

INDEPENDENT

🍁 Book, Rick

Necking With Louise

ISBN 0889951942

In seven short connected memoirs, we come to know and value Eric as a young man growing up on the Canadian prairies in the mid-1960s. He is a farm boy and he is experiencing all the torment of dealing with life as it is dealt. He has his first date with a friend who has become more than that, he experiences his first kiss and break-up, his hockey team goes to the championship game, and, finally, his beloved grandfather dies. The stories are so personal and genuine that you cannot help but wonder if they are autobiographical. As appealing to an adult audience who will remember ‘the day’ as it will be to its targeted audience, this is a book to be savoured.

🍁 Boyd, David

Looking For a Hero

ISBN 0921156421

An intense and well-constructed story, it holds readers from the opening lines. It is a twisting, turning murder mystery whose solution is not known until the final file is read. Nicholas is accused of killing Robert Player. Player was a hero to Nicholas’ brother, Christian. Through a series of taped conversations, reports, and letters Nicholas becomes real to the reader, and we also become acquainted with the people in his life. In a string of associated stories, we learn the awful truth that led to Nick’s arrest. We end with the question: is there a hero?

🍁 Brooks, Martha

Confessions of A Heartless Girl

ISBN 08889994761

Noreen storms into town on the edge of a meteorological storm and creates unsettled conditions for everyone she meets. She is on the run, and finds herself in a rundown café in small town, Manitoba. While we come to know Noreen intimately, we also cross paths with some of the other wonderful characters that people the town. Brooks is adept at making us feel at home in the setting and with her finely wrought characters. We have a stake in everything that happens to them and we smile a little brighter knowing that love can transform lives and build bridges to the future.

🍁 Carroll, Lewis

Jabberwocky

ISBN 1553370791

This very old poem has been made new again with the distinctive and unusual interpretation of this fine artist. While other versions have tended to interpret the fun of Carroll’s wordplay, Jorisch takes a different perspective. He creates a world that is more about politics and war. The stark figures and colour choice project the violence that stands at the heart of his work. Older students will want to discuss its themes and the puzzles that he leaves unsolved. First in a new series of poetry called *Visions in Poetry*, this only fuels the fire and whets the whistle for the next one.

Cormier, Robert

The Rag and Bone Shop

ISBN 0440229715

This is Robert Cormier's final novel and proof positive that he had no intention of turning away from the tough topics he chose for his young adult audience. Jason is twelve, quiet, and shy. When a friend's sister is murdered, Jason is quick to report that he was last to see her alive. Needing a quick resolution to the shocking crime, the police enlist the help of a skilled and unrelenting interrogator. In a small, hot, windowless room he plies his trade and elicits a confession from Jason. Sad and suspenseful, this story's shocking ending will leave readers stunned.

Dublin, Anne

Bobbie Rosenfeld

ISBN 1896764827

Thank goodness there are writers like Anne Dublin who link us to Canadian heroes of the past. This book allows readers a glimpse into Bobbie Rosenfeld's inner feelings. An accomplished athlete, a successful insurance salesperson, and a long-time sports writer, she made a name for herself in every walk of life. At a time when women were considered fragile and often inferior, she forged a path for those who would follow. Her sense of fair play and team spirit were not only important on the track, but played an essential role in all aspects of her life. The writing is relaxed and the reader feels most thankful to be sharing so much of Bobbie's life.

🍁 Foon, Dennis

The Dirt Eaters

ISBN 1550378066

For those who are not usually fans of science fiction/fantasy, the first two books in Dennis Foon's acclaimed *Longlight Legacy* might just offer a mind shift. In this first book we meet Roan who lives in Longlight, a society created by his great-grandfather. The gentle peace of his existence has been destroyed by war, leaving waste and devastation. Roan is taken in by The Brothers and learns that he has the skills to be a fine warrior. His first mission is abhorrent to him and he flees. Survivors can exist in this apocalyptic world, but it will be people who have the resilience and goodness of Roan that will ultimately give them hope for their future.

Gavin, Jamila

Coram Boy

ISBN 0374413746

Abundant description of England in the 18th century and the rogues who preyed on poor families, promising to take their babies and young children to people who would care for them, this is historical fiction that will appeal to young men when other such stories don't seem to do that. Meshak is the pivotal character, as all other main characters know him. It is a story of parallels, inspiring and unsavoury people, fascinating history, and the ultimate triumph of good over evil. It encompasses love, kindness, hate, and greed. It will remain in your memory always.

