

Resource Links Excerpts
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Picture Books

WEBSTER, Deborah Kigjugalik

Akilak's Adventure

Illustrated by Charlene Chua. Inhabit Media, 2016. 32p. Illus. Gr. K-2. 978-1-77227-123-2. Pbk. \$10.95

Rating: E

Akilak is an Inuit girl who lives “a traditional, nomadic life” with her grandmother. One morning, Akilak’s grandmother sprains her ankle, and can no longer embark on an important hunting trip. Akilak must walk to her uncle’s camp before nightfall to gather food supply. The young girl feels uneasy about travelling alone, but her grandmother’s reassuring words echo in her mind as she sets out: “*your destination is not running away; it will be reached eventually.*” Guided by her grandmother’s spirit and her boundless imagination, Akilak meets a caribou that accompanies her and helps turn a long journey into a wonderful adventure.

Nuanced and evocative, ***Akilak's Adventure*** vividly brings Inuit culture and heritage to life for young readers from diverse backgrounds. In the book’s afterword, audiences learn that Inuit notions about travel and mindset are the focus of the story, introducing the concept of *taulittuq*, meaning “*the experience of moving but without the sense of nearing one’s destination.*” These Inuit ideas are expertly conveyed through Kigjugalik Webster’s easy flowing dialogue, and her natural rendering of young Akilak who dreams of transforming into a trout, wolf, or goose in order to achieve her destination. Despite Akilak’s initial impatience, the story enforces that anything in life can become exciting when you change your perspective and use your imagination. Charlene Chua’s illustrations showcase the tundra landscape in beautiful detail. As Akilak travels, grass, streams and lichen covered rocks extend as far as the eye can see. Scenes from Akilak’s expansive imagination are also woven throughout the illustrations, incorporating playful spreads full of colour and movement that will please readers of all ages.

Akilak's Adventure is a timeless adventure rooted in Inuit culture that should be a part of all library collections.

Thematic Links: Arctic; Tundra; Inuit; Journey; Caribou; Imagination; Spirits

Chloe Humphreys

Fiction Grades 3-6

WAGNER, Harmony

Queen of the Crows

Acorn Press, 2016. 155p. Gr. 4-6. 978-1-927502-68-6. Pbk. \$12.95

Rating: E

Hungry and afraid when her mother fails to come home yet again, Elsa finds comfort in a crow that seems to be following her - until that crow talks to her. As Elsa tries to hold her precarious life together, she is drawn into a life-or-death battle for dominance among the local crows. Watching the crows resolve their crisis, Elsa learns that birds and people aren’t so different after all.

Eleven-year-old Elsa is incredibly resourceful. She knows she’s growing up too quickly because of her mother’s illness, but loyalty and fear prevent her from reaching out for help. She’s fairly nimble at deflecting attention from herself in the adult world, but at school she is the target of bullying by mean girls, as well as by a teacher who misrecognizes Elsa’s struggle to hold her tiny family together as either stupidity or an indifference to schooling. (I was impressed the author included this point in the narrative, because it’s a topic rarely acknowledged by teachers or even in teacher training.) Elsa is remarkably warm-hearted for a young person in such dire circumstances, as readers will observe through a subplot that involves the integration of refugees into Canadian society; and while her life isn’t going to improve immediately, at the story’s end Elsa is stronger and wiser.

The crow story centres around Cracks, who introduces himself as a jester; this plot provides an imaginative counter-narrative to Elsa's bleak experiences. The Queen of the Crows has disappeared, and the rest of the crows, including the Queen's court, are unsettled. When a power vacuum appears, an older, scheming crow called Lustre attempts to exploit the flock's distress. The reason for the Queen's absence, however, underlines how the resolve of a supposed outsider can mask something valuable and rare.

This closely observed realistic fiction is nicely balanced with animal fantasy for middle-grade readers. *Queen of the Crows* is Harmony Wagner's first novel (it's based on a film), so there are admittedly a few rough spots, but the larger story is compelling enough to keep readers going. That said, this is a tough plot that doesn't pull back from the harsh reality of Elsa's circumstances, so it's best suited to readers who will give Elsa a chance. Adults should also be prepared to answer questions readers may have about Elsa's situation.

Readers who have enjoyed books like Brian Jacques's *Redwall Series* and who are ready for plots based in realism, diversity, and social justice should enjoy this novel. The themes of loyalty and independence will resonate, and regrettably the issue of bullying is still relevant in classrooms across the country. *Queen of the Crows* is a poignant story of poverty, hardship, and resilience that will reward attentive, sensitive readers.

