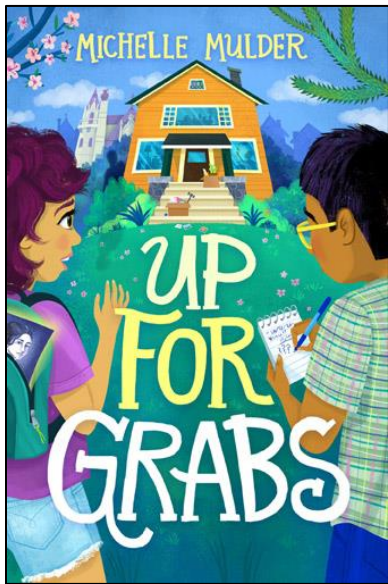


***Up for Grabs* by Michelle Mulder Teacher's Guide**

Created by Martha Brack Martin with support from Michelle Mulder and the Cormorant Team



Frida is a thirteen-year-old girl with a passion for art, books and travel. Arriving in Victoria, B.C. with her much older brother Zac, Frida quickly finds herself at the heart of a mystery that will take her and her new friend Hazeem on a journey; they discover not just the historic parts of the city — its free little book box libraries and its artistic past — but Frida's own history and past as well.

This book is a great choice for readers in grades 4-8, and has the right elements of mystery, humour, fun and adventure. The characters are relatable, well-developed, and realistic, as is the dialogue. It also provides some fabulous teaching opportunities relating to Canada's history, including its art, European settlement, the Klondike gold rush, and Victoria, British Columbia.

Themes

Some key themes and “big ideas” in this book include:

- Family
- Loss
- Art
- Exploring one's community
- What is truly valuable in life?
- Keeping and Letting Go
- Appearance versus Reality
- What makes a place “home?”

The Plot

Frida and her brother, Zac, have lived in seven countries in ten years. In fact, they've been travelling for so long that Frida has never considered herself from anywhere — until they inherit their grandmother's house in Victoria, British Columbia. Zac, always looking for money-making opportunities to fund their travels, is determined to sell everything in the house and expects Frida to help. Now they're up to their ears in family heirlooms, paintings of dead relatives, vintage paperclips, and ceramic animals.

As Frida explores the neighbourhood, she meets a childhood friend of her grandmother's, a relentlessly friendly kid named Hazeem who has a knack for finding treasures in the many book-exchange boxes nearby, and a nosy antique dealer who takes an interest in her grandmother's stuff. A big, sneaking-around-trying-to-break-in-to-the-house kind of interest. Is this strange neighbour looking for something specific? And will Frida and Hazeem figure it out before it's too late?

The Setting

This story takes place in contemporary Victoria, BC.

What Kind of Reader Will Love This Book? One who...

- Loves a good mystery
- Is fascinated by stories of hidden treasure
- Wants to learn more about Victoria, B.C.
- Appreciates stories with non-traditional families
- Can't walk past a bookstore, museum, art gallery or antique store without going inside
- Spends their time drawing, painting or journaling
- Would love to travel around the world
- Thinks the past is cool, and wants to know more about Canada's history, art, mysteries and scandals

Pre-Teaching Prep

Trigger Warnings: The protagonist, Frida, learns in the middle of the book that her grandmother was an alcoholic, and there is some brief discussion of the issues that alcoholism brings to families. Frida's mother died in a car accident when Frida was one, though Frida has no traumatic recollection about this as she was so young. Hazeem is also occasionally described as being sad about the recent death of his grandfather, though that too happened before the book begins. Be aware, as these references could hit home for some of your students.

Introducing the Novel

As an entry point to engage your students, go to the website for Craigdarroch Castle in Victoria, B.C. (<https://thecastle.ca/>). This is the “castle” in the community of Rockland, near where Frida’s grandmother’s fictional home can be found. The website opens immediately with a video showing the castle and alluding to some of its historical elements and background. (It is on a loop, so let it run a few times.) As the video runs, ask your students:

- What catches their eye in the video? What do they notice?
- What era (time period) do they think the castle showcases?
- What mood do they get from seeing the video?

