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Of Cabbages and Kings: Reviews of Children's Books

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Of Cabbages and Kings: Reviews of Children's Books

BY LYNETTE M. AUTREY, KELLY HOUSE, TARA MULVANY, KATHLEEN PLOND,
KATHARINE RENER, LEAH VAN BELLE, AND MELANIE ZAMBOROWSKI

Many people have warm memories of aunties who gave sensible birthday gifts, like educational games (created when toy designers didn't realize that education can be great fun as well), or new shoes, or, the worst ever, new underwear. Perhaps the gifts weren't exciting to open at the time, but we look back on those gifts with great affection and humor because they came from our aunties. I'm a person who takes being an auntie very seriously. As Auntie Lee Lee (for that is what I'm called), I'm the auntie who's willing to push all the living room furniture against the walls so we can put the tent up and have a campout indoors, complete with board games and stories by flashlight. I'm the auntie who has a cookie cutter for every possible occasion, vintage aprons, and sprinkles galore on-hand at all times so that sugar cookies can be rolled out by little hands whenever the craving for sugary goodness strikes. I'm the auntie who invented Rain On The Lake—which is a bath taken with the shower going as well so one has the effect of, well, being in a lake with rain sprinkling down. (We keep it short, so water consumption does not run rampant.)

I share these things about myself as an auntie because I suspect there are fellow Auntie Lee Lee types among our readers. And because I want to put the next thing I tell you in perspective, so that you understand that I'm not the sensible (read as "un-fun") kind of auntie.

I am *The Auntie Who Gives Books As Gifts For Every Possible Occasion*. Yes, it's an official title. Birthday, Valentine's Day, Halloween, Christmas, Hanukkah—all get celebrated with books in my family. When my godson, Ethan, was very young, I digitally recorded myself reading books aloud, burned the readings onto a CD, put the CDs in little pockets inside the book covers, and mailed them to him in Pennsylvania. I loved knowing that I was able to "read" to him from hundreds of miles away. And he once told me about the recorded read alouds, "Auntie Lee Lee, you always say the same thing when you read the book!" as if he had discovered something quite amazing. And he had!

Someone once gave me a bookmark that read, "A book is the gift that keeps on giving." So true! When I was a classroom teacher, my absolute favorite part of every day, was reading aloud to my class. As an auntie, it's hard to match the joy for me in curling up with a little one and a book, talking about books with my preteen nieces, or picking out new books at the library or bookstore. When we read aloud a book to a child, or give a book as a gift, or place a book in our classroom library for a reader to discover, we're giving that child an amazing thing: possibility. The possibility to discover herself

as she embarks on grand adventures. The possibility to develop a deep and enduring love for books. As teachers, most of us are unabashed bibliophiles, with great affection and respect for children's literature. We understand its power, not only to teach, but to inspire...and we just plain love it ourselves.

My fellow reviewers and I hope that you find books in this column to inspire you and your students. Happy reading! -Leah

Note: I've had some questions about the name of the column; "Of Cabbages and Kings" refers to a line from the poem "The Walrus and the Carpenter" in Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (first published in 1871):



Illustration by Sir John Tenniel

"The time has come," the Walrus said,

"To talk of many things: Of shoes—and ships—and

sealing-wax—
 Of cabbages—and kings—
 And why the sea is boiling hot—
 And whether pigs have wings.”

Abel, J., & Madden, M. (2012). *Mastering comics: Drawing words & writing pictures continued*. New York: First Second. 318 pp. ISBN: 978-1-59643-617-6. (Trade paperback). \$34.99.

For middle school artists who love comics and graphic novels, this book, the second by Abel & Madden on the top of comic art, will, to put it frankly, *rock kids' world*. It's that good. The husband and wife team who bring us this gem are professors at New York's School of Visual Art and the editors of the *Best American Comics* series (First Second, 2011). They're exactly the right dynamic duo to help budding comic artists understand the art of comic design, plot development, script writing for comics, the use of computers and web-based comic art, and so much more. Abel and Madden's clear, familiar writing style engages the reader, and their extensive illustrations and use of examples and comics throughout make the design skills they're teaching clear and accessible. Plus, this book is just plain fun! Equally wonderful is their *Drawing Words & Writing Pictures: Making Comics: Manga, Graphic Novels, and Beyond*. (First Second, 2008). —Leah



Amstel, M., (2012). The horse-riding adventure of Sybil Ludington, revolutionary war messenger. (Ill by T. Hammond and R. Carbajal). Minneapolis, MN: Graphic Universe. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0-76137-073-4. (Hardcover); \$23.94.

Marsha Amstel uses vibrant colors and detailed graphics to truly bring the Revolutionary War to life. Her unique use of a comic strip format both appeals to readers and takes away from any feeling of boredom a student might encounter when learning about history. This would be an excellent book to use in Social Studies with students in the upper elementary level or even at middle school level. I like how the introduction gives imperative details and sets the scene before the comic style writing begins. The book also includes resources for further reading and writing websites. This information would be great for older students to use to complete further research on the Revolutionary war. —Melanie

Aronson, M. & Newquist, H.P. (2007). *For boys only: The biggest, baddest book ever*. New York: Feiwel and Friends. 157pp. ISBN: 978-0-31237-706-9. (Hardcover); \$14.95.

