In This Issue

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- Legends of the Guardian King
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- Many book reviews
Dear Readers,

It’s Sunday here in Mozambique. I skipped the Portuguese service this morning, and will worship with others in English later this afternoon. The group of worshippers come from the embassy, businesses, nonprofit aid organizations, and missionaries, plus any others who wish to worship in English. It’s always a meaningful service, and I look forward to today’s, my last in Africa on this trip. Next Sunday I board a plane here for a three day trip home to the Oregon Coast. I’ll miss the Weils, my hosts, and CAM, the school where I’ve been working for 3.5 months.

I wish each of you could spend time in a library overseas, especially in a third world country. There you would see a hunger for good books, and the mission library may be their only source other than borrowing from one another and purchasing books to bring back when they are out of country. I hope each of you in the western world appreciate the wealth of books we have there, and encourage those in other parts of the world to find a way of sharing reading material.

May the Lord bless you and your reading!

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 titles for the Christian reader. Materials reviewed may reflect a broad range of Christian doctrinal positions and do not necessarily reflect the views of Christian Library Journal.

Nancy L. Hesch
Editor & Publisher
Mark L. Ward
Webmaster


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With all the magazines available for young people of all ages today, how does one know which ones are best for our children, tweens, and teenagers (CTT)? The same guidelines one uses for books should be used for magazines and just as has been recommended by many experts for over 100 years, every parent should first read what their children are going to read.

The quality of children’s magazines of our great-grandparents’ days was far superior to what is found today. The first known children’s magazine, *The Young Misses’ Magazine*, appeared in 1757 in England. The first in America, *Children*, appeared in 1789. Most early CTT magazines were Sunday school papers. In 1873, Mary Mapes Dodge, the author of *Hans Brinker, or the Silver Skates*, agreed to be the editor for *The St. Nicholas Magazine*. She set high standards for the magazine that continued through her 30 years of editorship and to the end of the magazine in 1943, standards which are rarely seen today in CTT magazines:

1. To give clean, genuine fun to children of all ages.
2. To give them examples of the finest types of boyhood and girlhood.
3. To inspire them with an appreciation of fine pictorial art.
4. To cultivate the imagination in profitable directions.
5. To foster a love of country, home, nature, truth, beauty and sincerity.
6. To prepare boys and girls for life as it is.
7. To stimulate their ambitions—but along normally progressive lines.
8. To keep pace with a fast-moving world in all its activities.
9. To give reading matter which every parent may pass to his children unhesitatingly.

Does it really matter what magazines they read? Yes, it does matter what magazines are read by our children/tweens/teens. Just as our bodies are nourished by the food that is eaten, so our minds are nourished by what is read. Just as our bodies grow according to what is ingested, so our minds go by what is read. This is evidenced by a statement made by one of our past presidents. Theodore Roosevelt, who had a special magazine; “his beloved magazine, *Our Young Folks*, which taught me much more than any of my textbooks.”

Laura Apol wrote in her article in *Journal of Children’s Literature*; “Literature is not innocent—it works to persuade readers of the truth of its own perspective.” And “I have learned that children’s literature creates a world that readers believe and shapes both individual and national memory.”

Mary Mapes Dodge saw that what was read by children was important as was so evident in the stories throughout the many years of *The St. Nicholas Magazine*. “There is no period of life at which impressions can be so deeply made as in early youth, and as the youth of America are trained, so will the next generation of men and women be. Proper training ought, all educators agree, to consist in familiarizing young people with the conditions that will surround them in adult life.”

* A Good Line of Advertising, *St. Nicholas League Advertising Booklet No. 5*; bound into the Profitable Advertising 13 (Jan. 1904) 817-832 of Profitable Advertising, but paginated
Are CTT magazines important?
Magazines are easily found in many places, doctor’s waiting rooms, at the grocery or bookstore, and in libraries. Many teachers will use magazines to get reluctant readers to read or as a reward when certain tasks are accomplished. Librarians make them available in relaxing reading areas. They are good reading in homes when you want to avoid the television or the internet and you want a short read. There is educational value in magazines no matter the age of the reader.

“Magazines serve a variety of purposes. As a form of communication, they are:
1) functional: providing information and expanding the child’s world;
2) entertaining: affording a wide variety of pleasure on many levels, and
3) purveyors of experience: eliciting both aesthetic and emotional responses. (Frank, 1954). Because of their low cost, light weight, colorful pages, and condensed articles, many teachers find that students are attracted to the magazines.”

But do CTT read magazines with the technology of today?

While CTT magazines do not enjoy the popularity of the pre-internet days, CTT magazines can be used for educational and enjoyment purposes. But with the vast array of magazines available one must be careful what young, growing minds see and read. Whatever magazines are chosen for school or home, our guide should be Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, ...honest, ...just, ...pure, ...lovely, of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise think on these things.”

In 1999, SmartGirl.com did a “Teen Read Week Survey, where they found that 77% of girls read fashion and beauty magazines and 47% of boys read magazines about video games. According to the Consumer’s Union, more than 160 magazines are now targeted at children.

Evaluation Note

Seventeen magazine, J-14, and other similar magazines found on newsstands are more interested in worldly values than teaching teenagers Christian, conservative, educational principals and values. The same worldly philosophy is spreading into the tweens and children magazines. The highly popular American Girl is owned by Mattel and this brings into question the purpose of the magazine.

It is important to note with all the publications recommended, especially the publications from Scholastic Magazines and Weekly Reader, that teachers/parents should be aware of the non-Biblical viewpoints that do occur in these publications. Teachers/parents should definitely evaluate them before using them with their students/children. This would aid teachers/parents with the continuing education of showing their students/children how to critique and analyze what they read to see if it falls in line with scripture.

Recommendations

Christian CTT magazines are few and far between. Some Christian publishers of adult Christian magazines have published CTT magazines similar to their adult publication and are on the classroom magazine level. God’s World News—publishers of World Magazine (an excellent Christian news magazine) also has children & teen magazines

http://www.gwnews.com/

Nature Friend Magazine is an excellent Christian

Some nationally known Christian associations like Focus on the Family has a children’s magazines
http://clubhousemagazine.com

For those wanting a Creation viewpoint, there are three excellent magazines. Answers In Genesis has an adult level magazine called Answers that has a section for children. The adult magazine is suitable for teens through adults.
http://www.answersingenesis.org/ Creation Ministries International, based in Australia with offices in the U. S., has an adult level magazine, Creation that is suitable for teenagers http://www.creationontheweb.com/ Creation Illustrated Magazine has wonderful photography and is aimed at sixth grade through adult. http://www.creationillustrated.com/


GEMS (Girls Everywhere Meeting the Savior) Girls’ Clubs headquartered in Michigan publishes two wholesome magazines for girls Sparkle! and Shine Brightly www.gemsgc.org/

Two large, secular publishers of multiple classroom magazines that are very valuable for educational purposes are: Scholastic Magazines http://www.scholastic.com/ and one many remember from elementary days, Weekly Reader http://www.weeklyreader.com/index.asp

The Boy Scouts of America has the long-lived Boys’ Life and is great for all boys, but the ads have to be watched. www.boyslife.org

Carus Publishing publisher of multiple children & teen magazines that have been around for years. http://www.cricketmag.com/home.asp

Children’s Better Health Institute publishes
Child Life: A History Magazine for Kids www.childlifemag.org
Humpty Dumpty’s Magazine www.humptydumptymag.org
Jack and Jill www.jackandjillmag.org

Crinkles for ages 7-12 is a secular, but very educational magazine from Libraries Unlimited that takes a separate geographic location in each issue and discusses the people, places, events, and things of the area. www.crinkles.com

Hopscotch, Boys’ Quest, & Fun for Kids for elementary grades are very good, conservative publications.
http://www.funforkidzmagazines.com/index2.html

Learning Through History magazine from Classic Education, Inc. presents world history with one historical topic in each issue, for ages 9 to adult. www.learningthroughhistory.com/

Leben: a Journal of Reformation Life from City Seminary Press would be suitable for teens. According to their website: "Is your introduction to Christian history and biography, told through the lives of Reformers and patriots, and missionaries and martyrs." www.leben.us

National Geographic Kids online
http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/portal/site/Kids

The National Wildlife Federation, while necessary to watch for environmentalism, has four great animal magazines for different age levels. www.nwf.org

_Stone Soup: The Magazine by Young Writers & Artists_, published by the Children’s Art Foundation: www.stonesoup.com

Wildlife Education, Ltd., publishes _Zoobooks_ and _Zootles_. You’ll love the photography and so will your kids of all ages. _Zoobooks_ has earned the Parents’ Choice Gold Award. www.zoobooks.com

A government website for children’s magazines for the blind, handicapped, etc. can be found at http://www.loc.gov/nls/children/magazines.html

NOTES

1 Howard, Alice B. _Mary Mapes Dodge of St. Nicholas_, Julian Messner, Inc., N. Y. 1943


4 Gannon, Susan R., Suzanne Rahn, and Ruth


The following reviews were posted on the CLJ site just after the publication of the September 2007 issue, as publication ceased. We are happy to share them with you now. (The first title in this series, *Light of Eidon*, was reviewed in the April 2004 issue, with a rating of *5.)*

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**The Shadow Within / Karen Hancock (Legends of the guardian-king ; 2). Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2004.**

- Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
- Adult (HS)
- Rating: *5.

*The Shadow Within*, by Karen Hancock, is the second in her fantasy series Legends of the Guardian-King. It follows the events in the life of Abramm Kalladorne, born a prince of Kiriath, that began in *The Light of Eidon* [CLJ, 9, 1:51 (Apr. 2004)], winner of the 2004 Christy Award for fantasy. In the earlier title Abramm’s younger brother Gillard sells him into slavery where he becomes a champion in gladiatorial games and then escapes to a friendly neighboring country. As this book begins, Abramm returns home to Kiriath, accompanied by his faithful friend Trap, to kill an evil monster that is terrorizing the people, and then to claim his rightful position as king. The conflict between rival brothers emerges as one element in the conflict between true and false religious factions. The friendly help of Madeleine, Second Daughter of neighboring country Chesedh, assists Abramm in his battle for truth and against evil forces. This title won the 2005 Christy Award for visionary books.

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**Shadow over Kiriath / Karen Hancock (Legends of the guardian-king ; 3). Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2005.**

- Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
- Adult (HS)
- Rating: *5.

In *Shadow over Kiriath*, the nature of the spiritual warfare becomes evident in occasional interludes that detail conversations between two evil spirits who are plotting the downfall of Abramm (reminiscent of Peretti’s Darkness titles). In spite of their efforts, Abramm is crowned king of Kiriath and marries Madeleine. At that point, their strategy shifts to building up Abramm’s success so that his subsequent massive loss might cause him to renounce his faith. The repeated betrayals by a trusted member of his court, combined with the power of the dominant false religious cult, result in Abramm’s imprisonment, torture, and condemnation to death for heresy. This title received the 2006 Christy Award for visionary books.

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**Return of the guardian-king / Karen Hancock (Legends of the guardian-king ; 4).**

*Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2007.*

Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
PAP, 0764227971, 9780764227974, $13.99.

Adult (HS)
Rating: *5.

After his rescue from execution and recovery from his injuries, in *The Return of the Guardian-King,* Abramm begins his effort to rejoin his wife who had escaped to her neighboring homeland. However, his Lord has further lessons and choices for Abramm to confront. As an enemy nation seeks to invade and conquer Kiriath and Chesedh, the action and point of view shifts frequently from Abramm to Madeleine and back, and occasionally to and from Abramm’s sister Carissa and her husband Trap. Both Madeleine’s brother and his wife betray her at various times. However, the greatest deceit and treachery come from an incarnate powerful evil spirit that can only be finally defeated by the Lord.

