Brainstorm, Divide and Combine: Four pairs of authors on co-writing

Halloween books for fall fun

Qin Leng is a very busy illustrator

Reviews of over 35 books by Alice Kuipers, Michael Redhill, Helaine Becker, Charles de Lint and more
A stunning picture-book biography of **Ted Harrison**, Canada’s most celebrated painter of the Yukon

Co-authored by award-winning children’s author **Margriet Ruurs** and Ted Harrison’s premier biographer, **Katherine Gibson**.

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<th>Picture Book for All Ages</th>
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- Illustrated with family photographs and 35 colour reproductions of Ted Harrison’s art
- Includes a preface written by the artist himself

www.pajamapress.ca
Opinion: Who will write our stories?
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Fun and engaging stories for early readers

Book Bits: Words and Pictures
Three novel/comic hybrids entice readers

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Reviews of the latest in fine Canadian books for children and teens.

About the Illustrator: Marie-Louise Gay is a world-renowned author and illustrator of children’s books. She has won many prestigious awards, including two Governor General’s Literary Awards and the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award. Her books have been translated into more than 15 languages and are loved by children all over the world. She lives in Montreal.
Rock stars and secret agents.

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Dirk Daring: Secret Agent
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The mind-blowing missions of Darren Dirkowitz.

Dunces Rock
Kate Jaimet
The hilarious characters from Dunces Anonymous are back and rocking out.
In the 1970s, as children’s book publishing in Canada was just beginning to grow, there was a heady thrill in seeing the new books emerging in a range of topics and genres. These were our stories, our voices, our writers, creating a literature for our country.

Those books represented only a fraction of the stories that needed to be told. Forty years later, there are still plenty of voices that need to be heard. But, as new books appear, representing more and more of Canada’s diverse experience, I feel just as much excitement and pride as I felt those many years ago. That is why I was delighted when Nadia Hohn sent me her thought-provoking essay and challenge to Black Canadian writers — “Who Will Tell Our Stories?” — which you will find on our Opinion page.

Writing any book is a difficult task; can teamwork make it easier? The writing duo of Frieda Wishinsky and Elizabeth MacLeod interviewed other author teams to find out the pros and cons of teamwork in fiction and non-fiction creations.

In this issue, you will also find a profile of the extraordinarily busy illustrator, Qin Leng, a Halloween reading list and reviews of many new books for the fall season.

Happy reading.

YOUR FEEDBACK IS IMPORTANT!
EMAIL COMMENTS TO GILLIAN@BOOKCENTRE.CA

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“Who will write our stories?” On November 19, 2012, I lay awake, tossing in my bed, staring at the Maple Leaf blue-bedroom walls in my basement apartment with this persistent question in my head. I had just read Dr. Zetta Elliott’s blog post of April 5, 2010 (Black Canadian children’s literature ~ the stats), and this question haunted me. Dr. Elliott described the trend in Canada for most of the children’s and young adult books about Black people to be written by non-Black authors. Other unanswered questions emerged and kept me awake. “Who are Canada’s Black writers for young people? Who is writing our stories? Where are the Black writers?” I didn’t get much sleep that night.

Born of Jamaican immigrants in a country that is known more for maple syrup and bacon than oxtail with rice and peas, I did not feel Canadian. My family had not travelled outside of Toronto other than to go to Niagara Falls or, once, to Wasaga Beach, almost two hours away, where I became more aware of our otherness. I had never worn snowshoes, seen an ocean or gone camping, but I had had many early experiences of ignorance and racism, ranging from “there are no Black people born in Canada” to “I can’t be your friend because you’re Black” to insults about having “liver lips” and “burnt skin.” At the age of six, I mistakenly thought I could grow up to have long blonde hair and green eyes, but I must have thought something was missing because in third grade I asked my teacher if we could learn about different cultures and people in different countries. In Grade 5, I began to scan my school library for books about Black people. First, I took out books about Black inventors and innovators — all American. However, this changed for me in 1988, when I found Harriet’s Daughter by Marlene Nourbese Philip. This was the first book where I read about a Black girl in Canada who was not fleeing from slavery. (I will qualify this statement, however, to say that Barbara Smucker’s characters Julilly and Liza in Underground to Canada, published in 1977, still meant a lot to me. And the title of Harriet’s Daughter is a reference to a game that her characters play involving Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad.) The author describes the relationship between best friends — Margaret, Ti-Cush and Zulma. They had Caribbean backgrounds. Their parents had
accents. They heard Bob Marley’s music at home. They lived in Toronto. This was the first time I read about characters that were so much like me. My Black adult female friends and I still hold Harriet’s Daughter dear to our hearts. This was our Are You There God? It’s Me Margaret.

Unfortunately, I cannot think of another African Canadian “coming of age” novel since Harriet’s Daughter, which indicates that there is a gap in the variety of children’s literature. In the above-mentioned blog post, Dr. Elliott details what she discovered when she searched the Canadian children’s literature journal, CM, for reviews of books by and about Black people that have been published in Canada since 2000. She identified the following trends:

1. There are lots of picture books about African or Caribbean folktales.
2. There are lots of picture books about African safari animals.
3. There are many more non-fiction books than fiction at the MG/YA level.

Dr. Elliott has since updated the list to include books published up to 2013. There are books about historic figures, such as Viola Desmond and Frederick Douglass, continental Africa and the Underground Railroad, which are all very important, but too few books reflect everyday life for the contemporary Black child, despite the fact that I experienced this very same issue when looking for literature during my own 1980s and 1990s childhood.

In addition to the African-American television shows that I watched religiously during those years, I sought books by African-American authors. I read books by Alice Walker, Rita Williams Garcia, Rosa Guy, Terry McMillan and the late young adult author, Walter Dean Myers, then eventually Toni Morrison and Zora Neale Hurston. Though they painted worlds sometimes more mature than my own, the described realities were not Caribbean or Canadian by any means, but they were realities I could relate to, ones that were Black, urban and “other.” And the more I read, the more I wanted to read these books. I had a hunger, what Myers referred to as “[A re-alization that] as I discovered who I was, a black teenager in a white-dominated world, I saw that these characters, these lives, were not mine. I didn’t want to become the ‘black’ representative, or some shining example of diversity. What I wanted, needed really, was to become an integral and valued part of the mosaic that I saw around me.” I believe this is also why an adult book like The Coldest Winter Ever by Sister Souljah was so popular amongst the Black high school students I taught in 2005. When I read the novel aloud to my class during the 20-minute Drop Everything And Read (DEAR) period, all of my students listened attentively instead of talking or texting, begging me to continue reading. Many of these students had their own borrowed copies of this book, copies that had passed through many hands. Maybe they just wanted to hear me read the swear words or “inappropriate parts” of the novel, but I also believe it was more of what Myers calls “the recognition of themselves in the story, a validation of their existence as human beings, an acknowledgment of the value by someone who understands who they are.”

Consequently, a 2013 study by the Cooperative Children’s Book Center (a library of the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin — Madison) found that of the estimated 5,000 children’s books published in the United States, only 93 were about Black people, that is, 1.86 percent. Given that African Americans comprise 10 percent of the national population and the importance of these books to children outside of the United States, like my students and myself, this statistic is devastating. The 2013 statistic is the lowest it has been since 1994. What is to become of books about Black children and young adults written by authors of African descent?

This situation begs for current, age-appropriate literature in Canada and the United States. In summer 2013, Canadian Children’s Book News editor Gillian O’Reilly wrote “Writers of Colour in Conversation: Five Authors Discuss Their Work, Their Publishing Experience and Their Audiences.” All of the authors featured in this article were of African descent, and I only recognized one—Zetta Elliott. I became hopeful. Could it be that there were other current African-Canadian authors that I just didn’t know about? As I negotiated my very first contract with a publisher in January 2014, my wish to connect with other writers of African descent who were writing for children and young adults led me to start a group in Toronto (African-Canadian Writers for Children and Young Adults). Since then, a group of three, myself included, has gathered. We continue to meet and grow in number, and I still find more writers who wish to join. At the meetings, we writers often refer to our childhoods, growing up Black in Canada, and express a hope that the youth today will have more choices of books to read. Most of the writers are self-published with the goal of getting much-needed books with prominent Black characters into the hands of children and young adults. This new group is a community that shares many of my goals and concerns and is finding an audience. For example, Angela Ndengmo’s self-published series, I Am Loving Me and Boy, I Am Loving Me, is becoming a fixture in many households in the Black community in Ontario. The simple messages of self-worth and self-love resonate with a new generation of Black boys and girls.

On March 24, 1853, Mary Ann Shadd published the first issue of the Provincial Freeman, an abolitionist newspaper, in Windsor, Ontario, making her the first Black woman publisher in North America and first woman publisher in Canada. By signing articles off with her initials (M.S.) and having male editors, Samuel Ringgold Ward and Reverend Alexander McArthur, who would eventually be credited in name only, Shadd understood that despite the gender and racial inequality of that time, diverse viewpoints on the abolitionist message needed to be circulated in both Canada and the United States by any means necessary.

Throughout my journey as a writer, I have become more hopeful that I will not need to venture out alone in writing about African-Canadian experiences or have another sleepless night—unless, of course, it is because of a deadline.

Who will write our stories? We will.

News Roundup

AWARDS, BOOK LAUNCHES, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND THE LATEST NEWS

TD Canadian Children’s Book Week Tour Roster

The 38th TD Canadian Children’s Book Week will take place from May 2 to May 9, 2015. The theme this year will be Hear Our Stories: Celebrating First Nations, Métis and Inuit Literature. Noted Cree-Métis artist and author Julie Flett is creating the Book Week image that will appear on the poster and bookmarks available for sale in March of 2015.

The Book Week Theme Guide (downloadable from the Book Week website in March 2015) will offer a collection of 70 annotated titles and activities by and about First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

Twenty-nine authors, illustrators and storytellers will be touring the country, giving thousands of children and teens the important opportunity to meet a “real, live” creator of books and stories, and sharing stories with children’s book lovers of all ages.

Alberta
Claudia Dávila, author/illustrator
Jeff Ross, author

British Columbia
Interior
Joel Sutherland, author
Lower Mainland
Jan Coates, author
Vancouver Island
Lesley Livingston, author

Manitoba
Shelly Sanders, author
Meg Tilly, author

New Brunswick
Shane Peacock, author

Newfoundland
Hugh Brewster, author

Labrador
Kim Firmston, author

Northwest Territories
Kathy Jessup, storyteller

Nova Scotia
Andrea Beck, author/illustrator

 Nunavut
Anne Villeneuve, author/illustrator

Ontario
Dawn Baker, author/illustrator
Lee Edward Födi, author/illustrator
Jerry Haigh, storyteller/author
Tanya Lloyd Kyi, author
Laura Langston, author
Lori Weber, author
Susan White, author

Prince Edward Island
Bill Swan, author

Quebec
(English Language Tour)
Don Aker, author
Gail de Vos, storyteller/author
Jacqueline Guest, author
Rukhsana Khan, author
Chieri Uegaki, author

Saskatchewan
Cary Fagan, author/illustrator
Rob Laidlaw, author

Yukon
Roslyn Schwartz, author/illustrator

Apply for a Reading
Celebrate TD Canadian Children’s Book Week by hosting an author, illustrator or storyteller. Information about who is touring in your area and how to apply can be found on the Book Week website. The deadline for applying is December 31, 2014.

Also available on the Book Week site is information about the annual Book Week Writing Contest for Kids & Teens — open to young authors in Grades 4–12.
For further information about either of these programs, visit www.bookweek.ca.

Inspire! Toronto International Book Fair — Six CCBC programs and much more

The inaugural Inspire! Toronto International Book Fair (November 13-16, 2014) is a huge consumer and trade show that will bring together Canadian and international writers, publishers, teachers, librarians and members of the public. There will be lots of opportunities to buy books as well as attend professional and public workshops, seminars, panels and other on-stage programming for adults and children.

The CCBC has a busy agenda — presenting six different on-stage programs over three days.

At the CCBC Award Winners 2014 Showcase, winners of the following CCBC awards will read, take questions and sign books: the TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award (English Language), the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award, the Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People, the Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children’s Non-Fiction, the Monica Hughes Award for Science Fiction and Fantasy and the John Spray Mystery Award. To see shortlists, go to www.bookcentre.ca/award.

The Read to Remember Panel will feature authors Hugh Brewster, Deborah Ellis and Linda Granfield discussing their books about war and the importance of writing for children on this particular topic.

The Young Adult Literature Panel celebrates YA literature and the remarkable Amy’s Marathon of Books. Moderated by author Kevin Sylvester, the panel will feature Amy Mathers, authors Sylvia McNicoll and Teresa Toten and children's book editor Hadley Dyer (HarperCollins Canada).
Have you ever wondered how a picture book evolves from an idea into a beautifully illustrated piece of literature? The How a Picture Book is Made Panel features author/illustrator Ian Wallace, author Kyo Maclear, publisher Diane Kerner (Scholastic Canada) and designer Michael Solomon (Groundwood Books) in a discussion moderated by Prof. Larry Swartz (OISE).

TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award Showcase is a chance to meet the winner and finalists of the books nominated for the 2014 TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award.

TD Bank Group and the CCBC present author David Weale and illustrator Pierre Pratt, creators of the 2014 TD Grade One Book Giveaway, Doors in the Air.
An extra treat for children’s book lovers at Inspire! will be the exhibit of children’s book illustrations mounted by CANSCAIP (Canadian Society of Children’s Authors, Illustrators and Performers). Don’t miss this chance to see the work of Canada’s talented illustrators and the opportunity to purchase a piece of literary art.
For further information, visit www.torontobookfair.ca.

continued on page 8
EVENTS

Seen at …
A PHOTOGRAPHIC LOOK AT CANADIAN CHILDREN’S BOOK EVENTS

1. Gabrielle Prendergast (Capricious) at the Orca Book Publishers booth at the American Library Association conference in Las Vegas in June. 2. Ruth Ohi spends time with Pig, Cow and Chicken (well, Duck actually) at the Moose Jaw Public Library during the Saskatchewan Festival of Words in July. 3. Claire Eamer (Before the World Was Ready: Stories of Daring Genius in Science) enjoys her Lane Anderson Award (Youth category), given for excellence in science writing. 4. At the all-children’s-book Telling Tales Festival in Hamilton, author Meg Tilly (Behind the Scenes) reads to an eager crowd. 5. Also at Telling Tales Festival in September, author Kari-Lynn Winters (No-Matter-What Friend) greets a fan. 6. The proceeds of crime (writing): Arthur Ellis Best Juvenile Crime Award winner Elizabeth MacLeod (Bones Never Lie: How Forensics Helps Solve History’s Mysteries) celebrates with CCBN editor Gillian O’Reilly and fellow nominee Karen Autio (Sabotage) at the Crime Writers of Canada annual Awards Banquet.
Second Story Press Celebrates 25th Anniversary

Congratulations to Second Story Press, celebrating its 25th anniversary in the fall of 2014. It has been a quarter of a century since the press addressed in its adult list. “The hard work of writing can be a slog. Part of the problem might be that I am a very slow processor, and it takes me a lot of trial and error before a story starts to really take shape. Both The Night Gardener and Peter Nimble required somewhere around 20 drafts. I’m trying to get faster!”

