

Picture Books

COVELLO, Paul

Canada 123

HarperCollins Publishers, 2017. 32p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - K. 978-1-44345-381-3. Bdbk. \$12.99

Rating: E

Canadian author Paul Covello's (*Canada ABC*) new counting board book about Canada is large in size and inclusive in design. The numbers range from 0 to 100. All the provinces and territories are included (and their flags). Subjects range from Canadian animals (on the land, in the sea, and in the air), to nature, occupations, transportation, sports, hobbies and all four seasons. Many of the illustrations contain a Canadian flag, or a maple leaf, and feature people from a wide variety of age groups and backgrounds. There are opportunities to count objects on each page. The numbers appear spelled out as words and numerals; i.e. 25 and twenty-five. The full-page illustrations are not labelled with the province name, but the details in the artwork help narrow down the area. The train is drawn in the mountains (British Columbia), the boats are shown with colourful houses and a lighthouse in the background (Newfoundland) and the farm page shows wheat fields and flat land (Saskatchewan). There is a bilingual page (Quebec or New Brunswick), and outdoor scenes from the territories (sled dogs and polar bears). The final page shows a labelled map of the country, but the capitals are not marked on the page. As a Canadian, I was proud to read this book to children, and to lend it out to others through the library.

Thematic Links: Canada; Counting; Geography

Tanya Boudreau

Fiction Grades 3-6

LAWSON, Julie

A Blinding Light

Nimbus Publishing, 2017. 264p. Gr. 5-7. 978-1-771085410. Pbk. \$14.95

Rating: G

Julie Lawson has a way of writing realistic characters who resonate with children today, while still staying true to the spirit and culture of her historical settings. In *A Blinding Light*, she has created two wonderful characters in Will and Livy Schneider, part of a half-German family living in Halifax in 1917, during the Great War. Both are witnesses to and victims of the devastating Halifax Explosion on the morning of December 6th that killed almost 2000 people. Twelve-year-old Livy has trekked by herself to the Richmond area of town, which was completely destroyed, to meet up with her family's former housekeeper, while Will is almost at the heart of the explosion, in Citadel Hill, on assignment for his school paper.

Will witnesses the horror firsthand, and is then called to testify at the official investigation to discuss whose fault the explosion was - the French cargo ship *Mont Blanc*, which was carrying volatile explosives, or the *Imo*, an empty Belgian relief ship. The court, and the citizens of Halifax, are only too happy to blame the *Mont Blanc*, but Will stands strong and gives an account of the events that should help to not allow the *Mont Blanc*'s captain to be used as a scapegoat.

Will, whose father has been mysteriously missing for some time after a ship's accident, is thrown into a political fight based on a strong anti-German prejudice. He is a character of incredible integrity and strength, and Lawson's eloquent and realistic writing of him is top notch. With alternating chapters between Will's and Livy's points of views, this historical fiction novel is a thought-provoking read with extremely well-represented themes of resilience, tragedy, and humanity.

As an excellent account of the single largest man-made explosion in history before the 1945 atomic bomb detonation, as well as its aftermath, this rivetting novel is highly recommended as a must-have addition to any Canadian library.

Thematic Links: Halifax Explosion; World War I; Disasters; Social Classes; Prejudice; Germans in Canada; Humanitarian Efforts; Resilience

Nicole Rowlinson

Fiction Grades 7-12

CURTIS, Andrea

Big Water

Orca Book Publishers, 2018. 181p. Gr. 9-12. 978-1-459815711. Pbk. \$14.95.

Rating: E

On September 14, 1882 a large passenger boat called the *SS Asia* sank, resulting in the loss of 123 lives. Out of that massive tragedy came a story about two unlikely survivors, a young girl and boy who were picked up days after the sinking. In her book, ***Big Water***, Andrea Curtis has re-created that event and cast the two young survivors as the main characters who must come to terms with the grim reality that has befallen them and learn to work together in order to survive.

This bond forged by the two main characters is underwritten by the death and despair that surround their predicament. Injured and near death themselves, they are isolated and cold, struggling to stay alive while the passengers around them die off quickly in massive numbers. Christina, as the young girl and main character, undergoes an existential crisis, whereby the recent death of her twin brother becomes a point of reference where she questions why she was supposedly chosen to live or find the will to fight on. Curtis handles this internal crisis very well, and we are provided a character who thinks and acts in virtuous terms despite the harsh circumstances. Momentarily, Christina's thoughts do get expressed in such bleak terms as, "*what kind of god lets someone like my brother die? He was a better person than I will ever be.*" But it is through this internal dialogue that she eventually comes to a place where her self-esteem is bolstered by her perseverance, expressing that, "*The others from the Asia are gone, but Daniel and I survived. We are survivors.*" Her strength therefore becomes a journey in itself, and we get a good example of positive character development.

Curtis has managed to engage the complex subject matters of mortality and grief in a surprisingly accessible and appropriate manner for young readers. Her philosophical observations on the topic manage to provoke thought and lend themselves well to the profundity of the historical event and the fictional representation. Curtis also throws in allusions to the poems *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kublai Khan* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, again demonstrating the intelligence behind this book, and its homage to romanticism and human virtue. ***Big Water*** is an excellent read for young readers and adults alike.

