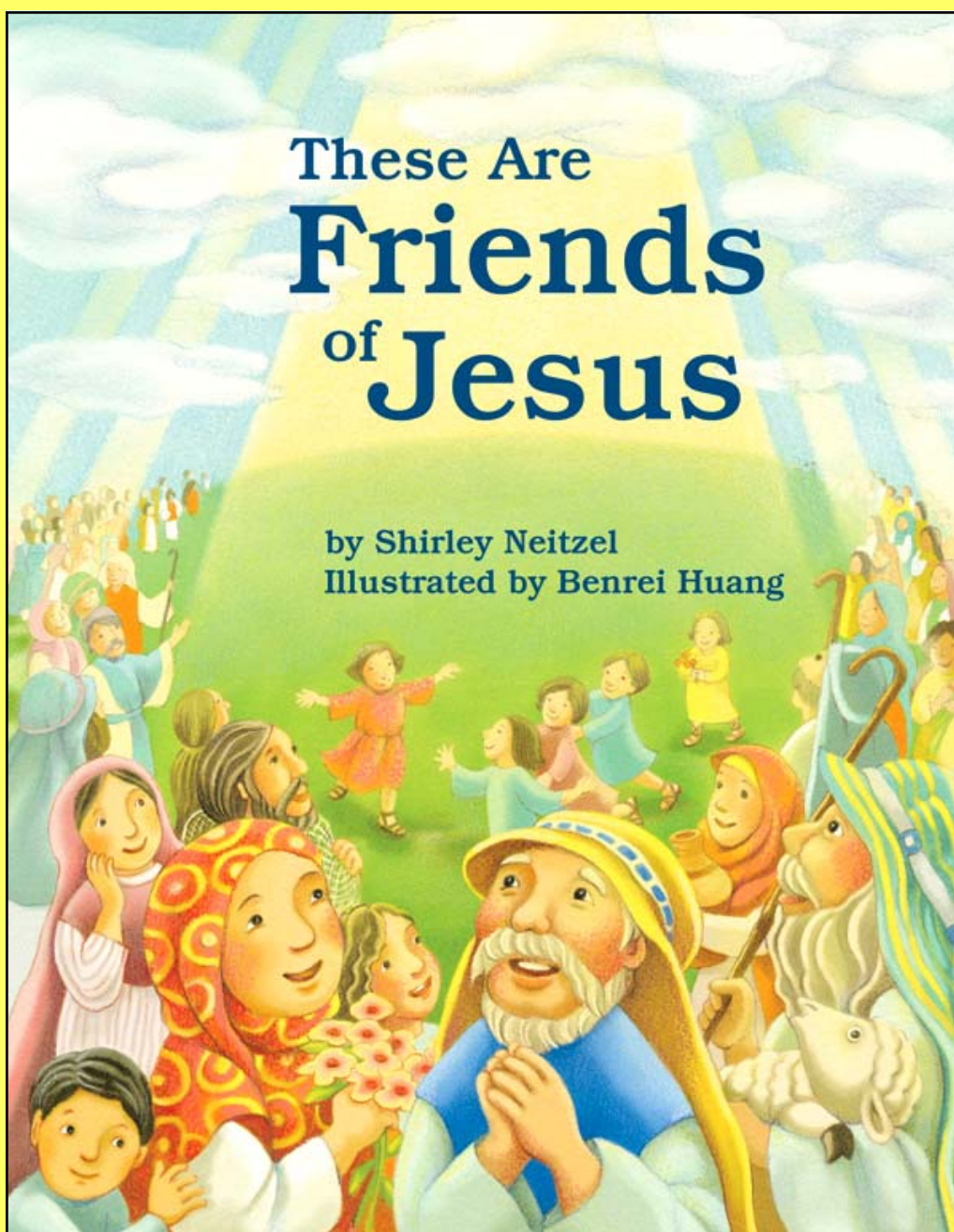


Volume XI, No. 3
September 2006

Christian Library



J O U R N A L





A Letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Greetings from Cashmere, Washington. After traveling or being in Haiti from January 2 until August 11, with a brief trip home for surgery, it's great to have time to spend with family, friends, and CLJ. I am so thankful!

This issue has been a long time coming. My Mac, now about 12 years old, no longer works as well as it did originally. The format for *CLJ* was created originally by a professional graphics artist, using Quark Xpress, a publishing program I learned to use only by adding new content to the prior issue, and trial and error after that. Quark is made for the Mac only, so moving to a Windows compatible program has been a need for the past few years. When my Mac finally refused to access the Internet, as my browser is too old, and the OS too old to allow updates, the decision to work in Microsoft Publisher was made for me. I admit I have been stalling, not knowing if I could format *CLJ* in another program. Once I dug in and really tried to format in Publisher, using Help regularly, things came together, and now putting together an issue of *CLJ* is easier than I knew it could be, thanks to God.

Isn't this a wonderful metaphor for our response to God's call? His call is specific and personal, accompanied by the gifts he has given us, but we hesitate to answer, fearful that we won't be able to do whatever he asks. And when we finally answer the call, yes, there are difficulties, but what we need is given to carry out the work. If we could only remember, how much less procrastination there would be in our lives.

We have made some progress on the Core Collection, but not enough to permit a section to be included this year. Hopefully, we will have content and formatting worked out, and final title selections made to allow the first section or two to be in the upcoming publication year.

In Christ's love,



Nancy L. Hesch

Nancy L. Hesch



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The purpose of the *Christian Library Journal* is to provide readers with reviews from a Christian point of view of both Christian and secular library materials. Materials reviewed may reflect a broad range of Christian doctrinal positions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the *Christian Library Journal*.

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Nancy Hesch Editor & Publisher

Section Editors:

Dr. Ray Legg	Nonfiction
Mary McKinney	Articles
	Fiction
	YA Nonfiction
Maxine Cambra	YA Fiction
Rosemarie DiCristo	Children's Nonfiction
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Cover image: *These Are Friends of Jesus*: text by Shirley Neitzel, illustrations by Benrei Huang, © 2006 Augsburg Fortress. Used with permission.

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“...Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven.” Matthew 5:14 (NIV)

Kristi Wolcott

Vision Video presents four DVDs that teach about people who have let their light shine for God's glory. In the Yali Story, God's light shines through missionaries and Christian nationals who overcome obstacles to translate the Bible into the Yali language. God's light shines in evangelists in colonial Virginia as the Great Awakening brings about the dawn of religious freedom in *The Gospel of Liberty*. C.H. Spurgeon Tonight shows how God used C.H. Spurgeon to light the way for many to know Christ. Finally, *Mother Teresa, Woman of Compassion* demonstrates how God's light can shine through a life of service. Although the method of reaching others varies as much as the doctrines of the individuals, each story shares a common thread. The single-minded goal of each of these people is to demonstrate Christ's love for

others by allowing their light to shine through their good deeds for Christ and to bring glory to God.

These informative DVDs would be useful in any church library or classroom setting. The Yali Story could be used effectively to present information on missions. However, this DVD does include occasional glimpses of the Yali in their traditional dress, including men in nothing but penis gourds and women in nothing but their skirts. *The Gospel of Liberty* and *C.H. Spurgeon Tonight* would be useful in conjunction with a history unit covering the same time period. *The Gospel of Liberty* also includes bonus materials about colonial dress and colonial Williamsburg that teachers may find interesting for classroom use. *Mother Teresa, Woman of Compassion*, is

The Yali story / . Worcester, Pa. : Vision Video, n.d.

DVD, 1563648504, list price: \$19.99.

B or 266/.009951. Yali (Indonesian people)—Missions. 1 videodisc (75 min.) : col., sd. ; 4 3/4 in.

Adult. Rating : 4.

The Yali Story intertwines the story of God's transformation of the Yali people with the story behind the translation of the Bible into the Yali language. Testimonies of the nationals blend with those of the missionaries to present an inspirational picture of how God uses people to accomplish his will.

The Yali Story clearly presents the story of missions to the Yali people but also shows the work the Yali have accomplished for the Lord. Stunning views of the mountains of Papua New Guinea enhance this well-done documentary. Excellent bonus features give more details on the mission work, the missionaries, and a music video.

Gospel of liberty : Virginia's great awakening and the separation of church and state / director, Andrew Gardner. LCCN 569903. Worcester, Pa. : Vision Video, n.d.

DVD, list price: \$19.99.

280/.4/0973. Williamsburg, Va.; Church and state; Great Awakening. 1

videodisc (37 min.) : col., sd. ; 4 3/4 in.

Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 4.

The Gospel of Liberty relates some of the events leading up to the Great Awakening as well as some of the events providing the foundation for freedom of religion in America. It recounts a time when the appointed leaders of colonial Virginia try to quell the influx of itinerate preachers who seem to encourage people to pursue salvation apart from the state-sanctioned church. As people discover a relationship with Christ, they desire to meet with other like-minded believers. In living-history style, Thomas Jefferson narrates using authentic quotes from his bill that introduced freedom of religion to Virginia.

The Williamsburg set and well-designed costumes from the colonial period add to the authenticity of *The Gospel of Liberty*. Colonial music plays in appropriate sections. Bonus features include a very interesting segment on period dress and a segment about the Williamsburg colony.

C.H. Spurgeon tonight / features Dr. Craig Skinner. Worcester, Pa. : Vision Video, n.d.

DVD, list price: \$14.99.

B or 286/.1/092. Spurgeon, C. H. (Charles Haddon), 1834-1892; Baptists—England—Clergy—Biography. 1 videodisc (56 min.) : col., sd. ; 4 3/4 in.

Adult. Rating : 3.

C.H. Spurgeon Tonight introduces the dynamic Baptist pastor, C. H. Spurgeon and it recounts many of the facets of his years of ministry. Spurgeon's creed shines through his passion for preaching, for training new pastors, and for helping the helpless. He said of himself, "...if I am asked what is my creed, I reply, 'It is Jesus Christ.'"

While *C.H. Spurgeon Tonight* presents helpful biographical information, the format feels a little bit outdated with grainy drawings of places Spurgeon preached or visited providing much of the visual while the biographical information is presented. The audio is not as clear as most modern audio is. Periodically the narrative is interrupted by a sing-along style version of some of Spurgeon's favorite hymns. After the biographical information is presented, a drum roll introduces a man dressed as C.H. Spurgeon who gives a living history type presentation and ends with a mini-sermon. Although the format of *C.H. Spurgeon Tonight* may be a bit out of date, the message remains. "The influence of his preaching and writings continues to light the way for others."

Mother Teresa / written by David Aikman and Tom Ivy. (Great souls.) Worcester, Pa. : Vision Video, n.d.

DVD, list price: \$19.99.

B or 271/.97. Teresa, Mother, 1910-; Missionaries of Charity—Biography; Nuns—India—Biography; Missionaries; Nobel prizes—Biography; Women—Biography. 1 videodisc (56 min.) : col., sd. ; 4 3/4 in.

