Erin Bow
Weaving Story Gold

Amy Mathers on the Future of Canadian Teen Fiction

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ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR: Carey Sookocheff was born on a cold January day in Ottawa, Ontario. She has also lived through the chilly seasons of Calgary, Winnipeg and Maple Creek, Saskatchewan. A long-time sufferer of perennially cold feet, she now experiences the “wet cold” winters of Toronto with her husband, two daughters and their dog.

Opinion: The Future of Teen Fiction
Amy Mathers talks about what she’d like to see in future Canadian teen literature.

News Roundup
The Hockey Sweater to become a stage musical; Joan Marie Galat speaks at United Nations Environment Programme event in Seoul, South Korea; Guelph authors connect with immigrant families through literature; Sheree Fitch: Mabel Murple’s Book Shoppe and Dreamery; James Heneghan wins Phoenix Award; TD Canadian Children’s Book Week Tour Roster 2017.

Seen at...
A photographic look at book events

Keep Your Eye On... Kevin Sands

Profile: Erin Bow: Weaving Story Gold
Tracey Schindler profiles YA superstar Erin Bow, a physicist turned poet turned award-winning YA author.

Focus: Writing the YA series
Rachel Seigel talks to Lesley Livingston, Morgan Rhodes and Arthur Slade about the awards and challenges of writing serial fiction.

Focus: A Stronger Publishing Industry
Three book buyers share their opinions.

Bookmark! Canadian Booksellers’ Recommendations
A gift-giving guide for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

The Classroom Bookshelf
Books that encourage young people to get involved in protecting our planet.

Book Bits: New Selections for the Holiday Season
Camilia Kahrizi reviews three picture books for Chanukah and Christmas and a non-fiction title about Diwali.

We Recommend
Reviews of the latest Canadian books for children and teens.
NEW
From the author and illustrator of *Little You*

**RICHARD VAN CAMP**
**AND JULIE FLETT**

Comes a new
“sweet and loving board book.”
—*Kirkus*

“A lovely picture book that will resonate with parents and show young readers the profound, positive impact they have on their parents’ lives.” — *School Library Journal*

CCBC Best Books
Read to Me!’s 50 Best Books for Babies list
Winner of the R. Ross Annett Award
Best Picture Book at the American Indian Youth Literature Awards
If you’re anything like me, the holiday season has snuck up on you and you’re frantically trying to figure out what to buy for all those people on your list. Well, I hope you’ll have some great ideas for the children in your life after reading this issue. We’ve provided you with lists and reviews of some of the best Canadian titles published this fall. Keep reading and see what booksellers across the country are recommending, and discover some new holiday-themed books that can be read aloud in the classroom or enjoyed at home.

Having just awarded the second Amy Mathers Teen Book Award at the TD Canadian Children’s Literature Awards Gala in November, we asked Amy if she would share some insights into where she sees Canadian teen fiction heading in the future. She discusses the struggles that Canadian YA authors face as they try to produce books that will allow Canadian teens to find themselves in the titles they’re reading while still appealing to teens in the United States and abroad. Tracey Schindler profiles award-winning YA author Erin Bow, whose latest book, The Swan Riders, hit shelves in September, and Rachel Seigel has a round-table discussion with Lesley Livingston, Meghan Rhodes and Arthur Slade about writing serial fiction. Alison Morgan chats with three Canadian booksellers about how we can create a stronger publishing industry in Canada, and we learn which provinces authors, illustrators and storytellers are visiting during TD Canadian Children’s Book Week 2017.

Also in this issue, in “Keep Your Eye On,” we chat with Kevin Sands, author of The Blackthorn Key and Mark of the Plague, discovering how he broke into the field and why he likes to write books for kids; we introduce you to three new titles that teach kids about protecting the planet; and we have reviews of many new books to curl up with over the long, cold Canadian winter.

Venture into a new book today!

Sandra O’Brien
Time and time again, the theme of identity comes up in teen fiction.
When you’re a teen — learning about yourself, coming to terms with new responsibilities, getting used to a changing body, handling new feelings and dealing with school, parents, friends, cultural expectations, society in general — there’s endless potential for things to go off course. And in those moments when it seems like the world is falling apart, stories are there to help us pick up the pieces and go on. Stories make us realize we’re not alone, and help us to find our place first as a person, and then in all the other identities of our lives.

In Canadian teen fiction, however, while Canada is known for publishing diverse children’s books, one of the most obvious identities is usually missing — being Canadian.

During a talk I heard her give at the Kitchener Public Library during her term as Writer-in-Residence, author Kelley Armstrong explained the reasons behind the phenomenon this way, “Canada is foreign but not exotic.” When I speak with Canadian authors about their books, a lot tell me they’ve heard the same words from their editors and publishers and have had to adjust their work accordingly. And in those moments when it seems like the world is falling apart, stories are there to help us pick up the pieces and go on. Stories make us realize we’re not alone, and help us to find our place first as a person, and then in all the other identities of our lives.

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The other reason is this — from the earliest days of discovery and settlement in the 1500s and 1600s until now, Canada has been known as a country people come to from somewhere else. Forced here by other governments, trying to escape war or famine, or simply looking for more opportunities, living in Canada is a transition made by many. Aside from the Indigenous Peoples of Canada, we are a nation made up of immigrants from all over the world.

It also inspires a wide selection of stories about our countries of origin. From When Morning Comes by Arushi Raina to Aluta by Adwoa Badoe to Strange Light Afar by Rui Umezawa to Child of Dandelions by Shenaaz Nanji (to name just a few), authors are sharing their world views and enriching our readership through the thoughtful portrayals that result.

This awareness of the world, as well as a keen interest in putting an emotional perspective on past historical events, is something Canada can be proud of, producing powerful books like Worlds of Ink and Shadow by Lena Coakley, The Darkest Corner of the World by Urve Tamberg and The Emperor of Any Place by Tim Wynne-Jones.

At times, though, this outward focus leads us to cast a blind eye to the problems of our own country, as author Lawrence Hill points out in his article, “How Harper Lee helped Canadians ignore racism in their own backyard” (Globe and Mail, February 19, 2016). Hill writes, “Black history in Canada is as complex and varied as the history of any racial or ethnic group, but we have lost sight of that, partly as a result of our obsession with evil in another era and another country.”

I can think of two teen books, Chasing Freedom by Gloria Ann Wesley and Stones by William Bell, that contradict Hill’s claim that Canada is obsessed with racism in another country, but both books feature at least some historical-fiction elements, placing them in another era. The fact that so few examples come to mind proves his assertion, which can also be extended to a reluctance to talk about the other problems Canada faces, namely discrimination, poverty and violence.

Also on the list of taboo topics are atrocious acts Canada has committed — using Chinese men to build the Canadian Pacific Railway, the internment of Japanese-Canadian citizens during World War II and The Somalia Affair in 1993.

A familiar Canadian narrative we are willing to explore most often is our shameful history of residential schools. While having relatable books about Canada’s cultural genocide of Indigenous Peoples is especially important as school curriculums start incorporating the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, what we lack are cur-
rent books featuring Indigenous Peoples. The Outside Circle, a graphic novel by Patti Laboucan-Benson and Kelly Mellings and The Missing by Melanie Florence are notable exceptions, one providing a concrete example of the lasting effects residential schools have had over generations and the other offering a new and compelling perspective on the need for the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls.

Coupled with Ontario’s initiative to promote culture and the arts through school curriculums, Indigo’s #ReadTheNorth campaign and renewed Canada Council funding by the federal government, now seems like the perfect time to tell Canadian stories.

Unfortunately, with Canada’s small market and the melting-pot nature of the United States, writers are encouraged to focus on either being exotic or homogeneous to an American audience, and actual Canadian stories have little place in the mix.

While Indigo’s #ReadTheNorth campaign promotes Canadian literature, it also reinforces our identity in the context of our geographical proximity to the United States. It’s a catchy hashtag, and quite relevant when used by the Raptors in the similar form #WeTheNorth to signify their status as the only Canadian NBA team. This identity seems to be one we’re happy with and even proud of in sport, but takes on a different meaning when put in the context of arts and culture. Yes, Canada is distinctive in the fact that we are known for our cold winters, our large and geographically varied country and our location, all of which come across in stories that are easily identifiable as Canadian.

However, Canada is also known for our focus on social justice, our immigrant population, our peaceful nature, our extensive worldview and our struggles in trying to make reparations for grievous treatment of people who deserved to be respected. We don’t always get it right, and we have failed our most vulnerable citizens more than once, but we continue to try to be better.

When these Canadian themes — our stories of where we’ve succeeded and of where we’ve failed, as well as of our incredibly complex relationship with the United States — are reflected in our teen literature, the result is potent and informative. Examples include If You Live Like Me by Lori Weber, Gravity by Leanne Lieberman and Trouble is a Friend of Mine by Stephanie Tomly. As we continue to focus on providing readers with books that tell the stories of minority groups (LGBTQ2 community, people with disabilities, people dealing with mental illness, Indigenous youth, etc.), we need to remember that being Canadian is an identity, too, and, in the context of living next door to the United States, a minority one at that.

Ken Setterington’s comment that “Librarians wandering the publisher displays at the big U.S. conferences often seem surprised to discover that so many of their favorites are Canadian” (School Library Journal, August 11, 2016) tells me two things. One, Canadian writers create memorable books. And two, writers from Canada are not generally identified as being Canadian.

About eight years ago, I was in the same position as the librarians in Setterington’s quote. If asked, I’d have been lucky to name five Canadian teen authors and I actually live in Canada. Now, if someone talks to me about a book, my default is to assume the writer is Canadian. Often, though, the author is American, and my limited knowledge of American teen fiction feels like a gap, as though focusing on Canadian teen fiction isn’t enough.

It’s odd, but it also reveals something about Canadian teen fiction culture — that we’re comfortable hiding in the shadows, downplaying our homegrown talent, and that American teen fiction bestsellers tend to eclipse the books we offer.

In her speech at the Canadian Children’s Book Centre Annual General Meeting, former Canadian Children’s Book News editor Gillian O’Reilly urged writers to not be afraid to write the landscape of Canada. While this can be interpreted in a geographical sense, and she was talking more to children’s authors, it also pertains to writing about the issues that affect Canadian teens specifically. Teens are in an unparalleled time in their lives when they are learning about the world around them and still forming opinions. They are able to deal with complex issues that at times have unclear resolutions.

In the end, books written for a teen audience serve two main purposes. One is to educate and expand the views of the reader, encouraging empathy and understanding, while the second is to reach the readers who are going through the same thing and are looking for connection and community.

While talking with teen author Robin Stevenson, I complained about how books about disabled people (people like me) are few and far between, and then end up being disappointing anyway. She could relate, telling me that because there are so few books on certain topics, they end up having increased pressure on them to tell and reflect the stories of all in said group. When finding a book that echoes your experience is so challenging in the first place, it’s easy to pin your hopes on it. It’s also easy to become angry when you realize the author has sensationalized real issues for the sake of writing a “good story.” Finding those books that capture something real and bring the humanity into a subject is like finding gold.

My recent mining expeditions have turned up Girl Mans Up by M.E. Girard and Small Displays of Chaos by Breanna Fischer.

As author Richard Scrimger puts it most succinctly in the voice of Ralph Brody, a visiting author in Downside Up, “The idea... is to know the characters you are writing about. A lot of the time that’ll be you. Know yourself. Tell your story.”

What is the future of Canadian teen fiction? It’s hard to say definitively. What I would like to see is a vast selection of books, written by diverse authors, that allow teens to find themselves reflected in the stories they’re reading, no matter what their circumstances. I take very seriously author Sheree Fitch’s encouragement to writers to write the books they needed — because chances are someone else out there is looking for them, too. If writers from Canada claim their Canadian identity, keep striving for authenticity and tell their own stories in their own unique voices, we will continue our legacy of diverse writing, fostering new ideas of what being Canadian truly means.

Amy Mathers is a columnist for the CCBC’s e-newsletter for teachers and a YA reviewer for the National Reading Campaign.
Joan Marie Galat speaks at United Nations Environment Programme event in Seoul, South Korea

Award-winning author Joan Marie Galat of Edmonton, presented at A Special Rendezvous of the Environment and the Arts in Seoul, South Korea. Her speech, called The Nature of Night, revealed the relationship between art and science in our Earth and sky environment.

Held at Seoul City Hall on July 22, 2016, the talk concert was attended by more than 250 people, including the Canadian Ambassador to Korea, Eric Walsh. The event increased awareness about sustainable development and climate change through inspiring stories from cultural experts. Two other speakers participated: Henry Tsang, sustainable architect and professor, and Ho-Seob Yoon, visual communication designer and professor.

While in South Korea, Galat also provided presentations for elementary and high school students. She then travelled to Tokyo for a meeting about her books with members of the National Astronomical Observatory of Japan and the International Astronomical Union.

Guelph Authors Connect with Immigrant Families Through Literature

Eric Walters was the driving force behind Welcome Neighbours, an event held in Guelph on Saturday, September 17, that featured Canadian children’s authors connecting with immigrant families. Joining Walters were Robert Munsch, Jean Little, Kathy Stinson, Jo Ellen Bogart, Janet Wilson, Lisa Dalrymple, Kira Vermond and Werner Zimmermann. Walters organized the event so that refugee families were connecting with immigrant families. Joining Walters were Robert Munsch, Jean Little, Kathy Stinson, Jo Ellen Bogart, Janet Wilson, Lisa Dalrymple, Kira Vermond and Werner Zimmermann. Walters organized the event so that refugee families were connecting with immigrant families.

Authors, illustrators and other dignitaries all read a page from Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family’s Journey, written by Margriet Ruurs, to the audience, and then the page was read aloud in Arabic by interpreters. The book, published by Orca Book Publishers, was given to all those in attendance. After the reading, some of the children performed a song in both Arabic and English for those gathered. Children also received copies of books written and illustrated by the authors in attendance, including some of Munsch’s work that has been translated into Arabic.


The Canadian Children’s Book Centre is excited to announce the tour locations for the authors, illustrators and storytellers taking part in TD Canadian Children’s Book Week, which runs from May 6-13, 2017. Schools, libraries, bookstores and community centres can visit www.bookweek.ca for more information and to apply for a special visit from one of these fabulous Canadian creators!

