

Excerpts
Resource Links
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Picture Books

MCLELLAN, Stephanie

Tweezle into Everything

Illustrated by Dean Griffiths. Pajama Press, 2013. 32p. Illus. Gr. 3-5. 978-1-927485-47-7. Hdbk. \$17.95

Rating: E

A most beautifully written and illustrated book about a little boy monster who lives with his parents and big brother and big sister. To the family Tweezle seems like a little trouble maker but in reality he only wants to help out doing big kid stuff like his siblings.

Being the baby of the family, Tweezle tries to do the things big kids and his parents do but always gets into trouble because he is too little. Stuff gets broken and a lot of messes need to be cleaned up but Tweezle doesn't mean to be a trouble maker. He just wants to help and is a gentle little monster. When he finds a baby bird in trouble and fixes a nest for it, his family realizes that Tweezle means well and that he is growing up and not just a baby.

This book would be helpful tool to read to an older sibling in preparation of a newcomer in the family. It could help explain to small children what happens when a new smaller child tries to play with them that sometimes they cannot do the same things as they do.

Thematic Links: Understanding; Patience; Growing Up

Carmen Poulin

Fiction Grades 3-6

BRADFORD, Karleen

A Country of Our Own: The Confederation Diary of Rosie Dunn, Ottawa, Province of Canada, 1866 (Dear Canada Series)

Scholastic Canada, 2013. 183p. Illus. Gr. 5-8. 978-1-4431-1324-3. Hdbk. \$16.99

Rating: E

Having read one or two volumes from girls' pseudo-historical series such the *Dear America Series*, or the British *My Diary Series*, I did not expect great things from *Dear Canada*; I didn't want to see my own history similarly fictionalized beyond any claims to historical authenticity. Then I looked at the authors contributing to the *Dear Canada Series*. The list is extensive, and each author there is a familiar name to young Canadian readers; each author there is respected for his or her authorial integrity. Karleen Bradford's *Confederation Diary of Rosie Dunn* is a welcome addition to the well-researched and well-written *Dear Canada* library.

It is 1866, and young Rosie Dunn has had to take her older sister's place in service with a politician's family destined to move to Ottawa, the capital of the new Dominion of Canada. Rosie's father is keen on politics, so she is used to hearing the news, but not always understanding what it means. Her keen interest and intelligence, but lack of raw information, make Rosie the perfect vessel for bringing political knowledge to the young reader.

On 31 December 1857, Queen Victoria chose Ottawa as the new capital of the Province of Canada; by 1866, when Rosie Dunn arrives, Ottawa is still little more than a back-woods community, with mud instead of sidewalks and small wood houses instead of the attractively designed and solidly constructed homes of Toronto, Kingston, Montreal, or Quebec City. The "hardships" Rosie's employers have to endure make her an admirable servant: she is

industrious, honest, clever, and used to working in less-than-luxurious conditions. Rosie's story is a rich combination of life in 1860s Ottawa and a lay-person's understanding of the political events that accompanied the birth of our nation. We learn much of what the common people might have thought about the politics of the time, of the relations between the British ruling class and the Irish and French Canadian working classes, and of the day-to-day activities of the working people in each community. The feeling Bradford creates in her story - the characters, the setting, the honest human emotions - remind me strongly of one of my favourite novels for young Canadian readers, Lyn Cook's much earlier *The Secret of Willow Castle* (1966). Both books take a significant moment in Canadian history and bring it to life for young readers. What better way to engage with our history than through the eyes and ears and minds of well-constructed fictional counterparts?

Thematic Links: Canadian History; Canadian Confederation; Canadian Politics; Irish-Canadian History

Karyn Huenemann

Fiction Grades 7-12

OPPEL, Kenneth

The Boundless

HarperCollins Publishers, 2014. 332p. Gr. 4-10. 978-1-44341-026-7. Hdbk. \$19.99

Rating: E

Kenneth Opiel has woven together the most incredible strands in this latest fantasy adventure. Imagine *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde, *Water for Elephants* by Sarah Gruen, basic Canadian History and Geography texts, and legends of the Canadian wilderness combined into a young adult road trip. Now imagine it being written by Kenneth Opiel.

