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Great Lakes, Great Books in a Time of Change

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Great Lakes, Great Books in a Time of Change

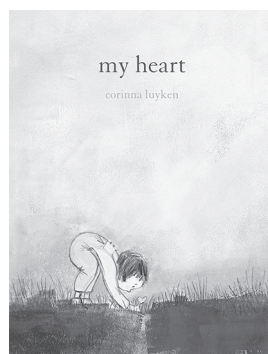
by Lynette Marten Suckow



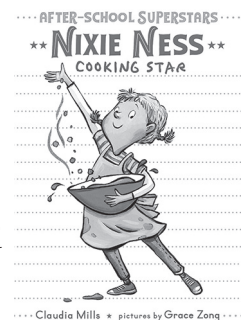
**Lynette
Marten Suckow**

Who knew that all of our familiar routines, our communities, and our connections with the world would change in the course of a few days last March? The changes imposed by our vigilance against a virus have resulted in an adaptation of what we once considered normal. It was a big change all at once. However, change is ongoing and easier to accept at a slower pace. The following stories are about changes in family structure, changes in relationships, changes in politics, changes caused by the death of someone dear, and how we adapt to change. We discover our roles in the new scenario, while seeking ways to actively participate in making changes for the better. After reading the selections below, treat yourself to all the suggestions on the Great Lakes Great Books list.

My Heart by Corinna Luyken uses the contrast of color in gray, white, and yellow tones to visually depict the same feelings voiced by her words. She enlists drawings of windows to graphically show how "My heart can be closed or opened up wide." Hearts can be found on every page—drawn as leaves, flowers, constellations and the wings of birds. The illustrations truly enhance the sparse text and remind readers that emotions are a part of being human. Readers who sometimes struggle to recognize goodness in the world will relate to this contemplative book.



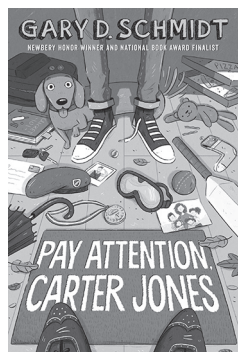
Nixie Ness: Cooking Star by Claudia Mills introduces Nixie Ness and Grace Kenny, best friends since they were toddlers, who look forward to spending their after-school hours at Nixie's house. Daily routines are upturned for the two friends when Nixie's mom goes back to work. Nixie finds herself attending enrichment classes at the after-school program, while Grace finds after-school care at the house of another classmate, Elyse, and begins a friendship with her. Although Nixie enjoys the cooking activities at the after-school program and makes new friends there, she is definitely jealous of the friendship growing between Grace and Elyse. When Nixie says something to hurt Grace's feelings, helpful classmates coach her through the apology and reconciliation process. Black and white illustrations, along with clever chapter markers by Grace Zong, break up the text for struggling readers in this After-School Superstars series. Other books in the series are *Vera Vance: Comic Book Star* (2020) and *Lucy Lopez: Coding Star* (2020), which feature some of the other activities and characters in Nixie's after-school program.



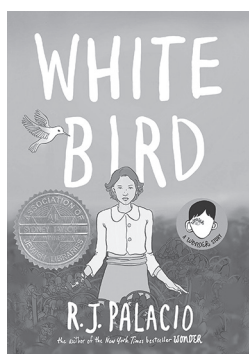
Pay Attention Carter Jones by Gary D. Schmidt, who won the 2008 Newbery Honor Award for *Wednesday*

Must Read Texts

Wars and followed it up with *Okay for Now* (2011), grabs readers by the heartstrings once again as Carter Jones takes center stage in this touching and humorous tale of a family unraveling at the seams. Carter's adventure begins one day, when he opens the front door to find an English butler, Mr. Bowles-Fitzpatrick, who was sent by his deceased grandfather. It reminds readers of *Mary Poppins*, except this butler, besides being "practically perfect" at household management, is an expert at the game of cricket. The Joneses are dealing with the death of Carter's brother, his dad's extended deployment to Germany, and the everyday stresses of school and home in a single parent family. The butler manages to divide up the chores and bring a productive stability to the family. In fact, he knits the whole neighborhood together by forming a cricket team, while teaching the game from the ground up. He also teaches readers about the British game of cricket, as he mends relationships between families and friends. Readers will laugh on one page and cry on the next. Schmidt is known for skillfully writing about the complexity of relationships, especially for middle school audiences.



White Bird by R. J. Palacio is a heart-wrenching Holocaust story, passed down from a World War II survivor to her grandson. This graphic novel frames the story through the grandson's video chat request, in order to complete a Humanities project at school. Sara Blum lived a fairy tale existence in 1930's France with parents who were college-educated and gainfully employed. However, her town began to change in 1940, as Nazi guards appeared in the village more frequently, and Jewish families routinely disappeared. On the same school day that guards rounded up the Jewish students at Sara's school, she saved herself by hiding in a deserted tower. Through the kindness of a classmate and his family, Sara was led to safety and



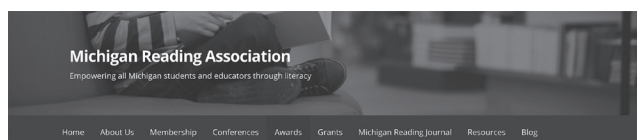
hidden in a barn for four long years. That classmate was Julien, who had crippled legs from polio, making him a Nazi target because of his imperfection. Shortly before the war ended, the Nazis guards caught up with Julien and shot him. Sara, who had been separated from her parents, became part Julien's family, remaining close to them even after she found her father who had also been in hiding for years. In honor of her brave friend Julien, Sara passed on his name to her son and grandson. Revealing that she hadn't told her story to anyone else, she asked her grandson to remember her story and use it to fight injustice in the world. Following the suspenseful main story, readers will find ten additional pages of historical information about World War II and the role of the French Resistance.

Start Here by Trish Doller is a story of loss, of hope, of new beginnings. After their mutual best friend, Finley, succumbed to cancer, Willa and Taylor decide to honor her memory by sailing to Key West, Florida the summer after graduation, just as the three of them had planned to do together. Finley left them a list of clues as to the route they should sail for one last maximum adventure before college. The trouble is that Willa and Taylor are definitely not best friends, although Finley was a best friend to both of them. Each time their rocky relationship begins to gel, Willa and Taylor argue or say something offensive, and end up angry all over again. However, the close proximity of living on a sailboat together and adhering to the same plan for the journey is forcing them to talk out their differences and find similarities instead. As they heal from the loss of their friend, Willa and Taylor tentatively form a new kind of friendship. Doller, author of *Something Like Normal* (2012) and *In a Perfect World* (2017), adds another heartwarming story about modern teens and the problems they encounter to her list of good books.



Each year, the GLGB committee selects 40 books, published within the last two years, to introduce K-12

classrooms to some of the best books available on the market. Teachers and librarians are encouraged to provide students with books from their grade-level lists and allow them to vote on their favorites. Great Lakes Great Books is one of Michigan Reading Association's Student Involvement projects, promoting active participation in the reading process by students. Look for a classroom ballot, student certificate, promotional bookmarks, last year's winning titles, and the opportunity to nominate your favorite new book at www.michigan-reading.org under the Awards and Grants tab.



Great Lakes Great Books



Author Biography

Lynette Marten Suckow works at the Peter White Public Library in Marquette, MI where she provides reference assistance with library resources and digital technology. She holds a master's degree in education from Northern Michigan University, is a Marquette-Alger Reading Council board member, and a committee member for the Great Lakes Great Books Award. She can be reached at lynette.suckow@gmail.com.

