

Resource Links Excerpts  
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**Picture Books**

FITCH, Sheree

***Everybody's Different on Everybody Street***

Illustrated by Emma Fitzgerald. Nimbus Publishing, 2018. 32p. Illus. Gr. 2-5. 978-1-77108-600-4. Hdbk. \$22.95

Rating: E

If ever you go travelling  
On EveryBody Street  
You'll see EveryBody's  
Different  
Than EveryOne you meet...

Readers are introduced to "EveryBody Street" with this refrain repeating several times throughout this remarkable picture book. As the writer travels down the street, she meets many different kinds of people. At first, she compares the people she meets to various animals: "*Some shuffle hippopotami,*" "*Some meditating dolphins,*" or "*Some dance about like ants.*" EveryOne you meet is unique!

As the book progresses, the writer meets people who display various characteristics: pride, worry, neatness, and weariness. Some people want hugs, while others want applause. However, the writer soon discovers that, "*All of us are perfect/ And all of us have flaws.*" Whether we have families, or are searching for a family, we all have dreams of the future, and we all know pain at some point in our lives. The most important thing for all of us to realize is that we are all travelling on the same path of "*EveryBody Street,*" and we all share a common humanity, "*EveryOne IS EveryOne.*"

This evocative picture book was written by Sheree Fitch in 2001 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Festival of Trees as a fundraiser for what was then the Nova Scotia Hospital Foundation. Her poem would raise awareness in schools about mental illness and addictions. Although Fitch felt unequal to the task, her personal experiences convinced her that she could write this beautiful poem. She wrote the poem while on a trip to New York City. A few weeks later September 11, 2001 changed the world. For Fitch the poem became a love song for that city - and the world!

Fitch's lyrical prose is enhanced by the very beautiful illustrations of Emma FitzGerald. The illustrations are done in bold and bright colors, and are very rich in detail which provides a superb backdrop for this poem about individual differences. This picture book will appeal to younger children, but it could also be read by older readers who could relate to the important messages of understanding and compassion in this book.

***Thematic Links:*** Mental Illness; Diversity; Relationships; Caring; Addictions; Community; Loneliness; Resilience

Myra Junyk

**Fiction Grades 3-6**

CURTIS, Christopher Paul

***The Journey of Little Charlie***

Scholastic Canada, 2018. 234p. Gr. 4 - 7. 978-1-4431-4263-2. Hdbk. \$18.99

Rating: E

Twelve-year-old Charlie has a hard life growing up in South Carolina in the mid-nineteenth century, but it's bearable because Pa is beside him tending the fields, teaching him to shoot, and showing him how to live in an oversize body. When Pa dies under mysterious circumstances, Cap'n Buck, the neighbouring overseer, comes to claim a debt he

says Pa had failed to honour. Charlie and Ma are destitute; Cap'n Buck says he'll take Charlie's labour in lieu of the money. And so Charlie begins a journey of unimaginable violence, cruelty, and desperation to retrieve a pair of runaway slaves.

I just loved *The Journey of Little Charlie*. It took me a few pages to adjust to Charlie's dialect, but I liked his character immediately, and his story was gripping. The voice and plotting combine to let readers' understanding of events emerge with Charlie's. With elements of adventure, mystery, personal peril, and family saga, the novel is hard to put down and will appeal to a wide range of readers - and will stand up to repeated reading.

Some readers may need to discuss troubling plot points with an adult. Much of the violence in the story happens offstage, but some elements - for instance, cat-hauling and Ma's disappearance - occur in Charlie's narration and provide disturbing examples of Cap'n Buck's despicableness. Christopher Paul Curtis (author of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963*, among other novels) depicts pre-Civil War rural life realistically but pulls back appropriately for his audience - and offers a hopeful ending for Charlie in Canada (and ties Charlie to the world of Curtis' *Buxton Series*).

The book would make an excellent pick for a novel study: it's eminently readable and sure to provoke discussion. It's a must for school and classroom libraries. One of my favourite books so far this year, *The Journey of Little Charlie* is a winner.

