Shining Willow

The Branch
by Mireille Messier
ISBN: 9781771385640
Binding: Hardback
Publisher: Kids Can Press
Pub. Date: 2016-09-06
Pages: 32
Price: $18.95

When an ice storm snaps a small girl's favorite branch from the tree in her yard, she's crestfallen. The girl's mom says it's just a branch. But not to her! That was the branch I sat on, jumped from, played under. It was my castle, my spy base, my ship...? Luckily, her neighbor Mr. Frank understands. He says the branch has potential. What's potential? she asks. It means it's worth keeping. And so, with imagination and spirit, and Mr. Frank's guidance and tools, the girl transforms the broken branch into something whole and new, giving it another purpose, and her another place to treasure. In this endearing picture book, author Mireille Messier explores a young child's experience with loss and renewal. Though the little girl is heartbroken that her special perch in the tree is gone, the kindness and vision of her neighbor, combined with her own creativity and determination, help her recognize that it can have a new life in a different form. The charming intergenerational relationship adds depth and richness to the story, as it becomes clear they both offer something valuable to each other. The story is vividly and warmly illustrated by renowned, award-winning artist, Pierre Pratt. This book would work well for character education lessons on perseverance, teamwork and initiative. It also provides an excellent example of caring for the environment by reusing salvaged materials, making it a terrific pick for Maker Spaces and STEAM lessons.

Carson Crosses Canada
by Linda Bailey
ISBN: 9781101918838
Binding: Hardback
Publisher: Tundra
Pub. Date: 2017-05-30
Pages: 32
Price: $21.99

From the author of If You Happen to Have a Dinosaur comes a funny and sweet cross-country roadtrip adventure with a sassy septuagenarian and her quirky canine.

Feisty Annie Magruder and her dog, Carson, live in British Columbia, Canada, and they're setting out to visit her sister, Elsie, in Newfoundland. In their little rattlesnag car, packed with Carson's favorite toy, Squeaky Chicken, and plenty of baloney sandwiches, Annie and Carson hit the road! They travel province by province, taking in each unique landscape and experiencing something special to that particular part of this vast, grand country. For example, they marvel at the beauty of the big, open sky -- and grasshoppers! -- in Saskatchewan and discover the gorgeous red earth and delicious lobster rolls in PEI, before finally being greeted by Elsie -- and a surprise for Carson!

A Horse Named Steve
by Kelly Collier
ISBN: 9781771387361
Binding: Hardback
Publisher: Kids Can Press
Pub. Date: 2017-04-04
Pages: 32
Price: $18.95

"Steve is a fine horse," begins Kelly Collier's clever picture book. But he thinks he could be finer. He wants to be EXCEPTIONAL. When Steve finds a beautiful gold horn lying on the ground in the forest, he realizes he has found his path to the exceptional! He immediately ties the horn to the top of his head and prances off to show his friends. Not everyone is impressed, but most of his friends agree -- Steve and his horn are indeed exceptional. In fact, many of his friends are so inspired, they decide to tie items to the tops of their heads as well. So when Steve discovers his horn has suddenly gone missing, he's devastated and frantically searches everywhere to find it. He won't be exceptional without his horn! Or will he? This is a laugh-out-loud tale of an endearingly self-absorbed horse, illustrated in lively black-and-white artwork. Throughout the story, Collier interweaves humorous commentary and some definitions (such as for devastated: That means really, really bummed.).
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Malaika's Costume
Nadia Hohn
ISBN: 9781554987542
Binding: Hardback
Publisher: Groundwood Books Ltd
Pub. Date: 2016-03-01
Pages: 32
Price: $18.95

It's Carnival time. The first Carnival since Malaika's mother moved to Canada to find a good job and provide for Malaika and her grandmother. Her mother promised she would send money for a costume, but when the money doesn't arrive, will Malaika still be able to dance in the parade?

Disappointed and upset at her grandmother's hand-me-down costume, Malaika leaves the house, running into Ms. Chin, the tailor, who offers Malaika a bag of scrap fabric. With her grandmother's help, Malaika creates a patchwork rainbow peacock costume, and dances proudly in the parade.

A heartwarming story about family, community and the celebration of Carnival, Nadia Hohn's warm and colloquial language and Irene Luxbacher's vibrant collage-style illustrations make this a strikingly original picture book.

Underneath the Sidewalk
Claire Eamer
ISBN: 9781443146364
Binding: Hardback
Publisher: Scholastic Canada Ltd
Pub. Date: 2017-02-28
Pages: 32
Price: $16.99

What lurks beneath the sidewalk cracks . . . ?

Run, jump, spin round,
Skipping to the playground.
Skip, hop, jump, stop!
Crack in the sidewalk.
"Oh, no!"

A girl takes care to step over the sidewalk cracks, but in a moment of distraction she falls through . . .

In rhythmic verse that begs to be read aloud, Underneath the Sidewalk combines humour, joy and just the right dose of spine-tingling fear as it explores the age-old childhood question of what would happen if you fell through the cracks in the sidewalk!

Children will delight in the breathtaking art that opens up worlds of imagination in this magical story of bravery, adventure and friendship.

When Planet Earth Was New
James Gladstone
ISBN: 9781771472036
Binding: Hardback
Publisher: Owlkids Books
Pub. Date: 2017-09-15
Pages: 40
Price: $18.95

It has taken billions of years for Earth to become the planet it is today. When Planet Earth Was New looks back to the very beginning, using a poetic approach grounded in scientific fact to give an overview of how the planet has changed over time: from hot lava to the formation of oceans to the evolution of living things in water and on land. The book also includes the relatively recent evolution of humans -- who are just a tiny speck in the sweep of Earth's history.

This broad look at the Earth is designed to inspire awe and inquiry. With STEM connections to biology, geology, evolution, and more, it is a springboard for discovery, discussion, and research. A striking design with full-spread, digitally enhanced watercolor art gives the book a rich, atmospheric feel. Back matter includes informational notes about each spread, as well as sources, an author's note, and a glossary.
A bear sleeping safely in her den, Kohkom telling a story by the fire, the trees crackling with cold—we are all connected to the seasons and the cycle of nature. The calming rhythm of the words echoes the rhythm of the land in this timeless picture book about the moon calendar of the northern Cree, and its warmly rendered watercolour illustrations bring Saskatchewan's north to life. When the Trees Crackle with Cold is written in English and the northern Plains Cree y-dialect, inviting Cree and non-Cree speakers alike to explore the traditional moon calendar.

Winner of the 2017 McNally Robinson Book for Young People Award: Younger Category. When a young girl helps tend to her grandmother's garden, she begins to notice things that make her curious. Why does her grandmother have long, braided hair and beautifully colored clothing? Why does she speak another language and spend so much time with her family? As she asks her grandmother about these things, she is told about life in a residential school a long time ago, where all of these things were taken away. When We Were Alone is a story about a difficult time in history, and, ultimately, one of empowerment and strength.

Every child needs a home. Children need somewhere safe where they can be happy, eat their meals with their family, play with their toys, and go to sleep at night feeling unafraid. But many children all over the world have had to leave their homes because they are no longer safe. Because of war and conflict, they and their families have become refugees. For them life is hard and full of questions. In spite of everything, they find time to laugh, play, and make friends. And most importantly, they have hope that somewhere, someone will welcome them to a new home.