This Issue Features:
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    From Varying Points of View
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♦ Reviews of :
    2006 Releases
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Dear Readers,

Greetings from Haiti. Since early January I have worked with several young Haitian seminary students in the cataloging of two libraries: Emmaus Biblical Seminary and Cowman International School. These student helpers have dedicated their lives to God’s service, and have been a joy to work with. Despite illness, surgery, frequent loss of electricity, loss of Internet access in two locations, we are almost finished with the job, and I leave for home in about two weeks.

It is a joy to announce that we will soon publish the first bits of the promised Core Collection for the Young Christian Reader. Beginning in the area of science, we hope to include the sections on general science, mathematics, and astronomy in our next issue. Including books from Preschool through Grade 12 in three sections, we will continue to build over the next months, listing both Christian and secular titles. Our desire is that those with established collections will find titles to update and upgrade their libraries, while developing libraries will have some direction to build the best library possible.

In Christ’s love,

Nancy L. Hesch
Editor and Publisher
The purpose of the *Christian Library Journal* is to provide readers with reviews from a Christian point of view of both Christian and secular library materials for the Christian reader. Materials reviewed may reflect a broad range of Christian doctrinal positions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff of the *Christian Library Journal*.

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Editor: Picture Books


Published in the U.S.A. ©2006, Christian Library Services
This series of reviews demonstrates yet again the truth of the observation by C.S. Lewis that “what you see and hear depends on where you are standing; it also depends on what sort of person you are.”

The subtitle for the first edition of Michael O’Brien’s A Landscape With Dragons was “Christian and pagan imagination in children’s literature” (1994, 72 pp.). This second edition expands on that theme as O’Brien expresses his concern about the increasing “neopaganism” and Gnosticism in children’s literature today. He is convinced that traditional myths, legends, and fairy tales reflect an accurate moral understanding in their negative portrayal of, for example, witches and dragons. So he concludes that modern stories that reverse that symbolism with, for example, good dragons, may cause moral confusion in the minds of children. To provide a “standard against which to measure” children’s culture he divides the field into four main categories: “(1) Material that is entirely good; (2) Material that is fundamentally good, but disordered in some details; (3) Material that appears good on the surface but is fundamentally disordered; and (4) Material that is blatantly evil, rotten to the core” (p. 86). To assist parents in their evaluation of books or other media, he suggests several questions: “Does the story reinforce my child’s understanding of the moral order of the universe? Or does it undermine it? Does it do some of both? Do I want that? What precisely is the author saying about the nature of evil? What does he tell the reader (or viewer) about the nature of the war between good and evil?” (p. 104)

Michael D. O’Brien is the author of a series of novels, also published by Ignatius Press. Although his Roman Catholic perspective is apparent, he writes to the broader Christian community. His lengthy discussions of several popular authors of fantasy illustrate the criteria O’Brien applies as he determines appropriate categories for those authors’ works. For example, he considers the works of J.R.R. Tolkien a clear Category 1. Most of C.S. Lewis’s fantasy would fit Category 1, with a few titles approaching Category 2. He considers that “Madeleine L’Engle’s fantasy tales have got many details right, but the foundation is wrong” (p. 103), a Category 3. O’Brien places Lloyd Alexander and Stephen Lawhead in the “gray zone,” some works in Category 2 and others closer to Category 3. Elements of Gnosticism appear in the Star Wars films. The popular works of R.L. Stine earn a clear Category 4. Like Richard Abanes (see below), O’Brien judges terms and actions in fantasy works set ostensibly “in our world” as he would judge them in our own real world, rather than evaluating them based on the context of their specific imaginary worlds. He does not favor censorship, but encourages discernment. His closing comment is, “[t]he solution will never be simply a matter of criticizing the false culture surrounding us. The absolutely essential task of parents is to give their children a true culture, a sure foundation on which to stand.” To that end, he provides in the final third of the book a recommended family reading list, arranged by level from picture books to adult titles, a majority of which were in print at the time of publication. (A title or two in this list surprised this reviewer.) A dozen finely detailed black and white illustrations by different artists are sprinkled throughout the book. Lacks index.

This book was in press before the Harry Potter controversy arose, but O’Brien’s views on the Potter issue are available online. Richard Abanes (below) cites him several times. Although some readers will not agree with all of O’Brien’s presuppositions and/or conclusions, this title is definitely recommended for church libraries, professional libraries in Christian schools, and interested parents and teachers.

Author Steve Wohlberg begins Hour of the Witch with a chapter illustrating the rise of media products aimed at the youth market that feature witches as main characters. The next chapters concentrate on the immense popularity of J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter books (and the films based on them) and discuss their content, especially those terms and activities that appear to be related to real world occult practices. Another chapter raises the issue of moral relativism in some actions of the “good guys” in the stories. One chapter, “The Evidence: Potter Fans Turn to Witchcraft,” provides a few brief anecdotes that illustrate that some occult practitioners have used the Potter popularity to woo Potter fans to explore witchcraft personally. Potter fans that are unaware of the potential dangers in real world witchcraft may be desensitized to that potential danger by these often-lighthearted fantasy books. Other chapters discuss in some detail “What the Bible Says about Sorcery” and “What Is Wrong With Wicca?” The latter uses frequent lengthy quotations from occult members to illustrate their views. Wohlberg provides a positive alternative to such occult practices in a clear presentation of the superiority of the true biblical opportunities for rich spiritual life in Jesus Christ.

Steve Wohlberg has a radio and TV ministry and has published a few books on various religious topics such as end times. Each chapter begins with a relevant pithy quotation, and other illustrative quotations are generously sprinkled throughout the book, with complete citations at the end of each chapter. The author quotes extensively from the first five Harry Potter books, and often from earlier books by Richard Abanes. He occasionally cites other sources (with their web addresses) as found in Abanes. Unlike Abanes, he does not observe that Rowling’s presentation of witchcraft in Hogwarts does not teach Wicca per se. However, like Abanes, he assumes from his knowledge of the occult the significance of certain events in Rowling’s books. For example, where Rowling writes, “Trelawney spoke in [different] … harsh, hoarse tones,” (Harry Potter 5, p. 431) Wohlberg infers channeling. “[Trelawney] unexpectedly became a medium for someone else’s mind” (Wohlberg, p. 168). Rowling makes no such attribution.

What You See, Part 4,
From Varying Points of View
by Donna W. Bowling


PAP. 0898706785, list price: $12.95.

PAP. 0768422795, list price: $13.99.

PAP, 0736917004, list price: $11.99.
809.3/8766. Tolkien, J. R. R. (John Ronald Reuel), 1892-1973. Lord of the rings; Lewis, C. S. (Clive Staples), 1898-1963. Chronicles of Narnia; Rowling, J. K. --Characters--Harry Potter; Magic in literature; Narnia (Imaginary place); Christianity and literature; Children--Books and reading; Middle Earth (Imaginary place); Potter, Harry (Fictional character); Children's stories, English--History and criticism.; Fantasy fiction, English--History and criticism. 297 p. ; ill. ; 22 cm.
Adult. Rating : 5.

The cover for Harry Potter, Narnia, and The Lord of the rings, by Richard Abanes, proclaims that this book tells “What you need to know about fantasy books and movies.” Abanes observes the enthusiastic reception to the Harry Potter and The Lord of the Rings films, and he understandably expects the same when the (then) impending release of the movie of The Chronicles of Narnia, The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe takes place. In the first chapter, Abanes notes significant changes in direction in modern fantasy, including the best seller Harry Potter series and the “horror” titles for children and young people by R. L. Stine and his colleagues. He adds an extended discussion of the deliberately anti-Christian “His Dark Materials” trilogy by Philip Pullman. One topic in the next few chapters includes warnings about certain series deliberately promoting Wicca to teenagers. Various benefits for children from traditional fairy tales are another topic. In the second part of this book, Abanes spends one chapter each discussing Tolkien’s Middle-earth, Lewis’s Narnia, and Rowling’s wizarding world of Harry Potter, followed by another chapter on “Harry Hype.” The third section begins with a chapter on “The Potter Wars” which discusses varying opinions about the Potter series. Abanes spends several pages disagreeing with John Granger’s view that Harry Potter is really a Christian series (see below). Other chapters deal with high-powered marketing and the need for media literacy in dealing with films and videos. The final chapter offers a series of questions and answers on such topics as Harry Potter, censorship, and “Christianity, the Bible, and occultism.” Two appendices discuss “What’s so bad about occultism?” and “Helpful resources.” Extensive detailed endnotes often provide further discussion. Includes useful index.

Richard Abanes has written other books on occult issues including two dealing with Harry Potter—Harry Potter and the Bible: the Menace Behind the Magick in 2001, and Fantasy and Your Family: Exploring The Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter and Modern Magick in 2002. In fact, much of the text in this new title has been adopted or adapted from Fantasy and Your Family. (Some of the text from the earlier work appears in endnotes in this new book.) The topics in the new title have been rearranged, with substantial additions of new material. New additions include: discussions of the Philip Pullman trilogy, a chapter on Narnia (mentioned only briefly in the first book), frequent citations from Michael O’Brien’s book (see above) and several O’Brien articles available online, discussion and disagreement with John Granger’s book (see below). One endnote refers to a debate between Abanes and Granger held at a Christian university. He mentions Harry Potter 5, but apparently misses the significance of the prophecy by Trelawney cited by Wohlberg (see above). Although he retains his understanding that the context of Rowling’s wizarding world is “our real world” rather than an “imaginary world,” he also retains the recognition that Rowling’s series does not teach Witchcraft, per se. The addition of an index that includes some endnote references is a real plus.

Some readers will not agree with Abanes on every issue, but this new book has enough valuable new content that it is highly recommended for church libraries, Christian school professional libraries, librarians, and teachers, plus other interested individuals.


PAP, 0806645717, list price: $13.99.

In Faith Journey Through Fantasy Lands, author Russell Dalton writes “The goal of a dialogue is not simply to find out whether or not we agree or disagree with the material and stop there” (p. 7). Instead, he approaches three very popular fantasy series—Harry Potter, Star Wars, and The Lord of the Rings—with the expectation that he will find both areas of agreement and disagreement and that he will learn from his interaction with these fantasy works. Set in the context of a journey, Dalton’s first chapter on worldview discusses good and evil, miracles vs. sorcery, and God’s providence. Other chapters reflect the journey theme: “A Call to Journey;” “Learning the Way: Education and Training for the Journey;” “Travel Provisions: God Gives Us What We Need for the Journey;” “Traveling Companions: Friendship and Fellowship;” “Staying on the Right Path (and Our Potential to Stray from It);” “Road Signs: Virtues in the Fantasy Lands;” “Creatures of the Dark: Vices in the Fantasy Lands;” “Rough Roads Ahead: Hope and Hard Times;” “The Trail of Trials: Our Internal and External Battles;” “The Way of Christ: Images of Christ and Sacrifice;” and “There and Back Again: Celebrating and Returning from the Journey.” A special section at the end, “Dangers along the Path: Cautions and Concerns,” addresses the topics of witchcraft, questionable virtues, frightening events, violent resolutions, offending others, and obsession with fantasy lands.

Dr. Dalton is director of the Master of Arts in Religious Communication at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. This book is designed for individual study or with study groups. Dalton assumes some knowledge of each of the three fantasy series of books or movies. Within the various chapters, he relates events from some or all of the series to illustrate the subtopics under discussion. In each of the chapters, the author refers to several relevant Scripture passages. He is careful to point out areas where his fantasy illustrations compare or contrast with biblical teachings. Each chapter ends with a series of “questions for reflection” and personal application. His final section acknowledges that varying perspectives on the fantasy series are appropriate, if discussed in a reasoned, gentle manner. A “Fantasy Land Index” is subdivided into sections for each series, and their books and films, followed by a lengthy Scripture index. This title is definitely recommended for church libraries, Christian school libraries, and interested individuals.
is a Lord over all, including the Force. These Christians call the Lord of the Force God” (pp. 4-5). The forty-one short chapters are divided into five sections: “The Lord of the Force,” “Seeking,” “Knowing,” “Fighting,” and “Serving,” each dealing with one aspect of the Christian. Nearly every chapter begins with two short quotations: the first from a character in one of the Star Wars films, and the second from a Bible verse. (The only substitutions are a couple of quotes from the Jedi Creed and one quotation each from Soren Kierkegaard and St. Francis.) Each chapter starts with a brief commentary elaborating on the context of the Star Wars quote, followed by a longer discussion relating the chapter theme to the Christian’s practical life experience, and ends with a specific challenge to action.

A broadcaster and writer, Dick Staub is also the director of the Center for Faith and Culture and an adjunct professor at Seattle Pacific University. He consistently uses the term “Jedi Christian” (a seeming oxymoron?) for a Christian who is dedicated and disciplined. An example of his approach comes from his chapter “Meditate!”: “Today our electronic lives pulsate manically, fast-paced, with noisy janglings and rapid-fire images…. We are culturally glutinous and spiritually anorexic, uncritically devouring immense portions of soul-starving culture, and then we wonder why all is not well with our soul.” His solution is “Meditating on God’s written revelation….” (p. 61). Staub primarily writes to the contemporary individual who is seeking a worthy purpose for committed living. This is not a book for study, but a series of stimulating devotional challenges. However, it does provide useful ideas for ministry with Star Wars fans, young and old. Easily accessible to high school age students, it is recommended for interested individuals and as an added title for church or Christian school libraries where it falls within their selection guidelines.


