

Books editor Jon Fear • jfear@therecord.com

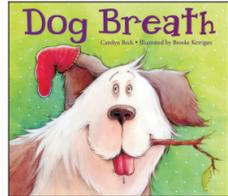
BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

A good dog is hard to forget

By Brenda Hoerle, Record staff

I love our dog. So do most people who meet Bella, a four-year-old pug. For years, I'd fended off my children's pleas for a dog. I never understood how much love a pet can bring a family until Bella came along. Now we can't imagine life without her.

A mischievous pooch is lovingly remembered in *Dog Breath* (Fitzhenry & Whiteside, \$18.95 hardcover).



The Toronto duo of writer Carolyn Beck and illustrator Brooke Kerrigan show young readers all the ways this beloved animal has left his mark.

A favourite bone now lies abandoned, as does a rubber ball, ragged with tooth marks. The owner remembers a dog whose breath was a morning wake-up call, who loved to escape to explore garbage cans and roll in the strangest of smells.

But always: "There you were at the door, scratching to come in, smelling like rotten cheese. Looking all waggy and happy with yourself. At first all we did was cry some more. Tears of lost turned to tears of found."

For ages six to 10. A heartwarming tale all pet owners will appreciate.

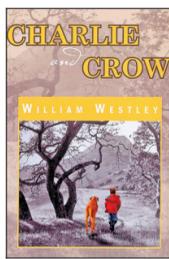
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Charlie and Crow (Self-published, \$15 softcover) is a first work of fiction by William Westley of Waterloo.

Written for his three children, 16 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren, it tells the story of Charlie Sands, an orphan living in a small Ontario town with his Aunt Ellie and his constant companion, a dog named Sam.

The cheerful boy is a familiar sight in town, always eager to help the baker, the butcher and the grocer, who know his aunt struggles both mentally and financially to care for him. They return Charlie's favours with gifts of food.

The seven-year-old's quest to belong to his own family takes a momentous turn when he meets Crow, an Ojibwa woman who teaches him about spiritual traditions and the importance of following his dreams. In the end, Charlie's wish comes true.



This is a tale of family, hope and faith, suitable for all ages. Westley encourages parents and children to read the book together, then to reread it to fully comprehend the relationships Charlie develops along the way.

The book's art is by Clara Bird and Martha de Santiago. Copies can be obtained at www.Xlibris.com or through Amazon.com.

Westley, 92, is a retired McGill University sociology professor. His other published works include *The Silent Majority* and *Violence and the Police*, a 1971 book.

He will speak about policing at 7:30 p.m. on March 22 at Luther Village in Waterloo.

Brenda Hoerle is an arts and life copy editor with the Waterloo Region Record and the Guelph Mercury.

FOR OLDER CHILDREN

MAKING BOMBS FOR HITLER

By Marsha Forchuk Skrypuch (Scholastic Canada, 160 pages, \$8.99 softcover)

By Mandy Wiebenga

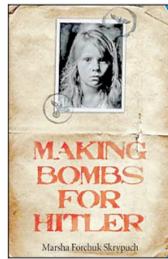
How are parents or teachers supposed to teach children or preteens — or even teenagers — about the horrors of the Holocaust?

The only possible answer is that it must be done with great care and sensitivity.

Brantford writer Marsha Skrypuch, the author of 15 books, delivers the truth about the Holocaust, describing it through the eyes of 12-year-old Lida, a Ukrainian girl who is forced into slave labour in Germany during the Second World War.

Lida is honest, caring, and confused.

Why, she wonders, is all of this happening to her and to the people she loves?



I was surprised by the ways in which I was entranced by this book. As a reader, you want to know what's going to happen to Lida and you are horrified alongside her when something awful happens, which is an all-too-common occurrence.

Making Bombs for Hitler does an incredible job of recounting the hateful acts committed against Jews and other "undesirables" during the war. It is a safe and sensitive book, as well as a great conversation starter, allowing for more than a few teachable moments with young people who read it. For ages 9 to 12

Mandy Wiebenga is a Cambridge writer.

