Thoughtful Dialogue and an Informed World View

Christopher Paul Curtis
Funny, Real, Engaging!

Bookmark!
Immigrant and Refugee Stories

Reviews of over 35 books by
Cale Atkinson, Sheree Fitch, Tim Wynne-Jones, Ruth Ohi and more
Opinion: Kids on Board: Handling the Plight of Refugees with Care
Marylynn Miller Oke asks Suzanne Del Rizzo, Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch, Samya Kullab, Mary Beth Leatherdale and Margriet Ruurs how they transform the stories of refugees and immigrants into thoughtful dialogue and an informed world view.

News Roundup
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Focus: Children’s Authors Empower Young Voices through Creative Writing for Children Society
An innovative creative writing program has been flourishing in Vancouver and satellite cities, helping kids nurture their love of reading and writing. Mentored by published authors, kids get to design and publish their own books.

Bookmark! Immigrant and Refugee Stories
A selection of books that focus on immigrant and refugee experiences, for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12

Red Leaf Literature
This column features titles chosen by Canadian Children’s Book News’ reviewers. These books are thought to be of the highest quality and signify titles of exceptional calibre.

We Recommend
Reviews of the latest Canadian books for children and teens

Index of Reviews
THE WORD ON THE STREET
TORONTO BOOK & MAGAZINE FESTIVAL
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DAVID A. ROBERTSON  KENNETH OPPIL  RUTH DHI  CARY EIGAN
As I sit down to write this, I’m realizing that this is my tenth issue as editor of Canadian Children’s Book News and I couldn’t be prouder of the articles we’ve included, all of the fabulous Canadian children’s literature we’ve reviewed and the many authors and illustrators we’ve profiled and introduced you to in our “Keep Your Eye On...” column. It’s been such a pleasure working with all the contributors to the magazine and the team that helps me put the magazine together; I couldn’t do it without you. Many thanks for your hard work and patience as I learned the ropes. I think I’ve finally got this!

In our opinion piece in this issue, Marylynn Miller Oke interviews authors who have written books about immigrant and refugee experiences. I’m sure you’ll find it as engaging a read as I did. The stories are uplifting and will help young people gain a better understanding of the world we live in today. Our Bookmark! column complements this article with titles for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12. I hope you’ll purchase or borrow some of the books mentioned to share with the children in your life.

Heather Camlot shares a candid interview she conducted with Christopher Paul Curtis earlier this year and helps us learn about this award-winning author whose career in children’s literature didn’t take off until he was in his forties. Nevertheless, Curtis has contributed numerous titles to the historical fiction genre and continues to do so with his latest title, The Journey of Little Charlie.

In our “Keep Your Eye On...” column you’ll meet Sarah Sawler, whose first two children’s books came out this spring. I had the pleasure to meet Sarah while I was in Halifax in April and I think you’ll find her books as engaging as I do. In a new column, Larry Swartz introduces primary teachers to picture books that they can use in the classroom to discuss diversity with their students, and in our focus piece, Lee Edward Födi and Kallie George tell us about an innovative creative writing program that helps kids nurture their love of reading and writing.

And, as always, please don’t forget to read the many reviews included in our “Red Leaf Literature” and “We Recommend” sections. If you’re looking for a fabulous book for the children or teens in your life, you’re sure to find something to add to their bookshelf.

Happy reading this fall.

Sandra O’Brien

Your feedback is important!
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Exposing Canadian kids to unimaginable horrors endured by millions of global refugees is a delicate operation. Honesty, compassion and a gentle hand are required to lead young readers into the ravaged lives of displaced children — who, for the most part, are just like them.

Driven by devastating facts, personal history or a human instinct to somehow help, five well-known authors reveal how they transform this urgent situation of relentless despair and precarious hope into thoughtful dialogue and an informed world view.

**What motivated you to write this book?**

**SD:** My children were asking about the Syrian conflict after seeing coverage in the media, so I began searching online for more kid-friendly resources to begin a discussion. I came across a short article about a young boy who fled with his family to the Za’atari camp, where he encountered and began a friendship with an assortment of wild birds. This article really stayed with me and was the tiny spark that inspired me to begin writing *My Beautiful Birds*.

**MFS:** The refugee experience of Vietnamese Canadians has interested me for decades. Millions were affected, yet there was virtually no mainstream literature on the topic. A publisher introduced me to Tuan. As soon as I met him, I knew I had to write his story.

**SK:** I was a reporter based in Beirut covering the resettlement of Syrian refugees to Canada for *The Globe and Mail*. An editorial director approached me with the idea. Though I never thought I’d ever write a graphic novel like *Escape from Syria*, formulating the narrative and writing the book was easy. I had years of reporting on refugee families as a foundation, and a grasp of their everyday problems and issues that often went under-reported by the mainstream international media.

**ML:** In the fall of 2015, hundreds of thousands of refugees and migrants were risking their lives on the Mediterranean Sea, seeking asylum in Europe. I was distressed by the dangerous crossings and the growing hostility toward them. I wanted to take action in some small way.

**MR:** I wanted my two young grandsons to know about war and refugees, but in a gentle manner. My actual writing of this story was inspired by the images I came across on Facebook of stone art made by Nizar Ali Badr, an artist living in Syria. I knew kids would like his rock art as much as I did and I felt that his pictures told a story about war and refugees.

**ML:** Sharing Ruth, Phu, José, Najeeba and Mohamed’s stories was a huge responsibility and especially daunting. Even though their crossings were years ago, their harrowing journeys were still vivid in their minds and painful to discuss. I wanted to tell the truth and honour their experiences, yet make it bearable for children. The hope that shines through the book comes from their stories — accounts of the kindness of strangers, of friendships forged, of the bonds of family and their courage and resilience.

**Your story is vivid. How do you balance the facts, visceral emotion and expression of hope when writing for young readers?**

**SD:** Finding that balance was very important. I wanted to honestly depict the real struggles faced by the Syrian people, in a child’s first person point of view, along with their incredible capacity to be hopeful and to see the beauty around them, even during difficult circumstances. I wanted to incorporate children’s universal loves, like animals, sports and art — they bind us together as human beings.

**MFS:** Books for young people must be scrupulously researched and factually accurate. I use my research as a scaffold for the emotion and humanity. That emotion in *Adrift at Sea* is all Tuan’s — we were both in tears as I interviewed him and I wept as I wrote the narrative. As I write, I am Tuan. My goal is to make the readers feel like they are Tuan.

**SK:** My main focus was to stay true to the facts. If readers found the novel to be emotional, I think that was a product of my staying true to the actual experiences of refugees in incredibly difficult circumstances. I wanted to give an accurate account of what refugees who had their lives turned upside down by this conflict experienced. Jackie Roche, the illustrator, was key, I think, in emotional aspect; she used colours to portray the atmosphere and highlighted certain symbols to emphasize them. I think the novel is all the more gripping because of that.

**ML:** Your story is vivid. How do you balance the facts, visceral emotion and expression of hope when writing for young readers?
Margriet Ruurs (MR)
Margriet Ruurs is the author of 40 books. She has an M.Ed. from Simon Fraser University and an honorary Fellowship from Okanagan College. Her book *Stepping Stones* was featured in *The New York Times*, on BBC and CBC and has so far raised $80,000 for refugees. Margriet conducts author presentations at schools around the world, combining her love of travel with her passion for sharing books with children. She runs a book lovers’ B & B, Between The Covers, on Salt Spring Island, BC. Her newest book is a novel called *Bus to the Badlands*.

MR: A few just-right words can paint a more powerful picture than an elaborate piece of prose. I very much had my six- and eight-year-old grandsons in mind while writing the text. I also realized that this story is not exclusive to Syria. I grew up with similar events in Holland right after World War II. I think the story formed itself as I grappled with emotions.

Why is it important to explore and share the hardships faced by various communities around the world — in this case young refugees and their families?

SD: Children are smart and deserve to know what is going on in the world in a child-friendly, responsible manner, so that they can become informed, mindful, thoughtful, empathetic leaders of tomorrow.

It is so wonderful to see more books coming out that are both ‘mirrors and doors.’ A teacher in British Columbia shared with me how touched and happy two of her recently resettled Syrian students were when they read *My Beautiful Birds*. One said, “This was me.” To see oneself reflected back in a book is very empowering.

SK: I write mainly for a North American audience who have a vague, very general, even misinformed understanding of what is happening in Syria. And yet, it’s in the understanding of these complexities that decision makers and informed citizens can make a stronger case to their governments for why resettlement is important, even necessary.

MFS: I have dedicated my life to writing refugee stories. My first book, *Silver Threads*, was about my Ukrainian grandfather who came to Canada for freedom, only to be interned as an enemy alien in World War I. The pain that he suffered and the ripple effect through the generations of my family made me realize how important it is to air these stories.

After writing his story, I felt a moral responsibility to search out other untold refugee stories. This led me to write a number of books about survivors of the Armenian Genocide and also the lesser-known refugee stories of WWII. Sharing these stories shows how much we all have in common. With context and awareness come empathy, sympathy and admiration for those who have persevered.
ML: In a world of 24/7 news and social media, it is impossible for children and youth in Canada not to be aware of the plight of refugees and the heartless response of so many. Books about young refugees go beyond the dehumanizing headlines and anti-immigrant rants to help children gain a deeper understanding of the situation, to see that refugees have families and feelings and needs just like them and go on to have productive, happy lives.

MR: I think it is important to share difficult concepts with children in such a way that they can develop empathy. Allowing you to put yourself in someone else’s shoes is the power of books. I wanted to show readers that being a refugee is not someone’s own choice. In my other books, like the Around the World series, I share information about real kids and their families and schools. I hope that books like these help to create understanding and tolerance, and respect for others.

SD: I’m thrilled to see more Canadian kidlit featuring diverse and ‘own voice’ stories that reflect the world we live in today. As books like these get published, more readers may see themselves in the characters. It is more important than ever that we encourage and model empathy, tolerance, communication and kindness to our children, our leaders of tomorrow.

MFS: Every single kid in the schoolyard today feels like they’re living in a war. Reading these stories gives them context for their own experiences.

SK: I grew up in a neighbourhood of Toronto known to be a ‘first stop’ for new immigrants and refugees. There were people from all over the world in my grade three class. Those shared experiences as a newcomer greatly informed my understanding of ‘Canadianess’ and what it means to be privileged enough to hold a passport and call myself a citizen of this country. But it isn’t a fairy tale either, the immigration story in Canada is rife with hardship and competing narratives of belonging, and these struggles ought to be reflected in literature, especially for young people.

ML: I’m grateful to visit classrooms across the country to see firsthand how relevant these stories are. All of us who aren’t Indigenous are immigrants. The forces that brought you here seeking peace and security are probably not that different from those that forced the boat refugees in Stormy Seas to leave their homes.

MR: These are issues that face all of us today, in Canada and around the world. When a community welcomes refugees — that is Canada at its best. Reading a book about the issue can be more effective than just hearing about it on the news. I think global issues and global awareness are huge in schools. My favourite comment on Stepping Stones came from a 12-year-old who wrote, “Your book changed my mind about refugees.”

What do you want the story to accomplish?

SD: I hope that My Beautiful Birds encourages children to listen to newcomers’ stories, and to be loving, patient, friendly and empathetic to each other, especially when we have struggles.

MFS: I hope that slipping into Tuan’s shoes for a moment in time will change the reader’s perception about people who have newly arrived to Canada. To consider all that a person had to live through to get here and the fact that the challenges don’t end when they get here.

SK: I wrote this novel for the young student who is curious about his or her refugee classmates. If reading it creates better understanding of their plight, then I consider my goal accomplished.

ML: Until we get a chance to really learn the stories behind the images of overcrowded boats, to see these people as just normal families like our own, making difficult choices in dire circumstances, we can’t really understand their plight. I hope that young readers carry Ruth, Phu, José, Najeeba and Mohamed’s stories in their heads and their hearts and remember them when they hear about refugees and think about the impact of their actions — or inactions.

SR: My hope with Stepping Stones was simply to share a story with children to open their eyes to the fact that some children, in different parts of the world, live under different circumstances. I hoped to help them to express compassion. If my book can change the mind, and attitude, of one child, then perhaps it can help change the minds and attitudes of more readers. That is huge.

How does the compelling artwork in your respective works impact the reader and contribute to the story?

SD: My polymer clay artwork has a dimensional quality that really captivates young readers. I used a more impressionistic approach with a limited colour palette to best convey the emotions of the main character, Sami’s journey and the beauty all around, even though he is struggling with aclimating to the refugee camp. I wanted to juxtapose the soft textures of the birds’ feathers with the gritty desert sand to show intuitively that there is always hope, even in harshness.

MFS: Brian Deines’ artwork is able to show the vastness of the ocean and the sheer daunting nature of what Tuan’s family was up against. He used models from the extended Ho family to create the faces and expressions and that made it so personal. It was such an honour to have Brian do the artwork for this book!

