

Summer Reading 2022
Oceans of Possibilities
Children's and YA Literature
Wellfleet Public Library

All selections and annotations by WPL Librarian Anna L. Nielsen

Picture Books

Andros, Camille; illus. Amy Bates. *The Boy and the Sea*. NY: Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2021. This picture book is for children, for teenagers, for adults. A boy grows into a child, into a teen, into a man, and always, always, he goes to the sea to ponder, to wonder, to ask. When a boy, he crouches at his grandfather's feet and listens to the whispers of the sea. When a teen, he runs to the waves to hear whispers once again. As a man, he breathes in deep. And the sea always tells him, "Dream. Love. Be." And so he does. A meditative book, gently rolled along with impressionist gouache, watercolor, and colored pencil scenarios of the beach and the ocean beyond. **Ages: 3+.**

Baek, Heena; trans. Korean Sophie Bowman. *Magic Candies*. Berkeley, CA: Owlkids Books, 2021. Baek is the 2020 winner of the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, and amazingly, deservedly, so. With thirteen titles under her belt in her native South Korea, this is her first picture book translated into English, and it is magnificent. She is a meticulous miniaturist and collage artist, and creates whole quirky environments that feel like film sets to tell her stories. In *Magic Candies*, Tong Tong looks for some marbles and ends up with candies, candies that allow him to hear the secret words of whatever and whomever. The sofa would really, really like the remote removed from her sides because she is starting to ache. Tong Tong's facial expressions are molded into incredible expressions of joy and shock. He talks to his dog, his father, even his passed-away grandmother. Baek is a stupendous artist and storyteller. You'll be hooked, so be sure to also snag her *Moon Pops* (Berkeley, CA: Owlkids Books, 2021), a twist on a traditional Korean folktale in which the moon begins to melt away. **Ages: 4+.**

Barroux. *I Love You, Blue*. Louisville, KY: Flyaway Books, 2022. Across the wide blue sea, there floats a little boat in which sits a little man. He loves the blue of the ocean and is happy. But wait! The ocean is roaring and raging! What shall he do? A giant whale swims along and floats him to shore. Phew! But wait! The next day the little man can't find Blue the Whale. Has something happened? Yes. Plastic in the sea. Poor Blue has a belly full of bags. A gentle anti-pollution polemic that gets the points across without resorting to strident screams of blame and condemnation. We could all learn a thing or two. Let's just start by cutting out plastic, agreed? Yes. **Ages: 3+.**

Bondestam, Linda; trans. Swedish Galit Hasan-Rokem. *Good Night, Earth*. Brooklyn, NY: Yonder, Restless Books, 2021. This quirky import is filled with wriggly wretches giving each other the eye and wiggling away, and if you're the Meerkat family, engaging in some evening stretches. Each spread has a new species of animal thinking about, if not actually doing, the bedtime ritual of trying to fall asleep. The Kiwi eyes are wide open in dismay that they're still awake and the owl family looks downright ragged. The illustrations are mixed media of rich colors and line scratches that express sly humor and real tiredness. To top it off, pages are shortened to give glimpses of who we're watching the animals with – the aliens looking at earth through a telescope. Now there's a perspective. Highly recommended. **Ages: 3+.**

Chabbert, Ingrid; illus. Guridi; trans. French Kids Can Press. *A Drop of the Sea*. Toronto: Kids Can Press, 2018. Ali lives at the edge of the desert and he worries about his great-grandmother. She's not getting younger. Her breathing and walking seem to hurt. So Ali worries. "Great-grandma, have all of your dreams come true?" Surprised, touched, she thinks and remembers. She's never

seen the sea. Ali is determined. The sea is only four days away. He grabs a bucket for the water of the sea and walks as fast as his little legs can carry him. Such love! The gouache and pencil drawings rendered digitally lend a dignified simplicity to this tale of a fundamental truth of life – what wouldn't we do for those we love, to help their dreams come true? Beautiful. **Ages: 4+.**

