

Selected and annotated by Melissa Albarran, Michelle Biwer, Lauren Gray and Anna Shustitzky
December 2015

There is a book for just about everyone in this large collection of picture books, chapter books, and titles for young adults. The CCB's current graduate assistants compiled a number of their favorite books for youth in this end of the year bibliography.

Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*. Little, 2007. 256 p. Gr. 7-10. Recommended by Lauren & Anna.

Junior is a fourteen-year-old Spokane Indian with a speech impediment and a knack for cartooning. When bullies on the "rez" aren't tormenting him, Junior spends his time shooting hoops with his best friend Rowdy. After Junior is assigned the same textbook that his mother used *thirty years ago*, he comes to the realization that he needs to get away from the reservation in order to make something of himself. Through poignant and hysterical illustrations, readers of all ages will find themselves rooting for Junior as he struggles to maintain his identity in an all-white school while fighting for social change.

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *The Impossible Knife of Memory*. Viking, 2014. 391p. Gr. 9-12. Recommended by Michelle.

Hayley is used to traveling across the country with her father, a truck driver, and as a result has not attended a formal school in many years. When her father decides they need to settle down, Hayley's anxiety about her dad's mental health increases as she struggles to adjust to her new life and a potential boyfriend. Anderson sensitively portrays the trials of living with mental illness while also injecting humor and wit into every page, a trait which ensures that this important novel remains both thoroughly enjoyable and reflective of life.

Antony, Steve. *Please, Mr. Panda*. Scholastic, 2015. 32p. 4-6 yrs. Recommended by Michelle & Melissa.

With narrowed eyes and an ornery expression, Mr. Panda asks each animal he comes across his standard query, "Would you like a doughnut?" He refuses all the rude animals who demand the colorful treats, but in the end a grateful lemur comes along and actually says the magic word (please) and Mr. Panda happily gives the lemur all the doughnuts. It is easy for a book about manners to become a pedantic and (pardon the pun) sugary mess, but there is enough fun and peculiarity here to appeal to everyone, especially those who do not care to share their treasured baked goods.

Billingsley, Franny. *Chime*. Dial, 2011. 361p. Gr. 7-10. Recommended by Anna.

Briony is a witch, a fact she keeps hidden from her village for fear of her own life. She is convinced that her powers killed her stepmother and left her twin sister disabled, and now she is determined to make things right and save the village from the deadly sickness that came in from the swamp. While she considers her next move, the newly arrived Eldric takes an unnerving interest in her, teasing out the truth behind her feelings of responsibility and self-loathing.

Briony's narrative twists around facts and timelines and dealings with old magic, making this mystery and its haunting conclusion all the richer to read.

Bingham, Kelly. *Circle, Square, Moose*; illus. by Paul O. Zelinsky. Greenwillow, 2014. 40p. 3-7 yrs. Recommended by Anna.

In this hilarious semi-sequel to *Z Is for Moose*, our antlered friend stumbles upon a lesson about shapes and immediately causes chaos as only Moose can do. Chomping through the square-shaped sandwich (yum!) and stumbling across the rest of the carefully coordinated scenes, Moose enthusiastically demonstrates his knowledge of--and love for--all kinds of fun shapes. After the narrator quits in frustration, Zebra makes a cameo and helps Moose finish the lesson in fine form. There is a bit of a lesson to be found, but parents tired of saccharine fare will appreciate this off-the-walls interpretation of a usually dull topic.

Brockenbrough, Martha. *The Game of Love and Death*. Levine/Scholastic, 2015329p. Gr. 8-10. Recommended by Melissa.

The game has been played many times over the centuries but Death has always won. This time, Love hopes he has chosen a player with a heart courageous enough to persevere and to persuade Death's player to choose love over fear. Henry and Flora come from two completely different worlds: Henry is a white boy raised by an affluent family that is not his own, and Flora is an African-American girl who dreams of escaping Seattle to fly around the world. As Death and Love manipulate their chosen pawns and contemplate the meaning of human life, a heart-wrenching love story unfolds.

Bryan, Ashley. *Ashley Bryan's Puppets*; illus. with photographs by Rich Entel. Atheneum, 2014. 80p. Gr. 3-6. Recommended by Melissa.

Ashley Bryan's collection of puppets created from objects that washed ashore on Maine's Cranberry Isles are showcased here, most accompanied by poems about them. Each puppet has an African name, with an English translation in the subheadings. The puppets draw the reader's attention, with their uncanny and abstract resemblance to their living counterparts.

Campbell, Scott. *Hug Machine*; written and illus. by Scott Campbell. Atheneum, 2014. 32p. 4-7 yrs. Recommended by Anna.