Alberta

Joyce Grant, author
John Martz, author & illustrator

British Columbia

Geneviève Côté, author & illustrator

Lower Mainland

Mahtab Narsimhan, author

Vancouver Island

Charis Cotter, author

Northern Region

Melanie Florence, author

Manitoba

Marianne Dubuc, author & illustrator
Beth Goobie, author

New Brunswick

Linda Granfield, author

Newfoundland

Josée Bisaillon, author & illustrator

Labrador

Mireille Messier, author

Northwest Territories

Natasha Deen, author

Nova Scotia

Kathleen Kompass, storyteller

Nunavut

Joan Marie Galat, author

Ontario

Mike Boldt, author & illustrator
Jason Chabot, author
Karen Gummo, storyteller
Kate Inglis, author
Diane Carmel Léger, author
Stacey Matson, author
Gabrielle Prendergast, author

Prince Edward Island

Caroll Simpson, author & illustrator

Quebec (English-language tour)

Norm Perrin, storyteller
Kathryn Shoemaker, author & illustrator
Judith Silverthorne, author
Ted Staunton, author
Kari-Lynn Winters, author

Saskatchewan

Northern Region

Alan Cumyn, author

Southern Region

Erin Bow, author

Yukon

Emil Sher, author

The Hockey Sweater to become a stage musical

In 1980, The Hockey Sweater, the iconic story by Roch Carrier, was made into an acclaimed National Film Board animated film by Sheldon Cohen, who illustrated the children’s book that was issued as a 30th anniversary edition. Now Emil Sher is writing a book and lyrics (with composer Jonathan Monro) for a stage musical of the beloved story. Sher has written numerous plays that have been produced on Canadian stages. His latest, The Book of Ashes, inspired by the true story of an Iraqi librarian who saved tens of thousands of books in the midst of war, premiered at the International Children’s Festival in St. Albert, Alberta, in the spring of 2016. Sher is a laureate of the 2014 K.M. Hunter Artist Award in Literature, and his debut novel for continued on page 8
1. Eric Walters, Werner Zimmerman, Lisa Dalrymple, Kathy Stinson, Kira Vermond, Janet Wilson, Jo Ellen Bogart, Jean Little and Robert Munsch welcome Syrian refugees to the Guelph area in September.

2. Author and illustrator Kevin Sylvester signed autographs for his many fans.

3. Margriet Ruurs signs copies of *Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family’s Journey* at the launch in Vancouver.

4. Students from John T. Tuck Public School proudly display their Telling Tales Explore Your World School Contest winning entry to Barbara Reid who inspired their beautiful work of art.
young readers, Young Man with Camera, was a Governor General’s Literary Award finalist. To learn more about Emil Sher’s work, please visit www.emilsher.com.

A Dream Come True
Author Sheree Fitch has dreamed about owning a book store since she was a teenager. After getting a degree in children’s literature, she went on to author titles such as Mabel Murple, Sleeping Dragons All Around and Toes in my Nose and Other Poems and has also written books for adults and young adults. But now, after many years of success in the field of children’s literature, another dream is coming true.

Fitch and her husband Gilles Plante have decided to open Mabel Murple’s Book Shoppe and Dreamery. The plan is to have a soft opening of the bookstore in River John, Nova Scotia, next June. Fitch and her husband are renovating two buildings across the street from their home and hobby farm that will eventually be turned into the bookstore and a space for workshops and storytelling. With plans to carry Canadian children’s books she loves and Atlantic books for adults, there will be something for everyone.

According to The Pictou Advocate, Fitch has already received requests from schools to visit on class trips and for experiential learning. She also mentioned that the store will be as much about storytelling as it will be about the books. At present, Fitch is working on a novel to be published in 2017, entitled Majorly Weird and Freakwently Wonderful, and she is also co-editing an anthology of poetry for and Freakwently Wonderful, and she is Majorly Weird published in 2017, entitled Wish Me Luck, James Heneghan, author of Wish Me Luck, published by Farrar Strauss Giroux in 1997.

Wish Me Luck, James Heneghan, published by Farrar Strauss Giroux in 1997, was a Governor General’s Literary Award winner. For more information visit, www.childlitassn.org/phoenix-award.

Tell us about your newest book. In Mark of the Plague, the Black Death has returned to London, spreading disease and fear through the city. A mysterious prophet predicts the city’s ultimate doom — until an unknown apothecary arrives with a cure that actually works. But when an assassin threatens the apothecary’s life, Christopher and his faithful friend, Tom, are back to hunting down the truth, risking their lives to untangle the web of a dark conspiracy. And as the sickness strikes close to home, the stakes are higher than ever before...

Tell us about the process of writing. I start with research: for The Blackthorn Key, I learned about apothecaries and Restoration London; for Mark of the Plague, it was the Great Plague and epidemics. Then I plot everything in detail, laying out what happens in each scene before I begin. Once that’s done, I write the first draft: around 5000 words a day, not worrying about quality yet, just getting the story down. Future drafts then improve and/or rework the story until the final polish — which is always the best part!

How did you first get published? It took a while to break through. I wrote three manuscripts before The Blackthorn Key, querying one, which nobody wanted. At the time, I was disappointed, but looking back, I see why it got 100 rejections: it was terrible! So in retrospect, I’m glad no one took it.

After all that, The Blackthorn Key went quickly: I queried agents in May 2014, chose one in June, made edits that summer, then submitted to publishers, signing with Simon & Schuster in September. But it took over five years to get there!

What do you like about writing for young people? It’s the most fun of all the genres. And you don’t have to stick to one particular style to be successful: funny or serious, light or dark, breakneck or introspective — all can work, even within the same book.

It’s telling that “adventure” is a category found only in middle grade; adult books are “thrillers” or “mysteries.” There are plenty of adult adventures — the most successful book in recent history, The Da Vinci Code, was one — but you’re not allowed to call them that. Books for younger readers are the only place you’re permitted to have unabashed fun.

Tell us about writers who inspire you. There are so many! Several inspired me when I was young: Michael Crichton, with brilliant plots and pacing; Stephen King, who’s been taking us inside the heads of characters for nearly 50 years; Dick Francis, for introducing me to mysteries; Michael Moorcock, David Eddings and Raymond E. Feist for fuelling an obsession with fantasy. More recently, I’d say J.K. Rowling, for reshaping children’s fiction, and Brandon Mull, who writes my favourite kind of adventures.
CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNERS OF THE
2016 Canadian Children’s Book Centre Awards!

**Missing Nimâmâ**
written by Melanie Florence
illustrated by François Thisdale
Clockwise Press
Winner of the
TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award

**L’arbragan**
written and illustrated by
Jacques Goldstyn
Éditions de la Pastèque
Winner of the
Prix TD de littérature canadienne pour l’enfance et la jeunesse

**Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox**
written and illustrated by
Danielle Daniel
Groundwood Books
Winner of the
Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award

**Sex Is a Funny Word: A Book About Bodies, Feelings, and You**
written by Cory Silverberg
illustrated by Fiona Smyth
Seven Stories Press
Winner of the
Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children’s Non-Fiction

**The Blackthorn Key**
(Blackthorn Key)
written by Kevin Sands
Aladdin
Winner of the
John Spray Mystery Award

**The Scorpion Rules**
(Prisoners of Peace)
written by Erin Bow
Margaret K. McElderry Books
Winner of the
Monica Hughes Award for Science Fiction and Fantasy

**The Truth Commission**
written by Susan Juby
Razorbill Canada
Winner of the
Amy Mathers Teen Book Award

For more information, visit bookcentre.ca
Erin Bow

Weaving Story Gold

BY TRACEY SCHINDLER

“Love of storytelling and love of language need not be at odds. In children’s literature, they aren’t. In YA, you will find stories told without cynicism about stories. Stories told without the need to deconstruct stories. Stories with beginnings, middles, and ends. Stories innocent of modernism. Stories of all kinds — but always stories.” — Erin Bow

What do an orphan with a talking cat and a talent for woodcarving, a girl who lives at the edge of the world learning to bind the dead, and a crown princess held hostage have in common? If you said that all three characters come from the incredible imagination of YA author Erin Bow, you would be right. A few years ago, a wonderful librarian suggested I read the book Plain Kate. The author, he told me, was also a poet and her writing was beautifully lyrical — the story dark but extraordinary. Two paragraphs in and I was hooked. I have been an Erin Bow fan ever since.

Erin is a physicist turned poet turned YA novelist who was born in Des Moines and raised in Omaha, but became Canadian through love. She resides in Kitchener, Ontario, with her husband James Bow, their two young daughters and a goofy labradoodle named Luna. She writes in their backyard garden shed, which they converted into her writing sanctuary. Until this fall, she also held a part-time post as a Science Writer at Perimeter Institute for Theoretical Physics, a job that combined her love of science with her love of writing. Now she has made the leap to being a full-time writer.

It’s perhaps not so much of a leap as the next rational step — in 2015, the CBC declared that Erin Bow is “so close to YA superstardom she could probably touch it.” Her work has earned much literary praise and a fistful of awards. Her poetry (two collections published under her maiden name, Noteboom) has won the Canadian Literary Award, and when her first novel, Plain Kate, won the TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award (2011), the jury stated that it is a book “to be read for generations.” Her second novel, Sorrow’s Knot, won the Monica Hughes Award for Science Fiction and Fantasy (2014), and The Scorpion Rules has been named Book of the Year for Young Adults (2016) by the Canadian Library Association as well as being short-listed for both The Amy Mathers Teen Book Award and the Monica Hughes Award for Science Fiction and Fantasy.

All three of Bow’s fantasy/sci-fi/dystopian novels share common themes of death, loss and heartbreak, but also of renewal and second chances. Bow has an immense respect for kids and her work reflects that respect. She does not shy away from the dark and shadowed in her storytelling. In a 2014 interview, she stated that “… stories shouldn’t be dumbed down or prettied up for kids. Kids have emotionally complicated and important things going on in their lives. Stories for children should reflect that.” About the lives of teenagers, she observed that, “Teenagers deal with big stuff, even if they don’t have contact with actual deaths. The emotional journey of adolescence seems to me a series of weddings and funerals, highs and lows, beginnings and endings, firsts and lasts. I think it’s good to have stories where heroes deal with big stuff and come out the other side. Someone once said that it’s okay to take young readers to dark places, so long as you don’t leave them there. I agree with that.”

Through her storytelling, Bow immerses her readers in fantastical worlds populated with remarkable characters — weaving a magical tapestry of words. Since her newest book, The Swan Riders, a companion novel to The Scorpion Rules, hit the shelves in late September, there is no better time to learn a little more about this truly remarkable YA author.

Could you start off by telling us three curious facts about your life thus far?

I studied physics instead of English because I thought I could teach myself to write and read, but teaching myself about eigenvectors was kind of a tall order. I was good at physics:
as a student I worked at the CERN supercollider. I still miss it.

I have weird luck. I’ve been hit by lightning. I’ve been rear
dended by a funeral procession. At my first literary festival, I
stepped on a nest of bumblebees and went from the emer
gency room to the stage, where I gave my first reading bare
foot because my feet were too swollen for my kicky boots.

I am one of those people who want to travel the whole
world. I have had raclette at Swiss hostels, frogs in Beijing and
fermented horse milk beer in Mongolia. I want to do it all. I
want to be 90 and waltz into a youth hostel, swinging off my
huge backpack.

YA is such an interesting category of fiction... it crosses
many divides. What drew you to writing YA?
When I sat down to write my first novel, Plain Kate, I didn’t
really think about what genre it was going to be. I had just
read a huge volume of Russian fairytales, so it tumbled out
sort of Russian, and sort of fairy tale. And it tumbled out YA, I
think for similar reasons: YA was what I was reading.

The shorter answer is that I write YA because I read YA.
There are a lot of things to love about it — emotional intensity,
compressed timelines, fluidity of genre conventions — but I
think what it boils down to is that YA is in love with story,
as opposed to being in love with language or with literary
cleverness.

I’m also a published poet, and I’m in love with language,
and with beautiful sentences. I enjoy literary cleverness in
small doses. But these are not enough for me, without a story.
YA uses teenagers as a kind of story quality control system:
small doses. But these are not enough for me, without a story.

I think fantasy writers know that dreams entering the waking
world are always scary and surreal and important. This one is
annoying, so... what can you do?

Each of your books creates such immersive worlds — from
the darkly magical realm of Plain Kate to the fractured
North America of Scorpion Rules. Where do you find
inspiration for your world building?
I believe that a fantastical world — and I include science fic
ction in that heading — has to have an economy, an ecology
and a mythology. Otherwise, it comes off as set dressing, just
a few inches thick and not extending far past the edge of the
stage. People can tell.

One way I build worlds is from the details up. Sorrow’s Knot,
for example, features a culture that binds the dead — literally
binds them, in knots of dyed yarn, because otherwise they
come back and are generally terrifying. I put a lot of thought
into the yarn and the cords in that book. They are an impor
tant part of the setting: the village of Westmost is surrounded
by a ward of knotted cords, like a giant magic fence. They are
unreliable narrators like Megan Whalen Turner and sweeping
universes like Tamora Pierce and... I could go on and on.

I feel very lucky to know some talented YA writers person
ally. I’m married to one of them, James Bow. E.K. Johnston,
R.J. Anderson and I regularly get together over shawarma and
plot world domination. It is good to have writer friends. It can
be a strange and isolating profession, and you need someone
who you can tell the truth to, even if that truth makes you look
bad. Such as, “I killed someone today; I feel amazing.”

Can you remember what you felt when your first book
was published?
I sold my first novel on the American election day in 2008, the
day Obama got elected. I’d been a campaign volunteer; it was
a heady day. I remember leaving my horrible, horrible job to
have lunch with my family and sneak a glass of champagne.
My three-year-old didn’t get why I was so excited, what was
so special about the day. I told her that a good man had been
elected president, and that I had sold my book for a lot of
money, and therefore we could change the way we lived, and
be happier. It would be a better world.

She thought for a moment then asked, “Can all my jelly
beans be red?”

What is the hardest part of the writing process for you?
The kid with the jellybeans once asked me, “What’s taking
you so long with your book, Mommy? Is it all the words?”

The hardest part is all the words.

There are a few magic days where I create something from
nothing, and it feels effortless and powerful and like the best
thing in the world. I live for them, but mostly the days are not
like that. Most days are about locking myself in my writing
shed for an hour, even though I’d rather scrub the toilets or
possibly chew off my own foot like a fox. It’s hard but it’s also
amazing, so... what can you do?

How does it feel to make the transition to being a
full-time writer?
It’s only been two weeks, so I’m going to go with “terrifying.”
I think fantasy writers know that dreams entering the waking
world are always scary and surreal and important. This one is
no different.

What other YA authors inspire or challenge you?
There are so many! The community is open-hearted and the
books are fantastic. I want to do ensemble casts like Leah Bar
dugo and effortless-seeming historical settings like Elizabeth
Wein and snappy dialogue like Sarah Reese Brennan and
culturally important, with everyone wearing bracelets and practising cats-craddle games. The village where the hero lives has no wool-bearing animals. So where do they get the wool? They must trade for it, but with whom? What do they trade in return? That strongly informed the economy of the world, and gave me a class of people who went out into the forest to gather dyes, despite the risk of getting eaten by the dead outside the ward: thus, plot. The world is built from the yarn up.

Plus, it just makes a setting seem much more credible if you get little details right. The Scorpion Rules and The Swan Riders take place in a far-future world, and contain elaborate geopolitics, magnetically launched spaceships and a fantastically powerful trans-human intelligence that is enforcing a global peace. But the first book also takes place entirely on a permaculture goat farm. And let me tell you, the goat husbandry is SPOT ON. People believe me about the spaceships because I got the goats right. The mundane earns the fantastic.