In this series author Karen Hancock tells an exciting and complex story with characters that make mistakes, but grow and change through their experiences. She reports the internal thoughts and conflicts of her characters at greater length than their significant spoken dialogue. This fantasy series with frequent allegorical elements includes supernatural events produced by both the forces of Light and those of the Shadow. She illustrates several important truths. True religion can be twisted and used by evil forces. The love and forgiveness of the Lord, at great cost to Himself, prompt fallible believers to awe and worship. True believers, indwelt by both Light and Shadow, may give leeway to the Shadow within by their fear, anger, jealousy, pride, and efforts to defeat evil by their own natural abilities. True victory only comes through total submission to the Lord and His ways and timing. Relationship and submission to the Lord takes precedence over human relationships and personal desires. With its allegorical elements, this powerful series can stimulate a sense of worship in mature Christians. Librarians serving younger readers, or those with more restrictive selection policies, might note the presence of occasional references to appropriate desires for intimacy between married couples, but without details of the physical intimacy. This series has a great deal to commend it.

References:


This present darkness / Frank E. Peretti. Westchester, Ill. : Crossway Books, 1986.


Donna W. Bowling, Library/Educational Consultant, Dallas, Texas
Review Rating System

*5  Outstanding — a book which impacts someone’s life or thinking
  5  Excellent — well written, among the very best
  4  Good — definitely worth reading
  3  Fair — to be read for relaxation or to meet needs for information
  2  Poor — poor writing or editing; read only if very interested
  1 — What can we say? Not much going for this title.

Recommended with caution (may be used with any of the above ratings) — Note reservations within the review.

Not recommended (may be used with any of the above ratings) — Note problems within the review.

With fiction, the rating includes the quality of plot development/pacing, characterization, sense of time and place, mood and atmosphere, dialogue, depth of perception, sensitivity of writing, use of humor. Be aware that some books are character driven, so character development is extremely important. Others are plot driven, so character development isn’t as critical; plot is.

Commonly used abbreviations in CLJ reviews

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**Picture Books**


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!

HBB: 0374303800, 9780374303808, $16.00.

Primary

Rating: 4

Who would not want a best friend with her on the first day of school? But Lizzy's best friend is an apple tree! In *The Apple Doll*, written and illustrated by Elisa Kelven, Lizzy creates a figure from a fresh apple, leaves, and twigs. She names the doll Susanna, and they face school together. In the classroom there are problems: food and toys are not allowed, and the other children find Susanna laughable.

At home, Susanna’s head begins to wither. Lizzy’s sister and other family members offer suggestions to keep the figure fresh and finally decide to make Susanna into a traditional dried apple doll by soaking the peeled head in lemon juice. After drying, the doll has the wrinkled look of a wise old woman. With a new body and hair, Susanna is ready for another visit to school for sharing time. This time the children are fascinated and want to make apple dolls, too. The last scene is the whole class playing in the apple tree, surrounded by their apple dolls. After the story concludes, there are step by step instructions for making an apple doll.

Ms Kelven has used mixed media in her illustrations, with chalk, pencil, and various paper collage elements, creating a warm tone. The apple doll in the instructions is shown in a photograph with drawings for the important steps.

The family's warm support is evident in the way they listen to Lizzy and offer help. All members of the family are involved in the apple doll project. They take her fear seriously and encourage her to take Susanna back to school, sure that this time the children will no longer laugh.

Robin Currie


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!

HBB: 0374304467, 9780374304461, $15.00.

Primary

Rating: 5

In Jonathan Bean's picture book, *At Night*, a young girl can't sleep. She hears noises her family members make as they sleep in nearby rooms. She tosses and turns in her bed. A soft breeze from her window entices her. She decides to load up bedding and climb to her home's rooftop garden patio, unaware that her mother watches her movements toward the stairway.

On the patio, the young girl settles in a chair. She makes herself comfortable beneath the stars. She gazes out over the sleeping city all around her. She admires lights shining on tall buildings, houses, streets and bridges. Eventually her head nods, and she sleeps. Her mother settles in a chair beside her in the moonlight with a hot beverage in hand, and looks out at the city at night.

In this first picture book, written and illustrated by Jonathan Bean, the author uses muted colors to capture the warm feelings of a summer evening. The watercolor illustrations complement the story line and add multi-layered textures and meanings to the story. For example, the mother's watchful care isn't explicit in the story line but is illustrated at appropriate moments.

Overall, Bean's beautifully illustrated book captures the magical quality of summer moments that both young and old can appreciate.

Connie Walsh Brown

**Counting in the temperate forest / Fredrick L. McKissack, Jr. and Lisa Beringer McKissack. (Counting in the biomes) Berkeley Heights, N.J: Enslow Elementary, 2009.**

Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!

LIB: 0766029905, 9780766029903, $22.60.
Primary, Intermediate  
Rating: 4

*Counting in the Temperate Forest* is part of the Counting in the Biomes Series by Enslow. Authors Fredrick L. McKissack, Jr. and Lisa Beringer McKissack begin by explaining the definitions of a biome, temperate forest, and the four seasons. Then they ask counting questions about animals that live in the temperate forest. For example, “How many claws does the star-nosed mole have?” The answer is given along with interesting information about that animal. Ten temperate forest animals are highlighted in this book. In the back is a section for parents and teachers. Additional facts about temperate forests, other books, and useful web sites are listed. Following are two pages for the children to count again. The counting photographs, the numbers, and the number words are listed for review.

The book features full-color photographs spanning the two-page layout. The questions and information are listed on the left page with the photograph bordering the information box. Numbers are printed on each photograph with arrows pointing to the objects being counted. The intended number is highlighted in yellow. This book is adaptable for all age levels. Using it as a counting book, preschool children can count the objects in the photographs and learn animal names. For primary school children, they can also reinforce their counting abilities, learn to spell number words and match them to the actual numerals, and read about the temperate forest animals. Intermediate students can use this book for science research as they study different biomes. The facts listed in the book are very kid-friendly and easy to understand. Unfamiliar words are sounded out and defined. A map in the front of the book shows where temperate forests are found in the world. A glossary and index are in the back. This book and its series are highly recommended for school libraries, teachers, and homeschoolers. This is a beautiful book which has something for all ages to enjoy and learn.


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
HBB: 1423102991, 9781423102991, $16.99.
PS, Primary  
Rating: 5, recommended with caution

*Knuffle Bunny Too* by Mo Willems is a day in the life of pre-K Trixie and her special toy Knuffle Bunny who enjoys school, a trip to the playground, and family time with her. While at school, jealousy arises between Trixie and a classmate named Sonia who has the same Knuffle Bunny. The girls’ teacher confiscates the toys until the end of the day, unknowingly exchanging them. No one realizes the mistake until the middle of the night when Trixie’s reluctant father is persuaded to walk across town to meet Sonia and her father to make the exchange. Then all is well. Or is it?

With children old enough to understand the book could be used to discuss alternative ways to deal with the disappointment the girls experience.

Willems’ enchanting illustrations are hand-drawn ink sketches overlaid on black & white photographs of the elegant old city of Brooklyn. This creative artwork is the book’s main redeeming quality.

*Floss Craig*


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
HBB: 068982954X, 9780689829543, $17.95.

Primary  
Rating: 3

How boring is the assignment “report on your summer vacation”? In the mind of Olivia the piglet in *Olivia Saves the Circus*, it is an opportunity to shine. First she spruces up her “boring uniform.” When it is her turn to
report, Olivia spins a tale of a trip to the circus. When all the circus personnel develop earaches, Olivia performs in every role from the Tattooed Lady to Queen of the Trampoline. After this grand escapade, she quietly notes that her dad did take her sailing. When the validity of the circus story is questioned by the teacher, Olivia defends it as true, “To the best of my recollection.” This elicits an eye roll from the teacher.

There is a tight interplay between words and pictures, with the text sometimes so spare that the picture is essential for the punch line. Falconer uses charcoal for the characters and action, but adds brilliant red to elements such as Olivia’s clothing additions. In Olivia’s circus fantasy, however, the accent color is pink. The reader is clued in that the truth has faded just a little. This becomes very clear in the small picture of the sailing trip with Dad. Here the accent color is red, signaling to the reader that this is the truth.

Olivia’s facial expressions and antics are humorous. She is more precocious than the average early elementary student, but that makes her fun. Olivia shares a fantasy, the kind of adventure most children wish they could report to the class. The reader is well aware when the facts have been enhanced, and, with the return to accent red at the end of her tale, adults and children are assured Olivia knows what really happened on her summer vacation.

Robin Currie

Children’s Fiction


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
PAP: 1593695667, 9781593695668, $6.95.
Intermediate
Rating: 4

Chrissa by Mary Casanova addresses the timeless issues of cliques and bullying in this creative story set in Minnesota. Chrissa Maxwell’s family moves into her grandmother’s house to help care for the family home after her grandfather dies. Previous summers at Nana’s lake home brought hours of swimming, games, and great cookies; but now Chrissa finds herself living in a new bedroom and attending a new school in the middle of the fourth grade year. Despite her best efforts to make friends, Chrissa lands in the “loser” group, destined to be the brunt of the mean girls’ cruel jokes. If she tells an adult what the Queen Bees really did, she would not only be labeled a loser but also a tattler.

Casanova relates an important issue in a fictional setting guaranteed to keep an eight-to-ten year old turning pages and contemplating their relationships with others. Recommended for individuals and for a class read-aloud.

Mary Vee


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
PAP: 1593695675, 9781593695675, $6.95.
Intermediate
Rating: 4

Chrissa Stands Strong by Mary Casanova, a sequel to Chrissa, addresses another timeless issue: everyone needs to be given a second chance. Shocked when last year’s bully speaks kindly to her in a shopping mall, Chrissa wonders if Tara has changed. Should she give her a second chance? When Chrissa tells her friends the good news about Tara’s kind words, they walk away from their friendship circle leaving Chrissa without anyone to talk to. Cruel cyber jokes pop up in the days that follow, opening old wounds and creating a serious accident. Who would do such a mean thing? Did Chrissa befriend a changed person or a bully? Unsure of what to do, she turns to her parents for help.

Casanova’s sequel to Chrissa adds
suspense to this second friendship conflict story, which proves to be an exciting read. As problems compound, the community bonds in an effort to unite these fragile elementary friendships.

Mary Vee

**Clementine’s letter / Sara Pennypacker ; pictures by Marla Frazee. New York : Hyperion Books, 2008.**

Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!  
Intermediate  
Rating: 3

Clementine loves her teacher, Mr. D’Matz. He understands her and she understands him and his rules. But Clementine’s world is shaken when she learns that her beloved teacher could win a trip to Egypt and be replaced by a substitute. Sara Pennypacker, author of *Clementine’s Letter*, draws us along with Clementine as she stumbles over the expectations of the substitute teacher and other grownups in her world. Illustrator Marla Frazee effectively sketches Clementine as a tomboyish Shirley Temple.

Clementine matures as she learns from her mistakes—like when she causes havoc in her apartment building by selling the neighbor’s trash. But in the process, she learns the proper protocol under the wings of patient and understanding adults. And though she wants Mr. D’Matz to stay, she conquers her selfishness by making a speech she hopes will help him win the trip.

Pennypacker woos us into falling in love with Clementine, a vivacious, free-spirited third grader. Clementine’s dialogue and character are affectionately believable. Clementine, like most kids, is naturally funny. She makes special trips to the grocery store to learn new vegetable names—not to increase her culinary vocabulary, but to nickname her younger brother. Throughout the book, she calls him names like “Daikon Radish” and “Bok Choy.”

*Clementine’s Letter* is recommended for third to sixth grade independent readers. There are references to “catching outlaws drinking beer,” and a discussion about Mr. D’Matz’s name being “almost a swear.” The poignant message in *Clementine’s Letter* is that life works better when you understand the rules. This teaches children and adults the importance of communication and grace.

