Resource Links Excerpts
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Picture Books

HELMER, Marilyn
That's What Bears are For
Illustrated by Sonia Nadeau. Peanut Butter Press, 2012. 32p. 978-0-9865329-2-4. Gr: Preschool -2. Hdbk. $19.95

Rating: G

While looking through the attic, Jenny finds a long-forgotten stuffed bear in a trunk. Her mother tells her "He's very old" and should be placed in a safe place. Bear longs to be hugged and is upset at the prospect of being relegated to the top, hard-to-reach shelf in Jenny's room. The other delicate toys such as the porcelain doll and china giraffe don't share Bear's desire to be cuddled. The Jack-in-the-Box shows Bear his broken spring and grumbles, "Look what happened to me …… The little girl did that". Bear is adamant: "I want to be hugged and cuddled. That's what bears are for". At bedtime, he wiggles himself to the edge of the shelf and hopes to land in Jenny's bed. Unfortunately, he falls on the floor. His next attempt lands him closer, and on the third night Bear successfully jumps into Jenny's arms. From that moment on, the pair are inseparable.
Sonia Nadeau's soft watercolour illustrations show Bear's assorted somersaults and tumbles through the air. His black button eyes are expressive and convey a range of emotions - from sadness, to surprise to finally joy.
This sweet, gentle story will resonate with children who have a beloved toy. Pair this title with Don Freeman's classic *Corduroy* for a bear-themed bedtime storytime.

Thematic Links: Bears; Bedtime

Linda Ludke

Fiction Grades 3-6

MORRISON, Patricia
Shadow Girl
Tundra Books, 2013. 217p. Gr. 4-6. 978-1-77049-290-5. Pbk. $12.99

Rating: E

Shadow Girl is a haunting book about alcoholism, poverty, and their social consequences. The cover copy describes this novel as heartbreaking, and I agree. I found ***Shadow Girl*** very affecting and sad, but it's a powerful realistic novel that offers strong observations on how immediately family problems and social problems affect children's lives.
When the text opens in December 1963, Jules is an eleven-year-old girl carrying heavy burdens. She is hungry, her father hasn't bought groceries for a while, and there is nothing but a small amount of spoiled food left in the fridge. Except for Patsy, her best friend, Jules has few friends at school and is sometimes the object of bullying. She spends much of her out-of-school time at the Six Points Plaza, hanging around the Zellers toy department and pining after a doll she hopes to get for Christmas. Jules is resourceful and responsible, however; she keeps herself quietly amused, stays out of her father's way when he's drunk, and takes care of the house and herself as best she can.
One night, however, her father's rage gets out of control, and he abandons Jules, leaving her by herself for several days. Eventually, a caring adult intervenes and Jules is taken into the custody of social services. All she wants is for her father to come back to her, for things to be the way they once were. Slowly, Jules learns that that's simply not possible. The book follows Jules as she comes to terms with life in foster care and the choices her father has made.
This is in many ways a difficult, unflinching book. Jules' father, Joe, is an unlikeable character, and the adults he

associates with are also negative and unattractive. One social worker is kind but ineffectual; another is bureaucratic and cold. The members of the first foster family Jules joins range from indifferent to hostile, and it's only when Jules' situation reaches a crisis that another solution is considered. I deeply appreciated the integrity with which the author examined the entwined issues of alcoholism, poverty, neglect, and forms of bias and prejudice. I also admire the author's courage in producing such a bleak and unsparing study of her characters' lives.
There are a few weaknesses in the text. The balance of showing versus telling is sometimes off, so at times the novel feels somewhat stilted. The narrative style - though not the content - emulates that of books from the early 1960s, and the exposition can feel somewhat didactic, particularly when Jules reflects on poverty and on religion. The conclusion also arrives very quickly, with limited resolution; to me, it felt truncated and not entirely believable. Still, this is fiction for children, so the ending is modestly happy. Jules is clearly still deeply troubled, but readers see that she now has the potential for real hope in a genuinely caring foster situation. It's muted hope, but still hope, and readers are left with the idea that positive change is possible no matter one's circumstances.
Shadow Girl is certainly not for every reader, but thoughtful readers who seek out realistic fiction will likely enjoy this book. It's sensitively and authentically written and very emotionally moving.