How did you first get published? My route to publication was a little unusual, insofar as I had already been writing professionally for a few years by the time my first book came out. I spent my 20s working in a variety of mediums: film, television, comics, theatre. This was a great way to hone my craft and pay my bills, but it wasn’t exactly creatively rewarding. During this time, I began working on a manuscript about a blind orphan who was the greatest thief who ever lived (Peter Nimble)... the sort of story I wished I could have read when I was a kid. What started as a private little indulgence soon became all consuming. By the time the book was finished, I knew I didn’t want to do anything else but children’s books for the rest of my life.

What do you like about writing books for kids? Children’s books have been something of a lifelong passion. I collected children’s books long after I had grown out of childhood. I have always loved how children’s literature speaks to two separate readers (child and adult), and how it asks those two readers to meet in the middle: a child reader is asked to engage with the adult perspective of the author, whereas the adult reader is asked to engage with the child perspective of the protagonist.

Tell us about your newest book. My newest book is called The Night Gardener and it came out from Penguin this spring. It’s a spooky story about two abandoned Irish children who discover an ancient tree that seems to be able to grant people their heart’s desires... but only at a very deadly price!

I’m also currently working on a top secret follow-up to my first novel, Peter Nimble & His Fantastic Eyes. Don’t tell anyone!

Tell us about the process of writing. I know a lot of writers who relish sitting down at a keyboard, but that’s not me. I love dreaming up worlds and characters... but the actual work of writing can be a slog. Part of the problem might be that I am a very slow processor, and it takes me a lot of trial and error before a story starts to really take shape. Both The Night Gardener and Peter Nimble required somewhere around 20 drafts. I’m trying to get faster!

Correction

An extra paragraph crept into our “Keep Your Eye On...” interview with Meghan Marentette in the Summer 2014 issue of Canadian Children’s Book News. The section on “Tell us about someone who inspired you to write” belongs to our Spring 2014 interview with Kim Firmston. Apologies to both authors!
Jill Barber celebrates the joy in making music - in all its forms!
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Ages 8-12 | Paperback | $9.95

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A True Story

by NICK GRAY with LAURA SCANDIFFIO
With a Foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

SHARON E. MCKAY
by NICK GRAY with LAURA SCANDIFFIO
With a Foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama

With a Foreword by His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Qin Leng is a busy woman. If her name seems familiar, it’s probably because, since launching her picture-book illustration career four years ago, Leng has illustrated more than a dozen titles with publishers including Annick Press, Inhabit Media and Second Story Press — and that’s just in Canada. Her work has also appeared with Usborne Books (the largest children’s publisher in the UK) and the venerable French publisher, Éditions Gallimard. She has been so prolific, in fact, that even the artist herself wasn’t sure how many titles she’d illustrated until I asked her to fill in the blanks on the list I’d put together in preparation for writing this profile. “It was actually a shock to me, how many books there are,” wrote Leng in the email accompanying the completed list, which includes *Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin*, written by Chieri Uegaki; *Norman, Speak!*, written by Caroline Adderson and *Not Just Another Princess Story*, written by Sheri Radford, all of which came out within the past year. “My head is about to explode!”

That endearing humour, tempered by a bit of nervousness, is apparent when we meet in person as well. Despite her success, Leng has never been interviewed face-to-face, and isn’t quite sure what to expect as she shows me around her small downtown Toronto condo. Petite and stylish, Leng leads me to her work table and pulls out the sketches she was working on when I arrived. A dozen incarnations of the same raccoon, each no bigger than an inch square, fill one page, while another sheet reveals a detailed rural landscape, all rendered in ink with a fine brush. I marvel at the finesse and precision she’s achieved with such an unpredictable tool, and she laughs. “I’m okay with drawing,” she says, “but I’m so clumsy with other things. I spill things, break things, but when I draw I have control.” The raccoons are part of the menagerie that will appear in poet Robert Heidbreder’s *Song for a Summer Night*, forthcoming in 2015 from Groundwood Books. It is only one of five projects she has on the go, along with an upcoming series called Piper Green, publishing with Random House US; an anti-bullying series for Toronto’s Second Story Press; a biblically themed book for HarperCollins’ Christian imprint, Zonderkidz; and a proposal she’s preparing in the hope of landing yet more work.

One would assume, given her output, that Leng must spend hours a day hunched over her sketch pad or perfecting her colours in Photoshop. She does, but only after she’s come home from her day job. Like a growing number of illustrators, Leng’s route to the world of children’s books came by way of a detour through animation. While helping a friend research possible courses of study at Montreal’s Concordia University, Leng stumbled upon the film-animation program at Concordia’s Mel Hoppenheim School of Cinema. Though she had already been accepted at McGill University, where she planned to study biology, Leng decided to apply to the film program and see what happened. “I got accepted and at that point, I was like, I just have to do it.”

Since graduating in 2006, Leng has worked at several studios, joining the production company, 9 Story Entertainment, as a layout supervisor in 2009. She is in charge of designing background animation for kids’ shows, including *Almost Naked Animals* and *Numb Chucks*. Leng says that people are always surprised to find out that she isn’t illustrating books full-time, but rather toiling away in animation. “Five days a week, nine-to-five, that’s what I do,” says Leng. “Then when I go home I work on my own projects; on weekends… I’m always doing something.”

Even before landing her first picture-book deal, Leng was constantly drawing. Three years after starting out in animation, she had reached the point where she felt the need for more artistic freedom and recognition, so she put together a portfolio. “But I had no confidence,” recalls Leng. “I didn’t study illustration, I don’t know how it works. Do I just start knocking on publishers’ doors?” Pushing back against her fears, Leng began mailing and emailing her portfolio and sending postcards to publishers she found on the Bologna Children’s Book Fair list of attendees and exhibitors. She contacted as many as 100 in one day. The gamble, and persistence, paid off when she was hired to illustrate *A Flock of Shoes*, the 2010 title authored by Sarah Tsiang that became her first of several titles for Annick Press. Though she’s now represented by KidShannon in the US, Leng continues to find work without an agent in Canada.
Determination is apparently part of Leng's DNA. Her father Leng Hong is a respected and successful painter, who supported her ambition even as he cautioned her that the life of an artist is not an easy one. But art is also in her genes. Leng recalls a childhood, first in her native Shanghai and then in Bordeaux, France (the family moved to Montreal when Leng was nine), filled with time spent doodling next to her father as he worked on paintings, and hours drawing with her twin sister on the backs of old calendars or any other paper they could get their hands on. “Even before I realized my dad was an artist, I always used to draw,” says Leng. “It was my thing.”

To this day, she is rarely caught without a sketchbook, and frequently posts drawings to her Tumblr page (qinleng.tumblr.com), where she showcases her personal sketches as well as work from projects in progress. Scanning through the posts, one gets a sense of the range of Leng’s work; quickly drawn comic self-portraits contrast with detailed, polished images in fully realized digital colour from her books or the commercial illustrations she does for European magazines, including the children’s publication, Youpi. “The longer I spend on a drawing, the worse it will get,” says Leng. “It has to be super spontaneous, so a lot of the stuff I have on my Tumblr takes me maybe half an hour.”

Perhaps it is that spontaneity that fills each image with an effervescent sense of movement and playfulness. Leng’s characters can safely be described as adorable, be they animal or human, but she is careful to avoid slipping into the preciousness that pervades many children’s books, saying she strives for “cute but quirky; there’s a little bit of odd in the cuteness.” Often, she will include fun details in her illustrations, adding another layer to the story through the visuals. It all adds up to a winning combination: several of Leng’s books have been nominated for awards, and all three of the titles she published with Sarah Tsiang were given starred reviews in Quill & Quire and made the CCBC’s Best Books for Kids & Teens list.

Is there a graphic novel on Leng’s professional horizon? “I’d really love to [do one], just because it’s a different format,” says Leng. “I like different kinds of angles, almost like cinematography, but you can’t really do that in picture books.” Though she’s received encouragement from Groundwood Books to try her hand at writing, Leng is not as confident creating with words as she is with pictures. Besides, with so many current and potential illustration projects already on the go, it’s unlikely that Leng could take on a job of that scope without giving up her work at the animation studio. Not that she isn’t already starting to think that step might be inevitable. Though it would be hard to give up the financial security, Leng is feeling cramped by her own success. “I need another me to do my day job,” she jokes, noting that while she isn’t rushing her current projects (or complaining), it would be nice to have more time for revisions and research. “And a vacation,” says Leng with a sigh.

Dory Cerny is the Books for Young People editor at Quill & Quire magazine.

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**Forthcoming and Recent Titles by Qin Leng**

- **And What If I Won’t?**
  written by Maureen Fergus
  Owlkids Books, 2015

- **Bible Stories for Jesus’ Little Lambs**
  written by Julie Stiegemeyer
  Zonderkids, 2015

- **Boost Child Abuse Series, Books 1 and 2**
  written by Kathryn Cole
  Second Story Press, 2015

- **Piper Green series, Books 1 and 2**
  written by Mathew Price
  Random House, 2015

- **Song for a Summer Night**
  written by Ellen Potter
  Scholastic, 2015

- **Not Just Another Princess Story**
  written by Robert Heidbreder
  Groundwood Books, 2015

- **Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin**
  written by Chieri Uegaki
  Kids Can Press, 2014

- **Where’s That Puppy? (Waar is Max?)**
  written by Mathew Price
  Ploegsma, 2014

- **Norman, Speak!**
  written by Caroline Adderson
  Groundwood Books, 2014

- **Une Mamie en Or**
  written by Géraldine Collet
  Hatier, 2014
FOCUS WRITING DUOS

Brainstorm, Divide and Combine

How writing duos manage their partnerships

BY ELIZABETH MACLEOD AND FRIEDA WISHINSKY

It started over lunch — a perfect place to cook up a writing project. We both love food, writing and research, and one day we decided to put all three into a book. By dessert we were brainstorming ideas. We continued to shape the topic over emails, coffees and Liz's amazing chocolate chip cookies.

A few months (and many coffees and cookies) later, we sent our proposal to a few publishers. We were thrilled that Scholastic US said yes. Now all we had to do was write the book.

But how could we do that together?

We followed a BDC process: Brainstorm, Divide and Combine. Liz is a science and activity expert and Frieda leans toward history and language, so it was a straightforward divide. Our editor Brenda Murray put our chapters together.

The resulting book, Everything But the Kitchen Sink, was published in 2008, and earned a Red Cedar Award and a Silver Birch Honour.

Here's what Val said about that process:

“Liz and Frieda work completely independently, not ever scrutinizing one another's work, which calls for a lot of trust. I did a page map to show how much space each entry would be allotted. Word counts were assigned based on that allotment. Because A History of Just About Everything is a big book (124 pages), we divided it into quarters.

“It was one of the most difficult projects I've ever edited because of the need to get up to speed on a huge variety of topics very quickly, the thousands of facts and details and the sheer volume of words. And all the while we were working away, we had to remember that every single entry had to be not only comprehensive and accurate, but also, most importantly, interesting for a child to read.”

Val added, “The big risk in dual-author books is that the two authors' writing styles won't harmonize, requiring a lot more editorial time. That wasn't the case with Liz and Frieda who have very closely aligned styles. Also, the people management and tracking of various stages was greater than it would be with a single author.

“I have worked with one other duo on a couple of projects. Those two authors [Jane Drake and Ann Love] wrote different parts of the books but submitted everything and responded to editing as if they were one person. I was never completely sure who had written what. That's a very different way of doing things than for Liz and Frieda.

“Dual-author projects can work if the writers have similar styles and are very respectful of one another's talents. That has been the case with both dual-author teams I have had the pleasure of editing.”

Ann Love and Jane Drake, a sister team, have written more than 30 non-fiction books together, including Sweet! (Tundra Books), The Kids Book of the Far North and the classic The Kids Cottage Book (both Kids Can Press). Their most recent book is Pandemic Survival (Tundra).

Ann and Jane have the most integrated writing approach of any of the pairs we interviewed. When they get a book idea, they quickly go into what they call their “mulling stage.” As Jane says, “This involves a lot of sushi and writing on the back of envelopes.” Yes, it seems that most writing pairs depend on food to help the process!

Once they’ve assembled all of their ideas, the sisters each do their own research to create a comprehensive outline, describing the book’s subtext and themes. To sharpen the focus, they then reduce their outline to one page. This involves many emails and phone calls between the pair. Once the proposal is accepted, each one says what she wants to write. Since
they have slightly different interests — Jane tends to write fictional elements, Ann focuses on non-fiction sections, for instance — dividing up the writing is fairly easy.

The sisters believe that being related is definitely a benefit to their writing process. Thanks to their shared background, there are many things they just accept without long explanations. They also like working together because it allows them to take on big projects. Usually Ann and Jane break up a book into many small, integrated chunks. Pandemic Survival was the first book that they really split in half, with one writing all the text on pandemics up to the year 1800, and the other bringing the book up to the modern day.

Before their editor sees their manuscript, this duo read and edit each other’s work. They “massage” their writing to improve it and remove any duplication. And they say they have no trouble accepting criticism from each other. Even serious criticism? “Yes,” says Ann, “because we know how to present feedback to each other. As well, we have the same goal, so there’s no competition between us.”

Ann and Jane say they haven’t had many difficult experiences with editors, but they feel having a writing partner makes tough encounters easier. “We present a united front,” Jane says, “and back each other up.” They say it’s also nice to have someone to vent to when problems arise.

Having a writing partner defuses situations, say the sisters, so neither one takes editing comments or reviews personally. No one can commiserate over a project quite as well as the person who wrote it with you. And no one celebrates successes as happily either!

