What Bluebirds Do

Pamela F. Kirby
A Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Today I am writing primarily to librarians and teachers. When we were in our early years at CLJ, people like you enlivened CLJ with articles related to books and libraries. They shared their ideas, projects, lesson plans in short articles for the journal. And many of them were reviewers for CLJ. Today we still have reviewers who are librarians and teachers, and they often base their choices of what to review on the needs of their school library. The books they review become part of their library.

How about you? Would you be interested in earning free books for your library? Are you interested in sharing good ideas with others like yourselves?

Note on the home page of our website a call for articles. Email me your ideas.

Or go to the Reviewers section, read the material there, and if still interested, fill out the reviewer’s application.

Each reviewer or writer for CLJ determines what level of involvement he/she wants. Some review many books, and others only a few.

Please make this a matter of prayer, if you feel God is calling you to join this group of volunteers, producing a journal many find helpful.

In Christ’s love,

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

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


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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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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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I will not be afraid / by Michelle Medlock Adams ; illustrated by Jeremy Tugeau. Saint Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House, 2008. LCCN .

HBB: 9780758613356, $14.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm.
PS (PRI) Rating: 4

Thunderstorms, strange dogs, the dark—there are a lot of things that can be frightening to a child. *I Will Not Be Afraid* by Michelle Medlock Adams addresses these and other fearful situations in her picture book. Simple rhyming verse assurances accompanied by an appropriate scripture provide a pleasant means for allaying childhood qualms and concerns. The soft pastel illustrations by Jeremy Tugeau that are juxtaposed with the line drawings frame the text and verse well.

Verse picture books can often fall into the “too cute” category, yet this one flows with a natural bounce that helps with an uncomfortable topic for many children: fear. The appealing illustrations feature a little girl and parents of possible mixed heritage, which widens the audience interest potential. The scripture-based text forms a gentle lesson of how God watches over all and how he is aware of all needs, all the time. The book’s message of quiet reassurance creates opportunities for discussions and there is also a parenting moment suggestion at the end of the book.

*Pam Webb*


HBB: 9781590785621, $16.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm.
PS (K) Rating: 3

The wonder of winter compels children to ask, “Will it snow soon?” This feeling of anticipation is captured in the picture book *Mama, Will It Snow Tonight?* by Nancy White Carlstrom. The soft textured illustrations by Paul Tong complement the text well. The story is conveyed with a few repetitious words, yet the recurring text captures that continual questioning that accompanies the youthful longing for that first seasonal snowfall.

This is an unusual picture book in a few ways. The dreamy quality of the book helps to transcend verisimilitude checks, such as why are a fox and a rabbit together in the woods with the mother and child? Why are berry picking and jam making being done in winter, when they are usually done in summer? Also, the child seems too old to be continually asking about the snowfall. Yet, it does somehow pull together, perhaps due to the surreal sense due to the smudged style of the illustrations and the text’s slow cadence. The text is not settling if read like a usual story, nor does it read well if approached as a poem—instead, the rhythm is that of the quiet exchange of mother and child, the passing of time as they wait for that special moment together. Carlstrom fans might be surprised by this new offering, if used to her light and breezy Jesse Bear series. This book is more like her tender and thoughtful *Before You Were Born*. Those looking at capturing the stillness and wonder of winter time will want to turn to *Mama, Will It Snow Tonight?*  

*Pam Webb*

HBB: 9780761455462, $17.99
E or 398.2  1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 cm.
PRI Rating: 4

Little Sister and the Month Brothers by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers is a classic brought back to life. Poor Little Sister lives with a cruel stepmother and stepsister. Each day Little Sister slaves about the house doing all the work while the stepmother and stepsister sit around. As the years pass, Little Sister's beauty becomes a topic of jealousy. One day the stepmother pushes Little Sister out in the middle of a blistering storm to fetch fresh violets. Trudging through the snow with no coat, Little Sister happens upon the Month Brothers. Pleased with her kindness, the Month Brothers decided to help Little Sister.

Tomes pen, ink, and poster paint illustrations, crafted at her kitchen table, revive a style of art from yesteryear. These drawings won the Children’s Book Showcase award in 1977. Most of the full color illustrations include snippets of dialogue amplifying the text. A few of the text blocks contain words such as “stupid”.

Regniers retells a favored Slavic folktale handed down for generations in her family. Marshall Cavendish Corporation is reviving classic titles from children’s literature for a new generation to enjoy. Titles are selected that have withstood the test of time.

We recommend this book to folklore and fairytale readers. Mary Vee


HBB: 9780061626548, $14.99
Fic  94 p. : col. ill. ; 19 cm.
PRI INT   Rating: 5

Emmaline and the Bunny unfolds life in the town of Neatasapin where Emmaline just doesn’t fit in. The mayor of Neatasapin and all the residents make tidiness their goal, but Emmaline is messy. Most of all, Emmaline wants a nice, snuggly bunny to play with, but in Neatasapin, bunnies outside of cages are declared too untidy. When Emmaline learns of a place called “Untidy,” she instinctively knows that she will find a place where she fits in. In Untidy, Emmaline befriends a talking bunny. Unfortunately, Emmaline learns that her very presence there will put her new friend in danger, so she chooses to keep the bunny safe by returning home. Before she leaves, she is informed that if she creates an appropriate habitat—called an invitation—maybe her new friend, the bunny, can come to Neatasapin. Creating an “invitation” will put her parents at risk of the mayor’s wrath, but not creating an invitation will invite Emmaline’s misery.

Katherine Hannigan’s character, Emmaline, shows the loneliness that being different from others often creates. Emmaline’s growth as a character occurs as she learns that loving others means putting their well-being above her own desires. The setting plays an integral role in the plot as the very name of the town, Neatasapin, shows the initial conflict with Emmaline, who lives on “Ship-
Shape Street.” Words like, “dinglederrydee” and “hoopalala” enhance Hannigan’s rhythmic prose. The combination of these nonsensical words and Emmaline’s quirky personality create a humor all their own, even though the story in itself is not humorous. The plot, though basic, unfolds quickly and creates an interesting read. The watercolor illustrations are endearing and a delight to enjoy with the story. An emphasis on conservation and creating habitats that preserve wildlife does not overshadow the theme, everyone needs a place where they belong.

Kristina Wolcott

HBB: 9780761455615, $15.99  
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 x 29 cm.  
PRI PS Rating: 4

Cool Dog, School Dog is a bouncy rhyming story about Tinka, an active dog who hates to be alone while her boy goes to school. This is the sequel to Deborah Heiligman’s Fun Dog, Sun Dog. Tinka sneaks to school while Mom isn’t looking, and becomes “a cool dog, a school dog, a breaking-all-the-rules dog.” The angry teacher calls Mom to come and get Tinka. However, things start looking up for Tinka when the children need a dog to read books to! Tinka is invited every day to sit in the book nook and listen to children. “A look dog, a nook dog, a loves-to-hear-a-book dog,” reads the text.

Tim Bowers creates cute cartoon illustrations using acrylic paint. He depicts the emotions of kids and dog perfectly while showing Tinka in trouble as well as Tinka happily listening to kids read. Children and even adults will be attracted to this loveable dog. Full-color illustrations grace each page. School counselors and teachers who use pet therapy would especially like this book. Children could also come up with their own rhymes for their pets using Heiligman’s catchy style. Dog-lovers of all ages will enjoy the simple flowing text.

Tina M. Cho

PBB: 9780761456155, $7.99  
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 16 x 14 cm.  
PS Rating: 4

Firefighters! Speeding! Spraying! Saving! is an action-packed board book that will keep little firefighters and their parents on the edge of their seats as they rush from the fire station to the scene of a fire and back again. Patricia Hubbell’s rhymes and sound words will keep young children coming back for more. The book begins and ends with a clanging bell as the firefighters rush down the pole to get dressed. Don’t forget the Dalmatian, Spot. “Sirens screech—Whee-ahh! Whooo! Pumper truck comes zooming through!” Ladders, a hatchet, a hydrant, a hose, saws, axes, and sledges are used to rescue a family. The tired firefighters rest back at the station until the bell clangs again.

Viviana Garofoli’s colorful, computerized full-page illustrations enhance the text.
and attract little children to this board book. It’s a perfect size for young kids to hold and peruse on their own. The pictures can stand alone for those non-readers, as they tell the story in their own words. This is perfect for preschool and kindergarten teachers to share with their classes as they talk about community helpers. This book is part of the “Things That Go” series written by Hubbell.

Tina M. Cho


HBB: 9780525477891, $16.99
PAP: 9780142414248, $6.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm.
PRI Rating: 5

At school for Career Day, children are discussing their parents’ fascinating jobs. But when one girl stands and shares that her father changes light bulbs, her classmates scoff. Little do they know, this light bulb stands at the top of a landmark—the Empire State Building! As the girl shares about her father’s job and how she assists him, her classmates learn that even the most unassuming jobs matter.

The Top Job by Elizabeth Cody Kimmel offers readers an inside glimpse of an overlooked career at a famous locale. Pride in her father flows through the girl’s narrative, although at moments the girl makes pointed comments directed at the scoffing classmates. This is not necessarily admirable, but it is natural for a child. Kimmel presents a caring, hardworking father who values time with his daughter, as well as a narrator who is a strong, independent young lady.

Robert Neubecker’s black-outlined crayon illustrations soften the metropolitan nature of New York City, giving it a welcoming feel.

Children will readily identify with the themes in this interesting, unique read.

Jaclyn S. Miller


HBB: 9780758614230, $13.99

E or 263.9 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm.
PRI Rating: 5

In That’s Not My Colt, Dandi Mackall tells the Easter story from the perspective of Matthias, a ten year old boy from Bethphage who owns the colt that Jesus rides into Jerusalem. Matthias wants to start training the colt to be ridden, but his mother has him wait until after the Passover. Men come and take the colt, explaining that the Master needs it. Matthias and his father know they’re talking about Jesus and let them take the colt. Matthias is frustrated, though, and follows the men to see what they will do. He sees Jesus ride the colt even though it has never been broken. After Jesus’ entry to Jerusalem, the colt is returned to Matthias. He later witnesses Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection.

Although Matthias and his family are fictional characters, I didn’t find any information in the story that contradicted the Biblical accounts of the events described. Illustrator Chris Ellison’s pictures are realistic color paintings that compliment the story well. The dress and appearance of the characters appear to be accurate to the time period.
and ethnicity of those involved.

Matthias’s reluctance to give up his colt is realistic, yet he submits to his father and acknowledges that Jesus is worthy of using his colt if He wants.

I believe this book would interest children in grades K-2 as an Easter read aloud. It will give children a different way of looking at the Easter story. The theme of giving up something important for Jesus could also provide for some interesting and beneficial discussion.

Amy Simon


PAP: 9780310719441, $4.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 21 cm.
PRI Rating: 4


PAP: 9780310719557, $4.99
E or 227 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 21 cm.
PRI Rating: 4


PAP: 9780310719489, $4.99
E or 224 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 21 cm.
PRI Rating: 3


PAP: 9780310719496, $4.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 21 cm.
PRI Rating: 4

Cecil, The Lost Sheep by Andrew McDonough tells about a sheep named Cecil who becomes bored. Seeking adventure, Cecil sneaks to the mountains where he finds himself stuck on a ledge. He ponders his punishment. His shepherd rescues him later that day and lovingly carries him home to a surprise celebration, just for him.

The Good Samaritan by Andrew McDonough is a retelling of Jesus’ parable. Jesus speaks of a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho who is attacked and left him for dead. A priest and temple healer walked by and refused to help. Later, a Samaritan notices the injured man, stops, and helps him. Jesus asked, “Which of the three people was a real neighbor?”

Jed & Roy McCoy by Andrew McDonough is a Christmas story about two shepherd brothers named Jed and Roy who don’t get along. Day after day the brothers do mean tricks to each other. One night an angel announces the birth of a baby who will bring peace on earth. Jed and Roy run to Bethlehem where they find the baby and discover the true meaning of “Peace on earth.”

Jonah’s Story by Andrew McDonough tells of a city named Nineveh “that wasn’t very nice” and Jonah, a man sent by God to tell those people to stop being mean. Jonah didn’t like Ninevites. He decided to sail in the opposite direction. A huge storm came. To save the ship, Jonah was
thrown overboard. A great fish swallowed him. Three days later, the fish spit him on shore. Sorry for what he did, Jonah traveled to Nineveh, then gave God’s message.

_Zac the Taxman_ by Andrew McDonough is the story of little Zach, shortest in his third grade class at Jericho School. Kids tease him throughout the day calling him “snorty, shorty.” Zac wants to get even. Even as a grown-up, Zacchaeus wants to get even. One day, Jesus comes to Zac’s town. Jesus shows Zac kindness. Zac is so happy he gives a party for everyone.

_Cecil & Friends_ by Andrew McDonough is a new series published by Zonderkidz. Each of the five currently published books tells a Bible story in a fresh, entertaining way. McDonough melts modern culture with Bible times in his text and drawings to help kids understand key concepts. Readers will find the expert in the Good Samaritan dressed in a business suit and shorty Zac the taxman, the only kid not picked for the basketball team.

Designed to be a read-aloud, this series provides discussion starters. A “Cecil Page” follows each Bible account, providing a synopsis of the story, questions for the young listener prior to hearing the story, and follow-up questions to insure understanding. The last page of each book gives the Bible text.

McDonough’s illustrations draw readers into his stories with bold cartoon style drawings. Some character illustrations resemble others from different books in the series. Modern day and Bible time apparel is freely intermixed throughout. These compact 8” x 8” books are easy for children to hold.

McDonough’s idea for this series came during a presentation at Bible College. McDonough sketched sheep while telling Jesus’ parable about the lost sheep. The audience quickly asked for more stories to be told in his humorous way.

_Mary Vee_


HBB: 9780811865456, $15.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 27 cm.

PRI (PS)  Rating: 3

_What Brothers Do Best/What Sisters Do Best_ is a sweet story by the _New York Times_ best-selling author, Laura Numeroff, who wrote _If You Give a Mouse a Cookie_. Laura lists many ways brothers and sisters are helpful to each other, such as pushing you on a swing, sharing snacks, making music, and cleaning your room. No matter what activity brothers and sisters do, they are tied together in love.

Lynn Munsinger illustrates cuddly animal brothers and sisters using water colors, pen and ink, and pencil. This is actually two books combined into one. Read _What Brothers Do Best_ and then flip the book upside down to read _What Sisters Do Best_. The text is the same, but the illustrations are different. After reading this book, children could make their own list of activities they enjoy doing with their sibling. The text is very short and is lacking a good story plot. This book is a sequel to _What Mommies Do Best/What Daddies Do Best_ and _What Grandmas Do Best/What Grandpas Do Best._

_Tina M. Cho_

**HBB:** 9780399246364, $15.99

**E** 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 22 cm.

**PS** Rating: 4

*Leaves,* is a pretty picture book about a bear’s first autumn and the conundrum of falling leaves. Bear tries to put them back on; tries to figure out what is happening. Then, winter comes and he hibernates, not waking up until next spring, when he finds—leaves—brand new leaves!

In *Leaves,* author illustrator, David Ezra Stein, uses simple, evocative language to catch the feeling that children and bears have with that first leaf fall. His simple, vibrant water colors, with a bear of varying emotions as centerpiece, carry the theme well. Little children will enjoy finding the extra bits in the pictures, bugs, an evocation of wind, snow and winter creatures. A good book for pre-schooler and reader to snuggle over.

*Donna Eggett*


**HBB:** 9780761454526, $17.99

**E** 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 x 29 cm.

**PRI INT** Rating: 4

*An Apple Pie for Dinner* is a delightful book. The story is a simple one. Granny Smith wants to bake an apple pie but doesn't have any apples. She sets off with a basket of plums and swaps with her neighbors for a variety of items until she has what she needs—apples. She bakes the best pie ever with the help of her neighbors and, of course, shares the delicious dessert with them all.

Children will love the repetition and soon be anticipating what the next page brings. Unlike *The Little Red Hen* and her lazy friends who end up with no bread, the conclusion to *An Apple Pie for Dinner* is pleasant and good-natured. The recipe for the yummy creation is included at the back of the book along with information on the author and the unusual illustrations which add so much to this picture book. Carol Baicker-McKee has created a three-dimensional, mixed media technique which is appealing and interesting to the reader's eye. Preschoolers and early elementary aged children will welcome this story. Very good also for a read-aloud.

*Ceil Carey*

Easter egg haunt / written by Mike Thaler ; illustrated by Jared Lee. (Tales from the back pew) Grand Rapids, Mich.: , 2009. LCCN 2008007596.

**PAP:** 9780310715917, $4.99

**E** 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 21 cm.

**PRI (INT)** Rating: 4

*Easter Egg Haunt* is typical Mike Thaler. The book is filled with colorful cartoons and sidebars with extra entertaining comments thrown in. Easter is approaching and the church is holding an Easter egg hunt. Our narrator hopes the eggs aren’t scrambled and wonders if the preacher will dress up as a giant bunny, Bunzilla, or the Easter Mummy. As the children decorate eggs in a variety of ways (what do you think of a Frankenstein egg?), the teacher is asked “what is the spirit of Easter?” As he relates the story of Christ’s death and resurrection, the
comment is made that Easter is really all about Jesus. The teacher responds, “Like everything else.” Thaler’s usual humor is found throughout but the message is true and the last page declares John 3:16. Not your standard Easter book but delightful and fun and certainly has its place.

Ceil Carey


LIB: 9780761455608, $16.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm.
PS PRI Rating: 5

Ready! Set! Fun! In this big picture book, Sleep, Big Bear, Sleep, a large, curious Bear is not listening very closely. Old Man Winter warns Bear its time to hibernate, go to sleep. But bear doesn’t hear it correctly. Sleep gets interpreted as jeep, as Bear and a small hare friend go looking for a camp with a jeep, and have a wild adventure. Sleep? Maybe it means sweep, or leap, or dive deep. Each new rhyming word brings fun. Will Big Bear ever get the message?

Story-telling illustrator Will Hillebrand brings author Maureen Wright’s delightfully funny story alive with emotion, color, and action. Ranging from bright to snowy to night to under water, the illustrations capture attention as you look for detail. Wright’s clever story Sleep, Big Bear, Sleep calls for alert reading and listening. It will be enjoyed for its giggle possibilities; however, along the way there are some very good lessons: rhyming; friendship (that little hare goes everywhere with bear); the need to listen; and a look at both little ones who don’t listen, and grandparents’ waning hearing.

Donna Eggett


HBB: 9781590784648, $17.95
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 30 cm.
PRI PS Rating: 5

In this beautifully illustrated and enchantingly written picture book, Come to The Fairies’ Ball, all the magical creatures receive an invitation to the King’s Ball, to be held immediately. Everyone scurries about finding their best clothes. Everyone that is except one fairy whose dress is torn and tattered. With the help of some ants she sews a new dress but arrives at the ball late. Rather like Cinderella, but without ugly step-sisters and ashes, this fairy meets a prince. All the characters in Come to the Fairies’ Ball are magical: fairies, a brownie type mailman on a crow, dwarves, trollish characters. Look closely at the sumptuous, intricate illustrations and you’ll see even more.

Accoladed children’s literature artist Gary Lippincott enchantingly, classically illustrates this engaging poem. His full page, action filled, colorful illustrations are lightly steeped in sepia with a slight mist of enchantment. Readers will go through the book again and again just to see new things on each page. Popular, multiple award winning children’s author and poet Jane Yolen once again demonstrates her expertise. Onomatopoeia, cadence, repetition, mixed with joy and
fun, make this a book that children will repeat as they jump and play. Very good for reading out loud, and individually, *Come To the Fairies' Ball* will also be useful in the art class.

*Donna Eggett*

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HBB: 9780547152226, $15.00

E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 21 cm.

PRI (PS) Rating: 5

A chapter book for early, capable readers, *Fine Feathered Friends* relates a happy escapade of that delightful duo, Mouse and Mole. One windy spring day, our two adventurers decide to go bird watching. Mouse is a poet, Mole is an artist, and together they are going to produce a bird book. It is not as easy as expected. They have to resort to all sorts of tactics, including gluing leaves all over themselves and building a nest big enough for both. They also have to learn just how to observe birds.

Author and illustrator of many children’s books, Wong Herbert Yee presents *Fine Feathered Friends*, his fourth book in the delightful series about the escapades of Mouse and Mole. If you have not met these two friends before, this is a good story with which to begin.