Alicea Jones


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!  
HBB : 0060276924, 9780060276928, $15.99.  
LIB : 0060276932, 9780060276935, $16.89.  
Intermediate, Middle School  
Rating 4

In *The Dragon’s Child: A Story of Angel Island*, Laurence Yep weaves a quietly suspenseful tale packed with information on the Chinese immigration experience in early twentieth century California. His niece, Dr. Kathleen S. Yep, discovered immigration interviews while researching family history and the two crafted a story based on them. Each chapter opens with questions posed to Gim Lew Yep in the present followed with the story through the eyes of the ten-year-old boy.

Lung Gon Yep was born in America where he lives and works. When he visits his wife and children in China, Lung Gon decides his youngest son will return with him to California. Gim Lew is torn between leaving his mother and disappointing his father. For the journey he must prepare for the interrogation all Asian immigrants undergo. But Gim Lew stutters. His father worries the immigration officials will believe it is because he is lying. So Gim Lew must memorize family facts and details and work to tame his stutter.

As they journey, first to Hong Kong and then on a ship to San Francisco, Gim Lew’s insights provide comparisons between American and Chinese customs.
Issues of prejudice against Chinese are woven throughout the plot. When they reach Angel Island, sometimes called the Ellis Island of the west coast, Gim Lew’s anxiety intensifies. He has not yet tamed his stutter, which builds tension in the story.

The book concludes with facts about Chinese American immigration and photos of Yep’s father and grandfather. This story is a wonderful way to introduce family heritage and early twentieth century history and to launch discussion about prejudice and treatment of immigrants.

Lisa A. Wroble

* * *


A magical fantasy, The Farwalker’s Quest, takes place in a futuristic world—a world left devastated and fragmented by the Blind War. Everyone in Canberra Docks assumes twelve-year-old Ariel will become a Healtouch like her mother. She certainly doesn’t seem talented enough to do anything else. Her best friend, Zeke, hopes to follow in his father’s footsteps and become a village-chief-like Tree-Singer. But just three days before the Namingfest, Zeke’s tree won’t speak to him. Instead, the maple directs Ariel to a magical artifact of old: a telling dart.

Used before the war, the telling dart has a secret message destined for but one. The dart fully captures Ariel’s imagination and her heart. When a pair of strangers turns up asking questions and making threats, Ariel and Zeke are forced into a treacherous, life-altering journey. The Farwalker’s Quest, a coming-of-age adventure, is a must-read. Even those who are not generally fans of fantasy are sure to be pleased. No maps or charts are required in the reading of this book. With substantive characters and a well-woven plot, Joni Sensel crafts a breathtaking tale full of twists and turns that will leave the reader breathless. The pacing is perfect, the prose lyrical and smooth. Readers will quickly find themselves transported to a magical world of danger and loss, of dreams and destiny.

Sensel allows darkness in the story, enough to convey the essence of truth, but not so much as to overwhelm the reader or glorify the darkness. Instead, light shines through. As the characters are forced to reconcile their expectations with reality, they must wrestle with their passions and purpose. The story makes it clear—we are each gifted, we each have a calling. It emphasizes love, hope, trust, compassion, forgiveness, and sacrifice. And The Farwalker’s Quest finishes as strongly as it starts, confirming that in spite of hardships, redemption and new beginnings await those who seek.

Cheri Williams


Set in a West African village, One Hen tells a slightly fictionalized account of a man who diligently works to become a successful business man, eventually impacting his entire country. The reader follows the life of a young boy named Kojo from boyhood until he is a grandfather, and Milway does a wonderful job describing his world.

Our hero is determined to improve his family’s life after the death of his father, and when the villagers work to make loans possible to families, Kojo take advantage of his opportunity. First he buys a hen, then sells her eggs, which enables
him to add to his flock. Because of his family's increased stability based on the income he earns, Kojo is able to return to school, eventually earning a scholarship to agricultural college. Not only does he become a prosperous farmer and employer of many, Kojo returns the favor of loaning to others many times over.

Readers will appreciate the inspiring story, as well as the practical information on how to invest in specific organizations which provide loans to people throughout the world, who desire to start their own businesses, yet are trapped by poverty. Another reference is a glossary with African words, and other terms that may be unfamiliar to readers.

Fernandes' illustrations are full-page paintings and collages. The reader will enjoy seeing various elements of the marketplace, Kojo's family, and his village highlighted in multiple folk-art type images. The painted pages complement the story well, and with summarizing phrases coordinating each page of artwork, the tale builds until the triumphant conclusion,

"And it all started with one small loan to buy one brown hen."

Jennifer Vines


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
HBB : 0375840907, 9780375840906, $15.99.
LIB : 0375940901, 9780375940903, $18.99.
Intermediate, Middle School
Rating: 4

The Penderwicks on Gardam Street is the second novel about the Penderwick family. Mr. Penderwick and his four daughters are settling into a new school year, and everything seems normal—until Aunt Claire comes for a visit. Typically the family treasures Aunt Claire's visits. After she parcels out gifts for the girls, Claire hands her brother a letter from his wife who died of cancer four years earlier. In the letter, Elizabeth Penderwick begs her husband to date again. The thought of Mr. Penderwick remarrying frightens the girls and they devise a "Save-Daddy Plan." In the midst of the turmoil that Mr. Penderwick's dating creates, the girls get into fixes of their own. Jane, 11, and Skye, 10, switch school projects to suit their strengths. Rosalind, 12, has boy problems. Batty, age four, has seen a scary looking man she dubs "the Bug-Man." The next door neighbor, a widow named lantha, befriends the girls and helps them along the way. In the end, the Penderwick girls realize that their deceptions have sullied the family honor, and strive to fix their misdeeds.

Jeanne Birdsall crafts characters whose antics create a very fun story and who grow throughout the story. The plot skips along as fast as the girls get into their next brilliant idea or the next devastating heartbreak. The setting could be Anytown, USA, and though this is contemporary fiction, Gardam Street feels as safe as Andy Griffith's Mayberry. Birdsall adds life to the story through her simple yet rich descriptions of the area. Mr. Penderwick likes to use Latin phrases and words, and Jane Penderwick, writer, enjoys using words of any length. A budding romance, middle-school style, is present in the story. Also, Jane feels she may have an enchanted rock and writes a play including Aztec sacrifices (no gory description - just her plot). Reincarnation, new age crystals, and the Big Bang are each mentioned in the story, but there is no further discussion of them. On the night of family confessions following the play fiasco, Jane sums up the problem they’d been having. "You made one false step, then found yourself mired in deception." (p. 261) The importance of honesty, forgiveness, and moving on is a thread that ties the story together.

"Let's figure out how to unsully the family's honor. Any ideas?"

Kristi Wolcott

Shooting the moon / Frances O'Roark Dowell. New York :
**Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2008.**

Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!

**HBB**: 1416926909, 9781416926900, $16.99.

**PAP**: 1416979867, 9781416979869, $5.99.

Intermediate, Middle School

Rating: 4

Jamie Dexter is expecting letters from her big brother. TJ joined the Army and has been sent to Vietnam (no surprise in this time of war) and Jamie wants to know all. Having grown up in an Army family with “the Colonel” for a dad, Jamie and her brother were raised on playing war and she wants to share in all the excitement: the sound of helicopters, the smell of gunpowder, the exhilaration of being in the thick of things. But what her brother sends her is a surprise—a roll of undeveloped film, the first of many such packages. Jamie learns to develop the film herself and initially is very disappointed in what she considers boring pictures. Gradually she sees a whole new side of war, one she and TJ never imagined. The glow fades off Army life and Jamie realizes she is helpless to bring her brother home safe—and so is the Colonel!

*Shooting the Moon* makes the reader aware of different sides of war, not necessarily condemning or condoning but opening eyes. This is also the story of a young girl with a very commanding, controlling father who she suddenly realizes, in the face of war, is not infallible. Although written about the Vietnam War, *Shooting the Moon* touches on many of the same issues about war that young people are considering today in the face of Iraq.

*Ceil Carey*
Intermediate students are ripe and ready to get their hands dirty. They are willing to spend hours entranced by an investigation that enables them to dash up to the nearest adult to say, “Guess what?” or “Did you know...?” Excited by their ability to share new information, these young scientists eagerly drag their parents to their local library or bookstore to gather more information on the same topic or an offshoot. Feeding these hungry minds and providing opportunity to share their investigation produces a sense of accomplishment in the very minds that will discover tomorrow’s medical discovery, invent new technology, engineer a car that doesn’t pollute, and much more. If bookshelves are filled with scientific resources, intermediate investigators will read them.

Eight books are reviewed for intermediate age children here: How Science Works, provides enough science investigation and information to last a year, Janice VanCleave’s 201 Awesome, Magical, Bizarre, & Incredible Experiments and Janice VanCleave’s 202 Oozing, Bubbling, Dripping, and Bouncing Experiments explore basic scientific concepts, Science Around the World transports young detectives around the world with science in other countries, The Ben Franklin Book of Easy and Incredible Experiments teleports readers back in time to participate in the same experiments Franklin conducted, Super Science Concoctions : 50 Mysterious Mixtures for Fabulous Fun serves up science in the kitchen, Janice VanCleave’s Guide to the Best Science Fair Projects and Guide to More of the Best Science Fair Projects will take the guess work out of science fairs


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
HBB : 0895773821; OP; buy used.
Intermediate
Rating: 5

How Science Works, by Judith Hann, powerfully packs a wealth of elementary science information linked with practical, easy experiments. Readers are invited to explore a myriad of topics ranging from matter, energy, light, air, electricity, and computers to force, motion, sound, water, and magnetism. Each topic is explained as though from the heart of a loving, knowledgeable grandparent. Exceptional photography illustrates an appropriate age student performing each step of their experiment while capturing the child’s curiosity, pleasure, or effort. A glossary with illustrations and index is included.

This up-to-date scientific and historical information will supplement any elementary teacher’s curriculum, serve as a foundation for homeschoolers, and broaden the understanding of the student reader. Each chapter opens with a paragraph designed to engage the reader to search further in the chapter for additional details and experiments. Each full-colored photo has a caption and serves to clarify the corresponding text. Experiments are easy to follow with materials that are easy to obtain. Sidebars with additional information can be found throughout the book.

Hann successfully satisfies the reader in the same way Mr. Rogers satisfied his young viewers when he took them to a factory, grocery store, or other location during his program. In both cases the participant comes away with a fulfilled, yet stirred curiosity.

Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
PAP: 0471310115, 9780471310112, $12.95.


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
PAP: 0471140252, 9780471140252, $12.95

Intermediate Primary
Rating: 3

Janice VanCleave's 201 Awesome, Magical, Bizarre, & Incredible Experiments by Janice VanCleave and Janice VanCleave's 202 Oozing, Bubbling, Dripping, and Bouncing Experiments by Janice VanCleave are resources for scientific experiments in the areas of biology, chemistry, earth science, astronomy, and physics. These resources for classrooms, libraries, and homes continue to stand the test of time. Each experiment is powerfully packed into a half page and contains a purpose, materials list, procedures, expected results, and a paragraph explaining the scientific reasons for the results. A glossary and index are included.

Simplistic black and white drawings clarify one step in each experiment. An update of this book might include a reorganization of experiments into similar sub-groupings to provide ease in locating specific experiments. Also, an introduction to each category to briefly explain biology, chemistry, physics, earth science, and astronomy for the young readers could help them choose an experiment wisely.

VanCleave's science experiments will enhance any library with a myriad of exciting experiments for children to prove, test, and discover scientific ideas.

Science around the world : travel through time and space with fun experiments and projects / Shar Levine and Leslie Johnstone ; illustrations by Laurel Aiello. New York : Wiley, 1996.

Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
PAP: 0471119164, 9780471119166, $12.95

Intermediate
Rating: 3

Science Around the World, by Shar Levine and Leslie Johnstone, opens our world to curious young minds. Upper elementary students can explore snippets of science's historical great moments from countries like Russia, China, Australia, Mexico, and the United States in ten short chapters. Related experiments from such scientific fields as physics, chemistry, biology, and geology are then presented to encourage hands-on encounters with each country without leaving home. Most experiments require adult supervision, which adds to discussion and discovery. Each section closes with a tidbit about a famous scientist from that country. A glossary and index compliments the easy format.

Levine and Johnstone explain scientific procedures clearly; however, illustrations to confirm the reader's thinking often fall on the next page. Although warnings are provided throughout the book, one experiment that produces dangerous fumes does not indicate "adult helper" on the "What you will need" list. Another instructs students to tape a wick to a bowl then add vegetable oil. Tape may not stick in this setting.

While the concise text in each chapter stirs the reader's curiosity it also bounces them from one historical fact to another, leaving them unsatisfied. Interested readers are briefly encouraged to seek additional sources in their local library. Specific books are not recommended to channel their search. This book would have served its purpose greater had more time been devoted to satisfying a natural inquisitiveness about the historical facts briefly mentioned.


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
PAP: 0471076384, 9780471076384, $12.95.

Intermediate
Rating 5

The Ben Franklin Book of Easy and Incredible Experiments, edited by Lisa Jo Rudy, invites the reader to engage in the very experiments that piqued this great inventor's curiosity. Rudy focuses chapters on Franklin's widely known interest in observation, weather, electricity, music, printing, light, and sight. A brief history leads the reader to
discover questions, thoughts, and struggles that premised Franklin’s choice to conduct the four to eleven experiments included in each chapter. Friendly text guides the user through each experiment’s purpose, materials not always found in a home, procedures, and a discussion to link the reader’s findings with Franklins. Realizing a student may be ripe for further study, Rudy provides a “What’s Next” section at the end of each chapter filled with additional sources.

Children interested in history or science will be eager to perform these experiments that range from easy for the lower elementary student to easy for the middle school student. Exciting and easy to read text makes this a good choice for students to check out from a library, or parents to purchase as a gift for their child. Although words like magic appear in the text, scientific exploration is the focus, not lessons in magic. Teachers could use the progressive experiments from any chapter to supplement science or history units. Cheryl Kirk Noll’s handy, well-drawn illustrations clarify any misunderstandings in the procedures. Appropriate safeguards are mentioned regularly and a comprehensive glossary and index are provided.

Two issues to note: page 34, step seven in making an anemometer, can be misunderstood by a child, causing an eye injury. Page 77’s procedures for a panpipe instruct the reader to make the instrument upside down from today’s methods. Perhaps a discussion with the student can lead to research of panpipes from Franklin’s day. This text will provide hours of enticing scientific exploration.


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!

PAP: 0471326275, 9780471326274, $14.95.

Intermediate
Rating: 5


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
PAP: 0471148024, 9780471148029, $14.95.


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
PAP: 0471326275, 9780471326274, $14.95.

Intermediate
Rating: 5

Janice VanCleave’s Guide to the Best Science Fair Projects by Janice VanCleave and her Guide to More of the Best Science Fair Projects are outstanding resources for intermediate students seeking to enter a science fair. Projects range in ideas for new scientists to advanced investigators in this age range. Step by step instructions guide students from choosing an initial topic, research, formulating a problem, hypothesis, and conducting a suitable experiment to preparing a report, display, and presentation for judges. Helpful do’s and don'ts
share mistakes others have made.

These books contain a thorough presentation of information that other sources simply skim over. Introductory pages could easily benefit older students as well. Each book contains fifty science fair project ideas that begin with a simple experiment demonstrating an avenue to test a given question. In-depth variables follow with suggestions for additional changes. Background information and definition of terms propel the curious scientist into the proper direction for deeper learning. Methods to demonstrate investigations, including those that use items prohibited for a science fair display (i.e. live animals, batteries with open-top-cells, aerosol cans, water, live plants, and etc.), complete each idea. Appendix A is a resource for other science project and experiment books, appendix B provides suggested references for the scientific categories covered in these books, and appendix C provides sources of scientific supply stores including addresses, phone numbers, web sites, and email addresses. A glossary and index concludes this invaluable reference tool.

If a library could choose only one of these titles reviewed above we recommend *How Science Works* because of its thorough presentation, professional photos with kids demonstrating experiments, and background information provided for each topic. If a library could purchase two titles from these reviewed we recommend adding *Janice VanCleave's Guide to the Best Science Fair Projects* by Janice VanCleave and her *Guide to More of the Best Science Fair Projects* for its concise yet systematic information that leads a young scientist from start to finish in a science fair project. If after purchasing the above titles a library was interested in purchasing additional titles, we highly recommend *The Ben Franklin Book of Easy and Incredible Experiments* for the innovative application of experiments from a historically accomplished scientist.
FICTION

Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
HBB : 0061470767, 9780061470769, $15.99.
LIB : 0061470783, 9780061470783, $16.89.
Middle School
Rating 4

With his contemporary fiction Bird Lake Moon, Kevin Henkes dives into the pain of divorce from a child’s perspective. Twelve-year-old Mitch’s father leaves his mother. Now Mom takes Mitch to live with his grandparents on rural Bird Lake. Fortunately, it is summer. Even so, the house is too small, and his grandparents are cranky; so Mitch fantasizes about living in the vacant house next door.

Meanwhile, ten-year-old Spencer and his family plan to return to the vacant house. Eight years previously, Spencer’s older brother Matty drowned at Bird Lake. Now the family returns for the first time to see if they can transcend the memories of the tragedy—and to decide if they will keep or sell the property.

Indignant at the appearance of the intruders, Mitch decides to scare the family away by haunting the property. When Spencer’s family leaves for the day, Mitch sneaks over and plants signs of his presence. To Spencer, Mitch’s pranks seem a message from Matty. Mitch meets Spencer and they become fast friends. But both boys have secrets.

Children will empathize with Mitch Sinclair’s feelings of sorrow, anger, and guilt associated with the tragedy of divorce. The author develops the characters thoroughly and includes a strong writing style, age appropriate to the audience. On one occasion, a mother acknowledges she believes in “signs” in reference to her dead son. However, the plot erases any overt spiritualism. Although the protagonist engages in lying, he is eventually found out, or driven by guilt to come clean. The result is reconciliation and moral growth. Bird Lake Moon will inspire children to persevere through the initial trauma of divorce with hope for the future.

Glenn Haggerty

Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
HBB : 0439852072, 9780439852074, $17.99.
Middle School
Rating 4

Get your pentominos ready, start thinking like a math expert or an art lover, and join the Calder Game! Calder, Petra, and Tommy are friends and students in the 7th grade class when Calder has the opportunity to travel to England with his father. Imagine his surprise when an Alexander Calder sculpture sits in the middle of the town square! But instead of raves by the residents, most of them are very unhappy by the intrusion of the Minotaur, a modern art monstrosity to many. But it all takes on a more sinister feel when Calder disappears. Petra and Tommy are called in from the States and the search begins! Why has Calder disappeared (could it have anything to do with his name?), will they find him, and will they find him in time?

Readers may be surprised at the total freedom Calder is allowed in a foreign country but the real beauty is in the author’s message about observation and imagination. The kids in her story may be put in danger but as always, Balliett offers readers new ways to think and focus on what we see and what we must conjecture. Calder, Petra and Tommy also appeared in Chasing Vermeer by the same author, but the reader need not have read their first adventure to totally understand and enjoy the second.

Ceil Carey

Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
Middle School  
Rating: 4  
Sabine is a child of dandelions; a weed which must be uprooted to improve the land, yet resilient enough to survive. Shenaaz Nanji tells the story of this teenage Indian girl living in Uganda, shortly after Idi Amin comes into power. *Child of Dandelions* begins in 1972 as the government announces all foreign-born Indians have 90 days to leave the country. Organized as a countdown to the deadline, the story begins with Sabine's relationship with her best friend, Zena, an African whose family has strong military ties. Their friendship becomes strained, and then broken by economic differences and misconceptions. It is difficult to determine right and wrong; each side of the conflict has valid points of view regarding the role of wealthy Indians in Uganda. After her parents escape to Nairobi, Sabine and her brother are left under the care of their grandfather. The story reaches a climax when Sabine confronts corrupt officials, suffers sexual harassment, and narrowly escapes with her family intact. Concluding with an author’s note, additional background about Indian and British immigration, class systems, and the violence of Amin’s regime cements it within a historical context.

Readers will immediately connect Sabine’s experience with the holocaust. As little is written for children about this time period, and history curriculum rarely reaches the 1970’s, this book represents a milestone in young adult literature. Character development, suspense, and vivid details are beautifully interwoven within a teen’s point of view. Although some names and foreign vocabulary are difficult, explanations and context clues facilitate understanding. The politics, business dealings, and social structure is challenging as few students have the background to understand political/social complexities. Nonetheless, readers will identify with Sabine as a person and grow in their understanding of new cultures and the violence so many in this world have had to suffer.

*Child of Dandelions* is a strong, beautiful novel of young girlhood in a time of political upheaval.

Kristine Wildner

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High School (Middle School)  
Rating: 4  
*Climbing the Stairs* by Padma Venkatraman depicts life in British-occupied India during World War II for a fifteen year-old girl. When Vidya and her father are caught in a demonstration that turns violent, she witnesses the beating that causes him brain damage. Her world is shaken when her father can no longer support the family and they move into her grandfather’s household which is seeped in old-fashioned tradition. Unaccustomed to the cultural expectations set upon girls at the time, Vidya fears she will be married off before she can obtain the college education her father promised her before the incident. In order to escape the restrictions and demands of her domineering Aunt, Vidya stumbles upon the forbidden second floor library where she finds solace in books.

The young protagonist encounters trials caused by heartbreak and war but gains self-confidence when she learns to speak her mind while paying proper respect and grows in character.

Venkatraman portrays Indian culture with imagery displaying festivals with all their vibrancy of colors and smells. He paints a strong sense of loyalty to family traditions with many references to the worship of the various Hindu gods. He describes the caste system of hereditary classes where a cook is not allowed in the kitchen when others consider him impure. Vidya’s father is referred to as an idiot because of his disability.

The growing struggles of a nation are paralleled with that of a young woman’s want of independence. *Climbing the Stairs* is an endearing novel of realization with a humbling look into the dynamics of a close-knit family struggling for
YOUNG ADULT BOOKS

freedom. This is an enjoyable read with a delightful and rare insight into another culture not often seen in teen novels.

Elfie Rosario


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!

HBB : 0375837507, 9780375837500, $16.99.


High School Rating: 4

Depicting the harsh realities of westward expansion, The Devil's Paintbox chronicles the account of 15-year-old Aiden and his younger sister, Maddy. After the deaths of their parents and siblings, the teens are near starvation on their drought-ridden Kansas farm. A business man, Jefferson J. Jackson, discovers the children as he seeks workers to join his wagon train heading west to Oregon. Becoming essentially indentured servants, they join Jackson and begin the perilous trip. When Aiden befriends a Nez Perce Indian while leading a river crossing, he learns to respect the natives and broadens his framework of human compassion. After losing his sister in a tragic accident, Aiden falls into a personal depression. His disposition does not improve upon reaching Washington. As an indentured laborer, Aiden works in a logging camp. With small pox (the devil's paint) threatening everyone, Aiden defies authority and determines to save others despite certain personal risk.

McKernan's depiction of life in the West is carefully researched, beautifully written, and candid. Corrupt adult circumstances including prostitution and alcohol and drug abuse are a part of Aiden's life with language reflective of his situation. Faith is briefly addressed, but is not an integral part of the storyline. The characters and their relationships are complex and painfully genuine as Aiden shows compassion for everyone, despite his feelings of desperation. Intense emotions accompany every gripping event, as anger, sadness, and a strong sense of justice impact his friendships and shape his heroic actions. There is no easy ending; this is a story of survival and adventure grounded in human perseverance despite unthinkable obstacles. Concluding with an author's note focusing on small pox and resources for further reading, the book is a very satisfying read suitable for mature readers ready to tackle a long, challenging narrative of westward expansion.