Reluctant readers will love the tiny sections this book offers. It begins with directions about a secret code that can be solved throughout the book. It includes over 100 different topics that may interest boys and girls. Some of the topics include: “How to Fight a Shark,” “America’s Scariest Amusement Park Rides,” and “Vikings vs. Pirates”. This book is a wonderful resource as a mentor text for many different forms of writing. —Tara

Asch, F. (2011). *Happy birthday, big bad wolf*. Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press. 30pp. ISBN: 978-1-55337-368-1. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

Poor Little Pig! He wants to throw Big Bad Wolf a birthday party, but his parents just don't think it's a good idea. When Big Bad Wolf shows up at the Pig family's home for a pork dinner, Little Pig mistakes his unexpected arrival for a surprise birthday party, leaving Momma and Poppa Pig to play along. After an evening of party games and chocolate cake, Big Bad Wolf is left with a decision no wolf should have to make. The author and illustrator, Frank Asch, creates an imaginative story using well known characters in a “what if...” situation. Asch credits Photoshop for his colorful illustrations. —Lynette

Becker, H. (2012). *The big green book of the big blue sea*. (Ill. By Willow Dawson). New York: Kids Can Press. 80 pp. ISBN: 978-1554537464. (Hardcover); \$15.95.

The Big Green Book of the Big Blue Sea demonstrates how the ocean works and why. The book includes experiments that can easily be done in class, and adapted for a variety of age levels, or at home using everyday materials to help explain scientific concepts. These experiments not only help to explain concepts but are also meant to be used as a tool to highlight pollution and raise awareness to other ecological threats. Through this book, young scientists will gain a hands-on understanding of water, facts and history of ocean life, and become more aware on how actions affect the world we live in. -Katie

Beiser, T. (2011). *Bradley McGogg: The very fine frog*. (Ill. By R. Berman). Toronto, ON: Tundra Books. 21 pp. ISBN: 978-1-77049-276-9. \$7.95.

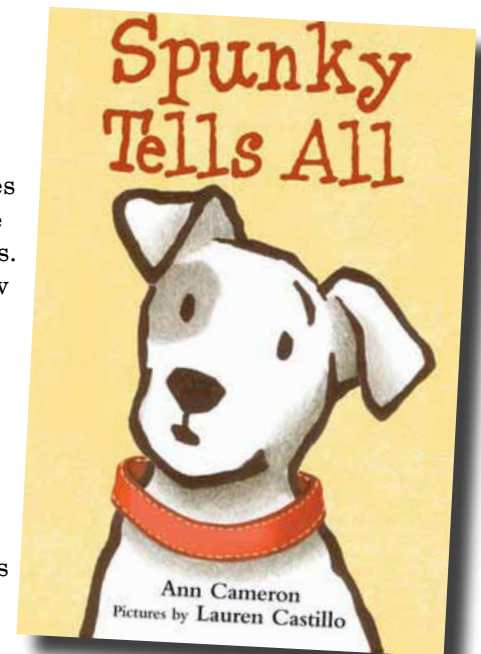
Follow Bradley, a whimsical and hungry frog, as he searches for something delicious to eat. Although Bradley's neighbors generously offer to share their dinner with him, they are not able to provide this picky-eating amphibian with anything a frog might declare as, "good frog things to feed on!" (p. 2) Tim Beiser uses rhythm and rhyme to point out the unique differences of cuisine preferences among the forest animals. The watercolor illustrations are beautifully done in colorful detail by Rachel Berman, adding to the charm and humor of the story. Children will enjoy listening to or reading the story of Bradley McGogg, and perhaps be able to relate to his very particular food preferences. -Lynette

Bowers, V. (2012). *Hey, Canada!*. (Ill by M. Pavlovic). New York: Tundra Books. 72 pp. ISBN: 978-1-77049-255-4. (Hardcover); \$19.95.

Have you ever been on a long road trip? Bowers' creative use of narrative text allows readers to learn interesting facts about Canada as they follow two cousins, Cal and Alice, and their grandmother, Gran, across Canada from coast to coast to coast. Bowers uses a combination of narrative text, creative illustrations, and real photographs to inform her readers all about Canada. I absolutely love how Pavlovic's illustrations and photographs flow smoothly together, intermixing with one another. The transition from page to page easily grabs the reader's attention with something new to see with each page turn. Bowers also uses humor to grab her reader's attention. For example, there are hamster updates from Cal's pet hamster that he snuck into the car. Alice is the narrator of the story, and writes in the form of a journal entry as she records her experiences. Cal tweets updates on their road trip, which also includes facts about his new experiences. There is a section called "Cal's Historical U-Turn," which uses comic strips to depict his experiences. Bowers includes a "Find It!" section, at the end of each chapter, where readers can go back and locate or discuss the facts they learned about. There are maps of Canada included as well as a page depicting each territory's flag. There is so much to see in this book and you won't want to stop reading until Gran, Alice, and Cal's journey is complete. -Melanie

Cameron, A. (2011). *Spunky tells all*. (Ill. By L. Castillo). New York: Frances Foster Books. 106 pp. ISBN: 978-0-374-38000-7. (Hardcover); \$15.99.

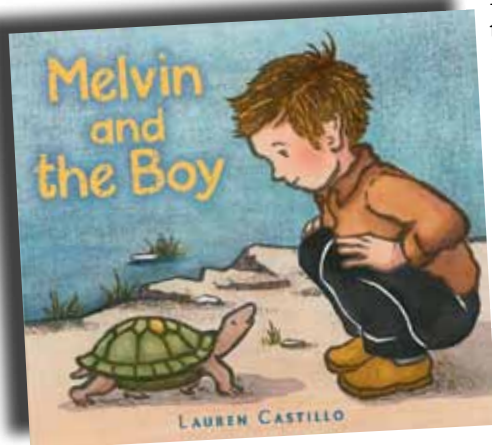
Spunky Tells All is a unique chapter book that tells the story of the Bates family from the dog's point of view. Many readers will be familiar with Spunky's family, as this is Ann Cameron's 10th book centering on the Bateses. The story begins with Spunky professing his love and loyalty for his family, but also his frustration for their inability to understand him. The reader soon learns a dog's life is filled with strong emotions, interesting scents, bully dogs, foolish cats and vivid dreams. Spunky is a lovable character with lots of human-like qualities. He describes himself as a contemplative and reflective dog; he soon discovers he is also a "catologist" (a student of cats), as



he tries to understand the actions of the family's new cat, Fiona. This book will make readers laugh while helping dog lovers appreciate their best friend even more. -*Lynette*

