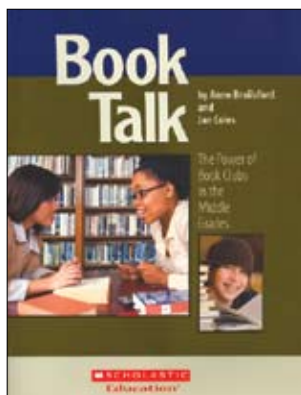


• TEACHING RESOURCES •

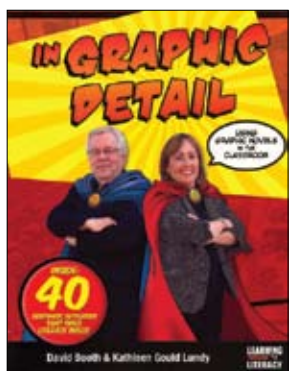


Book Talk: The Power of Book Clubs in the Middle Grades

by Ann Brailsford and Jan Coles
Scholastic Canada, 2008
ISBN 978-0-7791-6681-7
\$72.50, 312 pp, adult
www.scholastic.ca

This comprehensive guide is designed for teachers of grades 6 to 9 to help them implement school-based book clubs as part of their Language Arts programs. The rationale for book clubs in schools is that book clubs take advantage of social interests of middle graders, allowing these students to talk

(which we know they love to do) and to share ideas, encouraging them to be active participants in the reading process. Just as in adult book clubs, school-based clubs stimulate reflection and deepen understanding of what is read, helping readers to refine and revise their ideas and opinions and to broaden their comprehension. In *Book Talk*, the authors outline organizational frameworks, practical teaching strategies, levelled book lists for relevant themes for the target ages, examples of how teachers have used book clubs successfully in their classrooms, and assessment tools including blackline masters. *Book Talk* is a highly usable and practical guide for teachers who would like to develop book clubs as a teaching/learning strategy.



In Graphic Detail: Using Graphic Novels in the Classroom

by David Booth & Kathleen Gould Lundy
Rubicon Publishing, 2007
ISBN 978-1-897096-98-7
\$34.95, 120 pp, colour illustrations, glossary, index, adult
www.rubiconpublishing.com
www.scholastic.ca/education

With the increasing number of graphic novels available and their obvious appeal to students (see review of *Ramp Rats*, page 21), come questions about their educational merit, suitability for use in schools and how to use this relatively

new genre in the classroom. The answers lie in this resource, authored by authorities in the field of literacy, which debunks myths regarding graphic novels and offers information to help teachers use them effectively. The authors begin by defining graphic novels and explaining how they differ from comics. They go on to outline key features of graphic novels and how these books can be used to increase literacy and teach content in other subject areas. Practical strategies for supporting special needs students, for independent and group reading and readers theatre, and for responding to the novels are illustrated by examples of this genre. Any teacher interested in engaging their students in a new reading experience will find convincing arguments for the use of graphic novels and lots of help in getting started within this resource.



Yes, but...if they like it, they'll learn it!

by Susan Church, Jane Baskwill, Margaret Swain
Pembroke Publishers, 2007
ISBN 978-55138-211-1
\$24.95, 120 pp, adult
www.pembrokepublishers.com

Today teachers know that good professional practice means that learning should be based upon “authentic” pedagogy, which is well defined in the first chapter of this book. We also know that the present case for accountability often pushes teachers into teaching for test preparation, which can be contradictory to learning through authentic literacy

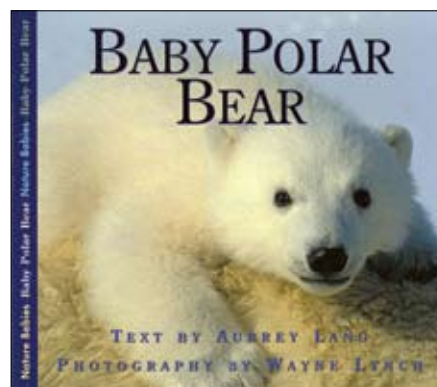
experiences. The authors begin this book dealing with arguments that teachers might use to ignore the need for authentic literary exploration. They provide some good suggestions for dealing with teachers’ concerns such as using tests as texts, and linking recent research results and learning criteria to authentic learning and assessment. However, the bulk of this book consists of chapters that detail examples of excellent projects undertaken by schools. These projects meet the learning expectations and outcomes for Canadian students, and also help students develop deep understanding of concepts and theories through examining specific problems, provide student

experience outside of school integrated with school learning, and provide knowledge readily transferred beyond the classroom into students’ lives. Along with a thorough explanation of each project, there are a number of consistent components in each chapter. They include how students’ experiences met the curriculum expectations for Language Arts from a number of provincial ministries, the instructional focus for each project, how the needs of diverse learners were met, the blackline masters used in recording information and planning, assessment practices and how parents and the community were involved.