Does having two young daughters influence how you write your female protagonists?
Not really. I was a feminist before I had kids, and having two daughters has not changed it — just made it more urgent and a little angrier. (The stuff my 10-year-old science-loving beauty with the pixie cut goes through, for being lovely, for being smart, for having short hair, for heaven’s sake — it would be irritating if it were happening to me, but to see it happen to her makes me want to set things on fire.)

I write the fabled “strong female characters” without really trying. The trick is simply to write them as fully human, and to put them in charge of their own stories.

It’s maybe worth expanding on that last part a little, because it’s the part that I sometimes get wrong. The ending of Plain Kate, for instance, has the hero making a hard decision and then taking a dramatic action that has real consequences. I went through several drafts before I got that right. There was a draft where the decision wasn’t hers, a draft where the action wasn’t hers and another draft where her attempt to take action didn’t come off. I struggled to figure out what was wrong with it.

This experience has made me aware of how many books have a supposedly strong female character who is under-mined at crucial moments. She decides to take a stand that’s going to change things and transform her, but she doesn’t actually get to do it because she is knocked unconscious, tied to a horse and whisked away.

I’m not saying that we as writers can never have “horse whisking” happen to our female heroes, but I think we need to watch out for those moments where stories about girls become stories about someone else. We’re all conditioned by hundreds of years of stories that are never ultimately about the girls, and the pull of all those stories is strong.

Could you reflect a bit on the importance of diversity in YA fiction?
As a white person, I’ve never lacked for people who look like me in fiction of any kind. So I really can only imagine what fiction is like for those who have never, ever seen themselves as the hero in the story. I have glimpses of how important it is — I have written about what my self-portrait queer heroine means to me, and would have meant to me as a young reader. But I cannot truly know.

But there’s something even white people lose when we have this unrealistic all-white, all-abled, all-straight cast in books: we lose the richness of the real world. I want better than that for myself as a reader, and for my mostly white children as readers. Books are meant to take us out of ourselves and tell us new things about what it means to be human.

I met a retired academic recently — bit of an ass, really — who, when asked if he’d ever read Charlotte’s Web, retorted: “Why would I? I don’t have children.” Imagine missing Charlotte’s Web. Imagine missing all the fiction that isn’t catering directly to you. That’s a great sadness and smallness, and I want no part of it.

I want books with black heroes and Muslim heroes and autistic heroes and on and on — mostly because black and Muslim and autistic kids deserve these books, but also, selfishly, because I want to grow old and get bigger and happier, not smaller and sadder.

If you had a superpower, what would it be?
The ability to fall asleep simply and easily, without fuss, when I’m tired.

Or, possibly, flying.

What are you working on currently? Can you give us any hints?
My agent will kill me if I tell you too much, but I want to do a brothers-and-sisters story, which I’ve never done, and I want to do another story with a great animal-human relationship in it. I am working on one that has both.

What advice might you offer writers trying to break into the industry?
I personally have found the YA community hugely welcoming and supportive. I hang out, virtually and sometimes in person, with writers and readers who know about book hangovers and character crushers and copy-editing hells. These people know who is writing what, and who is publishing what and what the problems and triumphs are. In this way, rather organically, I’ve learned a lot, and feel I fit naturally into the community — not a thing that often happens to me.

If I were starting out today, I’d seek out online communities like the Blue Boards or Facebook groups, or the YA side of Twitter. There are also communities on Wattpad and NaNoWriMo, if that’s your thing. If you happen to live somewhere near where CANSCAIP or SCWBI meets, then conferences can be a huge creative kick-start.

That said, I broke into the industry with no connections, no fiction track record, no networking and the world’s worst query letter, sent over the transom and into the slush pile. So it’s perhaps encouraging to know that you don’t HAVE to do any of this stuff. The only absolute requirement is to write the best darn book you possibly can. 🖤

Tracey Schindler is a book reviewer and former teacher living in Bethany, Ontario.
“Arushi Raina’s *When Morning Comes* is riveting historical fiction . . . its characters are engaging, its description of societal differences and injustice is thought-provoking, and its action sequences are at times heart-stopping.

At its best, historical fiction allows us to feel as if we are living through something we have only read about. That is especially true in the case of *When Morning Comes*.”

— Montreal Gazette

“This novel presents an excellent starting point to inspire curiosity, and serves as a bold and dignified testament to a struggle that shouldn’t be forgotten.”

— Quill and Quire

*When Morning Comes* explores the roots of the 1976 Soweto Uprising in South Africa—told from the points-of-view of four youths from diverse backgrounds.

Introducing young adult readers to a remarkable new literary talent, *When Morning Comes* offers deeply compelling storytelling with a vivid snapshot of South African society on the eve of the student-led uprising that changed it forever.
It is difficult to pinpoint the exact origin of the book series. While some historians consider C.S. Lewis’s Narnia, or Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings trilogy, to be the first examples of series, neither was originally imagined that way. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote multiple stories about Sherlock Holmes in the late 19th and early 20th century (to the point of despising his own character), while around the same time, Lucy Maud Montgomery’s Anne Shirley, Baum’s Oz and Lofting’s Doctor Doolittle series were gaining popularity with children. Whenever it originated, the draw of series (or serial fiction as it’s often called) is indisputable. A series offers readers familiarity of characters and setting, and appeals to personal interest. It’s been nine years since J.K. Rowling published the final Harry Potter novel, and yet its fan base is one of the largest and most active in the world. With the growth of Young Adult Fiction as a category has also come an explosion of Young Adult series. From Hunger Games to Maze Runner to Princess Diaries and Pretty Little Liars, series enjoy a strong popularity with teens.

But what about writing series appeals to authors? To find out, three Canadian Young Adult series authors were interviewed, all of whom have a unique perspective on the benefits and challenges of writing series fiction.

Lesley Livingston is an award-winning author of teen and middle grade fiction, best known for Wondrous Strange, recently named one of CBC’s “100 YA Books That Make You Proud To Be Canadian.” Livingston’s books have sold to more than 10 countries to date, and Wondrous Strange has been optioned for film/TV by Shaftesbury Films. Livingston’s current work-in-progress is a YA historical epic, The Valiant, which will be published in February 2017, by Penguin Razorbill (US) and HarperCollins (CAN) and tells the story of a 17-year-old girl’s journey from fierce Celtic princess to female gladiator and darling of the Roman Empire.

Morgan Rhodes lives in Ontario. As a child, she always wanted to be a princess — the kind that knows how to wield a sharp sword to help save both kingdoms and princes from fire-breathing dragons and dark wizards. Instead, she became a writer, which is just as good and much less dangerous. Along with writing, Rhodes enjoys photography, travel and reality TV, and is an extremely picky yet voracious reader of all kinds of books. Under another pen name, she’s a nationally bestselling author of many paranormal novels. www.fallingkingdoms.net www.morganrhodes.tumblr.com She is currently working on copy edits for the fifth book in the Falling Kingdoms series, Crystal Storm, which comes out December 13th, and next she dives right into writing the third and final book in the Spirits and Thieves trilogy!

Arthur Slade was raised on a ranch in the Cypress Hills of Saskatchewan and currently lives in Saskatoon. He is the author of 18 novels for young readers, including The Hunchback Assignments, which won the prestigious TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award, and Dust, winner of the Governor General’s Award for Children’s Literature. Visit him online at www.arthurslade.com. His latest novel is Crimson, set in a world where magic is fading and a queen who has ruled for a thousand years is starting to lose her grip on the queendom.
1. What is the appeal of writing a series over a standalone? Which do you prefer?

**LL:** Every book I've had published to date has been a part of a series. Granted, the first instalments of my Wondrous Strange series and my Never series can be read as standalones, but I wrote them specifically with series continuation in mind.

**MR:** If I have to pick one, I love writing series. When writing a series, I get to spend more time with the characters and watch them grow and change, and they can sometimes take me by surprise by how they develop over time.

**AS:** The appeal is taking characters and watching them change over a longer period of time than one story. Plus, if a book is good, we often wish there was more. There is an equal joy in digging into a rich world that lasts for four novels and writing a one off (and being done with that story).

2. How does writing a series differ from writing a stand-alone novel?

**LL:** I honestly don't think it does. At least, not for me. I already have to have way more of the world in my head than ever appears in the books. There are corners of the sandbox that I might never get around to playing in, but I still know that they exist.

**AS:** Characters are generally the same. World building is the same process, but only has to be done once in the first book then added onto with each following volume.

3. How do you go about writing your series? For example, do you outline all volumes / have an overall plan? Where do you start? Characters? Setting?

**LL:** It almost always starts with characters. And setting, for me, is almost always a character (or characters) in and of itself. I usually start with a fairly detailed plan of what I want to happen in book one, and an overall concept of the series arc. I know I’ll inevitably make discoveries during the actual writing stage that will impact the storylines, so I try not to get too stuck on a path before I know what those discoveries are going to be.

**MR:** From the beginning, I had a pretty good idea of the main story arc in Falling Kingdoms. With characters, I like to start with what seem like archetypes — the dark prince, the spoiled princess, the angry rebel — but get to know their depth over time. While I plot each book when it’s time to write it, I didn’t know exactly how everything would pan out in the series, which is part of the fun.

**AS:** I usually start with an image or an idea. For the Hunchback Assignments series, the basic idea was “what if a hunchback could change shape and become a spy for the British Empire?” But the first image I had was of him clinging to a wall in the rain while pursuing someone. The story expanded from there (both forward and backward, since that scene eventually appeared about a quarter of the way into the book). I am a lazy planner, so I only had very vague ideas of where the character would be going in the following books and discovered each story as I was writing.

4. How do you maintain continuity between volumes? How do you remember what happened in the previous books, know what will happen going forward, keep track of characters?

**LL:** I don’t keep charts or lists or spreadsheets, although it might be helpful if I did! What I tend to do, like Art mentioned, is mostly keep reading back through the previous books as I write forward, hunting for the hidden threads and buried gems I’ve already embedded in the narrative. That has the benefit of also keeping my head in the story as I go and fostering continuity from book to book.

**MR:** I do have a series “bible” that contains physical traits and locations, etc. But I find that I need to skim the last books to refresh my memory as I’m editing the latest one, just to try to avoid any plot holes or inconsistencies.

**AS:** I write in Scrivener, so I am able to keep a master list of characters. But I also found that I did a lot of re-reading of previous volumes (even listening to the audiobooks), both to remind me of the tone of the books and the various actions that were taken. I was also very thankful for having the same editors for the books, and between our brains we were able to keep the books consistent.

5. Often the middle book(s) of a trilogy/series are considered the weaker as they merely lead up to the final book. How do you maintain quality consistency?

**LL:** A middle book still has to have a plot. Characters. Conflicts and resolutions. Structure. Pacing. I don’t know how I would go about writing a middle book any other way. It might not answer the overall question of the series, and it has to exist within the framework of the whole tale, but there has to be a there there.

**MR:** An important thing to remember when writing series is that each book should have its own plot that has a beginning, middle and end. I try to make sure at least three major things happen in each book and not to leave all the “big stuff” for the finale. Really, I think of each book as its own season in a television show.

**AS:** Each book was written as a standalone. So I did this as a way of keeping the series strong throughout. There was a character arc and cast of characters that appeared in each novel, but you could pick up the series at any stage and theoretically jump right in.
6. What are some challenges you’ve encountered in writing your series? For example — oversights, improbable events or elements? Characters doing things that make no sense?

**LL:** When I was writing my time travel NEVER series, I realized during the very last round of edits of book three (Now And For Never) that the way I’d ended the book had effectively rendered book one (Once Every Never) an impossibility. My sympathetic editor gave me a few days to pull apart the last 50 pages of the story and rewrite history (and actually make the book better! Bonus!). But, yeah, that was a little tense. Time travel, man... it messes with your head.

**MR:** A challenge I have had is my mythology and magic. While I definitely had a good idea of what I wanted in book one, with each additional book new facets are added to the magic and history to complicate it, and sometimes I’m left with a discrepancy. A way around this has been to state (and actually show, as in the companion trilogy A Book of Spirits and Thieves) that history that has been told is not always completely accurate to what really happened. Since this is how it is in real life as well, I think it feels very real.

**AS:** The biggest challenge was keeping the same tone and finding a fresh, new way to tell the story. With each novel, I’d find the characters handling similar situations in similar ways, and it was difficult to think up a new way to solve problems. But that’s where imagination comes in!

7. Does a series have to answer all questions at the end? Why or why not?

**LL:** Unless the world of your book (or series) begins and ends on the first and last pages, then there are always going to be questions left unanswered. There will always be loose threads trailing off into the distance that we, as readers, never get to reach the end of. That’s as it should be.

**MR:** I think a series needs to answer enough questions to make it satisfying to most readers, and the major plot lines need to be resolved. Leaving a few unspoken outcomes up to a reader’s imagination is not a bad thing, though, I think.

**AS:** No. Just like life, I think it’s better to have a bit of mystery at the end. We know generally where the characters end up, but don’t want to outline the rest of their lives.

8. How do you deal with the passage of time in your series?

**LL:** Always according to the needs of the story. I’ve written stories that span months or years, and others that span mere days. It really just depends on what’s happening in that series. In my STARLING series, books two and three pick up moments after the end of the previous volume.

**AS:** Each book was a year in the life of my characters. So that made it easier to chart how they changed during that time.

9. How do you keep a reader invested over multiple volumes?

**LL:** Compelling characters and interesting stories. But I will add the caveat that, insofar as I write YA/MG — and so my intended audiences tend to not only read voraciously but are also growing up at the same time — it’s pretty imperative to have the books come out in a timely fashion (i.e., one a year at least). That way you don’t run the risk of having your audience “outgrow” your series.

**MR:** All I can do is try to write a compelling story with interesting characters. If I’ve done my job properly, I hope readers will be compelled to find out what happens next.

**AS:** If the story is strong and fresh and the characters interesting enough, they should follow along. And there is something relaxing, in a way, to be hanging out with characters who have become friends.

10. Do you know immediately how many volumes will be in a series? (e.g., duology / trilogy / quartet)

**LL:** Not necessarily. I’ve written books that had a set number of volumes contractually that did or still could expand. There are, in my experience, always enough loopholes and breadcrumb trails and wiggle room scattered throughout the initial story (see answer to question 7, above) to allow you to continue, even in a companion story or a prequel format, if the opportunity arises.

**MR:** I sometimes have an idea, but rarely is an author given carte blanche to write as many books as they want without first making sure there’s a sustainable audience for it. For Falling Kingdoms, I felt very strongly that it had to be six books to cover all the plots and characters properly, but this number wasn’t guaranteed until book four was being written — and at that time I needed to know if it needed a definitive ending. Book four would have been A LOT longer if that had been the last book in the series.

**AS:** No. I thought The Hunchback Assignments would be seven books, but by the time I actually wrote the books, I discovered four was a much better number to keep the overall story strong and cohesive.