Adult. Rating : 5.

Mother Teresa, Woman of Compassion documents the life of Agnes Bojaxhiu, otherwise known as Mother Teresa. Born in 1910 to compassionate and generous parents, Agnes learns the virtue of helping others. A devout Catholic, Agnes decides to become a nun when she feels God's call to serve him. Throughout the years, Mother Teresa's compassion reaches beyond borders to shine a light to the helpless all over the world. "It is Christ in His distressing disguise whom I love and serve." — Mother Teresa

This outstanding DVD *Mother Teresa, Woman of Compassion* contains excellent footage showing where Mother Teresa lived and worked. The people whom Mother Teresa affected are interviewed including Dan Rather, who called Mother Teresa a "steel lily." The DVD ends with a wonderful musical tribute to a woman who touched so many throughout her life.

Review Rating System

- * **Outstanding quality**
- 5 Excellent quality**
- 4 Very good quality**
- 3 Good quality**
- 2 Fair quality**
- 1 Poor quality**

With fiction, this 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.

With nonfiction, this includes quality of the information, up to date, stimulates further inquiry, adds to the understanding of the topic, illustrations which are informative and appropriate.

A book may be outstanding from a literary point of view, but still have content that is objectionable in itself or in the way it is handled. Therefore, a high rating does not necessarily indicate that a book is recommended.

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.

Commonly used abbreviations in CLJ reviews

C Canadian Library Cataloging Number

ISBN International Standard Book Number

LCCN Library of Congress Cataloging Number

HBB Hardbound book

LGP Large print book

LIB Library edition

LLB Loose-leaf binding

PAP Paperbound book

PBB Paper board book

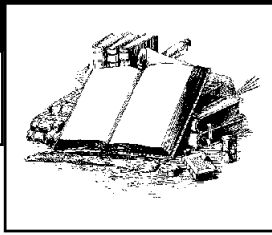
SPR Spiral bound book

CAS Audiocassette

CDR CD-ROM

DVD Videodisc

VID Videocassette



*

**The biggest bear / Lynd Ward.
LCCN 52008730. Boston :
Houghton Mifflin, 1952.**

LIB, 0395148065, list price: \$16.00.
E. Bears—Fiction. 84 p. : illus. ; 28 cm.
Grades PS-3. Rating : *5.

In Lynd Ward's *The Biggest Bear*, young Johnny is so humiliated by the lack of a bearskin on his family's barn wall that he goes out with his gun into the woods to shoot a bear himself. Instead, he comes home with a small bear cub to keep as a pet. As the bear grows, he becomes a great annoyance to Johnny's own family and to the neighbors in their valley. After several ineffective attempts to get the bear to make his home in the woods, Johnny finally leads his huge pet out in the woods to shoot him. But before he can accomplish his chore, the bear suddenly pulls Johnny through the woods and into a trap set by men from a nearby zoo, thus saving Johnny from his unhappy responsibility.

Before Lynd Ward wrote and illustrated *The Biggest Bear*, he had already illustrated a number of other books, including two Newbery Medal books: *The Cat Who Went to Heaven*, by Elizabeth Coatsworth, 1931; and *Johnny Tremain*, by Esther Forbes, 1944. Although Ward used full color in some of the more than two hundred books that he illustrated, for *The Biggest Bear* he chose a monochrome effect using black and brown watercolor. The full-page illustrations on the right-hand pages almost tell the story alone, without the benefit of the few lines of text placed near the bottom of the opposing pages. The white space on the opposite pages enhances the effectiveness of the sympathetic portrayal of a rural mountain society of years past. Sensitive told, this story lends itself to

discussion of love of pets and family, acceptance of personal responsibility in a community, and the pros and cons of killing animals for sport. This 1953 Caldecott Medal book is highly recommended for Christian school and home libraries.

Donna W. Bowling

**God created / by Mark Francisco
Bozzuti-Jones ; illustrated by Jui
Ishida. LCCN 2003040367.
Minneapolis : Augsburg Books,
2003.**

HBB, 0806645687, list price: \$16.99.
231.7/65. Creation. 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ;
29 cm.
Grades PS-3. Rating : 5.

Mark Francisco Bozzuti-Jones's *God Created* "celebrates the natural and human worlds and reminds us of our shared origin and kinship." Many books about creation merely mention conspicuous examples in the natural world. *God Created*, however, includes seeds, insects, plants in the water, language, and stories. Naturally, lions, tigers, and horses have their place, too!

Jui Ishida uses bright colors, with a talent for shading into subtle tones. I enjoyed her artwork showing that God created the beginning, the middle, and the end of all things. One page shows a person in four life stages—from a baby to an elderly man with gray hair and a wrinkled face.

Personal relationships are stressed in this book. We read, "God created tears and laughter, smiles, frowns, winces, hugs, and friendships, too." This emphasis gives boys and girls permission to own their feelings. After all of these marvelous creations, children can feel very special when they hear the last page, "God created you."

I had a tiny quibble with the phrase, "God created men, women, and children

all over the earth." I think of Him directly creating Adam and Eve, and people eventually spreading throughout the world. Yet, I also realize God creates each tiny baby. And, in case you wondered, I will happily read this book to my little granddaughters!

Roberta Lou Jones

*

**The little island / by Margaret
Wise Brown ; with illustrations by
Leonard Weisgard. LCCN
2004541591. New York :
Doubleday Books for Young
Readers, 2003, c1946.**

HBB, 0385746407, list price: \$14.95.
E. Seasons—Fiction; Islands—Fiction. 1 v.
(unpaged) : ill. ; 21 x 26 cm.
Grades K-2. Rating : *5.

When Leonard Weisgard produced his illustrations for *The Little Island*, he had in mind a specific island off the coast of Maine. The disarmingly simple story shows how changes in seasons, the weather, and day and night affect the little island. One summer day a little kitten comes to the island with some people on a picnic. As he is exploring, the Island tells the kitten that he, too, is like a little island. The kitten accepts the challenge to "take it on faith" as a fish describes for him how the island is actually part of the land—"a part of the world and a world of its own."

Margaret Wise Brown used the pseudonym of Golden MacDonald for this story that employs mild personification. Illustrator Leonard Weisgard, painted his superb illustrations on pressed wood using opaque tempera mixed with egg white. Full-page five-color illustrations adorn the right-hand pages. The text on the left pages is frequently accompanied by further related illustrations in the more subdued two-color duotone used for the

endpapers. Weisgard's birds and butterflies, seals and strawberries are done with exquisite detail and are placed in the midst of striking landscapes and seascapes featuring brilliant greens and blues.

This 1947 Caldecott Medal book can be used in discussions of time and seasons, weather, geography, and plants and animals. It also lends itself to focus on attention to detail or on the meaning of faith. This delightful book is highly recommended for public, school, and home libraries including Christian schools and homes. (My son insisted on a personal copy for his own young son!)

Donna W. Bowling

Mama : a true story in which a baby hippo loses his mama during a tsunami, but finds a new home, and a new mama / Jeanette Winter. LCCN 2005020905. Orlando, Fla. : Harcourt, 2006.

HBB, 0152054952, list price: \$16.00.

E. Hippopotamus—Infancy; Parental behavior in animals; Tsunamis—Environments aspects. 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 20 x 24 cm.

Grades PS-1. Rating : 5.

A unique picture book which will be enjoyed by all ages, *Mama* is a true story from the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. Far from the Tsunami epicenter, a Kenyan juvenile hippopotamus is swept away from its herd and its beloved mama. Kind people rescue it and put it in an African nature reserve where it finds a most unusual new mama. The flamboyant, colorful, emotions-engaging acrylic illustrations tell the story. Only two words are used, cleverly situated repetitions of Mama and Baby. In closing, author Jeanette Winter appends the full story of this occurrence.

Eminently suited to today's visual audience, *Mama* presents a complete, satisfying narrative. And a reassuring

one as well. The possibilities of a disaster in their own area worry children and adults. *Mama* provides a comforting reality in the midst of catastrophe. It displays love, care for the helpless, and joie de vivre. With a little encouragement, helpful discussions will flow from the reading of this beautiful volume. The bold, primitive illustrations will encourage young artists. A good book for sharing, little ones will also be happy to handle this book for themselves.

Donna Eggett

Owen's walk / written by Karen Hill ; illustrated by Carol Thompson. LCCN 2005012900. Nashville : Tommy Nelson, 2006.

HBB, 1400306949, list price: \$14.99.

E. Christian life—Fiction; Allegories. 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 x 28 cm.

Grades PS-1. Rating : 4.

Owen is a lively little boy with a big imagination. One day Owen gets ready for an adventure through the woods. He has a backpack from his grandmother with items he might need and a "Book of Signs" to guide him on his way. Owen's journey is sometimes difficult, but when he follows his book, he is able to trek through the woods and make it home. He feels stronger and more courageous when he finishes. With delightful watercolor illustrations, *Owen's Walk* is an allegory which teaches children the importance of memorizing Scripture and how the Bible guides us through life's journeys.

Karen Hill has written a fun book which children will delight in reading again and again. Watercolor illustrations by Carol Thompson enhance the story and are well done. The story shows a beautiful relationship between Owen and his grandmother. The plot moves along nicely and will keep a child's attention. A bonus in the back of the book is a fold

out map of Owen's journey through the woods and the Scripture depicted in the icons of Owen's *Book of Signs*. Worthy of concern is that this small child is sent by himself through the woods to walk home. It is dark when he finally arrives. The story makes it clear he's never done this before.

Pam Halter

Prairie Christmas / written by Elizabeth Van Steenwyk ; illustrated by Ron Himler. LCCN 2004009869. Grand Rapids : Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2006.

HBB, 0802852807, list price: \$17.00.

E. Prairies—Fiction; Midwives—Fiction; Mothers and daughters—Fiction; Christmas—Fiction. 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 x 27 cm.

Grades K-5. Rating : 4.

Prairie Christmas, by Elizabeth Steenwyk, showcases life on the Nebraska prairie. Emma is 11, and looking forward to Christmas with her mother. Early that morning a neighbor gallops up and urges her mother to hurry to the Van Der Meer's to deliver a baby. Emma goes along and helps entertain the small children, Hansie and Will. They decorate a Christmas tree and Emma cooks Christmas porridge. The baby is born, and Emma realizes helping others makes a special Christmas.

Ronald Himler's pencil and watercolor drawing aptly show life in 1880. Meet Old Dan, the faithful horse. Note the wood-burning cooking stove, the stable joining the house, and the sleeping cupboard. The illustrations are abundant and realistic. I enjoyed the expression on Emma's face as she admired the baby, and gave it her warm scarf.

While the children wait for the birth, they "hear alarming sounds from the bedroom." Emma suggests they sing "Silent Night," but Hansie and Will

“don’t seem to know the words.” Children who are ready to discuss babies being born will pick up on the birthing theme.

