

# OCTOBER: Picture Book



In *Once Upon an Hour*, a little girl named Yu-Rhee wants to learn how to tell time. Her mother does so by telling her a story that she grew up hearing: a little girl climbs up a mountain in search of a plant to heal her sick mother but is met with obstacles. The story is told from the perspective of the mountain who pleads for help from the animals of the zodiac who live nearby. Readers will learn about the traditional Korean practice of telling time and how stories can be used as a teaching tool.

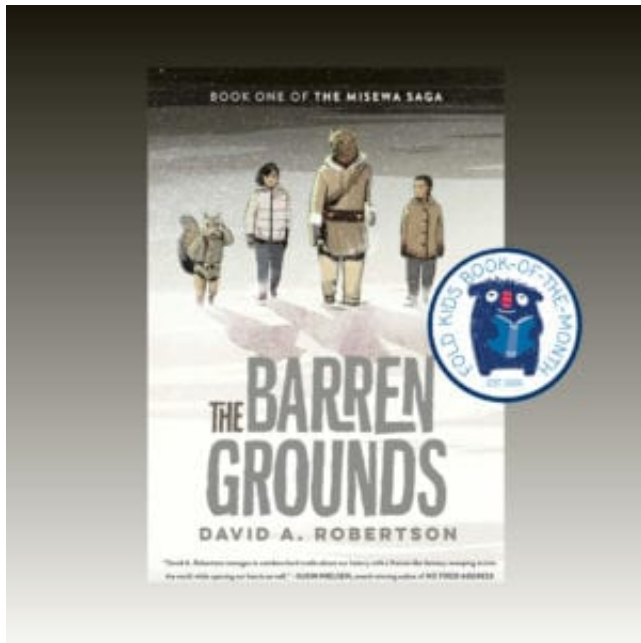
It's the Book-of-the-Month for October 2020 because it's a lovely tale of determination but also one of offering aid to someone in need. Little ones will be in awe of Kim's diorama art that adds depth and a feeling of whimsy.

## ABOUT THE CREATORS

**Ann Yu-Kyung Choi is a Toronto-based writer and an educator with the York Region District School Board in Ontario. Her debut novel, *Kay's Lucky Coin Variety*, was a 2016 Toronto Book Awards finalist and one of CBC Books' 12 Best Canadian Debut Novels of 2016.**

**Soyeon Kim is a Toronto-based, Korean-born artist who specializes in fine sketching and painting techniques to create three-dimensional dioramas. She's illustrated a number of beautiful picture books including *Sukaq and the Raven* and *You Are Never Alone*. Soyeon won the Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Illustrator's award in 2013.**

## OCTOBER: Middle Grade



*The Barren Grounds* is about Morgan and Eli — two Indigenous kids living in a foster home in Winnipeg — who find a portal in their attic that leads them to an alternate reality called Askí. However, this world is going through the White Time where it's cold and covered in snow. They meet Ochek, a Fisher, who is the lone hunter in his community of Misewa and Arik, described as “a sassy Squirrel”, and the four of them go on a journey to stop this forever winter from freezing

them all. The decision to make *The Barren Grounds* the Book-of-the-Month for October 2020 was an easy one. As the start of an epic middle grade fantasy, Robertson centres characters who don't often get the chance to be the heroes. Readers will learn about how the foster care system affects Indigenous children and the impact of climate change as a result of human beings taking from the land without honouring it. It gives its kid characters room to be angry and sad but also compassionate and full of awe. It is about the devastating loss of culture but also finding the path back to it.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**David A. Robertson is a Winnipeg-based writer and member of the Norway House Cree Nation. He is the author of numerous books for young readers including *When We Were Alone*, which won the 2017 Governor General's Literary Award and was nominated for the TD Canadian Children's Literature Award. *Strangers*, the first book in his Reckoner trilogy, a young adult supernatural mystery, won the 2018 Michael Van Rooy Award for Genre Fiction (Manitoba Book Awards).**

## NOVEMBER: Picture Book

*Violet Shrink* is a picture book about a little girl named Violet who struggles with anxiety. The book offers readers a way to discuss their anxious feelings with the adults in their lives while also reassuring them that their feelings are valid. It's a necessary read for adults that acts as a reminder: children have agency with regards to their boundaries and should be afforded consideration of their feelings. Mok's illustrations are delightful and adds a sense of play that makes this a

perfect vehicle for the topic. Anxiety isn't just an adult issue and seeing it in literature for small humans is why it was chosen as the Book- of-the-Month for November 2020.

