Teen Takeover Issue: Delving into the Minds of Canadian Teens

Susin Nielsen: Tough Topics with a Touch of Humour

Bookmark! What Do Teens Really Want to Read?

Canadian Teens Review Titles by Catherine Egan, Alison Hughes, Raziel Reid, John Wilson and more
Books Matter.
CONTENTS

THIS ISSUE


4
An Interview with Elly MacKay
Meet TD Canadian Children’s Book Week poster illustrator, Elly MacKay.

6
News Roundup
In Memoriam: David Booth; Welcome, Rose Vespa, the CCB’s new Executive Director; Kit Pearson named to Order of Canada; TD Canadian Children’s Book Week — May 5 to 11, 2019, Official Tour Roster & Locations; MTI YA FEST

8
Keep Your Eye On... Kari Maaren

10
Identifying Canadian Books — Grassroots Style
Amy Mathers discusses a simple way we can help one another recognize Canadian books.

11
Canadian Literature: Three Teens’ Opinions
Three of our teen reviewers express their opinions about Canadian literature.

14
Profile: Susin Nielsen
Emma Martel from Halifax, Nova Scotia, chats with author Susin Nielsen to find out what motivates her and how she manages to add humour to the heavy topics she writes about.

17
What do boys read? And why do they stop?
Kevin Sylvester interviewed a few of our male teen reviewers and asked them about their reading habits. He was curious to know what these boys were currently reading and why they thought their friends and classmates often stopped reading in their teen years.

20
Bookmark! Teen Takeover
In this issue we focus on YA books in the following genres: Sci-Fi/Fantasy, Historical Fiction, Mystery, Contemporary, Graphic Novels and Non-Fiction.

22
Teen Reviews
This section includes 21 titles reviewed by our team of teen reviewers. Be sure to check out what they thought of some of the latest YA and middle grade novels.

32
We Recommend/Red Leaf Literature
More reviews of the latest Canadian books for kids. Titles given Red Leaf Literature status are indicated with a red maple leaf in this issue.

40
Index of Reviews
Groundwood Books gratefully acknowledges the support of the Canadian booksellers who joined us in celebrating our 40 years of publishing the very best children’s books.

Munro’s
Victoria, BC

McNally Robinson
Saskatoon, SK

McNally Robinson
Winnipeg, MB

Blue Heron
Uxbridge, ON

Moonbeam Books
Toronto, ON

The Book Keeper
Sarnia, ON

Ella Minnow
North York, ON

Westminster Books
Fredericton, NB

Congratulations,
McNally Robinson,
Winnipeg!
A few months ago, a group of us sat together at the Canadian Children’s Book Centre and an idea came to mind: why not invite teens from across Canada to read and review a few YA titles for Canadian Children’s Book News. At first, I wondered where we would find enough teens to participate, but this didn’t turn out to be a problem at all, and the next thing I knew we were mailing books around the country and our teen reviewers were off and… READING.

And now, months later, I am very excited to present to you the first TEEN TAKEOVER issue of Canadian Children’s Book News. Amy Mathers, who kindly agreed to co-edit this issue with me, and I have worked with a group of teens from Alberta, Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia. The teens, aged 13 to 18, have been such a pleasure to work with and have graciously contributed their thoughts and opinions about Canadian YA literature. The quality and thoughtfulness with which these young people wrote was truly impressive, and I’d like to thank each and every one of them for their participation in this special issue.

I’d also like to thank Susin Nielsen, who appears in our profile piece, Kevin Sylvester, who conducted an interview with a group of our male teen readers and Amy Mathers, with whom it has been an absolute pleasure to share the job of editor. I hope our readers will enjoy this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together!

Sandra O’Brien

Although I eat, sleep and breathe Canadian teen fiction, last May I had the rare opportunity of getting my head out of the books and working with those who have first-hand knowledge of the topic: teens. Facilitating the Forest of Reading Teen Committee, discussing books with passionate teens, took me right back to being in the high school library club when I was an enthusiastic teen myself.

Continuing to work with teens through this Teen Takeover issue of the Canadian Children’s Book News has been a joy and a revelation of sorts. Because as much as I know about my personal tastes in Canadian teen fiction, and my adult preferences, I’ve realized I know quite little about what teens actually read. It’s a lot more than you might think.

I hope this issue is as eye-opening for you as it was for me. So many teen voices have come together to tell us what they really think about reading and Canadian books, and their eagerness to share flows off the page.

Sandra O’Brien has been an incredible and patient mentor throughout the whole process of co-editing — an experience I am grateful to have. I’d like to echo her thanks to Susin Nielsen and Kevin Sylvester, and add Kari Maaren as well as all of the dedicated teens that worked with us to bring this issue to life.

Amy Mathers

Your feedback is important!
EMAIL COMMENTS TO SANDRA@BOOKCENTRE.CA

Like us! facebook.com/kidsbookcentre
Follow us! @kidsbookcentre
Explain the process you went through to create the image for the 2019 TD Canadian Children’s Book Week poster.

I started as I usually do, with thumbnails for different concepts, but was offered a unique way of working. Usually as illustrators we go from thumbnail to sketch to final, with little room for change. Instead, they said I could play with the different elements in my theatre and experiment with the composition, lighting and landscapes. I ended up sending the CCBC about eight images to choose from, with different readers and settings. We both agreed on this one. I’m always having my kids pose in different postures so I can figure out how to draw this or that. I changed their appearance, but I wonder if they will recognize themselves as the little readers here.

Tell us about your training as an artist and how long you’ve been working as a children’s illustrator.

My parents, Joan and Steve Irvine, are both artists and my grandmother, Barbara Irvine, was a painter, so while I was growing up, I was surrounded by people working with paper, clay, oil paints and photography. When I was a teen, my mom took me on a train trip through the United States to meet members of the Movable Book Society. I learned about paper theatre and tunnel books on that trip. I loved the intimacy and perspective you could create with these forms.

I started selling my dioramas and tunnel books at 1st Hand Gallery in Toronto and went on to attend the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, taking illustration, photography and printmaking. I met my husband there and we spent a year trying to live off of our art. That led me to getting a teaching degree. (It was a tough year!) I taught at some galleries for a few years before getting into illustration. I combined my love of photography with making my dioramas. My first book, If You Hold A Seed, came out in 2013, and I’m currently working on my 10th book.

What or who inspires the illustrations you create?

Much of my art is about exploring nature. I grew up in a church that was converted into a house in North Keppel. There were a wetland, forest, fields and the bay all within walking distance. It is still my favourite place to be and is where I go when I need to feel re-energized.

Tell us about some of the projects you are currently working on.

I have a new book coming out this spring, set at a local waterfall, called The Tallest Treehouse. It is a book about friendship and working together, but also about, of all things, fairy architecture. This winter, I illustrated a book for Tundra, written by Kallie George, called The Secret Fawn. A little further in the works is a book called Hidden Treasure for Running Press and another for Tundra called Clouds.

You visited Prince Edward Island during the 2018 TD Canadian Children’s Book Week tour. Tell us about that experience.

It was such a fantastic week. I visited 17 schools and libraries. I couldn’t have had a better host. Roseanne Gauthier, the children’s librarian from the Confederation Public Library, drove me from town to town across PEI. She had everything worked out to the minute, including stops for panoramic views of the shores and lighthouses. At every school or library we visited, I shared my books and had volunteers help me make a scene in my miniature theatre. Then, the whole group worked on a collaborative illustration. If we had time, we did a story-building activity, too. While we packed up, there were always a few kids who broke their lines to come and tell me about a story they were writing or about how much they love to make art. It is so inspiring to meet so many creative children. This is such an amazing program and I was so happy to be a part of it last year.

Elly MacKay:
Exploring Nature

by Sandra O'Brien
DREAM YOUR WAY INTO
TD Canadian Children’s Book Week
WITH THIS YEAR’S POSTER!

Available for purchase at bookcentre.ca/shop
Kit Pearson named to Order of Canada

Congratulations to author Kit Pearson, who was appointed a Member of the Order of Canada for her contributions as an author of Canadian literature for children and young adults. As one of Canada’s most beloved children’s authors, she has written award-winning books such as *A Handful of Time*; the *Guests of War* trilogy; *Awake and Dreaming*; *The Whole Truth*, winner of the CLA Book of the Year for Children Award; and *A Day of Signs and Wonders*, finalist for the TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award. She has also received the Vicky Metcalf Award for her body of work and the Lieutenant Governor’s Award for Literary Excellence.

TD Canadian Children’s Book Week

May 5 to 11, 2019

Official Tour Roster & Locations

Alberta
Shelly Becker, author
Nadia Hohn, author

British Columbia
Interior
Brooke Kerrigan, illustrator
Lower Mainland
Ashley Barron, author & illustrator

Vancouver Island
Patrick Weekes, author

Northern Region
Bernice Hune, storyteller

Welcome, Rose Vespa, the CCBC’s new Executive Director

The CCBC is pleased to welcome Rose Vespa as our new Executive Director. Rose graduated from the University of Western Ontario with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours English and History) and a Master of Library and Information Services. In 2018, Rose completed her Master of Public Administration from the University of Liverpool.

Rose has been the CEO of several public libraries in Ontario and has extensive public-sector leadership experience, including expertise in organizational development, mentorship, stakeholder relations, planning and fund development. Her most recent position was Director of Library Services for the Mississauga Library System.

“Children’s literature is a gateway to learning, creativity and empathy,” said Rose Vespa. “I began my career as a children’s librarian and I am looking forward to working with the board, the members and the CCBC staff to continue the good work of advocating for Canadian children’s authors and literature.”

IN MEMORIAM

David Booth, 1938-2018

It is with deep sadness that we announce that David Booth passed away on December 22, 2018. David was Professor Emeritus in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. For over 60 years, David was involved in education as a classroom teacher, consultant, professor, researcher, speaker and author. In addition to his work in education, David was also the author of many teacher reference books, as well as *The Dust Bowl*, *Til All the Stars Have Fallen: Canadian Poems for Children*, Molly Whuppie and the Giant and many more.

As a young teacher, I attended many of David’s workshops. He believed that bringing literature to life for children and deepening their understanding of the texts they read was imperative. David helped ignite in me a love of children’s literature, as I’m sure he did for many of his students and colleagues. His presence in the education and literary world will be sadly missed.

Our condolences go out to David’s family and friends. A celebration of David’s life will be held in the spring of 2019. Donations in David’s honour can be made to the University of Toronto (donations.management@utoronto.ca or 800-463-6048).

News Roundup

AWARDS, BOOK LAUNCHES, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND THE LATEST NEWS

*Continued on page 8*
ORCA PICTURE BOOKS
in English & en français

• NOW AVAILABLE •
DISPONIBLE MAINTENANT

“A delicious, enjoyable, and necessary narrative.”
—CM. Canadian Review of Materials

“Just right for families who seek balance and mindfulness.”
—Kirkus Reviews

“For a complete list of Orca titles available in French visit, orcabook.com/French/
Tell us about your latest book or a project you are currently working on. Weave a Circle Round starts out seeming like a slice-of-life story about an angry 14-year-old girl named Freddy meeting her mildly mysterious new neighbours and somehow ends up as a chaotic fantasy adventure in which up is down, the laws of physics are negotiable, and poetry is the key to everything.

Tell us about the process of writing. I spend September to May marking student papers while bemoaning my lack of writing time, then plunge into the writing process in June and only stop at the end of August. I sometimes write all day, every day. I sometimes write one sentence then stare at it in despair for 10 minutes before deleting it. Every day is a new and terrifying adventure.

How did you first get published? The short version: 1) For decades, I wrote novels and showed them to no one. 2) I wrote Weave a Circle Round and started sending it out, just for a change. 3) Everyone ignored it. 4) I produced an independent album called Beowulf Pulled My Arm Off. 5) David Hartwell, a senior editor at Tor Books, bought the album at a convention I was not attending. 6) A year later, David was at another convention, and he and a friend of mine started talking about my music. 7) The friend told him I wrote novels, too. He said I should send him one. 8) I sent him one. 9) A year and a half later, he called me. Long story short: If you want to publish a book, write comical music about Anglo-Saxon epic poetry.

What do you like about writing for younger teens? I like taking the bizarre contents of my imagination and pouring them haphazardly out onto the page. My readers can handle it. Kids in the 12-to-14 age range sometimes get left out when people are classifying books, possibly because 13- and 14-year-old protagonists are seen by many as too old for middle grade and too young for YA. But that’s the age I’m drawn to, as it’s awkward and in-between and full of emotions and new experiences and anxieties. I love capturing the weirdness of not fitting anywhere and being surrounded by peers who don’t fit anywhere either.