Adult Rating: 4. The Gospel According to Harry Potter: Leader’s Guide for Group Study by Connie Neal and Skip Parvin has a format different from most leader’s guides. Neal’s The Gospel According to Harry Potter in 2002 had more than fifty chapters offering illustrative reflections on individual incidents from each of the first four books in the Harry Potter series. For each chapter topic, this leader’s guide begins with a few sections from Neal’s 2002 title and then suggests a few related incidents from the films for the first two Harry Potter books relevant to the topic. A few Scripture verses from the Old and New Testaments are printed in the study guides and other related passages are suggested in sidebars. Other sidebars in various chapters include definitions, helpful charts, and a few quotations from the Harry Potter books. Several open-ended questions for discussion and one or more suggested activities follow. Each chapter concludes with a suggested relevant closing prayer. Chapter titles are: “What Should a Christian Think about Magic, Wizardry, and Sorcery?” “The Love of Power versus the Power of Love;” “Many Gifts, One Body;” “What Does It Mean to Be Called?” “How Should We Deal with Temptation?” “Breaking Free from Slavery to Sin;” “How Do We Overcome Prejudice?” “What Should a Christian Think about Ghosts?” “Courage and Self-Sacrifice;” and “Good versus Evil: The Oldest Conflict in Creation.” Since Neal did not discuss ghost-hunts in her earlier book, there is no suggested supplementary reading for that chapter, but the film scenes, Scriptures, and other activities deal with the subject appropriately.

Connie Neal is a former youth worker and popular speaker. She has written several other books, including What’s a Christian to Do with Harry Potter? in 2001. In one of her many articles, she cites the experience of Don and Carol Richardson as they discovered a “redemptive analogy” in the culture of the Sawi people in Indonesia. Neal suggests the contemporary Potter phenomenon in our culture as an analogous context for her question “Is Harry Potter the new Peace Child?” Samuel F. “Skip” Parvin is an experienced author of youth ministry curriculum and has co-authored another study guide dealing with contemporary culture. A few useful charts deal with character qualities of various individuals in the Harry Potter series. One insightful chart is adapted from Australian Julian Jenkins’s article “Discerning the Presence of Christ at the Centre of Culture.” Jenkins suggests that readers or viewers consider in each literary work a number of qualities (e.g., awakening the conscience vs. deadening the conscience) that may tend to lead them either toward Christ or away from Christ. To facilitate a use of either video format for the films Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone and Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, an appendix correlates the scenes from the DVD format versions to the VHS format versions. (Because the films follow the books rather closely, the recommended sections from the books could be used instead of film scenes for study on an individual basis.) Although Neal’s worthwhile 2002 book stands alone, this study guide provides considerable additional value. This accompanying title is highly recommended for church libraries, professional libraries in Christian schools, teachers, parents, and other individuals interested in the Harry Potter controversy.


PAP, 0830832882, list price: $11.00. 823.914. Rowling, J. K.--Characters--Harry Potter--Handbooks, manuals, etc.; Potter, Harry (Fictitious character)--Handbooks, manuals, etc.; Children's Books and reading--Handbooks, manuals, etc.; Children's stories, English--Handbooks, manuals, etc.; Fantasy fiction, English--Handbooks, manuals, etc.; Wizards in literature--Handbooks, manuals, etc.; Magic in literature--Handbooks, manuals, etc. 69 p., 21 cm.

Adult Rating: 4. Teacher Gina Burkart’s book, A Parent’s Guide to Harry Potter, is full of practical suggestions for parents, or other interested adults, to use in interacting with children. The sixteen chapters are divided into two parts. “Part One: What Children Can Learn from Harry Potter” deals with its literary genre: “The Harry Hype,” “More Than a Story,” “The Modern Fairy Tale,” “Discussing Fantasy with Children,” “Morals, Not Magic.” In the chapter “The Real Issues in Harry Potter,” Burkart suggests “a few” of the possible issues for discussion: child abuse, family structure and relationships, bullying, sibling rivalry, materialism and economic status, teacher-student relations, good versus evil, love, fear, rules, discipline, gangs, prejudice/racism, death penalty, life after death, risk taking, magic/occult, loss of parents/loved ones, running away from home and life problems, friendship, family values, religion and faith. Several of these personal issues are addressed individually in “Part Two: Talking about Harry Potter with Your Children.” The lead-in quotations at the beginning of each chapter are from relevant professional experts for Part One, and from the Harry Potter books themselves for Part Two. Frequent sidebars in both sections suggest “Questions to bridge the gap” to apply the topic under discussion to everyday life situations. Helpful endnotes provide citations for additional related professional resources.

Gina Burkart teaches writing at the university level, and practices as a freelance writer and editor. She insists that parents should discuss with their children the books that they are reading, both to build bonds based on shared experiences and to use such opportunities to help children to build a moral framework for their own lives. Her goal is “to bring adults and children together as they grow in their Christian faith” (p.12). Although there is a little overlap in topics with the Neal and Parvin book above, the approach and style are different. This book has a wider scope because it considers events up through Harry Potter 5. More than just another added title, this book also is highly
recommended for church libraries, professional libraries in Christian schools, teachers, parents, and other individuals interested in the Harry Potter controversy.


Although this book is aptly named, John Granger did not start out looking for God in Harry Potter. Quite the opposite is true. When Granger encountered his first Harry Potter book, his purpose in reading it was to prove to his children why such a book about witches was so dangerous. He was genuinely surprised to find in the Harry Potter books many Christian principles and symbols of Christ that he recognized from his own background in classics and medieval literature. Granger feels strongly about the danger of the occult in our real world today. But he distinguishes between "invocational" magic, which involves "calling in" demonic principalities and powers for personal power and advantage" (p. 4), from what he refers to as "incantational" magic that "sings along with" or "harmonizes" with the creator of the universe. The former is seen in occult magick that calls on demonic or nature spirits. The Harry Potter books contain no incidents of such calling on spirits. (The ghosts in the Harry Potter books serve simply as an additional type of character.) Granger sees the "incantational" magic in the Harry Potter books as analogous to biblical miracles, consistent with the design of the creator.

In Looking for God in Harry Potter, Granger rearranged and expanded considerably his earlier The Hidden Key to Harry Potter, published in 2002, that grew out of four academic lectures he had given. In this book, the first several chapters deal with the first five Harry Potter books as a whole, discussing common themes seen in increasing complexity, such as life journey, spiritual growth, sacrificial love and death, symbols of Christ, significance of names, etc. In the latter part of the book, each of the first five Potter books is discussed individually. For example, HP2 warns about dangerous books. (Granger suggests in an endnote that Rowling might have had in mind the Philip Pullman His Dark Materials trilogy mentioned above.) Granger points out the children’s character growth from the misbehavior seen in the earlier books to the greater responsibility they assume as they mature. Harry’s corrosive anger in HPS dissolves as he faces more serious challenge at the end of that book. An appendix suggests a progressive approach for “Speaking of God in Harry Potter” with children.

In his book reviewed above, Richard Abanes points out certain suggestions in Granger’s books that are inconsistent with statements made by J. K. Rowling, the author of the Harry Potter books. Abanes also illustrates that some symbols Granger sees as symbols of Christ have had other very different interpretations as well. Granger himself acknowledges that some of his suggestions and predictions may turn out to be mistaken. (He was correct in his prediction about Dumbledore’s fate in HP6. When HP7 is finally published, many other questions will be answered.) Granger, in turn, is distressed at authors like Abanes who seem unable to see the distinction between a real world context and an imaginary world context, or to recognize a difference between “invocational” magic and “incantational” magic. These two authors have debated in person, and clearly demonstrate the truth of C. S. Lewis’s observation at the beginning of this article. In spite of some possible weaknesses in their positions, each has a useful perspective to offer. The choice of the title “Looking for God in Harry Potter,” rather than “Finding God in Harry Potter,” may be justified by such differences in perspective. While Granger and Abanes disagree on their approach to the Harry Potter books, they both agree with Neil on the dangers of the occult in the real world. They also share with some others a negative reaction to Philip Pullman’s His Dark Materials trilogy. Granger’s book is highly recommended for church libraries, professional libraries in Christian schools, teachers, parents, and other individuals interested in the Harry Potter controversy.

Just a note about two other “pro-Potter” books that, along with the books of Connie Neal, are viewed by Abanes as mistaken. Both are currently out of print. A Charmed Life: the spirituality of Potterworld (2002) is written by the British author, Dr. Francis Bridger, who has served as a visiting professor at Fuller Theological Seminary. Bridger’s thoughtful, reasoned approach may be more convincing to some readers than Granger’s. This book might still be available from christianbook.com. The other title, God, the Devil, and Harry Potter: a Christian Minister’s Defense of the Beloved Novels (2002), is written by John Killinger, who also wrote Ten Things I Learned Wrong from a Conservative Church. Killinger has a few good insights, but many readers will not appreciate the frankly liberal stance he demonstrates in other areas.

Although they look at these issues from different perspectives, these authors generally demonstrate a Christian respect for the others because they share a desire that Christian children should be strengthened in their Christian faith and walk.

References:


HBB, 0525474528, list price: $16.99.
E. Snakes--Fiction; Rattlesnakes--Fiction; Animal infancy--Fiction; Cows--Fiction; Ranch life--Fiction; Horses--Fiction.  1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 28 cm.

Six-year-old Sandra lives on a ranch in the Arizona desert many miles from the nearest town. With no other children to play with, Sandra instead plays with the various animals found on the ranch and helps do the ranch chores along with helping her mother in the kitchen. Sandra also enjoys exploring the ranch in search of the wild animals that live there, and is warned to be cautious of rattlesnakes. Her favorite animal is a small horse named Chico, which she was given when she was five. One day while riding Chico, Sandra ventures far from home to look at a newborn calf and encounters a rattlesnake. She makes it home safely and her father later takes her for a ride in the truck. They get caught in a downpour, after which they search for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow and then head home for supper.

The first female Supreme Court Justice, Sandra Day O'Connor, has written a children's book about her life as an independent young girl on a ranch in Arizona. Beautiful, muted-color illustrations by Dan Andreasen bring this delightful story to life and greatly enhance the story being read. The sentences are somewhat stilted in places. Children will enjoy reading about ranch life and the surroundings of the ranch are nicely depicted both in the words and the pictures. All told, Chico is a good story for first-through-third graders and will capture their imaginations and interest.

Sherri Myers


HBB, 1581347421, list price: $9.99.
E or 220. Bible--Juvenile literature.  1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 21 cm.

Written and illustrated by Debby Anderson and using short, simple sentences and many boldly-colored drawings, I Love My Bible! is an
introduction to the Bible that packs a lot into its picture book format. It tells readers how the Bible was written; that it’s God’s instruction manual, teaching us the best way to live; that some people aren’t allowed to read Bibles; and that we should share God’s Word with everyone.

The “God’s Word is for everyone” theme is nicely backed up by Anderson’s wonderful illustrations. An African American boy and girl appear on the cover and first page of text, numerous African American and brown-skinned children appear in the book, and a photo of the author on the back cover includes two African American children. Also, all actual Bible figures (Ruth; Moses; Joseph; etc.) are portrayed as brown or black skinned.

Anderson peppers the book with Bible verses (using the New International Version, New Living Translation, English Standard Version, and New Life Version) and many are incorporated into the text, for instance: “God says that anyone who reads and obeys (the Bible) will grow strong just like a tree beside a river. Psalm 1:2-3.” Most important, statements like “The Bible is the best book in the whole world!” are backed up—by listing the types of books it contains, by explaining why it’s different from other books, and by stating that it’s God’s word—totally true.

One quibble: the page mentioning Jesus shows a man who appears to be an Israelite king, which may confuse young readers.

Rosemarie DiCristo


This book tells the story of a home schooled farming family through the eyes of a seven-year-old girl. First, we meet the family: father, mother, three brothers, a baby sister, and several pets including a parrot named little Dorrit, and Rosie the cow. The day begins and ends with family Bible reading. The children go about such chores as making butter and cheese, gathering eggs, and picking strawberries. Schooltime includes reading classic literature, using maps and a timeline, and presenting a narration. Mealtimes and playtimes are also discussed.

This book works well as a read aloud. The large text also makes it easy on new readers (my own homeschooled daughter just finished first grade and was able to handle the vocabulary with minimal help). The full color illustrations by this self taught artist are beautiful watercolors and add much to this pleasant story. Smaller than most picture books, the pages are sturdy and the binding is sewn. The story line is simple, and the tone is cozy. The family is lovingly portrayed and the author has tucked in simple, and the tone is cozy. The family is lovingly portrayed and the author has tucked in


There are, so far, only two books in the Illustrated Psalm series. I hope there are more because these books are wonderful. The concept is simple. Take a Psalm (King James Version) and illustrate it. The end result is delightful.

The Lord Builds the House has a line or two of text on each page and pleasing watercolors depicting both family life and nature. The cover illustration on this sturdy book pictures a treehouse that will inspire dreams in many a young person. Also warmly portrayed are swans on the nest, rabbits in their warrens, ducks on the water, and quaint country cottages.

Bless the Lord is the second title. It is slightly larger than its companion (8 1/2x11 instead of 7x10). The illustrations are even better in this book. There is so much loving attention to detail filling these cozy interior scenes and pleasing landscapes. Each page is a world to be explored; the careful viewer will be rewarded. A true love of nature and life and a sense of God’s goodness shines through Bluedorn’s paintings. These books beg to be read time and again. Each book ends with the Psalm set to music by Harvey Bluedorn, the artist’s father.

David Rainey


This book is based on Proverbs 12:18, “Thoughtless words cut like a sword. But the tongue of wise people brings healing.” Tale of the Poisonous Yuck Bugs illustrates beautifully

David Rainey


Prolific author Carolyn Nystrom offers a set of children’s books about people who knew Jesus. This review covers Fish, Peter! and Sing, Mary!

Sheena Dawson has illustrated each book with colorful, detailed drawings. The faces of biblical people are especially interesting, showing joy, sadness, and perplexity.

Songs tie together the story of Mary’s life. She sang to Elizabeth, the angels sing at Jesus’ birth, and her song was “moans of grief” when Jesus died. After Jesus returned to Heaven, the Spirit “came with power” and Mary “sang to God on high.” She knew He “lives on high to save from sin.”

Peter tells the joy of following Jesus. The former fisherman is glad Jesus taught him to fish for people—rather than fish in water. Peter follows Jesus as he heals and teaches about forgiveness. Peter makes his great statement, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”

Nystrom has Jesus saying, “Peter you are like a rock. I will build my church on those words.” Fish, Peter! uses wine in the last supper. Jesus turned the water into wine in Sing, Mary!