YOUNG ADULTS

Teenager's suicide has ripple effects

MONOCEROS

by Suzette Mayr (Coach House Books, 268 pages, \$20.95 softcover)

By Cindy Matthews

Suzette Mayr's fourth novel takes a very delicate topic, teen suicide, and makes it approachable. It's not always an easy read. The reader will be significantly impacted by her story.

Early in the book, a 17-year-old boy who is questioning his sexuality hangs himself. On the pages that follow other characters who knew the boy, some not nearly as closely as others, experience the impact of his action.

His English teacher, who is going through her own life-altering issues, feels guilt for not remembering the boy's name. The boy's girlfriend, disgusted by his secret lifestyle, is relieved by his death. His guidance counsellor, a male, somehow missed the suicide signs. And the counsellor's secret lover, the principal, frets that the suicide and its gay understorey will reflect poorly on the Catholic school and chooses to minimize the event and his response.

Mayr's portrayal of the dead boy's parents is both enthralling and disturbing. They hoped their son would just wake up and discover he was actually heterosexu-

Help is available

- Distress Line: 519-745-1166
- Youth Line: 519-745-9909
- Crisis services: 519-744-1813

al. Instead, they find him dead.

As the story continues the author unravels the impact of the death on a community of mourners and bears witness to the variations in the way that grief is felt and expressed — sometimes publicly, sometimes privately, and most often with indifference.

Mayr is adept at maintaining

the focus on a single character in each chapter, giving us an intimate examination of their individual perspectives.

She is also good at interjecting humour throughout the novel.

The book's ending feels contrived, as if Mayr felt rushed to give the book's title some relevance, but overall, this is a compassionate and compelling read for mature teens and adults alike.

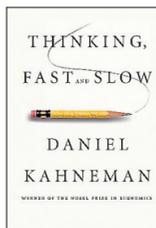
It would be a brave high school administrator who would make this book compulsory reading just for the rich discussion it would solicit.

Cindy Matthews is a Wilmet Township writer.

An important book about how we make decisions



Chuck Erion



I've just finished reading *Thinking, Fast and Slow* (Doubleday, \$34 hardcover) by Daniel Kahneman, who won the Nobel Prize for economics in 2002, but is, in fact, a psychologist.

I started the book around Christmas after it caught my eye on several bestseller lists. At almost 500 pages, it's a bit of a slog, but more for the mental challenges it contains than for the page count. With other books on the go, it became my fallback read.

So I took it with me on a road trip to Albany two weeks ago with my older son, a lawyer, and it was fun to bounce around Kahneman's ideas with him. Reviewing the book is no small challenge. Especially when an author I admire, Nassim Taleb (author of *The Black Swan*) has called it, "a landmark book in social thought, in the same league as *The Wealth of Nations* and *The Interpretation of Dreams*."

Kahneman examines how humans make judgments and

decisions and it formulates two ways of thinking. System 1 is our fast response, intuitive and emotional, while System 2 is the deliberator, slower and more logical.

Sometimes our impulses and quick intuitions are helpful, especially to escape sudden danger. Other times, we are led to make illogical choices and get stuck in uncovered assumptions and prejudices. On the other hand, our System 2 thinking can be faulty as well, especially when it fails to critique the illogic of System 1.

Examining these mental glitches takes up most of the book, an arduous exercise that challenges the reader on every page. And the problems presented virtually all come from evidence-based research. Kahneman is breaking down the gap between the academic silos of economics and psychology. The core principle of free-

market economics (Milton Friedman's Chicago School) that citizens make the best choices when unconstrained by government is challenged by behavioural economists who see the cost of the mistakes made with such freedom.

Here's a few insights that readers will discover: That interviewers of new soldiers are unable to predict which ones will have leadership skills on the battlefield; that we attach more weight to the negative (physical pain, financial loss, etc.) than to positive when choosing a course of action; that subjective confidence is a poor index of the accuracy of a judgment; and that it is easier to "put good money after bad" than to admit our mistake in a losing investment. Each chapter ends with several examples that illustrate the various themes.

For myself, I was left wondering what else from behavioural psychology was missing. There is no mention of peer pressure, of the subconscious, or of family-of-origin predispositions in analyzing how we make choices. The conclusions about where behavioural economists should influence social policy may go too far. They recall the "halo effect" by which we attribute too much ex-

pertise to people (being good at one thing does not mean you're good at many things).

