

The Review Crew



Early Elementary Fiction

Ned the Knitting Pirate

By: Diana Murray
Illus. by: Leslie Lammler
Roaring Book Press, 2016
ISBN: 9781596438903

*Topics: Pirates; Knitting; Sea
Monsters; Rhymes*



This legend is about the crew of the *Rusty Heap*. The pirates sing their pirate ditties and the captain stomps his wooden leg. The captain told him that scurvy pirates don't knit or wear fuzzy hats. The captain told him that he couldn't knit another stitch, so Ned packed it all up. That night they were attacked by a sea monster. Ned ran down and brought up his knitting trunk, and catapulted the blanket at the monster. The beast was so cozy, he decided to take a nap. He swam down into his den, and it would be a hundred years before he'd wake again. Ned was a hero and all the pirated wore fuzzy hats, scarves and boots. This is a colorfully illustrated book with clever rhyming verse telling the story.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Place Bridge Academy

Little Boo

By: Stephen Wunderli
Illus. by: Tim Zeltner
Henry Holt and Company,
2014

ISBN: 9781627795579
Topics: Seeds; Patience; Perseverance; Life cycle of plants; Seasons



In a board book with lots of little lessons, a pumpkin seed yearns to be scary. Alas, autumn leaves and winter snowflakes are unafraid. A chill wind, however, counsels patience as he tucks the seed in for a long winter's nap. "Boo!" mutters the seed, even in his sleep. Summer follows spring and leads into fall as the seed sprouts, grows, flowers, and bears fruit. Now a mighty pumpkin—having learned patience and perseverance—our hero still frightens no one. Not, that is, until a fortunate bit of knife-play and a can-

dle fulfill his fondest dream. Zeltner's illustration's, originally rendered in acrylic on board, lend a slightly surreal charm. Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley
Cheltenham Elem.

Du Iz Tak?

Written and illus. by:
Carson Ellis
Candlewick Press, 2016
ISBN: 9780763665302

*Topics: Plants; Insects;
Seasons*



When a plant begins to unfold from the ground, curious insects gather around and ask, "Du iz tak?" or, "What is it?" As it grows they decide they can build a "furt" in it where they relax, fend off a spider and its webs, and are astonished when it blooms to reveal "unk gladdenboot"—a flower! But the seasons change, the flower droops, and they must abandon the fort even as another transformation is taking place on a neighboring log. The invented language, the detailed insects, and the story of the seasons make this interesting book one to be pored over more than once.

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert
Alumni

FISH

Illus. by: Liam Francis
Walsh
Roaring Brook Press, 2016
ISBN: 9781626723337

*Topics: Wordless; Fishing;
Pets*



A boy and his dog go out on a boat, but not for what the reader expects. The goal is letters, and while they mostly find ones they are looking for—others have to be thrown back. In attempt to get his last letter, he is pulled down below into "schools" of letters swirling around. He's finally successful until sharks (A's) attack, and thankfully, the boy's best friend saves the day. The ending reveals the need for the letters, and a hard one to predict. The cartoon illustrations in pen and watercolor are a complete success and readers will look forward to what every turn of the page will bring. Reviewed by: Emily Rubin
Barnum Elem.

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- ☺ We know DPS students and the DPS curriculum.

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Splashdance

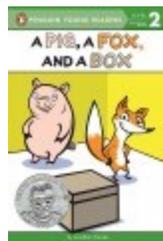
Written and illus. by:
Liz Starin
Farrar Straus Giroux,
2016
ISBN:
9780374300982



Topics: Teamwork; Prejudice; Bears; Swimming; Tolerance
When bears are banned from the local pool, Ursula the bear and her friends fight prejudice in their own way and prove that bears are equal to other animals. A very topical story that could be used to teach racial/religious tolerance.
Reviewed by: Denise Cushing
Carson Elem.

