
TRANSITIONAL

Brisson, Pat **The Summer My Father Was Ten** ISBN 1563978296

Perfect when talking about memoir with your students, this book tells a heartfelt story that is a turning point for a young man, the narrator's father. We are initially introduced to the boy's neighbour, an old man who loves opera and gardening. When an afternoon of baseball turns destructive, the boy and his friends are left to answer the question 'WHY?' It has no easy answer. He does his best to atone for his wanton disregard of another's property and, in doing so, he garners a lifetime friendship and a newfound love of gardening.

Brown, Ruth **Toad** ISBN 009940382X

Brown's descriptive powers are perfect for this swamp story. Who could love a toad? And love him we do not! He smells, oozes slime, and is aberrant to all our other senses. He is noisy, slippery, and UGLY! Surrounded by the beauty of his environment, he drips the greens and browns that permeate his habitat. As we closely consider his antics, we cannot help but notice that we are not the only watchers. When the skulking hulk that follows his every move finally captures him, we are quick to learn why the toad does not complain about his lot in life.

Bunting, Eve **The Wednesday Surprise** ISBN 0395547768

Many cannot read this book without tears. Such a story! Anna and her grandmother have a great love. They spend much time together while Daddy drives his big truck from city to city, and Mom works. On Wednesdays they hatch a surprise for Dad's birthday. They work very hard, with a big bag of books and many evenings shared. At long last, the big day arrives. Dad is not the only one in for a big surprise!

Cooper, Elisha **Dance!** ISBN 0060294191

For those who love to dance, this book will conjure up memories of long hours of practice, focused attention on new steps, and the pain that accompanies the lead-up rehearsals to opening night. There is not much of the glory and drama of that anticipated performance. For those of us, like Cooper, who watch from the sidelines and can only admire the grit and stamina of the dancers, it is a clear observation of all that overwhelms us. His pen and ink drawings, accompanied by wandering text, provide awareness for the reader of the call of 'the dance'.

Crews, Donald **Shortcut** ISBN 0688135765

This prolific author has so much to teach us about writing in this dramatic story of a summer visit to the grandparents in Florida. In that particular summer the grandchildren are off to entertain themselves when they come upon the railroad tracks. They know they should not walk there, but they are tired and the tracks provide a shortcut to Bigmama's. Besides, they can't see, or hear, a train. What's the harm? With great luck, they avoid almost certain injury and they never speak of the incident again. Well, that may not be quite true.

Davies, Nicola

Surprising Sharks

ISBN 0763627429

Nicola Davies has such a way of dealing with information in a humorous and enlightening way. There are only three kinds of sharks that attack people regularly...and only six kill someone each year. While I know you are saying that six is too many, you might be interested to know that crocodiles, elephants, dogs, and pigs kill more people than sharks do every year. Look at what you can learn from exemplary informational writing! Davies also advises that while the last word that we might want to hear when entering the water is 'shark', the same holds true for the shark. The last word they want to hear is human, since 100 million sharks are killed each year by humans!

 Duggan, Paul

Murphy the Rat

ISBN 0889950849

Can there be more fun than reading poetry to kids? What could be better than fun poems that speak to a kid's innate sense of rhythm and their propensity for loving anything that is remotely upsetting, or gross, to their parents and teachers? Such is the case with this spirited collection of poems. In *Tough City*, where legions of rats like Murphy hold court, there is mayhem at every turn. As they come to know the characters, and their quirks and foibles, kids will be begging for 'take-out', or repeated readings. Get to know Murphy and the gang...you won't be sorry!

 Grassby, Donna

A Seaside Alphabet

ISBN 0887765165

Do you think that all prairie people long for a holiday on a coastal shore? Is it that it is so foreign to our experience? Those who have spent their lives listening to the waves lap the shore, watching soaring seabirds, smelling the salty air, and feeling the winds whip through tousled hair cannot imagine living anywhere else. In this beautifully detailed, alliterative alphabet book the reader becomes part of the events on the Atlantic coast, from Maine to Nova Scotia and PEI. The detailed notes that follow the text make it as useful as it is beautiful.

 Greenwood, Barbara

A Pioneer Story

ISBN 15507441284

Starring the Robertsons, especially Sarah and her little brother, Willy, this book is set on an Eastern Canadian farm in 1840. Their stories are told as short vignettes, accompanied by instructions and explanations for many of the events that were part of their daily lives. Following the children through a full year, we are introduced to a way of life that has long since passed, and given a close-up view of some of the difficulties and challenges that faced each family member as the sun rose every morning. The black and white illustrations add to our sense of being with the Robertsons as they face life as pioneers in a new land.