Combining pencil and gouache, Yee’s illustrations are simple, charming, and friend-making. These small vignettes are dotted plentifully throughout the tale. Yee’s engaging narrative holds readers’ interest. Words that might be new to the reader are an integral part of the story, making them easy to guess. The story itself is fun and one with which children will identify. Besides being a pleasurable story, *Fine Feathered Friends* portrays friends who are unlike each other in several ways, yet manage well to enjoy each other and cooperate happily. Each is willing to complement the other’s talent. This is a good book for a young reader to curl up with and enjoy. It is also interesting to read to a young audience.

*Donna Eggett*

HBB: 9780736921527, $13.99
E 32 p. : col. ill. ; 21 x 26 cm.


HBB: 9780736921510, $13.99
E 32 p. : col. ill. ; 21 x 26 cm.

PRI NF Rating: 3

Kathryn Andrews Fincher uses her artwork to share the stories of Christian examples in her God Has A Plan series. She uses her gift of painting to share her faith in Christ with her readers. Each of these books follows the same format. The Introductions in each book share Andrew's inspiration and thought process for that book. Both books look at the early lives of eventual Christian leaders and focus on the plan that God had for their lives, even when they were not aware of the ultimate purpose He had for them.

God Has A Plan for Little Boys examines King David, Joseph, Eric Liddell, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther King, Jr., Brother Andrew, and Henry Blackaby. She dedicates this book to Blackaby because of the influence he had on her with his in-depth Bible study Experiencing God.

God Has A Plan for Little Girls examines Mary, the mother of Jesus, Mother Theresa, Susanna Wesley, Kay Arthur, Ruby Bridges, Harriet Tubman, and Corrie Ten Boom. Fincher dedicates this book to Kay Arthur because of the influence her studies have had on her.

Both books include lovely paintings that show the beauty and innocence of childhood. Obviously, Fincher's major contribution is the artwork. The text, however, provides numerous examples of people that God was able to use for His work because of a specific plan He had for them. The choice of people to highlight includes people that were involved in difficult times in history.

In both books, the text does a good job of highlighting God's plan, even with difficult circumstances and when "human efforts" were not enough. There are corresponding scriptures highlighted with each person described. Those scriptures add to the beauty of the art as well as focusing more attention on God's role in each Christian's life and work.

Rachel Langston


LIB: 9780761427100, $20.95
636.8 48 p. : col. ill. ; 23 cm.
PRI Rating: 5

Is your family considering adopting a cat or kitten? Cats, by Joyce Hart, offers questions and information designed to help children prepare and care for a new feline pet. Using family friendly words, Hart asks kids if their home has adequate space and how might other pets respond to a kitten. These and more questions help new owners design a comfortable home for a new friend. Hart opens this full color book with a brief history describing how felines first came to be considered household pets.

Cute, colorful photos capture soft yet spunky kittens of...
various breeds. Boys and girls will be delighted with these professional photos from the Marshall Cavendish Image Library as their adult friend reads important facts about caring for a new kitten.

Designed for ease in handling, this 48 page, hard bound book features large photos, title, and sub headings in full color with black text on white paper. Some chapters include sidebars with information such as hazards for cats, specific veterinarian services, and unusual breeds of kittens.

Recommended as a gift or resource.

Mary Vee


HBB: 9780745960494, $12.95

This lovely picture book presents a color filled burst of acclamation for the wonderful multiplicity of artistry wielded by our Lord as He created everything. Aptly naming it Creation Song, author Scott-Brown majors on God's glorious music. Each page swirls with color, imagination


HBB: 9781590786147, $18.95

598.8/42 48 p.: col. ill.; 27 cm.

PRI PS All ages Rating: *5

Be prepared to be enchanted! A science picture book, What Bluebirds Do delightfully presents a mix of photos and narrative about one season in the life of Eastern Bluebirds. Starting with courtship, it carries colorfully through nest building, eggs, parents stuffing bright yellow mouths with a wide variety of foods, sanitation, growth, flying, further care, and the full grown new birds. To cap it all off this book closes with detailed, interesting data about bluebirds.

A nature photographer whose work has appeared on the National Wildlife Federation website and in many other places, Pamela Kirby fell in love with her backyard bluebirds. What Bluebirds Do reflects both her expertise and her love. Opening with a full page portrait of the parent birds, the reader is treated to a visual feast of charming, intimate bird family life. Here is a glimpse to whet your appetite: with sparkling clarity, one photo shows a parent bird in full flight, beak full of meal worms, and a baby almost falling out of the nest in excitement. The narrative serves well to highlight the photos. Aimed at primary students, everyone, no matter what age, will enjoy looking at and reading this book. What Bluebirds Do will encourage young readers to hone their skills. It will be welcome in nature study and science classes. Readers interested in photography will be challenged and encouraged. And besides all that, it is perfect for sitting comfortably still and dreaming through its pages.

Donna Eggett
and reality. The words are fitted right into each illustration. Singing, dancing, following the order of Genesis, the incomparable act of Creation unfolds happily throughout the pages.

Internationally known illustrator Elena Gomez’ distinctive style comes from work in many mediums, from textiles and tableware to children’s books. Born in Nepal, living in England, author Anna Scott-Brown brings her talents as journalist, radio producer, and writer to Creation Song, her first children’s book. Both illustrations and words evoke movement, glory, and excitement. Creation Song is reminiscent of the Shaker dance hymn, “Simple Gifts.” The Bible reference from Genesis is not included in this book. But it will be easy for an astute reader to bring the Genesis account alongside this account. Because it is a picture book with few words, Creation Song is listed for young children. In reality it is for all ages, from preschoolers to great-grandparents. Approach it as a lovely piece of art and poetry and you will see God’s Creation rolling out before you.

Donna Eggett


HBB: 9780547014944, $16.00
811/.54 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm.
PS PRI Rating: 4

An interesting picture book, Red Sings from Treetops portrays, through pictures and poetry, how colors inhabit each season. Here are some examples: “Green is new in Spring,” “In Summer White clinks in drinks,” “In Fall, Green is tired . . . time for Brown to take over,” “In Winter Blue smiles from shadows amongst the White.” Both pictures and words display the colors for each season. Whimsy, color sense, and the lilt of the seasons come together to make this an intriguing book.

Caldecott Honor winner Joyce Sidman brings her poetic expertise and her love for all the seasons to Red Sings . . . . Noted sculptor, mural painter, and illustrator of children’s books Pamela Zagarenski combines her highly imaginative style and a wide palette of colors to enlighten the words. Readers and audience will want to stop on each page and look at all the little eye-appealing tidbits which inhabit the full page illustrations. Red Sings . . . will be enjoyed by preschoolers snuggled on a lap, early readers just adventuring into imaginative reading, and the adults who introduce both groups to this book.

Donna Eggett


HBB: 9781590787465, $16.95
PAP: 9781590786741, $8.95
636.7/37 32 p. : col. ill. ; 29 cm.
PRI (INT) Rating: 4

Photographer and author Cat Urbigkit tells young children in engaging visuals and text how dogs guard herds of sheep in the Rocky Mountains. Brave Dogs, Gentle Dogs
explains in simple language how guardian dogs instinctively protect sheep. Urbigkit shows how pups and sheep become familiar with each other from the pups' birth, and seem to become attached to their herd. She explains terms such as bonding, socialization, and predators in the context of the book, as well as sharing a brief history of guardian dogs. Side by side Spanish text is provided on each page.

Large photos and well phrased informative text make *Brave Dogs, Gentle Dogs* interesting reading. The photos capture many emotive moments between dogs and sheep, including plenty of puppy pictures. Wide shots add to the reader's understanding of the setting. Urbigkit's writing tends to be touchy-feely, suggesting the animals have human-like feelings. The book's roomy format and varied sizes of photos gives the sense of a personal scrapbook. Readers of both Spanish and English will find useful and interesting information. While elementary age children can understand the text in English, the Spanish translation is of a higher level due to the subject matter. Children who love animals, or are studying natural history or geography will delight in this book for both independent reading and as a read-aloud.

*Karen Schmidt*
HBB: 9780811862660, $14.99  
Fic 129 p.: ill. ; 20 cm.  
INT Rating: 4  
Best friends who live vivaciously, Ivy and Bean talk their way into ballet lessons that they soon go to great lengths to avoid in *Ivy & Bean Doomed to Dance*. Author Annie Barrows has created a pair of precocious girls who are strong willed and adventurous. In this story, the friends deplore ballet class once they’ve begged their way into it. They scheme to avoid the class performance in their role as squids by trying to sprain a limb, catch an illness, and then finally disappear from home by hiding out in the local aquarium. Their plans fail, despite the girls’ wild escapades.  
Barrows’ lively writing carries the storyline along colorfully. The characters are well developed and individual, and realistically represent middle elementary age girls. The pair’s schemes to hurt themselves to others’ illnesses, and intentionally get lost in the aquarium, all to avoid finishing the class they had promised to attend, sets a questionable example. Parents’ involvement is brief. Most children will enjoy the story for its nonstop sense of adventure and drama. The black and white illustrations are cute and expressive.

Karen Schmidt

HBB: 9780761455875, $15.99  
Fic 103 p.; 22 cm.  
INT Rating: 4  
*Thirteen ways to sink a sub* is part of the Marshall Cavendish Classics, selected titles that have withstood the test of time and have been brought back into print for a new generation. Gilson’s book was originally written in 1982 yet children today will enjoy this story of a fourth grade class attempting to sink a sub, substitute teacher, that is!  
Mr. Star, a teacher who never, ever gets sick, has the flu and Hobie Hanson’s fourth grade class has a substitute. And not just any substitute but a young woman who has never taught a class before—she is straight out of college. Who will be able to make her cry first—the boys or the girls? The contest is on and the kids bring out all their tricks, never imagining that Miss Ivanovitch might have some of her own.  
Cleverly written, Jamie Gilson takes a simple event and writes a book that will capture the interest of young readers, ones who can clearly imagine themselves in the same situation. Her descriptions and language are timeless, not dating the book in any way. A perfect selection for the shelves of any school library.

Ceil Carey

PAP: 9780825433528, $7.99  
Fic 141 p.; 22 cm.  
INT MS Rating: 5  
New adventures abound in *Andrea Carter and the Trouble with Treasure*. Andi’s friend Corey acquires a map showing
where gold can be found. He convinces Andi and Jenny that panning for gold will make them rich. They anticipate prospecting along the upcountry route they will take with Andi’s brother to the lumber camp.

Before their plans materialize, Andi, Cory, and Jenny find themselves jailed by an overzealous deputy because of some horseplay resulting in a broken water trough. Andi’s brother comes to the rescue just as news of a bank robbery demands the deputy’s attention. The youthful jailbirds obtain their freedom—embarrassed, but with no permanent harm done.

Getting rich is not as quick and easy as they had imagined. However, fishing for supper and camping under the stars is relaxing until a rattlesnake shows up. The subsequent injury and side trip for medical attention throws them off schedule. Then the excitement escalates. Menacing strangers appear in an unexpected place setting off a surprising chain of events.

Susan K. Marlow’s most recent story gives Andi Carter the opportunity to rise to a challenge and shoulder more responsibility. She enjoys her friends and the simple pleasures of life. However, when Andi is faced with more trouble than a thirteen-year-old knows how to handle, she relies on prayer for guidance. She accomplishes tasks she knows are impossible without God’s help.

This book offers a realistic look at life in the early days of California’s history. The writing is tight and the action moves at a quick pace. Although the scenes are suspenseful with vivid detail, Mrs. Marlow keeps gore to a minimum. She maintains a good balance of tension. Andrea Carter and the Trouble with Treasure is a great addition to a series that will keep readers saddling up with Andrea Carter.

Deborah H. Rabern


Something to Sing About is the story of Jamie Jo Morgan’s tenth summer—the summer that her mother got kicked out of choir for singing off-key, the summer that a best-friend candidate moves in next door, and the summer the church exploded. It is also the summer that Jamie Jo’s brother Payne returns home following the break-up of his second marriage. Summer brings bee season, and bees terrify Jamie Jo. By the end of the summer, Jamie Jo learns that words carry the potential to sting worse than a bee, and that God can work all things together for good.

C.C. Payne’s quirky characters drive the plot. Through short, simple sentences, Jamie Jo relates her experiences throughout the quickly paced story. The dialogue trips along as an extension of the first person narrative and further develops Jamie Jo’s character. Set in summer, when bees flourish, the setting of Franklin, Kentucky, buzzes with potential danger for Jamie Jo who is convinced she’s allergic. Part of her rationale is that even perfumed toilet paper gives her “fire-pee”. The endearing characters create a world that draws in the reader. Payne gives a sensitive portrayal of
Jamie dealing with her fears, her brother dealing with the break-up of his marriage as well as failing to please his dad, and her mom getting kicked out of choir. In the first church service in the rebuilt sanctuary, the pastor’s point sums up the theme of the book, “Remember, there is purpose in all things.” (p. 153)

Kristina Wolcott


PAP: 9780921100119, $2.90
Fic 90 p.; ill.; 22 cm.
INT Rating: 4

Living where the sun shines only half the year, seal hunting with his best friend, and traveling overland on sleds with whalebone runners and sleeping in handmade igloos is a way of life depicted in Anak, The Eskimo Boy. Piet Prins’ fictional story opens up a window to the Eskimo culture. Anak’s coming of age means traveling with his father to a white man’s town to trade furs, hunting walruses and caribou with the adult men of his tribe, and figuring out his survival when stranded on an ice floe. Anak’s world consists of snow, ice, seal meat, sled dogs, and ancestral traditions, and through the story he works his way toward an understanding of how he fits into his small Eskimo village.

Prins appears to have first hand knowledge of the Eskimos’ world. His character, Anak, offers glimpses how a boy experiences his frozen world and the people in it. Culture and values are well described, as are family relationships (as viewed from a child’s eyes). Young readers will gain a basic grasp of how the Eskimos’ life differs from his own and how native cultures often value family in a way unlike that of many North Americans. The somewhat rustic black and white drawings illustrate the story occasionally, but add little to the overall impact of the tale. A few references to non-Biblical spirits appears, as does a white missionary who represents the Christian tradition. Anak, The Eskimo Boy, is useful for the study of other cultures and northern geography. It would also make interesting family reading.

Karen Schmidt


PAP: 9780802422538, $6.99
Fic 120 p.; 19 cm.
INT Rating: 3

Run, Jeremiah Run follows the journey of a foster boy as he is moved from home to home and school to school. Jeremiah’s reaction to the string of rejections he has endured is running. He runs at inappropriate times causing the rejection to continue. Despite his best efforts to please the adults in his life and control his urge to run, he fails time after time.

As the story begins, Jeremiah takes off running at school and his foster parents are called, again. When he sees them enter the school he can tell his is being sent back for a new placement. Mrs. Kennedy, the social worker is unable to place him, so she
takes him home with her, where he has previously spent a weekend. PJ, the Kennedy’s son is about the same age as Jeremiah and welcomes him warmly.

When things are difficult, Jeremiah remembers his Grandma Joanie’s strong words, which give him the courage to face his fears. When he puts his hand deep in his pocket he feels tiny mustard seeds she has given him, he plants them in the Kennedy’s garden, praying they will grow and keep him in this family.

In his new school, Jeremiah is excited to learn that Mr. Kennedy is his P.E. teacher and the track coach. Jeremiah bonds with the boys on the team, and Mr. Kennedy helps Jeremiah learn to run to something instead of from something.

Although the adult characters lack complexity, the story is important and brings understanding to the struggles and insecurities of foster children. The subject is handled with sensitivity and care, while the importance of practicing our faith in practical ways, is shown by example without being preachy.

Suzanne Sharpe


PAP: 9780802422590, $6.99
Fic 156 p.; 20 cm.
INT Rating: 3

This is book two in The Also Rans Series, but there is no connection between the characters in the two stories. The theme is the same; troubled children learning to trust and build relationships in spite of fears and difficulties.

Coming Across Jordan takes place at Harriet Tubman Elementary School in Philadelphia. Kevin Manning is 12 and the new kid, trying to remain unnoticed his first day. Although we aren’t told why, we know that this isn’t the first time he has been the new kid. That is just one of the things in the story that are assumed but not explained, leaving the reader wondering.

While everyone is in the cafeteria having breakfast, Kevin’s little brother Jordan is introduced as the new kid to the Kindergarten class. Jordan’s autism makes him stand out and he draws much unwanted attention. Kevin, his protector, steps in to calm him, revealing himself as the other new kid. Although Kevin loves Jordan, he wrestles with the responsibility and longs for freedom.

Curtis, Melanie, and Mrs. Blake are the other three main characters. Mrs. Blake is Jordan’s teacher and has a special gift with children. Curtis, the boy who always seems to be in trouble, is irresistible to Kevin, who strives to develop a friendship with him because of their mutual love for drawing. Melanie is the good girl and wants Kevin to avoid Curtis.

When Curtis and Kevin get into trouble and are sent to detention, they serve it in Mrs. Blake’s room where she challenges them with a special project. Melanie, although not in detention, is a regular in Mrs. Blake’s room after school, declaring her to be “the best teacher in the world.” Mrs. Blake’s prayers and positive attitude help the children become friends and accept each other even with all their differences.

As in the series first book,
Run, Jeremiah Run!, the lesson is important and the story is good, but there are holes that, if filled, would add emotional depth to the characters. Both stories could be read independently with no problem.

Suzanne Sharpe


PAP: 9780982165218, $6.99

Fic  91 p.: photo ; 22 cm.

INT Rating: 2

When Jack Mitchell reaches his one hundredth birthday, he gives his great-grandson a 1915 rookie Babe Ruth baseball card worth $50,000. Trevor, the eleven-year-old protagonist in Safe at Home by Robert Skead, knows the card is worth more than money. The story behind the card is that his great-grandfather is the only baseball player who ever stole home base while Babe Ruth was pitching. A newspaper reporter writes about the valuable card and Jack’s incredible claim. Unfortunately, no official records back up the story.

Trevor begins to doubt the story, creating friction between him and Jack. When the card disappears, Trevor seeks help from his family and forgiveness from his great-grandfather. Working together, they plan Operation Curveball to expose the thief, but none of Trevor’s suspects appear to be guilty. Trevor discovers who stole the card, but he has no proof until the guilty person finally admits the theft and asks Trevor’s forgiveness. Trevor remembers how he felt when he had to ask his great-grandfather to forgive him and knows he needs to forgive his friend.

Solving the mystery of the disappearing card and learning the truth about his great-grandfather’s stolen-base story help Trevor learn the importance of forgiveness and faith. Regrettably, the suspense is lessened by Mr. Skead’s amateurish writing and the book’s poor editing. Trevor’s parents are too perfect, his sister too typically the aggravating older sibling, the school bully too impressed by Trevor standing up to him. The “Fact vs. Fiction” wrap-up concluding the book helps clear up confusion about the historical information presented in the story and is a nice touch.

Johnnie Alexander Donley

LIB: 9780761427070, $20.95
636.7 48 p. : col. ill. ; 23 cm.

INT Rating: 5

Plentiful information and instructive photographs make Big Dogs a useful resource for new dog owners or children researching large dogs. Joyce Hart first briefly describes how large dogs have appeared in world history. A potential large dog owner then finds out how to decide whether a big dog is the right choice. The majority of the book is divided between the final two chapters about choosing a big dog and then caring for it. Hart discusses puppy vs. adult pets, dog temperaments, where to buy a pet, and lists questions to help make an informed decision. Finally she outlines dog care.

Children interested in big dogs will receive plentiful facts and interesting details in Big Dogs. Hart systematically provides useful information at a level which intermediate students can comprehend. She covers the major topics factually, adding side bars about laws related to owning large animals and dangerous foodstuffs. Photos are captioned, and often picture breeds not typically seen. A glossary, references for further information, and websites about dog care and training conclude the book. Hart does a very fine job covering the topic, both for information and for teaching youngsters about caring for large dogs.

Karen Schmidt


HBB: 9780811849166, $16.99
970.015 46 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm.


HBB: 9780811849180, $16.99
B ro 919.8/904 45 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm.

INT NF Rating: 4

The Explorers series is intended to introduce readers to people “that had a major impact on people’s view of the world.” This series fulfills concept requirements from the National Council for the Social Studies and the National Academy of Sciences. Information includes compilations from actual logs and diaries from both expeditions. This “first hand” information makes the stories more vivid and interesting for any reader.

American students have always studied the voyages of Christopher Columbus. In Animals Christopher Columbus Saw: An Adventure in the New World, Sandra Markle presents a different perspective of one of those journeys to find the fastest route between Europe and Asia. Her story is nicely complimented by the art work of Jamel Akib.

