

Picture Books

SEGRE, Chiara Valentina

Lola and I

Illustrated by Paolo Domeniconi. Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 2015. 32p. Illus. Gr, 1-3. 978-1-55455-363-1. Hdbk. \$18.95

Rating: E

Lola and I is a gently loving picture book with an affirming message about disability. This is a charming and sweet story that unfolds carefully and mysteriously to reveal an important reality - the narrator is actually a guide dog for the blind and Lola is a young woman who was lost her sight in an accident.

Lola is described as the narrator's best friend, and she gives fond descriptions of their activities together from the beginning of their friendship when Lola was very sad and afraid to go outside. As the story continues readers sense the increasingly strong bond between the two friends as they shop, watch television, go to the beach or share a snack.

The text is strong although whimsically told. It is supported with dreamy soft focus watercolors with high visual appeal. The illustrator (Pablo Domeniconi) perfectly captures the mood of the two friends.

Children and adults alike will be comforted by this story of how a guide dog can positively change the life of someone who cannot see. *Lola and I* was chosen the 2015 *IBBY Outstanding Book for Young People with Disabilities*. It would be an excellent and welcome addition to any primary school or public library shelf.

Thematic Links: Children with Disabilities; Guide/Therapy Dogs

Anne Letain

Fiction Grades 3-6

DI FIORE, Mariangela

Elephant Man

Illustrated by Hilde Hodnefjeld. Translated by Rosie Hedger. Annick Press, 2015. 50p. Illus. Gr. 4-8. 978-1-55451-778-7 Hdbk. \$19.95

Rating: E

Joseph was born a normal, beautiful baby, but strangely when he was only a few years old, large crumbled lumps resembling cauliflowers began to grow on his body. His head became enlarged and a growth on his forehead resembled the start of a trunk. He had difficulty speaking and was unable to smile or make any facial expressions. Joseph was further devastated when his mother died when he was only 11 years old. Left with his distraught father and soon after a merciless stepmother, Joseph was forced to leave school, seek work and finally abandoned. Starving and penniless, he had no choice but to tour with a carnival, on display as a strange anomaly, called the 'Elephant Man'.

Joseph was lonely and dreamt of having friends to laugh with and discuss the many books he was so fond of reading. He had a great imagination and wrote beautiful poems and stories about caring people who weren't judgmental about outward appearances. Fortunately, he was contacted one day by a London doctor, Frederick Treves, who had seen him in the theatre. Finally, he had met someone who treated him kindly and took an interest in his life. It would be sometime later, but once again this same doctor rescued Joseph and arranged for him to live in the London Hospital. There he had visitors with whom he could discuss books, music and poetry. He finally ventured outside to enjoy the surrounding gardens, feeling like a person again, even though he was a person with an illness.

This rendition is based on a true story, emphasizing how Joseph Merrick, despite his incredible suffering, was able to find happiness, realizing the good inside everyone and the beauty of nature around him. Each large, softly

coloured illustration is drawn with intricate details, depicting Joseph's struggles. Interestingly, the heads of the two main characters influencing Joseph's life, Dr. Frederick Treves and Tom Norman, are illustrated by photographs, thus documenting the story as true. Many of the drawings also have historical significance, reflecting the research done by the illustrator. There is also a photograph showing "what researchers think Joseph would have looked like if he hadn't had his illness", along side a drawing of how he actually looked as he became older. The final pages contain an 'afterword', giving factual information about Joseph's life and medical condition, along with authentic letters and pictures.

This story is poignantly written and very thought provoking, especially for young students. It should illicit valuable classroom discussion regarding relationships with others, regardless of disabilities. This text should prove to be an important addition to an elementary school library resource centre collection.

Thematic Links: Self Esteem; Bullying; Disabilities; Friendship; Respect

Carolyn Cutt

Fiction Grades 7-12

MOORE, Lisa

Flannery

Groundwood Books, 2016. 268p. Gr. 10-12. 978-1-55498-076-5. Hdbk. \$18.95

Rating: G

Acclaimed Canadian author Lisa Moore has applied her significant skills to a teen protagonist. Flannery Malone is in Grade 12 at her St. John's school. Her single parent mother and precocious yet bratty little brother live in a materially impoverished but loving home, where the chances are equal that the power will be turned off for lack of payment or a vibrant kitchen party will break out. Her best friend growing up, Tyrone O'Rourke, has been in her life literally forever, but his abusive step-father has driven him to skip school, couch surf, tag graffiti and smoke dope. Flannery is hopelessly in love with him, but although he is a good guy, his life is too screwed up to respond. Her mother, Miranda, is also unsuccessful in love: neither of the fathers of her children are in her life now, and she persists in wearing her tiara and creating performance art while waiting for a knight in shining armour.

Flannery's other lifelong friend is Amber, who dedicates herself to competitive swimming in order to please her alcoholic mother and success-driven father. But when Amber falls for Gary, a possessive narcissist, she is told to drop Flannery as a welfare loser. Gary totally dominates Amber; she gets a tattoo "brand", she does drugs, she quits swimming.

