

Alberta Authorized Resource List and Annotated Bibliography

Novels and Nonfiction Grades 8–12



September 2006

*This document is available online at
http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/bySubject/ke/*

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Knowledge and Employability

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The primary intended audience for this document is:

<i>Administrators</i>	
<i>Counsellors</i>	
<i>General Audience</i>	
<i>Parent School Councils</i>	
<i>Parents</i>	
<i>Students</i>	
<i>Teachers</i>	✓

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ORGANIZATION OF THIS DOCUMENT

The Knowledge and Employability list of authorized Novels and Nonfiction resources is organized as follows:

Authorized Novels and Nonfiction Resources Listed by Grade

Novels and nonfiction resources are listed alphabetically for grades 8–9 and grades 10–12. Each entry provides the following information:

- title of resource
- copyright date
- vendor/distributor name.

Annotated Bibliography Listed Alphabetically by Title

Each of the resources listed has a corresponding annotation. Each annotation identifies the:

- title of resource
- author
- quotation from text
- ISBN
- awards
- information about the text (such as, plot, theme, sensitive issues)
- annotation

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Suggestions for using these titles in Knowledge and Employability classrooms are noted in boxes.

FOREWORD

The Learning and Teaching Resources Branch of Alberta Education is pleased to present the **new list** of authorized novels and nonfiction titles for Knowledge and Employability courses, grades 8–12.

- Titles on the grades 8–12 novels and nonfiction list are drawn from the elementary, junior high and senior high school English language arts novels and nonfiction titles authorized by Alberta Education.
- New titles have been added that are specific to Knowledge and Employability courses.

This list includes annotations from the English language arts approved list containing short quotation summaries, suggested themes and literary features. Information specific to Knowledge and Employability courses is provided following the English language arts annotation. Potentially sensitive issues have been identified. Also included is one video, “Holes,” that has been authorized as a student support resource. The video can be ordered directly from ACCESS: The Education Station at:

ACCESS: The Education Station
Learning and Skills Television of Alberta Ltd.
3720 – 76 Avenue NW
Edmonton, Alberta
T6B 2N9
Telephone: 780–440–7728
<https://estore.accesslearning.com/>

Review and Selection Process

In 2004, Alberta Education formed a Knowledge and Employability courses teacher review team to develop a list of potential novels and full-length nonfiction titles for grades 8–9 and grades 10–12. Titles from the English language arts approved novels and nonfiction listing were reviewed for their applicability and appropriateness for Knowledge and Employability students.

This list includes novels and nonfiction titles that are authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

Criteria for Selection

All short-listed titles were read, reviewed and validated by members of the Knowledge and Employability courses teacher review team. As the teacher review team read the texts, they looked for and selected titles that:

- engage and make connections with the reader
- make connections to real-life experiences
- encourage a personal response to literature from students
- offer a variety of purposes, human experiences and values
- provide an interesting reading experience suitable for the age, ability and social maturity of the students
- illustrate literary merit, with a range of style and structure
- elicit thoughtful responses and a critical appreciation of literature
- broaden student understanding of social, historical, geographical and cultural diversity
- encourage students to develop a sensitivity to and an understanding of individual differences, such as age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability
- represent an appropriate reading level for the division being recommended
- use language effectively and responsibly, and language that is essential to the integrity of the work.

In addition, the potential titles were analyzed to ensure that guidelines for recognizing diversity and promoting respect were met. Several books were submitted for First Nations' validation.



Please note that Canadian titles are identified with this icon.

Selecting Titles for the Classroom

It is important that teachers exercise care in selecting learning resources appropriate for their students.

Alberta Education and the teacher review teams strongly recommend that teachers read the books prior to selection and carefully consider the sensitivities of both the student audience and the community.

The Knowledge and Employability courses teacher review team carefully considered grade and age appropriateness when assigning titles to this list. Teachers who consider a title listed for a different grade to be appropriate for their students may wish to coordinate their choice with their colleagues.

Titles must be selected in a context of respect for the values of others. If a student, for whatever reason, is uncomfortable reading an assigned book, an alternative choice should be offered.

Teachers of all grades are encouraged to refer to the Choosing Resources section in the *Senior High School English Language Arts Guide to Implementation*, 2003¹.

The *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12*² describes Controversial Issues as follows:

Controversial issues are those topics that are publicly sensitive and upon which there is no consensus of values or beliefs. They include topics on which reasonable people may sincerely disagree. Opportunities to deal with these issues are an integral part of student learning in Alberta.

Studying controversial issues is important in preparing students to participate responsibly in a democratic and pluralistic society. Such study provides opportunities to develop the ability to think clearly, to reason logically, to open-mindedly and respectfully examine different points of view, and to make sound judgements.

Teachers, students and others participating in studies or discussions of controversial issues shall exercise sensitivity to ensure that students and others are not ridiculed, embarrassed or intimidated for positions that they hold on controversial issues.

Controversial issues:

- represent alternative points of view, subject to the condition that information presented is not restricted by any federal or provincial law
- reflect the maturity, capabilities and educational needs of the students
- meet the requirements of provincially prescribed and approved courses and programs of study and education programs
- reflect the neighbourhood and community in which the school is located, as well as provincial, national and international contexts.

Controversial issues that have been anticipated by the teacher, and those that may arise incidentally during instruction, should be used by the teacher to promote critical inquiry and/or teach thinking skills.

The school plays a supportive role to parents in the areas of values and moral development and shall handle parental decisions in regard to controversial issues with respect and sensitivity.

This information about controversial issues should be used as a guide in presenting various points of view about an issue raised in a novel or piece of nonfiction. Teachers should also investigate what policies their school system has in place that will assist in responding to inquiries from parents or members of the community.

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1. The *Senior High School English Language Arts Guide to Implementation*, 2003 is available on the Alberta Education Web site at http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/curriculum/bySubject/english/ela10.asp. It is also available for purchase from the Learning Resources Centre at <http://www.lrc.education.gov.ab.ca>.
 2. The *Guide to Education: ECS to Grade 12* is available on the Alberta Education Web site at http://www.education.gov.ab.ca/k_12/legislation. It is also available for purchase from the Learning Resources Centre at <http://www.lrc.education.gov.ab.ca>.

Junior High Titles Knowledge and Employability

Note: The following authorized novels and nonfiction titles are not available for purchase from the Learning Resources Centre. Teachers may contact the publishers or a book distributor of their choice.

Big Burn
The Breadwinner
Freak the Mighty
Guts
Holes
Holes (Walt Disney Classroom Edition) (Video)
Homeless Bird (First Harper Trophy Edition)
The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (First Harper Trophy Edition)
Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird (Puffin Books Edition)
Maniac Magee (First Paperback Edition)
Men of Stone
Mystery Magazine
Mystery in the Frozen Lands
Peacekeepers
Science Fiction Magazine
The Seeing Stone (Paperback Edition)
Sees Behind Trees (Hyperion Paperback Edition)
Shane (New Bantam Edition)
Shipwrecked! The True Adventures of a Japanese Boy
The Tomorrow Tunnel
Touch of the Clown
Trapped in Ice
Under the Blood-Red Sun
Underground to Canada
Walk Two Moons
Who Is Frances Rain?
Winners

Senior High Titles Knowledge and Employability

Note: The following authorized novels and nonfiction titles are not available for purchase from the Learning Resources Centre. Teachers may contact the publishers or a book distributor of their choice.

AK
Artemis Fowl
Big Burn
The Cage
Crabbe
Finding Forrester
The Giver
The Hobbit
In Flanders Fields
Kensuke's Kingdom
The Lady at Batoche
Laws of Emotion
The Lie That Had to Be
Mystery Magazine
Offside
Short Classics Collection (Set 1)
Short Classics Collection (Set 2)
A Single Shard
Skellig
Speak
Sports Stories
The Tomorrow Tunnel
Touching Spirit Bear
The Tuesday Cafe
Virtual War
Willa's New World
The Wreckers

Knowledge and Employability

**Authorized Novels and
Nonfiction
Listed by Grade**

Knowledge and Employability

**Annotated Bibliography
Listed Alphabetically
by Title
Grades 8–9**

BIG BURN

Lesley Choyce



Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

“My father says this used to be one of the most beautiful harbours in North America—and it was when he was growing up here.’ ‘It still is,’ I said feeling a little defensive. ‘Not with that, it isn’t,’ she said pointing inland to the landfill.” p. 23

Big Burn is a story about two teens on Eastern Canada’s coastline. The story focuses on responsible citizenship and proactive problem solving as the characters take on a big company to protect their community from the company’s toxic waste dumping. The novel is written at a lower level and is easy for students to read.

Big Burn contains two instances of inappropriate language or behaviour. Alberta Education strongly recommends that teachers review this resource prior to using it with students. Careful consideration should be given to the sensitivities of both the student audience and the community. This resource does not include a teacher’s guide. *Big Burn* offers opportunities to integrate with Knowledge and Employability science on environmental issues.

Thistledown Press Ltd.,
1995

softcover
215 pages

ISBN 1-8954-4943-X

THE BREADWINNER

Deborah Ellis



“We have to remember this,’ Parvana said. ‘When things get better and we grow up, we have to remember that there was a day when we were kids when we stood in a graveyard and dug up bones to sell so that our families could eat.’” p. 111

The Breadwinner is a poignant novel about an 11-year-old girl who must take on the dangerous task of supporting her family in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. As a girl, Parvana is not allowed to attend school, but her bitterness about this is alleviated somewhat by the fact that she can accompany her father into the market where he makes a small living reading and writing letters for the illiterate. When the Taliban imprison Parvana’s father, the family faces the horrifying prospect that, since women are not allowed outside the home alone, they will have no source of income. It is decided that Parvana, who can read and write, must disguise herself as a boy and take her father’s place in the market. Later Parvana encounters Shauzia, another girl in disguise, and they decide to increase their income by collecting and selling bones from a bombed cemetery to a bone merchant. This experience in particular affects Parvana deeply and makes her long for a safer, easier life.

Having worked with Afghan refugees, Deborah Ellis writes from a close knowledge of human rights abuses under the Taliban regime. Descriptions brutality and violence are particularly disturbing but ultimately *The Breadwinner* is a story celebrating the stamina and spirit of a young girl in the face of great odds. Providing readers with a review of the historical context of Kabul from 1978–2001 will prepare them for the harsh reality of war described throughout the text.

Knowledge and Employability

The Breadwinner provides excellent opportunities for class discussion on international issues in either English language arts or social studies Knowledge and Employability courses. Current events, mapping, research and small group projects are all activities that teachers could incorporate into the novel study. The dialogue and narration provide an interesting read for students at this level. Character development allows students to make connections to their own lives. Pre-reading discussion and explanation may be necessary for a clearer understanding of the religious and political beliefs of the Taliban. A glossary and author’s notes are provided to help students. This is not a lengthy novel, and the print is somewhat larger so the appearance is not intimidating. Themes in the novel are mature and there is some violence.

Toronto, ON:
Groundwood/Douglas &
McIntyre 2002
[original 2000]

paperback

ISBN 0-88899-416-8

FREAK THE MIGHTY

Rodman Philbrick

"Freak is still holding tight to my shoulders and when they ask him for his name, he says, 'We're Freak the Mighty, that's who we are. We're nine feet tall, in case you haven't noticed.' That's how it started, really, how we got to be Freak the Mighty, slaying dragons and fools and walking high above the world." pp. 39-40

Freak the Mighty is a poignant tale of two misfits who find the power to overcome their fear of the intolerant outside world. Max, the narrator, is an overgrown eighth-grade kid who is labelled "learning disabled" by his teachers. With his mother dead and his father in prison, Max lives in the basement of his grandparents' house, where he can escape from a friendless world. Everything changes the day Kevin—"Freak"—moves in next door. Freak has a normal-sized head but a body the size of a two-year-old. He gets around on crutches, but is soon riding on Max's shoulders, creating a formidable Arthurian knight. Their imaginary quests form an invincible bond. Freak helps Max get moved from the learning disabled class into an academic class and supports him when his father gets out of jail and goes on a rampage. In the end, Freak gives Max something magical: a blank book for writing down their legend.

Rodman Philbrick portrays both Max and Freak with a skill that makes their vulnerabilities and their triumphs come alive for students. The voice of Max as the narrator is touching and funny. *Freak the Mighty* explores loyalty and friendship within an easy and high-interest read.

Knowledge and Employability

Freak the Mighty is age appropriate for junior high school. Students in Knowledge and Employability courses can relate to the characters and the feeling of not fitting in. Written in the present tense, the novel has a sense of immediacy that will hold students' interest. This will not be an intimidating book for students. The reading level and chapter lengths are appropriate and breaks in the chapters allow for discussion. The novel flows well and will keep students engaged.