Tell us about writers who inspire you. I very much admire Diana Wynne Jones because every one of her books reads like the product of a bet she’s made with herself. Like: “I bet I could set a book outside of time.” “I bet I could set the next book in this series thousands of years in the past, with completely different characters.” “I bet I could write a book in which not even the protagonist knows which of the characters she is until almost the end.” Jones never falls into a rut because whenever she’s in danger of doing so, she goes, “I bet I could create a scenario in which it’s perfectly logical that centaurs show up at an SF convention.” And she always wins the bet.
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF

THE CANADIAN CHILDREN’S BOOK CENTRE

Wednesday, June 5, 2019 | 6:00pm

Room 224, Northern District Library
40 Orchard View Blvd. (Yonge and Eglinton) Toronto, Ontario M4R 1B9

Members and the public welcome | Reception to follow

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT BOOKCENTRE.CA

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

To all members: The Canadian Children’s Book Centre’s Annual General Meeting is taking place on Wednesday, June 5, 2019 in Toronto at 40 Orchard View Boulevard, Room 224, Toronto, ON. In accordance with Section 3.04(b) of our bylaws please accept this notice as a formal call for the nomination of directors. The members will elect new director(s) to the board to fill any vacancies at the Annual General Meeting. We welcome nominations from the general membership.

If you are a member in good standing with the Canadian Children’s Book Centre and have someone in mind who you think would be an asset to the CCBC and its mission and goals, please send the name of the person you are nominating along with their mailing address, email address, current telephone number and a short bio to Rose Vespa at rose@bookcentre.ca.

Qualities we are looking for in a potential board member:
- strong belief in and commitment to the mission and goals of the CCBC
- would be interested in people with background in finance, public relations, fundraising, IT or website specialization
- must work well in groups
- although not essential, a plus would be some background in children’s literature
- able to commit to giving time and energy to the organization

Once a nomination is received by the nominating committee of the board it will issue to the nominee a form of consent that must be completed by the nominee and returned as soon as reasonably possible and in any event prior to the Annual General Meeting. A nominee shall also meet any other requirements for nomination determined by the board of directors from time to time.

Nominations must be received by May 5, 2019 in order for them to be considered by the nominations committee of the board.

The purpose of the meeting, in addition to electing directors, is for the members to appoint an auditor to hold office until the next Annual General Meeting and to receive the audited financial statements.*

The names of the individuals nominated for election as directors and the name of the auditor being recommended for appointment will be available by May 15, 2019 at bookcentre.ca/agm2019.

Members are reminded that they may appoint a proxy to attend the Annual General Meeting on their behalf. Any such appointment must be evidenced by a document in writing, signed by the member and received by the CCBC prior to the date of the Annual General Meeting. A proxy form will be available online at bookcentre.ca/agm2019 by May 15, 2019.

*The audited financial statements will be available by May 15, 2019. Any member may, on request, obtain a copy.
Identifying Canadian Books

GRASSROOTS STYLE

In my continuing journey of identifying and supporting Canadian authors for teens, I hit a high point while shopping for Christmas presents in December. Scanning the shelves in the teen section of my local Indigo bookstore, I could easily pick out several Canadian authors. Being able to do so made me inordinately proud. I’ve read so much and am (mostly) up-to-date on what is coming out, that it felt like I had a super power akin to Superman’s X-ray vision to be able to look at a book and know whether or not it was Canadian. I’m learning, but unless you have time to do your research, books that don’t have Canada in the title or a distinctive Canadian location are often indistinguishable from American and British books.

As a kid, I remember being excited to see a Canadian maple leaf sticker on the spines of books at the library. It wasn’t until I was a grown-up that it occurred to me the stickers should be on books from other countries, not our own. This is the reality of living in a country with a population of nearly 37 million next to a country with a population of nearly 327 million. Fewer stickers are needed to label Canadian books than American ones.

This is part of a problem identified by James Lorimer during his speech at the Canadian Children’s Book Centre’s Annual General Meeting last June. The statistics aren’t promising — readership of Canadian books is falling, and he is part of an informal think tank of publishers who are trying to solve the problem. He discussed how everyone has a role to play in promoting Canadian books, from book sellers to libraries to publishers to the government, but it begins with knowing which books are actually Canadian. This is an industry and institutional problem.

What if we simplify the problem though?

Books have always held a place of reverence in my life. While my parents tell me stories about how I used to eat parts of pages from books, they are also quick to include the fact that I was careful not to eat any of the text. I know the rules on how to treat books properly — no breaking spines, folding down page corners, or marking them up. Their sacredness means every time I commit one of those cardinal sins, I feel slightly sick.

So I am about to suggest something that feels instinctively wrong. Institutional change takes time, what can we do to help in the meantime?

In the libraries and used book stores, we mark up the books ourselves — a simple red maple leaf on the upper right hand of the title page. I intend to do it to the books I donate to different programs, and I encourage you to do the same. It’s a start.

My hope is that by doing so we can eliminate the cost of buying individual stickers for every Canadian book, remove the onus on librarians to mark up the books themselves and inform readers at the same time.

And perhaps it will inspire greater change. Lately, with my review copies of books, the accompanying publicity sheet features a small maple leaf if the author is Canadian. What if that maple leaf were automatically included on the upper right hand of the title page when it was printed by the publisher?

If we keep thinking outside the box, I know we can find a solution. If we value our Canadian literature, then we can also find new ways to promote and support it.

Amy Mathers is a columnist for the CCBC’s e-newsletter for teachers and a YA reviewer for the National Reading Campaign. She’s also the co-editor of this special issue of Canadian Children’s Book News.
OPINION: A TEEN PERSPECTIVE

Themes of Social Justice in Teen Fiction

BY SARA RIGOTTI

I cannot speak for the entire population, but I want, in fact, I think we need, topics of social justice in teen fiction. But I have one condition: when it comes to themes of social justice, with examples like poverty, disability, racism, sexual harassment and assault, and LGBTQ+, we must be truthful and not evasive. These realities, harsh and the result of being misunderstood or discriminated against, are a part of society. They are not some fantasy created by the author; they are real. There is no avoiding them. We cannot gloss over these realities because all we'll be doing is making matters worse in today's world. By ignoring or simplifying these subjects, we are enabling aggressors, bigots and the ignorant. We need stories with real issues to break through the barriers of our society.

The importance of these themes is staggering, and the overall reason can be summed up easily: we need to end the misconceptions and discrimination. Using any theme in writing doesn't just add to the plot or strengthen the story, it also brings awareness and changes the perspectives of a massive audience. Teens are the generation on the brink of entering adult society. They have the capability of understanding these issues and working toward changing them. We need to change the teen perspective in order to change societal perspectives because the statistics are horrifying.

In Canada, 1.3 million teens and children suffer from poverty (that's one in five), and one in two Status First Nation children lives in poverty. With disability, almost 14 percent of Canadians 15 and older are affected, over 25 percent of whom won't reveal that fact because of stigma, fear and discrimination. Legally sanctioned racism has always existed in some form in Canada, whether toward Indigenous people, Blacks, Japanese Canadians or others. Even the relations between Anglophone and Francophone Canadians are strained.

With sexual harassment and assault, the biggest problem is a lack of understanding. Sexual assault can include touching any part of a person's body in a sexual way, even through clothing, without permission, and doesn't pertain only to women. One in four girls and one in six boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18. Rape is the most under-reported crime; 63 percent of sexual assaults are not reported to police, and only 12 percent of child sexual abuse is reported to the authorities.

Finally, with LGBTQ+, identifying as LGBTQ+ is not the problem, it's the attitude toward people who identify as LGBTQ+ that's the problem. According to research, 20 percent of homeless teens in shelters identify as LGBTQ+. That does not include how many are on the streets. In fact, the consensus is that the percentage on the street is much larger because they feel safer alone than in a shelter due to homophobic and transphobic violence. LGBTQ+ teens are four times as likely to attempt suicide than the heterosexual population because of sexual, verbal and physical harassment and assault directed toward their identification. Did you know that there's something known as the “transpanic clause” that people are trying to get banned? Basically, the clause is used in legal defence, claiming that the person panicked, and attacked someone else because they thought they were trans. Saying these harsh facts are awful would be a gross understatement.

Having these themes in teen fiction is incredibly impactful. Personally, I have found myself moved to tears, furious, overwhelmed, empathetic, and filled with relief and even joy when the outcome proves worth the pain. Everyone enjoys a good happy ending, but honestly, sometimes it's better to have a realistic ending. There is nothing wrong with a happy ending, but it leaves the reader with a sense of finality. It's over, the antagonist has been dealt with and the protagonist comes out stronger than ever. So, everything has been done and there's nothing left to overcome, right? Wrong.

A realistic ending shows that even though the story's conflict is over, there may and probably will be more conflict to come, more obstacles to overturn. It gives the sense that this is not over. This is current, this is real, this is ongoing. And it needs to change. It's a call to action, a prompt to look past stereotypes and stigmas and widen our perspective.

Books take us into the minds and views of other people; they inform and alter ideas. They show us the suffering and mentality of the victims, how even the smallest things, like an offhand comment or blatant ignorance, can affect and even worsen the problem. We must tell the truth about these issues instead of trying to evade them. Fiction can make us want to learn more, it may encourage us to help. We need to look at social justice issues in teen fiction because our generation can make a difference.
Selecting and Recommending Books

BY JADE RITTER

If you knew you were going to be stranded on a desert island and could pick only one book to take with you, what would it be? For book lovers, it’s an unthinkable question! With so many wonderful books out there, selecting a book to read can seem impossible, but I have a few tried and true tips to make the process a little easier.

Visit your public library.
My public library is always the first place I go when I’m looking for a new novel. I start my search by browsing the shelves, while watching for any titles or covers that seem intriguing. We’ve all been told not to judge a book by its cover, but often, that’s how we select one. If something jumps out, I’ll read the synopsis to get a further feel for the book’s plot and theme. I personally love historical or contemporary fiction, so if the novel is either genre, I’m likely to read it. Another deciding factor is whether or not I share any common interests with the protagonist or can relate to something they are going through. If you are able to connect with the protagonist on some level, it’s more likely that you will find the novel engaging and enjoyable.

Use Goodreads or online resources.
Goodreads is a book lover’s best friend, and the Cupid of the literary world. Not only can you set a reading goal and keep track of all the books you read, you can also make note of future titles to read. As if that’s not amazing enough, Goodreads also provides users with recommended titles based on the books they’ve read, or plan to read. Loved a certain novel? Search it on Goodreads and you’ll be given a list of related titles that other readers also enjoyed. The first thing I do after I finish a book is record it on Goodreads, then take a peek at the list of related titles. I’ve found some of my favourite books this way and my “To Be Read” pile is constantly growing.

Challenge yourself to step out of your comfort zone.
It’s easy to get caught up in reading only a certain genre or author. (I’m very guilty of this!) Everyone has their favourites, but at some time or another, we reach a point where we need a change. Although it can be difficult, challenge yourself to read outside of your usual genres. If I have absolutely no idea what to read, I’ll choose a book from the “New Arrivals” shelf at my public library or from a display. If I’m feeling very brave, I’ll select a book at random from the shelves. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. You might be surprised to find you actually really enjoy spine-chilling thrillers. Personally, I’ve discovered I love a good mystery.

And if finding a book isn’t hard enough, just wait until someone asks you for a recommendation! We’ve all been there; a friend, family member or co-worker approaches you for a recommendation, but you have absolutely no idea! They definitely won’t like that romantic comedy you just finished, so what do you do?

Ask them about their interests.
When recommending a book for someone, the best place to start is with asking the person about their interests. What are their hobbies or passions? Do they have a favourite genre? Is there a topic they would like to learn more about? This allows you to narrow down possible genres and provides you with a general topic idea for the book. You’ll also be able to eliminate any titles that don’t meet these requirements.

Ask them what book they read last, or if they have a favourite.
Whenever I’m recommending a book for someone, I always ask this question. The books a person reads can say a lot about them, and this will provide you with an idea of their interests with respect to topics, genres and authors. If they really enjoyed that book, you can try recommending a title that has a similar theme or protagonist or recommend another title by the same author if you are really stuck for ideas.

Go with something tried and true.
When in doubt, always recommend a book you have heard positive reviews about. Whether it’s a recently released title that has gotten rave reviews or a book you just finished, select a novel you know holds appeal. Chances are, if it has been well received, it most likely is engaging.

So when in doubt, check it! Whether you’re looking for a book for yourself or you’ve been tasked with recommending a novel, follow these guidelines and the next time you’re on your way to a desert island, it will be with a good book in hand! 📚
Canadian Content in Teen Literature

BY AMY MATHER
AND HALEIGH ARSENAULT

As adults — authors, publishers, reviewers, publicity managers, book printers, teachers, librarians, editors, etc. — we talk constantly about promoting Canadian content to our kids and teens. With the Teen Takeover issue, it is the perfect opportunity to get a teen’s view on the matter, and Haleigh Arsenault was happy to oblige. Does Canadian content matter to teens? Read on and find out.

**Does a book’s being Canadian matter?**

When a book is Canadian, it’s not automatically better than a book from another country. So, saying that I, a Canadian, think that all books written by Canadian authors are better than books written by British or American authors, is just ridiculous. I do think, though, that because I am from Canada, I might prefer to read a Canadian book sometimes. But where the book is from does not mean it is good or bad. All that matters is that the story be interesting. Canadian authors may look a little more into Canadian history for their books and then mix in some cool, out-of-this-world fantasy content. In a way, a book’s being Canadian does matter to me. It could hold pieces of my country’s history or even some of my own history, depending on the people in it. It allows me to connect with the book on a deeper level than I would with other books.