Janeczko, Paul

Dirty Laundry Pile

ISBN 0688162517


Selected by a man who believes that poetry must be spoken daily in every school classroom, this anthology of verses provides diversity and clever repartee in a series of voices that are as unusual as they are varied. Their words are penned by some of our most prolific poets and, also, by some of our newest. It is a collection that begs to be read aloud, and often. Imagine yourself a snowflake, a kite, or even a dirty laundry pile and see what you have to say. Or strike out on your own, and create new voices to be shared.

Jenkins, Steve **Hottest, Coldest, Highest, Deepest** ISBN 061849488X

Take a smattering of the Guinness Book of World Records, mix it with intriguing facts from the natural world, and put both in the hands of a talented and accomplished artist...voila! You have this guide to the world and its many wonders. Cut paper collages provide a clear look at the highest mountain, longest river, the hottest spot and the list goes on. Jenkins' ability to show perspective through his art and add informative text will have young scientific minds devouring his words through many readings.

 Kaner, Etta **Animals Migrating** ISBN 1553375483

Migration is one of the true wonders of the natural world. This book is filled with the thrilling tales of a host of animals and the yearly treks that they make, while facing untold dangers and intolerable weather. The tone is chatty, the style is very appealing, and the information provided is absorbing. The line and watercolour illustrations provide a close-up view for each journey taken. AMAZING! Kaner's personal style makes this book more appealing and the host of hands-on activities will have fans poring over it time and again. Discussion is sure to follow.

 Little, Jean **Orphan at My Door** ISBN 0439988349

The *Dear Canada* series offers a look at Canada's history through the eyes of its children. The books are created by some of our most venerated authors and give accurate diary accounts of the life and times of young women. That could be one of their drawbacks...don't boys write diaries? Well, journals then! In this one we learn about the Home children who came from Britain for placement with Canadian families, often as servants and mothers' helpers. Jean Little tells Victoria's story with her usual sensitivity. It is evident that she did her research and wrote it with admiration for the children who emigrated to a new and unfamiliar land.

 Matas, Carol **Play Ball!** ISBN 1552635570

It's the early 1900s in New York City. After a recent move Rosie is not making friends and is spending her free time working at her father's nickelodeons. When her brother's baseball team is short a player, Rosie knows that she can help. Girls are not allowed to play ball though. Dressed as a boy, Rosie is able to fool her teammates and the opposing team, until a fall reveals her secret. The baseball scenes are detailed and authentic, the characters rich and diverse, and the action is fast paced. One of three Rosie adventures, this is a book that will appeal to those interested in historical fiction and a good sports story.

Moss, Marissa **Amelia's Notebook** ISBN 1562477846

If you want your kids to see what a writer's notebook can look like, you need to meet Amelia. She is a headstrong, opinionated and perceptive nine-year-old who has a lot to say. In this book, that resembles a school composition book, she shares her views and interpretation of life as she lives it. She does it with pizzazz and feeling, and she includes artifacts, drawings and admonitions to those who should not be reading her notebook (her older and bothersome sister). It is an example of what kids can do to record the things that are important to them and will be a timeworn treasure at some future point.

 Munsch, Robert**Lighthouse**

ISBN 0439974585

While sentimental, this book is not schmaltzy and would be a perfect way to get kids talking about memories and the death of a loved one. During the night following her Grandpa's funeral, Sarah awakens with an ache to visit the lighthouse, a place he loved. As she and Dad make their way to their special place, they openly share memories of the Grandpa they have just lost. Those memories are what bring them back to the lighthouse, a tradition that will continue into the fourth generation, if Sarah has anything to do with it. Lovely, expressive illustrations accompany this story about love and death, and the impact of both.

 Oppel, Kenneth**Peg and the Yeti**

ISBN 0002005387

Peg's proven herself seaworthy at eight, and now she has the earth's loftiest peak to conquer. Armed with little to sustain and protect her, she begins her ascent. A night in a cave with a cantankerous Yeti does not deter her. She notes that he likes the snack food she carries. His penchant for pork scrunchions renders him amenable. They travel together to the peak of the mountain. Their descent is met with a quiet acceptance that the Yeti is to have a permanent place in their lives. There is great humour in the cleverly designed constructions of master artist Barbara Reid and a promise of further adventure.

Park, Barbara

Skinnybones

ISBN 067988792X

About the only thing that is big about Alex Frankovich is his mouth...and it is constantly flapping. He is the smallest kid on his Little League team but that doesn't deter him from bragging to T.J. Stoner that he can beat him in a pitching duel. Now, Alex knows that T.J. is the best pitcher on the team and the creepiest kid in school. What would make him open his big mouth and issue such a challenge? You will certainly laugh-out-loud while sharing this story with your students. The sure sign that is tested and true will be the lineup of readers aching to have a chance to read it again, or to hear about other books by Barbara Park. Be sure to have *Almost Starring Skinnybones* on a nearby shelf.

