoon.

The family moves from Vancouver to the ancestral homestead, dominated by a huge old house well past its prime, inhabited by the remains of 6 woodpeckers, inadequate heat, and the unsettling stench of a former in-house chicken coop. This is the end of the earth for the girls and Lydia, especially, is hard-pressed to find any redeeming value in such a hopeless situation.

However, Lydia is fascinated by the visceral connection the farm has to the Carleton Trail travelled by the North West Rebellion leaders in their conflict with a distant and unsympathetic government. Because her situation seems to echo that of the rebels, she engages in her own rebellion, only to find her parents more distant and lost than either herself or her sister. The two girls set out on their own to a cabin on the prairie. Their unsuccessful bid for independence does finally gain the attention of the parents but by then the girls know their own selves better than mom and dad. The eventual trip back to Vancouver is bittersweet.

The humour in this novel is really quite engaging. I also realize it is not a widely shared kind of humour. It reminds me of an observation made by a friend from the prairies who lives in Toronto: many people do not 'get' prairie humour, and much of the humour in the Saskatchewan TV Series *Corner Gas* went over the heads of many in other parts of Canada. Kind of like mom and dad in *Queen of the Godforsaken*.

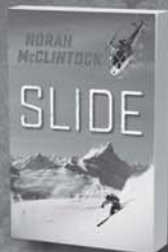
**Thematic Links:** Family Life; Saskatchewan; North-West Rebellion

Lesley Little

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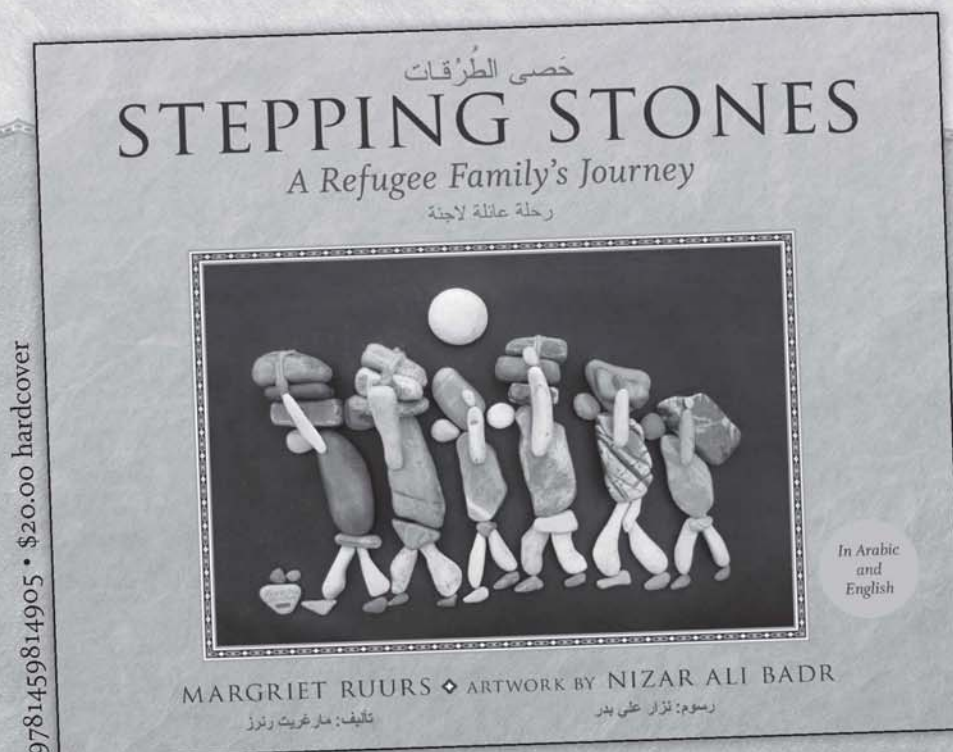
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*In Arabic  
and  
English*

HOWLING, Eric

**Gang Tackle**

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 176p. Gr. 5  
up. 978-1-459812253. Pbk. \$9.95

G



The Southside High School Saints football team has talent but no money. Even their coach has been cut from the payroll. Enter Roland Fort, a corpulent, corporate heavy-hitter whose sporting goods company is the perfect fit for rescuing the team from another year of torn jerseys

and worn out equipment.

Fort is willing to provide the team with \$20,000.00 worth of equipment as long as he is the coach. The school and the team agree to the deal but not all goes well. The Coach has his own idea of how to manage his team and it is based more on what looks good for him rather than what talent the team possesses. There is also the matter of coach posting bail for the former star wide receiver Jamal.

When Jamal is caught reluctantly helping some gang members rob a Best Buy store, Coach Fort publicly brands Him as a petty criminal, typical of the rest of the team. The reality of the situation is that each of the players has ideas and ambitions, none of them criminal. After Jamal organizes a demonstration of the team's dissatisfaction with the coach, the money is withdrawn and the team deploys its former impoverished equipment.

It's at this point that Jamal realizes his recreational project of designing a football app could lift the team out of its poverty. A little help from TSN in the form of an interview with Jamal and his explanation of the development of the app helps. The Southside Saints are back in business and on their own terms. Their beloved coach is also back and Roland Fort is put in his place.

This book works well to highlight the perniciousness of prejudice backed by money. It also works well to illustrate the ingenuity of those whose intelligence is not measured by conventional means. What it lacks in depth and length does not seriously impact its message.

**Thematic Links:** Bullying; Discrimination; Single Parent Families; Corporate Sponsorship; High School Sports; Conduct of Life

Lesley Little

KHALIL, Danah

**My Demon's Name is Ed**

Second Story Press, 2016. 248p. Gr. 10-  
12. 978-1-927583-96-8. Pbk. \$12.95

A



Khalil describes the psychological torment endured by individuals suffering with eating disorders. As the novel begins in April 2012, the main character is grappling with the realization that something is very wrong with her. Her life has become one long conver-

sation with the imaginary Ed (acronym for Eating Disorder). These conversations appear frequently throughout the text, and Ed's words are italicized. Ed is continually telling her that she is too fat, and that she must do something extreme to deal with her imperfection!

What follows is a personal journey through the agonies of anorexia. The heroine struggles to eat "healthy" foods in an effort to control her weight. She also exercises obsessively for long periods of time. She feels compelled to lose weight, and hates herself when she fails to achieve her goals. She is fixated on health and fitness blogs on the Internet as she pushes for more and more weight loss. Her obsession has caused her to lose twenty pounds, but she still wants to lose more despite her emaciated appearance. Despite her family's attempts to get her treatment for her eating disorder, she feels very much alone and isolated. How much weight will she have to lose before she no longer feels fat?

Danah Khalil's novel is an emotional roller-coaster. The raw honesty of the novel is evident on each and every page. The narrative focuses on the main character and her struggles with her eating disorder. This novel gives readers information about healthy eating habits, vegan lifestyle, as well as definitions of various eating disorders. It was very brave of Khalil to publish this novel about a topic which is very important in our weight-obsessed society.

However, the journal format soon becomes very repetitive. Ed's didactic voice, as well as the frequent profanity, soon becomes difficult to hear. At times, the novel feels more like a non-fiction exposé about eating disorders. The writer also digresses into poetry at several points which becomes confusing in this journal format. This novel could definitely have used more rigorous editing to enhance its important message.

**Thematic Links:** Anorexia; Journaling; Athletic Competition; Family Relationships; Addiction; Vegan Lifestyle

Myra Junyk

KING, Wesley

**Dragons vs. Drones**

Razorbill/Penguin Random House,  
2016. 281p. Gr. 5-8. 978-1-59514-797-4.

A/G

Hdbk \$21.99



Marcus has never really fit in - mostly because he spends all of his free time searching for his father who disappeared and was branded as a traitor by the CIA. He knows his father is out there somewhere.

With the eighth anniversary of his disappearance looming and a huge storm on the horizon, Marcus knows this is not a coincidence. The storms and his father's disappearance are somehow linked. Marcus sets out for the centre of the storm, encounters drones, gets struck by lightning, and assumes his life is over.

Dree also never feels like she fits in - except when she is working in Wilhelm's forge. She has been his apprentice for the last two years and is a talented welder. In Dree's mind she is far more talented than even Wilhelm. Dree has many secrets: She comes from a long line of Dragon Riders - formerly wealthy and respected, now shunned and impoverished in light of the new world order in Dracone where economic and cultural growth have replaced dragons and magic; She has dragon fire in her blood - she is not harmed by fire and can generate fire when she gets emotional; Dree has raised a baby dragon. She found him in the hills when she was younger and has kept him hidden in a cave. She calls him little brother, though his name is Lourdvang; She has designed weapons that could be used from the back of a dragon. She would be considered a traitor for this act alone.

The lightning bolt that hits Marcus really transports him into Dree's world of Dracone. Strangely, he feels more at home here than in Arlington, Virginia. The drones follow him, however, and begin to lay waste to the city. Dree and Marcus must then team up in order to stop the drones from obliterating everything in sight. Plan A - get the dragons to overlook clan differences and fight together. Plan B - build a dragon-like drone of their own and combine the best of both worlds. Plan C - make their hybrid even more powerful by using an ancient dragon artifact called "The Egg" to infuse their machine with dragon spirit, gaining them a bargaining chip in the process. Better yet, put all of the plans into action at once.

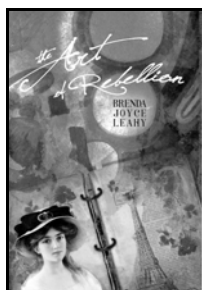
If you are not annoyed by the blending of fantasy and science fiction, you will enjoy this middle-grade novel. There is no shortage of action sequences. Dree and Marcus run from dragons, from drones, and from palace guards. They conveniently find their way to Marcus' father - only to be put to task by the Prime Minister - who is truly the mastermind behind the drones and the destruction. He has his reasons. King sets up his sequel nicely by having "The Egg" stashed back in Arlington - from

Marcus' father's original trip off-world. In fact, all of the events in this novel fall conveniently into place. This novel gets an A+ for action but a C- for creativity.

**Thematic Links:** Family Relationships; Friendship; World Creation; Survival; Loyalty

Angela Thompson

LEAHY, Brenda Joyce  
**The Art of Rebellion**  
Rebelight Publishing, 2016. 238p. Gr. 7-12. 978-0-9948399-8-5. Pbk. \$15.99



The basic story here involves Gabrielle, a privileged young turn-of-the-century woman in France who is more interested in art - specifically painting - than marriage. Her parents have different plans for her so she runs away to Paris to pursue her passion. In terms of the period portrayed in this story about turn-of-the-century Paris the author has done her homework as far as descriptions of fashion, landscape, architecture, and events. are concerned.

However; while well-researched on the surface, this book is a frustrating case of the story being much, much better than the writing. Some of the painful errors of vernacular and period language usage, chronic over-explanation, and just plain pretence are more telling of inadequate authorship than historical inaccuracies.

While the popular TV series *Downton Abbey* fuelled enormous public fantasizing about membership in the privileged social stratum of a by-gone age, it did so with a profound sense of what the era was. Author Brenda Leahy seems not to have developed that sense. The reader often finds Leahy's descriptions of her French *Belle Epoch* situations informed more by her desire to tell the reader what to think rather than what the situation entails. There are frequent protestations by Gabrielle that she must "create art"; and while that may be a youthful way of expressing it, there is a laughable pretence here that diminishes the sentiment it is intended to express.

Leahy seems too eager to give her story contemporary currency at the expense of veracity. One small example is Gabrielle using the American English colloquial term "snagged" to describe observing her female roommate brazenly helping herself to a glass of champagne from a silver tray at a cultured Paris salon rather than waiting to be offered said glass of champagne, as decorum at a function of that calibre would dictate. Although the term "snagged" accurately describes the act of removing the glass from the tray, it ignores the importance of

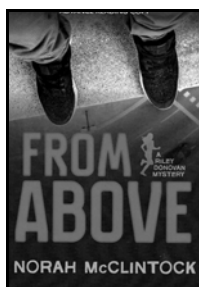
societal offence such an impudent and imprudent gesture demonstrated in that context.

The problem with pasting contemporary interpretation onto an historical situation is that it tends to diminish both the importance of the historical moment and the importance of - in this case - the young female artist's decisions, regardless of what they may be. This does not give young adult readers their due in terms of accuracy and honesty with respect to historical fiction and the invaluable lessons it should impart.

**Thematic Links:** France; La Belle Epoch; Marriage; Feminism; Anarchism; Art; Friendship; Social Mores

Lesley Little

MCCLINTOCK, Norah  
**From Above (A Riley Donovan Mystery)**  
Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 226p. Gr. 7-10. 978-1-4598-0933-8. Pbk. \$10.95



In her latest mystery, Riley Donovan witnesses the death of one of her classmates, Ethan Crawford. Riley happens to be nearby when Ethan falls from the roof of the local recreation centre. The coroner rules his death a tragic accident. The police determine that the fall was possibly self-inflicted as Ethan had been displaying erratic patterns of behaviour prior to his death. Ethan's parents are adamant that their son would never do that and Riley knows Ethan well enough to be suspicious as well. She also thinks that she saw someone else on the roof. Riley shares her thoughts with her Aunt Ginny who is leading the investigation. Eyes then turn to fellow classmates as suspects - other members of the football team, his ex-girlfriend, Riley's want-to-be boyfriend, Charlie, and even Riley herself. The actual murderer? Someone who has the ability and authority to thwart many of Riley's investigative plans.

*From Above* reminds me of one of McClintock's earlier title *Dooley Takes the Fall* where the premise for the protagonist is similar. In both novels, the main character is in the "wrong place at the wrong time," witnesses a tragic fall/murder, and becomes embroiled in the investigations that ensue. So, truth be told, it feels like I have read this novel before. To McClintock's credit, she is skilled at keeping the reader guessing about the true outcome of the story - twists and red-herrings lead the reader in many directions - though the final reveal is disappointing. I appreciate smart, insightful kids, but I always find it difficult to believe that a teenager is more capable than a

trained professional, particularly when that professional ends up looking foolish in the process. This is the seventh book in the *Riley Donovan Series*. The appeal will be there for those who have read the previous titles, but I am not inspired to read the other titles based on this installment.

**Thematic Links:** Family Relationships; Friendship; Trust; Murder/Suicide; Investigations; Drug-Trafficking

Angela Thompson

OPPEL, Kenneth  
**Every Hidden Thing**  
HarperCollins Canada, 2016. 353p. Gr. 6 up. 978-1-44341-029-8. Hdbk. \$19.99



Ken Oppel has certainly not lost his talent for both great adventure and narrative with *Every Hidden Thing*. This book was inspired by the antics of two pioneering paleontologists of the nineteenth century and what became known as the "Bone Wars". Oppel chooses to make his two protagonists the daughter and son of two warring, competitive and totally unethical scientists and unravels the adventure in alternating voices - those of teenaged Samuel Bolt and Rachel Cartland who naturally defy their egotistic fathers and develop a Romeo and Juliet style romance in spite of their fathers' long-standing enmity and complete hatred for each other.

Everyone (Dad and Dad, the kids, the army, some outliers from P. T. Barnum and Company) is looking for the greatest find of all - known to some as "The Black Beauty" and to most of us who grew up on dinosaur lore as T-Rex. Will it be found? Will love prevail? Amid the startling backdrop of the Badlands and possible provocation of the Sioux nation, crisis after crisis ensues - and the reader is on a ride to the very end.

The book has been described by the publishers as Romeo and Juliet meet Indiana Jones and the description is fair enough. The reader gets some understanding about early palaeontology but the focus is truly on the adventures of the main characters and the revelations of their back story and their budding relationship rather than the dinosaurs. The voices of Sam and Rachel read largely true, although Rachel certainly sends out some mixed messages regarding early feminism! Professors Bolt and Cartland are well developed and almost too human. There's an utterly hilarious and quite unforgettable scene where Sam actually manacles the two together with handcuffs!

Oppel has deliberately made the decision to

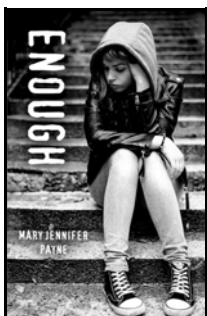
write this for a Young Adult audience although much of it feels like the target audience is adventure seeking middle schoolers. However, inclusion of a few scenes of awkward sexual awakening and awareness, as well as other sexual allusions drop the book firmly into the YA cadre.

In general, the book works very well and explores a time and place that has not routinely been showcased to young readers. There is a lot of creativity and even fun involved with the various adventures Sam and Rachel encounter, and Oppel has attempted to make them historically and geographically accurate, with some sensitivity to First Nations issues.

**Thematic Links:** Adventure Stories; Palaeontology

Anne Letain

PAYNE, Mary Jennifer  
**Enough (Orca Soundings)**  
Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 166p. Gr. 9-12. 978-1-4598-1130-4. Pbk. \$9.95



When Lizzie's father died four years ago, her mother lapsed into alcoholism and bad judgement. A string of bad boyfriends has culminated in Dean, also unemployed and also alcoholic. But when he sexually assaults Lizzie, she knows that she can no longer stay to protect her physically challenged

younger brother, her aged family pet, or her mother. Lizzie's grandmother takes her in, and helps her start at a new school. But when her brother calls to warn her that Dean is threatening to put the dog down, Lizzie knows she has to step back in. She gets the dog to safety, but loses her boyfriend due to all the family drama. It takes a chance encounter with a street walker to make her realize what she needs: "You need someone in this world to love you like your nan does, but, more importantly, you need to love yourself, Lizzie." (p. 140) When her brother calls in desperation, Lizzie knows what she must do.

**Enough** is in the gritty tradition of many of the Orca novels, and is similarly powerful. Lizzie is a real world example of a teen torn apart by decisions she should not have to make at her age. We must admire her courage and resilience in the face of these challenges.

**Thematic Links:** Sexual Assault; Dysfunctional Families; Alcoholic Parent; Responsibility

Patricia Jerney

PEEL, Kit  
**Snow Summer**  
Groundwood Books, 2016. 223p. Gr. 7-10. 978-1-55498-357-5. Hdbk. \$16.95



**Snow Summer**, set in the English country-side village of Pateley Bridge, is a contemporary commentary that relies on the conventions of the fantasy genre to reveal the follies of humanity. The village, and indeed most of the world is stuck in an interminable winter.

In addition to being faced with life in a difficult climate, Wyn and her friends Kate and John, are also conflicted about the development of their local forest, Skrikes Wood. John's father is the lead developer and the project provides jobs for local people at the expense of their natural surroundings. John starts a petition to stop his father from moving forward, but his efforts do not come to fruition. Hope seems to be lost - until Wyn meets a mysterious stranger. Introducing himself as Tawhir, he acts like he knows Wyn and she feels like she know him too. She is simultaneously attracted to and repelled by him. Tawhir claims to know who Wyn really is. She is pretty sure he is crazy. He claims that Wyn has the power to restore the temperate weather and save the world. She thinks he must be confusing her with someone else..... she is just an ordinary girl..... isn't she?

As the story progresses, Tawhir reveals the world of spirits and elemental forces that inhabit Skrikes Wood. The spirits are likewise suffering under the oppression of winter. Their local earth spirit, Thwaite, has taken all the species he can relocate to underground caverns, but this solution is only temporary and his powers wane. There are also rebel spirits who blame the human world for all of their problems and seek to end the human influence. Wyn does indeed have the power to affect change in both the human and the spiritual realms. With the help of Tawhir and Thwaite she awakens the spirit within her - that of a powerful dragon champion, Mugasa. Time is of the essence, however. Will she be able to reach the full extent of her powers before winter sets in forever?

Peel describes his setting with rich and lyrical language. The forest and its spirits come alive with his writing and you are drawn into Pateley Bridge. He creates an unlikely hero in Wyn and gives her the challenge of accomplishing in three days what it took her mentor spirit, Thwaite, ten years to master. All the while, Wyn resists. Her attitude borders on selfishly petulant yet she is remarkably suc-

A/G

cessful and skilled in every way. It is a convenient though necessary circumstance and one has to suspend one's disbelief. The premise of Peel's story is one that echoes fantasy stories past - Universal spirit is reincarnated (by choice or not) into a lower or unknowing being and must triumph over his/her limitations of form and resume rightful spiritual supremacy. What is unique is how well Peel weaves in his social commentary on global warming/human interaction with the environment.

**Thematic Links:** Climate Change; Realm of Fantasy; Self-Discovery; Friendship; Activism; Human Development

Angela Thompson

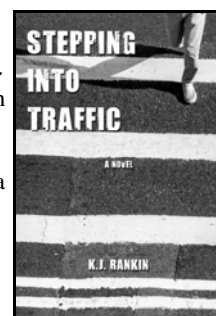
RANKIN, K. J.  
**Stepping into Traffic**  
Thistle-down Press, 2016. 203p. Gr. 9-12. 978-1-77187-101-3. Pbk. \$15.95

E

All teens who read this book should give their parents a hug. **Stepping into Traffic** does an exceptional job of showing how the loss of loving parents can damage a young life.

Sebastian was eight when his parents were killed in a car accident. He was put into child protection services, and is now moving into his eighth foster home in seven years. Although he was not abused in a life-threatening way, his experiences have badly damaged his self-esteem. He lost a mother who sang to her plants and read him bedtime stories, and a father who coached his little league team. Instead he has been physically beaten by foster fathers in alcoholic rages, forced to eat separately from the family members, given a diet exclusively of wieners and beans, and second-hand clothes. Despite these experiences, Seb still has a good heart: he buys candy for his foster siblings when he can afford it, and feeds a stray dog his leftovers. It is unsurprising that as a teen he is easy pickings for gangs, and the novel opens with his arrest for breaking and entering. His well-meaning social worker must find him a new foster home or he will be placed in a group home: "they should be called grope homes since most of the guys there are either on you for sex or whatever's in your pockets" (p. 21).