**Thematic Links:** Slavery; Bullies; Detroit; Adventure; The Underground Railway

Leslie Vermeer

### Fiction Grades 7-12

LITTLE, Ashley

#### ***Confessions of a Teenage Leper***

Penguin Teen, 2018. 291p. Gr. 9-12. 978-0-7352-6261-4. Hdbk. \$21.99

Rating: E

The fascinating facts behind this novel: armadillos, common in Texas, Florida and Louisiana, can be carriers of the mycobacterium leprae, the bacteria which causes Hansen's disease, more commonly known as leprosy, and 5% of humans are susceptible if they contact or consume armadillos. Over 100 new cases are diagnosed annually in the United States, and many of these are treated through the National Hansen's Disease Program in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. The original leprosarium in Carville, Louisiana, which opened in 1894, is today both a museum, an out-patient residence, and a boot-camp for at-risk youth.

Abby Furlowe has a plan: she will be a cheerleader in her senior year for her Texas high school, will date the captain of the basketball team, will get a scholarship to USC to study acting, be chosen as prom queen, and then become a famous actor. She is well on her way to achieving her goals, when, unbeknownst to her, the armadillo meat which she ate at a church potluck supper five years earlier causes her to develop Hansen's Disease. The first symptoms, scaly rash on her limbs and face, are misdiagnosed as allergies or fungus infection. When she loses feeling in her hands and feet, she begins to injure herself, and during a cheer she has a horrible fall. She is in a coma for 16 days as a result of a head injury, and awakens to multiple broken bones. A biopsy finally identifies Hansen's Disease, but by now she has permanent nerve damage. She is sent to Carville for therapy.

In the midst of this family trauma, her 19-year-old brother is having problems. He drinks to unconsciousness, and is only saved by Abby's CPR. Then he disappears. Abby knows he has been earning money as a webcam boy, who supplies online porn, performed to the wishes of his paying customers. When he returns a week later, he is supported by a boyfriend and ready to come out to his family.

Abby had always been pretty and popular: "*It was too hard for me to have people see me now. They used to smile when they saw me, strangers too. Guys were constantly checking me out. Now, people looked away or, worse, stared, and sometimes pointed. Just being alive was humiliating. I so badly wanted things to be like how they were before. I wanted to be beautiful again. I wanted my friends back. I had gone from being one of the hottest girls in school to one of the ugliest people in Texas, and maybe all of the United States, in a matter of months. It was devastating. Obviously.*" (p. 80) Abby's former friends no longer sit with her at lunch, or return her texts. She is

now one of the uncool students that she used to mercilessly mock: “*School sucked more than anything has ever sucked before in the history of the world. I hated myself and the way I looked and the way everyone looked at me, or didn’t look at me. I felt bad for all the kids who had lived their whole lives ugly. It was a terrible way to go through the world. People looked right through you. Or immediately away. Good-looking people have so many advantages. And they don’t even realize it because things have always been that way for them.*” (p. 74) Her life plan has been disrupted: she can no longer cheer, and won’t get that scholarship. But through her therapy she meets Jane, a young woman with ten years experience of living with the disease, who tells Abby to focus on other aspects, and not just her appearance. Abby also meets Scott, a young man in the boot-camp program, who becomes both a friend and a love interest. Her therapist, Dr. Rodriguez, recommends that she write down her experience with the disease, and a new plan emerges: Abby has a passion for writing. She anchors her new life to a quotation she finds, “*It is not what we have lost that matters most, but what we choose to do with what we have left.*” (p. 280) Abby, her family and friends and school community, are realistically and effectively drawn. Ashley Little has combined an uncommon aspect of modern-day medicine with the common challenge for teens of realizing what is truly of value in life.