New York, NY: Scholastic Inc.,
Scholastic Signature, 2001
[original 1993]

ISBN 0-439-28606-9

GUTS

Gary Paulsen

"Years later, when I came to write Hatchet and the scene where the pilot is dying, I remembered this man of all the men I saw dead from heart attacks and car wrecks and farm accidents. I remembered him and his eyes and I put him in the plane next to Brian because he was, above all things, real, and I wanted the book to be real." p. 6

Guts is Gary Paulsen's autobiographical response to his readers' frequent questions about his life and his inspiration for his novels. The book is a short, easy and a compelling read, and a valuable nonfiction companion to the author's Brian Robeson series. Paulsen writes about his early determination to create bows and arrows from scratch, details the skills a person can develop to keep from starving in the wilds, and describes how hordes of insects can drive animals and men insane in northern woods.

Graphic descriptions of hunting may be offensive to some readers. He also reviews his own experiences with heart-attack victims, plane crashes and a number of other high-drama incidents that contributed to *Hatchet*, included in the ELA 10-2 list, and its sequels.

Knowledge and Employability

Gary Paulsen's books are so well liked that students will enjoy finding that they are based on real events. Boys will identify with the "macho" image. As a class study, the novel lends itself to comparisons with real-life situations focusing on survival and problem-solving skills. Links can be made to many outdoor activities and sports.

New York, NY: Random House Children's Books, Dell Laurel-Leaf, 2002
[original 2001]

ISBN 0-440-40712-5

HOLES

Louis Sachar

"One thing was certain: They weren't just digging to build character. They were definitely looking for something. And whatever they were looking for, they were looking in the wrong place. Stanley gazed out across the lake, toward the spot where he had been digging yesterday when he found the gold tube. He dug the hole into his memory." p. 71

This novel has support videos available through ACCESS: *All About the Book: A Kid's Video Guide to "Holes,"* 2002 [21 min. BPN 2076103], *Good Conversation: A Talk with Louis Sachar,* 1999 [21 min. BPN 2075912] and *Holes* (feature film) [120 min. BPN 2079101].

New York, NY: Random House Children's Books, Dell Laurel-Leaf, 2001 [original 1998]

ISBN 0-440-22859-X

Awards:

ALA Best Books for Young Adults, 1978

In *Holes*, Stanley Yelnats finds himself plunked down in Camp Green Lake, a work-camp for juvenile delinquents, after being wrongfully accused of theft. Stanley discovers there is no lake, just a gigantic, dry wasteland where daytime temperatures hover around 95 degrees in the shade. All of the boys are sent out each day in the heat to dig holes. The warden, it seems, is convinced that there is buried treasure on the site. When Stanley digs up a tiny cartridge with the initials 'KB' on it, enclosed in the shape of a heart, he's sure he has found a clue.

Stanley learns that one hundred and ten years ago, Katherine Barlow, the schoolteacher, refused an offer of marriage from the son of the richest man in the country. Instead, she fell in love with Sam, a negro. There was a law in Texas forbidding their romance, so the gentle schoolmarm became the notorious outlaw Kissin' Kate Barlow.

Holes subtly addresses the themes of justice and friendship through a humourous, descriptive and accessible style that has wide appeal for students.

Knowledge and Employability

Holes has many features that will appeal to students in Knowledge and Employability courses. The chapters are short, the vocabulary appropriate and the novel flows smoothly. Students will relate to the characters and the realistic action. The lack of female characters is a minor flaw. The novel lends itself to problem-solving activities in the Knowledge and Employability Studio and cross-curricular activities in mathematics and science. Class study is recommended.

The video *Holes* exhibits high filming standards, good direction and acting, and is faithful to the novel. It supports the teaching of character development and visual communications and encourages personal response. Caution should be noted with the portrayal of the *Young Offenders Act*, bullying by authority figures and the guilty until proven innocent approach.

HOMELESS BIRD

Gloria Whelan

"Whatever my sassur had said, I knew Sass would never think of me as a daughter. I was nothing now. I could not go back to my parents and be a daughter again. I was no longer a wife or a bahu, a daughter-in-law. Yes, I thought, I am something. I am a widow. And I began to sob." pp. 45–46

New York, NY: HarperCollins
Children's Books,
HarperTrophy, 2001
[original 2000]

ISBN 0-06-440819-1

Awards:

National Book Award, 1993

ALA Best Book for Young
Adults, 1993

Homeless Bird is an easy read about the plight of young widows in India. The story follows Koly, a 13-year-old girl who must take a husband. Money set aside for her education is now for her dowry, and Koly learns the skills of a master embroiderer rather than reading and writing. A betrothal is finalized when the family sells their valued possessions, and Koly moves in with her in-laws.

It is immediately apparent that her teenage husband, Hari, is terribly ill, and Koly realizes that the family has acquired her dowry money in order to take him to Varanasi where he can bathe in the holy waters of the Ganges. But the trip only serves to hasten Hari's death, and Koly finds she is an unwanted widow with a sass (a mother-in-law) who despises her. However, Hari's sister Chandra is friendly, and Hari's father (her sassur) agrees to teach her how to read. In the next few years, Chandra marries and then Hari's father dies. Her sass persuades Koly, now seventeen, to go with her to Delhi, and intentionally abandons her in Vrindavan, a city of four thousand temples and a multitude of widows. Destitute, Koly is helped by Raji, a young rickshaw driver who puts her in touch with Maa Kamala, who runs a charity organization that helps abandoned widows.

The story takes on a difficult social issue while portraying the individual growth of a teenage girl. Koly's spirit grows as she rebuilds her life using her skillful, creative fingers and quick mind. Eventually, she even finds love with a young man who cherishes her.

Knowledge and Employability

Homeless Bird would be especially useful as a small group study. Topics such as arranged marriage and cultural differences in the treatment of women may make it more relevant to girls. The length of the novel, size of font and appropriate vocabulary will appeal to students in Knowledge and Employability courses. The Knowledge and Employability Studio provides background and activities related to story structures, characters and writing responses.

THE LION, THE WITCH, AND THE WARDROBE

C. S. Lewis

“But you are—
forgive me—you are
what they call a girl?’
asked the Faun. ‘Of
course I’m a girl,’
said Lucy. ‘You are in
fact Human?’ ‘Of
course I’m human,’
said Lucy, still a little
puzzled. ‘To be sure,
to be sure,’ said the
Faun. ‘How stupid of
me!’” p. 11

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe is the first novel in C.S. Lewis’ classic fantasy series. The novel has a mix of human, animal and mythical characters engaged in high adventure in an imaginary world.

During the bombing of London in World War II, four children—Peter, Edmund, Lucy and Susan—are sent to live in the English countryside with an eccentric professor. When Lucy hides in an old wardrobe, she discovers it leads to Narnia, a land where it is always winter and never Christmas. On her first trip into Narnia, she encounters Mr. Tumnus who tells her of the ruling White Witch and her determination to capture the “daughters of Eve” and the “sons of Adam.”

All of the children eventually travel together through the wardrobe and find sanctuary from the Witch in the woodland house of Mr. and Mrs. Beaver. Edmund soon betrays the group by slipping away to join the White Witch, while the Beavers and the other three children flee to the other side of Narnia. Complications ensue culminating in the appearance of Father Christmas and a magical lion named Aslan and finally, the great battle with the Witch, her wolves and her evil minions.

Teachers should be aware that C. S. Lewis was a well-known professor of theology at Oxford and that the series is sometimes criticized for being too overtly an allegorical representation of Christian theology. Sensitivity to biblical references and mature discussion of them will help students make thoughtful and appropriate interpretations of the text.

Knowledge and Employability

Since *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* can be read and enjoyed on many different levels, it can be used as a class, small group or independent study. Due to its length, teachers may want to consider reading portions of the novel aloud and discussing it in class. Students with a limited religious background may require assistance to fully understand the Christian and Catholic references.

New York, NY:
HarperCollins 2000

paperback reissue

ISBN 0-06440-942-2

MAMA'S GOING TO BUY YOU A MOCKINGBIRD

Jean Little



"Tess came a step nearer to him. He flashed a glance at her and saw his own disbelief and sorrow mirrored in her eyes. All at once, he knew why he had come to find her. She had been the one person he could think of who would understand. She had spoken herself of her grandmother's death and her parents ... Something must have happened to her parents." p. 93

Toronto, ON:
Penguin Books Canada 1984

paperback

ISBN 0-14-031737-6

Awards:

Canadian Library Association
Book of the Year for Children
Award, 1985

Ruth Schwartz Children's Book
Award, 1985

Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird is a touching story about an eleven-year-old boy struggling with the illness and then the death of his father. The story begins during the summer holidays at a lakeside cottage where Jeremy Talbot is staying with his little sister and their aunt. Jeremy's best friends have moved away; his dad is in the hospital undergoing an operation for cancer; and his mom has been staying in town to be near the hospital. By the end of the summer, when Jeremy's father is finally able to come to the cottage, Jeremy begins to realize for the first time that his dad is dying.

Jeremy must deal with each new reality brought about by the start of school, the mother's daily drives to the hospital and the eventual death of his father.

Jean Little creates a realistic portrait of a family dealing with the illness and eventual loss of a parent. The novel captures the ambivalent feelings of an eleven-year-old who feels that he has to be courageous but still can not help giving in, at times, to the temptation to quarrel with a little sister or to think selfishly of his own desires. Although Little's representation is thoughtful and sensitive, teachers will need to carefully attend to students' feelings and backgrounds when discussing death, family illnesses and grieving the loss of a parent.

Knowledge and Employability

Students in Knowledge and Employability courses can relate to the real-life situations presented in this novel. How families cope and go on after a death in the family is a sensitive topic that may be more suitable for class study and discussion. Students will find the reading level, vocabulary and format to be appropriate although an 11-year-old protagonist may be a turn-off for some older readers.

MANIAC MAGEE

Jerry Spinelli

"The ball, the batter, the pitcher all racing for home plate, and it was the batter, the new kid out of nowhere, who crossed the plate first ... And that's how Jeffrey Magee knocked the world's first frogball for a four-bagger. And how he came to be called Maniac."
pp. 27–28

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Jerry Spinelli*, 1994 [20 min. BPN 2075906].

New York, NY:
Little, Brown & Company 1990

paperback

ISBN 0–31680–906–3

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1991

Maniac Magee is a tall-tale style novel in which Jerry Spinelli tells the origins of Maniac Magee, a boy who seems to arrive from nowhere and quickly shakes up the town of Two Mills. There, Magee meets many different people, learns how to read from an impoverished elderly man, and befriends an African-American girl named Amanda Beale. He also causes a bit of trouble in Two Mills by intercepting a pass at a football game, rescuing another boy from bullies, and stepping into a little league baseball game and connecting with Giant John McNab's fastball for half a dozen home runs. Of course, this last episode means that McNab and his gang of Cobras are out to get him.

Nobody can believe it when they realize this white-skinned maniac is staying with Amanda Beale's family in the heart of the black side of town. Spinelli's novel presents such current issues as civil rights, racism, and bullying with poetry, humour and a sense for what it means to be part of a global human family.

Knowledge and Employability

Students in Knowledge and Employability courses will relate to the topics of bullying, racism, discrimination and neighbourhood alliances introduced in *Maniac Magee*. These topics present many opportunities for class discussion. Appropriate vocabulary, short chapters and familiar language expressions will hold students' interest.

MEN OF STONE

Gayle Friesen



"A thousand thoughts crowded into my mind as she left the room: horses walking into living rooms, chewing freshly baked buns; twelve laughing and crying children in one small house; tree-lined streets; men in army boots, storming through doors, taking people from their warm beds. Men of stone, she had said. Men with no eyes. Strangers with no reason to hate, who hated all the same. Claude." pp. 90–91

Men of Stone is a coming-of-age story that draws parallels between people caught up in the currents of political strife in post-revolution Russia and current-day teens caught up in their own territorial wars. Fifteen-year-old Ben is feeling overwhelmed: he's started senior high, his best friend Stan is having problems at home, and he is being bullied by a group of other boys who call him "ballerina boy." The leader of the group, Claude, has even warned him to stay away from Kat, the girl Ben would most like to befriend. The prospect of a visit from Great-Aunt Frieda doesn't appeal to Ben any more than contact with the rest of his family. At school, however, his class has begun a social studies unit on Russian history, and Frieda, born just before the Russian Revolution, has lived a good part of that history. Frieda tells Ben about her life in a Mennonite community, separated from her baby son, with her husband imprisoned by soldiers with their rifles—men of stone. Amazingly, the old woman has kept a graceful balance to her life. As he spends time with Frieda and struggles to help Stan, Ben gradually realizes how fortunate he is to have a family—including Aunt Frieda. A very accessible read, the story portrays bullying and some violence.