SK: Jackie Roche, the wonderful illustrator of the book, incorporated colour and style in the novel in brilliant ways to evoke the emotions the characters were experiencing and their environment. In the refugee camps, she used hues of orange and yellow to convey the poor hygienic conditions, the stillness and deprivation. In Canada, by contrast, she used blues to convey the cold of the winter, the unfamiliarity and
the distance between the characters and what is to them a foreign and strange place.

ML: I had the incredible good luck to work with Eleanor Shakespeare, an extraordinarily talented collage artist. Eleanor delved deep, painstakingly researching historically accurate photographs and ephemera to use in her collages. Her illustrations and handwritten quotes bring the boat refugees experiences to life, revealing the multi-layered, complex factors that forced them to leave their homes. Eleanor’s stunning artwork reminds you of all the beauty in the world and offers respite from the storm.

MR: When I first spotted Nizar’s art, I realized that I have seen books illustrated in many different mediums, but never in rocks. His art is striking, fluent in its forms and full of feeling and emotion. Normally a picture book is illustrated after it is written. In this case, I wrote the text to accompany the art, and it seems to work well.

How did you feel when writing about such emotional subject matter?

SD: Even though this is a fictional picture book, it was inspired by real-life events. It was an emotional book to write. I have the deepest respect and admiration for the bravery the Syrian people have shown when forced to flee their homes. I created from my heart, from a place of respect, and I tried my best to create a book that illuminates their strength, resilience, love and never-ending hope.

MFS: As I was writing, I was Tuan. I felt his fear, his thirst, the sun beating down on his head, his despair at watching the other boat engulfed in flames. It’s like opening up your vein and writing with the blood.

SK: I rarely think about it. My focus was on being fastidious with the facts, referring to my years of reporting. I felt an urgent need to tell the story as it was told to me by those who experienced it.

ML: Researching and writing Stormy Seas was often very draining. Coming to terms with the heart-break of millions of people around the world, many under 18, displaced by war, famine, natural disasters and persecution was difficult. But listening to the boat refugees talk about their experiences had the greatest impact on me — hearing the fear in their voices or the pain of feeling unwelcome in their new home. I’m so grateful for their generosity and honesty.

MR: I realized, as I wrote Stepping Stones, that the story of fleeing a war is universal. It is not just Holland in 1945 or Syria in 2016. I hope that Rama’s specific flight to freedom paints a universally understood story of what it is to be a refugee and how to open our hearts to those in difficult situations.

Marylynn Miller Oke is a freelance writer. With experience in broadcast and public relations, she writes frequently for the academic and non-profit sectors.

LEARNING IDEAS
Books noted in this article can be used across disciplines and to effectively introduce difficult subject matter.

Creative
- Make pictures with stones and other natural items.
- View artwork from students around the world.
- Write a poem based on the text about one’s own family and illustrate it with a photo of rock art.
- Use first-person accounts of the journeys as a model for writing in language arts.
- Discuss the story and predict what might happen next.

Geography
- Plot the refugees’ journeys on maps.
- Find countries and the sea on a map and discuss terrain and distances.

Social Studies
- Compare past and present media coverage of these refugee crises.
- Older students can discuss war, politics, religions, persecution, terrorism and more.
- Discuss how policies around the world directly impact the lives of refugees.

Student Activism
- Encourage and discuss ways students can take action to help refugees today.
News Roundup

AWARDS, BOOK LAUNCHES, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND THE LATEST NEWS

Lyn Cook, 1918-2018
Evelyn “Lyn” (Cook) Waddell passed away on Saturday, July 14, 2018, three months after her 100th birthday. A pioneering Canadian children’s author from the 1950s to 2004, Lyn wrote 23 books for children and young adults.

She graduated from the University of Toronto, and completed her first children’s novel while working in Sudbury as a children’s librarian. She returned to Toronto, hosting a story hour on CBC. The Toronto Public Library retains her papers as part of the Osborne Collection of Early Children’s Books.

Our condolences go out to Lyn’s family and friends.

Jonathan Klassen named to Order of Canada
Congratulations to Jonathan Klassen who was named to the Order of Canada on June 29, 2018. Klassen was appointed for his transformative contributions to children’s literature as an illustrator and author.

Nominees for the Hackmatack Awards pose for a photo holding their author signs and award certificates: Helaine Becker, Kathleen Cherry, Jenny Kay Dupuis, Deborah Toogood, Robin Stevenson, Maxim Cyr, Dave Atkinson, Marie Cadieux, Alice Walsh and Joan Marie Galat.

Congratulations to the 2018 Hackmatack Children’s Choice Book Award Winners
The winners of the 2018 Hackmatack Children’s Choice Book Award were announced on June 1 at a ceremony at the Theatre Louis Vermeersch of the Centre scolaire-communautaire Samuel-de-Champlain in Saint John, New Brunswick.

The English Non-fiction winner was I Am Not a Number by Jenny Kay Dupuis and Kathy Kacer; the English Fiction winner was Fluffy Strikes Back by Ashley Spires; the winner for French Non-fiction was Les Bleues de Toronto by Karin Gottot and Maxim Cyr; and the winner of French Fiction was Les expériences de Mini-Jean, Tome 1 by Alex A.

The Hackmatack award ceremony was the culmination of this year’s award week, during which 11 of the nominated Canadian authors visited participating schools and libraries in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island.

Thousands of children in Grades 4 to 6 participated in the Hackmatack program over the course of the school year by reading from the shortlist of 40 titles (20 French and 20 English) and voting for their favourite in each category. The Hackmatack Children’s Choice Book Award program is presented by TD Bank Group and supported by the Canada Council for the Arts, Nova Scotia Department of Education and the New Brunswick Public Library Service, among others.

Smith and Thornhill at the Osborne
This is just a reminder that Sydney Smith will give the 12th Annual Sybille Pantazzi Memorial Lecture on Thursday, October 18 and Jan Thornhill will give the 31st Helen E. Stubbs Memorial Lecture on November 15 at Toronto Public Library’s Osborne Collection. Visit www.toronto publiclibrary.ca/osborne for details.

Nahid Kazemi named IBBY Canada’s 2018 Joanne Fitzgerald Illustrator in Residence
IBBY Canada is pleased to announce that Nahid Kazemi has been selected for the 2018 Joanne Fitzgerald Illustrator in Residence Program, to be held at Northern District Branch of Toronto Public Library. During her residency in the month of October, Nahid will present art activities for school children at the library, lead evening workshops in the library for

Continued on page 10
The Canadian Children’s Book Centre
IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THE FINALISTS
OF OUR 2018 BOOK AWARDS!

TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award
Prix TD de littérature canadienne pour l’enfance et la jeunesse
Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award
Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children’s Non-Fiction
Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People
John Spray Mystery Award
Amy Mathers Teen Book Award
Prix Harry Black de l’album jeunesse

The winners will be announced later this fall.

THESE BOOKS EXEMPLIFY
THE VERY BEST OF CANADIAN PUBLISHING.

Congratulations
TO ALL!

For the full shortlists for each award, please visit
www.bookcentre.ca
Tell us about your latest book. My latest book, which was co-written with YouTube personality Frankie MacDonald, covers a lot of ground. At its core, Be Prepared! The Frankie MacDonald Guide to Life, the Weather, and Everything is Frankie’s life story — an inspiring tale that includes early experiences like Frankie’s keen interest in meteorology, relationships with his family members and teachers, and his almost intuitive understanding of technology. Frankie is on the autism spectrum, so he had to work hard to learn to verbally communicate and cope with sensory overload. Ultimately, readers will find out how all these early experiences helped make Frankie the remarkable person he is while also learning about meteorology.

Tell us about your writing process. I’m not sure I have just one! Every book I write is a new puzzle I have to figure out. When I wrote 100 Things You Don’t Know About Nova Scotia, I fell down a lot of research rabbit holes, and it sometimes took me a while to realize when I’d hit a dead end. Once I finished the research, I’d go ahead and write and then do a lot of revision.

My next book, 100 Things You Don’t Know About Atlantic Canada for Kids, was a similar format, so it was a lot easier to write because I’d already done it once. I went through a similar process, often looking for an interesting tidbit of information and then expanding my research around that bit of info until I had enough context.

Be Prepared! was a different process entirely. The story was based around interviews with Frankie, his family, his former teacher’s aide and a journal she provided me with. The story only emerged once I started gathering details and anecdotes. We worked on the weather facts last because we wanted to make sure Frankie’s story was at the core of the book.

How did you first get published? I had a lot of success with an article I wrote for Halifax Magazine called “50 Things You Don’t Know About Halifax.” I thought that there might be something there, that maybe people would be interested in a book that expanded on some of the facts in the article, and included many more.

I knew the general manager of Nimbus Publishing, Terrilee Bulger, so I mentioned the book idea to her and she encouraged me to write a proposal and submit it.

What do you like about writing for young people? Children’s books are often the ones that stick with you, the ones that help you start making sense of the world and give you a place to escape to. I like the idea that something I write might give a child a new perspective to consider or inspire them to do something that makes them happy.

Tell us about writers who inspire you. Oh wow, there are so many. If I had to pick just six, I would include Judy Blume, Gordon Korman, Elise Gravel, R.J. Palacio, Neil Gaiman and Oliver Jeffers.
“Wilkinson manages to craft a brilliant tale about adventure, youth, and hope.”
— Mike Marts, AfterShock Comics

“Beyond the conventional boundaries of storytelling”
— Mike Marts, AfterShock Comics

In this choose-your-own-adventure story come to life, a lonely 16-year-old ducks into an old bookshop to escape high school bullies. There he discovers he can travel to a parallel, twisted version of Toronto with a magical tablet called a Battledoors, and is faced with a series of choices that will lead him down different paths, each with greater consequences than the last. Is Owen ready to join forces with allies and enemies, battle bizarre creatures, face the ultimate antagonist, and become the hero of his own story?
During last April’s ice storm in Toronto, I sat down to read The Watsons Go to Birmingham by Christopher Paul Curtis. The freezing ice pellets and gusting winds were the perfect backdrop to the first chapter: 10-year-old Kenny is scraping the car windows while his teenage brother kisses the side-view mirror and, oh yes, his lips get stuck. The scene is so palpable and familiar — and laugh-out-loud funny.

“You can tell so much about an author by reading their books, and in his books, what you read is what you get,” says Andrea Pinkney, Executive Editor at Scholastic, which published Elijah from Buxton, The Madman of Piney Woods and The Journey of Little Charlie, known together as the Buxton Chronicles. “He is that funny, he is that real, he is that engaging.”

Although Curtis, 65, was always interested in writing, he didn’t become a published author until the age of 42. Born and raised in Flint, Michigan, Curtis took a job at the Fisher Body Plant after high school, hanging doors on Buick cars. What began as a summer gig lasted 13 years; then he quit to pursue writing.

He wrote while working odd jobs. When he won the prestigious Avery Hopwood and Jules Hopwood prizes for writing from the University of Michigan, where he took classes, his then-wife suggested he take a full year off from working to turn his story into a novel. That novel, The Watsons Go to Birmingham, was named a Coretta Scott King Award Honor Book and a Newbery Honor Book in 1995. Four years later came Bud, Not Buddy, which took home both the Newbery Medal and the Coretta Scott King Award — a first for any published work. The success meant no more odd jobs and established Curtis as a force, not only in historical fiction but in children’s literature.

“He invites readers on a journey,” explains Pinkney. “He has a unique ability to reach out a hand to a kid, bring them into an experience and keep them in the journey. It’s one thing to connect with a reader, but he stays with them.”

I caught up with Curtis by phone in Windsor, Ontario, his home for over 30 years.

What drew you to write for middle grade? I never really set out to write for one particular group. The story that came to me was about a 10-year-old boy and his family taking a journey. I didn’t think of it as a story for middle readers. I didn’t think of it as anything really. I know that’s against the rules — you have to keep your audience in mind — but I told a story that I thought I might like to read. I was surprised when I turned it in and they told me it was for middle readers. I guess that’s just where my mindset is, I feel very comfortable writing from a middle grade perspective.

Why do you write what you do, what compels you to tell these stories? I’ve always been a fan of history. I think that it’s so much more relevant to have your writing tethered to historic events; it has a sense of reality to it. As I’ve written more and more books, and as I take my responsibility as a writer for young readers more seriously, this is a way I can interest young readers in historic events. What would be a great thing is if they went out and got an actual history book about the subject — like slave-catching or Buxton — that would be the ultimate goal.

Where do the ideas come from, what inspires you? The ideas come from anything really. When I talk to young people, I tell them writers have to be hyper-aware of everything. Any conversation someone has, anything you hear, can
be molded into a story. I sit down and see what comes to me and through me. I don’t plot my stories; when you’re a young writer, if you don’t plot the story it’s going to wander and meander wherever it goes. I get to know a character first. I write at the library or a donut shop, and I know I’ve got the story as soon as the voice of the character comes to me. They tell me the scenes. I’ve learned to listen to them. Whatever the process is, whatever parts of my brain this masquerade is reaching, I need to listen to it.

