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Two Girls Read Books About Girls With Their Dad — Here Are Their Reviews

BY JOSEPH WILSON AND HIS TWO DAUGHTERS
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This year for International Women’s Day, I sat on the couch with my three daughters after school and we read some books. I chose some books specifically for the occasion that showed diverse female characters in all sorts of strong roles.

We started with Elise Gravel’s *Artsy Boys and Smelly Girls*

(<http://elisegravel.com/en/blog/artsy-boys-and-smelly-girls-free-e-book-kids/>)

which was written to “teach your young ones that their gender does not define who they are, how they are required to behave, what they are required to like, and how they are required to feel!” The consensus was: three thumbs up for this book, especially for the girl on page eight who is farting. (In French this is signified with the wonderfully onomatopoeic word “PRROUT!” floating in a noxious cloud of gas).

The next book, *Welcome to the Forest* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SmOnjWt6nx4&ab_channel=StoryWeaverEnglish) featured a blind girl named Tulsa who visits Kanha Tiger Reserve near her home in India. The girls thought it was cool that the descriptions of the forest were sensory references to sounds, smells and textures. “Tulsa can feel the cold and pure air in her mouth. It tastes like mint leaves,” writes author Bhavna Menon. Tulsa gets to touch an elephant’s wonderfully rough skin. My girls couldn’t wait to see the tiger, but in the end they just get a description of its roar (“AUHN!”) which prompts the guide to hustle the visitors back on the bus to return home. Three more thumbs up for this book.

Tap into the rich Indigenous tradition of Own Voices storytelling with this great selection of books! Check out the list here (<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/learning/view/ownvoices-shows-and-books-to-celebrate-indigenous-history-month-with-you>).

My wife and I are both scientists and as such I tried to sneak in a couple of books about female scientists. *Anna’s Extraordinary Experiments With Weather* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OetbmKpBczo&ab_channel=MyMotherhoodStudio) tells the story of meteorologist Anna Mani and features illustrations of the many instruments she invented to measure weather patterns such as wind-speed or pressure changes. When she gets diamond earrings as a present as a young girl, Anna complains “Aiyye! ... they were expensive and useless.”

“What?” said my eldest daughter Sonia. “I’d love earrings like that.”

“People like different things. Mom doesn’t really like jewellery either.”

What Anna really wanted was “books, books and more books!”

“Oh. Now I get it,” said Sonia.

Two thumbs up for this one; the youngest, Maria, was getting bored.

Nivi, the main character of *A Whistling Good Idea*

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruf2Ckhvdug&ab_channel=VideoBooks4Kid), is reading a book and becomes

supremely annoyed when her mother asks her to perform a chore. I glance at Sonia for a glimmer of recognition. She smiles. Instead of just complying, Nivi builds a Rube Goldberg contraption, something our middle daughter, Elizabeth, is prone to do.

“Oooo, I’ve got to try that later,” she says.

One thumb up; Maria is eyeing her Barbies with impatience.

Want to read more books about the experiences of people of colour? These kids' books feature a POC as a main character. Read about that here (<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/learning/view/8-kids-books-where-the-main-character-is-a-person-of-colour>).

The Girl Who Could Not Stop Laughing (<https://storyweaver.org.in/stories/59108-the-girl-who-could-not-stop-laughing>) by Meera Ganapathi features a girl who laughs a lot and laughs loudly. Under the glare of disapproving adults, she decides to control her responses and is determined to make it through a day without laughing. Her experiment is short-lived. On page 12, a very serious-looking teacher farts in the middle of reading a book, which causes my daughters to crack up. (This time: “Prouuuut!”). Three very enthusiastic thumbs up.

I should know by now that bodily functions are way more interesting to children than meteorological instruments. In my efforts to introduce my daughters to complex female protagonists I might have inadvertently reinforced a trope no less profound than the fact that farts are funny. But also, hopefully, that sitting on the couch reading books with your dad is a nice way to spend an afternoon.

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