More book projects are definitely in Ann and Jane’s future, but they’re also working on interactive I-books. Their first one, Keeping Up with Jax and Rupert, focuses on the environment, a topic that has been of great interest to the sisters since their childhood. The I-book illustrations animate with sound and action, plus there is a slide show, question-and-answer widgets and guessing games.

Sheryl and Simon Shapiro are another writing pair who are also related, but, in their case, it’s by marriage. Their books include Better Together (what an appropriate title!), Ladybugs Have Lots of Spots and Slither Slide, What’s Outside? — all from Annick Press. These picture books combine lively verses and visuals to explain various concepts. Sheryl is also the Creative Director at Annick Press and a talented designer, while Simon has a background in math, applied science and computer programming.

The couple had co-written skits and parodies, so they knew they could write well together. Their first book came about when Annick accepted a proposal from Sheryl. The couple agree that when it comes to writing, Sheryl is the ideas person. Simon does the actual writing, which usually involves a lot of poetry and rhyming, with a great deal of humour.

After Simon has written a first manuscript, Sheryl gets involved again as the pair edit their work together. Much of that editing gets done far from their work desks. Sheryl and Simon do a lot of work while they’re on long drives. Simon is at the wheel, coming up with more rhymes until they find the perfect one, while Sheryl is busy writing down everything.

As they work through their manuscripts, Sheryl and Simon look for new directions in which they can take their writing. They ask themselves questions such as, “What else can we do with this rhyme?” and “Is this the most kid-friendly word?” A manuscript isn’t finished until they’re both happy with it.

Being married is a real advantage for their writing process, Sheryl and Simon believe. “Working face to face really helps,” says Simon, “and it’s easy for us to grab small chunks of time and quickly get work done and decisions made.” Their writing process involves a lot of back-and-forth discussions, so living together makes the logistics of this much easier.

The pair do argue over wording or edits, but they discuss issues until they come up with a solution that works for both of them. They also say they’re able to separate their work from their personal lives.

Sheryl and Simon deal with their editor’s comments together. Usually the edits come in by email, so they’re both able to read them and agree on a response. Although Sheryl and Simon feel that the process of writing with a partner is more difficult than writing alone, they feel the final product is better. “We inspire each other,” Sheryl says. “Brainstorming can be really difficult; it’s much easier when there are two of us.”

This writing duo would like to keep working together, but they’re also open to the idea of writing books on their own or with other authors (Sheryl wrote Create Your Own Millennium
A Different Kind of Challenge: Fiction

Writing fiction as a twosome is a different kind of challenge. Richard Scrimger (RS) and Marthe Jocelyn (MJ) tackled that to produce Viminy Crowe’s Comic Book, a work of fiction with graphic-novel elements. In it, Addy (Viminy Crowe’s niece) and comic fan Wylder get trapped inside Uncle Viminy’s new comic — drastically altering the plot as they struggle to get out. Claudia Dávila did the comic art, and Tara Walker edited the book for Tundra Books.

RS: Way, way back in 2011, Marthe called me up and wondered if we could write a book together. I said sure.

MJ: Actually, we met in a coffee shop during the OLA convention, was it three years ago? I said, hey, what if we wrote a book together? How much fun would that be! And so easy! Writing only half a book!

RS: It took a quick phone call and a couple of emails to decide on a basic premise (two kids inside a steampunk comic) and a style of alternating he-said, she-said chapters. The writing began smartly enough — passing the narrative baton back and forth, each trying to amuse the other — and before we knew it we had 10,000 words and a contract.

There was much, much more to do, and at times it felt impossibly gritty — right up to the end, where we had to emergency re-sync art and text — but the completion of the first draft was the hardest bit for me.

MJ: As fun as those first weeks were, I would not do it that way again. A little more planning, especially with three plots and a second whole world involved, would likely have reduced our labour by about a year.

RS: Claudia had roughs and sketches before we had finished writing. The problem being that we would change our minds and Claudia would have to redraw.

MJ: Yeah, another mistake was waiting too long to bring the artist on board, so that Claudia was stuck with being an illustrator instead of being a full collaborator. But she made the very best of a crazy, restrictive format, packing acres of story into only a few panels at a time.

RS: Marthe is way more orderly than I am, and much better at detail. So she made sure of drafts, sequences and plot overlap. She swept up after us. I got to be the idea guy.

MJ: The thing about Richard that is both good and bad is that his brain never stops clicking. This is an excellent quality when it comes to thinking up plot — which happens to be my very worst feature. It is also a terrible quality when it comes to thinking up plot, because he really truly never stops thinking up plot.

RS: The ideas were mostly ours, but the finished book is editor Tara Walker’s as much as it is Marthe’s and mine.

MJ: She had the extra-difficult job of not only overseeing the creation of a book with three plots but also of managing three stubborn and sensitive creators who were occasionally at odds.

And here’s how Tara found the process:

“This was definitely the most time-consuming and hair-pulling book I have ever edited — not because it was lacking in any way, but because of the multiple creators and the fact that this is part graphic novel and that the story itself is a bit of a mindbender. Sometimes it felt like we’d never find our way back out of this book. But we got there in the end.

“I approached Marthe and Richard as a unified writing team, i.e., I gave my notes to the both of them and expected that they would work out any disagreements between themselves. That worked... for the most part. Marthe and Richard are both such good writers and consummate pros. They are their own best editors, something I’ve often found with the very best writers I’ve worked with.

“Working with two very different writers isn’t a con, but it can be challenging — especially when you’re working with two people as different as Marthe and Richard are from one another. Like Addy, Marthe is smart and sarcastic and a bit bossy. Richard, like Wylder, is nerdy and goofy and a bit of a shrugger. Both want/need different things from an editor, so the way I worked with each of them separately was different from the way I worked with the other one.
The White Oneida

**Jean Rae Baxter**

Joseph Brant chooses Broken Trail, a white boy adopted by the Oneida, to be his protegé in searching out Tecumseh in the uniting of all the First Nations to create a country of their own.

978-1-55380-332-4 (pb)  ■  280 pp  ■  $11.95

**Available from**

Ronsdale Press

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Mouse Tales

**Story:** Philip Ray  
**Art:** Andrea Torrey Balsara

Wonderfully touching colour illustrations tell the story of Happy, the pocket mouse, asking for bedtime stories to help him sleep — stories from the Grimm brothers that keep him awake.

978-1-55380-262-4 (pb)  ■  32 pp  ■  $9.95

**Available from**

Ronsdale Press

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Arrow through the Axes

**Patrick Bowman**

The third volume in this exciting retelling of Homer’s *Odyssey* has Alexi, the Trojan slave of Odysseus, completing the journey to Ithaca and helping Odysseus defeat the suitors.

978-1-55380-323-2 (pb)  ■  220 pp  ■  $11.95

**Available from**

Ronsdale Press

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Jellybean Mouse

**Story:** Philip Ray  
**Art:** Andrea Torrey Balsara

The second volume in the series tells how Happy finds it boring to go with John to a laundromat, until he joyfully succeeds in outwitting the jellybean machine.

978-1-55380-344-7 (hc)  ■  32 pp  ■  $11.95

**Available from**

Ronsdale Press
2014 TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award

The TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award honours the most distinguished book of the year. Two $30,000 grand prizes are awarded, one for a book in English and one for a book in French.

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE FINALISTS

*Branded by the Pink Triangle*  
written by Ken Setterington  
Second Story Press, 2013  
978-1-926920-96-2 (pb) $15.95

*In the Tree House*  
written by Andrew Larsen  
illustrated by Dušan Petričić  
Kids Can Press, 2013  
978-1-55451-565-3 (hc) $19.95

*The Man with the Violin*  
written by Kathy Stinson  
illustrated by Dušan Petričić  
Annick Press, 2013  
978-1-55498-138-0 (hc) $17.95  
978-1-55498-402-2 (eBook) $9.99

*Once Upon a Northern Night*  
written by Jean E. Pendziwol  
illustrated by Isabelle Arsenault  
Groundwood Books, 2013  
978-1-55498-138-0 (hc) $17.95  
978-1-55498-402-2 (eBook) $14.95

*The Unlikely Hero of Room 13B*  
written by Teresa Toten  
Doubleday Canada, 2013  
978-0-385-67834-6 (pb) $14.95  
978-0-385-67835-3 (eBook) $9.99

FRENCH-LANGUAGE FINALISTS

*Destins croisés*  
written by Élizabeth Turgeon  
Les Éditions du Boréal, 2013  
978-2-76462-220-9 (pb) $14.95

*Le lion et l’oiseau*  
written and illustrated by Marianne Dubuc  
Les Éditions de la Pastèque, 2013  
978-2-92334-292-4 (hc) $24.95

*Ma petite boule d’amour*  
written by Jasmine Dubé  
illustrated by Jean-Luc Trudel  
Les Éditions de la Bagnole, 2013  
978-2-92334-441-1 (hc) $19.95

*Le Noël de Marguerite*  
written by India Desjardins  
illustrated by Pascal Blanchet  
Les Éditions de la Pastèque, 2013  
978-2-92334-138-0 (hc) $17.95

*La plus grosse poutine du monde*  
written by Andrée Poulin  
Bayard Canada, 2013  
978-2-89579-567-4 (pb) $15.95
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FINALISTS OF THE
2014 Monica Hughes Award for Science Fiction and Fantasy

Established in 2011, this award honours excellence in the science fiction and fantasy genre. The $5,000 prize, awarded annually to a Canadian author, is sponsored by HarperCollins Canada, in memory of the late Monica Hughes.

**Curse of the Dream Witch**
written by Allan Stratton
Scholastic Canada, 2013
978-1-4431-1937-5 (pb) $7.99
978-1-4431-2849-0 (eBook) $7.99

**Rush (The Game, Book 1)**
written by Eve Silver
Katherine Tegen Books, 2013
978-0-06-219213-4 (hc) $19.99
978-0-06-219216-5 (eBook) $10.99

**Slated (Slated Trilogy, Book 1)**
written by Teri Terry
Nancy Paulsen Books/Penguin Young Readers Group, 2013
978-0-399-16172-8 (hc) $19.00
978-0-14-242503-9 (pb) $10.99

**Sorrow’s Knot**
written by Erin Bow
Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic, 2013
978-0-545-16666-9 (hc) $19.99
978-0-545-57800-4 (eBook) $17.99

**The Stowaways**
written by Meghan Marentette
illustrated by Dean Griffiths
Pajama Press, 2013
978-1-927485-33-0 (hc) $19.95

For more information and for jury comments, visit [www.bookcentre.ca](http://www.bookcentre.ca)
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FINALISTS OF THE

2014 Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children’s Non-Fiction

Established by the Fleck Family Foundation, this $10,000 prize recognizes exceptional non-fiction books for young people. The award honours Norma Fleck (1906-1998) who inspired a deep love of reading in her children.

Branded by the Pink Triangle
written by Ken Setterington
Second Story Press, 2013
978-1-926920-96-2 (pb) $15.95

A History of Just About Everything: 180 Events, People and Inventions That Changed the World
written by Elizabeth MacLeod and Frieda Wishinsky
illustrated by Qin Leng
Kids Can Press, 2013
978-1-55453-775-4 (hc) $21.95

The Last Train: A Holocaust Story
written by Rona Arato
Owlkids Books, 2013
978-1-926973-62-3 (hc) $16.95

Looks Like Daylight: Voices of Indigenous Kids
written by Deborah Ellis
Groundwood Books, 2013
978-1-55498-120-5 (hc) $15.95
978-1-55498-413-8 (eBook) $14.95

My Name Is Blessing
written by Eric Walters
illustrated by Eugenie Fernandes
Tundra Books, 2013
978-1-77049-301-8 (hc) $19.99

The Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children’s Non-Fiction is administered by the Canadian Children’s Book Centre.

For more information and for jury comments, visit www.bookcentre.ca
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FINALISTS OF THE

2014 John Spray Mystery Award

Established in 2011 to honour excellence in the mystery book genre and sponsored by John Spray, President of the Mantis Investigation Agency, this $5,000 prize is awarded annually to a Canadian author of an outstanding work of mystery writing for young people.

The Further Adventures of Jack Lime
written by James Leck
Kids Can Press, 2013
978-1-55453-740-2 (hc) $18.95

The Metro Dogs of Moscow
written by Rachelle Delaney
Puffin Canada, 2013
978-0-14-318414-0 (pb) $12.99

The Spotted Dog Last Seen
written by Jessica Scott Kerrin
Groundwood Books, 2013
978-1-55498-387-2 (hc) $14.95
978-1-55498-401-5 (pb) $8.95
978-1-55498-388-9 (eBook) $8.95

Whatever Doesn’t Kill You
written by ElizabethWennick
Orca Book Publishers, 2013
978-1-4598-0083-0 (pb) $12.95
978-1-4598-0085-4 (eBook) $12.95

Who I’m Not
written by Ted Staunton
Orca Book Publishers, 2013
978-1-4598-0434-0 (pb) $12.95
978-1-4598-0436-4 (eBook) $12.95
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FINALISTS OF THE

2014 Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award

Established by Charles Baillie in the name of his wife, author Marilyn Baillie, this $20,000 prize, shared between author and illustrator, honours excellence in the picture book format for children aged three to eight.

Fox and Squirrel written and illustrated by Ruth Ohi
North Winds Press/Scholastic Canada, 2013
978-1-4431-1914-6 (hc) $14.99

How To written and illustrated by Julie Morstad
Simply Read Books, 2013
978-1-897476-57-4 (hc) $18.95

The Man with the Violin written by Kathy Stinson
illustrated by Dušan Petričić
Annick Press, 2013
978-1-55451-565-3 (hc) $19.95

My Name Is Blessing
written by Eric Walters
illustrated by Eugenie Fernandes
Tundra Books, 2013
978-1-77049-301-8 (hc) $19.99

Where Do You Look?
written and illustrated by Marthe Jocelyn and Nell Jocelyn
Tundra Books, 2013
978-1-77049-376-6 (hc) $17.99
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FINALISTS OF THE

2014 Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People

Established in 1988 in memory of historian and author Geoffrey Bilson, this $5,000 prize is awarded annually to the Canadian author of an outstanding work of historical fiction.

**Brothers at War**
written by Don Cummer
Scholastic Canada, 2013
978-1-4431-1382-3 (pb) $7.99
978-1-4431-2848-3 (eBook) $7.99

**Graffiti Knight**
written by Karen Bass
Pajama Press, 2013
978-1-927485-53-8 (pb) $14.95

**Little Red Lies**
written by Julie Johnston
Tundra Books, 2013
978-1-77049-314-8 (eBook) $11.99

**The Manager**
written by Caroline Stellings
Cape Breton University Press, 2013
978-1-927492-47-5 (pb) $11.95
978-1-927492-49-9 (eBook) $11.95

**Me & Mr. Bell**
written by Philip Roy
Cape Breton University Press, 2013
978-1-927492-57-4 (eBook) $9.99

The Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People is administered by the Canadian Children’s Book Centre.

