

# The Review Crew



## Early Elementary Fiction

### Yard Sale

By: Eve Bunting

Illus. By: Lauren Castillo

Candlewick Press, 2015

ISBN: 9780763665425

*Curriculum: Family; Moving;  
Writing exemplars*



When Callie's family leaves their rambling house for a new apartment, their yard sale sweeps everything away—Callie's headboard with a crayon tick for each time she has read *Good Night, Moon*; her red bicycle; even her best friend, Sara. When a woman asks if *she* is for sale, Callie bursts into tears--then learns what makes a house, any house, a home. Eve Bunting blesses us again with her fine eye for detail, keen ear for dialogue, and deft touch on our heartstrings. Lauren Castillo's watercolors complement Bunting's words with rich color and texture.

Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley

Cheltenham Elem.

### Melissa's Octopus and Other

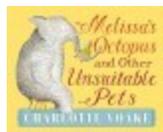
#### Unsuitable Pets

Written and Illus. by: Charlotte Voake

Candlewick Press, 2014

ISBN: 9780763674816

*Curriculum: Friends; Pets; Wild Animals;  
Humor*



Melissa and her friends have the most un-

suitable pets. Melissa has an octopus, but he really makes a mess in the bathroom. Thomas has a mole, but he is very hard to find. He could pop up anywhere! Betty has a chameleon, but she can never find her pet, since he blends in to the background. Arthur has a warthog, but he doesn't listen and does whatever he wants. Caroline's giraffe is very sweet and gentle, but he is a bit too tall. The other pets include a worm, an elephant and a crocodile. They all agree that the crocodile is the most unsuitable of them all. Colorful illustrations really make the book. It would be fun to read aloud to youngsters.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns

Place Bridge Academy

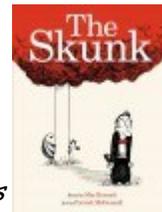
### The Skunk

By: Mac Barnett

Illus. By: Patrick McDonnell

ISBN: 9781596439665

*Curriculum: Skunks; Friends*



A skunk is following, almost stalking, a tuxedoed man. He follows him everywhere but never says a word. Finally the man is desperate to get rid of the skunk and he sells his house and moves to another part of town to escape him. He is finally rid of the skunk! But then the man realizes something is missing in his life - the skunk's company! Children will enjoy the comic ending to this cute story. Comic book style illustrations that use color sparingly add to the charm of the book.

Reviewed by: Jutta Gebauer

South H.S.

**Achoo! Why Pollen Counts**

**Brought to you by  
the Denver Public  
Schools Book  
Review Committee.**

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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.)

Written and illus. by: Shennen Bersani  
Arbordale Publishing,  
2015

ISBN: 9781628555509  
*Curriculum: Pollen; Ani-  
mals*



Baby Bear is suffering terribly. Spring has arrived and the pollen is bothering him. He has allergies. But this book is really about the reason we need pollen. Bear finds out that many animals actually rely on different pollens for their food source during every season of the year. Even he eats pollen in the form of snow crystals. After the story, readers can learn more about how allergies form, the process of pollination, and the work of bees. This is a charming story with adorable illustrations and provides important information as well. A great addition to any elementary library.

Reviewed by: Jutta Gebauer  
South H.S.

## Early Elementary Nonfiction

### Police Officers

By: Julie Murray  
Abdo Kids, 2016

ISBN: 9781629709161  
*Curriculum: Community  
helpers; Safety*



In this introductory non-fiction book Julie Murray and Abdo Kids do a great job of describing the importance of police officers and their importance in the community and familiarizing young students with basic non-fiction text features. There was no mention of guns, but the book did include a photograph of a tool belt that had a gun clearly dis-

played. Crisp photographs depict police officers in many roles. Includes a table of contents, bold words, and a picture glossary of terms and tools used. A wonderful starter series of community helpers.

Reviewed by: Emily Hungerford  
Barnum Elem.

