Same Kind of Different as Me, by Ron Hall and Denver Moore ; with Lynn Vincent. Published by Thomas Nelson. Used by permission.
Review Rating System

*5 Outstanding—a beautifully written 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 a need 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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PAP, 9780310712565, 3.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) ; col. ill. ; 20 cm.

The Berenstain bears and a job well done / created by Stan and Jan Berenstain ; written by Mike Berenstain. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010. LCCN 2008033726.

PAP, 9780310712541, 3.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) ; col. ill. ; 20 cm.

PRI PS Rating: 4

Two of the latest books from the Living Lights series teach children how God wants them to live. In typical Berenstain fashion, these books are designed to entertain and evoke lively discussion on topics pertinent to kids. On the inside back cover, additional activities can be found to ignite dialogue between children and adults.

The Berenstain Bears and the Gift of Courage relates the story of David and Goliath using a situation that most children will experience. Too Tall’s gang often teases Brother and Sister Bear mercilessly. The cubs grow frustrated as the taunting continues and renders them helpless. One evening, Papa Bear reads the story of David and Goliath. As Sister Bear listens to how David trusted God for protection, she wishes she were brave too. Papa reassures Sister that God is watching over her and will give her courage. The cubs encounter the gang the next day as they are throwing rocks at a hornets’ nest. Sister bravely grabs Too Tall’s arm while Brother boldly steps forward. His determined look causes the gang to run as a swarm of angry hornets chase them away. As the cubs walk to school the next day, they recount God’s protection.

In The Berenstain Bears and a Job Well Done, the cubs learn how to follow through even when they don’t want to. Its spring cleaning time at the bear’s family tree house and everyone has a job to do. The bears attempt to clean their playhouse but become quickly distracted when they find a ball and bat inside. When Papa discovers the cubs are not on task, he uses the opportunity to teach them what the Bible says about enjoying their work. While the book does not directly address obeying your parents, it could easily be used to initiate such discussion.

Children who love the Berenstain bears will be delighted with these books. Jan and Mike Berenstain do a spectacular job weaving biblical principles into real life encounters. You’ll want to be sure to purchase these books in hardcover as the paperback editions are quite flimsy.

Lisa Dirks

* 


HBB, 9780061915284, 16.99
LIB, 9780061915291, 17.89
E 1 v. (unpaged) ; col. ill. ; 29 cm.

PRI Rating: *5

Friendship comes in many shapes, sizes, and forms. Forever Friends is the story of two unlikely friends who meet just as spring blossoms. Blue Bird sings seemingly to no one … while Brown Bunny sleeps in a log. The bunny joins the bird in song and friendship all through spring, the warmth of summer, and the falling leaves of autumn.

The call of winter cold means
the bird must fly south, leaving bunny alone until next spring. Being alone is hard on both the bird and the bunny, but the promise of spring means the friends can once again play together.

Berger creates a sweet story of friendship between an unlikely pair. The differences between a bird and a bunny as friends may engage small children to think more globally about the friends they choose. Berger is just as creative as illustrator with the methods of her art. Her specialty appears to be that of collages from miscellaneous and random material. Those who read to the younger children might take the time to help the children identify some of the items used in the collages.

*Debby Willett*


HBB, 9780823421589, 16.95

E 1 v. (unpaged); col. ill.; 31 cm.

PS PRI Rating: 5

Holly wants to show her slippers and her cat Jasper the new fallen snow outside. Her mother teases her about being a “silly billy” and a “funny bunny” for not understanding she must wear her boots to go out and play. In *Holly's Red Boots*, author and illustrator Francesca Chessa has the intrepid Holly search high and low throughout her house for the missing red boots. She needs to find them sooner than later because, as we all know, snow waits for no one, especially little girls who can’t find their boots.

Whimsical, bright, engaging, and playful are some of the words that come to mind when reading this delightful story. The lighthearted teasing of the mother is a reminder that young children aren’t always logical and that humor is a welcome alternative to parental exasperation. The large, childishly crayoned drawings add to the capricious tone. And there is that cat Jasper. How many cats look forward to playing in snow? An ideal book for either the beginning of winter or between seasons when the weather is fickle between winter’s leaving and spring’s arrival. It can definitely be enjoyed many times.

*Pam Webb*


HBB, 9780060783334, 17.99

PAP, 9780060783358, 6.99

E 1 v. (unpaged); col. ill.; 19 x 29 cm.

PRI (INT) Rating: 3

When a boy and a girl sneak away from their father to search for treasure far below in the city underground, they don’t expect the horrors that await them. When pirates and monsters kidnap the girl, the boy pursues them through the underground to save her.

*The Dangerous Alphabet* by Neil Gaiman intrigues the reader but requires several careful readings and close observation to piece together the story line. The story could be better told without the couplets which detract from the main story and strive to feel postmodern; the illustrations best supply the plot here. Gris Grimly’s illustrations in bleak sepia tones and jagged lines also include a kind of “Look and Find” activity—items beginning with that page’s letter can be found in each illustration.

The purpose of the alphabet
concept is curious and offbeat, including devices such as “C” is the way that we find and we look,” or Gaiman’s swapping of the order of “W” and “V.”

A bit too dark (illustrations include a dangling brain and spinal cord, as well as an infant in a jar) and a bit too complex for its intended audience of five years and up, the book could serve well as a curiosity piece for adults. A highly original concept, but not for everyone.

Jaclyn S. Miller


HBB, 9781434764348, 12.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm.
PRI Rating: 5

That’s Where God Is by Dan and Ali Morrow begins on a Sunday with a boy’s visit to grandpa’s house. Grandpa and grandson share a comfy chair. After talking about all sorts of things, the boy asks: “Where is God?” Instead of giving a pat answer, grandfather invites the child to keep his eyes open, confident that God can be found “all over the place.”

On Monday, the child experiences God while at the zoo, since “God created all kinds of animals.” Throughout the rest of the week the little boy finds God in everyday experiences and encounters with others. God’s presence is in the power of a storm and in acts of sharing, helping and forgiving.

Soon, it is Sunday again. The child excitedly shares all the places he has found God. After listening, grandfather explains that God is in all those places, but can also live in our hearts if we invite him in through prayer.

Illustrator Cori Godbey uses clear, tinted watercolors that enhance the gentle and intimate mood of the story. He shows a very loving grandfather swinging his grandson in the air one moment and then sitting with his grandson on his lap. Each following page presents one instance of God’s presence on each day of the week.

The Morrows have written a story that children will enjoy, and one that will encourage adults to share God and his word with their little ones. Bible verses at the bottom of each page provide opportunities for biblical teaching and discussions. This book can also be used to introduce young children to God, who is not only around us, but also in us.

Carmen Redding


HBB, 9780763632410, 15.99
Bd, 9780763644338, 6.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) ; col. ill. ; 25 cm.
PS Rating: 5

The exhilaration of soaring beyond the blue sky is captured with succinct eloquence in Leslie Patricelli’s picture book Higher! Higher! The sparse repetitive text and bright crayon-like illustrations feature a little girl who gleefully asks to go higher as she swings. The illustrations showcase her imagined sense of achieving greater and greater height until she reaches space and discovers she is not the only one who enjoys the freedom a swing provides. A fun read that appears deceptively easy, yet offers a deeper understanding of the power of imagination.

What makes this book work so

HBB, 9780307446442, 11.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) ; col. ill. ; 23 cm.

PS (PRI) Rating: 5

Well-known fantasy writer Donita Paul teams up with her daughter, Evangeline Denmark, to tell an endearing tale of a dragon and a turtle in this inspirational picture book. Vincent Nguyen, illustrator of numerous children’s books, enhances the story with colorful drawings of a kitten-sized dragon who encounters a lost turtle.

The Dragon and the Turtle tells the story of Roger, an adventurous turtle who likes to play pirate. One day, he is blown off course and ends up lost. Padraig is snacking on bugs when he meets Roger. Wanting to help Roger, he asks questions about Roger’s house. Padraig tries to find it by scouting from the air, using Roger’s description. Each time he is wrong, he returns to Roger and asks for more detail before trying again (the clues are: brown, music, cookies baking, sandy, salty, and strawberries).

He stays with Roger and keeps trying to help the turtle find his way home. As he does, the two find out more about one another and become friends. When they finally reach Roger’s house, his mother invites them in to eat freshly-baked chocolate chip snappers (the cookie recipe is included in the book and is easy to bake!). This book also includes a discussion section for parents to use with their children after reading this book.

Based on Proverbs 17:17 (“a friend loves at all times,”) the book illustrates this principle as Padraig goes out of his way to help Roger, showing children (and adults) how that to have friends, one must be a friend.

Recommended for all children’s collections.

Carol R. Gehringer
Roller Coaster Planet with their special guest, Mr. Percy Possum.

Illustrator Anne Kennedy does a very good job of depicting the scenes from the story, especially when something goes wrong with a job! Throughout the story, addition and subtraction skills are reinforced as the class earns money and loses money when paying for their mistakes. For example, when the class gets Percy Possum’s hat and coat wet while washing a car, they take money from their profit to pay his cleaning bill. Additionally, lessons about cooperation, teamwork, determination, perseverance and respect for others are evident throughout the book. But the theme that hard work leads to rewards is the most important lesson in this book.

Overall, it’s cute and lots of fun. Ultimately, readers will laugh at the predicaments the class gets into and will be excited when they finally enjoy their day at Roller Coaster Planet.

Rachel Langston


HBB, 9780810938724, 15.95

E 1 v. (unpaged); col. ill.; 29 cm.

PRI Rating: *5

In Dear Primo: A Letter to My Cousin, Duncan Tonatiuh recounts the heartwarming story of two boys separated by distance and culture. Carlitos lives in the Mexican countryside and Charlie lives in a busy American city. Though Carlitos and Charlie have not met, they are cousins and want to know more about each other and “what life is like far away.” They manage to breach the gap between them by writing letters in which they describe their daily lives.

Carlitos describes his farm surrounded by mountains and trees, the crops his family harvests, and the animals: the burro, the pollos (chickens) and the crowing gallo (rooster). Charlie describes the city with its skyscrapers and bright lights. Throughout the book, Tonatiuh places bold, brilliant, and detailed images of each child’s environment side by side, allowing the reader to compare and contrast each child’s surroundings and experiences simultaneously. While Carlitos rides his bicycle to school, Charlie rides the subway. Carlitos plays soccer at recess; Charlie plays basketball. Carlitos likes quesadillas for a snack; Charlie likes pizza. In the end, the information shared in the letters, prompts the boys to want to meet each other. “My primo should come visit me!” they both say.

Tonatiuh underscores the importance of family ties, and the full, rich, and happy life of each of the characters regardless of their unique environment and culture. The author draws on his own experiences and observations, having lived in both Mexico and the United States. In the author note, he explains that despite the apparent differences between Mexico and the United States, we are more similar than different. “People”, Tonatiuh says, “are people.” Like the primos in the story, young readers will be curious and eager to learn about people who share a different language and culture.

Carmen Redding

Debut author Charles Toscano presents a winsome story with an underlying message that can be embraced by all: being charitable towards others brings its own rewards.

In Papa’s Pastries, a young boy accompanies his father to several Mexican villages to sell pastries. Miguel’s family is in need of firewood, a new roof, and clothing to make it through the winter. His father prays for God’s blessing before they leave.

