

Saturday Favorites

*These books are some of the favorites of the Saturday Morning Book Club!****

Anderson, J. (2016). *Ms. Bixby's last day*. NY: Harper Collins. ISBN: 978-0-06-233817-4, 300 pgs.

Imagine your favorite teacher has just told the class that she won't be able to finish the school year. Three boys with very different responses to the news ban together to make sure Ms. Bixby's last day is SPECTACTULAR. Along the way they grow in more ways than they ever imagined as they try to make sure she has wine, raspberry cheesecake, and gets to read aloud the end of *The Hobbit*. Anderson uses changing points of view to keep the reader engaged and provide background about each boy and their own struggles. (MM)

Bauer, M. D. (2016). *Little Cat's luck*. Ill. J. A. Bell. NY: Simon & Schuster. ISBN: 978-1-4814-2488-2, 211 pgs.

In this companion book to *Little Dog, Lost*, a little house cat named Patches decides to follow a floating leaf to find her perfect little corner of the world. This search leads Patches to surprising places and encounters with surprising "friends." With a little luck on her side, she survives her big adventures and, with new kittens in tow, makes it back home...but there's one more surprise awaiting the reader! (MH)

Creech, S. (2016). *Moo: A novel*. NY: Harper Collins. ISBN 978-0-06-241524-0, 278 pgs.

City-dwellers, Reena and her family, make the unlikely move to rural Maine and find themselves in a cultural shift. Reena is thinking blueberries and beaches, instead her parents volunteer her and her brother, Luke, to work for an eccentric neighbor, Mrs. Falala. They end up taking care of a contrary cow ("that Zora"), making new friends, and opening themselves to new thoughts and ideas that are life-changing. Written in free verse in Reena's voice, the story reads quickly, unencumbered with heavy text or wordiness. The characters are fully developed and the simplicity of the story and lack of over-dramatization make it realistic. This is another Sharon Creech jewel. (LW)

Brown, M.W. (1938). *The dead bird*. NY: HarperCollins. Ill. C. Robinson. ISBN-13: 978-0060289317, 32 pgs.

Brown takes a direct approach to a difficult subject, suggesting how a community ritual can provide solace. She uses terms like death, funeral, and describes death as "cold dead and stone still with no heart beating." To depict the final scene, Robinson uses a wide-angle view of growing trees and the children flying a kite, implying a return to carefree life. However, the final sentence is abrupt, "And every day, until they forgot, they went and sang to their little dead bird and put fresh flowers on his grave." (SS)

Burleigh, R. (2016). *Solving the puzzle under the sea: Marie Tharp maps the ocean floor*. Ill. R. Colon, NY: Simon & Schuster. ISBN-13: 978-1481416009, 40 pgs.

Since Burleigh writes this biography in the first person, Marie Tharp, a geologist and oceanographic cartographer, tells her own story. Map-lover Tharp became one of the 20th-century's most important scientists. With fellow geologist Bruce Heezen, she mapped the world's oceans. Although Tharp was a woman working in a man's field, Burleigh focuses on her dedication to her goal and casts her story in a happy, upbeat light.

Colón's softly hued, textured watercolors further explain the story. A biographical page is appended, as well as thorough back matter. This interesting, beautifully illustrated biography is inspirational. (SS)

DiCamillo, E. (2015). *The tiger rising*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. ISBN-13: 978-0763680879, 144 pgs.

Twelve-year-old Rob Horton, still struggling with his mother's death, moves with his father to a small town in northern Florida. Bullied at school for being a newcomer and suffering from an unexplainable rash, Rob befriends another outsider named Sistine. After he is suspended from school, Rob shares a startling secret with Sistine: he's found a live tiger caged not far from the motel where he and his dad live and dad works. DiCamillo's writing is lyrical and the unbelievable becomes plausible in helping Rob work through his grief over the loss of his mother. (AO)

Fern, T. (2015). *W is for Webster: Noah Webster and his American dictionary*. Ill. B. Kulikov. NY: Farrar Straus Giroux. ISBN: 978-0-374-38240-7, unpagged.

