

Resource Links Excerpts
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Picture Books

PORTER, Dawn

Oliver's Grandma: A Book For Children About Parkinson's Disease

Illustrated by Janet Johnson. Dawn Porter (self-published), 2011. 28p. Illus., Gr. K-3. 978-0-9877793-0-4. Hdbk. \$20.00.

Rating: G

Grandma and Grandpa White come to Oliver's house every Sunday for dinner. Six year old Oliver is perplexed by Grandma's behaviour.

"Her hands shook all the time, and when she ate, sometimes the food fell on the table or even worse, the floor! But Mommy never reminded her to use her manners or to clean up her mess like she did to Oliver."

Oliver wishes that his grandmother was more like his friends' grandmothers. He also wonders will his grandmother "... go away to heaven like Ashley's grandpa did?"

Things get tense for Oliver because Grandparents' Day, at school, is fast approaching and he has not informed his mother because he is afraid that the other children will laugh at his shaky grandmother. Nonetheless his mother has found out about the day from another mother. This prompts an open and informative discussion between Oliver and his mother. In simple terms Oliver's mother describes the effects of Parkinson's disease and why Grandma acts the way she does. She assures Oliver that Grandma will continue to visit every Sunday. She offers hope about new medicines being discovered. Armed with this knowledge Oliver is a proud grandson on Grandparents' Day.

Dawn Porter, who has been living with Parkinson's disease for over a decade, does a good job of fusing fiction and non-fiction. She captures the fears and anxieties of a young child. The information about the disease is simple and uncomplicated. Her intention of conveying information about Parkinson's disease is successful.

Janet Johnson has illustrated the book in a wonky, cartoon style. The goofy, bold drawings offset the seriousness of the text. Oliver's evolving emotions from anxiety to excitement concerning Grandparents' Day are clearly illustrated.

There is a useful "Tips on Talking to Young Children about Parkinson's disease" at the back of the book.

This book is recommended for both school and public libraries. It is, of course, specific in its mission to educate children and assist adults in understanding Parkinson's disease. Because Dawn captures the worries of a child so well, it is suitable for story time in order to prompt discussion about dealing with worries.

Thematic Links: Parkinson's Disease; Grandparents; Families; Anxiety

Laura Reilly

Fiction Grades 3-6

TROGEN, Brit and Kari Trogen

Margaret and the Moth Tree

Kids Can Press, 2012. 176p. Gr. 4-6. 978-1-55453-823-2. Hdbk. \$16.95

Rating: G

A richly imaginative and fantastic story of orphaned childhood, this novel depicts the need for nurturing during this very important period of growth and development. Margaret is a young child who, after experiencing the deaths of her parents, her uncle and her great-aunt, all unique in their approaches to child rearing, finds herself placed in an orphanage run by a most unsuitable matron, Miss Switch. Aptly named for a character who switches, not only her personality, but also the appearance of the orphanage when visitors come to call, Miss Switch possesses a twisted

psyche due to her life's experiences as a former model. The children in her care have been segregated into "Pets" - those children whose physical beauty remind her of her own childhood, and the "Dregs" - those children who are plain or ordinary. Miss Switch treats her "Pets" as overseers to her slaves, the "Dregs". "Pets" get reasonable food and accommodation, and are provided with choice tasks, like seeing to the personal needs of Miss Switch and overseeing the "Dregs", while "Dregs" are put to work doing the dirtiest and most menial of household chores and are fed a little cold mush each day.

Margaret has been allocated "Dreg" status at the orphanage. She is a strong and intelligent girl who understands that what occurs at the orphanage is abusive of all the children there. Miss Switch inflicts horrible penalties on Margaret and the other children who infringe on her entitled life at the orphanage or who have accidents while attempting to carry out their work duties. In order to survive the ordeal, Margaret slips out of the orphanage at night to enjoy some relief from servitude and punishment. One night, Margaret meets new friends - the moths that live in the tree in the garden. She finds that she is able to communicate with them and quickly befriends them. When life at the orphanage becomes so overwhelming to all of the children there, the moths assist Margaret in rectifying the situation.

A wonderfully engaging tale of how one child copes with injustice and creates a plan to overcome it. Recommended as a recreational reading book or for literature study groups. The novel may also be useful as a discussion starter on abusive relationships and the need to report abuse to get assistance in stopping it.

Thematic Links: Child Abuse; Orphanages

Sharon Armstrong

Fiction Grades 7-12

POZNANSKI, Ursula

Erebos: It's a game. It watches you.