You tend to give a taste of history, particularly in *The Watsons with the bombing in Birmingham*, but also with the *coffin ships in The Madman of Piney Woods*. Usually I’ll tell the story and as I get to a certain point, I’ll do the research on it. It was such a big historical moment, these ships lined up on the St. Lawrence River and the people on board were dying. It was amazing to me that I had never heard that before. If you let the characters go where they want to go, things will come up. I think one of the reasons the books are successful is that I look at these historical events and at how the young reader would react to them. I don’t go into the politics of it, the deeper issues of it, just how someone that age would look at it. If there is a reason the books work, it’s because they are not didactic, there’s no “here’s the lessons, learn this, learn this.” They aren’t overwhelming, but they are snapshots with which to learn.

**How did you first learn about Buxton?** My father’s cousin lives in Detroit and she told me about how it had been a place for slaves. I was a 10-year-old kid. It’s very difficult for me to place myself in the head of someone who had been a slave. You have to accept your nonhumaness, that you’re a person who’s from a historically oppressed group to write about the oppressed. They study them better, they know them better. But I started from the point of a little boy. The big challenge for me was *The Mighty Miss Malone* because it was a female protagonist. But then I stopped and thought about it — I have, sisters, my mother. The writing wasn’t a challenge; the challenge was getting over it in my head and thinking I couldn’t do it. There’s not much difference in a male telling a story or a female telling a story. All my [manuscript] readers and editors are women! I have faith that if something didn’t ring true, my editors and readers would tell me.

**Do you remember what it was like having your first book published, and later the transition to becoming a full-time writer?** I was 42 and I was working in a warehouse unloading trucks. I had gone to my mother’s house and there was a letter from Random House [Delacorte at the time]. I ripped it open and I remember my mother almost fainted. [They wanted to publish *The Watsons.*] I had done well in high school, but I worked in a factory for 13 years; I worked as a maintenance man — that’s hard on your parents when they have expectations for you. I was still working at that warehouse when I got a call from a school principal who invited me to talk about *The Watsons.* He said we only have $300 — I was making $250 a week at the warehouse! I was getting more and more speaking engagements and that’s when I became a full-time writer.

**Your first book was a huge success. How do you get over the praise, the “I don’t know if I can do this again,” and get back to work?** I get through life by having very low expectations of myself. I don’t take anything seriously in terms of praise or negative comments. I take it in, but I don’t dwell on it. After *The Watsons* came out, I made a conscientious decision to not try to top it, just to get into the same frame of mind, go back to the same place I wrote it, the same process — I tried to duplicate what seemed to work before. I just wanted to tell another story, and it had nothing to do with what went before and what would come after.

**What is your writing process? How do you begin and follow through?** I have a rough idea of what I want to write about, but nothing is set in concrete and I allow the character to tell me what happens. At first it was a very tedious thing. As I’ve become a more practised writer, I know what works, I’m able to get to the point where the character is telling me about the story. I’ll pick a subject and go from there.

**What is the hardest part about the writing process for you?** The hardest part of the writing process — and this shows how long I’ve been doing it — is the first letter I get back from the editor. It’s terrible. The letter would come and it would be this thick thing. It would sit for weeks before I’d open it. I’d go through it very quickly and not pick up on anything. Then I’d get the call from the editor: what do you think? I think I better read the letter! Now it’s the first email telling you how they want to change things. I’ve had miserable jobs, I’ve been unemployed, so I know if this is the hardest part of my job, I’ve got it made. It’s so wonderful, I truly, truly love it.

**Could you talk a bit about diversity in children’s fiction?** When I was growing up, there was no diversity. There were very few books that were for, by or about people like me, or Hispanic people, or Indigenous people. They were all books done by other people. I was an excellent reader, but I never developed a love of books until I was much older because...
I didn’t see myself reflected in the books. There are more books now, there is a better effort, but it always amazes me that my books are among the go-to books for diversity now. We’ve come far, but we have a long way to go. I encourage young African-Canadian and African-American kids to write their stories. I think that’s the only way it’s going to happen — if we have more encouragement for more young writers and hire more people in the editorial process. A lot of times a book that could do well is missed because the editor just doesn’t get it.

**Do you ever think you should have started writing 20 years earlier?** I don’t think I could have. That’s one of the things that’s different about writing. There are no writing prodigies. You have to live through things to have depth in a book. It comes when it’s supposed to, and if you’re lucky enough it comes when you’re able to handle it. You have to have a certain level of maturity and you have to be older to not get your head turned around. I can see how that can happen to younger people. You never know how long your career is going to be.

**What are you working on now or next?** I’m working on a story that takes place in Flint in 1968, the story of a young boy that touches on the Vietnam War, on urban renewal and other things going on in the sixties.

**What authors inspire you or challenge you?** Toni Morrison challenges me. I love her writing, but I find it very difficult to read. The first two or three times I read one of her books I’m in a fog, but her use of language pulls me back in. After my fourth or fifth reading, I see the shapes and I understand what’s going on. Mark Twain is absolutely brilliant. It’s his use of humour. He and Jim Thompson [a crime writer from the 1950s] can really make me laugh.

**What advice would you offer writers trying to break into the industry?** You have to be persistent, you have to be patient. Give it your best shot. You have to have a thick skin, take rejection and not take it personally. Me, I take it personally. My first rejections ate me up. It’s going to take time and you’re going to be rejected. But it’s a chance for you to improve.

**What effect do you hope your work will have on your readers?** I hope they enjoy the story, and then I hope they go on and ask other questions. I hope I give them the desire to find out what happened and get a deeper understanding of history. Those who don’t know history are condemned to repeat it.

**What’s your proudest accomplishment as a writer?** When I go to conventions of teachers or librarians and a teacher will tell me that the first book a certain student read was one of mine and it got him interested in reading. It’s the highest compliment. Teachers have a horribly tough job that in so many ways is not rewarding, but the fact that they teach and they use my books as an aid to reach a student, to help them read or ideally produce another writer — that’s the thing I’m most proud of.

Heather Camlot is a writer, editor, translator and the author of the Silver Birch Award-nominated Clutch.
The story of celebrated YouTube weather enthusiast Frankie MacDonald’s early years, along with facts about all things sunny, rainy, snowy, and stormy.

Children’s Non Fiction | $16.95
Ages 8-12

Author Jacqueline Halsey spares no detail in this inspiring story of the brigantine that brought the first Scottish immigrants to Nova Scotia.

Middle-grade Fiction | $12.95
Ages 8-12

Colourful images depicting Canadian animals like moose, whales, and caribou, and more makes this vibrant book a perfect introduction to the Mi’kmaq language.

Board Book | $14.95
Ages 0-3

This dreamy story follows a young child who travels back in time to 1950s Halifax with a whimsical tune.

Picture Book | $22.95
Ages 4-8

One Story A Day for Beginners is a new release in September of 2018.

Written by a group of Canadian authors, this 12 book series includes 365 little stories from everyday life that touch on a wide variety of topics. The series is designed to foster children’s total development — linguistic, intellectual, social, and cultural, through the joy of reading.

Children ages 5 to 7 can now enjoy a simple and fun story every day!
While we could argue that any children’s literature worth its salt broadens children’s views of themselves and introduces them to ways of looking at the world they might not have otherwise encountered, there are some picture books that do more than this. They give voice to individuals and groups whose perspectives are not often heard or respected. Such stories often celebrate those who make a difference in the lives of marginalized individuals and groups and remind readers of the sameness and differences that we all live by.

Across the community of Canadian children’s book publishers, more and more books are being published that are recognized as ‘multicultural literature,’ and tend to be books that focus on race, ethnicity and culture. However, an expanded definition of multicultural literature reminds us that attention must be paid to such issues as gender, class, sexual orientation, ableism, religion and geographical location. The primary classroom can provide a meaningful arena for bringing awareness and understanding to those issues. The books that kindergarten to grade three teachers choose to include in their programs can provide significant opportunities for exploring issues that create a foundation that encourages children to respect others.

In the classroom, fictional characters that represent or assert identity can help to open the minds of young readers to acceptance of differences. When selecting books that help students work toward an understanding of diversity, it is important that we assess a book’s potential for addressing social justice goals, combating intolerance and fostering a sense of inclusion. When we make a conscious decision to share books that consider diversity and equity, we are providing a mirror for the students we teach, recognizing and respecting their cultures and promoting a strong personal connection for them. We are not only aiding students to connect to the author’s creation, but we are also encouraging them to connect to those they sit alongside, and indeed enrich their text-to-world connections.

With the vast smorgasbord of picture books that are available for teachers to offer their students, through teacher read-aloud experiences or organized classroom libraries, consideration needs to be given to selecting appropriate titles and designing meaningful activities for students to engage with and learn through literature. *Hand Over Hand*, written by Alma Fullerton and illustrated by Renné Benoit, is an excellent title to accompany discussions about gender bias, and the following titles, recently published, serve as examples that help inspire talking, reading, writing and artistic responses that can help students make connections to their own lives and the lives of others, and come closer to an understanding of my story, your story, our story.

**Focus issue: Racial Bias**

**Summary:** When a young boy named Ayden is playing with his friends one day, he is called a ‘bad word.’ When he tells his mother about the incident, she tries to comfort him. When he tells his teacher, she sets out to teach her students about the meaning of tolerance and ‘harmony’ and the beauty within each of us.

**Responding to My Skin: Brown**

**Discussing Race and Differences**

Discuss with the students why some words are considered ‘bad words.’

1. Why might some people call others ‘bad words’ or names?
2. If you, or someone you know, is called a ‘bad word’ or name, what should you do?
3. Why do you think the author wrote this story?
4. How does the book help us to understand racial differences?

**Discussing and Illustrating the word harmony**

The teacher in the story invites the students to make a picture that depicts the word harmony. Have the students discuss the meaning of the word. Ask: What are some examples of being in harmony? When are people in harmony? Students can then create their own drawings or paintings to illustrate a harmonious situation.
Focus issue: Diversity and Mental Health

Summary: This book was originally published to raise awareness for mental health and addiction. This updated version presents Sheree Fitch’s talent as a wordsmith and rhyme artist as she helps readers to consider the gifts that each of us has, the things that make us similar and different and the worries that many of us carry around.

Responding to EveryBody’s Different on EveryBody Street

Discussing Differences

The following questions can be used to guide a discussion of the book:

1. What does the title mean to you? Why might Sheree Fitch write a book called EveryBody’s Different on EveryBody Street?
2. How does this book help us to understand our differences? Our similarities? Our weaknesses?
3. How did this book help you to think about yourself? Others? Your relationship to others who are different than you?

Become an Illustrator

Have the students imagine that they have been hired to create an illustration for Sheree Fitch’s poem? Students can consider an excerpt of the text that they found appealing and create an illustration that might accompany the text. NOTE: Images could be assembled into a PowerPoint to create a newly illustrated version of the book.

Exploring Choral Dramatization

Students can be organized into groups of three or four. Provide each group with an excerpt of the book and invite them to explore ways to read the text as choral dramatization by considering the following: How will the lines be divided amongst group members? What are some different voices that can be used to bring meaning to the text? How will gesture, movement and/or sounds enrich the choral presentation? How will each member of the group stand or sit (or create a still-image tableau) to present their excerpts. After rehearsing, and becoming familiar with their parts, students can present their choral dramatization to others.

Larry Swartz is a literacy and drama instructor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. He has served as juror for the TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award and is the author of Creating Caring Classrooms and Take Me to Your Readers.
For the past 14 years, an innovative creative writing program has been flourishing in Vancouver and satellite cities. Its purpose is to help kids nurture their love of reading and writing. Of course, there are many programs like this across the country, but what makes this one unique is that kids get to actually design and publish their own books — and are mentored by published authors.

Creative Writing for Children Society (CWC) was founded in 2004, and was the brainchild of Joon-hyung Park. As a recent immigrant to Canada, he was keen to find a way for his two daughters to improve their English and express their experiences in a creative way. He felt a key component of this would be to help kids make ‘real’ books.

That’s where we, Kallie George and Lee Edward Födi, came in, joining CWC as two lead mentors. We were enticed by Park’s idea and passion. Even though our individual childhood experiences were quite different, there’s one thing we had in common — the desire to make ‘real’ books.

When we were young, that meant making books by hand: stapling, sewing, gluing, and playing all roles in our ‘publishing houses.’ We were not only the writers, we were the illustrators, printers (read: photocopiers) and editors. Our books even had copyright pages! If you’re a published author or illustrator reading this, you might relate. Kallie’s first book, Journey to Talking Land, was published when she was five; Lee’s first, The Farm 7720, was published when he was six or seven. (Side note: ‘7720’ referred to his phone number).

Yes, our books were full of charm and creativity, but as we got older, our appetites to improve grew. As we moved into the middle grades, we had a desire to be as professional as possible. We had many opportunities to write stories and create in our classrooms, but one thing we noticed is that there wasn’t the same support for writing as there was for other activities, for example, sports. If our friends wanted to figure skate or play hockey, they had coaches, practices, tournaments — in other words, a lot of structure, and a community with which to celebrate their passions.