Thematic Links: Families; Crows; Birds; Mental Health; Bullying; Friendship; Loyalty

Leslie Vermeer

Fiction Grades 7-12

KÖRNER, Miriam

Yellow Dog

Red Deer Press, 2017. 295p. Gr. 6up. 978-0-88995-546-2. Pbk. \$14.95

Rating: E

This very Canadian coming of age novel set on a reserve in northern Saskatchewan could become a classic, if only because it bridges the gap between what life is now and what life was with an evolving life that has both meaning and relevance.

Jeremy and his mother have a quiet, comfortable life in a small community. His father died when Jeremy was a toddler. Jeremy's friend Justin has some quirks, but nothing worrisome, in spite of the fact that he hates dogs and dares Jeremy to pull the tail of a dog that lives by a ramshackle cabin at the end of the road where Jeremy lives. Jeremy takes the dare but then feels terrible about his betrayal of the dog's trust and tries to make it up to him. Jeremy meets the old man who lives in the cabin and continues to visit him in spite of his mother's angry protestations. Jeremy also discovers that he has a way with dogs and wants to develop his own dog team. The old man used to keep a dog team so he shows Jeremy how it's done.

Justin maintains his aversion to dogs until he realizes that letting Jeremy's dogs out of the yard on dog shooting day is too cruel, even for him, so he rescues the one dog Jeremy can't find and begins to make amends. The two friends then develop their dog sledding skills until they venture too far out one day and become lost.

The old man sets out to find the boys; they had been warned not to do precisely what they then did. The old man almost dies trying to find them but is saved by modern technology and what the boys had learned from him.

Author Körner has created a believable series of events that unravel the mystery of both Jeremy's nightmares and his mother's anger when it turns out the old man he was forbidden to visit is his paternal grandfather and the dog whose tail he pulled was the puppy a very young Jeremy was holding when the sled he was riding in broke away from the musher who was Jeremy's father.

The relevance of this story lies in its knowledge that while the dog sledding it portrays is a thing of the past, it can still be part of the current mosaic of life in remote settlements. For the young adult like Jeremy, it proves to be a connection to the father who died so young and the grandfather who at last can pass on his heritage to his grandson.

Thematic Links: Saskatchewan; Sled Dogs; Family Life; Friendship

Lesley Little

Non-Fiction Grade K-6

DELAUNOIS, Angèle

Water's Children: Celebrating The Resource That Unites Us All

Translated by Erin Woods. Illustrated by Gérard Frischeteau. Pajama Press, 2017. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-1-77278-015-4. Hdbk. \$18.95

Rating: E

“Child of here, child of there, child of water...tell me about the water you see, the water you drink, the water that bathes you”

This TD Canadian Children’s Literature Award nominee is a unique title that explores the vital importance of water through the lens of what water means to twelve children from around the world. Written in poetic form, each two-page spread features a child from a different country who was invited by the author to share what water means to them in their life and surroundings. Each does so in their own language, and their (translated) answers are inspiring. The ultimate goal of the book is to spark discussion (and hopefully potential conservation action) about the vital role that water plays in each of our lives. The illustrations are gorgeous and tailored to represent a familiar depiction of each of the twelve ‘narrator’s’ homeland. The phrase “*water is life*” is translated into each language and placed as a watermark on each two-page spread. The first names of the twelve narrators are listed in the dedication at the front of the book and the translators for each of the countries are listed at the end of the book.

This title is suitable for older toddlers through to primary school students and would be a wonderful addition to a personal, school, or public library collection. It reads like a crossover between a picture book, poetry, and a non-fiction title. Highly recommended.

Thematic Links: Water; Conservation; Cultural Diversity

Erin Hansen

Non-Fiction Grades 7-12

WILSON, John

A Soldier’s Sketchbook: The Illustrated First World War Diary of R. H. Rabjohn

Tundra Books, 2017. 112p. Illus. Gr. 7-12. 978-1-77049-854-9. Hdbk. \$22.99

Rating: E

“The Moment I saw Russell Hughes Rabjohn’s remarkable pictures - through a book he published privately in 1977 - I knew they were something unique that deserved to be shared. Because First World War soldiers were not permitted to sketch, paint, or take photographs close to the fighting, most images of that conflict were created far from combat. Yet many of Rabjohn’s detailed illustrations are scenes of the dangerous front-line world where soldiers lived and died” (p.5)

In addition to this book, John Wilson also found five diaries written by Rabjohn at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa. It was the combination of the illustrations and the diaries that prompted Wilson to share Rabjohn’s interpretation of World War I thorough ***A Soldier’s Sketchbook: The Illustrated First World War Diary of R. H. Rabjohn.***

Rabjohn showed his talent for drawing at an early age and started attending the Ontario College of Art at the age of fourteen. In 1914 he won the Toronto Boy’s Dominion Exhibition Award for pen-and-ink drawing. When he reached the age of eighteen he enlisted in the army and identified himself as an illustrator. It was this that got him employed to map trenches, draw dugouts and sketch the graves of fallen comrades. He was allowed to carry a large sketchbook on the battlefield and he used this freedom to capture his experiences.

