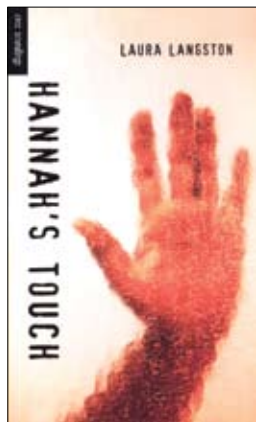


## • FICTION •

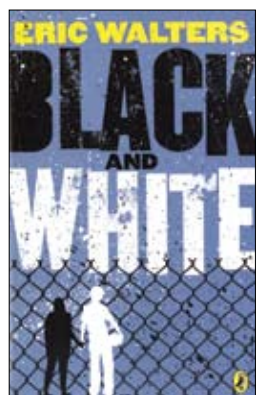


### Hannah's Touch

by Laura Langston  
Orca Book Publishers, 2009  
ISBN 978-1-55469-149-4 (pbk)  
\$9.95, 132 pp, ages 13 – 15  
[www.orcabook.com](http://www.orcabook.com)

Sixteen-year-old Hannah is stung by a bee and experiences a severe allergic reaction. During the bee sting episode, Hannah loses her St. Christopher's medallion, a gift from her boyfriend, Logan, who died a year before in a car crash. She has a near-death experience during which she hears Logan's voice and feels his presence. He tells her to "go back" because her "work is not finished." She is having a very difficult time coming

to terms with Logan's death. Hannah feels guilty that she didn't do more to prevent what happened to him. She also blames Tom, Logan's best friend, who insisted that they race their cars after they had been drinking. Hannah cannot forgive herself, and she definitely cannot forgive Tom. It is after the near-death experience that Hannah discovers that she can heal people, even animals, simply by touching them. The first one to benefit from Hannah's gift is old Mrs. O'Connell's ancient dog, Kitty, who starts to act like a puppy once she has touched Hannah. Mrs. O'Connell recognizes Hannah's amazing ability but has a hard time convincing Hannah that she now has a special gift. Hannah tells Mrs. O'Connell, "This isn't a gift. It's a curse." All her life Hannah has been different and now she feels like a freak. Marie, her closest friend, thinks Hannah should visit a pastor, and her parents think she should see a psychiatrist. Hannah keeps trying to find the St. Christopher's medallion, and to understand what it is Logan wants her to do. No wonder Hannah is having nightmares! Unexpected events and Logan's voice gradually reveal to Hannah what she must do. By using her healing powers for others will she also begin to heal herself?



### Black and White

by Eric Walters  
Puffin Canada, 2009  
ISBN 978-0-14-331249-9  
\$12.99, 220 pp, ages 12 – 14  
[www.penguin.ca](http://www.penguin.ca)

The last thing Tom wants to do after school is watch the grade eight girls' team play basketball. Tom is on the boys' grade eight team and doesn't think the girls' team is very good. Tom's best friend, Steve, convinces him to go. The team does not play very well except for Denyse, a grade seven girl, who is so impressive on the court Tom cannot help but notice her.

He thinks Denyse is really pretty and the fact that she is black and he is white is not an issue. Denyse and Tom begin to spend time together as friends. When Tom's father drives Tom and Denyse to a ski club, Tom teaches Denyse to snowboard, and gets his first kiss. But on the ski hill, a racist comment is made by a white man to Denyse which upsets her very much. Tom cannot believe that some people still use such racist language. He believes that no one should be treated differently because of their skin colour. Once Denyse and Tom start to officially date it becomes clear that not everyone is happy about this situation. Denyse's brother gives Tom a hard time, but not for the reasons Tom expects. During a game at school Denyse is knocked about by four black girls on the opposing team. As Tom watches the game he notices that the girls look as "though they are more interested in hurting Denyse than they are in winning the game." Though not against the relationship, both sets of parents tell Tom and Denyse it will not be easy and there will be many challenges. Now it is up to Denyse and Tom to decide whether or not the feelings they have for each other are strong enough to withstand the prejudices of others.