Thematic Links: 19th Century; SS Asia; Great Lakes; North America; Maritime History

Zachary Chauvin

Non-Fiction Grades K-6

MULDER, Michelle

Going Wild: Helping Nature Thrive In Cities. (Orca Footprints Series)

Orca Book Publishers, 2018. 48p. Illus. Gr. 3-6. 9781459812871. Hdbk. \$19.95 (Reviewed from Advance Reading Copy)

Rating E

“*Small steps toward big changes*” is the motto of the *Footprints Series*. Michelle Mulder’s writing encourages young readers to take an interest in rewilding and conveys a sense of confidence that young people can and do make a difference to the world.

“*Going Wild explores how civilization beats back the wilderness and why we need to let it back into the urban landscape*”. Effective examples are used to illustrate how civilization has abused the wilderness. Mulder discusses the European arrival in North America and subsequent efforts “*to stamp out the links that Indigenous people had with nature.*” This example gives readers not only an insight into Canadian history, but also validates the intrinsic connections between humans and the environment. Using four photographs and two pages of text the Industrial Revolution and its effects on humans and nature is succinctly and effectively summed up. When citing examples children are always part of the story: Cree children in residential schools, young girls working in factories. Mulder uses personal, local, national and international examples of how urban dwellers can enjoy and enhance nature in cities, big or small. From making a habit to enjoy local nature daily (cloud gazing in a meadow!) to planting native wildflowers, to transforming an unused basketball court into an outdoor classroom, to high-rise rooftop gardens, all the examples used are thought provoking and inspiring. TREE-MENDOUS KID POWER recounts the story of ten-year-old Adeline organizing 150 children to plant soil protecting mangrove trees in Flood-prone Jakarta Indonesia.

The book is divided into four chapters: Paving the Way, Road Block, Life in the City, and Wildlife Welcome. Each chapter is accompanied by effective colourful graphics, photographs, sidebars and chatty text that is packed with fascinating facts. (The present day ornamental North American front lawn originated 500 years ago in France. In order to watch for enemies castle dwellers cut down forests to allow grass to grow.)The book includes an introduction, table of contents, resources, glossary and index.

This book is highly recommended for both public and school libraries. The book offers great ideas for classroom field trips and nature projects. It offers ideas for individual projects as well. It is no small feat to combine descriptions of widespread environmental degradation with examples of hope and positive change but this is indeed what Michelle Mulder has done in *Going Wild*.

She concludes with “*Humans need natures, and together we can make sure that life on our planet thrives, not just far away on distant hilltops, but right here in our cities too.*”

Thematic Links: Rewilding; Urban Wildlife; Global Warming; Global Citizens; Nature Conservation; Urban Planning

Laura Reilly

Non-Fiction Grades 7-12

PAISLEY, Erinne

Can your Outfit Change the World? (Popactivism Series)

Orca Book Publishers, 2018. 149p. Gr. 7-12. 978-1-459813069. Pbk. \$14.95

Rating: G

This is Erinne Paisley’s second book in Orca Publishing’s *Popactivism Series* and it focuses on fashion: ...”how you can spend your fashion dollars in a responsible and eco-friendly way”.

There is an impressive amount of information in this book and its accessible, breezy style (thank-you Sarah Harvey) makes for a comfortable read.

Paisley wore a dress made from sheets of her math homework to her high school prom and the response to her unique approach prompted her further research into fashion and its impact on the planet and its inhabitants. What she found was enlightening and inspiring. The positive tone of this volume goes a long way to demonstrating how anyone can become a fashion activist.

Everything from considering fabric to ethical pricing and purchasing to recycling to industrial mores is covered here and it comes with information on how to either develop one’s own clothing network or investigate the origins of the clothes you buy. There are also inspirational stories of how young individuals made a positive impact on their lives and the broader landscape by questioning the established way of doing fashion.

However, there is also a manipulative tone to this tome and it has to do with the use of italics. Rather than using italics as a means of indicating, say, a useful online resource for the motivated reader, certain words throughout the book are italicized, it would seem, for no purpose other than trying to influence the reader rather than allow for independent conclusions. My preference would be to italicize the online references so the reader can investigate further whatever aspect of this book is of interest. The book is printed and bound in China. One would hope that fair trade practices and ethical use of materials are a given in this instance.