A Pig, a Fox, and a Box

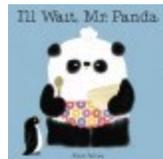
Written and Illus. by:
Jonathan Fenske
Penguin Young Readers,
2015
ISBN:
9780448485119



Topics: Humor; Friendship
In this rhyming Geisel Honor book, Fox loves to tease Pig, but somehow his practical jokes always backfire. When fox hides in a box, Pig ponders the puzzle while sitting on the box—which collapses. Slow to learn his lesson, Fox hides in a box again. This time he has faked his entrapment under a rock slide. Unfortunately, when Pig moves the debris, he tosses it atop the box—with predictable results. A howler for the second grade set, Fenske's book is filled with his own refreshingly simple illustrations. This is one of many books in the Penguin Young Readers series.
Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley
Cheltenham Elem.

I'll Wait, Mr. Panda

By: Steve Antony
Scholastic Press, 2016
ISBN: 9781338028362



Topics: Patience
Mr. Panda is getting ready to cook something but it is a surprise. Many of the animals come by and he tells them they will simply have to wait until he is done. One little penguin is willing to wait, and wait, and wait while none of the others can be bothered. In the end, the waiting was worth it. This would be a great read aloud for a class learning the importance of patience in order to get something wonderful.
Reviewed by: Chris Coble
CEC Early College

Marta! Big & Small

By: Jen Arena
Illus. by: Angela Dominguez
Roaring Brook Press,
2016
ISBN: 9781626722439



Topics: Animals; Adjectives;
In this wonderful story, we meet an ordinary girl named Marta who meets and compares herself to an elephant, horse, turtle, lion, rabbit, and snake--which leads to a funny discovery and escape. Throughout the book we are taught new Spanish words, both the animals and adjectives, with the translations in the back of the book. A delight to read to primary grades and perfect for story time with an ECE, Kinder, or young first grade class. A new favorite with simple text structure that will be repeated time and time again.
Reviewed by: Emily Rubin
Barnum Elem.

Lola Knows a Lot

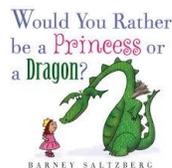
By: Jenna McCarthy
Illus. by: Sara Palacios
Balzer + Bray, 2016
ISBN: 9780062250179



Topics: Kindergarten; Anxiety; Siblings; Self-confidence
Five year-old Lola can do so many things. She has perfected a flawless cartwheel and has taught her parents how to operate the complex remote control. She feels confident and completely ready for Kindergarten until her older sister tells her about all the things she doesn't know. Lola worries that the other kids will start school smarter than her. This sweet story recounts all the ways Lola is competent. A great self-confidence booster.
Reviewed by: Denise Cushing
Carson Elem.

Would You Rather be a Princess or a Dragon

Written and Illus. by:
Barney Saltzberg
Roaring Brook Press,
2016
ISBN:
9781626723580



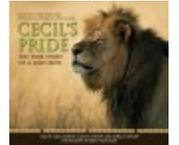
Topics: Dragons; Princesses; Behavior
How should you decide which is better for you, being a princess or being a dragon? Here are a few things to take into consideration. "If you want to be a princess... you should wear a lot of pink. If you want to be a dragon... being green would help, I think." Would you rather be clean or dirty, polite or misbehaving? Of course it is hard to

wear pink all the time so sometimes there might be a bit of dragon in a princess and a bit of princess in a dragon. This rhyming story will be perfect for a read aloud and the pictures are a match for the text.
Reviewed by: Chris Coble
CEC Early College

Early Elementary Nonfiction

Cecil's Pride: the True Story of a Lion King

Craig Hatkoff, Juliana Hatkoff, and Isabella Hatkoff

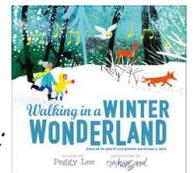


Illus. by: Brent Stapelkamp, photographer
Scholastic, 2016
ISBN: 9781338034455

Topics: Lions; Unusual animal alliances; Poaching; Animal conservation
This is the backstory of Cecil, a black-maned male lion killed by poachers in 2015--and another male, Jericho. Descendants of competing bloodlines, the two rivals formed an unheard of alliance when a pair of lion brothers chased each away from his lionesses and cubs. Working together, they defeated the brothers and shared their territory. When Cecil was killed, however, Jericho disappeared. What would happen when he returned? Would Jericho kill Cecil's cubs to assure the ascendancy of his own? In the end, Jericho mourns Cecil and adopts his offspring. Brent Stapelkamp, whose research follows big cats, provides photos of startling beauty. The Hatkoffs earlier authored the best-selling *Owen and Mzee*.
Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley
Cheltenham Elem.

