

Resource Links Excerpts
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Picture Books

GOOSE, Roy and Kerry McCluskey

Sukaq and the Raven

Illustrated by Soyeon Kim. Inhabit Media, 2017. 36p. Illus. Gr. K-2. 978-1-77227-139-3. Hdbk. \$16.95

Rating: E

Sukaq is a little Nunavummiut boy who is “sweet and fast”, and who loves to embark on adventures. His favourite adventure happens in dreams when his anaana tells him the story of the raven creating the world. With wonder and excitement, Sukaq imagines himself nestled on the raven’s back as the bird places the sun and the moon in sky, and brings humanity into the universe. Sukaq falls asleep with soothing areal visions of the Arctic in his mind.

The narrative, orally told by Inuit storyteller Roy Goose and written by Kerry McCluskey, feels at once intimate and vast as it reaches back into the rich oral history of the Inuit people. The presence of young Sukaq at the narrative’s centre roots it in the present, making the origin story highly enjoyable for young readers who will delight in his child’s perspective.

The mixed media illustrations (which are in fact dioramas) are richly textured and showcase a rainbow of hues from bright primary colours, to the deep purples and blues of twilight. The Arctic comes alive as Soyeon Kim plays expertly with depth and movement, showcasing the raven’s flight across earth. Even the book’s end pages transport you on a magical journey, visually hinting at the adventure contained within its pages.

A perfect bedtime story, ***Sukaq and the Raven*** is a treasure that will have children begging for multiple readings. It belongs on all library shelves.

Thematic Links: Inuit; Bedtime Stories; Legends; Storytelling; Imagination; Dreams

Chloe Humphreys

Fiction Grades 3-6

FAGAN, Cary

The Hollow Under The Tree

Groundwood Books, 2018. 105p. Gr. 4-8. 978-1-55498-999-7. Hdbk. \$16.95

Rating: E

The Hollow Under The Tree is a quick read with a beautiful story. When a sweet lion named Sunny is separated from his circus crew during a train incident, he hunkers down and hides in High Park. When animals start going missing, Sadie Menken, the pie maker’s daughter, goes into the park to investigate, only to find a gentle lion slowly thinning out. Sadie takes it upon herself to care for the lion, but she quickly realizes she’ll need some help to keep Sunny fed, as lions do not like pie. Sadie reluctantly recruits the odd child she delivers pie to, Theodore Jr. is not as comfortable around Sunny as Sadie is, but agrees to supply him with dinner regularly. When the police start searching the park for a reported monster, Sadie and Theodore Jr. quickly move Sunny into Theo’s garage, but lions are not meant to be cooped up. Sadie knows that Sunny does not belong in the city, and sets out to do what she must to get Sunny where he belongs.

This novel will have every animal lover wanting their own personal “Sunny”.

Thematic Links: Lions; Circus Animals

Holly Rainville

Fiction Grades 7-12

CROZA, Laurel

The Whirlpool

Illustrated by Kelsey Garrity-Riley. Groundwood Books, 2018. 96p. Gr 5-8. 978-1-77306-032-3. Hdbk. \$16.95

Rating: E

Whirlpool is a highly recommended collection of seven short stories about a series of fascinating and unique characters. In the title story, Jasmine is undeservedly the centre of school gossip because nobody has asked her what really happened last summer. *It's a Step* recounts the small but progressive changes that Charity and her mother make to escape a domineering and abusive father. *A Beautiful Smile* shows northern transplant Nicola's first day in a crowded urban Junior High and how she handles her first run-in with a domineering peer. In *Destiny*, Dani describes how she's working to achieve her own personal dream - and uses a school assignment to support her brother in achieving his. In *Book of Dreams*, Mike finds the family he's always longed for - but it's not what he expected. Other main characters aren't human, such as an Oh, So Perfect Hair Dolly, who learns that she's more than physical appearance. *The Sunflower* is from the point of view of a squirrel thinking about life and death as it collects food and memories for the winter.

There are many ways to use this collection. Each story could be read individually, provide the basis for a read-aloud and a class discussion, or be used as fodder for group work. Students might dramatize what Charity says in the cafeteria the next day, extend *It's a Step* to predict the future of her and her mother, write a newspaper article about the restaurant in *Book of Dreams*, or record a voicemail to Dani explaining the effect of her story.

Thematic Links: Family; Relationships; Self-Esteem; Bullying; Peer Support; Friendship; Gossip; Advertising; Media Studies; Immigration/Migration; Point of View; Dreams

Helen Mason

Non-Fiction Grades K-6

THORNHILL, Jan

The Triumphant Tale of the House Sparrow

Groundwood Books, 2018. 44p. Illus. Gr. 4-7. 978-1-77306-006-4. Hdbk. \$18.95

RATING: E

"The House Sparrow is, after all, adaptable. For ten thousand years, it has changed as we have changed. It has followed us around the planet, and can be found on every continent except Antarctica."