Discuss their observations. Hopefully they will be at least marginally intrigued. Save further digging into the website for later (see “Culminating Activities” further in the guide). Let them know this castle and its neighbourhood are inspiration for the new novel they will be reading. The story doesn’t have a lot about the actual castle in it, but it stimulates conversation! (See additional options exploring this website under Culminating Activities further in the guide.)

Now show the students the cover. Discuss the following:

- What does it mean for something to be “up for grabs?”
- How do they feel about the cover? What do they notice? What do they wonder?
- Can they make some predictions based on what they see on the cover?

Chapter Questions (for Independent Work or Class Discussion)

Pick and choose the questions that work for *your* students in *your* classroom. Use as many or as few as you like. All page number references are from the first edition (2023).

Chapter 1

1. Look at the first page of chapter one. What interesting bits of information does the author include in these first three paragraphs to snag your interest? Discuss what captured your interest with the class.
2. Hazeem carries around a notepad so he can write down information and keep track of things he’s observed. Now it is your turn to be like Hazeem. Create a graphic organizer of your choice (perhaps a T-chart or a table). Then, using jot notes, record what you know about each of the characters you meet in this chapter. Leave some room so you can add new information as you move through the book.
3. Frida enjoys keeping track of the weirdest book titles she finds in the book box on her block. Be as creative as you can and create titles for two imaginary books you think could go on her list.
4. We learn a bit about the character Zac from Frida’s thoughts, but no actual details about his age, identity or physical characteristics. Why does this make sense?

5. Frida is surprised at Hazeem’s willingness to talk about things she clearly would not share with a stranger. On page 7 she thinks, “Part of me wanted to turn and run, but a part of me was fascinated. What else would he talk about as if it was a totally normal conversation topic?” What does this tell us about both Frida’s character, and Hazeem’s? Explain your thoughts.

Chapter 2

6. What is Zac’s relationship to Frida? Why do you think she refers to him as “Dad-ee-o” on page 14?
7. Frida explains her understanding of conceptual art to Zac. What were conceptual artists trying to do? How do you feel about the Piero Manzoni’s artwork Frida describes?
8. Using Google Earth or any other program your teacher suggests, explore the various countries Zac and Frida visited. Which one looks most interesting to you personally? Why?
9. Define the underlined words in the quotations below. You can use a dictionary to help you.
 - a. “Give me a friendly-looking embalmed moose any day” (p. 18).
 - b. “I donated some photos to the archives too” (p. 19)
10. Summarize what we learn about Frida’s family in this chapter, using no more than five sentences.
11. Do you think you could travel around the world with only a few possessions? Why or why not?
12. The chapter ends on a cliffhanger with the last sentence, “At that point, I had no idea I was so close to something that would change everything” (p. 23). What do you predict will happen next, and why?

Chapter 3

13. “*Bonjour*” Pierre says on page 27. Why does the author write “*Bonjour*” in italics?
14. A few paragraphs farther down the page, the author again uses italics in this sentence: “I can’t imagine what it was like *before* Zac cleared some of them out.” Is the author’s reason for using italics the same in this case? Explain.
15. We learn more about the relationship between Zac and Frida in this chapter. What do we learn? Add the new information to your graphic organizer from chapter 1.
16. Put yourself in Zac’s shoes at the time when he was 17. How would *you* have handled what he experienced? How has this affected him, in your opinion?
17. Have you ever done a tour of an historic place? What kind of historic place would interest you the most? Share your experiences and ideas with a small group in your class.
18. How do you feel about Hazeem’s “Relentless Friendliness Project” (p. 31)? Could you do something like that, or would it be too hard for you?

19. Do you believe people in communities are less friendly lately? Use examples from your personal experiences to defend your opinion. Then vote on the issue as a class and discuss the result.

Chapter Four

20. On page 37 the chapter begins with the sentence, "A loud *boooooong* echoed through the house." Why is the word "*boooooong*" written in italics?
21. Zac is the only family member Frida has left. How does the author show us in this chapter that Frida is longing for more family connections? Defend your answer by including specific details from the chapter as well as your own ideas.
22. How would you feel if you found a secret drawer in an old family heirloom? Would you have handled it the same way Frida did? Why or why not?
23. Why do you suppose Frida wants to keep the portrait a secret from Zac for now?
24. Do you believe the story Hazeem tells Frida about the sourdough starter? Explain your reasoning.
25. The people who live on the street are having a neighbourhood barbecue in this chapter. What new character(s) does Frida meet at the barbecue? Update your graphic organizer with the new information you've gathered.

