



Natalie's Book Recs

March Newsletter

Hello all and happy March!

This month, I finally got my hands on *We Are Water Protectors*, the picture book that won the Caldecott this year. The story was powerful and the illustrations were gorgeous. Since I'm trying to highlight picture books that aren't already in the spotlight this month, I left it out of the newsletter, but it's a good one that I hope you don't miss!

Another thing you should know is that this month's middle grade picks are a little more unconventional than usual—and there's no fiction! I *did* read lots of middle grade fiction last month, but sadly, none of it was quite good enough to recommend. My two picks this time are a work of nonfiction and a poetry anthology. They may not be the first books that catch a kiddo's eye, but both of them are pretty spectacular.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy the newsletter. Happy reading!

XOXO,

Natalie Tate

The Books

Picture Books Ages 3–8

One Little Bag: An Amazing Journey. Henry Cole.

My Cat Looks Like My Dad. Thao Lam.

Please Don't Eat Me. Liz Climo.

Early Chapter Books Ages 5–9

Our Friend Hedgehog: The Story of Us. Lauren Castillo.

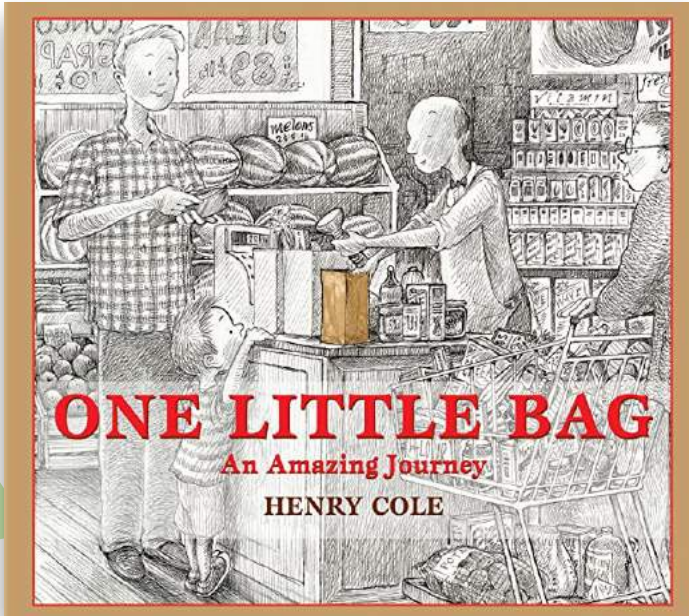
Middle Grade Reads Ages 8–12

A Sporting Chance: How Ludwig Guttmann Created the Paralympic Games. Lori Alexander, illus. Allan Drummond.

The Tree That Time Built: A Celebration of Nature, Science, and Imagination. Mary Ann Hoberman and Linda Winston (editors).

Young Adult Reads Ages 13+

Everything Sad is Untrue: (A True Story). Daniel Nayeri.

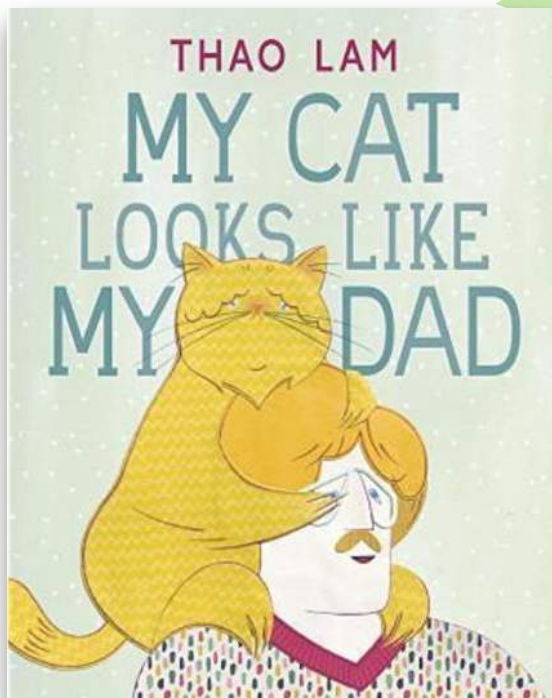
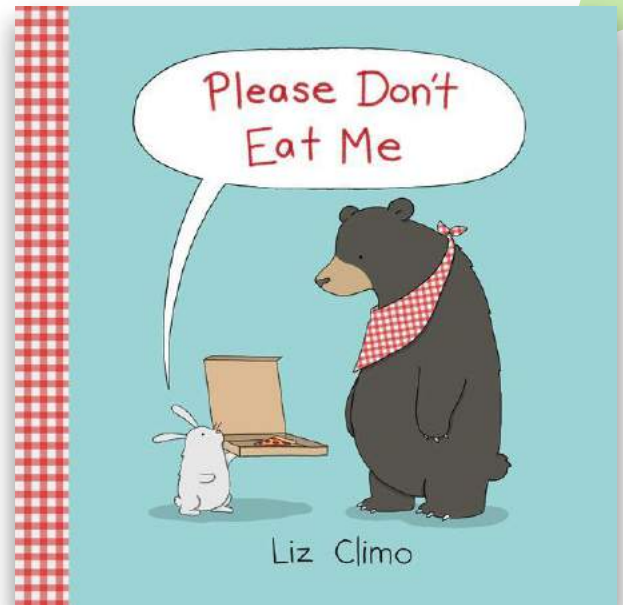


