



2018

A Blackthorn Key Adventure: The Assassin's Curse

Tessa McMillan

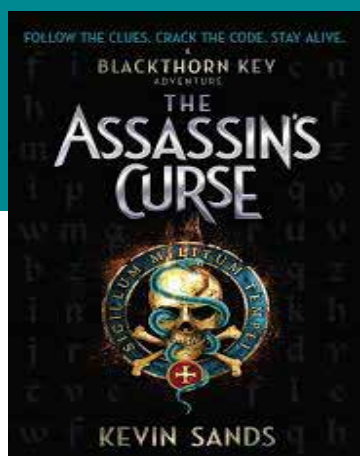
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Book Review

A Blackthorn Key Adventure: The Assassin's Curse

King Charles II invites Christopher and Tom to a party, where Christopher stumbles upon a poisoned guest and is attacked by an assassin. Acting quickly, Christopher and Tom save Charles and the king's sister, Minette. Charles asks Christopher, Tom, and Sally to join Minette's entourage to Paris so they can stop the assassins. Once in Paris, the three friends learn the origin of the curse on the French royal line. Christopher realizes the curse is being resurrected by a group of servants and nobles who want the Templar treasure for themselves. The master-mind servant over the assassination attempts flees, but his nobleman co-conspirators are exposed, thanks to Christopher, Tom, and Sally's investigations.

Sands delivers another death-defying wild ride through history in his third Blackthorn Key novel. Luckily, fans of the codes and clues found prevalent in Sands' first book will receive a hearty helping in Assassin's Curse to whet their sleuthing appetites. Compared to Sands' previous two books, *The Assassin's Curse* is a cleaner, sharper, and better-structured story. This is because Sands gives more background on the historical events and locations he bases his mystery on. Sands also breathes new life and relatable personalities into the pivotal characters of King Charles II and King Louis XIV. In these ways, history is brought vividly and solidly to life for readers to savor and enjoy.

Author

Kevin Sands

Illustrator

NA

Reviewer

Tessa McMillan

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

532

Year

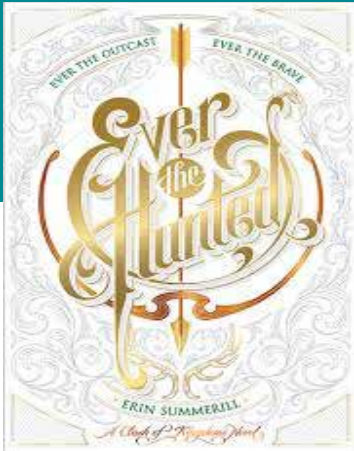
2017

Publisher

Aladdin

ISBN

9781534405233



Book Review

A Clash of Kingdoms: Ever the Hunted

Author

Erin Summerill

Illustrator

Reviewer

Lisi Merkley

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

400

Year

2016

Publisher

HMH Books for Young

ISBN

9780544664456

In the wake of her father's death, Britta is left with nothing and is caught poaching on the young king's land. As she awaits her death sentence, Britta is called up to speak with the king's advisor. To her surprise, he offers her a deal. If she can find her father's murderer, she will be freed. There's only one catch: the suspected murderer is her father's old apprentice and her only friend, Cohen. With death as the only other option, Britta sets out to find Cohen. Along the way, she discovers the truth about her father's murder and about who she really is. Eventually, she uncovers a devious plot to control the king and take over the country, and she's the only one who can stop it.

Ever the Hunted is well written and reminiscent of Shannon Hale's fantasy books. Britta is a believable character who matures and learns a lot over the course of the book. Erin Summerill, the author, does a good job at describing the inner turmoil Britta feels as she deals with betrayal and learns of all the secrets that have been kept from her. The plot keeps the reader invested throughout the book and never feels as if it is dragging along. The conclusion is a little rushed and forced, however, considering the build-up throughout the book, but overall Ever the Hunted is a lovely read full of messages about loyalty, trust, and the importance of honesty.

*Contains moderate violence.



Book Review

A Darkly Beating Heart

Author

Lindsay Smith

Illustrator

Reviewer

Meagan Andrus

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

264

Year

2016

Publisher

Roaring Brook Press

ISBN

9781626720442

Reiko wants nothing more than to exact revenge on everyone who has ever wronged her. While working in Japan with her aspiring fashionista cousin, she visits Kuramagi, a village determined to preserve historical accuracy. In Kuramagi, Reiko stumbles upon a historical artifact that allows her to step into the life of Miyu, a girl from the Edo period of Japan whose heart also craves vengeance. Reiko believes that in order to exact her own revenge, she has to help Miyu with hers. However, Reiko does not know all of the secrets surrounding her sojourns into Miyu's life, or what has been going on in her own modern timeline. She learns the dangers of giving in to hate and is finally able to purge both herself and Miyu of their vengeful desires.

This book is difficult to rate because it is very dark and disturbing at times. On the one hand, Reiko is pretty messed up and is a very unreliable narrator, often fantasizing about killing herself or others. On the other hand, the narrative is richly detailed and the plot is very compelling. The historical details are accurate and fascinating. Smith does a really good job of weaving together a powerful, if unconventional, story between the two timelines. While this is an enjoyable read, it should be noted that this book might contain triggers for those who have been victims of domestic abuse or who struggle with suicidal or self-destructive thoughts and tendencies.

*Contains severe language, severe sexual content, and severe violence.



Book Review

A Drowned Maiden's Hair: A Melodrama

Author

Laura Amy Schlitz

Illustrator

Reviewer

Cynthia Frazier

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

343

Year

2006

Publisher

Candlewick Press

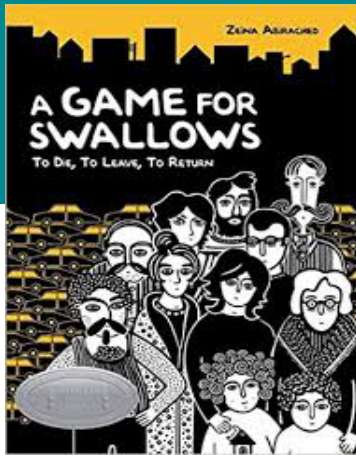
ISBN

9780763638122

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*Contains severe language, severe sexual content, and severe violence.



Book Review

A Game for Swallows: To Die, to leave, to return

Author

Zeina Abirached

Illustrator

Reviewer

Jared Leighton

Rating

Excellent

Level

Primary

Pages

192

Year

2007

Publisher

Graphic Universe

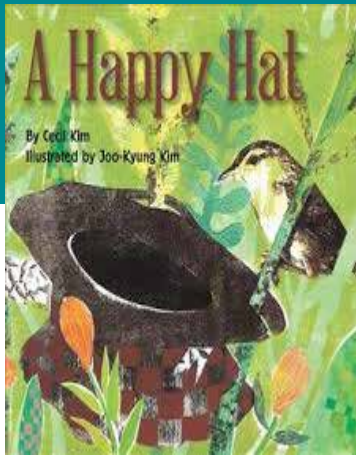
ISBN

9780761385684

Zeina is an energetic young girl caught, quite literally, in the firing line of the Lebanese Civil war. Zeina's home city of Beirut is partitioned into two parts, the West side being Muslim and the East side being Christian. Crossing into either side follows a deadly risk of sniper fire. One day, Zeina's parents take longer than usual to come home. Zeina grows very worried. To cheer Zeina up, her Grandmother tells of different stories of the family, neighbors, and friends. The reader is taken on a journey of life in Lebanon along with its culture and everyday activities. After a terrifying bomb raid, Zeina's parents return home safely the next morning.

Abirached retains the darkness of war through her black and white imagery while still providing the vibrance of her culture that can't be destroyed by shells or snipers. She spares blood and violence for an intimate look into her life under bombing raids. The artwork is unique and leaves the reader appreciating individual characters and events. The way that Abirached shows her story is too good for children not to read about her life growing up. This book is recommended for sixth graders learning about conflicts in the Middle East. Interpreting the artwork would be a fantastic way to help children understand the reality of war for other children not as fortunate as them.

*Contains mild violence



Book Review

A Happy Hat

Author

Cecil Kim

Illustrator

Joo-Kyung Kim

Reviewer

Kayla Packard

Rating

Excellent

Level

Primary

Pages

32

Year

2014

Publisher

Magination Press

ISBN

9781433813382

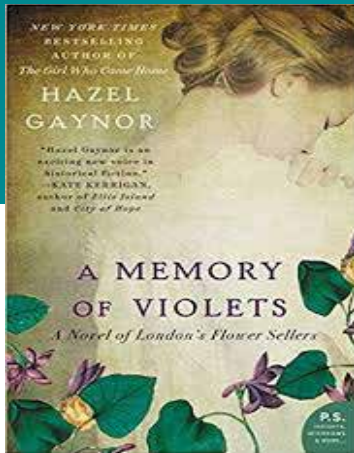
A hat reminisces about its creation and the ups and downs of being passed from owner to owner. When the hat is taken away by a stray dog, it finds itself alone in the woods. A mother bird finds the hat and builds a nest inside for her eggs. The hat provides shelter and warmth as the babies hatch and grow. As the birds fly away, the hat looks forward to future use and finds joy in helping others in different, and sometimes unconventional, ways. Readers will be inspired by this simple illustration of being positive amidst trying circumstances, feeling confident in one's own value, and finding joy in serving others.

Short, simple statements that are enriched by the hat's personal feelings and contemplation appropriately acknowledge that it is, after all, just a hat, while still providing emotional depth and insight that allow the reader to share in this story of belonging. The artwork and text together captivate readers and provide many opportunities for analysis and discussion about literature elements such as descriptive language, art mediums and personification. The book is a pleasure to read and the craft of the author and illustrator together create a beautiful tribute to the forgotten and worn-out goods of our childhood.



Book Review

A Memory of Violets



Author

Hazel Gaynor

Illustrator

Reviewer

Sydnee Burr

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Young Adult

Leaving a complicated past and all that is familiar behind, Tilly rides the train to London to start a new job as Housemother in Mr. Shaw's Training Homes for Watercress and Flower Girls. Grateful for the chance to start anew, and refreshed by the fact that no one knows her or her history, Tilly revels in her new life, job, and friends. After finding a hidden collection of letters in her room, Tilly embarks on a journey of discovery revolving around two sisters living barefoot on the streets of London. As she learns more about their relationship, she yearns for healing between her own sister and self.

Hazel Gaynor intricately weaves multiple viewpoints into one flawless story. Originally set on finding out everything she can about these two mysterious sisters, Tilly didn't expect to relate so well to their sad tale and discover her own wants and needs. Gaynor beautifully instructs readers on the importance of empathy, the strength that can be found in familial relationships, and the power within new beginnings. Appropriate for young adult readers and enjoyable for older adults as well, *A Memory of Violets* spins an important, seldom-told story.

Pages

386

Year

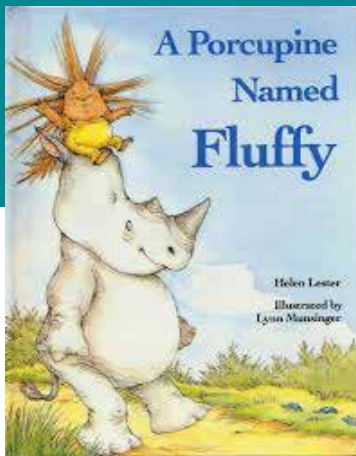
2015

Publisher

HarperCollins

ISBN

9780062376899



Book Review

A Porcupine Named Fluffy

Author

Helen Lester

Illustrator

Lynn Munsinger

Reviewer

Makayla Anderson

Rating

Dependable

Level

Toddler, Preschool

Fluffy's parents wanted Fluffy to stand out, so they gave him a unique name. As he gets older, Fluffy goes through a journey of trying to fit the stereotype that his name has given him. He tries everything from becoming like a cloud to soaking in the tub for a really long time, but nothing works. Ready to give up on living up to his name, he meets a rhino with an unusual name as well. After a good laugh, Fluffy realizes that he is unique and can be himself no matter how Fluffy he isn't.

This is a great book that can be used to teach children about being themselves and being unique. Teachers and parents can help readers look deeper into the meaning of the book by analyzing the feelings that Fluffy is experiencing and how he overcomes those feelings. It would be a great book for preschool and young readers. Teachers could also use this book to teach about adjectives. The illustrations are light, fun, and add meaning to the text.

Pages

30

Year

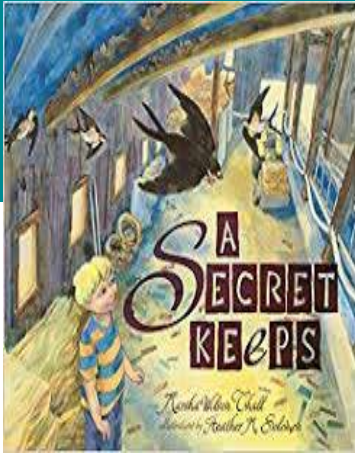
2013

Publisher

Houghton Mifflin Har-

ISBN

97805444003194



Book Review

A Secret Keeps

A young boy goes with his family to visit his grandparents' farm. They promise him there is a secret waiting for him, but when he arrives, no one will tell him what the secret is. He searches all over the farm to discover the secret, exploring fields and the barn, questioning animals. He enjoys time with his grandparents roasting marshmallows and helping collect eggs. Finally, he finds the farm cat's litter of new kittens. He chooses one to keep and names it Secret.

The rhyming narration of this book is highly whimsical and poetic. The words alone provide vivid imagery. The story meanders in a nostalgic sort of way instead of making an effort to get right to the point. The emphasis is definitely on the enjoyment of the experience rather than the ultimate resolution of the mystery. The art style seems to be mixed media, part watercolor and part collage. The variety of textures contrast well and fill every page with a wash of color. The mood of the scenes change mostly based on the lighting available, whether night or day. The characters' faces have enough realism that they give the impression of having been painted from a reference photo.

Author

Marsha Wilson Chall

Illustrator

Heather M. Solomon

Reviewer

Acacia Haws

Rating

Excellent

Level

Preschool

Pages

32

Year

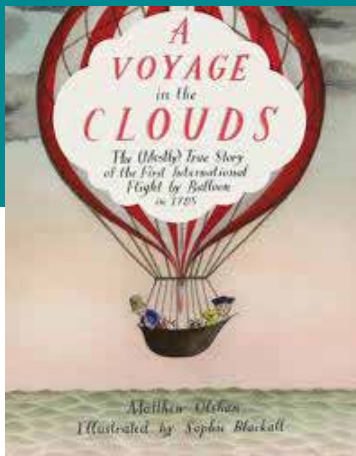
2012

Publisher

Carolrhoda Books

ISBN

9780761355939



Book Review

A Voyage in the Clouds: The (Mostly) True Story of the First International Flight by Balloon in 1785

In 1753, no one had ever traveled from one country to another via hot air balloon— until British Dr. John Jeffries and Frenchman Jean-Pierre Blanchard determine to be the first. Their aerial adventure is filled with hangups, however, not the least of which is that the two men are rivals who try to thwart each other before the balloon even leaves the ground. More problems await them in the air, forcing them to set aside their differences and find a creative solution that will land them safely on French soil.

With witty banter and downright humorous writing, Matthew Olshan manages to make this historical event come to life in book that will captivate readers as young as age five. Readers will be surprised to learn in the author's note that very few of the details in the book are artistic liberties; the author based the majority of the story on John Jeffries' own account of the voyage. Comic strip panels and frequent use of speech bubbles make Blanchard and Jeffries' personalities come to life. A muted color palette and wise choice of typeset throughout the book sets it distinctly in the past, while lightheartedly animated characters bring a modern feel.

*Blanchard and Jeffries urinate off of the hot air balloon to lighten its load. An illustration shows them from behind, clad in bloomers.

Author

Matthew Olshan

Illustrator

Sophie Blackall

Reviewer

Nicole Clark

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Primary, Intermediate

Pages

40

Year

2016

Publisher

Margaret Ferguson

ISBN

9780374329549



Book Review

Alan Cole Is Not a Coward

Author

Eric Bell

Illustrator

Reviewer

Meagan Andrus

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

262

Year

2017

Publisher

Katherine Tegen Books

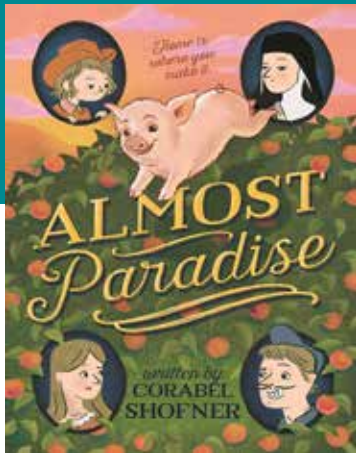
ISBN

9780062567024

Alan Cole likes painting and staying out of people's way, especially when it comes to his cold father and cruel older brother, Nathan. If he had his way, he'd spend his days learning how to paint faces and sneaking looks at Connor, the cutest boy in school. But when Nathan comes to him with a series of challenges, Alan finds himself stretched to the very limit of his comfort zone. Alan can't say no to the challenges because Nathan threatens to tell the whole school about his crush on Connor. Alan finds that the challenges push him to become something more than what he was—no longer a coward or an insignificant little goldfish, Alan steps up to embrace who he really is and hopefully make some changes in other people's lives along the way.

This book is heart-wrenching, funny, and moving all at the same time. Alan is a wonderful character that accurately relates the triumphs and mishaps of middle school. Readers will find themselves cheering for Alan as he slowly starts to break a cycle of abuse and neglect that his family has shown him for years. Though this book breaches some difficult topics, like abuse and sexual orientation, the overarching theme is that it's okay to be who you are, it's okay to be vulnerable, and it's good to try new things and step outside your comfort zone. Young and old readers alike will appreciate this book for empowering kids and teenagers to stand up for themselves and what they know to be right. Fans of books like *Wonder* and *Fish In A Tree* are sure to love this first novel from Eric Bell.

*Contains mild violence.



Book Review

Almost Paradise

Author

Corabel Shofner

Illustrator

Reviewer

Mavane Farnsworth

Rating

Dependable

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

304

Year

2017

Publisher

Farrar, Straus and Giroux

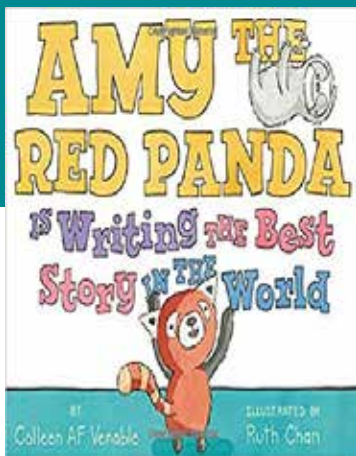
ISBN

9780374303785

Ruby Clyde, a twelve-year-old living with her single mother, wakes up in the back of Catfish's car. Catfish is her mother's boyfriend. Her mother, Babe, is sitting in the passenger seat. As a pit stop is made, Catfish impulsively commits an armed robbery, throwing both Catfish and Babe in jail. Ruby escapes to find her estranged aunt, her mom's identical twin, who lives nearby. Aunt Eleanor is a nun suffering from cancer, and together they attempt to bail Babe out of jail. Catfish testifies against Babe and reports that she encouraged the robbery. Ruby is put up for adoption and Aunt Eleanor adopts her. However, Babe and Eleanor decide to swap places like they used to when they were young. Babe will be able to raise her daughter like she always should have, and Eleanor will serve God teaching the inmates about Him.

Almost Paradise is a story of a family coming together. Ruby's mother, Babe, has always been babied and doesn't know how to take care of herself, let alone her daughter. Babe recognizes her weaknesses and works to develop a motherly nature. The story is based around four main characters. These four characters have very different personalities, but their stories aren't developed particularly well. Their uniqueness adds interesting elements to the story, but there is little pull towards their personalities. The characters' lives are spelled out through the eyes of Ruby, but there isn't much for the reader to discover. There are many exciting elements to the story to catch the attention. From discovering Ruby's estranged aunt, to an armed robbery, to finding out that Eleanor has cancer, there is always a plot twist to keep the reader engaged.

* Contains mild language.



Book Review

Amy the Red Panda is Writing the Best Story in the World

Amy the red panda starts composing a story, but then the letters explode and declare that she is writing the best story in the world. Before she can resume telling her story, however, her friends gather around and begin making suggestions. Upset at being unable to tell her story, Amy tears down the words. Her best friend, Mervin the sloth, helps cheer her up, and she finishes by writing “Amy and Mervin had a fun day.” The rest of their friends reappear to compliment the sentence and request another story.

Although the sentences Amy writes aren't quite “stories,” this book gets the point across that sometimes well-intended comments can block people from creating. Amy gets frustrated by all the input—something that many children can relate to as they are trying to learn independence—but is able to have fun again with the support of her friend. The watercolor illustrations do a good job communicating the emotions of Amy, cluttering the pages and obscuring her as the characters offer more and more conflicting advice before Amy shoos them away. The colors are bright and cheerful, and all the animals are furry and cuddly-looking, from the hedgehogs to the hippos. Children will be able to find humor in the comments of the animals as well as connection to Amy and her struggles.

