A Delicate Balance
Illustrating non-fiction with accuracy and appeal

Reviews of over 30 books by Kenneth Oppel, Anne Michaels, Robbie Robertson, Martine Leavitt and more

We Have Diverse Books!

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Elephant Journey
by Rob Laidlaw, illustrated by Brian Deines
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by Wallace Edwards
September 29th | 9781927485781

Evie Brooks is Marooned in Manhattan
by Sheila Agnew
August 3rd | 9781927485828 PB

A Year of Borrowed Men
by Michelle Barker, illustrated by Renée Benoit
November 11th | 9781927485835

Timo’s Garden
by Victoria Allenby, illustrated by Dean Griffiths
October 1st | 9781927485842

Kiss, Kiss
by Jennifer Couëlle, illustrated by Jacques Laplante
December 10th | 9781927485866

Ben Says Goodbye
by Sarah Ellis, illustrated by Kim La Fave
October 1st | 9781927485798

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Opinion: We Have Diverse Books
Gillian O’Reilly urges us to recognize the remarkable range of diverse books that we currently have in Canada.

News Roundup
Paul Kropp (1948-2015); TD Canadian Children’s Book Week 2016: The Tour Roster; TD Canadian Children’s Book Week 2016: Apply for a Reading; A birthday extravaganza.

Seen at …
A photographic look at book events

Keep Your Eye On… Angela Misri

Profile: Tim Wynne-Jones, the Writing Maestro
Sylvia McNicoll interviews Tim Wynne-Jones about his craft, his father and his new book, The Emperor of Any Place.

Focus: A Delicate Balance
Danny Christopher, Celia Godkin, Scot Ritchie and Margot Thompson discuss illustrating non-fiction with accuracy, clarity and appeal.
It’s 1964 and life is about to change for seven teen girls when the orphanage they call home burns to the ground. On their own for the first time, each girl embarks on a journey of discovery, following clues to the families they never had and experiencing the world in ways they never imagined.

“How did the authors handle the challenges that a common premise invites? The answer is very well, indeed... Highly enjoyable and varied reads.”

—QUILL & QUIRE
FROM THE EDITOR  GILLIAN O’REILLY

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Last summer, when travelling in northwestern Quebec, I had the chance to visit Camp Spirit Lake — or rather the lovely museum that commemorates the internment of 1200 Ukrainian-Canadians at Camp Spirit Lake during WWI. This is a piece of history skilfully depicted in Marsha Skrypuch’s 2007 novel, Prisoners in the Promised Land: The Ukrainian Internment Diary of Anya Soloniuk. I felt privileged to have a kind of three-way stereoscopic experience of the place — seeing the actual landscape where the camp existed, absorbing the huge amount of historical information in the museum and recalling the story told by Skrypuch’s young protagonist. (And I was pleased to see Prisoners in the Promised Land for sale in the little shop, too.)

There are so many stories — past and present, real and fictional, in Canada or beyond our borders — that have been told by our creative authors and illustrators. The hashtag #WeNeedDiverseBooks has been a big topic in the last year and will continue to be in 2016 — and it’s an important one. In this issue, I argue that, while there is room for many more new and diverse voices, there are already a lot of diverse books on the Canadian publishing scene, and we need to recognize and celebrate them.

When I was younger, the idea of illustrating non-fiction conjured up images of medical diagrams or realistic pictures of animals or machinery. The reality is very different. In this issue, four illustrators with quite different styles explain how they work and the ways they deal with the challenge of combining accuracy, simplicity and appeal as they illuminate non-fiction texts.

The fall season always brings a delightful array of wonderful new books. Check out our review section and author interviews to discover some of the latest titles.

Happy reading.

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We **have** Diverse Books

LET’S RECOGNIZE AND SUPPORT THEM

We have diverse books. The hashtag and US-based campaign of “We need diverse books” has captured a lot of attention over the last year — for good reason. Stories about a wide range of people, histories, experiences and viewpoints help readers to see themselves in the world, experience other people’s lives through literature and, generally, keep them open to the world. And there is a need for more stories about and by a diverse range of people.

We need to recognize, however, that, in Canada, we **have** diverse books. Not enough, perhaps, there are always more stories to tell. But it’s important to recognize the remarkable range of diverse books that we do have. We need to celebrate and support them — especially if we want more diverse books.

What are diverse books?
The term “diverse” has been defined broadly by the We Need Diverse Books™ campaign, which began in the US as a grassroots organization responding to the situation they saw in their country and was echoed by a corresponding British campaign. This group of children’s book lovers advocates essential changes in the publishing industry to produce and promote literature that reflects and honours the lives of all young people. It defined diversity as “including (but not limited to) LGBTQIA, people of color, gender diversity, people with disabilities, and ethnic, cultural, and religious minorities.” It added, “We subscribe to a broad definition of disability, which includes, but is not limited to physical, sensory, cognitive, intellectual, or developmental disabilities, chronic conditions, and mental illnesses (this may also include addiction). Furthermore, we subscribe to a social model of disability, which presents disability as created by barriers in the social environment, due to lack of equal access, stereotyping, and other forms of marginalization.”

What do we have?
Forty or 50 years ago, publishers were pushed into creating a viable children’s publishing business in this country because they wanted to tell our own stories, something different from the mainstream of British and American books that flooded into the country each year. They wanted to tell the stories of and for the kids they saw around them. Some terrific books that came out of the early years were ones we would now classify as “diverse.” Think of Kids Can Press’s *The Sandwich* in which Vincenzo learns to stand up for his “stinky meat” sandwiches in the face of his classmates’ white bread fare. From Tundra Books came illustrated memoirs of Chinese-, Singaporean- and Ukrainian-Canadian artists. From Groundwood Books, *A Salmon for Simon* told the story of a First Nations boy. Annick Press’s Talk-About-Books set a standard for multicultural images in board books for toddlers. And, of course, the lives of kids with physical disabilities have been masterfully explored in a host of books by Jean Little since the 1960s.

A glance through the offerings of the following decades offers up a host of titles. *Ghost Train, The Fragrant Garden, The Mystery of the Frozen Brains, Elijah of Buxton, Up Home, Harriet’s Daughter, Second Watch, Call Me Aram, A Group of One, Prisoners in a Promised Land* and *Illegally Blonde* — this handful of picture books and novels gives us Chinese-Canadian, African-Canadian, Finnish-Canadian, Armenian-Canadian, South Asian-Canadian, Ukrainian-Canadian and Portuguese-Canadian stories. And, while *Illegally Blonde*, a fun romance, is probably the only teen novel in this country with a Portuguese-Canadian protagonist, the rest of the titles represent a small portion of what is available in each area.

As our spring 2015 issue and the dazzling theme guide, “Hear Our Stories,” showed, the quantity and quality of First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) books have been growing by leaps and bounds. We have some wonderfully strong books that put people with disabilities squarely as the protagonists. And, in recent years, there has been an increasing number of thoughtful and engaging books dealing with mental illness.
Do we need more?
You bet we need more. We need to encourage and support writers from diverse backgrounds to write their stories and publishers to publish them.

In addition, each of us might have our own list of what we would like to see. I’m very excited about the growth in FNMI stories and passionate about the need for more. As a history buff, I would love to see more stories of Caribbean immigration to Canada, or the multicultural world of industrial Cape Breton in the first half of the 20th century (it wasn’t all just Scots). I would love to see historical novels about the first mosque to be built in Canada (Edmonton, 1930s) or the second synagogue (Victoria, 1860s). Or other new and surprising stories in Canadian history that I’m not even aware of.

This year, I’m delighted to see the picture book, Oscar Lives Next Door, written by Bonnie Farmer (who grew up in Peter-son’s childhood neighbourhood of St. Henri) and illustrated by Marie Lafrance, and Mayann’s Train Ride, a picture book illustrated by Tamara Thébault-Heikalo and written by former Nova Scotia Lieutenant-Governor Mayann Francis about a childhood trip from Cape Breton to New York City.

How do we find out about diverse books?
The role of teacher-librarians, public librarians and booksellers is, of course, key in bringing children and diverse books together. For more resources, look to the Canadian Children’s Book Centre’s thematic lists and some of the articles published in past issues of Canadian Children’s Book News. For reasons of space, I haven’t talked about non-fiction books, but you can find them and much more in all the resources listed below.

Why is it so important to recognize that we have diverse books?
First, of course, all the books mentioned here — and many more being published in Canada — are good reads and have much to offer kids and teens — both in terms of mirroring their own lives and giving them a window onto others.
There is a second and very important reason for taking note of the diversity of books we have. Publishers are, in part, dreamers who publish books they are passionate about. But, for the very practical reason of keeping their businesses afloat, they also want books that sell. The best way to encourage a publisher to invest in more diverse books, by more diverse authors, is to ensure that the books that are already available find a market. Likewise, the best way to encourage more diverse authors to believe they can get published is to ensure that the books that are already available find a market.

Yes, we need more diverse books — but, if we want more of them, we have to recognize the diverse books we, as Canadians, have. Celebrate and support them. Buy them and make sure to put them before young readers who will enjoy them. That’s how we ensure there will be more diverse books. 🌟

Gillian O’Reilly is the editor of Canadian Children’s Book News.

CCBC Resources on Diverse Books

Visit the Canadian Children’s Book Centre website (www.bookcentre.ca) to find these resources.

In the menu bar, look under resources to find thematic lists on Black History Month, Chinese-Canadian Stories, Disability-Themed Stories, Jewish Stories, LGBTQ Books and Multicultural-Themed Books among others.


Back issues of Canadian Children’s Book News can be accessed through the website (click on “Canadian Children’s Book News Back Issues”). You’ll find coverage on diverse books, including the following:

**CCBN, Spring 2015** — several articles on First Nations, Métis and Inuit Stories (including an opinion piece by Métis author David Bouchard, a profile of Cree author David Alexander Robertson and interviews with four publishers)

**CCBN, Fall 2014** — “Who Will Write Our Stories?” Nadia L. Hohn on being an African-Canadian writer

**CCBN, Summer 2014** — “In Their Heads: Children’s books every teacher should read” looks at books that help us understand children facing challenges, including ADHD, autism spectrum disorder and special needs

**CCBN, Summer 2013** — “Writers of Colour in Conversation” — a roundtable discussion with five authors and illustrators of colour

**And more...**

Planning to attend the Ontario Library Association’s Super Conference in January 2016? The Association of Canadian Publishers is hosting a session called “#We Have Diverse Books! Where to Find and how to use Canadian Children’s Books that Reflect the Diversity of our Population.” Other sessions include “We Need Diverse Authors,” “Diversify Your Shelves” and “LGBTQIA + YA Readers’ Advisory.” For more information, visit www.olasuperconference.ca/event.
Since his first novel, novels for teenagers. Paul Kropp (1948–2015) Author, publisher, teacher and mentor to many Canadian writers, Paul Kropp died on August 22, 2015, after a short battle with cancer. Born in Buffalo, New York in 1948, Kropp studied at Columbia University before moving to Canada to do his M.A. in 17th-century metaphysical poetry and then, more practically, to obtain his teacher’s certification. “I was a few hundred years too late to become a metaphysical poet,” he recalled on his website. “But while teaching high school in Hamilton, Ontario, I learned that I could write interesting novels for teenagers.” Since his first novel, Burn-Out, written for his vocational school students in an effort to find something they could read and wanted to read, Paul Kropp went on to write more than 60 books for young people, including nine books for young adults, numerous books for reluctant readers and five illustrated books for beginning readers. In addition to his children’s books, he also wrote books for adults, professional development resources for teachers and, most recently, The Lost Botticelli, a mystery revolving around an art theft. In 2002, Kropp and Terry Durkin (1938-2012) founded High Interest Publishing (HIP Books), dedicated to providing books for struggling and reluctant readers — books that were interesting to read but with appropriate vocabulary and careful typesetting and design (e.g., no hyphens at the end of lines). The company offers six series, ranging from junior titles to fantasy to teen adventure, and many resources for teachers.

He also served as president of CANSCAIP and was active in the organization for many years. Author Sharon Jennings, current President of CANSCAIP and a former Director of the Board at the Canadian Children’s Book Centre, first met Kropp 25 years ago. “Paul was the epitome of someone comfortable in his own skin, and so it was effortless for him to be generous with his time and expertise and support. And whether it was as a teacher, author, publisher, volunteer extraordinaire, Paul always seemed to be having fun. He is an inspiration to us to grow and evolve creatively, to embrace new ideas, to see problems as interesting puzzles, to find enjoyment in our work, and to always see a stranger as a possible new friend. Paul believed in the profound importance of encouraging children to read, and we will miss Paul’s constant and unwavering commitment to the children’s book community.”

**TD Canadian Children’s Book Week 2016 | 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, 2015. 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 to 12. For further information about either of these programs, visit [www.bookweek.ca](http://www.bookweek.ca).

**TD Canadian Children’s Book Week 2016 | The Tour Roster** The next TD Canadian Children’s Book Week will take place from May 7 to 14, 2016. It has been 40 years since the CCBC was founded by a group of dynamic champions of Canadian books for Canadian children and 39 years since the first Children’s Book Festival (as it was known then) took place — featuring 12 authors. In 2016, 30 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 literature enthusiasts of all ages. The CCBC has added a tour in northern BC.

Visit [www.bookweek.ca](http://www.bookweek.ca) for more information on these talented authors, illustrators and storytellers, and updates on who will be visiting in your region.

