

### **Picture Books**

FULLERTON, Alma

***In a Cloud of Dust.***

Illustrated by Brian Deines. Pajama Press, 2015. 32p. Illus. Gr. K-3. 978-1-927485-62-0. Hdbk. \$19.95

Rating: E

***In a Cloud of Dust*** demonstrates a challenge that affects a wide range of children and adults, living in developing countries such as Tanzania - transportation. Anna, like many children in her country, has miles to travel to get to her school, but no transportation to help her. One day, a bicycle library truck stops outside her school dropping off bicycles to some of the students there. Unfortunately, Anna does not receive a bike, but she helps to teach other children how to ride and gets a ride in return. To Anna's surprise, when her friend, Mohammed, stops the bike at his house, he offers Anna the bike to continue her journey onward. Anna thanks him and tells him that she will pick him up on her way to school the next day. This simple gesture helps Anna to arrive home before dark and offers her reliable transportation in the future.

Told in simplistic language in free verse, this story helps children understand some of the dilemma that exists for many children in developing countries today. An excellent resource for learning about other cultures, ***In a Cloud of Dust*** inspires children to learn about life in developing countries and about organizations who help folks by providing bicycles to children and adults, so they can go to school or their jobs, and also help to create jobs in communities. Highly recommended for classroom investigation and discussion and learning about good citizenship.

***Thematic Links:*** Life in Developing Countries

Sharon Armstrong

### **Fiction Grades 3-6**

CLARK, Kathy

***The Choice***

Second Story Press, 2014. 220p. Gr. 4-7. 978-1-927583-65-4. Pbk. \$14.95

Rating: G

***The Choice*** is written by Kathy Clark. Hungary was one of the last countries to be invaded during WWII. In 1944 Nazi Germany invaded and stayed until the end of the war in 1945. Many Jewish people were taken by surprise at the brutality of the SS and the Nazis in Hungary, they believed that they would remain safe and not fall victim as other countries had. Even though the Germans were there for only one year, 550,000 Jews were killed that year. A Hungarian group called 'Arrow Cross' contributed to the restrictions, deportation, and death of Hungarian Jews as they fashioned themselves after the SS and Nazis and believed that they were a superior race.

Jakob is a Jewish boy in Budapest during the Second World War and hiding in plain sight as a Catholic. His best friend Ivan is Catholic and Ivan's father is an Arrow Cross member. When Jakob learns about how his Jewish relatives are suffering, he makes a decision to tell the truth about who he is. By doing this, he puts his family and himself at great risk and finds that his friend betrays him and Jakob ends up in a concentration camp fighting for his life. Jakob believes for a long time that his Catholic friend Ivan has betrayed him, but in the end, he finds out that Ivan had to make his own hard choice that day.

The book is well written for young readers and describes life during the war and in concentration camps. The story is heartbreaking but full of hope and tolerance. The book will be a good addition to any school library.

**Thematic Links:** Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)

Katherine Watmough

### **Fiction Grades 7-12**

AVI

***Catch You Later, Traitor***

Tundra Books, 2015. 293p. Gr. 7-12. 978-1-10191-765-7. Hdbk. \$21.99

Rating: E

Twelve-year-old Pete Collison is growing up in Brooklyn in 1951, sharing his love of baseball and Sam Spade detective stories with his best friend Katherine. Suddenly his world is turned upside down, when his teacher accuses his father of being a communist. His school friends turn against him, except for Katherine, but her parents force her to stop seeing him. The FBI begin following him, pressuring him for information about his father. His older brother, determined to get into a government-sponsored program on rocketry, begins to act suspiciously. When Pete asks his father for straight answers, his father is not forthcoming. Pete decides to star in his own detective story, searches his father's files, and tails his movements. The family history he thought he knew begins to fall apart, as he learns his grandfather went to Russia in the 1920s, with Pete's father's brother, and his other brother has held a grudge ever since. In the news, McCarthyism is in ascendancy, and Dashiell Hammett is sentenced to prison for subversive activities. Is it paranoia if they really are out to get you?

This novel contains a lot of fascinating detail of daily life in Brooklyn in the 1950s, against the larger background of political events. In his author's note at the end, Avi states, "History is memory researched. Historical fiction is memory brought to life." (p. 294 uncorrected proof) Just one year older than the protagonist Pete, Avi brings this novel to life with many of his own remembered experiences. Although the historical context may require some greater understanding, and the writing contains mature stylistic features, this book would work very well as a class study or read-aloud for Grade 7 to 9.

