



Page Turners: Books for Children

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

^aUniversity of Pittsburgh, ^bUniversity of Pittsburgh, ^cEndicott College, ^dUniversity of Pittsburgh, ^eDuquesne University

Agatha May and the Angler Fish

Written by **Nora Morrison & Jessie Ann Foley**

Illustrated by **Mika Song**

Dial Books for Young Readers (Penguin Random House), 2022

ISBN: 9780593324752

This beautifully written and charmingly illustrated text shares the tale of Agatha May, who struggles with organization and cleanliness and often is picked last in science class. But while Agatha May has trouble showing her talents in traditional ways, her chance to shine comes when she gets to prepare and present on the angler fish - a creature as fascinating, odd, and unique as Agatha May herself. Filled with interesting facts about the angler fish and told in a lilting rhyme pattern, this book will delight children and everyone who roots for the underdog. This book is an excellent cross between nonfiction and storytelling and reminds everyone to keep searching for ways to light up their dreams. Ages 4-7.

BIG

Written and illustrated by **Vashti Harrison**

Hachette Book Group, 2023

ISBN: 9780316353229

This book, a recent Caldecott and Coretta Scott King winner, shares the sad but true story so many young women face -- that big is beautiful and strong, until it isn't. Following the growth of a young black girl with beautiful and poignant illustrations, the book reveals how the small shames and thoughtless words can leave lasting impacts on children whose bodies do not match perceptions of beauty. Particularly striking is the way the author uses illustrations to illuminate how painful and restrictive the boxes society puts us in, as well as the limits we set for ourselves. Ultimately a story of self-discovery and pride, *BIG* addresses the ways that the world can judge larger girls, especially those of color. But it also shows how we can teach our children to rise up and reclaim their own image as one of beauty and strength. Ages 5-10.

Hello, Puddle!Written by **Anita Sanchez**Illustrated by **Luisa Uribe**

Clarion Books, 2022

ISBN 9780358381440

This story follows a young girl watching a nearby puddle throughout the seasons. The reader learns about the many different animals, insects and birds that use the puddle for a myriad of reasons. This enchanting text helps young readers learn about an overlooked habitat in nature as they see the puddle being used as a home, a drinking hole, a bath, a place for seeds to germinate, a feeding spot and much more. The puddle shrinks and grows throughout the seasons illustrating the ways that weather impacts our environment. Beautiful, colorful illustrations accompany the simple text to help the reader have a window into this world. Resources are provided at the end of the text to help readers explore the wildlife around them, create their own puddle and learn additional facts about the many animals in the text. Ages 4-7.

KittyWritten and illustrated by **Rebecca Jordan-Glum**

Roaring Book Press, 2022

ISBN 9781250768049

This comical tale allows readers to follow the adventures of Granny when she is cat-sitting for her family's pet. Granny thinks this job will be very easy until she loses her glasses and the antics begin. After accidentally letting the cat out and a raccoon in, Granny is in for a wild night. The engaging text is coupled with colorful illustrations that help bring the story to life and includes many action words that make this an exciting read aloud. This story is sure to delight young children who will relish in knowing Granny's mix-up and watching the chaos unfold. Ages 4-7.

The Last StandWritten by **Antwan Eady**Illustrated by **Jarrett and Jerome Pumphrey**

Alfred A. Knopf, 2024

ISBN 978-0-593-48057-1

Papa Earl has the last remaining stand at the farmer's market. Each Saturday, Papa and his grandson, Little Earl, harvest peppers, plums, pumpkins, and eggs, and pack them in the truck. They head off to the market, where a cast of friends and regular customers gather. One Saturday Papa finds himself unwell. Little Earl steps up to fill the gap. He harvests all the goods and transports them to the market in his wagon. The concerned customers miss Papa. While Little Earl sells all the wares, he returns home with a still full wagon, filled with luscious treats that friends have made from Papa's produce. Most Saturdays are for harvesting, but this Saturday is for gathering and feasting. This sensitive story is a delight for the senses. Don't miss the detailed illustrations, end pages, author's notes, and under-the-dust jacket cover to find additional insights about Papa's advocacy for Black farmers and the power of intergenerational relationships. Ages 4-10.

Oh, Panda

Written and illustrated by **Cindy Derby**

Alfred A. Knopf, 2023

ISBN 978-0-593-5642-1

On a wintry day, Panda encounters a beautiful butterfly. He wants to play, but the butterfly soars up, up, up—right over a snowy mountaintop. Panda tries to follow, but the mountain is too cold, too icy, and too high. An unseen narrator tries to distract Panda, reminding him he is “still a bit too small” to take on the mountain. However, Panda is a tenacious little bear who will not be dismayed. He persists. Using every possible resource, Panda overlooks problems and false starts. He tries again and again until he does indeed reach the peak of the mountain. When he looks down the other side, he finds warmth, sun, and a whole world of butterflies. The sparse text and whimsical watercolor with gouache illustrations convey a story of determination, innovation, and grit. This would be an excellent text to model growth mindset principles. Ages 3-8.

Rabbit, Duck, and Big Bear

Written by **Nadine Brun-Cosme**

Illustrated by **Olivier Tallec**

Random House Studio, 2023

ISBN 9780593486986

Rabbit, Duck, and Big Bear are three friends living in the forest who do everything and go everywhere together, except down the long, winding path. They each have their reasons for not wanting to journey down that path together and this beautifully illustrated text celebrates the friendship between them on every page, highlighting the joys of the adventures and activities they do undertake, from decorating the forest with garlands and lanterns to playing in the autumn leaves. The long and winding path is ever present, however, and young readers will appreciate finding out that each friend has a special relationship with it and where it leads. This endearing book gently discusses the need for all of us to be with friends at times, and alone at times. Ages 4-8.

What’s Inside a Caterpillar Cocoon? (And Other Questions about Moths and Butterflies)

Written and illustrated by **Rachel Igotofsky**

Crown Books for Young Readers, 2023

ISBN 9780593176573

This stunningly illustrated informational text (one of the *What’s Inside* series by the author) focuses on the similarities and differences between moths and caterpillars at every stage of their life cycles. It is filled with interesting and engaging facts about both, and Igotofsky intentionally includes caterpillar and moth species that are less common but strong examples of the characteristics she eloquently describes. The illustrations are intricate and young readers will enjoy poring over the pages to catch each detail. There is much to learn about these fascinating insects from this book and the author also includes additional educational resources to launch children’s interest in this topic. This nonfiction text would be an excellent read-aloud and worthwhile addition to any classroom library. Ages 4-7.

Freaky HeartWritten by **Lori M. Jones**

Independently published, 2024

ISBN: 979-8876853783

As a parent of children with disabilities and an academic with a disability, I find far too often books about children with differences fall into stereotypical disability troupes. *Freaky Heart* provides a refreshing take about what it means to grow up different. Annalise, born with half a heart and dependent on a pacemaker to stay alive, has always felt different. Multiple operations and hospital stays have only added to Annalise's sense of alienation. As a middle-school student, Annalise desperately wants to be normal, but she believes her peers see her as a "freak." An accident at school sends Annalise back to the hospital, meanwhile she must address the life challenges of a typical middle schooler. These challenges give her a new way of seeing herself, which is the beauty of the story. It centers on Annalise's humanity, not her differences. This book gives the child with a disability the opportunity to claim power back by using words that were intended to harm, such as freak. The author uses humor and real-life experiences to develop a compelling story that would benefit all middle-grades students to read. Ages 10-15.