

Best Bets

Recommended Canadian Reads for Children from 2016

Picture Books • Junior Fiction • Junior Nonfiction



The Best Bets Committee, under the wing of the OPLA division of the Ontario Library Association, picks this annual list.

Books are selected on the basis of their literary/artistic merit as well as their appeal for children or young adults.

Text and illustrations are of equal importance in picture books and information books.

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 committee, now known as the OLA Best Bets Committee, is under the wing of the OPLA division of the Ontario Library Association.

The 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.

2016 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Kate Alatsas, Brampton Library

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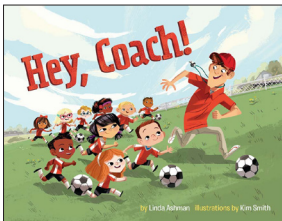
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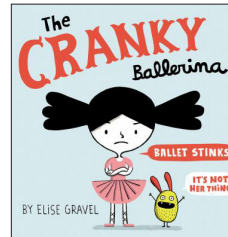
PICTURE BOOKS



Ashman, Linda. *Hey, Coach!*
Illustrated by Kim Smith.
Sterling Children's Books.

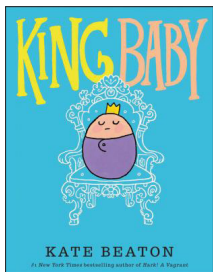
Canadian Kim Smith illustrates this charming rhyming story of the fun first season of a pee-wee soccer team. Completely written from the shouts of the kids

(Hey, Coach!), the illustrations show us the patience of, and payoff for, their great coach—including the orange slices.



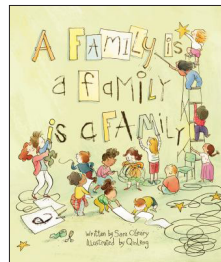
Gravel, Elise. *The Cranky Ballerina*. HarperCollins.

Ada hates ballet, and she hates going to ballet class more than anything—the leotard is too tight and the tutu is too fluffy! But while her pirouettes may not make her the best ballerina, they might just make her pretty great in a very different sport altogether.



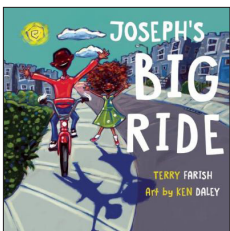
Beaton, Kate. *King Baby*.
Arthur A Levine/Scholastic.

King Baby rules! In this fun picture book, King Baby runs his parents ragged, demanding to be fed, changed and burped. But what will happen with the addition of Queen Baby?



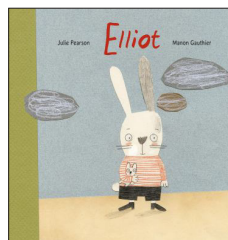
O'Leary, Sara. *A Family is a Family is a Family*. Illustrated by Qin Leng. Groundwood Books.

When a teacher asks her students to describe their families, a foster child worries how she will respond because her family is not like everybody else's. But as her classmates describe their families in every variation you can imagine, she realizes that every family is unique and special in its own way, but they are all based on love.



Farish, Terry. *Joseph's Big Ride*.
Illustrated by Ken Daley.
Annick Press.

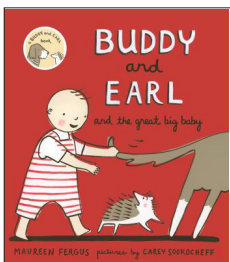
When Joseph was in a refugee camp, all he wanted to do was ride a bike. Now that his family is settled in Canada, can his dream come true?!



Pearson, Julie. *Elliot*. Illustrated by Manon Gauthier. Pajama Press.

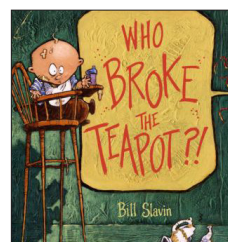
Elliot's parents love him very much, but they don't know how to be good parents. While his birth-parents go to classes to learn how to take better care of him, Elliot is loved and cared for by a new family. In this simply and yet poignantly written book, we

learn about why some children go into the foster care system and how a child can be loved and made part of a family, even if they weren't born into it.



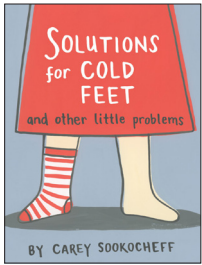
Fergus, Maureen. *Buddy and Earl and the Great Big Baby*.
Illustrated by Carey Sookocheff.
Groundwood Books.