Kristine Wildner


HBB : 0786838183, 9780786838189, $16.99.

PAP : 0786838191, 9780786838196, $8.99.

High School, Middle School Rating: 5, not recommended

In The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks: A Novel by E. Lockhart, fifteen-year-old Frankie returns for her sophomore year where life with her new boyfriend upgrades her popularity at Alabaster Preparatory Academy, a prestigious boarding school. The notion of a secret society intrigues Frankie and she investigates the pranks and history of the Loyal Order of the Basset Hounds.

Soon Frankie struggles with the perceived “old boy” tradition of unspoken rules and expectations because she feels overlooked for being a girl. Despite her wit and intelligence, she feels left out of the brotherhood and camaraderie shared by the all-boys club. Unknowingly, Frankie exerts herself by commandeering power in the unlikeliest role and turns into an obsession. In her pursuit of wanting to belong to the club, however, she hurts other friends in the process.

The author has created a remarkable young protagonist who transforms and finds forgiveness. Readers may admire a strong character in Frankie because she overcomes challenges and insecurity by learning from her mistakes. The teen
protagonist is a gutsy, outspoken feminist who transforms from an awkward, debate geek into an assertive and confident young woman.

The novel contains slang bordering on profanity, dating behavior without adult supervision, reference to body parts, deception, and manipulation. Characters in romantic relationships break curfew and sneak into unsupervised areas. Premarital sex is suspected among characters. Males dress up as females and borrow women’s garments for a Halloween party. Women’s lingerie is strewn all over campus in a separate caper.

Because of the reckless behavior and scenarios depicted, this novel may not be suitable for Christian teens although it is well crafted and cleverly written. The YA novel was awarded the 2009 Printz Honor book and was also a National Book Award Finalist.

Elfie Rosario


An eighteen-month-old toddles from the scene of a triple murder into a nearby graveyard. Thus opens the first chapter of The Graveyard Book. The ghosts of Mr. and Mrs. Owens take pity on the child and vow to protect him from the killer that has followed to finish off his escaped victim. Silas, who passes between the real and spirit worlds, agrees to be the guardian. He provides food and protection to the newly named Nobody Owens. “It takes a graveyard to raise a child,” becomes the motto of the inhabitants and Bod begins a new life.

Throughout the book, Bod pushes boundaries and must cope with the consequences. He learns Slipping, Fading, and Dreamwalking along with more traditional instruction. Bod’s insatiable search for knowledge prepares him to out-maneuver villains in a final dramatic battle for his life where the reason he’s marked for death by a secret society is revealed.

Neil Gaiman draws us into a fascinating sphere where fantasy and reality co-exist. Black and white illustrations by David McLean merge the spectral and real worlds to imply menace without being frightening. Gaiman’s writing shows restraint in the portrayal of the murders and the unremitting threat to his main character. He celebrates friendship and loyalty through such diverse characters as a girl named Scarlett, Bod’s teacher, Mrs. Lupescu, and a long-dead witch. His imagination catapults us, along with Bod, through the Ghoul-Gate with Goblins and Night-Gaunts, into the Celtic barrow lair of the Sleer and through other narrow escapes and last minute rescues. The plot threads are resolved with tidiness which could be considered somewhat contrived, but the door is left open for future adventures should Mr. Gaiman choose.

Deborah Rabern


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PAP: 160062016, 978160062018, $12.99.


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!

PAP: 160062210, 978160062216, $12.99.
The Hollywood Nobody series by Lisa Samson revolves around Scotty Dawn. She and her mother, Charley, live in a mobile home and travel to various film locations. She knows Charley is keeping secrets from her about why the two of them are on the run.

In *Hollywood Nobody*, Scotty enjoys writing her blog about the waywardness of people in the movie industry. A close friendship develops between Scotty and Seth, a young man who believes in God. Seth becomes involved with a woman who has a problem with drugs and alcohol. Scotty begins learning about Christianity on her own because Charley does not believe in God. After barely escaping from a biker-looking guy, she finds out her actual name is Ariana, and Charley is her grandmother.

In *Finding Hollywood Nobody*, Scotty continues gossiping about the Hollywood scene on her blog but questions the rightness of it. Seth is now having sex with his girlfriend. Scotty befriends a young girl whose baby is born with a heart defect and needs surgery. This encounter leads to a change in her relationship with God. She finds out the biker-looking guy is her father who changed his appearance and identity after the mob tried to kill him.

In *Romancing Hollywood Nobody*, Scotty is appalled when Seth is arrested for underage drinking. She prays for him, but realizes he will have to find his own way back to God. She has never dated or kissed a boy until she meets Angus. He thinks God has deserted him because his parents are divorcing, and his father is an alcoholic. Scotty believes God loves him and would never turn away from him.

The books should be read in sequence and are written from Scotty’s point-of-view in a journal format. The blog, diary entries, and text messages are incorporated as part of the journal. The pace moves along quickly in books one and three but tends to bog down in book two. Words and phrases have been italicized for emphasis.

Lisa Samson has provided a valuable resource for teenage girls who are frustrated with their lives and want to learn more about Christianity. In book one there are two usages of typical adolescent street language and one usage of mild profanity. The books are not preachy and are written in an appealing style for teens. They divulge God’s unconditional love for everyone.

Dianne Woodman


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explicit sex scenes.

Ellie Soderstrom


HBB : 0670062529, 9780670062522, $16.99.
PAP : 142413380, 9780142413388, $6.99.

Middle School
Rating: 3

Best friends Kari Sundgren and Lucas Stickney become accidental sleuths when they try to discover the identity of Gallery Guy, the disguised artist copying Rembrandt’s paintings. Talented artists themselves, the fourteen-year-olds travel to museums and art galleries in London, Paris, and Amsterdam in their quest to solve an international mystery.

Kari narrates The Mystery of the Third Lucretia in a fast-paced, conversational style that slips in fascinating information about art and cultural history amidst the suspense. Relying on Kari’s intuition, Lucas’s photographic memory, their knowledge of Rembrandt, and an assortment of disguises, the girls gather the clues they need to solve the puzzle. Unfortunately, they also rely on deception—after lying to Kari’s mom, the girls learn a difficult lesson about unforeseen consequences.

Now that Kari’s mom knows about Gallery Guy, she helps gather more clues. But the “Gl Can’t see Threesome” soon learn that the mystery isn’t just about art—it’s also about murder. And Kari and Lucas are the Gallery Guy’s next targets.

The Crime Writers’ Association of Great Britain named the novel as a runner-up for the Debut Dagger Award. Author Susan Runholt has written an exciting page-turner with strong female characters who rely on their combined strengths to solve the mystery. Kari sees God as letting her down at a crucial point, but doesn’t give him any credit when things go right. Runholt presents the seamier side of Amsterdam as a dangerous place without going into explicit detail.

Johnnie Alexander Donley


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
HBB : 0060733748, 9780060733742, $15.99.
LIB : 0060733756, 9780060733759, $16.89.
High School
Rating: 4, with caution

History lives in The Red-Headed Princess. Elizabeth Tudor, daughter of King Henry VIII, realizes by the age of three that life is tenuous. After the beheading of her mother, she is shuttled about at the whim of an inattentive father and his Privy Council. Two faithful caretakers and her tutors form the only stable family group she is to know.

Elizabeth receives intensive classical training in Greek, Latin, math, horsemanship, and court protocol. Her life, as well as provision for her physical needs, depends on pleasing whoever wields political power. Wise beyond her years, she becomes adept at sidestepping the traps laid by those who desire to use her as a pawn. A near seduction by the much older and married Sir Thomas Wyatt teaches her the dangers of surrendering to passion. His betrayal of her when his wife confronts them alerts Elizabeth to his ambitious eye for the throne. She resolves never to be controlled by any man.

Ann Rinaldi stays within the bounds of propriety while revealing the excesses of life in the sixteenth century. However, nothing is held back in the description of intimate moments between the would-be lovers. Elizabeth revels in Sir Thomas’ daring advances. She desires the illicit relationship and shows little concern for his wife who has befriended her.

Catholic persecution of Protestants sweeps the countryside when Queen Mary (Elizabeth’s half-sister) ascends to the throne. Coercion from the Queen along with political expediency forces Elizabeth to an outward conversion to Catholicism. Her instinct to survive and reign drives
her more than principle.

Princess Elizabeth's turbulent life has few spans of tranquility. She is in and out of royal favor, banished, accused, imprisoned, and finally crowned Queen of the realm. This compelling story quickens interest in one of the most fascinating monarchs of all time.

Deborah Rabern


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!

HBB: 0618979743, 9780618979745, $16.00.

Middle School, Intermediate Rating: 4

Award-winning author Lois Lowry spins an old-fashioned parody reminiscent of terrible situations that befall characters from Grimm fairy tales. The four Willoughby children live with their wicked parents and feel they would be better off as orphans. They seek a way to get rid of their parents, not knowing that their parents are formulating their own diabolical plan inspired by the story Hansel and Gretel: abandon the children. The eldest son is a bit ruthless, but Nanny tries to teach all the children some values. She does admit, however, that their parents are truly dolts and that she, herself, is a Presbyterian.

This book is harmless satirical fun, mocking fairy tales and classic stories in just about every way. All turns out well in the end for everyone but the evil parents.

Jill Williamson

NONFICTION

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Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!

PAP: 1550376861, 9781550376869, $14.95.

LIB: 0613511773, 9780613511773, $26.95.

Middle School Rate: *5

The title is creepy, the cover is colorful, and the content is fabulous! *Nibbling on Einstein's Brain* is a fantastic book that enables teachers to challenge their students not to take everything at face value. In a world filled with an abundance of information from countless media sources, how is a person to determine what is true and what is bogus? How is one to decipher biased opinions and faulty statistics from professional research and careful mathematical calculations? Diane Swanson has created an easy-to-understand guide to help students navigate the informational highway and arrive at factual and solid scientific conclusions.

*Nibbling on Einstein's Brain* begins by explaining proper scientific method and why it is has been proven over time to be a valid method of research. Then the author introduces the idea that some scientists present fraudulent and misleading research that can sometimes be difficult to distinguish from reputable research. The book then encourages students to challenge the research behind scientific claims using a series of more than twenty questions they call “Baloney Busters.” Next, students
are encouraged to consider and question the media sources reporting the research and whether or not they are presenting it fairly. Finally, the author explores a series of questions that causes the student to think more deeply about the way they approach scientific research they encounter, the factors influencing their point of view and their willingness to continue to learn and develop their own ideas.

If this weren't fantastic enough, Diane Swanson then takes her thoughts and puts feet to them by encouraging students to be committed to sorting out good and bad science by deepening their own scientific knowledge and speaking out to ensure that accurate research is done in areas that are relevant to the student. The book concludes with an extensive list of magazines, books, and internet sites for students to study and explore to assist them as they develop their own scientific minds.

This is a valuable tool for all students to use to sift through the vast amount of information that inundates the world today. The author doesn't encourage skepticism, but solid, commonsense questions with which to approach scientific data in order to determine its validity. I would highly recommend this book to parents, teachers, and students!

Kim Ford

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Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
HBB: 0802853021, 9780802853028, $17.00.
PAP: 0471119164, 9780471119166, $12.95.

Middle School, Intermediate Rating: 5

William Carlos Williams was a man whose heart was stirred by the common sights and sounds that he encountered throughout the day. His love for words was evident from childhood, and he was especially drawn to poetry. His heart and imagination began to pour forth in his own poetic creations early in life, and by the time he completed his study of medicine he was also a published poet. Williams filled his duel role of physician and poet for more than forty years, and he continued to write poetry long after he retired from his medical practice. Although awarded the Pulitzer Prize posthumously, he lived to see the publication of forty-eight volumes of his poetry.

