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.

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Cover photo by Mark L. Ward.

Published in the U.S.A. © 2011
These newer and updated secular book selection resources are geared to the general market.


PAP, 9781570615009, $16.95.

028.5/5 xiv, 288 p.; 19 cm.

Adult HS Rating: 3

Nancy Pearl’s Book Crush is not your ordinary book list. Rather it is a collection of over 100 topical narratives that mention a total of more than 2,000 books. Divided roughly by age groupings into three parts—Youngest readers; Middle-grade readers, ages 8-12; and Teen readers, ages 13-18—each part is subdivided into 35 or more short sections with alphabetically arranged catchy, age appropriate topics. (E.g. “Ahh, Those Adorable Anthropomorphic Animals;” “Before and After Harry (Potter, of Course);” “Cry Me a River”) These topical sections vary in length from less than one page to several pages, with further subdivisions within a few of them. Narrative paragraphs within each topical section briefly discuss a relevant title, giving author and illustrator if appropriate, and frequently mentioning other related titles, with authors but without further comment about these additional related titles. Because the catchy topical section titles sometimes fail to clearly identify the nature of their contents, their usefulness as a guide may be diminished.

With years of experience as a public librarian, Nancy Pearl, author of Book Lust and several other books, is a frequent speaker, including time as a NPR radio commentator. She is also the model for the Librarian Action Figure (one is on the Reference desk in a local library). Book Crush is intended as an invitation to young readers as well as a selection aid for those who serve them. However, some contemporary topical sections include titles that could be inappropriate for Christian school libraries and their families. Although the arrangement in this resource and its inconsistency in the amount of information given for individual titles decrease its usefulness for some potential users, a large number of worthy titles are included. For this reason, librarians and others may find it beneficial.


PAP, 814100732, $39.95.

011.62 xix, 536 p.; ill.; 26 cm.

PROF Rating: 4

This thirteenth edition of Adventuring with Books is the final edition to be published. Ninety years after the National Council of
Teachers of English published its first recommended book list it is discontinuing producing further titles in its NCTE bibliography series. Other titles also in this discontinued series are *Your Reading* (middle school/junior high), *Books for You* (senior high), and *Kaleidoscope* (multicultural literature, grades K through 8). This last edition of *Adventuring* includes descriptions of more than 850 books published between 1999 and 2001. These titles are grouped by general subject content into 24 chapters, which are then subdivided into more specific categories. Within each subcategory, entries are arranged alphabetically by author. Each entry has its own entry number and includes author, title, illustrator if appropriate, publisher, ISBN, number of pages, and interest level (P for pre-K-grade 3, I for grades 4-6, and ALL for all ages). Descriptive annotations of about 150 words often indicate potential classroom use and sometimes mention other related titles. Because some books fit into more than one category, the bibliographical information for those books may be listed within additional categories, with reference to their main entry numbers where their annotations are located.

Chapter titles include: “Science Nonfiction,” “Fantasy Literature,” “Poetry,” and “Literature and Language Play.” At the beginning of each subject chapter is a list of specific criteria for excellence for that topic, followed by a summary list by categories of titles included in that chapter. A few pages of valuable introductory discussion about the subject and application of the specific criteria for selection are then followed by the book entries grouped by subcategory. Since other chapters deal with different ethnic groups, the chapter on “Indigenous Peoples” deals specifically with Native Americans. The final chapter on “Critical Literacy” suggests opportunities for using books to encourage children to be change agents for problems in their own culture. Author, illustrator, subject, and title indexes refer to entry numbers. The detailed subject index includes cross-references as needed. Although perhaps half of the titles published during the three-year period are now out of print, and some others may be a bit dated, the specific chapter introductory discussions remain quite useful. Earlier editions of *Adventuring* are available on the used book market for even older titles. Other more recent works, including, for example, Freeman’s *The WINNERS! handbook* (see below), can suggest additional newer titles.


HBB, 9781591585756, $95.
011.62  xv, 1901 p. ; 26 cm.

**Best books for middle school and junior high readers : grades 6-9 / Catherine Barr and John T. Gillespie. 2nd ed. (Children's and young adult literature reference series)** Westport, Conn.: Libraries Unlimited, 2009. LCCN 2008050755.

HBB, 9781591585732, $85.
011.62/5  xix, 1242 p. ; 26 cm.

**Best books for high school readers : grades 9-12 / Catherine Barr and John T.**

HBB, 9781591585763, $85.
011.62/5 xix, 1075 p.; 26 cm.

PROF Rating: 4

The Best Books for Children, Best Books for Middle School and Junior High Readers, and Best Books for High School Readers provide the most inclusive of the selective bibliographies of in-print books for children and young adults. These latest editions in the “Best Books” series from Libraries Unlimited, compiled now by Catherine Barr and John Gillespie, retain the general format of earlier editions [cf. CLJ 12, 1 (2007), etc.]. Book titles included are grouped broadly by genre or subject, and then subdivided into more narrow subjects. Within each narrow category, entries are arranged alphabetically by author. Information for each entry includes its unique entry number, author, title, grade level, illustrator (if available), publication date, publisher, price, ISBN, pagination, sentence-length descriptive annotation, citation(s) for reviews, and Dewey Decimal number. Each title included received recommendations from one or more of: Booklist, Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books, Horn Book, Horn Book Guide, Library Media Connection, School Library Journal, or VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates). Citations from review sources indicating outstanding recommendations are starred, and special symbols are appended to titles with audio versions available. Some entries also list additional related titles. Author indexes provide titles for each author along with entry numbers; title indexes indicate entry numbers for both main entry books and added titles; and subject/grade level indexes provide subject cross-references, and list entry numbers only by grade level groupings.

For each of these new editions, all titles included in the latest previous editions and supplements were examined and out-of-print titles were dropped, “as well as those that were considered no longer timely or suitable.” (For example, a few older in print Newbery Medal winners have been dropped from the current edition.) This ninth edition of Best Books for Children includes 26,475 numbered entries, with more than one thousand added titles. This second edition of Best Books for Middle School and Junior High Readers includes 13,793 numbered entries plus another 795 added titles by the same author. This second edition of Best Books for High School Readers contains 11,639 numbered titles plus 1,149 added titles. The latest editions of each of these resources include considerably more graphic novels than the previous editions. There are few titles that appear in more than one of these bibliographies. Because interests and reading abilities of students do not always coincide with their grade levels, users of these bibliographies may also wish to consult those for adjacent grade levels. As with earlier editions “Although the books with the greater number of titles have correspondingly less white space on the pages, that does not detract from their usefulness. Since the detailed subject [heading] information does not appear with the main entries, these works are less useful as cataloging aids. However with the grade levels applied to that detailed subject information, this feature may be helpful for
selection purposes. The brevity of the individual annotations provides less useful information for selection, but the trade-off is the greater number of titles included.” [CLJ 10, 1 (2005)] These very useful resources may be available in local public libraries. If not, budget considerations may determine choice to purchase.


HBB, 9781591585459, $75.
11.62 xix, 645 p.; 27 cm.
PROF Rating: 4

The new subtitle for the third edition of Beyond Picture Books reflects its special emphasis on a subject approach to books for children in kindergarten through second grade. The new edition of this annotated bibliography includes some 3,600 titles, a net gain over the second edition by more than 1,250 titles. Entries in the annotated bibliography section are arranged alphabetically by author. Each entry includes its entry number, title, illustrator, publication date, ISBN, series, subjects, and reading level, followed by a paragraph about the text and the illustrations. In addition to the A, B, or C reading levels designed specifically for this work, Lexile Framework numbers have been added where available. With this edition, the annotated bibliography is preceded by a 116-page subject guide arranged alphabetically by major subject headings with frequent subdivisions and cross-references. Under each subject heading, all titles in the bibliography marked with that subject heading are listed alphabetically by author along with their entry numbers. For many subjects, to distinguish nonfiction titles from fiction, fiction titles follow nonfiction titles under an additional subject heading to which “fiction” is added.

As in the earlier edition, a listing of 200 “Outstanding First Readers” appears at the front of the volume. Less than one-third of the titles from the earlier edition are retained in this ”Outstanding” list of currently in print titles. (In the annotated bibliography, worthy out-of-print titles are included if WorldCat indicates that these titles are available in more than one hundred libraries.) This edition introduces the new annual Theodor Seuss Geisel Award, first awarded in 2006, honoring both authors and illustrators from books specifically designed for beginning readers. Indexes at the end of the volume refer to titles with entry numbers: title index, illustrator index, readability index, and series index. In these latter two indexes, arrangement is by author under the specific reading level or series. This useful resource is definitely recommended for Christian school libraries with adequate budgets.

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011.62 v.; 26 cm.

HBB, 9780824211028, $290.
011.62/5 xv, 1593 p.; 26 cm.


HBB, 9780824210861, $245.
011.62/5 xiii, 1,456 p.; 26 cm.

PROF Rating: *5

For around 100 years the H. W. Wilson Standard Catalog Series has been a highly regarded resource for librarians. [cf. CLJ 12, 1 (Mar. 2007)] Now this renowned series has a new name, the “Core Collection Series,” but the edition history and general format of the more recent standard catalogs are retained. In Part 1 of each work entries are arranged according to the current abridged Dewey Decimal Classification for nonfiction titles, followed by fiction and story collection titles. Under each DDC number, titles are arranged alphabetically by author. Full cataloging information for each entry includes author, title, publication data, specific grade levels, subject headings, and specific DDC number. “Most highly recommended” titles are starred. A brief descriptive paragraph frequently includes a quotation from a professional review source. Additional titles in the series, or analytical contents of a collected work may be added to the entry. Part 2 is a combined author, title, and subject index.

For each of these new editions, all in print titles included in the latest preceding edition and its annual supplements have been considered for continued usefulness, along with appropriate newer titles published in the interim. A number of relevant titles are included in more than one of these bibliographies, and a few are listed in all three. The sections on graphic novels that are classed in 741.5 have been expanded. As in previous editions, for fiction series, the first title is cited in full, with brief listings for other works in the series. Bilingual works and dictionaries are the only materials in languages other than English that are included. Textbooks are not included.

The new twentieth edition of the Children’s Core Collection includes entries for more than 11,000 books, of which more than 7,000 are new to this edition. Retaining the pattern of earlier editions, following the sections for Non-fiction, Fiction, and Story Collections is an additional lengthy section for Easy books. The new tenth edition of the Middle and Junior High Core Collection includes entries for more than 8,000 book titles, of which more than 6,000 are new to this edition. The new seventeenth edition of the Senior High Core Collection includes 6,268 book titles, and 4,598 analytical entries. Of these more than half are new to this edition. Unlike the other two newer editions in the Core Collection Series, this latter edition retains from its predecessor two additional sections before the index, a “List of Recommended Periodicals,” and a “List of Recommended Electronic Resources.” It also retains in its index analytical references in its combined “Author, Title, Subject, and Analytical Index.” Because the other newer editions in the Core
Collection Series have discontinued these useful features, librarians who own those preceding editions in the Standard Catalog Series may wish to retain their earlier editions, along with these new editions, for a few years.

The amount of information and format in these Core Collection Series resources make them quite valuable as selection aids for purchasing new books, cataloging them, and offering recommendations to students, teachers, and others. Titles listed in these series are considered of high quality for the general audience. Titles that have been discontinued because of space issues, or out of print, may still be quite useful, so absence from these lists does not indicate that a book should not be a library collection. Each print edition in the Core Collection Series is followed by three annual supplements, with further new editions scheduled on a four-year cycle. Subscriptions to the online editions of the Core Collection Series, with quarterly supplements, are available through Wilson Web at www.hwwilson.com. Although bibliographies in the Best Books series (see above) list more book titles, a number of worthy book titles dropped from that series are retained in these Wilson Core Collection Series bibliographies with somewhat fewer titles. This extremely valuable series is highly recommended for libraries with adequate budgets.


PAP, 9781555706883, $75.  
11.62 xii, 357 p.; 28 cm.  
PROF Rating: 5

This second edition of the *Neal-Schuman Guide to Recommended Children's Books and Media for Use with Every Elementary Subject*, compiled by former teacher Kathryn I. Matthew and librarian Joy L. Lowe, is completely new. With a large majority of the titles listed in the earlier 2002 edition now out of print, out of more than 1000 “books, videos, software, CDs, DVDs, and Internet sites” included in this new edition, only three or so remain from the earlier edition. Like the earlier edition, “Each of the eight chapters deals with a major elementary school subject area: mathematics; science; English language arts; social studies; health (including safety and families); sports, recreation, and dance; art; and music. Each chapter begins with key areas of concern and national standard topics for that subject and suggests how books and media can be used to foster meaningful learning. Within subtopics of each area, suggested titles are arranged by grade level. Entries include author, title, date, place, publisher, pagination, and grade level, followed by a paragraph-length descriptive annotation with teacher applications. (Video entries indicate running time; software specifies Windows and/or Macintosh platform, etc.) An "Explorations" section at the end of each subtopic suggests several possible classroom activities using some of the listed resources. Each chapter concludes with related teacher resources, including books, professional organizations, internet sites, and references. . . . The appendix lists additional teacher resources: journals with
mailing addresses, phone numbers, and websites; professional organizations with contact information and related journals they publish; internet sites for teachers and students; and media sources. . . . The uncluttered single-column format with ample white space and font size is inviting.” [CLJ 10, 1 (2005)]. The occasional additions and changes in the chapter subtopics as well as certain titles selected for this new edition reflect updated curriculum emphases. Individual entries now include ISBNs and information about the availability of e-books. An author and illustrator index is followed by title and subject indexes. The unique inclusion of non-print media in this resource is a real plus for today’s elementary student. With the rate at which published titles go out of print, this up to date edition is quite welcome. While not every included title reflecting current curricular emphases would be appropriate for Christian school libraries, this work suggests many useful titles to support the school curriculum. It is highly recommended.


