



2023

LIGHT READS,  
GREAT  
STORIES

A reading list curated for readers in adult literacy programs, ESL students and readers, and adult learners.

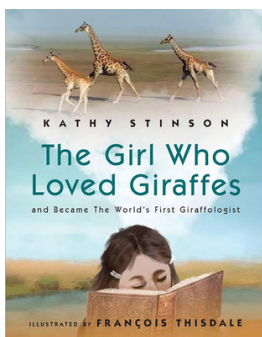
[forest@accessola.com](mailto:forest@accessola.com) | [forestofreading.com](http://forestofreading.com)



Thank you to the *Light Reads, Great Stories* Selection Committee  
for their dedication to curating this list:  
*Myra Junyk, Sonia Doyon, Gail Kavelman, Lynella Reid-James*

# LIGHT READS, GREAT STORIES

## Beginner Level Choices



### **The Girl Who Loved Giraffes**

**Written and Illustrated by Kathy Stinson and François Thisdale**

Published by Fitzhenry & Whiteside

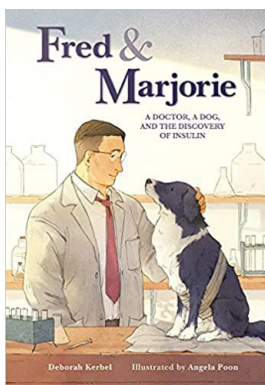
When Anne Innis saw her first giraffe in a zoo, she was entranced. So much so that a love for giraffes shaped her whole life. She decided at a young age that she would one day travel from her home in Canada to study giraffes in their natural environment in Africa.

After overcoming obstacles to doing so based on her gender, Anne succeeded in fulfilling her dream in 1956 and became the world's leading scientific expert on giraffes. Gender discrimination then interfered with her ability to share her passionate interest and her knowledge with students. The disheartening injustice of it led her into work championing equal rights for women.

Anne eventually gained the recognition she deserved for her remarkable achievements in the field of animal behaviour. By then giraffe numbers in the wild were dwindling, and she became devoted to helping save them.

In *The Girl Who Loved Giraffes and Became the World's First Giraffologist*, Kathy Stinson and François Thisdale have created a gem of a book that captures the dramatic story of Anne's life, the majestic beauty of giraffes, and fascinating facts about this most intriguing and magnificent creature.

Anne Innis Dagg herself is thrilled that the book will cause young readers to fall in love with giraffes as she did, and bring their attention to the cause dearest to her heart, that of giraffe conservation. Readers are bound to fall in love with Anne, too.



### **Fred & Marjorie: A Doctor, a Dog, and the Discovery of Insulin**

**Written and Illustrated by Deborah Kerbel and Angela Poon**

Published by Owlkids Books

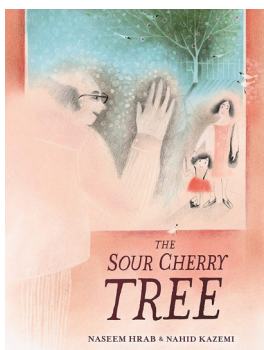
In 1921, Frederick Banting was a young doctor with an idea: could the mysterious secretions of the pancreas be used to treat diabetes? We now call this substance insulin, and its life-saving discovery was an impactful milestone in medical science.

Banting and his assistant, Charles Best, worked together in a small lab to test the theory with street dogs. Banting formed a special bond with one of his test dogs and gave her a name: Marjorie. After Marjorie responded well to insulin treatments, the treatments went on to be used for humans with diabetes—and the results were deemed practically miraculous.

A real-life scientific milestone told in an innovative graphic novel format, the book also thoughtfully discusses the use of animals for medical research, including back matter on the subject and further information about diabetes.

# LIGHT READS, GREAT STORIES

## Beginner Level Choices



### **The Sour Cherry Tree**

**Written and Illustrated by Naseem Hrab and Nahid Kazemi**

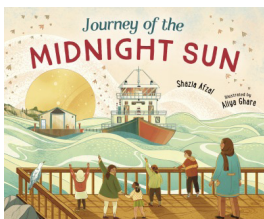
Published by Owlkids Books

A heartwarming look at love, loss, and memorable objects through the eyes of a child by critically-acclaimed creators Naseem Hrab and Nahid Kazemi

“Deeply evocative ... A beautifully poignant celebration of memories of a loved one that live on in those that remain.” — Kirkus Reviews – STARRED REVIEW

After her grandfather’s death, a young girl wanders through his house. As she tours each room, the objects she discovers stir memories of her grandfather—her baba bozorg. His closet full of clothes reminds her of the mints he kept in his pockets. His favorite teacup conjures thoughts of the fig cookies he would offer her. The curtains in the living room bring up memories of hide-and-seek games and the special relationship that she and her baba bozorg shared, even though they spoke different languages.