Markle tells the story of at least 10 different animals Columbus encountered and their impact on his mission. Throughout the book, readers learn about a variety of animals as well as come to understand their contributions to the journey and, ultimately, to Columbus’
discoveries. Even rats and cockroaches play a role. Akib’s illustrations include detailed and interesting “cut aways” emphasizing specific animals and showing where they would have been seen on the ship.

Because the story includes more than just the human characters, readers will find it engaging. It’s also an excellent lesson in determination and persistence. Columbus never found the route to Asia that he was looking for but he made several voyages in his quest, discovered other unexplored areas and never quit trying to complete his original mission.

In *Animals Robert Scott Saw: An Antarctic Adventure*, Markle introduces readers to Robert F. Scott, naval commander and explorer. At a time when Antarctica was largely unexplored territory, Scott assembled a skilled crew for 2 expeditions to the area. From sled dogs to penguins, Scott and his crew encountered many different animals unfamiliar to them. One of the crew members, Dr. Edward Wilson, spent many hours sketching and painting these animals. Upon returning home to England, Dr. Wilson’s art was used in an exhibition open to the public.

In 1909, Scott launched a 2nd expedition to Antarctica. This time, he used Manchurian ponies instead of dogs to pull supply sleds. Also along was Denis Lillie, a biologist, who collected a variety of marine animals. Unfortunately, Scott and 3 of his crew died in the wild as they were making their way to an appointed supply stop.

Markle’s emphasis on the animals makes the story more engaging than just reading the names and dates of the expeditions. Because this was an unexplored area of the world when Scott went there, the scientific data that he and his crew gathered proved invaluable to later explorers. Today, the area where scientists live and work at the South Pole is named after Robert Scott and Roald Amundsen, the first explorer to reach the South Pole. This book includes a number of actual photographs from the expeditions. There is even a picture of Scott’s own dog and several of Dr. Wilson’s sketches.

Both books include a glossary, suggested reading list and an index.

*Rachel Langston*


LIB: 9781602792432, $18.95
796.357  32 p.: ill. (chiefly col.); 25 cm.
INT Rating: 4

In *Baseball (Real World Math: Sports)*, Cecilia Minden and Katie Marsico show a variety of math skills play a significant role in understanding and playing the game of baseball. The book begins with an overview of the game and shares a methodical look at a variety of mathematical disciplines found in the game (geometry, statistics, measurements, and money). Similar books are written about other sports in this same series (basketball, football, running, soccer, speed skating, swimming and tennis).

Throughout the book are three highlighted areas to emphasize the connection. Real World Math Challenges are questions about math
directly related to the game of baseball. Learning and Innovation Skills are facts about baseball paired with provocative questions. Life and Career Skills are highlights of the game that demonstrate skills to be carried beyond the game itself.

This book is an excellent resource. For someone new to the sport, it provides a quick overview of the game. For someone that already understands and enjoys baseball, it provides a more in-depth look at the sport. Quite possibly, for students that may not understand or be interested in certain math skills, this book pairs something they are interested in with actual examples of math used on a daily basis.

The book also contains some excellent resources: answers to all the questions included in the math challenge sections; actual photographs; tracking down criminals using disguises, a memory like a steel trap, and the element of surprise to make more than 3,000 arrests throughout his career.

Nelson does an excellent job of depicting the time, place, and circumstances in which Reeves lived and worked. Her judicious use of similes “getting through to them was like trying to find hair on a frog” adds interest to the story by making comparisons to which children can directly relate. As an African American man working in a white man’s world, Reeves is a positive role model even today. Gregory Christie’s textured paintings broaden Reeve’s story sometimes using exaggerated features to depict the emotion of the people, the rough nature of their environment, and the harsh circumstances in which they lived. Concluding with a photo of Reeves, glossary, timeline, further reading and websites, additional information about Judge Parker and Indian Territory, and a selected bibliography, Bad News for Outlaws is an excellent impetus for further research.

Kristine Wildner
a glossary including words highlighted throughout the text; a resources page including names of related books and web sites and a subject index.

Rachel Langston

PAP: 9780824955434, $19.99
590 222 p. : col. ill. ; 28 cm.
INT Rating: 4

My Big Book of Wild Animals is a comprehensive resource for students interested in learning more about animals and the habitats where they live. The book contains an extensive collection of full-color photographs provided by the San Diego Zoological Society. Highlighted animals are divided into six main categories: Insects, Spiders, Amphibians, Reptiles, Birds, and Mammals.

Each section contains an introduction including definitions, statistics, common names, and sub-categories of animals. Individual animals in each section have dedicated pages with specific information about where to find them, interesting facts, common jobs, and habits of the animals.

The layout is readable and includes a combination of cartoon characters, photographs, charts, and diagrams. Additional resources include a section on habitats, a list of animal group names, a glossary, and an index. The habitat section is laid out much like the animal sections to provide continuity throughout the book. The short paragraphs and white space on each page make it readable for students with a variety of reading abilities.

This book will be enjoyed by anyone that likes animals and wants to learn more about them. It would also make an excellent addition to class and/or school libraries as part of any reference collection.

Rachel Langston

HBB: 9781590782569, $16.95
597.98 1 v. (unpaged) : ill. ; 24 x 27 cm.

INT PRI Rating: 4

Starting with a captivating glimpse into the mother love and protection provided by the female alligator, this science picture book, Alligators and Crocodiles, provides an intriguing look at the many crocodilian species present on earth today. Information includes the life cycle and habits of these creatures and their use in the commercial world. A brief mention is made regarding crocodilian ancestors of two hundred million years ago. Also, a short passage about these saurians in myth and art worldwide is included. A concluding page adds more information.

Wildlife conservationist and prize winning children’s author, Laurence Pringle presents well researched facts in an interesting manner. Pringle presents Alligators and Crocodiles in understandable, everyday language. Much data is included, e.g. the origin of the various names, similarities and differences between the species, prey animals, world wide distribution, locomotion, and anatomy. Prolific children’s book illustrator Meryl Henderson’s colorful pictures portray these animals
accurately, and in their proper habitats. The illustrations are full page with the narrative implanted within them. Practical for the science class, \textit{Alligators and Crocodiles} will also provide enjoyment for leisure reading.


HBB: 9781590786017, $17.95
371 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill., maps ; 24 x 26 cm.
INT MS Rating: 4

Margriet Ruurs expands the traditional concept of school by looking at how and where children learn throughout the world in \textit{My School in the Rain Forest}. Part photo essay, part expository text, this engaging book takes the reader to schools throughout the world—from a war-torn school in Afghanistan to a floating school in Cambodia to a home school in the United States and nine other countries in between, including a medical ship which sails throughout the world. Each two-page spread focuses on a different country with bright color photographs, a narrative explaining the school’s circumstances, and the lives of the children who attend. A corner box provides facts on the country including its relative geography, flag, official country name, population, languages, and other notable facts.

Incorporating quotes from children attending the schools, this book provides a unique insight into how children learn in many varied situations. The author compiled the book in cooperation with a number of people throughout the world who actually work with these schools. The photos of smiling students hide some of the hardships they must live with, but demonstrate the students’ sincere enthusiasm for learning—especially in areas where their parents often cannot read nor write. This book is a perfect complement to intermediate and middle school studies of world geography and diverse cultures. In addition, the engaging text invites discussion, comparisons, and supports curriculum goals related to non-fiction literacy.

\textit{Noah Webster : weaver of words} / Pegi Deitz Shea ; illustrated by Monica Vachula. Honesdale, Pa.: Calkins Creek, 2009. LCCN 2009007312.

HBB: 9781590784419, $18.95
B or 423/.092 40 p.: col. ill.; 27 cm.
INT Rating: 5

Most Americans are familiar with Webster’s dictionary. What may come as a surprise, however, is Noah Webster’s critical role in the history of our nation. \textit{Noah Webster: Weaver of Words} recounts his life and countless contributions to American education, language, and culture. His direct ancestors included passengers on the Mayflower and a governor of Connecticut. One of five children, Webster’s family was committed to learning and community service. This book tells the story of Noah’s lifelong journey in those fields.

This book is written in a conversational tone with a number of sidebars to further explain the times and customs of Webster’s days. The artwork is colorful with lots of detail for students to truly see what early American life was like. The vocabulary is
appropriate for 3rd grade and above but the story is truly engaging for readers of any age. There is quite a bit of information contained in the book and it provides an engaging picture of Webster's life.

Additional resources contained in the book include a chronology of his life; a bibliography containing primary, secondary, and internet citations; and statistics about the various dictionaries that Webster is credited with writing. Obviously, Noah Webster loved learning and he dedicated his life to learning many things. This book shows just how he made sure that all Americans to come after him had opportunities and resources to learn as well.

Rachel Langston

Camping with the president / Ginger Wadsworth ; illustrated by Karen Dugan. Honesdale, Pa.: Calkins Creek, 2009. LCCN 2008024155.  
HBB: 9781590784976, $16.95  
973.91/1092 32 p. : col. ill. ; 29 cm.  
INT Rating: 4

It's hard to imagine that the President of the United States could just leave Washington and head to the woods on a camping trip. That's exactly what President Teddy Roosevelt did, though, and Camping With The President is the story of what happened on his journey.

After reading John Muir's book about America's National Parks, Roosevelt decided to travel west to explore some of the areas described in Muir's writings. He sends a letter to John Muir requesting him to be his personal guide in California. Also, he made arrangements to travel into the woods and camp with Muir alone—no politics, no advisors and no press—for four days.

The author is able to create an informative, interesting story using information and research from that time. An extensive “Author's Note” shares specific details about where she obtained her information and provides additional titles for interested readers. The illustrations provide an excellent picture for readers that may not be familiar with this time period or this part of the country. The book also contains short biographies of Roosevelt and Muir and additional information about Yosemite National Park, where this even occurred.

Overall, the book includes excellent details that any reader would find interesting and does a nice job of contrasting two well-known, influential personalities in American history.

Rachel Langston

HBB: 9780439680134, $16.99
Fic 202 p. : ill., map ; 22 cm.
MS HS Rating: 5

The Boy Who Dared by Susan Campbell Bartoletti offers a fictionalized account of a real individual. Teenager Helmuth Guddat Hubener has grown up in an impoverished Germany that suffered under the Treaty of Versailles. When Adolph Hitler comes to power, many of Helmuth’s countrymen follow Hitler’s dynamic lead. But Helmuth becomes disillusioned with the propaganda fed to him. As basic freedoms slip away from the Germans and Nazi cruelties multiply, he dares to listen to a secret short wave radio that speaks truth about the war. What he hears strengthens his decision to resist the Nazis and to share what he knows with others. Helmuth risks everything to write and distribute pamphlets proclaiming the realities kept hidden from the German people.

Unlike many books on World War II that, justifiably, recount atrocities, The Boy Who Dared puts a refreshing spin on the genre. Readers see the back story of how Hitler deceived Germany. From empty promises to the pressure to conform, readers watch (and learn from) the evolution of a country’s descent into corruption.

In a series of flashbacks from a prison cell, Susan Campbell Bartoletti describes the teenager’s life in clear, yet descriptive language. The book speaks of God and faith as motivating factors in Helmuth’s beliefs and decisions; it is Mormon faith that guides him, not Christian faith. However, there is no attempt to evangelize readers; Bartoletti simply recounts this aspect of Helmuth’s life. The young man’s beliefs, as portrayed in the book, sync well with those of Christians.

Additional learning aids include a map, a historical timeline, photographs, a letter from the author, and a bibliography. The publisher further adds an online address for discussion guides.

Jaclyn S. Miller


PAP: 9781400310180, $9.99
Fic vii, 344 p. ; 22 cm.
HS Rating: 4


HBB: 9781400312160, $16.99
PAP: 9781400315123, $9.99
Fic 338 p. : ill., map ; 24 cm.

Adventure, excitement, and the word of God are all present in this pirate story. In Isle of Swords, Captain Ross searches for treasure that will allow him out of the pirate business. He shows bravery and a caring for his fellow man that is not often evident in pirates. With the help of his daughter, Anne, his crew, and an injured young man with no memory whom they nickname Cat, Captain Ross helps the Brethren recover the treasures of Constantine while fighting the most notorious pirate, Bartholomew Thorne. In the end Ross and other pirates agree to help the
British navy in putting an end to piracy. In *Isle of Fire*, Cat works to remember his past only to find he is Thorne’s son. He must choose whether to follow the evil Merchant and the ways of his father or risk everything for Captain Ross and his crew. Ross and his friends in the British navy must deal with the betrayal of King George and an unknown weapon developed by the descendents of the Vikings, Thorne’s newest allies. Adventure and intrigue pull the reader to the end of the story.

Batson’s plot is well developed and the storyline is fast moving. He uses a good balance of dialogue and description. The story successfully takes the reader back to the days of the pirates. Ross, Anne, Cat, and others grow in character, becoming better people at the end than at the beginning after turning away from a life of piracy. Others like Thorne grow in the opposite direction, becoming more evil. The setting is ever changing as the pirates and former pirates sail the seas. These books are hard to put down. *Isle of Swords* is winner of the Moonbeam Children’s Book Award. *Isle of Fire* was awarded the Moonbeam Children’s Book Award.

*Jane Mouttet*


  PAP: 9781601421173, $12.99  
  Fic  248 p.; 21 cm.

**It’s a green thing / Melody Carlson.** (Diary of a teenage girl. Maya ; 2) Colorado Springs, Colo.: Multnomah Books, 2009. LCCN 2008037958.

  PAP: 9781601421180, $12.99  
  Fic  249 p.; 21 cm.


  PAP: 9780601421197, $12.99  
  Fic  244 p.; 21 cm.  
  HS Rating: 4

Melody Carlson has been publishing the *Diary of a Teenage Girl* series since 2000. The series follows several loosely-connected teenage girls from all walks of life as they search for and find God and then strive to be witnesses to their friends and family. Previous entries in the series have featured Caitlin, an average middle-class girl; Chloe, who forms her own Christian rock band with two friends; and Kim, a Korean adoptee. The final three installments of the series feature Maya Stark, a vegan teen with a sincere commitment to helping the environment and a strong desire to have a “normal” life despite a turbulent home situation.

In *A Not-So-Simple Life*, Maya home schools herself and works to become emancipated from her parents as her mother descends into alcoholism and drug abuse and her father, a once-famous singer, is away on tour trying to revive his musical career. *It’s a Green Thing* follows Maya as she moves in with her uncle and cousin after her mother goes to prison on drug related charges. Maya commits her life to Christ and begins attending public school, church, and youth group and writing a green living column for a local newspaper.

In *What Matters Most*, Maya must choose between her desire for a normal life and an
invitation to join a Christian rock band while coming to terms with her mother's release from prison and subsequent re-entry into Maya's life.

Maya is a likeable character who comes to rely on God in every aspect of her life, but struggles realistically with things such as forgiving people who have wronged her and what sort of relationship she should have with a boy from her youth group. Her passion for helping the environment rings true and is timely.

Each chapter ends with a green-living tip. The tips include definitions of words such as “organic,” instructions for making your own compost and recycled art projects, and internet sites for various environmental initiatives such as Nike’s Reuse-A-Shoe program which recycles shoes into pavement for playgrounds. Carlson does not shy away from issues such as alcoholism and drug addiction. Although all drinking and drug use take place offstage, their consequences for both the victim and the victim’s family are clearly shown. Also, though Maya never compromises her body and says repeatedly that she never would, she must often reconcile her environmentalist values with the jobs that she holds while trying to become emancipated, such as working in a store that sells designer clothing and a short stint as a model. Characters from previous books make background appearances, but Maya’s story stands on its own easily. This series is highly recommended for all teenage girls and teenage girls-at-heart.

Elizabeth Norton


HBB: 9781590786277, $18.95
Fic 241 p.: ill.; 22 cm.

MS Rating: 4

Eleven-year-old orphan Zoe Royster tells her own story, from her first grocery shopping trip with her never-met-before Uncle Henry to her realization that not all adults are as no-good as her disappearing dad, her drug-addled mom, and mom’s string of boyfriends. Quite a few, including Uncle Henry, his neighbors Fred and Bessie, and even Ms. Avery, the fifth-grade teacher, care very much about Zoe. And Zoe learns to care about them, too. More importantly, though not without a few bumps along the way, she learns to trust them.

Intelligent, quirky, and sporting a mane of uncontrollable red hair, the protagonist of Wild Things is a twenty-first century Pippi Longstocking. Zoe’s adventures may not be as fantastical as her predecessor, but mystery abounds in the woods behind Uncle Henry’s house. Zoe finds a deserted cabin, a white doe, and a wild boy who shoots arrows and carves lifelike miniatures.

Zoe doesn’t know, may never know, the whole story. But that’s okay, because a feral black-and-white cat has lived in the woods for many years. His memories and experiences (written in third person) fill in the details. This clever literary device also lets the reader see Zoe from a perspective other than her own.

Ms. Carmichael’s engaging tale features a narrator who, at a tender age, has seen and experienced a rough side of
life. No wonder Zoe is mouthy and independent. She won't lose her spark, but she will learn important lessons about trust and heroism. Unfortunately, she tends to blame God when things go wrong, but never thanks Him when things go right. God's name is vainly used in a few places.

The 240-page novel includes scattered illustrations of the cat, named Mr. C'mere by Zoe.

Johnnie Alexander Donley


PAP: 9780825424380, $9.99
248.8/3 123 p. ; 20 cm.
HS (Adult) Rating: 4

In Help! My Family's Messed Up, Emily Park Chase relates the biblical account of Joseph and his family (Genesis 37-50), re-written with a modern twist. Shortly after Joel's (Joseph's) mother dies, he meets his new step-family. Jealousy and contention create an atmosphere that quickly disintegrates his blended family. When Joel is unjustly imprisoned, he ponders his life, speculates on how a loving God can allow these tragedies, and seeks solutions.

Timely topics include blended families, adoption, abuse, addiction, and death. Chapters consist of story segments from various perspectives; real-life anecdotes about people whose lives have been shattered by dysfunctional families; and Christ-centered advice for both victims and perpetrators. Forgiveness, redemption, and restoration are unmistakably the author's main themes, as she offers scripture-based advice on how to stop the destructive cycle and begin the healing process. “Chew on it” sections at the end of each chapter contain questions that can be used in either group discussions or for self-study. Scripture references, taken from the New Living Translation of the Holy Bible (Tyndale House, 1996), throughout the book are clearly documented and subject specific. An additional appendix, entitled “Notes,” lists scriptures referenced by chapters.

Chase is a public speaker and author of What Do I Say to a Friend Who's Gay? (Kregel, 2006), a compilation of true stories and suggestions for young adults on how to introduce Christ to homosexual friends. In conjunction with Exodus International, a ministry that addresses homosexual issues, Chase and her husband minister to teens about dating relationships and the pitfalls of the homosexual lifestyle.

Kimberley D. Harris

Beyond the reflection's edge / by Bryan Davis. (Echoes from the edge ; 1) Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zonderkidz, 2008. LCCN 2008001423.

PAP: 9780310715542, $12.99
Fic 384 p. ; 21 cm.


PAP: 9780310715559, $12.99
Fic 365 p. : ill. ; 22 cm.


PAP: 9780310715566, $12.99
Fic 348 p. ; 22 cm.
HS (Adult) Rating: 4

Echoes from the Edge is an adventure fantasy trilogy for
teens written by Bryan Davis, author of the Dragons in Our Midst series. In the first book, *Beyond the Reflection’s Edge*, 16-year-old Nathan is a James Bond-like protagonist, who maintains physical purity in a morally unstable world. When his parents, a government investigator and a concert violinist, are brutally murdered, Nathan is whisked off to stay with an old family friend and his teenage daughter, Kelly. The duo soon becomes entangled in an inter-dimensional mystery that takes them through the streets and outskirts of Chicago, on three different Earths, each on separate time lines. Utilizing a small mirror, a violin, a camera, and other strange objects his parents have left him as clues, Nathan and Kelly travel through time and dimensions to escape evil specters; uncover the truth about Nathan’s parents; and save the worlds from greedy, power hungry predators.

In the second book, *Eternity’s Edge*, Nathan and Kelly visit a misty world inhabited by vision stalkers who communicate through music and feed off of human fear and its accompanying discord. Time and space begin to bleed into one another, causing weather catastrophes and nightmare epidemics.

In the third book, *Nightmare’s Edge*, the epidemic continues to build. Nathan is given the task of entering a world in which nightmare and reality are nearly seamlessly blended. Caught between a dream that appears bizarrely real and a reality that quickly fades into mist, Nathan is nearly absorbed into the abyss of spent nightmares.