He is placed with Mrs. Ford, an older widow whose only child was killed in an industrial accident. Seb can't believe that he is allowed to eat as much as he wants, has new clothes to wear and a well-furnished bedroom. Mrs. Ford lives in the same neighbourhood



where Seb grew up, and at the local high school he meets some of his elementary school classmates. He even goes back to his elementary school, and begins to help out the custodian, Mr. Frogley. But the only schoolmate who begins a friendship is Donny, known to the other students as a drug pusher and troublemaker. Despite warnings, Seb gravitates to Donny's circle of drugs, alcohol and violence. But with the support of Mrs. Ford and Mr. Frogley, he is given a chance to turn his life in a more positive direction, and truly have a home again.

Sebastian's story is a clear demonstration of how circumstances can turn a good kid into a "juvenile delinquent". This book should make every reader think of his or her role to help those with a less advantaged upbringing.

**Thematic Links:** Foster Care; Teen Drug Use; Self-Esteem.

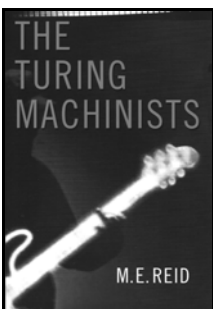
Patricia Jerney

REID, M. E.

### **The Turing Machinists**

Dancing Cat Books, 2016. 210p. Gr. 7-12. 978-1-770864665. Pbk. \$14.95

E



This is a remarkable book, and not everyone will see it as such. The title alone should be a good indication of its deep intelligence but a quick look at online reviews tells me it is generally misunderstood or ignored.

The book's protagonist is Del. He is extremely intelligent, has Asperger's, and attends a school that has a program for students on the Autism Spectrum. He has no friends per se, even though he likes the concept. He is, however, fully aware that he does not quite know how to deal with the social machinations required of the world of friends. Del does have classmates and he even likes one of the two girls in his grade 12 class.

Del also likes the work of Alan Turing, the brilliant and eccentric English cryptanalyst who broke the German Enigma code during WW II. The fact that Turing was also a logician and mathematician is a huge selling point for Del and his classmates. Mathematics is a universe they understand. The same can be said for logic. Logically speaking, Del knows that cause and effect follow a distinct pattern. Therefore, if you don't like the effect, you change the cause. Del does not like the effect that his parents' rumoured divorce will have: a huge negative impact on everything. He calculates that by changing the cause for the divorce, its effect will change.

For Del, the cause of the divorce is his fa-

ther's failed dream of a successful rock band. In order to change that, Del decides to fulfill his father's dream for him by entering a rock band competition at a regional pub. He convinces his classmates to join the band and he even manages to find a manager in the person of a fading rock musician who just happens to live close by. The mechanics of how this all comes about is not at all typical and the miraculous victory here is not that the band wins the competition but that they manage to get to the finals. This ultimately noble quest is a surprisingly accessible illustration of the particular workings of the Asperger's mind, and how easily it can be (and is) generally misunderstood.

The story is narrated in the first person by Del, which naturally allows for the addition of supplementary observations under the guise of self-explanation. The genius in this is the inclusion of clinical as well as philosophical comments by Del that gain explanatory context where there would otherwise be none. This manages to take the novel beyond the realm of being an "issue" work into one with a unique intelligence worthy of the reader's attention.

The band's name, *The Turing Machinists*, is a deceptively playful nod to geniuses unrecognized because their behavior does not fit the "typical" pattern. It is also a nod to the random nature of neurological disorders and how those with such disorders can learn how to deal with them, making them managers-in-training of the machine that is mistaken for them.

**Thematic Links:** Asperger's; Communication; Family; Music; Rock Band; Friendship

Lesley Little

ROSS, Jeff

### **A Dark Truth (Orca Soundings Series)**

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 103p. Gr. 6-11. 978-1-4598-1327-4. Pbk. \$9.95 (Reviewed from an Advance Reading Copy)

G



Riley and Dashawn live for skateboarding. In their words: "Skateboarding gave us something different, something we could get better at every day but which, at any time, we could totally ruin ourselves doing" (p. 3). Their goal is to submit "Sponsor Me" videos with the hopes of landing sweet endorsement deals. One of their friends tells them about a construction site for a new tech. company that is located in the suburbs - from brief cell-phone photos, the site looks perfect as a backdrop and has all of the ledges and benches

needed for great skateboarding tricks. Riley, Dashawn, and their videographer, Tasha, head out to the site. If the cops show up, their plan is to split up and re-group at the local McDonald's.

The police do, in fact, take an interest in what the threesome is up to. Riley and Tasha manage to evade capture, but Dashawn isn't as lucky. In fact, the next day Riley finds Dashawn bruised and beaten with his arm in a sling. Dashawn says the two police officers attacked him - the police officers report that Dashawn hurt himself. At first, Riley is not sure who to believe. Aren't police officers supposed to uphold the law and tell the truth? On the other hand, what reason would Dashawn have to lie to him?

At the heart of this high-interest low-vocabulary title is an edgy exploration of racism and its consequences and impacts. Ross examines the abuse of power, in this case attributed to the police officers, and the fear and anger that results when these abuses are not addressed. *A Dark Truth* is a powerful and emotional story.

**Thematic Links:** Racism; Racial Profiling; Abuse of Power; Friendship; Following One's Dream

Angela Thompson

ROSS, Jeff

### **High Note (Limelight Series)**

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 118p. Gr. 7-9. 978-1-4598-1111-9. Pbk. \$9.95

G

*High Note* is part of Orca Publisher's *Limelight Series*, each novel of which presents a teen character experiencing life in the performing arts. In *High Note*, Hailey and her best friend Crissy are both contenders for an important role in the produc-



tion of *The Marriage of Figaro* being staged at the Paterson Centre for the Performing Arts, which they both attend. This sets the stage for conflict and jealousy, competition that could be handled by the two girls in a number of ways. Hailey is essentially part of the opera group because Crissy asked her to join; she has other interests, although her singing abilities and love of music make opera her dream. For Crissy, on the other hand, opera is everything; she is driven to succeed, pushed by her mother, and has focused on little else in her schooling. As these truths unfold, we can see the direction the plot will take, yet still wonder how the girls will react. The tensions are palpable; the outcome remains uncertain until the end. Caught up in the backstage drama -

Crissy championed by the famous Isabel Rosetti and Hailey by the rising star Denise Cambridge - the girls are shown first-hand the drama that rages behind the curtains. In solid narrative tradition, the choices that they make reveal their true characters, and readers are satisfied with the realistic ending Jeff Ross provides us.

**High Note** is told in Hailey's voice, an excellent choice for explaining to the reader the intricacies of the operatic world. Hailey tells the reader the basic plot of *The Marriage of Figaro* much as if the reader were a classmate who had asked. This technique does not always work, but Hailey's character is well-constructed, her narrative voice consistent, so that we really do feel that *she* is talking to us, not the author. We feel more keenly, then, the betrayal Hailey struggles to come to terms with, and her mature realization that one cannot be responsible for others' choices and behaviours. In a world of stiff competition, Hailey learns, it is difficult but necessary to retain one's integrity and sense of self above all else.

**Thematic Links:** Opera; The Marriage of Figaro; Performing Arts School; Rivalry Between Friends

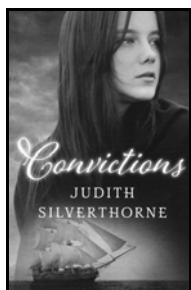
Karyn Huenemann

SILVERTHORNE, Judith

**Convictions**

Coteau Books, 2016. 220p. Gr. 10-12. 978-1-4598-1153-9. Pbk. \$16.95

E



It is 1842. Jennie's family is starving, so she takes some mouldy oats from a milliner's garbage. For that, she is convicted of theft and sentenced to 7 years transportation to the penal colony of Australia. She is one of 235 female convicts, including pregnant women and women with young children.

Jennie is fourteen when she boards the convict ship *Emily Anne*; the youngest prisoner is ten-year-old Alice.

Judith Silverthorne's account of Jennie's life on board the *Emily Anne* is convincingly harsh; there is very little evasion of the horrors of the women's lives at the hands of uncaring or even abusive guards. What helps Jennie survive are the relationships the women forge in their shared hardship. As Jennie discovers the gamut of "crimes" the women have been sentenced for, she comes to appreciate her fellow prisoners' differences. Learned prejudices against the "doxies" Lizzie and Fanny, or the alcoholic Dottie, or the Irish-Catholic Kate, are eventually subsumed in the need to band together to survive the physical and psychological trauma of their situation. Seasickness and poor rations threaten their health. Crowded into small,

shared bunks or hammocks, they are afflicted by rodents, lice, and fleas. Women and children, most used to living simply but honourably, are treated like animals by the poorly paid crew and guards.

Not all the guards are as vile as "Red Bull" Chilcott, whose lecherous behaviour threatens the sexually innocent among the prisoners, and whose sexual appetites mark him as a target for Fanny's manipulations on behalf of her friends. Some of the guards are cruel but not abusive, and some appear more sympathetic towards the women's plight. We see a subtle connection growing between Jennie and a young crew-member, Nate, and when the ship is wrecked on a reef near Tenerife, we are not surprised that the intelligent Nate is instrumental in saving a small number of crew and prisoners.

Silverthorne does not stray from her excellent historical representation even in the romance that is beginning to grow between Jennie and Nate. The women's ultimate fate after being saved by a passing Scottish vessel - whose Captain and crew are welcoming neither to the English nor to women - is logically supportable in terms of the political, financial, and cultural reality Silverthorne is recreating. Nate expresses his hope that his and Jennie's lives will follow a similar path, and we are shown a narrative direction in which that could be true; but at the close of the novel, we are left with as much uncertainty as Jennie and the other survivors. As readers, we are convinced of the historical truth reflected in **Convictions**. Jennie's story remains in our minds, her future pondered, long after the last page is read.

**Thematic Links:** Australia; Penal Colonies; British Criminal History; Discrimination Against Women; Physical Abuse

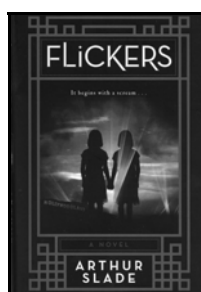
Karyn Huenemann

SLADE, Arthur

**Flickers**

HarperCollinsCanada, 2016. 242p. Gr. 7-10. 978-1-44341-665-8. Hdbk. \$19.99

G/E



Abigail dies as a result of the stress of this birth. It takes two weeks for Ernest to name the child Beatrice. The supernatural element of the plot enters early though is mentioned casually: "*The twin didn't look as though she be-*

**Flickers** opens on the Canadian prairies near Lethbridge, Alberta. Twin daughters are born to Ernest and Abigail. The first child is born quickly and she is beautiful. They name her Isabelle. The second child is a surprise. She is misshapen and covered with birthmarks.

*longed here. It was as if he'd wrenched her from some other place*" (p. 4). Ernest vows to raise and protect both girls.

When his nephew, Wayne arrives unannounced and professes to want to raise the girls in a mansion in California, Ernest is openly hostile. Apparently Wayne's boss, Mr. Cecil, is a successful movie producer who thinks that Isabelle, in particular, will have a wonderful career in his motion pictures. Ernest tells his nephew to get lost. However, a suspicious fire (started by wasp/scorpion-like creatures) causes circumstances to change. Ernest dies in the fire but saves both girls. Guardianship is turned over to Wayne. Apparently Mr. Cecil gets what Mr. Cecil wants.

Fast-forward a few years and Isabelle is the toast of Hollywood as predicted. We encounter her at a party being thrown to celebrate the release of her latest film. She is beautiful, applauded, and adored. Her sister, however, never gets to leave the mansion. Her only friend is the groundskeeper's son, Raul. Beatrice knows that there is something strange about their circumstances. People disappear. Mr. Cecil has the uncanny ability to twist every situation to his advantage and he always seems to see her innermost thoughts. On top of this, his films are getting more and more fantastic and horrific. Will Beatrice learn the truth before it is too late?

Faustian contracts and insects snatched from another dimension are just two of the bizarre twists that are revealed as this story progresses. Conceptually, Slade's story of interwoven dimensions that respond to/require the life-force of the human imagination is ambitious and insightful. The backdrop of old Hollywood with its glamour and the sheer pace of innovation during that time is the perfect façade. Isabelle and Beatrice have very distinct voices and this speaks to the care Slade took in crafting his characters. **Flickers** gives the reader a look into a rich period in American history that it would be a shame to miss.

**Thematic Links:** Family Relationships; Imagination; Old Hollywood; Motion Pictures; Supernatural; Twins

Angela Thompson

STELLINGS, Caroline

**Freedom's Just Another Word**

Second Story Press, 2016. 203p. Gr. 9-12. 978-1-77260-011-7. Pbk. \$12.95

G



Louisiana knows her nickname, Easy, is perfect for the blues singer she hopes to become. Raised in Saskatoon, she has been exposed to that

soundtrack by her black parents, who moved there to escape the segregation of the deep South in the 1950s. Easy is subjected to a certain amount of ignorance and racism, especially as her birth mother was a drug-addicted white drifter who had an affair with her married father. She was raised in a loving home, but her mother has recently died, and her father can only share with Easy his knowledge of auto mechanics as she works beside him in his garage. When Easy learns that Janis Joplin, her idol, is passing through town on her tour train, Easy makes sure she is at the train station with her accordion and frottoir, prepared to demonstrate her talent. Amazingly, the train stops, and Joplin gets out in search of a refill of Southern Comfort. Easy manages to get her some, and Joplin in return suggests they meet in Texas at the famous Threadgill's. This could be her big break!

Now Easy has to make it to Texas. Fortunately (or not), a nun and a postulant from a nearby convent come to the garage seeking automotive advice. They are planning to drive to New Mexico, and agree that Easy can travel with them. The postulant has a holier-than-thou attitude which makes it almost unbearable, but Easy will do anything to get to Janis. It also means she can visit the mother of her father's war buddy, who died and left his medals behind. On the trip, both Easy and the young postulant realize they have been too judgmental. When Easy finally gets to Threadgill's, the pervasive racism makes her realize she cannot sing there. But the journey has positive results: she learns the truth about her birth, the postulant gains a new attitude towards her calling, and Easy breaks into the music scene back in Saskatoon.

This novel is set in 1970, and provides an unsentimental look at that era. With Easy as the protagonist, we see racism in its various forms. Her breezy attitude belies the challenges she has faced. The Janis Joplin plot line also brings in the issues of drug and alcohol abuse, and the nuns provoke religious discussion. Stellings handles these heavy topics deftly, with Easy's confidence and humour.

**Thematic Links:** Professional Musicians; Racism; Charitable Work; Drug Addiction; Parent-Child Relationships

Patricia Jerney



TULLSON, Diane  
**Taz's Recipe**  
Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 116p. Gr. 6-10. 978-1-4598-1035-8. Pbk. \$9.95 (Reviewed from Advance Reading Copy)

Taz can't cook! In Grade 9 Food Science class, every-

one has finished their chocolate chip cookies when Taz discovers she has forgotten to put in the chocolate chips. In an attempt to remedy the situation, Taz softens some chocolate in the microwave, and nearly burns down the entire classroom. She is terribly embarrassed, and never wants to go back to school. When she does return, however, she discovers that her Food Science class has been moved to the school cafeteria, and is now being taught by Chef.

Chef is a hard taskmaster who will determine which students get into the chef apprenticeship program. The students in the program will work in the school kitchen, and complete the first two levels of professional cook certification by graduation. Only five students will be admitted to the program, which is like getting a free year of college. The final project determines who gets into the program - and who passes Grade 9 Food Science. Taz joins a group with master cook Mielle, and indifferent Caz. Will this be another cooking disaster for Taz?

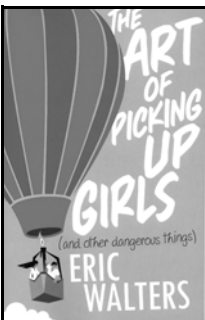
Diane Tullson has written an amusing novel about the trials and tribulations of a challenged cook. Taz hates to cook, but by working in a group with more proficient students, she learns to enjoy the process of cooking. She also learns a great deal about commitment to a task, determination, group work and friendship. Taz is an admirable character who deals with life's challenges while taking on greater responsibility for her own learning.

**Taz's Recipe** describes the high school Food Science program with its safety issues and culinary vocabulary. The apprenticeship model is rarely seen in novels aimed at this age group. Readers will discover that there are multiple paths to reach their goals in life. At the end of the novel, Diane Tullson also includes two tasty recipes. This novel is a light-hearted read which will appeal to readers who may feel that they cannot do something - but discover that if they put their mind to a task, they can accomplish a great deal!

**Thematic Links:** Cooking; Family Relationships; Friendship; Teamwork; Competition; Confidence

Myra Junyk

WALTERS, Eric



**The Art of Picking up Girls**  
(And Other Dangerous Things)  
Razorbill Canada, 2016. 272p. Gr. 7-12. 978-0-14319497-2. Pbk. \$14.99

The ease with which one reads an Eric Walters novel is a true testament to his skill as a writer. It is

also a gift to his readers.

For the most part, this insightful and thoroughly engaging story of Graham and Ethan and Raine is spot-on. Displaced Graham, whose family has moved from a small town to the big city in his last year of high school has also found himself dumped by his long-time girlfriend who has taken up with his (former) best friend.

Enter Ethan, newly demoted from the big city high school basketball team for bringing girls and alcohol into the team's hotel room during an out of town tournament. His "punishment" is expulsion from the team and assignment to showing new boy Graham the ropes.

The two hit it off and embark on a socializing spree while Ethan philosophizes between events. The philosophy discussions are entertaining, showing the reader the aspects of each character not usually on display.

The playful banter begins to wane when Graham encounters Raine, an attractive young vegan unlike the other girls the two have been pursuing. Part of the method the two follow is to use false names and Graham is introduced to Raine using the name Dakota. The crisis comes when Ethan tells Raine Dakota's real name behind his back.

The resolution to the crisis is both believable and wise. Walters manages to convey loyalty and forgiveness in his characters without diminishing their verisimilitude.

The same, however, cannot be said for another part of the book. Raine is involved in an ongoing protest on a traffic island near a pork slaughterhouse and Graham/Dakota decides to join her. He experiences an epiphany when a pig on one of the trucks looks him straight in the eye. I found this component of the story contrived and forced, unusual for an Eric Walters novel. The whole episode seems tacked on to the rest of the vegetarian interlude which was actually quite natural in its introduction and evolution. In spite of his genuine affection for Raine and his appreciation for her principles, it seems unnatural for a young man to give up bacon so easily. Just sayin'.

**Thematic Links:** High School; Dating; Personal Conduct; Family Life; Vegetarianism; Friendship; Loyalty

Lesley Little



WESTON, Paula  
**Burn (The Rephaim, Book IV)**  
Tundra Books, 2016. 430p. Gr. 10 - 12. 978-1-77049-851-8. Pbk. \$12.99

(cont'd on p. 57)

# Non-Fiction Grades 7-12

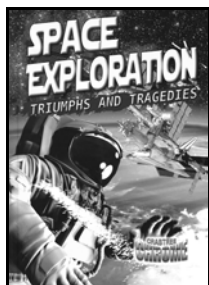
NEWLAND, Sonya

**Space Exploration: Triumphs and Tragedies (Crabtree Chrome Series)**

Crabtree Publishing, 2016. 48p. Illus.

Gr. 5-9. 978-0-7787-2292-2. Hdbk. \$21.56

G



This book is another title in the *Crabtree Chrome Series* which is designed for reluctant readers who read several levels below their actual grade level by engaging them in popular and timely topics. The book contain 5-6 chapters which have bold head-

ings and minimal text which is interspersed with black and white and coloured captioned photographs, drawings, diagrams, maps and other memorabilia. Text boxes add additional information and in addition to the words in bold being included in the glossary, they are also explained at the bottom of the two page spread in which they appear. The book includes a Table of Contents, an Index, and a Learning More section which includes a listing of books, movies and websites.

In *Space Exploration: Triumphs and Tragedies* we are given a brief overview of the space exploration program from the launch of Sputnik 1 by Russia in 1957 to the proposed visit to an asteroid by NASA by 2025. The 2-page spreads look at such topics as the first spacecraft, the first male and female in space, Project Apollo, the moon landing, the Voyager probes, Shuttle disasters, space stations, Mars and beyond, future missions and space tourism.

While the amount of information in the book is minimal, it does give a good introduction to the topic for students at the upper elementary and junior high levels and may spark their interest enough to seek out some of the other resources which are listed in the Learning More section. This would be a good addition to an elementary or junior high school science program.

**Thematic Links:** Space Exploration

Victoria Pennell

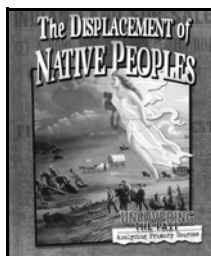
PEPPAS, Lynn Leslie

**The Displacement of Native Peoples (Uncovering the Past Series)**

Crabtree Publishing, 2016. 48p. Illus.

Gr. 5 up. 978-0-7787-2571-8. Hdbk. \$23.49

E



history is a record of a particular time or an event that has happened in the past. For most of that time we have to rely on what people who were living at the time have documented in various ways. Historians study or analyse evidence from the past to help us understand what happened, it is their job to interpret what the pieces of evidence from the past actually mean.

This series looks at how historians interpret the past. Using the particular topic covered each book begins with an introductory chapter which focuses on the importance of studying history. Other chapters focus on kinds of sources, analysing the evidence, uncovering the story, differing views of the same incident, and modern examples of the same kinds of events. As these books about well-known and well-documented events in history unfold we learn why and by whom evidence is created, how it can be analysed and interpreted in various ways and how controversy in history can develop. All of these topics have created some controversy in their interpretation over the years depending on the point of view of the person creating the documentation or the person doing the research - sometimes we come to a topic with a pre-conceived idea and that influences how we do the research. Readers will learn about primary and secondary sources, bias, prejudice, the denial of evidence and learn how to be critical in their own research.

