

Resource Links Excerpts
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Picture Books

FAGAN, Cary

Little Blue Chair

Illustrated by Madeline Kloemper. Tundra, 2017. Unp. Illus. Gr. 1-3. 9781770497559. Hdbk. \$22.99

Rating: E

A simple blue chair, on a journey through multiple owners and places throughout the world, is the subject of this beautifully structured circular tale.

The story begins with the chair in the possession of a little boy named Boo. Boo cherishes the chair, and for years his imagination allows him to use it in ways that some would never dream up. When he eventually grows too big for the chair, his mom sadly puts it at the end of the lawn with a sign saying "Please take me". A man finds the chair, and takes it to sell to a junk shop. From there, the chair becomes a useful holder for a woman to grow a tree, an extra seat on a boat for a captain's daughter, a base on the back of an elephant in Africa, whose caretaker offers rides to children, a birdfeeder on a huge tree, a seat on a carnival's Ferris wheel, and a young boy's plaything. This young boy attempts to see if the chair, with a bouquet of balloons tied to it, will carry him off into the sky, but to his dismay the chair floats away without him on it.

The chair sails back over the ocean, and many towns and cities, until it finally comes to rest in the yard of a young man. The young man, thinking the chair looks familiar, decides to spruce it up, as it has become chipped and wobbly throughout its journey. The man gives the refinished chair to his little girl, Belle, who contentedly sits down on it in a cozy corner of the house - Boo's house - to read.

As the chair changes hands from person to person, each owner takes great care to ensure that the chair goes to someone else who can use it, rather than just being tossed aside. This is a very subtle lesson in caring for something that others may find of little value, and it acts as a gentle reminder of beauty being in the eye of the beholder, and of how a little touch-up and a little paint can breathe new life into something a bit broken-down.

The illustrations are magnificent, created with inks and pencils and finished digitally, in a palette of muted reds, blues, yellows, and greens, and showing a diverse set of characters, including multi-racial families. The calming effect of the subdued tones meshes perfectly with the hopefulness and enchantment of the story.

This lovely tale by award-winning author Cary Fagan, and featuring the beautiful debut illustrative work of Madeline Kloemper, would work perfectly for a quiet, feel-good story time session along with *New Old Shoes*, *Ox-Cart Man*, and perhaps some of *Kids Can Press' CitizenKid Collection*.

Thematic Links: Circular Stories; Nostalgia; Second-Hand Items; Reusability; Imagination; Cause and Effect

Nicole Rowlinson

Fiction Grades 3-6

LUKINS, Sheilah

Full Speed Ahead: Errol's Bell Island Adventure

Illustrated by Laurel Keating. Tuckamore Books, 2016. 30p. Illus. Gr. 2-6. 978-1-77103-093-9. Pbk. \$12.95

Rating: G

This fast-paced Newfoundland adventure story certainly has a strong pedigree. Author Sheilah Lukins and illustrator Laurel Keating both reside in Portugal-Cove Newfoundland, a community very close to Bell Island, the destination of young mouse Errol's grand adventure in this early chapter book. Peppered with shipping terminology and Newfoundland trivia, young readers will likely not realize how much they're learning as they zip through this

distinctly Canadian tale. It's easy to get swept away in the book's action, as Errol runs away from home, clings for dear life on the edge of a ship, almost becomes lunch for a cat, and gains temporary residence in a rather large purse before finally making his way back into the arms of his worried parents. Along the way, Errol displays exemplary problem-solving skills, thinking of his family to help him cope with anxiety, reading key signs to find food, and cooperating with fellow travellers. I could have had even more of Keating's adorable illustrations to help break up the occasionally long stretches of text and visualize key moments in the story. In all, however, a fun romp that emphasizes how looking to the past and believing in yourself can help you chart a new course for the future. Lukins encourages teachers to use this text in the classroom, and has compiled additional resources including worksheets and activities which can be found on a companion website: www.sheilahroberts.com/errolthemouse/

Thematic Links: Adventure; Ships; Newfoundland; Problem-Solving; Heritage; Identity

Natalie Colaiacovo

Fiction Grades 7-12

LIBERMAN, Leanne

The Most Dangerous Thing

Orca Book Publishers, 2017. 225 p. Gr. 10-12. 978-1-4598-1184-3. Pbk. \$14.95. (Reviewed from Advance Reading Copy)

Rating: E

Sydney has two good friends in grade 10 - Sofia and Paul. Both of them understand that she has trouble with relationships. She struggles with negative feelings about herself, and fights a constant battle against the "fog" that threatens to take over her life. She wants to get an education and get on with life, but it is a daily battle to get up in the morning and get to school. Then one day, she gets a text from a fellow classmate, Paul. He sends her a picture of clouds and wants to talk to her. Could he possibly be interested in her?

