BEST BETS
2002
Reading for
Children

The OLA’s Canadian Materials 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

A storm is quickly brewing, and a boy who dreams of being a Mountie is sent in search of his younger brother. He searches in all the usual places without luck. Then, finally he finds the little one, snatches him up onto his horse and races the storm home. The beautiful illustrations capture all the tension of the impending storm and the hurried energy of the hunt.

Garay, Luis. The Kite, Tundra Press
A tale about a young boy in Latin America who has three wishes: that he can sell all his newspapers, that his baby brother will be born soon and that he could have the kite in Senor Gonzalez’s toy stall.

Godkin, Celia. When the Giant Stirred: Legend of a Volcanic Island, Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
This is a book that reminds one of a Gaugin painting, with warm colours in a paradise-like setting. It is also a dramatic portrait of the cycle of nature on a volcanic island. Interesting for many ages.

Hundal, Nancy. Twilight Fairies; illustrated by Don Kilby. Fitzhenry & Whiteside.
Since Miranda knows that the fairies in her garden only appear in the evening, she decides to have her birthday party there, hoping the fairies will join in the fun too. Skeptical mortals, take note- magic does abound in that twilight garden, with fairy dust lighting up the night. A delightful story with equally enchanting illustrations.

Riley and his parents spend a special day with their old dog Jasper before they go to the veterinary clinic to put him down. Beautiful illustrations enhance the text.

Reynolds, Marilyn. The Name of the Child; illustrated by Don Kilby. Orca
Lloyd barely arrives at his uncle’s farm when disaster strikes. Both his aunt and uncle become very sick and are unable to look after themselves or their new baby. Miles from any help, they turn to Lloyd, who is afraid of every noise he hears. Setting out in the wagon with Old Bob, the horse, leading, Lloyd holds on tightly to the baby. Suddenly, he calms down and realizes what he must do. Readers will be touched by the adventures of an unlikely hero. Don Kilby’s illustrations powerfully capture Lloyd’s story.

Schwartz, Roslyn. Yo Baby!, Annick Press
A simple guessing game for babies enlivened by such unusual choices as pineapples, handsome hounds and desert islands.

When Soloman’s beloved tree is felled in a storm, his uncle helps him deal with his grief by teaching him to carve a traditional Tsimshian mask from its wood. The illustrations are simple and clearly portray Solomon’s emotional journey to healing.

Vande Griek, Susan. The Art Room. Ill by Pascell Milleli, Groundwood
Spend a day studying under Emily Carr in her Granville Street studio working among her menagerie of animals, some in cage, some on the loose. The language is vibrant, though the lively pictures will keep you from turning the pages too quickly.

FICTION

Butcher, Kristin. Cairo Kelly and the Mann. Orca
Midge and Kelly are serious about playing baseball. So when they decide to stop playing until their favourite umpire is reinstated, everyone knows that something important is at stake here.

Cumyn, Alan. The Secret Life of Owen Skye. Groundwood
Owen and his brothers stick together no matter what ridiculous ideas get into one or more of their heads at any given time. These include family feuds, communion with the dead, hypothermia, and true romance.

Haworth-Attard, Barbara. Irish Chain. Harper Collins
Rose Dunlea is dyslexic in WWI Halifax. When 2 ships collide in the harbour, bringing terror, destruction and death to all she knows, Rose is sure that it was her fervent prayers to end school that has done this.

Heneghan, James. Flood Groundwood Press
Andy Flynn is rescued by the Sheehogue, or Little People, from a flood that kills his mom and stepfather. Andy, accompanied by the Sheehogue is taken by his Aunt Mona to live in Halifax. Andy discovers enroute that he has a father there and leaves Aunt Mona to find him. A poignant yet humourous tale.

Hutchins, Hazel. Robyn’s Art Attack. Formac Publishing
It’s Robyn’s turn to choose the destination of the next class field trip. She chooses the art gallery to the dismay of all of her classmates, even her best friend. But the trip ends up surprising everyone, including Robyn.

McNamee, Graham. Sparks, Random House
Poor Todd just want’s to come across as normal, but keeps getting shoved into the special needs class. Eva’s there too, but she likes it. She also likes Todd.
When Griffin, Shade’s young son, is sucked into the Underworld, his father embarks on a perilous quest to bring him safely home. Unbeknownst to Shade, his evil nemesis is hunting Griffin. Will Shade find his son in time?

Tate, Nikki. Jo’s Triumph. Orca
Joselyn escapes from an orphanage and disguises herself as a boy to get a job as a Pony Express rider. Jo is blackmailed into a promise that whether she keeps it or breaks it, could mean death.