Roberta Lou Jones

Princess Madison and the Royal Darling Pageant / Karen Scalf Linamen ; illustrated by Phyllis Hornung. LCCN 2005016807. Grand Rapids : Fleming H. Revell, 2006.

HBB, 0800718402, list price: \$12.99.

E. Self-perception—Fiction; Self-esteem—Fiction; Princesses—Fiction; Sisters—Fiction. 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 21 cm.

Grades PS-3. Rating : 5.

Every little girl dreams of being a princess, and though we grow older, there remains a special place in our hearts for fairy tales that end in “happily ever after.” In *Princess Madison and the Royal Darling Pageant* we encounter a young princess who struggles with the authenticity of her title. While her sister and other princesses in the kingdom easily display a winning smile, golden hair, and polite table manners, Madison is a little rough around the edges and doesn’t fit the typical princess description quite as easily.

After all of her plans to verify her identity as a princess have failed, she learns an important lesson from her father. It serves as an equally meaningful reminder to the reader: it’s not about who we are, but Whose we are.

Cleverly written with modern examples, Karen Scalf Linamen takes the reader along into a magical literary kingdom. Vibrant illustrations by Phyllis Hornung add to an already lively tale and make it a wonderful story for children and parents to share.

“The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord.” Psalm

45:11

Sarah Burkhead

Sing praise / by Rhonda Gowler Greene ; illustrated by Janet Broxon. LCCN 2005010848. Minneapolis : Augsburg Books, 2005.

HBB, 0806651202, \$16.99.

E. Stories in rhyme; Christian life—Fiction; Nature—Fiction. 1 v. (unpaged) : ill. ; 29 x 22 cm.

Grades PS-2. Rating : 4.

A happy, vibrant picture book, *Sing Praise* models the lilting words of Psalms 148 and 150. From mouse to chimpanzee, ocean to sky, seasons and weather, young to old, all dance and sing their praises to the Lord on high. No musical notation included; however the poetry invites rhythm and song. Children and adults will raise their voices with enjoyment as all of creation joyfully praises the Lord.

Teacher and award winning children’s author Rhonda Greene’s book *Sing Praise* boldly captures in contemporary words the joy and acclaim of Psalms 148 and 150, providing a ‘glad thanksgiving song to God.’ Noted for her textile designs and book illustrations, Janet Broxon’s effervescent, swirling, cheerful watercolors marry happily with the text. Children will have fun with *Sing Praise*; art classes will be interested in the illustrations.

Donna Eggett

Another look at the same title.

Grades 3-6. Rating : 4.

Sing Praise, by Rhonda Gowler Greene, is based on Psalm 148 and Psalm 150. Everything praises the Creator. Janet Broxon illustrates praise by humans and praise by animals, mountains, trees, and sun. People of various ethnic groups, “...raise up high in sweet refrain sincerest adoration, praising God, exalting him...in song and celebration.”

Several features are positive for story times with preschoolers. The large pages contain words that either rhyme or have memorable cadences. Broxon’s pictures are easily seen by a small group of children gathered around the storyteller. One page offers a whimsical monkey. A farm scene includes milk cows that moo “in beastly joyful song.”

Roberta Lou Jones



These are friends of Jesus / by Shirley Neitzel ; illustrated by Benrei Huang. LCCN 2005010459. Minneapolis : Augsburg Books, 2006.

PAP, 0806651199, list price: \$9.99.

E or 232.9/5. Jesus Christ—Friends and associates—Juvenile literature. 1 v. (unpaged) : ill. ; 26 cm.

Grades PS-3. Rating : *5.

“Shirley Neitzel describes the friends of Jesus. Shepherds were “joyful friends of Jesus.” Teachers in the temple were “thoughtful friends of Jesus.” The disciples were “loyal friends of Jesus.” The forgiven thief was a “humble friend of Jesus.” The first page reads, “God sent Jesus, his only son, to be a friend to everyone. Come meet some friends of Jesus.” The cadence resembles “This Is the House that Jack Built.”

Benrei Huang’s artwork adds much to the storyline. Women look surprised and joyous when the angel announces the resurrection. Palm trees, boats on the Sea of Galilee, and even a frog in water add good detail.

“How Do We Know About Jesus’ Life?” offers Scripture and summaries of the various friends of Jesus. As an example, “For hundreds of years prophets said God would send a savior to the world. The people of Israel looked forward to his coming. So when the angel Gabriel came to Mary...she knew her son was

the promised one.”

The conclusion notes, “These are some people who heard God’s word and worshiped his Son as Savior and Lord. They all are true friends of Jesus.” Buy *These Are Friends of Jesus* for family use, children’s Sunday School classrooms, and church libraries. This paperback is nicely bound and the slick cover will easily clean.

Roberta Lou Jones

Trains : steaming! pulling! huffing! / by Patricia Hubbell ; illustrated by Sean Addy. 1st ed. LCCN 2004104468. New York : Marshall Cavendish, 2005.

HBB, 0761451943, list price: \$14.95.

E. Railroads—Trains—Fiction; Stories in rhyme. 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 cm.

Grades 1-3. Rating : 4.

Author Patricia Hubbell has written a rhythmic concept poem about the many different types of trains: passenger trains, freight trains, electric trains, subway trains, trolleys, and toy trains. Types of train cars are listed as well as train itineraries north and south and east and west “all across our great big nation.” Megan Halsey and Sean Addy team to create illustrations using clip art, etchings, original drawings, and maps in their collages.

Trains: Steaming! Puffing! Huffing! is a book for several audiences, one to be read at several levels. The young child will enjoy hearing the rhythmic poetry and examining the detailed collages, but the adult reader will enjoy the puns and wordplay that they will, hopefully, explain to the child. Once the fun and puns in the illustrations are noted, both child and adult will giggle over the tank car which is a swimming pool for seals, the blue baboon express with a banana eating baboon engineer, the Union Pacific cattle cars where the cows proclaim, via a speech bubble, that

maybe they are lost. Fonts, text size, and color vary for emphasis. Hubbell keeps the voice and feet tapping; and Halsey and Addy keep the eye returning to find another joke. *Trains* is a keeper, but not an essential book for your collection.

Marion Mueller

Your special gift / Max Lucado ; illustrations by David Wenzel. LCCN 2005032169. Wheaton, Ill. : Crossway Books, 2006.

HBB, 1581346980, list price: \$15.99.

E. Individuality—Fiction; Gifts—Fiction; Self-acceptance—Fiction. 31 p. : ill. ; 26 cm.

Grades PS-3. Rating : 5.

Your Special Gift, like the other books in a series of children’s tales, *If Only I Had A Green Nose*, *Best of All*, and *You Are Mine*, best selling author Max Lucado inspires readers to do the right thing. In this case, every day Wemmicks learn to use their God-given gifts to serve others. The Wemmicks attempt to help a family in need. At first, helpful Hans tries to offer a quick solution encouraging his fellow Wemmicks to jump to the aid of a needy family. Though well intended, the Wemmicks struggle to meet the needs of the family by doing all the wrong things. The poor family is left “still shivering and their tummies still growled.” Punchinello is the main character and leads the group to Eli the master woodcarver for counsel. Eli helps Punchinello and his friends discover what special gifts God has given each of them and then they can make a difference.

In this heart warming story, Lucado uses wonderful characters, like Lucia who loves to paint, to demonstrate how God endows us each with unique gifts. Recommended highly for any family, school, or community with a picture book collection.

Rebecca Cress-Ingebo

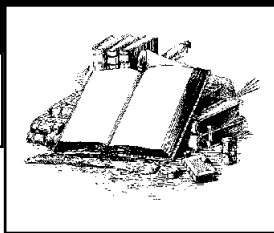
Another take on the same book:

Grades PS-3. Rating : 2.

Your Special Gift, Max Lucado’s sequel to his picture book, *You Are Special*, tells the story of the Wemmicks, wooden people created by Eli, who lives high on a hill “but not so high that he couldn’t hear and see” everything. One morning each Wemmick receives a special gift perfectly suited to his or her interests: a beautiful vase for Violet the florist; a guitar for Splint; a spoon for Hans the baker. Then a family is stranded after their wagon breaks down and their food and clothing washes away. The townspeople try to help, but nothing goes right... until they use the gifts they just received to feed, clothe, and entertain the family.

The story is simply told with a lot of dialog. David Wenzel’s large, comical illustrations add a strong dose of charm. But the storyline is not believable. Lucado’s point is that when the Wemmicks use the wrong talents to help the family, disaster results. For instance, the Wemmick who can’t cook provides food; the one who offers clothing brings the wrong size. Since the Wemmicks each received the “right” gift mere seconds before the family arrived—and are delighted to receive their gifts—it’s downright puzzling that they would not use them to help ease the family’s discomforts. The baker never thinks to use his new spoon to whip up some food; he tries to fix the wagon. Punchinello never thinks to use his hammer to fix the wagon; he just repeats “This isn’t working.” It’s only after everyone treks to Eli and Eli tells them to use their new gifts that they do so. This makes the whole concept seem lugged in, and ultimately means that while *Your Special Gift* is a pleasant book, it’s not an exceptional one.

Rosemarie DiCristo



A dog's life : the autobiography of a stray / by Ann M. Martin. LCCN 2005005022. New York : Scholastic, 2005.

HBB, 0439715598, list price: \$16.99.

Fic. Orphaned animals—Fiction; Dogs—Fiction. 182 p. ; 20 cm.

Grades 4-6. Rating : 5.

Squirrel is one of five puppies born in a gardener's shed to a stray dog. In *A Dog's Life*, she relates her autobiography, from her inauspicious birth to contented old age.

Only two of the puppies, Squirrel and brother Bone, survive. Mother trains them to survive as strays, scavenging for food and being wary of wild animals and humans. When mother doesn't return one day, Squirrel and Bone must fend for themselves. The cautious Squirrel follows the more aggressive Bone, and they leave the shed to find food and sustenance. Adventures and struggles follow. Bone, the cute tan dog, is ultimately rescued, while Squirrel is left hungry, cold, and lonesome.

Squirrel survives the first winter and then meets Moon, another stray. They become companions through thick and thin, traveling through woods and small towns, meeting welcoming humans and dogcatchers, fighting wild dog packs, and facing speeding traffic, which costs Moon his life. Again, Squirrel is alone. Seasons pass; years pass. Finally, Squirrel comes to an elderly woman's home in the country. Obviously, the woman loves dogs and is savvy about the ways of strays. Gradually the "two old ladies," Squirrel and Susan, become friends and companions.

There are many dog story standards; there are even other books told from the dog's point of view, but Ann Martin is able to carry and maintain that point of view consistently from start to finish. She also manages to interject, without becoming pedantic, facts about dogs and

their behavior, such as a dog's inability to see certain colors. This is a gentle book, one in which the reader immediately empathizes with the dogs, and desperately wants the dogs to overcome obstacles.