PAP, 9781598846775, $35.00.
28.162 xi, 259 p.: ill.; 28 cm.
PROF Rating: 4

In Judy Freeman’s annual The WINNERS! Handbook, the author examines four highly respected annual lists of the best children’s books of the year: The American Library Association’s “Notable Children’s Books,” Booklist’s “Editor’s Choice,” Horn Book’s “Fanfare,” and School Library Journal’s “Best of the Year.” These lists often disagree with each other. In fact, for 2009, only 7 titles out of 183 titles appear on all four lists, and 103 titles appear on only one list. To these lists, Freeman adds 39 of her own additional choices. From this list, she has chosen 105 titles for the WINNERS! annotated book list (designed for use in Freeman’s one-day workshop), but then includes those titles not chosen in a separate list.

As in earlier editions [cf. CLJ 12, 3 (2007)], entries in the 2009 WINNERS! bibliography are grouped by genre and then arranged alphabetically by author. Each entry includes Freeman’s own rating, “best” lists (see above) in which that book appeared, bibliographic information, descriptive annotation, a number of earlier related titles, subjects, plus a suggested “germ,” or library or curriculum related activity. Among the pages of additional features of this handbook are suggested considerations in book selection, listings of youth media awards for 2010, Freeman’s favorites for the past decade, a number of related websites, and pages of games and drama activities related to this year’s chosen annotated titles.

While earlier editions of WINNERS! (sometimes with slightly varying titles) include a few pages of repeated selection hints, most information and activities are unique to each year. For example, the 2004 edition includes a twenty-year retrospective list of winners, and suggestions for “books that bomb,” among other useful hints and activities. Each annual edition has its own value and is recommended for updating lists published in earlier years.
All of these book lists compiled for the general market have value. Some may be available in local public libraries. Because their annotations do not necessarily indicate issues that may make certain included books questionable for Christian school libraries, librarians may want to preview included titles before purchase. For selection purposes, school librarians with limited budgets often make use of special features from general online services such as www.amazon.com, etc. Another service that provides much of the information in the Wilson Core Collection Series, but without that format, is www.titlewave.com from Follett Library Resources. TITLEWAVE® includes more than one million print and non-print titles and provides a number of additional useful features for online searching by active librarians that have accounts with Follett.
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>
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HBB, 9780525474418, $16.99. 
E or 649/.10245 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 28 cm. 
PRI (PS, K) Rating: 5

Babies Don’t Eat Pizza is written to ease the fears of young children who will soon be a big brother or sister. In the first part of the book, author Dianne Danzig explains what to expect from a baby. It starts from pregnancy, using correct terms, such as ‘uterus’ and ‘umbilical cord’ but explains them in kid-friendly ways. She also covers what newborns look like, how they eat and how they behave. The book tells how babies begin to be mobile, and ways to have fun with them.

The last part of the book focuses on the older sibling – addressing fears that parents might not have enough time for them, not love them the same after the baby is born, etc. The book ends with a list of ten tips for parents to help their older children adjust to a new baby. Illustrator Debbie Tilley uses colorful, almost cartoonish drawings to add humor to the book.

A parent reading this book to his or her children will have to decide how much information is appropriate for their child to know about childbirth. The author explains that babies come out “through an opening between moms’ legs.” The accompanying picture shows a smiling mom in a hospital gown lying on a table looking at a crying baby held by a nurse. This would be a good read aloud for children ages two through six.

Amy Simon


HBB, 9780811872379, $16.99. 
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm. 
PRI (PS, K) Rating: 5

“On a teeny little farm, in an itty-bitty coop, a very small hen laid a big, humongous egg.” Thus begins the tale of Chicken Big by Keith Graves. Those familiar with the age old story of Chicken Little will crack up at this modern twist. Chicken Big, however, is no small fry when it comes to holding his own against those henyard hooligans who do their best to belittle him with their various name-callings. Nope, Chicken Big shows perseverance and patience is often the best way to deal with those who simply don’t know or understand that different is well, different. A great tale for those who have been bullied, or for those who may have done a bit of bullying themselves.

The understated text is in harmony with the over-the-top illustrations. Chicken Big is one really, really big chick. He is so big and so different from most chicks that he is mistaken for an elephant, a hippo, a sweater, and even an umbrella at various points of the story. The longsuffering chick eventually wins over the rather dense flock of barnyard birds and they see that outward appearances can truly be deceiving. A very familiar theme; however, it is told with so much flair that young readers won’t even mind learning humongous words. Chicken Big will find itself in good company with other tale twists such as The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka and Lane Smith.
Pam Webb


HBB, 9780316070195, $16.99.
E 1 v. (unpaged): col. ill.; 24 x 31 cm.
PRI (PS) Rating: 5

Young Holly moves with her family to the country where there is a barn with stables, hay, and bridles—in short, as the book is aptly titled, Everything But the Horse. She watches girls from a neighboring farm riding their mares and Morgans and longs for one of her own, but no one else in her family thinks it’s a good idea. Finally it is her birthday and there is a special present waiting in the barn! Only it is not the horse she had hoped for but a shiny new bicycle. Holly finds joy in the gift nevertheless.

This is a dear story from the author’s own childhood, and the sentiments are captured delightfully: first Holly’s comfortable happiness in her city home, then her adjustment to a farm house with no indoor plumbing or electricity, her fervent wish for a horse, and finally her reaction to the birthday surprise. It is a tender portrait of an imaginative girl and her loving family. The ending is poignant and provides a good discussion point for young readers. “I was sure I could not hide my feelings completely as I stood staring at my big present. It was what it was and could never be anything else,” recalls Holly. Children will understand Holly’s disappointment and learn from her resilience. The writer’s whimsical pen and ink and watercolor drawings are pure Holly Hobbie: a world full of rustic charm, youthful innocence, and simplicity.

Nina Ditmar

Big red lollipop / by Rukhsana Khan ; illustrated by Sophie Blackall. New York: Viking, 2010. LCCN 2009022676

HBB, 9780670062874, $16.99
E 1 v. (unpaged): col. ill.; 26 cm.
PRI PS Rating: 5

Big Red Lollipop tells the story of Rubina, a young girl invited to a friend’s birthday. Her mother (“Ami”) insists that Rubina take along her younger sister. Sana misbehaves and Rubina is humiliated. To make matters worse, Sana eats the big red lollipop birthday favor that Rubina was saving to eat the next day. The tables are turned when Sana gets invited to her own party and Ami says she must bring baby Maryam. Rubina rises to Sana’s defense and is later rewarded by Sana’s gesture of friendship.

This amusing and tender story is enhanced by the bright and whimsical illustrations of Sophie Blackall, who effectively captures a wide range of facial expressions as the drama unfolds. The drawings are cleverly drawn from a variety of perspectives, from aerial views to close-ups to pictorial “thought bubbles.” Though not actually explained, it is depicted through Ami’s appearance and clothing and unfamiliarity with birthday party protocol that this family is from another culture. (A read of the book flap reveals that the author is the middle sister in this true incident, which took place shortly after her family’s move from Pakistan to Canada). Though ethnic difference sets the story in motion, it seems intentionally understated, perhaps so as not to distract from the story within. In fact,
it is so subtle that younger readers may be puzzled by the mother’s stubborn and unusual stance.

The book is recommended for ages 4 and up (inside front cover) but my 7 year old, as one of 3 girls, enjoyed the theme of sibling rivalry and had obvious empathy for the young characters and their clueless mom. This is a tale older children will enjoy sharing with younger ones and parents will not mind reading “one more time.” Big Red Lollipop presents many valuable themes including obedience, dealing with disappointment, and showing compassion; its sweet ending all about simple kindness, grace, and forgiveness.

*Nina Ditmar*

**Waiting out the storm / JoAnn Early Macken ; illustrated by Susan Gaber. Somerville, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 2010. LCCN 2008030746.**

HBB, 9780763633783, $15.99. E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 28 cm.

PS PRI INT Rating: 4
Exquisitely illustrated, Joann Early Macken’s newest picture book, Waiting Out the Storm, tells the story of a young girl and her mother as they pick flowers just before an afternoon thunderstorm. The story is told in two voices; the daughter asks a question; her mother answers in rhyme. First she hears the wind, then the thunder. Once it begins to rain, the girl’s concern moves to the animals and how they cope with the rain. In the end, the mother and child go inside, cuddle together and wait out the storm.

Children will enjoy reading this book aloud with a parent, as the child’s voice consists of relatively simple text, easy to sound out or decipher based on picture clues. Moreover, teachers of older students may choose this book to model literary devices including rhyme, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and simile.

Susan Gaber’s vibrant illustrations lift this book above many other mother/child books. Her brilliant colors, use of texture to depict the rain, and other details extend the text into a memorable piece of art. Similarly, Macken’s rhyming text, rich with literary devices, place the reader in the middle of the storm—hearing the wind and thunder, feeling the raindrops and enjoying the cozy indoors.

*Kristine Wildner*

**Sunday is for God / by Michael McGowan ; pictures by Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher. New York: Schwartz & Wade Books, 2010. LCCN 2008048828.**

HBB, 9780375841880, $17.99. E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 28 cm.

PS Rating: 4

It’s Sunday, and for this family that means getting up early, eating breakfast, getting dressed in their best clothes, and going to church. The table is full of good smelling food—ham and sausage, eggs, biscuits and jelly. Everyone—even the baby—eats plenty and then off they go to prepare for church. Starched white shirts come out of closets and cuff links are adjusted. Do the boys remember how to tie their ties? The family hears the church bells as they start walking in that direction. As the choir begins singing, children are reminded to stop fussing. The church service begins with prayers and reading from the Bible. Everything is important in
church, from the sitting and
listening to the passing of the
offering plate. The final hymn
is sung and it is time for
church service to be over. The
boys are ready to have some
playtime. They know there
will be a wonderful dinner on
the table before long.

Most children usually
understand that school is on
weekdays and weekends
means playtime, but this
picture book addresses
something a little different.
*Sunday Is for God* is a
delightful picture book, not
just because it teaches Sunday
is the Lord’s Day, but because
of the creative illustrations.
Look closely at the pages, past
the initial illustrations, to find
screened images of hymnal
pages and verses from the
Bible. The colorful
illustrations of the family as
they prepare for and attend
church are warm and inviting.
Readers will find the book
transcends race and gender
and is appropriate for the
suggested age group.

*Debby Willett*

*Where to sleep* / by Kandy
Radzinski. Chelsea, MI:
LCCN 2008040788.

*PBB, 9781585365357, $9.95.
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24
cm.*

*PS PRI* Rating: 4

Getting ready for bed, be it for
a nap or for the night, is made
that much cozier with the
brightly illustrated rhymed
text found in Kandy
Radzinski’s *Where to Sleep*. An
adorable orange tabby kitten
explores various possibilities
for a snooze, but each one
presents its own problem. At
the very end the obvious
choice is the perfect solution.
A calming prelude to bedtime
that will both relax and
entertain young readers as
they too look where to sleep.

Books are a natural for
breaching those sticky
situations that come up in a
little person’s life—getting
ready for bed being one of
them. Kandy Radzinski creates
the means of addressing
bedtime through her cute
cat’s explorations. By the
end of the book, when the
cat is curled up contently at
her best friend’s feet, children
should be all ready to curl up
and sleep sweetly. Colorful
illustrations attend the rhyme,
which is not perfect in meter,
but bouncily accompanies the
detailed and life-like pictures.

*Pam Webb*

*When Jack goes out* / Pat
Schories. Honesdale, Pa.:
LCCN 2009024570.

*HBB, 9781590786529, $13.95.
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 22
cm.*

*PS PRI* Rating: 5

*When Jack Goes Out* is another
cheerful book in this unique
and delightful series about a
little terrier who has really
exciting adventures. One night
Jack’s little master puts Jack
out on his leash, leaving Jack
nothing to do but pace in a
circle about his doghouse.
Soon a UFO full of tourist alien
robots arrives and lets Jack off
his leash. They all have a
wonderful party, dancing,
playing, and swimming. It is
such a wonderful party the
aliens decide to tie Jack’s leash
to the UFO and take him home.
But Jack loves his little master
and knows how to slip his
head out of his collar.

Nary a word can be found
throughout *When Jack Goes
Out*. Graphic artist, children’s
book author and illustrator,
noted for her *I-Can-Read*
series about Biscuit the
Puppy, Pat Schories’ colorful,
emotive, companionable
illustrations tell the whole
story, including characters,
plot, setting, action, and
denouement. This makes the book useful for teaching the elements of story to pre-literate children. It also helps those who have learned to read but need help in building the imagination for creating their own stories. It is fun to read it with a group of little ones, letting the children take turns telling the story each in his/her own way.

Donna Eggett


HBB, 9781585365074, $15.95.
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 x 29 cm.
PRI Rating: 5

Memoirs of a Goldfish by Devin Scillian tells the simple, yet charming tale of a frustrated fish. Humorous and sweet, the book will bring a smile to readers' faces and have them begging to be read this tale over and over. The main character's voice is genuine and likable and his irritation is palpable.

Rich, vibrant colors instantly invite the reader to turn pages and the illustrations remind readers of a Pixar film: exuberant and friendly.

Children will delight in the rare combination of a great story and illustrations that live up to the tale (and vice versa). A gem of a book.

Jaclyn S. Miller


HBB, 9780547223230, $12.99.
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 25 cm.
PRI PS Rating: 4

The same endearing illustrations that have captivated children for years are back in this fun, lively counting book featuring Lyle the Crocodile by Bernard Waber. Geared towards preschoolers, Waber encourages children to count along with Lyle as he undertakes a new job.

