

The Dark Won't Wait

Written by David A. Poulson

Published by Red Deer Press

Dom's life revolves around cars and baseball until a chance connection to a high school audition hands him a major role in a psychological thriller. This would be exciting enough, except that real life begins to shadow the script in a very creepy way as an elusive girl and a local murder draw Dom out of his otherwise quiet shell.

With a nod to Frederick Knott's famous play "Wait Until Dark" and its subsequent film, this book has it all — drama, mystery, thrills aplenty, and contemporary teen humour.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Crime fiction, racism and hate crimes, friendship, dating, drug dealing and gun violence (non-graphic), fast pace, mild profanity, academic achievement, school drama productions, family, grief.

The Discovery of Finnegan Wilde

Written by Caroline Pignat

Published by ThistleDown Press

A thrilling novel of self-discovery that is part adventure, part mystery, and part Celtic myth, set in Dublin in 1913.

Fifteen-year-old Finnegan Wilde steals to survive. Always on the run from gangs and police, Finn is also fleeing her own mysterious past, glimpsed only through nightmares and an unusual Celtic mark on her arm. When, in a chance encounter outside the museum, she scores a journal filled with strange diagrams, maps, and a drawing identical to her mark, Finn hungers for more than the next meal. She wants answers, and more than anything, she wants to find her family. Eddie Moore, a young apprentice archaeologist, has spent months trying to decipher an ancient manuscript he and his father excavated from a bog. The Moores believe it was written by Tomas, a 9th century monk, and that it holds the clue to finding the legendary Cauldron of Plenty, one of four Treasures of Ireland. But when Eddie's father is seriously injured by a gang in an attempted robbery, Eddie alone must find the Cauldron.

When their search brings them together, Finn and Eddie realize the mark on her arm and his ancient manuscript are connected. Finn doesn't trust this awkward scholar from the rich side of town. Eddie is just as suspicious of this wild girl with no home, no past, and no rules. But if they can work together, perhaps - as Tomas hoped - they will make the greatest discovery of all. Three voices - those of Finnegan, Eddie, and Tomas - intertwine like a Celtic knot that readers will delight in unravelling to the very last page.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Mystery, murder, adventure, orphan, thief/stealing, threats, mild profanity, self-harm talk, gangs, bullying, workhouses, betrayal, family, dementia, archaeology, museums, ancient manuscripts, folklore, the supernatural, Irish history and geography.

The Factory

Written by Catherine Egan

Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

Thirteen-year-old Asher Doyle is no stranger to misfortune. Bullied at school and struggling with problems at home, he dreams of the day he can leave it all behind him. That's when he receives an unexpected opportunity: an invitation to join the Factory -- a top-secret research facility that's supposedly developing renewable energy -- and Asher will be paid handsomely for his participation. It seems like the answer to all his problems.

But not everything is as it seems at the Factory. The other kids in the program are tired and sullen, almost as if they've had the life sucked out of them, and the staff members are clearly hiding something. What's more, Asher discovers he wasn't chosen at random; someone in the program desperately wants him to participate. Asher can't help but feel that whatever the Factory is doing, it's not what he or any of the other kids signed up for.

To Asher's horror, it turns out that the Factory isn't developing renewable energy at all. So what is the Factory up to, and more important, why? As conditions in the Factory worsen, Asher must team up with the other kids to uncover the sinister truth behind the experiment -- and his personal connection to it -- before someone gets seriously hurt.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Science fiction, dystopian life, impact of technology, debt, death, family relationships, ethics in science, scientific research, clean energy, coercion, poverty, friendships, secrecy, loneliness, climate refugees, community, justice, conformity, parental responsibility, bullying, innovation, and loyalty. Cliffhanger.

Finding Harmony

Written by Eric Walters

Published by Orca Book Publishers

So what if Harmony has to be the grown-up?