Miguel and his father travel to three villages in the hopes of selling the pastries. When they arrive in a village, his father sings while the villagers clap and dance. The villagers delight in listening to his songs, for his father is known both for his delicious pastries and his wonderful voice. But the villagers are also experiencing hardships, telling him they are unable to purchase the pastries.

So Miguel’s father gives his pastries to those who are in the greatest need of them. By the time they return home, all of his father’s pastries have been given to others. Although there is no money to pay for the things their family needs, his father is not discouraged, trusting that “the more you give away, the more you shall receive.” The next day, the family is repaid for his father’s kindness toward others, as villagers arrive to fix the roof, mend their clothing, and provide firewood. Miguel thanks God for blessing their family.

Sonja Lamut is a gifted illustrator. Her soft colors in the illustrations capture the message underlying the story (being selfless towards others). Setting the story in rural Mexican villages enhances the story.

Recommended for elementary school libraries, church libraries, as well as children’s collections in public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer


“There are many kinds of quiet,” begins this delightful picture book aptly titled The Quiet Book by Deborah Underwood. The muted illustrations of bears, rabbits, moose, owls, and other creatures presented by Renata Liwska deftly add to the sense of “hush” as one reads through all sorts of possible quiets. The humor is subtle, clever, and appealing as the author and illustrator lead young readers to the last type of quiet—“sound asleep quiet.”

The collaborative efforts of Underwood and Liwska provide an enchanting read for both reader and listener. The types of quiet range from expected, “new sister quiet” to thoughtful “don’t scare the robin quiet” to thought-provoking “jelly side down quiet.” Readers will no doubt be amused at the different quiet possibilities enhanced by the cuddly soft animals in the illustrations. A perfect book leading up to bedtime.

Pam Webb
HBB, 9780310711926, 16.99
232.92 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm. + 1 sound disc (digital ; 4 3/4 in.)
PRI (INT) Rating: 5
Written by bestselling author Nikki Grimes, Voices of Christmas is a wonderful addition to holiday literature.

Voices of Christmas retells the events of Christmas from the viewpoints of different characters involved in the Nativity story. Starting with the angel Gabriel, each character tells their part of story through the poetry written in the first-person voice: Mary, Joseph, Elizabeth, Zechariah, a neighbor who watches them leave for Bethlehem, the innkeeper, a shepherd, Gaspar, Herod, Melchior, Simeon, Anna, and Balthasar. The last voice is addressed to “you,” and asks if “you” are like the magi, a shepherd, Simeon, or Mary, waiting for the Emmanuel.

Each voice has a two-page spread, with a quote from the Bible (but without a specific scripture reference) at the top of the spread. The poetry is set in gold on darker pages, making the layout simple but elegant. Each poem is slightly different and reflects the voice of the character it portrays.

The illustration shows an intense close-up of the character, caught reflecting or praying at a dramatic moment. The dramatic illustrations by Eric Velasquez are imaginative and well-done, enhancing the poetry and prose. They effectively capture the person, and reflect the voice of each character. The illustrations also reflect the Middle East ethnicity of the characters.

A 20-min. audio CD is also included on which Nikki Grimes and Craig Northcutt expertly read the poetry. Original music, written by composer Keith Ward, accompanies the poetry and adds to the mood. The CD could be played in its entirety without the book, but the illustrations are an important component.

Recommended for elementary school libraries, church libraries, and public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer

LIB, 9780547215969, 15.94
423 138 p. : col. ill. ; 29 cm.
PRI (INT) Rating: 5


LIB, 9780547215976, 17.95
423 8, 405 p. : col. ill. ; 26 cm.
PRI (INT) Rating: 4

Everyone begins somewhere when it comes to reading skills and picture dictionaries, and books such as The American Heritage Picture Dictionary provide the rudiments of literacy. This newly updated edition is colorful and attractive in layout. The basic structure is displaying the word and an accompanying illustration. While most of the illustrations explain the word, there is the problem of concept words such as able, a, an, again, being difficult to present accurately. Pre-readers might need help understanding their
meaning. The back section proves more beneficial pre-reading helps with several full-page illustrations of lists. This section would be especially useful to English as second language readers. This particular edition might not be a first choice for pre-readers considering how many other introductory dictionaries are available, yet it is attractive and offers many word/illustration pre-reading prompts.

The American Heritage First Dictionary fares better with its lively, engaging illustrations and photographs. Combined with short definitions, this format provides primary readers with independent reading opportunities to search out and become familiar with common concepts and words. There are over 2000 words and 850 color photographs and drawings, with each entry featuring full-sentence definitions, along with sample usage. Of note are sidebars, guidewords at the top, and the alphabet appearing on the bottom pages, reinforcing the search for words through indexing skills. The bright, bold fonts and balance of text to white space make the layout easy to read. There are additional sections on phonics, spelling, parts of speech, homophones, compound words, and lists of common word groups, such as parts of the body and pairs of opposites. Again, there is a lot of competition for first dictionaries, yet American Heritage provides a worthwhile option for the beginning readers.

Pam Webb
(Editor's note: This is a different type of picture dictionary, one I prefer. I give it a 5.)

HBB, 9780064462549, 17.99
636.8 32 p. : col. ill. ; 26 cm.
PRI Rating: 4
Cats is a visually stunning, factual book written for elementary age children. It’s creatively organized using photographs as the subheading cues—students can simply look at the pictures to predict the content. The striking photography captures not only different breeds of cats, but their personalities, moods, and a variety of instinctual behaviors. The layout, design, and 2nd-3rd grade reading level of the text makes the information accessible to newly independent readers. Consequently, Simon has written an ideal example of expository text that can be used to teach children how to pull out main ideas and use picture clues to aid in comprehension. Speaking directly to the reader in a style which is both friendly and interesting, Cats is an excellent choice for reading aloud. A comprehensive resource, the book covers all the basic subtopics related to domestic cats: instincts, origins, unique physical characteristics, senses, training, communication, life cycle, breeds, and factors to consider when choosing a pet cat. With a cover of three extremely cute orange kittens, Cats is certain to be a popular choice among students while serving as an excellent introduction to domestic cats.

Kristine Wildner

How does a bird build its nest? What materials does it use? A picture book in the format of a birder’s notebook, *Even an Ostrich Needs a Nest* answers these and other questions. Both Kelly’s narrative and graphics flow in rhythm, curling in bird like movement over the pages. Forty birds’ nesting habits are described. A bird habitat map and instructions for helping birds with nesting provide a fitting conclusion.

Multiple award winning author of children’s fiction and non-fiction books, Irene Kelly, loves and studies domestic and wild animals. This love is evident in her nature books. *Even an Ostrich Needs a Nest* is full of information garnered from personal experience and good research. Before publication, the American Museum of Natural History checked the text and art for accuracy. Its intriguing format and fascinating information draws the eye, encouraging the reader to learn and understand the unique nests each of these forty birds create.

*Even an Ostrich Needs a Nest* has multiple uses. It will be welcome in science, ecology, zoology, art classes, and clubs. Elementary age readers can read it for themselves. Younger children will enjoy having it read to them, perhaps tracing the waves of words, birds, and nests with their fingers.

Donna Eggett

**Why boys & girls are different**: for boys ages 4-6 and parents / [from text originally written by Carol Greene ; illustrated by Michelle Dorankamp]. (Learning about sex series ; 1) St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 2008. LCCN 96123968.

HBB, 9780758614094, 12.99
649/.65 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm.
PS PRI Rating: 4

**Where do babies come from?**: for boys ages 7-9 / [from text originally written by Ruth Hummel ; illustrations by Janet McDonnell]. (Learning about sex series ; 2) St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 2008. LCCN 2009275184.

HBB, 9780758614100, 12.99
649/.65 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm.
PRI INT Rating: 4

**Where do babies come from?**: for girls ages 7-9 / [from text originally written by Ruth Hummel ; illustrations by Janet McDonnell]. (Learning about sex series ; 2) St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 2008. LCCN 2008301429.

HBB, 9780758614162, 12.99
649/.65 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm.
PRI INT Rating: 4

**How you are changing**: for boys ages 10-12 / [from text originally written by Jane Graver ; illustrations by Len Ebert]. (Learning about sex series ; 3) St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 2008. LCCN 2010483051.

PAP, 9780758614117, 12.99
649/.65 59 p. : col. ill. ; 23 cm.
How you are changing: for girls ages 10-12 / [from text originally written by Jane Graver ; illustrations by Len Ebert]. (Learning about sex series ; 3) St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 2008. LCCN 2009286060.

PAP, 9780758614179, 12.99 649/.65 61 p. : col. ill. ; 23 cm.

INT MS Rating: 4

The Learning about Sex series includes six titles intended to “help parents communicate biblical values to their children in the area of sexuality.” The series has been updated from its original publication and is meant to provide parents and teachers with specific information and a Christian perspective regarding the physical, sexual, and social development of children.

Each title is targeted to a specific age. Thus, the illustrations, vocabulary, and readability of each book are well suited to the types of questions children of that age would ask. Additionally, each book includes an Editor’s note and a section directing grown-ups how to use these books as tools in their discussions with children about the changes their bodies undergo. All the titles consistently use appropriate names for body parts and the illustrations are anatomically correct. In the titles for older children, the body parts are labeled.

Throughout each book, scripture is used to reinforce the concept that God is our creator and that He created our bodies to be unique and to be used for His glory. In the first book, there is specific reference to Jesus as our Savior and discussion about the different roles that males and females have in a family and a community. The second book is written in story form and addresses adoption, a new sibling, and information about male and female body parts. The third book is written in a Q&A format with some extra resources such as a glossary and sample prayers at the end of each section. It introduces many social and emotional issues that everyone deals with as they enter adolescence.

Each book emphasizes that God created our bodies exactly the way they are and that His love doesn’t ever leave or change, regardless of what happens to our bodies. Likewise, each book reinforces the truth that we are all equal in God’s eyes and that being a male or a female is the way He designed us. All the books are specific without giving more details than are needed. While the illustrations are informative, they are not suggestive in any way.

The major difference between the versions of the books (girls and boys) is the “main character” and the pronouns. For the most part, the text is virtually identical and the illustrations are identical. Toward the end of the third book, there is some noticeable difference in the information about what girls and boys experience during adolescence but some information about the opposite sex is included in both books.

Overall, this series is well-written and informative concerning material that can be difficult to present and discuss. It would be an excellent resource for any parent, especially Christian parents.

Rachel Langston

HBB, 9780547249667, 15 Fic 129 p.; 21 cm.

INT Rating: 4, w/caution

Mary Mae is curious and full of questions nobody wants to answer—and worse yet, she thinks she shouldn't even ask. Questions like how did all the animals fit on the ark, and how did God create the earth and everything in it in six days, and why do some people think the earth is 6,000 years old, while others think it’s millions of years old. In Mary Mae and the Gospel Truth, Mary Mae asks her mom, her grandma, her Sunday school teacher as well as her pastor, Sister Coates, her questions. None of them seems to have an answer, and her mom quickly decides that only homeschooling Mary Mae will protect her from the evolutionary indoctrination she receives at school. Desperate to return to school, Mary Mae determines to show her mom that she can maintain her faith while studying science.

Sandra Dutton’s characters realistically present the challenges faced by public school students and their parents. Mary Mae’s school teacher presents science with an evolutionary bias and the fossils to back it up, and her parents and church leaders feel uncomfortable with any questions that might make Mary Mae doubt the validity of the Bible. Dutton introduces two educated, reasonable Christian adults at the end of the book. There is some occasional profanity. Frequent dialogue makes this book interesting and the dialect used for Mary Mae makes her character even more realistic.