The books are very well laid out. Each consists of 4-6 chapters which has an introductory blurb and an historical photograph on a 2-page spread. Other 2-page spreads consist of text, captioned photographs, documents, and quotations. There are "evidence record cards" for many of the photographs describing where it came from, who the photographer was, the location, the date and the source. Also there are "Analyze This" boxes which focus on a particular photograph, document, or quotation and pose questions which would be great for class discussions. There are also "Perspectives" boxes which give information or pose questions about different perspectives of the same event. Words in bold type are defined in definition boxes or in the glossary at the back of each book. There is also a table of contents, a timeline, a bibliography, internet guidelines, and an index.

*The Displacement of Native Peoples* focuses on how native peoples have been displaced in Canada and the United States since the time the Europeans arrived through treaties, empty promises and military force. Some of the topics included are government relations and policies

such as the Potlatch Law and Dawes Act, residential schools and other forced assimilation, and native uprisings such as the Black Hills War, the Red River Rebellion and the North West Rebellion. A final chapter looks at displacement today with an emphasis on the Kurdish people of the Middle East.

This series is very well done and would be a great introduction to historical research for students at the junior and senior high levels. The choice of topics is quite interesting and most will be part of the history programs in today's curriculum.

**Thematic Links:** Native Peoples of North America - Displacement; United States - History; Canada - History; Kurdish Displacement

Victoria Pennell

SHIELDS, Carol and Patrick Crowe

**Susanna Moodie: Roughing it in the Bush**

Illustrated by Selena Goulding.

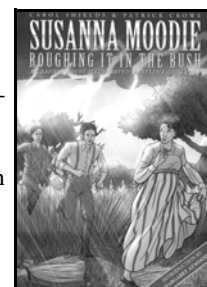
Graphic novel adaptation by Willow Dawson.

Introduction by Margaret Atwood. Xenophile

Media Inc./Second Story Press, 2016. 137p.

Gr. 9-12. 978-1-77260-003-2. Pbk. \$22.95

E



This graphic novel is based on a 2002 screenplay by Carol Shield and Patrick Crowe that dramatizes the life and writings of Susanna Moodie, an upper-middle class British woman who immigrated to Canada in 1832. It focuses on the seven years she spent in building a homestead in Upper Canada, ten miles from Peterborough, before moving to Belleville, Ontario with her family. The authors detail Susanna's sense of isolation, her struggles to adapt to her new lifestyle, and her work as a writer. The story also highlights tensions between Canadians and Americans, Susanna's involvement in the anti-slavery movement and her friendship with some First Nations people. The narrative of the graphic novel is straightforward and Goulding's illustrations work well to compliment the text, with the exception of a few confusing instances where poorly placed dialogue prompts the eye to read the conversation out of order.

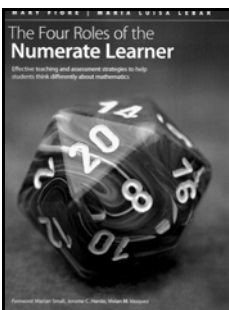
As Atwood points out in her introduction, this novel, and graphic novel adaptations in general, are a great way for younger or less proficient readers to be introduced to the

(cont'd on p. 63)

# Professional Resources

FIORE, Mary and Maria Luisa Lebar  
***The Four Roles of the Numerate Learner: Effective Teaching and Assessment Strategies to Help Students Think Differently About Mathematics***

Pembroke Publishers, 2016. 96p. 9781-55138-3118. Pbk. \$24.95



## ***The Four Roles of the Numerate Learner***

by Mary Fiore and Maria Luisa Lebar promotes, “a new way of thinking about mathematics and a new way of doing mathematics.” The writers have based their resource on current research on teaching mathematics as well as models created by the Ontario Ministry of Education. Their approach relies heavily on the connections between literacy and numeracy, as their definition of numeracy suggests, “*To become numerate, students must learn to make sense of the mathematics, use mathematical skills effectively, thoughtfully communicate mathematical thinking, and critically interpret mathematical knowledge and skills.*” (p. 10)

This resource is divided into six chapters which provide an outline of the four roles in the framework and discuss topics such as: critical thinking, mathematical thinking skills, rich mathematics tasks, and assessment. The first chapter explains the connections between literacy and numeracy in great detail and describes mathematical thinking. The next four chapters address each of the four roles in detail: Sense Maker, Skill User, Thought Communicator and Critical Interpreter. Each chapter defines the role and focuses on numerous examples at various grade levels. Chapter 2, “Sense Maker” explains the use of rich tasks to develop mathematical thinking and explains the use of effective questioning. In each chapter, there is specific reference to assessment tasks to promote effective learning. The final chapter, “Moving Forward” addresses the links between teaching and learning as well as using the framework as a professional development tool to support, “*collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, communication, creativity, and citizenship.*” (p. 81)

Mary Fiore and Maria Luisa Lebar have written an extremely useful resource which can be used by new teachers and experienced teachers alike to improve their mathematics instruction. This book provides numerous examples of each role and gives clear and con-

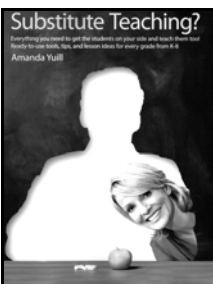
cise descriptions of how to address each role in the classroom environment. The links between literacy and numeracy instruction are also very explicit. This comprehensive resource can serve as a guide for planning, implementing improvements in mathematics instruction, as well as providing a useful tool to engage teachers about effective mathematics strategies. “*By adopting the Four Roles of the Numerate Learner framework, students will become skilled critical thinkers, thoughtful problem solvers, and reflective communicators.*” (p. 11)

**Thematic Links:** Numeracy; Mathematics Instruction; Assessment; Critical Thinking; Literacy Instruction

Myra Junyk

YUILL, Amanda  
***Substitute Teaching? Everything You Need to get the Students on Your Side and Teach Them Too! Ready-to-use Tools, Tips, and Lesson Ideas for Every Grade From K-8***

Pembroke Publishers, 2016. 60p. 9781-55138-3125. Pbk. \$24.95



***Substitute Teaching? Everything You Need to get the Students on Your Side and Teach Them Too! Ready-to-use Tools, Tips, and Lesson Ideas for Every Grade From K-8*** was written by substitute teacher

Amanda Yuill as a resource for teachers starting out in the profession, as well as experienced teachers returning to the classroom as substitute teachers. Yuill’s resource is filled with amusing anecdotes about her career as a substitute. Her aim in this resource is to answer the question, “*What should I expect - the good, the bad, and the ugly - and what should I do about it?*” (p. 8)

The toolkit is divided into eight chapters which provide: an outline of the tools needed, specific instructions on how to deal with vari-

ous grade levels from primary to intermediate, specific instructions for various subject areas such as art and physical education, and advice on how to get a permanent job. Yuill introduces her first chapter, “Toolkit for Substitute Teaching,” with a discussion of the bad reputation of substitute teachers. She wants to help change this reputation with the tools in this resource. “*By being excellent substitute teachers, by having a positive and creative attitude, and by the way we talk about our profession, we can change the perception of the profession of substitute teaching. It is time!*” (p. 9) However, some of the ideas that Yuill presents would definitely not change this perception. Her primary tool for getting students’ attention is candy. This is obviously problematic in a day and age when allergies are rampant. In later chapters, Yuill describes the physical, social, and academic characteristics of various grade levels, gives instructions on how to deal with these levels, and provides very rudimentary worksheets.

At first glance, this toolkit appears to offer useful information for a substitute teacher. However, Yuill’s amusing anecdotes and useful instructions on behavior management cannot disguise the fact that her book is primarily based on her own experiences as a substitute teacher. Much of her advice is common sense for educators. What works for her will not necessarily work for everyone. Giving out candy, telling “gross” or “scary” stories may get students’ attention, but what pedagogical value do they have? As well, the worksheets are very simple. They are heavily weighted toward rote activities such as word searches and cloze reading. Her advice on finding permanent employment mostly includes ways to make various stakeholders “happy.” Perhaps Yuill should have spent more time finding up-to-date educational research resources to enhance her book’s credibility.

**Thematic Links:** Substitute Teaching; Behaviour Management; Finding a Job

Myra Junyk



## Canadian School Libraries

is a new organization dedicated to fostering the growth of the school library learning commons in Canada and to developing a national network of school library practitioners and supporters.

For more information check out the website at

<http://www.canadianschoollibraries.ca/>

## Audio-Visual Resources

### *An Introduction to First Nations Culture & Traditions*

McIntyre Media, 2015. 27 min. PDF resource guide. Gr. 3-8. Educator's Package \$179.00

A

This DVD and its accompanying resource guide provide an introduction to the regalia, dance, drumming, food, environmental connection, and pow wows of First Nations communities. The teenaged host, Cedar Smoke, introduces each of these topics, followed by an interview with a member of a First Nations community who explains the topic further. While Cedar Smoke's segments aren't always well integrated into the video, the interviews are very interesting. The interviews and the



shots of dancing, drumming, and singing are the highlights of the video because they provide clear explanations and vibrant examples of each of the topics covered. However, these shots are

often mixed in with stock footage and transitional animations which bring down the quality of the video somewhat.

Despite some of the flaws in the production of this video, there is a good range of topics covered. The video, along with the additional information provided in the resource guide, would be well-suited for inclusion in an elementary or middle school social studies classroom as a general introduction to First Nations traditions.

**Thematic Links:** First Nations Culture; Pow Wows; Canadian Culture

Alice Albarda

## French Resources

ANTONY, Steve

### *Les lézards verts contre les rectangles rouges*

French text by Isabelle Montagnier. Éditions Scholastic, 2015. 26p. Illus. Gr. 1-3. 978-1-4431-4949-5. Pbk. \$11.99

E



This powerful story for young children is the French translation of the English book *Green lizards vs red rectangles*. The theme of war and peace is apparent from the first pages of the book,

without even seeing the first page. The green lizards and the red rectangles are at war with each other, the lizards try very hard to fight the red rectangles, but the rectangles are sly. The rectangles try to fight back, but the lizards are very strong. One lizard speak up and shouts "Why are we fighting exactly?" but he gets squashed by the war. Then the war really picks up, with lizards and rectangles fighting each other everywhere. Both sides fight each other to exhaustion, until one large red rectangle orders peace. The two sides retreat, and learn to live together peacefully.

A remarkable story for young children on the heavy topic of war and peace, this book should be in every primary school library. It is a clever use of lizards and rectangles to illustrate both sides - they could not be more different from one another visually. The story is told in a simple easy to read format, though French second language learners may need explanation for some vocabulary. The story pauses at key moments, allowing for discussion and reflection throughout the book. It can

easily be integrated into the curriculum, and is particularly relevant in this day and age as more classrooms are welcoming students from refugee families who have experienced war first hand, to help other children understand their experience and demonstrate acceptance of differences. This book would be a phenomenal addition to primary classrooms and libraries, highly recommended.

**Thematic Links:** War and Peace; Acceptance of Differences

Veronique Lavoie

ARPIN, Mylène

### *Les chenilles et les papillons (Curieux de nature series)*

Éditions Hurtubise, 2016. 194p. Gr. 4-6. 978-2-89723-763-9. Pbk. \$12.95

G



It is known that youth 8 to 10 years old are "naturally curious". Their interests are manifold especially regarding the confusing nature of fauna and flora.

In this third volume of the *Curieux de nature series*, the author, Mylène Arpin, offers young readers a foray into the world of caterpillars and butterflies. This docudrama includes Camille and her friends, Fanny and Hugo, during their summer vacation. Camille spends much time with her grandmother Bea (she affectionately calls the Grand-Man), who is always full of projects. Her wildflower garden allows the young people not

only to indulge in watching butterflies, but also to witness the transformation of caterpillars into butterflies. But that's not all ! Readers will rejoice at the birth of the kittens of Juliet Gripette, the abandoned cat rescued by Camille.

This series - which is aptly named - has the advantage of providing relevant information to young naturalists through a story with believable characters.

The projects proposed by Grand-Man are easy to perform as stated at the beginning of the book. This book of watching butterflies with colourful illustrations provides valuable information which is easy to understand. In addition, there is a table of contents and a bibliography.

This would be a good book for curious 8 to 10 year-olds.

**Thematic Links:** Nature; Butterflies

Louise Melançon

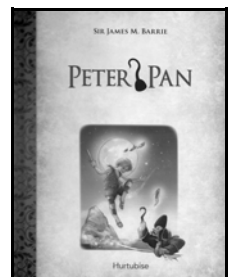
BARRIE, James M.

### *Peter Pan (Classic Collection Series)*

Adapted from the original by Anne Rooney. French translation by Andre Gagnon. Illustrated by Robert Dunn. Éditions Hurtubise. 2016. 47p. Illus. Gr. 4-8. 978-2-89723-774-5. Hdbk. \$11.95

E

The classic James M. Barrie *Peter Pan* story is retold in this volume for young



children. They will meet Wendy and her brothers Michael and John and fly with them through the stars to a wonderful imaginary world which includes magical fairies as well as the frightening band of pirates led by Captain Hook.

The story is shortened and simplified for young readers but the plot of the original remains intact and thus the book is a good introduction to one of the classics of English literature. There are more than a dozen books in this *Classic Collection Series* including adaptations of such novels as *Alice in Wonderland* and *Treasure Island*.

The text is on only one side of each double-page spread and on the other side are beautiful colour illustrations by Robert Dunn which will help students with comprehension and also introduce them visually to the Darling family, the lost boys and the pirates of Captain Hook.

**Thematic Links:** Peter Pan; Classic Literature

Ann Ketcheson

BEAUCHESNE, Sarah-Maude  
**Lèche Vitrites**  
Les Éditions Hurtubise, 2016. 220p.  
Gr.9-12. 978-2-89723-757-8. Pbk.  
\$16.95



Billie Fay has moved to Montreal with her sister Annette and her mother who has recently returned from an extended trip. Billie is 18 and is hoping she can put her first love behind her and just enjoy Montreal, hang out with her friends and perhaps check out some new guys in order to find a boyfriend.

Beauchesne gives her readers insights into Billie's relationships with her sister and her mom which can be tense at some times and comforting at others. She also maintains a close relationship with her dad even if she isn't ready to meet his new girlfriend as yet.

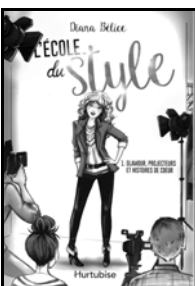
Throughout the novel, Billie remains self-absorbed and insecure, seemingly unable to take charge of her life and move on. Much of her time is spent in agonizing decisions about what to wear and what music to listen to and yet she seems not to hesitate about having sex with Erik almost as soon as they meet. The author treats Billie Fay with understanding and with humour but although Billie does a great deal of soul-searching she doesn't really seem to mature substantially and seems more like a young teen than an adult. By the end of the novel when she decides she should wait for love to come along, readers don't really know the reason for the decision nor can they believe she is serious.

Young female readers who are interested in the minutiae of romance and relationships - the agonies and the ecstasies - appear to be the primary audience for the novel.

**Thematic Links:** Love; Friendship; Relationships

Ann Ketcheson

BÉLICE, Diana  
**L'École du Style: 1. Glamour, Projecteurs et histoires de Coeur**  
Les Éditions Hurtubise, 2016. 250p. Gr. 7-12.  
978-2897-237-486. Pbk. \$12.95



Olivia Boisbriand, a regular 14-year-old teenager, is shopping one evening with her mother when she is spotted by Élodie Brabant, the manager of a new modeling agency in town. A former model herself, Élodie is seeking out the sort of unconventional beauty Olivia possesses, in

her mission to revolutionize the way the fashion industry presents young girls to the public.

Olivia and her mother, Elizabeth, agree with Ms. Brabant's desire to engage models representing everyday people, to prove that fashion is accessible to all.

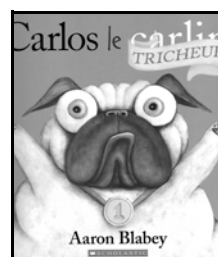
Sooner than she realizes, Olivia is thrown into the fashion industry and is sent to London, England, with three other models her age to try her hand at modeling. Olivia learns how to pose for photographs, how to walk down the runway, and how to accept the sometimes brutal criticism rampant in this industry. Along the way, she learns some hard lessons about competition between models and the true nature of friendship, both old and new. A certain 16-year-old intern, Alonzo, catches her eye and while a mutual attraction and romance becomes possible, Olivia has to decide whether or not to prioritize friendship over romance, or vice-versa.

In this first novel of the *École du Style Series*, Bélice evokes readers to question their own definitions of beauty and to consider whether the physical aspects of one's appearance are indeed the most important in life. Between a recent fight with her best friend Sara and her single mother's new romantic interest (with Ms. Brabant's ex-husband and Alonzo's father!), Olivia must lay down sensitive boundaries in her relations and decide whether or not the modelling industry is really for her.

The language level used in this book is accessible to intermediate French-language learners. The character-driven plot makes the novel a quick read. Important discussions take place over body image, friendship, romance and single-parent families, making this an excellent resource for anyone dealing with those issues.

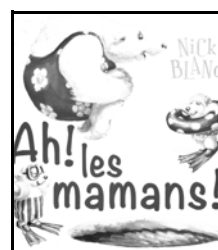
**Thematic Links:** Single-Parent Families; Female Friendships; Model/Fashion Industry; Body Image

Samantha Read



BLABEY, Aaron  
**Carlos le Tricheur**  
Éditions Scholastic, 2016. Unp. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 1. 978-1-431-4892-4. Pbk. \$10.99

For review in English see p. 2.



BLAND, Nick  
**Ah! Les mamans!**  
Éditions Scholastic, 2016. Unp. Illus. Gr. Preschool. 978-1-4431-5111-5. Pbk. \$10.99

For review in English see p. 3.

BOLDUC, Claude  
**Terreur chez Müller (Collection: TatouLu!)**

Illustrated by Paul Roux. Éditions Vents d'Ouest, 2016. 157p. Illus. Gr. 4-9. 978-2-89537-490-9. Pbk. \$12.95

Le Furet (aka Jean) finds a strange little mask in the grass when he is delivering papers and wandering near Muller's house. He decides to keep it, completely unaware of its importance and significance to Mr. Muller. Later, le Furet and his friends are inside Mr. Muller's house and it becomes clear that he isn't their enemy; on the contrary, he is the victim of some invisible force which he cannot clearly explain to the children. The seemingly normal house becomes a house of horrors and although they easily got into the building, the children begin to wonder if they will ever get out.

This book delves into fantasy and suspense as well as alluding to the power of thoughts and imagination and the importance of facing and overcoming one's fears. The house becoming gradually smaller and smaller and leaving no possible exits is a metaphor for the way fear can incapacitate people and keep them from acting and reaching their potential. While these themes underlie the novel, Bolduc has kept the story exciting and interesting and young readers will be on the edge of their seats



wondering just who Mr. Muller is, what might be causing him so much trouble, and how the children can possibly be of help while still saving themselves.

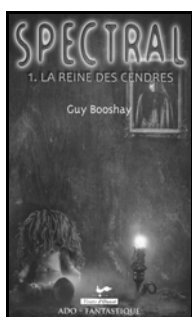
The book is divided into 14 short chapters plus an epilogue and uses a large font so it is very accessible for young readers at the junior level and will also interest many intermediate students as well. Paul Roux's illustrations help readers understand the context and action of the story as well as the emotional responses of many of the characters.

**Thematic Links:** Fantasy; Suspense

Ann Ketcheson

BOOSHAY, Guy

**Spectral: 1. La Reine des Cendres**  
Éditions Vent d'Ouest, 2016. 210p. Gr. 10-12. 978-2-89537-5043. Pbk. \$11.95



Fans of murder mysteries and the supernatural will want to devour this first volume in the *Spectral Series*. Brijit Baskangen and Samuel Vincent are a dynamic duo who seek to uncover and document paranormal events and superstitious tendencies using two distinct points of view on their blog, Spectral.

Samuel is a folklorist and specialist in the occult. When conducting paranormal investigations, he looks for clues in mythology and the occult. On the other hand, Brijit is a professional psychologist and sees this type of occurrence from a purely scientific point of view. Together, the pair has created a significant online following and they are often invited to conferences to speak on various paranormal occurrences and events.

Brijit and Samuel find themselves at such a conference in the small Québec village of Sainte-Germaine-de-Morte-Croix, where they give a lecture on a famous witch who haunted the area over 100 years ago. Julie Corrigan, a descendant of the witch, seeks out their help dealing with the horrendous events that have taken place at her home. Since the arrival of her recently orphaned niece Delphine, Julie and her family have witnessed terrifying and unexplained activities at her inherited ranch house at the edge of town. The situation devolves quickly and Julie and her partner Patrick Rattier are found murdered in their home soon after, their son missing. Brijit and Samuel use their unconventional methods to infiltrate the unconscious Delphine and solve the murder.

Both the advanced vocabulary and the expressions used in the narrative of this novel make *Spectral Vol. 1* a great read for fans of

mystery and the occult that have a firm grasp of the French language. It should also be noted that the plot does contain mature subject matter involving sexual abuse; discretion is advised to those wishing to recommend this resource to anyone under 16.

**Thematic Links:** Murder Mystery; The Occult; Paranormal; Suspense

Samantha Read

BOUCHER, Denis M.

