

The S.E.L.E.C.T.



Nook

Educate

Select and Evaluate Literature to Empower Children & Teachers

Entertain

Excite

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Francesca Pomerantz, Editor
Nina Miller, Assistant Editor
www.salemstate.edu/selectnook

About the S.E.L.E.C.T. Books at Salem State College

The S.E.L.E.C.T. Nook Newsletter shares information about new children's books with teachers and Salem State College faculty. The S.E.L.E.C.T. Nook Newsletter was founded by Dr. Jo Ann Brewer and the late Dr. Diane Bushner and is made possible through the generosity of the following publishers:

Abrams
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About the Book Reviews

Book reviews are written by undergraduate and graduate students studying children's literature in courses at Salem State College, as well as by faculty teaching the courses. The book reviews printed here are excerpted from longer papers.

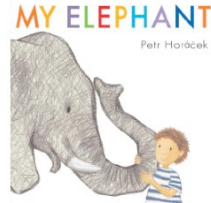
The Book Reviewers: Spring 2010 Edition

The book reviews printed in this edition of the newsletter were written by undergraduate students enrolled in EDU/ENG 334: *Literature for Children in the Elementary Grades*, as well as Francesca Pomerantz, Associate Professor of Education and Nina Miller, Assistant Editor.



My Elephant

Written and Illustrated by Petr Horacek
Candlewick Press 2009



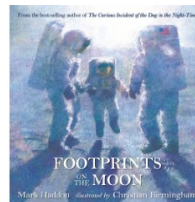
My Elephant, written and illustrated by Petr Horacek is a great book to read with your preschool or first grade class or at home with your children. It's an adorable story about a young boy with a very active imagination. His grandma and grandpa are too busy to play with him, so he creates his own playmate. The playmate happens to be an elephant that gets into all sort of mischief according to the little boy. Both the boy and the elephant have a wonderful time playing kickball in the yard, finding tigers in the jungle, and going fishing. But amidst all the fun activities, someone messes up grandpa's flowerbed, knocks over orange juice in the kitchen, and eats all grandmas' cupcakes! When the boy is asked who did those things, he simply replies "It must've been my elephant." The boy becomes upset when he doesn't think his grandparents believe him about the elephant. But towards the end, the boy is overjoyed when they play along and allow his imagination to run wild. His grandfather even tells him that his elephant carried him to bed!

Petr Horacek's illustrations were the first thing I noticed when picking up this book. The colors he chose are vibrant and stimulating to the eye. Some of the illustrations look as if they were drawn by a child. For example, the elephant's skin looks like it is scribbled in with a gray crayon and the illustration of the little boy and his elephant in the jungle resembles how a child would imagine it to look. The illustrations are guaranteed to draw children and adults into this wonderful and engaging story. The text is written in large and bold font which is easy for children see, and great for first time readers.

Krystina Sullo

Footprints on the Moon

Written by Mark Haddon
Illustrated by Christian Birmingham
Candlewick Press 2009



Footprints on the Moon is about a boy growing up in 1969 with outer space on his mind. He had a solar system wall chart and would gaze at the night sky looking at the moon each night. His parents bought him an atlas and kept a scrapbook of all the news articles of the outer space voyages he read about. This boy would read about astronauts, the orbit of the Earth, and dreamed of one day going to the moon himself. On a very special night, the United States lands three remarkable men on the moon and the boy witnesses the historical event as it unfolds on his television.

Mark Haddon brings to life an historical event that occurred over 30 years ago, and shows it through the eyes of child. Mark Haddon is a multi-award winning author who lives in Oxford, England. This story was written about his own love for the moon and solar system and his own experience watching the astronauts land on the moon. The book is written as a memory of a man looking back on his childhood. Children will get caught up with the thought of being on the moon and adults will remember the day they saw or heard about the first men to step onto the moon.

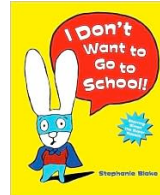
The pictures have a hazy look as though you were seeing what the man was remembering. The colors used are bright and vibrant adding to the feel of the excitement. Even the night sky scenes are dazzling with the moon shining on the young boy. The text and illustrations complement each other and bring to life the happy

memories of the man. I enjoyed reading this book because it brought to life a historical event that many of the children of today could not imagine witnessing. This book is ideal to read to a class when discussing the planets and the moon. It is also a great way to get students to get involved with current historical events. It would encourage them to find their own interest in the world today and maybe even start their own scrapbook with something they find interesting and want to remember.