Fast forward, and these are the things that we wanted to bring to CWC. At the beginning, CWC was a very humble enterprise. There was just one class, once a month, with 10 kids in the basement of a local church. But, within months, the program began to blossom, with classes popping up all around the Greater Vancouver area.

CWC is now a registered not-for-profit organization, and has grown under the leadership of Joon-hyung Park and Director, Sarah Hong — reaching about 150-200 kids annually. The mentors consist of published authors, editors, illustrators, playwrights and actors. Our philosophy is that kids never work with the same mentor twice, so they get to rotate through many different creative approaches. Over the years, our students have had the joy of working with such talented creators as Dan Bar-el, Stacey Matson, Lori Sherritt-Fleming, James McCann, kc dyer, Crystal Stranaghan, Greg Brown, Shelley MacDonald, Jared Hunt, Donnard MacKenzie, Danika Dinsmore, Rachelle Delaney, Phoebe Li and Marcie Nestman — and we continue to add new voices.

Immigrant families embraced CWC for many reasons, not the least of which was that it was a fun and creative way for first-generation Canadians to improve their English and celebrate their voices. CWC came to represent a new approach to learning for families coming from a more traditional approach to education in Asia, where there was a dearth of creativity. Parents who did not have much opportunity to express themselves through creative writing when they were in school had a strong desire to provide that opportunity for their children. It is important to note that CWC’s workshops were never designed to teach English; it just became a positive side effect. As students grew to love reading and writing through our program, their skills naturally improved.

“What CWC has given me is a love for creative writing, and critical reading skills.”
— Alison Gretton Coulter age 15
Our student body has changed over the years. Initially we began with kids solely from Park’s Korean community, but we now enroll students from a variety of cultural backgrounds. We even have a segment of workshops for children in the home-learning community, allowing them to earn credits for creative writing and language arts.

We are really proud to have helped kids from different groups in Canadian society find their voices. So many of those students have grown up through CWC and are now pursuing their own artistic dreams.

“It’s really not an exaggeration to say that CWC got me to where I am today,” says Hyo Hyun Kim, now attending Bryn Mawr College, a women’s liberal arts college in Pennsylvania. “CWC made it possible for me to reach into my own creativity that I never even knew existed, and communicate it to others through words and beyond. The CWC community was a place where I was free and unafraid to share my thoughts, where my stories and dreams were valued.”

It’s also not an exaggeration to say that some of our greatest professional joys have come in mentoring kids just like Hyo Hyun. Our only regret — we wish we could somehow invent a time machine, go back to when we were kids and take part in CWC ourselves!

Ted Kim is a 15-year-old student from Korea, attending high school in Canada. “CWC has given me a unique voice to express myself in a vivid, original way,” Ted says. He is currently writing a historical fiction story chronicling the life of a famous Korean prince.

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“BOOKMARK!” highlights books for a variety of grade levels around a particular theme. CCBC’s Library Coordinator, Meghan Howe, has compiled a list of books that focus on the immigrant and refugee experience to complement Marylynn Miller Oke’s discussion with five authors who have written about refugees and immigrants from various parts of the world.

**IMMIGRANT & REFUGEE STORIES**

**PICTURE BOOKS FOR PRESCHOOL TO GRADE 7**

*Adrift at Sea: A Vietnamese Boy’s Story of Survival*  
written by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch with Tuan Ho  
illustrated by Brian Deines  
Pajama Press, 2016

In the middle of the Pacific Ocean, a fishing boat overloaded with Vietnamese refugees drifts. This is the true story recounted by Tuan Ho, who was six when his family dodged Vietnam’s military police bullets for the perilous chance of boarding that boat.

*The Banana-Leaf Ball: How Play Can Change the World* (Citizen Kid)  
written by Katie Smith Milway  
illustrated by Shane W. Evans  
Kids Can Press, 2017

Separated from his family when they are forced to flee their home in Burundi, young Deo lives alone in a refugee camp in Tanzania. Resources are scarce and gangs steal what they can. One gang leader has begun targeting Deo.

*From Far Away*  
written by Robert Munsch and Saoussan Askar  
illustrated by Rebecca Green  
Annick Press, 2017

Written as a collaboration between a young girl and best-selling author Robert Munsch, this book is based on the real-life experience of Saoussan Askar, who emigrated with her family from war-torn Lebanon when she was just seven.

*Joseph’s Big Ride*  
written by Terry Farish  
illustrated by Ken Daley  
Annick Press, 2016

In the refugee camp where he lived, Joseph wanted one thing — to ride a bike. In America, Joseph spots the perfect-sized bike. It belongs to a girl he names Whoosh. When she crashes her bike, Joseph fixes it and Whoosh offers him a ride.

*The Land Beyond the Wall: An Immigration Story*  
written and illustrated by Veronika Martenova Charles  
Nimbus Publishing, 2017

Emma lives on the grey, cold, lonely side of a wall. On the forbidden other side, there is happiness and colour. When Emma’s parents disappear, she must live with her Aunt Lily, who crushes her dream of becoming an artist, until a strange boat and its captain help her escape.

*My Beautiful Birds*  
written and illustrated by Suzanne Del Rizzo  
Pajama Press, 2017

Fleeing from a home destroyed in the Syrian Civil War, Sami is consumed with worry about his pet pigeons left behind. Even in the relative safety of a refugee camp, the boy struggles to adjust, shattered by thoughts of what he has lost.

**JUNIOR & INTERMEDIATE FICTION AND NON-FICTION FOR GRADES 1-9**

*Making Canada Home: How Immigrants Shaped This Country*  
written by Susan Hughes  
Owlkids Books, 2016

This timely book chronicles how Canada has handled major waves of immigration, from welcoming early Europeans to becoming a modern-day safe haven for refugees. Each period of immigration has helped create the multicultural society of Canada today.

*Mud City* (The Breadwinner Series, Book 3)  
written by Deborah Ellis  
Groundwood Books, 2015 ©2003

Parvana’s best friend, Shauzia, has fled Afghanistan, only to end up alone on the streets of Peshawar, Pakistan. She must scrounge for food, beg for money and find a safe place to sleep each night. But is it worse than a lifetime spent in a refugee camp?

*Next Round: A Young Athlete’s Journey to Gold*  
written by John Spray  
Pajama Press, 2016

As a young refugee, Arthur Biyarslanov fled war in Chechnya, ultimately becoming a school-aged soccer star in Toronto. After
breaking his leg, Arthur discovers boxing and goes on to win gold for Canada at the 2015 Pan Am Games, and qualify for the 2016 Summer Olympic Games.

**A Refugee’s Journey from Iraq (Leaving My Homeland)**
written by Ellen Rodger
Crabtree Publishing, 2017

Zainab has never known peace in her homeland of Iraq. When her father is threatened by a group fighting against the government, her family seeks safety in Jordan and, later, the United States.

**Seeking Refuge**
written by Irene N. Watts
illustrated by Kathryn E. Shoemaker
Tradewind Books, 2016

Marianne, a Jewish refugee, arrives in London via Kindertransport. Lonely and longing for her real family, Marianne attempts to become an English girl. With the outbreak of WW II, Marianne is evacuated to Wales, where she is shuffled from one unsuitable home to another.

**Stormy Seas: Stories of Young Boat Refugees**
written by Mary Beth Leatherdale
illustrated by Eleanor Shakespeare
Annick Press, 2017

Put the current refugee crisis into stark context and travel from 1939 Europe to present-day North Africa, experiencing the harrowing journeys of five young people who fled their homes and risked everything in search of refuge, safety and security.

**Team Fugee (Soccer United: Team Refugee)**
written by Dirk McLean
Lorimer, 2017

Two years after his birth parents disappear in Nigeria, newly adopted Ozzie moves to Canada. At his new school, Ozzie and the other Nigerian kids compete for time on the soccer field with Victor’s team of Syrian refugees. Can Ozzie and Victor unite to create one team?

**Where Will I Live?**
written by Rosemary McCarney
Second Story Press, 2017

Every child deserves a home. But many children around the world have had to leave their homes because of war and conflict. This book offers young readers a glimpse into what life is like for child refugees.

**SENIOR FICTION FOR GRADES 7 AND UP**

**Escape from Syria**
written by Samya Kullab
illustrated by Jackie Roche
colour by Mike Freiheit
Firefly Books, 2017

In this harrowing and timely tale of courage and determination, Amina narrates her family’s odyssey after their home in Aleppo is destroyed. They must endure refugee camps, risk ocean crossings and escape the terror of jihadist militias in order to reach safety in Canada.

**The Komagata Maru and Canada’s Anti-Indian Immigration Policies in the Twentieth Century (Righting Canada’s Wrongs)**
written by Pamela Hickman
Lorimer, 2014

In 1857, Great Britain declared that people from India were British citizens and could live anywhere in the Commonwealth, but Canada refused to accept them. This racist policy was tested when the Komagata Maru, with over 300 Indians wishing to immigrate to Canada, was turned back.

**Sadia**
written by Colleen Nelson
Dundurn, 2018

Sadia, 15, is passionate about one thing: basketball. But off the court, she struggles with Mariam’s choice to de-jab and Amira’s situation as a recent refugee, leaving her acutely aware of the difference between the immigrant and refugee experiences.

**Stay Strong: A Musician’s Journey from Congo (Arrivals)**
written by Natalie Hyde
Clockwise Press, 2015

For 15 years Gentil Misigaro and his family moved from country to country to escape the violence that followed them from the Congo to Rwanda and Uganda. This is a timely and gripping story of a refugee who is using his music as a powerful force for positive change.
Red Leaf Literature

Red Leaf Literature features titles chosen by Canadian Children’s Book News’ reviewers. These books are thought to be of the highest quality and signify titles of exceptional calibre. Whether you’re a parent, teacher or librarian, our reviewers feel that these books would make an excellent addition to your home, school or library collection.

PICTURE BOOKS AND NON-FICTION PICTURE BOOKS FOR PRESCHOOL TO GRADE 4

The Bagel King
written by Andrew Larsen
illustrated by Sandy Nichols
Kids Can Press, 2018
978-1-77138-574-9 (hc) $18.99
978-1-5253-0097-4 (eBook) $9.99
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

For as long as he can remember, young Eli has looked forward to Sundays. This is the day that his Zaida delivers freshly baked bagels from Merv’s Bakery to Eli’s home. They would then sit together, just the two of them, savouring their favourite treat as well as each other’s company. “Warm. Chewy. Salty. Bagels were the best thing about Sunday.” Then one Sunday, Zaida injures himself from a fall at the bakery and must rest at home for two weeks. Sadly, this means no bagels for Eli or a trio of elderly friends who also look forward to Zaida’s deliveries. A Sunday without bagels seems to be just another ordinary day. Thankfully, the resourceful Eli makes a surprise visit to Merv’s Bakery to retrieve the usual Sunday order. His stellar effort in restoring the beloved breakfast tradition is celebrated by Zaida and his friends. “Long live the Bagel King!” they cheer for Eli.

A superb storyteller, Andrew Larsen has written a touching tale about the love between a grandfather and grandson and how they value their time together. Their conversations with each other and other characters are so natural that one can almost hear the inflections in their voices. The text, sprinkled throughout with humour and Yiddish terms, highlights the importance of community and the helping of others. One becomes keenly aware that Zaida delivers much more than bagels.

Sandy Nichols’ nostalgic illustrations, rendered in acrylic paint, portray a rich multicultural neighbourhood inhabited by individuals whose distinct personalities pop off the pages. Of special delight is Zaida’s wardrobe, right down to his stylish pyjamas.

The Boy and the Blue Moon
written by Sara O’Leary
illustrated by Ashley Crowley
Henry Holt and Company, 2018
978-1-62779-774-0 (hc) $23.50
for Preschool to Grade 2

On the night of a blue moon, anything can happen, something we can enjoy “as quick as a wish.” We hope that we, too, can enjoy something just as magical, pleasure of seeing him have that experience, if only for a moment. However, the boy’s experience does not take away from the reader’s enjoyment of the story. The text is spare and simple, poetic in its use of language. The boy’s wish to live on the moon, the boy now travels there, finding it to be as perfect as he had dreamed it would be. But when he realises how lonely he will be, the boy sees his yellow porch light twinkling on Earth, a guide for his return home.

Crowley’s illustrations, predominantly blue and white with splashes of red and occasionally yellow, are gorgeous, easily capturing the wonder and magic evoked by this night. O’Leary’s text is spare and simple, poetic in its use of language. The boy’s deepest desire to live on the moon speaks to the untapped wishes of readers young and old. Even the revelation that perhaps the boy dreamed his experience does not take away from the reader’s pleasure of seeing him have that experience, if only for a moment. We hope that we, too, can enjoy something just as magical, something we can enjoy “as quick as a wish.”

Ken Kilback is a writer and primary teacher in Vancouver.

Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario.
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**AVAILABLE AS EBOOKS:**

orcabook.com
**The Brilliant Deep: Rebuilding the World’s Coral Reefs**
written by Kate Messner
illustrated by Matthew Forsythe
Chronicle Books, 2018
978-1-4521-3350-8 (hc) $24.99
for Grades 1 to 4

Non-fiction Picture Book | Coral Reefs | Marine Life | Hope | Ingenuity |
Natural World | Biography | Conservation

It only takes one, one coral gamete to start a colony; one person to make a difference; one idea to change the world. This is the central and compelling message of *The Brilliant Deep*, a picture book created in homage to Ken Nedimyer, a pioneer of coral restoration — his living legacy the ongoing efforts to rebuild the world’s coral reefs — and founder of the Coral Restoration Foundation.

In this engrossing title, author Kate Messner tells the story of Nedimyer’s love for the ocean. As Ken watched his beloved coral reef dying, he felt powerless to stop it, until the day he found staghorn coral growing on rocks. Instead of selling the coral for aquarium use, he grafted pieces from the growing coral onto other rocks and soon he was growing coral colonies that he eventually transplanted onto a dying reef. The results were miraculous — his transplants were thriving and reproducing — and his foundation continues his work around the globe today.

This evocative and inspiring picture book is a tribute to both the wonders of nature and the incredible power of human hope and ingenuity. Messner’s narrative is simple and lyrical, while Matthew Forsythe’s gorgeous full-spread watercolour illustrations, in muted palettes of brown, blue, red and green, evoke the mystery and wonders of the ocean.

*The Brilliant Deep* will spark the imagination of many young readers, encouraging innovation, curiosity, experimentation and the belief that one person can change the world.

Tracey Schindler is a book reviewer and former teacher living in Bethany, Ontario.

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**Dear Girl**
written by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Paris Rosenthal
illustrated by Holly Hatam
HarperCollins Publishers, 2017
978-0-06-242250-7, (hc) $21.99
978-0-06-288187-8 (eBook) $9.99
for Preschool to Grade 2

Picture Book | Empowerment | Girl Power

With simple illustrations and straightforward text, *Dear Girl* is a book to cherish. Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Paris Rosenthal have written a beautiful love letter to girls everywhere, with just the right balance of serious and sweet. I want to buy this for all the girls and women in my life; this is a picture book that can be read meaningfully regardless of age. The art, with its mixture of collage and drawing, beautifully compliments and deepens the story, and the overall experience of reading this book is satisfying on every level.

It’s the perfect empowerment text to become a mantra for generations of girls, and the illustrations add sweet depth to the already poignant story. In few words, this book manages to address body image, bravery, solitude and friendship, all with an overarching theme of love. Will this book solve bullying and forge world peace? Not directly, or at least not all at once. But will this book resonate in the hearts and minds of our girls as they grow and face challenges? Absolutely.

I love this book more every time I read it. This is the voice I want whispering in my daughter’s ear as she grows.

Jen McConnel is a teacher and graduate student with an MA in Children’s Literature.

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**EveryBody’s Different on EveryBody Street**
written by Sheree Fitch
illustrated by Emma FitzGerald
Nimbus Publishing, 2018
978-1-77108-600-4 (hc) $22.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 3

Picture Book | Poetry | Community | Diversity | Cities

EveryBody’s Different on EveryBody Street, the playful and songy poem by Sheree Fitch, was first released in 2001, in support of the Nova Scotia Hospital. Now, nearly two decades later, it’s back as a vibrant picture book complete with illustrations by Halifax’s Emma FitzGerald. Originally commissioned to raise awareness of mental illness and addiction, it introduces children to the inequalities that exist in a city in an accessible and thoughtful way.

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**Dear Girl**

A review of *Dear Girl*, a picture book designed to empower girls, written by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Paris Rosenthal, illustrated by Holly Hatam. The book is suitable for preschool to Grade 2 and is praised for its simple narrative and beautiful illustrations. It addresses themes such as body image, bravery, solitude, and friendship, and is described as a book that could resonate with girls as they grow and face challenges. The author, Jen McConnel, is a teacher and graduate student with an MA in Children’s Literature.

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**EveryBody’s Different on EveryBody Street**

A review of *EveryBody’s Different on EveryBody Street*, a picture book by Sheree Fitch, illustrated by Emma FitzGerald. The book was first released in 2001 and has recently been released as a picture book with illustrations by Halifax’s Emma FitzGerald. Originally commissioned to raise awareness of mental illness and addiction, it introduces children to the inequalities that exist in a city in an accessible and thoughtful way. The review notes that the book was first released in 2001 and then recently re-released as a picture book. The book addresses mental illness and addiction and introduces children to the inequalities that exist in a city. The reviewer describes the book as a vibrant and engaging picture book that is designed to educate children about the challenges that exist in society.

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**The Brilliant Deep: Rebuilding the World’s Coral Reefs**

A review of *The Brilliant Deep: Rebuilding the World’s Coral Reefs*, a picture book written by Kate Messner and illustrated by Matthew Forsythe. The book is aimed at Grades 1 to 4 and is described as a non-fiction picture book that explores the wonders of nature, the incredible power of human hope and ingenuity, and the story of Ken Nedimyer’s efforts to rebuild the world’s coral reefs. The reviewer describes the book as an evocative and inspiring picture book that is a tribute to both the wonders of nature and the incredible power of human hope and ingenuity. The book is noted for its simple narrative and lyrical prose, as well as its beautiful full-spread watercolour illustrations. The reviewer describes the book as a perfect empowerment text that can spark the imagination of many young readers and encourage innovation, curiosity, experimentation, and the belief that one person can change the world.
Set on a fictional city street, this story celebrates the uniqueness of those who inhabit a neighbourhood. “Some thunder-walk like elephants / Some dance about like ants / Some are wearing purple polka-dotted / Zebra-striped pants!” writes Fitch early in the book. However, as Fitch digs deeper into the lives of residents, it’s clear that not everybody has the same opportunities on EveryBody Street. “Some grow juicy red tomatoes / Some don’t have enough to eat,” writes Fitch on one page. “Some of us have shelter / Some sleep in the park,” she writes on another.

Young readers will also enjoy the repetitive chorus of EveryBody’s Different on EveryBody Street, which goes: “If ever you go travelling / On EveryBody Street / You’ll see EveryBody’s Different / Than EveryOne you meet.” During every read, they’re also likely to notice something new and unexpected in FitzGerald’s lively and memorable illustrations.

While celebrating the many different people that come together to create a community, Fitch also successfully isolates the ways in which everyone is the same: “All of us are perfect / And all of us have flaws,” she writes.

Jessica Rose is a writer, reviewer and editor in Hamilton, Ontario.

In Meet Chris Hadfield, the second in the series, we identify with a man whose young imagination was captured by the first moonwalk in 1969. His educational and career choices thereafter focused on his desire to become an astronaut. He learned about machinery, joined the Air Cadets and Armed Forces, flew fighter planes and became a test pilot before going into space three times. He was the first Canadian to walk in space and to command the International Space Station.

His accomplishments are catalogued with references, amongst others, to aspects of the Canadian Space Programme, including the Canadarm. There is substantial information presented, but it is done in a manner easily absorbed by young children. Hadfield’s enthusiasm for his work almost bounces from the page as he is portrayed eagerly sharing his excitement with upcoming generations through music, visits with school children or astronauts in training.

In both titles, author and illustrator have successfully collaborated to highlight the lives of two dissimilar people, from different eras and walks of life, each with their own dream. The attractive format, clear text and cheerful, droll illustrations convey a substantial amount of information, with added insights provided through charming comments in speech balloons. Bright, colourful cartoons reveal expression, enthusiasm and small human foibles. Each title also includes historical photos and a timeline of the major events in the lives of Desmond and Hadfield. This is a worthwhile series, easy to read and to browse through, and good for library and personal collections.

Aileen Wortley is a retired librarian from Toronto.

Meet Viola Desmond (Scholastic Canada Biography)
written by Elizabeth MacLeod
illustrated by Mike Deas
Scholastic Canada, 2018
978-1-4431-1351-9 (pb) $8.99
for Grades 1 to 4

Meet Chris Hadfield (Scholastic Canada Biography)
written by Elizabeth MacLeod
illustrated by Mike Deas
Scholastic Canada, 2018
978-1-4431-6387-3 (hc) $14.99
978-1-4431-1947-4 (pb) $8.99
for Grades 1 to 4

Meet Viola Desmond is the first new picture book in the Scholastic Canada Biography series that features lives of prominent Canadians. In 1946, Nova Scotia businesswoman Viola Desmond was unceremoniously dragged from her selected movie seat, unaware it was designated ‘whites only.’ She is jailed overnight and fined for failing to pay a one-cent tax difference on her ticket-price. The issue of colour goes unmentioned. Supported by a black-owned newspaper and an association promoting racial equality, Viola seeks justice at a higher court. Although unsuccessful, the case drew attention to the injustice of racial exclusion.

Shown as part of a busy, loving household, a purposeful woman running a beauty salon or a genteel, white-gloved lady behind bars, the essential Viola shines through in the text and rich illustrations. Despite the poignancy of her early death, emphasis is given to the continuation of her story through strides made in racial equality, her posthumous pardon and the many honours bestowed upon her.

In Meet Chris Hadfield, the second in the series, we identify with a man whose young imagination was captured by the first moonwalk in 1969. His educational and career choices thereafter focused on his desire to become an astronaut. He learned about machinery, joined the Air Cadets and Armed Forces, flew fighter planes and became a test pilot before going into space three times. He was the first Canadian to walk in space and to command the International Space Station.

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978-1-4431-6387-3 (hc) $14.99
for Grades 1 to 4

Non-fiction Picture Book | Mystery | Curiosity | Circus | Parade | Humour

“The book looks boring, doesn’t it? You might as well stick it back on the shelf. Or toss it under your bed. You don’t need to read it because it looks like nothing happens in this book.” Because the opening pages are dark and blank, a quirky-looking character urges readers to stop reading and move on elsewhere. But wait! The plot becomes a little more interesting when the narrator spots scattered objects on the following pages. “A striped ball! But no one is bouncing it. This is a really shiny shoe. But no one is walking in it...” He becomes increasingly animated, asking more questions with each passing page as additional items are discovered. He can barely contain himself when he hears the sounds of music and horses and cheering and laughing. The mystery is finally solved in a marvellous three-page fold-out at the book’s finale that explodes with detail, colour and characters. “EVERYTHING HAPPENS IN THIS BOOK!” concludes the narrator with a huge smile on his face.

This publication is a genuine page-turner, thanks to the successful partnership between author Judy Ann Sadler and illustrator Vigg. Young readers will be fully engaged from the very beginning. Not only does the protagonist arouse curiosity with his pointed
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observations and inquiries, but Vigg’s minimalist and colourful artwork, hand drawn and rendered digitally, is action packed, providing many intriguing clues to accompany Sadler’s captivating text. Experiencing the buildup towards the conclusion becomes an absolute joy.

Senta Ross

**JUNIOR AND INTERMEDIATE FICTION FOR GRADES 2 TO 9**

**The Assassin’s Curse**  
*(Blackthorn Key, Book 3)*  
written by Kevin Sands  
Aladdin Books, 2017  
978-1-5344-0523-3 (hc) $23.99  
978-1-5344-0524-0 (pb) $12.99  
978-1-5344-0525-7 (eBook) $11.99  
for Grades 4 to 8  
*Historical Fiction | Mystery | Adventure | Code Breaking | Puzzles | Assassins*

Charles, King of England, has summoned Christopher and Tom to court to praise their bravery and resourcefulness. While there, a plot to kill the king is exposed. However, a cryptic message left behind proves the King’s sister Minette was the intended victim. The two, along with their friend Sally, are ordered to accompany Minette to Paris for her protection. Christopher, a puzzle genius, uses his skills to decipher the code and discover the secrets of an ancient curse on the French throne, as they search for the long-hidden treasure meant to unlock that curse. Christopher refers to the lessons taught and learned while he lived and worked with Benedict Blackthorn, a master apothecary. That connection to the past and the ongoing mention of his master is welcome.

Above and under Paris streets, the three friends embark on a tension-filled race to find the treasure and thwart an assassination. They don’t always see eye-to-eye as they work together. Christopher is right when he accuses Christopher of rushing forward with no thought given to the dangers the three may encounter. Christopher recognizes that Tom has a point; he promises to make a concerted effort to think before further rash and impetuous action. There is also a hint at the changing relationship between Sally and Christopher. Fans will relish this development and will appreciate their continued growth as honourable, often funny, and very authentic characters.

Kevin Sands’ storytelling is remarkable. The Paris setting, the strong sense of 17th-century history, the fast-paced action and complex plot make for a captivating and very satisfying read. *Spoiler alert — it ends with a cliffhanger. Call of the Wraith* is due to be released in late September. I will be waiting in line.

Sally Bender is a retired teacher-librarian and avid blogger about children’s literature.