Chapter Five

26. Frida has an intense dislike for Liz, almost from the moment they first meet.
- Have you ever met someone that bothered you right away? If not, have you ever met someone you hit it off with from the very first moment? How did your encounter go?
 - How do you feel about Liz? Why?
27. Frida plans to investigate the portrait to find out the identity of the lady, and "why our great-great-great-grandfather had hidden her away" (p. 52). What are your theories? Explain them using evidence from the text as well as your own ideas, then share them in a class discussion.

Chapter Six

28. Once again, the author has used italics in the sentences below from page 53. Explain why in each case:
- "My brother had no reason to think I was doing anything unusual, I told myself. *Just relax.*
 - And I did when I saw Zac's note on the counter – *Gone to get Groceries.*"
29. Hazeem has made a deal with his mother to stay mostly offline for the summer. How would you handle that? Do you think you could do it? Why or why not?
30. Anna and Frida seem to really understand each other. How does the author show us this?

31. What new details does Anna share about Frida's family in this chapter? Add these to your graphic organizer.

Chapter Seven

32. Do you agree with Frida that someone came into the house and moved the things on the desk, or is her imagination getting the better of her? What do you think might have happened?
33. Define the underlined words in the quotations below. You can use a dictionary to help you.
- "My brother looked at me, perplexed, shook out the tablecloth..." (p. 63).
 - "He had an incredible poker face that worked perfectly..." (p. 64).
 - "We're going to look way more suspicious than the rich antique-tycoon..." (p. 66).
34. Liz really shows her true personality in this chapter. Pick two adjectives that you feel describe the character of Liz perfectly. Then use examples from the book to prove Liz fits your descriptive choices.
35. What does Liz mean when she says, "It depends whether you see the object as personal belongings or cultural heritage" (p. 71)?

Chapter Eight

36. Consider this part of the story:

"Now I was coming in to see people from our family's past. It was like coming to collect bits of myself that I hadn't known I'd lost, and it was more than a little weird" (p. 74).

In your own words, explain what the experience of seeing her family portraits means to Frida.

37. There's been lots of mentions of portraits in the book so far. Channeling your best artistic skills, choose a character of your choice and create a portrait of them with your teacher's direction and chosen medium.
38. Why was Sophie Pemberton's artistic career cut short? What would you have done if you were Sophie? How are things different today?
39. Do you have any physical or personality traits that are similar to other members of your family? How does sharing these with a family member make you feel? Explain.

Chapter Nine

40. Do some research to find out where your local archives are located. What kinds of things would you be most interested in finding there? Why?
41. What do the characters learn about photography from their visit to the archives? Are you surprised by what they hear? Explain.
42. How does the author show us that Frida is being affected by everything that's going on in her life? What advice would you give Frida at this point in the story?

Chapter Ten

43. Why do you personally think Liz is offering her services at such a steep discount?
44. What does Frida mean in the sentence, “His words were cold water down my spine” (p. 101). What do we call this type of figurative language?
45. In this chapter we finally learn how Pierre fits into Frida’s and Zac’s story. Using no more than five sentences, write a summary of Pierre’s relationship with the family.
46. Pierre and Zac live by the motto, “Life is what you make of it,” according to Frida. In your own words, explain this motto.

Chapter Eleven

47. Frida and Hazeem pass several tourist spots on their way to Pierre’s boat. Think about what tourists would like to see in *your* local community. List at least three spots. Then share your list with your classmates and determine which are the most popular choices.
48. Are you surprised Hazeem doesn’t know how to swim? Why or why not?
49. What do you think of the new developments in the mystery? Explain your thoughts.

