

Canadian Civil Liberties Education Trust (CCLET)

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CCLET List of recommended children's books

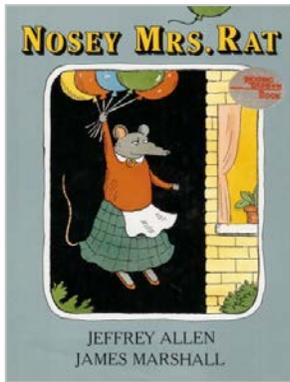
This list represents some books we have used successfully with children and youth in order to introduce and explore various issues around rights and freedoms.

If you have any additional recommendations for the list, please contact us! You can send your suggestions to education@ccla.org.

The books are listed alphabetically, by author surname. You can also search ("CTRL+F" for PC, or "⌘+F" for Mac) by subject keywords below.

Subject Keywords:

- Citizenship
 - Culture
 - Climate Change
 - Democracy
 - Difference
 - Discrimination
 - Equality Rights
 - Freedom of Association
 - Freedom of Belief
 - Freedom of Expression
 - Freedom of Opinion
 - Freedom of Peaceful Assembly
 - Freedom of Religion
 - Global Awareness
 - Homelessness
 - Identity
 - Inclusion
 - Individual Action
 - Mental Illness
 - Poverty
 - Privacy
 - Race
 - Reasonable Limits
 - Refugee Protection
 - Right to Life
 - Right to Liberty
 - Right to Security
 - Rules
 - Voting Rights
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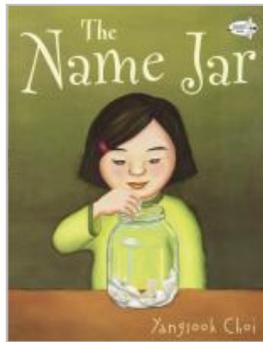
Allen, Jeffrey: *Nosey Mrs. Rat*. Toronto: Puffin Books, 1987.

Mrs. Rat just loves snooping on her neighbours. When a neighbourhood boy becomes fed up with Mrs. Rat's spying, he decides to teach her a lesson by turning the tables on her.

Subject Keywords: Privacy

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Mrs. Rat loves snooping on her neighbours so much? Have you ever felt so curious about something that you wanted to do some snooping yourself?
2. Why do you think the neighbours, especially Brewster Blackstone, were so upset about Mrs. Rat's snooping?
3. Do you think it is important to respect people's privacy? Why or why not?
4. Who do you think should be allowed to look at your personal things? Does it matter why they might want to look? Is just being curious a good enough reason to snoop?
5. Could there ever be a time when it might be fair to look at someone's personal stuff without their permission?



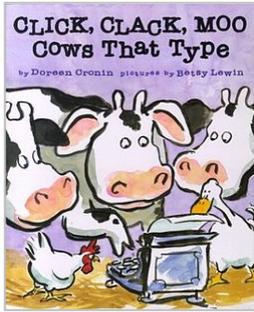
Choi, Yangsook: *The Name Jar*. New York: A.A. Knopf, 2001.

Unhei recently moved to America from Korea with her family. After someone teases her about her name on the school bus, Unhei welcomes suggestions from her classmates to help her choose an "American" name. When Unhei's mother reminds her of the origins of her name, Unhei knows exactly which name to choose for her new life in America.

Subject Keywords: Culture; Difference; Identity; Inclusion; Race

Discussion Questions:

1. How many names do you have? Do you know how you got your names? Is there a story and a special meaning behind your name? Unhei's name means grace in Korean. Do your names have different meanings in another language?
2. Why do you think Unhei was worried about using her Korean name in America? Why do you think Unhei decided in the end to keep her Korean name?
3. Do you think your name is an important part of your identity? Why or why not? If you could choose any name to represent who you are and what you want people to know about you, what name would you choose?



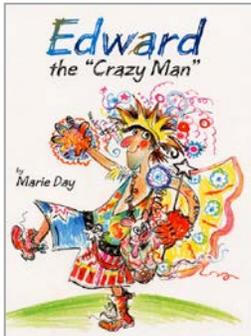
Cronin, Doreen: *Click, Clack Moo. Cows that Type*. New York: Little Simon, 2010.