As their relationship develops, Sydney struggles to deal with her fears. When Paul seems to want a more serious physical relationship, Sydney is terrified and runs away from him. Her life is complicated enough without sex, which she calls "the most dangerous thing!" She visits her reclusive widowed grandfather, Zeyda, and tries to get him to engage in life. As a former stockbroker, he gives her tips on her investor's club project. He is shocked that she is even considering dating a non-Jewish boy. Sydney's family follows Jewish traditions, and Paul's family is from Hong Kong. Her older sister Abby also makes her life more complicated. Sydney is mortified to hear that her sister and her friends are planning to perform *The Vagina Monologues* at school. How will she cope with the embarrassment?

Leanne Lieberman has written a beautiful novel set in Vancouver. Although the language is graphic, it will definitely appeal to teenage readers who are beginning to date and to explore their sexuality. Her portrayal of Sydney's depression and relationship challenges is both sensitive and insightful. Sydney's family is supportive of her feelings, but they are also a family with realistic issues to address. They debate the best ways to celebrate their Jewish heritage in 21st century Canada. Sydney's grandfather struggles with his grief for his wife and his isolation from the community. He cannot understand how the Jewish culture will survive in these modern times.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of this novel is its exploration of teenage sexuality. This topic is rarely addressed in novels. Sydney's relationship with Paul starts out as friendship, but soon becomes physical. At first, she struggles because of her depression, but in time, she realizes that sex is part of life. Her sister's obsession with discussing sexuality in an open forum while performing *The Vagina Monologues* at school allows the writer to address issues of sexuality, female empowerment and dating more fully.

Thematic Links: Sexual Relationships; Dating; First Love; Depression; Anxiety Disorder; Grandparents; Loneliness; Friendship; Dramatic Productions; Jewish Culture

Myra Junyk

Non-Fiction Grades K-6

WILLIAMS, Dave, and Loredana Cunti

To Burp or Not to Burp: A Guide to Your Body in Space

Illustrated by Theo Krynauw. Annick Press, 2016. 48p. Gr 3-6. 978-1-55451-853-1. Pbk. \$14.95

Rating: E

Imagine living without gravity. How would you go to the toilet without having your urine float all over the room? Or take a drink without losing it? Worse yet, what if you have to pee during an eight-hour space walk? No tree to hide behind.

Author Dr. Dave Williams, a NASA astronaut, discusses these and other important aspects of living in space. Not only do astronauts have to learn how to eat, drink, and pee in zero gravity, they also must exercise harnessed to their equipment and wear special absorbent shirts and pants so that their perspiration doesn't cover everything in the space capsule. Phew.

And what happens if you burp? Well... On Earth, gravity keeps the rest of your stomach contents down. No such luck in zero gravity. Prepare to clean up a floating mess. Ack.

Students will love reading about the bodily functions discussed in this highly entertaining title. Interspersed between the funny and gross parts are scientific facts that will amuse and enlighten. This would make a great addition to any classroom or school library.

Thematic Links: Space; Gravity; Zero Gravity; Body Functions; Space Walk; Waste Management; Recycling; Changes in Space, Space Clothing; Space Food; Sleeping in Space

Helen Mason

Non-Fiction Grades 7-12

Behind the News Series: STEELE, Philip. *Global Financial Crisis* (978-0-7787-2586-2); *Race and Crime* (978-0-7787-2588-6); *Hostage Takers* (978-0-7787-2587-9); *Uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa* (978-0-7787-2589-3); MARRIOTT, Emma. *Violence Against Women* (978-0-7787-2590-9)
Crabtree Publishing, 2017. 48p. Illus. Gr. 7-12. Hdbk. \$23.49 ea.