Lyle loves dogs and dogs love him, so walking dogs is the perfect job for Lyle the Crocodile. On the first day, Lyle walks one dog named Gwendolyn. He skips along to keep up. The second day, Lyle adds a dog named Morris. Walking two dogs is harder, but Lyle handles it well. On day three, Lyle walks three dogs. He finds this more difficult, as two of the dogs plow ahead and one tags slowly behind. Each subsequent day, Lyle gains another dog until at last he's walking ten dogs on the tenth day of his job.

Lyle creatively figures out how to get the dogs to stay together despite their different walking styles. “Pokey” is rather slow. “Sniffy” likes to inhale every scent. “Frisky” pulls the others rapidly along. On the last day, however, a squirrel is spotted and all ten dogs break into a brisk run. An out of breath but
determined Lyle sprints after them. When Lyle finally gets the dogs to stop, he asks the reader to assist him in counting to make sure each one is there. Lyle collapses in a chair, when the day is through, satisfied that he has done his job well.

If you’re a Lyle the Crocodile fan, you’ll want to add this book to your collection. And if you’re simply looking for books to reinforce counting to ten, this book will definitely fit the bill!

*Lisa Dirks*

**Pigs make me sneeze! : an elephant & piggie book / by Mo Willems.** *(An elephant & piggie book.)*
LCCN .

HBB, 9781423114116, $8.99.
E 56 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm.
PS (PRI) Rating: 5

Who can resist a Mo Willems? His whimsical pal combo of Gerald the Elephant and his best friend Piggie have gone through many adventures together with simple, yet superb humor and this new entry, *Pigs Make Me Sneeze!* is another fun read for beginners. It appears Gerald might be allergic to pigs, which means he will be forever separated from Piggie! Yet, a visit to Dr. Cat finds a remedy to Gerald’s and Piggie’s current dilemma. As usual, Mo Willems brings a bit of sunny fun to the world of young readers.

Take a bit of Dr. Seuss illustrative, toss in some Laurel and Hardy soft nonsense, and shake together with a good measure of literary elements: pace, conflict, theme, and irony, and open wide for a reading delight. Mo Willems is everything the honors and awards make him out to be. Subtle and deeply funny all at the same time, his books easily pass “Read it again, please!” test. The ending is absolutely drop down funny. Must be read with plenty of flair and dramatic sneezing.

*Pam Webb*
**Emma Dilemma, the nanny and the secret ferret / by Patricia Hermes. Tarrytown, NY: Marshall Cavendish Children, 2010. LCCN 2009039579.**

HBB, 9780761456506, $15.99.
Fic 137 p.; 22 cm.
INT PRI Rating: 3

In *Emma Dilemma, the Nanny, and the Secret Ferret*, we meet Emma, her Nanny, and entire family as they are leaving to spend the summer at their vacation home in Maine. At the last minute, Emma decides to smuggle Marmaduke, her pet ferret, on vacation even though “This year, Mom had laid down the law: No ferrets in Maine.”

Emma manages to get Marmaduke to Maine with only Nanny finding out and she promises Nanny she’ll confess as soon as they get there. When they arrive, however, Emma is too excited about visiting her cousin, Max, and her “favorite tree” to tell about Marmaduke. When she discovers the tree is to be cut down, she makes a plan to save it. Emma and Max decide to secretly remove the markers on the trees to be cut down. Emma even camps in the tree as the cutters arrive. Ultimately, she has to give in, climb out of the tree and tell her parents about the smuggled ferret.

Without a doubt, Emma is smart, spirited and lots of fun. She has a strong sense of social responsibility and she’s close to her family. The book is entertaining, easily readable and appealing to boys and girls.

Readers should be aware of several situations in the book that could influence children. Emma deliberately disobeys her parent’s wishes when she sneaks the ferret to the vacation house. She repeatedly promises her Nanny that she’ll confess, only to keep putting it off. She trespasses on private property and tampers with the tree markers, costing the owner time and money.

Emma Dilemma definitely lives up to her name! In the end, the book has a happy ending with something of a surprise resolution.

*Rachel Langston*

**Lilly and the pirates / Phyllis Root ; pictures by Rob Shepperson. Honesdale, Pa.: Front Street, 2010. LCCN 2009030494.**

HBB, 9781590785836, $16.95.
Fic 116 p.; ill.; 24 cm.
INT Rating: 5

*Lilly and the Pirates* opens with Lilly’s discovery that her parents, both scientists, have been asked to study the frangipangi fruit fly in the Shipwreck Islands. Lilly records this worry in her worry journal so that no harm will come to her parents. Because they understand her fears, Lilly’s parents don’t want to make her miserable by travelling across the sea, one of her biggest worries. Instead they send her to her uncle’s house in Mundelaine. In Mundelaine, Lilly tries very hard to be good, and her uncle the librarian tries very hard to be a good uncle. However, the day she meets Mrs. Teagarden and takes the pirate oath is the day she discovers her parents are shipwrecked. Mrs. Teagarden and Lilly head to sea to rescue Lilly’s parents. Uncle Earnest notices Lilly sneaking out of the house and gets a ride with the pirate Blackheart in hopes of rescuing Lilly. Blackheart the pirate wishes to get information from Mrs. Teagarden’s pet parrot Aristotle. In the process of attempting to rescue her
parents, outrun Blackheart, and survive life at sea, Lilly makes a discovery that is sure to chart the course of her life.

Phyllis Root’s writing engages the imagination while Rob Shepperson’s illustrations humorously depict Lilly, her family, and friends. Until her parents are in danger, Lilly allows her fears to guide her decisions, but love for her parents forces her to overcome at least some of her fears, making her a wonderfully developed character. Root utilizes short sentences, good dialogue, action verbs, and a quirky plot to move the story forward quickly. Mrs. Teagarden’s pirate accent comes through in her dialect. The settings, from the fictional Mundelaine to the Shipwreck Islands, help drive the story while providing an extra layer of thinly-veiled symbolism to the story. The mood of the story is light, but even so Root manages to convey that letting go of worries is the only way to truly live.

Kristi Wolcott

Casey and Derek on the ice / by Marty Sederman ; illustrated by Zachary Pullen. San Francisco:


HBB, 9780811851329, $15.99.

Fic 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 x 28 cm.

PRI Rating: 4

Hockey fans young and old will find something to cheer in the collaborative efforts of Marty Sederman’s and Zachary Pullen’s Casey and Derek on the Ice.

Told poetical story fashion, readers will root for Casey and Derek as they attempt to pull off the team play that determines the game’s outcome. Will they freeze up? Or will their action heat up the ice?

Sederman, a hockey mom in the truest sense, shows her years of watching from the sidelines as she weaves the story of rival teams The Rockets and the Titans. Basing her story of the poetic rhythms of famed “Casey at the Bat” the lines aren’t as smooth as they could be in a few spots, yet the enthusiastic telling covers the bumpy meter. Filled with hockey jargon and complemented by Pullen’s delightful stylized illustrations, this is one fun tale to read out loud and enjoy. Although there is no lack of hockey books available for young readers, one more can’t hurt and would be a suitable companion for Dino-Hockey by Lisa Wheeler and Barry Gott or Z is for Zamboni by Matt Napier and Melody Rose.

Pam Webb


LIB, 9780375858819, $15.99.

INT 104 p. : ill. ; 22 cm.

Rating: 5

Anna Maria’s Gift opens with the famous violin maker, Nicolo Lombardini, giving his daughter a violin he made specifically for her in the months prior to his death. Following the death of her father, Anna Maria is taken to a Catholic orphanage for girls in Venice. There she has the privilege of studying violin under the great composer Antonio Vivaldi. She quickly becomes his star pupil to the dismay of Paolina, Vivaldi’s other top violin student. Paolina takes revenge on Anna Maria by tossing her precious violin, her last link to her father, into the canal outside the orphanage. One night
Anna Maria recognizes the voice of her violin being played in the distance and determines to find it. While Anna Maria thinks finding the violin is her most important goal, the nuns at the orphanage encourage her to find forgiveness for Paolina.

Janice Shefelman recreates 1715 Italy with her writing, and Robert Papp’s pencil illustrations further the opportunity to travel back in time. Shefelman draws out the personalities of her characters and allows both Anna and Paolina to find growth throughout the book. The setting, mostly Venice, Italy, acts as another character in the story with its canals and sounds prominently involved in the plot. From beginning to end, Shefelman’s use of active verbs, short sentence lengths, and a good plot move the book forward quickly. In addition to the fact that her violin was her last gift from her father, Anna’s attachment to her violin also comes from the fact that her father told her that he “kept the violin here in my room for a month before varnishing it. And while I slept, my soul entered its body.” p.5. Without “preaching” the story shows that even when it seems impossible, making peace with others can be the sweetest music in the world.

Kristi Wolcott

HBB, 9780399239960, $16.99.  
B or 782.421642092 1 v.  
(unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 x 29 cm.  
PRI INT Rating: 5

In Home on the Range, author Debora Hopkinson tells the story of John Lomax, a man from Texas in the 1860s who was one of the first music anthropologists in this country. The book is historical fiction, but seems well researched. It begins with John as a child, growing up on a farm near the Chisholm Trial where cowboys would drive their cattle. John was exposed to many of their songs that way. The book follows him through his education and onto his quest to record and write down as many cowboy songs as he could.

Illustrator S.D. Schindler fills the pages with realistic watercolor paintings of John, cowboys, and his adventures. At the end of the book there are three pages of historical notes explaining the known facts about the life of John Lomax. The author also includes notes on her sources. This is an enjoyable book for children in grades K-3. It would be a good resource for teaching about the lives of cowboys in the mid to late 1800s. It would also be an interesting supplement to a music history lesson or introduction to music anthropology.

Amy Simon


HBB, 9780547152288, $16.99.  
811/.54 29 p. : col. ill. ; 27 x 28 cm.  
INT MS Rating: 5

Skillful pairing of poetry and art results in a sensuous experience for readers of many ages in Dark Emperor & Other Poems of the Night. This picture book with 12 poems by award-winning author Joyce Sidman is full of educational content as well as artistic presentation. Sidman describes in animated verse the nocturnal habits and habitats most active in the dark, including baby porcupines, a primrose moth, mushrooms, and an oak tree. Poems are brief and varied in style. Delectably accenting the poetry is letterpress art with delightful details such as intricate spider webs, and wide-eyed mice under the hungry eye of a great horned owl.

Whether read aloud or savored silently, Dark Emperor & Other Poems of the Night is a feast. Sidman’s poetry is easy to read, yet alive with inflection and rhythm. The accompanying well written informative text on the far right of each two-page spread adds interesting educational value. Rick Allen’s letterpress illustrations are a perfect match for the poems. Readers will appreciate the details and subtle colors. A one-page glossary adds further educational value. This book would enthrone language arts and science teachers and any reader who enjoys nature or good writing.

Karen Schmidt

* A mirror to nature: poems about reflection / Jane Yolen; photographs by Jason Stemple.

HBB, 9781590786246, $17.95.
811/.54 31 p.: col. ill.; 23 x 25 cm.
INT (All ages) Rating: *5

A Mirror to Nature: Poems About Reflection pairs a dozen photographs by Jason Stemple with the rhyming verse of Jane Yolen. Each photograph contains a reflective image of wildlife in water, including an assortment of birds and other animals such as the raccoon, deer, coyote, alligator, and frog. Yolen provides a playful poem and interesting fact for every natural depiction.

The result is a wondrously entertaining and captivating picture book that invites the reader to reflect upon all types of reflections. Stemple’s photography is simply stunning, and Yolen’s poems are as contemplative as they are humorous. A reference to Hamlet on the dedication page credits Shakespeare for inspiring both the title and the concept: “To hold, as ’twere, the mirror up to nature ... ” The juxtaposition of what is real with what is illusory, yet equally beautiful, encourages inquiry not only into nature’s literal reflections, but our own perception of the world around us. For example, Stemple’s photograph of one side of a shell and its reflection in a pool of water at the beach is accompanied by Yolen’s eight-lined poem entitled “A Solitary Cockle” describing the “solitary bivalve” as “somewhat open to the moment.” The fact portion explains the difference between a cockle and a clam: Both are bi-valves, meaning two shells connected by a hinge joint, but cockles have a foot they use to burrow into the sand.

A Mirror to Nature is perfect for intermediate readers in grades three through six to enjoy independently, but parents and teachers won’t want to miss the wonderful opportunity to join them and experience this unique combination of visual and literary art together. It’s very simply profound.

Laurie A. Gray
**Summer sanctuary / Laurie Gray. Carmel IN: Luminis Books, 2010. LCCN.**

PAP, 9781935462347, $11.95.

Fic 194 p.; 21 cm.

MS INT Rating: 3

Twelve-year-old Matthew narrates this delightful story of his growing friendship with Dinah, a mysterious older girl who dug his discarded lunch bag from the trash can outside the library. The son of a minister, Matthew has three younger brothers named Mark, Luke, and Johnny. Another baby is on the way. Matthew is home-schooled, reads at the twelfth-grade level, and studies sophomore-level science and math. Since his best friend is away for the summer, he spends his time on a special project involving Einstein’s theory of relativity and time dilation.

When Matthew finds out that Dinah is essentially homeless, he sneaks her into the church basement. Dinah spends her nights safely at the church and her days at the library. Matthew shares his packed lunches with her and she shares her dumpster finds with him. Matthew plays hymns on the piano and Dinah plays her harmonica.