In *Echoes from the Edge*, darkness dances with light in this shadowy land where the nightmares of many gather to form a pseudo-reality that is both horrifying and deadly. Davis inspires readers to view everything “through the light” to decipher what is real and what is only a dangerous distraction. *Beyond the Reflection’s Edge* provides a firm plot foundation that continues throughout the series. Although the story line periodically drags, the protagonists develop a gentle romance that enhances the, overall, fast-paced action theme. Characters are fresh, believable, engaging, and maintain an entertaining dialog meshed with friction, comical banter, and mutual respect. Davis’s era and location descriptions create a skeletal background for this series steeped in suspended reality. Concepts are simple enough to grasp, without talking down to the audience and his writing style flows easily among worlds.

*Kimberley Harris*


PAP: 9780310718369, $9.99
Fic 400 p.; 22 cm.
MS (HS) Rating: 5

Bryan Davis returns with a new fantasy series about dragons, but with a twist.

Davis has done a wonderful job of developing a plot and characters that draw in the reader.

In the first book, *Starlighter*, Jason Masters receives a cryptic message from his missing brother. When he tries to investigate it, he enters a world where dragons have enslaved humans. Human and dragon worlds collide as Jason meets Koren, a descendant of humans who is a dragon slave. Jason had doubted the myth—of people taken through a portal to
another world and held in slavery to the dragons—until he begins to uncover the truth. A black egg is the key to the end of the world, and Jason must work fast with Koren if he is going to save the two worlds from destruction and set the human captives free.

Plot twists, action, and no concerns about inappropriate language make this another excellent choice for middle school students and older, especially those who like fantasy and adventure.

If Starlighter, the first in a 4-part series, is any indication, The Dragons of Starlight series promises to be another excellent series from an accomplished storyteller whose other series include Dragons in Our Midst, Oracles of Fire, and Echoes from the Edge.

Recommended for all middle school and teen collections in public and school libraries. Makes a good gift for children, ages 10 to 16.

*Carol R. Gehringer*

**Chosen / Ted Dekker.** *(Lost books ; 1) Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2007. LCCN 2007032976.*

HBB: 9781595543592, $14.99

Fic 260 p.; 22 cm.

**Infidel / Ted Dekker.** *(Lost books ; 2) Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2007. LCCN 2007033071.*

HBB: 9781595543639, $14.99

Fic 245 p.; 22 cm.

**Renegade / Ted Dekker.** *(Lost books ; 3) Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2008. LCCN 2008000063.*

HBB: 9781595543714, $14.99

Fic 285 p.; 22 cm.

**Chaos / Ted Dekker.** *(Lost books ; 4) Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2008. LCCN 2008002896.*

HBB: 9781595543721, $14.99

Fic 261 p.; 22 cm.


HBB: 9781595543738, $14.99

Fic 304 p.: map ; 23 cm.


HBB: 9781595543745, $14.99

Fic 287 p.: map ; 22 cm.

HS (Adult) Rating: 4

The Lost Books series by Ted Dekker is a set of six young adult books that span the 15 years between the Black and Red novels from another of Dekker's popular series, the Circle Trilogy. The titles of the six novels in order of their release are Chosen, Infidel, Renegade, Chaos, Lunatic, and Elyon. When the first letters of each of the Lost Books is written down individually in order, they spell ‘Circle’. The entire series focuses mainly on four teenaged characters, two males Billos and Johnis, and two females Silvie and Darsal, The four have been chosen to be the new leaders of the Forest Guard, and quickly find themselves in search of seven lost books of history. The difficult adventure will take them in many directions as they race to find the books before Teeleh, the Dark One, can acquire them as he seeks to destroy the world.

*Chosen* introduces readers to Billos, Johnis, Silvie, and Darsal who have been chosen as the new leaders of the Forest Guard by supreme commander Thomas Hunt. Before being initiated, the four teenagers must venture into the desert on a mission to prove themselves. They are attacked by Horde troops but are helped by the mythical Roush and given a new secret
mission—find the seven lost books of history before Teeleh does.

*Infidel* finds Johnis as a celebrated hero instead of the coward he was believed to be. Taking Silvie with him, Johnis rushes to rescue his mother from the Horde. There he meets Karas, daughter of the priest, who joins them in their escape. One of the four chosen reveals themselves as an infidel and steals three of the books, ending up in another world.

*Renegade* focuses on Billos, who has entered an alternate world through a book of history by touching the cover with blood. He meets Marsuvees Black in Paradise, Colorado, who gives him special superhuman powers, causing Billos to go on a killing spree in the western town. The three remaining chosen must try to rescue the renegade, but will they all get out alive?

*Chaos* begins with Johnis and Silvie in 2033’s Las Vegas on Earth, arrested and bailed out by a much-older Karas who has been there for 15 years and is now a millionaire. The three chosen ones must travel to Romania in search of the remaining books and discover Darsal and Alucard there.

*Lunatic* has our heroes arriving back in their homeland, but now the Horde is in control of the land and the healing lakes of Elyon are blood red. The Forest Guard is in hiding, Johnis is under the control of a strange being, while Darsal is captured and enslaved by a Horde commander. Can a lunatic save them?

*Elyon*, the series’ conclusion, has Johnis under the control of Shaeda who is set on taking control of the world. The final battle between good and evil takes place; who will triumph in the end? Will Elyon’s chosen prevail against the Dark Priest, the Horde, Shaeda, and the Shataiki?

Ted Dekker, a hugely-popular Christian suspense author, has penned many books about the struggles between good and evil, which the Lost Books series also involves. Kaci Hill joins with Dekker to author the last two books in the series. Young adults will eagerly devour each book as they read about the adventures of the four chosen Forest Guard leaders as they seek the seven missing books of history. Teens will identify with the teenage main characters as they struggle with situations beyond their understanding or ability to control. Well-developed characters, interesting plots, and gripping action-packed scenes will capture and hold readers’ attention. Dekker does a fantastic job building a fantasy world that coincides with many of the other books he has written, most particularly the Circle series. Although disguised as other names and situations, Christian elements are present throughout the entire series, such as using Elyon in place of God and Teeleh in place of Satan. The colorful, eye-catching covers are just the beginning of a journey of a lifetime for the young adult readers who dare to challenge the forces of evil in the Lost Books series.

**Sherri Myers**


PAP: 9780310714231, $9.99

Fic 317 p.; 22 cm.

**The owling / Robert Elmer.** *(Shadowside trilogy ; 2)* Grand Rapids,
Robert Elmer, a well-known author of more than forty novels, takes a premise, once presented by C. S. Lewis in his science fiction trilogy, and rewrites it for today’s youth. The premise is, “What would it be like if Jesus had come to another planet?”

The Shadowside Trilogy is an excellent science fiction series, written by an accomplished storyteller whose first two books in this series were nominated for the American Christian Fiction Writers (Young Adult) award in 2009.

Elmer has done a wonderful job of developing a plot and characters that draw the reader in. In the first book, self-centered Oriannon struggles as she decides whether to stay true to her comfortable life or to follow her heart and Jesmet’s teachings. The subsequent books find her continuing to struggle with the decision to follow his teachings as she has her faith tested.

In addition, Elmer employs science fiction elements that make this a delightful read: stun batons, ear buds, and lev-scooters, as well as lots of action and a retelling of the gospel story that is not preachy. Plot twists, action and no concerns about inappropriate language make this an excellent choice for fifth grade students and older, especially those who like allegory, fantasy, and science fiction.

In *Trion Rising*, Oriannon lives on the bright side of the planet, Corista. She has the power of being able to record everything she sees and hears. Her life is turned upside down when Jesmet, a music teacher arrives at her school with strange new songs and ideas. Is her friend Margus right about Jesmet?

When she loses her way on the dark side of Corista, Oriannon is rescued by the very people she had been taught to despise. When they are in danger, she is forced to make some difficult choices.

In *The Owling*, Oriannon has returned to the Brightside and is recruited to help carry out a plan for peace. Oriannon must decide if Sola’s proposal for peace is really an evil plot against the Owlings, and if so, what to do about it.

In *Beyond Corista*, Oriannon and her friends, Margus and Wist, are on a dangerous mission—warning other way stations of impending doom. As she is met with disbelief, she soon begins to wonder if the threat is real and if her visits from Jesmet were a hallucination.

Recommended for all middle school and teen collections in public and school libraries. Makes a good gift for children, ages 10 to 16.

*Carol R. Gehringer*


Taoshira, the Fourth Crown Princess of the Blue Crescent Islands is unwilling to marry, especially when it’s to the unseen Prince Ramil of Gerfal. He is just as reluctant to
YOUNG ADULT FICTION

marry her, and when they do meet, sparks fly, and they are not ones of romance. The young betrothed couple are kidnapped and discover more about one another and themselves during their trial. Wars, violence, truths, and lies are all part of the journey as Taoshira and Ramil try to make their way back to their kingdoms. Each one discovers what commitment to country and to another person is all about. Julia Golding spins a mesmerizing tale in Dragonfly, a story that feeds the appetite for strong character-driven plot.

Although the beginning starts almost tediously slow with the description of life as Princess of the Blue Crescent Islands, the pace picks up considerably well once Taoshira and Ramil meet. Their shared adventure of being kidnapped is reminiscent of C.S. Lewis’s A Horse and His Boy with the faraway setting and customs. While there are no talking animals, there is plenty of adventure, action, and memorable characters. This could be considered a coming of age novel, in that both Ramil and Taoshira must come to terms who they are and what they have to offer to friends, family, and country.

Some of the fighting scenes are violent, which might be disturbing to younger readers. There are several references to different faiths and religion, ranging from the goddess Taoshira reveres to the violent war god of their enemy, who Taoshira must worship or be declared a witch. There is also the element of cultural mix prejudice, since Taoshira and Ramil are of opposite ethnic backgrounds, ideas, and customs. Each make adjustments, as do those around them. Well-written, notably in building characters and tension, this is a story for those who like their adventures couched within a long ago and faraway feel to them.

Pam Webb


HBB: 9780823421985, $16.95
Fic 206 p.; 22 cm.
MS Rating: 4

Clementine Kidd and her younger sister Josie grew up in the mining camps of the Idaho Territory. Because of his poor health, Pa Kidd no longer seeks gold in the icy streams. Instead he loses money at poker and gets drunk in the town’s saloons. Some nights he rides with the vigilantes who execute their own kind of justice. Mrs. Kidd earns money for the family by cooking breakfast and supper for the bachelor miners. She shows Clementine where she hides most of her money so that Pa won’t gamble with it.

Against this backdrop, Kristiana Gregory developed a well-written story based on an old folk song, “My Darlin’ Clementine.” In the song, a miner’s daughter drowns and is mourned by her boyfriend. In this 206-page novel, young Josie opens and closes the story. But sixteen-year-old Clementine narrates almost all the events. It’s through her mature eyes that the reader experiences her friendship with the Chinese physician, Tall Sing, who inspires Clementine’s own desire to attend medical school. But Clementine’s dreams may be dashed by a powerful man who tries to blackmail her into marrying him.

Though grounded in the region’s history, My Darlin’ Clementine includes scenes that may disturb younger
readers. The vigilantes kill without mercy. Young Josie enters an opium den with her friend, a fourteen-year-old saloon girl. Ma Kidd vanishes one night and it’s not until months later that the family discovers she fell down an abandoned mineshaft.

Even so, Clementine is a sensitive narrator. She shows intelligence and strength with her creative solution to rid her family of the blackmailer’s threat while holding onto her dreams.

*Johnnie Alexander Donley*


PAP: 9780310283980, $14.99

Fic 344 p.; 23 cm.

HS (Adult) Rating: 3

Coleman Luck, in his debut novel, *Angel Fall*, presents a fantasy tale of good versus evil. Alex and his two sisters are sent to live with their estranged father in England; however, on route their plane crashes into the ocean. When they awake they find themselves in Boreth, and discover each will play a role in saving this world from the evil within it. Alex, a bitter, resentful young man, pays a large price for his arrogance and loses his life as he gains it when faced with evil. Sweet, young Tori must overcome her trials without the aid of her sister. And Amanda, has the burden of an impossible task and learns the cost of forgiveness and perseverance. *Angel Fall* contains the promise of a riveting allegory. There are siblings who are fated to save a world from evil’s destruction, a vast, wondrous setting filled with mesmerizing supernatural characters, and the intermixing of realism and the fantastical. However, the story could benefit with a trimming of excess narrative descriptions and a toning of modern vernacular. While the target audience might be juveniles or young adults, there are intense scenes that might be of concern to audiences under twelve. One scene deals with molestation, that is not graphic, but could be considered disturbing. The message of forgiveness and sacrifice is well-done, as is the message of the consequence of choices made. Those who relish fantasy quests and are seeking stories with a more modern twist in the traditions of Tolkien, Lewis, and L’Engle will want to consider new author Coleman Luck.

*Pam Webb*

**Miss Match / Erynn Mangum. (A Lauren Holbrook novel : 1) Colorado Springs, Colo.: THINK, 2007. LCCN 2006034502.**

PAP: 9781600060953, $12.99

Fic 367 p.; 21 cm.


PAP: 9781600060960, $12.99

Fic 327 p.; 21 cm.

**Matchpoint / Erynn Mangum. (A Lauren Holbrook novel : 3) Colorado Springs, Colo.: THINK, 2008. LCCN 2007051981.**

PAP: 9781600063091, $12.99

Fic 367 p.; 21 cm.

HS (Adult) Rating: 3

In the Lauren Holbrook series, author Erynn Mangum introduces 23-year-old Laurie—with a penchant for chocolate, coffee, romantic comedies, and matchmaking.

In *Miss Match*, Laurie sees visions of singles in her life paired with other singles.
Encouraged by her recent success with her sister and new brother-in-law, Laurie proceeds to set up her laid-back singles’ pastor with her coworker Ruby, a stickler for punctuality. Meanwhile, Laurie meets Ruby’s brother Ryan. This time, all of Laurie’s friends are trying to set her up. Laurie likes spending time with Ryan. The only problem is that she’s always promised her Dad she’d never get married.

*Rematch* opens with Ruby and Nick’s wedding. Laurie knows she’s on a roll with her next match, her two best friends Brandon and Hannah. Everything’s going well for Laurie until her Dad, widowed since Laurie’s elementary days, decides to attend a singles’ retreat. Laurie doesn’t know if she wants a stepmom. Ryan assures her everything will be all right. Laurie decides she’ll keep him around; after all, he does bring her chocolate and coffee.

Laurie has matched almost every single she knows in *Match Point*. After Laurie has casually dated Ryan for a year and a half, everyone in Laurie’s family and circle of friends is pushing for them to get more serious about a wedding. Although Laurie insists that Ryan is just a good friend, she must admit to herself that she isn’t sure how she feels. As Laurie seeks God’s wisdom and dodges her friends’ questions, she learns that romantic relationships rarely work in real life the way they do in her favorite movies.

Each novel is heavy on dialogue. Laurie is witty, so the dialogue makes for lots of entertaining moments. However, many of the characters seem to have the same voice. Mangum often doesn’t distinguish the characters well enough for readers to keep up with who’s speaking which lines. Several characters use the same phrases, pet names, and so forth. Also, nearly everyone who dialogues with Laurie shares the same sense of humor, from her good friends to strangers.

The Lauren Holbrook series is more of an entertaining than a deeply impacting read, but each book does contain spiritual content. Laurie doesn’t deal with deep issues of faith. She does, however, exhibit a genuine interest in seeing people believe in Christ. And she applies her daily devotions to the events in her life. She wrestles with the concept of God’s sovereignty and asks for His wisdom.

*Rachelle Dawson*


PAP: 9781595543561, $12.99
Fic 267 p.; 22 cm.

HS Rating: 4

The story of *Ruby Unscripted* juggles divorced parents with their new spouses, split loyalties, questions of faith, and homesickness. The divorce of Ruby’s parents transplants her to an exclusive Marin County, California high school. A new world opens as a variety of people influence her through her job at the Underground Coffeehouse & Theater.

The overdose death of a childhood friend preys on Ruby’s mind, along with the stress and disorientation of their move. Life gets more complicated when she learns her older brother, Carson, has decided to live with their father two hours away. She no longer has a built-in
Ruby does not fit in until she joins a film group and discovers she has a passion for each detail of the filmmaking process. She settles into a comfortable niche until her best friend Kate arrives for a visit. Kate's lack of sophistication embarrasses Ruby, and uneasiness muddles her emotions.

Cindy Martinusen-Coloma writes an appealing, introspective story told from Ruby's viewpoint. Incorporating text messages into the narrative links the reader into Ruby's social life. The author taps into the emotional climate of alternating storm and calm that govern the adolescent barometer.

She documents the complexity of family relationships without excessive intensity. Ruby's friendship with a gay young man is accepted with some nominal opposition voiced by her grandmother. Ruby's reactions to teen-age drinking, drugs, and sexual activity, along with peer pressure, points up the conflicts that teens confront at an early age.

Ruby also experiences some taunting for being a Christian, although her faith seems a diminished part of her life. Questions rather than answers prevail as her family visits various churches after their relocation.

A reading group guide offers twelve sets of thought-provoking questions. They address adjustments, relationships, divorce issues, and destiny. Ruby's story opens avenues for dialogue.

Deborah Rabern


PAP: 9780800733803, $9.99
Fic 207 p.; 22 cm.
HS Rating: 3

Unsigned Hype, the first novel of Booker T. Mattison, provides an insight into the hip hop music world through the talents and dreams of fifteen year old Tory Tyson.

Tory, like many urban youths, dreams of fame and fortune. Tory's music producing ability gets him a spot on Power 97's Unsigned Hype contest, and fame and fortune comes to him. Unfortunately, the sudden attention and money also brings problems to Tory's life. Although Tory grows up without benefit of a father, his mother provides a strong, faith-based upbringings. Conflict occurs when Tory desires to get on with his life in music and decides to drop out of school. Through his journey of utilizing his music talents, Tory meets several people, including the intelligent and pretty Precious, who begin to change his goals. Precious introduces Tory to Christian hip hop style, which opens up a world and thoughts he had not considered.

Filled with street slang surrounding the hip hop music world, the plot of an urban youth who fulfills the dreams of many young men by becoming the next music sensation is appealing and the novel is filled with realism. There is the harshness of broken friendships, the influence of drugs on talent and reputation, and the consequences of going against family values. There is also a large portion of idealism, in that Tory not only lives a life mostly untainted by drugs and gangs, he rises quickly in the music world without too much adversity.
It is surprising Tory’s mother allows him to be so actively involved in hip hop style, considering how polar the lyrics and general lifestyle are to a faith-based lifestyle. Tory’s introduction to Christianity through the friendship of Precious and her parents points him in the direction he finds himself drawn towards. The contemporary language and music culture should be appealing to teen readers, and the author’s background in the music industry comes through quite well.

Pam Webb


PAP: 9780310711933, $4.99
Fic 118 p.; 22 cm.


PAP: 9780310711964, $6.99
Fic 121 p.; 22 cm.


PAP: 9780310711940, $6.99
Fic 111 p.; 22 cm.


PAP: 9780310711957, $6.99
Fic 101 p.; 22 cm.

MS (INT) Rating: 4

In The Elijah Project Elijah is a child with supernatural gifts. Some refer to him as the Elijah who appears in the Biblical book of Revelation. In On the Run the series opens with Elijah bringing a puppy who was hit by a car back to life. When the story hits the news, the evil organization which has been looking for Elijah now knows where to find him. The parents leave home with a message for their children to follow. The parents are kidnapped, leaving the older two children, Zach and Piper, to protect Elijah and fight the evil force as they search for their parents. In The Enemy Closes In, the RV the children are traveling in (without a licensed driver) breaks down. While waiting for repairs, Zach is drawn in by a beautiful young girl with attachments to the organization chasing them.

Book three, Trapped by Shadows, sees the family temporarily re-united, but Elijah ends up in the hands of Shadow Man, the apparent head of the organization. The family is caught in a cave while looking for Elijah and finds the only escape is through praise and worship.

The final book The Chamber of Lies has all three of the children seeing the lies of the evil one, how their lives would be if they would just follow him. Throughout the series there are two friends who help the children as well as an old man who seems to act as an angel. There is an underlying subtle story of teenage romance between Piper, Elijah’s sister, and Cody, one of the friends.