Jen Bryant has captured the essence of William Carlos Williams' life in the book A River of Words. This delightful picture book brings Williams' life into vivid focus, and makes his love of poetry a natural extension of his very full life. It is obvious, even in this abbreviated format, that Williams cared a great deal for all those around him, and the free-style verse of his poetry reflected that love fully and creatively.

Melissa Sweet's illustrations cleverly combine some of Williams' poetry with the everyday images that inspired his words. The pictures also reflect the combination of his busy medical career and family and the way Williams would snatch opportunities to capture his poems even amid a busy work day. Combined with Bryant's succinct and thoughtful words, this book represents the very things that made Williams' work unique and meaningful: freedom of verse and the admiration of everyday beauty.

A River of Words also includes a time line of Williams' life as well as significant historical events that might have influenced his work or his life. This is a significant book for children because it shows how the love of the written word can enrich life no matter whether you are a doctor or a student. It is not surprising at all that this book is a Caldecott Honor choice. It is an excellent teaching tool encased in the wonder of interesting pictures and intriguing thoughts.

Kim Ford

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“Who were these people? How had they lived?” Sally Walker addresses these critical questions about the first European settlers in the Chesapeake Bay area in the 1600’s. Written in Bone begins with a mystery; a carefully excavated grave discovered in August, 2005. With nothing except bones to identify the remains, the scientists examine the teeth and the ends of the leg and arm bones, and can determine the age, sex, and ethnicity of the person. Further analysis yields information about how long the person lived in America, physical labor, burial process, cause of death, and health issues. Each chapter moves to another archaeological site, with more mysteries to uncover. Examining the unmarked graves and the soils surrounding them, archaeologists discover long-forgotten buildings and artifacts. Tying forensic science to history, our knowledge of these first settlers deepens as scientists unlock personal stories and link them with the written record.

From rich man to slave, from sealed coffin to a hasty basement burial, each chapter tells a story of discovery, careful scientific study, and historical significance. Well-organized, clear, concise text does not lecture the reader, but engages the reader in the process of discovery and analysis. The layout is visually enticing, mixing text with historic and current photographs, maps, diagrams, and timelines. The book respectfully explains the process of forensic archaeology and puts it in historical context. Careful attention is always paid to reverence to the bodies and the scientific process, noting every detail can be of critical importance. A bibliography, list for further reading and websites, and index complete the book as a valuable educational tool.

Kristine Wildner
Chasing Fireflies, Charles Martin’s fifth book, circles around a myriad of plots. However, it’s his distinctive characters that enable this novel of gentle, enduring love to survive and win while struggling among evil, immoral people. Every chapter is filled with intrigue, tension, twists and complications, down-home humor, and compassion. His well timed phrasing and unforgettable characters will accelerate Martin to the forefront of selling authors. At times, however, the reader catches Martin putting too many words in Uncle Willie’s mouth.

Teens and adults will enjoy this endearing story about fishing, baseball, and unconditional love between fathers and sons. And the magic that comes from chasing fireflies on a warm summer night.

Maxine Cambra


City of Thieves by David Benioff is the fictionalized story of the author’s grandfather’s experiences in World War II Leningrad. Lev Beniov has remained in the city during the siege by the Germans, despite the evacuation of his mother and sister. Living in an apartment building with other teens, they've become a family of sorts, but when he is caught looting the body of a German paratrooper, Russian soldiers take him to prison to be executed. His cellmate for the evening is Kolya, a soldier accused of deserting his post. In the morning, instead of facing a firing squad, Lev and Kolya are ordered by a general to find a dozen eggs in five days time for his daughter’s wedding cake. In a city that has resorted to eating the paste out of library books for the protein, this is a Herculean task, but if they don't succeed, the men will be hunted down by the general’s men and lose their ration cards, either outcome meaning certain death. The two travel the city in the quest for eggs and come across horrific scenes of depravity along with startling compassion and generosity. Their quest for the eggs becomes something more, elevating and teaching Lev and Kolya about what it means to be
human and to fight for something bigger than themselves. Kolya is constantly talking about sex and as Lev is only 17, his mind goes there often as well. Both men swear often, and there are scenes of cannibalism and torture. The latter two however are shown for their wickedness and are not glamorized. I would not recommend this book for most teens, unless parents are prepared to discuss the recurring sexual themes. The book’s redeeming characteristic is its unflinching portrayal of the impact of war on the people who didn’t sign up to fight it yet live in its path.

Christy Lockstein


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!

PAP : 1602600600, 9781602600607, $10.97.

Adult
Rating: 4

Wanda E. Brunstetter’s A Cousin’s Promise is set in an Amish community in northern Indiana. It begins with a group of cousins and friends going on a weekend road trip that ends in tragedy. When they are involved in an accident, each person’s life is changed forever. Wayne and Loraine are a young engaged couple with their whole lives ahead of them. When the accident leaves Wayne disabled, he fears being a burden to Loraine and breaks off the engagement. Loraine loves Wayne and still wants to keep her promise to be his wife. When her ex-boyfriend Jake comes back into her life and Wayne continues to push her away, Loraine is unsure who will have her heart.

A Cousin’s Promise will be well liked by Wanda E. Brunstetter’s loyal readers as well as new readers. This book is a heart wrenching story about love and sacrifice. The reader will be pulled into the story from the beginning. The strong sense of community within this Amish settlement is evident and Ms. Brunstetter has written it beautifully. Despite the heartbreak the characters are dealing with, God’s love can be felt among these people who have suffered terrible losses. The reader will especially enjoy Wayne nursing an injured sheep back to health, although the story would have benefited from the injured sheep having a larger role because of the many lessons that could have been learned. Overall, this is book with likeable characters dealing with very real situations and emotions. Readers will certainly look forward to reading the Indiana Cousin’s series.

Carly Kendall


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!


Adult
Rating: 5

A Flickering Light is the first in a series Jane Kirkpatrick is writing, based on the life of her grandmother, a trailblazer for women in the early 1900s. Jessie Ann Gaebel was a photographer’s assistant and eventually owned her own studio. This story tells of Jessie’s young life from fifteen to eighteen as she apprentices to FJ Bauer. He teaches her many things in her field and paves the way for her future success in photography.

Jessie is a headstrong girl, independent and one who feels that she knows her own mind; thus she finds herself falling in love with her mentor. It is not until the ending of the book that Jessie and her boss reveal to each other their feelings and there is a physical aspect to their relationship but, as Jessie says, “nothing has passed between us that had to do with a marriage bed.”

Jessie eventually confesses and leaves her hometown to make a new start. As she arrives in Milwaukee, the destination of her new job, she is whisked away to a wonderful home to stay, a place where her hosts invite her to be a
permanent guest at no cost. Wondering how this could be, it seems they are cousins to Fred Bauer and he has sent a letter ahead, introducing Jessie. It is not yet decided at the culmination of the book whether she will take advantage of their hospitality. Staying seems to be a connection she knows she should sever yet the indecision leaves readers waiting for the next book in the series.

The book itself is long, 400 pages. The name of Jane Kirkpatrick is one known well to Christian readers and *A Flickering Light* will surely be popular.

*Ceil Carey*

**Less than dead / Tim Downs.** *(Bug man series ; 4)*

*Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 2008.*

*Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!*

- **HBB:** 1595543074, 9781595543073, $22.99.
- **PAP:** 1595545778, 9781595545770, $14.99.

**Adult Rating:** 5

*Less Than Dead*, the fourth book of the Bug Man Series, is a fast-paced thriller. The Bug Man is Nick Polchak, a forensic entomologist, who is assisting the FBI. Dead bodies have been discovered on an influential politician’s property in the town of Endor. Nick befriends a woman, Alena, whom the townspeople believe is a witch because she communicates with dogs and pinpoints corpses. Witchcraft and Endor tie in to three Bible verses from 1 Samuel quoted before the first chapter.

Tim Downs has authored a well-plotted book with unexpected complications and leaves the reader guessing until the end. The friendship between Nick and Alena, both social outcasts, is just as essential to the plot as discovering the killer. Nick is an offbeat individual with a sarcastic sense of humor, adding an interesting dimension to the mystery. Words and phrases are italicized for emphasis, and all the thoughts of the characters are italicized.

The book will appeal to readers who enjoy forensic mysteries. Readers curious about the specific insects attracted to decomposing bodies and details about dog training will find the novel informative. The main focus is on the solving of a crime, not the religious beliefs of the characters. Only one minor character believes in God, and there is one mild display of vulgarity.

*Dianne Woodman*

**A proper pursuit / Lynn Austin.** *Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2007.*

*Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!*

- **HBB:** 0764204408, 9780764204401, $19.99.
- **PAP:** 0764228919, 9780764228919, $13.99.

**Adult, High School Rating:** 4

Lynn Austin’s *A Proper Pursuit* is a coming-of-age story written with Chicago’s 1893 World’s Fair as its backdrop. In this historical romance, Violet Hayes tells the story of her first summer after graduating from “Madame Beauchamps’ School for Young Ladies.”

When Violet learns of a family secret, she devises a plan to go to Chicago to find her long lost mother under the ruse of spending time with her grandmother and seeing the World’s Fair. Her grandmother and each of her great aunts have plans of their own for Violet’s stay.

This is a story about a young woman struggling with issues that the women of that time face, like which man would make a better choice for a husband. Everyone seems to know what is best for Violet, except Violet.

Violet struggles with the things she is doing, worrying whether she is living up to what she was taught at “Madame Beauchamps” and trying not to disappoint anyone. It is a time in history when women
began to want equal rights, including the right to vote. Ideas that seem “unladylike” to Violet at the beginning of the story become things that she would like to investigate further, such as whether women should be allowed to vote or not or whether one should marry for love or money.

The author immediately draws the reader into the story with the announcement of the father’s engagement and the conversation that ensues. From that dining room scene until the end of the book one feels a part of the story. This is accomplished with the use of historical details, humor, and Violet’s search for the truth.

In the end Violet is a little wiser and has made her decision. In the process she has grown up, earlier conflicts are resolved, and her faith begins to grow. It is not a neat and tidy “happily-ever-after, but the reader is left with the best possible outcome.

Tralyn Kidder-Hughes

**Remembered / Tamera Alexander. (Fountain Creek chronicles ; 3) Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2007.**

*Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!*


Adult, High School
Rating: 3

In *Remembered*, by Tamera Alexander, Veronique Girard and Jack Brennan have both been devastated by deaths. Veronique is traveling to Willow Springs to fulfill her mother’s final request to find her long lost father who left Paris to find the family fortune as a miner in Colorado. Jack has given up a life as a wagon driver to become a freighter bringing supplies up the Rocky Mountains to the small isolated mining towns. He becomes her escort and help as she seeks her father in each town, but as they spend time together they come to discover feelings both thought gone.

Alexander writes a sweet, safe historical romance. Jack is a masculine gentleman of faith. Veronique is a talented and beautiful, if a bit spoiled and naïve, woman of faith. Their relationship grows naturally. There are a few messages of faith, including not wasting gifts from God, being content with what you have, and depending upon a heavenly, not earthly, father. This is an enjoyable read. The plot is fairly straightforward. References to previous books make it desirable to have read the previous volumes.

*Christy Lockstein*


*Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!*


Adult, High School
Rating: 5

An urban fantasy, *Shade* twists, turns and veritably races through the streets of modern day San Francisco.

“I can feel them. The homeless man and... some kind of monster. I know what this sounds like, but I'm not crazy! I'm a grad student—here at UCSF. Something attacked me in my lab. It was in my head. I saw myself through its eyes.”

