

BOOKS TO FALL FOR

Five picture books celebrate autumn.

Yellow Time

Lauren Stringer. Beach Lane, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-4814-3156-9

Stringer (*Deer Dancer*) offers up a poetic meditation on the transient wonders of autumn—aka “yellow time”—finding delight in everything from the smells of the season (“Like wet mud and dry grass/ with a sprinkle of sugar”) to animals



not always considered to be lovely in and of themselves (“Black crows fill bare branches/ and raise their voices/ in praise of yellow time”). Rendered in acrylic and oil, Stringer’s paintings burst with bright swaths of sunflower yellow as trees bend and sway in the wind, giving up their

leaves in golden swirls and curls as jacketed children revel in the turbulent weather, making crowns from fallen leaves and saving some to press between book pages as mementos of the season. It’s a joyful reminder to make the most of fall when it’s here. Up to age 8. (*Sept.*)

Bella’s Fall Coat

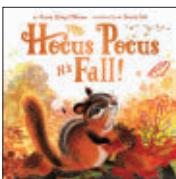
Lynn Plourde, illus. by Susan Gal. Disney-Hyperion, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-1-4847-2697-6

A girl named Bella, “not as little as she used to be,” revels in an autumn day—and in the patchwork coat her grandmother made for her, a coat that’s on its last legs. Grams repeatedly suggests that the coat is ready for retirement, but Bella isn’t having it, repeatedly dashing outdoors to romp through the leaves, pick apples from trees, and dash alongside migrating geese (“She sneaked and snooped. She honked and whistled. She flapped and flew”). The mutual adoration between Bella and Grams is abundantly evident in the tender exchanges Plourde (*Merry Moosey Christmas*) puts together, as well as in Gal’s (*Here Is the World*) gauzy, multilayered images, which capture both Bella’s near-inexhaustible energy and that of a woodland landscape in flux. Ages 3–5. *Illustrator’s agency:* Morgan Gaynin. (*Sept.*)

Hocus Pocus, It’s Fall!

Anne Sibley O’Brien, illus. by Susan Gal. Abrams Appleseed, \$12.95 (24p) ISBN 978-1-4197-2125-0

O’Brien and Gal maintain that there’s something downright magical in the changing seasons in this follow-up to *Abra-cadabra, It’s Spring!* Gentle rhymes—broken up by phrases like “Open sesame!” and “Razzle dazzle!”—high-



light cooling temperatures, the donning of sweaters, migrating birds, and other autumnal standbys; lifting full-page flaps reveals the completed rhymes while underscoring the idea that something special has taken place. In one

scene, two children stare out over a green forest from their tree house; lifting the flap reveals a landscape transformed by vibrant orange, scarlet, and golden foliage (“Leaves on trees are green and bright./ *Abra-cadabra!*/ What a sight!”). Gal’s cozy mixed-media images feel simultaneously retro and contemporary, a subtle reminder that autumn’s pleasures are evergreen (so to speak). Ages 3–5. *Author’s agent:* Lara Perkins, *Andrea Brown Literary.* *Illustrator’s agency:* Morgan Gaynin. (*Aug.*)

Little Frog and the Scary Autumn Thing

Jane Yolen, illus. by Ellen Shi. Persnickety (Legato, dist.), \$15.95 (32p) ISBN 978-1-943978-01-4

Vivid autumn foliage is generally considered to be a thing of beauty, but those unfamiliar colors spell danger to a young frog. “To Little Frog, red and gold were scary,” writes Yolen (*On Bird Hill*). “They were the colors of hot sun and



cold blood.” Mama Frog tells her daughter that “most things that are scary are only just new,” and after exploring the forest on her own and sliding down a pile of leaves with her father, Little Frog starts to agree.

Yolen doesn’t rush Little Frog’s emotional turnaround, and newcomer Shi’s inviting mixed-media landscapes make it clear that the amphibian is never in danger. Little Frog’s (mostly) reasoned reactions to her own nervousness hint at ways readers might tackle their own fears. Ages 4–8.

Author’s agent: Elizabeth Harding, *Curtis Brown.* *Illustrator’s agent:* Anne Moore Armstrong, *Bright Group.* (*Sept.*)

Wonderfall

Michael Hall. Greenwillow, \$17.99 (40p) ISBN 978-0-06-238298-6

An oak tree, with cutout leaves and a pair of squirrels cavorting through its branches, narrates Hall’s (*Frankencrayon*) pensive story, watching as autumn arrives. In a bit of seasonal punning, the title of each free-verse poem



substitutes the word *fall* for the suffix *-ful*.

In “Peacefall,” the oak’s acorns drop, “*plink, plunk, plop.*” In “Dutifall,” the tree notices schoolchildren carrying knapsacks waiting beneath it: “The busy/ yellow/ bus is/ back.”

Slowly the tree’s leaves change color and drop (the poems’ verticality echoes this action), and after the last leaves have fallen and geese fly south, three spreads herald another seasonal change: “Will/ this night... bring/ the/ first... snowfall!” Hall’s crisp, graphic digital collages provide plenty to talk about, and the puns add another layer of interest. Ages 4–8. *Agent:* Anna Olswanger, *Olswanger Literary.* (*Sept.*)