Castillo, L. (2011). *Melvin and the boy*. New York: Henry Holt and Company. 34 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8050-8929-5. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Melvin and the Boy is a sweet story of a boy wishing for a pet and finally finding one in a very uncooperative turtle. Melvin (the turtle) does not fit the image the boy had when he pictured himself with a pet; he is not very social, he is very slow on walks, he doesn't even like to snack on pretzels. Lessons are learned about what makes a happy home (and a happy pet). This is Laurant Castillo's first book as both author and illustrator. The story is simple and heartfelt, while the illustrations are realistic with a classic feel. -*Lynette*



Christensen, B. (2012). *Plant a little seed*. New York: Roaring Book Press. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1-55453-468-5. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

Looking for a spring/summer book with large colorful pictures? Christensen explains how to grow a garden both starting and ending with a seed. She enlightens her readers by showing how different plants grow in different ways. My favorite part is the very last page of her book, which includes fun gardening facts. -*Melanie*

Clanton, B. (2012). *Vote for me!* Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press Ltd. ISBN: 978-1-55453-822-5. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

With another presidential election coming up in November, *Vote for Me!* is the perfect choice to read aloud in any grade-level classroom. It is a fantastic picture book that can be adapted for any grade-level. Whether you are a kindergarten teacher looking for a fun book to enjoy with students or a high school teacher looking for an opener for a lesson on politics, *Vote for Me!* is an excellent choice. The two main characters, a donkey and an elephant, try to persuade the reader to vote for them. I like how Clanton uses either a red or blue background on each page to represent which character is talking and represent each political party. Clanton opens the door and allows for great discussion topics such as political parties, effects of arguing, and even learning lessons. -*Melanie*

Cole, H., Vogl, N. (2005). *Am I a color, too?* Bellevue: Illumination Arts Publishing Company, Inc. (Ill. By G. Purnell). 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0974019055. (Hardcover); \$15.95.

Tyler has a question: "Am I a color too?" Realizing he must be confused having heard people refer to his father as Black and his mother as White, the authors of this book, Tyler's mother and grandmother, set out to find the best way to answer Tyler's question. Who we are as human beings is explored through the perspective of a young boy who wonders why people concentrate more on what is on the outside of people rather than what is on the inside. Gerald Purnell's illustrations bring a visual component to this tale that further enhances this universal message. -*Katie*

Davis, A. (2012). *A hen for Izzy Pippik*. New York: Kids Can Press. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1554532438. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

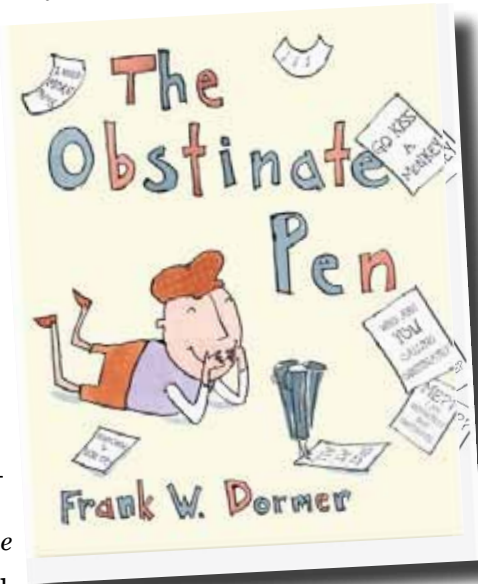
Shaina finds a wandering chicken and knows she must do the right thing and save the chick until its owner, Izzy Pippik, comes for her. Times are hard in the town and protecting the chick and the baby chicks to come often proves to be a trying task for Shaina. As time goes by and Izzy Pippik does not return, Shaina's confidence diminishes. More chicks come and soon they fill the town, from the rooftops to the alleyways. Newcomers and tourists come to see the community filled with chickens and times steadily improve for the town. What will happen when Izzy Pippik rolls back into town? This is a sweet and inspirational tale of an honest and steadfast girl and her band of chicks. -*Katie*

Day, A. (2012). *Carl at the dog show.* New York: Farrar, Straus Giroux. 36 pp. ISBN: 978-0-474-31083-7. (Hardcover); \$14.99.

Who needs to read printed words on a page when you can use beautiful pictures to guide you on a journey and tell your very own story? A picture is worth a thousand words and a new story is waiting to be discovered each and every time you open this book. Children of all ages will absolutely love diving into this touching story about a little girl, Madeleine and her dog, Carl. Alexandra Day's beautiful illustrations depict over 40 breeds of dogs! Young readers will delight in the dog scavenger hunt Day included near the end of her book. There is even a spot to personalize your book by including a picture of your very own family dog. Magical moments are sure to happen when sharing this book together. -Melanie

Dormer, F., (2012). *The obstinate pen.* New York: Henry Holt and Company. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8050-9295-0. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Dormer uses humor to truly captivate his readers. *The Obstinate Pen* is about a stubborn pen that does not write what the owner wants to write. Instead, it writes silly things like "you have a big nose" or "you have eyes as large as dinner plates." This is a great book for discussing writing or obstinacy either in the classroom or at home. It is also a great read aloud that can be used to introduce students to creative writing or a mini lesson that can show students how to use humor in their writing. *The Obstinate Pen* can also be used to discuss new vocabulary including the word "obstinate." It might be fun for students to first listen to the story and then use text clues to help them create a definition for obstinate. Older students can even take it a step further and explain the reasoning behind their definition. Whether it the purpose for reading is for a lesson or purely for enjoyment, children will love to read about the obstinate pen. -Melanie



Dower, L. (2008). *For girls only: Everything great about being a girl.* New York: Feiwei and Friends. 157pp. ISBN: 978-0-31237-706-9. (Hardcover); \$14.95.

