

CANADIAN CHILDREN'S

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Rodeo Writer

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of Books begins

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Pink Shirt Day

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to screen
kids' books
on film

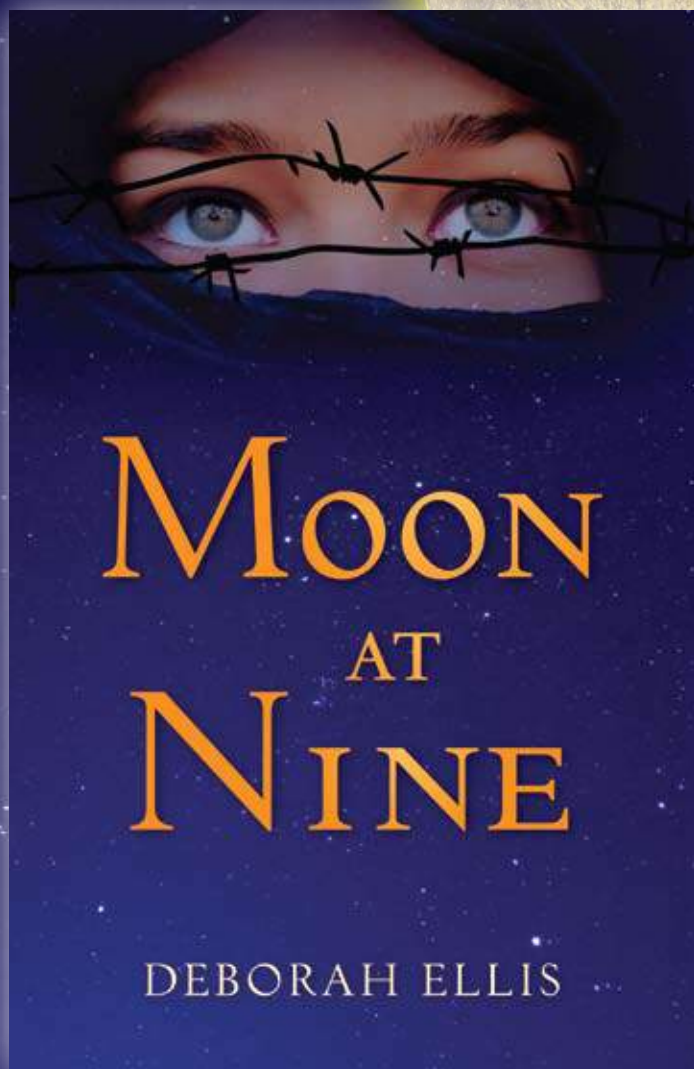


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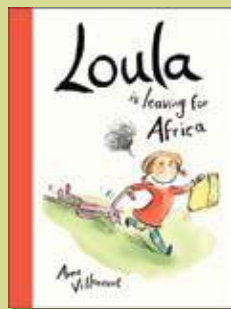
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COVER: Illustration from *Loula is Leaving for Africa*, written and illustrated Anne Villeneuve, published by Kids Can Press © 2013. Used with permission.

For more information, visit www.kidscanpress.com

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ABOUT THE Illustrator: Anne Villeneuve has written and illustrated close to 40 books, created games for magazines, illustrated for newspapers and designed cake boxes for a bakery. She's also worked on "scenography" for Cirque du Soleil shows, murals for soft drinks and posters for the Dairy Farmers of Canada. Over the years, her work has earned her many distinguished recognitions, such as the Governor General's Literary Award and the Québec/Wallonie-Bruxelles Literary Award in 2000, the TD Canadian Children's Literature Award in 2005 and 2009, and the Mr. Christie's Book Award in 1998.

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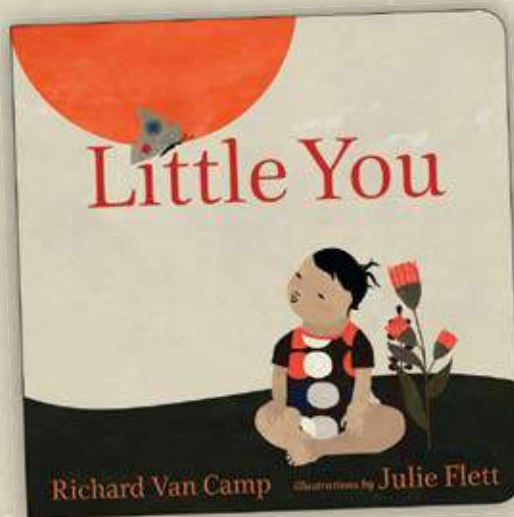
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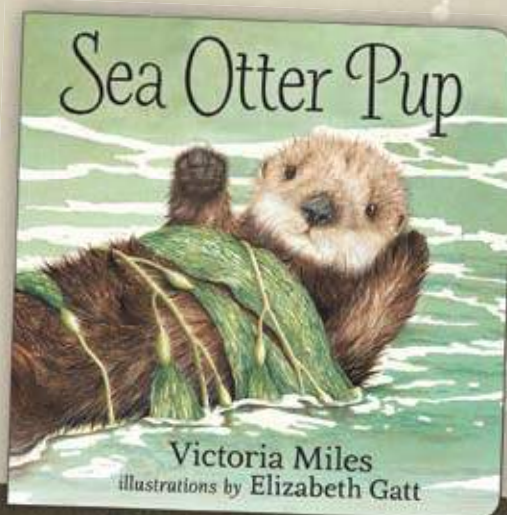


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FROM THE EDITOR GILLIAN O'REILLY



Movie producers have been turning Canadian books into films since 1919 when the first silver screen version of *Anne of Green Gables* appeared. An execrable production, it featured a shotgun-toting Anne in front of a schoolhouse flying the Stars and Stripes — evidence that movie producers' ability to ruin an adaptation is long established too. (The movie disappeared when the director was murdered three years later.)

Early in 2014, the new film *Hold Fast* debuts across Canada. Based on Kevin Major's award-winning book, *Hold Fast* has already drawn raves (and tears) at film festivals in Newfoundland, Poland, Korea and Brazil. It is wonderfully exciting to see this powerful and moving book brought to the screen by a talented team of Newfoundlanders. In this issue, we look at ups and downs of movie adaptations of Canadian books — the exciting successes, the obstacles and the horror stories.

February 23 to March 1, 2014 marks Freedom to Read Week. As I write this, I am remembering a recent radio story on books denied to Guantanamo Bay prisoners. Orwell's *1984* was allowed; *Jack and the Beanstalk* and *Puss and Boots* were not. Mystifying, but also an example of how the written word can seem so powerful and threatening to some. It's important to recognize, cherish and celebrate our freedom to read what we want every year.

There is lots to read in these pages — about school libraries, Amy's Marathon of Books, TD Canadian Children's Book Week and many fine new books to discover and enjoy.

Happy reading.

Gillian O'Reilly

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In defense of school librarians Fostering 21st century skills in our students



A couple of Februaries ago, my older daughter came home from school excited about a project she was doing on Nelson Mandela. "Did you know they put him in jail for trying to help black people?" she asked incredulously. In Grade 4 at a French-language school north of Toronto, her teacher (who is inspiring in so many other areas) had told his students to find facts and pictures about important figures in black history. And how were they to find all that? "He told us to Google it and print pictures from the Internet."

That was it. No suggested web links, no tips for finding things suitable to her reading level, no French-language web portals or databases, no instructions on how to avoid copyright infringement and to properly attribute images. And no books.

My daughters' school, like almost half in Ontario, has no librarian — someone who is professionally either a teacher or an MLS graduate and who acts as an advisor, expert, and friend to student and faculty alike in order to guide the search

and evaluation of information and reading material. They have a library — decently stocked by today's standards, especially given generally higher prices for French books — and a library technician, who tirelessly keeps it in order and makes great effort to promote recreational reading through book fairs, book battles, author visits, and the like.

"In this school, every classroom has an Internet-enabled interactive white board, but no information specialist to help exploit its possibilities."

But unlike a true librarian — and here I am not talking about the individual's talent, nor even her professional qualifications, but about the role the administration assigns her to play — my daughter's beloved *bibliotechnicienne* is not mandated, and likely not even allowed, to act as a peer to faculty, an expert in her field, someone responsible for an academic function. She does not advise teachers, she does not teach lessons on information searching, she does not curate web portal links, she does not even purchase student online resources (in fact, the school has none). The search for information — that complex, often frustrating, but ultimately satisfying process that is essential to real learning from elementary to graduate education — is left to teachers on their own to guide, with few resources, another demand added to the myriad challenges they face. In this school, every classroom has an Internet-enabled interactive white board, but no information specialist to help exploit its possibilities.

The pattern is similar across the province and across the country, in English- and French-language schools alike. School librarians are becoming rarer. Sometimes they are found only in larger schools, or only in secondary schools, or shared between several schools, or shared between library and prep-time duties. And that's where they exist at all: New Brunswick has just 3 teacher-librarians, Nova Scotia none.

As librarians are becoming an endangered species, a shift is happening in schools that has profoundly impacted students' selection of individual reading material. As part of an emphasis on basic skills, literacy programs have taken prominent place in the classroom. On the one hand, this has meant that literature is often linked to the teaching of almost any subject. Canadian historical fiction might be used in social studies, for example, to show a child-centered view of a historical event. On the other hand, classroom-based individual reading programs have reduced both breadth and depth of choice in a child's reading: a small collection of books, often with assigned levels, means the child's choice is limited to the few books in the next level he or she is intended to master, without the intervention of a caring library professional.

In Ontario, where this shift from the library to the classroom has taken place over the last couple of decades, reading scores have gone up, but the number of kids who say they enjoy reading has gone down. The enjoyment of reading — in any form, in any medium, on any topic, at any level — is an essential ingredient in creating independent thinkers and lifelong learners. What should be a deeply personal process, one that can stimulate a love of reading that goes beyond the required curriculum and aims to produce nuanced, empathetic and expressive communicators, is often left to the quick classroom pick. It is true that on visits to the library, students will have more time and choice, but there is still less likelihood they will encounter a professional with the time, expertise or mandate to "sell" them appealing and enlightening books.

When my daughters were learning to read, the classroom literacy program was valuable. The books were most often deadly dull leveled readers — one of them a series translated into French from New Zealand — but they did foster basic reading skills, especially phonics, something that has to be mastered early in French with its consistent but stubbornly non-phonetic orthography. But none of these books are among the handful of early readers my kids remember fondly. And now that they are independent readers in both languages, I struggle to entice them to read anything beyond light fare, media tie-ins or comics (not to disparage graphic novels like the *Les Dragouilles* series, winner of two Prix Tamarac in the Forest of Reading). I simply don't have an ally at the school; my daughter's Grade 5 teacher consistently read them picture books by Madonna, of all people.

Schools without librarians are failing students. Research has demonstrated that, according to the National Reading Campaign, "well-stocked, professionally-staffed school libraries... are linked to student achievement, reading, information literacy skills and success at the post-secondary level." Fostering some of the most essential 21st century skills — critical evaluation, synthesis, empathy, communication — should be done in the most natural, self-motivated manner: through reading and information seeking. And the surest way to put that front and centre is by investing in school libraries. 📖

Todd Kyle is CEO of the Newmarket Public Library in Newmarket, Ontario, and the President of the Board of Directors of the Canadian Children's Book Centre.

FREEDOM TO READ WEEK

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News Roundup

AWARDS, BOOK LAUNCHES, ANNOUNCEMENTS AND THE LATEST NEWS

Welcome Camilia Kahrizi

Camilia Kahrizi has joined the CCBC as Marketing and Website Coordinator. She comes to the CCBC from Oxford University Press.

Born in Antigonish, NS, Camilia grew up in Brossard, QC, and graduated from McGill University. An internship at a Montreal publishing house during her university years convinced her that she wanted to work in publishing. "I took distance courses in Ryerson's publishing program, moved to Toronto and got an internship at Oxford soon after."

Asked about her favourite children's books, Camilia points out that she attended French school and says, "In French, I loved Sylvia Desrosier's Notdog series — they were my first chapter books and I still remember borrowing them one by one from my school library."

Great Kids, Great Reads podcasts offer great book discussion

"There's just something amazing about hearing people talk about books," says Kevin Sylvester, explaining the thinking behind his new series of podcasts where he talks with booksellers about their recommendations.

Why podcasts? "I'm a bit frustrated with the lack of attention for kids' books on the electronic media. As you know, I'm a broadcaster in my other life, and I love radio. I love hearing people talk passionately about things they love."

"So I thought, if the radio isn't going to come to kids lit, I'll take it to the 'radio' (podcasts being a kind of on-demand radio format). Now there's a Facebook page, website with the podcast as well as the list in print — and the podcast is available on iTunes."

Each month, Kevin invites "a couple of booksellers into my cramped attic, and we talk about the best kids books out there. I get them to pick a couple of highlights from each age group (picture book, middle grade and YA)... Then we throw in a "lightning round" of picks. There's usually 12 books in total."

The first few interviews are with Michelle Gram and Melissa Bourdon-King of Mabel's Fables in Toronto. "Independent booksellers in particular are masters at matching kids with books, and are great at actually reading the books they sell. Handselling is an art, and I wanted to recognize the people who are the front-liners in this world."

Sylvester lists a number of independent booksellers on the Great Kids, Great Reads site, and hopes to be able to interview booksellers from outside Toronto. He says, "My hope is to have this podcast be something that all booksellers will listen to and maybe even host on their websites and social media. At the very least I'd like to have a page on the site dedicated to the online outlets for these stores. Also, because it's a podcast, the people listening could be anywhere. Maybe they can buy at Mabel's online store, but maybe they live in Phoenix. Okay, then go to Changing Hands and get the books there or click on their link and "order local."

To listen to the podcasts and explore the site, visit greatkidsreads.com.

Seven Secrets offers seven girls' stories

A "dream team" is how author Vicki Grant describes her fellow writers for the Seven Secrets series from Orca Book Publishers. Grant, Kelley Armstrong, Marthe Jocelyn, Kathy Kacer, Norah McClintock, Teresa Toten and Eric Walters are each working on one of seven interlinked novels planned for publication in 2015.

Seven Secrets will be the third "Seven" set of books from Orca and the first to feature female protagonists — all girls who have been raised in the Wallace Marshall Academy for Orphans and Necessitous Children, set in the spring of 1964. The series premise is "Who are you? Do you really want to know about the secret of you who are and where you came from?"

The first set of books, *Seven the series*, was conceived by Eric Walters as a set of books written by himself and six other experienced writers: Sigmund Brouwer, Norah McClintock, Shane Peacock,

Richard Scrimger, Ted Staunton and John Wilson. Seven the series offered the stories of seven cousins, all teenage boys, as they carried out their late grandfather's wishes. Working from the same opening premise, each author was free to explore his or her character's story. A huge undertaking, the series, launched in the fall of 2012, sold over 100,000 books and went into five printings. In 2014, those seven authors will return to follow their characters' lives in *The Seven Sequels*.

New \$5,000 Award for First Nation Communities Read Title

On the tenth anniversary of the First Nation Communities Read program comes the announcement of a significant new book award. Beginning in 2014, creators of the First Nation Communities Read title will receive additional recognition as recipients of the \$5,000 Aboriginal Literature Award. The award is supported by a four-year funding commitment from Periodical Marketers of Canada (PMC).

The First Nation Communities Read title is selected annually for community-based reading across Canada. It focuses, alternately, on Aboriginal literature for adults and young adults, and Aboriginal literature for children. The current (2013-2014) selection is *Indian Horse* by Richard Wagamese. The 2014-2015 title will be for a children's book and will be announced in May 2014.

PMC is the association of book and magazine distributors and longtime sponsor of the Foundation for the Advancement of Canadian Letters (FACL). Executive Director Ray Argyle said: "All of us at PMC feel privileged to fund this award which recognizes the work of the creators of outstanding Aboriginal literature and supports the objectives of our Foundation for the Advancement of Canadian Letters."

Speaking on behalf of First Nation Communities Read, Karen Foster, juror (and librarian at Chippewas of Georgina Island First Nation Public Library, added: "A funded award has been a longtime goal

continued on page 8

Seen at ...

A PHOTOGRAPHIC LOOK AT CANADIAN CHILDREN'S BOOK EVENTS



Jennifer Maruno



Jennifer Maruno



Tom Sandler

Above: Enjoying the Canadian Children's Book Awards Gala: (l) Helene Boudreau, Jennifer Maruno, Natalie Hyde and Jennifer Lanthier and (r) Helaine Becker and Maureen McGowan.

Left: At the Writers' Trust Awards, Barbara Reid accepts the 2013 Vicky Metcalf Award for Literature for Young People, presented to a writer for a body of work in children's literature.

Below left: During the TD Grade One Book Giveaway Tour (Vancouver, Calgary, High River, Winnipeg, Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, London, Brampton), author Loris Lesynski, along with illustrator Michael Martchenko, shared *Boy Soup* with thousands of fans.

Below middle: In Halifax, Meghan Marentette (*The Stowaways*) and Jill MacLean (*Nix Minus One*) launch their new books in conjunction with Woozles Bookstore.