Thematic Links: Families; Loneliness; Foster Care; Social Issues

Leslie Vermeer

Fiction Grades 7-12

BOWMAN, Patrick
Cursed by the Sea God: Odyssey of a Slave Book II
Ronsdale, 2013. 208p. Gr. 6-9. 978-1-55380-186-3. Pbk. $11.95

Rating: E

I have been waiting for the next installment of Patrick Bowman's *Odyssey of a Slave* ever since I finished the fist book, *Torn from Troy*. ***Cursed by the Sea God*** did not in any way disappoint. *Torn from Troy* is a retelling of Book 9 of Homer's *Odyssey*, in which Odysseus begins to recount the ten years since his departure from Troy after its conquest: it tells of their encounters with the Cicones, the Lotus-eaters, and the Cyclops. In ***Cursed by the Sea God*,** the Trojan protagonist, Alexias, commonly known as Alexi, continues his journey as a slave on Odysseus's boat, the *Pelagios*. After their dramatic escape from the Cyclops at the end of *Torn from Troy*, the Greek soldiers and sailors, and their Trojan slaves, find themselves in a land where the king has harnessed the winds - he thinks… but the winds have become powerful, and his erstwhile reasonable punishments have been resulting in his peoples' deaths. Alexi's outspoken nature again serves him well; with his help, Odysseus reveals the truth to the King, who grants them the powers of the wind to sail to their home in Ithaca. Bowman's subtle humour comes into play, when King Aeolus insists that instead of "Your Majesty," they call him "Your Inclemency." When the sailors inadvertently release the winds, Alexi is blamed, and it takes all his wit and verbal abilities - as well as most of the novel - to regain Odysseus's trust.
The story from Homer that readers will most likely recognize is that of Circe, who turns the crew into pigs. Alexi, a pig himself, was not part in this rescue, but learns from Odysseus's behaviour that all is not black and white. While Circe is a wicked enchantress, she is also the source of information that helps Odysseus and his crew to survive on their journey, which includes a decent into - and return from - Hades. Through it all, we are shown the complex mixture of compassion and ruthlessness that Alexi recognizes - and resents - in Odysseus: he knows that Odysseus treats him well, but knows also that he is still a slave, and a pawn in Odysseus's clever manipulations of his crew. We are shown the depths of Alexi's internal turmoil, and care greatly for his success and happiness.
Once again, Bowman has created for young readers a faithful representation of Homer's plot, presented in a narrative that is fantastical, fast-paced, and sure to captivate young readers.

Thematic Links: Homer's *Odyssey*; Greek Mythology; Slavery in Ancient Greece; Circe; Odysseus

Karyn Heuenmann

Non-Fiction Grades K-6

LAIDLAW, Rob
Saving Lives and Changing Hearts: Animal Sanctuaries and Rescue Centres
Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2012. 62p. Illus. Gr. 4-7. 978-1-55455-212-2. Hdbk. $19.95

Rating: E

Animals around the world are mistreated, abused and used for human advantage. Author Rob Laidlaw brings attention to this fact through a discussion and description of animal sanctuaries and rescue centres that have been successfully founded and developed. What is an Animal Sanctuary? Chapter one begins with some basic principles that an authentic sanctuary should adhere to, then discusses animal needs; for example, space, company and activities. The following chapters give vivid descriptions of sanctuaries specializing in the protection of specific animals, from donkeys and other farmed animals in Canada to camels in India, bears in Asia and chimpanzees used in medical research.
Rescue centres also play an important role, often for migratory or exotic birds. Tortoises, pelicans and penguins are also often in need of rescue and their stories are told as well. But are all these centres authentic? The concluding chapters discuss this problem, including the establishment of the "Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries (2007). Finally the author discusses how young students can "be a voice for the animals".
This informative text is appealingly presented and filled with colourful photos of the many animals involved. The information is written in both lyrical and documentary style, highlighted as 'notes'. Written for intermediate readers, the information is clearly presented for young students. A table of contents, glossary and index are included, as well as a list of "selected sanctuaries and organizations". This text should spark student interest and provide many points for discussion. It should prove to be a popular addition to an elementary school library collection.