In a nutshell, Noah Webster loved words! According to this picture book biography, Noah was odd, different, smart, curious, a big talker, and, often, someone who talked way too much as a child and as an adult! He sometimes talked so much he was annoying to others. As a young boy, he was not happy with his school, so he set out to change things. And, change things, he did! He wrote a speller and, indeed, a dictionary (20 years in the making). This biography is well-written, interesting in both story and language, and should appeal to young readers. (MH)

Fleming, D. (2016). *Maggie and Michael get dressed*. NY: Henry Holt. ISBN-13: 978-0805087949, 40 pgs.

In this humorous story, a boy and his dog complete the routine task of dressing for the day. Colors and prepositions are woven into the simple story subtly increasing young readers' cognitive skills. Fleming uses her signature pulp painting technique to beautifully illustrate this book. (SS)

Fox, M. (2015). *Nellie Belle*. Ill. M. Austin. NY: Beach Lane Books. ISBN: 978-1-4169-9005-5, unpagged.

Mem Fox does not disappoint! This is a lovely picture book with colorful illustrations. Nellie Belle is a dog checking out different places in her neighborhood—the beach, the street, and the yard. She sees lots of friends and takes part in fun activities until she ends up at the park in the dark. Oh, no! What will happen to Nellie Belle? Will she make it home to her cozy bed? Will she soon be hugging her teddy bear named Ted? The rhyming text Mem Fox uses in this book could actually be sung to the tune of "Oh, where have you been, Billy Boy, Billie Boy?" Children will love it. (MH)

Gravett, E. (2016). *Bear & hare - Where's bear?* NY: Simon & Schuster. ISBN-13: 978-1481456159, 32 pgs.

Bear takes a turn hiding but isn't very good at it. Hare hides while Bear seeks. Bear isn't very good at seeking either. In frustration Hare bellows, "I WANT BEAR!"

The text is spare, simple, and repetitive making Gravett's illustrations in pencil, watercolors, and wax crayon stand out on the ample white backgrounds. Quiet humor can be seen in the expressive pictures of this story for the youngest readers. (SS)

Henry, M. (1947). *Misty of Chincoteague*. Ill W. Dennis. NY: Simon and Schuster. ISBN-13: 978-1416927839, 159 pgs.

Marguerite Henry's Newbery Honor Book has captivated generations of boys and girls, weaving the descriptions of true incidents from the tiny island of Chincoteague and realistic fiction into a heart-warming story. The book begins with wild horses brought into captivity and then Henry clearly demonstrates the opposing forces of humans and nature. Wesley Dennis's pen-and-ink ponies depicting rippling muscles, shaggy coats, and free spirits bring the story to life. This is a timeless, wonderful story for all ages of readers. (SS)

Hurley, J. *Hop*. (2016). NY: Simon & Schuster. ISBN-13: 978-1481432726, 40 pgs.

With minimal prose and joyful illustrations, acclaimed artist and author Jorey Hurley opens our eyes to the amazement of nature. *Hop* portrays a day in the life of a rabbit family. Filled with stunning illustrations with only one word on each spread, Hurley has created a beautiful picture book. The full-page author's note provides the reader with more information about cottontail rabbits. (SS)

Jackson, R. (2016). *Have a look, says book*. Ill. K. Hawkes. NY: Atheneum. ISBN: 978-1-4814-2105-8, unpagged.

"Come get cozy in your favorite chair and open this book to find a world of wonders waiting for you..." And, yes, this is what you will find... a world of wonders in this book. The text does not follow specific patterns, but surprises the reader with unusual words and pictures, such as: mossy trail, gluey snail, toothy comb, squishy peas, and steamy loco, just to name a few. Get settled in to enjoy great illustrations and very interesting language. (MH)

Kelly, E. (2016). *The island of the lost girls*. NY: HarperCollins Books. ISBN-13: 978-0062238641, 304 pgs.