**L'Île-au-Crâne de Shédiac**

Illustrated by Paul Roux. Bouton d'or Acadie, 2016. 206p. Illus. Gr. 4-6. 978-2-89750-031-3. Pbk. \$19.95



The detective trio who call themselves The Three Musketeers are on summer vacation in Shédiac, New Brunswick, when they hear local stories about a nearby island called Skull Island. Supposedly it is covered with human remains but no one really knows why. In their attempt to investigate, the trio finds a piece of old parchment which apparently will lead the person who can interpret it to a magnificent old crystal skull. Naturally Ania, Gabriel and Mamadou are intrigued and they set out to solve the mystery. However, a nasty local businessman has other ideas and then a strange man of Incan origin also appears on the scene. Who can the children trust to help them find the lost treasure?

Despite some leaps in the plot and some rather zany additions to the story such as the Jarnigocopter, a sort of helicopter specifically designed for the children, the novel is full of adventure and excitement. The children don't know who is on their side and young readers will enjoy watching the mystery unfold as they attempt to follow clues, read maps and keep ahead of the bad guys. The trio has been featured in half a dozen other adventure stories situated in New Brunswick and fans of the series will see that the characters haven't changed much. Ania is still the smart one, Gabriel talks too much in the wrong places and Mamadou always has to stop for something to eat. That said, this book can also stand alone as a good adventure story and does not depend on details from previous novels in the series.

The book consists of 41 short chapters plus an epilogue and the black and white illustrations aid in comprehension of plot details.

**Thematic Links:** Mystery; Adventure; New Brunswick

Ann Ketcheson

BRIGHT, Rachel

**La souris qui rugit**

Illustrations by Jim Field. French text by Isabelle Allard. Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 30p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-1-4431-4978-5. Pbk. \$11.99

E

Illustrated with a rich colour palette and written in a beautifully graceful font type, this life-affirming fable contains a lesson that is both timely and hard to miss: We are all afraid sometimes, but we can also all be brave, and that each of us has value, just as we are.



In the middle of the savannah, lies a huge pile of rocks (a la *Lion King*) where the king of the jungle resides. At the base of the rocks, lives the "smallest and quietest" of all mice. Children (and some adults) will recognize themselves when the mouse finds herself so small that she feels invisible, ignored and forgotten. On the other hand, the lion is important, respected and admired. One night, the mouse decides that she must learn to roar so that everyone will respect her too.

However, the only one who can teach her to roar is the lion. Will he eat her as a snack? Only one way to find out! As the mouse reflects, "You have to take risks to make a change!" Climbing the rocks, she comes face to face with the lion, who opens his eyes and... screams in terror! "Don't be afraid," says the mouse, "I come as a friend. We're going to have fun, us two, I promise." And so begins the friendship they both needed. The mouse no longer feels small - she found her voice without needing to roar at all - and the lion now roars - out of joy!

Just in case anyone missed it, the final page (as all good fables do) sums up the moral of the story: "That day, they both learned that no matter our size, we all have a mouse AND a lion in our hearts." Well said.

**Thematic Links:** Bravery; Friendship; Animal Fables

Ashley Nunn-Smith

BYRNE, Richard

**Ce livre n'est pas le bon!**



French text by Kevin Viala. Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 30p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-1-4431-4965-5. Pbk. \$11.99

E

Following the clever *Ce livre a mangé mon*

*chien!* (2015), Byrne brings us another picture book that breaks the fourth wall and uses the concept of the physical book in your hands as the central plot device. Featuring the same three characters: Bella, her dog and her friend Bruno, whereas the last book revolved around what can get lost in the gutter of the pages, this one focuses on different kinds of books and the physical act of turning the page.

While having a potato sack race across the page of their own book, Bella's dog trips and knocks the two children into a different book. They progress from one type of children's book to another by hopping (turning) the pages. The illustration style changes accordingly with each hop and kids will enjoy recognizing the familiar kid lit fare: including a graphic novel (where a cat and mouse bring them to a bun-sporting librarian to help find their book); a non-fiction title about Egypt; counting, activity, colouring, origami, and spot-the-difference books; and even an interactive app version of Little Red Riding Hood! When they end up in a spooky story with a monster breaking through the page, Bruno and Bella decide to jump through the hole and find themselves back in their own book again. Observant readers will notice that the "monster" was really Bella's dog wrapped up in his potato sack.

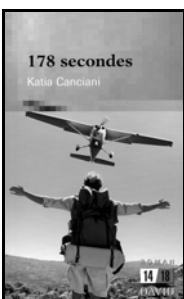
With this title, Byrne shows another creative way to play with the physicality of a book and expands that concept to include the intertextuality and stylistic conventions associated with each type of children's book, raising questions about our own assumptions and expectations and perhaps subtly bringing children to ponder what the various illustrative styles actually do contribute to the reading experience. A first purchase.

**Thematic Links:** Illustration Styles; Children's Book Formats; Reading Experience

Ashley Nunn-Smith

CANCIANI, Katia  
*178 secondes*

Les Éditions David, 2009. 270p. Gr.  
10-12. 978-2-895974536. Pbk. \$14.95



*178 secondes* will appeal to fans of road trip books, teenagers and adults alike. In the spirit of Jacques Poulin's *Volkswagen Blues*, Katia Canciani combines a quest of self-discovery with cross-country travel and her love for aviation. Nicola, a CEGEP student who has grown up in a single-parent family in Montreal, has just turned 18 and is itching to get away from the familiar in order to discover his country, the English language,

and most importantly, his identity.

As the narrative unfolds, readers begin to understand the complex events surrounding his birth that have resulted in the emotionally unsettled teen that is Nicola. Prior to departing on his cross-country tour, Nicola's friend Jade took him to a fortune-teller and reader of auras for a consultation. Although initially skeptical, this meeting had a profound effect on Nicola, leading him to uncover the deep secrets his family has hidden from him about his relationship with his mother and her very existence.

Nicola's voyage takes him from Montréal to Toronto and through to British Colombia, up to the Yukon and finally through the Maritime Provinces. Along the way, he meets many interesting people from across Canada who teach him, in various ways, about life. He learns that the francophone community outside of Québec is quite a bit larger than he previously thought. He learns how to be alone, who and what is important to him, and what his dreams are. He learns that despite having a mother who attempted to kill him as an infant, he has to live in the present and focus on what he has, rather than what he is lacking. He returns to Montréal a phoenix, rising from the ashes of his family's past and ready to tackle his life.

Canciani's creative writing style will enthrall readers of all ages. The narrative text is interspersed with Nicola's poetry, allowing readers to fully grasp his evolution as a character. The language complexity level should be considered advanced for French language learners.

**Thematic Links:** Road Trips; Aviation; Self-Discovery

Samantha Read

CARRIER, Jérôme  
*Les insectes du Québec (Mon Premier Animalier)*

Édition Anzou, 2016. 29p. Illus. Gr.  
Preschool - K. 978-2-7338-3920-1. Hdbk. \$6.95



This beginner informational book for young children from the *Mon Premier Animalier* Series focuses on insects common in Quebec. The cover features a magnified photograph of a stunning Monarch butterfly, followed by a moth on the inside cover. The index on the next page lists the insects and the pages where they are found, each page containing an up close photograph and a 2-3 sentence description.

Insects featured include ant, ladybug, mosquito, grasshopper, and dragonfly. The foam covered hardcover and colourful, glossy pages are designed to be appealing to small hands. This book is a nice resource to have for young

children to get an up close look at insects they are naturally curious about in their daily lives. Recommended as an introductory resource for informational text in a pre-K or kindergarten setting.

**Thematic Links:** Insects; Nature; Science

Veronique Lavoie

DAVIS, Aubrey  
*La grosse patate*

French text by Michel Bourque.  
Illustrated by Dusan Petricic. Éditions Scholastic, 1997/2015. 29p. Gr. K-2. 978-1-4431-5288-4 Pbk. \$10.99

This classic story is the French translation of the English title *Enormous Potato*. It tells the tale of a farmer who plants a potato, and the potato grows so large that when it is time to harvest the farmer needs help. He enlists his entire family, from his wife down to the family pets to assist him in the overwhelming task of picking the giant potato out of the ground. When they finally succeed, the potato is so huge they don't know how they will eat it all. The farmer and his family decide to have a feast to share the enormous potato with the whole village so everyone can share in their fantastic accomplishment.

A cute story about teamwork and cooperation with enough humour and silliness to keep young children engaged and entertained, this would make a good choice for a classroom read aloud. It could be used to tie into a theme about helping others or just as a fun farming story. A great addition to a primary classroom or school library.

**Thematic Links:** Teamwork; Cooperation

Veronique Lavoie

DE LA BÉDOYÈRE, Camilla  
*J'adore ma maman*

French text by Claude Cosette. Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 30p. Illus. Gr. 1-2. 978-1-4431-4572-5. Pbk. \$10.99

This informational text for young children is a French translation of the English title *I love Mom*. It is an introduction to how mothers in the animal kingdom care for their young. Each



page features a real life photograph of a mother and her young, and the text explains the ways the mother cares for and shows love for her baby.

The idea behind this book is good, though there are some issues with the execution. The cover depicts a mother giraffe with her young, however giraffes are not discussed inside the book which may cause confusion or disappointment among young readers. The descriptions of the animals and explanations of their habits are useful, yet some terms used would require further explanation for a young audience. The texts are short and direct, though there lacks a flow to the book. There are no numbers on the pages or table of contents, so the reader must flip through the book to find the limited information available.

This would be an appropriate book to tie into Mother's Day, or as an introduction to the animal kingdom, but it's usefulness in the classroom is limited.

**Thematic Links:** Animals; Mothers; Caring

Veronique Lavoie

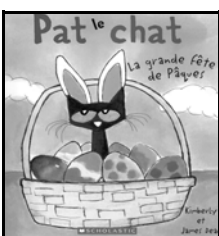
DEAN, Kimberly et James

**Pat le chat: la grande fête de Pâques**

French text by Isabelle Montagnier.

Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 22p. Illus.

Gr. K-1. 978-1-4431-5143-6. Pbk. \$10.99



This is the French translation of the English title *Big Easter Adventure* featuring the character Pat the cat. In this Easter themed story, Pat wakes up to find a letter in his basket from the Easter

bunny asking for his help. The letter asks him to find the eggs, paint the eggs, and hide the eggs. He also asks Pat to wear the bunny ears he left behind. Pat can't say no to the Easter bunny's request, so he puts on the ears and starts looking for eggs. He goes to the hen house and asks the hens to help him help the Easter bunny. They say "Of course!" and give him some of their eggs in exchange for adding a pink nose and buck teeth to his costume. Then Pat continues hopping on his way to the workshop to paint the eggs all the colours of the rainbow. Now that his basket is full of colourful Easter eggs, Pat now has to find places to hide them around the neighbourhood. As he's hiding the eggs, the Easter bunny appears and thanks Pat for doing such a wonderful job helping him, and he gives Pat a Super Assistant ribbon for his hard work.

This book is basic in its structure and story content. The story feels rehearsed, as though there are other Easter books that follow a similar storyline. Nevertheless, this is an age ap-

propriate choice for young French learners, the simple sentence structure and vocabulary used make it suitable for primary grades. It would fit nicely with an Easter theme, and also has an underlying message of helping others. Colourful, glossy illustration on every page are attention grabbing yet add very little to the development of the story. The ending is nice but seems almost abrupt, and rather than have Pat receive a medal for helping the Easter bunny, it would have been nice to have him internalize the feeling of accomplishment. This book fails to deliver anything new or exciting, there are better options available in this category.

**Thematic Links:** Easter; Helping Others

Veronique Lavoie

GAUDET, Jonathan

**Le Journal du Corsaire (Series:**

**Adventure Atout)**

Éditions Hurtubise, 2016. 183p. Gr. 4-9. 978-2-89723-736-3. Pbk. \$12.95



Antoine is an orphan who has always had a leather-bound journal with him. It is his most prized possession. By chance he meets Jules and Sarah who help him decipher the historical entries and letters. This information leads the trio to adventures involving pirate treasures, a group of bad guys who want to find the treasure chest first, and links to both the history of New Orleans and Antoine's own mysterious past.

This novel has suspense and intrigue as the teens try to figure out the clues leading to pirate Jean Lafitte's supposed treasure. Mingled with the story of the treasure is the mystery of who Antoine is and why the strange journal was found with him when he was abandoned as an infant. There are chase scenes in a cemetery and the trio is captured, tied up and held hostage until they give the key to the treasure chest to Kob, the head of a gang who is also on the treasure trail. Readers will be keen to learn how the teens outwit the thugs and eventually win the prize.

The adventure and excitement of the novel will appeal to both male and female readers. Gaudet has included a chronology from the 1682 discovery of Louisiana to present-day events such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and cemetery vandalism as recent as 2013 which ties in with the plot and makes the entire treasure story seem more realistic. There are 19 chapters plus an epilogue thus breaking down the story into smaller chunks and making it accessible for most young adult readers.

**Thematic Links:** Pirates; New Orleans; History; Adventure

Ann Ketcheson

GIGUÈRE, François

**Touché!**

Éditions Vent d'Ouest, 2016. 165 p.

Gr. 7-12. 978-2-895374800. Pbk.

\$9.95

**Touché!** is a classic teenage love story that will be of particular interest to fans of sports and football. Marc-Étienne Fournier and Daphné Perreault are next-door neighbours who grew up together and were inseparable as children. When they entered high school, Daphné's father decided to send her and her two sisters to a local private school, collège Du Rivage, following a personnel conflict he endured as a teacher at the public school, l'école secondaire Jean-Talon. As a result, Daphné and Marc-Étienne have lived separate lives for the better part of three years, each making his or her own friends at their respective schools.

Now in Grade 11, Marc-Étienne is the quarterback for Jean-Talon High School's football team, les Intendants. Marc-Étienne and his best friend and teammate, Félix-Antoine, are doing whatever it takes to attain their goal: to be one of the final teams vying for the provincial football championships. Daphné, for her part, is captain of the cheerleading team at college Du Rivage, and is dating the quarterback of the football team at her school, les Lions.

During the first game of the football season, Marc-Étienne accidentally knocks Daphné over while trying to catch the football. The story is set in motion - Marc-Étienne falls in love with Daphné and has to learn to communicate his love to her, however difficult it may be for him, and to win her heart. In doing so, he has to let Ariane Grondin, a cheerleader at Jean-Talon who has a crush on him, know that he is not interested in her. Meanwhile, Daphné has had it with her selfish boyfriend, David Robataille, and has to break up with him despite a possible loss to her own popularity.

The two childhood friends are getting to know each other all over again through their volunteer work at the local food bank. Marc-Étienne describes the feeling of being in love as being touched (touché), which has a double meaning for him as it also means touchdown in French. Will they be able to make their relationship work, despite the fact that they attend rival schools and play for rival teams?

This book would be a good read for an ado-



lescent whose first language is not French. The story is straight-forward and the vocabulary is not too difficult. The French language learner may find the novel difficult to follow, however, as many new characters and a major plot twist are introduced at the end.

**Thematic Links:** Football; Teenage Romance

Samantha Read

GILL, Deidre

**La neige magique**

French text by Josée Leduc. Éditions Scholastic, 2015. 37p. Illus. Gr. K-2. 978-1-4431-4505-3. Pbk. \$10.99



A simple and cute story about the power of play and imagination, this French translation of the English title *Outside* tells the story of a boy who is bored after a snowfall. He decides to get dressed to go outside to play. Once outside the little boy invites his older brother to come play with him, but he is more interested in playing on the computer inside. So the little boy starts to build a snowman, then a snow castle. Suddenly, a dragon appears and takes him for an amazing ride around the forest and village. As darkness falls the boy knows it is time to return home, and as he is on his way back his brother decides to come out to play in the magical snow.

This is a fun story that highlights the importance of play and imagination. The stunning illustrations that accompany the text tell most of the story, and will inspire young children to share their own experiences. The simple and engaging structure of the story is ideal for the primary age group, as the sentences are simple and appropriate yet somehow still convey the sense of wonder for the outdoors. As the message of the importance of playing outside versus inside is presented gently, children themselves will come to the conclusion that playing outside is more fun than being in front of a screen. This book would be a great classroom read aloud and discussion about playing outside and the importance of using your imagination.

**Thematic Links:** Snow; Imagination; Nature

Veronique Lavoie

GRONDIN, Victoria

**Dépourvu**

Éditions Hurtubise, 2016. 173p. Gr. 9-12. 978-2-897237455. Pbk. \$12.95



Imagine a world where most of the popula-



tion lives with some form of autism spectrum disorder. A world organized to not only meet the needs of those we consider autistic, but one devised to help everyone thrive, to chose a career most suited to the interests and talents of the individual. Then, meet Guillaume, who in our current under-

standing of the world would be considered "normal" but who, in the universe of *Dépourvu*, is indeed handicapped.

Throughout his entire life, Guillaume has been told that he's different, that his competencies are limited, that he will live out his days at a menial job with few friends and meaningful connections. After suffering some traumatic attempts to "cure" him of Wing's Syndrome during his childhood, Guillaume has now learned to accept his daily routine and his quiet life at home with his family.

When he meets Grace, his world is turned upside down. Grace is the only other person he's ever encountered with Wing's Syndrome, and he's surprised to learn that unlike him, she has found her true talent, playing Jazz music on the Saxophone, and is indeed considered a rising star in her field. Their connection is instantaneous and inspires Guillaume to appreciate life and to adopt a positive attitude. When Grace has to move back to Montreal from Quebec City, Guillaume courageously agrees to face his biggest fear - to undergo a series of tests in the name of research to cure Wing's Syndrome - just to spend more time with Grace. Anyone who has experience with, or is interested in learning more about Autism Spectrum Disorder will appreciate such a creative portrayal of the disorder. The courage and determination of Guillaume will inspire those who feel limited by their lot in life, whether it be a learning disorder or physical disability.

**Thematic Links:** Autism; Neuropsychology; Alternate Reality

Samantha Read

HARIMANN, Sierra

**C'est la Saint-Patrick**

Illustrations by The Artifact Group. Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 30p. Illus. Gr. K-2. 978-1-4431-5135-1. Pbk. \$7.99



The book *C'est la Saint-Patrick* is an excellent demonstration of the importance of teamwork. Fuji wants to organize the very first St-Patrick parade and she needs someone to play in the band. Sammy promises to spread the word. At his dance les-

sons, Sammy learns that Bridget is learning to play the bagpipe but she does not feel ready to play in a band unless she practises every single day until the parade. But that is quite a commitment as Bridget finds practicing quite boring. Without hesitation, Sammy invites her to practice at Puppyville Manor where he and Gigi will cheer her up. All set! Poor Sammy! He finds the rehearsals very boring as well. Fortunately, he has a brilliant idea and with Gigi's help, both decide on the spot that they will learn Irish dancing and participate in the parade.

Fuji could not have been any happier. On the day of the parade, every one shines and does his/her best. Teamwork was the key to a successful parade.

This book gives parents/teachers the opportunity to explain the origin of St-Patrick's Day as well as the meaning of the shamrock and the colour green. The importance of supporting friends and siblings in their endeavors should also be stressed as well as the importance of practising when learning to play an instrument.

**Thematic Links:** St-Patrick Day; Teamwork; Practising; Willingness; Parades

Suzanne Dagenais

HELING, Kathryn and Deborah Hembrook

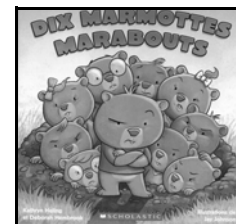
**Dix marmottes marabouts**

Illustrated by Jay Johnson. Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 23p. Illus. Gr. K-2. 978-1-4431-5126-9. Pbk. \$8.99



Hibernating sounds peaceful and serene but it also comes with challenges, especially confinement. At the beginning of the story, we have ten grouchy groundhogs squirming and craving for space.

All of a sudden, number 10 stops and screams: *let me out of here! This den is way too small.* It leaves while the remaining 9 muddy groundhogs work noisily to improve their accommodation. All of a sudden, number 9 stops and screams: *let me out of here! I desperately need a bath.* And off it goes while 8 lovely groundhogs twirl and dance in their hole. All of a sudden, number 8 stops and screams: *let me out of here! I am dizzy.* And it goes on and on until there is only one grouchy groundhog left in the den. Where are my friends? Feeling lonely, it sticks its head out of the den and sees all its friends checking out their new environment. Scared by their shadow, they all decide to continue their hibernation and reintegrate the den. Soon enough they are all asleep dreaming of an early spring.



Hibernation is a great topic. How long does it last? What other animals hibernate? Do animals wake up to eat while hibernating? According to a tale, groundhogs that come out of their burrow and see their shadow quickly go back to sleep for 6 more weeks. Children who have many siblings may like to share their experience as a member of a large family.

**Thematic Links:** Hibernation; Confinement; Reactions to Limited Spaces; Counting Backwards; Large Family

Suzanne Dagenais

HOLM, Jennifer L. and Matthew Holm  
**Coup de Soleil**  
French text by Isabelle Allard. Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 217p. Illus. Gr. 4-9. 978-1-4431-5131-3. Pbk. \$16.99

E



10-year-old Soleil goes to spend part of her summer vacation with her grandfather in Florida. This is a change from the family's original plans, but Soleil knows Disney World is in Orlando so she has high hopes. Only when she arrives does she realize that

her grandfather lives in a retirement community which isn't at all close to Orlando. Fortunately she meets Buzz, son of the community's groundskeeper, and his love of comics and superheroes helps her cope with what has the potential to be a very boring vacation. This graphic novel is set in the mid 1970's and some of the humour comes from such items as Polaroid cameras and dolls with crocheted skirts which actually hide a roll of toilet paper. Young adults won't remember the era, but their parents and teachers may be amused by the flashbacks. Also adding to the humour is the need for Soleil to fit in with the seniors around her. Occasionally she can be helpful by finding someone's lost cat. She learns to be co-operative when her grandfather's plans for the day include simply going to the bank, playing golf, or getting to the restaurant by 4:30 in order to enjoy the early bird special for dinner.

The story also alludes to various comic book super heroes and what super power Soleil and Buzz might like to have. Young readers who are fans of the comics will understand how much the two children enjoy and relate to these characters.