Knowledge and Employability

Adolescent problems and challenging situations will engage students in Knowledge and Employability courses. Students will relate to Ben's trouble with bullies and the anger he feels. Connections can be made to personal development and universal strategies since the underlying message of the novel is to be true to yourself. Stories told by the character Great Aunt Frieda provide cross-cultural content and background to Russian history. This novel would provide interesting comparisons with the novel *The Wild Children*. Students will find the use of colloquial language, the smooth flow and pace appealing.

Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press Ltd., 2000

ISBN 1-55074-782-7

MYSTERY IN THE FROZEN LANDS

Martyn Godfrey



"Despite an outcry from the public, naval officials believed the Inuit stories and declared that all people on Sir John's voyage were dead. For me it is proof of nothing. The questions have yet to be answered. I have not given up hope that my uncle is still alive. That is why I am here, frozen in a foreign sea." p. 13

Mystery in the Frozen Lands is a historical novel that recounts the disaster of the Franklin Expedition through the journal of Peter Griffin, a fictional teenage cabin boy and nephew of Franklin, who has joined a mission to discover the fate of the lost expedition. In Peter's first entry, dated November 10, 1858, *The Fox* is locked in ice and the suicide of one of the crew is fresh in Peter's mind. Through the following months, he writes of the cramped quarters, the monotonous routine of ship life, and his friendship with Anton, a young Inuit from Greenland, whose job it is to care for the dogs.

In February, Peter is allowed to join Captain McClintock's expedition by sledge along the Boothia Peninsula, where they meet Aboriginal hunters with items that could likely have come from Franklin's men. In April, Peter joins another expedition exploring the west coast of King William Island. Eventually they find evidence of the Franklin Expedition including a large wooden boat with a sledge beneath it and two skeletons inside.

The author was inspired to write *Mystery in the Frozen Lands* when he read about the discovery of the graves from the Franklin Expedition on Beechey Island and the likelihood of lead poisoning contributing to mental disorders among the officers. Although an easy read, this is not a typical Martyn Godfrey novel. The story deals with themes of cultural difference and human reactions during crises.

Knowledge and Employability

Written by an Alberta author, *Mystery in the Frozen Lands* is a very readable novel. The vocabulary and length are appropriate for students in Knowledge and Employability courses. A protagonist who is the same age will add interest. Historical references can be linked to social studies and the study of North American exploration. Class study would facilitate good discussions on the topic of survival.

Toronto, ON: James Lorimer & Company, Publishers, 1988

ISBN 1-55028-137-2

MYSTERY Magazine

Steck-Vaughn



Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

"Max didn't want to start art lessons today, or any day. Dave thought he was an artist. He thought he could teach Max the shapes of things using clay. Max didn't care about the shapes of things. All he cared about was music." (See No Evil) p. 8

This series consists of ten individual mystery stories in small novelette form, each bound in a full-colour softcover. The stories are set in situations that students would be familiar with, and the plots revolve around real-life experiences worthy of discussion. Various reading levels are represented. The *Mystery Magazine*, in glossy, teen-magazine format, engages students in quick reading segments, cartoons, puzzles and a word search. The stories are interspersed with suitable pen and ink-wash drawings. The teacher's guide provides rationales, reproducible blackline masters, a synopsis of each story, vocabulary and answer keys to worksheets. Blackline masters are formatted for clarity and ease of use. The guide is clearly divided into pre-reading focus, suggested applications of blackline masters and follow-up activities.

The *Mystery Magazine* is slightly outdated in its representation of television and movie content. The fashions shown on individuals in pictures are dated as well; however, the basic content in the magazine is appropriate. There is little Canadian content other than one story set in the Canadian Rockies. One form in the worksheets requires a zip code instead of a postal code. The teacher's guide does not provide suggestions for use of media or technology.

Steck-Vaughn
1995

ISBN 0-8114-9336-9

PEACEKEEPERS

Dianne Linden



"After Mr. Melnyk moved on, Shane gave me the rogue animal look again. 'You'd better be careful, Smelly,' he said, 'I can make your life miserable.' 'I don't think so,' I said back, which goes to show what I know about anything." p. 5

Peacekeepers is about the challenges of thirteen-year-old Nellie Letitia Hopkins. Nell's mother, Alice, is a reservist in the Canadian Armed Forces on a peacekeeping mission in Bosnia. Nell and her brother Mikey have moved in with their bachelor uncle who means well but is eccentric and doesn't know much about kids. Nell resents her mother leaving and worries that she will be killed in a land mine explosion so she refuses to answer any of the e-mails her mother sends her.

When both Nell and Mikey are forced to attend new schools, Mikey does all right but Nell becomes the target of increasingly vicious bullying. She knows she should speak up, but instead takes on the attitude of a victim, becoming withdrawn, refusing help from school staff and administration, and obsessing that the dangers she feels make her life similar to her mother's in Bosnia. Sam Hashi, the one friend that Nell makes, tries to support her as much as he is able and Nell opens up a little. Just when life seems to be improving, she is assaulted on her way home from school. In the end, Nell must dig deep within herself and accept all the help that is offered in order to turn her life around. Teachers will need to take time to discuss the issue of bullying with students.

Knowledge and Employability

Peacekeepers deals with a topic relevant to students in Knowledge and Employability courses—bullying in a junior high school. Characters are well-developed and realistic and the plot moves at a brisk pace. Canadian and Alberta content will help to engage readers. The topic, peacekeeping in Bosnia, facilitates cross-curricular connections to social studies and current events through class or small group study. The Knowledge and Employability Studio has templates to facilitate journal writing and other writing activities.

Regina, SK: Coteau Books,
2003

ISBN 1-55050-271-9

SCIENCE FICTION MAGAZINE

Steck-Vaughn Company

Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

"The slivery material shone like a mirror. From a distance, the spaceship blended in with the industrial surroundings as if it were just another one of the newer buildings. If the three teens hadn't been looking specifically for the movie set, they would have missed it altogether"
Behind the Screams,
p. 9

This series consists of ten individual science fiction novelettes. The topics in these books will be of high interest to most students in this age group. The books include life-like sketches of teens on each page, making them suitable for low level readers. The novelettes are accompanied by a science fiction magazine, which consists of short articles relating the books to current movies and to teen contexts. Illustrations, photographs and activities set the scene for connecting the books to current happenings. The teacher's guide provides a variety of strategies for connecting the materials in the books to basic English language arts subject matter; e.g., vocabulary building.

Steck-Vaughn Company

ISBN 0-8114-9335-0

THE SEEING STONE

Kevin Crossley-Holland

“So, Arthur,’ says the hooded man in his deep voice, ‘what will your quest be?’ Then the hooded man and the knight take Arthur by the left arm and the right, and raise him to his feet. They bow to him, and give him the reins of the riderless horse. Then they mount their own horses and ride away, deeper into the forest. Arthur is alone. He turns around, very slowly, and I recognize him. I am Arthur: Arthur-in-the-stone is me.” p. 155

The Seeing Stone is an historical fantasy that melds the story of Arthur, a foster child in a nobleman’s home in 1199, with the story of the legendary King Arthur. Arthur is a sensitive thirteen-year-old boy who longs to be a knight but also likes to write poetry. He bemoans the fact that he lacks the skills for becoming a squire like his brother Serle, and he raises his father’s hackles by too readily helping peasants such as his friend, Gatty, the reeve’s daughter. When Merlin gives the boy of the twelfth century a magical stone, it reveals the future King Arthur as a boy like himself, on the threshold of manhood in a time, like his own, when the knights of the realm are in turmoil over who shall succeed to the crown.

Kevin Crossley-Holland presents this lengthy story from the point of view of Arthur in one hundred short chapters. The text captures details of day-to-day life in a great manor of the twelfth century, including accounts of special occasions such as Halloween and Yuletide. Teachers will want to discuss the treatment of women in the context of medieval times. Throughout, pages are decorated with woodcuts in the style of early manuscript motifs. *The Seeing Stone* is the first novel in a projected trilogy.

Knowledge and Employability

Set in 1199, this novel would lend itself to further study of the medieval period, including castles, armour, foods and culture either through class, small group or individual study. Links could be made to social studies and science. The format is pleasing with larger print and shorter chapters. Although it is long at 338 pages, the reading could be broken up with hands-on activities related to the novel.

London, England: Orion
Paperbacks, 2001
[original 2000]

ISBN 0-75284-429-6

SEES BEHIND TREES

Michael Dorris

"Then, from her sack she brought out a tightly woven sash, placed it over my eyes, and tied it with a length of grapevine. 'What are you doing?' I wanted to know. 'Shhh,' she said. 'Describe this place to me.' 'But I've never been here before and I can't see.' 'Shhh,' she said again. 'Look with your ears.'" p. 5

Sees Behind Trees, set in North America's eastern woodlands in the 16th century, follows the journey of an Aboriginal boy who compensates for his poor eyesight by using his other senses to "see" things around him in a way that no one else in his village can. Walnut is frustrated that his poor eyesight makes hunting difficult, and afraid that he may never earn his adult name, until the expert on hunting arranges for a special trial, explaining that the village needs "someone with the ability to see what can't be seen." Walnut is able to identify the approach of a man with a limp so far away that none of the other contestants comes close to seeing him. The weroance pronounces Walnut's adult name: Sees Behind Trees.

The man with the limp is Gray Fire, an old man who wants to make a trek back to a place of incredible beauty where a past mishap resulted in his limp. He asks Sees Behind Trees to use his special abilities to help him in his quest. The journey is filled with adversity, spirituality and self-discovery, and ultimately presents Sees Behind Trees with the sorrow of losing a friend and the joy of saving a child. The book presents an appreciation of the historical context and demonstrates cultural diversity in a very accessible read.

Knowledge and Employability

This well-written adventure would be especially useful for introducing First Nations content. The structure of the novel is appealing. Chapters are broken down into sections. Reading level and vocabulary are appropriate for students in Knowledge and Employability courses. Class study is recommended due to the many opportunities for discussion on topics such as overcoming hardships, problem solving and accepting those who are different.

New York, NY: Hyperion
Paperbacks, 1999
[original 1996]

ISBN 0-7868-1357-1

SHANE

Jack Schaefer

“I like him.’ Mother’s voice was serious. ‘He’s so nice and polite and sort of gentle. Not like most men I’ve met out here. But there’s something about him. Something underneath the gentleness ... Something ...’ Her voice trailed away. ‘Mysterious?’ suggested father. ‘Yes, of course. Mysterious. But more than that. Dangerous.’” p. 10

New York, NY: Random House Children’s Books, Bantam Books, 1975
[original 1949]

ISBN 0-553-27110-5

Shane embodies the elements of a classic western through the fresh and innocent eyes of a child.

When the mysterious stranger, Shane, rides up to the Starrett’s small homestead, Bobby is mesmerized. Joe and Marian Starrett are drawn, as well, to this man who manages to have entire conversations without really telling anyone anything about himself. Shane stops for a drink of water, but ends up staying on as the Starrett’s hired man. It is not long before he is caught up in an ongoing feud between the homesteaders and Fletcher, a cattle baron determined to keep the range open. When Fletcher’s men bait him at the saloon in town, they discover that Shane will tolerate their insults only to a point. After Shane knocks down a couple of the ranch hands, Fletcher decides to hire a gunman.

Schaefer’s novel sensitively tells the story of a boy’s growing up. Bobby becomes aware of the desperate loneliness of a man who cannot shake his past, and he takes to heart Shane’s words that encourage him to live and grow strong in the caring, loving heart of his family.

Knowledge and Employability

Shane is a timeless novel. Written in a conversational style, the vocabulary is appropriate for students in Knowledge and Employability courses. The exploration of the difficulties faced by settlers in the “old West” may provide links to the social studies curriculum. Shane reinforces positive values and attitudes and reinforces social skills.

SHIPWRECKED! THE TRUE ADVENTURES OF A JAPANESE BOY

Rhoda Blumberg

"Manjiro dreamed of digging enough treasure to finance his return to Japan. He was tormented by a vision of his mother begging for food. He had not seen her for nearly ten years. Although aware that he could be imprisoned and killed for the sin of visiting a foreign country, he would risk death for peace of mind." p. 53

New York, NY: HarperCollins
Children's Books,
HarperTrophy, 2003
[original 2001]

ISBN 0-688-17485-X

Awards:

New York Public Library's
"One hundred titles for
Reading and Sharing", 2003

Judy Lopez Memorial Award,
2001

ALA Notable Children's Book,
2001

Shipwrecked! The True Adventures of a Japanese Boy

chronicles the amazing true story of Manjiro (later renamed John Mung), the first Japanese to set foot in America. Manjiro was a lowly fishing boy in 1836 who gained a position with the crew of a small fishing vessel only to be swept far out to sea by a storm. The crew managed to land on a tiny island where they survived for five months before American sailors from a whaling ship finally discovered them. However, Japan's isolationist policy at the time forbid foreign ships access to the country and stated that any person leaving the country and returning later would be put to death.

