



Ontario Library Association Best Bets 2017 List

Picture Books

Bailey, Linda. Carson Crosses Canada. Illustrated by Kass Reich. Tundra.
Carson is a dog who is heading from BC with his owner, over to the East Coast where his owner's ailing sister lives. A dog has a rather different view of the best parts of Canada, so as the car goes from province to province, Carson is more excited about dinosaur bones than the history they represent. He likes the grasshoppers in Saskatchewan and the lobster rolls in PEI. This is a funny version of the many celebrations of Canada that came out in 2017.

Collier, Kelly. A Horse Named Steve. Kids Can Press.

In this hilarious kid's picture book, a fun-loving horse named Steve knows he's awesome, but thinks that he can be exceptional. One day he finds a golden horn lying in the forest and thinks, this is it! Steve takes this golden horn for a ride, inspiring his friends to put items on their own heads, to make themselves feel exceptional too. But, one day Steve's horn goes missing, and he's frantic. Does the horn actually make him a better horse? Besides being a great read, A Horse Named Steve explores self-esteem and what makes a person unique and special.

Florence, Melanie. Stolen Words. Illustrated by Gabriele Grimard. Second Story Press.
This beautiful and sensitive picture book explores the intergenerational impact of Canada's residential schools. When a young girl asks her grandfather how to say something in Cree, he explains how his words were stolen from him as a young boy. With beautiful and tragic imagery and words, this quiet picture book will help children and adults understand the need for truth and reconciliation.

Galbraith, Bree. Milo and Georgie. Illustrated by Josée Bisailon. OwlKids Books.
Milo and Georgie have moved to a new city. To Milo this means he must retire from fun forever, but Georgie wants to go explore her new world. So Milo ties yarn around Georgie so that she can go explore, but come back whenever he misses her. That is, until the yarn breaks, and Milo is forced to discover the world outside his new front door. This brother and sister duo will help children explore the scary world of change.

Renaud, Anne. Mr. Crum's Potato Predicament. Illustrated by Felicita Sala. Kids Can Press.

When Filbert P. Horsefeather walks into Mr. Crum's restaurant, he only wants potatoes. But the picky Horsefeather is unimpressed by Mr. Crum's offerings. That is, until, the potato predicament leads the chef to invent the potato chip. Filled with playful language and quirky characters, this book is a great read aloud. Just be sure to have a salty snack on hand afterward.

Slater, Dashka. The Antlered Ship. Illustrated by Terry and Eric Fan. Simon and Schuster.

Marco the fox has a lot of questions, but none of his other fox friends share his sense of curiosity. In a quest to find answers to all of life's questions, such as how deep does the sun go when it sinks into the sea?, Marco goes on a sea voyage with some new animal friends. Ultimately, he finds the answer to his BIG question: What's the best way to find a friend you can talk to?

Snicket, Lemony. The Bad Mood and the Stick. Illustrated by Matthew Forsythe. Tundra. As a bad mood travels from one person (and animal) to another, a stick makes a similar journey in this funny story about love, butterflies and ice cream.

Snyder, Carrie. Jammie Day! Illustrated by Brooke Kerrigan. OwlKids Books. On a cold winter morning, Cliff decides not to get dressed and wears his jammies to school. His distracted parents and teachers don't seem to notice, so Cliff wears them to school every day and soon the other kids join in! A fun picture book with great illustrations!

Spires, Ashley. The Thing Lou Couldn't Do. Kids Can Press. Lou and her friends know how to have great adventures when they play. Nothing is too tough for them. They can even outrun planes! Until it is jointly decided that high up in a tree would make a great spot to be pirates on a ship. And we discover that Lou doesn't know how to climb a tree and is unwilling to try. Many imaginative excuses later, she is finally encouraged to try, with an unexpected result!

Whittingham, Jane. Wild Ones. Illustrated by Noel Tuazon. Pajama Press. Filled with energy and fearlessness, a wild little girl runs, skips and jumps through her day until she falls into her bed and fast asleep. This playful and rhythmic story is a great read for the wild toddler in anyone's life. Read one on one, or with a group; the story will delight any wild one.

Honourable Mentions

Collet-Derby, Pierre. Barnaby Never Forgets. Candlewick Press.

Stinson, Kathy. Dance of the Violin. Illustrated by Dusan Petricic. Annick Press.