Prelutsky, Jack

If not for the Cat

ISBN 0060596775

There are those that believe that writing haiku is an easy way to get kids interested in poetry. Others can hardly imagine anything tougher: three lines, 17 syllables, unrhymed, a short poem of a 'keenly observed moment' about nature or human nature. Good grief! Jack Prelutsky proves himself a true observer of natural things and an expert at word choice, when he creates 17 quietly elegant haiku, each summarizing the essence of an animal in riddle form. Ted Rand's double page spreads provide the answers, a perfect match executed with subtlety.

🍁 Sadler, Judy Ann

Hemp Jewelry

ISBN 1553377753

As is the case with earlier books in the *Kids Can Do It* series, this book delivers great ideas, instructions and interest in a craft that kids can master. The 16 projects are preceded by a list of the materials and tools that will be needed to complete any of the described jewelry. The colour photographs that accompany the clear, step-by-step instructions give the crafter a clear idea of the results. Looking at this book might encourage students to seek others in the series that includes birdhouses, face painting, native crafts, and quilting. The list is fairly extensive.

Schachner, Judith

Skippyjon Jones

ISBN 0142404039

Holy frijoles! You've never met a cat like Skippyjon Jones. He is the bane of his mother's existence and he is routinely sent to his room to think about what it means to be a Siamese cat. What freethinking kitten, when faced with isolation, would not let his imagination fly wild and free? Certainly not Skippyjon Jones. Soon, he is off on the adventure of a lifetime in chihuahua guise, with the full intention of taking on any lowlife bandito who crosses his path. Oh, the fun that awaits! Be prepared to read this book once more...or twice...or ten times.

Schnur, Steven

Autumn

ISBN 0395770432

Interested in acrostics? You cannot help it when you have allowed yourself the visual treat that accompanies the innovative and clever wordplay in this ode to the fall season. Harvesting images as you share this alphabet book is not a tedious task. In poetic prose Schnur creates riddles for all 26, which are answered in the first letter of each line of the witty acrostic. Linoleum block prints are clean, bright, and clue-laden. What a great word game and a perfect model for further writing!

🍁 Setterington, Ken

The Wild Swans

ISBN 0887766153

Ken Setterington weaves elements from both the Andersen and Grimm versions to tell this timeless tale of a king who makes a promise to marry a woman who might be a witch. It is his only hope for finding his home and returning to his children. Fearing that his children will be harmed, he hides his eleven sons and one daughter from her. She ultimately discovers these sons and casts a spell upon them. It is left to the young sister to save her brothers. Her task is arduous, but the result is heartwarming. The *scherenschnitt* artwork adds an old world quality to the drama and is explained in full detail in an afterword to the text.

Sidman, Joyce

Song of the Water Boatman

ISBN 0618135472

What a combination! Take a little science, mix it with poetic form, and sprinkle in a touch of melody. Look to the seasons to give direction to the pond poems that grace the pages of this intricately illustrated book. Beginning in spring we meet the pond creatures whose songs herald its fresh delights. As we amble through summer and plod into autumn, we closely observe the comings and goings of the many creatures and plants that give the pond life. As winter makes its presence felt, the pond settles into quiet...patiently waiting for spring to burst forth once again. A prose paragraph accompanies each poem to give scientific data a pride of place in this exceptional book.

🍁 Staunton, Ted

Morgan Makes a Splash

ISBN 0887806228

This is the 28th in a series called *First Novels*. They are appropriate fare for readers who are aching to read a 'chapter book'. We meet Morgan, a chubby kid, who doesn't like being at the pool where kids will see his body jiggle. His mother signs him up for swimming lessons, but of all people to be there is Aldeen, the class bully. She, too, has an aversion to the water but threatens Morgan with all manner of repercussions if he rats her out. He is finally able to make her see that she will be discovered avoiding the lessons and convinces her to step up to the plate and pass her test. Humour, good character development, and an understanding of the motivation for their actions make this a fine read.

Whatley, Bruce

Wait! No Paint!

ISBN 0064435466

The role that an illustrator plays in the creation of a worthy piece of children's literature is at its most evident here. The three little pigs have left home and built their own houses. An accident with spilled juice causes collapse in the straw house. Where did the juice come from, and whose is that Voice? It takes no time at all to learn that the illustrator has a big part in the theatrics that make this book sing. When he runs out of red paint, the results are comedic. As the pigs change from green, to patterned, and finally polka-dotted, they become painfully aware that there will be no fire. Now what?