Captain Whitfield found a safe haven for the Japanese men in Hawaii, but took the eager Manjiro with him back to New England. For three years he worked on a sailing ship where the crew eventually mutinied against its insane captain. Manjiro then panned for gold during the California gold rush, earning enough to buy a whaling boat and return to Japan with three others of the castaways. When the four arrived, they were immediately imprisoned, but following the arrival of Commodore Perry in 1854 and the end of Japan's isolationism, Manjiro rose to be a samurai and ambassador.

The account is interspersed with a wealth of archival photographs and graphics, as well as whaling prints, whimsical Japanese illustrations and sketches by John Mung himself.

Knowledge and Employability

Many pictures and large print will attract students who will have some familiarity with this subject from their studies of Japan. The subject would fit well in a unit with a survival theme. Topics such as Japan, the gold rush, whaling and working at sea facilitate cross-curricular links to social studies, science and occupations. Activities on story structure and the character component of the Knowledge and Employability Studio would be useful with this book.

THE TOMORROW TUNNEL

K. Butcher



Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

“Ashleigh examined the cover more closely. The front of the book was silver too, except for a dull black circle that resembled a bottomless hole, falling into it almost—in eerie green letters—was the title. Ashleigh wondered what it meant—The Tomorrow Tunnel.”
p. 16

This Canadian novel recounts the adventures of two sisters who purchase a magical book. As the sisters discover, the book gives powers of extra-sensory perception (ESP) to anyone who places a personal possession inside. The book is written at a lower level and is easy for students to read.

The topic of ESP may need a mature introduction for some students. The names of some of the people in the story may be perceived as creating or reinforcing negative images of immigrant groups. The resource does not include a teacher's guide.

1999
softcover
188 pages

ISBN 0-8954-4990-1

TOUCH OF THE CLOWN

Glen Huser



"... Cosmo wipes his finger through the white of his cheek and uses the greasepaint to make a mark on Nathan's cheek. He does it to each of us in turn ... 'The touch of the clown,' Cosmo says in a voice so soft it is almost a whisper. 'We pass it on from one to another. It was given to me by my clown-master. A little smudge of Clown White. It enters our pores and we are changed forever ...'" p. 123

Touch of the Clown is a sensitively written novel about a neglected thirteen-year-old, Barbara Stanwyck Kobleimer, who finds support and friendship from Cosmo Farber, a clown instructor living with AIDS. Since her mother's death, Barbara's father and grandmother drink the days away in front of the television, while Barbara looks after Livvy, her demanding little sister. One summer day, Livvy chases a ball onto a busy street and is struck by a man riding a bicycle. Right from the start, Barbara realizes this man in multicoloured clothes is someone extraordinary. Once they get Livvy off the street and onto the boulevard, Cosmo pulls some balls out of his backpack and adds Livvy's ball to them in a juggling act.

When Cosmo realizes Barbara's situation, he urges her to register in an upcoming clown workshop while Livvy attends an art class nearby. Barbara forges her father's name on the application form and sneaks out of the house to attend. There, Cosmo helps Barbara develop a belief in her own creativity and talent and an awareness of people who can love and help her. Although Cosmo ultimately passes away, he leaves Barbara with the confidence she needs to seek help. Teachers will require time to discuss the issues of family dysfunction, alcoholism, AIDS and death.

Knowledge and Employability

Students in Knowledge and Employability courses will relate to the real-life issues such as neglect, alcoholism and AIDS presented by this Edmonton author. The topics provide many opportunities for class discussion. Teachers can make connections to the universal strategies of positive values and attitudes and problem solving.

Toronto, ON: Groundwood Books, 1999

ISBN 0-88899-357-9

TRAPPED IN ICE

Eric Walters



"Out of the corner of my eye, I could see the bear. It was charging towards me in big loping strides, quickly closing the gap between us. I screamed uncontrollably! It was getting bigger and bigger, coming closer and closer. I could see every ripple of its body, the muscles, the folds of the skin, the mouth partly open, the thick tongue hanging out of one side." p. 124

Toronto, ON:
Penguin Books Canada Ltd.
1997

paperback

ISBN 0-14-038626-2

Awards:

Shortlisted for the Ruth
Schwartz Children's Book
Award

Trapped in Ice is set in the winter of 1913–1914 on an expedition launched by Vilhjalmur Stefansson to map uncharted Arctic islands in Canada's north. When their ship, the *Karluck*, became locked in ice en route to Herschel Island, Stefansson took a small contingent to try and reach land. The ship's captain, Robert Bartlett, faced the challenge of saving the remaining members of the expedition and the ship's crew as the ice in which they were encased drifted toward Siberia.

In this exciting novel, Eric Walters presents this story of Arctic exploration from the perspective of thirteen-year-old Helen Kiruk, the daughter of the seamstress hired for the expedition. Partly through a diary format, we learn how Helen and her younger brother Michael find themselves drawing closer together in the face of an overwhelming task of dogsledding with the crew over precarious ice. Helen also discovers in the gruff captain, something of a kindred spirit who loves hearing her stories and who invites her listen to his favourite Mozart recordings.

The novel also explores the themes of diversity and respect through the relationship between one of the scientists and the Inuit guide, Kataktovich. While the scientist initially refers to Kataktovich as a "dirty, filthy Indian," he later comes to learn Kataktovich's language and customs while spending a large amount of time with him.

Knowledge and Employability

The conversational language and diary format used in this novel are particularly effective. *Trapped in Ice* could be used as a class study or as an independent study for stronger students. Boys may have difficulty relating to a female protagonist. Cross-curricular links are provided to social studies, science, occupations and music. The novel includes the topics prostitution and prejudice that may be sensitive areas for some students.

UNDER THE BLOOD-RED SUN

Graham Salisbury

"By noon, everything we had that had anything to do with Japan was spread out over the kitchen table—Mama's beautiful traditional kimono; a bundle of letters tied together with white ribbon; a photograph of me when I was younger, standing in the front row of my language class with a Japanese flag in the background ... 'Bury it,' Mama finally said, her eyes glistening."
p. 137

New York, NY: Random House Children's Books, Dell Yearling, 1995
[original 1994]

ISBN 0-440-41139-4

Awards:

Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction, 1995

ALA Best Book for Young Adults, 1995

Under the Blood-Red Sun is a story about the prejudice experienced by a Japanese-American family in Hawaii during the attack on Pearl Harbour. Tomi Nakaji and his little sister, Kimi, were born in Hawaii, but their parents were born in Japan. When their grandfather, Joji, comes from Japan to live with the family and displays a Japanese flag in their yard, the family's Japanese heritage stands out even more.

Tomi's best friend, Billy, a haole (white boy), shares a love of baseball and dogs. Tomi and Billy are out for baseball practice one morning when the sky is suddenly filled with low-flying aircraft. Within minutes, they hear explosions and gunfire and see black smoke rising from the navy yards at Pearl Harbour in the distance. Immediately, Tomi's life is changed as his family struggles to survive in the face of numerous calamities. Mr. Nakaji is arrested in a roundup of Japanese men, and his boat is scuttled. A vengeful neighbour boy draws attention to the family's cages of racing pigeons, and Grampa's old Japanese sword. Tomi and Grampa are forced to slaughter the birds, and soon Joji is among those arrested and sent to camps on the mainland. Tomi's mother, a housemaid, loses her job.

Salisbury's depiction of a teen caught in the chaos following the infamous attack on Pearl Harbour is vivid, compelling reading. The story deals with themes of cultural differences, racism and war within a historical context. Teachers may wish to relate Tomi's story to the experiences of Japanese-Canadians at that time.

Knowledge and Employability

Under the Blood-Red Sun brings to light cultural difference during times of crisis. The underlying social issues tie into social studies. Comparisons could be made to current events and life following September 11, 2001 (9/11). Due to the social issues involved, this would be more effective as a class study. The reading level is appropriate for students in Knowledge and Employability courses and the use of humour in the relationship between grandfather and grandson will add interest.

UNDERGROUND TO CANADA

Barbara Smucker



*"There was moaning
now and crying up
and down the line of
slaves. The big slave
trader didn't care or
hear. He lashed his
whip in the air,
pulling children from
their mothers and
fathers and sending
them to the cart."
p. 20*

Underground to Canada is a historical novel set in the period just before the Civil War, when the Underground Railroad was helping slaves escape to Canada. The novel centres on a female protagonist, Julilly, who is separated from her mother and relocated to a different plantation. Eventually, Alexander Ross, an abolitionist posing as an orthologist, devises an escape plan for Julilly and some other slaves on the plantation. As Julilly makes the difficult trek across the northern states, she finds the mental and physical strength from the belief that her mother has also found a way to escape to Canada.

In his introduction to the 1999 reissue of this novel, Lawrence Hill argues that it is essential for teachers and parents to talk to students about the term "nigger" and how it represents the dehumanizing attitude many white people had toward black people in the days of slavery. Rich discussion about this terminology will enrich students' appreciation and understanding of this period in history, and reveal the underlying themes of tolerance, respect, sacrifice and freedom that pervade the text.

Knowledge and Employability

Underground to Canada is a fast-paced novel that will quickly draw readers in. Well-developed characters and many twists and turns in the plot will keep the reader engaged throughout the novel. Students will empathize with the struggles of Julilly. The historical basis of the novel promotes discussion of slavery and the social conditions of the time. Use of the term "nigger" will require explanation. Character development and persuasive writing exercises in the Knowledge and Employability Studio will work well with this novel.

Toronto, ON:
Penguin Books, a division of
Pearson Canada 1978

paperback

ISBN 0-14-130686-6

WALK TWO MOONS

Sharon Creech

"We walked out onto her porch and there, lying on the top step, was a white envelope ... Phoebe picked it up and opened it. 'Gosh,' she said. Inside was a small piece of blue paper and on it was printed this message: Don't judge a man until you've walked two moons in his moccasins. 'What an odd thing,' Phoebe said." pp. 44-45

London, England: Macmillan Children's Books, 2001
[original 1994]

ISBN 0-330-39783-4

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1995

Hartland Award for
Excellence in Youth Adult
Literature, 1995

Walk Two Moons is a funny, bittersweet story about two 13-year-old girls whose mothers have disappeared. Salamanca Tree Hiddle is retracing her mother's final steps on a car trip from Ohio to Idaho. Her free-spirited grandparents are driving and request a story to pass the time. The story comes to us through Sal's voice as she fills the hours and days of the trip with an account of her and her best friend, Phoebe Winterbottom. Like Sal, Phoebe's mother left the family suddenly. Phoebe is convinced the strange young man who appeared on the Winterbottom's doorstep a while back has kidnapped her mother, especially when she begins receiving secret, cryptic messages on her doorstep. The two girls try to unravel the mystery.

Sal tells Phoebe's story with a humorous tone and rich backwoods flavour. She is also candid about the rebellion the last year has raised within her. In telling the story to her grandparents, Sal figures out some important things about her own life. At journey's end, she is finally able to accept what happened to her mother and close a puzzling and painful chapter in her life.

Knowledge and Employability

Students in Knowledge and Employability courses can relate to this "coming of age" novel. It may appeal more to girls since the central characters are female. *Walk Two Moons* will broaden students' understanding of geographical and cultural diversity. The novel lends itself to independent novel study. Chapter lengths, reading level and vocabulary are appropriate and not intimidating.

WHO IS FRANCES RAIN?

Margaret Buffie



"She grew clearer and clearer, almost like a Polaroid picture developing ... 'She's turning ... going back into the cabin. Wait. Now she's back with a pair of binoculars. It must be Frances Rain. It has to be. Omigod! What am I seeing? I'm seeing a ghost. I don't believe it!" pp. 100–101

Combining ghost story and time-shift fantasy, ***Who Is Frances Rain?*** dramatizes the connections between the past and the present. Lizzie and her two siblings have always spent summer holidays at grandmother's cabin on Lake Winnipeg. The only difference this summer, when Lizzie is fifteen, is that her mother and new husband are joining them. Life has turned into a perpetual argument. For solitude, Lizzie explores Rain Island, where she stumbles across the crumbling remains of a small cabin and a pair of unbroken wire-rimmed spectacles. When Lizzie puts the glasses on, the world shifts and she realizes she is seeing Rain Island in the past, when the cabin still stood there. In recurring visits, she sees a stark, solitary woman and a girl who is wearing the spectacles. In the days that follow, Lizzie finds out everything she can about the mysterious Frances Rain, who chose to live—and die—by herself on the island. Like the pieces of Gram's jigsaw puzzle everyone works on, Lizzie begins to see that the mystery of Frances Rain connects to her own family. Lizzie's narrative voice is funny, self-reflective and heartfelt as it reveals a teenage girl's growing awareness of herself as an integral part of her family and a link between generations.