Below right: Nova Scotia Education and Early Childhood Development Minister Karen Casey enjoys time with students at the official donation of 20,000 Formac First Novel books to Nova Scotia elementary schools.



Julian Marentette



for us. This new partnership with Periodical Marketers of Canada is a wonderful 10th anniversary achievement. We look forward to beginning First Nation Communities Read's second decade with an enhanced program and the additional program stature PMC's endorsement provides."

Book Week: March release for Book Week materials

TD Canadian Children's Book Week takes place from May 3 to 10, 2014. In honour of the centenary of the beginning of World War I, the theme is **Read to Remember**. The theme reminds us that books can help us to *remember* past conflicts, *honour* those who involved and *recognize* that war is still with us today.

The information-packed Book Week Theme Guide offers a collection 70 annotated titles and activities, covering WWI, WWII and subsequent wars Canada has been involved in. Available in March, it can be downloaded free from the Book Week website (www.bookweek.ca). Visitors to the website can also purchase Book Week posters and bookmarks, featuring the powerful artwork of Brian Deines.

Book Week: Find Public Readings in Your Region

There are many free public readings taking place across Canada during TD Canadian Children's Book Week. These readings, generously funded by the Canada Council for the Arts, are held in public libraries, community centres, bookstores and, in the case of remote regions where there is not a public library, local schools. In April, you can check online to see if there is a reading to enjoy in your area.

Book Week touring authors, illustrators and storytellers include: Catherine Austen, Karen Bass, Helaine Becker, Beverley Brenna, Jill Bryant, Sean Cassidy, Anita Daher, Clara Dugas, Claire Eamer, Georgia Graham, Sarah Harvey, Matt James, Kathy Kacer, Karen Krossing, James Leck, Danica Lorer, Kyo Maclear, Sharon McKay, Stephanie McLellan, Susan Mitchell, Monique Polak, David Poulsen, Richard Scarsbrook, Marsha Skrypuch, Kathy Stinson, Patricia Storms, Larry Verstraete, Ian Wallace and Patti Warnock.

Visit www.bookweek.ca to find out which author, illustrator or storyteller is going where.



Keep Your Eye On ... Ashley Barron

INTERVIEW BY GILLIAN O'REILLY

Tell us about your newest book. *Shaping Up Summer* is the fourth and final book in the Math in Nature series, written by Lizann Flatt (Owlkids). Like *Counting on Fall*, *Sizing Up Winter* and *Sorting Through Spring*, *Shaping Up Summer* takes kids on a journey through varied seasonal North American ecosystems, while teaching them math concepts along the way. Inside its pages, skunks dig shapely holes, alligators soak up parallel sunrays and narwhals swim alongside ice cones, cubes and cylinders.

I really could have used this sort of book growing up as a kid whose eyes used to glaze over at the very mention of the word math.

Tell us about the process of illustrating. A lot of time and research had gone into the Math in Nature manuscript by the time it reached my hands. This made the task of visually mapping out each spread, in the form of a thumbnail sketch, a lot easier.

Behind every finished illustration in any picture book, are pages upon pages of preliminary line drawings (sketches) that were worked and reworked to bring it to that point.

I like drawing, but I like the paper collage stage even more! To begin a collage, I'll trace the underlying sketch onto transparent paper. Having drawn out each element, I'll then use the transparency as a guide to cut along. I use scissors and exacto knives for cutting out each piece and mainly glue sticks for pasting everything down. I've come to appreciate double-sided tape and its forgiving properties when it comes to last minute changes. All of my pasting efforts were really put to test when it came to photographing the final book art, as it was shot upside down!

After the work has been photographed, I get sent a digital file to then finalize in Photoshop. Here, I'll apply extra details to the image that would otherwise be too tiny or time-consuming to cut all out by hand.

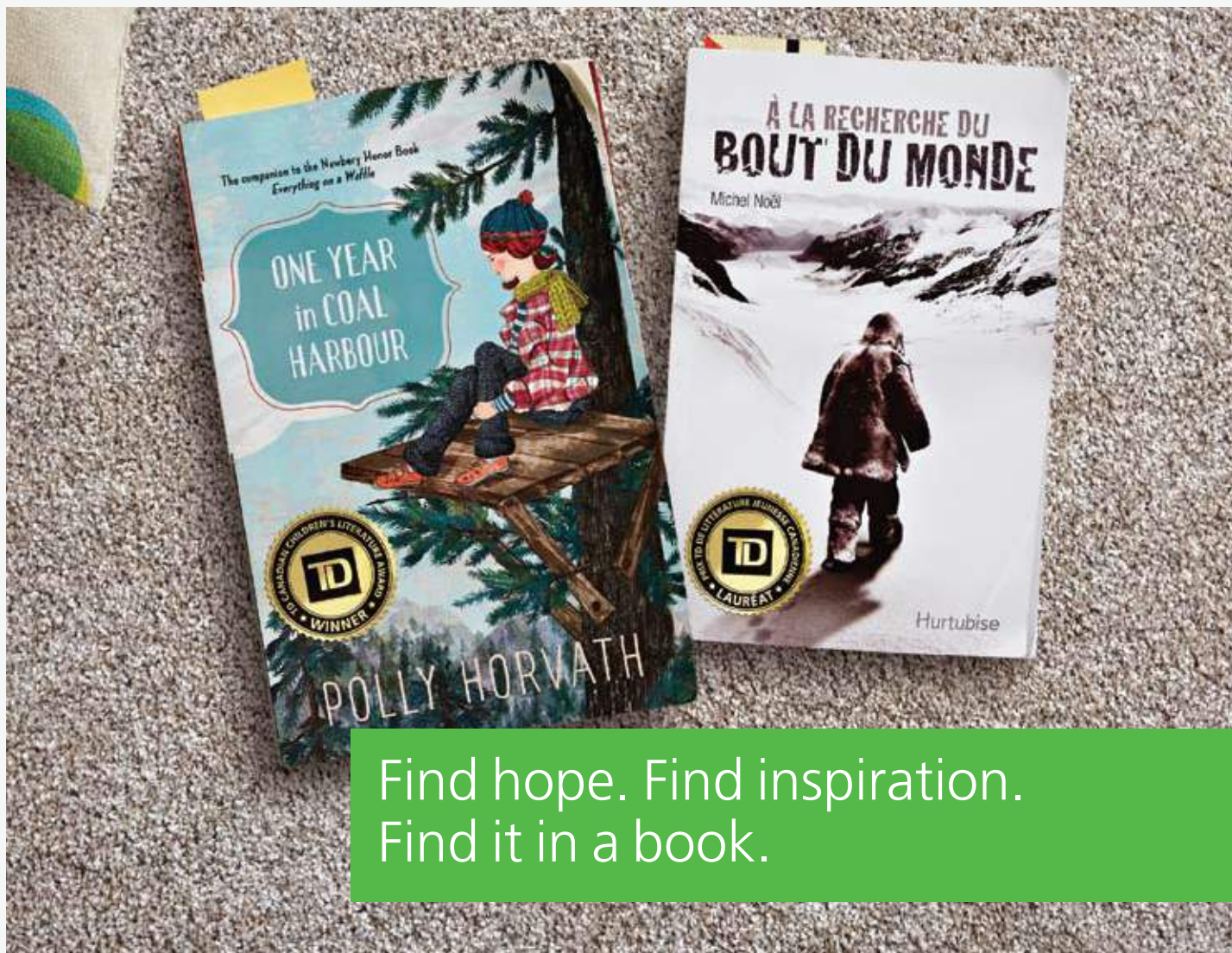
How did you first get published? I was lucky. I had sent the right illustration promo to the right person at the right time because a short while after, Mary Beth Leatherdale (Owlkids' Editorial Director at the time) got in contact to set up a meeting with me. Having grown up as a devout *chickaDEE* and *OWL* magazine subscriber, you can imagine my excitement!

What do you like about illustrating books? Something I've now recognized since completing the Math in Nature series is how much I enjoy the collaborative process of making a book. Working from home as a freelance illustrator can feel a little isolating at times, so it was a nice change to have such a supportive team (author, editor, designer, art directors) working with me the whole way through, by way of scheduled meetings, ongoing emails and launching events.

Tell us about illustrators who inspire you.

I'm in love with the bright, bold layers of Blexbolex's book illustrations and the geometrical minimalism of Charley Harper's wildlife prints. As well, I look up to Maira Kalman's ability to observe her surroundings with such grace and whimsy.





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Learn more at tdreads.com



The Canadian Children's Book Centre



David Poulsen

Rodeo Writer

BY SYLVIA MCNICOLL



"And that's what rodeo's all about: guts and heart."

In a voice reminiscent of John Wayne, David Poulsen calls out the conclusion of a barrel race on an episode of CBC's *Heartland*. Poulsen may be commenting on rodeo in that scene but he could be describing his own writing. He started as a gutsy rodeo rider of no great skill and ended up as an accident-prone rodeo clown. Then he wisely chose the safer role of rodeo caller and commentator for television, the films *Convict Cowboy* and *Black Stallion*, the annual Calgary Stampede and many other rodeos. But, with over 2,500 performances under his belt, he's still a writer at heart; and has been since the days when his dad and he swapped books. Poulsen gave him his Hardy Boys and his father loaned him Perry Mason. Reading with his father inspired him to be the person who created those stories.

Developing the guts

As an inner city Calgary boy, Poulsen visited his uncle's ranch in Swift Current every chance he had, developing a love for the country and animals. By the time he finally began rodeo competitions at 19, he was too far behind to compete successfully. He also earned his BA later than most, beginning it at University of Calgary and then completing it at University of Saskatchewan. He landed his first full time job at Lakeland College in Vermilion, Alberta, where he enjoyed teaching, but not the subjects he was assigned — business writing and public speaking.

He began writing and sending off his work with the same calamity-prone results as with his rodeo riding — until he wrote and submitted a poignant short story about the effects of the battle of Dieppe on three hometown hockey heroes. "The Welcomin'" won the 1984 Alberta Culture Short Story Writing Competition. That same year he married Barbara — a teacher and barrel racing rodeo lover herself.

Three years later, he also married his love of mystery and cowboy life with the first in a trilogy of novels, *The Cowboy Kid*, published by Great Plains. *Ride for the Crown* and *Ride the High Country* became the sequels. "They were my practise books," says Poulsen.

He continued practising until 1990, when Barbara introduced him to a writer named Martyn Godfrey who was visiting her school. "Martyn was the best... his books were loved by his readers and I learned a ton from him. It was Martyn who pushed me to leave teaching and write full time."

Climbing onto the bull

Poulsen parted with a regular paycheck to support a family, including three children, on itinerant royalties and school visits. It was a decision challenged at one of his first high school visits, he recalls.

"In the staff room between presentations, the vice-principal, a nice enough older gentleman, said to me, 'So let me see if I understand this correctly — you've left a tenured college teaching position to become a full time writer?' He made the word 'writer' sound like 'male stripper.'"

"Yes, that's right," Poulsen answered. The vice-principal looked at him for a long moment, put his hand on his shoulder and, in a kindly voice, said, "Well, the good news is — maybe you can get your old job back."

Poulsen never had to return to Lakeland College. In 1996 his *Billy and the Bearman*, a story about runaway kids in Alberta, was published with Napoleon Publishing and he also began a fun mystery and monsters junior novel series with Roussan called the Salt and Pepper Chronicles. A re-issue of the first book in that series, *The Vampire's Visit*, was the featured book in the TVOKids Reading Rangers Book Club in November 2013.

But he cites his first important book as *Last Sam's Cage*, published by the now defunct Key Porter Books in 2004. When a social worker suggested Poulsen write about a young offender, he went on the streets, in a police cruiser and alone, to research and interview homeless youth. From those ventures he created Eddie Slater, a teen abused by his stepfather who hides out at the Calgary Zoo where he meets an older man. The man says he wants to listen and help — but Eddie doesn't trust his motives. Instead Eddie breaks into his home and discovers a surprising backstory that relates to an incident from Poulsen's own past. Growing up, he and his friends enjoyed playing in the Calgary Zoo except for one classmate who consistently refused to join them. Poulsen found out that the boy's brother had been kidnapped (and later killed) from the zoo playground.

Getting the young adult voice right, whether for *Last Sam's Cage* or any of his other books, is key to Poulsen. "I hate when authors write the way they wish kids sounded or how they sounded back in their day." Poulsen suggests writers watch their shows, listen to their music, talk to them in classes and really just listen to them. He personally likes shooting hoops with kids. For his Lawrence High books, a high action, low vocabulary series also with the former Key Porter, he spent three weeks in the high school hallways (not in the classroom!) listening and researching in an effort to recreate authentic kids' voices.

Showing the heart

Linda Pruessen, his former editor at Key Porter, talks about her earliest memory of meeting Poulsen. "We'd been working together for awhile by phone and email, but he'd come out to do a reading at Harbourfront around the Tree Award festivities, and I showed up to watch, and to chat with him afterwards. It was in the theatre, and the podium was all set up with its little glass of water, etc. He came out wearing his jeans, cowboy boots, and button down shirt. He walked to the centre of the stage, kind of looked at the podium, and then walked right past it to the edge of the stage where he sat down, legs dangling over, and proceeded to talk to the kids. They loved it. That pretty much says it all — he does this because he loves writing, and he loves kids."

In 2008, *Numbers*, a powerful book for YA readers, was published with Key Porter. Incensed by the Jim Kegstra case in which an Alberta teacher preached anti-Semitism in his social studies class, Poulsen created an extremely talented and charismatic teacher (he actually wrote out real lesson plans for him) who uses his skills to lure kids to his way of thinking. Andy Crockett, the main character, almost falls for the propaganda too, until he is asked to act on it.

In order to combine his love of teaching with his love of writing, Poulsen had decided to pursue his MFA in Creative Writing online through University of British Columbia (UBC). He worked on *Numbers* during this time and scored amazing faculty advisors: Glen Huser (author of the Governor General's Literary Award-winner *Stitches*) and Susan Nielsen (author of the Governor General's Literary Award-winner *The Reluctant Journey of Henry K. Larsen*). "The UBC experience was one of the most important things I've ever done. Not only did it prepare me for the kind of teaching and mentoring I'm wanting to do, but it stretched me creatively in ways I hadn't thought possible."

Winning in the writing rodeo

Poulsen has had many wins in his career, such as the 2005 Alberta Centennial Medal for outstanding service to Alberta and Albertans, a 2010 Golden Eagle Children's Choice Book Award for *The Prisoners and the Paintings*, and plenty of other nominations for children's choice awards. However, his favourite moment came when a brown paper envelope arrived in the mail. It was about a Japanese international high school students' choice award. "I opened the envelope and there was a gorgeous gold medal (the Sakura) inside, a certificate announcing that *Numbers* had won the competition and a piece of original artwork from one of the participating students. I was whooping and dancing around the house like I'd just scored the winning goal in the Stanley Cup."

Doing something that he says was out of character for him, Poulsen contacted the organizers, asking if they'd ever thought about having the winning author come over there to tour schools and meet the kids who voted. Then he forgot all about it. "A few months went by and then one day here was an email telling me it was arranged and when would I be able to come. One of the best emails I've ever received." He loved visiting Japan and Korea.

In 2012 Poulsen was selected as the 32nd Writer in Residence at Saskatoon Public Library. He credits this win to his newly minted MFA. The year in Saskatoon allowed him to meet many talented writers but also to spend time with his adult kids and their families who live there.

Another novel he worked on while studying at UBC became *Old Man*, published in 2013 by Dundurn Press and currently nominated for the White Pine Award. Influenced by the war protests from his own teen years, Poulsen relates some of the horrors of the Vietnam War through an attempt at reconciliation between an estranged father and son. Says Poulsen, "I like to put characters in difficult situations, present the questions and let the reader mull over the answers."

In *Old Man*, Nate Huffman doesn't want to go anywhere with his Dad who keeps their destination (Saigon) a secret until shortly before they board the plane. However, as they revisit his past in A Shau Valley, a major Vietnamese battle ground, Nate develops, perhaps too late, a respect and affection for his father.

Poulsen thinks of himself as hardworking rather than talented. If he could have a normal routine between his rodeo performances and some 70 to 80 school visits a year, it would be getting up in the morning at 7AM doing ranch chores (he and his wife raise quarterhorses), eating breakfast and then writing 1,000 words, however long that takes him. He limits his Internet and Facebook activity to 20 to 45 minutes a day. On the road he still forces himself to squeeze his writing quota in during hotel R & R time.

Falling off the bull (before the full nine seconds)

Like most writers, Poulsen finds his books have lost their homes as publishers fall. When Roussan closed shop, Poulsen found Key Porter to continue his Salt and Pepper Chronicles. Now that Key Porter has folded, he's exploring new opportunities for that series, as well as *Numbers*.

Publishers are also looking at his current YA project, a story again about the ravages of war, this time with the descendants of the bomber and the bombed in Japan trying to reconcile. Poulsen doesn't seem overly concerned or pessimistic about the publishing industry although, like most writers, he feels the weight of new marketing responsibilities placed on his shoulders. Instead he's looking very much forward to his new adult book.

