INSPIRATION FROM THE EDGE
How Coastal Regions Shape Canadian Stories

Summer Reading Suggestions

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Canada’s Hans Christian Andersen
Award Nominees

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As summer approaches and the weather gets warmer, adults scramble to come up with fun and exciting ways to keep children busy. If you’re a teacher looking for fabulous books to recommend to your students to read over the summer or a parent looking for some audio books for those weekend trips to campsites or cottages, we’ve got you covered. This issue is chock full of titles that the children in your life will love. Tracey Schindler writes about Canadian authors, books and series to introduce to children over the summer, tells us about some exciting library programs across the country and lists some independent bookstores to visit. She has recommended picture books for the youngest of readers, series for those junior- and intermediate-aged children and numerous authors for teen readers to discover. And for even more great recommendations, Meghan Howe, the CCBC’s Library Coordinator, has provided a list of summer-related titles in our “Bookmark!” column. These stories take place at camps, resorts and the seaside during summer holidays.

Be sure to read “Inspiration from the Edge” where Marylynn Miller Oke has a round-table discussion with five authors who live on Canada’s East and West Coasts. Dawn Baker, Deborah Hodge, Sylvia Gunnery, Jessica Scott Kerrin and Andrea Spalding tell us about the coastal areas they live in and share some insight into how that impacts their work. A second part to this piece will be in the fall issue when Marylynn chats with authors who live in Northern Canada’s coastal region.

IBBY Canada has nominated Isabelle Arsenault as the illustrator and Kenneth Oppel as the author they have selected for consideration by the 2018 Hans Christian Andersen Jury. To honour these two nominees, we have provided a profile of each individual so our readers can get to know them better. Our congratulations go to both Isabelle and Kenneth. And we are pleased to provide you with over 35 reviews of the latest Canadian titles in our “Red Leaf Literature” and “We Recommend” sections.

Happy Summer Reading!

Sandra O’Brien

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Summer
A TIME TO RECONNECT WITH BOOKS
BY TRACEY SCHINDLER

My own childhood memories of summer — of cottage getaways, car trips and family vacations — always include memories of a favourite book and the simple joy of reading. Summer is a time for kids to read without the pressure of school, to read for pure pleasure, to pick up a book just for themselves. The lazy days of summer provide the perfect opportunity for kids of all ages to disconnect from screens and reconnect with books. Books go everywhere: sailboats and canoes, cottage docks and camp cabins, backyards and parks — with the added bonus that books don’t need power cords, outlets, Wi-Fi or data packages!

There are so many fun ways to incorporate reading into your summer schedule. If your family is planning a car trip, pick up or download some audio books everyone can enjoy. While audio books can help give reluctant or non-readers a taste for great stories, they also introduce all kids to books above their reading level, teach critical listening skills and capture the wonder of listening to stories being told by talented storytellers. Classics like Anne of Green Gables by Lucy Maud Montgomery, Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang by Mordecai Richler or Farley Mowat’s Owls in the Family are great choices for shared family listening. If your family enjoys a good mystery, check out Gordon Korman’s Swindle (the first title in an eight-book series of the same name) or his newest series, Masterminds. For a fantasy/sci-fi adventure with lots of laughs, try the fabulous Adventurer’s Guide to Successful Escapes by Wade Albert White. Great books transcend age differences, provide common topics of discussion for parents and kids and will make the miles go by faster.

If you find yourself visiting a new city or town this summer, why not check out a bookstore. They’re great places to stop, stretch and find something new to read! In Halifax, Woozles is Canada’s oldest children’s bookstore and is well worth a visit. Drawn & Quarterly in Montreal has an extensive selection of graphic novels; while in Toronto, Mabel’s Fables offers many summer events. Further north, in North Bay, you’ll find a terrific selection of picture books at Gulliver’s Quality Books and Toys. Half of The Owl’s Nest in Calgary is dedicated to children (but adults might find a little something there, too), and Audrey’s Bookstore in Edmonton also has a fantastic children’s collection. If you happen to be in Vancouver, try Humpty Dumpty Books & Music located in Granville Market; or, on Vancouver Island, head to The Children’s Bookshop in Sidney or check out Munro Books, located in a stunning heritage building in the heart of Victoria’s Old Town. Beyond knowledgeable staff who can help you pick out that next great read, many of these independent bookstores are sure to offer drop-in summer activities or story times, perfect for a short diversion from a long drive.

Staying closer to home, or just hanging out at a cottage for the summer, has its advantages, too! Libraries — in large urban centres, in small towns and in rural communities — offer fantastic reading programs that encourage and support children’s literacy. Across Canada, the theme for the 2017 TD Summer Reading Club is “Canada,” a perfect tie-in to the ongoing celebration of our country’s 150th birthday. This reading club, also available in French, allows kids to track all the books they read, get stickers for their progress and attend many fun, free programs at local libraries. From coast to coast, public libraries also offer unique and varied programs for kids and teens.
throughout the summer. The Vancouver Public Library offers a summer Writing and Book Camp for kids 11-16. The Brampton Public Library has an innovative teen summer reading challenge with amazing prizes — last summer one lucky winner was awarded a lunch date with Kenneth Oppel! In the picturesque town of Lumsden, Newfoundland, the library offers a Storybook Walk during the town’s summer festival — kids get to listen to a story while outside participating in a fun, interactive walk. So, no matter where you live, or spend your summer, your local library is a great place to hang out, whether for story times, engaging in literacy-related programs or just picking up some new summer reads.

Summer is a key time to encourage early literacy and help youngsters get ready for kindergarten or the next grade... especially the transition from kindergarten to grade one. Joel Sutherland, Children’s & Youth Services Librarian at the Georgina Public Library and author of some of the Haunted Canada books, believes in the value of summer reading. This June, library staff will visit all of Georgina’s schools to get kids excited about the library’s summer reading club. And, for the sesquicentennial, Canadian children’s books at the library will get a maple leaf sticker! From picture books to early chapter books, Canadian choices are plentiful. Picture book favourites include Marie-Louise Gay’s books about the high-spirited Stella and her slightly apprehensive brother, Sam — Stella: Star of the Sea, Stella: Fairy of the Forest or Stella: Princess of the Sky. The Sandcastle Contest, Alligator Baby, Moose and Mud Puddle are just a few Robert Munsch titles for fun summer reading. Or how about Dennis Lee’s Alligator Pie, Garbage Delight or Melvis and Elvis. There are also some fantastic new Canadian picture books sure to fit the bill. Pick up In the Red Canoe by Leslie A. Davidson for a magical canoe trip with a young girl and her grandfather as they explore the quiet beauty of a lake. Snuggle up and read Chris Hadfield and Kate Fillion’s The Darkest Dark to discover how Canada’s foremost astronaut learned not to be afraid of the dark — then go outside to explore the night sky! Jon Klassen’s picture book trilogy (I Want My Hat Back, This Is Not My Hat and We Found a Hat) is sure to tickle funny bones and be read over and over again. There are also plenty of terrific early chapter books that are perfect for kids who are beyond easy readers but are not yet ready for junior fiction. The Orca Echoes collection offers a wonderful selection of newer titles, including Batcat and the Seven Squirrels by Eric Walters, Not For Sale and Blackberry Juice by Sara Cassidy and Lark Holds the Key by Natasha Deen. Popular early chapter series include Canadian Flyers by Frieda Wishinsky (ideal for reading during Canada’s sesquicentennial), The Magical Animal Adoption Agency by Kallie George and Binky the Space Cat, a series of hilarious graphic novels by Ashley Spires.

This summer, engage reluctant readers with graphic novels that offer fast-paced, often humorous and high-energy storylines in an accessible format. The graphic novel universe is large and diverse. Scott Robins, Children’s Services Specialist at the Toronto Public Library and co-author of A Parent’s Guide to the Best Kids’ Comics, makes these suggestions for teen readers: The Unbeatable Squirrel Girl Beats Up the Marvel Universe by Ryan North and Erica Henderson, Snotgirl Volume 1: Green Hair Don’t Care by Bryan Lee O’Malley and Leslie Hung and This One Summer by Mariko and Jillian Tamaki. Other title possibilities include SuperMutant Magic Academy by Jillian Tamaki, Norah McClintock’s I Witness or Nothing Could Possibly Go Wrong by Prudence Shen and Faith Erin Hicks.

For junior / intermediate readers, Scott recommends The Nameless City; also by Faith Erin Hicks, the first title in a breathtaking new fantasy series. Other options include the popular Jellaby series by Kean Soo, about a lonely girl who befriends a purple monster. Soo has also written the March Grand Prix series with three full-throttle stories starring March — a hare who sets out to become the world’s greatest race car driver. In the Sam & Friends Mystery series, by Mary Labatt and Jo Rioux, canine detective Sam and her human sidekicks, Jennie and Beth, solve spooky mysteries. Alex A.’s Super Agent Jon Le Bon series offers six books featuring the wacky but lovable hero, Jon, who is definitely not your average superhero. Meet two improbable pals in Doug Savage’s Laser Moose and Rabbit Boy; who use their powers to battle aliens, mutants and even a cyborg porcupine in their quest to keep the forest safe. Finally, Viminy Crowe’s Comic Book by Richard Scrimger and Marthe Jocelyn is a laugh-out-loud comic book / novel cross-over that is sure to be a hit!

Hi-lo stories (high interest, lower reading level) are also a great way to get more hesitant readers interested in books. Short, action-packed stories written by amazing Canadian authors are books that really resonate with junior and teen readers. High Interest Publishing has a number of series for a variety of age levels. Orca Sports, Currents and Limelights are geared to junior readers, while Lorimer’s SideStreets and Podium Sports Academy, as well as Orca Soundings will appeal to teens looking for a gripping story at a manageable reading level.

The summer also provides kids with the time to binge read a favourite author or series! There are numerous Canadian junior / intermediate fiction series to choose from with a broad
range of genres and reading levels, from the youngest junior fiction reader to readers ready to make the leap to young adult fiction.

For humour and hijinks, introduce readers to Gordon Korman’s classic series, MacDonald Hall, or try out Sarah Myrowksi’s fun fractured-fairy-tale series, Whatever After. A Year in the Life of a Total and Complete Genius, a newer series by Stacey Matson, is also sure to provide a lot of laugh-out-loud moments. For mystery fans, why not try Eric Wilson’s Canadian Mysteries, featuring two young detectives solving mysteries with a distinctly Canadian flavour. For a supernatural mystery, check out The Grim Hill series by Linda DeMeulemeester; or consider Shane Peacock’s The Boy Sherlock Holmes, six enthralling tales about the exploits of a teenaged Sherlock Holmes in Victorian London.

There are plenty of choices for adventure seekers, too! Eric Walters’ new trilogy, Rule of Three, is a dystopian adventure set on the outskirts of Toronto after the power goes out. Kelly Armstrong teamed up with Melissa Marr to write The Blackwell Pages, a trilogy in which three kids descended from Norse gods must save the world. Kenneth Oppel’s series Airborn provides exciting exploits with a distinctly steampunk flavour, while Submarine Outlaw, written by Philip Roy, offers eight novels full of nautical thrills for those readers transitioning to young adult fiction. For more maritime adventure and historical fiction, try two gritty seafaring trilogies by Iain Lawrence — High Seas and Curse of Jolly Stone. Older readers ready for a darker adventure might try Arthur Slade’s steampunk thriller series, The Hunchback Assignments or Orca’s Seven, The Series, which revolves around seven teens who must complete dangerous tasks set out in their mysterious grandfather’s will. This series includes sequels AND prequels — that means 21 books by seven of Canada’s best children’s authors! Orca has also published a series entitled Secrets, set in the ‘60s with female protagonists. In this series, seven orphaned girls set out to discover their origins after their orphanage burns down.

For historical fiction enthusiasts, there are also some great choices. Scholastic Canada publishes two excellent Canada-focused series written by some of Canada’s best-known authors. Dear Canada and I Am Canada invite readers into the hands of kids this summer are limited only by your imagination. Whether listening to audio books on a road trip, setting aside time to turn off electronics and read as a family, heading to the local library or a bookstore, or just snuggling up for story time in a tent, at a cottage or on your couch, make reading an integral part of your summer. The time spent reading a wonderful book is always time well spent.

Tracey Edgar Schindler is a book reviewer and former teacher living in Bethany, Ontario.
Claude Aubry Award Recipients
The Claude Aubry Award was established in 1981, in honour of the late Claude Aubry, who served as director of the Ottawa Public Library. The biennial award is given to individuals for distinguished service within the field of children’s literature. This year’s recipients of the award are Gillian O’Reilly, author and former editor of Canadian Children’s Book News, and Daniel Sernine, editor-in-chief of Lurelu, the only Québécois review for children’s literature, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

Gillian O’Reilly is a professional editor with over 30 years of experience in the Canadian book industry. She has been a passionate supporter of Canadian children’s literature who is eager to spread the word about the wealth of talent in our country. Gillian is the author or Slangalicious, published in 2004, and co-author of The Great Number Rumble: A Story of Math in Surprising Places with Cora Lee, which was just reissued in 2016. Gillian was the editor of Canadian Children’s Book News for 20 years, has held volunteer roles with CANSCAIP and Friends of the Osborne Collection and has been a juror member for several awards.

