Christian Library Journal

Secret Keeper Girl Series

Just Call Me Kate

by Dannah Gresh and Janet Mylin
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*.
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LCCN</td>
<td>Library of Congress Cataloging Number</td>
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<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Canadian Library Cataloging Number</td>
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<tr>
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<td>International Standard</td>
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<td>LGB</td>
<td>Loose-leaf binding</td>
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<td>Hardbound book</td>
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<tr>
<td>LIB</td>
<td>Library edition</td>
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<tr>
<td>PBB</td>
<td>Paper board book</td>
</tr>
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<td>Spiral bound book</td>
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PAP, 9780310712558, $3.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 21 cm.
PRI PS Rating: 4
The week before Christmas is so exciting for Brother and Sister Bear—there is so much to do! Of course, there is the Christmas Eve play; they have an important role. They are going to be the camel for the three wise bears. With a little adjustment, Brother can see out of the face and Sister will not trip again. Grizzly Gramps and Gran have given Brother and Sister money to spend on Christmas gifts this year, but all they can think of is themselves. Sister wants a new Bearbie doll and Brother wants a special rubber band-powered model airplane. The gifts they buy leave extra money just in case they find something else they want. Excitement builds for the Christmas play and the Bear siblings are about to learn a very important lesson about the joy of giving.

As is typical for the Berenstain books, the illustrations are colorful and the bears are signature for all the stories. This story focuses on Christmas and the joy of giving. Generosity is a trait most parents want their children to emulate. The last page of the book includes activities to encourage discussion between parent and child and gift giving. This page is an opportunity for parents to establish discussions on traditions and faith, if not already established.

Debby Willett

HBB, 9781400074488, $10.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 cm.
PRI Rating: 5
Lisa Bergren has written a beautiful story for young children in God Gave Us the World. The full-page artwork by Laura Bryant is colorful and appealing.

Mama Bear, who lives at the North Pole, is taking her cubs on a trip to see a special exhibit—Bears Around the World. As she explains to her cubs the different kinds of bears, the artwork depicts the landscape where each kind lives. She impresses upon her little ones the vastness of the world, the uniqueness of each kind of bear, and their similarities and differences. Of course, the cubs are thrilled to learn this, because all they know is the part of the world in which they live. Since they are polar bears, they don’t know about panda bears in China, sloth bears in India, or grizzly bears in America.

Mama Bear explains that while their family lives in the cold, snowy North, some bears live in the rain forest, and others live in the desert. Every bear has a special place in God’s world, a place where they are suited to live.

The bear’s story is easily relatable to every child. Mama Bear shows her cubs that God gave us the world and everything in it, and God chose the place where each person should live. She impresses on them a need to protect their environment, just as children should do.

This delightful book will be read again and again as children drink in the beauty of
the artwork and come to realize that God made the world for them, too.

Juanita Wier Nobles


HBB, 9780618618651, $16.00
E 32 p. : col. ill. ; 26 cm.
PRI Rating: 3

This beautifully illustrated book is about a storm on a Midwestern farm on a hot day in summer. The little girl of the family, whose name we never learn, tells it in the first-person.

Dad is plowing the field with his tractor, Mom and the children are trying to cool off at the pond, when the wind indicates that trouble is in store. Mom quickly gathers up her two children and calls the dog. But before they can get to shelter, a dark cloud appears and the threat of bad weather causes the whole family to begin gathering everything, and trying to get to shelter as quickly as possible.

Before they all get inside, large drops of rain begin to fall. Sound-effect words on every page emphasize the rain, which quickly turns to hail, ping-pinging on the roof.

When they realize that Maizey, their favorite chicken, is caught in the storm, Dad runs to rescue her. Then they all go inside—Mom, Dad, Tom, little sister, the dog Scooter, and the hen Maizey. They quickly try to mop up the water, close the windows, and stay dry, as they look out the windows at the terrible storm. Lightning and thunder make the house shake, and they confirm that a thunder-boomer has arrived.

As the children look out the window, the sound-effect words are all over the page, emphasizing the intensity of the storm. The little sister, who is narrating, tries to soothe the dog, telling him, “That’s just the thunder-boomer showing off.”

The storm is over, they all go outside to see the damage, and Maizey, the hen scampers off. She ruffles her feathers, pecks, and seems to be searching for something. When she finally settles down, the little sister looks under her wing, and finds a tiny, soaked and scared kitten. The sound effect words continue, but now they are the sounds of a peaceful kitten.

Children will especially like this book because of the sound-effect words and the repetition.

Juanita Wier Nobles


PAP, 9780547144221, $5.95
E 46 p. : col. ill. ; 22 cm.
PS Rating: 3

George and Martha: One Fine Day offers three stories about author and illustrator James Marshall’s beloved hippo characters who are best friends. In “The Tightrope” George inadvertently shakes Martha’s confidence as she walks a tightrope and then he must think quickly to offer words of encouragement. “The Diary” finds George trying to read what Martha writes in her diary. Even when he politely asks permission, Martha insists on her privacy. The two friends then try to gross each other out at the lunch table in “The Icky Story” and in the process conclude that it is better to be considerate.

The easy format of these stories and the little lessons
contained in them may appeal to parents reading aloud to preschoolers but the stories seem much too simplistic (each is no more than a few paragraphs) to hold the interest of early readers. Originally published in 1976 and suggested for ages 4-8 (publisher’s web site), the three stories have a sweet sentiment but do not really relate to each other, nor, for that matter, to the title. Children already fond of George and Martha may delight in the tales; others may, as I did, wish the plots were more developed and the endings less abrupt. Nevertheless, readers of all ages can have fun with James Marshall’s humorous drawings, which feature the hippo duo in some rather silly situations. The pen and ink sketches contain many adorable details and are smartly highlighted, as though neatly colored with a brand-new set of markers.

Nina Ditmar

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HBB, 9780060854850, $16.99

E 32 p.: col. ill.; 23 cm.

PRI Rating: *5

What book character started more than 50 years ago and is still as appreciated today as it was then? Little Bear, of course! Little Bear was Harper’s very first I Can Read Book. Now, more than two hundred titles and thousands of happy children later, Little Bear appears in a brand new I Can Read Book, Little Bear and the Marco Polo. Little Bear was Harper’s very first I Can Read Book. Now, more than two hundred titles and thousands of happy children later, Little Bear appears in a brand new I Can Read Book, Little Bear and the Marco Polo. Little Bear, his Ladybug, and Grandpa rummage through the attic and find some real treasures which set them on an adventure combining seafaring, zoology, and some marvelous memories.

Else Holmelund Minarik has lost none of her charm over the years. A first grade teacher and mother, Minarik aimed (and still aims) to provide interesting, imagination starting, teaching books for all her children. Packed into these few delightful, enjoyable pages are lessons on character development, geography, a bit of history, and just right beginning reader vocabulary. Noted for her artistry portraying animals on ceramics and with watercolors, Dorothy Doubleday’s winsome illustrations admirably illuminate Little Bear and the Marco Polo. With print a perfect size for emerging readers, an interesting story which lends itself to word definition, and pleasing illustrations, Little Bear and the Marco Polo is a delight for family reading, a valuable addition to the school and classroom library, and a treasure to own.

Donna Eggett


HBB, 9781590787052, $16.95

E 39 p.: ill.; 22 cm.

PRI INT Rating: 4

In Slowpoke, author Emily Smith Pearce imparts the delightfully simple, yet wisdom-filled, tale of Fiona, a youngster who enjoys life in the slow lane. While her fast-moving, multi-tasking family spins through life all around her, Fiona eats ice cream so slowly it melts, leisurely soaks in the tub until her toes are wrinkled, and takes so long
feeding the dog that the hungry creature falls asleep.

After poking through breakfast one day, Fiona misses the school bus, prompting her mother to enroll her in Speed School. Fiona learns her lessons well and soon becomes as good a multi-tasker as anyone else in her family. So good, in fact, that her head starts spinning. And it gets stuck. Backward!

The trauma causes Fiona to revert to her slow-poking ways, and she starts a sort of rehab program for her family called Slow School. Before long, Fiona has her parents and brother taking their time, too, and the entire family learns to appreciate the beauty of pokiness together.

“Slow doesn’t stink,” says her brother, “if you’re not waiting for the bathroom.”

Slowpoke is a small book, only 40 pages of elementary-level chunks of text, but the lessons it holds for kids and adults alike are big ones. Fiona shows us that life isn’t always about doing and going and accomplishing. It’s sometimes simply about slowing down and taking time to enjoy the ride.

June Mathews

Aggie the brave / Lori Ries ; illustrated by Frank W. Dormer. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2010. LCCN 2009026646.

LIB, 9781570916359, $12.95
E 48 p.: col. ill. ; 23 cm.
PRI Rating: 5

Aggie the Brave, written by Lori Ries and illustrated by Frank W. Dormer, is a book for beginning readers. These two have collaborated before in this series for children about a dog and her owner, Ben. This easy reader contains three chapters about a visit to the vet for the dog, Aggie, to be spayed and vaccinated.

The book begins with Ben telling Aggie to be brave as his mother drives to the appointment with the vet. However, when Ben learns that Aggie will have to stay overnight in the animal hospital, he is the one who has to be brave because he does not wish to be separated from his beloved pet. The next day, Ben waits anxiously for Aggie’s release. When he takes her home, she has a big collar, which almost looks like a lampshade, on her neck.

Ben’s empathy for Aggie with her lampshade protector spurs his creativity. He gets out his markers and turns Aggie into a ferocious lion, coloring the lampshade collar to make Aggie look like she has a brown mane. After the stitches are removed and the protector is gone, Aggie is again his active playmate.

Children can easily relate to the adventures shared by Aggie and Ben. The sentences are short and the illustrations are colorful and consistent. Beginning readers will pick this up more than once to enjoy the story because of its easy readability and its colorful appeal.

Juanita Wier Nobles
PAP, 9781590526798, $9.99
Fic 167 p.: map; 21 cm.
INT MS (HS) Rating: 4

PAP, 9781590526804, $9.99
Fic 143 p.: ill., map; 21 cm.

PAP, 9781590526811, $9.99
Fic 144 p.: ill., map; 21 cm.
INT MS (HS) Rating: 4

PAP, 9781590527504, $9.99
Fic 152 p.: ill., map, music; 21 cm.

PAP, 9781590527498, $9.99
Fic 167 p.: map; 21 cm.

PAP, 9781590526828, $9.99
Fic 168 p.: ill., map, music; 21 cm.
INT MS (HS) Rating: 4

Chuck Black’s The Kingdom Series is a biblical allegory in a medieval-like setting. In the six books of this series, Black offers, in a very condensed time frame, a panoramic view of biblical history from a fresh perspective as he adapts key people and events from Genesis to Revelation to his world of Arrethrrae.

Kingdom's Dawn. Leinad is armed with a sword and sent to warn the people of Mankin to flee to higher ground to avoid the imminent deadly Vactor Deluge, but to no avail. Only his companion Tess believes him. After their escape from the vactors, they travel south and are sold as slaves to Lord Fairos.

Kingdom's Hope. Bound and left to die from vicious animals, Leinad is rescued by the King, who knights him and sends him back to Fairos to deliver his slaves from bondage. Years after their deliverance, the people disobey the King's Code, and are taken captive but later released. Sir Leinad receives a promise of One to come.

Kingdom's Edge. Bearing the sword of promise, a stranger claims to be the Son of the King, but Kifus accuses Him of being an imposter. The Prince chooses and trains Cedric and others as knights prepared to fight against the Dark Knight and his Shadow Warriors. Then the Prince surrenders to Kifus for death by hanging. But before He is buried, He returns from death and sends His Knights abroad to tell others of the King’s love.

Kingdom's Call. Even after the death of the stranger, His Followers continue to spread the word that the Prince is alive and offers hope to all. Sir Gavin, a skilled swordsman committed to the King and the Code, zealously pursues the Followers of the Prince to distant cities to stamp out their message. When wounded by Shadow Warriors, the Prince rescues him.

Kingdom's Quest. With a new name, Sir Gavinaugh begins
his new mission to share the knowledge of the Prince throughout the world. In his travels he rescues an Outdweller from slavery and later is beaten almost to death, but lives. Imprisoned by Kifus, he is sent bound to Namor.

*Kingdom's Reign.* Sir Cedric, with others, boards ship for the Kingdom across the Great Sea to prepare for battle against the Dark Knight and his Shadow Warriors. During several years of peace, Sir Cedric serves the Prince on Arrethrae. When the Dark Knight and his Shadow Warriors escape, they defy the Prince and His forces in a final showdown.

Although the allegorical intent in this series is plain, Black's unique characters live and grow as they face many challenges in his imaginary setting—even when they occasionally shift from representing one biblical character to another. The many detailed sword fights in each book emphasize the necessity of command of God's Word in confronting challenges. Faithful commitment to the King and His Son is the central theme. Qualities such as integrity, compassion, mercy, and respect for life demonstrate that faithfulness. Each book features a map at the beginning, and ends with a chapter-by-chapter list of Discussion Questions, suggested Answers to Discussion Questions with scriptural references, an original song or tune unique to that book, and an Author's Commentary. While not great literature, this series has value in church, Christian school, or home libraries for individual or group reading.

*Donna W. Bowling*

**Daniel at the Siege of Boston, 1776 / Laurie Calkhoven. (Boys of wartime) New York: Dutton Children's Books, 2010. LCCN 2009012125.**

HBB, 9780525421443, $16.99

Fic x, 195 p. : maps ; 22 cm.

INT Rating: 5

*Daniel at the Siege of Boston 1776* is the story of Daniel Prescott, a 12-year old boy living with his parents and little sister in Boston at the onset of the Revolutionary War. The Prescotts are Patriots who run a tavern frequented by Redcoats and Loyalists, which affords them the opportunity to act as spies for the Sons of Liberty. With the heart and fear of a boy but the desire to act like a man, young Daniel navigates a series of dangers and challenges throughout the eleven months following the Boston Tea Party.

Though Daniel is a fictional character, the historical setting and some of the other main characters are factual and well researched by author Laurie Calkhoven in this "Boys of Wartime" book. The events are told from Daniel’s point of view in the language of the time, making the story realistic and engaging. The author does a remarkable job portraying the living conditions in Boston during the siege: the lack of supplies and loss of freedoms, the splitting of loyalties, the risks, and the isolation.

