THE PANDA BOOK AWARDS SHORTLISTS
2018-2019
The Panda Book Awards Reading Initiative
2018-2019

Every school year, the Panda Steering Committee promotes the Panda Book Awards reading initiative and publicizes lists of highly recommended books for readers in international schools in China. The four reading categories are: Younger Readers, Middle Readers, Older Readers, and Mature Readers. Each list consists of eight to ten titles that span a wide range of genres. Students are encouraged to read as many books from the list as possible and are invited to vote for their favorite book in the weeks after Chinese New Year.

The reading initiative is the responsibility of the Panda Steering Committee, a group of international librarians in China. These professionals volunteer to read, review and discuss book titles submitted by other librarians or students. The goal of the Panda Book Awards initiative is to instill an enduring love of reading and to take students on an exciting reading adventure.

The Panda Book Awards initiative is now in its eleventh year and its popularity has grown tremendously. During the first year, five international schools participated in voting. This year, fifty international schools joined the initiative, and over 7,700 students cast their votes.

In the fall, the Panda 2018-2019 books will be available at all participating schools. In the meantime, explore the hand-out and put the Panda titles on your summer reading list.
After the Fall  Santat, Dan
Everyone knows that when Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. But what happened after? Caldecott Medalist Dan Santat’s poignant tale follows Humpty Dumpty, an avid bird watcher whose favorite place to be is high up on the city wall—that is, until after his famous fall. Now terrified of heights, Humpty can longer do many of the things he loves most. Will he summon the courage to face his fear?

Du Iz Tak?  Ellis, Carson
Du iz tak? What is that? As a tiny shoot unfurls, two damselflies peer at it in wonder. When the plant grows taller and sprouts leaves, some young beetles arrive to gander, and soon—with the help of a pill bug named Icky—they wrangle a ladder and build a tree fort. But this is the wild world, after all, and something horrible is waiting to swoop down—booby voobeck!—only to be carried off in turn. Su! With exquisitely detailed illustrations and tragicomic flair, Carson Ellis invites readers to imagine the dramatic possibilities to be found in even the humblest backyard. Su!

Have You Seen Elephant?  Barrow, David
Elephant wants to play hide and seek. See if you can help the others find him—he’s very good at hiding! This tale of absurdity is perfect for sharing with children who will love finding Elephant (and being faster at it than the boy in the book!). Watch out for the dog and the tortoise, too . . .

Hug This Book!  Saltzberg, Barney
Expertly whimsical illustrations accompany this rhyming celebration of the printed book, and the attachment many of us all feel to our very favourites. The imaginative humour is balanced by earnest devotion, traits to which the young audience will relate. A sure-to-be favourite, this title will draw giggles and snuggles ... with the book itself!

In a Village by the Sea  Van, Muon
Written in a spare, lyrical style using fresh, evocative imagery, In a Village by the Sea tells the story of longing for the comforts of home. A perfect book for teaching about diverse cultures and lifestyles through rich pictures and words, moving from the wide world to the snugness of home and back out again.

I Yam a Donkey  Bell, Cece
Even frustrated grammarians will giggle at the who’s-on-first routine that begins with a donkey’s excited announcement, “I yam a donkey!” Unfortunately the donkey’s audience happens to be a yam, and one who is particular about sloppy pronunciation and poor grammar. An escalating series of misunderstandings leaves the yam furious and the clueless donkey bewildered by the yam’s growing (and amusing) frustration. The yam finally gets his point across, but regretfully, he’s made the situation a little bit too clear . . . and the story ends with a dark and outrageously funny twist.
**The Night Gardener  Fan, Eric and Terry**

One day, William discovers that the tree outside his window has been sculpted into a wise owl. In the following days, more topiaries appear, and each one is more beautiful than the last. Soon, William’s gray little town is full of color and life. And though the mysterious night gardener disappears as suddenly as he appeared, William—and his town—are changed forever.

