

## Literary Genre Bibliography: Fantasy 2021

### Grades K-2

Le, Minh. **Lift**. Disney-Hyperion, 2020. ISBN: 9781368036924

**Summary:** Iris loves to push elevator buttons, and it has always been her job until one day when her little brother pushes the button. As her parents celebrate this achievement, Iris feels only betrayal. When she sees a broken elevator button pad being cast aside by the maintenance man, she seizes her opportunity. Once she gets to her bedroom, she tapes the broken button to the wall, and to her astonishment it dings and opens to a jungle setting! The adventures begin, and Iris is amazed to discover that adventures are sometimes best shared, even with annoying little brothers.

**Curricular use:** This is a nearly wordless picture book, so there are opportunities for inferring. It would work well as a creative writing prompt. Art teachers could use this book to show small, squarish framed illustrations in the real world versus full-page images in the imaginary worlds, similar to Maurice Sendak's use of space in his real world versus "Wild Things" world illustrations.

**Audience:** General use K-3, springboard for related lessons for older students too.

Litchfield, David. **Lights on Wonder Rock**. Clarion Books, 2020. ISBN: 9780358359531

**Summary:** Heather has always longed to be taken aboard an alien spacecraft and have wondrous adventures in space. One night she sneaks away to a place called Wonder Rock, where she tries to send a signal to any alien crafts in the area by blinking her flashlight on and off into the sky. To her amazement, an alien ship *does* land and she's invited on board. She is tempted to leave Earth, but a glimpse of her parents looking frantically for her is all she needs to draw her back home. For years she hopes to be visited by her alien friend again, but it doesn't return until she is an old lady. This time she *does* embark on a journey with her alien friend, but when she sees Earth getting smaller and smaller in the window, she once again realizes that everything she *really* longs for is on Earth.

**Curricular use:** The illustrations in this book are truly magical, simple but filled with light and extraordinary use of color. There is a combination of small individual panels used for intimate moments, several larger panels on a page to show a sequence of events, and full page illustrations with plenty of space for wonder and magic. There is a clear message of "be careful what you wish for." The beautiful friendship between Heather and the alien models appreciation for those who are different from ourselves.

**Audience:** K-3

#### **I also loved:**

Twohy, Mike. **Spacebot**. Simon & Schuster, 2020. ISBN: 9781534444379

**K-2 Curricular use:** Simple rhyming text to build phonemic awareness. Many sight words kids could read independently.

## Grades 3-4

Dahl, Sophie. **Madame Badobedah**. Walker Books, 2020. ISBN: 9781536210224.

**Summary:** A new guest has arrived at the Mermaid Hotel, and spunky Mabel, whose parents run the place, is convinced that the eccentric old woman is a jewel thief. Mabel names her “Madame Badobedah (rhymes with ooooh la la).” When Mabel is caught spying on the mysterious guest, she is surprised to be invited in for tea and a friendship begins to form. As the two unique characters learn more about each other they share marvelous fanciful adventures. Between the imaginary episodes, Madame Badobedah’s life story is gradually and sensitively revealed. The connection between young and old is beautiful, and the reader comes to see how first impressions shouldn’t be given too much weight; sometimes a person is just in need of a true and reliable friend.

**Curricular use:** The story, though quite comical at times, lends itself to discussions about social emotional awareness and the risks of misjudging people based on first impressions.

**Audience:** Grades 2-4

Grossman, Lev. **The Silver Arrow**. Little Brown and Company, 2020. ISBN: 9780316539531.

**Summary:** When Kate’s estranged uncle shows up for her 11th birthday with the gift of an actual steam engine, she and her brother Tom are a bit perplexed as to how to play with such a gift. They are quite unprepared when the train suddenly embarks on a magical adventure to deliver animals to new homes. Kate and Tom befriend the animals on board, who reveal that they are travelling to a new home because of the actions of humans that have endangered animals and habitats. The train is threatened by several invasive species (who try to board the train without a ticket!), and there is a beautifully crafted chapter where the kids experience the world from a tree’s perspective. The call to environmental protection is powerful, but it doesn’t distract from the action-packed adventures.

**Curricular use:** Great for discussing environmental issues. An animal on board helps Kate understand that she doesn’t need to feel guilty about environmental issues that began before she was even born, but she has a responsibility to be part of the solutions.

**Audience:** Grades 3-5

### I also loved:

Van den Ende, Peter. **The Wanderer**. Levine Querido, 2020. ISBN: 9781646140176

An exquisite wordless adventure with intricate illustrations that portray a paper boat’s journey through some pretty wacky waters. A stunning masterpiece with something new to notice every time. (Amazon has a sneak peek available!)

## Grades 5-6

Selfors, Suzanne. **Braver: A Wombat’s Tale**. Imprint, 2020. ISBN: 9781250219916.

**Summary:** A young wombat named Lola is out for one of her secret daytime adventures when she hears a terrible screeching followed by growls, and she knows her entire wombat burrow is under attack! She sees her family and neighbors being hauled away at the command of a Tassie devil, and the only hint as to what she should do is her mother calling, “Find your uncle! He’ll know what to do!” Uncle? What uncle? Lola embarks on a dangerous journey to free her family. She is accompanied by a

swamp rat and a young penguin, but it's difficult to know whether they are to be trusted. As her quest takes her closer to the queen's palace, family loyalties come into question as well.

**Curricular use:** This story offers many opportunities to discuss that we shouldn't judge others by their classification but by their actions. The message is also clear that it's OK not to be like everyone else.

**Audience:** General use for grades 3-6.

Soontornvat, Christina. **A Wish in the Dark.** Candlewick Press, 2020. ISBN: 9781536204940.

**Summary:** Pong was born in a prison, but he never could accept that he is forced to live there until he comes of age. When the opportunity to escape arrives, he takes it! This puts the prison warden out of a job, which upsets his daughter Nok enough that she begins searching for Pong. Pong has found a home in a city called Chattana. The city is ruled by a corrupt governor who, ever since the Great Fire, uses his magic to create glowing orbs, the only light source allowed in the city. When Pong is abruptly forced out of his first home within the city, he gets connected with a group of protesters who are planning a peaceful revolt against the governor. A Thai version of *Les Miserables*.

**Curricular use:** Told in alternating stories (Pong's and Nok's), this book lends itself well to discussions about point of view. In addition, the story is full of brilliant descriptions and character development. One of the peaceful protesters also figures out a way to make light so the people of Chattana are not forced to follow the rules of a tyrannical governor, which has a great STEAM connection.

**Audience:** General use for 4-6 grade

**I also loved:**

Alkaf, Hanna. **The Girl and the Ghost.**

This story and author are Malaysian. Upon her grandmother's death, Suraya inherits her pelesit (similar to a daemon companion). This is a truly compelling story of jealousy, family, grief, and forgiveness, but it is a little disturbing and grotesque at times. (Learning how the pelesit was created gave me the creeps for sure!)