

Picture Books

LAFITTE, Dwayne

Bullet the New Steam Engine

Illustrated by Thérèse Cilia. Pennywell Books/Flanker Press, 2016. Unp. Illus. Gr. K-3. 978-1-77117-456-5. Hdbk. \$19.95

Rating: E

Reading this book evoked memories of when I was a child and each summer we would travel on the Newfoundland Train - fondly know as the "Newfie Bullet" - to visit family on our summer vacation.

In this book Dwayne Lafitte follows the journey of the new steam engine for the narrow gauge Newfoundland Railway across the province from St. John's to Port aux Basques. Along the way the engine meets a herd of caribou, encounters fog, meets people waiting for their mail, helps rescue fishermen, experiences the northern lights, finds some lost berry-pickers, and safely travels through the Wreckhouse area (the windiest area of the province). While this may seem somewhat unrealistic to many readers, the Newfoundland railway did operate this way as it was the only route across the island for many years and if help was needed it was provided.

The book is greatly enhanced by the beautiful full-colour illustrations by Thérèse Cilia which depict some of the well-known and picturesque areas along the route.

Unfortunately Newfoundland no longer has a railway. It was closed in 1988 when tractor trailer trucks and a passenger bus were deemed more efficient to handle the cargo and passengers using the highways which had been constructed throughout the province.

This book will bring back fond memories to many like myself who travelled the railway in our childhood as we share the book with young readers today. I highly recommend it for school and public libraries as well as personal collections.

Thematic Links: Newfoundland Railway; Newfoundland and Labrador - History

Victoria Pennell

Fiction Grades 3-6

SCRIMGER, Richard

Lucky Jonah

HarperCollinsCanada, 2016. 223p. Gr. 5-8. 978-1-443410717. Pbk. \$14.99

Rating: E

Jonah is having a tough time in grade 8, what with his bully of an older brother, his perfectly perfect best friend Magnus, and his perceived lack of any discernible skill or purpose in life. While watching Magnus crush it on the basketball court one day, the local old weird guy, Gord, approaches him with a gift - a disposable camera with twelve pictures to be used - that he insists is expressly for Jonah, or "Lucky" as he calls him. He relays a story to Jonah, saying that the camera is magic and that each picture is a wish. After Gord spins away, as he tends to do, Jonah continues to watch the game, admiring the perfection that is Magnus, and snaps a picture of Magnus with the camera. Immediately, Jonah is on the court, basketball in hand, with the crowd shouting at him and teammates waiting for a pass. He has become Magnus!

When Jonah realizes that the camera has the power to transport him into other people's bodies, he has no idea how to handle the information. Throughout the next several hours, he becomes alternately Magnus's girlfriend, a mall security guard, a teen delinquent, a decrepit old man, and a baby girl, among others. It's an incredibly draining

experience, but also one that gives Jonah rare insight into the people he thought he knew, and, in the case of Magnus, becomes a real eye-opener.

Along the way, Jonah comes to realize that the reality of his life is not nearly as undesirable as he always thought, and the journey helps him to come to terms with the fact that he is gay, something that he had never fully concluded until this roller-coaster day.

Jonah, and this story, had me from the first page. The growth he experiences throughout his bizarre day, and the insight he begins to gain toward other people, and particularly toward himself, is brilliantly written. His internalized self-awareness, including realizing that perhaps this whole thing is happening to him for the purpose of figuring out who he is, is remarkable.

This is an extraordinary novel, with bursts of laugh-out-loud humor, heartfelt despair, and incredibly insightful character growth. It's also important to note that this novel perfectly fills a noticeable gap in novels aimed at elementary and middle school aged children that feature a main, or even secondary, character who is LGBT. This is an excellent, must-have choice for school (even those in conservative communities) and public libraries. Highly recommended.

Thematic Links: Fantasy; Coming of Age; LGBT Youth; Humorous Stories; Identity; Fitting In

Nicole Rowlinson

Fiction Grades 7-12

FLORENCE, Melanie

The Missing

James Lorimer & Co., 2016. 186p. Gr. 9-12. 978-1-4594-1085-5. Pbk. \$14.95

Rating: G/E

Melanie Florence has produced a taut and timely thriller which deals with the contemporary Canadian problem of missing and murdered aboriginal girls and women. It is definitely an issue that has not routinely appeared in young adult fiction, and Florence approaches it through the voice of Feather Bedard, a seventeen-year-old aboriginal girl attending high school in Winnipeg. Two of her friends suddenly disappear, and one is deemed a suicide. When Feather's brother, Kiowa, is considered a suspect in the disappearance of one of the girls and is arrested and taken to the Winnipeg Remand Center, Feather wants answers. When she is written off by the local police as an aboriginal time-waster, Feather takes the investigation into her own hands. Feather is a determined and strong young woman with good instincts.