Dynamic duo Buddy and Earl are at it again! In this, their third adventure, a baby visits the house and chaos ensues. Will Buddy and Earl be able to put this big baby to rest? Read to find out!



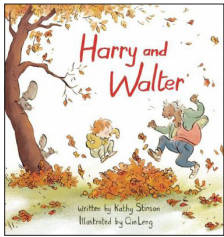
Slavin, Bill. *Who Broke the Teapot? Penguin Random House*.

Someone in the household has broken the teapot! But who could it be? Wonderful illustrations and repetitive text makes this picture book a perfect resource for storytime and will have kids shouting "who broke the teapot!?"



Sookocheff, Carey. *Solutions for Cold Feet and Other Little Problems*. Tundra Books.

What do you do when you're missing a shoe? Or when your ice cream melts? Or you get caught in the rain? A creative girl and her exuberant dog explore solutions to these and other everyday kid problems. Some solutions are better than others, but as long as they're together they'll make the best out of any situation.



Stinson, Kathy. *Harry and Walter*. Illustrated by Qin Leng. Annick Press.

Life is sad when you move away from your very best friend, especially when he is almost 90 years older than you are. Expectations of how this story will end are turned upside down in this lovely picture book.

PICTURE BOOKS HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Smith, Monique Gray. *My Heart Fills with Happiness*. Illustrated by Julie Flett. Orca Book Publishers.

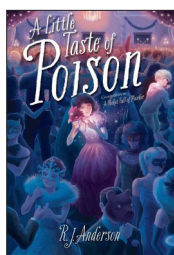
Fergus, Maureen. *A Dog Day for Susan*. Illustrated by Monica Arnaldo. Owlkids.

Janousky, Peggy Robbins. *Move it, Miss Macintosh*. Illustrated by Meghan Lands. Annick Press.

Hohn, Nadia L. *Malaika's Costume*. Illustrated by Irene Luxbacher. Groundwood Books.

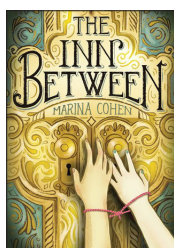
Van Camp, Richard. *We Sang You Home*. Illustrated by Julie Flett. Orca Book Publishers.

JUNIOR FICTION



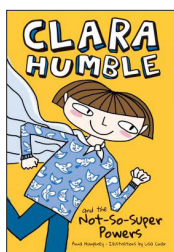
Anderson, R.J. *A Little Taste of Poison*. Atheneum Books for Young Readers.

In this follow up to *A Pocket Full of Murder*, Isaveth has been offered a scholarship to study magic at the most exclusive school in the city. But things may not be as they seem, as someone seems determined to set Isaveth up for failure. Secret plots, corrupt politicians, and midnight adventures await readers.



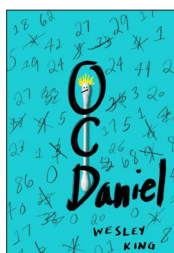
Cohen, Marina. *The Inn Between*. Roaring Brook Press.

Quinn and Kara are best friends, together for one last time, as they travel with Kara's family to her new home. An unplanned stop at a very weird hotel makes them question almost everything they accept as "real" in this spooky story. There is a subplot about Quinn's younger sister being kidnapped (and presumed murdered) not long before that is carefully handled.



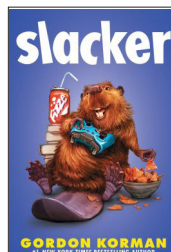
Humphrey, Anna. *Clara Humble and the Not-So-Super Powers*. OwlKids.

Who doesn't want to believe they have super powers? Clara Humble is just your average fourth grader, but with a very special power—she can move things with her mind (or so she thinks)! Clara uses her powers to help get her through some tough times at school and at home, but as you would expect, having super powers isn't always what it's cracked up to be.



King, Wesley. *OCDaniel*. Simon & Schuster.

Daniel is a backup punter (ie, waterboy) on the football team, a writer, a student, a little brother...and he gets what he calls Zaps if he doesn't follow his routine. He worries he's crazy, and it doesn't help when someone calling themselves "Fellow Star Child" asks him to help them investigate a murder. Based on Wesley King's own childhood experiences with unspoken and undiagnosed OCD, it's a beautifully sympathetic portrayal of how lonely it can be to think you're the only one.



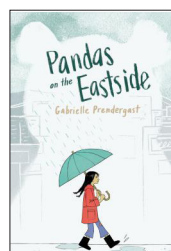
Korman, Gordon. *Slacker*. Scholastic.