Karen Autio, author Kelowna, BC
Rebecca Bender, author & illustrator Burlington, ON
Marty Chan, author Edmonton, AB
Lisa Dalrymple, author Fergus, ON
Geneviève Després, illustrator Saint-Lambert, QC
Danika Dinsmore, author Gibsons, BC
Donna Dudinsky, storyteller Toronto, ON
Wallace Edwards, author & illustrator Yarker, ON
Sarah Ellis, author Vancouver, BC
Lucy Falcone, author Toronto, ON
Maureen Fergus, author Winnipeg, MB
Kallie George, author Vancouver, BC
Vicki Grant, author Halifax, NS
Bob Graham, storyteller Orillia, ON
Judith Graves, author Cold Lake, AB
Gabrielle Grimard, illustrator Waterville, QC
Doretta Groenendyk, author & illustrator Canning, NS
Alison Hughes, author Edmonton, AB
Kate Jaimet, author Ottawa, ON
Sharon Jennings, author Toronto, ON
Wesley King, author Oshawa, ON

continued on page 10
1. Bad Pirates! At the new location of Toronto's Ella Minnow Children's Bookstore, Rose Hill, Heather Kuipers and Yvette Caradonna ham it up with author Kari-Lynn Winters. 2. 3. 4. The seventh annual Telling Tales Festival in Hamilton in September drew over 6,000 visitors to see author / illustrator Debbie Ohi (2.), writer David Bouchard (3.), poet Carol-Ann Hoyte (4.) and many more performers. 5. Celebrating science at the Lane Anderson Awards dinner: Lindsey Carmichael (third from right), winner in the young readers category (Fuzzy Forensics), Maria Birmingham (Tastes Like Music) and Kids Can Press Editorial Director Yvette Ghione (with Daniel Loxton's Plesiosaur Peril) with the winner and shortlisted books in the adult category.
Mary Ann Lippiatt, storyteller
New Sarepta, AB

Angela Misri, author
Toronto, ON

Simon Rose, author
Calgary, AB

Graham Ross, illustrator
Merrickville, ON

Margriet Ruurs, author
Salt Spring Island, BC

Kean Soo, author & illustrator
Toronto, ON

Robin Stevenson, author
Victoria, BC

Tiffany Stone, author & poet
Maple Ridge, BC

Allison van Diepen, author
Ottawa, ON

Wind + Rain + Power Failure = One birthday extravaganza
The plans were made, the guests were invited and the preparations were in place for author Shar Levine’s birthday party on August 29, 2015. In lieu of birthday gifts, Levine asked her guests to donate to the Canadian Children’s Book Centre. Donate they did. And then there was the weather.

As Levine, a long-time CCBC board member, reports, “Vancouver hadn’t had rain in four months. The day of the party the forecast was for not just rain but more rain than we would normally get in an entire summer. No problem. We put out tents and four giant 15-foot umbrellas. Then gale force winds blew down the tents and took out the umbrellas, which were supported by 100-pound stones. No problem. We moved the party indoors, put the band in the suite downstairs and set up appetizers in the room. Then the power went out at noon.”

Between a gas stove and a gas barbecue, the food preparations went on. The 80 guests partied by candlelight and the band, the all too appropriately named Jon Gale and the Gale Force Blues, played acoustic. The festivities went on until 1:30 a.m. “Best party ever!” reports Levine, adding, “I am blown away by the generosity and support of my friends.”

Correction
A photo credit was inadvertently omitted from the article “Separately working together” in the Summer 2015 issue of CCBN. Credit for the photo of Liam O’Donnell should go to Ali Sonderup.

Tell us about your newest book. Thrice Burned (Fierce Ink Press) is the second book in my Portia Adams Adventure series. It contains my favourite mystery, a casebook I call “Truth be Told.” In the first book, Jewel of the Thames, I had to spend a lot of time introducing the audience to my detective, describing her home and connecting her to Baker Street. While necessary, it slowed down the story, which in a mystery is not ideal because you want to keep building the tension all the way to the big solution. In Thrice Burned, I felt untethered from that responsibility and free to write at the pace of the great mystery stories I enjoy. I think the clip of the second book is exactly where I want to stay for the duration of the series. I also had the space to flesh out the relationships between the characters I had spent the last book introducing the audience to.

Tell us about the process of writing. Like any other creative endeavour, the process of writing is not a continuous linear path. There are days when no words come at all, so I spend my time doing research or creating animations for book trailers. Then there are other days when I have to stop to give my writing hand a break because I’ve been bent over a notebook for three hours. I think the best part of my process is that, for that dedicated amount of time that I have parcelled off to write, I always focus on producing something creative — even if that creation is not on a page.

How did you first get published? I sent out lots of submission letters to publishers and agents, and the 38th letter I got back was an acceptance (as were the 39th and 40th — it turns out that when it rains it pours). I got some advice early on from other writers: for every rejection letter you receive, send out two more submissions that very day. It worked for me, so I’m happy to pass that advice on.

What do you like about writing for young people? I like the eventfulness and the drama that is so present in the lives of young people. By the time you hit your 30s, you’ve (hopefully) got some things figured out — about yourself, about your career, about your relationships. But between 15 and 30 is a tumultuous era of learning from triumph and failure — a time in your life when everything seems like a big deal and the future seems so far away. Writing from that perspective is empowering.

Tell us about writers who inspire you. Oh my gosh, there are so many! Stephen King is my favourite writer; I will read/watch anything he has a hand in, and I don’t even like horror (except for his writing). I adore Joss Whedon and Aaron Sorkin, and will watch their shows when I need to be inspired to write killer dialogue. My favourite mystery writers are Kathy Reichs, Arthur Conan Doyle and Mary Higgins-Clark. Their deft way of weaving clues into character-driven stories inspires me every day.
Get ready to #LOL!

Inspire a love of reading with these side-splitting, knee-slapping, laugh-out-loud funny books!

“There are moments when I actually laughed out loud on a New York subway train”
-SCHOOL LIBRARY JOURNAL

“The fun comes from watching the mad schemes go off the rails”
-NATIONAL READING CAMPAIGN

“Susan Juby is one of our country’s greatest court jesters”
-GLOBE AND MAIL

Where do YOUR favourite funny books rate on the LOL-meter?

For more books, downloadable resources and classroom activities visit: penguinrandomhouse.ca/penguinlol
Tim Wynne-Jones, the Writing Maestro, Presents The Emperor of Any Place

BY SYLVIA MCNICOLL

Much celebrated, much anticipated...
With his 2011 title, Blink & Caution, Tim Wynne-Jones won his second Arthur Ellis Best Juvenile/YA Crime Award and his second Boston Globe-Horn Book Award. He is a double Governor General’s Literary Award winner for Some of the Kinder Planets and The Maestro. He’s earned the Vicky Metcalf Award for Literature for Young People and he is an officer of the Order of Canada. He has written radio dramas, a children’s musical, an operetta libretto and three adult books. Tim Wynne-Jones is undoubtedly Canada’s writing maestro.

Serious students of writing have been waiting three years for The Emperor of Any Place, the latest novel by Tim Wynne-Jones. He has never taken so long between books before. He says that he knows what it takes to write a picture book and a middle grade or young adult novel, he knows the elements they require, but he also knows “You have to write what you want to write, not what you think people expect you to write.” This is the way the master works. The wait is worth it. Says Vermont MFA student Jennifer Whistler, “He is a writer’s writer, you study him, take notes, highlight passages and generally dissect his work so you can learn from the master.”

The Idea
Wynne-Jones always knew he wanted to tackle a World War II story but didn’t know how to go about it. His father frequently recounted some of his own experiences, but it took Tim a year of living in Europe with his wife Amanda West Lewis, author of September 17, to realize his father’s connection to that geographical theatre was blocking him; it was almost as if his father owned that arena. A series of readings in Japan and Wynne-Jones’s love for Japanese culture opened up the idea — and gave him enough confidence — to write from the Pacific theatre of World War II instead.

When Wynne-Jones began what he originally called Kokoro-Jima: The Heart-Shaped Island, he knew that he wanted to write a survival story set on a tropical island. (The Maestro depicted a teen in survival mode in northern Ontario.) He knew that he wanted to somehow include magic. In addition, he has always been fascinated with stories about Japanese soldiers who, isolated in a jungle, came out fighting long after peace was declared. And he wanted to tackle World War II as a microcosm, a battle between two people with the fallout effect spilling onto subsequent generations.

Inspiration from Dad
The Emperor of Any Place is dedicated to his father, Lieutenant-Colonel S.T. Wynne-Jones, and the framework story revolves around a complicated three-generational father-son relationship.

Tim had a complicated relationship with his own father, an engineer who uprooted his large family (four girls and two boys) at least 12 times, from England to Canada, from Kitimat to Vancouver to Toronto and to Ottawa among just a few of the moves. In this way, he contributed to that feeling of desert-island isolation and otherness from which Tim Wynne-Jones draws; many of the characters in his novels are looking for homes. While there was plenty of story and joke telling and singing around the family dinner table — Tim’s Rex Zero novels best depict some of his own boyhood — his father was a disciplinarian who brooked no discussion or dissension and later did not understand his son’s dabbling in the arts.

Wynne-Jones played in a rock band and wrote, as he calls them, pretentious lyrics. He had studied at and been kicked out of architecture school; his only paying design gig was a series of outhouses for the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests. “I can truly say that people shit on my early work quite regularly.” He returned to the University of Waterloo
to study visual art and, while house-sitting for his favourite professor in Stratford, was forced to share the Volkswagen bug with a York University acting student who was in charge of the prof’s horse. That student, Amanda Lewis, became his wife.

Tim’s father liked Lewis very much and she became their buffer. When the couple moved to Toronto, he worked at his sole full-time job in book design at PMA Books. He quit after a year and a half, started his own design company with Michael Solomon (now Art Director at Groundwood Books) but then quit that, too. He returned to York University to complete a Masters in Visual Arts, after which he was so fed up with school that he gave himself the summer off to try his hand at writing a novel. His father despaired of Tim’s ability to ever provide for his family; after all, you couldn’t just do whatever you liked, it wasn’t responsible. When Odd’s End, the thriller Wynne-Jones banged out in those six weeks, won him the $50,000 Seal First Novel Award, his father realized he might be wrong about careers and pursuing dreams. Wynne-Jones and Lewis bought a house and a car and started a family.

**First draft**
The first draft of The Emperor of Any Place grew to over 600 pages told from 12 different viewpoints — “You know how inane drafts can be when you follow your heart,” says Wynne-Jones. He hates first drafts, and gets quite grumpy as he works on them in the loft of his self-designed home 15 minutes outside of the village of Perth, Ontario. He claims he self-medicates with food — he loves to cook, and gains 10 pounds with every novel. Usually he writes a scene or chapter, a mini-novel as he likes to think of it, and a bit of the following unit so he has something to start from the next day. Internet contact becomes a reward he allows himself when he’s done the writing. “You can’t write if you’re prey to the Internet. That makes you Internet highway road kill!”

In this draft, one of the main characters, Cliff, became the antidote father — opposite to everything Tim’s father stood for, also opposite to the antagonist grandfather, Griff, the army sergeant major. Cliff supported and encouraged his son, the 17-year-old protagonist, Evan; in fact he protected Evan too much. Tim’s editor Liz Bicknell suggested that he needed to kill this darling, that Cliff in his over-protectiveness was stalling the story. At page 70 of the manuscript, she had stopped reading. Wynne-Jones told her not to bother continuing.

**Second, third drafts**
Wynne-Jones compares the detested first run-through to choosing a piece of marble that’s more or less the right colour and dragging it to a studio. He enjoys the second and subsequent rewrites much more, finding contentment as he carves out the sculpture or story buried in this stone. He rewrote and rewrote The Emperor of Any Place, cutting out two subplots, nine of the viewpoints and 300 pages.

The result? Evan’s father dies within the first few pages. He leaves behind the diary of a Japanese soldier (Ōshiro) that he was in the middle of reading and an accusation about Evan’s grandfather Griff. Evan reads the account of the isolated Ōshiro complete with his encounters of the jikininki or ghosts
of the unborn and Tengu, a kind of war metaphor / monster. When Griff shows up to settle the estate, Evan must discern the difference between the reality and hallucination in the journal and decide for himself whether his grandfather is truly the villain his father deemed him.

Teaching and mentoring
The three years in creation of the new novel was interspersed with various speaking, teaching and mentoring engagements. Many Canadian children’s writers consider Wynne-Jones an inspiration. “Tim is like a big warm, bear-hug of a creative monsoon,” says Anita Daher, author of Wonder Horse. Says Jennifer Maruno, author of Totem who consulted with him during his Toronto Public Library Writer Residency, “He was kind, funny and very sincere about all I had written. He kept me going.” Students who want to learn more about rewriting from this maestro should read his essay “Ten Questions to Ask a Revision” at timwynnejones.ca.

Wynne-Jones loves teaching children’s writing to students at the Vermont College MFA Program. One week of every month is devoted to the four or five students he is assigned. As he receives the packages with their submissions, he clears off all his writing and research files from his desk. He then actually polishes the wood with Pledge and the next day returns as The Teacher. “My students keep me from keeling over into pessimism because of their drive and their enthusiasm and — most importantly — their brilliant ideas. As long as there are brilliant ideas, there will be someone ready to step up to the plate and make sure those books get in front of other people. Our job as writers is no different than it ever was; namely, write something wonderful.”

When he teaches in residence, twice a year, an instructor requirement is always to read from a new work. In this way, he enjoys the brightest and kindest response to his early drafts.

Hopes and desires
After all the awards and accolades, what’s left for Tim Wynne-Jones, what does he hope to accomplish with The Emperor of Any Place?

Wynne-Jones would love to have the kind of wide-spread audience appeal that Kenneth Oppel’s work draws. He especially enjoyed / envied Oppel’s Airborn, which won the Governor General’s Literary Award and the Ontario Library Association’s Red Maple Award.

But, says Wynne-Jones, “Inasmuch as I write to my audience at all, I’m hoping to catch the eye of the young reader’s inner wizard… I’m hoping there’s something in what I do that might appeal to a kid’s sense of wonder.”

The question becomes, are there that many wizards out there? “I jump back and forth between out-and-out panic and a kind of quiet faith that reading will never get old and, on optimistic days, that there might actually be more people reading than ever before…”

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Warren James, Regina Public Library

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Sylvia McNicoll is the author of over 30 books, Best Friends Through Eternity (Tundra Books) being her latest.
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(Kids Can Press Ltd.)

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(Ashby-BP Publishing)

Finalist

by Maria Birmingham
(Owlkids Books Inc.)

www.laneandersonaward.ca
The Delicate Balance
Illustrating non-fiction books with accuracy, clarity and appeal
BY GILLIAN O’REILLY

Illustrators who create the images for non-fiction books have a task that requires a careful balance. There is, of course, the need to be accurate. There is the need to convey information simply and clearly. And they have to produce illustrations that are appealing to young readers. Four experienced illustrators talk about the pleasures and challenges of illustrating non-fiction books for kids.