Author

Colleen AF Venable

Illustrator

Ruth Chan

Reviewer

Loretta Farnsworth

Rating

Excellent

Level

Toddler, Preschool,
Primary

Pages

40

Year

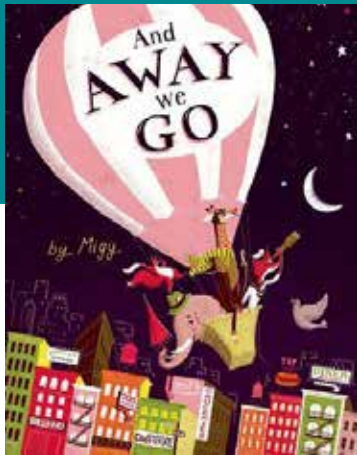
2017

Publisher

HarperCollins Children's

ISBN

9780062338488



Book Review

And Away we Go!

Author

Migy

Illustrator

Reviewer

Sydnee Burr

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Preschool, Primary

Pages

40

Year

2014

Publisher

Henry Holt & Co

ISBN

9780805099010

Mr. Fox orders a hot air balloon so that he can fly to the moon. Upon takeoff, he meets his elephant friend who not only wants to come along but wants to stop for some pizza. As the friends rise through the city, they meet more friends with more take-out suggestions. Soon the party consists of a fox, a pizza loving elephant, musical squirrels, a giraffe thirsty for milkshakes, a dancing rhino, and card-playing rabbits. The wind blows, the strings snap, and the balloon heads to the moon as the animals touch ground. But Mr. Fox isn't mad, he's too happy having fun with his friends.

Migy offers a delightful rendition of what it is to dream big dreams, and be okay when things turn out differently. Extraordinary plans are full of excitement, and that excitement is contagious! As Mr. Fox shares his dream with his friends and they share what they love with him, they create an unforgettable community that ends up being more important to Mr. Fox than his original space travelling dreams. Vintage looking illustrations reminiscent of old time Paris lure in adults, making it easy to relent when their young charges ask for Migy's book again and again.



Book Review

And She Was

Author

Jessica Verdi

Illustrator

Reviewer

Meagan Andrus

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Young Adult

Pages

353

Year

2018

Publisher

Point

ISBN

9781338150537

Eighteen-year-old Dara has just graduated high school and wants her mother's support for her to go pro in the tennis world. While searching for some legal documents, Dara discovers a major secret: her mother is actually her biological father, and transitioned when Dara was very young. Without waiting for a bigger explanation, Dara leaves to find some answers about her extended family. Along the way, her mother writes her e-mails to explain what she went through growing up and why she did what she did. Dara is at first happy with her new extended family but later realizes that large houses and personal chefs do not necessitate happy, supportive families. In the end, Dara is able to understand her mother on a deeper level than she ever has before and learn what being a family really means.

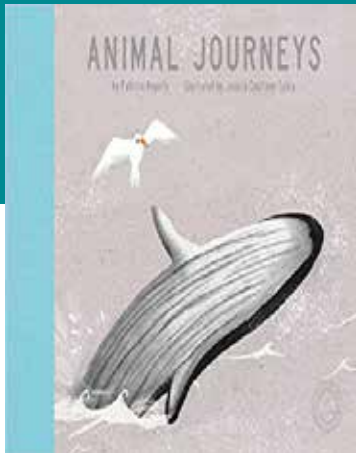
This book is excellent for its engaging storyline and interesting characters, but what makes this book stand out is the way it treats the issue of having a transgender parent, as well as the transgender topic in general. Every teen, young adult, and older adult should read this book in order to better understand what it's like for some transgender people. The situations in this book are very specific to that character, but the feelings and trials and struggles are commonly shared by the transgender community. This book will open the reader's eyes to this topic and its surrounding issues. Overall, this book is an emotional and fun read, and is one of few books that will leave the reader feeling changed in some way.

*Contains severe language, moderate sexual content, and mild violence. (Trigger warnings: domestic abuse, mental illness, suicide.)



Book Review

Animal Journeys



Author

Patricia Hegarty

Illustrator

Jessica Courtney-Tickle

Reviewer

Haley Cook

Rating

Excellent

Level

Primary

Pages

68

Year

2017

Publisher

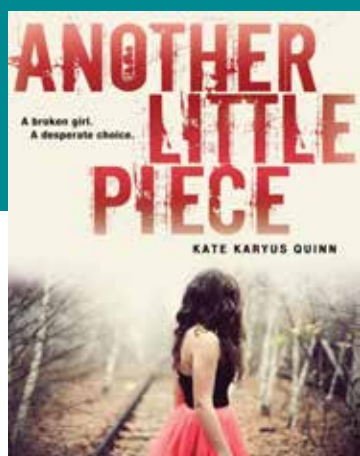
360 Degrees

ISBN

9781944530044

Animal Journeys details the journeys of many different animals, with some traveling huge expanses of land and others hardly moving more than a few feet throughout their lifetime. Patricia Hegarty starts by showing all of the long distance migrating animals traveling up to 57,000 miles. From Arctic terns to ruby-throated hummingbirds, each animal has a unique journey. Hegarty then explores several marine animals that migrate, including reindeer, hippopotamuses, and humpback whales. Migrating animals who live in extreme temperatures come next in the book, including the fennec fox and the dung beetle, and then the book ends by sharing the interesting behaviors of some animals as they journey.

Patricia Hegarty has created a beautiful book with the help of illustrator Jessica Courtney-Tickle. This book has a wealth of knowledge about many different types of animals presented in a clear, easy to read, and visually appealing format. The information is engaging due to the many fun facts included alongside the bright illustrations, which show the animal that is being written about. The book can be read in spurts because one animal is covered in one to two page sections. This makes it a great book to reference multiple times during a longer time frame, but it can also be read in one sitting. This book is perfect for animal lovers or those looking to learn some fun facts about many types of animals. It is perfect for second and third grade readers, but is enjoyable for any reader interested in animals.



Book Review

Another Little Piece

Author

Kate Karyus Quinn

Illustrator

Reviewer

Cynthia Frazier

Rating

Significant Shortcom-

Level

Young Adult

Pages

422

Year

2013

Publisher

HarperTeen

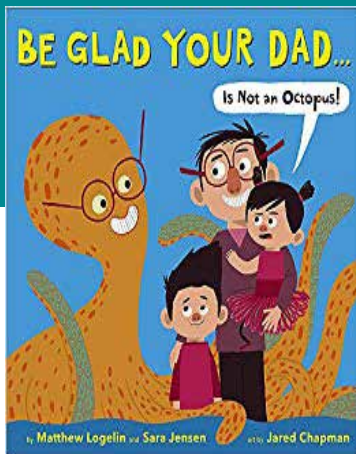
ISBN

9780062135957

Annaliese Rose Gordon was last seen the year before running out of the woods at a high school party, screaming and bleeding profusely from a head injury. Now she has been found walking along a road hundreds of miles away from her home with no memory of her life before or since. Though her parents are trying hard to help her adjust back to her old life, Annaliese still thinks of them as the mom, the dad or the parents. Annaliese is beginning to realize that her body doesn't quite fit, and the memories and flashbacks she dreams of are of other girls in other situations, maybe even other lives. She sees oaths taken, lots of blood, and realizes she needs to find out who and what she is. When she finds the razor with names carved into the handle she begins to identify with one of them, Anna.

Kate Karyus Quinn has written a supernatural thriller as her debut novel that weaves a fragmented story line from past to present and back multiple times in the book. Told from the point of view of Annaliese, it is a mass of fractured memories, flashbacks, and visions of strange people which makes this book difficult to unravel and understand. The prose is good, descriptions are well written, and using the bad poetry of a sixteen year old protagonist to introduce each chapter is a method in itself to clue the reader into another little piece of the plot. Due to the subject matter, the confusing plot, and adult themes contained in this book it may be a more appropriate read for high school age youth to adult.

*Contains severe violence, severe sexual content, and severe language.



Book Review

Be Glad Your Dad is Not an Octopus

Be Glad Your Dad Is Not an Octopus by Matthew Logelin and Sara Jensen is a humorous story of a brother and sister who recognize their dad isn't perfect and make plans for a new one! However, if their dad was any number of animals, they might be in a worse situation. The kids learn that, in the end, maybe their dad isn't so bad after all.

From the artwork to the interesting facts about certain animals (glossary included), Be Glad Your Dad Is Not an Octopus is a great read for kids who need some Dad appreciation. Some parents have every right to be weary of the message the book can send about fathers, but all in all, it is a cute story for when a child is mad at Dad.

Author

Matthew Logelin and

Illustrator

Jared Chapman

.....

Reviewer

Shelby Bunker

Rating

Dependable

Level

Toddler, Preschool

.....

Pages

36

Year

2016

Publisher

Little, Brown and Com-

ISBN

9780316254380



Book Review

Betty Before X

Author

Ilyasah Shabazz

Illustrator

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Intermediate

Pages

216

Year

2018

Publisher

Farrar Straus Giroux

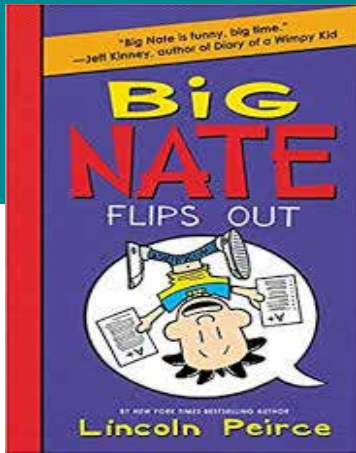
ISBN

9780374306106

No matter how hard she tries, Betty just can't get her mother, Ollie Mae, to love her. One day, Betty decides that she has had enough of the beatings and lack of love, and so she runs away. A kind, well-off couple takes her in as their daughter. Soon, Betty and her friend Sue-setta begin volunteering with the Housewives' League, an organization that encourages people to not shop at places where Negroes can't be hired. With all the prejudice, racism, and hate surrounding blacks at this time, Betty is determined to make a difference and learns from her new mother's example how to be a leader, be kind, and help those around you. When an African American boy is shot and killed, tensions are heightened. Betty resolves to help by aiding the family, because it is through caring for others that the best work is done.

This is an excellent work of historical fiction about the childhood of activist Betty Shabazz, written by her own daughter. The story is in first person, becoming much more real and personal, as it is as if we are hearing it from Betty herself. Set in the 1940s, readers will experience the turmoil and prejudice of the pre-Civil Rights period. Yet even with these difficult times as the background, this story emphasizes finding the good and counting your blessings, especially in bleak situations. This book follows Betty as she learns how to find her voice and make a stand, starting with small differences in the community. Her early experiences helped shape who Betty eventually became, and this story shows the development of both her leadership and her desire to help change come. An inspiring story of a girl seeking for belonging and a better world, Betty Before X is well worth the read.

*Briefly mentions lynching and a boy being shot.



Book Review

Big Nate: Flips Out

Author

Lincoln Peirce

Illustrator

Reviewer

Haley Cook

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Primary, Intermediate

Pages

224

Year

2016

Publisher

HarperCollins

ISBN

9780062367525

Nate has just joined the yearbook club with his two best friends, Francis and Teddy, but to their dismay, the director is Gina, a bossy fellow sixth grader. Nate decides that his role in yearbook should be photographer so he can contribute lots of humorous candid photos for his fellow classmates to enjoy. Unfortunately, Nate is not known for being tidy and there's no way Mrs. Godfrey, the audiovisual director, will allow him to take a camera - that is, unless Nate can convince Francis to borrow it for him. After receiving the borrowed camera from Francis, it goes missing and Nate must find it before his friendship with Francis is damaged forever.

Lincoln Peirce has created a book that is very appealing and relatable to young readers. Students in fifth through seventh grade will especially relate with the content, but younger and older children may still enjoy it. It is designed as a mix of comics and traditional text. The comics feature funny illustrations that help readers visualize the characters and see the dialogue. The only problem with this format is that sometimes the pages are very busy and may be difficult for inexperienced readers to comprehend. However, the organization tends to be neat, orderly, and appealing. There are many jokes, most of which are funny and some of which may go over young readers' heads. There are multiple conflicts and resolutions throughout the plot, keeping this book engaging but also fast paced. Children of all ages will enjoy reading this book.

Comment



Book Review

Biggest, Baddest Book of Bugs

Author

Anders Hanson & Elissa

Illustrator

Reviewer

Kati Penovich

Rating

Excellent

Level

Primary

Pages

24

Year

2013

Publisher

ABDO Publishing Com-

ISBN

9781617834059

This bug-focused book begins by defining the word bug and giving a brief overview of the types of creatures that are classified as bugs. Readers will learn about the life cycle of bugs who go through metamorphosis and the strategies that bugs use to stay alive despite having many predators. The book goes on to explain some strange bug behaviors such as bees dancing and ants walking in a circle. The book ends on an interactive note, inviting readers to test their ability to recognize bugs up close and to answer questions about what they have just read.

This book is sure to delight kids who are interested in learning more about the world around them and the creatures that inhabit it. The vivid photographs of bugs often run off the page, almost creating a three-dimensional effect. The interactive nature of this book allows readers to become more engaged in the learning process by completing activities such as searching for camouflaged bugs and answering true/false questions. The large and brightly colored headings on each page make it immediately obvious what each section will highlight, which creates interest and allows readers to quickly focus on each new topic. In addition to learning to identify many types of bugs, readers will learn new bug-related terms such as bioluminescent and metamorphosis. This engaging and informational book would make a great addition to a school library or a child's home collection.



Book Review

Bug Girl

Author

Benjamin Harper and

Illustrator

Anoosha Syed

Reviewer

Becky Jamieson

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate

Pages

301

Year

2017

Publisher

Imprint

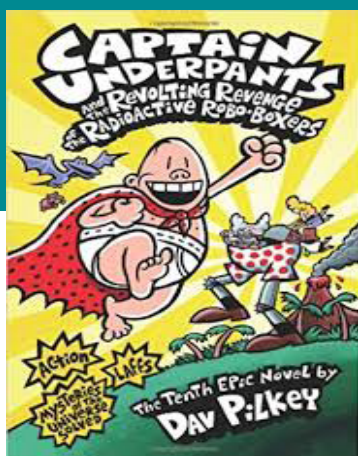
ISBN

9781250106612

Oyster Cove has two superheroes that no one has seen in many years, but Amanda still has faith that they will save the town. When green monsters start appearing, the superheroes only watch as they are captured. It is then up to the next generation of superheroes to save the day. Amanda and Emily, daughters of the old heroes, each start developing superpowers. These ex-best friends will have to put their sixth-grade middle school animosity behind them if they want to save the town and their mothers. Using their new powers and a little help from their sidekick Vincent, the girls manage to defeat the Exterminator and save the town.

The main character's love of bugs and bug-based powers would make this book a good supplement for any teacher doing a unit on bugs. There are even cool bug facts at the beginning of every few chapters that could be used to give students a quick overview of some of the abilities of bugs. This book would also be appropriate for any young superhero fans that want to see new powers in action. Young women in particular may enjoy reading about female superheroes since so many of the big-name heroes like Superman and Batman are male. This book's message is about coming together in times of need and to do what is right because it is right, and that neither fear nor anger should stop someone from acting to help others. The main character embodies these traits and is a good role model for readers.

*Contains mild violence.



Author

Dav Pilkey

Illustrator

Reviewer

Haley Cook

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Primary, Intermediate

Pages

192

Year

2013

Publisher

Scholastic

ISBN

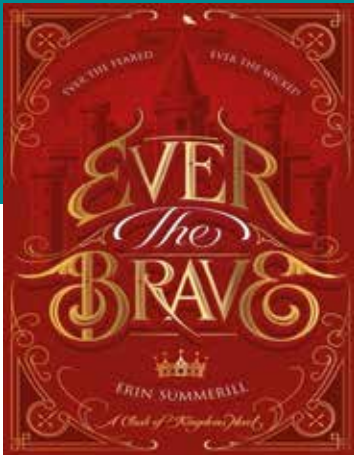
9780545175364

Book Review

Captain Underpants and the Revolting Revenge of the Radioactive Robo-Boxers

Tippy Tinkletrousers, ever the super villain, wants revenge on Captain Underpants, his nemesis. Tippy has time travel on his side, and with another Tippy from the past, he is ready to wreak havoc and defeat Captain Underpants once and for all! George and Harold, along with their trusty pets, Crackers and Sulu, must try and stop Tippy as he attempts to extract his revenge, which ends up causing the extinction of dinosaurs and the ice age in the process. Unfortunately, George and Harold's time machine is destroyed, so they need Tippy to get them back to the present. With the help of their pets, some cavemen, and of course, Captain Underpants, they are able to make it back safe and sound with a few hilarious kinks along the way.

Dav Pilkey has perfected the hybrid between comic and chapter book. He organizes the text in a way that appeals to all readers and includes frequent humorous comics with illustrations to keep children engaged. The potty humor is on point for the audience, but is witty and tastefully planned, causing many adult readers to snicker as well. The comics are designed as if written by a child, but the main body of text uses proper spelling and grammar. The famous 'Flip-O-Rama' brings the action to life as the reader is able to simply flip a page and see low-scale animation in action. The plot humorously includes explanations for the extinction of dinosaurs, the ice age, and the creation of the earth, which may spark a child's interest in learning more about the true reasons.



Book Review

Clash of Kingdoms #2: Ever the Brave

Author

Erin Summerill

Illustrator

Reviewer

Lisi Merkley

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

464

Year

2017

Publisher

HMH Books for Young

ISBN

9780544664463

After fighting to save the king and her kingdom that doesn't accept her, all Britta wants is to live a normal, boring life in her cottage and maybe marry Cohen. But when the woman who almost took over the country in book one starts kidnapping all the channelers—women with magical abilities—in the neighboring country, it's up to Britta to save the day again. Working with the king, Cohen, and some new friends, Britta is forced to come to terms with her new channeler powers, face some hard facts about her family, and stop a war between two countries.

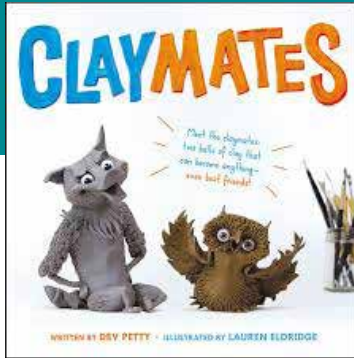
Ever the Brave is better than the first of the Clash of Kingdoms novels, because not only do we see a lot of action and impossible situations, but all the characters grow and develop over the course of the book. Different from the first, Ever the Brave is written with multiple points of view, allowing us to really dive into the characters' brains and understand why they do what they do. Britta learns to accept herself, powers and all; Cohen starts allowing others to act for and protect themselves; and the king grows into his role as leader of a country. Overall, this book is a great story with inspiring character development.

*Contains mild language, mild sexual content, and moderate violence.



Book Review

Claymates



Author

Dev Petty

Illustrator

Lauren Eldridge

Reviewer

Katherine Martin

Rating

Excellent

Level

Toddler, Preschool,
Primary

Pages

32

Year

2017

Publisher

Hachette Book Group,

ISBN

9780316303118

Starting out as two balls of clay, newfound friends are molded into a brown owl and a gray wolf by an artist. Left alone on the worktable, the clay creations come to life. With endless possibilities, they begin changing shape and playing with the art supplies left on the table. When they hear the artist return, they must hurry to get back to their original design.

The illustrations in *Claymates* are photographs of an actual art studio. This medium allows the reader to see clay molding as a new world of excitement and creativity. Creatively adding black swirls when the balls of clay are changing shape, the illustrator is able to add an element of magic to the story. This book is appropriate for young children and introduces the tools and methods used to form clay creations. It would be very useful as an introductory tool when working with this art medium.



Book Review

Coming Home

A boy waits in an airport, clearly looking for someone. He sees many other people reuniting with soldiers who are returning home. He watches people greeting their pets, their spouses, and their children. The boy makes note of them, but he continues to look for the soldier he is waiting for. Finally, he finds who he is looking for and they reunite.

In this book are very few words, and the majority of the book is taken up in sweeping double page spreads of highly emotive paintings. Children may enjoy flipping through the book, but it might easily bring tears to the eyes of an adult. The power of *Coming Home* relies heavily on the artwork and its ability to draw the reader into the mind of the little boy. Without giving the book that kind of full attention, the effect might very well be underwhelming. For anyone inherently interested by the emotion of such a reunion, this book would be able to recreate that experience.

Author

Greg Ruth

Illustrator

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Reviewer

Acacia Haws

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Primary

.....

