

Best Bets

Recommended Canadian Reads for Children from 2015

Picture Books • Junior Fiction • Junior Nonfiction



The OLA's Canadian Materials Committee, under the umbrella of the OPLA Children 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.

Best Bets wants to know...

The Best Bets committee is interested in knowing about who you are and how you make use of the lists we provide. Please take a few minutes and fill out a short survey for us! Thank you.

Survey Link: <http://goo.gl/forms/5199Ms0Xt1>

OLA BEST BETS 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 other interested parties.

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 Best Bets 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 publications by Canadian authors and illustrators from the current calendar year. 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.

2015 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kate Alatsas, Brampton Library

Vivien Keiling, Barrie Public Library

Kara Miley, Toronto Public Library

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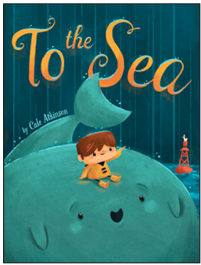
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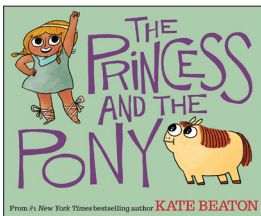
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PICTURE BOOKS



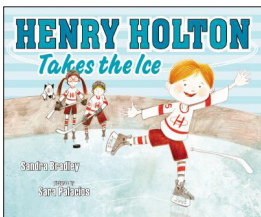
Atkinson, Cale. *To the Sea*. Disney-Hyperion.

In this beautifully illustrated picture book, Tim, a boy who feels invisible, meets Sam, a lost blue whale whom no one else seems to notice. Tim promises to return Sam to the sea, and along the way they become good friends. As Tim says in the book “friends don’t let friends down.” This story will not disappoint!



Beaton, Kate. *The Princess and the Pony*. Arthur A Levine/Scholastic.

The creator of *Hark, a Vagrant!* offers a girl-power parable about brave warriors and how good things come in small packages (plus fart jokes and charming, energetic illustrations).



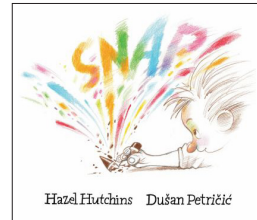
Bradley, Sandra. *Henry Holton Takes the Ice*. Illustrated by Sara Palacios. Dial Books for Young Readers/Penguin.

He shoots he scores! Or does he really? Henry lives in a family where everyone loves hockey, everyone except Henry who would much rather do figure skating. Will Henry manage to win over his hockey loving family? A great picture book about following one’s passion and doing something that you love!



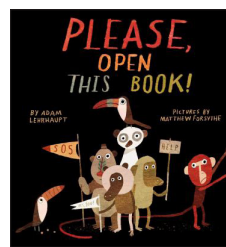
Fergus, Maureen. *InvisiBill*. Illustrated by Dušan Petričić. Tundra Books.

Everyone in Bill’s family is so busy being busy and noisy that no one hears him ask for the potatoes. Then the wonderful, terrible thing happens: Bill (an ignored middle child) becomes invisible—or InvisiBill! And suddenly everyone pays attention to Bill in ways they never have before. Leaving only one question: can InvisiBill become *visiBill* again?



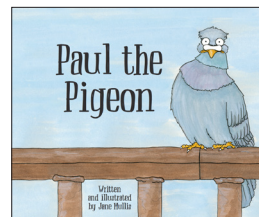
Hutchins, Hazel. *Snap!* Illustrated by Dušan Petričić. Annick Press.

Evan is excited to have a brand new box of crayons! One day the brown crayon snaps in two and one by one the crayons get smaller, disappear, and lose their wrapping. What to do? Evan learns to use what he has to create an awesome picture. An excellent picture book that teaches kids about primary colours, mixing colours, and using crayons in different ways.



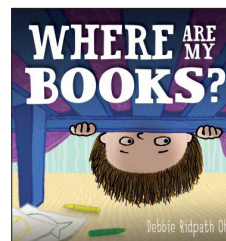
Lehrhaupt, Adam. *Please Open this Book!* Illustrated by Matthew Forsythe. Simon & Schuster.

The tables are turned in this entertaining sequel to *Warning, Do Not Open This Book!* A group of monkeys and some other animal friends are trapped inside the pages of a story book. Through a mix of cajoling, they plead their case for the reader to stop turning the pages so that the book stays open. Their future is in your hands!



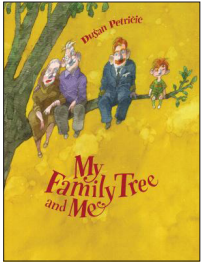
Mullis, Jane. *Paul the Pigeon*. PaulthePigeon.com.

