

The Halifax Explosion: 8 December 1917 at 3:05 in the Morning

Written and Illustrated by Afua Cooper

Published by Plumleaf Press

The Halifax Explosion is a poem written by Halifax’s seventh poet laureate, Dr. Afua Cooper. It reveals dramatically what happened on 6 December 1917 at 9:05 when two ships carrying munitions and war supplies collided in the Halifax Harbour. The poem shows the tragic toll the resulting explosion and fire took on the residents of Halifax and the surrounding area, which stretched all the way north to Africville. Dr. Cooper commemorates the Halifax Explosion through verse and highlights the experiences of the Black Haligonians in this disaster. Her powerful words are magnified in this book with dramatic historical photographs and poignant art.

Poetry is movement, poetry is politics, it’s everything. It fires the imagination and so that excites me because in firing the imagination then we produce a new world. — Dr. Afua Cooper

Content/Discussion Themes

Africville, colonial racism, poetry, Canadian historical events, World War I

Haunted Canada: The Graphic Novel, Volume 1 (Four Terrifying Tales)

Written by Joel A. Sutherland

Illustrated by Hannah Barrett, David Bishop, Matt Salisbury, and Jenn Woodall

Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

Four unique artists breathe ghastly life into the scariest tales adapted from the bestselling series!

A corpse that haunts a crossroads . . .

A creepy doll with a mind of its own . . .

An island that is no vacation destination . . .

A neighbour with a scary reputation . . .

Perfect for those who love graphic novels and fans of the original series, these four stories have it all: creepy settings, hair-raising history and super-scary storytelling by award-winning author, Joel A. Sutherland.

Illustrated in full-colour, these blood-curdling tales are sure to keep any reader turning the pages — and awake at night.

Content/Discussion Themes

Canadian ghost stories

Little by Little: You Can Change the World

Written by Sonya Ballantyne

Illustrated by Rhael McGregor and Toben Racicot

Published by Highwater Press

Michael might be young, but he's got a big heart and a strong sense of right and wrong. He knows it's right to help people when they need it—but what can he do when so many people need help?

When Michael finds out about an upcoming youth conference, he sees his chance to learn more about helping others. But when he gets to the conference, he's the youngest person there! And the speaker on stage is saying things about his community that aren't true. Will Michael be brave enough to use his voice to stand up for what he knows is right?

Little by Little is a beautifully illustrated graphic novel about how one Indigenous child sparked change and inspired others.

Content/Discussion Themes

Advocacy, Indigenous voices, empowerment

The Longest Shot: How Larry Kwong Changed the Face of Hockey

Written by George Chiang and Chad Soon

Illustrated by Amy Qi

Published by Orca Book Publishers

Larry Kwong became the first player of Asian descent in the NHL when he played one shift with the New York Rangers in 1948.

Even though Larry's achievement happened more than 70 years ago, his contribution to hockey is only now being recognized. He broke hockey's color barrier and fought racism and discrimination at every step of his career. From his humble beginnings on the outdoor rinks in Vernon, British Columbia's Chinatown all the way to playing at Madison Square Garden and in the NHL, this inspiring hero has a timeless story for young readers.

Content/Discussion Themes

Hockey, racism, trailblazers

Owls: Who Gives A Hoot?

Written by Frances Backhouse

Published by Orca Book Publishers

Owls are incredible creatures.

They can see in the dimmest light, hear the faintest of sounds, fly silently and rotate their heads to look straight backward. Most owls are nocturnal, more often heard than seen. Even those that are active during the day stay largely out of sight.

Owls: Who Gives a Hoot? reveals the secrets of these mysterious birds and the important role they play in our lives and their ecosystems. Learn about the 19 species that live in Canada and the United States—from the tiny elf owl to the hefty great horned owl. And meet the scientists, activists and young people who are working to keep these iconic birds in flight and turning heads for years to come.

Content/Discussion Themes

Owls, ecosystems, environmental stewardship

Queer History A to Z: 100 Years of LGBTQ+ Activism

Written by Robin Stevenson

Illustrated by Vivian Rosas

Published by Kids Can Press

An essential resource for young readers that details the people, events and places that have shaped queer history in North America.

In this exploration of the history of LGBTQ+ activism in North America, middle-grade readers can learn about the key people who led the fight for equality, the events that brought about change and the places where history was made. Presented in an A to Z format, with one topic per letter (“P Is for Pride”), the entries include subjects such as coming out, pride flags, Jazz Jennings and the Stonewall Inn. Young readers will be particularly interested in learning about youth activists such as Gavin Grimm, the history of the first gay-straight alliance and the ongoing issue of banned children’s books in America.

Author Robin Stevenson has won numerous awards, including a Stonewall Book Award Honor. She has carefully curated the key people, places and events in queer history across North America to offer a pitch-perfect compilation of individual stories that are accessible, interesting and inspiring. *Queer History A to Z* is a must-have resource for young readers, and a terrific jumping-off point for discussions about history, identity and the progress made by the LGBTQ+ community. With so many fascinating biographies and cultural history lessons throughout, it also makes an excellent general social studies resource. Eye-catching art by Vivian Rosas appears on every spread, capturing many of the iconic images of the LGBTQ+ rights movement. Extensive back matter includes short biographies of LGBTQ+ activists, a timeline, a glossary, resources for kids, selected author’s sources and an index.

