

The Review Crew

Early Elementary Fiction

Bear and Bunny

Written and Illus. by: Daniel Pinkwater

Candlewick Press, 2015

ISBN: 9780763671532



Curriculum: Friendship; Pets; Frogs, Kitties

Bear and Bunny are friends. Their favorite thing to do is to wander in the woods. When they get together, they exchange stories of things they have found. Then one day, Bunny asked Bear why they don't have a pet. So they thought of things they could have as a pet. A pinecone would not be a good pet. Then they thought about a caterpillar. That could be a pet. They found a frog up in a tree and decided it was a kitty, since kitties often get up in trees. Bear climbed up to rescue it. They decided to keep the kitty/frog. Bear and Bunny both continue to call the frog "kKtty" and take him home to be their friend. This is a fun story of friendship and could begin a discussion about pets. The illustrations really add to the telling of the story.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Place Bridge Academy

I Wanna Be A Dinosaur!

By: Matt Haugen

Illus. by: Stephanie Mirocha
GIA Publications, Inc., 2015

ISBN: 9781579999995



Curriculum: Families; Dinosaurs; Imagination

The family is at the breakfast table when Carl announces that he wants to be a dinosaur. Little sister, Sara, wants to be one. They talk about what kind of dinosaur they want to be. Carl wants to be a T-Rex and Sara can be a Diplodocus. The family spends their Saturday Adventure day at the prehistoric playground. The kids and parents discuss what different types of dinosaurs they would like to be and why. Pictures of these dinosaurs are on each page and the family talks about them. The illustrations are wonderful. As they talk about each one, there is a picture of that dinosaur blended into the picture wherever they are. This would be a great book to introduce dinosaurs to little ones. It has an easy reading level, but older elementary students would enjoy it too.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Place Bridge Academy

The Little Snowplow

By: Lora Koehler

Illus. by: Jake Parker

Candlewick Press, 2015

ISBN: 9780763670740

Curriculum: Snow; Working hard; Persistence

Little Snowplow is just that...little. He's new to the Mighty Mountain Road Crew and can't seem to compete with the big trucks, or his predecessor who retired to the beaches of Florida. Yet, Little Snowplow works hard and practices to become a strong snowplow, and with determination, helps when the big snowplows just



Brought to you by
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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!

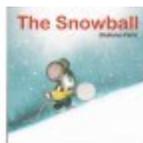
- ☺ Every month each member writes reviews of at least twelve recently published books.
- ☺ This publication consists of the best books we review each month.
- ☺ Our hard work earns thousands of dollars of free books for our school libraries and for the classroom library at ETLs, where DPS teachers can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

can't. A great read-a-loud for younger grades on working hard, not judging a book by its cover, and especially fun to read during snowy days. Entertaining for young girls and boys a great addition to any classroom or school library. Koelher's first picture book is illustrated by Jake Parker who does a great job at the sketch style drawings.

Reviewed by: Emily Rubin
Barnum Elem.

The Snowball

Written and illus. by:
Giuliano Ferri
Michael Neugebauer,
2015



ISBN: 9789888240425

Curriculum: Snow

In this board book, a mouse contemplating a little snowball is joined by a cat on a hike, and they decide to make the snowball bigger, rolling it up a hill. A very formal pig helps them, and they are just rounding the top of the hill where a carrot-munching rabbit is sitting, when gravity strikes.

The huge snowball rolls down the hill with all of them in it until "Splat!" The dazed and confused animals wonder, "What next?" Of course; a snowman dressed in their gear! The soft blue and white background evokes a snowy day, and the cutouts showing the snowball growing progressively larger add to the fun. A simple book with simple text and a little humor for the young ones.