Rachel Seigel is a Sales & Selection Strategist at EduCan Media.
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To celebrate the awards season and all that is outstanding in Canadian children’s publishing, the CCBC talked to three book buyers about their perspectives on some of the highs and lows of the business. We interviewed a buyer from Indigo, a children’s independent bookseller and a representative from educational publishing. Our conversation covered a number of topics, culminating in some interesting ideas about how to make our industry even stronger.

We spoke with Kate Newman, Category Manager for Frontlist at Indigo Books. Newman credits her early years as a bookseller at Indigo with giving her the insight she has into what customers want. We also spoke with Lisa Doucet, co-manager at Woozles Children’s Bookstore in Halifax. Doucet also runs book clubs and is a regular children’s book reviewer for several Canadian publications. Rachel Seigel, our third panelist, is the K-12 book buyer at EduCan Media, an educational wholesaler/distributor based in Toronto. She worked at Indigo before going on to manage Mabel’s Fables, and has also worked at S&B Books. Each of these women brings a unique perspective to their analyses of the Canadian children’s book market, but they share a number of enthusiasms and concerns.

When we asked each of our panelists what genre or category stands out as exceptional in Canadian children’s books, they all agreed that picture books take the cake! As Newman says: “There is some serious talent in this country… we have produced some outstanding picture books that feature both readability (hello, Robert Munsch and Linda Bailey!) and exceptional art (I’m looking at you, Wallace Edwards and Barbara Reid!)” Newman says she believes we (in Canada) are in the midst of a picture book renaissance. “[As a buyer] I have a wealth of options, but part of my job is to narrow the focus for customers… I’m thrilled that there are so many great Canadian picture books to choose from now.”

Doucet is struck by the wide range of beautiful, fun and unique picture books by Canadians, particularly those by Elly MacKay, Soyeon Kim, Marie-Louise Gay, Cybèle Young, Mélanie Watt and Sydney Smith. For Doucet, our books are often filled with humour and playfulness, joyfulness and exuberance, wit and whimsy, but there are also many quietly beautiful stories that feature timeless messages and touch on truly universal themes.

“Nothing will help sell a book as well as a beautiful, eye-catching cover.”

— Lisa Doucet

Doucet is a big fan of Canadian YA fiction as well, citing authors like Marthe Jocelyn, Martine Leavitt and Susin Nielsen as outstanding. She gave a nod to our abundance of outstanding novels in verse, too, particularly My Book of Life by Angel by Martine Leavitt and The Gospel Truth by Caroline Pignat and both Audacious and Capricious by Gabrielle Prendergast.

Seigel is also a fan of our YA books: “I’ve always felt that Young Adult is exceptional in Canada. We have such strong writers, who take chances, tackle a variety of subjects that resonate, and have great traction with readers.”

All this positive feedback led us to wonder if our panelists thought they could make any general comments about ways in which Canadian books could be even better. Again, their answers were surprisingly similar: all three pointed to the need for really strong design. For Doucet, the cover design for early readers and novels, in particular, was also a big issue: “Nothing will help sell a book as well as a beautiful, eye-catching cover.” She described the frustration she feels over books that bear covers that do not match their intended audience. “If a book has an awful cover, it doesn’t appeal to my customers, and their students won’t read it.” From a publisher’s perspective, cover design can be surprisingly tricky. Getting the author and illustrator, design, editorial and sales to agree on a cover that meets everyone’s expectations (and individual preferences) can be an exercise requiring unbelievable tact and diplomacy, but it’s crucial to get covers right, and we need to try harder!

A more tangible and, again from a publisher’s perspective, a possibly easier shortcoming to correct, is what Doucet described as “noteworthy editorial lapses… characters’ names changing throughout the course of a book,”
sentences that are difficult to read or interpret because of missing words…”Seigel has the same concerns:” … I’ve seen some unforgivable errors… [including] mistakes in the dates of historical events.’ There is always pressure to bring books out on time and to work efficiently, and increasingly with less money and fewer staff, but careful editing is essential, particularly in children’s publishing where books are used as tools for the acquisition of written and oral communication skills. As publishers, we can do better!

So who is not making these mistakes? We asked our panelists which publishers stood out as exceptional, and they all had different answers, perhaps reflecting the different emphasis each of their roles demands. For Newman, Scholastic deserves high marks for producing books that are focused on what kids want and for making those books as accessible as possible. She appreciates the emphasis they put on a book’s package, and that there’s an obvious effort to keep prices in check. She also loves Wide Eyed Editions (part of The Quarto Group out of the US) because “they take non-fiction books and turn them into beautiful, inspiring, fun keepsake books.”

Seigel is also a fan of Scholastic and some of the other Canadian arms of multinationals. She finds the books that PenguinRandomHouse, HarperCollins and Simon & Schuster produce generally have a more commercial feel than some of the books brought out by smaller presses.

For Doucet, both Groundwood and Pajama Press stand out. She feels Groundwood takes risks and often creates very impactful books (Baldacchino and Malenfant’s *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* is one title that comes to mind). She also likes the Pajama Press list, which she feels has an impressive consistency in terms of the overall quality. Seigel is a fan of Pajama Press as well: “They make a deliberate choice to produce a smaller list, so that they can spend time on key things like editing and design.” A theme that is echoed repeatedly by our panelists is the need for interesting books that are packaged to appeal directly to children.

Finally, we asked what one change would have the greatest impact in terms of making Canadian books more competitive. Again, there was a unified thread to the responses, and what’s great about that is how tangible the bookselling experts’ advice is: “Thoughtfully create books that kids will want to read over and over.” “Publish fewer books, and then pour all our resources into those truly outstanding books that come along…showcasing works by creating beautifully designed books.” And remembering “if it doesn’t look appealing it won’t sell…. We shouldn’t buy a book simply because it is Canadian, we should buy it because it is a Canadian book that is fantastic!”

Canada has an amazing number of talented authors and illustrators, and obviously, very supportive booksellers. Canadian publishers work hard to create the very best books possible, so that those exceptional people are successful. But we need to work harder still, creating excellent packaging for our beautiful books, and editing them incredibly carefully. Only then will we be truly competitive! 🌟

Alison Morgan is an instructor in the Publishing Certificate Program at Ryerson and was the Publisher at Tundra Books for several years.
**Great Titles for Holiday Gift Giving**

**PICTURE BOOKS FOR PRESCHOOL TO GRADE 5**

**Awesome Is Everywhere**
written by Neil Pasricha
(Puffin Canada, 2015)

With the simple touch of your fingers, go on a stunning interactive journey to see the world as you never have before. Fly through wispy clouds, dive deep into the sparkling ocean, feel wet grains of sand on a hot and sunny beach... You will discover you can fly your mind to anywhere on Earth. Awesome is everywhere.

**The Darkest Dark**
written by Chris Hadfield
illustrated by Terry Fan and Eric Fan
(Tundra Books, 2016)

Chris loves rockets and planets and pretending he’s a brave astronaut, but at night he doesn’t feel so brave. He’s afraid of the dark. When he watches the groundbreaking moon landing on TV, he realizes that space is the darkest dark there is — and the dark is beautiful and exciting, when you have big dreams to keep you company.

**The Liszts**
written by Kyo Maclear
illustrated by Júlia Sardà
(Tundra Books, 2016)

The Liszts make lists. Some usual and some unusual. They make top 10 lists and lists of their greatest admirers and most fearsome enemies. The Liszts make lists in every season but not on Sundays, which are listless. One day a visitor arrives and he’s not on anyone’s list. How will they handle something so unexpected?

**The Princess and the Pony**
written and illustrated by Kate Beaton

Princess Pinecone knows exactly what she wants for her birthday: a big, strong horse fit for a warrior princess! But when the day arrives, she doesn’t quite get the horse of her dreams. In spite of herself, Princess Pinecone (and everyone else) falls in love with one unforgettable roly-poly pony... that farts. This title is also available in French as *La princesse et le poney*.

**When Green Becomes Tomatoes: Poems for All Seasons**
written by Julie Fogliano
illustrated by Julie Morstad
(Roaring Brook Press, 2016)

Taking a diary-like approach, poems are offered for different days throughout the year. Verse by verse, day by day, the snow melts, April showers fall, magnolias bloom, berries ripen, warm rivers beckon swimmers, fireflies twinkle, a new school year starts, leaves turn and winter returns. The poems stand on their own as solidly as they connect to each other, inviting multiple readings to experience the details.

**JUNIOR & INTERMEDIATE FICTION FOR GRADES 3 TO 9**

**The Adventurer’s Guide to Successful Escapes**
written by Wade Albert White
illustrations by Mariano Epelbaum
(Little, Brown and Company, 2016)

Step into a world where fantasy and science fiction meet in dark alleys, dragons aren’t nearly as innocent as they look and nothing is quite what it seems. Anne has spent years dreaming of the day she and her best friend, Penelope, will leave Saint Lupin’s Institute for Perpetually Wicked and Hideously Unattractive Children. But when the big day arrives, curious happenings lead Anne to an epic quest.

**The Blackthorn Key**
*(Blackthorn Key, Book 1)*
written by Kenneth Oppel
(HarperCollins Publishers, 2014)

The *Boundless*, the most magnificent train ever built, is on its maiden voyage across Canada, and Will Everett is about to embark on the adventure of a lifetime! There’s a murder, and Will, now protecting the key that unlocks the train’s treasures, becomes the target of sinister figures from his past. Will and Maren, a young tightrope walker, must save the *Boundless* before someone else winds up dead.

**A Boy Named Queen**
written by Sara Cassidy
(Groundwood Books, 2016)

Evelyn is both aghast and fascinated when a new boy comes to Grade 5 and tells everyone his name is Queen. Queen wears shiny gym shorts and wants to organize a chess/environment club. His father plays weird loud music and has tattoos. How will the class react? How will Evelyn?

**A Day of Signs and Wonders**
written by Kit Pearson
(HarperTrophy Canada, 2016)

Inspired by the childhood of acclaimed Canadian artist Emily Carr, this novel is a sensitive and insightful look at friendship, family and the foundations of an artist, drawn over the course of a single day — a day in which a comet appears, an artist is born and an aching hole in one girl’s heart begins to heal.
MiNRS
(MiNRS, Book 1)
written by Kevin Sylvester
(Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2015)
Earth has been mined to the edge of extinction. Twelve-year-old Christopher and his family live on a planetoid with other families, working as miners for terraforming companies. During a blackout, the colonists are attacked by vicious invaders. Christopher and a few others are forced into the maze of mining tunnels. How will they survive? Young readers will also want to check out the recently released sequel, MiNRS 2.

The Nameless City
written and illustrated by Faith Erin Hicks
Colours by Jordie Bellaire
(First Second, 2016)
Every invading nation gives the City a new name. To the citizens, it is the Nameless City, and those who try to name it are forever outsiders. Kaidu is an outsider, a member of the latest occupying nation. Rat is a native of the Nameless City. These two unlikely friends will need to stand together — because the fate of the Nameless City rests in their hands.

SENIOR FICTION FOR GRADES 7 TO 12

Beware That Girl
written by Teresa Toten
(Doubleday Canada, 2016)
The Waverly School is scholarship student Kate O’Brien’s last stop on her climb to Yale. She targets the mega-wealthy, yet damaged, Olivia Sumner as the one to take her there. Then handsome and whip-smart Mark Redkin joins the administration and charms his way into students’ lives — especially Olivia’s. It becomes clear that Redkin poses a threat to Kate — or should she beware of Olivia?

Every Hidden Thing
written by Kenneth Oppel
(HarperCollins Publishers, 2016)
Somewhere in the badlands, lies the skeleton of a massive dinosaur. Finding it could change both Samuel’s and Rachel’s lives significantly. As the rivalry between their fathers becomes more intense, Samuel and Rachel are pushed closer together. Can they join forces to find their quarry, and with it a new life together, or will old enmities and prejudices keep them from both rex and each other?

Flannery
written by Lisa Moore
(Groundwood Books, 2016)
Sixteen-year-old Flannery Malone has been in love with Tyrone O’Rourke since forever. But Tyrone has grown into an outlaw graffiti artist, literally too cool for school — a problem since he and Flannery are partners for entrepreneurship class. Her mother can’t scrape together the money for her biology textbook, and her best friend has abandoned her for a dangerous relationship. Can a love potion fix Flannery’s life?

The Gospel Truth
written by Caroline Pignat
(Red Deer Press, 2014)
Sixteen-year-old Phoebe is a plantation slave and a keen observer of the brutality that comes with being owned. Mute since her mother was sold, Phoebe has taught herself to read — an advantage and a danger. When a Canadian doctor, the ‘birdman,’ visits the plantation for bird watching, Phoebe soon realizes it’s more than birds that he is after.

Saving Montgomery Sole
written by Mariko Tamaki
(Razorbill Canada, 2016)
Sixteen-year-old Montgomery Sole is a square peg in a small town, a girl with two moms forced to go to a school full of homophobes. Thank goodness for her two best friends — Thomas and Naoki. Monty’s obsessed with paranormal mysteries like ESP, astrology and superpowers, but when strange things actually start happening to Monty, she realizes that the greatest mystery of all is herself.

Through the Woods
written and illustrated by Emily Carroll
(Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2014)
Journey through the woods in this sinister, compellingly spooky collection featuring five hauntingly beautiful, spine-tingling graphic stories, including webcomic sensation “His Face All Red.” These chilling tales spring from the macabre imagination of award-winning comic creator Emily Carroll. Come, take a walk in the woods and see what awaits you.
The Classroom Bookshelf

THINK OUTSIDE THE TRASH... REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

BY TRACEY SCHINDLER

The Three R's. Reduce. Reuse. Recycle. We hear it everywhere, and in schools across the country students participate in recycling programs and litterless lunches, plant school gardens and partake in Earth Day activities. But what do terms like sustainability, carbon footprint, Kyoto Protocol or zero emissions really mean for young students? How do teachers make environmental concepts concrete in their classrooms? Three fantastic books break down “environmentalism” into bite-sized chunks and, most importantly, help to combat the feeling many children can have — that they are too young to really make a difference. These classroom-worthy books will help kids see themselves as part of the solution, able to make meaningful change.

Pocket Change: Pitching In for a Better World (Orca Footprints)
written by Michelle Mulder
Orca Book Publishers, 2016
978-1-4598-0966-6 (hc) $19.95
978-1-4598-0968-0 (eBook) $9.99
for Grades 3 to 7
Non-fiction | Sustainability | Consumerism | Environmentalism | Making a Difference

What Matters
written by Alison Hughes
illustrated by Holly Hatam
Orca Book Publishers, 2016
978-1-4598-0910-9 (hc) $19.95
978-1-4598-0912-3 (eBook) $9.99
for Kindergarten to Grade 3
Picture Book | Recycling | Environmentalism | Making a Difference

Pocket Change: Pitching In for a Better World

After reading this book aloud, teachers could ask their students what small acts they do that might make a difference. Do they recycle at home? Turn off lights when they leave a room? Have they helped plant a tree or flowers that attract butterflies or bees? Or go on a class walk through the schoolyard or a local park where students can pick up litter just like the boy in the book. Back in the classroom, they could draw scenes imagining the difference picking up a piece of trash might make for their local flora and fauna. Chart small acts throughout the year and then have a class event celebrating all the ways the students have helped make the world cleaner and greener.

