

Resource Links Excerpts
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Picture Books

SHINDLE, Janet

Nana's Magic Swing

Self-Published, 2018. Unp. Illus. Gr. K-6. 978-1-4602-9622-6. Pbk. \$10.99

Rating: E

Janet Shindle is a retired social worker who has worked extensively with children and adults who have struggled with loss. This story is based on her own son's reaction to the passing of the author's grandmother. This is the story of the love between four year old Graham and his great grandmother Nana. Nana's home is full of love. Her outdoor swing, big enough to hold four and with a large umbrella to keep off the sun, is their magic swing, where Nana takes Graham on imaginary trips around the world with the help of an old map. When Nana dies, Graham is left facing many new feelings and events. The story walks him through some very intense concepts. Nana's funeral is described in detail with lots of attention to Graham's feelings at certain points. The graveyard and the burial are described and Graham's worry that Nana won't be able to breathe is addressed by an explanation that she no longer needs to breathe.

Graham continues to remember Nana by going to her house and sitting on the empty swing. When his younger siblings join him one day, Graham takes on the role of storyteller and models Nana's stories. This triggers happy memories for Graham and his feelings of sorrow slowly change to warm happiness as thoughts about the love he and Nana shared take hold.

At the end of the book, the author provides tips to help teachers and caregivers explain death to the very young or those children facing death for the first time.

This book is a very useful resource, especially because it is hard to find materials written at this early year's level. It will help teachers and caregivers start the discussion about death and grief with young children who are experiencing this. The concepts are difficult, but explained in a simple way through storytelling. There are many concepts described in this book and teachers and caregivers may find that they can only deal with one item at a time, so this book may have to be read several times to cover all the ideas it depicts. Some of the concepts and descriptions of the burial rites may not apply to all cultures, although the experiences of death and grief are universal.

Thematic Links: Love; Death; Grief; Funerals; Burial; Graveyard

Elizabeth Brown

Fiction Grades 3-6

DONOGHUE, Emma.

The Lottery's More or Less

Illustrated by Caroline Hadilaksono. HarperCollinsCanada, 2018. 285p. Gr. 4-7. 978-1-44344-560-3. Hdbk. \$19.99

Rating: E

This is the second book in Emma Donoghue's *The Lottery's Series*. Once again, Sumac Lottery is the nine-year old narrator of the novel. This time she is trying to keep her family traditions intact. She leads a complicated life with one grandfather, five pets, and four parents - two mothers who are married to each other and two fathers who are also married to each other. She is the fifth child in a family of seven homeschooled siblings, all named after trees. There are multiple races, cultures and special needs represented among the biological and adopted Lottery children. Sumac is facing several crises this winter! One of her dads and her favourite brother, who have been working to help

the homeless, are stranded in India because of a terrible ice storm which has hit Toronto. They also have a visitor from Brazil who injures his eye just in time for the holidays. The Lottery's must now take care of him as well while he recovers from eye surgery. During the ice storm, Sumac and her family get to know their diverse neighbours, and find out that kindness and compassion come in many different shapes and sizes!

This is a wonderfully funny and uplifting novel about a family that practices the values it believes in such as: diversity, experiential learning, empathy, environmentalism, tolerance and love. Caroline Hadilaksono's black and white illustrations provide intricate detail to enhance the narrative. Emma Donoghue once again fills her novel with diverse characters and unique situations. Those already familiar with the Lottery's will be thrilled with this new edition in their story, and those who have not yet met this remarkable family will definitely want to go back to read the first volume in the series. Once again, the Lottery's saga has a powerful message for readers, "*Be the change you want to see in the world.*" (p. 166)

Thematic Links: Winter Celebrations; Diversity; Social Justice; Family Relationships; Dementia; Gender Roles; Home Schooling; Change; Emergency Preparedness

Myra Junyk

Fiction Grades 7-12

LAWRENCE, Lisa J.

Trail of Crumbs

Orca Book Publishers, 2019. 256p. Gr. 9-12. 978-1-4598-2121-7. Pbk. \$14.95

Rating: E

The review copy arrived with a sticker attached that read *Lead Title*. The sticker was no mistake - this is an exciting YA title by a relatively new author. Lisa Lawrence's first book *Rodent* also garnered a lot of attention and *Trail of Crumbs* which is a kind of a riff on Hansel and Gretel is also deserving of some good noise.