Middle schooler Cameron Boxer is so wrapped up in his video games that he fails to notice when his house is on fire! When his parents insist that he join an extracurricular activity at school, he reluctantly starts a community group which soon morphs into a school wide campaign, much to his dismay. A story about unexpected outcomes and what can happen when people work together.



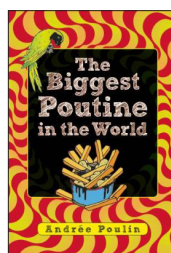
Krishnaswami, Uma. *Book Uncle and Me*. Groundwood Books.

Every day Yasmin stops by Book Uncle's lending library on the corner by her apartment and gets a new book which she returns the next day. Until, that is, Book Uncle is told he can no longer run his free library. Yasmin rallies the neighbourhood and takes her cause all the way up to the new mayor.



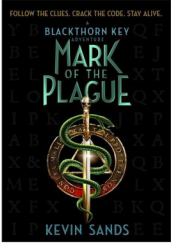
Prendergast, Gabrielle. *Pandas on the Eastside*. Orca Book Publishers.

When ten-year-old Journey learns that two Giant Pandas, caught in the middle of a diplomatic disagreement between the United States and China, are stranded in limbo in a nearby warehouse, she rallies friends and neighbours in her poverty-stricken yet tight-knit community to come to their aid.



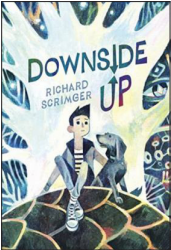
Poulin, Andr  e. *The Biggest Poutine in the World*. Annick Press.

A big pot of poutine on his birthday is the last good memory Thomas has of his mother before she left. After years of wishing she'd return, Thomas decides that the only way to bring his mother home is if she sees him in the newspaper, breaking the world record for the largest poutine. As he works towards his goal, Thomas starts to learn about himself, the people in his life, and the secrets that they've kept from him.



Sands, Kevin. *Mark of the Plague*.
Simon & Schuster.

An apothecary apprentice without a master, Christopher is finding his way in his new life as the owner of the Blackthorne Apothecary shop after the death of his master and mentor. When the Black Plague makes a return to London and a mysterious prophet appears, predicting whom the plague will strike next, Christopher is pulled into a tangled conspiracy.



Scrimger, Richard. *Downside Up*.
Tundra Books.

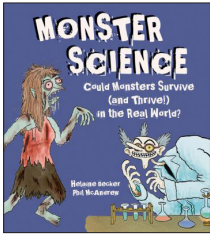
Sixth-grader Fred Berdit is grieving for the loss of his dog Casey, and then he loses Casey's old tennis ball down a sewer grate. He just has to go after it, and winds up (down?) in an upside-down world that matches his own, but where nothing gets lost—Casey is still alive. It seems perfect—but is it?

JUNIOR FICTION HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Adderson, Caroline. *Jasper John Dooley: Public Library Enemy #1*. Kids Can Press.

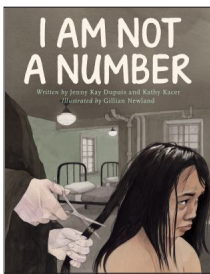


JUNIOR NONFICTION



Becker, Helaine. *Monster Science: Could Monsters Survive (and Thrive!) in the Real World?* Illustrated by Phil McAndrew. Kids Can Press.

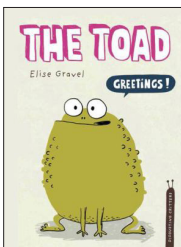
A fact book about your favourite fictional monsters! Learn about the myths and the science behind some of literature's greatest monsters. Compare fact and fiction to determine if these characters could have walked the earth.



Dupuis, Jenny Kay and Kathy Kacer. *I Am Not a Number*. Illustrated by Gillian Newland. Second Story Press.

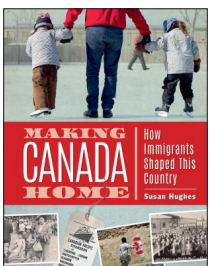
Based on the life of Jenny Kay Dupuis' grandmother, this heartbreaking book tells the story of Irene, a young Indigenous girl taken from her reservation to a Residential School.

Assigned a number by the nuns who run the school, Irene tries to remember who she is and where she comes from. When she and her siblings return home, their parents make the decision to disobey the law and keep the children at home. Additional information and photos from the author's personal story are included at the end.



