

Great New Books 2015 – Book Talk

North Coast Council Library Professional Development Day

Michelle Todd, Children's Librarian : Olmsted Falls Branch, Cuyahoga County Public Library

***The Skunk* / Barnett**

A gentleman leaves his home one day – to see a skunk sitting at his doorstep ... who proceeds to follow him ... no matter how fast, or slow, or twisty the path he takes! The man cannot shake the skunk, and the skunk comes closer...and closer... Who is this skunk and why is he following the man?!

***The Great Cheese Robbery* / Warnes**

Patrick the elephant is home with his very large and heroic Dad when there's a knock at the door. A well-dressed mouse claims to be from the Cheese Inspection Council and needs to check the fridge. Then the swindler and his pals attempt an unprecedented robbery! Who will stop them and save their cheese?!

***A Pet for Fly Guy* / Arnold**

While on a picnic at the park, Buzz and Fly Guy watch people having lots of fun playing with their pets. It seems everyone has a pet ... except Fly Guy. The two friends head to the pet shop and then back to the park searching for the right pet. Will they ever find one?

***We Dig Worms* / McCloskey NF**

Worms are cool and slimy and interesting! This book answers your questions about what a worm eats, how it moves through the ground, why it comes out when it rains, how its body works, and how it poops. There is even a worm in Australia that can grow to 10 feet long -- that's as tall as an elephant!

***The Right Word: Roget and His Thesaurus* / Bryant NF**

As a shy boy, Peter Roget loved reading and he *loved* words – in fact, he loved words so much, he started making lists of similar, but a *little* different, words ... so he could always come up with *The Right Word* for every situation! With his sharp intelligence and passion for learning new things, Peter grew up to not only become an accomplished doctor, but also inventor of the slide rule and pocket chess set – along with the first Thesaurus.

***Claude at the Beach* / Smith**

Claude is quite the stylish dog, with a jaunty beret, who decides to take a vacation one day while Mr. and Mrs. Shinyshoes are at work. He packs his suitcase with useful items like whipped cream and a lampshade, and heads off on his adventure – which includes sharks, a sand castle contest, and pirate treasure!

***The Case of Weird Blue Chicken* / Cronin**

When detective chicks Dirt, Sugar, Poppy, and Sweetie post a flier, a little blue bird comes by asking them to find her missing birdhouse. The chicks interrogate their client, then start "sleuthing" – good thing retired police dog J.J. Tully is nearby! This is their second adventure, with lots of laughs and hilarious illustrations.

***The Glorkian Warrior Delivers a Pizza* / Kochalka GN**

A friendly three-eyed alien dunce, the Glorkian Warrior gets a mysterious call to deliver a pizza and declares, "You say wrong number, I say ... DESTINY!" Follow this bumbling do-gooder through zany miscommunications, hilarious confusion, and rivalry with his backpack – all in his attempt to help out!

***Odd Duck* / Castellucci GN**

Theodora Duck loves lavender hats, stargazing, and swimming with a teacup on her head – nothing odd about that, right? Now, her new neighbor Chad is *truly* one odd duck, with his multicolored feathers, shabby yard and house, and quirky art "sculptures" in his yard. But since neither likes to fly south in the winter, sometimes the best friendships blossom from the tiniest common interests.

***Mr. Ferris and His Wheel* / Davis NF**

For the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, American architects wanted to out-do Paris' Eiffel Tower – but so far all they had were ideas for taller towers! But then George Ferris proposed something so *different*, so *far-fetched*, so *unbelievable* – a mechanical wheel that would not only spin around, but carry hundreds of people! Getting from drawing board to working machine, though, was not easy ... find out how he did it and amaze your friends!

***Trapped! A Whale's Rescue* / Curtis NF**

Learn the true story of a humpback whale that got caught in old fishing ropes off the California coast. The more she tried to twist free, the tighter the ropes cut into her skin – she was trapped! Without help, she'd get too tired to lift her blowhole above water for air ... and would drown. Find out how she was freed!

***Neighborhood Sharks* / Roy NF**

Follow the annual Great White Shark migration to San Francisco's Farallon Islands, where these skilled predators come to gorge on the abundant seal and sea lion population. Find out how sharks hunt their prey and how scientists follow the sharks to learn more about them.

***Temple Run* / West NF**

Get ready to run for your life! If you like the Temple Run game, you're gonna love this graphic book! You come across an ancient treasure, but taking it accidentally releases an evil force all over the world! Learn all about the ancient world and discover clues as you race through time, cultures, and ancient civilizations to unlock secrets and send the demons back to their dimension. The world is in danger unless you can stop them!

