

Best Bets

Recommended Canadian Reads for Teens from 2015

Young Adult Fiction • Young Adult 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

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Sheilah O'Connor, Toronto Public Library

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Polly Ross, Aurora Public Library

Faith Roebuck Shergold, Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library

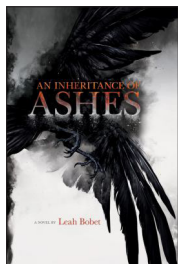
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YOUNG ADULT FICTION



Bobet, Leah. *An Inheritance of Ashes*. Scholastic Canada.

Hallie and her sister Marthe struggle to maintain the family farm as the veterans of a supernatural war return to their community. Surprisingly fast-paced, this dark fantasy goes deep with themes of family, home, knowing yourself, and what it means to care about others.



Bow, Erin. *The Scorpion Rules*. Margaret K. McElderry Books.

A breath of fresh air in the dystopian genre, *The Scorpion Rules* is feisty, thought-provoking, and exciting – this is a book you do not put down! The world is ruled by an Artificial Intelligence that humans created as the ultimate means to ending the wars that were tearing apart

countries and people, and, once Talis came into consciousness, he decided the best way to do that would be to hold the children of the global leaders hostage; their lives being forfeit should their parents go to war with another country. Two scorpions in one bottle; if one attacks, they both get stung – and human nature is always pushing people to fight for what they want. “*The world is at peace...and really, if the odd princess has a hard day, is that too much to ask?*”



Johnston, E.K. *Prairie Fire*. CarolRhoda Lab.

Dragon fighting has consequences. In the first book, *The Story of Owen*, his classmate, best friend and bard, Siobhan has her hands so injured that she can no longer play music. In this second book, they have both gone to serve in the Oil Watch as all dragon slayers must but Siobhan

is struggling to find her place in this new life & Owen is hated by those in charge. Taking place in the Calgary area, this sequel expands the number of characters but remains focused on Owen and Siobhan. A moving and ultimately heart wrenching book.



Leavitt, Martine. *Calvin*. Groundwood Books.

Calvin is a 17-year-old kid who is experiencing a schizophrenic episode in which he sees, hears, and speaks to Hobbes, the tiger from the *Calvin and Hobbes* comic strip. Calvin believes that if he can convince *Calvin and Hobbes* creator Bill Watterson to draw one last comic strip

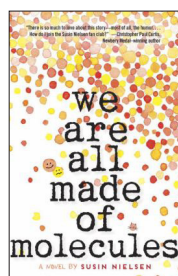
depicting a normal teenaged Calvin *without Hobbes*, he will be cured of his mental illness. Calvin embarks on a dangerous hike across frozen Lake Erie headed for Watterson's home in Cleveland, accompanied by his childhood friend Susie (as well as Hobbes). A unique, heartwarming, and surreal coming-of-age story.



McKay, Sharon. *Prison Boy*. Annick Press.

Prison Boy takes place in an unnamed country that is unsettled with civil war and political unrest. Pax and Kai are two orphans who are left on their own to care for each other after their caregiver Bell dies. They end up working for a shady character called Mister who asks them

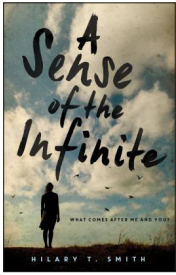
to deliver a package, a bomb unknowingly. They end up in prison, separated, and Pax is tortured by the brutal prison guards to find out what he knows. An endearing story which highlights the strength of the human spirit to overcome adversity.



Nielsen, Susin. *We Are All Made of Molecules*. Tundra Books.

Stewart and Ashley are very different. Stewart is awkward but brilliant, whereas Ashley is the queen of grade nine in everything but grades. Then Ashley's mom and Stewart's dad decide the families should move in together. Stewart's mom is dead, Ashley's father recently came out and is

living at the end of the driveway and dating men—a fact Ashley wants to conceal. Stewart tries to be glad about the move (but isn't), and Ashley doesn't even try. Then things fall apart, and the two discover that sometimes differences don't matter, it's the things we share that count.



Smith, Hilary T. *A Sense of the Infinite*. Katherine Tegen Books.

Annabeth is entering her final year in high school and dealing with life, just like any other teenager. Of course, life – as almost any teenager can attest to – sometimes throws you curveballs, and sometimes those throws can knock you off your feet. As Annabeth prepares to figure out the rest of her life with the plans she's made with her best friend, she finds herself getting more and more lost as the plans she thought were a given seem to keep changing and slipping from her grasp. Friends, family, your past, and your future; how do you figure out who you are when life is just sound boundless?