Seasoned award winning Jan Thornhill has written and illustrated a bird book like no other. ***The Triumphant Tale of the House Sparrow*** takes the reader back in time and follows humans and House Sparrows around the world. The Ancient Egyptians used a hieroglyph of a House Sparrow to describe something bad. House Sparrows traveled with the Roman legionnaires to Britain. In 1700 Germany, peasants were fined if they did not catch a certain number of sparrows. Despite hundreds of years of the sparrow's reputation as a pest, immigrants to North America missed the song of the sparrow and fifty pairs were successfully released in Brooklyn in 1852. These are just a few of the facts readers will find in this fascinating fact-filled book about the House Sparrow.

Jan's well researched portrayal of the House Sparrow highlights the interconnectivity of human activity to the environment. The book follows the increases and decreases in the House Sparrow population over time. The book contains a map of the origin and distribution of the House Sparrow, the life cycle of the House Sparrow, a glossary, resources, and references as well as a list entitled "Wild Animals that Choose to Live with Us."

The distinctive illustrations by Jan are lovely and thought provoking. Her perspective varies from the top of an apartment building to ground level, looking under a rail car. Her use of colour enhances the type of scene: bright blue sky and cheerful green meadows of a farm to the dark gray and black of an underground mine. The visual appeal of the artwork is captivating.

This book is highly recommended for both school and public libraries. The book offers many examples of how social and economic changes affect wildlife. It provides a fresh way of looking at history. Using the list at the end of the book, students can propose their own historical research on connection between an animal and historical events. A science study unit could investigate House Sparrow activity around local areas.

Anyone who reads *The Triumphant Tale of the House Sparrow* will look at these plucky little birds with new respect.

Thematic Links: House Sparrow; Introduced Birds; World History; Conservation; Animal Adaptability

Laura Reilly

Non-Fiction Grades 7-12

KIRK, Heather

Seeking Peace: The Quakers

Borealis Press, 2017. 271p. Illus. Gr. 6 up. 978-0-88887-679-9. Pbk. \$24.95

Rating: G

In her book, *Seeking Peace: The Quakers*, Heather Kirk provides an historical account of the Quakers and their everlasting mission to promote peace through acts of civil disobedience. Kirk's main argument throughout the book will be that by honouring the principal of pacifism with such determination and zeal, the Quakers have proved immeasurably beneficial for the rest of mankind. So while it may have been difficult and arduous for the Quakers to live by this value, the external influences they had upon greater society were tremendous.

Kirk begins the book by running through a detailed biography of the religion's founders, George Fox and his wife Margaret Fell, who developed the Religious Society of Friends in Northern England as a response to the ongoing religious reformation in seventeenth century Europe. Religious persecution in this period would drive many of its followers to seek refuge elsewhere, mainly in the North American colonies. From the North American perspective, Kirk then runs through many of the most significant events in American history, such as the French and Indian War, the War of Independence and the Civil War to demonstrate that the Quakers in their desire to work within the terms of pacifism helped establish important infrastructure like the Underground Railroad and improve existing institutions like hospitals and prisons. As well, Kirk argues that regions like Pennsylvania that were more heavily populated by Quakers experienced less violence than other colonial regions.

The book follows Quaker history up until modern times, describing the hardship many experienced in their wishes to remain out of both World Wars as combative personnel. Some were harshly condemned or imprisoned while others took part in the wars in medical roles, helping maintain emergency committees and bolster ambulance resources. Eventually their efforts would lead to the Friends, as a collective, winning the Nobel Prize Peace in 1947. Most importantly, they never acted with any intention of picking sides, but rather, as Kirk herself puts it, "*the Quakers were a spiritual or religious force rather than a political force. They did not seek to overthrow the government and run the country. They simply sought sanctity.*"

Seeking Peace: The Quakers is structured like a school textbook, containing sections for Quaker jokes, quotes and questions at the end of each chapter. It is richly illustrated with a large amount of historical photographs, signs and bulletins that provide wonderful insight and accompany the text quite well. The book is heavily biographical, and runs down a steady stream of past Quakers in a linear fashion. While this style is understandable when studying a group of people over a large period of time, it can deprive the reader of some intimate knowledge about the organization and its religious rituals, which are barely covered. But the book should serve as an excellent introduction to the Religious Society of Friends and how opposing all forms of violence works well if one adopts an active and altruistic sense.