**Do you look for Indigenous and French reads?**

I personally don’t look for anything in particular when I am looking for books. I do love Indigenous and French reads though, because of how deep the stories go. You really get to experience the different writing styles, the way the characters talk and just the words they use. You don’t usually see that happen, and for some reason, Canadians are known for historical books. They put so much content in every page, giving you a look at how people’s lives were. Reading them makes me ask myself how I think I’d do in the situation. But can you really answer that question? I do honestly like the Indigenous reads more than the French, just based on the content. I’ve always been so interested in the people that lived here years and years before they even started building New France, and if I am in the mood for something big on history, I look for a book in these two categories.

**Do Canadian settings and authors entice you?**

When I find a book with a Canadian setting, I am instantly pulled in and I connect to it. I pay more attention to the little details in the setting when I know it’s from Canada. It could be because I want to see if they wrote about a familiar place or if they wrote about a place I’ve always wanted to visit. But if the author isn’t Canadian, it’s so cool to think about how they wanted to find out more about Canada. I feel proud when a province or territory of Canada is mentioned. I look up to authors as I want to be an author myself, and reading books by people who may have lived in the same city as me is inspiring. I get a sense of excitement because maybe I’ll be just as successful as they are. I want to be them, to write like them. I can proudly say that out of my book collection, some of my favourites were written by Canadian authors, my role models.

[Opinion: A Teen Perspective]
Compelling Characters, Perfect Pacing and a Touch of Humour

BY EMMA MARTEL

Susin Nielsen writes with a passion for her characters. She builds realistic personalities and places them in unique situations, a surefire recipe for an interesting story. In her latest novel, No Fixed Address, main character Felix Knuttson is an incredibly empathetic young man. He is living out of a van with his mother, Astrid, and constantly deals with issues such as having to shower at school and not having a place to use the bathroom at night. But, with his friends Dylan and Winnie — his own personal Ron and Hermione — Felix manages to pull through in the end.

Nielsen’s novels are also remarkable in that they carefully navigate difficult topics while still managing to mix in humour in a way that alleviates the tension without brushing past the characters’ predicaments.

Susin started her career bringing meals to the cast of Degrassi Junior High. She claims she wasn’t much of a chef, but that position is what helped her writing career take off. She ended up writing 16 episodes of Degrassi, and since then has worked on several television shows, including The Adventures of Shirley Holmes and Robson Arms. Susin also wrote four books for the Degrassi series. From there, she wanted to write about her own characters for a change, and published her first solo novel, Word Nerd, in 2008. It was a success, winning a number of awards, including the Red Maple Award. Since then, Susin has written a number of her own novels. Her latest, No Fixed Address, was released in September and has already received high praise. It’s no wonder that it has as it is clear that she has perfected her style, and No Fixed Address is an excellent novel with compelling characters and perfect pacing.

Susin Nielsen has won awards such as the Governor General’s Literary Award 2013 and the Canadian Library Association Book of the Year for Children Award, both for her book The Reluctant Journal of Henry K. Larsen. She is a Canadian author who has certainly made a name for herself, with her books translated into 12 languages around the world.

Susin writes out of her home in Vancouver, BC, where she lives with her family and her two cats, Emily Brönte and Erwin Schrodinger.
You've done a lot of writing for TV. Do you find the process of writing a screenplay or script for an episode to be very different from that of writing a novel?

Yes, it's quite different. Writing for TV is very structured, by length of episode, act breaks and page count. You have to write synopses, beat sheets and outlines, all before writing any dialogue, and get each stage approved by producers and broadcasters. And usually I'm writing for someone else's show, so I'm hired to write for their characters and world, not to re-invent the wheel. It's also much more collaborative, which can be really fun, but it's also a challenge when the story room feels excited about some scripts and a broadcaster doesn't share that excitement and wants you to change a lot of your favourite elements, which sometimes happens.

Writing my books is a much freer process; I don't outline, I just start, and, of course, the story is entirely up to me (and then I have amazing editors who help draw out the best version of the story — I'd be lost without them). Of course, that also makes it much harder, and much more daunting. It's a lonelier profession in many ways.

I think I learned pacing and snappy dialogue from all of my years in TV, and how to write to chapter endings that hopefully make you want to turn the page. I'm also pretty good at cutting away the 'flab' in a story; TV is all about moving the story forward, and I try to do that in my books, too, although I love that I can also have more introspective moments.

You've written books with characters from all sorts of backgrounds. How do you research so that you stay true to the experiences of people with diverse stories?

Good writing is an act of the imagination. So, while I absolutely research for accuracy in certain situations (like, what would happen to Felix if he was taken to the police station; what would Henry's therapist try to talk to him about in their sessions; what would happen in group art therapy), I am mostly using my imagination — creating a fictional character, putting him or her into a situation and imagining what it would be like for him or her, how he or she would navigate each situation.

A lot of your books deal with heavy topics such as grief, guilt, homophobia, and in your latest novel, No Fixed Address, homelessness. What motivates you to write about these subjects?

I don't really set out to write about heavy things. I start with a character and imagine a situation to put him or her into, and it grows from there. I want my novels to be relevant, but I don't want to hammer anyone over the head by making the books 'issue driven.' That said, I know I've written about some heavy topics... I'm honestly not sure why! I think the ideas sometimes present themselves.

You have well-rounded and believable characters in your novels. When you come up with a story, does it start with a character, or do you have an idea of what story you want to tell and draw the characters from that?

It almost always starts with a character, although it can happen in different ways. With The Reluctant Journal of Henry K. Larsen, I was reading a book by Wally Lamb, The Hour I First Believed, and he put one of his characters into the very real-life tragedy of Columbine High School (the first but certainly not the last mass school shooting in the US, where two boys killed 13 students/teachers before killing themselves). A line in the book mentioned that one of the shooters had a brother. And it stopped me in my tracks. I wondered what would it be like to be the surviving brother of the 'perpetrator' of an irreversible act of violence. And Henry was born from that. Otherwise, characters usually start talking to me then I figure out their stories.

Would you say that there are any authors who have influenced your work?

Definitely. Judy Blume was a big influence when I was growing up; her books made me feel like I wasn’t alone, or helped me understand what boys were thinking, etc. Christopher Paul Curtis was also a powerful influence; I read Bud, Not Buddy to my son when he was around nine or 10 — it’s a beautiful story, not traditionally structured, and quite a sad story told in first-person narrative but with a lot of humour. It kind of gave me permission to start writing Word Nerd — also a first-person narrative, with some real
sadness at its core, yet with lots of humour. Our own Susan Juby has also been an influence — I think her work is wonderfully, uniquely funny, yet often with some really sad stuff underneath the humour.

The titles of your novels are always very interesting. They grab readers’ attention and leave them wanting to know more about the book. How exactly do you go about choosing a title?

It varies. Sometimes the title is there from the get-go, which happened with both Word Nerd and No Fixed Address. But sometimes I write my way toward a title. That’s what happened with We Are All Made of Molecules — the title came to me about half way through writing my first draft, and I rewrote with that in mind. Optimists Die First — that one took me forever to come up with — it actually had another title entirely, an absolutely terrible one — This is the Soundtrack of My Life. Thank God my editors told me that it, and the book, needed a ton of work. It took me a long time, with lots of help from my editors, to find my way to telling the story I really wanted to tell in that one. It wasn’t until the third full draft that I suddenly realized what the title was, and yet again I worked my way through the manuscript to have it all play out.

You manage to give your novels some light-hearted humour in the midst of heavy topics. Do you feel that it’s important to offer your readers this balance?

Absolutely. I tend to like reading novels that balance that blend of comedy and drama, and it’s what I like to write as well. I would not enjoy writing, let alone reading, books that deal with some of the subjects I’ve dealt with if they didn’t also have some levity throughout. For me, using humour actually makes the sad moments that much more powerful. And my overall world view is hopeful (I’m an optimist, unlike Petula in Optimists Die First), so all my books end with a sense of hope.

What inspired you to write for a young adult audience?

I’m not entirely sure. I wrote for a lot of teen and tween shows when I started writing for television, and I wasn’t much older than a teen myself when I started. I think it’s a great time of life to write about — a time of ‘firsts’ — first love, often first sex, first experimentation with drugs, alcohol, who you want to be... It’s a time when you’re figuring out the world and your place in it. It’s a time when you often lose some of your childlike innocence. I have powerful emotional memories from that time, and I think that’s partly why I choose young protagonists. That said, I’ve met a lot of adults who’ve read my work. Apparently one third of readership for YA is adults! 🧙

Emma Martel is an International Baccalaureate student from Halifax, Nova Scotia. She spends her spare time laughing with her best friends or learning about history. Sometimes both at the same time! Emma would like to study history after she graduates from high school.
What do boys read? And why do they stop?

BY KEVIN SYLVESTER

These questions matter a lot in my world. I write for children. I’m male. I write books with male protagonists (Neil Flambé, MINRs). But I also write books with female protagonists (Mucus Mayhem, Splinters, also MINRs). And I try to write books that anyone can enjoy. Most of them are written for middle grade readers, and when I visit schools (which I do a lot) I see both boys and girls engaged with those stories.

But I have been told by teachers and parents that boys might not read my girl-protagonist books. Why? Because ‘they only want books with boy characters.’

Is this true? (Is it not also possible that this kind of implicit bias sends the wrong message to those very boys that there are appropriate and inappropriate titles for them?)

The situation seems more worrisome as boys age. Numerous studies find that they turn away from reading. If they continue to read, it’s almost exclusively non-fiction. It’s still reading, but many people see it as limiting what the boys get from books.

And there is a general feeling that YA fiction is the domain of the girl reader, with an emphasis on female characters and (often) romance. Does that actually alienate boy readers as they hit their teens?

Educators, publishers and just plain old adults wrestle with these questions a lot. To get to the bottom of some of this stuff, I went to the sources — teenage boys who read (at different levels, as it turns out).

Here’s who I chatted with.

Matthew Demers, aged 14, from Saint-Lazare, Quebec.
Diego Lees, aged 13, from Kingston, Ontario.
Nicolas Martinez, aged 18, from Waterloo, Ontario.
Joey Mathers Scholl, aged 13, from Kitchener, Ontario.
Alex Reppin, aged 14, from Toronto, Ontario.
Max Schindler, aged 18, from Bethany, Ontario.

And here’s what we chatted about.

I started asking them what books they are currently reading. There was a wide range of authors and books, including A Time to Run by Lorna Schultz Nicholson, Kens by Raziel Reid, Extras by Scott Westerfeld, The Beauty of the Moment by Tanaz Bhathena, The Nameless City series by Faith Erin Hicks and, of course, Diary of A Wimpy Kid by Jeff Kinney. But the boy who is reading that is also reading Sleight by Jennifer Somersby. That’s four women authors, a prominent gay writer and definitely some ‘girl-centric’ YA and middle grade titles.

Already the kids were challenging some of the clichés about what teen boys read. As Alex put it, “I don’t care if they are girl-focused or guy-focused. I just hope the book is good and holds my interest.”

Most of the boys are old enough that they pick the books themselves — usually at a bookstore or sometimes online. And none of them felt that they’d been turned off by a book with a female protagonist.

Although Matthew and a couple of others did say they’ve been mildly teased for reading books that seemed ‘girlie.’

“I have been told I was reading a book for girls before, like The Hunger Games, but I didn’t stop reading it. It was a good book,” Matthew said.

Diego ran out of books one day and borrowed his sister’s Archie comics. “And to be honest, I was a little paranoid that people would be like, ‘Ha you’re reading an Archie comic. That’s so for girls.’ But nothing like that happened.”

Max spends a lot of time ‘trolling’ in Chapters stores and says he often reads book jackets to see if they look interesting. He admits that publishers often market books for what they think a boy or girl wants to see, “with pink colours or unicorns,” but that’s never swayed his decision making. “For most people it has nothing to do with the gender of the character. It’s about whether the story is good or not.”
Joey has seen the same thing. “Some books are made to look like they are for girls. But anyone can read any book and enjoy it.”

Nicolas did say he thought there might be too many ‘romance’ novels out there, “where the girl gets the guy or vice versa,” but added he’d never stopped reading a book because it was ‘girl-focused.’

Matthew also said, “I don’t usually choose books that have romance in the description.” But he stressed that he just wants to read about ‘unique characters.’

So all of them were willing to read anything that struck them, and weren’t worried too much about peer pressure.

“I read for enjoyment and I’m not going to ruin my happiness reading a book because of someone else,” added Nicolas.

Or as Matthew put it, “Yes, I have been criticized for reading a ‘girlie’ book, but it has never stopped me from reading it. The person criticizing you probably hasn’t even read the book and just wants to mock you.”

Some really interesting responses came when we talked about why boys often turn away from reading as they get older. Almost all of them have noticed changes in the habits of their male friends and classmates.

Joey says a lot of boys stop reading in his class because they read more slowly than other kids, including girls.

“The books get bigger and bigger as you get older. And a part of it is that they can’t read that thick book in three weeks. So they don’t try to. Or they try the book once and it’s not right for them so they put it down, and then give up.”

Joey says he worries about his classmates and wishes the boys would keep trying because it preps them better for the later grades.

“They will have a really hard time in high school when they have to read, and it will now take them way longer, and then they’ll have a tough time doing the reports and they’ll never catch up,” he says.