This book would be especially useful with students from grade three on to high school. The projects outlined here could be easily replicated or serve as excellent models for teachers to plan an engaging, worthwhile unit of study that not only helps students to make academic gains but to appreciate the broader questions and issues of life in their communities. Recommended.

Reviewed by Betty Schultze

• NON-FICTION •

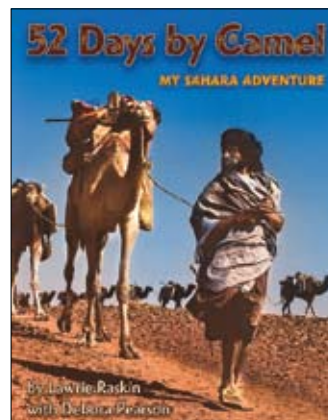


Baby Polar Bear

by Aubrey Lang
photography by Wayne Lynch
Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 2008
ISBN 978-1-55455-102-6 (paperback)
ISBN 978-1-55455-101-9 (hardcover)
\$7.95 (pb) / \$15.95 (hc)
36 pp, colour photos, ages 5 – 8
www.fitzhenry.ca

Baby Polar Bear is one of the latest releases in the Nature Baby series by the prolific wildlife writer and photographer team,

Aubrey Lang and Wayne Lynch. In *Baby Polar Bear*, basic facts and the life cycle of the polar bear are beautifully depicted in simple text and fabulous colour photographs of polar bears and other arctic animals. The appeal of polar bears to children and the plight of polar bears so much in the news today due to the effects of climate change, make this a timely addition to the collections of classrooms and school libraries. Other titles in the Nature Babies series include: *The Adventure of Baby Bear*, *Baby Penguin*, *Baby Seal*, *Baby Fox*, *Baby Elephant*, *Baby Lion*, *Baby Owl*, *Baby Ground Squirrel*, *Baby Koala* and *Baby Sloth*.



52 Days by Camel

by Lawrie Raskin with Debra Pearson
Annick Press, 2008
ISBN 978-1-55451-136-5 (paperback)
ISBN 978-1-55451-137-2 (hardcover)
\$14.96 (pb) / \$26.95 (hc), 88 pp, colour illustrations and photos, index, ages 10 – 12
www.annickpress.com

This account of the author’s travels in North Africa is fascinating reading and is illustrated by many striking photographs that help to make the area come alive in the reader’s mind. Lawrie Raskin’s enthusiasm for seeing the Sahara first hand is infectious, and one can’t help but be

caught up in his excitement at actually visiting such exotic and remote locations as Timbuktu. (Although, he is reminded that his impressions are relative when he is taking photographs in Timbuktu and is asked, “What are you doing?” by a resident. He replies, “Oh, taking pictures of mysterious Timbuktu.” The questioner comments, “Timbuktu is not mysterious. It is you who is mysterious!”) The colourful presentation of information, easy writing style, and intrigue of a culture so different from our own make *52 Days by Camel* a great recreational read as well as a resource for assigned study of the land and people of North Africa.

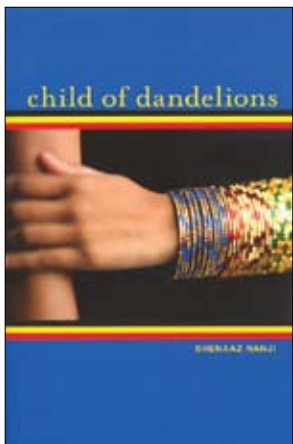
Reviewers

Diana Mumford worked as a teacher and teacher-librarian for twenty years before switching to her present career as an editor.

Betty Schultze is a retired teacher, literacy consultant and workshop presenter, who is the author of two books on strategies for beginning writers.