There is a serious underside to this sunny story. Soleil's teen brother is dealing with substance abuse and although her grandfather claims to have quit smoking, Soleil finds cigarette packages hidden everywhere within his condo. Soleil feels she has too many secrets on her conscience and, like Vesuvius, she finally erupts. Her grandfather persuades her that

none of these problems is her fault and together they throw all of his cigarettes into the trash so that he can fulfill his promise to quit smoking. Readers will enjoy lots of laughs from the story but will also realize that is always easier to talk with others and work things out rather than to keep secrets and have to cover up the truth.

The graphic format of the novel makes it accessible to most reading levels and it is a very quick read with only a few words per page and the pictures filling in the rest of the details re the plot, characters and settings.

**Thematic Links:** Family Relationships; Substance Abuse; Comic Heroes

Ann Ketcheson

HOLUB, Joan and Suzanne Williams  
**Blanche Neige est chanceuse (Series: L'académie Grimm)**  
French text by Isabelle Montagnier. Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 214p. Gr. 3-6. 978-1-4431-4727-9. Pbk. \$10.99

E



Blanche and her friends are certain that M.A.L.I.C. E. wants to destroy Grimm Academy but they are not sure just who actually belongs to this diabolical group nor who is the leader directing everything from outside. Blanche suspects her stepmother plays some sort of role in the evil plot

but can't find proof despite all of the lucky charms and magic in her possession. Blanche and her friends Rouge, Cendri and Raiponce have the treasure map and clues in their possession. Now all they have to do is interpret them!

Like the first two novels in this series, the authors weave together characters from various fairy tales into the imaginary Grimm Academy world. Mlle Muffet and M. Dumpty make their appearance, along with Mme Jabberwock and Mme L'Oye. Add to the mix some mean step-sisters and a nasty stepmother, some handsome princes and dancing at a fancy ball and the story is complete.

The book, with its female main characters and cover in shades of pink, is designed to appeal to female tween readers who will enjoy the mystery, magic and romance. The authors have also made Blanche an interesting role model. She has more self-esteem and confidence by the end of the book, realizing she can depend on herself and her friends instead of lucky charms. She also finds she doesn't need to continually look in mirrors in order to feel good about herself. Interesting ideas for young female readers to absorb while reading about a fairy tale world.

Although the book seems long at over 200 pages it is divided into 15 chapters and so seems reasonable for children in late primary or

junior grades. It can be read as a stand-alone novel but the characters and plot are a continuation of the earlier books in the series and thus it makes more sense to read the books in order.

**Thematic Links:** Fairy Tales; Fantasy

Ann Ketcheson



HUGHES, Susan  
**Houdini a disparu (L'album des choix)**  
Illustrated by Keanne Franson. Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 88p. Illus. Gr. 2-4. 978-1-4431-4651-7. Pbk. \$7.99

G

For review in English see p. 17.

JACKSON, Tom  
**L'autobus magique présente les volcans et les tremblements de terre**  
French text by Louise Binet. Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. 3-5. 978-1-4431-5129-0. Hdbk. \$14.99

G

This book is the French translation of the English title *Magic School Bus Presents Volcanoes and Earthquakes*. It is the latest offering from the *Magic*



*School Bus Presents Series* inspired by the popular children's program and book series. It is an informational book about volcanoes and earthquakes, featuring a combination of real life photos and cartoon depictions of the characters from the series. In this book, Mme Friselis takes her class on a field trip to visit volcanoes. On the first page readers will find a table of contents, and on the back page a glossary of important terms can be found.

Throughout the book, information is presented first with an introduction followed by small snippets of information in speech bubbles or as reports by the characters from the series. Descriptions next to real life photographs also help to deliver small bits of information on the topics presented. Underwater volcanoes, space volcanoes, and terrestrial volcanoes are all covered, as well as the effects of volcanic eruptions from lava to tsunamis and earthquakes. While the topic can be frightening for younger children, this book helps them understand what is happening and why it occurs, which can help ease the fearful feeling.

This book would be useful to have on hand

as part of a unit on volcanoes and earthquakes, and would be a good resource to have for a research or class project. Recommended for classroom or school libraries that serve elementary grade students.

**Thematic Links:** Earthquakes; Volcanoes

Veronique Lavoie

JOUBERT, Jean-Étienne  
**Mon très grand animalier des oiseaux**

Éditions Anzou, 2016. 92p. Illus. Gr. 5-6. 978-2-7338-4004-7. Hdbk. \$19.95



This large hardcover informational book features 72 birds found in Quebec. They are divided into 7 categories which can be found in the table of contents at the beginning of the book: birds of the city and garden, wetlands dwellers, rural birds,

birds of the St. Lawrence river, protected birds, forest birds, and long distance travellers. Each page features a close up colour photograph of the bird with descriptions of average size and weight, followed by the answers to the questions "who is this bird?", "where does it live?", "what does it eat?", and additional important information. There are also 3 true or false questions about the bird at the bottom of each page. At the end of the book there are a few games to help recognize birds by their beak, name the parts of the bird's body, and spot the differences.

This book offers an in-depth look at birds commonly found in Quebec. It is very informative and would be a great resource for a class project on birds, or for someone with an avid interest in birds. The glossy, colourful pages and stunning photographs bring the information to life for the reader, and even adults are likely to find out some new information about the birds that they see everyday. It would be useful to have on hand for a research project or for a unit on birds in the environment. Recommended for classrooms or school libraries that serve older elementary level students.

**Thematic Links:** Birds; Environment; Nature

Veronique Lavoie

LAFRAMBOISE, Michèle  
**Le gant (Collection Ado)**  
Éditions Vents d'Ouest, 2016. 170p.  
Gr. 9-12. 978-2-89537-476-3. Pbk. \$9.95



thinks he might convince Amélie to be his girlfriend. Julien revels in his new popularity at school and the feelings of power it brings. But power becomes arrogance and a need for vengeance. Can Julien's friends convince him to get rid of the glove and go back to his more familiar and pleasant "old self"?

Laframboise gives readers an interesting character study. At first we support Julien as he breaks out of his shyness and becomes more assertive. But the author helps readers see that power can corrupt, even at the high school level, and Julien becomes less and less likeable. How he eventually overcomes his need for power and attention gives this coming-of-age story an entirely different focus and therefore makes it more interesting.

Readers will ask themselves to what lengths they might go to become popular with their peers. The other question underlying the story is whether many of those in powerful positions become blinded by their ambition and thus lose their humanity. These are serious themes which are skilfully handled by Laframboise and make this a must-read novel which will appeal to both male and female young adult readers.

**Thematic Links:** Popularity; Power; Friendship

Ann Ketcheson



Illus. Gr. K-3. 978-1-4431-5296-9. Pbk. \$10.99.

For review in English see p. 8.

LATULIPPE, Martine Latulippe



**Le Bonhomme Sept-Heures (Les p'tits classiques series)**

Illustrated by Elise Catros. Auzou, 2016. 24p. Illus. Gr. K-2. 978-2-7338-4130-3. Pbk. \$4.95

A long, long time ago,



a Quebec legend sent the kids to bed no later than seven o'clock for fear of the Bonhomme Sept-Heures. Parents and older siblings entertained the scare describing the Bonhomme as a very, very ugly character with a hooked nose, a long beard and a creepy hat. According to the parents, every night at seven o'clock sharp, the villain would look for disobedient children to put away in the huge sack he carried on his back. Once caught, the children were taken to a far away cave - never to be seen again.

It would appear that the tale was purely invented by parents as a threat for disobedient children. The word Bonhomme Sept-Heures was the result of the transformation of the word *bonesetter*, a specialist who would come to the house to mend broken limbs without medication or anesthesia. Children who witnessed their parents screaming and crying feared the *bonesetter*.

Using this text discussion could revolve around the following topics - What is a legend? Do children know of any other legend? Are all legends frightening? Bed time routines. Children will also need to be reassured that today's methods to fix broken bones are not as frightening as those portrayed in the story.

**Thematic Links:** Legends; Disobedient Kids; Villains; Bonesetters; Bedtime

Suzanne Dagenais

LAVERY, Hélène  
**Marquée au fer rouge**

Éditions Vents d'Ouest, 2016. 216p.  
Gr. 9-12. 978-2-89537-483-1. Pbk. \$11.95



Jade receives quite the shock when she finds a half-naked photo of herself she had meant to stay private published on her classmate's Facebook page. Enraged, she involves the police, her parents and the principal of her school to take down the photo her soon-to-be ex-boyfriend's friend published online without her consent. Traumatized, Jade avoids attending school and facing up to the bullying and name-calling that persists amongst her classmates. Threats, spying, name-calling and victimization continue, despite Jade's attempt to distance herself from the situation by getting involved in a theatre production at her school and starting a new romance with a fellow actor, Yann. Upon reaching out to organizations like Cyberaide and Kids Help Phone, Jade discovers the experiences of many other victims of online bullying. With the help of friends and family, Jade regains confidence in her talents and



abilities and learns to love life once again.

This novel is an appropriate recommendation to francophone readers, or fluent French language learners. Those who have been victimized by online bullying or intimidation will relate to Jade's emotions and experiences. Readers who enjoy full character description and development will want to read *Marquée au fer rouge* by Hélène Lavery.

**Thematic Links:** Online Bullying; Online Privacy; Social Media Use and Ethics; Self Confidence

Samantha Read

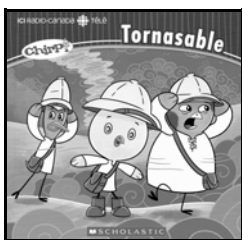
MOORE, Diana

*Tornasable (CHIRP Series)*

Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 22p. Illus.

Gr. K-2. 978-1-4431-5293-8. Pbk. \$9.99

G



The book *Tornasable* is an episode of the TV show called CHIRP. Each episode appears to be written by a different author.

In the show, we find three superheroes: Chirp, Tweet (Tudi) and Squawk (Scouac). The three friends take pleasure in imagining themselves into very special adventures. In this particular episode, the three friends imagine that they are in a desert. They are very thirsty but have just run out of water. They look around themselves and to their amazement an oasis suddenly emerges in the middle of the desert landscape. No time to quench their thirst as a sandstorm rises. How will the three friends survive? Luckily Tudi always carries with him a super kit and inside the kit, the friends find an umbrella. At least they can protect themselves from all the sand while walking towards the oasis. Will our friends survive their predicaments?

What is a 'chirp'? Are the friends too audacious in their adventures? Why is the sandstorm called a Tornasable? What can be found in a desert? What is an oasis? Has anyone been in a desert? Children can locate deserts on a map.

**Thematic Links:** Adventurous Friends; Predicaments; Super Kit; Support; Imagination

Suzanne Dagenais

MUNSCH, Robert

*Montre et raconte (Munsch les Classiques)*

Illustrated by Michael Martchenko. Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 24p. Illus. Gr. K-2. 978-1-4431-5267-9. Pbk. \$8.99

E



This is a bizarre story where a big brother, Benjamin, packs his baby sister in his knapsack and brings her to school for *show and tell*. Upon arriving in class, baby sister wakes up and is inconsolable in this unfamiliar environment. She starts crying and screaming at the top of her lungs. Everyone is astonished and alternately the teacher, the school director, and the doctor try to soothe the baby.

But they are unsuccessful and Benjamin must resort to calling his mother. When he reaches her, she has just discovered that the baby is missing and Benjamin must confess that the baby is not missing but at school with him. Relieved, the mother rushes to school where in no time she rocks her daughter to sleep. Everyone is reassured and mother and children head home. Benjamin must pick something else to bring to school for *show and tell*. He sets his mind on his bagpipe and all sorts of weird looking objects including a snake. Undoubtedly, Benjamin is very creative when it comes to sharing his life with his classmates.

Some topics for discussion upon reading this book might be asking children to discuss Benjamin's behaviour - was it a good idea to bring his baby sister to school without telling his mother? Did Benjamin consider the safety of his sister? Ask children what can be safely brought to school for *show and tell*. What was their best show and tell ever?

**Thematic Links:** Show and Tell; Acting Impulsively; Consequences; A Mother's Know How

Suzanne Dagenais

NELSON, Kadir

*Avec un grain d'amitié*

French tet by Isabelle Montagnier.

Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 30p. Illus. Gr.

Preschool - K. 978-1-4431-5170-2. Pbk.

\$11.99

E



This book is the French translation of the English title *If you plant a seed*. The story begins with a bunny and a mouse who plant seeds in a garden, and with love and care carrots, tomatoes, and cabbage grows. Then some birds come along and want some food, but the bunny refuses to share any. A food fight breaks out, and soon there is almost no food left. Then the baby mouse shares a tomato with the birds, and soon the birds return to spread an abundance of seeds over the garden. A short time later, a bountiful

harvest grows, with more variety than ever before. The bunny and mouse and all the birds are overjoyed, and everyone shares a wonderful feast that is more delicious than the last. Everyone is happy as they all get along and are full of good food and new friendships.

A cute story for young children that helps demonstrate the long term benefits of sowing seeds of friendship, this book is a nice choice for educators of younger age groups. There are few words to this book, as the sentences are spread out over several pages and most of the story is told through the delightful illustrations. Each 2 page spread depicts the events of the story in a simple yet engaging image for children to respond to. The message is an important one for young children, as they naturally think in the present and this book helps them consider the repercussions of their actions. Recommended for early learning classrooms or school libraries that cater to younger ages.

**Thematic Links:** Sharing; Friendship

Veronique Lavoie

NÖEL, Michel, Josée Laflamme, & Jean-Louis Fontaine

G

*Je découvre et je comprends series:*

*Les Iroquoiens* (978-2-7338-4005-4);

*Les Algonquiens* (978-2-7338-4006-1)

Les éditions Anzou, 2016. 31p. Illus. Gr. 4-6. Hdbk. \$21.95ea.

This collection of hardcover informational books is designed to introduce elementary students to the history and cultures of the Iroquois and Algonquin people. The two hardcover editions are divided into three sections: A very long time ago, Not so long ago, and Today's age. They take the reader through a chronological sequence through the history of the First Nations in what is now Ontario and Quebec regions and their contributions to making Canada the country it is today. These fact filled books introduce young male characters who take the reader on a journey to discover the history and traditions of their people. The combination of real life photographs and cartoon illustrations throughout the book help break up the information presented in the different sections. Each edition features a glossary at the end of terms found in bold text in the book.

This collection provides a lot of information for young readers on the his-



tory, culture, and traditions of the Iroquois and Algonquin. The introduction by the characters at the beginning provides a friendly means to explore the connections between past and present. This series would be useful for a unit or class project, or even as a text book. The inside of the book jackets contain a poster depicting important facts as well as a map and features of the land and First Nations. A table of contents would have been a nice inclusion however it was somehow omitted. An adult would likely learn a lot from reading this series as well, it would be a fantastic resource to have in an elementary classroom or school library.

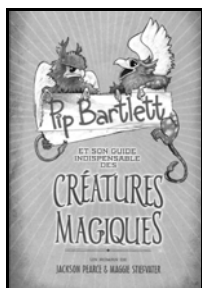
**Thematic Links:** First Nations Ancestry; Culture; History

Veronique Lavoie

PEARCE, Jackson et Maggie Stiefvater

**Pip Bartlett et son guide indispensable des créatures magiques**

Scholastic, 2016. 218p. Illus. Gr. 7-8. 978-1-4431-5137-5. Pbk. \$12.99



Pip Bartlett, nine, has a passion: magical creatures. The *Jeffrey Higgleston Magical Creatures Guide* never leaves her hands. She consults it regularly and is even enriched by Higgleston's personal observations.

Another peculiarity of this curious little girl is she is the only person able to understand what magical creatures say. She says more gifted people talk to the magical creatures. But few people want to believe in her ability to communicate with them.

Following an incident with a unicorn which went wrong, her parents sent her to Cloverton, Georgia, with her Aunt Emma, to spend the summer. Her Aunt Emma is a veterinarian for magical creatures. In her clinic, Pip can observe all kinds of magical creatures: griffins, invisible salamanders, etc. These pets - yes, you read that right "these are pets" - under the watchful eye of Pip, are studied very closely, because she wants to become the best researcher in the field.

On arrival in Cloverton, Pip met Tomas Ramirez, a young boy of her age. While it is not easy to be able to make friends with this fragile boy who is allergic to "347 things" and who does not love animals, she changes her mind when he tells her to believe in her ability to communicate with magical creatures. As Pip must spend the summer with her aunt, she is entrusted with certain tasks that she performs with pleasure, but her biggest challenge

is when "fuzzles" appear and begin to proliferate. This invasion of "fuzzles" will hold Pip, her aunt and the whole community of Cloverton spellbound. As with all problems, there is a solution, and Pip finds it.

This story of magical creatures will be well received by the young readers who love the "fuzzles" and the disturbance they cause. Pip is particularly curious and clever, which makes her a sympathetic character. The illustrations of magical creatures - from the *Jeffrey Higgleston Magical Creatures Guide* - help make this book plausible. They will delight readers.

The French translation by Hélène Rioux makes an interesting and readable text.

**Thematic Links:** Magical Creatures; Unicorns

Louise Melançon

PELLETIER, Dominique  
**C'est la Saint-Valentin (Je suis capable series)**

Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 21p. Illus. Gr. K-1. 978-1-4431-5177-1. Pbk. \$8.99



This book is part of a series that demonstrates how a confident little boy and a confident little girl go about life with a smile on their face. They trust their abilities to do just about anything.

In this story, Gustave and Olivia are getting ready for Valentine's Day. They are familiar with the annual holiday and its customs which include red roses, chocolates, love letters, decorations, Cupid, and the most important one, choosing a Valentine.

First the roses: Gustave goes bare hands to pick a few roses. To his surprise, he ends up with thorns on his face and fingers. Is he dispirited? Not for a moment. Next on his list is the chocolate box. Our friend soon discovers that it is very difficult to resist the temptation and he ends up eating most of the chocolates. Writing a love note? No problem! However, using ink and a quill-pen is tricky as Gustave quickly finds out. What about Olivia? It seems that her tasks are less daunting as she successfully decorates the living room - although the cat might say that he is buried in a sea of red. Then Valentine's crafts. In no time a garland of red hearts and tons of cards are ready. Pick a valentine? Easy for Olivia as she sets her heart on her dog. But the one thing that is particularly difficult for both Olivia and Gustave is sharing their secret love.

Children will love to talk about Valentine's Day and their favourite tradition. How did Cupid become the symbol of love with his bow and arrow? Are children willing to disclose

their secret feelings for the special someone?

**Thematic Links:** Valentine's Day and its Traditions; Love; Friendship; Positive Attitude

Suzanne Dagenais

POTTER, Molly

**La ronde des émotions**

French text by Isabelle Fortin.

Illustrated by Sarah Jennings. Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. 1-3. 978-1-4431-4977-8. Pbk. \$11.99



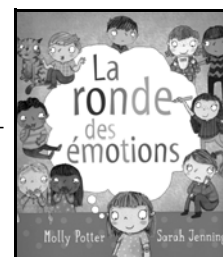
This is the French translation of the English book *How are you feeling today?* It is designed to introduce children to the different emotions they experience everyday in different situations and how to deal with them. The first two pages serve as a table of contents where all the emotions are depicted in illustrations with page numbers listed. On each page a different aspect of emotional intelligence is explored, including feeling happy, sad, angry, bored, embarrassed, jealous to name a few. In all, 12 emotions are covered in this book, with each page first describing the various ways to deal with a particular feeling. There is also a small description on every page explaining the emotion that is covered. For example, boredom is when nothing interests you and you don't know what to do with yourself. If you are feeling bored, some suggested activities include organizing toys or clothes, daydreaming, dancing to your favourite music, or drawing a picture from your favourite book.

This book is a fabulous resource to have a discussion on feelings and emotions with primary age children. It offers children a comforting and safe way to explore their own emotions and realize that everyone experiences them in different ways. The intent of this book is to help children deal with their emotions appropriately, and this goal is well executed.

The illustrations are friendly and inviting, and depict a variety of children experiencing and dealing with their emotions. The colourful images combined with the short, easy to understand descriptions are appropriate for French second language learners. This book would be an ideal resource for children who may be having emotional issues. Recommended for primary classroom or school library.

**Thematic Links:** Emotions; Feelings

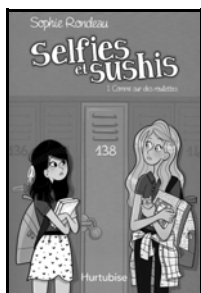
Veronique Lavoie



RONDEAU, Sophie.

**Selfies et Sushis: 1. Comme sur des roulettes**

Éditions Hurtubise, 2016. 233p. Gr. 4  
up. 978-2-89723-796-7. Pbk. \$12.95



The narrative of this novel takes the form of a diary, told from two distinct points of view. Both Raphaëlle and Anaé are living in single-parent households, and both are about to start their last summer vacation before entering high school in September. Raphaëlle is an energetic but clumsy girl who loves playing soccer and sending selfies to her recently-separated father on her new cell phone. Anaé loves eating sushi with her father, the principal of her new high school, and learning more about her Japanese mother who died in childbirth. Both girls are starting to take an interest in boys but must also deal with their parents who are seeking out new romance.

The language level and vocabulary in the novel is accessible to French language learners of an intermediate level. The story line and subject matter are quite straight forward, making this a great resource for students looking to improve their comprehension and vocabulary in the French language. The novel is a quick read, with larger than normal font size and line spacing. It will be of particular interest to adolescent girls who may have to deal with separated parents and their attempts to find new romance.

**Thematic Links:** Divorce; Unexpected Friendships; Entering High School

Samantha Read

ROUX, Paul

**L'égout du risque (TatouLu Collection)**

Vent d'Ouest, 2016, 132p. Gr. 8-9.  
978-2-89537-489-3. Pbk. \$11.95



In this story meant to be funny and entertaining, Paul Roux tells the tale of Vincent Dunais who has a very unusual love for, above all things, foul odours. Since he was small, he loves everything that stinks. The more it smells the happier Vincent is! His greatest dream is to go down in a manhole - on the cover, we see him smiling as he goes down there.