Climbing on again with lots of guts, lots of heart

Serpent's Rising, scheduled to be published in December of 2014 with Dundurn Press, marks the debut of Poulsen's entry into the adult mystery genre. A crime journalist, Adam Cullen, and an ex-cop turned PI, Mike Cobb, team up to solve mysteries in Calgary. Perhaps the Hardy Boys have grown up, hopefully in a series.

But, of course, Poulsen will continue to write stories for his younger audience. As he says, "I love my job because a) I get to write and I love doing that and b) I go to schools (well over 1500 since I started) and talk with kids ABOUT writing which I also love." ☺

Aspiring cowgirl, Sylvia McNicoll, has written over thirty books, most recently *Crush*. *Candy. Corpse* (Lorimer), *Dying to Go Viral* (Fitzhenry Whiteside) and *Dog on Trial* (HIP).



Recent titles by David Poulsen

Old Man

DUNDURN PRESS, 2013

Shivers and Shakes

(The Salt and Pepper Chronicles)
KEY PORTER BOOKS, 2009

Numbers

KEY PORTER BOOKS, 2008

The Prisoners and the Paintings

(The Salt and Pepper Chronicles)
KEY PORTER BOOKS, 2008

Jeremy's Song

(Lawrence High Yearbook)
KEY PORTER BOOKS, 2008

Cowboy Cool

(Lawrence High Yearbook)
KEY PORTER BOOKS, 2008

Wild Thing

(Lawrence High Yearbook)
KEY PORTER BOOKS, 2007

Blind Date

(Lawrence High Yearbook)
KEY PORTER BOOKS, 2007

The Book of Vampire

(The Salt and Pepper Chronicles)
KEY PORTER BOOKS, 2007

No Time Like the Past

(The Salt and Pepper Chronicles)
KEY PORTER BOOKS, 2007

The Hunk Machine

(The Salt and Pepper Chronicles)
KEY PORTER BOOKS, 2006

The Vampire's Visit

(The Salt and Pepper Chronicles)
KEY PORTER BOOKS, 2006

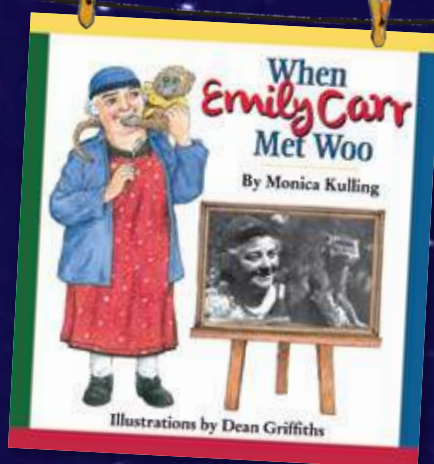
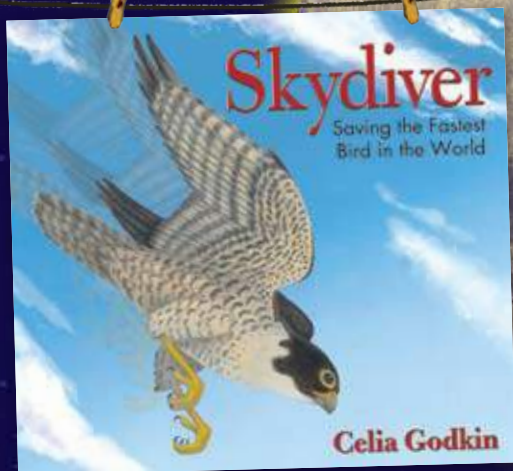
Last Sam's Cage

KEY PORTER BOOKS, 2004

Billy and the Bearman

NAPOLÉON PUBLISHING, 1996

pajamapress



SPRING 2014

Moon at Nine by Deborah Ellis
April 1st | 978-1-927485-57-6 (HC) \$19.95
978-1-927485-59-0 (PB) \$16.95

Peach Girl by Raymond Nakamura
and illustrated by Rebecca Bender
May 15th | 978-1-927485-58-3 (HC) \$19.95




Skydiver: Saving the Fastest Bird in the World by Celia Godkin
April 15th | 978-1-927485-61-3 (HC) \$19.95

When Emily Carr Met Woo
by Monica Kulling and illustrated by Dean Griffiths
April 15th | 978-1-927485-40-8 (HC) \$19.95
Revenge on the Fly by Sylvia McNicoll
April 15th | 978-1-927485-56-9 (PB) \$12.95

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From Page to Screen:

the options, ovations and obstacles in taking books to film

BY GILLIAN O'REILLY

By the time she had finished the first page of Kevin Major's classic novel *Hold Fast*, filmmaker Rosemary House knew it could be a movie and she optioned it right away.

That was in 2009. Four years later, *Hold Fast*, the film, opened in Halifax and St. John's on December 6, 2013, to a standing ovation and excellent reviews and was # 3 on that week's list of top grossing Canadian movies (#1 in English-language movies). *Hold Fast* is slated for release in the rest of Canada early in 2014.

What inspired House to explore the project in the first place? "Kevin wrote to me and said, I really like your movies; it would be great if you could do one of my books."

House wrote the script and the film was produced by her own company, Rock Island Films, and Markham Street Productions. It was directed by fellow Newfoundlander Justin Simms and many of the cast are from the province too. The fact that the book was a classic published over three decades ago in 1978 and reissued in 2003, and was a Governor General's Literary Award winner, helped in getting support from funding agencies, says House, and when the distributor Entertainment One got on board, "the doors flew open when it came to private funding."

Asked about the challenge of turning the novel into a movie script, House says there were two big challenges. "The first is that the story is told in the first person; so it's all inside the head [of the main character]. You have to take it out of his head and put it into action or into dialogue. The less dialogue the better and the more action the better."

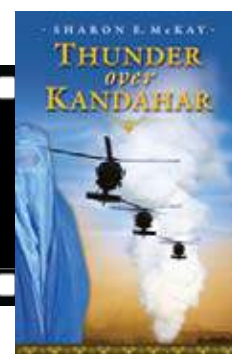
The second challenge was that, in the book, the bulk of the story takes place in the city, before the boys steal the car and run off to camp in the woods. In the script, to maintain the action, stealing the car takes place a third of the way into the story. "I had to preserve the integrity of the story and the characters while creating 'a tight script' and 'a compelling adventure'," House says, quoting the recent review in Halifax's *The Chronicle Herald* with evident glee.

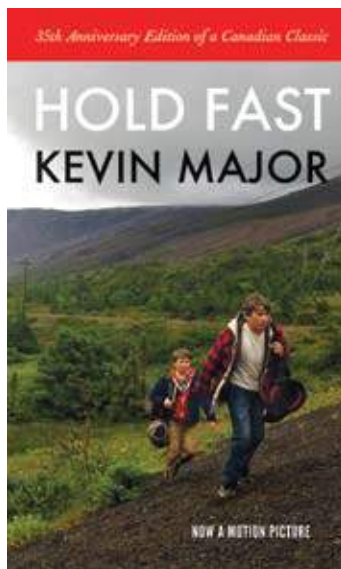
While *Hold Fast* author Kevin Major had the opportunity to be on hand for some of the shooting, he wasn't involved at all in the scriptwriting. "I was fully aware that writing for film was a very different undertaking than writing a book. It required special skills I didn't have."

"I had every confidence in Rosemary and her intention to keep to the core of the story. We had chatted several times and we were on the same wavelength as to what this story was all about. I fully expected to see new aspects of it onscreen, as I expected elements of the book to fall away. Michael's journey would still be the same and be front and centre."

The rapport between House and Major, the relative speed with which the film was made and, indeed, the fact that the project actually got to fruition at all, are not typical. Many projects are abandoned for one reason or another and, once a book is optioned for film, an author can have little to no say.

Fans of Kenneth Oppel's books can readily imagine that his stories would make wonderful movies. Many of the author's books have, in fact, been optioned (all but one before publication) but only one made it to a finished production – on the





small screen. *Silverwing*, originally planned as an animated movie feature, came out as an animated television feature in 2003. However, he has recently had the opportunity to work on a script for one of his books.

Oppel is philosophical about the difficulties of bringing books to the screen. In his case, producers have been unable to interest investors (*Half Brother*) or have been bought by larger companies who nixed the project (*Airborn*).

In the case of *Airborn*, his 2004 steampunk novel featuring airships, pirates, mysterious flying cat creatures and two young teens, he wasn't able to see the script until a few days before the two-year option came up for renewal. He discovered that the scriptwriters had removed the flying cats (an integral part of the book) and aged his protagonists into twenty-something romantic leads. Fortunately, when the studio dropped the project after the company was sold, Oppel was able to stipulate that he didn't want that script being shopped around to any other producers.

Recently, however, a Canadian company took up the book and offered Oppel a more intriguing proposal. He would write the first draft of the script and would be an executive producer, a title that sounds more hands-on than it is: "It's more of a consulting role than a roll up your sleeves role".

Although he worked in scriptwriting for a number of years in the 1990s, Oppel says that he would normally have been leery of writing the script for his own book. Because it had been published nearly 10 years ago, he was able to approach it more as a reader than a writer. "It was a fresh experience... I

read it more with an eye to what I could see on screen."

He enjoyed the process. "The way I write is very visual. I see books as mental movies. And there were parts I thought would be quite spectacular, such as the first shot – seeing the airship and its immensity.

"It's a fun exercise. You look at a story and winnow it down to its plot elements. A movie is quite unforgiving; it's like a train and you have to link the cars in the right order. At the same time, the scenes that flesh out the book – like meals and quiet conversations – are the bits which give the movie character."

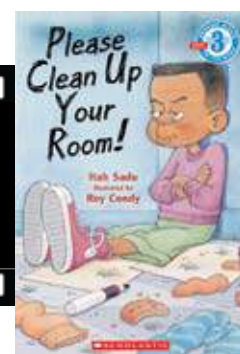
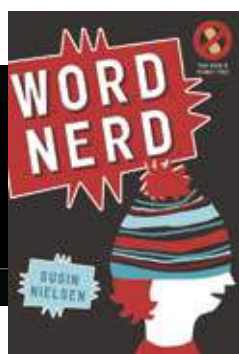
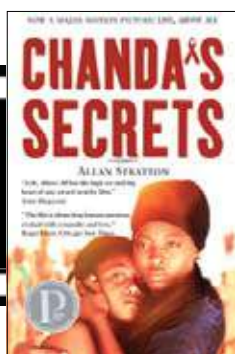
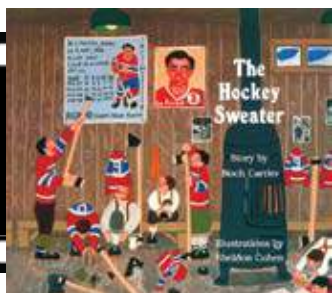
He says he was "quite pleased with the result I handed in." The project is currently in its third year of development.

Oppel adds that there has been renewed interest in *This Dark Endeavour* recently, so fans of his books may yet be able to see them on screen.

In the works

Despite the challenges to getting a project to fruition, there is no shortage of interest in Canadian books as potential for movies. The last few months have seen the announcement of several projects.

Actor Donald Sutherland's own production company, Martin's River Ink, has announced plans for an animated version of William Gilkerson's *Pirate's Passage*, winner of the 2006 Governor General's Literary Award. Sutherland is co-writing the script with partner Brad Peyton and will voice the character of Captain Johnson, who encounters the young protagonist Jim Hawkins.



At the time of the announcement, Sutherland said, "*Pirate's Passage* is a thrillingly exhilarating adventure, a glorious coming-of-age-story, rich in both imagination and history, in perception and truth.

"I couldn't put the book down. It resonated with the clearest image of the man inside every boy's being that I could imagine. It was life writ true and I knew Jim and Captain Johnson's marvelous journey had to be seen on screen."

Film rights to Sharon McKay's 2010 acclaimed novel *Thunder Over Kandahar* – about a friendship between two girls in present-day Afghanistan – have been sold to Mind's Eye Production, to be directed by Anita Doron. The Saskatchewan company was responsible for *Prairie Giant: The Tommy Douglas Story* and the film adaptation of Guy Vanderhaeghe's *The Englishman's Boy*.

Doron was also the writer and director for the 2012 film, *The Lesser Blessed*, based on Richard van Camp's novel. The book – about a 16-year-old Dogrib boy in a Northern town – was published for the adult market in Canada, but won the Deutschen Jugendliteraturpreis (German Youth Literature Prize) in 2001.

Terri Tatchell, Oscar-nominated Vancouver scriptwriter for *District 9* (directed by her husband Neill Blomkamp) has recently optioned *Word Nerd*, Susin Nielsen's funny and thought-provoking novel about a Scrabble-playing alliance between an overprotected boy with a peanut allergy and the ex-con son of his upstairs neighbours.

Even older classics are drawing interest. Scott Young's 1952 novel *Scrubs on Skates* has been optioned for television and film by Toronto's Marble Media (known to book lovers as the creators of *This Is Daniel Cook* and other shows).

Books that made the transition: *Chanda's Secrets* and *Shi-shi-etko*

Several books have successfully made the transition to film in recent years. One example is *Chanda's Secrets*. Allan Stratton's 2004 novel about one girl's bravery and strength in the midst of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, was made into the 2010 feature film *Life Above All*, a German/South African production, with a script by noted Canadian author and playwright Dennis Foon. It won the prestigious François Chalais Prize at the Cannes International Film Festival and was South Africa's official selection for the 2011 Best Foreign Film Oscar.

Shi-shi-etko is a short film based on Nicola I. Campbell's award-winning picture book, illustrated by Kim LaFave. The live action production was produced Monkey Ink Media and

was filmed in traditional Sto:lo territory, in the Sto:lo language of Halq'emeylen (with English subtitles). The film was screened at the 2009 Vancouver International Film Festival as part of the Canadian Images program and a screening in Winnipeg included audience members from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Sto:lo Nation in Chilliwack acquired copies for use in their language kits for elementary school students, and the BC Nurses Union has copies to use in seminars around residential school dialogue and healing.

National Film Board

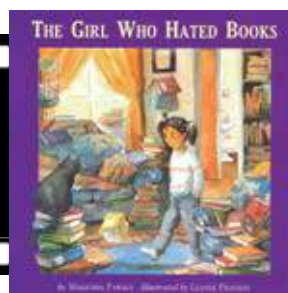
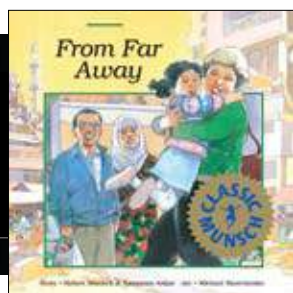
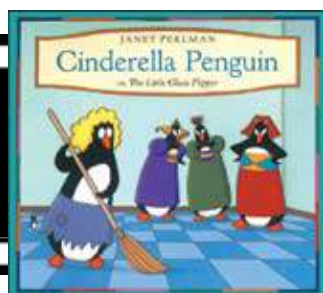
The National Film Board has produced a treasure trove of films with children's book connections. In some cases, the film came first; in others, the book. Perhaps the best known is *The Hockey Sweater* which was made into a film in 1980 (based on a short story by Roch Carrier). Its creator, Sheldon Cohen, approached Tundra Books' May Cutler about a picture book possibility and the children's classic appeared in 1984. The delightful *Cinderella Penguin* by Janet Perlman also began life as a film in 1981 before becoming a book in 1992.

Books that later became NFB films include Dayal Kaur Khalsa's *I Want a Dog and Snow Cat*, as well as Robert Munsch's *Blackberry Subway Jam*, Ann Blades' *Mary of Mile 18*, Michèle Lemieux's *Stormy Night* and others.

In addition, the films in NFB's Talespinners series were created by emerging filmmakers as part of an initiative to tell stories from diverse perspectives. Many of them were based on fine children's picture books, including *Roses Sing on New Snow*, *Christopher Please Clean Up Your Room*, *Christopher Changes His Name*, *From Far Away*, *The Girl Who Hated Books*, *Oma's Quilt*, *The Chinese Violin*, *Lights for Gita* and the story "The Friends of Kwan Ming" which was part of Paul Yee's *Tales from Gold Mountain*.

The process of taking a book from page to screen is a long and arduous one, with many obstacles at almost every step long the way. The fine stories being told in this country are justifiably drawing the interest and energy of film producers today. Many of us have found ourselves closing a terrific Canadian book and thinking, "Wouldn't that make a great movie?" In the not so distant future, we may be able to see more of those wishes become reality. ♡

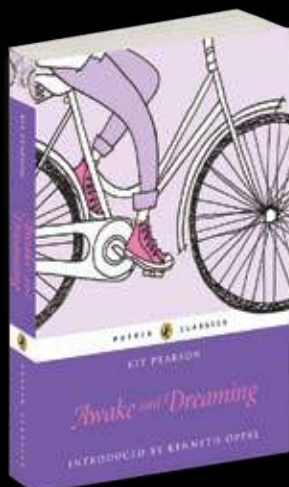
Gillian O'Reilly is Editor of *Canadian Children's Book News*.