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert
Alumni

My Dog is the Best

By: Laurie Ann Thompson



Farrar Straus Giroux
Books, 2015

ISBN: 9780374300517

Curriculum: Friendship; Dogs

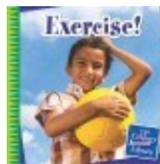
In this simply illustrated picture book, a toddler demonstrates all the ways his dog is the best. He plays tug and chase and blows bubbles, all while the dog slumbers. Soon, it's nap time, and the tot nods off. Dog wakes up and guess what he wants to do? A delightful picture book that the pre-school set will enjoy!

Reviewed by: Denise Cushing
Carson Elem.

Early Elementary Nonfiction

Exercise

By: Katie Marsico
Cherry Lake Publishing,
2015



ISBN: 9781631889844

*Curriculum: Exercise;
Health; Physical fitness; Children's
health; Sports*

In this chapter style non-fiction book about exercise we learn about the benefits (health, coordination, prevention of illnesses and diseases, energy boost, and relaxation) of physical fitness. The photographs bring to life the different exercise options, including soccer in the park with friends, hula hooping by yourself, playing outside with your dog, running, swimming, yoga, playing on the playground, shoveling snow, and joining a team to play organized sports at a recreation center, which will help readers connect with at least something that looks interesting and gets them excited about being active. A great non-fiction science title and series to include in any classroom or school library, this includes a great glossary, guided reading level, table of contents, index, captions, bold

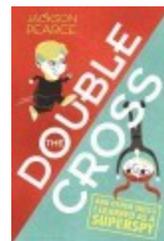
words, and interactive boxes to get readers to think, make connections, make guesses, observe further, do an activity, and ask questions. Also includes a find out more section with books and websites.

Reviewed by Emily Rubin
Barnum Elem.

Upper Elementary Fiction

The Doublecross

By: Jackson Pearce
Bloomsbury, 2015
ISBN: 9781619634145



*Curriculum: Spies; Spy
school; Families; Sib-
lings*

Hale the Whale. Not exactly the nickname expected of the only son of "The Team" in Sub Rosa Society (SRS), but it's true. While the director's son goes from Hale's best friend Wally to Walter, junior agent, Hale can't catch a break. He just wants to combat the League like any good kid raised with the SRS as home. What happens when all he knows gets turned upside down? This perfect middle grade novel attaches to the insecurities of intermediate age students and with the spy school setting any student will enjoy. Chapters are great lengths and keep students turning the pages for more.

Reviewed by Emily Rubin
Barnum Elem.

"When it is dark enough,
you can see the stars."
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

Grandma's Red Silk Dress

By: Young-ah Kim

Illus. by: Yoo-min Han

TanTan Publishing,
2015

ISBN:
9781939248114



Curriculum: Math stories; Korean culture; Grandmothers

From TanTan Publishing's math stories comes this charming tale of a much loved garment that is repurposed again and again. At once a story of fundamental math (the parts and the whole), of intergenerational affection, and of traditional Korean culture, this beautifully illustrated work rewards contemplation. By story's end grandmother's silk skirt has become a vest, a baby blanket, a quilt, and a blessing pouch. The young narrator notes, "Grandma's stories are now my stories, too."

Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley
Cheltenham Elem.

Gon, the Little Fox

By: Nankichi Niimi

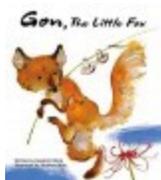
Illus. by: Genjirou Mita

Museyon, 2015

ISBN: 9789140842035

Curriculum: Fairy tales, Japan

In the village below Nakayama castle, a lonely, fun-loving fox named Gon mischievously adds to the peasants' hardship. When a bit of his tomfoolery hastens an old woman's death, Gon turns his energy to secret good deeds. Yet even kindness can end in tragedy. Inspired by his country's feudal past, Nankichi Niimi, often called the Hans Christian Andersen of Japan, relates an ironic



tale of mischief, mercy, and unintended consequences. The richly detailed story readily transports the reader to an ancient and distant land. Exquisite watercolors help complete the exotic journey.

Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley
Cheltenham Elem.

"Could You Lift Up Your Bottom?"