The Elijah Project series is reminiscent of several books. It seems as though Bill Myers may have been influenced by A Wrinkle in Time and the early spiritual warfare works of Frank Peretti. The series needs to be read in order; readers who do not do so may have a difficult time understanding the plot line. The books are short and fast paced and could have been written as one book; however
it would be about 400 pages. Each of the first three books leaves the reader hanging and unsatisfied with the ending. Readers really need access to all four books at the same time. The plot is tense throughout the series, making these books hard to put down. The theme is that evil will try to overcome good, but the good must persevere.

Jane Mouttet


PAP: 9780825435744, $10.99

Fic 210 p.; 21 cm.

MS (HS) Rating: 4

Based on the real-life story of the Ripley family, Stephanie Reed's The Light Across the River provides readers with a historically accurate look at those who participated as conductors on the Underground Railroad. The story describes young Johnny Rankin's encounter with a runaway slave named Eliza, who makes a daring escape across the Ohio River with a baby, just as the winter ice is breaking up. Her story later becomes famous in Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel Uncle Tom's Cabin.

Hugely impacted by Eliza's courage, Johnny has the privilege of meeting her again when she returns from the safety of Canada in order to rescue her daughter and grandchildren from slavery. This time, Johnny is mature enough that he is allowed to personally conduct them to the next safe-house in the Underground Railroad.

Reed’s novel describes the realities of slave life and the dangers involved in attempting to escape, without going into graphic detail. The godly Rankin family also illustrates the importance of following the biblical mandate to stand up for the defenseless, regardless of the danger it poses to the Rankin's own lives. This novel would be a great addition to a classroom or home school study of the slavery and Civil War era. Reed includes a short list of additional information resources at the end of the novel that could be used for this purpose.

Sherri Beeler


PAP: 9780310714842, $9.99

Fic 222 p.; 22 cm.


PAP: 9780310714859, $9.99

Fic 224 p.; 22 cm.

MS (HS) Rating: 5

Nancy Rue presents a teen series dealing with real-life issues while providing a wholesome alternative to popular literature.

In Motorcycles, Sushi, and One Strange Book, Jessie struggles to deal with her own ADHD and her mother’s bipolar disorder. Her parents were unmarried when Jessie was born, so her father didn't know about her until recently. When her mother is unable to care for her, she moves in with her father who lives in another state. Jessie finds a strange book that seems to echo her thoughts and helps her sort through the issues of her life.

In Boyfriends, Burritos, and an Ocean of Trouble, Bryn has
been good at keeping secrets, even about her athlete boyfriend’s abusive behavior. When a car accident reveals the truth, her world unravels as her boyfriend and others blame her. She is threatened by them when she decides to press charges. Her grandmother arrives to help her. Like Jessie, Bryn finds a mysterious book that could hold the secret to riding out the tidal wave her life has become.

Written from the perspective of the girls, both books emphasize character development over plot. Realistic dialogue and narrative help the reader empathize with their struggles. Both start as lonely teens, because each has presented a façade to the world around them. The other characters are also flawed, facing their own personal demons. The books end on a hopeful note for the girls as they gain a new maturity and spiritual grounding through the discovery of Yeshua (Jesus). The spiritual tone is a gentle one, and readers will not find themselves being preached at, as they follow along in the girls’ journey.

Tough issues mentioned in these books: unwed pregnancy, mental illness, ADHD, and abuse. They are presented in a matter-of-fact way, allowing the reader to put themselves in their shoes.

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

Carol R. Gehringer

The dog in the wood / Monika Schröder. Honesdale, Pa.: Front Street, 2009. LCCN 2009004970.

HBB: 9781590787014, $17.95
Fic 163 p.; 22 cm.
MS Rating: 4

The Dog in the Wood thoughtfully expresses the physical and emotional turmoil of the people in Eastern Germany immediately after World War II. Told from the point of view of ten-year-old Fritz, who begins the story living on a prosperous farm with his mother, older sister, and grandparents, the family is anticipating the occupation of the Russian army. When Hitler dies, and his grandfather recognizes Germany’s defeat, Fritz’s grandparents commit suicide. Eventually, the Russians temporarily take over the farm; their land is redistributed, and the family must move in with their maternal grandmother. Fritz becomes bitter with the move. When his mother is taken prisoner by the Russians under suspicion of hiding weapons, he becomes furious with his grandmother for not doing more to help. Taking on the responsibility for finding his mother on himself, Fritz learns first-hand of the complex political realities of this new world.

Monika Schröder’s personal and family experiences in East Germany give the reader a unique historical perspective, seldom portrayed in children’s literature. Dialog and fast-paced action keep the reader’s attention throughout. The image of the dog in the wood refers to a wood carving; a symbol of growth within an atmosphere of oppression. The suicide of the grandparents is not graphic, but shocking as Fritz finds them hanging in the barn. There is also some drinking by the Russian soldiers, although it is appropriate to the situation and not condoned or encouraged. The author’s note including historical information about the division of Germany and the Soviet
prison camp system is helpful for readers unfamiliar with this period of history. Traditionally, the Nazi’s and communists have been stereotyped in the American mind as evil entities; The Dog in the Wood challenges that image and reveals the positive and negative facets of all people, regardless of their political affiliation.

Kristine Wildner


PAP: 9781600063565, $12.99
Fic 161 p.; 21 cm.
HS MS Rating: 3

High school freshman Melissa Rollins is a typical teenager, striving for good grades, hanging out with her friends, developing a crush on the new boy in French class, and working hard on her dance team routines so she can try out for a captain position next season. As pressure mounts throughout the semester—some of it circumstantial, and some of it self-imposed—Melissa begins worrying about her weight. When she passes out twice in dance rehearsals, her choreographer won’t let her return until she sees a doctor; there it is revealed that Melissa is borderline anorexic and will likely battle the tendency toward this eating disorder all her life.

Most teenage girls who read Skinny, by Laura Smith, will recognize the familiar challenges high school brings relating to grades, extracurricular activities, and social life. Melissa seems perfectly normal, and even her eating habits do not seem all that drastic, until the end of the novel. She slips into her eating disorder quietly and unintentionally—beginning with poor eating habits and inconsistent meal-times, then eating only salad at lunch to lose a few pounds for dance team, progressing into weighing herself constantly, limiting her food intake, becoming obsessively scheduled with her time and eating habits, and ultimately experimenting with throwing up a couple of times.

Melissa appears to be a Christian, as she reads the Bible and prays every night before she goes to bed; however her faith does not seem to be a significant part of her or her family’s life on a daily basis. Her distorted view of God has her bargaining with Him, promising to “do better” at various things if only He will grant her request to become dance team captain. Her study of scripture on her own results in distorted interpretations that Melissa actually uses to prove that her limited eating is biblical—although at the end of the novel she and her parents say that they will get through everything with God’s help, and Melissa does realize the falseness of some of her scripture interpretations.

Sherri Beeler

Another look at Skinny: Skinny is the story of fourteen year old Melissa Rollins, in love for the first time, compulsive about her good grades, and yearning to be captain of her dance team. One thing she does not have is a perfect body and she sets out to get just that. Lists of her daily activities keep her on track, including what she will eat at each meal. You can’t be too thin, can you, asks Melissa? One thing leads to another and when she finds herself over the top with the demands of school and dance
and friends, Melissa turns to throwing up to get rid of those extra pounds. Fortunately what she is doing is discovered in time and with the help of concerned parents and a knowledgeable doctor, Melissa’s life changes for the better.

Young women who read this will surely relate in some way to Melissa’s feelings and situation. The writing is a good expression of teens today. Melissa knows the Lord but does not depend on him on a daily basis—mostly when things get tough for her. The message of the Gospel is evident but the book is not overly preachy.

Ceil Carey


HBB: 9781423109662, $17.99
PAP: 0, $8.99
Fic 483 p. : map ; 22 cm.
MS (HS) Rating: 3, recommended with caution

Heroes of the Valley is a fantasy with a medieval feel to it. Hallie, the main character, has been raised on the stories of the heroes of the valley.

Hallie, as the second son, longs for adventure, excitement, and acceptance. His behavior often gets him into trouble and his parents and siblings do not act lovingly toward him. He idolizes his uncle, who is also the second son. When he witnesses the murder of his uncle, the anger wells up in him and he determines to avenge his uncle’s death. He travels down the valley past the other Houses (family settlements) to his destination. In the process he learns about himself and discovers he cannot kill his uncle’s murderer in cold blood. Hallie develops a friendship with Aud, the daughter of one of the Houses, and together they determine to go against the traditions of the valley and see what lies beyond.

The book moves slowly at the beginning as the reader is introduced to the background information and the culture of the setting, but the pace picks up as the adventure and action begin. Each chapter opens with part of the legend of the heroes of the valley which gives some background to the story. The reader will see Hallie grow in character from a bumbling troublemaker to a leader of his people. Jonathan Stroud does use cursing and vulgar language in several places throughout the book. The last scene of the book also includes a battle with dead people, including Hallie’s uncle. Hallie is in his early teenage years, making the main character one who might appeal to middle schoolers. The book is almost 500 pages in length making the book a good length for some high schoolers.

Jane Mouttet
The Auralia Thread
by
Donna W. Bowling

  PAP: 9781400072521, $13.99
  Fic xii, 334 p. : map ; 21 cm.
  PAP: 9781400072538, $13.99
  Fic 370 p. ; 21 cm.
  PAP: 9781400074679, $13.99
  Fic x, 385 p. : map ; 21 cm.
  Adult HS Rating: 5

Cradled in a giant footprint beside the river, two older Gatherers looking for berries discover a tiny baby girl with silverbrown hair. Compassionately seeking to protect her, they take her to their home among the Gatherers outside the walls of House Abascar. As Auralia grows she freely explores far and wide through the forest, collecting nature souvenirs of many colors to share with her friends. Becoming skilled in weaving and building, she begins to demonstrate a special ability to transform dull items into various colors from nature. However, prompted by the queen, the king has outlawed bright colors for anyone without royal permission. (The king has also outlawed any talk about the Keeper, but the prince still seeks Him.) Throughout Auralia's Colors, Auralia's colored gifts to her friends are confiscated, and eventually she herself is imprisoned for daring to wear a multi-colored cloak she had woven. An explosion in the underground tunnels housing the confiscated colored treasures brings down the entire House Abascar, and young Prince Cal-Raven is left to lead the survivors.

Four houses had been established in regions of the Expanse: House Abascar, House Bel Amica, House Jenta, and Cent Regus—now the ruined and cursed home of the beastmen. In Cyndere's Midnight, Cal-Raven leads his refugees away from wealthy Bel Amica toward certain large caves for protection. Meanwhile, in Bel Amica, Princess Cyndere resists the rising power of the Seers who promote faith in the moon spirits that foster self-indulgence. Although Cyndere's husband has been murdered in an attack by beastmen, she continues his efforts to tame and redeem beastmen from their curse. She succeeds in befriending Jordam, a beastman who has been helped by Auralia. Jordam not only protects Cyndere, but he returns her brother (who has been captured by beastmen) to face the political intrigue and rising danger in Bel Amica from the deceitful Seers.

In Raven's Ladder, Cal-Raven and his companions follow directions from the Keeper to find a location for the New Abascar. When earthquakes and deadly underground tentacles threaten their cave home, the refugees follow Cal-Raven's trusted assistant and escape towards House Bel Amica. Meanwhile, treacherous captors interrupt Cal-Raven's mission and deliver him bound to prison in Bel Amica. After Cyndere secures his release, he encounters a cult's perversion of Auralia's story.
and learns of the plot by Seers and their
beastmen to overthrow Bel Amica's royal house.
When a heroic effort by Cal-Raven is thwarted,
he faces a crisis of faith.

Author Jeffrey Overstreet is a film critic as well
as a contributing editor at Seattle Pacific
University's Response magazine. In this fantasy
series, the Auralia Thread, he has created an
engrossing and complex world, filled with
beauty in the colorful details of nature and
occasional songs. Among the memorable and
well-developed characters, some are gifted with
special abilities. Stonemasters can "magically"
sculpt stone with bare hands; firewalkers can go
through fire without harm. As the narrator
shifts from scene to scene, the intricate and
consistent plot takes some unexpected turns.
Important themes include the self-destructive
effects of greed and pride, the peril of self-
gratification unbridled by moral constraint, the
danger from false doctrine, and the importance
of true faith when surrounded by unbelief. This
excellent series is highly recommended for
public, church, Christian school, and home
libraries. Stay tuned. The final volume due in
the spring of 2011 is entitled The Ale Boy's Feast.
Let’s walk the talk: girlfriend to girlfriend on faith, friendship, & finding real love / Danae Dobson. Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009. LCCN 2009019564.

PAP: 978141439104, $12.99
248.8/33 vi, 200 p.; 19 cm.
MS Rating: 4

Amidst the whirl of Starbucks runs, manicures, and mall shopping, Dobson and her friends manage to minister to those around them in Let’s Walk the Talk! In this inspirational self-help book for young teens, Dobson discusses a variety of topics, including clothing choices, peer pressure, dating, and family issues. Each chapter is divided into three main parts: an anecdote about a specific issue today’s teens face, with biblically-based suggestions for solving the issue; opinions and advice from Christian teens and professionals who work with them on a daily basis; and study questions to spark further self and scriptural exploration. Anecdotes admonish on the pitfalls of trusting in money, possessions, and secular entertainment for happiness; encourage readers to develop and mature in their personal relationships with God; and define success as acknowledging one’s God-given talents and living a life devoted to Him.

Let’s Walk the Talk!, the sequel to Let’s Talk! Good Stuff for Girlfriends About God, Guys, and Growing Up (Tyndale, 2003), is Dobson’s second nonfiction book for adolescent girls. Issues discussed are timely and author speaks from the perspective of a girlfriend/mentor. Included in the final chapter is a user-friendly list of self-esteem building scriptures. Danae Dobson is the author of several children’s books, including Woof! A Bedtime Story about a Dog (W Pub Group, 1985), the Forest Friends series, and Parables for Kids (Tyndale, 2005), co-authored with her father, Dr. James Dobson. She has been a guest speaker on The 700 Club, Time for Hope, and Focus on the Family. Scripture references are mainly taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version (Zondervan, 1984).

Kimberley Harris


HBB: 9780805086744, $16.95
PAP: 9780312608712, $7.99
811/.54 169 p.; 21 cm.
HS (Adult) Rating: 5

How can there be a little war? Are some deaths smaller than others, leaving mothers who weep a little less?

These poignant words comprise the message of The Surrender Tree. Cuba has fought three wars for independence and still she is not free. Told in the voices of Rosa la Bayamesa, a historical figure whose healing skills were legendary, her husband Jose, their constant enemy, Lieutenant Death, and a young girl named Silvia who comes to Rosa to learn the art of healing, you will long remember the message of sadness, slavery, and the struggle for freedom. The Surrender Tree is history in verse and presents a powerful portrait of Cuba.

This would be a wonderful addition to the shelves of any high school library where it would be read by lovers of both poetry and history.

Ceil Carey
HBB: 9781604130867, $30
B or 540.92 136 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm.
MS (HS) Rating: 4

Marie Curie begins with a short chapter on Marie Curie’s visit to the United States in 1921, in order to receive recognition from President Harding. Then the book goes back to the beginning of her life and tells her story chronologically. Interspersed throughout the story are glimpses into other things happening in the world of science at the same time in history. There are also photographs of Marie Curie at different stages of her life.

The bits of simultaneous history that are included are offset in boxes. These are somewhat distracting and create the feeling of reading a textbook. However, the story of Marie’s life is well written and the narrative overcomes the distraction factor within the first two chapters. The added historical context enriches the biography.

Marie Curie’s adultery is included, and handled with sensitivity. The consequences to her and others are honestly discussed. Another area of concern might be Marie’s passion for her work, to the detriment of mothering her daughters. This part of her life is also covered honestly.

One area of concern is the documentation. Although the Chronology, Notes, Bibliography, Further Resources, Index and Credits are included, an Appendix would have been helpful. One example of the lack of justification is a statement regarding the motives of a contemporary and competitor of Marie’s, (page 95), without clear documentation to support the author’s judgment.

This book is not only informative but also inspirational. Marie Curie made major scientific contributions to the world at a time when women were not taken seriously outside of the home. It is amazing to read what can be accomplished when passion is combined with a solid work ethic, regardless of the obstacles we face.

Suzanne Sharpe

HBB: 9781590786208, $16.95
811/.6 32 p. : col. ill. ; 26 cm.
MS Rating: 3; not recommended

Nature is the theme loosely woven through Pumpkin Butterfly, in which poet Heidi Mordhorst describes squirrel antics, cherry blossoms, storms, and raccoons. Poems meander over single and double page spreads in a variety of textual forms, evoking some of the playful elements of the seasons, such as a cat pouncing on wind-swirled leaves and the effect of snow on a school playground. The illustrations by Jenny Reynish are often clever, accenting the poetry with interesting and child-friendly images.

While Pumpkin Butterfly focuses on topics many children will enjoy, it also highlights topics Christian parents and possibly teachers might find objectionable. A Halloween theme is alluded to in several pieces, such as
“Ghosts,” the title of the first poem which has an obscure connection to spirits, Cauldron Full of Compost” that induces an image of witches, and “Most Realistic Costume Award” which actually has nothing to do with costumes. One poem, “Guest List: Charles Darwin’s Garden Party” clearly implies evolution. While this collection is written with plenty of color and feeling, other nature poem books can be substituted for this one with equal success.

Karen Schmidt


HBB: 9781580891295, $24.95
303.6/1 ix, 181 p.: ill., maps; 26 cm.
HS Rating: 3; not recommended

In a world which has become defined by global military conflicts and local drive by shootings, violence has become an assumed fact of life, but is there another way? Anne Sibley O’Brien and her son Perry Edmond O’Brien attempt to remind us of those which took a different path. In After Gandhi, the authors reflect upon the biography of Mohandas Gandhi and those that followed his call to non-violent resistance. The text is filled with short narratives about more than 16 individuals or movements which stood up to oppression without using violence. The authors highlight many well known activists like Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, and Cesar Chavez. In like manner, they bring to light lesser known figures like Thich Nhat Hanh of Vietnam, Vaclav Havel of Prague, and the white scarved mothers of Buenos Aires.

The text is exciting for several reasons. First, it draws the reader into the world of each movement. The authors do not resort to the retelling of cold facts and figures. They attempt to impress the context upon the reader by using metaphorical prose to set the stage. This encourages the reader to experience another world and makes the feeling of oppression real. Next, the text expands the reader’s view of the world. It encourages one to think beyond the confines of one’s socio-political world. This forces the reader to become aware of global issues and the interconnectedness of global oppression.

While this book has a lot to offer, the reader must be warned that the message of the book is more than a history of non-violent resistance. It is a call to action. The authors are calling for resistance to the American war in Iraq. This call remains hidden until the final chapter of the text. The authors inspire the reader with the past, then call them to join in the present. This approach comes dangerously close to emotional manipulation of high school students for political gain.

Monty M. Self

Three cups of tea : one man’s mission to promote peace--one school at a time / Greg Mortenson and David Oliver Relin ; adapted for young readers by Sarah Thomson. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2009. LCCN 2009353179.

HBB: 9780803733923, $16.99
PAP: 9780142414125, $8.99
371.82209549 xxiii, 209
When he accidentally stumbles across the village of Korphe while lost in the mountains of Pakistan, Greg Mortenson also discovers his life's calling. He promises the villagers who rescue him that he will return to build their children a school where they can gain an education. This ignites his desire to help the children of Pakistan and Afghanistan and to promote peace through the power of education. Despite threats, poverty, a kidnapping, and theft, he perseveres and succeeds, eventually building more than 60 schools.

Three Cups of Tea tells the true story of Mortenson's humanitarian efforts in Central Asia. Children will value this man's noble quest to bring education to the poor (and thereby peace to the world) since it directly relates to emphasis in kids' lives—school and other children.

This book carefully portrays frightening details. The Islamic faith of the Pakistani and Afghani characters shows a peaceful, loving religion in contrast to the Taliban, which—naturally—is discussed given the setting. Exciting moments do exist in this book, but children may find the number of characters whom Mortenson encounters cumbersome and difficult to remember, despite the character guide at the back.

This children's adaptation of the bestselling book includes maps, a glossary, a "Who's Who" guide to characters, a discussion guide with writing activities, a timeline, Q and A with Mortenson's twelve-year-old daughter, and several pages of color photographs.

For younger readers, the book may be too broad as an introduction to cross-cultural awareness. However it is a good adaptation for culturally focused children as well as older children.