Additional titles are Point, John! (John the Baptist) and Preach, Paul! (The Apostle Paul).

Robert Lou Jones


This book is based on Proverbs 12:18, “Thoughtless words cut like a sword. But the tongue of wise people brings healing.” Tale of the Poisonous Yuck Bugs illustrates beautifully
the power of our words to hurt or to heal. Humor and hyperbole are used to illustrate the power of the spoken word. Words have the power to destroy or to build up as illustrated by the two colorful Yuck bugs who spout hateful words at each passersby. Things look pretty grim until the Utterfly spreads her words of kindness.

This book is best suited for story time or for reading aloud. Many of the words are made-up or imaginary words so it would be a difficult book for a child to read alone. The illustrations are delightful and colorful. The story and the illustrations are fanciful, with imaginary insects and plant life. Most pages contain only four lines of text and the illustrations on each two page spread illustrate the text. The illustrations and text work well together. As a read aloud this book can be used for children from preschool to teens, maybe even adults. The lesson of the power of our words is something we all should revisit from time to time. Will you be a Yuck Bug or an Utterfly? The choice is yours.

Mary J. McCoy
PAP, 0736902945, list price: $7.99.  
Fic. Guardian angels--Fiction; Romans--Fiction; Rome (Italy)--History--476-1420--Fiction; Fiction; Angels--Fiction; Christian life--Fiction.  
165 p. ; 21 cm.  

PAP, 0736902937, list price: $7.99.  
Fic. Guardian angels--Fiction; Fools and jesters--Fiction; Clement VI, Pope, ca. 1291-1352--Fiction; Popes--Fiction; Avignon (Papal city)--Fiction; Angels--Fiction; France--History--John Ill, 1350-1364--Fiction; Christian life--Fiction.  
172 p. ; 21 cm.  

PAP, 0736902961, list price: $7.99.  
Fic. Guardian angels--Fiction; Angels--Fiction; Rome--History--Empire, 30 B.C.-476 A.D.--Fiction; Christian life--Fiction.  
159 p. ; 21 cm.  

The angel in the Ring, set in A.D. 1364, is about a sixteen-year-old orphaned gypsy boy named Brin who is an outcast among his own people. Taught by the gypsies to earn his keep by picking pockets, Brin is shocked when he is caught doing so by a mysterious stranger who says he knew Brin’s dead father. Upon talking with the hooded man, Brin decides that now is a good time to leave the gypsies and set off on his own. He is later attacked by four men who demand his ring, which was given to him by his own. He is later attacked by four men who demand his ring, which was given to him by his dead father. He is later attacked by four men who demand his ring, which was given to him by his dead father. He is later attacked by four men who demand his ring, which was given to him by his dead father. Brin becomes enmeshed in a world of danger and adventure in which the ring plays a major part.

The Angel and the Sword is set in A.D. 1351 and is the second book in The Guardian Angel series. Raphael is a young court jester at the French court of Pope Clement VI in Avignon, France. He notices an assassin on a nearby rooftop and tries to stop him before he murders the Pope. The man escapes and Raphael is falsely accused of being a traitor and is sentenced to death. With the help of a girl named Juliana, can Raphael use his skills as a jester to escape and possibly solve the mystery of the traitorous assassin?

The third book in the Guardian Angel series, The Angel and the Cross is a story set in the first century A.D. and is about a young boy named Quentin who is a son of a Roman legion commander. He is betrayed by his trusted teacher and is turned over to enemy Zealots. The daughter of the most feared of the rebels helps Quentin to escape, but what was the purpose behind Quentin’s capture in the first place?

Sigmund Brouwer’s Guardian Angel series is an action-packed set of three stories in which guardian angel Pelagius is the central character. Pelagius is quite funny at times, but also sends forth words of wisdom about angels and God through his ‘angel blogs’. Pelagius is sent to protect and help each of his charges during times that could change the course of history.

Each book in this series is well-written and full of enough action and adventure to keep young readers interested. These books will appeal to both boys and girls alike. Geared toward kids ages 9-12, older children will also be captivated by these exciting and faith-filled adventure mysteries.

Sherri Myers

The case of the sassy parrot / Milly Howard ; illustrations by Bruce Day. (Crimebusters Inc ; 2)  LCCN 2002000930. Greenville, S.C., Journey Books, 2002.  
PAP, 1579247210, list price: $7.49.  
Fic. Mystery and detective stories; Grandmothers--Fiction; Parrots--Fiction.  
168 p. ; ill.; 22 cm.  

The Case of the Sassy Parrot is second in the Crimebusters Inc. series written by Milly Howard. Maria Delores O’Donnell Ruiz is a member of the Crimebusters Inc. along with Julio, her seven year old cousin, and Travis, Mark, and Corey, who are school mates. Maria Delores, Julio, and Travis spend weekends with Maria’s Gran to help with the finishing touches to their shop for the upcoming Gasparilla Festival in Tampa Bay.

The first weekend there, Gran comes across a very talented green parrot that is mouthy, sassy, and just not sale material. This parrot also has a knack for mimicking anybody’s voices—which could be a problem, or a help, depending on which part of the story you are reading. Cousin Julio collects stones and one day one of the stones turns out to be one that has more value than Gran and the Crimebusters could have anticipated. Although the Crimebusters fall into a bit of trouble, they eventually work their way out and are able to solve a mystery that involves an international gang of jewel thieves.

Readers will enjoy the adventure as Maria Delores, Julio, Travis, and Gran—and Kiwi the parrot—discover the secret of the ruby while enjoying the Gasparilla Festival. This is a great read that 7 – 11 year olds will really enjoy more than once and will open the door to other Crimebusters stories.

Dobby Willet

HBB, 0439255833, list price: $10.99.  
Fic. Catherine II, Empress of Russia, 1729-1796 -- Fiction; Elizabeth, Empress of Russia, 1709-1762 -- Fiction; Peter III, Emperor of Russia, 1728-1762 -- Fiction; Kings, queens, rulers, etc.--Fiction; Diaries--Fiction; Russia--History--Elizabeth, 1741-1762--Fiction.  
169 p. ; ill., map ; 20 cm.  

Fourteen-year-old Sophie Augusta Fredericka is a princess from Anhalt-Zerbst in Prussia in the year 1743. Her father is not of royal birth but her mother is Princess Johanna Elizabeth of Holstein-Gottorp. Her cruel, abusive mother has high hopes for Sophie and wants her to marry into royalty. Empress Elizabeth of Russia sends a request for Sophie to travel to Russia to see if she is fit to marry the Empress’s nephew, Peter, who is heir to the throne. Sophie is chosen to be Peter’s wife and her name is changed to Catherine. Sophie must also change her religion and her language to suit the Empress of Russia and soon realizes she has traded much of herself in order to become royalty.

Catherine by Kristiana Gregory is the final book in the Royal Diary series and is one which outlines the life of Catherine the Great. Each book in the series highlights a particular figure in history who was royalty by using a diary format in which the young girl writes her thoughts. This book does a good job of describing Catherine’s life up to her being chosen to be the Grand Duke’s wife, and includes her family tree and several pictures of portraits of the royal family. A detailed historical note is also included at the end with interesting facts of Catherine’s accomplishments during her lifetime and things that happened at that period of time in history. These fun and exciting diaries will encourage young readers to want to learn about royal figures in history.
without having to be made to read them; instead they will be asking for more.

Sherri Myers


PAP, 0764200232, list price : $10.99.
Fic, Friendship—Fiction; Interpersonal relations—Fiction; Religion—Fiction; Jews—United States—Fiction; Christian life—Fiction. 226 p. ; 21 cm.


Kylie Peterson always assumed she was a Christian since she was born into what she thought was a Christian family. But when she is invited to help out with her cousin Jed’s wedding, Kylie begins to have a deeper understanding of what being a Christian really is.

Rachel Cohen’s cousin Davina is marrying Kylie’s cousin Jed, so Rachel is also invited to help with the wedding. Rachel’s family is Jewish, but Davina is a Messianic Jew, which means she believes in Jesus and has been saved.

As the two fourteen-year-olds spend time together working on the flowers for the wedding, they discuss many things like boys, friends, and religion. Each girl begins to examine her beliefs as they see Davina’s faith in action.

The fourth and final book in the Friends for a Season series by Sandra Byrd is Daisy Chains, a thought-provoking and informational story about two young girls on a journey to claiming their faith. Daisy Chains takes place in the spring, as each story in the series has a different season in which it is set. Each stand-alone book is faith-based and has interesting characters girls will easily identify with. Daisy Chains will educate and enlighten teen girls as to the Jewish and Christian faiths, and will help them strengthen their own religious beliefs. As a parent of teens, I highly recommend this fantastic, wholesome series for young teenage girls, and my daughter has excitedly talked about them to her friends.

Sherri Myers


HBB, 0395536804, list price : $22.00.
Fic, Islands—Fiction; Survival—Fiction; Indians of North America—Fiction; Newbery Medal. 181 p. ; col. ill. ; 24 cm.


In 1835 a schooner came from California to San Nicolas Island to take the Indians of Ghalas-at to safe new homes on the mainland. Despite efforts to restrain her, one girl jumps overboard and swims back to the island where she lives alone for eighteen years. In his Island of the Blue Dolphins, Scott O’Dell offers a moving story of survival through creativity and determination. Shortly after twelve-year-old Karana jumps from the ship to care for her six-year-old brother Ramo who had been left behind inadvertently, he is killed by a pack of wild dogs. Alone, Karana builds herself a crude house near a spring, makes weapons for protection from the wild dogs, and gathers food for the winter. To relieve her loneliness over the years, she befriends the leader of the pack of dogs that killed her brother. After wounding him, she decides instead to nurse him back to health and names him Rontu. Afterwards, she befriends a pair of birds, and later a wounded otter. When a group of Aleuts arrive at the island one summer to hunt for otter, Karana tries to hide, but the sole Aleut woman finds her. Using signs, and learning a few words of each other’s languages, they enjoy a brief time of friendship. After eighteen years alone, two white sailors and a padre from the mission at Santa Barbara come to the island to rescue her. In a sequel, O’Dell credits Zia (1976), Karana’s young niece, with urging the captain and padre to rescue her aunt.

This first of several children’s books by Scott O’Dell received many honors, including the Newbery Medal. Written simply and sensitively as a first person account of growth with adaptation, O’Dell demonstrates his extensive knowledge and appreciation for the natural environment of the area. At O’Dell’s request, Ted Lewin provided twelve full-color plates as illustrations for this edition. This compelling book is highly recommended for Christian school, public, and home libraries.

Donna W. Bowling


HBB, 152025359, list price : $17.00.
Fic, Brothers and sisters—Fiction; Family life—Connecticut—Fiction; Connecticut—Fiction. 211 p. ; ill. ; 20 cm.


HBB, 0152025235, list price : $17.00.
Fic, Moving household—Fiction; Family life—Connecticut—Fiction; Connecticut—Fiction. 234 p. ; ill. ; 20 cm.


HBB, 152054742, list price : $17.00.
Fic, Brothers and sisters—Fiction; Museums—Fiction; Vacations—Fiction; Family life—Connecticut—Fiction. 223 p. ; ill. ; 20 cm.

The Moffats is a fun story about a mother and her four children who live on New Dollar Street in Cranbury, Connecticut, in the early 1900s. Sylvie, the oldest at fifteen, is the most responsible and the least noticeable one of the family. Twelve-year-old Joey is the man of the house since his father passed away several years earlier, and nine-year-old Janey is the one who enjoys the upside-down view of the world. Rufus, the youngest at five years old, is the one who gets into the most trouble. When the yellow house they live in is put up for sale, the children do everything they can to prevent having to move. Adventures abound throughout the Moffats.

The Middle Moffat is a story about the Moffat family that centers mainly around ten-year-old Janey Moffat. Her mother always introduced the oldest Moffat, who was sixteen, as ‘Sylvie, my oldest child’ and the youngest as ‘Rufus, the baby in the family,’ who was just six. Thirteen-year-old Joey was always introduced as ‘Joey, my oldest son,’ but Jane was only ever introduced as ‘Jane’. Dubbing herself ‘The Middle Moffat,’ Janey mysteriously sets about on her own adventures. Between trying to help the oldest inhabitant of Cranbury reach one hundred years old, to reading every book in the library, to hosting organ recitals and watching eclipses, Janey Moffat is anything but ‘plain old Jane.’

The Moffat Museum is set in 1919. The Moffat family has moved to 12 Ashbellows Place in Cranbury, and the children are growing up. Sylvie is getting married and Joey is going to work instead of school. So they can remember good times from their childhood, the children decide to open the Moffat Museum. Their
museum features Bikey, the bike they all rode, Sylvie’s fox painting, and Rufus, the Waxworks Boy, sitting in a sleigh.

Sixtieth Anniversary Editions of Eleanor Estes’ Moffats books have been reprinted by Harcourt Children’s Classics, with original illustrations by the author and Louis Slobodkin. New updated cover art by Tricia Tusa gives each book a colorful, eye-catching look. All set in the early 1900s, each story is jam-packed with silly adventures that will bring smiles to children’s faces as they read about the Moffat family. Children from second to sixth grade will enjoy these fun, exciting classics that will take them back in history to a time when life was simpler and childhood really was a time of innocence.


HBB. 015252596, list price: $17.00.

Fic. Cats-Fiction; Family life-Fiction; Fire Island (N.Y.)-Fiction. 258 p.: ill.; 20 cm.


The Pye family is comprised of Mr. and Mrs. Pye, their children Rachel and Jerry, and their pets Gracie (a cat) and Ginger (a dog). Papa is a famous ornithologist, a scientist who studies birds. After hearing about a bird called a puffin, which mysteriously is living on Fire Island, he decides to take the whole family there for the summer to study it. Three-year-old Uncle Bennie, Mama’s little brother, also goes along on the family vacation.