Junior Fiction

Anthony, Joelle. A Month of Mondays. Second Story Press. Suze Tamaki is a middle grade student trying to survive school, when her mother reappears in her life after a ten year absence. She also has to deal with being moved into Honours English class. A heartwarming page turner about the perils of a teenager's life.

Arbuthnott, Shane. Dominion. Orca Books. Molly Stout knows she was meant to be an engineer on her family's airship, the Legerdemain. For generations, the Stouts have collected the spirits that keep all of Terra

Nova running. But Molly captures one spirit that tells her everything she knows about her world is wrong, and Molly has to decide what's right. Arbuthnott has conjured an engaging and exciting world, and Molly is so much fun it's easy to forgive some characters and concepts that aren't as well-defined.

Brouwer, Sigmund. Innocent Heroes: Stories of Animals in the First World War. Tundra. Brouwer combines the moving fictional story of a Canadian platoon in World War One with the true stories of animal heroes on which it's based. Alternating sections mean that the real history is always easily available to readers inspired by the adventures of the Storming Normans.

Goldstyn, Jacques, translation by Claudia Zoe Bedrick. Bertolt. Enchanted Lion Books. In this short sweet book, it is the tree that has a name and not the little boy who loves and names the tree, Bertolt. The boy is a loner. He doesn't care if his mittens don't match or he doesn't have friends at school. Because throughout the seasons, he has his ancient oak. Until one spring when there are no new leaves on the tree, and the boy must find the best way to commemorate his friend.

Hall, Kirsten. The Gold Leaf. Illustrated by Matthew Forsythe. Enchanted Lion Books. The forest is alive with shades of green – jungle green, mint green, and moss green to name a few. One day a new colour arrives – a gold leaf. It's so beautiful all the animals try to have it. The leaf passes from one animal to another getting smaller and smaller until it blows away. Beautiful prose is paired with illustrations that are vibrant and leap off the page, including the dazzling golden leaf that will draw the reader's attention every time the page is turned.

Harper, Charise Mericle. Mae and June and the Wonder Wheel. Illustrated by Ashley Spire. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. June's grandmother has mailed her a package. It's a Wonder Wheel! Every day June spins the wheel and gets a sealed envelope with instructions. Perhaps she could use the wheel to help her talk to the new neighbour next door – Mae. Or maybe she could use the wheel to help her avoid April at school. Making friends is hard, but June is up for the task. A lovely early chapter book for readers that enjoy simple stories and strong friendships.

Lyttle, Alex. From Ant to Eagle. Central Avenue Publishing. Calvin, a 12 year old boy has just moved to a small town from the big city with his family. His only amusement is getting his younger brother Sammy to do his chores for him. With each chore completed, Sammy moves up a level to hopefully achieve an Eagle status. A sudden cancer diagnosis threatens to rock Calvin and Sammy's world. A wonderful Juvenile fiction book that will have you reaching for the Kleenex box!

Skuy, David. Run. Cormorant Books.

Lionel is in 8th grade, overweight and doesn't have a lot of friends. The pills he takes for anxiety make him feel a little spaced out. There is, of course, a bully who makes Lionel's life even worse. By accident, he starts running and much to his surprise, others tell him that he is good at it. But Lionel's low self-esteem prevents him from believing these new friends or even thinking that anything could ever change for him. Skuy's writing is convincing. We believe that this child may sabotage his hopes for a good life because he doesn't believe he is any good.

Honourable Mentions

King, Wesley. Laura Monster Crusher. Penguin Random House.

Rivers, Karen. Love, Ish. Algonquin Young Readers.

Green, Shari. Macy McMillan and the Rainbow Goddess. Pajama Press.

O'Neill, Catharine. Annie and Simon: Banana Muffins and Other Stories. Candlewick Press.

Delaney, Rachelle. The Bonaventure Adventures. Penguin Random House.

Juvenile Non-fiction

Gladstone, James. When Planet Earth Was New. Illustrated by Katherine Diemert. OwlKids.

This gorgeously illustrated book may be light on information, but will have huge impact, convincing any reader to do further research. Starting with a dark planet being hit with giant meteors, Gladstone and Diemert move the reader through billions of years to present day earth.

Keating, Jess. Shark Lady: The True Story of how Eugenie Clark Became the Ocean's Most Fearless Scientist. Illustrated by Marta Alvarez Miguens. Sourcebooks.

