

Excerpts
Resource Links
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Picture Books

BEATON, Kate

The Princess and the Pony

Arthur A. Levine Books/Scholastic, 2015. 40p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 3. 978-0-545-63708-4. Hdbk. \$19.99

Rating: E

This picture book by Kate Beaton (*Hark, A Vagrant*) took me by surprise. Within the span of a few pages, I was laughing out loud and then almost crying because I was so touched by a scene featuring something as non-emotionally as a pile of rejected sweaters. And never would I have believed a book that had fart humour in it would be chosen by myself to be added to my list of favourite picture books. But this book is now on that list!

The princess in this story looks like a tanned medieval warrior and she acts like a tomboy. Her name is Pinecone, and for her birthday she's hoping for a big, fast, strong horse. What her kind-hearted parents give her instead is the complete opposite. I don't want to give away the funny description of the pony's appearance or behaviours but the audience, whether children or adults, will be giggling openly. The story then veers into themes of acceptance and determination as the princess begins training her unwarrior-like pony for battle. There doesn't appear to be any hope for the pair as Pinecone is led into the ring dressed like an innocent looking Little Red Riding Hood, but in the midst of flying "dodgeballs and spitballs and hairballs and squareballs" the meanest warrior becomes enamoured with the pony's cuteness and stops the war. Then the scenes with the sweaters and fart happen.

The digital illustrations poke fun of the warrior mentality and the writing is funny in the dialogue and the narrative. This is a book teachers and librarians will cherish and be excited to share with an audience of children because the war ends in a truce, and new friendships form between lifelong enemies.

Also available in French. See p.

Thematic Links: Princess; Birthday; Truce; Peace; Warriors; Battles; Weapons; Tomboys; Underdogs; Acceptance

Tanya Boudreau

Fiction Grade 3-6

PATTON, Anne

Through Flood and Fire

Coteau Books, 2015. 205p. Illus. Gr. 4-6. 978-1-55050-640-2. Pbk. \$9.95

Rating: G

On April 26, 1903, 10 year old Dorothy Bolton and her family begin the perilous journey from their tent in the tiny village of Saskatoon to the remote Barr colony. After a difficult sea voyage from England, the Bolton family wants to reach their promised homestead. "Dorothy knew all about Mr. Barr's pledge to build a proper British community: church, school, hospital and community hall for plays and operas." (p. 4) These promises were the reason 2000 people left England for Canada.

However, their journey is not an easy one. Her mother is left behind in Saskatoon to care for Rose Thorpe, an ailing four-year old with scarlet fever. Dorothy, her sister Lydia and her father set out to claim their homestead. On the way, they encounter great difficulties: runaway horses, snakes, floods, storms, sprains, fires and wind. Throughout all these difficulties, the family realizes how important it is to love and depend on each other. When they finally reach their destination, they are greeted with an empty prairie. They have to dig up the sod to build their new home! ***Through Flood & Fire*** is a good example of a novel that can introduce young readers to important historical events. The settlement of the Prairies during the late 19th and early 20th centuries was a critical turning point in Canadian

history. The provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta were settled by courageous immigrants. The events in this novel are fiction; however, they are based on the experiences of Dorothy Holtby who told her story to Anne Patton in 1983, "At nine years old Dorothy had been plucked from her familiar urban life in England and thrust into the rigours of wilderness survival." (p.197) There are very useful text features in this book such as maps, illustrations, photographs, a glossary and a list of expressions used in Yorkshire dialect. Patton's novel brings a very human face to an important aspect of Canadian history, and it would be a wonderful addition to any school library to complement the study of the settlement of the Prairies in the early 20th century.

Thematic Links: Saskatchewan History; Immigration; Settlement on the Prairies; Survival; Family Relationships

Myra Junyk

Fiction Grades 7-12

BAXTER, Jean Rae

Hope's Journey (Forging a Nation Series)

Ronsdale Press, 2015. 220p. Gr. 5-11. 978-1-55380-446-8. Pbk. \$11.95

Rating: E

This fifth volume in the *Forging a Nation Series* begins in 1791. Hope Cobman is 13; her mother has died and she has been released from the orphanage into indentured service. Hope knows her father and three older brothers are somewhere between the new Republic and United Empire Loyalist settlements in Upper Canada, that they are alive, and that she is not an orphan.

Hope's journey begins in the small cabin where she has been employed to care for the cantankerous Loyalist Mrs. Block who is unable to feed or bathe herself, even though she manages to rule her small domain with an iron fist. Her son Ephraim's wife has left him and he is trying to petition for losses incurred at the hands of American rebels who drove them out of their home and profitable business in upstate New York.

