

Resource Links Excerpts
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Picture Books

GROENENDYK, Doretta

Step Outside

Illustrated by Doretta Groenendyk. Acorn Press, 2013. 32p. Illus. Gr. K-4. 978-1-927502-19-8. Hdbk. \$19.95

Rating: E

This delightful picture book celebrates for children the invigorating and important experience of being outside. Each page expresses, in simple phrases, the many ways in which everyone can enjoy their surrounding environment; for example, “dance between raindrops”, “sleep below stars”. Children are encouraged to unplug their electronics and to look around the world outside, discover nature and expand their imagination through activity and movement.

The artwork is superb, combining watercolour and acrylic paintings with appealing collage. As the text is minimal, the celebration of the outdoors, nature and physical activities is conveyed through the illustrations. Many elements are added to the paintings with the use of collage. There is so much for the reader to discover about the outside world on every page. Each brightly coloured illustration conveys humour, energy and enthusiasm about the activity portrayed, encouraging the reader to be outdoors.

This text should promote some interesting classroom discussion and would also provide a good resource for art projects. It should be a popular addition to both an elementary school and classroom library collection.

Thematic Links: Outdoor Recreation; Nature; Exercise; Art, (Painting/Collage); Environment

Carolyn Cutt

Fiction Grades 3-6

HAMMOND, Kristie

Ting Ting

Sono Nis Press, 2013. 206p. Gr. 3-6. 978-1-55039-210-4. Pbk. \$9.95

Rating: G

Ting Ting is a two-country story. Ting Ting is an eight-year-old girl. She lives a fairly ordinary life for the time in which she lives. She works hard to get the highest grades at school, deals with an annoying cousin, looks forward to eating her favourite candy and hangs out with her best friend at school. This normal existence is changed forever when her parents, who are in Canada because of her father’s scholarship, cannot return home to China because of the Tiananmen Square protests. The hardest part of Ting Ting’s life begins when she has to leave everything she knows, and go to live in British Columbia as a refugee with her parents. The adjustment to living differently and learning to acclimatize to everything Canadian is a challenge that Ting Ting is able to make, and she does it very well.

For anyone wanting to understand the difficulties of emigrating and adjusting to life in Canada, this is a book to show what life is like. Ting Ting is an uplifting character who is able to beat all odds because of her resiliency, character and intelligence. The difference in life between China and Canada will be interesting to any child who comes from both of those cultures or is interested in learning more about them.

Thematic Links: Tiananmen Square Protests; China; Vancouver; Refugees

Elizabeth Ford

Fiction Grades 7-12

CHOYCE, Lesley

Jeremy Stone

Red Deer Press, 2013. 184p. Gr. 7-9. 978-0-88995-504-2. Pbk. \$12.95

Rating: E

Jeremy Stone is an unexpected page-turner. Written in first-person free-verse, it tells the story of Jeremy Stone as he begins at a new high school off the First Nations reserve he grew up on. He is tormented by Thomas Heaney and his friends on day one, but he also becomes friends with a troubled classmate, Caitlan. Jeremy is no ordinary teenager, and seems to have the ability to traverse across the realms and communicate with both the living and the dead. This is never an absolute though as the reader will come to learn. Jeremy seems to be able to communicate with his grandfather, Old Man. He is revisited by his imaginary childhood friend, Jimmy, but finds out he was actually just an imaginary friend he invented to cope as a child. He is also visited by Jenson Hayes, Caitlan's boyfriend who committed suicide after supposedly being bullied by Thomas; when confronted about bullying Jenson, Thomas has no knowledge of Jenson, and Jeremy can find no reference to Jenson's death on the Internet. The distinction between the living and the dead, and the real and the imaginary, is therefore hazy and debatable.

Jeremy Stone is an original story told in an original style. The reader comes to know Jeremy as a down-to-earth, sarcastic realist who has faced difficulty in his past and continues to have problems in his present. He is very likable in that he does not always know what the best course of action to take is, realizes that his ghost friends might be entirely in his head, and sees how weird the situation between himself, Caitlan, and Jenson is.

Many social and historical issues are raised in this short work as well, which could be discussed within the classroom. For example, Jeremy is forced to learn about the French Revolution, but is not taught about his own people's history. He is bullied by his classmates and tries to solve the problem without using aggression. His father walked out, his mother has had drug problems, and he is not doing well in school. Caitlan is contemplating suicide and cuts herself. The writing style could also be a point for student discussion. The fact that it is never absolutely clear whether Jeremy's ghosts are real or not leaves room for different interpretations. A short interview with the author is included, which would be interesting for readers who appreciate this unique form of storytelling, and who would like to explore the concepts of reality and perceived realities in storytelling.