Daniel Sernine has written numerous novels for adults and teens and has penned many articles and short stories for textbooks, comic books, magazines, anthologies and collections. Born in Montreal, Daniel completed a Master of Library Science from the University of Montreal and has been the editor of the highly regarded children’s and youth literature magazine, Lurelu, since 1991. Focusing on French-language books published in Canada and French translations of English-Canadian works, Lurelu is an important resource for schools, universities, libraries and daycare centres in Quebec and across Canada.

Summer at The Children’s Book Bank
In addition to offering their regular daily story time and the chance for visitors to browse the shelves for free books, The Children’s Book Bank is hosting a variety of engaging literacy activities this summer. Look for the launch of “Reading in the Park” this July with weekly story times in beautiful Regent Park along with visits from their mini book bank. Concerned about your children’s reading skills over the summer? Sign them up for the free Summer Reading Program, which provides a fun, guided way to keep children reading.

Finally, watch for their Canada 150 celebration events, including chances to participate in contests about Canada’s best children’s literature.

To learn more about what is going on at The Children’s Book Bank and how to support them, visit their website at childrensbookbank.com or Facebook page facebook.com/childrensbookbank.

INDUSTRY

IN MEMORIAM
Harry Black, 1934—2017
Harry was an author, an illustrator and an international aid worker. He demonstrated compassion toward others in his career choices, including his work with the Canadian Red Cross, his 26 years as Executive Director of UNICEF Canada and his post-retirement work with the International Council for Iodine Deficiency Disorders. In 2002, Harry was made an Officer of the Order of Canada for his work with UNICEF to improve living conditions for children in developing countries, leading disaster-and famine-relief projects worldwide. We extend our condolences to Harry’s family and friends.

The Canadian Children’s Book Centre would also like to announce the creation of The Harry Black Picture Book Award for the best French-language Canadian book for children. The award comes with a $5,000 cash prize and will be awarded in Montreal at this year’s Prix TD Gala in October. The Canadian Children’s Book Centre is both honoured and proud to coordinate this new and exciting award.

The award will be given to outstanding books of the picture book genre in which the author and illustrator achieve artistic and literary unity. The book must give equal consideration to the text or storyline (in the case of wordless books) and the visual material, and there should be a seamless integration of text/storyline, illustration and design.

To be eligible, a book must have been published between January 1 and December 31, 2016. Both the author and illustrator must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada. The book should be aimed at young readers aged three to eight years old. Eligible genres are fiction, non-fiction and poetry.

For a complete list of eligibility requirements, please go to www.centredulivrejeunesse.ca. Submissions must have been received by Friday, May 5, 2017.

Patricia Bow, 1947—2017
Patricia was born in Ottawa into a family that descended from Scottish, Irish and English pioneers and had a fascination for history. As an undergraduate, she went on to study history at Carleton University in Ottawa and then took a graduate degree in library science at the University of Toronto.

After moving to the Kitchener-Waterloo area, Patricia received a diploma in journalism and went to work for the New Hamburg Independent and the University of Waterloo communications office. Patricia also wrote and published more than 20 novels, full of ghosts and dragons. Best known, perhaps, was The Bone Flute, a finalist for the Silver Birch and Red Cedar Awards.

“My mother was my first editor. She encouraged me and helped me to become a better writer. Her proofreading skills were legendary, but she also could take apart a plot and offer great suggestions,” says James Bow. “And she was proud of me. That meant everything. I will miss all of that, a lot.”

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

Gina (Jean) Calleja, 1928-2017
It is with deep sadness that we announce that Canadian children’s author/illustrator Gina Calleja passed away suddenly on March 7, 2017, due to complications from lymphoma. Born in Lowestoft, England, Gina studied at Reading University Department of Fine Arts and the Slade...
School of Fine Art, University of London. She taught in England for several years before immigrating to Canada in 1958.

Gina’s works included Peas Again for Lunch, Spaghetti Word Race, Those Words, Toto Hates Purple, Wizzo and the Cookie Babies, Bloor and Christie: The Mystery of the Bright Red Ribbons and Great Food for Happy Kids.

Gina is survived by her husband of 58 years, Joseph, her daughter Anna, son-in-law Allan and grandsons Marcel and Antoine. Our condolences go out to Gina’s family and friends.

Norah McClintock, 1958—2017

Born and raised in Pointe Claire, Quebec, Norah wrote over 60 books for young readers, including middle grade, YA and graphic novels. Her popular mystery series include the Chloe and Levesque Mysteries, the Robyn Hunter Mysteries, the Mike and Riel Mysteries and the Ryan Dooley Mysteries. Throughout her extensive writing career, Norah won the Crime Writers of Canada’s Arthur Ellis Award five times.

“What I loved about Norah McClintock’s work was how seriously she took mystery writing. The plots were so well crafted; the voices and situations were so authentic and believable. That is not always easy to do in mysteries for young people,” says Gillian O’Reilly. “It is not surprising that she won five Arthur Ellis Awards in eight years. And I think she set the bar for many of the other fine mystery books we see today.”

Norah is survived by her husband, two daughters and a grandson. Our condolences go out to Norah’s family and friends.

Richard Wagamese, 1955—2017

Born in Northwestern Ontario, Richard was famous for his reflections on the legacy of the residential school system. His novel Indian Horse was a finalist in CBC’s Canada Reads in 2013, and won the First Nation Communities Read Award for 2013/14. Richard began his writing career in 1979, as a journalist. In 1991, he became the first Indigenous writer to win a National Newspaper Award for column writing. He also won the George Ryga Award for Social Awareness in Literature for his 2011 memoir, One Story, One Song, the Canadian Authors Association Award for Fiction for his novel Dream Wheels in 2007, and the Alberta Writers Guild Best Novel Award for his debut novel, Keeper’n Me in 1994. Richard’s voice will be sadly missed in the literary world. Our condolences go out to Richard’s family and friends.
There are hundreds of Canadian magazines in stores now. Don’t say we didn’t warn you.

See two worlds collide: CanadasMagazineStore.ca/video
Isabelle Arsenault
Illustrator Extraordinaire!

BY SANDRA O’BRIEN

If you’ve ever read a book illustrated by Isabelle Arsenault, you will immediately recognize and appreciate the sensitivity and finesse of her style. With its softened edges and muted colours, her work appeals to both children and adults and has gained her international recognition. With numerous books to her credit, she has illustrated picture books and graphic novels in both English and French and has recently published her first self-written title.

Isabelle has won the prestigious Governor General’s Literary Award for Children’s Literature — Illustration three times. In 2004, she won for Le cœur de monsieur Gaugin (written by Marie-Danielle Croteau); in 2012, for Virginia Wolf (written by Kyo Maclear) and in 2013, for Jane, le renard & moi (written by Fanny Britt). Isabelle was also a finalist for a Governor General’s Literary Award in 2008 (My Letter to the World and Other Poems by Emily Dickinson), and in 2011 (Migrant by Maxine Trottier). She has twice had picture books named to the New York Times Best Illustrated Books of the Year list (Migrant and Jane, the Fox & Me) and won IBBY Canada’s Elizabeth Mrazik-Cleaver Canadian Picture Book Award in 2012, for Virginia Wolf. A few other titles Isabelle has illustrated include Cloth Lullaby: The Woven Life of Louise Bourgeois, You Belong Here, Alpha, Once Upon a Northern Night, That Night’s Train, Spork and Louis parmi les spectres.

Cloth Lullaby: The Woven Life of Louise Bourgeois (written by Amy Novesky) won the prestigious BolognaRagazzi Award this year for its in-depth study of art, its history and its present. This special category of the award highlights the care and commitment that many publishers all over the world dedicate to this genre of books. As stated in the release, “Art is universal and children’s publishing has an opportunity to safeguard, preserve and promote awareness of humanity’s artistic legacy.”

The Hans Christian Andersen Nominating Committee of IBBY Canada has nominated Arsenault as the illustrator they have selected for consideration by the 2018 Hans Christian Andersen Jury. They feel that “Her exceptional contribution to the literary and artistic heritage of children’s literature in Canada and internationally makes her a deserving and outstanding candidate.” The official announcement of nominees for the 2018 Hans Christian Andersen award took place on April 3, 2017, at the Bologna Children’s Book Fair. The jury will
hold its meeting in January 2018, after which the shortlist will be announced immediately. The winners will be announced on the first day of the Bologna Children’s Book Fair in 2018. Isabelle chats with us here about her work, her inspiration and how she came to be an illustrator of children’s literature.

**When and how did you discover your artistic ability?**
When I was five or six years old, I won a drawing contest in my local newspaper for Christmas. It’s probably then that I had a hint at my artistic ability; but moreover, I guess that I understood that I really enjoyed drawing and I could use my ability to create something unique.

**Where did you study?**
I studied graphic design and illustration at Université du Québec à Montréal from 1999 to 2001. Before that, I went to Cégep du Vieux-Montréal and studied fine arts.

**What other authors or illustrators inspire you?**
I get inspiration from illustrators from the picture book world such as Carson Ellis, Jon Klassen and Beatrice Alemagna. Also, I discovered that in the graphic novel world there was a lot of experimentation, and a few artists like Dominique Goblet, Brecht Evens and Manuele Fior are really pushing the boundaries of visual narrative along with innovative use of traditional techniques.

**Why did you decide to work in the field of children’s literature?**
I worked for a few years as an editorial illustrator with very overwhelming timeframes and very short deadlines. I wanted something different, to take more time to develop my style and explore the narrative input I could have. So I started slowly with my first picture book, and then it took maybe two years to completely get rid of the editorial creation and work full-time in the book world creating picture books and graphic novels.

**Do you find writing as rewarding and / or challenging as illustrating?**
I believe illustrating is also a narrative process, especially in the graphic novel world where I had total freedom to deploy a world of its own with Jane, the Fox & Me. But, I must say — having just published my first story that I wrote myself (Colette’s Lost Pet) — it just opened a wider world of creation and gave me the confidence that I can fully take charge in my future creations. I think writing is a very different process, and, since it’s new to me, it is all very refreshing and exciting as opposed to illustrating, where I must explore deeper into my style during each new book project. It is a more demanding and physical exercise.

**How does the process of illustrating your own work differ from illustrating the work of other authors?**
I guess that I feel that I can use more personal input for inspiration. In Colette’s Lost Pet, I was inspired by my two young boys and the back alley behind our house in the Mile End neighbourhood in Montreal. I can control the content and get it in sync with my surroundings. But I’m still very much inspired by the words of others, since they bring me to new places, to worlds other than mine, which is sometimes interesting, too.

**Tell us what medium(s) you prefer to work in and why?**
I use pencil and eraser, it’s as simple as that. It’s pure and easygoing and it needs to stay true to the idea because, with as few tools as that, I feel that my ideas and direction need to have strong concepts.

**You have received many accolades for your work. How does it feel to add the Hans Christian Andersen Award nomination to that list?**
Well, it easily tops all those received earlier as it feels like an embodiment of my career to date. I feel very grateful for these recognitions as they are part of a whole: good stories and good publishing. An illustrator needs these elements to fully experience all the possibilities that relate to any project. I can also say that the most important element that made a big difference in my work and hence the recognition, was the freedom I got to do these books and develop my style into what it is now.

**Tell us about Colette’s Lost Pet and what inspired you to write this book?**
This book started with an image I did for research, showing a little girl looking at a poster of a lost bird. Then my agent suggested that it could be an interesting starting point for a story, and so I developed the plot around that girl and her missing parakeet based on imagination. I set the story in our neighbourhood and was inspired by my two kids and their friends playing in our back alley.

**When you are not writing or illustrating children’s books, what do you enjoy doing?**
I like spending time with my family in the country, something very simple and calm.
On Kenneth Oppel: An Interview

BY STEPHANIE DROR AND DR. ROBERT BITTNER

Every other year, the Canadian section of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) nominates an author and an illustrator that have made a lasting contribution to children’s literature in Canada. For the 2018 author nomination, IBBY Canada selected Kenneth Oppel. Oppel is a Canadian with an international audience; he has written over 28 books published in 26 countries in 24 languages. He is a Governor General’s Literary Award winner, and his books have been celebrated and enjoyed by Canadians of all ages, claiming over two dozen reader’s choice awards. His writing plunges readers into an atmosphere of buoyant adventure, taut suspense, heart-pounding propulsion and the formation of relationships between his memorable, multi-dimensional characters. The following is IBBY Canada’s interview with Kenneth Oppel.

When did you first realize you wanted to be an author and how did you go about it?

My first writerly achievement was learning how to type at seven years old. The task I set myself was to type out my father’s entire economics textbook on his old typewriter. I can’t help thinking now that the satisfaction I felt as I stacked my typewritten economics pages was a precursor of the pleasure I’d feel as a manuscript of my own grew and took shape.

Over two summer holidays when I was 14 and 15, I wrote a humorous story about a boy who loves video games, my latest obsession at the time. He discovers an alternate world beyond the screen, in which two argumentative spacemen pilot the ship he thought he himself was controlling.

While the story was certainly my own, I had found a new style to copy: Roald Dahl’s. I tried very consciously to emulate everything, from his British idioms to his manic energy and sense of the fantastic. It was pretty convincing — convincing enough to impress Roald Dahl himself, who had kindly read the story when it was passed on to him by a mutual family friend. He liked my story enough to recommend it to his own literary agent. They in turn sold it to Puffin Books in England, and Dutton in the United States, and Colin’s Fantastic Video Adventure, my first book, was published in 1985, over 30 years ago, just as I was graduating from high school. I’m sure I was quite insufferable.