This slice of high school life is real in every way. Despite the apparent hardships in Flannery's life, she wears her emotions on her sleeve. We share her every delight, shame, embarrassment, pride, victory and loss. When her mother invades Flannery's privacy with her parenting blog, or buys her brother a drone with the end of the month's money which Flannery needs for a biology textbook, we are angry with her. When she inspires Flannery with her homework assignment, or bakes special treats when really needed, we love her. When Flannery rides behind Tyrone on his motorcycle, and receives a tender kiss, we share her thrill. With Moore's intense and authentic prose you accompany Flannery every poignant step of her way.

Thematic Links: Single Parent Family Life; Teen Romance; Friendship; Bullying

Patricia Jerney

Non-Fiction K - 6

KULLING, Monica

Clean Sweep! Frank Zamboni's Ice Machine (Great Ideas Series)

Illustrated by Renné Benoit. Tundra Books, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. 2-5. 978-1-77049-795-5. Hdbk. \$19.99

Rating: E

This appealing story begins with the opening, in 1940, of a beautiful skating rink in California, called “Iceland”, built by Frank Zamboni, his brother, Lawrence, and cousin, Pete. Skating on the smooth, fast surface became very popular, but the necessary resurfacing of the ice which was done by hand, was very time consuming. Frank was determined to solve this problem.

Frank Joseph Zamboni, born in Utah in 1901, grew up on the family farm. Leaving school in grade nine to help his father, Frank showed exceptional talent for fixing trucks and tractors. This was the beginning of a very successful career. Moving to California, Frank and his brother opened a business which included an ice-making plant. Frank then decided to build a skating rink and after much experimentation, he had the smoothest ice around, but the challenge was ice-resurfacing. As this intriguing tale unfolds, the reader learns how, after many years of labour, Frank’s design and models have resulted in a successful ice machine, this amazing invention known as a Zamboni machine.

Large, soft coloured illustrations set the scene for this biographical text. Beautifully rendered in watercolour with coloured-pencil drawings, each picture accurately depicts the historical times as Frank Zamboni’s career began. Drawings of early motor cars and trucks should capture the reader’s attention as well as should an early prototype of the ice machine. The figures are also dressed in clothing appropriate to the time period. A large 2-page spread drawing depicts the Model A ice-resurfacing machine, and a short text is included describing how it works. Further illustrations show improved models, which now are painted with the company name ‘Zamboni’.

Lyrical written, this appealing story should hold the readers interest and prove to be a valuable source of information for further study and discussion. The final page includes some fascinating facts about the popular Zamboni machine. This biography is part of Monica Kulling’s award-winning *Great Ideas Series*, which feature inventors and their interesting inventions. This excellent text should prove to be a popular addition to an elementary school library resource center and is highly recommended.

Thematic Links: Ice-resurfacing Machine; Zamboni Machine; Skating Rinks; Inventors; Inventions; Biography

Carolyn Cutt

Non-Fiction 7-12

STEVENSON, Robin

Pride: Celebrating Diversity & Community

Orca Book Publishers, 2016. 119p. Illus. Gr. 4 -12. 978-1-459809932. Pbk. \$24.95.

Rating: E

Publishing just in time for June’s Pride parades, this timely, attractive and cheerful book will engage any student from middle school and beyond. Even adults whose understanding of the LGBTQ community is vague will learn much and discover the language to talk about diverse sexuality with their students. This non-fiction book is divided into four chapters: The History of Pride, Pride and Identity, Celebrating Pride Today, and Pride Around the World. A glossary, references (perhaps useful for teachers and other adults), resources (including excellent books and websites) and an index complete the book. The author Robin Stevenson and her partner Cheryl have an eleven year old son. She has been attending pride events since she was in high school and continues to do so today in Victoria, BC.

The first chapter gives a thorough overview of the history of the gay rights activism which began after the Stonewall riots in New York in June of 1969. The influence of activism, marches and demonstrations for many causes spilled over into the gay rights issue. By 1972 high schools became involved, leading to today’s Gay Straight Alliances. The 80’s were dominated by the threat of AIDS and the 90’s saw the development of Queer Nation, a time in which Bill 167 in Ontario, Canada was fought and lost. But a new, more in-your-face attitude began to prevail that led to the legitimization of same sex marriage and the changing of public opinion, led by the Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) which is now an international organization of more than 200,000 people.

Chapter two answers the question of what it means to come out. It identifies the members of the LGBTQ community and what their various acronyms mean, including what it means to be intersex, transsexual, transgender (or nonbinary or genderqueer) questioning or two-spirited. Robin shares her own coming out story and that of 17-year-old Duncan Smith and 12-year-old Harriette Cunningham.

Chapter three discusses the activities of Pride Day, including dressing up in wild, extravagant costumes, the coming together of families and friends in marching, games, eating, music and dancing to draw attention to the political questions of equality and discrimination that the LGBTQ community continues to struggle with. The symbols of Pride Day like the pink triangle, the lambda and the rainbow flag are highlighted.