Matthew says another problem is that books don’t keep pace with other forms of entertainment. “I think this because they get more interested in video games, and think that they’re too cool to read, even though reading is cool.”

Alex also saw video games as a factor, and also sports. “As they get older, guys find other stuff to do, they hang out more, play video games more. There are still some guys that read a lot, you just don’t find them as often.”

Nicolas agreed. “I think boys stop reading because they lose interest. They aren’t finding stories that interest them anymore.”

In fact, Alex is going through that experience right now. He says that he wishes there were more exciting adventure stories, but as you get older (he’s 14) there are fewer and fewer books like that.

“I stop reading books because I get bored of them. I like comics and something usually with regular people with superpowers,” he says.

Alex says he’s trying to keep up by reading short stories, “that way I can still read but don’t have to read as much to get the whole story.” He and his mom read longer stories together to, “get them in my system.”

Like Alex, Matthew said he wished there were more stories with ‘fun and adventure.’ And he also worries that the boys he knows have stopped reading, calling it “a big deal.”

Since the boys I talked to are still reading, I also wanted to know what they are doing to help their friends stay with books.

Joey says he has a very good friend who only reads books about war (and does sometimes kid Joey for reading ‘feminine’ books). Joey suggested In the Buff by Vicki Grant, and his friend laughed at the premise — about a kid visiting his grandpa at a nudist colony.

“I think funny is one way to grab someone as a reader,” he says. But he also thought his friend would stick with books that are more reflective of what is going on in his life.

“He’s into war and he’s a cadet.” But his friend is reading and is keeping up with class reading. “Although even in French class, if he’s allowed to bring in his own book for a project, it will be about war.”

Diego says he’ll often ask what books his friends did like, and then suggest something similar. “Then I go on about how ‘actiony’ and cool it is,” he adds.

Nicolas says he does try, by talking about what he likes in a book. “And I hope they’ll find that interesting and read it, too.”

Max says it’s hard to convince anyone to do anything as they get older. “To be honest, most of my buddies don’t read anything. They might read articles on stuff they find interesting, but not books. It’s a time thing. They’d rather watch Netflix. In our culture of instant gratification, you’ll choose what’s easiest and right in front of you.”

What he said next made we wonder (and not for the first time) if we kill the joy of reading by demanding kids read books so much in school.

“Once the school system stops pressuring you to read for English class, you use whatever excuse you can to not have to bother,” Max said.

In my mind this suggests they see reading as a chore, not as enjoyable.

Diego agreed. “As you get older you have more and more stuff on your plate and that doesn’t always leave time for sitting down by the fire and reading a book, like they always show in movies and stuff.”

In fact Max does think those kids might come back to reading when they get older, when the memory of reading as ‘work’ fades away. “They’ll fall back in love with reading a book in front of a nice warm fire maybe, but they’ll have to learn to appreciate that on their own.”
Joey was one of the kids who said he has seen his classmates turn away from ‘harder reading.’ I asked if he thought the school should change the way it teaches. “I think my teacher is just trying to get them ready for high school. But maybe she could encourage easier reading on the side and then gradually build up to harder books for kids who have trouble reading.”

As a possibly useful aside, a lot of male authors I know have gone through similar experiences when they were young. I wouldn’t be a reader today if it hadn’t been for Spider-Man comics. And as the books got longer in school, I found I could only follow them if I’d seen a movie version — such as the old animated Hobbit film. Those stories hooked me and I went on to study Victorian literature at the University of Toronto. But if the adults in my life hadn’t let me stick with the ‘easier’ texts, I wouldn’t be a reader or a writer today. So you’ll notice a lot of us write adventure stories, often with pictures and illustrations. Dav Pilkey’s Dog Man series is a perfect example, of this.

Of course another trend that’s backed up by research is that boys switch to non-fiction as they grow older. (www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/reading-minds/201803/what-is-it-boys-and-reading)

Max says that definitely applies to him, but disagrees about it being limiting. “I liked Harry Potter when I was younger, but as I’ve grown older I’ve become more interested in real historical stories, such as the siege of Stalingrad. Things like that seem forgotten. When I want a fiction story, I often watch a show or movie.”

Nicolas, who like Max is 18, reads plenty of fiction, but he also pointed to topical subject matter as a key point for how he chooses books. “I wish authors wrote more books about LGBTQ+, or books about topics that aren’t necessarily talked about every day. Like mental health issues or disabilities. Everyone should read from this point of view to understand a little more.”

Diego also sees this happening in his class. “Many boys are reading the graphic novels and non-fiction books. Some other boys are barely reading at all and are taking out the informational magazines in back of the class.”

When I asked the boys what the adult males in their lives were reading, it was almost exclusively non-fiction.

Alex said, “My dad reads books for smart people, non-fiction, art and photography books, and the newspaper. My uncle reads historical fiction, mostly.”

Joey says his dad and step-dad read, “but not a lot.” His step-dad “thinks that there are better things to do than read, like watch TV or hang out with family, but it is good to just read sometimes.”

Max said his dad suggests non-fiction to him, such as Jordan Peterson’s 12 Rules for Life, and also has a close family friend who recommends books, but they are almost always non-fiction.

When Max mentioned reading Harry Potter, it tweaked another question for me. J.K. Rowling was once asked if the books would have been as popular if Harry had been a girl. She said it was never a choice, because Harry ‘appeared’ to her as a boy. (Of course, she chose to publish the books as J.K. Rowling instead of Joanne in order to obscure the fact the books were written by a woman.)

But I asked the boys if they thought the books would have been as popular if they had been about Harriet Potter.

Alex was firmly on the ‘no’ side. “It probably wouldn’t have been as popular, because that’s just how people are. Most people like to read books about guys. That’s just how it is, but I don’t know why.”

Matthew also thought so. “I think that if Harry Potter had a female lead, it might not have been as popular to males. I think this is because the boys who liked it would have been criticized for reading a ‘girlie’ book.”

Diego agreed as well, but says things may have changed. “Today, not many people would care. But 21 years ago, Harriet Potter would have been rejected by many die-hard fans of the now famous Harry Potter.”

Nicolas wondered if a bias in our culture is the problem. “In society we see superheroes as male role models and see very few female superheroes. So I think we automatically make characters male unless the book requires it to be different.”

So, what did I learn? Of course, it’s always dangerous to draw a lot of conclusions from a few conversations. But each teen seemed to back up some of our worries. Boys do fall behind. They do give up. They do turn away as reading changes from something joy filled to something that feels like a slog.

And we are all fighting a battle with what Max called the ‘instant gratification’ of video games, TV, Netflix and other distractions.

But I was cheered by the idea that there are readers out there, like these kids, who don’t conform to the clichés. Not one of them suggested that they were scared off by even the gentle teasing they’ve received.

And it’s possible that adults need to see that, maybe, the times are changing. Maybe things are getting better. And maybe, as my generation moves out of the system, the kids who don’t care as much about gender or genre will just let it fade away.

Diego put it this way. “This perceived problem could be because of the time they (and you) grew up in. In the 20th century, there were more stereotypes of male and female people. These stereotypes could affect teachers in a way that they believe that there is a difference between ‘male’ and ‘female’ books.”

So I’ll keep writing my books the way I want to write them and hope that there are the readers out there (boys and girls) who will want to read them.

Kevin Sylvester, author, illustrator and broadcaster, has written and illustrated more than 30 fiction and non-fiction titles, including The Almost Epic Squad #1: Mucus Mayhem, the Neil Flambé Capers and the MINRs trilogy.
For our spring Bookmark! column CCBC’s Library Coordinator, Meghan Howe, has compiled a list of YA titles that complement our Teen Takeover issue. Books from six different genres have been included.

**Terrific Teen Titles**

**SCI-FI/FANTASY**

**Fate of Flames**  
*The Effigies, Book 1*  
written by Sarah Raughley  
(Simon Pulse, 2016)

The Effigies, four girls each with the power to control one of the elements — earth, air, fire and water — have protected the world from Phantoms — massive beasts of nightmare. Now a human foe with an army of Phantoms threatens the world. Can Maia, the newest Fire Effigy, reunite the other Effigies before the world is destroyed forever?

**Tangled Planet**  
written by Kate Blair  
(DCB, 2017)

A group of humans has arrived at Beta Earth, an uninhabited planet bioengineered for human life. But when 17-year-old engineer Ursa finds a dead body and sees a large creature with sharp teeth leaving the scene, fear and uncertainty grip the colonists. Is their new world safe?

**Why the Monster**  
written by Sean Qitsualik-Tinsley and Rachel Qitsualik-Tinsley  
(Inhabit Media, 2017)

Huuq, a young Inuit boy, is fleeing from camp bullies when he finds a stone-like egg. When he breaks the mysterious egg, he is turned into a monstrous half-human creature. As Huuq tries to figure out why and how to return to his natural self, he is thrust into a world of fearsome creatures, mystical powers and an unfathomable evil.

**HISTORICAL FICTION**

**The Farmerettes**  
written by Gisela Tobien Sherman  
(Second Story Press, 2015)

Defying convention, a group of mismatched girls live and work on a farm during the summer of 1943: dutiful Helene; fun-loving Peggy; Isabel, whose fiancé is in Europe; rich Binxie and reliable Jean, whose family farm is taken over by the group of “farmerettes.” And then there is the mysterious “X,” who feels the most out of place, always longing for what lies out of reach.

**The Game of Hope**  
written by Sandra Gulland  
(Penguin Teen Canada, 2018)

Paris, 1798. Hortense de Beauharnais is engrossed in her studies at a boarding school for aristocratic girls. Her beautiful mother, Josephine, has married Napoleon Bonaparte, soon to become the most powerful man in France. Where will Hortense’s future lie? It may not be in her power to decide.

**The Gospel Truth**  
written by Caroline Pignat  
(Red Deer Press, 2014)

Phoebe, 16, is a plantation slave and a keen observer of the brutality that comes with being owned. Mute since her mother was sold, Phoebe has taught herself to read — an advantage and a danger. When a Canadian doctor, the ‘birdman,’ visits the plantation for bird watching, Phoebe soon realizes it’s more than birds that he is after.

**MYSTERY**

**Along the Indigo**  
written by Elsie Chapman  
(Amulet Books, 2018)

The town of Glory is famous for seedy businesses and suicides along the Indigo River. Marsden, desperate to escape her predestined fate, needs money and ends up skimming the bodies that appear along the Indigo. There she meets Jude and, as they grow closer, the two unearth secrets that could allow them to move forward… or chain them to the Indigo forever.

**The Disappearance**  
written by Gillian Chan  
(Annick Press, 2017)

Tragic circumstances throw two boys — Mike, disfigured and guilt-ridden by his brother’s death, and Jacob, an elective mute who is isolated, withdrawn and bullied — together in a group home. An unlikely friendship develops, but, when Jacob finally speaks, he seems to know everything about Mike, including what happened to his brother. Who is Jacob and where does he come from?

**The Hanging Girl**  
written by Eileen Cook  
(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017)

Skye Thorn has been giving tarot card readings for years, so when golden girl Paige goes missing, Skye uses her paranormal abilities to help the police. Paige and Skye are polar opposites and both are living a lie. Now the prank has turned deadly and Skye must find the identities of those who would kill to get what they want.
CONTEMPORARY

36 Questions That Changed My Mind About You
written by Vicki Grant
(Running Press Teens, 2017)
Two random strangers with two heartbreak-
ning secrets. Thirty-six questions to make
them fall in love. Hildy and Paul each have
their own reasons for joining the university
psychology study that asks the simple
question: Can love be engineered?

Calvin
written by Martine Leavitt
(Groundwood Books, 2015)
Calvin has always known his fate was
linked to the comic strip, Calvin and
Hobbes. But, at 17, he is suddenly stricken
by a schizophrenic episode, and Hobbes (as
a large man-eating tiger he can’t quite see)
is with him as a delusion he can’t control.
As the hallucinations persist, Calvin
struggles to regain control of his own mind
and destiny.

The Fixes
written by Owen Matthews
(HarperTeen, 2016)
Eric Connelly is crumbling under the
weight of his dad’s expectations when he
meets rich, wild Jordan Grant. Jordan and
Eric — now E — along with two popular
girls, become the Suicide Pack, combatting
their rich-kid boredom with ‘fixes’ from
joyriding and shoplifting, escalating into
more violent activities. When Jordan starts
talking about bomb building, E must decide
if he’s too far down the rabbit hole to
back out.

GRAPHIC NOVELS

In Real Life
written by Cory Doctorow
Illustrated by Jen Wang
(First Second, 2014)
Anda loves playing the massively multi-
player role-playing game where she can be
a leader, a fighter, a hero. Gaming is, for
Anda, entirely a good thing. Complications
arise when she befriends Raymond, a poor
Chinese kid who is a gold farmer collect-
ing virtual gold to sell to rich players for
real money. Anda tries to help him — with
disastrous results.

Hostage
written and illustrated by Guy Delisle
translated by Helge Dascher
(Drawn & Quarterly, 2017)
This is the extraordinary story of
Christophe André, a volunteer with
Médecins Sans Frontières, who, in 1997,
was kidnapped and held captive in the
Caucasus region. Handcuffed and in
solitary confinement, André had almost no
contact with the outside world for 111 days.
Thoughtful and intense, this graphic novel
examines our will to survive in the darkest
of moments.

