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## Great Lakes Great Books Award Reviews

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# Great Lakes, Great Books Award Reviews

by Lynette Marten Suckow



Summer is a great time to catch up on reading and to find some new favorite books from the Great Lakes Great Books Award list. Choose from various genres of fiction or stick to the facts with nonfiction. The following titles are my personal favorites from each of the five age levels on the GLGB list. After making these titles part of your summertime reading, share them with friends and go back to the list for more.

The GLGB committee selects 40 books published within the last two years to introduce new literature into K-12 classrooms on an annual basis. Teachers and librarians provide students with books from their grade level lists and allow them to vote on their favorites. GLGB is one of Michigan Reading Association's Student Involvement projects promoting active participation in the reading process by students. You'll find a classroom ballot, promotional bookmarks, and the opportunity to nominate a book for next year at: <https://www.michiganreading.org/student-involvement/great-lakes-great-books>

***THE TEA PARTY IN THE WOODS*** by Akiko Miyakoshi begins as Kikko sets off across the yard in her father's snowy footsteps. She tries to catch up with him because he forgot the pie to be delivered to Grandmother. Don't be lulled into thinking this is a rendition of "Little Red Riding Hood"—even though readers will see some similarities. Kikko trips in the snow, dropping the pie, and then hurries up to keep sight of her father in the distance. As her father approaches a house Kikko's never seen before, she realizes she's been following a bear in clothing and is invited by a lamb (also in clothing) to a fabulous tea party



inside. When the guests, all forest animals, find out that Kikko's pie is ruined, they each contribute a piece of their own to make a brand new multi-flavored pie. Charcoal drawings on textured paper are enhanced by Kikko's yellow hair and red skirt. The author/illustrator provides a storytelling masterpiece on each page, especially the last page showing Father and Grandmother looking down at the pie which is hidden from the reader's view. Was the tea party real, or was it an imaginative tale about a walk through the woods? The proof's in the pie...what do you think?



**Lynette Marten Suckow**

***S IS FOR SLEEPING BEAR DUNES: A NATIONAL LAKESHORE ALPHABET*** encourages second and third graders to take a guided tour of the Sleeping Bear Dunes near Traverse City in northern Michigan through Kathy-jo Wargin's poems and informational text. The poetry offers younger readers a quick trip through the pages, while the factual paragraphs in smaller text allow older readers to absorb more in-depth information. "C is for cherries....." is paired up with information about how cherries grow well in sandy soil and a temperate climate provided by Lake Michigan. Besides learning about the geography, economics, local culture, and history of the area, readers are treated to a visual feast of Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen's illustrations. A resident of Michigan himself, van Frankenhuyzen accurately portrays the lakeshore experience in vivid oil paintings.

**FISH IN A TREE** by Linda Mullaly Hunt features Ally, who dreads going to school because she can't read and doesn't want anyone to find out. So far, she's fooled all her teachers and kept other students at arm's length to cleverly hide her secret. Ally finally runs out of ways to deflect attention from herself when she chooses an inappropriate greeting card for her departing teacher because she can't read the message. On top of that, there's a new teacher, Mr. Daniels, scheduled to start work the very next day. Ally thinks he'll be easy to fool, but he turns out to be the first teacher who recognizes the signs of her dyslexia. He also offers to work with her after school and makes an effort to build up her self-esteem in the classroom. Mr. Daniels sums up her learning disability with a phrase that also sums up his rationale for teaching: "Everybody is smart in different ways. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its life believing it is stupid." As Ally's confidence grows, she reaches out to other students to form alliances and friendships. Keisha, a talented baker, Albert the scientist, and Oliver who talks through every problem, are already good readers, and they soon share their academic strengths and challenges with Ally. This story will warm your heart with the hope that every student has the chance to succeed.

**ORBITING JUPITER** by Gary D. Schmidt is the story of Joseph Brooks, the stereotypical bad boy—tough and unpredictable—who is only 14 years old. An abusive father has raised him and a year ago, he fathered a child of his own with another 13-year-old. All of this unconventional activity lands him in foster care with Jack Hurd and his parents. Jack is a little younger than Joseph and narrates the story for readers. Good parenting by the Hurds, along with several teachers who recognize Joseph's intellect, gradually loosen him up and allow him to reveal his whole story, including a yearning to see his daughter named Jupiter. Jack can count the number of times Joseph has smiled during his stay and, as he relaxes into his nurturing surroundings, they begin to add up faster. The future is looking good for Joseph until his father

shows up and tries to use him and Jupiter for financial gain. Readers won't be able to predict the plotline twists toward the end of the book because of Schmidt's masterful storytelling. After digesting the impact of **ORBITING JUPITER**, readers may want to pick up some of Schmidt's earlier award-winning books, such as **LIZZIE BRIGHT AND THE BUCKMASTER BOY** (2004), **THE WEDNESDAY WARS** (2007), and its sequel, **OKAY FOR NOW** (2011).