A companion book to *For Boys Only*, this book includes topics such as "10 Objects to put in your Backpack Before a Big Test," and "Babysitting: Just about Everything you Need to Know." At the end of the book is a fun quiz for the reader to take. This is a great resource for real life problems and is a great tool to teach many forms of writing. -Tara

Dubois, M., Hilden, K., & Price, J. (2011). *Lonely planet not for parents: The travel book.* Footscray, Victoria: Lonely Planet. 208 pp. ISBN: 978-1742208145. (Hardcover); \$19.99.

Not-For-Parents: The Travel Book gives its readers an insight into the culture of over 200 countries and sets itself apart from other travel books. You won't find where the best pizza places are or museum facts in the pages of this book. Kids and their interests were the inspiration for this work. Each country is given its own page and is complemented with photographs, maps, and colorful facts that are sure to engage readers. Topics such as crazy facts, hideous histories, epic events, amazing animals, and funky foods are only the beginning. These thought-provoking headings create a snapshot of what each country is like. -Katie

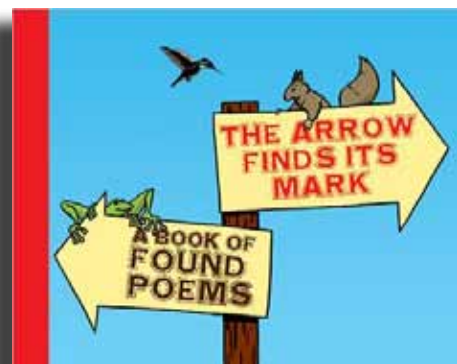
Feder, S. V. (2012). *Daisy's perfect word.* (Ill. by S. Mitchell). New York: Kids Can Press. 87 pp. ISBN: 978-1-55453-645-0. (Hardcover); \$14.95.

Go on a Journey into a new series with Daisy and her friends. Daisy loves words and even carries around a notebook to keep her favorites in. When she finds out that her favorite teacher is moving away, she decides to search for the perfect word to give as a gift. This is a wonderful book to use as a mentor text for playing with language. The back of the book even contains "Daisy's Wonderful Word Lists," which are sorted into categories such as, "made up words" and "quiet-time words". Daisy will inspire students to keep their own lists of favorite words. -Tara

Fern, T. (2012). *Barnum's bones: How Barnum Brown discovered the most famous dinosaur in the world.* (Ill. By B. Kulikov). New York: Farrar Straus Giroux. 40 pp. ISBN: 978-0374305161. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

Barnum was born with his parents' hopes that he would go on to do great things in life. Who would have guessed those great things would begin with collecting rocks? Tracy Fern's book is based on the research and life of fossil hunter Barnum Brown (1873-1963). Barnum has a talent for sniffing out bones and is recruited by the American Museum of Natural History in 1897 to start its collection of dinosaur fossils. On his quest to uncover what is hidden beneath the earth's surface, Barnum makes the discovery of a lifetime and perseveres through any obstacle to collect all the pieces of this grand puzzle. Accompanied by the appealing illustrations of Boris Kulikov and a teacher's guide (available for free download on the authors website), this book is the perfect complement to a dinosaur curriculum or to show students that everyone can accomplish big things with enough determination. -Katie

Formento, A., (2012). *These bees count!.* (Ill by S. Snow). Chicago, Illinois: Albert Whitman & Company. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8075-7868-1. (Hardcover); \$16.99.



Snow uses beautiful, realistic paper cutouts to brighten up each page and show the reader what bees do. Formento takes a narrative approach to inform her readers about the life of a bee and why they are important. She also includes "the buzz on bees," near the end of her book, which discusses in further detail the purpose and importance of bees, their various jobs, and also how and why hives are dying out. Many times children think of bees as being only bad for them because they can sting and hurt them. However, bees do so much more than sting people. It is important to show children the other side and how truly important and good bees are for us. This book does just that! -Melanie

Gorbachev, V. (2012). *How to be friends with a dragon.* Chicago: Albert Whitman & Company. 30pp. ISBN: 978-0-80753-432-8. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

The how-to-article takes on a new form in this wonderful story about becoming friends with a dragon. Simon loves dragons and has decided that he wants to become friends with one. His sister, Emma, tells him, "To be friends with a dragon you must follow the rules." Readers finish the story being well-prepared to become friends with a dragon. This book serves as a great mentor text for teaching students about writing how-to articles. -Tara

Grigsby, S., (2012). *First peas to the table.* (Ill by N. Tadgell). Chicago: Albert Whitman & Company. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8075-2452-7. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Grigsby uses a narrative text form when informing her readers about how pea plants grow. Tadgell adds a special touch to the picture book by including beautiful illustrations to depict every step Maya, the main character, takes with growing her pea plant. I really like how Tradgell chose to illustrate Maya's science journal and the notes she took on her pea plant. including dates, pictures of her pea plant, measurements, and even a diagram that shows the ongoing process of a pea plant. *First Peas to the Table* also references Thomas Jefferson and how he experimented with the plants in his very own garden. There is an Afterword that gives further details on Jefferson. This is an excellent book to use in a science classroom, grades 3-8. It is very helpful to show students the scientific method and how to keep records during an experiment. It also is a good book to show students the process of a pea plant and the different stages it goes through. In a social studies classroom, you might use this book to introduce Thomas Jefferson. -Melanie