Upon their arrival on Fire Island, the Pyes add a new member to the family in the form of an abandoned kitten, which they name Pinky Pye. Pinky has a talent for using the typewriter, which endears her to the Pyes. This new family member, a lost owl, a vacation to an island, and a broken foot for Papa all make for an exciting new Pye family adventure.

Pinky Pye is the sequel to the Newberry Medal-Winning story by Eleanor Estes called Ginger Pye. In that story, the Pyes added Ginger the dog to their family, and in Pinky Pye, Pinky is added to the ever-growing Pye clan. Family unity and cooperation are present in this story, along with kindness and acceptance of each member’s individuality. Respect for humans, nature, and animals alike is also present in this charming story. Humorous adventures abound throughout the book, and the typewriting Pinky is in the middle of many of them. The only negative drawback would be the story is somewhat dated, having been written in the 1950s, but a quick explanation of iceboxes and a few other such words, will keep young readers on track to enjoy this smile-producing classic.


HBB. 1400305543, list price: $16.99.

Fic. Princesses-Fiction; Kings, queens, rulers, etc.-Fiction; Fathers and daughters-Fiction. 1 v. (unpaged): col. ill.; 29 cm.


Author Max Lucado adds another successful children’s storybook to his ever-growing list with The Way Home: A Princess Story. The setting is in a majestic kingdom of long ago where a king finds an abandoned baby and raises her as his own daughter. Anna, the beautiful young princess, is fascinated by tales of the Lowlanders whom she’s heard “never work and their days are all filled with fun.” Anna feels discontented because she spends most of her time studying. So even though she is warned to avoid the Lowlanders, she is deceived by them and enters the dark forest. She soon realizes this is a mistake, but cannot find her way back to the castle. The king determines to rescue his daughter and cuts his way through the thick brush to find Anna in the possession of wicked Olbaid. The king must sacrifice himself in order to free Anna and when her tears drop onto her fallen father, he is revived and shows Anna the way home.

Award-winning illustrator Tristen Elwell’s paintings wonderfully complement this moving story. His artwork transports us to a medieval world of wretched creatures and brave knights, castles and deep, dark, evil forests. This mysterious and exciting book is a creative telling of the gospel message as the King gives himself for the sake of his child. Children age five and up will cherish this addition to Lucado’s children’s books.

Floss Craig

Sherri Myers

HBB, 0810959577, list price: $18.95.
636.800222.  Cats--Greece--Mykonos Island-- Pictoral works; Photography of cats--Greece-- Mykonos Island.  75 p. : col. photographs. ; 32 cm.
Grades 3-6.  Rating : *.

CATS ARE AMAZING CREATURES. THEY ARE CLEVER, PLAYFUL, ENERGETIC, CURIOUS, AND MANY MORE THINGS. CATS COME IN ALL KINDS OF SHAPES, SIZES, AND COLORS, MUCH LIKE PEOPLE DO, AND HAVE DIFFERING PERSONALITIES. SOME CATS ARE INDEPENDENT, WHILE OTHERS ENJOY HUMAN COMPANIONSHIP. CATS ENJOY HUNTING, PLAYING, AND SLEEPING, ESPECIALLY IN THE WARM SUNSHINE. THESE GENTLE, FURRY COMPANIONS CAN BECOME QUITE AGGRESSIVE WHEN CONFRONTED WITH DANGEROUS SITUATIONS, AND WILL FIGHT TOOTH AND CLAW FOR THEIR VERY LIVES. PATIENT AND CAUTIOUS, CATS USE THEIR SANDPAPER TONGUES TO KEEP THEIR LOVELY FUR COATS CLEAN AND ARE FASTIDIOUS WITH THEIR MINISTRATIONS. CATS ARE MOST DEFINITELY UNIQUE, ENTERTAINING, AND INTERESTING CREATURES.

Cats by Hans Silvester is an in-depth, close-up look at man’s other best friend, the feline, better known as a cat. Using fabulous, full-color photographs all taken on the Greek Islands, this educational book isn’t only for young children but is also great for anyone who would like to learn more about these wonderful animals. Abundant photographs and well-written descriptions capture every aspect of a cat’s day, and the settings chosen are beautiful backdrops to the diverse cats portrayed. Whimsical illustrations by Sandra Lefrançois and descriptive text by Hubert Comte make this an exceptional addition to any library or bookshelf.

Sherri Myers


HBB, 1595154930, list price: $20.95.


HBB, 1595154922, list price: $20.95.
513. Arithmetic--Juvenile literature; Engineering mathematics--Juvenile literature.  48 p. : col. Ill. ; 26 cm.

Kieran Walsh, a writer from New York City, offers these cute books: Construction Math and Music Math. Both selections apply mathematics to everyday life. Colored photographs, drawings, and charts will attract grade school age children. The music book discusses compression technology, CDs, frequencies of piano notes, and beat matching. Sidebars, highlighted printing, and occasional blue printing make a readable text. The sections, “Notes and Octaves” and “Beats Per Minute,” simplify difficult musical concepts.

The construction book stresses history and geography, with examples such as the Great Pyramid, Hoover Dam, The Great Wall of China, and San Francisco’s Golden Gate Bridge. I enjoyed reading about the ten tallest structures in the world. Taipei 101, in Taiwan, leads the list at 1,670 feet tall. The Sears Tower in Chicago, and the Empire State Building in New York also rate among the tallest ten. Kieran Walsh makes the reading applicable to children wherever they live. For instance, she mentions apartments, condominiums, and houses. Boys and girls look and act thoroughly modern. The author’s tone is instructive and helpful, never condescending.

Each book includes a glossary, suggestions for further reading, websites to visit, and an index. Ten other books complete the “Math and My World” series. Titles include Weather Math, Animal Math, and Money Math. These quality books are recommended for all students, but especially for boys and girls who view math as dull and dry. Children will soon see the usefulness of mathematics! Check the website at www.rourkepublishing.com. The publisher offers this set at a considerable discount.

Robert Lou Jones

Lost!... but found, safe and sound / produced by the National Park Services. Larned, Ks : Assn. of National Park Rangers, 1999.

DVD, list price: $17.00; also available in VHS, $12.00. Order direct, http://www.anpr.org/lost.htm.
613.6. Safety education--Juvenile literature; Children--Life skills guides--Juvenile literature; Self-reliance in child--Juvenile literature; Lost children; Safety.  1 videodisc (12 min.) : sd., col. ; 4 3/4 in.

Lost!... But Found. Safe and Sound, a presentation produced by the Association of National Park Rangers, ably teaches young children what to do if they are lost in the woods.

The heroine of the story is Kelly, a seven year old girl who has been looking forward to her family’s camping trip. She’s so excited to be in the woods, she runs ahead of her mother, father, and brother, accidentally taking a different path. Searching for animals sends her deeper into the woods until she becomes lost. However, instead of panicking, she remembers the lesson taught by a park ranger who’d visited her school. She realizes the need to stay in one place, in an area that’s comfortable and not hidden from searchers. More importantly, she’d placed in her fanny pack a whistle (louder and easier than calling for help) and a large garbage bag (to keep her warm and dry). Kelly settles in for the night, and is rescued the next morning.

Having Kelly narrate the story makes what to do if lost in the woods superbly clear and easy-to-remember. Short and sweet (a plus for the youngest audience members), the recording has perky country music for a background, and even contains gentle humor (when Kelly’s brother sits around reading comics while Kelly sets up camp, they make faces at each other; later, Kelly is so happy to be rescued she hugs “even” him). Although one scene showing Kelly roughly jamming a twig down a hole in a tree (to see if any animals are home) might not be the best behavior to imitate, everything else would be helpful and appealing to kids... even the fact that each of the rescue dogs that appears in the video gets listed in the extensive credits.

Renee deCristo

HBB, 1897066333, list price: $16.95.
745.5. Handicraft. 160 p.: col. ill.; 28 cm.

Mary Wallace, an art teacher, offers wonderful creative ideas for children in I Can Make That! The colorful pictures, easy instructions, and common materials will inspire all boys and girls.

Five sections—costumes, puppets, nature crafts, toys, and games—offer endless possibilities for fun! Small and simple projects include finger puppets and toy doll furniture. Costumes are more involved, but designed for maximum impact with minimum work. A “Jolly Jester” costume starts as a box. Host a toga party with really quick Grecian robes or Roman tunics! Games include “Tangle,” “Owl Eyes,” and “Squishers.” Over a dozen nature crafts could easily mesh with creation lessons in Sunday School. “Respecting Nature,” a sidebar, includes notes for child safety. For instance, “Don’t eat wild berries unless a grown-up tells you they are not poisonous.” Care of nature was highlighted with statements such as, “Don’t pull a plant up by its roots.”

Wallace illustrates puppet possibilities with gloves, socks, cardboard tubes, and sponges. Do you need a puppet stage? Find two chairs, a plant up by its roots.”


HBB, 1595560041, list price: $22.95.


HBB, 1595560092, list price: $22.95.
Grades 4-8. Rating: 5.

The Road to War: Causes of Conflict series was born in an effort to provide educators with a greater selection of material detailing the environments in which history’s most significant and complex wars were generated. Designed for upper elementary, middle school, and junior high school students, the series foregoes focusing on specific battles or strategies, instead delving into the deeper historical issues behind each conflict.

Each title is equally enlightening, allowing the series to fulfill its purpose by supplying the information necessary to give students a more complete perspective on each war, adding depth both to the educator’s lesson and the student’s understanding. Many user-friendly features abound, including an index of notable figures, a chronological list of significant events, and a glossary of terms. Additionally, each book features approximately 25 color photographs and illustrations that enhance the simple yet universal nature of the text.

Despite employing five different authors, the Road to War: Causes of Conflict series is consistent throughout in its attention to detail and ability to relate the importance of various cultural, political, and historical events to the tensions that bring about war. Students in each of the targeted age groups, regardless of background or ability should find each title beneficial as they seek to undertake what can be a daunting task: understanding what causes men to rise up in battle against each other.

The Iroquois and their history / by Genevieve St. Lawrence. (We the people.) LCCN 200503676. Minneapolis: Compass Point Books, 2006.

HBB, 0756512727, list price: $17.95.

The Sioux and their history / by Mary Englar. (We the people.) LCCN 2005003679. Minneapolis: Compass Point Books, 2006.

HBB, 0756512735, list price: $17.95.
978.004/97585. Sioux Indians—Social life and customs—Jrilevine literature; Sioux Indians—History—Jrilevine literature. 48 p.: ill. (mostly col.), map.; 24 cm.

The Pueblo and their history / by Genevieve St. Lawrence. (We the people.) LCCN 200503678. Minneapolis: Compass Point Books, 2006.

HBB, 0756512743, list price: $17.95.

Grades 4-7. Rating: 5.

The We the People series focuses on important events in United States history. These four books describe American Indians.

Illustrations are from varied sources. Readers will meet antique maps, and a historic picture from Harper’s Weekly in 1869. I enjoyed George Catlin’s 1830s painting of an Iroquois mother and baby. More recent pictures include Richard Nixon, Chief Chad Smith, Stuart Paisano, and Mohawk ironworkers building New York City’s Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in the 1920s.

Cherokee Indians of the Appalachian Mountains had their own alphabet and wove beautiful baskets. Yet, this tribe was relocated by the
1830 US Government Indian Removal Act. The infamous “Trail of Tears” was the tragic result. Sioux history includes Chief Crazy Horse and George Custer. The chapter about the Sioux and buffalo is especially interesting. Pueblo Indians constructed cliff dwellings in southwestern United States. They thanked the spirits of sky, earth, and animals for good corn crops. The Iroquois lived in longhouses in northeastern United States and Canada. This tribe stressed being in harmony with the natural world. Alas, Europeans arrived with measles and smallpox in 1634.

Quality paper, reinforced spines and sturdy hardbacks make this series a good choice for heavy use situations. Consider the entire set. Taken together, the titles offer a broad picture of Indian history. For more information, check www.compasspointbooks.com.

Roberta Lou Jones
In her book, Bridge to Terabithia, author Katherine Paterson tells the moving story of why Jesse Aarons decided to build that bridge. Jess is training for recess races by running around the pasture on his family's struggling farm, when his brand-new neighbor from Alexandria, Virginia, climbs the fence and introduces herself as Leslie Burke. His growing friendship with Leslie transforms Jess’s fifth-grade year. As Leslie introduces Jess to the fantasy worlds of Narnia and Prydain, they are inspired to create their own secret imaginary kingdom of Terabithia in a secluded wooded area across a creek bed. In addition to their play in Terabithia, Jess helps Leslie and her father with some improvements in their rented farmhouse, and Leslie accompanies the Aarons family to Easter church services. But during a rainy spring break, Jess returns from a short trip with his friendly music teacher to the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., to learn of Leslie’s devastating accident. In building the bridge, Jess comes to terms with the loss of his friend.

Katherine Paterson is the daughter of missionary parents, with missionary experience of her own. She has written a number of other fine children’s books, including another Newbery medal title, Jacob Have I Loved. The characters she develops with such expertise encounter and surmount realistic and often painful issues as they grow. Paterson illustrates with penetrating well articulated, filled with action and a plot that moves quickly. The protagonist is an ordinary teenage boy who displays extraordinary courage and character in the Realm. One observes his character qualities growing throughout the narrative. The book is Baston’s first novel and is reminiscent of C.S. Lewis’s Chronicles of Narnia and Lloyd Alexander’s Prydain Chronicles. It is the first book of a trilogy. Second in the series is Rise of the Wyrm Lord, and third, The Final Storm. Thomas Nelson Publishers has an intriguing website at http://www.thedoorwithin.com that you may want to visit.

This title is highly recommended for any collection.

Pamella A. Russell


A futuristic novel that takes place in 2305, The Goodness Gene follows Will on his journey from a sterile, protected environment into an uncivilized area of the Dominion of the Americas. At sixteen, Will and his twin brother Berk are slated to take leadership positions in their father’s government. They have been groomed from conception in a petry dish to become officials in The Goodness regime. When Will is sent as an emissary to unfamiliar areas of the Dominion, a near tragic event hurls him into a quest that changes his world forever. Intelligent and lovely Leona exposes Will to a new way of experiencing life. No longer is everything black and white, facts carelessly learned without question.