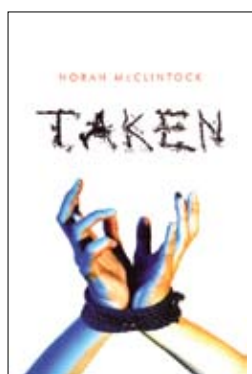
### In The Woods

by Robin Stevenson  
Orca Book Publishers, 2009  
ISBN 978-1-55469-200-2  
\$9.95, 124 pp, ages 12 – 14  
[www.orcabook.com](http://www.orcabook.com)

Inside his tightly zipped jacket, the baby is held close to his chest by a sling made from his sweater. "Don't you dare die... If you die I'll be emotionally scarred for life," Cameron tells the tiny bundle while he pedals his bike as fast as he can through the woods to the highway. With the help of a passing motorist they reach the hospital and the baby girl is saved but Cameron is freaked out by the whole experience. Who would

leave a baby in the woods? That is what the social worker and the police want to know. They also wonder if Cameron is the father. Does he know the mother? It's no to both questions and Cameron is determined to find the mother. He believes his twin sister, Katie, knows. It was she who had called and pleaded with him to go to the woods. Perhaps it is one of the girls in their class at high school? Once Cameron discovers the mother's identity he faces a real dilemma. Does he protect a teenager's secret like he promised or does he go to the police? Cameron confides in Audrey, a friend from school who helps him to understand the issue of teen pregnancy from the side of an adopted child. Life has suddenly handed Cameron many things that require him to make some very important decisions. Fate intervenes and leaves him no choice about what he must do.

The plot moves along fairly quickly, and the characters are well-developed, especially Cameron. I could hear his voice and was with him every step of the way. The ending of the novel is particularly moving and not, perhaps, what one might expect. The issue of teen pregnancy is dealt with frankly, but without judgement, and with compassion.



### Taken

by Norah McClintock  
Orca Book Publishers, 2009  
ISBN 978-1-55469-152-4  
\$12.95, pp 165, ages 12+  
[www.orcabook.com](http://www.orcabook.com)

Abduction of our children by an unknown person is the number one concern of modern parents. It is the reason streets are empty of kids playing outside and why the Kiss and Ride drop-off at school is backed up with parent drivers every beautiful, sunny morning.

Norah McClintock uses this fear as the theme and storyline of her new book *Taken*. Stephanie is still mourning the loss of her dad in a car crash when her mom meets and falls for Gregg, who is the complete opposite of her cultured, hard-working father. Needless to say, conflict arises between the new boyfriend and Stephanie whenever they meet, even over such trivialities as how to drink out of the orange juice container. That story is layered over the disappearance and subsequent killings of two girls, roughly the same ages and shape as Stephanie, living in their quiet, rural area.

One of the more interesting themes is how Stephanie's relationship with her mother shifts throughout the book. Her mother's choice of companion is a complete mystery to Stephanie as her mother plans to give her dad's insurance money to the boyfriend to start a mysterious, unnamed business. She is unsure about her mother's affection and wonders instead if her mother has transferred her affection and loyalty to Gregg. This shift is only touched upon by the author and the reader is left unsatisfied by the absence of some resolution.

For reluctant readers, this book is simple, easy to follow and the outcome is clear early on in the story; it ensures success immediately. For avid readers who have strayed away from formulaic writing to something more original, this is a quick page turner and not really worth the effort.

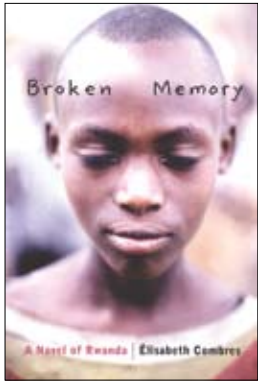
### Reviewers

**Victoria Miller** is a teacher librarian in a middle school in Ontario. She has taught for 27 years from Kindergarten to Grade 10.

**Diana Mumford** worked as a teacher and teacher-librarian for twenty years before switching to her present career as an editor.

**Julie Rank** teaches grade nine in Corner Brook, NL. She is always on the lookout for books that will appeal to her 14-year-old students.