Tell us about this picture and the challenges in creating it.
My gyrfalcon illustration took a bit of time because I had some trouble finding good images of gyrfalcons in the position I wanted. I had to look at video and images of other large types of falcons to help me with accurate posing. I wanted to make sure the plumage was accurate, but not so busy that it distracted from the overall form of the bird. This meant scaling back some of the feather detail when finishing the illustration. With that being said, it still took over 140 layers of cut outs to create the finished image.

You have illustrated traditional legends but, with A Children’s Guide to Arctic Birds, you were creating illustrations that had to be accurate and informative in a way that depictions of, say, evil spirits of legends, don’t have to be. Was your process different and, if so, how?
It was different. I was not focused on telling a sequential story with my bird illustrations; I was trying to represent each particular bird species, one at a time. All the illustrations definitely had to work together, but each illustration was more of a singular piece. Because the book was aimed at a younger audience and intended to be quite artful, I had a lot of freedom with my illustrations. I was focused on different goals to some degree, but I was creating the illustrations the same way I do with most of my illustrations, so in the end it did feel rather similar.

Danny Christopher
A Children’s Guide to Arctic Birds (Inhabit Media)
written by Mia Pelletier

What medium do you work in?
I make watercolour washes by hand, scan them and then cut pieces out digitally and place them over top of my scanned sketches. It is a fairly slow process.

How do you balance the need to appeal to readers while also conveying the information clearly, simply and accurately?
I think the readers of non-fiction books are looking for accuracy in illustration first and foremost. Accuracy becomes the top goal of the image. But, that being said, there is a lot you can affect with style, subject selection, positioning and angles to create a compelling image.

How did you do the research for this book?
Looking at a lot of image sources is important. I looked through images online and in books, but I also found looking at video clips of birds to see them move in their natural environments was really helpful, especially with posing and tone.

Celia Godkin
Skydiver: Saving the Fastest Bird in the World (Pajama Press)

What medium do you work in?
Over the years, I’ve worked in a variety of media, including graphite and coloured pencils, ink, watercolour and oils. The past few books, including Skydiver, have been in water-soluble oils because I like the intensity of colour and it’s easy to correct.

How do you balance the need to appeal to readers while also conveying the information clearly, simply and accurately?
My first priority is accuracy. I try to write concisely in an accessible, narrative style. As I write, I think about the illustration that will accompany the text and how it will work page by page. The illustrations expand on the text and can show details that I don’t need to write about. For example, in
Skydiver, I don’t need to say peregrine chicks are hand-fed little pieces of raw meat by their carers using a pair of tweezers because I can show that in the illustration. Some of my illustrations are very simple, like the one mentioned above. Others are complex and detailed, often showing many animals in a given habitat, but even my most complex illustrations are simplified versions of the endless complexity you see in the natural world.

Children love complex illustrations and will spend a lot of time looking at them and seeing things that most adults will miss. I usually keep the text simple, but not the illustrations. Skydiver is something of an exception to that.

How did you do the research for this book?
In the days before the Internet, I relied heavily on the picture collection at Toronto’s Reference Library. Now, it’s easy to find images on the web. I decide on the location for my story and make sure all the plants and animals illustrated are found there. For Skydiver, I visited a raptor centre to get acquainted with peregrines.

Tell us about this picture and the challenges in creating it.
The chicks were challenging to paint because they are in the ‘scruffy teenage’ phase, where the sleek adult feathers are growing through the fluffy down feathers. I always find buildings difficult and tedious to illustrate because the perspective lines have to be exactly right or it’s not convincing.

You have written and illustrated books on everything from wolves to volcanoes to forest fires. What drew you to peregrine falcons and the story of saving the species in Skydiver and how do you mesh what is a rather complicated history in words and pictures?
In the light of all the scary stuff we are hearing about climate change, I wanted to give children hope by telling them of a man-made disaster that we fixed. The banning of DDT is one such story.

I kept the story simple by following one peregrine falcon family. But in order to explain why the first clutch of eggs is taken from them, I had to bring in the bigger picture, which meant flipping back in time to talk about DDT and the protest movement it generated. I’ve always avoided flashbacks, but in this case I saw no alternative.

In contrast to most of my books, many of the illustrations in Skydiver are simple, showing just the peregrine family and their immediate surroundings. The most complex image is of the anti-DDT demonstrations. The focus of interest is a huge crowd of people marching down a city block carrying placards. I simplified the background streetscape to make it generic.

Scot Ritchie
Pésk’a and the First Salmon Ceremony (Groundwood Books)

What medium do you work in?
I hand draw on paper to start, ink that, then scan the black line art into the computer. Then, and this is where I have the most fun, I’m able to play with colour in Photoshop. This book was a great opportunity for me to change my style a bit. I felt that since it would be set mostly outside in nature, and be describing First Nations people, a loose painterly style would work best.

How do you balance the need to appeal to readers while also conveying the information clearly, simply and accurately?
It’s about reaching the right balance. I want to represent objects or places but also keep a lightness and humour in the art. Specifically, I would say it’s about knowing when to loosen the line and when to keep it tight while still keeping the whole image cohesive. Because the term non-fiction covers such a vast area, there is a lot of room for variation of style within the genre. The subjects of some books require more precise renditions, while others allow less. It sounds complicated when I write it down, but it works well when I’m drawing.

How did you do the research for this book?
I am lucky that my nephew is an archaeologist working on excavations of First Nations villages in BC. One village in particular, Hïgilem, interested me. When I decided to write this book, I was able to learn a lot from him about the history and life of the Sts’ailes people in this region. Along with that, I met with the chief on a couple of occasions as well as doing library research. I was very curious to see how First Nations
life had been portrayed in historical and children’s books. It’s worth mentioning that little evidence remains of day-to-day life 1,000 years ago in these villages, so there is a certain amount of room for educated creativity.

Tell us a little bit about this illustration and the challenges in creating it.
I have a number of favourite illustrations in this book, but the smokehouse spread was very enjoyable to do because it gave me an opportunity to create an atmosphere. I wanted to give readers an image that would help them smell the drying salmon and the smoky air, to bring a real sense of what it might have been like for P’esk’a and the Sts’ailes people working and living in Hiqelem. When I’m drawing, I also try to be conscious of what the kids would enjoy as they’re looking at the book, so this allows a lot of room to have fun with things like wind blowing the smoke around — and I had a lot of fun with that!

In this book, you are illustrating First Nations history, which obviously has to be done with care and respect. How do you combine that with the playfulness and lightness and almost cartoon quality that is very characteristic of your style?
I love this question because it was very much in my mind while writing and illustrating the book. I think it’s possible to have great respect for a culture (or anything) and still find the human and playful side of things. In fact, I would say it is one key way to show respect for a culture. It was very important to me that I show people doing what people do, not present an elevated version of things. I’m also a big believer in the power of playfulness to help communicate ideas. I have to say the best compliment I’ve had was from a friend who, after looking through the book, said he thought I did it in a very honouring way. That meant a lot to me because that was certainly my goal.

Margot Thompson
 _Planet Ark: Preserving Earth’s Biodiversity_ (KidsCan Press) written by Adrienne Mason

What medium do you work in?
I start with a piece of canvas cut to size, not stretched. I transfer the rough draft of my image onto the canvas, then I add a transparent gel medium to the surface of the canvas for texture. After the gel has dried, I paint the image using acrylics. Sometimes I scan my final image and alter it a bit on the computer, but usually I just paint. People often think my illustrations are done with pastels, which is never the case. However, pastel is also a favourite medium of mine.

How do you balance the need to appeal to readers while also conveying the information clearly, simply and accurately?
I make fairly detailed roughs in pencil for approval before painting, so once I start the final artwork, I’m fairly confident that the accuracy is okay and the composition is working. As far as making the image appealing goes, I stick with the style that I’ve built up over the years, which includes strong colours, texture and dimensionality. If there’s one thing that I focus on more than anything else, it’s colour — not necessarily for accuracy, but more for richness and atmosphere. I think I have a tendency toward fairly spare compositions, so keeping the idea simple and clear is not usually a problem.

How did you do the research for this book?
Researching is a lot easier than it used to be with all that the Internet offers. I do most of my research through Google image searches. The team at Kids Can Press do a lot of the research, too, so it’s a cooperative process. As everyone knows, you have to be careful with the accuracy of information you find on the net, so I compare several different sources to make sure they match up. For things that are hard to find online, sometimes I resort to old-fashioned books.

In your books, you are doing spot illustrations of particular animals, but you are also working with more abstract ideas — biodiversity and how to preserve it in _Planet Ark_, inventions inspired by nature in _Biomimicry_. How do you tackle the job of conveying those “big” ideas in your illustrations?
Working on the big ideas is often the fun part. I started out as an illustrator doing editorial illustrations for magazines. Most of the work I did at this time was “concept” illustration, for which I was given a topic and had to find a way to represent the ideas symbolically. So I got used to working on images that weren’t purely representational. The cover of _Planet Ark_ is an example of this. We had to convey the idea of a huge variety of living things, so I chose to make my image somewhat abstract. There are plants and animals riding in the boat, but there are also scenes of nature in the hull of the boat, and in the waves. I think this helped make the image seem full of wildlife, and also stimulate the imagination of the viewer. Your eye can wander around the image, swimming with a turtle, riding an iceberg or perching on the ark alongside a pair of African crowned cranes.
The TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award is administered by The Canadian Children’s Book Centre.

For more information and for jury comments, visit www.bookcentre.ca or www.tdreads.com
Congratulations to the finalists of the

2015 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.

From Vimy to Victory: Canada’s Fight to the Finish in World War I
written by Hugh Brewster
Scholastic Canada
978-1-4431-2461-4 (hc) $19.99

If: A Mind-Bending New Way of Looking at Big Ideas and Numbers
written by David J. Smith illustrated by Steve Adams
Kids Can Press
978-1-894786-34-8 (hc) $19.95
978-1-77138-253-3 (eBook) $18.99

Residential Schools, With the Words and Images of Survivors: A National History
written by Larry Loyie with Wayne K. Spear and Constance Brissenden
Indigenous Education Press
978-0-9939371-0-1 (hc) $34.95

Starting from Scratch: What You Should Know about Food and Cooking
written by Sarah Elton illustrated by Jeff Kulak
Owlkids Books
978-1-926973-96-8 (hc) $19.95

Why We Live Where We Live
written by Kira Vermond illustrated by Julie McLaughlin
Owlkids Books
978-1-77147-011-7 (hc) $17.95
978-1-77147-081-0 (pb) $12.95
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FINALISTS OF THE

2015 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.

**Arrow Through the Axes**
*(Odyssey of a Slave, Book 3)*
written by Patrick Bowman
Ronsdale Press
978-1-55380-323-2 (pb) $11.95
978-1-55380-325-6 (eBook) $9.99

**Dance of the Banished**
written by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch
Pajama Press
978-1-927485-65-1 (pb) $15.95

**The Gospel Truth**
written by Caroline Pignat
Red Deer Press
978-0-88995-493-9 (pb) $12.95
978-1-55244-349-1 (eBook) $12.99

**Unspeakable**
written by Caroline Pignat
Razorbill Canada
978-0-14-318755-4 (pb) $15.99
978-0-14-319201-5 (eBook) $10.99

**Underground Soldier**
written by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch
Scholastic Canada
978-1-4431-2437-9 (pb) $8.99
978-1-4431-2898-8 (eBook) $8.99

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

2015 Amy Mathers Teen Book Award

Established in 2014, the award honours excellence in teen fiction. The $5,000 prize is named for Amy Mathers, whose remarkable Marathon of Books raised the funds to create the award.

The Art of Getting Stared At
written by Laura Langston
Razorbill Canada
978-0-670-06750-3 (hc) $18.99
978-0-14-318845-2 (pb) $11.99
978-0-14-319298-5 (eBook) $9.99

Blues for Zoey
written by Robert Paul Weston
Razorbill Canada
978-0-14-318328-0 (pb) $15.99
978-0-14-319171-1 (eBook) $10.99

The Bodies We Wear
written by Jeyn Roberts
Knopf Books for Young Readers
978-0-385-75412-5 (hc) $21.00
978-0-385-75411-8 (eBook) $10.99

The Gospel Truth
written by Caroline Pignat
Red Deer Press
978-0-88995-493-9 (pb) $12.95
978-1-55244-349-1 (eBook) $12.99

What We Hide
written by Marthe Jocelyn
Tundra Books
978-1-77049-642-2 (hc) $21.99
978-1-77049-643-9 (pb) $11.99
978-1-77049-644-6 (eBook) $11.99

The Amy Mathers Teen Book Award 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

2015 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.

**About That Night**
written by Norah McClintock
Orca Book Publishers
978-1-4598-0594-1 (pb) $12.95
978-1-4598-0596-5 (eBook) $12.95

**Dead Man’s Switch**
written by Sigmund Brouwer
Harvest House Publishers
978-0-7369-1747-6 (pb) $12.99

**The Show to End All Shows**
(Master Melville’s Medicine Show, Book 2)
written by Cary Fagan
Puffin Canada
978-0-670-06586-8 (hc) $18.00
978-0-14-319177-3 (eBook) $13.99

**The Voice Inside My Head**
written by S.J. Laidlaw
Tundra Books
978-1-77049-565-4 (hc) $19.99
978-1-77049-566-1 (eBook) $11.99

**Julian**
written by William Bell
Doubleday Canada
978-0-385-68205-3 (hc) $19.95
978-0-385-68207-7 (pb) $14.99
978-0-385-68206-0 (eBook) $9.99

The John Spray Mystery Award is administered by the Canadian Children’s Book Centre.

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

2015 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.

The Boundless
written by Kenneth Oppel
HarperCollins Publishers
978-1-44341-026-7 (hc) $19.99
978-1-44341-027-4 (pb) $12.99
978-1-44341-032-8 (eBook) $11.99

The Nethergrim
(The Nethergrim, Book 1)
written by Matthew Jobin
Philomel Books
978-0-399-15998-5 (hc) $19.99
978-0-14-242268-7 (pb) $9.99
978-0-698-14919-9 (eBook) $9.99

The Night Gardener
written by Jonathan Auxier
Puffin Canada
978-0-670-06772-5 (hc) $19.99
978-0-14-318997-8 (pb) $11.99
978-0-14-319198-8 (eBook) $2.99

Sea of Shadows
(Age of Legends, Book 1)
written by Kelley Armstrong
Doubleday Canada
978-0-385-67198-9 (hc) $19.99
978-0-385-67200-9 (pb) $14.99
978-0-385-67199-6 (eBook) $2.99

The Story of Owen:
Dragon Slayer of Trondheim
written by E.K. Johnston
Carolrhoda Books
978-1-4677-1066-4 (hc) $19.95
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FINALISTS OF THE

2015 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.

