

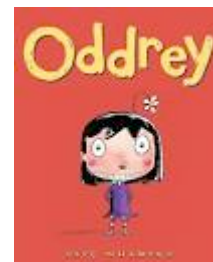
BEST BETS 2012

Reading for Children

The OLA's Canadian Materials Committee, under the umbrella of the OPLA Child and Youth Services Committee, picks this annual list.

Books are selected on the basis of their literary/artistic merit as well as their appeal for children.

Text and illustrations are of equal importance in picture books and information books.



PICTURE BOOKS

Barclay, Jane. *JoJo the Giant.*

Illustrated by Esperança Melo. Tundra.

Even though JoJo eats his veggies, and drinks his milk, he isn't getting any taller. Life is hard for him and his mother; he is always running from bullies and is mocked by the big kid when he decides to join the big race. But it is during the race that he sees just how big he can be.

Fagan, Cary. *Mr. Zinger's Hat.*

Illustrated by Dušan Petričić. Tundra Books.

Mr. Zinger, a storyteller, cleverly inspires young Leo to create his own fairytale involving a young prince, a royal challenge, and himself – Leo the hero! A heartwarming story with beautiful illustrations.

Fullerton, Alma. *A Good Trade.*

Illustrated by Karen Patkau. Pajama Press.

Through vibrant pictures, Kato's seemingly simple life in Uganda is revealed. While hauling heavy water cans, Kato's trek hints at the realities of village life (including subtly indicated dangers lurking). When Kato, who has very little, is able to make "a good trade" for something most take for granted, readers will be left with much to think about.

Klassen, Jon. *This is Not My Hat. Candlewick.*

A small fish is about to learn a big lesson. He has stolen a hat but no need to worry, he won't be caught. The text and illustrations of this book combine to create a humorous tale that will have you turning back the pages, and wondering if that really just happened. Sure to delight anyone who reads it.

Lanthier, Jennifer. *The Stamp Collector.*

Illustrated by Francois Thisdale. Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

A young boy, intrigued by a stamp from far away grows up to be a prison guard for a man imprisoned for his writings. The many letters sent to the writer cannot be given to him but the guard passes along the stamps, a silent reminder of a world who cares. Not a book for pre-schoolers, this is a striking example of the power of words and pictures together.

Little, Jean. *Wishes.*

Illustrated by Geneviève Côté. North Winds Press.

The wish-list of a child is beautifully presented in this sweet story, told in verse. The illustrations capture the bright and cheerful ideas that fill the minds of typical young "dreamers". A charming picture book that's sure to become a storytime favourite.

Maclear, Kyo. *Virginia Wolf. Illustrated by Isabelle Arsenault. Kids Can Press.*

Vanessa's sister, Virginia can't get out of her blue mood and says she has turned into a wolf. Then Virginia tells her about an imaginary world called Bloomsberry, and Vanessa begins to draw the world of Bloomsberry on their walls! Suddenly, the mood is lifted. Whimsical illustrations by Arsenault are a perfect fit. Based on the lives of two famous sisters, Vanessa and Virginia.

Spires, Ashley. *Larf. Kids Can Press.*

Larf is alone in the world. He is the only sasquatch but he is quite happy with that. He has his bunny Eric, hobbies, and

favourite television shows. However, he's about to discover he's not as alone as he thought. Larf's adventure begins when he discovers another sasquatch is making appearance in a nearby town, and he decides it's time to meet! However, not everything unfolds the way Larf, or the reader, expect.

Whamond, Dave. *Oddrey. Owlkids Books*

Bright illustrations convey the optimism and individuality that Oddrey – always a little different- brings to situations.

Speedily coming to the aid of stage-struck peers on performance night, her ability to think independently shines through. An encouraging story for those who think differently.

Young, Cybele. *A Few Bites. Greenwood Books*

Ferdie is not interested in his lunch. Despite Viola's pleading to try "a few bites", he will not be swayed – until Viola weaves a new colourful, wonderful world where broccoli fuels dinosaur power and "orange power sticks" give aliens super vision. This is super fuel for the imagination!

Young, Dianne. *Dear Flyary*

Illustrated by John Martz. Kids Can Press.

