

NOVEL SUMMARIES

Broken Strings – Co-Written with Kathy Kacer (Penguin Random House 2019) Shirley could almost sing and dance before she could walk and talk. She becomes the lead female role in the school play, *Fiddler On The Roof*. Her role in the play unlocks mysteries about the history of her family, her grandfather and the Holocaust. Set in New Jersey a few months after 9/11, this emotional story is built around the secrets that are revealed.

Always With You (Nimbus, 2019) Emily's beloved grandfather passes away. Before his death he leaves behind for her a series of letters and presents to be given to her at major times in her life. Each message ends with the line – Always With you. A gentle picture book about grief and the things that remain.

Light A Candle (Orca, 2019) With the independence of Tanzania the new president asks members of the Chugga tribe to bring wood to the top of Kilimanjaro to 'light a candle' to show freedom. This picture book follows a young boy joining his father to the top of the mountain to complete this request.

Elephant Secret (Penguin Random House 2018) Samantha Gray has one parent, her dad, and a big family: eleven elephants. Living in an elephant sanctuary and raised close to the herd, Sam understands the animals' behavior, interacts with them easily, and has a special relationship with each one. With a new arrival at the sanctuary, Sam's world is upended. She knew that raising a newborn elephant would be hard, time-consuming work. But she never anticipated the secrets surrounding this baby, which threaten the herd's peaceful existence, the sanctuary's everyday routine, and even Sam and her dad's place among their elephants.

The Wild Beast – (Orca 2018) A picture book illustrated by Sue Todd – a creative take on a creation story sparked by a story told while on safari.

Surfer Dog – (Orca 2018) A picture book illustrated by Eugenie Fernandes set in Costa Rica – a story about a boy, a dog and a surf board.

Batcat and the Seven Squirrels (Orca Fall 2016) Ages 6 – 10 Nathan has always loved animals and longed for a pet. So when he discovers seven orphaned baby squirrels in his backyard, Nathan is keen to help them. He soon enlisted the unexpected help of Batcat, a neighborhood cat who is fed by many but owned by no one.

Today is the Day (Tundra, 2015) Ages 6–10 A birthday party is held for the 115 children of the orphanage, many of who were abandoned so young that they don't know their birthday or age. Excitement builds as the day approaches. Finally it arrives, and each child gets a 'loot bag', party hat and cake. Even more significantly, they not only celebrate their birth, but each child receives a birth certificate—letting the world know they are important.

***Walking Home* (Doubleday, 2014) Ages 9–13** Muchoki is left in a desperate situation with the death of his father due to political violence and his mother to malaria. He is forced to take his younger sister on a trek across Kenya to find the maternal family he's never met in a place he's never been. This novel is integrated into a website where the reader can see videos and pictures, hear interviews, read bonus chapters, hear sections read by the author, and read a running 'directors' cut' of the experience as the author undertook the same walk—150 kilometers across Kenya—as the protagonist in the book. A new experience that combines fiction and non-fiction, utilizes technology, and is applicable for courses ranging from Social Justice and Global studies to geography, history and African studies. It can even be tied into Writers' Craft courses.

***Hope Springs* (Tundra, 2014) Ages 6–9** During a period of drought the children of the Hope Orphanage are denied water by the people of the community, who feel there isn't enough for their families. The children are helped to understand that even good people can do desperate things and they decide that the only way to fight darkness is with light. Based on the development of a real water project in Kikima, Kenya this picture book features the beautiful illustrations of Eugenie Fernandes.

***Saving Sammy* (Orca, 2014) Ages 7–9** After Morgan's backyard is flooded by the nearby river, her dog, Shire, finds a baby beaver that has been washed out of its den. Realizing that its parents aren't coming back, Morgan must quickly learn to care for the beaver, which she names Sammy. First chapter book.

***Skye Above* (Orca, 2014) Ages 7–9** On a family trip to Costa Rica, Skye's parents help her live her dream of flying in three different ways. First chapter book.

***Enigma* (Penguin, 2013) Ages 8–12** The sixth in the *Camp X* series. Once more Jack and George find themselves in the middle of a dangerous plot involving spies, Nazi agents and gangsters while being involved in the most top-secret of code-breaking facilities, Bletchley Park, England.

***My Name is Blessing* (Tundra, 2013) Ages 6–9** This picture book tells the story of Muthini, a young Kenyan boy who overcomes great odds, extreme poverty and difficult choices. This is based on the inspiring true story of a young orphan in the Creation of Hope program.