Teachers could use this title if using 6 Traits Writing (<http://www.nwrel.org/assessment/>) when discussing voice/point of view. Teachers could also include it in a Reading Circle theme about dogs, which might also feature *Because of Winn-Dixie* by Kate DiCamillo (Candlewick, 2000), *Strider* by Beverly Cleary (Morrow, 1991), *Ribsy* by Beverly Cleary (Morrow, 1954), *Shiloh* by Phyllis Naylor (Atheneum, 1991), and *Sable* by Karen Hesse (Holt, 1994). This book is also a suitable middle grade read-aloud. *A Dog's Life* was selected as a Children's Book of the Year in 2006.

Marion Mueller

Gentle's Holler : a novel / by Kerry Madden. LCCN 2004018424. New York : Penguin/Viking, 2005.

HBB, 0670059986, list price: \$16.99.

Fic. People with disabilities—Fiction; Blind—Fiction; Poverty—Fiction; Music—Fiction; Family life—North Carolina—Fiction. 237 p. ; 22 cm.

Grades 4-6. Rating : 5.

Livy Two is a twelve year old girl living in rural North Carolina with her large family. Named for Livy One, who died as an infant, Livy Two feels she has her own personal guardian angel. Livy Two's father is a sometimes successful musician and her mother holds the family together. Livy Two's little sister Gentle has something wrong with her eyes and as there is no money for a doctor, the parents resist admitting something is wrong. When Grandma Horace shows up an uproar ensues. Disapproving of their lifestyle, she

nonetheless provides the means for Gentle to get some help. This assistance further undermines the father's precarious role as provider. Through the tension, Livy Two comes to understand that Grandma Horace loves them all as much as her Daddy loves them, and that people can have different ways of expressing love.

The author of *Gentle's Holler* has penned a poignant story. Written from Livy Two's point of view, it reflects the transition from self-absorption to thinking of others that is typical for this age. The girl's talent for writing songs and the visits of the mobile library give her places of refuge from the reality of the family's poverty. Tension builds as the oldest brother begins to view his father through the world's eyes and runs away. Although they are reconciled, it is through tragedy.

Author Kerry Madden has captured the self-sufficiency of the people of Appalachia, and woven in many traditions of that area to create a realistic environment for Livy Two's observations on life. This is not a story in which they live "happily ever after," but it is a story in which hope is alive which sustains them in the darkest of days.

Kelley Westenhoff

The miraculous journey of Edward Tulane / Kate DiCamillo ; illustrated by Bagram Ibatoulline. LCCN 2004056129. Cambridge, Mass. : Candlewick Press, 2006.

HBB, 0763625892, list price: \$18.99.

Fic. Toys—Fiction; Rabbits—Fiction; Love—Fiction; Listening—Fiction; Adventure and adventurers—Fiction. 198 p. : ill. ; 21 cm.

Grades 4-6. Rating : 5.

Edward, a rabbit with a china head, starts his life being loved by Abilene,

but he does not return her love. His adventures and misadventures lead him to the ocean floor, a garbage dump, and a doll repair shop, with his head in twenty-one pieces. Through it all, he is loved by those who find him—a fisherman, a hobo, and a young boy with a dying sister. In time, he learns to return that love.

DiCamillo's touching story will draw readers in, bringing both tears and laughter as Edward's adventure continues. Edward is an endearing character, especially as he learns to love. The book has the potential for becoming a much-loved read aloud.

Each chapter starts with a brown-tone reproduction of an acrylic painting. The book has an older feel to it with its cream-colored pages of print with glossy pages of full color illustration interspersed periodically. Ibatouline's illustrations help readers visualize the emotions of the text. This book won the Boston Globe/Horn Book award for fiction in 2006.

Jane Mouttet

A penny for a hundred / by Ethel Pochocki ; pictures by Mary Beth Owens. Bathgate, N.D. : Bethlehem Books, 2005.

PAP, 1883937523, list price: \$9.95.

Fic. Friendship—Fiction; Farm life—Maine—Fiction; Prisoners of war—Fiction. 31 p. : ill. ; 26 cm.

Grades 3-6. Rating : 4.

Nine-year-old Clare is looking forward to the first year she's old enough to help with the potato harvest in Aroostock County, Maine; but this year—1944—is a little different. German POWs will be helping, too, and Clare isn't sure how she feels about that.

A Penny for a Hundred uses beautiful language and deep imagery to tell the story of Clare and her growing

friendship with Peter, one of the POWs. The title refers to the penny Clare gets for every one hundred potato bugs she picks, a job Peter helps her with. It's a gentle story of "enemies" showing true Christmas love and understanding despite being caught up in a world at war, as Clare determines to make Christmas in Maine a little bit more like home for Peter and the other POWs, and the German prisoners try to show their appreciation to the Americans.

This thirty-two page book contains more words per page than the usual picture book, increasing its appeal to older children as well as adults. Mary Beth Owens' charming color and black and white illustrations ably add a period look and feel. Author Ethel Pochocki includes much detail about life in 1940s Maine, as well as information on harvesting potatoes; she even includes recipes for the Swedish pancakes and Christmas stollen Clare makes.

This lovely book was chosen as one of *Yankee Magazine's* "One Hundred Classic New England Children's Books" and was honored as a Smithsonian Notable Book for Children. It was first published in 1996 (Down East Books); this edition is a reprint by Bethlehem Books.

Rosemarie DiCristo

True friends / Stephanie Perry Moore. (Carmen Browne series ; 1.) LCCN 2004019892. Chicago : Moody Publishers, 2005.

PAP, 0802481728, list price: \$5.99.

Fic. Friendship—Fiction; Prejudices—Fiction; Moving, Household—Fiction; African Americans—Fiction; Christian life—Fiction; Virginia—Fiction. 116 p. ; 19 cm.

Sweet honesty / Stephanie Perry Moore. (Carmen Browne series ; 2.) LCCN 2005004358. Chicago : Moody Publishers, 2005.

PAP, 080248168X, list price: \$5.99.

Fic. Friendship—Fiction; Behavior—Fiction; Adoption—Fiction; African Americans—Fiction; Christian life—Fiction; Virginia—Fiction; Schools—Fiction. 143 p. ; 19 cm.

Golden spirit / by Stephanie Perry Moore. (Carmen Browne series ; 3.) LCCN 2006012945. Chicago : Moody Press, 2006.

PAP, 0802481698, list price: \$5.99.

Fic. African-Americans—Fiction; Family violence—Fiction; Friendship—Fiction; Virginia—Fiction. 143 p. ; 19 cm.

Perfect joy / by Stephanie Perry Moore. (Carmen Browne series ; 4.) LCCN 2006012945. Chicago : Moody Press, 2006.

PAP, 0802481701, list price: \$5.99.

Fic. African-Americans—Fiction; Schools—Fiction; Middle schools—Fiction; Virginia—Fiction; Popularity—Fiction. 97 p. ; 19 cm.

Grades 2-6. Rating : 4.

True Friends is about ten-year-old Carmen Browne, who was happily living in Charlottesville until her dad's new job as the assistant football coach at Virginia State causes the family to move to Ettrick. Upset at first, Carmen doesn't want to leave her best friend, Jillian, behind, but being only two hours away and still close enough to visit occasionally makes it a bit less heartbreaking. Now a fifth grader, Carmen makes a new friend named Riana, who is happy to have someone accept her for who she is. Later as she begins to fit in, Carmen has to decide which is more important to her—Riana's friendship or a chance to be popular with the 'in-crowd.' Will an assigned report on affirmative action, and a visit from Jillian, help her to figure out the things in life that really matter? Will Carmen realize who her true friends really are?

In book two of the Carmen Browne series, entitled *Sweet Honesty*, Carmen learns a lesson about telling lies and suffering the consequences when her lies get her and her friends into trouble.

Carmen likes to think she's all grown up, but she soon learns that being ten doesn't mean she knows everything. When Carmen's adopted big brother Clay wants to find his birth parents, she must decide whether to help him against their parents' wishes. Carmen quickly learns that honesty really is the best policy.

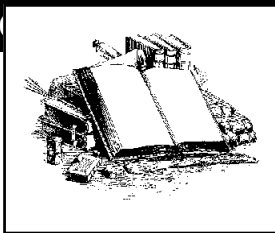
In *Golden Spirit*, book three in the series, Carmen's world is touched by a neighboring family's domestic violence, and later by her aunt and uncle having marriage troubles. Carmen's summer is full of special times including her personal decision to accept Christ into her heart. But will Carmen stop being so bossy and allow her golden spirit to take control instead?

Carmen Browne is an eleven-year-old sixth-grader in *Perfect Joy*. Carmen finds she is popular at her new school and her two best friends become jealous of her. She begins having problems with studying and doing her homework, and as her grades start slipping, Carmen must learn to heed the voice of God. Then her mother discovers a lump that could mean breast cancer, which really scares Carmen. With so many things going wrong, will Carmen be able to get it all together and regain perfect joy in her life?

Stephanie Perry Moore is the author of the Payton Sky series and the Laurel Shadrach series for young teenage girls, and now brings pre-teen girls a series of their own. Carmen Browne is an African-American ten-year-old living in Virginia with her parents, little sister, and adopted brother. These chapter books are written from Carmen's viewpoint and realistically shine a spotlight on problems kids experience as they enter the teen years, such as peer pressure, moving, and body image. Domestic violence, honesty, and cancer are also addressed in this faith-based

series, which is a good choice for preteen girls.

Sherri Myers



The case for a creator for kids / by Lee Strobel with Rob Suggs. LCCN 2006003990. Grand Rapids : Zonderkidz, 2006.

PAP, 0310711487, \$7.99.

212/.1. God—Proof, Cosmological; Religion and science. 89 p. : ill. ; 22 cm.

Grades 5-7. Rating : 4.

The Case for a Creator for Kids is a revised version of author Lee Strobel's Gold Medallion Award-winning book, *The Case for a Creator*.

How the world was created is a timeless argument between theologians and some scientists. Many scientists have adopted the theory of the "Big Bang" to explain the origin of all things. Appropriately written for fifth to eighth graders, *The Case for a Creator for Kids* covers questions that most children will be asking themselves and others as what they have been taught in church and at home is challenged by the secular scientific theories. How did the world begin? How was Earth created? How did everything appear from nothing?

From an investigative journalist's point of view, Lee Strobel writes to children in their language as if sitting down with them personally. Using humorous examples like elephants on roofs to explain evidence, and stuffed closets to explain the "Big Bang" theory, Lee Strobel is able to put into perspective otherwise complicated terms. It is as if you are a detective looking for clues, or evidence, as a scientist would to solve a crime or mystery. What you are looking for are answers to questions like, "Did it all start with a big bang?" "Could God be the Intelligent Designer?" "What is your final answer?" Further thought provoking questions are given along with definitions and examples of possible answers to consider based on facts, not opinions.

The conclusion invites the reader to take a step of faith towards God if they

haven't already while not completely casting a negative view on science itself. God did, after all, create science so it would lead to finding him and the wonder of it all.