Farmer Brown's cows have a unique talent – they can type! All that typing was enough to drive Farmer Brown mad, but when he finds out that the cows are using their typing skills to make demands on the farm, he realizes he has a *real* problem on his hands.

Subject Keywords: Freedom of Association; Freedom of Expression; Freedom of Peaceful Assembly;

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think the cows' request for electric blankets was reasonable? Why or why not?
2. Do you think it was fair for the cows to go on strike when Farmer Brown refused to provide the blankets? Why or why not?
3. Why do you think the cows also asked Farmer Brown to provide blankets for the hens? Was it helpful to include the hens in their request for blankets?
4. What did the cows do in order to convince the farmer to give them the blankets? Do you think they should have had to make this compromise?



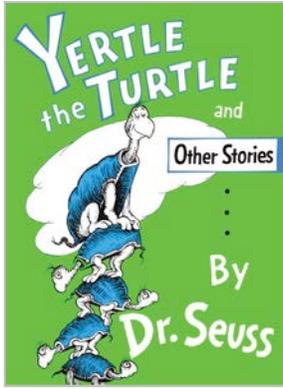
Day, Marie: *Edward the "Crazy Man"*. Toronto: Annick Press Ltd., 2002.

As a young boy, Charlie meets a homeless man who has a talent for transforming discarded objects into fantastic costumes. Everyone in the community dismisses him as the "Crazy Man" but Charlie sees something special in him. One day the "Crazy Man" saves Charlie from being run over by a car, and then disappears. It's not until a chance meeting when Charlie is all grown up that he is finally able to thank the man who saved him.

Subject Keywords: Poverty; Homelessness; Mental Illness

Discussion Questions:

1. Most people in Charlie's neighbourhood make fun of Edward and call him the "Crazy Man". When the class bully said Edward is a weirdo that should be locked up, why do you think Charlie said that's a "really dumb thing to say"? What did Charlie see in Edward that everyone else seemed to ignore?
2. When Charlie was all grown up and found Edward sleeping on the street, he leaves his business card instead of leaving money. In what ways did was Charlie's business card more helpful to Edward than simply giving money?
3. Dr. Singh tells Charlie that Edward has a serious illness that makes it very hard for him to act like most people do. There may be some people in your community that have a similar illness, or may be living on the street like Edward. How do you think people like Edward want to be treated?



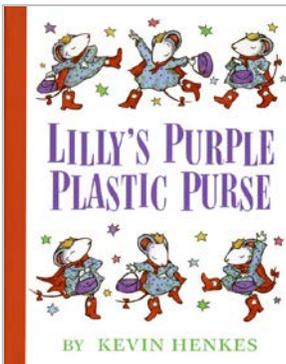
Dr. Seuss.: *Yertle the Turtle and Other Stories*. New York: Random House Inc., 1950.

Yertle the Turtle is king of the pond, but when he decides take drastic steps to expand his kingdom, a plain little turtle named Mack starts to question the king.

Subject Keywords: Democracy; Equality Rights; Freedom of Expression; Individual Action; Reasonable Limits; Right to Liberty;

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did Mack and the other turtles obey Yertle's commands to pile on top of one another to make a new throne?
2. Since Yertle is the king of the pond, shouldn't he be allowed to make the other turtles do whatever he wants? Why or why not?
3. Should Mack have just done as he was told? Do you think Mack was right to complain? Why or why not?



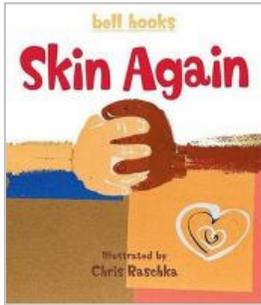
Henkes, Kevin: *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*. New York: Greenwillow Books, 2006.

Lilly loves her new purple purse and can't wait to show it off to her classmates. When her favourite teacher asks her to put it away until the end of class, she expresses her anger in a way that she soon regrets.

Subject Keywords: Freedom of Expression; Freedom of Opinion

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Lilly drew that mean picture of Mr. Slinger? Do you think she meant the things she said/drew? Have you ever said something you didn't mean and then apologize for it afterwards?
2. Do you think Lilly's drawing hurt Mr. Slinger's feelings? Do you think Mr. Slinger should have given Lilly a harsher punishment like a detention after school? Why or why not?