### 3 Little Culottes

By: Sylvie Chausse  
Illus. by: Anne Letuffe  
Berbay Publishig, 2009  
ISBN:  
9780980671117



*Curriculum: Pigs; Wolves; Clothing*  
This take on the story of the three little pigs has Lucette, Paulette, and Marie-Antoinette decked out in woolen culottes, or pants, of French design. To their horror, one night the culottes disappear from the clothesline and their search takes them to three houses of straw, twigs, and brick, where a suspiciously familiar animal has been adapting the fine pants for his own uses. While recovering their clothes, they take pity on the envious wolf and teach him to knit his own! The rhyming text is cheerful and humorous, and the bright collage illustrations are delightful with their mix of paint, fabric, and other real objects. A fun book to use for a fractured fairy tale unit.

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert  
Alumni

## Upper Elementary Fiction

### My Father the Great Pirate

By: Davide Cali  
Illus. by: Maurizio A. C.  
Quarello



Wilkins Farago, 2014  
ISBN: 9780763665425

*Curriculum: Fathers and sons; Coming  
of age; Lies that tell the truth*

Each summer Dad, captain of the pirate ship Hope and her eccentric crew, carries home exotic tales and the smell of the sea. Then a tragic telegram reveals Dad to be less and more than he has claimed. Can a son learn to love a father who lied—and learn truth is more than fact? Cali evokes the sweet sorrow of growing up and the profound grief of growing old. Artful design and Quarello's striking palette add to a book that will touch your heart and mind.

Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley  
Cheltenham Elem.

### Ben Draws Trouble

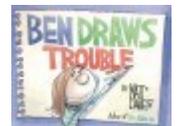
Written and Illus. by:  
Matt Davies

Roaring Book Press,  
2015

ISBN: 9781596437951

*Curriculum: School; Drawing; Imagina-  
tion*

Ben Lukin loved to draw in art class, writing class and in math class. He liked to draw all kinds of things, but especially people. When Ben was riding his bike home from school, his sketch book fell out of his pack. When he got home, he reached for it, and it was nowhere to be found. Meanwhile, one of his teachers found it. When he got to school the next morning, there was a group of angry students and teachers looking at his sketch book. Ben's teacher, Mr. Upright, looked through his sketch book and asked Ben to follow him. He walked him past the principal's office and down to the auditorium. He asked Ben if he would be willing to help with set design for the



play. Ben's drawings looked even better twenty feet tall.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns

Place Bridge Academy

### Alpha

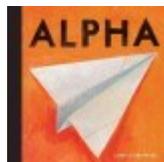
Written and Illus. by:

Isabell Arsenault

Candlewick, 2015

ISBN:

9780763678524



*Curriculum: Language; Alphabet*

*Alpha* introduces the International Radiotelephony Spelling Alphabet (A-Alpha, B-Bravo, C-Charlie) graphically through illustrations and text. In this book, letters from the alphabet are displayed on one page with the corresponding image facing it on the next page. One is immediately drawn to the striking illustrations done in watercolor, gouache, pencil, and colored pencil, as well as the large, bold text. This book is both informational and interactive as connections must be made between the image and text. Favorites include a bowler hat representing C for Charlie (Chaplain) and a wallet with credit cards, money and a baby picture representing P for Papa. Alpha is presented in a memorable manner for little ones learning the alphabet, emergency service personal learning the NATO phonetic alphabet or just for fun.

Reviewed by: Sarah Martinez

North H.S.



## Upper Elementary Nonfiction

### When the Wind Blows

By: Stacy Clark

Illus. by: Brad Sneed

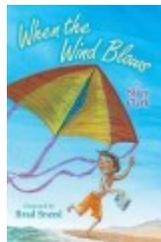
Holiday House, 2015

ISBN:

9780823430697

*Curriculum:*

*Wind energy*



In this introductory illustrated non-fiction book about wind energy, Stacy Clark and Brad Sneed turn a narrative and lyrical story into a learning opportunity. While enjoying the watercolor paintings the reader learns about what happens when the wind blows for the windmills in the ocean. Wonderful vocabulary is used throughout the book, and while these are illustrations, they are clearly inspired by real-life objects and meant to teach. This would be great for an introduction to any energy unit, best for between second and fourth graders, and possibly a grade level below as determined by teacher.