Lynne Brandt

To everything there is a season / Jude Daly. LCCN 2005012676. Grand Rapids : Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2006.

HBB, 0802852866, \$16.00.

223. Bible. O.T.—Ecclesiastes—Criticism, interpretation, etc.; Bible. O.T.—Ecclesiastes—Pictorial works. 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 x 28 cm.

All ages. Rating : 4.

South African illustrator Jude Daly sets her illustrated version of Ecclesiastes 3: 1-8 in a rural South African village. Line by line, Daly interprets the well-known verses, juxtaposing the oppositional phrases on opposite pages. Her watercolor spreads cover full pages and half pages. The primitive art style represents two families, one living in a red house another in a blue. Miniature people, houses, and flora and fauna appear stamped on the broad veldt and sea landscape. There are surprise details on each page. The complete King James text is appended.

There are several elegant detailed versions of this biblical passage, most notably *To Every Thing There is a Season* illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon (Blue Sky, 1998) and *Turn, Turn*, Turn by Pete Seeger, illustrated by Wendy Anderson Halperin (Simon and Schuster, 2003). Initially, this reviewer ranked this last in the trio, but upon further thought and examination, recognized the simplicity, which lends itself to elegance. Dillon's version is multicultural, elaborate, and glitzy; Halperin's version is detailed and minute requiring lengthy study. Daly's, on the other hand, catches the

universality of the message in its sparseness. This is a tender down-home edition of Ecclesiastes 3.

Marion Mueller

Mind your manners! / Diane Goode. LCCN 2004047179. New York : Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

HBB, 0374349754, list price: \$16.00.

395.1/22. Etiquette for children and teenagers. 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 cm.

Grades 5-8. Rating : 3.

After receiving as a gift an antique children's spelling book her husband found in an antique shop, author-illustrator Diane Goode became interested in a portion of the book designed to "impress upon their minds the importance of religion, and the advantages of good manners." The speller was published in 1802. Ms. Goode was intrigued about what children in the new United States were learning, especially about table manners. Lesson III listed thirty-five rules for proper table behavior. She hopes that readers will become interested in learning about the history of etiquette and childhood in America, and that this book will pique their curiosity.

Goode pictures a family named Abbott entertaining a family of guests. On each page, one or two of the thirty-five table manners are printed. Watercolor double page spreads of the Abbotts and guests at table fill the pages. An author's note explaining Goode's interest and a photo of the little speller are appended, as is the list of manners in original wording.

The pictures demonstrate, not proper behavior, but coarse behavior on the part of the Abbotts while the guests look on aghast. The Abbotts's cats and dogs are as improperly behaved as their owners. The rollicking watercolor pictures are filled with detail, which encourage

careful examination. Clever. Witty. Yes, this picture book is just that for the reviewer, but whether this is a children's book is unclear. Why would the average child be interested in such an esoteric topic as the history of table manners? Would the picture book crowd understand the negative examples? They don't understand or follow positive examples. Would the old-fashioned language also be a stumbling block to appreciation? This reviewer would use the book with older students, perhaps in conjunction with Penner's book *Eating the Plates: a Pilgrim Book of Food and Manners* (Aladdin Paperbacks, 1997).

Marion Mueller

Knotting : make your own basketball nets, guitar straps, sports bags and more / written by Judy Ann Sadler ; illustrated by Céleste Gagnon. (Kids can do it.) Toronto : Kids Can Press, 2006.

HBB, 1553375416, list price: \$12.95.

746.4/22. Knots and splices—Juvenile literature; Handicraft. 40 p. : col. ill. ; 26 cm.

Grades 2-6. Rating : 4.

Whether you are a boy or girl scout, are a lover of the outdoors, or are someone interested in learning a new skill, *Knotting* is an informative how-to book dedicated to various combinations of knot-tying.

From the basic simple/overhand knot to a more complex reef/square knot, the book gives detailed instructions and colorful illustrations to make your own personal experience a little easier. These knot combinations are often referenced throughout the book in the projects mentioned. The creative uses of these knots are varied in allowing one to make their own guitar strap, dog leash, or rope ladder—just to name a few.

The basic knowledge this book has to offer extends to many other projects and

could serve as a learning activity shared by children and parents alike.

Sarah Burkhead

Song of the water boatman : & other pond poems / written by Joyce Sidman ; illustrated by Beckie Prange. LCCN 2002000477. Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 2005.

HBB, 0618135472, list price: \$16.00.

811/.54. Pond animals—Juvenile poetry; Ponds—Juvenile poetry; Children's poetry, American; Pond animals—Poetry; Pond plants—Poetry; American poetry. 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 30 cm.

Grades K-5. Rating : 4.

Song of the Water Boatman & Other Pond Poems gives readers a glimpse into pond life. The book has several possibilities for connections to the school curriculum. Sidman uses eleven poems and eleven non-fiction pieces to share aspects of pond life. Algae, beetles, turtles, and the seasons are just some of the aspects she has included in the book. For each aspect Sidman writes a poem which describes the object in a more aesthetic way. She also writes a short non-fiction piece which more scientifically describes the object. The poems are great starting points for the further study of pond life or for poetry writing. A glossary helps readers with unfamiliar terms.

Prange uses full color (with an emphasis on greens and browns) woodcut prints to illustrate the poems. Her illustrations give children a close-up view of pond life, much of which is not visible to the naked eye. Her illustrations may entice students to learn more about wood cut prints and experiment with them on their own. *Song of the Water Boatman* was a 2006 Caldecott Honor book.

Jane Mouttet

Wise guy : the life and philosophy

of Socrates / M.D. Usher ; pictures by William Bramhall. LCCN 2003056376. New York : Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005.

HBB, 0374312494, list price: \$16.00.

B or 183/.2. Socrates—Juvenile literature. 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm.

Grades 4-7. Rating : 4.

Wise Guy traces the life and thought of Socrates. As a child, the philosopher liked to visit shops of local craftsmen and ponder ideas about wisdom and goodness. When Socrates grew up, his endless questions attracted friends who became his followers and enemies who became his accusers. We learn that Socrates did not value wealth or physical beauty (he was poor and homely). Instead he valued wisdom and contentment and time spent with friends.

This book would be a good teaching aid to help introduce ancient philosophy and/or ancient Greece. Readers see the clothes the people wore, the musical instruments they played, and the gods they prayed to (Socrates prays to Pan while the gods look over him). A secondary text block (with smaller type) appears on most pages giving background information and commentary. The color illustrations are two-page spreads in the style best defined as caricature. A note on ancient sources describes which parts of the narrative are based on history and which parts are speculation. The author is a professor of classics at the University of Vermont.

David Rainey

Phillis Wheatley : young revolutionary poet / by Kathryn Kilby Borland and Helen Ross Speicher ; illustrated by Cathy Morrison. (Young patriots series ; 10.) LCCN 2004028710. Carmel, Ind. : Patria Press, 2005.

HBB, 1882859472, list price: \$15.95.

B or 811/.1. Wheatley, Phillis, 1753-1784; African American poets—Biography; Slaves—United States—Biography; Poets, American—Colonial period, ca. 1600-1775—Biography. 120 p. ; 23 cm.

Abner Doubleday : boy baseball pioneer / by Montrew Dunham ; illustrated by Cathy Morrison. (Young patriots series ; 11.) LCCN 2004029310. Carmel, Ind. : Patria Press, 2005.

HBB, 1882859499, list price: \$14.95.

B or 796.357/092. Doubleday, Abner, 1819-1893—Juvenile literature; Baseball players—United States—Biography—Juvenile literature. 108 p. : ill. ; 23 cm.

John Audubon : young naturalist / by Miriam E. Mason ; illustrated by Cathy Morrison. 2nd ed. (Young patriots series ; 12.) LCCN 2005029406. Carmel, Ind. : Patria Press, 2006.

HBB, 1882859510, list price: \$15.95.

B or 598/.092. Audubon, John James, 1785-1851; Naturalists; Artists; Birds. 120 p. : 23 cm.

Grades 3-5. Rating : 3.

The text in the Young Patriots series was originally published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company as part of the Childhood of Famous Americans series, which is a registered trademark of Simon & Schuster, Inc. At this date Patria Press has reissued twelve of the original titles with Cathy Morrison's new pencil illustrations. Concluding each volume are a brief timeline, fun facts, and "What Happened Next?"

This reviewer grew up on the Childhood of Famous Americans series. The Patria Press website promotes the series with the following words: "Hook Kids on History," "Get Kids Reading," and "Jump-start Kids Curiosity." When they were originally published they did just that for this reviewer. Although biographical fiction with much imaginative dialogue, and certainly not literary masterpieces, the books serve

the purpose that the website promotes. Since the childhood of the biographee is mainly featured, one learns little about later life or accomplishments. The books fill the hunger young readers often have about what it was like being a child in the "olden days." Cathy Morrison's illustrations are an improvement over the silhouettes and static ink pictures of the first edition. No documentation whatsoever.

Marion Mueller

Will Hobbs / Hal Markovitz ; foreword by Kyle Zimmer. (Who wrote that?.) LCCN 2005008181. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791086577, list price: \$30.00.

B or 813/.54. Hobbs, Will; Authors, American—20th century—Biography; Children's stories—Authorship; Wilderness areas in fiction. 124 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm.

Beatrix Potter / Margaret Speaker Yuan ; foreword by Kyle Zimmer. (Who wrote that?.) L C C N 2 0 0 5 0 0 8 1 8 3 . Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791086550, list price: \$30.00.

B or 823/.912. Potter, Beatrix, 1866-1943; Authors, English—20th century—Biography; Artists—Great Britain—Biography; Children's stories—Authorship; Animals in literature; Animals in art. 114 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm.

Jane Yolen / Carolyn Carpan ; foreword by Kyle Zimmer. (Who wrote that?.) LCCN 2005007828. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791086607, list price: \$30.00.

B or 813/.54. Yolen, Jane; Authors, American—20th century—Biography; Children's literature—Authorship. 126 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm.

Grades 4-7. Rating : 5.

Will Hobbs by Hal Marcovitz presents the life of an author with a fondness for adventure and devotion to the

environment. Hobbs' first published book, *Changes in Latitudes* (Avon, 1988), is about saving sea turtles from eminent extinction. His childhood as a military dependant required a lot of moving and provided ample opportunity to develop an appreciation for the great outdoors and its creatures. As a junior high school English and reading teacher, he writes to awaken these feelings in tweens.

Beatrix Potter by Margaret Speaker Yuan portrays an author who draws and writes to assuage the loneliness of an isolated childhood. An avid reader, Potter had no formal education. She kept journals, in code, that, when posthumously decoded, provide a history of her life and times. Her passions included art, writing letters, and travel. Letters to entertain an ill friend became the foundation for *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Frederick Warne Company, 1902).