Thematic Links: Fashion; Ethical Shopping; Marketing; Recycling; Re-purposing; Vintage Clothing

Lesley Little

Professional Materials

FIORE, Mary and Maria Luisa Lebar

Moving Math: How to Use Thinking Skills to Help Students Make Sense of Mathematical Concepts and Support Numeracy Development

Pembroke Publishers, 2017. 122p. 9781-55138-325-5. Pbk. \$24.95

Rating: E

Moving Math by Mary Fiore and Maria Luisa Lebar encourages teachers, “*to design learning experiences that will allow students to make sense of mathematical concepts and skills.*” The writers have based their resource on current research about teaching mathematics, as well as models created by the Ontario Ministry of Education. Their approach relies heavily on the connections between literacy and numeracy, as their definition of numeracy suggests, “*To become numerate, students must learn to make sense of the mathematics, use mathematical skills effectively, thoughtfully communicate mathematical thinking, and critically interpret mathematical knowledge and skills.*” (p. 10)

This resource is divided into ten chapters which provide an outline of the specific thinking skills of effective learners: inferring and interpreting, analyzing, evaluating, making connections, synthesizing, reasoning and proving, and reflecting. The first three chapters address issues of professional learning, cross-curricular thinking, and learning experiences for sense making. The subsequent six chapters examine thinking skills of effective learners. Each chapter outlines how to enhance students’ mathematical thinking and numeracy development through one of the specific thinking skills. There is heavy emphasis on planned experiences to promote an understanding of mathematical concepts. Each of the chapters on thinking skills explains the “bigger ideas” related to that skill in the “making sense of...” section at the beginning of the chapter. Then the writers address specific mathematical concepts related to the particular skill, and move on to prompts and assessment criteria. Each chapter addresses the use of the thinking skill at three levels of instruction: Grades 1-3, Grades 4-6 and Grades 7-8. Specific practical examples are given for each level.

Mary Fiore and Maria Luisa Lebar have written an extremely useful resource which can be used by mathematics specialists and novices alike to improve their instruction. Specific examples of how to use thinking skills are provided with clear and concise descriptions of how these skills should be used in the classroom environment at various grade levels. This comprehensive resource is a wonderful starting point to plan, discuss, and implement changes in mathematics instruction to address student needs. The importance of numeracy in today’s world is clearly stated by Fiore and Lebar, “*Numerate learners use their knowledge and understanding of mathematics to make sense of the world around them so they participate as reflective and competent citizens in a rapidly changing world.*” (p. 26)

Thematic Links: Numeracy; Mathematics Instruction; Thinking Skills; Literacy Instruction

Myra Junyk

French Resources

BOUCHARD, Anne-Marie

Ma visite au musée: L'art moderne du Québec

Illustrated by Julien Chung. Éditions Auzou, 2017. 64p. Illus. Gr. 3-6. 978-2-7338-5273-6. Hdbk. \$21.95

Rating: E

“Qu'est-ce que l'art moderne?” is one of the many questions ***Ma visite au musée: L'art moderne du Québec*** art history book for children will answer as well as peak an elementary school-aged child's curiosity.

Anne-Marie Bouchard a curator of l'art moderne au Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, has cleverly curated a mini work of art herself by collating some of the most well-recognized masterpieces by successful Canadian artists. Each double page has one or two full-colour photo reproductions of the artworks from artists such as Horation Walker, who painted more traditionally, to the imaginative artist Henri Julien. The book touches on impressionism to cubism, fauvism, surrealism, and works of abstraction such as Paul-Émile Borduas and recently deceased Jean-Paul Riopelle's artwork *Espagne*. It also includes photographer Maurice Perron and female artists such as Helen Galloway McNicoll and Mimi Parent.

Bouchard manages to explain with a wonderful ease the composition and subject matter of any artwork to the naive and eager aspiring artist, such as Marc-Aurèle Fortin's *L'Orme à Pont-Viau* majestic tree painting “Quel arbre magnifique! Il occupe presque toute la surface du tableau!...” This entices the reader to continue questioning more and inquisitively inspecting the colour plates for the details that are suggested.

Sometimes the author introduces the artist and artwork with questions in an engaging manner not seeming pretentious for the young observer, such as Mimi Parent's *Autoportrait au chat*; such questions as “*Ce chat a faim, c'est évident! Pourquoi Mimi Parent, l'artiste, ne lui donne-t-elle pas à manger?*”.

When a young reader already finds it fascinating ***Ma visite au musée: L'art moderne du Québec*** has a few more surprises; at the end of the book there is an “*Activités*” section with blank framed pages to draw “*autoportraits*” and “*Drôles animaux*”. There is also an exercise to find “*formes géométriques*” in *Escalier de secours* and a page of “*Lexique*”.

To enable these masterpieces to jump off the page and garner it entertaining and accessible to the young reader Julien Chung has created, through flat digital rendering, an art gang of diverse characters and a pet dog that navigate through the book against solid backdrops that denote the atmosphere of the painting. Each character makes an appearance through the book at various points with quirky quotes, questions and comparisons. As an example, skater boy compares a digital sepia rendition of the snowscape that Ozias Leduc's *La Ferme Choquette* has drawn inspiration from in his 1901 painting.

Anne-Marie Bouchard has found a superb concept by creating ***Ma visite au musée: L'art moderne du Québec*** that should entice children to visit galleries and become very inquisitive in interpreting art. For those that are creative and those that are not artistically inclined, both will find something to look at from colour, geometry, nature, technology and most importantly realizing that Canadian artists have contributed throughout many generations and added their talents to international art movements. There is always something to draw on. No pun intended!

Thematic Links: Canadian Art; Modern History; Winter; Landscape; Figurative; Abstract; Art Movements; Canadian Biographies; Photography

Lara Chauvin