Matthew tells Dinah that he read in the Bible “that 1,000 years on earth is like a single day to God. So I want to do the math to see if the time dilation traveling at the speed of light would be like one day equals 1,000 years.” If so, the Bible proved Einstein’s theory before the scientist discovered it. While Matthew struggles with the math, Dinah helps him access the internet for further research. They set up email accounts so they can stay in touch with each other when Dinah leaves with her mother, who had been incarcerated, to another city.

Author Laurie Gray writes a sweet story about a boy’s first brush with an innocent romance. Matthew learns an important lesson about showing love to society’s outcasts. In his zeal to protect Dinah, however, Matthew keeps her existence a secret from his parents. He lies to his family and sneaks out of the house at night to help Dinah during a rainstorm. In a brief scene, Dinah is horrified when Matthew says something derogatory about homosexuality.

*Johnnie Donley*


PAP, 9780307458223, $13.99.

Fic 305 p.; 21 cm.

MS Rating: 5

In *The Charlatan’s Boy*, Grady is found under a Palmetto bush as a baby and raised by Floyd, a showman and huckster. He is the star of Floyd’s show, dressing in fur and mud and acting like The Wild Man of the Feechie Swamp. Although Floyd is a liar and a fraud, Grady accepts him as the only family he has and takes pride in his profession. But when their feechie act no longer gets them any money and they must try different acts and gimmicks, Brady starts to doubt who he is and he longs for a real family and friends. Then Floyd decides to create another Great Feechie Scare so people will believe in feechies again. Grady’s delighted and can’t wait to act like his old Feechie self—though in his heart he wonders if he’ll ever know who he truly is.

Grady tells his story in a lively and unique voice. You easily become attached to his sweet character and funny diction,
feeling for him when he's in trouble and rooting for him when he's successful. Each chapter begins and ends a story, the plot and southern voice feels reminiscent of *Huckleberry Finn*. Every character is interesting and well rounded. The end is surprising and completely satisfying. This would be a fun read aloud book for the entire family.

*Ellie Soderstrom*

  
  HBB, 9780439269704, $17.99.
  
  Fic 372 p. : ill. ; 20 cm.
  
  MS (HS) Rating: *5

The Dreamer is a fictionalized biography of Pablo Neruda, one the world’s most widely-read poets and winner of the 1971 Nobel Prize for Literature.

The story opens with Neruda as a young Chilean school boy—painfully shy, slightly built, and sensitive. His repressive father disapproves of the boy's vivid imagination and bellows, "Stop that incessant daydreaming!"

Later, when Neruda is a teenager, his father publicly burns his notebooks. Nevertheless, his loving stepmother, a kind librarian, and his brave uncle nurture and sustain Neruda until he leaves home to enter the university—on the path to becoming the beloved poet who "wrote to the common person and about the common thing" (author's note).

Ryan's prose is imaginative and poetic, reflecting the perspective of the young writer. She delicately covers the abuse Neruda suffered and portrays him as trying to understand his father: "He looked directly into Father's eyes and became lost in his gaze. Who was inside? Someone mean and hateful? Or someone so controlled by his own past that he dared not allow anyone he loved to control their own future?" (p.340)

The book format—with wide margins, triple-spaced words, short paragraphs, and thick cream pages—is appealing. Peter Sis’ dream-like drawings perfectly complement and extend the story without ever distracting from its flow. Who better than Sis to illustrate such a story? His Caldecott Honor Book autobiography, *The Wall: Growing up Behind the Iron Curtain*, chronicles his own repression as an artist. Middle school readers will empathize with Neruda's difficult life and his hope for a better future.

*Carol Satta*

  
  HBB, 9780545106054, $17.99.
  
  Fic 377 p. : ill., maps ; 22 cm.
  
  MS (HS) Rating: 5

Award-winning author Deborah Wiles presents a documentary-style novel about a fifth grader's experience during the 1962 Cuban missile crisis. *Countdown* captures her life as she deals with the fear of war. Adding song lyrics, photos, and sidebars along with the fascinating story creates a unique work of historical fiction with the feel of a memoir.

In the summer of 1962 President Kennedy and Russia's Krushchev face off about Russian missiles being sent to Cuba. Meanwhile Franny deals with an uncle
who has lost touch with reality, a best friend who likes someone else, an almost perfect younger brother, and an older sister with secrets of her own.

While rumors of war fly around her, Franny deals with relational issues and faces her own fears. She prepares for air raid drills, writes letters to Krushchev that never get mailed, and tries to figure out her sister’s coded letters. Living near Andrews Air Force Base—near Washington, D.C.—Franny worries about nuclear disaster and what will happen next.

With newspaper clippings, reprints of posters, song lyrics, and sidebars about famous people of that era, the book reads like well-documented historical fiction, at other times like a documentary. The black and white photos, as well as typeface, black pages with white text, and general layout, add to the documentary feel. Aimed primarily at middle school students, adults who lived through the Cuban missile crisis will also be mesmerized by the memories this book causes them to recall. Countdown, meant to be a 1960s trilogy, has already won a number of awards: Publisher’s Weekly Best Book of the Year; Top Ten Middle Grade Books; and Booklist Editor’s Choice.

Highly recommended for public and school libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer

HBB, 9781426302091, $17.95. 
B or 920.93711 63, [1] p. : ill. ; 29 cm.

MS Rating: 5

It’s no surprise that the National Geographic Society has published an outstanding, entertaining book. Helen’s Eyes: A Photobiography of Annie Sullivan is such a book!

The book, with a forward by Helen Keller’s great-nephew, is a view into the world and personality of Annie Sullivan, Helen’s teacher and life-long companion. It tells of Annie’s very difficult childhood in a “poorhouse” and her courage in telling inspectors of the institution that she wanted to go to school. Because Annie needed a job, she agreed to become Helen’s teacher, even though she had never been out of Massachusetts. She traveled to Tuscumbia, Alabama, to meet and teach Helen, a difficult student.

The book is well-written, informative and entertaining. It is full of interesting photographs and documents that chronicle Sullivan throughout her life with Helen. Consequently, the reader gains an understanding of Helen Keller’s importance in history as well as an appreciation for Sullivan’s great teaching talent and personal sacrifice in spending her life in Helen’s service.

Rachel Langston


LIB, 9780761447597, $12.99. 
986.1 32 p. : ill. (some col.), col. maps ; 29 cm.


LIB, 9780761447634, $12.99. 
968.91 32 p. : ill. (some col.), col. maps ; 29 cm.

MS (HS) Rating: 3

Marshall Cavendish’s series, Global Hot Spots, is designed to provide students with an overview of the politics, economics and social crises in turbulent countries around the world. Similarly organized, these 32 page books include brilliant graphics and photographs which draw the reader’s attention immediately to key points. The authors utilize relatively short paragraphs and bullet points to explain each topic in two page chapters. A judicious use of quotations provides a personal point of view and ties the complex issues together. Each book ends with a look to the future, fact summary focusing on population, industries, labor, and focus questions, a glossary and index.

Columbia has been a “hot
spot” since the 1500’s when the Spaniards invaded the country. In the process of modernization, the country has gone through civil war, dealt with guerrilla groups who have fought against the country’s elite, and found itself financially linked with the drug trade. Similarly, Zimbabwe’s troubles began in the colonial era with the British exploiting their mineral wealth. In modern times, intense violence began when the country fought to gain independence from Britain 1965-1980. Unfortunately, the country has been devastated by the spread of HIV/AIDS, food shortages, and other diseases of poverty; and efforts at land reform and the distribution of wealth have wreaked havoc and sent the country into a downward spiral of violence and poverty.

Explaining the complex political, economic and social states of such tumultuous countries is a huge undertaking, especially in a 32 page book. Readers will come away with a strong overview, but not an in-depth understanding of these countries; further teaching and research is needed to support the learning process, as the high-level facts are difficult to fully comprehend without prior knowledge. The series is an excellent resource for middle and high school schools with a course which focuses on current world events and wants their students to have access to a synopsis of issues written for young people.

Kristine Wildner


HBB, 9780547194691, $17.
630.973 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm.
MS (All ages) Rating: 5

In Country Road ABC, Arthur Geisert’s cleverly detailed etchings lead the reader from A to Z through Iowa farmland, as each letter introduces some not-so-typical contemporary farm vocabulary. An actual country road in the author’s hometown is beautifully depicted along the bottom of the oversized pages as one continuous scene progressing through the four seasons. Above the road on each page, a larger illustration represents the word for that letter of the alphabet. We see the characters at both work and play (men are shown in one picture playing cards). At the end of the book is a useful glossary.

It is evident from the very first letter that this is not your standard “ABC” book. Arthur Geisert has chosen words that educate (“A is for ammonia fertilizer”), amuse (“K is for kick), and surprise (“N is for no mail today”). There is enough simplicity for preschoolers (“P is for pig”) but also plenty of challenging concepts (“I is for inoculate”) for older readers. Country Road ABC is an enchanting journey, a refreshing detour from the cutesiness of so many other farm stories for children.

Parent readers will appreciate the elements of patriotism and realism so delicately woven through the artwork, which includes both colored and black and white sketches, as well as a few imaginative silhouettes. All of the exceptional drawings reveal the author’s experience with and obvious affection for the landscape, people, and lifestyle of rural America.

Nina Ditmar

HBB, 9780890515693, $15.99.
231.7652 23 p.: col. ill.; 30 cm.
MS INT Rating: 5

In *Charley and Trike in the Grand Canyon Adventure*, Charlie the monkey and Trike the triceratops embark on a field trip to the Grand Canyon. Charlie discovers fossils of sea creatures in various levels of the canyon. In addition to seeking fossils, Charlie also tries to discover who might be stealing food from his backpack. He suspects Captain Wes, the tour guide, because he reminds Charlie of a pirate. As Trike describes the biblical flood and explains that the fossils are a result of the flood, Charlie learns about the Bible, records what he’s learned in his green notebook, and starts learning about making decisions about trust based on facts rather than speculation. The plot is interesting and moves quickly. The setting is integral to the story since Charlie’s discovery of fossils at the top of the canyon starts his path to discovering that the Bible can be trusted. Trike’s explanations about the biblical flood causing the fossilization of sea creatures at all levels of the Grand Canyon helps present the theme given on the inside cover, “the Bible can be trusted as the true, inspired Word of God.”

Ken Ham and Karen Hansel include scientific evidence of the biblical flood and interesting facts about the history of the Grand Canyon in picture book format. Brilliantly colored cartoon illustrations by Portland Studios bring the story to life. Lifting flaps or reading inset booklets and maps make the book a lot of fun to look at while providing educational material. The character of Charlie the monkey develops a little bit throughout the story as he learns about the Bible, records what he’s learned in his green notebook, and starts learning about making decisions about trust based on facts rather than speculation. The plot is interesting and moves quickly. The setting is integral to the story since Charlie’s discovery of fossils at the top of the canyon starts his path to discovering that the Bible can be trusted. Trike’s explanations about the biblical flood causing the fossilization of sea creatures at all levels of the Grand Canyon helps present the theme given on the inside cover, “the Bible can be trusted as the true, inspired Word of God.”

Kristi Wolcott


LIB, 9780547216010, $18.95.
MS HS Rating: 4

The updated version of *The American Heritage Student Thesaurus* for grades 7-10 (ages 12-16) has been specifically designed to help meet the growing demands on older students’ writing skills. With 6000 main entry words, this sturdy, hardcover thesaurus provides synonyms, antonyms, parts of speech, usage, and special Word Groups sections which give definitions for related words to that particular entry. Also included are sentences to help students to understand the correct way to use each word. A brand new section entitled Tips for Writers will enable student readers and writers to add detail and descriptive words to their writing projects.

Winner of the Parents’ Choice Approved Award, *The American Heritage Student*
Thesaurus from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt is a useful and informative tool that includes a wide range of modern words that older students encounter often. Synonyms, antonyms, and sentences are clearly written and easy to understand. A small sprinkling of illustrations is present, although more pictures and the use of color would have added extra interest to the rather plain look of the entire volume. The paper used is heavier stock to stand up to repeated usage. Main entry words are written in medium blue while everything else is printed using black font. All in all, The American Heritage Student Thesaurus will prove to be an excellent addition to the students’ bookshelf, providing vocabulary-boosting words for many school years to come.

Sherri Myers


LIB, 9780761444756, $29.95. 954.92  144 p. : col. ill., maps ; 25 cm.


LIB, 9780761434160, $29.95. 995.3  144 p. : col. ill., col. maps ; 2r cm.


LIB, 9780761444824, $29.95. 989.2  144 p. : col. ill., col. maps ; 25 cm.


LIB, 9780761444484, $29.95. 989.5  144 p. : col. ill., maps ; 25 cm.

MS (HS) Rating: 4

Marshall Cavendish’s Cultures of the World series continues to be at the forefront in publishing comprehensive, well-organized, and colorful resources about the diverse countries of our world. The newest titles, Bangladesh, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, and Uruguay, are all organized similarly into thirteen chapters which cover all aspects of the country from geography and history, to government and the economy, religion, lifestyles, language, arts, leisure, festivals, and food. Each book concludes with a map, summary of the economy and culture, timeline, glossary, resources for further information, bibliography and index. The series is the perfect resource for any in-depth study of a foreign country.

The authors underscore the unique facets of each country, not only highlighting the positive, but also pointing out the suffering of the people, movements toward reforms, and a reconciliation of indigenous peoples with modern lifestyles. Utilizing brilliant color photographs, a varied layout with colorful sidebars, and a comprehensive narrative, the books depict the countries in a manner which assumes little prior knowledge, yet a relatively high (8th grade) reading level. Consequently, readers will walk away with a strong sense of what it is like to live in each country, as they have been given a chance to experience some of their literature, almost taste the food (with recipes), and
understand the deep histories which shape the lives of the people in each country today.