**Clara Voyant**  
written by Rachelle Delaney  
Puffin Canada, 2018  
978-0-14-319853-6 (hc) $19.99  
978-0-14-319855-0 (eBook) $10.99  
for Grades 4 to 6  
*Fiction | Mystery | Moving | Psychic Ability | Mother-Daughter Relationships | Friendship | Kensington Market, Toronto*

Life with her New Age-obsessed mother, Gaby, has always been unusual, but when Clara’s no-nonsense grandmother moves to Florida, their lives become even more unpredictable. Gaby and her mom have moved to Toronto’s Kensington Market to live above the herbal shop where her mom diagnoses people’s ailments and concocts strange potions to cure them. Her mom has also made friends with a couple who completely buy into the ‘woo,’ as she calls it, which just feeds her mom’s kookiness. To make matters worse, the move meant leaving her High Park school and starting over in a new school with new kids. Luckily there’s Maeve, who’s adventurous and confident and helps Clara come into herself.

Aching for the chance to prove that she’s got the chops to be a feature reporter on her middle-school newspaper, Clara is crest-fallen when she’s assigned the horoscope instead. She decides to match the horoscopes to people she knows under each sign, and much to her surprise, they start coming true! Soon, everyone at school is talking about Clara Voyant the psychic, but Clara always believed that there was no such thing. When a mystery arises at school, she gets the opportunity she’s been looking for, but she’ll need some help from her friends — and her powers!

The story is light, funny and well crafted, and the mystery of the missing mascot has just enough twists to keep kids interested. The side story about the conflicted mother-daughter relationship is also well written, and is an important reminder to readers that it’s okay to be yourself and not exactly like your parents. Overall, this is a really fun read that middle-grade kids will love.

Rachel Seigel is the Adult Fiction Specialist at Library Services Centre.

**The Ghost Road**  
written by Charis Cotter  
Tundra Books, 2018  
978-1-101-91889-0 (hc) $21.99  
978-1-101-91890-6 (eBook) $10.99  
for Grades 4 to 8  
*Fiction | Mystery | Family | Ghosts | Newfoundland*

After the death of her mother when she was only an infant, Ruth has been wandering down a lonely road. Plagued by haunting dreams of shipwrecks and her late mother’s face, Ruth’s sole comfort is her annual summer excursion with her father. But when he remarries, he decides to take his new wife on a honeymoon without Ruth. Instead, she is shipped off to Buckle, Newfoundland, to meet her maternal family for the first time. Taken in by her Great Aunt Doll, Ruth uncovers numerous secrets about her mother’s past, is introduced to her shockingly identical cousin, Ruby, and the whimsical Eldred, who tells her about the lost colony of Slippers Cove.
The inhabitants of Buckle differ greatly from the city folk Ruth typically encounters. Their superstitious beliefs push her out of her comfort zone, yet she finds a kindred spirit in Ruby. As the girls explore their family history, they are surprised to discover that twin girls are born into every generation and that they always pass before they can raise their children. In every set of twins, one girl possesses ‘The Sight’ and can see the Ghost Road that leads to Slippers Cove. Where Ruby is imaginative and spontaneous, Ruth is logical and pragmatic and her dedication to science cannot explain her nightly visions. Ruth and Ruby begin to unravel the mysteries of these dreams and discover a deeply buried truth that will change their lives forever.

Charis Cotter has written another thrilling mystery with fierce heroines and supernatural intrigue that is bound to draw in middle-grade readers.

Kayla O’Brien is studying English and Gender Studies at Queen’s University in Kingston.

Daniel Misumi hates everything about his new home, especially his creepy attic bedroom. When he finds a tiny fruit bat weeping in the rafters, things take a turn toward the absurd — the bat can talk. And while his grammar is atrocious, he is all-the-more cute and loveable for it. Shipped across the sea in a box of papayas, the bat is far from home. Daniel takes it upon himself to care for the creature, which he names Megabat, and to hatch a plan to get him home. An ally is found in the little girl who lives next door. And her brother, a pigeon-hating, bird-trap-building villain, provides just the right strength for his creepy attic bedroom. When he finds a tiny fruit bat weeping in the rafters, things take a turn toward the absurd — the bat can talk. And while his grammar is atrocious, he is all-the-more cute and loveable for it. Shipped across the sea in a box of papayas, the bat is far from home. Daniel takes it upon himself to care for the creature, which he names Megabat, and to hatch a plan to get him home. An ally is found in the little girl who lives next door. And her brother, a pigeon-hating, bird-trap-building villain, provides just the right amount of tension.

Anna Humphrey uses both pathos and humour to deliver a tale that is sure to strike at the hearts of young readers. Anyone who has ever felt alone will identify with both Daniel and Megabat. While the theme of loneliness may be a sad one, Humphrey stuffs the pockets of this story with enough little treats to keep our spirits lifted. Jelly rolls and Star Wars, friendship and a quirky pigeon all make for a page-turning good read. Black-and-white drawings by Kass Reich will keep readers engaged. Her deceptively simple style brims with fun and emotion. This is a book to challenge and entertain. Both Humphrey and Reich appear to know exactly what will appeal to their young readership. Who can resist a tiny bat wielding a juice-box straw as a light sabre? Reluctant readers will be caught off guard!

Ildiko Sumegi is a reviewer from Ottawa and the mother of two young readers.
The first story tells of how one teenage girl encourages her mother to leave the psychological prison created by her father. Another story points to the emotional harm and factual paucity of the rumours that swirl about a high school cafeteria. Other tales touch on the difficulty of navigating a new high school and of following the path for which one is destined. One particularly poignant tale touchingly illustrates the aching hope of a teenager who finds warmth and a sense of family at the restaurant where he works.

Two stories in particular stand out for their originality and artful magic. One is told from the perspective of a doll — the Oh! So Perfect Hair Dolly. The other is told from the perspective of a squirrel who pilfers the sunflower seeds planted by an elderly gentleman around the gravestone of a loved one. The choice of protagonist here is deceptive: neither of these is a childish story. If anything, they provoke a deeper understanding of life and the currents of meaning to be found within it.

Croza has constructed each of her seven stories with sensitive attention to detail and an empathetic understanding that rings as true and as clear as a bell. These are stories that will inform the lives of young readers, allowing them to learn something about the human condition and about themselves.

Ildiko Sumegi

SENIOR FICTION FOR GRADES 7 AND UP

**The Hanging Girl**
written by Eileen Cook
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Books, 2017
978-0-544-82982-4 (hc) $23.99
978-1-328-80990-2 (eBook) $21.99
for Grades 9 and up

*Fiction | Mystery | Kidnapping | Psychics | Tarot Cards*

Skye Thorne has big plans. As soon as she graduates, she’s heading to New York with her best friend, Drew, to start a new life. However, there’s a hitch; Skye and her eccentric mother live on the poorer side of town and though she works shifts at the local burger shop and does tarot readings for her classmates, using insider information she’s collected while helping out in the guidance counsellor’s office, Skye hasn’t saved a cent.

So when Paige, the most popular girl in school, goes missing, the class psychic conveniently starts to have ‘visions’ about what might have happened to her. But when things suddenly take a deadly turn, will Skye own up to her involvement in the disappearance or let her visions take the fall.

*The Hanging Girl* is a terrific thriller. Eileen Cook has written a strong female character, with questionable moral values — a skewed sense of right and wrong. As the plot moves more and more out of her control, Skye lets her curiosity and her ability to read people get the better of her, complicating an already complex story. There were moments when I wasn’t sure who the bad guy was, or who I was actually rooting for, and I liked it.

Cook really appreciates the teenage experience, and, at times, the book felt like being back in high school, complete with cliques and odd teachers, watching Skye and the other teenagers navigate the challenges of being almost adult, while watching the mystery of...
Paige’s disappearance unfold.
This book was a great page-turner with amazing plot twists and nail-biting suspense from beginning to end.

Roxanne Deans is the Director of Inventory, Outreach & Communications at the Children’s Book Bank in Toronto.

Monster
(The Dark Missions of Edgar Brim, Book 2)
written by Shane Peacock
Tundra Books, 2018
978-1-77049-701-6 (hc) $21.99
978-1-77049-703-0 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 7 and up

Historical Fiction | Horror | Adventure | Fear | Monsters | Friendship

As the story opens, Edgar and Tiger are running through the streets of London, trying to escape the monster that just moments before Professor Lear had warned, “… is coming for you all!” Edgar desperately wants to keep his friends and family safe but knows he must draw the monster out to destroy it. When his stepfather, Alfred Thorne, insists he take up a trade, Edgar is annoyed but knows he must follow his wishes. He is sent to work with his uncle, Dr. Vincent Brim, but ends up under the tutelage of the renowned vivisectionist, Dr. Godwin. As Edgar gets to know Dr. Godwin better, he begins to suspect his motives and wonders if his own uncle takes part in Godwin’s bizarre experiments.

In this sequel to The Dark Missions of Edgar Brim, Shane Peacock once again takes us on a riveting journey into 19th-century England. Readers will become engrossed as Edgar and his friends try to battle the monster that seems to be impervious to Thorne’s weaponry and will shudder with fear as Edgar’s loved ones fall prey to this horrific beast.

This would be the perfect novel to accompany a study of Gothic literature as Peacock adeptly weaves details from Poe’s, Shelley’s, Stoker’s and Wells’ works into his own. He has also left his readers anxiously awaiting the finale to this fabulous trilogy. One can only shudder at the thought of what monster Peacock will bring forth next!

Sandra O’Brien is the editor of Canadian Children’s Book News.

Past Tense
written by Star Spider
HarperCollins Publishers, 2018
978-1-44345-211-3 (hc) $22.99
978-1-44345-213-7 (eBook) $13.99
for Grades 7 and up

Family | Mental Illness | LGBTQ+ | Friendship

Julie Nolan is your average teenage girl. She spends every day with her best friend, and secret crush, Lorelei, strives to make her parents proud and plans to arrange the perfect spring formal. Just as Julie finally decides to confess her love to Lorelei, her friend becomes suddenly determined to set Julie up with her ex-boyfriend Henry. In the midst of this unwanted love triangle, life suddenly becomes complicated for Julie. Yet Julie learns a whole new definition of complicated when her mother comes home to tell her that she has lost her heart. Confused and sworn to secrecy, Julie begins to accompany her on midnight visits to the graveyard so that her mother can be ‘buried’ amongst her fellow dead.

As the story progresses, Julie becomes aware of Lorelei’s truly selfish nature, and finds a surprising ally in Henry. Burdened with a mother who believes she’s the living dead, an oblivious dad and a baby brother she must protect, Julie’s high school experience soon grows to surpass any typical level of teenage angst. Star Spider writes a refreshing novel about an unapologetically queer young girl, whose sexuality does not define her, nor determine her happiness.

Kayla O’Brien

This Book Betrays My Brother
written by Kagiso Lesego Molope
Mawenzi House Publishers, 2018
978-1-988449-29-6 (pb) $18.95
978-1-988449-30-2 (eBook) $9.99
for Grades 9 and up

Fiction | South Africa | Family | Rape | Community | Siblings | Coming of Age

Naledi’s older brother is beloved by everyone, especially by Naledi. Basi is an exemplary student, a rugby star and a supportive big brother. Naledi, in contrast, is nothing special. While her brother’s birth is described as light in the darkness after generations of only women, Naledi’s birth brought no such celebrations, something she has simply accepted. At 13, Naledi is boy-crazy and close to having a new girlfriend, a beautiful girl named Moipone. Basi is fiercely loyal and desperately wants to become a lawyer to make the world more just. When Naledi witnesses something she’ll never forget, it shatters her perception of her brother and the world around her.

Set in post-Apartheid South Africa in the late 1990s, This Book Betrays My Brother takes place during a time of transition, not only for Naledi as she comes of age, but for all of South Africa. Filled with rich descriptions, Molope brings to life the town of Marapone, which means “where the bones are.” From the beginning, violence against women frames the novel — Basi finds a woman’s body in the woods, a ghost named Vera is often seen around town and Basi’s best friend’s mother is in prison for murdering her abusive husband. In the era of Time’s Up and #MeToo, this book is increasingly relevant and manages to handle heavy issues with poignancy and power. Told in a poetic voice, this story engrosses the reader from the beginning, and the last lines carry such an impact they’ll leave the reader feeling forever changed.

Emma Hunter is the CCBC’s Marketing and Website Coordinator.

Coming Fall 2018

All About Anne
by Anne Frank House
illustrated by Huck Scarry
72 pages. September 2018
ISBN: 9781772600605

Black Women Who Dared
written & illustrated by Naomi M. Moyer
24 pages. September 2018
ISBN: 9781772600711

Seasons before the War

A celebration of childhood in old St. John’s by acclaimed Newfoundland novelist Bernice Morgan, with artwork by award-winning illustrator Brita Granström.

“Bernice Morgan’s wonderfully evocative prose, delightful in its detail, and Brita Granström’s marvelous illustrations are an inspired combination, making Seasons Before the War a book sure to be reread and treasured.”