Heard, G. (Ed.). (2012). *The arrow finds its mark: A book of found poems.* (Ill. A. Guilloppe). New York: Roaring Brook Press. 48pp. ISBN: 978-1-59643-665-7. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Children will be inspired to create their own “found poems” after reading this collection of found poetry from many well known poets including Naomi Shihab Nye, Jane Yolen, and Kristine O’Connell George. The collection contains 40 found poems and an introduction that explains how found poems can be created. Above the title of each poem, the inspiration for each poem is listed. It really shows children that a poem can be made from something as simple as a product label or book titles sitting on a bookshelf. It offers great inspiration for writers’ notebooks. A must-have! -Tara

Kaner, E., (2012). *Earth-friendly buildings, bridges and more: The eco-journal of Cory Lapont.* (Ill by S. MacEachern). Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press Ltd. 64 pp. ISBN: 978-1-55453-570-5. (Hardcover); \$18.95.

Kaner uses a narrative approach to inform her readers about various buildings, bridges, tunnels, domes, dams, dikes, locks, and levees from all around the world. Cory Lapont is Kaner’s main character. He spent years traveling around the world, seeing new sites and collecting postcards to include in his “scrapbook.” MacEachern included both real photographs and beautiful illustrations to help show the reader each new place. Kaner uses a fun section in her book titled “Check This Out” to inform readers of various interesting facts. She also includes a helpful glossary and index for readers to use as a reference. She uses humor to grab the attention of her readers. For example, a few pages include a special section titled “Two Ways to Become Famous.” This section gives some creative suggestions of ways Cory feels he can become famous, many of which include a career of some kind. This section might interest students and perhaps give them a few ideas as to what they might want to become or do when they grow up. This book not only informs the reader on various land features and buildings but it could also be an excellent introduction to a discussion on real-life careers. -Melanie



Lamprell, K. (2011). *Lonely planet not-for-parents: London, everything you ever wanted to know.* Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet. 96 pp. ISBN: 978-1742208169. \$14.99.

Lamprell, K. (2011). *Lonely planet not-for-parents: New York, everything you ever wanted to know.* Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet. 96 pp. ISBN: 978-1742208152. \$14.99.

Lamprell, K. (2011). *Lonely planet not-for-parents: Paris, everything you ever wanted to know.* Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet. 96 pp. ISBN: 978-1742208176. \$14.99.

Lamprell, K. (2011). *Lonely planet not-for-parents: Rome, everything you ever wanted to know.* Oakland, CA: Lonely Planet. 96 pp. ISBN: 978-1742208183. \$14.99.

Looking for a travel book complete with maps to guide you through the restaurants, hotels, and museums of London, New York, Rome, or Paris? Then these are *not* what you have been looking for. However, if you’re looking for a book to spark a child’s interest in one of these sites then these books are for you! Each book is composed of various facts, random bits of information and is accompanied by a colorful layout with bright photographs and illustrations. With a new topic on every page, this is a series of both educational and humorous material that will attract children. These well researched and laid out books are sure to spark a child’s interest in the world around them. -Katie

Lodding, L.R. (2011). *The busy life of Ernestine Buckmeister.* (Ill. S. Beaky). New York: Flashlight Press. 30pp. ISBN: 978-0-97997-469-4. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

Ernestine Buckmeister is a very busy girl. Her parents have every minute of every day planned out for her with the hopes that she “lives life to the fullest”. In the end everyone learns that finding time to play is part of “living life to the fullest.” Children can easily relate to Ernestine’s overscheduled life and will enjoy the beautiful illustrations. It’s sure to be a favorite. -Tara

Maclear, K. (2012). *Virginia Wolf*. (Ill. By I. Arsenault). New York: Kids Can Press. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1554536498. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

One morning Virginia wakes up in a “wolfish” mood, much to her sister Vanessa’s dismay. The house is turned upside-down with Vanessa’s efforts to cheer up her sister. With a brush in her hand, Vanessa attempts to paint Virginia her perfect place: Bloomsberry. Sometimes everyone has bad days, but will tomorrow be better for Virginia? This compassionate story and Isabelle Arsenault’s uniquely intriguing illustrations will keep readers interest until the end. *-Katie*

Malaspina, A. (2012). *Touch the sky: Alice coachman, Olympic high jumper*. (Ill by E. Velasquez). Chicago: Albert Whitman & Company. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8075-8035-6. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

In the 1930s, times were rough in Albany, GA. *Touch the Sky* is based on the true story of Alice Coachman and her struggles to become an Olympic high jumper. Malaspina takes a narrative approach to inform her readers about the struggles Coachman had to overcome in order to achieve her dream. She includes dates to show the timeline of events. Velasquez uses large, colorful, captivating pictures that cover the entire page to illustrate what Coachman’s life was like back in the 1930s and 1940s. On the last couple pages of the book, real black and white photographs are included of Alice Coachman. Some of the photos show Coachman with teammates, while others show her in action, either getting ready to run or high jump over the bar. This book would be a great choice to use if you are looking for a book that goes against stereotyping. It would also make an excellent choice to use for a biography unit or during Black History Month. Malaspina ends her book with an author’s note, which gives further detail and information about Alice, including a website to visit. Alice’s website not only celebrates her life but also helps other young athletes achieve their dreams too. *-Melanie*

McPhail, D. (2012). *The family tree*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC. 40 pp. ISBN: 978-0805090574. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

This story is soft, yet engaging, illustrations add to the beautiful simplicity of its words and blends together to compose a touching story. *The Family Tree* follows a family through its generations starting with a young man venturing into the wilderness to start his own life. As he makes his preparations to build his house and farm, he takes notice of one tree in particular and decides not to chop it down. The tree provides shade for him and his family as well as a sturdy anchor for a swing. As generations pass and times change the tree remains and is strongly rooted to the family’s heritage. When the developing world threatens to chop the tree down, can one little boy make a difference? *-Katie*

Nobisso, J. (2003). *In English, of course*. . (Ill. By D. Ziborova). New York: Gingerbread House. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0940112070. (Hardcover); \$17.95.

