



THE **TEACHING LIBRARIAN**

The magazine of the Ontario School Library Association
volume 16, number 3 ISSN 1188679X

Novel Ideas @ your library™



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14

- 14** Queen Victoria's Innovative Library
Janine Schaub
- 16** Participating in the Family Literacy Day World Record Attempt
Tara Truscott
- 18** From Technophobe to Blogophile – One Teacher's Transformation
Kerry Millar
- 25** Success with Reluctant Readers
Shari Nicholas and Pat Lankveld
- 26** Graduate-level Education for 21st-Century Teacher-Librarians
Dr. Jennifer Branch
- 30** Super Conference Photo Collage
Photos by Caitlin Nicholls and Brian Pudden
- 34** Reading by Flashlight: Confessions of a Genre Junkie
Jai O'Neal
- 36** Where Have the Parents Gone in YA Fiction?
Ramona Matthews
- 38** Meet the Author: Kean Soo
Maria Martella



16



38

- | | |
|---|---|
| 6 The Editor's Notebook | 12 Professional Resources
Brenda Dillon |
| 7 President's Report
Marilyn Willis | 20 Idea File |
| 8 Connected Librarian
Sandra Ziemniak | 29 Drawn to the Form
Scott Robbins |
| 9 School Library Seen
Kayla Adams | 41 Book Buzz
Martha Martin |
| 11 Rita Resourceful | |

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TL mission

THE TEACHING LIBRARIAN

The Teaching Librarian is the official magazine of the Ontario School Library Association. It is published three times a year to support OSLA members in providing significant and effective library programs and services. *The Teaching Librarian* promotes library programs and curriculum development that furthers exemplary educational objectives. The magazine fosters effective collaboration within the school library community and provides a forum to share experience and expertise.

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Jennifer Marriott



TL guidelines

- V. 17, no. 1 "Collaboration @ your library"
Deadline: May 11, 2009
- V. 17, no. 2 "Freedom @ your library"
Deadline: September 21, 2009
- V. 17, no. 3 "Celebrate @ your library"
Deadline: February 2, 2010

Articles of 150–250 words, 500 words, or 800–1,300 words are welcome. Articles, when approved, should be accompanied by good quality illustrations and/or pictures whenever possible. Text must be sent electronically, preferably in a MS Word (or compatible) file. Pictures can be printed or digital (minimum size and quality are 4" x 6" and 300 dpi, approximately 700 MB and in jpeg format if electronic). With photos which contain a recognized individual, please secure the individual's permission in writing for the use of the photo. Photos taken at public events, or crowd shots taken in a public place do not require permission from the subjects. All submissions are subject to editing for consistency, length and style. Journalistic style is preferred. Articles must include in the body of the text the working title, name of author, and email address. OSLA reserves the right to use pictures in other OSLA publications unless permission is limited or denied at the time of publishing. Any questions about submissions should be directed to the Editor of *The Teaching Librarian*:
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Novel Ideas @ your library™

Diana Maliszewski



My husband loves words. That's to be expected, since he is a writer. He loves discovering the etymology, the origin of words and how they evolve over time. He explained to me, as I struggled for the "right" approach to this column, that the word "novel" stems from a Latin term that simply means new. The concept that a lengthy fictional narrative stems from an original idea led to our use of the term novel to describe such a piece of work. In this issue, "Novel Ideas @ Your Library," we take advantage of this dual definition

to explore both narratives and innovations.

If you were fortunate enough to attend Super Conference 2009 this year, you would have had a chance to immerse yourself in all sorts of novel ideas. I enjoyed listening to Will Richardson challenge his audience to embrace the new technologies our students adore to engage them in their learning. I'm looking forward to actively trying this out, as my school was fortunate enough to win \$30,000 in the Best Buy Best In Class Fund contest; the students created a music video, featuring a song they wrote, to describe how they would creatively use products available at Best Buy to enhance teaching and learning in new ways. Right now, however, I'm waist-deep in "passport chats" for the Forest of Reading®. The students and teachers in my school schedule time to discuss the Blue Spruce, Silver Birch, and Red Maple books with each other. It's a thrill to see how passionate kids can get about a really good novel.

School libraries are ideal sources of novels and novel ideas: enjoy discovering both in this edition of the magazine. ■





ONTARIO SCHOOL LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

President's Report

Marilyn Willis

Despite the increase in planning time responsibilities and the myriad of curriculum areas to support, the teacher-librarian is there ready to meet the needs of students, staff, and extended communities. You are always willing to share and support each other and, more importantly, do it with a smile and with good nature.

Lisa Weaver is a good example of such an educational leader. Her year as president of the OSLA has been full of ups and downs and yet she never lost her optimism and her clarity of vision. In the upcoming year, I hope to fill the big shoes that she has left me and continue with the goal to help teacher-librarians and library support staff to do the best job they can under optimized working conditions. A huge thank you goes to Lisa in recognition of her efforts to ensure that teacher-librarians and all school library staff have had a voice and that it was heard.

Together with the OSLA council I hope to maintain that strong voice. It's important that as OSLA members we keep each other informed and continue to collaborate. For collaboration, as we all know, is the key to accomplishing even the hardest task.

Thanks to the wonderful staff and volunteers from OLA, we had yet another successful Super Conference where everyone had an opportunity to speak "librarianese." It was wonderful to see so many people wearing their "I support School Libraries" buttons and to watch attendees talking excitedly about a presentation they had just been to or a keynote speaker they had been inspired by.

I anticipate that many opportunities will arise in the near future for us to promote school libraries. The recent study *Exemplary School Libraries in Ontario*, a joint effort between OLA, People For Education, and Queen's University, reinforces the idea that the people in the libraries are just as important, if not more so, than the things on the shelves. You will be receiving a copy of this important report with this issue of *The Teaching Librarian*.

As you carry out all your daily activities, do remember to take time for yourself and your family. The entire school community is enriched because of your work. As Mattie Stepanek says, "Unity is strength... when there is teamwork and collaboration, wonderful things can be achieved." ■



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School libraries are always looking for new and exciting ways to catch the eyes of their students and draw them in. Whether they're entering JK or just finishing up their final year in high school, today's youth can be called tech comfortable, if not downright tech savvy. Luckily, many libraries are making the switch to more technology-friendly programming in order to add some flavour to the library experience. Try adding the following links to your library's web page as a way to update your program and broaden your library's reach.

Spice up your search engines

Tired of using the same old search engines? For a different spin on searches try these sites:

Clusty acts like a regular search engine but returns the hits in clusters of related ideas or themes that are related to the original query. Users can also choose to view the hits by clusters, sources, or sites giving them more opportunity to refine their searches.
<http://clusty.com>

Kartoo displays the search results in graphic organizer form with lots of colourful visuals. Great for users who prefer work organized associatively rather than linearly! <http://kartoo.com>

PicSearch allows users to search over three billion images. It's colourful, user-friendly, and boasts that all images are internally filtered and family friendly.
www.picsearch.com

Online books and magazines

Can't afford to buy several copies of the same book? Find magazines too pricey for the flimsy paper they're printed on? Here's an option...

Google Book Search gives students and teachers more online reading options. Although navigating the site takes a bit of practice, it houses a wealth of book and magazine titles, many with "full view" access.
www.books.google.com

Educational games

Games in the library? Now that's a novel idea! Although games are a no-no in some libraries, the following educational games offered by The Media Awareness Network support the media curriculum and student learning. Try changing the game link every couple of weeks to keep the kids coming back to your site.
www.media-awareness.ca/english/games

Jo Cool or Jo Fool

This game teaches students how to make smart choices about what they see on the Internet by answering a series of questions related to Jo's favourite websites (ages 9–12).

CoCo's AdverSmarts

This fun game asks students to create their own advertisement for a new breakfast cereal in order to understand the idea of gimmicks (ages 5–8).

Privacy Playground:

The First Adventure of the Three CyberPigs

In this game the CyberPigs play on their favourite website and encounter marketing ploys, spam and a close encounter with a not-too-friendly wolf, all designed to help kids spot marketing strategies and avoid online predators (ages 8–10).



Learning to podcast at Super Conference

CyberSense and Nonsense:

The Second Adventure of The Three CyberPigs

In this game students learn how to authenticate online information, understand the rules of netiquette, distinguish between fact and opinion, and how to recognize bias and harmful stereotyping in online content (ages 9–12).

Allies and Aliens

This game takes the student on an intergalactic adventure designed to develop critical thinking skills so they can identify bias, prejudice, and discrimination in the world around them (grades 7–8).

The Target is You!: Alcohol Advertising Quiz

Get your students to take this interactive quiz designed to increase their awareness of how alcohol is marketed to youths. They will begin to understand how marketing messages can influence their attitudes towards drinking (grades 6–8).

Online tutorials for Teachers

How do you support teacher PD in your library? Do teachers want to know more about technological issues, but have trouble attending your PD sessions during lunch or after school? Try linking online tutorials to your website so teachers can complete the “how-to” tutorials on their own, as often as they wish.

TASI

Direct your teachers to this free, interactive tutorial designed to improve their image searching skills. It looks at the pros and cons of using the Internet to find copyright free images and examines the legal and financial implications of using digital images.
www.vts.intute.ac.uk/tutorial/image searching

Webtools4u2use

Teachers will love this dynamic site! It contains a wealth of information on the topic of web 2.0 tools and how they can be used both in the library and in the classroom. Teachers can browse the huge list of tools and try them out in a comfortable and safe environment. <http://webtools4u2use.wikispaces.com> ■

SCHOOL LIBRARY SEEN – A COMIC PERSPECTIVE

Kayla Adams

“IS THERE A SEARCH
FUNCTION THAT FINDS
THE GOOD BOOKS?”



THE GATHERING PLACE

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CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS

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Dear Rita,

I find that students are using the library more for playing games than studying. I had to put a stop to playing cards a year ago when money started to appear on tables – I heard students say “Casino Rama is here and now!” I’ve just started to allow chess again after having problems with students throwing pieces at each other, but the noise level has increased considerably. Do you have any guidelines for this?

*Thank you,
Blackjack Blocker*

Dear Blocker,

This is what I would consider a good problem! First of all, it’s good because it indicates that the students in your school feel comfortable enough to come to the library to play their games; and secondly, it’s an easily solved problem that might lead to a more engaging library environment.

I understand not allowing them to use the library as a place to gamble. We are not casinos; however, if they knew you were receptive to games that didn’t involve gambling, maybe they would then help you with the volume control necessary for the school library to function.

Would you consider setting aside an area in the library just for game playing during lunch or for students on spare periods when the library is not booked for classes? Empower the students by letting them take the lead to organize a games club or elicit the assistance of other staff who might be experts in certain games and invite them to help supervise on those days.

As far as banning chess when someone throws a chess piece, why punish all the game-players? Provide the culprit with the choice to stay and abide by the library expectations or decide to leave. Let the others carry on in a civilized manner.

I’m not sure whether game playing on the computers is an issue, but if so, that too can be addressed. Obviously, your first priority for student use of the library is for classes doing schoolwork, homework, and research, but having said that, the school library should be a community learning commons. Always ask – are the students learning while they play these games? Let this help you decide which games

might best be included. As you know, a lot more learning goes on than we sometimes realize when kids socialize, either in person or while using the social web via computers, iPods, or cell phones. Game playing is one way they socialize. Think of all the skills they are using while playing games – teamwork, decision-making, strategy, critical thinking, and multi-tasking come to mind.

The school library is a great place to be. Having all types of learners use it for a variety of reasons helps keep it (and us!) vibrant.

Rita

*Do you have any school
library concerns or gripes?
Need advice?*

*Just ask Rita!
She’s reliable, reasonable,
rich in experience...
and always right!*

*contact Rita at
rita@accessola.com
You’ll never regret it!*



She’s reliable, reasonable, rich in experience ...and always right!

Booktalks and Beyond: Promoting Great Genre Reads to Teens

Lucy Schall
2007
9781591584667

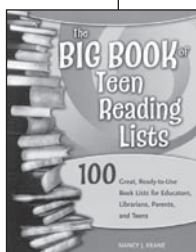
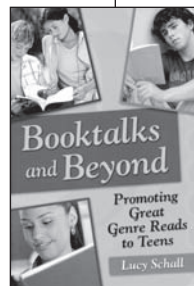
Looking for a booktalking guide for all those new books you've been buying? Check out *Booktalks and Beyond*, a collection of booktalks for 101 books published between 2001–2006, all selected for their teen appeal.