Watts, Irene N. Finding Sophie. Tundra Books,
14 year old Sophie should be thrilled that the war is over since she has not seen her family for many years. When she arrived in London as part of the Kindertransport from Nazi-Germany, she began a new life with her beloved Aunt Em. Now she has learned that her father, who has suffered and lost so much, will soon arrive in England to take her away with him. Suddenly, her two worlds are about to collide. Sophie knows she must make a decision. A very moving and realistic portrayal of life during this time period.

Woods, Shirley. Jack: The Story of a Beaver; illustrated by Celia Godkin. Fitzhenry & Whiteside,
Against all odds, Jack, a young beaver, survives the dangers of the wild. Readers will admire Jack’s tenacity as he fights bravely to save himself and his family. Another absorbing animal adventure from Shirley Woods.

NON FICTION

This gorgeously illustrated work exposes the precarious life of the hummingbird.

Batten, Jack. The Man Who Ran Faster Than Everyone: The Story of Tom Longboat, Tundra Books
Although the long-distance runner, Tom Longboat was exploited and treated shamelessly by his handlers and other business people, this extraordinary athlete was able to soar above the mediocrity of narrow-minded people by excelling in his sport. His pure love of running, his belief in his own abilities, and his quiet dignity were Tom Longboat’s trademarks. This moving story shows the highs and lows of his remarkable career.

A great followup to Volume I, with interesting short biographies of both well-known and lesser-known Canadians.

Levine, Karen. Hana’s Suitcase. Second Story Press
Many years after Hana Brady died in a concentration camp, her suitcase ended up in a Holocaust museum in Japan. A young curator spends years trying to discover who Hana was and her research leads her to Toronto when Hana’s brother now lives.

MacLeod, Elizabeth. The Wright Brothers: A Flying Start. Kids Can Press
The amazing achievements of the Wright Brothers are presented in a compelling way using vintage newspaper articles, letters, memorabilia, photos, and illustrations by the Wright Brothers themselves. Arranged around cartoon-like drawings of the brothers, who also comment on what is happening in their own lives at the time, MacLeod brings the characters to life. A fascinating and entertaining book using effective techniques to capture the readers’ imaginations.

Traveling from east to west across this great land, Moore visits each province and territory, exploring it’s landscape, marking it’s historical milestones, sampling it’s cuisine, and celebrating it’s people.

Peacock, Shane. Unusual Heroes: Canada’s Prime Ministers and Fathers of Confederation. Puffin
A lively, informative collection of short biographies that will keep both children and adults entertained with its humourous style. Canadian history comes alive!

Schwartz, Ellen. I’m a Vegetarian. Tundra Books
With an emphasis on healthy eating patterns, this non-preachy book covers everything from how to inform friends and family to tasty recipes.

Smith, David. If the World was a Village. Kids Can Press
The diversity of our world reduced to a sample population of 100. For example 10 of us are preschoolers. Find out how many speak English, who eats what, and who’s still hungry. This is a tricky feat of serious number crunching.

Zonta, Pat. Jessica’s X-Ray. Firefly
This book is clearly written, straightforward and complimented with actual x-ray images. It also includes beautiful and startling MRI and ultrasound images.

NON FICTION SERIES

Kids Can Do It Kids Can Press
Books in this series include Making Masks by Renee Schwartz and Making Shadow Puppets by Jill Bryant and Catherine Heard. Colourful, easy to follow multicultural crafts.
OLA’S CANADIAN MATERIALS COMMITTEE

OLA members committed to children’s services and eager to evaluate and promote Canadian children’s books are invited to join the OLA’s Canadian Materials Committee. We are a long standing committee with a strong voice in promoting Canadian children’s literature. Our goal is to highlight excellence in children’s literature for the OLA membership and those interested in children’s literature.

Members discuss and evaluate recent publications by Canadian authors and illustrators. The books evaluated are suitable for children from birth to twelve years old. From these discussions, the Committee produces “Best Bets”, an annual annotated list of recommended titles. The list is released each year at the OLA Conference and is found on the OLA Home Page www.accessOLA.com. The latest list is reproduced here for those who may not have access to the web.

Meetings are held a minimum of four times a year at National Book Service (25 Kodiak Crescent in North York).

The Canadian Materials Committee is a wonderful opportunity to evaluate new Canadian books, network with colleagues and be an active participant in OLA.

OLA’s Canadian Materials Committee Members:

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