Walking in a Winter Wonderland

Illus. by: Tim Hopgood
Henry Holt, 2016
ISBN:
9781627793049



Topics: Winter; Snow; Songs
Based on the lyrics of the popular song sung by Peggy Lee, this book takes the reader through a joyous winter adventure: sleighing, snowballing, and observing the animals in their snowy habitats. Bold and lush illustrations are spread across pages that are sprinkled with musical

notes. In the back are the original words by Felix Bernard and Richard Smith. Use this with the music teacher for a fun-filled sing-along. Reviewed by: Peggy Obert Alumni

Upper Elementary Fiction

The Lost Compass

By: Joel Ross
Harper, 2016
ISBN:

9780062352972

Topics: Orphans;
Survival; Environmental degradation; Airships; Pirates



In this sequel to *The Fog Diver*, Chess and his crew have found sanctuary in Port Oro, but find they are unable to escape their past. The Assemblers need Chess to locate the Compass - a fabled machine capable of dispersing the deadly fog. Seeking to ensure his domination, the slum pirate Lord Kodoc wants to use Chess to destroy the Compass. Either way, Chess and his crew must risk their lives diving into the Fog to face driftsharks and ticktocks to ensure a future for everyone. Witty banter, hilarious pop culture references, lots of action, and a positive message makes this title an entertaining read.

Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen
George Washington H.S.

Dream Jumper

By: Greg Grunberg
and Lucas Turnbloom
Illus. by: Lucas Turnbloom

Graphix, 2016

ISBN:

9780545826037

Topics: Dreams;
Families; Friendship



Ben has the strangest and most vivid nightmares every night; it almost feels as if they are real. These dreams often include other students in his school that he needs to save from precarious situations. When Ben visits a doctor for a sleep study, he finds a ward full of kids that are stuck in a dream world - the same kids he's seen in his dreams. Ben endangers his life by entering the risky dream

state himself to fight an evil dream monster and soon discovers that his gift may be his birthright. Reviewed by: Denise Cushing Carson Elem.

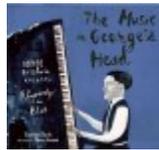
Upper Elementary Nonfiction

The Music in George's Head

By: Suzanne Slade

Illus. by: Stacy Innerst
Calkins Creek, 2016
ISBN: 97816279099r

Topics: George Gershwin;
Music; Jazz



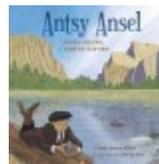
George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* is one of his best known pieces. This beautifully illustrated picture book starts with George as a boy. "George heard music all the time." His family did not know that he was interested in music until one day his mother decided to get a second hand piano. His older brother wasn't interested, but George sat down and played a ragtime tune. From that day on, George took lessons with some of the best music teachers, sneaked into concerts, and worked in a music store. He played music that the customers wanted to hear and began to write his own music. He sold his first one at the age of seventeen. The story goes on to explain how he started his career and how he developed his unique style of classical, ragtime, jazz and the blues. There is an author's note about his life along with a timeline and additional titles to read more. The illustrations make the book. Reviewed by: Karen Burns Place Bridge Academy

Antsy Ansel

By: Cindy Jensen-Elliott
Illus. by: Christy Hale
Henry Holt and Co, 2016

ISBN: 9781627790826

Topics: Ansel Adams;
Art;



Hyperactivity

Ansel was a restless boy. He hated sitting in school but he loved running around outside. Luckily his father realized that school wasn't going to work for him so he took him out of school, got him a tutor and let him explore outside as much as he wanted. This began a lifelong love of being outside and exploring the world around him. When he got his first camera, his future was sealed. Ansel Adams is still one of the most recognized nature photographers in the United States. Wonderful illus-

