

Barb's BookSpot: Episode 1
January, 2015

***The Great Thanksgiving Escape* by Mark Fearing.**

Candlewick Press, 2014.

Feeling very claustrophobic and neglected, Gavin and Rhonda decide to escape the annual holiday celebration at Grandma's and make a break for the swing-set outside. This book is great for considering point-of view, interaction between illustrations and text, and presents a funny situation to which many of your young listeners can relate.

***And Then Comes Christmas* by Tom Brenner, Illustrations by Jana Christy.**

Candlewick Press, 2014.

The days leading up to Christmas are filled with seasonal changes, winter activities, holiday preparations and anticipation. This book uses a simple "When.../Then..." pattern to describe the way we get ready to celebrate the holiday. The construction is perfect for prompting prediction. What is most beautiful in this book is the use of language. The strong verbs and lovely details exactly correspond to the breathtaking, illustrations.

***Hanukkah in Alaska* by Barbara Brown, with Illustrations by Stacey Schuett.**

Henry Holt/Macmillan 2013.

A little girl is very worried that her favorite tree with her swing will be destroyed by a moose who seems to have taken up residence in her backyard. She can hardly even think about Hanukkah activities and celebrations because of her worry. This book has a strong setting, and the description of Alaskan life in the winter is revealed through simple, precise details, and easy-to visualize scenes. Later in the book, after the family witnesses the aurora borealis, the language becomes a bit more figurative, and colorful. In one book, we get two ways of setting a scene and encouraging visualization in an audience. This would make a great mentor text for teaching writing, techniques of description, creating a strong setting, and even identifying the central problem/solution which drives the story.