What is your writing process and what is your favourite tip for young writers?

Readers — and not just young ones — sometimes imagine that ideas are rare and elusive things. An idea starts with a simple question. It doesn’t have to be particularly unusual or profound: *How did that crack get in the window? Why is that tree taller than the other ones? What does that worm taste like?* We’re all of us bombarded with questions every day. All a writer does — odd, strange people that we are — is ruminate over them — and write them down.

I typically spend months doing this, and when I think I have the general ingredients of a story, I outline. I try to write down all the major events in my story in chronological order. It starts off fairly orderly, but I work on these a long time,
THE WORD ON THE STREET
NATIONAL BOOK & MAGAZINE FESTIVAL

Halifax on September 16
Saskatoon on September 17
Lethbridge on September 23
Toronto on September 24

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TORONTO
Celebrate the TD Grade One Book Giveaway and the 2017 shortlist for the TD Canadian Children's Literature Award on TD KidStreet.
adding, taking away, asking more questions. Only when I think I have a decent beginning, middle — and maybe end — will I launch in and type those terrifying words: Chapter One.

Typically, I get stuck early on and hate everything I’ve written. Kids should never feel bad about getting stuck. It’s natural. What I do is think about the story and the characters some more, and often go back to the beginning and start afresh. I don’t always work chronologically. If I’m stuck in one place, I go to another.

The writing is sloppy, the characters are thin. There are huge plot holes. I try not to edit myself as I write. I try to write every sentence that comes to mind. Sometimes you have to write a lot of terrible sentences before the good ones come. And your best ideas will often come to you while you’re in the physical act of writing.

The only mistake you can make is not writing.

**What makes your work “Canadian”? Is your writing different than the broader North American style?**

Growing up in Canada in the ’60s and ’70s, my cultural, and especially literary, influences came from the UK (the largesse of a colonial heritage) and the US (the inevitability of sharing a border with a superpower). On TV I learned more about American history and current events than Canadian. Canadian literature (and especially children’s literature) had yet to achieve a critical mass. Certainly, there were not many artists celebrating Canada or mythologizing it.

Every writer is a literary chimera, birthed from so many influences. Perhaps as a Canadian writer my perspective is a little more global. I’ve written stories set in late 18th-century Switzerland (*This Dark Endeavour*), the wild west of the late 19th-century United States (*Every Hidden Thing*), as well as the late Victorian age in Canada (*The Boundless*) and Canada in the 1970s (*Half Brother*). Increasingly, I am interested in setting my stories in Canada because, as a smaller country (in terms of population, and economic power) dwarfed by larger ones, if we don’t tell our own stories, who will?

**From bats to bees to flying ships, giant trains and dinosaur bones, you have a broad range of topics and themes! What inspires you?**

I wrote *Airborn* after completing three books about bats. I loved my bats, but what a treat it was to write about humans again. They could eat food other than midges and mosquitoes, they wore clothing, they slept in beds — all this struck me as wonderfully novel.

Like *Airborn*, many of my books are inspired by things that fascinate me. Bats, chimps, trains and, in the case of *Every Hidden Thing*, dinosaurs — but really, the people who first discovered their bones.

What, I wondered, would it have been like to be that first person to dig up a massive dinosaur bone? Imagine the excitement, the torrent of questions: “What on earth have I discovered?” This was my Indiana Jones moment. I bought hiking boots, and a hat. The badlands terrain was like an ancient hidden world, literally sunken below prairie level, a world of buttes and ravines and coulees and rocks of astonishingly different textures and colours.

**Talk about some of this inspiration.**

The seed for my novel *Half Brother* was planted in my mind over 20 years ago, but didn’t germinate until late 2007, when I read the obituary for Washoe, an extraordinary chimpanzee who had learned over 350 words of American Sign Language. As a first-year undergrad at the University of Toronto, I’d read with fascination about Project Nim — a follow-up experiment to Washoe — in which a baby chimp was raised as a human child to determine whether chimps were capable of learning human language.

When I’d written my Silverwing series, I’d imbued the bats with human awareness and vocabulary. But what would it be like to tell a story with only the words Nim or Washoe had learned? The idea had a powerful appeal, but I decided that limiting myself to a 250-word vocabulary — heavy on nouns, and light on verbs — would probably create something that might generously be called brave and avant-garde; or ungenerously, an unreadable mess. Fortunately, it ended up being seen as the former.

**The Nest is an incredibly complex novel that has uncommonly dark themes for children. What stimulated this story?**

The biggest influence for *The Nest* was very personal: the birth of our third child 11 years ago. She was born with Down syndrome, and it really made me re-evaluate how we look at what normal is and what that means. Is it possible for anyone to be truly normal? Is it a certain model of behaviour we must all try to live up to? All of us have weaknesses, flaws, things that make us “less than.” It made me think about how we value people, and how we look at who’s worthy, who’s lovable. For sure I was drawing on my own experiences for the emotional core of this book, because at the beginning when you have a baby who’s “different,” there’s so much you don’t know. There’s surprise, there’s worry, there’s questioning about what her prospects were going to be.

**How do you get into the minds of your young protagonists? Do you feel you’re a kid at heart, does that help with characterization?**

I think it’s fair to say that the people who choose to write for young readers do so because they have a fascination with childhood and adolescence.

Our childhoods form such a relatively small portion of our lives, and yet they play a disproportionately large role in them. The experiences we have in our first 18 years don’t neatly dissolve into the past and disappear. They keep up. They run parallel with our day-to-day lives until we die. Whether we like it or not, childhood is probably behind most of our victories and screw-ups and feelings of fulfillment or despair.

There are plenty of adult books with child protagonists, but the trick of the children’s writer is to be able to leave your own skin and fully imagine yourself with a younger body and mind, moment by moment, and write about it without an adult sensibility, or retrospective commentary. It’s a tall order.
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INSPIRATION FROM THE EDGE

By Marylynn Miller Oke

Far more than a pretty setting, Canada’s latitudinal fringes play complex characters in the works of well-known authors. From the Atlantic to the Pacific, we discover how breath-taking landscapes and intriguing communities infiltrate many salt-laced tales and the creative process behind them.

FEATURED AUTHORS

Dawn Baker (DB)
Gander resident Dawn Baker has worked as an artist and children’s writer for more than two decades. Her work was shortlisted twice for the WANL Heritage and History Book Award. She served as a juror for the 2016 Governor General’s Literary Awards, participated in the 2015 TD Canadian Children’s Book Week Tour and was the 2016 Winterset Children’s Writer in Residence.

Sylvia Gunnery (SG)
Sylvia Gunnery lives at Crescent Beach on Nova Scotia’s South Shore with her partner Jim and a few rescued critters, including a bunny and a crow. She has given readings and presentations at schools, libraries and conferences in her own province and across Canada. Her newest YA novel, Road Signs That Say West, was launched in February at the Reading for the Love of It conference in Toronto.

Deborah Hodge (DH)
Deborah Hodge of Vancouver is the author of more than 25 books for children. Her recent book, West Coast Wild: A Nature Alphabet, illustrated by Karen Reczuch, was the winner of this year’s Information Book Award given by the Children’s Literature Roundtables of Canada.

Jessica Scott Kerrin (JSK)
Halifax-based Jessica Scott Kerrin is best known for her fiction books for boys, including the eight-book series called Martin Bridge, a trilogy called The Lobster Chronicles and two related mystery novels: The Spotted Dog Last Seen and The Missing Dog Is Spotted. Her latest novel, The Things Owen Wrote, will be published this fall, and her first picture book, The Better Tree Fort, will be published spring 2018.

Andrea Spalding (AS)
With a specialty in children’s literature, Andrea Spalding has authored over 30 books in a variety of genres, plays, films, radio and TV scripts and magazine articles. Her writing has earned her numerous awards, nominations and shortlists, notably Me and Mr. Mah, which was chosen for the Dalai Lama’s list of books that promote cultural tolerance and understanding. A resident of Pender Island, BC, she is also an artist, musician and avid traveller.
How does the experience of living on the coast influence your work?

**DB:** Living in Newfoundland and Labrador informs every aspect of my life. Our weather is as notorious as our scenery is glorious. I take care to observe and mentally document what I see every day. When I sit down to write, draw or paint, I can recall those images and the feelings associated with them. This is a deeply emotional place.

**SG:** The East Coast is deeply part of who I am, how I think and how I imagine. My stories and characters have their roots in this place. Beginning with my first Scholastic publication in 1984, I’ve intended my stories to take young readers into an East Coast experience. For me, it’s especially important for those who live here to see themselves in the pages of books.

**DH:** Living in Vancouver allows me to always feel close to nature. Being around nature gives me a sense of peace and calmness — qualities that make me a better writer.

**JSK:** The scenes in my head that play out in my stories are grounded in my East Coast experiences. These include place names, heritage sites, architecture and the weather. I’ve worked with curators, historians, artists and archivists, who all taught me to pay close attention to my surroundings, to be a vigilant interpreter.

**AS:** I am always inspired by my surroundings. When I lived on the prairies, I wrote *Finders Keepers* featuring the rolling landscape, constant wind and expansive blue skies. A new updated edition has been released by Dundurn. Now I’m on the West Coast, the smell of cedar trees and salt, grey skies and stunning vistas permeate my stories. Landscape is always a character in my books.

How do the distinct culture, language, tradition and landscape impact you?

**DB:** Newfoundland and Labrador culture, tradition and landscape feature prominently in each and every one of my children’s books. It’s what they are all about. I hope to reflect our province for the children who live here and to provide an introduction for those who do not.

**SG:** They’re always there, like the air I breathe. Books by other Atlantic writers are a reassurance of who I am and where I come from. Years ago, on a flight to Europe, I was re-reading Alistair MacLeod’s *As Birds Bring Forth* the Sun. MacLeod’s stories took me right back home. In my own writing, I have hoped to get even part way toward having that kind of effect on East Coast readers.

**DH:** I am always aware of the presence of nature with the ocean, mountains and forest nearby. Many of my books reflect this. My recent book, *West Coast Wild*, is set on the western edge of Vancouver Island, a pristine and magnificent place. It is home to a unique ecosystem where an ancient rainforest meets the sea and where all the animals living there (bears, whales, eagles, salmon and other marine creatures) are connected in an intricate web of life. It is a special place I wanted to share with young readers.

**JSK:** The landscape impacts me every minute of every day, as soon as I step outdoors. I’m surrounded by shipyards, fog-horns and historic cemeteries. In the summers, I sail up and down the eastern coast on our boat, aptly named *Cape Fear*.

**AS:** I live it, and my stories, though fiction, are always an extension of my life experiences. The thing I love most about Canada is that each place has its own traditions, local words, different landscape and wide variety of cultures. The richness of Canada is immense, and I cannot get enough of it.

Are any of the locales or characters of your stories based on people or places you know in your area?

**DB:** All of the locales in my stories are based on actual places. In *A Newfoundland Year*, some of the locations are Gros Morne, Gander, Eastport, Twillingate and St. John’s. It is no surprise these are places I frequent and love! The characters in my stories, for the most part, are fictitious. *A Newfoundland Adventure* is one exception. I tell the story of the Newfoundland pirate, Peter Easton, who was an actual historical figure, and the Irish princess, Sheila NaGeira, a famous legendary character.

**SG:** I borrow from people I know all the time, just bits and pieces to form a fictional character. It seems natural to imagine my characters in coastal settings such as the ones I experience every day. In *Game Face*, Jay’s grandfather, a retired lobster fisherman, says, “Tomorrow, there’ll be lotsa boats out there even before five. When you see their lights, you think they’re stars fallen to the horizon.” During lobster season, I watch those “stars” from my home in the pre-dawn darkness.

**DH:** Every summer, I take my family to the spectacular Pacific Rim region of Vancouver Island to see the wild, open ocean and the sky that seems to stretch on forever. I have visited this area for some 40 years. Watching the youngest members of my family discover the beach was my inspiration for writing *West Coast Wild*.

**JSK:** Absolutely. My two recent mystery novels are inspired by The Old Burying Ground, a nationally designated site in Halifax dating back to 1749. One marker bothers me to this day. It is a double gravestone with details about the husband, who died in his 30s, etched on the left-hand side, but the right-hand side remains completely blank. The marker is over 200 years old. No one knows what happened to his wife — perfect inspiration for writing a mystery novel.

**AS:** Solomon’s Tree is the perfect example of being able to immerse myself in landscape and culture. Solomon and his Tsimshian family are real. They lived on Pender and we consider each other ‘family’ despite being from different cultures. Victor Reece, Solomon’s father, gave me the name White Raven, a great honour that still brings me to tears. Our friendship immersed me in the culture and this book resulted.
Could you describe the view from your workspace?

DB: I wish that I could say the view from my home was of the mighty Atlantic Ocean. I do most of my writing and drawing from a cozy loveseat in my family room. The view is of my back garden, which is actually quite beautiful. When paint is involved, I stick to my studio.

SG: Our house is within splashing distance of the Atlantic Ocean. We look out over Green Bay and the distant LaHave Islands, always aware of the mood of the sea, the rising and setting of the sun, the phases of the moon, the creatures that live on the water or along the shoreline. I initially positioned my desk to have a view of the ocean, but this was too much of a distraction (and seagulls kept flying into my stories and perching).

DH: I live in an old Vancouver neighbourhood that is full of huge and majestic trees. My writing desk looks out into a backyard of greenery — towering trees and large leafy bushes. It’s apparent we live in a rainforest!