Chapter Twelve

50. Are you surprised the art gallery’s employee Jennifer has reached out to Zac? How did the author give us clues earlier in the book that this might happen?
51. What new revelations about their family does Zac share with Frida?
52. Explain in your own words what “intergenerational trauma” means. Were you familiar with this concept before? How do you feel about it?
53. Zac is determined to sell everything so they can be free to travel. Would you make the same choice if you were in his shoes? Why or why not?

Chapter Thirteen

54. On page 123 Anna tells Liz “You seem a bit...het up.”
 - a. What do you think “het up” means?
 - b. Can you think of any other old-fashioned expressions or words that aren’t used much anymore? Why do words go out of fashion?
 - c. What are some “new” words or expressions that have become popular in your time? (Keep it appropriate!)
 - d. With the class, make a list of both the new and old phrases you’ve come up with, and write their meanings beside them.
55. How do you feel about the way the two police officers react to the break-in?
56. Have you ever had a time when you were by yourself and were absolutely terrified? How did you handle it? Do you think it gets easier when you are older? Why or why not?
57. Who do you think took the missing items out of the house? Explain your reasoning with evidence from the story as well as your own ideas.

Chapter Fourteen

58. Do you think the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts theft story is true? Do a little research and check it out.

59. Pretend you are a reporter, and your job is to create a news story about the theft. You can write it as a blog or an article for a website or newspaper, or perform it as a TV news segment.
60. The author has used many real places, people and events in this story. As a reader, do you prefer your fiction with real elements, or does it make a difference to your enjoyment of the story? Share your thoughts.
61. What do you think about the kids' theory that Pierre was somehow involved in the art gallery robbery? What would you do as your next steps if you were Frida and Hazeem?

Chapter Fifteen

62. How did you feel when Liz broke into the house and chased Frida? Would you have made the same choices as Frida and Hazeem? Explain.
63. What techniques has the author used when writing this chapter to increase the suspense and excitement? Give at least one example from the chapter to show what you mean.

Chapter Sixteen

64. On the bottom of page 156, Pierre describes Frida's grandfather's skills as a liar. He says, "Your grandfather was an excellent one, and I was very *naïf*." Using context clues, what do you think the word in italics means?
65. Put yourself in Zac's shoes, coming home and finding the house ransacked and Frida gone. How would you have handled that? What would you have done?
66. Summarize Pierre's story of how the painting ended up in Frida's family's possession.

Chapter Seventeen

67. On page 166 the author uses periods between single words in two different places: "Best. Guess. Ever." and "Hand. It. Over." How would you read these sentences out loud? Grab a partner or two and share your best performance of these sentences (quietly!)
68. On page 168 the author writes, "How quickly would salt water destroy the painting, and would the Museum of Fine Arts still want it back, or — ?" This punctuation at the end of the sentence tells the reader how to read it.
 - a. In your own words, explain how you feel this sentence should be read.
 - b. What does it tell us about the way the character is feeling at that moment?
69. Consider this paragraph from page 172:

"For the first time all summer, I wasn't thinking of alternate realities. I was thinking only of what was actually in front of me, and *that* was spectacular."

What lesson(s) does this paragraph show Frida has learned through her experience with the portrait and her investigation into her family? Explain.

70. What do you predict will happen with Liz and the painting? Are you surprised Frida and Zac just let her disappear? Share your thoughts.

Chapter Eighteen

71. What has Zac learned from the experience of almost losing Frida the day before? How is his new understanding similar to Frida's?

72. The denouement of a story happens after the climax is over, where all the "loose ends" are tied up. What do we learn in this "denouement" chapter about the various characters and their next steps?

73. How do you feel about the story now that it's finished? Share your feelings in a small group, or with your whole class in a discussion. Want a bigger challenge? Write to the author and let them know your thoughts, questions, and feelings. You can email them at <https://www.michellemulder.com/contact-1>.

Culminating Activities

Give students the opportunity to make connections to the world and themselves, as well as to other texts, and to choose their own way of demonstrating them. Here are some other activities to consider at the end of the novel:

When Your Home Is Your Castle: Exploring Craigdarroch

To explore the famous "castle" in Victoria, go to the website found here: <https://thecastle.ca/>

Ideally students will enjoy this most by working in small groups, but it can be done as a whole class exploration if that's all you can manage with technology. The goal is to educate the students not just on the historical building itself, but to provide an opportunity to cover media and digital literacy expectations as well.