The Hug Machine is ready for anything! He'll hug big things and small things, and no person, animal, or ice cream truck can resist! The Hug Machine gives the best hugs, and he has a busy day ahead of him. Think you're too big for a hug? No way! Too spiky for a hug? Not a chance--the Hug Machine will find a way. Even the Hug Machine gets tired, though, and it takes a tasty snack and a very special hug to bring him back to full hugging power. This story is delightful without getting saccharine, and readers of all ages should pick it up when they're feeling down. Hug accomplished!

Carroll, Emily. *Through the Woods*. McElderry, 2014. 208p. Gr. 7-10. Recommended by Melissa.

In this collection of five horror stories, Emily Carroll writes and illustrates chilling tales that echo fairy tales but manifest a more unsettling nature. Carroll excludes depictions of the horrors, granting imaginations free rein to create personalized monstrosities. At the end of each tale, readers may dread to look over their shoulders.

Cashore, Kristin. *Graceling*. Harcourt, 2008. 471p. Gr. 8-10. Recommended by Michelle & Anna.

Katsa is one of the few born burdened with a Grace, a magical ability signified by eyes of different colors. Katsa was unable to hide her Grace, a gift for killing, and was quickly recruited by her uncle, King Randa, as an assassin for his kingdom. Her guilt over a lifetime of murder leads her away from Randa's reach and on a mission to repent by saving the kingdom alongside a fellow Graced fighter named Po. Cashore excels in developing a memorable and complex set of characters (with a world to match) in this fast-paced fantasy with enough romance, mystery and thrill to earn a spot on the "favorite" bookshelf of any genre-lover.

Curtis, Christopher Paul. *The Mighty Miss Malone*. Lamb, 2012. 320 p. Gr. 4-7.

Recommended by Lauren.

It is the Great Depression in Gary, Indiana and Deza Malone's family is about to begin their "journey to a place called Wonderful." Deza is a type-A perfectionist and a dexterous reader. After a family tragedy, Deza and her strong-willed brother, Jimmie, step up to help their mother search for their missing father. During their expedition, they spend time living in a Hooverville shack, taking odd jobs to help with expenses, and struggle with daily anxieties of hand-me-downs, welfare food, and rotten teeth. Curtis provides a helpful afterword highlighting the historical events and figures that the Malone family encounters.

Datlow, Ellen, ed. *The Faery Reel: Tales from the Twilight Realm*; ed. by Ellen Datlow and Terri Windling; illus. by Charles Vess. Viking, 2004. 528p. Gr. 7-12. Recommended by Anna. Faeries can be found all over the world, and you'd be wise to remember that they're not just cherubic benefactors with butterfly wings. In this collection of stories and poems by a host of well-loved authors, readers will find changelings and tengu, undine and fox spirits, sometimes worlds away but often messily intermixed with our ordinary dealings. These tales are breathtaking and whimsical in turn, and fans of the fey folk will gain a new appreciation for their trickery while perhaps discovering a new favorite author on the way.

Dubuc, Marianne. *Mr. Postmouse's Rounds*; written and illus. by Marianne Dubuc; tr. from the French by Yvette Ghione. Kids Can, 2015. 4-6 yrs. Recommended by Melissa.

As Mr. Postmouse makes his deliveries, he travels to many critters' homes: a rabbit burrow, a turtle shell, a snake's lair and a squirrel's tree among them. Dubuc's detail in the cutaways of these environments will provide much entertainment and joy with each new discovery.

Fleming, Candace. *The Family Romanov: Murder, Rebellion, and the Fall of Imperial Russia*. Schwartz & Wade, 2014. 304p. Gr. 7-12. Recommended by Melissa.

The last Russian emperor, Tsar Nicholas II, and his family lived glamorous and romantic lives in great contrast with the common people of Russia, who struggled to bring food to the table and searched for a way to improve their livelihood. Fleming supplies readers with the social, political, economical and religious influences that lead to the decline of a dynasty amid the turbulence of World War I.

Gaiman, Neil. *Blueberry Girl*; illus. by Charles Vess. HarperCollins, 2009. 32p. 4-6 yrs. Recommended by Michelle.

A poetic prayer to the "ladies of light" that watch over us, *Blueberry Girl* embodies the hopes for

happiness and empowerment that we have for our daughters and for ourselves. The book features illuminating illustrations from Charles Vess, who portrays a diverse collection of joyous girls at all ages achieving spectacular, if not impossible, feats with great warmth and tenderness. After all, we are “only as big as our dreams.” This is a perfect gift for a newborn blueberry girl and her mother on their first mother’s day together, or for sappy young women like myself who need an anthem to bring them confidence and strength on the dark days.

Harrison, Hannah, E. *Bernice Gets Carried Away*; written and illus. by Hannah E. Harrison. Dial, 2015. 32p. 4-6 yrs. Recommended by Melissa.

