Forging New Paths

Book Buddy, January, 2024

Score in ’24—reading opens doors and offers great pleasures. No idea what titles to choose? Start right here with Book Buddy Picks, this month focusing on books about “Forging New Paths.” The New Year lays before us, a fresh new page ready to write our experiences on—what a gift to start anew, to welcome 12 exciting months, certain to be full of opportunities.

Make “Paging On” with Clover your New Year’s resolution!

Fun facts and creativity abound in “365: How to Count a Year.” In this clever picture book author Miranda Paul dissects a year, detailing amusing info about what a year might hold.

Month by month, week by week, day by day, minute by minute and second by second, possible experiences are presented by a cute brunette kid and his friendly lion sidekick. The pair offers readers the chance to imagine fun activities to fill time, with a few responsibilities thrown in for good measure.

At the onset, a year appears to be a big chunk, but when it’s broken into smaller measures, each tick can rock our clock. “It takes the Earth 365 days to spin around the sun. That’s 365 ‘Good mornings,’ 365 ‘Good nights,” and hopefully, 365 clean pairs of underwear.”

A year also is comprised of 52 weeks. “That could mean 52 Friday night movie popcorn spills,” or “52 sleep-in-Saturdays.”

Page by page, word by word, musings about a year are presented, amusing facts accompanied by big, bold, bright illustrations by Julien Chung. At the end of this appealing read, information about calendars and methods to creatively count your year are included.

Maps make getting around so much easier—we all know that. But in the fun book, “What a Map Can Do,” by Gabrielle Balkan, we are immersed in all the ways that maps make our lives easier. A friendly raccoon serves as our guide in this colorful, informative book with lots of maps and illustrations by Alberto Lot.

For starters, our guide explains that maps show us a “birds eye view of things,” without even being a bird. Readers get a look-see inside raccoon’s room. It’s a comfy place with a bed, desk, and the usual furnishings. To help readers get engaged in map fun, raccoon asks for help in finding certain things.

After visiting the contained space of raccoon’s room, we next see his entire house. Then we move into his neighborhood and the fun really starts as raccoon asks readers to help navigate the way from his house to the playground. Maps rock because they serve “… as a tool that can help us get to where we want to go.”

Facts about maps are included in this comprehensive must-read that includes many more maps of interest—a map of a national forest, a trail map, a museum map, a weather map, even a map about the inside of our bodies that follows the journey an animal cracker takes when raccoon pops it into its mouth. There’s plenty more to explore in this crowd pleaser!

Ginny from “Ginny Off the Map” has a unique interest. She’s a geography nerd—smart as a whip and obsessed with details about the world and its inhabitants, information she spouts off about to her friends and family. Ginny also is an Army kid. Though she’s only 11, Ginny and her older sister Allie, age 12-½, have moved five times in their short lives.

Another move is in the cards for girls and their mother—the girls’ dad, an emergency room doctor, is being deployed to Afghanistan, a big surprise. Especially because the family is just about to move from South Carolina to Maryland, setting up yet another household.

The news of her father going away for months flattens Ginny, who has a special bond with him—feels like he’s the only one who truly understands her. Ginny’s sister certainly doesn’t. In fact, Allie couldn’t be more different than Ginny. Allie has hoop madness, continually has a basketball in her hands, makes friends easily and loves to be outdoors.

As their father prepares to leave the country, he gives Ginny a thoughtful gift. A compass that symbolizes his desire for Ginny to “find her true North,” while he is away—to determine what her dreams are, how to pursue them and be true to herself.

This is a gargantuan goal for Ginny, one sidelined by obstacles that upend her as she tries to improve her relationship with her sister, develop new friendships, and adjust to missing her dad and all of his wisdom. Ginny’s growth is a route strewn with obstacles but readers will pull for her to find her way.

*Written by Chris Stuckenschneider. Copyright 2024 Community Literacy Foundation. Reprint with permission.*