



The Magic Suitcase News

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Our Website

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The Magic Suitcase Website

Happy New Year to all of our friends and supporters. The Magic Suitcase is off to an exciting start to the new year and we hope that you'll let us in to your libraries to help you create a picture book collection like no other!

Our new website is fully launched and accessible. Visit our on-line bookstore at www.magicsuitcase.ca to find valuable teaching tools, featured titles (newly published, released or 'must see' titles) and a searchable database (subject area, theme or topic; character trait and learner profile - suitable for International Baccalaureate schools). In addition to viewing the cover images while searching, you'll find detailed information by just clicking the image. Many newly published titles have **teaching ideas** and **insider tips** to expand the ways to use the books in teaching curriculum content to your students. We are seeking even more creative ways to use the materials so send us your ideas. We'll publish them with your name (thanks to Wendy, Sharon, Mary Lynn, Elaine, Rob and Robyn for getting us started)!

To encourage you to visit us often, we'll be featuring new books every week. Click on the **Featured Titles** www.magicsuitcase.ca/books.cfm link on the home page.

As well, we'll be featuring frequent specials to get you started. Once you've created an account (optional for browsers) you are free to surf through our site as well as place books in your cart for viewing again later. When you are ready to check out, our system lets us know. We then contact you regarding payment (no payments are made on-line), PO's and P-cards are accepted. There is also a "wish list" feature that allows you to request a book that is not in our database. Once the book comes in, there is no obligation to buy... we'll contact you about it and then you decide.

Take advantage of our January special!

20% off all hard cover books ordered by February 3rd, 2008!

Informational Picture Books

This article was inspired by a recent visit to John Darling P.S. in Kitchener, Ontario. It is holding a genre fair for Grades 3 - 5. Each class spends a week investigating and working with various text. For four days, students are exposed to a variety of books within a specific genre. On the fifth day, a guest speaker considered an expert in the field is invited to present additional information to the students. I had the privilege of not only being the first speaker but also having the opportunity to present some my research findings about ways we can work with informational picture books. Thank you to Mary Lynn Muir for organizing the fair and for inviting me to speak.

Informational texts, by definition, should deliver true and accurate information to the reader. Although picture books are traditionally thought of as fictional storybooks, and are found in a different section of the library than are non-fiction informational books, there

are ways in which we can teach students to use picture books for projects and research. For many younger students the reading level of a picture book is more suited to their reading level than are many non-fiction books. Traditionally, non-fiction books are more text-heavy with fewer illustrations. Often the illustrations are photographs that add a realistic component to the text.

In a picture book information also comes to the reader via illustrations. Drawn or painted illustrations can add an element of fiction, especially if the drawings are cartoon-like and playful, or these illustrations can direct the reader's eye to notice specific details that may never be mentioned in the text. These details can be an illustrator's way of playing with the story presented in the text that can either complement the text or tell an accompanying, more detailed story.

By teaching children to read illustrations as well as text, we expose children to an alternative source for gathering information. This is especially useful in the content areas of the curriculum such as science, social studies, math and even the arts.

Perry Nodelman, author of the book titled *The Pleasures of Children's Literature* (1996, 2002), states:

“When we look at pictures in art galleries, we're supposed to delight in visual impressions. But when we look at the pictures in picture books, we're meant not just to do that but also to think about how they relate to the accompanying words and also to the pictures preceding and following them. In other words, we must consider not only their beauty but also to how they contribute to our unfolding knowledge of the story. In fact, *everything* in such pictures is less important a source of aesthetic delight than a source of information about the story ” (p. 219).

Some will argue that picture storybooks can promote misconceptions in areas such as science and technology. This, in fact, can be true unless we provide students with ways in which to disseminate information for truth and accuracy. Students can be taught to read illustrations as well as text at a young age. When 'reading' text and illustrations students can learn to ask themselves a series of questions as to the truth and accuracy of the information being given.

The following are some sample questions to get your students started in using picture books for scientific information:

1. Is there new scientific terminology presented in the text? What are the meanings of the new vocabulary words and how do they relate to the topic of study? Are the new words defined in the text?
2. Can I find the facts presented in the story supported in another source (non-fiction book, encyclopaedia, on the internet)?
3. Is there other information included in the illustrations, not mentioned in the text, which can support my topic?
4. Does the text support other information shown in the illustrations?
5. Does the book contain more than one font type in the text to differentiate meaning (fact vs. fiction)?

For further reading on this topic see the list on Outstanding Science Trade Books for students K-12 published by the National Science Teachers' Association at <http://www.nsta.org/publications/ostb>.

Hot Off the Press!

The following books are recently published quality children's picture books. For more detailed or additional information on these titles, click on the titles below.