This novel about two sisters from the Philippines living in a Louisiana town with their stepmother while their father is away easily fits into the Cinderella genre. Twelve-year-old Sol and her six-year-old sister Ming endure life in a rat-infested apartment with their cruel stepmother. Sol often talks to the ghost of their dead sister Amelia. Both Sol's friend Manny and a junkyard owner with a penchant for art help to make life more bearable. This novel would appeal to many different grade levels, from upper-elementary through high school. (AO)

Knisley, L. (2016). *Something new: Tales from a makeshift bride*. NY: First Second Books. ISBN-13: 978-1626722491, 304 pgs.

In this graphic novel memoir, Lucy Knisley again celebrates her love of food and relationships. Mostly, in this follow-up to *Relish*, Knisley focuses on her relationship with her boyfriend-fiancé-husband and the planning that went into their wedding. Overall, Knisley's writing is simple and clear. Readers get a light, humorous view into her life. With the popularity of graphic novels, adding this nonfiction to a high school library will give lovers of the format another choice for reading. (AO)

Lewis, J. and Aydin, A. (2016). *March: Book 3*. Ill. N. Powell. Marietta, GA: Top Shelf Productions. ISBN-13: 978-1603094023, 256 pgs.

This conclusion to the March trilogy finishes the story begun in March Books 1 and 2. While continuing the story of Representative John Lewis's participation in the Civil Rights Movement, this volume tackles key events like the disagreement within the movement among key members and the changing tide of public opinion regarding civil rights after the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church that killed four young girls in 1963. This autobiography would work well in a high school unit about the sixties or in a study of current events. (AO)

Lowry, L. (2016). *Looking back: A book of memories*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. ISBN-13: 978-0544807969, 272 pgs.

Like looking at an album with a friend, Lois Lowry comments on the photos in her album. To the delight of Lowry book lovers—she introduces each photo, or group, with a quotation from one of her books, then makes a connection between an event in her life and its fictional counterpart. In her Newbery award book, *The Giver*, Lowry writes about role memory plays in one's life, and in *Looking Back*, she shows readers the role it plays in her own life—how she has used her memories in her work, how memories have helped her get through difficult times, and how memories enrich and connect us. This book is intimate and personal. (SS)

Larsen, A. and Luxbacher, I. (2016). *The not-so-faraway adventure*. Toronto, Ontario: Kids Can Press. ISBN-13: 978-1771380973 32 pgs.

Theo and Poppa go on an adventure as they set out to celebrate Poppa's birthday. Amazed by Poppa's magical trunk containing treasures and maps from his travels, Theo decides to take Poppa on a new adventure, to the beach and out to lunch, just like Nana always did for his birthday. Luxbacher's mixed-media collage artwork is vibrant and creative. Children will love looking at the double-page spreads as well as at the colorful characters. Larsen and Luxbacher's appealing picture book clearly depicts a girl and her love for her grandfather. (SS)

Mader, C. (2016.) *Stowaway in a sleigh*. NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. ISBN: 978-0-544-48174-9, unpagged.

Slipper is a curious cat who encounters a certain Mr. Furry Boots in her own living room. She creeps into his large bag and ends up making a trip to the North Pole (implied.) Santa and Mrs. Claus are kind and understand that she really doesn't want to stay there and he returns her to her own home again. The dreamlike illustrations are breathtaking, in the spirit of *The Polar Express*. The text is very limited, leaving readers to imagine and discuss details in the pictures on each page. As a read-aloud, this book is first rate and a kindergarten class of children absolutely loved it, asking for it to be read many times over. Ages 4-8. (LA)

Miller, P. (2016). *The hole story of the doughnut*. Ill. V. X. Kirsch. NY: Houghton Mifflin. ISBN-13: 978-0544319615, 40 pgs.

This is an account of the invention of the doughnut via the master mariner, Hanson Crockett Gregory from Rockport, ME. Although Gregory became a ship captain and was awarded a medal for heroism, his legacy is his delicious creation, the doughnut.