Is it possible to write a 48-page picture book without any words that's so good it'll make you cry? If you'd asked me that question in January, I would've just shrugged. But ask me now and I will hand you a copy of *One Little Bag*.

Henry Cole has made the story of a paper bag and the three generations of humans it interacts with into a book that is deeply moving and wholly original, and Cole's detailed scenes bring this story to the next level. This is my favorite picture book of the year so far. Do yourself a favor and read this one!

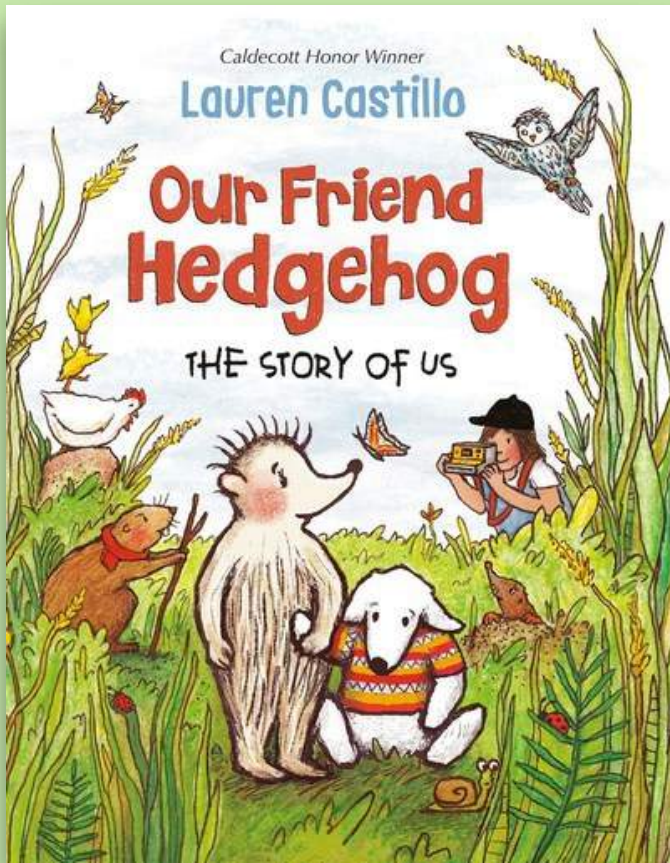
When Bunny accidentally burrows into a hungry bear's yard, it's time to act fast or face his doom. Bunny orders Bear a pizza and tries to skedaddle. . . but Bear won't let him leave. He needs dessert! He needs Bunny's foot for good luck! He needs Bunny to fix his lawn!

As Bear piles on the excuses to keep his new "friend" around, an exasperated Bunny tries his best to address complaint after complaint and keep himself from becoming Bear's next meal. This silly tale of contrived friendship is a laugh-out-loud read.



Dad likes sardines. So does the cat. Dad likes boxes. So does the cat. Dad likes to nap in the afternoon. So does the cat. And neither Dad nor the cat ever replaces the toilet paper, much to Mom's chagrin!

