

Resource Links Excerpts
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Picture Books

LIGHTBURN, Ron

Frankenstink! Garbage Gone Bad

Tundra Books, 2015. 32p. Illus. Gr. K-4. 978-1-77049-694-1. Hdbk. \$19.99

Rating: E

“Clean up your room!” Every child surely can relate to that familiar command. But what if all that collected junk and debris, old food scraps and dirty clothes tossed under the bed, suddenly turned into a stinky, garbage-devouring monster!

Author and illustrator, Ron Lightburn, cleverly creates a ‘creepy concoction’ that begins to grow and come to life in the smelly mess under a young boy’s bed. As the monster emerges it attacks the fridge, eating everything in sight. Spying the garbage bags lining the street, it eats its way to the city dump, rapidly increasing in size. What will happen as this enormous blob of garbage takes over!

Each large, imaginative illustration, done in comic-book style, accurately depicts the garbage-laden monster described on each page. Many of the drawings are done in vivid shades of blue and green as the monster grows in the night. Even the cover glows in the dark and the reverse side of the dust cover is a poster size illustration! The rhyming text and clever vocabulary add to the entertainment of this hilarious tale. Reminding the reader of the importance of recycling and composting, the story should promote both laughter and discussion and would be fun read aloud. An excellent book for both the school library and classroom, this text is highly recommended.

Thematic Links: Recycling; Composting; Environment; Personal Hygiene

Carolyn Cutt

Fiction Grades 3-6

GARDNER, Lyn

The Ghastly McNastys: The Lost Treasure of Little Snoring

Illustrated by Ros Asquith. Kids Can Press, 2015. 141p. Illus. Gr. 2-5. 978-1-77138-128-4. Hdbk. \$16.95

Rating: G

If you love a pirate story - and who doesn't? - you may be happy to learn about ***The Ghastly McNastys: The Lost Treasure of Little Snoring***, volume 1 in a new series from Kids Can Press. While it's not a book for every reader, it's likely to be a hit with its intended audience.

The Ghastly McNastys, the world's meanest, vilest pirate twins, have arrived in Little Snoring intent on collecting treasure. But Tat and his best friend Hetty already have plans to find the same treasure, in order to save Tat's parents from bankruptcy. It's pirates versus kids, and though the resolution is predictable, the story certainly isn't. ***The Ghastly McNastys*** provides an absurdly silly over-the-top reading experience: Roald Dahl meets *Pirates of the Caribbean* plus an awful lot of bodily functions.

This book often reminded me of *Bert Fegg's Nasty Book for Boys and Girls*, particularly with the editorial asides and the gross illustrations. It's a fun, snot-filled text that is likely to be enjoyed by younger readers much more than by adult readers. But it's also good-hearted in its presentation and offers an easy introduction to a long tradition of absurd books, films, and TV. Those who enjoy this book won't have long to wait for a second adventure with the McNasty twins, Tat, Hetty, and the rest of Little Snoring. This series looks like a good fit for school and classroom

libraries - if not for squeamish teachers!

Thematic Links: Comedy; Friendship; Loyalty

Leslie Vermeer

Fiction Grades 7-12

GREEN, Dawn

When Kacey Left

Red Deer Press, 2015. 227p. Gr. 8-12. 978-088995-523-3. Pbk. \$12.95

Rating: E

Sara is sent for counselling when her best friend Kacey commits suicide. Part of her therapy is to write a journal, with her entries addressed to Kacey. This novel is her journal entries over the better part of that first year after Kacey left.

Sara is very angry, and expresses it openly in her journals. Why did Kacey do it? Why don't her parents leave her alone? Why is she the object of so much unwanted attention at school? For a long time, Sara cannot grieve fully for Kacey, and her loss. Instead she and her well-meaning parents try a variety of methods of dealing: she dyes her hair like Kacey's, she takes guitar lessons on Kacey's guitar, she re-reads Kacey's texts and poems and song lyrics, she gets a puppy. She struggles to understand the girls who were formerly friends of both her and Kacey, and who seem to have moved on. Finally when a well-meaning student teacher assigns her an English project on *Romeo and Juliet*, Sara chooses the topic of teen suicide. The result is an epic public meltdown, a release of her pent-up anger and guilt, and the option of speaking to other student groups on this important but too often taboo topic. Now she can finally read Kacey's suicide note addressed to her, and learn to just love her for who she was.

Green shows the expert touch of someone who knows teens well, and can speak their truth. After Sara's emotional journey, Green concludes the novel with a useful selection of current Canadian suicide resources. Young readers will benefit from this open and raw portrayal. Green refuses to offer simplistic answers to a complex topic, but succeeds in validating the emotional experiences.

Thematic Links: Teen Suicide; Survivor Guilt

Patricia Jermey

Non-Fiction Preschool - Grade 6

DIAZ, Natalia & Melissa Owens

A Ticket Around the World

Illustrated by Kim Smith. Owlkids Books, 2015. 32p. Illus. Gr. K-3. 978-1-77147-051-3. Hdbk. \$17.95

Rating: E

Led by a young boy, readers of this book will visit thirteen different countries spanning six continents. Beginning with Costa Rica, readers will travel to India, Morocco, Greece, Canada, Brazil, France, Botswana, China, Philippines, Australia, United States, and Jordan. Each country is depicted on a 2-page spread which includes a map of the country highlighting the cities, towns and landmarks which are mentioned in the text. As the young boy introduces his friend from each country he talks about the geography, population, climate, wildlife, language, food, landmarks, etc. making it feel like one is on a real journey. Each piece of text is accompanied by a colourful

illustration which gives further information at a level which will be readily understood by young readers. The book has a world map at the beginning highlighting the thirteen countries which are visited and a short quiz about the countries at the end.