The titles are divided into genres, including Issues, Contemporary, Adventure/Survival, Mystery/Suspense, Fantasy/Science Fiction/Paranormal, History, and Multiple Cultures, and are further divided into narrower themes or topics. The information for each book includes publication information, a list of themes/topics, a summary/description, read-aloud/reader response prompts, the booktalk, suggested learning opportunities, and a list of related works. A detailed table of contents and a thorough index make it easy to find the desired booktalk.

Highly recommended for anyone interested in booktalks for teens.

The Big Book of Teen Reading Lists: 100 Great, Ready-to-Use Book Lists for Educators, Librarians, Parents, and Teens

Nancy J. Keane
2006
9781591583332



With lists divided into sections – Genre, Character, Books about Self,

Setting, Common Themes, and Audience – there's something here for everyone. These lists have many uses: collection development tools, reader's advisory

tools, display prompts, and suggested reading lists for teachers interested in having students read subject-related fiction. There are photocopy-ready bookmarks, too. A thorough index makes it easy to find particular titles, topics, or authors.

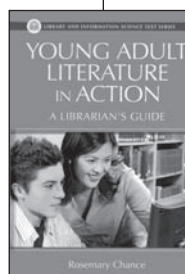
Highly recommended – very useful and quite interesting.

Young Adult Literature in Action: A Librarian's Guide

(Library and information Science Text Series)
Rosemary Chance
2008
9781591585589

If you're looking for an introduction to books written for young adults (12–18 years old), then *Young Adult Literature in Action* is well worth reading. The author combines information about young adult literature with suggestions for reading promotion and, in only seven chapters, covers

an introduction to young adults and YA literature, and a variety of genres and formats (e.g. quick reads, realistic fiction, fantastic fiction, informational books,



cultural diversity, and intellectual freedom.)

An excellent introductory text for anyone interested in books written for young adults. Highly recommended.

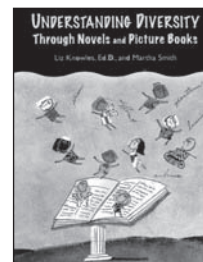
The Natural World Through Children's Literature: An Integrated Literature Approach

(Through Children's Literature Series)
Carol M. Butzow and John W. Butzow
2007
9781591583516

The Natural World Through Children's Literature suggests 27 books, suitable for students in grades K–3, which can be used to teach integrated units focused on natural science (life science and earth science). Each book suggestion includes a

variety of activities in a number of curriculum areas (language arts, writing, social studies, science, mathematics, arts, and information literacy), and materials such as a vocabulary list, activity pages, and crossword puzzles are provided (which can be copied for classroom use).

Primary teachers will find *The Natural World Through Children's Literature* useful. Teachers who like this integrated, book-focused approach will want to check out other titles in the series. Recommended.



Understanding Diversity Through Novels and Picture Books

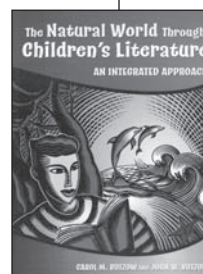
Liz Knowles and Martha Smith
2007
9781591584407

Given the current focus on such things as diversity, safe schools (which, ideally, would include understanding and respect for each other), and character education, *Understanding Diversity* is a timely title.

Knowles and Smith cover 16 areas of diversity, including race/ethnicity, ageism, exceptionalities, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and religion. For each area, they provide an introduction, a definition, annotations, a bibliography, discussion questions, featured authors, annotated journal articles, resources, and awards. They've been quite thorough and *Understanding Diversity* is jam-packed with information for teachers of junior and intermediate grades (4–8).

An American focus is present throughout this book and is particularly noticeable in the sections on racial/ethnic groups. The concept is certainly worthwhile, and *Understanding Diversity* is

a good start, but Canadian teacher-librarians would have to provide supplementary information and resources to support the understanding of diversity in Canada.



Brenda Dillon

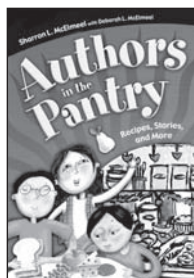
Would have to be supplemented with Canadian information and resources. Recommended.

Authors in the Pantry: Recipes, Stories, and More

Sharron L. McElmeel, with Deborah L. McElmeel
2007
9781591583219

McElmeel presents profiles of 50 popular children's authors, accompanied by interesting facts and anecdotes as well as recipes contributed by the authors. Some of these recipes are personal favourites of the authors while others were developed to connect with the author's life or books. What an interesting way to help children in grades K–6 develop their "literary taste"!

Recommended.



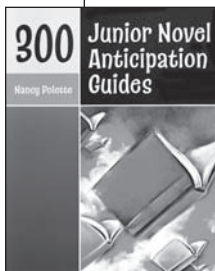
300 Junior Novel Anticipation Guides

Nancy Polette
2006
9781591584223

An anticipation guide is a series of value statements, with which readers are asked to agree or disagree. This guide can be used to introduce a novel and to spark thought and discussion both before and after reading the novel.

Polette presents a collection of 300 anticipation guides for novels suitable for students in grades 4–8. Each guide is a single page and permission is granted for copying for classroom use.

Recommended.



ei SPRING 2009 EDUCATION INSTITUTE

The Education Institute is Canada's own continuing education program for librarians, teacher-librarians, and all other library and information workers!

Since 2003, well-respected and knowledgeable speakers have contributed to a full roster of audio conferences, web conferences, and online courses – all offered to you in the comfort of your own space. The model of gathering several participants at one site for one low cost has been highly successful in many workplaces. These sites have discovered the benefits of combining face-to-face pre and post discussion with the distance-learning component.

The timing has been an issue with school library audiences, and we know you are eagerly awaiting the "EI-to-Go" service which we had anticipated would be in place by now. We hope you will be patient just a while longer! EI-to-Go is in full planning mode, and by the next issue of *The Teaching Librarian*, we expect to have the full launch details!

In the interim, let me tell you about a great online course scheduled for July.

Rekindle the Fire! CanLit for Children and Youth

4-week online course starting Monday, July 6
with Joanne de Groot

- Spend time renewing your love of literature!
- Deepen and strengthen your knowledge and appreciation of Canadian authors, and illustrators and their works
- Understand more about the world of publishing and distributing CanLit
- Explore the historical roots of Canadian Children's Literature and follow through the decades to the current trends
- Discuss issues of collection development

Joanne de Groot has been a teacher-librarian and director of a medium-sized public library system. She recently completed her PhD in elementary Education, and teaches courses on children's literature, education technology, and Web 2.0 in the Teacher-Librarianship by Distance Learning Program at the University of Alberta.

To register or for more information visit
www.educationinstitute.ca



Students Interview Holaine Becker for IRle-Forest Interactive



QUEEN VICTORIA'S INNOVATION



Queen Victoria Public School, in the heart of the Parkdale neighbourhood of Toronto, is a creative wonder. Vibrant artwork everywhere gives the whole school a welcoming feeling. The artistic vibe is a tribute to the many students, staff, and local artists who have worked together to make art a part of their daily lives. For all the school's charms, the real jewel of the place is the library.

The teacher-librarian, Milica O'Brien, has poured her creative personality into every part of the library and has successfully made it a place that is enticing and exciting for both students and staff. A pirate skeleton guards an open treasure chest with jewel-laden texts at his feet; a little stove with a big pot of cookbooks stirs up some interest in reading, and a flock of sparkly fairies hovers over a large collection of pink and purple books. It makes you wish you were a reluctant reader in need of persuasion. Teacher resources that once stood unused on a back shelf are given a theatrical layout in one whole section of the library. Milica has worked hard to link numeracy and literacy through the arts. Easels display famous prints, steps are covered with art books linked to the curriculum, and math manipulatives are paired with resources in bins.



ATIVE LIBRARY

Janine Schaub

The library is designed around themed areas to inspire readers. A display of popular books in wire baskets is nicknamed “the drive-thru” by students. The “living room” is a quiet place for hanging out with a book on a comfy couch beside a huge fish tank. Another carpeted nook is specifically designed for the kindergartens with bins right on the floor so that little students can see every book cover. Baskets along another wall are grouped by theme for easy access by tiny hands. Another reading area targets the school’s Tibetan-Canadian population, which is the second largest in North America. Milica takes delight in spoiling a small army of grade five library helpers. She calls them her “staff” and they work daily to keep the many displays and bins of specialized collections in order.

Milica has also had a key role in co-ordinating and developing many storytelling walls that adorn the school. As chairperson of the school’s arts committee, she has worked with other staff members, local artists, and community organizations like “Inner City Angels” and “Mariposa in the Schools” to help students work with artists to successfully complete many ambitious projects. Some of the murals have been crafted in the style of famous artists. Classes study an artist’s body of work and then develop an idea for their mural. Other

murals are originals and have themes like “heroes and she-roes.” One student’s contribution was a portrait of the school’s caretaker who was his hero because the man always had a smile and a kind word when the boy first arrived at the school. Some murals wind their way up several flights of stairs telling traditional stories like *Anansi the Spider*, or have a curriculum focus such as a study of the urban community found in the Parkdale neighbourhood mural.

Students at Queen Victoria clearly feel very connected to their school and adore the library, which sets the tone for the whole place. As one student put it, “My dad wants to buy a house and move but I hope we stay in our apartment forever because I love this school.” ■



Participating in the Family Literacy

Tara Truscott

As a teacher-librarian who has worked in different school libraries with different school cultures, I have found that sometimes a book will mysteriously disappear. It is not signed out; neither is it awaiting repair... it is just gone! The book that most commonly suffers this fate is the latest edition of the *Guinness Book of World Records™*. While I am initially frustrated by this turn of events, I know that some group of students, likely labeled reluctant readers, are in fact poring over this tome, undeterred by a looming due date. *Guinness'* book fascinates a diverse group of children and that is why I organized my school's participation in the attempt to break a world record organized by ABC-Canada in January 2009.

ABC-Canada is a not-for-profit organization funded by the private sector. Their mission is to promote literacy, specifically adult literacy. They fund public service announcements and programs to encourage adults to improve their reading, writing, and math skills. As a teacher-librarian, I became familiar with the organization as a result of their Family Literacy Day,

held every January 27. In the past, I have worked with school staff to organize Family Literacy Day activities such as "snuggle up and read" events, or curriculum focused literacy nights. None, however, were as powerful as this year's attempt to break a world record.

Picture it: a gym and a library full of students, a big screen and a microphone at the front of each location, a leader reading aloud in one of our official languages, while teachers seated with each group join in reading chorally. The students listen and laugh as the adults read, in the same order as hundreds of thousands of adults and children across the country, five stories by Robert Munsch, honorary chair of Family Literacy Day.

We were part of an attempt to break the *Guinness World Record™* for "Most Children Reading With an Adult, Multiple Locations." This record is currently held by the United States (78,791 readers). At Mount Joy Public School, 460 readers and 23 adult leaders participated. In accordance with *Guinness* regulations, we had one witness for every 100 participants including



Family Literacy Day World Record Attempt

Markham's Deputy Mayor, a Regional Councillor, and a School Board Trustee. Our school was just one, from over 1,500 registered locations, where over 190,000 Canadians participated. If all locations had the appropriate number of witnesses and sent the required documentation to ABC-Canada, our country will have more than doubled the existing record.

Initially, planning this event was a daunting task – there was a 20-page guide listing the rules and guidelines that needed to be followed to ensure that our event could count towards the *Guinness World Record*™. I was thrilled to discover that finding appropriate witnesses was easy. People from the community were excited to volunteer their time to witness our event. It really promoted a sense of togetherness. We were united as a school – reading the same books – at the same time – all the while picturing the same thing happening at other locations across the country: schools, public libraries, daycare centres, and individual homes. Students aged 4–14 participated in our event – and few events captivate a group with such a wide age range.

Now is the hard part – students ask me regularly “Did we break the world record?” And I have to reply that we don’t know yet. Individual locations sent their documentation to ABC-Canada by the end of February. They collated the required statements and forwarded them to *Guinness*. In the meantime, we wait with anticipation to discover if we will get a line in the book that somehow continues to disappear from our school libraries!