Kristine Wildner

The paper boomerang book: build them, throw them, and get them to return every time / Mark Latno. Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2010. LCCN 2010007251.

PAP, 9781569762820, $12.95. 745.54 xi, 145 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. MS Rating: 3

There is a certain fascination with flying things, be they balloons, kites, or even boomerangs. That tenuous connection between being earthbound and lifting off into the sky is age old. Mark Latno builds upon that connection with his The Paper Boomerang Book. An authority on boomerangs and a veteran teacher of boomerang building, Latno provides a quick guide that both combines the history of boomerangs and how to construct them. This book is appealing for flight fanciers and those who are looking for a variety in crafts. Though the book is fine on its balance of history, suggested construction techniques, and even has a variety of helpful photographs, there is a lack of specific construction directions. For instance, marking where the wings should intersect would have been helpful, and had to be discovered through trial and error. The instructions could be used with older children, and would perhaps complement a junior high or high school physical science curriculum. A unique book for a unique medium of flight.

Pam Webb


HBB, 9781423129011, $16.99. 811/.6 136 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. MS Rating: 5

Based on her mother’s poetry album, Debbie Levy has creatively written a novel in verse, capturing the true events of what happened to her mother during 1938 in Nazi Germany. Twelve year old Jutta Salzburg (Debbie’s mother) enjoyed going to school and playing with her friends in Hamburg. But everything suddenly changed. The Nazi Party rose to power, causing more restrictions to be placed on their lives, and the threat of arrests and persecution grew. The poesiealbum (poetry album) tells of the events as friends seem to disappear overnight, whether moving to another country or taken off by the police. Jutta was fortunate enough to escape before the Holocaust. Memories from Jutta’s friends introduce each chapter. The Year of Goodbyes reflects the feelings and thoughts of a teen girl living through the period as her family waits for visas. Excerpts from her diary and family photos are included, as well as the original German writing. A timeline of major dates before, during, and after World War II, as well as those within Jutta’s life is included. An afterword explains what happened to each of her friends.

Levy has done her research well. The tone of the book is much gentler than most other Holocaust literature, making it a possibility for 5th graders to read. However, it does not dilute the reality of watching friends disappear. It is a perfect read for one not ready for the reality of the death
Camps. A discussion guide is available from the publisher and on the author's website, making this a good choice for the classroom or book club.

Recommended for school and public libraries, especially for 5th grade and up.

Carol R. Gehringer


HBB, 9781590787182, $17.95.

5th grade and up.

In *Cleopatra Rules!* Vicky Shecter asks, “What if all your preconceived notions about Cleopatra were wrong?” She writes a fresh, informative, fun-to-read nonfiction book about Cleopatra aimed at middle school readers.

When facts about ancient life are combined with doubts about earlier biographers' motives (mainly Roman historians who wrote about her from their point of view), a different story about Cleopatra is discovered. Even modern scholars are not as quick to accept everything that has been written about her by the Roman historians.

Each chapter in *Cleopatra Rules!* presents numerous photos of ancient artwork and sidebars with interesting information, illustrating her life from childhood (she was a "bookish nerd") to her life with Julius Caesar and Marc Antony (she used them to protect and further her interests). The banner captions accompanying the photos and drawings make it easy to read.

The chapters themselves are short in length; the tone of the book is fun and slightly irreverent, but factual. Punctuated with puns and a chatty, almost gossipy narrative, *Cleopatra Rules!* is especially appealing to its target audience of young adults in grades 5-9.

Schechter's research is backed with lengthy endnotes, timeline, glossary, bibliography, and picture sources. The bibliography lists both primary and secondary sources and articles. Even the typeface (Berkeley Oldstyle Book) lends itself to the book's tone. Readers will enjoy learning about the "original teen queen" who was restored to her throne after her younger brother's advisers took over in his behalf, and who had children with both Roman heroes, Julius Caesar and Marc Antony.

Highly recommended for public and school libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer


HBB, 9781590785928, $17.95.

Part biography, part science text, replete with beautiful illustrations, *Planet Hunter* tells the story of Geoff Marcy, his colleagues, and the lofty Keck Observatory atop Mount Mauna Kea in Hawaii, and their collaboration in finding two hundred new planets since 1995. As a boy Marcy fell in love with the night sky. This love has blossomed into in-depth study of that sky, adding greatly to the enormous leaps and bounds being made in astronomy in
our times. Meet the Mauna Kea telescope, the new extrasolar planets recently discovered, learn about the Doppler Effect, Spectral Fingerprints, Dwarf Stars; be ready to think in terms of hundreds of billions of stars and millions of years. For further study the author has included an extensive bibliography and large glossary.

A prosecutor and advocate for children and families, with an MFA in children’s writing, Vicki Wittenstein uses her research and discovery skills and her clarity of explanation to provide an engrossing account in Planet Hunter. While the narrative is engrossing, the illustrations, garnered from a wide range of media, are totally captivating. This book opens with a spectacular sunrise over the Keck Observatory. Literally and artistically out-of-this-world paintings of unexplored but known planets draw the eye onward throughout this book. Scientific illustrations, pretty enough for a glossy magazine, illuminate the astronomical details. Mathematical drawings help explain salient points. Planet Hunter makes the reader want to learn. It will appeal to a wide age-range of readers, late elementary and middle school age through adult. Classroom, library, and home will want a copy. It will also enhance the coffee table, and waiting rooms.

Donna Eggett

Youth occupational outlook handbook / editors@JIST. Indianapolis, Ind.: Jist Pub., 2010. LCCN 2010006375.

PAP, 9781593577438, $19.95.
331.702 xv, 304 p.; 24 cm.
MS (HS) Rating: 5

The Young Person’s Occupational Outlook Handbook provides information on 260 major jobs, representing 90% of the workforce in the USA. It is a valuable resource for students starting to research job possibilities and explore career choices.

Each job has a short description, subjects to study in school, related jobs, earnings, job outlook, as well as education and training required. In addition, there is an activity that can be done to learn more about the job or an idea on how to find out more information. Lastly, there are fun facts about each job. There is a brief contents page, followed by a detailed table of contents, a resource section of information available on the Internet, and an index of job titles.

The information is based on the US Department of Labor’s Occupational Outlook Handbook and follows their arrangement of jobs. It even includes a section on job opportunities in the military. A new section, written by the editors at JIST Publishing, on “green occupations” is also included. It also includes “Some Points to Consider” when choosing your career and using the information in the book.

Each job is a single page, with a few carefully placed illustrations acting as a key to the Education & Training, Earnings, and Job Outlook sections. The Something Extra section is set in a tilted sidebar. The layout of the page is crisp and eye-catching.

This publication is easy to read and visually appealing, making it good choices for students who are curious as well as those who are exploring career choices. It is a must for guidance counselors, school libraries,
and public libraries.

*Carol R. Gehringer*

HBB, 9780375858567, $16.99.
Fic 232 p. : map ; 22 cm.
HS MS  Rating: 4

Johanna leaves her sister Rose and goes into service to Dame Margery Kempe, a very religious woman who lacks compassion for those around her. She has decided it is her calling to make a pilgrimage to Rome and Johanna is to accompany her. Unfortunately for Johanna, preparations for the pilgrimage are an added chore to her already demanding day. Finally, the day of departure has come and gone and after a somewhat difficult trip across the sea, the pair joins a group from their hometown. The constant piety of the Dame almost causes her to be abandoned, with Johanna forced to continue with the group, but the Dame has given rules to follow—or else. Johanna and the Dame do eventually part ways, but both end up in Rome. Johanna discovers a new sense of internal fortitude that serves her well; she also enjoys finally being paid for her efforts.

The setting of the story is 1413 England, not a familiar background for most people. Barnhouse does an excellent job researching for The Book of the Maidservant. Her descriptions of villages, forests, people, and hospices are engaging. Her character development is well done, especially with Johanna, Dame Kempe, and the group that make the pilgrimage—giving the reader clear insight into their culture.

Debby Willett


PAP, 9780800734398, $9.99.
Fic 259 p. ; 22 cm.
HS (MS)  Rating: 3

Perfectly Dateless, a contemporary novel by Kristin Billerbeck, chronicles a senior’s quest for the perfect prom date. A few obstacles stand in her way. Daisy Crispin belongs to the invisible group, and her lifelong crush has caught the attention of one of the popular girls. Though Daisy’s parents don’t allow her to date, buy fashionable clothes, or dance, Daisy is determined to find a way to attend prom and do it in style. But wanting to be noticed will take her places she never imagined she’d go.

Daisy’s craving for fashion and popularity makes her seem shallow at first, but through the story, Daisy learns the consequences can be high. Tied in with this growth, Daisy’s relationship with her parents also shifts. In the beginning, Daisy’s frustration emerges through sarcastic comments, disregard for her parents’ rules, and negative thoughts about her family and home. However, as the story progresses, Daisy learns things about her parents that cast them in a new light, and their relationship begins to change from both sides.

A big drawback to Perfectly Dateless is its many contemporary references, which include technology, celebrities currently on the teen radar, and TV shows. These references will quickly outdate the book. And teens living in other countries, or those not consumed with pop culture, are likely to feel like outsiders as they read.

Rachelle Dawson
HBB, 9780545080927, $16.99.
Fic 218 p.; 21 cm.
HS (MS) Rating: 5

Matt was rescued from Vietnam when the soldiers airlifted children out. *All the Broken Pieces* is his story told in narrative verse. Matt was fathered by an American soldier who left his mother. He has been adopted by an American family and has a younger brother. He also has a younger brother in Vietnam who was maimed by one of the many mines planted in that country. Matt struggles with the fact that his Vietnamese mother sent him to America and with the fact that if his new family knew what he had done (left his brother who ended up in a mine field), they wouldn’t want him around his American brother. Matt is also a baseball player and one of his team mates resents him because the teammate’s brother didn’t make it home from Vietnam. Matt’s dad has many friends who fought in the war. He takes Matt to meet these men, which eventually gives meaning to the men who gave so much and helps Matt to heal.

Ann Burg successfully uses the voice of a young Vietnamese boy who is struggling with his identity amidst the trauma he has faced. She also effectively uses flashbacks to tell Matt’s story of his life before he left Vietnam. Because the story is told in narrative verse, it is a fast read. Readers will empathize with Matt and his struggles and learn more about the Vietnam no one talked about after the war. They will learn more about the importance of hearing the stories of others in order to better understand them. While there is racism in the book, the caring adults in the story help the boys work through their differences and grow to accept each other.

*Jane Mouttet*

**Raising dragons / Bryan Davis. (Dragons in our midst ; 1) Chattanooga, Tenn.: Living Ink Books, 2004. LCCN 2005453231.**
PAP, 9780899571706, $14.99.
Fic ix, 399 p.; 23 cm.
HS (MS) Rating: 4

In *Raising Dragons*, Billy Bannister learns that his father had once been a dragon. Billy meets Bonnie Silver, who has recently fled her home many miles away as her mother lay dying from a dragon slayer attack. As “anthrozils” (both fully human and fully dragon), Billy, Bonnie, and his father are pursued and attacked by several dragon slayers. Their friends provide aid during key times in the conflict.

In *The Candlestone*, Bonnie’s abusive father takes her to his research lab so she can “free her mother” from the candlestone into which she
had been “transluminated.” Meanwhile Billy and his friends discover that her father was lying, and set off to rescue her.

In *Circles of Seven*, Billy and his British teacher fly to England, followed by Bonnie and other friends. There Billy agrees to a challenging mission that involves moving through portals in and out of seven other dimensions roughly patterned after levels in Hades from Dante’s *The Divine Comedy*. Only Bonnie accompanies him, but their friends monitor their progress from time to time and occasionally intervene.

In *Tears of a Dragon*, while Billy and Bonnie cross into yet another dimension to rescue his father and others, their friends combat evil supernatural beings in their efforts to deliver one friend’s sister from possession by the wicked sorceress Morgan. The action continues in the following series, *Oracles of Fire*.

Author Bryan Davis has produced an imaginative, complex, fast-moving fantasy with well-developed characters that encounter constant challenges and threats in their struggles. A few face death and miraculous resurrection. Beginning in the first volume in a small-town setting, the succeeding volumes involve travel into further contexts and dimensions. The twenty-first century characters encounter both medieval and futuristic science fiction type technologies. Key themes are integrity, faithfulness, sacrificial love, and weapons of truth and faith that are demonstrated by the use of Scripture, song, and prayer. These books in the Dragons in Our Midst series by Davis spell out in greater detail certain events also related in *Eye of the Oracle*, the first of his later *Oracles of Fire* series. [CLJ 14, 1 (2010)]. These two series will appeal to young adults and those who enjoy fantasy from a Christian perspective. They are highly recommended for church, Christian school, and personal libraries.

*Donna W. Bowling*


HBB, 9780316098335, $24.99.

Fic 321 p.; 25 cm.

HS Adult Rating: 5

*Room* is the only novel you’re likely to read told from the first-person perspective of a five-year-old. His name is Jack. Prince JackerJack. GingerJack. Jack is a typical five-year-old in many respects. He’s on the brighter side. He loves to play, he’s very literal, and he sometimes throws a fit. He also has lived his entire life in an 11-by-11-foot room. That is, Room with a capital-R. Everything in Room is personified, because it’s all Jack knows: Rug, Wardrobe, Table, Sink, Toilet.

There is a real person who lives with Jack: his mother, Ma. We never find out her real name. But slowly we find out her story—she’s been captured by a bad man, Old Nick. And, slowly, we find out Jack’s place in Ma’s story. Prince JackerJack needs to rescue his mother.