THE PUFFIN CLASSICS FAMILY

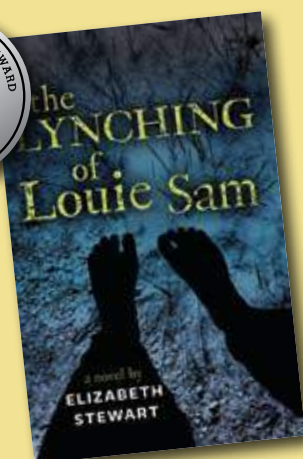
Welcomes Four **CANADIAN** Additions



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNER OF THE

2013 John Spray Mystery Award

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



The Lynching of Louie Sam

written by
Elizabeth Stewart

Annick Press, 2012

978-1-55451-439-7 (hc) \$21.95

978-1-55451-438-0 (pb) \$12.95



**Canadian
Children's
Book Centre
Awards**

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

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



Amy's Marathon of Books: an amazing fundraiser for a new teen book award

BY GILLIAN O'REILLY



Amy Mathers and CCBC's Meghan Howe filming a recap of her Newfoundland reading list.

It's a cross-country challenge with an unusual twist. On January 1, 2014, Amy Mathers began a marathon trip across Canada — through 365 teen novels — in a fundraiser for a new teen book award.

"My intention is not only to raise awareness of quality Canadian teen fiction, but to solicit pledges and donations for the Canadian Children's Book Centre in order to fund a new teen book award to be included in the annual Canadian Children's Literature Awards. My goal is to raise at least \$100,000 in order to fund an annual \$5,000 award."

Why would someone commit herself to reading a novel and posting a 200-word review on her website every day for a whole year?

The idea for Amy's Marathon of Books began a few years ago when Amy first attended the Canadian Children's Literature Awards Gala. "Going to the Gala was exactly how I imagined going to the Oscars might be, only better because the

celebrities were authors whose books had touched my life. My most memorable moment of that night was getting to pet Jean Little's guide dog."

There was one thing missing, however: an award for teen books. "I came home that night wondering if there was a way I could raise enough money to fund one, but I couldn't think of anything besides saving up for a really, really long time."

Born with a type of glycogen storage disease, Amy received a liver transplant at age five and a heart transplant when she was 27. In 2012, she began using an electric wheelchair to get around. "From my different vantage point, I started noticing the plethora of opportunities to take part in running/walking/biking marathons, usually involving some sort of fundraising to cure an illness or raise awareness for another issue. While I knew I had the determination and drive to complete a marathon, it didn't seem that doing one would mean that much if I was just pushing a button on my wheelchair to propel myself forward."

Thinking about what would be possible, Amy came back to her love of reading. "I realized that the two goals — the first of trying to fund a Canadian teen book award and the second of trying to show that even people with physical limitations could take part in something athletic in nature — came together quite seamlessly. I could participate in a Marathon of Books of my creation, and use the money fundraised by it to help the CCBC fund a Canadian teen fiction book award."

Amy adds, "Terry Fox is a hero and inspiration of mine, because he showed me that if you have a dream you can pursue it, no matter what your limitations might be. I read that he could run a kilometre in approximately six minutes, so I timed myself and realized I could read 10 pages of text in the same amount of time. Thus, every 10 pages I read will count as one kilometre across Canada, which is over 8,000 kilometres across, if you're going by the Trans-Canada Highway. The idea of turning it into a year long event came from the CCBC, and I am up to the challenge."



"I like the Canada-wide aspect of it because as a Canadian citizen who has had two transplants due to a genetic condition, I am very grateful for the generosity of Canada's universal health care system as well as my two donors. My Marathon of Books is an excellent way for me to show my appreciation for a country that has saved my life on many occasions, and for the books that have supported me through my illness. Also, actually travelling across Canada would be difficult for me, so I am excited to have the opportunity to travel across our beautiful country through books instead."

Interviewed in mid-December a few weeks after the announcement of the Marathon, Mathers says, "The response has been overwhelmingly positive. I've received emails from such Canadian greats as Gordon Korman, Teresa Toten and Sylvia Gunnery. Book suggestions are pouring in on the website and donations are already up to almost \$2,000 before I've even started. There is a lot of enthusiasm for my Marathon of Books coming from elementary schools, librarians, publishers and teen authors in general."

"I am thrilled at the response because I think the publicity will go a long way to promoting our home-grown and very talented Canadian writers for teens. At times, our writers get overshadowed by writers from the United States, and I would like to see Canadians become more knowledgeable about the authors we have here and take some pride in them."

Participate in the 13 Book Challenge!

While Amy will be reading 365 books, she is encouraging teens and other teen fiction supporters to pick one teen book from each province and territory on Amy's reading list and complete their own book journeys across Canada in a 13 Book Challenge. Participants can read for pleasure and visit the website to contribute their comments about the books – or use the 13 Book Challenge to fundraise for the teen book award themselves through a printable fundraising form.

To follow Amy's Marathon of Books, view her reading list or donate, visit www.amysmarathonofbooks.ca.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNER OF THE

2013 Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction

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



Kids of Kabul: Living Bravely Through a Never-Ending War written by Deborah Ellis

Groundwood Books, 2012

978-1-55498-181-6 (hc) \$15.95

978-1-55498-203-5 (eBook) \$14.95



**Canadian
Children's
Book Centre
Awards**



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

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

"BOOKMARK!" HIGHLIGHTS BOOKS FOR A VARIETY OF GRADE LEVELS AROUND A PARTICULAR THEME.

Pink Shirt Day takes place during the last week in February (on different days in different parts of the country). Based on the initiative of two Nova Scotia students, Pink Shirt Day encourages all of us to stand up to bullies. By collectively refusing to tolerate bullying and developing the skills to prevent it, children and adults can help to make the world a better place for themselves and others.

PINK SHIRT DAY

BOOKS ON BULLYING

PICTURE BOOKS AND EARLY CHAPTER BOOKS FOR KINDERGARTEN & UP

Bird Child

written by Nan Forler
illustrated by François Thisdale
(Tundra Books, 2009)

Bullying and the ability to rise above it are at the heart of this strikingly beautiful picture book. Eliza's mother has given her "wings to fly" and the ability to see all the possibilities that lie before her. When new student Lainey is bullied, Eliza wants to help, and she does, by finding a way to show Lainey all that she can be.

Bully 101

written and illustrated by Doretta Groenendyk
(The Acorn Press, 2012)

This book explores both the temptations of bullying and the remarkable possibilities of kindness. It identifies ways in which bullying occurs (cyber, playground, bus), the feelings that can result for both the bully and the victim, and the simple notion that anyone can choose kindness instead. It can be used as a conversation starter on why we bully or watch it happen, and presents the idea that bullying is a choice.

Morgan Gets Cracking (First Novels)

written by Ted Staunton
illustrated by Bill Slavin
(Formac Publishing, 2012)

Curtis is the new kid at school, and Morgan doesn't like him. He can juggle and play guitar and he gets away with teasing Aldeen, the Queen of Mean — who isn't even mean back. When Curtis and his family get invited to a neighbourhood party, Morgan comes up with a plan to see if Aldeen actually likes Curtis. But as usual, things don't go quite according to Morgan's plan.

Willow Finds a Way

written by Lana Button
illustrated by Tania Howells
(Kids Can Press, 2013)

Willow is thrilled when the whole class, including her, is invited to classmate Kristabelle's fantastic birthday party. But the bossy birthday girl starts crossing guests off the list when they dare to cross her. Willow finds a quiet but convincing way to let Kristabelle know her behaviour is not acceptable. This is the companion to *Willow's Whispers*.

You're Mean, Lily Jean

written by Frieda Wishinsky
illustrated by Kady MacDonald Denton
(North Winds Press/Scholastic, 2009)

Carly always played with her older sister, Sandy. Then Lily Jean moved in next door. The sisters are happy to have a new friend to join their games. But Lily Jean starts taking over. Tired of being bossed around, Carly thinks up a creative way to teach Lily Jean a lesson. With Sandy's assistance, can she transform a bully into a friend?

JUNIOR NON-FICTION AND FICTION FOR GRADES 4 TO 8

Better Than Weird

written by Anna Kerz
(Orca Book Publishers, 2011)

In this stand-alone sequel to *The Mealworm Diaries*, Aaron has made a couple of friends and at least one enemy. Anxiously awaiting the arrival of his father, whom he hasn't seen in many years, Aaron is trying to cope with bullying at school, his grandmother's illness and his father's pregnant new wife. Aaron worries his father will think he's too weird and leave again and wonders how he can make his dad proud.



Cyber Bullying **(Take a Stand Against Bullying)**

written by Rachel Stuckey
(Crabtree Publishing, 2013)

Cyber bullying can include acts like posting rumours, threats or other hurtful comments on social networking sites or circulating inappropriate pictures of a person on the Internet. This book provides a revealing look at cyber bullying and explains how it is different from other forms of bullying. Other topics include the potential legal issues related to electronic harassment, responsible digital citizenship, online security and how to take a stand against cyber bullying. Readers may also want to read the other titles in the Take a Stand Against Bullying series.

Jane, the Fox & Me

written by Fanny Britt
illustrated by Isabelle Arsenault
(Groundwood Books, 2013)

Hélène has been inexplicably ostracized by the girls who were once her friends. Her school life is full of whispers and lies — Hélène weighs 216; she smells like BO. Her loving mother is too tired to be any help. Fortunately, Hélène has one consolation, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. This title is also available in French as *Jane, le renard & moi*.

The Last Superhero

written by Kristin Butcher
(Napoleon & Company/Dundurn, 2010)

Jas is putting all his energy into an adventure comic he hopes will be his ticket into an elite summer art program. But when he meets up with Wren, an eccentric, crusading classmate, his efforts are derailed. Wren is avenging the victims of school bullies and keeps drawing Jas in until there's no going back.

The Odds Get Even

written by Natale Ghent
(HarperCollins Canada, 2009)

Best friends Boney, Itchy and Squeak are the Odd Fellows and hang out in Boney's tree house to escape being bullied by Larry. When the Odd Fellows decide to get even, they have to avoid getting tangled up in their own schemes! Readers will also enjoy Ghent's sequel, *Against All Odds*.

The Power of Harmony

written by Jan L. Coates
(Red Deer Press, 2013)

Living in Springhill, Nova Scotia, during the 1960s, Jennifer becomes a target for bullying when her best friend moves away. When a new girl named Melody joins the class, she becomes the new victim. Jennifer must overcome racial prejudices as she becomes friends with Melody through their shared love of reading, books and music.

Words That Start with B

written by Vikki VanSickle
(Scholastic Canada, 2010)

Grade Seven was going to be Clarissa's year. That was until her favourite teacher went on sabbatical and her best friend, Benji, was targeted by bullies. Now Clarissa's mom needs medical treatments just when Clarissa needs her the most. How is a 12-year-old girl supposed to survive it all?

INTERMEDIATE & SENIOR NON-FICTION AND FICTION FOR GRADES 7 AND UP

Blob

(Orca Currents)
written by Frieda Wishinsky
(Orca Book Publishers, 2010)

Eve is starting a new high school and things couldn't be worse. She has gained weight

over the summer, lost her best friend and become the target of a cruel girl's bullying. When she joins a mentoring program called Girls Helping Girls, she learns to accept herself, make new friends and help others.

Born Ugly

written by Beth Goobie
(Red Deer Press, 2011)

Shir is unpopular at school and an outcast in her own family; the only places where she can escape are at her part-time job and in her secret retreat by the river. When her job becomes a world of uncertainty and someone invades her river haven, Shir hopes the alcohol will help her cope. Eventually, Shir must stop being a victim and assert herself or there could be deadly consequences.

Creeps

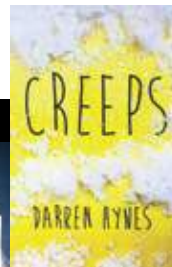
written by Darren Hynes
(Razorbill, 2013)

Relentlessly-bullied Wayne Pumphrey wishes he were courageous enough to actually send the letters he writes to friends and family. When Wayne is rescued by Marjorie one morning, an unlikely friendship develops. But the bully now has plans for both of them... and nothing will ever be the same again.

Egghead

written by Caroline Pignat
(Red Deer Press, 2008)

Gawky ninth grader Will Reid is a nerd who finds himself bullied by Shane. Katie has been Will's friend since elementary school, but maintaining that friendship has proven difficult in high school, especially now that they've been rumoured to be romantically involved.



Home Truths

written by Jill MacLean
(Dancing Cat Books, 2010)

Brick's dad has an uncontrollable temper and his mom is self-absorbed, which leaves Brick to care for his little sister, Cassie. Every now and then Brick feels the need to release a little anger, and bullying seems the right way to do it. This summer Brick is going to earn enough money to escape and never look back. But who will Brick's dad take his anger out on when Brick's not around? Readers will also want to read MacLean's *Nix Minus One* and the Prinny Murphy books.

Living with the Hawk

written by Robert Currie
(Thistledown Press, 2013)

Blake Russell always looked out for his younger brother, Blair, until they reached high school and began playing football. Blake, a senior and a quarterback, moved in different circles with friends who partied, bullied younger players and abused the girls they dated. As the differences between the two brothers become more pronounced, a body is discovered in a field north of town, severing the brotherly bond and dividing the Russell family forever.

My Side (Orca Soundings)

written by Norah McClintock
(Orca Book Publishers, 2013)

When quiet, shy Addie is lured into the woods, she is convinced she's going to die. She quickly finds out that there are worse things than terror — things like betrayal by her best friend and public humiliation in front of the entire school. But there are two sides to every story.

Odd Ball

written by Arthur John Stewart
(Thistledown Press, 2011)

Four middle-school students attempt to change the culture of their school. Kevin refuses to accept the “geek” label; Paula is having trouble at home and has become the target for bullying girls; Jobbi, a Latvian immigrant, is the catalyst for change; and Stephanie realizes that school life is deteriorating and decides she must do something to stop it.

Rat (Orca Sounding)

written by Lesley Choyce
(Orca Book Publishers, 2012)

Colin tries to protect an elderly gentleman from two school bullies who then decide to make Colin their target. When they post an unflattering photo of him online, Colin discovers he's not their only victim. Tired of the code of silence at school, Colin decides to fight back and finds that standing up for what you believe in can be empowering.

The Reluctant Journal of Henry K. Larsen

written by Susin Nielsen
(Tundra Books, 2012)

Thirteen-year-old Henry's happy, ordinary life comes to an abrupt halt when his older brother, Jesse, picks up their father's hunting rifle and leaves the house one morning. What follows shatters Henry's family; they are forced to resume their lives in a new city where no one knows their past. At school and in his apartment building, Henry eventually befriends a group of oddball characters who help him adapt to his new life. Readers will also enjoy Nielsen's *Word Nerd*.

Stickboy

written by Shane L. Koyczan
illustrated by John Rummén
(House of Parlance Media Inc., 2008)

This story is narrated by a guy who, after enduring years of bullying from classmates, snaps and becomes a bully himself. The title of this story, written in free verse, refers to the “sticks and stones” proverb and the narrator's feeling of being made of dynamite sticks waiting to explode.

We Want You to Know: Kids Talk About Bullying

written by Deborah Ellis
(Coteau Books, 2010)

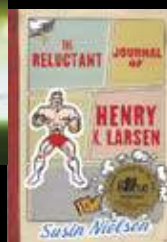
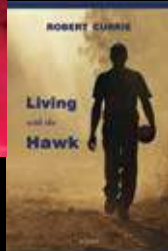
In this thoughtful and candid book, Ellis asks students aged nine to 19 to talk about their experiences with bullying. The kids raise questions about the way parents, teachers and school administrators cope with bullies, as well as which methods have helped them and which have not. Some students reveal how they have overcome their fear to become advocates for the rights of others. A teacher's guide is available online at www.coteaubooks.com.

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS

The Bully-Go-Round: Literacy and Arts Strategies for Promoting Bully Awareness in the Classroom

written by Larry Swartz
(Pembroke Publishers, 2013)

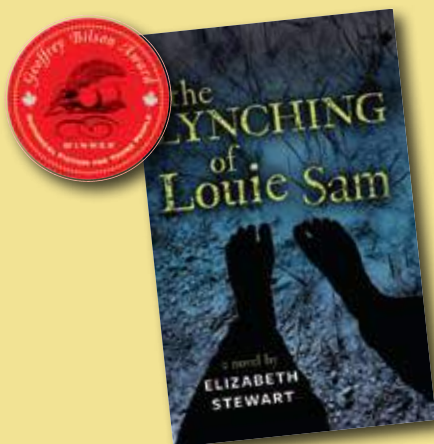
This book advocates the use of various literacy and arts strategies to promote bullying awareness and aid teachers and students alike in reaching a better understanding of the issues that surround bullying. This handy flipbook includes more than 35 class activities, along with resource lists and discussion prompts. It has been written for teachers of Grades 4 to 12.



CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNER OF THE

2013 Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People

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



The Lynching of Louie Sam
written by Elizabeth Stewart

Annick Press, 2012

978-1-55451-439-7 (hc) \$21.95

978-1-55451-438-0 (pb) \$12.95



**Canadian
Children's
Book Centre
Awards**

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

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

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE WINNER OF THE

2013 Monica Hughes Award for Science Fiction and Fantasy

Established in 2011, with the first award being presented in 2012, this award honours excellence in the science fiction and fantasy genre. The \$5,000 prize, awarded annually to a Canadian author, is sponsored by HarperCollins Canada, in memory of the late Monica Hughes.