For more information, go to: www.abc-canada.org

This Family Literacy Day World Record Attempt took place in the 24 hour period beginning at 2 pm EST January 23rd. Participating adults read aloud *Pigs; Mortimer; Purple, Green and Yellow; Marmel, Marmel, Marmel*; and *Something Good* by Robert Munsch in this order to groups of up to 35 children. ■



Educational Computing Organization of Ontario



Want to learn and/or share innovative usage of technology in the classroom? The Educational Computing Organization of Ontario (ECOO) will be holding its 30th annual conference November 11–13, 2009, at the Sheraton Parkway North, in Richmond Hill, Ontario. Deadline for presentation proposals is April 24. Conference registration begins in September and Early Bird pricing is in effect until October.

For more information, please see www.ecoo.org, and click on “Conference.”



From One

If I've inspired you to bring blogging into your personal and/or professional life, here are some helpful hints to get you started:

1 Read lots of blogs

Reading blogs helps you to figure out how blogging works. It will show you that just about anyone out there can create a decent blog. All it takes is commitment, focus and an idea.

2 Find your niche (and stop lurking!)

Are you an amateur photographer? Birdwatcher? Maker of sock monkeys? Well, guess what? Out there in the blogosphere, there are others just like you. As you explore and read all kinds of blogs, you may just discover a community of like-minded individuals. Once you've found some favourite spots, quit lurking and start interacting! Leave comments. Engage in discussions. Explore the tremendous interactive potential of blogging.

3 Select a blog platform and start publishing

A blog platform is the online tool you use to help you create your blog. There are plenty of free options. Some of the most popular choices include: WordPress, Blogger, TypePad and LiveJournal. Do some research to see which one has the features that best meet your needs and your skill level. Do not be afraid of the words "skill level." I am proof that a good "Frequently Asked Questions" feature can take a person basically anywhere they want to go. Publish your first post. Then publish another. Repeat. You get it.

4 Bring it to the classroom

Now that you're a pro, share what you know with your students. They will realize your true coolness. You may be revealed as a Computer God or Goddess. But first, you need to make the blog a secure place for students to learn and share their work. That's easy! You can adjust the blog's privacy settings so that only certain people will be able to read it, and with the click of your mouse, you can set up comment moderation (so that student comments must be approved by you before they will appear on the blog). Check with your admin regarding Internet guidelines and send information packages home to parents. Now you're ready to go!

My completely surprising journey into the blogosphere began in the middle of my first job interview. I was fresh out of Teacher's College. I was ready for anything. I was wearing my new suit (my only suit). I was prepared for questions about balanced literacy and numeracy programs, parents and behaviour problems, classroom management and assessment, ESL, and the curriculum. I was especially prepared for The Technology Question. The reason I was prepared for The Technology Question was because I had asked my boyfriend what I should say the night before.

"Talk about blogs," he said.

"Um... blogs?" I replied, oh-so-casually.

Not one to be daunted in the face of cluelessness, my boyfriend gave me the five-minute "Blogging/Basic Computer Stuff for Dummies" talk and sent me on my way. As a person whose computer use began and ended with "typing things out," I found all of this new information terrifying and at the same time, wonderful for impressing administration during an interview. When interview day arrived and I heard the words, "How would you bring technology into your classroom?" I perked up and said, with as much confidence as I could muster, "Someday I might like to start a class blog" (Emphasis on the someday and the might).

Who knew that these words were magic? From all the raised eyebrows in the room you would have thought I'd said I was planning on getting my kids to develop software and rebuild hard drives and do

From Technophobe to Blogophile – Teacher's Transformation

Kerry Millar

web conferences with Bill Gates. Suddenly, the cool, young teachers on the interview panel wanted me in their club. Only the principal looked lost. He asked me to explain the term “blog.” I couldn’t believe it, but it appeared he wanted an answer. “Um... it’s like a website, but you can add new stuff to it all the time. Like an online diary.”

Well... they loved it. In the end, I didn’t take that job, but I just couldn’t shake the blog idea. I wanted to know more. I wanted to understand the magic.

So I did what I usually do when I want to feel smarter. I started reading. Except, for the first time, the bulk of my reading was on the screen rather than on the page. I discovered almost immediately that there are blogs about everything. For any topic you can think of, there’s likely someone out there with a lot to write about it. I had little interest in reading blogs about cars or crocheting or what some stranger’s dog ate for lunch. But luckily, I soon found the blogs about children’s books. Paradise. This was where I belonged. I’d worked for several years as a children’s bookseller, so it just felt right to me. It was amazing how many blogs out there were about kid’s books. This was the Kidlit-osphere. For about a year, I lurked (read blogs but never commented on them) and when I felt brave, I started to leave comments. After a while, I couldn’t believe it, but I wanted in.

After looking into different options for blog platforms, and spending many hours scanning blog tip sites, with the click of my mouse, I sent my first “post” out into the world on July 12, 2007. I think one person read it. My boyfriend. Now, almost two years and 400 posts later, I feel secure in saying that I’m not a novice blogger anymore. I write at www.shelfelf.wordpress.com where I review children’s and YA books, host authors for interviews, post book-related news, and participate in all sorts of cool Kidlit-osphere initiatives. I also post reviews monthly at a new collaborative blog called GuysLitWire, where a group of bloggers review and recommend the best reads for teen guys. I am a member of the advisory council for readergirlz, the amazing online reading community that inspires teen girls to read, reflect, and reach out to their communities. I have also been a judge for the past

two years for the Cybils Awards which are presented by kidlit bloggers to the authors of the best books published each year in all sorts of genres. My life is full of bloggish delight.

Sounds like a happy ending? Absolutely! But it’s not over yet. This year, my third year of teaching, I brought blogging into my Grade 5 classroom. I figured it made sense to create a class blog about what I love most: books. I decided it would be fairly easy to translate student book reviews into the blog format, and after some planning, checking with administration, creating the basic blog template and settings, and collecting a whole pile of permission forms, my class blog was born. My students post book reviews of the titles they complete for independent and personal reading. They leave comments on each other’s posts. They’ve loved it from the start. Our blog is still very much a baby blog, just getting off the ground, but it’s fun for everybody to see it take shape, and gosh darn it, it just looks so impressive. You can visit our growing blog at: www.bookboostsandbeyond.blogspot.com.

I think it must be obvious by now that I’m not scared of technology anymore. In fact, I’m well on the way to true computer geek status. I’m the girl pressing her nose up against the window of the local Mac store. I have hugged my computer. I’ve started to podcast with my students. Comic Life, a desktop-publishing program designed to create comic strips or arrange photos, is next on the list. When my colleagues ask me techie questions, I no longer do a double take. So, what do I love most about where blogging has brought me? Well, aside from the stacks of advance reading copies of fantastic books publishers send me, I’d have to say the most exciting thing about all of this has been the not knowing. Not knowing where I was headed, and then being completely delighted when I arrived. That’s exciting, and scary, but it’s a good kind of scary, a *fantastic* kind of scary. I’m eager to see where blogging takes my students and me next.

Funnily enough, the boyfriend has just started blogging with his high school Writer’s Craft class. Today, he needed me to show him how to put a poll into his blog. Go figure. ■

*“Someday
I might like
to start a
class blog”
(Emphasis on
the someday
and the
might)."*

Matching the perfect book to the right reader is part art, part science. Presenting these gems in just the right way can capture the interest of future fans. We asked school library staff throughout the province how they introduce new books and novels to their students, staff, and patrons in exciting and innovative ways.

One strategy I have used to present the books from the Forest of Reading® to our students is a variation on the “Book Talk.” I prepare short descriptions on each book, usually found on the OLA site. Students pick a description randomly. They must identify the book from the description using the clues in the blurb, title, and cover illustration. It’s just like a scavenger hunt. In partners, they prepare a mini book talk to present their book to the rest of the group. After about five minutes, each pair presents their book to the group. In that way, the students are more engaged in the process and all the books in one category are presented in one orientation session. This has worked very well for me and for our students.

Evelyne Altchech
Mazo de la Roche Public School
York Region District School Board

When introducing a new book I search YouTube and other Internet sites for unique online resources I can integrate into a short presentation. For example, when I introduced James Patterson’s *Maximum Ride* series I found a movie trailer on YouTube and a video clip featuring the author. Patterson’s website also featured five chapters from one of his books in an audio format. The sign-up list for this series is still growing, and the books have been circulating since the fall.

Randy Gould, Teacher-Librarian
Sir Alexander Mackenzie Senior Public School
Toronto District School Board

Student engagement and enthusiasm is key when introducing new material. My go-to strategy? Good marketing and creativity! This is evident when older, seemingly forgotten novels are suddenly reinvigorated when labelled “vintage” and are showcased on a shelf dubbed “Old School.”

Catchy expressions also prove to be quite motivational, like telling my students to “give a chapter a chance!” encourages them to read the first chapter from a novel and take it for a “test drive.” If they still don’t engage with the text? No problem – a new novel is always waiting to be explored!

Finally, the game “Random Quote” is something that I created in order to encourage greater student attention

and interest. When introducing a new text, I will choose an exciting passage and read it aloud to stimulate discussion questions from students – who said that? What happened? Where? Depending on your audience the level of questioning can be adjusted to support and enhance inferencing, synthesizing... whatever your current literary focus may be!

Marla Zupan, Teacher-Librarian and Grade 7/8 teacher
St. Bonaventure Catholic School
Toronto Catholic District School Board

Here are two things that we do to introduce new books to our staff and students:

With all credit going to an idea published in LMC, we send out a list of new titles (loosely group by subject) by email a few times a year. We include the name of a fake author/title (always a pun, courtesy of one of our library staff); for example, *Paris in the Winter* by Francis White. People are encouraged to email us with the “fake,” and all correct answers go in a draw for home-baked goodies. We average 40 responses each time – which means there are at least 40 people at our school who have cast their eye over our list of new acquisitions! This generates more than a few inquiries and items checked out.

We also hold a book display/mobile checkout in our staff common room once or twice a year (before Christmas/March/summer breaks), to show off the great books we have to many of the staff that say they have no time to come to the library. It’s a great social time, and stimulates a lot of conversations about books, authors, and issues.

Shelagh Straughn, Librarian &
Assistant Housemaster of Wright House
Trinity College School
Port Hope, Ontario

Helping students make the connection between a new feature film and the original novel can create a renewed enthusiasm for award-winning novels. The feature film *Because of Winn-Dixie* had just been released in the theatres. Many students and teachers were unaware the Newbery Honor Book had been published five years prior to the release of the film. I took advantage of my library news segment at our school assembly by speaking in role as India Opal, the irresistible 10-year-old heroine in the novel. After my presentation, I was overwhelmed with requests for the novel. I eventually had to buy additional copies. Teachers also mentioned the entire audience was hanging onto every word I said.

Wendy D’Angelo, Teacher-Librarian

Wells Street Public School
York Region District School
Board

The theme for Volume 17 Issue 1's
edition of Idea File will be how
do you entice/persuade/encourage/
manage to hook in teachers to
work together with you? Send your
submissions before May 19, 2009
to TingLeditor@gmail.com.

library collection.

We have begun a Podcasting Book Review Club. Using the digital technology available in our iMac labs, many classes in our school partner with the library for project-based learning. We selected five Grade 11 students, who had experience with this technology, to become our "technical team." These students wrote succinct reviews of their favourite books, and then, using Garageband on the iMacs, recorded themselves reading their book reviews out loud, and added music and graphics, to create podcasts. We decided to post these podcasted book reviews on an iWeb account, and then linked the iWeb account to the school website. We launched our podcasts during literacy month, with a school-wide advertising campaign, and have had much interest from many students who have volunteered to create more book reviews to be made into podcasts! We hope that the number of student-created podcasts will continue to grow, that peer-recommended reads will increase our students' interest in reading, and that eventually, we can even have staff record reviews of their favourite books! To watch and listen, go to www.albertcampbell.org, click on library, and then click on podcasts.

Heather Peterson and Anne Werfhorst,
Teacher-Librarians
Albert Campbell Collegiate Institute
Toronto District School Board

What better way to learn about a new book than from a trusted peer?

First, I solicit students who return books that were on the "brand new" shelf. If they are enthusiastic about a book when they return it, I ask if they'd consider producing a "book byte," a one-minute recorded book review. I initially used a *Twilight* poster as incentive and every byte earned a student a ticket into the draw for the poster. Now, I don't have to offer any carrots; students just like how fun it is to record themselves.

The next step is for students to compose a one-minute script. I record them using Audacity, which is an open source, freely available to download, cross platform recorder, <http://audacity.sourceforge.net>. It's also on the Peel Board image so I show them how to use the program at school and then they can use it for lots of other activities, such as Reader's Theatre.