Sherlock Holmes vs. Harry Houdini
written by Anthony Del Col and Conor McCreery
Illustrated by Carlos Furrúzono
(Dynamite Entertainment, 2015)
The world’s most famous detective meets
the world’s most famous magician... Harry
Houdini’s London tour is attacked by a
mysterious figure that controls the powers
of beyond. The goal? To destroy Houdini’s
career. Houdini reluctantly teams with
Sherlock Holmes, who is locked in his own
fight. Can the two rise to overcome a
seemingly impossible force?

NON-FICTION

#NotYourPrincess: Voices of
Native American Women
edited by Lisa Charleyboy and
Mary Beth Leatherdale
(Annick Press, 2017)
What is it like to be an Indigenous woman
or girl today? In this compelling collection
of art, essays, poems and interviews, more
than 50 contemporary artists come together
to shatter stereotypes, reveal hurt from the
past and celebrate hope for the future.

Bad Girls of Fashion: Style Rebels
from Cleopatra to Lady Gaga
written by Jennifer Croll
illustrated by Ada Buchholc
(Annick Press, 2016)
From Cleopatra to Coco Chanel and
Marlene Dietrich to Madonna, female style
rebels have used clothes to shake things
up and break the rules. With an energetic,
appealing writing style, Croll demonstrates
how, through the ages, women have used
fashion as a tool, and how their influence
continues to shape the way women present
themselves today.

I Am a Feminist: Claiming the
F-WORD in Turbulent Times
(Orca Issues)
written by Monique Polak
(Orca Book Publishers, forthcoming May 2019)
What is feminism? Why does it still matter?
What exactly does intersectionality mean?
From suffragists to the #MeToo movement,
this title encourages readers to stand up,
speak out and make gender equality a
reality, not just a dream.
For this Teen Takeover issue we asked teens from across Canada to read and review intermediate and YA titles. Here are their thoughts and opinions on some of Canada’s latest titles.

**Body Swap**
written by Sylvia McNicoll
Dundurn, 2018
978-1-4597-4090-7 (pb) $14.99
978-1-4597-4092-1 (eBook) $8.99
for Grades 8 and up
Fiction | Death | Intergenerational Friendships | Privilege | Growing Old | Justice

Hallie Prince is your classic teenager: always on her phone, daydreaming about her crush and hating her ‘pudgy’ body. Then her life ends, literally, when she gets hit by a Hurricane SUV driven by 82-year-old Susan MacMillan. In the carnival for the dead, Susan claims that the accelerator was stuck and she wasn’t able to stop. The two of them are brought back to life, but there’s a catch — they’ve swapped bodies! Now they’re trying to adapt to completely different lifestyles and they have to work together before their time runs out to seek justice for their fatal crash.

*Body Swap* is told from the alternating perspectives of the two witty protagonists, and, while it has an equal mix of morbid humour, comedy and suspense, this story strongly emphasizes compassion for both young and old. It depicts Hallie struggling to adapt to her new wrinkly skin and aching bones, longing for the body she used to have. On the other hand, Susan is having the time of her life, learning how to use technology and enjoying the youthfulness she hasn’t experienced in a long time.

This book made me laugh so much, and I seriously enjoyed it from start to finish! In the end, it opened my eyes to the privilege of growing old. It is also the perfect book for teaching empathy to teens about senior citizens, and even though it has two female main characters, I believe that anyone, boy or girl, young or old, will enjoy this story.

Amy Zhu is from London, Ontario. These days, you can usually find her reading, drawing or binge watching her new favourite anime.

**Be My Love**
written by Kit Pearson
HarperTrophy Canada, 2019
978-1-44344-402-6 (pb) $14.99
978-1-44344-404-0 (eBook) $7.99
for Grades 5 to 8
Historical Fiction | Friendship | Mental Health Issues | LGBTQ+

*Be My Love* by Kit Pearson portrays the struggles of growing up and changing at a different pace than your close friends, and explores the reality of mental health and how important it is to be paying attention to it.

Maisie visits Kingfisher Island every summer. She enjoys hanging out with her dear friend, Una. Maisie and Una have many games and jokes they like to play, but this year, Una has changed. A secret, a mistake and a confession play big parts in Maisie’s summer. She goes through a roller coaster of emotions — excitement, shock, regret, sympathy and many more. Maisie thought it was going to be the worst summer of her life, but it turned out to be the best.

Pearson made every single one of her characters so realistic. They were all relatable in some way, which made it that much more interesting, and sometimes heartbreaking, to read. The problems and conflicts they had were real, and many different readers could relate to them. The mix of historical fiction, mental illness and LGBTQ+ content left me on the edge of my seat throughout most of the story.

This book would be good for a read-aloud in middle school for a mental health or LGBTQ+ unit and, if you like historical fiction, I would recommend *Be My Love*.

April Smith lives in Waterloo, Ontario. She enjoys reading, music and art.
Roa has made the sacrifice of marrying Dax, her enemy and king, in an effort to save her people. She struggles to earn respect and her people’s rights from the society she doesn’t fit into, while also trying to save her beloved sister, whose soul is trapped in an eagle’s body. Roa carries the weight of a kingdom on her shoulders as she tries to make the right choices, to choose between family and love, and to prove her disbelievers wrong.

Although I found the beginning of the book a bit slow and lacking the spark to hook the reader, it eventually picked up and I thoroughly enjoyed it. And while certain components were predictable, it was a very well written story and the world it took place in was vibrant and well thought out. Readers who persist will be glad they did.

The Caged Queen is a fast-paced fantasy that explores themes of relationships and love, uprising, kingdom politics, folklore and tradition. Kristen Ciccarelli’s novel flips from the present day to Roa’s childhood memories and to legends, which adds a lot of context and depth to the characters and the story, as well as foreshadowing the events to come. The author succeeds in bringing Roa to life, her motives and flaws are realistic and relatable.

Mariana Latta Suazo is an avid 17-year-old reader from Kitchener, Ontario, who enjoys spending time in the great outdoors, as well as playing cello and singing.

Chicken Girl is a powerful novel about learning to embrace oneself and ignore the expectations of others. It serves as an important reminder not to allow oneself to be overcome by the darkness in the world, but instead, to look for the light. Anyone who has ever felt pressure to look or act a certain way in order to be accepted can sympathize with Poppy. With high school being a time of self-discovery and trying to find one’s place, Chicken Girl would be perfect to use as novel study for secondary students or as part of an anti-bullying display.

Jade Ritter is a 17-year-old avid reader and chicken keeper who resides in Alma, Ontario.

Dark of the West by Joanna Hathaway is a well-written and very descriptive novel. Through vivid detail, the author creates a realistic picture of the setting and the characters.

The story begins in a war-torn land with two extremely different characters. I fell in love with them from the very beginning. There’s Athan, the son of a highly successful commander, who will forever live in the shadow of his two older brothers. He only truly feels at home when he is in the air, in his beloved plane. That is, until he meets Aurelia, a beautiful princess.

Aurelia has her own dreams to fulfill. She would like to go to university and make her father proud. As you read on, it may seem as if Aurelia and Athan are perfect for each other; after all, they both dislike the rules and secrets in their lives. The problem is, Aurelia’s mother is Athan’s father’s enemy, and his father will go to great lengths to gain power, even if that means murder. Can the daughter of a Queen and the son of a Commander fall in love and forget about all of the pain in their lives?

Over the course of 480 pages, the story follows them from one region to another, through their letters to and from each other, and leaves readers hoping their future will include one another. Dark of the West is most certainly a page turner. I would recommend this book to high school students, especially those who enjoy fantasy, adventure and a little bit of romance.

Jenna Cassidy, 14, is from Saint-Lazare, Quebec. When she is not reading, she enjoys playing her flute and walking her dog Chance.
**The Divided Earth**  
*The Nameless City, Book 3*  
written and illustrated by Faith Erin Hicks  
colour by Jordie Bellaire  
First Second, 2018  
978-1-62672-161-6 (hc) $28.99  
for Grades 4 to 8  
*Graphic Novel | Historical Fantasy | War | Teamwork*

The Nameless City is stuck between armies, with traitors on both sides. Prince Erzi, desperate for ultimate power, takes the Divided Earth — a manual belonging to the first builders of the Nameless City and hidden by the city’s monks — to make the Napatha, a weapon of mass destruction. Teenagers Kaidu and Rat set out to steal the manual from the prince and help Kaidu’s father, General Andren, get the separate nations and tribes to agree to his plan for unity and hopefully bring peace once and for all.

*The Divided Earth* is the third and final book in Faith Erin Hicks’ graphic-novel series, *The Nameless City*, and raises the question — what is the point of war and why can’t it be talked out peacefully?

Of the three books in the series, I found this to be the best one; it was the most entertaining, had the most going on and had the best storyline. I was never able to guess what would happen and I usually can. Set in 13th century China, the historical fantasy reminds us that war is not the answer and that it only leads to more problems. I would recommend the book to people who are reluctant readers and who like adventure and mystery — the story really draws you in and the illustrations are amazing. You should read the first two books beforehand, but you can jump in if you don’t mind being a little confused at the beginning.

Alex Reppin lives in Toronto, Ontario. He likes playing video games and hanging out with his friends.

---

**Fifteen Point Nine**  
written by Holly Dobbie  
DCB, 2018  
978-1-77086-523-5 (pb) $14.95  
978-1-77086-524-2 (eBook) $9.99  
for Grades 9 and up  
*Fiction | Bullying | Teamwork | Parental Neglect | Alcohol Abuse | Suicide*

In *Fifteen Point Nine* by Holly Dobbie, Aggie lives with her mother (whom she calls Jane) in a house that Aggie calls the dump because Aggie and Jane never throw anything away; in fact, they actually bring home garbage. Jane, an alcoholic, is extremely paranoid, and neither she, nor Aggie, has a cellphone. They don’t have a house phone either, and Jane takes other similar precautions because she is afraid someone will come to their house. Jane does not make much money and there is never enough food in the house. At school, Aggie and a few others are bullied for being different. They are bullied by everyone, but especially two cliques, “Those Girls” and “Idiot Boys.” The group being bullied come together to show everyone what is being done to them.

Some issues the author addresses are bullying, suicide and self-harm, alcohol abuse and child neglect. The bullying is physical, emotional, mental and verbal. The teachers and staff at the school ‘don’t see it’ and don’t do anything about it. The students being bullied create the Pig Mask Chronicles, a video to show what is being done to them. The bullying affects Joanie so much that she ends up committing suicide. Aggie starts cutting herself, but she does not intend to commit suicide, just harm herself. When Aggie’s best friend finds out she is cutting herself, she helps Aggie stop. Aggie starts going to meetings for kids of alcoholics because of Jane’s alcohol abuse.

I think this book could be incorporated into the grade nine or 10 curriculum. It could be used to show teenagers that it is possible to take control of any bad situation and to find a solution to any problem.

Dahlia Klein is from Laval, Quebec. When she is not reading or studying, you might find her with her friends, watching Netflix or watching Disney shows/movies.

---

**Game of Secrets**  
written by Kim Foster  
Sky Pony Press, 2018  
978-1-5107-1644-5 (hc) $27.99  
978-1-5107-1646-9 (eBook) $14.99  
for Grades 7 and up  
*Historical Fiction | Victorian England | Fantasy | Siblings | Assassins*

In *Game of Secrets* the world is made up of normal people, and the Tainted — people with special powers who are feared and killed. The main character, Felicity Grace, is orphaned and looking after her younger brother, Nate, who is Tainted. A man named Hawksmoor ends up breaking her out of prison after an incident in the market, and she discovers that she, too, is Tainted. Shoved into an unknown world, Felicity trains to be an assassin to get her brother back and defeat the Huntsman, who threatens everyone’s life every day.

I felt like I was along for the ride as Felicity grew up to harness her abilities and really start wanting to train and get better. I honestly think that anyone who wants to see a girl grow up and learn how to stand up and fight is in the right place because it’s all right here. *Game of Secrets* might be more appealing to girls, but boys might like the little spark of romance and girl power. There was one part in the book, when we started to figure out her family’s past, which I had to re-read. Some parts were a little confusing; maybe because we don’t see into her past, it’s a little hard to follow. But other than that, the book was amazing, and my friends and family also loved the plot. I’m now searching for more of Kim Foster’s work because I’m hooked.

Haleigh Arsenault lives in Hamilton, Ontario, and is 15 years old. She loves to play soccer.
Marvelous New Middle Grade

March 2019

The first Mighty Muskats Mystery! Four cousins solve the case on the Windy Lake First Nation.

What if Mozart’s sister had the spotlight? Inspired by the life of Nannerl Mozart.

Sibby Henry has lost her skateboard! Adjusting to a new school is hard enough.