Knowledge and Employability

This is a well-written, high interest, low vocabulary novel that realistically portrays teenage life. Blended families, family conflicts and conflict resolution are dealt with in a positive manner and could lead to discussion group activities, such as brainstorming, predicting and seeing another's point of view.

Toronto, ON: Kids Can Press Ltd., 1987

ISBN 0-919964-83-4

Awards:

Canadian Library Association
Young Adult Canadian Book
Award, 1987

WINNERS

Mary-Ellen Lang Collura



"Everything was clear now and the world was brand new. His father was a star. His mother was a winner. He had been a rodeo man. She had been beautiful. Imagine if they had lived, where he'd be now. He would be the junior rodeo champion of North America. Everyone would know who he was. He would be a rider above the walkers. A winner." p. 16

Vancouver, BC: Greystone Books, 1993
[original 1984]

ISBN 1-55054-223-0

Awards:

Canadian Library Association Award, 1985

Winners is set in southern Alberta on the Ash Creek Reserve. Fifteen-year-old Jordy Threebears has already lived in eleven foster homes; now he is sent to live with Joe Speckledhawk, a grandfather who has been released from prison for manslaughter. Joe is a taciturn, introspective old man, but Jordy does not mind being left alone. He attends Grade 9 in the small town high school. Slowly, with the help of the community and Mr. Campbell, his social worker, he pieces together the history of his deceased parents.

When his grandfather gives Jordy a horse as a Christmas gift, both Jordy and Joe begin opening up to one another. Miss MacTavish, one of Jordy's teachers, offers to give him tips on riding if he will spend some time with another pupil, Emily MacKenzie, a blind girl who loves to ride but requires a riding companion. Jordy revels in having his own horse and being with Emily. Complication is introduced with the sudden disappearance of Jordy's horse. Jordy cannot help thinking that one of the ranch hands is involved.

When Jordy finally gets his horse back, he trains for and participates in a one hundred mile endurance race in the foothills. The whole community rallies in preparation for the race. In detailing Jordy's education, Collura brings out a number of acculturation issues but also underlines the fact that winning lies within the heart of the individual. Some coarse language is used to develop characters.

Knowledge and Employability

Teen identity is both an age-appropriate and subject-appropriate topic for students in junior high Knowledge and Employability courses. *Winners* provides an excellent springboard to further study and discussion of Aboriginal issues in Alberta, although the Aboriginal content may be sensitive for some students and some communities. Light swearing and colloquial dialogue may be difficult for some students.

Knowledge and Employability

**Annotated Bibliography
Listed Alphabetically
by Title
Grades 10 to 12**

AK

Peter Dickinson

"At once the dream-world was forgotten and he knew exactly who he was, Paul, Warrior, of the Fifth Special Commando of the Nagala Liberation Army, now out on a mission to blow up and ambush the Grand Trunk Railway between Dangoum and Jomjom. Who he was, what he was, all he was. Paul. Warrior. A boy with his own guns." p. 5

London, England: Macmillan Children's Books, 2001 [original 1990]

ISBN 0-330-48204-1

AK depicts the horrible story of child warriors in Africa. Paul was a homeless orphan boy when guerilla soldiers found him wandering in the bush. The soldiers taught him to carry a gun, an old AK, and become a "Warrior"—someone to prepare meals for a soldier "uncle," serve as a sentry or act as a decoy in ambushes. When the war ends, Paul's uncle, Michael, declares that the boy is to be his adopted son. It will be Paul's job to get an education, learn English and study the country's dominant cultures. All arms are to be turned in to the government, but Paul buries his AK in a secret place.

Paul is learning the Fulu language in a settlement away from Dangoum, the capital city, when word comes that there has been a coup. Along with a couple of the other boy Warriors and Jilli, the young girl teaching him Fulu, Paul strikes out for Dangoum where he is certain his uncle's life is in danger. It is a route that will take him past the spot where the AK is buried, and Paul knows the time has come to dig it up.

Written at an average reading level with graphic depictions of war, the story presents two possible results of the violence—one showing a positive direction; one locked into the bleak recurrence of strife and warfare—and challenges the citizens of today to effect a change for the better.

Knowledge and Employability

The African setting, plenty of plot action and a protagonist who is close to their age will attract and motivate readers in the English language arts Knowledge and Employability course. *AK* easily connects to social studies and the exploration of maps, globes, atlases and current events. Teachers can use this novel to promote discussion of racial issues and international events, although students may require background information on African politics and government.

ARTEMIS FOWL

Eoin Colfer

“Artemis’s main problem was one of location—how to locate a leprechaun. This was one sly bunch of fairies, hanging around for God knows how many millennia and still not one photo, not one frame of video. Not even a Loch Ness-type hoax. They weren’t exactly a sociable group. And they were smart, too. No one had ever got his hands on fairy gold. But no one had ever had access to the book either. And puzzles were so simple when you had the key.”
p. 63

New York, NY: Talk Miramax Books/Hyperion Paperbacks, 2002
[original 2001]

ISBN 0–7868–1707–0

Artemis Fowl combines fantasy and modern crime adventure into a fast-paced and humorous story. Artemis is a 12-year-old criminal genius who obtains a copy of The Book—a mythical text that reveals all the secrets of The People (elves, fairies and dwarfs who have been forced underground by humans). Holly is a determined fairy creature who is the first female member of Commander Root’s LEP (Lower Elements Police) recon patrol. When Holly goes to Ireland to replenish her magic, she encounters Artemis staking out the replenishing site. Despite Holly’s incredible personal and technological resources, she becomes his hostage. Artemis demands fairy gold in exchange for her freedom. Commander Root and the LEP locate Holly at Fowl Manor on the outskirts of Dublin. Equipped with an arsenal of time-stops, mind-wipes, blasters, bio-bombs and a terrifying troll, they try to rescue her but Artemis is prepared and waiting for them.

Colfer’s ending may be disappointing to some readers, but the journey getting there is hilarious. The subterranean fairy world that Colfer details parallels the world above. The text is packed with witty dialogue, bright and not-so-bright characters, and action sequences that loop one cliffhanger to the next. While the humour and gadgetry may appeal more to boys, girls will enjoy the tough and gritty female fairy, Holly.

Knowledge and Employability

Artemis Fowl will captivate and hold the interest of students from its opening pages. The novel introduces universal themes, such as good versus evil, and students will find characters to both love and hate. Comparisons with other fantasy titles of current interest, such as *Harry Potter* and *The Lord of the Rings*, provide opportunities for class discussion on the fantasy genre. Readability is average. Students may require some background in geography to understand the foreign settings in the novel.

BIG BURN

Lesley Choyce



Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

“My father says this used to be one of the most beautiful harbours in North America—and it was when he was growing up here.’ ‘It still is,’ I said feeling a little defensive. ‘Not with that, it isn’t,’ she said pointing inland to the landfill.” p. 23

Big Burn is a story about two teens on Eastern Canada’s coastline. The story focuses on responsible citizenship and proactive problem solving as the characters take on a big company to protect their community from the company’s toxic waste dumping. The novel is written at a lower level and is easy for students to read.

Big Burn contains two instances of inappropriate language or behaviour. Alberta Education strongly recommends that teachers review this resource prior to using it with students. Careful consideration should be given to the sensitivities of both the student audience and the community. The resource does not include a teacher’s guide. *Big Burn* offers opportunities to integrate with Knowledge and Employability science on environmental issues.

Thistledown Press Ltd.,
1995

softcover
215 pages

ISBN 1-8954-4943-X

THE CAGE

Ruth Minsky Sender

"I must remember my number. But I must not forget my name. I must not let them wipe out my name. Riva Minska. Number 55082."
p. 175

The Cage, set in and around 1942, is an autobiography relating coming-of-age experiences during the Holocaust. Sixteen-year-old Riva is a Jewish girl living in a hopeless Polish ghetto. After Nazis take her mother away, Riva struggles to care for her brothers and maintain a sense of family despite the horror around them. The narrative is presented as easy-to-read fragments of experience in Riva's diary. She uses the writing to keep herself together in an atmosphere of prejudice, discrimination and daily hardship.

Students will appreciate this enthralling perspective on adolescent suffering in the context of the Holocaust. Students might be invited to write their own memoirs and narratives about keeping themselves together during their own times of hardship. The novel contains ethnic/religious epithets, gender references, and descriptions of intolerance and violence. Teachers should discuss these issues critically within their historical context.

Knowledge and Employability

The Cage provides an adolescent perspective of life during the holocaust. Although the historical content is mature, the novel is still easy to read and understand and the reading level is appropriate for students in Knowledge and Employability courses. Curriculum connections can be made to social studies. Class study is recommended due to the mature content.

New York, NY:
Simon & Schuster
Children's Publishing
Division, 1997
[original 1986]
264 pages

ISBN 0-689-81321-X

CRABBE

William Bell



"Layer by layer I was being stripped away: the ordeal with the bear; the waterfall; my breaking down tonight and admitting what I never before admitted to anyone, including myself. What would happen, I wondered, when the last layer was peeled off? What would be left?" p. 81

Markham, ON:
Fitzhenry & Whiteside,
2002
[original 1986]
169 pages

ISBN 0-7736-7483-7

Crabbe is a highly entertaining novel by popular Canadian author William Bell. It captures the wilderness adventure of a mixed-up adolescent. The first-person narrator is Franklin Crabbe, a chatty, funny but troubled eighteen-year-old. Feeling like an outsider and fed up with what he sees as adult hypocrisy, Crabbe runs away from home and goes off to seek freedom. As he learns to survive in the Algonquin Park wilderness, he meets and falls in love with Mary Pallas, a kind woman who has her own secrets to hide. Through his relationship with her, Crabbe finds his identity and purpose, ultimately taking the help she gave him to become independent, be himself and learn to survive in a confused, often irrational world.

Crabbe contains minor contextualized coarse language, references to mercy killing and a few sexual references. Because the book is set up in journal entries, it provides opportunities to explore how point of view influences the presentation of characters and conflict. Students might also be encouraged to try their own journal writing.

Knowledge and Employability

Crabbe deals with a young man struggling to find himself and to overcome typical teenage problems—topics that are relevant to students in Knowledge and Employability courses. The outdoor action and adventure will be especially appealing to rural students. Teachers can make cross-curricular connections to science, social studies and physical education. Topics such as personal identity, points of view, plot, conflict and character development can be explored with the Knowledge and Employability Studio.

FINDING FORRESTER

James W. Ellison

"He took a deep breath and cracked open the top notebook ... Notes filled the margins of every page. They were written in a tiny, precise hand, and the more Jamal studied them the more struck he was with their brilliance. The man had torn his work to shreds, and yet the care and insight that had gone into his critiques were signs to Jamal that his work had value." p. 39

Finding Forrester is about Jamal, a sixteen-year-old South Bronx African-American basketball player who gets involved in the life of Forrester, a reclusive seventy-year-old Caucasian Pulitzer Prize writer. Jamal is a gifted teen with a private passion for reading and talent as a creative writer. As Forrester provides writing instruction and helps mentor Jamal through a snobby Manhattan prep school, the two form a close attachment despite their differences in colour and age.

This book is about friendship and acceptance. It also explores the dangers of cheating and the importance of education in improving one's life. *Finding Forrester* recognizes diversity and promotes respect; as such, it lends itself to personal response and decision-making activities. The text is a novel adaptation of the popular movie by the same name.

Knowledge and Employability

Finding Forrester deals with issues that students in Knowledge and Employability courses can relate to, such as being an outsider, being falsely accused and facing discrimination. It will grab their attention very early. Vocabulary and concepts are advanced and would benefit from class study. Activities with the Knowledge and Employability Studio could include essay writing, movie reviews and personal reflections.

New York, NY:
Newmarket Press, 2000
192 pages

ISBN 1-55704-479-1

THE GIVER

Lois Lowry

"The Giver shrugged. 'Our people made that choice, the choice to go to Sameness. Before my time, before the previous time, back and back and back. We relinquished color when we relinquished sunshine and did away with differences.' He thought for a moment. 'We gained control of many things. But we had to let go others.' 'We shouldn't have!' Jonas said fiercely."
p. 95

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Lois Lowry*, 2002 [22 min. BPN 2075911].

New York, NY: Random House Children's Books, Dell Laurel-Leaf, 2002 [original 1993]

ISBN 0-440-23768-8

Awards:

Newbery Medal, 1994

The Giver is a science fiction novel that presents a utopian/dystopian future in which colour, pain and variation have been erased. Conformity, good manners, precise language, and work for the common good are the most highly valued virtues. We discover this world through Jonas, a boy approaching the "Ceremony of Twelve," a coming-of-age ritual in which young people receive life assignments such as birth mothers, caring for the elderly, or nurturers of the young. Jonas finds that his assignment will be something very different: he is to train as the Receiver of Memory under an aging, bearded sage, the only person with access to the history of humankind. Through mental transmission and the laying-on of hands, "the Giver" allows Jonas to experience everything that has been lost to the new society—everything from the colour and warmth of summer sailing and a family gathering at Christmas to the pain of battle and starvation. Jonas begins to realize that while his carefully modulated society avoids the larger tragedies of history, it creates a more subtle kind of horror.