The Sour Cherry Tree is an authentic look at death and loss centred on the experiences of a child, both strikingly whimsical and matter-of-fact. Drawing on the Iranian-Canadian author’s childhood memories, this tender meditation on grief, love, and memory is at once culturally specific and universally relatable.



### **Journey of the Midnight Sun**

**Written and Illustrated by Shazia Afzal and Aliya Ghare**

Published by Orca Book Publishers

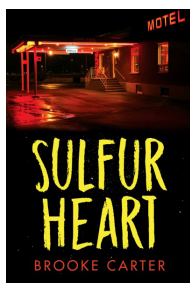
This is the true story of the journey of the Midnight Sun Mosque.

In 2010, a Winnipeg-based charity raised funds to build and ship a mosque to Inuvik, one of the most northern towns in Canada’s Arctic. A small but growing Muslim community there had been using a cramped trailer for their services, but there just wasn’t enough space. The mosque travelled over 4,000 kilometers on a journey fraught with poor weather, incomplete bridges, narrow roads, low traffic wires and a deadline to get on the last barge heading up the Mackenzie River before the first winter freeze. But it made it just in time and is now one of the most northern mosques in the world.

This beautiful picture book reminds us that the collective dream of fostering a multicultural and tolerant Canada exists and that people of all backgrounds will come together to build bridges and overcome obstacles for the greater good of their neighbors.

# LIGHT READS, GREAT STORIES

## Intermediate Level Choices



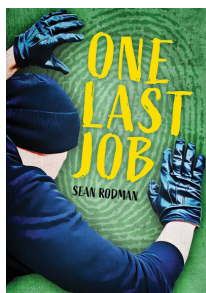
### **Sulfur Heart**

**Written by Brooke Carter**

Published by Orca Book Publishers

Will's father was just found dead in a pile of sulfur.

He was a retired cop who'd been working as a night security guard at the SulCorp sulfur mill. Now, to determine if his death was a tragic accident or something more sinister, Will must return to the place he swore he'd never set foot in again. Hope is a little town struggling in the shadow of a major metropolis, haunted by a history of death, violence and crime. And then there's the girl Will never thought he'd see again, Eve. But falling back in love with her isn't the only complication he will have to face while investigating his father's possible murder. Could his search for the truth cause history to repeat itself?



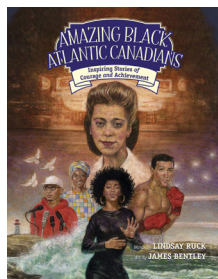
### **One Last Job**

**Written Sean Rodman**

Published by Orca Book Publishers

Michael has been getting into trouble lately.

As a consequence, his mom is making him look after his grandfather for the summer. The thing is, Gramps isn't your average senior citizen: he's a retired burglar with a lifetime of criminal knowledge. When a thief breaks into Gramps' apartment and steals a necklace with great sentimental value, the unlikely pair team up, combining old-school planning and modern tech to track down the necklace—and try to steal it back.



### **Amazing Black Atlantic Canadians: Inspiring Stories of Courage and Achievement**

**Written by Lindsay Ruck and Illustrated by James Bentley**

Published by Nimbus Publishing

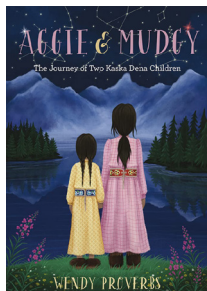
This fascinating, full-colour illustrated book features over 50 amazing Black people from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador, sharing their incredible stories and accomplishments, past and present.

Among these amazing Black Atlantic Canadians are people who saved lives, set sports records (Delmore William "Buddy" Daye), achieved international superstardom (Measha Brueggergosman), made change in their own neighbourhoods (Quentrel Provo), overcame injustice (Viola Desmond), and enacted many other inspiring deeds of courage and perseverance. With dozens of profiles on both historical and contemporary Black people from Atlantic Canada, Lindsay Ruck celebrates the accomplishments of some of our region's amazing Black heroes.