The tale of a pigeon about town, travelling the TTC in Toronto and accidentally moving to a new location where he finds new friends, new types of food and a new home. A delightful, humorously illustrated self-published book.



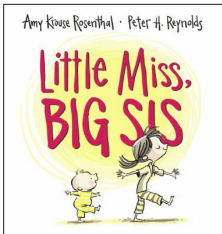
Ohi, Debbie Ridpath. *Where Are My Books?* Simon & Schuster.

Spencer’s books are going missing, with nuts and flowers being left in their stead. Who’s taking them and why? When squirrels turn out to like to read, Spencer starts a lending library.



Petričić, Dušan. ***My Family Tree and Me***. Kids Can Press.

A young boy traces his family from his great-great-grandparents down to himself. Open the book from one side to see his Dad's family, and from the other to view his Mom's. Everyone's clearly related, but with lots of diversity of many kinds. A fun way to help children understand family connections.



Rosenthal, Amy Krouse. ***Little Miss, Big Sis***. Illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds. HarperCollins.

The big news is this—Little Miss will be a big sis! A sweet and simple ode to welcoming a new baby and being a big sister, told with sparse yet expressive rhyming text and delightful illustrations. An excellent “big sibling” book for its light-hearted depiction of both the good and the not-so-good of learning to be a wonderful big sister.

PICTURE BOOKS HONOURABLE MENTIONS

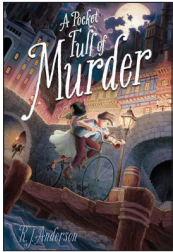
Beck, Carolyn. ***That Squeak***. Illustrated by François Thisdale. Fitzhenry and Whiteside.

Florence, Melanie. ***Missing Nimama***. Illustrated by François Thisdale. Clockwise Press.

Maclear, Kyo. ***The Good Little Book***. Illustrated by Marion Arbona. Tundra Books.

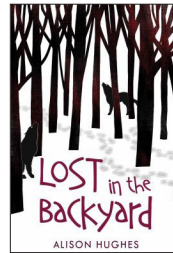
O'Leary, Sara. ***This is Sadie***. Illustrated by Julie Morstad. Tundra Books.

JUNIOR FICTION



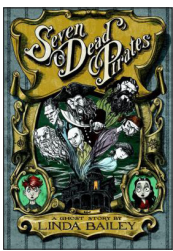
Anderson, R.J. *A Pocket Full of Murder*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

Isaveth's family is very poor, but on the whole fairly happy. At least as happy as they can be when they are not only poor, but Moshite, the oppressed followers of a very unpopular religion. Then Isaveth's father is arrested for a magical murder she knows he didn't commit, and it's up to Isaveth, her sisters, and a street boy named Quiz to unravel layers of magic and mystery and trace the real killer. An exciting mystery/fantasy crossover.



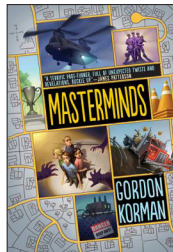
Hughes, Alison. *Lost in the Backyard*. Orca Book Publishers.

Flynn would much rather be on the computer or using his smartphone than be, *ugh!*, outdoors. When he finds himself in the wilderness and has no idea how to get back, he turns to his phone's GPS, only to find no signal. In fact he has nothing except some badly remembered lessons on outdoor survival. A fast moving quick read, this will appeal to fans of adventure and survival stories.



Bailey, Linda. *Seven Dead Pirates: A Ghost Story*. Tundra Books.

After moving into the run-down seaside mansion his family has inherited, Lewis, a shy and lonely 11-year-old, discovers that his new bedroom is occupied by the ghosts of seven dead pirates. The motley crew begs Lewis to help them reclaim their pirate ship, which is on display in the nearby marine museum. Lewis concocts a clever plan to get them back to their ship on Halloween night, and finds his voice and a new friend along the way. A rollicking paranormal pirate story with depth, perfect for middle grade readers.



Korman, Gordon. *Masterminds*. HarperCollins.

Eli and his friends live in Serenity, a small town that's the nicest in the world. Except, is it? Realistic and engaging characters occupy a funny and well-plotted story that really surprises.



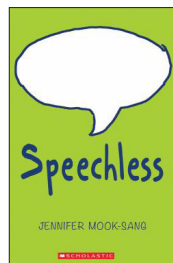
Leck, James. *After Dark*. Kids Can Press.