Lowry's 1993 Newbery Medal winner is at once spellbinding and disturbing. Euthanasia, an infant being put to death, and post puberty medication to eliminate sexual urges are all treated with sensitivity and occur only where integral to the plot. These issues may be difficult for some students. Although Jonas' rejection of these norms provides the central conflict, the story's resolution creates an open-ended interpretation that encourages critical thinking and debate.

Knowledge and Employability

The Giver is an interesting book that will facilitate valuable discussion on many topics of interest to students in Knowledge and Employability courses. Class study is strongly recommended since many potentially sensitive topics such as euthanasia, sexuality, societal norms and conformity are presented. Short chapters and plot action will appeal to students.

THE HOBBIT

J.R.R. Tolkien

"Out jumped the goblins, big goblins, great ugly-looking goblins, lots of goblins, before you could say rock and blocks. There were six to each dwarf, at least, and two even for Bilbo; and they were all grabbed and carried through the crack, before you could say tinder and flint. But not Gandalf." p. 57

The Hobbit is a prelude to the popular *Lord of the Rings* trilogy. It is a fantasy saga set in the land of Middle Earth. Bilbo Baggins is a Shire Hobbit—a peace-loving creature who lives a life free of adventure. Gandalf the Wizard whisks him off for a series of adventures with a group of dwarves to seek a pot of gold that was stolen from their ancestors by Smaug the dragon. Along the way, the group encounters giant spiders, unfriendly elves and a creature named Gollum from whom Bilbo wins a magic ring in a riddle contest.

Many elements of *The Hobbit* are familiar archetypes: a quest must be undertaken, there is a mentor, good battles evil, the protagonist must find strength and courage within, and finally a significant character change occurs. Tolkien uses allusions and borrowings from ancient Norse legends. Many students will enjoy Tolkien's original vocabulary as they escape into his entertaining world.

Knowledge and Employability

Adventure, magic, mystery and war are all topics that will appeal to students in Knowledge and Employability courses. Small print and longer chapters make this a novel that is more appropriate for senior high school students. Class or small group study is recommended due to challenging vocabulary. The novel works well with activities from the Knowledge and Employability Studio on point of view, plot development and characterization.

London, England:
HarperCollins Publishers, 1999
[original 1937]
310 pages

ISBN: 0-261-10221-4

IN FLANDERS FIELDS

Linda Granfield



"... the Great War was unlike any other in history. It was a new and horrible artillery battle fought from rat-infested, water-filled trenches dug deep into foreign soil. There would be little noble about it, except the dedication of millions to fight for what they believed. Into the nightmarish terrain of the Western Front stepped John McCrae."

In Flanders Fields recounts a significant time in world history through John McCrae's famous poem. This book beautifully illustrates each line of the poem with a painting by Janet Wilson. These vivid impressions of battle-torn cities, hospital wards, cemeteries, and soldiers bring new meaning and immediacy to the poem. Between verses, Linda Granfield informs the reader with factual details about World War I, John McCrae's life, the battle of Ypres, the grim realities of trench warfare, and the memorials that continue today.

The poem itself can be read in different ways. Some see it as a call to arms, to the continuance of war. Alternatively, as Granfield suggests, some believe that "we continue to honour the memory of those who sacrificed themselves for a cause they believed to be great and just." Granfield provokes the reader to think about his or her individual perspective, and treats the issue with sensitivity and respect while still providing a realistic depiction of the First World War.

Knowledge and Employability

Although *In Flanders Fields* can be used effectively at several grade levels as background for Remembrance Day, there are clear curriculum links with Grade 11 Knowledge and Employability social studies or the study of poetry in English language arts. Pictures, simple vocabulary and the realistic portrayal of war encourage reading.

Markham, ON:
Fitzhenry and Whiteside
Limited 2002
[original 1995]

paperback picture book
reissue

ISBN 0-7737-2991-7

KENSUKE'S KINGDOM

Michael Morpurgo

"He was right. We were happy, and I was his family. But I had another family too. I thought of the last time I had been out in a boat, of my mother and my father and how they must be grieving for me every day, every night. By now they must surely believe I was drowned, that there was no chance I could be alive. But I wasn't drowned. I was alive. Somehow I had to let them know it."
pp. 126–127

London, England: Egmont
Children's Books Limited,
Mammoth, 2000
[original 1999]

ISBN 0–7497–3639–9

Awards:

Winner of the Children's
Book Award, 1999

Kensuke's Kingdom is a survival story that begins in England when 11-year-old Michael's parents decide to buy a small second-hand yacht. After fixing and outfitting the *Peggy Sue* and learning how to navigate, they become sailors in the south seas. Michael is thrilled with their travels. Then disaster strikes. One night, Michael goes to retrieve his dog when a sudden gust of wind rocks the boat and the two fall overboard. After what seems like hours someone helps him into a boat. He regains consciousness on a beach of a small island, seemingly alone with his dog. Michael can find no water and no edible vegetation. Parched and hungry, he finally falls asleep.

With morning, Michael discovers someone has left a bowl of water and some strips of fish. His benefactor does not reveal himself until Michael starts a small fire on the beach. Suddenly a small, enraged man emerges and hastily extinguishes the fire. He is Kensuke, a Japanese man, and in time, Michael will come to know Kensuke's story: how he survived a naval battle at the end of World War II, how he hid from American marines and how he heard them talk of the destruction of Nagasaki where his family lived. Fond as Michael becomes of Kensuke, he longs for his parents and searches for a way to get back to them without betraying the Japanese man's whereabouts. Morpurgo's spare text and Michael Foreman's pen sketches make this a very accessible novel for below grade level readers.

Knowledge and Employability

The award-winning novel, *Kensuke's Kingdom*, would be too difficult for most students in Knowledge and Employability courses to read on their own but has many benefits as a novel read by the teacher. Connections can be made to social studies and the study of World War II. This modern day Robinson Crusoe tale could also be used to explore survival themes.

THE LADY AT BATOCHE

D. Richards



Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

"A strong horse, a rifle and the freedom to roam the Saskatchewan country—that was all a young Métis man needed. Maybe later a river lot to farm and raise good horses ...with Marie" p. 29

The Lady at Batoche chronicles the Métis rebellion in a tale of high adventure, combining numerous battle scenes with important historical details. Both the Canadian and the Métis side of this struggle are explored through the different viewpoints of the main characters. This book continues where the author's previous work, *Soldier Boys*, left off. The resource includes a teacher's guide that follows the same format for each of the 11 chapters: Focus (addressing significant events, characters, themes), Writer's Craft (addressing literary techniques), Speculation (posing questions), Comprehension Questions, Contexts (prompting student discussion) and Creative Work (offering extension activities and projects). General questions, a glossary and a short biography of the author are found at the back of the guide.

Activities and questions will need to be adapted and modified for students. A connection to the Knowledge and Employability social studies program of studies could be made through the theme of Canadian History.

1993
softcover
207 pages

ISBN 1-8954-4907-3

LAWS OF EMOTION

A. Lohans



Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

"From my window I watched the silver jet thrusting upward into the milk-blue sky. It disappeared through the gauzy layer of cloud just the way it had the morning Eric left, my throat tightened. I saw, but didn't really see, the diluted sunlight casting its pale glow over the tree branches and neighbourhood roofs." p. 25

This resource consists of a volume of Canadian short stories, as well as a complementary teacher resource on short fiction. The stories are relevant to teenagers who are dealing with "coming of age," exploring topics such as victory, loss, attraction and pregnancy. By exploring tough situations with no quick fixes, the stories allow readers to identify with the characters' difficult emotions and see how others deal with these situations. The characters represent a wide range of socio-economic groups, have authentic dialogues and deal realistically with issues facing them. The writing styles and story lengths are varied to appeal to students with a range of abilities. For each selection, the teaching resource includes a summary of the story, a description of skills and concepts related to instructional goals, and suggested teaching strategies, including pre-reading and post-reading activities. Suggested journal/personal writing topics are also provided for each selection. The stories would be useful for inspiring class discussion.

The themes presented in many of the stories could raise a number of controversial issues. Although the teaching resource provides some background information on issues, teachers may require additional support materials to feel fully prepared to handle these issues. Alberta Education strongly recommends that teachers preview this resource. Careful consideration should be given to the sensitivities of both the student audience and the community.

Note: The *Blue Camero* was not reviewed for Knowledge and Employability; therefore, disregard the section in the teaching resource pertaining to this title.

1993
softcover
207 pages

ISBN 1-8954-4907-3

THE LIE THAT HAD TO BE

S. Palermo



Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

“Officer Harnish darted his eyes around the bakery, then walked to a bright white wall where a map of Italy, the British flag, and a picture of the Pope were tacked all in a row like colourful stamps of identity. He ripped down the map and the picture, crumpled them in his hand and tossed them to the floor. ‘Come with us he ordered.’” p. 21

This historically accurate novel is centered around a ten-year-old Canadian–Italian girl living in Nova Scotia during WWII. The story explores the prejudice and discrimination that can be prompted by war, as the girl’s community turns against her because of her Italian heritage. Other themes that are dealt with in the resource include the need for understanding and forgiveness rather than revenge and hate, personal versus social needs, and the injustice of Canada’s internment policy. Each of the sixteen chapters includes a prologue and epilogue, as well as chapter headings to cue the reader. The book’s reading level is low and chapters are short (six pages each). The teacher guide provides a general overview, unit focus, writer’s craft notes, questions for reader response, speculation questions, a vocabulary section, and suggestions for creative extension activities. A glossary of literary terms and an index are provided.

Alberta Education strongly recommends that teachers preview this resource. Careful consideration should be given to the sensitivities of both the student audience and the community. Because the main character is a ten-year-old female, the novel may not be appealing to the younger male audience. A few questions in the teacher’s guide (first chapter) are aimed at too low a group and would have to be reworded for older students. There are no blackline masters included with the resource. A connection to the social studies program of studies could be made through the themes of internment and world conflict.

1995
softcover
101 pages

ISBN 1–8954–4944–8

MYSTERY Magazine

Steck-Vaughn



Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

"Max didn't want to start art lessons today, or any day. Dave thought he was an artist. He thought he could teach Max the shapes of things using clay. Max didn't care about the shapes of things. All he cared about was music." (See No Evil) p. 8

This series consists of ten individual mystery stories in small novelette form, each bound in a full-colour softcover. The stories are set in situations that students would be familiar with, and the plots revolve around real-life experiences worthy of discussion. Various reading levels are represented. The *Mystery Magazine*, in glossy, teen-magazine format, engages students in quick reading segments, cartoons, puzzles and a word search. The stories are interspersed with suitable pen and ink-wash drawings. The teacher's guide provides rationales, reproducible blackline masters, a synopsis of each story, vocabulary and answer keys to worksheets. Blackline masters are formatted for clarity and ease of use. The guide is clearly divided into pre-reading focus, suggested applications of blackline masters, and follow-up activities.

The *Mystery Magazine* is slightly outdated in its representation of television and movie content. The fashions shown on individuals in pictures are dated as well; however, the basic content in the magazine is appropriate. There is little Canadian content other than one story set in the Canadian Rockies. One form in the worksheets requires a zip code instead of a postal code. The teacher's guide does not provide suggestions for use of media or technology.

Steck-Vaughn
1995

ISBN 0-8114-9336-9

OFFSIDE

C. Beveridge



Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

"I ran my finger and thumb across the last zip-lock bag, shoved it into my ski sock and nudged my bureau drawer closed. Finished for another week and nobody suspected a thing. Sweeping my hand through the thin stream of light on the desktop, I checked my fingers for telltale powder streaks and clicked off the lamp."
p. 9

Offside is a Canadian novel about a 15-year-old boy who inadvertently gets his hockey team hooked on a cold remedy drug, and then must decide how to fix the problem. The novel combines a sports theme with important issues of performance-enhancing drugs, peer pressure, family relationships and responsible decision making. The resource is written at a lower level and would be engaging for most students. This novel would work well in a teacher-directed class study. The accompanying teacher resource guide provides chapter summaries, speculation questions, comprehension questions, extension questions and essay questions. The guide also includes a glossary, bibliography and a list of related books, documentaries and Web resources.

The novel contains some inappropriate language and refers to issues that may be sensitive for some students, including suicide, violence, drugs and manic depression. The size of the book could be intimidating to some Knowledge and Employability students; however, the story is fast-paced and easy to read.

