

Resource Links Excerpts
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Picture Books

LAFITTE, Dwayne

Over in the Harbour

Illustrated by Thérèse Cilia. Pennywell Books, 2014. Unp. Illus. Gr. Preschool - 2. 978-1-77117-332-2. Hdbk. \$19.95

Rating: G

Over by the harbour

In a bog in the sun

Lived an old mother moose

And her little calf one.

“Stomp!” said the mother;

“I stomp!” said the one

So they ran and they stomped

In a bog in the sun.

Inspired by the counting rhyme *Over in the Meadow* this beautiful picture book focuses on Newfoundland and Labrador wildlife in their natural habitat while teaching children to count from 1 to 10. Some of the animals featured are moose, the Newfoundland pony, polar bears, puffins, Newfoundland dogs, beavers, Canada geese, cod fish, seals, and foxes.

Thérèse Cilia’s two-page spread, bold watercolours are a wonderful addition to the text and will encourage readers to count while getting a visual interpretation of the habitat of each of the animals featured.

Young children will easily get the rhythm of the text and will be encouraged to participate in the responses of the young animals to their mother’s instructions as well as in counting the young animals as they progress through the book.

This book will be a great addition to school and public libraries as well as a great book for sharing with preschoolers.

Thematic Links: Newfoundland Wildlife; Counting; Rhymes

Victoria Pennell

Fiction Grades 3-6

CITRA, Becky

Finding Grace (A Gutsy Girl Book Series)

Second Story Press, 2014. 195p. Gr.4-9. 978-1-927583-25-8. Pbk. \$9.95

Rating: G

Struggling to cope with her mother’s depression and silence, Hope is a lonely young girl who takes solace in writing to her imaginary friend Grace. When Hope and her mother move in with her grandmother, Hope makes a shocking discovery that Grace is actually the name of her twin sister! Hope begins to understand her mother’s depression when Hope learns that Grace was diagnosed with polio as a toddler and her mother could not afford to support both girls and had to give up Grace for adoption. Hope and her mother decide to try and find Grace in British Columbia and adventure ensues as they integrate themselves into the small town of Harrison Hot Springs. When Hope meets Grace and the two become fast friends, Hope must decide whether or not to tell Grace who she is: will Hope lose a friend or gain a sister?

Finding Grace is a quick and engaging read that draws the reader in with its authentic voice of a ten-year-old girl. The emotion Hope exhibits is very sincere, and while it is childlike and suiting of her age, she nevertheless exudes a maturity that makes the story an interesting read for all ages. The book has a rather depressing start as we read about Hope's family troubles, but soon it becomes a fun, summertime read that manages to entice us with its varying moments of seriousness, humour and sadness. Hope's perspective towards her mother's depression was very interesting to read as portrayed from a child's point of view and it reinforced the idea that the illness affects everyone not just the victim. The ending was a pleasant surprise as so many children's books conclude with a stereotypical, happy ending that would likely never occur in real life, but Citra manages to create an ending that is at once both realistic and happy. Altogether a great summertime read that deals with serious life issues in a refreshing manner.

Thematic Links: Adoption; Friendship; British Columbia; Sisters; Depression

Stephanie Johnson

Fiction Grades 7-12

BROUWER, Sigmund.

Tin Soldier (The Seven Sequels Series)

Orca Book Publishers, 2014. 248p. Gr/ 9-12. 978-1-4598-0546-0. Pbk. \$10.95

Rating: E

Sigmund Brouwer certainly knows how to weave an intriguing mystery, and protagonist Jim Webb's blend of hard-earned cynicism and innate compassion stand him in good stead as he unravels the secrets of his grandfather's past.

Tin Soldier is part of the *Seven Sequels Series*, which takes Webb and his six cousins on further adventures, this time self-imposed, to defend the reputation of the grandfather they all loved.

Spending the week between Christmas and New Year's at their grandfather's cabin, five of the seven cousins discover a World War II pistol, a hidden cash of fake identities and money in the wall of the cabin. The discovery sets wheels in motion, and Jim finds himself in Alabama talking to Ruby Gavin, who he met as part of his first adventure, *Devil's Pass* (2012).

