

From the Library

Everyone who walks by the library laments on the emptiness of our wonderful space. Our collection is about two-thirds of the way packed up. Upstairs you can still find shelves full of easier chapter books and picture books. I am scanning all library books to complete an inventory of the entire collection before I box them up. About half of the collection will be coming into our temporary library space this fall. And yep, I am taking all the good books. The space will be great, we will still have our book fair, and there will be book clubs and author visits. After we return to school in August we will have our first author visit. On September 29th, Liz Pichon (pronounced pea-shone) will visit Lafayette. Pichon is the author of a few picture books as well as the Tom Gates series which is kind of the British version of the Diary of a Wimpy Kid series.

In *The Brilliant World of Tom Gates*, Tom is a master of excuses, expert doodler, comic story writer extraordinaire – and the bane of his grumpy teacher, Mr. Fullerman. And in his first wacky journal of scribbles and silliness, you'll find all sorts of comic craziness to make you groan with glee! Will Tom ever manage to get his homework in on time, avoid the rage of his teacher – AND impress Amy Porter, who sits next to him? This would be a great summer read. Speaking of summer reading, I am already creating my stack for the summer. Here are a few I've read this year; I bet you can check them out at your local library.

Try *Gingerbread For Liberty!: How a German Baker Helped Win the American Revolution* by Mara Rockliff. A picture book biography about a forgotten hero of the American Revolution who rose to the occasion and served his country, not with muskets or canons, but with gingerbread! Mara Rockliff's dialogue-laden text is accessible, even humorous at times. She also includes a recipe for gingerbread at the end of the book, offering options for different skill levels. The illustrator Vincent X. Kirsch pays careful attention to mirror the narrative in his book design and illustration. The interior art is made up of layered paper cut outs in primary colors, with white edging that mimics traditional gingerbread decoration. I would read this to 2nd- 5th graders or anyone studying the American Revolution.

I thought there were many amazing picture books this year, and I still love *Rufus Goes to School* best, I love Rufus, a close second is *Sam and Dave Dig a Hole* by Mac Barnett and Jon Klassen, illustrator.

"We won't stop digging until we find something spectacular," Dave says to Sam. They dig their hole deeper—and even sideways—but they keep just missing what they're looking for. There is a clever play between words and picture in which readers are in on a joke to which the characters are oblivious, remember Jon Klassen's award winning *This Is Not My Hat*. Klassen's cross-section illustrations give readers a mole's-eye view of the underground proceedings, extending the spare text with visual humor. Barnett's well-chosen words and plentiful white space support readers.

If you want a cool alphabet book, you must read *Take Away the A* by Michaël Escoffier. Both the text and illustrations look at how subtracting a single letter from a word can make an entirely different word. Kris Di Giacomo's illustrations add another level of wit and whimsy to Escoffier's word shenanigans. For instance, dice, as ice, chill poker players' drinks. For G, a glove falls in love—and scurries to a crosswalk after his paramour, an octopus. The silly situations and fun details (almost all the characters are either

animals or inanimate objects, and a mouse reappears in many of the illustrations), invite readers to linger over the artwork.

A popular beginning chapter book this year at Lafayette was *Tales of Bunjitsu Bunny* by John Himmelman. Isabel, aka Bunjitsu Bunny can throw farther, kick higher and hit harder than anyone else at school. She never hurts another creature, unless she has to. Boys and girls have enjoyed this book this year, with a female protagonist and a boy-friendly subject. The spare illustrations support the text but leave much to the imagination of the reader and chapter contains a moral or lesson disguised in an entertaining package that's easy to take in. Still so many good books out there but this will be the last one I'll mention and it's a good one.

Although I've never read a book by author/illustrator Steve Jenkins that isn't spectacular, I think it's because he often writes thinking of his own children. Well, here is his *Egg: Nature's Perfect Package*. Jenkins explores how a simple, often colorful, sometimes surprisingly shaped package, reveals nature's life cycle, unusual animal defensive strategies, parenting behavior, evolution, and more, in this illustrated non-fiction picture book. Jenkins' signature torn paper and collage illustrations are featured against white backgrounds, really making the images pop. The final pages illustrate the cycles of a chicken and alligator as each creature develops over time, in five stages from embryo to hatchling.

Finally, there are still 367 library books still checked out and I think some may be lost. I'm sure many of you have been searching for these books. Your kind and generous children often share their library books and sometimes books can get lost this way. I think we often do the same thing as adults. Lafayette library checked out a grand total of 22,343 books this year. I know, that is a great number; Lafayette Elementary students are voracious readers. Lastly, thank you for a wonderful year and a successful book fair.

Judith Perlin, Librarian