Indeed, the opportunity arises: the road employees are working in a pipe near his home.

When they go on their coffee break, Vincent takes the opportunity to sneak into the manhole. The return of sewer workers forces him to rush deeper in the pipe. And then the adventure begins ... In the dark, damp corridors, Vincent confronts all sorts of dangers. Then he suffers a fainting due to inhalation of natural gas, and is brought to the surface by a sewage engineer working on a top-secret file. Vincent's oddity earns him being recruited by the engineer to develop an odor software for the cinema!

Reading this book can be a little difficult because the text includes several puns with the word sewer. In contrast, young readers will enrich their vocabulary regarding odours, nose, and smell. Many colourful expressions will make them smile repeatedly.

This humorous story, between a graphic novel and comics, written and illustrated by Paul Roux, also reflects on the waste that ends up in our sewers.

**L'égout du risque** is the third in the *The TatouLu collection*.

**Thematic Links:** Sewer; Sense of Smell; Humour

Louise Melançon

RUSSELL, Brendan

**La cache au trésor (CHIRP Series)**

Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 22p. Illus. Gr. K-2. 978-1-4431-5294-5. Pbk. \$9.99



**La cache au trésor** is an episode of a TV show called CHIRP. Each episode appears to be written by a different author.

In the book, we find three superheroes:

Chirp, Tweet (Tudi) and Squawk (Scouac). The friends take pleasure in imagining themselves into very special adventures. This time around, they want to become treasure hunters in the jungle. Finding an ancient pyramid made out of gold is at the top of their wish list. Sounds ambitious? Yes, but the friends find what they are looking for and without hesitation, they climb the stairs of the pyramid. Inside, they find jewellery, crowns, a golden vase filled with golden popcorn, etc. Everything glitters!

In his wisdom, Chirp warns his friends that all that glitters may be traps. But his warning comes too late and sure enough, the friends find themselves in all kinds of predicaments. What do they do? Yes, they look in the super kit and find all kinds of wooden blocks that help them return to safety.

Teachers/parents can ask children if they know the meaning of the word 'chirp' and if there is a correlation between the sound and the

characters of the book. Are the three friends too adventurous? Should they be more careful about their choice of games? What is a predicament? Children may be willing to share times where they find themselves in an impasse and how they got out of it.

**Thematic Links:** Imagination; Adventures; Predicaments; Resourcefulness

Suzanne Dagenais

**TARSHIS, Lauren Tarshis  
2011: Le Tsunami au Japon  
(Survivants series)**

French text by Martine Faubert.

Illustrated by Scott Dawson. Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 83p. Illus. Gr. 3-6. 978-1-4431-4313-4. Pbk. \$9.99



Despite the recent death of his dad, Ben and his family travel to Shogahama Japan to visit his father's hometown and spend time with Uncle Ojisan. In March 2011, there is a catastrophic earthquake and tsunami and Ben and the rest of the family are caught in the midst of it. When Ben is separated from the others, readers wonder if he can survive on his own in a foreign country and if he will ever see his family again.

This short book gives young readers a good sense of what it might be like to be caught in the middle of natural disasters such as earthquakes and tsunamis. Since children see so many similar stories on the news this gives them a sense of what real people might endure. Ben is taught lessons about courage, resilience and survival as he has to fend for himself in the middle of catastrophic destruction.

The story is short and there is enough action and suspense to keep young readers interested throughout. Although the author alludes to death and destruction in the book there are not a lot of grisly details so the novel is suitable for young children.

The final pages of the book give factual information about the disaster as well as explaining some of the science behind both earthquakes and tsunamis. The involvement of the Fukushima nuclear facility is also mentioned and there are a few statistics about the number of people killed or injured and the number of buildings destroyed.

**Thematic Links:** Earthquakes and Tsunamis; Action; Survival; True Stories

Ann Ketcheson

## Reviewers

*Thanks once again to all our dedicated reviewers who make each issue of **Resource Links** possible.*

**Alice Albarda**, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS

**Erin Hansen**, Teacher-Librarian, Calgary, AB

**Tanya Boudreau**, Librarian, Cold Lake Public Library, Cold Lake, AB

**Suzanne Dagenais**, Program Officer, Ottawa, ON

**Mavis Holder**, Librarian at Volunteer Calgary, Calgary, AB

**Karyn Huenemann**, Instructor in Children's Literature, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC

**Chloe Humphreys**, Librarian, Vancouver, BC

**Patricia Jerney**, Former Teacher-Librarian,

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**Beth Wilcox**, Library Learning Commons Teacher, Prince George, BC

If you are interested in becoming a reviewer for

### *Resource Links*

please contact the editor

Vicki Pennell at

Phone: 709-335-2394; Fax: 709-335-2978

E-Mail: [resourcelinks@nl.rogers.com](mailto:resourcelinks@nl.rogers.com)



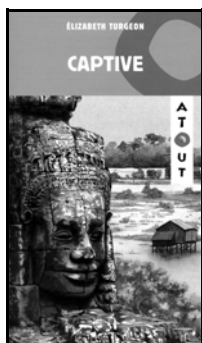
TEKAVEC, Heather  
**Les Bons Petits Singes**  
Illustrated by David Huyck. Éditions Scholastic, 2016. Unp. Illus. Gr. K-3. 978-1-4431-5297-6. Pbk. \$10.99.

E

For review in English see p. 55.

TURGEON, Élisabeth  
**Captive**  
Éditions Hurtubise, 2016. 304p. Gr. 9-12. 978-2-89723-742-4. Pbk. \$12.95.

G



While accompanying his father, Claude Miron, to Cambodia, the young Alice Miron is captured by mistake by members of FKP: Khmer peasant strength, mild protest movement. Although there was mistaken identity, the FPK does not release Alice. By abduction, the group will seek to attract the world's attention on the problem of farmers whose government confiscates the land.

During his captivity, Alice met Chan (the daughter of the leader of the movement FPK, Lok thol). As the days pass, they become friends, making Alice's captivity less painful. Alice learns more about the life of Chan, but also about the situation in Cambodia.

Meanwhile, Alice's parents and his best friend, Jonathan, begin looking for him. They face many problems, especially the lack of cooperation from the local police. Then, after several days of fruitless waiting, a drawing of Alice arrives to his parents. Hope returns. Convinced that Alice left a hidden message in his drawing, his mother scrutinizes the drawing with a microscope. Indeed, clues, hidden in watercolor, allow his parents to look for him. However, Sourkea Sampham (a double agent who infiltrated the movement FPK) wants to take advantage of the Canadian hostage situation. In fact, he works for the government to discredit the movement FPK ... and, for him, all methods are allowed: murder, violence, lying, etc.

The ending is happy. Alice says goodbye to Chan and reassures his humanity. It is thanks to his human qualities that Chan has finally triumphed over evil, violence, and hypocrisy. A NOTE to the reader closes the book. The author, who returned from a trip to Cambodia, presents the facts that led to the writing of this novel. The advantage of this novel lies in the fact that the situation in Cambodia is little

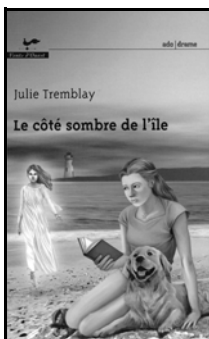
known especially by young people. This novel allows them to become aware of the problems facing the Cambodian population. It is clear that even in the era of the Internet, many problems in the world are unknown.

**Thematic Links:** Cambodia; Political Issue

Louise Melançon

TREMBLAY, Julie  
**Le côté sombre de l'île**  
Éditions Vent d'Ouest, 2016. 269p. Gr. 7-12. 978-2-895374732. Pbk. \$13.95

E



The lighthouse at Pointe-aux-Rochers, a small fictional town located on the St. Lawrence River in Québec, has an unsettling history that has haunted the village since the time of colonization. As a result, the children of the community are forbidden to visit the lighthouse and the dangerous, rocky island it is located on.

Over the years, rumours and gossip have been circulating throughout the community, enticing fear and an overall aversion of the lighthouse and its environs amongst the townspeople.

Marie-Soleil Langlois, a local 13-year-old girl, has just finished her year-end exams and is very excited to spend her summer camping with her friends and spending her free time with her family. However, once she starts having strange visions and dreams of the events that took place at the lighthouse so many years ago, she knows she must go against her parents' wishes and investigate the death of Rosalie, a woman who died on the island during childbirth.

With the help of her friends, and in particular they boy she's liked since primary school, Jean-Christophe, she uncovers the secrets of the lighthouse's past. Can she help Rosalie come to terms with the events leading up to the death of her and her child? Furthermore, can she help her community come to grips with its past? Mystery fans will enjoy the well-developed, relatable characters as they explore their community's past and experience the usual ups and downs of teenage life, including the importance of family, friendships and even a bit of summer romance.

In this novel, Julie Tremblay does an excellent job of slowly revealing the mysterious past of the lighthouse, enticing the readers to continue reading as the suspense builds. The author favours description over dialogue or action, though, so this novel will be of particular interest to the more advanced readers of the French language. Tremblay does not shy away from using "Québecismes," so the reader needs to have an excellent grasp of the subtleties of Qué-

bécois French.

**Thematic Links:** Ghost Stories; Lighthouses; Mystery; Small Communities in Québec

Samantha Read

WEST, Tracey  
**Le secret du dragon de l'eau**  
(*Maîtres des Dragons Series*)  
French text by Marie-Carole Daigle. Illustrated by Graham Howells. Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 90p. Illus. Gr. K-3. 978-1-4431-5142-9. Pbk. \$9.99

E

Each of the young dragon masters wears a small stone pendant which allows direct communication with his/her assigned dragon and there is also a large magic stone within the castle. At the outset of the novel, someone has tried to steal this large stone and coincidentally his friends notice that Bo has received some sort of message via a black feather and now is acting very strangely. They wonder just what he might be hiding and if he knows more than he is saying about the attempted theft.

Tracey West gives young readers a novel full of fantasy and excitement as Yoann, Rori, Anna and Bo are on the trail of the thieves while at the same time trying to resolve the threat which has been made to Bo's family. Their success depends on working together as a team and co-operating with one another, valuable lessons for any group of friends.

This a chapter book suited for children in the primary grades thanks to its easy to read large font and the high interest level of the plot. As well, there are illustrations by Graham Howells on every page and these add entertainment as well as detail to the book. A handful of questions at the end of the story provide activities for young readers and add to the enjoyment of both the plot elements and the illustrations.

**Thematic Links:** Dragons; Fantasy; Friendship; Teamwork

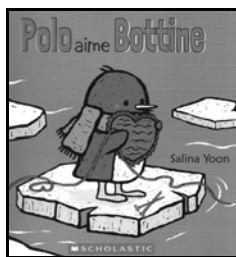
Ann Ketcheson

YOON, Salina  
**Polo aime Bottine**  
Éditions Scholastic, 2016. 30p. Illus. Gr. K-2. 978-1-4431-4983-9. Pbk. \$10.99

G

This is a love story between two penguins, Polo and Bottine. They share a passion for knitting. At the beginning of the story, Polo looks through a telescope to find love. All he





finds is a fingerless mitten. No prints on the snow, a real mystery. Polo is resolved to find the owner and he asks around, but without success. He then decides to knit a similar mitten, just in case. It is only when a

pair of puffins lands at his feet that Polo understands that the mystery has been solved. The said mitten was lost while the puffin was flying and was meant to warm up his bill. Polo wastes no time in giving the soft beak cover to the freezing puffin.

Grateful, the love birds hatch a plan to help

Polo find his better half. They fly to the other side of the ice floe after taking away Polo's wool balls from his basket. The puffins find Bottine dealing with a very special request: a whale wants a sweater. Bottine is aware that it will be a phenomenal task, but she is so generous that she agrees. She turns around to start knitting but her basket is empty and all her wool is gone. Where is the wool? Intrigued, both penguins leave on the spot to look for their wool and as they cross paths they decide to solve the mystery together. The first clues are two pieces of wool running parallel on the snow. Following the pieces, the two penguins pick up their knitting needles and start knitting for the pleasure of being together and for staying warm. They are happy as they share an iceberg. But

their happiness is cut short when they are abruptly separated by a blizzard. Polo and Bottine are miserable as they must face the storm without each other's support. They keep on knitting as they climb higher and higher on each side of the mountaintop. Fortunately, they make it to the top at the same time and from that moment on, destiny seals their love and they go on living a great and beautiful adventure.

**Thematic Links:** Searching for Love; Knitting; Hatching a Plan; Clues; Generosity

Suzanne Dagenais

(cont'd from p. 12)

Good mannered monkeys and bad mannered children romp through this hilarious book about behaviour. When a group of bad mannered children visit the playground by the monkey cage, the zoo keeper realises that the children need to be caged and the polite monkeys allowed to mingle with the adults.

The outlines of the pictures are drawn in pencil and the colours entered digitally. The end papers are delightful and reinforce the notion that the animals in the zoo have their eyes on the visitors while the visitors are watching the animals.

A good read aloud for young listeners, as there is plenty of dialogue which will produce grins and giggles when Mother Monkey says, "This place is disgusting, why aren't there any banana peels on the ground?"

Adults will enjoy the irony, while young ones will enjoy the mayhem.

Also available in French. See p. 54.

**Thematic Links:** Monkeys; Behaviour; Zoos

Mavis Holder

UNGAR, Richard

**Yitzi and the Giant Menorah**

Tundra Books, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. K-4. 978-1-77049-812-9. Hdbk. \$21.99



Although this book, set in Poland, has a theme of celebrating Hanukkah, it also has a much broader theme of how we can say "thank you" for a

gift. When the citizens of the village of Chelm receive the gift of a large menorah, they decide they must give an appropriate gift in return to the mayor of nearby Lublin. Several attempts to send gifts are thwarted, so they light the menorah on a hill outside the village, light all

the candles and sing a Hanukkah song. The sights and sounds are heard by the mayor of Lublin and give him the gift of joy and inspiration that no material gift could have given.

Ungar uses a technique called watercolour monoprinting to produce the highly coloured original works on each double page spread. On some pages there are also pencil drawings of some of the characters which can be found in the colour illustrations

A brief telling of the story of Hanukkah is at the back of the book.

**Thematic Links:** Hanukkah; Gift Giving and Receiving; Polish Village Life; Art - Print Making

Mavis Holder

VALÉRIO, Geraldo  
**Turn on the Night**

Groundwood Books, 2016. 40p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 1. 978-1-55498-841-9. Hdbk. \$18.95



When a young girl falls asleep reading, she transforms into the magical creature from her book and goes looking for the brightest and biggest star in the sky. She isn't able to reach it herself, but with help from her toy chicken and deer, she is able to touch it. Once

she brings the star into her bedroom, it scatters into hundreds of smaller lights which decorate her bed, her walls and her belongings.

Like all good wordless books, this story is open to interpretation. Children will likely have their own ideas about where the magical creature, the chicken and the deer came from (as they appear as different objects in the story) and why she wanted the star. The last double page spread hints at how books, imagination, and dreams take us into other worlds.

The acrylic paint and colour pencil illustra-

tions in Valério's picture book are colourful and bright despite the night time setting. The sky is vibrant blue and the ground is apple green. In this story, indoor lights are powered with stardust, not electricity, and pets are pampered. The silver, glittery title makes for an attractive cover.

**Thematic Links:** Dreams; Sleep; Wordless Books; Night; Stars; Cooperation; Imagination

Tanya Boudreau

VAN CAMP, Richard

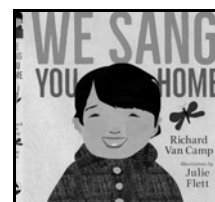
**We Sang You Home**

Illustrated by Julie Flett. Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 26p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - K. 978-1-459811782. Bdbk. \$9.95



**We Sang You Home** is a gentle board book about welcoming a new baby into a family. A great strength of this book is that it is non-specific and inclusive enough to encompass all new babies - arriving through birth, fostering, or adoption - and it does not specify gender. The lyrical text is reminiscent of a poem/song and gently begins "we sang you from a wish, we sang you from a prayer", letting the little one know how much they were anticipated and wanted. The whole message is one of love, welcome, and completion now that the young one has joined the family. The eye-catching illustrations hint at a non-specific non-white race for the family (could be Asian, First Nations, Inuit, etc.), making this book inclusive and encompassing of Canada's ethnic diversity.

Both the author and illustrator have Canadian First Nations backgrounds. Richard Van Camp is a member of the Dogrib (Tlicho) Nation from Fort Smith, NWT, Canada and illustrator Julie Flett is Cree-Metis. The story is not specifically First Nations oriented and alludes



generally to traditions present in many/most cultures such as songs, prayers, rebirth, and hope for the future. It is a book of thankfulness and hope that would make a wonderful addition to the preschool collection in a library.

Highly recommended.

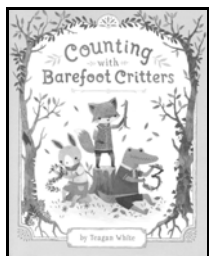
**Thematic Links:** Poetry; First Nations; Babies; Song; Birth

Erin Hansen

WHITE, Teagan

**Counting With Barefoot Critters**

Tundra Books, 2016. Unp. Illus. Gr. K-1. 978-1-101917718. Hdbk. \$19.99



This is a book that celebrates the friendships that an only child can make as Fox and the familiar collection of friends from the author's previously reviewed book, *Adventure With Barefoot Critters*, plus some extras, count up to 12. Each double page

has a verse on the left page and a full page, whimsical illustration of the number of friends playing on the right.

The illustrations have so many delightful details to be discovered that they will be looked at again and again. The illustrations repeat the number on each page in so many ways that an observant child will enjoy finding them. For example, on the page about eight, the flowers blossom in groups of eight, and the petals and leaves are falling in groups of eight. As Fox finds more friends to play with on the main picture page, so mouse collects a separate group of equal number on the page containing the verse. The verse is in AABB format and prompts the reader to provide the next number in the sequence to complete the rhyme.

Because there are so many small details to notice this book will continue to fascinate long after the first reading.

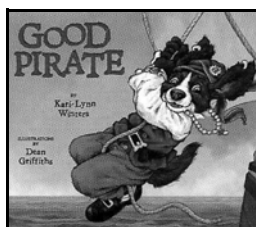
**Thematic Links:** Counting; Friendship

Mavis Holder

WINTERS, Kari-Lynn  
**Good Pirate**



Illustrated by Dean Griffiths. Pajama Press, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-1-927485-80-4. Hdbk. \$19.95



Barnacle Garrick is a pirate, and a dog. He believes all his canine crew members should be rotten, sneaky, and brainy. They have to catch cannonballs with their mouth, steal

treasure from cats, and spend time in the ship's prison if Captain Garrick thinks they look too clean. "*Shinin' yer boots? I've no use for a couple o' bucklin' fancies! Both of yez, into the brig!*" His daughter, Augusta, wants to be accepted, but she cannot walk past a potentially dangerous situation without fixing it, or ignore the lure of pretty jewels and perfumes. This gets her in trouble, but when her father and his crew

realize her get-away plan was only possible because of her stylish ways, they redefine what they want in a crew member, and it includes the word fancy.

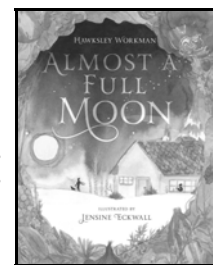
The pirate terminology that appears all throughout the dialogue is defined on the end papers of the book (i.e. grill, gangplank, stern, brig, sea pups, arr) along with a large drawing of a labelled pirate ship. Augusta's character reminds me of Fancy Nancy, and the art work reminds me of Jan Brett. There are a variety of pure-bred dog and cat pirates on board the wooden ships, with plenty of action happening both on and near the ocean.

**Thematic Links:** Pirates; Dogs; Father/Daughter; Treasure; Rescue; Stylish; Acceptance

Tanya Boudreau

WORKMAN, Hawksley  
**Almost a Full Moon**

Illustrated by Jensine Eckwall. Tundra Books, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-1-77049-871-6. Hdbk. \$21.99



other add ingredients like parsnips, potatoes and garlic cloves to their hearty meal.

Soon, guests and friends begin to arrive, including a mysterious and magical red-headed girl accompanied by a group of curious animals. The boy and his grandmother welcome everyone with generosity and kindness, sharing the meal and their home without hesitation. The cabin fills with music, laughter and conversation. After the last guest departs, the little boy snuggles up in bed while his grandmother reads a cookbook, and the moon quietly watches over the cabin.

Based on the lyrics of Hawksley Workman's holiday song *Almost A Full Moon*, this story captures the simple joys of sharing love and warm food on a winter's night. Despite its simplicity, Workman's melodic and repetitive text beautifully describes each element of the story: the large moon, the luscious soup, the burning candles, and the sparkling snow. Also, the text poignantly highlights the close relationship between grandmother and grandson, as well as the bond that exists between community members; soup is generously made to "feed everyone we know" and "to feed everyone we don't." Eckwall's evocative illustrations visually elaborate on the book's simple text, adding a playful element of magic, allowing - among other things - for wild animals to participate in the festivities. The warm interior of the cabin, rendered in earthy tones, is effectively contrasted with the crisp winter world outside. Additionally, small visual details populate every page, encouraging young audiences to look closely at the illustrations to discover new delights throughout successive readings.

This tender-hearted book is a highly recommended addition to all classroom and library collections as a wonderful winter-focused title. It champions generosity and community, and will delight readers of all ages.