***Percy Jackson's Greek Gods* / Riordan**

Percy Jackson shares his own irreverent take on the Greek gods – from the origin tales of Gaea and the Titans to those readers will recognize from the *Percy Jackson* series. And Riordan stays true to Percy's flippant style, personality and perspective – with side comments and titles like "Hera Gets a Little Cuckoo," "Zeus Kills Everyone," and "Artemis Unleashes the Death Pig." Illustrations are beautifully done by John Rocco. Gr 3–7

***Frank Einstein and the Antimatter Motor* / Scieszka**

Kid genius and inventor Frank Einstein created two self-assembled robots, Klink and Klank, and then together they designed an anti-matter motor flying bike for Midville's Science Prize Contest. But his idea is stolen—along with Klink and Klank! —by his rival, T. Edison, and his financial advisor/sidekick, Mr. Chimp. Will Frank and his trusted pal Watson be able to thwart Edison's plans and rescue the two robots? Gr 3–5

***Adventures with Waffles* / Parr**

In a small Norwegian village, Trille and his best friend-neighbor, Lena, get into one hilarious and at times injury-inducing escapade after another (sometimes with Grampa!) – all the while enjoying the intoxicatingly delicious waffles made by Auntie Granny. For fans of character-driven, sentimental stories, this story delivers. Gr 3–5

***Pip Bartlett’s Guide to Magical Creatures* / Pearce & Stiefvater**

Nine-year-old Pip can communicate with magical creatures—but no one believes it. After a “Unicorn Incident” at school, Pip goes to stay for the summer with Aunt Emma, veterinarian of magical creatures. Pip helps out, makes a friend, and finds her ability, knowledge and creativity are really needed when fireball Fuzzles invade the town. A fast-paced read with engaging characters and delightful illustrations for fantasy and animal story fans. Gr 3–5

***Bayou Magic* / Rhodes**

Almost 10 years old, Maddy leaves her family in New Orleans to spend the summer with her grandmother in the bayou. Her sisters said Grandmère is a witch, with a house of no electricity or indoor plumbing, but Maddy soon discovers that Bon Temps, the bayou, and Grandmère hold fascinating aspects – healing herbs, family history, a new friend, magical fireflies, and mermaids. When a Gulf oil spill threatens the town, Maddy uses her magic to save her new home. For fans of character-driven, family stories, history, and a little fanciful magic. Gr 3–6

***The League of Beastly Dreadfuls* / Grant**

Eleven-year-old Anastasia is completely average – until some very dreadful things happen. She learns at school that her parents died suddenly in a vacuum cleaner accident, whereupon two very old “aunts” whisk her away to the abandoned St. Agony’s Asylum for the Criminally Insane. Locked in her room each night, fed “Mystery Lumps,” and given endless cleaning chores, Anastasia soon suspects all is not as she was told, and the boy wearing a birdcage is not an insane gardener. Soon, she and the boy and his brother form the League and plan their escape – with a sugar key, chocolate laxative, and a sleeping drug. Great characters, delightful illustrations, hilarious narrator in the vein of *Series of Unfortunate Events*. Gr 3–6

***Unusual Chickens for the Exceptional Poultry Farmer* / Jones**

Twelve-year-old Sophie Brown has newly moved to great-uncle Jim’s Blackbird Farm from Los Angeles after he passed away. Mom is working furiously on writing deadlines, supporting the family since Sophie’s father lost his job. Adjusting to this new life, she writes letters to her great-uncle and beloved Abuelita, who also recently passed away. She also begins quirky correspondence in chicken care with the mysterious Agnes of Redwood Farm Supply, who assures Sophie that the chickens showing up belonged to her great-uncle – but be careful and tell no one about their “unusualness,” like levitating things, becoming invisible, and turning enemies to stone! She can’t ask the town’s chicken expert, for she seems intent on stealing the hens! Wonderful characters and fun ink drawings offer engaging warmth and humor, plus a little magic and mystery. Gr 3–6

***The Terrible Two* / Jory**

When Miles moves to a new school – in the middle of Farmville, USA – he’s mad because (A) he had a stellar reputation as the school’s prankster – at his *old* school – and (B) apparently this *new* school already has a prankster ... who somehow got the principal’s car on top of the middle school steps, blocking the entrance. How would someone even do that?! Can Miles out-prank this mysterious rival in this podunk cow-town, and regain his former glory? It’s a mooooving hilarious adventure with hysterical comic illustrations. Reluctant readers and *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* fans will love this. Gr 4–6

***Audrey (Cow)* / Bar-el**

Take one courageous poetic cow, a loyal canine best friend, an eavesdropping horse, a genius-at-logistics pig, an equally genius-at-subterfuge skunk, and a not-so-smart but very hungry cougar – among several other memorable characters – and you’ve got a rollicking adventure about how one cow escapes the traditional end-of-the-road. Uniquely told in “interviews” of the various animal and human characters. Beautifully written, endearing characters, humorous, thought-provoking, and highly engaging. Gr 4–6