Recommended for ages 8 and up (back cover), the story illustrates the value of liberty and the sadness and brutality of the war. Daniel sees a soldier violently killed and later is forced to watch the hanging of a traitor. Young readers will be caught up in the story and not even realize they are learning American history. Just enough

HBB, 9780525420859, $16.99
Fic 180 p.; 20 cm.
INT PRI Rating: 4

In Gail Donovan’s In Memory of Gorfman T. Frog, fifth grader Joshua Tree Hewitt (named for a national park) finds a 5-legged frog in the pond behind his home. He is an instant celebrity at school... for a little while. As he tries to get one adult after another to pay attention to the plight of “Gorfman T. Frog” (named after school principal and nemesis Mrs. Gorman), his determined ways keep landing him in trouble. When Gorfman dies Josh becomes even more resolute to find answers. He eventually captures the support and help of his loving grandparents and their biologist friend.

This book is recommended for 9-11 year olds (publisher's website). Young readers will sympathize with Joshua, misunderstood by the adults around him, and finding himself in hot water no matter how hard he tries to do the right thing. Gail Donovan writes with humor and sensitivity, and the full-page sketches by Janet Pedersen give extra personality to the characters. Most of the adults are far less endearing and realistic, aloof to the point of hyperbole, though they ultimately (and predictably) come around. It is explained that Josh's parents were divorced when he was very young, his father then died, and his mother remarried, giving him a third set of grandparents and a half-sister. Josh periodically wonders if he gets his “motormouth” from his biological dad and he thinks more about heredity when confronted with Gorfman’s extra leg, but this complicated side-plot is not really necessary to the main story and may be a bit too murky for the intended audience. There is ample use of challenging vocabulary and the author subtly weaves in lots of interesting factual information about ecology and amphibians.

Nina Ditmar

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PAP, 9780802487032, $7.99
Fic 96 p.; ill.; 19 cm.
INT Rating:*5

Kaitlin Harding finally figures out a way to get Zachary Donaldson to notice her in Just Call Me Kate, part of the Secret Keeper Girls series. She writes his name, in pencil, on the school’s bathroom wall. When the principal notices she carries a folder with Zachary’s name written all over it, Kaitlin, who prefers to be called Kate, faces detention. In detention, Kate finds friends with whom she forms a group called “The Secret Keeper Girls.” The teacher monitoring detention wisely gives Kate a journal and asks some
questions that lead Kate to a more intentional kind of life. Her new friends also help her along the way.

Dannah Gresh and Janet Mylin get to the root of boy craziness without being preachy. Written in first person, Just Call Me Kate, opens a window into the mind and life of a 12-year-old girl. Kaitlin’s character is rounded out as she transitions from being boy crazy to a girl focused on her goals and her friends. From her parents, who love God and love each other, to her brother, who defends her when a mean girl bullies her, to a wise teacher, to good friends, Kaitlin has a support system that all girls need. The story moves quickly, with good dialogue, short sentences, and humor sprinkled throughout.

In the end of the book is a Bible verse and some pointed questions that help apply the story on a deeper level. In the midst of a fun read, several important lessons are touched on, like the importance of being content with one's age, the importance of knowing and working towards one's goals, and the importance of friends who will help keep accountability. “Some things in life are kind of heavy. That’s why we need to have friends like the Secret Keeper Girl Club to help us carry the weight sometimes.” p.84

Kristina Wolcott

HBB, 9780921100966, $29.95
221.9/505 346 p. : ill. ; 25 cm.


HBB, 9780921100973, $29.95
225.09/505 320 p. : ill. ; 25 cm.

INT MS Rating: 3

The beautifully told stories in Story Bible for Older Children are a reprint from a much older time.

In both of these books, DeVries uses language that children can understand to tell stories from the Bible. In addition to familiar Bible stories, DeVries tells of the kings of Israel and Judah, some of whom did evil things. DeVries keeps to the theme of the scriptures in the Old Testament book—to point to the coming of the Messiah. This fact is mentioned many times throughout, and DeVries shows how the Bible stories depict the fact of God's redemption for mankind.

In the New Testament book, DeVries focuses on Jesus, his coming, his boyhood, his miracles and parables, the calling of the disciples, his teachings, his death and his resurrection. DeVries goes on to include the spread of the gospel by Paul and the disciples. Paul's missionary journeys are described, along with maps, and mention of those who went with him. DeVries tells of the deaths of the apostles and Paul. The last chapter is a paraphrase of the faith chapter, Hebrews 11, and is a tribute to all those who suffered as heroes of the faith.

Drawings by Cornelis Jetses are on many of the pages; sometime the picture is small and sometimes it is as large as half a page or more. The drawings seem to be old classics, not ones that children can relate to with ease. They are line drawings in black and white. Some are quite stunning, others need more thought to be understood.

The stories are fairly long. Even though they are well-told and factual, I don’t think they will hold a child’s interest to the end. The Old Testament book contains 231 stories, and the New Testament book contains 211 stories. It seems a little overwhelming for a child.

These books would be a wonderful collection to a family library and would be a great asset as reference books. Almost every story in the Bible is included, and one can readily find a story by using the index.

Juanita Wier Nobles


HBB, 9780310716624, $15.99
242/.62 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 x 29 cm.

PS (PRI) Rating: 4

Springtime is the right time to rejoice in God’s creation. and Kathy-jo Wargin and Kim Gatto do so in their collaborative effort entitled K Is for Kite. This picture book resonates with all the varied
children's nonfiction

Elements found in spring, and the portrayed child shows the variety through cheery poetic verse and accompanying illustrations. Young readers can easily appreciate the exuberance felt when spring arrives. From April’s showers to playing marbles to feeling spring’s “zing,” this seasonal alphabet glorifies God’s blessings. Adults and children will enjoy the reminder of how much spring is appreciated.

Wargin’s prose holds throughout the book, with nary an awkward rhyme or forced play upon the theme of spring alphabet. There is a delightful mix of expected and unexpected spring wonders to appreciate through the book. The illustrations are reminiscent of child art and reflect the merry energy that spring can produce. Those looking to introduce or reinforce God’s miraculous season changes will welcome K is for Kite as a reading choice.

Pam Webb


LCCN .
HBB, 9780890515952, $16.99
306 64 p.: col. ill., maps, charts; 26 cm.
INT (MS) Rating: 3

The world seems friendlier and more fascinating after reading Passport to the World, Your A to Z Guided Language Tour. Craig Froman introduces 26 languages and the people and places associated with them in a colorful book full of photographs and maps. Familiar languages—German, Japanese, Spanish and Hebrew—are presented along with Bengali (Bangladesh), Oriya (India), Xhosa (South Africa) and Cherokee (USA). A full color world map in front pinpoints every language’s location and an intro page launches the Christian context by describing the Tower of Babel as all languages’ starting point. A mock passport inside the front cover allows readers to apply stickers onto each country’s “visa” area.

Studying geography and world cultures becomes a pleasure, even for early readers who can learn from the plentiful photography in Passport to the World. Short text sections, Did You Know, bulleted facts, and maps with charts make the learning fun and simple. Each language presents four phrases such as ‘hello’ and ‘thank you’ in phonetic spelling so students can try pronouncing them. Common foods, currency, handcrafts, and native dress are also pictured. Homeschool families and private schools will enjoy supplementing their social studies with this book. Families planning overseas travel can use it, as well as those wanting more information about countries they pray for.

Karen Schmidt

PAP, 9780890515914, $12.99
550 88 p.: col. ill., maps, diagrams, charts; 22 x 28 cm.
INT Rating: 4

Who wouldn’t like studying science if it was as well explained and experiential as Tom DeRosa and Carolyn Reeves make it in The Earth: Its Structures & Its Changes? Basic upper elementary level geology is covered through 20 investigations that
incorporate the scientific method. Students will read, draw, map, and experiment with household items to comprehend mountains, earthquakes, continents, rocks and minerals, caves, volcanoes and dirt. Each investigation encompasses an introduction that prompts student thinking and questions, a guided procedure or experiment, the science supporting the topic, activities for deeper learning, and basic comprehension questions. An introductory page helping homeschool parents get the most from the study and a one-page glossary bookend the paper-covered volume.

Homeschool families can incorporate this book into science studies for formal science or just for fun learning. Older students might choose to use online or supplemental texts for deeper study. The investigations use easily found or purchased items. Photos and diagrams are a strong element in the text; graphically the book is appealing for even the most science-shy student. Parents will enjoy working with kids as well as reading the brief introductions to each investigation, and will appreciate the safety guidelines. A clear creationist view underlies the book; a few “Pause and Think” sidebars illuminate Scripture or refer to biblically sound Internet sites. Creative children’s workers might also appreciate the investigative ideas as object lessons.

Karen Schmidt


HBB, 9781590787571, $18.95 597.95/968 40 p. : col. ill., col. map, photos. ; 22 x 27 cm.

INT Rating: 4

Mysteries of the Komodo Dragon explores the truth about these living dragons and explains fables that could have developed from the earliest sightings of the beasts. Sailors in ancient times may have stumbled across their remote Indonesian habitat, giving rise to later map notations that proclaimed, “Here there be dragons.”

It is possible that Chinese sailors collected dragon skins on their voyages giving rise to fanciful tales of imaginary giant reptiles that inhabit their mythology. Rumors proclaimed the beasts were twenty feet long.

A specimen collected in 1910 helped a museum director in Java identify the animal as a monitor lizard. This initiated a fascination with the Komodo dragon that has spurred scientists to study the habits and habitat of this rare creature. Not only is their size remarkable, but their hunting, feeding and reproduction are of intense interest.

Author Marty Crump presents a volume with striking glossy photographs from several sources on each of the twenty-nine pages of the primary text. The captions offer data that expands the narrative. The entire book is designed for visual engagement, and scientific terms are explained with clarity.

The final ten pages provide additional information about Indonesia, the life cycle of the Komodo dragon, its conservation status, and survival program. A complete bibliography, glossary, further reading list, and helpful websites complete the book.

The surprising facts about this animal’s capacity for food consumption, the deadly bacteria contained in their
saliva and teeth, along with their ability to hatch unfertilized eggs is sure to pique the curiosity of even the most reluctant reader. Not only does the student gain complete instruction about the Komodo dragon, but also about the scientists and scientific method. The book may even encourage a budding scholar toward a career in herpetology or zoology.

Deborah H. Rabern


HBB, 9780545046510, $16.99
611 1 v. (unpaged) (some folded) : col. ill. ; 29 cm.
INT (PRI MS) Rating: 5

Caldecott Honor award-winning author/illustrator, Steve Jenkins rises to the top of primary non-fiction with Bones: Skeletons and How They Work. Jenkins skillfully utilizes carefully textured collage artwork to make comparisons, underscoring the skeletal similarities between humans and animals in structural design and function. Beginning with large and small bones, human and animal, the author depicts each bone to a precise scale (1/5 actual size, actual size, etc.). Each page depicts a separate comparison between humans and assorted animals beginning with the hand, then foot, and moving to major support areas including rib cages, backbones and the skull. Adding impact and interest, three and four page fold-out spreads emphasize length and detail.

Children learn how bones are a living, growing part of an animal; the skeleton of each animal is marvelously designed to fit perfectly together, adapted to the way each individual animal lives. The book concludes with more detailed text, cutaways and sidebars discussing bone composition, how bones heal, exoskeletons, fossils and other interesting trivia.

One statement from the book: “The human coccyx, or tailbone (above), is left over from a time when our ancestors had tails.” It is the only reference to evolution.

Published in a picture book size, the book features bold, white text printed against a primary color background, with the bones as focal point of each page. An excellent resource to support the casual or academic study of anatomy, the book’s comparisons of animals and humans are fascinating; the similarities in design clearly demonstrate God’s perfect design to support and protect the body.

Kristine Wildner


HBB, 9780525420767, $17.99
811.008/09282 28 p.: col. ill.; 28 cm.
PRI (PS) Rating: 5

Poet Bobbi Katz has assembled a collection of 44 short poems for children, aptly called More Pocket Poems, as they follow her earlier book Pocket Poems. This anthology travels through the seasons, with poems from such notable writers as Ogden Nash and Emily Dickinson featured alongside the work of contemporary poets, including the author. The mix contains several poems with Spanish phrases, a Navajo chant, several anonymous works, a jump rope jingle, and several poems about ghosts, skeletons, and witches.
With the four seasons as a framework, these catchy poems have relevance to children's lives: a spring rain, summer fireworks, school lunches, winter sledding. They are invitingly presented, with colorful watercolor illustrations by Deborah Zemke that capture the spirit of each scene. The poems are simple but not babyish, making them fun to read aloud to pre-schoolers and early readers. Older children will appreciate the cleverness (August Ice Cream Cone Poem: “Lick quick”). An endnote from Bobbi Katz introduces the reader to “Poem in Your Pocket Day”, a national event of the Academy of American Poets. As the title suggests, More Pocket Poems would be ideal for this occasion, the purpose of which is to promote poetry by encouraging children to carry a poem in their pocket and share it. These are certainly poems that parents will enjoy sharing with their children, and children will giggle over sharing with each other.

Nina Ditmar


HBB, 9780060823382, $16.99
811/.60809282 32 p.: col. ill.; 29 cm.
PRI Rating: 5

School can be a wondrous, wild, wacky place. From show-and-tell, to school lunches, to music class, these poems plentifully showcase a subject to which children can readily relate.

There's No Place Like School offers a delightful assortment of poetic goodies. A variety of styles, forms, and subjects keep the book fresh with every poem. A solid dose of silliness adds humor and fun. Along the lines of Shel Silverstein, these clever verses will keep kids laughing as they recognize snapshots from their academic lives.

The one fly-in-the-ointment is the first poem, “Going to School,” a strange selection about a child who is being chased out the door by bears as he hurries to school. Readers will scratch their heads at this one. Fortunately, the other poems deal with more common childhood experiences: riding the school bus, fears of math, the clock ticking toward recess, squirting drinking fountains, class pets, etc.

Bold, bright watercolors emphasize the expressive, comical characters. The book is friendly and approachable; children will easily reach for this book as a favorite. A great way to interest kids in poetry!