**Thematic Links:** American History and Politics - 1950s; The Cold War; Baseball 1950s; Detective Stories

Patricia Jerney

### **Non-Fiction Grades K-6**

WALLACE, Ian

***The Slippers' Keeper***

Groundwood Books, 2015. 40p. Illus. Gr. K-6. 978-1-55498-414-5. Hdbk. \$18.95

Rating: E

When Joe Purdon (1914-1982) was a boy growing up on his family's farm in Ontario, he discovered a small patch of rare wild orchids. When he was thirteen, he learned a little bit about these flowers from his teacher, Miss McIntyre, so he knew they were a wonder. "As remarkable, it takes seven to fifteen years for a plant to bloom even though it produces fifteen to thirty-five thousand seeds in a single pod every year. Can you imagine that?" After he receives (reluctant) permission from his father, Joe puts up with biting deer flies and mosquitoes, overgrown scrub brush, hungry deer, and industrious beavers to transplant the orchids. Because of his dedication, he transforms the land into an area suitable for his hand-pollinated plants. "Someday", he said, "there'll be more slippers in the fen than there are bugs in the bush." The story continues into Joe's adulthood. He inherits the land from his father and raises a family of his own on it, all the while tending to his orchids. The book ends with an epilogue explaining how his daughter Rhodena continues caring for the orchids that are now part of the largest colony in Canada.

Wallace's (*Boy of the Deeps*) watercolour illustrations include close-up views of the flower, and sweeping views of the land (including the school yard). The school appears to be a one room school house, and the characters wear overalls or dresses, hats and sturdy brown shoes. On the farm, the chickens roam free and Laddie the dog, follows

Joe everywhere. Details I noticed that added authenticity to the time period were the fly paper hanging from the kitchen ceiling, clouds of steam coming out of the old kettle, indoor clotheslines, and lanterns. The full page illustrations also complement the story. When the father is angry, he is seen gripping his fork and pointing his finger during suppertime, and when Joe refers to all the bugs in the bush, the reader will be able to find an assortment of wildlife hiding amongst the grasses and plants. I would recommend this book to families who garden or to someone wanting a story that inspires hard work and independence.

**Thematic Links:** Slipper Orchids; Conservation; Protection; Ontario; Biography; Joe Purdon; Naturalists; Family Farm; Rare Wild Flowers

Tanya Boudreau

### **Non-Fiction Grades 7-12**

GRAZIANI, E. Graziani

***War in My Town***

Second Story Press, 2015. 184p. Gr. 6-10. 978-1-927583-71-5. Pbk. \$11.95

Rating: G

Although the history of the Second World War is taught in secondary school, the focus tends to be on the Western European campaigns. Canadian Forces were in Operation Husky, the invasion of Italy from Sicily northward, but the travails of the Italian villagers situated in the area of the Gothic Line are not nearly as well known, and Ms. Graziani has done us a favour in telling the story of her mother's childhood during the war in the village of Eglio, in northern Tuscany. This area was not directly affected until the overthrow of Mussolini, his subsequent return as a puppet figurehead for the Nazis, and the German fortification of the Gothic Line as a final stronghold in 1944.

This non-fiction book tells the story of Bruna from 1940 to 1945, as she goes from a carefree schoolgirl surrounded by a large loving family to a victim of German occupation, starved for food and supplies, surrounded by death and destruction. Their peaceful village is forced to provide labour for fortification projects, and food and housing. Meanwhile they are bombarded by the approaching Allied forces. Finally in April 1945 they awake to find the Germans have disappeared overnight, and the liberating American forces are welcomed. Miraculously her mother and siblings have all survived, even the two brothers drafted into the Italian military. She ends her book on a philosophical note: "When war came to Eglio, all I could see was the hardship and brutality, the desolation and unfairness. But in the end, our wartime experiences left me with a deep appreciation and understanding of life - an appreciation of every moment that we have to share with the people we love." (p. 178) We are left with an appreciation that Graziani has shared her family's story.

**Thematic Links:** World War II - Italy; The Gothic Line; Biography

Patricia Jermey

### **Professional Materials**

MANDEL, Joey.