Translated by Judith Pattinson. Annick Press, 2012. 434p. Gr. 7-12. 978-1-55451-372-7. Pbk. \$19.95

Rating; E

Erebos: It's a game. It watches you. The subtitle of this novel conveys its eerie premise. As our society moves more towards the data mining of mainstream social networking sites and search engines, the power of *Erebos* is ever closer to being unleashed.

Nick Dunsmore is a typical teen: he does well enough at school, enjoys basketball and video gaming, has some good friends and some romantic interests, and has busy parents who are only vaguely aware of how he spends his time. So he and his classmates are perfect targets for the creators of the video game *Erebos*. The bootleg CD is shared from person to person, only after an oath of secrecy. And once a student begins to play, the game is absolutely addictive: Nick's teammates begin to miss team practices, absenteeism rates at school rise, and those who do attend are literally falling asleep in their desks.

The game is so addictive because of its apparent "artificial intelligence". As the user moves through the levels, the game asks players to open their internet connections. By reading e-mail, checking out music files and internet browser history, the program can personalize the characters, the background music, and the activities of the game to perfectly and uniquely appeal to each player. But then the game begins to require that the player achieves tasks in the real world, and the line between fantasy and reality becomes seriously blurred. As a middle-aged non-gamer, observing this process was fascinating: I became as addicted to the book as the characters are to the game! The real world consequences are serious and suspenseful.

Erebos was originally published in Germany, where it is a bestseller and winner of the 2011 German Children's Literature Award. This translation is bang-on in presenting authentic teen voices and video game experiences, and suffers in a Canadian context only by being set in London, England, and using London landmarks as geographic clues.

Thematic Links: Video Gaming; Artificial Intelligence; Suspense

Patricia Jermy

Non-Fiction Grades K-6

LEVINE, Karen

Hana's Suitcase, Anniversary Album

Second Story Press, 2012. 174p. illus. Gr. 4-8. 978-1-926920-36-8. Hdbk. \$24.95

Rating: E

"This book takes its honourable place on the growing list of books that will successfully introduce the Holocaust to Canadian students. It would be a very effective read-aloud. Its haunting pages will bring tears to the eyes and strengthen our resolve to sustain a peaceful world.

Highly Recommended." (**Resource Links**. Vol. 8, # 1, October 2002)

The quote above is from a review of the original ***Hana's Suitcase*** written for ***Resource Links*** by Joan Marshall ten years ago. Little did we know at the time that her words would be so true. This book has won more awards, both national and international, than any other children's book in Canadian history. Now in its twenty-eighth printing, it has been published in more than forty-five countries and in twenty-nine languages around the world. It has also been produced as a play in Canada, the USA, England and Japan, as two documentaries for television and as a feature-length documentary called *Inside Hana's Suitcase*. This book has been an inspiration for so many children and adults throughout the world to, as Archbishop Desmond Tutu states in the foreword to this anniversary edition, "be constantly vigilant to humanity, prejudice, bigotry, and the terrible consequences of silence, indifference and apathy." (p. vi)

This anniversary edition contains the complete text of the original version of the book - the amazing story of happened when Fumiko Ishioka, a Holocaust educator at the Tokyo Holocaust Centre in Japan, received a suitcase from the Auschwitz museum with the name Hana Brady written on the outside. As Fumiko dug deeper she uncovered the heartbreaking story of a young girl from Czechoslovakia who was killed at Auschwitz during World War II. She also found Hana's brother George Brady who managed to survive and now lives in Canada. This edition also contains 64 pages of additional material which give some indication of the impact the book has had on children all over the world. Included in this additional information are updates from author Karen Levine, Hana's brother George Brady and Fumiko Ishioka, memories from Hana's childhood neighbours, letters from children, parents and teachers, a list of the awards and honours which the book has won, visuals of the covers of the many translations of the book and posters of the dramas, a things you can do section, the story and lyrics of *Hana's Song*, and lots of captioned colour photographs, many of which have been taken with students in various parts of the world who have done major studies based on the book. There is also a CD which contains the original CBC documentary on which Karen Levine based this book and a group of students singing *Hana's Song*.

In the ten years since the publication of the original book Karen Levine, Fumiko Ishioka, and George Brady and his daughter Lara Hana have visited schools, community centres, churches and conferences in many countries around the world giving credence to the book's ability to impact people of all origins and ages. This anniversary edition will be welcomed by many of the readers of the original as well as a whole new generation of readers who are just old enough to delve into its pages.

Highly Recommended.