Pages

30

Year

2014

Publisher

Feiwel and Friends

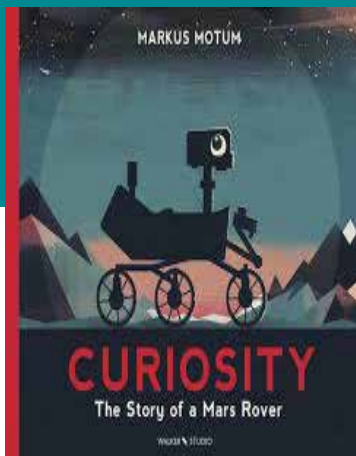
ISBN

9781250055477



Book Review

Curiosity: The Story of a Mars Rover



Author

Markus Motum

Illustrator

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Primary, Intermediate

Pages

56

Year

2017

Publisher

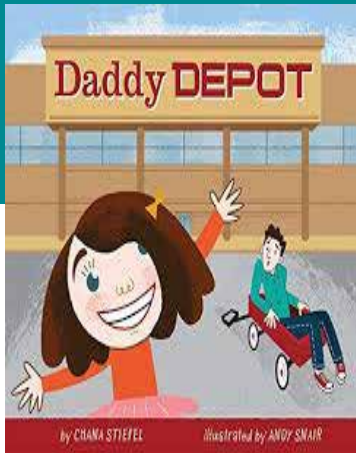
Candlewick Press

ISBN

9780763695040

Curiosity is the Mars Rover that launched in 2011. She has helped us discover much about the planet Mars through her exploration and tests. This book gives the history of Curiosity, how she got to Mars, and what she has done since. Written in first person from Curiosity's perspective, this non-fiction account takes on a personality and engages readers in learning about the Mars Rover.

Expertly designed, this book is a highly engaging and effective non-fiction picture book. The text breaks down concepts into understandable language and defines terms that may be unfamiliar. It is written as if Curiosity, herself, is talking to the reader, creating an interesting dialogue while teaching lots of information. Though the text is wonderful, the illustrations are what steal the show. They add to the message of the text through an expert use of space and well-crafted diagrams. Beautifully composed and highly informational, this book is a must-read for anyone wanting to know about the Mars Rover!



Book Review

Daddy Depot

Author

Chana Stiefel

Illustrator

Andy Snair

Reviewer

Mavanee Farnsworth

Rating

Dependable

Level

Preschool, Primary,
Intermediate

Pages

40

Year

2017

Publisher

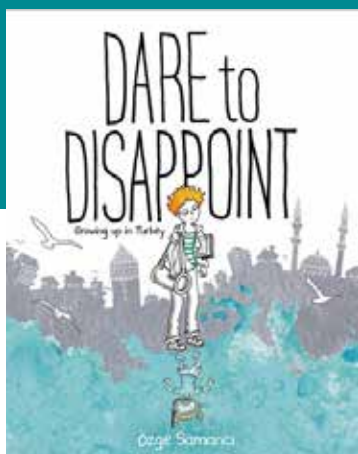
Feiwel and Friends

ISBN

9781250058898

Lizzie loves her dad, but sometimes he can be a bit distracted or embarrassing. While Lizzie is online, she notices an ad for a Daddy Depot, a dad megastore where you can pick out a brand-new dad. Lizzie drags her dad to the Daddy Depot, ready to trade him in. She immediately takes off browsing the different aisles. Each new dad she meets isn't what she pictured as the perfect dad. She searches all around, until she sees one dad dancing a silly chicken dance. She knows only one dad dances like that and realizes that her dad is the perfect dad for her.

Daddy Depot is a book that brings justice to all dads again. This relatable story helps the reader understand that we each have something unique to offer. Chana Stiefel is able to share a heart-warming message about dads that is hard to find in society today. Andy Snair, the illustrator, created the images using ink and digital elements. The pictures are simple and don't distract from the story. The illustrations are very simplistic. More detail would help capture the reader's attention and add to the brilliance of the storyline. The color palette is somewhat limited, leaving lots of gray area throughout the book. This book has a different story to tell that is refreshing and rare.



Book Review

Dare to Disappoint: Growing Up in Turkey

Author

Özge Samancı

Illustrator

Özge Samancı

Reviewer

Katherine Martin

Rating

Cannot Recommend

Level

Young Adult

Pages

190

Year

2015

Publisher

Farrar Straus Giroux

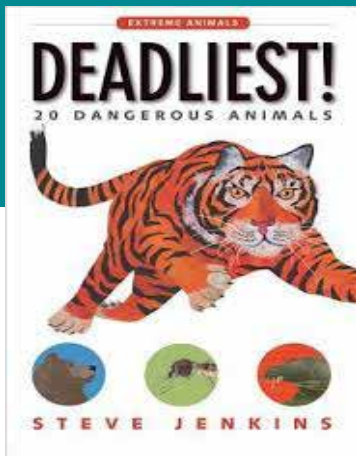
ISBN

9780374316983

All six-year-old Özge wants is to go to school like her big sister Pelin. She even sneaks into the school instead of going to the store for milk. As she reaches her teen years, school becomes Özge's entire life. Although once a dream of hers, it becomes a nightmare as she is encouraged study as hard as possible, get into the best high school and then college in Turkey, and eventually become an engineer. Özge struggles between pleasing her father or choosing to follow her new dreams of being an actress and swimming in the ocean. For a time, she attends two colleges, trying to pursue both dreams. Finding that this still doesn't make her happy, Özge decides to focus on pleasing her father. In an unexpected way, Özge finds a new dream—being an artist. She decides that this time, nothing will hold her back from pursuing this dream.

The title Dare to Disappoint is fitting for this book because it definitely did. The pages are filled with detailed black and white sketches. As time progresses, more and more color is found in the sketches, possibly analogous to Özge's increased awareness and personality as she grows older. While the images are fitting for the story, it is the content of the book that is disappointing. As Özge grows up and moves away from home, she begins to drink, smoke, and have sex. For example, Özge gets a boyfriend with the intention of having sex with him and sleeps with him one month later before breaking up with him. There are also scenes of violence throughout the book that would be traumatizing to children, including war scenes, assault, and possible rape. While all of these are realistic behaviors and events, they are not appropriate from young readers.

*Contains mild language, moderate sexual content, severe violence, and questionable behavior (drinking alcohol, smoking cigarettes).



Book Review

Deadliest! 20 Dangerous Animals

Dangerous animals are everywhere. This book compiles a list of the twenty most dangerous and deadly animals across the world. From venomous animals that live in the ocean to ravenous mammals on land, the most dangerous animals are all around us. Page by page, the reader will learn facts about each animal, including their location on the globe and their size compared to a human.

This is a great informational text filled with facts for young readers. There is a table of contents in the beginning that include pictures along with each title. Unfamiliar words are highlighted in blue, and the definitions are compiled in the back of the book. There is a map indicating where each animal can be found in the world, along with comparisons to human size. One of the last pages includes a list of each animal and the number of deaths per year associated with that animal. The last page is full of bibliographies, so that readers know where to go if they want to do more research.

Author

Steve Jenkins

Illustrator

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Reviewer

Makayla Anderson

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Preschool, Primary,
Intermediate

.....

Pages

40

Year

2018

Publisher

Houghton Mifflin Har-

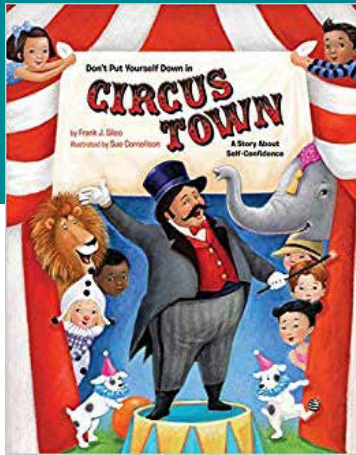
ISBN

9781328841704



Book Review

Don't Put Yourself Down in Circus Town: A Story About Self-Confidence



Author

Frank J. Sileo

Illustrator

Sue Cornelison

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Excellent

Level

Preschool, Primary

Everyone in Circus Town is busy preparing for the big show. Many of the performers are having lots of missteps and falls, and they start to get down on themselves. Ringmaster Rick sees the falling self-confidence and calls a meeting where he encourages the performers to not let their mistakes define them as a failure. He teaches them to think positive thoughts and be confident in their abilities. With persistence and self-confidence, they are able to keep working and put on a fantastic show!

A great way to teach children about self-confidence! The circus is a most appropriate setting for this topic and this story is a fun way for kids to learn! The illustrations are colorful and adorable, with soft edges. A Note to Caregivers in the back explains what self-confidence is as well as some strategies for building it in children. This story is straightforward, but still cute and enjoyable, and would be a great addition for an elementary classroom or home library!

Pages

32

Year

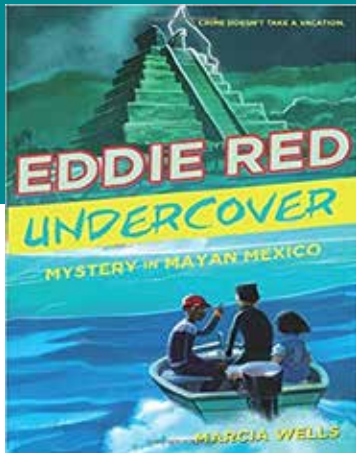
2015

Publisher

Magination Press

ISBN

9781433819148



Book Review

Eddie Red, Undercover: Mystery in Mayan Mexico

Author

Marcia Wells

Illustrator

Marcos Calo

Reviewer

Phyllis Rosen

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate

Pages

199

Year

2015

Publisher

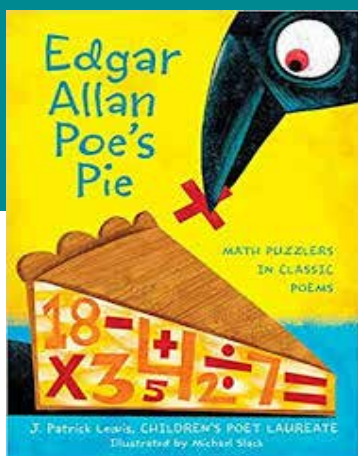
Houghton Mifflin Har-

ISBN

9780544302068

Eddie Red goes on vacation to Mexico with his parents and his friend Jonah. While there, an antique Mayan mask is stolen from the hotel lobby, and the police think Eddie's dad is the thief. Eddie and Jonah decide they have to solve the crime to save Eddie's dad. They encounter a street gang, the police chief's daughter, and other characters in their quest for the truth. They also get themselves into lots of trouble, including a broken arm for Eddie and a brief hospital stay for Jonah. Eventually Eddie's powers of observation help them discover who the thief really is and they are able to aid the police in catching the thief.

This is a fun story, if a little unbelievable, that young kids will enjoy. The story does a good job promoting family and doing what's right. Sometimes kids think differently than adults; this is neither good nor bad. Because they are so worried about Eddie's father, the kids in the book take some chances that are not very smart. They allow themselves to get into dangerous situations. On the other hand, because they are young they notice events that sometimes adults gloss over. This helps them to think outside the box and look for clues and solutions where adults might not. These two different perspectives would be good for discussion in a classroom. Helping kids to recognize when they are crossing the line into danger could be very beneficial in today's world.



Book Review

Edgar Allan Poe's Pie: Math Puzzlers in Classic Poems

What do you get when you cross Walt Whitman with a spider whose web-spinning was disturbed by a wind which blew sixty percent of it away? Robert Frost with boxer shorts at ninety cents a pair? Shel Silverstein with a hippo-po-tah-tum eating you at four percent per bite? In Edgar Allan Poe's Pie, children's poet Laureate J. Patrick Lewis cleverly integrates math problems into new adaptations of classic poetry using the original rhyme and meter.

Brilliantly executed, this book perfectly weaves poetry and mathematics. Teachers who want to emphasize transdisciplinary integration in their classrooms or who are looking for a way to challenge students will find great use for Edgar Allan Poe's Pie. The math problems presented are at about a fourth to sixth grade level and cover money, multiplication and division of percentages and decimals, division with remainders, perimeter and area, and fractions. Answers to each problem are provided upside-down in small print in the bottom corner of each spread for easy access. Additionally, a spread at the back of the book provides a brief narrative of each poet featured in the book.

Author

J. Patrick Lewis

Illustrator

Michael Slack

Reviewer

Nicole Clark

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Primary, Intermediate

Pages

40

Year

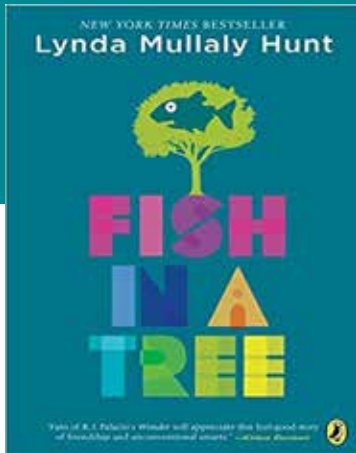
2012

Publisher

Harcourt Children's

ISBN

9780544456129



Book Review

Fish in a Tree

Author

Lynda Mullaly Hunt

Illustrator

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

266

Year

2015

Publisher

Nancy Paulsen Books

ISBN

9780399162596

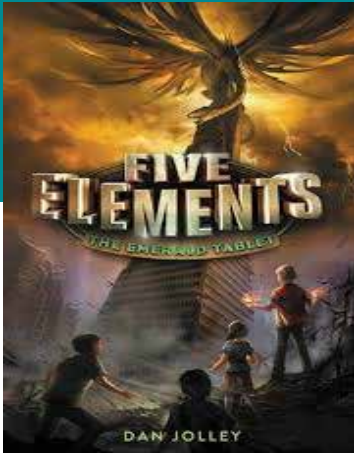
Ally has lived her whole life thinking she is dumb. She can't read or write, but nobody knows. And frankly, nobody seems to care. That is until Mr. Daniels. Mr. Daniels is different from any teacher she's ever had. He genuinely cares about his students and makes a special effort to help those who are struggling, without ever making a scene about it. With his help, she is diagnosed with dyslexia and he starts helping her learn to read after school. The safe environment he creates in the classroom, as well as the support he offers, helps Ally realize that she is not in fact dumb, but that her whole life, she'd been a fish, that everybody had been trying to make climb a tree.

Real and inspiring, *Fish in a Tree* tells a story of hope for those that struggle with dyslexia or other learning differences. Too often people who learn differently are treated as stupid or incapable, preventing them from progressing and reaching their full potential. But with the proper support and belief in their potential, children who have learning differences can prove to be successful. This story shows how one girl's life was changed with the help of a caring teacher. The characters in this story are lovable and well-developed and have you rooting for their success. Addressing themes of bullying, caring, and learning differences, this book is set up to inspire and uplift those who pick it up to read. A beautiful must-read.



Book Review

Five Elements: The Emerald Tablet



Author

Dan Jolley

Illustrator

Reviewer

Kenny Deem

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate

Gabe lives with his uncle, a professor of ancient history, religions, and legends. In an effort to solidify their friendship before he leaves, Gabe's friends decide to do one of the rituals they'd learned of from his uncle's collection. Little did they know they were performing real magic and had each bonded themselves to one of the four elements: Air, Fire, Water, and Earth. Unwittingly, they have enlisted themselves in a long-standing war and must learn to master their new powers before they become casualties.

Within the fantastical story of magic and monsters, The Emerald Tablet tackles the themes of friendship, trust, and forgiving oneself. The characters are well developed, as they stay true to their natures while exploring and facing their inner demons and simultaneously battling external ones. Put in perilous situations, they must learn to trust each other more deeply and decide whether they can extend that trust to individuals they do not know as well. These developments occur seamlessly within the narrative, giving the characters a sense of depth and reality.

*Contains mild violence.

Pages

291

Year

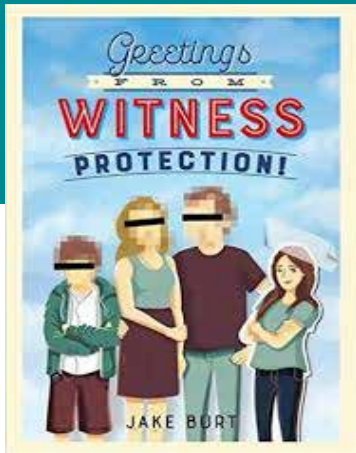
2016

Publisher

Harper

ISBN

9780062411655



Book Review

Greetings From Witness Protection!

Author

Jake Burt

Illustrator

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

358

Year

2017

Publisher

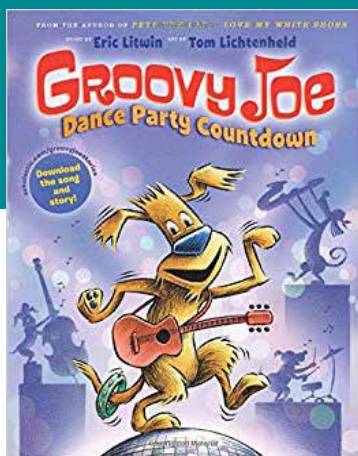
Feiwel and Friends

ISBN

9781250107114

Nicki Demere, a foster-child, is offered a position as the daughter in a family placed in Witness Protection. She disappears with her new family to North Carolina, becoming Charlotte Trevor. With strict rules to help them stay out of the limelight, the Trevor family actually seems to be making a life for themselves - that is, until the picture is posted. A middle school yearbook photographer posts a picture of the Trevor family, giving a murderous man the tip he needs to find them. With some ingenuity, the family comes out alive and the relocation process starts again. When Witness Protection tries to take Charlotte away, the family is adamant that she is their daughter and will stay with them. Triumphant, they move to Arizona together.

This book is a fast-paced and engaging read. The original plotline and characters are captivating and interesting. Life for the Trevors is not perfect, but their unique situation makes the family rely on each other and ultimately grow closer together. The end of the story is intense when the hitman finds the family; however, it does not exceed the development of the intended middle grade audience. With middle school characters and humor, this book is quite fitting for older children as they are sure to find it pleasurable. The uplifting themes of friendship, family, and being loved just as you are balance nicely with the intensities of the spy thriller genre. A story that both quickens the pulse in anticipation and touches the heart, *Greetings from Witness Protection* is sure to be a hit!



Book Review

Groovy Joe and the Dance Party Countdown

Groovy Joe is having a dance party! It starts out as a grooving party of one, but knocks on the door keep coming, adding more and more dogs! First $1+1$, then $2+2$, soon it's $4+4$ for a party of 8. Even then, Groovy Joe says there's room for one more, YOU! Start boogieing with Groovy Joe and his friends, and get some addition practice in along the way.

From the author of well-loved Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes, comes another grooving tale, this time focusing on basic math! Readers can practice simple addition skills as the numbers keep doubling. The accompanying illustrations are fun and adorable, bringing the rockin' feel to the book which is made complete with a song available for download on Scholastic. A cool book with dogs and numbers galore, get ready to tap your feet and work some equations with Groovy Joe and the Dance Party Countdown.

Author

Eric Litwin

Illustrator

Tom Lichtenheld

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Excellent

Level

Preschool, Primary

Pages

40

Year

2017

Publisher

Orchard Books

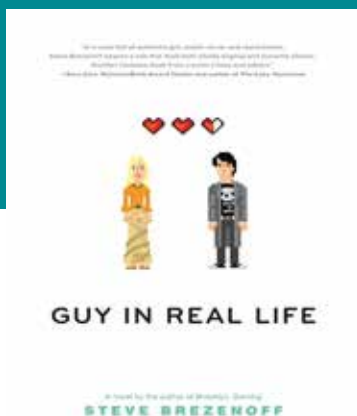
ISBN

9780545883795



Book Review

Guy In Real Life



Author

Steve Brezenoff

Illustrator

Reviewer

Meagan Andrus

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

386

Year

2014

Publisher

Balzer + Bray

ISBN

9780062266835

By chance one night, sixteen-year-old Lesh and eighteen-year-old Svetlana run into each other—literally. After that chance meeting, they begin eating lunch together at school and slowly learn they have more in common than they might think. On the outside, they're total opposites: Svetlana is a blonde embroidery aficionado and expert dungeon master of her friend group's RPG; Lesh is a gangly, metal-loving, black-wearing boy. While they get closer, Lesh begins playing an online fantasy game as a beautiful elfen priestess he names Svvetlana (two v's), partly because he thinks messing with online nerds is fun, but mostly because he admires the real Svetlana so much, he sort of wants to be exactly like her. As Svetlana (one v) and Lesh get closer and start to fall for each other, Lesh has to face his true feelings for the girl he admires so much - does he want to be with her or does he just want to be her?

This book is fun, quirky, romantic, and deep. Fans of online gaming and role-playing games like Dungeons and Dragons will find kindred spirits in the artfully crafted characters of Svetlana and Lesh, but even those who have no experience with such games will still enjoy the story. Told through alternating first-person perspectives, readers really get to know the two main characters intimately and will find that many problems they face are familiar. The book also tackles difficult issues like gender identity and what it means to be a boy or girl, stalking and the negative effects it brings, and family dynamics when you're a teenager and you just want to be alone in a family that can't seem to let you grow up. Overall, *Guy in Real Life* is an excellent read that expertly blends fantasy and realistic fiction.

