

# **BEST BETS**

# **2011**

## **Reading for Children**

**The OLA's Canadian Materials Committee, which is 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

**Beck, Carolyn.** *Dog Breath.*

**Illustrated by Brooke Kerrigan. Fitzhenry & Whiteside**

The bed, some toys and lots of funny memories are left after a child's dog is gone. A heart-warming look at the joys of having a mischievous pet.

**Beck, Carolyn.** *Wellington's Rainy Day.*

**Illustrated by Brooke Kerrigan. Orca Book Publishers.**

The only witness to Wellington devouring a meatloaf and the contents of the garbage pail is his nemesis, Honey the cat. Can he stay out of trouble? While kids will enjoy the rhyming text and soft watercolour illustrations, it is the grossly satisfying ending they will savour the most.

**Fernandes, Eugenie.** *Kitten's Summer.* **Kids Can Press.**

Younger children will love Kitten and all the other animals that are met along the way. The crisp appealing illustrations and rhyming text will make this a fun read-a-loud and also a great springboard for discussion. A definite winner!

**Reid, Barbara.** *Picture a Tree.* **Scholastic Canada.**

This book celebrates the beauty and splendour of one of nature's most enduring symbols, the tree. They decorate our landscape with their leaves and blossoms and provide food and shelter for all Earth's creatures. Barbara Reid's use of Plasticine is breathtaking. A beautiful picture book.

**Sadler, Judy Ann.** *Reaching.*

**Illustrated by Susan Mitchell. Kids Can Press**

Surrounded by a loving family, a baby grows to toddlerhood, eager to explore and learn. Baby reaches for everything while parents, siblings, aunt, uncle and grandparents cuddle and play. With gentle rhythm and child-friendly watercolours, the book reminds us to treasure each moment.

**Schwartz, Roslyn.** *The Vole Brothers.*

**Owlkids Books**

This wonderfully entertaining picture book features the Vole brothers, whose comedic antics to get food fill the pages. The brothers follow and outwit a cat but celebrate too soon! The characters, communicating with readers through speech bubbles, are sure to be a hit!

**Spalding, Andrea.** *Seal Song.* **Illustrated by Pascal Milelli.**

**Orca Book Publishers.**

Finn rescues a seal tangled in fishing nets and then a couple of days later a girl named Sheila appears in Finn's community. Later the seal returns Finn's favour during a storm at sea. The luminous, atmospheric illustrations are in complete harmony with the text of this book inspired by Celtic folklore.

**Spires, Ashley.** *Small Saul.* **Kids Can Press**

Unlikely pirate Small Saul has joined the crew of The Rusty Squid, but it seems that he is not quite fitting in. Pirates only care about their ship, being tough, and treasure. Can Saul show the other pirates that there is more to life though singing, ship decor and pineapple upside down cake? You won't want to miss this adventure on the high seas!

**Viva, Frank.** *Along a Long Road.* **Harper Collins**

Original and striking illustrations capture the exhilaration and speed of a rider along on a narrow, golden road. The rider (and reader) wind through different landscapes. Rhythmic text complements the speed of the ride as it loops once around - and then begins again. First created as a 35' long artwork.

**Winstanley, Nicola.** *Cinnamon Baby.* **Illustrated by Janice Nadeau. Kids Can Press.**

A love story about two people who meet, fall in love and have a baby who just can't stop crying! At least until Miriam thinks of cinnamon and finds the perfect way to keep their baby happy.

### Picture Books (Honourables):

Amado, Elisa. *What Are You Doing?* Illustrated by Manuel Monroy  
Groundwood.

Campbell, Nicola. *Grandpa's Girls.* Illustrated by Kim LaFave.  
Groundwood.

Delaunoy, Angèle. *The Little Yellow Bottle.* Illustrated by Christine Delezenne. Second Story. For older readers.

Desrochiers, Sylvie. *Hocus Pocus.* .Illustrated by Rémy Simard.  
Kids Can Press.

Foggo, Cheryl. *Dear Baobab.* Illustrated by Qin Leng. Second Story.

Hartt-Sussman, Heather . *Noni Says No.* Illustrated by Geneviève Coté. Tundra.

Stuckner, Joan. *Can Hens Give Milk?* Illustrated by Joe Wiessmann.  
Orca Book Publishers.