By: Hee-jung Chang

Illus. by: Sung-hwa Chung

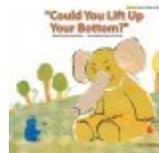
Tan-Tan Publishing,
2015

ISBN: 9781939248046

Curriculum: Shapes, Problem solving

When Frog loses his hat in a brisk wind, Elephant holds it hostage under her great bottom and demands a ransom of foods of various shapes—a triangle, a rectangle, even a circle within a circle. Each payment only inflames Elephant's appetite, and she finally calls for something with a special shape. To see how Frog gains the upper hand and her hat, read this Korean tale with a geometric twist. Six pages of plane figure activities for pre-school and kindergarten complete the book. Hee-jung Chang's off-beat story is an eccentric hoot. Sung-hwa Chung's lovingly-crafted, mixed-media illustrations make retelling the story easy, while meriting careful study on their own.

Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley
Cheltenham Elem.



"Silently, one by one, in the infinite meadows of heaven,
Blossomed the lovely stars, the forget-me-nots of the angels."
— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Evangeline*:

George

By: Alex Gino

Scholastic Press,
2015

ISBN:
9780545812542

GEORGE

ALEX GINO

Curriculum: Family relationships; Gender identity; Acceptance; Bullies

Fourth-grader George really wants to try out for the role of Charlotte in the class play, *Charlotte's Web*. He feels connected to the witty spider. He and his best friend, Kelly, practice and practice, but when it comes time to try out, their teacher won't allow George to try out for the part because George is a boy. George knows he's not a boy; deep down inside she's a girl. In this coming of age story, George finds her voice and the courage to ask for acceptance from others. Author Alex Gino creates a memorable character that introduces the subject of gender identity to our youngest students in terms that they can understand.

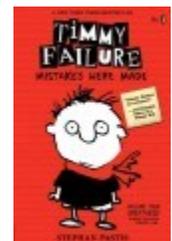
Reviewed by: Denise Cushing
Carson Elem.

Timmy Failure: Mistakes Were Made

By: Stephan Pastis

Candlewick Press,
2013

ISBN:
9780763660505



Curriculum: Private investigators; Friendship; Humor; Family relationships

Timmy Failure runs an amateur detective agency out of his mom's closet with the aid of his partner, Total the polar bear. Timmy isn't the best detective- he's bumbling and often

overlooks clues, really obvious clues. When the Failure Mobile (his mom's Segway) is stolen, Timmy faces his most difficult case ever. Will he be able to deceive his mom until he recovers the Segway, or will he be doomed to face her wrath? How will Timmy deal with his mom's new boyfriend? Written and illustrated by *Pearls Before Swine* author, Stephan Pastis.

Reviewed by: Denise Cushing
Carson Elem.

The 39-Story Treehouse

By: Andy Griffiths

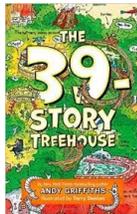
Illustrated by: Terry Denton

Feiwel and Friends, 2013

ISBN: 9781250026927

Curriculum: Inventors; Friendship; Fantasy

Andy and Terry are best friend inventors who live in a 39-story treehouse. (In the last book, it was only 26-stories, but they added new things!) This treehouse is unbelievable, with such amenities as a baby-dino petting zoo, the world's scariest roller-coaster, a not-so-very-merry-go-round, a boxing elephant, and not to mention the shark tank. Andy and Terry are not only inventors; they are writers as well. They are in a spot of trouble, as their publisher, Mr. Big Nose, is expecting their next tome in 24 hours! Never fear - Terry has a new invention - a Once-upon-a-time machine! This invention will write and illustrate a book all by itself! All the boys need to do is set the dials for comedy level, characters, setting, romance level, disaster, and fruit and vegetable based transport option. Sounds easy, but of course, antics ensue when they end up battling Professor Stupido, a famous un-inventor. Will the book be finished on time?