15-year-old Charlie is stuck renovating an old house with his family in a small town rather than have the kind of expensive vacation he is used to. When the town conspiracy theorist shows up claiming there are aliens or maybe vampires or possibly zombies, Charlie is skeptical but if it will get him out of work, he'll go along with it. Charlie is snarky even in the face of horror which helps to keep things well balanced between funny and scary.



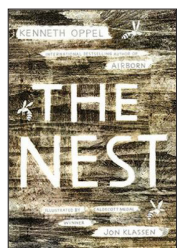
George, Kallie. *Clover's Luck* (Magical Animal Adoption Agency #1). Illustrated by Alexandra Boiger. HarperCollins.

Clover, a seemingly unlucky girl, gets hired as a summer helper at the Magical Animal Adoption Agency. While there, she is asked to care for the many magical animals while the owner is away. But Clover's job isn't easy, a tricky witch keeps trying to steal the magic from each of the animals. The first book in a new series, this charming story proves that courage and kindness are more important than good luck.



Mook-Sang, Jennifer. *Speechless*. Scholastic Canada.

It is time for the annual speech competition, and this year Jelly Miles hopes to usurp the competition, Victoria, the school's resident know-it-all and bully. Will Jelly be able to calm his nerves and win the prize? Bullying, public speaking and community service are concepts that are explored in this book.



Oppel, Kenneth. *The Nest*. Illustrated by Jon Klassen. HarperCollins Canada.

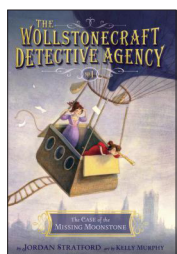
Steve wants nothing more than for everything in his life to be normal; a normal summer of normal kid activities, normal parents who worry about normal things, and a normal baby brother who doesn't need to go to the hospital all the time.

Instead, Steve has a summer filled with worry as he deals with a baby brother who is fighting to survive and parents that have almost reached their limit in coping with the reality of their situation. So when a mysterious wasp queen appears in his dreams and offers Steve a chance to make everything 'normal', Steve doesn't hesitate. But what is the cost of normal? And once you say "yes", can you later take it back?



Sands, Kevin. *The Blackthorn Key*. Aladdin/Simon & Schuster.

Christopher, an apothecary's apprentice, finds himself in the midst of a mystery where the odds are life or death. This debut novel offers rich characterization, a fully-realized historical world, and a can't-put-it-down plot.



Stratford, Jordan. *The Case of the Missing Moonstone* (The Wollstonecraft Detective Agency). Illustrated by Kelly Murphy. Alfred A. Knopf.

Ada is not your typical young lady living in 1826 London. For one thing, she has a hot air balloon on her roof that she frequently escapes to when things don't make sense, which is often the case. For another, she loves science and mysteries, which is convenient because there are so many books to read. When Mary, a poor girl from the country, arrives to be tutored with her, they start the Wollstonecraft Detective Agency. Their first case: help a young heiress prove her maid didn't steal a priceless heirloom.

JUNIOR FICTION HONOURABLE MENTIONS

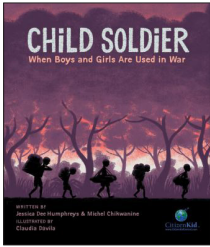
Adderson, Caroline. *Jasper John Dooley (SERIES)*. Kids Can Press.

Stevenson, Robin. *The Summer We Saved the Bees*. Orca Book Publishers.

Wishinsky, Frieda. *Survival (SERIES)*. Scholastic Canada.

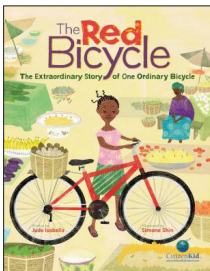


JUNIOR NONFICTION



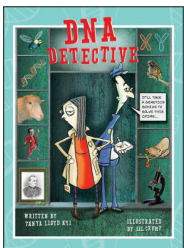
Chikwanine, Michael and Jessica Dee Humphreys. *Child Soldier: When Boys and Girls Are Used in War*. Illustrated by Claudia Dávila. Kids Can Press.

This powerful graphic novel was co-written by Michael Chikwanine who was captured when he was five years old and forced to be a child soldier. This novel describes his experiences in 1993 Congo, his eventual escape and how he found his way to Canada. The straightforward illustrations highlight this issue without being too overwhelming for children.



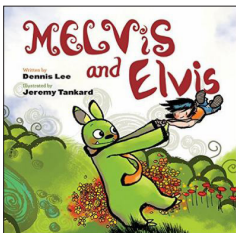
Isabella, Jude. *The Red Bicycle: the Extraordinary Story of One Ordinary Bicycle*. Illustrated by Simone Shin. Kids Can Press.