Jane Yolen by Carolyn Carpan chronicles the self-proclaimed "ordinary" life of an author whose written legacy has touched both children and adults worldwide. Often referred to as "America's Hans Christian Andersen" or a modern day Aesop, Yolen has written over 250 books and received seventeen major awards. Works include picture books, fantasy novels, and poetry for children and adults, science fiction, mystery, historical fiction, nonfiction for young readers, and songbooks.

Who Wrote That? is a series of books written about storytellers and writers. Each book includes a bibliography; most popular books, major awards, and well-known characters lists, index, and chronology. Author trivia boxes, full page illustrations, large fonts, and informal writing style engage the reader. Information included is taken from interviews with authors, autobiographies, official author web

sites, and journal book reviews. Foreword, written by Kyle Zimmer, President of First Book, a literacy organization for disadvantaged children, reminds the reader of the significant contribution the storyteller makes to our civilization. Good resource for writing reports. Recommended for both school and public libraries.

Kim Harris

Chaucer : celebrated poet and author / Janet Hubbard-Brown. (Makers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.) LCCN 2005004784. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791086356, list price: \$30.00.

B or 821/.1. Chaucer, Geoffrey, d. 1400; Poets, English—Middle English, 1100-1500—Biography. 138 p. : col. Ill. ; 24 cm.

Dante : poet, author, and proud Florentine / John C. Davenport. (Makers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.) LCCN 2005007492. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791086348, list price: \$30.00.

B or 851/.1. Dante, Alighieri, 1265-1321; Authors, Italian—To 1500—Biography. 140 p. : col. Ill. ; 24 cm.

Eleanor of Aquitaine : heroine of the Middle Ages / Rachel A. Koestler-Grack. (Makers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.) LCCN 2005007489. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 079108633X, list price: \$30.00.

B or 942.03/1/092. Eleanor, of Aquitaine, Queen, consort of Henry II, King of England, 1122?-1204; Queens—Great Britain—Biography; Queens—France—Biography; Great Britain—History—Henry II, 1154-1189—Biography; France—History—Louis VII, 1137-1180—Biography; Middle Ages. 158 p. : col. Ill. ; 24 cm.

Galileo : Renaissance scientist and astronomer / Tim McNeese. (Makers of the Middle Ages and

Renaissance.) LCCN 2005007494. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791086283, list price: \$30.00.

B or 520/.92. Galilei, Galileo, 1565-1642; Astronomers—Italy—Biography; Scientists—Italy—Biography; Astronomy, Renaissance. 166 p. : col. Ill. ; 24 cm.

Leonardo da Vinci : artist, inventor, and Renaissance man / Rachel A. Koestler-Grack. (Makers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.) LCCN 2005007490. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791086267, list price: \$30.00.

B or 709/.2. Leonardo, da Vinci, 1452-1519; Artists—Italy—Biography; Inventors—Italy—Biography. 146 p. : col. Ill. ; 24 cm.

Michelangelo : painter, sculptor, and architect / Tim McNeese. (Makers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.) LCCN 2005007493. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791086275, list price: \$30.00.

B or 709/.2. Michelangelo Buonarroti, 1475-1564; Artists—Italy—Biography. 148 p. : col. Ill. ; 24 cm.

The Medicis : a ruling dynasty / Heather Lehr Wagner. (Makers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.) LCCN 2005007488. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791086305, list price: \$30.00.

945/.5/0099. Medici, House of; Florence (Italy)—History—1421-1737; Florence (Italy)—Kings and rulers—Biography. 156 p. : col. Ill. ; 24 cm.

Machiavelli : Renaissance political analyst and author / Heather Lehr Wagner. (Makers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.) LCCN 2005007047. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791086291, \$30.00.

B or 320.1/092. Machiavelli, Niccolò, 1469-

1527; Statesmen—Italy—Florence—Biography; Intellectuals—Italy—Florence—Biography; Florence (Italy)—History—1421-1737; Florence (Italy)—Biography; Renaissance—Italy—Florence. 138 p. : col. Ill. ; 24 cm.

Queen Elizabeth : and England's golden age / Samuel Willard Crompton. (Makers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance.) LCCN 2005007491. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791086321, list price: \$30.00.

B or 942.05/5/092. Elizabeth I, Queen of England, 1533-1603; Great Britain—History—Elizabeth, 1558-1603; Queens—Great Britain—Biography. 148 p. : col. Ill. ; 24 cm.

Grades 4-8. Rating : 4.

Chelsea House Publishers' new series, *Makers of the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, is a wonderful addition to texts currently available to grades 4-8. Entire volumes are devoted to individuals normally relegated to paragraphs and sidebars in existing texts for this age group. Along with the standard biographies of DaVinci, Elizabeth I, Galileo, and Michelangelo, this series includes Chaucer, Dante, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Machiavelli, and the Medicis (also Thomas More, not reviewed). Each volume contains at least six chapters, a chronology and timeline, bibliography, index, and suggestions for further reading which include website addresses. The endnotes for each chapter provide examples of how to document resources. Almost all of the illustrations are photographs of period paintings or tapestries, and each chapter concludes with a short self-test. Frequent sidebars break up the text, although sometimes in odd places. Treatment of the religious conflicts and church corruption of the day are straightforward without judgment. The volumes are overall quite readable and engaging. At the price of each volume, the thrift-conscious librarian should focus on the individuals least often found in

biographies for this age group.

Chaucer: Celebrated Poet and Author, is written by Janet Hubbard-Brown. Leading off with a chapter showing Chaucer at the height of his popularity, the author drops back to his childhood and upbringing in subsequent chapters. They build to chapters seven and eight which explore Chaucer's motivation in writing *The Canterbury Tales* and his theme of marriage. The latter chapter makes this book more appropriate for the students at the more mature end of the recommended age group. Ending with his final years, this volume makes an individual who is normally obscure to this age group more accessible.

Dante: Poet, Author and Proud Florentine by John C. Davenport, is a delightful inquiry into the motivations and abilities of the man on whose writings many people's images of hell are based. Discovering that the foundation of many of their impressions of life is based on this renaissance poet rather than anything biblical will intrigue many student readers. Well written and lively, this book may even prompt a student to delve into a copy of *Divine Comedy*, or even Virgil. The author's description of how Dante's political woes affected his writing provides a good starting point for helping students understand satire.

Author Rachel A. Koestler-Grack has penned an excellent volume in *Eleanor of Aquitaine: Heroine of the Middle Ages*. Engaging, interesting, and thorough, this book may motivate students to inquire as to why Eleanor was able to be so successful in a time when her gender worked against her. It was the author's good fortune to be able to write about an individual rarely profiled adequately for this age group and she makes the most of it. This is a fun read for the librarian as well.

Galileo's struggles with the church are

only part of the story in this biography sub-titled Renaissance Scientist and Astronomer. His drive to understand the forces around him, beginning to dispute the works of Aristotle and Archimedes, is clearly outlined in the first several chapters. How this drive set him on a collision course with the Inquisition is evident in the way author Tim McNeese sets out the facts. The book concludes with the 1992 official announcement by Pope John Paul II that Galileo had been right after all.

It is difficult to find anything new to say about *Leonardo DaVinci: Artist, Inventor, and Renaissance Man*. It is equally difficult to cover all facets of DaVinci's life in one short book. Author Rachel Koestler-Grack makes a good attempt to balance both of those points. The hope might be that a new book on the shelf about DaVinci might attract students confused about the popular novel and movie that has his name in it. If so, they will find a good recounting of DaVinci's life and work.

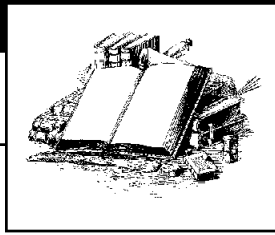
The volumes *The Medicis: A Ruling Dynasty* and *Machiavelli: Renaissance Political Analyst and Author* should be read together, as the history and information in them intertwine. The powerful Medicis appear as sympathetic characters in much of their volume and Machiavelli's life clearly parallels the travails of his native Florence as set out in the book about him. Both books are by Heather Lehr Wagner, which accounts for some exact lifting of text from one to the other regarding some of the historical events. Still, they are easy to read, and if difficult to follow, it is a result of the subject families and the times, not because the author failed in her task to write clearly.

The book entitled *Michelangelo: Painter, Sculptor and Architect*, written by Tim McNeese, does a good job moving the reader through the various

time periods of artwork in the artist's life. The political machinations between church and state, the rivalry between the artist and DaVinci, and the concerns Michelangelo had for his extended family are all explored. Photographs of some of his most beautiful works are included, and the sidebars are interesting.

Samuel Willard Crompton has done an excellent job providing a young reader with just enough information in *Queen Elizabeth and England's Golden Age* to whet an appetite for more. Truly one of the amazing women rulers of all time, Elizabeth is portrayed here as a sovereign determined to have her own way, but for the good of her people. The volume's only shortcoming is that it stops very abruptly with the queen's death rather than wrapping up with a summary of Elizabeth's impact on the world.

Kelley Westenhoff



Bad connection : a novel / Melody Carlson. (The secret life of Samantha McGregor ; 1.) LCCN 2006013162. Sisters, Ore. : Multnomah Publishers, 2006.

PAP, 1590526929, \$11.99.

Fic. Teenagers—Psychic ability—Fiction; Missing persons—Fiction; Teenage girls—Fiction. 244 p. ; 21 cm.

Grades 9-12. Rating : 4.

Samantha Gregor is sixteen, seventeen next month, and she is not sure what to do with her gift. "It's a God thing," as she puts it—the gift of visions and prophetic dreams. When she was six years old she had a vision dream, and it helped in the finding of her neighbor's lost guinea pig. Her father understood her gift, but now that he is gone Samantha has to convince her mother that she is not crazy, and doesn't need a counselor. Samantha especially misses her dad now that her dreams are focused on Kayla, a high school girl who has gone missing. Samantha struggles with trusting the gift God has given her, as she tries to use it to find Kayla.

Author Melody Carlson, adept at relaying a teen girl's feelings and thoughts, explores the gift of visions and prophetic dreams in *Bad Connection*. The focus is more on Samantha's struggle with accepting being God's vessel for this particular gift than it is on finding the missing Kayla. The book's theme seems to focus upon learning to accept what is not in our control, as in Samantha's gift of visions. Carlson fans will not be disappointed, and those new to her writing will see that she weaves a fairly plausible plot. The book ends on a cliff hanger which undoubtedly serves as the jump into the book two of The Secret Life of Samantha McGregor series.

Pam Webb

I do! : a novel / Melody Carlson. (Diary of a teenage girl. Caitlin ;

5.) LCCN 2004019846. Sisters, Ore. : Multnomah, 2004.

PAP, 1590523202, list price: \$12.99.

Fic. Diaries—Fiction; Colleges and universities—Fiction; Interpersonal relations—Fiction; Christian life—Fiction; Weddings—Fiction. 263 p. ; 21 cm.

Grades 9-12. Rating : 3.

