

The Review Crew

Early Elementary Fiction

You and Me and the Wishing Tree

Written and Illus. by: Nancy Tillman

Feiwel and Friends, 2016
ISBN: 9781250056290

Curriculum: Fathers and sons; Wishes; Make believe

A father and his son woke up one day, and it was not a usual day. There, in their yard stood an orange wishing tree. They both made wishes. The first wish came quickly, the boy wished to fly. They flew over the land and the sea and then over a circus. The boy wished for lunch and then for friends to join them. They played and made wishes all day long. Even a wish to be invisible was granted. As he grew sleepy, the father carried him off to bed. The boy asked his dad, "Did your wish come true?" He answered back, "My wish was just to be with you." This is a wonderful story with beautiful illustrations. The author wants to remind her readers that they are loved.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Place Bridge Academy

Everyone Loves Cupcake

By: Kelly DiPucchio
Illus. by: Eric Wight
Farrar Straus Giroux, 2016
ISBN: 9780374302931

Topics: Friendship; Self-acceptance

From the author of *Everyone Loves Bacon*, readers get another peek at the secret lives



of food. Cupcake is insecure; she wants everyone to like her. In order to do this, she takes great pains to make sure that her frosting and sprinkles are just right. She wears a tiara and she regales the other pastries in the shop with tales of her awesomeness. Soon the other pastries grow tired of her and do not want to spend time with her. When she meets up with Fortune Cookie, he advises her to be herself. Cupcake gives it a try and soon all the pastries in the shop are being honest as well, confessing their deepest darkest secrets. Did you know that the New York Cheesecake hates New York and Croissant is a little flaky? This is a delightful read for preschool to second graders and the artwork is stellar in a very retro style. Adults will enjoy the many puns the book offers.

Reviewed by: Denise Cushing
Carson Elem.

Also an Octopus

By: Maggie Tokuda-Hall
Illus. by: Benji Davies
Candlewick Press, 2016
ISBN: 9780763670849

Topics: Story elements; Humor; Imagination

What are the things every story needs? A character, of course! Who will the character be though? And what will the character want? In this adorable debut, Tokuda-Hall introduces us to her imagination, where we meet an ukulele playing Octopus, who will bring out giggles from the stubbornest of readers (children and adults alike). This book adds an extra level by discussing the parts of a story, including characters, plot, and of course, a resolution--but that all stories start



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Who are we?

- ☺ We are DPS teacher librarians from elementary, middle and high school.
- ☺ We know DPS students and the DPS curriculum.

What we do!

- ☺ Every month each member writes reviews of at least twelve recently published books.
- ☺ This publication consists of the best books we review each month.
- ☺ Our hard work earns thousands of dollars of free books for our school libraries and for the classroom library at ETLs, where DPS teachers can order baskets of books for their classrooms. (Call 720-423-8131 to order.)

with a little bit of nothing, reminding us that we are all storytellers deep down. Vibrant and colorful illustrations keep children entertained throughout.

Reviewed by: Emily Rubin
Barnum Elem.

Great, Now We've Got Barbarians

By: Jason Carter Eaton
Illus. by: Mark Fearing
Candlewick Press, 2016
ISBN:



9780763668273

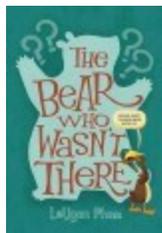
Topics: Cleanliness; Pests

Mom says a messy room invites pests, but her son pooh-poohs the thought of ants, flies, or mice. Then huge and hairy barbarians arrive, attracted by the crumbs and disorder, camp out in the garage, and start using the boy's toys and school supplies for personal grooming. The boy reluctantly cleans up and the barbarians just as reluctantly leave. The last few pages show an unintentional bathtub flood, with pirates showing up! Humorous illustrations show details like a campfire from the croquet mallets in the garage and ears being cleaned with action figures. Fun to read and for discussion of the consequences of not being tidy!