* Contains severe language, moderate sexual content, and moderate (video game) violence.



Book Review

Here, There, Everywhere



Author

Julia Durango and Tyler

Illustrator

Reviewer

Meagan Andrus

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Young Adult

Pages

299

Year

2017

Publisher

HarperTeen

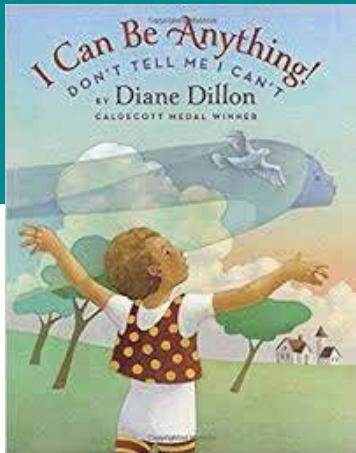
ISBN

9780062266835

Zeus has just moved to a small town from Chicago so his mother can follow her dreams and open up a health food cafe. He plans on having a boring summer delivering food from the cafe before starting his junior year at a new school. On one of the first days of summer, however, he meets Rose while delivering an order. She's amazing on the piano, smart, funny, and insanely beautiful. But she has plans to attend a prestigious music high school in New York and he's just an awkward junior. Luckily, over the summer, Zeus and Rose put worries for the future aside and decide to live in the moment instead. When complications arise, Zeus has to figure out how to balance love, family, and responsibility—and somehow convince Rose that what they have is more than just a summer fling.

This is a sweet, heartwarming first-love story that is told in a genuine teenage boy voice. Even the minor characters are real and well-developed. The story itself is funny and quirky with a lot of laugh-out-loud narration. What is most impressive about this book is the emphasis on making a teenage love story as real as possible—with all of the awkward moments and heart-fluttering glances and shy attempts at conversation. The authors do a wonderful job of capturing everything involved in young love, and while this book is not deeply literary or symbolic, teen romance fans will revel in the cute love story and uplifting side stories of Zeus's family, his friends, and the nursing home residents. Overall, this is a wonderful book that readers will devour in as few sittings as possible.

*Contains severe language and mild sexual content.



Book Review

I Can Be Anything! Don't Tell Me I Can't

Zoe can be anything she wants to be: an astronomer, a musician, an ornithologist, even the president! With enough hard work and dedication, Zoe believes she can find her talent and become whatever she wants to be. No voice in her head telling her that she is not good enough will stop her! Whenever negative thoughts come, Zoe encourages herself and reminds that voice that she can do anything.

This is a book that encourages kids to pursue their dreams and believe in themselves. So often, we allow the voice of doubt and discouragement to prevent us from trying, but this book inspires children to ignore that voice and work towards their aspirations. Everybody has talents and potential. With some dreaming and dedication, people can work hard to achieve their potential. Award-winning creative and beautiful illustrations fill the book with color. Inspiring words and delightful drawings teach that you can be anything you want to be. otherwise.

Author

Diane Dillon

Illustrator

.....

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Excellent

Level

Primary

.....

Pages

32

Year

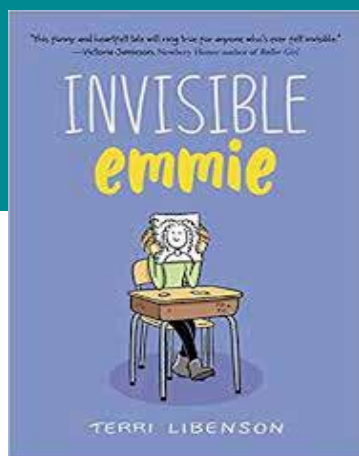
2018

Publisher

The Blue Sky Press

ISBN

9780062266835



Book Review

Invisible Emmie

Emmie is a girl who seems invisible. She likes to draw and keep to herself, so not many people notice her. But everything changes when she accidentally drops a love note she wrote to her crush. It gets spread all over the school and Emmie thinks she might die of humiliation. Before school's out, she has to face her crush in art class. There she finds out that everyone thinks her note was a funny joke and she starts relaxing. She ends up talking and laughing with her crush and another girl all through art. Emmie realizes that it's not too hard to talk to people and make friends after all.

Sweet, hilarious, and totally relatable, *Invisible Emmie* is a great middle grade novel. With a split perspective between the most popular girl in the whole school and a girl who never talks, it offers a unique combined whole that sheds light on two different middle school experiences. Each view is written in its own style, switching between a graphic novel and text interspersed with lots of pictures. With pictures and speech bubbles that break up the text, this book is a light read that is engaging and enjoyable. The laughs, the cries, the romance – this book has it all. Entertaining and heartfelt, it's sure to have you hooked.

Author

Terri Libenson

Illustrator

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate

Pages

185

Year

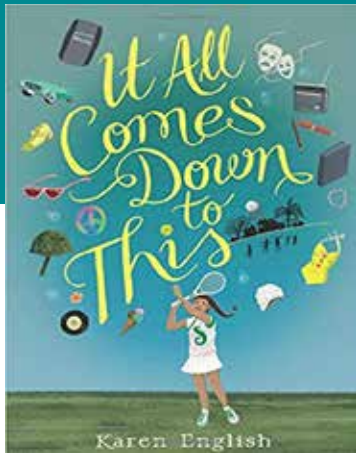
2017

Publisher

Balzer + Bray

ISBN

9780062266835



Book Review

It All Comes Down to This

Author

Karen English

Illustrator

Reviewer

Emma Patton

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

368

Year

2017

Publisher

Clarion Books

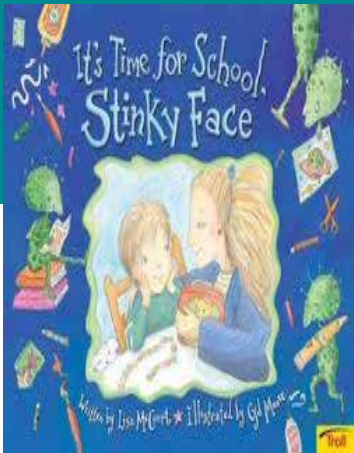
ISBN

9780544839571

Twelve-year-old Sophie starts off her summer with everything she could want: a best friend right across the street, a beautiful and confident sister, and a house in one of the nicest neighborhoods in Los Angeles. But, as the day her sister has to leave for college approaches, Sophie notices that things aren't that perfect. Her father moves out and her mother becomes more emotionally distant. She notices that white people see her differently because she's black, but her housekeeper scolds her for not having any black friends and for pretending to be white. As she spends the summer days preparing to audition for a local play, writing a story, and trying not to listen to the things the neighborhood kids say about her, she realizes that the more she sees of the world, the less welcoming it seems. The trick is to learn how to fit in without sacrificing the things that make her who she is.

It All Comes Down to This is a vulnerable story about the struggle to belong. The book, set in 1965, covers heavy topics, like extramarital affairs and racism, that may be sensitive to some readers. These issues are viewed through the eyes of a twelve-year-old girl who is trying to navigate the complexities of an increasingly adult world. This is a book about transitions: from girl to woman, insecurity to self-acceptance, and shelter to independence. So many of the emotions that come up for an adolescent girl are never openly discussed, and she may wonder whether she is the only one feeling these things. After reading this book, a girl doesn't have to wonder anymore because she will see her own complicated thoughts and feelings echoed in Sophie's life. Readers on the cusp of adolescence or old enough to look back at this time in their life would be the most suited this book. It All Comes Down to This does what all great literature should do. It reassures the reader, whether adult or adolescent, that they are not alone.

*Contains moderate language and mild sexual content.



Book Review

It's Time for School, Stinky Face

It's Time for School, Stinky Face by Lisa McCourt is a darling story of a little boy who has some concerns before he is ready for school. He asks his mom a series of 'what if' questions with different scenarios of how his day at school could go wrong. His mom takes his questions seriously and gives him creative and encouraging answers to show him that he will be just fine.

From the fun illustrations to the creative questions and answers, It's Time for School, Stinky Face does a fantastic job representing a child's fear of starting school. The inquisitive nature of a child is so acutely captured in this story. It can be frustrating for a parent to constantly answer a slew of crazy questions, but this mother makes it a game and responds in such a unique and engaging manner. This is the perfect story for a parent with an curious child or for a child scared to start a new situation.

Author

Lisa McCourt

Illustrator

Cyd Moore

Reviewer

Shelby Bunker

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Preschool

Pages

30

Year

2000

Publisher

Scholastic Inc.

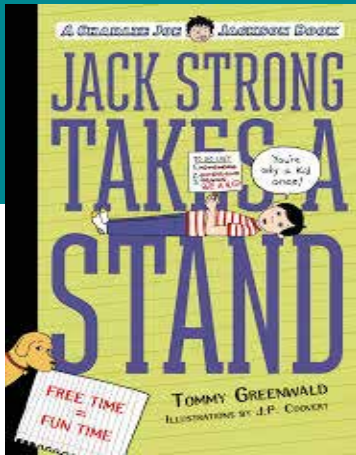
ISBN

9781338135824



Book Review

Jack Strong Takes a Stand



Author

Tommy Greenwald

Illustrator

Melissa Mendés

Reviewer

Katherine Martin

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Intermediate

Pages

226

Year

2013

Publisher

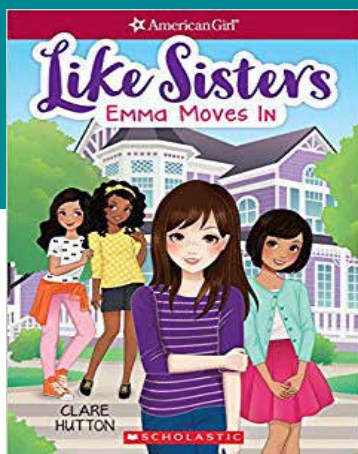
Roaring Brook Press

ISBN

9781596438361

Jack Strong goes to school and does homework like all other middle school kids, but nearly all of his free time is filled with extracurricular activities. Jack's patience dwindles when, instead of hanging out with friends, he is shuttled from one activity to the next. He decides to stand up to his parents by sitting down on his favorite couch and refusing to get up. Jack attracts the attention of many people, infuriating some and inspiring others. The host of a local TV show comes to Jack's house to interview him. Surprising everyone, including himself, Jack gets off the couch, ending his strike. He and his parents come to a compromise, freeing his schedule of the activities he hates so he can spend more time on what he loves.

Tommy Greenwald portrays the thinking of a young middle school boy with conflicting interests. Jack's voice is well developed and his thought patterns flow in a very natural way. Illustrations throughout the book add clever details and humor to Jack's story. A theme of balance is evident throughout the novel, as even Jack himself, who once was overwhelmed with a busy schedule, becomes bored and tired of his new couch potato life. The question of whether preteens and teenagers should be concerned with preparing for college by filling their schedules with extracurricular activities is explicitly brought to attention through characters such as Nana and Mrs. Fleck. This question is answered on page 209 when Jack's father comes to the conclusion that Jack should not have to do things he is not interested in, but should instead pursue those things he does love.



Book Review

American Girl: Like Sisters: Emma Moves In

Author

Clare Hutton

Illustrator

Reviewer

Amanda Durrant

Rating

Excellent

Level

Primary, Intermediate

Pages

190

Year

2017

Publisher

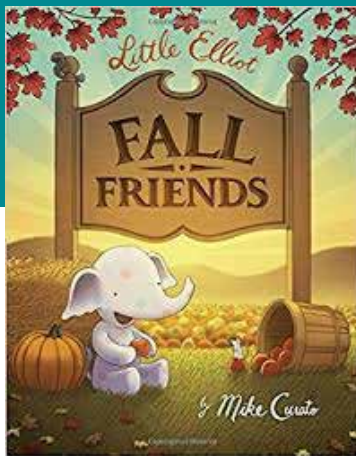
Scholastic

ISBN

9781338114997

Emma is so excited to spend summer vacation at the beach in Waverly. She has a whole list of things she has to do with her twin cousins, Zoe and Natalia. But a big surprise is in store for Emma on her last night there. Her family is moving from Seattle to Waverly so that Emma's mom and aunt can open up a bed and breakfast. Emma is excited at first, but quickly realizes that living with cousins isn't nearly as fun as being on vacation with them. Emma struggles to find her place, both at home and at her new school. Emma and her cousins overcome the obstacles thrown at them while their relationship grows stronger than ever and Emma becomes just like a sister.

This is a great read for girls starting at a new school or children who are moving. It goes into detail about the plethora of feelings a big change such as a move or family separation can bring. The text is written at a level that older elementary children can easily read, but also can relate to. Troubles at home and issues at school are presented, with peaceful resolutions involving talking about feelings and looking at it from another person's point of view are offered. Although the text uses descriptive language, the book would benefit from a few illustrations to break up the monotony of text written for the older primary to intermediate grade level.



Book Review

Little Elliot: Fall Friends

Author

Mike Curato

Illustrator

Mike Curato

Reviewer

Jazmin Gomez

Rating

Excellent

Level

Toddler, Preschool,
Primary

Pages

40

Year

2017

Publisher

Henry Holt and Compa-

ISBN

9781627796408

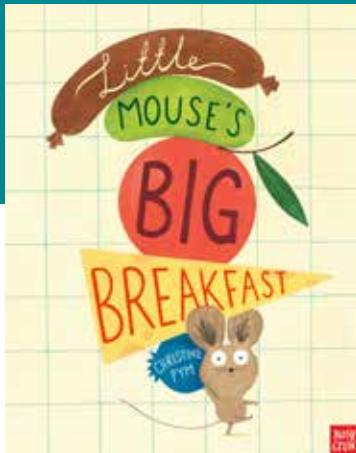
Elliot and Mouse enjoy the city life. It is exciting and full of color, but sometimes it can be too much. The two friends decide to hop on a bus and visit the fall countryside. When Mouse is unable to find Elliot during a game of hide-and-seek, he enlists the help of new friends. Together, they come up with a delicious solution that leads Elliot straight to Mouse. Their adventure ends surrounded by new friends, food, and a sky full of stars.

An elephant and a mouse are unlikely friends that touch on several different topics in one simple picture book. They teach readers about trying new things, making friends, working together, thinking creatively, and enjoying simple pleasures. Curato's illustrations were created using pencil on paper and digital color. The pictures on each page wonderfully capture the rich fall colors and autumnal mood of the story. The short narrative, engaging plot line, and aesthetically pleasing illustrations make this a fun book for parents or older children to read to young kids.



Book Review

Little Mouse's Big Breakfast



Author

Christine Pym

Illustrator

Reviewer

Sydnee Burr

Rating

Excellent

Level

Preschool, Primary

On a cold winter's morning, little mouse wakes up hungry. Unable to find anything to eat in his frozen world, little mouse scurries into a house and finds the perfect breakfast. He's so busy hoarding all his delicious finds that he doesn't notice he isn't the only one searching for some breakfast. A big black cat is on the scene and thinks little mouse would make an excellent breakfast. Escaping as speedily as he can, little mouse only snags one sunflower seed on his way out. He isn't worried though, because he knows that when he gets hungry again, there will be other houses waiting.

With few words per page and larger than life illustrations, Christine Pym meets her audience's needs perfectly. Preschoolers and young primary school-aged children will fall in love with this hungry little mouse and root for him as he scavenges for a breakfast that only becomes larger by the second. Little mouse's big plans don't succeed, however, which teaches these young minds that not only is it okay to fail, it's exciting to try again. With a twist on the last page, giggles are sure to ripple through all classrooms who enjoy Little Mouse's Big Breakfast.

Pages

32

Year

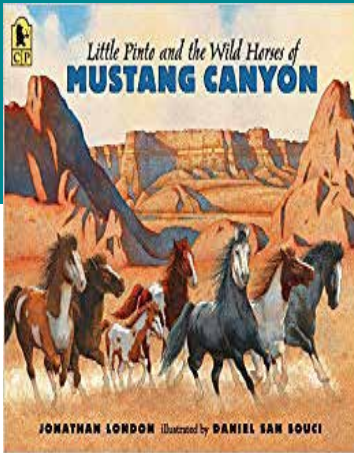
2018

Publisher

Nosy Crow

ISBN

9780763696269



Book Review

Little Pinto and the Wild Horses of Mustang Canyon

Author

Jonathan London

Illustrator

Daniel San Souci

Reviewer

Sarah Checketts

Rating

Dependable

Level

Toddler, Preschool,
Primary

Pages

40

Year

2002

Publisher

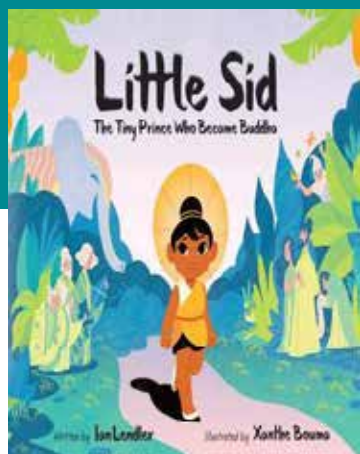
Candlewick Press

ISBN

9780763695125

Little Pinto and the Wild Horses of Mustang Canyon is a story of a young colt, barely a day old at the beginning, who belongs to a wild herd that runs free in Mustang Canyon. They run together seeking water, safety, community. The leader of the herd, Old White Face, protects his family from stranger horses and other dangers, such as a plane. In all the excitement and adrenaline, Little Pinto - who scrambles to keep up - falls into the roaring river. Managing to survive, he is reunited with his parents and back to running freely through the beautiful landscapes of the canyons.

The illustrations for this story are magnificent. The watercolors used create a feeling that the reader is in the desert along with the mustang. San Souci, the illustrator, skillfully painted the horses and surroundings to look realistic regarding proportion, movement, and lighting. The masterfully painted landscapes that span the length of two pages help the reader to feel a part of the story's world. The many hues in the canyon walls and desert grasses and the horses themselves create feelings of awe and tranquility. While the story itself is simple and short, the ideas of the importance of the family bond and goodwill within one's community are easily understood by all readers regardless of age.



Book Review

Little Sid: The Tiny Prince Who Became Buddha

Author

Ian Lendler

Illustrator

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Preschool, Primary

Pages

40

Year

2018

Publisher

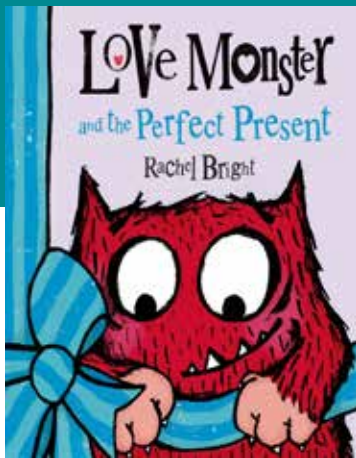
First Second

ISBN

9781626726369

Little Prince Sid is sick and tired of being spoiled and given things, things, things. All he wants is his parents to be with him, but they are always needed elsewhere. Fed up, Little Sid leaves the castle in search of happiness. He searches the village, then continues through the forest in search of wise people who can help. It isn't until he is hanging off a cliff, about to die, when he eats a strawberry as his last meal and is then rescued, that he realizes he has found happiness. He returns to the castle enlightened and begins changing things - giving his things away, making others happy, and finally at the end of the day getting his parents to just be with him.

With beautiful illustrations, a great format, and fun story, this book is simply delightful! Though the historical accuracy falters due to changes made to fit in with the story, it does portray some truth about the life of Siddhartha Gautama and Buddhism and includes a short note at the end, explaining some of the facts. The artwork is clean and modern, with lots of color and adorable portrayals of the characters. The text is written in narrative snippets, accompanied by thought and speech bubbles from the characters. This simplifies the text and makes it more accessible for beginning readers. This layout also serves to make the book more engaging and aesthetically pleasing. Besides being a fun way to introduce Siddhartha Gautama, it also teaches readers that happiness is not found in things, or wealth, or power. Rather, it is found in being with those you love and enjoying the moment.



Book Review

Love Monster and the Perfect Present

It's Present Day and Love Monster wants to find perfect present for his special someone. He goes to the shop and finds that all the shiny presents are expensive. He is worried he won't find a special present in time. Then he has a great idea that comes from the heart.

This story shows young children that the most special presents don't have to come from a store or be expensive. This book can be used to encourage the spririt of giving and caring for others. The bright illustrations keep the reader and children engaged, while having fun listening to how Love Monster finds the perfect present.