In English, Of Course is based on the memories Josephine Nobisso has of her “broken English” and growing up in Little Italy. The story follows a hesitant Josephine as she navigates her way through the use of her developing English to tell her class about her life in Naples, Italy. Nobisso, with the help of the engaging illustrations from Dasha Ziborova, gives the reader an insight into Josephine’s thought process and her often literal viewpoint of her multicultural classmates. *-Katie*

Nobisso, J. (2009). *Hot cha cha!*. (Ill. J. Holub). New York: Gingerbread House. 32pp. ISBN: 978-0-94011-218-6. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

This book is a poetic verse filled with poetic devices. It includes examples of alliteration, assonance, rhyme, meter, and slant rhyme. It also provides a great model for items to include when writing using who, what, where, when, why, and how. This book can be used with many ages; it can be used with younger children to play with sounds. It also makes a great mentor text for storytelling and poetic devices for older children. *-Tara*



Nobisso, J. (2004). *Show; don't tell: Secrets of writing*. (Ill. By E. Montanari). New York: Gingerbread House. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0940112131. (Hardcover); \$28.95.

In this engaging and interactive book, Nobisso offers insight into an authors' most crucial decision: the choice of specific nouns and adjectives. Montanari's characters encourage the reader to explore a multitude of words as well as principals of English grammar to discover his or her voice as a writer. The characters keep the readers eyes busy across the pages with their input to the storyline, making this read more suitable for independent reading. Including scratch-and-sniff pages, different textures, and a sound module, the characters continue to walk a reader through the use of words and language in the writing process. -*Katie*

O'Connor, G. (2012). *Hades: lord of the dead, Olympians vol. 4*. New York: First Second. 78pp. ISBN: 978-1-59643-434-9. (Trade paperback); \$9.99.

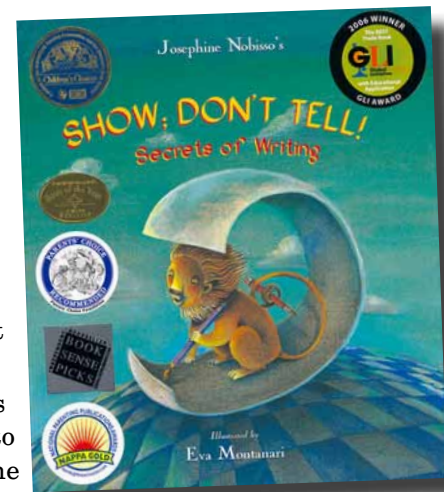
Why do we have seasons of the year? A question human beings asked themselves long before they had the scientific understanding to answer it. O'Connor brings to life the familiar dark tale of Ceres (goddess of grain, whose name is the root of the word cereal) her daughter, Kore, and Hades, ruler of the underworld. With artful drawings and scrappy dialogue, O'Connor gives a dramatic, modern feel to the timeless tale of Kore's kidnapping and imprisonment by Hades. Because Kore ate six pomegranate seeds in the land of the dead, she must remain with Hades 6 months of each year; the other 6 she can join her mother on Olympus. And so, during the months that Kore is away, Ceres mourns and does not grant her grace to the ground for crops to grow—fall and winter envelope the earth each year. O'Connor's retelling and revisualization manages to make Kore feel very much like a 21st century teenager who likes a guy of whom her mother doesn't approve. O'Connor has created an entire series that makes Greek mythology just as inviting as this book does. Learn more about his work at www.olympiansrule.com. -*Leah*

O'Connor, G. (2011). *Hera: The goddess and her glory*. New York: Roaring Brook Press. 78 pp ISBN:978-1-59643-433-2. (Paperback); \$9.99.

George O'Connor uses vibrant colors to depict ancient Greek mythology in his graphic novel, *Hera*. He begins his novel with an illustration of the Olympians family tree on the inside of the front cover of the book. It is nice how O'Connor uses a graphic organizer to display a lot of information in a way that is visually pleasing to the eye. I also like the location of the family tree because as a student reads the story, he/she can quickly locate the family tree reference page to help clarify the text. It is important to understand the relationship between characters in order to deepen your understanding and comprehension of Greek mythology.

Towards the end of his novel, O'Connor includes a few discussion questions that allow an opportunity for the reader to think beyond the information given in the text. These thought-provoking questions might be answered individually, with a partner, or even in a small group. I like how the questions are open-ended and lend themselves to creative responses, as opposed to convergent questions that require one "right" answer. Guiding children to think openly and answer with a creative mind takes time and practice.

Greek Notes is yet another helpful feature O'Connor includes in his novel. This section lists page-by-page additional information readers need to know in order to understand the text. I like how it not only lists the Greek Notes by page number, but it also includes the panel number so the reader can easily locate the appropriate information in the graphic novel. *Hera* is an excellent resource for any lesson on Greek mythology. -*Melanie*



Perrin, M. (2012). *Cock-a-doodle who?* (Trans. by E. Kossnar). Chicago: Albert Whitman & Company. 40 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8075-1107-7. (Hardcover); \$12.99.