This book features informative sidebars, an index, and 20 colour illustrations from artist James Bentley.

# LIGHT READS, GREAT STORIES

## Intermediate Level Choices



### **Aggie & Mudgy: The Journey of Two Kaska Dena Children**

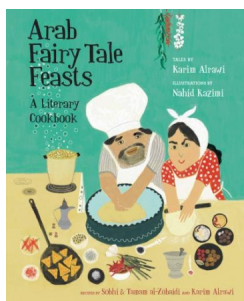
Written by Wendy Proverbs

Published by Wandering Fox

Based on the true story of the author's biological mother and aunt, this novel traces the long and frightening journey of two Kaska Dena sisters as they are taken from their home to attend residential school.

When Maddy discovers an old photograph of two little girls in her grandmother's belongings, she wants to know who they are. Nan reluctantly agrees to tell her the story, though she is unsure if Maddy is ready to hear it. The girls in the photo, Aggie and Mudgy, are two Kaska Dena sisters who lived many years ago in a remote village on the BC–Yukon border. Like countless Indigenous children, they were taken from their families at a young age to attend residential school, where they endured years of isolation and abuse.

As Nan tells the story, Maddy asks many questions about Aggie and Mudgy's 1,600-kilometre journey by riverboat, mail truck, paddlewheeler, steamship, and train, from their home to Lejac Residential School in central BC. Nan patiently explains historical facts and geographical places of the story, helping Maddy understand Aggie and Mudgy's transitional world. Unlike many books on this subject, this story focuses on the journey to residential school rather than the experience of attending the school itself. It offers a glimpse into the act of being physically uprooted and transported far away from loved ones. Aggie and Mudgy captures the breakdown of family by the forces of colonialism, but also celebrates the survival and perseverance of the descendants of residential school survivors to re-establish the bonds of family.



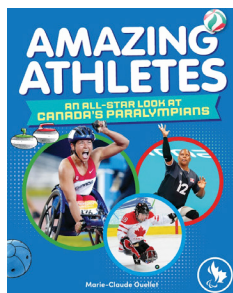
### **Arab Fairy Tale Feasts: A Literary Cookbook**

Written by Karim Alrawi and Illustrated by Nahid Kazimi, with recipes by Sobhi and Tamam al-Zobaidi

Published by Tradewind Books

Arab Fairy Tale Feasts is the latest title in the highly acclaimed Fairy Tale Feasts series in which prominent writers of diverse cultures have created enchanting tales paired with traditional recipes easily accessible to young cooks and their families.

These magical tales, by award-winning author and master storyteller Karim Alrawi, all feature food or feasting and conclude with an iconic recipe. They are accompanied by intriguing anecdotes illuminating Arab culture and culinary traditions.



### **Amazing Athletes: An All-Star Look at Canada's Paralympians**

Written by Marie-Claude Ouellet, Phyllis Aronoff (Translator), Howard Scott (Translator)

Published by Owlkids Books

Discover the world of Para sport and meet some of its greatest athletes in this fascinating look at the third-largest sporting event in the world, the Paralympic Games.

This nonfiction book introduces readers to Canadian Paralympians and the sports they play, from PEI-born Para ice hockey pro Billy Bridges, to Goalball player and Iranian refugee Ahmad Zeividavi. Each section details a competitor's journey to professional sports, their greatest triumphs, and what inspires them most. Along the way, readers will deepen their knowledge of Para sports like Wheelchair curling, Para swimming, and more.

# LIGHT READS, GREAT STORIES

## Advanced Level Choices



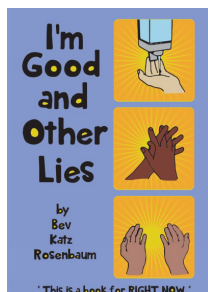
### Stealing Home

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.