🍁 Haworth-Attard, Barbara **Theories of Relativity** ISBN 0006392997

Dylan is a self-described ‘throwaway’ child. What that means is that his mother threw him out when it looked like he might infringe on her chance to meet a reliable and prosperous man to be her new husband. He has not been on the streets long, but he has seen enough to make him suspicious and cautious. He enjoys visits with Jenna, but he notices that she is already falling prey to Brendan, self-appointed guardian of the kids who people his streets. Dylan makes a break by returning to his grandparents’ home where he was once happy, only to find his grandfather dying in a nursing home. It seems he has run out of options, but he learns there are good people and they can offer a glimmer of better things to come.

🍁 Holeman, Linda **Search of the Moon King’s Daughter** ISBN 0887766099

This is breathtaking historical fiction. Holeman proves her mettle with superb character development and a plot filled with twists and turns, despair and faith. While she has us embroiled in the events that shape Emmaline’s life, she also seamlessly weaves the brutal conditions of nineteenth century England into her story. We are transported back to walk alongside Emmaline as she deals with the hand she has been dealt; she does it with courage, selflessness, and hope. This is a most remarkable book that begs to be read aloud and savoured.

Johnson, Angela **The First Part Last** ISBN 0689849230

Chapters move back and forth from ‘then’ to ‘now’. Then is the time when Bobby was with Nia and they were awaiting the birth of Feather. Now is the time of Bobby’s struggle to be a single parent to his little girl. What lies between is the challenge for young people to make the right decisions when faced with the emotional impact of teen pregnancy. The plan to have the baby adopted seems right; then, tragedy strikes. What results is this amazing book whose focus is the young father. Don’t forget to read *Heaven*, the prequel to this fine read and our first introduction to Bobby. This is heartbreaking, yet uplifting fare.

🍁 Kennedy, Michael **Words On Ice** ISBN 1552632032

Even in Canada books about baseball outnumber hockey books more than two to one. However, with the arrival of each new hockey season there is a glut on the market of books about our national sport. As with all literature, some are commercial, some are marginal, and some are worthy of purchase and discussion. This worthy anthology is edited by Kennedy and contains some very famous names as creators of the stories collected...Richler, Gzowski, Callaghan, and Carrier. The stories are varied and give voice to one of our most revered traditions.

🍁 **McNamee, Graham** **Acceleration** ISBN 0440238366

We quickly learn that Duncan harbours some guilt for the failed rescue of a drowning victim in the previous summer. This year he is working in the Toronto subway system, in the lost and found department. When they are not busy, Duncan finds time to check out the items that cover the shelves. One is a leather book, which proves to be the diary of a sadistic man who tortures animals and stalks women. When Duncan cannot get police attention, he determines that he might ultimately become the saviour he missed being last year. What a ride... guaranteed edge-of-the-seat tension and spellbound interest through to the end!

Morpurgo, Michael **Private Peaceful** ISBN 0007150075

Thomas loves his big brother. So, when the British Army takes Charlie into service, Thomas enlists (at age 15) and follows him to the front. His desire to prove himself overrides his fear and any common sense. The horrors he sees, the social bigotry he faces in the trenches, and the abusive behaviours of officers all serve to show him that in war there is no glory. As he waits through this long night, Thomas tries to think of anything but what he must face in the morning. He reflects on his childhood with Charlie and his family. The shocking ending explains his introspective personal remembrances. The story is based on authentic interviews and battlefield visits.

🍁 **Murray, Joan** **Lawren Harris** ISBN 1552977633

The high quality of the reproductions and the straightforward text will make this a book that will appeal to those interested in the history of Canada and its artists. The size of the reproductions makes it easier for the reader to actually see the artist's style and technique and appreciate the clarity of the work. The text provides a close look at the influences of his surroundings on his life's work and gives readers a historical look at the time in which Harris worked. The chronology that follows shares a glimpse of the seasons, places, and people as he experienced them.

Nye, Naomi Shihab **19 Varieties of Gazelle** ISBN 0060504048

In sharing the joys and sorrows of her people, Naomi Nye also celebrates her heritage in hopes that, through mutual understanding and acceptance, we will eventually achieve peace. This collection has many previously published poems, but there are also new ones to be appreciated and that will hold the interest of the adolescent reader. Using her senses and her heart, as poets do, she treats us to the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of the Middle East. The Arab culture is rich in tradition and history, but is also an area of great instability. Through these heartfelt poems Nye helps us understand it in a clearer way.

🍁 **Pavanel, Jane** **The Sex Book** ISBN 189422230X

An A to Z format and a clear, candid approach to ALL sexual subjects make this excellent resource essential for both sexes. The graphics are terrific; the 'sex symbol' boxes are gender-specific. Any questions? They are all answered here. Any needed information is accurate and easy to find and to understand. Symptoms, treatment, and avoidance of STIs are the focus of much space and great importance. This is an indispensable book that will help everyone better understand sexual matters.