While the information contained in each 2-page spread is brief it does give an interesting perspective on each country from a child's point of view. It's really amazing how much information can be contained in a few short paragraphs. The vibrant colour illustrations are excellent and add greatly to the information and appeal of the book.

This would be a great resource for students at the primary level who are beginning to learn about other countries in their social studies programs.

Thematic Links: Geography; Countries

Victoria Pennell

Non-Fiction Grades 7-12

HEGEDUS, Anna Molnár

As the Lilacs Bloomed (The Azrieli Series of Holocaust Memoirs)

The Azrieli Foundation, 2014. 217p. Illus. Gr. 10-12. 978-1-897470-48-0. Pbk. Free

Rating: G

Nothing is harder than to analyze critically than a memoir from a holocaust survivor. The subject matter is familiar to us as we learned about it throughout school and the media, but it's always a shock to get such an incredibly personal and intimate retelling from a first hand perspective. The atrocities that survivors had to go through is unspeakable at the best of times, and yet, here we have the eyes and ears of people who went through it.

Such is the memoir *As the Lilacs Bloomed* or rather, the accounts of Anna Molnar Hegedus, who was sent to Auschwitz, separated from her husband and son, encouraged her daughter to press on, then moved to the Schlesiensee labour camp and finally, sentenced to a death march. The entire account describes in vivid detail the atrocities that took place in each setting, and how Anna was able to survive the entire ordeal. It is a very powerful and moving account.

As the initial book was published in 1946 entitled *Miert?* (Why) the book was written just months after everything occurred. It jumps around a lot, and there's very little cohesive narrative throughout the story. It feels more like you're having a conversation with Anna, and not reading a book about her. This has an advantage, as it makes the experience feel more intimate, and you connect and feel everything Anna is feeling. On the downside, it is hard to keep track of the time and chronology of everything that is going on. Anna does jump around in the story from time to time, and it makes it hard to follow.

Overall, this was a very difficult read in many respects. All of the characters are real and seeing what is forced upon them are horrific. Material like this is needed to remind us just what kinds of atrocities occurred to those in World War II. I would shy away from using this book from the classroom, as it is very graphic and sometimes hard to follow. I would recommend this as additional readings, and first hand accounts of a prisoner of Auschwitz and the forced labour camps. Please only read this if you are in the right frame of mind, and a lot of tissues on hand.

Thematic Links: World War II; Prisoner of War; War; Auschwitz; Forced Labour Camps

Michael Rogowski

Professional Materials

WILLIAMSON, Denise Gagne

Teaching French Through Drama: A Teacher Resource

Listening Voice Media Ltd., 2012. 78p. 978-0-9736911-7-7. Spiral Bd. \$29.95

Rating: E

Williamson has twenty-five years of first-hand experience in elementary classrooms and this is evident in this excellent resource for teachers of either core French or French Immersion. Although Williamson draws on experience with children from Junior Kindergarten to Grade Six, her ideas could easily be adapted beyond this group and could also be used with high school students and adults after appropriate modification.

Williamson's premise is that language is more easily learned and retained when presented through song, rhyme and movement. In other words, when all of the senses are incorporated in the learning experience. The beginning of the book makes the case for encouraging live performance in this day of movie screens, TV screens, and computer screens. She discusses how to adapt dramas for various audiences, whether another class at school, the entire school, or an evening to which parents are invited. She talks about classroom management and discipline, both of which can be maintained with techniques using drama. Even games, far from disrupting the classroom, can be used in order to both build knowledge of a second language and to build positive attitudes among students. Williamson devotes a section specifically to primary children and gives samples of stories, puppet making, poems and games. Another chapter focuses on upper elementary children and provides hints regarding choosing an appropriate play, props and décor.

This resource is practical and helpful and contains ready-made suggestions for teachers of a second language. Non-drama teachers will gain not only resources but confidence about incorporating drama in their lesson plans.

Williamson's excellent book and enthusiasm for her subject will motivate teachers and they, in turn, will motivate their students.

Thematic Links: Drama; French Teaching

Ann Ketcheson

French Materials

BERGERON, Alain M.

Le Défi de Dominic (Collection: Ma petite vache a mal aux pattes #133)

Illustrated by Sampar. Soulières Éditeur, 2015. 84p. Illus. Gr. K-3. 978-2-89607-314-6. Pbk. \$8.95

Rating: E

When Andreanne arrives in Dominic's class and tells of her fight against cancer, Dominic wonders if he could ever agree to having his head shaved in order to raise funds to fight the disease. He casually mentions this to his mother who interprets it as a decision he has already made and who immediately begins to elicit funds from friends and family to help the cause. Dominic isn't sure how it will feel or how he will look and wonders if his friends will all just make fun of him if he has no hair.

This is a heart-warming story of children supporting one of their peers and reinforces the idea that people of any age can volunteer in the fight against cancer. Dominic receives a great deal of moral and monetary support and his friends' reaction is both surprising and gratifying.

While based on a serious topic, Bergeron and illustrator Sampar also add humour to the novel. Even the cover conveys this, as readers see Dominic with a swim cap on his head in order to see what he might look like without hair and drawing a moustache and beard in the mirror since he's heard that men often grow them to offset baldness.

There is a brief insert at the beginning of the book describing the Leucan organization and its mission to help and support Quebec families struggling with cancer.

Thematic Links: Cancer; Raising Money to Fight Cancer; Friendship

Ann Ketcheson