Explore the whole website, and have the students keep track of any words they don't know for possible discussion later. If students are navigating in groups, they will be less likely to skip areas or options. Circulate with a clipboard to observe and record how well the students can navigate around the site. Encourage them to take turns navigating the website with their partners. Listen to the discussions and make anecdotal notes of learning. (You may decide to create a website scavenger hunt if you have younger students. If you do, make sure you ask them why Scheele's Green paint was dangerous!) To further assess their knowledge, you can ask them to discuss, or independently write a reflection featuring these prompts:

- How did the website creators design the website to make it interesting?
- What is the purpose of the website and how do they know?
- What media techniques are used on the website?
- Does the website offer elements that make it accessible to all users?
- What elements could be added to make the website even more interesting?
- If you had to buy one item from the Castle online store, what would you buy, and why?

Visiting Victoria

Imagine you and a group of your friends are invited to visit Victoria (though for a happier reason than Frida and Zac!) What would you want to see and do?

Using the website <https://www.tourismvictoria.com/> and any others you find in your online “travels,” create a plan with your group for a three-day trip in Victoria. Think about:

- How you will get there from your home location
- How much money it will cost to travel there and back
- Where you will stay (and how much it will cost)
- What you will see and do (and how much it will cost)
- Where you will eat for each meal (and again... how much that will cost)

Now, in your group, create an itinerary of your trip. Be sure to include links to the places you will visit, the costs associated with each place, and any other details your teacher might ask you to include (e.g., directions, a map showing your route, distances between places, how you will get around, notes about what to be sure to see at each place, etc.) Your teacher will decide how they want you to share your work with the class.

Victoria is Golden: Exploring Victoria, British Columbia’s Gold Rush Past

Want to know more about Victoria and how gold played a part in its history? Wondering where the miners went after arriving in Victoria? Using the three websites below (and any others you find useful), research Victoria’s history to determine how the city – and province – was affected by gold fever.

<https://www.victoriaharbourhistory.com/goldrush/>

<https://www.victoria.ca/EN/main/residents/about/history.html>

<https://goldrushtrail.ca/history/>

A Picture’s Worth a Thousand Words:

Art plays a big part in *Up for Grabs*. Frida loves drawing and talking about art, the characters visit an art gallery, and several real artists are mentioned. As a class, dig through the book to make a list of all the artists and creatives mentioned in the chapters. Then divide up the list, working in small groups to do your own “mystery-solving” and share what you learn with the rest of the class in a presentation of your teacher’s choice (e.g., PowerPoint, brochure, handout, model, etc.)

Beauty Is in the Eye of the Beholder

Frida and Zac have toured art galleries and museums all over the world thanks to their travels. Now it’s your turn. Pick a famous art gallery or museum from any country of your choice and investigate its website. What would you most want to see? Alternatively, stick closer to home

and visit a local art gallery or museum. Record five things that you found the most interesting and explain why.

Sophie Who?

Frida learns her family portraits were painted by the real artist Sophie Pemberton. Explore Sophie's work and life by researching her using the following websites:

https://oakbaychronicles.ca/?page_id=401

<https://www.hellenicaworld.com/Art/Paintings/en/SophiePemberton.html>

<https://aggv.ca/exhibits/the-art-of-sophie-pemberton/>

<https://alchetron.com/Sophie-Pemberton> (This video features many examples of Sophie's art.)

Think about:

- How did Sophie's gender as a woman affect her career as an artist?
- Would Sophie's career be affected in the same way if she was living and working today?
- What did you find surprising?
- What did you notice about the subject matter of her art?
- How would you personally describe her style of painting?

Discuss your conclusions about Sophie with your classmates.

Take Action!

Are you aware of any book exchange boxes in your own community? How could you find out where some might be located? Check out what author Michelle Mulder did in honour of *Up for Grabs*, here: <https://www.vancouverislandfreedaily.com/community/book-for-young-readers-up-for-grabs-in-victoria-neighbourhood-lending-libraries/>

Now take action like Michelle did! As a class, bring in books you would like to donate to a Little Free Library© or community book exchange box. Decide if you are going to focus on a specific genre or audience age for your donated books. Once you have a collection gathered, determine a plan to donate these books to any book exchange boxes in your community, or to another worthy option if you don't have any book boxes near you. (If you want an even bigger challenge, figure out how you can start your own!)