Wilson has divided the book into six sections which take Rabjohn from his training for War at Camp Borden through the battles of the war at Vimy and Ypres and the eventual return home. He offers an introduction to each section,

giving background information as to what was happening in the war at the time. Using Rabjohn's own words and his detailed pen-and-ink illustrations, Wilson gives us an in-depth understanding of what life was like for soldiers fighting from the trenches of Europe. Interspersed with Rabjohn's entries, Wilson also offers an introduction to each page of diary entries and inserts connecting sentences to help readers further understand what Rabjohn is recording. A brief timeline of the First World War is included, as well as an index and a further reading section.

I found this book to be quite interesting. Rabjohn's diary entries along with Wilson's introductions and inserts provide an up-close and detailed description of a soldier's life and the fighting which took place during World War I. Rabjohn's sketches are wonderful - they are very detailed and provide a visual journey through the war. I would recommend this book to all high school students who are studying World War I in their Social Studies programs, especially now as we are commemorating the 100th anniversary of "The Great War".

Thematic Links: World War I; Diaries; Biography; Russell Hughes Rabjohn

Victoria Pennell

Audio-Visual Materials

Truth and Reconciliation: The Legacy of Residential Schools in Canada

LeMay Media & Consulting/McIntyre Media, 2016. DVD 30 min. Gr. 9-12. \$119.00

Rating: E

Of all the documentaries released by McIntyre this year on the topic of Truth and Reconciliation, this is the one to see. Award-winning Métis writer and director Matt LeMay's passion shines through even as he steps back and lets his film speak for itself. The documentary features original interviews with contemporary advocates for reconciliation, including Former Assembly of First Nations Chiefs Shawn A-in-Chut Atleo and Phil Fontaine, Truth and Reconciliation Commissionaire Dr. Marie Wilson, Former Executive Director of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation Mike Degagne and residential school survivor, Martha Marsden. These interviews bring to light the lasting impact of residential schools on Indigenous communities and Canada as a whole, and the film is clear in highlighting the role of non-Indigenous actors in this story. Phil Fontaine asserts: "*It isn't just an experience or a history of our community. It's Canada's experience. It's Canada's history.*"

Combining contemporary and historical images and videos including a 1955 residential school promotional film, LeMay emphasizes that nothing occurs in a vacuum and that the country's past actions have had serious reverberations. He draws a path from the experiences of Indigenous children in residential schools, to the many Indigenous children relying on child welfare services today and the numerous missing and murdered Indigenous women. Further, he contextualizes the Canadian government's 2008 apology for atrocities perpetuated by residential schools, presenting it as the culmination of hard work on the part of many Indigenous groups to "*dra[ng] Canada to the table*" and "*not allow for this legacy to go unconfroed.*" As Shawn A-in-Chut Atleo highlights in the film, residential schools are "*casting a dark shadow, a long shadow across the entire country, one that requires in that case for light to be shone.*" The recommendations by the Truth and Reconciliation commission emphasize the important role education can play in shining that light. Lemay's documentary can go a long way in helping students understand that the history of residential schools cannot be relegated to the past.

Thematic Links: Canada; Canadian & World Studies; Indigenous Peoples; Residential Schools; Truth and Reconciliation

Natalie Colaiacovo

Professional Materials

TROTTIER, Pat

Relationships Make the Difference: Connect With Your Students and Help Them Build Social, Emotional and Academic Skills

Pembroke Publishers, 2016. 95p. 978-1-55138-314-9. Pbk. \$21.95

Rating: E

Relationships Make the Difference is a book about one of the fundamentals of the teaching profession - building relationships with students. Pat Trottier has been involved in education in Winnipeg, Manitoba for more than thirty years across the spectrum of instruction as a teacher, resource specialist, administrator and instructor of teaching candidates. Her teaching experiences taught her that, “*When students knew that I cared and was listening and trying to understand what was important to them, they would put extra effort into their work.*” (p. 5) She advocates building trusting relationships with students, parents, and staff members in order to “*support your students in further developing the social, emotional and academic skills essential to standing tall, being proud of ourselves and positively connecting and including others in our lives.*” (p.9)