Jaclyn S. Miller


- HBB: 9781590784716, $16.95
- B or 973.7/092 32 p.: col. ill.; 25 cm.
- MS (INT) Rating: 4

Voyages: Reminiscences of Young Abe Lincoln is a slim volume recalling Lincoln's three trips down the Mississippi on flatboats. Although Lincoln's reminiscences about his youth are sparse, others documented his stories and their impact on his life. Neil Waldman tells the story of the first voyage mostly in Lincoln's own words, a trip to sell produce down the river and his first dollar earned. Hired for a second trip by a prosperous farmer, Lincoln's second trip is marked by his initial witness of the horrors of the slave trade. His final voyage recalls Lincoln's ingenuity when their boat is caught on a dam. Concluding the third voyage, Lincoln recalls his experience observing a slave auction. It is here that Lincoln references the Scriptures, especially the relevance of Exodus—Moses leading his people out of slavery, and where his personal convictions about slavery are cemented within his core values.

Taking on the persona of young Lincoln, incorporating Lincoln's words (differentiated by brown, italic type) with his own, Waldman's voice becomes Lincoln's as he accounts for his travels and recalls his
impressions of the people, especially the slaves he encounters along the way. Thoroughly researched, Waldman's words and accompanying illustrations blur the line between fact and fiction; the entire book evokes the feeling that it is Lincoln's personal journal. Sepia tones, Waldman's own illustrations of a young Lincoln, images of scripture, slaves, money, and a slave auction poster augment the text as personal snapshots of critical moments on each voyage. Teachers will enjoy sharing this short book aloud with students as part of their study to the prelude to the Civil War. Students wanting greater insight into the life and motivations of this beloved president will come to a greater understanding of the man through his own words and personal stories.

Kristine Wildner

**PAP: 9781400070824, $13.99**

*Fic* 378 p.; 21 cm.

**Adult Rating: 5**

Claudette Fiore lives the lifestyle of the Hollywood rich and famous in *Limelight*. She basks in the reflection of her famous husband until his death. When the IRS descends, it’s evident the accountant has paid himself instead of taxes. Bereft, homeless, and facing financial disaster, Claudette attempts suicide and awakens in a mental institution. She obsesses over her failing beauty, aging, and loss of her staff.

She calls her gay stepson Michael to rescue her from the clinic. After he settles Claudette in the modest bungalow that was her childhood home, Michael retreats to Hawaii. A series of domestic disasters plague this proud octogenarian. Her inept self-reliance forces her to accept help despite her desire to remain aloof from contact with those she disdains.

As events unfold, Claudette’s suppressed memories surface. She re-evaluates her values and relationships. Finally, she extends herself to others and begins to experience genuine happiness.

Somehow, Melody Carlson captivates us with this selfish old lady armored in stubborn superiority. A delightful thread of humor prevails in Claudette’s misadventures as she attempts to cope with everyday life.

Strong writing puts us on the front lines of Claudette’s losing battle to forget the past. The emergence of her memories draws the reader into ever deepening sympathy with this pampered former beauty whose snobbery conceals insecurity. The gradual intrusion of truth onto the false reality the main character has constructed helps the reader understand why she chose a superficial life.

Mrs. Carlson makes the point that gay people are not exiled from God. Michael, along with his partner, find acceptance in a church. He presents the strongest witness of Jesus Christ as he urges Claudette to consider the afterlife.

An intriguing character study, this novel engages our compassion and keeps us wondering how Claudette will face each new challenge.

*Deborah H. Rabern*

**June bug / Chris Fabry. Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009. LCCN 2009013140.**

**PAP: 9781414319568, $13.99**

*Fic* 326 p.; 21 cm.

**Adult HS Rating: 5**

June Bug Johnson leads an unusual life—she travels from town to town with her father in their RV, never settling in any one spot. Then the RV breaks down in a Colorado Wal-Mart parking lot and June Bug’s life changes forever. She sees a missing child poster in the Wal-Mart and recognizes herself.

Meanwhile, in Dogwood, West Virginia, police dredge the past from a lake and the Edwards family must confront their hopes and fears regarding the child that disappeared from their lives so many years before. As forces beyond their control drag June Bug and her father back to Dogwood, she must confront her father’s past to understand her own.

With an easy narrative style,
Chris Fabry has created June Bug, a beautifully controlled tale based upon Les Misérables. June Bug, a precocious 9-year-old, captures the reader's heart with her charming personality and Fabry tells her story so that truthfulness rings throughout. Fabry sprinkles elements of the gospel in the book, but they fit naturally with the book's straightforward style; no sermonizing. He also exemplifies the theme of loving one's neighbor and demonstrates how this looks, as well as how it doesn't, through June Bug's eyes.

Since one main point-of-view is that of the town sheriff, a few scenes do include mild descriptions of police situations: a terrible plane crash and its aftermath, crime scenes and confrontations with suspects. However these scenes remain tame and add to plot and character development.

A discussion guide is included.

Jaclyn S. Miller


PAP: 9780787144888, $14.99
Fic 291 p.; 21 cm.

In the shadow of the lions / Ginger Garrett. (Chronicles of the scribe series ; 1) Colorado Springs, Colo.: David C. Cook, 2008. LCCN 2008928480.

PAP: 9780787144887, $14.99
Fic 311 p.; 21 cm.

Adult (HS) Rating: 3

Chronics of the Scribe is a post modern series – it is a story within a story. Garrett includes the story of the scribe sharing the main story with a human as a beginning and end to the book as well as occasional asides throughout the book. In In the Shadow of Lions, Bridget is dying in a hospice unit; an angel (the scribe) allows her to see back in time which results in the story of Anne Boleyn being written on the computer of Mariskka, the hospice nurse. The lives of Henry VIII and Thomas More are presented throughout this book. The Hutchins book, William Tyndale’s Bible, also plays a role in the story. Henry VIII’s endeavors to produce a male heir are shown through the eyes of Anne Boleyn as is her participation in the attempts. The external story for In the Arms of Immortals is Mariskka’s overnight success after selling Bridget’s story. The main story takes place in Sicily in 1347 and centers around the Black Death of that time period. A strange man comes to town in a ship, bringing the death with him and no one (not the priest, the wealthy family of the village, or the village “witch”) is able to stop the death which comes to many in the village. The scribe takes Mariskka back in time to experience the story so that she can write about it.

The story within a story concept makes understanding the first book difficult at times. The flashbacks to contemporary times do not flow smoothly and the reader is not aware of the direct connection to the main story. In the second book, with Mariskka actually being a participant in the events, the story within a story is easier to understand. It also helps to have read the first book in the series which gives background for the external story. Garrett has done much research into women in ancient history which guided her writing of
the series. Both In the Shadow of Lions and In the Arms of Immortals contain historical information that may be previously unknown to some readers. Once a reader gets used to the post modern storytelling, the characters are well developed and dialogue and events help make history come alive. While there is some sexual content in book 1, it is important to the story of Henry VIII’s quest for a male heir and is presented as discretely as possible. While written for adults, mature teens who like learning about history through fiction are a secondary audience for this series.

Jane Mouttet


PAP: 9780764203282, $14.99
Fic 492 p.; 22 cm.
Adult HS Rating: 4

Upon receiving her master’s degree in genetics, Lacey McHenry is thrilled to be hired as a research assistant at the renowned Kendall-Jakes Longevity Institute. Three weeks into her new job, an enigmatic young intruder breaks into the lab at night and attacks Lacey, but flees as other staff members arrive. Cameron Reinhardt bandages her wound, and she is sent on a gurney to the clinic for further examination and treatment. The next morning, Lacey is surprised to see her wound almost instantly healed, and her reports of her frightening experience described as a mental breakdown from stress. Lacey and Cameron are distressed to see falsification of records and wonder about a cover-up, even as further break-ins occur. Chapters from the points of view of Lacey and Cameron are rotated with those about Zowan, an increasingly skeptical young man in the mysterious subterranean New Eden enclave.

Author of four Christy awards, Karen Hancock offers in The Enclave another suspense-filled novel. Unlike her Arena, this science fiction story is placed on our Earth several years in the future. Frequently introspective, the main characters are well developed—although the reader may occasionally wince at Lacey’s susceptibility to the Institute Director’s personal magnetism. For readers familiar with the documentary film Expelled, the “scientific” bias expressed against Cameron’s Christian views is quite credible. Before the end of the book, the three narrative strands have converged to bring an appropriate (if somewhat bloody) resolution. Although the plot is not quite as tightly knit as in Hancock’s earlier novels, and recent scientific research findings render a minor assumption questionable, this exciting story considers several important ideas. These include the providence of God, faith in the midst of suffering, intellectual integrity, and concern for positive Christian witness. Definitely recommended for Christian adults and older high school students.

Donna W. Bowling


PAP: 9780805447323, $14.99
Fic x, 384 p.; 22 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 3
“Guardian of the Flame”, by T.L. Higley, stands alone in a series that covers the Seven Wonders of the World.

The story is told from several points of view (the Light keeper, the Roman captain, Julius Caesar, Cleopatra, etc.) and without sacrificing continuity.

Although the book starts slowly, seeming more concerned with Caesar, Cleopatra, and the politics of ancient Alexandria than with anything else, it eventually grabs your attention. It also took awhile for me to feel a connection with the main character Sophia, the Guardian of the Flame. That disconnect may be the author’s intention as Sophia is a rather isolated and anti-social character.

The book is not particularly Christian or evangelical in its contents although there is vague reference to the one true God of the Jews. In its hint of romance, use of symbolism, and certain surprises at the end, one might see an implied message about God’s love and hope. The heroine of this lively story has her fair share of comedic mishaps as she indulges a longing for adventure. Birdie’s uninhibited enjoyment of life infects her grandson, although her enthusiasm sometimes outruns her common sense and leads to trouble. The family dynamic of the too busy parents and the solitary teen left to his own devices rings true, and moves toward resolution in believable stages.

Guardian of the Flame is a reasonably well-written story, laced with great imagination, loosely based on history, with a bit of romance and a happy conclusion that will appeal to many teens and adults.

Gail Whitney
The dilemma of adult children striving to make decisions for a parent with a history and desire for independence highlights a common family conflict. *Seeing Things* is a marvelous, meaty novel that provokes thought.

*Deborah H. Rabern*

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**The rook / Steven James. (The Bowers files ; 2) Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 2008. LCCN 2008006830.**

HBB: 9780800718978, $19.99
PAP: 9780800732691, $13.99
Fic 489 p.; 22 cm.
Adult Rating: 5

“Slipping past their defenses, taking them out unaware.” (p. 480)

Agent Patrick Bowers is in San Diego as a consulting favor to one of his team members, and he has brought his stepdaughter Tessa along because no real danger is

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**The knight / Steven James. (The Bowers files ; 3) Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 2009. LCCN 2009014944.**

HBB: 9780800718985, $19.99
PAP: 9780800732707, $13.99
Fic 492 p.; 22 cm.
Adult Rating: *5

An old book, a dark tale, and a psychopath hidden among the reality of day to day human depravity come together in Steven James third installment in the Patrick Bowers Thriller series *The Knight*. A series of murders are going to take place over a period of ten days...that's all the FBI has learned from the killer. The race to discover who is behind the evil threatens to destroy everyone it its path. Time is running out. Who will survive?

The dialogue in this story is tight, intense. Every thought and every implied thought is taut and packed with layered meanings. Everything matters in this book. The action was so rapid, the bad guy so incredibly evil, and the race to catch him so frantic that every muscle in my body was coiled like a spring! *The Knight* made me forget time, place and reason...I was completely immersed in story.

Now Patrick Bowers is a tragic character, and he has a brilliant mind. He loves his step-daughter, and he is dedicated to justice. But the poor man needs to find peace. Take a vacation. Get grounded. That won’t happen. The only light in his world seemed to blink out when he lost the only person he'd ever loved enough to share his heart with. However, the glimmer of faith left behind has a difficult time taking hold in Pat Bower's life because he is constantly trying to stay one step ahead of a psychopath. Actually, the psychopath is always ten steps ahead of everyone, and the race to capture him is suspenseful and frightening.

You won't find a thriller with more thrills, a novel with more action, a crime story with more twist and turns, characters with more heart and sheer grit than those written upon the pages of *The Knight*. There’s not a lot of faith to be found among the pages, but for good, clean, heart-pounding entertainment Steven James’ novels have much to offer.

*Kim Ford*
present and his geoprofiling might help crack a mysterious series of arson fires. What no one could possibly know is that evil itself has slipped past their defenses, and what should have been a few days of quality time with Tessa explodes into one of Patrick Bowers’ most deadly investigations!

The timing of each event in *The Rook* is strategically placed to draw the reader deep into the hearts and minds of the characters. From the outset, Bowers is struggling with secrets from his past alongside his deep desire to connect with Tessa and find a way to express his deep love and longing to be a father. Yet in what appears to be a random act of violence, both he and Tessa are thrust into a plot of national intrigue. Once again, the reader is left in a desperate race against time as Patrick and his team members frantically try to figure out what is going on around them.

There are deeper emotional issues woven into this second Patrick Bowers Thriller. Steven James not only places the reader alongside the players for both good and evil, but he plumbs the depths of Bowers’ heart as he struggles to move past the loss of his wife and reach out to Tessa. He also finally recognizes that his relationship with agent Lien-hua Jieng might be more than just a work-related partnership. Beyond all of this, the reader also comes to know Tessa in a much deeper and meaningful way, and oddly enough it is her eclectic character that James uses to bring an electrifying dimension to this story.

Steven James is a brilliant writer. Each word, each phrase, each scene is succinctly and powerfully written to wring every ounce of emotion out of the reader. Along the journey, the reader’s heart will ache, will laugh, will cry as the very spirit of each character is placed within the crucible of terrifying trial. Slowly, but surely, they are being drawn to the One who is able to rescue them from themselves.  

*Kim Ford*

*Katt’s in the Cradle* recounts slices of life from a quartet of pastor’s wives who meet bi-weekly for lunch. They drive forty miles from Red River, Ohio, to gather at Lulu’s Café away from the church fishbowl. Their meetings are an opportunity to vent in privacy and receive support during their assorted tribulations.

Jennifer deals with her mother’s mental illness. Anxiety besets her when the mother of her adopted daughter contacts her, and she notices the same car lurking in her rear view mirror each day. Felicity wonders whether having another child would derail her successful career. Meanwhile, her feuding Hispanic family is en route from Los Angeles to celebrate her husband’s fortieth birthday.

Lisa and her husband deal with two factions that threaten to destroy their small church.

Mimi’s alcoholic father disrupts her household and brings public embarrassment as she and her husband

**Katt’s in the Cradle : a novel / Ginger Kolbaba & Christy Scannell. (Secrets from Lulu’s Cafe series ; 3) New York: Howard Fiction, 2009. LCCN 2008025404.**
It seems as though the writing team of Ginger Kolbaba & Christy Scannell have plugged formulas into a template. A lack of cohesion mars the plot. Opportunities for suspense and dramatic tension go to waste. The tale bogs down with extraneous back story and descriptions of attire. Its title refers to a peripheral character, Ally Katt, a youthful successor to the Presbyterian pastor’s deceased wife, Kitty Katt, who was murdered in a prior book. These stereotypes appear to be inserted for levity.

This well-intentioned novel may be adequate for the uncritical reader who doesn’t mind being told instead of shown. Meticulous impartial attention to the Baptist, Methodist, Assemblies of God, and Community churches and lip service to Presbyterians. However, the book flops along on four flat tires to its happily ever after. The conclusion leads us to understand that pastor’s wives have issues just like real people. Eureka!

Deborah Rabern

HBB: 9780764207709, $19.99  
PAP: 9780764205736, $14.99  
Fic 336 p.; 22 cm.  
Adult HS Rating: 4

Fans of Beverly Lewis and especially those waiting for this third and last book in the Seasons of Grace series, will devour The Telling. All the loose ends are finally tied together – does Lettie return to her family, how does her husband Judah respond when he learns of her long-kept secret, will she meet the child she gave up for adoption and what about Grace and Vonnie and their romance!

Told in her inimitable way, author Lewis invites us into the world of the Amish, this one a place many Englischers inhabit. Grace’s friend Heather is attempting to cure herself of cancer in a natural way and is surprised to learn she was born to an Amish woman. No wonder Heather loves the people and culture. She has also met, via social networking, a young man who seems to understand her struggle and approaches it with prayer and compassion.

Grace’s family continues to deal with her mother’s disappearance and all that means to them and to their community. Grace and Heather set out for Ohio hoping to bring Lettie home and discover her reason for leaving.

God’s love and grace are firmly interwoven into this conclusion of The Seasons of Grace. Beverly Lewis is considered the tops in the writing of Amish fiction and for no small reason. Her stories are believable and well written. The plots transport readers into this religious culture that many find intriguing. The pace of each book is smooth but many feel that the first two books in this series leave two many unanswered questions. There are always some in any series but The Seasons of Grace may have more than most. That is why fans have waited for this third and last book in the series with such anticipation.

Ceil Carey

PAP: 9781400074570, $13.99  
Fic 358 p.; 21 cm.
**ADULT FICTION**

Adult Rating: 3

In *White Picket Fences*, those fences are what keep the family secrets of the Janiver’s away from the public. A husband who is always working, a wife who is starting to fall for a substitute teacher, and a 17-year-old son who has a secret from when he was four years old. It’s when Tally, the 16-year-old niece to Amanda, moves in with the family, that the family realizes how their secrets and desire to look perfect have backfired and caused more pain then they could have ever imagined.

The horrific death of a baby during a fire when Chase, the son, was four years old has been haunting the family for years. The lack of communication is causing the Janivers to hide from one another. It is when Chase begins acting out and not being involved in family events that their world come

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**My Hands Came Away Red** by Lisa McKay


PAP: 9780802489821, $12.99

Fic 391 p.; 21 cm.

Adult Rating: *5

*My Hands Came Away Red* is an incredible story by Lisa McKay. Dealing with subjects that are making headlines today, it is written in such a gripping way that it is almost easy to forget that this is a novel and not a missionary biography. Told from the perspective of an Australian teenager, this book is a great read for all ages. It is one of the most engaging fiction books I have read in recent years and should be a “must” read for all those involved in short-term missions.

It recounts the journey of a group of teens on a short-term mission trip as they become caught in a political/religious uprising. The leading characters are drawn with exceptional depth and you feel like you are right there with them as they struggle physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The story raises questions of God’s sovereignty in the midst of human tragedy, of God’s character, and His response to injustice. Religious battles and spiritual struggles are portrayed in ways that are hard to forget when the story ends.

From just reading about a group of teens on a mission, you quickly become a part of their family as they walk through what God calls them to do. There are no pat answers at the end and you are left wondering what if this was me, or my child. Discussion questions at the end help one to process and better understand the events in the novel.

As a career missionary, I found this book, and *The Missionary* by William Carmichael and David Lambert, which I previously reviewed, to be two of the best novels I have read in years. They stand head and shoulders above that Christian fiction which all too often follows an “everything works out in the end” formula. Lisa McKay has produced a work that will keep you on the edge of your chair and will stay with you long after the last page is read. Very thought provoking!

*Gail Whitney*
crumbling down.

The connection between Chase and his cousin Tally is both honest and tender, realizing that they need one another in order to not hide from the world or their secrets. God is present as if He is an afterthought at times; the family, it seems, takes Him for granted, but prays when times are tough. The journey the Janviers go on is tiresome at certain points and filled with extensive background information. Will I still be loved and appreciated if I am honest? Can I survive once the truth is told? Meissner answers these questions in a thoughtful and understanding manner, making the reader realize that a family, with faith and trust in God, can survive under any amount of strain.

Kate Hensing


PAP: 9780802469274, $13.99
Fic 317 p.; 21 cm.
Adult Rating: 4

Having her name translate into “Miss Fortune” is something that Allie Fortune really hates, especially in her line of work as private investigator. Make that the only female private investigator in New York City in the year 1947! But her work is a welcome distraction from her own personal mystery – where is David, her fiancé who disappeared during the war?

In Miss Fortune Allie is hired by Mary Gordon a woman claiming innocence as her house is ransacked and her life is threatened. Allie is certain Mary is not telling her the entire truth about a mysterious and legendary treasure that has gone missing. She teams up with an FBI agent named Jack who is single and attractive and really makes her smile… yet her heart belongs to David, her long lost love, and she cannot rest until his fate is known to her.

In Miss Match, Jack receives a cryptic letter from his former love, Maggie, begging him to come to Germany to rescue her and a child. Since the FBI refuses to get involved, Jack resigns and asks Allie to help him investigate. Allie formulates a plan and before they know it, they are both on their way to Germany on a rescue mission, never realizing the dangers the trip will involve.