**Interested in reviewing? Contact: [dmumford@CanadianTeacherMagazine.com](mailto:dmumford@CanadianTeacherMagazine.com)**



### **Broken Memory A Novel of Rwanda**

by Elisabeth Combres, translated by Shelley Tanaka  
Groundwood Books / House of Anansi Press, 2009  
ISBN 978-0-88899-892-7 ( bound )  
ISBN 978-0-88899-893-4 (pbk)  
\$18.95, 136 pp, Author's Note, ages 13 – 15  
www.groundwoodbooks.com

Although this is a work of fiction, the historical content is real. The author spoke with many adolescent survivors of the genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994. From these conversations, and those with aid workers and psychologists,

Elisabeth Combres created this story of Emma, a young Tutsi survivor. Hiding behind a chair, Emma did not see her mother murdered, but she heard it. At the age of five Emma was an orphan who “slept in the bush, went for long days without eating,” and “walked between the dead bodies that blackened the fields and the roads.” Eventually Emma was taken in by an old Hutu woman, and there she lived for nine years. This act of courage by the old woman was not without its dangers, as the Hutu killers would have slaughtered them both if Emma were discovered. As the years passed, Emma remembered her mother’s face less and less, and continued to suffer from nightmares. She befriended another genocide survivor, Ndoli, who was physically and emotionally scarred from the torture he endured. When Emma recognized the voice of a prisoner on a truck as that of the man who murdered her mother, she collapsed and fainted near a wall. It was Ndoli who stayed by her side throughout the night. Ndoli and Emma were helped by the nameless “old man” who ran a clinic which helped young survivors cope with their trauma. Through his kindness and patience Emma began to recover and soon found the courage to visit her former village. It is there that she made a discovery that enabled her to begin to deal with the past and look to the future.

The two children in this novel represent the many thousands of children who suffered during this horrific time. It is also a story of hope, and of the immense courage of the Tutsi survivors, and of those Hutus who were against the slaughter. It is a story of a country trying to heal itself.

### • PICTURE BOOK •



### **The Secret of Your Name**

by David Bouchard  
illustrated by Denis J. Weber  
Red Deer Press, 2010  
ISBN 9780889954397  
\$24.95, 35 pp, CD, ages 6+  
www.reddeerpress.com

With the cover showing the familiar Hudson’s Bay Company blanket coat, this book invites the reader to meet the Canadian Metis community. This is a dual language book, in English and Michif. Michif, according to the end notes, is a combination of the French and Cree languages

used by Metis who lived in Western Canada. Eventually, the author (Order of Canada winner, David Bouchard) writes, he will “claim [the language] as his own,” a common refrain regarding learning his culture throughout the book.

Metis history is significant to the Grade 8 study of Canadian history, specifically Opening the West. This picture book would be a good introduction to how the Europeans interacted with one of the aboriginal communities, and how that community fought to keep their language and culture alive. Much of the shame and denial of their heritage, which cuts across this book, lives on, described today by the author. Grade 6 students, who study First Nations, will be inspired by artist Dennis J. Weber’s evocative painting and illustrations. The recurring motif of the Hudson’s Bay coat reminds students of the close relationship between the great trading house of HBC and the First Nations, including the Metis.

As an added bonus to this book, there is a CD read by David Bouchard in English highlighted with fiddle, pipe and drum music. The music is led by John Arcand. After the musical interlude, the book is reread, in Michif this time, by Bill Starling, which makes it possible to hear Michif spoken, if not understood. This book would be a valuable resource when studying First Nations.

### • NONFICTION •



### **ID**

### **Stuff that Happens to Define Us**

by Kate Scowen  
illustrated by Peter Mitchell  
Annick Press, 2010  
ISBN 978-1-55451-224-9  
\$12.95, pp 160, ages 14+  
www.annickpress.com

This is a largely serious book wrapped in fanciful illustrations and interesting print. No Times New Roman here! Sombre tales of pivotal life experiences are told from a young person’s point of view, as they deal with sexuality, sizism, abuse, suicide, loss and fitting into a larger community. Each story is short, between 10 – 15 pages, and liberally sprinkled with stylized illustrations. It is written in the first person, as if the situation could apply to you or someone sitting next to you. The stories are related with tact and sensitivity, while not shying away from the awfulness that is the experience itself. After each personal tale, there is a Question and Answer page which gives greater detail about the incident in an effort to have the reader understand and demonstrate empathy, and insight into what the writer was thinking when the act occurred.