Once I have the audio file, the student snaps a picture of the book's cover using our school camera and they save it in our shared drive. For this reason, I insist that all book bytes are based on books that are part of our

photo. It is incredibly easy to do this. I then send the file to their homeroom or language arts teacher and myself. They play the file either during prime time (which is our homeroom period) or during the start of a language class. It's a great way to introduce new books. I keep a master file of all the book byte links, which is posted on our school website in the library section.

If the book byte is really well done, I've also burned the audio file to a CD and played them during morning announcements.

Some samples can be found here:

<http://postcard.fm/03f448ep>

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

<http://postcard.fm/7a7a1bbp> *Firestorm* by David Klass

Janice Robertson
Glenhaven Senior Public School
Peel District School Board

One way to introduce new books to the library is to find them mentors, books that have been around for a while and that are known within the school. New books are paired up with old books that have parallel themes, settings, characters, plots, or distinctive stylistic similarities. The pairs of books are grouped in sets of 10 books, usually five or six groups of books set out on the same number of tables depending on the sizes of the classes. When classes come into the library to select independent reading at the beginning of a semester, they work in groups of four or five students to look at the covers, read the jacket blurbs, scan the pages, and figure how the books match up. Each student at each table is responsible for reporting back to the class the titles of two books at the table, providing a one-sentence summary of what has been discovered about each of the books and, finally, a one-sentence explanation of why the books should be paired. The rest of the class records the pairings on a list of all of the books, arranged in two columns by group.

From a practical point of view, one needs to have pairs of books in reserve to change the book lists as the books are signed out. Fortunately, the wonders of word processing mean that one does not need to redo everything, for every class. Pairing up the books is time consuming, but it is a great way to get to know the collection when you are new to a library or to refresh your memory about some of the great books in your collection. Also, the need to avoid having pairs of books overlapping within each group of 10 books helps to

IDEA FILE

ensure that a wide range of books will be represented in sets of books used with each class.

This strategy gives students a reason to actually look at the books and practice techniques for previewing and skimming (rather than just glancing at titles). Most students seem to like the social activity as they work together at the tables. Although skimming seldom yields a definitive critical assessment of a novel, students are exposed to a wide selection of books and do not have to spend a long time listening to one person and they can take a closer look at things that catch their interest at the end of the session. This activity gives students practice speaking and listening and it is a good way to get new books into circulation and to remind people about books that have been popular in the past.

Derrick Grose, Teacher-Librarian
Lisgar Collegiate Institute
Ottawa District School Board

One of the ideas I have used for introducing novels to students is a little activity I call "Leading Lines." I choose books with exciting opening lines and write them out on chart paper or type them onto a worksheet. I then put a picture of the cover of each book on the worksheet or hold up the book cover for the students to see. Students then have to try and match up the leading line to the book cover. It generates a fair amount of excitement for the books I have chosen. It's also a great way to introduce books for a literature circle. Here are a couple of examples:

- ◆ "The first time I seen her, I got a bad feeling inside. Not like I was in danger or nothing. Just like she was somebody I should stay clear of. To tell the truth, she was a freak like me. The kind of person folks can't help but tease. That's bad if you're a kid like me. It's worse for a new teacher like her."
The Skin I'm In by Sharon Flake
- ◆ "Nearly two months before I found the body in the park, David Mitchell came to my school."
Not a Trace by Norah McClintock
- ◆ "The early summer sky was the color of cat vomit."
Uglies by Scott Westerfeld
- ◆ "Someone was following him. He was sure of it. Bare feet following in time to his steps and stopping just after he did." *The Third Eye* by Mahtab Narsimhan

Julie Millan, Teacher-Librarian
John Wanless Public School
Toronto District School Board

Central Commerce Collegiate (CCC) makes use of what is called a "TEL school conference." TEL is an acronym for "Toronto Education Link," the Toronto District

School Board's in-house academic communication and collaboration system based on First Class communication software, which is quite popular among many school boards around the world. The TEL School conference is an in-house "paperless" communication environment. CCC has a number of sub-conferences within its TEL school conference, one of which is called "Library News."

This is where "New in the Library," our lists of newly received items, is published. Each list may be divided into Fiction/Non-Fiction or separated into curriculum areas. By putting this into our TEL school conference, all members of our school community are able to find information on what has been added to the collection, and can, if so desired, print off a copy for posting in the classroom. This means of communication enhances library usage and facilitates the easy sharing of information within the school.

Shanie Mangulins, Library Secretary
Central Commerce Collegiate
Toronto District School Board

At our school, we have borrowed and developed these ideas:

- ◆ Place novel series (always very popular) in small bins and label them to encourage enthusiasm, sequential reading and sharing through discussion with other students hovering around the same novel set.
- ◆ Prepare PowerPoint presentations on the author by linking with his or her website and discussing other books by that author to build anticipation for the new arrival. Students will run to use a computer to engage with literature, then turn to the hard copy after they cross the bridge between technology and paper version.
- ◆ Upload a print version of the book onto a computer reader such as Kurzweil and present the first page on an interactive screen such as a SMART Board, asking the students to mark new vocabulary, characters, plot highlights, setting, and any number of features – students with reading difficulties are then able to use Kurzweil to enjoy the book as they and the software program read together.
- ◆ "Sing" the first page to younger students, clap the rhythm of the text, and appeal to another of the multiple intelligences.

Martha Morris
Hillcrest Public School
Simcoe County District School Board

One effective method of introducing new novels that I have used is a Preview Program. As part of a Partner

Unit, I have had Intermediate students read novels purchased for Junior division students. The older students prepare slide shows promoting their assigned novel. Circulation of these materials is excellent both amongst the target audience as well as amongst the peers of the previewers. I often use this method to introduce the Silver Birch Books.

Susan A. Packer, Teacher-Librarian
Woodcrest Public School
Durham District School Board

One of the ways that I like to introduce a new book to a class is by what I call “unlocking the book.” I start with the book tied up with a small combination lock. I tell them that the book is locked up and we need to find the right combination to get it open. I explain that they need to make predictions about the book in order to use the combination. The students have some time to examine the book, looking for clues and evidence. Students offer up their predictions, providing support, and we discuss as a group. Eventually we have four good predictions, and the combination. By the time the book is “unlocked,” the children are so engaged they listen very intently to find out if their predictions were correct. I enjoy overhearing the children taking the time to “unlock” their own books before they begin to read.

Gail Sedgewick
Vellore Woods Public School
York Region District School Board

I project the cover art for two to four novels onto the SMART Board and give students a chance to “think, pair, share” about which book they think they would like or not like based on the cover. They discuss predictions for what the books might be about and the elements that lead them to that opinion, such as cover art, the author’s name and so forth. I then read aloud an exciting section from the books to confirm or deny their predictions. There is always a fight to sign out the books after this intro. My only complaint is that I have to prepare a different set of books for every class.

Tara Truscott, Teacher-Librarian
Mount Joy Public School
York Region District School Board

A recent trend seems to be that authors and publishers are borrowing presentation techniques and tone from a variety of other media formats. A couple of the Blue Spruce book nominations this year are examples. *Chester* by Mélanie Watt incorporates graffiti and diagram notation, and *Such a Prince* by Dan Bar-el has a cover which looks like a tabloid newspaper.

Before reading *Such a Prince* to a Grade 2 class, I brought in a couple of tabloids. We looked for the publication title and we distinguished between advertisements and copy. We identified the main headlines. Then we discussed what tricks the publishers had used to encourage us to open the paper. We explored other strategies that publishers could use to get us to buy the product.

Without showing the cover, I then gave the students a summary of the story of *Such a Prince*. The class was divided into pairs and asked to design a cover to entice people to read the story. The results demonstrated very savvy and sophisticated consumers and readers. We had fun comparing their covers to the original and then proceeded to enjoy reading the story. Afterwards we discussed the main differences between book covers and newspapers and the reasons why they were not the same.

Catherine Harris, Teacher-Librarian
William Berzcy Public School
York Region District School Board

During *Freedom to Read* week, I create a display of books that have been banned in schools, or at least challenged. The display has a big sign that indicates that these books are “Forbidden Fruit” or “Banned Books.” Some years, I wrap yellow “Caution” tape from the dollar store around the display surface, although this sometimes makes some of the kids wonder if they should even touch the books! Under each book is information that has a flip-up cover. On this cover, a sign reads: “Why was this book banned?” Under the flip-up cover is a brief explanation of why this book was challenged. This display creates interest in the books and students read the books to investigate why some of these books have been challenged. As a book is removed from the display a new “Forbidden Fruit” arrives in its place. The *Freedom the Read* website, www.freedomtoread.ca has a great list of books and the banning background as a resource. *Three Wishes*, *Snow Falling on Cedars* and of course *Handmaid’s Tale* are just a few of the books on the list!

Stephanie Alexander
The Woodlands School
Peel District School Board

I work in a large school where teachers may not find it convenient to visit the library at all, let alone consult the professional development section. In order to get books into teachers’ hands, I decided to take the library to the teachers. I annexed a study carrel in the staff room and declared it library territory. The Library Annex features recent fiction and non-fiction likely to interest adults,

IDEA FILE

along with a sprinkling of professional development resources. Teachers sign out the books themselves on a sheet. Comments have been positive, traffic has been brisk and the professional development books are actually being read. Today the staff room, tomorrow the world...

Glenn Turner, Teacher-Librarian
Ottawa Carleton District School Board

So you've bought all the latest and greatest novels and non-fiction books. You create terrific displays in your library to show them off. But you're still not getting the message out? Try to use your website to highlight your new books and link to Horizon at the same time. It's easy using software licensed by the province for all schools in Ontario.

Here's how I do it:

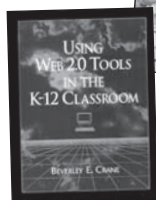
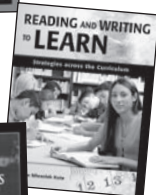
1. Make sure you have Adobe Dreamweaver and Fireworks loaded on your computer.
2. Capture images of the books by right-clicking on them from the Internet and save to a folder.
Editor's note: Make sure you have copyright permission to use the image.
3. Open Dreamweaver, then open a new blank file.
4. Click on Commands, Create Web Photo Album.
5. Give your page a title, e.g., "February Fiction." Select your images folder and an output folder (create this one ahead of time, prior to this step).

6. Customize your photo album. I like four columns and 144×144 file size for the resized images. Deselect the "check box" for creating a navigation page for each photo.
7. Click OK and in minutes you have a new web page with your images showing in Dreamweaver.
8. The real work starts now. Search for each book in Horizon and copy the URL into the link box for each image in your web page. This takes a while but the result is worth it.
9. Select Edit, Find and Replace. Replace the file default extension ".jpg" with nothing. This makes the resulting page look cleaner. Save.
10. Your output folder will contain an index file (the web page with images), and three folders. You need only to keep the thumbnail folders. Delete the images and pages folders. You may want to make the heading fancier or change the background colour of the page.
11. Upload both the index file and thumbnail folder to a folder on your website and link to the index file from a suitable spot on your library web page. Enjoy!

To see what your creation might look like go to <http://irhs.ca/library> and click on "New Books" on the right most link of the navigation bar. For you visual learners, you can see a slideshow demo at www.slideshare.net. Search for "Web Photo Album for Librarians." Good luck!

Al Samsa
Iroquois Ridge High School
Halton District School Board

WHAT'S NEW AT *The OLAStore*★



Active Reading: Activities for Librarians and Teachers

Beth McGuire ★ Libraries Unlimited ★ 978-1-59158-666-1 ★ 2009 ★ \$42.00

Reproducible activities that provide a purpose for and encourage students to think about and discuss current, star-reviewed, and award-winning literature. Activities reinforce comprehension of the material and include extension activities for going beyond the text, allowing the students to practice higher level thinking skills. Grades 6–8.

Reading and Writing to Learn: Strategies across the Curriculum

Katherine Wiesolek Kuta ★ Teacher Ideas Press ★ 978-1-59158-585-5 ★ 2009 ★ \$36.00

Research indicates that writing and reading should be taught in tandem. Using this content-area resource learn how to present strategies common to good readers to increase understanding of a text. Students are taught to predict and infer, visualize, connect, question, understand word meanings, organize, clarify/monitor, and evaluate/reflect. Grades 3–12.