JSK: I write from a room upstairs in my 1870s home in downtown Halifax, which I call the library. Next to my desk is a tall window, and I see a slice of my postage-stamp-sized backyard, which includes a pond stocked with koi and a giant maple tree. In the spring, the koi stare up at me, patiently waiting for their daily meal.

What do you love about working in a coastal community?

DB: Gander is a Newfoundland community rather than a coastal community. The island feeling permeates life here. I meet people every day who ask about my work and often say nice things about my books. I love that! I really appreciate the support and encouragement.

SG: Quiet. Calm. Relative isolation. I love that there’s a community of writers in my area. Occasionally, I’ll meet one of these writers for a walk on the beach or a coffee and a chat at LaHave River Books.

DH: I love that I am never far from the ocean. When I step outside my house, I can breathe in the fresh, moisture-laden sea air. It makes me feel happy and at home.

JSK: The population is small, friendly and not overly competitive. People here open up with their quirky stories. They are natural-born storytellers. There’s lots to write about.

AS: I live in a place that attracts many artists, writers, musicians, acrobats and actors. Here, writing is considered an ordinary mainstream job. The community is totally supportive and we all flock to each other’s book launches and art shows. I also love being alone in the silence, able to listen to the sound of the waves, the wind in the cedar trees and the cry of the eagles. These sounds often find their way into my stories.

How long have you lived on the coast? What attracts you to the area?

DB: I have lived in central Newfoundland nearly all my life. The stunning rugged beauty of the landscape and the depth of meaning to be found in our history and culture are also great attractions.

SG: I’ve lived on the East Coast all my life. These are my roots. There’s a simplicity of lifestyle that suits me, including new and long-time friendships and neighbours you can count on. With two beaches nearby, I can walk for hours, bundled against cold winds or wading in the water to cool off.

DH: I was born in Saskatchewan, but have lived much of my life on the West Coast. I am attracted to the grandeur and majesty of our landscape. I am minutes from the ocean and can see the mountains from almost anywhere in the city. I feel lucky to live in such a beautiful area!

JSK: We moved here in 1985. I attended the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, and then, later, Dalhousie University. We’ve stayed because of the quality of life that Nova Scotia affords and we’ve raised our son here. He considers himself a Maritimer, but we, his parents, will never move past the status of come-from-aways.

AS: I’ve lived here 27 years. It’s the most beautiful place in the world, and I never want to leave. Every day, when I open my eyes and look out of the bedroom window, it takes my breath away, no matter the weather.
Have you lived and worked in other areas? How did that impact your work compared to your current location?

**DB:** I have only ever worked from here in Gander. I try to do what I can to promote my province’s traditional identity.

**SG:** I’ve always lived and worked in Nova Scotia. As long as I have a desk in a quiet corner, I can take myself into the imagined world of my books.

**DH:** I lived in the Okanagan for more than a decade. It was lovely, but I always missed the majesty and grandeur of Vancouver’s geography.

**JSK:** I grew up in Alberta and attended the University of Calgary, but I’ve spent my entire adulthood in Halifax. My newest novel, called *The Things Owen Wrote*, gives an affectionate nod to my prairie upbringing. It will be published by Groundwood Books this fall.

**AS:** I’ve lived in two big cities in England: Manchester and Sheffield. Then we immigrated to Edmonton. A lot of my stories are about feelings of isolation, no matter where you live. I love exploring relationships that make connections, particularly exploring cross-cultural connections.

What is the most inspiring aspect about where you live now?

**DB:** It’s the people. The climate, the many historical tragedies and the economic challenges have tested those who live here. Despite that, or maybe because of it, we have a thriving artistic community. From theatre, music and dance to visual art and writing, every discipline is alive and well. Nearly everyone I know is on some level a storyteller. I’m just happy to be one of them.

**SG:** Nova Scotia is a creative, supportive and inspiring place to live and work as a writer. We have the Writers’ Federation of Nova Scotia supporting us at all stages of our careers. We have the East Coast Literary Awards, the Atlantic Book Awards, Read by the Sea, Writing on Fire, the Cabot Trail Writers Festival, the Lunenburg Lit Festival, the Port Medway Readers’ Festival, One Book Nova Scotia, Arts Nova Scotia and more. How can we not be energized and inspired as writers and readers?

**DH:** The writing community here is very inspiring. It’s wonderful to live and work among people who know what it means to live in this special place — people who want to protect our coastline. None of us takes for granted the ocean, forests and mountains that are the amazing backdrop to our lives.

**JSK:** Halifax is a place of history, a mix of old and new buildings, lots of green space, and perched on the ocean. There are great coffee shops and breweries, a symphony, a professional theatre, a gorgeous library, a cultural mix of restaurants and festivals, all within walking distance of my home. This place gives me things to write about as well as the time to write.

**AS:** The people. I live in a fabulous community where we are all a little crazy, good crazy, creatively crazy. This is the only place in my life I’ve really felt I fit in. Everyone here has an amazing story, and I love hearing them. My friends and neighbours inspire me.

Can you imagine living or working anywhere else? Why or why not?

**DB:** Newfoundland is where I live and where I make sense. It’s what I write about and what I enjoy illustrating. I’m finishing work now on my newest book, *The Puffin Patrol*, another story about this place. There are still many of them left to tell.

**SG:** I’m not likely to live and write elsewhere because I’m very happy to be exactly where I am.

**DH:** I can imagine living in other places — but only locations where nature is a big and beautiful presence.

**JSK:** I can’t imagine living anywhere if I can’t be on the water. If we move, it would have to be near the ocean. Lakes don’t count, not even the great ones.

**AS:** At this point in my life, I cannot imagine living anywhere else but on this island. I think I must be one of the luckiest people in the world.

Marylynn Miller Oke is a freelance writer. With experience in broadcast news and public relations, she writes frequently for the academic and non-profit sectors.
“BOOKMARK!” Highlights books for a variety of grade levels around a particular theme. CCBC’s Library Coordinator, Meghan Howe, has compiled a list of books that are perfect to read while at the cottage, on a road trip or just hanging out in the backyard.

Summer Reading!

**PICTURE BOOKS AND NON-FICTION FOR KINDERGARTEN TO GRADE 7**

**See You Next Year**
written by Andrew Larsen
illustrated by Todd Stewart
(Owlkids Books, 2015)
Each summer, a young girl’s family returns to the same beachside motel. Everything is comfortingly predictable — the families she sees, the rhythm of the days, the bonfires and even the patterns raked on their beach. But, this year, she meets a new friend… sometimes change can be good.

**The Specific Ocean**
written by Kyo Maclear
illustrated by Katty Maurey
(Kids Can Press, 2015)
A young girl doesn’t want to leave the city for a family vacation on the Pacific Ocean. But she falls under the ocean’s spell, feeling moved by its beauty and rhythms. By the end of their holiday, the girl wonders how she can bring the magic of the ocean home.

**A Walk on the Shoreline**
written by Rebecca Hainnu
illustrated by Qin Leng
(Inhabit Media, 2015)
Nukappia can’t wait to get to his family campsite on the shoreline. As he and his uncle walk along the shore, Nukappia learns that the shoreline is an entire ecosystem of plants and animals used by the Inuit for generations.

**Be a Beach Detective: Solving the Mysteries of Seas, Sands, and Surf**
written and illustrated by Peggy Kochanoff
(Nimbus Publishing, 2015)
Biologist and artist Peggy Kochanoff answers many questions in this illustrated guide to solving beach mysteries. An entertaining and enlightening look at life by the ocean, perfect for beachcombers of any age.

**A Morning to Polish and Keep**
written by Julie Lawson
illustrated by Sheena Lott
(Red Deer Press, 2015 ©1992)
On the last day at their summer cabin, Amy’s family gets up before dawn to go fishing. When Amy loses her first big catch, it seems like the day is spoiled. Or is it? By the end of the day, Amy has a real fish story to tell, as well as a lasting memory — to polish and keep.

**Sea Glass Summer**
written and illustrated by Heidi Jardine Stoddart
(Nimbus Publishing, 2016)
Molly loves searching for sea glass at Gram’s cottage. Each morning, they wander the beach together, looking for these ocean treasures. But then, Molly’s family moves, and she finds herself living in a faraway city. When a surprise parcel arrives from Gram, Molly wishes with all her might for another sea glass summer.

**West Coast Wild: A Nature Alphabet**
written by Deborah Hodge
illustrated by Karen Reczuch
(Groundwood Books, 2015)
Come and explore the fascinating ecosystem of the Pacific West Coast in this stunning nature alphabet book. Discover a magnificent region that includes an ancient rainforest, a rugged beach and a vast, open ocean, where a variety of species thrive in an interconnected web of life.
**JUNIOR & INTERMEDIATE FICTION FOR GRADES 3-9**

**Driftwood**
written by Valerie Sherrard  
(Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2013)
Adam’s summer is off to a disappointing start. His best friend isn’t able to join him and his family at the seaside campground as planned, and he’s frustrated with his parents. At least an ever-changing cast of new summer friends proves to be an entertaining distraction.

**Nature Calls**
*(Finley Flowers, Book 2)*
written by Jessica Young  
illustrations by Jessica Secheret  
(Picture Window Books/Capstone, 2015)
Summer is here, and Finley is heading to Camp Acorn to make crafts, eat s’mores and prove that she’s tough enough to get back to nature! But on an overnight outing, Finley and her cabin mate get lost, and her ghost story comes back to haunt them!

**Sea Change**
written and illustrated by Frank Viva  
(Tundra Books, 2016)
One summer can change your whole life. When school ends, Eliot’s parents send him to the very edge of the world: a fishing village in Nova Scotia. What does this small town have to offer?

**Shack Island Summer**
written by Penny Chamberlain  
(Sono Nis Press, 2014)
In this evocative coming-of-age novel, 12-year-old Pepper and her oddball brother are spending the summer on Shack Island with Grandma. As the summer days and starlit nights work their magic, Pepper explores ESP, dreams and infatuation, and decides to look for her birth family.

**Summer Days, Starry Nights**
Written by Vikki VanSickle  
(Scholastic Canada, 2013)
Reenie Starr loves summers at her family’s resort, but as a teenager she feels like she’s living in a country where people speak a different language. When Gwendolyn Cates arrives to teach dance, Reenie comes to realize that there is more to life.

**SENIOR FICTION FOR GRADES 7 AND UP**

**16 Things I Thought Were True**
written by Janet Gurtler  
(Sourcebooks Fire, 2014)
When Morgan’s mom gets sick, she panics. Then she finds out the dad who left when she was a baby isn’t as far away as she thought… With Adam and Amy along for a summer road trip, Morgan feels ready for anything.

**Girl on the Run**
written by B.R. Myers  
(Nimbus Publishing, 2015)
Running star Jesse’s dreams of a scholarship end after her dad dies of a heart attack. She escapes to a job as a summer camp counsellor, ending up in charge of a group of boy misfits. In the midst of chaos, Jesse finds the inspiration to run again.

**Road Signs Say West**
written by Sylvia Gunnery  
(Pajama Press, 2017)
Three sisters, one guitar and the Trans-Canada Highway. Author Sylvia Gunnery writes an engaging summer story about three sisters navigating the difficult roads of adolescence, trauma, secrets, shame, and fear for the future.

**This One Summer**
created by Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki  
(Groundwood Books, 2014)
Rose and Windy are summer friends whose families have stayed at Awago Beach for as long as they can remember. But this summer is different, and they soon find themselves tangled in teen love and family crisis.

**Way to Go**
written by Tom Ryan  
(Orca Book Publishers, 2012)
Danny thinks he must be the only 17-year-old guy who doesn’t have his life figured out in Cape Breton. After a run-in with the cops, he has to get a summer job. To make matters worse, he’s keeping a secret.
Red Leaf Literature

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

PICTURE BOOKS FOR PRESCHOOL TO GRADE 3

Keeper of the Light
written by Janet Barkhouse
illustrated by Thérèse Cilia
978-1-4595-0464-6 (hc) $16.95
for Grades 1 to 3
Picture Book | Lighthouses | Nova Scotia | Courage | Heroism

It is 1925. Since her father’s death, Sara has helped support her family by working in a lighthouse located off mainland Nova Scotia. Today, she eagerly anticipates her 12th birthday and a week with her family. Suddenly, plans change when the lightkeeper is rushed to the mainland requiring urgent medical care. Sara is alone and in charge as a ferocious storm hits. Singlehandedly, she maintains the warning light and sounds the foghorn. And when a ship is wrecked, she uses superhuman strength to rescue its victim, her father’s encouragement sounding in her head.

Sara’s heroism may seem exaggerated, but it was actually common for children to work in lighthouses. As Sara tackles her chores, the fascinating details of her work and the functions of a lighthouse are revealed. She starts the fire, primes the water pump, milks cows, collects eggs and maintains the lantern room, ensuring its light is primed and working.

Sara’s character epitomizes courage. Despite her fear and personal disappointment, she is dutiful, faithful and brave, talking aloud to give herself courage. Even when emergency strikes, she perseveres through her terror.

The illustrations, as enticing as the story, depict a heroine, small and vulnerable against the intriguing backdrop of a lighthouse. Using mainly muted colours, the artist captures the cosiness within and the contrasting drama of wild seas and changing skies without. Text and visuals capture effectively the simultaneous increase in the rising storm and Sara’s anxiety.

