

BEST BETS

2007

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

Bailey, Linda. *Goodnight Sweet Pig.*

Illustrated by Josée Masse. Kids Can Press

Going to bed should always be this much fun! Linda Bailey scores again with a chaotic bedtime romp in this delightfully illustrated counting book which features the antics of some awfully attractive pigs. Instead of counting sheep, readers will be partying all night long with these rhyming pigs.

Fagan, Cary. *Ten Old Men and a Mouse.*

Illustrated by Gary Clement. Tundra Books

Is it a pest of a mouse that has come to join them in the synagogue or is it a new friend?

It takes ten old friends and a surprising turn of events for the decision to become clear. Clement's expressive faces draw us right in to share the fun.

Heidbreder, Robert. *A Sea-Wishing Day.*

Illustrated by Kady MacDonald Denton. Kids Can Press.

A boy and his dog set sail on the sea of imagination in this fun-filled nautical adventure. Lilted rhythm, delightful rhymes, and water-coloured illustrations make this book a treat.

Hutchins, Hazel. *The List.*

Illustrated by Maria van Lieshout. Annick Press

A royal entourage takes a long journey, piling their elephants with the rare and wonderful gifts on the Queen's list to carry to a new baby in a distant kingdom. Little Princess Cassidy has a list, too, but what precious gift can she possibly be carrying?

Ohi, Ruth. *A Trip With Grandma.*

Annick Press.

Even though Clara and Grandma will be with him on a car trip, Sprout is scared to be away from Mom and Dad for so long. Ruth Ohi conveys Sprout's inner turmoil through her gentle yet expressive illustrations and shows how a wise and fun-loving Grandma can save the day. A Trip with Grandma is a winner!

Tankard, Jeremy. *Grumpy Bird.*

Scholastic Inc.

Bird wakes up so grumpy that he can't even be bothered to fly. Hilarious drawings illustrate Bird's walk through the countryside accompanied by friends who are cheerfully oblivious to his mood.

Watt, Mélanie. *Chester.*

Kids Can Press.

In this delightful display of hijinks, Chester the cat takes over the writing and illustrating of Watt's story about a mouse, to hilarious effect. His red marker edits every page according to his own whim, even as the author tries to retake control. Who wins out in the end? Readers!

Watt, Melanie. *Scaredy Squirrel Makes a Friend.*

Kids Can Press.

When you are too frightened to make friends, you find ways to amuse yourself. For instance, you make up a Plan of what is needed in order to meet the Perfect friend. But things seldom happen as expected.

Winters, Kati-Lynn. *Jeffrey and Sloth.*

Illustrated by Ben Hodson. Orca Book Publishers.

When Jeffrey's daydreams take over his life, he has to quickly figure out how to regain control. A book that can be understood on many levels.

Wishinsky, Frieda. *Please, Louise!*

Illustrated by Marie-Louise Gay. Groundwood Books.

Driven to distraction by a pesky little sister who won't give him a minute's peace, Jake wishes she were a dog instead. A gentle beware-of-what-you-wish-for story, made even more charming by Gay's delightful pictures.

FICTION

Frizzell, Colin. *Just J.*

Orca Book Publishers.

Jenevieve, aka J, is grieving her mother's death, dealing with her father's new girlfriend and trying to deal with being 13. It would all be too much if it weren't for a newfound aunt who helps restore J as they restore an old home together.

Jackson, Melanie. *Shadows on the Train: a Dinah Galloway mystery.*

Orca Book Publishers.

Feisty Dinah, the spunky girl detective with the huge singing voice, once again solves a high-paced mystery with humour, energy and ingenuity. This time Dinah is being stalked by a dangerous man from her dead father's past who will stop at nothing to retrieve a lost treasure. Jackson's warm-hearted heroine tangles with shady characters, an ex-con, zany situations and learns about rare stamps in her inimitable way.

Johansen, K.V. *Nightwalker.*

Orca Book Publishers.

Maurey is an outcast who resembles the hated and feared sorcerers, the Nightwalkers, who have been expelled from their land. When he is accused of stealing the Queen's ring, unexpected help comes from a young baroness who helps him escape. Together they discover that the Nightwalkers hold the key to the truth. Now they must find them.

Jones, David. *Baboon: a novel.*

Annick Press.

What could be worse than a plane crash in the African savannah? Jerry quickly finds out when he regains consciousness and discovers to his horror that he is living in the body of a baboon. He slowly realises no one can help him and that he alone must find a way out of this nightmare.

Jordan, Rosa. *The Goatnappers.*

Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

15 year-old Justin wrestles with issues of honesty, family responsibilities, school pressure and an absentee-dad suddenly reappeared. Supported by a warm family structure, his perception of an adult world matures as he wrestles with complexities and a moral dilemma. An excellent sequel to *Lost Goat Lane*.

Kilbourne, Christina. *Dear Jo: The Story of Losing Leah...and Searching for Hope.*

Lobster Press.