Using Web 2.0 Tools in the K–12 Classroom

Beverley E. Crane ★ Neal-Schuman Publishers ★ 978-1-55570-653-1 ★ 2009 ★ \$71.94

Find a host of Web 2.0 tools available on the Internet today, plus teaching and learning strategies to use them in the K-12 classroom. Language arts, science, and social studies unit lesson plans included in each chapter exemplify topics at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Each chapter focuses on a specific Web 2.0 tool.

Success with Reluctant Readers

Shari Nicholas and Pat Lankveld

Shari, the teacher-librarian, and Pat, an English teacher, collaborated to create a reading program for Essential Grade 9 English students using Orca novels.

In October 2008, Shari provided Pat with “Take the Orca Challenge,” a pamphlet listing the Orca Series titles and authors in the school library collection. The following week, Shari introduced these novels to Pat’s Grade 9 Essential English students. Shari explained that the Orca Series novels are stories about teenagers and teen issues, including teen house parties, drugs, bullying and racism, teen pregnancy, shootings, school lockdowns, and many other topics. Shari selected the Orca Series because these novels are written at a grade 2 – 4.5 reading level, which matched the Essential students’ reading levels. This meant the students could read and comprehend the novels and this success encouraged them to become daily readers.

Each student was instructed to select a novel for daily in-class reading. Initially, many students were reluctant to make selections, but eventually every student had a novel in hand. Each morning, students read for 20–30 minutes. When one student refused to read his novel, declaring that he had read all of the series in Grade 8 (an avoidance tactic, as there are 60 novels in the series), Pat’s department head chatted with him, explaining that daily reading was the expectation for all students. Once he actually started reading, he discovered he could do it, and he did – he read 11 novels by the end of the semester.

Shari and Pat created a visual display board, titled “How Many Can You Read?” Titles and topics were listed, followed by spaces for students to sign their names. As they finished their novels, students completed book reports, signed the display board, and placed stickers beside their names at the bottom of the board. The stickers displayed a running total of books read to date for all to see. Candy reward packages were awarded after five books and again after 10 books.

Initially, Pat and her students moved as a class to the library to sign out new books. Later, students went with Pat’s E.A. Eventually, they went to the library

independently to return books and to sign out new ones. The library staff members quickly learned all of the students’ names and this, too, was a welcoming experience for these Grade 9 students. These students were proud of this independence and many of them, rarely seen in the library before this program, became frequent library visitors as a result of this reading program.

To provide an additional literacy opportunity, Pat brought her students to the library in January and Shari taught them how to post a blog about one of their novels, using information from their book reports. Then interested students did podcasts of their book reviews. Students had fun with these added opportunities.

Pat’s initial goal was for each student to read five books. Eleven out of 13 students achieved this classroom goal and, incredibly, seven of those students read 10 or more novels. Overall, 13 students read a total of 113 novels in two months. The program was an outstanding success.

Everyone was proud of the success experienced by these reluctant readers. ■

Comments from students included the following:

“This is the first book that I have read that I liked.” – Tony

“I have never read 10 books in my life! They were good.” – Josh

*“I have never read this many books before. I really liked Lockdown. It was cool.”
– Taylor*

“These books were great. I really liked reading them.” – Richard

If you would like further information or copies of the forms Shari and Pat used, please contact Shari Nicholas at shari_nicholas@wrdsb.on.ca or Pat Lankveld at pat_lankveld@wrdsb.on.ca.

Graduate-level Educ Teacher-

**Dr. Jennifer Branch,
Joanne de Groot,
Marcia Mardis,
Diane Galloway Solowan
and Lois Barranoik
Faculty of Education,
University of Alberta**

To run a well-used library, you need to keep your finger on the pulse of your patrons' needs. You need to find out what your clientele wants and what they think about the library-based activities you have been running. Analysing differences between the genders when it comes to reading tastes and habits and collecting some information on popular authors to beef up the collection might also keep you more in tune with patrons' needs. But who has the time to survey?

What is the highest degree most leaders in your schools and districts have? We are guessing you will say a Master of Education degree. Rightfully so! The Master of Education (MEd) degree prepares leaders – for roles in administration and policy, psychology, special education, curriculum, and information technology. We are proposing all teacher-librarians in the 21st century need to have, or be working on, a Master of Education degree or a Master of Library and Information Science degree.

What does it take to be a teacher-librarian? In many countries, most will have a Master of Library (and Information) Science/Studies (MLS/MLIS) degree while others will have a Master of Education degree with a

specialization in school libraries. In the US, most states have certification requirements for School Library Media Specialists that expect a Bachelor of Education (BEd) and a MLS/MLIS degree. The same is true in Australia. From my experience in Britain, many of the school librarians will have a MLS/MLIS degree but not necessarily a BEd and a teaching certificate. In Ontario, however, most teacher-librarians only need to take one additional qualification course in Librarianship to be qualified to run a school library. We believe that this is NOT enough for teacher-librarians in the 21st century. In *Librarians as Learning Specialists: Meeting the Learning Imperative for the 21st century*, Zmuda and Harada present the idea that teacher-librarians are, in fact, learning specialists.

These specialists generally have no official classroom assignments per se because they work with the entire school population. They may include reading specialists, writing coaches, mathematics coaches, science coaches, and instructional technology specialists. Learning specialists are strategically positioned to be teacher leaders.

To be a teacher leader, you need to have the same degree as other school leaders.

For the past year or so, the Faculty members in the Department of Elementary Education at the University of Alberta have been spending a lot of time thinking about the role of the teacher-librarian in the 21st-century schools and what knowledge, skills, and attitudes we needed to be developing in our program. We were successful in our application for a Fulbright Senior Specialist and Dr. Marcia Mardis joined our faculty for three weeks in October of 2008. Dr. Mardis has been instrumental in the writing of American Association of School Librarians' new *Standards for the 21st-Century Learner* and is a prolific researcher and conference presenter in the area of school libraries. This was our chance to work with a leader in the field and take a good hard look at our program. In preparation for Dr. Mardis' visit, we surveyed all of our recent Master of Education in Teacher-Librarianship graduates to find out more about what they were doing in schools and school libraries, how well prepared they

The new Teacher-Librarian by Distance Learning Program will start courses in January 2010. Applications will be reviewed for the first cohort in April and October 2009. For more information, contact Jennifer Branch at jbranch@ualberta.ca or check out our website at www.quasar.ualberta.ca/tl-dl.

Education for 21st-Century Teacher-Librarians

felt they were based on their education, and what trends and issues they saw emerging in their work.

Our former students told us that:

- ◆ The M. Ed degree empowered them to take on greater leadership roles in their schools and districts and they highly recommended the program to others.
- ◆ The program was transformational – both personally and professionally.
- ◆ The online format provided them with flexibility and the opportunity to succeed while managing their diverse work and home responsibilities.
- ◆ They developed professional contacts and friendships across the country and in several other countries around the world.
- ◆ They enjoyed focusing on global issues of teaching, learning, and the school library while having the opportunity for choice in assignments that could be tailored to unique situations and professional learning needs.
- ◆ They enjoyed the thoughtful, high quality discussions.
- ◆ They appreciated the quality instruction and the support of the Teacher-Librarian by Distance Learning administration and community.
- ◆ “What is learned and discovered in TL-DL is for all teachers, not just teacher-librarians.”
- ◆ The program is reasonably priced compared to similar programs in Canada and is a deal compared to programs from the US.

Using these findings and pulling all the learning outcomes from each course, we re-visioned the curriculum.

From this work, we developed seven courses, which combine and re-imagine certain topics from our current program and add new ones. For example, we saw a need for a new course in multiple literacies with an emphasis on reading. We also realized, from both the survey and our own reading and thinking, that the leadership role of the teacher-librarian needs to be the integral part of every course. We also recognized that allowing students’ choice in assignments was making learning meaningful for our students.

The seven courses that form the core of our new program are:

EDES 549 The Leadership Role of the Teacher-Librarian

Explores leadership in schools with an emphasis on the historical, current, and potential importance of information-rich learning environments. Includes an exploration and critical evaluation of the leadership, management and policy creation for facilities, programs, staffing, budgeting, technology, collections, and reporting.

EDES 544 Technology Applications

Explores leadership in schools with an emphasis on learning new and emerging technologies for information-rich learning environments. Includes an exploration and critical evaluation of a variety of technologies and demonstrations of how they might be used in teaching and learning.

EDES 546 Resource Selection and Evaluation

Explores leadership in schools with an emphasis on the selection and evaluation of print and digital resources for information-rich learning environments. Includes an exploration and critical evaluation of fiction, reference materials, informational texts, periodicals, databases, and digital learning objects.

EDES 542 Inquiry-based Learning

Explores leadership in schools with an emphasis on inquiry-based learning. Includes an exploration and critical evaluation of the nature and culture of inquiry, process approaches to inquiry, and demonstrations of how to incorporate inquiry in teaching and learning.

EDES 541 Resource Organization and Management

Explores leadership in schools with an emphasis on the organization and management of print and digital resources for information-rich learning environments. Includes an exploration and critical evaluation of leadership, management and policy creation for collections, and the organization of resources.

References

Barranoik, L. K. (2004). *Meaningful research projects: Perspectives from high school students and their teacher*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB.

Zmuda, A., & Harada, V. H. (2008). *Librarians as learning specialists: Meeting the learning imperative for the 21st century*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

EDES 543 Multiple Literacies

Explores leadership in schools with an emphasis on the cultural, social, commercial, and educational issues raised by multiple literacies. Includes an exploration of different theories of reading and practices of literacy in an era of rapid cultural and technological change.

EDES 545 Technology Integration


Explores leadership in schools with an emphasis on new and emerging technologies for information-rich learning environments. Includes an exploration and critical evaluation of leadership, management, research and policy creation for technology integration.

These seven courses along with the three required courses from the Department of Elementary Education make up the 10 courses – 30 credits – required for the Master of Education Degree. Having all seven courses be required of all students the TL-DL program is a shift. In the past we have had a much more “choose your own

adventure” model, as Dr. Mardis called it. While this allowed students a lot of choice, it meant that some students had “holes” in their education.

We have also come to believe that we are committed to education for teacher-librarianship at the Master of Education level. We strongly believe that teacher-librarians are school leaders and, as such, need to have the same degree as other school leaders – the Master of Education degree. As a result, we developed a new mission for the Master of Education in Teacher-Librarianship to develop school and professional leadership in inquiry, literacies, technology, and resources through meaningful learning experiences.

While we are excited about our new program, we are still committed to delivering a high-quality program to those students in our diploma and MEd streams. As new courses become available, they will be offered to both cohort and non-cohort students. We are also hoping to offer some of our new and revised courses to former students who are interested in further professional development. This may take a few years to happen, but the seeds have been sown. ■



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Scott Robbins

If you're a teacher-librarian tempted to get your feet wet in the world of graphic novels, just plug your nose and take the plunge! Graphic novels have had a bumpy history, first viewed as either disposable entertainment or trash literature capable of corrupting children. Times have changed and graphic novels are now receiving the recognition they deserve from many sectors of the educational community as a means of conveying information in a unique and engaging way, addressing social issues, increasing literacy, and fostering a new and voracious love of reading.

The key to learning about graphic novels is finding that secret fan among your colleagues. Graphic novel supporters are slowly making themselves known, and they are your best resource in learning about format and finding titles best suited to the needs of your students. The number of graphic novels being published each year is growing and it can be challenging to keep up with the best books in any given year. Here's an overview of what's new, what's exciting, what's "novel" in the world of graphic novels for the next six to eight months. There are sure to be books that will engage your students and perhaps turn many of them into one of those voracious readers.

Don't fear the manga

From cell phone charms and t-shirts to cartoons and knapsacks, your students will constantly remind you how their world is influenced by Japanese comics or manga. These fast-paced stories with exaggerated characters aren't the comics you grew up with. For the past few years, the challenge with this material has been in the inconsistency of the content. Librarians would acquire initial books in hopes of having the entire series on their shelves, only to find that after a few volumes, a character would drop an inappropriate word or the reader would encounter unacceptable sexual innuendo. Viz launched their kids' line last summer with a slew of great titles for younger readers. This year they have released more titles in their *Pokemon* and *Legend of Zelda* series. These are perfect for reluctant readers and the video game tie-ins will hopefully lead non-readers to pursue reading experiences. Another title coming out this year from Viz is *Dinosaur Hour*, a non-fiction manga that combines dinosaur facts with humour. Udon is launching their line of manga for kids this spring with four new titles specifically for the 7–12 age group. There's something for everyone here, including stories about fairies helping girls become singing superstars, a boy ninja who plays baseball, and a full-colour manga called *Swans in Space*.