Jaclyn S. Miller


HBB, 9780525478751, $17.99
821 40 p.: col. ill.; 30 cm.
PRI (PS) Rating: 5

Rhymes Round the World includes poetry from Mother Goose to William Shakespeare. It is a unique collection of 40 short poems that originate from all corners of the globe. Anonymous, traditional nursery rhymes from various cultures are featured alongside the work of literary icons. Some are newer works including one from author-illustrator Kay Chorao. A poem about “Ghoulies and Ghosties” has children in costume (ghost, witch, and devil) on Halloween. There
are sundry cheerful topics, accompanied by bright pictures of playful animals and joyful children who frolic through the pages, ultimately snuggling together at “Day’s End.”

This is a wonderful introduction to poetry for preschoolers but it is also so much more. The poems are short and lyrical and they are so beautifully presented that each page could easily stand alone as framed artwork. Many of the drawings cleverly encompass two poems, making it appear, for example, as though a boy and girl eating popsicles on their front stoop in America and a father playing with his son in Africa are in the same scene. Kay Chorao’s pictures are rich with cultural detail sure to interest and educate young readers. A boy in India rides an elephant, a child in Israel plays with a dreidel, and Mexican children break open a piñata. Even more enchanting, though, is the way the children of such diverse nationalities seem to interact on the pages and share the familiar experiences of being tickled, making shadow puppets, finding shapes in the clouds, and catching snowflakes. It is a precious example for children that we are more alike than different.

*Nina Ditmar*


HBB, 9780547053417, $18.00

932/.012 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 cm.

INT MS Rating: 4

At the Great Pyramid in Egypt, a mystery opens. It is 1954 and the supervising Egyptologist, Kamel el Mallakh is puzzled, yet, he’s certain it is not a mistake. It will take a large team and more than four decades to reveal the enormity of the mystery first found. Come along and understand what they found in Egypt.

The Pharaoh, Cheops is dead ... as soon as he became a Pharaoh, he became a deity, the son of Re, the sun god. He started preparing for his death immediately, which was the Great Pyramid that would shelter everything he would need in his afterlife. It would take twenty years and a hundred thousand workers to create the pyramid that would be very grand, almost 500 feet high.

The help of Cheops’ son, Djedefre, is required to make the final arrangements, the rituals for safe passage into the afterlife. Egyptians way of life were dependent upon traveling by boat, and the afterlife was no different. Cheops will need his own boat to travel to reach the sun god on the other side.

Finding the Great Pyramid was quite a feat, and finding the unexpected wall is where the mystery begins for the Egyptologist, Kamel el Mallakh. Inside is where he opens the greatest mystery of his career.

Read with Mallakh, and those who followed him, to discover what remains today the oldest, largest, and most complete Egyptian tomb collection in the entire world. Discover how the Egyptians built their boats for their Pharaoh Cheops as he made his journey across a body of water, like a ‘winding waterway,” to arrive at his afterlife.

Witzman’s book is engaging for any reader interested in Egyptian history. His illustrations are as integral to
the text as to the learning. Readers will be enchanted by the imagery and taken back to the workers as they build the pyramid and the boats. This is a book not to be missed.

*Debby Willett*


HBB, 9780399245213, $17.99

974.7/3 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill., col. maps ; 24 x 28 cm.

INT Rating: 4

*River of Dreams* summarizes the history of the Hudson River. From “food, shelter, and transportation” (p. 4) to military vantage point, to “America's first superhighway” (p. 16) to artistic muse, the Hudson River is a valuable resource to America. Unfortunately, the more recent history of the Hudson River has not been as grand. The twentieth century brought industrialization to New York City, and pollution to the Hudson River. In 1965, Fanny Reese and a group of people who wished to preserve the integrity of the Hudson River founded the Scenic Hudson to promote good stewardship of the Hudson River. Because of their dedication, fish and other wildlife are returning to the river that would have been lost to history without advocacy.

Hudson Talbott presents information about the Hudson River using mostly simple language. The lovely illustrations bring his words to life and further educate the reader. Through his illustrations, Talbott enriches the book with ancillary information, such as different types of boats that have utilized the river and wildlife that call the river home. Maps are provided as needed, and fanciful illustrations provide delight where appropriate. Talbott's illustrations also clearly render the desperate condition of the river before the Scenic Hudson started its advocacy program. The point of the book is clear, we must take care of the world in which we live to maintain its beauty and provide for the future. “It's now my turn to help in keeping the river of dreams flowing, for all those dreamers yet to come.” (p. 39)

*Kristina Wolcott*


HBB, 9780761430636, $20.95

B or 370.92 40 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm.

INT Rating: 3

Overcoming a challenging life situation to reach one’s goals is what young readers will take away from *Booker T. Washington : Getting into the Schoolhouse*. Larry Dane Brimner walks the reader through Washington's life from his birth in a Virginian log cabin through years of slavery, and into his studies and eventually establishment of the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

Washington's life as a slave and his determination to get an education stands out, along with occasional quotes that give life to the facts. A brief glossary, timeline of important dates, and two pages of additional resources add breadth to the book. Each two-page spread presents captioned illustrations or photos.

The basic factual data on Booker T. Washington is covered in this American
Heroes series biography. The art adds helpful historical cues. However, the life of this significant individual seems one-dimensional and unimaginative.

Students will gain a glimpse of what it was like to grow up as a slave in the South and finally gain entrance to an African American school. They also are exposed to the rewards of hard work and the value of education from this version of Washington’s biography. While appearing to be accurate, this biography is very careful in expressing or avoiding political, ethnic, and cultural nuances, to the point of losing them altogether.

Karen Schmidt


LIB, 9781590369227, $18.00

A homeschooled child fascinated with drawing and writing about animals and nature will snag the attention of scores of upper elementary and younger middle school readers. Jennifer Hultig’s Beatrix Potter is an engagingly written biography of author and illustrator Beatrix Potter that will captivate and inspire children. Hurtig describes Potter’s British childhood that allowed her plentiful opportunities to explore the natural world and hone her illustration and writing aptitude. Her experiences with both rejection and success in publication reveal the realities of her profession as well as her persevering spirit. Hurtig spotlights Potter’s development of her skills and describes her best known books.

Even reluctant readers can come under Potter’s spell in this skillfully produced biography. Photos, reproduced letters and sketches, short impactful quotes, and use of color and bold text all make the reading easy and accessible. “Inspired to Write” call-out notes highlight elements that carried Potter to eventual publishing success. Wanna-be writers will appreciate the Creative Writing Tips, publishing flow chart, how-to on writing a biography review, and list of writing terms. Fan information and a quiz on Potter facts round out the slender book. Teachers, homeschool parents, kids who love Potter or writing all will enjoy and learn from this well-produced title.

Karen Schmidt

PAP, 9781400310128, $9.99

d fixation, 339 p. : col. ill. ; 22 cm.


PAP, 9781400310135, $9.99

d fixation, 338 p. : col. maps ; 22 cm.

MS Rating: 5

At the end of The Door Within, the first in this fantasy series by Wayne Thomas Batson [CLJ 11, 2 (2006)], teenaged Aidan returns home from his mission in the Realm of Alleble. Batson continues his young adult series with The Rise of the Wyrm Lord and The Final Storm.

In The Rise of the Wyrm Lord, Aidan learns that his new friend Antoinette has also been called to the Realm of Alleble. Aidan asks if Antoinette could try to rescue the Glimpse twin of his friend Robby from his connection to the enemy. After completing her assigned mission, Antoinette heads off to fulfill her promise, but is captured by the enemy.

In The Final Storm, Aidan is trying to persuade his friend Robby about the truth of Alleble when the king calls him back to the Realm to “seek what is lost.” Meanwhile, convinced of the truth about Alleble, Robby calls out to the king and is drawn into the Realm for his own mission. Among other lost things, Aidan finds Antoinette. During a massive attack on Alleble, the mortwraith Falon rescues Sir Robby and brings the three friends together.

Batson puts a worthy twist on his mirror universe setting. As the action shifts from one character to another, the fast-moving plot builds in excitement to a creative surprise ending in the final volume. Although “twins” have similarities, various well-drawn unique characters face different conflicts and grow through them. For example, the issues and resolutions involved in their personal conversions (changes in allegiance to the king) vary for a few pairs of Glimpse and human twins.

This series about the conflict between good and evil shows that, although occasional doubting is natural, trust and absolute loyalty, even at the risk of death, are essential in confronting the enemy with his lies and offers of power. Other themes include courage, compassion, sacrifice, forgiveness, redemption, and concern for the natural environment.

This series is highly recommended for all libraries and families that enjoy fantasy.

Donna W. Bowling


HBB, 9780525422051, $16.99

Fiction, 199 p. ; 22 cm.

MS Rating: 5

The Last Newspaper Boy in America is about generational paperboys where for years somebody in the David family has been throwing the paper for the people in Steele, Pennsylvania. Each son acquires the route on his twelfth birthday, and now it is Wil’s turn. He has been practicing for weeks, getting the trajectory right so the newspaper will land perfectly on the welcome mat of each house, as he rides his bicycle
and does his route. But when Wil’s birthday is almost here, the paper decides to stop the route in Steele.

The rest of the book is dedicated to Wil’s problem-solving abilities, figuring out how to keep the route active in his town. He gets people to sign a petition and he goes straight to the head of the paper with his complaint. Wil is a very industrious boy, wanting to keep the route so he can save money to buy himself a laptop. Not many twelve-year-old boys would think of all the things this boy does. He is truly a self-starter!

Corbett’s entertaining way of describing the kids and the antics they get into keep the reader chuckling and turning the pages. She uses modern technology by introducing e-mails from grandma (who is away on a trip to South America) as she encourages Wil to carry out his plan to foil the circus barker. Wil also surfs the web at the library and uses microfiche.

This is a delightful book for middle-schoolers, filled with action, dialogue, and down-to-earth family situations.

Juanita Wier Nobles

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HBB, 9780803732247, $16.99

Fic 299 p.; 22 cm.

MS (HS) Rating: 4

Beginning in 1845 and ending in 2002, *The Brooklyn Nine* by Alan Gratz follows nine generations of a baseball-loving family as they play ball and witness famous events in U.S. history. The book, a series of short stories following a child in each generation, is well written and fast paced. Some stories are poignant; some suspenseful (as when a Yankee soldier runs from Confederate troops; or when another character attempts to pitch a perfect game). Baseball fans will delight in the glimpses of the history of the game and the sheer joy the characters show in playing. The love of family is clearly portrayed as each generation has deep, close relationships to each other and to previous generations. However, although the book is geared to young readers, certain aspects are problematic.

One story chronicles the later career of King Kelly, who became a drunkard. While it’s portrayed as a sad, bad thing, it’s also portrayed as part of Kelly’s charm.

In another plot, the heroine runs numbers while her policeman father looks the other way. (It’s ultimately portrayed as a “sucker’s game” and Frankie destroys the gambling ring). In the World War II story, teen characters drink and smoke; a team prayer is played for laughs; God’s name is taken in vain. Other stories use anti-Jewish slurs and a slang term for intercourse.

In more innocuous passages, characters interact with Abner Doubleday, Negro Leaguer Cyclone Joe Williams, and famed sportswriter John Kieran. Readers get to see the history of New York, an overview of the Civil War, and the nuclear hysteria of the 1950s. *It’s a wonderful novel with many good qualities.*

Rosemarie DiCristo

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One character lies. One beats up the other boys. One sneaks into a theater without paying.
The Last Best Days of Summer will inspire readers to consider their own lives and relationships. Valerie Hobbs tells the story of twelve-year-old Lucy, who is spending the last days of her summer vacation the way she always has, alone with her “Gram” at the cabin by the lake. She is leaving behind her popular best friend Megan, and her summer job, as a companion for Eddie, a boy with Down’s syndrome. Something has changed when Lucy reaches the cabin; her parents are a little anxious, and a teenage girl is helping out. Lucy notices Gram has changed, not all the time, but sometimes she appears to be in a fog—forgetting what she is doing, not planning carefully, starting a fire, etc.

Hobbs temporarily changes the voice of the narrator immediately after Lucy arrives at the cabin. Eddie misses Lucy terribly and understands that she is gone. Although it a stretch to believe that to believe that any twelve-year-old boy, much less one with Down’s syndrome, could find his way on a bus to a rural location several miles away; nevertheless, Eddie makes it to the lake safely.

The themes of Lucy’s story center on change. The people in our lives change, and we must adjust, mature and become better as a result. The story unfolds realistically; Lucy still wants to be popular, like her friend Megan, but understands that the definition of popularity includes kindness toward people who are different. Gram is growing older, yet she still retains her own special personality. Recommended for readers who are ready for a thoughtful book, one reflecting ordinary life—where they may see themselves or others and come to an acceptance of change, of differences, and come to grips with the concept of human frailty.

Kristine Wildner


Sam has everything a city kid in Africa could want: his own bedroom, a computer, private school, running shoes, friends, and a home—until the day his mother dies. In Jan Michael’s City Boy, Sam finds himself dragged away from the stable life he knows, to a remote village far away. He doesn’t want to live with Aunt Mercy after his mother dies from “the disease.”

In the village, Sam has to sleep on a crowded hut floor with cousins who have also lost their parents. He has no friends, bedroom, or computer. All he has is a picture of his parents, and the blue running shoes his mom gave him. Nothing is the same. Villagers assume he’s a thief because he’s the new boy. Sam is convinced no one cares about him until he meets one-armed Mr. Brown.

This well-crafted book about the AIDS epidemic transports the reader into Sam’s life and his ultimate discovery of the love of family. Michael gently deals with the AIDS issue, mentioning the primary means of transmission only once. Her focus is the hardship children face after their parents die.

This book is highly recommended for ten-year-olds and up, and would serve as a discussion book read for small groups.

Mary Vee
100 words every middle schooler should know / from the editors of the American Heritage Dictionaries. (100 words series) Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010. LCCN 2009050644.

PAP, 9780547333229, $5.95
428.1 116 p. : ill. ; 21 cm.
MS Rating: 3

Middle school students are on the cusp of the challenges just beyond eighth grade. When they sit down to write, they will need every resource available to them. Teachers will be assigning reports, research papers, and even journaling to students to acquaint them with the fine art of writing. Vocabulary and grammar are ongoing lessons, so resources that support those skills are vital to students' success. These are some of the words found in the book, 100 Words Every Middle Schooler Should Know—adversary, barricade, counter, disdain, exasperation, grueling, meticulous, restitution, and zeal. Each word is accompanied by the part(s) of speech, definition, Word Origin, and Quote(s) from authors students may be familiar with. For example:

(57) meticulous, adjective – showing great concern for details; extremely careful or precise. Word Origin – The English word meticulous originally meant “fearful.” Quotes from Ellen Raskin, The Westing Game; Janet & Geoff Benge, Laura Ingalls Wilder: A Storybook Life; Sarah Dessen, Keeping the Moon.