Cuevas, Michelle; illus. Erin E. Stead. *The Uncorker of Ocean Bottles*. NY: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2016. Anything illustrated by Stead is worth a read. Her attention to line and her detailed compassion for her characters make real art of illustration. She uses woodblock prints, oil pastels, and pencil, and by just the preliminary matter pages we know exactly who the Uncorker of Ocean Bottles is: he is a little old, a little wrinkled, but absolutely kind. He is tired but still awake, alone but not solitary. Only the title page is behind her, and Stead has already involved us: we want to know, we must know – what is his story, this slightly hunched man with the red wool cap? Cuevas tells us, and the collaboration between artist and writer is perfected. He is the one whose job it is to open any bottles and make sure their messages are delivered. Recommended, again and again. **Ages: 4+.**

Demas, Corinne; illus. Ted Lewin. *The Disappearing Island*. NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2000. It's Wellfleet, Cape Cod, MA, and Carrie is turning nine years old. For her birthday, her Grandma is taking her to the disappearing island, Billingsgate. They motor from Wellfleet Harbor in Grandma's boat, *Aphrodite*, and zip through the tide, watching rocks appear which can't be seen during high tide, and finally they see it, "a flat stretch of beach out in the middle of the sea." Grandma explains how over a hundred years ago the bit of sand was a mile long, with thirty-five homes and a school and a lighthouse. Billingsgate Island is a real place, and Lewin's pencil and watercolor drawings have an exactness to them that assures us he's been to Wellfleet before. Welcome, all. **Ages: 5+.**

Eggers, Dave; illus. Woodrow White. *We Became Jaguars*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2021. A boy is in his home and his grandmother comes to visit. His parents "went out and left us alone." The boy is not quite sure about this. But his grandma, well, she is sure. "Let's be jaguars," she said. And so they play. Grandma gets on the floor and growls, and the boys gets right in the game. A foldout spread shows them transforming and beginning to run. This is a very cool grandma. The gouache, acrylic, and digital illustrations are full of life and imagination, and the boy and his grandma run and play and look at the world. They don't even get tired. "Jaguars jaguar, so we jaguared on," reports the boy. A beautiful ode to intergenerational relationships. Worth reading and sharing again and again. **Ages: 5+.**

Estellon, Pascale. *Orange Is an Apricot, Green Is a Tree Frog*. Hudson, NY: Princeton Architectural Press, 2021. A concept book of pure elegance. Red looks like a cardinal and an autumn leaf – on the verso are circles of shades of red and on the recto are exquisite detailed drawings of bird and leaf. The next set of pages carry more shades of color and more representations – raspberries, a rose, pomegranates, and a chili pepper. And so it goes, from orange (check out especially the turmeric and the goldfish), through yellow to blue and green and black and white. Exquisite. **Ages: 2+.**

Henkes, Kevin; illus. Laura Dronzek. *Little Houses*. NY: Greenwillow Books, HarperCollins, 2022. A little girl skips and trips across a beach, stopping to wonder, to think, to marvel at the ocean of possibilities. Her grandma points out all the shells, the "little houses." Her grandpa says, "The world is so big and there is so much to know." Deep breath. Beauty. Possibility. Necessary reading. **Ages: 3+.**

Klassen, Jon. *The Rock from the Sky*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2021. Five chapters of pure, dry, classic Klassen excellence. Three animals with big eyes and tiny hats manage – with barely a gesture of action between them – to avoid falling rocks, death, and aliens. Seriously. **Ages: 5+.**

Lawson, JonArno; illus. Qin Leng. *A Day for Sandcastles*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2022. Dedicated to children who know how to have fun in waves and a summer on Cape Cod, this is a delightfully appropriate summer read. Three siblings jump off a bus to run down the path for a day at the beach. What fun! What perfection! What a lovely summer day! Stopping only to review strategy and have a sandwich or two, the children build and build. The tide gets close, the tide gets far, the tide gets close again. It's okay. It is a lovely summer day, and the children have time to build. Enjoy this wordless joy. **Ages: 2+.**