Mary Mae’s mother is the leader in her home—overruling her husband’s view that Mary shouldn’t be pulled from school. This character-driven book moves quickly. The setting is integral to the book, since the geology of the land (Ohio) provides the fossil evidence at issue. Mary Mae learns that her open mind allows her to learn, but that her mother’s fears nearly stifle her education.

Kristi Wolcott


HBB, 9781400316427, 14.99 Fic 378 p.; 22 cm.

INT MS Rating: 4

SpineChillers Mysteries combines three previously published mysteries by Fred Katz in a single volume. It has an interesting novelty cover—a 3-D scary clown face—which adds to the stories.

The individual books, published in 1996-1997, were the first 3 books in his SpineChiller series. Dr. Shivers’ Carnival sets the stage when a mysterious carnival appears overnight. When Kyle and his friends investigate, they are offered free admission to all the rides—but it isn't what they expect. Attack of the Killer House has Anne thinking her brother is playing a joke on her, but it turns out to be more than that. Their parents are away when small electronics begin chasing and attacking them.

In Birthday Cake and I Scream, MacKensie is celebrating his twelfth birthday at Creep the Clown’s Pizza Palace. As he and his friends are enjoying video games, Creepy shows up
with games of his own.

For anyone who loves a good roller coaster ride story, where one is permitted (or even encouraged) to scream, this compilation will be sure to delight. Readers will enjoy a scare or two—but even as the tension builds, these faith-based books show that it is just clean fun.

While it isn’t something that should keep readers awake late at night, I wouldn’t recommend it for under the ages of eight years old. This book is better suited to those in third grade and higher. It should especially appeal to boys.

Carol R. Gehringer


HBB, 9780385736169, 14.99
LIB, 9780385905893, 17.99
Fic 147 p. : ill. ; 22 cm.
INT Rating: 5

Emily’s Fortune tells the story of the recently orphaned Emily Wiggins attempting to get to her Aunt Hilda before Catchum Child-Services delivers her to her awful Uncle Victor. On the way to Aunt Hilda’s house in Redbud, Emily meets Jackson, another orphan heading west. When Jackson discovers that Emily is going to inherit 10 million dollars, he wisely warns her that others may want to find this child travelling alone. Emily realizes that she will have to watch out for her greedy Uncle Victor who will try to hunt her down now that she is an heiress. Jackson disguises Emily, but the disguise is not fool-proof. Emily must exercise great courage and wisdom if she is going to make it to Aunt Hilda’s safely.

Phyllis Reynolds Naylor delivers quirky characters, wacky phrases, and onomatopoeia in this delightful work of children’s fiction. Emily and Jackson create a wonderful team as Jackson helps Emily escape those who would harm her. Throughout the story Emily changes into a girl who has not been allowed to do anything unsafe—including attending school—into a brave young lady who can think clearly in dangerous situations. The plot speeds along as Emily and Jackson tackle the many obstacles in their path. A stagecoach to the

West and towns along the way—in the days before cars but after trains—rounds out the setting. Emily says “lordy” once. Ross Collin’s pencil sketches illustrate the story and add even more personality to the characters. As Emily determines whom she can trust, she learns first impressions aren’t everything, and clear thinking and observation can lead to some good decisions.

Kristi Wolcott

HBB, 9780316068710, 15.99
636.80092/9 214 p. : col. ill. ; 21 cm.

INT Rating: 5


HBB, 9780316068727, 16.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm.

PRI INT Rating: 3

Combine a cat with a backstory to melt your heart, a community library, and a librarian who brought them together, and you have a winning juvenile book. *Dewey the Library Cat* is an adaptation of the *New York Times* adult bestseller by the same author, Vicki Myron. This version focuses more on Dewey and less on the adult aspects of the first book. For those unfamiliar with Dewey—his story is a heartfelt and inspiring tale. Found in the library's book drop on the coldest day of the year, Dewey flourishes under their tender care, transforming from a bedraggled, abandoned kitten to the matchless reigning personality of the Spencer Public Library in Iowa. *Dewey* shows how one cat can touch so very many lives. There is something here for everyone: a good read, a moving animal story, and more than a few laughs. Dewey's passing is handled with sensitivity, catching all emotions from empathy, to joy, to sadness. James Herriot aficionados will definitely want to add this one to the bookshelf.

Animal stories are not unique, yet now and then one comes along that truly reaches every audience. Myron is able to capture both adult and younger readers in this adapted version. The front cover shows the magnificence of this personality plus feline, and the inside photographs add to the delight of getting to know Dewey.

A series of picture books inspired by the *Dewey* books are commendable additions to the lovable cat tale. In *Dewey's Christmas at the Library* the story centers on Dewey's first experience with Christmas, and how he helped to decorate the library's Christmas tree.

Although a smidge too cute around the edges with *Dewey's thoughts* interspersed in the text, *Dewey's Christmas at the Library* nevertheless is a wonderful addition to the library shelves. After all, how often does a book come out promoting the library with such a lovable, furry character?

*Pam Webb*

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**Where do babies come from?** ; for boys ages 7-9 / [from text originally written by Ruth Hummel ; illustrations by Janet McDonnell]. (Learning about sex series ; 2) St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 2008. LCCN 2009275184.

HBB, 9780758614100, 12.99
649/.65 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm.

PRI INT Rating: 4

**Where do babies come from?** ; for girls ages 7-9 / [from text originally written by Ruth Hummel ; illustrations by Janet McDonnell]. (Learning about sex series ; 2) St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 2008. LCCN 2008301429.

HBB, 9780758614162, 12.99
649/.65 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm.

LIB, 9780766033528, 23.95
B or 634/.11092 128 p.: ill. (some col.); 24 cm.
INT Rating: 3

Johnny Appleseed is the story of John Chapman, whose eccentric life earned him a place in America's tall tales. In addition to stories of John Chapman, the book also presents the history surrounding Chapman's life, 1774 - 1845. From Indian raids, the War of 1812, and the Panic of 1819, to Johnny's desire to supply apple trees to a growing nation and spread his Christian beliefs, Johnny "Appleseed" Chapman's life provides a glimpse into America's past.

Richard Worth fills the pages with interesting history and well-documented stories about John Chapman. He also includes pictures from the period, illustrations of John Chapman, and a map of sites Chapman either lived or visited. A picture of the 1813 Battle of the Thames River in which Tecumseh was killed shows graphic violence. Worth also presents Chapman's religious views, which include the four rules that Emmanuel Swedenborg set forth for his religion (his followers in England formed the Church of the New Jerusalem). Worth also compares Chapman's lifestyle to that of the Transcendentalists. (p. 111) While the stories of Chapman's life and the history laid out in Johnny Appleseed are interesting, it can be a little hard to follow. In spite of that, reading about Johnny "Appleseed" Chapman's dedication to hard work, his beliefs, and the people settling new lands can plant seeds of inspiration.

Kristi Wolcott

PAP, 9780899578774, 14.99
Fic ix, 426 p.; 23 cm.
MS (HS) Rating: 5
Wayne Thomas Batson, well-known author of the Door Within trilogy, and most recently, co-author of the Berinfell Prophecies, presents another fantasy series for young adults.

In Sword in the Stars, Alastair Coldhollow has spent years waiting for a sword to appear in the stars to foretell the coming of Halfainin. Disappointed when he fails to find Halfainin, Alastair thinks he has misread the prophecy. On his way out of town, a woman being pursued by Gorracks thrusts her bundled child into Alastair’s arms before leading her pursuers away. Faced with caring for the child, Alastair turns to his friend, Abbagael. She is unaware that Alastair spent years as a hired assassin and is wanted for his violent past. Together they embark on an adventure of outrunning the Gorracks, while war rages all around them.

One could read this book without seeing the spiritual undertones but anyone who is acquainted with biblical stories will recognize the feud between brothers, a star foretelling a new king, the repentant sinner being used by God, and more.

Batson is known for his epic fantasies where good struggles to overcome evil, heroes arise from humble beginnings, and true courage is staying true to your word, whatever the cost. Sword in the Stars is no exception. Both character and plot development are strong. Some plot lines are resolved at the end of this book, while others are left hanging, leaving the reader eager for more. The only negative is waiting for the other books in the series: book 2 is scheduled for release in 2011.

Highly recommended for public libraries and school collections.

Carol R. Gehringer


HBB, 9780061123184, 15.99
LIB, 9780061123191, 16.89

Author of numerous poems and novels, Joseph Bruchac presents Night Wings, a novel which once again draws on his Abenaki heritage.

Paul Fortune, a young teen, goes to live with his grandfather while his military parents are serving overseas. Paul and Grampa Peter have a good knowledge of military tactics as well as a nonverbal way of communicating with one another, both of which come in handy when they are kidnapped and forced to go on a journey. Darby Field, a ruthless treasure hunter, kidnaps Grampa Peter, who is known for his scouting skills and expertise with Native American legends.

Field seeks the mythical Pmola’s treasure and only Grampa Peter knows how to find it. So Field forces him to lead a hunt up Mount Washington, a dangerous and unpopulated area of the Northeast. According to Native American legend, Pmola is a large bird-like creature that guards its treasure and punishes trespassers who threaten it. Paul has only heard of this legend a little bit as he was
growing up—but recently he began having nightmares about Pmola. What if his nightmares are prophecies of the future?

Some parts of the books are scary, but this is a fast-paced thriller with Native American lore and cliffhanger chapter endings. It is an exciting story that can be read quickly. Readers will enjoy a glimpse at the Pmola legend and Abenaki traditions in the midst of a scary story. Fairly short (194 pages), it is suitable for younger readers (5th grade and up). It is a bit short on character development but Night Wings is a welcome addition to multicultural literature, nonetheless.

Recommended for school and public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer


HBB, 9780810979918, 16.95
Fic 259 p.; 22 cm.
MS (INT) Rating: 4

An exciting mystery, revolving around problem-solving, mathematics, and logic, The Unknowns takes place in a trailer park community known as Adjacent, which shares its island setting with a nuclear power plant and garbage dump. Misfits, twelve-year-old Di and Tom long for excitement, while at the same time dreading the start of middle school. When their math tutor, Mrs. Clarke, disappears, the children investigate, and find straws and a salt shaker representing an equation involving the numbers 3, 4, and 5. As one clue leads to the next, they explore the Pythagorean Theorem, the properties of a circle, factorials, and other geometric concepts. Joining forces with a few other children on the island, the clues lead them to discover a series of underground tunnels and realize that they must not only find Mrs. Clarke, but also discover a menacing plot involving the power plant and all the island citizens.

The community of Adjacent represents much that is wrong with an industrialized community in which human life is marginalized relative to corporate growth and the resultant waste. Benedict Carey, a mathematician and science writer for the New York Times, brilliantly integrates a kidnapping and corporate mystery with math clues which require both higher level thinking and creative analysis. The math is well-explained with diagrams and tables related to Adjacent, and distances and directions integral to the plot. He invites the reader to not only think about the plot, but also to stop and problem solve along with the characters. The pace is fast, with unique, well-drawn multi-cultural characters that draw the reader into the mystery as they face overwhelming odds and corporate espionage. Certain to have wide appeal, students who love math are the immediate audience; others will gain an important understanding of the use of math in “real” situations.