For more information and for jury comments, visit [www.bookcentre.ca](http://www.bookcentre.ca)
“BOOKMARK!” HIGHLIGHTS BOOKS FOR A VARIETY OF GRADE LEVELS AROUND A PARTICULAR THEME.

Enjoy this selection of creepy tales for Halloween, compiled by CCBC Library Coordinator Meghan Howe.

Ghosts and Vampires and Werewolves, Oh My!

PICTURE BOOKS & BEGINNING READERS FOR KINDERGARTEN & UP

13 Ghosts of Halloween
written by Robin Muller
illustrated by Patricia Storms
(Scholastic Canada, 2007)

Children visit a haunted funhouse, encounter a host of funny, spooky creatures and then vanish one by one. Can be sung to the tune of “The Twelve Days of Christmas.”

Easy-to-Read Spooky Tales
written by Veronika Martenova Charles
illustrated by David Parkins
(Tundra Books, 2007-2008)

This 10-book series, which features the same three characters telling multicultural stories based on a cautionary theme, offers a shiver of anticipation along with the thrill of accomplishment.

Ghost in the House
written by Ammi-Joan Paquette
illustrated by Adam Record
(Candlewick Press, 2013)

This cumulative counting book is a playful Halloween treat. A little ghost “goes slip-slide with a swoop and a glide” as he meets a mummy, a monster, a skeleton, a witch and finally a little boy.

The Haunted House that Jack Built
written by Helaine Becker
illustrated by David Parkins
(Scholastic Canada, 2010)

A host of characters in spooky costumes chase one another around the house that Jack built until they settle in to eat their treats and reveal their true selves. A perfect Halloween read-aloud.

Scaredy Squirrel Prepares for Halloween:
A Safety Guide for Scaredies
written and illustrated by Mélanie Watt
(Kids Can Press, 2013)

Scaredy Squirrel prepares for the spookiest night of the year with everything from costume ideas and trick-or-treating strategies to decorations and a party-planning guide! This title is also available in French.

A World Full of Ghosts
written by Charis Cotter
illustrated by Marc Mongeau
(Annick Press, 2009)

From skeleton spirits in Alaska to wandering gauchos in Argentina — tour the globe to discover what ghosts are up to. Featuring luminous illustrations, this book gives young children a not-too-scary glimpse into the unknown.

JUNIOR & INTERMEDIATE NON-FICTION AND FICTION FOR GRADES 2 TO 8

Alison’s Ghosts
(Streetlights)
written by Mary Alice Downie and John Downie
(Lorimer, 2008)

Alison is held captive by the powers of a mysterious pipe bowl belonging to a Mi’kmaq shaman. She must uncover the history of the pipe before she, too, is consumed by the grim fate of the pipe’s holders.

A Bad Case of Ghosts
(Barnes and the Brains)
written by Kenneth Oppel
illustrated by Victor Rivas Villa
(HarperCollins Canada, 2010)

Giles Barnes enlists the help of “local geniuses” Tina and Kevin Quark, and their “ghostometer,” to get rid of the rustles and creaks in his house. Readers will also like Oppel’s A Creepy Case of Vampires.

The Dead Kid Detective Agency
written and illustrated by Evan Munday
(ECW Press, 2011)

Hanging around the cemetery, 13-year-old October Schwartz befriends five dead teenagers. When her teacher dies in a suspicious accident, October and her friends get involved in a murder plot and a search for the truth about a 40-year-old explosion.

The Giant Bear: An Inuit Folktale
written by Jose Anguitinggurniq
illustrated by Eva Widermann
(Inhabit Media, 2012)

One of the most frightening creatures in traditional Inuit stories is the nanurluk, a
massive bear with ice-covered fur that lives under the sea ice. When a lone hunter spots the breathing hole of a nanurluk near his iglu, he uses quick thinking and excellent hunting skills to outsmart the deadly bear. Also from Inhabit Media is The Qalupalik, written by Elisha Kilabuk and illustrated by Joy Ang.

**Haunted Canada 4:**
**More True Tales of Terror**
written by Joel A. Sutherland
illustrated by Norman Lanting
Scholastic Canada, 2014

Haunting encounters and unexplained incidents — this fourth book in the Haunted Canada series offers 28 unsettling and absolutely true ghost stories from across the country. Readers will also enjoy the revised *Haunted Canada Ghost Stories* by Pat Hancock and Allan Gould (Scholastic Canada, 2014).

**Sinister Scenes**
(The Joy of Spooking)
written by P.J. Bracegirdle
(Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2011)

Spooking, the terrible town on the hideous hill, has been overrun by disruptive outsiders — who have come to shoot a horror movie. When the star disappears, Joy Wells steps into the role and into a real-life horror. Young readers will also want to read the first two books — *Fiendish Deeds* and *Unearthly Asylum*.

**That One Spooky Night**
written by Dan Bar-el
illustrated by David Huyck
(Kids Can Press, 2012)

There can only be one night a year when a broom will search for a witch, mermaids might swim in a bathtub and a house party could get a little too batty. Here are three strange stories about that one spooky night!

**This House is Haunted**
written by Maureen Bayless
illustrated by Janet Wilson
(Scholastic Canada, 2011)

Howard has moved into a new old house with 29 creepy rooms and a ghost! He will do anything to get rid of the ghost — even if that means facing a bully. Originally published in 1993 as *Howard’s House is Haunted*.

**SENIOR FICTION FOR GRADES 7 AND UP**

**End of Days: Night Runner II**
written by Max Turner
(HarperCollins Canada, 2010)

As he and his friends cope with being vampires, Zachariah Thomson learns he is the subject of an ancient prophecy. Zack must re-examine what it means to be good at a time when only the strong and ruthless can survive. Sequel to *Night Runner*.

**Haunted**
written by Barbara Haworth-Attard
(HarperTrophyCanada, 2009)

Like her Gran, Dee has “the Sight,” the skill to see spirits from the afterlife and experience their earlier deaths. While aiding with the investigation of missing girls, Dee is pulled into a mystery that strikes frighteningly close to home.

**Hemlock**
written by Kathleen Peacock
(Katherine Tegen Books, 2012)

Mackenzie’s dreams are haunted by Amy, her best friend who was brutally murdered by a werewolf. Investigating Amy’s murder puts Mackenzie’s own life at risk, as she discovers secrets about her friends and her hometown of Hemlock.

**The Horrors:**
**Terrifying Tales, Book One**
edited by Peter Carver
Red Deer Press, 2005

Fifteen spine-tingling tales written by some of Canada’s leading writers for teens, including Don Aker, Brian Doyle, Kathy Stinson, Martine Leavitt and Karleen Bradford. Teen readers will also want to check out *The Horrors: Terrifying Tales, Book Two*.

**The Night Wanderer:**
(A Graphic Novel)
written by Drew Hayden Taylor
adapted by Alison Kooistra
illustrated by Michael Wyatt
(Annick Press, 2013)

Tiffany is having problems with her parents and her boyfriend. Little does she know that her father’s mysterious boarder, Pierre, is a First Nations vampire who has returned home to die. Her chilling encounter with Pierre helps her come to terms with her own troubles.

**Plain Kate**
written by Erin Bow
Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic, 2010

Plain Kate lives in a world of magic and curses, where cats can talk and shadows can reincarnate the dead — a hostile place that strips her of everything she holds dear. However, when that world falls prey to a vengeful madman, Kate must become the heroine within her.

**The Summoning**
(Darkest Powers)
written by Kelley Armstrong
(Doubleday Canada, 2008)

When Chloe Saunders suddenly starts seeing dead people, she gets locked up in Lyle House, a group home for unstable teens. But the home isn’t what it appears to be. Sequels in the trilogy are *The Awakening* and *The Reckoning*. 
Morgan on Ice  
(First Novels)  
by Ted Staunton  
illustrated by Bill Slavin  
Formac, 2013  
978-1-4595-0920-1 (pb) $5.95  
978-1-4595-0289-5 (hc) $14.95  
978-1-4595-0291-8 (eBook) $4.95  
for Grades 1 to 3  
Fiction | Friendship | Social Situations | Humour

Morgan is one of the most popular characters featured in the First Novels collection by Formac Publishing, with more than 15 Morgan titles now available. He is a delightful eight-year-old boy who gets himself into some difficult predicaments, but always finds an “interesting” solution to his problem. His best friend, Charlie, and his “arch nemesis,” Aldeen, also feature prominently in the stories, making the books appealing to both boys and girls.

In this latest instalment, Morgan is determined not to learn how to skate and wants to go see Monster Truck-A-Rama with Charlie. But Morgan has already promised to go to Princesses on Ice with Aldeen, and his parents won’t let him change his plans.

Kids will love this latest addition to the series, written with Ted Staunton’s dry wit and humour and illustrated with Bill Slavin’s comical drawings. They will easily relate to Morgan’s situation. The Morgan books provide the perfect transition into first novels. The chapters are kept very short (usually no longer than five pages), drawings are featured in every chapter, the books are never longer than 50 to 60 pages, but, best of all, they make kids laugh! Another new title, Morgan’s Got Game, will be available in the fall of 2014.

Bagels Come Home!  
written by Joan Betty Stuchner  
illustrated by Dave Whamond  
Orca Book Publishers, 2014  
978-1-45980-346-6 (pb) $6.95  
for Grades 2 to 4  
Fiction | Animals | Dogs | Mystery | Humour

Bagels Come Home! is one of the latest books in the Orca Echoes series for seven-to nine-year-olds and tells the story of Bagels, a whippet/Jack Russell/sheltie mix, who is adopted by the Bernstein family. Bagels is aptly named—as they discover when he eats a whole bag of bagels. He is an extremely energetic dog with a knack for escaping his confines. Hoping a session of obedience training will help Bagels calm down, the Bernstein family enrolls him at the local puppy school only to see him expelled. Josh and Becky, the Bernstein children, worried that if Bagels doesn’t shape up he’ll be returned to the shelter, must figure out how Bagels has become such a stealthy escape artist. Perhaps it’s Creamcheese, the family cat, that’s helping Bagels with his disappearing act?

Written by the late Joan Betty Stuchner, who passed away in June 2014, Bagels Come Home! is a hilarious story that will greatly amuse young readers. Known for her sense of humour, Joan loved to entertain children with her writing. She will be sadly missed by her writing colleagues.

Other recent titles available in the Orca Echoes series are Saving Sammy written by Eric Walters, illustrated by Amy Meissner and Ospreys in Danger written by Pamela McDowell, illustrated by Kasia Charko. The Orca Echoes series is designed for students who have transitioned into chapter books and are looking for something a little more challenging. Covering a wide range of topics, these books are usually 50 to 60 pages in length, with chapters that are three to eight pages long and contain one or two illustrations per chapter.
The Puppy Collection
by Susan Hughes
illustrated by Leanne Franson
Scholastic Canada, 2014
for Grades 1 to 4

Book 1: Bailey’s Visit
978-1-4431-2409-6 (pb) $5.99

Book 2: Riley Knows Best
978-1-4431-2410-2 (pb) $5.99

Book 3: Murphy Helps Out
978-1-4431-2411-9 (pb) $5.99

The Puppy Collection series is written for young dog lovers in Grades 2 to 3 who are ready for slightly longer chapter books (longer chapters, fewer illustrations and 80 to 90 pages in length). The main characters in the books are Kat and her best friend, Maya, who are both “totally dog crazy,” and each book features different breeds of dogs.

In the first instalment in this series, Bailey’s Visit, Kat’s aunt opens a dog-grooming salon and allows Kat and Maya to help out at the shop. They meet a chocolate Labrador retriever that Kat’s aunt is dog sitting and help to care for him. In the second book, Riley Knows Best, the girls meet a golden retriever, and a new girl at school makes Kat very uncomfortable. The third book, Murphy Helps Out, includes a little Shetland sheepdog and a lost cocker spaniel. When tension arises between Maya and Grace, the new girl at school, Kat hopes Murphy can help them sort it all out. The books are filled with black-and-white drawings by Leanne Franson that give children added clues as to what’s happening in the story. Watch for the fourth book, Bijou Needs a Home, this fall.

Sandra O’Brien is the CCBC Interim Program Coordinator and a former teacher with an M.Ed. in Children’s Literature.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE...

Gender Matters:
A roundtable discussion on labelling books for boys or for girls

Plus
A profile of author Tanya Lloyd Kyi; a quiz on Quebec children’s literature; an interview with illustrator Julie Flett; reviews of the latest books and much more

For more information, visit www.bookcentre.ca
**Words and Pictures**

Three novel/comic hybrids entice readers

**BY LAURA SHTERN**

Art Spiegelman famously said, “Comics are a gateway drug to literacy”—the idea being that comics can get you hooked on story and character and world building and language, until you need more substantive amounts and turn to novels for them. This does not in any way suggest that comics (and their library-friendly siblings, graphic novels) cannot be great literature in their own right, as is the case with Spiegelman’s own *Maus* or *This One Summer* by Mariko and Jillian Tamaki, reviewed in this issue. The fact remains that comics — certain kinds of comics — can pull in reluctant readers. In children’s books, this has led to the creation of hybrids to straddle that line. Some, such as Lincoln Pierce’s *Big Nate* books, have been huge successes. *Viminy Crowe’s Comic Book*, *Gottika* and *Project Superhero* present three different versions of the novel/comic hybrid.

**Viminy Crowe’s Comic Book**

written by Marthe Jocelyn and Richard Scrimger
illustrated by Claudia Davila
Tundra Books, 2014
978-1-77049-479-4 (hc) $19.99
978-1-77049-480-0 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 4 to 8

Fiction | Adventure | Fantasy | Steampunk | Comics | Ingenuity

*Viminy Crowe’s Comic Book* is a novel about comics. Eleven-year-old Wylder Wallace is enjoying his first solo visit to Toronto ComicFest when he meets Addy Crowe, niece and uncredited collaborator of Viminy Crowe, author of Wylder’s favourite comic. Addy has a pet rat named Catnip and a copy of the yet-to-be-released new issue of the comic in question—the steampunk adventure, *Flynn Goster*. After an encounter with a malfunctioning train display turns a convention-centre bathroom into a dimensional portal, Addy, Wylder, Catnip and the comic book all wind up inside the story of the comic book where they proceed to hopelessly derail the plot.