Thematic Links: Holocaust; World War II

Victoria Pennell

Non-Fiction Grades 7-12

SWAN, Bill

Footeen and Sentenced to Death: The Story of Steven Truscott (Real Justice Series)

James Lorimer & Co. 2012. 152p. Illus. Gr. 8-11. 978-1-4594-0070-0. Pbk. \$12.95

Rating: E

On June 10, 1959 twelve-year-old Lynne Harper went missing from Clinton, ON. The next day she was found, raped

and murdered, her body left in the bush on the Lawson farm just outside of Clinton. 14-year-old Steven Truscott had given Lynne a ride on his bicycle down to the highway where he watched as she hitchhiked away in a grey car. Several of their schoolmates had seen them together. As the last person to see Lynne alive, Steven was interviewed often by the police and eventually charged in her rape and murder. A jury declared Steven guilty, sentencing him to death. The Court of Appeal refused to overturn the verdict but the government of Canada reduced his sentence to life in prison. Steven began to serve his sentence at the Ontario Training School for Boys, in Guelph. When he turned eighteen he was transferred to Collins Bay Penitentiary in Kingston, ON where he was a model prisoner. In 1966 Isabel LeBourdais wrote and published *The Trial of Steven Truscott*, extolling his innocence and highlighting errors that had been made by the courts. In 1969 Steven was granted parole. He married and had children. In 1971 Steven co-authored *The Steven Truscott Story* with Bill Trent. On March 5, 2000 CBC's *The Fifth Estate* aired a TV show that brought Steven's case back into the public eye. Finally, in August of 2007 Steven Truscott was acquitted and became a free man after forty-eight years. The government of Ontario awarded him \$6.5 million in compensation. Lynne Harper's murderer has never been found.

This clearly written, compelling book focuses on the details of Truscott's trial and how the evidence of Steven's friends and acquaintances was ignored as it didn't fit into the Crown's case. Evidence given by some of the children even contained lies. All of the evidence used to convict Truscott was circumstantial. Most of the dialogue used in this book is directly quoted from testimony and police interviews. Author Swan deftly interweaves this dialogue with simple urgent text that moves the story along quickly.

A good glossary explains the needed legal terms while a useful index will make it easy to access particular names. Each chapter is dated, which places the story in time. The raw, edgy cover with Truscott's 14-year-old photo will draw readers in. The hand-drawn map of the area where Lynne was killed is essential to understanding the story. Readers will be astounded at how Truscott was betrayed by the justice system. Written at a grade 4.8 level, this sad story will appeal to all older students and could easily be accessed for report writing on the stories of the wrongfully convicted.

Thematic Links: Steven Truscott; Lynne Harper; Association in Defense of the Wrongfully Convicted; James Lockyer

Joan Marshall

Audio-Visual Resources

TELL, Max

The Heart Shaped Tree - A Modern Fairy Tale Fr All Ages

Music by Doug Banner. Max Tell Productions, 2011. CD 25 min. Gr. 2 up. \$14.99

Rating G

A boy named Argu and a girl named Argi find friendship through a magical ball, and a smile that stops Argu from clacking and Argi from hissing. Argu and Argi find a secret place and are drawn together magically, they fall asleep under a heart shaped tree in which we discover the Shakespearean undertone of two feuding houses and forbidden love. In the same vein as *Romeo and Juliet*, the story brings to life a toned down version of friendship, love, rivalry, bigotry, violence, forgiveness and shame.

Delightfully, we are then introduced to a folk song about a book. Enchanting and uplifting, the melody energizes the adult audience and yet for a child the lyrics are full of simple yet powerful descriptions of what a book can teach. Everything. It can teach tying shoes, to writing songs, questions, laughter, which, what, where, how, why, right from wrong. Poetic and endearing, it "Comes out wrapped in poetry, like apples from a poets tree".

Finally, a quirky yet humorous story about Rodney Scribble, where everyone scribbles except Rodney Scribble, who instead writes three words "My dog spot". The mayor, Mrs. Scratchit, Mr. Pen Knib the parents and everyone thinks they are doomed because "Rodney Scribble cannot scribble". Clever repetition and use of descriptive names directs the story into this ever so hilarious yet morally valuable tale.

Max Tell and Doug Banner have created a three part entertaining, sometimes serious and enchanting CD that directs the listener to the magic of reading books. Beautifully orated with precise melody, sound effects, pitch and tone, it sends the listener into a dream like place. Other than the CD's namesake, ***The Heart Shaped Tree***, it would be advisable for a parent to guide the child, due to the adult like messages and imagery.