Sara Morin

I Don't Want To Go To School!

Written and Illustrated by Stephanie Blake
Translated by Whitney Stahlberg
Random House Books for Young Readers 2009



I Don't Want To Go To School! by Stephanie Blake, an illustrator and author from France, makes her American debut in this lighthearted and easy to follow picture-book which is tailor made as a pre-first day of school bedtime story. The story follows “Simon the super rabbit” a mischievous young hare that fears his first day of school. When presented with the notion of attending school by his parents, they are met by a firm “No way!” The illustrations are colorful, vibrant, and accurately set the tone for this story which clocks in at a mere 11 pages.

Stephanie Blake does a terrific job of using energetic colors, noticeable font, and simple expression in the faces of the characters to tell a story that even the youngest viewer would be able to recognize. The use of repetition, as well as open vibrantly colored spaces with the whiteness of the characters in the forefront leave the pages feeling uncluttered, making it easy for the young reader to focus on the story and illustrations. The pace of the story is also well orchestrated by Blake. Since the pacing begins slowly and picks up towards the end, the book can be read aloud in a manner that can convey excitement towards the idea of embarking on your first day of school.

In the story of *I Don't Want To Go To School!* Blake tackles a very real issue which can be very difficult for a child or parent to undergo. I believe she does so in a positive manner that is truthful to the experience. The book encourages children to step out of their comfort zones and take steps towards their own independence. Not doing something under the reasoning of “I don't want to” will not always be an option to a child, and I feel this story shows a child that facing your fears is a vital part of progressing into adulthood.

The parental figures are portrayed as encouraging, kind, and capable of saying what a parent may just not know how say to their child before their first day of school. The story culminates as expected, with Simon facing his fear of school head-on, and his parents making good on what he was told his experience would be like. Simon is shown in the last illustration with a sense of accomplishment, and should leave the child with the positive feeling Blake was trying to convey all along. Should a parent with a nervous child pass up reading them *I Don't Want To Go To School!*? My answer would be “NO WAY!”

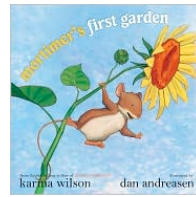
Joe Ialuna

Mortimer's First Garden

Written by Karma Wilson

Illustrated by Dan Andreasen

Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing 2009



Mortimer's First Garden, by Karma Wilson and illustrated by Dan Andreasen, is a great piece of literature to start off a spring season theme in school. Mortimer is a cute and adorable mouse who loves to eat seeds. While eating a seed on the window sill, Mortimer looks out the window and sees that everything is brown. Mortimer wants to see green, anything green. After overhearing people, who live in the house, talking about planting seeds and waiting to see green, Mortimer becomes apprehensive about planting a precious seed. He thinks seeds are for eating, not planting. But Mortimer becomes convinced that miracles can happen. Mortimer decides to plant his sunflower seed and he waits and waits and waits. A huge miracle happens.

The way the book illustrates and discusses the way that Mortimer plants his seed is a great way to show and teach children how to plant seeds and how to take care of the seed as it grows. While I was reading this book, I automatically became interested because the story line is about spring and I love spring. The illustrations are so clear, colorful, soft, and subtle that they made me feel relaxed and at ease. Every illustration matches what the text says. Also the story is not overwhelmed with characters so younger children can have a better grasp on comprehending the story. The author emphasizes when the humans are talking with italic writing. This helps the reader understand when the humans are talking.

Not only did I like the beautiful and soft illustrations and the well-written text in *Mortimer's First Garden*, I also enjoyed this story's theme. I love to plant flowers and this book dealt with my all time favorite flower, the sunflower. I would recommend reading this book at school or at home when the spring season is on its way. This book is recommended for ages 4-8. This book could also be read in a science class if the children are learning about planting seeds. This piece of literature can offer an educational and fun experience.