**Thematic Links:** Full Moon; Winter; Cooking; Family; Friends; Community; Celebration; Generosity

Chloe Humphreys



Check out the  
**Resource Links**  
website at  
[www.resourcelinksmagazine.ca](http://www.resourcelinksmagazine.ca)

(cont'd from p. 39)

*"Blood. Everywhere. And the awful reality: this is what I do. This is what I've done for more than a century. I take no pride in it, but at least I know what I'm doing now."*

Paula Weston's *Rephaim Series*, which follows Gabriella and her half-angel comrades, moves at a dizzying pace; *Burn*, the fourth and concluding novel, is no exception. Readers will easily get caught up in the emotional sweep of the story, the thrill of the battle scenes.

With a brief prologue to bring readers up to speed, Gaby and friends are off again, this time to defend Gaby's home town in what may be the penultimate battle between Good and Evil. Gaby's memories have suddenly been restored, meaning she now understands the longer history of the Rephaim, the break with the Outcasts, her long and puzzling estrangement from her twin, Jude, and her love-hate relationship with Jude's best friend, Rafa. It's a lot for a girl to process, but Gaby does, and the gradual fitting together of so many pieces makes an exciting, engaging story.

With her memories restored, Gaby is a more thoughtful, balanced character. She's lost none of her hotheadedness, but she's begun to wonder what exactly she's fighting for. *Burn* doesn't provide simple answers but does bring the Rephaim story to a satisfactory resolution. There's certainly space for another series with these characters, though.

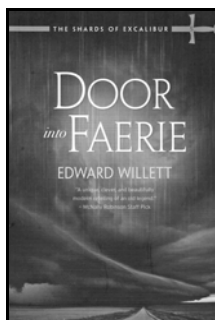
For readers who like contemporary fantasy, enjoy books with strong female leads, or just want a ripping yarn, *Burn* is a great choice. It stands alone but will be much more satisfying for those readers who have followed the entire story arc.

**Thematic Links:** Urban Fantasy; Angels and Demons; Good and Evil; Family; Memory

Leslie Vermeer

WILLETT, Edward  
*Door into Faerie (The Shards of Excalibur Series)*  
Coteau Books, 2016. 196p. Gr. 5-9.  
978-1-55050-892-5. Pbk. \$14.95 (Free ebook with purchase of print book)

G



King Arthur's legendary sword Excalibur has been broken into five shards, and this book concludes with the discovery of the fifth piece. Our heroine, Ariane, now has two of the shards, and continues in her quest to reassemble the sword on behalf of the Lady of the Lake,

which will allow her to finally close the door to the realm of Faerie. Her friend, Wally Knight, has now become more than just a friend, as their relationship has grown stronger. Rex Major, the computer genius who is the current incarnation of Merlin the Magician, also has two shards, and has enhanced his position by befriending Wally's sister Felicia, who shares with Wally the bloodline of King Arthur.

The international travel takes us to Scotland this time, to Castle McPheiden, the ancestral home of Wally's mother's family. When his mother goes there to research and film a documentary, Rex Major follows her and Ariane and Wally are close behind. We learn that the first Knight to move to Canada was a son of the McPheiden family, and brought with him an important family artifact, which he referred to as a "secret treasure". The novel's climax occurs at his burial site in the graveyard in Cannington Manor Provincial Park, where Rex Major confronts Ariane and Wally who have found the hil and now have the sword intact. The intervention of the Lady of the Lake prompts Ariane to use Excalibur to open the door to Faerie. But the knights who come through the portal are divided in their loyalties between Rex and the Lady, and an epic battle ensues. With Wally's skills with the sword, and Ariane's strengthened powers, they are victorious, and by closing the door to Faerie and concealing the sword, they end the quest.

The overlay of the Arthurian legend on a modern Canadian context continues to work well. As a quest epic spanning five novels, the plotlines and character development are all brought to a satisfying conclusion. Readers who have followed Ariane and Wally's relationship will be pleased that this Arthurian tale has a happy ending.

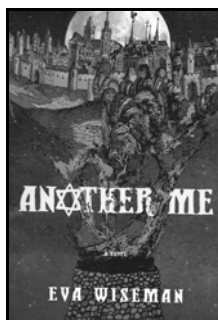
**Thematic Links:** Legend - King Arthur; Fantasy; Adventure

Patricia Jermy

WISEMAN, Eve  
*Another Me*  
Tundra Books, 2016. 227p. Gr. 6-10.  
978-1-77049-716-0. Hdbk. \$21.99

A

Eve Wiseman once again uses her knowledge of the tumultuous history of Jews in Europe for *Another Me*. Set in fourteenth century France, this novel shows how the Jewish community is able to co-exist and even thrive in times of relative prosperity. But when Strasbourg is threatened by the Black Death in 1349, the Jews are scapegoated as the cause. Anti-Semitism



forces poison the water supply, and then blame the Jews. When the town council tries to protect them, a mob revolts. The entire Jewish community is rounded up and forced onto wooden platforms over the cemetery, which are then set on fire. Thousands die in this excruciating manner, and Jews are forbidden to live in the city. This is history.

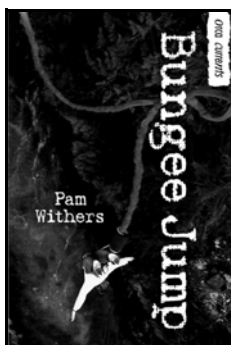
In the novel, our hero is Natan, son of a fabric and used clothing merchant who is banned from the draper's guild because of his religion. When his father is beaten up by thugs, Natan and his brother take his wares to sell in Drapers Row. Natan meets Elena, the daughter of Wilhelm the draper, and is immediately smitten. Despite their relationship being forbidden by city law, they meet under cover of darkness. But when Natan is caught on the streets after curfew by those same thugs, he is stabbed to death. His spirit enters into the body of Hans, Wilhelm's apprentice, in the form of an *ibbur*. According to Jewish mysticism, this occurs when someone's life is ended before he completes a task important to the Jewish people. Natan, now appearing as Hans, must somehow try to save his community. With the support of Elena, he tells the city council that the Jews did not poison the well, and appeals for their protection, but he is unsuccessful. The plague hits the city hard, and many die, including Elena's father. When the Jews are taken to the cemetery to be killed, Natan manages to rescue his little brother, and sends him away with a Jewish couple to be raised in the faith. Through this act he has fulfilled his task, and his soul is released. Hans returns to his body and courts Elena, who remains faithful for the rest of her life to her memories of Natan.

This is a fascinating and horrific glimpse into Medieval France. By focusing on these real events in Strasbourg, Wiseman brings her readers a deeper understanding of the past, and invites them to reflect on intolerance and xenophobia in the present.

**Thematic Links:** Jewish History - Strasbourg, France; Medieval History; Prejudice and Intolerance

Patricia Jermy

WITHERS, Pam



*Bungee Jump (Orca Currents Series)*  
Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 123p. Gr. 5-9.  
978-1-4598-1216-1. Pbk. \$9.95 (Reviewed from Advance Reading Copy)

P/A

Thirteen-year-old

Chris has a lot of responsibility on his shoulders. His family owns a small tree-farm that is struggling financially and an island with a mysterious and notorious history. Hospital Island (also known as Thorn Island) was once home to a hospital that treated children with leprosy. Many of the children died on the island and legend has it that the doctor who cared for the children also jumped to his death. Many think the island is haunted. Chris wants to capitalize on this notoriety. He wants to build a bungee jump on an old utility pipe that spans the aerial link between the island and the mainland. His father thinks this will be a great source of revenue and it might just put the family back on its feet. He hires an engineer to plan and complete the project and leaves Chris in charge when he is forced to leave his family and take a job in the city.

The project seems doomed from the start. Several of the locals are opposed to the project, chief among them, their school librarian, Mrs. Dubin. She talks to Chris several times about

“disturbing history” (p.7) and says “[the] island is theirs, no matter what you think” (p.70-71). Chris notices that the engineer they hired does careless work and that half the time he’s not even working on their project. Instead he is running around with a metal detector which he says is for making sure his structure is secure. There are also the ghostly sounds and the mystery surrounding the doctor’s death. Rumor has it that the doctor was stealing from the hospital and that he hid the fortune on the island. All of these factors add up to stress and conflict for Chris and his family.

With the exception of Mr. Roth, Chris’s Science teacher, the adults in this novel are absent, demented, or inconsequential. Chris, at thirteen, is left “in charge”. What is his mother doing in all of this? This omission is glaring.

Much of the content and vocabulary is consistent with what one would expect from a high-interest/low vocabulary novel. The plot progression is well paced though predictable.

One simile I object to is when the kids go to the island for a picnic and they are all getting out of their boats - Withers compares this by saying “like soldiers on D-Day” (p. 63). This landing is nowhere near as violent, perilous, or historically significant. To Withers’ credit, she has included excellent information about bungee jumping, both the mechanics and the experiential aspects. I wonder though.....if my thirteen year-old son came up with the idea of making a bungee jump off of an old drainage pipe fifteen stories in the air.....it would take me more “than a while to come around to the notion” (p. 4). Overall, the ghost-adventure aspects and Chris’s family dynamics stretched my willingness to suspend my disbelief.

**Thematic Links:** Phobias; Supernatural vs. Science; Family Relationships; Achieving Goals

Angela Thompson

(cont’d from p. 26)

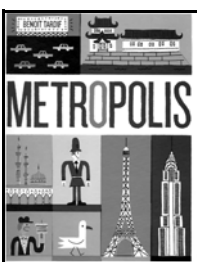
Settlers; Pioneer Trails; Breaking the Plains; Western Conflicts; Religious Pioneers; America Expands; Settlement Timeline

Helen Mason

TARDIF, Benoit

**Metropolis**

Kids Can Press, 2016. 72p. Illus. Gr. K-3. 978-1-771387217. Hdbk. \$18.95



**Metropolis** is an arm-chair travel guide for children. Illustration heavy, the book takes you into thirty-four big cities. Each double page spread contains ten to twelve square or rectangle panels that include the foods, the buildings, and the people

from that area. Underneath the city name are three facts: the country the city is in, the language spoken there, and the population (in millions). Some of the cities in the book are New York, London, Zurich, Auckland, Beijing, Cairo, Nairobi, Athens, Mumbai and Mexico City. The cities from Canada are Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver. Foods from other countries appear with English translations or descriptions below - kanelbulle (cinnamon bun), patat oorlog (fries with mayonnaise, onions, and peanut sauce) - but some words such as dialogue (Andiamo, Es Picante, mi amor) are defined in the glossary on the last page.

There is humour in some of the illustrations. The Alcatraz Island prison panel has a labelled shark fin “terrifying shark”, and the New York panel has included a “legendary sewer-

dwelling crocodile”. The illustrations are cartoon styled, with solid colours and few details. Often the people don’t have facial features and their skin colour are shades of pink, orange, yellow and brown. Arms and legs are extra-long and bend in unnatural ways.

Although the details and facts are few, I think children will be intrigued when they see things like snake soup, a traditional junk ship, and the Mode Gakuen Cocon Tower and want to either learn more about Hong Kong and Tokyo or perhaps even visit there one day. This book shows children how much variety there is in the world, and gives them ideas of where they might like to travel to one day.

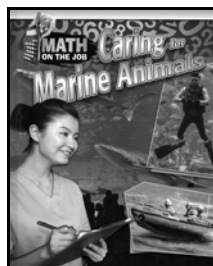
Front material includes a table of contents and a foreword from the author about his own travel experiences. The end pages consist of a map of the world, highlighting the cities mentioned in the book. This book would be useful in a small library that doesn’t have the budget for a large geography section, or in a larger library because of its artwork.

**Thematic Links:** Cities; Tourist Attractions; Culture; Travel; Geography

Tanya Boudreau

WUNDERLICH, Rick

**Math on the Job: Caring for Marine Animals (Math on the Job Series)**



Crabtree Publishing, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr 3-7. 978-0-7787-2358-5. Hdbk. \$21.56

Part of Crabtree's *Math on the Job Series*, this

title describes three math-related careers that involve working with marine animals: marine veterinarian, veterinary technologist, and aquarist.

Each profile includes a practical scenario about a possible related emergency. Readers are challenged to solve related real-life math problems. They're given necessary facts and visuals to help them, as well as a Math Toolbox to explain some of the math.

Skills covered in the first rescue involve adding and subtracting fractions with the same denominator, changing fractions to decimals, showing a decimal as a fraction, and converting both between kilograms and pounds and meters and feet. The math in the second scenario involves proportions, temperatures in Fahrenheit degrees, and both 12- and 24-hour clocks. The third scenario involves multiplying and dividing one- and two-digit numbers and more practice on some of the skills developed earlier.

The title includes two *Careers that Count* sidebars that focus on actual people working in the marine field. Career Pathways provides tips on what readers can do now if they want to pursue a particular career. The book also has a Learning More section, a glossary, answers, an index, and an author bio.

Because of the interesting scenarios and excellent photos that will draw readers into the problems, this is a recommended title for students in junior and early intermediate grades.

**Thematic Links:** Marine Veterinarian; Orcas; Veterinary Technologist; Aquarist; Seals; Great White Sharks; Fractions; Decimals; SI/ Imperial Conversions; Proportions; Division; Multiplication; 24-hour Clock; Referents

Helen Mason

# 2016 Contemporary Adult Titles with Appeal for Strong Teen Readers

By Gail Sidonie Sobat

With

Heather Ganshorn, Ingrid Johnston, Margaret Mackey, & Linda Telgarsky

*I am delighted to share the selected 2016 Contemporary Adult Canadian Titles with Appeal for Strong Teen Readers. Following in the impressive footsteps of Dr. Margaret Mackey has been, to say the least, a little daunting. But this compilation offers 23 new and/or newer titles that we collectively feel will entice young adult readers.*

*As in the past, some of our offerings have decidedly adult content - language, sexuality, violence - and we trust to the reader that she or he will put aside any novel with content that doesn't appeal. Most importantly, we feel that this is a list that will enrich the reading pleasure and exploration of those teens who are eager to read beyond the classroom and to delve into the rich literature that awaits. One of my areas of focus - full disclosure, I am a Canadian author - is that of CanLit. Regrettably, research continues to support the dismal statistics of a dearth of Canadian content in curriculum at all levels of education. In a tiny attempt to address this deficit, many of the titles this year are written by well and lesser known Canadian authors.*

*And finally, this resource would not exist at all were it not for the excellent reviewers who've contributed to our list. They are the backbone that supports the whole enterprise. Many thanks for their careful reading and thoughtful commentary.*

*Thank you to the editors of Resource Links for their continued support and for welcoming this year's list and this year's green editor. Readers: welcome and enjoy!*

Gail Sobat

## Contemporary Life

**Woefield Poultry Collective** by Susan Juby. Toronto: Harper, 2012. Pbk. 336p. 978-1554687459

**Republic of Dirt** by Susan Juby. Toronto: Harper, 2015. Pbk. 416p. 978-1443423953

Fresh from the city, naive and idealistic, Prudence Burns inherits a farm which aptly lives up to its name Woefield. Determined to make the farm self-sustaining, she sets to work with the assistance of a crew of misfit helpers: Earl, an elderly, reclusive bluegrass legend; Seth, a deliciously foul-mouthed, agoraphobic

heavy-metal blogger recovering from alcoholism; and Sara, an able 11-year-old girl who is raising a flock of exotic show hens. Each of these characters narrates the ridiculous antics and misadventure - sometimes retelling the same story - and their voices lend the books considerable charm.

Prudence is armed with pluck and derring-do tinged with a little self-righteousness. She is hopelessly ill-equipped to care for a farm that faces foreclosure in the first book, and failure in the second. She dreams of organic farm produce to sell at the local farmers' market and of living the Emersonian good life in her new home on Vancouver Island. Through a series of small deceptions to herself and to the bank loans manager - Prudence pretends to open a rehab centre which the bank manager's niece attends - and with a little help from her motley crew of friends, she just manages. Hilarity ensues.

In **The Republic of Dirt**, Prudence falls ill with a serious thyroid condition and her friends must come to the rescue and keep the farm running. A second complication arises when young Sara, who's been residing on the farm with her poultry collection while her separated parents spar, is wrenched from the circle of adoring friends because of a parent-teachers conference and a misunderstanding about her safety. Thereafter, the book focuses on Sara and assisting the child with the real safety issues: her parents. Perhaps not quite as successful as the first book, the sequel is still worth a read as the characters are nonetheless the main attraction. *GSS*

\* explicit language

**The Mountain Story** by Lori Lansens. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2016. Pbk. 365p. 978-0-345-80903-2

Told in the form of a letter from a father to his college-aged son, **The Mountain Story** is a tale of four people who are lost for five days on a mountain top that towers over Palm Springs. Gripping from start to finish, this is the story of Wolf Truly as told to his son. On his eighteenth birthday, Wolf travels up the mountain to commit suicide. He is interrupted in the process by three women who ask him to guide them to Secret Lake. They are three generations of the Devine Family: Nola, Bridget, and Vonn. We

learn that Nola, the mother/grandmother, has come to the mountain to scatter the ashes of her husband who died in the previous year. As can happen in the wilderness, in searching for the lake the four of them become disoriented and they find themselves lost.

Over the course of the five days on the mountain, we learn about the violent circumstances of the death of Wolf's mother when he was four years old, his dysfunctional relationship with his alcoholic father, his failed love for a young woman, and the accident of his best friend, Byrd, that took place on the mountain the year before. Though he starts out intending to commit suicide, Wolf is quickly caught up in the dynamic and problematic relationship of the three Devine women and the overwhelming task to help them get off the mountain. They must all work together and make sacrifices if they are to survive this ordeal. Unlike most novels of this type, from the very outset of this book we know that someone will not survive. This disclosure just impels us to read on, haunted by the need to know who will not make it off the mountain. Lansens' writing is compelling and you will find it almost impossible to put this book down once you start it. *LT*

**The Illegal** by Lawrence Hill. Toronto: HarperCollins, 2016. Pbk. 400p. 978-1554683840

Lawrence Hill's latest novel has already received a range of accolades and awards. This story of a young marathoner, Keita Ali, from a fictional country in the Indian Ocean, addresses many of the issues we read about in the press every day: the movement of refugees fleeing from war and dictatorship, attitudes towards illegal immigrants, race, discrimination and the clash of wealth and poverty. Set in the near future, **The Illegal** follows Keita's escape from his impoverished island, Zantoroland, described as a nightmare dictatorship, to the larger and wealthier island of Freedom State where he is running a marathon and also fleeing the police.

The novel is fast-paced and the plot exciting. Refugees seeking to escape from Zantoroland attempt to travel across a dangerous sea to Freedom State, hoping to find refuge in Africtown, a shanty town, ruled over by the larger-than-life, Lulu. Keita faces an ongoing series of dangers in the marathon he is running and in his attempts to live as an illegal immigrant in Zan-

toroland. While the book is a very good read, written with Hill's characteristic insight and careful plotting, it doesn't quite achieve the resonance or stature of his earlier novel, *The Book of Negroes*. Nevertheless, it is an important book worth everyone's time and offers many reflections on the kind of world we are living in today. *IJ*

***The Goldfinch*** by Donna Tartt. New York: Back Bay Books, 2013. Pbk. 771p. 978-0316055437

This coming-of-age novel was a literary sensation and will appeal to young readers who love a meaty tome with fascinating characters.

The story begins with a bang - literally. Thirteen-year-old Theo Decker and his mother are the victims of a terrorist bomb attack on the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Miraculously, the boy survives; his mother does not. In the immediate aftermath of the explosion are two important other happenstances that shape the boy's destiny: Theo meets the dying father of the girl he'd earlier admired in the gallery, and he absconds with a painting, the 1654 Carel Fabritius masterpiece, *The Goldfinch*, from which the novel draws its name. In the ensuing 14 years, this painting factors as both a burden and a remaining connection to his lost mother. For nearly the entire time, he keeps the possession a secret as he moves from New York to Las Vegas where he lives with a dissolute and inattentive father who eventually abandons him. Here, he also meets the Russian teenager, Boris, with whom he has a complicated, substance-abuse-infused relationship.

Theo returns to New York and to Hobie, friend of the dying man in the MET, who becomes a surrogate father and through whom he reunites with Pippa, the girl from the gallery. Theo consorts with an array of eccentric characters, including assorted lowlifes, con men, Park Avenue recluses, and dissolute preppies, as he assumes the role of antique swindler (unbeknownst to antique restorer and partner, Hobie) and eventually penetrates high society through an impending marriage to wealthy Kitsey Barbour.

Understandably, the painting continues to haunt him, and eventually it is lost, necessitating his journey to Amsterdam and a final confrontation with the criminal underworld of art theft. Here Theo descends into a fever-induced state of near madness and reunites with Boris who has played an unscrupulous hand in the lost *Goldfinch*. This is a novel that examines the capriciousness of fate, the beauty of art, the complexity of love for persons and possessions. Ultimately, this is also a story of redemption, "that good come around sometimes through some strange back doors." *GSS*

## Family Life

***The Memento*** by Christy Ann Conlin. Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2016. Pbk. 400p. 978-0385662420

This gothic tale set in the 1950s in rural New Brunswick has elements of Kate Morton to it - a rural estate, a wealthy, eccentric family, dark secrets - but with a decidedly Canadian, Gothic twist. Fancy Mosher is a twelfth-born child, like her Grampie. Local legend has it that the family's twelfth-born children can speak to the dead. As with many supernatural gifts, this one manifests itself at the onset of puberty. Fancy lives with her foster mother, the housekeeper at the summer estate of a wealthy family. She's looking forward to a summer of roaming the countryside with her best friend Art, but things are derailed when her alcoholic mother shows up, demanding that Fancy try to use her gift to contact her brother John Lee, who drowned at the age of four because of his mother's negligence. After the wealthy Parker family arrives for the summer, more dark secrets are revealed. While there are supernatural elements to the story, it's really a book about how children are marked by their parents' deeds, even when those deeds are concealed. *HG*

## Childhood

***If I Fall, If I Die*** by Michael Christie. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2015. Hdbk. 336p. 978-0-771-02365-1

In this first novel by Michael Christie, we meet Will, an eleven-year-old boy who lives with his agoraphobic mother in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Precocious and naive, Will happily lives in the small world of his house until one day he hears a noise and ventures "Outside" to investigate. In his backyard, Will encounters an Aboriginal boy, Marcus, who intrigues him. Will returns to the "Outside" again and again in search of Marcus, where he discovers a world of people, places, and happenings that are both exciting and dangerous (just as his mother feared and predicted).