For her part, Hope seeks the assistance of a friend of the family to write a letter of inquiry to the General under whom her father and eldest brother served during the Revolution. When Mrs. Block dies suddenly, Hope is free to continue her journey of discovery. Armed with her wages, some assistance from Ephraim Block, and her own courage, she sets out.

Hope arrives in the newly-minted capital of Upper Canada only to find her father is ill and not inclined to accept that she is his daughter. Hope was born after her father and brothers left for military service; her father did not know her mother was pregnant. Hope returns to Kingston and discovers that her brother who deserted the army is in hiding under the floor of the very house she is visiting. The two arrange to leave together to find the father. Her brother has made his life with the Cherokee but wants to convince his father that Hope really is his daughter so she can know her heritage and perhaps inherit his 200 acre allotment from the military if he dies, so she can have a life of her own. The author's descriptions of life in Upper Canada just after the American Revolution are wonderfully accurate but perhaps interpreted with a much more contemporary view than people living at the time would have been able to consider. As a means of guiding younger readers to historical fiction, I can appreciate the author's intentions, but for a more accurate interpretation, perhaps the author could leave a little more to the reader's own devices.

That being said, this series serves an important purpose in its distillation of events and the reactions of those living them. As a means of engaging readers in the 21st century, this works very well to bypass rhetoric and breathe some life into what laid the foundations for the Canada of today.

Thematic Links: Upper Canada History; United Empire Loyalists; Family Life; First Nations; Colonial Military

Lesley Little

Non-Fiction Grades K-6

KYI, Tanya Lloyd

DNA Detective

Illustrated by Lil Crump. Annick Press, 2015. 116p. Gr 5-8. 978-1-55451-773-2. Pbk. \$14.95

Rating: G/E

The jewels have been stolen. The perpetrator wore gloves. One was left at the scene. There are no other clues. How can detectives catch the thief? This book walks readers through the thinking processes of a young detective as she collects and uses DNA evidence to eliminate suspects and finally identify the perpetrator.

How does DNA identification work? The author compares DNA evidence to high-tech fingerprints - both can be inadvertently left behind and collected from crime sites. Humorous cartoons, kid-friendly photographs, bulleted lists, and chunked text help the author explain the development of knowledge about DNA. There are profiles of many DNA rock stars, including Gregor Mendel and Rosalind Franklin.

A cartoon page or spread at the end of each section brings readers back to the crime in question. The detective outlines what she's learned. Readers are asked to decide either the next step or what suspects might be eliminated. By the end, the detective - and readers - have their man - er, woman.

This title is highly recommended as an excellent introduction to criminal forensics. Further reading, selected sources, and an index are included.

Thematic Links: DNA; Genetics; Inheritance; Criminal Forensics

Helen Mason

Non-Fiction Grades 7-12

D'COSTA, Jasmine

Branded a Baby Killer: The Story of Tammy Marquardt (Real Justice Series)

James Lorimer & Co., 2015. 117p. Gr. 5-9. 978-1-4594-0993-4. Pbk. \$12.95

Rating: G

Branded a Baby Killer is the most recent title in Lorimer's *Real Justice Series* that examines the cases of Canadians who have been wrongfully convicted. Tammy Marquardt was convicted of murdering her two-year-old son and spent fourteen years in prison for the crime. Tammy was only acquitted in 2011 when Dr. Thomas Smith's pathology reports came into question.

D'Costa examines Tammy's case with a careful eye. She is quick to point out the prejudices that Tammy faced in light of her own struggles in life. Medical professionals judged Tammy based on her appearance, low income, and her own health and mental challenges. The authorities were also looking for someone to blame. D'Costa skilfully incorporates actual testimony from both Tammy's original and her acquittal trials. This book is a solid encapsulation of Tammy's ordeal and its impact.

Thematic Links: Investigative Techniques; Low-Income Families; Wrongful Conviction; Survival; Mental Illness; Addiction

Angela Thompson

Audio-Visual Materials

Secrets Series: WALTERS, Eric. *Innocent* (978-1-4598-1094-5); KACER, Kathy. *Stones on a Grave* (978-1-4598-1090-7); GRANT, Vicki. *Stones on a Grave* (978-1-4598-1098-3); ARMSTRONG, Kelley. *The Unquiet Past* (978-1-4598-1088-4); MCCLINTOCK, Norah. *My Life Before Me* (978-1-4598-1092-1); JOCELYN, Marthe. *A Big Dose of Lucky*; TOTEN, Teresa. *Shattered Glass* (978-1-1096-9)
Orca Book Publishers, 2015. CDs. Gr. 7-12. \$29.95 ea.

