

# **BEST BETS**

## **2014**

### **Fiction Reading for Young Adults**

**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 merit as well as their appeal for  
young adults. Illustrations are also  
considered in the case of graphic novels.**

**Boorman, Kate A. *Winterkill*. Amulet/Abrams.**

This dystopian book is about an isolated settlement with some dark secrets. Emmeline's settlement is under rule of the council and cannot leave the compound. Outside the compound you can die from the cold or the monsters that wiped out half the population. Emmeline is 'stained' from something that her Grandmother did long ago, and crippled, but she can't help but explore the path that is forbidden to her and learns some very startling truths.

**Chapman, Elsie. *Divided*. Random House.**

This sequel to *Dueled* picks up where the first left off but is careful to fill readers in if they are new to this world. West Grayer is determined to no longer be the killer she was forced to become. She is back in school and training other teens. But the Board – those who rule - have other plans for her.

**Crewe, Megan. *Earth and Sky*. Razorbill Canada.**

Skylar has grown up tormented by panic attacks; hallucinations of things that aren't real and haven't happened. Just as she feels that her sanity must be slipping, she meets Win and discovers the shocking truth – our world is not our own. Earth's entire history as we know it has been a very long science experiment, and all the tests and histories that have been played out and re-written are slowly tearing the very fabric of our reality apart.

**DeVries, Maggie. *Rabbit Ears*. Harper Trophy Canada.**

In Vancouver's Eastside, two sisters struggle with harsh realities of the world. 13 year old Kaya, carrying a painful secret and grieving the loss of her father, slowly spirals into the world of addiction and sex work. Beth, Kaya's 16 year old sister, has her own methods of coping. Together they must fight to overcome adversity; though sometimes the greater challenge is fighting the darkness inside ones' self.

**Ellis, Deborah. *Moon at Nine*. Pajama Press.**

In this heartbreaking story set against the political and religious turmoil of post-revolution Iran, readers meet 15-year old Farrin and Sadira, two classmates whose friendship gradually deepens into romance. When their relationship is discovered, the girls are separated and later imprisoned. Yet Farrin and Sadira refuse to give up on their love—and the consequences are tragic.

**Guest, Jacqueline. *The Comic Book War*. Coteau Books.**

It's 1943 and Robert is stuck at home listening to the radio for news of the war overseas, eager for any word of his older brothers fighting in WWII. His only real consolation and escape from the difficulties of wartime that have taken over his whole town are his comic books. When he watches a meteorite fall to earth, he quickly notices that each of his favourite superheroes have meteorites in their storylines. Quickly, Robert sees more and more proof that the comics are mirroring what is happening to his brothers, and the only way to ensure their safety is to keep buying and reading each new edition.

**Johnston, E.K. *The Story of Owen: Dragon Slayer of Trondheim*. Carolrhoda Lab.**

In a reality where our history is the same, with the exception of one thing, Owen is learning the family trade – to become a dragon slayer. Dragons have been around for as long as we know, and as human's society and technology advances, the resulting pollution emissions attract more and more dragons to attack people and cities. Siobhan, Owen's classmate, recognizes the importance of his family's radical ideas and takes up the mantle of Bard to this slayer-in-training. This is Owen's story, listen!

**Koyczan, Shane.** *To This Day: For the Bullied and Beautiful.* **Annick Press Ltd.**

A beautiful, powerful, and sometimes heartbreaking poem about the effects of being bullied, and the triumph of finding the strength to rise above it all. The emotional truth attached to the words and the stories leave a lasting impression that won't soon be forgotten. Similarly, the illustrations contributed by thirty artists are breathtaking.

**Stewart, Elizabeth.** *Blue Gold.* **Annick Press.**

The lives of three 15 year olds; Sylvie in a refugee camp in Tanzania, Laiping living and working in a cell phone factory in China, and Fiona in North America are connected in this stunning book about the mineral coltan, harvested in Africa and used in cell phones. All three lives are vivid and the story disturbing but very readable.

**Tamaki, Mariko.** *This One Summer.* **Illustrated by Jillian Tamaki. Greenwood Books.**

Rose has always loved spending summers with her friend Windy at Awago Beach. But this summer, growing up is more complicated than they thought. This superbly illustrated graphic novel perfectly captures the pivotal but awkward time of transition between girlhood and adolescence.

#### **HONOURABLE MENTIONS**

Dance, Jennifer. *Red Wolf.* Dundurn.

Jocelyn, Marthe. *What We Hide.* Tundra Books.

Kernaghan, Eileen. *Sophie, in Shadow.* Thistle-down Press.

McClintock, Norah. *From the Dead.* Orca Book Publishers.

Rosen, Suri. *Playing With Matches.* ECW Press.

## 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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