***A Snicker of Magic* / Lloyd**

Felicity has been all over and back again, with her wandering mom and younger sister, never settling down for long. But when they arrive in Midnight Gulch, where her mother grew up, it finally feels like home – maybe because of the legends of magic that abounded there long ago. Despite her rule of not getting close to anyone (knowing they’d be leaving), Felicity finds herself collecting friends and stories and legends of curses along with the words she’s always collecting, which she sees flip, slide, pop and float everywhere she looks. Maybe there’s still a little snicker of magic left in this town to help Felicity’s mother finally stop wandering... Beautifully written, great characters, an endearing narrator, unique plot twists, and magical elements. Gr 4–7

***Rain Reign* / Martin**

Everyone says Rose is obsessed with homonyms (after all, her name is a homonym). Rose has high-functioning autism and struggles when routines are changed or rules are broken; calming herself with homonyms and prime numbers. But when a hurricane super storm disrupts everything in her world – trees uprooted, bridges washed out, school closed, and her dog lost – Rose relies on her methodical plan and lists to find her dog and try to bring order back into her world. For fans of *Because of Winn-Dixie*, *A Dog’s Life*, and *Shiloh*. Beautifully written, endearing narrator, and humorous moments among a very engaging plot. Gr 4–6

***A Handful of Stars* / Lord**

Twelve-year-old Lily lives in Maine, making and selling mason bee houses at her grandparents’ general store, to raise money for an expensive and risky eye surgery for her black lab, Lucky, who is slowly going blind. Salma is in Maine for the summer with her migrant family to pick blueberries. Lucky becomes their link and they immediately bond over dogs, art, and blueberry enchiladas. When creative and artistic Salma decides to enter the Blueberry Queen pageant—which no migrant girl has ever done—Lily’s eyes are opened to prejudices she’d never seen or noticed before, and she begins to look deeper at her own unexplored biases. Well-written, great characters, and richly described setting enhance this story of family, friendship, and growing up. Gr 4–6

***How to Speak Dolphin* / Rorby**

Twelve-year-old Lily has no friends or activities outside of school or home since life revolves around helping her stepfather care for her half-brother, Adam, who has severe autism. To make matters worse, her stepfather, a cancer specialist, doesn’t acknowledge that Adam needs a special caretaker, special school, or special therapy. Her mother recognized these needs, but she died two years ago. Adam’s strong attachment to dolphins coincides with the stepfather being asked to help a young dolphin, and Lily meets a girl who might just be a true friend (and not make fun of her brother). Beautifully written from Lily’s perspective, this highly engaging story offers a vivid picture of life with a child with autism, as well as the ethics of marine animal attractions. Gr 4–7

***Moonpenny Island* / Springstubb**

How can such a tiny island like Moonpenny hold so many secrets? Flor is bereft when her best friend -- each other’s *perfect* friend – Sylvie leaves the island for a new school ... and now everything on Flor’s safe comfortable island is changing! Her sister begins dating the island troublemaker; her mother flees the constant bickering with Flor’s father; and then there is the arrival of Jasper, daughter of a geologist visiting the island to unearth trilobites.

Jasper is decidedly different from anyone Flor has ever met, and she opens Flor's eyes to even more secrets of Moonpenny Island. Highly engaging, well-written, richly described setting, and endearing storyline. Gr 4–6

***Kinda Like Brothers* / Booth**

Eleven-year-old Jarrett is used to having foster babies in the house but then the case workers bring a developmentally challenged toddler, Treasure – and her 12-year-old brother Kevon. Jarrett feels nothing but resentment about sharing his room – as well as everything else this summer – like making movie trailers with his best friend. Between asthma attacks and difficulty passing summer school, Jarrett has enough to worry about without Kevon in his business – and then Kevon makes the basketball team and shows off! Jarrett longs to get even – spying on Kevon and his social worker, digging for some way to get rid of his unwanted “brother.” Gr 4–6

***Bad Magic* / Bosch**

Twelve-year-old Clay stopped believing in the magic tricks he used to practice with his older brother, Max-Ernst -- calling them fake "cheese-wizardry." But Max-Ernst disappeared two years ago, and Clay has never stopped feeling abandoned. But then he's forced to confront the possibility that magic may be real when he is sent to a survival camp on a volcanic island full of oddities: strange campers, a swarm of bees guarding the borders, a disappearing teepee, a llama that understands Spanish, and an abandoned library haunted by a girl's ghost. But even these things are not as they seem, as Clay discovers an elaborate stage production behind the mysteries, with his missing brother at its heart. Highly engaging, great characters and narration. Gr 4–6