Under Word Origin, the detail is greater; however, for purposes here, it was condensed. In the front of the book, Guide to the Entries is very informative when referring to the Word Origin. In addition, the Pronunciation Guide is very helpful for reviewing.

Middle schoolers should know these excellent words. Perhaps an Internet link could have also been provided where students could challenge their vocabulary.

Debby Willett


HBB, 9780310718192, $16.99
782.25 40 p. : col. ill. ; 24 x 29 cm. + 1 compact disc (digital, audio. ; 4 3/4 in.)

MS (HS) Rating: 4

I See the Rhythm of Gospel explores the evolution of gospel music and its place in black history. Each page offers a different aspect of gospel music, while a detailed timeline traces the origins of the slave trade in 1485 through the election of an African-American president in 2008. Bold folk art illustrations by Michele Wood illustrate the link between the black experience and gospel as a powerful musical expression of struggle, hope, jubilation, and Christian spirituality. Included is a CD with five songs representing various forms of gospel style.

Intended for readers of all ages, this picture book is so jam-packed with information that it is probably best suited for middle schoolers and above. Each page is a jumble of images, poetry, quotations, and narrative, combined with a timeline and picture captions, and all done in an array of font styles and vivid colors. There is even a hidden figure to hunt for in each scene. The emotional content is strong and somewhat abstract; young readers may not have the readiness to sort through everything the author and artist present. The
captions and timeline are rich with detail, but rather interrupt the flow of the otherwise beautiful and lyrical text. Readers will want to revisit this book again and again, focusing on one feature at a time, in order to absorb all that it has to offer. The CD is a wonderful bonus and a great way to introduce children to gospel music.

*Nina Ditmar*


An understandable, fluent narrative, integrated with striking photographs, fascinating historical prints and colorful maps makes David K. Wright’s *Cuba* stands out among country books for middle and elementary school readers. The book begins with an overview of Cuban political history, its road to independence and the influence of 19th century poet and activist, José Martí, who laid the foundations for today's government. With Fidel Castro and Communism dominating the 20th century in Cuba, Wright sometimes integrates, and other times, separates the politics of the country with other important components. Ensuing chapters cover key aspects of this beautiful island including indigenous people, slavery, modern history, geography and wildlife, tourism, Communist economics, education, politics, the Cuban people, religious beliefs, culture, food and traditions.

Clearly written from an American perspective, Wright does an excellent job explaining the relatively complex politics of Cuba, including Castro and Communism, in a manner which children can understand. Never assuming prior knowledge, the author clearly explains difficult concepts within the text. Subheadings divide the chapters creating relatively short passages to aid student comprehension. In addition, topics of high interest are set apart from the narrative, providing detailed facts on subjects such as hurricane statistics, Pope John Paul II’s visit to Cuba, defections of Cuban citizens, etc. *Cuba* is an excellent resource to help students understand this beautiful, yet oppressed country, whose relationship to the world is continually evolving, especially with the relatively recent change in leadership. A timeline, summary of facts, resources for additional information and index complete the book.

*Kristine Wildner*


Who can identify more than three signers of the Declaration of Independence? Just how vital was the Christian faith to those who signed this pivotal document? Those were among the questions that drove author Marilyn Boyer to write *For You They Signed*. This well-researched and timely volume addresses contemporary American cultural as well as spiritual illiteracy concerning the nation’s founding.
Furthermore, it summons readers to recover and preserve for future generations the robust spiritual and political legacy of America’s Founding Fathers.

Biographical sketches of the Declaration’s fifty-six signers unlock the heritage embodied in their exemplary lives. A sidebar encapsulates basic biographical details concerning each individual. The major portion of each entry focuses on important events in the subject’s life with particular emphasis on the development of his spiritual and moral character amid his involvement in the formation of the United States. Ample contemporaneous quotations as well as insightful portraiture by Linda Linder accentuate their profoundly human elements. Each entry also includes a chronological record of public service and discussion questions for review.

This hard-bound knowledge base is well organized for careful study and efficient information retrieval. An introduction, a preface, and an epilogue orient the reader to the impetus and aims of the book. Four appendices present definitions of relevant character qualities, recount Patrick Henry’s speech to the signers, and elucidate the Christian nature of state constitutions, and America’s oldest institutions of higher learning. Endnotes document the underlying secondary sources, and suggested readings encourage further exploration. An access code is included for an online companion guide.

Young readers will find this work an encouraging gateway to understanding the Christian nature of America’s founding. Readers of all ages will be inspired to embrace and live in the light of the rich religious heritage of the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

Bradley A. Poteat

This is Rocket Science is a comprehensive overview of the history of rocket science with stories of the key scientists intertwined with the technological development. Gloria Skurzynski organizes the book chronologically; beginning with the Chinese alchemists who searched for the secret to eternal life, and in the process discovered that the combination of saltpeter, sulfur, and carbon would burn. This discovery quickly led to the development of rocket weaponry and eventually spread to Europe. Isaac Newton first used his laws of gravity and motion to explain how rocket propulsion works.

Modern rocket science began in the late 1800’s when Konstantin Tsiolkovsky calculated the motion of a rocket, and Robert Goddard first imagined rockets flying to the moon. During this time period, the development of missile rockets continued with both liquid and solid fuels. The pace and scope of rocket science accelerated as the United States and the Soviet Union competed in the buildup of nuclear arms and technology which would send a man to the moon.
has brought nations together with the International Space Station and other cooperative projects.

Capturing the reader's imagination and inspiring future scientists, Skurzynski's book is a fascinating look at rocket science. Brilliant color photos and well-placed diagrams clarify many features of technology, and the narrative is rich in technical detail, but does not become bogged down in calculations. While the author does not address current issues of funding, the possibilities of rocket science are endless as the imagination and technical expertise of scientists. Skurzynski explains concepts in general terms so that the reader understands without knowing the details of the science and math. A glossary and index complete the book.

Kristine Wildner


HBB, 9780545223263, $9.99
790.1/94  124 p. : ill. ; 22 cm.
MS INT Rating: 3

Patterned after The Dangerous Book for Boys, this more compact volume plays up the risk-taking, adventure seeking interests of not quite adolescent aged boys. From the believable—how to be a modern knight—to the practical (how to dress a wound)—to completely farfetched, as in how to join a band of gorillas, The Boys' Book of Adventure by Steve Martin contains 46 feats and courageous endeavors. All start with a factual introduction that may summarize a myth, relate a historic tale, or merely open the theme. A craft, activity or game is detailed point by point, accompanied by illustrations as needed. Safety is emphasized, beginning with the first page and warning notes are frequent. Young kids, teens, adults, males, and females who like to read will find themselves skimming or poring over this compact book. The gamut of adventures is diverse and well presented, capturing one's imagination. Instructions are clearly written and safety notes are frequent. While good sense should prevail, a disclaimer in the preface might give parents a heads-up to review the contents before unleashing their daring young male readers. Ghost hunting, aliens, and millions-year old fossils are discussed.

Overall this is fun book with considerable useful content, helpful for stimulating boys to worthwhile pursuits, or at least finding new interests both in their reading and in their recreation.

Karen Schmidt


HBB, 9780525420774, $22.99
978/.032 128 p. : ill. ; 24 x 29 cm.
MS (HS, Adult) Rating: *5

The winner of the 2008 National Endowment for the Humanities Medal, Years of Dust by Albert Marrin tells the ecological cautionary tale of the Dust Bowl. Years of Dust shares not just a history of the Dust Bowl, but also of the plains themselves from the late 1700s to the 1930s. A richly intricate
tapestry of events unfolds in the book, explaining the multi-faceted nature of this catastrophe. From the wholesale slaughter of the buffalo and the over-farming of land after World War I to the drought of the 1930s and Roosevelt’s New Deal, Marrin’s book paints a holistic picture of causes and effects.

Simple, but not simplistic, language allows readers to fully grasp the information. At the book’s end, Marrin shares the problem of drought and desertification (the process of land becoming desert) around the modern world.

The book includes multiple photographs, illustrations, and media from the period. The occasional map, although helpful, could benefit from greater detail, such as including the rivers and mountains mentioned in the text. Sidebars illuminate wildlife, regional cultures and interesting people while literary, historical and personal quotes pepper the chapters.

The book also features a glossary, notes on the text, a suggested reading list, bibliography and index. It is a well-balanced and accurate approach to a natural and sociological disaster.

Highly recommended.

Jaclyn S. Miller

**The greatest doctor of ancient times: Hippocrates and his oath / Mary Gow. (Great minds of ancient science and math)**


LIB 9780766031180, $31.93

B or 610.938 128 p. : ill. (chiefly col.), col. map ; 25 cm.

MS Rating: 4

*The Greatest Doctor of Ancient Times: Hippocrates and His Oath,* written by Mary Gow, is a compilation of the information available regarding the famous physician of the fifth century BC. The book surveys the life of Hippocrates, the culture surrounding and influencing medical science in his day, and the impact he and other doctors of his era have had on modern medicine. The author frequently refers to conflicting accounts and a lack of corroborating information to definitively ascribe certain writings to Hippocrates, or even to verify many details of his life. What is certain from history is that Hippocrates represents a group of determined and compassionate men who sought to care for their patients to the best of their abilities. The author touches on controversial medical issues such as abortion and physician-assisted suicide, both of which are specifically addressed in the famous Hippocratic Oath. The issues are discussed objectively.

At over 120 pages in length, the book is divided into eight chapters and includes many useful illustrations and photographs. One chapter explains the influence of Greek mythology on healing strategies of the day. Another chapter details the Hippocratic Oath, taken in some form by most physicians today. Some of the prevailing theories of medicine in the fourth and fifth centuries BC are discussed, and a few of the actual case studies from the Hippocratic writings are reproduced. The book includes a small activities section, which gives readers some hands-on application of what has been learned. Activities include tips for discussing the Hippocratic Oath with a doctor and assembling a family first-aid kit. A chronology is present, as
well as an extensive bibliography. A small glossary is also provided, followed by book and website recommendations for further reading, and an index.

On the whole, the book successfully portrays Hippocrates and his contemporaries as valuable links in the chain of medical research and patient care.

Amy Arens
Lisa Bergren presents *Waterfall*, and *Cascade*, her entry into young adult literature. Be prepared for historical fiction, romance, adventure, time travel, and plot twists!

In *Waterfall*, the Betarrini sisters travel to Italy with their archaeologist mother. Typical American teens, they grow bored at the medieval castle archaeological site. When they place their hands over handprints in an ancient tomb they stumble upon, the sisters are transported back to 14th century Tuscany. Gabi finds herself in the midst of a fierce battle while her younger sister Lia ends up elsewhere. Two handsome young men, Marcello and Lucas, rescue them. They face life-threatening adventures including fighting battles alongside the men before returning to their own time.

In *Cascade*, Gabi longs to return to Marcello, even though it is dangerous. She convinces Lia and their mother to return. Hailed as heroines in earlier battles, the sisters find themselves dealing with treachery, accusations, even death threats, as they try to sort out friends and enemies. Meanwhile, as her relationship with Marcello deepens, Gabi must decide whether to stay with him forever or return home. Before she is able to give him her heart, the ladies are called home. The adventures continue in *Torrent*, expected in Fall 2011.

Bergren does it again, penning a well-written character and plot-driven series. Readers should be aware that although the story involves evil men, violence, and torture, it is handled without excessive detail. The book includes an interview with the author, discussion questions, and historical notes.

This book will appeal to older teens and adults alike. Although this is Christian fiction, it is definitely not preachy.

Highly recommended for school libraries and public libraries.

*Carol Gehringer*

**An off year / Claire Zulkey. New York: Dutton, 2009. LCCN 2008048968.**

HBB, 9780525421597, $17.99

Fic 213 p.; 22 cm.

HS Rating: 2, not recommended

In *An Off Year* by Claire Zulkey, Cecily Powell and her friends leave for college about the same day. Her father helps carry a box up to her dorm and watches her turn the key. But when Cecily opens the door, she takes a deep breath and trembles. “We’re going home. Now.” Back in her Chicago bedroom, Cecily realizes she didn’t know why the dorm or campus, or even the concept of college upset her. Her honest answer to friends and family: “I don’t know why I couldn’t start classes; I don’t know what I want to do; I just don’t know.” Her father doesn’t force her to address the problem at first. Cecily wallows days away...
watching TV, fighting with her sister and aimlessly ticking off hours. Her dad tires of the situation and sends her to a psychologist. To Cecily’s surprise, the psychologist helps her understand no one else in her life has things figured out either, despite following society rules.

Zulkey uses her blogging writing style to tell Cecily’s story. Written as ramblings without direction, *An Off Year* presents Cecily’s choice to not follow her friends to college or gain employment. No directions, solutions, or alternatives are offered, neither is Cecily satisfied with her aimless year.

This story contains vernacular and life styles typical of a secular college campus setting, offers no hope for the situation, and is therefore not recommended.

*Mary Vee*

PAP, 9780764144707, $21.99
771 128 p. : ill. (chiefly col.) ; 28 cm.

HS Adult Rating: 4

150 Projects to Strengthen Your Photography Skills is a book filled with stunning photography and specific lessons on how to become a photographer at your own pace. John Easterby delves into several aspects of the medium: genres, equipment, methods, techniques, shooting, editing, and presentation using concise language and suitable images to explain the subject of photography. Concepts such as composition, flash photography, and editing are explained, followed by creative projects in which the reader is given assignments to reinforce the concepts Easterby has described.

Projects in the book cover a wide range of experience levels. For example, a beginner may practice shooting images using a cell phone or taking portraits in natural light, while an experienced student may complete a project such as creating fashion magazine mock-ups or create a multimedia piece. Focusing primarily on digital photography, Easterby’s information is current regarding interchangeable lens, camera bodies, and lighting equipment. Applying to a photography school and mapping a career path as a professional photographer are also discussed.