Maxine and Leah's story unfolds through computer diary entries, e-mails and instant messages, into a terrible reality. The friends are lured into the online world; oblivious to the dangers lurking there and when Leah falls prey to an online predator, Maxine is left alone to deal with the consequences.

Peacock, Shane. *The Eye of the Crow.*

Tundra Books.

Can Sherlock Holmes save a young boy from hanging for murder? Sherlock may be just 13 years of age but already he possesses great skill in observation and deduction. This is a great introduction to this famous literary character for young readers that will also appeal to adult Sherlock fans.

Pearson, Kit. *A Perfect Gentle Knight.*

Puffin Canada.

The Bell family have dealt with their mother's death badly. The kids have been held together by their eldest brother who includes them all in a game in which they are members of the Round Table. But when some of them are ready to leave the game, Sebastian cannot let go. A moving tale of loss and mental illness.

Sherrard, Valerie. *Speechless.*

Dundurn Group.

Griffin's first experience with an oral presentation in class was a humiliating disaster and he is horrified when a second one is assigned. With help from pal Bryan he hatches a foolproof plan: he'll pretend he's stopped talking to protest the use of child soldiers in Africa. But we all know what happens to best laid plans. A well-crafted story that blends humour with thought-provoking information about child exploitation.

Tilly, Meg. *Porcupine .*

Tundra Books.

A beautifully told story of a young girl who fights to protect her siblings when her father dies and her mother gives up. Strong language adds to the reality of the story.

Non-Fiction

Bateman, Robert and Kovacs, Nancy. *Birds of Prey: an Introduction.*

Scholastic Canada.

Robert Bateman's love of wildlife and the environment shines through in his newest book about birds. When some people hear the word raptor, they think of dinosaurs or the Toronto Basketball team. But raptors are also birds of prey and Bateman's thoroughly researched and richly painted pages are filled with fascinating and entertaining details about these amazing hunters.

Bouchard, David. *Aboriginal Carol.* **Illustrated by Moses Beaver and music by Susan Aglukark.** **Red Deer Press.**

This is a beautiful melding of art, song and text highlighting one of the most beloved Christmas carols. The text is in English and Inuktituk.

Brewster, Hugh. *At Vimy Ridge: Canada's Greatest World War I Victory.*

Scholastic.

Historic photos, maps, pictured artefacts, and sidebars about real men and women who lived through it give immediacy to this powerful description of the terrible time of blood and sacrifice from which Canada emerged as a truly independent nation.

Greenwood, Barbara. *Factory Girl.*

Kids Can Press.

Skilfully blending fiction and non-fiction, Greenwood introduces readers to working conditions for children in the early 1900's. Forced to leave school and living in poverty, 12 year-old Emily endures appalling conditions in a garment factory. When a friend dies in a fire, she finds the courage to try and bring about change.

Ipellie, Alooook with MacDonald, David. *The Inuit Thought of It: Amazing Arctic Inventions.*

Annick Press.

This accessible, liberally illustrated book is packed with photos and brief but informative descriptions of an impressive array of tools, clothing, transport, and much more developed to support life in the remote north of our continent. A timeline and short overview at the beginning provide a context, and a bibliography provides opportunities for further exploration.

Lesynski, Loris. *Shoe Shakes.*

Illustrated by Michael Martchenko. **Annick Press.**

Once you start reading this colourful picture book, you won't be able to sit still! Bop with the beat through poems and rhyming stories all about feet and shoes. Silliness reigns in this fun-filled frolic for kids (and adults)!

Luxbacher, Irene. *1,2,3, I Can Paint.*

Kids Can Press.

Three well defined steps lead to full colour paintings in this latest entry in the Starting Art series.

MacLeod, Elizabeth. *The Kids Book of Canada at War.*

Illustrated by John Mantha. **Kids Can Press.**

This winning book offers an overview of Canada's role in war and peacekeeping experiences throughout history. An informative and interesting text is enhanced with historical photographs, war posters, letters and illustrations.

Schwarz, Renee. *Wind Chimes and Whirligigs.*

Kids Can Press.

Another entry in Kids Can's excellent crafts series. This time we learn how to make delightful, colourful hanging creations from art supplies, bits of hardware, and found objects. Every project is laid out step-by-step and clearly illustrated. From the tennis ball whirlybug to the crazy spinning kitty, these ideas are an open invitation to fire up the imagination and start making your own right now.

Thomas, Keltie. *How Soccer Works.* **Illustrated by Stephen MacEachern.**

Maple Tree Press.

A well-illustrated overview of soccer with appeal for both the novice and experienced player. Bright, colourful page layouts and lively, easy-to-read text introduce basic information and interesting facts.

The OLA's annual Best Bets 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.

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.



National Book Service

The Committee thanks National Book Service 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 National Book Service (25 Kodiak Crescent in North York). 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.

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