Seraphina
written by Rachel Hartman

Doubleday Canada, 2012

978-0-385-66839-2 (hc) \$21.00

978-0-385-66840-8 (eBook) \$10.99



**Canadian
Children's
Book Centre
Awards**

The Monica Hughes
Award for
Science Fiction
and Fantasy
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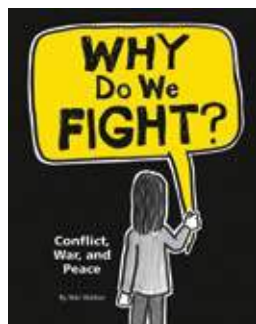
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The Classroom Bookshelf

Making the World a Better Place to Live

BY SANDRA O'BRIEN

This month's books all share a common theme: "How can we make the world a better place in which to live?" From understanding conflict, children's right to play, building schools for girls in Afghanistan, sustainable energy or feeding the world – you will read about amazing kids who CAN and DO make a difference.



Why Do We Fight? **Conflict, War, and Peace**

written by Niki Walker
Owlkids Books, 2013
978-1-92697-386-9 (hc) \$16.95
for Grades 5 and up

Non-fiction | Conflict and Resolution

Introducing the topic of conflict is no easy matter but author Niki Walker has done so in a clear and concise manner in this book. She starts by explaining that a conflict is a disagreement between two groups of people that can either lead to a violent or a peaceful solution depending on how it's handled. She talks about the factors that start conflicts, how dividing lines are drawn, whether cooperation or combat are chosen to resolve the conflict, how building and keeping peace is a full-time job and how the best answers are rarely the easiest ones. The book promotes tolerance and understanding and explains how they can be used to resolve or heal conflicts. Real life and global experiences are discussed to give students a broader understanding of the world.

We live in a world filled with conflict. Some conflicts are small and relatively easy to sort out. Others occur on a much larger scale and require much more diplomacy and work to resolve. Whether children are trying to deal with conflict at school or home or in the school yard, adults have an important role in giving them the tools they need to find peaceful resolutions. Helping children understand conflicts that occur on a larger scale and teaching them to debate and discuss the underlying reasons for these conflicts is also important. This book provides parents and teachers with a wonderful resource to begin discussions about conflict and would make a valuable resource at home or school for students in the late junior, intermediate and early senior grades.



When Children Play: **The Story of Right to Play**

written by Gina McMurchy-Barber
Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2013
978-1-55455-154-5 (hc) \$19.95
for Grades 4 and up

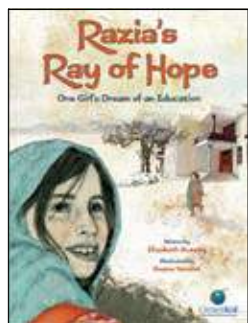
Non-fiction / Social Issues / Self-Esteem / Sports and Recreation / Values and Virtues

This book examines the organization Right to Play and how it has reached out to thousands of disadvantaged children around the globe, creating opportunities to fulfill their fundamental need and right to play. It contains true stories about kids who have been inspired to help other kids and excerpts about athletes such as Clara Hughes, Silken Laumann and Wayne Gretzky, who have acted as ambassadors for Right to Play.

Originally named Olympic Aid, the non-profit humanitarian organization began in 1992 and Johann Olav Koss, a speed skater and four-time gold medalist from Norway, became Olympic Aid's team captain. Johann threw himself into his work and, by the late 1990s, he and his team members wanted to see the organization become something more than a fundraising organization. In 2000, the group took on its new name of Right to Play and they began to develop and implement their own programs around the world. In 2001, Right to Play's first sport and play programs were started in refugee camps in Angola and Côte d'Ivoire. They now provide programs and support in over two dozen countries around the world.

This inspirational story teaches children the importance of play in their lives and will hopefully encourage children who want to make a change in the world to get out there and do so. As President Isaias of Eritrea told Johann Olav Koss "You see us as more than just bodies to be kept alive or mouths to feed. This is the first time my country's children will be able to play and to develop properly."

Play has the ability to normalize a situation, to educate and to help children going through trauma. Every ball the organization gives out reads "Look After Yourself, Look After One Another." Intended for children eight years and older, this book would be appropriate for use in the junior, intermediate and early senior grades to demonstrate to children how they too can create change in the world.



**Razia's Ray of Hope:
One Girl's Dream of an Education**

written by Elizabeth Suneby

illustrated by Suana Verelst

Kids Can Press, 2013

978-1-55453-816-4 (hc) \$19.95

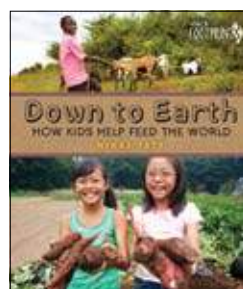
for Grades 3 to 6

Non-fiction | Schools | Global Cultures | Courage | Initiative

When Razia realizes a school is being built near her home, she pleads with her grandfather and mother to convince her father and brothers to allow her to attend the new school. At first, the men deny Razia's wish as she is needed to help her mother and to harvest almonds and peaches. But Razia, not being easily dissuaded, visits the school and meets Razia Jan, the woman who organized the building of the school and asks the teacher to speak to her family on her behalf. Her eldest brother listens to Razia Jan and eventually allows his sister to attend the school on the condition that she completes her household chores before and after classes. On her first day of school, Razia tells her teacher she wants to grow up to be a teacher one day and share her knowledge with her mother and eldest brother.

Razia's Ray of Hope is based on a true story describing the experiences of the students at the Zabuli Education Center found just north of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul. The book includes the story of the real Razia Jan who believes that education is the key to positive, peaceful change in the world. It also includes a glossary of Dari words used in the story, classroom activities that can be used in conjunction with the book and a factual section entitled "Education for Everyone." The statistics are startling when one realizes how many children do not attend school around the world. The book stresses the point that everyone benefits from educating girls and women and that this can be achieved one child at a time. Women who are literate tend to have better incomes, housing and health care and can thus provide better lives for their families.

This inspirational story would be appropriate for use in primary and junior classrooms to engage students in global issues and would be a valuable addition to any library. A portion of the royalties from this book directly support the Razia's Ray of Hope Foundation.



**Down to Earth:
How Kids Help Feed the World
(Orca Footprints)**

written by Nikki Tate

Orca Book Publishers, 2013

978-1-45980-423-4 (hc) \$19.95

for Grades 3 to 8

*Non-fiction | Agriculture |
Developing Countries | Food Supply*



**Brilliant! Shining a Light
on Sustainable Energy
(Orca Footprints)**

written by Michelle Mulder

Orca Book Publishers, 2013

978-1-45980-221-6 (hc) \$19.95

for Grades 3 to 8

Non-fiction | Energy Use

These two titles in the Orca Footprints series show readers how children can help create a better world for all of us to live in.

In *Down to Earth*, we meet children who are pitching in to plant seeds and harvest crops; children who are raising chickens, ducks, turkeys and pigeons; children who help care for livestock; and we learn how children and animals work together on farms. Author Nikki Tate turned Dark Creek Farm from a hobby into a working farm and gives us a glimpse of life on her farm through excerpts included in the book.

In *Brilliant!*, readers learn about sustainable forms of energy and see how through imagination and innovation people have created some unusual and peculiar power sources. Author Michelle Mulder begins the book with the story of energy — which talks about the sun, fire, wind, water, steam, electricity and more — and then delves into some fascinating ways that people around the world create power without using fossil fuels, thus creating less pollution.

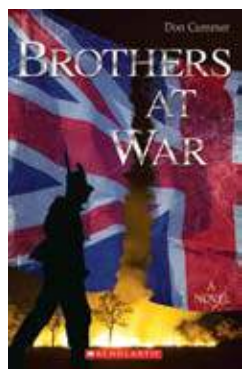
The authors of both books provide students with real life examples of how children work on farms and create sustainable forms of power. From riding water buffalos in Thailand to using pop-bottle skylights in the Philippines, students will learn a great deal about farming and energy. Each book is chock-full of photographs of children from around the world and provides fascinating information for students to use in projects or presentations.

Appropriate for students in the late primary to early intermediate grades, both books would be excellent resources to have in school or classroom libraries to support the science curriculum.

Sandra O'Brien is a former teacher with an M.Ed. in Children's Literature.

Exploring History Through Fiction

BY RACHEL SEIGEL



Brothers at War

written by Don Cummer
Scholastic Canada, 2013
978-1-4431-1382-3 (pb) \$7.99
978-1-4431-2848-3 (eBook) \$7.99
for Grades 4 to 7

*Fiction | Historical | Military & Wars |
Pre-Confederation*



Amelia and Me

written by Heather Stamp
Flanker Press, 2013
978-1-77117-254-7 (pb) \$17.95
for Grades 4 to 7

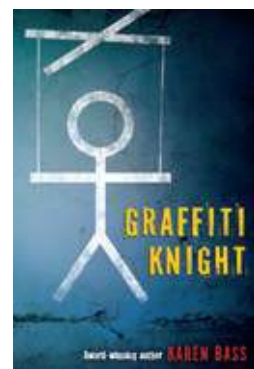
*Fiction | History |
Pre-Confederation Newfoundland |
Women in Aviation*



Touched by Fire

written by Irene N. Watts
Tundra Books, 2013
978-1-77049-524-1 (hc) \$19.99
for Grades 5 to 9

*Fiction | European History |
American History | Jewish History |
Immigration*



Graffiti Knight

written by Karen Bass
Pajama Press, 2013
978-1-927485-53-8 (pb) \$14.95
for Grades 7 and up

*Fiction | Post-War Germany |
Communism and The Cold War |
Adolescence | Civil Disobedience*

History is the succession of events that shape our present and our future, and one of the best ways to engage children in learning history is through historical fiction. Good historical writing offers insights into people and events from the past, and helps children to understand how the world we live in has been shaped by those events.

Brothers At War, by Ottawa author Don Cummer, covers a little known part of Canadian history — the years leading up to the War of 1812.

Jake Gibson comes from a Loyalist family. Eli McCabe's family has just moved to Ontario from the American South and are quickly identified as outsiders. When Jake ventures out onto the icy Niagara River on a dare, it's Eli, with the help of General Isaac Brock, who saves his life. The boys become fast friends, but find their friendship tested when Eli's father refuses to pledge his loyalty to the king. As Loyalists in Upper Canada become more and more suspicious of the American family, the looming war threatens to tear the boys and the town apart.

In his debut novel, Cummer does an excellent job of illustrating the rising tensions between the loyalists and the patriots in newly settled areas of Upper Canada. Although the war is only just about to begin by the end of the novel, readers gain an excellent understanding of the politics and events leading up to the war. As the novel progresses, the tension level in the town escalates, as do the threats to the friendship between Jake and Eli.

Jake is a compelling and realistic character, and readers will relate to him. His bond with Eli is a strong one, but there are

consistent outside forces that test the limits of that friendship. The issues at hand are far from black-and-white, and Cummer doesn't oversimplify or sugar coat these problems.

First in a planned three-book series that will follow the boys through the war, this novel explores different kinds of loyalty, and how the friends we choose can shape more than personal destiny.

The next book, *Amelia and Me* by author Heather Stamp, takes readers to Newfoundland in 1931, and is about a young girl with big dreams of becoming a pilot like her idol Amelia Earhart.

For 12-year-old Ginny, becoming a pilot is the most important thing in the world, but the obstacles to her success are enormous. Canada is in the middle of the Great Depression, and there's barely money for food, let alone flying lessons. Her mother refuses to even hear about flying, and insists that Ginny drop out of school and work to help the family. It will take all of Ginny's stubbornness and determination to achieve her dream, but does she have what it takes?

Based on the girlhood experiences of the author's aunt, this charming historical novel gives girls a spirited and likeable heroine. Ginny is an atypical girl for her time. She prefers trousers to skirts, fixing cars instead of clothes, and dreams of an occupation that is both dangerous and considered to be only for men.

The book is rich in historical detail. The Depression has impacted every person in the community. The author brings to life Ginny's town and the people in it, including visiting aviator Amelia Earhart, who plays a pivotal role in Ginny's life.

The conflict between Ginny and her mother serves as the catalyst for Ginny's physical and emotional journey, and readers will

appreciate the maturity she gains as a result. Thanks to an all-too-brief encounter with Amelia Earhart at her home in New York, she learns that sometimes circumstances mean dreams to have to be delayed, but not abandoned.

Studying historical fiction also gives readers a view of the world outside of where they live, and a broader understanding of key events that have shaped our universe. The next two novels take place in different parts of Europe, and cover lesser-known aspects of history.

In *Touched by Fire*, Irene Watts addresses anti-Semitism, immigration and labour rights in the early 20th century through the firsthand account of teenaged Miriam as her family flees the anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia, settles in Berlin, and eventually immigrates to America where she finds work in the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, the company now known as the site of the horrific industrial fire in 1911.

Readers will be completely drawn into Miriam's story as Watts deftly constructs a narrative of heartbreak, excitement, triumph and terror with every phase of Miriam's life. While the history is fascinating, the novel suffers from trying to cover too much. Each of the major events could have been its own novel. Instead all are crammed into just 208 pages, and feel short on detail in some areas.

Despite the rushed pacing, however, the themes of courage, hope, dreams and making the journey will engage readers and, hopefully, lead them to further research and reading on those fascinating and dangerous times.

The last book, *Graffiti Knight* by author Karen Bass, takes readers to Soviet-occupied Germany in 1947, and is a riveting page-turner that readers will find impossible to put down.

Sixteen-year-old Wilim and his family live in Leipzig, Germany, a town scarred heavily by WWII and now occupied by the Soviets who are brutal and oppressive. The war has also left its scars on his family, but Wilim is finding his voice, sneaking out at night to leave messages on police buildings. What he's doing is dangerous but exciting, and Wilim feels justified considering how much his family has suffered. When one mission goes too far, Wilim finds he's endangered the people he's tried most to protect, and he's forced to take drastic action to keep them safe.

The setting is detailed and richly drawn, and Bass successfully creates an atmosphere of tension and fear. Wilim's family are no strangers to Soviet brutality, and after witnessing a group of soldiers terrorize his crippled father, he decides it's time to act.

His minor acts of rebellion give him a sense of power and control that he lacks in his daily life. The more he succeeds in angering the police, the more his game escalates, until it culminates in one final act that puts him and his family in a life-or-death situation.

The spelling of "knight" in the title is a clever play on words, as Wilim's acts take place under the cover of night and, at the same time, implies heroism. Wilim is a complex and fascinating character and readers will be left to decide whether his actions are heroic or simply reckless.

A skilled storyteller can bring history to life, and while the four highlighted books span different countries, cities, and historical periods, all effectively present these events through the eyes of the children living in them, and more deeply connect readers to the past.

Rachel Seigel is Sales & Selection Strategist at Edu-Reference Publishers Direct in Toronto and a regular contributor to *Canadian Children's Book News*.

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Laura Scandiffio ART BY Gareth Williams

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ages 10+

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We Recommend

NEW AND NOTED BOOKS FOR TODDLERS TO TEENS



Loula is Leaving for Africa

written and illustrated by Anne Villeneuve
Kids Can Press, 2013
978-1-55453-941-3 (hc) \$18.95
for Preschool to Grade 2

Picture Book | Independence | Imagination

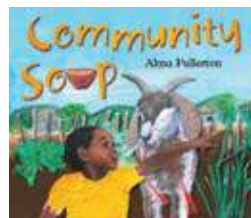
Exasperated by the thoughtless antics of her three brothers, little Loula decides to run away to Africa. “Africa is far away, very far away, the farthest away I can get from my MEAN, HORRIBLE, STINKY brothers. Plus they are scared of snakes. And if they come, piranhas will eat them.” Intercepted by Gilbert, the family’s devoted chauffeur, the two embark on a marvelous adventure of make-believe where the ordinary is transformed into the exotic. Through their imaginations Loula and Gilbert enter the jungle (a city park), ask directions from a giraffe (horse), traverse a desert (sandbox), eat ostrich souffle and grasshopper sandwiches (cotton candy and ice cream), and embark onto an ocean liner (paddleboat). Upon their arrival in Africa (a small island within the park) Loula and Gilbert sit side by side on the shore, savouring the beautiful sunset and the quiet until it is time to return home.

In this simple and masterfully written text, Anne Villeneuve introduces us to two endearing characters. What a privilege it is to accompany these intrepid travellers as they journey to Africa through their vivid imaginations and to listen to their fanciful conversations. A variety of emotions, ranging from anger to the joy of discovering a kindred spirit, are beautifully and subtly expressed. One can’t help but be moved by the compassionate presence of Gilbert and the caring he demonstrates towards his young charge.

There is a lightness and freedom to Villeneuve’s energetic ink and watercolour artwork which is optimistic and refreshing. Her characters’ facial expression and body language speak volumes. Note how the ink scrawl above Loula’s head, which symbolizes her frustration, diminishes in size the closer Loula approaches her destination, only to disappear once she sets foot in Africa.

May Gilbert and Loula experience numerous exciting journeys together!