As part Barron’s Aspire Series, the target audience of this book is the mature photography student who wants to pursue a professional career; however, many projects in the book can also be completed by anyone who has a digital single lens reflex camera. The written content explaining the various concepts does not go into great detail, which could detour some readers who are looking for in depth information on certain topics. There is no nudity in the book, but a few images may be unsettling for some readers. Also, Easterby includes a resources section with a listing of professional photographers for further study. Some contemporary photographers listed could have offensive photographs if the reader chooses to research outside the parameters of this book.

Jody Sorey

HBB, 9781601423399, $14.99
Fic 120 p.: ill.; 20 cm.
Adult Rating: 3

The *Chasm* opens with businessman extraordinaire Nick Seagrave facing an impassable barrier to Charis, the shining city in the distance. His perception tells him the city is a façade concealing a dark tyrant inside whose plan is to enslave, condemn, and finally execute those who enter. However, others hear joyful music and singing. They extol the virtues of the King of Charis and are determined to reach the enchanted city, whatever the cost.

A flashback brings Nick back to the beginning of his journey when the mysterious guide, Joshua warns him about trusting others and leads him off the red road to explore other pathways. Preferring to be in control, Nick starts on one of the many gray routes that lead downhill to rewind memories of life before he appeared in this strange land.

Throughout his trek Nick confronts his misguided past, catches glimpses into spiritual realms and contends with his passion to remain master of his own destiny. Joshua reassures him that he can find his own truth; any option is valid.

Randy Alcorn’s allegory is obvious to any Christian familiar with the Bible and orthodox teaching. He exposes Nick’s self-delusion and reveals the ingrained thought patterns that alienate him from reality. Although the brevity of the material leaves little room for character development, most readers will be able to identify with Nick and his struggle to come to terms with his choices.

Twelve elaborate pen and ink drawings by Mike Biegel are interspersed throughout the twelve chapters of *The Chasm*. The book provides questions in the back for each section, and scripture references help the reader explore the truth about Jesus Christ. It will appeal to those who lack time for a longer work and are interested in allegorical literature.

**Within my heart** / Tamera Alexander. (Timber Ridge reflections ; 3) Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010. LCCN 2010014687.

PAP, 9780764203916, $14.99
Fic 378 p.; 22 cm.
Adult Rating: 5

Tamera Alexander’s latest novel series gives us glimpses into the lives of people during the post-Civil War era, and relates historical facts about modern inventions that paved the way for the future of America. This particular love story, third in the series, also gives an authentic picture of medicine, especially cardiac care, in a small Colorado community in 1877.

In *Within My Heart*, we meet Rachel Boyd, the widowed mother of two young boys, as she struggles to keep up the work on the family ranch, the legacy for her sons’ future. When her long-time friend, Ben, has a heart attack while she is shopping in his store, she is able to help him. She worked with her own father who was a doctor, so she knows what medication he needs and assists the town doctor, Rand Brookston. He soon realizes that Rachel knows more about medicine...
than he had surmised.

Dr. Brookston uses a brand-new technique he recently read about to save Ben's life. With his fists, he pounds on Ben's chest and causes his heart to beat again, causing no small stir in the small town of Timber Ridge. Later, when fluid begins to gather around Ben's lungs, Dr. Brookston uses another innovative procedure to draw the fluid out and help him breathe more easily. A bond begins to grow as Rand calls on Rachel more and more to assist with medical needs.

Rand Brookston writes articles in the paper occasionally to teach people how to prolong their lives and prevent disease. When a typhoid epidemic breaks out in the local elementary school, people begin to listen to what the doctor says, and because of this, the epidemic causes a minimal loss of life.

The work on the ranch goes on, and Rachel is about to lose it all, when a stranger comes to Timber Ridge. He advises Rachel to buy a new, stronger breed of cattle that will withstand the harsh Colorado winters. Rachel has to decide which is more important—to keep the ranch going or to do what her heart wants and become more involved in medicine, and with Rand.

There are many references to things that happened in the first two books, which leaves the reader wondering, but the book is deeply moving and we often see the main characters calling on God. An unexpected near-tragedy at the end of the novel draws it all to a satisfactory conclusion.

Alexander’s character development is consistent and clear throughout. The plot is interesting and compelling, with both adventure, romance, and historical truth.

Juanita Wier Nobles

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While we’re far apart / Lynn Austin. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010. LCCN 2010015877.

HBB, 9780764208133, $19.99

Fic 411 p.; 23 cm.

Adult (HS) Rating: *5

Penny Goodrich had been in love with Eddie Shaffer ever since she was a young girl living next door to his family. Now as adults, Eddie is a widower with two young children, while Penny has remained single and still lives with her parents. Newly-enlisted in the Army in World War II, Eddie requests Penny's help in caring for his children, twelve-year-old Esther and nine-year-old Peter. Although Penny attempts to befriend her two charges, Esther and Peter instead gravitate toward their elderly Jewish neighbor, Jacob Mendel, whose wife was killed in the same tragic accident as their mother. Jacob is angry with God (Hashem) for taking his beloved wife Miriam and has now been blamed for burning down the nearby synagogue he has quit attending.

Set in Brooklyn, New York, in 1943, While We’re Far Apart is an interesting look at events from World War II, both on the home front and overseas in the war zones. Jacob is desperate for news of his son and family overseas in Nazi-held Hungary, while Penny anxiously awaits news of the war from Eddie. As Jacob struggles with his love for Hashem (God) and his anger at Him for taking his wife away, Penny grows from being an over-protected, fearful girl living with her parents to become an independent, confident woman that drives buses for a career. Esther begins to experience feelings of curiosity towards love for
the opposite sex, which concerns both Penny and Jacob.

Rationing, slow news travel in the 1940s, and the devastation of war are woven into the historical facts of the novel. Lynn Austin’s finesse at combining historical events with fictional characters is evident, bringing the World War II time period to life. Issues such as rape, teenage pregnancy, premarital sex, arson, and atrocities of war are present in While We’re Far Apart as part of the storyline but do not go into graphic detail. Crises of faith of several characters are a major theme throughout Ms. Austin’s novel, but Jacob Mendel sums up the truth of believing in God as he states that he slowly learned that ‘walking in faith meant leaving a way of life in which he was in control and willingly walking in uncertainty, trusting that God was in control’ (pg. 360-361). As Esther, Jacob, and Penny learn to trust God with their lives, He proves that He has always been there all along. A short author note about Raoul Wallenberg’s real life part in WWII rescuing Jews is included at the end, as well as discussion questions about the book. This book won the Christy Award in 2011.

Sherri Myers

**Back on murder / J. Mark Bertrand. (A Roland March mystery) Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010. LCCN 2010005987.**

PAP, 9780764206375, $14.95

Fic 382 p.; 22 cm.

Adult Rating: 4

Roland March is a Houston homicide detective who knows his days are numbered on the police force unless something drastically changes. But all that could change with the new case that involves a missing girl and a drug house raid. J. Mark Bertrand enters the crime novel market with *Back on Murder*, the first in a series. March was once one of the best detectives on the force, yet tragic circumstances beyond his control started a downward spiral which affected both his professional and personal life. When he unexpectedly joins forces with missing person detective Theresa Cavallo, life begins to change, and not always for the better. For one, Cavallo is a dedicated cop and is extremely attractive, and although she does not hide her faith, she does not hide behind it, meaning she is willing to tell March which way is up now and then. As Cavallo and March open up the case it becomes more complicated and more evident there is something very corrupt going on within it. Can March put all the pieces together before he too becomes a missing person?

At first *Back on Murder* reads much like a sequel since the story feels as if reader acknowledgment is a given. It is not until a solid half of the book has gone by that the back story is revealed, making the plotline and the protagonist’s motivation’s clear and understandable, which results in a slow unraveling that adds more tension to the plot. Bertrand deftly weaves the first person narrative around a solid murder mystery. His technical knowledge and background work lends a more than credible viability to the story. Those who want a murder mystery without the gratuitous violence and language will want to check out this first installment of the Roland March series. A serious contender in the crime novel genre, *Back on Murder* provides an earnest wish for
the sequel to come out sooner than later.

_Pam Webb_

**Unexpected love / Andrea Kuhn Boeshaar. (Seasons of redemption ; 3) Lake Mary, Fla.: Realms, 2011. LCCN 2010039332.**

PAP, 9781616381929, $12.99

**Undaunted faith / Andrea Kuhn Boeshaar. (Seasons of redemption ; 4) Lake Mary, Fla.: Realms, 2011. LCCN 2011001033.**

PAP, 9781616382056, $12.99

**Adult Rating: 4**

_Unexpected Love_ and _Undaunted Faith_ continue the Seasons of Redemption series by Andrea Boeshaar. _Unexpected Love_ opens with Lorenna Fields nursing an extraordinarily handsome, blind amnesiac in a Chicago hospital. Lorenna feels her face is disfigured by a birthmark, and has deemed herself too ugly to be loved. As she continues to care for her patient whom she dubs “Mr. Blackeyes,” she finds herself falling in love. When Lorenna learns who he really is, her insecurities increase.

_Undaunted Faith_ follows Bethany Stafford to the old West with pastors Luke and Jake McCabe where Bethany will become the school teacher. After a lifetime of listening to her father say she’s “plain as a field mouse,” Bethany finds herself doubting that anyone will ever find her attractive or want to marry her. After a town gossip accuses Bethany of being in a compromising situation with the town sheriff, Luke offers marriage to rescue her reputation.

Andrea Boeshaar’s writing offers an escape into another era while offering hope for the present. Both books offer a taste of post Civil War America. From Chicago’s bustle to the dusty, brown Arizona Territory, Boeshaar makes the past accessible while delivering sweet stories of love and hope. In both books, the main female protagonists deal with feelings of insecurity. One has a supportive family, the other does not, but both know the love that God gives. Throughout both books, the women grow in their love for God as they learn to find their security in Him. More than romances, both books move quickly and intertwine a minor element of suspense as the protagonists seek to overcome evil with good. A thematic thread that seems to run through the entire series is trust God who not only provides eternal hope, but delights in working in the lives of His children.

_Kristina Wolcott_


PAP, 9780310276432, $14.99

**Adult Rating: 3**

Brandilyn Collins known for her “seatbelt suspense” writing style does not disappoint with her novel _Exposure_. Kaycee Raye, a woman whose syndicated newspaper columns showcases fears, is living one of her worst fears—she is being stalked. Yet, the proof vanishes before she can convince anyone. Have her fears finally overruled her sanity? Tension further mounts when someone close to Kaycee disappears. Is there a connection? Is Kaycee responsible? A page turning tension-filled read to the unexpected ending.

Known for her tightly-written
psychological thrillers, Collins heightens the drama with fragmented sentences mirroring the fear-induced thoughts of the protagonist. The staccato storytelling technique serves its purpose and the reader is thoroughly drawn into the Kaycee's life of fears and borderline delusions; however, this also creates a feeling of going for a long run without benefit of a needed breath. Fortunately, Collins weaves in that needed breather by weaving in the tandem story of Lorraine who is also being pursued by her own fears. This suspenseful dash of a mystery drama has a demanding pace and will appeal to those looking for a quick ride at the amusement park versus a leisurely stroll on the beach.

Pam Webb

  PAP, 9780764203213, $14.99
  Fic 336 p.; 22 cm.
  Adult (HS) Rating: 4

Serendipity involves a young couple, Todd and Maggie Valmer, who marry for reasons other than love. They embark on a life together hampered by unequal feelings for each other, cultural differences, and a heavily mortgaged farm. Maggie is furthermore saddled with caring for a hateful mother-in-law, whose attitude is worsened by health issues.

Hardworking and rooted in their faith, Todd and Maggie struggle through the bad times, and the happy ending Cathy Marie Hake’s readers have come to expect eventually ensues. But along the way, the story falters in depth and detail, falling somewhat short of Hake’s previous offerings. For example, Todd finally concludes he’s in love with Maggie, but how he grows into that love is unclear. Then we see the unexplained survival of Maggie’s roses, which at one point, thanks to Todd’s well-intentioned overdose of fertilizer, are dead or dying.

We later learn, only by casual reference, that half the roses lived. But Hake never chronicles the painstaking efforts it would have taken to save them. The roses are Maggie’s legacy, a crucial part of her livelihood, and in terms of the story, highly symbolic of the relationship between Maggie and Todd. Yet they’re treated offhandedly by the author.

Finally, the relationship between Maggie and her mother-in-law is neither fully explored nor resolved. Sometimes, though, a lack of resolution indicates a future life for characters. So hopefully, this loose end means we’ll see more of the Valmers.

Yes, even though it disappoints in some ways, Serendipity is an enjoyable read and enough of a charmer to leave Hake fans hankering for more.

June Mathews

  PAP, 9781400070015, $14.99
  Fic 457 p.; maps; 21 cm.
  Adult HS Rating: 4

Lady Elisabeth Kerr, a Highland commoner by birth, became a Lowlander upon her marriage to nobleman Lord Donald Kerr. Living with his widowed mother, Lady Marjory, and his brother Andrew and sister-in-law Janet has proven to be a
lesson in patience for Elisabeth. Secrets abound in the Kerr household—Lady Elisabeth secretly worships the pagan moon, while Lord Donald hides his liaisons with other townswomen, and Lady Marjory conceals her gold beneath her floorboards. As Bonny Prince Charlie marches into Edinburgh with his Jacobite army in an attempt to regain the crown, the Kerr family must make the difficult decision whether to join the uprising or remain loyal to King George. Their decision brings lasting consequences which will change all of their lives forever.

A retelling of the Biblical story of Ruth and Naomi, historical novel *Here Burns my Candle* by Liz Curtis Higgs brings to life in 1745 Edinburgh. Although the book starts off slowly, it picks up pace once the men head off to fight in the war. Flawed characters, some of them quite unlikeable, are redeemed by book’s end. Themes of faith, hope, forgiveness, and redemption are the centerpiece of this extraordinary novel. It is quite obvious from the vivid descriptions and attention to historical details that Ms. Higgs has done extensive research on the time period and Scottish society. Pagan worship of the moon is practiced by Elisabeth, calamities of war, and extramarital affairs are present, although they do not go into detail. The Scottish dialect tends to be somewhat overwhelming at times. A glossary included in the back of the book proved to be a lifesaver for some of the harder to interpret words. A map of 1745 Edinburgh, an author’s note section, and a reader’s guide round out this lengthy but interesting novel. A sequel entitled *Mine Is the Night* is now currently available also.

*Sherri Myers*


PAP, 9780310276333, $14.99

Fic 334 p.; 22 cm.