### I'm Good and Other Lies

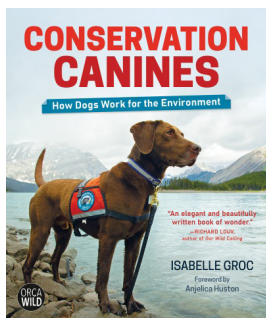
Written by Bev Katz Rosenbaum

Published by DCB Young Readers

Is it asking too much to live a typical twelfth grade existence? Kelsey Kendler just wants to earn some money for university, hang out with friends, maybe even snag a boyfriend. But her pill-popping mom and distant dad scare off anybody she tries to bring home, making those last two things feel impossible.

Her part-time ice cream shop job's a slog, but at least there, she can escape her parents' constant fighting ... until the COVID-19 pandemic forces a lockdown and she's stuck at home with them 24/7.

As the lockdown takes its toll on Kelsey's mental health, she starts to see the appeal of her mom's pills. She hates what they do to her mom, but numbing herself to the world seems like a pretty good idea right about now. Horrified to find herself following in her mom's footsteps, she can only hope she'll eventually figure out some other way to cope ...



### Conservation Canines: How Dogs Work for the Environment

Written by Isabelle Groc with a foreword by Anjelica Huston

Published by Orca Book Publishers

"Robust and engaging...Sure to be a hit with both children writing reports and those who enjoy books about animal companions and adventurous work. A must for school and public libraries."—Booklist, starred review

With their precise sense of smell, their hardworking temperament and their ability to bond with humans, dogs increasingly lend their paws and noses to fixing some of the most complex environmental problems on the planet. What kinds of dogs does it take to help wildlife? What kind of training do they go through? Who are the people who work with these special dogs? What do those people do, and what difference do they make for wildlife?

In *Conservation Canines: How Dogs Work for the Environment*, author Isabelle Groc shares stories of dog encounters in the field and examples of canines working to conserve wildlife. Meet brave Anatolian shepherd dogs protecting farmers' livestock against cheetah attacks and Maremma dogs guarding penguins from foxes. Learn how rescue dogs sniff out orca poop in the ocean and how highly focused canines can detect rare frogs hiding in wetland tunnels. The story of these conservation canines celebrates the profound and ancestral human-animal bond and gives hope and inspiration for finding new ways for people to successfully co-exist with wildlife.

# LIGHT READS, GREAT STORIES

## Advanced Level Choices



### #BlackInSchool

Written by Habiba Cooper Diallo

Published by University of Regina Press

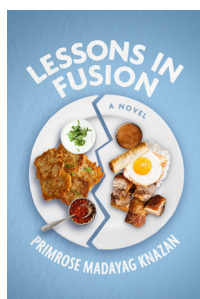
A young Black woman documents the systemic racism in her high school diary and calls for justice and educational reform.

The prevalence of anti-Black racism and its many faces, from racial profiling to police brutality, in North America is indisputable. How do we stop racist ideas and violence if the very foundation of our society is built upon white supremacy? How do we end systemic racism if the majority do not experience it or question its existence? Do our schools instill children with the ideals of equality and tolerance, or do they reinforce differences and teach children of colour that they don't belong?

#BlackInSchool is Habiba Cooper Diallo's high school journal, in which she documents, processes, and resists the systemic racism, microaggressions, stereotypes, and outright racism she experienced while being Black in school in Canada.

Powerful and eye-opening, Cooper Diallo illustrates how our schools reinforce rather than erode racism: the handcuffing and frisking of students of colour by police at school; one-dimensional, tokenistic curricula portraying Black people; and the constant barrage of overt racism from students and staff alike. She shows how systemic racism works, how it alienates and seeks to destroy a child's sense of self. She shows how our institutions work to erase the lived experiences of Black youth and try to erase Black youth themselves.

Cooper Diallo's words will resonate with some, but should shock, appall, and animate a great many more into action towards a society that is truly equitable for all.



### Lessons in Fusion

Written by Primrose Madayag Knazan

Published by Yellow Dog

Sixteen-year-old Sarah (it's pronounced SAH-rah, thank you) has a successful blog creating fusion recipes. When Sarah is invited to compete on Cyber Chef, a virtual cooking competition that soars in popularity at the height of the pandemic, her twists on her Baba's recipes are not enough to pique the palate of the show's producers. She is pushed to present dishes that represent her Filipinx culture, but these flavours are foreign to her since her parents raised her emphatically Jewish. To survive Cyber Chef and find her cultural identity, Sarah must discover why her mother turned her back on all things Filipinx, and learn the true meaning of fusion.