Thematic Links: First Nations; School; Teenagers; Bullying; Teen Suicide; Ghosts

Caroline Chung

Non-Fiction Grades K-6

RUNSTEDLER, Nancy

Pay It Forward Kids: Small Acts, Big Change

Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2013. 64p. Gr. 3 - 6. 978-1-55455-301-3. hdbk. \$19.95

Rating: E

Pay It Forward is a movement toward mindful kindness as a force for social change. More than charity, the movement encourages acts of compassion: giving without an expectation of reciprocity. *Pay It Forward Kids* profiles more than a dozen young people who have embraced this movement and whose efforts show how easy it is to make a positive change in world.

This bright, eye-catching book is meant to inspire. The easy-to-read profiles introduce kids from across Canada and the United States whose interests in helping range from homelessness, poverty, and literacy to bullying, education for girls, and child slaves. These young people provide strong examples of children's power to accomplish just as much as - or even more than - adults. Importantly, the profiles emphasize that change starts wherever we are, because even a small act of kindness counts. This is an encouraging and affirming message.

Readers may be deeply moved by the courage and selflessness shown by many of these kids. One of the best stories is that of Jenece Edroff, who - despite having serious medical needs of her own - committed herself to raising money for other children and their families, one penny at a time. To date, she has raised more than \$8 million. Another story features Jack Praver and his sister Madi, who regularly bring their friends together to perform random acts of kindness, demonstrating that even holding a door or smiling at a stranger can create a ripple of good. True, the book - and the Pay It Forward movement - doesn't address the larger, structural causes of many social ills. But if young people make an early habit of being socially engaged, this generation could indeed create a profound positive change in our world tomorrow.

Thematic Links: Social Justice; Social Change; Kindness

Leslie Vermeer

Non-Fiction Grades 7-12

VERSTRAETE, Larry

Life or Death: Surviving the Impossible

Scholastic Canada, 2014. 156p. Gr. 5-8. 978-1-4431-1951-1. Pbk. \$7.99

Rating: E

Life or Death: Surviving the Impossible is an extremely exciting collection of 33 diverse stories about true life-or-death situations. Against all odds, individuals escaped from or survived perilous circumstances, high-risk rescue missions were successfully carried out, and great courage and determination were displayed by very unlikely heroes. The stories are taken from recent, semi-recent, and past events from all over the world, making it a diverse and fascinating collection. Specific stories include how Juliane Koepeke survived in the Amazon jungle after being the sole survivor of a plane crash, how the crew of Apollo 13 made it back to Earth in one piece, and how Shin In Geun escaped from Camp 14 in North Korea.

This would be an excellent book to read and discuss in the classroom. The variety of stories would appeal to a wide range of readers with varying interests and backgrounds. Students may recognize some stories from the news, such as the Chilean miners trapped underground for 69 days in 2010, or be inspired to conduct additional research about historical heroes, such as Corrie ten Boom, who rescued Jewish people in the Netherlands while the country was under Nazi occupation. The stories are each about several pages long, and captioned photographs are included. Interspersed throughout the longer stories are quick, one-page summaries of heroic or awesome feats. One example is how a girl in the USA managed to save the life of a boy in England by viewing a Facebook message and telling her mother, who in turn alerted the local authorities, who then contacted the equivalent English authorities who could directly intervene, thereby rescuing the boy; all of this occurred within two and half hours. The mix of story lengths keeps the collection dynamic and fast-paced. Readers can dip into the book for quick reads, or be compelled to keep reading "just one more" account. The writing style is clear and precise, and the circumstances of each story are very-well explained. Overall, it is an inspiring collection that shows how creative and brave humans can be, and how in any dangerous or terrible situation, there is always hope.

Thematic Links: Survival; Extreme Situations

Caroline Chung

Internet Resources

<http://currents4kids.com>

Les Plan Educational Services, 2013. Gr. 4-6. \$180/year subscription perschool

Rating: G/E

Currents 4 Kids is a reasonably priced, Canadian, on-line, classroom resource which provides authentic learning

opportunities for junior/middle school students, while developing critical thinking skills and honing literacy skills through rich tasks and checks of understanding through graded quizzes. All tasks can be assessed/evaluated using the included rubric while being managed on-line. A forum for teachers is also included allowing sharing of uses, ideas and practices.

Articles are engaging and of high interest to the target audience and provide a variety of high quality media supports, including photos, diagrams, background information, videos and supplemental web resources. Most offer a “read to me” function to assist reluctant readers or emerging readers to interact confidently should articles be written above their current reading level. In addition, a wiktionary is available to look up words new to the reader. Students can create an on-line response to a summative topic which then can be submitted to the teacher for review and comment before editing and finally publishing their response, which may also be shared with other students in the on-line forum. The articles are also perfect as a springboard into an independent, paired or group research project, and are archived by date of publication or by category for easy access on the web site. The program includes classroom set up, teacher files, articles, activities, response, wiktionary, read to me function, resources, teacher forum, and web resources.