The interaction between the comic book and the world of the comic book is wonderful, as the changes Addy and Wylder make to the plot change the book (both their copy and the one Viminy Crowe has in the real world), and the mechanics of the comic control the world within the book. When Addy turns the page in the comic, she and Wylder are transported to the location shown on the next page. When Wylder throws the comic, the whole world tumbles. When the comic takes a dip in an alligator pit, the whole world floods. It is an excellent adventure all around, with great steampunk world building and several great characters. Comic panels are scattered throughout the book, with an old-school children’s adventure-comic quality to the art that works really well.

**Gottika**

written by Helaine Becker
illustrated by Alexander Griggs-Burr
Dancing Cat Books, 2014
9781770863910 (pb) $12.95
for Grades 5 to 9

Fiction | Jewish Legends | Fantasy | Golems | Folklore | Quests

*Gottika* belongs to another category of hybrid books, a straightforward novel with a few sections of comics. This is becoming more common, particularly in early chapter books, and is for the most
part well done here. *Gottika* is a retelling of the story of the Golem of Prague, reputedly brought forth from clay and sacred words by a 16th century rabbi to protect the Jews of Prague, then destroyed by his creator when he could not be controlled. Becker moves this story into a future dystopia, after famine and the failure of “digi-devices,” and the “info-cloud” has remade the world. The Stoons are people who were forced to leave their homeland long ago and now live in favelas outside the great city of Gottika. Though first welcomed into the land for their culture of knowledge, they are now a despised underclass, subject to oppressive laws forcing them to wear hats to denote their status, forbidding them from practising magic, curtailing education and movement and limiting family size. Things are getting even worse as the story begins. The Stoons are being framed for the murder of Gottikan children, and the evil Count Pol, ruler of Western Gottika, is kidnapping teenage girls. Dany, a 15-year-old Stoon, lives in the favela with his mother, who suffers from “the staring sickness,” and his father, who was once a great scholar and magician. Dany’s father brings forth the Golem, who defends the favela, and, with his help, Dany and his family take on the evil Count, learn secrets that can change everything and set Gottika on a new path. It makes for an exciting story, with very short chapters that move things along.

It is not a perfect book — the power structure of the city of Gottika doesn’t make a lot of sense, and the world building is more sketched than illustrated. The art has a grotesque quality that fits the mood of the story, and in places the art is very powerful. But there is a motionless quality to the art that keeps the push of the story in the written sections and relegates the comics to something supplementary. While the reading level would be fine for middle grades, there are swearing and suggestions of sexual violence, and child murder and ethnic hatred are major plot elements. As a result, the subject matter may make the book more appropriate for readers at the older end of this age range.

*Project Superhero* is a faux diary fiction/non-fiction hybrid about comic book superheroes, but without any comics (though it does have illustrations). Intrigued? You should be. Jessie, a 13-year-old comics nerd, is overjoyed with her eighth-grade class’s year-long project on superheroes — the Superhero Slam. Jessie throws herself into it wholeheartedly, trying to determine what makes a superhero. She decides the epitome of superhero-ness is Batgirl (Stephanie Brown version) and sets out to discover what it takes to be her. As part of her research, Jessie sends questionnaires to people with heroic qualities. This is the non-fiction aspect of the book, as the fictitious Jessie’s questionnaires are answered by real people, including comic book creators, scientists and athletes such as Clara Hughes and Hayley Wickenheiser. Jessie’s diary also records interactions with family, friends and enemies, training with her martial-artist aunt and periodic scientific infodumps about things she learned in school or while researching the project. Jessie comes across as enthusiastically interested in everything, which wouldn’t be particularly believable in a standard novel, but works in the particular context of this book. The illustrations throughout are wonderful and full of life and fun.

In different ways, all three of these books successfully use comics either as subject or as medium to bring the reader into the story. Share them with the reluctant readers in your life.

Laura Shtern is the Manager of Children’s Services for Niagara Falls Public Library.
We Recommend
NEW AND NOTED BOOKS FOR TODDLERS TO TEENS

We All Count:
A Book of Ojibway Art
written and illustrated by Jason Adair
Native Northwest, 2014
English and Ojibway
978-1-55476-396-2 (board book) $10.00
for Preschool to Grade 1

We All Count:
A Book of Cree Numbers
written and illustrated by Julie Flett
Native Northwest, 2014
English and Cree
978-1-55476-398-6 (board book) $10.00
for Preschool to Grade 1

Two board books in the We All Count series created by Native Northwest are strong additions to the counting-book genre. Though the styles of the artists are quite distinct, they share the important message that “We all count.”

The first book in the series We All Count: A Book of Ojibway Art by Ojibway artist Jason Adair provides an inviting introduction to Ojibway art and culture in addition to teaching children to count in two languages. The book combines vibrant images, stunning colours, numbers and text in English, and numbers in the Ojibway language. The importance of nature is emphasized by the striking illustrations. Each page introduces a number and a colour and a new creature. (It is interesting to note that people figure in just one of the illustrations.) Jason Adair draws inspiration from the Woodlands style of Ojibway art, and his illustrations complement the very simple bilingual text beautifully.

In We All Count: A Book of Cree Numbers, award-winning Cree-Métis artist Julie Flett creates a beautifully illustrated counting book that “subtly explores the connections among language, culture, and nature.” The colours and tone are equally lovely, though more subdued and more modern in style than Adair’s illustrations. Roughly half the illustrations feature people and their activities, while the others introduce different animals. This gentle bilingual celebration of Cree culture combines Cree and English numbers and simple English phrases with stylized illustrations that help guide young readers in their discovery.

These books will intrigue and engage preschool children and emerging readers alike. They will be an appreciated addition to library, classroom and home collections.

Robin Sales is a Montreal librarian enjoying a leave with her young son.

Work: An Occupational ABC
written and illustrated by Kellen Hatanaka
Groundwood Books, 2014
978-1-55498-409-1 (hc) $16.95
for Preschool to Grade 1

Picture Book | Alphabet Book | Occupations

With visual humour and exuberant illustrations author/illustrator Kellen Hatanaka takes what could be a very dry alphabet book about occupations and livens it right up. This silly, fun, flashy picture book introduces all kinds of options for the curious child. For example, who knew we could grow up to be Xenologists? (For that matter, who knew there were xenologists?) And did the ones in the illustration notice they are being studied by a humanoid creature with four legs and a tail? This is just one of many visual jokes that add interest and humour to the alphabetical listing of occupations. Rigid traditional roles for males and females did not limit Hatanaka’s imagination or illustrations, and those biases won’t be passed on to young readers.

The book concludes with want ads about each occupation. The word play might make adult readers groan but is likely to appeal to the elementary audience. This rollicking read is a worthwhile introduction to both the alphabet and work options. Children cannot dream of becoming something unless they have heard of it. From aviators to zookeepers, the book’s busy male and female characters illustrate in an amusing way that life is full of possibilities.

Robin Sales

Nancy Knows
written and illustrated by Cybèle Young
Tundra Books, 2014
978-1-77049-482-4 (hc) $19.99
for Preschool to Grade 2

Picture Book | Memory | Sorting

Nancy is an elephant facing a conundrum. Despite an elephant’s reputation for having a good memory, she is aware she has forgotten something very important. She mentally organizes the things she knows for sure, like objects and places, but ultimately it is in the space between her thoughts that she finally is able to remember the one elusive memory.

Author-illustrator Cybèle Young has expertly created drawings and paper artifacts to mirror what the elephant is thinking and doing. Nancy the elephant carefully lists and sorts through a large variety of objects with various attributes. The resultant visual representation of memory is intriguing. Is that a seesaw? A balloon? Is this a group of objects that all make noise? Technically and artisti-
cally, Young has produced an astonishing level of detail using only paper. The juxtaposition of the line drawings with the carefully crafted paper sculptures is sublime.

There are many opportunities for deeper discussion beyond the basic storyline. For example, what is the sorting rule for the various things the elephant remembers? Why did the elephant choose to include a pot with a lid in the group of objects remembered by her stomach? What exactly is memory?

Parents and classroom teachers will love the varied opportunities for learning and sharing that Nancy Knows presents. This is one of those books that, upon repeated readings, yield more and more details for discovery.

Nancy Rawlinson is an elementary teacher in the Toronto District School Board and a juror for the Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children’s Non-Fiction.

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**Letter Lunch**

*written and illustrated by Elisa Gutiérrez*  
*Owlkids Books, 2014*  
*978-1-77147-000-1 (hc) $17.95*  
*for Kindergarten to Grade 2*

**Picture Book | Wordless Book | Letters | Food**

Elisa Gutiérrez has written and illustrated an unusually successful storybook. This wordless odyssey of discovery unfolds through expressive mixed-media illustrations and connects the seemingly disparate worlds of writing and eating in a sort of imaginary Letterland.

At the beginning of the book, the boy and girl at the centre of the story are attempting to paint something on an easel but realize they are hungry. When they look in the kitchen, they find the cupboards are bare except for a single letter “c.” After creating a list of letters, they go shopping in the garden, the market and even on the top of a mountain. Returning home, they finally mix up their “letter lunch” that will nourish their creativity. In the end, the initially blank easel is bursting with useful and relevant vocabulary.

Gutiérrez has created illustrations that are deceptively simple. Having the story unfold exclusively through pictures is not an easy task. The contrast between the mainly blues, greens and greys of the pictures and the brightly coloured representation of the individual letters provides a welcome focus for each of the graphic panels. The idea to have consonants replace fruit and vegetables in a sort of edible metaphor is intriguing. Presenting vowels as the symbolic seasoning of words is simply ingenious.

At home and in the classroom, Letter Lunch provides a visual starting point for oral storytelling for children at all reading levels. Pre-readers, ESL students and developing and accomplished readers will all welcome this opportunity for personalized and creative storytelling.

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**Bear on the Homefront**

*written by Stephanie Innes and Harry Endrulat*  
*illustrated by Brian Deines*  
*Pajama Press, 2014*  
*978-1-927485-13-2 (hc) $19.95*  
*for Kindergarten to Grade 4*

**Picture Book | World War II | Canadian Homefront | Evacuees**

This is the second picture book about a teddy bear’s adventure created by the team of Stephanie Innes, Harry Endrulat and Brian Deines. The first book, A Bear in War, follows the adventures of a teddy bear on the front lines during World War I. In this second book, Bear on the Homefront, the reader follows this same teddy bear’s adventures, except the story takes place on the homefront during World War II.

During the second World War, as a result of the heavy bombings, many English children were shipped to allied countries to keep them safe. In Bear on the Homefront, Grace and William Chambers are sent to Canada to live with a family on their farm in Winnipeg. In Halifax, they are met by a nurse named Aileen Rogers, who accompanies them on their journey. To help alleviate the fear and stress the children are feeling, Aileen gives them her beloved teddy bear to comfort them while they’re in Canada. The teddy bear recounts the events that happen during his time with the children until he is returned to Aileen once again.

The story is created using events from Aileen Rogers’ diary and making her real-life teddy bear the narrator. Giving the teddy bear a voice and telling the story from his perspective makes the book more appealing to young readers and enables parents and educators to introduce history in an interesting way. The book can also be used with older readers as a means of introducing some of the events that occurred in World War II and providing further opportunities for children to research the events and facts for the time period presented in the text.

The beautiful and calming illustrations by Brian Deines enhance the text and hold the reader’s attention. Bear on the Homefront is a wonderful way to introduce children to history. It can be used to generate discussions about feelings that accompany life changes and to encourage children to seek out further information about world history.

Delia Cipollone Antonacci is a Professor in the Library and Information Technician Program, Seneca College
The Highest Number in the World
written by Roy MacGregor
illustrated by Geneviève Deprés
Tundra Books, 2014
978-1-77138-024-9 (hc) $18.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

Picture Book | Hockey | Girls in Hockey | Heroes

Nine-year-old Gabe (not to be called Gabriella) Murray lives and breathes hockey. She’s the youngest player on her team. She has created a move that her teammates call “the Gabe.” Her wish is to wear the same number as her hero Hayley Wickenheiser: number 22. But when her coach hands out the team jerseys, Gabe is given number 9. Heartbroken, Gabe wants to quit the team. How will she be able to play hockey without her lucky number? Gabe’s grandmother comes for a visit and tells Gabe that number 9 belonged to two of the greatest hockey legends of all time, Maurice “Rocket” Richard and Gordie Howe. She eventually convinces Gabe that this new number might not be so bad after all.

This fun and lively book breaks the stereotype that the love of hockey is just for boys. The main character is a feisty girl whose passion for hockey is communicated throughout the book. Her hero is not only Canadian, but is also a female Canadian hockey player, Hayley Wickenheiser. Gabe’s grandmother tells about her passion for the game as a young girl. Through her grandmother’s experience, the reader is able to see how playing hockey has changed for girls over time.

Geneviève Deprés’s illustrations bring the text to life. She captures the mood being described on the page and keeps the illustrations simple, yet colourful.

This book truly conveys the love of hockey across all generations and genders.

Delia Cipollone Antonacci

Bunny the Brave War Horse
written by Elizabeth MacLeod
illustrated by Marie Lafrance
Kids Can Press, 2014
978-1-77138-024-9 (hc) $18.95
for Grades 1 to 3

Picture Book | World War I | Horses | Courage

Award-winning author Elizabeth MacLeod introduces young readers to the events of World War I through Bunny the Brave War Horse, a story about a police horse with rather long ears who is selected to go overseas with two Canadian soldiers, brothers Thomas and Bud Dundas, to help during the war. Based on true events, the story takes readers from the selection of the horses in the police stables to the battlefields of France, showing the bravery of both the soldiers and the horses.

MacLeod’s simple language and straightforward manner is accompanied by a subtle undercurrent of sobering emotion, as readers learn about war. Thomas, Bud and Bunny dodge enemy bullets and encounter gas attacks, lack of food and shelter, and even death. Throughout the events of the war, MacLeod still is able to tell a touching story about the relationship between two brothers and a horse. Illustrator Marie Lafrance’s two-page spreads are drawn with a folk-like simplicity, resembling paper cut-outs placed against a muted colour palette of unembellished landscapes. The men could almost be toy soldiers — an effect that softens the harshness of some of the events portrayed.

Included at the end of the book are more historical details about the Dundas brothers, their experiences overseas and the contributions made by horses during World War I. There is also a simplified map of France. This book would serve as a good introduction to World War I for Remembrance Day for early grades.