Most of the book follows the sometimes hilarious thoughts in Jack’s five-year-old head. His observations about the world are entertaining not only because author Emma Donoghue has captured a small child’s voice perfectly but because Jack has a unique perspective on the world—having never believed it existed before age five.
The story has a few objectionable elements—a few naughty words and troubling themes (sexual slavery not least)—but these are filtered through Jack's understanding, and only adults will know what is going on (except for the bad words). Objectionable elements are not dwelt upon. Some readers may tire of listening so long to the thoughts of a five year old, but Room is a remarkably creative work.

Mark L. Ward, Jr.

**In Between : a Katie Parker production (act 1) / Jenny B. Jones. Colorado Springs: Think, 2007. LCCN 2006103298.**

PAP, 9781600060984, $14.99.

Fic 347 p.; 21 cm.

**On the loose / Jenny B. Jones. (Katie Parker production ; act 2) Colorado Springs: Think, 2007. LCCN 2007019436.**

PAP, 9781600061158, $12.99.

Fic 367 p.; 21 cm.

**The big picture / Jenny B. Jones. (Katie Parker production ; act 3) Colorado Springs: Think, 2008. LCCN 2007045177.**

PAP, 9781600062087, $12.99.

Fic 375 p.; 22 cm.

Katie Parker starts life from scratch as a foster child. When her mother is sent to prison, Sunny Haven Home for Girls becomes her residence. Before long she transitions to the care of Pastor James Scott and his wife, Millie. Katie hides her vulnerability with a flourish of skepticism and a stream of consciousness that would do credit to a standup comic. She's full of bravado—part tough teen and part Cinderella.

In *Between* introduces us to drama queen Katie. She's determined to end this pretense of normal family life in short order. Wrong choices land her in serious trouble with unforeseen consequences. Secrets abound in this story, and foreshadow the revelations in Act 2 and 3.

Katie settles down in *On the Loose*, but peace vanishes after a tornado rips through town. Life at high school is tempestuous as she copes with science fair sabotage and undeserved accusations. Boy troubles plague both Katie and her best friend Frances. Her insecurities rise to flood stage as Millie receives a cancer diagnosis, the Scott's prodigal daughter shows up, and Katie's mother gets out of prison. In the midst of her chaotic life, Katie relinquishes her defenses and hopes in God.

In *The Big Picture*, Bobbie Ann Parker (Katie's mom) works her way through legal obstacles to regain custody. Although the Scotts aren't convinced Bobbie Ann is stable, they have no recourse. Hours away from the Scotts and her new friends, Katie trusts God to help her start over and rebuild a relationship with her mother. Before long Bobbie Ann's erratic behavior convinces Katie that drugs are taking over again. She faces the turmoil with her newfound faith, and learns that God cares for her in every situation.

Jenny B. Jones is a witty, articulate, light-hearted writer who deals with weighty issues while entertaining the reader with hilarious teen-age escapades. Katie’s observations about church and Christians from an outsider's point of view are well done. The author presents Katie’s curiosity about God as transparent and real. She begins to comprehend that God builds
character in His people by allowing them to face adverse circumstances and deal with them. Kati is no pushover. Trust doesn’t come easy to her. She observes and reflects on the lives of others. She confronts God with her questions. Some of the most poignant scenes in this series take place as the author shows us Katie’s sincere quest for understanding.

The first book in the series provides the foundation for the following ones. It offers less intense conflict and is a fluffier read. The subsequent two novels have drama that is more serious and the pace accelerates. All three books provoke laugh-out-loud moments. Weighing in at close to 350 pages each, the books may be a tad longer than the average young adult story, but these engaging, satisfying tales are far above average. The reader isn’t ready for them to end. We can only hope Jenny B. Jones will have a heart, and bring Katie Parker and the cast back for many encores.

Deborah H. Rabern


LCCN 2008021475.

HBB, 9780385733403, $16.99.
Fic 225 p. : map ; 22 cm.
HS Rating: 4

Baba, Ma, daughters Reet and Asha are saying their final good-byes at the train station in Delhi. Baba has lost his job and will soon be flying to America to look for work, then send for his wife and daughters. In the meantime, Ma, Reet, and Asha are getting on the train to Calcutta to stay with Baba’s family. Asha sees her Ma fall into a deep depression, calling it “The Jailer,” unusual for her strong M. Both Reet and Asha have left their studies at Bishop Academy, where Asha had hopes of furthering her education. Ma and the girls know their lives will be different living under the roof of Baba’s family; remembering the brother-in-law’s sterner look on life, but waiting for the wire from Baba gives them hope.

Asha has a secret, really many secrets, and she keeps them locked up in her “S.K.” – her nickname for her diary, Secret Keeper. For Asha, S.K. is her secret companion, though her best friend is her sister Reet. On the roof of the new home, Asha is slowly building a friendship with the boy next door, a painter. He wants to paint a portrait of Asha—but that would be so inappropriate in this culture. Yet the younger sister cannot marry before the elder sister. Their lives will all change. Will Baba be home soon? Will the dreams Asha has secretly kept in S.K. ever see the light of day?

Secret Keeper is written in the time of the leadership of Indira Gandhi, and military rule was about to be established. It was going to be a difficult time for all citizens of India. Perkins, as a native of India, is adept with even the most minor details in creating a culturally fascinating read. Fortunately for the reader, Perkins includes a glossary of frequently used terms. The story is written in the narrative, and details of the India culture are thorough in reference to the families. The families came in contact with a mob of beggars when they arrive in Calcutta. Ma quickly comes out of the Jailer mode with Reet when she suggests giving them something:

“Ma,” Reet said over her shoulder, “Can’t we give them something?” “Are you insane?”
Ma hissed, “If you give one of them anything, the rest will mob us.”

This quote is a profound example of the disparity Ma and her girls find when leaving their comfortable life in Delhi.

*Debby Willett*


PAP, 9781600066221, $12.99.
Fic 167 p.; 21 cm.
HS Rating: 4

Laura Smith pens a realistic novel about a popular teen that is beautiful enough to be a model but struggles with self-confidence, leaving her prey to sexual temptation.

Lindsay, a sixteen-year-old girl, faces the challenges of wanting to fit in, wanting to be understood, and wanting to be loved. She craves the self-confidence she finds in Noah, her first love. As she is drawn into the relationship, will she be able to make her own conviction about chastity and sex? She knows what her parents believe and what her church teaches, but when someone says he loves you, can it really be so wrong?

There is more character than plot development, as Lindsay struggles with her choices and their consequences. She knows—in theory—what she wants to do. Yet when faced with the actual situation she gives into temptation. The sex scene takes place off-stage, so there are no graphic details. After hearing a talk from her pastor, she decides to end the physical aspect of her relationship with Noah. The final scene leaves the status of their relationship in question.

*Hot* is a well-written book, one that will appeal to teen girls. Lindsay’s final discussion with Noah is realistic and thought-provoking. She realizes that premarital sex is throwing away God’s gift to one’s future spouse. This short book could be read as a group and used with a discussion guide available at the publisher’s website.

Recommended for teen fiction collections in both public and school libraries.

*Carol R. Gehringer*


HBB, 9780823420995, $16.95.
Fic 117 p.; 22 cm.
HS (MS) Rating: *5

Over the past ten years her dad has moved them so many times she has forgotten where she has lived. Every move means a name change. Now she does not even remember what her real name is. Her dad and brother keep calling her Blondie. What is that about? Every move has meant a change in her birthday. That means she does not even know for sure how old she is, or when her real birthday is. This latest move is the most frustrating. She feels alone. Her brother—not sure what his real name is—takes the moves in stride. He makes new friends because he plays sports. It does not work that way for her.

Then she goes to the public library and meets an assistant there who really wants to help her. The help she receives is not what she was expecting and has the potential to fracture her world. Not sure what to do with this explosive information, she tracks the library assistant down only to find he and his family have moved overnight. “Not every illegal alien comes from Mexico,” he had said to her.
Now she is afraid for him and his family. Still, what will she do with all this new information about her life?

Springer has a reputation for keeping readers engaged. This 117-page page-turner will put you in a chair until the very end. Every chapter has a new twist that you will not want to miss. Charge up your popcorn popper and

Debby Willett


HBB, 9780545107105, $17.99.

Fic 313 p.; 22 cm.
HS Rating: 4

Natalie Standiford tells a modern story of three prodigal daughters in Confessions of the Sullivan Sisters. The Sullivans are a socialite family living in Baltimore. For the three Sullivan sisters, Norrie, Jane, and Sassy, life consists of prep school and weekly tea with their grandmother, Almighty. On Christmas Day, Almighty announces she has been diagnosed with a brain tumor and her death is imminent. Furthermore, one of her three granddaughters has offended her deeply and as a punishment she has disinherited the entire family. The granddaughters have until New Year's Eve to submit their confessions to Almighty in writing. After she reads them, Almighty will decide whether to reinstate the family into her will or follow through with her plan to donate her entire fortune to charity and leave them penniless. In their confessions, Norrie, Jane, and Sassy detail love, hatred, truth, lies, and even death.

Standiford's writing style is light and humorous, but the message of repentance and forgiveness is apparent throughout the book. Although the girls sometimes resent the way Almighty wants to control their lives, each realizes why her actions may have offended her grandmother and sincerely asks for forgiveness. The relationships within the Sullivan family are positive; the sisters especially share a tight bond. In spite of their wealth and social position, Norrie, Jane, and Sassy are normal teenagers. Readers will understand Norrie's infatuation with a boy she meets in her speed-reading class and Sassy's guilt over her perceived role in the death of Almighty's husband. Jane is suspended from Catholic school because she doubts the existence of God, but later undergoes a powerful conversion experience. The book contains one scene of implied fornication and some profanity, but the characters for the most part make responsible choices. A solid choice for high school libraries.

Elizabeth Norton

PAP, 9781400315956, $12.99.
155.6/32 xii, 209 p.; 21 cm.
HS Rating: 4, with caution

Becoming a real man is a process that involves growing, maturing, and making good decisions, according to A Guy's Guide to Life: How to Become a Man in 224 Pages or Less. In his guide (which runs only 209 pages), Jason Boyett helps teenage boys grow towards becoming complete men by giving advice on relationships, God, health, sexual matters, and even such things as how to tie a necktie and ways to give to charity.

The book is filled with practical, common-sense tips, especially in the dating section. Its use of pull quotes, questions and answers, and bold and italic fonts nicely break up the text and make it reader-friendly. Boyett's conversational tone will definitely attract teen readers, but he's often flippant. Comments like “People are now eyeing you like a monkey just climbed out of your butt,” are common, as are fart jokes and comments about wetting one's pants, giving wedgies, or having wet dreams.

Some of Boyett's opinions may be controversial. While he acknowledges the pluses of courtship, he dismisses it as a worthwhile possibility. He seems to indicate that gay couples are a normal part of modern life, and implies that the one time it's “okay” to lie is when assuring a woman she isn't fat.

Even so, this is a strong book full of relevant information. The best chapters deal with sex, although they are extremely frank, with detailed descriptions of what sex is and blunt commentary on masturbation, pornography, and what qualifies as losing one's virginity.

On the back cover, Boyett says he gives “real answers for real guys trying to figure out how to live in a real world.” Add that he shows how all this relates to a teen's faith and you get a good idea of how valuable A Guy's Guide to Life is.

Rosemarie DiCristo


LIB, 9780816081219, $55.
025.5/24 xxxvi. 720 p.; 24 cm.
HS (MS) Rating: 5

Author of numerous nonfiction books, Jeff Lenburg presents a comprehensive guide to conducting thorough research for students of all ages.

Facts on File Guide to Research lists thousands of resources, explains research methods, and shows proper citation of sources. Online bibliography creators are mentioned. Appendices include style guides for APA, MLA, and the Chicago Manual of Style, in addition to a bibliography and index. Acknowledgements, introduction, and two tables of contents (broad and detailed) are arranged before the main text.

Expanded and updated to include Internet research and online resources, the 2nd edition is divided into four parts: (1) Researching your topic, (2) Finding sources of information, (3) Finding sources by subject, and (4) Using your sources. Each section has further detail. For example, “Researching your
topic” has developing your subject; gathering your information, and evaluating your sources. The chapters in “Finding sources” are: finding archives, associations, biographical information, CD-ROM collections, electronic databases, electronic journals, email discussion groups, general references, government publications, libraries, newspapers, search engines, and researching on the Web. “Finding sources by subject” comprises a list of subject headings, guides, books, article indexes, periodicals, and websites selected by librarians and researchers.

This book is an excellent introduction to the methods of research for any student or topic. Search engines, and free resources including e-journals by subject that are available on the Internet, make this an invaluable addition to any library.

Recommended for school and public libraries, and for researchers of all ages. Librarians will also find it useful for strengthening collection areas.

Carol R. Gehringer


PAP, 9780824210984, $55.
355/.0310973 ix,177 p.; 26 cm.

HS Rating: 5

Russia / edited by Richard Joseph Stein. (The reference shelf; v. 82, no. 4) New York: H.W. Wilson, 2010. LCCN 2010024983.

PAP, 9780824210991, $55.
947 vii, 214 p. : ill., maps, ports.; 26 cm.

HS (Adult) Rating: 5

Each of these titles, part of The Reference Shelf, contains reprints of articles, excerpts from books and addresses on current issues, and studies of social trends.

The American Military Presence Overseas gives the reader a chance to explore the debate as to whether the U.S. federal government should substantially reduce its military and/or policy presence on South Korea, Japan, Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq and Turkey. Further discussion looks to what extent the U.S. has become an empire, whether Obama’s 2009 decision to implement a troop surge was beneficial, and whether the U.S. should stay in Iraq. Articles in the fourth section highlight the U.S. relationship with Turkey and two chapters examine the U.S.’s military alliances with Japan and South Korea. The narrative is generally done well and doesn’t overpower the more analytical aspects of the book.