***Thematic Links:*** Leprosy - United States; Internet Pornography; Friendship; Family

Patricia Jerney

### **Non-Fiction Grades K-6**

HOWDEN, Sarah

#### ***5 - Minute Stories for Fearless Girls***

Illustrated by Nick Craine. HarperCollinsCanada, 2018. 169p. Illus. Gr. 3 up. 978-1-44345-536-7. Hdbk. \$17.99

Rating: G

In this book Sarah Howden portrays 12 women who have “*pursued their dreams, changed the world, and shown everyone what girls can do*”. Included in the book are Amelia Earhart, Misty Copeland, Ruth Wakefield, Tanya Tagaq, Viola Desmond, J. K. Rowling, Hayley Wickenheiser, Princess Diana, Deepika Kurup, Jane Goodall, Zahra Lari, and Michelle Obama. All of these women have had an impact on various aspects of science, the arts, sports, humanitarianism, women’s rights, and activism throughout the world. They have been role models for young girls everywhere inspiring them to follow their dreams.

The book is designed to appeal to a younger audience with its full page colour illustrations by Nick Craine which are superimposed by the easy to read text. This book would be a good one to share with early elementary students or as a springboard to more extensive research for junior high and senior high students who are studying women’s rights. I would recommend it as an addition to school and public libraries.

***Thematic Links:*** Women - History; Women’s Rights

Victoria Pennell

### **Non-Fiction Grades 7-12**

AL RABEEH, Abu Bakr with Winnie Yeung

#### ***Homes: A Refugee Story***

Freehand Books, 2018. 220p. Gr. 7-12. 978-1-988298-28-3. Pbk. \$19.95

Rating: E

This unadorned true account of a young boy's journey from childhood and relative safety in his native land through its disintegration and his dangerous journey to eventual safety in Canada is as remarkable as the story of how it came to be told.

Abu Bakr's journey begins when he is ten and his family moves to Syria because they are Sunni in predominantly Shia Iraq. Direct death threats had prompted the move and it was not easy. It took months to get visas and after a 24 hour bus ride, Abu and his family arrived in Syria. The family endeavoured to make a life for themselves in Syria but the long game put into play by Abu's father and uncles was to get out of the Middle East altogether.

They succeeded eventually but not without numerous setbacks. Basically, Abu Bakr's family doggedly went through the required channels and worked hard to support themselves while they waited. Throughout the book, Abu Bakr's family endeavours to remain true to their religion while maintaining a neutral position as the entire nation degenerates into brutal chaos. Extended family and soccer help Abu Bakr maintain his equilibrium.

The journey out of Syria was fraught with danger until the family reached the airport and their flight to Italy. Abu Bakr recalls the last passport check in Syria, conducted by *shabiha*, armed militia of the Ba'ath Party. It went like this, after the legitimacy of the family's exit from Syria was established:

*"Ten minutes: that's how long it took them to check everyone's documents. I gripped my backpack the entire time. We had lived through shootings, raids, and massacres, but those ten minutes were the most horrifying ten minutes I had ever experienced. When the SUVs finally peeled away, I could breathe again. Father chuckled and looked at me. 'I think that was our last shabiha squeeze, son.'"*

After landing in Edmonton and attending school, Abu Bakr found peace and quiet but also isolation. When his English teacher asked what secret wish he might have, he realized it was to have his family's story told. The answer to that question is this book.

**Thematic Links:** Family; Syria; Civil War; Refugees; Intolerance

Lesley Little

### **Professional Resources**

GEAR, Adrienne

***Powerful Understanding: Helping Students Explore, Question, and Transform Their Thinking About Themselves and the World Around Them***

Pembroke Publishers, 2018. 172p. 9781-55138-328-6. Pbk. \$24.95

Rating: E

*"Powerful Understanding hopes to provide teachers with a model to help students develop a deeper understanding of what they are learning."* (p. 11) Adrienne Gear's approach is based on the "Know-Do-Understand" model driven by the competencies of: Communication, Thinking and Personal and Social. The focus is on deep understanding and application of knowledge instead of memorization of facts. *"We are moving from teaching students what to think to teaching them how to think."* (p. 12) The Powerful Understanding Model is structured so that it can apply to any level of instruction in any subject area. It engages students by exploring topics, interacting with information through inquiry or investigation, and developing their own thinking about the topic in order to understand the content.

