



Silver Birch Express 2023 Nominee List Annotations and Content



Alina in a Pinch

Written and Illustrated by Shenaaz Nanji

Published by Second Story Press

Moving to a new city means Alina has to make new friends, and nothing is worse than lunch at a new school. When her grandmother visits, Alina is inspired to help her cook the delicious Afro-Indian meals she's always loved, but a cruel note from a mysterious lunchtime bully leaves a bitter taste that even Nani's excellent cooking can't erase.

With an audition for Junior Chef fast approaching and Nani's wise lessons helping her, can Alina embrace her heritage and convince her classmates that being different is a good thing?

Content/ Discussion Themes

Cultural differences, prejudice and tolerance, bullying

Bear in the Family

Written by Eric Walters and Illustrated by Olga Barinova

Published by Orca Book Publishers

Jasmin and Hunter did not expect to find an orphaned bear cub stuck in the neighbors' well. Rescuing the tiny cub from the well was the easy part; now they need to care for it until the people from the bear-rescue sanctuary can make it safely through the fires to pick it up. The cub turns out to be exactly what one would expect of a wild animal—a huge handful!

Content/ Discussion Themes

Forest fires, interracial families, animal rescue

Crimson Twill: Witch in the City

Written by Kallie George and Illustrated by Birgitta Sif

Published by Candlewick

Crimson Twill is a little witch, but you might not know it. She lives in the country and loves polka dots and puppies instead of pointy shoes and black dresses. She even wears a big bow on her hat—which is crimson, just like her name. Tonight, for the very first time, Crimson is riding on her mother's broom all the way to New Wart City to go shopping at Broomingdale's! The huge department store has everything a witch could itch for. For Crimson, each floor (hats! cats! brooms!) is a new adventure. But is Broomingdale's ready for a witch as unique as Crimson?

Content/ Discussion Themes

Friendship, misfits, wordplay

Flipping Forward and Twisting Backward

Written by Alma Fullerton and Illustrated by Sarah Mensinga

Published by Peachtree

A diagnosis of dyslexia could change everything for an aspiring fifth-grade gymnast struggling at school in this authentic, high-energy novel in verse.

The gym is where Claire shines and she's on her way to qualifying for the state championships. But at school, she's known as a troublemaker—which is fine with her since it helps her hide her reading problem. Claire has never been able to make sense of the wobbling jumble of letters on a page.

When a sympathetic principal wonders if she's acting out because she may have dyslexia, she's stunned. Claire has always assumed she's dumb, so she's eager to get evaluated. But her mother balks. Afraid Claire will be labeled "stupid," she refuses testing. Can Claire take on both her reading challenges and her mother's denial? Is it worth jeopardizing her dream of the state championships?

Content/ Discussion Themes

Learning differences, novel in verse, overcoming obstacles

Kaleidoscope of Dinosaurs and Prehistoric Life: Their Colors and Patterns Explained

Written and Illustrated by Greer Stothers

Published by Wide Eyed Editions

What colors were the dinosaurs? Find out in this kaleidoscopic look at the technicolor world of dinosaurs and other prehistoric beasts as they may have looked.

A richly detailed and vibrantly illustrated natural history book, this fascinating read is bursting with color and will show you dinosaurs like never before. Discover cutting-edge theories on feathered dinosaurs, the colourful secrets of the fossil record, and what million-year-old remains tell us about how extinct animals lived and looked. Paleo-artist and author Greer Stothers reimagines the dinosaurs and their prehistoric peers, using fossils and the examples of living species to bring this often misrepresented world to life.

- Could big dinosaurs have been gray like elephants?
- Would a snow-dwelling dino have been a brilliant white?
- What could mutant dinosaurs have looked like?

As well as the dinos, there's also a section that takes a look at other extinct animals, shows how animals from the Ice Age may have looked, and explores how clues about long-dead creatures can be discovered from art by the prehistoric peoples who encountered them.