Exploring the Same Themes in Different Texts

After reading *Up for Grabs*, consider reading *Swept Away* by Natalie Hyde, *The Winterborne Home for Vengeance and Valor* by Ally Carter, or *The Fabulous Zed Watson* by Kevin and Basil Sylvester. How are some of the same themes repeated in these stories? How are they handled differently?

Create a presentation comparing the themes in your choice of books.

Interview with the Author

Martha: Neighbourhoods and the value of local communities feature strongly in some of your other works, both fiction and nonfiction. *Up for Grabs* is no exception. Like Frida, you've been a global traveler. Do you think your travels are responsible for your appreciation for neighbourhoods?

Michelle: Absolutely. Growing up, I didn't know my neighbours very well. I got my first taste of community in university, living in a dorm, and after that, wherever I traveled, I noticed how neighbours interacted with each other. In a settlement in the Dominican Republic, farmers worked together so everyone had enough help at harvest time. In a village in Peru, when someone was sick, neighbors brought whatever they had to offer—herbs, meals, or help around the house. When I moved into a condo building as an adult, I tried to encourage those kinds of relationships. My neighbours and I painted a road mural together. We celebrated the opening of the book-exchange box that we put up in the parking lot. We borrowed and lent things between us, and on Thursday evenings, whoever was available got together for tea and conversation.



Photo by Stephanie Rae Hull,
Centric Photography

Martha: That is awesome! It sounds like you were the original inventor of the Relentless Friendship Project! Am I right in thinking that Frida's grandmother's house is in the Rockland neighbourhood of Victoria? How did you end up setting it there?

Michelle: As I was writing about Frida's grandmother's house, I noticed that it looked a lot like the house of a friend of mine who lived in Rockland! Curious, I went on a historic tour of that neighbourhood to see if it would work as a setting for the story I had in mind, and the more I learned about the neighbourhood's history, the more perfect it seemed. (By the way, my friend later got a big kick out of reading a novel set in her house. She asked me to point out, though, that her place isn't nearly as cluttered as the one in the story.)

Martha: Ha! Hopefully with fewer embalmed mooseheads too! What made you decide to have Frida being raised by her much older brother Zac?

Michelle: I think it's important for kids to see families like theirs in the books they read. Around the time I began dreaming up this story, my mother mentioned an acquaintance who had been raised by a much-older brother. I'd never read a book featuring that family situation before, it tied in beautifully with the storyline, and I could imagine how Zac and Frida would get along. Since then, several readers have commented that *Up for Grabs* is like a celebration of different kinds of families. I couldn't be happier with that description!

Martha: Yes, the different types of families are one of the things I loved about the book when I first read it, too. So, tell me, what is your writing process like? Are you an “outliner” or a “fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants” kind of writer?

Michelle: I am very much an outliner. (In fact, I don’t do much of anything without an outline or at least a list!) With every novel I’ve written, though, at some point, I know far more about the characters than I did when I wrote the outline, and I can see that the original plan doesn’t work anymore. The trick is knowing when to keep going according to plan, and when to let go and head in a different direction. It’s a bit of a balancing act, I find.

Martha: With this book, did you find yourself making significant changes?

Michelle: The core plot didn’t change very much, but the people involved sure did. In early drafts, Frida wasn’t nearly as sociable, Hazeem didn’t exist, and Anna wasn’t so friendly either.

Martha: Wow! Big changes!

Michelle: I’ve noticed that whenever I start writing a new story, I feel shy, as though I’m afraid that if I write about people who are a lot like me - a bit off-beat and goofy - readers won’t like them. Early versions are usually super-serious, mysterious characters who don’t ring true, and then my writing friends read the draft and encourage me to lighten up and just be myself. That’s when the writing really starts to flow. Thank goodness for friends!

Martha: That’s a great bit of advice for young writers. Sharing your stories with others is a great way to improve your work – especially when they know you well enough to challenge you to let go of what’s holding you back!

