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Great Lakes, Great Books

by Lynette Marten Suckow



The Great Lakes Great Books Award list for the 2018-19 school year has a large offering of titles that include something for every member of your home and school families. Choose from non-fiction, graphic novels, poetry, and wordless books, to get you started. Read to your family or read with them; taking turns with the same book or making time to read separate books alongside each other. I remember favorite stories from my children's childhood because we read picture books every night and, as the years passed, we talked together about the novels they enjoyed as teens. Whatever your preferred method of sharing books with others, add some Great Lakes Great Books titles to your family reading list for the year.

Each year, The Great Lakes Great Books committee selects 40 books, published within the last two years, to introduce to K-12 classrooms. Teachers and librarians 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 book-marks, last year's winning titles, and the opportunity to nominate your favorite new book at www.michigan-reading.org under the Student Involvement tab.

THE SECRETS OF NINJA SCHOOL, by Deb Pilutti, is the tale of a summer camp experience like no other. Ruby looked forward to attending Master Willow's School for Ninjas, hoping to discover her own secret skill, as well as learn ninja kicks and jumps. She practiced the ways of the ninja and kept trying



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while other students found their secret abilities one after another. Ruby did not find hers—until one night when everyone confided that they were all homesick. Ruby was also homesick, but wanted to help the other students feel better. She used the sewing skills learned from her grandmother to make them stuffed dragons for bravery, and told them stories—just like her father did when she couldn't sleep. By helping her friends, she realized how to use the skills that she already possessed. At the end of the book, the author shares Ruby's Dragon Softie pattern with those readers who also want to rise to their own potential by developing a new skill.

THIRTY MINUTES OVER OREGON: A Japanese Pilot's World War II Story, by Marc Tyler Nobleman, begins with a timeline of events that drew the United States into World War II in 1941. After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii, the U.S. retaliated by bombing Tokyo, Japan's largest city. That led to another attack on the U.S., this time a mission to start forest fires by dropping bombs near the town of Brookings, Oregon. Nobuo Fujita, a Japanese pilot, catapulted his plane from a Japanese submarine and flew it to the Oregon coast. Although Fujita completed his bombing mission, only one bomb detonated, and it didn't burn very long in the recently rained-on forest. The war ended

Must Read Texts

in 1945, and Nobuo Fujita became a regular civilian, although he harbored some guilt about his part in wartime destruction. Twenty years later, the town of Brookings invited Fujita to a Memorial Day Festival to put old World War II resentment to rest. He accepted the invitation, and so began a 35-year journey of forgiveness and acceptance between the people of his home in Japan and his new friends in Oregon. Over time, he donated money to the Brookings Library for "children's books that celebrate other cultures" with the hope that understanding other people would prevent future wars. Nobuo Fujita died in 1997 at the age of 85. Watercolor illustrations by Melissa Iwai lend a sense of calm to this story of acceptance and healing.

BOB, by Wendy Mass and Rebecca Stead, is introduced by its cover with gold lettering and a small triangle of color set against sepia tones that give form to Bob and hints to the mystery inside. It's been five years—half of her life—since Livy visited Gran in Australia. She doesn't remember much about the things she enjoyed last time she was a visitor in Gran's house, but when she opens the upstairs closet, someone remembers her. A short green creature named Bob, dressed in burlap and feathers, stands before her talking about a promise to help him find his way home. As Livy reacquaints herself with Bob, she learns about friendship and keeping promises. Bob is very literal, which leads to some humorous situations, but he is also connected to Australian geography and the five-year drought that took place during Livy's absence. Everything comes around in the end, and it's a pleasure reading this well-constructed story to get there. The quiet sepia-colored illustrations by Nicholas Gannon are few in number, but effectively support the fantasy elements of this very contemporary story.

APPLE IN THE MIDDLE, by Dawn Quigley, features Apple Starkington, the cultural product of a Minneapolis, Minnesota suburb, who always feels like she doesn't quite belong. She speaks with an Australian accent when under pressure, is overly sensitive about her tan skin, and hasn't liked her name since someone told her that an apple is red like a Native American on the outside, but white on the inside. Born of a White

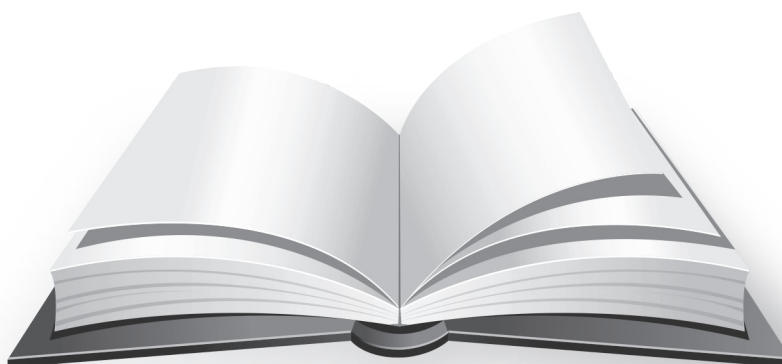
dad and an Ojibwe mom, who died giving birth to her, Apple has always lived with her dad and her stepmom. This summer, 15-year-old Apple is being reunited with her grandparents on the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation in North Dakota. The grandparents give her space to adjust to a very practical, rural way of life, a collective and inclusive sense of humor, a community of extended family that makes sure everyone is cared for, and an acceptance of people and nature that she has never experienced before. Finding the other half of her heritage is just what Apple needs to accept herself and confidently choose a path in the world. Since Michigan is also home to various Ojibwe tribes, Apple opens up their world to all of us.