Number five in the Caitlin series, *I Do! Diary of a Teenage Girl*, pulls together in a neat package all the trials Caitlin O'Conner has faced in the first four books by Melody Carlson. Now 21 and in her senior year of college, Caitlin's hope of marriage to Josh Miller comes to fruition, but not without new difficulties to face. One by one, Caitlin is confronted with future mother-in-law problems, choices over how to spend the money her father gives her, doubts about her decision to accept Josh's proposal, and a myriad of issues faced by many brides-to-be. As always, Caitlin waits for God's best and watches as He brings resolutions into each situation culminating in a wedding day that is "picture perfect."

At times, *I Do! Diary of a Teenage Girl*, reads like an A to Z wedding planner, covering every detail and becoming too predictable, but there is enough story to keep one reading. One thread involves Jenny, Caitlin's roommate, who struggles with anorexia, but the girls find a creative way for each of them to be conscious of their diets while avoiding extremes. And Beanie, from previous books in the series, adds interest as readers learn about her new life in New York at a school for fashion design.

Melody Carlson is an award-winning author whose books for children, teens, and adults total over 90. She has two grown sons and lives in Central Oregon with her husband. They enjoy skiing, hiking, camping, and biking.

Floss Craig

The refugees / by A. Conan Doyle ; illustrated by T. de Thulstrup. (Huguenot inheritance series ; 6.) LCCN 2004001168. Pella, Iowa : Inheritance Publications, 2004.

PAP, 0921100671, \$14.90.

Fic. Persecution—Fiction; Huguenots—Fiction; Canada—History—To 1763 (New France)—Fiction. 389 p. : ill. ; 21 cm.

Grades 9-12 (Adult). Rating: 3.

The association of Sherlock Holmes to his creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is a natural one. However, Doyle wrote other novels besides those of his Baker Street detective, many of them historical in scope, and *The Refugees* is one of them. Originally published in 1892, the story centers on the escape of Amory de Catinat, his uncle, and daughter from France to America, because of the persecution of the Huguenots as ordered by King Louis XIV. They meet up with the capable Amos Green and Captain Ephraim who aid their escape.

When the older de Catinat dies from the rigors of the trip, or perhaps more from a broken heart from leaving his beloved France, Amory and his cousin, along with Green and the Captain continue on towards freedom from persecution from the Roman Catholic church. Shipwrecked on an iceberg, nearly captured by savage Canadian Indians, and pursuit by an over-zealous priest nearly are the undoing of this brave little foursome. Their adventures and persistence keep the reader interested, even though the old style writing of heavy detail can make it slow going at times.

This book is part of the Huguenot Inheritance series, a series devoted to those Protestants of the Reformation, the Huguenots, whose history and influence remains intertwined throughout Europe's.

Those interested in reading a classic novel, a solid historical fiction novel on this subject, or for those who are devoted Doyle fans should consider *The Refugees* for their reading list.

Pam Webb

Replay : a new book / by Sharon Creech. LCCN 2004028240. New York : Joanna Cotler Books, 2005.

HBB, 0060540192, list price: \$15.99.

Fic. Schools—Fiction; Theater—Fiction; Fathers and sons—Fiction; Family life—Fiction; Conduct of life—Fiction. 180, 31 p.; 20 cm.

Grades 6-8. Rating : 4.

Leonardo, also called Fog Boy and Sardine, is the third of four children in a whirling-dervish Italian family. Everyone is busy; busy with themselves, busy with activities, and busy within the family. Leonardo feels squashed within the close family, thus his self-prescribed nickname, Sardine. Because he is a dreamer, the family hangs the nickname Fog Boy on him. In *Replay: A New Book*, Leonardo tries out for a play that his drama teacher has written. He desires to be a star and be noticed, but instead he is given the role of the old crone. The drama teacher gives the students assignments designed to get them into their roles and to understand themselves. One of the assignments involves writing how and why people have changed; Leonardo wonders about his father who has become very quiet since a heart attack. While searching the attic, Leo finds some tap-dancing shoes and an autobiography his father wrote at thirteen. Leo surreptitiously reads the autobiography and discovers Rosaria, a family secret. But, the play, too, must go on. On the evening of the play, the whole extended family is in attendance. Leo wants to be the star, but flubs some lines, gets lost in the lines, picks them

up, effervescently tap-dances to take his bow.

There are many levels of understanding in this novel by Sharon Creech. The replay of lives and issues, Dad and his tap dancing and Leo and his, Rosaria's disappearance and her location, the theatrical performance replays, and the "real" personalities of the many extended family members. The reader also encounters the relationship of father and son, the real Leonardo and the fanciful Leonardo, and the connection of Leonardo's play with real life. An addendum in the back of the book gives the meaning of Leonardo's school play.

The appended play is an odd story with some redeeming character values, but the mystical quality, the brief references to witchcraft, and the magical appearance of the emerald table are confounding. Thankfully, most readers will ignore the play script as they do so much appended material. It is the dialogue in standard conversational format and stage play format that moves the book along providing insight, momentum, and comic relief. However, many of my student readers will miss most of the nuances, and perhaps, the entire meaning. Some could even miss the plot. Clever. Unusual. Confusing. Thoughtful. Incisive. As usual a wonderful Sharon Creech offering. Yes, "All the world's a stage...what part will you play?" (From the cover)

Marion Mueller

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A summer of kings / by Han Nolan. LCCN 2005019487. Orlando, Fla. : Harcourt, 2006.

HBB, 0152051082, list price: \$17.00.

Fic. Race relations—Fiction; Civil rights movements—Fiction; African Americans—Fiction; Black Muslims—Fiction; Family life—New York (State)—Fiction; Westchester

County (N.Y.)—History—20th century—Fiction. 334 p.; 22 cm.

Grades 6-10. Rating : *5.

Set in 1963, *A Summer of Kings* by Han Nolan is an historical fiction account of two young people deeply affected by the Civil Rights movement. Fourteen-year-old Esther Young looks forward to her first summer of freedom from tutors, since she flunked the third grade. Labeled by her school friends as immature and by her gifted family as inept, Esther struggles with her outcast persona. When eighteen-year-old King-Roy Johnson, the son of mother's childhood friend who has been accused of murder, comes to spend the summer with the Youngs, Esther decides to fall in love with him. While King-Roy is drawn to Malcolm X's Islamic group that preaches the need for a violent revolution, Esther researches the peaceful revolution advocated by both Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. After an impromptu trip to Harlem, horrified by the filth and decay she has witnessed, Esther convinces her family to participate in the peaceful march on Washington, D. C.

Han Nolan contrasts Esther's triumph through simultaneous visuals of King-Roy's clash with his accusers. Colorful prose and generous font are sculpted into *A Summer of Kings* in easy to follow ten to twelve page chapters. Nolan skillfully develops believable characters and utilizes rhythmic, evenly paced dialogue to tell this multifaceted tale. Highly recommended for both school and public libraries. *The Liberation of Gabriel King* by K. L. Going (Putnam, 2005) is similar in style, though not as well rounded, and geared to younger audience.

Kim Harris

Totally unfair / by Nancy Rue. (Nama Beach High ; 4.) LCCN

**2004016917. El Cajon, Calif. :
Zondervan/Youth Specialities,
2005.**

libraries.

Kim Harris

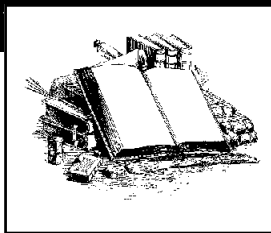
PAP, 0310251834, list price: \$6.99.

Fic. Christian life—Fiction; High schools—
Fiction; Schools—Fiction; Teacher-student
relationships—Fiction; Competition
(Psychology)—Fiction. 142 p. ; 21 cm.

Grades 9-12. Rating : 4.

In 'Nama Beach High Book 4: *Totally Unfair* by Nancy Rue, Laura and her friends head into their junior year, pledging to be Christian witnesses at their school. When Laura's friend Stevie runs for class president, the group's arch enemy Gigi also decides to run. Stevie's campaign plans are all about helping to improve academic life, but Gigi is getting most of the class votes with her underhanded campaign strategies. Stevie's group faces their daily challenges with prayer and scriptural encouragement between classes, which leads Gigi and her followers to turn the tables by convincing school staff that the rival group is proselytizing. The heat is turned up when Mrs. Isaacsen, a caring, trustworthy, devout Christian counselor, is targeted with nasty rumors and the threat of being fired. In her quest to save Mrs. Isaacsen, Laura faces persecution from her friends, the students and staff forcing her to turn to Jesus, the only one who can be counted on in a crisis.

Though Nancy Rue's message is often didactic and riddled with teenage slang, her obvious heart for teens and concern for the gospel is consistently clear. The informal writing style of *Totally Unfair* blends well with the up-close character development and thoughtful dialogue. Plot movement is rather mish-mash, appropriately denoting teen interaction with life. Subject matter could easily be used in a Christian study group for either teens or adults working with teens. Recommended for Christian school



Being a girl who leads : becoming a leader by following Christ / Kubiak Primicerio. (Being a girl.) LCCN 2006013571. Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2006.

PAP, 0764200917, \$11.99.

248.8/33. Leadership—Religious aspects—Christianity; Christian teenagers—Religious life. 175 p. ; 22 cm.

Grades 5-9. Rating : 5.

As a popular retreat speaker and author of several books for young Christian women, Shannon Kubiak Primicerio raises her voice again to lead girls toward spiritual wisdom. This fourth book in her "Being a Girl" series, dispels popular myths about wardrobe, language, friendships, hobbies, and other habits of teen popular culture. Primicerio provides practical advice for those wanting to follow Christ more closely. Like her other well-written books, she provides a great role model for teen girls. Leadership as it is defined by Christ and in this book is not bossing people around, but rather a pattern of living. Cultural compromises that endorse and erode Christian values are evaluated in chapters entitled: "In Bad Company," "It Isn't a Costume Party," and "Loose Lip and Lying Tongues."

This resource can be a valuable tool in the hands of youth leaders charged with developing the next generation of Christian women standing for truth. As a journalist and biblical studies student, Primicerio writes to encourage young women to be different, to stand against wrong, and to be world changers. This easy readable format would also be a good read for non-Christians. Appendix notes the list of gifts from Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Ephesians. Recommended for teachers, youth leaders, parents, and teenage girls.

Rebecca Cross-Ingebo

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Under the overpass / Michael Yankoski. LCCN 2004027331. Sisters, Ore. : Multnomah Publishers, 2005.

PAP, 1590524020, list price: \$11.99.

B or 305.5/692/092. Homelessness—United States—Case studies; Homelessness—United States—Anecdotes; Homelessness—United States—Biography. 224 p. : ill. ; 21 cm.

Adult (Grades 9-12). Rating : *5.

My 30 days under the overpass : [not your ordinary devotional] / by Mike Yankoski. LCCN 2006008684. Sisters, Ore. : Multnomah Publishers, 2006.

PAP, 1590526686, list price: \$9.99.