Watt, Melanie. *Scaredy Squirrel Has a Birthday Party.* Kids Can Press.

## FICTION

**Citra, Becky.** *Missing.* **Orca Book Publishers**

When Thea's dad reluctantly accepts a job at an old horse ranch, Thea discovers an abused horse and is determined to gain its trust and ride again. Thea and her neighbour, Van, delve into the mysterious disappearance of a guest at the ranch decades earlier. By unearthing the past mystery of the ranch, Thea and her father must face their own past tragedy.

**Dueck, Adele.** *Racing Home.* **Coteau Books.**

Erik did not want to leave his grandfather's farm in Norway. But he must adjust as his new stepfather moves the family to the Canadian west. This is a richly detailed and engrossing portrait of pioneer prairie life seen through a young boy's eyes.

**Ellis, Deborah.** *No Ordinary Day.* **Groundwood Books.**

Valli is a spirited and clever orphan, struggling to live on the streets of modern-day Kolkata, India. One not-so-ordinary day, fate causes her to meet a doctor who will change her life forever, if Valli can find the courage to let her. One feels an instant connection with Valli and also feels heartbreak as it is revealed that Valli is suffering from leprosy.

**Ellis, Sarah.** *Dear Canada: That Fatal Night of Dorothy Wilton.*

**Scholastic Canada.**

The Titanic disaster has ripped Dorothy's idyllic world apart. As she tries to face what happened that day by writing in her diary, she realizes that she will never look at the world the same way again. A must read!

**Fagan, Cary.** *Banjo of Destiny.* **Groundwood Books.**

Jeremiah longs to play the banjo. His newly wealthy, well-meaning-if-misguided parents shower him with expensive things but forbid the banjo. So Jeremiah makes his own and teaches himself to play. It's all about being true to oneself. A humorous book about perseverance and determination.

**Kerz, Anna.** *Better Than Weird.* **Orca Book Publishers**

Aaron decides he must stop being weird. But his classmates think he's weird, and the school bully constantly insults him and beats him up. Aaron also wants to make sure that when his Dad returns after years away, he will not find anything that will make him leave again! But a surprise changes things from weird to "better than weird".

**Lottridge, Celia** *The Listening Tree*. **Fitzhenry & Whiteside**

During the Depression, 10 year old Ellen sits high above the street getting to know her new neighbourhood by watching what goes on below. She finally engages with others when she overhears a plan to evict the family next door.

**Lyon, Annabel** *Encore Edie*. **Penguin.**

Edie is in high school now and determined to both be herself and fit in. Some of her choices lead to misunderstanding and hurt in this subtle, charming look at a girl who doesn't give herself, or others, enough credit.

**Narsimhan, Mahtab.** *The Tiffin*. **Dancing Cat (Cormorant Books).**

Bombay and its dabbawallas come to life in the story of Kunal. Kunal is intrigued by the dabbawallas who devotedly deliver tiffins all over Bombay. He dreams of his birth mother and of escaping his cruel life. Although he escapes, finds friendship and a new life as a dabbawalla, not all of his dreams will come true. But he does find a happier life nonetheless.

**Pearson, Kit.** *The Whole Truth*. **Harper Trophy Canada.**

Since their father's death, which is clouded in secrecy, Polly and her sister have been living with their grandmother. When an unexpected visitor shatters their new world, the girls discover that it is only when the truth is revealed that their lives can ever heal. Heartfelt and poignant.

**Junior Fiction – Honourable Mentions:**

Auxier, Jonathon – *Peter Nimble and His Fantastic Eyes* (Penguin)

Gilmore, Rachna – *That Boy Red* (Harper Collins)

Johansen, K.V. – *The Black Box: a Cassandra Virus Novel* (Sybertooth)

Kent, Trilby – *Stones for My Father* (Tundra)

Pignat, Caroline – *Timber Wolf* (Red Deer)

## NON-FICTION

**Gerszack, Rafal with Dawn Hunter.** *Beyond Bullets: a Photojournal of Afghanistan*. **Annick Press**

Poignant and moving, this is a record of time spent with both troops and civilians in Afghanistan. With journal-type entries, Polish-born Gerszack offers rare insight into all-to-real conflict situations as well as quieter (though war-torn) areas. Thoughtfully-observed and beautifully photographed with compassion for both soldier and civilian.