Young readers will respond to an exciting story and a child heroine not much older than they are.

Aileen Wortley is a retired librarian from Toronto.

Little Blue Chair
written by Cary Fagan
illustrated by Madeline Kloepper
Tundra Books, 2017
978-1-77049-755-9 (hc) $22.99
978-1-77049-757-3 (eBook) $11.99
for Kindergarten to Grade 2
Picture Book | Adventure | Reuse | Journeys

Boo’s favourite chair is little and blue. Not only does this young boy sit, read and eat on it, but he also falls asleep on it. When he outgrows the chair, his mother places it at the end of the lawn, accompanied by a sign that reads “PLEASE TAKE ME.” So its journey begins. As it wends its way from the back of a pick-up truck to a junk shop and then to exotic locales across the ocean, this humble piece of furniture assumes a surprising variety of roles for its subsequent owners: a plant stand, a chair for elephant rides, a bird feeder, a replacement seat on a Ferris wheel and a carnival prize. After a child ties a bunch of balloons to the chair, it becomes airborne and floats in the opposite direction from whence it came.

Landing safely in a garden, this well-worn object reunites with an adult Boo, coming full circle.

Author Cary Fagan has written an endearing tale about a small and seemingly insignificant object that subtly transforms the lives of its temporary owners as it travels the world, purely by happenstance. As it is passed on from person to person, there is a feeling of goodwill and respect for its presence. It is lovely to contemplate that this little blue chair, which is first introduced as the cherished possession of a child, concludes its decades-long odyssey with that child’s daughter.

Rendered in ink and pencil and finished digitally, Madeline Kloepper’s charming illustrations beckon readers to explore a variety of environs. Myriad details, such as the houseboat décor or the busy goings-on at the carnival, will delight young readers as they follow the wooden protagonist on its voyage.

Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario.
Short Stories for Little Monsters
written and illustrated by Marie-Louise Gay
Groundwood Books, 2017
978-1-55498-896-9 (hc) $19.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 3
*Picture Book | Questions | Vignettes | Cartoons*

Do snails have nightmares? What do trees talk about? Can mothers see through ceilings? These simple, yet profound, questions are but three of the themes addressed in a collection of 19 short stories that explore the thoughts children have about their world. To make matters even more interesting, each double-page chapter is depicted in a series of panels complete with speech bubbles — a precursor to the graphic novel.

Marie-Louise Gay has the remarkable ability to examine young people's interests in a respectful manner that will resonate with her audience. With the addition of her unique sense of humour, this collection has been transformed into a playful exploration of day-to-day living. Who hasn’t found oneself in situations where one desperately wishes to disappear... or pretend to have the answer when one hasn’t a clue as to what is going on?

Gay’s distinctive cartoon-like illustrations, completed in water-colour, ink, coloured pencil, 6B pencil and collage, using Japanese paper, are filled with energy, charm and unexpected surprises. Anyone who enters Gay’s special world through her pages will meet a variety of memorable characters. There will be smiles... perhaps even laughter... and there may also be glimmers of self-recognition.

And yes, snails do have nightmares!

Senta Ross

Today
written and illustrated by Julie Morstad
Simply Read Books, 2016
978-1-927018-68-2 (hc) $22.50
for Preschool to Grade 2
*Picture Book | Daily Activities | Choices | Imagination | Decision Making*

Today, written and illustrated by Julie Morstad, explores a day in the life of a little girl. We join her as she wakes up in the morning and invites us to participate in every decision that follows — what should we wear today? How should we do our hair? What should we have for breakfast? From there, the reader is invited to make choices by selecting activities and locations for the day, until nighttime arrives and we are directed to choose a set of pajamas and get ready for bed. Morstad provides ample options for each question, often in beautiful two-page spreads featuring a diverse group of children.

Today is a vastly appealing book that will be engaging for young readers, with illustrations that will be fun to explore and that encourage participation. Its interactive element makes it an ideal book for a parent and child to read and discuss together (or point, if they are too little to discuss); or it might be a source of inspiration for their own endeavours: a challenge is something to be savoured. Morstad does not condescend to her young readers. She offers a realistic scenario to which all children (and adults) can relate — trying and failing. Lou’s determination to try again offers readers some advice for their own endeavours: a challenge is something to be savoured.

Ildiko Sumegi is a reviewer from Ottawa and the mother of two young readers.

The Wolves Return:
A New Beginning for Yellowstone National Park
written and illustrated by Celia Godkin
Pajama Press, 2017
978-1-77278-011-6 (hc) $19.95
for Grades 1 to 3
*Non-fiction Picture Book | Grey Wolves | Yellowstone National Park*

The Yellowstone Wolf Project, acclaimed in environmental circles, is presented in picture-book format for young children. Over two years, during the mid-nineties, 23 Canadian grey wolves were transferred to Yellowstone Park where overhunting had previously eradicated them. This volume details the dramatic effects this single change has wrought in the park. They include the preservation of
endangered wolf populations, a healthier but contained population of formerly invasive elk herds, the subsequent re-growth of trees and reintroduction of many species of animals, birds, fish, insects and plants throughout various ecosystems in the park.

This could be complicated subject matter for younger audiences to assimilate, but Celia Godkin, acclaimed environmental writer and illustrator for children, has presented the material persuasively in clear, direct language. From the initial release of the wolves, it is systematically shown how one change in the ecosystem leads to the next, leaving readers in awe of the fascinating chain of life and fragile balance of nature.

The text is enhanced by compelling, vivid illustrations. Thirteen double-page spreads reveal different habitats within the park, such as woodland and ponds, each populated by various new species of wildlife. The endpapers are illustrated with delicate sketches of species found within the park. There is also a two-page summary explaining the wolves’ extinction in the United States and a brief explanation of the project.

Aimed at young children, adults and older children will also find wonder and a salutary message in this handsome book that prompts much thought on the complexity and resilience of nature.

Aileen Wortley

JUNIOR & INTERMEDIATE FICTION AND NON-FICTION FOR GRADES 4 TO 8

The Bonaventure Adventures
written by Rachelle Delaney
Puffin Books, 2017
978-0-14-319850-5 (hc) $19.99
978-0-14-319852-9 (eBook) $10.99
for Grades 4 to 6

Fiction | Circus | Boarding School | Family | Making Friends | Creativity

Genius Sebastian is good to a fault. He listens to his parents, does his homework diligently and never breaks the rules. When an encounter with a pig in a teeny hat leads him down a mysterious alley to the Explorers Society, he, along with wayward orphan Evie, gets caught up in an adventure unlike any he could ever have imagined.

Sebastian is used to doing exactly what he’s told, and would never imagine doing anything that he isn’t supposed to. Even the idea of skipping school is enough to put him in a tizzy. When he starts working at the Explorers Society, he is encouraged to do something inappropriate. This opens up a world of possibilities to Sebastian, and shows him the benefits of taking risks. He and Evie are well-developed, three-dimensional characters, and kids will find them easy to relate to and root for. The novel also subtly addresses the importance of curiosity and exploration, of thinking outside the box and of occasional rule breaking.

First in a new series, this is a funny and entertaining adventure filled with missing persons, evil thugs, puzzles and a cat named Metro Dogs of Moscow and The Circus Dogs of Prague, explores the world of the circus from a human perspective with The Bonaventure Adventures. Seb’s exclusive invitation to an elite Montreal boarding school will remind readers of Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone, except, unlike Harry, Seb doesn’t belong there. Instead, along with other circus-school outsiders Frankie and Banjo (the bêtes noires), Seb’s just trying to find a way to fit in and avoid attracting the attention of the school’s directrice, Angélique Saint-Germain.

Heartwarming and hilarious, Seb’s quest to keep his lack of talent a secret leads to some tricky situations. However, as his friendships with the bêtes noires develop, Seb’s determination and creative thinking prove to be exactly what he needs to stay in school and offer hope to a dying industry.

With vibrant circus imagery and a story that is sure to capture the imagination of readers, The Bonaventure Adventure would make an excellent choice for a classroom read-aloud.

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

The Explorers: The Door in the Alley
(The Explorers, Book 1)
written by Adrienne Kress
illustrations by Matthew C. Rockefeller
Delacorte Press, 2017
978-1-101-94005-1 (hc) $22.99
978-1-101-94007-5 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 4 to 8

Fiction | Mystery | Adventure | Humour | Risk Taking | Curiosity | Creative Thinking

Rachel Seigel is a freelance writer and author of titles in the Canadian Aboriginal Communities Series.
Conflicted carnivore Sarah Elton knows that meat eating can be a sensitive subject, if not outright controversial. Elton, author of **Consumed: Sustainable Food for a Finite Planet** (for adults) and **Starting from Scratch: What You Should Know about Food and Cooking** (for children), presents a thoughtful overview of eating habits in a way that children, and their parents, can understand. She covers food choices, ranging from religious to ethical to environmental, without coming across as preachy or alienating of non-Western cultures. McLaughlin’s fun and colourful illustrations strike a good balance between cheer and clarity without trivializing issues like factory farming.

Elton introduces this, her second book for children, with a personal story about food, that made her question where meat comes from. She then delves into a short history of vegetarianism and ends with the conclusion, “Set the table for everyone.” Elton highlights how everyone’s food choices are personal and should be treated with respect. She uses short, descriptive titles for each chapter, such as “Meat Math,” to back up facts, like how meat eating is affecting the planet. Teachers and parents will appreciate the diversity of body types and cultural groups represented in this study of how and what we eat.

This book can serve as a springboard for conversations on many topics, such as health, religion, environmental issues and animal cruelty. It includes a glossary to help students along with words like ‘pescatarian’ as well as a suggested reading list for budding food activists. Young food and nutrition students may appreciate the weekly menu of meatless food options, which may inspire them to help out in the kitchen.

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SENIOR FICTION FOR GRADES 7 AND UP

**Blood Brothers**
written by Colleen Nelson
Dundurn, 2017
978-1-4597-3746-4 (pb) $12.99
978-1-4597-3748-8 (eBook) $8.99
for Grades 7 and up

Fiction | Gangs | Murder | Graffiti Artists | Fitting In | Friendship | Loyalty

Fifteen-year-old Jakub, the son of Polish immigrants, is a Catholic boy and a graffiti artist. At night, Jakub and his best friend, Lincoln, sneak out with spray paint to make their mark. When Jakub gets a scholarship to a prestigious private school, he knows it’s a chance for a better life, but it also means leaving Lincoln. As Jakub gets settled in his new school, Lincoln gets involved with his older brother’s gang, the Red Bloodz. When the Red Bloodz find out that Jakub knows too much about a murder, Lincoln’s loyalty is tested. Will he choose to save his friend and risk defying his brother?

In Nelson’s gritty new novel, she skilfully explores moral dilemmas and difficult decisions. Jakub and Lincoln are kids on the brink. While the chance to attend a better school in a better neighbourhood should be good news for Jakub, he’s torn. He’s hesitant to leave Lincoln, and worries that he doesn’t belong there. Lincoln faces a dilemma. When his brother gets out of jail and offers him a chance to make some money, Lincoln finds it hard to resist. Feeling left behind by Jakub and wanting to fit in somewhere, he is eager to prove himself to his brother. But as the level of violence and danger involved in the tasks escalates, Lincoln wrestles with his conscience and the horror of what he’s being asked to do.

Telling the story from the alternating points of view of Jakub and Lincoln, Nelson does an excellent job of creating realistic, complex characters and keeping readers invested in their fates. Both boys struggle with not wanting to disappoint someone close to them, and both face situations that challenge their values and their perceptions of themselves. The story is fast-paced and suspenseful, and readers won’t be able to put it down. While both boys suffer real consequences for their decisions in the end, there is still hope, making the emotional impact of the novel all that much stronger.

Rachel Seigel

**Maud: A Novel Inspired by the Life of L.M. Montgomery**
written by Melanie J. Fishbane
Penguin Teen, 2017
978-0-14-319125-4 (hc) $22.99
978-0-14-319690-7 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 9 to 12

Fiction | Biography | Lucy Maud Montgomery | Canadian History | Romance

Fans of *Anne of Green Gables* will delight in getting a glimpse of what L.M. Montgomery’s teen years might have looked like. It is important to remember that this novel was inspired by her life and is not totally biographical. Fishbane opens with a disclaimer and a cast of characters for the book, which I appreciated. Maud struggles with her life on PEI, growing up with her grandparents and their traditional views. Her grandfather has very strong feelings as to a woman’s place, and that is not at college and not as a writer. Reading through Maud’s challenges was like being a cheerleader or a fly on the wall. There is a romantic storyline in this book as well — one that has religious conflict but also conflicts with Maud’s true desire to be a writer… does giving in to love mean giving up on her dream?

Fishbane has a beautiful way of writing that had me hearing the words in my mind as if the book were being read aloud to me… and in a voice that I think would be relevant to the time. Not only does the story depict the late 19th century on Prince Edward Island and support that with struggles that one would expect for that period in history, but the language that is used really makes the reader feel as if she has travelled back in time.

This would be a wonderful fit for YA lovers that lean toward more literary reads, great for teens interested in Canadian historical fiction and lovers of that red-headed Anne.

Erin Grittani is the Education Manager at Mabel’s Fables Bookstore in Toronto.