Children today do not know a world without recycling. But how did recycling in North America even begin? Was it spearheaded by government? Did big industry see dollar signs in reusing old plastic and metal? The answer, told by Elise Moser in the wonderfully inspirational book, What Milly Did, might surprise you. One woman, Milly Zantow (with the help of friends, schoolchildren and others), is responsible for kick-starting plastics recycling. During a trip to Japan in 1978, Milly saw bundles of paper, glass and metal put to the curbside for recycling. Japan didn’t have room for the large landfills that Americans were used to. Back in Wisconsin, she learned that her local landfill was nearly full and leaching poisons into the groundwater. Milly decided to learn what exactly was going into landfills by climbing to the top of one. There she spent the whole day watching what the trucks were dumping. What she saw was plastic. Lots and lots of plastic.

In What Milly Did, Moser takes young students on a fascinating journey, describing how Milly learned about plastics and took on both industry and governments. Her grassroots efforts included creating the first recycling centre; finding a customer for her shredded plastic — a yo-yo factory; and later developing a global...
“Reducing waste is the first, and some would say most important, of the Three R’s.”

What Milly Did: The Remarkable Pioneer of Plastics Recycling
written by Elise Moser
illustrated by Scot Ritchie
Groundwood Books, 2016
978-1-55498-893-8 (pb) $11.95
978-1-55498-894-5 (eBook) $11.95
for Grades 3 to 6
Non-fiction | Biography | Recycling | Plastics | Environmentalism | Milly Zantow

recycling standard, the system of numbers inside the little triangle found on plastics we use today. Milly’s story is a glimpse into the early days of the recycling movement and shows how one woman’s determination, hard work and community building created huge changes in how we manage our garbage in North America.

“…her efforts demonstrated a much larger lesson — that you can push past your limits to accomplish something important, and you can push other people too.”

On top of being a fascinating biography of a remarkable woman, What Milly Did has the power to inspire students to see that one person has the potential to create change. As a class or individually, students could research Canadian pioneers of the environmental movement such as Farley Mowat; David Suzuki; Bob Hunter, founder of Greenpeace; Birute Galdikas, outspoken advocate for orangutans and the preservation of the rainforest; or Sheila Watt-Cloutier, Inuit activist instrumental in getting PCBs and DDT banned by demonstrating the effect of global warming on the Arctic. Students could also do research into the plastics industry and the long-term consequences of plastic waste on wildlife and the environment, including our oceans and lakes. As a class, students could brainstorm ways of reducing plastic waste in their school or community.

Reducing waste is the first, and some would say most important, of the Three R’s. Reducing the amount of “stuff” we have and rethinking consumerism is the focus of Michelle Mulder’s Pocket Change: Pitching in for a Better World, part of the Orca Footprints series. In this timely and engaging book, Mulder traces the roots of our consumer-driven lives and the desire by many for a more sustainable lifestyle. She suggests that the more stuff we buy, the more we need to work and the less time we have for family, friends and community. Having the latest iPhone or the newest fashions hasn’t made us happier, and despite our global consumption of resources at an enormous pace, many people in the world are still hungry and don’t have adequate shelter or clean water.

But what if we could meet our needs, have more time to spend with friends, family and community AND protect the environment? Mulder encourages young readers to envision a different world and shows that individuals or small groups of people can make big changes. Microlawns in Kenya, Habitat for Humanity and “sweat equity,” community gardens and food-sharing organizations, libraries that lend out toys, tools or kitchen appliances, and Freecycle, are just some examples of the ways people are choosing to share resources, avoid unnecessary consumption and keep things out of landfills! Students learn how growing a tiny cabbage can fight hunger, how a few dollars can help 10 families start their own businesses and how running errands for a neighbour can help you learn to become a bike mechanic — for free! Discover what skills could be traded within your classroom. A piano (or skateboarding, or…) lesson in exchange for help with building a fort?

These three books are terrific springboards to student engagement. They are packed with ideas that elementary students of all grades could put into action, from picking up litter or reducing plastic waste to planting a school vegetable garden and donating the produce to a local shelter or hosting a school or community-wide toy and book swap. What Matters, What Milly Did and Pocket Change share a similar message of empowerment for students. They can make help make the world a more equitable, cleaner, greener place… one small act at a time!

Tracey Schindler is a book reviewer and former teacher living in Bethany, Ontario.
Let’s Celebrate!

BY CAMILIA KAHRIZI

Books about holidays have always been plentiful, but while the focus has often been on Christmas, Canadian publishers have been increasing their offerings lately on other holidays and festivals as well. With the winter holidays now gearing up, teachers and librarians will be looking for relevant books to read to children, and others will be seeking presents for young readers. The following four books will be perfect for both.

Two new Christmas-themed picture books out this season would make lovely gifts to children from toddlers to age eight. The first, *Fox and Squirrel: The Best Christmas Ever*, is the latest installment in Ruth Ohi’s Fox and Squirrel series. As in the previous books in the series, she pairs a simple story with adorable illustrations. A recent snowfall gets Squirrel and Fox into the Christmas spirit, and inspires Squirrel to make it the best Christmas ever. He starts by collecting berries for decorations. But when Fox tries to help out, Squirrel dismisses him, tells him he’ll ruin it and goes off on his own. When he gets lost in the woods, Squirrel learns the value of being inclusive with your friends, and how everybody brings something to the party.

While the story does not cover any of the traditions or history related to Christmas, it does share a sweet message and presents a scenario that most children will relate to — rejecting a peer or feeling rejection. The book makes a nice cozy read in the weeks leading up to the holidays, either in the classroom or at home, with a story that is both enjoyable and can lead to further discussion.

The Day Santa Stopped Believing in Harold, written by Maureen Fergus and illustrated by Cale Atkinson, turns a very common childhood experience — the moment a child stops believing in Santa Claus — on its head. In this very funny book, Santa Claus finds himself doubting the existence of a child named Harold. Harold looks different every year, his mom writes his Christmas list, and his dad seems to leave out the cookies and milk on Christmas Eve. Could they be trying to trick him into believing in Harold? He has several discussions with Mrs. Claus and the elves, until a conversation with the reindeers inspires him to seek proof of Harold’s existence. Meanwhile, a little boy named Harold struggles with his own loss of faith.

Reading this book is a joyful experience — the clever story and the fun and colourful illustrations work perfectly together. There are many details in Atkinson’s illustrations, small and large, that are funny and sweet. The page where Harold is sitting on his bed, surrounded by books and newspaper articles, trying to work out whether Santa is real or a conspiracy, made me laugh out loud. I clearly remember feeling, as a child, that Santa Claus probably didn’t exist, but still wanting to believe in him nevertheless, and this book perfectly captures that experience. Some might wonder...
if the story could drive some young readers to doubt, but the happy ending — in which both Harold and Santa find proof to their satisfaction — smooths everything over nicely.

*Yitzi and the Giant Menorah* written and illustrated by Richard Ungar, is another beautiful picture book. This one tells an original tale set during Chanukah. The Mayor of Lublin delivers a giant menorah to the People of Chelm, who are very grateful. Every night, the villagers light a candle on the menorah and try to think of a way to thank the mayor, but each gift — potato latkes and applesauce, two barrels full of Chelm snow, and a hand-carved dreidel — fails to reach the Mayor, mostly due to humorous circumstances (yes, the snow melts). Finally, a young boy named Yitzi comes up with the perfect idea.

Ungar’s unique watercolour illustrations are inspiring and uplifting, and the story is sweet and amusing. At the end of the book, there is a one-page explanation of the history of Chanukah, for any readers who may be unfamiliar with it. This picture book is sure to become a Chanukah classic, and would make a wonderful gift to any child.

For older children, *Diwali: Festival of Lights*, written by Rina Singh, is a great pick. *Diwali* is the second book in a new series by Orca Book Publishers called Orca Origins. The first chapter covers the basics of Diwali — the associated legends, and the differences between Hindu, Sikh and Jain Diwali celebrations. Then the book dives into the history of Indian immigration (with a focus on Canada) and the evolution of Diwali in both India and North America. Finally, the last chapter explores how Diwali is celebrated in different regions and in different socio-economic groups around the world.

Personal accounts by people of different backgrounds help illustrate the facts and history presented in the book, which is peppered with interesting sidebars and even a few recipes that sound delicious! There are also beautiful photographs on every page. The book is at once fascinating to read and to look at. At the end of the book, one can find a glossary, a list of references and resources for each chapter (valuable for anyone doing a school research project) and an index.

If the following books in the Orca Origins series are as well done as *Diwali*, it would make for a very valuable set in the classroom. The first book in the series is *Passover: Festival of Freedom* (written by Monique Polak), and upcoming books will cover Chinese New Year, Christmas and Ramadan. *Diwali* is well-researched and informative; the chapters on immigration and on the work of not-for-profit groups in disadvantaged communities will be useful in the classroom beyond the context of the holiday.

These four books will be interesting and fun for children of all faiths and backgrounds. With the holidays approaching, the books provide a wonderful spotlight on how people of different cultures and religions will celebrate during the winter solstice, as well as on the core values at the centre of each important celebration.

Camilia Kahrizi is the CCBC’s Marketing and Website Coordinator.
We Recommend
NEW AND NOTED BOOKS FOR TODDLERS TO TEENS

Adrift at Sea: A Vietnamese Boy's Story of Survival
written by Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch with Tuan Ho
illustrated by Brian Deines
Pajama Press, 2016
978-1-77278-005-5 (hc) $22.95
for Grades 2 to 4

Picture Book | Biography | Non-fiction | Vietnam | Refugees | War | Hope | Family

Basing her book on the true story of Tuan Ho, Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch recounts the tale of six-year-old Tuan and his escape from Vietnam during the height of the war in 1981. The voyage of Tuan and his mother is long, difficult and fraught with dangers, including leaving his youngest sister behind, a narrow escape in the midst of gunfire, and a difficult traverse across the ocean in a leaking skiff. As frightened as he is, Tuan must not give up the hope that he will be reunited with his family at the other end of the voyage.

Adrift At Sea tells this difficult tale with a direct honesty that creates an opportunity for accompanied discussion, especially for some younger readers. Skrypuch maintains a strong sense of hope throughout, demonstrating the true strength of young Tuan. It is also a powerful story for all readers in light of the Syrian refugee crisis, providing an accessible way to build empathy toward newcomers to Canada.

The illustrations by Brian Deines are detailed, giving the story a canvas-like texture, and they add depth and richness to the imagery created by the words. This balances with the black-and-white photographs included of Tuan. The final pages of the book give the historical context, which may help it to reach an even broader audience of readers interested in the historical significance and the real-life outcome of the story.

Ashley Pamenter writes programming for Girl Guides of Canada-Guides du Canada and is a former elementary teacher in Toronto, Ontario.

All the World a Poem
written by Gilles Tibo
illustrated by Manon Gauthier
translated by Erin Woods
Pajama Press, 2016
978-1-77278-009-3 (hc) $18.95
for Grades 2 to 4

Picture Book | Poetry | Imagination | Natural World | Reading and Writing Poetry | Magic

“At night all the poems from all the books put on their pajamas and curl up under my quilt.”

All the World a Poem is a poetic picture book that immerses the reader in a world of words and wonder. In both rhyming and unrhymed verse, the words of Gilles Tibo sing as the reader moves from page to page. The lyricism of this picture book lends itself perfectly to reading aloud for a variety of ages, and the words themselves are so vivid there is almost no need for illustrations. That being said, the layered creations of illustrator Manon Gauthier are whimsical and give the feeling that a child had a hand in making those images. From the moment this book is opened and a kaleidoscope of butterflies greets you, you are immediately transported—almost as if on the wings of said butterflies. Erin Woods deserves recognition for the power of her translation. The flow of the story is maintained throughout, and there is not a single part that reads awkwardly as a result.

For young readers, hearing the words of All the World a Poem will fill them with the understanding that magic exists. This is grounded in the natural environment that Gilles Tibo and Manon Gauthier draw from the text. This beautiful book is best read together, leaving all enchanted by the depth and simplicity it creates. Even the presentation of the words on the page in relation to the illustrations gives the reader a new or re-imagined understanding of the fluidity of poetry.

Ashley Pamenter
Friend or Foe?
written by John Sobol
illustrated by Dasha Tolstikova
Groundwood Books, 2016
978-1-55498-407-7 (hc) $18.95
978-1-55498-408-4 (eBook) $16.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 2
Picture Book | Friendship | Fear | Curiosity

“This is how it was.” So begins the intriguing story of a lonely mouse who lives in a small house next to a great castle where a cat resides. Every evening, the mouse climbs onto the roof to gaze up at the cat who, in turn, peers down at him from the highest window in the palace tower. After many such occasions, the mouse wonders if the cat is his friend, as he very much yearns to have one. Determined to find out, he secretly squeezes through a hole in the castle wall and makes his way to the feline. “As the mouse climbed the stairs to the palace tower, he began to grow afraid. What if he was wrong? If he was, the cat would tear him to pieces. Still, he kept climbing. Was the cat friend or foe? He had to know.” Their encounter leads to unexpected results.

For his first picture book, author John Sobol has composed a unique cat-and-mouse tale with a twist. Beautifully written, the text explores the perspectives of the two characters, subtly inviting readers to determine their relationship since, by story’s end, the mouse is still wondering.

Using graphite and ink wash on paper, with some digital colour, artist Dasha Tolstikova explores the contrasting panoramas as seen by the two characters. Looking up at the tower... gazing down at the rooftop... Her deceptively simple illustrations, composed in a variety of shades of grey with a splash of red thrown in, extend an invitation for quiet contemplation.

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

Animals of the Salish Sea
written by Melaney Gleeson-Lyall
illustrated by Coast Salish Artists
Northwest, 2016
978-1-55476-205-7 (hc) $15.95
for Preschool to Grade 2
Picture Book | Salish Sea | Animals | Sea Creatures | Native Art

Animals of the Salish Sea, a vibrant reference book written by Melaney Gleeson-Lyall and colourfully illustrated by 13 talented Coast Salish artists, is sure to be welcomed by children and their parents alike. Filled with forest animals, sea creatures and mountain dwellers, large and small, this book introduces young readers to the natural and supernatural creatures of this lesser known ecosystem. This reference book highlights 28 creatures, setting aside an entire page for most along with a little known fact, the cultural significance and a visually stunning representation that will whet the intellectual and emotional appetites of readers. The brief text, large type and appealing illustrations are perfect for young readers to enjoy on their own, or for parents and teachers to read aloud. It is written in the first person with an authentic Indigenous voice that includes readers in the text, inspiring them to learn more. As well, some pages include curious facts that young readers are often seeking, such as what the animals eat and where they live. Parents and teachers will be pleased to see an introductory page that provides some important information and facts about the Salish Sea.