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert
Alumni

The Bear Who Wasn't There

Written & Illus. By:
LeUyen Pham
Roaring Brook Press,
2016



ISBN: 9781596439702

Topics: Animals; Humor

Duck is fed up with all the bear books out there and is on a mission to get the focus on him. Different animals, from birds, to turtles, and even a dinosaur get in on the search--even

the author/illustrator tries to find the bear she just KNOWS she drew. A hilarious book full of dialogue, speech bubbles, and characters will entertain readers over and over again as they look to find things they missed the first read. A new classic for sure, perfect for classroom and school libraries looking for another funny animal read-a-loud.

Highly Recommended
Reviewed by Emily Rubin
Barnum Elem.

Spork Out of Orbit

By: Nan Walker
Illus. by: Jessica Warrick
Kane Press, 2016
ISBN: 9781575658193



Topics: Friendship; Respect; Character education; School

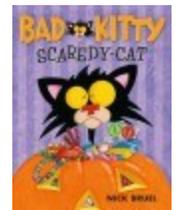
This first book in the "How to be an Earthling" series is all about Respect. Mayhem ensues in Mrs. Buckle's third grade class when an alien named Spork lands on the playground. He has come to Earth in order to earn his Galaxy Scout Solo Explorer badge. The third graders have fun teaching him how to be an earthling with integrity through lessons on Respect, Honesty, Responsibility, and Kindness. Inevitably, there are miscommunications between the kids and Spork and they are quite funny. The end of each book features activities and quizzes to reinforce the message of the book. Based in a narrative format, students will find the character education message subtle and the book to be quite fun.

Reviewed by: Denise Cushing
Carson Elem.



Bad Kitty: Scaredy-Cat

Written and Illus. by:
Nick Bruel
Roaring Book Press,
2016
ISBN:
9781596439788



Topics: Halloween; Alliteration; Alphabet books

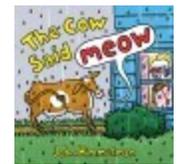
Nick Bruel extends the Bad Kitty phenomenon with a bit of back story. Just how did Bad Kitty come to be bad? It seems she used to be many kinds of cat, but one Halloween night, faced with an alphabetical and alliterative parade of spooks, she became a scaredy-cat. When an accidental spill reveals what's in trick-or-treat bags, however, kitty finds the motivation to go completely bad. She mounts an alliterative attack that chases from the field every monster in the neighborhood—all in alphabetical order.

Victorious, she will never be a scaredy-cat again. Bruel's zany illustrations add to the fun.

Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley
Cheltenham Elem.

The Cow Said Meow

Written and Illus. by:
John Himmelman
Henry Holt and Company, 2016
ISBN:
9781627793780



Topics: Farm animals; Animal sounds
It's raining, it's pouring, the old...lady is letting everyone inside?!? When a cold, wet cat tries and succeeds to get in the house, the cow gets an idea. Then, the pig, chicken, donkey, sheep, and duck all follow suit. The old lady (with thick glasses) has no idea until one of them ruins the plan and she kicks them all out. What will happen to the poor dog that came late to the party? Children will love the animal sounds and colorful illustrations. Perfect for any primary classroom or school library.

Reviewed by: Emily Rubin
Barnum Elem.

Little Elliot Big Fun

Written and Illus.
by: Mike Curato
Henry Holt and Com-
pany, 2016
ISBN:
9780805098273



Topics: Friendship; Carnivals; Fear; Anxiety

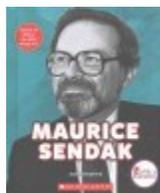
Colored pencil drawings lend an air of nostalgia to this story about Elliot the elephant and his friend Mouse. Elliot and Mouse visit a carnival on the boardwalk, but Elliot is too anxious and afraid to try out any of the rides. He is afraid of the clowns and the fun house. He's even afraid of the games! Can Elliot learn to go with the flow and have fun? Young children will relate to Elliot's fears. The illustrations set the story in the 1940's.

Reviewed by: Denise Cushing
Carson Elem.