Tin Soldier, though, is only superficially about the mystery Webb solves; its most poignant impact comes from the lessons Webb learns. This may sound trite and clichéd, but Brouwer's message of tolerance is not only apropos to our current sociopolitical situation, but a truth that each generation needs to learn for itself. Webb is introduced by Ruby to Vietnam War veteran Lee Knox who, she says, will be able to help determine why Webb's grandfather had hidden two veterans' ID cards; or, rather, two veteran's ID cards, for while the names are different, the pictures are the same. Lee's questions, weaving upwards through his personal contacts from the war, soon result in drastic consequences, and the two unlikely associates set out to find answers.

Webb carries serious anti-military baggage from abuse at the hands of his ex-step-father; Lee harbours deep racial anger from his experience as an activist in the Civil Rights movement. Their common purpose only mostly overcomes their seeming antipathy, but they both recognize the similarities that bind them together more than their prejudices hold them apart. Webb's previous abuse and subsequent life on the streets of Toronto help him to empathize with the trauma Lee has experienced through the upheavals of the 1960s and 70s. His growing respect for Lee fosters a belief in Lee's opinion that Webb's generation have the power - like Lee's in their time - to make a positive statement in the world: "Guy like you," Lee asserted, "maybe you could come up with another song like *One Tin Soldier*. Make a difference, not just make money" (p. 109). Brouwer provides a few lines of the song by the Canadian folk group Original Caste for his readers, and I wonder how many will seek out the song - will get past the very 1970s folk feel and really listen to the meaningful words. Reading ***Tin Soldier*** I was struck with the similar pertinence of *The Fiddle and the Drum*, by a more well-known Canadian artist, Joni Mitchell. *Fiddle and the Drum*, though, is a cappella, and would not lend itself to Webb's transposing of the song from major to minor key, reinventing it for his own generation. Brouwer takes the issues of Webb's parents' generation and builds an analogy that readers will not only understand but *feel*. Webb - and in a lesser way Lee - learns that self-respect and

forgiveness are key to letting go of anger. Racism, tolerance, compassion, self-respect, and the power of song resonate through the novel. In the end, as he performs his adaptation in a small club, we cheer for Webb as much as does his audience.

Thematic Links: Vietnam War; American Civil Rights Movement; Nashville Music Scene; Folk Music, Social Values

Karyn Huenemann

Non-Fiction Grades K-6

KACER, Kathy

The Magician of Auschwitz

Illustrated by Gillian Newland. Second Story Press, 2014. 32p Illus. Gr. 2-6. 978-1-927583-46-3. Hdbk. \$18.95

Rating: E

During World War II, a young boy named Werner is separated from his family and sent to the Auschwitz Concentration Camp. He is alone and surrounded by sadness and cruelty. Then a small miracle happens. His bunk mate Herr Levin shows him fatherly kindness and friendship. One day, both are awakened by the prison guards. They demand from Herr Lewin, magic tricks. To Werner's amazement, his friend proceeds to do incredible tricks that astounds the guards and Werner. Later, Herr Lewin would teach Werner a magic trick; the only gift he could give him.

Both survived their imprisonment but would never meet again. They were real people. What happened to them after the war is outlined at the end of the story with photographs. Herr Lewin was a well-known magician "The Great Nivelli".

The dark brooding illustrations aptly evoke the darkness and inhumanity of the setting. The only spots of colour are the red in the playing cards and the Nazi arm bands.

This is an excellent tale to teach children about the horrors of the Holocaust.