Interested in reviewing? Contact: dmumford@CanadianTeacherMagazine.com

• FICTION •

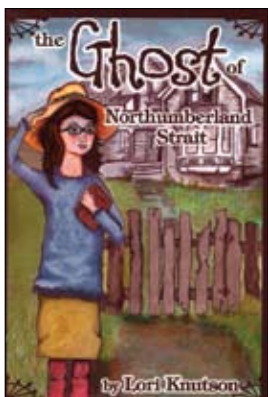


Child of Dandelions

by Shenaaz Nanji
Second Story Press, 2008
ISBN 978-1-897187-50-0
\$9.95, 216 pp, Historical Note, ages 12+
www.secondstorypress.ca

Child of Dandelions takes place in Uganda in 1972 when Idi Amin declared that all Indians must leave the country within ninety days. At that time, many Indians were part of the middle class in Uganda, having established themselves after two waves of immigration from India in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this story, fifteen-year-old Sabine is caught up in political and personal drama as her uncle goes missing, her parents flee, and her friendship with her

best friend is affected by the girls' ancestries. Through the eyes of Sabine, we learn how African Ugandans resented the English and Indian people who largely controlled the country, and how they expelled the Indians, even those born in Uganda. Sabine ultimately escapes with her brother to Canada where she hopes to be reunited with her parents and to begin a new life. Shenaaz Nanji, herself born in East Africa, has captured this period of Ugandan history in an emotional story in which a young person begins to understand the realities of the real world outside the security of her family.

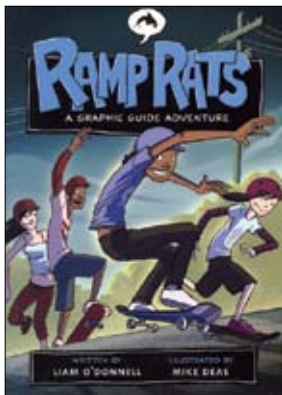


The Ghost of Northumberland Strait

by Lori Knutson
Napoleon Publishing, 2008
ISBN 978-1-894917-43-8
\$9.95, 146 pp, ages 8 – 12
www.napoleonandcompany.com

In this story—which incorporates elements of mystery, time travel and contemporary issues like the aftermath of divorce—thirteen-year-old Charly becomes friends with a mysterious young woman who lived long ago. Part of the mystery is that only Charly can see this ghostly woman. They meet in an old house that sits on the shore above Northumberland Strait in

Prince Edward Island. Charly has recently moved to PEI from Alberta with her mother and sister to live with her Grammie after her parent's divorce. She explores a run-down, abandoned house not far from Grammie's, but sometimes when she enters the property, she encounters Katherine and finds that the house is restored to the way it was when Katherine was alive. Parts of the mystery are revealed only at the end of the story, keeping the reader wondering about how and why Katherine died, and why Charly is the only one who can connect with her. *The Ghost of Northumberland Strait* is a first novel for Lori Knutson, skillfully written in a lively style that clearly demonstrates that the author can develop a complex story line and that she understands the idioms of today's youth.



Ramp Rats: A Graphic Guide Adventure

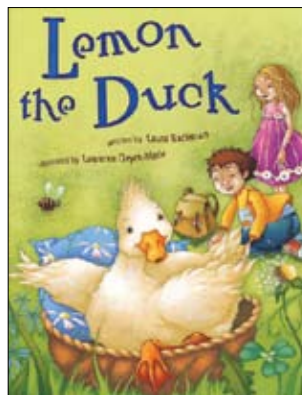
by Liam O'Donnell
illustrated by Mike Deas
Orca Book Publishers, 2008
ISBN 978-1-55143-880-1
\$9.95, 64 pp, colour illustrations, ages 8 – 14
www.orcabook.com
www.graphicguideadventures.com

This is the second in Orca Book Publishing's series of graphic novels for readers aged 8 to 14 with a unique concept: comic book panels depict contemporary characters as they engage in adventures and teach skills of interest to young people. In

Ramp Rats, step-by-step instructions are given for skate board tricks as Bounce and his friends try to find places to practise their skate boarding while avoiding bullies, gang members and prejudiced adults. Fast paced action in an urban setting will capture the attention of the target audience, keeping them turning the pages as Bounce learns to stand up to someone who has been pushing him around for too long.

Wild Ride, an action packed adventure set in a remote valley and teaching survival tips, is the first in the series, and *Soccer Sabotage* is due to be released in 2009.