At the conclusion of the book there is an Afterward about what readers can do when seeking help for their own experiences. There is a resource list for Canada and the US, phone numbers to get help, and websites if readers have more questions.

This book is divided into quick reads as the authors delve into the questions raised by young adults. To use it in the classroom, the stories could be available for teachable moments, or within the parameters of character education. It would be appropriate in the self-help section of the library, or as stories read aloud for discussion—what would you do if it were you?



### **Piece by Piece**

### **Stories about Fitting into Canada**

edited by Teresa Toten  
Penguin Group, 2010  
ISBN 978-0-670068-494  
\$20, 123 pp, ages 12+  
www.penguin.ca

In this country of immigrants, we celebrate and denigrate our heritage, all the while trying to belong to mainstream groups. *Piece by Piece* is about trying to belong while keeping part of what makes us unique. There are fifteen stories in this selection, in which all authors answered the hateful question, “Where are you from?”

This is an excellent resource for Grade 8 students who are studying human migration in Geography. The short stories are good snapshots of experiences that look at the barriers and bridges of migration to Canada. Will I make myself understood in a new language? What will the new food be like? Will I find something familiar?

The first entry by Svetlana Chmakova should be very motivating to students, as it is in a mini-graphic novel format. It follows the ups and downs of two sisters who have migrated with their parents to Canada. I like the graphic novel format, which most students find very engaging. It should be especially appealing for ESL students who may be living the issues described there while using the vocabulary and pictures to enhance their own literary and conceptual development.

My favourite story is “Shadow Play” by Rui Umezawa. It includes the perseverance and creativity all the immigrants’ stories showed, besides an entry into understanding the charms of the opposite sex, which were far out of reach for him at that time. He is trying to fit in on so many levels, and continues to try, despite numerous failures.

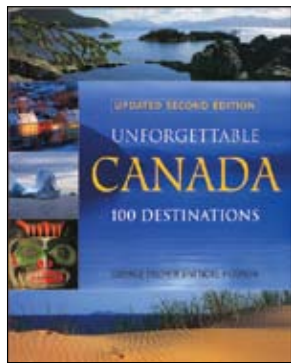
Soon, in the Greater Toronto Area, the visible minority will be Caucasian. How will I belong in a city that doesn’t share my cultural heritage? Soon it will be my turn to ask those questions.

This book opened up those questions for me and assured me there is a place for all of us who love this country.

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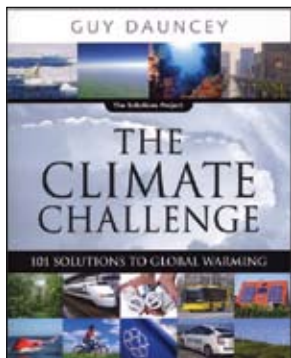
## Unforgettable Canada 100 Destinations (Updated Second Edition)



The Boston Mills Press  
2007  
ISBN 978-1-55046-461-0  
\$29.95, 288 pp, adult  
www.fireflybooks.com

This book would be a great resource for your personal ambitions to see more of our remarkably beautiful country, or to inspire your students with a field trip to a memorable or historical location. All provinces and territories are included, and even though no doubt there are many more than 100 worthwhile destinations, this collection will give you a taste of how wonderful it would be to visit each area of Canada. Spectacular photography and frequent factual sidebars will make you appreciate the diversity of this land we call home. Happy summer holidays!

