March Book Buddy

“Uniquely You”

We are all special in our own way—some of us do well in math and science, others of us enjoy English. Maybe you admire the way your buddy can shoot a basketball. Maybe that same friend is envious of your big foot in soccer. When we compare ourselves to others, we often use a yardstick that’s inflexible.

To help us zero in on our attributes, Clover has selected a “Uniquely You” theme for March. She’s happy to suggest books that feature characters who come to realize their personal strengths, assets that make our world a more well-rounded place. Page On. Enjoy!

Wouldn’t it be nice if we all had a buddy in the mirror that spirited away our insecurities when we glanced into a glass and saw ourselves there? A pal who is all about accentuating our positive qualities. The main character in “The Reflection in Me,” by Marc Colagiovanni, has a pal like that, one who boosts the kid’s ego as it points out the child’s top-notch traits.

“I like being you,” the reflection in the mirror states. “To me you’re perfect.”

The child doesn’t initially think so, until the reflection starts tallying the child’s strong points: eyes that “sparkle like stars on the darkest of nights,” a voice “…as joyous as a songbird whistling in the trees,” and a smile “…as bright and cheerful as the sun in the sky.”

Who wouldn’t start to feel better hearing such lovely compliments?

After the mirror ticks off the child’s physical qualities, it moves on to the child’s personality and points out the child’s special qualities, topped off with the kid’s most endearing trait of all—overall kindness. That’s the bedrock of this endearing, feel-good book with just-right illustrations by the ever optimistic Peter H. Reynolds, whose cheery disposition and artistic talent puts smiles on readers’ faces.

 When people aren’t happy with themselves, they have a nasty way of tearing down others. That’s the scenario in “Lola and the Troll,” by Connie Schultz. In this endearing read we meet a girl who develops pluck after she’s belittled by a neighborhood meanie.

 Lola is upbeat and loves school—except going there takes her past Tom the Troll’s home. The Troll terrifies all the kids, some of whom change their route, while others dash past in terror. Though Lola has her tiny pup Tank by her side, trying to get past Tom the Troll’s lair without being noticed fails. The Troll nails her with barbed remarks about her hair, clothing and such, remarks that sting so much that Lola changes herself to avoid being razzed.

Other’s notice Lola’s slumped gloom and doom. Fortunately, a wise bookshop owner takes Lola under her wing, pointing out qualities she and Lola share, an observation that impacts Lola in a big way, forcing her to face her dread of the meanie, who ends up being more Tom than Troll.

Illustrations by Sandy Rodríguez are colorful and engaging, adding more allure to this heartfelt story.

Passionate about nature, Rachel Carson, (1907-1964), a celebrated author, environmentalist and marine biologist, loved to write as a child and wander in the woods and fields with her dog. No detail missed her observant eye. She made notes about what she saw and was published at an early age. Yet Carson eventually had a rough time deciding on a career because her love of writing collided with her passion for biology. All this in an era when women didn’t pursue careers in science.

A gorgeous new book in verse, “Force of Nature,” by Ann E. Burg, gifts us with a personal, powerful chronicle of Carson’s life, beginning when she’s 11, and advancing through adulthood, after the books she wrote about nature, the ocean and the danger of pesticides were widely recognized and honored, including her most famous, “Silent Spring,” a bestseller.

Carson’s steadfast mother encouraged her daughter to write and supported her desire to attend college. For Carson, nothing was more important than an education—marriage, she said, wasn’t for everyone. But how could she support herself with her writing?

The answer came when Carson enrolled in biology, a class that captivated her. Gradually, she came to realize that she could use her observations—the things she saw in fields, creeks, in the ocean—to write books about nature that might create positive change.

Life wasn’t easy for Carson. She had great personal loss, yet she strove forward, putting pen to paper and leaving the world richer for her contributions. Throughout this lovely book, readers are treated to drawings by Sophie Blackall, her illustrations of animals, birds and plants gracing the pages.

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