Thistledown Press Ltd.
2001
Softcover
335 pages

ISBN 1-8943-4525-8

SHORT CLASSICS COLLECTION (Set 1)

Steck-Vaughn Company

Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

"After weeks and months of study, I made a great discovery...I discovered the secret of life and death! More than that I knew that I was capable of giving life and movement to dead matter!"
Frankenstein, p. 11

Frankenstein, Gulliver's Travels, Huckleberry Finn, The Iliad, Julius Caesar, A Midsummer Night's Dream

This series of short books consists of adaptations of classic literature. The books cover a wide range of forms, topics and writing styles, all presented at a lower reading level. *Frankenstein, Gulliver's Travels, Huckleberry Finn, The Iliad, Julius Caesar, and A Midsummer Night's Dream* are all recommended for Grade 10 students. In these books, the formal language of the classics as they were written has been maintained, as well as the "thinking" of the periods; however, the selections are formatted for easy-reading, with shorter chapters to encourage completion. Each book is divided into six or seven chapters, some having an epilogue and all having a glossary of terms. Each of the chapters is approximately six pages in length interspersed generously with full-page, full-colour artist's renditions of scenes. The covers are also done in full colour to engage students. The teacher's guide provides author information, personal response questions, comprehension questions, critical thinking questions connected to literary terms, writing activities focusing on particular skills, and an answer key. It also includes a summary of each story, which would be useful to keep on hand when students are choosing stories; there are no summaries provided on the back of the covers.

Alberta Education strongly recommends that teachers review activities in these resources prior to using them with students. Careful consideration should be given to the sensitivities of both the student audience and the community due to some of the subjects raised. No blackline masters are included, and questions posed in the teacher guide would have to be provided to students by the teacher.

Steck-Vaughn Company

ISBN 0-8114-6830-5
1991

SHORT CLASSICS COLLECTION (Set 1)

Steck-Vaughn Company

Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

"Sir, it was a school for orphans. The people there did not starve us or beat us, but it was cold and we had little to eat. Their one purpose was to make us humble and hard-working." Jane Eyre, p. 17

The Call of the Wild, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Jane Eyre, Macbeth

This series of short books consists of adaptations of classic literature. The books cover a wide range of forms, topics and writing styles, all presented at a lower reading level. *The Call of the Wild, The Hunchback of Notre Dame, Jane Eyre, and Macbeth* are all recommended for Grade 11 students. In these books, the formal language of the classics as they were written has been maintained, as well as the "thinking" of the periods; however, the selections are formatted for easy-reading, with shorter chapters to encourage completion. Each book is divided into six or seven chapters, some having an epilogue and all having a glossary of terms. Each of the chapters is approximately six pages in length interspersed generously with full-page, full-colour artist's renditions of scenes. The covers are also done in full colour to engage students. The teacher's guide provides author information, personal response questions, comprehension questions, critical thinking questions connected to literary terms, writing activities focusing on particular skills, and an answer key. It also includes a summary of each story, which would be useful to keep on hand when students are choosing stories; there are no summaries provided on the back of the covers.

Alberta Education strongly recommends that teachers review activities in these resources prior to using them with students. Careful consideration should be given to the sensitivities of both the student audience and the community due to some of the subjects raised. No blackline masters are included, and questions posed in the teacher guide would have to be provided to students by the teacher.

Steck-Vaughn Company

ISBN 0-8114-6830-5
1991

SHORT CLASSICS COLLECTION (Set 1)

Steck-Vaughn Company

Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

*"Horatio says 'tis but
our fantasy.
Therefore, I have
invited him along
with us to watch the
minutes of this night;
That if again this
ghostly form should
come, He may believe
our eyes and speak
to it."*

Hamlet, p. 6

The Canterbury Tales, Great Expectations, Hamlet, Ivanhoe

This series of short books consists of adaptations of classic literature. The books cover a wide range of forms, topics and writing styles, all presented at a lower reading level. *The Canterbury Tales, Great Expectations, Hamlet, and Ivanhoe* are all recommended for Grade 12 students. In these books, the formal language of the classics as they were written has been maintained, as well as the "thinking" of the periods; however, the selections are formatted for easy-reading, with shorter chapters to encourage completion. Each book is divided into six or seven chapters, some having an epilogue and all having a glossary of terms. Each of the chapters is approximately six pages in length interspersed generously with full-page, full-colour artist's renditions of scenes. The covers are also done in full colour to engage students. The teacher's guide provides author information, personal response questions, comprehension questions, critical thinking questions connected to literary terms, writing activities focusing on particular skills, and an answer key. It also includes a summary of each story, which would be useful to keep on hand when students are choosing stories; there are no summaries provided on the back of the covers.

Alberta Education strongly recommends that teachers review activities in these resources prior to using them with students. Careful consideration should be given to the sensitivities of both the student audience and the community due to some of the subjects raised. No blackline masters are included, and questions posed in the teacher guide would have to be provided to students by the teacher.

Steck-Vaughn Company

ISBN 0-8114-6825-9
1991

SHORT CLASSICS COLLECTION (Set 2)

Steck-Vaughn Company

Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

The Odyssey
"The first danger you will meet comes from the Sirens. They sit high up on the rocks singing. Their song is so beautiful that it casts a spell over all sailors who hear it. That is the way they lure the men to deaths." p. 30

The Odyssey, Romeo and Juliet, Sherlock Holmes, The Time Machine, Tom Sawyer

This series consists of shortened versions of classic literature, adapted to a Grade 4 to 6 reading level. The series illustrates different literary periods and writing styles. *The Odyssey, Romeo and Juliet, Sherlock Holmes, The Time Machine, and Tom Sawyer* are all recommended for Grade 10 students. Each book begins with three introductory activities requiring students to reflect on their prior knowledge and personal experiences. After the story, there are nine factual questions based on information from the book. These are followed by five or six interpretive questions to stimulate critical thinking and literary skills. These questions can also be used for group discussion. Finally, there are approximately five writing activities to enrich students' understanding of the literary work.

Steck-Vaughn Company
softcover
48 pages

ISBN 0-8114-6839-9
1991

SHORT CLASSICS COLLECTION (Set 2)

Steck-Vaughn Company

Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

The Red Badge of Courage.
"He had dreamed of battles all his life. But in truth he believed that the time of wars had passed. He had looked upon the war in his own country with distrust. It must be some sort of play affair. He thought." p.30

The Red Badge of Courage, A Tale of Two Cities, Treasure Island, 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

This series consists of shortened versions of classic literature, adapted to a Grade 4 to 6 reading level. The series illustrates different literary periods and writing styles. *The Red Badge of Courage, A Tale of Two Cities, Treasure Island, and 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* are all recommended for Grade 11 students. Each book begins with three introductory activities requiring students to reflect on their prior knowledge and personal experiences. After the story, there are nine factual questions based on information from the book. These are followed by five or six interpretive questions to stimulate critical thinking and literary skills. These questions can also be used for group discussion. Finally, there are approximately five writing activities to enrich students' understanding of the literary work.

Steck-Vaughn Company
softcover
48 pages

ISBN 0-8114-6844-5
1991

SHORT CLASSICS COLLECTION (Set 2)

Steck-Vaughn Company

Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

"As I read, I began to nod over the dim page. A terrible night followed. I dreamed I was lying in the bed, listening to a fir tree rattle against the windowpane. To stop it, I broke the pane and stretched an arm through the hole. At once, the fingers of an icy cold little hand closed on my arm." (Wuthering Heights, p. 8)

Moby Dick, Pride and Prejudice, The Turn of the Screw, Wuthering Heights

This series consists of shortened versions of classic literature, adapted to a Grade 4 to 6 reading level. The series illustrates different literary periods and writing styles. *Moby Dick, Pride and Prejudice, The Turn of the Screw, and Wuthering Heights* are all recommended for Grade 12 students. Each book begins with three introductory activities requiring students to reflect on their prior knowledge and personal experiences. After the story, there are nine factual questions based on information from the book. These are followed by five or six interpretive questions to stimulate critical thinking and literary skills. These questions can also be used for group discussion. Finally, there are approximately five writing activities to enrich students' understanding of the literary work.

Steck-Vaughn Company
softcover
48 pages

ISBN 0-8114-6847-X
1991

A SINGLE SHARD

Linda Sue Park

"Holding the pouch clear of the boulders with one hand, he climbed back to the path. His every movement was quick with purpose; to hesitate was to doubt. He had made up his mind: he would journey on to Songdo and show the emissary the single shard."
p. 130

This novel has a support video available through ACCESS: *Good Conversation: A Talk with Linda Sue Park*, 2002 [21 min. BPN 2075910].

New York, NY: Random House Children's Books, Dell Yearling, 2003 [original 2001]

ISBN 0-440-41851-8

A Single Shard portrays the loyalty and courage of a young potter's apprentice in a small Korean village in the 12th century. For years, Tree-ear, an orphan, has lived without a home. While scavenging meals for his friend and protector, Crane-man, Tree-ear discovers the master potter, Min, plying his craft. Of all the ceramics in Ch'ulp'o, Min's reveal the finest craftsmanship and showcase the exquisite grey-green colour of celadon. Tree-ear cannot help but dream of one day becoming such a craftsman himself.

When he is startled and drops a box that Min has set out to dry, Tree-ear makes a deal to work for nine days to pay for the damage. It is grueling labour, but when the term is over Tree-ear offers to continue working for the old potter. Gradually, he learns the painstaking skills. Because a potter will only pass on the skills of the wheel to a son, Min refuses to let Tree-ear further his skills even though Min's son died many years ago. Tree-ear thinks if he can make the long journey to Songdo, to show Min's vases and seek a commission from the royal household, he may yet win Min's favour.

Linda Sue Park's extensive research into an ancient art is woven seamlessly into this story of a boy's growth as he takes on responsibilities beyond his years. In examining Korean society of the period, Park presents a culture in which the humanism of the Buddhist and Confucian traditions were strong features.

Knowledge and Employability

A Single Shard is a very readable novel. The vocabulary and font size are appropriate for students in Knowledge and Employability courses although the historical content may not appeal to everyone. It promotes responsibility, a key component of the program. The examination of ancient Korean culture promotes respect and tolerance for others. The novel could be used in class, small group or individual study with the personal reflections and essay writing sections of the Knowledge and Employability Studio.

SKELLIG

David Almond

"She unfastened the buttons of his jacket. She began to pull his jacket down over his shoulders. 'No,' he squeaked. 'Trust me,' she whispered. He didn't move. She slid the sleeves down over his arms, took the jacket right off him. We saw what both of us had dreamed we might see. Beneath his jacket were wings that grew out through rips in his shirt."
p. 94

New York, NY: Random House
Children's Books, Dell Laurel-
Leaf, 2001
[original 1998]

ISBN 0-440-22908-1

Awards:

New York Times Best Book of
the Year, 1999

School Library Journal Best
Books of the Year, 1999

Skellig is a strange and wonderful story about a boy who finds a mysterious, sarcastic birdlike man living under a pile of cobwebs in the garage of his family's dilapidated new house. With his parents preoccupied with his chronically sick baby sister, Michael is often on his own and is drawn to the decrepit garage. It is packed with ancient furniture, rolled up carpets, pipes, spiders, bluebottle flies, and a man who looks like he might be dead—but isn't. In the days following his discovery, Michael begins tending the man, who he learns is named Skellig. He finally shares his secret with Mina, the quirky, strong-willed girl next door, and the two of them make a plan to try to help Skellig.

Skellig combines themes of change, faith and friendship with frequent references to William Blake, science and art. The startling introduction sets the novel's haunting and atmosphere. True to the voice of the young narrator, the prose is spare: brief sentences, dialogue exchanges with little elaboration, details that would catch the eye of a boy. Put it all together and it evolves into a rich, high interest story with many levels to study.

Knowledge and Employability

Skellig presents real-life situations and life lessons at an interest level appropriate for students in Knowledge and Employability courses. Most students will identify with the novel's protagonist, Michael, although the "angel" concept may seem contrived or unrealistic to some. The Knowledge and Employability Studio provides templates to facilitate discussions of characterization. Underlying themes of compassion and spirituality could be explored effectively in class study. Pacing of the novel is inconsistent. The plot moves faster at the beginning and end, and slower in the middle, and may cause some students to lose interest. British expressions and syntax may be confusing to some students.

SPEAK

Laurie Halse Anderson

*"We fall into clans:
Jocks, Country
Clubbers, Idiot
Savants,
Cheerleaders,
Human Waste,
Eurotrash, Future
Fascists of America,
Bit Hair Chix, the
Marthas, Suffering
Artists, Thespians,
Goths, Shredders. I
am clanless." p. 4*

Speak is a painful but redemptive young adult novel about a Grade 9 student suppressing and eventually dealing with the trauma of a rape. The narrator, Melinda Sordino, is a high school freshman who is struggling in school and feels like an outsider. Gradually the reader learns the reason for her depression and withdrawal: during the summer she was raped by another student. In the ending, she finally confronts her attacker, thereby learning to stand up for herself and to become more self-empowered. Melinda's final character change is inspiring and progressive; she finds her literal and figurative voice and learns to "speak" up against what is wrong and unjust.