Author

Rachel Bright

Illustrator

Rachel Bright

Reviewer

Meagan Beal

Rating

Excellent

Level

Toddler, Preschool

Pages

32

Year

2013

Publisher

Harper Collins Children's

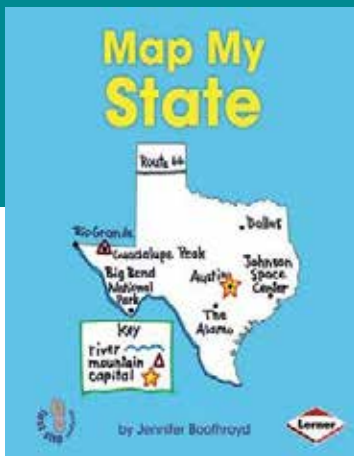
ISBN

9780374346485



Book Review

Map It Out: Map My State



Author

Jennifer Boothroyd

Illustrator

Reviewer

Katherine Martin

Rating

Significant Shortcom-

Level

Toddler, Preschool,
Primary

Pages

24

Year

2014

Publisher

Lerner Publishing

ISBN

9781467711128

A family is going on a trip to Texas to see things like the Johnson Space Center or the Alamo. Before they can go, a young boy decides to make a map of Texas to guide them on their trip. He starts by planning all of the places they want to visit. Then, he labels the map with the places they will visit. He adds important symbols and completes the map by creating a key for those symbols. The last few pages of the book include directions for how the reader can make her own state map, fun facts about Texas, and a glossary for important map terminology.

Map My State is intended for young children who are learning how to create a state map. The most important parts of a state map are highlighted throughout the book, showing the reader how those parts are added. Key vocabulary words are bolded. Based on the idea of a family going on a road trip, the title Map My State is inappropriate because the child in the book is not mapping his state, but is mapping a state he is traveling to. The characters remain nameless and are not seen, lacking depth. Images throughout the book are gathered from a variety of sources and do not flow well together for that reason. The steps at the end of the book for how the reader can create her own map are out of order when compared to the steps the boy in the story, and some are even different than what he used to create his map. This discontinuity is confusing for the reader.



Book Review

Mary Engelbreit's Nutcracker

Author

Mary Engelbreit

Illustrator

Mary Engelbreit

Reviewer

Sydnee Burr

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Preschool

Pages

40

Year

2011

Publisher

Harper Collins

ISBN

9780062224170

Marie receives a beloved gift for Christmas, a nutcracker. What she doesn't know however, is that her nutcracker is actually a handsome prince who is under a terrible spell. Late that night, magic is in the air, and from out of the darkness the evil Mouse King arrives to frighten Marie. Her nutcracker jumps to her defense, and a serious fight ensues. Victorious, the nutcracker returns to his former self, and takes Marie with him to Toyland. When Marie wakes the next morning, she's at home, and rushes downstairs to find her beloved nutcracker. Although she didn't find her beloved toy, she did find her charming prince, and when they grow up, they live happily ever after.

Mary Engelbreit stuns readers with her recreation of the classic tale, *The Nutcracker*. Her illustrations that woo the world over don't fall short in this children's fairy tale. Engelbreit's adaption is very close to the original story with very few changes. Written in a form that allows young readers to easily follow along, she also gives life and understanding to the ballet version that has captured audiences' rapture for years. With bright, exciting, and merry illustrations, young readers will capture the magic of Christmas, of imagination, of playing pretend, and of dreaming impossible dreams as they dive into Mary Engelbreit's *Nutcracker*.



Book Review

Maybe a Bear Ate It!

Author

Robie H. Harris

Illustrator

Michael Emberley

Reviewer

Staci McCarty

Rating

Excellent

Level

Toddler, Preschool

A little cat dressed in monster pajamas is all tucked in bed ready to sleep when his very favorite book goes missing. He uses his great imagination to think of all possible things that could have happened to his beloved book: maybe a bear ate it or maybe a stegosaurus stomped on it. Sleep will not ensue without his favorite book, so he looks and looks and looks. After a prolonged search, he finds that his book was only under his bed. The reunion with the book is a joyous celebration.

This is an interactive book that is bound to capture the attention of its audience. Geared towards children five and under, this book encourages children to use their imagination with every turn of the page. With questions on nearly every page, it helps to engage young readers and helps them to develop problem solving skills. This is a book with few words, yet the vibrant illustrations are sure to catch the eye of the reader. The last two pages have creative activities with questions and riddles that will help the young reader to develop critical thinking skills.

Pages

38

Year

2017

Publisher

Cartwheel books

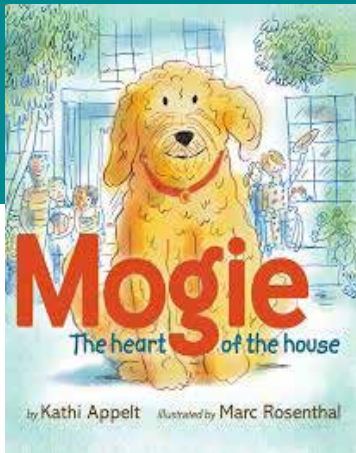
ISBN

9781338161106



Book Review

Mogie: The Heart of the House



Author

Kathi Appelt

Illustrator

Marc Rosenthal

Reviewer

Nikki-Catrina Anderson

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Preschool, Primary

Mogie is a ball-chasing, tail-wagging, moon-howling pup with a heart as true as true can be. Mogie comforts young Gage who used to be a ball throwing, race, running back-flipping boy, but has fallen sick and lost his mojo. Knowing just the right ways to comfort Gage in this difficult time, she sticks with him until he finds his mojo and is able to return home. Mogie's story continues at the Ronald McDonald House where she stays to help the next child who comes sick and in need of a friend.

Through its pastel watercolor pictures and storyline, this children's book conveys the message of hope and friendship. The author uses specific childlike language which gives a tender feel and makes it relatable to all ages. The undertone of sadness is overcome by the message of hope and success as Gage overcomes his sickness and is able to return home. An author's note in the back of the book gives a glimpse into how the author met and was touched by the real Mogie. Readers of all ages will fall in love with Mogie and the work she is doing in for sick kids in the Ronald McDonald House.

Pages

38

Year

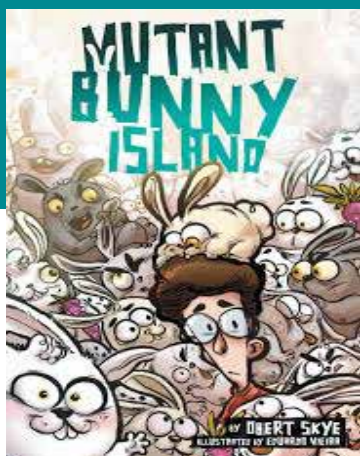
2014

Publisher

Atheneum books for

ISBN

9781442480544



Book Review

Mutant Bunny Island

Author

Obert Skye

Illustrator

Eduardo Vieira

Reviewer

Becky Jamieson

Rating

Excellent

Level

Primary, Intermediate

Pages

200

Year

2017

Publisher

HarperCollins Publishers

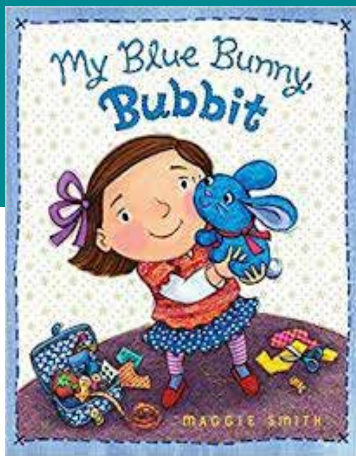
ISBN

9780062399120

With all of summer vacation stretching out before him, Perry plans to spend it all in his room reading the comics that his Uncle Zeke sends him. However, his plans change when Uncle Zeke sends a card pleading for help. Perry hops on a plane that very day to help his uncle on Bunny Island. There he makes two friends: Juliet and Rain. These three working together eventually find Perry's Uncle Zeke; however, he is no longer a human, but a mutant bunny! The evil mayor is turning all of the people who live on the island into mutant bunnies using purple carrots. Perry and Juliet must use Perry's secret stash of potato chips to turn everyone back to normal.

This book would be very good for readers moving from picture books to chapter books. Every few chapters, the book includes excerpts from Perry's favorite comic book with pictures that would help give struggling readers a break from the long passages of text. One of Obert Skye's most well know series is Leven Thumps, but unlike that series, in this book there is no special destiny to save the world placed on the main character. In fact, the main character is a very ordinary ten-year-old with a love for comic book characters, making him a fun, whimsical character to read about. This book's overall message is to be yourself no matter how crazy you may be. It conveys the idea that if you are true to your own likes and dislikes, then you can make friends and be a hero among them when they need help for troubles, big or small.

*Contains mild violence.



Book Review

My Blue Bunny, Bubbit

My Blue Bunny, Bubbit is a tender tale of traditions, special things, and family. The narrator is expecting a new baby brother, and she isn't sure how she feels about it. When Nonni, her grandma, comes to visit, the girl decides that her new baby brother needs a special friend like her special blue bunny Bubbit. She and Nonni work together to design, cut, and sew a special treasure.

This book is perfect for small children expecting big changes in their family. New babies can be a big disruptor in an only child's life, and this book demonstrates beautifully how special a transition it can be if done right. Not only has the little girl been given a task to do (and by extension a semblance of control) amid the family changes, but Nonni is also passing on her skills of sewing of designing the pattern, selecting and cutting the fabric, and sewing. A simple project with grandma turns a potentially confusing change into a special memory one little girl will treasure forever.

Author

Maggie Smith

Illustrator

Reviewer

Tessara Garrett

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Preschool

Pages

40

Year

2014

Publisher

Clarion Books

ISBN

9780547558615



Book Review

Night Witches

Author

Kathryn Lasky

Illustrator

Reviewer

Cynthia Frazier

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

211

Year

2017

Publisher

Scholastic Press

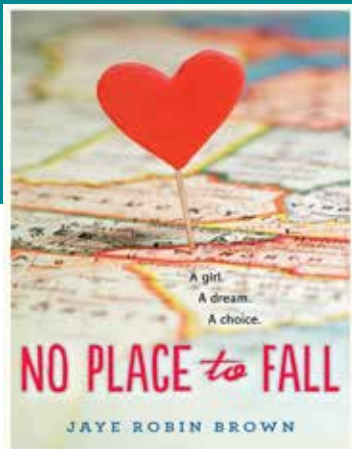
ISBN

9780545682985

It is 1942 and Russia is being invaded by Germany. The city of Stalin-grad is besieged and bombings continue day and night. Valya's family is dead or fighting in the war, leaving only one thing to do. Valya sets off to find her sister Tatyana's regiment, thinking that she can become a pilot also. After harrowing experiences, she finds her sister's unit and joins them in their work of targeting Nazi supply lines and fuel dumps. The planes they fly are slower and lighter than fighter planes and can only hold six bombs at a time. Each plane flies up to eight missions a night, stealthily maneuvering through the air like witches on their brooms - Night Witches, as the German soldiers call them. Valya is faced with the most desperate task of her young life when Tatyana's plane goes down in German territory.

This book spotlights a group of women pilots in Russia during World War II and is a fast-paced adventure story. Kathryn Lasky's characters are believable and well rounded, especially Valya through whose eyes the story is told. The writing is clear and crisp and easily read. However, as an historical fiction novel geared for the middle school to young adult reader, it would have been helpful for the author to include historical facts, dates, or notes about the area and time period. Additional information about or references to where to get material about the Night Witches and a vocabulary of Russian words used in the book would be helpful to an inquiring reader. This book is appropriate for middle school youth and older.

*Contains moderate violence, mild language, and mild sexual content.



Book Review

No Place to Fall

Author

Jaye Robin Brown

Illustrator

Reviewer

Meagan Andrus

Rating

Dependable

Level

Young Adult

Pages

354

Year

2014

Publisher

HarperTeen

ISBN

9780062270993

Sixteen-year-old Amber Vaughn is a singer, and a good one at that. She dreams of the day when she can leave behind her small town and complicated family. When an opportunity to audition for a performing arts high school comes up, Amber spends all her time singing and preparing to hopefully wow the judges. She makes beautiful music with Will, her best friend's older brother, and enjoys fun with friends. However, things soon get complicated: two new boys at the school cause problems; the state threatens to take away Amber's nephew when her sister and brother-in-law are arrested; and Will, with whom Amber finds herself falling in love, has a girlfriend. When everything in Amber's life becomes too twisted and tangled up, she has to grow up a little and figure out her own problems, with the help of some loving friends and family.

This book alternates between sweet, dramatic fun and deep, emotional truth. Amber deals with a lot of difficult challenges. The best parts of the book were those detailing Amber's family and the cycle of imperfect relationships the plot centered around. There were a lot of beautiful moments between Amber and her mother, as well as some between her and her older sister. Her family was not perfect, but the book proclaimed the importance of fighting for family and those you love. The more problematic sections dealt with Amber and her romance with Will—the two flirt and kiss while he is in a relationship with another girl. He later blames his infidelity on being a jerk and a guy, which didn't seem like good enough reasons. Potential readers should know that this book includes sensitive topics and underage substance abuse. Despite the questionable romance, the book was a fun, entertaining read that young appreciators of drama and small-town situations will love.

Contains severe language and moderate sexual content.



Book Review

Not If I Save You First

Author

Ally Carter

Illustrator

Reviewer

Lisi Merkley

Rating

Dependable

Level

Young Adult

Pages

304

Year

2018

Publisher

Scholastic Press

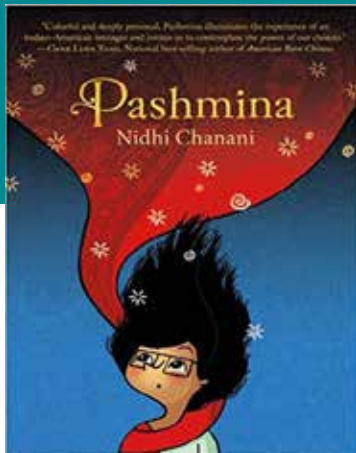
ISBN

9781338134148

Maddie, the daughter of the ex-Head of the Secret Service, grew up in the White House roaming the secret passages with Logan, the president's son. But when the Russians attack Logan's family and her dad is injured, Maddie and her dad are forced to flee to Alaska and live a life of solitude in a little cabin. After six years of letters with no response from Logan, Maddie has accepted her lonely Alaskan life—until Logan shows up at their doorstep, only to be kidnapped and dragged through the Alaskan wilderness hours after he arrives. Maddie knows that it's up to her to track him down and save his life—even if she can't stand him anymore.

Not if I Save You First is a fluffy, entertaining novel with little substance. The story isn't really explained until the last fourth of the book where we discover the political reasons to the kidnapping, and the first three fourths are just spent wandering around in the wilderness, which is interesting only because they are in Alaska. The book also lacks in the believability of the romantic relationship between Logan and Maddie. Maddie flips between hating and adoring Logan the whole novel, and Logan can't see why his actions hurt her. All in all the book is entertaining, but not anything fabulous.

*Contains mild language and moderate violence.



Book Review Pashmina

Author

Nidhi Chanani

Illustrator

Reviewer

Emily Loveless

Rating

Dependable

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

176

Year

2017

Publisher

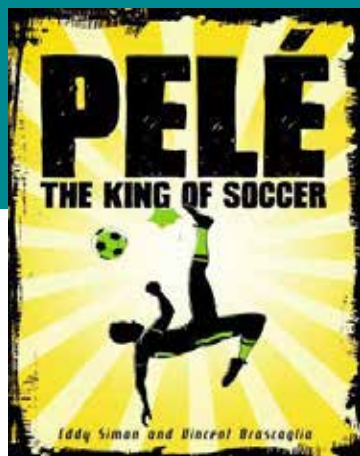
First Second

ISBN

9781626720879

Priyanka Das doesn't know who her father is, and her mother won't talk about him or why she left India and her whole family behind before Pri was born. But Pri needs answers if she's ever going to know who she really is. When Pri finds a magical pashmina, she is transported to an India more vibrant than she ever dreamed, even with that shadow lurking around. Out of the blue, Pri's aunt invites her to stay for a week, and suddenly everything seems to be coming together, but the India Pri arrives in is more complicated than her visions showed. As she sees the layers in her cultural heritage, Pri learns her mother left India because her fiancé broke off their engagement after she became pregnant. In searching for family, Pri has discovered a culture of complicated, and not always pretty, history and expectations. She doesn't find the father she imagined, but maybe she can be another link in the chain encouraging change.

Pashmina tackles big topics like family, navigating two cultural worlds, and gender issues with an engaging visual medium. The illustrations are bold, and the juxtaposition between black and white and colored pages is a clever means of delineating Pri's experiences and the magical visions channeled through the pashmina. Pri's adolescent uncertainty is heightened by the complete absence of information about her family and where she and her mother came from. Her journey to India serves to ground and clarify her identity, but this goal ends up getting a bit overshadowed as the story shifts focus to the discrimination and oppression of women in India, historically through present day—which seems to be the ultimate mission of the pashmina. Chanani does broach an important topic, and Pashmina is an accessible means of starting the conversation with readers. However, the execution leaves the work itself feeling a bit disjointed by the end where we are left to wonder if Pri's journey will actually have a larger impact on her.



Book Review

Pelé: The King of Soccer

Author

Eddy Simon

Illustrator

Vincent Brascaglia

Reviewer

Cynthia Frazier

Rating

Dependable

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

137

Year

2017

Publisher

Roaring Brook Press

ISBN

9781626729797

The famous soccer player, nicknamed Pelé, is born October 23, 1940, the very day his family gets electricity in their home near Sao Paulo, Brazil. Pelé's father had been a pro soccer player before a knee injury ended his career, and he drills his son daily in soccer techniques. Pelé's first soccer ball is one fashioned from rags bundled tightly together to form a ball. He practices soccer for hours every day, and by the time he is fifteen, he is given his first professional contract. Soccer becomes his escape from the slums. He travels the world playing soccer and wins three world cup medals. He is considered to be the greatest soccer player in the world as he scores over 1279 goals in 1363 games spanning twenty-two years. He becomes a great humanitarian, a Good Will Ambassador for UNICEF, and a man who loves working with youth. He calls soccer 'the beautiful game' because it brings people of all colors, nationalities and languages together.

This biographical graphic novel was written by Eddy Simon, a French writer, and illustrated by Vincent Brascaglia, a comic artist, who draws for the French magazine Okapi. The book depicts Pelé's life in chronological order from childhood to retirement. It discusses being a black athlete in the sixties and seventies and details some of his most famous games, his great love of country, and his exemplary humanitarian efforts. Though the novel is supposedly geared for children in elementary school, it shows all aspects of Pelé's life, including his illegitimate children and unfaithfulness to his wife. In addition to his weakness for women, it includes some swear words and describes and shows violence on the field. Though the comic format of this book might attract grade school children, it may be more appropriate for readers in middle school and older.

*Contains mild sexual content, moderate violence, and mild language.



Book Review

Perfectly Good White Boy

Author

Carrie Mesrobian

Illustrator

Reviewer

Meagan Andrus

Rating

Cannot Recommend

Level

Young Adult

Pages

293

Year

2014

Publisher

Carolrhoda LAB

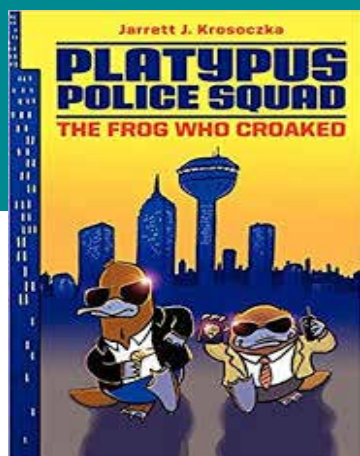
ISBN

9781467734806

Sean is entering his senior year of high school after being dumped by the most beautiful girl he's ever cared about. But Hallie is moving on, going to college, and Sean still has a stagnant year before deciding what to do with his life. Sean considers only one thing to get him beyond his small town: the Marines. He decides to keep his head down, get through the school year, and join up when he graduates. He doesn't count on caring for his weird coworker Neece, who shows him a world beyond hot girls and beer and deer-hunting and the thrift store where they work. She gives him the motivation to actually join up and make something out of his life.

This book deals with relevant topics, such as the paralyzing fear that many young adults experience when contemplating how to leave teenage-hood behind and move towards larger goals. However, the amount of language, crude remarks, and sexual content (including several fully-described sex scenes) in this book is enough to turn anyone off of the narrative. Even those with high tolerance for lewd content would be turned off by the sheer amount of vulgarity in this book. Every sentence has at least two swear words or crude references. No teenager or adult should read this book—all of the language and sexual content gets so in the way of the actual story that it distracts from any plot.

*Contains severe language, severe sexual content, and moderate violence.



Book Review

Platypus Police Squad: The Frog Who Croaked

Author

Jarrett J. Krosoczka

Illustrator

Reviewer

Haley Cook

Rating

Significant Shortcom-

Level

Primary

Pages

240

Year

2013

Publisher

Walden Pond Press

ISBN

9780062071644

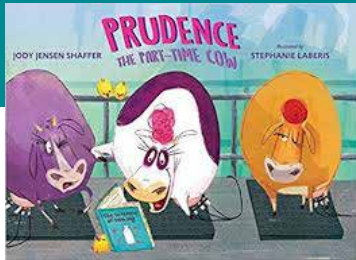
Rick Zengo has finally made it onto the Platypus Police Squad. His grandfather served on the squad and it has been Zengo's dream to walk in his steps. Unfortunately, being on the force isn't always smooth sailing. Zengo's partner, O'Malley, is old, slow, and less motivated than Zengo. They have different philosophies on how to find the source of illegal fish that plague their city. It's up to Zengo and O'Malley to work together to crack the case before more citizens get sick. Zengo must find a way to catch the distributor without stepping on the toes of his sergeant Plazinski and Pandini Jr., the city's most popular philanthropist and business owner.