Greta lives in Edmonton with her father, stepmother Patty and twin brother Ash. Things have steadily deteriorated since her mother died of breast cancer seven years ago, and in the middle of twelfth grade, Greta and her family are living in a basement suite with few amenities including heat.

After a terrible and final altercation with Patty (who Greta finds burning all the family photos pre-Patty), the twins find themselves abandoned in the suite with a small amount of food and no money when Patty and their father leave. It seems apparent that their father has chosen loyalty to Patty over loyalty to his children.

Greta has also made some poor choices about who she chooses to socialize with at school and ultimately finds herself drunk and sexually abused at a party. Deeply ashamed she keeps the details to herself. Just when things cannot appear to get any worse, they do - on both the day to day work of living and the social side of school. The twins have to make some really hard decisions and find both strength and resilience to continue on and move forward. Surprisingly, support comes to them from some very unlikely people and Greta and her brother grudgingly learn that there is both kindness and goodness in the world.

This is a taut page-turner read. Lawrence keeps up a very attractive pace which keeps the plot flowing. Sometimes the style is somewhat confusing in that the book switches from the present to the past without warning. That said, other features such as strong characterization for both the main and secondary characters made this a treat to read. Even though this book was about a pretty heavy-duty topic, Lawrence actually made room for some humor and love of food.

Highly recommended.

Thematic Links: Sexual Abuse; High School

Anne Letain

Non-Fiction Grades K-6

BOWLES, Stella with Anne Laurel Carter

My River: Cleaning up the LaHave River

Formac Publishing, 2018. 96p. Illus. Gr. 4-7. 978-1-4595-0551-3. Pbk \$16.95

Rating: E

My River: Cleaning up the LaHave River is the true story of how a Nova Scotian student, Stella Bowles, became a successful environmental activist. Stella and her family live on the LaHave River in Nova Scotia. Concerned about the contamination of the river, Stella learned how to conduct scientific studies on the fecal bacteria levels of the La Have River.

Many residents by the river use straight pipes “*Pipes that let you flush what’s in your toilet straight into a lake or ocean or river.*” The story is about how Stella takes this simple and, at times, gross information about “poop” and eventually convinces governments to invest in a \$15.7 million clean-up and introduce legislation banning straight pipes.

The book is written in an engaging manner. It takes the reader through a two and a half year journey from the simple beginnings of a grade 6 student working on a science fair project to a sophisticated activist using social media to educate the public and influence government. The reader is introduced to Stella’s family and mentor Dr. Maxwell. The story is at times lighthearted describing the jokes of Lennie, Stella’s father and at times serious describing debates at a public forum meeting. The text is supplemented with many relevant photographs, and informative sidebars and is written in an appropriate manner (narration by Stella) for the intended audience.

My River: Cleaning up the LaHave River is highly recommended for both school and public libraries. It is a positive example of what an individual can do for the betterment of a community while also gaining a sense of personal achievement.

Thematic Links: River Pollution; Waste Water Treatment; Science Fair Projects; Environmental Activism

Laura Reilly

Non-Fiction Grades 7-12

Cutting-Edge Careers in Technical Education Series: MASON, Helen, ***Dream Jobs in Information Technology*** (978-0-7787-4449-8); ***Dream Jobs in Human Services*** (978-0-7787-4452-8); MORGANELLI, Adrianna, ***Dream Jobs in Manufacturing*** (978-0-7787-4450-4); ***Dream Jobs in Architecture and Construction*** (978-0-7787-4448-1); O’BRIEN, Cynthia, ***Dream Jobs in Transportation, Distribution & Logistics*** (978-0-7787-4458-0); ***Dream Jobs in Green & Sustainable Living*** (978-0-7787-4451-1)

Crabtree Publishing, 2018. 32p. Illus. Gr. 7 up. Pbk. \$9.95 ea.

