# Best Bets for Holiday Gifts 2024!

Check out some of our favourite 2024 titles for children and teens.

## Picture Books

Still My Tessa by Sylv Chiang, Illustrated by Mathias Ball, North Winds Press.

Evelyn is worried about Tessa. Tessa doesn't want to play the same games they used to play together, but Evelyn is determined to find new ways to connect with her older sibling. And she is also learning to see Tessa as a non-binary person by learning to use new pronouns for them. Evelyn learns very quickly that it isn't hard, but she sees that others still find it difficult. Through the course of this heartfelt story, Evelyn reaffirms her connection to her sibling and shows those around them how to make the effort to support Tessa - with love.

How to Staycation like a Snail by Naseem Hrab, Illustrated by Kelly Collier, Owlkids.

Snail is an epic explorer … kind of. He loves the quiet things about adventures, like reading maps, hiking along slime trails, and collecting souvenirs. On big vacations, he finds the sights, sounds, and unfamiliar foods—like escargot!—way too overwhelming. In fact, his favorite part of a vacation is when he gets to return to his home *SHHH*weet home. So, while his friends take a trip to the city, Snail and his buddy Stump decide to have an adventure in their own backyard—a staycation!

This Land is a Lullaby by Tonya Simpson, Illustrated by Delreé Dumont, Orca.

An Indigenous child is lulled to sleep by the sights and sounds of a summer evening on the Plains. In warm, soothing language, a mother speaks to her infant, poetically describing their ancestral surroundings and reflecting on traditional Cree knowledge. This lyrical, gentle picture book honors the enduring relationship between a child, their ancestors and the land. Dumont's exquisite pointillism illustrations look like intricate beadwork.

## Children’s Fiction

The Curse of Eelgrass Bog by Mary Averling, Penguin Random House.

Nothing about Kess Pedrock’s life is normal. Not her home (she lives in her family’s Unnatural History Museum), not her interests (hunting for megafauna fossils and skeletons), and not her best friend (a talking demon’s head in a jar named Shrunken Jim). But things get even stranger than usual when Kess meets Lilou Starling, the new girl in town. Lilou comes to Kess for help breaking a mysterious curse—and the only clue she has leads straight into the center of Eelgrass Bog. Everyone knows the bog is full of witches, demons, and possibly worse, but Kess and Lilou are determined not to let that stop them. As they investigate the mystery and uncover long-buried secrets, Kess begins to realize that the curse might hit closer to home than she’d ever expected, and she’ll have to summon all her courage to find a way to break it before it’s too late.

Waking the Dead and Other Fun Activities by Casey Lyall, HarperCollins.

Twelve-year-old Kimmy Jones wants to excel at the unique (and secret) aspect of her family’s funeral home business. Under the watchful eye of Grandma Bev, Kimmy learns how to raise the recently deceased, request their last wish, and break the connection to send them on. But when Grandma unexpectedly dies herself, Kimmy can’t reach her spirit, and nothing seems like it’s ever going to be right again. Then a boy dies under mysterious circumstances on the night of a meteor shower. With no witnesses, Kimmy’s the only one who can get answers about what happened. So she breaks into the hospital morgue, and for the first time in months, her power works. She Wakes the boy up. Except then Kimmy can’t break the connection and so he *stays* Awake. Even worse, the boy has no memory of what happened to him. As Kimmy works to unravel the mystery, she discovers secrets about her heritage and learns about a witch who has been wreaking havoc for centuries.

Salma Joins the Team by Danny Ramadan, Illustrated by Anna Bron, Annick Press.

Salma dreams of becoming a champion swimmer like her hero, Olympian Yusra Mardini. So when she signs up for her school’s swim club, it feels like her dreams could come true . . . until mean comments from older girls at the pool and women at her mosque spark body image and self-esteem issues. But with the help of her close friends and family—the team that always has her back—Salma is ready to claim her place in the pool.

## Children’s NonFiction Books

Mushrooms Know: Wisdom From Our Friends the Fungi by Kallie George, Illustrated by Sara Gillingham, Greystone Kids.