Reviewed by: Emily Hungerford

Barnum Elem.



### Mira que artista!

#### Pablo Picasso

By: Patricia Geis

Combel, 2015

ISBN: 9788498258547

*Curriculum: Artists; Biographies; Art*



Artist Pablo Picasso's life and work is presented in this amazing interactive book full of lift-the-flaps, pull-outs, pop-ups and extras. The book opens with a brief biography of the artist that details his interest in art starting at a very young age and provides examples of his work from when he was 7 years old. The book then traverses through his Blue and Rose periods, Cubism, and many other different styles of painting. Although this is a great introduction to Picasso, the real draw of the book is its fun interactive features. One is invited from the beginning to touch, play, and examine all that Picasso's art has to offer. The attention to detail throughout is incredible, with a paper African mask representing his interest in primitive art, a 2-D guitar with actual strings representing his Cubist period, and a pop-up group of art aficionados looking at a realistically sized Guernica representing the grand scale of one of his most widely recognizable works. From Combel, a publishing house based in Spain with a focus on educational, high quality materials, this book is in Spanish and is one in a series of various artists.

Reviewed by: Sarah Martinez

North H.S.

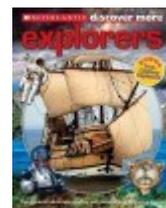
### Explorers

By: Penelope Arlon and

Tory Gordon-Harris

Scholastic, 2015

ISBN: 9780545791224



*Curriculum: Explorers*

What can an ancient Greek, a 14<sup>th</sup> century Moroccan Muslim, and an 18<sup>th</sup> century Lemhi Shoshone woman have in common? All adventured well beyond their homelands and added to the knowledge of their times. Today's explorers set out on adventures to the bottom of the sea, the ends of the

earth, and the depths of space. Join them all in *Explorers*. This beautifully formatted and illustrated book includes contributions by people of color, non-Western nations, and women. An extensive index and brief online companion are included.

Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley  
Cheltenham Elem.

### **The Dreaded Ogress of the Tundra**

By: Neil Christopher

Illus. by: Larry Mac-Dougall

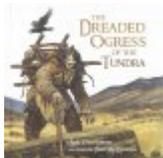
Inhabit Media, 2015

ISBN: 978927095799

*Curriculum: Folktales; Inuit*

Inuit legend tells of a terrifying ogress: the amautalik. The elders tell many tales of this frightful being. In fact, the mere mention of her name will bring crying, restless children to silence. Children are what she eats after all. This book contains two stories from the Inuit elders about the amautalik. The stories are fabulously illustrated. Young readers looking for a fright will not be disappointed (adults either). These are great written presentations of stories long in the oral tradition of the Inuit people. This will be a wonderful addition to a folklore unit.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
CEC Early College



## **Middle School Fiction**

### **Blackbird Fly**

By: Erin Entrada Kelly

Greenwillow Books,  
2015

ISBN: 9780062238610

*Curriculum: Bullying;*



*Filipino Americans; Music; Middle school*

Middle school can be hard, but when you are different it seems impossible. Apple has black hair, eyes that slant, a mother whose English is accented, and of course a weird nickname. She just wants to be like everyone else. But when the 'Dog Log' comes out and she is listed as the third ugliest girl in school, Apple decides she will run away and start her life over as a street musician. With boys barking at her in the school halls, ugly rumors circulating, and her friends turning on her, music is Apple's only release. An unexpected friend may help Apple to see that standing out from the crowd may be better than blending in. Many readers will identify with the angst, struggle, and uncertainty that is so aptly portrayed in this title.

Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen  
Thomas Jefferson H.S.