Reviewed by: Denise Cushing
Carson Elem.

Dolls of Hope

By: Shirley Parenteau

Candlewick Press, 2015

ISBN: 9780763677527

Curriculum: Dolls; Japan; Schoolgirls; Historical fiction

Eleven-year-old Chiyo disgraces her family when she disrupts her sister's marriage meeting with the wealthy Yamada Nor. Consequently, she is sent far away to a girls' school in Tsuchiura, where she must learn proper behavior. Lonely and out of place among the wealthy students, Chiyo is thrilled to be selected to take part in a special ceremony welcoming The Friendship Dolls sent by schoolchildren from American. The trip to Tokyo is new and exciting, but being named the official protector of one of the dolls is a dream come true and a role that Chiyo takes very seriously. This title is based on an event that took place in 1926 in which American and Japanese children exchanged thousands of dolls in the name of friendship and to promote peace. Readers will be fascinated by the project and the cultural dynamics of 1926 Japan.

Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen
Thomas Jefferson H.S.



Upper Elementary Nonfiction

Iguanodon

By: Susan Gray

Illus. by: various artists

Child's World, 2015



ISBN: 9781631439797

Curriculum: Dinosaurs

Part of a twelve volume set, this tome is packed with information for young readers. From the first discovery of an Iguanodon bone in 1820's New Zealand (before dinosaurs were even imagined) to current studies, our understanding of this ancient herbivore has grown again and again. The reader will learn about Iguanodon's range, habitat, behavior, and anatomy—even about the latest scientific speculation on its color. An afterword introduces the Cretaceous, Jurassic, and Triassic periods and recommends additional books, a website, and places to visit. Beautiful illustrations and captioned photographs add to the fun.

Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley
Cheltenham Elem.

Mary Todd Lincoln

By: Kathleen Krull

Bloomsbury, 2015

ISBN:

9780802738240

Curriculum: Mary Todd Lincoln; Abraham Lincoln; Civil War

Mary Todd Lincoln had a strong personality that stood out in an era where a woman's role was to support her husband but not dominate him. It was Mary's decision that her husband become president and she was instrumental in bringing about his rise in politics and eventual election to the Presidency. Born in the South, she was nonetheless a strong supporter of the North and the anti-slavery movement; she was criticized by many for speaking out on politics throughout her life; at the same time, Mary had a nurturing side, raising a family of boys, feeding and caring for wounded Civil War soldiers, and befriending many freed slaves

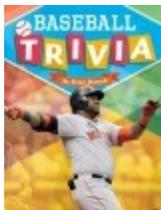


including a dressmaker named Elizabeth (who later became Mary's very best friend). The beginning of Mary's demise came after the death of her second son and her husband's assassination. It seems she didn't have much to live for and was placed in a mental hospital for a time. This is just one book in the series, "Women Who Broke the Rules" and tells a little-known story of a highly unusual yet influential woman of American history.

Reviewed by: Jutta Gebauer
South H.S.

Baseball Trivia

By: Brian Howell
Abdo Publishing,
2016
ISBN:
9781680780017



Curriculum: Sports; Baseball

It is always with slight trepidation that statistical trivia books are added to one's collection, especially when the topic is sports and that the stats can alter from game to game and year to year; however, Brian Howell's *Baseball Trivia* should last a wee bit longer in relevance than most trivia books due to the fact Howell includes specific year and people references [such as "Who was the first black player in the modern era (after 1900) ..."; "In 2012 Detroit Tigers star ..."; and "During the 1988 World Series ..."]. The trivia is portrayed in question/answer format with the questions highlighted by a mustard yellow to separate the two parts of information. Photographs varying between color and black and white adorn the colorfully bordered pages, making this reading engaging and bright in view. An added Trivia Quiz, glossary, and list of re-

sources for more information round out this delightful book of knowledge.

Reviewed by: Dawn Lewallen
Skinner M.S.