Sonia Levitin weaves intrigue into her science fiction while she keeps readers turning the pages. The author shows how certain politically-correct beliefs can be taken too far; and the drive for power, though in this case seemingly self-sacrificing, can bring tragedy into the lives of less fortunate persons. Through natural dialogue and vivid description, everything from nature to relationships and responsibility comes into new focus in unexpected ways. Other than place names like Washolina and Fresmofield, this book presents a believable scenario that shows love and hope can prevail against impossible odds.

Flora Craig
PAP, 076400224, list price: $9.99. 
Fic. --Cancer--Fiction; Mothers and daughters--Fiction; Christian life--Fiction; Family life--Fiction. 248 p. ; 22 cm. 
Grades 4-8. Rating : 5. 
Fourteen-year-old Quinn Miller’s mom has breast cancer, and her family has decided to travel to Seattle, Washington, in order to try an experimental treatment. The six-week stay at Anderson House is made somewhat easier for Quinn when she meets Annie, whose mother is also undergoing treatment at “Planet Cancer.” Annie’s family has a secret, and although they never discuss it among themselves, Annie shares it with Quinn, who then gives advice on the situation. Since Quinn tends to be a list maker, one day her mom decides to surprise her with her old teenage diaries. Finding a list inside that contained things her mom wanted to do before she died, Quinn decides to help her mom finish her list. But does that mean Quinn is telling her mom it’s okay to die by helping her? 

Author Sandra Byrd has written a four-book series entitled Friends for a Season for girls ages ten to fourteen. Red Velvet is the third book in this wonderful series, and deals with the subjects of cancer and dying. Each of the four stories deals with situations young girls may face such as divorce, death, and friendship, and all contain a faith element that is presented in a subtle manner that is neither offensive nor flashy. Young teens will identify with the girls in the stories whether they have the particular situation or not in their own lives, as the characters are written in a realistic manner. These wholesome, interesting stories will strengthen Christian girls’ faith while providing an enjoyable reading experience. 

Roberta Lee Jones

Shine like stars : the continuing story of Katie Fremont / by Sharon Westra. (Sequel to: The rest of forever.) Baltimore : Publish America, 2005. 
PAP, 1412784658, list price: $24.95. 
Fic. --College students--Fiction; Marriage--Fiction. 392 p. ; 23 cm. 
Grades 10-Adult. Rating : 3. 
Katie Fremont is a young college student who is engaged to Wayne Anderson, her knight in shining armor. She is planning her upcoming wedding, and with everyone giving her advice, Katie is becoming frustrated. Will she have everything ready in time for the big day? Meanwhile, Wayne is struggling with whether he and Katie are really ready to be married, or if they should wait until life is a little more settled for them. Money issues and questions as to where they will live plague him, as do doubts of his band being scheduled to go on tour shortly after the wedding. Doubts continue to linger in Wayne’s mind as to whether they are doing the right thing as the day of the wedding draws ever closer. 

Shine Like Stars is the conclusion of the Katie Fremont trilogy by Sharon Westra. The main characters are now in early adulthood and are making choices for their future, whether getting married, going into the ministry, or starting a career. While being an enjoyable, fairly realistic story, Katie’s histrionics tended to be quite annoying and tedious at times. Her constant crying spells gave me pause in believing she was ready to be a married woman and needed to mature considerably before doing so. Geared mainly toward older teens and college-aged young adults, this fictional novel will also be enjoyed by older adults who remain young at heart. 

Sheri Myers

HBB, 0395978270, list price: $15.00. 
Fic. --Pottery--Fiction; Korea--History--Koryo period, 935-1392--Fiction; Newbery Medal. 152 p. ; 22 cm. 
Grades 4-7. Rating : 5. 
In 1200 A.D., Tree-Ear, an orphan lived under a bridge in Ch’ul’po, Korea. Living in this village are many potters who mold the local clay into delicate pieces of the celebrated, celadon ceramics. One evening Tree-Ear sneaks into Mr. Min’s drying shed and breaks a ceramic piece from a set of nested boxes. After pleading to work off his debt the potter pushes the boy into heavy labor while Mrs. Min feeds and befriends him. Tree-Ear watches the master potter recast and recreate delicate vessels until they appear flawless. He appreciates Min’s artistic abilities and searches the clay beds for mud that will produce the finest celadon ware. He tirelessly keeps wood cut for his master’s firing kiln. One day a messenger from the Northern Province of Korea arrives in Ch’ul’po to handpick delicate, one-of-a-kind ceramic pieces for the Emperor’s palace. He chooses Min’s set of nested bowls but one piece was missing—the one Tree-Ear broke. The boy promises to wait for Min to recreate his one-of-a-kind masterpiece and deliver it to the palace in North Korea. This terrifying and challenging journey could bring fame to Mr. Min and endeared Tree-Ear to the two old people he has learned to love. 

Linda Sue Park has authored several books of fiction based on Korean history and received the Newbery Medal for A Single Shard in 2002. Her emotion-filled characters take us on the perilous journey of young and unselfish Tree-Ear for a man he respects. Park includes Author’s Notes that give us insight into the Koryo era, 919-1392 A.D. The ceramic pieces crafted by the Korean celadon potters mentioned in the book still exist somewhere in the world today. If you visit her website, lspar.com, you will see several pieces
of the celadon ware she writes about in *A Single Shard*. Written on an eighth grade reading level, her skillful, precise writing makes this a book adults and teens might enjoy.

Maxine Cambra

**Sweetgrass basket / by Marlene Carvell.**  

HBB. 0525475478, list price: $16.99.  
Fic. United States Indian School (Carlisle, Pa.)--  
(State)--Fiction. Boarding schools--Fiction. Schools--  

Although fiction, Marlene Carvell's *Sweetgrass Basket* is set in the Carlisle Indian Industrial School that functioned from 1897 to 1918. Two young Mohawk sisters, Sarah and Mattie, lived in tell their story in prose poetry. This is a sad story. You will reflect on injustices in the world. These girls met hostility, deceit, and sadness. Food was scarce. Mattie wondered “where the rest of the soup might be.” An occasional ray of sunshine came through in a loyal friend, the kind janitor, or one kind teacher. Mattie was falsely accused of stealing a teacher’s pin. She ran away, was caught, and eventually died.

Becoming a woman is a theme of the book. Sarah said, “I saw the stains, and I thought my body was punishing me...” This focus could be positive, for a young girl approaching puberty. Yet, adults need to know this emphasis, and make a wise decision for children in their lives.

Roberta Lou Jones
BOOK REVIEWS

YOUNG ADULT NONFICTION


PAP, 0764200985, list price: $11.99

What exactly is love? Everyone has a different opinion of what love is and what it means to love something or someone. In Shannon Kubiak Primicerio’s book Being a Girl Who Loves: Learning to Love Like Jesus, love is given an in-depth study. Through the use of personal stories and biblical references, Ms. Primicerio sets the course for readers to explore the true meaning of love. Each chapter includes a five-question study section for personal or group reflection, and a ‘love in action’ section with practical ways to put what was read in the chapter into practice.

Being a Girl Who Loves is the first book in a new three-book series by Ms. Primicerio called Being a Girl. While they are geared mainly towards teen girls, anyone can benefit from these insightful books’ messages of learning to love, serve, and lead like Jesus. Love isn’t merely an emotion, it is also a choice, according to Ms. Primicerio. I tend to agree, and highly recommend this book to anyone wishing to learn to love like Jesus loved—selflessly.

Sherri Myers


LIB, 0766023621, list price: $19.95.

Enslow Publishers’ Best Science Projects series features science experiments that can be done at home or in a classroom. Each topic subsection begins with a 1 to 3 page informative overview. Experiments prompt use of the scientific method, with a materials list, questions for further study, and diagrams or charts to visually enhance the information. Suggested Science Project Ideas following each experiment are highly valuable for extending learning or promoting student self-learning. A chapter on safety is applicable to all science study. Appendices include a helpful listing of science supply companies, and several titles and Internet addresses for additional reading. Both these books would definitely benefit school and homeschool libraries.

Planet Earth Science Fair Projects covers the earth’s position in space, the moon, basic geology, and a brief overview of mapping. All 29 experiments relate to the Earth and include contemporary issues such as global warming, conservation, and water issues. Most can be done by students in small groups or even alone. Clear notes point out dangerous or difficult activities. Effective, simple line art adds clarity on many pages. No glossary is provided, so this book is most useful in conjunction with a textbook.

Karen Schmidt


LIB, 0766023672, list price: $19.95.


PAP, list price: $8.99.

This is the third edition of The Christian Babysitter’s Handbook. First published in 1997, the book has been updated with information regarding internet usage, computer games, and satellite/cable television. It offers practical hints on how to find a job babysitting, how to entertain children, how to set a fair price, and how to deal with some emergencies. Author Sarah Fletcher is strong in her presentation of the gospel, how babysitting is a ministry, and how to bathe it in prayer. The songs, games and suggestions for play are particularly strong, although heavily sprinkled with resources solely from the same publisher.

Unfortunately, some more practical issues are scantily addressed. For example, although we laugh at the antics of Calvin & Hobbes in regard to their babysitter, defiant children are no longer exceptional in this age of over-indulgence. The chapter on discipline is light on dealing with these kids and their parents. The chapter on emergencies and the resulting worksheet create a dilemma. A teenage babysitter should never answer the telephone where she’s sitting; much less try to take messages. Further, with the prevalence of dangerous food allergies these days, a note as to those would be helpful. The Sitter’s notebook section in the back has some very good forms. The journal is particularly useful and the sitter’s report is something any parent would be thrilled to receive. This would not be a bad resource to have available to middle schoolers looking for ways to make money in a manner that honors God.

Kelley Westenhoff


LIB, 0766025004, list price: $26.60.
B or 709/.2. Leonardo, da Vinci, 1452-1519 -- Juvenile literature; Artists--Italy--Biography--Juvenile literature; Scientists--Italy--Biography--Juvenile literature. 128 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.
Jennifer Reed has written a complete biography of da Vinci from birth to death. She discusses the many accomplishments of the artist/inventor in ten chapters, featuring his interests in art, architecture, engineering, astronomy, polyhedrons, and the human body. Introductory and concluding chapters place da Vinci in the midst of the Renaissance and explain the long-term effects of his work. She focuses on ideas, theories, questioning, and imagination. Appended is a section of activities readers could do based on da Vinci’s studies. Black and white photographs of da Vinci’s notebooks are scattered throughout the book. Also appended are a chronology, glossary, further reading, Internet websites, chapter notes, and an index.

This title includes well-organized, accurate research material for the middle schooer.

Reed’s work is a complete, balanced biography showing strengths, weaknesses, interests, and frustrations. Much appreciated in the presentation is her attempt to place da Vinci as a member of the Renaissance, an influence on the Renaissance, and a product of the Renaissance. Even though this title is part of a series, Great Minds of Science, it does not read like a typical school series, for Reed’s literary efforts are of fine quality. While there are many books about da Vinci, many cover only a portion of his life (Leonardo’s Horse by Fritz, Putnam, 2001) or are too cursory (Leonardo da Vinci by Stanley, Morrow, 1996), and others are too much like an encyclopedia. A very successful biography is Kathleen Krull’s Leonardo da Vinci (Viking, 2005).

Marion Mueller


PAP, list price: $6.99.
B or 917.804/2,092. Lewis, Meriwether, 1774-1809.--Juvenile literature; Lewis, Meriwether, 1774-1809; Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1806)--Juvenile literature; Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1806); Explorers--West (U.S.)--Biography--Juvenile literature; Explorers; West (U.S.)--Discovery and exploration--Juvenile literature; West (U.S.)--Description and travel--Juvenile literature; West (U.S.)--Discovery and exploration. 231 p. : map ; 21 cm.

Grades 4-8. Rating: 3.


PAP, 1883002350; list price: $8.99.
B or 917.804/2,092. Lewis, Meriwether, 1774-1809.--Juvenile literature; Lewis, Meriwether, 1774-1809; Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1806)--Juvenile literature; Lewis and Clark Expedition (1804-1806); Explorers--West (U.S.)--Biography--Juvenile literature; Explorers; West (U.S.)--Discovery and exploration--Juvenile literature; West (U.S.)--Description and travel--Juvenile literature; West (U.S.)--Discovery and exploration. 64 p.; 21 cm.

Grades 4-8. Rating: 3.

Husband and wife team Janet and Geoff Benge have written a chronological biography of Meriwether Lewis from his birth in Virginia on a plantation next to Thomas Jefferson’s until his death. Included are his early years as an Appalachian frontiersman and soldier; life as Jefferson’s secretary, but especially the years preparing for and completing the Corps of Discovery’s trip through the Louisiana Territory to the Pacific Ocean. The title is part of the Benges’ History of Heroes series. The study curriculum guide includes key quotes, ideas for a display corner, chapter questions, student explorations, community links, related themes to explore, and culminating events. A bibliography of books and resources is appended to the guide.

The Benges write a laudatory fictionalized biography. Only occasionally do the author’s hints at any weaknesses such as Clark’s better boating skills. The text details contacts on the exploration with the many Native American tribes almost in a racist fashion, for the warrior qualities and fears are emphasized. There is no general theme, but a strictly chronological presentation. Only four sources are sited in the text, which includes no footnoting, but many conversations and apparent emotions. The title is not a page-turner, but for the history buff, the timeline-like presentation makes it easy to check overall accuracy. Many titles about the journey of the Lewis and Clark Expedition have been published during the last five years. I would recommend the following, which give life to the characters: As Far As the Eye Can Reach by Kimmel (Random House, 2003), York’s Adventures with Lewis and Clark by Blumberg (HarperCollins, 2004), and How we Crossed the West by Schanzer (NGS, 2002). The curriculum guide was written both for the teacher and the home school parent. Most of the questions and activities require lower level thinking skills such as recall and definition, but little application and evaluation.