Kristine Wildner


HBB, 9781590787083, 17.95
Fic 189 p.; 22 cm.
MS Rating: 5

Eddy Thomas is obsessed with science in The Reinvention of Edison Thomas. He has a precise grip on advanced
physical science, but only a tenuous grasp of the real world. When his project places third in the science fair, Eddy is humiliated. His dream of going to regional competition is crushed. He dumps his materials into a box and slinks away from the disaster.

The lay-off of the school crossing guard precipitates an additional anxiety crisis for Eddy. He has visions of an impending tragedy with cars striking unwitting children as they venture into the intersection. These nightmares prompt Eddy to work on a new invention, one that will force cars to stop at the sign.

As Eddy labors to solve the problem of this safety issue, he receives unexpected assistance and support from a classmate. When the opportunity to go to the regional science fair as an alternate arises, two other classmates help him resurrect his damaged project. Eddy's perceptions evolve until he is able to appreciate true friendship.

Dr. Jacqueline Houtman writes with great humor and an abundance of scientific knowledge. She offers a sympathetic portrait of a high-functioning autistic young boy who has tremendous obstacles to overcome, despite his genius.

Eddy's speech is robot-like and his unawareness of social interaction is portrayed along with his literal interpretation of language. The author subtlety reveals Eddy's difficulties with time management through dialog and the level of detail in his lists.

Sprinkled throughout the text are numbered facts from the “Random Access Memory of Edison Thomas” that keep pace with the rapid misfires of Eddy's brain as haphazard thoughts intrude, derailing his ability to stay on track and operate in a normal fashion.

This entertaining and educational story encourages those who have challenges and inspires empathy for those who face them.

Deborah H. Rabern


HBB, 9781416986607, 16.99

PAP, 9781416986614, 5.99

Fic, 201 p.; 22 cm.


HBB, 9780385734660, 16.99

Fic, 208 p.; 22 cm.

MS Rating: 5

Wicked Will and The Secret of the Sealed Room are the beginnings of a promising new series. Combining history with mystery, readers will learn about a historical figure while trying to unravel a suspenseful tale. Both books center on well-known historical figures, yet MacDonald focuses on a time period that most biographical stories tend to gloss over—young adolescence. MacDonald seamlessly weaves into the engaging plot an abundance of historical information without bogging the story in pedantic overtones. The series will bridge the gap for those readers who prefer non-fiction, by injecting historically accurate details that enlivens the fiction read. They are an excellent complement to any history or biographical study in class.
While the books are entertaining and enlightening, both books center on murder, which might prove a bit heavy for young readers. The author adeptly weaves her interest in theater, mystery, and history into the stories.

*Wicked Will*, the first in the series, features young William Shakespeare on the cusp of discovering his penchant for drama and plot. An itinerant acting troupe arrives in Stratford and William makes acquaintance with Tom, the youngest player. When Tom’s uncle is accused of murdering a prominent citizen, William decides to help Tom clear his uncle’s name. Together they find themselves deep into plots and counterplots as they try to solve the mystery in Stratford.

In *The Secret of the Sealed Room*, readers are introduced to Benjamin Franklin when he was a lively young printer’s apprentice. Ben befriends fourteen-year-old Patience, an indentured servant and orphan. When Patience’s mistress unexpectedly dies she takes the opportunity to run away; however, by doing so it she becomes a prime suspect when it is discovered her former mistress was murdered. Benjamin shows his future cleverness by harboring Patience and helping her prove her innocence as they try to solve the murder.


PAP, 9780825435898, 7.99
Fic 144 p.; 22 cm.
MS Rating: 4

Thirteen-year-old Andi grapples with serious questions in *Andrea Carter and the Price of Truth*. She longs to buy her mother a special birthday gift, and has her eye on a music box. Her initial effort to earn money by posing as a migrant peach picker ends in disaster.

When the bank refuses to allow Andi to withdraw money without her mother’s signature, she makes a deal with Mr. Goodwin to work in exchange for the music box. The general store would be the ideal job except for the storekeeper’s son, Jack, who has become a disciple of the school bully.

Andi’s impulsive actions land her in trouble. Her encounter with the bully gains her a vicious enemy. Andi doesn’t comprehend that her actions may have consequences—one night, alone in an unsavory neighborhood, she witnesses a killing.

Author Susan K. Marlow deals with issues of the heart and conscience in her latest in the Andrea Carter series. Andrea’s motives are pure, but the story reveals the dangers that inexperience and secrecy engender. Andrea must reevaluate the cost of truth as she faces division in her family, threats to what she holds dear, and public opposition.

This engrossing tale gives the reader insight into the frontier view of justice and the legal system of the 1880’s. The book looks at loyalties, friendship, commitment, and the worth of one’s honesty. It also answers the question of whether or not to trust God when faced with an impossible situation. Readers will sympathize with this stubborn, independent heroine while absorbing historical knowledge.

It’s another page-turner for Andi’s fans and new readers.
The year is 1964; Carolina has lived her entire life with her mother, father and baby brother in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. When her family is killed in a car accident, Carolina moves in with an old family friend, Auntie Shen. Together they begin to heal and regain a sense of normalcy. When Auntie Shen suffers a stroke, Carolina’s life spins out of control. She is shifted from one foster family to another; running away seems to be her only option to get closer to home. After some time on her own, she is found by an American Indian woman, Miss Latah and her husband, Mr. Ray Harmony. Here she finally finds the love of a family, but she feels guilty because she has not told them the truth about her past. When a boy from a foster home comes back into her life, Carolina must make an important decision—whether to stay on Harmony farm, or run away again.

Carolina Harmony is a thoughtful story which will touch the heart of middle school girls, especially those who have suffered a similar loss and/or lived in foster homes. Carolina’s story is very personal. 1964 was a time of change in the United States; a time when people began to rely more on government institutions than their neighbors. McDowell romanticizes many of Carolina’s memories, yet employs stark realism in some tense moments when she is in the foster care system and runs away. With strong characters and themes related to family and caring, the story is an accurate portrayal of a young girl’s perspective—her doubts, fears, and self-esteem. There is some light, young romance with a bit of tension, and testing of faith, but ultimately, Carolina Harmony is a story of the true meaning of family; of opening your heart, mind and home to others.

Kristine Wildner

PAP, 9780802486028, 6.99
Fic 174 p.; 19 cm.

PAP, 9780802486035, 6.99
Fic 172 p.; 19 cm.

PAP, 9780802486042, 6.99
Fic 156 p.; 19 cm.

PAP, 9780802486059, 6.99
Fic 175 p.; 19 cm.

PAP, 9780802486066, 6.99
Fic 176 p.; 19 cm.
The Yasmin Peace Series introduces us to thirteen-year-old Yasmin. She lives with her mother and two brothers, York and Yancy, in the projects of Jacksonville, Florida. Her brother, Jeff, recently committed suicide, and her father is serving time in jail for dealing drugs.

In *Finding Your Faith*, Yasmin is confused by the developing feelings she has for her childhood friend, Myrek. She is upset that her friends value boys more than friendship.

In *Believing in Hope*, Yasmin is scared York is going to end up in jail when she catches him selling drugs. She joins a club for eighth grade girls run by a Christian counselor.

In *Experiencing the Joy*, Yasmin is caught in the woods with Myrek and sent to Orlando for the summer. While staying in Orlando, her cousin tries to pressure her into participating in criminal activities.

In *Learning to Love*, Yasmin’s father is out of prison, and she has just started high school. She is disappointed when she doesn’t make the dance team, but excited to go on her first date with Myrek.

In *Enjoying True Peace*, Yasmin is frustrated that her family is planning on moving to Orlando. She allows two of her girlfriends who are drunk into her apartment, which leads to serious consequences.

Stephanie Perry Moore portrays a clear picture of the harsh realities faced by families who live in low-income neighborhoods. Poverty, teen pregnancy, suicide, low self-esteem, peer pressure, and gang violence are issues addressed in the books.

Even though the books are written in the first person point of view, the reader is not limited to the main character’s perspective. All of the supporting characters’ thoughts and motivations are revealed through dialogue. The characters sound like real people because of the informal expressions in the dialogue.

The importance of having faith in God and the healing power of prayer is a major focus in the series. The books will appeal to girls in grades eight through nine who are trying to deal with the challenges they face today and understand how God fits into their lives.

*Dianne Woodman*


HBB, 9780547181882, 16

Fic 145 p.; 22 cm.

MS (HS) Rating: 4

*The Day of the Pelican* begins with two incidents that upend the Lleshis family’s normal village life in Kosovo. News of a massacre of seventy people, including children, has reached them. Relatives arrive urging the Lleshis to take refuge with them in the country. However, the father believes his responsibility is to keep their small grocery store open for their Albanian neighbors.

Meli is kept after school one day. Her thirteen-year-old brother, Mehmet, leaves on time and disappears. Last seen running up the street near the police station, the authorities deny having him in custody. Months pass as the family functions in a conflicted limbo of fear and hope.

Finally, a cynical, embittered
Mehmet arrives back home. Serbian authorities had kidnapped, beaten, and dumped him in the countryside to die. He’s only alive because the Kosovo Liberation Army rescued and nursed him back to health. Together again, the family begins a prolonged quest for refuge.

Katherine Paterson, winner of numerous prestigious literary awards, fills her latest novel with insight into what displaced persons endure. These non-religious Muslims only want to continue life as usual. They are not political or inclined to activism. Although the family has a subliminal awareness of growing estrangement between the Serb and Albanian population, they are unprepared for the personal repercussions of ethnic cleansing.

Mrs. Paterson shows us geographic settings and allows the reader a glimpse into Albanian culture and one family’s struggle to stay together. She reveals the various stages of uprooting, the progression of persecution and its inhumanity. This engrossing story, told through the eyes of eleven-year-old Meli, allows the reader to see the cruelty of oppression, and the vast difference that intervention can offer to a people in distress.

Deborah H. Rabern


In The Doom Machine, Jack is a juvenile delinquent living in the small town of Vern Hollow in the 1950s. Jack’s Uncle Bud has invented a device for creating holes in space. Dr. Shumway and her daughter Isadora get stranded in the town when their car breaks down. After Jack repairs the car, he, Uncle Bud, Dr. Shumway, and Isadora try leaving the town. They are stopped by Sergeant Webb and his son Grady.

But they aren’t the only ones interested in the device. Jack, Uncle Bud and his device, Dr. Shumway, Isadora, Sergeant Webb, and Grady are taken on board an alien spaceship by a race of giant spider-like creatures called skreeps. The aliens want control of the device and fly to their home galaxy. Jack and Isadora escape from the spaceship, and rebel aliens help Jack and Isadora fly to Skreepia with a goal of defeating the hostile skreeps.

Mark Teague has written an entertaining science fiction story focusing on space travel and wormholes. The third person omniscient point of view draws the reader into experiencing firsthand the humorous and serious moments of the storyline.

The black and white illustrations scattered throughout the book help in visualizing the characters and their surroundings. The use of similes and metaphors adds depth and meaning to the story.

The Doom Machine is geared towards readers in grades five through eight. The language is simple, and the dialogue is realistic for the age group. Children will learn about pollution and the impact it has on the environment.