Karri Yano is a Toronto writer and editor.

Julia, Child
written by Kyo Maclear
illustrated by Julie Morstad
Tundra Books, 2014
978-1-77049-449-7 (hc) $19.99
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

Picture Book | Cooking | Friendship

Inspired by Julia Child and Simone “Simca” Beck, who co-wrote the classic Mastering the Art of French Cooking, Kyo Maclear’s latest picture book will charm young and old alike. This Julia, after tasting a particularly good sole meunière, develops a deep appreciation for French cuisine, and she and her friend Simca embark on a quest to learn everything there is to know about cooking. They take classes, experiment in the kitchen and visit the market for the best ingredients, and do so with great élan. When they notice that the grown-ups around them lack the same enthusiasm, they decide to cook them a feast infused with youthful merriment. They are dismayed to find their dinner party descending into chaos, however, when the adults begin indulging in their usual greed and bad behaviour.

Julie Morstad’s clever illustrations leave the adult characters as colourless outlines, reflecting their lack of joie de vivre. They only begin to gain some colour at the very end, when they finally learn their lesson via the petits gateaux that Julia and Simca prepare for them. In contrast, Julia’s hot dishes give off a rainbow steam, and the pages illustrating her escapades with Simca are bright and whimsical. As with Maclear’s Virginia Wolf, adults will be able to appreciate the cultural references in this book, but children will relate to the main characters, who learn to understand the behaviour of others — in this case, cranky grown-ups. Younger readers might need help understanding the storyline, but the extra time will be well worth it. Julia, Child is sure to inspire a new generation of chefs.

Camila Kahrizi is the CCBC Marketing and Website Coordinator.
As the finest hunter and fisherman in his village, a young salmon-bearing rivers: the Skeena, the Nass and the Stikine.

Cloudwalker continues their retelling of First Nations legends from the British illustrator Roy Henry Vickers and oral historian Robert Budd. Following last year’s publication of Raven Brings the Light, author-illustrator Roy Henry Vickers and oral historian Robert Budd continue their retelling of First Nations legends from the British Columbia Northwest Coast. Cloudwalker, the second publication in their series, highlights the formation of this province’s largest salmon-bearing rivers: the Skeena, the Nass and the Stikine.

As the finest hunter and fisherman in his village, a young Gitxsan warrior generously provides food for the people in his community. One day, while engrossed in the trapping of trumpeter swans, he suddenly finds himself carried high up into the sky by the birds’ forceful wings and dropped onto the clouds. While finding his way home, the hunter discovers a waterproof cedar box filled with fresh water from which he drinks. Occasionally, some water spills out when he stumbles or falls. When he eventually returns to his home on earth, three new rivers are discovered in areas where previously there were none. All originated from the spilled water... “juice from the clouds.”

Vickers’ digital artwork is nothing short of stunning. His atmospheric illustrations, a portion of which are superimposed by a layer of glossy ink portraying traditional wildlife imagery, beckon readers to enter the pristine northern BC wilderness depicted within its pages.

Not only is Cloudwalker a memorable retelling of an ancient story, but it also emphasizes the vital importance of protecting our rivers: “The people of the Northwest Coast know that the richness of their culture and the wealth of the people comes from the rivers, the land and the sea. So, they teach their children to be respectful and responsible and take only what they need. They make sure the river is full of life to provide for future generations.”

Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario.

Any Questions? invites readers, young and old, to enter Marie-Louise Gay’s world. Here one can experience this much-loved author’s unique creative process through the delightful text and captivating watercolour, pencil, pastel, ink, coloured pencil and collage illustrations. Several of her favourite characters surface briefly en route, lending an air of familiarity and fantasy. The numerous questions posed by children are answered with creativity, humour and respect. And, in case you’re wondering what Gay’s favourite colour is, it’s purple... or green... or orange... “It depends on the weather.”

Senta Ross is an author and editor living in Western Bay, Newfoundland.

Cloudwalker
written by Roy Henry Vickers and Robert Budd
illustrated by Roy Henry Vickers
Harbour Publishing, 2014
978-1-55017-619-3 (hc) $19.95
for Grades 2 and up
Picture Book | First Nations | Origin Stories | Rivers

Following last year’s publication of Raven Brings the Light, author-illustrator Roy Henry Vickers and oral historian Robert Budd continue their retelling of First Nations legends from the British Columbia Northwest Coast. Cloudwalker, the second publication in their series, highlights the formation of this province’s largest salmon-bearing rivers: the Skeena, the Nass and the Stikine.

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Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario.

Any Questions?
written and illustrated by Marie-Louise Gay
Groundwood Books, 2014
978-1-55498-382-7 (hc) $19.95
for Grades 2 and up
Picture Book | Creativity

“Where do your ideas come from?” “How did you learn to draw?” “Where does a story start?” “What is your favorite color?”

These are only a few of the questions author-illustrator Marie-Louise Gay has been asked by curious children who wish to learn where stories and illustrations originate and how a book is made. Her illuminating responses can be found in Any Questions? (a book about an imaginary encounter between Gay and an inquisitive group of children as they collaborate on writing and illustrating a story). “A story always starts with a blank white page... If you stare long enough at a blank piece of paper, anything can happen...” And so it does! From an assortment of words and ideas, scribbles, doodles, sketches and collages, imaginations soar, inhibitions fade — and a marvellous tale gradually emerges. Happily, the ending of this narrative serves as the beginning of another.

Any Questions? invites readers, young and old, to enter Marie-Louise Gay’s world. Here one can experience this much-loved author’s unique creative process through the delightful text and captivating watercolour, pencil, pastel, ink, coloured pencil and collage illustrations. Several of her favourite characters surface briefly en route, lending an air of familiarity and fantasy. The numerous questions posed by children are answered with creativity, humour and respect. And, in case you’re wondering what Gay’s favourite colour is, it’s purple... or green... or orange... “It depends on the weather.”

Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario.

The Elevator Ghost
written by Glen Huser
illustrated by Stacy Innerst
Groundwood Books, 2014
978-1-55498-425-1 (hc) $14.95
978-1-55498-426-8 (pb) $9.95
978-1-55498-427-5 (eBook) $12.95
for Grades 3 to 6
Fiction | Ghosts | Storytelling

The Elevator Ghost is a delicious confection written by Glen Huser (winner of the Governor General’s Literary Award for Stitches), with eerie black-and-white illustrations by Stacy Innerst. Carolina Giddle, a babysitter faintly reminiscent of Mary Poppins, entertains her charges with delightfully gorpy homemade snacks and mesmerizing stories. Rather than floating down to earth with an open umbrella, Carolina arrives on Halloween night in a glittering Volkswagen stuck all over with tiny objects: Tinker toys, fridge magnets, jewellery and silver spoons.

Huser gleefully reimagines familiar stories that particularly appeal to children — a skeleton on the hunt for his stolen foot, a ghost ship full of tantrum-prone pirates, a consumptive ghost who rides the elevator. Each story is in itself a perfect little gem. His transformation of a Chinese legend into a very creepy story that takes place on a movie set is a masterful example of creative storytelling.

Huser’s sense of humour and playful approach to language shines through in the original names he comes up with for people — Jack Scrumble, Miss Peebles, Hubert Croop — and for snacks — Jupiterian Jumbles, granghoula bars and Rumpelstiltskin sandwiches. His characters are vividly drawn and very real: a five-year-old who specializes in spectacular tantrums, a boy obsessed with extraterrestrials, and Carolina herself, with her gentle appreciation of her ghostly companions, her creative approach to keeping children in order and her affection for Chiquita, her pet tarantula.

The Elevator Ghost would be an excellent book to read aloud to children aged six and up, and a compelling read for older children. We can only hope that the enchanting Carolina Giddle will soon return in her sparkling Volkswagen to tell us more stories.

Charis Cotter is an author and editor living in Western Bay, Newfoundland.

Any Questions?
written and illustrated by Marie-Louise Gay
Groundwood Books, 2014
978-1-55498-382-7 (hc) $19.95
for Grades 2 and up
Picture Book | Creativity

“Where do your ideas come from?” “How did you learn to draw?” “Where does a story start?” “What is your favorite color?”

These are only a few of the questions author-illustrator Marie-Louise Gay has been asked by curious children who wish to learn where stories and illustrations originate and how a book is made. Her illuminating responses can be found in Any Questions? (a book about an imaginary encounter between Gay and an inquisitive group of children as they collaborate on writing and illustrating a story). “A story always starts with a blank white page... If you stare long enough at a blank piece of paper, anything can happen...” And so it does! From an assortment of words and ideas, scribbles, doodles, sketches and collages, imaginations soar, inhibitions fade — and a marvellous tale gradually emerges. Happily, the ending of this narrative serves as the beginning of another.

Any Questions? invites readers, young and old, to enter Marie-Louise Gay’s world. Here one can experience this much-loved author’s unique creative process through the delightful text and captivating watercolour, pencil, pastel, ink, coloured pencil and collage illustrations. Several of her favourite characters surface briefly en route, lending an air of familiarity and fantasy. The numerous questions posed by children are answered with creativity, humour and respect. And, in case you’re wondering what Gay’s favourite colour is, it’s purple... or green... or orange... “It depends on the weather.”

Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario.

Cloudwalker
written by Roy Henry Vickers and Robert Budd
illustrated by Roy Henry Vickers
Harbour Publishing, 2014
978-1-55017-619-3 (hc) $19.95
for Grades 2 and up
Picture Book | First Nations | Origin Stories | Rivers

Following last year’s publication of Raven Brings the Light, author-illustrator Roy Henry Vickers and oral historian Robert Budd continue their retelling of First Nations legends from the British Columbia Northwest Coast. Cloudwalker, the second publication in their series, highlights the formation of this province’s largest salmon-bearing rivers: the Skeena, the Nass and the Stikine.

As the finest hunter and fisherman in his village, a young Gitxsan warrior generously provides food for the people in his community. One day, while engrossed in the trapping of trumpeter swans, he suddenly finds himself carried high up into the sky by the birds’ forceful wings and dropped onto the clouds. While finding his way home, the hunter discovers a waterproof cedar box filled with fresh water from which he drinks. Occasionally, some water spills out when he stumbles or falls. When he eventually returns to his home on earth, three new rivers are discovered in areas where previously there were none. All originated from the spilled water... “juice from the clouds.”

Vickers’ digital artwork is nothing short of stunning. His atmospheric illustrations, a portion of which are superimposed by a layer of glossy ink portraying traditional wildlife imagery, beckon readers to enter the pristine northern BC wilderness depicted within its pages.

Not only is Cloudwalker a memorable retelling of an ancient story, but it also emphasizes the vital importance of protecting our rivers: “The people of the Northwest Coast know that the richness of their culture and the wealth of the people comes from the rivers, the land and the sea. So, they teach their children to be respectful and responsible and take only what they need. They make sure the river is full of life to provide for future generations.”

Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario.
Separated from his family, a boy named Werner finds himself sharing a bunk in the Auschwitz concentration camp with a quiet, kindly man named Levin. Their days are filled with exhausting work, and their evenings are fueled by fear. One night, Werner is awakened by prison guards yelling, “Do your magic!... Show us your tricks!” It is Levin they want. All eyes rest on this prisoner as he masterfully performs one magic trick after another, using a deck of cards given to him by a guard.

This scene repeats itself many times, and Levin continues to amaze the onlookers with his ever-changing repertoire. Werner learns that the tricks have a deeper significance than mere entertainment for Levin. “If I displease these guards, if I fail in my magic, if I run out of tricks, if they tire of me... my life will be over.” Levin teaches a card trick to the young Werner with the hope that it will keep him alive as well. Both survive and go their separate ways after the war is over. It is only through reading an obituary in 1977, that Werner realizes that his friend had been a famous magician, known throughout Europe and the United States as “The Great Nivelli.”

In her first picture book, Kathy Kacer has written a gripping account of survival and hope during one of the darkest times in history. One cannot help but be moved by Levin’s gift of magic and friendship that transforms the days of a lonely boy who, in turn, retains a lifelong love of magic. An afterword contains information and photographs of the real-life Werner and the Great Nivelli.

With the exception of fragments of red on the playing cards, Gillian Newland’s compelling graphite illustrations, coloured digitally, are primarily black and grey, reflecting the oppressive conditions in the camp. A particularly evocative picture is that of Levin’s and Werner’s hands as they do a magic trick together... an inspirational and hope-filled moment that is remembered for a lifetime.

Senta Ross

### The Magician of Auschwitz
written by Kathy Kacer
illustrated by Gillian Newland
Second Story Press, 2014
978-1-927583-46-3 (hc) $18.95
for Grades 3 and up

**Picture Book | Holocaust | Magic and Magicians**

He doesn’t have a big nose. His skin is smooth. His tail is embarrassingly short. Thanks to his appearance, Bog looks almost more human than troll, a fact that makes him uncomfortably self-conscious.

But life for a cave troll in the wooded hills of Northern Ontario feels like a bit of an outsider. He looks almost more human than troll, a fact that makes him uncomfortably self-conscious.

Although Bog can be unsympathetic at times, he’s never unlikeable. Occasionally, he’s hot headed and stubborn, but that makes him real, a character readers will enjoy accompanying on his quest. If you’re not won over by this charming tale, you might be, like Bog’s father, made of stone.

Joel A. Sutherland is an Information Assistant at the Ajax Public Library and the author of *Haunted Canada* 4 (Scholastic Canada)

### Tales from Big Spirit series
written by David A. Robertson
Highwater Press, 2014
all books $16.95
for Grades 3 to 7

#### The Ballad of Nancy April: Shawnadithit
illustrated by Scott B. Henderson
978-1-55379-476-9

#### The Poet: Pauline Johnson
illustrated by Wai Tien
978-1-55379-479-0

#### The Rebel: Gabriel Dumont
illustrated by Andrew Lodwick
978-1-55379-481-3

#### The Scout: Tommy Prince
illustrated by Scott B. Henderson
978-1-55379-478-3

### Graphic Novels | First Nations History | Heroes

The lives and contributions of both well-known and less familiar Indigenous figures from Canadian history, including Thanadelthur, Gabriel Dumont, Pauline Johnson, Tommy Prince and Shawnadithit, are featured in this graphic-novel series. (A sixth book featuring John Ramsey was not available at the time these books were reviewed.) Each historical figure is introduced through the eyes of a child attending Big Spirit First Nation School. When faced with their own personal challenges, like the fear of speaking in front of
On a Scale of Idiot to Complete Jerk: A Highly Scientific Study of Annoying Behavior — Science Project by J.J. Murphy
written by Alison Hughes
Orca Book Publishers, 2014
978-1-4598-0484-5 (pb) $9.95
978-1-4598-0486-9 (ebook) $6.59
for Grades 4 to 7

Fiction | Humour | Human Relations

Grade 8 student J.J. Murphy offers up some hilarious observations about the dark side of human nature in this “Science Report.” Applying the scientific method or, as he puts it, “looking at things in a sciencey way,” our narrator presents case studies, graphs and charts documenting the churlishness he finds all around him. Pushy kindergarteners, rude old codgers, mouthy parents and mean-spirited bus drivers all come under fire here as he studies examples of “jerkitude.” There’s a whole chart on “Rating Annoying Teacher Behavior,” and a chapter on “Jerks in Sport.” Case studies also examine whether or not “jerkishness” is hereditary. And there’s a fun quiz at the end.