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



Community Soup

written and illustrated by Alma Fullerton
Pajama Press, 2013
978-1-927485-27-9 (hc) \$19.95
for Preschool to Grade 2

Picture Book | Community Gardening | Cooking | Goats

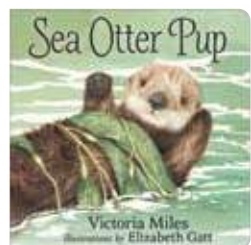
It’s soup day at a Kenyan schoolhouse. While the teachers stir the broth, the children gather vegetables from the community garden. All except for one. Little Kioni is looking for her missing herd of goats, only to discover that they have followed her to school and are now wreaking havoc in the garden. A frustrated Kioni announces, “These pesky goats made me so mad... I’d like to put them in the soup.” This statement turns out to be a “eureka” moment in that the wayward goats do make a contribution to the soup... with their milk!

Alma Fullerton has incorporated the perfect ingredients to create an engaging and charming picture book. With its conversational tone, including a dash of questions and exclamations, *Community Soup* makes for an excellent read-aloud. One section is similar to “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” which adds to the fun: “Kioni has a herd of goats/with hair of calico./And everywhere Kioni goes,/ those goats are sure to — / GO!”

Fullerton’s colourful three-dimensional art, which integrates paper sculpture and mixed media collage, draws readers into that lovely far-away community garden where cooperation, sharing and commitment are so very important. One can almost feel the textures emanate off the pages. And, as a bonus, a recipe for pumpkin vegetable soup is included.

A portion of this book’s proceeds will be donated to the Creation of Hope Project, which supports the building of community gardens in Kenyan schools. Thus, *Community Soup* offers great nourishment for the body as well as the soul.

Senta Ross



Sea Otter Pup

written by Victoria Miles
illustrated by Elizabeth Gatt
Orca Book Publishers, 2013
978-1-4598-0467-8 (hc) \$9.95
for Preschool to Grade 1

Board Book | Endangered Wildlife | Sea Otters | Feeding | Mother-Child Relationships

The moist-eyed, furry sea otter pup, a paradigm of vulnerable cuteness, makes a good subject for rousing concern about protected species whose habitat is threatened by humans. On the surface, this story is about a baby otter progressing from helpless reliance on his mother to diving for his own food. The environmental message comes in an addendum to parents at the end.

Since the length of the text on each page and the level of the language (which includes words like drift, bobs, hind and anxious) may be challenging for children less than four years old, it is curious that a board book format is used. The narrative tone also seems an odd mix of a scientific observer and a warmer narrator. The end feels abrupt, perhaps because of this wavering between fiction (the story of “Pup” the Sea Otter) and non-fiction (an account of how all sea otter pups feed).

Nevertheless, children will identify with the cuddly pup and his often humorous expressions during the familiar parent-child routine of being fed, instructed, washed and groomed. Parents will appreciate illustrator Elizabeth Gatt’s beautiful acrylic palette of cool patinas and green-greys, warmed by the deep earthy brown of the otter pup. Textures of sinuous kelp and spiky fur contrast with the smooth washes of water in the mainly horizontal and diagonal compositions.

Sea Otter Pup could easily accompany a lesson on endangered animals for four- to six-year-olds or provide leisure reading for a parent and child.

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



Sink on the Brink

written by Lisa Dalrymple
illustrated by Suzanne Del Rizzo
Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2013
978-1-55455-231-3 (hc) \$18.95
for Preschool to Grade 2

Picture Book | Endangered Wildlife | Lizards – Skinks | Identity Crises | Growing Up | Humour

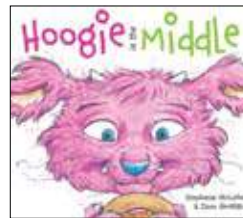
Pride comes before the fall for Stewie, a happy-go-lucky lizard, who loses his bright blue tail as he moves from his juvenile to his adult form. Accustomed to singing about himself as blue, Stewie sinks into a depression in which his formerly paradisiacal surroundings fail to inspire him. While searching for his muse in a new habitat, he learns that there really is no place like home. He also learns that Common Five-Lined Skinks, like himself, are near extinction. Perversely, his endangered status bolsters his esteem, inspiring him to sing again as a “skink on the brink.”

Dalrymple’s fun text has good read-aloud elements like repetition, rhythm, alliteration and, in Stewie’s songs, rhymes like those that children themselves would improvise: “I’m Stewie./ I’m blue-y./ It really is true-y.” Without seeming to teach, the story gives readers knowledge of a skink’s behaviour, predators and defenses.

Matching the playfulness of the text, Del Rizzo’s Plasticine illustrations are colourful, energetic and joyous, hailing a new Canadian talent. Her scenes abound with gamboling frogs, scrambling centipedes and winking mice. Stewie himself steals the show, with spot-on expressions of joy, chagrin, terror and self-satisfaction. Depth is created through textures, layers, size and detail, making Stewie’s busy brown, blue and green world radiate life. A satisfying plot element, not mentioned in the text, is also illustrated at the end.

Teachers and readers will find the supplemental pages near the end useful, with additional information about habitat, life cycle, levels of endangerment and instructions for a DIY Plasticine Stewie.

Aliki Tryphonopoulos



Hoogie in the Middle

written by Stephanie McLellan
illustrated by Dean Griffiths
Pajama Press, 2013
978-1-927485-28-6 (hc) \$17.95
for Preschool to Grade 1

Picture Book | Brothers and Sisters | Emotions



Tweezle into Everything

written by Stephanie McLellan
illustrated by Dean Griffiths
Pajama Press, 2014
978-1-927485-47-7 (sc) \$17.95
for Preschool to Grade 1

Picture Book | Brothers and Sisters | Emotions

Award-winning author Stephanie McLellan has drawn inspiration from her own three children and created *Hoogie in the Middle*, a sneak peek into the world surrounding Hoogie, the middle child. The author playfully uses rhythm, alliteration and similes to delineate Hoogie’s character and exhibit how the middle child feels: “Pumpkin is the big, big girl,” “Tweezle is the itty, bitty baby” and “[Hoogie] feels like the hole in the middle of a donut.”

Whatever Hoogie does is not right. When Tweezle squishes food, “Everyone laughs.” When Hoogie does it, she is told to “not be such a baby.” Similarly, she is “too small” to help dad. “Too big. Too small. No room for me at all,” sums up the pain she feels. In the end just like “the sun in the middle of the solar system,” Hoogie isn’t so invisible anymore. McLellan finishes her story with a deliciously sweet simile!

Continuing in this series, *Tweezle into Everything* follows in the footsteps of the typical baby of the household where Tweezle is the “last yummy cookie.” Charming similes and playful dialogue express Tweezle’s adorable character, constantly trying to prove he is big: “I not baby...I big boy!” He believes he is all grown up he messes his father’s tool shed, or enhances his older sister’s paintings. However, Tweezle is made to feel like the “...mud on the bottom...” of his sisters’ shoes. Yet he refuses to give up: “I not bottom.” The book has an unpredictable and heart-warming ending, showing that what Tweezle unexpectedly does is indeed a “big deal.”

This loveable family comes alive with Dean Griffiths cuddly personified monsters. Vibrating hues painted in pencil crayons and watercolours evoke an expressionistic style with realistic elements. The clever use of negative space adds dimension and energy to the characters as well. Consistent rendering makes switching from each book in the series a seamless transition. The difference is the focus on the title characters, e.g. Hoogie holding a donut over one eye exaggerating the fact that she feels “like the hole in the middle of a donut” or Tweezle holding a large beach ball reinforcing his babyish stature.

Hoogie in the Middle and *Tweezle into Everything* explore the wonder of childhood and the average day-to-day dilemmas and real-life emotions of children with siblings. Wonderful books to read aloud that provide an opportunity for discussion among parents and children.

Lara Chauvin is a creative writer and owner of a children’s arts and crafts workshop company.



The Unkindness of Ravens (Bigfoot Boy, Volume 2)

written by J Torres
illustrated by Faith Erin Hicks
Kids Can Press, 2013
978-1-55453-713-6 (hc) \$17.95
978-1-55453-714-3 (pb) \$9.95
for Grades 2 to 5

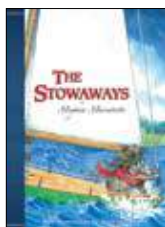
Graphic Novel | Adventure | Humour

The further adventures of Bigfoot Boy continue as Rufus returns to his grandmother's home with the magic totem that transforms him into a sasquatch and his new pal Sidney, a squirrel with whom he can communicate. A pair of ravens notice Rufus's ability to speak with Sidney along with the totem and decide they must have it. Rufus and Sidney meet up with Penny, their new friend from *Into the Woods*, the first book in the series. She has been digging up the forest hoping to find a totem for herself but with no luck. Meanwhile, a housing development company has also been digging in the forest. The ravens ramp up their plans to secure the totem by kidnapping Sidney. With Penny's help, Rufus confronts the ravens in full sasquatch mode and the two rescue Sidney. But the ravens have one last trick and manage to snatch the totem away. As the weekend ends, Rufus is totemless as he heads back to the city.

In this second installment of Bigfoot Boy, Torres maintains a simple, straightforward narrative with likeable characters. Penny's no-nonsense attitude is a perfect contrast to Rufus's goofiness. Hicks' art shines with big, bold panels packed with action and lush forest scenes. She brings to life both the human and animal characters with her mastery of facial expressions and body language.

Readers will be amused by the silliness throughout: Rufus's clothing issues transforming back and forth into Sasquatch, the bumbling ravens and their inability to make the totem work and Rufus' corny battle catch phrases. With all of these strong elements, the series to date feels a bit sparse as readers are given hints of a bigger, epic story, but not quite enough. Here's hoping Torres pulls back more layers for a more satisfying Volume 3.

Scott Robins is a Toronto librarian and co-author (with Snow Wildsmith) of *A Parent's Guide to the Best Kids' Comics: Choosing Titles Your Children Will Love*.



The Stowaways

written by Meghan Marenette
illustrated by Dean Griffiths
Pajama Press, 2013
978-1-927485-33-0 (hc) \$19.95
for Grades 3 to 6

Fiction | Adventure | Mice

Rory Stowaway is a young mouse yearning for adventure. He wants to explore the World Beyond like his ancestors but, ever since Grampa disappeared during one such expedition, his family feels differently. Papa believes his father was eaten by a cat and Gran insists that her travelling days are over. Rory is not so easily dissuaded and soon enough the entire Stowaway family finds itself embroiled in a mouse-sized adventure bigger than even Rory could ever have imagined.

Like Arrietty of *The Borrowers* or Stuart Little, Rory Stowaway is a pocket-sized hero set against rather large odds. The story takes a

few chapters to really get going but, when Rory discovers evidence that his Grampa may still be alive, plenty of action ensues. Young readers will delight in Rory's miniature mouse world and cheer on Rory, Gran and the rest of the Stowaway family as they battle against cats, escape scientists and survive a hurricane.

Meghan Marenette's debut story is nicely paced and harkens back to a simpler time — Rory and the "Weedle" mice live in a world without Google, Xbox or iPhones. The Stowaways are thoroughly human despite being mice and young readers will easily relate to the sibling rivalry, family conflicts and Rory's frustration with his parents as he tries to become the mouse he wants to be. The book itself will appeal to youngsters with its glossy hardcover, a red ribbon bookmark and lively illustrations by Dean Griffiths.

The Stowaways is an engaging story which would also be a wonderful read-aloud book for younger children at home or in the classroom. The book's endearing characters, exciting plot and the central themes of family and growing up would be fertile ground for classroom discussion.

Tracey Schindler is a teacher who currently works at the Ajax Public Library.



The Spotted Dog Last Seen

written by Jessica Scott Kerrin
Groundwood Books, 2013
978-1-55498-387-2 (hc) \$14.95
for Grades 3 to 6

Fiction | Mystery | Cemeteries | Loss | Coping | Humour

Absent when his Grade 6 classmates choose their community volunteer placements, Derek is stuck with repair work at a local cemetery, the last place he can afford to be mentally. Traumatized by an accident years earlier, Derek braves the cemetery duty, despite the nightmares that result and his curmudgeonly chief supervisor, partly because he wants to resolve his feelings and partly because of a mystery that embroils him and his fellow volunteers, bright but grim Merrilee and goofy Pascal. Trying to crack the strange code found in a library mystery book, the three classmates uncover more than they hoped: a way to cope with their fears.

Although this book deals with the serious, devastating subject of the loss of a child, its tone is gentle and humorous. Jessica Scott Kerrin treats death and coping, not often discussed with children, in a realistic yet optimistic way. The book is also about the joy and escape of reading, as well as the release and therapy of writing. Mysterious on many levels, the novel's largest mysteries are about death itself and how to live. That not all the mysteries hinted at in the supporting characters are divulged seems a mature and rational choice. Kerrin also includes her own coded message (which aligns with the theme of coping) to entice young mystery fans.

Despite unlikely coincidences, the plot feels complex and rich. Readers of all ages will learn something interesting and new about cemeteries.

Aliki Tryphonopoulos

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Mr. Zinger's Hat
written by Cary Fagan
illustrated by Dušan Petričić
Tundra Books, 2012
978-1-77049-253-0 (hc) \$19.99



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The Creature Department

written by Robert Paul Weston
Razorbill, 2013
978-1-59514-685-4 (hc) \$18.00
for Grades 3 to 7

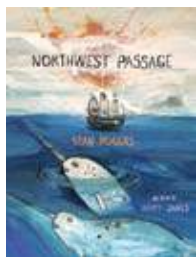
Fiction | Fantasy | Monsters

Welcome to Bickleburgh, a town where nothing ever happens, except behind the walls of top-secret electronics factory DENKi-3000 — or so Elliot von Doppler imagines. Like the town, Elliot is kind of average, at least by outward appearances. He's so nonchalantly comfortable in his own skin that he doesn't see the correlation between his social status (friendless) and the bright green fishing vest (dorky) he insists on wearing every day. But when his eccentric Uncle Archie, DENKi-3000's head of Research and Development, invites Elliot and new-girl-in-town Leslie Fang for a tour of the company, Elliot discovers that both Bickleburgh and he himself are far from ordinary. A team of bizarre creatures work in secret at DENKi-3000, creating fantastical gadgets and gizmos. Archie believes his nephew and Leslie possess the unique abilities required to help create the next great invention, thereby saving the company from a corporate takeover.

The fast friendship that forms between Elliot and Leslie is the heart of *The Creature Department*. Thanks to a mother with a severe case of wanderlust, Leslie has never spent very long in one place and is consequently as companionship-starved as Elliott. The unlikely duo are both real and uniquely appealing as they encounter successively odder creatures and are faced with mounting challenges and problems.

The fantasy feels a little cramped by the setting since the action doesn't stray much further than DENKi-3000's walls, but hopefully the creatures will be allowed to run rampant in the forthcoming sequel. However, this will be of little concern to young readers. The humour (often gross-out), imagination (wild and wooly) and cover (glow in the dark!) will delight children looking for a story with the power to make them believe in the unbelievable.

Joel A. Sutherland is an Information Assistant at the Ajax Public Library with a MScEcon in Library and Information Studies and the author of *Be a Writing Superstar* and the forthcoming *Haunted Canada 4* (Scholastic Canada).



Northwest Passage

written by Stan Rogers
illustrations and commentary by Matt James
Groundwood Books, 2013
978-1-55498-153-3 (hc) \$24.95
for Grades 4 and up

Picture Book | The Arctic | Canadian History | Exploration | Music

Over the centuries, explorers have attempted to discover the Northwest Passage, either via the sea through the Arctic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, or over land. Hundreds succumbed to starvation and the extreme frigid temperatures. It was only in 1906 that Roald Amundsen successfully completed the voyage by ship.

Inspired by the song "Northwest Passage" composed by the legendary Canadian folk musician Stan Rogers in 1981, artist Matt James has documented and illustrated not only the Arctic expeditions from the past, but also the road trip taken by Rogers, who

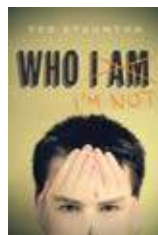
sought to acquire a deeper understanding of the grueling odysseys experienced by renowned explorers such as Henry Kelsey, Alexander Mackenzie and David Thompson. It is, however, John Franklin's tragic expedition which is highlighted in Rogers' music and thus in James' publication.

It is obvious that James has done a great deal of research regarding the exploration of the Northwest Passage. Included are brief biographies of the leading explorers, maps, a timeline of northern exploration, and a detailed account of the mysterious disappearance of John Franklin's ships and crew. Interspersed are the lyrics of Stan Rogers' song, most notably the chorus: "Ah, for just one time, I would take the Northwest Passage/ To find the hand of Franklin reaching for the Beaufort Sea..."

Matt James is the winner of the 2013 Governor General's Literary Award for Children's Illustration for his work on this book. His pronounced acrylic and India ink illustrations, which juxtapose the past with the present, depict the desolate and dangerous beauty of the Arctic as well as the vast open spaces of our country. The people, wildlife and landscapes are vividly portrayed in a child-like, yet powerful, manner.

An ambitious undertaking, *Northwest Passage* pays tribute to an important chapter of Canada's history, as well as highlighting the present effects of global warming on this iconic route.