### **Pieces and Players**

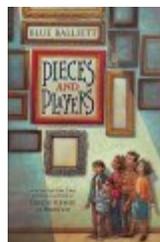
By: Blue Balliett

Scholastic Press, 2015

ISBN: 9780545299909

*Curriculum: Mystery;  
Art theft*

This is the latest offering from Blue Balliett, the author of *Chasing Vermeer* and other adventures. The three adventurers from previous books are back: Petra, Calder and Tommy. This time they are joined by two other sleuths: Zoomy and Early. Thirteen pieces of art have been stolen from the small, local museum. With the help of a friendly ghost and an Ouija board, they are off and hunting. Fans of earlier novels in the series will love this book. It is a fast paced adventure starring a bunch of smart thirteen year olds. A little bit



of magic and a little bit of math round out this fun mystery.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
CEC Early College

## **High School Fiction**

### **Sweet**

By: Emmy Laybourne

Feiwel and Friends,  
2015

ISBN: 9781250055194

*Curriculum: Cruise ships; Weight loss; Drug side effects; Addiction; Celebrities*

'The Cruise to Lose' is a seven day luxury trip for the rich and famous to try the new sugar substitute Solu. It is supposed to sweeten food while causing weight loss. Invited along by her friend Vivika, Laurel soon realizes that something is very wrong. Everyone seems so happy, as they lose weight by eating as much as they want. But when the mood on board the ship changes, no one is satisfied with their daily allowance of Solu. They desire more and will do anything to get it. *Sweet* is a seemingly lighthearted tale that twists into a horror story that will keep readers hooked.

Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen  
Thomas Jefferson H.S.



### **The Fixer**

By: Jennifer Lynne

Barnes

Bloomsbury, 2015

ISBN: 9781619635944

*Curriculum: Sisters;  
Politics*

After their grandfather develops dementia, Tess is forced to move to



Washington, D.C. with her much older sister Ivy, a "fixer" who helps prominent political figures solve a variety of embarrassing problems. Tess starts to get that reputation as well at her new school when a classmate suddenly draws her into the suspected murder of a Supreme Court justice. The case blows up into a tangled web of deception that Ivy tries to protect Tess from only to reveal her own startling secret. A touch of romance and humor, relationship issues, and plenty of action make this book and its believable characters a winner for high school fans of suspense. Reviewed by: Peggy Obert  
Alumni

**The Truth About My Success**

By: Dyan Sheldon  
Candlewick Press, 2013  
ISBN:  
9780763672720



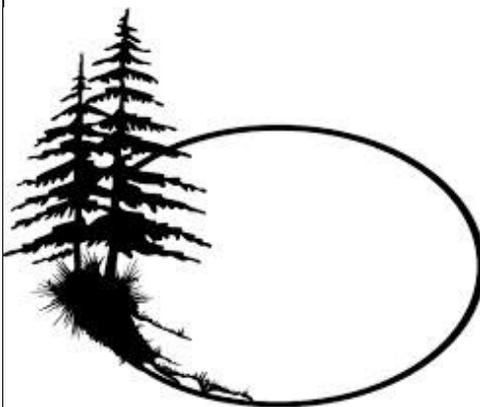
Curriculum: *Hollywood: Actresses; Impostors*

Paloma Rose is a spoiled brat. She is a very popular actress on the show *Angel in the House*. The truth is she is as far from angelic as possible. As a matter of fact, there is talk of canceling the popular show just because she is so hard to work with. Oona Guinness works hard to keep her grieving, father propped up as well as working her own job and dreaming of going back to school. However, Oona looks very much like Paloma Rose. Thus a plan is hatched: send Paloma Rose to brat camp and slip Oona into her place in the show. No one will ever know. This book is a great weekend escape. Fun and funny and of course there is a twist to the end. Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
CEC Early College

**Winter Trees**

**William Carlos Williams**

All the complicated details  
of the attiring and  
the disattiring are completed!  
A liquid moon  
moves gently among  
the long branches.  
Thus having prepared their buds  
against a sure winter  
the wise trees  
stand sleeping in the cold.



**Winter Morning Poem**

**Ogden Nash**

Winter is the king of showmen,  
Turning tree stumps into snow men,  
And houses into birthday cakes,  
And spreading sugar over lakes.

Smooth and clean and frosty white,  
The world looks good enough to bite.  
That's the season to be young  
Catching snowflakes on your tongue.

Snow is snowy when it's snowing  
I'm sorry it's slushy when it's going.



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