**Me and Me**
written by Alice Kuipers
HarperTrophy Canada, 2017
978-1-4434-882-6 (pb) $14.99
978-1-4434-883-3 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 8 to 12

Fiction | Death of Dying | Grief | Guilt | Fears | Identity

Lark has ample reason to have mixed feelings about her birthday, but her 17th starts out to be a day full of promise. Alec Sandcross has planned an idyllic date, complete with roses and a romantic trip to the lake with a canoe. But then an accident occurs, and a young girl that Lark used to babysit is drowning. When Lark and Alec try to save her, Alec hits his head and Lark suddenly finds herself faced with a terrible choice: which of the two will she save? Me and Me tells both stories, the story of what follows when/if she chooses Alec as well as when/if she chooses Annabelle. It is the story of Lark coming to terms with her grief, guilt and fears, and figuring out who she is and who she wants to be, her search for wholeness amongst the pieces of her broken world.

Provocative, original and compelling, Kuipers delivers a sophisticated and nuanced exploration of identity, loss and acceptance. The book is carefully constructed to provide both the protagonist and the reader with room for reflection, while also remaining highly readable and engaging as Lark alternates between realities. Song lyrics (both Lark’s and her mother’s) gracefully help bring together the strands of Lark’s story into a single finely woven narrative. The main and secondary characters are well realized and multi-faceted, and Lark’s relationships with her best friend, her band mates, her father and Alec are complex and believable.

The author skilfully brings Lark’s story to a close that provides resolution, while still leaving much for the reader to ponder. Teens will find a lot to love in this thought-provoking tale.

Lisa Doucet is Co-Manager of Woozles in Halifax.
What does it take to fulfill a dream?

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Two new picture books from Annick Press provide the inspiration.

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978-1-55451-914-9 pb
978-1-55451-915-6 hc

The Dance of the Violin

Kathy Sinson-Dusan Petrije

Ages 5–8
978-1-55451-900-2 jacketed hc

Follow #TUNDRA50 for details of our birthday celebrations, including an online auction of our anniversary tote bags featuring original art by our illustrators!
An abundance of children live in the Mile End neighbourhood of Montreal to which Colette has just moved. What better way to meet them than to enlist their assistance in finding her lost pet parakeet? The only problem is that this particular parakeet does not exist. As the coterie of youngsters gradually expands in number, so do Colette’s fabrications about the bird: “It’s gained some weight lately. It kind of grew bigger and bigger. So I had to get a bigger cage and then a bigger house. Until it became TOO BIG to fit in the house! But then it was the perfect size to fly around! So we travelled the world. We flew to Paris and Japan! We’ve been to the desert… and sailed the sea. And we ate a rattlesnake in the jungle! I’m telling you, this parakeet is truly amazing! It’s just the best pet you could ever dream of… and it’s MINE!” Does the search party really believe her?

Isabelle Arsenault has created a memorable young protagonist who will charm readers with her vivid imagination and dynamic spirit. As Colette explores the back lanes of her new community while wearing her bright yellow raincoat, she certainly leaves an impression on the children she meets. Reflecting a culturally diverse population, these young problem solvers unite to make her feel welcome.

Arsenault’s animated illustrations, rendered in pencils, watercolour and ink with digital colouration in Photoshop, are in a picture book/comic book format, complete with hand-lettered text in speech bubbles. The mostly muted black-and-grey illustrations are interrupted by the vivid yellow of Colette’s raincoat and the soft blue of the imaginary parakeet’s feathers.

Colette’s Lost Pet is the first book in a new series featuring children from the Mile End neighbourhood, which just happens to be where Isabelle Arsenault and her family reside.

Senta Ross

Good Morning, Grumple
written by Victoria Allenby
illustrated by Manon Gauthier
Pajama Press, 2017
978-1-77278-014-7 (hc) $15.95 for Preschool

Picture Book | Family | Morning | Love

For those of us who have a hard time transitioning from an active day to a quiet night, there are bedtime stories. However, some of us have just as much trouble shifting ourselves from bed to breakfast. It is for these little morning “grumples” that Victoria Allenby has written this book. In rhyming verse, Allenby describes just how hard it can be to wake a sleeping grumple and offers up a gentle song to soften a sometimes-tricky transition. A song, a tickle, a kiss and a hug are just what a grumple usually needs.

Manon Gauthier’s simple collage illustrations give this book a handmade feel. She has made charming use of crayon, pencil, paint and scissors. Gauthier has cast the two main characters — mother and child — as black-and-white foxes, and she has successfully (and most amusingly) captured Grumple’s resistance to waking up. He doesn’t look particularly thrilled with his morning hug. Neither does he appear to relish being joyously swung about the room. But as the yellow sun outside Grumple’s window becomes brighter with each turn of the page, both Grumple and reader are roused and beckoned out into a bright new day.

Taking time in the morning to read together in bed is a fantastic idea — grumples may even look forward to it! It might also offer the adult grumples out there a chance to slow down and reconnect before rushing out the door.

Ildiko Sumegi

Greetings, Leroy
written by Itah Sadu
illustrated by Alix Delinois
Groundwood Books, 2017
978-1-55498-760-3 (hc) $18.95 for Kindergarten to Grade 2

Picture Book | Immigrant Experience | Belonging | Friendship | Caribbean and Latin America

Roy wakes up bright and early on his first day of school in Canada. Having recently emigrated from Jamaica, he’s nervous to meet his classmates. However, he quickly realizes that his principal, neighbours, teachers and new friends want him to feel welcome.
They find inventive ways to share in Roy’s admiration for his hero, the Jamaican music legend, Bob Marley.

Greetings, Leroy is the most recent picture book by award-winning author Itah Sadu, owner of Toronto bookstore A Different Booklist. Accompanied by bright, bold paintings by Alix Delinois, a Haitian artist living in Harlem, Greetings, Leroy is a rich exploration of the immigrant experience through the eyes of a young boy tasked with adjusting not only to a new school, but a new country.

What makes this book especially unique and affecting is that it is told in Roy’s own voice in the form of an email to Leroy, a friend who still lives in Jamaica. While Roy is meeting new friends in Canada, computer technology is allowing him to stay connected to his Caribbean roots, which remain very important to him.

Exploring universal themes, including friendship and belonging, Greetings, Leroy is a playful look at the immigrant experience, perfect for children adjusting to a new life in Canada. It is also a critical read to help instill empathy in all children who will benefit from better understanding the experiences of newcomer children in their classrooms.

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

Harry and Clare’s Amazing Staycation written by Ted Staunton illustrated by Mika Song Tundra Books, 2017 978-1-77049-827-3 (hc) $22.99 978-1-77049-828-0 (eBook) $11.99 for Preschool to Grade 2

Picture Book | Siblings | Imagination | Vacation

School’s out and it’s time for vacation, but siblings Harry and Clare find themselves stuck at home with nowhere to go. Luckily for the two children, their vivid imaginations can take them anywhere they want, from planet Mars all the way to caves full of treasures. Clare, being the eldest, however, has deemed herself the one who makes all of the decisions, leaving Harry to simply follow her lead. Not wanting to spend his entire vacation being bossed around by his big sister, Harry comes up with a sneaky plan to take back control, and all he’ll need is a few snacks!

In Harry and Clare’s Amazing Staycation, Ted Staunton pieces together a story of childhood imagination that we can all relate to, accompanied by Mika Song's beautifully drawn illustrations. He describes the incredible ability of all children to find adventures in the most mundane places, and depicts a heartwarming, realistic relationship between a brother and sister. The siblings face numerous challenges, from being stuck inside on a rainy day to power struggles between the two of them.

Learning to get along with others and to look at life’s hurdles with positivity are a couple of the many important lessons we learn as children. Staunton has created the perfect story to share with siblings and friends learning how to play together, and with any children who need help discovering the wonders that can be found in life’s obstacles. Harry and Clare’s Amazing Staycation is a beautiful tale filled with childhood optimism and imagination!

Trista Rakochy is an English Rhetoric student at Laurentian University.

Liam Takes a Stand written by Troy Wilson illustrated by Josh Holinaty Owlkids Books, 2017 978-1-77147-161-9 (hc) $18.95 for Preschool to Grade 2

Picture Book | Siblings | Competition

Little Liam is the youngest in his family. His brothers Lister and Lester are twins. They do all the same things and are highly competitive with each other. Liam just wants to spend time with them, but he’s never included. When they open up rival lemonade stands and neither brother will include him, Liam devises a plan of his own, eventually resulting in Lister and Lester is wanting to be included.

Liam Takes a Stand is charming and funny, the outlandish competition between the older boys serves as a backdrop to the more universal story of a younger sibling feeling (and being) left out. The repetition in this book is just enough to pull it together for a younger reader, but not excessive to the point of turning off that young reader. Some pages are quite busy with illustrations, giving readers lots to look at (and likely different things to notice each time), while other simpler images provide well-placed breaks.

The message about not underestimating the (in this case literal) little guy was subdued, as was Liam’s simpler approach that brought him success. (While his brothers had live bands promoting purple lemonade, Liam opened an apple cider stand using local apples, ginger and cinnamon.) The mixed ages of the characters will serve the book well as a read-aloud in multi-age settings, and the twins-plus-little-brother dynamic is a refreshing diversion from the many books about families with two children, or twins without other siblings.

Tara-Michelle Ziniuk is a writer and editor based in Toronto.

Milo and Georgie written by Bree Galbraith illustrated by Josée Bisaillon Owlkids Books, 2017 978-1-77147-170-1 (hc) $18.95 for Preschool to Grade 3

Picture Book | Moving | Siblings

The story of a child resisting change can be told a thousand ways; in Milo and Georgie, Bree Galbraith finds a new and adorable (though not cutesy) way. Milo and his younger sister have to move out of their home at the end of a school year when their mother gets a new job. Milo swears he’ll never have fun again as he says goodbye to the home he knows. Georgie is much more open and determined to find the fun in their new circumstance.

Georgie explores their new area while their mother is at work, tied to a string so that Milo can safely stay home and not lose her. His reluctance to even go outside is not unlike the narrator in Kyo Maclear’s The Specific Ocean. Of course, things turn around by the end, but it’s quite a journey getting there.

Milo and Georgie is engaging and fun, realistic and absurd in the appropriate places. It touches on age differences and sibling relationships just enough. It’s nice to see a family headed by a single
Mr. Postmouse Takes a Trip
written and illustrated by Marianne Dubuc
translated by Yvette Ghione
Kids Can Press, 2017
978-1-77138-554-7 (hc) $18.95
978-1-77138-909-9 (eBook) $9.99
for Preschool to Grade 2
Picture Book | Geography | Community | Habitats | Homes | Travel | Transportation

Mr. Postmouse and his wife, Mrs. Mouse, are taking their mouselings — Milo, Lulu and Pip — on a vacation around the animal kingdom. However, as readers will discover, a postmouse’s job is never done. Mr. Postmouse loads up his wagon, bringing parcels to deliver to the many family members and friends he will meet along the way.

Mr. Postmouse Takes a Trip is the clever follow-up to Dubuc’s popular, award-winning 2015 picture book, Mr. Postmouse’s Rounds. It introduces young readers to a variety of natural environments, including a forest, a desert, a beach and a jungle. Multiple modes of transportation, such as a cruise ship, a camel and a hot air balloon, carry Mr. Postmouse and his family from place to place.

Each double-page spread in Mr. Postmouse Takes a Trip boasts minimal text, giving Dubuc ample space for her captivating and detailed illustrations, each depicting an intricate community in soft, earthy tones. A modern-day Richard Scarry, Dubuc allows readers to glimpse inside the interiors of animals’ homes, each overflowing with objects, many of which will be unfamiliar to some readers, and delightful characters from a variety of species.

Helping to build visual literacy skills, Mr. Postmouse Takes a Trip will encourage young readers to make meaningful connections between the text and their own homes and communities. Endlessly charming, this is a book to be read again and again, each time revealing wacky details that were missed the first time around.

Jessica Rose

Simone: The Best Monster Ever!
written and illustrated by Rémy Simard
translated by Karen Li
Owlkids Books, 2017
978-1-77147-293-7 (hc) $16.95
for Grades 1 to 4
Graphic Novel | Monsters | Friendship

This collection of comics translated from French to English for the first time, some from a previously published book and others from the popular French language kids’ magazine, J’aime lire, features the odd friendship between a sweet young girl named Simone and a googly green-eyed monster named Maurice. Simone exists in Maurice’s monster world where everything is turned upside down — flowers, puppies and good behaviour are feared or viewed as disgusting, while bad behaviour is rewarded, and gross or scary things are loved. Simone is considered “the monster” in this world. This gag forms the basis for each humorous comic strip and explores themes and situations that are relevant to kids — holidays, school, friendship and play.

Each page of this collection features a short comic of no more than five panels, making this book suitable for children just

Tara-Michelle Ziniuk

More Than Balloons
written by Lorna Crozier
illustrated by Rachelle Anne Miller
Orca Book Publishers, 2017
978-1-4598-1030-3 (eBook) $4.99
for Newborn to Toddler
Board Book | Animals and Nature | Imagery | Poetry | Family | Love | Bedtime Story

“I love you more than...”

This charming little board book from the Governor General’s Literary Award-winning author, Lorna Crozier, playfully and poetically explores the depths of love between a parent and child. In this narrative by the parent, the young animals — representing the child — are told that they are loved more than “balloons love the moon” and “more than a tuba loves a tune.” Each page contributes an additional line to the poem and plays with simple yet sophisticated imagery that is a delight to the ear and eye.