Dolphin SOS
written by Roy Miki and Slavia Miki
illustrated by Julie Flett
Tradewind Books
978-1-896580-76-0 (hc) $17.95

From There to Here
written by Laurel Croza
illustrated by Matt James
Groundwood Books
978-1-55498-365-0 (hc) $18.95

Hope Springs
written by Eric Walters
illustrated by Eugenie Fernandes
Tundra Books
978-1-77049-530-2 (hc) $19.99

Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress
written by Christine Baldacchino
illustrated by Isabelle Malenfant
Groundwood Books
978-1-55498-347-6 (hc) $16.95
978-1-55498-350-6 (eBook) $16.95

The Most Magnificent Thing
written and illustrated by Ashley Spires
Kids Can Press
978-1-55453-704-4 (hc) $16.95
978-1-77138-174-1 (eBook) $9.99

Nancy Knows
written and illustrated by Cybèle Young
Tundra Books
978-1-77049-482-4 (hc) $19.99

The Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award is administered by the Canadian Children’s Book Centre.

For more information and for jury comments, visit www.bookcentre.ca
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Science Fun and Facts

PICTURE BOOKS AND NON-FICTION FOR KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 5

**Bye, Bye Butterflies!**
(A Tell-Me-More Storybook)
written by Andrew Larsen
illustrated by Jacqueline Hudon-Verrelli
(Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2012)

When Charlie starts school, he gets the chance to become a “butterfly scientist” with his classmates as he learns how caterpillars turn into butterflies. Facts about the monarch butterfly’s life cycle, migration and more are included. Readers will also enjoy other books in the Tell-Me-More Storybook series.

**Counting on Fall**
(Math in Nature, Book 1)
written by Lizann Flatt
illustrated by Ashley Barron
(Owlkids Books, 2012)

Using poetic prose and cut-paper collages, this book introduces basic math and number sense through the patterns of the seasons. Other books in the series explore patterning, sorting, data management and probability; time and measurement; and geometry, symmetry and spatial sense.

**Going Up! Elisha Otis’s Trip to the Top**
(Great Idea, Book 4)
written by Monica Kulling
illustrated by David Parkins
(Tundra Books, 2012)

The young Elisha was fascinated by farm machinery, especially the hay hoist. In 1857, this creative inventor installed his first successful passenger elevator in a five-storey department store in New York City. Other books in the series feature inventors Margaret Knight, Elijah McCoy, George Eastman and Guglielmo Marconi.

**Motion, Magnets and More: The Big Book of Primary Physical Science**
written by Adrienne Mason
illustrated by Claudia Dávila
(Kids Can Press, 2011)

This one-stop sourcebook of fun facts and hands-on activities answers kids’ tricky questions about the physical sciences. The “Touch It” section covers materials, matter, mass and magnets; “Build It” delves into structures, systems and shapes; “Change It” deals with solids, liquids and gases; and “Move It” discusses motion, forces, friction and gravity.

**Plesiosaur Peril**
(Tales of Prehistoric Life)
written by Daniel Loxton
illustrated by Daniel Loxton and Jim W.W. Smith
(Kids Can Press, 2014)

Author-illustrator Daniel Loxton uses stunning state-of-the-art computer-generated images to vividly re-create the undersea world of the Jurassic period. Readers follow the story of a baby plesiosaur, a marine reptile related to dinosaurs, whose curiosity about her new world in the ocean leads her to wander away from her mother. A must-read for young dinosaur lovers!

**The Queen’s Shadow: A Story About How Animals See**
written and illustrated by Cybèle Young
(Kids Can Press, 2015)

Based on the science behind the way animals see, this intriguing “surrealist whodunit” details the quest for the Queen’s stolen shadow. The Royal Detective, Mantis Shrimp, questions the guests — Chameleon, Shark, Lancehead Snake, Goat, Dragonfly, Colossal Squid, Pigeon and two sea urchins — to solve the mystery.

**The Slug**
(Disgusting Critters)
written and illustrated by Elise Gravel
(Tundra Books, 2014)

Gravel hilariously explores such topics as the slug’s two pairs of tentacles for seeing and for smelling (it sees you’re a kid and you smell like broccoli) and its mucous covering (handy for following another’s mucous trail). Other critters covered in the series include flies, head lice, spiders and worms.
Weeds Find a Way
written by Cindy Jenson-Elliott
illustrated by Carolyn Fisher
(Beach Lane Books, 2014)
Persistent, exuberant… weeds have personalities, and this beautiful non-fiction picture book puts them on colourful display! From bright yellow dandelions in sidewalk cracks to purple loosestrife growing along roadways, weeds add unexpected splashes of colour and life in the least likely places.

Whoosh! A Watery World of Wonderful Creatures
written by Marilyn Baillie
illustrated by Susan Mitchell
(Owlkids Books, 2014)
Reading about splashing like a dolphin or hiding like a clownfish gets kids thinking about creatures that love water as much as we do. Each spread shows an animal in a watery scene on one side and a child mimicking the animal’s activity on the other. The echoing images bring to life the real ways that animals behave.

written by Catherine Ripley
illustrated by Scot Ritchie
(Owlkids Books, 2010)
This 10th-anniversary edition provides kid-friendly explanations for nearly 100 everyday mysteries. Divided into six sections — Bathtime Questions, Supermarket Questions, Nighttime Questions, Outdoor Questions, Kitchen Questions and Farm Animal Questions — this charmingly illustrated book will thrill inquisitive young readers.

Winter’s Coming: A Story of Seasonal Change
written by Jan Thornhill
illustrated by Josée Bisaillon
(Owlkids Books, 2014)
Lily, a snowshoe hare, hears that winter is coming — but who or what is winter? She watches blackbirds fly south, a squirrel hide food and a frog disappear under a rock… how should she prepare? A great introduction to animal adaptation. Readers can also explore migration in Thornhill’s Is This Panama? A Migration Story.

You Are Stardust
written by Elin Kelsey
illustrated by Soyeon Kim
(Owlkids Books, 2012)
This innovative and beautifully illustrated book reminds young readers of our innate relationship with the natural world, based on the idea that every atom in our bodies came from a star that exploded long ago.

JUNIOR, INTERMEDIATE & SENIOR NON-FICTION AND FICTION FOR GRADES 3 TO 10
Before the World Was Ready: Stories of Daring Genius in Science
written by Claire Eamer
illustrated by Sa Boothroyd
(Annick Press, 2013)
Read about eight great scientists whose ideas changed the world but whose theories were not readily accepted in their time — from Copernicus’s sun-centred model of the universe in the 16th century to Rachel Carson’s warnings about the dangers of pesticides in the 20th century.

Branching Out: How Trees Are Part of Our World
written by Joan Marie Galat
(Owlkids Books, 2014)
Profiling 11 trees, from familiar ones such as the red maple to lesser-known ones like the tall-stilted mangrove, this book highlights the complex ways trees are part of our society, culture and economy. The symbiotic relationship between trees and animals is also explored.

Case Closed? Nine Mysteries Unlocked by Modern Science
written by Susan Hughes
illustrated by Michael Wandelmaier
(Kids Can Press, 2010)
Readers will explore nine historical case files, meet investigators who are researching each mystery and study the tools and techniques at their disposal. As modern science sheds new light on ancient and recent mysteries, readers will learn whether these scientific detectives can finally declare — CASE CLOSED!

The Case of the Missing Moonstone
(The Wollstonecraft Detective Agency, Book 1)
written by Jordan Stratford
illustrated by Kelly Murphy
(Alfred A. Knopf, 2015)
History, mystery and science collide in a new series based on two real historical figures. Lady Ada Byron, age 11, is a genius. Mary Godwin, age 14, is a romantic. Together, the girls form a secret detective agency, for the apprehension of clever criminals, using math, science and analytical thinking.

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Earth’s Cycles
(Earth’s Cycles in Action)
written by Diane Dakers
(Crabtree Publishing, 2014)
With informative text, vivid photographs and detailed diagrams, this useful title explains the patterns and cycles created on Earth by the influence of the Sun and the Moon, as well as by the Earth’s magnetic poles and the planet’s rotation. Other books in the series include The Carbon Cycle, Earth’s Water Cycles and The Nitrogen Cycle.

Every Last Drop:
Bringing Clean Water Home
(Orca Footprints)
written by Michelle Mulder
(Orca Book Publishers, 2014)
For millions worldwide, finding clean water is a daily challenge. Mulder looks at the innovative ways communities are finding to quench their thirst — from drinking fog in Chile to using biosand filters in Afghanistan. Other topics in the series include cycling, food production, sustainable energy, waste reduction and housing.

Evolution: How We and All Living Things Came to Be
written and illustrated by Daniel Loxton
(Kids Can Press, 2010)
This comprehensive introduction includes topics from Charles Darwin to modern-day science, and answers such frequently asked questions as how do we know that evolution happens and, if it does, where are the transitional fossils? Enhanced with computer-generated images, illustrations and photographs, this is a fascinating read.

Fuzzy Forensics:
DNA Fingerprinting Gone Wild
written by L.E. Carmichael
(Ashby-BP Publishing, 2014)
Endangered parrots taken from the wild and sold as pets, African elephants butchered for their ivory tusks — explore real cases from the crime scene to the laboratory to the courtroom. See how DNA fingerprints can identify endangered species, match animal parents with their wild babies, and trace a furry victim’s country of origin. Winner of the 2014 Lane Anderson Award.

Half Brother
written by Kenneth Oppel
(HarperCollins Publishers, 2010)
As Ben’s family and a team of scientists attempt to teach Zan, the baby chimp, how to communicate using American Sign Language, they discover the complexities of humanizing a wild animal. In this thought-provoking novel, Ben risks everything he loves in order to save his “baby brother.” Older teens will enjoy Oppel’s This Dark Endeavour.

Dirty Science:
25 Experiments with Soil
written by Shar Levine and Leslie Johnstone
illustrated by Lorenzo Del Bianco
(Scholastic Canada, 2013)
Fun experiments help budding scientists discover interesting things to do with dirt while learning about the ground beneath their feet — from discovering the unseen critters that roam our lawns to learning how to change a pink flower into a blue one. Other titles in the series include Hockey Science, Scary Science and Snowy Science.

If: A Mind-Bending New Way of Looking at Big Ideas and Numbers
written by David J. Smith
illustrated by Steve Adams
(Kids Can Press, 2014)
This intriguing guide to understanding huge ideas and numbers uses clever devices to scale down everything from timelines (the history of Earth compressed into one year), to quantities (all the wealth in the world divided into one hundred coins), to size differences (the planets shown as different types of balls).

Impossible Science
(Mystery Files)
written by James Bow
(Crabtree Publishing, 2012)
Humans are always reaching to make new discoveries. Science often holds the key to uncovering mysteries, yet some things remain beyond our grasp. Young readers will learn the facts about the possibilities for eternal youth, creating life, moving faster than the speed of light, alien life and time travel.

It’s Catching: The Infectious World of Germs and Microbes
written by Jennifer Gardy
illustrated by Josh Holinaty
(Owlkids Books, 2014)
Microbiologist Jennifer Gardy — “disease detective”— picks up her microscope to bring expert insight to the microbes that are all around us. Irreverent, playful and contagiously fun, this book explains a variety of germs and the diseases they cause, from the common cold to Ebola.
**Nibbling on Einstein's Brain:** The Good, the Bad and the Bogus in Science  
written by Diane Swanson  
illustrated by Francis Blake  
(Annick Press, 2009)

Swanson equips kids with strategies on how to tell the difference between legitimate science and sketchy science. This informative book, which promotes critical-thinking skills, features artwork that lends levity to the serious content.

**On a Scale from Idiot to Complete Jerk:** A Highly Scientific Study of Annoying Behavior  
written by Alison Hughes  
(Orca Book Publishers, 2014)

When Grade 8 science-project time rolls around, J.J. Murphy dives into research about jerks. By J.J.'s estimation, his science project, *On a Scale from Idiot to Complete Jerk*, is groundbreaking, exhaustive, highly scientific and seriously worthy of bonus marks!

**Pandemic Survival:** It's Why You're Alive  
written by Ann Love and Jane Drake  
illustrated by Bill Slavin  
(Tundra Books, 2013)

Delving into the history of many diseases, the authors offer an in-depth look at the causes, symptoms and often bizarre cures that were administered to the sick and dying. They also discuss the evolution of medicine and introduce readers to the pioneers who discovered vaccines, stressed the importance of cleanliness and invented antibiotics.

**Patient Zero:** Solving the Mysteries of Deadly Epidemics  
written by Marilee Peters  
(Annick Press, 2014)

Peters takes readers on a spine-chilling journey through time and across continents, following the scientists who solved the mysteries of seven killer epidemics. This is a gripping tale of how disease spreads, and it reminds us that millions of people owe their lives to the work of these pioneer epidemiologists.

**Shapes in Math, Science and Nature:** Squares, Triangles and Circles  
written by Catherine Sheldrick Ross  
illustrated by Bill Slavin  
(Kids Can Press, 2014)

Blow cube-shaped bubbles! Ace paper-airplane making! Three books in the popular *Shapes in Math, Science and Nature* series are now available in one compilation. Fun illustrations, informative text and fantastic hands-on activities and puzzles introduce readers to the basics of geometry and its myriad applications!

**The Source of Light**  
written by David Richards  
(Thistledown Press, 2011)

Badger and Mike, two 17-year-olds, seek answers to serious questions about Mike's mom's infidelity and his dad's involvement in industrial espionage. Against a backdrop of the synchrotron, the world's most powerful microscope, the boys and their friend Angie begin an operation that will change the lives of everyone they know.

