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Great Lake Great Books Adapting to Change

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Great Lakes, Great Books Adapting to Change

by Lynette Marten Suckow

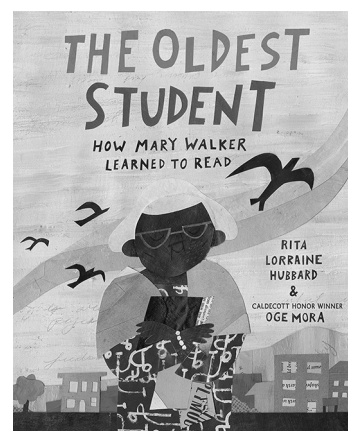


**Lynette
Marten Suckow**

Early in 2020, COVID-19 made its appearance in Michigan and changed our lives. We washed our hands, put on our masks, sanitized everything, measured a six-foot distance between us, and adapted to living with the constant danger of an invisible virus. Scientists developed a vaccine to protect adults and teens from the worst symptoms, allowing us to loosen restrictions on social interactions and venture out into the world again. Recently, variants of the disease have spread, requiring a return to masking and social distancing. Even more now than ever before, we spend our lives adapting to new situations, stages of life, and societal trends. The future is unknown, but our resilience and ability to adapt will carry us through. Check out the 2021-22 Great Lakes Great Books list below to read about adaptation that occurs at its own pace.

The GLGB committee each year takes on the task of reading as many children's and teen books as possible, all in order to select forty – published within the last two years – to introduce K-12 classrooms to some of the best books available on the market. Teachers and librarians are encouraged to provide students with books from their grade-level lists, and allow them to vote on their favorites. Great Lakes Great Books is one of Michigan Reading Association's Student Involvement projects, promoting student participation in the reading process. Look for a classroom ballot, student certificate, promotional bookmarks, last year's winning titles, and the opportunity to nominate your favorite new book at www.michiganreading.org under the Awards tab.

***The Oldest Student:
How Mary Walker
Learned to Read*** by
Rita Lorraine Hubbard
(Random/Schwartz &
Wade) is quite inspiring
and shows just how
adaptable a person can
be by staying focused
in a changing world.
Mary's focus was to
keep working. She



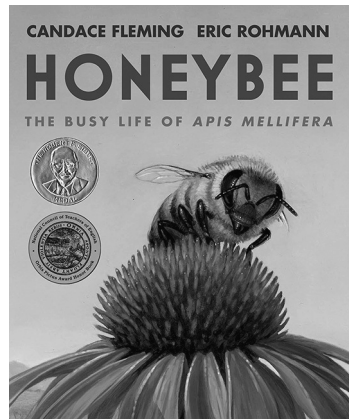
worked her way through childhood, enslaved in the cotton fields. Enslaved people were not allowed to read or write or do anything that might take up work time. In 1848, the Emancipation Proclamation freed Mary's family to fend for themselves, still working as freed slaves for a pittance of their worth. Marriage, motherhood, and more work defined Mary's existence for the next ninety years. Even in retirement, Mary volunteered her services, always working, always giving. There was never time to learn reading and writing. At the very old age of 114, Mary's last living son died, leaving her truly alone. She finally found the time to attend reading class, becoming the oldest student ever. Her resilience and determination led her to receive recognition from Presidents Lyndon Johnson in 1966 and Richard Nixon in 1969. She died the same year at the age of 121. Real

life photos of Mary in her later years adorn the endpapers of the book in order to give readers an idea of how reading expanded and enhanced her life. The patterned geometric illustrations by celebrated artist, Oge Mora, accent the text with strong images of Mary's journey.

