



Forest Of Reading
Awards

Silver Birch Fiction 2023 Nominee List – Annotations



Butt Sandwich and Tree

Written by Wesley King

Published by Paula Wiseman Books

Eleven-year-old Green loves his devoted older brother, Cedar, a popular basketball star, but that doesn't mean he wants to follow in his footsteps. He doesn't really care about sports or making friends. Still, eventually Green caves to pressure to try out for the basketball team. He may be tall like Cedar, but he's nowhere near as skilled.

And when a confrontation with the coach spurs Green to flee the court, his flight coincides with a priceless necklace going missing—making him the number one suspect. To clear Green's name, the two brothers team up to find the necklace, and along the way, they learn to appreciate their differences...and the things that bring them together.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Sibling relationships, Autism Spectrum Disorders, stealing

Forever Birchwood

Written by Danielle Daniel

Published by Harper Trophy Canada

Adventurous, trail-blazing Wolf lives in a northern mining town and spends her days exploring the mountains and wilderness with her three best friends Penny, Ann and Brandi. The girls' secret refuge is their tree-house hideaway, Birchwood, Wolf's favourite place on earth. When her beloved grandmother tells her that she is the great-granddaughter of a tree talker, Wolf knows that she is destined to protect the birch trees and wildlife that surround her.

But Wolf's mother doesn't understand this connection at all. Not only is she reluctant to engage with their family's Indigenous roots, she seems suspiciously on the wrong side of the environmental protection efforts in their hometown. To make matters worse, she's just started dating an annoying new boyfriend named Roger, whose motives—and construction company—seem equally suspect.

As summer arrives, so do bigger problems. Wolf and her friends discover orange plastic bands wrapped around the trees near their cherished hangout spot, and their once stable friendship seems on the verge of unravelling. Birchwood has given them so much—can they even stay together long enough to save this special place?

Content/ Discussion Themes

Friendship, environmental issues (housing development), police abuse of authority (bribed by corporation), environmental activism

Living with Viola

Written and Illustrated by Rosena Fung

Published by Annick Press

Livy is already having trouble fitting in as the new girl at school—and then there's Viola. Viola is Livy's anxiety brought to life, a shadowy twin that only Livy can see or hear. Livy tries to push back against Viola's relentless judgement, but nothing seems to work until she strikes up new friendships at school. Livy hopes that Viola's days are numbered. But when tensions arise both at home and at school, Viola rears her head stronger than ever. Only when Livy learns how to ask for help and face her anxiety does she finally figure out living with Viola.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Mental health (anxiety), immigrant experiences, self-advocacy

Meranda and the Legend of the Lake

Written by Meagan Mahoney

Published by OwlKids Books

Eleven-year-old Meranda thought her life was complicated enough with physical challenges (she uses crutches to walk) and her helicopter parents. But when her great-uncle Mark dies, Meranda and her family visit Cape Breton, Nova Scotia, where her parents grew up and where she hasn't been since the age of three.

Soon, secrets begin to unfold: Why does the newspaper headline say her great-uncle Mark's death was suspicious? Why do strangers keep calling Meranda "miracle baby"? Why does her usually calm mother seem so panicky and scared? And what on earth does all this have to do with mermaids? Meranda and her new friend, Claire, decide to investigate on their own. But as Meranda begins to separate fact from fiction, she finds herself in very real danger...

Content/ Discussion Themes

Character with physical disability, death, overprotective parents, friendship

Sneaks

Written by Catherine Egan

Published by Knopf Books for Young Readers

When Ben Harp sees his teacher's watch crawling across the hallway, he thinks he must be dreaming. But no, he's just seen his first Sneak—an interdimensional mischief-maker that can borrow the form of any ordinary object.

He figured this school year would be bad—his best friend moved away, the class bully is circling, and he’s stuck doing a group project with two similarly friendless girls, Charlotte and Akemi. Still, he wasn’t expecting aliens!

And he certainly wasn’t expecting that the woman he and Charlotte and Akemi are assigned to interview for their “living local history” project would be a Sneak expert. Or that she’d foist an old book on them to keep safe. . .and then disappear.

Now Ben, Charlotte, and Akemi are trying to understand a book that seems to contain a coded map while being pursued by violent clothes hangers, fire-spitting squirrels, and more. The Sneaks want that book! And they want something else, too: to pull a vastly more dangerous creature into the world with them.

Can three misfit kids decode the book in time to stop an alien takeover? And if they do, will they get extra credit on their group project?