Dianne Woodman

After the Train by Gloria Whelan is an historical fiction novel about a young boy who lives in post-Holocaust Germany. As his teacher drones on about the cruelties of the Nazi’s upon the Jews during World War II, thirteen-year-old Peter Liebig equates attending Herr Schmidt’s class to “tearing off a scab.” The war has been over for ten years. Peter and his friends want nothing more than to finish the last day of classes, forget about war, and begin their summer adventures. Herr Schmidt’s summer assignment for the students is to find, interview, and write a report about a German citizen who risked his/her life to assist a Jew during the war. Peter shows little interest in completing this assignment until he discovers a packet of his parents’ old letters that reveal a murky past that causes him to mistrust them. Embittered by their deception, Peter is determined to unearth the truth, at all costs.

Through engaging and believable character sketches, Whelan deftly introduces Peter and his community.

Historical points about the Holocaust, post-WWII attitudes toward the Jews, and descriptions of the German terrain authenticate both mood and atmosphere. Peter’s first person account invites the reader to experience his discovery, as well as the subsequent emotional impact. Gloria Whelan is the National Book Award winning author of Homeless Bird (HarperCollins, 2000). Other than one barely perceptible character confusion between Peter’s father and Herr Schmidt, this post-Holocaust fiction is similar in quality to Number the Stars by Lois Lowry (Houghton Mifflin, 1989) and Yellow Star by Jennifer Roy (Marshall Cavendish, 2006).

PAP, 9781578592197, 21.95
031/.02 xi, 292 p. : col. ill. ; 25 cm.
MS (Adult) Rating: 5

One of more than a dozen books in the Invisible Ink Press “Handy” series, The Handy Answer Book For Kids (and Parents) by Gina Misiroglu features 800 questions with 100 color photographs and illustrations in ten chapters: Outer Space; Planet Earth and Our Moon; Creatures Big and Small; Plant Life; People around the World; Politics and Government; How Things Work; Math, Measurement, and Time; All about My Body; and Daily Life. This book provides substantive answers to typical questions curious children ask every day from “Why is the ocean salty?” and “Where does the water from my toilet go?” to “How do airplanes fly?” and “What causes people to pass gas?”

The real value of the book lies in the breadth of the questions and the depth of the answers. Some questions seem unlikely to be posed by children (“How is the earth like an onion?” or “Which tree was used in the fledgling shipbuilding industry?”), but the vast majority is consistent with a child’s imagination.

Questions of faith (“Where do people go after they die?” and “Who is God?”) are answered generally, reflecting the beliefs of multiple world religions. One subject where all parents might appreciate some child-friendly answers is missing completely: The word “sex” appears nowhere in the text or index. In response to the question “How did my life begin?” Misiroglu writes, “Each person begins life as a single fertilized cell.”

The book never claims to have all the answers, just lots of handy ones. It’s an excellent resource for parents and middle-grade readers.

Laurie A. Gray

Off to war / Deborah Ellis. Toronto: Groundwood Books, 2008. LCCN 0.

HBB, 9780888998941, 15.95

PAP, 9780888998958, 9.95
303.6/6083 175 p. : ports. ; 28 cm.
MS (INT) Rating: 4

In Off To War: Voices Of Soldiers’ Children, American and Canadian children talk about coping with the stress of having a parent deployed to Afghanistan and/or Iraq. The forty children interviewed by Deborah Ellis range in age from 6 to 17, and the majority of them are pre-teens.

The book is split into sections, with black and white photos of nearly all the children. Each section begins with an explanation that ties in with the children’s views. Only the responses of the children are in the book. The questions asked by the author pertain to the job of the parent(s) in the armed forces, the length of deployment(s), the effects of having a parent away from home, and advice for other military kids.

Deborah Ellis does an excellent job of explaining terms unique to the military. Terms are either defined in the text or can be looked up in the glossary at the back of the book. Because page numbers for terms are not listed, some terms will need to be looked up while reading the book.
bibliography is included for further reading.

Very few kids talk about relying on God to help them cope with the effects of stress from having a parent deployed in a war zone. Some military families belong to Wiccan or Pagan groups.

The book is appropriate for all youth. Children who have little or no knowledge of the armed forces will get a glimpse into how military kids feel about the United States and Canada’s involvement in the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. Military kids will appreciate being able to read about other kids who struggle with the same issues as they do.

*Dianne Woodman*


HBB, 9780763647018, 19.99

636.7092/9 xi, 323 p.: map, photos; 22 cm.

MS (INT) Rating: 4

*Bulu: African Wonder Dog* is a true story, written in a narrative format about an extraordinary Jack Russell Terrier mixed breed dog and his owners, Steve and Anna Tolan. Bulu is the last of his litter to be adopted—listless, odd-looking, long legged, and weak. Steve and Anna nurse him to health and the dog quickly becomes a part of their family. Early on, Bulu “adopts” two orphaned warthogs that follow him around throughout much of his young life. Later, when Steve and Anna take in some frightened marmosets, Bulu serves to comfort them and include them in his adopted family. Bulu shows little fear, which sometimes gets him into big trouble. More than once, Steve and Anna travel great distances to secure adequate veterinary care when Bulu gets himself into some serious scrapes.

Bulu’s unique, nurturing personality captures the reader’s heart. Dick Houston develops his story from the perspective of the owners, the important work they are doing in Africa, and the inspiration they take from...
Bulu to preserve and respect African wildlife. This special dog is a good example as he overcomes physical difficulties and gives himself totally in the care of others. Black and white photographs throughout the book lend credence to Bulu's loveable personality and insight into his many scrapes and adventures. Younger readers who pick up this book because it is a dog story may have difficulty—the initial exposition of the story is a little slow. But patient readers will be rewarded in the end as they come to know and love Bulu and his owners, and appreciate all that he endures.

Kristine Wildner

How you are changing : for boys ages 10-12 / [from text originally written by Jane Graver ; illustrations by Len Ebert]. (Learning about sex series ; 3) St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 2008. LCCN 2010483051.

PAP, 9780758614117, 12.99
649/.65 61 p. : col. ill. ; 23 cm.
INT MS Rating: 4

How you are changing : for girls ages 10-12 / [from text originally written by Jane Graver ; illustrations by Len Ebert]. (Learning about sex series ; 3) St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia, 2008. LCCN 2009286060.

PAP, 9780758614179, 12.99
649/.65 61 p. : col. ill. ; 23 cm.
INT MS Rating: 4

See the series review in the Picture Book section, p.13.


PAP, 9781402765421, 5.95
B or 944/.026092 124 p. : ill. (chiefly col.), col. map ; 20 cm.
MS (HS) Rating: 4

Joan of Arc: Heavenly Warrior, with its small size, slick paper, and extensive use of color illustrations, is beautifully appealing. Its fresh writing and careful attention to detail make it a nice choice for readers wanting to learn about Joan of Arc.

Tabatha Yeatts nicely covers all important aspects of Joan’s life: an overview of her peasant childhood; a history of the Hundred Years War; how Joan came to hear heavenly voices; her attempts to convince authorities of her mission to save France; her amazing grasp of battle strategy; her capture, trial, and execution; and the subsequent clearing of her name and her canonization. Sidebars add greater detail on key figures in Joan’s life as well as related topics like the connection between the real Sir John Fastolf and Shakespeare’s Falstaff, Inquisition torture practices, how Catholic saints are canonized, and fictional portrayals of Joan.

Potentially unfamiliar words appear in bold and are defined in a glossary, there’s a timeline of events, a two-page bibliography, four pages of notes, a page of image credits, and a two-page index.

One of the men Joan encountered was John the Bastard; no explanation is given of the meaning of the word, just that it wasn’t considered offensive in that time. While the book contains extensive detail, the emphasis on the many battles can seem repetitive, and the text chosen for pull quotes is usually unremarkable, and sometimes even intrusive to the flow of the narrative. However, Joan’s deep religious fervor is always
portrayed positively, and the book as a whole is well written, lively, and informative enough to serve as a stand-alone volume on the life of Joan of Arc.

*Rosemarie DiCristo*

**Joan of Arc: warrior saint / Jay Williams. (Sterling point books)**
PAP, 9781402751202, 6.95
B or 944/.026092 126 p.: ill., maps ; 21 cm.
MS (HS) Rating: 4

While *Joan of Arc: Warrior Saint* by Jay Williams covers much of the same ground as Tabatha Yeatts’ *Joan of Arc: Heavenly Warrior*, it goes into more detail, particularly the hardships she faced, while adding a much more grisly description of her trial and death by burning at the stake.

There is more emphasis on little details – like the food and dress in fifteenth century France, Joan’s childhood in the peasant village she grew up in, a fuller description of the fear of witchcraft in Joan’s day, that time period’s belief in and reliance on prophecy, and on Joan’s many heavenly visions. More detail is also included on the battles Joan took part in, her capture, and the possible betrayals she faced.

In one way the greater detail may have a negative aspect: while there’s use of dialogue and quotations (many from primary sources), some appear to be the author’s guesses as to what Joan and her companions may have said.

*Joan of Arc: Warrior Saint* is a paperback book with only two illustrations: a map of Joan’s France and an illustration of the parts of Joan’s armor. There’s a “cast of characters” and a six page index, but no bibliographical or source information.

This book gives a nice overview of the Hundred Years War and Joan’s deep love of religion; it features the exploits of John the Bastard; and has a wonderful, detailed look at Joan’s life and death. *Joan of Arc: Warrior Saint* should appeal to older readers – its lack of illustrations makes it seem “older” and its attention to detail gives a fuller presentation of Joan of Arc’s story.

*Rosemarie DiCristo*

**Abraham Lincoln / by Billy Aronson. (Presidents and their times)**
LIB, 9780761428398, 34.21
B or 973.7/092 112 p.: ill. (some col.) ; 24 cm.
MS (INT) Rating: 4

Countless biographies of presidents, especially Abraham Lincoln, have been written for children. *Presidents and their Times: Abraham Lincoln* is one of many which follow a classic chronological format. The book begins with his poor, rural childhood, early jobs, self-education, his career in law and politics, and his eventual election as president. Aronson is careful to explain Lincoln’s views on slavery in the context of his political situation and awareness of the strong views of the American people on both sides of the issue. Lincoln’s passion to preserve the union, the complex politics and strategies involved with winning the Civil War, and his immediate concerns for Southern reconstruction are major themes. Personal information including his marriage, the death of his sons, and his assassination are included, but are not the
major focus.

As one of a series of presidential biographies, this book follows a straightforward format with chapters subdivided into key subjects allowing for efficient scanning for key information. The author focuses not only on the man, but the period of history in which he lived, how he impacted the world around him, and how he was ultimately affected by people, politics, and the world. Making judicious use of quotes, Aronson effectively explains the multifaceted politics surrounding Lincoln’s presidency. Using high quality photographs, political cartoons and drawings, as well as insets highlighting interesting subsets of information, Marshall Cavendish has created a child-friendly biography using clear, concise language which makes the book useful not only as a life-history, but also as a thorough overview of the Civil War. The book ends with a glossary, timeline, index, bibliography, and resources for further information.

Kristine Wildner

PAP, 9780310717881, 9.99

**Fic** 215 p.; 21 cm.


PAP, 9780310717898, 9.99

**Fic** 216 p.; 22 cm.

**HS (MS)**  Rating: 4

Prolific young adult author Melody Carlson continues her *On the Runway* series about two sisters in a reality TV show.