Marion Mueller
**BOOK REVIEWS**

**ADULT FICTION**

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PAP, 0805431683, list price: $14.99

Fic. Spiritual warfare--Fiction; Race relations--Fiction; Best friends--Fiction; Children--Fiction; Mississippi--Fiction; Christian fiction. 331 p. ; 23 cm.

Adult. Rating : 5.

Black or White deals with spiritual warfare and racism. The mythical town of Cat Lake in Mississippi is home to three children—Bobby Parker, Missy Parker, and Most Junior. The Parkers are a white family while Most Junior is black, and the children are great friends. During one summer, Most Junior gives his life so that Missy can live.

This book deals with many of the Christian themes that we see in everyday life while weaving them into a great story. When Most Junior is dying, he is completely confident that he will go to be with Jesus and that he will be rejoicing soon. This scene gives the reader confidence in a relationship with Jesus. And later in the book, Missy finds herself interested in a man who is not a Christian. She judges correctly and will not become unequally yoked with him by dating him and inviting the possibility of marriage.

And the spiritual realm is a part of this book from the beginning. Demons are out to attack Missy, while the angels are protecting her. But this spiritual realm is not overdone. Real Christian themes are woven throughout a well written story.

*Angela Andrews*

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PAP, 1578567343, list price: $13.99

Fic. Women pioneers--Fiction; Social isolation--Fiction; Western stories; Christian fiction. 370 p. ; ill. ; 21 cm.


The small community of believers in Bethel, Missouri, isolating themselves from the "outside" world of luxury and corruption, lives as the early church did, sharing all things in common, and ministering to the hurting and the needy. Obedient to their leader, Herr Wilhelm, Emma chafes at the community requirements that individuals should not "stand out." She desires to be unique, for her voice to be heard and counted, even though she is "just" a woman.

When her husband is directed by Herr Wilhelm to lead a group of scouts to the west in search of new land for the Bethel community, Emma manipulates the situation so that Herr Wilhelm does the unthinkable and allows her to accompany the nine men chosen for this task. The journey has its challenges—more from Emma's deception than from any physical hardship—but along the way Emma learns what it means to support her husband as well as speak her mind when the purpose is for the benefit of others, rather than herself.

As she and these men carve out a home in the laviishly wild woods near Puget Sound, her impatience and brashness is tempered by the immense difficulties they face—refined into decisive leadership that allows her husband to lead her household, but gives her an equal
standing in their marriage partnership, and in the larger community of believers. Emma becomes a true helpmeet to her husband, learning when to speak boldly, and when to hold her tongue; when to take initiative, and when to wait for her husband's leading.

Based on a true story, and written in her trademark style of prose, Jane Kirkpatrick’s story A Clearing in the Wild will resonate with readers who recognize the shaping of their own spiritual journey, as—like Emma—our strengths and weaknesses are tempered and refined as we learn to listen to the Lord.

**Sherri Beeler**

**The color of the soul / Tracey Bateman. (The Penbrook diaries ; 1.) Uhrichsville, Ohio : Barbour, 2005.**

PAP, 1953104448, list price: $12.95.
Fic. African Americans—Fiction; Georgia—Fiction. 315 p.; 21 cm.

**The Color of the Soul** journeys through the life of the one hundred-year-old Miss Penbrook. In 1948 Miss Penbrook invites Andy Carmichael, a black journalist from Chicago, down to her home in Georgia to write her story. As Andy leaves Chicago, he hopes his floundering marriage can survive. He enters a world where he will be threatened, beat, and where things are not always as they seem. After Andy reads the Penbrook journals and spends time with the Christians who run the boarding house where he stays, Andy reconsiders Christianity and how it should affect his life.

Tracey Bateman carefully unfolds the story of Miss Penbrook and Andy, starting with Andy’s introduction to the South, and following each character as they discover their identity. The tense plot moves the story dramatically toward the unexpected conclusion. Each character struggles to overcome past abuses, misunderstandings, and tragedies. Dialogue increases the drama and dialects help develop characterization. After one character is raped, Bateman very sensitively shows the effects of rape on the victim. Sex outside of marriage is another problem addressed in this book. Bateman manages to present sin as sin, whether it is immorality, bigotry, or lies by showing the effects of sin on one’s life.

**Kristina Wolcott**


PAP, 0736914064, list price: $22.99.
Fic. Mystery fiction; Kansas City—Fiction. 286 p.; cm.
Adult. Rating: 3.

In this entertaining suspense novel, Kansas City detectives Tom Griggs and Charlie Pasch of the KCPD/FBI Organized Crime Joint Task Force, must table their murder investigation of two competing crime families to find missing KC billionaire, Warren Blake. Blake’s wife, Evelyn (dubbed “Queen Evelyn” by her employees), seizes her opportunity to take control of Blake Media. Complicating matters are Evelyn’s new religion editor, Judge Gideon Judge, a scam artist with designs on Evelyn; and a mysterious Blogger spilling insider secrets, bent on stirring-up suspicion about Evelyn’s mismanagement of Blake Media, and her involvement in Warren Blake’s disappearance. As Detective Pasch explains, “This entire story is about stolen identity. Like Mozart’s opera, The Marriage of Figaro, or Eddie Murphy’s movie, Trading Places, it’s filled with jealousy, betrayal, and lots of people in disguise…. everything’s connected. A good detective always connects the dots.”

Detective Pasch, a Christian, tries to teach the biblical values of forgiveness and reconciliation to the gruff and jaded Griggs. Characterization is developed in the main characters, but is stereotypical in the antagonists. Most growth takes place in characters Griggs and Judge Gideon. Detective Pasch, developed as a wise and spiritually mature character, may be blind to one deficiency: He is most passionate when championing a comic-book store owner’s right to stock ‘mature’ comics without fear of community censorship: “...comics (are) like any expressive medium, they (can) speak to any age group they please. Only an idiot ropes off an entire art form for a single demographic.”

The fast-paced action includes gangland violence, bungling mistakes of criminals and law enforcement officials, final justice for the unrepentant, and second chances for the remorseful. Unsavory characters smoke, drink alcohol, lie, and cheat. The reader will be entertained by the narrator’s sense of humor and adventure in Deliver Us from Evelyn.

**Vicki Talley McCollum**

**Finding Anna / Christine Schaub. (Music of the heart.) LCCN 2005018579. Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2005.**

PAP, 0764200593, list price: $12.99.
Fic. Spafford, Horatio Gates, 1828-1888—Fiction; Hymns—Authorship—Fiction; Hymn writers—Fiction; Biographical fiction; Christian fiction; Musical fiction. 316 p.; 22 cm.
Adult. Rating : 5.

**Finding Anna** relates the story of Anna and Horatio “Gates” Spafford. After the great Chicago fire of 1871 steals the lives and livelihoods of thousands, Anna and Gates feel compelled to help survivors rebuild their lives. Unfortunately, service saturates their time, and their relationship starts to drift apart. When they realize that they must focus their efforts on rebuilding their relationship and family, tragedy strikes. Facing an ocean of despair, with possibly the darkest days of his life on the horizon, Gates reaches out for God’s peace and looks for Anna.

Christine Schaub masterfully tells the well-known, historical fiction story behind “It Is Well.” She also weaves in the stories behind the story including how the Spaffords survived the fire and how much they helped others in need. This fictional tale includes enough facts and real people to be believable. The excellent characterization exhibits the very real personalities of the Spaffords, not only displaying their sterling characters but also some fatal flaws consistent with their


Fic. Women--Florida--Fiction; Terrorism--Prevention--Fiction; Miami (Fla.)--Fiction; Suspense fiction. 612 p. ; 23 cm.

Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 4.

Sara has barely escaped from Bolivia and has returned to the U. S., a widow with no money and no job. Firestorm is the sequel to Windle’s contemporary fiction Crossfire, published in 2000. It continues the story of Sara Connor de Cortez and her struggle to make a life for herself both spiritually and emotionally. Sara’s efforts to rebuild her life are complicated by her growing attachment to Doug Bradford, a DEA agent whose dangerous job brings back too many memories, and her renewed search for God. Whom can she trust? Strange things are happening in the jungles of Paraguay. Old enemies are coming closer. Can Sara survive? Will the God she has grown to love be enough?

Windle’s story is slightly unbalanced. The main character, Sara, is not as well developed as the other characters in the book. Can anyone be that naive? It is not essential to have read the first book, but perhaps Sarah’s character makes more sense if you do read Crossfire first. The details of the culture and drug subculture of the various South American counties detailed in the book seem well researched and are believable since Windle’s parents were missionaries in Columbia and she served fifteen years as missionary in Bolivia. This accurate portrayal of a culture we know so little about is one reason to read Firestorm. If along with Sara you can grasp the concept that “Safety is not the absence of danger but the presence of God” then you time has been well spent.

Mary J. McCoy


Fic. Kierkegaard, Søren, 1813-1855--Fiction; Depression, Mental--Fiction; Philosophers--Denmark--Fiction; Existentialism--Fiction; Historical fiction. 294 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 5.

Soren Kierkegaard was a prolific Danish writer of the 1800s who composed works of philosophy, theology, psychology, literary criticism, and fiction. Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy calls him the “father of existentialism.” He suffered from bipolar disorder which heavily influenced his productivity as he oscillated between melancholy and mania. Much of his writing was a way of working through events of his own life. Kierkegaard’s infatuation for Regine Olsen inspired a good deal of his poetic works. Loving Soren is a fictionalized biographical account of their relationship and engagement told from Regine Olsen’s point of view as she experiences “the illusory eternity of first love.”

Ms. O’Neill’s writing is fluid and poetic. The book is beautifully written with a slight Victorian voice, reflecting the lifestyle and atmosphere of Copenhagen in the early to mid 1800’s. The author writes of Regine’s fascination with Soren with such depth of perception that one experiences her obsession as if it were one’s own. Headings reveal the main theme of each chapter. For the curious and scholarly, the author provides three pages of sources for further reading on the subject. This title is highly recommended for senior high students as well as adults.

Pamela A. Russell


PAP, 0764201328, list price: $13.99.

Fic. Crusades--Fiction; Fathers and sons--Fiction; Christian fiction; Historical fiction. 448 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult. Rating : 4, with caution.

Ignored by his father because of his illegitimate birth, Philip de Tollard simmers with anger that his legitimate-born half brother, Gareth, should inherit the Hawken estates, while he must serve his legitimate-born half brother, Gareth, should inherit the Hawken estates, while he must serve his legitimate-born half brother, Gareth, should inherit the Hawken estates, while he must serve as a stable hand on neighboring Cassley lands. When he falls in love with impetuous Lady Beatrice, Philip requests that his father give him some kind of inheritance so that he might properly support a wife. His father is willing, but Philip’s cruel step-mother interferes, framing Philip for the murder of his father.

Philip flees the country while conflict rages between kings and princes, drawing Philip and Beatrice into politically complicated lives. Beatrice’s arranged marriage produces a child, but her elderly husband then dies. In order to protect her son’s inheritance, she violates a vow made to Philip and agrees to marry Gareth, which she immediately regrets. He is cruelly abusive and controlling. In his despair and anger at her betrayal and his low lot in life, Philip sinks into a world of sin, darkness, and war, serving as a mercenary.

Philip and Beatrice are reunited unexpectedly when he impulsively kidnaps her in the Holy Lands while seeking revenge upon Gareth. Philip and Beatrice pursue a path of reconciliation, which leads to adultery and her pregnancy. Beatrice returns to her husband to save Philip’s life, and pretends the unborn child is Gareth’s. Gareth’s mother, seeing through the lie, attempts to kill the baby boy at his birth, until she is interrupted by Philip and his friends who save Beatrice and the child. Gareth is killed in the battle. Philip and Beatrice eventually wed; his name is cleared of his father’s murder, and he inherits the Hawken lands for his son.

Judith Pella’s Mark of the Cross is a historically rich book set in the early medieval era. It is well written, and fascinating reading. However it does contain scenes of sensuality, and the frequent, pejorative use of the word “bastard.” The three main characters are preoccupied with sex: Gareth in an abusive, perverted way, and Philip and Beatrice—who only know each other a few months—form a basis for their intense relationship on what appears to be lust masquerading as love.

Adult. Rating : 5.

The novel is one that puts readers in a moral quandary. Instinctively, the reader longs for the thwarted love relationship to prevail between Philip and Beatrice, but then we are reminded that Beatrice is still married, so there is no pleasure for us in their later reconciliation, love, and subsequent adultery. We feel that Gareth is somehow deserving of this betrayal of his wedding vows because he is such a cruel, abusive, scheming man—and yet Beatrice married him willingly, and, politically, he does hold rightful ownership of Hawken lands, despite his role in framing Philip for murder. His death at the end of the story is a relief, but it comes too late to allow the reader to honorably enjoy the marriage between Beatrice and Philip, even though both have suddenly reconciled with God in the last few chapters, despite a lifetime of impetuous behavior and clear rejection of God.

Sherri Beeler

PAP, 1582924837, list price: $12.99.

Fic. Great Awakening--Fiction; Clergy--Fiction; Connecticut--History--Colonial period, ca. 1600-1775--Fiction; Christian fiction; Historical fiction. vii, 358 p.; 21 cm.

Adult (Grades 9-12). Rating : *5.

Aspiring lawyer Harrison Shaw, poor and from the wrong side of town, is given a coveted internship position with New York attorney J. K. Jarves. When a defining choice turns a mentor into an enemy, Harrison’s dreams seem hopeless. But that’s only the start. Jarves will stop at nothing for revenge, even if it means taking Harrison’s church to court. As the unprepared defendant, Harrison must provide proof of the Holy Spirit’s existence.

Master storyteller Jack Cavanaugh brings to life spiritual disease permeating Havenhill. He meets in an orphanage, Hale appears to the townspeople to be somewhat of a miracle worker as he goes abouttown spread God’s Word. Pilotville appears to be a place of equality where black and white live peacefully as neighbors, but a closer look beneath the surface toges the impression all is not quite right in the town. The town benefactor, Papa DeGroot, has secrets hidden in the Mississippi bayou he will kill to protect, and Hale is a threat to those secrets. Will Hale find what he was seeking in Pilotville, and possibly find out more than he ever wanted to know?