Jarrett J. Krosoczka has created his own alternate world as the setting for this book. There are many illustrations throughout the book that show the characters, which can help students visualize the characters because, unfortunately, the text does not always describe their appearances--or even their species. There is also a lot of advanced vocabulary, which is great way to help enhance readers' vocabularies, but young readers may find it too confusing. The dialogue in this book tends to be awkward and contains a lot of outdated slang. The plot also is lacking a pressing conflict. Some readers may find this book appealing, but the outdated slang and lack of conflict explanation may cause readers to quit before reaching the resolution.



Book Review

Prudence the Part-Time Cow



Author

Jody Jensen Shaffer

Illustrator

Stephanie Laberis

Reviewer

Staci McCarty

Rating

Excellent

Level

Toddler, Preschool,
Primary

Pages

29

Year

2017

Publisher

Henry Holt and Compa-

ISBN

9781627796156

Prudence may look like a full-time cow, but to her herd, Prudence is just a little too part-time. Prudence tries her hardest to fit in with the herd, but she cannot contain her creative mind. She is a scientist, an architect, and an engineer. The herd is unimpressed with Prudence's creativity and shuns her for being different. Just as the herd gives up on Prudence ever being a normal full-time cow, Prudence comes up with an ingenious plan to get the herd to like her. Prudence works all through the night and is finally accepted as a full-time member of the herd, still knowing she will always truly be a part-time cow.

This is a fun and easy read with beautiful and vibrant illustrations that easily grab the attention of young readers. Prudence the Part-Time Cow speaks to the creative-minded who are just trying to fit in. It incorporates elements of peer-pressure and bullying and expressing individuality, while introducing topics of science, technology, engineering, and math. This book helps young readers develop an understanding of valuing differences. This is a perfect book for any teacher's curriculum as well as home libraries to teach children about acceptance of others and ourselves.



Book Review

Puppy!

Author

Keith Graves

Illustrator

Reviewer

Acacia Haws

Rating

Excellent

Level

Preschool

Pages

30

Year

2016

Publisher

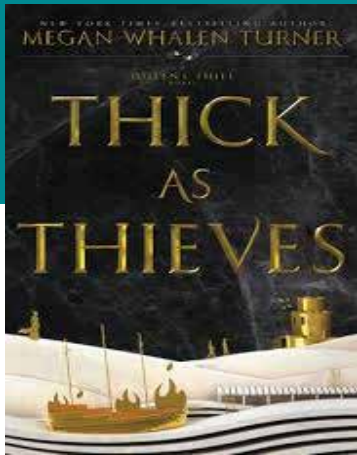
Roaring Brook Press

ISBN

9781626722255

Trog the cave boy has toys that should be lots of fun: sticks, rocks, and mud. But all he wants is a puppy to play with. He comes across a striped alligator and brings it home, dubbing it “Puppy!” His new pet causes a lot of problems for his family, like crying a lot and eating everything presented to it with a big crunch, including the family’s bed and table. Trog does everything he can to soothe his unhappy pet. Finally, the alligator’s enormous mother comes to retrieve her baby and brings him home where he is happy once more. Trog goes in search of a new pet and finds a “kitty.”

This book reads sort of like a comic book for very young readers. The story is arranged in panels as well as in full page spreads. The art style is cartoony and expressive. The frequent repetition of the word “crunch!” can make reading the story aloud very humorous. Trog’s enthusiasm and unfailing sympathy for his new pet is sweet, which offers a good balance to the humor. The comic book-like nature of the page layouts can make reading the story aloud a bit of a challenge because the book has continuous narration as well as frequent interjections from Trog, both of which progress the story. This would be easier for preschool-aged children who visually understand the concept of a speech bubble.



Book Review

Queen's Thief: Thick as Thieves

Author

Megan Whalen Turner

Illustrator

Reviewer

Tessara Garrett

Rating

Dependable

Level

Young Adult

Pages

352

Year

2017

Publisher

Greenwillow Books

ISBN

9780062568243

Kamet the slave is staged to run the empire as the next emperor's head slave, but things take a turn when he learns his master has been poisoned and killed. Rather than face torture and death, he flees. Joining up with an Attolian soldier who has promised him a new life in Attolia, Kamet and his companion go on a journey full of life-threatening setbacks. After a life full of mistrust as a slave, Kamet looks for any opportunity to escape on his own. But as the Attolian proves time and again his loyal nature, Kamet finds it harder to leave him behind. In the end, Kamet finds the new life he was searching for as well as a new sense of trust and loyalty he never expected.

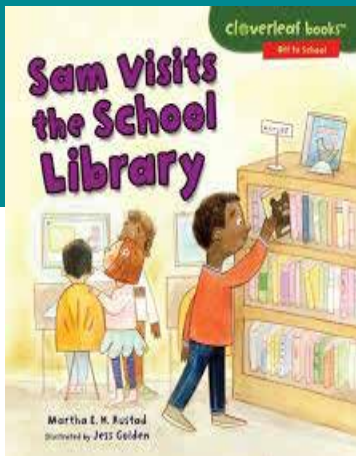
Kamet's journey leads him to discover a new level of self-worth and the true meanings of trust, loyalty, and friendship. In his life as a slave, he has lived "comfortably" with the perks and powers of a head slave. However, he is loyal to an abusive master and trusts no one. Friendship is a luxury he can neither understand nor afford. On his journey of escape, even free of his master, he still struggles with these principles. It is only through the constancy of his Attolian companion that he grows to change. The Attolian repeatedly shows him respect, treats him as a free man, saves his life, and forgives his faults. Slowly Kamet grows to trust him, and as he does his own self-worth grows. He starts to see himself as a free man instead of a fugitive slave. He starts a new life where his loyalty is well earned, he finds trust in others, and he builds friendships. His difficult journey of climbing mountains and letting go of old ties is highly representative of his growth from slave to free man.

*Contains moderate violence.



Book Review

Sam Visits the School Library



Author

Martha E. H. Rustad

Illustrator

Jess Golden

Reviewer

Cynthia Frazier

Rating

Excellent

Level

Toddler, Preschool,
Primary

Pages

24

Year

2018

Publisher

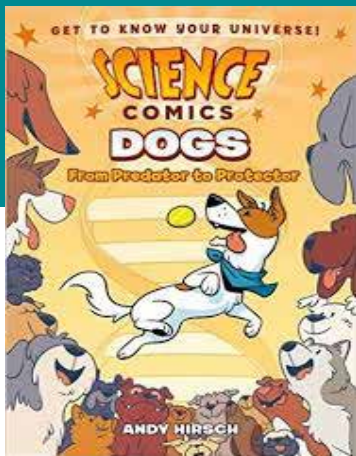
Millbrook Press

ISBN

9781512439380

Sam is excited to visit the library today. He will return the book he checked out last week and pick out a new book from his elementary school library. He and his classmates have the opportunity to research their own topics on the library computers. They get to choose the book they want to read at home and learn that some books are about facts (nonfiction) and some books tell stories that aren't true (fiction). Some of the students like graphic novels and others read e-books or listen to audiobooks.

Sam Visits the Library is the sixth book in the Off to School series by Cloverleaf Books. This beginning chapter book goes through the steps for using the library for students who are experiencing school for the first time or who will be coming back after vacation. Jess Golden's illustrations depict happy, smiling children eager to find the new worlds that await within the pages of a book. She subtly shows people of differing ethnicities and physical limitations. Miss Hill the teacher is in a wheelchair, suggesting that all people are welcome in the library.



Book Review

Science Comics: Dogs: From Predator to Protector

Author

Andy Hirsch

Illustrator

Reviewer

Mavane Farnsworth

Rating

Dependable

Level

Intermediate

Pages

128

Year

2017

Publisher

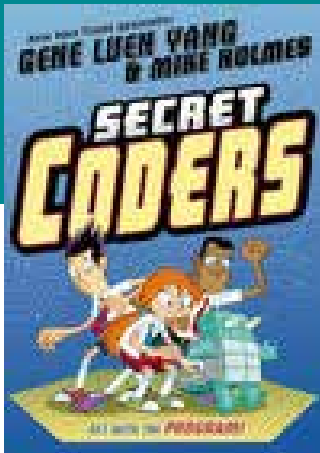
First Second

ISBN

9781626727670

Rudy, a four-legged friend who loves humans and balls, is taken to the park with his owner. While at the park, Rudy explains about the species of dogs, and then jumps back into time (25,000 BC to be exact). During this time wolves were the closest animal to a dogs, but they weren't the best human companion because wolves aren't naturally tame. Through evolution, changes in wolves' traits resulted in the dog that man loves today. Each dog has many different qualities and characteristics that make that dog unique to specific environments and tasks. Through this journey, one will come to understand how the origins of dogs and a dog's genetic makeup define their skill set and personality.

Andy Hirsch has made informational reading exciting. This book is unique in format due to its graphic novel layout. The graphic novel helps readers not feel as overwhelmed and brings a narrative element to an informational text. The pictures are clear and they help the reader understand the information being presented. The content could be considered a heavy load of information, but Hirsch covers just enough to feel educated and not overwhelmed. Through the entire journey, Rudy is chasing his ball and lands in different time periods. He will then go on to explain more about dogs in each scene. While Rudy and his story aren't fully developed, this element is crucial to help keep an easy flow to the book.



Book Review

Secret Coders

Author

Gene Luen Yang & Mike

Illustrator

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate

Brand new at an old, weird school, Hopper isn't exactly happy about her mother's choice to move (and teach) there. Soon, Hopper becomes friends with Eni, a kid who is learning to code. They are determined to find out the secrets of the eerie school and discover a robot turtle, which can be programmed with code. While practicing coding, they find a secret room. They are captured by the creepy custodian and must prove their coding abilities or be expelled.

The first in a series of graphic novels, this book is an excellent introduction to coding with an exciting plotline. With fun characters and an interesting story, it is a great way to get children learning about and practicing coding, while still enjoying the book. The authors include a blank page when the characters get to a big coding problem, allowing readers to attempt writing the code before reading on to check it. Examples and explanations are integrated into the story, providing the reader with everything they need to know to understand how to write the code. Engaging and educational, this is a perfect choice for future programmers!

Pages

88

Year

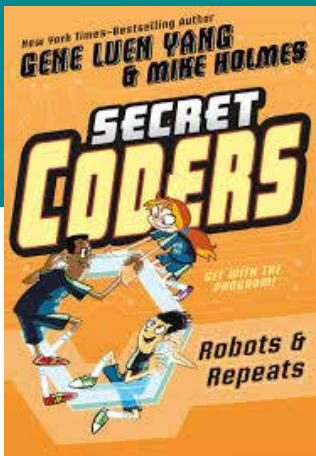
2015

Publisher

First Second

ISBN

9781626720756



Book Review

Secret Coders: Robots & Repeats

Author

Gene Luen Yang & Mike

Illustrator

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate

Pages

92

Year

2017

Publisher

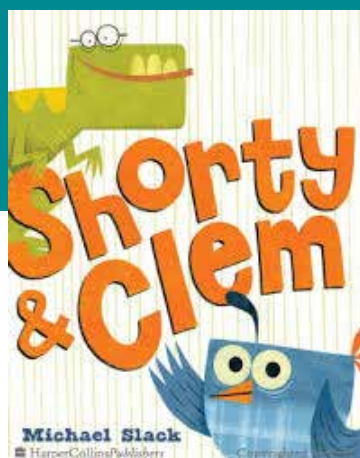
First Second

ISBN

9781626726055

The coders find the right door and discover the triangle of light, the most powerful robot in the world. When they return to school, they find out their new principal is evil Dr. One-Zero, who turns their chemistry class into a lab for creating his special green soda, a concoction which reprograms humans. Eni, Hopper, and Josh find a way to sneak into his conference room where they discover a map with binary numbers that disclose the location of his jail. They go to explore the jail, only to be confronted by an army of robot ducks. With the triangle of light, can they outsmart the robots?

The fourth book in the set, Robots and Repeats continues the story of the Coders and Dr. One-Zero, this time teaching nesting repeats along the way. It also introduces ASCII tables and goes deeper into binary numbers. With the same humor and interesting plotline, this book lives up to the rest of the series and keeps the entertainment and coding education going. Written as a graphic novel, this book has the ability to teach otherwise difficult concepts for kids in a simpler, visual way. The pictures help to practice visualizing what the code does and the way the book is set up allows for lots of examples and practice actually coding. Another great addition to Secret Coders!



Book Review

Shorty & Clem

Author

Michael Slack

Illustrator

Michael Slack

Reviewer

Samantha Bullock

Rating

Excellent

Level

Toddler, Preschool,
Primary

Pages

35

Year

2017

Publisher

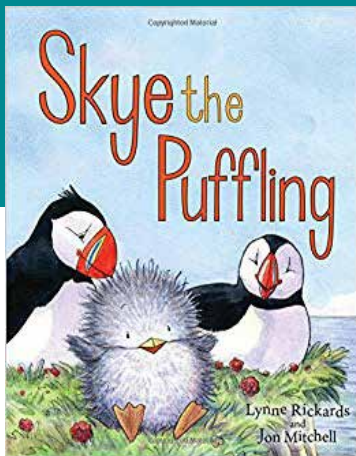
Harper

ISBN

9780062421586

The lure of an unexpected and brightly wrapped package is almost universal, and Shorty the shortysaurus is certainly not immune to curiosity. There's just one problem: the package is not for him! It's addressed to his quail friend Clem. Shorty imagines what might be in such a fun-looking box, all the while trying his utmost to resist opening it. Unfortunately, he eventually gives in to temptation, opens the box, and must then apologize and explain his mistake to Clem. But as it turns out, Clem reveals a delightful secret that makes everything better: the package is actually a birthday gift for Shorty!

Shorty & Clem gives a highly relatable depiction of the temptation to open a package that belongs to someone else and presents an ethical resolution of the acted-on temptation. Shorty has an engaging personality which is amplified through the geometric illustration style. The artwork conveys meaning in onomatopoeic words and presents playful, expressive characters in a vibrant color palate. The big, bold characters, combined with an uplifting moral message and the book's large, chunky font make Michael Slack's book an appealing choice for preschoolers and elementary school children.



Book Review

Skye the Puffling

Author

Lynne Rickards

Illustrator

Jon Mitchell

Reviewer

Kati Penovich

Rating

Excellent

Level

Primary

Pages

32

Year

2016

Publisher

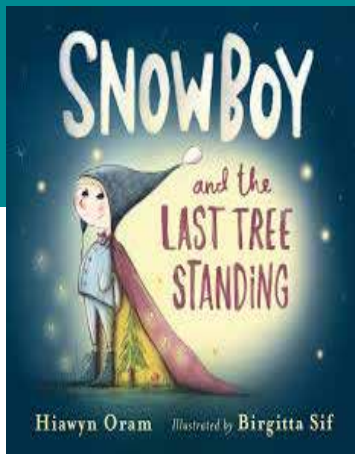
Floris Books

ISBN

9781782502555

Skye, the fluffy gray puffling, is born to adoring parents, who unfortunately are fast asleep one morning when she goes adventuring and falls onto the back of a gannet flying due south. Skye's parents search high and low for the little puffling; all the while, Skye is riding farther and farther from her home and her parents. Skye's situation becomes perilous when she falls into the ocean, but luckily her new gannet friend helps her out of the water and flies her to safety. Skye is soon reunited with her devoted parents and they spend the summer with the gannets until Skye's new feathers come in and she is able to fly on her own.

The story of Skye the puffling is beautifully illustrated and written in rhyming lines that create a pleasant rhythm and encourage reading aloud. One of the story's strengths is its portrayal of the relationships between characters. Skye's parents show extreme concern for her safety and do everything they can to find her. They are also portrayed as having an affectionate relationship with each other. And even though the gannet plays a part in her unwanted journey, Skye does not blame the bird but instead becomes friends with him. Skye also shows a lot of bravery for such a young creature. Despite finding herself in uncomfortable circumstances, Skye does not complain or cry for her parents; she simply tries to be tough and make the best of her circumstances. This story of a clumsy but brave little puffling and her loving parents is sure to appeal to parents and children alike.



Book Review

Snowboy and the Last Tree Standing

Snowboy is busy defending the polar bears when Greenbackboy comes along and drags him off to play a game called Ka-ching! By cutting down all the trees and catching all the fish, Greenbackboy is determined to get rich. Snowboy realizes that he needs to save nature rather than destroy it and hides one little tree under his Cloak of Many Uses and sneaks two fish back into the sea. Then he tells Greenbackboy that he has to leave. He goes back to find his tree and a little beehive with honey. Eventually Greenbackboy comes straggling in asking for food. Snowboy shares his honey with him, but reminds him to leave some for tomorrow.

With delightful illustrations and a good moral, this story is great to share with your little ones. It raises awareness of preserving nature while telling a beautiful story, causing readers to truly ponder what result their actions have on the environment. Just one boy was able to do some good, even surrounded by a world consumed with greed and always wanting more. By being caring and considerate to nature, we can make a difference and help take care of our planet. The illustrations in this book are adorable, with soft edges creating a peaceful, quiet effect. While the message takes a hard stand, the words and the pictures help convey it in a poignant yet serene way.

Author

Hiawyn Oram

Illustrator

Birgitta Sif

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Preschool, Primary

Pages

32

Year

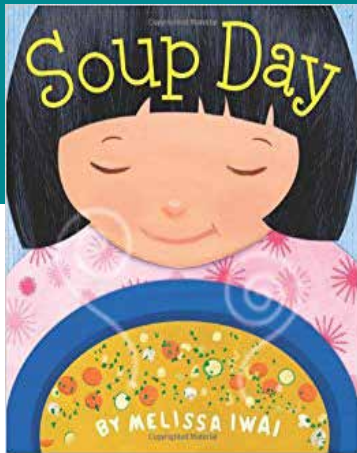
2017

Publisher

Candlewick Press

ISBN

9780763695729



Book Review

Soup Day

It's soup day! A young girl and her mother go to the grocery store to pick out fresh ingredients to make soup on the cold day. The mom shows the girl how to cut vegetables, pour the broth, and pick the perfect noodles. Together they play blocks, dress up, and read while they wait for the soup to cook. When the girl's dad comes home, it is time to eat the soup together!

This is a heart warming story of mother and daughter spending time together. The story tells the step-by-step process of making vegetable soup. This is great for young children that are interested in the kitchen and cooking. The sights, sounds, and smells of making soup are brought to life with wonderful text and illustrations. The illustrations make the food look so real that children will want to make their own soup with the recipe in the back of the book.

Author

Melissa Iwai

Illustrator

Melissa Iwai

Reviewer

Meagan Beal

Rating

Excellent

Level

Toddler, Preschool

Pages

32

Year

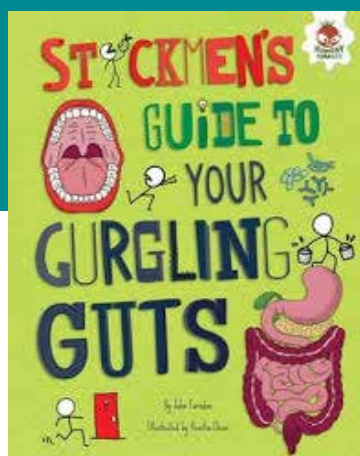
2010

Publisher

Henry Holt and Compa-

ISBN

9781250127723



Book Review

Stickmen's Guide to Your Gurgling Guts

This easy-to-understand guide walks through the process of eating and digesting food. It starts with facts about food and what it's composed of - carbohydrates, proteins, fats, vitamins, and fiber - defining all these things in very simple terms. It then explains the process of eating, starting with your teeth chewing food and the route it travels through your esophagus into the stomach and through the intestines. The narrator Stickmen travels through the book with you. The book describes the chemical processes that happen inside your body, including breaking down fat, staying warm, and filtering fluids. It ends with a description of waste disposal and a look at the discoveries made about the digestive system over time.

Throughout the book John Farndon has included interesting facts, pictures, and graphics showing the information talked about. Frandon's book makes the digestive system an exciting learning resource that is appropriate even for adults. There is a lot of text with scientific terms, making it a book for higher level readers, especially fourth to seventh graders, but younger children would still enjoy the interesting facts. This is a good book to read aloud with your child. It is very organized with clear headings and subheadings. Venitia Dean has drawn illustrations to support the text which helps provide overall clarity. It's a great addition to any collection, especially for those interested in digestion.