This is a very important book. I hope it will be widely read. I look forward to seeing its spreading influence and the response from fields as diverse as politics, business, religion and the arts. Hint to my lawyer son: even jurisprudence and legal practice.

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Robert Wittman is a retired FBI detective who solved several major art thefts and wrote about his career in a book called *Priceless: How I Went Undercover to Rescue the World's Stolen Treasures* (Broadway, \$17 softcover). My wife churned through the book and looks forward to meeting Wittman when he speaks on March 7 at the K-W Art Gallery.

I'm looking forward to a new collection of essays by Marilynne Robinson. It's called *When I Was a Child I Read Books* (HarperCollins \$29.95) and is due this month. Robinson is one of my favourite U.S. novelists and this collection will cover some of her favourite topics: faith, culture, patriotism and self-identity.

Chuck Erion is a former co-owner of Words Worth Books in Waterloo.

WHAT THEY'RE READING



Rebecca Erickson is an artist and curator at the Whitestone Gallery in Guelph and a social worker at KidsAbility. She recently read:

UNDERGROUND

by Antanas Sileika (Thomas Allen, 300 pages, \$24.95 softcover)

"I enjoyed reading Canadian writer Antanas Sileika's 1997 book of funny and memorable short stories, *Buying on Time*, about the postwar adjustment of a family of Lithuanian immigrants. When I saw that his most recent novel, *Underground*, was on The Globe and Mail's list of Best Books of 2011, I decided to read it as well.

Underground is part love story and part military history — about the experiences of Lithuanian partisans during the Soviet occupation. The experiences of the main characters are used to illustrate the complicated situation in 1940s Lithuania. Reading it was like a curtain being drawn back on a country and history that is almost unknown to me.

"I liked both of Sileika's books, but would save *Buying on Time* for a pick-me-up afterwards."

• **Rebecca Erickson** is a co-curator with Supria Karmakar of the exhibit **Open Book - An Expatriation of Books as Art** at the **Whitestone Gallery** in Guelph. Opening reception today at 2 p.m. Exhibit runs to March 29. The gallery is open Fridays and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., or by appointment. Call 519-827-0039.

Bookmarks

• **Wednesday, March 7:** 7:30 p.m. at **KW Art Gallery**. Lecture by **Robert Wittman**, author of *Priceless: How I Went Undercover to Rescue the World's Stolen Treasures*. Tickets: \$20 at door (\$15 in advance).

• **Wednesday March 7:** 7 p.m. in the chapel at Conrad Grebel University College. **Celebrating Mennonite Literature** series presents **Darcie Friesen Hossack** (*Mennonites Don't Dance*) on the topic: Writing Towards Home: A Prodigal Daughter Looks Back.

• **Thursday, March 8:** 7 p.m. public lecture in the Maureen Forrester Recital Hall, WLU. **Joseph Boyden** on Write From Wrong: Giving Voice to a People.

• **Thursday, March 8:** 4:30 p.m. in STJ 3014 at St. Jerome's University, Waterloo. Hear poet **Julia McCarthy**, author of *Return from Erebus*.

Bestsellers

Based on sales reported by more than 280 independent Canadian booksellers for the week ending Feb. 25. Bracketed figures indicate number of weeks on list.

Children's fiction

- (15) **Diary of a Wimpy Kid Cabin Fever** - Jeff Kinney
- (11) **War Horse** - Michael Morpurgo
- (1) **Geronimo Stilton Special Edition: Thea Stilton and the Secret of the Old Castle** - Thea Stilton
- (16) **The Invention of Hugo Cabret** - Brian Selznick
- (26) **Ivy and Bean** - Annie Barrows and Sophie Blackall
- (3) **Geronimo Stilton: The Mystery in Venice** - Geronimo Stilton
- (8) **Ivy and Bean: And The Ghost That Had to Go** - Annie Barrows/Sophie Blackall
- (24) **Wonderstruck** - Brian Selznick
- (1) **The One and Only** - Ivan Katherine Applegate
- (18) **Geronimo Stilton Special Edition** - Thea Stilton

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