The Allie Fortune Mysteries are quick reading, fun and give the reader a good picture of life in the forties for a young woman attempting to be independent in a world not quite ready for that type of freedom. Readers looking for a mystery will be well satisfied with these books. Those looking for a Christian mystery will find much lacking. Although the second book does bring the spiritual into realm more than the first, neither really hits the mark that readers may be looking for.

Ceil Carey


PAP: 9781416587460, $13.99
Many enjoy Gilbert Morris’ House of Winslow series. Honor in the Dust is the first in a prequel trilogy set in the 1500’s. In this book, Claiborn Winslow returns from war to find that his brother has arranged a marriage with his love. Grace and Claiborn choose to run away, leaving the family fortune behind. Eventually they are able to return to the ancestral castle but it is years before Claiborn is able to reconcile with his brother Edmund. After their return to the castle, Claiborn’s son Stuart does whatever he can to improve his social position. He eventually secures a place in the court of King Henry VIII because of his skill with weapons and falconry. Stuart makes acquaintance with William Love’s pursuit / Siri Mitchell. Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 2009. LCCN 2009005411.
PAP: 9780764204326, $13.99
Fic 329 p.; 22 cm.
Adult Rating: *5

To live in the Puritan colony of Stoneybroke, Massachusetts is to live your entire life in a constant state of uncertainty. For nothing except sin and all of its depravity were certain, and everything else, especially as it related to God and salvation through the death of His Son is circumspect - subject to one’s pursuit of the strict observance of piety and righteousness. Siri Mitchell explores this Puritan lifestyle in her latest novel Love’s Pursuit, and places the truth of God’s grace in plain view.

Susanna Phillips is a young woman of marriageable age, and in her heart she longs for the affection of John Prescott. Her day to day existence, steeped in unending labor, moves forward unchanged until savages are spotted by one of the town’s prominent members. The governor’s army captain, Daniel Holcomb, comes to Stoneybroke in response to this report in order to train the militia in proper defense methods. Little does anyone suspect, Susanna least of all, that his presence would also bring profound change into their lives. For you see, Daniel Holcomb would bring to their lives the definition of God’s unmerited grace.

Love’s Pursuit is a profound book in many ways. Siri Mitchell captures the voice of the Puritan villager and recreates the stifling, hopeless, helplessness of much of their existence. Siri’s book takes a close look at Puritan beliefs and reveals that while they were so close to the truth of God’s love, they missed His grace almost entirely. Love’s Pursuit captures the essence of this reality in the life of the Puritans, and the reader’s heart breaks for Susannah and her entire family as they become the target of a malevolent man’s selfish desires.

God’s love pursues the hearts of the Stoneybroke colony – Susannah’s heart in particular. The truth revealed will resonate deeply with reader’s hearts and will bring new understanding of God’s unmerited favor and the reassurance of His love and mercy. Love’s Pursuit is a rich, satisfying look into the Puritan lifestyle.

Kim Ford
Tyndale and through circumstances and Tyndale’s teaching learns that there are things in life more important than having a presence in the king’s court.

In *Honor in the Dust*, Morris once again shows his skill in writing well-researched historical fiction. The characters draw out the emotions of the reader. Claiborn, Stuart, and Edmund change and grow making them seem real rather than just characters in a book. The plot shows the life of King Henry VIII from the viewpoint of a naïve young man. It also shows how William Tyndale sacrificed in order to provide the scriptures in the language of the people. Young adults interested in reading more about the court of King Henry VIII or the work of William Tyndale will be drawn to this book.

*Jane Mouttet*

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PAP: 9780764205019, $13.99

Fic 364 p.; 22 cm.

Adult Rating: *5

Nancy Moser is an author truly gifted to bring people back to life in her fiction! *How Do I Love Thee?* transports the reader to another time – another place – into another life, and then allows them a happy sorting out of fact from fiction. This story leaves you wanting to read more about Elizabeth Barrett Browning and savoring the experience of a visit into her world!

Truly, the life of Elizabeth Barrett Browning is better than fiction in places! This book focuses particularly on her romance and subsequent marriage to Robert Browning. Both Robert and Elizabeth seem to dwell in an emotional realm far beyond that of every day existence. To bring these two poets together! Ah! What romance! And when the reader discovers how nicely they compliment one another...well, it’s just almost fictional!

The reader also learns some unsavory truths along the journey. Elizabeth was an opium addict as a result of an unspecified lung ailment. This might be a pretty disturbing fact for some to uncover. However, it seems that Robert does a great job discouraging her from the use of her drug, and eventually she all but weans herself from its use. The heartbreaking truth of the emotional enslavement that Elizabeth’s father wielded over her and all of her brothers and sisters was shocking at times. It was very sad to learn that she lived the majority of her life not really understanding what love was all about.

It’s quite easy to understand why Nancy Moser chose to write the story of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s romance! *How Do I Love Thee* is a beautiful tribute to a woman whose life was complex, colorful and filled with both dramatic tragedy and dramatic romance. If you are looking for compelling historical fiction, look no further!

*Kim Ford*

PAP: 9780764203480, $13.99
Fic 352 p.; 23 cm.
Adult Rating: 5

When you try to blend two stories, one present-day and one Eighteenth century, it would seem an impossibility. But Tom Morrisey tells the tale of Captain Henry Thatch and a young, freed slave named Ted Bascombe alongside the story of Treasure Hunter Greg Rhode and his newly discovered soul-mate and blends them so seamlessly you look forward to the end of each chapter just to see how marvelously it blends into the beginning of the next!

This is a story of treasure hunting in the cannon-and-sword sense as well as in the GPS and diving sense. However, on a much deeper and satisfying level, this is the story of everyone’s search for the ultimate treasure – forgiveness and redemption. A more unlikely gathering of characters you'll never find than the ones that leap from the pages of Pirate Hunter. The story plot itself seems an unlikely location for spiritual truth too, but you will find it seamlessly and believably woven into the tale.

Readers will be drawn in from the very beginning, and by the time they reach the final chapters, they will be reading at a frantic pace! It is no exaggeration at all to tell you this an extremely satisfying read!. Readers will experience the full gamut of emotional impact during the course of Pirate Hunter and be left the better for having read the tale.

Kim Ford


PAP: 9780764203725, $13.99
Fic 428 p.; 22 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 5

Tales of his father's adventures during the French Resistance captivate Emile in Searching for Eternity. The enigma of his father haunts him. Did he disappear because of another woman, or is he a spy?

Emile’s mother abandons France for a new life in the United States with her reluctant son in tow. They land in Atlanta, GA in the 1960's. High school bullies and sudden exposure to virulent racism make his transition nightmarish. Even his church changes from Catholic to Baptist leaving him with many questions for his devout grandmother. His feeling of homesickness, displacement, and confusion over his father hinders adjustment to his new home.

One bright spot is his friendship with Eternity Jones, a girl with passionate commitment to justice and knowledge of the truth. She and Emile forge a lifelong alliance to find Emile’s father. Eternity’s own tragic circumstances help him put his feelings of abandonment and sorrow in perspective as the two families are linked together.

Elizabeth Musser shows how different characters process disappointments and adversity and how it affects their faith in God. Biblical references are intertwined as a seamless part of the narrative. Her handling of French history, the testimonies of the Klaus Barbie trial, and its impact on the world remind us never to forget the evils that
unrestrained men can inflict. This engaging and entertaining story that spans almost three decades reveals impeccable historical research. Truth sings from each chapter, yet the author never belabors catastrophic events.

Like a master chef preparing an intricate dish of many textures and flavors, Elizabeth Musser carefully layers Searching for Eternity with a full range of emotions, sensory experience, history, French culture, and the spiritual dimension of budding faith. Her people transcend the role of character. It’s a book to be savored.

Deborah Rabern


PAP: 9780805447354, $14.99
Fic 392 p.; 22 cm.
Adult Rating: 4

Powers is the story of Mariutza and Jazz, two people whose separate lives are worlds apart. Soldiers appear with helicopters and guns to pursue Mari through the Louisiana swamp. Her grandfather lies dead and a lifetime of training kicks in as Mari realizes she must escape and find the Prophet. She dresses in her traveling clothes, burns their home, and heads for the open road.

Meanwhile, visions accompanied by blackouts haunt Jazz. His employer thinks he’s on drugs. Jazz seeks refuge in his apartment only to find it’s been invaded by vandals. As he surveys the damage, he sees three attackers coming toward him.

The City of New Orleans is as foreign to Mari as the back alleys of Beijing would be to us. Yet, destiny draws her to an encounter with Jazz as mysterious entities bent on their destruction hound them through the streets and into the surrounding countryside. In the quest for answers, their paths crisscross with FBI agent Daniel Groves who tracks them with relentless zeal.

John B. Olson writes heart-stopping suspense and is adept at creating an atmosphere of impending doom. The novel maintains a tantalizing ambiguity about the supernatural forces that swirl around both the main characters. One wonders if voodoo, Santeria, or Christianity is at work. The fog begins to clear in patches after the first 150 pages as the plot intertwines the characters.

Escalating action quickens the pace during the last half of the book as clues lead into unexpected territory. Otherworldly phenomena abound through to the end. This tale is a grand variation on a little known passage of scripture. Those who aren’t familiar with the fine details of the Old Testament will be surprised when all is revealed. Ted Dekker fans would be well-advised to take a look at Powers.

Deborah H. Rabern


PAP: 9780764205545, $13.99
Fic 349 p.; 21 cm.
Adult Rating: 5

Watch Over Me opens as Deputy Benjamin Patil discovers an abandoned newborn in a plastic grocery bag. Ben feels compelled to take care of the baby, but his infertile wife fears bonding to a child that may be taken
away without warning.

Ben’s marriage to Abbi has ruptured following his life-altering military tour in Afghanistan. Always a hippie-style liberal, Abbi participated in anti-war demonstrations while he was serving. Not only is their relationship shaky, but they are alienated from friends. No one knows about her purging or Ben’s attempted suicide.

Ben and Abbi struggle to resolve their cultural, lifestyle, and political differences as well as to find their way back to faith and each other. Their precarious parenthood makes them edgy as they are conflicted about solving the mystery of baby Silvia’s birth.

As they assume the role of parents, their paths intersect with a deaf teen who does odd jobs for them. Neither Matthew’s dysfunctional family nor his failing kidneys quench his optimism, zest for life, and quest for his missing father.

Christa Parrish has written a beautiful, multifaceted story that touches the heart on many levels. Her characters evoke sympathy as their backgrounds are revealed in bits and pieces. She has created a tapestry of authentic modern life with complicated interrelationships that continually evolve. She allows us to know these people and provokes us to root for their success.

This compelling novel beckons the reader through the individual quagmires of conflict to resolution. Answers arrive only after hard-fought battles with pride and character flaws. Faith glows naturally through the central characters like light from a masterwork of art. The author doesn’t portray a fantasy of exalted religion, but tells the truth about the nitty-gritty of coming to grips with an available God. This book is worth the investment of your time and money.

Deborah H. Rabern

Dawn’s prelude / Tracie Peterson. (Song of Alaska ; 1) Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 2009. LCCN 2009025046.

HBB: 9780764207228, $19.99
PAP: 9780764201516, $13.99
Fic 335 p.; 21 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 4

Dawn’s Prelude is book one in the Song of Alaska series. Tracie Peterson combines a story of abuse and escape with the history of Alaska right after it became part of the United States. Lydia was forced into a marriage by her father as a business deal. Both her father and her husband die in the same accident, leaving an interesting state of affairs. Lydia has enough money to leave the abusive life behind and start over with her aunt in Alaska, telling no one but her lawyer where she is going. After arriving in Alaska she discovers she is pregnant. She also falls in love with the owner of the local sawmill who has been a friend of her aunt for a long time. Through underhanded means, the step children discover the Lydia’s child exists and connive to bring the baby back to Missouri. In this historical romance, Lydia’s faith grows and she learns that men can be trusted after all.

Peterson has researched her subject well. The information about the Tlingit people and the mission outreach to them appears to be accurate. Lydia and the other characters in the book seem to be real people. Peterson’s sense of time and place in this book indicates that she has spent time in the area. The
suspense at times makes the book difficult to put down. While written at an adult level, this book will also appeal to middle school and high school students who enjoy historical romances. The book invites the reader to anticipate the next two books in this trilogy.

Jane Mouttet


In According to Their Deeds, Paul Robertson explores many thought-provoking questions. Should one mistake cost a man his reputation even years after the fact? Is it wise to choose mercy over justice? As the story opens, Charles Beale, owner of a Virginia rare-books store, attends an estate auction to buy back the books that he sold to Derek Bastien, who was murdered in an apparent robbery. Beale is intrigued when an antique desk sells for far more than its resale value. Upon bringing the books home, he discovers that one volume is hollowed out to conceal papers, which, if made public, could ruin the careers of some of Washington's most powerful and respected people. Even as he wonders who would pay such an exorbitant price for the desk, and why, Beale grapples with a question of justice and mercy as he decides whether to take the papers to the police.

The plot unfolds slowly in this character-driven story which is told mostly in dialogue. The author builds suspense through Beale's conversations with his staff, wife, and customers in the present and flashbacks to the chess games and conversations that he shared with Derek Bastien. Beale is shown as always merciful, in contrast to most of the other, less-developed characters, which include a Congresswoman, an FBI agent, and various antiquities dealers with whom Beale is acquainted. Some characters and subplots could benefit from further development, but this does not impede the story. For example, a William Beale is mentioned several times, but the fact that William is Charles Beale's deceased son is not established until the end and feels like an afterthought. Suspense builds gradually, but the reader is kept engaged and will have difficulty solving the mystery before the characters. Recommend for those who like a clean but suspenseful mystery.

Elizabeth Norton


In Things Worth Remembering takes the reader through the final week prior to Maisey Laswell's wedding. The only daughter of Kendy and Luke Laswell has come home after college graduation to marry the love of her life, Marcus. From the very beginning of the journey it is very obvious that Maisey does not want to go home and have to spend any time with her mother. Since this week is one traditionally filled with special family moments, it doesn't take long for Marcus to realize that Maisey is shutting her mother out completely. When he is bold
PAP: 9780764205088, $13.99
Fic 341 p.; 22 cm.
Adult Rating:*5

Lillian and Reinhardt Vogt desire the freedom to practice their Mennonite faith, and they feel they will only find that freedom on the plains of the American continent. The journey across the ocean comes at a far greater price than anyone could have dreamed, for what began as a group of six ends in only four lives placing their feet on American soil. This small group must somehow find a way to move beyond their loss and make a way for themselves on the vast Kansas plains.

Dreams and commitment drive the Vogt family on to Kansas, and there they find that God’s grace and strength are ever present as they try to restructure their lives into the loving, close-knit family that they all long for. When tragedy strikes again, they all face a trial of their faith fiercer than it seems any human heart can survive. Buried amid the never-ending needs of survival, each member of the family isolates themselves inside their own pain, until utter destruction seems the only certainty. Finding their way back to God and each other is a very long journey ahead.

*Fields of Grace* is a rich and satisfying story. The characters are realistically portrayed, and their struggles are fierce. Their victories and losses are also painfully believable and heartfelt. Kim Vogel Sawyer captures the essence of grace amid the pages of a memorable story.

Kim Ford
or misplaced. The ending of the novel is the perfect picture of God’s abundant grace and extravagant love for His children, and it serves as the perfect ending to a very traumatic week of family events! *Things Worth Remembering* is a book worth re-reading and sharing!


- **PAP:** 9780781448925, $14.99
- **Fic** 292 p.; 21 cm.
- **Adult Rating:** 3

In *Stretch Marks* the mind as well as the body of twenty-nine-year-old Mia expands. Her concrete certainties about abortion, organic eating and her mother crack and crumble in the wake of an unplanned pregnancy. Mia’s entrenched beliefs are uprooted by a surprising emotional connection to the baby. A stunned Mia realizes her mother’s values trump her own assumed political correctness. The second shock is her partner Lars unceremonious exit as soon as he learns about the pregnancy.

A coterie of colorful friends and neighbors assists Mia as she copes with her irrepressible mother, Babs, who arrives in full motherhood mode to help. At the same time, Mia befriends Flor, a pregnant teen-ager who has little support. Her circle widens to include Adam, whose mission becomes watching over Mia. Her intermittent discourse with Lars keeps her off-balance and longing for their relationship to stabilize.

This urban fairy tale by Kimberly Stuart is a pleasant read without surprises. Comic elements hold gut-wrenching emotion at bay, despite the main character’s abandonment by the father of her child during the miseries of early pregnancy and unresolved questions about her parent’s divorce.

The author embellishes the narrative with intricate descriptions that tend to be distracting. Agnostic Mia’s strongest spiritual commitment seems to be to her yoga class. Babs, the social butterfly mother, tackles yoga with enthusiasm while substituting the name of Jesus for the mantra. Their visit to a black evangelical church inspires Babs to a more demonstrative spirituality that strikes Mia as patronizing.

Learning to tolerate and even enjoy another’s idiosyncrasies is at the core of the mother-daughter plot line, and two unlikely romances round out the ending. The narrative implies that weddings are on the horizon, even as Mia’s heart softens toward God with the wonder of her new baby.

*Deborah H. Rabern*


- **PAP:** 9780764200069, $14.99
- **Fic** 362 p.; 22 cm.
- **Adult (HS) Rating:** 3

After five years of waiting for her husband to return from prison, he is finally home. Andrea isn’t sure how to feel about this. She loves John almost against her will, even though she knows he’s probably not good for her. His alcoholism and infidelity have been issues throughout their married life. The whole thing is awkward—especially since Rebekah, their teenage daughter receives John with
anger, and their youngest daughter receives him with fear. Only Billy, their high-functioning Down syndrome son is truly glad to see him.

As John, a new believer in Christ, struggles to figure out how to live life again, he finds himself drawn to old temptations, and, unfortunately, he succumbs. Rebekah, meanwhile, takes up drinking, and has turned to New Age-type paganism and casting of spells in an attempt to control her life and fulfill her desires. Andrea seems simply to drift, accepting John's new infidelities as painful, but not unexpected, and unable to leave him or hold him accountable.

The Returning, by Ann Tatlock, is a fairly realistic look at a "messy" family life, illustrating how the consequences of one person's sin are far-reaching, and how a new believer will flounder without the discipleship of a mature believer. The novel wonderfully illuminates Billy—his joys, his struggles, his limitations, his strengths, his desire to live like anyone else, despite his Down syndrome. His cheerful goodness is a warm spot in a story of bleakness. While the novel ends with an event that indicates there is hope for change in John and Rebekah's lives, things are not tied up nice and tidily. Also, parents may find that the spell-casting and other pagan rituals are described in more detail than they would wish for their high-schooler to read, unless they read the novel together and discuss it.

Sherri Beeler


PAP: 9780764203879, $14.99

Fic 399 p.; 22 cm.

Adult Rating: 5

Ben Buckley is a grieving widower—twenty years after the fact. The sudden death of his wife has cost him far more than he has ever realized in the years since her passing. When a young, enthusiastic, albeit under-qualified young lady interviews for a position at his company Ben finds himself behaving in ways very uncharacteristic of his normal behavior—he hires her! Meanwhile, his secretary, Carolyn decides to delve into her boss’ past in an attempt to solve some of his unresolved grief only to find that she herself has many unresolved issues of her own that must be faced.

And the young lady that Ben hires, Kelly, turns out to have far more wisdom and insight that she believes herself to possess, and the honest steadfastness of her faith becomes a greater life-changing influence upon those around her than she could ever imagine. As she enters the world of home design and retail sales, Kelly blossoms into a young woman who displays promising talent in areas unique to her and the long-held dreams of her heart. Her quiet, unassuming role in this story becomes a beautiful beacon of God’s love and faithfulness.

Sometimes a Light Surprises is about family. It is about grieving and learning to cope with the sudden changes death brings into our life. It is a story about relationships and the surprising and oftentimes unrealized ways that our thoughts, words and deeds impact those with whom we come in contact with. God uses the quirky, irritating, challenging and difficult
people in our lives to mold us in ways that only He can.

Jamie Langston Turner, in her own special way, creates a story that explores those areas of the heart that often remain hidden from view. Take time to explore this treasure, because — Sometimes a Light Surprises.

Kim Ford


PAP: 9781414333267, $12.99
Fic 340 p.; 21 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 4

Cottonwood Whispers, the sequel to Fireflies in December, follows Jessilyn Lassiter through the summer of her 17th birthday. Even as they celebrate the beginning of summer, Jessilyn and her best friend, Gemma Teague, find themselves contending over an issue that interferes with the closeness they usually enjoy. Jessilyn also wonders whether or not her other best friend, Luke Talley, will ever return her feelings for him, especially as he increasingly avoids her throughout the summer. When tragedy strikes, Gemma, Luke, and Jessilyn pull together in hopes of overcoming an even bigger disaster.