Welcome to New Zealand: A Nature Journal

Written and Illus. by:
Sandra Morris
Candlewick Press, 2014
ISBN: 9780763674779



Curriculum: Nature; New Zealand; Art Journaling

Journal inspiration for kids is beautifully introduced in this picture book through watercolors, felt-tip pens, crayons, and pencil illustrations as well as instructional, informative text. Author and illustrator Sandra Morris provides a basis for observing nature that includes; tools needed, ideas and techniques, and guides to getting out and exploring your own backyard. From New Zealand, the author/illustrator has a thorough knowledge of the fauna and flora of the area that is recorded in a variety of sections ranging from A Walk in the Forest to a Cloud Log to a Frog Metamorphosis and more. The topics presented may be easily replicated if one is interested in chronicling the outdoors for themselves and making a journal of their own. A glossary, index, and bibliography are provided.

Reviewed by: Sarah Martinez
North H.S.



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Middle School Fiction

The Apple Tart of Hope

By: Sarah Moore Fitzgerald

Holiday House, 2014

ISBN:

9780823435616

Curriculum: Relationships; Bullying



Fourteen-year-old Meg is in New Zealand with her family when she gets the news from home that her best friend and next door neighbor, Oscar, rode his bike into a local lake and is presumed dead. Meg and Oscar's brother Stevie don't believe the caring, happy baker of apple tarts could have committed suicide and they are determined to find the truth. Discovering that Oscar's reputation at school is in shambles, Meg begins to question Paloma, the girl who has been living in Meg's house and says Oscar was hopelessly in love with her. The truth about narcissistic Paloma's bullying and attempts to destroy Oscar are revealed, just as Oscar himself returns, almost literally from the dead. The importance of hope, love, and true friendship are themes that middle school readers will focus on in this touching story.

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert
Alumni

"Dwell on the beauty of life. Watch the stars, and see yourself running with them."

— Marcus Aurelius

School for Sidekicks

By: Kelly McCullough

Feiwei and Friends, 2015

ISBN: 9781250039262

Curriculum: School; Superhero; Ethical conduct



Evan is a huge superhero geek. He knows everything about the masks (good guys) and the hoods (villains). More than anything he wants to be a superhero. One day, on a school fieldtrip, he accidentally saves his hero, Captain Commanding and finds himself enrolled in Hero High learning how to be a sidekick. This is a great action adventure. Upper elementary and middle school readers will be enthralled. There is some possibility that this book could be a bridge for readers of graphic superhero books to traditional print books.

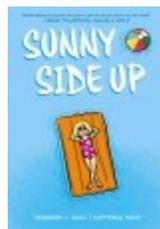
Reviewed by: Chris Coble
CEC Early College



Sunny Side Up

Written and illus. by:
Jennifer L. Holm and
Matthew Holm

Scholastic, 2015



Curriculum: Family problems; Friendship

Sunny feels like there are a lot of secrets in her life. Instead of going to the beach house with her family, she gets sent to Florida to spend the summer with her grandfather. Her grandfather lives in an old folk's community and it is full of, well, old people. Luckily she meets Buzz. Before she knows it her summer is filled with comic books, cats and an alligator. This mostly light hearted graphic novel deals with some very heavy topics.

While this has the appearance of a fun graphic story, it should not be recommended to younger students. This is, however, a great story for mature readers in the upper elementary grades as well as middle school.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
CEC Early College

Middle School Nonfiction



Graphic Warfare: Tet Offensive

By: Joeming Dunn

Illus. by: Ben Dunn

Magic Wagon, 2016

ISBN: 9781616419837

Curriculum: Vietnam War; War; Asian Countries; Vietnam History

Factual, to-the-point, clear and concise, *Graphic Warfare: Tet Offensive* does an excellent job providing background history on the country of Vietnam; the beginning of the conflict between Vietnam and France, with the United States later joining in the war; and then the Vietnam War itself. It must be noted, however, the title of the book is VERY misleading as information regarding the Tet Offensive only covers a minuscule portion of the 32-page book. *Graphic Warfare: Tet Offensive* follows a simple graphic novel format, typically three or four panels per page. Panels are accompanied by short, comprehensive captions that overlay muted tones of green, brown and gray artwork. The information provided takes a neutral tone, neither commending nor condemning actions from either side until the very chapter



where suddenly the story is no longer about Vietnam but about America's home views on the war. Maps can be found throughout the text as well as an ending timeline, glossary, mini biography on two of the main Vietnam War military leaders, and a quick listing of specific statistics.