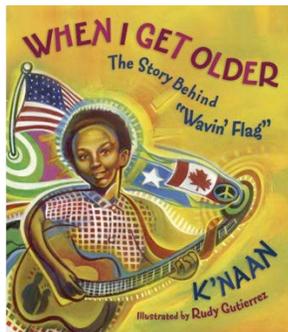
hooks, bell: *Skin Again*. New York : Hyperion Books for Children, 2004.

Our skin might be one of the first things people see on the outside, but just like a book, the real stories that make us who we are lie just beneath the surface.

Subject Keywords: Culture; Difference; Identity; Inclusion; Race

Discussion Questions:

1. In this book the author says “The skin I’m in is just a covering. It cannot tell my story.” The colour of our skin is just one of the many characteristics that make up our identity. What are some other important features, both visible and invisible, that make you who you are and tell your story?
2. Do you think you can really understand and know someone just by their appearance? Why or why not?
3. What could happen if we judged people only by the way they look on the outside? What parts of your story would someone miss if they only paid attention to your appearance?



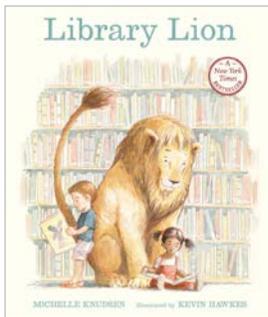
K'Naan: *When I Get Older. The Story Behind "Wavin' Flag"*. Toronto: Tundra Books, 2012.

Internationally renowned recording artist K'Naan tells the story of his family's escape from war-torn Somalia to Canada and the inspiration behind his hit song, *Wavin' Flag*.

Subject Keywords: Citizenship; Global Awareness; Refugee Protection

Discussion Questions:

1. In the book, K'Naan says that when he and his family moved to Canada, they were called “refugees.” What do you think it means to be a refugee? How is moving to a country as a refugee different from moving to another country because you prefer the scenery or weather there?
2. Do you think Canada should do anything to help refugees looking for a safe place to call home? If so, what? If not, why not?



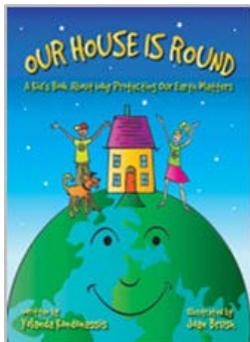
Knudson, Michelle. *Library Lion*. Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick, 2006.

Miss Merriweather the librarian is very strict about following the rules in the library. Since there are no rules about lions, Miss Merriweather isn't bothered when a lion comes for a visit. But when something terrible happens, the lion quickly comes to the rescue the only way he knows how: by breaking the rules.

Subject Keywords: Freedom of Expression; Reasonable Limits; Rules;

Discussion Questions:

1. If we have freedom of expression, why must we be quiet in the library? Do you think this is a fair limit to our freedom of expression? Why or why not?
2. Why did the lion break the rules? What were the consequences of breaking the rule? What could have happened if the lion didn't break the rule? Can rules sometimes have consequences too?
3. At the end of the story, Mr. McBee told the lion that there was a new rule about roaring in the library. Do you think the new rule is more fair? Are there rules in your school that you think may have some negative consequences? Can you think of ways to improve those rules and make them more fair?



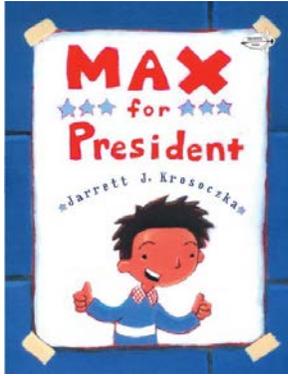
Kondonassis, Yolanda: *Our House is Round*. New York : Sky Pony Press, 2012.

Our House is Round is a book that demonstrates how each of us can have a positive and negative effect on the health of our planet.

Subject Keywords: Climate Change; Global Awareness; Individual Action

Discussion Questions:

1. We all have stuff in our homes that we don't need any more and want to throw away. What would happen if, instead of putting your garbage out to be collected, you hid it inside a closet so you wouldn't have to look at it?
2. When you do put your garbage out to be collected, where do you think it goes? What do you think might happen over time if we continue to collect our garbage in landfills?
3. In the book, the author says that our earth is not too messy to clean up, but we need a plan and we all need to help. What kinds of actions can you take to help clean up our big round house?