Author

John Farndon

Illustrator

Venitia Dean

Reviewer

Haley Cook

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Primary, Intermediate

Pages

32

Year

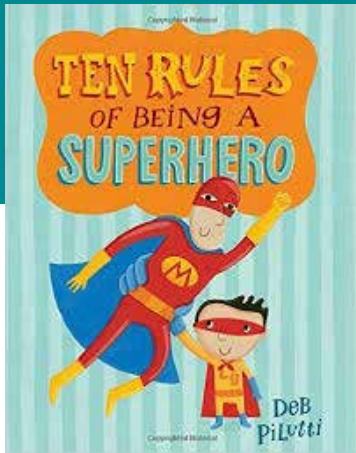
2017

Publisher

Hungry Tomato

ISBN

9781512432121



Book Review

Ten Rules of being a Superhero

Action figure Captain Magma and his sidekick Lava Boy introduce the ten important rules for every superhero. It takes more than wearing a cape to be a real superhero. The list begins saying a superhero must always respond to a call for help. But along with the adventures of defeating villains and using super powers, there are unavoidable consequences; saving the day is messy! In the end we find that adventures are more fun with a friend.

The pictures in this clever and humorous book are bold and colorful, full of favorite childhood toys and activities that catch the attention and imagination of children. Counting up to ten adds a compliment to the guide; children love to count. They will be able to connect with the everyday perils of real life play for a small child, including making messes, being quiet for sleeping siblings, needing to recharge with a nap and snack, and the importance of having a friend, even if it is a toy. Through adventures, activities, and rules that most children can relate to, they find that they may have superpowers too.

Author

Deb Pilutti

Illustrator

Deb Pilutti

Reviewer

Ellen McCarty

Rating

Excellent

Level

Toddler, Preschool,
Primary

Pages

32

Year

2014

Publisher

Henry Holt and Compa-

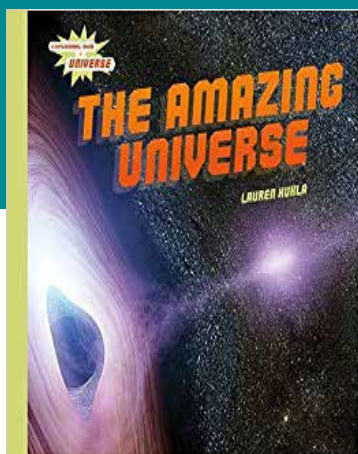
ISBN

9780805097597



Book Review

The Amazing Universe



Author

Lauren Kukla

Illustrator

Reviewer

Makayla Anderson

Rating

Excellent

Level

Preschool, Primary,
Intermediate

Pages

32

Year

2017

Publisher

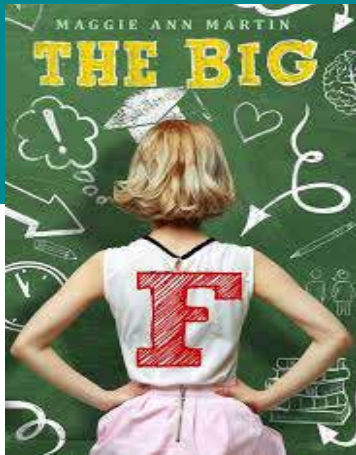
Abdo Publishing

ISBN

9781680797558

Exploring the cosmos can be fun yet intimidating. This informational text simplifies the universe and takes the reader through the theories and processes scientists have approached exploring space. Beginning with what we can observe in the night sky, the text, accompanied by stunning photos of the universe, journeys through the beginning of time until present-day space. Mysterious black holes are discussed in depth and the end of the book includes a black hole guidebook. Clues are discussed to explain how scientists have created their theories on how the universe began and how it may end.

This text would be good for older readers if it is being read independently, but it can also be used with younger readers. There are many words used in the text that are complex. Some of these words are highlighted in a different color and defined in the back of the book. There are other words that are not defined which may be complicated for younger readers. The photos used enhance the text and each photograph has a caption included underneath providing further explanations. The table of contents is simple, clear and concise. A timeline is included to help readers understand the beginning of the universe and its growth. Almost every other page includes a 'Did you know' box that provides fun facts for the reader. There is an index in the back and a website included where readers can go to learn more about the universe. This book would be a great resource for adults and children.



Book Review

The Big F

Author

Maggie Ann Martin

Illustrator

n/a

Reviewer

Katelyn Osborn

Rating

Dependable

Level

Young Adult

Pages

277

Year

2017

Publisher

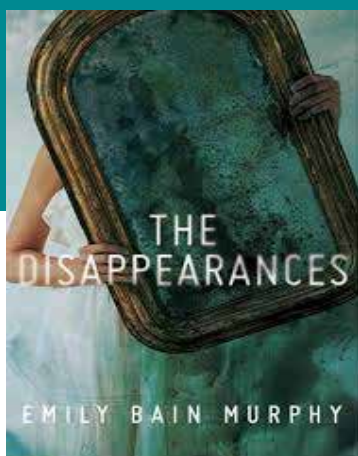
Swoon Reads

ISBN

9781250123213

Danielle has her life all planned out, but everything falls apart when she doesn't pass English and her early admission to Ohio State is revoked. When the truth comes out at the worst possible time, Danielle finds herself at odds with her mother and with no plans for the future. Begrudgingly, she enrolls at Denton Community College, where she reunites with her childhood crush Luke. She also gets a job at the campus bookstore and meets Porter, one of Luke's roommates, who seems intent on ignoring her. As Danielle works through the semester, through her maddeningly difficult English course, and through her relationship with her mother, Luke and Porter are there at every step to be the perfect boyfriend and the almost-friendly coworker, respectively. And in the end, only Danielle can decide if she'll make the 'Big F' the best or the worst thing to ever happen to her.

The Big F is a book that fills a niche not often written about: that confusing time right between high school and college that many readers will identify with. This book does an excellent job of portraying the dual themes of confidence and confusion that most people feel during that time of their life. Though Danielle can seem shallow and overly ditzzy on occasion, she becomes a more deep, rich character as the book progresses, and readers will enjoy the journey as Danielle finds her voice and takes steps to become more of who she wants to be. A developing love triangle will not surprise any readers; however, both Porter and Luke are likeable and fun to read. Unfortunately, many secondary characters feel undeveloped at most times. In end, The Big F is a quick, fun read for any young adult's bookshelf, though it will not be considered a necessary addition.



Book Review

The Disappearances

Author

Emily Bain Murphy

Illustrator

Reviewer

Taylor Nelson

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Young Adult

Pages

388

Year

2017

Publisher

HMH Books for Young

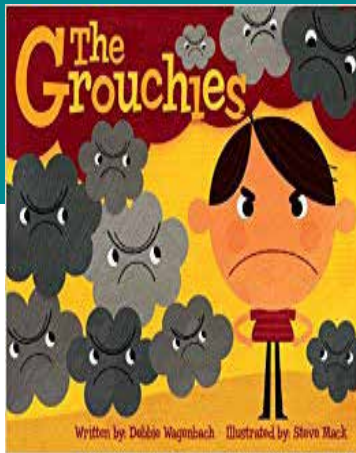
ISBN

9780544879362

When Aila Quinn's mother Juliet dies, Aila and her brother are sent to live with the Clifftons in Sterling, Juliet's childhood home. They very quickly realize that Sterling is a town full of mystery and tragedy. Every seven years, something important disappears: scents, reflections, colors, music, etc. No one knows the cause of these Disappearances, but Sterling harbors suspicions that Juliet was somehow responsible. Following a chain of clues her mother left behind, Aila determines to break the curse and clear her mother's name. Realizing the Disappearances are mysteriously linked to Shakespeare, Aila teams up with a few friends (and some enemies) to finally put the Bard to rest, bring back the things that have disappeared, and find love and family amid tragedy and grief.

The Disappearances is a fantastic novel. The storyline is so completely original and unique, and the author's style is gorgeous and captivating. Aila Quinn is a very real heroine, spunky with a tragic past. She has insecurities, she often fights with her little brother, and she has a seemingly unattainable crush. Aila is courageous and resilient and still learning how to deal with grief. The book is full of intrigue and mystery that unfolds at a perfect pace. The tiny, precise details and captivating backstory make the world come alive. This book combines classic elements with modern storytelling to create something that feels both familiar and exciting - a perfect marriage of magic and the mundane. It is hard to believe that The Disappearances is Emily Bain Murphy's debut novel. This author is one to look out for!

*Contains mild violence.



Book Review

The Grouchies

Author

Debbie Wagenbach

Illustrator

Steve Mack

Reviewer

Kaley Durney

Rating

Excellent

Level

Preschool

Pages

32

Year

2009

Publisher

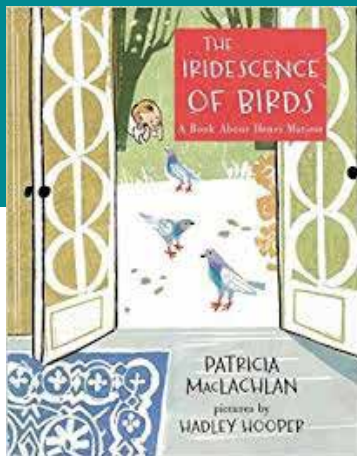
Magination Press

ISBN

978143380543

The Grouchies are here to stay for the day. They make him feel gloomy and grumpy to the point that his mom is wondering where his smile is. He goes to his sisters room where she's playing with his teddy bear—the grouchies remind him that if he's not nice he'll get his way. Sister's not happy and neither is his mom, the grouchies are still with him as he goes to the park to play. The grouchies jump and sing their song as he kicks sand at his friends because they didn't invite him. Dad is now taking him home while grouchies follow along. It's now the end of the day nobody is happy, his Mom and Dad are helping him learn how to fight back the grouchies. He starts feeling better and he gets a good night's rest. Tomorrow will be a better day because he won't let the grouchies push him out of bed.

Debbie Wagenbach masterfully demonstrates how the grouchies can make children, and adults, feel and act. The lesson being taught is that we can all have bad days and we can all be grumpy, but there are good things that help us feel better and make the grouchies go away. The young boy makes mistakes that children can easily relate to, which will help them connect with the story and actually want to try the positive coping strategies. In the back of the book, the author, gives helpful tips for parents on how to help children if they feel angry or sad often. The illustrations are lots of fun and colorful. Because of the colorful setting, it's easy for kids to see the gray grouchie clouds. The character is five-years-old, so it can be used for children throughout elementary school and for children in preschool. Overall, this book is amazing at teaching kids coping strategies to use when they are feeling down.



Book Review

The Iridescence of Birds: A Book About Henri Matisse

Author

Patricia MacLachlan

Illustrator

Hadley Hooper

Reviewer

Haley Cook

Rating

Excellent

Level

Preschool, Primary

Pages

40

Year

2014

Publisher

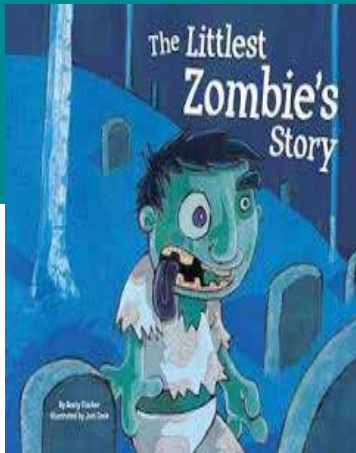
Roaring Brook Press

ISBN

9781596439481

Henri Matisse grew up in northern France where the weather was dreary and the sun was rarely seen, but this didn't mean that there was no color in Henri's life. He is surrounded by colorful plates that his mother paints and the pigeons that he takes care of. With the guiding hand of his mother, Henri observes life around him. This inspires his own paintings and leads him to create his own colors by mixing paint to show what he observes and counterbalance the grey city of France. Matisse eventually grows up and continues to create art, with the influence of his childhood and his mother still seen clearly in these pieces.

MacLachlan has created an informational picture book that gives an insight into the life of Henri Matisse and the inspiration for many of his pieces. The illustrator, Hadley Hooper, spent many hours researching the techniques and works of Matisse to guide the illustrations. Hooper has made them more visually appealing to children, since Matisse tends to use bright, vibrant colors that children might find uncomfortable to look at. The text of the story contains sentences that are split up across multiple pages, usually three to four pages per sentence. This gives the book a choppy feeling and creates a plot that is harder for readers to follow. Overall, MacLachlan has created an appealing, polished piece that helps children learn more about the founder of the Fauvism art movement, Henri Matisse.



Book Review

The Littlest Zombie's Story

When you are hungry, it is impossible to fall asleep! This restless little zombie, Chester, is found by his zombie mother late at night tossing and turning in his bed. Taking his hand, she does everything she can to help him fall asleep. Most lullabies sung by mothers put their little ones right to sleep, but this has the opposite effect on Chester. Counting brains, fingers, and toes, Chester finds himself hungrier than ever.

This is a great Halloween book for young children. The text is told in rhyme which keeps the story light as it flows from one page to then next. The illustrations clearly show the emotions that Chester is experiencing throughout the story, and really add to the text. There are few contrasting colors which help create the mood of this book. There could be some frightening parts for really young children because the zombies are talking about eating humans

Author

Rusty Fischer

Illustrator

Joel Cook

Reviewer

Makayla Anderson

Rating

Dependable

Level

Toddler, Preschool

Pages

22

Year

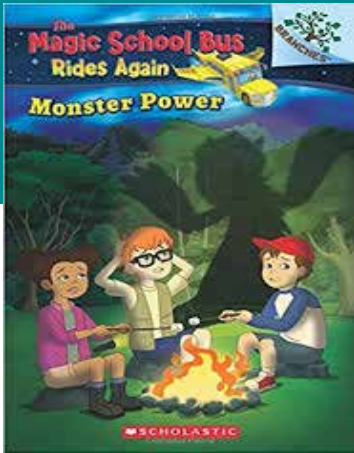
2014

Publisher

Magic Wagon

ISBN

9781624020230



Book Review

The Magic School Bus Rides Again: Monster Power

Ms. Frizzle's class is all set for a fun camping adventure! Arnold, terrified of the Blot Monster he'd seen in a scary movie, brings all the lights he can find. But there's one problem: he has nowhere to plug them in! Thankfully, Ms. Frizzle has an old generator that she lets him hook the lights up to. However, burning gasoline to power the generator creates pollution, which is bad and attracts the Blot Monster. The class must work together to find a way to create clean energy to power the generator. Through adventures with Ms. Frizzle, the class figures out the great power of wind and water and finds a way to keep their campground lit through the night.

A fun remake of The Magic School Bus, this new series is sure to be a hit for lovers of the original. The illustrations have been revamped, with old and new characters drawn in a newer style. Written as early chapter books for readers in first to third grade, this book definitely appeals to its audience. With fun illustrations on every page and larger text size, this book aims to propel younger readers into reading success and enjoyment. Vocabulary words are written in bold and definitions are found in a glossary at the back of the book. For older readers, the plot may seem slightly silly, but younger readers are sure to stay interested and both can learn about alternate energy sources through the story. This is a fun, educational read!

Author

Judy Katschke

Illustrator

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Excellent

Level

Primary, Intermediate

Pages

91

Year

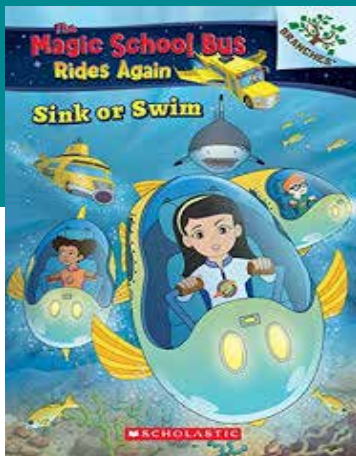
2018

Publisher

Scholastic Inc.

ISBN

9781338194449



Book Review

The Magic School Bus Rides Again: Sink or Swim

Author

Judy Katschke

Illustrator

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Excellent

Level

Primary, Intermediate

Pages

91

Year

2018

Publisher

Scholastic Press

ISBN

9781338194456

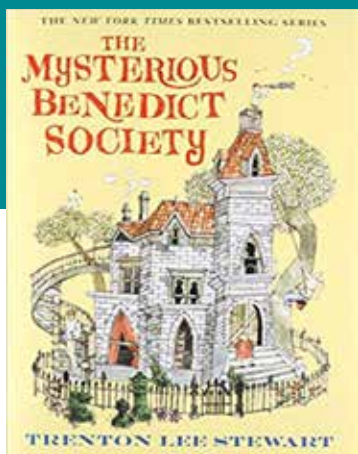
Ms. Frizzle's class decides to venture to Hawaii, where Wanda is set on finding a new animal friend to help save. She befriends a bluestripe snapper, whom she calls Becca Blue. Rather than enjoying her time in Hawaii with everyone else, Wanda constantly worries about Becca and how to help her. Ms. Frizzle's class explores the sea using fishmobiles, submarines that have fins like fish. On an expedition in her fishmobile, Wanda tries to save Becca from a shark. However, her efforts are not needed as a school of bluestripe snapper fish come and confuse the shark. Then the shark traps Wanda, so Ms. Frizzle calls in her school of fishmobiles to save the day.

This is a very fun, early reader chapter book that brings The Magic School Bus back to life! With pictures on every page and larger text, this book eases readers into the transition to chapter books. This series brings back many of the well-loved characters of the original Magic School Bus series while also adding some new, more diverse characters. This particular book is a great introduction to learning about fish. It teaches parts of a fish by using the fishmobile to diagram and explain the purpose of the different fins. It also touches on schools of fish and what their purpose serves. Entertaining and educational, your early reader will love The Magic School Bus! It is great for classrooms and the home.



Book Review

The Mysterious Benedict Society



Author

Trenton Lee Stewart

Illustrator

Carson Ellis

Reviewer

Becky Jamieson

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate

Pages

485

Year

2007

Publisher

Little, Brown and Com-

ISBN

9780143780113

Adults should always protect kids, but sometimes there are jobs only kids can do, and Mr. Benedict has one of these. He asks four gifted children to become his secret agents to help him save the world from an evil man intent on brainwashing everyone. Constance, Kate, Sticky, and Reynie are orphans and runaways that come together to form the Mysterious Benedict Society. Working together they spy on the “school” the brainwashing signal is coming from and send the information back to Mr. Benedict using Morse code. However, as the evil Mr. Curtain is moving forward with his plan to take over the world, the kids find they must take action to stop him. As a team they manage to stop his brainwashing machine and escape to safety.

The message of this book is that people are stronger when they work together. Each person on a team brings different characteristics that help the group. This is clear in the book: it takes Reynie’s leadership, Sticky’s brain, Kate’s athletics, and Constance’s stubbornness to save the day. The book shows the importance of family and friendships as it follows the kids who long for and develop these relationships. Reynie is the main character and he develops a lot over the course of the book. He goes from being a smart loner to a great friend others can rely on in difficult situations. However, there are times when he doubts himself and then receives the support he needs from others. These problems make him a more believable character and therefore more relatable for readers.

*Contains mild violence.



Book Review

The Other Side of Summer

Author

Emily Gale

Illustrator

Reviewer

Melissa Secor

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Young Adult

Pages

313

Year

2016

Publisher

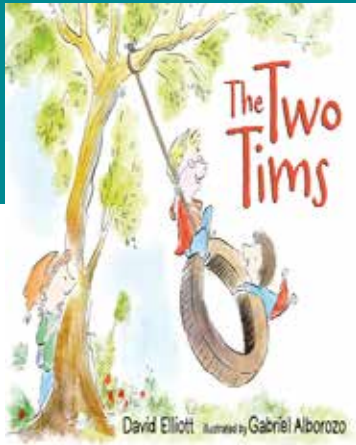
Penguin Random House

ISBN

9780143780113

Thirteen-year-old Summer's life turns upside-down when her older brother, Floyd, dies in a bombing incident at Waterloo Station in London. Her family is devastated, and life has suddenly lost its color. Stuck in a rut, her father decides that what they really need is a change of scenery. He packs up their small apartment in London and moves the family to Australia. Summer, her sister Wren, and their father find themselves in sunny Australia surrounded by strangers and without the presence of Floyd. The only thing Summer has to hold on to is Floyd's old guitar. As Summer plays, a boy named Gabe is drawn to her music. Gabe is surrounded by mystery, and Summer must help him find out who he is before it's too late.

The Other Side of Summer by Emily Gale is a beautifully written book about loss, tragedy, and healing. The pain and loss that Summer experiences is so raw and real, and the growth and healing that she goes through is beautiful and touching. The characters are perfectly described and are well developed throughout the novel. The plot is easy to follow, but is also intriguing and exciting which makes it difficult to put down. The Other Side of Summer would be a great book for older elementary students, as well as a wonderful read for teenagers and adults. There is no language or explicit material in the book, but some readers may find the loss and death of Floyd to be sensitive.



Book Review

The Two Tims

Tim and Tim are best friends forever. That is, until Tom shows up! Tim and Tim's easy friendship is complicated by this new addition to their group, and they must work out this new experience of including new friends. In the end, Tim, Tim, and Tom are best friends forever. That is, until someone new shows up.