It is one eyed alien Frazzle's "dropday" and he is now old enough to get his own spaceship. It purrs like "tarkelby" but then starts to make funny noises. Will Frazzle upgrade or stick with the old but much loved model? A fun look at life in outerspace complete with alien language.

Picture Books (Honourables):

Audet, Martine. *Martin on the Moon.* Illustrated by Luc Melanson, translated by Sarah Quinn. Owlkids.

Davis, Aubrey. *A Hen for Izzy Pippik.* Illustrated by Marie LaFrance. Kids Can Press.

Hochman, Marisa. *A Walk in Pirate's Cover.* Illustrated by Bette Woodland. Thirty Six Peonies Publishing Inc.

FICTION

Adderson, Caroline. *Middle of Nowhere.*

Groundwood Books.

Curtis has learned to take care of himself and his little brother Artie. When they strike up an unusual friendship with an elderly neighbour with challenges of her own, they all band together in an attempt to escape realities too difficult to confront along.

Bourke, Pat. *Yesterday's Dead. Second Story Press.*

Thirteen-year old Meredith dreams of becoming a teacher, but must leave school and her family to work as a servant in the home of a well-to-do doctor. Set in Toronto during the Spanish Influenza epidemic, we follow Meredith's desperate struggle to save the sick when the household she works for is stricken with the deadly flu. A well-written account of a tragic period in Toronto's history that is sure to appeal to young readers.

Curtis, Christopher Paul. *The Mighty Miss Malone.*

Wendy Lamb Books.

Deza a young black girl living during the Great Depression sets out to Michigan with her mother and brother in search of her father who has disappeared while looking for work. Despite the many obstacles they encounter, they never give up

looking for him. A moving portrait of a family desperate to be reunited.

Gay, Marie Louise and Homel, David. *Summer in the City.* **Groundwood Books.**

Charlie's Montreal "staycation" proves to be as adventurous as his other vacations. With near-disasters and hilarious situations - always complicated by his little brother Max - this is a fun read. Good for readers Grade 4 and up.

Horvath, Polly. *Mr. and Mrs. Bunny – Detectives*

Extraordinaire! **Illustrated by Sophie Blackall.**
Groundwood Books.

Detectives, Mr. and Mrs. Bunny move in with Madeline when her parents are kidnapped by some very bad foxes. Together they set out to solve the mystery and learn a lot about love, loyalty, wily foxes and marmots. A madcap adventure with delightful illustrations by Sophie Blackall.

Korman, Gordon. *Ungifted.* **Scholastic.**

Donovan's middle school pranks have earned him the reputation of, "boy most likely to wind up in jail". So how does he go from class-clown to star of the robotics team at the Academy for Scholastic Distinction? An admin mix-up lands Donovan in a "gifted" class with hilarious results. A sweet, funny story that demonstrates "talent" is not defined by IQ score.

Peterson, Lois. *The Paper House.* **Orca Book Publishers.**

10-year-old Safiyah lives in the slums of Nairobi, picking through garbage dumps for things to sell. A colour magazine first serves to fill holes in the sides of the hut but soon becomes art on the outside walls. Art which eventually allows her to attend school.

Skrypuch, Marsha Forchuk. *Making Bombs for Hitler.*
Scholastic Books.

Sent to a Nazi slave camp, 8 year-old Ukrainian Lida is designated a "sub-human Eastern worker" and separated from her sister (her story is in *Stolen child*). Saved by her ability to sew, she works in the laundry and then in a munitions factory. A well-written, poignant and moving novel, not to be missed.

Stratton, Allan. *The Grave Robber's Apprentice.* **Harper Collins.**

Hans was found as a baby in a box by a grave robber, who adopted him. He meets Angela von Schwanenberg, a young countess. Together they have exciting adventures as they fight a necromancer, meet highwaymen and travel through dark forests to save Angela's parents from the evil Archduke Arnulf. A book you won't be able to put down!

Junior Fiction - Honourables:

Grant, Vicki. *Hold the Pickles.* Orca Book Publishers.
Trojan, Kari and Brit. *Margaret and the Moth Tree.* Kids Can.
Wharton, Tomas. *The Fathomless Fire.* Doubleday.
White, Susan. *Ten Thousand Truths.* Acorn Press.