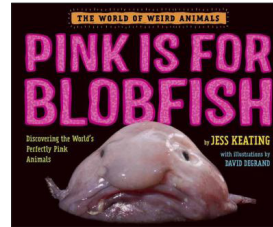
Gravel, Elise. *The Toad*. Tundra Books.

A nonfiction book that introduces the habitat and life cycle of toads. Comic style pictures and easy text present the information in a non-traditional way. Great for kids who want to read nonfiction but do not want to be inundated with too many details.



Hughes, Susan. *Making Canada Home: How Immigrants Shaped this Country*. OwlKids.

There is no better time than Canada's 150th birthday to examine more closely our history, both our triumphs and our challenges and the many immigrants who have shaped our country. Hughes' text is both timely and useful, in its first hand accounts, maps, photographs and historic documents, but also in the discussions it will spark in and out of the classroom.



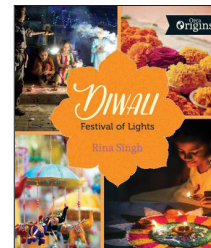
Keating, Jess. *Pink is for Blobfish: Discovering the World's Perfectly Pink Animals*. Illustrated by David DeGrand. Alfred A. Knopf.

Zoologist and author Jess Keating (*My Life is a Zoo* series) says it's about time to rethink pink. Cartoons by David DeGrand complement photographs of each of the featured creatures, including fish, tarantulas, birds, dolphins, slugs, snakes, and more. It's a really engaging read in its own right, as well as being suitable for simple school projects.



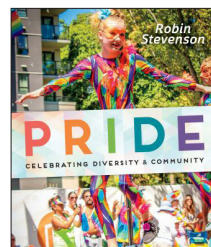
Shapiro, Simon. *Faster, Higher, Smarter: Bright ideas that Transformed Sports*. Annick Press.

For sports aficionados and science enthusiasts, learn more of the "why" and "how" that make your favourite game work. Science facts are peppered with real life examples, making this an engaging read.



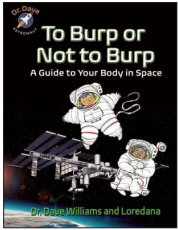
Singh, Rina. *Diwali: Festival of Lights*. Orca Book Publishers.

One of the first titles in the new Orca Origins series, "Diwali" gives a wonderful introduction into this important religious holiday for Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains. Colourful photos combined with easy to understand text give readers background and context, as well as the many different customs of how Diwali is celebrated in India and throughout the world.



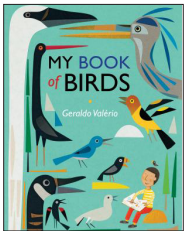
Stevenson, Robin. *Pride: Celebrating Diversity and Community*. Orca Book Publishers.

Pride is a time of many celebrations, culminating in the Pride Parade, but how many know how Pride began? Or that the rainbow flag isn't the only symbol of Pride? Stevenson's book is for anyone interested in Pride history, but shines in the first hand accounts of what Pride means to its participants.



Williams, David and Loredana Cunti. *To Burp or Not to Burp: A Guide to Your Body in Space*. Illustrated by Theo Krynauw. Annick Press.

In this short guide to bodily functions in space, former astronaut Dr. Dave Williams reveals fascinating (and occasionally gross) facts about daily life aboard the International Space Station: how astronauts eat, bathe, go to the bathroom, and more. Illustrated with humorous cartoons and photos from Williams' own space missions.



Valerio, Geraldo. *My Book of Birds*. Groundwood Books.

Beautiful collage creations depict birds of Canada and beyond! Facts are kept short and sweet for each of the lifelike birds in this book. Backyard birdwatchers will love searching the skies for these animals.

JUNIOR NONFICTION HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Bolger, Kevin. *Fun with Ed and Fred*. Illustrated by Ben Hodson. HarperCollins.

Plan International. *As A Boy*. Second Story Press.

Roberts, Jillian. *What Happens When a Loved One Dies? Our First Talk about Death*. Illustrated by Cindy Revell. Orca Book Publishers.

Roberts, Jillian. *What Makes Us Unique? Our First Talk About Diversity*. Illustrated by Cindy Revell. Orca Book Publishers.

skelton, j wallace. *Transphobia: Deal with It and be a Gender Transcender*. Illustrated by Nick Johnson. Lorimer.

Souders, Paul. *Nanuq: Life with Polar Bears*. Inhabit Media Inc.