### ABOUT THE CREATORS

Christine Baldacchino is a Toronto-based graphic artist and web designer with a background in early childhood education. Her picture book *Morris Micklewhite and the Tangerine Dress* was a Stonewall Honor recipient and the winner of the CBC Bookie Award for Best Picture Book.

Carmen Mok is a St. Catharines-based illustrator. She's illustrated books such as *Cone Cat* (written by Sarah Howden), *A Stopwatch From Grandpa* (written by Loretta Garbutt) and the upcoming *Tough Like Mum* (written by Lana Button).



## NOVEMBER: Young Adult

*Facing the Sun* is a young adult

(YA) novel that takes place in the Bahamas and follows four teens girls —Eve, Faith, Keekee and Nia— who witness big changes to their home, Pinder Street, and those changes happen alongside their own coming-of-age story.

This book was chosen as the Book-of-the-Month for November 2020 because its author, Janice Lynn Mather, expertly weaves four perspectives that offer readers a look into the lives of Black

girls, their dreams, their struggles and the love they have for their community. The story looks at macro issues of access to essential services such as reproductive health as well as balancing a community's right to decent paying jobs with the privatization of public spaces. Racialized teens, especially young women, will recognize themselves in these characters and will shed a light on the ways in which Black girls are often expected to bear the weight of responsibility in their homes. It offers a broader look at Blackness by being set outside of Canada and it's ultimately a story about four friends.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Janice Lynn Mather is a Bahamian author based in Vancouver, British Columbia. Her first book, *Learning to Breathe* (YA), was a Governor General's Literary Award finalist, a BC Book Prize finalist, shortlisted for the 2019 CCBC Amy Mathers Teen Book Award, a YALSA Best Fiction for Young Adults selection, an Amelia Bloomer's Top Ten Recommended Feminist Books for Young Readers pick, and a Junior Library Guild selection.**



## DECEMBER: Picture Book

*Two Drops of Brown in a Cloud of White* is a book about a little girl and her mother walking home from school during a snowy day. The mother is having difficulties adjusting to her cold new home and misses the warm faraway place she left behind. However, her daughter offers a different perspective on their home like when her mother sees a maple leaf as dry brown leaves while her daughter associates the brown with maple syrup. Campbell's art adds texture to the whiteness of snow both in terms of the blues and greys but

also with the type of paper she paints on. This story was chosen as the Book-of-the-Month for December 2020 because it's the perfect winter read to curl up with and a great reminder of how everyday things can hold little wonders if we look at them from a different point-of-view.

### ABOUT THE CREATORS

**Saumiya Balasubramaniam** is a Toronto-based writer. Her debut picture book, *When I Found Grandma*, illustrated by Qin Leng, was featured in the Globe and Mail's "Seven books to help kids make sense of the world" and by the CBC's "Kids books to look for in 2019". It was described by Publishers Weekly as a "subtle, heartfelt story."

**Eva Campbell** (Canadian) is a Victoria, BC-based artist and illustrator who teaches visual art. She has exhibited her work in Canada, the US, the UK, Barbados and Ghana, and won the Children's Africana Book Award for her illustrations in *The Matatu* by Eric Walters. She also illustrated *Africville* by Shauntay Grant, winner of the Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award and the Lillian Shepherd Memorial Award for Excellence in Illustration, and a Governor General's Literary Award finalist.

## DECEMBER: Middle Grade

*Music for Tigers* is a middle grade novel about a girl named Lousia who is sent to the Tasmanian rainforest for the summer to spend time with her Uncle Ruff. She's not happy about being in the remote camp and wants to practice her violin for an upcoming audition with the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra. However, what she'll come to realize is the connection her great-grandmother has to the supposedly extinct Tasmanian tigers and how her music could



be the key to connecting with the remaining one. It was described by Ardo Omer, our Kids Coordinator, as “a gentle read and does a fantastic job weaving family history with Australia’s killing of the Tasmanian tiger into extinction,” in Quill and Quire’s “2020 Books of the Year: Books for Young People” (<https://quillandquire.com/omni/2020-books-of-the-year-books-for-young-people/>). Kadarusman’s marriage of music with nature both in terms of plot and prose is why it was chosen as the Book-of-the-Month for December 2020.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michelle Kadarusman is a Toronto-based writer. Her 2019 middle grade novel, *Girl of the Southern Sea*, was a finalist for the Governor General’s Literary Award and a Junior Library Guild selection. Her previous novel, *The Theory of Hummingbirds*, was a finalist for the Forest of Reading Silver Birch Award, the MYRCA Sundogs Award, and the SYRCA Diamond Willow Award.