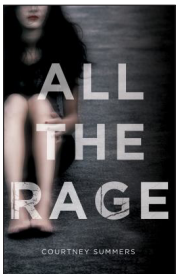
Tromly, Stephanie. *Trouble is a Friend of Mine*. Kathy Dawson Books.

"When there's an end-of-the-world cult living next door to you, make it your business to find out what they're up to," he said. "That's, like, a basic life rule." Zoe, recently moved to small town upstate New York after her parents' divorce, is not sure she likes this situation. Digby pays no attention to this whatsoever. And so begins the friendship of Zoe and Digby. One part humorous banter, one part razor wit, and the best friends you could possibly want to solve a kidnapping.



Stratton, Allan. *The Dogs*. Scholastic Canada.

A family on the run, a spooky old farmhouse, and a mystery that needs solving! Cameron and his mother move to a secluded farm to escape a violent past. While there, Cameron learns from his schoolmates that the farm is haunted by a man who was killed by his own guard dogs. A creepy and intense page turner—you won't want to put this book down!



Summers, Courtney. *All the Rage*. St. Martin's Press.

When Romy is raped by Kellan, the sheriff's son and town golden boy, nobody believes her. She is branded a liar, becomes a target for bullying, and the entire community regards her as an attention-seeking troublemaker. But when her ex-best friend Penny goes missing, Romy must decide whether come forward with information that could help find Penny, or keep silent because nobody will believe her. An intense and riveting novel recommended for those who like dark and gritty reads.

YOUNG ADULT FICTION HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Aker, Don. *Delusion Road*. HarperCollins.

Bodger, Holly. *5 to 1*. Random House.

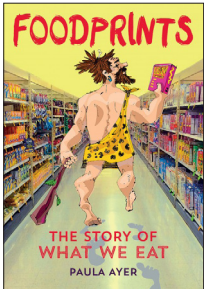
Guertin, Chantal. *Leading Lines*. ECW Press

Henstra, Sarah. *Mad Miss Mimic*. Razorbill Canada.

Johnston, E.K. *A Thousand Nights*. Hyperion Books.

Stevenson, Robin. *The World Without Us*. Orca Book Publishers.

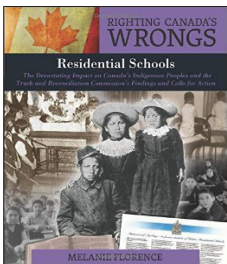
YOUNG ADULT NONFICTION



Ayer, Paula. *Foodprints: The Story of What We Eat*. Annick Press.

Food is so important to us. Teens will enjoy this fresh look at how food has evolved with us and why we eat what we eat. Chapters on topics such as GMO's, the perils of advertising, and fad diets, are also engaging. Colourful infographics easily convey information and a chapter on current teen advo-

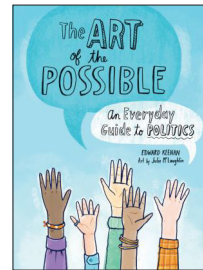
cates will show readers how they can get involved with their local food production.



Florence, Melanie. *Righting Canada's Wrongs: Residential Schools*. Lorimer.

The latest title in the Righting Canada's Wrongs series, this book documents the devastating impact of Canada's residential school system through photographs, documents, and first-person stories from First Nations, Metis, and Inuit residential school survivors. A

valuable resource that will help readers understand this dark period in Canadian history and the ongoing path towards reconciliation.



Keenan, Edward. *The Art of the Possible: An Everyday Guide to Politics*. Illustrated by Julie McLaughlin. OwlKids Books.

A perfect accompaniment to lessons on government, this short but inspiring read looks at how government works, from municipal to federal. Chapters on how decisions are made,

who makes the decisions, how arguments can be good for developing ideas, and of course, the tyranny of the majority, highlight different aspects of the political system. Most importantly, the book gives teens the encouragement and knowledge to engage and add their voice to their local politics in simple everyday ways.



Shantz-Hilkes, Chloe. *My Girlfriend's Pregnant*. Annick Press.

A new perspective on teen pregnancy, this non-fiction title focuses on the experience of the father-to-be and his needs. The information is divided into chapters where teen dads, social workers and doctors share their experience and expertise with the reader.