Stephanie McGrath

Mousie Love

Written by Dori Chaconas

Illustrated by Josee Masee

Bloomsbury 2009



Mousie Love is a charming picture book that is an excellent read on a cozy chair to a child. From the moment Tully laid eyes on Frill he fell in love with her. Driven by his intense feelings for her, Tully asks if she will be his bride. When Frill doesn't answer instantly with a yes, no, or maybe, Frill panics and searches for a way to win her heart. The romantic "mousie" love story goes through dramatic chase scenes, high speed escapes and all the while, Frill is trying to express her love. If only Tully would stop interrupting her. In the end, after everything the two have been through, Tully receives the answer, but is it the one he wants?

The illustrations enhance the characters in the story well. Tully and Frill are two mice in love. When Tully sees Frill, he has hearts in his eyes and when Frill sees Tully, she grins from ear to ear. The bright warm colors jump off the pages and there is a unique texture that accompanies the text. The text is full of poetic language, rich vocabulary and repetition. The poetic language adds sweet innocent romance, "The sky was

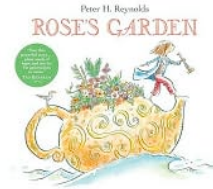
swept with a glitter of stars. They threw off showers of light like billions and billions of fireflies”. The author’s choice in vocabulary such as, “eager flutter”, “burbled” and “flitter”, exposes children to interesting vocabulary. The author also chose unique descriptive sounds including “WHOPPIT” and “THOOP” when portraying an exciting scene. There are several signs of repetition including proposal, chase, and recovery as well as a refrain in the story. It states, “Frill didn’t say no. She didn’t say yes. She didn’t say maybe”. This is an enjoyable way for children to be involved with the reading.

I really enjoyed reading this book about love at first sight. The first line grabs the reader’s attention, “The moment Tully saw Frill, he immediately fell in love”, and the illustrations enhance the story line. I enjoyed that Tully strived to provide everything he could for his love and she all along appreciated him. Children of all ages would enjoy this book, especially three to five year olds. It is a warm and fuzzy story that I recommend to be read in a cozy area with the youngster you love.

Amanda White

Rose’s Garden

Written and Illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds
Candlewick Press 2009



Rose’s Garden, written and illustrated by Peter H. Reynolds is a breathtaking story that was inspired by the late Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy. Rose has been sailing all around the world in her extraordinary teapot. She has collected seeds from all over and when she discovers that her teapot becomes too full, she finds a nearby city to dock. With the help of her friends, Rose discovers that with a little determination and planting seeds of hope and faith, life will surprise you.

Peter H. Reynolds is an award winning author and illustrator. A graduate from Fitchburg State College, Reynolds realized in seventh grade that he had a passion for drawing and writing. Reynolds has published and illustrated numerous books such as *The North Star* and *The Dot*.

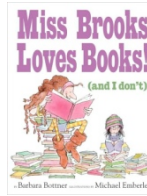
The story is about a girl named Rose and her adventure sailing around the world collecting seeds in her teapot. She sails into Boston Harbor and sees that this city could use some tender loving care. Rose starts planting and her garden becomes her new home into which everyone is welcome. This story was inspired by the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway, in Boston Massachusetts. The greenway is fifteen acres of beautiful park land, starting in the North End of Boston, where Rose Kennedy was born. This fantastic picture book is suitable for all ages.

Rena MacInnis

Miss Brooks Loves Books! (and I don't)

Written by Barbara Bottner

Illustrated by Michael Emberley



Miss Brooks Loves Books! (and I don't) is a delightful story about an enthusiastic school librarian who goes to great lengths to share her love of books with students. Dressed up for story time in costumes that resemble the “hungry caterpillar” and the “runaway bunny,” her passion for reading is palpable. When Miss Brooks announces to her class that all of the children will have the opportunity to choose a story to share for the upcoming book week, one little girl, Missy, is not thrilled. She doesn't share Miss Brook's affection for books and complains during every read aloud – “too flowery, too furry, too clickety, too yippity.” Missy flat-out tells Miss Brooks, “I'll never love a book the way you do.” Miss Brooks smiles and says, “Don't be so sure.” Once at home the girl begs her mother for help. They sift through book after book. It isn't easy but they finally find a topic that Missy can get truly excited about...warts! So with William Steig's book, *Shrek*, in hand, Missy dresses up as an ogre and passes out homemade stick-on warts to all of her classmates. Alas, she finally finds a book to love.