Russia gives the reader a broad picture of Russia with four chapters devoted to its history and ending with one detailing the issues facing contemporary Russia. The historical overview covers medieval Russia (980-1584) followed by revolutionary Russia & the early Soviet Era (1903 to 1954) and from Soviet Union to Soviet collapse. The closing discussion looks at the poverty, government corruption, regional tensions, and the threat of terrorist attacks as Russia struggles to maintain stability and influence today.

Russia is a magisterial work sure to be appreciated by history buffs. The words flow smoothly so it is easy to become engaged in the
narrative.

Both titles provide a reliable current-affairs source that examines the complexities and contradictions of the issue. *The American Military Presence Overseas* is well researched and analytically astute. Those familiar with *The U.S. Military* by Stiehm (Routledge, 2011) will find a complementary approach but one offering more points of view. *Russia* analyzes the paradoxes in Russian politics and society much as one might find in *The Return* by Treisman (Free Press, 2011) or *A History of Russia* by Riasanovsky (Oxford University, 2010) and a distinct strength in this discussion is the reality of how varied Russia's history is and how it has reinvented itself numerous times.

Adults and high school debate students can find much that is accessible here. The bibliography and listing of web sites along with additional periodical articles with abstracts will find much to expand and update the topic.

*Leroy Hommerding*
HBB, 9780310318422, $19.99.
Fic 320 p.; 23 cm.

HBB, 9780310321989, $19.99.
Fic 324 p.; 23 cm.

Adult Rating: 4

Both Double Minds and Intervention have themes of families in crisis. Each of the situations requires police involvement to solve a homicide, and both portray characters who realize Jesus Christ is the answer to their problems. However, Double Minds is a stand-alone novel, while Intervention is the establishing story for a series.

Double Minds opens with aspiring singer/songwriter Parker James receiving a text from her police officer brother about a murder at the recording studio. A break-in at her home makes her wonder if she was the shooter’s target. Although Parker has achieved modest success writing hits for her best friend, rising Christian star Serene, she longs to make her own mark as a recording artist. Pressure to secularize her music for a crossover market forces Parker to evaluate her artistic integrity and willingness to compromise to reach a larger audience. She deals with her father's alcoholism, Serene’s anorexia, and copyright infringement, while helping her brother hunt down a murderer.

The central issue in Intervention is the drug addiction of Emily, aged eighteen. Her widowed mother, Barbara, hires a counselor and stages an intervention in a last ditch effort to save her. Complications arise when the counselor is murdered and Emily disappears, en route to rehab. Although the police believe Emily is the killer, Barbara’s plight wins the sympathy of Detective Kent Harlan. He unravels the lies and plays a pivotal role in capturing the villain.

Terri Blackstock writes suspense novels that would make intense movies. Great plots and abundant cliff-hangers keep the reader turning the pages long past bedtime. Intervention is a fictionalized version of some challenges the author faced with her own addicted daughter. She doesn’t hold back any of the seedy details of full-blown drug addiction or the desperation of family members watching a loved one disintegrate. The portrayal of the Mom as always ahead of the police was a bit of a stretch in an otherwise compelling narrative.

Mrs. Blackstock has a great grasp of the minutia of the music and recording business of Double Minds. She gives the reader a clear understanding of the pressures attendant on those who are seeking success while striving to maintain core Christian values. The pace intensifies with short scenes leading to a satisfying climax in the last twenty-five pages.

Deborah H. Rabern

Uncertain heart / Andrea Kuhn Boeshaar. (Seasons of redemption ; 1) Lake Mary, Fla.: Realms, 2010. LCCN 2010022554.
PAP, 9781616380236, $12.99.
Fic 295 p.; 21 cm.

Unwilling warrior / Andrea Kuhn Boeshaar. (Seasons of redemption ; 2) Lake Mary, Fla.: Realms, 2010. LCCN 2010001453.
Unwilling Warrior and Uncertain Heart, the first two books in the Seasons of Redemption series, introduce two ladies in very different circumstances. Set in the midst of the Civil War, Unwilling Warrior follows Valerie Fontaine whose wealthy, southern upbringing and alcoholic father may destroy her chance for love with Ben McCabe. Valerie must give her every care to the Lord and trust Him to sustain her through battles she has not chosen.

Uncertain Heart follows Ben's sister, Sarah, as she seeks an independent lifestyle away from the small-town farming community in which she was raised. Torn between her wealthy employer, a former captain in the Civil War, and his steward, Richard Navis, who longs to leave the office and return to farming, Sarah must learn to allow God to chart the course of her heart.

Andrea Boeshaar creates two captivating stories which can stand independently as she delves into the effects of small, daily decisions on her characters' lives. For example, following a road of entitlement leads to a greedy, bitter villain in Unwilling Warrior, while decisions Sarah makes without seeking the Lord and the advice of godly friends nearly bring her to ruin in Uncertain Heart. The principle characters' growth revolves around their reactions to others as well as their circumstances. The plots of both books move quickly, shifting from personal battles in Unwilling Warrior to personal desires in Uncertain Heart.

From Civil War-era New Orleans to Jenkin's Junction, Missouri, and then to post-Civil War era Milwaukee, the settings provide a glimpse into life in that time period, and war-time intrigue helps deepen the plot of Unwilling Warrior. The dialogue in both books is well written, natural, and helps push the story forward. In addition to relating a great story, Boeshaar uses the character of Richard Navis to introduce some light humor in Uncertain Heart. Both books provide a highly entertaining read while each offers a deeper insight when the main characters fully surrender their lives to the Lord's leading.

Almost Heaven by Chris Fabry is set in Dogwood, WV, and is about Billy Allman, his love for music, and his dream of owning and operating a radio station that will honor God through its programming. God has a plan for Billy, but Billy's life, like Job's, presents him with one challenge after another.

Billy is born into a hard-working family living in rural West Virginia. At a tender age, he loses his father and his home during a flood. His mother's mind is permanently affected by the tragedy, causing Billy to become her primary caregiver. A misfit in school, Billy suffers the scorn and disdain of his classmates. The one bright light in his life is his music. An opportunity to perform the music he loves, however, turns tragic.

Through all of his trials and tribulations, Billy maintains an optimistic outlook, and his
faith, though shaken at times, is not destroyed. Billy is a person God can use to accomplish remarkable things, and He does.

Almost Heaven is told on two levels: the natural and the supernatural. Billy’s guardian angel, Malachi, is sometimes allowed to ward off the demonic forces that want to destroy Billy, but sometimes he is called away or not allowed to intervene.

After reading the book, the reader will sense that Chris Fabry knows his characters intimately. The book contains some delicate issues, such as kidnapping and child abuse, but the author exercises skill and discretion in writing about them. This book is a page turner: beautiful, insightful and thought-provoking. At times, the interludes with Malachi slow down the action a bit; nevertheless, I highly recommend it.

Sherri Beeler

**Adult (HS) Rating: 4**

Firefighter and paramedic Shawn Grady brings his insider’s knowledge to play in his novel Tomorrow We Die, adding authenticity to a behind-the-scenes look at the world of paramedics. However, readers should not expect Grady’s book merely to be a typical medical novel; it is an intense murder mystery.

Paramedic John Trestle is called to the scene of a man in cardiac arrest who manages to shove a piece of paper into his hand and whisper a cryptic message. The man survives, but later, when John goes to his house to return the paper to him, John finds the man dead in the hallway outside his apartment.

Thus begins John’s quest to decipher the mystery of the note—which leads him deep into the inner workings of his own ambulance company, revealing shocking corruption. The story builds to a climactic and terrifying ending as John and another medic, Naomi, face the murderous mastermind and barely escape with their lives.

Tomorrow We Die is a novel full of suspense and humor. John’s ambulance partner, Bones, is a delightful, quirky character whose crazy antics and wit brings relief to the heaviness of the ambulance runs they make. Peppered with medical jargon, the novel allows readers a look at the daily demands, stresses, and frustrations that paramedics face, and reminds us that our lives are but a vapor.

Sherri Beeler

Tomorrow we die / Shawn Grady. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010. LCCN 2010005988.

PAP, 9780764205965, $14.99.

Fic 326 p.; 22 cm.


PAP, 9780800733100, $14.99.

Fic 334 p.; 22 cm.


PAP, 9780800733117, $13.99.

Fic 303 p.; 22 cm.

In harm’s way / Irene Hannon. (Heroes of Quantico ; 3) Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 2010. LCCN 2009048994.

PAP, 9780800733124, $14.99.

Fic 326 p.; 22 cm.

Adult (HS) Rating: 5

Irene Hannon tries her hand with a new genre: romantic
suspense, in this Heroes of Quantico series, featuring a FBI agent who tries to save the heroine from her dangerous situation.

In Against the Odds, FBI Hostage Rescue Team member Evan Cooper is assigned to protect a diplomat's daughter while her estranged father negotiates a hostage situation abroad. Monica Callahan refuses to be intimidated by a terrorist threat at home until a warning becomes all too real. As things escalate with Monica's abduction, Evan is faced with mounting odds against the rescue of the one woman who penetrated the barriers of his heart.

Special Agent Mark Saunders has a chance encounter with his first love, in An Eye for an Eye. He is used to danger but psychologist Emily Larson is not. A determined killer shoots at them when they accidentally meet in a park, but both have enemies. As they search for answers to the sniper's identity, they wonder if they'll find the sniper before he strikes again. Mark tries to keep Emily safe and hopes to rekindle a relationship with her.

In Harm's Way is filled with suspense and surprises. Nick Bradley has faced his share of kooks before. When Rachel Sutton shows up in his FBI office holding a tattered Raggedy Ann doll, he isn't sure what to think. Initially he dismisses her until he discovers a link between the doll and an abducted baby. Soon, events are set into motion endangering Rachel and uncovering a startling secret.

Against the Odds (RT Reviewers’ Choice Award, Daphne du Maurier Award), and An Eye for an Eye was a finalist for 3 awards (Daphne du Maurier Award, RITA, and Booksellers’ Best). Hannon does an expert job at presenting believable characters, a tightly-written plot with plenty of twist and turns, just enough romance to make things interesting, and subtle faith elements incorporated into the story.

Highly recommended for all high school and public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer


LCCN 2010005617.
PAP, 9781400072002, $13.99.
Fic 335 p.; 21 cm.
Adult Rating: 5

Patricia Hickman’s novel The Pirate Queen is a delightful surprise. The modern story and characters feel superficial at the beginning, but the novel gains depth and beauty as the characters grow and change.

Sophora is the epitome of a southern lady—living a privileged life while choosing to overlook her successful husband’s numerous affairs and her own emptiness. Ironically, on the day Saphora finally plans to leave him, Bender announces that he has cancer.

Swallowing her own needs and ignoring her marriage wounds, Saphora takes the cancer in stride, moving with Bender to their summer beach house. She cares for Bender while hosting rounds of children, grandchildren, and friends who come to visit him. In the small beach-town community, her life intertwines with a grieving young widower, an insightful pastor, and a young boy with HIV. These people change her life in ways she could not have imagined, and they change Bender’s life as well.
While *The Pirate Queen* has a satisfying resolution, it does not end too tidily. Saphora’s strength of character is quite admirable as she tries to support Bender and her own children emotionally, while dealing with her own confused emotions. Her growth and maturity increases in tandem with her spiritual search. Children who deal with HIV is another key topic in the novel, and is dealt with honestly by Saphora, whose strong sense of justice drives her to seek kind and unbiased treatment for these children who are often misunderstood by society.

Sherri Beeler

**Dawn’s prelude / Tracie Peterson. (Song of Alaska ; 1) Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 2009.**
LCCN 2009025046.
HBB, 9780764207228, $19.99.
Fic 335 p.; 21 cm.

**Morning’s refrain / Tracie Peterson. (Song of Alaska ; 2) Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010.**
LCCN 2009040891.
HBB, 9780764207457, $19.99.
Fic 332 p.; 22 cm.

**Twilight’s serenade / Tracie Peterson. (Song of Alaska ; 3) Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010.**
LCCN 2010007459.
HBB, 9780764207785, $19.99.
Fic 334 p.; 24 cm.

**Adult (HS) Rating: 5**

Song of Alaska is a trilogy of books set in Alaska soon after it becomes part of the United States. They are stories which show how God can take a life of abuse and turn it into something good. Floyd Gray is evil; there is no other way to describe him, and has raised his sons to follow in his footsteps. Peterson’s plot line in the first two books exemplifies the adage that evil may prevail for a time, but good (and God) will triumph in the end.

In book one, *Dawn’s Prelude*, Lydia is forced into a marriage with Floyd by her father. When both her father and Floyd die in an accident, Lydia starts over with her aunt in Alaska. She finds she is pregnant with Floyd’s child and her step children, when they discover the child’s existence, want control of him. She also marries again, this time for love.

In book two, *Morning’s Refrain*, Dalton, the son of Lydia and Floyd, wants answers. His half-sister Evie, who has been living with them in Alaska, has to return to Kansas City, the Gray family home, because her estranged husband is deathly ill. Dalton returns with Evie to meet the siblings he has just learned he has.

In book three, *Twilight’s Serenade*, Britta returns to Sitka after six years to her family and the love she left behind. She had left because Yuri, the man she loved, married another, but had used her music as the excuse for leaving. Yuri is gone and his wife is in labor. The wife dies in labor and Britta feels an obligation to care for the baby and Yuri’s older daughter until Yuri can be found. Britta has to choose between her love for music and her growing love for Yuri’s children.