Thematic Links: Animal Welfare; Animal Sanctuaries; Rescue Centres for Animals; Human-Animal Relationship

Carolyn Cutt

Non-Fiction Grades 7-12

Aboriginal Biographies: GOLDSWORTHY, Katie. ***Political Leaders*** (978-1-77071-453-3); HOWSE, Jennifer. ***Artists*** (978-1-77071-454-0)
Weigl Educational Publishers, 2013. 32p. Illus. Gr. 7-12. Hdbk. $24.95 ea.

Rating: G

Aboriginal Biographies is a four title set that acknowledges some of the most renowned contributors to Canadian society. Two particular titles within the set recognize ***Artists*** and ***Political Leaders***, providing illustrated biographies of six individuals and their accomplishments.
Artists selects Aboriginals who are well known and spread out regionally. Bill Reid is an artist in the Haida tradition, carving totem poles to honour the Haida, an indigenous people of British Columbia. Prolific in his endeavours, Reid is also a writer, oral storyteller, radio broadcaster and historian. Allen Sapp is a Cree artist from Saskatchewan, finding his muse to be the ancestors that surround his passion. A victim of residential schools, Sapp finds redemption in his art and has managed to overcome his misgivings, having been awarded the Governor General's Award for his illustrations. Norval Morrisseau is referred to as the "Picasso of the North", for his amazingly vibrant paintings that are innovative and explosive in colour. Before he died in 2007 he accumulated a large number of recognitions, including the Order of Canada and a lifetime achievement award granted by Indspire. David Ruben Piqtoukun is an Inuit sculptor, finding his images nestled in stones such as alabaster. He has a close relationship to nature, and has received accolades for his carvings depicting the wild arctic. Alan Syliboy is a Mi'kmaq artist from Nova Scotia, painting in spiritual traditions which he finds in the faces of his family members. Syliboy was

commissioned to paint a 30 metre mural for the Vancouver Olympic Committee and continues to work for the Canadian government on large projects. Christi Belcourt is a Métis, inspired by her culture's traditional beadwork. Moving away from urban environments, into the Lake of the Woods region of Ontario, she finds inspiration in nature and paints while contemplating the power of Mother Earth.
Political Leaders selects politicians and activists who are working to improve not only the rights of Aboriginals but the rights of Canadians in general. Elijah Harper is a well known member of the Cree Nation who famously protested the Meech Lake Accord in 1990 for its neglect of First Nations in the Constitution. He continues to fight for human rights in the Canadian political scene. Ethel Blondin-Andrew is the first Aboriginal Woman elected to parliament. She remains a strong advocate for the rights of children and youth. Romeo Saganash was an unfortunate victim of the residential schools in Quebec, but has chosen to lead a life insisting that Aboriginal youth must become a part of the political system. He continues to represent Northern Quebec as a Member of Parliament. Paul Okalik is the first premier of Nunavut, who managed to succeed as a lawyer after life as a troubled youth. Okalik continues as a public speaker on the issue of Inuit rights. Shawn A-in-chut Atleo was taught by his family that the most effective way to rule and govern is in traditional methods. He continues to represent the Assembly of First Nations as its National Chief. Leona Aglukkaq is well known for her accolades as Canada's Health Minister during the H1N1 outbreak. She continues a proficient career as a Parliamentary leader for Nunavut.
All the profiles in Aboriginal Biographies are well laid out, with colour photographs of the individuals within the regions they inhabit. Inset around the photographs are a list of their accomplishments along with a short description detailing their family, education, and career. The series follows a standard template and manages it well. It is a well documented series on the many exceptional Aboriginal people that represent Canada.

Thematic Links: Aboriginal Artists; Aboriginal Politicians; Biography

Zachary G. Chauvin

Professional Materials

HARPER, Jennifer and Kathryn O'BRIEN
Student-Driven Learning
Pembroke Publishing, 2012. 129p. 978-1-55138-278-4. Pbk. $24.95

Rating: E

Student-Driven Learning is a resource book to assist teachers with the design of their classrooms, their implementation of curriculum, and their planning to meet the needs of all students as learners in their class. The philosophy of this resource material is to empower students to become lifelong learners by providing rich, authentic, experiential opportunities for learning. Students are motivated to take ownership of their learning through their own critical thinking - by wondering, creating, experiencing learning. The implementation of this strategy for classroom management, teaching and learning is outlined, step by step, from the smallest to the largest, and includes templates for planning and methodologies for assessment.
Recommended as a professional development resource for classroom teachers of K - 6 students.