***The Matatu Ride* (Orca, 2012) Picture book** This picture book tells the story of Kioko, who has been watching the matatus come and go for as long as he can remember. On his fifth birthday, Kioko gets to climb aboard one with his grandfather. As the matatu pulls away from the market, several village dogs chase after it. Kioko wonders why the dogs always bark and chase after matatus. When he asks his grandfather about it, his grandfather tells him a story about a dog, a goat and a sheep. Set in east Africa and inspired by a Kamba folktale, this story is filled with unexpected twists and turns.

Hunter (Orca, 2012) Ages 9–11 In this sequel to *Catboy*, Hunter knows humans are dangerous to both himself and to the other cats in his colony. He avoids them, as all wild cats should. So when a neighborhood boy starts showing up in Hunter's junkyard to chase away dogs and bring the colony food, Hunter keeps his distance. But a new condo development puts the whole colony in danger, and Hunter soon realizes the only way to save his family is to put his trust in the boy.

Prince for a Princess (Orca, 2012) Ages 7–9 (a first chapter book) Seven-year-old Christina desperately wants a dog, but her parents are reluctant to give in. They take her to a kennel that houses former racing dogs in need of new homes. When a large greyhound named Prince befriends Christina, her parents agree that it was meant to be. But Prince has never been a pet, so Christina has some work to do to make Prince a part of their family.

Catboy (Orca, 2011) Ages 9–11 Taylor and his mother have moved from a small town to the heart of Toronto. The differences are dramatic. While taking a shortcut across a junkyard with his new best friend Simon, Taylor becomes aware of a colony of feral cats that make the junkyard their home. When the future of the junkyard—and the cats—comes under threat, Taylor, assisted by his classmates, hatches a plan to save the cats.

Flyboy (Penguin, 2010) Ages 8–12 Anxious to join in the fight against the Nazis, a young boy fakes his age and identity in order to join the Royal Canadian Air Force. He becomes a navigator, flying in Lancaster Bombers, in bombing runs over Germany.

Home Team (Orca, 2010) Ages 7–12 In the tenth book in the basketball series, Nick and Kia convince the whole school to help them bring a Raptor to the school for a visit.

Trouble In Paradise (Penguin, 2010) Ages 8–12 The fifth in the *Camp X* series. The boys and their parents have been assigned to Bermuda—the home of one of the largest espionage operations in World War II, and once again find themselves in the middle of life and death adventures.

Tell Me Why (Doubleday, 2009) Ages 10+ In response to the research questions of a thoughtful thirteen-year-old, more than twenty-five influential figures—including Lieutenant-General Romeo Dallaire, Robert Munsch, Marc Garneau, Lynn Johnston, Rick Hansen and many others—have shared their wisdom, their experiences, and their convictions about how to counter suffering, cruelty, and darkness. Also profiled are five amazing young Canadians who are changing the world.

Shell Shocked (Penguin, 2009) Ages 8–12 Fourth in the *Camp X* series. It's November 1942, and Jack, George and their mother are moving . . . again. They've changed houses four times in less than six months, but with their lives on the line, they are willing to do whatever it takes. Jack and George have assumed new identities and are soon back at work as special operatives, keeping an eye out for suspicious activity at an ammunitions plant. They don't have to wait long before they uncover a plot by German spies to blow up the plant and everyone in it. It's up to the quick-thinking young boys to find a way to stop the enemy and stay alive while doing it.

Wave (Doubleday, 2009) Ages 9–12 The world is rocked by a tsunami—a wave that kills hundreds of thousands of people. The story, told in first-person by two family members, chronicles the family’s story of tragedy and survival..

Boot Camp (Orca, 2007) Ages 8–11 In book nine of the basketball series, Nick and Kia go to Washington to attend a basketball camp run by Jerome “Junk Yard” Williams.

Tiger Trap (Dundurn, 2007) Ages 9–12 The fourth in the *Tiger* series. Nick and Sarah, along with Mr. McCurdy and Vladimir, become involved in an international ‘sting’ to capture people trying to trade in endangered animals.

We All Fall Down (Doubleday, 2006) Ages 10+ It was just supposed to be a boring ‘Take Your Kid to Work’ day at a boring job, in a boring building. The place is the 84th floor of the South Tower of the World Trade Center. The date is September 11, 2001.

Fool’s Gold (Penguin, 2006) Ages 8–12 In this third book of the *Camp X* series, Jack and George are thrown into another adventure when gangsters force the boys into helping them break into the camp to steal gold stored on the property.

