

My Best Books of 2020

By Kathryn Tatnall Youth Services Librarian

Happy New Year one and all! I don't know about you but I have been looking forward to the end of this year since March. I know that many people enjoy year end reviews, but I don't. The only thing I like about looking back at the previous year is the many lists of "Best Books" produced by publishers and newspapers throughout the country. Rather than copy and paste The New York Times Best Seller list for you, I thought I would list some of the amazing books I have found here at the library in 2020.

Sandra Boynton is still delighting her young readers with a new board book called, *How Big is Zagnodd?* A cast of big, long, fuzzy, bright and dancing characters are featured in this book as well as Steve, who appears to be lost. This one will make you laugh. *Mad, Mad, Mad* by Leslie Patricelli gives little ones a better understanding of what they are feeling and why they might be feeling that way. Her board books are always popular with parent because of her honest, simple rhyming text, and appealing illustrations.

There were so many picture books published this year. Several of them cover the pandemic and how we are experiencing life now. I found that my favorites were those that were sweet and touching and reminded me of my children.

Ellie's Dragon by Bob Graham is a touching story that highlights the joy of imagination and friendship. As a preschooler, Ellie finds a baby dragon in the grocery store nestled on a carton of eggs. Ellie takes the dragon home with her and he becomes a friend who shares all aspects of her life. As Ellie grows and her social circle widens things change between the two. Now it might be a stretch that this next book is more about my "newest child", my puppy Taylor. Once I am able to read it without crying I promise to read it for a story time. *Picture Book by Dog* by animator Michael Relth is a wonderful book written from a dog's point of view. It is an amazing take on a dog's journey from the shelter to a loving family home.

I love funny books. I love books that surprise a laugh out of me while I am reading near someone else because that gives me a natural segue to telling them about the book. *Interrupting Cow and the Chicken Who Crossed the Road* by Jane Yolen is a hilarious book that should hold no surprises for the reader, but it does. What do you think happens when an interrupting cow meets a chicken who crossed the road?

One of the best new junior fiction books I have read this year is *The Brave* by James Bird. Collin counts every letter of every word anyone says to him. He then must tell them the numeric total before he responds. It is a condition called Arithmomania and it causes him to be bullied and ousted from school after school while living in California

with his father. After being expelled for the last time, Collin is sent to live with his mother on an Ojibwe reservation. A woman he has heard so little of, he doesn't even know her first name. Finding out about his heritage and family means finding the home he has always wanted. Being accepted for who he is and his disability means healing.

One of the best junior non-fiction books I've read this year is called *For Which We Stand: How Our Government Works and why it Matters* by Jeff Foster. This book is a clear look at our government from The Constitution to the Electoral College. The illustrations and graphics keep the book's information clear and understandable. It's like taking an AP Government class in high school because it's written by an AP government teacher.

Two of my favorite new graphic novel series this year are *Donut Feed the Squirrels* by Mika Song and *Kodi (Book 1)* by Jared Cullum. Norma and Belly are two squirrels who burn breakfast and are soon enticed by the smell of a new food truck in the forest selling donuts. Just how in the world are these two starving squirrels going to get their paws on one? Find out in Song's hilarious first offering featuring Norma and Belly.

In *Kodi*, Katya and her grandmother are spending the summer in their cabin in Alaska when an accident leaves Katya face to face with an enormous Kodiak bear who quickly becomes her best friend. When Katya and her family return to Seattle, Kodi discovers he will do anything to reunite with his dear friend. Beautiful watercolor illustrations show Kodi's journey to find Katya again. I am really looking forward to the second books of both these series.

I have enjoyed a return to non-fiction reading this year in all reading levels. One of my teen favorite non-fiction books is *Thank you for coming to my TED Talk: a Teen Guide to Great Public Speaking* by Chris Anderson. The author shares tips and techniques to help any teen, or adult, present a confident speech or talk.

If you are looking for a great read from 2020, or really any year, visit the library. Any one of the staff would love to share the last great book they've read with you. See you at the library!