**Starting from Scratch:** What You Should Know about Food and Cooking  
written by Sarah Elton  
illustrated by Jeff Kulak  
(Owlkids Books, 2014)

This book is a manifesto on food, inspiring both budding chefs and food lovers in the process! Recipes are demystified and cooking is boiled down to the basics, inspiring kids to go beyond the pre-packaged meal, to eat better and to understand what's on their plate.

**Tastes Like Music:** 17 Quirks of the Brain and Body  
written by Maria Birmingham  
illustrated by Monika Melnychuk  
(Owlkids Books, 2014)

Readers will come away amazed by all the weird and wonderful things the human brain and body can do. Whether it's having no fingerprints at all (adermatoglyphia) or hearing music every time you taste chocolate (synesthesia), these conditions bring our understanding of the human body to another level entirely.

**Zoobots:** Wild Robots Inspired by Real Animals  
written by Helaine Becker  
illustrated by Alex Ries  
(Kids Can Press, 2014)

Science fiction comes to life in this riveting showcase of zoobots — robots inspired by animals! Meet Squeeze, an octobot based on the octopus; Sliver, a serpentine bot based on snakes; and 10 other fascinating robots. Science buffs will also enjoy Becker’s *The Insecto-Files* and *Magic Up Your Sleeve*.
The Classroom Bookshelf

STRUGGLING FOR LIBERTY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

BY SANDRA O’BRIEN

Over the last two centuries, women have been fighting for their own rights and for the rights of others. They have fought against slavery, fought for the right to education and fought to receive equal pay for equal work. The three books reviewed in this issue’s column tell the stories of women who have struggled to gain some of the rights and freedoms that women experience today. These are important stories about brave women, and these books deserve a place on the bookshelves in our homes, schools and libraries.

44 Hours or Strike!
written by Anne Dublin
Second Story Press, 2015
978-1-927583-76-0 (pb) $11.95
978-1-927583-77-7 (eBook) $8.99
for Grades 4 to 8
Fiction | Labour History | Canadian History | Great Depression

The Toronto Dressmakers’ Strike of 1931 took place during a period in which distrust and resentment of immigrant workers was growing and the Great Depression was making everyone’s life difficult. In Dublin’s new novel, sisters Sophie and Rose are forced to work in a garment factory to support themselves and their mother after their father passes away. Tired of working 13-hour days for very little pay, the girls decide to stand with their fellow garment workers and strike until their demands are met: a 44-hour work week, a 15-percent wage increase and the union’s right to bargain on behalf of all workers. When Rose lands in prison after a fight on the picket line, 14-year-old Sophie must look after their failing mother at night and protest in the freezing wind all day. But what Rose faces during her 30 days in the Mercer Reformatory is even worse. How will the two young girls survive the hardships of a strike, an ailing mother and the Great Depression?

Anne Dublin’s latest work brings a crucial part of Canadian labour history to life and introduces young readers to key historical figures of the time. The story moves at a fast pace, and the short chapters keep readers engaged. Dublin has created two strong female protagonists who struggle to deal with all that life has thrown at them but do not lose their hope that things will eventually get better.

Written for students in the junior and intermediate grades, this book could be used in conjunction with the history curriculum or as a novel in English or language arts to teach about social justice or labour history.

Speak a Word for Freedom: Women Against Slavery
written by Janet Willen and Marjorie Gann
Tundra Books, 2015
978-1-770-49651-4 (hc) $24.99
978-1-77049-653-8 (eBook) $12.99
for Grades 7 and up
Non-fiction | Social Justice | Slavery | Women | Courage

For over 200 years now, female activists have been campaigning against slavery. Without the efforts of women like Elizabeth Freeman, Elizabeth Heyrick, Ellen Craft, Harriet Tubman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Frances Anne Kemble and Alice Seeley Harris, emancipation would have taken much longer. These women were followed by the likes of Kathleen Simon, who spoke out about slavery in China and Ethiopia, and Fredericka Martin, who fought for the rights of the Aleut People in the Pribilof Islands. And today, women like Timea Nagy, Micheline Slattery, Hadijatou Mani, Sheila Roseau and Nina Smith continue to fight against sexual slavery, the restavec system (involving children in Haiti), child slavery and slavery in general in countries like Canada, the United States, Antigua, Barbuda, Niger and India. They have created organizations to help those who have been enslaved and have taken leading roles in government agencies that work to end the various forms of slavery.

This informative tribute to the aforementioned women tells their stories and inspires young people to take action by learning more about modern-day slavery, by becoming smart consumers and by spreading the word. With archival photographs, a list of selected sources and a comprehensive index, Speak a Word for Freedom is an excellent resource for teachers of middle- and senior-grade social sciences. Janet Willen and Marjorie Gann’s first co-authored book, Five Thousand Years of Slavery, would make a good companion piece as it tells the history of slavery across the globe.
Give Me Wings: How a Choir of Former Slaves Took on the World
written by Kathy Lowinger
Annick Press, 2015
978-1-55451-747-3 (hc) $21.95
for Grades 6 and up
Non-fiction | Black History | American History | Music | Education

Ella Sheppard was born into slavery in 1851, but her family were able to buy their freedom and move to Ohio where slavery was illegal. Although her parents were very poor, they managed to find the money to send Ella to school and buy her a piano. At a time when many white people hated the idea of young blacks being educated, schools were being burned to the ground across the country. In 1871, Ella was attending the Fisk Free Colored School (later known as Fisk University) when it ran out of money and was on the brink of closure. Ella turned to music to save her future and became a founding member of a travelling choir, the Jubilee Singers. Together with eight other young men and women, Ella helped to raise funds as the choir followed the Underground Railroad from Cincinnati to New York. Putting their own lives and the lives of those who helped them in danger, the Jubilee Singers introduced a thrilling new sound with their spirituals that helped influence modern American music.

Filled with background information about this time period, many archival photographs and lyrics to many of the songs the choir sang, Give Me Wings takes its readers on a journey through a dramatic era in American history. It includes a timeline, further reading selections, a comprehensive index and an afterword that gives the reader a little more information about the individuals mentioned in the book.

This is an important story to add to any collection of books for young adult readers on black history as it introduces them to a young woman whose love of music helped break down barriers between the races. A must-have book for all school and classroom libraries!

Sandra O’Brien is the CCBC’s Outreach Education Coordinator and has an M.Ed. in Children’s Literature.

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Seven Secrets
You’ll Be Dying to Unravel

BY MELISSA MONTOVANI

Three years ago, Orca Book Publishers took a chance on a unique and ambitious concept, the Seven series, developed by Eric Walters and written by Walters with six other authors. Readers could pick up the seven books about seven grandsons in any order, even though a few of the characters’ actions impacted events in some of the other books. And pick them up they did — both the Seven books and the Seven Sequels. In fact, this literary experiment turned out so well that Walters is trying it again with a new set of writers, but, this time, there are important changes afoot. For starters, the Secrets series follows a group of seven teen girls living in an orphanage during the 1960s. While they consider each other sisters, they aren’t actually related. And do you want to know a secret? Written by Walters and six of the best, Canadian female YA authors, these books do not disappoint.

One night in June 1964, the Benevolent Home for Necessitous Girls burns to the ground, leaving each of the seven female protagonists completely unmoored. While the youngest girls are sent to live in real homes, the seven eldest girls, who range in age from 16 to 18 years, are called into the office of Mrs. Hazelton, the matron, the following day to discuss the next chapter in their lives. She explains the few clues she has about their identitities, gives them each $138, and sends them off into the world alone.

Tess, in The Unquiet Past by Kelley Armstrong, is kind of a loner. She has two roommates — Dot and Sara — but she doesn’t tell them about the nightmares and waking visions that torment her, fearing they will call her crazy. When Mrs. Hazelton gives Tess a mysterious phone number and address in Sainte-Suzanne, Quebec, she leaves without saying goodbye to the rest of the Seven. Along the way, Tess will have more visions about past events, including some about terrible experiments carried out on people in the psychiatric “hospital” she finds in Sainte-Suzanne. She has great chemistry with a cute Métis boy, whose presence speaks to the tension between himself and even the most liberal-minded white people. Readers who are either long-time fans of Armstrong’s writing or who love Gothic fiction will appreciate her ability to create a creepy and foreboding atmosphere while blending historical and fictional details and spot-on allusions to some key examples of Gothic literature.

Whereas Tess is a very independent character, even if that is partly a self-preservation technique, Sara, in Kathy Kacer’s Stones on a Grave, is the oldest girl at the home, remaining in the security of the orphanage past her 18th birthday. After the fire, Mrs. Hazelton gives Sara three items: a Star of David, documents from the displaced persons camp where she was born in Germany and a falsified document stating that she was healthy to travel to Canada. She explains the few clues she has about their identitities, gives them each $138, and sends them off into the world alone.

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about her family. While she meets some very friendly people in Germany, there are others who aren’t as welcoming. For example, the very doctor who granted her safe passage to Canada is clearly disturbed by her presence for some reason. Many parts of this book are emotionally difficult to read, especially those that detail the racism Sara and her fellow orphan Malou face — the former for being a German Jew and the latter for having brown skin. While one of the big reveals was something that I had predicted long before Sara was aware of it, Kacer has developed great insights into what living in post-war Germany was like for the Jews who stayed.

Unlike the other books in this series, Dot’s story, told in Vicki Grant’s Small Bones, is the only one that begins on the day she was born and wound up at the orphanage wrapped up in an old, camouflage military coat with a small mustard spoon with a family crest tucked in one of the pockets. The clues lead her directly to a business called “Howell’s of Buckminster,” but when she arrives there, she learns that Howell’s closed many years before, making it a dead end. When she finds that she’s also had her money stolen, she has a good cry, and then sets out to walk six miles to the local resort to see about a job. Even though Mrs. Hazelton emphasized she should “keep her wits about her” during her journey, Dot’s overactive imagination and lack of practice in paying attention lead to several other mistakes, mishaps and all-out disasters, which will leave readers laughing. Both long-time fans and those who have never read Grant’s writing will be in for a treat with Dot, the sweet romance that develops between her and a boy she meets, and the way the author wraps up the story.

From the description of the book and Toni’s night terrors, readers may expect Shattered Glass by Teresa Toten to be a very dark book. There are, certainly, moments that could have been as excruciating as the extensive lacerations covering her body, such as when Toni reads her hospital release form for the first time and the reader connects those wounds with Toni’s fear that her mother inflicted them. However, Toten’s liberal use of comedic elements makes the heart-wrenchingly difficult moments possible to bear. In particular, Toni’s missteps and fantasies about her father, her notions of romance and revenge against her co-worker Ethan, are hilariously on point, as is the characterization of Toni by her landlady, Grady, as someone from another century. Nevertheless, readers may find their hearts hurting for what Toni has gone through, what she believes has happened to her, and even for what one of her other colleagues, Rachel, eloquently explains: the “shame bits” are part of the universal experience of girls and women.

Betty (created by Eric Walters) is a kind, strong character, who generally believes the best of the people she encounters, making her a reflection of the title of her story, Innocent. It leaves her open to possible manipulation by those she encounters in Kingston, Ontario, the city where Mrs. Hazelton has arranged for her to have a job as a maid for the Remingtons, one of the city’s wealthiest families. Kingston is also the place where Betty’s father has been incarcerated for the murder of her mother. After she visits her father for the first time in jail, and he insists that he’s innocent, she does everything in her power to find out if he is, in fact, telling the truth. There is much to love about this novel which speaks assuredly about violence against women while pairing Betty with an incredibly sweet love interest and plenty of twists and turns.

Malou, in A Big Dose of Lucky by Marthe Jocelyn, is the only character among the Seven who is of mixed race, which means that she offers readers a unique perspective on what the 1960s in small-town Ontario was actually like. While Kacer included suggestions about the kind of racism Malou faced in Hope, the reader only truly sees in this book the kind of terror and humiliation she experienced at the hands of Sara’s boyfriend Luke. When Mrs. Hazelton hands Malou a plastic hospital bracelet with the name “Baby Fox” from a hospital in Parry Sound, Ontario, she heads there — only to find that it will not be as easy to discover who her parents are as she first thought. Beyond the interesting direction that the story takes with regard to Malou’s parentage, readers will be impressed with Jocelyn’s intersectional tale that speaks to the injustices faced not only by those who are poor, but also those who are either a visible minority or of diverse sexual orientation.

Last, but not least, Cady, in Norah McClintock’s My Life Before Me, is a strong character with a dream of following in the footsteps of her hero Nellie Bly, a woman who succeeded in developing a name for herself as an investigative journalist many years before. When a crumbling newspaper clipping brings her to Orrenstown, Indiana, she believes that, perhaps, the man with a desecrated grave is her father, but as is to be expected, the story becomes far more complicated than it might first seem. Cady’s journalistic reporting style makes the story she tells seem less emotional than some of the other tales in the Secrets series, but the racial tension that comes out in the people she meets in this small town and the obvious anger that she evokes by digging deeper into the story is well worth experiencing.

The orphans’ stories play out against the backdrop of the mid-1960s. Each of the seven characters confronts the world for the first time during a period of great social upheaval and at a time of great personal turmoil in her own life. The girls have all lost their home, and their sense of identity is forever altered by the secrets that they uncover throughout their journeys. These personal revolutions are juxtaposed with the social change being called for by the women’s, civil and gay rights movements, which each impact the seven stories in different ways. The secrets and tension created by these juxtapositions are something that readers will be dying to unravel.

Melissa Montovani is the founder of YABookShelf.com and the TEEN Publicist for Entangled Publishing. She lives and works in Toronto.
We Recommend

NEW AND NOTED BOOKS FOR TODDLERS TO TEENS

**Ride the Big Machines Across Canada**
written and illustrated by Carmen Mok
HarperCollins Canada, 2015
978-1-4434-3810-0 (board book) $12.99
for toddler to Preschool

*Picture Book | Travel | Canada | Canadian Provinces and Territories | Big Machines*

“I’m going on a trip from sea to sea. How will I do it? Come ride with me!”

Ah, family road trips — sitting by the window in the back seat watching the scenery roll by, imagining all manner of things. This large, sturdy board book, featuring a family on a cross-country road trip, evokes the simple pleasures of travelling with one’s family. In this jaunty, rhyming story, a young boy imagines himself in a whole variety of big machines as his family travels the provinces and territories of Canada.