Elixir (Penguin, 2005) Ages 9–14 Twelve-year-old Ruth must spend her summer at the University of Toronto, where her mother is hired to clean at the research building. There, the lonely girl is befriended by Dr. Banting and Mr. Best, who are on the search for a cure for diabetes. But to Ruth’s dismay the research they are doing involves testing on animals. She is approached by animal rights protestors who try to draw her into their plan to rescue the animals and in doing so, destroy the research and the hope of curing diabetes.

Triple Threat (Orca, 2005) Ages 7–12 The eighth in the basketball series. Nick and Kia get kicked off the court at the rec center by a group of older bullies. But revenge is sweet when they find the perfect teammate for a tough game of three-on-three: Jerome ‘Junk Yard Dog’ Williams of the NBA. This book is co-written with Jerome Williams.

Camp 30 (Penguin, 2004) Ages 9–13 In this sequel to *Camp X*, Jack and George are once again thrust into the dangerous world of espionage. The novel is set in Bowmanville, Ontario, and is based on the real Camp 30.

I’ve Got An Idea (HarperCollins, 2012) Ages 9–13 Alex and his friend Sam have been called a lot of things at school, including ‘brainers’ and ‘geekoids.’ But when Twilight Stevens, the new sixth-grader with the brilliant red hair calls the boys ‘dangerous’, Alex can’t believe it. It’s true that Sam’s ideas often get them into trouble, but nothing serious. That changes when they have the idea to sneak away to New York City to see a rock concert, and have to flee from street thugs.

Underdog (Orca, 2004) Ages 7–12 The seventh in the Nick and Kia basketball series. It’s a new season and Nick and Kia once again try out for the rep team. One new player has the skill and ability to make the team, however, he has to learn how friendship and team play are more important than individual ability.

***Royal Ransom* (Penguin, 2003) Ages 9–13** Jamie Ransom, a 13-year-old Cree boy, is surprised when his cousin asks him to help escort some people on a wilderness trip. His surprise turns to astonishment when he discovers that the group includes the young Prince Andrew and his sister, Victoria, who are next in line for the British throne. The adventure turns deadly when kidnappers strike and attempt to abduct the royal children.

***Off Season* (Orca, 2003) Ages 7–12** Basketball season may be over, but Nick and Kia are about to experience the adventure of a lifetime when they visit Nick's cousin Ned during their summer vacation. Spending time with Ned and his family in the mountains is different—and it becomes deadly when a forest fire erupts all around them. This is the sixth in the basketball series.

***Ricky* (HarperCollins, 2002) Ages 9–14** Ricky has always been more comfortable with animals than people. Sharing his house with 29 creatures, including a dog, cats, squirrels and an alligator, this eighth grader is lucky to have Mr. Johnston as his science teacher, who incredibly has even more animals in the classroom. Bogart the boa constrictor is one of Ricky's favorites. That's why it's completely shocking when vandals break into the school and destroy many animals, including Bogart. Ricky and his best friend, Augie Levy, devise a plan to raise money to replace Bogart and make up for what's been done.

***Tiger Town* (Dundurn, 2002) Ages 9 - 14** In this followup to *Tiger by the Tail* and *Tiger in Trouble*, Sarah and Nick are back home and helping Mr. McCurdy and Vladimir transform Mr. McCurdy's farm to a zoo for Boo Boo the bear, Peanuts the elephant, Kushna the tiger and other assorted exotic animals. The local paper, the mayor and an overzealous inspector combine with animal-rights protestors to make this job harder than anybody had ever expected.

***Road Trip* (Orca, 2002) Ages 7–12** In this fifth book in the basketball series, Nick and Kia and their teammates are on the road, heading to an elite hoops tournament. They are feeling overmatched by many of the high-profile teams that have been invited from all over the world. The teammates are looking forward to playing some ball, but also having a good time. Their coach, however, thinks that nothing will be good enough but winning it all.

***Camp X* (Penguin, 2013) Ages 9–14** It's 1943, and 12-year-old George and his older brother Jack stumble into a military camp located on the edge of Whitby, Ontario. Their curiosity gets the better of them and they are swept up into the mystery and intrigue of Camp X—Canada's top-secret spy camp. In the most exciting summer of their lives, the boys are enlisted in the fight against the Axis powers, and learn that in war, everybody is under suspicion—including themselves.