After months living in a foster home (again), Harmony convinces a judge that she can move back in with her mother. Her mom even finds an apartment that the social worker, Gloria, can't find fault with. But now Harmony has an even bigger battle ahead—trying to keep her mom on the straight and narrow, or at least keep Gloria from finding out when she slips. Which she does. A lot. Often left to fend for herself, Harmony finds an ally in Mr. Khaled, the owner of the convenience store across the street. He helps Harmony out with food in exchange for some part-time work. And at school, her principal seems to be on her side. Even so, it feels like Harmony's life is always one step from falling apart, and she can't really trust anyone. Harmony knows the question is less about whether she'll return to foster care and more about when she's ready to do it.

Finding Harmony is the prequel to the Governor General's award-winning *The King of Jam Sandwiches*.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Realistic fiction, parental neglect, coming of age, social worker, family court, resilience poverty, homelessness, drugs, alcohol, family, orphans and foster care, intergenerational relationships, refugees, deception, alcoholism, courts, lawyers, stealing, drinking, violence, smoking, drug bust, overdose, and heartbreak.

If We Tell You

Written by Nicola Dahlin

Published by Kids Can Press

If you can't trust your parents, who can you trust?

Cameron and Lewis Larsen are identical twins living normal, suburban lives ... until their mom and dad kill two uninvited guests at a neighborhood barbecue and then disappear. Following cryptic instructions their parents left behind, the twins make their way to a small hotel in Edinburgh. Too conspicuous as twins, they hide by pretending to be one person, each gathering clues on alternate days. The closer they get to the truth, only one thing is clear: Someone is following them. Will they uncover their parents' secrets before their own is discovered? With no idea who's after them, or why, the twins race to discover the truth about their parents. And, in the process, they learn a lot about themselves – and the unbreakable bond they share. Readers will be obsessed with finding out what happens next in this highly suspenseful coming-of-age story with a deadly twist.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Thriller, murder, espionage, abandonment, themes of fitting in, family memories, crime, stolen truck, torture, kidnapping, hostages, family, secrecy, false identity, violence, murder, espionage, social justice, terrorism, protest movements, Scottish/British culture/geography/history, journalism, criminal gangs, M16, art theft, and persistence.

Is There a Boy Like Me?

Written by Kern Carter

Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

London feels stuck. His school friends think he's this confident kid who likes video games and will kick your butt if you get on his bad side. His high-achieving parents think he's a genius coder and are pushing him to pursue that as a future career. None of this is true. London feels anxiety in crowds, and what he really wants to do is be by himself and read books.

Not knowing what else to do, London starts an anonymous online comic called "Is There A Boy Like Me," where he expresses his true feelings and explores what his life would be like if he could just be who he wanted to be. When the comic goes viral, it starts a global conversation about what being a boy really means, with London directly in the middle of it all.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Realistic fiction, individuality, friendships, writing process, family, planning for the future, athletic competition, bullying, forgiveness, technology, gaming, graphic novels, career choice, and social media effects.

No Purchase Necessary

Written by Maria Marianayagam

Published by HarperCollins

The wannabe-cool, Tamil-nerd vibes of *Never Have I Ever* meets the hidden life of *Stand Up, Yumi Chung!* by Jessica Kim in this funny, poignant coming-of-age middle grade debut from Maria Marianayagam.

Ajay Anthonipillai has a million-dollar problem.

Ajay has lived his life dutifully following the rules set by his Tamil parents.

Rule #3: Straight As only

Rule #5: There is no such thing as a no-homework day.

Rule #10: Never watch scary movies.

However, moving to a new school gives Ajay a new rule: to get on seventh-grade all-star Jacob Underson's good side.

When Jacob asks him to steal a Mercury bar from Scary Al's convenience store, Ajay feels this is his chance to finally "get cool" and stop eating alone. But Jacob rejects the stolen chocolate bar, leaving Ajay to unwrap it and discover that it contains Mercury's Twenty-fifth Anniversary Grand Prize...one million dollars.

Faced with an extreme dilemma, Ajay will have to bear the weight of his actions and battle his morality in deciding whether to claim the prize that may change the life of his family forever.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Realistic fiction, humour, adolescence, Sri Lankan culture, newcomer to Canada life, resilience, courage, Karate principles and philosophy, part-time jobs, bullying, friendship, family pressure, education, shoplifting, honesty, loneliness, peer pressure, Robert Frost's poetry.