The Coast Salish artists have portrayed each of the animals in a stylized way. The illustrations encourage wonder, and the patterns contain clues for readers about the meaning and symbolism of the creatures. Undoubtedly, this book will be picked up and enjoyed by children at story time, bedtime and any other time and will be a welcome addition to various library collections. A board book variation of this title is also available.

Krista Jorgensen is a former public librarian currently residing in Richmond Hill, Ontario.

In the Red Canoe
written by Leslie A. Davidson
illustrated by Laura Bifano
Orca Book Publishers, 2016
978-1-4598-0973-4 (hc) $19.95
978-1-4598-0975-8 (eBook) $9.99
for Preschool to Grade 2
Picture Book | Intergenerational Relationships | Nature | Canoeing

Leslie A. Davidson’s In the Red Canoe shares the magic of a canoe trip on calm waters, with a young girl at the bow and her grandpa at the stern guiding her toward wildlife and wonder. Whether young or old, we can all relate to the feelings of enchantment in fragile natural spaces. As the young canoeist dips and swings her paddle, she encounters beaver lodges, ducklings swimming, an osprey fishing, swallows swooping and the stars reflecting in the pond at night. This calm and reflective book, told from the child’s perspective, is written in rhyming quatrains and reads aloud well. The smooth rhymes add a gentle rhythm, making it a perfect bedtime story.

Laura Bifano illuminates each pair of verses with beautiful large-spread illustrations from imaginative angles that put the focus on nature, rather than the human characters. Those expecting an accurate depiction of creatures in nature may be disappointed, as in some cases the artist exercises creative license. Otherwise, the pictures have a quality to them that encourages wonder and inspires readers to want to be out in nature. Adults will be pleased to see that the main characters model safe boating by wearing life vests while in the canoe and sun safety by wearing hats. This book is perfect for sharing with young children during the late afternoon or evening when the weather is ripe for canoeing.

Senta Ross is a former elementary teacher and teacher-librarian in Kitchener, Ontario.
**Lucy & Company**
written and illustrated by Marianne Dubuc
Kids Can Press, 2016
978-1-77138-662-3 (hc) $17.95
for Preschool to Kindergarten

There is a saying that one can judge people by the company they keep. In this collection of three short stories, the main character, a young girl named Lucy, keeps excellent company indeed. Lucy and her four congenial animal friends — namely Marcel the mouse, Henry the rabbit, Dot the turtle and Adrian the snail — spend their days partaking in delightful experiences, be it sharing snacks, celebrating a birthday or finding a home for three abandoned baby chicks. Each chapter contains an element of surprise and ends happily.

Marianne Dubuc’s straightforward text, easy for very young children to follow, is made up of brief descriptions and conversations: “Lucy is looking for a special spot to have her snack. / This branch is perfect.” “What a wonderful view.” “Look — it’s Marcel! Can I sit with you?” The stories highlight the importance of being a good friend to others through sharing, helping and acting in a kind manner. In 2015, this book was originally published in French under the title *Lucie et cie*.

Dubuc’s muted watercolour and pencil crayon illustrations evoke an idyllic world inhabited by distinctive characters. What a pleasure it is to follow Lucy, always wearing her bright yellow t-shirt, and her comrades as they explore their natural environs! To add context to the geography, Dubuc has created a two-page map that shows how the settings connect with each story.

Young readers will enjoy being in the company of Lucy and her friends. One hopes that further adventures will unfold in the future.

Senta Ross

**Mittens to Share**
written by Emil Sher
illustrated by Irene Luxbacher
North Winds Press/Scholastic Canada, 2016
978-1-4431-4296-0 (hc) $19.99
for Preschool to Grade 2

A small child and an adult, all bundled up, with sled at the ready, enjoy the pleasures of a snowy day. The child looks up at a bird on a telegraph wire and the bird looks down on the child. Parent and child happily play in the snow until the child realizes one mitten is lost. Disappointed, they hurry home to select another pair from a vast array of sizes and colours. When they head back into the cold, the lost mitten is found, but part is missing, incorporated into the bird’s nest. A mitten to share!

The simplicity of this gentle picture book is deceptive because long after it is read, one finds oneself remembering it with a smile. The text is minimalist but elegant, satisfactorily capturing one’s attention and conveying the warmth of small experiences that make for lifelong memories. The story, which begins with what appears to be a casual view of a bird, comes full circle.

The artwork’s vitality across generous double-page spreads is a perfect accompaniment to the understated text. With illustrations rendered in acrylics, graphite, collage and charcoal, the pages vibrate with a variety of textures, patterns and rich colours, a feast for the eyes. Like the text, small whimsical details keep one pondering.

This gentle, thought-provoking book would make an excellent one-on-one read, creating the sort of bond between adult and child reflected in the story. It would also make a marvellous story-time read-aloud in a classroom or library setting. This title is also available in French as *Une mitaine pour deux*.

Aileen Wortley is a retired librarian living in Toronto.

**Ooko**
written and illustrated by Esmé Shapiro
Tundra Books, 2016
978-1-101-91844-9 (hc) $19.99
for Kindergarten to Grade 2

Ooko is a fox who has everything he could possibly want, namely a stick, a leaf and a rock. Sadly, what is missing in his life is a friend. And so his quest to find a playmate begins. On his travels, he discovers many strange-looking foxes (dogs, actually) playing with their two-legged human friends he assumes are all named Debbie. “What do the other foxes have that I don’t?” Ooko asks himself. Wishing to emulate the faux foxes so that a Debbie might become his friend, his physical transformation begins when he paints spots on his fur and applies pink fluff and floppy ears to his head (à la Dalmation, poodle and beagle). When a woman with faulty vision mistakes Ooko for her own dog, he is shocked to discover that this Debbie’s particular sense of fun is definitely not for him. After experiencing a bath, the wearing of a collar and a walk on a leash, he concludes, “I hate to say it... but Debbies aren’t very good at games.” Fortunately, the fox is rescued from domesticity and returns to the wild with a new friend, a raccoon.

Through the distinctive voice of Ooko, Esmé Shapiro has created a story about the importance of finding a kindred spirit while remaining true to oneself. Ooko is an unconventional character who has gone to extremes to be accepted by others, but then learns a valuable lesson: “I don’t need to look like the other foxes to find a friend! I would much rather be stinky and play stick than be squeaky clean and play itchy games. But hey, to each their own, right? To each their own.”

The hand lettering for text, rendered by Shapiro, gives the pages a distinctive look, as do her bold gouache, watercolour and coloured pencil illustrations, which fill the pages with vibrancy and energy.

Senta Ross
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Solutions for Cold Feet and Other Little Problems
written and illustrated by Carey Sookocheff
Tundra Books, 2016
978-1-77049-673-0 (hc) $21.99
for Kindergarten to Grade 1

Picture Book | Problem Solving | Friendship | Pets

Have you ever lost a shoe or had your hat blown away by the wind? How about getting caught in the rain or coping with a fast-melting ice cream cone? Do you suffer from cold feet or from boredom? These everyday predicaments can be annoying. However, a young girl and her dog demonstrate how problems can have a variety of solutions. For example, some possible approaches for locating a missing shoe are noted: “CHECK IN THE CLOSET / LOOK UNDER THE BED / SEARCH BEHIND THE COUCH / AND UNDER THE TABLE / WEAR A MISMATCHED PAIR.” The directions are clear, but even more illuminating are the cheerful illustrations, which provide clues as to how the problem arose. Pictured under a table is the mischievous dog, chowing on the missing shoe. Fortunately, there are times when the dog is redeemed for his misdeeds by becoming the solution himself. Such is the case with the suggestions for warming up cold feet: “BIG BOOTS / WOOL SOCKS / WARM SLIPPERS / A BLANKET / AND A DOG”. The final illustration portrays the dog curled up on the couch with the girl.

Author-illustrator Carey Sookocheff has created a clever and humorous story about solving problems in a resourceful manner, especially when a bit of the unexpected is involved. The joy of the unpredictable contributes to the delight of this publication as do the charming acrylic gouache illustrations, which have been assembled digitally. The special friendship between the youngster and the canine shines through as they go about their day-to-day routines, knowing that the “we” is more effective than the “I” when it comes to overcoming life’s little dilemmas.

Senta Ross

We Found a Hat
written and illustrated by Jon Klassen
Candlewick Press, 2016
978-0-7636-5600-3 (hc) $21.99
for Preschool to Grade 2

Picture Book | Animals | Fairness | Friendship | Humour

Two turtles find a hat together. Trying it on, they note that it looks good on both of them (a conclusion, one might add, that is highly debatable). They leave the hat where it is because it would be wrong, one turtle points out, for one of them to have a hat when the other does not. Later the turtles watch a sunset together, but one turtle has his mind elsewhere. Eventually, the turtles settle down to sleep. Well, one of them does; the other has more nefarious hat-related intentions.

This subtle yet striking picture book is the third in Jon Klassen’s humorous hat trilogy. In Klassen’s first two books, the hat was an object that divided, setting bear against rabbit and fish against fish. And we were amused! Many of us understand what it is like to have something that someone else wants. We might also know what it is like to want something that someone else has. However, in We Found a Hat the turtles inspire us to ask, “Does it really have to be this way? Do we really need to spend our time having and keeping and wanting and taking … hats?” The answer initially is “Maybe” … but then one turtle has a dream, and that dream changes the arc of the story.

Simple yet expressive illustrations in muted colours cast the story itself into sharp relief. Preschool and kindergarten children will find this book to be an opportunity for amusement, thought and growth.

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

Tokyo Digs A Garden
written by Jon-Erik Lappano
illustrated by Kellen Hatanaka
Groundwood Books, 2016
978-1-55498-798-6 (hc) $18.95
978-1-55498-799-3 (eBook) $16.95
for Preschool to Grade 2

Picture Book | Environmentalism | Urban Sprawl | Imagination | Animals | City Life

Tokyo lives with his mother, father, grandfather and a cat named Kevin in a small house dwarfed by tall buildings. Tokyo’s grandfather has lived in this house his whole life and remembers a time when the house was surrounded by hills with grazing deer, forests that sheltered foxes, meadows where you could hear birdsong and streams that teemed with salmon. According to Tokyo’s grandfather, the city had eaten it all up. “Cities had to eat birdsong and streams that teemed with salmon. According to forests that sheltered foxes, meadows where you could hear a time when the house was surrounded by hills with grazing deer, grandfather has lived in this house his whole life and remembers named Kevin in a small house dwarfed by tall buildings. Tokyo’s Tokyo lives with his mother, father, grandfather and a cat

by an elderly woman with a cart full of dirt. Disappointed, Tokyo accepts three seeds from the elderly woman who tells him to plant them and so he does. The next morning Tokyo and his grandfather are surprised to see three small wildflowers sprouting up from the bricks in the middle of the yard. Grandfather has never seen anything grow so fast and Tokyo’s garden keeps growing and growing until the city has become completely wild with trees towering over apartments, streets turned into rivers and wildlife abound. When his grandfather asks what they will do Tokyo innocently responds, “that we will just have to get used to it.”

In this beautifully imagined tale by Jon-Erik Lappano we watch as a city is overrun by wildlife, a tale that makes us stop and ponder about urban sprawl and how we have lost the natural beauty in the world that surrounds us. Kellen Hatanaka’s vibrant and playful illustrations bring Lappano’s text to life providing children with plenty to discover and giggle about. It’s an inspiring tale to share with younger generations and to encourage us all to bring natural beauty back to our cities.

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

We Found a Hat
written and illustrated by Jon Klassen
Candlewick Press, 2016
978-0-7636-5600-3 (hc) $21.99
for Preschool to Grade 2

Picture Book | Animals | Fairness | Friendship | Humour

Two turtles find a hat together. Trying it on, they note that it looks good on both of them (a conclusion, one might add, that is highly debatable). They leave the hat where it is because it would be wrong, one turtle points out, for one of them to have a hat when the other does not. Later the turtles watch a sunset together, but one turtle has his mind elsewhere. Eventually, the turtles settle down to sleep. Well, one of them does; the other has more nefarious hat-related intentions.

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The stories are interesting and provide a wealth of information. Beautiful real-life photos accompany each section, and a glossary of terms is included to enlighten readers. As with previous books in the series, a helpful list of suggested ways that students might become ‘giraffe guardians’ encourages them to become involved with wildlife preservation. I would suggest that the abundance of uninterrupted text could be daunting for younger readers, and that some adult guidance would be required to direct students looking for research information. Having said that, this book would be a great resource across all grade levels to introduce discussion about conservation, animal protection, animal endangerment, sustainability, social awareness and more.

Jenn Hubbs is a reviewer, bookseller and librarian.

Richard Van Camp’s sweet and simple verse expresses a couple’s joy in welcoming their new child into the world. On the first page, a woman plays a guitar as she sits and sings with a man under a crescent moon. Two pale rabbits peek out from behind some trees. The book begins: “We sang you from a wish / We sang you from a prayer.” A turn of the page and we see the woman and man with their new baby. They are standing on a hillside with the sky at their feet and a flock of birds overhead. They look as if they might take flight as well.

Over the course of the book, both words and illustrations convey the new parents’ feelings of gratitude, wonder and love. The images are of a happy family observing the world and quietly reveling in each other’s company. Julie Flett’s bold use of shape and delicate attention to detail are sure to draw in tiny aspiring bibliophiles. Little ones will enjoy pausing on each page to discuss the images — the artwork asks to be savoured. On the final page, the new parents sit outside again, singing into the night. Their baby is with them, and this time the moon is full! (The rabbits have a little surprise in store as well.)

Babies and toddlers love to be loved, and they will also love to see themselves and their parents reflected in the beautiful pages of this book.

Ildiko Sumegi

The latest in the 5 Animals series, this volume focuses on five unique and fascinating giraffes from around the world. Using a continuous narrative structure, information about both captive and wild giraffes is presented along with facts about their birth, diet, social structure and individual needs. Specific details such as the discovery that giraffes are social creatures that are able to communicate via infrasound (vocal noises that can travel long distances but are so low that they cannot be heard by humans) help to connect the reader to each individual giraffe.

The author is careful to remain relatively neutral on the subject of wild-versus-captive status. With the story of Gemina, a Santa Barbara giraffe who grew with a 90 degree bend in her neck, Dagg explains that the extra care provided by zoo staff likely extended Gemina’s life span, and that she would likely have been a target for predators had she remained in the wild.

The stories are interesting and provide a wealth of information. Beautiful real-life photos accompany each section, and a glossary of terms is included to enlighten readers. As with previous books in the series, a helpful list of suggested ways that students might become ‘giraffe guardians’ encourages them to become involved with wildlife preservation. I would suggest that the abundance of uninterrupted text could be daunting for younger readers, and that some adult guidance would be required to direct students looking for research information. Having said that, this book would be a great resource across all grade levels to introduce discussion about conservation, animal protection, animal endangerment, sustainability, social awareness and more.