McClure, Nikki. *Old Wood Boat*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2022. With her signature, hand-cut paper illustrations, McClure gives us the story of Old Wood Boat, who sits in the yard and “remembers the wind... the islands, and a sea of green.” Rain falls, the sun dries her, blackberries grow across her decks, and a family of raccoons move in. And then a new human family comes by and buys her, and tows her home to scrape and scrub, to fit new planks, to caulk, to sand, to sail again. An excellent diagram midway through the story tells readers where the fuel tank and propane lines and sinks and dirty clothes live, and a glossary at the back shares, “How to Talk Like a Sailor.” A great picture book for a seafaring clan. **Ages: 3+.**

McDaniel, Breanna J.; illus. Shane W. Evans. *Hands Up!* NY: Dial Books for Young Readers, Penguin Young Readers Group, 2019. Start every sunny summer day with this one. Every rainy day, too. Little Viv starts all her days greeting the sun with her tiny hands up, up, up! She plays peek-a-boo, and puts her hands up. Does her hair, reaches for books, dances and twirls, hands up! Basketball, gardening, protesting, hands up. Little Viv. May we all say yes to every day in just her way. **Ages: 2+.**

Morales, Yuyi. *Bright Star*. NY: Neal Porter Books, Holiday House, 2021. There's a lot of uncertainty in the world, and it starts at the very beginning. A fawn is born and takes her first steps, into light that is bright and beautiful. The second person narrator includes us all, telling us we are loved, that we must be careful, that we must go forth, that we are not alone, that we are a “bright star inside our hearts.” Peppered with Spanish, the story could also read as about border migration in all its varied levels of risk and meaning; the rhythmic words beat as a chant of encouragement and hope. The illustrations are warm acrylics and digital painting, with textured photos of woven wool blankets as endpapers. Gorgeous. Pair with **Alexis Deacon's *Ergo*, illus. Viviane Schwarz**, about an egg who is convinced she is the only thing in the world (and thus the entire world is only about her) until she pecks her way free and excitedly ventures forth to discover what wonders the world will bring. Round it out with the lush adventure of a child in Vietnam on his own eager and expectant hero journey down the Mekong River, ***My First Day* (Phung Nguyen Quang; illus. Huynh Kim Lien, NY: Make Me A World, 2021)**. The world really is a wonderful place, if we just decide to get beyond ourselves and see it. **Ages: 4+.**

Nordqvist, Sven. *The Dog Walk*. Edinburgh: Floris Books, 2021. Originally published in Sweden in 2018, this wordless picture book reads as a cross between Geisert and Oakley with a contemporary dash of Derby at her quirkiest, creating a cozy adventure. There is detail on every bit of every page and none of it makes a bit of linear narrative sense, except for the dog, the dog on a walk through worlds marvelously mad and madly marvelous, going over the river and through the woods back home to Grandma's house. A richly satisfying pleasure to pore over. **Ages: 2+.**

Raud, Piret; trans. Estonian. *The Sea*. NY: Thames & Hudson Inc., 2021. A fantastical tale about the Sea, who loves her fish and other creatures but sometimes, would like to be alone. So up she lifts herself and goes away, leaving the fish in the sea to be in nothing. Delicately and quirkily illustrated, the fish are just shy of odd and the opportunist cat has a belly that speaks of greed. All's well that ends well, "because cats, as we know, are afraid of getting wet." **Ages: 4+.**

Robert, Nadine; illus. Gerard DuBois; trans. French Paula Ayer. *On the Other Side of the Forest*. Berkeley, CA: Greystone Books, 2021. Arthur and his father live in a clearing by a forest. They have never been in it or through it, and have no idea what is on the other side. Eureka! They decide to build a tower so they can see. To get stones, they bake bread to barter with their neighbors, and then build all day when the baking and bartering is done. "It's very tiring. But a magnificent idea takes a lot of work." So work they do, and when a challenge arises, the neighbors collectively pitch in. The illustrations play at old-fashioned stylization, with all the characters portrayed as elegant rabbits elegantly dressed, going about their business in muted shades, which only serves to lend gravitas to the tale of the tower building and bartering. Besides, any picture book with an epigraph by Ai Weiwei is worth a read! Sweet and true, from beginning to end. **Ages: 7+.**