***Stop the Stress in Schools: Mental Health Strategies Teachers Can Use to Build a Kinder Gentler Classroom***

Pembroke Publishers, 2014. 128p. 978-1-55138-298-2. Pbk. \$24.95.

Rating: G

One of the real strengths of Joey Mandel's *Stop the Stress in Schools* is that Mandel not only underpins her argument with strong theory, but also constructs situational examples with various response options for her readers to consider. Short of actual role-playing (which of course is an excellent way to learn behavioural techniques), this is probably the best way of explaining what she is talking about. Her language is clear, her psychology sound, and the

structure of her argument easy to follow. If her ideas were implemented, there is no doubt in my mind that our children would have far more convivial educational experiences. The only problem, and one Mandel herself articulates, is that teachers in our school systems are themselves stressed by (for example) the lack of support for special needs children, large class sizes, and dwindling resources on a number of fronts.

Mandel's approach in many ways parallels parts of a sophisticated dialectic behavioural therapy program; the ideas of emotional regulation and developing interpersonal relationships are carefully distilled to be understood and internalized by her readers. Her ideas, though, might seem overwhelming to a teacher who reads *Stop the Stress in Schools* and thinks "I have to do all this to be effective!" Fortunately, while no teacher will be able to do it all, any movement towards Mandel's ideal educational experience is a step forward. Any little part of the process will benefit students and improve the classroom experience.

The fundamental concept is that teachers and students need learn how to build effective, respectful relationships as a community, and to understand their own emotional responses and behaviours as individuals. Integrating these two forms of knowledge will lead to calmer, more rational responses to external stimuli and thus a calmer, more productive environment. Mandel presents a methodology for teachers to understand and modify their own behaviours; this in turn enables them to facilitate understanding in their students. Awareness and acceptance are the cornerstones of her theories: individuals need to be aware of who they are - their strengths and weaknesses, how stress is manifested in their bodies, what stress looks like in others - as well as accepting what is real in their lives - those strengths and weaknesses, the validity of others' positions, the need to sometimes adapt. As awareness and acceptance grow, students and teacher alike will be better able to manage the stresses they experience in the educational setting: the final step in the process.

Mandel provides a number of scenarios for readers to consider, as well as numerous worksheets and exercises for teachers to use in their classrooms. Working through this text will enhance any teacher's knowledge of the relationship dynamics functioning in the classroom (and in the halls, and on the playground), and implementation of any of her ideas will be of benefit to the community as a whole.

**Thematic Links:** Stress Management; Interpersonal Relationship Skills; Emotional Regulation; Behaviour Modification

Karyn Huenemann

### **French Materials**

BYRNE, Richard

***Ce livre a mangé mon chien!***

Translated by Kévin Viala. Éditions Scholastic, 2014. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool. 978-1-4431-3699-0. Pbk. \$11.99.

Rating: E

A highly original and interactive story from author and illustrator Richard Byrne!

We've all seen books where portions of the artwork ends up accidentally and unfortunately lost in the gutter - that place between the two pages where the spine is bound. Byrne takes that very notion and turns it around to form the clever and original plot of his story.

Bella is walking along with her dog, who is about to cross the page, when all of a sudden... he is swallowed up by the gutter! She tries pulling on the lead, but to no avail. The dog is gone. Along comes friend Bruno, who asks what's wrong, to which Bella exclaims, "THIS BOOK JUST ATE MY DOG!"

First Bruno, followed by a doggie ambulance, a police cruiser, a fire truck, and, eventually, even Bella herself, are all swallowed up inside the gutter as they each, in turn, try to investigate what is going on. The city sidewalk-esque scene now bare, we are thrown out a letter from the gutter telling us to turn the book 90 degrees and shake it. In doing so (or in simply turning the page, if you're a fuddy-duddy) the whole crew comes tumbling out of the gutter, saved by the inevitable laws of gravity. Hurray - success!

Well, almost. The final page shows Bella and her dog walking away, with the verso right side up and the recto upside down. Oops.

A wonderful story, with clever text, attractive artwork and featuring the amazing interaction between what happens on the page of the story and *what happens on the page* (literally) of a printed tome.

**Thematic Links:** Dogs; Book Printing; Humour

Ashley Nunn-Smith