

BEST BETS

2014

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

Adderson, Caroline. *Norman, Speak!* Illustrated by **Qin Leng.** **Groundwood Books/House of Anansi Press.**

Training a dog is hard work. But what if you find out your dog speaks Chinese? You learn to speak Chinese too, of course! A sweet, funny story about an ordinary family with an extraordinary dog.

Côté, Geneviève. *Starring Me and You.* **Kids Can Press.**

Piggy and Bunny return and this time they are considering putting on a play. Their conversation alternates between each of their feelings and reactions. Piggy and Bunny are contrasting characters, highlighting the wonderful differences in friends. They come to realize that their differences are complementary, and that there's room for both to express themselves. A lovely, simple, sweet story to enjoy.

Covello, Paul. *Toronto ABC.* **HarperCollins Canada.**

From old (Fort York) to new (Yonge-Dundas Square), from A for AGO to Z for Zoo and beyond, this bright and cheerful board book will take you on a tour of our nation's biggest city!

Edwards, Wallace. *Unnatural Selections.* **Orca Book Publishers.**

Join Professor I.B. Doodling as he draws strange and wonderful composite creatures based on the suggestions of people he meets in his travels. If you've never met a toraffe or a cowaconda before, now is your chance!

Ohi, Ruth. *Shh! My Brother's Napping!* **North Winds Press.**

Big brother hears the refrain, "Shh! Your brother's napping!" and struggles to abide by his mother's wishes as they go about their day. How tempting it is to stuff something into your snoring brother's mouth, bang the pots and pans, or read a scary book and scream out loud? Oh's gentle rhyme, warm illustrations of this mouse family, and big brother's earnest attempts at quiet make an endearing read-aloud bedtime story.

Scanlon, Liz Garton. *The Good-Pie Party.*

Illustrated by Kady MacDonald Denton. **Scholastic.**

Posy doesn't want to move and her two best friends don't want her to either. Baking makes them feel better and a farewell party featuring pie helps even more, for a while. The sadness of leaving friends is palpable in this honest look at saying good-bye.

Sellars, Willie. *Dipnetting with Dad.* **Illustrated by Kevin Easthope.** **Caitlin Press.**

With exuberant pictures, a young native boy tells of the day that he is finally old enough to catch salmon with his father and grandfather. Traditions and facts are interwoven into the story just as the net itself is checked and made strong for the dipnetting. The author, a member of the Williams Lake Indian Band, portrays the importance of community and family thru the unique perspective of a boy coming of age in the Cariboo Chilcotin Region of BC.

Stellings, Caroline. *Gypsy's Fortune.* **Peanut Butter Press.**

Ever wonder where fortune cookies come from? For that we will have to go back to San Francisco in the 1920s to a fortune telling cat who was down on her luck. Beautifully illustrated

with watercolour-like illustrations and peppered with wise fortunes throughout, this book tells a beautiful story full of perseverance and magic.

Uegaki, Chieri. *Hana Hashimoto, Sixth Violin.*

Illustrated by Qin Leng. **Kids Can Press.**

Hana enters the talent show even though she's only had 3 lessons on the violin. She practices every day, inspired by memories of her grandfather's violin playing back in Japan. When the big day arrives, Hana's jitters nearly get the best of her, but in the end she surprises everyone with a memorable performance. A charming story of determination, courage, and a special intergenerational bond.

Villeneuve, Anne. *Loula and the Sister Recipe.* **Kids Can Press.**

An adorable book in which Loula is frustrated by her brothers, 'the worst invention in the world' and longs for a sister, so she asks her parents to make her one. Her father convinces her that you need specific ingredients to make a sister, so off Loula goes to create her very own sister and finds that sometimes the best companion in life is not what you expected.

Picture Books: Honourables

Bailey, Linda. *If Kids Ruled the World.* Illustrated by David Huyck. **Kids Can Press.**

Harper, Charise Mericle. *Go! Go! Go! Stop!* Knopf Books for Young Readers.

Trochatos, Litsa. *Don't.* Illustrated by Virginia Johnson. **Groundwood.**

JUNIOR FICTION

Adderson, Caroline. *Jasper John Dooley Not in Love.*

Illustrated by Ben Clanton. **Kids Can Press.**

Isabel loves Jasper, but what Jasper loves is Isabel's trampoline. Unfortunately, play dates with Isabel mean playing weddings and babies, just to get to the trampoline. Jasper hates girls, weddings, and babies, and wishes he could just play knights with his (boy) friends, but what's a boy to do when the only trampoline around belongs to an icky girl?

Armstrong, K.L. & M. A. Marr. *Odin's Ravens.*

Little, Brown Books for Young Readers.

The second in *The Blackwell Pages* series continues the action-packed adventures of this group of teens descended from Norse Gods. These 13-year-olds must find Thor's hammer and save the world from its prophesied end. Full of interesting characters with intriguing powers and all converging with mythology; the group learns to work together to help each other and save the world. A highly entertaining and engaging read.

Auxier, Jonathan. *The Night Gardener.* **Puffin Canada.**

When 14-year old Molly is hired to work for the Windsor family, she thinks perhaps she's found a safe place for herself and her little brother, Kip, to stay. But the Windsors are strange people, and their house is even stranger. Before too long, Molly realizes that what she and Kip need most is to leave the Windsor estate with its ancient evil powers. The question is, can they?