Always With You
BY ERIC WALTERS
ART BY CARLOE LIU
Picture Book | 978-1-77108-738-4
$24.95 | Ages 3-7 | April

“Eric has given us a story that is both heartwarming and encouraging, especially for those who have lost loved ones, for we can believe that they will always be with us.”
—Michael Martchenko

Second Story Press  www.secondstorypress.ca

New Spring Titles from Nimbus

Featuring Library-Friendly Fold-out Letters

Always With You
BY ERIC WALTERS
ART BY CARLOE LIU
Picture Book | 978-1-77108-738-4
$24.95 | Ages 3-7 | April

My Mommy, My Mama, My Brother, & Me
BY NATALIE MEISNER
ART BY MATHILDE CINQ-MARS
Picture Book | 978-1-77108-741-4
$22.95 | Ages 3-7 | April

If I Were the Moon
BY SHEREE FITCH
ART BY LESLIE WATTS
Picture Book | 978-1-77108-739-1
$22.95 | Ages 3-7 | April

Follow us online:  @nimbuspub or nimbus.ca
Emily, Tess, Cam and Dylan are part of a hide-and-seek club that has met to play a game every Friday night for many months, but a curfew imposed on some of the townspeople means there are now restrictions. For people under the age of 17, the 11:00 p.m. curfew is set because of suspected criminal activity, but the group of four friends chooses to play anyway. One Friday night, they go into the woods after dark, but soon they are being chased. They must rely on their hide-and-seek skills, and hope that those will be enough to save them.

Alison Hughes has written this book flawlessly. As I read, I could picture every detail of the setting and what the characters looked like as well as what was happening. With her great descriptions, I felt empathy for the characters, and was able to put myself in their positions. The story is very satisfying as you get through it and it all comes together. The way that the characters speak is believable and the narration is descriptive yet simple.

If you are a reluctant reader in grades seven to 10 and interested in a suspenseful book with lots of action, I would recommend this book for you. This story can be nerve-wracking, but stops short of being truly scary. As a reader, I gained a deeper understanding of how stressful it must be to be chased.

Matthew Demers is from Montreal, Quebec. Once he’s finished his homework, he can be found in Tilted Towers, reading or playing with his cat Butterscotch.

I loved In the Buff by Vicki Grant; I have been telling my friends and family to read it! Honestly, I have so many positive things to say about this book and am honoured I get to write a review for it.

When I tell my friends about In the Buff, I say that it is about a nude grandpa who joins a nudist community for seniors. When his grandson comes to visit, the boy accidentally lets his grandpa’s dog escape and they have to work together to find him. They make this weird face and ask, “You’re doing a book review on that?” And I say, “Yeah, I am!”

This book is so good, I just couldn’t put it down, and when I had to, I was always wondering what was going to happen next. I found that Grant ended chapters at just the right time. I really liked the first page when she wrote, “My grandfather’s grandson comes to visit, the boy accidentally lets his grandpa’s dog escape and they have to work together to find him. They make this weird face and ask, “You’re doing a book review on that?” And I say, “Yeah, I am!”

I really liked the first page when she wrote, “My grandfather’s name is Alan J. Smithers, but everyone calls him Gump. He’s old and really cranky. He’s also naked. Like, totally butt naked. And not just at bath time. I’m talking 24/7.” That really got me hooked; I knew that it was probably going to be a comedy and I really wanted to flip to the next page and keep reading. And by the end of the chapter, I just couldn’t put the book down. In my opinion, when an author hooks you in the first chapter that is a job well done, and if they suck you in on the first page that is proof that the author knows how to grab the reader’s attention using ideas that interest that age group. In the Buff is an amazing book from start to finish.

I hope that you get a chance to read it, I’m sure that you won’t regret it.

Joey Mathers Scholl is a 13-year-old living in Kitchener, Ontario. He plays drums and various other instruments in his spare time.
Julia Unbound
(The Witch’s Child, Book 3)
written by Catherine Egan
Doubleday Canada, 2018
978-0-385-68471-2 (hc) $21.99
978-0-385-68472-9 (eBook) $10.99
for Grades 7 and up
Fiction | Fantasy | Magic | Mystery

Julia is running — out of time, out of options and straight into harm’s way. With Dek’s life hanging in the balance, she allows the power-hungry Xianren, Casimir, to put within her a nuyi, a creature that will render her completely under his control in less than two weeks. She fights to find a way to stop him and save the lives of everyone she cares about, but playing for both sides leads her to uncover things that change her views of the world she thought she knew. Facing betrayal, mistrust and even murder, Julia must choose her side and let go of her fears. It’s time to become ‘Unbound.’

Catherine Egan’s intricate development with the first-person mentality, along with her attention to the separate beliefs, views and motivation of the supporting characters, is real and authentic. By following Julia’s desperation as she constantly moves between the sides of the conflict, one finds the reveals and declarations all the more impactful.

This fantastically written story left me wishing there was more to this trilogy. It deals with fighting for what you believe in and putting love above all else. It shows the emotions around loss and betrayal, truth and lies, discovering who you are and where you fit in the world, and depicts different values of sacrifice and how general the terms ‘right and wrong’ really are. Anyone who has ever struggled with who and what they are, or has had to choose between moral dilemmas or known the stress of protecting the people they care about, can relate to Julia. Written for intermediate and senior students, this book is excellent for expanding one’s perspective on the world.

Sara Rigotti, 15, is a student of St. Stephen Secondary School in Bowmanville, Ontario, and the youngest member of the Writers’ Community of Durham Region.

Kens
written by Raziel Reid
Penguin Teen Canada, 2018
978-0-7352-6377-2 (hc) $21.99
978-0-7352-6378-9 (eBook) $10.99
for Grades 9 and up
Fiction | LGBTQ+ | Social Media | Addiction | Isolation | Influence

Set in the gated community of Willowsland, this book takes an almost satirical look at culture inside a very affluent, ‘flawless’ neighbourhood. The kids, and even the adults of this community, worship three high school students who are known as the ‘Kens.’ Ken Hilton, Ken Roberts and Ken Carson are three rich, gay and heavily physically altered teens who have somehow used their social media prowess to completely run the school and town. Everyone practically kisses the ground they walk on. When they decide to bring in a fourth Ken, Tommy Rawlins is chosen. Kens follows Tommy through the surreal and messed up world of Willowsland, America.

CANADIAN SOCIETY OF CHILDREN’S AUTHORS, ILLUSTRATORS AND PERFORMERS

SAVE THE DATE
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2019
REGISTRATION OPENS IN JULY
www.canscaip.org

• Outstanding keynote speakers: Itah Sadu and Jan Thornhill
• Workshops with top Canadian publishers, agents, authors, illustrators
• Sessions on writing craft, genres, marketing
• One-to-One evaluations of your manuscript, portfolio or website

REGISTRATION OPENS IN JULY
www.canscaip.org

35 GREAT YEARS!
Kens is an interesting story with some often-true tones inserted within the satire. The themes focus heavily on the power social media ‘influencers’ have today. People will post videos of themselves doing obviously dangerous and stupid things, as in the Tide pod challenge, or the cinnamon challenge, and kids around the world will follow suit in order to be ‘popular.’ Ken followers will do anything to please the Ken gods.

I enjoyed the book, it was different from what I usually read. The dark themes of addiction, isolation from the real world, modern beauty standards, etc., are mixed in with a healthy dose of extremism. It’s a dark, almost unfunny humour that would not be at home in a 2018 classroom, which is exactly why it deserves to be there. Even though the novel is more parody than anything else, it still has good lessons about how dangerous isolating yourself and sheltering in a seemingly flawless environment can be. Kens might be a good read for today’s helicopter parents.

Max Schindler is 18, lives in Bethany, Ontario, and is taking a gap year before college, working as an aviation mechanic and hoping to do some travelling.

Learning to Breathe
written by Janice Lynn Mather
Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2018
978-1-5344-0601-8 (hc) $23.99
978-1-5344-0603-2 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 8 to 12
Fiction | Sexual Assault | Pregnancy | Poverty | Finding Family

Indira Ferguson is forced to leave her home to go live with her aunt in Nassau. She soon encounters many struggles in her new home — struggles that no teenage girl should have to face. Stuck with the nickname Doubles, everyone thinks that she will be just like her Mamma: cheap, easy, nothing but trouble. Indira soon finds an escape from school and home at a yoga retreat by the water. There, she finds true friends who help her learn to breathe, and maybe even family.

Learning to Breathe is a beautifully written story that puts the realities of sexual assault, teenage pregnancy, homelessness and finding family into perspective for its readers. Part of what makes this book stand out is that its characters are very real and spontaneous, often genuinely surprising the audience. The author never ceases to use every sense to put the reader inside the story, describing the way a situation smells or how the air feels. While she never ceases to use every sense to put the reader inside the story, describing the way a situation smells or how the air feels. While

Charlotte O’Dell lives with her Aunt Ginny in Victoria, British Columbia. Her dream is to become a pharmacist, but first she must earn enough money to attend school. She decides to take on the challenge of working at the St. Alice Hotel, a luxurious resort with elite guests. As Charlotte navigates the different expectations of everyone around her, she makes connections and friends, gaining the trust of her colleagues and the guests at the hotel. When a murder occurs, her connections keep her close to the mystery at hand, but how close does anyone want to be? Definitely not close enough to be the main suspect.

With a basis in history, a twist of romance and a roller coaster of a mystery, Murder at the St. Alice brings alive the fright and worries of new places and people, as you experience them alongside Charlotte. You get to know the workers and guests at the hotel as they try to help her find her way. Their unique relationships create memorable experiences for Charlotte.

Murder at the St. Alice is a fast read for pleasure. I love how Citra sets up the mystery, while still focusing on story development outside of the murder. I enjoyed how all the plot lines are tied together at the end, this left me very satisfied! The photographs included of the St. Alice Hotel added another level of it all being real, while still leaving much to the imagination. Through the story, Citra explores the issues around being a suffragette, the struggle of work and consequences of a single misstep. It is a tale about being strong and believing in what you can accomplish.

Emily Gilbert is a grade 10 student who enjoys every moment she can live in the fantasy world of imagination.

My Body My Choice:
The Fight for Abortion Rights
(Orca Issues)
written by Robin Stevenson
illustrated by Meags Fitzgerald
Orca Book Publishers, 2019
978-1-4598-1712-8 (pb) $19.95
978-1-4598-1714-2 (eBook) $9.99
for Grades 8 and up
Non-fiction | Abortion | Abortion Rights | Women’s Rights | Human Rights

In one of the launch books for the new Orca Issues series, Robin Stevenson describes the ongoing battle for abortion rights in all its rises and falls. This powerful and inclusive eye-opening book reaches out to readers of all ages and identities.

In an unassuming 176 pages, My Body My Choice covers the many aspects and layers of the abortion conflict, starting with a brief history of abortion itself then continuing through a past of constantly changing views toward the present-day struggles. It describes how abortions were and are performed, why legalization is fought for and the desperate measures people take. Making use of direct quotes, interviews with real experts and first-hand
accounts, as well as plenty of informative photos and illustrations, the layout is easy to follow.

_My Body My Choice_ is powerful, conversational and startlingly truthful. As an award-winning author and a past social worker, Robin Stevenson made her non-fiction debut with her book _Pride: Celebrating Diversity & Community_. She fights for and brings awareness to human rights by writing in a way that discoursages readers from ever putting the book down until they’ve absorbed every emotional detail. Stevenson discusses the controversy of abortion stigmas and myths, and the truth beneath the lies, and makes connections between the abortion debate and other international struggles.

With all the influences and opinions of the world today, this book is a way for the voices of real experts to be heard and is an excellent resource to have in high school and home libraries as well as classrooms (especially sexual education classrooms).

Sara Rigotti

---

_Sleight_
written by Jennifer Sommersby
HarperCollins Publishers, 2018
978-1-44341-885-0 (hc) $22.99
978-1-44341-887-4 (eBook) $13.99
for Grades 7 to 10
_Fiction | Mystery | Circus Life | Magic | Tragedy | Evil_

Genevieve Flannery has been working as a circus performer for as long as she can remember. With a daily schedule of acrobatic workouts, caring for elephants and performing with her mother Delia, Geni has a life you could only dream of. But her life becomes a lot more complicated when her mother loses hers. At the same time, a seemingly nice man, who Geni suspects has a dark history, buys their circus. With the realization of her new abilities and a mission to protect her family treasure, Geni is stumbling into a new reality altogether.

This absolutely thrilling novel has everything a good book needs, with lots of mystery, adventure, magic and evil, and even a twinge of romance. Sommersby’s explanations and attention to detail are exemplary. Her descriptions are good and terrifying and really make you understand the characters’ emotions and feelings. In spite of filling her book with magic and fantasy, Sommersby weaves a believable story with relatable, well-thought-out characters.

This masterpiece is an intoxicating 37 chapters of magic, tragedy, humour and drama so intriguing that you won’t be able to put it down until the final page. I can’t wait for the second book to come out.

Diego Lees is a grade 7 French Immersion student living in Kingston, Ontario.

---

**The Spoon Asylum**
written by Caroline Misner
Thistledown Press, 2018
978-1-77187-155-6 (pb) $15.95
for Grades 7 to 11
_Historical Fiction | Racism | Jazz | 1930s_

In the summer of 1933, Haven Cattrell’s father abandons him to his grandmother in the small northern Ontario town of Davisville. Seeking work, young Haven stumbles across Camp Nokomis, a girl’s summer camp. Employed as the assistant cook, Haven meets two musicians and soon becomes immersed in their world of jazz. The story dives deep into the history of black jazz musicians and their struggles and explores how love can shred one’s heart. Can Haven live in this new world he has been introduced to, or will he let his heartaches cloud his judgement from what’s really important?