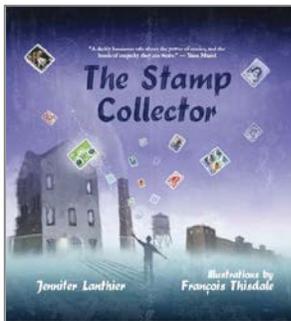
Krosoczka, Jarrett J.: *Max for President*. New York: Dragonfly Books, 2008.

Max wants to run for class president, but so does his classmate Kelly. Both have a lot of ideas on how to improve their classroom but only one person can win the election. Who will it be?

Subject Keywords: Democracy; Individual Action; Voting Rights;

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Max and Kelly wanted to run for class president?
2. If you can run for class president, should you be allowed to run for Mayor as well? Why or why not?
3. If you were elected as class president, what would you do to improve your school? If you were elected as Mayor, what would you do to improve your city or town?



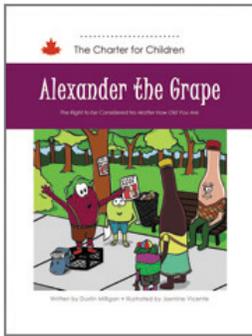
Lanthier, Jennifer: *The Stamp Collector*. Markham: Fitzhenry & Whiteside Limited, 2012.

A city boy finds a stamp that unlocks his imagination; a country boy is captivated by stories. When they grow up, the two boys take different paths—one becomes a prison guard, the other works in a factory—but their early childhood passions remain. When the country boy's stories of hope land him in prison, the letters and stamps sent to him from faraway places intrigue the prison guard and a unique friendship begins. (Amazon)

Subject Keywords: Freedom of Belief; Freedom of Expression; Freedom of Opinion; Freedom of Peaceful Assembly; Individual Action; Reasonable Limits; Right to Liberty;

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think the country boy wrote his first story? Why do you think the factory owners wanted to stop him from writing again?
2. The prison guard knew that he was taking a great risk when he decided to listen to the country boy's new story and write it down for others to read. Why do you think the guard was willing to take this risk?
3. What could be the consequence if we prevent people from expressing themselves freely? What could be the consequence if we allow everyone to express anything they wanted to? How should we decide what kind of expression should be allowed and what kind of expression should be limited?



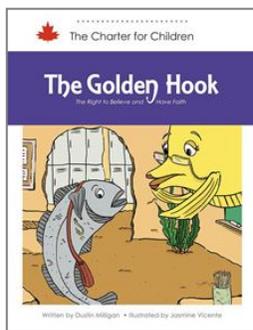
Milligan, Dustin. Alexander the Grape: *The Right to Be Considered No Matter How Old You Are*. Ottawa: DC Canada Education Publishing, 2013

Alexander dreams of travelling across the province as a mature bottle of grape juice, but the “Maturity Rule” (which states that only grapes of a certain age are old enough to become juice) is standing in his way. Determined to make his dream a reality before the fall, Alexander and his friends embark on a campaign to convince local politicians and voters to lower the age of maturity.

Subject Keywords: Discrimination; Equality Rights; Freedom of Association; Individual Action; Reasonable Limits; Rules; Voting Rights;

Discussion Questions:

1. Is it ever fair to treat people differently or have different rules depending on someone’s age? Why or why not?
2. In some countries, there is a law stating that you must be at least 16 years old before you can get a driver’s license. Is this fair? Why or why not? If there was a law that you had to be at least 16 to choose your own ice cream flavor, would that be fair? Why or why not?
3. In the story, there are two different rules based on age that all the grapes must follow. The Maturity Rule states that only grapes 10 years old and older can become grape juice; and the voting rule states that grapes must be at least 18 years old before they can vote in an election. Is it fair to have different age limits for different activities? Why or why not?



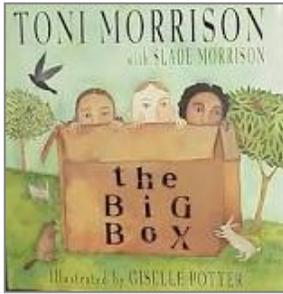
Milligan, Dustin: *The Golden Hook*. Ottawa: DC Canada Education Publishing, 2012.

