



Forest Of Reading
Awards

Blue Spruce 2024 Nominee List – Annotations and Content



Benny the Bananasaurus

Written by Sarabeth Holden and Illustrated by Emma Pedersen

Published by Inhabit Media Inc.

Benny loves bananas. He eats them morning, noon, and night. He even rides a bike with a yellow banana seat. In fact, Benny has a secret, he hopes one day he will turn into a banana! And if there is one thing Benny knows, it's that with a little imagination anything is possible. A funny and relatable story of a little boy who can be anything he wants to be (whether it's a dinosaur, a banana, or both!) with a big imagination and a bit of help from his *anaana*.

Content/Discussion Themes

Imagination, creativity, dinosaurs, family, self-love and self-esteem

Cocoa Magic

Written by Sandra Bradley and Illustrated by Gabrielle Grimard

Published by Pajama Press

Eight-year-old Daniel cherishes the hour he spends every morning helping his Great-Uncle Lewis in his chocolate shop. They mix, temper, pour, and mold. "It's magic, my boy," Uncle Lewis says. Daniel agrees. When a new girl named Sarah joins his class, Daniel sees how lonely she is and begins sneaking chocolates into her desk. Seeing Sarah light up after each treat is wonderful...but then Daniels starts noticing other classmates with troubles. Soon he is hiding more and more chocolates until the exciting day when everyone in class receives one, even the teacher! The best part is, no one knows it's him.

But then, when Daniel is the one feeling sad and alone, who will know to comfort him?

Content/Discussion Themes

Kindness, friendship, empathy, loneliness, community

Dear Street

Written by Lindsay Zier-Vogel and Illustrated by Caroline Bonne-Müller

Published by Kids Can Press

Alice loves her street. She loves its tall maple trees and marigolds and its apartment buildings with their colourful balconies. But not everyone feels the same. “Grumble, grumble, more construction, grumble, late, grumble,” she overhears. So Alice decides to write her street a love letter, which she leaves for someone to find. Through the seasons, as Alice encounters people grumbling about other things, she writes those things love letters, too, and leaves them to be found. She writes to her local park, a maple tree and even the snow. Then, one day, when Alice finds herself grumbling, she discovers a letter someone else has written to the spring crocuses. And Alice feels the joy she has been spreading to others come back to her!

Content/Discussion Themes

Community, kindness, friendship

Garden of Lost Socks

Written by Esi Edugyan and Illustrated by Amélie Dubois

Published by HarperCollins Publishers Ltd.

This big-hearted picture book debut from one of Canada's brightest literary stars follows Akosua, a budding Exquirolologist, as she finds both a new friend and a remarkable world hidden right in her very own community. Acclaimed artist Amélie Dubois adds a layer of magic to Akosua's charming adventure with her delicate, compelling illustrations.

Each turn of the page pulls readers deeper into Akosua's journey, daring them to become Exquirolologists too, and encouraging them to seek out magic in the mundane!

Content/Discussion Themes

Friendship, interests, passions, community, creativity, teamwork

How to Party Like A Snail

Written by Naseem Hrab and Illustrated by Kelly Collier

Published by Owkids Books

Snail is a party animal. Well...kind of. He loves the quiet things about parties: confetti, making new friends (using his indoor voice, of course), and the silence before everyone yells, “SURPRISE!” But when parties get loud, Snail retreats into his shell. He’s still partying, but no one can tell he’s having a good time while he’s tucked inside. His friends don’t understand why he doesn’t love loud parties like they do, and soon Snail’s party invites begin to dry up. In response, Snail decides to plan his own quiet party, complete with warm milk and lullaby lip-syncing. But something is missing—does Snail long for the “loud” after all? That’s when Stump, a fellow introvert, chimes in with an idea. Maybe Snail isn’t missing the “loud”...maybe he’s just missing a friend to share the quiet. Together, Stump and Snail turn the lullabies down low and celebrate “the shush” together.

Content/Discussion Themes

Inclusion, friendship, self-love, respect, and empathy

The Kindest Red: A Story of Hijab and Friendship

Written by Ibtihaj Muhammad and S.K. Ali Illustrated by Hatem Aly

Published by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers

It's picture day and Faizah can't wait to wear her special red dress with matching hair ribbons, passed down from her mother and sister. Faizah's teacher starts the day by asking her students to envision the kind of world they want, inspiring Faizah and her friends to spend the day helping one another in ways large and small.

But when it's time for sibling pictures, Faizah realizes that she and her older sister, Asiya, don't match like her classmates do with their siblings. With help from her classmates inspired by Asiya's hijab, Faizah finds that acts of kindness can come back to you in unexpected ways.

Content/Discussion Themes

Sisterhood, friendship, kindness, family traditions, community

My Fade is Fresh

Written by Shauntay Grant and Illustrated by Kitt Thomas

Published by PRHC Penguin Workshop

When a little girl walks into her local barbershop, she knows she wants the flyest, freshest fade on the block! But there are so many beautiful hairstyles to choose from, and the clients and her mother suggest them all: parts, perms, frizzy fros, dye jobs, locs, and even cornrows! But this little girl stays true to herself and makes sure she leaves the shop feeling on top with the look she picks!

Content/Discussion Themes

Community, self-expression, personal style, and identity

My Name Is Saajin Singh

Written by Kuljinder Kaur Brar and Illustrated by Samrath Kaur

Published by Annick Press

Saajin loves his name—he loves it so much that he sees it spelled out in the world around him in his snacks, in the sky and sometimes he even sings it aloud. On his first day of school, Saajin

is excited to meet his new classmates, but things take a turn when the teacher mispronounces his name as Say-jin and he is not sure how—or if he should—correct her. After trying to live with the different version of his name for a while and some thoughtful conversations with his family about the meaning behind it, Saajin realizes the importance of reclaiming his name and embracing his identity.

Content/Discussion Themes

Identity, self-love, advocacy, empowerment, the importance of inclusivity

Princess Pru and the Ogre on the Hill

Written by Maureen Fergus and Illustrated by Danesh Mohiuddin

Published by Owlkids Books

Princess Pru's life is practically perfect. She has two loving dads, an ostrich named Orville, and three royal tarantulas. But one day, a ghastly ogre with crusty toenails and goopy ears moves into the house on the hill. At first, Pru sees the ogre as a nuisance: he disrupts her royal rock band practices, weekly tickle tag games, and even the hide-and-seek tournament. But then she starts to wonder if the ogre is just lonely.

The unsympathetic townspeople become especially terrified when Oggy the ogre is spotted buying cupcakes and balloons. They receive ominous notes (that look very much like invitations), and the kings are convinced that Oggy wants to make everyone into a stew! But with courage and spunk, Pru heads to the house on the hill to meet Oggy—for a party! All along, Oggy just wanted to make friends—and thanks to Pru, he does.

Content/Discussion Themes

Courage, loneliness, community, empathy, friendship

The Words We Share

Written and Illustrated by Jack Wong

Published by Annick Press

Angie is used to helping her dad. Ever since they moved to Canada, he relies on her to translate for him from English to Chinese. Angie is happy to help: when they go to restaurants, at the grocery store, and, one day, when her dad needs help writing some signs for his work.

Building off her success with her dad's signs, Angie offers her translation skills to others in their community. She's thrilled when her new business takes off until one of her clients says he's unhappy with her work. When her dad offers to help, she can't imagine how he could. Working together, they find a surprising solution, fixing the problem in a way Angie never would have predicted.

Content/Discussion Themes

Identity, family, language and communication, empathy, immigration experiences