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Page Turners: Books for Children

Maria T. Genest^a, Katrina Bartow Jacobs^b, Carla K. Meyer^c, Michelle J. Sobolak^d, Patricia A. Crawford^e

^aLa Roche College, ^bUniversity of Pittsburgh, ^cDuquesne University, ^dUniversity of Pittsburgh, ^eUniversity of Pittsburgh

Picturebooks

The Box Turtle

Written and illustrated by **Vanessa Roeder**

Dial Books, 2020. ISBN 978-0-735-23050-7

In this charming story, the box turtle, just like many of us, is trying to gain confidence in who he is while feeling the pressure to fit in. Born without a shell, this story chronicles a box turtle's quest to find the perfect shell. Along the way, the box turtle tries out many shells often with hilarious results. Ultimately, and with a little help from his friends, he settles on the shell his parents first gave him. Children will certainly be able to relate to this tale of friendship, coming to accept ourselves and learning that we do not have to always "fit in" to find happiness. Ages 3-5. (MJS)

The Brain is Kind of a Big Deal

Written and illustrated by **Nick Seluk**

Orchard Books, 2019. ISBN 978-1338167009

This nonfiction picture book is all about our amazing brains. Seluk uses comic book style illustrations and humor to teach young readers how the brain controls everything we do from our thoughts, movements, senses, and feelings. Young readers will surely be pulled in by the illustrations and humor that Seluk uses to complement the text as they learn about the many functions of the brain and how it controls all other parts of the body. The sidebar graphics and text go into more detail about the brain and augment the reader's learning. Ages 6-8. (MJS)

Counting Creatures

Written by **Julia Donaldson**. Illustrated by **Sharon King-Chai**

Dial Books, 2020. ISBN 978-0-593-3453-0

This stunning picturebook offers a lift-the-flap counting game experience, while also introducing readers to a host of animals and their babies. As children count their way through the text, they will learn that baby sheep are called lambs, baby foxes are kits, baby hares are leverets, and so much more. In addition to these solid math and science connections, along with a predictable, yet engaging storyline, the book also offers a veritable visual playground. The colorful, profusely illustrated pages are punctuated with peek-through windows and interactive flaps, just right for

exploration by little fingers. This book will keep young children coming back for more, as they discover the many different layers of material within it. Ages 3-8. (PAC)

Julián at the Wedding

Written and illustrated by **Jessica Love**

Candlewick Press, 2020. ISBN: 978-1536212389

Julián, and his love of magic and make-believe, are back. In this follow-up story to *Julián is a Mermaid*, Julián and his abuela are invited to a wedding, where Julián meets Marisol, a new friend. Together the two imagine, create, and get into a bit of trouble. But through it all - the truth remains that, as the text tells us, a wedding is a party for love. Jessica Love continues to celebrate gender diversity and equal rights in simple, loving stories that come to life with her vivid and emotional illustrations. Ages 3-8. (KBJ)

Me and My Sister

Written and illustrated by **Rose Robbins**

Eerdmans, 2020. ISBN 978-0-8028-5542-8

“Uh-oh, here comes my sister...” This light, but insightful, picturebook offers readers a glimpse into the world of two siblings who have both similarities and differences. Although the word “autism” is never used in the text, it becomes quite clear that this is the issue at hand. Big brother narrates gently worded descriptions of the challenging behaviors of his sister, providing an empathetic yet realistic perspective. The tone is loving and compassionate. This text could serve as a powerful discussion starter. Ages 4-8. (PAC)

The New Neighbors

Written and illustrates by **Sarah McIntyre**

Penguin Books, 2019 (first published in the U.K. in 2018). ISBN: 978-1-52478-996-1

When Mr. Pigeon stops by the apartment roof to tell the young Bunny family that their new first-floor neighbors are rats, the exuberant young rabbits rush off to tell their sister. As the bunnies bounce down the stairs to inform all the neighbors in Pickle Lake, excitement turns to fear and even anger as unpleasant stereotypes and rumors about rats emerge. By the time they reach the Rats’ front door, nobody even wants to knock. But once the door opens, a warm welcome awaits, as the tenants realize that nobody should be judged by their appearance alone. This fast-paced tale seems simple, but reminds us all to think before we judge. Ages 4-8. (KBJ)

Saturdays are for Stella

Written by **Candy Wellins**. Illustrated by **Charlie Eve Ryan**

Page Street Kids, 2020. ISBN 978-1-62414-921-4

George loves Saturdays because these are the days he spends with his Grandma Stella. He loves everything about her and the special times they share. Their days are filled with fun and George knows he is loved deeply. One day, George awakes to learn that Stella has passed away. In his aching grief, George mourns his grandmother and comes to hate the emptiness of Saturdays. Life changes when his family gets a new addition. Baby Stella is born! George embraces his new little sister, finding a joy and love reminiscent of that of his grandmother. Suddenly, Saturdays are redeemed and once again set aside for Stella. This warm and poignant story highlights the power of intergenerational relationships and conveys a hopeful reassurance for even the most difficult times. Ages 4-8. (PAC)

Graphic Novels

It's Me. (Catwad #1)

Written and illustrated by **Jim Benton**

Scholastic, 2019. ISBN 978-1-33856-603-1

It's Me. (Catwad #1) is the first graphic novel in a new series by New York Times bestselling author, Jim Benton. This series features two cats who are complete opposites in their outlooks on life. Catwad is a pessimist who sees the world as terrible in every way. His overzealous friend, Blurmp, sees the world as amazing in every way. Their opposite perspectives on life make for a very amusing friendship. Young or reluctant readers will find the slapstick humor engaging. The novel is presented in short chapters that make reading the full text manageable for even the most reluctant of readers. Ages 8-12. (MJS)

Class Act

Written and illustrated by **Jerry Craft**

Quill Tree Books, 2020. ISBN 978-0062885500

On the heels of his Newbery Medal winning graphic novel, *New Kid*, Jerry Craft again hits a homerun with the second installment of the series, *Class Act*. The graphic novel explores the opportunities afforded (or lack there off) to a student of color, Drew, the main character, who comes from a poorer community in New York City and attends the elite Riverdale Academy Day School on scholarship. Using his craft, the author/illustrator continues to unabashedly address the everyday racism and microaggressions children of color face in white spaces. Craft's illustration and humorous writing style will capture the attention and respect of middle-grades readers. Ages 9-14. (CKM)

Young Adult

A Light in the Darkness

Written by **Albert Marrin**

Albert A. Knopf, 2019. ISBN 978-1524701208

An exceptionally well-written and researched work, *A Light in the Darkness*, recounts the tragic fate of Janus Korczak and his orphans in Nazi controlled Poland. The author uses a unique approach to storytelling which contrasts the ideologies of Hitler and Korczak. Marrin's approach poignantly introduces readers to World War II and to Warsaw. The author leaves no stone unturned and unflinchingly gives testament to the horror of the Holocaust through Korczak's story. The book requires critical thinking and reflection, yet is an extremely important work that illustrates how easily humans can be corrupted by hate and bigotry. Ages 13+. (CKM)