Romanyshyn, Romana and Andriy Lesiv, writers & illus; trans. Ukrainian Oksana Lushchevska. *How War Changed Rondo*. Brooklyn, NY: Enchanted Lion Books, with Ukrainian Book Institute with the support of the Translate Ukraine Translation Program, 2021. "In Rondo, it was a day like any other day." Until it wasn't. "Nobody knew what War was. It seemed to come from nowhere. It was black and scary." War touched everyone and everything, hurt everyone and everything. War didn't seem to stop – War certainly didn't have any heart. The three friends Danko, Fabian, and Zirka did their best to learn how to resist, how to fight, how to help the flowers grow when War took away all the light. Danko even aimed the small light on his bicycle at the flowers, to help them sing, and it worked! What if all that is needed to disperse the dark is a little bit of light? Danko and his friends joined together and sang and sang, and built a giant machine that would shine light over the whole town of Rondo. War dissipated and then disappeared. They all had scars, of course; darkness is never forgotten completely. But they had each other. And they had light. And War was gone. A heartbreaking tale warning of war, in all its dark guises. **Ages: 7+.**

Schaible, Johanna; trans. Swedish. *Once Upon a Time There Was and Will Be So Much More*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Studio, Candlewick Press, 2020. "Billions of years ago, land took shape." So the book begins, on the very first page. As the story of the world progresses, each page gets smaller, telling a little piece of history until we get to, "A month ago, it was fall." Smaller still, we get to yesterday, an hour ago, a minute ago, now! And the pages get bigger again as we wonder about the possibilities of the future. What will the morning bring? Tomorrow? The weekend? Next month? Next year? Ten years? "What will you discover when you're grown up?" A brilliant conceit, with acrylic and cut-paper collage illustrations that add to the depth and excitement of discovery. A truly wondrous book. **Ages: 5+.**

Tallier, Mariahadessa Ekere; illus. Ashleigh Corrin. *Layla's Happiness*. Brooklyn, NY: Enchanted Lion Books, 2019. Layla is seven years old and she is full of happiness. Full of down to her bones appreciation and joy for all the world. For climbing trees. For wearing purple. For slurping spaghetti, and for her dad from South Carolina, and for her mom for reading poetry, and for the sea for reaching into her pocket and slipping her a sand dollar. Layla is all about the happy. What is happiness for you? Ask Layla. She knows. **Ages: 4+.**

Trevino, Charles; illus. Maribel Lechuga. *Seaside Stroll*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2021.

A mother and daughter stroll a beach on a chilly winter day, losing and rescuing a favorite doll along the way. The accompanying text is all in rhyme and starts with the letter 'S', making the narrative a rhythmic, sliding, rolling forward adventure. The illustrations are in muted tones, lending a sense of cozy safety. Perfect for a one-on-one read-aloud, and a handy opportunity for toddlers to try out some new ocean-themed words themselves. **Ages: 2+.**

Woodson, Jacqueline; illus. Rafael Lopez. *The Year We Learned to Fly*. NY: Nancy Paulsen Books, Penguin Random House LLC, 2022. Inspired by Virginia Hamilton's *The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales*, Woodson shares her lyrical magic of being one of the best writers around once again, this time with a refrain strong enough to make us all breathe out our crying and keep trying, no matter what the world in its madness throws at us. "Lift your arms, close your eyes, and remember somebody somewhere at some point had to figure out they could fly." A brother and sister grow up together, play together, fight together, let it all go and fly together. Their grandmother tells them, "Nobody can ever cuff your beautiful and brilliant mind." Lopez's illustrations of acrylic on wood, pen and ink, pencil, and watercolors provide texture and bright, bright light. One of the best of the year. **Ages: 4+.**