Ross, Val

The Road to There

ISBN 0887766218

History has long harboured mapmakers and we have all seen the results of the meticulous work that was their job. No one has ever told their stories in such a relaxed and effective way. This wonderful resource reads more like a novel than an academic guide to some of the finest mapmakers the world has known. Ross packs her thirteen chapters with telling details and gripping descriptions of these talented and hardworking scholars. Maps may tell stories, but so does this accomplished and acclaimed author. Fascinating reading!

🍁 Sheppard, Mary C.

Seven For A Secret

ISBN 0888994389

Three fifteen-year-old cousins, summer in Newfoundland, a cove where trouble seems to dog its every citizen, and you've got a story. Kate, Rebecca and Melinda have been inseparable for years. Each summer brings them together and this one is no different...or is it? It could be depressing, but it isn't. That is due to the spirit with which the story is told, as a testament to the strength and resolve of those who live on 'The Rock' and take in their stride what life gives them, without complaint. The ending is hopeful and the story is endlessly absorbing.

🍁 Stinson, Kathy

Becoming Ruby

ISBN 0143012894

Nan is on the cusp of being an independent and capable young woman. She is searching for her place and herself. She no longer wants to be called Nan so she will become Ruby, the name given by her grandmother, the only person who seems to know Ruby and her struggles. While trying to come to terms with the relationship that binds her mother and grandmother, Ruby also begins to deal with her own bond with her mother. As she wallows in the muddied waters of boyfriends, a growing need for freedom, and her mother's constant interference, she begins to make sense of the interactions. It is a transformative year, but Ruby triumphs and is on her way to becoming RUBY.

🍁 Stratton, Allan

Chanda's Secrets

ISBN 1550378341

Chanda has lived through good times with her family on an African farm, but her father is dead and she is now living with her third stepfather. The most evident thing about her life is that it has changed. Her world is filled with illness and death, but AIDS is never mentioned. Then, one day, her mother disappears and Chanda begins to suspect that she has been stricken with the deadly illness. What about Chanda? Knowledge and learning help her face the situation and she encourages her mother to come home to die. She also makes arrangements to have her family tested. Telling this story in first person narrative makes it more personal and compelling. The telling is not maudlin or explicit, but it is heartbreaking. The setting is wretchedly authentic and the message that overcoming ignorance is the solution is always evident.

🍁 Toten, Teresa

The Game

ISBN 0889952329

Dani is in treatment for alcohol abuse and attempted suicide: her rehab allows her to talk about the game that she plays with her sister, Kelly. In taut, realistic writing we come to know Dani as she struggles to come to grips with all that is happening to her. She faces isolation and begins to sift through the hazy memories that flood her consciousness. When we realize what has led to this place and time, we know her demons. The story is heart wrenching and told with vigour. You will not soon forget the people you meet in these pages.

Whipple, Laura

If The Shoe Fits

ISBN 0689840705

Thirty-three poems retell the Cinderella story in a discerning, yet fresh, manner. We begin with Cinderella, an older, more pensive woman, who lives with her memories and ponders that magical night. Before Cinderella has the final say, EVERY other character also has a chance to share perspective, while expressing widely differing points of view. So many questions you might not have considered and here we have their answers. Wittily told, these poems will give you pause to stop and think of other stories whose characters might have had something important to say.

🍁 Wilson, Budge

Fractures

ISBN 0143312014

It is quite challenging to write short stories. They are so complex and are told in a few short pages, leaving the reader to ponder the ‘befores’ and ‘afters’. Yet, here are twelve inspired short stories by a single author and they follow on the heels of a list of previously published collections. If you have not read Budge Wilson’s work, be sure that you do! She has a wonderful way with characters, voice, and style. She tells us before we begin that a fracture is not a break. It might just be a crack, and a small one. Each of these masterfully told tales is of fractured families. The fractures vary in severity, and they have an important premise...to be human is to be flawed.

Woodson, Jacqueline

If You Come Softly

ISBN 0698118626

Few books leave readers sobbing. This is one; and *The Devil’s Arithmetic* (Yolen, 1990) may have that effect. Ellie (aka Elisha, white Jewish girl) and Miah (aka Jeremiah, black Christian boy) meet, fall in love, and then must face the hostility of society at a time when racial mixing was taboo and people were not averse to making their opinions about it known to others. A love like theirs is not common and families must try to deal with the fallout. Told poignantly in alternating voices, we come to harbour hope for a future filled with love and peace. That is not to be...