The illustrations dance across each page, accented with curlicues to give them an animated feel. Miller’s sketch-like artistic style creates playfully rendered animals experimenting with the different poetic metaphors; both the reader and the child will be enchanted with the young animals zooming around on bicycles and building sandcastles. Her use of colour adds a lovely vibrant pop to each page before reaching an ending with a lovely bedtime image, making it the perfect cuddle-up-before-bed kind of story. She also whimsically pulls in natural elements such as flowers, insects and landscapes from all four seasons to bring additional richness to the reading experience.

The harmonious interplay of the images created by Crozier’s text and Miller’s illustrations produces a delightful reading experience, making this a great addition to baby’s first library.

Ashley Pamenter writes programming for Girl Guides of Canada — Guides du Canada and is a former elementary teacher in Toronto, Ontario.
starting to read graphic novels. Reminiscent of newspaper comic strips, each comic has a predictable gag structure with a few panels of set-up and one or two panels featuring the punchline. Simard excels at delivering a strong visual gag. The punchlines in this book range from pure gross out — Maurice enjoying a swimming pool full of snot — to absolute silliness — Maurice plays badminton with a real ‘birdie.’ Simard’s artwork has a colourful retro style that is perfect for the irreverent tone of the book. He has a knack for illustrating distinct facial expressions on the characters that add to the humour. The monsters throughout the book have been designed to be cute rather than scary, keeping the appeal consistent for younger readers. When read in one sitting, the jokes featured here tend to get a bit repetitive, but the comics don’t need to be read in any specific order, making it a perfect casual read. Young readers who enjoy poring through books of jokes and riddles will enjoy Simone and Maurice’s hilarious antics.

Scott Robins is a Children’s Services Specialist at the Toronto Public Library and co-author of A Parent’s Guide to the Best Kids’ Comics.

There, There
written by Tim Beiser
illustrated by Bill Slavin
Tundra Books, 2017
978-1-77049-752-8 (hc) $21.99
for Preschool to Grade 2

Picture Book | Friendship | Patience | Gratitude | Emotions

It is raining, and Hare and Bear must amuse themselves indoors. Hare, however, is in the mood to complain. He spends the day railing against the world and the deep injustice of a day spent without sun. Bear’s response to each of Hare’s complaints is a calm “There, there.” Eventually, however, Bear can’t stand it anymore, and he takes Hare outside to contemplate the lowly earthworm in an effort to provide some perspective. The earthworm is then left with his own complaints!

Tim Beiser tells this amusing story in rhyming verse. Bill Slavin’s textured illustrations add to the comedic effect, portraying a patient, gentle Bear and a bug-eyed Hare who is quite obviously in a bad mood. Slavin adds his own details to the story — a leaky roof, a game of chess and fresh-baked carrot muffins. Observant readers will even notice a dust ‘bunny’ under Hare’s bed.

The story itself is one to which both children and parents can relate. It is funny because it is, to some degree, true. For this reason, it is a book that may spark fruitful discussion, enabling the Bears and Hares of this world to better understand one another.

In the end, we are left with the feeling that Bear clearly cares for Hare, and Hare, despite his current upset, values Bear’s advice. This is a story about two friends navigating a particularly bumpy day. And the worm? Readers will find the lowly worm to be the unintended star of the story!

Ildiko Sumegi
A nice feature of this book is that each new place displays its family in a new dwelling or setting; as well, each shows a different relative carrying the baby. Aunties and others are well represented, rather than defaulting to the idea that parents (mothers in particular) are the only ones who carry babies. The carrying options include parkas and slings, arms and shoulder poles (wherein two babies sit in baskets, each tied with rope to opposite ends of a wooden pole). Attention is paid to diversity; one father uses a wheelchair, and the family at the end located “here” is notably mixed race.

Ashley Barron’s paper-cut collage visuals add texture to each page and work well with the various themes in the book.

Tara-Michelle Ziniuk

You Can Read
written by Helaine Becker
illustrated by Mark Hoffmann
Orca Book Publishers, 2017
978-1-4598-1324-3 (hc) $19.95
978-1-4598-1326-7 (eBook) $4.99
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

Picture Book | Humour | Pro-literacy | Spelling | Adventure | Reading

The back cover of this picture book sums it up beautifully: “Books are Awesome, and so are the people who read them.” This picture book celebrates the wonderful life that comes with being a reader and the infinite portability of books. They can be brought into space or be read in one’s underpants, as Becker and Hoffman playfully attest throughout the story. Following the reading adventures of a young boy and girl, the reader is taken from the playground to the bottom of the sea and back again. Each quirky illustration takes the text and embeds it right into the story, creating a cohesive interplay of text and illustration.

Hoffman’s colourful and creative images bring Becker’s poetic words to life. Each full-page illustration is a story in itself, and each book cover featured is a pun or play on the illustrations. One such memorable page of “You can read in the bathroom, when you need some privacy” features books with the covers The Time Takers and the News Flush. Similarly, if you are walking down the street, nose in book, the covers remind you to Look Where You’re Going in order to avoid the “Eew.” These subtle delights are enough to charm both young readers and the adults reading with them. In addition, Hoffman’s simply drawn images and hand-lettered pages have a child-like feel to them, creating a kid-friendly reading experience.

Ashley Pamenter

Under the Umbrella
written by Catherine Buquet
illustrated by Marion Arbona
translated by Erin Woods
Pajama Press, 2017
978-1-77278-016-1 (hc) $18.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 3

Picture Book | Intergenerational Friendship | Emotions | Kindness

Under his umbrella / He strode without a smile. / Under his umbrella / He muttered all the while.

The day is cold and grey, the weather frightful. A man, whose mood harshly reflects the storm, is going to be late, what more could possibly go wrong? As he rushes along the blustery Parisian streets, he is quite unaware of a little boy standing beneath the awning of a nearby patisserie, gazing longingly at the delicacies displayed before him. Without warning, a sudden gust of wind seizes the ill-tempered man’s umbrella and drops it at the boy’s feet. What transpires is the sharing of a delectable treat and the beginning of an intergenerational friendship.

Through lyrical rhyme, Catherine Buquet writes of a man who, by chance, finds happiness in the unlikeliest of circumstances. Out of the commonplace grows a deeper significance. Under the umbrella, time seemed to stall. / The rain fell on... / The sky hung low... / The crowds crept by... / And none of that mattered at all. Originally published in French by Éditions Les 400 coups as Sous le parapluie, the text has been translated by Erin Woods.

Marion Arbona’s sophisticated pencil, ink and gouache illustrations ably contrast the wet and bustling streetscape with the bright, warm colours enveloping the boy and the patisserie, as if they were in a world of their own. By the story’s end, this vibrancy surrounds the man, showing young readers that something wonderful can happen when one least expects it, even on the most melancholy of days.

Senta Ross

Up! How Families Around the World Carry Their Little Ones
written by Susan Hughes
illustrated by Ashley Barron
Owlkids Books, 2017
978-1-77147-176-3 (hc) $17.95
for Preschool to Grade 1

Picture Book | Babies | Global Families

Babies being picked up and carried is a universal experience, and this picture book pays tribute to just that. “From West Africa to Peru, from Egypt to Canada’s Far North, from Korea to India, from Poland to Afghanistan and the place you call home…” the first page begins. From there, pages are shorter and more singsong, each with a line with “upsy-daisy” in it. This is a perfect way for toddler- and preschool-aged children to join in.

Each two-page spread focuses on another location around the world, a family with a baby in it and how the baby is carried. Some will be educational, displaying baby-wearing and baby-carrying practices specific to the culture in question, others are as simple and widespread as bouncing a baby on one’s hip.

Ashley Pamenter

The Time Takers
written by Helaine Becker
illustrated by Ashley Barron
Orca Book Publishers, 2017
978-1-4598-1324-3 (hc) $19.95
978-1-4598-1326-7 (eBook) $4.99
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

Picture Book | Intergenerational Friendship | Emotions | Kindness

A nice feature of this book is that each new place displays its family in a new dwelling or setting; as well, each shows a different relative carrying the baby. Aunties and others are well represented, rather than defaulting to the idea that parents (mothers in particular) are the only ones who carry babies. The carrying options include parkas and slings, arms and shoulder poles (wherein two babies sit in baskets, each tied with rope to opposite ends of a wooden pole). Attention is paid to diversity; one father uses a wheelchair, and the family at the end located “here” is notably mixed race.

Ashley Barron’s paper-cut collage visuals add texture to each page and work well with the various themes in the book.

Tara-Michelle Ziniuk
Reading: En français!

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The Best Mistake Mystery
(The Great Mistake Mysteries, Book 1)
written by Sylvia McNicoll
Dundurn, 2017
978-1-4597-3627-6 (eBook) $7.99
978-1-4597-3626-9 (pb) $8.99
for Grades 3 to 7
Fiction | Mystery | Friendship | Dogs | Responsibility | Humour | Mistakes

Twelve-year-old Stephen is gawky, a little anxious, likes to count his daily mistakes and has a tendency to over-analyze things. He isn’t good at school sports but is a champion Wii bowler. Sadly, his best friend and bowling buddy, Jessie, has moved away, leaving a big hole in Stephen’s life. He keeps himself busy by helping out with his dad’s dog-walking service, taking on his own canine clients — Ping and Pong — two totally dissimilar, slightly frenzied dogs.

While out walking the ever-excitable Ping and Pong, Stephen runs into Renée, a pushy classmate who is all sparkly accoutrements and brainy facts. Despite his protests, Renée helps him with the dogs, and the two stumble into a puzzling bit of intrigue when they witness the bomb squad blowing up a knapsack outside their school. Stephen and Renée quickly become entangled in a bigger mystery involving a curious set of neighbourhood characters, a rogue VW Beetle smashed into the school gym, an upcoming wedding and a dog-napping. Together, they solve the mystery, rescue the dog and discover the simple pleasures of friendship.

Sylvia McNicoll has written an engaging and entertaining mystery, which is not overly complicated but has enough red herrings and small twists to keep young readers guessing as to who the real culprits might be. Stephen and Renée, whose unlikely friendship mirrors that of Ping and Pong, are endearingly genuine middle school characters, full of insecurity and budding self-awareness. With Renée’s help, Stephen learns that some of his quirky personality traits might just make him a budding detective. More importantly, he learns that mistakes are part of life, opportunities to learn something new… and even a way to solve mysteries!

As this is the first in a series, readers will be delighted to know that Stephen, Renée and their zany canine companions will be back to solve more mistake mysteries!

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

Duels & Deception
written by Cindy Anstey
Swoon Reads, 2017
978-1-250-11909-4 (hc) $15.99
978-1-250-11908-7 (eBook) $10.99
for Grades 7 to 10
Fiction | Romance | Mystery | Kidnapping | Regency Era | Humour

When legal clerk Robert Newton arrives at Roseberry Hall to look into the affairs of the estate, he discovers that young heiress Lydia Whitfield seems to have things well in hand, in spite of the questionable antics of her guardian, Uncle Arthur. As heiress to the family estate, Lydia is thoroughly prepared to assume full management of Roseberry Hall once she marries her neighbour, Lord Aldershot, as per her late father’s wishes. Since she is nearing the age of majority, she enlists Mr. Newton’s assistance in preparing a marriage contract to formalize this arrangement. Yet, as Mr. Newton and the very capable Miss Whitfield continue to spend time together, they each begin to secretly regret her pending engagement. Then Lydia is kidnapped. With Robert’s help, she escapes unharmed, but clearly something is amiss, and the two are determined to apprehend her abductors. This quest continues to bring them together and gives Lydia further reason to re-evaluate all of her neatly arranged plans.

Like her previous novel, Love, Lies and Spies, Anstey’s latest work is a lighthearted Regency romance that flirts with a dash of mystery. And also like its predecessor, this book’s greatest strength is its characters and its delightful evocation of the Regency era with all of its formalities and social conventions. Lydia and Robert are likeable protagonists, and readers will enjoy the shifting narration from their alternating points of view. The prose is elegant and genteel, perfectly suited to the time period, and the dialogue is similarly refined but liberally laced with subtle wit and humour.

Jessica Rose

Breaking Faith
written by E. Graziani
Second Story Press, 2017
978-1-77260-024-7 (pb) $12.95
978-1-77260-025-4 (eBook) $8.99
for Grades 8 and up
Fiction | Drug Addiction | Heroin | Mental Illness | Homelessness | Sisters | PTSD

Eighteen-year-old Faith Emily Hansen doesn’t want to live under the weight of her heroin addiction; however, the drug’s surge of euphoria eases her anxiety and makes her difficult past feel far away. Visceral and raw, Breaking Faith is the most recent work of young adult fiction by teacher and novelist E. Graziani. It brings readers face to face with many complex issues, among them teen homelessness, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and drug addiction.

Faith shares her story — told in the first person and beginning with her traumatic childhood — at the insistence of her counsellor. When she was four, she witnessed the senseless murder of a police officer, only to be abandoned by her mother a few years later. Yet, despite the immensity of her struggles, Faith is easy to relate to. Her mature and thoughtful voice dominates Breaking Faith, heightened by Graziani’s authentic dialogue. Readers can’t help but hope for a bright future for spirited Faith.

At first glance, Breaking Faith is a highly captivating novel for teens; however, it’s also subtly educational, the result of Graziani’s in-depth research, which included working with addiction and mental health professionals. Psychiatrist Dr. Vimala Chinnasamy, who wrote the book’s afterword, congratulates Graziani on her ability to “bring the clinical elements of the story together so seamlessly with the narrative.”