Peterson has written enjoyable stories which include some of Alaska’s history. Her research shows the reader time and place, making the reader feel a part of the story. She accurately portrays the treatment of the Tlingit Indians and the differences of opinion surrounding their education. The characters seem to be real people. Lydia in book one,
Dalton in book two, and Britta in book three all grow in their Christian faith. The stories are believable and pull the reader into the lives of the characters. The romance in the stories will appeal to high school girls as well as adults. The later books in the series include enough of the back story that a reader not reading them in order will not feel lost.

Jane Mouttet


Kim Vogel Sawyer writes a delightful tale set in 1882 Nebraska, chronicling a year in the life of a town and its new schoolmarm, a woman with unusual ideas, according to the farmers in the rural community. She uses new methods to instill a love of learning in her students. She is far ahead of her time and the townspeople revel in repeating and embellishing things they hear about her.

Living with a local widow keeps her properly chaperoned as various bachelors vie for Miss Amsel’s attention, but she will have none of it. She is determined to do her job as a proper lady and do it well. Her heart has other ideas, however, when she meets the unmarried uncle of two boys in her class.

We meet characters one by one with personalities that come to life in Sawyer’s crisp method of writing. As readers are introduced to the various children, either they endear themselves to the reader or cause her to want to see them punished for their antics. One boy causes her no end of grief, but Miss Amsel has promised not to use “the stick” and she will not go back on her promise. The previous teacher had the children scared to death, and she is determined the children will want to come to school, so she stands by her guns and uses other methods to control her class.

The conditions in early American schools are represented in an authentic way, and the life of early farming communities is clearly presented. Hardships through the year are presented realistically. Miss Amsel is not a Christian when the book begins, but she learns to lean on God before the book is over.

A page turner, one that will keep you interested to the end.

Juanita Wier Nobles

PAP, 9780802473134, $14.99.

Adult Rating: 5

Teens need their parents’ love, and parents need to effectively communicate that love to their adolescent children. Dr. Gary Chapman focuses his experience with families toward showing parents how to recognize and show love in The 5 Love Languages of Teenagers. After describing the 5 languages—words of affirmation, touch, acts of service, physical touch, quality time—he guides readers in discovering their child’s primary language along with topics such as teen anger, the need for independence, responsibility, failure, single parents, and blended families. Useful resources in the back include how to hold a family forum, additional reading, and a love language test for teens.

Packed with examples from his family counseling work, Chapman’s book is valuable for its helpful ideas and for positive encouragement to parents in any stage and state of parenting teens. Chapman gives practical ideas throughout, along with demonstrating how the principles can bring positive results. No matter how many tips parents implement, they can’t help but be strengthened in their roles and motivation to love their teens through the tricky teen years. The chapters on anger and coping with a teen’s failure are particularly helpful. Parents, grandparents, teachers, and youth workers will find this book relevant.

Karen Schmidt


PAP, 9780764207020, $13.99.

Adult Rating: *5

The Smart Stepmom springs from the authors’ expertise and knowledge of the needs of Christian stepmoms who have long called for help yet felt ignored. It takes the complex issues of stepmomhood, categorizes them, and responds with spot-on, loving, candid advice. Opening with a wide look at who the stepmom is, this book moves on to core subjects such as giving yourself leeway, understanding his kids, forming a step-parenting team, the ex-wife, having a baby of our own, smart love, and much more. Each chapter ends with pertinent prayer, scripture references, and discussion questions.

The front cover of The Smart Stepmom declares, “Practical Steps to Help You THRIVE!” That is exactly what this book does. As the initiator of Successful Stepfamilies, and with wide experience as a licensed professional counselor, Ron Deal brings empathetic expertise to this volume. Laura Petherbridge, international Christian speaker and author, also has a wide range of experience in working with and for those coping with divorce and stepfamilies. Combining their love for the people they encounter, their experience, and their dedication to the Lord, the authors provide direct, easy-to-understand help based firmly in Scripture, as well as in know-how, and illustrated by the ideas and experiences of those they speak with in their work. The Smart
Almost Christian is a scholarly but accessible work drawing from the 2003-05 National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), to which Dean contributed professionally. Echoing other NSYR contributors, Dean differentiates the Moralistic Therapeutic Deism of American teenagers from the outlooks of major established world religions. Among the highest goods of this “cult of nice” (p. 25) are personal happiness, positive self-image, and the minimization of interpersonal friction.

Dean adds a reflexive dimension to the literature on the demographics of American Christianity and youth ministry. She asserts Jesus Christ as the ultimate model of Christian engagement with the world, interpreting his life, death, and resurrection in terms of “self-giving love” (p. 5). Consistent with her current positions in youth ministry and seminary education, the spiritual and psychological development of young people of faith is emphasized. Significant references to such traditional theological concepts as substitutionary sacrifice and atonement are generally absent.

Five appendices provide tabular data and summary findings from the NSYR as well as a major study of ministry practices. Endnotes provide detailed citations and further discussion. Other text enhancements include tables, lists, and illustrations throughout.

Mature adults, particularly ministry leaders, will find this book an informative and challenging aid to exploring American religious perspectives. Young adults may be stimulated to deeper reflection upon their cultural context and relation to the Christian faith.

Bradley A. Poteat


HBB, 9780195314847, $24.95.
277.3/030835 x, 254 p. : 25 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 4, with caution

Young Americans are favorably disposed toward religion but remain uncommitted and remarkably inarticulate concerning spirituality. In Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church, United Methodist pastor and Princeton seminary professor Kenda Creasy Dean argues that American churches are largely to blame for this ironic apathy. Criticizing “do-good, feel-good spirituality” (p. 4), she explores the dynamics of spiritual formation and the cultivation of consequential Christian faith among young people.


PAP, 9781601421623, $13.99.
306.874/3 220 p. ; 21 cm.
Adult Rating: 5

The mother-daughter bond is both resilient and tenuous at the same time. The companionship and relationship once shared when daughters are young can...
often drastically change once they become adults. There can be misunderstandings, frustrations, alienations, and discord. Achieving peace, achieving that harmonious connection is what mother and daughter team Cheri Fuller and Ali Plum explore in their insightful book *Mother-Daughter Duet*. More than a self-help resource, this is women’s group in book form. Valuable input on both sides of this special relationship provides a balance to each side of the perspective, so that mothers and daughters can come to understand one another deeper and better than before.

Mothers and daughters have different needs as the relationship changes in scope over the years. Adult daughters have complicated needs as they move from child to teen to adult, becoming wives and mothers themselves. And sometimes that metamorphosis is not smoothly achieved. Veteran author Cheri Fuller and her daughter Ali Plum provide a transparent look into their own less than perfect relationship and weave in anecdotes of other women who have both triumphed or failed to achieve that mother-daughter harmony.

This book helps smooth over the frictions and frustrations that often occur. Its thirteen chapters range from “Letting Go” to “Connecting and Bonding” to the most important “The Power of Forgiveness.” Trading off points-of-view helps readers to understand the unique perspectives of a mother and that of daughter.

Real-life advice woven in with biblical application makes this an approachable book, one to consider for book studies and gifts.

*Pam Webb*

**Kid’s travel guide to the 10 commandments / by Carol Mader. Loveland, Colo.: Group Pub., 2001. LCCN 51385.**

PAP, 9780764422249, $19.99.

268/.432  120 p. : ill. ; 28 cm.

Adult (HS) Rating: 4

The lessons in the *Kids’ Travel Guide to the Commandments* are varied with a large amount of different activities to choose from for each commandment. In general the ideas are clever and they are always Scripturally based with Bible verses abounding in each lesson. Also included are many handouts, worksheets and other resources that can be copied. The lessons are well organized and chapters are compared one with the other so that teachers know what to expect each week.

It will be a fun journey for the students as they learn about right and wrong in this format but more than fun, they will have learned about God’s laws. Teachers also should draw closer to the Lord in the process as each week they are provided with a “departure prayer” and reminded that preparing for the lessons without prayer will not produce spiritual fruit in the children.

The examples for the lesson on adultery seems to be a stretch but obviously this is a difficult concept to illustrate for young children. (Each week teachers are reminded that the lessons are for a varied age group.)

*Ceil Carey*

**Think: the life of the mind and the love of God / John Piper. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2010. LCCN 2009051489.**

HBB, 9781433520716, $19.99.

230.01  222 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult HS Rating: 5

In *Think: The Life of the Mind and the Love of God*, John Piper
Piper ends with advice on thinking both for those called and gifted to do serious thinking for the church and those not so inclined. He urges everyone to use his God-given gift of thinking, but for those whose main service will be elsewhere he urges humility and prayer: do not dismiss or mock but instead pray for those who write and study on behalf of God’s people. For those who write and study he urges humility and love: do your work in humility for the good of Christ’s body.

Mark L. Ward, Jr.

Shaking Ground: Unshakable Faith is a unique compilation of stories from various different mission groups and volunteers during and shortly after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti. Two of the authors, Richard Snook and Harold Martin, are both involved with Missionary Flights International, but many different mission organizations are represented. The end of the book includes a list of twenty-seven different organizations which contributed to the book.

One chapter is devoted to the partnership that developed between Missionary Flights International, which flew between Florida and Haiti, and Mission Aviation Fellowship, which flew within the country of Haiti. The authors also highlight the donations of aircraft and crews by Hendrick Motorsports and Joe Gibbs Racing and how crucial these partnerships were to the relief effort. They also discuss the Army Reserve and many other volunteers who pitched in.

There are photos on most pages which help to bring to life this incredible situation and the teamwork involved. A couple of pictures early in the book show some of the injuries and blood, but nothing overly graphic.

This book is an amazing testament to the teamwork and unity between missionaries of different organizations, secular

PAP, 9780310291909, $14.99.

261 236 p.; 21 cm.

Adult Rating: 3

Mike Tatlock’s Faith in Real Life is a cross between his memoir of community-related experiences and an explanation of his church’s framework for building community. Tatlock recounts his disappointments and experiments in several churches where he was a staff member. Then he explains his current church’s labels for the stages of community. The park is the initial point of contact between the churched and unchurched. The coffee shop offers opportunities for small groups of people to connect within the church. The living room is where friendships deepen among believers; they open up to each other, support each other in trials, and learn to serve together.

Though the publisher has classified it as Christian living, this book fits better in the leadership category because Tatlock’s advice and calls for action are aimed mostly toward pastors or staff leaders. So if you’re a lay member looking for a resource to move your church toward authentic relationships, you’ll have to work harder to apply the concepts in this book.

Tatlock shares many interesting stories but perhaps places too much importance on them. As proof for his claims, he often turns to his own experiences or observations about culture; Scripture takes a back seat instead of being the primary source of instruction. For instance, Tatlock claims the church must stress that a relationship with Christ is not just about heaven but about participating in God’s kingdom now. He supports his claim by contrasting modernism and postmodernism and thereby showing what today’s postmoderns need to hear. The New Testament is full of references to the future/present aspects of salvation, yet Tatlock discusses none of these. The characteristics of American culture, here and elsewhere, receive more emphasis than what God has already said about His plans for the Church and discipleship.

Rachelle Dawson

PAP, 9781933170312, $35.025.3/16 xi, 287 p.; 27 cm.

PROF Rating: 4

*Easy MARC* explains the MARC fields and subfields most commonly used when cataloging materials for school or small public libraries. The following information is covered: tag number and name, whether or not the tag is repeatable or required, how the tag may relate to another one, if the tag is under authority control, the value and meanings of the tag indicators, and any subfield codes with their meanings. *Piepenburg* provides examples, tells where to locate information on the item to be cataloged, gives practical hints about using particular tags and subfields, and explains subfields in detail.

Scott Piepenburg assumes his readers have a working knowledge of MARC records even though small libraries (his target readers) often purchase their MARC records or rely on their library cataloging software to create them. Nevertheless, for those librarians who modify or create their own MARC records, this is a clear and helpful volume packed with practical advice. Includes sample cataloging records and index. See the free Library of Congress online resource *Understanding MARC Bibliographic: Machine-Readable Cataloging* (http://www.loc.gov/marc/umb/) as a supplement or alternative to this book.

Editor’s note: As a professional librarian who learned MARC by copying and doing (training long ago!), I find this book a wonderful quick reference when I am supplementing records I have downloaded from other libraries. Carol rates it 3, I rate it 5, so we’ll go with a 4. nlh)

*Carol Satta*


HBB, 9780824210663, $120. B or 809/.8928203 xiii, 803 p.: ill. ; 26 cm.

PROF (MS/HS) Rating: 5

Books, especially books for juvenile readers, influence lives, even long past the suggested reading age. There is something about books from our childhood and adolescence that remain with us, often prompting us to introduce the books to our own children when the times comes. Yet, who are the people who pen these tales and stories? What is their story? Since 1934 the *Junior Book of Authors and Illustrators* series has provided the means of answering these questions, and the tenth edition marks its seventy-fifth year in providing information about the authors and illustrators of children’s literature. While much of the background information can be found on various websites, it is doubtful such an impressive compilation of past and present authors would be found in one place. An important resource for students and librarians alike.

The writers and artists found within this reference book represent a diverse rainbow of cultural and societal influence. As explained in the preface, names are complied and then voted on by those in the literature field and those selected are asked to contribute an autobiographical sketch.
Combined with a more detailed essay, along with a thorough list of the author's works, a significant author entry is created. This is a blend of former, present, and upcoming authors form the symphony of literary talent. The ancillary material includes an awards and honors list, which helps the reader understand the various accolades, a geographical index, which is helpful in locating authors and illustrators for visitations, and selected black and white book covers for each author and/or illustrator. Another notable inclusion is the index of past spotlights. If a particular author or illustrator is needed this page gives the corresponding reference to previous issues.

Pam Webb
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