

Keeping Up with Children's Literature

Feature

by Matthew C. Winner, March 2016

Browsing book reviews and shelf-surfing at the local book store are both excellent ways to keep abreast on what's new in children's literature, but inevitably you'll end up missing something. By contrast, having trusted Web resources and social media outlets can pull you headlong into the excitement of pre-publication anticipation, annual award buzz, and what titles are being talked about far and wide throughout the kidlitosphere.

No matter what the tool, there's a wealth of great content out there to help keep you in-the-know for the latest and greatest in children's literature. Combine these tools and you have a powerful force that can overhaul your collection to stay fresh with new releases, relevant to the children as well as the curriculum, and reflective of diverse needs and experiences.

BLOGS

For those who are drawn to regularly posted content encompassing book cover reveals, book trailer premieres, themes-based reading lists, reviews and commentary, you can't do better than a good kidlit blog.

Nerdy Book Club <https://nerdybookclub.wordpress.com/>

Daily posts from a community of readers ranging in topic from book reviews to top 10 posts to stories of how the blog post author came to be a reader. The sense of community and ability to network with other educators, librarians, and book enthusiasts make this an invaluable resource to have in your bookmarks.

Watch. Connect. Read <http://mrschureads.blogspot.com/>

Mr. Schu, known affectionately as the "Johnny Appleseed of Children's Literature," shares interviews with authors and illustrators, first looks at upcoming releases, book trailer premieres, and all other means of celebrating children's books and the faces behind them.

Magpie That <http://magpiethat.com/>

Picture book reviews from across the pond. While some of the books reviewed are exclusive to the United Kingdom (for now), the layout of the site is beautiful and lends itself well to picture-walking through new releases. And in a world of Amazon.com, no good book is really that far out of reach, is it?

Design of the Picture Book <http://www.designofthepicturebook.com/>

A look into the art and composition of a picture book. Posts incorporate generous amounts of interior art, giving readers not only a glimpse into new and well-designed picture books, but also a commentary on how the book's components work individually to elevate the whole. It's a reading experience that will cause you to fall even more deeply in love with the books shared on the site.

This Picture Book Life <http://thispicturebooklife.com/>

Quirky book lists, beautiful book-related crafts, and thoughtful interviews with children's book authors and illustrators. One of the things this blog does better than many others is feature its content on a site designed to show off its content. Editorial-quality photos, sharp post layouts, and an overall clean design help to illuminate the blog's content to a degree that it is plain to see how picture books can be works of art.

KCR! Kids' Comics Awards <http://comicsaregreat.com/category/kidscomicsrevolution>

An annual comic and graphic novel award nominated by teacher, librarians, and cartoonists, and decided by kids. The nominees in each of several categories are among the greatest and most loved characters and stories in kids' comics, and the list of nominees could easily be used to help libraries establish core collections of graphic novels. Categories include Favorite Comic Book Hero, Favorite Comic/Novel Hybrid, Favorite Webcomic, and Grossest Thing in Comics.

Kids Comics List <http://yaytime.com/resources/kids-comics-list-2014/>

Dave Roman, creator of the *Astronaut Academy* series, maintains a list of all of the comics and webcomics produced for kids each year. These robust lists are the easiest way to make sure you didn't miss anything from the previous year and they are a great way to connect readers to new comics. Specifically, the curated list of webcomics

for kids is always an impressive sight.

MULTIMEDIA

For those seeking engagement across technology platforms, multimedia sites provide access to articles, audio and video resources, and other means to interact with content, providing multiple points of entry and numerous opportunities to connect with books from all angles.

All the Wonders <http://allthewonders.com/>

Crafts, podcasts, book lists, book commentary, and songs adapted from favorite stories. All the Wonders bills itself as “a home for readers to discover new books and to experience the stories they love in wondrous ways.” This is executed through multiple resources connecting to a single book, such as in the case of their “All the Wonders of *Leo: A Ghost Story*” feature, wherein was published an original song adapted from the story, a puppet craft appropriate for elementary school-aged readers, a commentary on the art and story, and podcast interviews with the author and illustrator. Different books are featured each week and articles are written with parents and readers in mind.