In the four chapters of the book, Adrienne Gear explains: *"The Components of Powerful Understanding," "Lessons on Understanding Self," "Lessons on Understanding Others,"* and *"Lessons on Understanding the World."* She provides specific and detailed strategies to introduce the Powerful Understanding model. She explains that all children need social-emotional learning as well as those competencies outlined in the curriculum documents. Skills such as self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills and responsible decision-making are critical in today's world. The chapter on "Self" discusses ways to increase self-awareness so that students can build strong and more positive identities. Topics include: names, family, cultural identity, traditions and celebrations, feelings, fears, moral compass, dreams and uniqueness. Each chapter is enhanced by lesson details, indigenous connections, lists of anchor books, and very useful blackline masters.

The graphic features of this text are useful. “*Indigenous Connections*” text boxes provide interesting information, and there are numerous examples of students work. The lesson plans are full of strategies, and there are imaginative blackline masters such as, “*Find Your Passion*” and “*Global Footprint*.” These tools are not only practical, but they will also provide great motivation for students. The ideas presented in *Powerful Understanding* are meant for elementary teachers, and the suggested books are at the primary and intermediate level. This is an important resource for teachers because, “*An essential goal for teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is to try to help students understand that they are an important part of our global community. No matter what our age, our actions can affect and contribute to the world.*” (p. 126)

**Thematic Links:** Self-Awareness; Cultural Heritage; Morality; Uniqueness; Friendship; Inclusion; Empathy; Global Citizenship; Peace; Poverty; Social Justice

Myra Junyk

### **French Resources**

LÉGER, Diane Carmel

*L'Acadie en baratte (Petit guide inusité des Maritimes)*

Illustrated by Raynard Basque. Bouton d'or Acadie, 2017. 120p. Illus. Gr. 3-6. 978-2-89750-070-2. Pbk. 13.95

Rating: E

In her book, *L'Acadie en baratte*, Diane Carmel Léger takes the reader on an historical trip through many regions of what was once Acadia. We are accompanied by a young boy named Nico and his eccentric Mémère who is the proud owner of an aged Westfalia van which she refers to as "ma baratte". As a proud Acadian, Mémère wishes to introduce Nico to their culture by accessing its rich language, delicious food, and infamous hospitality on an extensive road trip. They come to visit historical Acadian villages, forts, kitchens and museums, all the while strengthening their own familial bond through the expression of their shared heritage, for as Mémère states, “*Oh, Nico! Depuis ta naissance, je rêve de te montrer l'Acadie.*” The trip therefore becomes a life changing journey for both of them.

Mémère and Nico cover an impressive amount of territory, and their ability to perform such feats is due to the adaptability of their Westfalia van and the imagination of young Nico. Once an historical spot comes up in conversation there is no need to consider its distance or geographical barrier to entry for the Westfalia can be converted into a baratte sous-marine or a baratte-hélicoptère, or a baratte-montgolfière to overcome any obstacle. This fantastical quality to the book really lends the story an adorable premise, reminiscent of *The Magic School Bus* adventures. The Westfalia in this way becomes a vehicle of unlimited potential, allowing Mémère and Nico a myriad of possibilities to explore Acadian life and history.

The importance of Acadian culture is emphasized via the character's experiences. They hear and speak in the subtleties of Chiac, they express a constant desire to sample Acadian cuisine, Mémère sings children songs and takes the time to explain particular events and places. Important Acadian figures such as Pascal Poirier and Louis Robichaud are discussed. As well, they visit important sites along the way, discussing the significance of L'Île Sainte-Croix, Port-Royal and Grand-Pré. The Grand Dérangement is treated with great reverence in the book, as Nico reflects and sympathizes with the people of that age, coming to terms with his own sadness in the process. All of this is demonstrated with much dialogue between a grandmother and her grandson, who come to appreciate each other even more through their engagement with Acadia. The book is illustrated through a series of paintings, providing a pastoral feel to the scenes. In fact, the whole book does extremely well managing to capture a pastoral sense, as though they are masters of the land in their ability to circumvent it yet remain humbled in awe of its beauty.

**Thematic Links:** Canadian Landmarks; Travel; Acadian Culture; Maritime Geography; Family; Adventures

Zachary Chauvin