In this book, Misner helps young adult readers understand the realities of racism and the Great Depression. You will find yourself melting into the pages as she recounts this gripping tale. With amazing detail, Misner makes you feel as though you are a part of the story. It has many of the things a teen novel needs, with drama, romance, friendship and bits of action scattered throughout. With its remarkable characters and plot, there’s nothing to improve upon in this marvellous piece of historical fiction.

I would recommend this book to anyone looking for a good read. But more specifically, it would be a great choice to read in class when exploring Canada’s history or the Great Depression.

Diego Lees
students have when coming to North America, and foreign students will relate to their problems. The Third Act will appeal to those looking for a realistic book, where things are put as they are. It would also be a really nice element to add to the curriculum when teaching about the Nanjing Massacre or to have students read in an English class.

Allison Bockus is a high school student who lives in Rigaud, Quebec. She loves reading dystopian novels and reality fiction, and acts at her local theatre.

---

The Story of My Face
written by Leanne Baugh
Second Story Press, 2018
978-1-77260-070-4 (pb) $13.95
for Grades 8 to 12
Fiction | High School | Nature | Self-esteem

Abby Hughes has the life of her dreams, a great group of friends, the perfect boyfriend and a beautiful face. Everything seems to be heading her way as she anticipates using her drama scholarship toward a summer internship. Her life, however, takes a dreadful turn for the worse when Abby is attacked by a mother grizzly bear. Now with a mangled and scarred face, Abby cannot stand to look at her reflection. Challenged with going back to high school and desperately trying to rediscover her self-esteem, Abby truly discovers what it means to find your inner beauty and gain confidence from the hardest of battles.

Leanne Baugh’s book will grab the heart and feelings of any young adult reading it. Everyone can relate to wanting to make friends and fit in. In this book, Baugh writes about how Abby learns to embrace her flaws and shows others struggling with social-media views of beauty to embrace their inner beauty instead. Baugh reaches teens like me on a personal level, telling us that it’s okay to have flaws and that learning how to find confidence from them is the most beautiful characteristic of all.

Lexi Brantner is from Warner, Alberta. She is a passionate writer and enjoys being involved in athletics.

---

Treason’s Edge
(The Tyon Collective, Book 3)
written by Susan M. MacDonald
Breakwater Books, 2018
978-1-55081-728-7 (hc) $15.95
for Grades 7 and up
Science Fiction | Adventure | Romance

Adventure, romance, science fiction and suspense fans will enjoy Treason’s Edge by Susan M. MacDonald. The third thrilling instalment of The Tyon Collective series, this story follows the events that took place after the Others launched a gruesome attack in the previous book, and Riley faced Anna’s betrayal.

After Anna, Riley’s former mentor and co-leader of the Tyon Collective, attacks Riley during her escape with the most powerful teenage Tyon, Alec, who is semi-conscious at the time, Riley wakes up in a hospital room on the intergalactic vessel, Nui. Alec is with Anna on a remote location on Earth. Suffering from memory loss, Alec’s mind has been altered and in a state of euphoria and he doesn’t realize he is under Anna’s control.

On this journey, Riley will make sacrifices for her Tyon friends and herself. She will come to understand that everything is not always as it seems. Riley learns these lessons while trying to increase her powers. On the other hand, Alec is confused; things begin to make sense, but as soon as they do, they suddenly don’t. Alec’s powers continue to get stronger, but he is blocked from his powers mentally. As they fall further into Anna’s web, we wonder if Alec and Riley’s friendship will survive. Can they even make their way back to each other?

This series is teen-audience ‘binge worthy.’ Every moment takes hold of you. Rooting for the characters and agreeing or disagreeing with their decisions bring you closer to them. You will understand the characters’ backgrounds and what makes them tick. Stick around for the fourth instalment because you won’t regret it.

Hibah Ahamedi is an aspiring lifeguard from Ajax, Ontario.
Because when it comes to education, you aren’t alone.

JOIN SYLVAN NATION!

Every parent’s go-to place for educational resources, tips and activities to help your child with school.
(Not to mention exclusive offers on Sylvan tutoring programs!)

Kids can go so much further when we come together. As a member of Sylvan Nation, you’re a part of something bigger.

IT DOESN’T MATTER WHETHER YOU HAVE A CHILD IN GRADE 1, 6 OR 10. TODAY IS AN AWESOME DAY

to start learning what you can do and taking those extra little steps to help your kids prepare for a big and amazing future.

GET INSPIRED
GET INFORMED
Share it with your friends
And yes, get rewarded for helping your family!

ARE YOU IN FOR HELPING YOUR KIDS GO FURTHER?

Earn points today at SylvanNation.com

Yes! I’m In!

Sponsor of Amy Mathers Teen Book Award
We Recommend
NEW AND NOTED BOOKS FOR TODDLERS TO TEENS

In this issue we have combined our Red Leaf Literature and We Recommend columns together. Red Leaf Literature titles have been indicated with a red maple leaf next to the title.

**Anna at the Art Museum**
written by Hazel Hutchins and Gail Herbert
illustrated by Lil Crump
Annick Press, 2018
978-1-77321-043-8 (hc) $21.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

*Picture Book | Art Museum | Fine Art | Boredom | Rules | Imagination*

Pity the museum attendant at the art gallery that young Anna visits! Unhappy and restless from the very moment she enters the building with her mother, she runs through the gallery, roaring at a Babylonian ceramic panel depicting a lion, knocking over an ancient urn and touching a modern sculpture and a painting, thereby setting off alarms. “No shouting. No running. No climbing. No touching,” chastises her mother. Anna wishes, “If only the museum could be turned inside out. Or the world outside in.” She discovers a connection with art when the attendant allows her to enter a secret workroom where conservators are restoring Mary Cassatt’s *Little Girl in a Blue Armchair*, 1878, which portrays a little girl who looks just like her. Realizing that something within her has changed, Anna begins to revel in the colours and artwork that surround her. “I’ll be back,” she whispers to the lion upon leaving the building.

Hazel Hutchins and Gail Herbert have written a charming story about a young girl’s introduction to art. Experiencing some of the world’s greatest masterpieces through Anna’s inquisitive eyes is a refreshing treat. An informative list of the artwork and artists in this publication is included.

Lil Crump’s cartoon-like, yet personality-filled, illustrations are rendered in soft pencil and Photoshop. The framed art on the gallery walls are reproductions of masterpieces provided by various art galleries and artist representatives. Readers will be intrigued and amused as to how the artwork mirrors what is happening on the floor of the museum. When Anna sets off the security alarm, the comparison between Edvard Munch’s *The Scream* and the reactions of the adults is particularly memorable!

Senta Ross

**Africville**
written by Shauntay Grant
illustrated by Eva Campbell
Groundwood Books, 2018
978-1-77306-043-9 (hc) $18.95
978-1-77306-044-6 (eBook) $16.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

*Picture Book | Nova Scotia | Community | Home | Discrimination | Reunion*

“Take me to the end of the ocean, where waves come to rest and hug the harbor stones, where the grass runs high up the hillside and the houses lay out like a rainbow...”

So begins a young girl’s illusory visit to the former site of Africville, a Black community that had been located on the shores of the Bedford Basin in Halifax, Nova Scotia, for 150 years. It was demolished in the 1960s against the residents’ will. Recalling stories she had heard about Africville from her family, the girl imagines herself smelling homemade apple pie and blueberry duff, meeting at the Caterpillar Tree for a game of football, rafting at Tibby’s Pond and catching fish from the sea. Her musings conclude at a present-day Africville Reunion Festival “... where memories turn to dreams, and dreams turn to hope, and hope never ends.”

Shauntay Grant has written a loving tribute to a once vibrant and self-sufficient Black community where many lived, in spite of strong opposition and racial discrimination. A nostalgic sense of ‘home’ permeates throughout. Included on the final page is an informative history of Africville.

Much like Grant’s poetic text, Eva Campbell’s vibrant illustrations, rendered on canvas in oil and pastel, stimulate our senses. One can almost taste the blueberries, smell the codfish and hear the laughter of children emanating through the mists of time.

Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario.
Annick’s Most Anticipated Spring Books

Slaying autism stereotypes with stand-up, one joke at a time.
9781773212579 pb with flaps

Who says dogs can’t fly?
9781773212807 hc

Counting with Munsch is as easy as 123!
9781773212463 bb

Best Reading—Phonics of Short Vowels
is a reading program consisting of 20 books and a teaching guide. Each story helps children aged 4-6 learn new letters, sounds, and sight words to establish a strong reading foundation.

In addition to the teaching tips for each book, there is a General Teaching Tips book. It recommends group and individual activities to review and reinforce short vowels and sight words.

The series is illustrated by Graham Ross and written by Cathy Jackson, who has dedicated her teaching career to helping children become successful readers.

DC Canada Education
www.dc-canada.ca
A traditional Newfoundland folktale
adapted by Andy Jones and Philip Dinn
illustrated by Denise Gallagher
ISBN 978-1-927917190 / trade paperback $14.95

PEG BEARSKIN
a traditional Newfoundland folktale
adapted by Andy Jones and Philip Dinn
illustrated by Denise Gallagher
ISBN 978-1-927917190 / trade paperback $14.95

PEG BEARSKIN
a traditional Newfoundland folktale
adapted by Andy Jones and Philip Dinn
illustrated by Denise Gallagher
ISBN 978-1-927917190 / trade paperback $14.95

Meet Ara and her computer assistant, ‘Deedee.’ Ara loves numbers, the larger the better. Curious about the number of stars in the universe, she decides to find out. With assistance from four computer scientists, she grapples, step by step, with programming Deedee for this challenge. She learns to break the problem into smaller pieces, and how to use formulas called algorithms and turn them into a special coding language. In addition to these ‘tricky but fun’ elements, there are several practical difficulties, but Ara and Deedee persevere. There are more stars than a googol — a number with 100 zeroes!

Ara is a gutsy heroine, undeterred by complexities. Through her persistence and that of a cast of enthusiastic female technical staff, readers learn elements of computer programming. Meeting a ‘Tenacious Trouble-shooter,’ an ‘Intrepid Innovator,’ a ‘Prolific Planner’ and a ‘Code Commander,’ Ara learns the scope of their departments and work. Underlying Ara’s task is an all-encompassing algorithm that spells success — ‘coding, courage, creativity, and collaboration.’ Ara is a positive role model for girls who may still feel that science and technology professions are predominantly for males.

Whimsical illustrations reflect an eager, bushy-haired Ara absorbed in her task, as is Deedee! Bright, colourful animated illustrations provide an abundance of detail and character. A glossary, a link to a related activity website and an introduction to the featured female technologists add to the value of this title as a clever and entertaining introduction to the complexities and satisfaction of technology for both girls and boys.

Aileen Wortley is a retired librarian from Toronto.
How to Catch a Bear who Loves to Read
written by Andrew Katz and Juliana Léveillé-Trudel
illustrated by Joseph Sherman
CrackBoom Books, 2018
978-2-924786-47-5 (hc) $17.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 2
Picture Book | Bears | Childhood | Forest Life

Julia lives in a forest and longs to befriend a bear to include in her group of woodland playmates — a squirrel, a skunk and a groundhog. Inspired by a storybook about a bear, she tries to lure one using honey and blueberries. There are several false alarms, but she eventually discovers large purple paw-prints leaving the scene and her book is missing. Fearlessly following the trail of paw marks, Julia discovers a treehouse inhabited by a bear that just happens to be reading her book. Courteously sharing a snack, he and Julia finish the book together and say farewell with a bear hug.

Julia is a solitary child, but lives a full life in her imagination. Cheerful, curious and enthusiastic with lots of initiative, she creates her own adventures undaunted by setbacks. Her innocence, combined with resilience and determination, makes her a loveable, positive role model. The text, including lighthearted wordplay between Julia and her forest friends, is direct and easy to read, although the farting contest seems a rather self-conscious attempt at humour. The book is a great plug for reading and the creativity it can inspire. Even Bear is a happy reader of library discsards!

Animated illustrations in bright, fresh colours complement Julia’s busy liveliness, while her animal friends are portrayed with quirky, eager expressions. Young children will immerse themselves in the easy-to-follow plot and detailed pictures. Overall, the book is a whimsical and humorous addition to bookshelves and library collections.

Aileen Wortley
Be Prepared! The Frankie MacDonald Guide to Life, the Weather, and Everything
written by Frankie MacDonald and Sarah Sawler
Nimbus Publishing, 2018
978-1-77108057-5 (pb) $16.95
for Grades 3 to 5
Non-fiction | Biography | Weather | Autism Spectrum Disorder

From a very young age, Frankie MacDonald was interested in geography and grew to love signs. As a visual thinker, he thought in pictures instead of sentences, so signs provided information, using symbols instead of words, which worked perfectly with his way of thinking. He also loved to watch the weather channel from when he was just a toddler; it was probably the maps and satellite colours that caught his attention, but he was learning a lot and decided he wanted to be a meteorologist. Frankie eventually turned into an “internet weather-broadcasting sensation” on YouTube, and his forecasts have been picked up by the press worldwide.