Originally published in France (where roosters crow *coco-rico* instead of cock-a-doodle-do), this playful book uses die cuts and bold, graphic patterns to reveal the daily adventures of life on the farm. Perrin and Kossnar, who translated the book into English, use rhyming questions and answers in the manner of Eric Carle's *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* series (2010, Henry Holt & Co.). Preschoolers will love the playful reveal with each page turn. -*Leah*

Peterson, B., (2012). *Leopard & Silkie: One boy's quest to save the seal pups.* (Ill by R. Lindsey). New York: Henry Holt and Company. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8050-9167-0. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Leopard & Silkie is a touching story about the life of two seals and how seal sitters protect and inform others about baby seals. Peterson includes interesting information about seal sitters in an "Author's Note" located near the end of his book. Lindsey uses beautiful photographs to show the lives of both the seals and the seal sitters. This book provides students living in Michigan with a unique opportunity to see marine life in a natural setting. -*Melanie*

Roge. (2012). *The french fry king.* Toronto, ON: Tundra Books. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1770493506. (Hardcover); \$17.95.

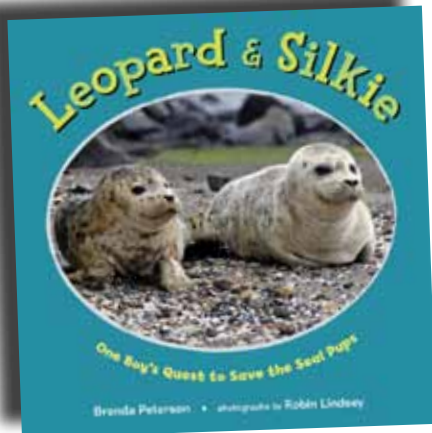
Roger is certainly not your typical dog. It would bore him to chase the mailman, chew on things, or bark at cars and passersby. He is often lost in daydreams of bigger things than the typical life of a dog has to offer. Roger watches the world around him and longs to be human. He feels that only when he becomes king that he will gain true happiness. He sets out on a journey to become the French Fry King. Will Roger be happy once he reaches the top? -*Katie*

Russell, P.C. (2012). *The fairy tales of Oscar Wilde, Volume 5: The happy prince.* New York: Nantier Beall Minoustchine Publishing, Inc. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1-56163-626-6. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

A beautiful fairy tale about the gap between the very rich and the very poor—a timeless tale that seems especially timely today. The Happy Prince, once a rich and selfish human being, is now a gilded and bejeweled statue, standing tall on his pedestal above the city, bearing witness to the suffering and misery of the townspeople who live in abject poverty. He is befriended by a small migrating sparrow, whom he enlists to carry away his gilding scrap by scrap as gifts to give to the townspeople. The bits of gold buy bread to feed the hungry and help the people better their lives by meeting their everyday needs. As winter nears, the gilding is almost gone and it's growing colder, yet the sparrow will not continue on his journey to a warm place for the winter because he doesn't want to leave the prince whom he now loves. You can guess the ending—tearfully poignant. Russell's retelling and emotion-filled drawings make the reader come to care deeply about the little sparrow and even the once-selfish prince. This book, while a deeply moving and visually beautiful book anytime, is incredibly relevant in the climate of concerns about the growing gap between the 1% and the 99%. -*Leah*

Sand-Eveland, C. (2012). *A tinfoil sky.* Toronto, Ontario: Tundra Books. 224 pp. ISBN: 978-1770492776. (Hardcover); \$17.95.

Home. The word is as foreign to 12-year-old Mel as security. While her mother, Cecily, struggles to stay clean, sober, and out of trouble, Mel spends her time singing on street corners for change and dreaming of a place she can call home. It isn't until Cecily has a fight with her boyfriend and Cecily and Mel take to the road again that Mel begins to think her dream might finally become a reality. They are heading to Cecily's hometown, where Mel's grandmother still lives, in hopes of starting again and finally having a real home. But Mel's grandmother turns them away, unwilling to believe that Cecily



has changed her destructive habits. For the next few days, they live out of their car as Cecily searches for a job and Mel goes back to singing on street corners for money. One evening, Cecily doesn't return and it isn't long before Mel is picked up by police and informed that her mother has been arrested for stealing. Mel is ordered to stay with her grandmother until her mother is released from jail. As she counts down the days, Mel slowly begins to build a new life. She makes friends at the local soup kitchen, secures a part-time job at the library, and works hard to prove to her grandmother that she can be trusted. The next 30 days will open Mel's eyes to a life she thought was out of reach as she finally discovers the meaning of the word 'home'. *A Tinfoil Sky* brings to life the hard-hitting realities of homelessness, while still managing to create a sense of family, love, and hope. Sand-Eveland has crafted a set of believable, honest characters who will appeal to every emotion. This book is a quick read and would be a rich addition to any middle or high school library. -*Kelly*

Schwartz, J., (2011). *City numbers*. (Ill by M. Beam). Toronto, Ontario: Groundwood Books. 60 pp. ISBN:978-1-55498-081-9. (Hardcover); \$18.95.

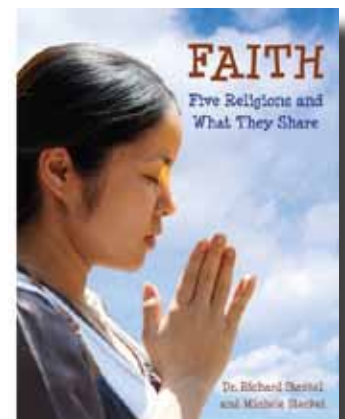
One day, Matt Beam was looking at some of his beautiful photographs when he noticed a common trend among many of the photographs. He noticed his pictures captured numbers in many different ways. Beam decided to collect his city number pictures in a file on his computer. Slowly his file grew and grew. Beam found the city numbers to be, "simple, chronological, funny, mathematical, dirt-cheap, sequential, completely nonsensical, and fun." Matt Beam teamed up with Joanne Schwartz to put some order to the photographs and created a book of city numbers. How fun would it be to introduce this book to a middle school math class and have students make their very own book of numbers? Books could even be published and presented using a PowerPoint presentation. This is a great way to connect math with students' everyday lives and for them to see for themselves that numbers really are everywhere around them! -*Melanie*