Author

David Elliott

Illustrator

Gabriel Alborozo

Reviewer

Tessara Garrett

Rating

Excellent

Level

Toddler

Short and sweet, this is a simple tale of two young boys learning how to adjust to new circumstances and friends. Even with the brevity of actual text, the story is humorous and entertaining. The confusion between the two Tims is enjoyable. The "resolution" of the final page with a new boy and dog showing up is sweet and ironic. This is a good text to use with young children to open up discussions about making new friends and being inclusive of new people. It is a simple story that provides a great opportunity to meaningfully discuss friendship with young children.

Pages

32

Year

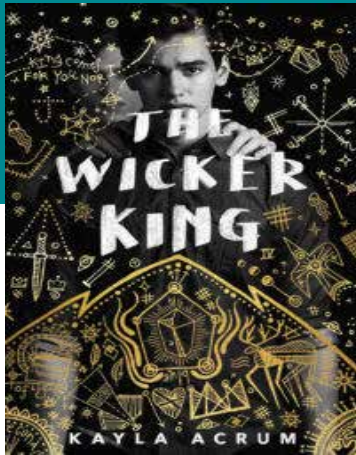
2016

Publisher

Candlewick Press

ISBN

9780763672645



Book Review

The Wicker King

Author

K. Ancrum

Illustrator

Reviewer

Meagan Andrus

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Young Adult

Pages

305

Year

2017

Publisher

Imprint

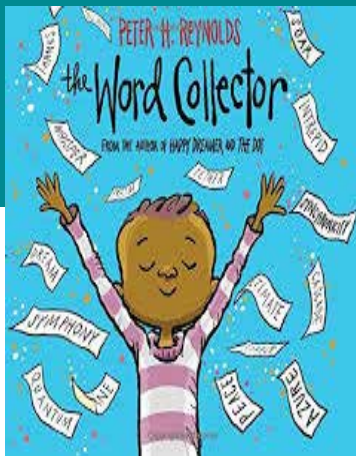
ISBN

9781250101549

Jack and August are unconventional friends and have been since they were little. In high school, it seems like nothing much will change: they'll each hang out with different friend groups at school, but in the evenings they'll do homework together, eat dinner together, or explore the woods together. Despite the fact that Jack's parents are never home and August's mom is severely depressed, they are happy with their lives. But soon, Jack starts seeing things that August doesn't, things that scare him. August doesn't know what to do, so he figures the best way to deal with Jack's visions are to ask him questions, and seek to understand. As the story gets darker and more twisted, August and Jack find themselves entrenched in a cycle of codependency that doesn't seem to be helping Jack or August. Without the help of trusted adults, they find themselves both in a mental institution, separated from each other. But Jack and August cannot exist as separate people—even if being separated is the healthiest and most logical course of action.

It's difficult to explain why this book merits an outstanding review. Perhaps it's the sheer fact that this book is so unique and well-written that it's refreshing to read? Or maybe instead, it is the delightfully flawed, twisted, yet somehow sympathetic characters that carry this dark story. The book is more than just a story—it's an experience told through very short chapters and other documents (photographs, school forms, ticket stubs, notes, etc.). As the story gets darker, the pages itself literally get darker and more stained until they are fully black. Even though the events of the novel are bleak, it ends with hope and reconciliation, and the author includes a note indicting the negligent adults of the novel for the tragedies that Jack and August endure. This book includes homosexual content and may be sensitive to some readers. This story is masterfully told, with a new and intriguing plot line and interesting, if not totally relatable, characters. Lovers of fantasy and psychological thrillers will enjoy this delightfully dark tale.

Contains severe language, severe sexual content, and moderate violence.



Book Review

The Word Collector

Author

Peter H. Reynolds

Illustrator

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Primary

Pages

40

Year

2018

Publisher

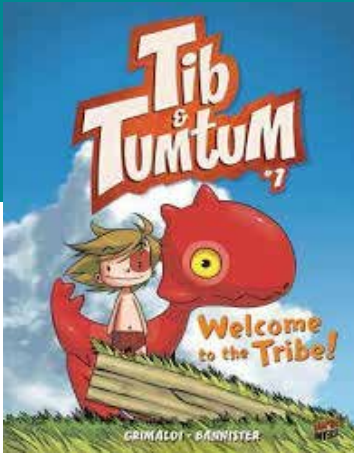
Orchard Books

ISBN

9780545865029

Some people collect bugs or coins or stamps. Jerome collects words. Big words, small words, dreamy words, sad words - he has all types of words in his collection. One day, when he is transporting his well-organized collection of words, he trips and the words get all mixed up together. This gets him thinking, and he starts experimenting with words, writing poetry and songs that touch people and help him communicate more completely. Filled with the knowledge of words that he has and the joy that it brings him, Jerome decides to set his collection of words to the wind, sharing them with everyone else.

With beautiful illustrations and a powerful message, *The Word Collector* communicates the importance of finding your words and sharing them. Words can be empowering. With a better understanding of words, we can learn to more clearly communicate and fully express ourselves. Words can be beautiful. Often, it is the different combinations of words that might not normally go together that create music for our ears. Watch as Jerome discovers the beauty and the power of words, and experiences the joy that is found in sharing them. Simple and sweet, this book still packs a punch as Reynolds seems to know just what words (and pictures) to use.



Book Review

Tib & Tumtum #1: Welcome to the Tribe!

Everyone in the tribe knows that dinosaurs died out long ago. However, it seems no one told Tumtum, Tib's 'imaginary' dinosaur friend. Although Tib is a human child and Tumtum is a sharp-toothed dinosaur, the two have a special friendship that starts because they both have a red spot around one eye. Between adventures with Tumtum, Tib tries to convince other people from his tribe that Tumtum is a real dinosaur. In the end Tumtum is welcomed to the tribe after he saves Tib and the other children from a pack of wolves.

This is a graphic novel that is fun and easy to read. By formatting the book as a graphic novel with many short adventures on each page, the author has made this an appropriate read for many struggling young readers. By using the pictures, even nonreaders can enjoy the story. Furthermore, this story will appeal to all dinosaur fans who have ever wanted a pet dinosaur of their own. The story is a fun adventure which uses characters with modern day characteristics and places them in a hunter-gatherer society. This combination allows readers to relate to the main character while at the same time providing an opportunity for an interesting setting with corresponding pictures. Cavemen interacting with a dinosaur is a good premise for any book.

Author

Grimaldi

Illustrator

Bannister

Reviewer

Becky Jamieson

Rating

Dependable

Level

Primary

Pages

48

Year

2013

Publisher

Graphic Universe

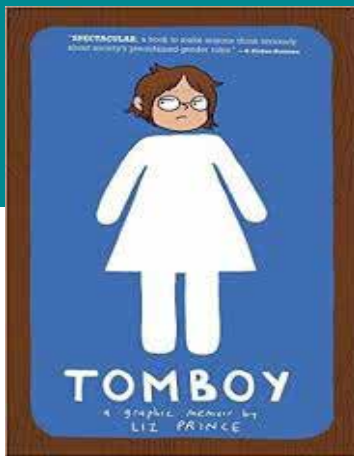
ISBN

9781467715225



Book Review

Tomboy-A Graphic Memoir



Author

Liz Prince

Illustrator

Liz Prince

Reviewer

Natalie Hatch

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Growing up, Liz Prince knew she was different. As soon as she can, she starts throwing fits and demanding to be kept from anything girly. Dresses are torture. Pink is horrible. And girls? Girls seem to be weak, always need rescuing, have to always look good, and never take part in any of the awesome adventures that knights, hunters, and boys can. But abstaining and being against the gender norms placed on her make her stand out, get bullied, and lead to more and more trouble. The problem is that she doesn't like the confines of what girls are supposed to be. Being girly just isn't her thing.

This is a graphic novel that challenges the societal norms and pressures that are staunchly applied to gender roles in a wonderful way. Liz Prince gives a run-down of the events of her young life and the bullying, ostracizing, and horrible jokes made at her expense. She travels with readers and shows them how she once thought she hated that she was born a girl until she was challenged and realized she liked being a girl; she just didn't like the societal pressures and norms. This is a well-thought out read with compelling evidence and thought-provoking scenes that challenges readers to rethink the gender roles, expectations, and limitations that we put on ourselves or others.

Pages

225

Year

2014

Publisher

Zest Books

ISBN

9781936976553



Book Review Traveler

Author

L. E. DeLano

Illustrator

Reviewer

Loretta Farnsworth

Rating

Excellent

Level

Young Adult

Pages

324

Year

2017

Publisher

Swoon Reads

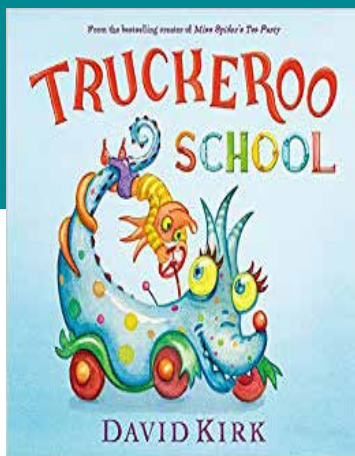
ISBN

9781250100405

Jessa loves to write, and she pulls her inspiration from her dreams and imagination. Or so she thinks. When one of her characters, Finn, suddenly appears in front of her, Jessa learns that she is a Traveler who can enter alternate realities and inhabit various versions of herself. Unfortunately, many of the other versions of Jessa are being killed off, and Finn is determined to protect this Jessa. Guided by their Dreamers—supernatural beings that instruct interdimensional travel and assign missions to improve the various realities—Jessa and Finn try to track down the murderer. Jessa falls in love with Finn, much to the dismay of her non-Traveler friend Ben. When the attacker kidnaps Finn and threatens Jessa's family, Ben accompanies Jessa on the rescue mission. The attacker is revealed and goes on the run, but Finn perishes. Jessa's Dreamer attempts to comfort her by reminding her that there are other realities with Finn, but Jessa insists that each alternate "self" has a unique and real identity that should not be so easily dismissed.

The story and settings feel unique and fresh. This book has many light-hearted, romantic scenes mixed with some more thought-provoking moments. Jessa encounters different versions of her family members and struggles to come to terms with close-to-home realities, such as her brother without autism and her parents happily married instead of divorced. She also grows frustrated under the instruction of her Dreamer, finding that some of her missions go against her conscience. Her desire to protect her family and friends is deep, and throughout the story, she develops a firm belief in her own and others' unique identities, regardless of the reality she is in. The author does a good job capturing the chaotic emotions experienced by many teens, from friendship and romance to family relationships. There are some sexual implications that may not be appropriate for younger readers, and there are some realities Jessa faces that are rather dark, including one in which humans hunt each other for food. However, positive themes of identity and conviction in the face of conflict prevail throughout the story.

*Contains mild language, mild sexual content, and mild violence



Book Review

Truckeroo School

When new monster babies are born in the town of Truckeroo, they are outfitted with a special and unique truck that's made perfect just for them. Pretty soon it's time for trucking school, where the pupils learn what every kid should know about being a monster and taking care of their truck. They exercise and have art class, music class, recess, and lunch. When the career fair happens, all the children learn how to lend a hand and depend on each other's trucks of the trade.

The bright and unique illustrations will capture the imaginations of young readers as they are like nothing ever seen before. Kirk writes for young, mature audiences of a school age who can easily relate to learning both academically and socially in school. The humor in Kirk's new book is clean but runs close to the potty side of things. A truck is spotlighted that spurts stinky gas and looks like a toilet. Especially relevant to boys who like trucks, and find potty humor amusing, Truckeroo School is sure to find a milieu that will want to visit Truckeroo many times over.

Author

David Kirk

Illustrator

Reviewer

Sydnee Burr

Rating

Dependable

Level

Primary

Pages

40

Year

2017

Publisher

Feiwel & Friends

ISBN

9781250016904



Book Review

Unplugged

Blip likes being plugged into her computer. But one day, there is a blackout and Blip trips over her wire and tumbles outside. There, she discovers a whole new world where she makes friends and does lots of fun things. When she returns home, Blip still likes being with her computer, but she also has a newfound joy of being unplugged.

This book is a darling way to show that it is good to take time to unplug and be in real life with those around us. It doesn't try to vilify technology, but portrays it as good and helpful while also pointing out the benefit of stepping away and enjoying the beauties of nature and developing solid relationships with friends. Adorable illustrations and simple text make it great for sharing with young children. Next time you think about plugging in, sit down and read this book. It will feel good to unplug.

Author

Steve Antony

Illustrator

Reviewer

Taylor Harris

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Preschool, Primary

Pages

32

Year

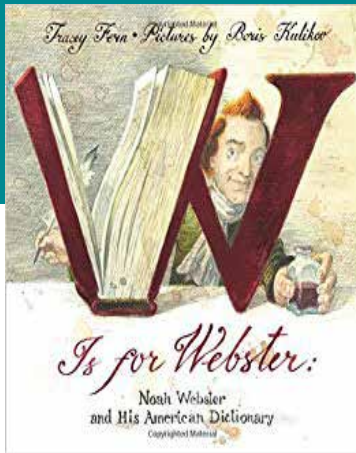
2017

Publisher

Scholastic Press

ISBN

9781338187373



Book Review

W is for Webster: Noah Webster and His American Dictionary

Noah Webster has a way with words - big words. He spends his childhood “playing roguish tricks” and hopes never to be sent to war because he is “ill able to bear the fatigues of a soldier.” As a young adult during the United States’ Revolutionary period, Webster feels strongly that the new country needs its own lexicon to reflect new American ideals and ways of living. He works tirelessly to collect and compile words and their histories from a myriad of sources, and after twenty years of work, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* is finally complete.

W is for Webster provides some interesting insights into the eccentric and quirky personality of Noah Webster, such as the fact that he took his heartbeat after every important discovery. However, stylistic inconsistencies in the writing and some confusing sentences occasionally draw attention to themselves and away from Webster’s story. The pacing feels sometimes too slow and at other times too quick, and at the end of the story, the reader is left wanting to know how life turns out for Webster. Readers looking for additional information about Webster’s life may find the Author’s Note somewhat lacking.

Author

Tracey Fern

Illustrator

Boris Kulikov

Reviewer

Nicole Clark

Rating

Dependable

Level

Primary, Intermediate

Pages

40

Year

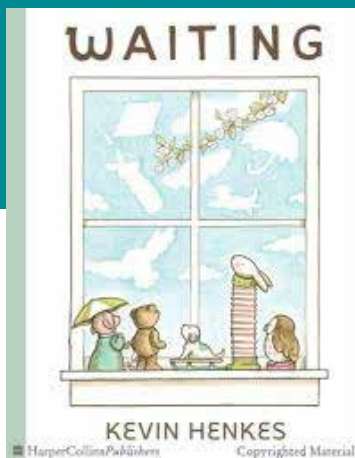
2015

Publisher

Margaret Ferguson

ISBN

9781466895102



Book Review Waiting

Author

Kevin Henkes

Illustrator

Reviewer

Acacia Haws

Rating

Outstanding

Level

Preschool

Pages

28

Year

2015

Publisher

Greenwillow Books

ISBN

9780062368430

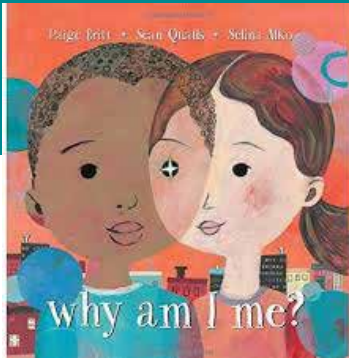
Five toys sit on a windowsill together, each waiting for different things. A dog on a sled is waiting for the snow. A teddy bear is waiting for the wind so he can fly his kite. When the things they're waiting for happen, the toys are happy. The rabbit toy isn't waiting for anything in particular but just enjoys waiting and watching the world with the others. They watch the seasons change and the celebration of holidays, like fireworks on the Fourth of July. They see storms and rainbows. New toys join them. One of the toys falls off and breaks. The last toy, a Russian doll cat, ends up making their number ten.

The illustrations in this book are composed of simple lines and colors, but the mood is consistent and light-hearted. The setting never changes, but the strength of this book lies in the power of subtle changes, such as making the rabbit stand out for not waiting for anything. The underlying philosophies in the story about being happy with where you are rather than waiting for something specific to make you happy is clear, but the moral is made softly, and it doesn't overpower the narrative. This is a mellow book. The story moves under the power of curiosity rather than humor or excitement.



Book Review

Why Am I Me?



Author

Paige Britt

Illustrator

Sean Qualls, Selina Alko

Reviewer

Makayla Anderson

Rating

Excellent

Level

Preschool, Primary,
Intermediate

Looking around at all of the diversity that surrounds us each day we are bound to ask, 'Why am I me?' Following the perspective of two little children who are very different from each other, the book explores this question. The reader is taken on a journey through their city which will cause them to also wonder, 'What makes me unique?' This thought-provoking book will cause you to reflect on the differences and similarities between those you meet.

With few word words on each page, this book would be a great read for younger children. The symbolism and depth from the pictures that accompany the text also make this a wonderful book for older children. All of the questions give the reader the opportunity to think critically and make connections to their own lives. This book would be a wonderful resource for learning about diversity and what makes you unique. The illustrations were created by using acrylic paint, colored pencil and collage. There is great contrast between light and dark colors which allow the images to pop. The illustrations are engaging and add meaning to the text. Almost every cultural group is represented.

Pages

28

Year

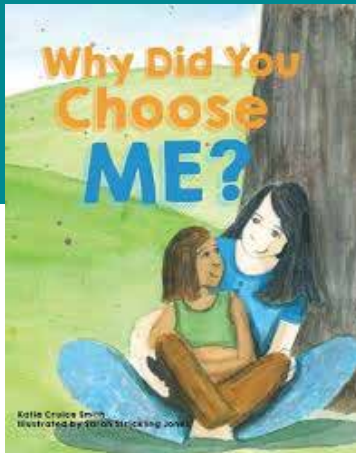
2017

Publisher

Scholastic Press

ISBN

9781338053142



Book Review

Why Did You Choose Me?

Why Did You Choose Me? is a sweet children's book to help adoptive and foster children adjust to being in a new family. The catchy rhymes and colorful illustrations are comforting for young children who may be confused and struggling to find answers to questions about their new lives. Adoption is such a precious gift and this book makes it possible for children to gain a better understanding of a sometimes difficult situation.

The author was inspired to write this book as she searched for stories to read to her own adopted children. Books like this are definitely needed in today's world. This book is a special book for special children and it is definitely a blessing. Throughout the book, there are splashes of color in honor of all the children who are still waiting for their forever home. This is such a wonderful way to remember these precious children. Adoptive and foster parents are heroes and they are changing the world for the better each day. This book will help them make that change.

Author

Katie Cruice Smith

Illustrator

Sarah Strickling Jones

Reviewer

Beverly Jones

Rating

Dependable

Level

Toddler, Preschool,
Primary

Pages

30

Year

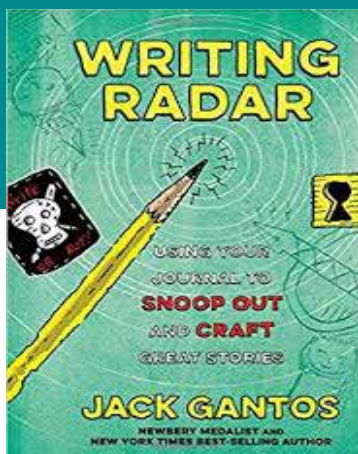
2017

Publisher

Ambassador Interna-

ISBN

9781620206034



Book Review

Writing Radar: Using Your Journal to Snoop Out and Craft Great Stories

Jack Gantos unlocks the secret of becoming a writer within the pages of this book. Instead of insisting that young authors have formal instruction in story construction, Gantos opens the eyes of the reader to the stories that surround us in our everyday life. As we observe what happens around us and write everything down that we think is interesting in a journal, Gantos promises we'll have plenty of fodder for an action-packed, emotion-based story of a lifetime. Other tools such as mapping, drafting, and editing are discussed, but the book clearly emphasizes honoring self, keeping promises, trying, working hard, and trusting your gut.

As the author of more than fifteen published books for “readers of all ages,” Jack Gantos has years of personal experience combing his way through the ever-changing jungle of a writing career. This career began as a boy, and he writes from that perspective many times. Between this voice and the middle-school anecdotes, this book is a perfect reference book for aspiring young writers, but is helpful to all ages as well. This would not be of good use necessarily as a textbook in a classroom, but teachers could find practical ideas to help tease out would-be writers and stymie conversation about what makes quality literature. Ideally, this book would be given to the hesitant young author as a personal read at home. It's fun and light but chock full of useful tidbits and exercises to flesh out ideas into stories.

Author

Jack Gantos

Illustrator

Reviewer

Emilee Bell

Rating

Dependable

Level

Intermediate, Young
Adult

Pages

203

Year

2017

Publisher

Farrar Straus Giroux

ISBN

9780374304560