J.J.’s descriptions will have readers not only laughing out loud but also reading passages aloud to whoever will listen — they are that funny. And yet, amidst all the hijinks, J.J. waxes philosophical when he poses questions like “Can you be born a jerk?” or “Once a jerk, always a jerk?” These inquiries may lead readers toward a better understanding of why people behave in mean and annoying ways.

Scott Robins is a Toronto librarian and the co-author (with Snow Wildsmith) of A Parent’s Guide to the Best Kids’ Comics.
The case study on the popular kids’ lunchroom behaviour spotlights a familiar kind of cruelty that for some readers may hit a nerve rather than a funny bone, but J.J. provides welcome levity with the graphs and Venn diagrams that follow by way of explanation. (Circles representing each individual’s “jerkish” behaviour overlap in what he terms “The Complete Jerk Quadrant.”)

Delivered in a chatty, irreverent tone, and peppered with entertaining line drawings and a variety of graphics, Alison Hughes’ book will be enjoyed by students who are in or approaching middle school, and may especially appeal to reluctant readers. (It reminded this reader that, when faced with difficult people, a sense of humour is a great resource to keep in mind.)

Darby Macnab works in the Learning Commons at The Bishop Strachan School in Toronto.

**Red River Raging** *(Disaster Strikes, Book 8)*
written by Penny Draper
Coteau Books, 2014
978-1-55050-584-9 (pb) $10.95
978-1-55050-803-1 (eBook) $10.95
for Grades 4 to 8

*Historical Fiction / Red River / Manitoba / Floods / Natural Disasters / Courage*

The eighth book in the Disaster Strikes series focuses on the Red River Flood of 1997. While his parents are studying the Yenisei River and its people in northern Russia, almost-14-year-old Finn is left behind, “exiled” with his grandmother and great-grandfather in Ste. Agathe, just south of Winnipeg, facing a boring winter and yet another new school. But he is soon caught up in a river adventure of his own, as the community prepares for the Flood of the Century.

Draper accurately captures the inexorable approach of the Flood with the cleanup of the houses and farms in the water’s path. The mysteries our two young heroines set out to solve will keep readers eagerly turning the pages, and the author’s attention to detail gives the book depth and emotional resonance. The prose is read with a nerve rather than a funny bone, but J.J. provides welcome levity with the graphs and Venn diagrams that follow by way of explanation. (Circles representing each individual’s “jerkish” behaviour overlap in what he terms “The Complete Jerk Quadrant.”)

Delivered in a chatty, irreverent tone, and peppered with entertaining line drawings and a variety of graphics, Alison Hughes’ book will be enjoyed by students who are in or approaching middle school, and may especially appeal to reluctant readers. (It reminded this reader that, when faced with difficult people, a sense of humour is a great resource to keep in mind.)

Darby Macnab works in the Learning Commons at The Bishop Strachan School in Toronto.

**The Swallow: A Ghost Story**
written by Charis Cotter
Tundra Books, 2014
978-1-77049-591-3 (hc) $17.99
for Grades 4 to 9

*Fiction / Friendship / Ghosts*

Polly lives in an old row house filled with big closets, dark corners and a dusty attic. It’s the perfect home for a ghost, Polly imagines, and as a voracious reader of fantasy novels she’d love nothing more than to come face to face with one. When she first meets Rose, the quiet girl with dark hair and pale skin who moves in next door, Polly believes she’s finally found a real ghost, and a friendship between the two girls is born.

Rose, on the other hand, *can see ghosts* — she sees them all the time, although she’d rather not. They’re creepy and needy, and Rose has other issues to contend with. Her parents are rarely home, she’s an only child and the kids and teachers at school largely ignore her. Hardly anyone ever speaks to her. Maybe Polly is right. Maybe Rose is a ghost…

The friendship between Polly and Rose is the beating heart of *The Swallow*. In many ways they’re polar opposites — Polly is loud, outgoing and comes from a large family, while Rose is soft-spoken, shy and isolated — but they’re both lonely and craving attention. Their relationship is sweet and bittersweet, for as the story unfolds they uncover some hard truths about their families and themselves that are hard to swallow. However, they go through these challenges together and the bond between them feels real.

The mysteries our two young heroines set out to solve will keep readers eagerly turning the pages, and the author’s attention to detail gives the book depth and emotional resonance. The prose is haunting and evocative. *The Swallow* doesn’t just fly; it soars.

Joel A. Sutherland

**Finding Ruby Starling**
written by Karen Rivers
Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic, 2014
978-0-545-53479-6 (hc) $18.99
for Grades 5 to 9

*Fiction / Twins*

*Finding Ruby Starling* is a ghost story. However, it is not a ghost story in the conventional sense. Instead, it is a story about finding family and identity. Ruby Starling is a young girl who lives in England and looks exactly like her twin sister, Ruby. However, she has other issues to contend with. Her parents are rarely home, she’s an only child and the kids and teachers at school largely ignore her. Hardly anyone ever speaks to her. Maybe Polly is right. Maybe Rose is a ghost…

The friendship between Polly and Rose is the beating heart of *The Swallow*. In many ways they’re polar opposites — Polly is loud, outgoing and comes from a large family, while Rose is soft-spoken, shy and isolated — but they’re both lonely and craving attention. Their relationship is sweet and bittersweet, for as the story unfolds they uncover some hard truths about their families and themselves that are hard to swallow. However, they go through these challenges together and the bond between them feels real.

The mysteries our two young heroines set out to solve will keep readers eagerly turning the pages, and the author’s attention to detail gives the book depth and emotional resonance. The prose is haunting and evocative. *The Swallow* doesn’t just fly; it soars.

Joel A. Sutherland
and Ruby are achingly earnest in their emails/letters/posts, and Ruth’s musings in particular are often so heartbreakingly honest that they offer truly profound observations on life, love, family and forgiveness. The format in which Rivers has chosen to tell this story is also worthy of note in that it is a highly effective way to get to know both girls. It also creates a sense of immediacy and helps the author maintain a spirit of levity, even as her characters wrestle with intense, and sometimes overwhelming, emotions. This book deals with issues such as adoption, abandonment and betrayal, and its protagonists are so genuine and believable that the story will capture a wide range of readers.

Lisa Doucet is Co-Manager of Woozles, the Halifax bookstore.

Seven Wild Sisters: A Modern Fairy Tale
written by Charles de Lint
illustrated by Charles Vess
Little, Brown and Company, 2014
978-0-316-05356-3 (hc) $20.00
978-0-316-23995-0 (eBook) $9.99
for Grades 6 to 9

Fiction | Magic | Fantasy | Siblings | Differences

Sarah Jane Dillard is the middle one of the seven sisters, an imaginative child who has always wanted to see fairies in the forest. She is the only sister who goes to the homestead at the end of the lane to help “Aunt Lilly” who lives there without electricity, running water or heat. One day, when Sarah Jane goes out alone to harvest wild ginseng, she finally comes upon magic; it is not at all what she expected. She seeks help from Aunt Lilly and they go on an adventure in the Other World with Old Man Tree.

In all the ways that count, this really is a fairy tale that takes place in the modern world. Charles de Lint has created a story that is traditional and contemporary, realistic and fantastic. Sarah Jane is a likeable character that you want to accompany. She cares for all the creatures she meets and follows the magical rules she has been taught, even when she is not sure that she believes in magic. Aunt Lilly is the same Lillian Kindred who was the protagonist of The Cats of Tanglewood Forest. This story stands on it own, although you will have a deeper understanding of Lillian if you have read The Cats of Tanglewood Forest.

The illustrations by Charles Vess are a wonderful addition to this tale. There are beautiful illuminated capitals at the beginning of each chapter and scenes from the story scattered throughout the text.

Seven Wild Sisters is a great introduction to the writing of Charles de Lint and might lead readers to a number of other stories when they are ready for more adult fare.

Willow Moonbeam is a math professor and librarian.

Finding Melissa
written by Cora Taylor
Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2014
978-1-55455274-0 (pb) $12.95
for Grades 9 and up

Fiction | Mystery | Memory

Award-winning author Cora Taylor’s latest young adult novel, Finding Melissa, is a finely crafted mystery, examining our perceptions of hidden truths, story and memory. Since she was six, Clarice Warren has lived with the unsettling feeling that she could have prevented the kidnapping of her younger sister, Melissa. During a family camping trip, Clarice believes that her mother’s obsession with what happened is the reason why they don’t connect and why her father left them. To help Clarice deal with her guilt, her school guidance counsellor suggests she keep a journal. As Clarice explores her feelings and what happened that night, she decides to become a summer volunteer at Child Find, stumbling upon a possible lead to her sister’s whereabouts. This also gives Taylor the opportunity to provide additional details about the danger of online predators and the importance of privacy.

Unaware of her true identity, Lessa (Melissa) lives with her Aunt Eliza Tok is the Shang Sorceress, one of a line of powerful guardians between the human world of Di Shang and the magical realm of Tian Xia. Raised without knowledge of her heritage, she has only recently accepted and begun to grow into her magic. Eliza has been in a constant battle between her responsibilities as a Sorceress and her loyalty to her loved ones — and when her friend Charlie becomes threatened, she must choose once again.

This is the final book in The Last Days of Tian Di trilogy, a captivating young adult series, and a fitting climax to an adventurous fantasy story. The characters we have come to know and love from the previous two books have grown up, and are faced with challenges and choices that mirror those of many young adults. It’s easy to relate to their struggles and doubts, which remain decidedly realistic despite the lush fantasy setting. Tian Di is a richly imagined world peopled by intriguing characters, ranging from the glowing, scholarly Mancers to the duplicitous, beautiful faeries. Bone, Fog, Ash & Star takes us to the far reaches of the human and magical worlds, giving us a taste of both mortal conflicts and fantastical ones, which, in the end, are more similar than dissimilar.

Eliza’s struggle is one that is easy to relate to. She strives for independence even as she regrets leaving her family — and childhood — behind; it’s a journey that everyone must travel as they become adults. Bone, Fog, Ash & Star is an engrossing celebration of fantasy and the power of young women to change both their own destinies and the world’s.

Hanna Felske is a former intern at the CCBC and a graduate of Centennial College’s Book and Magazine Publishing Program.
Rosie (who doesn’t know the truth either) in a small farmhouse in Tomahawk, Alberta. She believes that her mother gave her up when she was baby and that her father, having issues with the law, left Lessa there with his sister. When Lessa’s “father” (the kidnapper Hank) returns after being in prison, the last thing she wants to do is go with him, as there is something about him — a memory maybe — that tells her he’s not to be trusted.

Told from three points of view, the novel’s tension is enhanced by the addition of Hank’s perspective. Taylor deftly shows an unrepentant man with misogynist attitudes who is used to manipulating his family and navigating outside the law — a clever device as readers will know more than Lessa and Clarice about what awaits if they don’t stop him.

Melanie Fishbane is a freelance writer in Toronto and a graduate of the Vermont College of Fine Arts MFA program.

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The Story of Owen: Dragon Slayer of Trondheim
written by E.K. Johnston
Carolrhoda Lab, 2014
978-1-46771-066-4 (hc) $19.95
for Grades 7 and up
Fiction | Dragons | Rural Ontario | Fossil Fuels | Fantasy

As far back as history goes, there have been dragons, and dragon slaying has always been a proud profession. But dragons and humans have one thing in common: an appetite for fossil fuels. From the moment Henry Ford hired his first Dragon Slayer, no small town was safe — including the rural Canadian town of Trondheim — until Owen Thorskard arrived. At 16, with dragons advancing and his grades plummeting, Owen faced impossible odds — armed only with a sword, his legacy and Siobhan McQuaid, the classmate who agreed to be his bard.

Dragons are a staple of high-fantasy stories, and The Story of Owen offers readers an original spin on the popular convention. Set in present-day rural Ontario, the story takes place in an alternate world where the dragon threat has always been part of everyday life, made worse by industrialization and carbon emissions. In Johnson’s world, hybrid cars are the safer choice, Michigan is an abandoned wasteland, and fires need to be kept to a minimum for fear of attracting a dragon.

The story is told from the perspective of Siobhan, a grounded, well-developed character who is witty, intelligent, talented, fierce and refreshingly free of drama. She learns early on the necessity of embellishing and modifying the details of a story, and she encourages her readers to decide for themselves how much, or if any, of it is true.

Throughout the novel, elements of Canadian history are seamlessly woven into the alternate history, creating a fully believable world and plot, with subtle commentary about our carbon footprint and the need to protect the world’s natural resources. Clever, fast-moving and full of humour, The Story of Owen proves that no love triangle is necessary to create a compelling and entertaining read for young adults.

Rachel Seigel

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Saving Houdini
written by Michael Redhill
HarperCollins Canada, 2014
978-1-44340-994-0 (hc) $19.99
for Grades 5 to 9
Fiction | Time Travel | Magic | Houdini

Dashiel Woolf is thrilled when famous magician Bloom the Beguiler brings him onstage during a special performance to mark the 85th anniversary of Houdini’s death. But a century-old trick goes inexplicably wrong, transporting Dash back to 1926. Wandering the streets of Toronto, he barely recognizes the city, but with the help of his new friend, Walt, he hatches a plan to invent a trick to transport him home. This trick might also prevent the Great Houdini from taking part in the event that ended his life, possibly changing history forever.

Michael Redhill, an award-winning adult author, ventures into children’s books with this fun, historical adventure story. Setting the book in the streets of 1920s Toronto, Redhill does an excellent job of demonstrating how this now bustling metropolis would appear to a contemporary visitor. Dashiel’s mix of wonder, fear and skepticism is perfectly captured, and readers will appreciate his inventiveness and ingenuity as he finds ways to survive in this foreign time period.