Mushrooms always wear their thinking caps. They know so many things. This vibrant and informative book shares the fascinating lessons that fungi can teach us: that small can be mighty, being unique is a reason to celebrate—and staying connected is key

Club Microbe by Elise Gravel, Drawn & Quarterly.

Governor General’s Award–winning author-illustrator Elise Gravel provides a captivating close-up look at microscopic microorganisms and how they rule the world. With witty aplomb, Gravel explains how trillions of microbes live in us, on us, and everywhere around us. Gravel is adept at visualizing a topic that is essentially invisible. Far from being tiny terrors, kooky-looking cooties are presented in her signature wide-eyed, toothsome comic style. Superbly designed and full of fascinating facts, Club Microbe exudes a contagious enthusiasm that is positively infectious.

## Young Adult Fiction

Fledgling by S.K. Ali, Penguin Random House.

Raisa of Upper Earth has only lived a life of privilege and acquiescence. Ever dutiful, she accepts her father’s arrangement of her marriage to Lein, Crown Prince of the corrupt, volatile lands of Lower Earth. Though Lein is a stranger, Raisa knows the wedding will unite their vastly different worlds in a pact of peace: an infusion of Upper Earth technology will usher in the final age of enlightenment, ending war between humans forever. Newly released from imprisonment, Nada of Lower Earth has found her own calling: disrupting the royal wedding. Convinced her cousin Lein’s alliance with Upper Earth will launch an invasive, terrifying form of tyranny, Nada sets out undercover to light the spark of revolution. When Raisa goes missing a week before the wedding, all eyes turn to the rebels, including Nayf, Nada’s twin brother, a fugitive on the run. In Nayf and Raisa meeting, the long-simmering animosity between their worlds slowly burns away into something unexpected. But the Crown Prince wants his bride — and future — back. And he will go to the ends of the earths to reclaim them.

A Witch’s Guide to Burning by Aminder Dhaliwal, Drawn & Quarterly.

A witch’s work is never done when she works for the people. With the success of her town relying on her magic, demands are high. But what happens when a witch can’t keep up with the magical requests? She is burnt, of course—in a cruel ritual that extinguishes her magic and erases all her memories, making her just like everybody else. But when a burning ceremony is interrupted by rain in Chamomile Valley, a witch is left writhing at the stake. It’s up to a witch doctor and her toad friend to save the singed witch and nurse her back to health. Can they help her before her magic is lost forever?

Age 16 by Rosena Fung, Annick Press

*Age 16* is a moving, multi-layered coming-of-age graphic novel that explores three generations of mothers and 16-year-old daughters. Readers are immersed in alternating timelines, points of view and experiences: Roz in Toronto in 2000; Lydia in Hong Kong in 1972; and Mei Laan in Guangdong province, China, in 1954. Each character struggles with body image, gender expectations and identity. The three stories interweave and realistically convey how one generation impacts and shapes the next in so many ways.

The Unfinished by Cheryl Isaacs, Heartdrum/HarperCollins Publishers.

In Mohawk author Cheryl Isaacs’s spine-tingling horror debut, an Indigenous teen stumbles upon an eerie pond full of black water and shape-shifting monsters. When small-town athlete Avery’s morning run leads her to a strange pond in the middle of the forest, she awakens a horror the townspeople of Crook’s Falls have long forgotten. The black water has been waiting. Watching. Hungry for the souls it needs to survive. Avery can smell the water, see it flooding everywhere; she thinks she's losing her mind. And as the black water haunts Avery—taking a new form each time—people in town begin to go missing. Though Avery had heard whispers of monsters from her Kanien’kéha:ka (Mohawk) relatives, she has never really connected to her Indigenous culture or understood the stories. But the Elders she has distanced herself from now may have the answers she needs. When Key, her best friend and longtime crush, is the next to disappear, Avery is faced with a choice: listen to the Kanien’kéha:ka and save the town but lose her friend forever…or listen to her heart and risk everything to get Key back.