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Starting university seems to offer 18-year-old Charlotte a world of new and exciting possibilities — new friendships, opportunity to be free of her parents and, most importantly, the chance to discover new things about herself. As she plunges headlong into the excitement of this new-found freedom, Charlotte also discovers romantic possibilities — her attention is sought by both her charismatic classmate, Banahene, as well as Asare, an older and quite successful businessman. But there are rumblings of political unrest in Ghana that surface with profound consequences for Charlotte and her friends when a military coup overthrows the government and leaves the country in turmoil. As the political situation heats up, Charlotte finds herself becoming more engaged in the student protest movement. While being an activist is exciting, it also has life-threatening consequences.

Adwoa Badoe’s new novel is beautifully constructed, creating a powerful and poignant story in which readers act as witnesses, not only to Charlotte’s transformation into a political activist, but to her discovery of herself as a young woman. There’s nothing strident about Charlotte’s politics, and Badoe is careful to really flesh out her heroine; politics become essential to the woman Charlotte becomes over the course of the novel, but she’s also a teenager who is in the process of discovering who she is and is taking every opportunity to have fun. Watching Charlotte’s growing political engagement and her involvement with the protest movement is exciting to witness, but Badoe also notes that there are repercussions in a country that isn’t a democracy that challenge Charlotte’s initial idealistic optimism. This is a quiet novel that packs a big punch.

Jeffrey Canton teaches in the Children’s Studies program at York University.

Before We Go Extinct
written by Karen Rivers
Farrar, Straus & Giroux Books for Young Readers, 2016
978-0-374-30240-5 (hc) $24.99
for Grades 9 and up
Fiction | Grief | Family | Relationships

J.C. has been struggling ever since his best friend, Marvin (a.k.a. the King), died right in front of him in a tragic, possibly not accidental, fall from an unfinished skyscraper. Heartbroken and drowning in grief, J.C. stops speaking and withdraws from friends and family. Out of desperation, his mother sends him to stay with his father on an abandoned island in Canada for the summer. There, J.C. gets to know his dad, and with the help of a widow and her children living on the island, learns to live and love again.

Everybody deals with grief differently, and J.C. processes the death of his best friend by sending texts and photos to his dead friend’s phone and attempting to delete their other best friend, Daff, from his life by sending her curt texts in French. J.C.’s voice is strong in this novel, and author Karen Rivers does an excellent job of making his feelings of grief, remorse, anger and confusion authentic and real. Through the messages he sends to the King, and the longer unsent messages he composes to Daff, readers gradually learn the complex bond between the three friends, and of King’s own torment of which J.C. was mostly oblivious. Feeling guilty over not being able to save King, J.C. starts wondering about bigger things to save, such as great white sharks and the planet before they go extinct.

As the summer progresses, J.C. gradually develops a relationship with his father and local girl Kelby, and his inward communication begins to turn outward. Rivers offers no easy solutions or tidy endings in this story, but readers are left with a sense that J.C. will probably be just fine.

Rachel Seigel is Sales and Selection Strategist at EduCan Media.

Beware That Girl
written by Teresa Toten
Doubleday Canada, 2016
978-0-385-67836-0 (hc) $21.99
978-0-385-67837-7 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 9 to 12
Fiction | Mystery | Private Schools | Sexual Abuse | Deception

Smart, street-wise Kate O’Brien is determined to be accepted at Yale. A foster kid, Kate has gone to a series of private schools on scholarship, and attending NYC’s elite Waverly School for her graduating year is the final step. Razor-focused, Kate will lie and manipulate people to make her dream reality. “I could see it straight ahead. The good life. A clear path to the prize. Nothing gets in my way.” Once at Waverly, Kate must find her “it” girl, a girl whose wealth and social status will help seal Kate’s future. Enter Olivia. Super-wealthy, beautiful, and profoundly damaged… perfect for Kate’s purpose. But Olivia has designs of her own and is far more than she appears.

Kate and Olivia have begun the careful work of becoming friends when Mark Redkin, Waverly’s new Director of Advancement, makes an appearance. Charismatic, sexually charged and increasingly dangerous, especially to Kate, Mark captivates the girls of Waverly, but he leaves Kate cold. She is sure he knows more about her than he lets on, and once he ensnares Olivia, the stakes get extremely high. Can she survive whatever game he is playing?

In Beware That Girl, Teresa Toten has written a taut psychological thriller with dark undertones of wealth, privilege and desire. Kate and Olivia are complex, multi-layered characters with terrible secrets, and each revelation adds another twist in the fast-moving plot. Their relationship unfolds chapter by chapter through alternating perspectives — Kate narrates in the first person, while Olivia’s story is told in the third person — keeping the reader off balance. Whose story can we trust? Toten keeps her readers guessing until the end… of which girl should we beware?

Tracey Schindler
Big Blue Forever: The Story of Canada’s Largest Blue Whale Skeleton
written by Anita Miettunen
978-0-88995-542-4 (hc) $24.95
for Grades 4 to 6
Non-fiction | Baleen Whales | Endangered Species | Biodiversity

In 1987, a fatally injured, rare blue whale is washed ashore on a Prince Edward Island beach. She is buried with a view to her skeleton being exhumed later, to be used for public education. This is the story of how, 20 years on, despite unexpected obstacles, the remains of the whale were excavated, transported across Canada and meticulously re-assembled for permanent display at the Beaty Biodiversity Museum in Vancouver, British Columbia. The event is first described in story format, followed by a more detailed and technical explanation that reveals the complexities and hurdles that had to be overcome.

If the goal of non-fiction is to engage and stir the imagination, this succeeds admirably. The blue whale is a majestic animal by any standard — the largest in the world — longer than a dinosaur and as heavy as 33 elephants. Add to this marvel the fascinating intricacies of a project that includes a burial, an exhumation (complete with gross details), cross-country transportation and reconstruction for display purposes, and truth really is stranger than fiction.

Just as compelling is the informational segment on the life of blue whales and reasons for their tragically declining numbers as an endangered species. This is an inspiring read, told with clarity and directness. Each step in the process is documented with photographs, and the end-paper art is striking. Also included are testimonies from team members and suggestions for further reading.

Aileen Wortley

Dancing in the Rain
written by Shelley Hrdlitschka
Orca Book Publishers, 2016
978-1-4598-1065-5 (pb) $14.95
978-1-4598-1067-9 (eBook) $9.99
for Grades 7 and up
Fiction | Adoption | Self-identity | Family | Teen Pregnancy | Grief | Loss and Healing | Romance

Identical twins Crystal and Amber want to be the first in their family to graduate from high school without becoming a teenage mother. However, when one of the inseparable duo becomes pregnant, a tough choice is made. Crystal, the more ambitious of the two, has a skill and a dream: to become a professional antique dealer.

“Successfully weaves Cree mythology into the fast-paced adventure of two teens from vastly different worlds.” —Award-Winning Author Larry Loyie

“Descriptive and fast-paced”—School Library Journal

“The pace is relentless, the amply creepy threat is believable, and the setting is fully realized.” —Kirkus Reviews

“Will open many readers’ eyes to the issues of race, class, and privilege.” —Quill & Quire

978-1-77278-002-4  |  YA Novel Ages 12+
$14.95 PB with French flaps

Speed of Life
written by J.M. Kelly
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Books for Young Readers, 2016
978-0-544-74782-1 (hc) $25.50
for Grades 9 and up
Fiction | Teen Pregnancy | Teens | Family | Social Issues

Identical twins Crystal and Amber want to be the first in their family to graduate from high school without becoming a teenage mother. However, when one of the inseparable duo becomes pregnant, a tough choice is made. Crystal, the more ambitious of the two, has a skill and a dream: to become a professional antique dealer.

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www.pajamapress.ca/WINTER 2016 CANADIAN CHILDREN’S BOOK NEWS 33
car restorer. If she's given the opportunity to go to college, will this sever the bond she has with her family, or give her a future?

The dialogue and characters in Speed of Life are credible enough to make readers relate to the twins' lives. Kelly's writing brings the daily grind of young, working-class motherhood into sharp relief. Whether it’s describing the teens' attempts at achieving a work/life balance, or the trials of socializing in high school, Speed of Life will draw readers in to the small pleasures and little victories in Crystal's life. The occasional bit of humour prevents this book from being weighed down by its subject matter, and makes it somehow more realistic in its softness.

By contrast, Dancing in the Rain shows the life of a Canadian teen named Brenna, whose 16-year-old mother gave her up for adoption at birth. This book is loaded with themes like romance, adoption, identity, grief and healing. Brenna’s story shifts between her attempts to reconnect with her birth mother and mounting tension with her family. Adopted teens wondering about their birth parents might get too rosy a view about connecting with their biological family. However, this book could be a good read for young teens who recently lost a parent and are looking for ways to heal. One sibling turns to drugs and alcohol, the other takes the higher road (literally) and hikes her way through her pain and gets involved in charity work. Readers may take comfort in the well-chosen quotes about grief and life that start each chapter.

Both books involve keeping secrets, only to show that even protective lies can do damage. Dancing in the Rain portrays a slightly unrealistic afterglow surrounding adoption into a loving family, where Speed of Life copes with the gritty choice of facing reality in order to create a future. Of the two novels, Speed of Life is more likely to inspire teens to use protection or motivate young parents to start planning for the future.

Naomi Szeben is a Toronto-based writer and blogger.

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**EVERTON MILES IS STRANGER THAN ME**

*The Night Flyer’s Handbook, Book 2*

writen by Philippa Dowding

Dundurn, 2016

978-1-45973-527-9 (pb) $9.99

978-1-45973-529-3 (eBook) $8.99

*Fiction | Flying | Coming of Age | Friendship | Family | Grief*

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*Everton Miles is Stranger than Me*, the sequel to *The Strange Gift of Gwendolyn Golden*, picks up Gwendolyn's story the night before she is set to start Grade 9 at Bass Creek High School. Gwendolyn's strong and humorous voice carries seamlessly between the two tales, shining through with a touch more maturity and showing the impact her experiences have had on her.

As if starting high school and having to befriend Everton Miles, the new guy in town, aren't enough, Gwendolyn's Night Flyer adventures continue with a mysterious presence calling her name and leaving her strange gifts. Once she gets around to reading the doorstep that is the Night Flyer’s Handbook, Gwendolyn realises that the creature stalking her has been around for ages, and is actually a dark and sinister character named Abilith. Facing increasing danger as the focus of his desire, Gwendolyn finds solace and strength in her friends, even the ones that are new or just returning.

Dowding uses Gwendolyn’s coming of age and new-found awareness to explore the serious themes of her life — the baffling disappearance of her father, the inevitable changes involved in growing up and the potential power of the Shade to pull her down into sadness and grief for good.

Backed up by a firm and growing support system, Gwendolyn becomes capable of facing the dark while also enjoying the lighter moments of her life, including a potential romance. A must-read for Gwendolyn Golden fans, this latest addition to the Night Flyer’s Handbook series will not disappoint.

Amy Mathers

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**THE FIXES**

writen by Owen Matthews


978-0-06-233691-0 (eBook) $11.99

978-0-06-233689-7 (hc) $21.99

*Fiction | Friendship | Family Expectations | Peer Pressure*

Eric Connelly’s life has been completely mapped out for him. Preparing for his future is a full-time job, leaving him no time for frivolous things like friends or fun. He must live up to his potential, meet expectations and never tarnish the family name. But Eric just can’t seem to live up to the “Connelly Man Standard” that his Senator father expects from him, and when he meets the free-spirited Jordan, his father’s rules seem far less important.

Jordan and Eric join up with two of the most popular girls in school to combat their boredom. Eric is intoxicated with Jordan and swept up in the Suicide Pack’s activities. Liking guys is also definitely not part of the “Connelly Man Standard,” but he’s crushing hard on the charming and handsome Jordan Grant, who has a chip on his shoulder and a devil-may-care attitude.

When Jordan invites him to be part of his group, Eric jumps at the chance to spend more time with him. Sure, the pranks are illegal and somewhat dangerous, but they’re also liberating. As the pranks escalate and people start to get hurt, Eric is torn between his feelings for Jordan and his own sense of right and wrong.

The pacing is rapid, and the story intensifies, culminating in an explosive ending. The chapters are short and punchy, often with just a few words on a page, creating a feeling of frenzy. The author also does an excellent job of getting inside his characters’ heads, and helping the reader to understand their motivations — especially Jordan’s.

Language, sex, drugs and violence definitely make this a story more suitable for older teens, but those looking for a thrill ride of a book will not be disappointed.

Rachel Seigel
Haunted Canada 6:
More Terrifying True Stories
written by Joel A. Sutherland
illustrated by Norman Lanting
Scholastic Canada, 2016
978-0-385-68466-8 (eBook) $9.99
978-0-385-68465-1 (hc) $21.99
for Grades 4 to 8

Non-fiction | Ghosts | Canadian History

Haunted Canada 6 is the latest instalment in Joel A. Sutherland’s series of middle grade books featuring terrifying true tales. Sutherland has gathered and retold stories from across the country, from Nunavut to Barrie, Ontario, to Louisbourg, Nova Scotia. Each short story — some are only two or three pages long — tells of ghosts and demons that haunt places such as a bookstore, an historic theatre and a cathedral, among many other locations. The book includes spot illustrations by Norman Lanting, and several of the stories have accompanying photographs that depict the spooky locales described.

As are the previous books in the series, Haunted Canada 6 is great fun to read. Kids, particularly the brave ones who love being scared, will delight in it. Others might stuff it under the covers, read with a flashlight, and then be too scared to sleep!

Rachel Seigel

Making It Right:
Building Peace, Settling Conflict
written by Marilee Peters
Annick Press, 2016
978-1-55451-810-4 (hc) $21.95
978-1-55451-809-8 (pb) $14.95
for Grades 7 and up

Non-fiction | Conflict Resolution | Restorative Justice | Social Activism | Global Studies

Making it Right is a short but intense exploration of the differences between traditional legal responses and restorative justice practices available after a variety of conflict situations (bullying, violent attack, theft, etc.). Fictional stories at the start of each chapter engage the reader and introduce the situation under discussion, and author Marilee Peters uses real-life scenarios with young social activists as examples and role models for alternative practices. While some situations may be familiar, such as bullying or theft, there are also more serious international conflicts discussed, such as issues of genocide and war.

Each section looks at why and how conflict resolution could work for each scenario presented, and what the alternative form of justice might be, up to and including further violence. Historical, cultural and scientific context is also presented, with a look at brain research and clues from the animal kingdom. There is a strong emphasis on restorative practices and community building, but Peters notes that there is no one perfect solution. She acknowledges that people are not always treated fairly, and explores different attitudes and responses to discrimination.

Some of the book’s strongest moments occur when real crimes are discussed. When the Heiltsuk First Nations Community in Bella Bella, British Columbia, asked to take over the sentencing of Frank Brown, aged 15, they chose to look back on historical precedent. After they met as a community, Frank was banished for eight months to a remote island where he was forced to survive on his own. The community monitored his progress, but gave him the opportunity to change his life by his own actions. Frank credits his time on the island for reconnecting him with his community and he continues to help young people learn traditional skills and to stay out of trouble with the law.