This picture book is tons of fun and completely unexpected, from the surprising comparisons between Dad and the cat to the eclectic collage art that pops from each page and the unanticipated plot twist at the book's end. If you're looking for a picture book that's less conventional than most, look no further. *My Cat Looks Like My Dad* is the book for you.



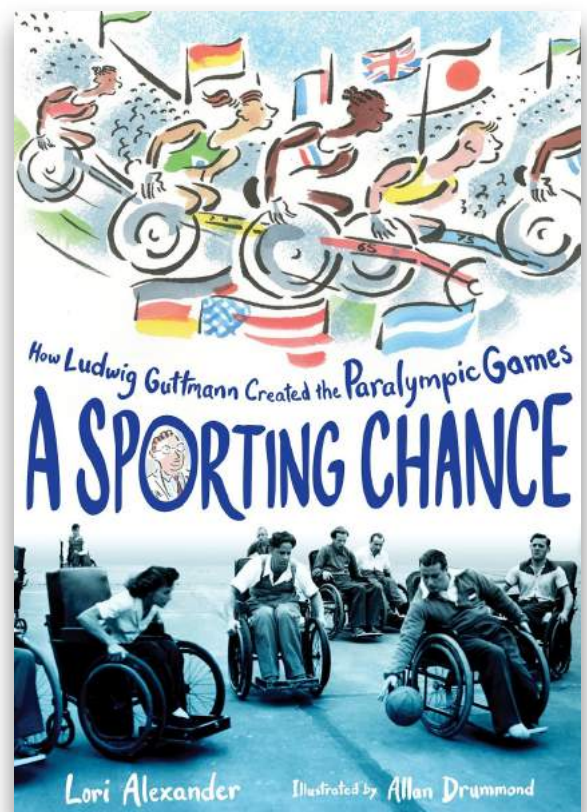
Hedgehog spends every day playing with her stuffed dog, Mutty, on a little island that the two have to themselves. But when a terrible storm blows Mutty away, Hedgehog must brave the "world beyond" to rescue her friend. On her quest, Hedgehog meets Mole, a multilingual language lover; Beaver, an outward pessimist; Owl, a self-professed know-it-all; Hen, a plucky mother; and one very kind human girl. But can they help Hedgehog find Mutty or will the little dog be lost forever?

Both the characters and the themes of friendship and teamwork may feel familiar to those who have read *Winnie-the-Pooh*. Still, Hedgehog's adventure is sweet without being a mere imitation of the classic. Early readers will be charmed by this engaging story that has just enough uncertainty to keep things interesting. *Our Friend Hedgehog* is the first book in a planned series.

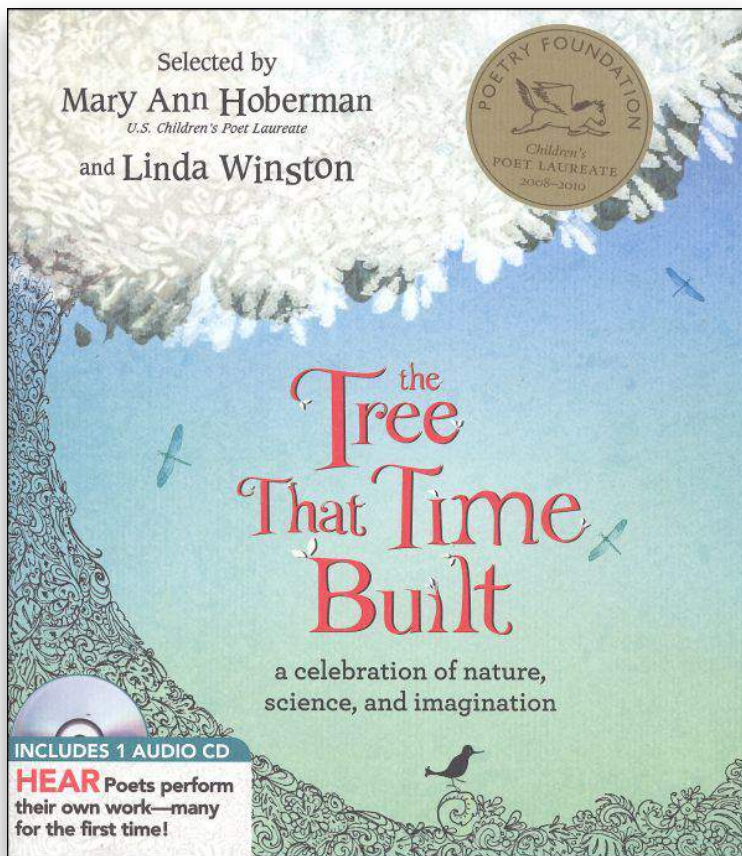
During World War I, a teenage volunteer named Ludwig watched helplessly as a young paraplegic patient wasted away in a hospital bed. The patient's death would remain with Ludwig for the rest of his life.