Paige and Erin Forrester have their own teen fashion TV show, but they are as different as night and day, both in personality and in their spiritual lives. This causes tension as they work together in the entertainment and fashion industry. Erin is a Christian who struggles to be a witness in the entertainment field. Her sister Paige is not a believer, and tends to make poor choices that threaten both the sisters' relationship with each other and the ongoing success of their show.

Erin is asked by the show's director to play “Jiminy Cricket” (a conscience) to Paige and to try to keep her out of trouble. But Paige is not the only one making poor choices. One friend becomes pregnant, one accidentally kills a former girlfriend through his drunk driving, and others deal with various relationship challenges as a result of choices they made.

In *Rendezvous*, the girls fly to Paris where their good intentions are lost, leading them to an unplanned week of filming at a runway model's family estate. They encounter romance, jealousy, and other surprises. Along the way they learn lessons about the cost of being in the spotlight.

In *Spotlight*, Paige and Erin take their reality show to London. They are bombarded by crazy fans, paparazzi, and more—and they both realize their lives have changed dramatically. Both are close to a breaking point with paparazzi hounding them, trying to report even hint of the smallest scandal.

These books focus more on character than plot development, but Carlson knows how to write for teens. Fans of Carlson's *Carter House Girls* series and readers of contemporary fiction will enjoy this series. *Spotlight* has discussion questions, while *Rendezvous* does not.

Recommended for middle and high school libraries and teen collections in public libraries.

_Carl R. Gehringer_

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HBB, 9780061667961, 17.99

**Fic** 278 p.; 19 cm.

**HS**  Rating: 4

In *Nothing but Ghosts*, sixteen-year-old Katie struggles to cope with the recent death of her mother from cancer. She lives with her father, who spends all of his time either restoring paintings or cooking. No holidays or birthdays have been celebrated since her mother died. She has a summer gardening job on an estate for Miss Martine, a social recluse. A romance develops between Katie and Danny, one of the co-workers on the estate.

When Katie learns that Miss Martine has not been seen by the townspeople for 53 years, she decides to find out why. She hopes that unearthing the secret to Miss Martine's...
disappearance from social life will help her cope with her mother’s death.

Beth Kephart does a good job of intertwining the two main plot lines in the story. Some parts of the novel are written in narrative poetry. The flashbacks are well written and important for understanding the main character’s actions and motivations. Descriptions of the background and characters are enhanced with similes and metaphors.

The story is told from the first person point of view. First person allows the reader to experience the same emotional roller coaster of grief as the main character.

The book will appeal to young adults who want to read a bittersweet story about the recovery process that is gone through after the loss of a loved one.

_Dianne Woodman_


HBB, 9780670011575, 16.99
Fic 318 p.; 22 cm.
HS (MS) Rating: 4

_Ashes_ is the story of Gaby Schramm, a young girl living in Berlin in the early 1930s. Thirteen-year-old Gaby is an avid reader who likes to go to movies and spend time with her best friend. But as Hitler rises to power, Gaby finds her life utterly changed. Nazi soldiers are seen throughout Berlin, even at the entrance to the zoo. Gaby’s beloved older sister, Ulla, becomes increasingly distant as she dates the mysterious Karl. When Gaby refuses to join the BDM, a division of the Hitler Youth, her favorite teacher turns against her. Many of Gaby’s favorite books are declared un-German and publicly burned. And though Gaby’s family is not Jewish, her father, a professor of astronomy, is branded a “White Jew” for his friendship with Albert Einstein, and the family must decide whether to stay in Germany or flee to America.

There are many books about World War II for young adults; however, few contain so much detail about Hitler’s rise to power. Gaby’s perspective as the daughter of an intellectual is unique and comes vividly to life through the first-person narration. The story is fast-paced, though occasional editorial errors are jarring. Detailed author’s notes at the beginning and end of the book divide fact from fiction and give background information on German life and politics during the rise of the Third Reich as well as biographical information about the real people who appear in the story, such as Albert Einstein and author Vicki Baum. Implied fornication and pregnancy out of wedlock provide background conflict. A scene depicting a public book-burning is frightening, but historically accurate and advances the plot. Readers will cheer Gaby’s desire to think independently. _Ashes_ is an excellent choice for middle and high school libraries.

_Elizabeth Norton_


HBB, 9780763639822, 17.99
Fic 362 p.; 21 cm.
HS (Adult) Rating: 3, w/ caution

_Chasing Orion_ is set during the polio epidemic of 1952 in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Precocious, eleven-year-old Georgie tells the story. She is obsessed with polio facts and
statistics. Her teen-aged neighbor, Phyllis, who is confined in an iron lung, provokes intense curiosity as well. Georgie urges her brother Emmett to befriend Phyllis without comprehending the emotional complications that result. The effect Phyllis has on Georgie and her brother is the centerpiece of the story.

Georgie is isolated from old friends due to a move across town. Group activities are restricted due to the dangers of polio infection. These limitations give her ample time to focus on the horrors of polio, her own fears, and the lives of others.

Georgie makes a new best friend, Evelyn, whose professional, intellectually driven family offers a counterpoint to Georgie’s more conventional household. The girls are drawn together by their intellectual curiosity and feelings of displacement within their social sphere.

Despite Kathryn Lasky’s history as an award-winning author, the story lacks the cohesion and tight narrative one would expect. Although the polio information and astronomy facts appear to be accurate, some cultural anachronisms jolt the reader out of the time period. Georgie’s perceptions, vocabulary, and viewpoint seem more contemporary to the present, as well as inappropriate to her age and the 50’s era.

Several uses of profanity, including six uses of God or Jesus as cursing, show up. Implicit sexual activity is noted and mulled over by the sharp-eyed heroine, including speculation about her brother and the disabled Phyllis.

The author considers the morality of euthanasia, along with questions about the fairness of God, and some not-so-subtle stereotyping of grade school Christians.

Ambivalence, ambiguity, and death without an eternal destination seem to wrap up the conclusion with new age implications.

Deborah H. Rabern


HBB, 9780547194899, 16.00

Fic 332 p.; 22 cm.

HS (Adult) Rating: 3

Although only fifteen-years-old, Blake has a complicated life. Granted, he’s brought most of that complication on himself by getting involved in a love triangle with his girlfriend Shannon, whom he loves, and Marissa, whom he considers a close friend.

In Flash Burnout, L. K. Madigan’s debut novel, readers discover the voice and thoughts of Blake, whose hormone-induced outlook on life is tempered by the quirkiness of his family and his comedic comebacks. Through first person narrative Blake chronicles his sophomore year that is filled with first loves, complicated friendships, and difficult situations. His outlook on life is “gritty,” as his photographer teacher says, and he needs to find the “heart.”

This YA novel has it all—drugs, sex, and rock and roll—and it works. Madigan writes about the ups, downs, lusts, and life of Blake with ease. For the most part, the teen dialogue and interactions ring true, although sometimes it comes off a little too contrived or sophisticated. Concerns include language, ranging from mild to strong, teen sex (and lots of talk about it), and rude slang. This is all in
Teenagers often think their world will never change, that things will continue on just as they are right now, including the main character in Boys, Bears, and a Serious Pair of Hiking Boots, Jenna. Jenna is seventeen-year-old environmentalist who participates in and heads up different activities for her Green Teen Team to support. Running from an inevitable change in her family life in New Jersey, Jenna decides to spend the summer in far away Canada with her godmother. Over the summer Jenna learns that some changes are good, while others are not. She also discovers the person she really is outside of the Green Teen Team.

While everything does come together in the end, the majority of Boys, Bears, and a Serious Pair of Hiking Boots seems to be just the senseless ramblings of the main character, with no plot or direction. It almost seems as if the plot were an afterthought that the author, Abby McDonald, decided to add just enough of towards the end to give the book some semblance of meaning.

The book contains casual remarks about premarital sex among the teenagers and swearing, as well as a character who struggles with his issues of “coming out” with his gay lifestyle.

Ruth O’Neil
known as The Grawl. This allegorical tale is woven with magical elements that resonate with Narnia and The Hobbit.

Readers unfamiliar with The Vanishing Sculptor will be at a disadvantage if reading Dragons of the Valley first. Author Donita Paul jumps right into the story without much back-story. Once the story begins though, the plot is strong enough to carry its own. Nevertheless, the appendix is appreciated until characters, places, and other Chiril elements are firmly placed in the reader’s mind. Paul is able to create a whimsical quest-tale, yet brings in allegorical components of trusting God without weighing down the plot. Though the ending seems rushed, it is satisfying.

Pam Webb


PAP, 9780547258737, 8.99
Fic 424 p.; 18 cm.
HS (Mature) Rating: 4, w/ caution

Streams of Babel by Carol Plum-Ucci plunges into a possible terrorist attack on the United States. At first, seventeen-year-old Cora's mother's death appears to be a drug overdose. But when Scott's mother dies and teens from the same neighborhood become ill, suspicions filter toward a possible release of a deadly biochemical in the water supply. Desperate to find an answer, US officials fly Shahzad, a Pakistani teen computer hacker, to New Jersey to spy on suspected terrorists chatting online in an American Internet cafe. Will he discover the plan before others die, or will the terrorists discover his work and set out to kill him as well?

Each chapter drives fast-paced developments through first person accounts from a large cast of international characters. Interestingly enough, each character is written first person past tense except Shahzad, the Pakistani teen, who is written first person present tense. When I interviewed Plum-Ucci as to her reasoning, she stated, “The "ultimate hero" changes from reader to reader, and I’m no different.” Streams of Babel is classified as horror, and therefore intended for mature readers. This book is recommended with caution because of profane and vulgar language.

Mary Vee

Red glass / Laura Resau. (Readers circle) NEW YORK: DELACORTE PRESS, 2009. LCCN 2007002408.

HBB, 9780385734660, 15.99
PAP, 9780440240259, 8.99
Fic 275, 18 p.
HS Rating: 4
In *Red Glass*, sixteen-year-old Sophie is socially awkward and irrationally fearful of germs, car wrecks, and becoming an orphan. She befriends Pablo, a six-year-old boy, whose parents were killed while trying to cross illegally into the United States. She embarks on a journey with her Great Aunt Dika, Mr. Lorenzo, and his son Angel to return Pablo to his relatives in Mexico.

Sophie and Angel develop romantic feelings for one another. Angel and his father go to Guatemala to find some family jewels; while there Angel is viciously beaten for refusing to join a gang. Sophie travels alone to Guatemala so she can deliver documents needed by Angel and his father. The kindness of strangers enables her to safely reach her destination. Sophie realizes that pushing herself to cope with difficult circumstances is the reason she is no longer hindered by irrational fears.

Laura Resau emphasizes the character’s emotions. The book portrays different ways hatred and love affect peoples’ lives. The author does an excellent job of using the five senses to create vivid images of poverty-stricken areas in Mexico and Guatemala. The use of similes to paint visual pictures adds depth to the writing, and flashbacks are well integrated into the plot.

Some of the dialogue is written in Spanish and German, and some words cannot be figured out from context clues. Sophie takes part in a spiritual cleansing ritual, and watches corn husk throwing divination.

Discussion questions at the end of the book enrich the story. The book is a useful resource for understanding why families risk their lives to illegally cross the border into the United States.