TWITTER

For those looking for bite-sized book recommendations and information on new releases, look no farther than 140 characters or less. It’s not necessary to have a Twitter account in order to view the following information, although an account is needed to reply or contribute to any of the information users post on-site.

#TitleTalk <https://twitter.com/hashtag/TitleTalk>

Last Sunday of every month. 8-9pm EST. A theme is selected and participants share books that connect to that theme.

#SharpSchu <https://twitter.com/hashtag/SharpSchu>

Third Wednesday of the month. 9-10pm EST. A book club wherein participants share thoughts on the pre-selected books and have the opportunity to tweet to and hear responses from the author or illustrator behind each book.

#VBCbooks <https://twitter.com/hashtag/VBCbooks>

First Monday of the month. 9pm EST. A middle grade book club for teachers and librarians that includes discussion, and on occasion Q&A with the novel’s author.

SOCIAL MEDIA

For those who find themselves on their smartphone or internet-connected device on their downtime, filling the void with the books creating the biggest buzz is as easy as launching an app. You may even be the one to start the conversation, so don’t be shy about sharing the books you love.

Instagram

Several book publishers have an active presence on Instagram and regularly share new and upcoming books from their catalog. Here are some of the most active publisher accounts:

- Penguin USA <https://www.instagram.com/penguinusa/>
- Random House Kids <https://www.instagram.com/randomhousekids/>
- Chronicle Books <https://www.instagram.com/chroniclebooks/>
- Candlewick Press <https://www.instagram.com/candlewickpress/>
- Flying Eye Books <https://www.instagram.com/flyingeyebooks/>

Pinterest

Finding and sharing books and book lists is simple on Pinterest. And the added bonus is that following active boards assures a steady stream of content passing right in front of your eyes. These profiles and associated boards are an excellent place to start:

- KidLitTV <https://www.pinterest.com/KidLitTV/>
- PragmaticMom <https://www.pinterest.com/pragmaticmom/>
- Brightly <https://www.pinterest.com/readbrightly/>

Goodreads

Reading in the company of colleagues and friends can foster a feeling of connectedness and purpose. These lists on Goodreads are just samples of the great conversations people are having online around books.

- 2016 Mock Caldecott https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/82343.2016_Mock_Caldecott
- 2016 Mock Newbery https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/82425.2016_Mock_Newbery
- 2016 Mock Printz https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/86331.Mock_Printz_2016

PODCASTS

For those who loved *Serial* and are ready to treat their ears to content focused on children's literature, listening to these podcasts gives voice to some of the creators behind your favorite modern works for children and allows you to discover new reads while on the go.

Let's Get Busy! <http://www.allthewonders.com/podcasts/lets-get-busy/>

A weekly chat with authors, illustrators, cartoonists, and more. Episodes range from 30-45 minutes on average and have included such guests as Dan Santat, Philip and Erin Stead, Katherine Applegate, and Jon Scieszka.

Picturebooking <http://picturebooking.com/>

A podcast about creating and sharing picture books. Episodes range from 45-60 minutes on average and have included such guests as Molly Idle, Matt Tavares, Peter Brown, and Victoria Jamieson.

The Best Book Ever [this week] <http://www.allthewonders.com/best-book-ever-this-week/>

Five books reviewed without script. Episodes range from 10-15 minutes on average and include reviews of newly published picture books, chapter books, and graphic novels.

Book Club for Kids <http://www.bookclubforkids.org/>

A podcast where young readers meet to talk about a book. Episodes range from 20-25 minutes on average and include a book discussion with kids led by host Kitty Felde as well as a celebrity read aloud.

I encourage you to explore each of these resources and then select the combination that's right for you. Setting aside time each day or each week to explore updates on your favorite blogs or social media tools is an excellent collection development practice. Leaving feedback, responding to posts, or generating content of your own is an easy way to become part of the conversation around children's literature and is also an effective way to advocate for your students and your library program. No matter what works best, I wish you lots and lots of happy reading in the future!

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