Reviewed by: Dawn Lewallen
Skinner M.S.

The Rain Wizard

By: Larry Dane Brimmer

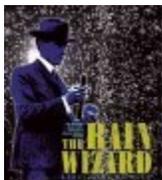
Calkins Creek, 2015

ISBN: 9781590789902

Curriculum: Weather; California; Rain-making; Charles Mallory Hatfield; Biography

In the early 1900s, Charles Mallory Hatfield used a smelly concoction of chemicals to 'make rain'. He was hired by the city of San Diego in 1915 to fill the Moreno Reservoir - a feat that would require more than the usual 10 inches of yearly rainfall. Some thought he was a fraud, but the rains did come. In five days, 17 inches of rain fell and the dam was filled to overflowing. When those rains caused flooding, loss of life, and millions of dollars' worth of damage, San Diego held Hatfield responsible and refused to pay him. This well-researched biography is an absorbing look at the history of pluviculture and at a man of whom little has been written.

Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen
Thomas Jefferson H.S.



High School Fiction

Friends for Life

By: Andrew Norriss

Scholastic, 2015

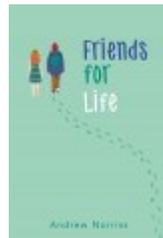
ISBN:

9780545851862

Curriculum: Ghosts; friends; depression

Jessica and Francis meet one day at lunch. But this is no ordinary meeting. Jessica is the ghost of a girl who died recently and Francis has been the first person who has been able to actually see her. The two become instant friends, sharing a love of fashion and design. Jessica is Francis' only real friend. Since he is a male and loves fashion and sewing, he is bullied quite often at school. But Jessica's friendship changes all that. She helps him build confidence in himself. In time, two other (living) friends, Roland and Andi, join Francis' circle and astonishingly, they can also see and communicate with the ghost Jessica. Roland and Andi are also misfits in a way; they have never fit in at their schools and have been the objects of ridicule. Interestingly enough, Roland and Andi can also see and communicate with Jessica just as if she were alive. So the friends go on a quest to find out why only they can see Jessica. The dark story behind her death is sad but it opens up new worlds for all three and finally answers many of Jessica's questions as well. This is a wonderful story of friendship and love.

Reviewed by: Jutta Gebauer
South H.S.



The Weight of Feathers

Written by: Anna-Marie McLemore

Thomas Dunne Books, 2015

ISBN:

9781250058652

Curriculum: Family; Relationships; Love; Feuds; Identity

Two families - the Corbeaus and the Palomas, traveling performers and arch enemies meet in the small town of Almendro, the town where their feud originated 20 years before. Secrets, hatred, curses, and lies consume both families as the Corbeaus walk amongst the trees with feathered wings and the Palomas splash in the lakes swimming like mermaids. Why do the families despise one another? No one can remember or is willing to divulge that information. It is the forbidden love, however, between the outcast Cluck Corbeau and exiled Lace Paloma that forces all involved to confront the truth. The magical realism in this Romeo and Juliet-like story captivates the reader as do the sayings or *dichos* in Spanish and French that introduce each chapter.

Reviewed by: Sarah Martinez
North H.S.



"The nitrogen in our DNA, the calcium in our teeth, the iron in our blood, the carbon in our apple pies were made in the interiors of collapsing stars. We are made of starstuff."
— Carl Sagan