***Long Shot* (Orca), 2001) Ages 7–12** The fourth in the basketball series. Nick and Kia try out for their rep team but are met by a new coach. Suddenly all their assumptions are thrown out the window as they discover that this coach expects perfection from everybody.

***Northern Exposures* (HarperCollins, 2001) Ages 9–14** As a joke, Kevin enters the 'Capture Mississauga' photo contest. Shockingly, his picture wins and his prizes include a trip to Churchill, Manitoba to photograph polar bears. His polar bear close-ups become too close in the adventure of his lifetime.

***Tiger in Trouble* (Dundurn, 2001) Ages 9–14** In this sequel to *Tiger by the Tail*, Sarah and Nick set off for a week at ‘zoo camp’. They discover the camp is run down, badly operated, and the owner has sinister plans for Kushna the tiger. Sarah and Nick must act to save the tiger that’s in trouble.

***Hoop Crazy!* (Orca, 2001) Ages 7–12** Nick and Kia compete as part of a three-on-three team in an NBA-sanctioned tournament. Can they team up to win against the best players in the whole city?

***Full Court Press* (Orca, 2000) Ages 7–12** In this sequel to *Three-on-Three*, Nick and Kia and their pals are back. Now it’s time for tryouts for the school team. The question is, will grade three students Nick and Kia have any chance of making a school team that’s always made up of older kids?

***The Money Pit Mystery* (HarperCollins, 2000) Ages 9–14** Mystery, magic, and buried treasure all combine to lead Sam, his sister Beth, and buddy Buzz, into a treasure hunt that almost costs them their lives. Set on Oak Island, Nova Scotia and based on the real Money Pit and the unsolved mystery that still surrounds it.

***Three-On-Three* (Orca, 1999) Ages 7–12** Nick and Kia are eager to sign up for the school’s three-on-three contest. To have a chance to win, they convince Marcus, two years older and the best player in the school, to become the third member of their team. Will that be enough to win?

***The Hydrofoil Mystery* (Penguin, 1999) Ages 8–12** It is 1915 and Canada is embroiled in WWI. William, a troubled 15-year-old is sent to spend the summer on the estate of famous inventor Alexander Graham Bell. William becomes involved with the construction of the hydrofoil—and a mystery to die for.

***Tiger by the Tail* (Dundurn, 1999) Ages 9–14** Sarah and Nick learn that their neighbor, a retired circus trainer, keeps exotic animals on his farm including a cheetah, chimp, python and a tiger named Buddha. When some teens cut the chains on Buddha’s cage, the kids must help recapture the tiger on the loose.

***Stranded* (HarperCollins, 1998) Ages 9–13** Gord is new to the school, struggling with his parents’ divorce, and trying to make friends and fit in. A week-long school trip to a remote island school helps him to establish new friendships while dealing with the life-and-death issues of a stranded pod of whales.

***Trapped in Ice* (Penguin, 1997) Ages 9–14** 13-year-old Helen accompanies her mother and brother on a ship headed to the Arctic. When the ship becomes trapped in the ice, Captain Robert Bartlett must use all his skills to keep them alive, and to try to save the members of the expedition.

The Pole (Penguin, 2008) Ages 8–12 Fourteen-year-old Danny is off on the adventure of a lifetime. As the youngest crew member aboard the renowned ship *The Roosevelt*, captained by Robert Bartlett, he is heading north with an expedition led by Robert Peary, in a race to be the first to the North Pole. Based on true events, this action-packed adventure details the journey of the first men to reach the Pole.

Run (Penguin, 2003) Ages 9–15 Winston has had a rough time adjusting to the separation of his parents. His mother sends him to stay with his father for a few days. His father, a newspaper reporter, is going on assignment to cover a story about a one-legged kid trying to run across Canada. Winston meets this runner, Terry Fox, and watches him run, hears him speak, rides in the van with him, shares meals, and gets to know Terry and be a witness to The Marathon of Hope.

Voyageur (Penguin, 2008) Ages 8–12 Brian, his mom and his sister, Jennie, have left their Manhattan home for a canoe trip in Northern Quebec in order to scatter the ashes of Brian's father, whose most cherished memories were of his childhood summer spent at a camp. They are unprepared for this trip and tragedy is only averted when they are rescued by an old man named Pierre who offers his services as a guide. In the end, they discover that Pierre is somebody far more important than simply a guide.

From The Heart of Africa (Tundra 2018) Fifteen African sayings illustrated by 15 different illustrators from Africa, Canada and The U.S.