Books for girls... and books for boys!

When the world realized that girls were reading comics too, publishers quickly filled the shelves with graphic novels especially for them. The last couple of years have seen series like *Fashion Kitty*, *Magic Trixie*, and *Babymouse* in the hands of young girl readers. Unfortunately, this left the boys with not many new choices – until now. This spring we will see two new series specifically geared towards boys. *Stone Rabbit* is about a bored bunny that finds a time portal under his bathroom rug, leading him on adventures through history. In *Frankie Pickle*, the title character uses his imagination to make the ordinary, extraordinary. In the first book, Frankie must clean his messy room and what better way to get the job done than to imagine himself as a dashing explorer. Your boy readers will be pleased with these two new series.

So, where are those NOVELS?

With the huge wave of new manga and both the new and continuing series geared towards the early chapter book and transitional reader, the actual book-length, meatier stories sometimes have a tendency to get buried. But there are some great titles coming early this year and continuing into the summer months. Here are a few titles to check out, perfect for your more advanced graphic novel readers.

Rose: A Bone Prequel: Jeff Smith's *Bone* series has captivated readers of all ages with its blend of cartoon fun and high fantasy and with the release of the final volume this January, where do *Bone* fans go next? This prequel introduces readers into the world where the Bones end up after being exiled from their homeland and tells the story of Rose, a young Gran'ma Ben and her confrontation with a terrible dragon.

Jellaby: Monster in the City: Canadian cartoonist Kean Soo follows up the first *Jellaby* tale with this sequel in which Portia, Jason and the monster Jellaby journey to Toronto and encounter another monster who aims to sate her appetite with the trio.

The Elsewhere Chronicles Volumes 1-3: Originally published in French, this fantasy-adventure trilogy follows Max, Rebecca, Noah, and Theo as they travel to a world of creatures made of shadows and now these creatures want to enter our world.

As you can see, graphic novels have a wide range of genres and interest levels – there's truly something for every reader. So, jump right in, the water's fine. ■

Super Conference 2009



OSLA President
Marilyn Willis at the
OSLA Award Reception

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MMORPGs

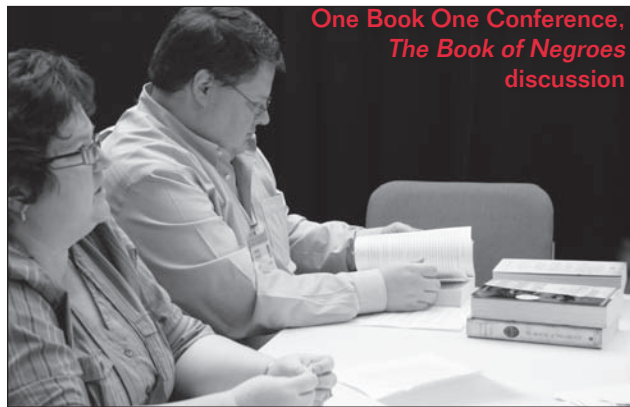
Michael Rosettis is the Teacher-Librarian of the Year



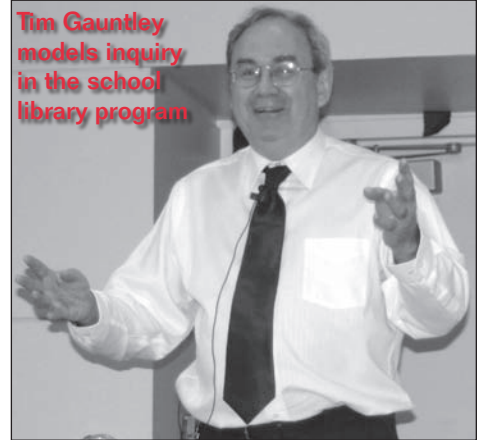
TL Editor Diana Maliszewski gets comfortable



Michael Rosettis, Derrick Grose and Martha Martin present Leadership and You in the School Library World



One Book One Conference, *The Book of Negroes* discussion



Tim Gauntley models inquiry in the school library program



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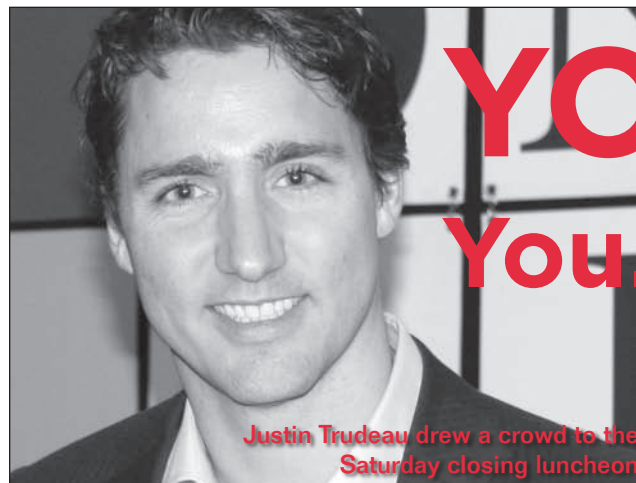
Forest of Reading® 2008 Winning Authors: Helaine Becker, Mélanie Watt, Dan Bar-El, Linda De Meulemeester, Eric Walters, and Martine Leavitt

I walked
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steps





Café Cubano entertains at the annual party

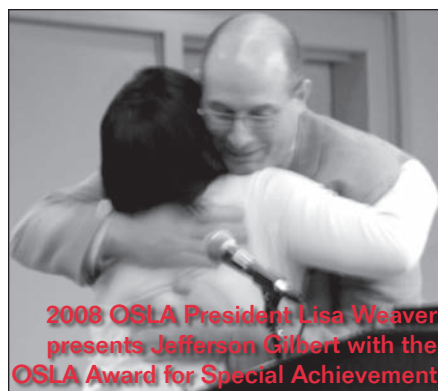


YOU
You. Yo

Justin Trudeau drew a crowd to the Saturday closing luncheon



Bill Slavin signs copies of his new book on the EXPO floor



2008 OSLA President Lisa Weaver presents Jefferson Gilbert with the OSLA Award for Special Achievement



Anita B
Larry

**READ
WALK
RUN**



OSLA Spotlight Speaker Will Richardson discusses why the Read/Write web changes everything

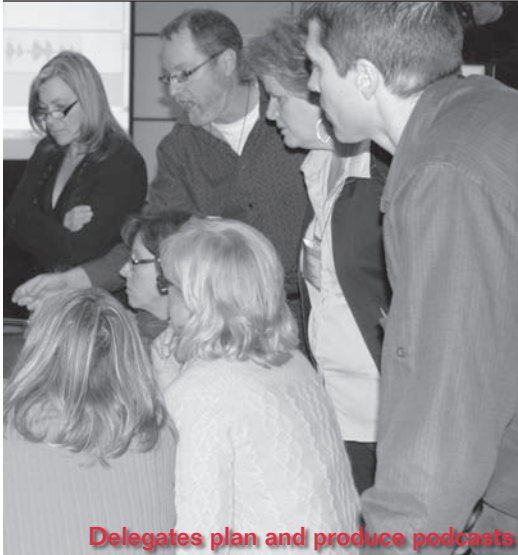


2009 OLA President Peggy Thomas sits with Toronto Mayor David Miller and plenary speaker Richard Florida



CBC personality Michael En

YOU LIVE, YOU LEARN. Your Library. Your Community.



Delegates plan and produce podcasts



Dance lessons at the Friday Night party



Rita Brooks Kirkland receives OLA's
Larry Moore Distinguished Service
Award from Larry Moore



Bobbie Henley draws people in with her
presentation on school library websites



Al Enright



OSLA Award Reception

Reading by Flashlight: Confession of a Genre Junkie

My name is Jai O'Neal (at least, that's my name for the purposes of this article) and I have a confession to make. I have been reading paranormal romances for the past year. In fact, I am currently reading my fourth paranormal romance series. Yes, I'm referring to those books with a Fabio-like character on the front cover, which you can often find in your local grocery store checkout counter or in the magazine section. You're probably thinking that I'm one of those lonely, bored housewives who is obsessed with watching soaps and eating bon-bons and has bookshelves filled with bodice rippers. On the contrary, I'm an independent woman working in a school library. I have my MLIS degree and will be a certified teacher-librarian with her B.Ed in May of this year. I'm an avid reader of all literary genres; nevertheless, I have not broadcast my love of what my dear friends would call "smut literature" until now. I want to break down the stereotypes associated with "smut literature" and show that it does have some redeeming qualities. And no, I'm not drinking or taking anything while I write this article.

Never in a million years did I think I would read a romance novel. That all changed when I read Stephenie

Meyer's now omnipresent *Twilight* saga. In fact I started the *Twilight* series before it gained popularity and was made into a movie. I was instantly drawn to Meyer's exploration of will power in which the main character, Edward, balances his conflicting desires to both kill and love a particular human. For me, the saga brought back good memories of being innocent and the thrill of having a first crush. My fellow adult fans of the books recommended other authors they enjoyed and I began to read those series too. Truth to be told, at the end of a long work day and after watching or reading news filled with violence, poverty, famine, and other issues that leave me feeling distressed, I just want to read an engaging story where the characters find love and have a happy ending. Is that so wrong? Well, if you knew my cultural background, you would say a resounding "Yes!"

I'm known as the "flashlight girl" in my inner circle of adult romance readers due to my conservative Southeast Asian background. In my culture, men and women do not openly display physical affection; it is considered strictly private and never discussed. As a child, I never saw my parents kiss, although I'm sure something happened, otherwise I wouldn't have been born. In the Southeast Asian culture, there is a difference between sensuality and sexuality; this is clearly demonstrated in the vastly popular Bollywood films, India's version of Hollywood. In a Bollywood film, the main plot centres on a hero and heroine falling in love. The first hour is dedicated to the hero meeting the heroine. The second hour traces the development of their relationship and the third hour resolves any stumbling blocks that are in the way of the hero and heroine marrying. In the entire three-hour plus film,

Jai O'Neal

the hero and the heroine do not show any physical display of affection. Many “close calls” of public displays of affection between the two lead characters are phased out and left to the audience’s imagination.

Knowing my family and culture as I do, I hesitate to read my romance novels openly at home because characters mate freely, frequently, and usually prior to marriage. While I was born in the United States, I still retain my family’s traditions and thus am reluctant to go beyond its parameters. I change the channel when characters make out in my favourite television shows if my dad is watching it with me, or I only watch reruns of *Sex and the City* if I’m by myself or with my sisters. I can’t help the way I was brought up.

So if reading vampire romance is “forbidden,” why do I read it secretly? Well, for me, it’s very simple: I love the characters and the worlds the authors create. Currently, I’m reading the fantastic and very addictive *Dark Hunter* series by Sherrilyn Kenyon. Kenyon has a complex story arc in which she effectively combines Greek mythology with the traditional romance tropes. Greek gods and goddesses retain their childlike characteristics and continue to intrude into the lives of mortals. The books are filled with allusions to Greek legends, along with handsome, tragic heroes that need and seek love in order to feel whole once again. The characters are far from perfect and most of the time are trying to make up for mistakes they have made in their past. There are many themes found in Kenyon’s series such as torn loyalties, finding an identity, and struggling to overcome adversity to achieve happiness. Sure the books are monotonous in a few areas:

the handsome hero who is at least six feet tall with a fantastic muscular body and shoulder length hair, the horrible cheesy covers of people who are dying to be stripped of their clothes, and the beyond-ridiculous titles such as *Burning Desire* engraved on the cover.

This article is appearing in a magazine for school library professionals, so let’s bring it back to the readers we deal with daily. You can’t judge a person by what they read. Reading is a luxury, an escape, and a way of exploring ideas and experiences. There is nothing wrong in reading romance, science fiction, fantasy, horror, western, young adult, or mysteries. Each genre has its merits and should not be marginalized or stigmatized. Ensure that you are supportive of all types of literature and don’t let any preconceived stereotypes affect the way you purchase or recommend books. My personal reading mantra is to not criticize anything without reading it first, and if it’s not my “cup of tea,” it may be someone else’s “burning desire.” ■



Where Have the Parents

While I don't toil like my peasant forebears did, I like to think that my DNA has blessed me with the ability to enjoy the sound sleep a hard day of physical work brings. So, it was unsettling to be visited by insomnia, with one thought swirling 'round and confounding my rest. I've read enough women's magazines to know that one cure for sleepless nights is to write down what is on one's mind; what a catharsis! This is what I read in the morning ...