**Skyfishing  Sterer, Gideon**

When Grandpa—a fishing connoisseur—moves to the city to live with his family, it doesn’t take him long to notice that there is nowhere to fish. Unfazed, his granddaughter proposes they pretend to fish out a window . . . until they actually catch something: a Flying Litterfish! Soon the two are catching all kinds of fish: Laundry Eels and Signfish, a Conconstructionfish and a Waste-muncher. It’s all in good fun, until the skyfishing attracts the attention of the Troublefish (read: police car). This might be the end of their skyfishing, but it’s just the beginning of their new friendship. Skyfishing is an imaginative debut picture book that celebrates the magic of companionship.

**There Is a Bear  Collins, Ros**

Poor Mouse! A bear has settled in his favorite chair, and that chair just isn’t big enough for two. Mouse tries all kinds of tactics to move pesky Bear, but nothing works. Once Mouse has gone, Bear gets up and walks home. But what’s that? Is that a mouse in Bear’s house?

**The Uncorker of Ocean Bottles  Stead, Erin**

The Uncorker of Ocean Bottles, who lives alone atop a hill, has a job of the utmost importance. It is his task to open any bottles found at sea and make sure that the messages are delivered. He loves his job, though he has always wished that, someday, one of the letters would be addressed to him. One day he opens a party invitation—but there’s no name attached. As he devotes himself to the mystery of the intended recipient, he ends up finding something even more special: the possibility of new friends.

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Middle Readers

Adolf Hitler  *Buckley, James*
Buckley describes how Adolf Hitler came to be the despot who plunged the world into a global conflict and initiated the murder of millions—and why the German people sanctioned his horrifying rise to power.

**Dogman**  *Pilkey, Dav*
Dog Man is back, and he’s about to be bested by the world’s most conniving cat crook! Dog Man hasn’t always been a paws-itive addition to the police force. While he can nuzzle miscreants, he tends to leave a slick of slobber in his wake! This time, Petey the cat’s dragged in a tiny bit of trouble—a double in the form of a super-cute kitten. Dog Man will have to work twice as hard to bust these furballs and remain top dog!

**Mission Mumbai**  *Mahtab, Narsimhan*
When aspiring photographer Dylan Moore is invited to join his best friend, Rohit Lal, on a family trip to India, he jumps at the chance to embark on an exciting journey just like their Lord of the Rings heroes, Frodo and Sam. But each boy comes to the trip with a problem: Rohit is desperate to convince his parents not to leave him behind in Mumbai to finish school, and Dylan is desperate to stay in India to prove himself as a photographer and to avoid his parents’ constant fighting.

**Ms. Bixby’s Last Day**  *Anderson, John David*
When Ms. Bixby tells her sixth-grade class that she is sick and will be leaving before the school year ends, her students are stunned. But the following week, when they learn that she’s already gone into the hospital to start treatment several days early, three boys swing into action, carrying out an ambitious (and mostly legal) plan to create a grand gesture of appreciation, bravado, and connection.

**The Quest for Z: the True Story of Explorer Percy Fawcett and a Lost City in the Amazon**  *Pizzoli, Greg*
British explorer Percy Fawcett believed that hidden deep within the Amazon rainforest was an ancient city, lost for the ages. Most people didn’t even believe this city existed. This is the true story of one man’s thrilling, dangerous journey into the jungle, and what he found on his quest for the lost city of Z.

**Real Friends**  *Hale, Shannon*
In this graphic memoir, Shannon Hale reflects on her childhood friendships. The book follows little Shannon’s life from kindergarten through fifth grade and captures the emotional roller coaster ride of friendship, from navigating the tricky waters of cliques and bullies to her never-ending struggle to stay in “The Group.”
Scar Island  Gemeinhart, Dan
Twelve-year-old Jonathan Grisby has been sent to the Slabhenge Reformatory School for Troubled Boys, a former lunatic asylum which is currently run by a sadist who enjoys punishing the boys and setting them against each other. When a lightning strike kills all the adults, the boys find themselves suddenly free—and trapped on Scar Island, which seems to be sinking into the ocean.

Some Writer!: the Story of E.B. White  Sweet, Melissa
The book mixes White’s personal letters, photos, and family ephemera with the author’s own exquisite artwork to tell the story of this American literary icon. Readers young and old will be fascinated and inspired by the journalist, New Yorker contributor, and children’s book author who loved words his whole life.

