Good afternoon and thanks for joining us I am Judy Simpson. We have a number of traditions on Across the Fence and one of them is to help celebrate National Library Week. This is a week to celebrate the contributions of our nation's libraries and librarians and to promote library use and support. A quick note about the origin of National Library Week. It started back in 1958 because research at the time showed that people were spending less time reading and more time with radio or television. Fast forward to today; our public libraries offer a variety of technology and other resources above all books. This afternoon I'm joined by two librarians. Our longtime friend Amy Howlett is with us from the Vermont Department of Libraries in Bellows Falls. And alongside Amy is Sarah Lawton. Sarah is the youth services librarian at Ilsley Public Library in Middlebury. Welcome to both of you. Now you've brought some books as always to review. Where are we going to start?

Amy.: I thought we'd start with the youngest. I have A Ball for Daisy by Chris Rawscka. I know that parents really want to have good books around their kids to help them grow in remarkable ways. This is a terrific combination of fabulous art and no words at all. The story is pretty basic. Daisy is a dog who has a ball. And other dog breaks the ball and daisy is just crushed. You see it is falling apart and you are so sad. As the story progresses the other dog’s owner gives a certain other ball and she's restored to joy again. But what the illustrator author does with this book is to use a very fuzzy water color line to show us this amazing expressive dog. I think this book will really resonate with children because what kid hasn't lost something that means a lot. Caldecott Winner; perfect for ages two and up. A Ball for Daisy.

Sarah.: I brought Zoozical by Judy Sierra, with illustrations by Mark Brown. I love this book; it’s a tough rollicking tale about winter descending on a local zoo and the animals become very depressed so it's up to two young friends, hippo and kangaroo to rally the troops together to create a musical or the “zoozical.” I think it's probably the only book I've ever read that successfully rhymes the word karaoke which is kind of an amazing thing. It also recently won Middlebury’s Grandparents Award prize so this is an annual contest. Where elders in our community choose their favorite picture book to share with kids and it's a great story time read and fun to share with kids because they can interact and become part of the story. We had a local kindergarten that actually put on a production of this book. But that helps kids get ready to read when they feel like they can become part of the book through interacting with text and pictures.

Judy.: Sounds like fun.
Amy.: I guess I'm all about the pictures this time. This is a graphic novel; it's Wonderstruck by Bryan Selznick. Some children may be familiar with the author, again author illustrator because of the wonderful book The Invention of Hugo Cabrera which is made into the movie Hugo. Again a big fat thick book. About half of it is pencil illustration. Its two parallel stories taking place 50 years apart. A 1927 story about a young deaf girl who is striving to get to New York City to find someone and 50 years later a boy, 11, Ben who is striving to get to New York City to find his father. The girl’s story is told almost exclusively in pictures. The boy’s in words but the two stories come together at the American Museum of Natural History and that's the real meaning of the word “wonderstruck” the concept of this fabulous museum. I love the story, I love the kids, and I really love the portrayal of the deaf community which comes across very strongly 50 years apart and the two parallel stories and of course in the end the two stories combined. It’s so rich and rewarding storytelling.

Sarah.: I love that book too. This book back to the story time crowd those 2-6 year olds Homer the Library Cat. You can just see them as TV's grin on Homer’s face says it all. Reyes Lindbergh lives up in the Northeast Kingdom, so it has some local flavor and Anne Wilsdorf is the illustrator. The scenes could be taken from any number of Vermont towns. Homer one day is used by life and he takes a little tumble out of the window and into his loud neighborhood so he goes on a bit of a tour and ultimately winds up at the public library surrounded by the crew of kids. It does look like a scene in my library with parents and kids enjoying the space and finding their community there. Homer comes to terms with the fact that everything doesn't have to be quiet and he finds his owner and the nice welcoming crew of kids of the library. The watercolor illustrations are so graceful and it's nice to see the cat helping the community. Actually another type of journey, I brought a journey for older kids this book: Inside Out and Back Again by Thanhha Lai, was the award winner for the national book award in 2011. This girl is a 10 year old living in Saigon towards the end of the Vietnam War and she must leave with their family. She ends up on a boat traveling to Guam and eventually picked up by the U.S. Navy and then ultimately cheery settles in Alabama in the late seventies. As the story of her loss of her place the loss of her childhood home and also her missing father. It's an autobiographical story and one of the most unique things as it’s told as a prose poem so they're like journal entries and each entry is poetically written prose verse. It's really a great read that really tells a very important story about a part of our history that really isn't discussed a bunch about her transition to a new life.

Judy.: Interesting.

Amy.: I have history too but I don't have it with me; my mother took it out of my hands last night. I am looking for a good novel have you got one? Yes I said I do. This is perfect for book clubs its Sarah’s Key by Tatyana DeRosnay it came out a couple of years ago. The story is a piece of history I did not know. It's a roundup of French children in Paris in 1942. French Jewish children by the French police. The children almost all were executed at Auschwitz. This is a poignant story of the little girl who was 11. Her mischievous brother says I will hide and she locks and into the closet as the family is taken away and then of course she worries about him. The story is parallel there's first of all the focus on the girl worrying about her brother and then 60 years later on the anniversary a young American married to a Frenchman uncovering the story of the capture and Valdev and all of the events of the French infiltration into the lives of Jews in Paris. It's also her life and her exploration as an American. I think that the take away for me was how uncomfortable this history is. How difficult it is to come to grips with these emotions in our past and how we go on from there. A gripping novel and a great read as I said for book clubs and for individuals and also a great audio book. That's a good one to keep an eye out for as well.
Judy.: Excellent.