This beautifully illustrated picture book biography follows the life of a young Eugenie Clark as she discovers her love of sharks and oceans. With tons of shark facts, and a timeline of Clark's life at the end, this book is great for any budding scientist.

Leatherdale, Mary. Stormy Seas: Stories of Young Boat Refugees. Illustrated by Eleanor Shakespeare. Annick Press.

Presented as five stories of young refugees fleeing their countries and setting off in search of safety, this book is a must have for any collection. Through illustrations, facts and amazing storytelling, the book brings the plight of these young people to life.

Paniaq, Herve. Animals Illustrated: Walrus. Illustrated by Ben Shannon. Inhabit Media.

Filled with strikingly detailed illustrations, this new look at the walrus is filled with behavioral and biological facts about the animal. What's new to this genre? Written by Herve Paniaq, an elder from Igloodik, Nunavut, the book gives fascinating details from a northern / arctic perspective.

Roberts, Jillian. Why Do Families Change? Our First Talk About Separation and Divorce. Illustrated by Cindy Revell. Orca Books.

The "Just Enough" series continues to impress with its ability to handle difficult topics in a child friendly manner. The latest addition from Dr. Jillian Roberts deals with how to speak to young children about separating or divorcing parents. Handled with care and using language that is easily understood, this book will reassure its readers that while their family may be changing, they will always be loved.

Robertson, Joanne. The Water Walker. Second Story Press.

This is the story of Ojibwe grandmother Josephine Mandamin who has worked to raise awareness of the importance of water and the need to protect it. She and others have walked from ocean to ocean to ocean and around all Great Lakes. After Robertson became involved with some of these walks, she knew it was important to keep the message going even after Mandamin gets too old to continue. It is told in simple language, making it accessible to all and the bright childlike illustrations bring even more to the story. There is gentle humour throughout and since Robertson is herself indigenous, the language and art is carefully and sensitively done.

Rusch, Elizabeth. Ready, Set...Baby! Illustrated by Qin Leng. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Anna and Oliver are preparing for their new baby! In this kid-friendly, comic-style book, soon to be brothers, sisters and parents will learn lots about that new bundle of joy heading their way.

Ruurs, Margriet. The Elephant Keeper: Caring for Orphaned Elephants in Zambia. Illustrated by Pedro Covo. Kids Can Press.

Aaron, a worker at a lodge sees a baby elephant in trouble one day and helps to save it. From this experience, he starts work at an elephant sanctuary and learns to care for them. Woven into this book is information about elephant rescue and how elephants survive in the wild. At the back of the book is further information about Aaron and names of organizations that support elephant rescue.

Sampson, Scott. You Can Be a Paleontologist! National Geographic.

Being a paleontologist is a lot more than just simply digging in the desert. Dr. Scott Sampson, host of the PBS Kids show "Dinosaur Train", gives an introduction to the field and the many things paleontologists must learn before they are able to do their job. Along with many interesting facts (did you know you can tell a fossil from a rock by licking it?), and stunning computer images of what dinosaurs may have looked like, young readers will be delighted to "dig" their way into this one.

Williams, Dave, and Loredana Cunti. Go for Liftoff: How to Train Like an Astronaut. Annick Press.

If you want to be an astronaut you need this book! Dr. Dave Williams walks kids through the education and training needed before the “fun begins.”

Honourable Mentions

Remarkable Lives Revealed Series. Crabtree Publishing.

Keating, Jess. What Makes a Monster? Discovering the World’s Scariest Creatures. Penguin Random House.

McAllister, Ian and Nicholas Read. Wolf Island. Orca Books.

McAllister, Ian and Nicholas Read. Bear’s Life. Orca Books.

Yellowhorn, Eldon and Kathy Lowinger. Turtle Island: The Story of North America’s First People. Annick Press.

YA Fiction

Ali, S.K. Saints and Misfits. Salaam Reads.

In Janna’s world there are 3 types of people: saints, misfits, and monsters. While the first two are easy to deal with, the problem is there is a monster in disguise at her mosque. Janna finds her voice and her place in the world after learning from her fellow misfits, ultimately exposing the monster for who he really is!

Berkhout, Nina. The Mosaic. Groundwood.

Twyla, a high school senior eager to leave her small, military hometown finds herself volunteering with a young veteran, Finch, in order to gain the service hours she requires to graduate. Twyla and Finch grow closer as they complete, and are pushed to defend, an intricate piece of art in a decommissioned nuclear missile silo. You’re going to need tissues for this one.