Children and adults alike will smile at the quirky and cartoon-like illustrations; especially those of Miss Brooks dressed as beloved literary characters. You can't help but admire this librarian's level of energy as she tries creative ways to hook a reluctant reader. This is entertaining read aloud material, perfect for gearing students up for book reports or independent reading or to just let them know that there is a book out there for all of us. Every library needs a Miss Brooks!

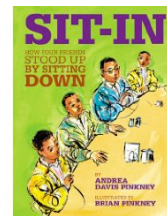
Nina Miller

Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down

Written by Andrea Davis Pinkney

Illustrated by Brian Pinkney

Little Brown & Company 2010



In *Sit-In: How Four Friends Stood Up by Sitting Down* Andrea Davis Pinkney tells the true story of the Greensboro sit-ins and other non-violent protests resulting in the overturn of segregation. In 1960 four black college students sat at a whites-only Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina and asked for doughnuts and coffee. Inspired by Martin Luther King Jr.'s call for social change through non-violent protest, the students sat at the counter peacefully for several days in protest of segregation laws. Refused service at the counter, they were joined each day by more and more students and inspired many other sit-ins throughout the south. That summer, the Woolworth's in Greensboro was desegregated and for the first time, black Americans were served at the lunch counter.

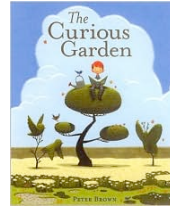
This picture book would be an excellent introduction to the history of the civil rights movement and would inspire students to ask and research questions related to it. The story is told in poetic language with quotations by Martin Luther King Jr. interspersed throughout the text. Pinkney uses many metaphors related to the lunch counter theme, such as “those kids had a recipe, too. A new brew called integration. It was just as simple: Combine black with white to make sweet justice. For them, integration was better than any chef's special. Integration was finer than homemade cake. Integration was a recipe that would take time.”

Brian Pinkney's illustrations reveal what is happening on a literal level (e.g., white people being served while the black students are ignored, Lyndon B. Johnson signing the Civil Rights Act of 1964) and some are more metaphorical (a long, long lunch counter, snaking off the page with seats occupied by the protesters to show the demonstrations spreading across the south). The combination, in illustration and text, of history and metaphors to describe what is taking place, makes for a memorable book likely to make a lasting impression, inspire discussion, and motivate students to learn more. This also makes an excellent companion book to *Freedom on the Menu* by Carole Boston Weatherford (Dial Press, 2004) and is appropriate for grades 2-6.

Francesca Pomerantz, Associate Professor

The Curious Garden

Written and Illustrated by Peter Brown
Little Brown & Company 2010



The Curious Garden, written and illustrated by Peter Brown, is the perfect picture book to begin discussing the importance of the environment with young learners. The book begins with a young boy, named Liam, who lives in a rainy and dreary urban setting. One day he discovers a patch of plants and flowers growing on an abandoned railroad track. Liam takes care of these plants and they soon begin to spread down the tracks and throughout the city. With these spreading plants the city becomes a brighter and happier place, and everyone in the city begins gardening! The book shows the importance of greenery, not only for the planet but also the special impact gardening can have on individuals.

The illustrations in the book are absolutely breathtaking. At the start of the book the illustrations are mostly gray in color, giving the observer the feeling of gloom and dread. However, as the plants begin to spread through the city, and the book, the illustrations become more vibrant. The illustrations paint a perfect picture of the ways in which a garden can brighten any place. One aspect of the illustrations that I really loved were the four pages that were entirely illustration with no text; these pages capture the changes that the city is undergoing with Liam's lead. These pages also allow readers to really put themselves in the setting.

I was not only impressed with this book for its rich story telling and illustrations but also the environmental message within the pages. Peter Brown even included an "Author's Note" page where he details his feelings on environmental issues that affect everyone. This book would be a great way to start a lesson on recycling and conserving with young learners. It is written in a way that does not preach but does show children the joy that gardening and helping the Earth can bring.

Sarah Cummings