William Everett gets the chance to accompany the legendary Cornelius Van Horne to the driving of the Last Spike at Craigellachie. William is to meet his father there, a man who has worked on the railway for many years, and created quite a name for himself through his hard work and integrity. The ceremony of the last spike is historically accurate, except for the use of a gold spike. But after the famous photograph is taken, everything goes askew: an avalanche is launched, and sasquatches are attracted to the site. William and his father survive, and rescue Mr. Van Horne. James Everett becomes Van Horne's right hand man, and his choice to operate the steamship service from Vancouver to Asia. Van Horne does not live to see his dream come true, but James Everett is there to supervise the maiden voyage of *The Boundless*, Van Horne's vision, a train more than seven miles in length, with nine hundred and eighty-seven cars and 6,495 people aboard. This train has first, second and third class accommodation as well as freight, colonists moving west, and a complete circus, a veritable town on wheels. Specialty cars feature a billiard room, a swimming pool, and a shooting gallery, to name just a few. It is also carrying Van Horne's body in a specially constructed funeral car, containing his most precious possession.

Although William is a first class passenger, he mingles with the other passengers at a scheduled stop, and there sees the funeral car guard murdered by a brakeman, who is leading a conspiracy to steal the gold spike and Van Horne's other treasure. William is chased across the top of the cars, but escapes into the circus section, rescued by an elephant. There he is provided a cover identity, and becomes part of another plot to break into the funeral car and steal a famous Krieghoff painting, which will through the magic of its canvas extend the life of Mr. Dorian, the circus ringmaster. William is befriended by Maren, a wire walker who dreams of one day crossing Niagara Falls. Together they survive the attack of the muskeg hag, and are able to foil the thieves. William finds his purpose in life, to join Maren and run away with the circus.

Opiel does an amazing job of weaving fact with fiction. Just when belief is stretched to the breaking point, another historical truth is worked into the plot, and we joyfully continue the ride. ***The Boundless*** lacks only one thing - a sequel.

Thematic Links: Canadian History; Circus Life; Canadian Legends; Canadian Pacific Railway

Patricia Jerney

Non-Fiction Grades K-6

QUINLAN, Don

Rick Hansen - A Life in Motion

Fitzhenry & Whiteside. 2013. 72p. Illus. Gr. 5-7. 978-1-55455-195-8. Hdbk. \$22.95

Rating: E

Rick Hansen suffered a spinal cord injury when he was a teenager after a car accident, which left him a paraplegic. He became a wheelchair basketball player in the 1980 Paralympics and continued to be involved in a variety of sports and win numerous awards for his athletic skills despite his disability. He is well known for his 'Man in Motion' tour, which took him around the world over a two-year period. This Canadian biography discusses how Hansen continues to raise money for spinal cord research and how he continues to increase awareness of issues surrounding disabilities.

The author's writing style would appeal to young students. The use of direct quotes from Hansen is very effective. Images throughout the book with accompanying captions capture his journey and supports readers who are visual learners. This book lends itself to deeper discussions on how one can make a positive difference in society. Students and teachers will be inspired by the determination of Rick Hansen.

Thematic Links: Physical Education; Health; Paraplegics; Disabilities; Wheelchair Sports; Canadian Biography

Cynthia Smyth

Non-Fiction Grades 7-12

MCLACHLAN, Brian

Draw Out the Story: Ten Secrets to Creating Your Own Comics

OwlKids, 2013. 139p. Illus. Gr. 6-9. 978-1-77147-003-2. Pbk. \$9.95.

Rating: E

In this engaging, beautifully designed how to book, author Brian McLachlan sets out the ten steps that budding cartoonists should keep in mind when creating their own comics. Emphasizing that all good comics tell a story, McLachlan highlights how comics are a combination of pictures and words no matter what the style, genre or format. He stresses the importance of using sketching practice and colour to use details that tell the story. Capturing the personality of cartoon characters and fine-tuning the timing and speed of reading a comic by varying the frame sizes are also both critical. McLachlan discusses the tools that cartoonists use, techniques such as flashbacks, and brainstorming for ideas based around the usual tropes, or basic elements, of story. The "Your Turn" section in each chapter is packed with intriguing practice exercises that will motivate the beginning cartoonist and challenge the expert. A useful index concludes the book.