~ Kevin Major, author of Hold Fast, The House of Wooden Santas, and No Man’s Land

978-1-927917183 / $29.95
Ages 7+
Available this fall from
Running the Goat, Books & Broadsides
www.runningthegoat.com
Bloom: A Story of Fashion Designer Elsa Schiaparelli
written by Kyo Maclear
illustrated by Julie Morstad
Tundra Books, 2018
978-1-101-91856-2 (hc) $21.00
978-1-101-91858-6 (eBook) $9.99
for Grades 2 and up

Picture Book | Fashion Design | Imagination | Resilience | Colour | Beauty | Individuality

Told as a young child that she was ugly, by her own mother, Elsa Schiaparelli spent her entire life searching for beauty and inspiration, be it in books, old dresses in a trunk, varying objects in the attic of her home, or in the flower markets of Rome. As her horizons expanded, so did her confidence as she cultivated her creativity and made her mark on the world. “I am an explorer, a circus performer and even the night sky. Dress up. Pretend. Make believe. The world feels brighter. I am growing into an artist.” Surrounding herself with the leading avant-garde artists of the day, Schiaparelli emerged as one of the world’s most original and audacious fashion designers. Through art and imagination, she created an array of uniquely designed clothing in brilliant colours which, consequentially, encouraged women to “dare to be different.”

By narrating this fictionalized biography in the first-person present tense, Kyo Maclear’s lyrical text surrounds readers with Schiaparelli’s irrepressible musings and hunger for beauty. We feel as if the protagonist is sharing her innermost thoughts with us, beginning with her poignant childhood and concluding with her triumphant success.

Julie Morstad’s elegant illustrations, rendered in liquid watercolour, gouache and pencil crayon, fill the pages with Roman and Parisian scenery from a century ago as well as samples of Schiaparelli’s iconic fashions, ranging from a hat shaped like a shoe to a coat with many drawers. Most striking of all is the shocking pink that permeates this picture book, as it is the colour invented by Schiaparelli as she set the world on fire with her flamboyant spirit. Interestingly, her influence continues to endure long after her passing, as summarized in “A Note from the Author and the Illustrator” at the book’s conclusion.

Senta Ross

5-Minute Stories for Fearless Girls
written by Sarah Howden
illustrated by Nick Craine
HarperCollins, 2018
978-1-44345-536-7 (hc) $17.99
for Preschool to Grade 2

Non-fiction | Biography | History | Feminism | Women

What do Amelia Earhart, Viola Desmond, J.K. Rowling and Michelle Obama all have in common? They’re all fearless women featured in this book. 5-Minute Stories for Fearless Girls introduces young readers to 12 female innovators, writers, performers, athletes, inventors, scientists and more. Most people reading this book will know some of the featured women, but there are also bound to be a few unfamiliar faces, even though we may have felt their influence or heard of their accomplishments. Each story is written to be read aloud in five minutes, making it perfect for bedtime.

Instead of simply framing each story as a brief biography of each woman, the stories are all told in unique ways from differing perspectives. Some are told through the eyes of a child about to meet Princess Diana or Michelle Obama, while others look at one moment in time. This makes them more engaging for young readers and easily draws them into the text. The bright illustrations perfectly capture the different women and their stories. The featured women are diverse and offer a varied range of role models for young children. Sarah Howden showcases them in a way that will grab a child’s interest and imagination. While the cover is colourful and eye-catching, the back of the book features something that caught my attention right away — a mirror that shows the 13th fearless girl: the reader.

Emma Hunter

Fox and Squirrel Help Out
written and illustrated by Ruth Ohi
North Winds Press/Scholastic Canada, 2018
978-1-4431-6320-0 (pb) $16.99
for Preschool to Grade 2

Picture Book | Friendship | Co-operation | Caretakers | Animals

One day something loud and squeaky drops from the sky and lands on Fox’s head. Seemingly unperturbed by the creature, Fox tells Squirrel that Squeak is soft and warm. Squirrel wonders if Squeak is hungry and finds food for the little one. But this does not stop Squeak from making an incessant racket. Fox suggests that maybe Squeak is bored, but Squirrel is unconvinced. Finally, when Fox starts to rock back and forth and hop like a rabbit, Squeak calms down. Tired from all the activity, Fox sits down to nap, so Squeak hops onto Squirrel’s head and off they doze. When day turns to night, Squeak’s family appears in the sky and off he flies to be with them. But wait, there’s a surprise ending that is sure to make kids laugh!
Fox and Squirrel are two of my favourite characters in children’s literature today. I love the concise language Ruth Ohi uses to tell their stories, I love their quirky friendship and I love the simplicity and expressiveness of Ohi’s illustrations. How can kids not be drawn to these two adorable characters and the adventures they embark upon.

This is another perfect read-aloud that parents and preschool or early elementary teachers will be able to share with their children and students. And, it’s a beautiful way to segue into conversations about friendship, co-operation and caretakers.

Sandra O’Brien, editor of Canadian Children’s Book News, would be a little leery if something soft and warm dropped on her head.

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**Good Night, Good Night**

*written by Dennis Lee*
*illustrated by Qin Leng*
*HarperCollins, 2018*

978-1-4434-1165-3 (board book) $12.99
978-1-44345-449-0 (eBook) $9.99

*for Infants to Preschool*

*Board Book | Poetry | Bedtime*

What a delight it is to revisit poems for children by Dennis Lee. The six previously published poems in this attractive board book make an irresistible bedtime read for the youngest member of the family, but will be enjoyed by all. These are finely honed poems perfectly composed to be read aloud. Lee’s sly humour saves the rhymes from being too generic or saccharine. Some are short, some longer, yet there is a unity of intent in the poems — time for bed, time to sleep.

The unity is visible in Qin Leng’s droll, magical and reassuring illustrations, which follow one child walking in a pastoral landscape and meeting other children (and friendly teddy bears) along the way. Leng’s loose lines and softly coloured spreads create a feeling of warmth. Under a canopy of trees, the entire cast of characters find just the right spot to lay their weary heads and fall to sleep. *Good Night, Good Night* will likely lull even the most reluctant sleeper into dreamland.

Theo Heras was a children’s librarian and is the author of *Where’s Bunny?*

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**Poppy & Sam and the Leaf Thief**

*written and illustrated by Cathon*
*Owlkids Books, 2018*

978-1-77147-329-3 (hc) $18.95

*for Kindergarten to Grade 2*

*Early Graphic Novel | Mystery | Gardening*

A little girl named Poppy lives in a garden neighbourhood with all her animal friends, including her best friend, Sam, a panda. When Basil wakes to discover a bite’s been taken from one of her leaves, Sam and Panda take on the case. They begin interviewing potential suspects, including Ms. Honeybee, Ladybug, Mr. Bumblebee and the Ants, but they all have alibis. The two amateur detectives try many ways to catch the thief: they attempt to stay up through the night to catch a glimpse of the crime, they enlist the help of the bees to spread sticky honey around Basil to trap the thief, and, finally, they apply
soap to Basil’s leaves. The next morning, Poppy and Sam follow a trail of soap bubbles and finally come face to face with the culprit.

*Poppy & Sam and the Leaf Thief* has only a few panels per page and multiple double-page spreads, making it a perfect introduction to graphic novels for beginning readers. Cathon’s illustrations are bright and cheerful and feature adorable character design for Poppy and her friends and will have high appeal for the intended audience. A word balloon on the cover clearly states that this book involves a mystery and introduces the conventions of a detective story as Poppy and Sam interview suspects, look for clues and come up with various ideas to catch the thief. Cathon concludes the story with sensitivity and an opportunity for learning. When Earwig is found to be the one eating Basil’s leaves, Basil reminds Earwig that he only needed to ask for a taste. The moment is poignant and subtle and avoids being morally didactic, providing a perfect ending to this delightful book.

Scott Robins is a Children’s Services Specialist at Toronto Public Library and co-author of *A Parent’s Guide to the Best Kids’ Comics*.
story and family pictures taken in better times make it a compelling read. It is not an easy account for children to understand, but it is a profound one that will provoke discussion. It reflects the extremes of evil and sacrifice of which mankind is capable, and reveals a spark of compassion in even the harshest individual.

Aileen Wortley

Sir Simon: Super Scarer
written and illustrated by Cale Atkinson
Tundra Books, 2018
978-1-101-91910-1 (eBook) $10.99
for Preschool to Grade 3

Are you interested in introducing your kids to the world of Halloween spooks and scares? Cale Atkinson’s latest picture book introduces young readers to Sir Simon Spookington Esq., a professional ‘super scarer’ who has just been assigned to his first house placement. After years of haunting forests, boats and even bus stops, Sir Simon is thrilled with his new promotion — minus all of his new ghost chores, of course. He happily discovers that his new home will be inhabited by a sweet old couple, who are the easiest folks to scare. Now he’ll have even more time to work on his future best-selling novel! At least that’s what Sir Simon thinks will happen. When Chester, the young grandson of the house’s inhabitants, shows up, Sir Simon decides that he’ll have to put Chester to work if he wants this to be an easy job. However, it doesn’t take long for Sir Simon to feel affection for Chester, and he soon learns that maybe there’s more to life than haunting.

Not only is Atkinson’s protagonist a mischievous trickster, but literally, he’s a wandering soul who just wants to find a forever home. Young readers will delight in the exploits of Sir Simon and Chester and might just end up mimicking Sir Simon’s haunting techniques around the house. With clever references to all the cult horror classics — including It, The Omen, Friday the 13th and The Shining — this charming tale promises to intrigue even its mature readers. Sir Simon: Super Scarer is bound to become a Halloween classic.

Kayla O’Brien

Turtle Pond
written by James Gladstone
illustrated by Karen Reczuch
Groundwood Books, 2018
978-1-55498-910-9 (hc) $18.95
978-1-55498-911-6 (eBook) $16.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 3

A pond in a local public garden is particularly fascinating for a young boy, who often visits with his parents throughout the year. There are turtles living there “… in hidden corners / and secret hollows / beneath the wet rocks / way at the bottom of turtle pond”. Through the boy’s eyes, we observe the turtles (the species being red-eared sliders) as they swim, feed, hide, explore, sleep and bask in the sun as the seasons rise and fall. Intrigued by their behaviour, the boy asks questions, such as “Can turtles see us or even hear us?” “When do they breathe air?” “Are turtles speaking?” Though the questions are largely left unanswered, they certainly merit further investigation.

With his thoughtful prose and poetic text, James Gladstone draws attention to these silent and unassuming ancient creatures as they slowly and deliberately move through their days. His writing is simple, yet expressive. An author’s note at the book’s conclusion contains additional information about these reptiles.

There is much to admire in Karen Reczuch’s stunning graphite pencil and watercolour artwork. As the turtles spend their days in warm, lush surroundings while the seasons change outside the greenhouse, they and their habitat are portrayed with great skill and detail. Reczuch’s power of observation beckons readers to take a closer look at the illustrations where they will notice that the patterns and nuances of the red-eared sliders’ bodies and shells are masterpieces in themselves.

Senta Ross

Wash On!
written by Michèle Marineau
illustrated by Manon Gauthier
translated by Erin Woods
Pajama Press, 2018
978-1-77278-018-5 (hc) $18.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 1

Mr. and Mrs. Gillis have two daughters — Babette, the perfect older sister, and little Petronilla, the not-so-perfect younger sister. One day, when taking a bath, Petronilla discovers that she has an interesting ability. If she says, “Wash on” instead of “Wash off,” colours transfer themselves from one object to another. When she refuses to say “Wash off,” splotches of colour continue to spread from object to object until the entire world is afflicted with a terrible case of coloritis! While Petronilla delights in her new-found power, objects become difficult to distinguish from one another. It is only when the family dog goes missing that Petronilla decides things have gone too far.

Michèle Marineau has written a story for the smallest of us. When we are tiny, sometimes we feel unimportant and overlooked, especially if we live in the shadow of an older sibling. Petronilla’s ability to cause chaos, not only throughout her own household but across the globe, is sure to amuse. Readers will revel in the attention Petronilla commands and the circus of colour she unleashes on the world. Anyone who has ever taken things a little too far will also identify with Petronilla’s concern for her lost dog and her consequent change of heart.

Multi-media illustrations by Manon Gauthier bring the chaos to life, creating an atmosphere of fun and mischief. Line drawings mixed with collage are covered with splotches and splatters of paint that bleed across the boundaries of objects. Young artists will be inspired to colour outside the lines.

Ilidiko Sumegi
**We Are Brothers**
written by Yves Nadon  
illustrated by Jean Claverie  
Creative Editions, 2018  
978-1-56846-292-9 (hc) $26.50  
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

*Picture Book | Siblings | Summer | Bravery*

When an older brother climbs to the top of the rock near his family’s lake house, he runs and jumps without any hesitation. His younger brother — the insightful narrator in Yves Nadon’s spectacular picture book, *We Are Brothers*— watches and cheers, but he’s too afraid to do the same.

All young readers will recognize the feelings of fear and reluctance the young narrator experiences when, one morning, his older brother says, “It’s your turn now,” as they walk toward the water. Unsure of his own abilities, the younger brother asks himself, “What if I slip?” “What if I miss? What if I die?”