Rating: G/E

Following the very successful *Seven Series* and the *Seven Sequels Series* Orca Book Publishers this year released the *Secrets Series*. These books centre on seven young girls who were living at an orphanage which was destroyed by fire. The girls have reached the age of majority and cannot be included in any custodial arrangements so they are given the documents they arrived with and sent out on their own. The seven books by some of Canada's most renowned young adult authors tell the story of how the girls seek to find their roots and come to terms with who they are. All the books have been reviewed in previous issues of Resource Links and most received either an excellent or good rating.

Now all these titles are available in audio-books. The text of each book is narrated in full by a different narrator making them accessible to those who may experience some difficulty with reading the text or just enjoy being able to listen to a book rather than reading it.

I am sure these audio-books will be a popular addition to school and public libraries and also to personal collections for those people who prefer the audio medium.

Thematic Links: Orphans; Adventure Stories; Mystery Stories

Victoria Pennell

Professional Materials

COFFMAN, Elizabeth

Dramatic Play on the Early Years

Pembroke Publishers, 2015. 96p. 9781-55138-3071. Pbk. \$24.95

Rating: G/E

In her new book, *Dramatic Play in the Early Years*, Elizabeth Coffman discusses the dynamic process of dramatic play which involves not only playing, but also planning, practising and imagining. "Dramatic play is a unique and powerful way for children and teachers to partner in an active investigation of stories, big ideas, and events." (p. 7) Dramatic play can occur in whole group settings, as a re-enactment in play areas, or as a small group activity. Unlike independent play, it is a partnership between the teacher and learners. There are no scripts, lines to remember or audience members. Dramatic play is a process in which students and the teacher plan and play in order to learn through experiences. Students become the story instead of just listening to it.

This teacher resource is divided into seven chapters: The Creative Process, Beginning Dramatic Play, The Importance of Practice, Building Belief, Finding the Story, Playing Inside Curriculum, and Teacher in Role. The first two chapters focus on establishing a classroom environment which encourages dramatic play as a creative process. Coffman explains how to promote imaginative thinking by using strategic pauses, reflection, experimentation, physical expression, and risk taking. She provides specific examples of dramatic play as well as warm up exercises. Later chapters emphasize the integration of dramatic play into the classroom through routines to address focus, control, observation, character development and story-telling techniques. The final two chapters look at the teacher's role in dramatic play and its effectiveness in various curriculum areas such as social studies and science.

Throughout this resource, there are numerous useful ideas for classroom teachers. Coffman gives specific examples of dramatic play at various grade levels. Text boxes provide extra information to complement the text. At the end of each chapter, there is a summary of the key points in each section. Coffman readily admits that some teachers may hesitate to implement these strategies in their classrooms. "Dramatic play in the learning environment can be particularly challenging for adults who often feel obligated to focus entirely on outcomes. In dramatic play the outcome is often not known ahead of time." (p. 8) As a result, Coffman spends time in each chapter explaining the

teacher's role. The final chapter deals with the teacher's role in great detail to clear up any lingering issues with dramatic play. This book provides a useful resource for both new and experienced teachers who want to introduce dramatic play into their learning environment in order to foster, "The fertile ground of the imagination that plays such an important role in learning." (p. 11).

Thematic Links: Drama; Early Years Curriculum; Classroom Organization; Imagination; Creativity; Writing

Myra Junyk

French Materials

BOUCHARD, Camille

OVNI (Collection: Graffiti +)

Soulières Éditeur, 2015. 207p. Gr. 7-9. 978-2-89607-324-5. Pbk. \$16.95

Rating: E

Recently there have been a lot of rumours about UFO sightings and when Jean-Pierre's grandfather does some plotting on a local map, everything leads to Lac Adalbert. Grandad, his friend Nicole, Jean-Pierre and his friends Jacinthe, Alain, Roger, Biaggio and Real decide to head to the lake, do some camping and some exploration and find out the truth behind these flying saucers. Little do they know what lies in store and just how long it will take before the mystery is unravelled.

Young science fiction fans will enjoy the premise of flying saucers and visitors from outer space who choose to contact people here on earth. Bouchard has a couple of the children captured and taken to another planet which naturally raises suspicions among the local townspeople so there is an element of mystery in the story as well. Were the children taken by aliens or was there some unmentionable accident involving them? Might murder even have taken place? Bouchard works out the plot in a logical fashion and the young people eventually return but readers will be intrigued as to just how and when this occurs.

Bouchard challenges his readers to wonder if such a thing truly could happen and just what the consequences might be for our planet and the people on it. However, philosophical questioning isn't the main point of the book. Instead, it is a good adventure/mystery/science fiction story which will intrigue both male and female young adult readers and keep them interested right to the end. While the book may seem long, at over 200 pages, there are several chapters and often breaks within chapters so the text isn't overwhelming for young readers in the intermediate grades.

Thematic Links: Science Fiction; UFOs

Ann Ketcheson