**THE BOY IN THE BLACK SUIT** by Jason Reynolds begins in Matt's senior year as he reels from the recent death of his mother. He can't seem to forget the images of his mother's funeral, but needs to get back to the reality of school and work. He takes a job at the funeral home and, drawn to the grieving families, attends the funerals held there. It's like therapy, so he puts on his black suit each day to blend in with the mourners. While Matt is trying to get himself together, his father starts to hit the bottle as he grieves his wife's death and ends up in the hospital. Matt is without parental guidance at this point, but he relies on his best friend, Chris, and his new friend and romantic interest, Lovey, who just lost her grandmother and primary caregiver. The two lost souls connect on several levels, including a childhood secret they share without knowing it.

## Author Biography

**Lynette Marten Suckow** works at the Peter White Public Library Reference Desk in Marquette, MI where she teaches people how to make the transition from print to digital literacy. She holds a master's degree in education, and has been a Great Lakes, Great Books Award committee member for the past eleven years.

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## 2015-2016 Great Lakes Great Books Award Winners

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### Kindergarten and First Grade Winner

*Gaston* by Kelly DiPucchio.....Atheneum Books, 2014

~Honor Books~

*One Big Pair of Underwear* by Laura Gehl.....Beach Lane Books, 2014

*Once Upon an Alphabet* by Oliver Jeffers.....Philomel Books, 2014

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### Second and Third Grade Winner

*My Explosive Diary* by Emily Gale.....Aladdin Books, 2014

~Honor Books~

*My Teacher is a Monster* by Peter Brown.....Little, Brown and Company, 2014

*I Love You Just Enough* by Robbyn Smith van Frankenhuyzen.....Sleeping Bear Press, 2014

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### Fourth and Fifth Grade Winner

*El Deafo* by Cece Bell.....Amulet Books, 2014

~Honor Books~

*Space Case* by Stuart Gibbs.....Simon & Schuster Books, 2014

*Zane and the Hurricane* by Rodman Philbrick.....Blue Sky Press, 2014

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### Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Grade Winner

*The Forbidden Library* by Django Wexler.....Kathy Dawson Books, 2014

~Honor Books~

*Gaijin: American Prisoner of War* by Matt Faulkner .....Disney Hyperion Books, 2014

*Absolutely Truly* by Heather Vogel Frederick.....Simon & Schuster Books, 2014

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### Ninth - Twelfth Grade Winner

*We Were Liars* by E. Lockhart.....Delacorte Press, 2013

~Honor Books~

*Dorothy Must Die* by Danielle Paige .....Full Fathom Five, 2014

*Darius & Twig* by Walter Dean Myers.....Amistad, 2013

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For more on Great Lakes Great Books, go to [www.michiganreading.org](http://www.michiganreading.org).

# Michigan Reading Association



## Membership Information

Regular Membership - \$35

Retired Membership - \$20

Full-time Undergraduate  
Student Membership - \$15

*As part of your membership,  
receive discounts to both  
MRA conferences.*

To sign up, go to  
[www.michiganreading.org](http://www.michiganreading.org)

The Michigan Reading Association (MRA) is an organization of people who believe that literacy is the key to transforming people's lives. Chartered in 1956 by the International Reading Association, MRA has grown to be a leader in providing literacy resources to teachers, parents, and universities.

The mission of MRA is to promote literacy across the state of Michigan. Our association works toward this goal in several ways:

- We offer high quality professional development conferences for teachers, adult educators, administrators, and all those involved in literacy education. We also invite homeschoolers and parents to access the best in literacy professional development.
- MRA's Michigan Reading Journal is one of the top research journals in the country and is available in both print and electronic formats.
- MRA works with local reading councils around the state to provide support and professional development to members in every region of the state.
- The organization supports international literacy efforts, such as TEACH: Teachers Educating and Creating Hope. This group is comprised of many Chaldean and some non-Chaldean teachers in the Detroit area interested in helping those displaced families with necessities and schooling needs.
- MRA puts on two conferences a year. Our Annual Conference in March brings in 1600 conferees, 150 speakers, and 100 exhibitors from across the state and country. With over 30 breakout sessions every session slot, there is always something for everyone. Our Summer Literature Conference in July offers a chance to interact with authors and illustrators more closely in a beautiful summer venue.

As a Michigan non-profit 501 (c)3, we are governed by a board of volunteers who work tirelessly to promote the cause of literacy throughout the state of Michigan.



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<i>Reading Research Quarterly</i> The leading journal of literacy research	<input type="checkbox"/> \$18	<input type="checkbox"/> \$14
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<i>Journal of Adolescent &amp; Adult Literacy</i> For educators of older learners	<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	<input type="checkbox"/> \$24
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