Dear Canadian Young Adult Authors and Publishers:

Imagine the most diligent Grade 8 reader you have ever encountered. She reads deeply, immersing herself fully in the lives of the people she comes across on the page, drinking in the places and the people to which reading introduces her. She yearns to understand. As she discusses her latest Canadian YA read with me, my student says, "I thought it was so sad that the main character's mother died...." Her voice trails off as she looks at me, sideways, "...or was that the last book I read? The dead mother, I mean." The wheels turn in my head. I sigh. "Sadly, that would be both," I reply. Yes, sadly for the protagonists and the story line; sadly, for you, eager young reader; sadly, for Canadian literature.

Is it just you, or have you noticed it among your peers too? The casualty count is mounting, with dead moms and dads accounting for an alarming presence (or would that be absence?) in too many books with contemporary settings these past few years. I'm no statistician, but aren't divorce and family separation more common in our country?

As someone who has survived a life-threatening illness, I have been more of a potentially-dead mother of teens – bluntly speaking – than the average Canadian my age. I take personal umbrage with the dead-parent-as-easy-plot-device. "The author does the dead parent thing," another student remarked, "so the kid in the story has a reason to have issues." Please, say it isn't so!

(Parenthetically, I know oncology patients rejoice that cancer is out of the closet and is discussed openly. Do use your influence to do the same with other diseases and infirmities. We're all for equal opportunity here, and some balance. Oh, and to you writers of historical fiction: exceptions do apply; we need historical veracity. Death in childbirth, demise from the common cold gone wrong, consumption, a farm accident, the plague... these are all legitimate.)

No one willingly suspends disbelief like yours truly. Make it worth my while, folks. Make it worth the time of your young readership. The crusade for no more dead dogs was taken up by another some years ago. Maybe it's my turn to hoist a placard: No more dead moms!

*Sincerely,
Ramona Matthews
Teacher-Librarian & avid reader*

its Gone in YA Fiction?

Ramona Matthews

As readers, we have taken on the world sans parents with *Oliver Twist* and *Huck Finn*, with *Mary Lennox* and with *Anne Shirley*. We understand that in times gone by, young people with no mother or father – or both – were likely. Set in more recent times, other fictional characters face the challenges of growing up either without one or both parents. S.E. Hinton's *The Outsiders*, Cornelia Funke's *The Thief Lord*, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter*, not to mention the Sonya Somes' aptly-titled *One of those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies*, all come to mind.

But Canadian YA fiction is also rife with the parent who has died a premature death, leaving behind children of various ages, often teens, to carry on in grief and confusion. How does this figure in the plots of YA works?

Recently, a few Canadian authors weighed in on the subject of dead or absent parents in the works they read and create. Marsha Skrypuch, award-winning author and current White Pine nominee, succinctly pointed out, "In YA fiction, the action swirls around a young person plunged into a time of decision-making. If all she has to do is ask Mommy or Daddy to fix it for her, there's not much of a story, is there?"

Helene Boudreau, new fiction author (*Acadian Star*) and non-fiction author for Crabtree expands on this: "One of the most pervasive qualities of Middle Grade and YA fiction is the character's 'journey' and how the character 'grows' within the context of that journey. If parents are too visible, too accessible, the main character has less opportunity to be self-reliant in solving the 'problem' and growing as a character. A common tool is to just omit the parent(s) altogether, either by being deceased or otherwise inaccessible."

Multi-award-winning writer Eric Walters concurs, "It's pretty simple – if parent(s) are present they're the ones who will intervene. At three in the morning, if I hear a noise downstairs, I don't wake up my 16-year-old daughter and send her to investigate. For the teen protagonist to take the action role, you have to remove the parents."

From a purely practical standpoint, Marsha Skrypuch reminds us, "Also, YA fiction is comparatively short, which means fewer characters can be developed. For

each parent who isn't a character, the author can save about 5,000 words."

As teacher-librarians and readers ourselves, we know the power of books and the role they can play as "bibliotherapy." What role does this factor play in writing for the YA audience?

Eric Walters explains, "If you write about real things you hit real issues and people can learn from them. I don't go into any book with that in mind, but it is a natural by-product. If it's too upfront then books become 'preachy.' It's sort of like in science fiction, the fiction, not the science, has to always be in the forefront, if you want to tell a good story. With *Wounded* [being released this spring by Penguin], it's about a young boy whose father is serving in Afghanistan and the whole PTSD [post-traumatic stress disorder] issue. It will help young people going through this situation, but the issue is discussed through the story."

If all she has to do is ask Mommy or Daddy to fix it, there's not much of a story, is there?

"An absent parent can represent many different kinds of loss for the reader," observes Marsha Skrypuch. "It can also represent the need for autonomy. In that way, there is an element of bibliotherapy. The absent parent is a device used in YA fiction as a way to plunge the young protagonist into action and decision-making – often at a time when they're emotionally vulnerable due to loss. The device works to heighten action and emotional impact with fewer words (i.e., fewer characters needing development). And the loss resonates with teens because young adults are constantly dealing with all sorts of loss issues in their personal lives."

Maybe I was being too hard on our writer friends. The dead or absent parent trend is just one of many that is evident in YA today. Plots involving sexual identity and an open discussion of gay and lesbian issues, social justice, dystopias, vampires and werewolves, plus newer formats such as graphic novels and novels set in free verse, make the range of reading on offer for the YA crowd very wide indeed. Lucky them – and lucky us as teacher-librarians, to be able to share in the riches available. ■

Maria Martella

It was Day One of the GTA takeaway show, where hundreds of teacher-librarians were lined up to spend their School Library Initiative funds.

We were in the Queen Elizabeth building at the Toronto CNE, attending our fifth show in three weeks! I was tired of drinking bad coffee, standing on concrete floors, packing and unpacking thousands of boxes, going without sleep, and worrying about the next four shows. But all that changed after I took a break to interview the talented and gracious Kean Soo, author of the popular graphic novel *Jellaby*.

MM: I love *Jellaby*, and I can't wait for April when the next one is released! How did *Jellaby* come about?

KS: *Jellaby* started as a webcomic – I had trained and worked as an electrical engineer for a couple of years, and it just wasn't doing it for me, so I decided I wanted to give comics a try, while I was still young enough to take a risk like that. Anyway, Hope Larson had put together this great little graphic novel, *Salamander Dream*, and was looking for a publisher. We had been talking, and I had this similar concept for *Jellaby* (a girl and her imaginary friend), so we decided to try posting our stories together on the web to see if there might be any interest. The two of us launched a website called the "Secret Friend Society" (www.secretfriendsociety.com), and Hope found a publisher almost as soon as our site went live. A year later, Hyperion contacted me, and that was that.



MM: Did you like monsters as

a child, or were you afraid of them?

KS: Oh, I totally loved monsters – I watched a lot of things like *Godzilla* as a kid – but at the same time, I did have this fear that there might be something that lived under my bed that was trying to eat me. As a boy, you definitely have that admiration of monsters, but at the same time, there's that fear of them, and of the unknown. I think that strange mixture of the two conflicting things is what makes them so interesting, especially for boys.

MM: *Jellaby* only says one line in your book. Is there a reason he doesn't speak?

KS: Well, I just never imagined him speaking. I only recently noticed that you could easily replace *Jellaby* with a lost puppy or pet, and still have the same basic story.

It did get difficult after a while, not having *Jellaby* speak. The deeper I got into the story, the more I realized Portia needed someone to play against, so that's how Jason came along.

MM: I love the ambiguity of *Jellaby*. He could be a boy or a girl, depending on the reader's perception.

KS: Yeah, at one point, Jason asks that question directly. Is he a boy? In my mind, he's a boy, but I like that the reader can interpret it either way.

MM: He also has little red wings. Can he fly?

KS: That's something I've consciously kept ambiguous. There's a scene in the second book where he sort of flies, but it's definitely something that can be interpreted in many different ways. I like ambiguity in stories; it makes the reading experience much more interesting, and lets the reader fill the gaps in on their own. But then I sometimes worry if it's too ambiguous.

MM: At some point I guess you just have to trust the reader.

Kean Soo

Meet the Author

KS: Definitely. I've made a point of never talking down to the reader. I want it to work for nine-year-olds as well as adults. I have faith that they can figure it out on their own.

MM: Did you read as a child?

KS: Yes, all the time. My family moved around a lot, and books were things you could take with you. So I was in an interesting place, with access to all these different types of comics and manga. I loved things like *Dragon Ball* and *Dr. Slump*, but I was also reading a lot of *Asterix*, *Calvin and Hobbes*, and Roald Dahl. The North American superhero comics weren't as important to me because they were harder to get, but I liked them because, again, they were a different style from the things I was reading.

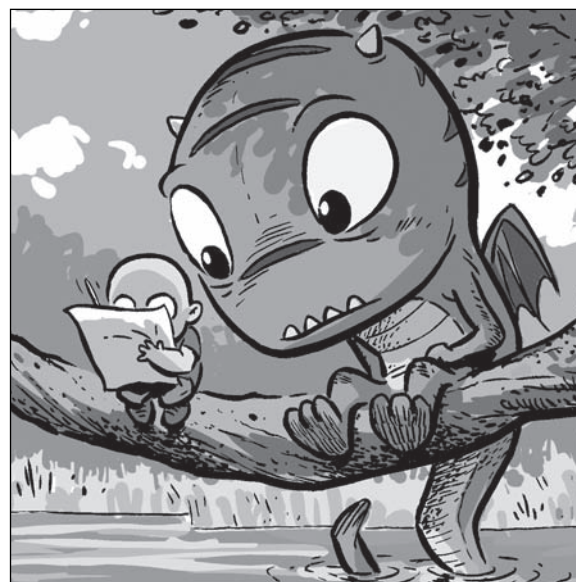
MM: I think this is an interesting point because some teachers still feel that manga, reading from right to left, won't work for their students. Do you think that perhaps this difference draws kids in?

KS: I think it's more that the comics being produced in North America just aren't offering the kids the things they're looking for, which is why they're turning to manga. The really popular manga right now, like *Naruto*, are all adventure stories. Aside from a handful of North American comics like *Bone* or *Amulet*, there really aren't that many graphic novels that fill that particular genre.

I think the format doesn't matter at all to kids; I think it's the content – the story – that they're really interested in. Kids are smart; they'll figure out how to read something like manga if it interests them.

MM: What do you read now?

KS: Right now, I read a wide range of fiction, although it's mostly adult fiction and graphic novels. Most recently, I really enjoyed Olivier Appollodorus and Lewis Trondheim's graphic novel, *Bourbon Island 1730*; the new *Scott Pilgrim* is a ton of fun, and I'm really excited that Naoki Urasawa's *20th Century Boys* is being released in English. I also just started reading Jhumpa



Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, which has really knocked me off my feet. She's really, really good.

MM: In *Jellaby*, Portia has to deal with bullies. Were you ever bullied as a child?

KS: Yes. I always ended up being the weird new kid in school.

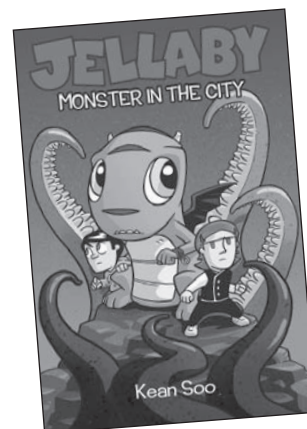
MM: How did you deal with it?

KS: You just shrug it off after a while, like Portia does. *Jellaby* is kind of reflective of how I felt at the time. It was a bit of a struggle for me, always making new friends.

MM: Do you have a mentor?

KS: I don't really have a mentor per se, but, early on, the comics community that I met through the web (people like Kazu Kibuishi, Derek Kirk Kim, Scott McCloud, Hope Larson) influenced me to actually start drawing my own comics. I've never met a more encouraging and supportive group of people.

MM: I understand you're still assistant editor of *Flight*? Tell me a bit more about this anthology.



KS: *Flight* is an annual anthology of short stories by artists sharing similar sensibilities. The sixth edition is being released this summer. Some of the past contributors have included Jeff Smith, Michel Gagné (who has done animation for films like *The Iron Giant* and *Ratatouille*) and Phil Craven (story artist on *Kung Fu Panda*). There are quite a few artists who got their feet wet with comics for the very first time, doing stories for *Flight*. It's a great venue for many artists that the general public might not know about.