Senta Ross



Who I'm Not

written by Ted Staunton
Orca Book Publishers, 2013
978-1-45980-434-0 (pb) \$12.95
for Grades 6 to 10

Fiction | Mystery | Identity | Missing Children

In *Who I'm Not*, inspired by a true story, Ted Staunton, known for his Morgan series for young readers, takes a break from his usual juvenile humour and intrigues us with two mysteries — one to do with the story and the other about the main character.

Told in first person, the story opens with a con-game gone wrong and follows the protagonist through events as he impersonates Danny Dellomondo, a Canadian boy who disappeared three years before. "Danny" infiltrates the missing boy's life in the small town of Port Hope, Ontario, but, as he adapts to his new surroundings, he learns not everything is as it seems in Danny's family.

The protagonist develops "Danny" as he struggles through each encounter trying to convince others of his identity. At the same time, he wrestles with his own identity and his place in the world. His inner reflections and flashbacks are balanced with an in-the-moment tension that keeps events coursing along, heightened by knowing that at any moment he can be discovered and sent back to the "Bad Time."

Other well-drawn characters — from Gillian who is initially suspicious of Danny but then befriends him, to Danny's sister Shan who desperately wants to believe Danny is who he says he is, to the retired cop Griffin — frame the story and illustrate the complex mire of relationships Danny must establish in order to be the Danny everyone remembers.

Staunton writes expertly with the voice and mentality of a teenage boy, as he did in his 2012 YA novel, *Jump Cut*. He

captures Danny's teenaged naivety and wry humour combined with a bullish determination to survive. Staunton reveals just enough information with each event to give a three-dimension character of Danny, yet still leaves us wanting to know more about his past and who he really is, and what happened to the real Danny.

The straightforward prose and scenes that naturally flow with increasing suspense will appeal to both avid and reluctant readers from ages 11 to 15.

Karri Yano is an editor and writer in Toronto.



The Manager

written by Caroline Stellings
Cape Breton University Press, 2013
978-1-927492-47-5 (pb) \$11.95
for Grades 8 and up

Fiction | Cape Breton | Boxing | Dwarfism

It is the summer of 1979 in Whitney Pier, the industrial section of Sydney, Nova Scotia.

Ellie and her 18-year-sister Tina are heading to Boston. For Ellie, it's a chance to get out of Cape Breton for a few weeks. For Tina, born with achondroplasia (dwarfism), her goal is to sign up for an experimental procedure that will make her taller.

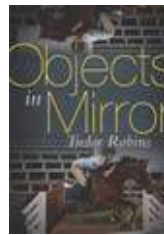
Tough-talking Tina hates school, hates being a dwarf and argues constantly with their father, but she is as crazy about boxing as he is. She helps train the guys at their father's boxing gym and she drives them hard. She and Ellie both know that, if the gym fails, their father will have to return to work in the coalmines, where his father and grandfather died.

Stopping in Truro, they encounter talented young boxer Jesse Mankiller — part-Mi'qmaq and part Cherokee. Through circumstance, Tina becomes his manager; she and Ellie take him to a series of bouts, ending up in Boston where, it turns out, he will fight the rising star at their father's gym. The trip includes a few gangsters, a colourful backwoods clan, some family secrets revealed and several tough choices (plus a little poolsharking).

Ellie narrates the story but hers is more the observer role amidst the emotions, hubbub and action around her; the driving force of the book is Tina, her passion and her pain. The world of boxing is an appropriate setting. While the injuries, the blood and the knockouts make challenging reading in our concussion-conscious era, they are not out of place for the 1970s or the tough, sometimes hardscrabble lives of the protagonists.

This lively and engaging read joins the growing list of books for young readers from Cape Breton University Press. (*Trapper Boy* was a *Best Books for Kids & Teens 2012* selection.) These are stories that explore many facets of Cape Breton culture and history. Kudos to CBUP for bringing them to children and teens.

Gillian O'Reilly



Objects in Mirror

written by Tudor Robins
Red Deer Press, 2013
978-0-88995-497-7 (pb) \$12.95
for Grades 8 and up

Fiction | Eating Disorders | Horses

Grace's summer is all planned out: she'll be working at her local stable while getting the opportunity to spend time with Sprite, the one horse she knows is perfect for her — or would be, if he hadn't been sold to someone else. But even a new horse in need of extra care and her growing closeness with the handsome, horse-savvy Matt aren't enough to distract her from the eating disorder that is starting to take over her. If Grace can't even face her own problems, how can she take care of anyone else's?

An authentic teen voice paired with a contemporary setting steeped in riding terminology helps make this book stand out. Grace's struggles and her attitude toward them — alternately determined and despairing — develop her growth process realistically as she works to overcome her barriers, both self-imposed and not. The long speech she makes in explaining the way she views herself to Matt verges toward clunky but, given that their relationship is based on touching concern for one another rather than sexual tension, the romance still remains believable.

The scenes in the ring and in the barn are well-written and comfortable; they meld the equestrian vocabulary and the stream-of-consciousness that is Grace's thought process as she rides or grooms. Concepts such as "joining up" are shown clearly without any unnecessary telling.

Tudor Robins also manages to find an ideal balance between horse scenes and home scenes, as she intertwines the evolution of Grace's anorexia throughout the story. The exaggerated mean girl trope is present, a disappointingly simplistic characterization in a cast of mostly well-developed characters, and the climax never really culminates, only hovering for a chapter or two before backing down. Otherwise, *Objects in Mirror* is a quick, earnest and credible read on one girl's bildungsroman of a summer.

Yahong Chi is an Ottawa-based reviewer and blogger.



Baygirl

written by Heather Smith
Orca Book Publishers, 2013
978-1-4598-0274-2 (pb) \$12.95
for Grades 8 and up

Fiction | Family | Addictions and Mental Health | Friendships

Sixteen-year-old Kit Ryan has been dealing with all the frustrations of living with an alcoholic father for as long as she can remember. But she has always been able to escape to Nan's place when things get out of hand, and count on her best friend Anne-Marie for comfort and support when things get rough. Then her father loses his job as a fisherman, thanks to the cod moratorium, and suddenly she and her parents are leaving their home in Parsons Bay to move in with Uncle Iggy in St. John's. There, Kit has to start over at a new school while also dealing with Uncle Iggy's depression, as well as her father's drinking. But Kit

surprises herself as she forges new (and sometimes unexpected) friendships, discovers strength she never knew she possessed and learns that her feelings for her father are much more complicated than she had ever imagined.

The greatest strength of Heather Smith's debut young adult novel is its realistic depiction of living with an alcoholic parent. She adroitly captures all the unpredictability, as well as Kit's shame, anger and fear. And yet, for all Kit's feelings of helplessness and rage, buried deep inside are also feelings of tenderness towards this man. Smith carefully threads her way through all of these complex emotions, and she refrains from providing a neat and tidy resolution.

The book is also filled with a cast of quirky and delightful characters, including a number of supportive adults that Kit can turn to for help. As well, *Baygirl* explores themes of friendship and first love, grief and loss — and its Newfoundland setting gives the story a distinct flavour while it still conveys universal truths that many teens will identify with.

Lisa Doucet is Co-Manager of Wozzles, the Halifax children's bookstore.



Smokescreen

written by Nancy Hartry
Tundra Books, 2013
978-1-77049-405-3 (hc) \$19.99
978-1-77049-406-0 (eBook) \$11.99
for Grades 9 to 11

Fiction | Mystery | New Experiences | Forest Fires | Native Beliefs | Hunting | Coming of Age

Fresh from fighting with her mother, 17-year-old Kerry Williams is banished to the woods of Northern Ontario for a summer job. A party thrown on her first night changes her job position when a forest fire is started and Kerry and her roommate Yvette are reassigned to kitchen duty for the revolving door of fire fighters now coming through base camp. Accusations of who started the fire run rampant and Kerry and Yvette do their part to solve the mystery, but the truth turns out to be more complicated and dangerous than either one of them could have ever expected.

In the face of a surprising lack of parental contact despite serious situations, Kerry and Yvette bond initially over being the only girls in the camp and take care of each other even when they disagree. Kerry begins the novel as a naive 17-year-old. However, falling in love with a Métis named Aubrey and being thrust into the deep end of responsibility mature her quickly — as she realizes she can be her own person outside of her mother's expectations for her.

Evenly paced with lots of dramatic action, *Smokescreen* lives up to its title as several characters have hidden agendas. Veteran author Nancy Hartry's quick and enticing book will keep readers guessing which characters are genuine and which ones are telling lies right up until the final chapters when all is revealed in a satisfying conclusion. This book is recommended for reluctant and recreational readers.

Amy Mathers is the creator of Amy's Marathon of Books (www.amysmarathonofbooks.ca).



A Fool's Errand

written by Maureen Fergus
Razorbill, 2013
978-0-670-06765-7 (hc) \$19.99
for Grades 9 and up

Fiction | Fantasy | Quests

Picking up precisely where the previous book, *The Gypsy King*, left off, this tale begins with Persephone and Azriel facing certain death at the hands of the merciless regent Mordecai. When Azriel offers to help Mordecai find the one thing he desires above all others, their lives are spared and they find themselves on a quest to find the legendary healing Pool of Genezing. They must do so within one hundred days or young King Finnius (who is still under the regent's power) will die.

As they embark on a journey that is fraught with danger and uncertainty in a desperate attempt to save not only the king but all of Parthania, Persephone is forced to face the truth about her feelings for Azriel and to re-examine the dream of "freedom" that she has cherished for so long.

Like the first book, *A Fool's Errand* features a briskly paced plot that still yields a fair number of surprises and keeps readers eagerly devouring pages right up to its cliffhanger ending. The characters are vividly drawn and compelling, and the romantic tension between Persephone and Azriel as their relationship deepens is deftly-handled. Their many adventures as they frantically search for the long-lost pool, combined with the political intrigue in King Finnius's court and the exquisite love story, make this second volume a satisfying read in its own right. Moreover, Maureen Fergus's delightful (sometimes dark) humour gives this book a unique flavour all its own.

Lisa Doucet



What We Hide

written by Marthe Jocelyn
Tundra Books, 2014
978-1-77049-642-2 (hc) \$19.99
for Grades 9 and up

Fiction | Secrets | Point of View

A 1970s Yorkshire boarding school called Illington Hall provides the backdrop for Marthe Jocelyn's newest work of fiction in which readers meet a number of the teens who make Illington their home. It is an intimate and multi-faceted snapshot of a single semester, told from the points of view of various characters, exploring the myriad secrets that each one keeps.

There is Jenny who came from America with her older brother Tom and lied about having a boyfriend in Vietnam; Robbie whose older brother Simon would never accept the fact that his kid brother is attracted to boys; Percy who longs to have a relationship with his famous film-maker father and Penelope whose mother just quietly fell apart one day and now lives in an institution. These teens and several others nonchalantly but oh-so-carefully navigate the minefields of their daily lives while harbouring their own closely held secrets and trying to bravely make sense of their lives and the hopes and dreams that they keep hidden.

In this book, which is utterly distinct from any of her previous ones, Jocelyn creates an authentic portrait of the daily lives of this unique yet fairly typical assortment of teens. The alternating viewpoints provide a more nuanced perspective and yet each storyline flows seamlessly into the next, enabling readers to feel invested in the overall picture as much as in each individual character. Jocelyn expertly weaves together her numerous strands of story to create a single, unified whole, allowing each character to emerge as their own complex individual. A captivating look at the stories that lie just beneath the surface of all the carefully constructed facades, *What We Hide* is thought-provoking, compelling and original.

Lisa Doucet



Apparition

written by Gail Gallant
 Doubleday Canada, 2013
 978-0-385-67962-6 (pb) \$14.95
 for Grades 9 to 12

Fiction | Mystery | Paranormal | Supernatural | Grief | Death

After Amelia's best friend Matthew dies from an apparent suicide, her ability to see ghosts reveals he hasn't moved on from the barn where he died. When her brother Jack has a supernatural, life-endangering experience in the same barn, Amelia realises the place is haunted by a possessive spirit. A journalist named Morris and his son Kip help Amelia investigate, but Amelia is torn between the living and the dead as both Matthew and Kip end up vying for her affections. Somehow Amelia must figure out how to free the ghosts while protecting the people she loves from harm.

In her debut novel, Gail Gallant tackles issues of grief, death and the paranormal through the tale of 17-year-old Amelia Mackenzie and her family. Living with their grandmother Joyce after the death of their mother, Amelia and her brothers Jack and Ethan are already dealing with loss and an impending move to the country when Amelia's best friend Matthew turns up dead.

Devastated, Amelia finds comfort in being able to see Matthew's ghost, but the situation becomes complicated after Kip enters Amelia's life as a love interest and she isn't ready to let go of Matthew yet.

The first book in a new series, *Apparition* is a recreational read that mixes mystery with a touch of romance, setting up Amelia as a strong female character/paranormal sleuth and placing her in a position where she has to choose between loyalty to the dead and love for the living.

Amy Mathers



Takedown

written by Allison van Diepen
 Simon & Schuster, 2013
 978-1-44246-311-0 (hc) \$19.99
 978-1-44246-312-7 (pb) \$11.99
 978-1-44246-313-4 (eBook) \$9.99
 for Grades 8 and up

Fiction | Crime | Courage

Two years after Darren takes the fall for Diamond Tony, the notorious head of the city's drug cartel, he's out and determined to get even. Working as an informant for the police, Darren infiltrates Diamond Tony's operation — but falling for Jessica wasn't part of his plan. When a deadly turf war breaks out between Diamond Tony and the Bloods, Darren gets caught in the crossfire. If Darren is going to protect Jessica and stay alive, he'll have to stay on his game, because any mistake could be his last.

With her latest novel, author Allison van Diepen demonstrates once again her familiarity and expertise at creating gritty page-turners with three-dimensional and human characters.

Darren lives in Toronto's inner city and has just gotten out of juvie after spending two years there on drug charges. On the surface, Darren comes off as a tough kid, a bad-news boy from a rough area whom society has given up on, but this image doesn't scratch the surface of the true Darren. While his actions are often reckless and stupid, he has noble reasons which readers will admire. He adores his baby brother and wants to make the neighbourhood safer for him. He also wants to leave the drug world and pursue a career in music, but he can't do that until he's well and truly free of that world.

Although the first person narration tells the reader that Darren survives, the multiple twists and turns and tense atmosphere of the novel will keep readers on the edge of their seats turning pages. In a category that is short on books that will appeal to teenage boys, this book is a welcome addition.

Rachel Seigel is Sales & Selection Strategist at Edu-Reference Publishers in Toronto.



Nothing Man and the Purple Zero

written by Richard Scarsbrook
 Dancing Cat Books, 2013
 978-1-77086-311-8 (pb) \$14.95
 978-1-77086-312-5 (eBook) \$9.99
 for Grades 9 and up

Fiction | Bullying | Diversity | Friendship | Respect | Humour

Marty Apostrophes and Bill Brown never meant to become accidental superheroes in foiling a bank robbery, and Elizabeth Murphy never meant for her Observer X video of them to go viral. But here they are, in their last year of high school in a small town where things don't seem to change, and it looks like three new superheroes are exactly what's needed to trigger a time full of shift, acceptance and heroism.

Written in a melodramatic style with a lot of italics, this unusual novel pulls together a series of thematic topics and puts a small-town, undeniably Canadian spin on them. The omniscient present point-of-view allows the narration to dip into the heads of all the

characters, providing insight and gently comparing their different mindsets. These switches occasionally become ungainly and an uneven split of pagetime renders Marty's character less developed than Elizabeth's or Bill's. This is a shame, because Marty is the springboard off which Richard Scarsbrook launches into the exploration of being gay as an adolescent; in fact, Marty's sexuality is never fully discussed between the three friends.

Although the trio never really feels like an actual trio, they still provide plenty of humorous moments and choice bits of dialogue. A wide secondary cast spans the gamut, from karate- and Taekwondo-trained Kitty McMann to the disappointingly stereotyped Slutty Mean Girl Virginia Sweet. The interwoven web of characters drives the plot as much as the plot itself does, as is evident from the epilogue which details each character's life after high school and thus brings this book to a close with the suggestion that, though greatness is thrust upon some, everyone is capable of it.

Yahong Chi



Crazy About Basketball!

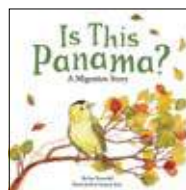
written by Loris Lesynski
illustrated by Gerry Rasmussen
Annick Press, 2013
978-1-55451-540-0 (pb) \$12.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 4

Non-fiction | Poetry | Wordplay | Basketball | Humour

Lesynski returns with a marvellous new collection of poems centred on basketball. In "Everything's a Hoop," Dunkin' Jim searches for anything that can be a hoop and calculates his chances of scoring from different angles, while in "Nightball" a young player practices his hoop shooting far into the night until he gets "the hang of landing in the net." In "Basketball," Lesynski shows how global "buh-BOMP" has become, to the point that "the world's become... a basketball drum." In addition, she suggests in "Basketball = Life" that bounce can be found in everything from the movement of sub-atomic particles to the movement of the universe, and from "a drop of blood" to "a gasp of air." And if you think Lithuanians playing basketball "on skates, on ice" is purely the author's creative license, then do an internet search!