This gripping historical fiction novel is a hard-to-put-down look into the bayous of Louisiana and the secrets it harbors. River Rising is full of twists and turns that keep the reader guessing until the end what the outcome of Hale’s journey to Pilotville will be. Racism, bigotry, faith, and hope all combine to make River Rising an intriguing page-turner and Athol Dickson an author not to be missed.

Sherri Myers


Fic. Mason (Ohio)--Fiction; Ohio--Fiction; Love stories.; Christian fiction. 396 p.; 22 cm.

Adult. Rating : 3.

Neil isn’t sure why he’s returned to his old family home in Mason, Ohio; he only knows that he felt called back after the unexpected death of his wife Caroline—called back to a place that he fled over twenty years ago. Neil helps his cousin Grace renovate the seventeen room “Gothic Horror,” as his father named the house, and in the process reacquaints himself with family he hasn’t seen in years, and with the faith of his childhood.

Resolving unfinished business with his cousin Mary, and uncovering the answer to a puzzling murder brings Neil to a place of peace he had forgotten—a discovery that enables him to move beyond past regrets and carry on with a life renewed with the joy of God’s grace.

Ann Tatlock’s Things We Once Held Dear, though fictional, is threaded with interesting bits of actual Mason, Ohio, history and folklore. Layering stories of the past and the present together, Tatlock skillfully draws the reader back and forth in time from events in the 1970’s, to events in the present. Things We Once Held Dear is a quiet novel that unfolds memories gently, with no real sense of tension or climax. Readers may find themselves drawn in by curiosity about the murder mystery, but about half-way through the book it is possible to guess who the criminal is, which takes some of the interest out of the end of the story. And while readers will empathize with the characters, the lack of energy in the story may create some reader indifference in the predictable outcome.

Sherri Beeler


PAP, 1591453376, list price: $13.99.

Fic. Reality television programs--Fiction; Prayer in the public schools--Fiction; Teachers--Fiction; Islands--Fiction; Christian fiction. 357 p.; 22 cm.

Adult (Grades 11-12). Rating : 5.

The Ultimate Reality Show stars high-school football coach, Jack Forrest. After Jack honestly answers a student who questions him about Christianity, Jack may lose his job. One day after football practice, the school’s vice-principal and Jack’s recent date, Kathryn Williams, explains that in order to keep his job, Jack must tell the student that Christianity is only one of many ways to God. The arrival of a helicopter interrupts their conversation. A man offers Jack a spot on the Ultimate Reality Show which rewards the winner with 10 million dollars. Knowing he’ll need money if he loses his job, Jack decides to participate. As personal challenges arise that repeatedly test Jack’s convictions, he wonders if he should just withdraw from the show and go home.

Clay Jacobsen writes this contemporary fiction book with the flair of an entertaining, fast-paced, television show. Straight from the football field to strenuous challenges of a “Survivor” type of reality show, action fills every page. Bikini-clad bombshells are a staple to the world of reality television, and they are not excluded in this book. Their purpose is to be representative of the world of reality television. As Jack progresses through the show, he notices his standards slipping as he is frequently exposed to temptations in an artificial setting, mostly related to an exceptionally pretty contestant. He does kiss the beautiful contestant several times. The mood is often intense as the action races and the unexpected occurs. Dialogue is much like that of most reality television shows, with the contestants forming alliances and building strong distrust of others. Without being preachy, Jacobsen very briefly touches on some tricky issues that confront Christians, like standing up for faith in spite of the ramifications, abortion, and believers dating non-believers. He also shows how choices made at any age affect the rest of your life. The theme, character counts, comes through the imperfect life of Jack Forrest, and the tuned in reader can learn along with Jack.

Kristina Wolcott


PAP, 0310263964, list price: $12.99.
**Valiant Hope**, third in Donna Fleischer’s Homeland Hero series, continues the story of Chris McIntyre, the troubled young woman who is a Desert Storm vet, a victim of childhood abuse, and a new Christian. Working at an inner-city community center, Chris begins to suspect that one of her young charges is being beaten by her father. When she goes to Alaina’s home to check on her, Chris wades into the middle of a beating and ends up being beaten herself.

Chris’s own abusive childhood memories once again push themselves to the forefront, and her rage becomes overwhelming in the face of her Lord whispering that she needs to forgive her father so she can be freed and move on. Jason Sloan, the paramedic who treated her at the scene of Alaina’s beating, is himself a victim of abuse, and recognizes the signs in Chris. And although he is grieving the senseless death of his own wife, daughter, and unborn child, he is moved to love Chris, and to push her to share her experiences with him. With the telling of her story comes an immense release and the realization that Chris needs to offer forgiveness to her father, in person.

Readers may find it a stretch to believe that Jason would become so thoroughly involved in Chris’s life after only knowing her for three days—and that she would reveal to him her greatest horror, when she hadn’t even discussed it with her long-time friend, Erin. Readers looking for action will find Valiant Hope a slower moving, intensely emotional story as it focuses primarily on Chris’s internal storms, and her eventual surrender to the Lord in the area of forgiveness.

*Sherrin Beeler*

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**What she left for me / Tracie Peterson.** LCCN 2005018580. Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2005.

PAP, 0764227769, list price: $12.99.

Fic. Aunts--Fiction; Pregnant women--Fiction; Runaway husbands--Fiction; Mothers and daughters--Fiction; Conflict of generations--Fiction; Christian fiction. 352 p., 22 cm.


Jana Templeton McGuire returns from a missions trip to Africa to discover that her husband, a pastor, has left town with his secretary, taken all of their money, all of her jewelry, and led the congregation to believe that she has asked him for a divorce. She is penniless and has only four days to move out of the parsonage to make room for the new pastor. Having learned in Africa that she is pregnant with their child, she has no choice but to call her mother and ask to come home. This is not just Jana’s story, it is also her mother’s story. It is a story of infidelity, abandonment, rape, and incest. It is also a story of relationships, the destructive power of guilt, and the healing power of forgiveness.

Tracie Peterson is a courageous author and is to be commended. She has tackled a tough subject in the Christian venue and done so with delicate candor. The rape is merely revealed; the incest is narrated in more detail, but with great prudence. The story is a perfect demonstration of the ripple effect, of how choices have consequences that can reach not only into the life of the perpetrator or the victim, but into the lives of future generations, as well. As the Templeton family works through the emotional behaviors of grief at the death of innocence, faith, and trust, the reader applauds the strength of the human spirit to arrive, not only at a level of acceptance, but to rise above it to the peace of God that passes all understanding. This title is highly recommended.

*Kristina Wulcott*

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PAP, 1589190300, list price: $12.99.

Fic. Kidnapping--Fiction; Slavery--Fiction; Sudan--History--Civil War, 1983--Fiction; Christian fiction; War stories. 320 p., 22 cm.


When the Lion Roars unites three individuals who seek to help politically ravaged Sudan. On a trip to deliver aid from Feed the World, Paul Farid meets Dr. Larson Kerr, an American medical doctor who devotes her life to the people of Warkou, Sudan. Ben Alier, leader of the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army, is also in Warkou, and threatens to kill Paul. Because Ben’s parents were killed by Government of Sudan (G.O.S.) soldiers, Larson takes care of his younger sister Rachel as well as Nyok, a boy whose parents were killed by G.O.S. soldiers. Before Paul can board his plane to leave, G.O.S. soldiers attack Warkou and abduct Rachel. Ben, Larson, and Paul must unite in order to find her. As violence roars across Sudan, Paul remembers “The Lion of Judah is among us—we have nothing to fear with Him in our hearts.” p. 175

DiAnn Mills courageously tackles this contemporary fiction novel based on the very tragic, non-fiction civil war which has raged across Sudan for about 20 years. The well-paced plot encompasses some of the complexities in Sudan’s political situation through the lives of Paul, Ben, and Larson. Throughout the book, all three main characters war either with God, self, or others. Some short scenes are violent, and in other scenes the characters patch up what was ruined by the violence. Mills introduces thoughts of the characters in italics most of the time and careful reading is sometimes needed to determine which character is thinking. While the mood of this book and the situation of Sudan often feel hopeless, Mills beautifully presents a story in which God uses willing hearts and can work for good to those who love him.

*Kristina Wulcott*

HBB, 1555705464, list price: $55.00.
025.2/781354. Readers’ advisory services—United States; Fiction in libraries—United States; Christian fiction, American—Bibliography; Children’s collections—Books and reading—United States; Christian literature for children—History and criticism; Christian literature for children—Bibliography; Children’s libraries—Collection development—United States; Libraries—Special collections—Christian fiction. xiii, 228 p.; 23 cm.


HBB, 1555705456, list price: $55.00.


HBB, 1555705227, list price: $65.00.
025.2/781354. Readers’ advisory services—United States; Fiction in libraries—United States; Christian fiction, American—History and criticism; Christian fiction, American—Stories, plots, etc.; Christian fiction, American—Bibliography; Libraries—Special collections—Christian fiction. xiii, 362 p.; 23 cm.

Barbara Walker has updated her 1998 title, Developing Christian Fiction Collections for Children and Adults [CLJ 4, 2/3:77+ (WiSp 1999)], by expanding it into three separate volumes. Librarians in public and school libraries are the primary target group for The Librarian’s Guide to Developing Christian Fiction Collections for Children, The Librarian’s Guide to Developing Christian Fiction Collections for Young Adults, and The Librarian’s Guide to Developing Christian Fiction Collections for Adults. Designed as stand-alone volumes, the basic structure for each book is the same. The contents of the first and third parts are very similar, with only slight variation due to the particular clientele considered. In Part 1: Essential Background, Chapter 1 on “How to Understand the Christian Fiction Genre” defines Christian fiction, gives a brief history, and identifies potential patrons. Chapter 2 on “How to Build Christian Fiction Collections” includes selection criteria and deals with some censorship issues. Chapter 3 provides suggestions on “How to Market Christian Fiction Collections.”

Part 3: Collection Development Resources includes chapters on “Christian Fiction Award Winners,” “About Christian Fiction Authors,” “Christian Fiction Publishers,” and “Review Sources for Christian Fiction” (including Christian Library Journal). The guide for children’s fiction lists only relevant Gold Medallion awards, while the guides for adults and young adults add Christy, RITA, and Christianity Today awards as well. The guide for children’s fiction provides biographies for only twenty-five authors, while the guides for adults and young adults include those biographies along with approximately twenty-five other authors. The content of each of the individual author biographies provided is the same in each guide, and the guide for young adults adds only a few authors not also included in the guide for adults.

Part 2: Core Collection Recommendations, is the major part of each book. The chapter on “Key Book Titles” is subdivided into genres. Two other chapters list “Key Series,” and “Key DVDs and Videos.” Most of the nearly 200 titles listed for children, the nearly 200 titles listed for young adults, and the over 500 titles listed for adults have descriptive annotations of varying lengths. These entries frequently conclude with evaluative quotations from standard review sources. (Annotations for series lists are shorter.) Since these three guides are designed as stand-alone volumes, those titles referred to in Part 1 of each are also cited in the other volumes. Many of the titles in these first sections are not included as part of the annotated core collections. While around a third of the core collection titles in the guide for young adults also appear in the core collection for adults, there are very few core collection young adult titles also listed in the guide for children. A number of the biographies refer to authors of titles listed in Part 1 that have not been included in core collection entries.

Although John Mort’s 2002 title, Christian Fiction: A Guide to the Genre [CLJ 9, 4/9 (Nov 2004)] remains more comprehensive than these updated guides by Walker, Mort’s volume does not include children’s titles. The Walker guides include a number of valuable, more recent titles. Since these new guides are designed as stand-alone volumes, the amount of duplication in the first and third parts is not inappropriate, but additional adaptation to the specific age groups would improve them. Although a comparison with Walker’s 1998 guide shows considerable carryover from the earlier title (including, regrettably, a misspelling of author Zane Hodges’ first name on page 5 or 6), the quality of these new guides is enhanced. However, a few inevitable errors remain, such as occasional misspellings, and omission of the 2004 Christy award for fantasy. Each volume has a combined author, title, subject index. Because of the unique content in each of these Walker guides, they are definitely recommended for public, church, and school libraries for these age groups, as finances permit.

Donna W. Bowling, Library/Educational Consultant, Dallas, Texas

The Crossway illustrated bible handbook is visually impressive, making excellent use of color, especially in graphs like the one showing which books of the Old Testament are prophecy, which are history, etc. Other excellent graphic material show where in Jerusalem each Holy Week event occurred, and what the important mountains of the Bible are.

The clearly-written text includes an overview of the Old and New Testaments, how life was lived in Bible times, and how the Bible was written. There are first-rate descriptions of the tabernacle and the various temples; the differences between Pharaohs and Sadduces; and the content of each New Testament letter. There’s also an especially clear explanation of the differences between the major Bible translations. However, a problem arises from the book being a ‘handbook’ rather than a ‘dictionary’ or ‘encyclopedia’: information is sometimes presented so sketchily it could confuse readers new to the Bible. The format of an Old Testament timeline, for instance, makes it seem Joseph’s family settled in Egypt before Isaac was born. Sites mentioned in the text describing a map often do not appear anywhere on the map itself. The listing of the people of the Bible is neither chronological nor alphabetical—especially problematic when listing the kings and prophets of Israel and Judah. There’s also some inconsistency: Abraham is identified as Abram but “Sarah” isn’t mentioned; Rachel is listed but not Leah, etc. A blurb about Isaac says only that he was born after Abraham and Sarah were too old to have children, had a name meaning ‘laughter,’ and was liked by all.

The Handbook is an ambitious work, covering many topics in interesting and innovative ways. But its selective coverage makes it best as a supplement to rather than a means of discovering the Bible.