• PICTURE BOOKS •

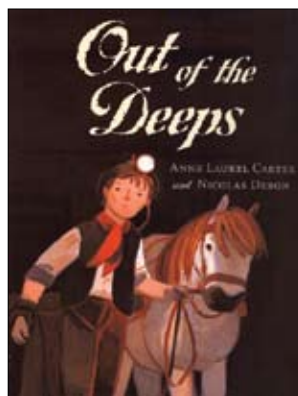


Lemon the Duck

by Laura Backman
illustrated by Laurence Cleyet-Merle
Lobster Press, 2008
ISBN 978-1-897073-74-2
\$19.95 (hardcover), 32 pp, colour illus., ages 4 – 8
www.lobsterpress.com

Lemon the Duck is born in an incubator in Ms. Lake's classroom along with three siblings. Ms. Lake's students, who have been studying oviparous animals, care for the ducklings and delight in their development. Although the other ducklings thrive, Lemon is unable to stand or walk

on her own and is diagnosed with a neurological balance problem. Ms Lake and her students adopt Lemon when the other ducklings go to live on a farm, and try to find ways to make her more independent. This delightful story of how a group of school children and their teacher care for a duck with special needs is based on a true story of the real Lemon the Duck. It has obvious applications for discussions about differences, the value of each individual and caring for others who need help, but it is such a great story with such wonderful illustrations, that children and teachers will love it for those reasons alone. For more information about Lemon the Duck and lots of ducky jokes and sayings, visit www.lemontheduck.com.

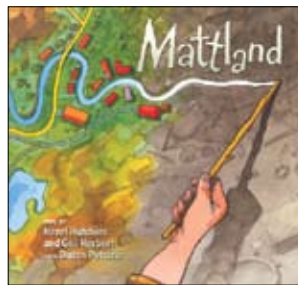


Out of the Deeps

by Anne Laurel Carter
illustrated by Nicolas Debon
Orca Book Publishers, 2008
ISBN 978-1-55143-559-6
\$19.95 (hardcover), 32 pp, colour illustrations,
historical note, ages 8 – 13
www.orcabook.com

Out of the Deeps is a fine addition to the body of excellent Canadian picture books that are superlative stories for children, beautiful works of art, and invaluable recordings of the history and culture of our country. In this story, a

young boy goes into the coal mine with his father on the day before the first paid holiday for the Glace Bay coal miners which was granted in 1944. He plans to bring his father's pit pony out so he too can enjoy the freedom and sunshine of the holiday. It is the boy's first experience in the deeps, and the pony helps him overcome his fears when they are entrusted to carry out a delivery alone. Through the telling of the events of the day, the author and illustrator convey much about the daily life of coal mining families and the dangers of working in the mines. *Out of the Deeps* deserves a place of honour on the bookshelves of Canadian picture book collectors and, of course, in school libraries and classrooms across the country.



Mattland

by Hazel Hutchins and Gail Herbert
illustrated by Dušan Petricic
Annick Press, 2008
ISBN 978-1-55451-120-4 (paperback)
ISBN 978-1-55451-121-1 (hardcover)
\$8.95 (pb) / \$19.95 (hc)
32 pp, colour illustrations, ages 4 – 7
www.annickpress.com

This beautiful picture book captures a small event in a lonely child's life so exquisitely that it takes your breath away—or maybe it's my nostalgia for a simpler time when children went outdoors and amused themselves that makes me like it so much. The plot is simple—Matt has no friends in his new neighbourhood, so he begins to draw in the mud outside his home in what looks to be a new subdivision under construction. Soon he has drawn Snake River and Turtle Lake and he creates "Mattland" out of whatever materials come to hand. Without fanfare or comment, another child shows up and hands Matt a popsicle stick. She returns to add more bits and pieces to the landscape, and then when the rains come and threaten to obliterate the increasingly complex Mattland, many hands appear to build dikes and canals to divert the flood. When the sun breaks through, a ring of smiling faces is reflected in Turtle Lake. Although the book was created for young children, all ages will relate to the significance of a moment that can occur in anyone's life—that moment when you feel out of place and alone, and someone comes along and joins you in whatever you are doing, making everything better. There's a message here about not needing endless electronic devices in order to have fun, but the ease of connection with other people over a common project is the most valuable lesson illustrated by this story.