Adult (HS) Rating: 3

Bestselling author Karen Kingsbury presents Learning, a contemporary novel about Bailey Flannigan. Many readers have watched Bailey grow up in Kingsbury’s other books and have clamored for more about her life. In *Learning*, Bailey’s first love Cody is coping with relationships that dramatically affect his life. He is a small-town football coach who moved to be closer to his mother who is in jail. Cheyenne, a friend, is badly injured in a car accident, and he helps her through recovery. Meanwhile, Bailey is off in New York pursuing her Broadway dreams.

This book has the reader grappling with some of Cody’s choices, but also understanding his struggles more. Will Bailey and Cody reunite? Will Brandon and Bailey have a future together now that he has become a believer? Or will someone else come into her life? What will develop in the next book, *Longing*?

Even without reading Kingsbury’s earlier books, one can read this book and know the backgrounds of Cody, Bailey, Brandon, and Cheyenne. The book is both character and plot-driven, with plot twists as God’s leads them on their life journeys. Because it is second in a series, the storylines are not tied up neatly at the end of the book; book three is due in September 2011, and book
four is due in February 2012. While this could be disappointing to some, it mirrors real life. One never knows what is around the corner, only that God will be always present.

In Kingsbury’s books, the characters face significant changes in their life; just reading about them often changes the readers. She has a gift for writing believable characters that her readers can relate to and want to know more about.

Recommended for high school and public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer


HBB, 9780310266952, $14.99
Fic 323 p.; 21 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 4

Holden Harris has not spoken a word since he was three years old. Now at eighteen in Unlocked, Holden continues to remain locked in his own private world of autism where he is unresponsive to his family and the rest of the world. His high school classmates bully and mock his different mannerisms and behaviors. Popular cheerleader Ella Reynolds recognizes something special about Holden and wants to reach out to him when she notices him drawn to the music of the drama club’s musical rehearsal. She realizes that music touches Holden on a deeper level than anything else and encourages his involvement with the musical production. However, Ella must make a choice when she realizes that it is her boyfriend and his friends who are instigating the bullying against anyone whom they perceive as different, including Holden. Soon music and Ella’s friendship reach Holden in ways his doctors and teachers never anticipated.

Unlocked addresses many timely and serious issues including autism awareness, bullying, teen suicide, and discrimination. Karen Kingsbury approaches each of these difficult subjects with grace while at the same time not shying away from the realities and consequences of each situation in this contemporary fiction novel. Readers see firsthand how the effects of bullying can alter the course of a life as well as how the apathetic indifference of one’s peers can be nearly as damaging to those in pain as the actual bullying. Kingsbury beautifully balances these weighty issues in a Christ honoring story. Characters and plot are well developed throughout the novel. Holden is a particularly strong character and it is fascinating to see the world through his eyes. From Holden’s perspective the world is a beautiful place and he is both happy and social. Adults and teens will equally be drawn to this story of friendship, faith, love and music.

Elissa Rizzo


PAP, 9780764207082, $14.99
Fic 391 p.; 22 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 4

Julie Klassen returns with another historical fiction heavily influenced by Jane Austen and other women authors: an impoverished young woman becomes a writer to support herself. The air of mystery surrounding her attracts the attention of a handsome captain and
endangers her livelihood.

In *The Girl in the Gatehouse*, a young woman lives with her maidservant and writes novels in secret. Mariah is banished from her father’s house following an indiscretion (she foolishly believed a man’s promises and he shamelessly compromised her). Her aunt offers Mariah refuge in the gatehouse on her deceased husband’s estate, but her stepson is unhappy with this arrangement. As soon as Mariah’s aunt dies, he schemes to remove her from the estate.

He leases the estate to Matthew, an ambitious captain trying to win the hand of a former love by impressing her father with his newly acquired wealth. Matthew is intrigued by Mariah and slowly begins to uncover her identity. His actions endanger his plans to win back the girl of his youth, as well as Mariah's continued livelihood.

This book features both character and plot development, as Mariah struggles in her faith as a result of her indiscretion. She discovers that God forgives her, loves her and offers her a second chance at love. In the author’s note, Klassen acknowledges the influence of Jane Austen's books for the inspiration of her Captain Bryant. Klassen also notes that many authors during that time published anonymously, including Austen. She continues her tribute to Austen by weaving a few actual reviews of Austen’s work into the storyline. This book also includes discussion questions, making it suitable for a book club selection.

Recommended for public libraries as well as school libraries.

*Carol R. Gehringer*

**Whisper on the wind / Maureen Lang. (Great War series ; 2) Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2010. LCCN 2009045567.**

PAP, 9781414324364, $12.99

Fic 419 p.; 21 cm.

Adult Rating: 4

*Whisper on the Wind* is set in Belgium under German occupation during World War I, where the people had to endure some terrible things. Reading pace is slow at first. However, as the reader comes to know Isa and Edward and realizes the scope of their effort during this trying time, the pages begin to turn faster and faster.

Isa is a musician, the daughter of a Belgian father and an American mother whose family has escaped the war-torn country. Isa, with several valuable jewels hidden in her flute, manages to get herself smuggled back into the country. Her hope is to use the jewels to buy passage out of there for Edward, his mother, Genny, and her younger son, Jonah. Genny took care of Isa as a child when her parents lived there, and for ten years she has been in love with Edward who is now 23 and busily engaged with an underground newspaper. With his publication, he tries to bolster the spirit of the Belgians as they are displaced, hungry, and under the watchful eye of numerous soldiers. One soldier, Max von Burkel, has taken over Isa’s family home, but she is able to get control of it again with the soldier remaining in one of the bedrooms.

The underground newspaper flourishes and continues to be an encouragement to the downtrodden people, despite the arrest of some of the people involved with it. Max, the German soldier confined to his room because of a war
injury, does not find out about the newspaper but other German soldiers are more invasive. When the printing press is found in the basement of her home, Isa is taken to prison and condemned to death. Through the help of the old German soldier, Max, her life is spared.

This is the second of three books in The Great War Series. Filled with action, suspense, and romance, history buffs will find Whisper on the Wind a treasure.

Juanita Nobles

  HBB, 9781595540867, $25.99
  Fic  449 p. : map ; 25 cm.

  HBB, 9781595540874, $26.99
  Fic  443 p. ; 25 cm.
  Adult (HS) Rating: *5
In his Hood [CLJ 11, 3 (2006)], Stephen Lawhead suggests that the legends of Robin Hood might have grown out of the resistance of the Welsh to the Norman invasion during the time of William the Conqueror and his son William II.

In Scarlet, the young forester Will Scarlet finds himself homeless when his Saxon thane is driven from his home and his lands taken under the king’s forest law. Hearing of Bran ap Brychan’s exploits as King Raven, Will determines to join Bran’s band of resistance fighters.

Tuck opens as Friar Tuck warns Bran of an impending attack on Bran’s community of Grellon from their “protectors” assigned by King William II. (The king had reneged on his promise of justice for Bran.) On an assignment for Bran, Tuck hides in a confessional booth to escape capture—and ends up hearing the king’s confession. William II is worried that the heavy expense of his campaign against the Welsh resistance includes a responsibility to pay for monks to pray for the souls of those killed in battle. Can Tuck exploit these concerns to aid Bran’s cause?

While a few of the historical persons mentioned in his King Raven trilogy may fit a slightly different time period, in this fictional series Lawhead brings to life medieval Britain with its political, social, and religious conflicts. Whether Welsh fighters, Norman noblemen, several clergy (both good and otherwise), or even the king, his various characters ring true. Action-filled plots with surprising twists demonstrate the military superiority of archers with longbows in that era. Both their presence and their absence illustrate themes of honesty, loyalty, compassion, mercy, forgiveness, and desire for peace. Frequent prayers acknowledge God as Trinity, the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, and requests for God’s will, wisdom, strength, and protection. Sections of a lengthy ballad interspersed throughout Tuck reveal how bards adjusted legends through the years. Highly recommended for school and public libraries.

Donna W. Bowling

The thorn / Beverly Lewis. (The rose trilogy ; 1) Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010. LCCN 2010014545.
The judgment / Beverly Lewis. (The rose trilogy ; 2) Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2011. LCCN 2010041244.
HBB, 9780764205743, $14.99
Fic 346 p. ; 23 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 5
The Rose Trilogy begins with The Thorn, which revolves around two sisters, Rose Ann, determined to stay close to her Amish roots, and Hannah, who left a few years earlier to live in the “English” world.
Rose Ann cares for her invalid mother, Emma, who was injured in a buggy accident several years earlier and refuses to see a medical doctor. Rose Ann also cooks and cleans for an English neighbor, but she senses someone else in the house. Rose discovers a girl, Beth, living in the upstairs rooms—a teenager with the mind of a child, who develops an attachment to Rose. When her dad allows her to visit Rose Ann’s home, Beth begins to come out of her shell.
Rose’s neighbor, Nick, is a special friend, but because of his rejection of the Amish beliefs, Rose is unable to consider creating a life with him. She agrees to court Silas, an attractive, eligible Amish man.
In Book Two, The Judgment, Hannah’s husband files for divorce and seeks sole custody of their daughter. Rose continues to go out with Silas until a former friend, Rebekah, comes back to town, which creates a problem in his relationship with Rose Ann.
When Hannah’s husband, Brandon, is seriously injured in an auto accident, temporarily losing his sight, he agrees to allow Hannah to care for him at her Amish home.
Beverly Lewis has another winner with this series of books. Both books are page-turners, true to Amish customs and beliefs. Fans of this author will be anxiously waiting for book three, The Mercy, which is released in September 2011.
Juanita Wier Nobles

PAP, 9781400074686, $14.99
Fic xiii, 383 p. ; 21 cm.
Adult HS Rating: 4
The tentacles of Deathweed are spreading through the Expanse, causing death and destruction. With hope restored after he had failed to rescue some of his people from slavery to the beastmen, young king Cal-raven heads to join his Abascar refugees. Meanwhile, his trusted captain Tabor-Jan is leading that group of refugees toward the destination planned by the king. Cal-raven’s mentor, the sage Scharr ben Fray, travels to secure for the king scrolls and keys to the legendary city. Restored to life after his fall, the ale boy, sometimes called Rescue, guides the captives through an underground river to join the king and the other refugees.
In The Ale Boy’s Feast, the final volume of his The Auralia Thread series [CLJ 14, 2,3 (2010)], Jeffrey Overstreet picks up his narrative with chapters shifting from the activities of one traveling party to another. Even for readers who have read the three earlier volumes in the series, the intricate and complex plot lines may initially be perplexing. (Consulting “A Guide to the Characters” at the end of the
With rich inventive detail, often beautiful description, and some surprising twists, this fantasy is somewhat darker than the earlier volumes. Certain supernatural inventions credited to the evil Seers may seem bizarre. Of the memorable and well-defined characters, a few experience death and restoration to life, with pleasant impressions. Important themes include faith in the supreme ruler of the universe (sometimes referred to as the “mystery”) and appreciation of His agents, forgiveness and redemption following repentance, respect for other people groups, joy in service rather than control over others, gratitude and hope in troubling times. This well-written book is definitely recommended for readers of this type of fantasy.

Donna W. Bowling


Fic 226 p.; 21 cm.

Adult HS Rating: 5

Donita K. Paul’s writing sparkles with wit, creativity, and entertainment while delivering a challenging theme. She paints her characters with enough detail to bring them to life. The quirkiness of the shopkeepers on Sage Street, the obvious love Simon feels for his family, and the loneliness that envelops Cora make them endearing and memorable. Throughout the story, Cora grows beyond her desire for control of her surroundings to opening herself to the pain that comes from loving others as she has been loved by God. The plot moves quickly, and the surprise arrival of her prodigal sister increases the tension. Humor naturally flows from Paul’s writing. The oddities of Sage Street, like the fact that sometimes it is there, and other times it isn’t, and the wizards located on Sage Street add a sparkle to this fanciful tale. While there is an element of “magic” and wizardry in Two Tickets to the Christmas Ball, the focus remains solidly on what God has done for humanity. “Do not deny what God has given you. No matter who your earthly family is or how they have failed you, your Heavenly Father will never deny or forsake you. You are what you are, and He made you just so.” (p. 211)

Kristina Wolcott

In every heartbeat / Kim Vogel Sawyer. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010. LCCN 2010014686.

HBB, 9780764205101, $14.99

Fic 346 p.; 22 cm.

Adult (HS) Rating: 5
Kim Vogel Sawyer presents another great story of people searching for a closer life with God. Three orphaned teenagers who grew up in an institution enter university, each on a different path and with different goals. Libby wants to be a journalist, Bennett wants to join a fraternity and find a place to belong, and Pete seeks to follow God’s will and become a preacher.

Libby quickly finds a place for her writings, but is troubled because Pete is seeking to put a stop to romantic fiction in magazines, which is what she is writing. Bennett struggles to become known and is resentful when he does not attain his goal quickly. Pete seeks to locate the parents who cast him out of their home at age seven.

This is a delightful tale of friendship and college life in the early 1900’s. Life in that time is presented realistically. When Pete comes face to face with the parents who don’t seem to care for him, he faces his fears and comes to the aid of siblings he has never met.

The confines of high society try the soul of Libby, who would really rather not be a girl, until her heart is smitten with love. She finds love for God and for the man who has loved her all along. Bennett also comes of age and finds his place.

Another satisfying and well-written book by Sawyer.

Juanita Wier Nobles


PAP, 9780800734213, $14.99
Fic 422 p.; 22 cm.

Adult Rating: 5

From author Sarah Sundin comes an amazing, heartwarming debut novel centered around World War II. Allie Miller is excited to leave the boredom of her own home and beau to visit like-minded Christian friends in the country. Walt Novak, forever tongue-tied when around unattached young ladies, finds Allie mysteriously easy to talk to during his short time on furlough. Their attraction can’t go farther because of Allie’s long-time suitor, Baxter—not because she has any feelings for him, but she fears disappointing her parents by not going through with the marriage...whenever Baxter decides to propose. However, with the blessing of her parents, the two are allowed to correspond when Walt is shipped off to war. And that’s when the adventures begin. A Distant Melody is an epic tale on the power of prayer, love, faith, trust, and the importance of true friends.

The cast of characters in A Distant Melody is unique and believable. Allie and Walt are instantly likable. It’s easy to connect with the characters, as Sarah Sundin’s writing style flows with life and feeling. The war, seen through Walt’s eyes, is expressed in gritty detail. The parts when he is in combat are intense and suspenseful.