Each double-page spread shows the little boy piloting, driving in or riding on a big machine that roughly correlates with the province through which they are travelling — from a gondola in the mountains of British Columbia to a fishing boat off the shore of Nova Scotia. The province and territory names are not explicitly stated, but each spread includes the provincial/territorial flag and appropriate landscapes or landmarks, although some are more obscure than others.

This book will appeal especially, but not exclusively, to little boys who will revel in Carmen Mok’s vibrantly painted full-page-sized harvesters, haulers, combines and cranes. Mok’s appealing colour palette includes warm greens and browns and bright oranges and reds. The little boy, figuring prominently in each picture, has a big head, wide-set eyes and a happy smile.

The lively, imaginative illustrations are sure to engage young children at story time. While the youngest will enjoy the simple rhymes and the colourful machines, slightly older listeners may enjoy looking for the flag in each spread, naming the big machines or even counting or finding shapes. Some youngsters might even like to plot the journey on a map of Canada, taking their own imaginary road trip!

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

**Sing a Song of Bedtime**
written and illustrated by Barbara Reid
North Winds Press/Scholastic Canada, 2015
978-1-4431-4684-5 (hc) $19.99
for Preschool to Grade 1

*Picture Book | Nursery Rhymes | Bedtime*

Sing a Song of Bedtime presents a delightful selection of 13 classic nursery rhymes and lullabies that lend themselves perfectly to bedtime reading. Partnered with Barbara Reid’s irresistible Plasticine illustrations, these familiar verses will now be introduced to a new generation.

Which child (or adult, for that matter) would not be captivated by the engaging bedtime-related scenarios created by this gifted artist? Within the realm of the natural world, a mother and baby orca surface for air in “Star Light, Star Bright.” The protagonist jumping over the candlestick in “Jack Be Nimble” happens to be an agile bunny, while a harried mouse cares for her numerous progeny in “There Was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe.” Humans feature as well. A sister tries to rouse her brother from bed in “Frère Jacques,” a mother comforts her newborn in “Hush, Little Baby,” and three siblings embark on a nighttime adventure with “The Man in the Moon.”

To enter into a world created by Reid’s imagination is a very special experience. Each work of art, beautifully photographed by Ian Crysler, is a visual celebration filled with innovative techniques, subtle details, a myriad of textures and colours, gentle humour and unique characters — all adding up to a memorable book that will be read and examined again and again.

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

**Ben Says Goodbye**
written by Sarah Ellis
illustrated by Kim La Fave
Pajama Press, 2015
978-1-927485-79-8 (hc) $18.95
for Preschool to Grade 1

*Picture Book | Friendships | Emotions | Imagination and Play*

During the preschool years, children often forge their first friendships and these relationships can be very intense. Here, Sarah Ellis explores how a young boy handles his sadness when his best friend moves away.

Ben is distraught because his best friend is leaving the neighbourhood. He opts to move, too, and seeks refuge in a cave (the space under the kitchen table) where his sole companion is a tamed (stuffed) lion. Adopting the persona of a cave boy, Ben resorts to grunting the sole sound of “guh” when his family speak to him.

Ben Says Goodbye is a beautiful, tender story that will resonate with parents and children alike. Ellis’ writing is as delightfully simple as the language in which it’s told, allowing children to connect on a deep level with the poignant story of Ben’s grief and loss. His imagery is as powerful as it is evocative, capturing the essence of a young boy’s emotional journey in a way that is both sincere and moving.

The illustrations, by Kim La Fave, are as striking as they are emotionally resonant. The use of orange and yellow in Ben’s world create a sense of warmth and hope, while the greens and blues of the cave and the natural world evoke a sense of solitude and introspection. Each page is a visual feast, inviting children to explore the story and its themes in a way that is both engaging and thought-provoking.

This is a book that will be read again and again, not just for the story it tells, but for the way it captures the essence of childhood loss and the journey toward healing. It is a story that will stay with children long after the last page is turned, offering comfort and solace in the face of heartbreak.

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

**Ride the Big Machines**

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

**Sing a Song of Bedtime**

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

**Ben Says Goodbye**

Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario.
While camped out in his makeshift dwelling, Ben finds solace in his two imagined stories about friendship. Using a pointed stick (pencil), he sketches his tales as a series of drawings on the walls of his cave. One tale tells of two boys who are best friends and of their fun and heroic antics. The other tale tells of two friends, living on different sides of the world, who dig their way to reunite in the centre of the Earth for a short visit.

When Ben smells butter in the air, he emerges from his cave and rejoins his family to share some popcorn. When he hears a moving truck’s beeping from across the street, he heads to the window to investigate the sound. From his post on the couch, Ben spies a neon-blue Scorcher Scooter — just the perfect size for a new pal.

The author offers a charming and delightful story in which a preschooler’s feelings and thoughts ring true. La Faye’s endearing softly hued illustrations, accentuated by black outlines, accompany this gentle tale. Ben’s cave drawings, rendered in black on an ochre background, populate the book’s endpapers. This is a clever touch that offers readers an additional visual level on which to extend and enjoy the story.

Readers who wish to read more about Ben and his adventures will also enjoy A+ for Big Ben (a recent board-book version of Ellis and La Faye’s 2001 title, Big Ben).

Carol-Ann Hoyte is a Montreal poet and the editor of Dear Tomato: An International Crop of Food and Agriculture Poems.

Mr. Postmouse’s Rounds
text by Marianne Dubuc
translated by Yvette Ghione
Kids Can Press, 2015
978-1-77138-572-5 (hc) $18.95
978-1-77138-609-8 (eBook) $9.99
for Preschool to Grade 2
Picture Book | Animals | Mail

What an industrious worker Mr. Postmouse is! Pulling a wagon heaving with mail, he conscientiously delivers letters and packages to a variety of animals on his daily rounds. No matter where the residents live, be it on top of a mountain or deep in the ocean, nothing will stop this intrepid mouse from fulfilling his duties.

Through detailed cross-section illustrations, hand drawn with pencil and coloured digitally, readers have the privilege of peeking inside an array of living quarters dotting Mr. Postmouse’s route. Burrows, tree houses, a mobile home, caves, cottages and a shipwreck, all reflecting the distinct characteristics, needs and wants of the creatures living within, are depicted in an inventive and witty manner. What about that rabbit burrow filled with bunk beds, or the upside-down furnishings in the bats’ cave? Is that Goldilocks eating porridge with the bear? And why is Little Red Riding Hood hiding behind the tree from the wolf?

Though the text is minimal, author-illustrator Marianne Dubuc has cleverly created a most engaging environment within her artwork — one that will delight readers and aspiring architects with each turn of the page.

Senta Ross

Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox
written and illustrated by Danielle Daniel
Groundwood Books, 2015
978-1-55498-750-4 (hc) $18.95
for Preschool to Grade 2
Picture Book | First Nations | Anishinaabe | Totem Animals | Tradition

“Sometimes I feel like a bear, strong and confident. I stand tall and growl and protect those around me.” So begins the introduction to the Anishinaabe tradition of totem animals, narrated by children who identify with a particular animal clan. Each creature symbolizes the personality traits and skills individuals must learn in order to benefit their people. Although connections with several animal guides may occur in their lifetime, it is believed that one totem animal acts as the primary guardian spirit.

The distinctive characteristics and strengths of a dozen totem animals are highlighted in simple four-line poems, each beginning with the same phrase: Sometimes I feel like a turtle, slow and quiet. I retreat into my shell and find peace and solitude. / Sometimes I feel like a fox, sly and sharp. I observe all those around me and disappear quickly.

Accompanying the poems are expressive acrylic-on-canvas illustrations portraying children wearing the animal masks of their clan while standing in front of a muted wallpaper background. Danielle Daniel, a Métis mixed-media artist and writer, depicts the underlying temperament of each totem animal in an understated, yet sensitive, manner.

Although Daniel wrote this book to encourage her young son to connect with his Aboriginal roots, it can also help children of all cultures to understand the many characteristics within themselves and others. A useful “Author’s Note” concerning the importance of totem animals is also included.

Senta Ross

Only Fish Fall From the Sky
written and illustrated by Leif Parsons
POW!, 2015
978-1-57687-757-9 (hc) $17.95
for Preschool to Grade 2
Picture Book | Imagination | Dreams | Alternate Realities

Only Fish Fall From the Sky encourages us to use our imagination by calling the normal, like sleeping in beds and sitting while eating, outlandish. The story begins with the boy narrator waking from a dream where water fell from the sky, when “[e]veryone knows only fish fall from the sky.” Two-page spreads illustrating the norms of the boy’s world — like dancing while eating — follow each proclamation about the bizarreness of our world and customs.

The intricate, doodle-style illustrations are not only the principal appeal of the book but provide necessary information, like why spending a recess in a schoolyard would cause the protagonist to “miss the view” (he normally spends recess playing in the clouds). The illustrations reward close viewing, with mini stories unspooling in apartment windows and on crowded sidewalks, and the dolphin
springing out of a night sea and the giant hand clutching a tiny teacup. Parsons experiments with proportion, gravity and levels of realism in his surreal drawings, where disembodied facial features can share a tenement with a giant fly.

Confusion may arise when the text and illustrations seem disconnected or contradictory, like when “everything [in the dream] was right-side up” is illustrated with people standing upside down or horizontally. The following pages clarify by depicting a world crunched in on itself where all planes are, gravity-wise, right-side up.

This unusual picture book urges three-to-seven-year-old children to see our norms and physics not as limits but as springboards for new possibilities.

Aliki Tryphonopoulos is a former children’s librarian living in Saskatchewan.

Bug in a Vacuum
written and illustrated by Mélanie Watt
Tundra Books, 2015
978-1-77049-645-3 (hc) $24.99
for Preschool to Grade 3
Picture Book | Grief | Loss | Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

With places to explore and pies to taste, Bug has a great life until he is sucked into the darkest depths of a vacuum cleaner. Dachshund, while following Bug around the house, loses his favourite hand-knitted, button-eyed dog stuffy to the same vacuum. And so, both Bug and Dachshund are thrust into intense experiences of profound change and loss. From Bug hoping someone has arranged a surprise BugDay party for him into intense experiences of profound change and loss. From Bug hoping someone has arranged a surprise BugDay party for him and Dachshund offering a dog treat to the vacuum in exchange for the same vacuum. And so, both Bug and Dachshund are thrust into intense experiences of profound change and loss. From Bug hoping someone has arranged a surprise BugDay party for him and Dachshund offering a dog treat to the vacuum in exchange for his stuffy, to Bug organizing a dust bunny army and Dachshund lying broken-hearted next to a destroyed vacuum cleaner, to Bug appreciating all he has and Dachshund leaving to eat his chow, both animals find themselves moving through Elisabeth Kübler-Ross’s five stages of grief.

Watt has created an amazing book that is funny, touching and accessible to people of all ages. The story uses simple and very spare language, which it combines with characters so engaging readers are easily carried along to the satisfying conclusion. Watt uses mixed media and Photoshop to create illustrations that add amazing details as well as layers of depth and expressiveness to the characters. This is particularly true for Dachshund, who utters not a single word, bark or growl. At the end of the story, there is hope — not just for Bug and Dachshund, but also for a certain hand-knitted, button-eyed stuffy.

Ken Kilback is a writer and primary teacher in Vancouver.

Starring Shapes!
written and illustrated by Tania Howells
Kids Can Press, 2015
978-1-55453-743-3 (hc) $16.95
978-1-77138-582-4 (eBook) $9.99
for Kindergarten to Grade 2
Picture Book | Mathematics | Geometry | Shapes | Drama

In the fictional town of Shapeston, the elementary school is populated with humans and shapes playing and working together. It’s time for the annual school play, and the focus is upon the many shapes that want to be a part of this school event. One by one, the shapes are introduced, and their dreams of the parts they could play are revealed. (For example, a circle could be the face of an analog clock.) Finally, the shapes and humans cooperate to prepare for a successful performance of the play.

While not a math resource book per se, Starring Shapes! provides a foundation with which to introduce children to basic geometry vocabulary. It also shows how to “train the brain” to see these two-dimensional shapes in the world around them. After reading the book, children could go on a shape hunt around the house, classroom or neighbourhood to help consolidate the concepts introduced by the story.

With just a few lines, author / illustrator Tania Howells conveys a wide range of delightful scenes in her uncomplicated illustrations. An especially charming effect is created when the shapes are seen to slip into place (for example, a triangle becoming the roof of a house) and knowingly look back at the reader.

Starring Shapes! is an engaging introduction to the geometry found in the world around us, and it teaches and reminds everyone to look at the world a little differently.

Nancy Rawlinson is an elementary teacher with the Toronto District School Board.

The Princess and the Pony
written and illustrated by Kate Beaton
Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic, 2015
978-0-545-63708-4 (hc) $19.99
978-0-545-63709-1 (eBook) $19.99
for Kindergarten to Grade 3
Picture Book | Female Warriors | Ponies | Humour

A story about ponies and princesses may seem like well-trodden territory, but The Princess and the Pony is a unique and very funny story of finding value in unexpected places. Princess Pinecone isn’t your ordinary princess — she’s an enthusiastic young warrior, training for battle. Pinecone’s birthday is coming up, and she’s tired of being given cozy sweaters. What she wants most is a strong, valiant horse to ride into battle. Unfortunately, the fat, big-eyed pony that arrives on her birthday isn’t quite what she asked for — it’s hardly the horse of a brave warrior. But when the princess tries her best with what she’s been given, it turns out that the pony has some hidden talents.

Kate Beaton is best known for lampooning historical and literary figures in her webcomic Hark! A Vagrant (also the birthplace of the titular pony), but her first work for children is right on the mark.
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It’s an imaginative story, with a not-too-serious lesson on what to do when a gift isn’t what you were expecting.

Her real forte, however, is her artwork. The cartoony illustrations do much of the storytelling, and provide most of the humour as well. Beaton has mastered the art of making you laugh with just a simple facial expression, and the adorably dumb-looking pony is a highlight of every page. Kids will have fun poking through each picture for the amusing background details — from a battling warrior eating hot dogs or riding an angry llama, down to the endpapers adorned with dozens of sweatered ponies.