How can graduate student Hailey Maniates be anything but terrified? The Mulo wants her dead. A homeless giant assigns himself her protector. And emergency room doctors question her sanity. Before she knows it she’s locked up in a psychiatric ward with a new identity—paranoid schizophrenic. But Hailey is sure she’s not having hallucinations, that she’s not crazy. Well, she’s pretty sure.

In this fast-paced, mind-bending thriller, Christy award-winning author John B. Olson explores the age old battle between good and evil. Is Hailey misdiagnosed with a debilitating mental illness at the hands of an agnostic physician? Or is she in the supernatural battle of a lifetime?
Olson employs a masterful use of language, characters that get under your skin, and a genuine exploration of faith. Not so much outright scary as deep down frightening, readers will be thinking about Hailey and Melchi long after they put the book down. Shade is full of faith, mystery, science, suspense, and a double-dollop of romance.

Recommended for adults and older teens who like romance or thrillers. You will not fear the terror of the night. —Psalm 91

Cheri Williams


Baseball is America’s pastime and one of the most recognizable trademarks of the country. In Stealing Home, Allison Pittman takes America’s game and shows readers the history of the sport, back when men played the game because they enjoyed it. This was a time before multi-million dollar contracts and the shadow of drug use. This was a time when “Take Me Out to Ball Game” was how people lived.

The book is set up like a baseball game. There are nine sections in the book, like nine innings in the game. The headings of each section correspond to different actions that take place during a game. It’s a creative yet subtle way to bring the book to life.

The characters in this story reach out to you and the reader immediately becomes attached to them. There is Duke, the baseball player who comes to a small town with a hidden secret. Ellie Jane is the town spinster who harbors a sad past. Ned is an injured man who has a secret love. Morris is a young African American boy who dreams about leaving town for bigger things. These four characters initially all keep to themselves until Duke comes to Picksville and initiates a chain of events that puts the ball into play. All these characters find their lives intertwined and are connected through events in the book.

Pittman weaves the game throughout the story with new stories, telegrams, and letters to begin each section. You can almost hear the crack of the bat and the cheers of the crowd as you read. She really brings to life the small town of Picksville and its inhabitants.

There is talk about alcohol addiction as well as racial violence, but both subjects are handled tastefully.

The story is engaging and is a delight to read. An umpire would say that Pittman has definitely hit a home run with this book.

Deborah Khuanghlawn

NONFICTION


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Deborah Khuanghlawn
Joyce Meyer does a thorough job of addressing the issues from different angles, using both personal experience and Scripture. She is honest and transparent in her descriptions of her own struggles in this area, enabling readers to relate to her.

Amy Simon


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!

HBB: 0849900085, 9780849900082, $22.99.

Adult

Rating: 4

Using a sports term, Max Lucado presents his thoughts about living an uncommon existence. In *Cure for the Common Life: Living in Your Sweet Spot*, Lucado shares his “big idea” and proposes that everyone can discover their sweet spot at the “convergence” of everyday life, personal strengths, and God’s glory.

The book is divided into three main sections: My Everyday Life, My Strengths, and God’s Glory. Each section is presented simply and succinctly. Lucado’s style is casual yet firm, and it’s appealing to a variety of readers. Additionally, the organization of the book makes it something that can be read quickly or a little bit at a time.

Lucado addresses reader’s roles as parents, community participants, and members of the church. He makes clear that God has specific roles and purposes that He expects fulfilled and that the most important role for anyone is that of being God’s child.

Some sections of the book include questions and activities for readers to use in identifying their strengths. All the information is presented in practical way that is easy to follow, understand, and apply to specific circumstances. It contains numerous scripture references from a variety of biblical translations which enhances the readability of the book. This is also helpful for readers with limited knowledge of Bible texts. It is difficult, if not impossible, to read the book passively.

The final section of the book is the *Sweet Spot Discovery Guide*. This workbook is provided by People Management International, Inc., and includes information for personal reflection as well as sections for group discussion and Bible study.

Readers from high school age and up could benefit from this reading this book. It is a straightforward, encouraging guide for anyone seeking to identify and fulfill their individual purposes while maintaining relationships with God and others.

Rachel Langston

Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
PAP: 0736905049, 9780736905046, $12.99.
Adult Rating: *5

Following God with All Your Heart is a practical guide to teach women to become extraordinary women for God. Elizabeth George, a pastor’s wife and Bible teacher, shares six verses that spoke to her heart and changed her life. The book is divided into six sections and teaches how to be successful, courageous, exceptional, humble, contented, and confident women for the Lord. She uses the lessons learned from people in the Bible such as Joshua, Mary, and the women at the cross as well as her own personal testimony. We are here on assignment from God. We cannot conform to the world but must be transformed completely so that unbelievers can see Christ in us. Daily we must be reading God’s Word intelligently. She gives plans on how to read the Bible several times in a year. We never need to fear because Christ lives in us. We are daughters of the King of Kings! Elizabeth George shares questions to ask ourselves to decide if something is in God’s will and will bring glory to Him. Also included is a checklist for humility.

She also elaborates on the scary subject of submission and explains how it is the basis for Christianity, the foundation of relationships.

Following God with All Your Heart is a necessary read for all women. It’s life-changing and helps direct our thinking in positive ways. Worry and fear are replaced with faith and courage. Each chapter begins with a quotation, one of the six Bible verses mentioned above, and steps to move forward in each character trait. The writing is very personal, practical, encouraging. A companion study guide is also available. Reading this book will teach you how to truly follow God with all your heart.

Tina Cho


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
HBB: 1591584914, 9781591584919, $45.
Adult Rating: 4

Motivated to contest the generally accepted perception that young adult literature is mostly depressing, Deanna J. McDaniel compiled Gentle Reads to show the world that current literature for children in grades 5-9 really can be affirmative. The characters in the stories represent positive traits—courage, morals, leadership, etc. Published in 2008, this book covers books written in the last 10 years that she considers “inspiring, heartwarming, or in some way lift the reader’s spirits.”

An annotated bibliography, the book is organized by genre—picture books, fiction, mysteries, science fiction, biography, etc. Full indices by author, title, subject, and series make the book easy to use, and an appendix cross-referencing Accelerated Reader, Reading Counts, and Junior Library Guild completes the book. Each book title is accompanied by all pertinent publishing information—author, copyright date, ISBN, and grade level. Next, McDaniel summarizes the book and provides the her criteria for considering a book to be “gentle.” The summaries are reader-friendly and could easily be used as quick book talks by teachers and librarians. Gentle Reads provides an excellent overview of a variety of books children will enjoy, but may overlook in a world where their peers are reading vampire love stories and other worlds full of magic.

Kristine Wildner
ADULT BOOKS


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
Adult, High School
Rating: *5

Filled with humor and compassionate but no-nonsense, tell-it-like-it-is verbiage, Get Out of that Pit by Beth Moore is for anyone who has felt like they were being drowned by life's situations or circumstances, either by their own maneuvering or as the result of someone else's actions.

The key verse for the book is Psalms 40:1-3.

I waited patiently for the LORD; He turned to me and heard my cry.

He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire;

He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.

He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God.

Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD.

Well-known Bible teacher Beth Moore expertly leads the reader through situational circumstances that result to an emotional downfall, or pit. Once a pit is identified, she leads you through the path to healing and restoration, using lighthearted humor and relatable illustrations. There is no condemnation from Moore for feeling trapped, only encouragement that no one need stay in a pit of their own making or one they find themselves in through no fault of their own.

Instead of fire and brimstone, Moore suggests that there is purpose to our pit. “There is no telling what kind of bludgeon the enemy wanted to use against you and against me, but in each of our lives God has only allowed what He knew after much thought and deliberation could be used for good, for the helping—even saving—of many lives.” She concludes that Satan’s destructive plan for our lives will ultimately end with him being cast into a pit of his own (Revelation 20:1-3).

The book finishes with a Discovery Guide complete with Discussion Questions that include reflection questions and personal applications. Moore also provides a template for how to get out of the pit, using God as salvation and Rescuer, and Scripture Prayers for those who need tangible words to repeat to God as they make their way out of the pit.

Bethany Jett


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
Adult
Rating: 5

Heaven is a place on earth. So goes the pop song. But Christians know better. Right?

Christians do not know better, argues Randy Alcorn in his lengthy book on the subject, titled simply Heaven. Christians, Alcorn says, have accepted many traditions and built up many stereotypes about heaven that have no basis in Scripture.

So Alcorn mines Scripture to produce a compendium of its teaching on nearly every imaginable question about heaven. Here is a sampling:

- Will we be ourselves in heaven?
- Will there be space and time?
- Will we actually rule with Christ?
- What is the New Jerusalem?
- Will animals inhabit the New Earth?
- Will Heaven ever be boring?
- Will there be art, entertainment, and sports?
- What will new earth society be like?

Alcorn stands squarely in the mainstream of historic evangelical theology—his footnotes are full of references to St. Augustine and Jonathan Edwards (as well as an exceedingly great number of references to C. S. Lewis). But something Alcorn calls
“christoplatonism” has so infected the church that he feels it necessary to make multiple apologia for his conclusions. The basic problem, he says, is that Christians have accepted the (Platonic) view that heaven is an immaterial place where Christians will live forever as disembodied spirits.

Alcorn shows convincingly from passage after passage that this is not the teaching of the Bible. When Christians “fall asleep,” they go to an intermediate place—probably a physical place, since Jesus’ physical resurrection body is there—but will spend eternity on the New Earth. Humans are physical-spiritual creatures, not spirits temporarily inhabiting bodies. And their eternal existence will be in physical bodies in a remade physical earth.

Alcorn’s lengthy work could perhaps have been cut shorter. Readers must remain aware that Alcorn purposefully includes some speculation in his work (as the questions above may suggest). But Heaven is a helpful, well-written work effectively targeting the layperson.

Mark L. Ward, Jr.


Tremper Longman’s commentary on Jeremiah and Lamentations, collected in one volume for the New International Biblical Commentary series, ably meets the series’ goal of "breaking down the barriers between the ancient and modern worlds so that the power and meaning of [the] biblical texts become transparent to contemporary readers."

Also like the rest of the series, Longman rejects liberal critical, precritical, and anticritical views in favor of what the series editors call "believing criticism" (xi-xii). This is certainly the most common approach in contemporary evangelical commentaries. This means that Longman will speak courteously and appreciably of the work of destructive liberal commentators, even though he frequently disagrees.

For example, Longman is careful to spend time discussing the composition of both the Bible books he covers. Liberals who see multiple layers of tradition get their space, but Longman concludes his section on the authorship of Jeremiah by pointing out simply that "it is virtually impossible to gain any certainty about the specifics” of any supposed history of composition. It is better to focus on "the message of the final form of the book" (5).

Longman’s work is aimed at the pastor or educated layman who needs little to no technical Hebrew discussion and only a brief summary of introductory material. The text is easy to read, with endnotes at the end of each section (he divides Jeremiah into 97 such sections, Lamentations into 5).

Mark L. Ward, Jr.


Hagee, as the founder and senior pastor of Cornerstone Church, Texas, a non-denominational charismatic church, and CEO at the non-profit Global Evangelism Television, is well-known for his national radio and television ministry. He indicates he wrote this book in 1995 though with ideas "revised and updated," and those who have read his Dawn Over Jerusalem (Nelson Publishers, 1998) will find many points repeated. Hagee, in his usual forthright style, articulates the nature of radical Islam and seeks to convince readers that the
Iranian escalating conflict is of great importance for the United States and Israel.

He interprets Scriptural passages to support the view that we are on a countdown to crisis and must recognize both the nature of radical Islam and the special place of the Jews & Israel in any world picture. His interpretation is clear and easy to follow. Jerusalem Countdown closes with an historical timeline of Israel which is interesting and informative.

His end-time prophecies rely heavily on interpretation and do not at times seem to fit with the literal interpretation of Scripture that he frequently espouses. He acknowledges conversations with people both inside and outside of government, the Middle East, and Israel, but does not connect names to support "facts" in support of his argument.