Currents 4 Kids provides a technology based, curriculum relevant, flexible, on-line classroom resource which melds 21st century learning skills with independent, small group or whole class learning opportunities. This web-based classroom can be accessed in computer labs, on tablets, laptops, through a smart board in school or at home. Students can engage in regularly scheduled class time, during free time, or non-school time by simply logging into their on-line classroom.

Recommended as a supplementary resource for literacy, reading/writing work groups, social studies, independent or group research, class or group discussions, study circles, home studies, recreational reading and current events for junior/middle school students. Language/reading levels may be too high for most grade 3 and too simplistic for most intermediate students.

Thematic Links: Activity Based Social Studies; Current Events; Literacy Based Website

Sharon P. Armstrong

Professional Resources

MANDEL, Joey

Moment to Moment - A Positive Approach to Managing Classroom Behavior

Pembroke Publishers. 2013. 160p. 978-1-55138-287-6. Pbk. \$24.95

Rating: E

Joey Mandel, author of ***Moment to Moment*** is a special education teacher as well as a parent coach and education consultant at ISAND (Integrated Services for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders). In this professional resource, she shares her knowledge and wisdom about understanding children and how teachers can support them to succeed socially, emotionally, and behaviourally. As an experienced teacher, Mandel understands that a positive learning environment in the classroom has to start with respectful, caring, and inclusive relationships among its classroom community. Mandel works with teachers to help them better understand the social-emotional needs of their students and create healthier relationships in the classroom.

Moment to Moment offers teachers the tools they need to help children succeed socially, emotionally, and behaviorally and shows how to build important social skills - from controlling speech and movement to building attention and concentration, to adapting to the social environment. Mandel has formulated a scientifically based framework that enables teachers to carefully observe, reflect, identify, and address critical skill deficits. She clearly communicates her ideas through detailed descriptions in simple, user-friendly language.

Teachers can use Mandel’s Class Survey to customize social-emotional learning goals for individual students while positively influencing the group dynamics of the class as a whole. This book provides a rich selection of learning activities, and games designed to promote growth across the field of relevant social skills while considering students’ feelings of engagement and accomplishment. There are before and after discussion points, and suggestions for extra supports that teachers can easily incorporate into their everyday practice.

Moment to Moment provides in-the-moment strategies for teachers to calm a student in crisis, guide a student to perform a skill the student currently knows, and support a student in practising this skill. “*What this book suggests is how you can find better insight, awareness, and empathy into the causes of behaviors by understanding the behavior as a skill challenge, rather than misbehavior. It shows you concrete options for exactly what you can do in the*

moment to support your students in developing skills they will use for the rest of their lives.” (p.8)

Thematic Links: Classroom Management; Behaviour Modification; Social Skills

Cynthia Smyth

French Resources

ROBERGE, Marie

Kondiaronk: Grand chef autochtone (Collection: Bonjour l'histoire)

Éditions de l'Isatis, 2013. 80p. Illus. Gr. 6-9. 978-2-923234-91-5. Pbk. \$13.95

Rating: E

During the 1600's, the many Indian tribes in North America were often at war with one another and this is true of the Hurons and their neighbours the Iroquois. Then white men arrived with guns and ammunition and made a difficult situation worse. This environment is the background for the life of Kondiaronk, a great Huron chief. When his people were suffering from famine and illness and were under constant threat from other tribes, Kondiaronk was able to take charge and work for peace and understanding.

This is an entertaining yet thought-provoking look at life in New France in the seventeenth century. While historical and factual, it is written in an approachable manner with both dialogue and description. The difficulty of diplomacy among native tribes and also between native tribes and the whites who arrived from Europe is the basis for the book and reminds students that the need for diplomacy to foster understanding among peoples of the world is not just a modern problem.

Any historical terms used in the text are marked with an asterisk and there is a glossary at the end of the book which explains them. There are also short bios of contemporaries of Kondiaronk as well as a timeline from 1492 (Christopher Columbus) to 1763 (the end of the Seven Years' War) which helps put the events of the book in context. As well, there are pages devoted to various aspects of native culture at the time: the main tribal groups of the Great Lakes area, slaves and prisoners of war, maladies and medicines, forts and the fur trade.

An index at the end of the book will help students find the material needed for research, although the story is so interesting that most will want to read it from beginning to end. Chapters are short and so the book is approachable for any student. This is an excellent research book about the history of early Canada and belongs in school libraries, along with the others in the *Bonjour l'histoire* series.

Thematic Links: New France; Huron Indians; Biography

Ann Ketcheson