Rating: G/E

This new series of books from Crabtree deals with some of the current issues we are facing in the world today - financial crisis, racial relations and crimes, hostage taking, political and religious uprising in a variety of countries, and violence against women. The books go beyond the news headlines to take a look at different perspectives, theories and the real lives involved in some of the world's biggest news stories of recent years. The books are arranged in 2-page spreads which consist of text, captioned photographs, documents, quotes, fact boxes and debate questions with a positive and negative statement. Topics are presented using case studies which give background information to the stories and allow readers to be aware of some of the issues impacting these news stories. The text raises many questions which give students an opportunity to debate among themselves and arrive at their own conclusions using the information which is presented. This style of presentation shows readers that there are no easy answers to some of the questions which are posed and that reporting the "news" can be a very complicated process. All books include a table of contents, a glossary and an index.

Global Financial Crisis examines the events that led up to the global financial crisis and recession of 2007 and onward. It highlights some of the causes for this crisis and the effects it had on various countries and how they coped with it. It deals with the topics of mortgage rates, government overspending, inflation, banks, bailouts, austerity, free trade and globalization and focuses in on the bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers in 2008, major layoffs and factory closures in China in 2008 and the debt crisis in Greece from 2008-2016.

Race and Crime deals with issues in the news involving racial bias, crime and police violence. Readers are given information and asked to reflect on the roles that policing, prisons, immigration and the media play in this issue and

also to examine the historical effects which include slavery, genocide and police violence. Other topics touched on are racial profiling, human trafficking, ethnic cleansing, and deportation. Some of the current events focused on are the murder of 17-year old Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida in 2012, the killing of 82 year old Mohammed Saleem in Birmingham, England in 2013, the issue of murdered and missing Métis and Inuit women in Canada from 1980-2016, the deportation of a Roma family from Doubs, France to Kosovo in 2013, the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in 2014, and the shipwreck of refugees on the coast of Turkey in 2015.

Hostage Takers looks at the reasons that individuals and groups engage in hostage taking and the effects it has on the victims, their families and the larger community. The question of whether or not governments should negotiate with hostage takers is raised. The ties with terrorism are also explored. Specific events highlighted are the abduction of Ingrid Betancourt Pulecio by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Columbia in 2002, the abduction of Judith Tebbutt a British tourist by Somali pirates in Kenya in 2011, the taking of 5-year-old Ethan Gilman by Vietnam war veteran Jimmy Lee Dykes in Midland City, Alabama in 2013, the hostage taking of 668 Algerians and 132 foreign nationals, who were working at Tigantourine, a natural gas production site in Amenas, Algeria by The Masked Brigade who are linked to al-Quida, the riot at the Campajaf prison in Aracaju, Brazil in 2012 which resulted in 3 guards and 128 prison visitors being held hostage, as well as the terrorist actions, including hostage taking and murder, taken by ISIL and its associated groups since 2014.

Uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa explores the issues surrounding the politics, conflict and revolutions which have taken place in these regions in recent years. The people behind the movements and the reasons why changes are taking place are presented along with perceptions of these areas by people around the globe. The events which are examined in detail which are part of the “Arab Spring” movement are the Jasmine Revolution in Tunisia in 2010, the uprisings at Tahrir Square in Cairo, Egypt in 2010 and 2012, the outbreak of civil war in Libya in 2011, protests for human rights in Saudi Arabia in 2011, and the civil war in Syria which began in 2011.

Violence Against Women deals with the exploitation of and violence against women and girls from trafficking and murder to sexual and domestic violence. The book looks at the way women and girls have been regarded throughout history and how this has played a major role in the treatment of women in our society today. Some of the specific case studies which are explored are the more than 370 murdered women in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, a city known for drug trafficking and wars between gangs and drug cartels, the shooting of Malala Yousafzai in the Swat Valley of Pakistan in 2012, the mass rape and torture of 200,000 Congolese women during the wars which have been taking place in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1996, the gang rape of 23-year-old Jyoti Singh Pandey - which resulted in her death - on a bus in Munirka, Delhi, India in 2012.

This set of books would be excellent for use in global issues and economics programs at the junior high and high school level as they deal with current global topics with which we are dealing in today’s society. The background information given along with the questions raised should instigate readers to examine their own reactions to these issues and to discuss them with their peers. The debate questions raised in the books would be good starting points for debating teams or for in-class debates.