Bernice, a tabby cat, feels left out and neglected at a lively birthday party; she is served a plain piece of cake and warm prune-grapefruit soda, and when everyone scrambles for the piñata, Bernice can only reach a foot-smushed gumdrop. Can anyone blame her for being crabby? When a clown-bear arrives with balloons, Bernice doesn’t take any chances-she snatches all of them and begins to float up, up, up. With new perspective, Bernice’s problems seem small and she begins sharing her balloons to cheer up other grumps.

Hartman, Rachel. *Seraphina*. Random House, 2012. 499p. Gr. 7-10. Recommended by Anna. In spite of her secret (and illegal) half-dragon origins, Seraphina indulges her musical talent and takes a job playing music for the court of Goredd. Her anonymity is almost immediately threatened, though, as she is caught up in the conflict surrounding a tenuous treaty between humans and dragonkind. People in court are paying her more attention than ever, some of it (like that from the attractive prince) more welcome than others. Uniquely positioned to negotiate both human and dragon worlds, Seraphina remains a thoughtful, empathetic narrator as she navigates this beautifully developed setting.

Jamieson, Victoria. *Roller Girl*. Dial, 2015. 240 p. Gr. 4-7. Recommended by Lauren & Melissa.

Astrid is an energetic, clumsy, and clever girl who is ready to become a roller derby star! After Astrid’s mother takes her and her best friend Nicole to a bout, she becomes determined to follow in the footsteps of her heroine, Rainbow Bite. When Astrid works toward her dreams by enduring a grueling roller derby camp for “beginners,” she struggles with finding her identity, while her relationship with Nicole suffers. This is a lively graphic novel about self-sufficiency, grit, friendship, and all out girl power. Readers will not only connect with Astrid’s charismatic personality, they will get a healthy dose of derby terminology.

Jenkins, Emily. *Toys Meet Snow: Being the Wintertime Adventures of A Curious Stuffed Buffalo, A Sensitive Plush Stingray, and a Book-Loving Rubber Ball*; illus. by Paul O. Zelinsky. Schwartz & Wade/Random House, 2015. 40p. 4-6 yrs. Recommended by Melissa, Michelle & Anna.

Romantic thinker StingRay, well-read Plastic and curious Lumphy venture outside after the first snowfall of the year. As a plush stingray, a rubber ball, and a stuffed buffalo, the trio struggle to exit the house but when they reach the snow-covered yard, the three take part in snow-related activities (the snow angels are precious) and marvel at the beauty of the winter wonderland.

Jones, Diana Wynne. *Howl’s Moving Castle*. Greenwillow, 1986. 212p. Gr. 6-9. Recommended by Anna.

As the oldest of three sisters, Sophie Hatter knows the dangers of going to seek her fortune and is resigned to running her family's shop for the rest of her days. When the terrible Witch of the Waste comes to the shop, though, one wrong move and Sophie is cursed, doomed to life as a 90-year-old woman. With nothing left to lose, Sophie sets out fortune-seeking after all, only to be (literally) swept up with the dastardly wizard Howl and his eponymous moving castle. Howl doesn't exactly live up to his reputation, and he and Sophie strike up an unusual friendship that brings both of them past their personal charades.

Klassen, Jon. *I Want My Hat Back*. Candlewick, 2011. 40 p. 5-7 yrs. Recommended by Lauren. A persistent, straight-faced bear has lost his hat and *desperately* wants it back. On a journey to find his beloved hat, he meets various animal creatures that steadfastly deny having seen it. Klassen's illustrations are clean, simple, and modern. With a limited (yet sophisticated) palette of creams, browns, and reds, this bear's hunt for his hat would work especially well with beginner readers in both programs and one-on-one settings. Plus, the palpable sarcasm will surely entertain a much older audience.

Levine, Gail Carson. *Ella Enchanted*. HarperCollins, 1997. 232p. Gr. 5-8. Recommended by Anna & Melissa. Intelligent, practical Ella has been perfectly obedient her whole life, all thanks to a so-called blessing given to her at birth by a well-intended but oblivious fairy. After her mother dies, Ella is sent to boarding school and forced to carry out the whims of two rich, horrible girls who soon become her stepsisters. Ella renews her quest to find the fairy and force her to reverse the spell, all while developing a slow, sweet, and entirely accidental romance with the prince of the kingdom. Long before Anne Hathaway played the part, this literary Ella Enchanted uses everything in her power to take control of her own life in this lovely adaptation of the Cinderella story.