Early Elementary Nonfiction

Maurice Sendak

By: Jodie Shepherd
Scholastic, 2017
ISBN:
9780531222911



Topics: Maurice Sendak; Author; Illustrator

In this Scholastic Rookie biography about Maurice Sendak, the reader learns all about the famous author/illustrator. Through illustrations, drawings, and informative text the reader learns how Sendak was raised, and his inspiration to write and draw about children in a more realistic manner. With great fun facts about his neighbor Rosie (the inspiration for *The Sign on Rosie's*

Door) and his dog Jenny (the star of *Higglety Pigglety Pop!*), this will be a must read for any fan of the author. A great primary biography title and series to include in any classroom or school library, this text includes a glossary, index, timeline, website, a table of contents, Fast Fact! boxes, captions, and bold words. There is even a poem at the end about Sendak and ideas for creativity to keep the reader thinking. Reviewed by Emily Rubin
Barnum Elem.

Upper Elementary Fiction

The Secret Fire

By: Whitaker Ringwald
Katherine Tegen Books,
2016



ISBN: 9780807517263
Topics: Greek Mythology; Quests; Friendship; Survival

The Secret Fire is the third and final book in the *Secret Box* trilogy. Jay has been kidnapped by an evil immortal who is seeking the urns of Faith, Hope, and Love. He wants to use the urns to eliminate Zeus from earth's history. Tyler and Ethan go to the Realm of the Gods to seek help. There they meet Pandora, whom they hope will provide help and some answers. This is a fun blend of adventure mixed with Greek mythology. The story is told from Jax and Ethan's point of view in alternating chapters. This is a good series for younger readers who are not quite ready for Riordan's stories. This series need to be read in order to understand the background and adds to the enjoyment of this series

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Place Bridge Academy



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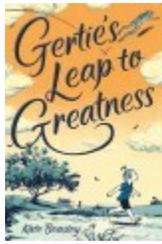
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Antonio Nicotera



Gertie's Leap to Greatness

By: Kate Beasley
Illus. by: Tim Hopgood
Farrar Straus Giroux,
2016
ISBN:
9780374302610



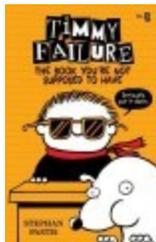
Topics: Families;
Schools

Gertie is determined to become the greatest fifth grader in the universe, mainly to show her absent mother what she's missing. Her plans to be a star are foiled by a new student in the class, who not only steals Gertie's seat but also her best friend Jean. Trying to get back at Mary Sue lands Gertie in hot water and suddenly she is an outcast. Can she redeem herself with a starring role in the school play, also getting her mother to come and see how fabulous she is? Gertie is totally out there and endearing. Black and white illustrations sprinkled throughout the book help show off Gertie's uniqueness.

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert
Alumni

The Book You're Not Supposed to Have

Written and Illus. by:
Stephan Pastis
Candlewyc Press, 2016
ISBN:
9780763690045



Topics: Kid detectives;
Adolescent humor

When Mom forbids any detecting until school is out, Timmy Failure establishes a clandestine office in a storage shed at Home Despot. Meanwhile, Timmy's two female cousins, Larry and Merry, are making him crazy; Timmy just can't seem to master the Buppy Guppy piano songbook; and his best friend Rollo is kidnapped—maybe. If you are eight to twelve years old, the goofy stories and cartoony illustrations will make

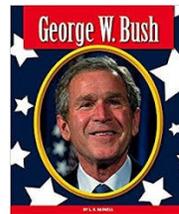
you snort with laughter. Challenging vocabulary will please parents and teachers. Pastis writes the *Pearls Before Swine* comic strip as well as the best-selling *Failure* series.

Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley
Cheltenham Elem.

Upper Elementary Nonfiction

George W. Bush

By: L. S. Haskell
Illus. by: various credited photographs
Child's World, 2017
ISBN:
9781503809086



Topics: U.S. History; U.S. Presidents
In 24 pages Haskell recounts the career of George W. Bush as businessman and politician, not forgetting the childhood and college years that helped form his political beliefs. Terrorist attacks, the United States response in Afghanistan and Iraq, the No Child Left Behind Act, Hurricane Katrina, and the financial crisis of 2008—all are here. Although he does not dwell on controversy, more than once Haskell notes public criticism of Bush's decisions. Part of a series from Child's World, the book is nicely bound and features color photos, glossary, timeline, and web links. Simple, short sentences make it easy for young readers to access extensive information.