Dimaline, Cherie. The Marrow Thieves. Comorant Books Inc.

Frenchie and a group of his Indigenous companions find themselves on the run in a Canada ravaged by global warming, while being hunted for their bone marrow, a key element to helping non-Indigenous individuals dream. Trying to avoid capture and being taken to marrow harvesting factories, Frenchie and his friends learn to survive and form a family while trying to find a safe haven.

Grant, Vicki. Short for Chameleon. Harper Collins.

Cam Redden and his dad run the Almost Family Surrogate Agency. They rent themselves out to families and pretend to be relatives of the families that hire him.

When Albertina and Raylene, two new clients, enter his world he gets embroiled in a mystery that he must solve. Part comedy, part mystery and a whole lot of laughs in this novel.

Juby, Susan. [The Fashion Committee](#). Viking.

Two very different high school students are pitted against each other to win a scholarship to a private art school. Charlie Dean is fashion obsessed teen, who lives and breathes everything about this world. John Thomas-Smith forges metal sculptures. Both seemingly care less about the other person, and their interests, but a journal they must keep as part of their scholarship application, reveals them to both be passionate individuals. [The Fashion Committee](#) is told in alternating voices between Charlie and John's entries and is a funny and poignant read.

Lee, Fonda. [Exo](#). Scholastic.

It's an alternative future, and both humans and aliens now co-exist, after Earth becomes a colony to a powerful alien race. Not everyone has accepted this, even though it's been a hundred years, and a group called Sapience wages terrorism-like acts on people who now work for the aliens. But for Donovan Reyes, who has an alien exoskeleton integrated into his own body, the question of who is on the right side and who is on the wrong side, is obvious. That is, until he is captured and becomes a pawn for the Sapience. The lines become blurred, in this thrilling read with a shocking ending.

Livingston, Lesley. [The Valiant](#). Harper Collins.

Fast-paced and engaging, this historical novel introduces readers to 17 year old Fallon, the daughter of a Celtic king, whose family was ripped apart by an invading Julius Caesar. Running from home and an arranged marriage, Fallon is captured and sold as a gladiatrix, to a school for the warriors owned by Caesar himself. A bit of romance, some twists and turns, and the vibrant lead character make this book (first in a series) very appealing.

Mac, Carrie. [10 Things I Can See From Here](#). Knopf Books for Young Readers.

Maeve's anxiety spikes thinking about leaving the home she shares with her mother in a small town outside Seattle, but when her mom leaves on a mission trip, she has no choice but to stay with her dad's new family in Vancouver. Maeve's stepmom and little brothers are great, but her father has some problems of his own. Maeve tries to navigate all this and some recent troubling history while starting a new relationship with a remarkable young woman, Salix. An LGBTQIA+, mental health, and step-family story that's not about so much drama, you'll want to experience all this with Maeve.

Nielsen, Susin. [Optimists Die First](#). Tundra

Petula is exasperated with her mandatory art therapy class. She's not anxious, she's just a realist. She's been made to attend, after the death of her sister, and everyone in it is weird. Including the new guy, Jacob. Well, maybe Jacob's not so bad. Readers may find the story resolves a bit quickly, but well-drawn, funny, diverse characters in the art therapy group and in Petula's family make this one a gem.

Younge-Ullman, Danielle. [Everything Beautiful is Not Ruined](#). Penguin Random House.

Ingrid grew up travelling with her famous, opra-star mother, Margot-Sophia, but has somehow found herself in a wilderness youth program with a group of broken misfits. Ingrid knows she doesn't belong here, but three weeks in the Canadian wilderness and a few caring new friends help Ingrid realize her past might not be as glowing as she remembers, and she may have more in common with these misfits than she thought. . . .

Honourable Mentions

Ciccarelli, Kristen. The Last Namsara. Harper Collins.

Shaw, Liane. Caterpillars Can't Swim. Second Story Press.

YA Non-Fiction

Charleyboy, Lisa & Mary Beth Leatherdale, eds. #Not Your Princess: Voices of Native American Women. Annick Press.

This collection of art, poems, interviews, and essays is in turns heartbreaking and excitingly optimistic; it's always profoundly moving. Teens who pick up this book will find their perceptions challenged and their ideas on contemporary Indigenous life broadened.