Sarah.: I love it when books put a new spin on history especially history that can be difficult to grapple with. I think actually Revolution also two stories from two different historical periods in a Parisian setting. This book just blew me away Jennifer Donnelly has written other historical fiction some set in the Adirondacks. She's written for adults and four teens. This is the young adult novel and young adult historical fiction. Two protagonists whose lives end of intersecting. One is a contemporary teenage musician from New York and the other is a servant girl who works for the royal family during the French revolution. They both lost someone that they really loved and it's their grief that ties them together through centuries. One of the most remarkable things about this book is the music that paces the book and actually couldn't help myself I had to make a play list of all the songs that are mentioned in this book and it's just phenomenal. Goes from Bach to Led Zeppelin to the rolling stones to Decemberists and Radiohead its incredible soundtrack it's always good to find.

Amy: I want you to talk about Monstermologist.

Sarah.: Okay so Monstermologist which I don't have because I can't keep it on my shelf. Anytime there's a good book in my library it gives me good street credit with all the middle school boys because it's one of the most disgusting books you'll ever read in your entire life. Its gothic horror which I don't normally touch but it's the story of a young boy who is an apprentice to a monster hunter and scientist. One of the most wonderful characters I've ever read. The stern taciturn Helenor worthrip whose mission is to identify and eradicate monsters. Will Henry the young boy is his assistant and ends up going off on a journey to try and find this specific species that there so much blood and guts in this book its great. It also has an amazing vocabulary the language is well written it’s literary and the vocabulary in that book I feel like is the top secret way to get any middle school boy to brush up on is SAT words.

Amy.: I will be quick with these; I have a couple of biographies. Amelia Lost our wonderful American heroine Amelia Earhart. I love this book because it does two things at the same time. It gives you the history of Amelia’s life very interesting life a very interesting woman but also the search after the plane went down. The format is lots of photographs lots of journal entries newspaper clippings and then the occasional interspersed piece. For example you can go to website and see how difficult it is to find Howland Island the little place they were searching for to refuel. One of the great heroines of our time and also some of the conversations with Eleanor Roosevelt another great American heroine about finding yourself and moving forward. I also brought and I saw you nodding with the Rolling Stones Life by Keith Richards.

Judy.: This surprises me I must say.

Amy.: Oh come on guys.

Sarah.: It's got a great cover.

Amy.: And an amazing life. For me the pull here was that Keith Richards really grew up. It is born in the fifties grew up in the sixties. I am not a big music person but what are rich exciting life and I love the parts or he's just a kid where he hates school where he's looking with some jealousy at this posh kids in the next neighborhood over Mick Jagger and then the development of their music and that incredibly exciting time with the Beatles and all of the London explosion. I also listen to this on tape and Johnny Depp is one of the readers which of course was terrific.
Judy.: There's nothing wrong with that.


Sarah.: I actually listened to this one too, it’s The Thousand Autumn’s of Jacob De Zoet. And that's why I know how to pronounce De Zoet. I got this through “Listen Up Vermont” which is our Vermont statewide downloadable audio e-book.

Amy.: A lot of libraries belong to that.

Sarah.: It was a terrific read. It's a historical fiction set on an island off the coast of Nagasaki Japan in the 1790s and young Jacob arises in earnest young clerk looking to make good. He meets a very enigmatic young Japanese midwife and become somewhat obsessed with her. It's a story of their relationship and their relationship parallels the relationships of the Dutch East Indies Company and the Japanese empire. Amazing medical drama high seas adventure just incredibly elaborate historical detail and I'm a huge historical fiction lover and this was probably my favorite of the past few years.

Judy.: Excellent.

Amy.: I don't want us to forget all of the things that public libraries do and I thought bringing a do it yourself book would help with that. This is One Yard Wonders I think knitters probably know about the one skein books as well but the idea is what can you do with a yard of cloth. These are patterns and ideas illustrated with great modern colors and modern fabrics. Laptop covers lunch bags insulated lunch bags. Great easy halter tops summer's coming up if you want to sew with your granddaughter here's a great idea book to get started and of course libraries also have woodworking radio building and everything.

Judy.: Well my pick today's is Animals Make us Human by Temple Grandin. I'm in the middle of reading that. Any kind of animal behavior is interesting to me so if you want to unlock what it is your dog or especially your cat is trying to communicate with you this is a great book because it puts you on the other side of the fence and lets you see life in the world of what an animal is going through and how they see which is kind of fascinating. And why if you are thinking about a cat maybe get two or maybe a black cat vs. a tabby and she explains why that is. It's just interesting stuff. You can get a complete list of all the books we have reviewed this afternoon. Write or call the Vermont Department of Libraries the address is: 109 States Street in Montpelier 05609 please be sure to include a return address. The number to call is (802) 828-3261. Thank you so much for bringing in these great books. That’s our program for today. I’m Judy Simpson we’ll see you again next time on Across the Fence.

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