The intricate detail of the plot is amazing. When things start looking up for Allie or Walt, something else crashes into their lives, testing their faith time and again. While this isn’t an edge-of-your-seat suspense from cover to cover, Sundin keeps the story moving right along. What an engaging book! This is definitely a winner that will appeal to historical fans everywhere.

Katie McCurdy

HBB, 9780310327349, $24.99
Fic 272 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.
Adult Rating: 3

Walter Wangerin, Jr. gives readers a fresh look at the story of Ruth and Boaz in his novel, Naomi and Her Daughters, by weaving together various Old Testament stories and focusing primarily on the life of Naomi.

Naomi is Bethlehem's healer. Milcah, a motherless girl, is driven and abused by her difficult and selfish father, but Naomi gains the girl's trust and treats her like a daughter.

Naomi experiences great loss and bitterness when she receives news, via a severed hand, that Milcah has been brutally raped by the Benjamites. Her body, hacked into twelve pieces and sent to the tribes of Israel, is a call to war.

After Israel slaughters the tribe of Benjamin, famine grips the land. Naomi's family moves to Moab, where Naomi loses both her sons and her husband. Grief-stricken and bitter, she returns to Bethlehem with her second "daughter of the heart," Ruth. Though it is difficult for the two of them to survive, Naomi guides Ruth through the process of gaining the protection of—and marriage to—Naomi's kinsman, Boaz.

Wangerin writes with a spare, terse quality that matches the harshness of the lives of the Israelites. This gives a foreign, unfamiliar quality to otherwise familiar tales. The novel does not shy away from the coarseness of the character's lives, and the book is sprinkled with many crude words and epithets. Also, nudity is specifically described during a birthing scene, and the scene where Ruth lays herself at Boaz's feet; she appears before him, naked.

Naomi is portrayed as a hakama, the teller of tales and singer of songs that "give order to the wild complexities of their existence, songs to collect their mute emotions into a spear of cursings or the milk of blessings." A stern, yet passionate poetic beauty is woven throughout the novel in Naomi's many songs as she wrestles with her bitterness toward God, and comes to a kind of "truce" with the hand he has dealt her.

Sherri Beeler


PAP, 9780781403696, $14.99
Fic 303 p. ; 21 cm.
Adult Rating: 2

Lindsey has no father, and her mother is more interested getting Lindsey off her hands so she can drag home the next man she finds. Desperate for love, Lindsey falls into the perfect high school summer romance while staying at her aunt and uncle's beach house. Campbell and Lindsay promise to be faithful to each other during their school years apart, but Campbell ends up getting another girl pregnant and feels obligated to marry her and care for the child.

Now an adult, Lindsey's own marriage completely falls apart, and after the divorce is finalized she and her kids escape to the beach house to try to cope with the aftermath. Lindsey's thoughts turn toward Campbell, whom she
has never really stopped loving, and their first meeting as adults seems to hold promise for a renewal their old relationship.

Although the novel is intended to be a "chick lit" romance, Marybeth Whalen's *The Mailbox* appears to reward unfaithfulness. Apparently neither Lindsey nor Campbell invest wholly in their marriages, clinging instead to memories of their lost high school relationship. The story deals well with the ambivalence Lindsey feels about her husband and the divorce, but blames the failure of their marriage on her husband’s unfaithfulness, rather than any role Lindsey might also have played in its disintegration.

The characters appear flat and a bit cliché, although Lindsey’s character exhibits more realism in her emotional struggles. Additionally, many events are simply contrived as plot devices to add complications to the story, such as Campbell’s daughter’s struggle with anorexia—an important but ill-developed aspect of the story.

*Sherri Beeler*

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**Head in the clouds / Karen Witemeyer. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2010. LCCN 2010016353.**

PAP, 9780764207563, $14.99
Fic 366 p.; 22 cm.
Adult Rating: 4

Karen Witemeyer’s new romance novel lends a bit of Texas twist to *Jane Eyre*, in *Head in the Clouds*. Amanda Proctor is a stubborn, resourceful, and hopeless romantic who finds herself out of a teaching job and into a romantic tangle when she pursues a man, only to discover he’s living a double life. Instead of returning home she takes a position as governess to Isabella, the ward of Gideon Westcott, who traded in his privileged life in England for the hardships of Texas sheep ranching. As the attraction between Amanda and Gideon grows, so does the impending threat of the arrival of Lord Petchey, Isabella’s uncle. He’s scheming to take his niece and her inheritance back to England, and he plays by his own rules. Amanda must deal with the desires of her heart to protect little Isabella and protect herself against letting her attraction to Gideon get in the way of her duties as governess, which is compounded by Lord Petchey’s treachery.

Witemeyer’s adept writing style saves the plot from becoming mired in the usual trite recipe romance. She combines deft imagery and omniscient point-of-view to keep pages turning, even when the plot points are anticipated. Witemeyer provides a resolute research factor in her portrayal of a working western sheep ranch, and while the cover art and title might hint at a frothy romance, *Head in the Clouds* has a solidity fans of frontier historical fiction should appreciate.

*Pam Webb*

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PAP, 9781400073979, $13.99
Fic 342 p.; 21 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: *5

Cindy Woodsmall’s second book in Ada’s House Series focuses on Lena, the unmarried schoolteacher. She has a large, unsightly birthmark on her face, and
attributes her singleness to this flaw. At the age of twenty-four, no available man has courted her.

On the very first page, the author defines the conflict. A large, teen-age boy has made it his goal to torment and upset the teacher at every turn. When she tries to get help from his family, they side with him and leave Lena with no support. In fact, the boy's mother, who was the former teacher, belittles Lena to her family and others at every opportunity. Characters from the first book in the series are developed and endeared to the reader. Other conflicts are described as characters are introduced, and every one of them compels the reader to keep turning the pages.

Woodsmall's main theme is that people can overcome problems in their life situations and learn to accept defects in their physical appearance. Lena reaches out to a child with a physical impediment and in doing so she comes to realizes that her physical flaw is not as problematic as she thought. She helps the child overcome his feeling of inadequacy because he was born with a missing arm, and when she does, she realizes she is able to do the same with the large birthmark on her face.

The author clearly defines other characters and conflicts, as they are introduced. When describing children in the schoolroom, Woodsmall keeps their attributes consistent throughout, as she does with all the characters. The reader comes to empathize with each one, even the boy who bullies the teacher and all the other children in the one-room schoolhouse.

The author writes with a compelling style, drawing the reader in, weaving characters and situations to become friends of the reader. When the book ended, this reader wished for more.

Juanita Wier Nobles
Don’t call it a comeback: the old faith for a new day / edited by Kevin DeYoung; foreword by D.A. Carson. Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2011. LCCN 2010036244.

PAP, 978-1-4335-2169-0, $16.99
230/04624 252 p.; 23 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 4

If the cultural tide is turning against evangelical Christianity today, it is not because the Christian faith lacks continuity with the past or integrity in the present. In Don’t Call It a Comeback: The Old Faith for a New Day, eighteen of today’s most well-known young evangelical leaders bear evidence that the faith has lost none of its vigor. The diversity of the book’s contributors, led by pastor and editor Kevin DeYoung, accentuates the unity of their message. They speak together to educate, exhort, and encourage the Church of today and of future generations by reasserting the content and character of the historic Christian faith.

The overall discussion explores the basic contours of gospel-centered thought and life in terms of evangelical history, theology, and practice. The book is deeply rooted in the heritage of major doctrinal themes traced throughout Church history. Individual chapters outline important theological strongholds and relate them insightfully to contemporary challenges facing the Church. The practical matters considered include vocation, social justice, homosexuality, abortion, gender identity and role, local church life, worship, and missions.

A forward by D.A. Carson and DeYoung’s own introduction frame the overall presentation. The text is well-organized with subheadings, and frequent citation and extensive discussion of relevant biblical passages aid the authors’ exposition. Each chapter ends with a brief list of recommended readings. General and scripture indices further enhance access to the text. Footnotes are insightful but neither overwhelming nor distracting.

Don’t Call It a Comeback is well suited to adult readers seeking a fresh but historically-grounded perspective on the major aspects of the evangelical Christian faith. Young adult readers learning to articulate the faith will appreciate the model presented by the book’s young evangelical leaders.

Bradley A. Poteat


PAP, 978-0-7814-0365-8, $12.99
231.7 188 p.; 21 cm.
Adult Rating: 3

In this book, Beth Redman passes along a message that changed her life— that the God who made us also knows us intimately. He knows each person’s name and cares about his or her life. Beth was rejected by her earthly father and suffered severe abuse as a child. She tells very little about this, however. Her main emphasis is that God will be our guide and father throughout life. With positive personal examples, she tells how God led her and her husband through their years in the UK and later in the United States, along with their five children. She also uses many biblical examples, telling about saints in the Bible who went through the same trials we sometimes experience.
Eight chapters emphasize that God knows our past, he shapes our character, he knows our choices, and he is our helper, our defender, and our restorer. He knows our name and will never forget us. Throughout the book, Beth encourages a personal relationship with God through close communion with him. She adeptly uses many scriptures throughout the book, in order to bring out her ideas.

Redmon candidly tells about her life experiences and how God led her through them. Her book is very positive as she praises the God of the Universe for her deliverance and her happiness.

This book is very personal, yet it is suited for a Bible study, individual or group. A study guide is included for discussion.

Juanita Wier Nobles

  PAP, 9781426712227, $12.00
  242/.6431  136 p.; 21 cm.
  Adult  Rating: 5
A calm moment is rare in a mom’s chaotic day, but she needs it. She needs the inspiration to find God in the mess and the mundane that often define her. She needs to laugh and remember why she loves being a mom. Moms will recognize themselves in these pages, written for real, everyday mothers who know how to do many things at once in order to get the job done.

In this book, Kristen Welch has written fifty-two meditations for busy mothers. She recalls incidents with her three children or she writes about her own life, then she cites a scripture verse that applies to the particular situation. Adding a prayer at the end of the short meditation brings one’s focus to the creator of all and the reason for living—to glorify God in our lives and to help little lives in our care come to a saving knowledge of God.

Welch recalls embarrassing situations or times when she tried a wrong method with her children. As she relates these incidents, she tells what she learned from each one, and how the learning caused her to want to become a better mother. Sometimes they are hilarious, sometimes they are thought provoking.

This book is easy to read and the tendency is to read fast. The reader will often laugh aloud or quietly call on God as she absorb these lessons.

Kristen went to Kenya in 2010 with a team called Compassion International. The proceeds from the sale of this book will benefit the Mercy House, a home for pregnant girls living on the streets of Kenya.

Juanita Wier Nobles

  HBB, 9780764205033, $19.99
  248.3/2  208 p.; 24 cm.
  Adult  Rating: 4

Author Cindy Jacobs opens The Power of Persistent Prayer by answering the question of why we need to pray. She provides abundant scriptural references, along with quotes of noted pray-ers and illustrations from various individuals. She expounds on the case for persistent prayer with the parable of the widow who refuses to give up until she receives justice. Jesus establishes a precedent of prayer with the example of
how a poor, powerless, no-status individual receives fair treatment because of her insistent pursuit.

Another section describes aligning prayers with God’s will and being confident in prayer. Understanding God’s will as He reveals it to us is the basis for supreme confidence that a prayer has been heard, and will be answered. Mrs. Jacobs uses George Muller as an example. Knowing God orchestrated a speaking engagement for him in Quebec, Muller didn’t hesitate to pray aloud for a dense fog to dissipate so his paralyzed ship could arrive on time. To the Captain’s astonishment, the fog disappeared in an instant.

Anecdotes like this one, the author’s own personal experiences, and scripture encourage the believer to pray with passion and purpose. Ten chapters make up this manual for those concerned with a strategic life of prayer. Other topics she explores are Blockages to Answered Prayer, Fasting, Praying the Word, and Persistent Praise.

Long-time prayer activist, Cindy Jacobs has written a comprehensive guide to enhance and broaden spiritual development. Her practical tips build faith and challenge the reader to grow in the practice of prayer. She presents an easy-to-read, well-researched book that draws the reader toward a deeper journey with Christ. Five questions on each chapter are available in the back of the volume, along with comprehensive notes to facilitate further reading. This book will make a great addition for any Christian’s library.

Deborah H. Rabern


PAP, 9781434764461, $14.99
248.4 237 p.; 21 cm.
Adult Rating: *5

Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family, presents this inspirational book to help people understand that a closer relationship with God can come to us through hardships in our everyday life. Early in the book, Daly tells about being in China when some friends there said they would pray for him. Daly asked how they would pray. The spokesman said, “We are praying that you will have more persecution in America.” He went on to say that Chinese Christians view churches and Christians in America as weak, for strength comes through persecution.

Daly’s book is filled with inspiring anecdotes from his childhood, adult life, and international travels for Focus on the Family. His stories are engaging and heartfelt and bring home the truth that sometimes things that might seem tragic when they happen will actually demonstrate God’s grace as we look back on them. He does not give a step-by-step program, and yet he imparts biblical principles that show how to draw on the strength of Christ. He also tells many stories of people he has met through the years who drew their strength from God as he relates their trying situations.

Daly’s true stories are uplifting and encouraging. The book is divided into three parts. Daly focuses on man’s weakness first, then he presents the invitation of God and the acceptance of man, and finally he emphasizes how strength of perseverance, character, and hope leads the Christian to grow and trust in
God more fully. The chapters are concise with pull quotes and captions throughout, which divides the reading and keeps the reader interested. The candid, true experiences are compelling, interesting, and easy to read.

This book encouraged me because I like to know how the day-to-day experiences of people cause them to develop a deeper dependency on God. If I were recommending this book on a scale of one to ten, I would give it all that and more.

This inspiring non-fiction book would be a credit to any Christian library.

*Juanita Wier Nobles*

**Preparing my heart for grandparenting / Lydia E. Harris.** Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2010. LCCN .

PAP, 9780899570136, $12.99  
248.8/45  xii, 212 p. : ill. ; 26 cm.  
Adult  Rating: 5

Grandparents of all ages and in all stages will gain insight for their grand role as they read and study these six weeks of Bible-study lessons prepared for those who are already grandparents and those looking forward to that exciting event.