Rosamaria DiCristo


Dr. Timothy Johnson comes with extensive credentials. He serves as assisting minister of the Community Covenant Church in Peabody, Massachusetts, and beyond that, his medical qualifications have taken him far and wide. Well-known as the medical editor for ABC News, he has reported on health care issues for Good Morning America since 1975, provides on-air analysis of medical news for World News Tonight, Nightline and 20/20, and also holds joint positions in medicine at Harvard and at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston. He is the author of several books, one which he co-authored with former US Surgeon General Everett C. Koop.

In this book, Dr. Johnson tackles such deep questions as does God exist? how did we get here? what is God like? and very importantly, what difference does it make? The book is completed by a suggested reading list and a bibliography.

The author insists we should not shy away from the questions that it seems all of us are asking. We don’t have the answers and sometimes are not even sure if we have the questions. Johnson takes us along on his personal spiritual quest and never hesitates to bare his own searching soul and make himself vulnerable by sharing what he is sure of—and that which he is not. His exploration is honest and although the reader may not agree with every conclusion that he comes to, he or she will feel this is a good guide for their own journey. In the preface, Dr. Johnson claims that he desires to face his beliefs with “candor and confession.” This candor and honest confession are what makes Finding God in the Questions so compelling and makes it a recommended addition to all church libraries.

Cel Carey


Credo is written to help readers better understand the Apostles’ Creed in order to help them better understand the Christian faith. Author Ray Pritchard begins by explaining why the Creed matters, then, chapter by chapter, dissects the Creed, one phrase at a time.

Pritchard focuses on the Creed for several reasons, including its ability to transcend denominational differences and its concise summation of Christianity. He cautions, however, that even the Creed doesn’t surpass the ultimate source of authority: God’s Word.

Credo is readable and convincing, painlessly utilizing church history, the words of varied men such as Martin Luther, Charles Spurgeon, and Pope Benedict, and copious examples from the Bible itself to succinctly but thoroughly cover all aspects of Christianity. It’s geared primarily for adults, but its look, feel, and tone as well as its ability to clearly explain the core points of Christianity would make it appealing to teens. These traits and each chapter’s “Think About It” questions will also make Credo good for new Christians.
Breathe: Creating Space for God in a Hectic Life was written with the busy mother in mind. Day after day, mothers and fathers have a busy schedule to keep that often includes keeping the house in order, working, raising children, and growing in their relationship with God. Sometimes life is on autopilot where they wonder where time has gone, and wonder how we can slow down to rest and focus more on God. Kent Wyatt Kent has written a book that gives advice on how to simplify your life and grow deeper in your faith with God. It’s what she refers to as Sabbath Simplicity.

Not only has Kent researched her material in writing this book, but she understands the hectic life of being a parent. She incorporates true stories about herself as well as other mothers who are in the process of adding simplicity to their daily lives. Physical and mental aspects of hurried parents and their children are discussed and are well documented in this book. The author focuses on godly practices for living an unhurried life. Scripture is explained where appropriate throughout the book.

Stacie Coomer


PAP, 0764200666, list price: $12.99.
248.8/3. Peterson, Tracie; Bottke, Allison; O’Brien, Dianne; Christian biography—United States. 206 p. ; 21 cm.

As women, many of us have bought into lies we’ve been told throughout our lives. We have also been crippled by those very lies and have allowed them to control every part of our lives. Tracie Peterson, Allison Bottke, and Dianne O’Brien have teamed up to bring women a non-fiction book that will help them break free from the bonds of several of the most common lies. Tackling such issues as body image, aging, and exercise, romance and marriage, fulfillment in life, forgiveness, and faith, I Can’t Do It All! is an excellent study guide for both individual and group study.

Touching on physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional aspects of the whole woman, each author gives advice based on biblical truths and personal experiences. Each chapter highlights a well-known lie and shines the light of scriptural truth on it in order to expose the fallacy. Personal application questions and ‘My Turn’ sections at the end of each chapter will help women to finally overcome the lies they’ve believed for too long and live their lives to the fullest potential that God intended for each one.

Sherri Myers

PAP, 0785211322, list price: $13.99.
248.8/6. Wilderness (Theology); Exodus, The; Consolation. xv, 204 p. ; 22 p. x 22 cm.

The 40 years wilderness wanderings of the Children of Israel provide a backdrop for Mark Atteberry’s book. Hasn’t everyone taken an unplanned path in life? Haven’t we wandered in a seemingly barren land? Surely, the answer is a resounding “Yes!” Walking with God on the Road You Never Wanted to Travel addresses our feelings when the path is unexpected and difficult.

“Keep Your Dream Alive’ will help readers who endure difficulties because of the choices of other people. Remember Caleb and Joshua. Then, keep talking, praying, and moving toward the dream. Another technique is “Turn Your Trip into a Testimony.” Bless other people because of your difficult road. Atteberry writes, “A detour will test your character, because it so naturally breeds anger and frustration....But it also gives you an opportunity to put forth an exceptional witness. If you can trust God and remain faithful even on the difficult side roads of life, you will impact a lot of people.”

Roberta Lou Jones

HBB, 1590524071, list price: $16.99.
248.8/8. Employees—Religious life; Witness bearing (Christianity); Work—Religious aspects—Christianity; Christian life. 173 p. ; ill. ; 22 cm.
Adult. Rating : 5.

As Christians in the workforce, many of us want to witness to a co-worker or boss, but don’t quite know how to break the ice. Others feel that home and work are two different lives that don’t mesh. Author Regi Campbell helps us with this dilemma by first having us put each of the people we work with into five different categories. Regi devotes a chapter for each of the categories that gives us ideas, personal experiences, and encouragement to enable us to talk to our co-workers about Christ with confidence. The author shows how important it is to know that with God’s help, we can make an eternal difference in the lives of people we interact with most of our waking hours.

About My Father’s Business: Taking Your Faith to Work begins with the heart of the author showing us that we have two jobs at work…one that requires us to produce for our earthly boss and the other that requires us to love for our heavenly Boss. Regi provides his web site address, so the reader can download the chart of the five categories. There is also a small group study guide available online at no charge.
This book is one that I would recommend for anyone who works in the secular world. It is very well-written, and the author seems to have a deep passion for showing Christians how to bring God’s light into the workforce every day. I think the study guide would be a great companion to the book.

Tammy Scarbrough


HBB, 0192802909, list price: $150.00.
270.03. Christianity--Dictionaries. xl, 1800 p. ; 26 cm.
Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 5.

A blurb on the back of The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church calls it “the authoritative standard reference book on the Christian church.” The work, which was first published in 1957 and now comes in a third revised edition, is worthy of such praise. With more than 6,000 entries on everything and everyone from Augustine to Zwingli, from Aaron to Zachariah, from Angola to Zimbabwe, the dictionary is as exhaustive as a one-volume dictionary could possibly be.

British academics and vicars populate the list of contributors, but the often quite large bibliographies following many entries contain generous amounts of references to French and German resources. The bibliographies are sometimes as long as the entries, and are quite valuable.

The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church covers theology (from heresy to orthodoxy), the content of the Bible (Bible books, characters, schools of biblical criticism), patristics, modern and historical denominations (of all shades from multiple countries and time periods), the church calendar and liturgy, and biographies of major figures in church history and theology. The book is not limited to Protestantism or to anything else more narrow than “Christian.” It constitutes a standard reference work, though it anything else more narrow than “Christian.” It

Mark L. Ward, Jr.


HBB, 0816054576, list price: $75.00.
296.03. Judaism--Encyclopedias. xxvi, 602 p. ; ill. ; 24 cm.
Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 5.

Facts on File, of Infobase Publishing, offers encyclopedias that “emphasize the living faiths and their historical and social backgrounds.” As part of that set, Sara E. Karesh and Mitchell M. Hurvitz have written Encyclopedia of Judaism. The authors are well qualified. Karesh teaches Jewish history; Hurvitz is a rabbi with a M.A. degree.

Eight hundred entries follow an A-to-Z format. Entries begin with “Aaron, abortion, and Abravanel,” and end with Zohar, Soroastrianism, and Zunz. Black and white pictures are ample, but not overly abundant. Each entry includes a useful “For further reading” section.

Various periods of Jewish history are well represented. Modern people, such as Henry Kissinger and Betty Friedan, join the ancient rabbis and Soroaethus in the dictionary.

Soroastrianism, and Zunz. Black and white pictures are ample, but not overly abundant. Each entry includes a useful “For further reading” section.

Rothbert Lou Jones


PAP, 802465323, list price: $12.99.
306.874/3. Mothers; Parenting; Parenting--Religious aspects--Christianity. 271 p. ; 23 cm.

It is a rare book these days that interweaves teachings of the Bible and how to raise children. In Being a Great Mom, Raising Great Kids, Sharon Jaynes tackles the task unflinchingly. A quote from Elizabeth Stone sums up the tone on parental responsibility in the book, “Making a decision to have a child—it’s momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body.”

Jaynes shares down to earth advice such as listening with your eyes, ears, facial expressions, and mind, while also offering scripture as basis for each point. She encourages mothers to take on the role of disciplinarian while embracing their child in love. She provides startling information in how we often change as parents of young children, to parents of teenagers, and this needs to be reevaluated. A study she shares “showed that 54 percent of mothers gave daily verbal affirmation such as ‘I love you’ to their fifth graders, but by the time the child was in the ninth grade, only 36 percent of the mothers were doing so….”

It is obvious Jaynes has done extensive research before writing this informative book. Her works cited section in itself are interesting in its scope and completeness, and further offers readers other opportunities to delve further into the subject of parenting. Being a Great Mom, Raising Great Kids is a book that offers practical advice and scripture that I would recommend to mothers of young children as well as teens.

5. Katherine Lopez


PAP, 0825460719, list price: $13.99.
Adult. Rating : 5.

With only some clothes, a few household items, toys, and medical books, gynecologists Reg and Catherine Hamlin, with their young son Richard, embarked on their life’s devotion of 40 plus years to serve the women of Ethiopia who suffer from a debilitating condition known as vesico-vaginal fistula. The book describes the condition as it presents itself in developing countries and what this condition represents for the women of Ethiopia. Dr. Catherine Hamlin, with the help of writer and film-maker John Little, writes this autobiography that reads like cherished memoirs of their shared life, work, political and financial struggles, relationships, and dedication to service in Ethiopia.

Dr. Catherine Hamlin tells their story with simplicity, humility, humor, and pathos. The couple’s single-mindedness is apparent in the statement that “…neither of us felt suited to a life of predictable comfort in England.” p.47 Following the death of Dr. Reg in 1993, Dr. Catherine has continued to serve in Ethiopia “in the hope that the torch lit by Reg for the fistula pilgrims of Ethiopia…will burn even more brightly, and that others will become inspired to stamp out this…maternal tragedy.” p. 302 Dr. Reg is quoted as saying, “A mother is a family’s
richest possession, a being of priceless value.”
p.302 This is not just a story of hope, but also of
human and cultural value. The reader will be
challenged to inquire further into the ongoing
work of Dr. Catherine Hamlin and the Addis
Ababa Fistula Hospital.

The book contains inspiring photographs, a list
of Fistula Hospital Trusts, and a bibliography.
This title is highly recommended.

Pamela A. Russell

Children tell stories : teaching and using
storytelling in the classroom / Martha
Hamilton and Mitch Weiss. 2nd ed. (.)
LCCN 2005021667. Katonah, N.Y. :
PAP, 1572746637, list price: $29.95.
372.67/7. Storytelling; Children’s stories--Study and
teaching; Storytelling ability in children; Activity
programs in education. xx, 264 p. : ill. ; 26 cm. (Inc.
CD-ROM).

Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 5.

Everyone loves stories! Martha Hamilton and
Mitch Weiss perform together as “Beauty and
the Beast Storytellers.” One result of their
experience is Children Tell Stories: Teaching
and Using Storytelling in the Classroom. Black
and white illustrations include pictures,
drawings, and sidebars. The layout allows the
reader to hop and skip to parts most relevant to
their needs. Certainly, reading chronologically
is great…but not required.

Hamilton and Weiss cover a wide range of
material, such as storytelling etiquette, fair use
in copyright law, and organizing a family
storytelling festival. A student self-evaluation
and goal setting form urged me to critique
myself. The authors explained why they
discourage contests, and offered suggestions for
including children with disabilities. A short
section promoted emotional healing with
stories.

Of course, look for anything you expect in a
storytelling book—types of stories, preparing a
storytelling unit, and benefits of storytelling.
“Helping Students Tell Their Stories” addressed
monotones, vocal expression, tempo, deep
breathing, and articulation. Even silence is a
“very effective element” used with body
language and facial expression.

Appendices include suggested stories and other
resources. Note the companion DVD, with
videos, web links, and printable stories. All
teachers, parents, and students will profit from
this highly useful, and readable book.

Roberta Lou Jones

Journeys to the edge of creation. (A
Moody Institute of Science presentation.)
DVD, 1575672529, list price: $29.99.

Journeys to the Edge of Creation has a thesis
and supporting arguments: Someone must have
created our universe. It is so beautiful, so vast,
so intricate. And the earth is so perfectly suited
to support life—against universal odds. It was
not to scare us or intimidate us that God created
the heavens, the DVD says, but to show us our
significance: “We are the supreme focus of the
creator’s attention and care.” The pictures and
accompanying scientific commentary constitute
added supporting arguments, though the science
is kept fairly simple.

The first DVD in the set focuses on the solar
system, while the second stretches the limits of
human knowledge by taking a journey through
space all the way to the edge (is there such a
thing?) of the universe. The narrator describes
the work of various space probes, of the Hubble
telescope, and of the earth-bound astronomers
who analyze the data their probes send back.
The DVDs also include a few comments from
an astronomer at the University of South
Carolina.

The pictures shown are the standard space shots
seen on numerous other TV specials or news
programs—with a few extra computer-
generated animations thrown in.

The second DVD closes with a gospel
invitation, an encouragement to people to read
the Bible to find out God’s thoughts.

Mark L. Ward, Jr.
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