Michelle: Exactly.

Martha: I have an art history background, but I never heard of Sophie Pemberton. How did you learn about her?

Michelle: I had never heard of Sophie Pemberton either until I got a behind-the-scenes tour of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria. At that point, I was just developing the storyline. I knew that I wanted Frida’s grandmother’s house to be full of old portraits, but I hadn’t considered the artist. When I mentioned this plot detail to Stephen Topfer at the art gallery, he immediately thought of Sophie Pemberton, and the more I learned about her, the keener I was to include her in the story. I loved the idea of showing Rockland as it is now *and* as it was a century ago. I think it gives us a richer sense of a place.

Martha: I love that Pierre’s accent comes out in the way you wrote his dialogue. How did you settle on his character’s story? Where did “he” come from?

Michelle: Great question! Before Pierre, came his boat. Decades earlier, I had met a man who lived in landlocked Winnipeg and was building a boat in his front yard. All his neighbors thought he was nuts... until he retired, sold his house, moved his boat west, and moved aboard. The

summer I began working on this novel, I happened across the Victoria Classic Boat Show in the Inner Harbour. As I wandered up and down the docks, looking at the boats and reading the signs, I spotted a name I recognized. Just as I looked from the sign to the boat, the fellow from Winnipeg stepped out onto the deck. He remembered me instantly, invited me aboard, and gave me a tour of his boat. The next time I was back at my desk, Pierre began to take shape.

Martha: How serendipitous was that? You're really making a great case for how writers need to look for inspiration everywhere, and that writing a book takes a village – something that fits well with your passion for the concept of community. What about Hazeem? Is he based on someone real you met, or an historical figure? I thought it was very cool he and his mom are from the Yukon. Was that an homage to Victoria's gold mining roots?

Michelle: Truth be told, it was more of an homage to sourdough! My partner is really into bread-baking and was learning all about sourdough around the world. When he told me the detail about miners keeping sourdough at the bottom of their sleeping bags, it was too good to leave out, and then on my tour of Rockland, I realized how much of an influence the gold miners and gold-mining money had on Victoria, so it all fit together nicely.

Martha: Speaking of Victoria, you do such a great job of showing the importance of community in this book. Victoria really becomes its own character in the story. I thought it was brilliant how you hid copies of the book in the Little Free Libraries© and book-boxes around Victoria to celebrate the launch of the book. Such a great idea!

Michelle: I've loved the concept of book exchange boxes ever since I first saw one in Vancouver in 2015. I was delighted when they started popping up in Victoria, and every time I see one, I find it impossible to walk by without taking a peek. As I mentioned, I convinced my neighbours to let me put one in our building parking lot, and I've spent many happy hours pedaling around Victoria, distributing books when our box overflows.

Martha: You're Hazeem!

Michelle: I am! The idea for the book-box scavenger hunt came from my friend Teale Phelps-Bondaroff who is our local book-box champion. He's mapped all 700 of the boxes in the Victoria area, and he's always working on ways to get more books into readers' hands. So good!

Martha: Now that your book is out in the world, what do you hope to inspire in your readers as they turn the last page of *Up for Grabs*?

Michelle: I hope this book inspires readers to step outside, go for a walk, be curious about what they see, and maybe start a conversation or two. The people in our neighbourhoods are a wealth of stories, information, skills, and new ideas, and it can be so much fun to learn things from each other. I'd also be delighted to learn that readers have closed the book and gone for a ride, set up a book-exchange box of their own, or discovered their own local mystery (without any nosy antique dealers getting in the way, of course)!

About Michelle Mulder

Michelle Mulder is an award-winning author of many books for children, including *The Vegetable Museum*, *Home Sweet Neighborhood*, and *Every Last Drop*.

When not writing, Michelle loves hanging out in the woods, making baskets out of found materials, drawing, diving into lakes, and diving into good books. They live in Victoria, British Columbia. For more information about Michelle and their books, please visit

<https://www.michellemulder.com/>

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<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/michelle-mulder/up-for-grabs/>

<https://storytimewithstephanie.org/home/Upforgrabs>

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