Thematic Links: Quakers - History; Quakers -North America; War; Peace; Religion

Zachary Chauvin

Professional Materials

ELLIOTT, Anne and Mary Lynch

Cultivating Readers: Everything You Need to Take Reading Instruction Beyond the Skills to Addressing the Will
Pembroke Publishers, 2017. 141p. 978-1-55138-324-8. Pbk. \$24.95

Rating: G

In ***Cultivating Readers: Everything You Need to Take Reading Instruction Beyond the Skills to Addressing the Will***, Anne Elliott and Mary Lynch examine how to motivate skillful readers who choose not to read. “*These students do not see value in reading, nor do they enjoy reading as a pastime.*” (p. 7) Good readers can read accurately with expression and fluency, identify comprehension strategies, and even talk about their reading. However, some of these readers do not enjoy reading. They display troubling characteristics such as lack of excitement about reading, as well as limited awareness of their reading preferences, or the value of reading. Elliott and Lynch focus their resource on creating a reading community in each classroom using six concrete steps: Sharing Your Reading Life, Knowing Your Students, Modelling the Habits of a Reader, Making the *Why* of Reading Visible, Creating the Space, and Nourishing the Will to Read. The first step involves teachers sharing their own reading preferences. “*We must establish during the early days that one of the foundational blocks of our classroom community is that we are readers.*” (p. 14) Strategies in this step include: sharing a variety of texts, explaining reading choices, and selecting texts to be read aloud for various purposes. The next step is to understand students’ reading preferences, habits, behaviours and history using interest inventories, reader surveys, classroom discussions and reading consultations. The subsequent steps involve modeling effective reading habits, explaining why reading is important, and creating physical spaces which promote reading.

This is a useful resource for new teachers as well as experienced professionals who want to explore new strategies to motivate competent but disengaged readers. There are many classroom strategies listed here, as well as worthwhile blackline masters. This resource may not be as useful for teachers who are more focused on helping their students to work on fluency, core competencies and reading strategies. All children should be exposed to a wide variety of books, reading experiences and reading environments so that they can appreciate how important books can be in their lives. “*After all, what good are the skills if you do not have the will?*” (p. 7)

Thematic Links: Disengaged Readers; Motivation; Community of Readers; Modelling; Classroom Libraries

Myra Junyk

French Resources

ARCHAMBAULT, Benoît et Éric Bédard

Quand Est-Ce Qu'on Arrive?

Éditions Auzou, 2017. 80p. Illus. Gr. 3-6. 978-2-7338-4309-3. Hdbk. \$24.95

Rating: E

Quand Est-Ce Qu'on Arrive? is a book on the marvellous chaos of family vacation against the stunning and fascinating backdrop of Quebec. We begin the book with a rundown of the dynamic family members: the father Julien (papa), the mother Régine (maman), the son Lucas (mon grand) and the daughter Élise (pitchounette). All the family members are eager to hit the road and very curious to learn about different regions of la belle province. We are also accompanied by an assistant in the form a fly (la mouche historienne) who buzzes around the family in their car. *La mouche historienne* is responsible for providing the reader with detailed descriptions of each location they visit.

Each stop on their trip is first introduced by a colourful page laid out in a comic strip style, where the family discusses their current location or upcoming destination. This is usually laced with fun humour and cute little antidotes that

commonly accompany any family road trip. So papa belts out ear-splitting renditions of songs by The Rolling Stones, while maman tries to distract him in order to save her children from the anguish. The children are also amazed to believe that papa eats his *poutine* in a *cache grotte* not a *casse-croûte*. This sort of playful banter provides an amusing framework for each Quebec attraction and is represented well in a playful comic strip format that is illustrated with great skill.

Following each comic strip portion, each of the Quebec attractions are then granted an informative section where *la mouche historique* discusses popular food, landmarks, infrastructure or items of historical interest. Each spot is shown its precise location on a map followed by two to three subsections which provide tidbits and deeper meanings. As an example, the family visits La Tuque and gains an appreciation for the singer/poet Félix Leclerc, giving a brief history of the *chansonnier* tradition in Quebec. The book also contains a section on *Le Québec en mode électrique*, discussing how the introduction of electricity at the end of the nineteenth century radically altered the Quebec landscape on the basis of hydroelectricity.

The road trip takes the family from their home in Saint-Jérôme to the Gaspé before circling back and going a little further north to the Lac St-Jean region. It will work well as an educational tool, as the informative sections delve into quite a bit of history, including insets on *Les Filles du roi*, early feminists, and *Français ou joul*, along with some facts on discoverers Samuel de Champlain and Jacques Cartier. Because of this approach the book shines as a learning tool for youngsters and adults alike. The reader will definitely gain an appreciation for the cultural depth and complexity of Quebec within the greatness of its varied landscape.

Thematic Links: Quebec - Geography; Quebec - History; Landmarks; Travel; Family Vacation

Zachary Chauvin