



Page Turners: Books for Children

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A Bear Far from Home

Written by **Susan Fletcher**

Illustrated by **Rebecca Green**

Anne Schwartz Books, 2022

ISBN 978-0-593-18189-8

A snowy white polar bear lives joyfully and moves freely in frigid Norway. . . until the day that everything changes. Suddenly, the bear's days of romping through snow and swimming in icy waters are over. The bear is trapped, caged, and shipped off to a foreign land; presented as a gift from the King of Norway to the King of England. Based on historical documents from 13th century Europe, this beautifully illustrated picture book introduces young readers to the menagerie of animals, creatures from all corners of the world, that were kept at the Tower of London. The poignant text points to the sad captivity faced by one bear, but fortunately, also leaves readers with a sense of hopefulness, when the King of England orders that the bear be allowed to swim and fish in the river each day. This compelling storyline has historical moorings and could serve as a powerful tool for learning about animal rights and humane education. Ages 4-8.

If You Live Here

Written by **Kate Gardner**

Illustrated by **Christopher Silas Neal**

Balzer + Bray, 2022

ISBN 978-0-06-286532-8

“If you live on a train, you know everything changes.” Gardner’s simple, yet beautifully written text explores what it might be like to live in many different homes, including on a train, a farm, or a submarine. Readers will want to closely examine Neal’s intricately detailed and amusing illustrations on each 2-page spread. The carefully chosen vocabulary invites discussion around each idea, developing knowledge of the world—why would living in a garden require patience? This picture book is enjoyable as a stand-alone text and could also launch instruction on habitats and communities. Ages 4-8.

Pow Wow DayWritten by **Traci Sorell**Illustrated by **Madelyn Goodnight**

Charlesbridge, 2022

ISBN 978-1-580-89948-2

The author, Sorell, and illustrator, Goodnight, are members of two different Native American tribes and have created texts and illustrations that show contemporary Native Americans. This text meets that goal by allowing the reader to explore the beauty and meaning of a yearly pow wow while telling the story of the main character, River, who is battling an illness that keeps her from dancing this year. While she is disappointed, she remembers that the pow wow is to honor the Creator, to pray for the continuance of the language and culture and also as a way to pray for healing for those like River who need it. With the support of family and friends she looks towards a brighter future when she will again play an active role in the beauty of the pow wow. This is a story of hope and perseverance set in a magnificent cultural context. Ages 4-8.

Pretty Perfect Kitty CornWritten by **Shannon Hale**Illustrated by **LeUyen Pham**

Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2022

ISBN 978-1-4197-5093-9

Unicorn's friends think he is positively perfect. However, perfection is hard to maintain even for a beautiful unicorn. In this new tale by the author and illustrator team of Hale and Pham, young readers learn about true friendship and how the gift of that friendship allows us to be loved even when we are not perfect. This story is full of descriptive vocabulary and vibrant and colorful illustrations that stand out on white pages. This book would be an excellent read aloud for classrooms and families alike as it reinforces an important life lesson: no one is perfect! Ages 4-8.

The Queen of KindergartenWritten by **Derrick Barnes**Illustrated by **Vanessa Brantley-Newton**

Nancy Paulsen Books, 2022

ISBN 978-0-593-11142-0

MJ is excited to start kindergarten and has everything in place: Hair freshly washed and braided? Check! First day of school outfit? Check! Up on time and ready to go? Check! Momma tells her that she needs one more thing. As she places a tiara on MJ's head, she dubs her the Queen of Kindergarten and explains about all the kind, caring, and helpful things that queens do. MJ embraces the challenge and goes to school ready to be an engaged learner, a classroom helper, and the thoughtful friend that her classmates need. This is a joyful book, with words and pictures that point to the power of relationships in children's lives—on the first day of school and beyond. Readers may also want to check out *The King of Kindergarten*, an equally celebratory companion text by the same author-illustrator duo. Ages 4-8.