Thematic Links: Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945); Auschwitz (Concentration Camp); Werner Reich; Herbert Nivelli; Magicians - Germany

Isobel Lang

Non-Fiction Grades 7-12

GILLMORE, Donald Allan

Uniquely Canadian

True People Endeavours Inc., 2013. 6 vol. + pocketbook. Gr. 5 up. 978-0-0018903-0-9 (6 vol set) Hdbk. \$489.00; 979-0-9918903-1-6 (pocketbook) Pbk. \$28.89

Rating: E

Did you know that: - during the second session of the 14th parliament of Lower Canada (Quebec) in 1831, the government passed Canada's 1st copyright law? in 1862 Mount Allison University in New Brunswick was the 1st university in Canada to admit women as students? on September 29, 1930 the 1st football game to be played under electric lights took place at Atlantic Park in Vancouver? that on March 8, 1965 Memorial University of Newfoundland became the 1st Canadian university to announce free tuition for all first-year students? that in 1986 Parliament passed the 1st Employment Equity Act in Canada in an effort to achieve equality in the workplace by ensuring that no Canadian is denied employment opportunities in the workplace unrelated to ability? that in 2011 Doctors Kevin Fund and Anthony Nicholas successfully completed the 1st operation in Canada using a robot to remove throat cancer from a patient at the London Health Sciences Centre in Ontario.

These facts are among the more than 7,100 stories containing over 12,700 Canadian “firsts” and unique subjects contained in the six volumes of *Uniquely Canadian* which has been written by Donald Gillmore over many years of research and fact-checking. Divided into 28 categories ranging from Aboriginal to Visual Arts, Gillmore explores happenings in Canada from pre-historic times up to the present day. Each volume begins with a variety of information including a map of Canada, definitions, Floral and Bird Emblems of Canada, Statistics, Flags and Coats of Arms, Canada’s National Anthem, as well as sections on using the books including special graphics and a list of the pictorial icons which are used to represent each of the 28 categories. Each volume also contains a bibliography and a comprehensive index unique to each volume. The binding of the hardcover volumes is beautiful and durable and each volume contains a silk bookmark for the reader’s convenience.

Each entry begins with colourful icons and the 1st accomplishment or uniquely Canadian fact is highlighted in bold text. Written in chronological order Vol I covers the period from prehistoric times up to 1859; Vol II covers 1860 - 1909; Vol III covers 1910-1939; Vol IV covers 1940-1969; Vol V covers 1970-1989; and Vol VI covers 1990-2012. The 243 page pocketbook which accompanies the set contains a selection of the stories from the six volumes as well as some stories which did not fit the format of the hardcover set. It contains over 1,000 firsts or distinctive people and events covering the 28 categories. The writing is very detailed and in many cases when a first is mentioned the story is carried forward to show the impact of that particular person or event.

This set of books is definitely unique. Pretty much everything you ever wanted to know about Canada is touched on in the many stories which Gillmore has put together and it is very accessible to anyone from about age 10 up. Two disadvantages I see are the fact that the stories are not illustrated and that there is not a comprehensive index for the whole series, however, I realize that these features would have made the set much larger and more expensive to produce.

This set of books would be an asset to all school and public libraries throughout the country. While the stories are short they will inspire researchers to delve deeper into the topics which interest them and they will provide trivia buffs with lots of information. With the 150th anniversary of Canada’s Confederation looming on the horizon, this set of books will be greatly appreciated.

Thematic Links: Canada - History; Canadian Firsts

Victoria Pennell

Professional Materials

HUGHES, Janette and Anne Burke.

The Digital Principal

Pembroke Publishers, 2014. 157p. 160p. 978-1-55138-288-3. Pbk. \$24.95

Rating: E

In their new book, *The Digital Principal*, Janette Hughes and Anne Burke argue that educational leaders do not have to be digital experts in order to play an important role in creating professional learning communities that embrace technological innovation. They believe that a digital principal is “an educational leader who is intent on maximizing student learning through the effective infusion of digital technologies.” (p. 7) There is no escaping technology in today’s world because “technological change is driving society in innovative ways.” (p. 5) Educational research indicates that technological integration improves student achievement, decreases dropout rates, enhances parent involvement and improves learning skills. The aim of this book is to show principals how to integrate technology into their school community in order to enhance student learning.