**Jordan-Fenton, Christy and Pokiak-Fenton, Margaret.** *A Stranger at Home: A True Story*. **Artwork by Liz Amini-Holmes. Annick Press.**

Ten-year-old Margaret returns home after two years in a residential school, only to find that she herself is considered an outsider by her Inuit community. Even her mother doesn't recognize her at first. But with time, determination, and the love of her father, Margaret is able to regain a sense of belonging amongst her people. It's a dark chapter from Canada's history, told with honesty, courage, and pride.

**Kacer, Kathy.** *To Hope and Back: the Journey of the St. Louis*. **Second Story Press.**

This book is a fictionalized true account of two Jewish children fleeing 1939 Germany with their families, hoping for safe refuge in Cuba. The shameful chapter in history where this ship of Jewish refugees is turned away from a safe refuge is brought to life through children's eyes.

**Kulling, Monica** *In the Bag!: Margaret Knight Wraps It Up* **Illustrated by David Parkins. Tundra.**

Book 3 in the Great Ideas Series is about another lesser known inventor. Mattie Knight spent her life inventing things in an age when women just did not do such things. The story is easy to read, exciting and perfectly illustrated.

**Kyi, Tanya Lloyd.** *50 Underwear Questions: a Bare-All History*. **Illustrated by Ross Kinnaid. Annick Press.**

Tanya Lloyd Kyi's humorous fact-filled homage to our "unmentionables" throughout history, combined with Ross Kinnaid's quirky illustrations and lay-out, make this a must read. You might even find out if codpieces are making a fashion comeback this year. Hilarious.

**Laidlaw, Rob.** *No Shelter Here: Making the World a Kinder Place for Dogs*. **Pajama Press.**

Dogs are often said to be man's best friend, but this book reveals many of the ways in which dogs are mistreated by humans. An informative book that will raise awareness of puppy mills, animal abuse and neglect. This book provides information regarding maltreatment, hints and tips for owners, and highlights individuals and organizations making a difference in world for dogs.

**MacLeod, Elizabeth.** *Canadian Money*. **Scholastic Canada.**

Elizabeth MacLeod's colourfully fast-paced and fascinating story about the history of money, especially Canadian money, will have readers searching for "spy coins" or 1911 Silver Dollars worth \$1 million. If you want to find out who Canadians really are, check out our unique money.

**Nicholson, Cynthia Pratt.** *Totally Human: Why We Look and Act the Way We Do*. **Illustrated by Dianne Eastman. Kids Can Press.**

This book aims to explain some of the weird and wonderful things we do as humans. Find out why we get hiccups, throw up, and crave junk food and why our eyes face forward. Interspersed with each question and answer are wacky pictures, interesting experiments, and fun facts relating animal behaviour to our own.

**Skrypuch, Marsha.** *The Last Airlift: a Vietnamese Orphan's Rescue from War*. **Pajama Press.**

Tuyet has had polio and is not young so she thinks she is unlikely to be adopted. Using photos and Tuyet's own memories, Skrypuch recreates what it felt like for an 8 year old to be taken from everything she has ever known. She does not understand what is happening and does not believe she is safe until months after she is adopted by a family in Toronto.

**Szpirglas, Jeff.** *You Just Can't Help It! Your Guide to the Wild And Wacky World of Human Behavior*. **Illustrations by Josh Holinaty. Owlkids Books.**

This colourful, interesting read breaks down why we're weird into four chapters of fun: "Senses Showdown", "In a State" (about emotions), "Say What?!" (communication), and "You + World" (about interaction). Packed with text boxes, drawings, pictures and photographs, this book will engage and entertain readers while highlighting various experiments revealing traits of human behaviour. For example: which baby's diaper do moms think is stinkiest? Or do we cry more tears watching a sad movie or chopping onions?

**Junior Non Fiction - Honourables:**

Fromer, Liza and Gerstein, Francine – *Body Works* SERIES (Tundra)

Levine, Shar and Johnstone, Leslie, Illustrated by Patricia Storms – *Snowy Science: 25 Cool Experiments* (Scholastic)

McMahon, Peter, Illustrated by Andy Mora – *Space Tourism* (Kids Can)

Wiseman, Blaine – *Record Breakers* SERIES (Weigl)

## 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 & B Books, [www.sbbooks.com](http://www.sbbooks.com), 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 (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.

### OLA's Canadian Materials Committee Members:

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