Created with pen and ink and Photoshop, Rasmussen's colourful and playful illustrations complement the vibrancy and humour of Lesynski's poems. From the energetic thumping of "Game On!" to the rhythmic-building "Momentum" and "Dribble Rhythm" to the charging intensity of "Audience Point of View," their bouncy beats are fun and exciting and challenge us not to read them out loud. In "That Smallest Sound," we hear the sweetest sound of all, which is "the swishing of the basketball" when it doesn't even touch the hoop's rim. And in "Scientifically Accurate," Lesynski reminds us of the one rule regarding who can play basketball — anyone whose "feet reach the floor."

Ken Kilback is a writer and primary teacher in Vancouver.



Is This Panama? A Migration Story

written by Jan Thornhill
illustrated by Soyeon Kim
Owlkids Books, 2013
978-1-926973-88-3 (hc) \$17.95
for Kindergarten to Grade 3

Non-fiction | Animal Migration | Seasons | Migratory Birds

Sammy, a young Wilson's warbler, knows it's time to fly south from the Arctic Circle to Panama. Having never migrated before and unable to find any other warblers to guide him, he sets off alone. After travelling with a flock of sandhill cranes and later a swarm of green darner dragonflies, he ends up at the Great Lakes, where he joins other warbler cousins. From them, he learns to fly at night while relying on patterns of stars as reference points. But when they pass over a large city, Sammy gets confused by the stars shining up from below. He crashes into a window while the warblers continue on. Although he is not badly hurt, Sammy is becoming too tired to care whether he ever reaches Panama.

Thornhill nicely captures the tension created by the collision of Sammy's excitement for the mysteries surrounding his first migration with the dangers and hardships associated with the sheer exhausting length of the journey. By the end of his three-week flight, Sammy is no longer the young bird who initially "flew for a whole hour" and was tired.

Kim's gorgeous illustrations combine watercolour paintings, ink and cut-paper collages, vibrant in colour and rich in detail. And the end papers display beautiful drawings of 10 warbler species.

The book also includes a map of Sammy's route as contrasted with the Wilson's warblers' regular route, a glossary of animal species that he encounters, and general information about how animals migrate.

Ken Kilback



The Legend of Lightning & Thunder

written by Paula Ikuutaq Rumbolt
illustrated by Jo Rioux
Inhabit Media, 2013
978-1-927095-28-7 (hc) \$16.95
for Grades 2 to 4

Non-fiction | Traditional Stories | Inuit

Two starving orphans are denied food and hospitality at an Inuit singing festival. Desperate, in a society where theft is unknown, they resort to stealing meat, a caribou skin and some flints. Still hungry, they divert themselves in play, creating different sounds with the caribou skin and sparks with the flints. As the repercussions they face dawn on them, they take refuge in the sky, taking the playthings along. There, whenever they are bored or lonely, they create flashes of lightning followed by the sounds of thunder.

Inhabit Media continue their mission to promote awareness of Northern culture with this traditional Nunavut legend. The story is deceptively simple and its narration is ingenuous — thus creating instant empathy for the unloved siblings. As the storyteller (depicted before an attentive audience) completes this origin tale, it is clear that it is also a cautionary tale with serious life lessons.

Full-page illustrations, in sepia tones with warm touches of gold, orange and red, capture the beauty of an arctic spring and reveal visual details that enhance the story. Emotionally expressive cartoon-style portrayals of the children co-exist effectively with the use of traditional Inuit art. The clever use of depth creates a further sense of the children's isolation from revellers in the background.

This pourquoi tale is a thoughtful read and a great resource for discussion on several aspects of Inuit culture. It is a welcome addition to the growing literature from the North ably presented by an author whose connection with her culture is obvious.

Aileen Wortley is a retired librarian living in Toronto.



Draw Out the Story: Ten Secrets to Creating Your Own Comics

written and illustrated by Brian McLachlan
Owlkids Books, 2013
978-177147-003-2 (pb) \$9.95
for Grades 5 to 9

Non-fiction | Graphic Novels | Writing | Illustrating

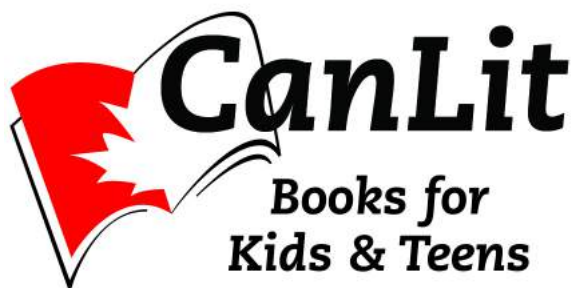
In this welcome addition to the growing collection of books on creating comics, Brian McLachlan's *Draw Out the Story* presents 10 lessons or 'secrets' to guide readers on their next comics project whether it's the next great graphic novel or a few silly comic strips to share with friends. Each lesson is presented with a blend of text, images, examples, and, of course, comics, concluding with a variety of activities where kids can practice what they've learned and

explore new ways of thinking about stories. The book begins with the fundamentals: mechanics, styles, formats, mood and tone, and then demonstrates how all these elements can be put together to create a story.

Draw Out the Story is well organized with each chapter building upon the previous. A table of contents and a short index are included, both ideal for kids who will want to re-read. McLachlan's writing is chatty and he makes recognizable references to all areas of popular culture. Never condescending, the book maintains an encouraging tone throughout. Each chapter features appealing colourful layouts with crisp white backgrounds. Bold headings and text reinforce key concepts, terms and ideas. The exercises at the end of each chapter provide a wide variety, ranging in difficulty, and train young cartoonists to play and really let loose.

The first seven 'secrets' lay a solid groundwork for aspiring creators but what really makes *Draw Out the Story* exceptional, moving beyond your typical 'how-to-create-comics' guidebook, are the final three chapters that focus on creating meaningful and fun stories through exploration, imagination and "what if?" play. Pair this title with Willow Dawson's *Lila and Ecco's Do-It-Yourself Comics Club* and watch kids relish in creating their own graphic stories.

Scott Robins



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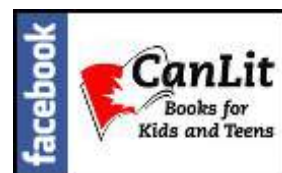


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Chitchat: Celebrating the World's Languages

written by Jude Isabella
illustrated by Kathy Boake
Kids Can Press, 2013
978-1-55453-787-7 (hc) \$18.95
for Grades 4 and up

Non-fiction | Language Arts | Understanding Cultures

Chitchat: Celebrating the World's Languages is a bright, engaging look at the history of speaking and languages. It walks readers through what language is, how it evolved, how parts of it became extinct and why communication is more than just words. Both the author and illustrator have multiple credits with very popular magazines, including *Yes* and *chickaDEE*.

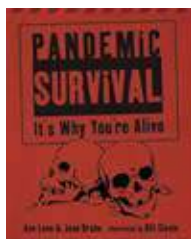
The compelling aspect of the book is the way the images are combined with non-fiction text features, such as charts, captions and speech bubbles. Without these features, the book would be better suited to Grade 7 and up. With these features, the book is easier for younger students to understand and enjoy. Another appeal for the younger students would be the activities, like "Invent your own language."

Another very pleasing aspect of the book is the multicultural images. The illustrator does a fantastic job of integrating a multitude of cultures, eras and ages. This makes the book more accessible to a wider audience.

The book would compliment curriculum. Students studying other cultures, communication or the development of civilizations could utilize the information provided. It has a glossary at the back, but the author also breaks things down into "kid speak" on the sides of the pages or in the non-fiction text features. The paragraph information requires a higher reading level but would still be useful for similar curriculum areas.

Broken down into natural sections, *Chitchat* allows students to explore the different aspects of something they take for granted. It includes an index, games, and connections for the children to enjoy. Likewise, adults will be drawn to the vivid way the author depicts language and its impact on our lives.

Jody Holford is a teacher and author in Chilliwack, BC.



Pandemic Survival: It's Why You're Alive

written by Ann Love and Jane Drake
illustrated by Bill Slavin
Tundra Books, 2013
978-1-77049-268-4 (hc) \$24.99
978-1-77049-499-2 (eBook) \$12.99
for Grades 5 to 9

Non-fiction | Health | Diseases | History of Medicine

Through the course of history, plagues, epidemics and pandemics have spread around the world and wiped out entire families and communities. Diseases like yellow fever, the Black Death, typhoid and small pox claimed the lives of many in historical times, but today we still battle deadly diseases like cholera, AIDS, meningitis and the flu. The H1N1 virus in 2009 was a form of swine flu which claimed over 18,000 lives worldwide.

Authors Anne Love and Jane Drake delve into the history of these diseases giving readers an in-depth look at the causes, symptoms and often bizarre cures that were administered to the sick and dying. They also discuss the evolution of medicine and introduce readers to the pioneers who discovered things like vaccinations, stressed the importance of cleanliness and invented antibiotics. The final chapter entitled "Global Village" discusses diseases we are dealing with today and encourages students to join in the debate about vaccinations and our personal choices and rights concerning health issues.

In this fascinating book, readers will be grossed out by the gory details of the diseases discussed and equally fascinated by the often strange treatments patients had to endure in days gone by. Anyone interested in diseases, biology or medical history will find this an intriguing read and will be equally amused by Bill Slavin's illustrations which add a lighter tone to the book. Written for students in the late junior, intermediate and early senior grades, this would make an excellent resource to be used in conjunction with the health, science or history curriculum.

Sandra O'Brien is a former teacher with an M.Ed. in Children's Literature.



Looks Like Daylight: Voices of Indigenous Kids

written by Deborah Ellis
Groundwood Books, 2013
978-1-55498-120-5 (hc) \$15.95
978-1-55498-413-8 (eBook) \$14.95
for Grades 6 and up

Non-fiction | First Nations | Native Americans | Activism | Cultures and Traditions | Family Relationships | Addictions

In *Looks Like Daylight*, Indigenous kids tell young readers how they see the world and how being Indigenous affects their lives. Deborah Ellis travelled across North America, from Haida Gwaii to Florida, from Iqaluit to Arizona, meeting kids between nine to 18 at their homes on and off reserve, at community and drop-in centres, schools, conferences, drug treatment centres, prisons, powwows and skateboarding jams.

There are tragic stories of racism, abuse and addiction, violence, the ongoing damage of the residential schools, suicide and the breakdown of families. But there are many more stories of young people moving forward: taking action; rebuilding a relationship with their language, cultures and traditions; forging relationships with elders; and making a difference in their communities.

Ellis provides a brief introduction to each of the 45 young people, giving a sense of context but never taking the focus off their stories. And these are extraordinary stories! Among others are 14-year-old cellist Danton, part of the Métis Fiddler Quartet whose debut album won the 2012 Canadian Folk Music Traditional Album of the Year Award; 11-year-old Ta'Kaiya Blaney, Coast Salish, an environmental activist fighting the Northern Gateway Pipeline; Cheyenne, 9, Crow, from Texas who started a fund to save wild horses and burros; and 16-year-old Zack, president of the St. Ignace Tribal Youth Council and part of the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

Over and over, these young people emphasize how important it is to reconnect with their cultures and traditions, with the land that their peoples come from. Perhaps most importantly, they ask us to

recognize that being Pueblo, Shoshane, Mi'kmaq, Inuit, Cherokee, Dene, Choctaw, Navajo and Cree is absolutely unique and that each of the more than 600 recognized tribes and nations in North America is a different experience — there is not one Indigenous way of being. The book includes a number of excellent resources for students in both Canada and the US.

Ellis's other works of non-fiction have allowed Afghan, Iraqi, Israeli and Palestinian children, as well as children in Sub-Saharan Africa, to tell their own stories. She points out that *Looks Like Daylight* is only a starting point and not a comprehensive look at Indigenous youth across North America. Nevertheless, this groundbreaking book is an essential resource for every school and library.

Jeffrey Canton teaches in the Children's Studies Program at York University.

New editions

Irene Watts mined her own past as a child of the Kindertransport to write the moving novels *Goodbye Marianne*, *Remember Me* and *Finding Sophie*. Tundra Books has recently re-issued the three books in an omnibus edition entitled *Escape from Berlin* (available in paperback and eBook) for readers to discover and enjoy.



Horrendo's Curse: The Graphic Novel is the adaptation of Australian author Anna Fienberg's middle grade novel, first published by Annick Press in 2002. The new edition is adapted by Alison Kooistra, who also did the excellent graphic novel version of Drew Haydon Taylor's *The Night Wanderer*. Illustrator Rémy Simard throws his energies and talent into the humorous tale of a boy cursed to be eternally polite, a crowd of rude villagers, a nasty crew of marauding pirates and some delectable meals.

This fall saw the publication of four books by critically acclaimed, bestselling Canadian authors in the Puffin Classics series, each with an introduction by another noted writer: *Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird* by Jean Little (introduction by Kelley Armstrong), *Awake and Dreaming* by Kit Pearson (introduction by Kenneth Oppel), *Underground to Canada* by Barbara Smucker (introduction by Lawrence Hill), and *Run* by Eric Walters (introduction by Deborah Ellis).



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Nikki Tate

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Elizabeth Suneby, Suana Verelst

**When Children Play:
The Story of Right to Play**
Gina McMurchy-Barber

Why Do We Fight? Conflict, War, and Peace
Niki Walker

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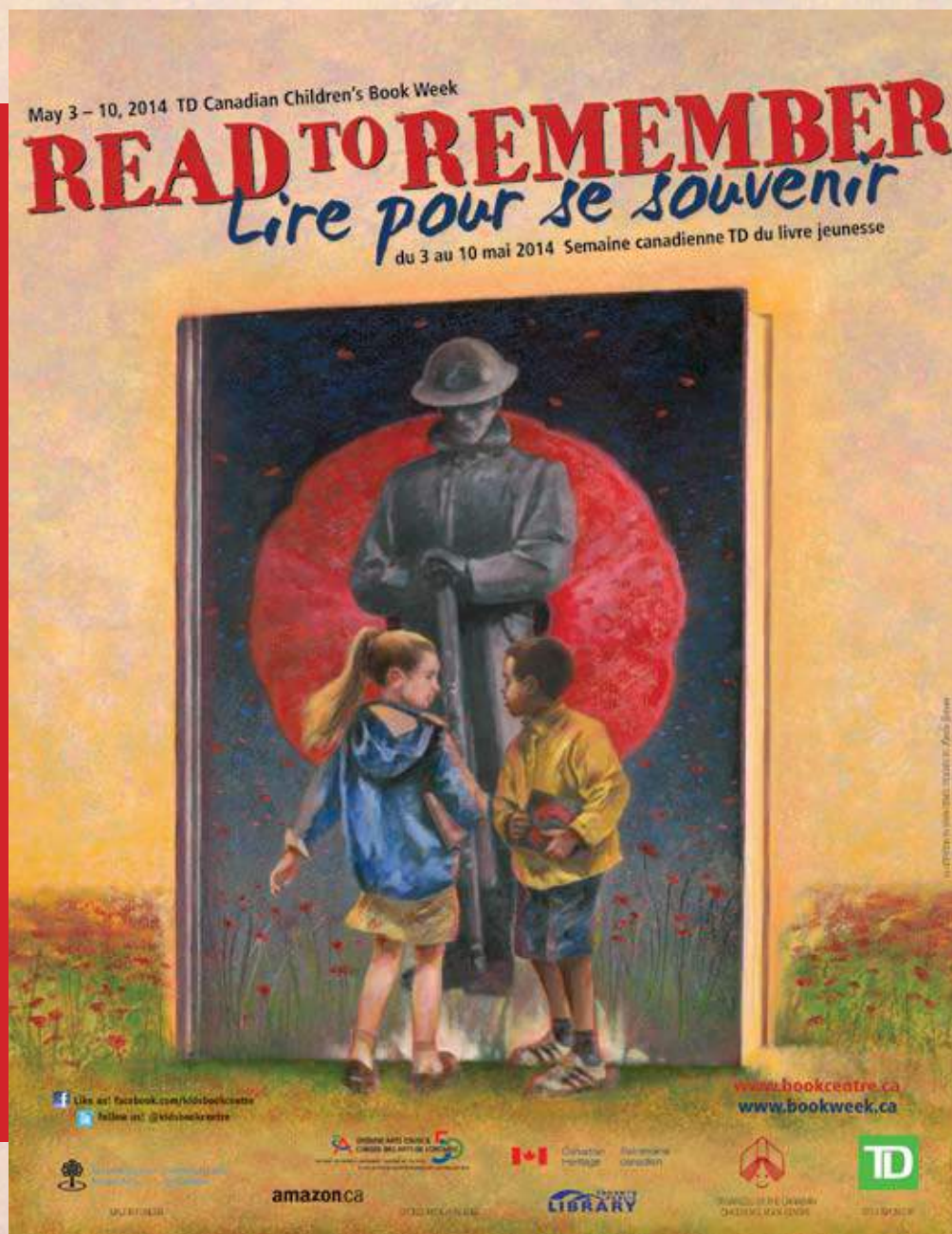
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