NON-FICTION

Bowers, Vivien. *Hey Canada!* **Illustrated by Milan Pavlovic.** **Tundra.**

Take a road trip across the country with Gran, Alice and Cal. Facts, photos, tweets, blog posts, and other information is brought together as the trio travels the country stopping along way to visit different sights.

Dyer, Hadley. *Potatoes on Rooftops: Farming in the City.*
Annick Press Ltd.

Kids are encouraged to join the "good-food revolution" with educational facts and step-by-step instructions. Fun for all ages, this book uses colour photos and interesting topics to inform readers of the importance of farming, especially in cities and on rooftops.

Eamer, Claire. *The World in Your Lunch Box: the Wacky History and Weird Science of Everyday Foods.* **Illustrated by Sa Boothroyd.** **Annick Press.**

Claire Eamer looks at everyday school lunches and turns them into a fascinating topic of discussion. She focuses on the science and history of each food using many strange and amazing anecdotes. When combined with Sa Boothroyd's quirky illustrations, this fact-filled narrative becomes an even more entertaining read. Who knew a sandwich or a slice of pizza had so much to tell us. "Peel me a grape", please!

Hyde, Natalie. *Cryptic Canada: Unsolved Mysteries from Coast to Coast.* **Illustrated by Matt Hammill.** **Owlkids Books.**

Curious kids who like true stories about "the unexplained" will enjoy this introduction to some of Canada's most mysterious places and events. Seven high-profile mysteries are examined, from buried treasure to mummies in ice, with the use of fun illustrations, and educational "History Mystery" sections.

Levine, Shar and Johnstone, Leslie. *Hockey Science: 25 Winning Experiments.* **Illustrated by Lorenzo Del Bianco.**
Scholastic.

Simple experiments that explain a lot about how hockey works, including things like how a hockey puck bounces and why hockey bags stink! A great book for kids and adults who like hockey and science experiments.

Pasternak, Carol. *How to Raise Monarch Butterflies: A Step-by-Step Guide for Kids.* **Firefly Books.**

Packed with colourful photographs, this book offers children and their adults a full picture of monarch butterflies. From their anatomy and life cycle, preservation efforts, to the details of finding, raising, and caring for monarchs – all the information is here in an engaging and accessible format.

Upjohn, Rebecca. *The Secret of the Village Fool.*
Illustrated by Renné Benoit. **Second Story Press.**

Anton is a quiet, poor man who talks to his plants and refuses to eat meat. He's dismissed as being the village fool, but everything changes when Nazi soldiers invade his small Polish town. Anton courageously hides a Jewish family in his home. Based on a true story, a special section documents with photographs what happened after the war to Anton, and the family he saved.

Junior Non Fiction - Honourables:

Heidbreder, Robert. *Noisy Poems for a Busy Day*. Illustrated by Lori Joy Smith. Kids Can Press.

OLA'S CANADIAN MATERIALS COMMITTEE

We are a long standing committee with a strong voice in promoting Canadian literature for children and young adults. Our goal is to highlight excellence in literature for children and young adults for the OLA membership and others with an interest.

The OLA's annual Best Bets lists evolved from a list put out by the Canadian Material's Committee of the Children's Services Guild. This Canadian Materials Committee is now under the wing of the OPLA Children and Youth Committee.

The OLA's Canadian Materials Committee selects books on the basis of their literary/artistic merit as well as their appeal for children and young adults. Text and illustrations are of equal importance in picture books and information books. We publish two lists each year, one listing top material for children and the other listing top material for young adults (teens).

The Committee thanks S & Book Books, a division of Whitehots Inc. for their ongoing support with providing a place to meet and copies of books to review.

Meetings are held a minimum of four times a year at S & B Books, a division of Whitehots Inc. (3086 Universal Dr., Mississauga). Members discuss and evaluate recent publications by Canadian authors and illustrators. The books evaluated are suitable for children and young adults from birth to nineteen years old. From these discussions, the Committee produces "Best Bets" lists, annual annotated lists of recommended titles. These lists are released each year at the OLA Super Conference and can also be found on the OPLA website on the Children and Youth Services Committee page at http://www.accessola.org/OLAWEB/OPLA/Children_and_Youth_Services_Committee/OLAWEB/OPLA/Best_Bets.aspx

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