Will manages to convince his mother to let him enroll in the local school and he develops a friendship with Jonah, an Aboriginal student in his class. Jonah and Marcus work together to try to solve the mystery of the disappearance of Marcus. As the novel unfolds, we learn not only about the tragic backstory of Will's mother, uncle and grandfather but also of an old mystery that helps inform the current intrigue surrounding the disappearance of Marcus.

Christie covers many topics in this book including teen friendship, parent-child relationships, Aboriginal discrimination and mental illness. Perhaps the most resonant theme is that no one gets through life without getting hurt; being alive necessarily means that there will be

some suffering and pain. As Will describes it, you need to build up some calluses. We may fall sometimes, but for the most part we get up, brush ourselves off and get on with living and it is the experiences, along with their risks, that give meaning to our life. *LT*

## Teenagers

***The Truth Commission*** by Susan Juby. Toronto: Razorbill, 2015. Hdbk. 320p. 978-0670067596

Perhaps best classified as New Adult fiction, *The Truth Commission* is an examination of the truth in a hyper-surveilled, socially networked world.

The novel is purportedly Normandy Pale's book-length work of creative non-fiction, submitted as a major project to Green Pastures, a high school for the arts, in a small Vancouver centre. Normandy relates the story of how she and her two best friends prompted other classmates to tell the truth about themselves.

Truth-telling has its consequences as Normandy learns. She considers revealing the truth about her own family: older sister Keira, Green Pastures' most notable alumna, has built a notable career from her graphic novels. The series portrays Keira as the heroine of a dysfunctional family - Normandy and her parents - as hopeless incompetents, rather a self-fulfilling prophecy for their real life. Confronting the realities of her sister's truth-and-lies telling, is for Normandy, a frightening but essential process to coming to terms with the damage it has inflicted. Along the way, readers also get a fun dose of the dos and don'ts of storytelling and writing creative fiction through Normandy's quirky and winsome voice. *GSS*

***The Little Girl Who Was Too Fond of Matches*** by Gaétan Soucy (Trans. Sheila Fischman). Toronto: Ansari, 1998. Pbk. 138p. 978-0-88784-781-3

Although this is not a current novel, Gaétan Soucy's work is absent to date from our list, and his genius should not be missed.

From its first breathless pages, the first-person protagonist captivates and intrigues: "We had to take the universe in hand, my brother and I, for one morning just before dawn papa gave up the ghost without a by-your-leave." is a tale of two siblings raised "by hand" on a rough rural farm under an authoritarian father, who dies of suicide as the story opens. Isolated from the world, the children - presumably in their teens - live in a dream-like otherworld of rural beauty and create a language of their own, largely culled from books and fairy tales. Forced to deal with their father's burial arrangements, the protagonist steps beyond the world of the farm and makes

first contact with neighbours and villagers. Thus begins her transformation - and it is some pages before we learn she is a she - from naive feral child to young woman. In the process of this bildungsroman, superstitions are examined and eventually rejected and disturbing family secrets are exposed to the light of understanding.

Recommended to the reviewer by a Grade 9 student, nevertheless, this is not an easy read because of the stream-of-consciousness/ invented language and the disturbing themes, but as an adult fairy tale, it is an exploration of the darkly human fascination with guilt, cruelty, and violence. *GSS*

\*some sexually explicit material

**Finton Moon** by Gerard Collins. St. John's: Killick Press, 2012. Pbk. 333p. 978-1-897174-90-6

An engaging adult fairytale, *Finton Moon* is a coming-of-age novel written with humour and poetic beauty. A blend of realism and magic, the narrative is set in the town of Darwin and features a cast of characters that in many ways represent the inhabitants of any small town in Newfoundland or beyond.

The titular protagonist is a young misfit in the tradition of Pip from *Great Expectations*. Finton is an unusual child who bears little resemblance to his rough brothers, his strict Catholic mother or his lawless father. He is a reader, a dreamer, a thinker and, above all, has a penchant for healing - the element that gives the book nuances of magic-realism. With Dickensian echoes, the book gradually reveals dark family secrets, even featuring a Miss Havisham -type of character, an unattainable love, bullies with whom he comes to fisticuffs, and expectations beyond his family station. Though he wishes to belong, ultimately, Finton realizes he never will, and escapes the place and the family that do not understand or accept him.

Rich in description, character, intrigue and language, Gerard Collins has created a gothic Canadian masterpiece. *GSS*

### ***Speculative/Science Fiction and Fantasy***

**Quantum Night** by Robert J. Sawyer. Toronto: Viking, 2016. Hdbk. 351p. 978-0-670-06578-3

Robert Sawyer is an expert at genre-bending. His newest book merges science fiction, thriller (with some horror overtones), political fantasy - and a novel of ideas: quantum physics and moral philosophy play significant roles in this story. Sawyer is also very skilled at communicating extremely complicated ideas in ways that are clear and straightforward and that also advance the plot in ap-

parently effortless ways.

This novel is set in 2020, and mostly takes place in Winnipeg, with a few side visits to Saskatchewan and a few other places. Jim Marchuk has developed a scientifically infallible method for detecting psychopaths - and it turns out the world is full of them. In the process of testifying about his methods in a notorious court case, he discovers that he has no memory of a six-month period of his life about twenty years ago. In pursuit of what happened during these lost months, he makes many significant discoveries about himself and his friends.

At the beginning of the book, 2020 Canada looks pretty familiar: Justin Trudeau is prime minister (though with a coalition government) and an identifiably Trump-esque president inhabits the White House. Through the course of events that transpire over a few months, the political landscape changes very radically, and the mix of familiar and frightening adds an intriguing texture to the book.

This book is a compulsive page-turner. Readers will have to accept a threshold for psychopaths that may seem unconvincing at first, but Sawyer makes a strong case. Exciting and thoughtful (in that order!), it is well worth a reader's time and attention. *MM*

**The Heart Goes Last** by Margaret Atwood. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2015. Hdbk. 308p. 978-0-7710-0911-2

In a world where the economy has collapsed, Stan and Charmaine have lost their jobs and home. They live in their car and survive on the tips Charmaine earns working part-time in a run-down bar. They are harassed and threatened by others who are even more desperate than them. One day they learn about an experimental corporate community called Consilience where they are promised a home and jobs. The catch is that once they sign up and enter the community, they can never leave. The promise of security and comfort is so strong that they accept the offer and it is only once they are in Consilience that they discover the cost of living this suburban dream life: they will be living in a prison every other month. This allows double the number of people to live in Consilience as they share homes and jobs - one month in prison and one month living a "normal" life.

After some time, unbeknownst to each other, Stan and Charmaine become obsessed with the people who live in their house while they are in prison. As the story unfolds, the pressure to conform, distrust, sexual obsession and greed affect and start to destroy Stan and Charmaine's relationship and lives.

The first part of the story focuses on the dark dystopian world. It is a dog-eat-dog, scary and often times violent place. Once the action moves to Consilience, the book still has its dark moments, but there are unexpected farcical threads (such as Elvis and Marilyn Monroe

"possibilibots" (sexual robot companions)) that move the story from sinister to slapstick at times. Throughout the story, however, you are compelled to consider just how frail the constructs of society and family are and what you might do in the same circumstances. *LT*

\*some sexually explicit material

### ***Poetry***

**Settler Education** by Laurie D. Graham. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2016. Pbk. 117p. 978-0-7710-3687-3

Canadian history offers many examples of massive contradiction, cases where opposing accounts of a single event must be juxtaposed in all their contrariness. In *Settler Education*, Laurie Graham confronts this challenge head-on. The book is described on its cover as "Poems," but it also includes images, maps, snatches of old colonial songs, legal accounts, and a relatively large set of end-notes, setting some of this material in context.

Graham does not shrink away from the horrors of Canadian history and Canadian current events. In a poem about a train ride across the prairies, she talks about the rationale for the building of the transcontinental railway in the following contemporary terms:

*No Oh My Nation, no God Save Our Queen,  
no colonial imperative except in our being  
here, in what it means  
to shower on a moving train, track rolling under  
the drainhole,  
the luxurious pillows, my last-minute discount.  
This is what they starved a people for.* (p. 2)

The poems pay particular attention to the Plains Cree uprising at Frog Lake, but the book more capaciously addresses the necessity of finding ways to process intolerable contradictions, even while acknowledging that it may not be possible to find a way to do so. It is thought-provoking and challenging - not a quick and easy read but well worth the effort it demands. *MM*

**The Pemmican Eaters** by Marilyn Dumont. Toronto: ECW Press, 2015. Pbk. 66p. 978-1-77041-241-5

Marilyn Dumont begins her book with an account of how her family traced connections with the Metis leader, Gabriel Dumont. From this prose introduction, the book moves to poems about the Metis resistance to western settlement. She moves between forms and languages and perspectives. In a letter addressed to Sir John A. Macdonald, she introduces contemporary events such as the Meech Lake discord, and concludes,

*..... you know as well as I  
that we were railroaded  
by some steel tracks that didn't last  
and some settlers who wouldn't settle*

and it's funny we're still here and callin ourselves halfbreed. (p. 9)

Many of the poems address the historical injustices of the white settlement of the prairies, but there are also more light-hearted tributes to fiddle-playing and dancing, and to the elegant eloquence of beadwork. The book itself resembles beadwork in its careful selection of detail and colour, its juxtaposition of different elements so they show each other to best advantage, and its elegant eloquence in the composition of words and lines. *MM*

## Mystery

***Speaking in Bones*** by Kathy Reichs. Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 2016. Pbk. 320p. 978-1501135347

In her 18th novel about forensic anthropologist Tempe Brennan, author Kathy Reichs has been able to maintain her winning combination of a good thriller, fast-paced plot and grizzly forensic details mixed with domestic mayhem. In this novel, Tempe is investigating a missing person case, but quickly finds herself dealing with more bones and further intrigue. Together with Zeb Ramsay, a local sheriff, Tempe becomes embroiled in a horrifying and sinister situation that threatens her personal safety.

As usual, Reichs also includes aspects of Tempe's personal life in the novel. In this case, she is negotiating her on again/off again relationship with Ryan and dealing with her mother's illness. The novel successfully blends humour into its plot and has the usual hallmarks of a story with many unexpected twists and turns. *IJ*

## Other Times and Historical Perspectives: Canada

***Hark! A Vagrant***. Montreal: Drawn & Quarterly, 2011. Pbk. 160p. 978-0-77046-060-7  
***Step Aside, Pops: A Hark! A Vagrant Collection***. Montreal, Drawn & Quarterly, 2015. Pbk. 160p. 978-1-77046-208-3

Nova Scotia comic artist Kate Beaton gained a popular following publishing comics on her blog (available at [www.harkavagrant.com](http://www.harkavagrant.com)). Her off-kilter take on history, literature and pop culture has gained her a devoted following. Her interest in history is wide-ranging, from the Fathers of Confederation to the uproar over "indecent" young women riding bicycles in the 1890s. Comics and literature are also a frequent topics (Jane Austen, the Brontë sisters and Wonder Woman each are the subject of several strips). Even if you aren't familiar with the historical people, stories and events behind a particular strip, they're still hilarious enough to send readers in search of a book (or at least a Wikipedia entry) that will

provide background information. *HG*

***The Piano Maker*** by Kurt Palka. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2015. Pbk. 288p. 978-0771071287

This well-crafted novel, rich in historical details, is set in the 1930s in the small Canadian town of St Homais. Helene Giroux, a refined and talented French woman arrives in the town and intrigues everyone with stories of her family's piano factory in France prior to World War One. She soon settles in as the church's pianist and choir conductor, gaining the admiration of the town's inhabitants for her musical talents and beginning a new friendship with David Chandler, a shoemaker in town.

Gradually, Helene's previous life is revealed to the reader and we learn about her former husband, what happened in the war, and the poverty she and her daughter endured. Details of her relationship with Nathan, a speculative businessman, emerge gradually and the novel follows Helene's efforts to face up to her troubled past and to explore new options for her life. Palka's novel is easy to read, suspenseful and intriguing. The narrative shifts in the book between Helene's present and past are well handled and allow readers to gradually come to new insights about the life of this mysterious protagonist. *IJ*

***Dancing in a Jar*** by Adele Poynter. St. John's, NL: Breakwater Books, 2016. Pbk. 179p. 978-1-55081-630-6

In 1929, newlyweds Don and Urla Poynter move to St. Lawrence, Newfoundland, where Don has been hired to oversee a fluorspar mine. The shift from New York was a radical culture shock, and this novel tells of their adjustment to a new life in letters from and to both of them. Their families in the big city are far from convinced that they have taken the right step, but Urla and Don find much to admire and love in their new home. Only Urla's deteriorating health is a real problem; everything else can be solved with ingenuity and hard work and a positive attitude.

The book fictionalizes a true story, told by Don's daughter by a second wife. There were some real letters and it is a tribute to Adele Poynter's skill that it is impossible to pin down what was actually written by the people involved and what she has imagined. It is a light-hearted and engaging story, despite the fact that readers know from the very beginning that the ending is sad. Life in St. Lawrence as the Depression takes hold is very challenging, but smuggling from the French island of St. Pierre alleviates some of the worst problems, and Urla's enthusiasm helps with the rest. *MM*

## Memoirs and True Stories

***Precious Cargo: My Year of Driving the Kids on School Bus 3077*** by Craig Davidson. Toronto: Alfred A. Knopf, 2016. Pbk. 297p. 978-0-345-81051-9

Craig Davidson, a fiction author who writes under the pseudonym Nick Cutter, spent a year when he was in his early thirties and at a low point in his life driving a school bus in Alberta. He accepted the job because it was the only one he could get. Initially, he took on the task of driving a bus of five teenage special needs students as a way to make some money but as he interacted with and really came to know these individuals, he witnessed firsthand how disabled and challenged people are seen and treated by others and learned some hard truths about himself.

Through his retelling of the events and conversations that happened with these teenagers, Davidson gives us a glimpse into what it is like to live in our society when you are a disabled or challenged person or a member of their family. Humor, happiness, embarrassment, anger, sadness and frustration run through the stories as he recounts them. Like the author, as we learn about the teenagers on the bus, we eventually come to see them as just the unique and interesting people that they are, being able to see beyond their disabilities or labels.

Davidson writes in an easy-to-read style and intersperses in the book excerpts from an unpublished novel he wrote, incorporating the teenagers as characters. Davidson generously shares his own feelings and failures as he describes how his bus riders changed him for the better. It is a wonderful read of the special relationship that can develop between people when you least expect it and how the person who benefits the most is not the one you expected. *LT*

## Arts and Culture

***Me Artsy*** by Drew Hayden Taylor. Madeira Park: Douglas and McIntyre, 2015. Pbk. 249p. 978-1-77162-070-3

***Me Sexy*** by Drew Hayden Taylor. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2008. Pbk. 186p. 978-1-55365-276-2

***Me Funny*** by Drew Hayden Taylor. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2005. Pbk. 191p. 978-1-55365-137-6

A non-fiction series originated by Douglas and McIntyre publishers who felt there was much to explore in Native arts and culture. Drew Hayden Taylor, who is both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal and calls himself "Blue-Eyed Ojibway," compiled and edited all three collections and contributes his own essay to each replete with his usual humour. He's cho-

sen thoughtfully from amongst some of Canada's First Nation stars, including: Thomas King, Tomson Highway, Richard Van Camp, Lee Maracle, Joseph Boyden, Gregory Scofield, Don Kelly, Ian Ferguson, Murray Porter and David Wolfman, to mention but a few.

The essays in all three collections are uneven, which is unfortunate, and many defy traditional essay forms, which is refreshing. These are often personal accounts of the realities for FNMI artists in Canada. They reflect the richness and variety of Aboriginal artistic endeavours, as well as the challenges facing the colonized artist.

**Me Funny** offers 11 essays that vary between academic analysis of comedy to stand-up to storytelling. Highlights include "Highways" "Why Cree is the Funniest of All Languages" and King's "Performing Native Humour: The Dead Dog Comedy Hour." Irreverent and insightful, the writers of the collection examine humour in fiction, visual art, drama, education and oral traditions.

Similarly, thoughtful and playful examination of sexuality is the focus of the second in the series: **Me Sexy**. Of the 13 essays, Tomson Highway's sequel to his first, "Why Cree is the Sexiest of All Languages," Nancy Cooper's cheeky "Learning to Skin the Beaver: In Search of Our Auntie's Traps," Boyden's naughty "Bush Country," and Taylor's own "Indian Love Call (Minus Jeanette MacDonald and Nelson Eddy)" are delightful standouts.

The most recent, **Me Artsy**, offers 14 new musings by artists in a variety of disciplines such as fashion design, "Drumming 101," play writing, dance, visual art, blues singing and

culinary arts. What is perhaps most courageous about this collection is that not all of the contributors are at ease with the written word. This lends the anthology and the individual essays an authenticity that is at times confounding to the non-Aboriginal reader, but ultimately and politically interesting and necessary. Two pieces, "Story of My Life," by Inuk producer Zacharias Kunuk (best known for his film *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner*) and Haida Manga artist, Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas' "The Wave" best illustrate the departure from traditional essay form at work in **Me Artsy**.

All three are excellent resources for both teacher and student, providing rich reading and alternate ways of seeing humour, sexuality and art from Aboriginal perspectives. *GSS*  
\*some sexually explicit material

(cont'd from p. 40)

original works and bridge gaps in understanding. At the same time, it should be noted that the text contains historically accurate diction that is now considered dated and racist. There is a note about this language on the copyright page, but it may be easily missed by readers.

This novel is best suited for students in grades 9-12 due to some mild sexually suggestive and violent scenes, including images of a black man who is tarred and feathered for marrying a white woman.

**Susanna Moodie: Roughing it in the Bush** would be an excellent addition to high school social studies classrooms.

**Thematic Links:** Graphic Novel; Biography; Canadian History; Upper Canada; Canada 1830-1884; Early European Settlers; Susanna Moodie

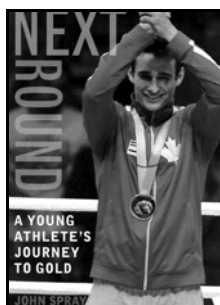
Beth Wilcox

SPRAY, John  
**Next Round: A Young Athlete's**



### **Journey to Gold**

Pajama Press, 2016. 112p. Illus. Gr. 6-9. 978-1-77278-003-1. \$16.95



This is the true story of a young Chechen athlete who, at the age of 20, will represent Canada at the 2016 Olympics in Rio as a boxer.

Arthur Biyarslanov's journey begins on a bridge, where, at the age of three, he witnesses his grandmother and siblings being fired upon by Russian troops nervous that, as Muslims, these Chechens might be armed with explosives. By the time Arthur and his siblings reach their father in Azerbaijan, they are refugees. After his father's death, Arthur and his family face further hardship, deciding to move to Canada in search of a better life.

Life in Canada is somewhat of an improvement but the gritty athleticism and combative nature Arthur developed in Azerbaijan serves

him well in Toronto's Jamestown. His skill in soccer helps him win friends and to learn English in a neighbourhood filled with countless foreign languages.

Arthur plays soccer for seven years and leads his team to a U.S.A. cup victory but a broken leg mid-way through his soccer career gives him pause and time to consider other sports. Boxing finally wins the day. Arthur also finds a mentor/trainer in Danny Santagato. Danny teaches Arthur how to fight using his brain rather than his temper. The next round - the Olympics - will show how successful this story will be.

Author John Spray is no stranger to either writing or boxing. He sponsors a mystery writing award and has been involved with boxing for most of this life.

**Thematic Links:** Boxing; Family Life; Refugees; Soccer; Chechnya; Azerbaijan

Lesley Little

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(cont'd from p. 22)

into the icy waters of the flooded Humber River.

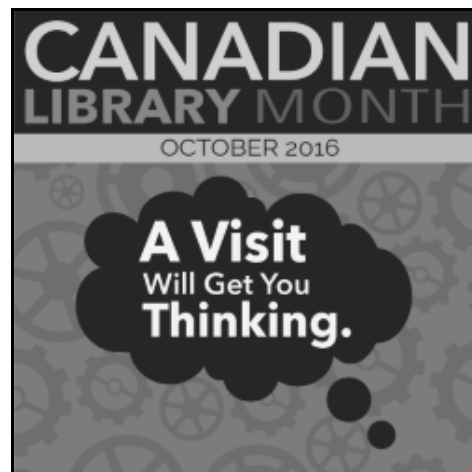
Middle grade readers will anxiously follow what happens to this grade 6 student, his friend Paul, and his mother as they're caught in the fury of Hurricane Hazel, a storm that flooded parts of Toronto during the fall of 1954. After staying up late to play Monopoly, the boys are awakened by a loud bang. Michael grabs a flashlight and heads downstairs - only to find that a tree has fallen through and smashed the living room window. The phones are out. The streets are flooded. What can they do?

As the house starts to tilt, Michael, his mother and Paul head for the attic. Michael

helps his mother and friend to safety. When he tries to follow, he's swept into the raging water. Readers will keep reading until they find out how Michael not only survives, but manages to rescue a cat and develop the self-confidence that helps him face other problems in his life. This action-packed story will fascinate difficult-to-please readers who want a lot of tense action.

**Thematic Links:** Hurricanes; Hurricane Hazel; Storms; Floods; Survival; Animal Rescue; Bullying; History

*Helen Mason*



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Pouch Cove, NL

A0A 3L0

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