When Aatma the cod fish is found at school with a golden hook behind his fin, teachers and classmates become scared and ban Aatma from wearing the hook to school. Because the golden hook is part of Aatma’s religion, the school board must decide whether or not he should be permitted to wear it to school.

Subject Keywords: Difference; Freedom of Belief; Freedom of Religion; Inclusion; Reasonable Limits; Rules;

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did Aatma’s teacher say that he could not wear his golden hook to school? Did she have a good reason?
2. Why was wearing the golden hook so important to Aatma?
3. If school safety and freedom of religion are both important, can you come up with a school rule that would allow Aatma to wear his golden hook and help to ensure that everyone is safe at school?



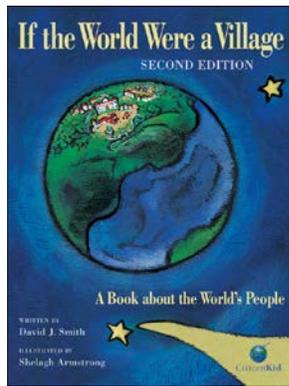
Morrison, Toni: *The Big Box*. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 1999.

The adults don't know what to do with Patty, Mickey and Liza Sue, three children who just can't seem to follow the rules. The adults create a world inside a big box for the children and shower them with all the best toys and treats. Despite all these gifts, it seems the only thing that will make the children happy is their freedom.

Subject Keywords: Reasonable Limits; Right to Liberty; Rules;

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you think the children deserved to have their freedom taken away? Why or why not?
2. In the Big Box, there were many items that the adults thought the children would enjoy like toys, games, movies and treats. Why do you think the children were still unhappy?
3. What do you think the children mean when they say "if freedom is handled just your way then it's not my freedom or free"?



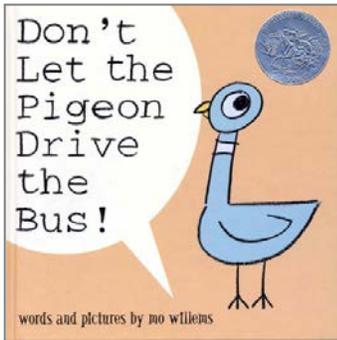
Smith, David J.: *If the World Were a Village*. 2nd ed. Toronto: Kids Can Press Ltd., 2011.

This book demonstrates what the world's population would look like if condensed into a global village of 100 people.

Subject Keywords: Citizenship; Equality Rights; Global Awareness;

Discussion Questions:

1. Search the book to find the following facts about our global village of 100 people:
 - a) How many people in the village do not always have enough to eat?
 - b) In the parts of our village where people do not have a nearby source of safe water, are boys or girls more likely to have to travel far distances each day to fetch water?
 - c) Are males or females more likely to be taught how to read?
 - d) How many people in the village have most of the world's wealth?
2. Why doesn't everyone in the village have equal access to food, water, education, or wealth? How do you think we could fix this problem?
3. If you could make rules so that everyone in the global village had enough to meet their basic needs, what would your rules say?



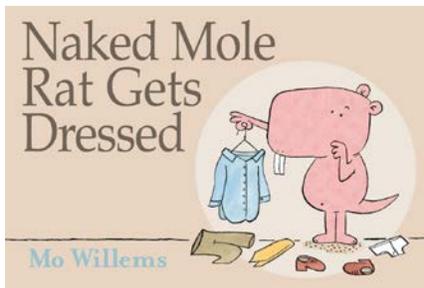
Willems, Mo: *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2003.

When the bus driver takes a quick break, a very tenacious pigeon tries desperately to convince readers to let him drive the bus despite the driver's specific instructions to the contrary.

Subject Keywords: Discrimination; Equality Rights; Rules; Reasonable Limits

Discussion Questions:

1. Is it fair that the pigeon is not allowed to drive the bus? Why or why not?
2. What if instead the bus driver had a rule about who could *ride* the bus: All animals are allowed to ride the bus, EXCEPT for the pigeon. Would that be fair? Why or why not?
3. What is the difference between making rules about who gets to drive the bus and who gets to ride the bus? Why might one rule be more fair than the other?