The Song from Somewhere Else  Harold, A.F.
Frank never thought she would be friends with class misfit Nick, but then he saves her from bullies. When she visits Nick’s house, strange music leads to a hidden door beyond which lie incredible—and dangerous—secrets. This is Frank’s chance to help Nick, just as he helped her.

Wishtree  Applegate, Katherine
An old red oak tree tells how he and his crow friend, Bongo, help their human neighbors get along after a threat against an immigrant family is carved into the tree’s trunk.
Older Readers

The Bitter Side of Sweet  **Sullivan, Tara**
Brothers Amadou and Seydou are child slaves on a cocoa plantation in Ivory Coast. They have lost all hope for the future until a new arrival, Khadija, teaches the brothers how to fight for freedom and life.

The Bone Sparrow  **Fraillon, Zana**
Subhi helps Jimmie to read her deceased mother’s notebook, but can their friendship help Subhi, a refugee, survive the misery of life in an Australian permanent detention center?

An Eagle in the Snow  **Morpurgo, Michael**
It’s World War II. Ten-year-old Barney and his mother meet a soldier who tells them he could have shot and killed Adolf Hitler during World War I—but didn’t. Did the soldier make the right choice?

Fish Girl  **Napoli, Donna Jo**
A young mermaid lives in an aquarium, on display to the public. When she makes friends with a human girl, she starts to dream about life beyond the tank she calls home.

La Belle Sauvage  **Pullman, Philip**
In this prequel to the His Dark Materials trilogy, Malcom Polstead, a young boy in Oxford, is drawn into a conspiracy surrounding a dangerous substance called Dust and a baby girl called Lyra.

The Mighty Odds  **Ignatow, Amy**
After a bus crash, four kids develop not-very-impressive superpowers, such as super-strong thumbs and the ability to teleport four inches to the left. How did this happen? The Mighty Odds are on the case.

Orphan Island  **Snyder, Laurel**
Subhi helps Jimmie to read her deceased mother’s notebook, but can their friendship help Subhi, a refugee, survive the misery of life in an Australian permanent detention center?

The Peculiar Incident on Shady Street  **Currie, Lindsay**
Scary things start happening to Tessa Woodward when her family moves to Shady Street, and she discovers a centuries-old mystery waiting to be solved.
Burn, Baby, Burn  Medina, Meg
Seventeen-year old Nora faces danger in 1977 New York, from arson, heat waves, blackouts and the “Son of Sam” serial killer on the city streets, to within the walls of her own home. Along the way, she grows up and falls in love.

Exit West  Hamid, Mohsin
In an unnamed country besieged by civil unrest, Saeed and Nadia seek safety and pursue love through a series of mysterious portals. Each place gives them a new refugee experience and a new dimension to their relationship.

Little Fires Everywhere  Ng, Celeste
A family’s ordered life in suburban Cleveland is overturned when free-spirited tenants move into their rental home and a family friend’s attempt to adopt a Chinese baby results in a bitter custody dispute.

Pachinko  Lee, Min Jin
Four generations of a Korean family transplanted to Japan face challenges and celebrate triumphs through seven decades of the twentieth century.

Turtles All the Way Down  Green, John
Part mystery, part romance, part exploration into the mind of a teenaged girl with a severe anxiety disorder, John Green’s latest novel puts Aza and her friends on the trail of a missing billionaire to win a hundred-thousand-dollar reward.

We Are Okay  LaCour, Nina
Marin, isolated in her college dorm over winter break, awaits the arrival of her former best friend and learns to deal with life and loss.

When Breath Becomes Air  Kalanithi, Paul
The true story of a young neurosurgeon who was diagnosed with Stage IV lung cancer, prompting him to question the meaning of life in the face of his imminent death.

Wolf by Wolf  Graudin, Ryan
In an alternative history, it is 1956. Germany and Japan have won World War II. Every year the victors hold a cross-continent motorcycle race in commemoration. This year, death camp survivor Yael is determined to win. The prize is a personal audience with Adolf Hitler, and she intends to kill him.