Characterization is good, if a bit thin and somewhat stereotypical - cops with donuts, creepy stepfather, gay friend etc. and in another format could hopefully be fleshed out more seriously.

The Missing is well written and creatively presented, with inserted chapters which give hints about motive from the murderer. It's a real page turner that is written for the reluctant or struggling reader, but is a quick read for anyone else. Where the book falls down is in the plotting. There are holes as big as an average sized canyon in the story as Florence attempts to bring together many social issues - prejudice, racism, social media, foster care, missing native women - and create a tidy ending. She does manage this but wraps everything up far too tidily and too quickly. The ultimate revelation of "whodunit" has a definite deflated feel to it.

However, ***The Missing*** is a must purchase for every secondary school library in Canada. It addresses a very pressing on-going struggle in Canadian society.

Thematic Links: Mysteries and Thrillers; Indigenous and Aboriginal Issues; Prejudice; Racism

Anne Letain

Non-Fiction Grades K-6

ARBUTHNOTT, Gill

Drawn to Science: What Makes Your Body Work?

Illustrated by Marc Mones. Crabtree Publishing, 2015. 64p. Illus. Gr. 3-6. 978-0-7787-2241-0. Hdbk. \$23.96

Rating: E

Brains, intestines, and blood, oh my! For children who are curious about unravelling the mysteries of how our bodies function, this installment of the popular ***Drawn to Science*** series is an engaging treasure trove of interesting information.

From the heart, the ear, and the skeletal system, to the lungs, eyes, and skin, ***What Makes Your Body Work?*** introduces readers to the body's major organs and systems by devoting a section to each and sharing information about different phenomena related to the way it functions. For example, when discussing the wonders of our skin, Arbuthnott touches on the mechanism behind scarring, explains temperature sensitivity, and delves into how humans sense touch. Fun facts are coupled with clear descriptions of all aspects of the body, lending the book a light and appealing tone that encourages readers to continue exploring the text to learn more.

For visual learners, important vocabulary is bolded throughout the book, and definitions are listed in a helpful glossary. Also, ***What Makes Your Body Work?*** is chock full of brightly coloured illustrations and diagrams that visually reinforce the concepts that are shared. To support the diagrams, a fun cast of characters reappear throughout the book to share facts in speech bubbles. For hands-on learners, the book contains numerous "Try It Yourself" sections that encourage young readers to perform experiments related to organs and body systems. Easy step-by-step instructions make these experiments ideal activities to perform at home or in a classroom setting. A concise "Find out more" section provides high quality resources (text, video and web based) for children to continue exploring anatomy.

This book functions as an exciting and engaging resource to help audiences understand the inner workings of the human body. It is highly recommended as a teaching aid and as source material for classroom or library activities.

Thematic Links: Science; Body Systems; Organs; Fun Facts; Experiments

Chloe Humphreys

Non-Fiction Grades 7-12

BRIGNALL, Richard

Champion for Health: How Clara Hughes Fought Depression to Win Olympic Gold (Recordbooks Series)

James Lorimer and Co., 2016. 128p. Illus. Gr. 7-9. 978-1-4594-1080-0. Pbk. \$12.95

Rating: Good

This short non-fiction book written at a grade 4.8 level details the life of Canadian cycling and short track speed skating Olympic star Clara Hughes. Her early dysfunctional family life in Winnipeg's Elmwood area nearly derailed her life entirely as she set off on a life of smoking, drinking and getting into trouble. But a chance TV program about Gaetan Boucher's 1988 Olympic short track ice skating so inspired Clara that she joined the Winnipeg Speed Skating Club and began to train. The rest, as they say, is history. Clara won thirteen World Cup speed skating medals between 2003 and 2010. She took up cycling as a summer sport to complement her skating but quickly found success winning cycling medals at the Commonwealth Games, the Pan American Games and the Olympics. In 2000 Clara returned to speed skating, winning World Championships and Olympic medals. In the next decade Clara went back and forth between the two sports while she was also battling depression.

Clara's work with the *Right to Play Organization* demonstrated her belief in the power of sport in the lives of the world's children. But it was her courageous speeches for *Bell's Let's Talk Program* detailing her depression and highlighting how we must as a society confront the stigma of mental illness that have forever changed Canadians' perceptions of mental health. *Clara's Big Ride*, a cross Canada bike ride during which she made many speeches and spoke to many Canadians about mental illness has further cemented her reputation as a Canadian hero.