When Leo outgrows his beloved red bike, he wants it to go to someone who will also love it. And so, it starts on a journey. From Canada to Burkina Faso where Alisetta uses it to get to fields and to market. Having transportation means her family does better, and her brothers can go to school. From there, it becomes an ambulance, helping to save many lives. Vivid pictures extend the story, giving a look into lives very different from ours.



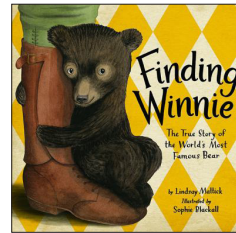
Kyi, Tanya Lloyd. *DNA Detective*. Illustrated by Lil Crump. Annick Press.

Someone has stolen millions worth of jewels, and there are no clues—except maybe the thief's DNA! This fascinating book reveals tons of amazing information about DNA and keeps readers engaged by following the detective as she solves the mystery of the missing jewels using DNA.



Lee, Dennis. *Melvis and Elvis*. Illustrated by Jeremy Tankard. HarperCollins.

In this whimsical book of poetry, friends Melvis and Elvis search for the perfect book at the library. Lee's poetry combined with Tankard's illustrations take the reader on an adventure in rhyme that is at times laugh out loud funny, but also soothing enough for bed time. As Lee perfectly describes, this book is "A home for your heart,/ And a treat for your mind."



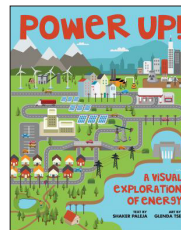
Mattick, Lindsay. *Finding Winnie: The True Story of the World's Most Famous Bear*. Illustrated by Sophie Blackall. HarperCollins.

During WWI, a Canadian veterinarian rescued a bear cub and named him after his hometown of Winnipeg. Mattick, his great granddaughter, tells the tale of Winnie, from his rescue, to becoming a mascot for the troops, to his eventual life in the London Zoo where the Milne family saw him. Blackall just won the Caldecott for the illustrations.



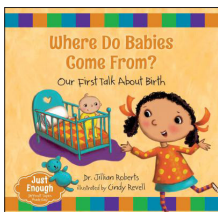
McCarney, Rosemary. *The Way To School*. Second Story Press.

The way to school isn't easy for everyone. The simple text and gorgeous photographs that make up this book readily demonstrate how hard children around the world work to exercise their right to an education.



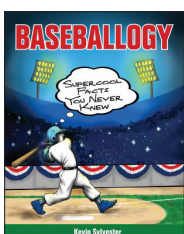
Paleja, Shaker. *Power Up! : A Visual Exploration of Energy*. Illustrated by Glenda Tse. Annick Press.

Considering it's part of our everyday lives, we hardly ever think about where and how we get the energy that we use for just about everything we do! This brightly illustrated book covers the basics, the politics, the pros and cons, as well as the randomly obscure observations and questions that someone might ponder. This packs a powerful punch in delivering important and useful facts in an easy and entertaining way.



Roberts, Jillian. *Where Do Babies Come From? Our First Talk About Birth*. Illustrated by Cindy Revell. Orca Book Publishers.

An easy to read book that will introduce your child to the concepts of reproduction and birth. This book uses simple language and examples from nature, without being overtly graphic. There is a section at the back that has more in-depth information about subjects like invitro fertilization, same sex parents, and caesarean section.



Sylvester, Kevin. *Baseballogy: Supercool Facts You Never Knew*. Annick Press.

For baseball fanatics and those who really could care less, this book pulls you in as it shares a wealth of historical facts, scientific explanations, and general information on anything and everything baseball. Sylvester delivers non-fiction material in his signature compelling, storytelling style.



Wilcox, Merrie-Ellen. *What's the Buzz? Keeping Bees in Flight*. Orca Book Publishers.

Written by a beekeeper, this book provides everything you need to know about bees. The how, why, what and where of bees are all here, along with lots of colour photos, details about different kinds of bees, what beekeepers do, and lots of information about what people are doing to help save the bees, making this a book to buzz about!

JUNIOR NONFICTION HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Becker, H. *Would You Survive?* Scholastic Canada.

Robertson, Robbie. *Hiawatha and the Peacemaker*. Illustrated by David Shannon. Abrams.

Silverberg, Cory and Fiona Smyth. *Sex is a Funny Word: A Book about Bodies, Feelings, and YOU*. Seven Stories Press.

Wallace, Ian. *The Slippers' Keeper*. Groundwood Books.

Wallace, Mary. *An Inuksuk Means Welcome*. OwlKids Books.

Young, Cybèle. *The Queen's Shadow: A Story About How Animals See*. Kids Can Press.