***Return to Augie Hobble* / Smith**

Eleven-year-old Augie lives at the struggling New Mexico amusement park Fairy Tale Place, which his father manages, along with his best friend Britt and various park staff personalities. Augie also failed his Creative Arts class, meaning he must complete a new final project over the summer (Britt aced his final project with a papier maiche self). Add to the mix fun illustrations and Augie's project drawings, plans and comics, plus bullies, the beautiful popular school girl becoming the new Cinderella at the park, werewolves, UFOs, and otherworldly communications. Tween narrator's voice rings true, nice pacing, silliness, and fun illustrations. Gr 4–6

***Circus Mirandus* / Beasley**

Fifth-grader Micah has lived with Grandpa Ephraim since his parents died. Grandpa's always been up for fun – teaching Micah how to tie complicated knots, building a treehouse together, and telling magical tales about Circus Mirandus and its powerful illusionist The Man Who Bends Light. But since Grandpa became very ill, his grouchy sister, Aunt Gertrudis, has taken over – limiting Micah's time with Grandpa, making him drink inky tea, and throwing away everything fun. But on a quick sneaked visit, Grandpa says the Circus is real, that he was promised a miracle from the Lightbender, and that he'd written a letter – which got picked up already by The Messenger, a parrot. When the Circus arrives, Micah and his friend Jenny go after that miracle that Grandpa requested. Great writing, fast-paced, well-developed characters, twists & turns. Gr 4–6

***If You Find This* / Baker**

Nicholas is a math and music genius who isn't used to being unable to solve a problem. However, when financial problems force his family to put their house for sale, he can't devise a way for them to keep it -- or the very special tree growing in the backyard. That changes the day Nicholas' grandfather comes to town, fresh out of prison and rambling on about buried family heirlooms. His mind failing and strength weakening, Grandpa Rose only remembers a few cryptic clues about the heirlooms' location. Two boys from school join Nicholas in the search, each with his own reasons for wanting a cut of the loot. This *Goonies*-style adventure is filled with ghosts, smugglers' tunnels, and mystery. Reminiscent of Louis Sachar's *Holes*. Gr 4–6

Masterminds / Korman

Serenity, N.Mex., has the best standard of living anywhere – no unemployment, total peace, honesty and contentment ... at least that's what Eli, Tori, Malik and Hector always thought. But when Eli rides past the town limits and gets really sick, their idyllic world begins to unravel – starting with his best friend Randy sent to live with grandparents he's never mentioned or seen before. Eli discovers a hidden note from Randy, leading to more questions: Why are their Internet and newspapers 'sanitized' from those outside town? Why are some kids special? Why does the town traffic cone factory keep driving trucks around with the *same* dusty cones? Discovering the truth is just the start. Rotating viewpoints, this story offers twists, turns and surprises! Gr 4–6

Tomb Quest: Book of the Dead / Northrop

Eleven-year-old Alex has always been close to death – sickly all his life and homeschooled by his Egyptologist-expert mom who works at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. When she and her colleagues discover and bring to the museum the Lost Spells from the Book of the Dead, evil forces take notice. Then Alex's mother recites a spell to save his life, unwittingly inciting eerie, unnatural events and the undead rising across the world – starting with the “Stung Man” mummy at the Met. Next, she and the Spells disappear, spurring Alex, his best friend Ren, and a mysterious scientist to battle ancient magic and millennia-old evil. A page-turner for reluctant readers, filled with adventure, danger, twists and turns. Book one of a new series, plus online game. Gr 4–6

Nightmares! / Segel & Miller

Eleven-year-old Charlie is sure his stepmother Charlotte is a witch; she dresses funny, makes creepy food like kale pancakes, and runs an “herbarium” store. His dad, little brother, and friends, however, all like Charlotte and think he's just still missing his mom. The nightmares don't help either, or moving into Charlotte's creepy purple mansion. The nightmare evil witch threatens to come into the real world, but instead Charlie gets tricked into the Nightmare World – full of monsters, madness and President Fear (who's a lot like scary Principal Stearns). But all is not as it appears; those who look scary are actually sympathetic. Amongst the fast-pace, creepy elements, plot twists, humor and ick-factors, readers can glean a bit about facing fears and discerning the real enemy. Gr 4–6

The Night Gardener / Auxier

Irish orphans Molly and Kip are desperate to find work – even if just for a bed to sleep in and a meal for their bellies. Brave, quick-thinking Molly is protective of her younger brother, who has a bad leg, but feels guilty over hiding their parents' death from him; spinning yarns about their travels and promising they'll all be together again soon. Molly finds them work as servants in a distinctly creepy, isolated country manor where a huge tree growing *into* the house is casting a spell over the family members ... among other mysterious goings-on. Well-written, definitely eerie, great characters, rich historical details, and engrossing plot twists. Gr 4–6

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