Above all, Breaking Faith is a testament to the importance of supporting the family members or peers who might inhabit our homes or classrooms. Thought provoking and genuine, it highlights how just loving and nurturing someone can be a life-saving act.

Jessica Rose

Breaking Faith
written by E. Graziani
Second Story Press, 2017
978-1-77260-025-4 (eBook) $7.99
978-1-77260-026-1 (pb) $8.99
for Grades 3 to 7
Fiction | Mystery | Friendship | Dogs | Responsibility | Humour | Mistakes

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Jessica Rose

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978-1-250-11908-7 (eBook) $10.99
for Grades 7 to 10
Fiction | Romance | Mystery | Kidnapping | Regency Era | Humour

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Like her previous novel, Love, Lies and Spies, Anstey’s latest work is a lighthearted Regency romance that flirts with a dash of mystery. And also like its predecessor, this book’s greatest strength is its characters and its delightful evocation of the Regency era with all of its formalities and social conventions. Lydia and Robert are likeable protagonists, and readers will enjoy the shifting narration from their alternating points of view. The prose is elegant and genteel, perfectly suited to the time period, and the dialogue is similarly refined but liberally laced with subtle wit and humour.

Jessica Rose
revelation of the culprits behind the kidnapping may not come as a huge surprise, the story is nonetheless satisfying in its resolution. Thoroughly charming, this is a very pleasing romance and an altogether delightful read.

Lisa Doucet

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**Exo**

written by Fonda Lee

Scholastic Press, 2017

978-0-545-93343-8 (hc) $23.99

978-0-545-93344-5 (eBook) $23.99

for Grades 7 and up

Fiction | Science Fiction | Aliens | Technology | Conflict

Set sometime in the future, Earth has enjoyed 100 years of peace with the zhree — an alien race who colonized Earth. Donovan Reyes is the son of the Prime Liaison — the leading diplomat in Earth/zhree relations. Donovan is also an Exo (a technologically modified human with alien technology fused to his body), which guarantees him a future in security forces. When a routine patrol goes askew, Donovan is abducted by a group of die-hard, anti-alien extremists known as Sapience. Because of his father, they see him as the ultimate bargaining chip. What they don’t realize is that the Prime Liaison doesn’t negotiate with terrorists — not even when it comes to his son. But if the Sapience kill him, it could spark another galactic war, and that would be the most disastrous result of all.

Since its inception, science fiction writers have envisioned multiple versions of what earth would look like in the face of an alien invasion. In Lee’s version, first contact led to war, largely because the two sides misunderstood each other’s intentions. A century later, humans and zhree basically get along, but the Sapience are determined to retake earth from the aliens.

Lee’s version of a colonized earth is believable and well laid out. In this world, Donovan and the other Exos are viewed as less than human by other humans because of their alien alterations, but they are viewed as too human, by the zhree. This contrast is also applied to the Sapience. Donovan had always been taught to view the Sapience as terrorists and the enemy, but the discovery of a personal connection to one of their leaders, and his attraction to a young female rebel, makes him see them differently. Thoughtful and well-paced, this novel will have wide appeal to sci-fi buffs, and make readers consider the meaning of humanity.

Rachel Seigel
The Goat
written by Anne Fleming
Groundwood Books, 2017
978-1-55498-916-4 (hc) $16.95
978-1-55498-917-1 (eBook) $14.95
for Grades 3 to 6
Fiction | Mystery | Friendship | City Life | Animals

A six-month-long dog-sitting gig brings Kid and her parents to New York City where Kid’s mom is also preparing to open in a show on Broadway. Meanwhile, Kid and her father spend their days exploring museums and galleries as well as nearby Central Park. When Kid meets and befriends a boy named Will, the two become engrossed in solving a unique mystery: is there really a goat living on the roof of Kid’s building? As they become increasingly determined to learn the truth about this rumoured goat, they both end up confronting major fears in their lives. And unbeknownst to them, their quest impacts the lives of several other residents of the building as well... including the goat!

Fleming’s middle grade debut is a whimsical and warm-hearted delight featuring a charming and eclectic cast of characters and a highly unusual quest. While the central story follows Kid and Will’s adventures, the narrative shifts between their tale and the stories of a number of other occupants of the building. As these seemingly very separate stories unfold, they ultimately all converge when Kid and Will achieve their goal. Fleming sensitively portrays the quiet struggles that each of the various characters endures and she deftly weaves them into this one touching and triumphant tale. Characters’ challenges are depicted with a thoughtfulness that inspires empathy in readers of any age. A finely crafted, surprising and winsome tale, it is a refreshing saga of friendship and finding ways to overcome the things that hold us back.

Lisa Doucet

Laura Monster Crusher
written by Wesley King
Puffin Canada, 2017
978-0-14-319782-9 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 3 to 6
Fiction | Family | Bullying | Self-Esteem | Action | Adventure | Fantasy

This will be a 2017 middle grade favourite for me. I loved the pace, the characters and the story from beginning to end. Laura had always been the big girl and had always been teased and bullied for it. Her family makes the decision to move, to be closer to her aunt, uncle and cousins, but also to give Laura a fresh start at a new school. She meets two friends (her first friends), gains a little bit of confidence and finds a secret door in her closet that does NOT lead to Narnia. There’s even a boy. This story had a couple of jaw-dropping twists and turns and a massive betrayal that blindsided me!

I loved the message of learning to harness your inner strength; this was a very positive read. Laura really learns to stand up for herself and what’s important to her. Wesley King manages to write from the perspective of a young woman struggling with body image and navigating the social world of early teendom brilliantly.

I think it’s incredibly relevant as well that some of the bullying that takes place in the story makes it onto the Internet — a great dialogue opener for classrooms looking to talk about cyberbullying! The book is a lovely blend of contemporary and fantasy and a whole bunch of monster crushing.

I read it cover to cover in a single sitting and was so sad when it was over. I sincerely hope this will be a series!

Erin Grittani

A Little Taste of Poison
written by R.J. Anderson
Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2016
978-1-4814-3774-5 (hc) $23.99
978-1-4814-3776-9 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 4 to 7
Fiction | Mystery | Fantasy | Magic | Social Class | New School | Bullying | Family Dynamics

This exciting whodunit takes the reader on a whirlwind adventure filled with magic, mystery and suspense. Anderson’s A Little Taste of Poison is the perfect follow-up to her Silver Birch-nominated A Pocket Full of Murder. In this sequel in the Uncommon Magic series, the characters of Isaveth and Esmond (also known as Quiz) are back after trying to clear her father’s name in the first book.

Isaveth has been offered a scholarship to the elite school of magic where Esmond has been studying. As is typical for any new student, she struggles to fit in and faces bullying from peers who do not believe someone of her social status should be welcomed. In addition to trying to fit in while learning a more intense version of magic in her sagary class, she is faced with trying to reveal a murder plot by none other than Esmond’s older brother, Eryx. As the plot twists and turns, the reader is taken on a thrilling ride rife with danger and unexpected allies. Although this is the second novel in the series, Anderson gives the reader enough background information to be able to pick up where the story left off with little difficulty. She masterfully weaves together both pieces in this text.

This novel is a great choice for middle school readers in search of a gripping mystery. Anderson also delves into darker themes in a very tween-friendly way, using her relatable and imaginative characters. The playful naming conventions and strong female protagonist are sure to delight readers as they learn more about Anderson’s unique take on magic as a culinary art.

Ashley Parmeter

Summer’s End
written by Joel A. Sutherland
Scholastic Canada, 2017
978-1-4431-3932-8 (eBook) $7.99
978-1-4431-3933-5 (pb) $7.99
for Grades 6 to 9
Fiction | Horror | Suspense | Friendship | Family | Secrets

“She lied. All her words are lies. She’ll say anything, do anything, to get what she wants. And all she wants... is a family.”

Fourteen-year old Jacob and his best friend, Ishiro, have one last
summer together. In September, Ishiro is moving to Japan with his family, and Jacob will be facing grade nine, his first year in high school, alone. Even their other close friends, twins Hayden and Hannah, will be attending a different school. Jacob fervently wishes for an epic summer — one to remember and to sustain him through the changes that are to come.

The boys start their holidays by striking out on an adventure in Ishiro’s canoe. While paddling, they discover a marshy passage into an isolated and seemingly empty new lake... “it was as if they had paddled into a separate lake forgotten by time...” Sitting in the centre of the lake, they find a solitary island, overgrown and foreboding. The boys are unable to resist the island’s siren call to go exploring. Once on the island they discover Summer’s End — an abandoned house with a dark past — and become entangled in a grisly, ghostly mystery.

Joel Sutherland, author of three editions of Haunted Canada, has written a deliciously creepy and suspenseful tale, perfect for young readers making their first foray into horror. The mystery unfolds as the secrets of Summer’s End, as well as those of their town, are gradually uncovered. Jacob is a sensitive kid confronting the reality of losing his best friend and coming to terms with a secret of his own. Solving the mystery of Summer’s End helps Jacob put his own ghosts to rest, allowing him to face the impending changes in his life with confidence.

A ghostly thriller with a generous helping of blood and gore and an unexpected twist, this novel is nicely positioned at the intersection of junior and YA fiction, and will appeal to both older readers of junior fiction and those venturing into young adult books.

Tracey Schindler

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**Top Dogs: True Stories of Canines That Made History**

written by Elizabeth MacLeod

Annick Press, 2017

978-1-55451-907-1 (hc) $19.95

978-1-55451-906-4 (pb) $12.95

for Grades 4 to 6

Non-fiction | Dogs | Animals | Animal Behaviours | History | Place

Using an easy-to-follow narrative style, Elizabeth MacLeod recounts eight key canine events to demonstrate the resourcefulness and dedication of dogs throughout history. Students will also learn about other service dogs in similar roles, as well as key facts relating to the specific time period and events discussed.

The book begins with Seaman the Newfoundland who accompanied Lewis and Clark on their expeditions into what would become North America. A strong swimmer and accomplished hunter, Seaman frequently provided the crew with food and protection from wild animals. Intermingled with Seaman’s story is a brief history of the dog as a service animal, and some of the qualities that make them such valuable partners, such as their sense of smell. Other chapters explore the backgrounds of the palace Pekingese of the Empress Dowager Cixi; Togo and Balto, the dogsled heroes who brought the diphtheria antitoxin serum to Nome, Alaska; Buddy, North America’s first guide dog; and military dogs such as Stubby, a rescue dog who ended up serving overseas in World War I. Each chapter highlights the relationship between dog and owner and the community at large.
MacLeod’s research is impeccably detailed, and each section is accompanied by historical photos, sidebar stories and facts about a specific element from history. One caveat I would add is that, while informative, at times these extra sections can overwhelm the main story.

A timeline, a list of suggested further reading resources and a list of places to visit are included at the conclusion of the book. This is a bright and heavily graphic resource for dog lovers and history buffs alike, and one that confident readers will enjoy dipping into time and time again.

Jenn Hubbs is a reviewer, book seller and librarian.

What a Waste! Where Does Garbage Go?
written by Claire Eamer
illustrations by Bambi Edlund
Annick Press, 2017
978-1-55451-919-4 (hc) $22.95
978-1-55451-918-7 (pb) $14.95
for Grades 4 to 6

Using historical facts and some fun science, What a Waste! examines the problematic history of garbage and waste, and how humans have dealt with it over the centuries. More than just refuse, the creation and disposal of human garbage tells us the story of civilizations, and how we choose to deal with it in the years to come may determine the future of our planet.

Author Claire Eamer tackles topics such as the history of garbage, the difference between rural and urban refuse, wasted food, expiration dates on food, the trend towards the sale of ‘ugly’ vegetables, landfills, fatbergs, alternative toilets and everything in between. An assortment of sidebars and text boxes explain specific points in history. Each page is focused on a single topic, giving students enough information to encourage them to do further investigation.

A good portion of the book focuses on individuals and companies who have developed solutions to a variety of different problems. Eamer also takes a significant look at the use of plastic and the dangers it poses. This leads to a discussion of how we can collect and reduce the huge amount of plastic in our environment. There’s even a Canadian shout-out to the students of St. Marguerite d’Youville in Hamilton, who reduced their whole-school garbage output to a single bag. Student-motivated decision-making exercises promote practical strategies for students to use in their own classrooms and homes, without seeming pedantic.

Edlund’s colourful and humorous illustrations help to engage readers with the topic at hand. Readers will enjoy exploring the fine details of each illustration and appreciate the often-quirky characters inserted into each page. What a Waste! would be a delightful addition to any library, science classroom or home bookshelf, and it will likely be a book that will be read over and over.

Jenn Hubbs
New Editions and Re-issues

In time for Canada’s 150th birthday, an updated edition of *The Big Book of Canada: Exploring the Provinces and Territories*, written by Christopher Moore, illustrated by Bill Slavin and with an introduction by Janet Lunn, is now available from Tundra Books. Written by one of Canada’s most versatile writers of history, it offers readers a wealth of information about Canada, contains more than 140 photographs and 110 original pieces by award-winning artist Bill Slavin.

*A Northern Alphabet* by Ted Harrison is also now available from Tundra in board-book format for the first time. Harrison’s bold, graphic art introduces the landscape, the people and the flora and fauna of the Canadian north in this ABC classic.

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