McKinley, Robin. *Beauty: A Retelling of the Story of Beauty & the Beast*. Harper, 1978. 247p. Gr. 6-9. Recommended by Anna. Years before any mention of roses or enchanted forests, plain, practical Honour (ironically nicknamed Beauty) lives contentedly with her father and two lovely sisters despite their relative poverty. When her father makes an unthinkable promise to the Beast of the forest, Beauty knows that she is the only one in her family that is up to the task ahead. Living with the Beast, she finds herself growing closer to him even as she longs to be with her family again. The rest is history in this lovingly crafted retelling, with a carefully paced narrative that is meant to be savored.

Rennison, Louise. *Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging: Confessions of Georgia Nicolson*. HarperCollins, 2000. 256 p. Gr. 7-12. Recommended by Lauren. Georgia Nicolson is a British teenager who details her comical anxieties through a journalized account of her day-to-day life. Accompanied by her deranged tabby cat, Angus, a three-year-old sister who "may have peed somewhere" in her room, and a gang of flamboyant friends, Georgia is on a quest to figure herself out in an atmosphere that's gone completely bonkers. Lovers of quirky, bold female figures will enjoy Georgia's perspective. And, of course, Rennison provides romantic tension that will leave romance lovers craving the following nine installments in the series.

Rowell, Rainbow. *Fangirl*. St. Martin's Press, 2013. 433p. Gr. 8-12 Recommended by Michelle & Lauren.

Cath is not only a huge fan of the (fictional) *Simon Snow* books, she is one of the most popular *Simon Snow* fanfiction authors on the internet. It is now the start of Cath's freshman year at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, but she is afraid to leave her bipolar father at home alone, and her struggles with social anxiety leave her far more comfortable with her online life than her real one. Despite Cath's attempts to separate herself from the "real" world, someone manages to make his way through the shield that Cath has put up around herself in this sweet romance with unusual depth.

Scieszka, Jon. *Battle Bunny*; by Jon Scieszka and Mac Barnett, and Alex; illus. by Matthew Myers but mostly Alex. Simon, 2013. 32p. Gr. 1-3. Recommended by Michelle & Anna. Alex appreciated the fact that his grandmother gifted him the saccharine picture book "Birthday Bunny," but he thought it needed some improvements. Alex "edits" this work in pencil to feature the fearsome evil Battle Bunny, and inserts himself as a heroic character bound to thwart Battle Bunny's evil plans. Kids and adults alike will first look at this "graffitied" pictured book with a mixture of confusion and horror, but after the realization comes that no one actually destroyed a book they will rejoice at the attention to detail and sheer hilarity that characterize "Alex's" altered storylines and illustrations.

Simpson, Dana. *Phoebe and Her Unicorn*; written and illus. by Dana Simpson. Andrews McMeel, 2014. 222p. Gr. 3-5. Recommended by Melissa.

When Phoebe launches a skipping rock and accidentally saves the beautiful and narcissistic unicorn Marigold Heavenly Nostrils from immobility due to staring at her own reflection, the bombastic mythical equine and the energetic and awkward fourth grader develop a quirky friendship. The comic strip illustrations drip with humor - Marigold wears a deerstalker hat by spearing it with her horn, for example - and the banter between the two is equally amusing.

Tamaki, Mariko. *This One Summer*. First Second/Roaring Brook, 2014. 320 p. Gr. 7-10. Recommended by Lauren.

Jillian and Mariko Tamaki's award-winning graphic novel uses an understated navy and white color scheme to tell the story of Rose's vacation at her family's summer home in Awago Beach. During their stay, Rose and her friend Windy celebrate their loves for movies and junk food while asking themselves difficult questions about sexuality, individuality, and relationships. While Rose struggles to cope with her parents' marriage problems, Windy grows increasingly isolated and self-reflective. This graphic novel gives readers an honest account of what it means to grow up, make tough decisions, and be true to one's beliefs.

Wein, Elizabeth. *Code Name Verity*. Hyperion, 2012. 343p. Gr. 9-12 Recommended by Michelle.

Verity is a Scottish spy captured by the Gestapo in Nazi-occupied France during World War II. Under duress, Verity is ordered to recount her role in the war effort through a series of letters which are consequently read by the Gestapo. Flashbacks relate the story of how Verity came to be in France and her enduring friendship with pilot Maddie. This spy thriller with heart is sure to entrance historical fiction fiends and English majors looking for a tightly plotted rollercoaster that defies literary expectations.

Wein, Elizabeth. *Rose Under Fire*. Hyperion, 2013. 360p. Gr. 9-12 Recommended by Michelle. Rose Justice is an eighteen-year-old American pilot who ferries planes for the British Air Transport Auxiliary during World War II. After she volunteers for a solo flight to France, her plane is intercepted by the Nazis. Now a concentration camp victim, Rose writes and recites powerful poetry for her fellow victims as a way of maintaining humanity and hope in this moving portrayal of female solidarity and defiance.