Rating: E

This series of books will be valuable in career education programs as they highlight a variety of careers in Technical Education which is quickly opening up many new avenues to graduates. Career and Technical Education programs combine academic studies, such as math and science, with valuable hands-on training which result in job-specific skills which are in high demand by employers. Each book begins with a 2-page spread about Jobs in Career and Technical Education. The next spread is an introduction to the careers in the particular cluster of jobs which the book is addressing. The books then go on to give information about specific jobs in each cluster. Each 2-page spread gives a brief description of the job, a “what you can do now” section which identifies the skills which one can start developing at the junior and high school level, a pathway which gives the secondary and post-secondary education and training which is needed for the particular job and “did you know” boxes which gives addition pertinent information. Captioned colour photographs, maps, and diagrams give additional information. Each book contains a Table of Contents, a learning more section, a glossary, and an index.

Dream Jobs in Information Technology highlights the following jobs - Network Architect, IT Manager, User Support Specialist, Database Administrator; Technical Writer; Cybersecurity Expert, Animator, Web Developer,

Game Designer, Software Developer, and Computer Systems Analyst.

Dream Jobs in Human Services includes the following jobs - Preschool Teacher; Teacher Assistant; Art Therapist; Mental Health Counsellor; Physical Therapist Assistant, Child and Youth Worker, Esthetician, Funeral Attendant, In-Home Health Aide, Credit Counsellor, and Special Events Coordinator.

Dream Jobs in Manufacturing describes the following jobs - Assembler, Welder, Tool and Die Maker, Industrial Painter, Design Engineer, Pipefitter, Boilermaker, Industrial Maintenance Mechanic, Quality Control Technician, Logistics Engineer, and Environmental Engineer.

Dream Jobs in Architecture and Construction highlights the following jobs - Architect, Cad Technician, Bricklayer, Carpenter, Concrete Finisher, Construction Inspector, Electrician, Heavy Equipment Operator, Ironworker, Plumber, and Refrigeration/Air Conditioning Mechanic.

Dream Jobs in Transportation, Distribution & Logistics deals with the following jobs - Automotive Service Technician, Auto Body Repair Technician, Motorcycle Technician, Able Seafarer, Traffic, Shipping and Receiving Clerks, Railroad Conductor, Reservation, Travel and Transport Agents, Aviation Maintenance Technician, Air Traffic Controller, Avionics Technician, and Logician.

Dream Jobs in Green & Sustainable Living describes the following jobs - Solar Panel Installer, Wind Turbine Technician, Energy Advisor, Sustainable Agriculture Technician, Geothermal Drilling Technician, Biomass Farmer, Environmental Management Technician, Green Roof Installer, Green Architectural Technician, Hydropower Technician, and Water and Wastewater Laboratory Technician.

This series gives a brief introduction to a wide variety of careers along with the path of studies that is needed to meet the requirement of them. While the description are brief, students in career education programs at the junior and high school levels will find valuable information here which may lead them on to dig more deeply into a particular career and how they might pursue it. I would highly recommend this series for all schools that offer career programs.

Thematic Links: Careers; Technical Education; Information Technology; Human Services, Manufacturing; Architecture; Construction; Transportation; Distribution; Logistics; Sustainable Living

Victoria Pennell

French Materials

BERGERON, Emmanuelle

Quatre Filles de Caractère (Collection: Ma petite vache a mal aux pattes)

Illustrated by Caroline Merola. Soulieres Editeur, 2018. 97p. Illus. Gr. 3-8. 978-2-89607-421-1. Pbk. \$10.95

Rating: E

Four young girls grew into women who changed the world in one way or another and Bergeron introduces young readers to these fascinating people. Agathe de Repentigny became a businesswoman in 1685 and was very successful in her many endeavours. Thérèse Casgrain became involved in Quebec politics and was instrumental in the feminist movement and obtaining the right to vote for women in the province. Viola Desmond, by refusing to give up her place in the 'whites only' section of a movie theatre, stood up for black rights. Insecticides such as DDT are now banned and this is in part thanks to the scientific research and writing of Rachel Carson, an environmentalist whose work helped make the public more aware of our planet and how to protect it.

Emmanuelle Bergeron tells about these women in an engaging and interesting way and the book is far from a dry history text. Students interested in feminism and the impact of women in various fields will enjoy the stories. The book could also be used for research as the author suggests several books, articles and websites where students can learn more.

The illustrations of Caroline Merola add a great deal to this book. They help with comprehension as well as giving young readers a sense of both the personalities and the historical setting of each of the women.

Thematic Links: Agathe de Repentigny; Thérèse Casgrain; Viola Desmond; Rachel Carson; Female Role Models

Ann Ketcheson