Honeybee: The Busy Life of Apis Mellifera

by Candace Fleming (Neal Porter Books)

follows the honeybee through its life cycle, showing how this insect adapts to each stage of growth. Even before the title page, a solitary bee emerges from a honeycomb cell to join the daily routines of the hive. *Apis mellifera*, as she's known in the scientific world, eats to gain strength and then begins to clean the nursery area. Glands behind her neck grow larger, signaling her ability to feed and care for larvae in the honeycomb cells. Her next job is tending to the queen, and, as she develops another set of glands that produce wax, she builds new honeycombs within the hive. *Apis mellifera* matures into a food handler, receiving nectar from forager bees and converting it to honey. Her next job is to guard the hive from invaders. After 25 days of learning every aspect of life in the hive, she is ready to become a forager, collecting nectar and pollinating flowers along the way. Upon return, she dances in code to direct other worker bees to her nectar location. Adapting to a new job every few days, for 35 days, a worker bee's life cycle is complete. Informational notes in the back of the book highlight the amazing biology of honeybees. Eric Rohmann's lifelike oil paintings, with their perfect balance of light and color, add further understanding to the workings of a beehive.



Incredible Jobs You've (Probably) Never Heard Of

by Natalie LaBarre (Nosy Crow Ltd) prompts readers to leave convention behind and step into a place of unique and unusual jobs. When a class takes a field trip to The Great Hall of Jobs, they skip over professions in

accounting and teaching to learn about careers in cheese sculpting, taste testing, snake milking, and forensic body farming. Readers who lack the passion to become a doctor, electrician, or chef may find themselves better suited to this unusual array of choices, especially those with creative, adventurous, or noisy personalities.

This book is oversized, allowing readers to graphically visualize themselves as a nautical cowboy or a crossword puzzle writer. LaBarre ends with a positive message about inventing your own job, trying something new, and changing jobs when your lifestyle demands it. She offers readers the impetus to find out more about these little-known professions, opening a world of possibilities.



Fighting Words by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley (Dial Books)

is a testament to the way humans change, adapt, and survive. Della is just ten, but she's experienced more than any child should in a lifetime. She and her teenage sister, Suki, have been living an isolated existence with her mom's boyfriend, Clifton, ever since her mom was sent to prison for cooking meth. Their living situation went from bad to worse when a drunk Clifton made an attempt to abuse Della before Suki got home and used her phone to document the situation. Then they ran. That's where this story begins. Della is back in school, where she's always in trouble because of her limited vocabulary of curse words... but those are the ones she prefers to use. Suki is still trying to protect Della from the outside world and the foster care system, but she's also trying to hold down a job and go to school. The sisters don't trust anyone, especially Francine, a by-the-book foster parent, who will turn out to be the best thing that ever happened to them. As Della makes progress navigating classroom routines, Suki begins to crumble emotionally and attempts



Must Read Texts

suicide. Communication between the two improves enough for Della to realize what kind of sacrifices Suki made to keep her safe from Clifton. Will they be able to trust Francine enough to get the help they both need to recover from unspeakable trauma? Although the author tackles the issues of sexual abuse and suicide, the story ends in a place of hope and is appropriate for middle school readers. The author received a 2021 Newbery Honor award for this book, following up a 2016 Newbery Medal for *The War that Saved My Life* (Dial Books). Both stories broach the subject of child abuse and are masterfully written.

Go With the Flow written by Karen Schneemann and illustrated by Lily Williams (First Second) is a book that wanted to be written a long time ago, when fifth grade health education glossed over the short chapter on menstruation, singling out females about this natural hormonal change that has been around since the beginning of time. Schneemann and Williams tackle the taboo topic through three high school friends who each have a different stigma attached to their monthly cycle. Christine, Abby, and Brit start off the



school year by rescuing a new freshman, Sasha, who is unknowingly having her first period on the first day of school. They assure her that they will help in any way and counsel her on monthly sanitary procedures. A shortage of supplies in the school bathroom sets Abby in motion, campaigning to make essential supplies available at no charge. The institutional resistance to consider the needs of female students drives Abby to ramp up her protests, resulting in school suspension for the whole group. The author uses Abby's blog posts to squeeze in extra information about menstrual cycles. Artwork is appropriately presented in shades of red, saluting the monthly menstrual flow. The graphic novel layout invites readers of varying levels to better understand the information laid out in text.

Author Biography

Lynette Marten Suckow works at the Peter White Public Library in Marquette, MI where she provides reference assistance with library resources and digital technology. She holds a master's degree in education from Northern Michigan University, is a member of the Marquette-Alger Reading Council, and serves on the Michigan Reading Association's Great Lakes Great Books Award committee. She can be reached at lynette.suckow@gmail.com.