Bringing a personality such as Harry Houdini to life is no easy feat, but Redhill does it well. His passion for his subject is obvious, and Houdini appears in the book as the larger-than-life figure that he was. His interactions with Walt and Dashiel are believable and cleverly conceived, and readers will find themselves hoping that Dash is successful in his mission to save Houdini.

From train hopping to Montreal to evading local police to escaping from a Dickensian-like workhouse for children, the action is non-stop, and kids will be fully along for the ride. While some aspects of the story could have been better resolved (such as Dash’s real purpose in going back), this will not detract from the overall enjoyment of the book.

Rachel Seigel is Sales and Selection Strategist at EduCan Media.
This One Summer
created by Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki
Groundwood Books, 2014
978-1-55458-152-6 (pb) $18.95
for Grades 7 and up
Friendship | Coming-of-Age | Relationships | Secrets | Family

Mariko and Jillian Tamaki’s 2008 debut graphic novel, *Skin*, was critically acclaimed and nominated for many awards, including four Eisner Awards and the Governor General’s Literary Award. It took six years for their sophomore effort to come out, but *This One Summer* has been worth the wait. The story follows Rose, a girl just on the cusp of adolescence, on her annual summer family stay at the cottage in Awago Beach. Rose quickly re-establishes her cottage routine and connects with her cottage friends, or rather cottage friend, singular. Windy, a year and a half younger than Rose, has been her summer-cottage friend since Rose was five. Windy is still firmly planted in childhood, while Rose is edging out of it.

Windy is safe and familiar, but lots of things are different this year. Rose’s mother is fragile this summer, fighting with Rose’s father and refusing to go in the water. And at the little convenience store in Awago Beach, where Rose and Windy make daily visits to buy candy and rent slasher flicks, they overhear the local teenagers talking about things they don’t quite understand.

*This One Summer* is at once an intricate portrait of the end of childhood and an ode to the magic of summer at the cottage. The whole story has a particular time-out-of-time quality, which perfectly captures that feeling of summer away from real life. Jillian Tamaki’s expressive black-and-grey drawings convey Windy’s care-free joy, Rose’s stillness, her mother’s brokenness and the teenagers’ brashness. Throughout the book, the art evokes the melancholy of childhood and an ode to the magic of summer at the cottage.

Laura Shtern is the Manager of Children’s Services for Niagara Falls Public Library.

Rachel’s Hope
(The Rachel Trilogy, Book 3)
written by Shelly Sanders
Second Story Press, 2014
978-1-92758-342-5 (pb) $12.95
for Grades 7 to 10
Fiction | Jewish History | Russian History | Immigrant Stories

*Rachel’s Hope* is the third and final book in Sanders’ The Rachel Trilogy. Seventeen-year-old Rachel, a Jewish girl born in pre-revolutionary Russia, is now living in San Francisco and has dreams of going to university and becoming a writer. Three years earlier, she witnessed the death of her Christian friend, Mikhail, and the subsequent 1903 Kishinev pogrom that bathed her hometown in blood. Fleeing the anti-Semitic violence, Rachel travelled to China, leaving behind her Russian Orthodox friend, Sergei.

Having survived the journey from Russia to Shanghai and finally to California, Rachel and her family endure poverty and back-breaking work to carve out a home for themselves. Rachel is inspired by Anna Struksy, amongst other women activists and writers. Despite losing their meagre home in the 1906 earthquake that levelled San Francisco, she remains determined to go to school and to continue her career as a journalist. Back in Moscow, Sergei is involved in the fight for democracy and freedom of speech. But his work distributing illegal newspapers and preparing for revolution puts him at great risk of cruel reprisal from the Russian Tsarist regime.

In *Rachel’s Hope*, Sanders ably combines historical fact with a gripping fictional story, knitting together the grim realities of pre-revolutionary Russia and the plight of Russian Jews with the hopes and dreams of a young girl building her life. Through Rachel and Sergei’s eyes, readers are given a candid glimpse into both the immigrant experience in early America and life inside tsarist Russia, which is teetering on the brink of revolution.

Inspired by the author’s grandmother, who survived a Russian pogrom and escaped to Shanghai and then to the United States, *Rachel’s Hope* is a must-read for fans of historical fiction. Delving into an underexplored period in history, the book includes a glossary as well as a detailed Historical Note.

Tracey Schindler is a former teacher currently working at the Ajax Public Library.

Playing With Matches
written by Suri Rosen
ECW Press, 2014
978-1-77041-182-1 (pb) $12.95
for Grades 7 to 11
Fiction | Family and Community | Matchmaking

Raina Resnick’s life appears to have taken an unhappy turn as of late. Expelled from her New York high school, she has been sent to live with her no-nonsense aunt in Toronto. She also discovers that her sister blames her for the recent collapse of their family’s business. Friendless at her new school, Rain stumbles into the unlikely gig of matchmaking within her Jewish community. With a surprising number of lonely men and women turning to the anonymous “Matchmaven” with their sad stories, Rain hardly feels qualified to advise them. Then Matchmaven receives a letter from her sister and she realizes that this may be just the key to helping Leah find love, and repairing their damaged relationship. But as she secretly tries to find the perfect pairings for not only Leah but many of her other would-be clients, she discovers that matchmaking is hard work. Her grades begin to slide, and her family becomes increasingly frustrated with her odd behaviour. However, surely it will all be worth it if only she can find a soulmate for Leah…

Featuring a witty and sympathetic protagonist, Rosen’s first novel is highly entertaining. She delightfully depicts both the quirks and the many charms of a close-knit Jewish community in a way that makes any reader feel at home in Rain’s world. Rain’s growth and maturation during the story are realistically rendered, and while her wry observations are frequently laughable, her genuine desire to help the lonely people who reach out to her is heartwarming. Moreover, the life lessons she learns along the way are insightful and inspiring.

Lisa Doucet
In a not-too-distant future, in a society that kills or abandons anyone with a physical disability, Whisper has found a loving family deep in the forest, hidden from view. When her cruel father forces her to become his house slave, her only solace is her music. Whisper has all but given up hope of ever feeling safe or loved when she is sent to Purgatory Palace, where other “rejects” gather. Could it be that home and love are closer than she thought?

In her debut novel, author Chris Struyk-Brown paints a chilling portrait of a future society where usefulness is tied to physical appearance, and those who are different are treated as less than human. Born with a cleft palate, Whisper is one of these societal rejects, used to abandonment, and to feel lonely. Whisper is a fascinating, multi-layered character. She identifies with the song of the violin — sad and lonely. It’s her comfort, her escape, her joy and her hope — everything she feels is in the music she plays — and it plays a part in each step of her journey. Whisper is strong and resilient and, despite the terrible cruelties she endures, she always perseveres and remains hopeful. Her detailed observations of her world give readers a clear insight into her reality.

The natural world also plays an important role in this novel, and while an exact cause is never given for the deformities, there are suggestions that environmental pollutants are responsible.

Taking on themes of identity, belonging, class and gender, Whisper is a thoughtful and highly engaging young adult novel that will keep readers thinking and discussing long after reading.

Rachel Seigel

Whoosh! A Watery World of Wonderful Creatures
written by Marilyn Baillie
illustrated by Susan Mitchell
Owlkids Books, 2014
978-1-926973-98-2 (hc) $17.95
for Preschool to Grade 2
Non-fiction | Water Animals | Animal Movement

From sliding like a penguin or floating like an otter to hiding like a clownfish or getting a bath like a baby elephant, Whoosh! offers a delightful new way for children to learn about creatures that live in and near water. Each beautifully illustrated spread introduces an animal involved in an activity on one side and a child mimicking the animal’s actions on the other. The echoing images bring to life the real ways that animals behave and how a child’s own play in the water can look similar.

Award-winning children’s author and former editor of chick-aDEEE magazine, Baillie has been awarded the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee Medal for her contribution to Canadian children’s literature. Her experience in both teaching science and in engaging young readers is evident in the lovely way in which she intertwines simple facts about animals that live on and near water with the many fun ways children interact with water.

The entertaining, informative text is complemented by the bright, joyful illustrations of Susan Mitchell, whose artwork has graced over 16 books, including Pumpkin Baby by Jane Yolen and Too Many Fairies by Margaret Read MacDonald. Mitchell has chosen a lively, sunny palette, which adds to the book’s appeal.

For parents and educators alike, Whoosh! is worth having on the bookshelf. The sparkling, imaginative illustrations are sure to engage young children at story time, while the last page encourages readers to try and move like the animals they see in the story — to leap like a dolphin or scuttle like a crab. A section at the back inspires children to think about the many ways we use water, and there is a wonderful “Did You Know” section that gives more information on all the animals presented in the book.

Tracey Schindler

The Death of Us
written by Alice Kuipers
978-1-44342-410-3 (pb) $14.99
for Grades 7 and up
Fiction | Dystopia | Disabilities | Indentity | Belonging | Music

This story begins with the sickening news that there has been an accident. Ivy’s car has gone through the traffic barrier and off the bridge. Kurt and Xander rush to the hospital. From this point on, the story alternates between the points of view of Kurt, Ivy and Callie — with Ivy’s and Callie’s chapters flashing back to the days leading up to this one. In this way, we learn that Ivy has only just reappeared after vanishing completely from Callie’s life three years earlier. Callie is overjoyed to welcome Ivy back and to renew their friendship. But not everyone is as thrilled to see Ivy again, and soon Callie finds herself lying to family and friends so that she can be with Ivy. Meanwhile, Ivy has her own secrets. As their stories — their individual stories as well as the story of their past friendship — emerge, so, too, do the details of what really happened on the night of the accident.

In typical Alice Kuipers fashion, this book is unforgettable and packs a powerful punch. From the first page, it is intense and riveting, and the non-linear storyline that weaves skilfully between the accident and the two weeks previous builds dramatic tension. Ivy and Callie’s relationship is masterfully depicted, as is the complex love triangle that develops while the story marches inexorably towards its emotionally charged conclusion. As they make their way toward that fateful day, more lies are told, truths are revealed, hearts are broken and seeds of doubt are sown. Shocking, poignant and heart-rending, The Death of Us will leave an indelible impression on its readers.

Lisa Doucet

In her debut novel, author Chris Struyk-Brown paints a chilling portrait of a future society where usefulness is tied to physical appearance, and those who are different are treated as less than human. Born with a cleft palate, Whisper is one of these societal rejects, used to abandonment, and to feel lonely. Whisper is a fascinating, multi-layered character. She identifies with the song of the violin — sad and lonely. It’s her comfort, her escape, her joy and her hope — everything she feels is in the music she plays — and it plays a part in each step of her journey. Whisper is strong and resilient and, despite the terrible cruelties she endures, she always perseveres and remains hopeful. Her detailed observations of her world give readers a clear insight into her reality.

The natural world also plays an important role in this novel, and while an exact cause is never given for the deformities, there are suggestions that environmental pollutants are responsible.

Taking on themes of identity, belonging, class and gender, Whisper is a thoughtful and highly engaging young adult novel that will keep readers thinking and discussing long after reading.

Rachel Seigel
From Vimy to Victory: Canada’s Fight to the Finish in World War I
written by Hugh Brewster
Scholastic Canada, 2014
978-1-4431-2461-4 (hc) $19.99
for Grades 4 to 8
Non-fiction | Canadian History | World War I

From Vimy to Victory: Canada’s Fight to the Finish in World War I is the latest in Hugh Brewster’s award-winning series of illustrated books about Canadians at war. It tells the story of Canadian participation in World War I over a 20-month period, from the battle at Vimy in April 1917 to the surrender of Mons in November 1918.

The book is loosely framed by the experiences of one particular soldier, Will Bird, who appears sporadically throughout the book, giving a personal perspective to the wide sweep of war. Brewster holds a nice balance between the personal and the larger stories of the war in the book by shifting focus from individual soldiers and their heroic acts of bravery to the movement of troops and battle strategies. The compelling text is complemented by excellent illustrations: black-and-white photographs, colour reproductions of war art, original artwork by Sharif ‘Tarabay and clear maps showing where the lines of battle were drawn.

The tragic individual stories, the hardships endured, the slow gains and losses of ground and the sense of futility as thousands die are presented with objectivity and respect. Brewster makes a complicated story accessible to young readers by dividing it into two-page segments with dramatic headlines, vivid pictures and text boxes. From Vimy to Victory does a masterful job of bringing a harrowing piece of Canadian history to life with sensitivity and imagination.

Charis Cotter

New editions

In Your Face: The Culture of Beauty and You Revised Edition (Annick Press) is an updated version of Shari Graydon’s thought-provoking look at the power and pitfalls of the beauty industry and its hype and the need for critical thinking. Fully rewritten and redesigned from the 2004 edition, In Your Face has been updated to reflect the heightened pressures of beauty in the digital era — both good and bad — to shape one’s self-image. The new edition illustrated by Karen Klassen and Katy Lemay

Northern Frights Omnibus Edition (HarperCollins Canada) by Arthur Slade is a compendium of three fast paced novels inspired by Norse mythology, previously published as standalone titles Draugr, The Haunting of Drang Island and Loki Wolf. These eerie stories from an award-winning author offers spine-chilling fun for readers.
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Jason Adair

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Reviews from Canadian Children’s Book News
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His neighbors have chickens.

Towards them. Now Dan lives in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Don, Ontario. In the summer, he would fall asleep to the sound

Young, he lived close to a cattle farm on the outskirts of Lon-

And anyone who phoned him during that time. When Dan was

Days talking in different voices. He regrets any confusion he

Ing the various characters for

Books include

Dan Bar-el is an award-winning children’s author. His recent

Art is the best job she can imagine. She has illustrated a number

Jana has always loved books, so bringing stories to life with her

Drew inspiration from the cows of her native Switzerland. Tat-

New edition! Audrey (cow) and Disco (dwarf bunny) are back in

That One Spooky Night. In explor-

Audrey (cow), Dan spent many

A Fish Named Glub,

Wish!

Supermarket. I wanted to taste new grasses and flow-

I think that if I was to choose just one word to describe myself,

Was downhill, straight to the meat section of the supermarket.

That word would be

Wanted to go places …

This just wasn't acceptable to me. I mean, I had dreams. I

Best of it.” I couldn't. I couldn't give up on life so soon.

You see, I knew exactly

Other alive. You see, I knew exactly

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