Content/ Discussion Themes

Misfits, sci-fi violence, bullying, elder abuse, absent minded parents, fantasy

Stealing Home

Written by J. Torres and Illustrated by David Namisato

Published by Kids Can Press

A gripping graphic novel that tells a boy’s experience in a WWII Japanese internment camp, and the lessons that baseball teaches him.

Sandy Saito is a happy boy who’s obsessed with baseball — especially the Asahi team, the pride of his Japanese Canadian community. But when the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor, his life, like that of every North American of Japanese descent, changes forever. Forced to move to a remote internment camp, he and his family cope as best they can. And though life at the camp is difficult, Sandy finds solace in baseball, where there’s always the promise of possibilities.

Through his experience, Sandy comes to realize that life is a lot like baseball. It’s about dealing with whatever is thrown at you, however you can. And it’s about finding your way home.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Racism, World War II internment, baseball, power of sports

The Stone Child: The Misewa Saga, Book Three

Written by David A. Robertson

Published by Puffin Canada

After discovering a near-lifeless Eli at the base of the Great Tree, Morgan knows she doesn't have much time to save him. And it will mean asking for help — from friends old and new.

Racing against the clock, and with Arik and Emily at her side, Morgan sets off to follow the trail away from the Great Tree to find Eli's soul before it's too late. As they journey deep into the northern woods, a place they've been warned never to enter, they face new challenges and life-threatening attacks from strange and horrifying creatures. But a surprise ally comes to their aid, and Morgan finds the strength to focus on what's most important: saving her brother's life.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Fantasy violence, Indigenous ceremonies, rituals and traditions, children in foster care

Swim Team

Written and Illustrated by Johnnie Christmas

Published by HarperAlley

Bree can't wait for her first day at her new middle school, Enith Brigitha, home to the Mighty Manatees—until she's stuck with the only elective that fits her schedule, the dreaded Swim 101.

The thought of swimming makes Bree more than a little queasy, yet she's forced to dive headfirst into one of her greatest fears. Lucky for her, Etta, an elderly occupant of her apartment building and former swim team captain, is willing to help.

With Etta's training and a lot of hard work, Bree suddenly finds her swim-crazed community counting on her to turn the school's failing team around. But that's easier said than done, especially when their rival, the prestigious Holyoke Prep, has everything they need to leave the Mighty Manatees in their wake.

Can Bree defy the odds and guide her team to a state championship, or have the Manatees swum their last lap—for good?

Content/ Discussion Themes

Racism, underdog athletes, perseverance

The Undercover Book List

Written by Colleen Nelson

Published by Pajama Press

He's known as the class troublemaker. She's known as the bookworm. But when every note they send is anonymous, identity is suddenly what they make it.

Between her father's posting overseas and her best friend Sienna's move to the other side of the country, seventh grade is looking lonely for Jane MacDonald. But Sienna has left her with one last trick: a hidden message in a library book—the perfect plot to start a secret club and find Jane a new book-loving friend.

Tyson Flamand has problems of his own. Since the fourth grade he's had a reputation as a bad kid, and there's no point fighting it when teachers always think the worst. So when he finds an anonymous note in the library looking for a nerdy new friend, he knows he's the last person in the world it could be meant for. But something makes him answer it anyway, and Tyson finds himself pulled into a secret book club where being hidden may be the first step to being truly seen.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Practical jokes, unlikely friendship, death of grandparent (natural), parent in military, identity

Zachary Ying and the Dragon Emperor

Written by Xiran Jay Zhao

Published by Margaret K. McElderry

Zachary Ying never had many opportunities to learn about his Chinese heritage. His single mom was busy enough making sure they got by, and his schools never taught anything except Western history and myths. So Zack is woefully unprepared when he discovers he was born to host the spirit of the First Emperor of China for a vital mission: sealing the leaking portal to the Chinese underworld before the upcoming Ghost Month blows it wide open.

The mission takes an immediate wrong turn when the First Emperor botches his attempt to possess Zack's body and binds to Zack's AR gaming headset instead, leading to a battle where Zack's mom's soul gets taken by demons. Now, with one of history's most infamous tyrants yapping in his headset, Zack must journey across China to heist magical artefacts and defeat figures from history and myth, all while learning to wield the emperor's incredible water dragon powers.

And if Zack can't finish the mission in time, the spirits of the underworld will flood into the mortal realm, and he could lose his mom forever.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Spirituality, Chinese American/Muslim heritage, identity