## The Climate Challenge 101 Solutions to Global Warming



by Guy Dauncey  
New Society Publishers  
2009  
ISBN 978-0-86571-589-9  
\$24.95, 320 pp, ages 15+  
www.newsociety.com

If you have heard Guy Dauncey speak (on YouTube if not in person), you will know that he is an enormously upbeat, optimistic advocate for change who believes we can do what it takes to turn around the human-made climate change disaster. In *The Climate Challenge*, Dauncey provides an overview of the relevant issues of importance, and then outlines 101 ways to make change happen, organized according to who needs to get active: individuals, champions (of change), communities, businesses, farmers, transportation industries, energy companies, governments, developing nations and citizens of the world. He ends with an impassioned plea for each and every one of us to take responsibility, to join others to do *something* to ensure that life as we know it can continue to thrive on Earth. The solutions he puts forward are visionary, do-able and often based on initiatives already underway and proven, although sometimes small scale and scattered around the world. With a wealth of information provided in short, easily digested chunks, and lots of references for further investigation, this book is a valuable tool for any individual, school or community group wanting to get started on effective ways to contribute to a growing wave of climate change action. Pick up a copy and take the summer to browse its pages and come up with your own action plan.



## the planning department

# SUMMER READING LOSS

by Brenda Boreham

Summer reading loss is a well documented phenomena that affects many students. It is of particular concern for those learners who are already considered to be “at risk.” Summer reading loss is also identified as being more significant in students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. Many of these children have limited access to books at home, or have parent/caregivers who are unsure of how to help them.

### HOW SIGNIFICANT IS SUMMER READING LOSS?

Summer reading loss has been the subject of research for many years. A recent article in *Issues and Trends in Literacy* by Maryann Mraz and Timothy Rasinski states: “A review of 13 empirical studies representing approximately 40,000 students found that, on average, the reading proficiency levels of students from lower income families declined over the summer months, while the reading proficiency levels of students from middle income families improved modestly. In a single academic year, this decline resulted in an estimated three month achievement gap between more advantaged and less advantaged students. Between grades 1 and 6, the potential cumulative impact of this achievement gap could compound to 1.5 year’s worth of reading development lost in the summer months alone. (Cooper, Nye, Charlton, Lindsay and Greathouse, 1996).”

### HOW CAN SCHOOLS SUPPORT READING DEVELOPMENT OVER THE SUMMER MONTHS?

#### Reading Instruction

- Providing students with successful reading experiences (matching children to books appropriate to their level, using high interest reading material, etc.) could give them the confidence to read voluntarily over the summer.

#### Providing Access To Reading Material

- Most public libraries have a fun summer reading program. Inviting a librarian to visit the school and talk with parents would create awareness of these programs. This would also be a great opportunity to sign children up and arrange for library cards.
- Provide a free or low cost summer reading program at the school.
- Provide part time summer access to the school library.



Brenda is the Literacy Resource Teacher at her school. This part-time position allows her to plan fun literacy events when she isn't busy in her own classroom.

### Providing Suggestions For Promoting Family Literacy

The following is a list of specific suggestions that might prove useful to parents. Share this information with parents/caregivers in a variety of ways: a workshop format during the last weeks of school, parent newsletters, a printed handout to go home with report cards, for example.

- Provide a quiet place in your home with reading and writing supplies (paper, felt pens, crayons, scissors, glue, etc.).
- Buy used books at second hand stores and garage sales.
- Reading material comes in many different forms: books, magazines, letters, Internet sites, newspapers, etc. Try them all!
- Visit the public library every week.
- Be a reading model. Children learn by example. Let them see you reading in your spare time.
- Read aloud to your children—20 minutes a day adds up over the course of the summer.
- Read in the car. Road signs, billboards and licence plates are all sources of reading material while you are in transit. Why not teach your children to read a road map?
- Daily household routines allow for many reading opportunities—recipes, phone books, the TV guide are all excellent sources of informational text.
- Try a family board game night. Encourage your children to read the instructions and follow the directions.
- When you are watching TV reduce the volume and turn on the closed captioning feature. Encourage your children to read the words on the screen.
- Listen to your child read to you. Ask questions (e.g., What do you think will happen next? What is the problem in the story?).
- Sing with your children. Singing helps them to develop an early awareness of rhyme, rhythm and words.
- Ask for your children’s help with household chores: printing grocery lists, marking events on the calendar, writing postcards and letters to family members and friends, etc.
- Challenge your children with word games such as word searches, crossword puzzles, Scrabble, Upwords, etc.
- On family trips to museums, science centres, parks and galleries make sure that you read the information on the displays.
- Have fun! .