Chapter four touches on the persecution suffered by the LGBTQ community in many countries around the world but emphasizes how Pride Day has galvanized thousands of participants to join together to pressure their governments into realizing that the tide of public opinion is turning away from discrimination and persecution. The life of Kasha Nabagesera, from Uganda, shows how one girl suffered and prevailed against fear and cruelty to establish an LGBTI organization and Uganda's first LGBTIQI magazine, *Bombastic*, influencing people all over the world. The last two pages of the book detail for students how they can help the LGBTQ cause through joining a GSA group, speaking up for equality, fighting bullying, writing to elected officials and attending their local Pride parade.

This is a very colourful book full of bright cheerful photographs of people of all ages and sexualities having fun and celebrating. It is extremely well designed, with queer fact boxes and quotes breaking up the text. The archival photographs are fascinating and lend power to the text. Present day photos, many of them of children, remind the reader that pride is a family statement.

The writing is clear and completely straightforward, addressing the intended reader honestly and without talking down at all. The writer portrays the LGBTQ community as normal and welcoming, powerful and inclusive, the way most Canadians, especially students, view it today.

This book is a must-buy for all schools in Canada.

Thematic Links: Pride Parades; The LGBTQ Community; Homophobia; The Stonewall Riots; AIDS; The Queer Nation; Bill 167; PFLAG

Joan Marshall

Professional Materials

LUNDY, Kathleen Gould

Conquering the Crowded Curriculum

Pembroke Publishers, 2015. 144p. 978-1-55138-294-4. Pbk. \$24.95

Rating: G

The ideology underpinning Kathleen Gould Lundy's pedagogy is not only sound but inspiring. The quotation she opens with, from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, sets the tone: "*If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea.*" Teaching children, Lundy convinces us, is far more about unlocking their potential than filling them with prescriptive knowledge.

This is not a new belief, of course, but Lundy goes a step farther, addressing the issue of how to "*weave authentic teaching tapestries*" (p. 8) given the complicated reality of the 21st-century classroom. Part of the challenge is of course restricted funding, and Lundy accepts the necessity of teachers working with less than ideal resources, and admits that some of her techniques require "*permission and support of the administrators*" (p. 72) and teachers who are prepared to engage in teaching methods that might not always work with all students.

One issue about which I disagree is Lundy's assertion that school should not be "*competitive, rigorous, and challenging,*" as "*many students are already encountering personal difficulties, sadness, and huge challenges*" in their lives. While this may be true, it is also true that many students do not thrive *unless* challenged. As Lundy is well aware in so much of what she says, there are myriad of methods of learning, and "*a teacher's job is to look after everyone in the classroom*" (p.29; emphasis in the original); it seems odd that on this issue she should be so narrowly prescriptive. This assertion, though, does not greatly impact the effectiveness of much of what Lundy

presents.

Conquering the Crowded Curriculum is based on a program Lundy designed entitled *All "I"s on Education*, funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education. The "I"s are *inclusiveness, identity, inquiry, integration, and innovation*. You can infer from only the terms how effectively Lundy's approach could function within the multicultural and otherwise diverse Canadian communities she is writing for. The text is logically structured, with 5 chapters, each addressing how a teacher can effectively incorporate these 5 ideals into the everyday activities in the classroom. In each chapter, Lundy presents her ideas, followed by relatively extensive sets of activities teachers can use to engage students in learning the topic at hand. These games and activities are beyond a doubt the greatest strength of Lundy's text: they are imaginative and, support a number of different learning styles (art, drama, writing, talking, acting). So at the more theoretical level, Lundy's pedagogy is solid; at the most granular level of detail, her classroom exercises are highly effective; the connective tissue that binds the theory to the practice, however, is not robust. Somehow, the narrative Lundy constructs for us just does not flow... I found myself reading past the narrative to get to the good parts: the examples and descriptions of exercises that I could use to implement her theory. Not such a failing perhaps, in effect, but it makes the book a bit harder to read through than it might otherwise be.

Thematic Links: Curriculum Design; Ontario Schools; Diversity in the Classroom; Student Self-esteem

Karyn Huenemann

French Materials

ANDERSON, Derek

Dix Petits Cochons: Une aventure dans le bain

Texte français by Helene Pilotto. Éditions Scholastic, 2015. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 3. 978-1-4431-4910-5. Pbk. \$10.99

Rating: E

Children will laugh out loud when one little pig who only wants to have a leisurely bath is suddenly joined by nine more pigs along with their snorkels and boats and balls and pails and all kinds of other beach paraphernalia. Young readers will be able to count to ten as the pigs appear and back down to one again as they leave the tub quite unexpectedly at the end of the story. Children will also enjoy the twist on the story of the three little pigs which echoes in this book.

Like the pig characters, the illustrations are big and bold and full of fun. The positively overflowing bathtub is filled with pigs who portray all kinds of various emotions and wear an amusing variety of costumes.

Thematic Links: Humour; Nursery Rhymes

Ann Ketcheson