If you are looking for answers to these world problems, these books will not give you any clear-cut resolutions, however, they will inspire readers to think about the issues and draw their own conclusions. I would recommend these books for junior and senior high school libraries.

Thematic Links: Global Issues; Financial Crisis; Hostage Taking; Arab Spring; Middle East - Uprisings; Africa - Uprisings; Violence Against Women

Victoria Pennell

Professional Materials

HOLLIS, Heather

Teaching, with Humor, Compassion and conviction: Helping our Students Become Literate, Considerate, Passionate Human Beings

Illustrated by Jean-Luc Trudel. Pembroke Publishers, 2016. 92p. Illus. 978-1-55138-316-3. Pbk. \$24.95

Rating: E

Heather Hollis's new practical teaching guide practices what it preaches. True to her book's title, Hollis's humour, compassion and conviction shine through her text, most apparent in the many anecdotes sprinkled throughout each chapter. The anecdotes are a highlight of this easy-to-read resource, deftly illustrating the abstract concepts at the book's core, and Hollis draws from her 20-plus years of experience - her missteps as well as her successes - to highlight the importance of employing humour, compassion and conviction to foster engagement in the classroom. Divided into four short chapters, the text kicks off with a look at the research behind Hollis's thesis that "*learning without engagement is not real learning at all*" (p. 8). The following three sections explore how educators can create learning environments conducive to engagement and, in turn, create engaged learners. Chapter 2 looks at the importance of humour in the classroom, and Hollis deftly provides concrete steps and strategies for using humour - something that is often very difficult to capture and explain. Chapter 3 emphasizes the importance of compassion, and demonstrates how small attempts to reach out to students can have a major impact. And finally, chapter 4 serves as a call to action, emphasizing that if teachers believe they can make a difference, their students might believe it too. Each chapter contains a treasure trove of additional reading and resources, including links to Hollis's own blog, *Suburban Princess Teacher*, and closes with sample handouts and planners that can be adapted and used to implement many of the activities Hollis describes in her book.

An extremely accessible resource, *Teaching with Humor, Compassion and Conviction* would be useful for new and experienced educators alike as they look to spark engagement in a classroom focused on nurturing life-long learners.

Thematic Links: Bullying; Compassion; Conviction; Discrimination; Diversity; Gender and Sexuality; Humour; Lesson Planning; Literacy; Mental Health; Social Responsibility

Natalie Colaiacovo

French Materials

MCISAAC, Meaghan

Movers: *Les passeurs d'ombres (Collection Virage)*

Translated from English by Farah Hamzi. Éditions Auzou, 2016. 459p. Gr. 7-9. 978-2-733843918. Pbk. \$15.95

Rating: G

In 2083, the line between the present and the future has never been more fluid and *Passeurs* (Movers) have the power to transport their *Ombre* (Shadow) from the war-torn world of the future to the present, leading to both overpopulation and societal breakdown. Pat and his younger sister Maggie are all too aware of the existence of *Passeurs* and the dangers associated with their actions as their father was condemned to life in prison for transporting his *Ombre* six years earlier. Pat and Maggie have inherited the *Passeur* gene and, through a series of interconnected events, become fugitives, along with Pat's outcast classmate Gabby Vargas. As the trio endeavour to escape from the BCAP, the authoritarian police force which monitors and controls the actions of *Passeurs*, as well as from Gabby's volatile *Ombre*, family secrets are revealed and unlikely friendships develop.

This highly suspenseful thriller, with detailed characterization, will appeal to intermediate readers with its intriguing depiction of a dystopian society in which present and future are connected. The familial bonds between Pat and his younger sister Maggie are particularly well-developed and the protective brother-sister relationship serves as the motor of the action, with Pat willing to sacrifice everything to protect Maggie. The friendship that develops between Pat and the often-rejected Gabby also serves as an important human arc in this otherworldly novel. The main strength of this novel lies in the author's ability to balance the depiction of science-fiction elements of the story with the human relationships, according equal importance to both. This novel would be suitable for intermediate readers, particularly those who have an interest in science-fiction and dystopian societies, and would be best used as an independent novel study focused on the themes of family, identity, and friendship.

Thematic Links: Mystery and Thriller; Science-Fiction; Dystopian Society; Family; Family Secrets; Identity; Sacrifice; Friendship; Acceptance

Amy J. Flight