Cotter, Charis. *The Swallow: A Ghost Story.* **Tundra Books.**

Polly is surrounded by family; Rose is often left alone by busy parents and each find comfort in their tiny attic spaces. When they discover each other through the attic wall, they forge a powerful friendship. When strange things start to happen at home, and a ghost starts terrorizing Polly, the girls must attempt to unravel the mystery surrounding Rose's family. A well-told tale with an unexpected conclusion.

Ellis, Sarah. *Outside In.* **Groundwood.**

Thirteen-year old Lynne befriends an unconventional family who live off-grid and survive by scavenging for things "Citizens" have thrown away. With her own home life in chaos, Lynne is enchanted by the Undergrounders' alternative way of life. But can she really keep her promise to keep their existence a secret? An engaging and insightful read about the complexities of family and friendship.

Fagan, Cary *I Wish I Could Draw.* **Groundwood Press.**

Cary thinks he is a terrible drawer. But as he tells an illustration filled story, he decides that maybe he's not that bad.

Gay, Marie-Louise. *Princess Pistachio.* **Pajama Press.**

Pistachio has always known that she was a princess; she felt the truth of it right to her very core. When she discovers an anonymous gift on her birthday she's convinced she now has proof of her regality!

Krossing, Karen. *Bog.* **Fitzhenry and Whiteside.**

When Bog's father is turned to stone by the evil Troll Hunter, Bog sets off on a quest to find the Nose Stone, a legendary troll relic of power that could restore his father to life. With the help of a large Forest Troll named Small and a little human girl named Hannie, Bog learns enough to start hunting for the stone, and also discovers a horrifying fact: the Troll Hunter is also on the track of the Nose Stone, hoping to destroy it!

Livingston, Lesley & Jonathan Llyr. *The Haunting of Heck House.* **Penguin Group.**

Cheryl and Tweed are best friends and cousins. They love scary movies, so when they get a chance to check out a real haunted house, they don't think twice. Except that this house not only has some of their arch enemies, it also has actual ghosts. By turns funny and scary, this should appeal to all.

Honourable Junior Fiction:

Ellis, Deborah. *The Cat at the Wall.* Groundwood.
Marko, Cyndi. *Kung Pow Chicken* series. Branches.
Redhill, Michael. *Saving Houdini.* Harper Collins.

JUNIOR NON FICTION

Brewster, Hugh. *From Vimy to Victory: Canada's Fight to the Finish in World War I.* **Scholastic Canada.**

The heroism of Canadian soldiers and the abomination of life in the trenches during World War I is well presented using a scrapbook-style. This collection of first person accounts, photographs, maps and illustrations is pulled together to provide young readers an excellent account of Canada's involvement from "Vimy to victory".

Elton, Sarah. *Starting From Scratch: What You Should Know About Food and Cooking.* **Illustrated by Jeff Kulak.**

Owlkids Books Inc.

Elton delves into the science behind food and cooking and also encourages kids to cook as a means of self-expression and a way to gain independence. Cultural influences are explained with a 'map' of chicken in countries across the globe from "Sopa de lima" in Mexico to "Massaman curry" in Thailand. Only 4 basic recipes are provided but there's plenty of content here to draw kids into the kitchen.

Gardy, Jennifer. *It's Catching: The Infectious World of Germs and Microbes.* **Illustrated by Josh Holinaty.** **Owlkids Books Inc.**

A fascinating look at how germs have changed the course of history, and continue to impact our daily lives today. Funny illustrations, scientific facts, and just the right "gross" factor make this book a page-turner for young science buffs.

McCarney, Rosemary with Plan International. *Every Day is Malala Day.* **Second Story Press.**

This powerful combination of text and photographs is a love letter to Malala and what she represents for girls around the world. Poignant photographs labelled from around the world combine with a simple text to create a most effective message – ALL children have a right to education. Outstanding.

Ruurs, Margriet & Katherine Gibson. *A Brush Full of Colour: The World of Ted Harrison.* **Pajama Press.**

The life and works of well-loved artist Ted Harrison is well captured for kids in this picture book, complete with questions for an interactive educational tool. Harrison known for his bright vivid paintings of northern Canada also imparts the message of having the courage to be yourself and spread happiness in everything you do.

Scandiffio, Laura. *Outlaws, Spies, and Gangsters: Chasing Notorious Criminals.* **Art by Gareth Williams.** **Annick Press.**

This collection of eight true crime stories allows kids access to the case files of some of the world's most notorious criminals. Each story contains a good balance of suspense and biographical information about famous and some not-so-famous "most wanted". Sure to be a hit with readers who love true crime stories.

Smith, David J. *If: A Mind-Bending New Way of Looking at Big Ideas and Numbers.* **Illustrated by Steve Adams.** **Kids Can Press.**

This fun and fascinating book gives new perspective to mind-boggling facts and figures. Smith scales down colossal concepts about history, geography, and science into imaginative and easy-to-understand analogies, visualized with beautiful infographics. A book all ages will enjoy.

Vickers, Roy Henry. *Cloudwalker.* **Harbour Publishing.**

The second in a series by collaborators Roy Henry Vicks and Robert Budd, this book tells the legend of how the rivers of British Columbia were first created. With breath-taking illustrations, this tale follows a young Gitksan hunter who, in his attempt to capture a group of swans, finds himself carried away and dropped in the clouds.

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 Materials 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).

Meetings are held a minimum of six times a year. 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](http://www.accessola.org/OLAWEB/OPLA/Children_and_Youth_Services_Committee/OLAWEB/OPLA/Best_Bets.aspx)

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