Each lesson is rich with information and inspiration as readers prepare in six different ways: for their new role, in prayer, as they model a Godly life, as they invest in the lives of their grandchildren, in times of joy and tears, and lastly as they attempt to make an eternal impact.

The author has the experience of five grandchildren herself, and her writing is filled with Scripture, wise admonitions and many entertaining and educational anecdotes. Each lesson (five for each of the six weeks of the study) is very well organized and includes questions, prayer ideas for that particular topic, and also weekend devotionals.

Even those who have been grandparents for some time can benefit from this study, straight from the loving heart of a grandmother who recognizes the important place that grandparents play in the lives of their grandchildren.

*Ceil Carey*

**Something like scales : finding light in a dark world / Ellen Gunderson Traylor.** Florence, OR:


HBB, 9780976810797, $16.99  
253.5  183 p. ; 23 cm.  
Adult  Rating: 3

*Something Like Scales* is a collection of personal experiences, re-framed Bible stories, and fables centering around a theme of enlightenment.

The book opens with an anecdote that describes the feel of absolute darkness, then segues into the story of Jesus healing the blind man with a poultice of mud made from spit. After this comes Plato’s Allegory of the Cave.

Subsequent portions explore Saul’s affliction with “something like scales,” the mystery of iniquity with the stories of Adam and Eve, as well as Cain and Abel. Other chapters survey the “scales” of religiosity, ignorance, and exclusivity. An excellent synopsis compares Buddhism and Christianity.

The book concludes with the story of Homer and his guide, and the necessity for redemption and the light of Jesus.

Author Ellen Gunderson Traylor invites the reader to consider the spiritual applications of her well-
written commentary. At the end of each chapter, she offers “Eye Openers,” a series of introspective and often speculative questions.

Some strict Bible constructionists may take issue with the creative license taken despite the quality of the writing. A different font distinguishes Mrs. Traylor’s fanciful story telling.

Something Like Scales is a recounting of the author’s personal meditations. Although some Scripture quotes head a few passages, there are minimal scripture references scattered throughout the text. Near the midpoint of the book, a questionable statement appears regarding vindication of the race of Cain. Readers are advised to verify that theological issues be established in fact, not personal opinion. However, the reader should bear in mind that this is merely a snapshot of the author’s musings along her unique spiritual journey.

Deborah H. Rabern


Life in the Balance carries the subtitle Biblical Answers for the Issues of Our Day. In this short volume, quadriplegic Joni Eareckson Tada and some of her contemporaries address hot-button issues like abortion, eugenics, euthanasia, and stem-cell research, as well as current problems such as violence and autism. From the depths of her experience and those of a shooting victim named Vicky, Joni shares that “we don’t forgive God for what happened. We take a deep breath and trust Him.” Steve Bundy explores the pitfalls of materialism in light of “the love of money [as] the root of all evil.” Kathy McReynolds uses the example of Terri Schindler as a springboard to discuss end-of-life issues like advance directives and ordinary vs. extraordinary care. Two of the writers’ guiding principles are that all people are made in God’s image and that there is no non-human human.

This volume’s purpose is to equip Christians to talk about and advocate for/against these issues based on God’s standards. Joni and her colleagues provide Scriptural principles backed by specific verses as well as current examples and research. They manage to do it in a thought-provoking, non-combative manner that holds weight. For example, the chapter about abortion is written by Sheila Harper, who founded SaveOne after regretting her abortion. The argument against fetal stem-cell research is more compelling because it is presented by Joni, who could conceivably benefit from such research. She argues that every human has equal dignity and provides the example of a paralysis victim named Laura who rejected the option of fetal stem-cell treatment and turned to nasal stem-cell treatment with good results. The last chapter calls for action by signing the Manhattan Declaration (summarized in appendix A) and changing thought, conversation, and action so God’s righteous kingdom will be promoted on earth.

Rebecca Velez

considerate guidelines for those who have a food addiction or disorder by choice. Another interesting section shows the tie-in between food addictions and other addictions.

Anyone who suffers from an eating disorder, or seeks to help someone else suffering from such a disorder will be interested in Hope, Help & Healing for Eating Disorders. The help one needs will start right at the first page. Even if such an individual does not yet desire to start on this program, the narrative will encourage the desire. It is also a good reference to keep handy during ongoing battles to overcome these problems.

Donna Eggett


PAP, 9780800794996, $13.99
B or 248.2/4092 249 p.; 22 cm.

Adult Rating: 4

In The Red Scorpion, Rami Kivisalo writes about his conversion and redemption in this gripping autobiography. He begins his life of violence as a teen, masters kung fu, becomes an international drug dealer, and sells out to demonic forces until he becomes a Christian. His story is a reminder of God’s unconditional love towards everyone, including this prodigal son.

Born in Finland and raised in a Christian family, his parents become missionaries to Tanzania when he is fourteen. Rami begins studying a rare form of kung fu, tapping into its dark supernatural side to gain more power. His life begins to spin out of control. He gets a red scorpion tattoo and begins drinking alcohol excessively. He continues a downward spiral, leading him into a life of illegal drug and arms trade, and into the inner circle of the Russian mafia.

The book is a candid, personal account of Rami’s journey into organized crime, demonic possession, and his struggle to fight the darkness after he accepts Jesus as his Savior. It is not sugar coated; it’s a realistic story of his ongoing struggle to free himself from his past by God’s grace. His story has a Pentecostal bent. But all who believe that demonic possession is real (and God has the ultimate
victory over evil) will appreciate the author's transparency and descriptive narrative.

Recommended for church libraries and adult collections in public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringen

The devil in pew number seven / Rebecca N. Alonzo with Bob DeMoss. Carol Stream, Ill.: Tyndale House, 2010. LCCN 2010007670.

PAP, 9781414326597, $14.99
B or 277.3 278 p. : photos.; 21 cm.
Adult Rating: 5

In this unbelievable true story, newspaper clippings, photographs, and vivid memories tell the story of a girl whose family was terrorized from her earliest memories. It reads like a novel, and has the feeling of a true-crime drama.

In 1969, Rebecca's father, Robert Nichols, accepts a pastorate in a close-knit community in North Carolina. Mr. Watts, an involved member in the church, opposes him and sets out to send the family away. Not long after Pastor Nichols arrives, he receives an anonymous letter saying that he has to leave, "crawling or walking... dead or alive."

Shortly after the family moves into the parsonage, this man begins a reign of terror that starts before Rebecca's birth and continues until she is seven. Mr. Watts and his henchmen shoot out the lights on the parsonage property, then set off dynamite near the church and parsonage, terrifying the family. The terrorism continues for several years. In spite of their efforts, the police are unable to find sufficient evidence to stop the man's vicious attacks.

Rebecca recalls fear and terror from her earliest memories, which continues until she is seven. Rebecca's father experiences both health and mental problems, until a terrifying night when an armed gunman shatters the life of the Nichols family.

The author recalls the courtroom trials that bring both the armed man and the man who terrorized her family to justice. However, the main theme of the book is forgiveness. Rebecca has to forgive the man who terrorized her. Her parents have taught her that the power to a victorious life lies in forgiving one's enemies.

Juanita Wier Nobles


HBB, 9781414339399, $22.99
B or 363.46092 xi, 267 p.; 24 cm.
Adult (older HS) Rating: 5

Prayerful pro-life activists who demonstrate authentic compassion not only can dissuade women from choosing abortion, they can also be catalysts for life change in abortion center workers. That is the prominent theme in Abby Johnson's personal story, Unplanned, co-authored with Cindy Lambert.

From her initial encounter with Planned Parenthood as a naïve college student wanting to help needy women, to a Planned Parenthood center director, Johnson walks readers through her journey. She depicts other volunteers and staff as well as pro-life advocates in a realistic light, while explaining her path
from one side of the abortion fence to the other. Johnson shares both her professional and personal experiences, including her own abortion and how her shallow faith deepened and changed.

Johnson's story is one that can resonate with readers from any vantage point of the abortion debate. She sheds light on the actions of anti-abortion activists who use violence or intimidation, as well as Planned Parenthood staff who are well-meaning but misguided. Her story contains strong sense of reality that may be especially piercing for female readers whose life experiences mirror Johnson's. As well, the book demonstrates how effective heartfelt compassion and prayer are in the best effort to reduce abortions.

Older teens, college students, women and those involved in any aspect of the crisis pregnancy-abortion cause will learn from Johnson's story. Physical details are clear but not unnecessarily gruesome.

Karen Schmidt
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 words every middle schooler should know</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 words series</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150 projects to strengthen your photography skills</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Roland March mystery</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggie the brave</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcorn, Randy C.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ale boy’s feast</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexander, Tamera</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alonzo, Rebecca Nichols</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American heroes</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Ada's house novel ; 2</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspire</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Auralia thread ; 4</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austin, Lynn</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back on murder</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailey Flanigan series : 2</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batson, Wayne Thomas</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beatrix Potter</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Berenstain Bears and the joy of giving</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berenstain, Jan</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berenstain, Mike</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bergren, Lisa Tawn</td>
<td>5, 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bertrand, J. Mark</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black, Chuck</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boeshaar, Andrea</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bones : skeletons and how they work</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Booker T. Washington : getting into the schoolhouse</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyer, Franklin</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The boys' book of adventure : are you ready to face the challenge?</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys of wartime</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The bridge of peace</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brimer, Larry Dane</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Brooklyn nine : a novel in nine innings</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryant, Laura J.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calkhoven, Laurie</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cascade : a novel</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The chasm : a journey to the edge of</td>
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<td>life</td>
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<td>Chorao, Kay</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
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<td>City boy</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohen, Hannah</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collins, Brandilyn</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbett, Sue</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crum, Shatta</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
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<td>Crump, Marty</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daly, Jim</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel at the Siege of Boston, 1776</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeRosa, Tom</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
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<td>The devil in pew number seven</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
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<td>DeVries, Anne</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeYoung, Karen</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
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<td>A distant melody : a novel</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
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<td>Donovan, Gail</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't call it a comeback : the old faith for a new day</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't make me come up there! : quiet moments for busy moms</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The door within : 2, 3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dormer, Frank W.</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doubleday, Dorothy</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The earth : its structure &amp; its changes</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easterby, John</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecob, Simon</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enchantment of the world</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure : a novel</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The final storm</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For you they signed : the spiritual heritage of those who shaped our nation</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Froman, Craig</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatto, Kim</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George and Martha one fine day</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A girl in the gatehouse</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God gave us the world</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God knows my name : never forgotten, forever loved</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gow, Mary</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gratz, Alan</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great minds of ancient science and math</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great War series ; 2</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The greatest doctor of ancient times : Hippocrates and his oath</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gresh, Hannah</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hake, Cathy Marie</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harris, Lydia E.</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head in the clouds</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Here burns my candle</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higgs, Liz Curtis</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobbs, Valerie</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope, help &amp; healing for eating disorders</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurtig, Jennifer</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can read. Level 1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I see the rhythm of the gospel</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Igsus, Toyomi</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In every heartbeat</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In memory of Gorfman T. Frog</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigate the possibilities</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacobs, Cindy</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jantz, Gregory L.</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenkins, Steve</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jetses, Cornelis</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
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<td>Johnson, Abby</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The judgment</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just call me Kate</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K is for kite : God's springtime alphabet</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katz, Bobbi</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The King Raven trilogy ; 2, 3</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The kingdom series ; 1-6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingdom's call</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingdom's dawn</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingdom's edge</td>
<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kingdom's hope</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
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<td>Kingdom's quest</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingdom's reign</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingsbury, Karen</td>
<td>39, 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kivisalo, Rami</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Klassen, Julie</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INDEX

Lang, Maureen 41
The last best days of summer 22
The last newspaper boy in America 21
Lawhead, Steve 42
Learning 39
Lewis, Beverly 42, 43
Life in the balance 53
Lindert, Linda 26
Little Bear and the Marco Polo 7
The mailbox : a novel 46
Manning, Jane 17
Marrin, Albert 28
Marshall, James 6
Martin, Steve 28
Michael, Jan 23
Minarik, Else Holmelund 7
More pocket poems 16
My favorite writer 20
Mylin, Andy 11
Mylin, Janet 11
Mysteries of the Komodo dragon 15
Naomi and her daughters 46
An off year 31
Overstreet, Jeffrey 43
Passport to the world : your A to Z guided language tour 14
Paul, Donita K 44
Pearce, Emily Smith 7
Pharaoh's boat 18
The power of persistent prayer : praying with greater purpose and passion 50
Prelutsky, Jack 17
Preparing my heart for grandparenting 52
The red scorpion : the true story of a ruthless Russian mob boss's dramatic redemption 54
Redman, Beth 49
Reeves, Carolyn 14
Rhymes round the world 17
Ries, Lori 8
The rise of the Wyrm Lord 21
Ritchie, Scot 7
River of dreams : the story of the Hudson River 19
The river of time series ; 1, 2 31
The rose trilogy ; 1, 2 42
Sawyer, Kim Sawyer 44
Scarlet 42
Seasons of redemption ; 3, 4 37
Secret keeper girl series ; 4 11
Sequel to Edge of eternity 34
Serendipity 38
Skurzynski, Gloria 27
Slowpoke 7
Something like scales : finding light in a dark world 52
Story Bible for older children : Old Testament 13
Stronger : trading brokenness for unbreakable strength 51
Sundin, Sarah 45
Tada, Joni Eareckson 53
Talbott, Hudson 19
There's no place like school : classroom poems 17
This is rocket science : true stories of the risktaking scientists who figure out ways to explore beyond Earth 27
Thompson, Carol 6
The thorn 42
Thunder-boomer! 6
Timber Ridge reflections ; 3 34
Traylor, Ellen Gunderson 52
Tuck 42
Two tickets to the Christmas Ball 44
Undaunted faith 37
Unexpected love 37
Unlocked 40
Unplanned : the dramatic true story of a former Planned Parenthood leader's eye-opening journey across the life line 55
Wangerin, Walter 46
Wargin, Kathy-Jo 13
Waterfall : a novel 31
Weitzman, David 18
Welch, Kristen 50
Whalen, Marybeth 46
While we're far apart 35
Whisper on the wind 41
Wings of glory ; 1 45
Witemeyer, Karin 47
Within my heart 34
Wood, Michele 25
Woodsmall, Cindy 47
Wright, David K. 26
Years of dust : the story of the Dust Bowl 28
Zemke, Deborah 16
Zulkey, Claire 31