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Alumni

From ETLs:

Karen Shannon

Antonio Nicotera



trations in muted, natural tones set the attitude for this story.
Reviewed by: Chris Coble
CEC Early College

Middle School Fiction

Dream Bender

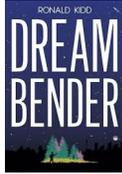
Written by: Ronald Kidd
Albert Whitman & Company, 2016

ISBN: 9780807517253

Topics: *Futuristic fiction; Dreaming; Control*

Jeremy is training to be a dream bender. Callie was trained to be a human computer. These were two of the jobs that the people in the City are trained for. Things like art, music and some machines have been banned and considered detrimental to this society. Dream benders had the ability to see into someone's dreams and adjust them. They are trained to adjust anything that may disturb the society. They are told it was to keep the world safe. Callie discovers some new friends that paint and enjoy music in secret. She starts to question why she and her friends must keep this secret. When Jeremy taps into Callie's dreams of singing, he starts to wonder about if it was right to adjust dreams like this. He begins to question if there could be more to life. The story is told alternating between Jeremy and Callie's point of view.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Place Bridge Academy



splits into two alternate realities. In one, she doesn't answer the phone, goes to France, and has romance and heartbreaking drama. In the other, she answers the call, the trip is cancelled, and she spends the summer in New York with a different kind of romance but the same heartbreak. Family secrets, messy friendships, and self-realization are intertwined in this well-spun story of magical realism.
Review by: Peggy Obert
Alumni

Salt to the Sea

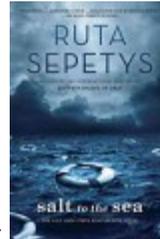
By: Ruta Sepetys
Philomel Books, 2016

ISBN: 9780399160301

Topics: *World War II; Refugees; Maritime disasters*

World War II was coming to a close. For thousands of refugees that was little comfort when they found themselves caught between the advancing Russian and German Armies. The only hope for escape was to board one of the ships designated to evacuate refugees from Gøtenhafen, Poland to a port in Germany. After trudging countless dangerous miles filled with cold, hunger, and despair, the Wilhelm Gustloff, seemed a safe haven until torpedoes found their mark. Although deemed the worst maritime disaster ever recorded, few have heard of the Wilhelm Gustloff. Sepetys skillfully shares the heart-wrenching story, so that the thousands lost will not be forgotten.

Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen
George Washington H.S.



"It was one of those March days when the sun shines hot and the wind blows cold: when it is summer in the light, and winter in the shade."

— Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

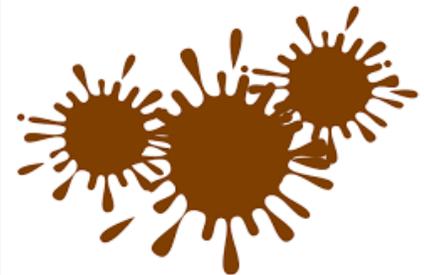


"By March, the worst of the winter would be over. The snow would thaw, the rivers begin to run and the world would wake into itself again.

Not that year.

Winter hung in there, like an invalid refusing to die. Day after grey day the ice stayed hard; the world remained unfriendly and cold."

— Neil Gaiman, *Odd and the Frost Giants*



"POOR MARCH

It is the HOMELIEST month of the year. Most of it is MUD, Every Imaginable Form of MUD, and what isn't MUD in March is ugly late-season SNOW falling onto the ground in filthy muddy heaps that look like PILES of DIRTY LAUNDRY."

— Vivian Swift, *When Wanderers Cease to Roam: A Traveler's Journal of Staying Put*

High School Fiction

Two Summers

By: Aimee Friedman
Scholastic, 2016

ISBN:

9780545518079

Topics: *Families; Relationships*

Summer Everett is about to board an airplane during a storm to visit her artist father in France when her cell phone rings. Should she answer it or not? Suddenly, the book



"In March the soft rains continued, and each storm waited courteously until its predecessor sunk beneath the ground."

— John Steinbeck, *East of Eden*