This gritty, realistic book will have an empathetic resonance for many female readers, especially those struggling in school. Overall, it is an easy read—episodic, and gripping. It is written in short descriptive paragraphs with some sections set up as dialogue suitable for reading aloud. Teens are realistically portrayed and students will likely want to discuss and write about Melinda's experiences as compared with their own.

Knowledge and Employability

Speak compliments universal strategies. It discusses issues that many students in Knowledge and Employability courses can relate to, such as loneliness, depression and rejection. The topic of rape is handled sensitively. The novel fosters cooperation, support and respect for others. Mature subject matter presents many opportunities for class discussion but the vocabulary and reading level would also permit independent or small group study. The novel could be used with the Knowledge and Employability Studio activities on the study of genres, essay writing and reflection writing.

Toronto, ON:
Penguin Books Canada Ltd.,
2001
Puffin Books edition
[original 1999]
198 pages

ISBN 0-14-131088-X

SPORTS STORIES

Jacqueline Guest

Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

"The bushes directly in front of him started to move.

Suddenly, from between the leafy green bushes, out poked the head of a big, white dog with sad, dark eyes and very large teeth."
Free Throw, p. 28

Free Throw, A Goal in Sight, Hat Trick, Rink Rivals, Rookie Season, Soccer Star! Triple Threat

The teen protagonists in these Alberta-based novels are often First Nations, Métis or Inuit males. Some central characters have physical disabilities and are portrayed positively and as strong individuals. The novels are 100 to 125 pages in length and have larger print. Descriptions of game strategies, plays and highlights, in such sports as hockey, soccer and basketball, are detailed and will be appreciated by the sports-minded individual. Characters in the novels face many challenges; e.g., divorce and remarriage, moving to a new school, creating new friendships and coping with bullying. The novels' themes include the need to be true to yourself and follow your dreams, sportsmanship, dealing with bullies, facing discrimination, young romance and jealousy. Many of the stories in the series have received literary awards.

softcover
James Lorimer and Co. Ltd.

THE TOMORROW TUNNEL

K. Butcher



Note: This resource is authorized only for Knowledge and Employability courses.

“Ashleigh examined the cover more closely. The front of the book was silver too, except for a dull black circle that resembled a bottomless hole, falling into it almost—in eerie green letters—was the title. Ashleigh wondered what it meant—The Tomorrow Tunnel.”
p. 16

This Canadian novel recounts the adventures of two sisters who purchase a magical book. As the sisters discover, the book gives powers of extra-sensory perception (ESP) to anyone who places a personal possession inside. The book is written at a lower level and is easy for students to read.

The topic of ESP may need a mature introduction for some students. The names of some of the people in the story may be perceived as creating or reinforcing negative images of immigrant groups. The resource does not include a teacher's guide.

1999
softcover
188 pages

ISBN 0-8954-4990-1

TOUCHING SPIRIT BEAR

Ben Mikaelson

"As he tossed and turned, Cole found himself growing angry again. He tried to fight back the familiar rage with his memory of touching Spirit Bear, but nothing seemed to ward off the bitterness and frustration that flooded his mind. Edwin had been right when he said that anger was never forgotten." p. 141

New York, NY: HarperCollins
Children's Books,
HarperTrophy, 2002
[original 2001]

ISBN 0-380-80560-X

Touching Spirit Bear is an easy to read, high-action adventure story about a troubled teenager learning to survive in the wilderness while dealing with his anger. After a brutal assault on a Grade 9 classmate, Cole Matthews must spend a year by himself on an isolated island off the BC coast. The idea is developed by a Native program—Circle Justice—in which those concerned devise a healing path for the offender. But Cole is not interested in healing; his plan is to play along and stay out of jail.

Garvey, an Aboriginal parole officer, and Edwin, a Tlingit elder, accompany Cole to the island and arrange to periodically bring food and supplies. Edwin tells Cole that there is a Spirit Bear off the coast of British Columbia, which is pure white and revered by the Tlingit for its pride, dignity and honour. Cole boasts that he would kill the bear if he saw it. Once the men leave, Cole lets loose his contained rage and burns everything, including the shelter. His attempt to swim to another island fails and Cole finds himself back on the shore, cold, exhausted and hungry. After his failed escape attempt, Cole encounters the Spirit Bear and almost loses his life when the bear mauls him. Fortunately, Garvey and Edwin return and find Cole.

After six months of physical rehabilitation, they are not sure whether Cole should be allowed to return to the island and complete his sentence. They are concerned, too, that Peter, Cole's victim, has slipped into a deep depression and has attempted suicide. The book portrays graphic violence and deals with difficult issues, but it also presents an intriguing look at justice, reformation and personal responsibility. Ultimately, Cole has a moment of revelation from touching the Spirit Bear, and begins to change his attitude and his life.

Knowledge and Employability

This well-written novel would be especially useful for introducing Aboriginal content. It connects to real-life situations and attitudes. Class study is recommended due to the many opportunities for discussion of sensitive topics such as abuse, addiction and suicide. There are cross-curricular links to health and social studies. Problem solving and character development components in the Knowledge and Employability Studio would work well with this novel.

THE TUESDAY CAFE

Don Trembath



"... at the end of class, Josh came up and said, 'See, you sure got them interested ... That's good writing.' I didn't know whether I should believe him or not, but when Mom came and asked if I wanted to come back next week, I said sure. Why not? I'd spent two hours in a classroom and I didn't look at the clock even once."
p. 56

The Tuesday Cafe is a warmly-humorous coming-of-age story about a troubled teenager who learns about himself and connects with others through an unlikely writing group. The novel begins with Harper Winslow being sentenced to forty hours of community service and a 2,000-word essay about "How I Plan to Turn My Life Around" after setting a fire in his high school. To help him with his essay, he is enrolled in The Tuesday Café, a writing group that Harper soon discovers is geared towards adults with special needs. For example, there is short, stout Patty, who likes to poke people in the back, and Lou, with shaggy grey hair who dropped out of school in Grade 4 and does not talk to anyone.

In Harper, Alberta writer, Don Trembath, offers the kind of wise-cracking teenage cynic who appeals to teens in general. Harper is convinced the class is going to be useless, and thinks their first writing assignment—"My Sunday"—is a dumb idea. But when he finally manages to get something written down and reads it out, he realizes that it has touched all of them. He decides to come back, and as he gets to know and care about his unusual classmates at The Tuesday Cafe, Harper begins to see his own problems in perspective.

Knowledge and Employability

The Tuesday Cafe is a highly recommended novel for students in Knowledge and Employability courses. Students will relate to the 15-year-old protagonist and his idea that trouble just seems to follow him around. Touches of humour and discussion of teenage issues will motivate readers. Students can draw parallels to real-life problems and solutions. The book provides excellent opportunities for class discussions on topics such as responsibility for one's actions, relationship skills and self-discovery. Exercises from the Knowledge and Employability Studio on essay writing, public speaking, reflecting responses, advertisements and graphic organizers could be used with the novel. The reading level, vocabulary and font size are appropriate and the book cover is representative of students in the Knowledge and Employability courses.

Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers, 1996

ISBN 1-55143-074-6

VIRTUAL WAR

Gloria Skurzynski

"Corgan felt his stomach heave as the simulated battleground grew sticky with blood. He swallowed hard and focused on his soldiers, forgetting that they were only virtual images no bigger than the height of his hand. He smelled ozone and smoke and chemicals—'Gas attack!' Brig screamed. 'Get them out of there, Corgan!'" p. 116

New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division, Simon Pulse, 1999
[original 1997]

ISBN 0-689-82425-4

Virtual War is set in 2080, on the brink of a "virtual" war to be fought through simulations. World federations will battle for twenty volcanic islands in the south seas that were once contaminated, as most of the earth was, but now, finally, are cleansed. Fourteen-year-old Corgan has led a privileged existence in the company of virtual beings in return for his willingness to train for the war. With the war only a few days away, Supreme Council introduces Sharla, a female "cryptanalyst" with an uncanny ability to break code, and a mutant boy, Brig, a genius at strategy. At night, Sharla manages to sneak her teammates out of the compound for a look at the world outside. These glimpses convince Corgan that they should bargain for their release and relocation to the Islands of Hiva if they win the war. Eventually, Corgan makes difficult decisions based on the inner strength and spirit nurtured by the love and friendship of his fellow warriors.

As Lois Lowry does in *The Giver*, Skurzynski offers a new world where individuality and humanity are sacrificed for a smoothly running society. As Corgan finds out, virtual war has all of the horrific dimensions of the wars that have plagued human history, minus the bloodshed and pain. Other issues explored in the novel include isolation and desensitization.

Knowledge and Employability

The science fiction action in this novel will engage readers who may not be interested in a more traditional novel. Students will be intrigued with the character, Corgan, a virtual warrior. Other major characters are introduced one at a time, which helps students to understand the plot although the numerous transitions between characters may be confusing for some students. Class study is recommended. The Knowledge and Employability Studio can assist with character development and reflecting writing activities.

WILLA'S NEW WORLD

Barbara Demers



*"Visions of parties
past replayed in my
head. Drunken
brawls, blood,
emergencies, shouts,
and gunshots. Often
impromptu, spilling
out from the kitchen
to the hall to outside.
For some, Amelia
said, the entire visit
to the fort was a
party—a reprieve
from the arduous
work trapping and
hauling furs,
traversing the land
and water—a
reprieve from the
hazards of winter."
p. 167*

Willa's New World begins in London, 1795, with recently-orphaned 15-year-old Willa Thompson boarding a merchant ship going to a Hudson's Bay post in the New World. Willa endures the cramped, difficult journey and makes her way to York Factory.

There, Master George, the chief factor, who becomes her protector, gives her a job as a clerk. Amelia, an Aboriginal cook, befriends Willa and tells her about the customs and beliefs of her people. With the support of these two, Willa finally begins to adapt to her new life, but when Willa declines a marriage proposal from George, he "transfers" her to Fort Edmonton House. Amelia's brother, cousin and mother escort her there. During this long and difficult journey, she suffers a vicious attack by one of the townspeople, but ultimately begins to appreciate the beauty of the new world and its people.

Knowledge and Employability

Willa's New World broadens students' understanding of historical and cultural diversity and provides links to social studies. Strengths of the novel are the presentation of First Nations culture, beliefs and traditions and the positive portrayal of women. *Willa's New World* contains mature subject matter that would best be explored in class study. Sensitive issues include rape, violence toward women, religious beliefs and the treatment of First Nations people by early settlers. The vocabulary and reading level may make this a difficult novel for some students.

Regina, SK: Coteau Books,
1999

ISBN 1-55050-150-X

Awards:

R. Ross Annette Award for
Children's Literature, 2000

THE WRECKERS

Iain Lawrence

"Her voice dropped, and she shivered. 'The law said that anything that came from a wreck was free for salvage. But for it to be a wreck, no one could survive ... So it was the law, John, that made the devil's work of wrecking.' 'Because,' I said, 'they killed the people who got to shore.' 'Yes. It came to that.' She sat again, close beside me. 'But it got worse. It got much worse.'"
p. 48

New York, NY: Random House
Children's Books, Dell Yearling,
1999
[original 1998]

ISBN 0-440-41545-4

Awards:

Geoffrey Bilson Award for
Historical Fiction for Young
People, 1999

The Wreckers is the first novel in Iain Lawrence's highly accessible High Seas Trilogy. This fast-paced, suspenseful story is about a village off the Cornwall coast where, the reader learns, people are luring ships to crash on the rocks so they can take their goods. The story is written from the perspective of 14-year-old John Spencer, who is taking his first ocean voyage, when the ship is lured to a dangerous part of the Cornwall coast and wrecked during a fierce storm. This casts John into the hands of the Wreckers, who would rather have no survivors to tell the tale of false beacons flashing along the cliffs. John finds safety with a family that has flourished from the spoils awarded through legitimate salvage rights, but he suspects the master of the house may be in league with the Wreckers.

Each chapter of *The Wreckers* ends on its own narrative cliff, creating high interest. The plot follows the teenaged hero as he faces the challenges of saving another ship in distress and freeing his father, the ship's captain, from imprisonment.

Knowledge and Employability

Plenty of action, suspense and an intricate plot will keep students interested and focused. Cross-curricular connections to science topics such as tides and weather, and social studies topics such as geography, exploration, maps and globes, are possible. Class or small-group study would provide opportunities for discussion.

Knowledge and Employability

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