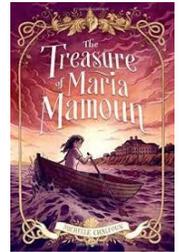
Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley
Cheltenham Elem.



Middle School Fiction

The Treasure of Maria Mamoun

By: Michelle Chalfoun
Farrar Straus Giroux,
2016
ISBN:
9780374303402



Topics: Adventure;
Treasure; Self-Esteem

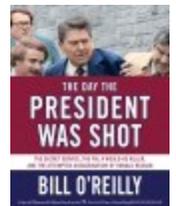
Maria lives with her mother in a tenement in the Bronx. Everyday Maria comes straight home and locks the doors to wait for her mother, a nurse to finish her second job. One day she forgets to be as vigilant as she should be and ends up being beaten up by the "bad barbies", her term for the mean girls in her school and tenement. Her mother immediately searches for and finds a new job and they leave the Bronx. The new job is for a wealthy older man who lives alone in a mansion on Martha's Vineyard. Maria and her mother are given a cottage to live in while her mother nurses curmudgeonly Mr. Ironwall. The cottage yields up several items that pique Maria's curiosity and before she knows it she is embroiled in a mystery and a search for treasure.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
CEC Early College

Middle School Nonfiction

The Day the President Was Shot

By: Bill O'Reilly
Holt & Co., 2016
ISBN:
9781627796996



Topics: History; Assassination attempt; Ronald Reagan

This is a great book for fans of non-fiction that reads like fiction. The book details the day that President Reagan was shot by John Hinckley. Each of the major players in the event is scrutinized and developed as a character and given a place in the action of the story. The background information is important to understanding the unfolding events and what happened afterwards. While everyone may not be thrilled with Bill O'Reilly, he is definitely able to put together an engaging story. The pages of the book are filled with primary source photos that aid understanding for readers.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
CEC Early College

High School Fiction

The Light Fantastic

By: Sarah Combs
Candlewick Press, 2016
ISBN:

9780763678517

Topics: Suicide; Bullying



Seven narrators are intertwined in this story covering one tragic day in April. A group of students online, the "Assassins," headed by the Mastermind, are planning mass murders in their respective states to right the wrongs they have suffered. Their sad stories include Phoebe's pain at being cyber bullied, Laura's vicious betrayal at a party, and the Mastermind's anger at his father. Among all these hurts there is also the powerful love of family and friends reaching out to save some of the Assassins. This is an intense portrayal of the anguish and hope of adolescence that will resonate with many high school students.

Review by: Peggy Obert
Alumni

Crow Mountain

By: Lucy Inglis
Scholastic, 2016

Topics: Montana; Native Americans; Romance

Hope and her domineering mother are heading to Montana from London. Her mother is going to study the ecosystem there. One hundred years earlier Emily left London in the care of her demanding guardian to travel west through Montana to meet her future husband in California. The girls' journeys parallel each other in many ways. They both meet exciting western men, they both meet with dangerous accidents and they both learn important lessons about life and love. This novel is a stunning trip into the wild beauty of Montana. Complete with bullies, racial profiling and gender fluidity. It is a grand adventure on many levels.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
CEC Early College



Morning Rain

By Tu Fu

A slight rain comes, bathed in dawn light.
I hear it among treetop leaves before mist
Arrives. Soon it sprinkles the soil and,
Windblown, follows clouds away.
Deepened

Colors grace thatch homes for a moment.
Flocks and herds of things wild glisten
Faintly. Then the scent of musk opens across
Half a mountain -- and lingers on past noon.



April Rain Song

Let the rain kiss you
Let the rain beat upon your head with silver liquid drops
Let the rain sing you a lullaby
The rain makes still pools on the sidewalk
The rain makes running pools in the gutter
The rain plays a little sleep song on our roof at night
And I love the rain.

Langston Hughes