Remembering Ethan

Written by **Lesléa Newman**

Illustrated by **Tracy Nishimura Bishop**

Magination Press, 2020

ISBN 978-1-433-83113-3

This touching book on the loss of a family member captures the complexity of grief as well as the importance of celebrating the life of a loved one who has died. Sarah misses her big brother Ethan and wants to talk about him and remember how he ducked his head to enter the door and carried her and the cat, Buttons, under one arm like “big bags of groceries.” She doesn’t understand why she and her parents can’t talk about Ethan. The engaging text and delicate illustrations of a family’s memories explores how Sarah’s family navigates grief and how healing can come from connection and love—and is a worthy book for any family in a similar circumstance. Ages 4-8.

Keeping the City Going

Written and illustrated by **Brian Floca**

Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books, 2021

ISBN: 978-1534493773

Despite those of us from cities living in close proximity, the Covid-19 pandemic isolated us all in ways none of us could have imagined. In spring of 2020, we learned to work, learn, and live almost exclusively from home. Yet for some workers, staying home was simply not a possibility. This book by Caldecott-winning Brian Floca is a heartfelt and beautiful appreciation to the essential workers who kept New York City running in the most critical ways. Focused on how we can support one another even when kept apart, this book offers a way for young children to reflect on and make sense of the isolation that the pandemic created. However, it also shows the power of kindness, bravery, and appreciation for strangers and friends who put their lives on the line to keep us all going. With vibrant colors and simple, almost poetic writing, this book serves as a loving memory - a thank you note - to those we watched through our windows. Ages 4-8.

Laxmi’s Mooch

Written by **Shelly Anand**

Illustrated by **Nabi H. Ali**

Kokila Press, 2021

ISBN: 978-1984815651

Young Laxmi is having fun playing pretend with her friends at preschool when they suggest she should play a cat because of her “whiskers”, pointing to the hair on her upper lip. Suddenly self-conscious of her facial hair, she comes home concerned about why she is different from her friends. Her family talks to her about being proud of her Indian American heritage, with her mother sharing the legacy of women with “mooches” - the playful word they use for the hair on the upper lip. In this body-positive text for young readers, Laxmi reminds us all to be proud of our heritage and the unique and beautiful bodies we all have. As Laxmi reminds the reader, “It’s ok, you can look”. *Laxmi’s Mooch* is a gentle and loving reminder that what makes us unique

also makes us beautiful. Parents and teachers of young children will appreciate this story of self-acceptance, family heritage, and celebrating ourselves for who we are. Ages 4-8.

Books for Young Adults

Firekeeper's Daughter

Written by **Angeline Boulley**

Henry Holt and Company, 2021

ISBN: 978-1250766564

In her stunning debut novel, Angeline Boulley tells the story of Daunis Fontaine, an 18-year-old young woman. As a biracial unregistered member of the Ojibwe tribe, Daunis does not feel as if she fits in her hometown or in the nearby Ojibwe reservation. Putting her dreamed about fresh start at college on hold to care for her fragile mother, Daunis finds herself navigating a secret life as an FBI informant in an investigation of a lethal new drug. The author, Angelina Boulley successfully writes a story that will keep younger adult readers on the edge of their seat as the heroine learns what it means to be a strong Ojibwe woman. The novels provide young adult readers to learn about social justice, modern Native American issues and personal growth. Ages 14 and up.

Let's Talk About It: A Teen's Guide to Sex, Relationships, and Being a Human

Written by **Erika Moen** and **Mathew Nolan**

Random House Graphic, 2021

ISBN: 978-1984893147

Erika Moen and Mathew Noal take on a challenging yet essential topic in their graphic novel, *Let's Talk About It: A Teen's Guide to Sex, Relationships, and Being a Human*. The book includes critical topics such as gender, consent, sexting, rejection, and more. The graphics include detailed illustrations of human genitals which may deter some readers and their adults, but this graphic novel provides much needed critical information. Some readers may question the way certain concepts are covered (i.e., sexting, sexually transmitted diseases, etc.); however, with the right guidance and support from the adults in their lives, the graphic novel could serve as an important conversation starter for topics that may otherwise not be addressed. Ages 14 and up.