*Dianne Woodman*

**Tournaments, cocoa & one wrong move / Nancy Rue. (Real life ; 3) Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2010. LCCN 2010023289.**

PAP, 9780310714866, 9.99  
Fic 252 p.; 22 cm.  
HS (MS) Rating: 5

Nancy Rue continues to provide a wholesome alternative to popular literature with her teen series that deals with real-life issues. In *Tournaments, Cocoa, & One Wrong Move*, everything seems to be perfect in Cassidy’s life. She makes good grades and is the school’s star basketball player. Even college recruiters are showing interest in her. Cassidy lives for basketball and for a potential future in college basketball.

When Cassidy is badly injured, forcing her to possibly be out for the rest of the season, she starts making choices that increase her problems instead of solving them. One of the choices she makes involves drugs. In her drive to reach the goal, Cassidy doesn’t consider the consequences of her actions. It affects her friendships, as well as her relationships with her team and her family members. She falsely accuses her best friend of turning her in, and she is kicked off the team. Cassidy has to deal with the realization that she unknowingly took drugs because she unwisely trusted her brother’s fiancée.

As her world falls apart, Cassidy finds a strange book that just might hold some answers. Every time she picks up this book, it seems to have the right words for her current situation, and it helps
Heartless / Anne Elisabeth Stengl. (Tales of Goldstone Wood ; 1) Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010. LCCN 2010006229.
PAP, 9780764207808, 14.99
Fic 363 p.; 22 cm.
HS (MS) Rating: 4
In her debut novel, Anne Elisabeth Stengl spins an interesting twist on a fairy tale with a spiritual allegory to the delight of her readers.
Princess Una of Parumvir dreams of marrying a charming prince, but things don’t quite work out the way she imagines. Una thinks Prince Aethelbald is boring and unromantic. He travels from the land of Farthestshore and brings warnings of a dragon rumored to be approaching Parumvir. When she rejects his offer, he tells her that he will return a later date. She ignores his warnings of danger, and dire consequences occur. Prince Leonard, a more charming prince, arrives in the role of a Fool. He befriends her, and Una is smitten. He departs to his own country, saying he will be back but he does not plan to return. Having given her heart away, she is easy prey to the Dragon King. Aethelbald returns to save the day, risking everything to win her back.

Heartless is a spiritual allegory with Prince Aethelbald playing a Christ-like, redeemer image. More plot-driven than character-driven, there are unexpected twists that are delightful, but there are also some parts about two-thirds of the way that get bogged down a bit. The Twelve Year Market that doesn’t necessarily appear every twelve years and sells only fairy goods is an imaginative addition.
Like true fairy tales, this book is meant to show a moral or lesson: giving your heart away unwisely results in consequences. There are no direct spiritual references. Despite some major bumps in the road, there is a happy ending to this story.
Recommended for middle and high school libraries, as well as teen collections in public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer

HBB, 9780545054744, 17.99
Fic 312 p.; 22 cm.
HS Rating: 5, w/caution

Marcelo In The Real World is a gripping mystery told through the eyes of a 17-year-old boy with high functioning autism. Marcelo is happy in his structured environment—taking care of horses, listening to his inner music, and studying religion. But when summer comes his father says he must enter “the real world.” Instead of working at his beloved stable, Marcelo must work in the mailroom at his father’s powerful law firm. Marcelo is forced out of his comfort zone where he must learn to multi-task, read facial
emotions, decide who to trust, and make ethical decision. One day Marcelo finds a photo of a disfigured girl and fears that the law firm may be covering up a scandal. With the help of his co-worker and friend, Jasmine, he uncovers the story behind the photo and must decide whether to do what is easy, or what is right.

Marcelo gives us a pure-hearted and beautiful commentary on what he sees around him. The narrative persistently stays true to his autistic character, the prose is sparse, formal, and he frequently forgets to use first person. Marcelo is a bright and sympathetic hero who shows us the world through new eyes. Marcelo is mentored by a Jewish rabbi, and studies many different religions. There are many profanities throughout the book, as well as several scenes with coarse sexual references. Although Marcelo stays pure throughout the story, he comes face-to-face with the sins of those around him. Only recommended to mature readers.

Ellie Ann Soderstrom


HBB, 9780545085724, 17.99
Fic 330 p.; 22 cm.
HS Rating: 3

In Distant Waves, Jane, Mimi, Amelie, Emma, and Blythe live in the small town of Spirit Vale with their psychic mother. Jane is confused and skeptical about the spiritualism industry.

When Jane is sixteen, she interviews the eccentric inventor Nikola Tesla for an article she wants to write for a newspaper contest. She is attracted to his assistant, Thad. She attends a psychic convention in England with her family, and is excited to learn that Thad and Nikola are there as well.

After Jane hears a prediction that the Titanic will sink, she is worried for Mimi and Blythe who are traveling with their employers on the ship. Jane, Amelie, and Emma try and stop them from sailing—and end up as stowaways. Jane finds out Thad is on board with Tesla, who is hoping to convince a couple of wealthy passengers to invest in his inventions. Can Tesla save them from the voyage's tragic end?

The book’s main plot focuses on psychic readings and how they affect people’s lives. The book’s subplot focuses on the sailing and subsequent sinking of the Titanic.

The author has included a number of historical figures in the storyline who portray both their belief and disbelief in psychic abilities. The spirit mediums use ouija boards, tarot cards, automatic writing, and crystal balls.

Distant Waves will appeal to readers who are interested in learning about some of the inventions of well-known scientists and the impact psychic readings can have on a person’s life. The author presents two sides to the question of whether contacting spirits in the afterlife is a real or fake occurrence without trying to sway the reader’s decision either way.

Dianne Woodman

HBB, 9780670011247, 16.99
B or 973.4/6092 97 p.: ill. ; 24 cm.
HS (MS) Rating: 4

In The Duel, Judith St. George explores the similarities and differences between Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr. Hamilton was born in poverty as an illegitimate child in the West Indies, and Burr into a high-society family in the American colonies. Both were orphaned at a young age and went on to become respected soldiers, attorneys, patriots, and politicians. As attorneys and political rivals, Burr and Hamilton were often at odds with one another, but they eventually became friends. Their friendship was short-lived, however, and in 1804 Burr challenged Hamilton to a duel. Early on the morning of July 11, 1804, Burr and Hamilton dueled at Weehawken, New Jersey. Hamilton was fatally injured and later buried with full military honors. Though Burr was indicted for murder in Hamilton’s death, he escaped before he could stand trial and lived the rest of his life out of the public eye.

While primarily a joint biography of Hamilton and Burr, this book also provides a good picture of life in the American colonies just before and after the Revolutionary War. Much attention is paid to detail including what a typical day was like for Hamilton and Burr as college students and in the military. St. George presents her information in such a way that it is easy to see the almost eerie similarities between Hamilton’s and Burr’s lives—and the reader leaves with a clear understanding of the events leading up to the duel. The narrative is highly detailed and flows easily, though transitions are sometimes awkward. Chapters are arranged chronologically with each divided into a section on Burr’s life and one on Hamilton’s; divisions are clearly marked with pictures. An extensive bibliography provides resources for further reading and research and makes this a solid choice for report writers.

Elizabeth Norton
   PAP, 9780899578842, 14.99
   Fic v, 419 p.; 23 cm.
   Adult (HS) Rating: 5
There is a twist in this science-fiction/fantasy series about dragons and humans: the dragons have enslaved humans for generations. This is the first book aimed at older readers by Bryan Davis.

In Masters & Slayers, Adrian attempts to rescue the human captives from his planet Major Four who are enslaved on Starlight, another planet. He is accompanied by Marcelle, a passionate sword maiden whose impulsive nature sometimes gets her into trouble. They have to overcome a conspiracy on their home planet, learn to work together, and decide whether or not they can truly trust others—including a dragon—that they meet as they try to free the Lost Ones. The slaves themselves thwart their rescue attempts, for they have no memory of their origins and are reluctant to believe their rescuers.

The Tales of Starlight series is meant to share some storylines from the Dragons of Starlight series. In Starlighter (Dragons of Starlight), teenaged Jason Masters receives a cryptic message from his missing older brother, Adrian. Both are involved in trying to free the human slaves. However, Starlighter, is aimed for a younger audience. There are some portions of Masters & Slayers that are not appropriate for younger readers—for instance, the dragons use the human slaves for breeding purposes, and the violence is realistic.

Packed with plenty of action and plot twists, this book will engage and satisfy the older reader. Davis does a good job in both developing a plot and characters that will inspire the reader. Older readers of his earlier series will enjoy reading about the parallel stories in both the Tales of Starlight and Dragons of Starlight series.

Recommended for all adult and teen collections in public and school libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer

   HBB, 9781599951959, 24.99
   PAP, 9780446547208, 7.99
   Fic 401 p.; 24 cm.
   Adult (HS) Rating: 4
Ted Dekker writes another intriguing and suspenseful novel with some spiritual application. In BoneMan's Daughters, BoneMan is a serial killer that has been lying low for the last couple of years—after another man was charged in the horrific murders of seven young women. Now the freshly released real BoneMan sees his opportunity to rise up and continue his search for the perfect daughter. He thinks he's found his candidate in Bethany Evans. He knows her parents do not love Bethany as they should. He could be the perfect dad if she could only be the perfect daughter. But her real father has something to say about that. Ryan Evans is determined to get his daughter back from the BoneMan by showing her just how much he does love her.

The plot of BoneMan's Daughters moves steadily and pulls the reader right along with it. Dekker changes point of view from Boneman to other characters in the book, which adds to the suspense. Dekker leaves one point of view just when something big
is about to happen. This is definitely a book for adults and maybe some mature young adults because of war violence and extensive discussion on bones breaking. There is some slang and taking the Lord’s name in vain; this takes place mostly in the beginning of the book.

Ruth O’Neil


PAP, 9780800732394, 13.99

Fic 345 p.; 22 cm.

Adult (HS) Rating: 4

The Outsider is a historical romance about Gabrielle Hope. Gabrielle and her mother join the Harmony Hill Shaker community to escape a life of poverty. Upon arrival, they are segregated: Gabrielle is put in the girl’s dormitory, her mother with the women. Shakers dissolve family units believing they cause stress—which draws individuals away from their daily work and worship. Outsiders are discouraged for the same reason. Gabrielle is enveloped in the religious environment and finds solace in gardening, praying, singing, and dancing. On the brink of womanhood, she looks forward to dedicating her life to Eternal Father and Mother Ann. But when she meets Doctor Brice Scott, an outsider, Gabrielle’s life is changed forever.

When the Shaker’s barn catches fire Gabrielle’s ‘gift of knowing’ sees Nathan, a friend, inside the burning building. Her warning shouts cause Doctor Scott to rush into the barn, find Nathan, and carry him to the sickroom where he works to save the boy’s life. Gabrielle is asked to help and while there, the doctor’s kindness to her and empathy for Nathan makes her question the Shaker’s opinion of outsiders.

The Outsider is a poignant yet predictable back-and-forth love story. Ann H. Gabhart’s historical notes detail the Shaker’s founder, Ann Lee, who claimed to be the second coming of Christ in female form. The author’s believable characters and conscientious research enrich her story.

Maxine Cambra


LCCN 2006100494.

PAP, 9781600061318, OP, buy used

Fic 477 p.; 21 cm.


LCCN 2007033177.

PAP, 9781600061332, OP, buy used

Fic 391 p.; map; 21 cm.

Adult (HS, MS) Rating: 5


LCCN 2007015672.

PAP, 9781600061325, OP, buy used

Fic 405 p.; 22 cm.