This book is not an attempt to fully explain digital literacies. Instead, it shows the possibilities of new technology and various ways to engage school communities in integrating technology into everyday practice. The first chapter addresses the definition of digital literacy as well as the role of transformational leadership in addressing digital issues. “We view digital literacies as social practice: it encompasses being able to collaborate and communicate in particular contexts while solving problems and making decisions.” (p. 11)

Subsequent chapters address the specific issues of implementing digital literacy in a school community: empowerment of stakeholders, planning, funding, equitable access, skilled personnel, professional development, technical support, digital curriculum resources, student-centered learning, assessment and evaluation, community

engagement and supportive policies and procedures.

This book is filled with realistic strategies for helping principals to implement digital literacy in their schools. Each chapter is organized with specific and practical suggestions. In Chapter 3, "Learning Culture for a Digital Age," there are numerous approaches for modelling and promoting the effective use of technology including: specific details on the transition from a computer lab to integrated technology, the use of personal digital devices in the classroom, and the movement to inquiry-based learning. Issues of cyberbullying and plagiarism are addressed in a thoughtful way.

Both new and experienced principals will find the information provided in this text worthwhile because, "The digital principal recognizes that citizenship always comes with responsibilities. Through modelling and promotion, the school leader helps teachers and students understand the social, ethical and legal issues that arise from the creation of a digital culture." (p. 103)

Thematic Links: Technology; Transformational Leadership; Innovation; Community-Building; Professional Development; Digital Citizenship; Communication; Cyberbullying; Plagiarism

Myra Junyk

French Resources

COMEAU, Marie-France

Diego l'escargot

Illustrated by Gilles Cormier. Bouton d'or Acadie, 2014. 22p. Illus. Gr. 2-3. 978-2-89682-031-3. Pbk. with CD. \$9.95

Rating: E

This book tells the story of a small snail from France named Diego. Diego has traveled to the shores of the Restigouche river in New Brunswick in pursuit of true love. Diego first encounters a slug eating an apple, and takes notice of the similarities between them. As he interacts with the slug, the slug is distracted and less interested in Diego than he is in her. Then a young girl comes along and notices Diego. She picks him up and sings a little song about snails, and Diego is convinced this little girl is his true love. He slowly crawls in her hands, leaving a slimy trail. The girl is disgusted, and drops Diego to the ground. A heron is on the lookout in the river, and notices Diego. In a quick snap of his beak, the heron grabs Diego and takes off in the air. Diego sees the river and forests pass underneath him as he is transported upside down the air. He hears the heron sing the same song as the little girl, and is again convinced the heron must be his true love. Suddenly, the heron notices a frog next to a small pond and dives for it, dropping Diego in the process. Diego, a bit disoriented, finds himself on a lily-pad in the middle of the pond. As he wonders where he is, Diego smells a wonderful smell. As it turns out, he has landed in the New Brunswick Botanical Gardens in St. Jacques, and there is a special guest chef from France inviting guests to taste specially prepared flowers. The chef notices the heron flying off with the frog, and then sees Diego alone on the lily-pad. The chef picks up Diego, recognizes him as a French snail, and sings the same song. The chef takes Diego back to his kitchen, where he is preparing a leek and cheese sauce to cook a special French dish: escargots! Diego is so overcome by the wonderful smells he ignores the signs that the chef is planning to cook him, and becomes convinced the chef must be his true love. Luckily, the chef is feeling nostalgic and decides not to cook Diego, instead using the shipment of fresh snails from France. He places Diego in a basket next to the lovely, plump strawberries. As the chef pours the snails into the pot, a small one lands next to Diego in the basket. As they share a juicy strawberry, Diego realizes he has found his one true love.

This book is well written in a style that is both interesting and educational for young readers. There are many opportunities for prediction, as well as several references to New Brunswick and French geography. The opportunity to discuss French culture is abundant throughout the story, giving children the opportunity to develop an appreciation for francophone culture that they may not otherwise be exposed to. Though some terms may be unfamiliar to French second language learners, this gives the opportunity to distinguish regional differences in language. The audio CD containing the author reading the story is a perfect accompaniment to the book, and is ideal for a listening center. The illustrations are cute and colorful, and provide the reader with a stunning visual depiction of the story and the setting. This book and CD combination would make a fabulous addition to a classroom or school library.

Thematic Links: Francophone Culture; Regional Geography; Love

Veronique Lavoie