Spires, A. (2011). *Binky under pressure*. Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press. 62 pp. ISBN: 978-1-55453-504-0. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

Ashley Spires fills her pages with multiple graphics to depict every step of her attention-grabbing story about Binky the space cat. All is peaceful in Binky's world when all of a sudden, Gracie, the foster cat shows up. Everything has been turned completely upside down and Binky now has to deal with some major life changes. Spires ties together humor with adventure to entertain her readers. She also includes a variety of themes from dealing with life changes to finding friendship in unexpected situations. This witty and adorable story is bound and determined to capture the hearts of young readers. -*Melanie*

Steckel, M., & Steckel, R. (2012). *Faith: Five religions and what they share*. Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press Ltd. 36 pp. ISBN: 978-1-55453-750-1. (Hardcover); \$17.95.

Steckel and Steckel take an inside look and explore five different religions, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. They are able to make connections and show how each religion is different, yet how all of the religions share similar core values, traditions, and practices. The authors use photographs from all around the world to show each religion in its natural setting. Some special features Steckel and Steckel include are a table of contents, glossary, index, and a note to parents and teachers providing them with ideas to promote tolerance and understanding. This would serve as a great resource for parents to use with their children at home. It is important for children to see similarities they share with one another so that they can learn to respect others for their differences. -*Melanie*



Wardlaw, L. (2012). *Red, white, and boom!* (Ill. By H.V. Lee) New York: Henry Holt and Company, LLC. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-0805090659. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

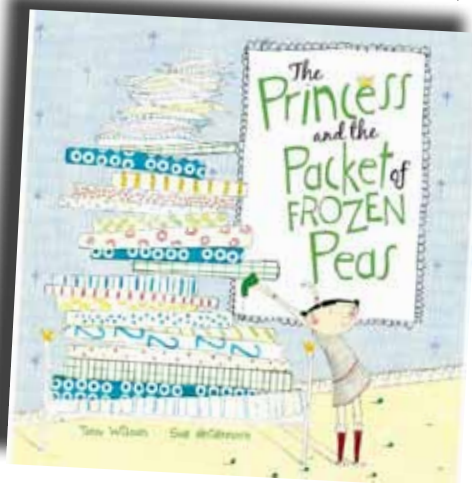
Red, White, and Boom! is a short and sweet read that is perfect for a read aloud to a class. Lee's charming illustrations provide a wonderful visual to accompany this rhyming storyline. The book illustrates a variety of ways people celebrate the 4th of July across the country. From morning parades to nighttime fireworks, there are so many ways we can say, "Happy birthday, America!" -Katie

Watt, M. (2011). *Scaredy squirrel has a birthday party.* Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1-55453-468-5. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

Young readers will completely fall in love with Scaredy Squirrel as he plans his very own birthday party. Melanie Watt uses many detailed illustrations that allow young readers to easily follow the story. I love Watt's creativity when she turned two of the pages into a file folder and included "exhibits" to illustrate each item on the birthday party checklist. For example, first on Scaredy's list, he had to confirm the date of birth. Exhibit A shows a birth certificate for Scaredy Orville Squirrel stating that he was born on October 3rd in a nut tree. The document also claims that Scaredy was cute, and born without any teeth or fleas. Watt uses humor to capture her reader's attention and she uses snapshots help them visualize the story. Children will love looking at the pictures and reading through each caption as they learn about every detail involved with Scaredy's birthday party. -Melanie

Wilson, T. (2012). *The princess and the packet of frozen peas.* (Ill. By S. deGennaro). Atlanta: Peachtree Publishers. 32 pp. ISBN: 978-1561456352. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

Wilson and deGennaro put a new spin on the classic Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale, *The Princess and the Pea*. This story follows the aftermath of Prince Han's marriage to Princess Eva. When Prince Han's brother, Prince Hedrick, decides it is time for him to find a wife he turns to Prince Han for advice. "The most important thing is to make sure she is a real princess," Han says, "A real princess is very beautiful and very sensitive." Hedrick, after observing his very sensitive sister-in-law, makes a bold decision to find an unreal princess. Could a thin camping mattress and a packet of frozen peas help him find the wife of his dreams? -Katie



Another Look at a Great Resource: A Professional Book Review

Goodman, K.S. (Ed.). (2006). *The truth about DIBELS: What it is, what it does.* Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann. 112 pp. ISBN: 978-0325010502. (Paperback); \$21.25.

DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills), we've heard the name; many of us have even used it, willingly or unwillingly. But what does it really test for? How do those 1-minute tests really help us to teach our students? Are the subtests helping or hindering our students? This book tries to answer those questions. I started with the appendix, which describes each subtest, how it is used and completed and what the DIBELS authors say it is testing for. P. David Pearson, in the forward states: "DIBELS is much more than a test—that it has, de facto, become an implicit (perhaps even an explicit) blueprint for a curriculum" (pg. ix). Pearson even feels that this pushes stakeholders into teaching to the test, focusing on phonics, phonemic awareness and fluency, forsaking other curricular goals including oral language and writing. Edited by Kenneth S. Goodman, each chapter in some way discusses what DIBELS does or, more to the authors' point, does not do and how it is actually being used in classrooms across the country. Each chapter focuses on how this assessment is leading us the wrong way, whether it is Goodman stating that the DIBELS view of reading is

“...that what happens in one minute is what happens in all reading” (pg. 10). Goodman also says that the DIBELS views learning to read as a series of sequential skills. This book presents a very different view of DIBELS and what it really tests for. -*Kathleen*

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