Complete with glossary, thorough index and list of medals, this well-designed book has boxed highlights and inspiring photos that will make it an easily accessible research source on this inspiring athlete.

Thematic Links; Speed Skating; Cycling; Olympics; Mental Illness; Depression; Clara Hughes

Joan Marshall

Professional Materials

MCCALLUM, Deborah

The Feedback Friendly Classroom: How to Equip Students to Give, Receive, and Seek Quality Feedback That Will Support Their Social, Academic, and Developmental Needs

Pembroke Publishers, 2015. 127p. 978-1-55138-3040. Pbk. \$24.95

Rating: G

In her new book, *The Feedback-Friendly Classroom*, Deborah McCallum explains how feedback helps students to become better learners. “*Students need feedback to understand how to work toward learning goals and curriculum outcomes...The process of learning with feedback is so much more than a part of evaluation and assessment; it is the underlying foundation of all learning.*” (p. 6) She explains how to create a feedback-friendly classroom to promote academics, socialization and development. Feedback routines motivate students to “*self-regulate, improve, grow, move toward learning goals, and become good citizens and critical thinkers.*” (p. 7)

This teacher resource is divided into eight chapters: Understanding Feedback, Feedback for Learning, Designing Feedback Strategies, Feedback Strategies, Feedback for Academics, Feedback for Socialization, Feedback for Development and Creating the Feedback-Friendly Classroom. The first two chapters focus on ongoing feedback during learning activities in the classroom. The writer very quickly establishes that feedback is not just about assessment because it encourages: deep learning, peer dialogue, reflection, student choice, socialization, community-building, and student self-esteem. Later chapters emphasize specific feedback strategies to create a culture of feedback. The final chapter looks at instructional design, feedback frameworks, goal setting, and assessment. Throughout *The Feedback-Friendly Classroom*, there are numerous useful ideas for classroom teachers. McCallum explains her feedback strategies and provides blackline masters to help implement these strategies into the classroom environment. Although many of her ideas will be familiar to experienced teachers, this resource would be a good addition for teachers who want to improve their use of feedback in the classroom. This book provides a useful resource for both new and experienced teachers who want to enhance communication in their learning environment because, “*Feedback-friendly classrooms help students develop the skills they will need to participate fully in a globalized world.*” (p. 8)

Thematic Links: Feedback; Assessment and Evaluation; Community Building; Communication; Critical Thinking; 21st Century Skills

Myra Junyk

French Resources

SMITH, Alex T.

Lili-Rouge et le gros méchant lion

French text by Hélène Pilotto. Éditions Scholastic, 2015. 30p. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-1-4431-4536-7. Pbk. \$10.99

Rating: E

If the cover image and the title don't give it away, by the second page, it should be quite clear to any reader that Lili-Rouge is Little Red Riding Hood and that the "grosméchant lion" is the big bad wolf of this classic tale, reimaged on the African savanna.

One morning, Lili-Rouge's aunt wakes up covered in chicken pox. Spritely little Lili-Rouge packs a basket of goodies, waves goodbye to her father, and heads out to Aunt Rose's house. She passes many savanna animals on her way (giraffes, monkeys, elephants and so on) and the titular big bad lion can be spotted hidden on each page. When she stops to rest, the lion asks her where she is going and her answer gives him a "brilliant" plan (elaborated in a 6-step flowchart reminiscent of Scaredy Squirrel).

Lili-Rouge is no easy target, however, and "*as soon as she arrived, Lili-Rouge could see that the person lying in the bed WAS NOT her Aunt Rose.*" The familiar refrains of an observant (but confused) Little Red Riding Hood become the clever distractions of the fast-thinking Lili-Rouge. "*What wild hair you have, my aunt!*" is her chance to braid the lion's mane into cornrows. "*What an unstylish robe you're wearing!*" is her excuse to dress him up in pink ribbons and hearts. Thoroughly frustrated that things are not going according to plan, the lion roars and reveals his bigness and badness. Lili-Rouge is not fazed in the least and says, "*If you're hungry, you only have to ask politely for food,*" and the lion, the girl and the rescued aunt all share the bagels from the basket. The lion promises to never, ever try to eat an aunt or a child again (fathers, on the other hand... well, thankfully, Lili-Rouge is keeping her eye on him).

Bright, colourful, clever and with a heroine who pulls no punches and is immune to any attempts to pull the wool over her eyes, this savanna tale of Lili-Rouge and the big bad lion is worth a laugh and a half!

Thematic Links: African Savanna Animals; Little Red Riding Hood Retellings; Strong Female Characters

Ashley Nunn-Smith