The cover art for *The Heart Shaped Tree - A Modern Fairytale For All Ages* could do with some improvement in design and colour. It also might be improved if a list were provided of the contents, as well as the lyrics in booklet form for educational, leisure reading and practice purposes.

The Heart Shaped Tree - A Modern Fairytale For All Ages melts anyone's heart with laughter, suspense, imagination and most importantly the magic of storytelling.

Thematic Links: Magic; Trees; Fantasy; Songs; Folk Tales; Fairy Tales; Music

Lara Chauvin

Professional Resources

ROG, Lori Jamison.

Guiding Readers: Making the Most of the 18-minute Guided Reading Lesson

Pembroke Publishers, 2012. 168p. 978-1-55138-273-0. Pbk. \$24.95

Rating: E

This book provides the study based rationale as well as an excellent model for guided reading instruction which has been developed to fit into a sequence of 18 minute lessons. The process is designed to be implemented with emergent, early, developing and fluent readers and writers. Each stage of reading and writing development is described and strategies, activities, and tasks are developed to assist teachers in their classroom practice with students. Black-line masters are also included to enhance the teaching and learning processes and examples of student work demonstrate learning.

This is a detailed and complete resource for guided reading instruction which is available both in print and as an ebook from the publisher. Highly recommended for every elementary classroom.

Thematic Links: Reading - Study and Teaching

Sharon Armstrong

French Resources

BOUCHARD, Camille

Le coup de la girafe (Graffiti +, no 72)

Soulières Éditeur, 2012. 112p. Gr. 8-9. 978-2-89607-150-0. Pbk. \$12.95

Rating: E

If ever there was a need for a proof that small miracles happen sometimes in the world of literature, Soulières' latest and timely publication - *Le Coup de la girafe* - provides it. But then, coming from Soulières' Publishing House, it comes as no surprise. It joins the many other courageous coups de maître of his career, such as *Le Secret de l'hippocampe*, *La Vie en rouge*, *Un couteau sur la neige* or *Jolie Julie*, to name but a few.

In this powerful and oh so well written novel by prolific Camille Bouchard, you will meet Jacob, an engaging and ingratiating youngster who, although fifteen, apprehends himself as a six-year old. He is "different" and attends a special class in a Senior High School. You will learn - in his own - sometimes naive, sometimes poetic words - how hellish are his schooldays.

You will learn how he faces a trio of ignorant and vicious bullies who never seem to run out of ideas to intimidate and hurt him, again and again, turning his life into sheer constant torture. You will feel his pain and his fears and how gratifying and character-building his free-spirit mother's love is - even if her conduct barely falls short of legal prostitution. Once, he tells him: "We recognize happiness by the sound it makes when it leaves", a quotation from French poet Jacques Prévert. For Jacob, this sound will turn out to be the lions' roar.

You will appreciate the support Jacob gets from his two faithful and sincere friends - Chloé and Romain - who protect him as much as they can. They help him develop self-esteem and self-confidence. You will also, alas, find out how, one day, on a class outing to the zoo, the sadist trio trick innocent and trusting Jacob into stepping in the lions's den instead of in the beautiful giraffe's park. The end is brutal and atrocious. You will agonize with Jacob. Above all, you will be in Jacob's mind and in his shoes, all along, feeling it all as if you were Jacob himself. You will get a front-row seat, so to speak, to get an insight about human perversity, stupidity and ignorance as well as read a commentary about friendship and love, on being different and on what the victims of harassment live through long after their tormentors are hunting for new preys to destroy. You will get a good look at this ever growing cancer now ravaging our schools and our society these days.

As Jacob describes his suffering and how he manages to cope with it, you will marvel at his resilience and just plain courage. Bouchard knows, to the smallest millimetre, how to dose his descriptions of the vicious manipulations, just so - enough to catch the interest of good mature readers but not too much so as not to discourage the not so mature ones.

Bouchard has written what is called an intimate psycho social novel, as you might have guessed by now - and given us a great, if short, novel. Once the inspiration had taken root in his imagination, Jacob's character kept growing until he could no longer resist and had to write the story down. When he did, he must have been helped by the gods; the most poignant parts of the novel rests in the non-dits - he left them floating over the page, untold, unwritten... Did he know then how the story would end? "I knew pretty well where the drama I had set in motion would lead me, [...] must admit, though, I cried as I began feeling I was losing control of Jacob's character, he answers." A moving major work indeed, no matter which angle you choose to appraise it. A book every teenager of 13+ should read. This statement applies to grownups as well.

Thematic Links: Being Different; Intimidation; Bullying; Drugs; Prostitution; Love; Friendship; Youngsters Resilience.

Louise Melançon