Why War Is Never a Good Idea written by Alice Walker, illustrated by Stefano Vitale



SUMMARY: Though War is Old It has not Become wise. Poet and activist Alice Walker personifies the power and wanton devastation of war in this evocative poem. Stefano Vitale's compelling paintings illustrate this unflinching look at war's destructive nature and unforeseen consequences.

Price: \$21.50

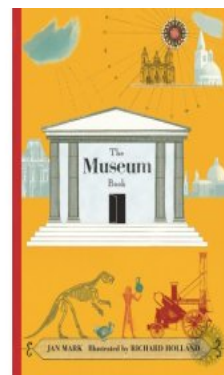
***Reviewed in the current issue of the Horn Book magazine.**

The Museum Book: A Guide to Strange and Wonderful Collections written by Jan Mark, illustrated by Richard Holland

SUMMARY: What is a museum? Why would anyone amass shells, words, clocks, teeth, trains, dinosaurs, mummies . . . or two-headed sheep? Find out where the word "museum" comes from and what unusual items (unicorn horns? mermaids?) some early museums placed on view. Jan Mark's humorous and conversational insights take readers through museums' multifaceted history, while Richard Holland's eye-catching mixed-media illustrations lend their own quirky flair. With vivid examples from all around the world, this wonderful book puts museums -- and the many artifacts lovingly stored there -- on display in a whole new light. Why do people collect things? This ode to museums mighty and minuscule will draw curious viewers of all ages -- and is worthy of collection itself.

Price: \$23.50

***Reviewed in the current issue of the Horn Book magazine.**



Close to the Wind: The Beaufort Scale written and illustrated by Peter Malone



SUMMARY: In 1810, a British naval officer and surveyor named Francis Beaufort developed a scale to give sailors a common language for describing the wind. From 0 (calm) to 12 (hurricane), stunning artwork and jaunty prose show what life at sea must have been like for a young boy serving as a midshipman in the 1800s. As William sails from Naples to the Caribbean, we learn intriguing historical information and nautical terminology, and witness how the wind affected day-to-day life on a ship. Detailed illustrations

show the wind at work, and readers will be engrossed and fascinated as they watch the storm develop in magnificent full-color paintings.

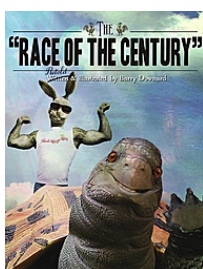
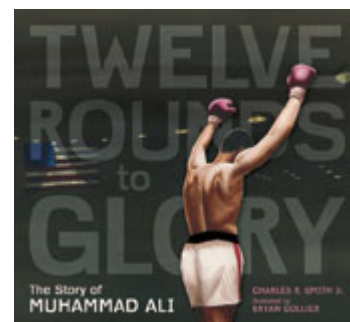
Price: \$21.00

Twelve Rounds of Glory: The Story of Muhammad Ali written by Charles R. Smith, illustrated by Bryan Collier

SUMMARY: "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee. . . I'm the prettiest thing that ever lived!" From the moment a fired-up teenager from Kentucky won 1960 Olympic gold to the day in 1996 when a retired legend, hands shaking from Parkinson's, returned to raise the Olympic torch, the boxer known as "The Greatest" waged many a fight. Some were in the ring, against opponents like Sonny Liston and Joe Frazier; others were against societal prejudice and against a war he refused to support because of his Islamic faith. Charles R. Smith Jr.'s rap-inspired verse weaves and bobs and jabs with relentless energy, while Bryan Collier's bold collage artwork matches every move -- capturing the "Louisville loudmouth with the great gift of rhyme" who shed the name Cassius Clay to take on the world as Muhammad Ali.

Price: \$25.00

***Reviewed in the current issue of the Horn Book magazine.**



Race of the Century written and illustrated by Barry Downard

SUMMARY: Certain he will win the race against Tom Tortoise, flamboyant Flash Harry Hare makes sure to please his fans by stopping to sign autographs, take photos, and chat with the crowds along the way in an amusing twist to this popular Aesop's fable.

Price: \$19.99

Calendar of Events

- January 31-February 1 – Ontario Library Association (OLA) annual conference in Toronto. www.accessola.com
 - Check out Judy's presentation called **Picture Book Perfect Selections #424** at 10:40 on January 31st
 - Visit our booth at the Expo – booth #T8
- February 14-15 – Reading for the Love of It 2008 in Toronto. www.readingfortheloveofit.com
 - Attend Judy's session called **Duct Tape for the Science Curriculum** at 2:15 on February 14th and 15th.
 - Visit our booth at the Expo – booth #120.
- February 22 – Waterloo Region District School Board Professional Activity Day
 - Visit our booth at the publisher's display at Bingemans Park
- February 29 – March 16 Peru Trip with students from Preston High School, Cambridge Ontario.

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