Content/Discussion Themes

2SLGBTQIA+ Activism & Advocacy, 2SLGBTQIA+ History

See It, Dream It, Do It: How 25 People Like You Found Their Dream Jobs

Written by Colleen Nelson and Kathie Maclsaac

Illustrated by Scot Richie

Published by Pajama Press

The creators of *If You Can Dream It, You Can Do It* are back with inspiring profiles on twenty-five diverse careers and individuals.

Young readers are given a lens into the life of an architect, a paleontologist, a pilot, and so many more through detailed job profiles and full-colour photos. How does a comedian write the perfect joke? How does a private investigator crack a mysterious case?

Questions about jobs you know, and don't know, are answered in a fun and accessible way through pro tips, spin-off job sidebars, and spotlight features about young people already achieving their dreams.

Following the success of *If You Can Dream It, You Can Do It: How 25 Inspiring Individuals Found their Dream Jobs*, teacher and award-winning author Colleen Nelson, teams up once again with librarian and literacy advocate Kathie Maclsaac to introduce inspiring individuals of many backgrounds, genders, and abilities. Seeing a wide range of representation, in both people and jobs, is the first step to young people discovering their own career possibilities. This information-packed resource shows how education can come in many different forms, such as university, college, trade school, apprenticeship, or specialized training. A wide range of job profiles provides valuable insight into how each individual developed the skills and expertise they needed for their career.

Content/Discussion Themes

Career Opportunities, Life Skills, STEAM, Creativity, Individuality

Think Like A Goat: The Wildly Smart Ways Animals Communicate, Cooperate and Innovate

Written by Lisa Deresti Betik

Illustrated by Alexander Mostov

Published by Kids Can Press

Think humans are the only intelligent creatures? Think again. The unique smarts of all kinds of creatures are on display in this intriguing exploration of animal intelligence!

Sure, humans are smart. But scientists are discovering that many other animals have smarts that might surprise us. For example: Some birds can store seeds in thousands of different places and then remember where they are months later. Octopuses can camouflage themselves as rocks, plants or other animals to avoid predators. And fireflies can communicate with one another by flashing light signals from their abdomens.

Covering four broad categories of intelligence – communication, social learning and cooperation, problem-solving and memory, and emotional intelligence – this fascinating book explains and celebrates animal intelligence in all its many varieties!

Lisa Deresti Betik’s innovative and highly readable resource about the intelligence of all kinds of critters is sure to delight animal lovers of every stripe. With lively, fun text presented in bite-size chunks, and playful illustrations by Alexander Mostov, including infographics and charts, the book is accessible and easy to read. Other topics covered include evolution and natural selection, ethology and distinctions between instinct and learning. The message is one of respecting other animals and recognizing we can learn a lot from how they solve problems. The high-interest topic has many life science curriculum links, including characteristics of living things, diversity of living things, and growth and changes in animals. The content is supported by a glossary, an index and suggested sources for further reading.

Content/Discussion Themes

Animal Communication, animal intelligence, biology

Trailblazing Life of Viola Desmond: A Civil Rights Icon

Written by Rachel Kehoe with Wanda Robson

Illustrated by Chelsea Charles

Published by Orca Book Publishers

Years before Rosa Parks famously refused to give up a bus seat in Montgomery, Alabama, Viola Desmond took a similar stand against racial segregation in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia.

On November 8, 1946, she was arrested for refusing to move from the “whites-only” section of a movie theater. Her heroic act inspired Black community leaders and made her a symbol of courage in the fight against inequality. This story of Viola's life is based on rare interviews with her sister Wanda Robson, who spent her life championing her sister's story and was successful in getting Viola a posthumous pardon that recognized she was innocent of any crime. From their childhood in Nova Scotia to Viola's career as a teacher in a segregated school and, later, her role as a pioneer in Black beauty culture, young readers are introduced to the girl and the woman who went on to become the face of the civil-rights movement in Canada.

Content/Discussion Themes

Civil Rights, Black Canadian History, Racism/Segregation, Trailblazer, Community Leader, Biography

Welcome to AI: What is Artificial Intelligence and How Will It Change Our Lives?

Written by Matthieu Dugal

Illustrated by Owen Davey

Published by Wide-Eyed Editions (Quarto)

The most complete guide to AI for youngsters, covering everything from Ancient Greece to ChatGPT.

In this fun, simple and vibrant non-fiction book, technoscience expert Matthieu Dugal, creator of documentary *AI: To Be or Not to Be*, shares the epic history of artificial intelligence and gives answers to the biggest head-scratchers:

- How does AI already help us, at home and at school?
- Which robots from your favourite movies may soon be in the real world?
- What are avatars?
- Which inventors are creating new technologies?
- How do algorithms work?
- ...and why can't AI cook pasta and drain it at the right time?

We can't see it and yet this technology is everywhere: it's in computers, cars and virtual assistants like Siri and Alexa. And it's already making decisions for us, for better and sometimes for worse...

This fascinating guide delves deep into how these decisions are made behind the scenes, putting tricky ideas into easy-to-understand terms. Keep kids' attention with colourful illustrations and easy-to-understand, well-researched facts to prepare them for an exciting AI-centric future.

Content/Discussion Themes

Artificial Intelligence, STEAM, new technologies