Bold wood-cut images in vibrant colours are scattered throughout the book, but I would have liked to see photos of the real-life activists and their communities. While the focus is heavily upon restorative practices, this is an excellent starting point for

Julia Vanishes
written by Catherine Egan
Doubleday Canada, 2016
978-0-385-68465-1 (hc) $21.99
978-0-385-68466-8 (eBook) $9.99
for Grades 7 and up

Fiction | Magic | Witchcraft | Mystery

Julia has an unusual ability. She can make herself invisible, or just beyond people’s senses. It’s a dangerous trait in a city that has banned all forms of magic, but a useful one for her profession as a thief and a spy. Her latest job has her posing as a housemaid in Mrs. Och’s grand house where an odd assortment of characters live and work. Julia suspects that there’s a connection between these people and the killer who is leaving a trail of bodies across the frozen city, and the more she learns, the more she wants to be done with this unnatural job. But Julia is entangled in a struggle between forces more powerful than she’d ever imagined, and escape will come at a terrible price.

In this novel, Catherine Egan has demonstrated a gift for world building, blending magic and low technology to create something resembling Puritan London. Witches cast spells by writing them down, and they are hunted and drowned at public events called “Cleansings.” If caught, Julia will be drowned just as her mother was nine years previously. Unfortunately, she’s not the only one in the house who’s not as she seems, and the secrets and magic are attracting unwanted attention from the authorities.

Julia is a flawed but strong female character with a lot of depth. Growing up parentless and raised by thieves, she is tough, cynical and ambitious, but not cold. She struggles with the choices she has to make, and themes of morality, conscience and guilt play large roles in this novel.

While the story is initially a bit slow to develop, the pacing picks up suitably to carry readers along and have them clamouring for the next two books in the series.

Rachel Seigel

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While the story is initially a bit slow to develop, the pacing picks up suitably to carry readers along and have them clamouring for the next two books in the series.

Rachel Seigel
high school-aged students to consider what role they can play and how they may be able to participate in conflict resolution in their own communities.

Jenn Hubbs

**Memoirs of a Sidekick**
written by David Skuy
Kids Can Press, 2016
978-1-77138-568-8 (hc) $17.95
978-1-77138-768-2 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 5 to 9

*Fiction | Middle School | Fitting In | Student Council*

Adrian is more than just a friend to fellow seventh grader Boris; he’s a sidekick. The two have been a team, breaking rules and getting into trouble at Bendale Public School for as long as they can remember, and Grade 7 is sure to be no different! When Boris decides to run for Student Council President in order to better his school, the two friends must win over each of the school’s student groups in order to accumulate their votes. When dealing with the ‘Little Kids,’ the ‘Tree-Huggers’ and the ‘Theatre School’s student groups in order to accumulate their votes. When

Kevin Sands transports us back to a time when people did not understand disease or what caused it, making the plague a terrifying occurrence. Sands conveys this fear adeptly through his characters and their actions, bringing this historical period to life for readers. Fans of The Blackthorn Key will not be disappointed with this second thrilling adventure. Filled with mystery, intrigue and the ultimate riddle that will keep readers guessing until the very end, Sands’ excellent sequel is impossible to put down.

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

**Mark of the Plague**
*(Blackthorn Key, Book 2)*
written by Kevin Sands
Aladdin, 2016
978-1-4814-4674-7 (hc) $22.99
978-1-4814-4676-1 (eBook) $11.99
for Grades 5 to 9

*Historical Fiction | Mystery | Adventure | The Black Death | Alchemy*

In this second instalment of the Blackthorn Key adventures, London has been plagued with The Black Death and the disease is spreading quickly. Christopher receives a letter in his deceased master’s handwriting and must, once again, try to decipher the riddle his master has left him. If he can do that, he’ll discover the treasure hidden in the apothecary’s shop. With the situation in London looking very bleak, a prophet predicts the city’s ultimate doom. But then an unknown apothecary arrives with a cure he claims will save the lives of those afflicted and he’s sent to the Blackthorn apothecary shop to prepare the remedy. Before long, the mysterious apothecary’s life is threatened, and a more secret location is chosen to protect those involved. Christopher and his friends Tom and Sally must discover the truth about this strange cure the apothecary claims he can produce, but doing so will put all of their lives in danger.

Kevin Sands transports us back to a time when people did not understand disease or what caused it, making the plague a terrifying occurrence. Sands conveys this fear adeptly through his characters and their actions, bringing this historical period to life for readers. Fans of The Blackthorn Key will not be disappointed with this second thrilling adventure. Filled with mystery, intrigue and the ultimate riddle that will keep readers guessing until the very end, Sands’ excellent sequel is impossible to put down.

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

**My Demon’s Name is Ed**
written by Danah Khalil
Second Story Press, 2016
978-1-927583-96-8 (pb) 12.95
978-1-77260-000-1 (eBook) $8.99
for Grades 7 and up

*Fiction | Eating Disorders | Mental Health | Recovery and Relapse | Poetry*

Khalil’s debut novel is a difficult one to judge. Firstly, because it is the true story of Khalil’s own struggle with anorexia, and secondly, the intention of the novel is so clearly to inform and help those both in and outside of a similar situation. So, while "enjoy" is not the right word for the novel, I do think it would be an enlightening read for anyone with, or close to someone with, an eating disorder. Danah’s story is told through her journal entries, which are sprinkled with poetry (mostly haiku), workout regimens and meal plans. Danah’s entries are constantly interrupted by the voice of Ed written in italics. Ed — short for “eating disorder”— is what Khalil refers to as the demon in her head that forces her to watch her calorie intake and maintain a rigid workout routine. Because of Ed, Danah has changed entirely; she is constantly angry and resentful toward her family, she resorts to secrecy to fulfill Ed’s needs and expresses constant frustration with almost everything in her life.

Overall, I felt that the adherence to real life was admirable, but at times a hindrance to the actual storytelling. Ed, whose voice is intended to teach the reader what a disorder feels like, often seems repetitive. While addicts might find Ed’s voice relatable in that it could be the window into the vicious cycle of recovery and relapse, other readers might find his voice detracts from the story.

The immensity of Danah’s daily struggle with a very real and visceral disorder certainly comes through in her deeply conflicted reflection. So, despite the criticism, there is a very true and raw story to be had in *My Demon’s Name is Ed*, and there is certainly an audience for Khalil’s book.

Stephanie Dror holds an MA in Children’s Literature from the University of British Columbia and is a book blogger and reviewer on *The Book Wars*.
Pandas on the Eastside
written by Gabrielle Prendergast
Orca Book Publishers, 2016
978-1-4598-1143-0 (pb) $9.95
978-1-4598-1145-4 (eBook) $7.99
for Grades 4 to 6

Fiction | Vancouver | Pandas | Social Advocacy

Growing up on Vancouver’s Eastside, Journey Song is no stranger to the harsher realities of life and she knows that many people see her neighbourhood as just a slum. But to her it is home, and its colourful, diverse inhabitants are her friends. She knows that people are often more than what they seem. But she also knows that there is a lot of sadness in the world: wars and messed-up families and people who haven’t enough to eat or anywhere to live. So when Journey learns about the plight of a pair of pandas that have been sent from China and are currently in a warehouse on the Eastside, she embarks on a quest to save them.

Set against the backdrop of the Vietnam War, this book will nevertheless resonate with young readers of today who will be struck by Journey’s clear-eyed view of the world as she tries to understand why people do the things they do. She confronts a number of weighty issues with tenacity and an open heart and mind. The author has also created a cast of fully realized secondary characters and provides a sensitive snapshot of Journey’s beloved Eastside neighbourhood, capturing its gritty urban aspect along with the ordinary kindnesses that make it a true home. And she poignantly highlights the deeply human nature of its occupants, individuals who are sometimes flawed but are still capable of genuine goodness. This book is heartfelt and hopeful, a gift to anyone of any age.

Lisa Doucet is Co-Manager of Woozles in Halifax.

These Are My Words: The Residential School Diary of Violet Pesheens
(Dear Canada)
written by Ruby Slipperjack
Scholastic Canada, 2016
978-1-4431-3318-0 (hc) $16.99
978-1-4431-3319-7 (eBook) $16.99
for Grades 4 to 6

Historical Fiction | First Nations Children | Residential Schools | Prejudice | Racism

During the 19th and 20th centuries in Canada, approximately 150,000 Indigenous children were taken from loving families and placed in residential schools. In emotionally and physically harsh conditions they were ‘educated’ and ‘assimilated’ into another lifestyle. Homesick for loved ones and her old life, Violet takes refuge in a forbidden diary. She writes of loneliness, her longing for her grandmother and her native traditions, and the harshness of school life. She also documents her determination to retain her Anishinaabe language, her customs and her own identity while trying to integrate into her new life.

This book is an evocative and meaningful addition to the Dear Canada series; each of these books is written in diary format and features significant episodes in Canadian history. The author has captured Violet’s isolation while depicting her as a survivor who walks a fine line between two cultures.

The quiet, intimate writing style creates empathy, making Violet a compelling character, and readers are propelled forward in their anxiety to know her fate. The author has managed to provide a glimpse of the indignity and tragedy of decades in one small volume that covers a year in a vulnerable child’s life. Photographs of Indigenous children at school are included, as is a brief history of the residential school movement from its inception until recent times, when attempts for belated justice have been sought. Violet’s diary provides deftly handled insights into a dark and tragic period of our history.

Aileen Wortley

The Turing Machinists
written by M.E. Reid
Dancing Cat Books, 2016
978-1-77086-465-5 (pb) $14.95
for Grades 8 to 12

Fiction | Asperger’s Syndrome | Music | Bands | Overcoming Challenges

As a 17-year-old with Asperger’s syndrome, Del Capp has a hard time relating to anyone — especially his father, who just wants Del to be “normal.” With his family on the verge of coming apart, he forms an all-Asperger’s rock band with his classmates. His goal — to win a battle of the bands contest and fulfill his father’s one-time dream of being a rock star. In his neighbour, a reclusive former rock star, Del finds a band manager and a possible friend. But this group will have a tough time learning to play together when, for them, breaking out of a routine is the hardest thing in the world.

In her first young adult novel, M.E. Reid skilfully brings us into Del’s world, illustrating the characteristics and challenges of Asperger’s syndrome without sounding too clinical. As a mother of two autistic children herself, Reid shows us throughout the text that she knows this terrain. She does not make the mistake of venerating the characters with Asperger’s — like other kids, they can be short-tempered and even violent.

Del is a believable and sympathetic character with a strong narrative voice. His awkward relationship with the former rock star, James Comfort, forms a good focal point, with both trying, and often failing, to understand the world the other lives in. The idiosyncratic exchanges between Del’s classmates, sometimes turning hilarious and profane, are also a highlight. The tables are turned on James when he is surrounded by this group, no longer the “normal” one — one of many moments that makes us question what “normal” really means.

The Turing Machinists is an entertaining and honest novel that will make older readers think more complexly about the autism spectrum.

Ian Usher studies English at McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario.
**When Morning Comes**
written by Arushi Raina
Tradewind Books, 2016
978-1-926890-14-2 (pb) $12.95
978-1-896580-69-2 (hc) $20.00
for Grades 8 and up
_Fiction | South Africa | Apartheid | Soweto Uprising_

“I had not expected them to shoot us. I did not.”

Arushi Raina’s debut novel is set in 1976, South Africa, a country racially divided by both law and brute force. In stark prose with alternating first-person narrative, Raina weaves together the stories of four young people whose lives collide against the backdrop of the oppressive apartheid regime and in the shadow of the looming Soweto uprising. Our four main characters include Zanele, a Soweto student and occasional night club singer with a dangerous secret — she is plotting against the government; her best friend, Thabo, who has become a gangster (Tsotsi) and has made some powerful enemies; Jack, who lives in white Johannesburg and is spending his last summer before university crashing parties; and Meena, a south Asian girl working in her father’s shop who discovers a trash bin of banned pamphlets.

Through a series of chance meetings, Zanele, Jack, Thabo and Meena become entangled in each other’s lives. The chain of events which brings them together — a failed plot to blow up a power station, a Soweto teacher murdered for teaching in Afrikaans despite threats from students, a vengeful police agent on the hunt and a secret network of students across the township — ultimately comes to a head on the morning of June 16th when some 15,000 Soweto students, simmering with resentment and anger march in protest against the Bantu Education Act.

This law forced all black students in grade 10 and above to receive their education in Afrikaans — the language of the ruling National Party instead of English. The Soweto Uprising began as a peaceful march against an unfair law but ended in blood, bullets and the death of approximately 200 students at the hands of the police. It was a seismic event which spelled the beginning of the end of apartheid.

Raina’s novel provides a riveting and candid depiction of life in South Africa at the cusp of an uprising which would eventually dismantle apartheid. But it is also a story of complicated friendships, a doomed love affair and the surprising strength and resilience of four young people living in impossible times.

Tracey Schindler

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**New Editions and Re-issues**

Fifth House Publishers has released a new edition of _Dragonfly Kites: Pimithaagansa_, the classic Tomson Highway story (originally published by HarperCollins, 2002), with stunning new illustrations by Cree-Métis illustrator Julie Flett. The text is in both English and Cree.

A revised edition of _The Great Number Rumble: A Story of Math in Surprising Places_ by Cora Lee and Gillian O’Reilly, with new illustrations by Lil Crump, will be released by Annick Press in October 2016. The new edition contains updated material and is a great resource to make math more exciting for kids.

_Sweetest Kulu_, by acclaimed Inuit throat singer Celina Kalluk and illustrated by Alexandria Neonakis, is now available from Inhabit Media as a board book. This beautiful bedtime poem is a must have for all little Canadians.

A 25th anniversary edition of _Once Upon a Golden Apple_ has been released in board book by Penguin Random House. Authored by Jean Little and Maggie de Vries and illustrated by Phoebe Gilman, this fractured fairy tale was originally published in 1991, and would make an excellent addition to any young child’s first library.
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Gillian O’Reilly urges Canadian writers to not be afraid to write the landscape of Canada.

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Feast your eyes on the amazing Book Week poster Ian Wallace has designed for the 40th Anniversary Tour of TD Canadian Children’s Book Week.

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Michelle Mulder

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Rina Singh

Fox and Squirrel: The Best Christmas Ever
Ruth Ohi

Yitzi and the Giant Menorah
Richard Ungar

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5 Giraffes
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Anne Innis Dagg

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Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch, Tuan Ho, Brian Deines

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Katherine Ashenburg, Capucine Mazille

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Gilles Tribo, Manon Gauthier, Erin Woods

Aluta
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Karen Rivers

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Shelley Hrdlitschka

Evertong Miles is Stranger Than Me
(The Night Flyer’s Handbook, Book 2)
Philippa Dowding

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Owen Matthews

Friend or Foe?
John Sobol, Dasha Tolstikova

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Joel A. Sutherland, Norman Lan ting

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