



The Biggest Poutine in the World

By Andrée Poulin
Annick Press, 2016
160 pages, paperback, \$11.95

LEVEL: Intermediate/middle
GENRE: Novel

On his fifth birthday, Thomas's mother left, and he hasn't seen her since. The last thing he remembers is her making a delicious dish of poutine for his birthday. Into the concoction of French fries, gravy and melted cheese curds, she stuck five green candles for him to blow out.

On the day of his twelfth birthday, Thomas comes up with the idea of setting a Guinness world record for the biggest

poutine in the world. Maybe then, his mother will come back and his emotionally distant father will pay attention to him.

As he puts together all the pieces of his "Phenomenal Poutine Project," Thomas not only learns why his mother disappeared, but he also comes to realize that Elie, the one person whose help he rejected, turns out to be his most devoted friend.

Funny and heartbreaking at the same time, *The Biggest Poutine in the World*, was the winner of the French language 2014 TD Canadian Children's Literature Award.

Curriculum Connections:

- **Character Education:** Coming-of-age; emotional growth; dealing with loss; teamwork; optimism; making a statement; familial conflict - abandonment
- **Art Education:** Cover art
- **Literacy and language:** Appealing style of prose including text messages, emails, etc.

Literary Links:

- **Record Breaker** by Robin Stevenson, Orca Book Publishers, 2013

Teacher Tips:

- The story is a visually appealing mixture of graphics, including fun text messages between Thomas and Sam, drawings of emails between Thomas and Elie, and an album of types of poutine (who knew there were so many!) Because of this it really wouldn't be suitable as a read-aloud.
- What exactly is poutine? (a dish of French fries covered with brown gravy and cheese curds originating in Quebec) This book has an eye-catching cover. There is a French edition as well as a U.S. edition. Download an image of each and initiate a discussion with your group about which one they prefer.
- **Introduction:** Read aloud pages 7 - 9.
- **Talking points:**
 1. **Why the PPP?** Thomas concocts the idea of making a giant poutine and feeding hundreds of people so that he might earn a world record and become worthy of the attention of his parents.
 2. **Character:** Thomas is a boy with much resentment, anger and jealousy and yet he can still see the potential for hopefulness. (Optimistic)
 3. **Project Management:** How did Thomas manage to get his big project accomplished? (careful planning and teamwork)
 4. **Prediction:** Will Thomas reconcile with his mother? Will his father become more involved with him?