Adult (HS, MS) Rating: 5

In The Restorer, when stressed-out soccer mom Susan Mitchell retreats to her attic hideaway with her journal and Bible, she starts hearing strange sounds. As she picks up an old plastic sword she’s immediately pulled into an alternate world. Guardian Tristan and his brother-in-law Kieran find her and discover that she has the gifts of a Restorer. In the midst of her sense of inadequacy and uncertainty, the One challenges Susan to surrender to His direction and proceed
in faith.

In *The Restorer’s Son*, Susan and Mark return through the portal and find that their 18-year-old son, Jake, has been captured by Cameron and deceived by Medea. Meanwhile, the new Restorer is Kieran, a reluctant skeptic who finally yields to the One’s call for him to take the Verses to Hazor.

In *The Restorer’s Journey*, Cameron and Medea collect weapons, grab Susan, and go back to their own world. Since Mark is no longer able to get through the portal, Jake, the new Restorer, goes to rescue his mother, who has been taken to Rhus as a subject for mental manipulation, but is redirected by the One.

In her first fantasy series, Sharon Hinck has created a richly detailed alternate world with unique, well-developed characters. The first person point of view in the first book is Susan’s, the other books shift back and forth between Susan’s and the other Restorers’ points of view. In the characters’ internal dialogs with the One, they see His love and learn to “surrender” in faith, “yield,” or “follow Me.” Both Verses from their oral Records and several Bible texts are used to counteract Rhusican lying mind poison. One poem set to music is found at the end of each book—along with a map, glossary, and reader’s guide. With its action-packed plot, young fantasy fans should not be deterred by the occasional practical hints for readers confronting feelings of inadequacy. *The Restorer* was a finalist for the 2008 Christy Award in the Visionary category. Highly recommended.

Donna W. Bowling


PAP, 9780307458834, 16.99

Fic 336 p.; 22 cm.

Adult Rating: 4

Jane Lindsay’s husband, Brad, has left her. Her comfortable life and marriage hang by a thread. Then, in a box of antiques found at a British jumble sale, Jane finds a mysterious ring tucked inside a book—a ring bearing her name.

Lucy Day serves as a dressmaker for Lady Jane Grey in 16th century England. Through Lucy’s eyes, readers get to know Lady Jane, a young woman controlled by her parents and the tumultuous political climate of her time. These forces threaten Lady Jane’s chance for happiness, true love, and the ability to choose her own path in life.

The stories of Jane Lindsay and Lady Jane merge through the journey of the ring. Both women share the ring and the ability to choose their own destinies. They must realize the power of their own choices before their lives are chosen for them.

*Lady in Waiting*, by Susan Meissner, delicately and seamlessly blends the past with the present in this tale of decisions and choosing wisely. Both women in the story vividly spring to life. The modern narrative feels true to life while the passages set in the 16th century transport readers to a harsh but beautiful period. Carefully chosen details illuminate the book.

Strong voices and strong characterizations fill the pages. Especially intriguing is Lucy. With her love and commitment to her mistress, she brings genuine emotion to
Lady Jane’s struggles.  
A hopeful tale with a strong, empowering message.  
Jaclyn S. Miller

Dark in the city of light / Paul Robertson.  
LCCN 2010011009.  
PAP, 9780764205699, 14.99  
Fic 414 p.; maps; 22 cm.  
Adult (HS) Rating: 4  
*Dark in the City of Light* is a novel set during the Franco Prussian War. The three main characters in the book are Baron Ferdinand Harsanyi, his son Rudolph, and daughter Therese. Each one of them has a very different perspective on the war. Due to the mysterious death of the Baron’s wife, he is now in control of her cinnabar mines—and both sides of the war make him promises if he will sell. Therese is lost and in love, but is her love interest really who he says he is? Rudolph is thrown into uncomfortable situations mainly because that is where his father wants him. He learns information that, once proved, could paint his father in a horrific light. The misconceptions held by these three cause distrust and fear in the family.  
Paul Robertson includes something for everyone in this book. There is suspense, romance, and a story based on real events in history, including famous characters from the Franco Prussian War—such as Richard and Pauline von Metternich. Many of the events woven into the story are historically accurate, making this book a good read as well as somewhat educational.  
Ruth O’Neil

If tomorrow never comes: a novel / Marlo Schalesky.  
LCCN 2008044281.  
PAP, 9781601420244, 12.99  
Fic 339 p.; 21 cm.  
Adult (HS) Rating: 5  
*If Tomorrow Never Comes* tells of childhood sweethearts Kinna and Jimmy, who dream of children and a house by the sea. Despite this dream of marrying and living happily ever after, they experience years of infertility—crushing their hopes for a family. Kinna is so full of pain and desperate for a child that she makes an unwise choice which threatens their marriage and life together.  
Walking along the beach, Kinna rescues an elderly woman who seems to pull their past, present, and future together. The woman appears out of nowhere, acting as a voice of wisdom at various points of the story. Jimmy and Kinna must decide whether they will embrace God’s plan for them or watch their love wash away like the sand castles they once built on the beach.  
In *Shades of Morning*, two sisters are estranged. When Rose dies, leaving Emmit, a son with Down’s syndrome, to Marnie’s care, she is completely caught off-guard. She never knew about her others. The main characters in *If Tomorrow Never Comes* show up as minor characters in *Shades of Morning*.
nephew and feels ill-equipped to care for him. Marnie is overwhelmed by regrets and guilt about her past. Taylor, her sister’s lawyer, is the man Marnie had once loved and left behind. With the arrival of Emmit and Taylor, Marnie must face the regrets and sorrows of her past or decide to run away from them again.

These novels are more character-driven than plot-driven, although the plot is tightly written. There are surprising plot twists in both books involving the elderly woman and Emmit. Both have spiritual implications and are handled deftly. Kinna and Marnie are transformed by the choices they make, and the consequences. An author’s note and reader’s guide are included in each book.

Recommended for high school collections and public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer


PAP, 9780307459046, 6.99
Fic viii, 390 p.; 21 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 4

In Saturday Morning, Lauraine Snelling creates the Girl Squad—four women whose paths merge at a San Francisco homeless shelter that needs retrofitted. Andy, a small-town Oregon mom, owns Lavender Meadows, a home-based company on her family farm. Her husband ignores both her accomplishments and desires when his new promotion requires them to live in San Francisco. Clarice, a wealthy widow, is cheated on by her new husband and finds herself homeless and virtually penniless in a strange city. A street person directs her to Casa de Jesus, the shelter run by Hope and her husband Roger. Clarice becomes an invaluable member of the shelter’s office staff just in time for Hope to become bedridden with a difficult pregnancy. Julia, a lawyer from the Midwest, arrives at the shelter searching for her runaway granddaughter and begins to teach job skills classes while she tracks down both her granddaughter and Clarice’s husband. The four women band together in prayer as they grow in faith and strive to save the shelter.

This novel of contemporary fiction successfully addresses many modern dilemmas Christian women face. The setting of a homeless shelter ministry to reforming addicts and prostitutes introduces an unsavory subculture. While avoiding lurid details, Ms. Snelling presents hope, albeit of a different stripe than readers may be accustomed to. The disparate cast of characters highlights the theme of Christian women supporting each other as they learn to put feet to faith while walking through life’s valleys. As the women battle callousness, homelessness, and fear, conflicts resolve in satisfying yet surprising ways that do not just give pat answers. The women’s challenges cover the gamut of relationship problems—marital, parental, and business. Young adults will benefit from seeing the consequences of life choices.

Rebecca Velez

PAP, 9780310284741, 16.99
248.8/45  288 p. : chart, diagram ; 24 cm.

Adult Rating: 4

Moms’ Ultimate Guide to the Tween Girl World, is written to help mothers equip their daughters for the often-difficult transition from child to teenager. The book focuses on four concerns many of today’s eight to twelve year old girls have: Who am I? Am I pretty enough? What’s happening to my body? And do they like me? Nancy Rue, with thirty-five years experience parenting, teaching, writing for, and working with tween girls, offers a full exploration of these concerns, using real-life scenarios, statistics, Scripture, readers’ self-assessment, and guidelines mothers can use to apply each chapter’s concepts. There are five pages of endnotes. The Bible translation used is The Message.

Rue is mainly concerned with freeing a young girl to be her own true self. Her attempts to guide mothers in helping their daughters achieve this permeates every page of the book. Rue is often painfully blunt, and expects the women using her guide to be equally blunt in assessing their parenting skills.

This is a book that takes commitment. In keeping with her view that the Bible isn’t an instruction manual, but a guide to forming a relationship with God, Rue doesn’t offer a quick list of practical tips on helping tweens become vibrant women. Rather, her book is more of a conversation between friends. It’s sometimes wordy, with many “in jokes” and snarky comments that may offend some readers, and frequent use of words like ‘boobs,’ ‘butt,’ and ‘pee.’ More problematic, Rue too often writes things like, “For more information on how to accomplish such-and-such, see that chapter in one of my other books.”

Rue is a fan of “open-handed parenting,” and while her book can seem touchy-feely, it’s also a thought-provoking look at ways modern mothers can help their daughters become strong, faith-filled, and compassionate women.

Rosemarie DiCristo


PAP, 9780817015688, 14.00
B or 618.92/85882/0092 xiv, 140 p. ; 18 cm.

Adult Rating: 5

Author Kathleen Bolduc is the mother of a young adult son with autism and moderate intellectual disabilities. She has shared their story in dozens of publications and books. In Autism & Alleluias she gives the reader a series of vignettes through which God’s grace to her son, Joel, and to their family, is demonstrated. Some of the subjects that she touches on are childlike faith, humility, trust, and unconditional love. Any parent of a child with an autism spectrum disorder will find comfort and encouragement in this book; each vignette reads as a daily devotion. All parents will find nuggets of truth that ring true and touch the heart. This is a moving and inspiring account of a precious life that uplifts the reader and draws her/him closer to the source of Mrs.
bolduc’s strength, her lord and savior.

Ceil Carey

*  

HBB, 9780849900419, 21.99
PAP, 0, 14.99
B or 976.4/53150630922
237 p.; 24 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: *5

Same kind of different as me: A modern-day slave, an international art dealer, and the unlikely woman who bound them together by Ron Hall and Denver Moore is truly an unlikely story, until you factor in God. I picked up the book, thinking it might be interesting. Little did I know I would find an amazing story of God’s love and concern made manifest, because of the obedience of one woman.

The story unfolds in the first person narrative alternating between Ron and Denver. It is very well done and gives incredible insight in how people see and interpret events very differently. Because the authors are honest with their feelings, emotions, prejudices and struggle, the reader is the richer watching their development and maturity.

Deborah Hall, Ron’s wife has a heart to obey God’s call to be a part of an outreach to the homeless. Ron on the other hand says, “I wish I could say that God had tapped me for the assignment too, but I didn’t. But I did feel called to be a good husband, so I went”.

Soon after they started volunteering Debbie points out a man that has just had a violent outburst of anger and says, “I really think God’s laid it on my heart that you need to reach out to him”. Ever-honest Ron replies “Sorry but I wasn’t at that meeting where you heard from God.” Thus, the journey that began with a desire to be a good husband evolves into a life changing experience for all.

This is a story that is so much more than a story. It is delightful, funny sad and challenging. It speaks of unbelievable hardships, horrors, pain, prejudice, love, friendship and service. Nevertheless, best of all it it illustrates the heart of God in the most unlikely places.

Gail Whitney
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