Kirsch complements the story with bright, cartoonlike illustrations evoking the history and humor of the tale. Cut-paper illustrations add whimsy to this sweet, fact-filled story. An extensive bibliography, author's note, and timeline are included. (SS)

O'Shaughnessy, T. (2015). *Sally Ride: A photobiography of America's pioneering woman in space*. NY: Roaring Brook press. ISBN-13: 978-1596439948, 160 pgs.

This book is an intimate journey of Sally Ride's formative years to her final moments. Before she was an astronaut, Sally was a competitive tennis player who excelled at the game. She took not one historic space flight, but two (in 1984). She broke ground as an inspirational advocate for space exploration, public policy, and science education. Sally fought gender stereotypes and opened doors for girls and women in all fields during the second half of the twentieth century. The author, Tam O'Shaughnessy, of this vivid photobiography, was Sally's life, writing, and business partner. The book was selected for the following honors—

- 2016 National Science Teachers Association's Outstanding Science Trade Books List
- 2016 Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People List (SS)

Raczka, B. (2016). *Wet cement: a mix of concrete poems*. NY: Roaring Brook Press. ISBN: 978-1-62672-1, 43 pgs.

Raczka encourages the reader to think of concrete poetry as word paintings. The images developed by the words are on the page for all to see. And concrete poetry is fun to read and write! The poems Dominoes, Eraser, and Autumn are favorites from this particular collection. (MM)

Reynolds, J. (2016). *As brave as you*. NY: Atheneum Books. ISBN-13: 978-1101940594, 432 pgs.

Genie Harris is filled with questions, so many that he writes them down in a notebook. When he and his brother leave Brooklyn to spend an entire month in Virginia with their grandparents, he adds many more questions to his list and often shares them with his grandfather. High on his list are questions about his grandfather's blindness and secret room. When his grandfather's poor judgment threatens to lead to family tragedy, Genie learns more about his family than he ever anticipated. This novel is a big departure from Reynolds's grittier urban tales, but the beautiful coming-of-age prose makes it a must-read. (AO)

Rylant, C. (2005). *The Lighthouse Family: The Turtle*. Ill. P. McDaniels. NY: Beach Lane Books. ISBN: 978-0-689-86244-1, 47 pgs.

Cynthia Rylant has once again written a story that will surely delight young readers. The lighthouse family is an unusual family made up of Pandora the cat, Seabold the dog, and three orphan mice—Whistler, Lila and Tiny. When Whistler and Lila hear a voice calling out from the dense fog, they immediately understand that someone is in trouble and can use help from the lighthouse family. This time, that someone is a lost turtle. There is a problem and resolution, with that common thread of helping one another, no matter who or what you are, shining through! A thoroughly enjoyable chapter book for ages 6-10... (MH)

Seeger, L.V. (2016). *Lemons are not red*. NY: Roaring Brook Press. ISBN-13:978-1596431959, 32 pgs.

The text is appropriately spare, but the book offers a visual treat. A repetitive framework continues throughout the book, and children will quickly catch on and join in the visual game. The paired objects are related, while the choices never become predictable. Illustrated with richly colored yet simple oil paintings, this book is delightful. (SS)

Seeger, L.V. (2016). *One boy*. NY: Roaring Brook Press. ISBN-13:978-1596432741, 48 pgs. Seeger's ability to transform everyday words and objects into an amazing concept book continues with *One Boy*. Using the numbers 1 through 10, her signature die-cut pages, with bright primary colors to enhance the book and a vocabulary that is designed to show words inside other words, the author has engineered a tribute to wordplay book that is unmatched. (SS)

Seeger, L.V. (2016). *Walter was worried*. NY: Roaring Brook Press. ISBN-13:9781596431966, 40 pgs. Seeger combines word art and simple text to tell the story of children's reactions to a storm. The characters' emotions are spelled out on their faces with the letters of the alliterative adjectives used to portray their features. The artwork uses bold colors with wide brush marks as backdrops and primary colors with almost graphic shapes. With only one sentence per page, much information is given in Seeger's collaboration of art and story. (SS)