Old School

Written by Gordon Korman

Published by Scholastic Canada Ltd.

Dexter is twelve years old and lives at The Pines Retirement Village with his grandmother. He's been home-schooled by the residents since he was six – until the day the truant officer shows up and announces that Dex has to go to the local public school.

Dex does not fit in at middle school. He gets along better with senior citizens than he does kids his own age. He dresses like a grandpa and his taste in movies and music is decades out of date. Only a few students—like Gianna Greco, a reporter at the school's newspaper looking for a bit story — want to talk to him. For most, he is a weirdo . . . or a target.

Dexter would do anything to get out of middle school and go back to his old life at The Pines. But when his wish finally seems to be coming true, his old and new worlds collide in a way that surprises everyone—and Dexter most of all.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Humor fiction, intergenerational relationships, bullying, intergeneration, death, ageism, friendship, individuality, education, community, co-operation, family, conformity, peer pressure, academic competitions, jealousy, respect for seniors, journalism, coding, school discipline policy, grief, and historical buildings.

The Time Keeper

Written by Meagan Mahoney

Published by DCB Young Readers

It's 1902 and twelve-year-old orphan Malcolm McKenzie's world is falling apart. His mentor, clockmaker Jack Alexander, was found dead inside a locked clock tower. His best friend — and Jack's son — Peter is dying of a mysterious disease. His only hope: a puzzle inside a seemingly broken pocket watch that even Jack couldn't fix. The watch, a precious heirloom passed down through a family of proud physicians, must be the key to solving Jack's murder and a miracle cure for Peter. But shadowy figures stalk the streets of Edinburgh, scheming to steal the watch and its secrets for themselves. Malcolm, alongside pickpocket and fellow orphan Maddie, must outsmart and outrun their enemies to solve the watch's puzzle and save the family that saved him ... before Peter's time runs out.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Historical fiction, mystery, orphanages, poverty, female medical pioneers, religion vs science, sexism, medical practice, loyalty, courage, determination, serums, secret codes, friendship, betrayal, apprenticeship, germ theory, romance and emigration, clock-making.

Unsinkable Cayenne

Written by Jessica Vitalis

Published by Greenwillow Books

When her unconventional parents finally agree to settle down in one place, twelve-year-old Cayenne's dreams come true—but the reality of fitting in is much harder than she imagined. Acclaimed author Jessica Vitalis crafts an unforgettable historical novel-in-verse about belonging, family, and social class for fans of Lisa Fipps's *Starfish* and Jasmine Warga's *Other Words for Home*.

Cayenne and her family drift from place to place, living in their van. It hasn't been a bad life—Cayenne and her mother birdwatch in every new location, they have a cozy setup in the van, and they sing and dance and bond over campfires most nights. But they've never belonged anywhere.

As Cayenne enters seventh grade, her parents decide to settle down in a small Montana town. Cayenne hopes that this means she will finally fit in and make some friends. But it turns out that staying in one place isn't easy.

As her social studies class studies the Titanic tragedy (the wreckage has just been discovered and her teacher is obsessed), Cayenne sees more and more parallels between the social strata of the infamous ship and her own life. Will she ever squeeze her way into the popular girls' clique, even though they live in fancy houses on the hill, and she lives in a tiny, rundown home

with chickens in the front yard? Is it possible that the rich boy she likes actually likes her back? Can she find a way to make room for herself in this town? Does she really want to? Maybe being “normal” isn’t all it’s cracked up to be.

Unsinkable Cayenne is a character-driven novel-in-verse about family, friendship, first crushes, and fitting in. Set in the mid-1980s, this literary novel is for readers of Megan E. Freeman’s *Alone* and Erin Entrada Kelly’s *We Dream of Space*.

Content/ Discussion Themes

Realistic fiction, novel-in-verse, PTSD, homelessness, family, community, friendship, poverty, bullying, young love, education, social justice, acceptance, peer pressure, race, loneliness, loyalty, popularity, charity, self-worth, unemployment, smoking, popularity, Titanic tragedy references, and birding..