Through her use of first person point of view, Jennifer Erin Valent effortlessly opens Jessilyn Lassiter's world. Jessilyn sparkles with all the hope of a young adult on the brink of maturity, but a terrible situation pushes her to make very tough decisions. The southern dialect employed in the dialogue trips along with its frequently dropped g's as well as phrase patterns that seem consistent with the South. Due to historically-held southern prejudices, the setting, Calloway, Virginia in 1936, helps drive the plot. Creeping in with ever increasing tension, the plot tightens to the dramatic climax. Since Cottonwood Whispers is written in first person, Jessilyn's personality — equal parts teenager and young lady — occasionally masks the tension, lending even greater drama to the climax. Questions of faith arise as Jessilyn continues her struggle to accept the faith her parents and Gemma already hold. In spite of all that happens, Jessilyn learns that "In spite of all the hate and unhappiness and ignorance in the world, some things were just good no matter how you looked at it.”

p. 338

Kristina Wolcott


PAP: 9781414323855, $12.99
Fic 296 p.; 21 cm.
Adult Rating: 4

Jan Watson, presents a likable heroine through Cara Whitt in Sweetwater Run. The book draws upon the Troublesome Creek characters and setting, being set in the Kentucky mountains of 1893. Newlywed Cara Whitt's life is dramatically changed when her husband is taken to jail over a minor neighborly dispute. When Dimmert gets an unexpected two year prison sentence, Cara struggles with the hardships of being alone. Relying on her family at first, Cara slowly discovers she has strengths she didn't know existed, and she begins to understand the hard times can be made easier as she grows in her faith and in her relationship with the Lord.
Jan Watson’s portrayal of life in the Kentucky mountains of the late 1800’s is reminiscent of Catherine Marshall’s Christy. She portrays well the contrast of lifestyles and values of the mountain folk and city dwellers through the two main protagonists, Cara and her sister-in-law Darcy. The book reads as a stand alone, yet reading the author’s Troublesome Creek series would provide helpful backstory. What could have easily become another sentimental historical romance, turns into a realistic story that centers on how choices bring on consequences. The characters are likable and the plot has unexpected turns, which is refreshing. For those who want a little bit more of Christy and appreciate a solid, realistic story where faith is shown as an ongoing process.

Pam Webb


PAP: 9780764205125, $14.99
Fic 318 p.; 22 cm.
Adult Rating: 3

Twenty year old Mattie O'Keefe is running away from her tyrannical saloon boss to the gold fields of South Dakota. It’s 1876 and the west is still full of promise and hard work for those willing to take on the challenge. Stephanie Grace Whitson presents a petite heroine with backbone, in her historical romance, A Claim of Her Own. Mattie, disappointed in her hopes to be reunited with her brother once she arrives in Deadwood, must start a new life. With the help of several new friends, Mattie learns all about starting over, and discovers how change sometimes takes place from the inside out.

Whitson provides a historical glance into South Dakota’s colorful beginnings in her novel. She has obviously done her research on the gold mining and the early town life of Deadwood. She fills the plot with memorable characters like Swede, the baby-toting freighter, Gallagher, the reformed gambler turned street preacher, running them alongside actual historical figures such as Buffalo Bill and Calamity Jane. Mattie’s challenges in becoming a gold miner make for an interesting story, as it is a character driven plot that isn’t too heavy-handed in its spiritual message. The climax and denouement seem rushed and a bit contrived, yet the overall story is satisfying.

For those who enjoy strong heroines with plots filled with accurate historical details, A Claim of Her Own, will provide an agreeable read.

Pam Webb

PAP: 9780800794583, $19.99  
226.8/06  367 p. ; 24 cm.  
Adult Rating: 5

Everyone loves a good story, especially when it relates to the message of Jesus and His Kingdom. Throughout His lifetime on earth, Jesus used stories about mustard seeds, yeast, fishing nets, and other people and items to explain the Kingdom of God. Using his final sermon series at Westminster Chapel as a guide, R.T. Kendall invites readers to a renewed appreciation and understanding of the meaning behind the parables of Jesus. The author writes this book not "claiming to understand fully all that God wanted to reveal," but wanting to instill within the reader a desire to learn more about Him. Kendall dedicates a chapter to each of the thirty-five parables that are found in the Gospels. In each of those chapters, Kendall spends quality time explaining the general meaning of each parable and the significance of each parable to one's life.

R.T. Kendall's writing makes the parables come to life and encourages the reader to discover the many different ways the Kingdom of God can be experienced. In his teachings on the different parables, Kendall invites the reader to discover a new way of living through intense study. When one reads Kendall's interpretation of the parable of the mustard seed, he or she is met with a radical understanding of total forgiveness. According to Kendall, "Jesus was advocating the kind of faith that, when you are sinned against, says, 'God, please let them off the hook. Bless them. Don't punish them.'"

Using relevant illustrations, alliteration, and a pastor's heart, Kendall paints the picture of a loving God through each of these parables. The disciple that spends time reading this book will come away with a renewed desire to not just understand the stories that Jesus told, but to apply each parable to his or her daily life. An in-depth study of these parables will help each of us become not just better hearers of the Word, but better doers of the Word as well.

Chris Carroll

God's girls in sports: guiding young women through the benefits and pitfalls / Holly Page. Colorado Springs, [Colo.]: Authentic, 0. LCCN .

PAP: 9781934068830, $16.99  
796/.083  166 p. ; 22 cm.  
Adult Rating: 3

Girls have more opportunities than ever before to participate in sports. Enabling them to do so while helping them become the woman God intends them to be is the basis of Holly Page's work, Gods Girls In Sports.

Page begins with a brief history of females in sports before dividing the book into Player, Parent and Coach sections. She has played all these role and writes with authority and sensitivity. With the personal account of her daughter making the decision to quit the volleyball team, Page shares lessons from that experience that highlight some of the most challenging issues facing girls seeking to play sports and honor God at the same time.

The book is practical, although
probably appeals to a somewhat narrow audience. Most of her thoughts seem aimed at junior high, high school and/or college-age athletes and parents. She does, however, spend a couple of chapters addressing general issues about why girls play sports and how their play differs from males.

Page dedicates an entire chapter to the issue of lesbianism among female athletes and coaches. While it’s not an easy subject to cover adequately, she writes:

“I would be gravely remiss if I didn’t mention to Christian parents a problem that is both pervasive and difficult to detect.”

Without being graphic, she gives an honest, frank presentation of the realities of this lifestyle in athletics and the difficulties it presents to any female athlete, particularly one that is seeking to honor God.

She does a good job of sharing her interpretation of biblical principles throughout the book. Additionally, she emphasizes that there is not a formula or “one size fits all” approach to girls in sports. Certainly, she makes the case that the decisions to play or not should be right for each particular athlete (and their families) regardless of the

A devotional volume, A Different Dream For My Child takes a heart-rending yet triumphant look at the battles, casualties, joys, and sorrows constantly faced by the families of seriously ill children. Each meditation is based on a family caught up in a hard situation, how they coped, and how the Lord helped. Many subjects and helpful suggestions are considered: managing anger, hate, frustration, unbearable sorrow; finding a caring network; working with medical personnel and options; family relationships under extreme stress; prayer; hearing about the problem for the first time; going on year after year; and, many more.

The mother of a baby born with a life-threatening birth defect, author Jolene Philo imbues A Different Dream . . . with valuable, intimate, clearly presented information. Philo draws on her own and others experiences, such as: Sandy and her husband's heartbreak when they discover their new-born son is anencephalic; Angie’s overwhelming anguish watching her child suffer through cancer and chemotherapy; Peggy coping with her daughter's serious mental disability; how Grandpa Curt became the family mainstay when his grandson was diagnosed with leukemia. Listed as a book for those in similar situations, A Different Dream . . . will be welcomed by everyone, from neighbors, teachers, and bystanders to counselors and pastors. This book encourages and emboldens us all to claim its introductory scripture: Deuteronomy 31:8 God is striding ahead of you. He’s right there with you. He won’t let you down; he won’t leave you. Don’t be intimidated. Don’t worry.

Donna Eggett
pressure or culture of a particular school or community.

Rachel Langston

The transformation study Bible / [general editor, Warren W. Wiersbe].


HBB: 9781434765307, $39.99
220.5/20834 xx, 2368 p. : ill., maps, charts ; 24 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 4

The Transformation Study Bible, published by David C. Cook, is the New Living Translation (NLT), which uses easy-to-understand contemporary English. Available in paperback, hardcover, and various leather versions, this highly-


day Joseph : a practical guide for growing great kids / Linda Massey Weddle.

PAP: 9781434765314, $16.99
248.8/45 219 p. ; 23 cm.
Adult Rating: *5

How to Raise a Modern-Day Joseph: A Practical Guide for Growing Great Kids is a helpful workbook companion to Larry Fowler’s Raising a Modern-Day Joseph. Did you know Joseph was from a dysfunctional family with half brothers and sisters, two wives for his father, and drugs were involved? Among this, Joseph remained faithful to God’s plan for his life. Within a family one child can grow to live for God while the other is completely opposite. Why does this happen? This book has practical steps and activities for parents and churches to do in order to teach their children to live for God. Linda Massey Weddle uses the five master life threads or godly character qualities from Fowler’s book as themes for each age group. Babies and preschoolers learn to respect the awesomeness of God. Kindergarten-second grade learn about wisdom. Older elementary kids learn about grace. Middle school kids learn about their destiny, and high school teens learn a godly perspective on life.

How to Raise a Modern-Day Joseph: A Practical Guide for Growing Great Kids is divided into a section for parents and a section for churches. Each of the 14 chapters speaks to a specific age group. Each chapter explains the master life thread and gives characteristics of that age group. It also lists questions each age group asks about God. The gold mine is the tons of activities you can do with your child to teach the character quality. Suggested memory verses and Bible stories or biographies, as the author calls them, all reflect the master life thread. At the end of the chapter is a checklist to mark off which Biblical concepts your child mastered. A great tool is the family itinerary for each age group. Here is where parents plan out the year with spiritual goals, memory verses, Bible biographies, family activities, and a field trip to correspond to the godly characteristic you’re teaching. Educational leaders in the church can use this book to partner with parents in teaching their children. This book is a good investment as it can be used throughout all your parenting years.

Tina M. Cho
informational study Bible was written especially to be read aloud, making it an excellent Bible for group study. Dr. Warren Wiersbe, well known Bible scholar, author, and teacher, provides beneficial notes and insightful commentaries throughout this Bible. Each book of The Transformation Study Bible is presented with an outline of the book’s contents including its key theme and verse, followed by a book overview, and finally a “Be Transformed” section.

Cross references in the center column, an index of preaching outlines, and a personal notes section are added features that aid the reader in their studies of the Holy Word. The foreword and ‘introduction to the NLT translation’ sections were quite informative as they explain more about the NLT translation process. Also included are unique full-color, detailed maps showing where the 12 tribes of Israel lived and where Jesus’ and Paul’s missionary journeys took them, in addition to several others. An extensive dictionary/concordance provides the Bible’s user with excellent definitions and abundant listings of applicable passages, while over 10,000 study notes originating from Dr. Wiersbe’s ‘Be’ series of Bible study books help explain what key Bible passages mean and how they might apply to the readers’ personal lives.

At over 2,300 pages, The Transformation Study Bible is a rather hefty volume, understandably so in part to the large amount of information it includes. In order to keep the amount of pages down, the publisher chose to use a small font which tends to be rather hard to read. While the words of Jesus are written in red, the color used is a light red which also is rather hard on the eyes. The paper used is somewhat transparent, causing the words to show through from the back, which is sometimes distracting where there are white places. All in all, The Transformation Study Bible is a thorough, easy to understand translation for anyone who wishes to not only read the Holy Scriptures, but who also wishes to study the Bible in-depth and grow spiritually.

Sherri Myers
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Page(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>21st century skills library. Real world math, sports</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>According to their deeds</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams, Michelle Medlock</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Gandhi : one hundred years of nonviolent resistance</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Akib, Jamel</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Allie Fortune mystery</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alligators and crocodiles! : strange and wonderful</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also Rans series ; 1-2</td>
<td>20-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An apple pie for dinner</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anak, the Eskimo boy</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrea Carter and the trouble with treasure</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angel fall : a novel</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals Christopher Columbus saw : an adventure in the New World</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animals Robert Scott saw : an adventure in Antarctica</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Auralia thread ; 1-3</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auralia's colors : a novel</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad news for outlaws : the remarkable life of Bass Reeves, deputy U.S. Marshall</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baicker-McKee, Carol</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrows, Annie</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartoletti, Susan Campbell</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baseball</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A baseball card mystery</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batson, Wayne Thomas</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond Corista</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond the reflection's edge</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big dogs</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackall, Sophie</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bowers files ; 2-3</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bowers, Tim</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The boy who dared</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyfriends, burritos &amp; an ocean of trouble</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brave dogs, gentle dogs : how they guard sheep = Perros guardines, perros valientes : como pastorean las ovejas</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camping with the president</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlson, Melody</td>
<td>30, 53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlstrom, Nancy White</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmichael, Clay</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cats</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecil &amp; friends</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cecil, the lost sheep</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamber of lies</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaos</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chase, Emily Parke</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chosen</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christie, R. Gregory</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronicles of the scribe series ; 1-2</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circle C adventures ; 5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A claim of her own</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Come to the fairies ball</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coming across Jordan</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cool dog, school dog</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottonwood whispers</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation song</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyndere's midnight : a novel</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis, Bryan</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawn's prelude</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Regniers, Beatrice Schenk</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dekker, Ted</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diary of a teenage girl. Maya ; 1-3</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A different dream for my child : meditations for parents of critically or chronically ill children</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dobson, Danae</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The dog in the wood</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dragonfly</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dragons of starlight ; 1</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dugan, Karen</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter egg haunt</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Echoes from the edge ; 1-3</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elijah project ; 1-4</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellison, Chris</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elmer, Robert</td>
<td>35-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elyon : a lost book</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmaline and the bunny</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The enclave</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The enemy closes in</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engle, Margarita</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eternity's edge</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabry, Chris</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fields of grace</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fincher, Kathryn Andrews</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefighters! : speeding! spraying! saving!</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garóloli, Viviana</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garrett, Ginger</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilson, Jamie</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God has a plan for little boys</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God has a plan for little girls</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God's girls in sports : guiding young women through the benefits and pitfalls</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Golding, Julia</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gomez, Elena</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The good Samaritan</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great pets</td>
<td>14, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregory, Kristiana</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian of the flame</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hancock, Karen</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannigan, Katherine</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hart, Joyce</td>
<td>14, 23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heiligman, Deborah</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help! my family's messed up</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henderson, Meryl</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroes of the valley</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higley , T. L.</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill, Kaci</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill, Patti</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillenbrand, Will</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honor in the dust : a novel</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do I love thee? : a novel of Elizabeth Barrett Browning's poetic romance</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to raise a modern-day Joseph : a practical guide for growing great kids?</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hubbell, Patricia</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I will not be afraid</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the arms of immortals : a novel of darkness and light</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the shadow of the lions</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INDEX

Infidel 34
Inheritance readers series ; 9 20
Isle of fire 29
Isle of swords 29
It's a green thing 30
Ivy + Bean ; 6 18
Ivy + Bean doomed to dance 18
James, Steven 57
Jed & Roy McCoy 9
Jonah's story 9
June bug 53
Kanis, Wim 20
Katt's in the cradle : a novel 58
Kendall, R. T. 73
Kimmel, Elizabeth Cody 8
Kirby, Pamela F. 15
The knight 57
Koestler-Grack, Rachel A. 49
Kolbaba, Ginger 58
A Lauren Holbrook novel : 1-3 38
Leaves 11
Lee, Jared D. 11
Let's walk the talk : girlfriend to girlfriend on faith, friendship, & finding real love 48
Lewis, Beverly 59
The light across the river : a novel 42
Limelight : a novel 53
Lippincott, Gary 12
Little Sister and the Month Brothers 6
Lost books : 1-6 34
Love's pursuit 62
Luck, Coleman 38
Lunatic : a lost book 34
Mackall, Dandi Daley 8
Mama, will it snow tonight? 5
Mangum, Erynn 38
Marie Curie : scientist 49
Markle, Sandra 23
Marlow, Susan K. 18
Marsico, Katie 24
Martinussen-Coloma, Cindy 39
Matchpoint 38
Mattison, Booker T. 40
McDonough, Andrew 9
McKay, Lisa 60
Meissner, Susan 59
Mills, Sara 61
Minden, Cecilia 24
Miss Fortune : an Allie Fortune mystery 61
Miss Match 38
Miss Match : an Allie Fortune mystery 61
Mitchell, Siri L. 62
Mordhorst, Heidi 49
Morris, Gilbert 61
Morrisey, Tom 64
Mortenson, Greg 50
Mosner, Nancy 63
Motorcycles, sushi & one strange book 42
Mouse and Mole, fine feathered friends 13
Munsinger, Lynn 10
Musser, Elizabeth 64
My big book of wild animals 26
My darlin' Clementine 37
My hands came away red 60
My school in the rain forest : how children attend school around the world 27
Myers, Bill 41
Nelson, Vaunda Micheaux 25
Neubecker, Robert 8
Nightmare's edge 32
Noah Webster : weaver of words 27
A not-so-simple life 30
Numeroff, Laura Joffe 10
O'Brien, Anne Sibley 50
O'Brien, Perry Edmond 50
Olson, John B. 65
On the run 41
Overstreet, Jeffrey 46
The owling 35
Page, Holly 73
The parables of Jesus : a guide to understanding and applying the stories Jesus taught 73
Parrish, Christa 65
Payne, C. C. 19
Peterson, Tracie 66
Phil 23
Philo, Jolene 74
Pirate adventures ; 1-2 29
Pirate hunter 64
Powers : a novel 65
Pringle, Laurence P. 26
Prins, Piet 20
Pumpkin butterfly : poems from the other side of nature 49
Raven's ladder : a novel 0046
A real life novel ; 1-2 42
Red sings from treetops : a year in colors 166
Reed, Stephanie 42
Relin, David Oliver 50
Rematch 38
Renegade 34
The returning 69
Reynish, Jenny 49
Riordan, James 41
Robertson, Paul 67
The rook 57
Ruby unscripted 39
Rue, Nancy N. 42
Rue, Nancy N. 42
Run, Jeremiah run! 20
Ruurs, Margriet 27
Safe at home 22
Sawyer, Kim Vogel 68
Scannell, Christy 58
Schrader, Monika 43
Scott-Brown, Anna 15
Searching for Eternity 64
Seasons of grace : 3 59
Secrets from Lulu's Cafe series ; 3 58
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seeing things</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A seven wonders novel</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadowside trilogy ; 1-3</td>
<td>35-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shea, Pegi Dietz</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sidman, Joyce</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singletry, Mabel Elizabeth</td>
<td>20-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skead, Robert</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skinny : a novel</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep, Big Bear, sleep!</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smith, Laura L.</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Something to sing about</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes a light surprises</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song of Alaska ; 1</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stark, Jackina</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starlighter</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stein, David Ezra</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretch marks : a novel</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroud, Jonathan</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stuart, Kimberley</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The surrender tree : poems of Cuba's struggle for freedom</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweetwater run</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tales from the back pew</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatlock, Ann</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The telling</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thaler, Mike</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That's my colt : an Easter tale</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Things worth remembering</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thirteen ways to sink a sub</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomson, Sarah L.</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three cups of tea : one man's mission to promote peace--one school at a time</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomes, Margot</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tong, Paul</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The top job</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The transformation study Bible</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trapped by shadows</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trion rising</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tugeau, Jeremy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turner, Jamie L.</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsigned hype : a novel</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbigkit, Carl</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vachula, Monica</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valent, Jennifer Erin</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VanHecke, Susan</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veenendaal, Alice; Kuiper, Annelies</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voyages : reminiscences of young Abe Lincoln</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wadsworth, Ginger</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waldman, Neil</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walkup, Janna C.</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch over me</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watson, Jan</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weddle, Linda Massey</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What bluebirds do</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What brothers do best : What sisters do best</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What matters most : a novel</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White picket fences : a novel</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitson, Stephanie Grace</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiersbe, Warren W.</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wild things</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women of achievement</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wright, Maureen</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yee, Wong Herbert</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yolen, Jane</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zac the tax man</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zagarenski, Pamela</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>