

Reading Matters

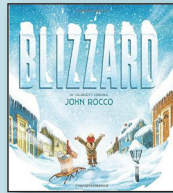
We're Not Alone: Family Support in Children's Books by Jean Dugan

It takes a village, doesn't it? Or at least a neighborhood, or an extended family to ensure that children's needs are met. Grandparents, neighbors, teachers — even other children — are part of the network of helping a child grow into a mature, compassionate member of a caring society. No one should ever feel alone. Featured are some recent children's books where community matters.



Jean Dugan, a long-time friend of *Exchange*, has been connecting kids with books for over 40 years. She helped establish a library program in the elementary schools of Gloucester, Massachusetts, and later brought her love of children's literature to the public library there. This is one more opportunity for her to share the best new books with children and those who care about them.

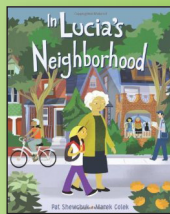
In 1978, New England was covered by almost four feet of snow from a two-day blizzard that paralyzed several states. Many streets weren't cleared for a week and nearly everybody ran out of milk and bread; I remember well how neighbors climbed over enormous snowdrifts to get to the convenience store a half mile away.



The boy in John Rocco's **Blizzard** — perhaps the author himself — tires of drinking cocoa made with water and with advice from his trusty Arctic Survivor Guide, takes matters into his own hands. Tennis rackets make good snowshoes for someone as lightweight as a 10-year-old, and a sled can carry all the emergency peanut butter, candles, and cat food his neighbors need. And his trek, shown in fold-out, mostly white pages, turns out to be a grand and memorable adventure. He's a real-world action hero, with a story to tell.

Blizzard by John Rocco (Disney Hyperion, 2014) Ages 5-9.

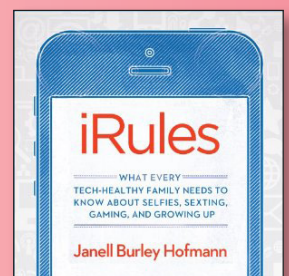
How does a neighborhood work, and what makes it special? In 1961, in **The Death and Life of Great American Cities**, Jane Jacobs described the "ballet of a good city sidewalk." Lucia, of **In Lucia's Neighborhood**, walks her urban streets with her grandmother who points out the dancers in the ballet and the rhythm of the 'hood, where something is going on every minute of every day. Lucia's is a safe, busy, happy neighborhood filled with the crisscrossing paths of dog walkers, shoppers, school children, and farmers bringing their goods to market, where all eyes are on the street and where everyone looks out for the welfare of others.



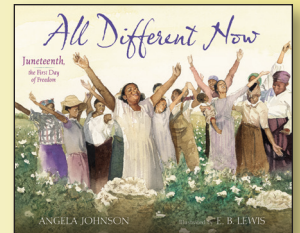
In Lucia's Neighborhood by Pat Shewchuk and Marek Colek (Kids Can Press, 2013) Ages 4-8.

We all know that personal technology is here to stay, and that's a good thing. But we may need a little help getting a handle on making the best use of it in our very busy lives — particularly in guiding our children, grandchildren, and students. Janell Burley Hofmann, a mother of five, has created what she calls an **iRules** contract to keep age-appropriate communication flowing between parents and kids. The subtitle of her book **iRules** says it all: "What Every Tech-Healthy Family Needs to Know about Selfies, Sexting, Gaming, and Growing Up." This book, for anyone who works with kids, is full of good ideas for talking with them about the sometimes uncomfortable pros and cons of the technology in our pockets and the greater importance of real human interaction.

iRules: What Every Tech-Healthy Family Needs to Know about Selfies, Sexting, Gaming, and Growing Up by Janell Burley Hofmann (Rodale, 2014) Adults.



Slaves in Texas did not hear about the Emancipation Proclamation until well after the Civil War ended. Angela Johnson's **All Different Now** is about the first Juneteenth celebration on the Texas coast, when slaves woke up to a new reality that they were free, and that things were different now. This is truly a family story of people who suffered together, worked together, shared a common history and on June 19, 1865, rejoiced together in the belief that "What was before would be no more." E. B. Lewis' watercolors portray the hope of a new day dawning.



All Different Now: Juneteenth, the First Day of Freedom by Angela Johnson. Illustrated by E. B. Lewis (Simon and Schuster, 2014) Ages 6-9.

Pearl's extended family consists of three people: Pearl, her mom, and her granny. That's the way it is, and that's the way it will stay. But then, in **Pearl Verses the World**, it doesn't. Australian author Sally Murphy and illustrator Heather Potter give us a small gem of a novel told in verse: the story of a lonely girl who doesn't quite fit in, whose poems don't rhyme and who, in her lively classroom forms "a group of one." When Granny dies, nothing in Pearl's life makes sense until she finds the strength to use her words to remember her grandmother — in verse, of course. Pearl's young teacher becomes an unexpected support who understands that "sometimes a poem needs no rhyme to be just right. Sometimes a poem just is."

Pearl Verses the World by Sally Murphy, illustrated by Heather Potter (Candlewick Press, 2009) Ages 6-10.