Thematic Links: Classroom Design; Curriculum Implementation

Sharon Armstrong

Audio-Visual Materials

Peace Out
Indiecan Entertainment Inc./McIntyre Media, 2012. DVD. 43 min. Gr. 9 up. $259.95 PPR

Rating: G

Peace Out is an environmental documentary that focuses on a BC Hydro dam project that will cause irredeemable damage to the Peace River Valley. The documentary interviews parties on both the BC Hydro side and those protesting the project for its environmental impact. While the Peace River project is the running theme throughout the documentary, a critical examination of Western culture and our proclivity towards energy consumption is also much of the focus.
The relationship between quality of life and energy consumption seems inseparable to many of those being interviewed. The corporate representatives wish to raise the alarm on general everyday consumption that makes necessary such projects as Peace River. The protestors on the other hand question the motives of the corporations, for if massive energy projects are needed to keep up the energy demand in Canada, why is much of the energy being exported to the United States? Many of the corporate representatives in the documentary come across as being in it solely for the profits, for they rarely seem interested in fundamental change. One representative claims that his oil company will actively gather a nursery in the region where the landscape is destroyed, and will later re-establish those areas to their former state. Such bio-geographical impossibilities are not constructive, and the documentary provides a good scientific panel to repute these sorts of claims. More constructive solutions are then provided, like attaching a price on the extraction of fresh water. The massive amount of fresh water utilized by energy companies is not policed at this point, and the documentary argues that water is fast becoming our primary concern as a dwindling resource.
The impact that awaits Peace River valley due to intentional flooding is quite dramatic. ***Peace Out*** is fair in its inclusion of those with economic interests alongside those with environmental and social interests. One could not state an outright bias is running throughout the documentary, but those wishing to protect the landscape are presented with more intuition and foresight. Most importantly, the documentary rightly criticizes an unbridled Western style of life, where the need to consume is outstripping our ability to act responsibly.

Thematic Links: Energy; Hydro-Electric Power; Nuclear and Oil Energy; Economics; Science; British Columbia; Environment

Zachary G. Chauvin

<u>French Materials</u>

Collection Classique : VERNE, Jules. ***Vingt mille lieues sous les mers.*** Illustrated by Andy Catling (978-2-89723-071-5); SPYRI, Johanna. ***Heidi***. Illustrated by Iva Sasheva (978-2-89723-072-2); COLLODI, Carlo. ***Pinocchio***. Illustrated by Claudia Venturini (978-2-89723-073-9); BAUM, L. Frank. ***Le magicien d'Oz***. Illustrated by Liz Monahan (978-2-89723-074-6)
Adapted by Ronne Randall. Translated from English by Andre Gagnon. Éditions Hurtubise, 2013. 48p. Illus. Gr. 4-6. Hdbk. $9.95 ea.

Rating: E

The *Collection classique* includes several well-known children's stories which have been adapted from the original into English and subsequently translated into French.
Vingt mille lieues sous les mers describes the adventures of scientist Pierre Aronnax on an around-the-world voyage with Captain Nemo aboard his submarine, the Nautilus. ***Heidi*** tells the tale of a young girl who lives with her grandfather in the Alps and who is able to restore her friend Clara back to health when she visits the mountains. ***Pinocchio*** is the emotional story of the wooden marionette made by Gepetto who wants nothing more than just to be a regular little boy. And lastly, in ***Le Magicien d'Oz*,** Dorothy and Toto, along with their stalwart companions - the scarecrow, the tin man and the lion - confront not only the Wizard of Oz himself but also the Wicked Witch of the West.
The books have attractive covers with an old-fashioned appearance and a wonderful illustration pertinent to the story. The story is printed in short chapters on the left-hand page while on the right is a full-page illustration. Not only are the illustrations beautiful in themselves, but they will add a great deal to childrens' comprehension of the plot. Different illustrators have contributed to the series: Andy Catling (*Vingt mille lieues sous les mers*), Iva

Sasheva (*Heidi*), Claudia Venturini (Pinocchio) and Liz Monahan (*Le Magicien d'Oz*). Each book also contains a short biography of the author.
Given the reasonable cost and the attractive and durable nature of these hard-bound books, they would be an excellent addition to a home or library in order to introduce children to literary classics.

Thematic Links: Classic Children's Literature

Ann Ketcheson