Authors Sarah Sawler and Frankie MacDonald have included stories of Frankie’s experiences growing up with autism, as well as information about all things weather related. Filled with pictures, graphics and fact-filled sidebars, Be Prepared! will help young readers to better understand and show compassion for those with Autism Spectrum Disorder and inspire them to learn more about the weather. There’s even a weather quiz at the back of the book to test readers’ knowledge once they’ve completed the book.

Frankie’s inspirational story shows us all that when we’re passionate about something we can turn that passion into a way to help others. And by watching Frankie’s YouTube videos, we can all be better prepared when the weather turns foul and storms, tornadoes, blizzards or earthquakes hit. Be Prepared! would make an excellent addition to school and classroom libraries and for that budding meteorologist in your midst.

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

Kate’s Ring
written by Donna Grassby
Red Deer Press, 2018
978-0-88995-567-7 (pb) $14.95
for Grades 5 to 8
Historical Fiction | Canada | Cape Breton | Family | Tragedy | Alcoholism | Hope

In the impoverished, industrial Cape Breton town of Whitney Pier in the 1920s, 13-year-old Kate struggles to hold her embattled family together. Her mother has tuberculosis and her alcoholic father is rarely home, leaving Kate to shoulder much of the responsibility for managing her five younger siblings. Thrust into a role not of her choosing, she must navigate prickly family relationships and adult problems until tragedy threatens everything she holds dear.

Kate’s hopes and dreams are simple enough. She wants her mother to get well, her father to stop drinking and her extended family to get along. She wants to attend school and spend time with her friend. And she wants a ring — a token of growing up and becoming a young woman. But, in one heart-breaking moment, everything changes and Kate must face the unthinkable. In that moment, Kate learns she is not alone and that when faced with tragedy, community and family pull together.

Donna Grassby’s debut novel draws a vivid picture of a hard-scrabble East Coast community and a family on the ragged edge of total breakdown. Like all good historical fiction, this story provides a window into another time and place while also illuminating how many issues and struggles persist across time. The troubles Kate faces — alcoholism, family discord, illness, poverty and her own sense of powerlessness — will resonate with many young readers.

History is so much more than names and dates, it is the texture of the everyday life of ordinary people. This novel eloquently depicts the reality of life in Whitney Pier for Kate and her family, but never becomes mired in bitterness or despair. Kate’s difficult story is punctuated with love, resilience, kindness and, most importantly, hope.

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

The Lotteryys More or Less
(The Lotteryys, Book 2)
written by Emma Donoghue
illustrated by Caroline Hadilaksono
HarperCollins Publishers, 2018
978-1-4434-4560-3 (hc) $19.99
978-1-4434-4562-7 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 4 to 8
Fiction | Diversity | Family | Christmas | Ice Storms | Resiliency

It’s the 21st of December and Sumac eagerly anticipates all of the family traditions that these next few days will hold. But things do not go according to plan. First, their couch surfer, Luiz, suffers an eye injury that means he will have to stay with the Lotteryys for an extra week. Then, PapaDum and Sic are unable to get home to Toronto for Christmas. And widespread power outages wreak further havoc throughout the city, and at Camelottery. Sumac valiantly tries to keep her big, boisterous family on track, but nothing seems to be working out right. Yet, in typical Lottery fashion, Sumac’s moms and dads and assorted siblings find a way to deal with each new roadblock, making the best of the situation.

In this second story about the Lotteryys, we are again transported into the delightfully chaotic world of this large, loving clan. Sumac adores her sprawling, unconventional family, but also cherishes their special customs and routines, and takes comfort in having some sense of structure in place. Readers will empathize with Sumac’s frustration and disappointment when an ice storm throws everything off-kilter. As in the first book, Sumac is an earnest and sympathetic protagonist, even when she behaves badly (and is ashamed). The entire cast of characters and their relationships with one another are winsome and heartwarming. While this family may feel too good to be true, this only adds to the sense of idyllic charm and wholesomeness that these books exude. Warm, touchingly humorous and insightful, this is a holiday story that can be savoured any time.

Lisa Doucet is Co-Manager of Woozles in Halifax.
NEW FROM COTEAU BOOKS

New mystery novels for grades six and up from two of Canada's most prolific, award-winning children's authors.

Download FREE study guides for both books at www.coteaubooks.com!
Nix wants to believe. And he has a story to tell. Yet his efforts are to no avail. The man-people knows tricks, too, and he very nearly wins an enormous stack of incredible prizes... until he loses them all at the very last moment. After Rupert returns to his regular life, various members of the Rivers family, feeling pangs of guilt that Rupert lost all the prizes, start to randomly whisk him away on unusual outings. Then, just when he finally begins to believe that he has made friends with this odd cast of characters, they vanish. But not before Rupert comes to some important realizations.

Once again, Polly Horvath has created a refreshingly offbeat and original tale that provides readers with an exhilarating adventure, but still manages to leave room for thoughtful reflection. While most of the adults in the book are well-meaning but self-absorbed in a caricaturish sort of way, they are nonetheless entertaining and lead both Rupert and young readers to more profound observations about life and fortune and family. His numerous escapades with the various Rivers family members are delightfully fantastical and yet revelatory. Quirky and compelling, Horvath’s latest offering satisfies on many levels.

Living with his very large family in the very poorest part of Steelville, Ohio, Rupert Brown tries to keep a low profile. And he tries not to complain, even when he is cold and hungry. So when he finds himself unexpectedly spending Christmas Day with the Rivers, the richest family in all of Steelville, it comes as quite a shock indeed. Rupert relishes the unusual experience of being warm and savouring a decadent meal, and he very nearly wins an enormous stack of incredible prizes... until he loses them all at the very last moment. After Rupert returns to his regular life, various members of the Rivers family, feeling pangs of guilt that Rupert lost all the prizes, start to randomly whisk him away on unusual outings. Then, just when he finally begins to believe that he has made friends with this odd cast of characters, they vanish. But not before Rupert comes to some important realizations.

Once again, Polly Horvath has created a refreshingly offbeat and original tale that provides readers with an exhilarating adventure, but still manages to leave room for thoughtful reflection. While most of the adults in the book are well-meaning but self-absorbed in a caricaturish sort of way, they are nonetheless entertaining and lead both Rupert and young readers to more profound observations about life and fortune and family. His numerous escapades with the various Rivers family members are delightfully fantastical and yet revelatory. Quirky and compelling, Horvath’s latest offering satisfies on many levels.

“‘We’ll be Friends Forever, won’t we, Pooh?’ asked Piglet. ‘Even longer,’ Pooh answered.” — A.A. Milne

The story of how a bear cub named Winnie became the inspiration for A.A. Milne’s books about a stuffed bear called Winnie-the-Pooh has become a part of Canadian mythology. In Winnie’s Great War, Lindsay Mattick and Josh Greenhut expand on Mattick’s picture book, Finding Winnie, to bring Winnie’s full story to life. The tale is a captivating and satisfying imagining of Winnie’s journey from tiny cub in the Canadian wilderness to beloved mascot of the Second Canadian Infantry Brigade, and then to star attraction at the London Zoo.

Grounded in historical fact, this is a buoyant, thoughtful narrative with strong themes of friendship, courage, loyalty and kindness. Winnie is a very nice bear who makes plenty of animal friends in her travels, first in the Woods, then on her adventures with Harry Colebourn and later at the zoo. But, at its heart, this is a story about the deep and abiding friendship between Harry and Winnie.

At times whimsical and even laugh-out-loud funny, the book does not shy away from some of the sadder or difficult moments — Winnie’s mother is shot by a hunter; horses are killed in a stampede during training camp; Winnie survives zeppelin attacks on London; not all the men of Winnie’s unit survive the war. These poignant moments add depth to the story, and the book could well serve as a gentle introduction to the First World War for younger readers.

Sophia Blackall’s irresistible black-and-white sketches complement the story perfectly, and the back matter includes a treasure trove of photographs from the Colebourn archives. All in all, this engaging little novel would make a wonderful read-aloud in the classroom or at bedtime.

Lisa Doucet

Tracey Schindler
Since the waters rose and their parents disappeared, Lori has been making ends meet for herself and her younger brother, Ben. Lori isn't sure if she is even real, only that a monster lives within her. When a job has her cross paths with five caged teens, Lori’s secluded life with Ben is put in danger. But this odd group might be able to help her unravel the enigma that surrounds the Lake Foundation after the world begins to forget.

Science fiction writer Patrick Weekes stretches the minds of his readers with an interdimensional tale about friendship, finding strength in our differences and kicking good old-fashioned, pus-spewing monster butt. With a slight, fantastical comedic edge, Feeder explores such topics as ableism and neurodiversity, and features transgender and queer characters.

Reading Lori’s story sometimes feels like it requires a physics degree with a minor in mythology due to a complicated villain plot, but at its heart it takes a very diverse group of teens and brings them together to form a new family. Together they must find answers to what the world can no longer remember, and fix it with the help of the special powers bestowed upon them by the ‘miracoral.’

Part action/adventure and part coming of age, Feeder hooks its readers with engaging characters and a challenging storyline.

Amy Mathers writes book reviews and hosts a podcast interviewing Canadian authors who write for teens.
22  
**TEEN REVIEWS**

*Be My Love*
Kit Pearson

*Body Swap*
Sylvia McNicoll

*The Caged Queen*  
(Iskari, Book 2)  
Kristen Ciccarelli

*Chicken Girl*
Heather Smith

*Dark of the West*  
(Class Alliance, Book 1)  
Joanna Hathaway

*The Divided Earth*  
(The Nameless City, Book 3)  
Faith Erin Hicks

*Fifteen Point Nine*
Holly Dobbie

*Game of Secrets*
Kim Foster

*Hide and Shriek*  
(Orca Soundings)  
Alison Hughes

*The House of One Thousand Eyes*
Michelle Barker

*In the Buff*  
(Orca Currents)  
Vicki Grant

*Julia Unbound*  
(The Witch’s Child, Book 3)  
Catherine Egan

*Kens*
Raziel Reid

*Learning to Breathe*
Janice Lynn Mather

*Murder at the St. Alice*
Becky Citra

---

*My Body My Choice: The Fight For Abortion Rights*  
(Orca Issues)  
Robin Stevenson

*Sleight*
Jennifer Sommersby

*The Spoon Asylum*
Caroline Misner

*The Story of My Face*
Leanne Baugh

*The Third Act*
John Wilson

*Treason’s Edge*  
(The Tyon Collective, Book 3)  
Susan M. MacDonald

---

*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*  
(Pop Classics)  
Jason Rekulak, Joss Whedon, Kim Smith

*Feeder*
Patrick Weekes

*How to Catch a Bear who Loves to Read*
Andrew Katz, Juliana Léveille-Trudel, Joseph Sherman

*I Am Small*
Qin Leng

*Mustafa*
Marie-Louise Gay

*Kate’s Ring*
Donna Grassby

*The Lotterys More or Less*  
(The Lotterys, Book 2)  
Emma Donoghue, Caroline Hadilaksono

*Very Rich*
Polly Horvath

*Wicked Nix*
Lena Coakley, Jaime Zollars

*Winnie’s Great War*
Lindsay Mattick, Josh Greenhut, Sophie Blackall

---

**WE RECOMMEND**

*Africville*
Shauntay Grant, Eva Campbell

*Anna at the Art Museum*
Hazel Hutchins, Gail Herbert, Lil Crump

*Ara the Star Engineer*
Komal Singh, Ipek Konak

*Be Prepared! The Frankie MacDonald Guide to Life, the Weather, and Everything*
Frankie MacDonald, Sarah Sawler

---

Reviews from *Canadian Children’s Book News* are indexed in the Children’s Literature Comprehensive Database, Gale Online Databases, ProQuest and EBSCO Publishing.  
Visit www.bookcentre.ca
GET INSIGHT. GET WRITING ADVICE.

GET PUBLISHED

LEARN FROM THE EXPERTS ON HOW TO TAKE YOUR CHILDREN’S BOOK FROM DREAM TO REALITY

HOSTED BY THE CANADIAN CHILDREN'S BOOK CENTRE

FEATURING: CARY FAGAN, AUTHOR | MELANIE FLORENCE, AUTHOR | LYNNE MISSEN, PUBLISHER | SEMAREH AL-HILLAL, PUBLISHER | MARIA MARTELLA, BOOKSELLER

SAT MAY 25 2019
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
40 ORCHARD VIEW BLVD.
ROOM 224
TORONTO, ON

LIMITED REGISTRATION
$100

REGISTER NOW AT BOOKCENTRE.CA/SUPER
Spring has sprung at tinlids
where you’ll find the very best books for schools and libraries K-12

ADVANCED PICTURE BOOKS
SCIENCE NON-FICTION
PICTURE BOOKS
GRAPHIC NOVELS
EARLY CHAPTER BOOKS MAGIC
FRENCH EASY READS
CANADIAN
SOCIAL STUDIES FICTION
CRAFT BOOKS
GARDENING

Tinlids is an independent Canadian owned business.
We care about quality. We care about diversity and we care about our role in creating a strong Canadian book industry.
tinlids.ca