Sehgal, K & Sehgal S. (2016). *The wheels on the tuk tuk*. Ill. J. Golden. NY: Beach Lane Books. ISBN-13: 978-1481448314, 40 pgs. Written by a mother and son writing team this book adapts the traditional story, *Wheels on the Bus* by setting it in India and using an auto rickshaw instead of a bus. Of course, the story contains rhythm, repetition, and wordplay. Whether one is asked to squish together or to go bobble-bobble-bobble, children everywhere will appreciate this colorful book. Golden's cartoonish watercolor, pastel and colored pencil illustrations are expressive, and paint a picture of a festive day on the streets of India. (SS)

Sidman, J. (2016). *Before morning*. Ill. B Krommes. NY: Houghton Mifflin. ISBN: 978-0-547-97917-5, unpagged. What do *you* wish for? The child in this story wishes for a snow day where mom gets to stay home and the whole family gets to play outside! Krommes' familiar woodcut illustrative style makes it easily recognizable. Sidman's quiet, comforting rhythmic text contains plenty of new vocabulary (slumber, unknowing, founder) to make young minds grow. (MM)

Sweet, M. (2016.) *Some writer! The story of E.B. White*. NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. ISBN-13: 978-0544319592, 176 pages. Throughout his life, E.B. White (1899–1985) divided his time between New York City and Belgrade Lakes, Maine. Readers and writers will relate to stories of White's childhood—as a child, he was "scrawny" and "fearful" but in love with words. Some of his youthful creations, such as essays, poetry, and a handmade brochure, are included in the book. *Some Writer* contains many examples of techniques and tools White used. Handwritten and typed drafts of Charlotte's Web serve as inspiration for young and old writers. Sweet employed her signature watercolor and collage, which incorporates wood and hardware, vintage office supplies, and quotes from White. Photos of the animals upon which White based

his stories are delightful. This biography serves as an introduction to primary source material. For the teacher librarian, the text is a rich source of nonfiction features, including a how-to on using a manual typewriter. An afterword by White's granddaughter provides more information. (Edited from the School Library Journal) (SS)

Tillman, N. (2016). *You're here for a reason*. NY: Feiwel and Friends. ISBN: 978-1-250-05626-9, unpagged.

Nancy Tillman has produced yet another beautiful book perfect for gift-giving or for anyone needing a little encouragement. Her poignant illustrations created digitally and enhanced with watercolor make the reader feel as if the images MIGHT be real, though it is obvious they aren't. Children of all ethnicities are features in the illustrations. One image that caused a young group to take a breath was the last one showing the Earth as a puzzle containing all the images from the previous pages. (MM)

Wilson, K. (2015). *A frog in the bog*. Ill. J. Rankin. NY: Little Simon. ISBN: 978-1-4814-4452-1, unpagged.

This is a Classic Board Book, originally written and illustrated in 2003. Little Simon has turned it into a delightful board book that tells the story of a small, hungry frog who eats everything he comes across until...the log he is sitting on starts to rise and stares at the frog with two hungry eyes! There is so much to enjoy about this book—rhyme and rhythm, counting, twisty language, cause and effect, the story line, cute illustrations and funny insertions in the text (ew, ugh). All of this is guaranteed to entertain young ones. (MH)

Yee, L. (2016). *Wonder woman at superhero high*. NY: Random House Children's Books. ISBN-13: 978-1101940594, 240 pgs.

This first novel in the DC Super Hero Girls series proves that Lisa Yee is the perfect writer to bring the stories of these characters to life. After leaving her home with the Amazons, Wonder Woman travels to Super Hero High where she begins to learn the ins and outs of high school. This school for superheroes is filled with both known and new heroes and villains. Many typical school issues such as first crushes, digital citizenship, and bullying are handled in an age-appropriate way for younger middle school students. (AO)

** Members of the Saturday Morning Book Group include: Linda Aulgur, Barri Bumgarner, Fran Colley, Carol Gilles, Marty Hawkins, Janice Henson, Nancy Knipping, Missy Morrison, Anna Osborn, Gennie Pfannenstiel, Debra Peters, Becca Rackley, Pam Riggs, Caitlyn Rosbach, Sharon Schneeberger, and Linda Wycoff.