This is a beautifully illustrated first look at the kaleidoscopic world of dinosaurs and other creatures for young children, and makes a gorgeous gift for young paleontologists and art-lovers alike.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Dinosaurs, Colours, Science, Paleontology, Fossils, Extinct Animals

Pink, Blue, and You! Questions for Kids about Gender Stereotypes

Written and Illustrated by Elise Gravel with Mykaell Blais

Published by Random House Children's Books, Anne Schwartz Books

Simple, accessible, and direct, this picture book is perfect for kids and parents or teachers to read together, opening the door to conversations about gender stereotypes and everyone's right to be their true selves.

Is it okay for boys to cry? Can girls be strong? Should girls and boys be given different toys to play with and different clothes to wear? Should we all feel free to love whoever we choose to love? In this incredibly kid-friendly and easy-to-grasp picture book, author-illustrator Elise Gravel and transgender collaborator Mykaell Blais raise these questions and others relating to gender roles, acceptance, and stereotyping.

With its simple language, colorful illustrations, engaging backmatter that showcases how "appropriate" male and female fashion has changed through history, and even a poster kids can hang on their wall, here is the ideal tool to help in conversations about a multi-layered and important topic.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Gender, Gender Identity, Gender Stereotypes, LGBTQIA2S+

The Strangest Thing in the Sea: And Other Curious Creatures of the Deep

Written by Rachel Poliquin and Illustrated by Byron Eggenschwiler

Published by Kids Can Press

A wonderfully weird book about the strangest creatures in the sea.

A feathery tutu dancing through the water? A tiptoeing rock wearing a wig? Not everything is as it seems in this fascinating exploration of bizarre sea animals. Each creature is introduced with intriguing art and text, and the question, "Am I the strangest thing in the sea?" Open the gatefold, and the actual creature in its habitat and a full description appear, along with the answer: No, it's *not* the strangest thing in the sea. That is, until the last creature, which *is* the strangest. But what could it be?

What's cooler than bizarre things that are real? Kids will want to dive right in!

Content/ Discussion Themes

Sea creatures, Ocean, Habitats, Biology

Tâpwê and the Magic Hat

Written by Buffy Sainte-Marie and Illustrated by Buffy Sainte-Marie and Michelle Alynn Clement

Published by Greystone Kids

Tâpwê can't wait to spend a week with his cousins on the other side of the Cree reserve-especially since Kokhom, his grandma, has given him the most amazing gift: a Magic Hat with bluebirds and grass snakes that come to life! Tâpwê is so excited that he soon forgets Kokhom's advice: Watch out for tricksters!

Tâpwê's adventure is everything he imagined. He meets his cousins, takes part in a powwow, and sleeps in a tipi. But soon he's reminded of Kokhom's words. Is his new friend Wâpos leading him astray with mischief?

Content/ Discussion Themes

Tricksters, Indigenous reserves, stealing and making it right

This is What I've Been Told: Mii yi gaa-bi-wiindmaagooyaan

Written and Illustrated by Juliana Armstrong

Published by Medicine Wheel Education

It's been said when teachings are passed down from one generation to the next, good things can happen. Language is learned, knowledge is shared and culture is practiced. In this story of language preservation, Author/Illustrator and Anishnaabemowin language teacher Juliana Armstrong illuminates a number of Anishnaabemowin words along with their cultural connections, passed down from her Ojibway ancestors. Knowing our culture means knowing who we are. When we know who we are, we can walk in a good way.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Ojibway knowledge, teachings and culture; Anishnaabemowin language

Who's Looking? How Animals See the World

Written by Carol Matas and Illustrated by Cornelia Li

Published by Orca Book Publishers

How do animals see the world? It turns out, *very* differently.

In this nonfiction picture book, a young girl and her baby sister's outdoor adventure (hiking through the forest, picnicking in the grass and swimming in the ocean) is overseen by the local fauna. The way those animals view the girls is very different from how the girls see each other.

Goats see far and wide in a panorama, whales don't see color the way humans do and a high-soaring eagle's sharp vision can clearly see a tiny mouse far below. Through clever illustrations and scientific prose, we are reminded that while we may see things differently, we all share this life together on planet Earth.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Perspective, Vision, Animals, Biology - what do we see and why