MM: Do you feel there are any problems in the publishing of graphic novels? What are your obstacles as a cartoonist?

KS: I think a lot of cartoonists find it hard to sustain the energy needed to complete a graphic novel – it took me about 16 months to finish this second *Jellaby* book, and that was a very difficult experience.

I think lots of publishers are pushing out manga and graphic novels at an accelerated pace because there's a growing demand for them, but you might be seeing some of the quality suffering as a result. There's still a lot of work to be done to get publishers to really understand and embrace this format. There are lots of niche genres that manga cover that North America will take a long time to adopt.

MM: Like what?

KS: Things like *Iron Wok Jan*.

MM: Is that because it's too risqué?

KS: No, it's more about broadening the genres within the medium. There are a lot of people who still think of comics and graphic novels as a genre, when they should realize it's just a format. *Iron Wok Jan* is a great example of how diverse manga actually are in Japan – here you have a comic about competitive cooking! North

American comics are still very superhero-driven. I'm hoping we can shift away from that soon.

MM: How do you think comics have changed? What do you think about Photoshop?

KS: Photoshop is a godsend! I've been using it for seven or eight years now and I'm still learning new ways to do things. It gives me more freedom, but at the same time I think I also react against that, because I worry about making my art to look too processed.

MM: What do you do about that?

KS: Just little things, like drawing panel borders and word balloons freehand so the art is a little more personal and less mechanical.

MM: How do you feel about the traditional method?

KS: I think the traditional mediums will never go away. Comics done with watercolours are absolutely gorgeous. The computer is never going to replace the traditional media.

MM: Any predictions for the future of comics?

KS: There were hardly any comics in school libraries when I was growing up. Now I see boys and girls reading manga all the time. I'm looking forward to seeing what some of them will do, comics-wise, in the next 10 years. This generation is going to grow up much more "comics literate." I think they're going to understand and wield the language better than we ever will.

MM: And think of how much easier it will be for that generation of librarians to choose manga or graphic novels for their students!

KS: Yeah, it's heady stuff. It's a really exciting time for comics. ■

OSLA Award Reception



Despite cutbacks in the publishing industry, some great novels and non-fiction narratives are still being released – books that challenge readers with new ideas, new ways of marketing themselves, and new twists on old tales. Consider these...



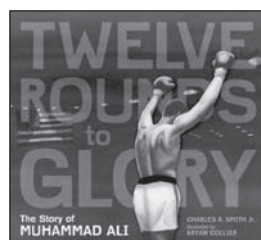
The Race of the Century

Barry Downard
2008
9781416925095

Sample Curriculum Links:
Grades 5 and 6 Healthy Living

Primary Language Arts:
Reading
Junior Media Literacy

Summary:
In this modern day twist to the classic fable of the Tortoise and the Hare, Tom Tortoise decides he's had enough of Flash Harry Hare. Challenging him to the "race of the century," Tom proves that persistence pays off – especially when Harry is distracted by the paparazzi, snacks and his adoring public.



Twelve Rounds to Glory: The Story of Muhammad Ali

Charles R. Smith Jr.
Illustrated by Bryan Collier
2007
9780763616922

Sample Curriculum Links:
Grade 7 Healthy Living
Grade 4 Language Arts:
Writing
Grades 9 and 10: Canadian and World Studies

Summary:
Muhammad Ali, arguably the greatest boxer who ever lived, was born in segregated Louisville, Kentucky in 1942. In this unusual picture-book biography, told in 12 lengthy poems by renowned writer Charles Smith, Ali's battles with

sports opponents, racism, religious discrimination and Parkinson's, are all documented. The language mimics the rhythm and pace of boxing, and the illustrations, done in watercolours by the talented Bryan Collier (*Martin's Big Words*), are the perfect complement.

The Underground Railroad: An Interactive History Adventure

Allison Lassieur
2008
9781429611831

Sample Curriculum Links:
Junior Language Arts: Reading
Grade 7 History:
British North America
Junior or Intermediate
Language Arts: Writing



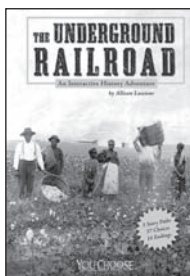
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Summary:

This new series of non-fiction narratives owes a lot to the old “Choose Your Own Adventure” books. Readers begin the text by learning some initial facts about the slavery movement and the Underground Railroad. Then they have the option of continuing the tale from the perspectives of a runaway slave, a slave catcher, or a person who is helping slaves travel to freedom on the “railroad.” Featuring historical photographs, maps, and diagrams, yet the size of a paperback novel, this is a great resource for reluctant readers, and an appealing tool to teach perspective, social justice, and critical literacy.



The Sword Thief (The 39 Clues #3)

Peter Lerangis
2009
9780545060431
www.the39clues.com

Sample Curriculum Links:

Intermediate Language Arts:
Reading
Junior Language Arts: Reading

Summary:

In this third of 10 books in the series, Amy and Dan are off to Tokyo, continuing their search for clues to find the mysterious treasure mentioned in the codicil to the late Grace Cahill’s will. With historical as well as fictional characters, an online game, real prizes and collector’s cards, not to mention some of the best children’s authors writing today, the series is a treasure for readers as well!



The Hunger Games

Suzanne Collins
2008
9780439023481
websites: <http://scholastic.com/thehungergames>
www.thehungergames.co.uk

Sample Curriculum Links:

Grade 7 and 8 Media
Literacy
Grade 7 and 8 Reading
Grade 10 Civics

Summary:

Katniss Everdeen is the salvation of her family in the disaster-ravaged land that was once North America. Struggling day by day to provide food for her younger sister and widowed mother in their harsh post-apocalyptic world, Katniss feels she has no choice but to volunteer in her sister’s place when the younger Everdeen is selected for the Hunger Games.

The barbaric, to-the-death survival games, held annually and featuring randomly selected young people from the 12 districts, are televised as a lesson to all would-be rebels. When Katniss finds an acquaintance among the other “Tributes,” and begins to see how the viewing public can be manipulated, she realizes she just might stand a chance of surviving after all....



Here Lies Arthur

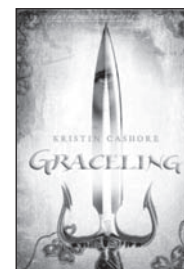
Philip Reeve
2008
9780545093347

Sample Curriculum Links:

Grades 9 and 10: English:
Reading and Literature
Studies
Intermediate Language Arts:
Reading

Summary:

In this beautifully written twist to the traditional Arthurian legends, a young servant girl named Gwyna is rescued by the minstrel Myrddin (Merlin) and kept in disguise as his servant, Gwyn. Through Gwyna’s eyes and her alternating roles as servant boy and, later, lady of the court, the reader experiences Arthur’s barbaric nature, his rise to power and Myrddin’s position as the ultimate spin-doctor, making it all possible.



Graceling

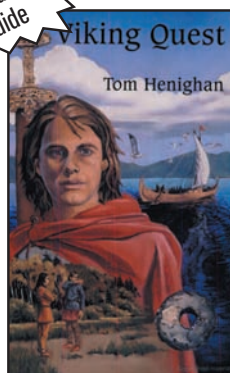
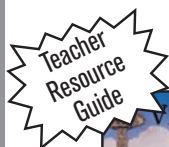
Kristen Cashore
2008
9780152063962

Sample Curriculum Links:

Intermediate Language Arts:
Reading
Grades 9 and 10: English:
Reading and Literature
Studies

Summary:

Katsa is one of the Gracelings – people born with mismatched eyes and particular gifts. In Katsa’s case, her Grace is killing... or so she believes. Forced to mete out punishment according to her arrogant uncle’s royal commands, Katsa has secretly begun to rebel. She and a trusted band of spies and court folk have started “the Council” behind her uncle’s back. When Katsa’s missions bring her into contact with another Graceling – Prince Po, whose skills at combat rival her own – Katsa realizes she can no longer continue doing her uncle’s dirty work. Soon she and Po are on a race for their lives – and what they discover on their journey has the power to destroy all they have ever known and loved. ■



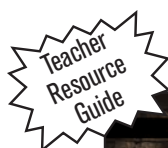
VIKING QUEST
by Tom Henighan

978-0-88878-421-6

\$8.95 paper

Historical Fiction, Ages 10+

Fifteen-year-old Rigg, son of Leif Eriksson, makes an amazing discovery: the Vikings aren't alone in the New World. But who inhabits it with them – demons, giants, or another human tribe?



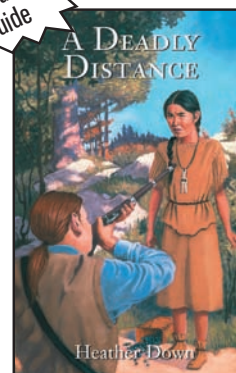
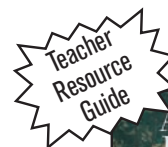
RUBY KINGDOM
by Patricia Bow

978-1-55002-667-2

\$12.99 paper

Fantasy, Ages 10+

When Amelia and Simon take their new friend Mara's side in a war for an alien world, Amelia must spread her wings and Simon must find out how far he'll go to save a cousin who's become a friend.



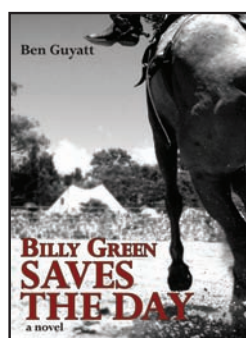
A DEADLY DISTANCE
by Heather Down

978-1-55002-637-5

\$11.99 paper

Historical Fiction, Ages 8+

In early-nineteenth-century Newfoundland, the Beothuks have been decimated. Young Mishbee struggles against tuberculosis and prejudice as she befriends a young settler.



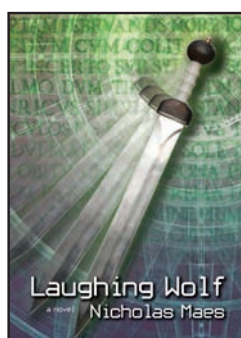
BILLY GREEN SAVES THE DAY
by Ben Guyatt

978-1-55488-041-6

\$12.99 paper

Historical Fiction, Ages 12+
August

When the War of 1812 starts, 18-year-old Billy Green finds himself faced with a series of fateful decisions. After spotting the massive American forces camped in Stoney Creek, the young man rides three hours in the middle of the night to Burlington Heights to warn the British. Can Billy help save the day?



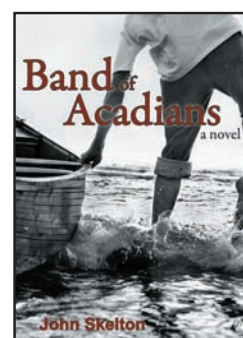
LAUGHING WOLF
by Nicholas Maes

978-1-55488-385-1

\$12.99 paper

Fantasy, Ages 12+
June

When a mysterious plague breaks out in the year 2213 that places humanity on the brink of eradication, fifteen-year-old Felix Taylor must go back in time and retrieve the only possible cure, a flower once common in ancient Rome but extinct for more than 2,000 years.



BAND OF ACADIANS
by John Skelton

978-1-55488-040-9

\$12.99 paper

Historical Fiction, Ages 10+
August

In 1755, on the eve of the Seven Years' War, 15-year-old Nola and her Acadian parents face expulsion from Grand Pré by the British. Nola, her friends Hector and Jocelyne, Nola's grandfather, and a band of bold teenagers manage to flee by boat only to encounter challenges tougher than their wildest imaginings.



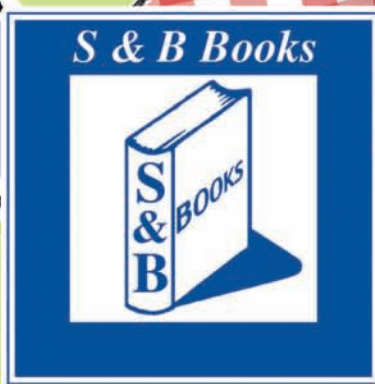
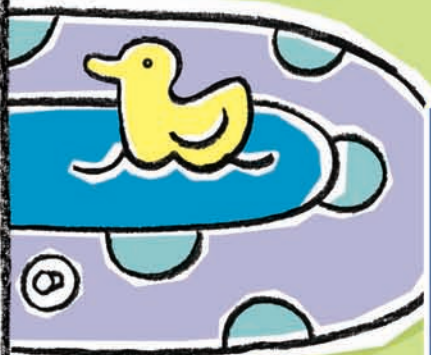
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