HEY, KIDDO: How I Lost My Mother, Found My Father, and Dealt with Family Addiction, by Jarrett J. Krosoczka, is Jarrett's own story of growing up in a non-traditional family. Some kids with difficult childhoods are saved by music or books or caring for animals. Jarrett was saved by drawing, which could explain why his autobiography is also a graphic novel. As the subtitle implies, Jarrett's childhood experience is becoming more commonplace today, but still needs to be told. Jarrett was born to a single mom with a drug problem that led to stealing, dealing, and an inability to hold down a job. Within a few years, it became apparent that the grandparents needed to take custody of Jarrett, with help from his aunts who were still in high school. Although Jarrett didn't find out the facts of his parentage until he was also in high school, or that his mom was in and out of jail for years on drug charges, he felt the absence of his biological parents. He was very aware of the generational differences between his grandparents and his friends' parents. While his mother popped in and out of his life, his grandparents were always there for him, encouraging his ambitions with art classes and good schools. In spite of the angst that accompanies teenage years, Jarrett finally tracked down his father and tried to accept a new relationship with the man who deserted him at birth. Jarrett's artwork effectively conveys his emotional journey through the first 18 years of his life with a balanced color palette of sepia and gray panels laid out in readable order. Readers may be interested to know that Krosoczka grew up to

become a famous graphic novelist, creator of the Star Wars: Jedi Academy books, the Lunch Lady series, and author/illustrator of an impressive list of picture books.

Author Biography

Lynette Marten Suckow works at the Peter White Public Library's reference desk in Marquette, MI where she provides assistance with library resources and digital technology. She holds a master's degree in education from Northern Michigan University, is actively involved with the Marquette-Alger Reading Council, and has been a follower of the Great Lakes Great Books Award list for the last 12 years. She can be reached at lynette.suckow@gmail.com.





OFFICIAL BALLOT FOR THE 2019-20 GREAT LAKES GREAT BOOKS AWARD

COMPLETED BALLOTS MUST BE RECEIVED BY JANUARY 19, 2020. Ballots may be e-mailed to greatlakesgreatbooks@gmail.com or completed online at www.michiganreading.org under the Student Involvement tab. Enter one vote per student.

Grades K-1			Grades 2-3		
Vote	Title	Author	Vote	Title	Author
	Hello Lighthouse	Sophie Blackall		Zoey and Sassafra: Unicorns and Germs	Asia Citro
	The Day War Came	Nicola Davies		Love	Matt de la Pena
	We Don't Eat Our Classmates	Ryan Higgins		Islandborn	Junot Diaz
	I Walk With Vanessa	Kerascoet		Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History	Vashti Harrison
	Stretch to the Sun	Carrie Pearson		Julian is a Mermaid	Jessica Love
	The Secrets of Ninja School	Deb Pilutti		Desmond Cole Ghost Patrol: Major Monster Mess	Andres Miedoso
	Baby Monkey, Private Eye	Brian Selznick & David Serlin		Thirty Minutes Over Oregon	Marc Tyler Nobleman
	The Hidden Life of a Toad	Doug Wechsler		Vivid: Poems & Notes About Color	Julie Paschkis
Grades 4-5			Grades 6-8		
Vote	Title	Author	Vote	Title	Author
	Pashmina	Nidhi Chanani		Endling: The Last	Katherine Applegate
	Lafayette!	Nathan Hale		Sweep: The Story of a Girl and Her Monster	Jonathan Auxier
	I'm Just No Good at Rhyming	Chris Harris		Aru Shah and the End of Time	Roshani Chokshi
	Can I Touch Your Hair?	Irene Latham & Charles Waters		Illegal	Eoin Colfer & Andrew Donkin
	Bob	Wendy Mass & Rebecca Stead		Martin Rising: Requiem for a King	Andrea Davis Pinkney
	Knights vs. Dinosaurs	Matt Phelan		Apple in the Middle	Dawn Quigley
	Ghost Boys	Jewell Parker Rhodes		The Prince and the Dressmaker	Jen Wang
	Harbor Me	Jacqueline Woodson		Front Desk	Kelly Yang
Grades 9-12			Grades 9-12		
Vote	Title	Author	Teacher Name: _____		
	The Poet X	Elizabeth Acevedo	E-mail Address: _____		
	What If It's Us	Becky Albertalli & Adam Silvera	School or Library: _____		
	A Heart in a Body in the World	Deb Caletti	City: _____		
	(Don't) Call Me Crazy	Kelly Jensen, Editor	For more information about GLGB, please visit: www.michiganreading.org		
	Orphan Monster Spy	Matt Killeen			
	Hey, Kiddo	Jarrett Krosoczka			
	Blood Water Paint	Joy McCullough			
	On a Sunbeam	Tillie Walden			

BOOKS OPEN DOORS

Dates: March 14-16
Detroit, Michigan
2020 Annual Conference

Saturday:
Sara K. Ahmed
Cornelius Minor

Sunday:
Ernest Morrell

Monday:
Jennifer Serravallo