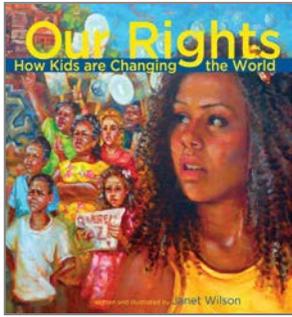


Willems, Mo: *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed.* New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2009. A naked mole rat named Wilbur breaks the first rule of the mole rat society: never wear clothes. Regardless of what the other mole rats say, Wilbur continues to express himself through fashion and the naked mole rat colony is forced to rethink their traditions.

Subject Keywords: Difference; Discrimination; Equality Rights; Freedom of Expression; Inclusion; Individual Action; Reasonable Limits; Right to Liberty; Rules;

Discussion Questions:

1. Wilbur wanted the freedom to express himself through his clothing. Why do you think the other mole rats were so upset that Wilbur liked to get dressed?
2. Wilbur was the *only* mole rat in the colony who liked to get dressed. Do you think it would be fair for the mole rats to take a vote to decide whether or not Wilbur should have the freedom to wear clothes? What do you predict would have been the result of the vote? Is voting always a fair way to decide about limits to our freedoms? Why or why not?
3. What was the question that Wilbur asked that made Grand-pah change his mind about wearing clothes? What did Grand-pah realise when he considered Wilbur's question? Why do you think this simple question made Grand-pah change his mind?



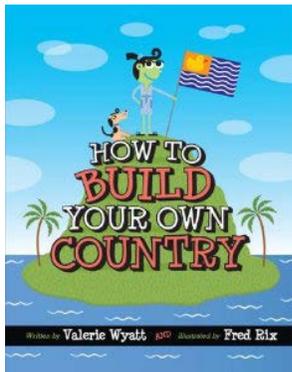
Wilson, Janet: *Our Rights. How Kids are Changing the World.* Toronto: Second Story Press, 2013.

Every child has the right to feel safe and secure. *Our Rights* is a compilation of true stories about children all over the world who are standing up for their rights and the rights of others.

Subject Keywords: Equality Rights; Freedom of Association; Freedom of Peaceful Assembly; Individual Action; Right to Life; Right to Security;

Discussion Questions:

1. Some of the children featured in this book were inspired to act as a result of an injustice that they faced. Some children were working to address problems that did not directly affect their own lives. Why do you think all the children in the book felt it was important to do something to protect not only their own rights, but also the rights of others?
2. Are there any important issues that affect the rights of children in your community? What are some lawful and peaceful ways that you can address those problems and make a difference in your community?



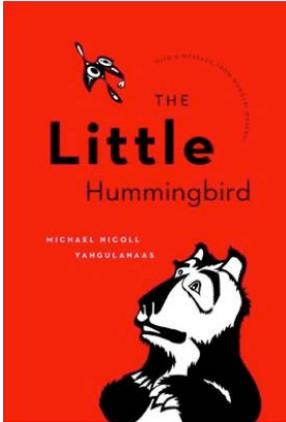
Wyatt, Valerie: *How to Build Your Own Country.* Toronto: Kids Can Press Ltd., 2009.

Have you ever wanted to be the leader of your very own micro nation? Find out how in this hilarious step by step guide to building your own country.

Subject Keywords: Citizenship; Democracy; Global Awareness; Reasonable Limits; Refugee Protection; Rules;

Discussion Questions:

1. Running a country is a lot harder than having pets. What necessities beyond food and water do you think your citizens will need to live healthy and prosperous lives?
2. Why do you think democracies seem to be the most popular form of government?
3. As the leader of your country, how will you treat the citizens of other countries? Will you allow them to enter your country as visitors? Will you allow anyone to enter as an immigrant (someone who leaves their country to live in yours)? If the people of another country are being treated badly by their leader, what might you do to help?



Yahgulanaas, Michael Nicoll: *The Little Hummingbird*. Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2010.

This book is about a courageous hummingbird that fights a forest fire one tiny drop at a time.

Subject Keywords: Individual Action

Discussion questions:

1. Why do you think the little Hummingbird continued to try to extinguish the massive fire, even though she could only bring water one drop at a time?
2. What lesson can you learn from the Hummingbird about taking action towards an important cause?
3. Do you think it was wise for the Hummingbird to put herself in danger by trying to fight the fire on her own? What do you think could have been accomplished if all the animals did their small part to try to extinguish the fire?
4. Have you ever done something like the Hummingbird? (Something courageous/acted to protect yourself or others?)