You don’t have to be a little princess to enjoy The Princess and the Pony — it’s a great choice for any young reader.

Ian Usher studies English at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.

**Some Things I’ve Lost**

written and illustrated by Cybèle Young

Groundwood Books, 2015

978-1-55498-339-1 (hc) $19.95

for Preschool to Grade 4

*Picture Book | Loss | Transformation | Growth | Imagination*

What might happen to a child’s favourite roller skate or umbrella when it goes missing, never to be found again? Award-winning author and artist Cybèle Young gives us a possible answer, with her curious take on life after loss. Blurring the line between non-fiction and fiction, *Some Things I’ve Lost* reads like a cleverly curated tour through an abstract museum of forgotten treasures (or a journey through an imaginative child’s brain!). On fold-out pages, Young transforms each object through a photo series of intricate paper sculptures, with each object ending up as a mysterious underwater creature. In a satisfying conclusion, the last image reveals the creatures all together forming a coral reef, with the inspiring words “Anything is possible.”

This book is unlike other children’s books, with its tiny text and minimalistic design (resembling an adult’s coffee table book), but what it boasts that some can’t is the space for a child’s imagination to develop. A purely visual feast, *Some Things I’ve Lost* provides inventive examples of how lost objects can be re-imagined, both in sculpture and in life. And to a parent with a child weeping over a favourite missing toy, this book might be highly useful!

Meghan Marentette is a Nova Scotian author and costume maker for both live actors and tiny stop-motion puppets.

**Hiawatha and the Peacemaker**

written by Robbie Robertson

illustrated by David Shannon

Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2015

978-1-4197-1220-3 (hc) $23.95

for Grades 1 to 4

*Picture Book | Traditional Story | History | Governance*

Legendary musician and songwriter Robbie Robertson was only nine when an Elder shared with him the story of The Great Peacemaker and his disciple Hiawatha. Robertson, himself of Mohawk and Cayuga heritage, was moved. Decades later, he’s written a stunning retelling in collaboration with David Shannon, a Caldecott Honor-winning illustrator. The book includes a CD featuring an original song written and performed by Robertson.

In *Hiawatha and the Peacemaker*, protagonist Hiawatha is consumed by hatred and grief after his wife and three daughters are killed. He seeks revenge on Tadodaho, the chief who provoked fighting among the five warring nations — the Cayuga, Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida and Onondaga — who at the time made up the Haudenosaunee. Instead, the Peacemaker arrives, asking Hiawatha to use his gift of speech to end the violence and unite the nations through the Great Law of Peace.

The pairing of Robertson’s elegant, descriptive prose with Shannon’s earthy and expressive oil paintings produces a picture book that makes the history of Aboriginal governance captivating for young readers. Brimming with details about pre-contact Haudenosaunee life, *Hiawatha and the Peacemaker* radiates with authenticity, providing students with a fascinating story to supplement what they’re learning about in the classroom.

At the core of *Hiawatha and the Peacemaker* is a powerful and positive message that shares with readers that they need to be equipped with little more than a message of peace to make a difference in the world. Fast-paced and dynamic, this gem will undoubtedly encourage readers to seek more stories derived from Aboriginal oral tradition.

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

**The Adventures of Miss Petitfour**

written by Anne Michaels

illustrated by Emma Block

Tundra Books, 2015

978-1-77049-502-9 (eBook) $11.99

for Grades 1 to 4

*Fiction | Short Stories | Animals – Cats | Humorous Stories*

*The Adventures of Miss Petitfour*, novelist and poet Anne Michaels’ first book for children, features a title character who is reminiscent of Mary Poppins — except Miss Petitfour prefers to travel by tablecloth. On windy days, she turns it into a makeshift balloon and flies off over the village and countryside, along with her 16 cats, who like to be aired. With suitably whimsical illustrations by British artist Emma Block interspersed throughout, the book consists of five short adventures revolving around the hunt for marmalade,
a spring jumble sale, a search for “birthday cheddar,” a lost stamp and a Festooning Festival.

The five stories encourage the acquisition of vocabulary and the learning of storytelling devices by emphasizing and explaining particularly big words and expressions like “Then one day” and “Meanwhile.” Michaels does this within the narrative, and in a very charming way, making it a useful feature for educators who wish to use the book in the classroom without distracting the independent readers. With each chapter in the book featuring “a single, magical day,” it is also perfectly segmented for bedtime reading at home.

Miss Petitfour’s favourite activities might inspire young children to try out new things; she makes starting a stamp collection or learning new dances and obscure songs sound terribly exciting. The Adventures of Miss Petitfour is a sweet and witty little book, great for kids who already love tea parties, arts and crafts and cats, and those who have yet to discover life’s smaller pleasures.

Camilia Kahrizi is the CCBC’s Marketing and Website Coordinator.

**Operation Josh Taylor**
(Hannah Smart, Book 1)
written by Melody Fitzpatrick
Dundurn, 2015
978-1-45973-134-9 (pb) $12.99
978-1-45973-136-3 (eBook) $8.99
for Grades 3 to 6
Fiction | Rock Stars | Independence | Responsibility

Thirteen-year-old Hannah loves Josh Taylor more than anything in the whole, entire world. Who is Josh Taylor? you ask. He is only the greatest, most talented teen singer on the planet. Hannah shares this deep and abiding love with her BFF Rachel and, when the girls discover that Josh’s concert tour is coming to THEIR town, it is like a dream come true.

There is, however, a slight hitch. It seems Hannah’s parents feel they spend enough money on her already (new skateboard, Chuck Taylor sneakers, new iPod…) and it is time for her to develop some responsibility and earn the money for the tickets herself. Even worse, Rachel’s parents are in agreement. If the girls want the chance to see their idol in concert, they are going to have to face bullies, overcome setbacks and discover their hidden talents… all part of the bumpy road to becoming more independent and testing the limits of friendship.

Melody Fitzpatrick hits many of the high notes of middle school adolescence in this simple, sometimes funny, story — bullying, mean girls, teen idol adulation, BFFs, annoying parents… even a first crush. However, Fitzpatrick uses a light touch — misunderstandings between Hannah and Rachel are quickly resolved, mean girl Scarlett is more of an annoyance than truly nasty, and even her parents’ decision to move the family from Vermont to Maine doesn’t cause Hannah undue angst.

Hannah, prone to impulsiveness and hare-brained plans, is quirky yet likeable, and many young readers will relate to her insecurities and worries. This sweet story about friendship and growing up never lapses into heavy-handed moralizing. An engaging, fun read, sure to please many tweens.

Tracey Schindler
The Nest
written by Kenneth Oppel
illustrated by Jon Klassen
978-1-4434-3862-9 (hc) $19.99
978-1-4434-3864-3 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 6 to 8
Fiction | Family | Anxiety | Wasps | Horror | Perfection | Dreams | Reality

The birth of Steve’s brother Theodore shakes his family up unexpectedly as little Theo’s medical issues keep mounting. With his parents preoccupied by their new son’s seemingly dim future, Steve starts having dreams featuring a mysterious angelic being who tells him she can fix his baby brother and make everything okay again. Struggling in his own childlike way to ponder deeper issues of brokenness, fear and dealing with the unknown, Steve is initially attracted to the idea, but as the dreams take a darker turn and start to bleed into reality, he realizes the cost of perfection may be too high.

Affected profoundly by Theo’s arrival, Steve suddenly finds himself dealing with his parents’ grief as well as his own, while also handling anxiety, obsessive-compulsive tendencies and a new, life-threatening allergy to wasps. The only one who takes Theo’s congenital problems in stride is Nicole, Steve’s little sister, who responds simply with love.

In this serious tale, author Kenneth Oppel intertwines suspense, mystery and horror, taking his reader on a journey into the mind. From Steve’s first encounter with the entity he comes to know as the queen wasp, it is difficult to discern what is real and what isn’t. The story plays on this uncertainty with precision, leaving the reader frantically turning pages with acute apprehension.

Accompanied by illustrator Jon Klassen’s subtle, yet haunting, black-and-white drawings and creative chapter numbering, The Nest explores one perceptive boy’s growing awareness of imperfection through the powerful use of allegory.

Amy Mathers is a regular reviewer for CCBN and a YA reviewer for the National Reading Campaign.

Attack of the Toga Gang
written by George Bowering
Dancing Cat Books, 2015
978-1-77086-442-9 (pb) $12.95
978-1-77086-443-6 (eBook) $9.99
for Grades 6 to 8
Fiction | Archaeology | Friendship | Poetry | Super Powers | Secret Clubs

With a collective interest in poetry, 13-year-old Harry Fieldstone and his friends Viv, Feet, Neville and Norm start a writing club. They’re all quirky characters in their own right, but Harry is unique as he strives to hide his true intellect from the others by crafting purposely mundane (yet humorous) verses. On the side he’s an enthusiastic archaeologist, and when he finds a mysterious ring while digging in a construction site, he immediately shows it to his friends, changing their lives as they learn it belongs to the ancient Toga Gang, who are coming after them to retrieve it.

In this bizarrely enjoyable and eclectic tale, author and former Parliamentary Poet Laureate George Bowering places the group of friends in a fantastic situation, discovering a ring that manifests a new superpower every day of the week. From telekinesis to jumping great distances to being able to read minds, Harry has a wonderful time trying to figure out which power will appear next.

But when the gangs start circling like vultures, putting Harry and his friends in danger, Harry confers with his favourite professor and realizes holding on to the ring will keep them all at risk. Reluctantly, he comes up with a plan to put the ring in a place where no one will be able to get it, including him.

Full of vibrant personalities, witty humour and unusual details, Attack of the Toga Gang is a surprising story told by an intriguing voice.

Amy Mathers

MinRs
written by Kevin Sylvester
Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2015
978-1-4814-4041-7 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 5 to 7
Fiction | Science Fiction | Adventure | Survival

After centuries of resource depletion on Earth, salvation has come in the form of Perses, a resource-rich planet coaxed into orbit from its collision course with Earth. It is just far enough from the Sun to be habitable for humans, and a company named Melming Mining has quickly set up operations there, using the resources to give the Earth a new and promising future.

Living with his parents in the mining colony, Christopher and the rest of the inhabitants are preparing for a communications blackout from Earth. Unsure of what to expect, Christopher and his best friend, Elena, plan a Blackout party, hoping to ease the fears of others, but when the party ends with a literal bang and an invasion, the only place to hide is in the mines. With the invading Landers up above and only children left below, Christopher must find a way to keep them all alive until the blackout ends — a long two months away.

The blackout changes everything, shifting Christopher’s focus to basic survival. At 12 years old, he is thrust into a leadership role, facing the grief of the other children as well as the pressing requirements of finding food and sabotaging the Landers. Along the way, he discovers truths about his family and the way the mining operation runs that cause him to re-evaluate his enthusiasm for the Great Mission.

Author Kevin Sylvester ends his gripping tale with a startling cliffhanger, meaning readers will be on pins and needles till the sequel comes out in September 2016.

Amy Mathers
“how easy it is for peer pressure and the need to be loved to lead to risky behaviour” - Quill & Quire

“a young writer to watch” - Winnipeg Free Press

“Carmichael gets inside of this Julia and gives her a true voice” - CanLit for Little Canadians

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Contrary to the rest of his family, Flynn prefers texting and binge watching YouTube videos to hiking and camping. He’s never understood how his parents and sister could rave about the wonderful solitude one finds in the wilderness. A chance stumble and fall while on a brief solo nature walk thrusts Flynn into the unforgiving Canadian winter in the forest. With inadequate clothing, a dead cell phone and only a granola bar for sustenance, he must find his way back to civilization.

Lost in the Backyard is a story of accidental survival and self-discovery. Flynn’s sarcastic comments and snappy comebacks give way to perceptive observations about himself, his relationships with other people and his family dynamics. While eating moss and snow, he begins to appreciate the beauty of the stillness in nature, if not how others can be so completely enamoured of it. While struggling to find shelter, Flynn reflects upon the classic adolescent wilderness adventures he has been forced to read for his Outdoor Education class — *My Side of the Mountain, Lost in the Barrens* — and makes sardonic comparisons between the protagonists’ situations and his own. Even in the direst of times, he never loses his sense of humour.

In Flynn, Hughes has created a likeable, entirely relatable character who, despite the transformative experience he undergoes, remains true to himself. The book is highly recommended for a generation that knows little of life before the omnipresence of “smart” technology and would easily relate to Flynn’s reflexive use of his phone and other technology, and his reluctance to leave civilization. It is also an excellent read for anyone looking for an resourcefulness | self-discovery.

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**Lost in the Backyard**
written by Alison Hughes
Orca Book Publishers, 2015
978-1-4598-0794-5 (pb) $9.95
978-1-4598-0796-9 (eBook) $9.95
for Grades 5 to 9

**Fiction | Outdoor Education | Nature | Wilderness | Resourcefulness | Self-Discovery**

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**Nowhere to Hide**
written by Sigmund Brouwer
Harvest House Publishers, 2015
978-0-73691-748-3 (pb) $12.95
for Grades 7 to 10

**Fiction | Suspense | Crime | Moral Decisions**

In the Arthur Ellis Award-winning *Dead Man’s Switch*, readers meet William King who lives on a prison island off the coast of Washington populated by the country’s most dangerous criminals and the families of the guards. He and his friends foil a deadly conspiracy from within the prison. In *Nowhere to Hide*, King and his friends MJ and Watt are called back into action to help the CIA track down a father who has failed to make child-support payments. As they learn more about their target, the boys come to realize the true nature of their mission and the alarming reason why they were chosen.

When is it okay to lie? This is the question that William King struggles with throughout Brouwer’s engaging sequel. When CIA agent Don Mundie recruits Will and his friends to become cyber hunters, MJ and Watt eagerly agree. King, however, is suffering from severe anxiety after the events of the first book and he’s more reluctant to say yes. This anxiety is an important part of the plot; Brouwer shows how it affects King’s actions and responses.

Set up in a hotel room with state-of-the-art equipment, it isn’t long before they find themselves caught up in a dangerous web of lies and deceit, and King wrestles with whom to believe and whom to trust. Mundie is clearly lying to the boys, but is he a good guy or a bad guy? And, if what he’s doing is bad but he’s good, then is it okay that he’s lying?