This accessible book is illustrated throughout in cartoon style, with the text broken up by amusing comics, bubbles of tips and boxes of information. Important text is bolded or highlighted. The book's tone is light-hearted as it imparts really useful ideas and tips that eager comic enthusiasts will eat up. This book should be in every art room

and classroom.

Thematic Links: Drawing; Comics; Creativity

Joan Marshall

Professional Materials

BOOTH, David

I've Got Something To Say! How Student Voices Inform Our Teaching

Pembroke Publishers, 2013. 144p. 978-1-55138-289-0. Pbk. \$24.95

Rating: E

“As teachers we know that when students have a sense of ownership in how their school day functions and feel secure that they will be heard, the classroom becomes a vital place.” (p. 10)

David Booth is Professor Emeritus and Scholar in Residence at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto where he has trained teachers to promote literacy for over 30 years. He has won numerous awards for his writing and his achievements in the world of education. His newest book, ***I've Got Something to Say! How Student Voices Inform Our Teaching***, offers practical strategies to engage students in classroom dialogue. In the 1990's, Booth participated in an action research team which included two hundred teachers in the Peel District School Board. They explored interactive speaking and listening strategies with their students resulting in the “Talk Curriculum.” Twenty years later, Booth revisits this research while including new research and practical strategies from practising educators to address both talk and voice in the classroom environment.

Each chapter in this book begins with a passage in a student's voice taken from transcripts or journals in classrooms in which Booth has worked. In all of these excerpts, the students are thinking aloud about the role of learning in their lives. The chapters then go on to address specific issues in speaking and listening. Articles by educational researchers and classroom teachers describe action research studies and give teachers lots of new ideas to implement in their classrooms. Booth and his colleagues explore many issues in this text including: the importance of talk, understanding the power of classroom voices, building a community of learners/readers, promoting reading aloud, using role-play and drama, finding voice through writing, supporting voice through technology, and assessing student voices.

In ***I've Got Something to Say!*** David Booth provides both experienced and new teachers with many very helpful strategies to improve the literacy skills of students through speaking and listening. Most importantly, Booth reminds readers that the, *“Students do most of their important learning as talkers, questioners, arguers, and chatterboxes.”* (p. 12)

Thematic Links: Speaking; Listening; Drama; Reading Aloud; Building Community; Drama; Writing; Technology; Assessment

Myra Junyk

French Resources

HARVEY, Derek

Super Animaux: Encyclopédie des 100 animaux les plus impressionnants, féroces, et rapide de la Terre

Éditions Hurtuboise, 2013. 255p. Illus. Gr. 3-6. 978-2-8972-3182-8. Hdbk. \$34.95

Rating: E

This encyclopedia is the French translation of the English Title *Super Nature, the 100 Biggest, Fastest, Deadliest*

creatures on the Planet. The first pages contain a table of contents, showing how the book is divided into 4 chapters: *Anatomical marvels*, *Talented Animals*, *Living and Survival*, *Remarkable senses*; with a summary section at the beginning and a glossary and index at the end. Each chapter is then divided into categories by animal type, including mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, amphibians, and invertebrates. The summary section describes the earth's climates, the types of animals that live on Earth, the evolutionary changes of animals, animal anatomy, and ways of life. The information presented in this book is appropriately detailed and fascinating for the higher elementary age group. Readers are introduced to more challenging scientific terminology with descriptive explanations. All pages are coloured and glossy, with stunning vivid colour photographs accompanying the text. The material presented relates to many science and math outcomes, for instance biology, habitats, climate, distance, speed, and weight. This would be a great resource for a class research project, and would make a fantastic addition to a school or classroom library.

Thematic Links: Animals; Discovery; Science

Veronique Lavoie