This teacher resource is divided into seven chapters: The Other R in Education, Building a Relationship with Your Students, The Classroom Community, The Responsive Classroom, Taking Relationships Home, The Teaching Community and Working Together as a Learning Community. The first two chapters explain the importance of building relationships with students, parents and colleagues, as well as establishing routines in the classroom to promote relationships. The next two chapters outline practical strategies to build community. “The Classroom Community” describes how modeling inclusion through words and actions fosters independent learners by promoting values of respect, empathy, fairness, self-control, tolerance and conscience. “The Responsive Classroom” explains interactive strategies such as social stories, the morning meeting, community involvement and cross-curricular learning. The final three chapters discuss the importance of parental and teaching relationships to promote learning, as well as describing a school-wide project on Aboriginal Perspectives.

Throughout this resource, there are numerous useful ideas for classroom teachers. Trottier stresses a focus on active learning and academic success, as well as the social and emotional growth of students in a supportive school community. There are descriptions of specific activities as well as blackline masters to support these activities. This book provides a useful resource for both new and experienced teachers who want to improve the learning environment and learning outcomes for their students. Pat Trottier urges teachers to focus in on relationships because, “*We must build the supports around students so they can learn to effectively communicate and work with their peers.*” (p. 6)

Thematic Links: Relationships; Classroom Management; Community Building; Empathy; Values; Parental Involvement

Myra Junyk

French Materials

CADIEUX, Marie
Historie de Galet

Illustrated by Françoise Dimberton. Bouton d'or Acadie, 2016. 72p. Illus. Gr. 5-10. 978-2-89750-040-5. Pbk. \$12.95

Rating:E

The Dieppe Raid, code named *Operation Jubilee* was an early attempt by Allied forces to gain a foothold in mainland Europe during the Second World War. The raid began on the morning of August 19th, 1942 and ended in complete failure, resulting in the deaths of thousands of soldiers and a full retreat. Most of the casualties were Canadians, as they made up most of the contingent. Marie Cadieux, in her graphic novella ***Histoire de Galet*** covers this event in stunning fashion, mixing wonderfully descriptive prose with Françoise Dimberton's beautifully sombre illustrations.

Cadieux chooses Martin as her main character, a fifteen year old boy from the city of Dieppe. Martin begins the book by describing how his life has been affected by the war. Nazis patrol the streets of his town, maintaining heavy surveillance on the citizens which as a result has radically changed the mood and demeanour of his neighbours.

Martin's family has been exiled while he is forced to remain to work. This predicament places him in the company of a courageous landlady named Madame Agnès, who shall provide a moral centre in his turbulent life.

When the raid begins, Martin and Madame Agnès discretely watch from their window which faces the beach. A large plume of smoke obfuscates their view but after the sounds of battle have ceased they venture down to the scene to get a closer look. Martin encounters a wounded soldier named Jo who speaks a strange dialect of French. Martin reflects on the man's young age, not much older than himself. In this way he vicariously confronts the cost of sacrifice and the true meaning of heroism. He immediately forges a strong connection to the wounded Canadian, and eventually recognizes his example of bravery as that which shall lead him over the hardship of war. There is a constant flow running in parallel through Jo and Martin's attachment to that which must be overcome. The pebbles on the beach for Martin become a symbol of resilience and perpetuity, and by further extension a vow that speaks of another day when heroism shall visit the shores once again, this time to successfully rid their lives of the Nazi menace. In an excellent example of courage, against the chains of tyranny, Martin thinks to himself, "*Un jour, moi et la plage de Dieppe, nous te retrouverons. D'une façon ou d'une autre. C'est une promesse.*"

The haunting prose of Cadieux and the monochromatic sepia illustrations work in perfect unison to heighten the vivid imagery of dark hardship as it exists in the silvery glimmers of hope. Catastrophe and death confront Martin when he explores the beach and we get a real sense that much innocence has been lost. The violence and consequent gore that the raid represents does not overwhelm the content even though we understand it hovers on the periphery. And this is a beautiful device the book repeatedly uses, to give us a sense of imminent danger yet walk us through the means to avoid its impermeable blackness. It is above all a wonderful book for young readers on the subject of war.

Thematic Links: World War II; The Dieppe Raid; War

Zachary Chauvin