Simple and rooted in timelessness, *We Are Brothers* is about overcoming one’s fears, but, more importantly, it’s about the tight bond formed between brothers, especially while they enjoy the freedom of summer vacation. In this coming-of-age story, award-winning French illustrator Jean Claverie’s pencil and pastel sketches add to the book’s warm, nostalgic feel.

Through crisp, poetic language, Nadon perfectly captures the great admiration and pride the younger brother feels toward his older sibling, who launches himself into the air with ease. However, even more moving, is the older brother’s unwavering belief that his younger brother is capable of taking the leap.

*Jessica Rose*

**Becca Fair and Foul**
written by Deirdre Baker  
Groundwood Books, 2018  
978-1-55498-957-7 (hc) $16.95  
978-1-55498-959-1 (eBook) $14.95  
for Grades 4 to 8

*Fiction | Summer | Wildlife | Ocean | Family | West Coast | Shakespeare | Justice*

Spending an island summer at their families’ cottages, tweens Becca and Jane are desperate to purchase a seaworthy boat. In order to earn money, the friends devise a plan to perform Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* at vacation’s end. As they rehearse and plan through the sunny days, they encounter a plethora of wildlife-related adventures and minor mishaps that make them question whether they’ll be able to achieve their goal.

From the plumbing mysteries plaguing both cottages to barred owl attacks and the kissing of sea anemones, the summer promises to be filled with excitement.

This sequel to *Becca at Sea* showcases Deirdre Baker’s love of natural history through detailed descriptions of the island’s diverse landscape and wildlife, thus providing the reader with a strong appreciation for the island setting. The congruity of the parallel plots of *Becca Fair and Foul* and *The Tempest* provides an additional element of interest along with the theme of justice. As Becca notes, “Nature isn’t fair or unfair. It just is.” Realistic characters, lacking
in artifice, also draw one in. Becca is a keen observer of the relationships and sorrows of her family members as well as how they prevail over their problems.

Appropriate as a stand-alone, Becca Fair and Foul will delight readers who love the outdoors and summertime escapades. For those who aren’t outdoor enthusiasts, the unpredictable combination of travails, sadness and humour entice one to read just one more chapter when descriptions of the vegetation threaten to overcome!

Robin Ahamedi is a library-technician living in Ajax, Ontario.

Everyone Can be a Changemaker: The Ashoka Effect (Ripple Effects)
written by Christine Welldon
Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2018
978-1-55455-357-0 (pb) $17.95
for Grades 4 to 8
Non-fiction | Social Entrepreneurs | Activism | Innovation | Ashoka

Mahatma Ghandi once said, “Be the change you wish to see in the world.” This axiom is at the heart of Ashoka, a helping organization that envisions a world where everyone can be a ‘changemaker.’ In this inspiring title, Christine Welldon introduces young readers to 16 diverse and remarkable ‘changemakers’ — social entrepreneurs who, with the help of Ashoka, are making their vision for a better world a reality.

Each chapter focuses on one ‘changemaker’ and includes a short biography as well as the important impact of their social initiative, and ends with a fact box highlighting how Ashoka assisted that person to achieve their goals. Readers meet people like Eden Full from Calgary, whose invention, a rotating solar panel called the SunSaluter, brings light and water to people in remote areas of Kenya, and Chris Balme of Philadelphia, whose “Spark” apprenticeship program helps high school students in danger of dropping out by matching them with mentors working in their chosen careers.

Each motivating and informative chapter includes eye-catching colour photographs, and the clever titles capture the essence of each change-making initiative from ‘Think Outside the Trash’ and ‘Can You Spare a Vote?’ to ‘Some Sprinkles on That?’ and ‘Make Food, Not War.’ The final chapter encourages readers to ‘Be the Change’ and provides both sage advice — follow your passion, volunteer, start small, ask for help and be a listener — as well as concrete actions kids can take, such as buying recycled items, finding pen pals from other countries or holding fundraisers for local initiatives.

A welcome addition to any library or classroom bookshelf, this title is sure to inspire many young readers to believe that they, too, have the power to change the world.

Tracey Schindler

Planet Grief
written by Monique Polak
Orca Book Publishers, 2018
978-1-4598-1570-4 (eBook) $10.99
for Grades 4 to 8
Fiction | Grief | Loss | Therapy | Family | Communication | Feelings

“… when you are a kid and you lose someone you love, you feel you’ve been exiled to another planet… Planet Grief.”

Both Abby and Christopher would rather be anywhere than at a grief retreat. Neither young teen wants to spend two days talking about their feelings. Abby, whose mother died recently from a heart infection, uses sarcasm and angry humour to mask her pain. Christopher doesn’t want to share his secret — that his father, a
paramedic who suffered from PTSD, committed suicide. Despite their reluctance to willingly participate, both Abby and Christopher are drawn in by the stories shared by others, such as Gustavo, whose father never smoked but died of lung cancer, and Antoine, whose baby brother died of SIDS. Over the course of the weekend, the kids reveal their pain and anger; they laugh together, share hard truths and, most importantly, learn that they are not alone.

Losing a parent or a sibling can be painfully isolating for kids. For Abby, Christopher and the others, the grief retreat provides a place where loss is a shared experience. With the help of Eugene, the group’s leader, they start moving from ‘what ifs’ to ‘what is,’ and learn that when it comes to grief, there are no rules and no timeline. Everyone handles grief differently.

Told in first person, with alternating chapters narrated by Christopher and Abby, this is an honest story about loss and sadness. The author introduces a little mystery and some well-placed dollops of humour that keep the book from becoming bleak. *Planet Grief* offers young readers a powerful and validating story about feelings, empathy, honesty and coping with loss.

*Sanctuary* written by Caryn Lix
Simon Pulse, 2018
978-1-5344-0533-2 (hc) $24.99
978-1-5344-0535-6 (eBook) $13.99
for Grades 9 and up

Set in a near-future world, Kenzie, daughter of the commander of the space prison, Sanctuary, has always believed that the Omnistellar Concepts Corporation is everything. When she’s taken prisoner by a group of super-powered teen prisoners, she tries to follow her training while she waits for rescue. As it becomes clear that nobody is coming, she forms a plan to escape. What she doesn’t realize is that there is an even more dangerous threat approaching, and the only chance of survival is to team up with the very people who are holding her hostage.

Citizens of the corporation are protected and taken care of, while non-citizens live in poverty and outside of society. As a junior guard at the space prison, Kenzie is anxious to prove herself and to do so she’ll take risks and bend, if not break, the rules. Despite her teenage recklessness, she believes in the corporation, and in everything she’s been told about the prisoners below. Her mom, by contrast, is all about protocol. Kenzie always believed that her mom would put her survival first, and it was a hard pill to swallow when she put the corporation above rescuing her daughter.

The storyline sometimes falters by relying too much on common sci-fi/dystopian tropes, but it does contain enough action to keep it exciting, and the author does a good job of leaving readers hanging to attract them to a likely sequel.

*The Ruinous Sweep* written by Tim Wynne-Jones
Candlewick Press, 2018
978-0-7636-9745-7 (hc) $21.00
for Grades 9 and up

*Fiction | Mystery | Murder | Adventure*
When Donovan Turner is thrown out of a car on the highway in the middle of nowhere, he barely remembers his name, let alone what happened. Where is his girlfriend Bee, how did he end up there and where is he? He attempts to flag down the next passing car, butSTARTS THE DRIVER AND CAUSES AN ACCIDENT. HEARING SIRENS IN THE DISTANCE, HE GRABS THE DEAD DRIVER’S BRIEFCASE AND RUNS. Meanwhile, when the police inform Bee that Donovan is the chief suspect in a murder, she knows that something isn’t right and is determined to figure out what happened that night and clear his name.

Tim Wynne-Jones’s latest YA novel is a complex and engrossing thriller, loosely inspired by *Dante’s Inferno*. After a hit-and-run leaves Donovan seriously injured and in a coma, his girlfriend hurries to be by his side. She is highly organized, analytical, smart and loyal, which makes playing detective a natural fit. The author alternates between Bee’s point-of-view and Donovan’s subconscious, coma-ridden view.

The story is suspenseful and tense, and the writing is what one expects from this award-winning author. The narrative is complex and sophisticated, and older students who appreciate a challenge will fully appreciate the subtleties of Wynne-Jones’s narrative. While the book does occasionally veer into more adult territory, *The Ruinous Sweep* will reward those who are patient enough to wait for the answers.

*Sanctuary* written by Caryn Lix
Simon Pulse, 2018
978-1-5344-0533-2 (hc) $24.99
978-1-5344-0535-6 (eBook) $13.99
for Grades 9 and up

*Science Fiction | Dystopia | Aliens | Survival | Mother-Daughter Relationships*

As part of Best Buddies, a group that pairs students with intellectual difficulties with peer buddies, Stuart and Sam are a good match. Sam is someone Stuart looks up to; Sam’s athletic prowess helps him challenge Stuart physically and he also helps him think things through. Things go awry when Sam has to be shocked back to life on the court during one of his basketball games. Learning he has a heart condition that will prevent him from playing college basketball, Sam retreats into himself and Stuart is the one whose life is affected.

The fourth book in YA author Lorna Schultz Nicholson’s One-2-One series, *A Time to Run* tackles serious issues — the effects of fetal alcohol syndrome and abuse, as well as the loss of one’s dreams. Stuart’s perspective is eye-opening, as the reader learns what it is like to be controlled by impulse and unaware of consequences. His energy flows off the page and even when he makes questionable decisions, he is still a likeable character.
Sam’s story of learning to adapt is compelling in its own way, although it lacks some key details. Faced with the loss of his identity as the captain of his basketball team, he struggles to find purpose again. Nicholson realistically portrays Sam pushing others away as he tries to cope.

The magic of *A Time to Run* lies in the fact that to get through, Sam and Stuart need each other. They are truly a team, and a friendship such as this is one to be treasured.

Amy Mathers is a columnist for the CCBC’s e-newsletter for teachers and a YA reviewer for the National Reading Campaign.

**This Is Not a Love Letter**
written by Kim Purcell
Hyperion, 2018
978-1-4847-9834-8 (hc) $18.99
for Grades 9 and up
Fiction | Mystery | Romance | Racism | Mental Health Issues

When Jessie wakes up one morning to find out that her boyfriend Chris has vanished, she knows that something is very wrong. When his mother, and eventually the authorities, hesitate she angrily pushes for action. Chris is well-liked and respected, a gifted athlete with a promising future and a loving family. He is also the only black teen in a small, sometimes narrow-minded, town. Given recent events, Jessie is certain that Chris has been the victim of a hate crime and is determined to prove it, despite the fact that she had insisted that they take a one-week break from their relationship just before he disappeared. Despite the guilt, anger and ever-mounting fear, Jessie forges ahead, determined to learn the truth. Ultimately, she discovers more about this boy she loves, she remembers things that he said and struggles to hold on to her belief that he’ll come home.

Written in letter form, Purcell’s novel exquisitely captures Jessie’s anguish and her wide range of emotions. While Jessie puts forward a tough-girl bravado, here she reveals all her uncertainties and fear, her worries and growing suspicion that maybe there was much that she missed, or opted to ignore, about Chris. Purcell weaves an intricate tale that delves into many serious issues, including racism and mental illness. Yet the story never falters beneath the weight of its dark explorations. At its heart, it’s a love story, as well as a mystery that keeps readers guessing (and hoping) until the very end. The story of Jessie and Chris’s relationship is finely nuanced and carefully crafted with fully realized characters. It is powerful and poignant and will stay with readers long after the last page.

Lisa Doucet
RED LEAF LITERATURE

The Assassin’s Curse
(Blackthorn Key, Book 3)
Kevin Sands

The Bagel King
Andrew Larsen, Sandy Nichols

The Boy and the Blue Moon
Sara O’Leary, Ashley Crowley

The Brilliant Deep:
Rebuilding the World’s Coral Reefs
Kate Messner, Matthew Forsythe

Clara Voyant
Rachelle Delaney

Dear Girl
Amy Krouse Rosenthal, Paris Rosenthal, Holly Hatam

EveryBody’s Different on EveryBody Street
Sheree Fitch, Emma FitzGerald

The Ghost Road
Charis Cotter

The Hanging Girl
Eileen Cook

Meet Chris Hadfield
(Scholastic Canada Biography)
Elizabeth MacLeod, Mike Deas

Meet Viola Desmond
(Scholastic Canada Biography)
Elizabeth MacLeod, Mike Deas

Megabat
Anna Humphrey, Kass Reich

Missing Mike
Shari Green

Monster
(The Dark Missions of Edgar Brim, Book 2)
Shane Peacock

Nothing Happens in This Book
Judy Ann Sadler, Vigg

The Whirlpool
Laurel Croza, Kelsey Garrity-Riley

Past Tense
Star Spider

This Book Betrays My Brother
Kagiso Lesego Molope

WE RECOMMEND

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Becca Fair and Foul
Deirdre Baker

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