During World War II, Ludwig, then a doctor, was hired to work for a second time with "incurables"—wounded soldiers and civilians with spinal injuries. Ignoring the advice of his contemporaries, Ludwig fiercely believed his patients could recover and go on to live great lives. Under his leadership, they would learn how to strengthen their muscles, exercise regularly, compete in athletic games, get jobs, and reintegrate into society.

Fascinating and well written, *A Sporting Chance* sheds light on one incredible man, on the incredible sporting event he created, and on many of the incredible athletes that compete today. This would make a great read before the Paralympic Games this year!



Middle Grade Pick (Ages 8–12)

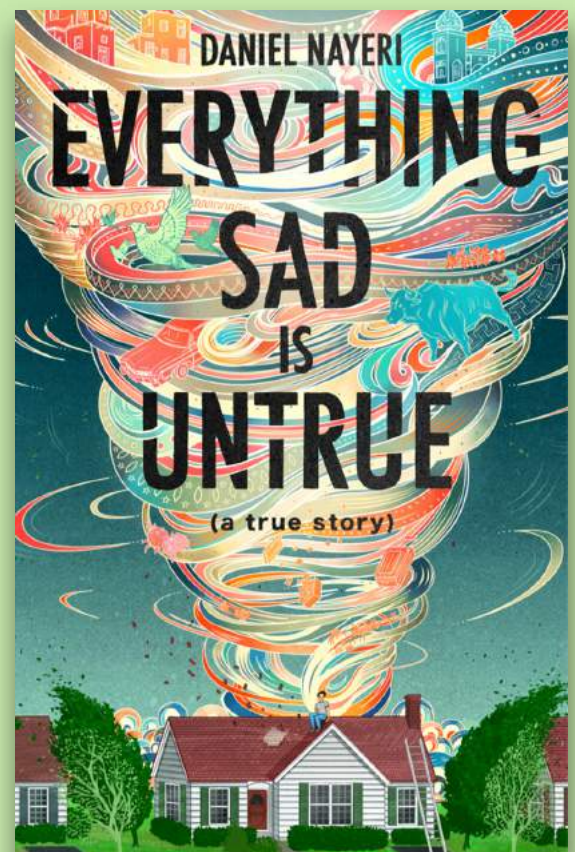


Science and poetry are more alike than we might think. That's what a poet-schoolteacher duo are out to prove in this book dedicated to one of the greatest naturalists of all time—Charles Darwin. The compilation of over 100 poems by more than 70 poets is divided into nine sections honoring topics such as the sea, the trees, prehistoric life, reptiles, and our role in taking care of the planet.

I know, I know. Poetry isn't everybody's favorite. But if you're going to get middle-graders interested in this genre, *The Tree That Time Built* just might be the perfect place to start. This is one of those rare collections that bridges the gap between juvenile and adult poetry. It's also tons of fun with a wide variety of poems, some silly, some serious, and all quality. In this collection, there are no duds.

In this 2021 Printz Award winner, a twelve-year-old refugee named Khosrou tells readers his story. In the hands of this deft young writer, the book becomes a tapestry of *many* stories weaved together. Some are about his family's incredible escape from Iran, some shed light on a new and difficult life in Oklahoma, others explain his grandparents' tragic history, and yet others are myths passed down the family tree for centuries.

Everything Sad Is Untrue is an unusual book. For one thing, it has no chapters. For another, it's marketed as a book for teenagers even though the narrator is twelve. There's good reason for both. This is an epic, no chapters needed, and it's also a complex story dealing with complex questions: What is home? What is family? What are belonging, truth, love, and belief? On his journey to find answers, Khosrou experiences immense sadness and loss, but his story is ultimately the story of hope. Based on the author's own experiences, this story stayed in my mind long after I'd turned the final page.



Young Adult Pick (Ages 13+)