Those who digest the chapters will understand better the place of Israel in biblical history, and the challenges ahead for the church and world. Public libraries adding titles on current charismatic leaders can add Jerusalem Countdown, as readers will seek some of Hagee's titles.

Leroy Hommerding


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
PAP: 1935085506, 9781935085508, $19.95.

Adult Rating: 5

Reading Jumpstart Your Publishing Dreams is like having a seasoned professional guide you through the publishing maze. In this valuable resource, Terry Whalin shares insider tips from over twenty years of experience in the industry. His roles as writer, magazine editor, book author, book-acquisitions editor, and now literary agent give him a unique perspective that benefits both beginning and advanced writers.

The first half of the book covers topics especially useful for new writers. Whalin offers practical help to get started, set writing goals, and increase productivity. He advises writers to gain publishing experience with or without pay and to participate in critique groups. One chapter includes twelve characteristics of successful authors while another encourages writers to keep reading to enrich their lives. Whether you want to write magazine articles, strengthen your storytelling with interviews, or gain input on writer's organizations, you'll find information to guide you toward success.

Later chapters, geared for more experienced writers, include ways to advance your career. Whalin gives tips to build a platform, create an online presence, benefit from conferences, and hire a literary agent. You'll also find chapters on book writing, coauthoring or ghost-writing, and marketing. I particularly appreciated his innovative ideas to repurpose previous writing and speaking content into different products, such as audio CDs, teleseminars, and books.

Each of the twenty chapters ends with two sections to help writers grow in their craft. "Dig Deeper" lists additional resources, such as books and Internet sites, and "Awaken Your Dreams" shows readers how to apply that chapter's content.

Whalin's easy-to-understand writing with pertinent examples captured my interest from beginning to end. Whether you write fiction or nonfiction, for children or adults, Whalin's inspiring guidebook offers a gold mine of wisdom to help you succeed. Those who apply its teaching will undoubtedly jumpstart their publishing dreams.

Lydia E. Harris

Losing control and liking it: how to set your teen (and

   Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
   Adult
   Rating: 5

While most parents might find it painful to admit, many conflicts with their teen children often arise from a power struggle. Professional counselor Tom Sanford addresses this single topic in his 2009 book, Losing Control & Liking It.

Being out of control is practically un-American. Sanford writes in an easy style to help readers realize how and when they are trying to grab or maintain control in situations with their teen children. He lists reasons why teens and parents both want to control their relationship and actions, and four main styles by which they do this. Sanford also gives parents pictures of how they might be too controlling and what the outcomes of this can be. Finally, he provides a logical set of choices to reduce controlling interactions and improve parent-child interactions and move teens toward responsible independence.

Brevity and gentle admonition are Sanford’s skillful tools in addressing this extremely common and prickly issue in parent-teen relationships. He makes such a logical and clear argument for how this kind of situation develops, how it can backfire, and then how to change the nature of these interactions. Sanford’s experience in counseling is obvious and beneficial in his multiple examples and illustrations.

Humor also smooths the message, particularly in the chapter on free will and a teen’s right to be stupid. Many parents will quickly recognize their own children in this section (and possibly themselves) and find relief in seeing their choices in a fresh way.

Several simple line drawings add useful reminders and insights, especially for visually oriented readers. Sanford’s solutions to changing a controlling parenting style are well explained and very realistic. He uses repetition profitably to reinforce his message and ends with short multiple choice quiz (answers included).

Teachers, youth workers and others who interact with teens regularly can gain useful insights.

Karen Schmidt

* *

Love and respect : the love she most desires, the respect he desperately needs / Emerson Eggerichs. Nashville : Integrity Publishers, 2004.

   Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
   HBB : 1591451876, 9781591451877, $22.99.
   Adult
   Rating: *5.

Love and Respect delves into the commands to husbands and wives in Ephesians 5:33: “However each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” When wives try to draw close to their husbands by talking through issues, they tend to speak disrespectfully, and their husbands respond harshly. Dr. Eggerichs calls this phenomenon the Crazy Cycle and shows couples how to diffuse it and begin the Energizing Cycle instead. He encourages husbands to love their wives unconditionally by thinking of the acronym C-O-U-P-L-E. Wives need closeness, openness, understanding, peacemaking, loyalty, and esteem. He instructs wives to respect their husbands unconditionally by following C-H-A-I-R-S. Wives should appreciate their spouses’ needs for conquest, hierarchy, and authority and respect his insight, desire for shoulder-to-shoulder relationship, and sexuality.
Love and Respect tackles the tough issues at the core of marriage. Since men see with “blue sunglasses” and hear with “blue hearing aids” while their wives experience life in pink, well-intentioned spouses find themselves at odds with one another, often without knowing how they arrived there! This common problem is often dealt with in marriage books, but Love and Respect’s emphasis on a man’s need for respect sets it apart from other books. Dr. Eggerichs, who holds two master’s degrees as well as a doctorate in family ecology, supports his understanding of husband/wife relationships with letter excerpts and examples from his counseling. In his counseling and at his Love and Respect seminars, he often hears comments like, “I’ve been married 35 years and have not heard this taught.” He teaches the principles of God’s Word without bowing to political correctness or popular psychology, and his practical suggestions can help heal broken marriages or enhance good ones. The appendices suggest conversational helps like “That felt disrespectful. Did I come across as unloving?” He also addresses spouses in difficult relationships, like those marriages that don’t appear to improve. Engaged couples would also benefit from this book.

Rebecca Velez


Preparing My Heart for Motherhood, Ann Marie Stewart, author of two other Bible studies and mother of two preteen daughters, directs readers to answers from God’s Word.

As research for this Bible study, Stewart asked dozens of mothers, “What do you wish you had known before you became a parent?” She combines their practical insights with truths from God’s Word in this study, to strengthen marriages and encourage moms.

Each day of this five-week study begins with a heart-stirring story of an experienced mother who shares her struggles and victories. The moms featured are ordinary, but they have been tested in the trenches of motherhood and have learned to depend on God. They come from different seasons and circumstances of parenting. The book appeals to expectant moms, single moms, stepmoms, foster moms, adoptive moms, mothers of teens, or even grandmothers.

If you’re a mom, do you desire to feel God’s love for you in a deeper way or grow in your love for your husband or children? Are you struggling to forgive someone, or do you want to pray more effectively for your children? Would a motherhood mission statement help you focus on your important task of mothering? Stewart offers wisdom on these topics and many more.

The NIV Bible passages are printed in the study guide along with thought-provoking questions called “heartwork.” But you don’t need to be a biblical scholar to answer them.

Just as mothers nurture their children, so this Bible study will nurture a mother’s soul. For information on additional Bible studies in this series or to order this one, go to: http://www.preparingmyheart.com.

Lydia E. Harris


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!

PAP : 1414318022.
Tony Dungy starts *Quiet Strength* with a negative image, his recollection of packing up his office as a fired professional football coach of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers in 2002. While he carries boxes to his car in the rain, he wonders what God has in store for him next and if God even wants him to remain a coach. But even with this loss of a job and the uncertainty of his future, his faith doesn't waver.

Throughout the book Dungy gives praise to God for the good things in his life but also turns to God for answers when the worst things happen to him. His constant theme is that as much as he loves football and coaching, God and his family are the most important things in his life. If you're not a football fan his repeated references to his games as a player and coach might not interest you but keep reading. He talks about the Bible studies he leads with other coaches, praying with the players before and after games, and encouraging them to be better husbands and fathers.

Coach Dungy takes us through his life, growing up in a Christian home, his marriage and birth of his children, and his playoff and Super Bowl wins. He also writes about some of the lowest points of his life including job losses, the death of his parents, and the suicide of his son. In this journey of his life with its extreme highs and lows he remains constant in his faith and uses scripture passages to emphasize his beliefs. This is his testimony as a Christian doing God’s work on and off the field.

*Livia Wright*


Waddilove brings her background as professional baby nurse, speaker, mother, and grandmother into her continuation of *The Baby Book* to *The Toddler Book*. This slim volume is surprisingly complete in its coverage of those often difficult two to three years that parents face. She provides insights, advice, expertise, and most of all common sense. In her friendly, yet authoritative style, she covers the gamut of concerns from sleeping needs to feeding needs, from potty training to childhood illnesses, and addresses the spiritual needs of toddlers as well.

Waddilove recognizes that raising a toddler in the 21st century is a challenge. She offers expert opinion and advice to parents in a forthright presentation that provides assurance backed with facts. Though she is British and the book is United Kingdom published, the overall material is applicable to a general audience, for Waddilove recognizes there are basic needs that every toddler has, and challenges that every parent faces, no matter the locale.

The purpose of the book is to provide a guidebook of tips and advice. It is void of graphs, illustrations, and photographs; however the only addendum proves to be invaluable since the author includes suggested schedule charts for toddlers at ages one, two, and three. There is also a chart for raising a baby and a toddler. The provided index makes for quick reference. Another important inclusion is Waddilove's chapter on the toddler's spiritual and emotional needs. Each topic begins with a scripture verse, which is built upon.

Waddilove's style is that of a friendly experienced neighbor, the common grandmother who has all the time and patience in the world to help out frazzled young parents. She neither condescending nor too vague in her approach. While there are more comprehensive volumes on toddler care available, this little paperback is packed with common sense and valuable information. This would make an excellent starter or companion book in the childcare collection.

*Pam Webb*

Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
Adult
Rating: 4

In The Treasure Principle Randy Alcorn does the impossible; he makes readers believe that parting with even more of their money can be joyful. Alcorn says there is a fundamental connection between our spiritual lives and how we handle our money. He refers to specific scripture passages throughout the book to help us understand that the possessions we have on earth are not to be stored here but in heaven, explaining that 15 percent of Jesus’ teachings in the New Testament dealt with man’s money and possessions. To illustrate his point Alcorn reveals six Treasure Principle Keys.

Alcorn states we’re looking for a joy we cannot find and riches here on earth that constantly elude us. He opens the book with a story of a traveler discovering a buried treasure on another’s land. The traveler decides he must have it and plans to sell everything he owns to buy the land. Alcorn says this illustrates the joy of surrendering lesser treasures here on earth to find greater ones in heaven. The shortsighted person lives for his possessions on earth; the Christian lives for the reward of heaven.

Although this is a small book, Alcorn relates several stories of faithful Christians who were moved to give more than 10% and many 90% of their income. He addresses the reasons for giving, the roadblocks we encounter, and how to get started. The chapters can be redundant with the message repeated throughout the book but Alcorn’s enthusiasm remains clear. He strongly feels that giving is important and wants to ensure we get the message. Alcorn is not purporting to break new theological ground with his strong belief on storing up treasures in heaven but is writing from a Reformed perspective.

Livia L Wright


Buy through the link below, and support CLJ!
All Ages

Rating: 5

Zondervan’s NIV Study Bible challenges students of the Bible to not simply read God’s Word but to engage in stimulating Bible study. Using historical and archaeological notes, a helpful cross reference system and numerous study helps, the student will develop a deeper appreciation for the beauty of God’s Word.

In order to help the reader understand each book’s context, the editors begin each book with an introduction that contains information about the book’s author, intended audience, date, theme and literary structure.

Once inside each book, the reader discovers how careful the editors have been to provide unbiased commentary. Consider Romans 7:13-25. The notes begin by saying “whether Paul is describing a Christian or a non-Christian experience has been hotly debated through the centuries.” The editors then proceed to give several points supporting the former and the contrasting points that support the latter. The reader is left to be taught by the Author of the book Himself.

Also within each book are charts and renderings relevant to the teachings of that book. For instance, Exodus contains renderings of the Tabernacle, a Hebrew calendar and a comparison of Jewish sacrifices.

This Bible contains a more thorough cross-reference system
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