Brouwer also does an excellent job of incorporating cool, up-to-the-minute technology, and challenging his readers to think about the positive and negative ways that it can be used.

While the plot occasionally gets confusing, humour, non-stop action and charismatic characters will ensure that readers who are looking for a thrill won’t be disappointed.

*Rachel Seigel is Sales and Selection Strategist at EduCan Media.*

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**Blank**
written by Trina St. Jean
Orca Book Publishers, 2015
978-1-4598-0807-2 (pb) $12.95
978-1-4598-0809-6 (eBook) $12.95
for Grades 7 and up

**Fiction | Amnesia | Brain Injury | Starting Over**

When Jessica wakes up from a coma with no memory of her life before the accident, she struggles to reconnect with her family, her friends and her past life. She experiences all of the symptoms of a brain injury — confusion, sadness, fear and rage — and returning to school is an absolute nightmare. When a new friend offers her a chance to leave her old life behind, Jessica must confront the reality of what starting over really means.

How much of who we are is determined by our memories? To Jessica, the protagonist in Trina St. Jean’s debut novel, it would seem the answer is all of us. Kicked in the head by a bison on her family’s ranch, *Blank* explores not only Jessica’s struggle to come to terms with her permanent memory loss, but also the ripple effect on her family and friends.

Her parents, though well meaning, don’t really understand what she’s going through, and Jessica feels like she’s letting them down by not being able to be who they expect her to be. Painfully uncomfortable exchanges between Jessica and her friends further solidify her realization that she has no connection to the girl she sees in the mirror. Jessica realizes that the only way to reconcile her warring personalities is to figure out what happened the night of the accident.

The characters are believable and compelling, the story is treated with seriousness and avoids clichés, and notes on brain injuries at the back of the book support the author’s research on the topic. Overall, *Blank* is a highly readable and suspenseful drama about resilience, self and the struggle most teens face to fit in.

*Rachel Seigel*
In Cut Off, Jamie Bastedo explores a lesser-known aspect of addiction, that of addiction to the Internet and the technology that allows access to it. The son of an Indigenous Guatemalan woman and a Canadian mine-owner, Indio (alias Ian) McCracken straddles two worlds but is at ease in neither. He is also a classical guitar prodigy and once his overbearing father uploads one of his performances to YouTube, his popularity explodes. At first, this online presence allows Indio to communicate with others like never before, but gradually his dependence on technology and online friendship and adulation lead him to disconnect from the world around him.

After a series of tragic events, his parents, seeing that traditional therapies are having little effect on him, send Indio to a wilderness rehabilitation centre. There he will not only learn to live without his gadgets, but to rely on his own instincts and judgement for survival, as well as work closely with people with whom he thinks he has nothing in common. Cut Off takes place in diverse locations — Guatemala, Calgary and the Northwest Territories — but one theme remains constant: Indio's desperate need to connect with people and feel like he belongs.

With our society's ever-increasing reliance upon technology, Bastedo's novel is especially timely. Any teen (or adult) who has ever felt lonely while in constant virtual contact with the world or has craved “likes” on Facebook will appreciate Indio's predicament. The novel will also appeal to parents perplexed by their teens' use of technology. Cut Off is also highly recommended for parents and teens to read together, as well as for high school reading groups. Through discussion of Indio's situation, adults and teenagers will come to a more nuanced understanding of mobile technology and social media and their role in building and breaking down barriers.

Andréa Schnell

Calvin has always felt a special connection to Bill Watterson's character of the same name from the much-loved comic strip, Calvin and Hobbes. But, when he starts experiencing auditory hallucinations of Hobbes speaking to him, he is soon diagnosed with schizophrenia. Calvin understands that this is a hallucination, but he is nonetheless certain that the only way to rid himself of Hobbes is to find Watterson and convince him to write one last comic strip. So with Hobbes and his former best friend, Susie, in tow, Calvin embarks on a dangerous journey across frozen Lake Erie with the intention of finding the comic's creator. Along the way, they meet a variety of quirky but ultimately helpful strangers, and Calvin and Susie have a number of very open, honest discussions about life and love, friendship and knowing when to accept help. They battle the elements, even as Calvin wrestles with his own questions of what is real, what is true and how to tell the difference.

Martine Leavitt's latest gem features a compelling protagonist whose internal struggles are sensitively drawn, while his external struggles to survive the harsh winter conditions create tension and drama that neatly propel the story forward. Written as an assignment/letter to his English teacher, Calvin's voice rings true and he is earnest and genuine, particularly in his reflections about his schizophrenia. He provides an insightful glimpse into the mind and heart of someone dealing with mental illness. His remarkable self-awareness as he wonders if Susie is, in fact, really with him or if she, too, is just a delusion makes him a sympathetic character and helps reinforce the doctor's assertion that "everyone is on a continuum" as opposed to being a case of either being psychotic or not.

A gentle and thought-provoking tale that combines profound musings with a touching love story and a rousing wilderness survival yarn.

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

Explore the Rich Storytelling Heritage of the East Coast
Trouble is a Friend of Mine
written by Stephanie Tromly
978-0-525-42840-4 (hc) $20.99
978-0-698-18-873-0 (eBook) $10.99
for Grades 8 to 12
Fiction | Adventure | Mystery | Humour

Resentful of the fact that she and her mother have had to relocate to a small town in upstate New York, Zoe Webster has plans of her own. Once she gets accepted to a posh private school in Manhattan, she’ll move in with her dad and his new wife and leave clique-y River Heights behind for good. She does not plan to get embroiled in oddball Philip Digby’s increasingly outlandish schemes. She does not plan to stay in River Heights. But in spite of her better judgement, that is precisely what happens. Even though Digby mocks her mercilessly, hits her up for cash and food on a far-too-frequent basis, reads her diary (!) and recruits her to participate in his carefully orchestrated, but oftentimes illegal, activities, Zoe can’t seem to say no to him. Which is how she finds herself trying to solve the mystery of a teen girl’s recent disappearance. And bringing down a major drug operation. And getting injured in an explosion while on a date with a not-quite-13-year-old genius. All while she ponders the conundrum of Digby himself.

A madcap mystery adventure, Tromly’s debut novel is a zany and thoroughly enjoyable romp. Although Digby is perhaps too preposterous to be believable, he is still an entirely winsome and entertaining character, as enigmatic as he is eccentric. Zoe’s realization that her mother is not quite as oblivious as she once believed is a refreshing addition to the story, as is her growing awareness that perhaps Prentiss Academy is more her father’s dream than her own. Touching moments notwithstanding, this highly original mystery/coming-of-age story will stand out for its witty cast of characters, their humorous exchanges and their off-the-wall antics. The questions that remain unanswered simply provide reason to hope that another book will be forthcoming soon.

Lisa Doucet

The Scorpion Rules
written by Erin Bow
Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2015
978-1-481-4-4271-8 (hc) $22.99
978-1-481-4-4272-5 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 8 to 12
Fiction | Dystopian Future | War and Peace | Child Hostages

Greta Gustafsen Stuart is the Duchess of Halifax and Crown Princess of the Pan Polar Confederacy. She is also a Child of Peace, a.k.a. a prisoner. In this future version of our world, nations are held in check by the keeping of hostages. Rulers of every nation must provide a child to be held as a hostage. A declaration of war means that the children of the warring leaders will die. Greta has grown up alongside other children of dignitaries, studying their lessons, learning to work the land, watching her friends be taken away to die and preparing herself to face death with dignity if and when her turn comes. But when Elian is brought to their Precepture, his absolute refusal to accept this ruthless system of controlling the world forces Greta to awaken to the reality of what is being done to them, all in the name of peace. Then Greta’s and Elian’s countries declare war. But the results of this war are further-reaching for all of the Children of Peace than anyone could ever have predicted.

Once again, Erin Bow has crafted a novel that is original, complex, heartbreaking and beautiful. Part dystopia, part sci-fi thriller, the world building is sophisticated, with political machinations that are cleverly plotted and carefully revealed as the story unfolds. Her characters are similarly multi-faceted, although the rich fullness of their natures emerges slowly and meticulously as the story weaves its way toward an imperfect conclusion. The descriptions are precise and exquisite, with the most vivid scenes being the ones that are quietly, conscientiously built up and then largely to the reader’s imagination. Unexpected turns of events, intricate relationships and devastating choices make this chilling portrait of the future unforgettable in a myriad of ways.

Lisa Doucet

An Inheritance of Ashes
written by Leah Bobet
Scholastic Canada, 2015
978-1-443-1-2844-5 (hc) $21.99
978-1-443-1-4678-4 (eBook) $21.99
for Grades 8 to 12
Fiction | Fantasy

The war against the Wicked God Southward has ended, but, for 16-year-old Hallie and her older sister, Marthe, the troubles are just beginning. As the men who went off to fight this war now struggle home, the young women struggle to maintain their family farm while they wait for Marthe’s husband to return. With each passing day, hope dims, the two sisters grow further apart, and Hallie becomes more convinced that Marthe is going to send her away. Then a new problem arises. Twisted Things, the Wicked God’s grotesque creatures, have made their way to Roadstead Farm. As Hallie, the new hired man and her neighbours try to figure out where the Twisted Things are coming from and what to do about them, Hallie realizes that she is going to have to do the most difficult thing in the world for her: trust others, and ask for and accept their help.

In lush, lyrical prose, Bobet has fashioned a richly layered story of family and friendship. The evil lord and his bizarre Twisted Things are cleverly imagined and intriguing, and the truth about his world and the war against him is complex and compelling. However, the book’s main focus is its depiction of Hallie’s various relationships: with her sister; with Tyler, the boy next door; with her best friend, Nat; and with Heron, the hired man who sees her perhaps more clearly than she sees herself. While the writing occasionally veers toward being overwrought, it is a carefully paced tale of Hallie coming into her own and learning to let go of the fears she has harboured for most of her life. In this thoughtful, intricate narrative, the war and the Wicked God serve as a tantalizing backdrop to Hallie’s tale of growth and self-discovery.

Lisa Doucet
Sex is a Funny Word: A Book about Bodies, Feelings and You
written by Corey Silverberg
illustrated by Fiona Smyth
Seven Stories Press, 2015
978-1-60980-606-4 (hc) $23.95
for Grades 2 to 5

Non-fiction | Physical and Health Education | Sex Education | Emotions
Silverberg and Smyth, the dynamic duo behind What Makes a Baby?, return with their second book of a planned trilogy, this time aimed at the 7-to-10-year-old reader. As with their previous book, engaging and colourful graphics are matched with factual information that is easy to follow. For this book, four diverse characters aged eight to 10 are our guides as they explore and react to discussions about their developing bodies and changing feelings in realistic ways.

One note — this book is broken into sections, and it is not meant to be read all at once. A prefatory note aimed at the grown-up reader advises that the book is to be read over the course of weeks or even years, and should be used as different conversations arise at different ages and stages. Sex is a Funny Word stresses the importance of four key concepts when talking about sex (respect, trust, joy and justice) and encourages a dialogue between adults and children, particularly in relation to cultural and personal beliefs.

There’s a lot of information to be found in these pages, but this isn’t your standard science-based text. Silverberg emphasizes that every body is different, both inside and out, and that each body is special. While there is an honest explanation about the physical changes that will occur in each individual, there is an equal focus on the emotional aspects of sex (crushes, feelings, relationships, privacy) and on gender and gender identity. This may be one of the first sex-ed books for this age group that is trans-inclusive, and the use of proper language is modelled and encouraged; there is even a glossary provided for further reference. The chapter on touching is handled with sensitivity and reassurance, including a matter-of-fact explanation of masturbation. Most notable is the excellent explanation of “secret touching” that invites discussions about respect, boundaries and saying “no” without ever using the words “sexual abuse.”

Sex is a Funny Word is a thoughtful and inviting book that curious readers will want to explore, both on their own and with trusted adults. Vivid colours and a cartoon-like layout help to create relatable characters, and humour is used to gently ease any discomfort or awkwardness along the way. Questions at the end of each section are open-ended and thought provoking, and provide caregivers with the opportunity to include personal values and beliefs along with factual information. Parents and teachers will find this an important and valuable addition to every classroom and home library.

Jenn Hubbs is a reviewer, bookseller and librarian.
Power Up! A Visual Exploration of Energy
written by Shaker Paleja
illustrated by Glenda Tse
Annick Press, 2015
978-1-55451-727-5 (hc) $24.95
978-1-55451-726-8 (pb) $12.95
for Grades 4 to 7
Non-fiction | Environment | Energy

From the introduction to the sections on renewable energy, non-renewable energy and the future, Power Up! will hold visual learners’ attention as it informs them where the world stands now and where it is going energy-wise.

On each double-page spread, author Shaker Paleja breaks complex information into chunks to explain what each type of energy is, how we get it and what its pros and cons are. Each page features a summary that is usually a mix of global, American and Canadian statistics. Readers can also extract thought-provoking information from the fact nuggets, such as “21% of people worldwide have no access to electricity.”

The last few pages of the book could have used more sparkle. The suggestions for saving energy need freshening, the glossary of energy terms is teensy, and ideas for further research might have been included with the Selected Sources section. However, the index, and the table of contents in the front are quite useful.

Importantly, in this visual approach to the topic, students can gain valuable practice reading the excellent charts, graphs and maps. Light, bright and printed on cheerfully coloured paper, the visuals make it easy to approach the multi-faceted text. Designed and illustrated by Glenda Tse, Power Up! demonstrates Annick’s continued success in pairing art and information in its non-fiction books.

Power Up! is just how I like information books: short, concise text, useful facts and enhancing and engaging artwork.

lian goodall writes and reviews in Whitehorse, Yukon.

New Editions and Re-issues

A Morning to Polish and Keep, Julie Lawson’s “fishing story” set around Sooke, BC, with illustrations by Sheena Lott, is back in print from Red Deer Press for a new generation of readers to enjoy.

Also from Red Deer Press comes The Song Within My Heart, written by David Bouchard and illustrated by Allen Sapp. This award-winning book (with Cree and English text) has been re-issued with a new design and a CD with music and narrative in English and Cree.

Updated and packed with information on Canada’s electoral and governing process, Joanne Stanbridge’s Who Runs This Country, Anyway? A Guide to Canadian Government, has been re-issued by Scholastic Canada.

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