261.8/325. Church work with the homeless—Prayer-books and devotions—English. 192 p. : ill. ; 18 cm.

Adult (Grades 9-12). Rating : 5.

In the midst of their college years Mike Yankoski and his friend, Sam, accepted the Lord's challenge to step out of their comfortable Christian lives and live on the streets with the homeless. *Under the Overpass* tells the amazing story of their five months on the street, dirty, homeless, and hungry, as they sought to serve Jesus with only what He gave them. Riveting, challenging, at times sickening, wonderfully triumphant in unusual ways—but don't read this book if you are not interested in dying to self. Mike and Sam soon learned first hand that fetid, needy people are not well received by sweetly sanitary churches.

Based on *Under the Overpass*, *My 30 Days Under the Overpass* is definitely not your ordinary devotional. It leads you through a month of painful spiritual and cultural expansion. Based on Yankoski's discoveries on how to live for Christ while living on the streets, these devotions share deeply personal experiences, highlighted by relevant scripture, and questions that will seriously, painfully probe your Christian

convictions. Each week closes with simple, productive suggestions for reaching out effectively.

Now studying theology and preparing for further work for his Lord, Mike Yankoski lays it on the line in both these books. The reader is brought face to face with smelly reality, provoked by God, and given practical action for living in a Christ copying manner. Having experienced it first-hand, Yankoski does not want the church to turn its back on the undesirable. *My 30 Days Under the Overpass* offers two warnings to Christians: "In today's world, keeping our faith life in convenient little boxes is a common problem." (131) And, "Put this book down if you are not willing to put your lifestyle where your mouth is." (9) These quotes stand true for both books. Seat yourself under the overpass, and prepare to be intensely dared to live totally for the Lord. I recommend both books for all sincere, seeking Christians, youth through adult. Both volumes will be useful in church and secondary school libraries, and provide valuable material for group studies.

Donna Eggett

The Facts on File guide to good writing / Martin H. Manser. LCCN 2004026990. New York : Facts on File, 2005.

HBB, 0816055262, list price: \$45.00.

372.62/3. English language—Composition and exercises—Study and teaching (Elementary); English language—Grammar—Study and teaching (Elementary). x, 405 p. ; 24 cm.

Grades 10-12 (Adult). Rating : 4.

There lies a bounty of writing guides upon bookshelves, with approaches as varied as their titles. It would be easy to gloss over one more guide to the list, especially when the title indicates it is a guide to good writing versus a guide to writing well. However, Facts on File is

known for quality publications and so investigation finds *The FOF Guide to Good Writing* by Martin Manser commendable in its handling of the subject.

Pick up most writing guides and there will be a concentration on the rules and standards of writing: grammar and punctuation, and then there will be a section on the actualities of writing. Manser spends the first half of the book on what he terms the four stages of the writing process: thinking and researching; planning; writing; and revising. The second half of the book deals with the complexities of grammar and punctuation. Together the two parts create a whole approach that both novices and the more experienced writer can utilize.

Pam Webb

The Facts on file student's thesaurus / [edited by] Marc McCutcheon. 3rd ed. LCCN 2004061966. New York : Facts on File, 2005.

HBB, 081606038X, list price: \$50.00.

423/.12. English language—Synonyms and antonyms. vi, 586 p. ; 24 cm.

Grades 6-12. Rating : 4.

Editor McCutcheon explains, in the introduction to *The Facts on File Student's Thesaurus*, that a thesaurus is a valuable reference tool to improve writing in two ways: avoid overuse of a particular word; and locate the perfect alternative word when one word is not quite correct. Organized alphabetically, 9,000 commonly used English words are listed. The entry is in bold, followed by the primary part of speech. Next is a list of synonyms and an illustrative sentence. If a word can be used in more than one way, additional synonym lists follow. Antonyms are at the end of an entry.

"This thesaurus has been organized to be simple and easy to use" (Introduction, v.) That is the claim, and that is the reality. An additional feature scattered throughout the book is called "Word Search." Word Search is meant to be an extra vocabulary builder by listing words and terms related to, but not synonymous with, the entry word. Only commonly used words are included which means slang, and words recently added to a teenager's vocabulary might not be there. The editor explains that judgments needed to be made. This is a fine basic thesaurus, which is far easier to use and understand than the old Roget's and more comprehensive than children's or other student thesauri. In the less expensive paperback format (\$19.95) this reviewer would consider multiple copies for instructional purposes.

Marion Mueller

The Facts on File dictionary of astronomy / edited by John Daintith, William Gould. 5th ed. LCCN 2006040860. New York : Facts On File, 2006.

HBB, 0816059985, list price: \$59.50.

520.3. Astronomy—Dictionaries. x, 550 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

Grades 9-12. Rating : 4.

The fifth edition of *The Facts on File Dictionary of Astronomy* is full of information that will be useful to astronomy students and appealing to astronomy enthusiasts. Edited by John Daintith and William Gould, the edition contains over 3,700 headwords with simple, but not watered-down, language. The majority of entries are on the longer side (1/2 page long), but some are as short as one or two sentences. A pronunciation guide accompanies more than 1,500 entries not considered commonly used words. One of the more useful features is the addition of plural

and variant spellings and abbreviations. Cross references help users find similar terms and concepts.

Black-and-white illustrations are scattered throughout the book. The illustrations are clear, but color would have made for better visual interest. Biographical entries are not included among the dictionary's entries; however the appendix contains a list of the names, birthdates, and nationalities of famous people in astronomy. The appendix also contains several charts, including a list of planetary satellites, a calendar of meteor showers, lists of constellations, asteroids, and other interesting facts. A list of websites, organizations, and a bibliography provide plenty of information for those who want to learn more on their own. The book assumes the reader accepts the validity of the Big Bang theory, yet references to it are scarce. Despite a somewhat dry presentation, the book is well organized and entries are clear. Recommended for all types of libraries.

Lisa Gonzalez

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The sun, Mercury, and Venus / Linda T. Elkins-Tanton. (The solar system.) LCCN 2005014799. New York : Facts On File, 2006.

HBB, 0816051933, list price: \$37.50.

523.7. Venus (Planet); Mercury (Planet); Sun. xxiii, 216 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

Mars / Linda T. Elkins-Tanton. (The solar system.) LCCN 2005014797. New York : Facts On File, 2006.

HBB, 0816051984, list price: \$37.50.

523.43. Mars (Planet). xvii, 206 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

Uranus, Neptune, Pluto, and the outer solar system / Linda T. Elkins-Tanton. (The solar system.) LCCN 2005014801.

New York : Facts On File, 2006.

HBB, 0816051976, list price: \$37.50.

523.47. Uranus (Planet); Neptune (Planet); Pluto (Planet); Solar system. xxi, 202 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

The earth and the moon / Linda T. Elkins-Tanton. (The solar system.) LCCN 2005014189. New York : Facts On File, 2006.

HBB, 0816051941, list price: \$37.50.

525. Moon; Earth; Sun. xxii, 233 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

Jupiter and Saturn / Linda T. Elkins-Tanton. (The solar system.) LCCN 2005014190. New York : Facts On File, 2006.

HBB, 0816051968, list price: \$37.50.

523.4/5. Saturn (Planet); Jupiter (Planet); Sun. xx, 220 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

Asteroids, meteorites, and comets / Linda T. Elkins-Tanton. (The solar system.) LCCN 2005013916. New York : Facts On File, 2006.

HBB, 081605195X, list price: \$37.50.

523.5. Comets; Meteorites; Asteroids. xiv, 210 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

Grades 6-12. Rating : *5.

The Solar System series explores the relationship between the sun and its orbiters, including the planets as well as asteroids, meteorites, and comets. The hypotheses offered are based on technological developments in the last hundred years and new data from space missions to Mars. The preface makes clear "the choice of a leading hypothesis among competing ideas is really a matter of opinion, and arguments can go on for decades." The series accepts as facts: the gravitational acceleration of the Earth, the radius of Mars, the height of prominences from the Sun. Almost everything else is open to argumentation and change. The volume on asteroids, meteorites, and comets views them as primordial matter from which the universe was formed.

Each volume includes an eight-page insert of full color photography pertaining to that volume's topic, three appendices (Units & Measurements; Light, Wavelength & Radiation; and A List of Known Moons). Each volume highlights the uniqueness of the planet along with great areas of knowledge that are unknown.

Due to recent discussion regarding Pluto, it is well to mention that Pluto is presented not as the final lonely planet but as the largest known of an extensive population of icy bodies that reach far out toward the closest stars, in effect linking the solar system to the galaxy itself.

Those familiar with *Encyclopedia of the Solar System* (Academic Press, 2006) will find the same high quality illustrations and layout but more comprehensive information on the relationship of the planets to each other and the universe. Those having used *The Solar System*, Planet Library Series (Lerner, 2000) will welcome the updating and easy-to-use nature of this series.

Elkins-Tanton holds a doctorate in geology and geophysics. Her work has been published in *Geology, Earth & Planetary Science Letters*, and in *The Journal of Geophysical Research*.

Public libraries, small or large, can add this tool for frequent use by students researching the solar system. Christian school libraries will find here a presentation that offers images and discussions youth can relate to, and yet complement a biblical discussion of God's role in the solar system's formation and processes.

Dr. Leroy Hommerding

Sleep and dreaming / Marvin Rosen. (Gray matter.) LCCN 2005011689. Philadelphia :

Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791086399, list price: \$32.95.

612.8/21. Sleep; Dreams. 159 p. : ill. (some col.) ; 25 cm.

Grades 11-12. Rating : 3.

Cells of the nervous system / Ona Bloom and Jennifer Morgan. (Gray matter.) LCCN 2005011690. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791085120, list price: \$32.95.

611/.0188. Neuroglia; Neurons. 147 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm.

Grades 11-12. Rating : 5.

The neurobiology of addiction / James D. Stoehr. (Gray matter.) LCCN 2005011989. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791085740, list price: \$32.95.

616.86. Brain; Neuropsychology; Substance abuse—Physiological aspects. 106 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm.

Grades 11-12. Rating : 5.

Brain disorders / Bryan Hains. (Gray matter.) LCCN 2005015851. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791085139, list price: \$32.95.

616.8. Brain—Diseases; Gray matter. 122 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm.

Grades 11-12. Rating : 4.

The forebrain / Elizabeth Tully. (Gray matter.) LCCN 2005011688. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791085090, list price: \$32.95.

612.8/25. Prosencephalon. 93 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm.

Grades 11-12. Rating : 4.

The midbrain / Michael Morgan. (Gray matter.) LCCN 2005011988. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791086372, list price: \$32.95.

612.8/264. Mesencephalon. 114 p. : ill. (some col.) ; 25 cm.

Grades 11-12. Rating : 4.

The hindbrain / Carl Y. Saab. (Gray matter.) LCCN 2005011687. Philadelphia : Chelsea House, 2005.

HBB, 0791085104, list price: \$32.95.

612.8/27. Rhombencephalon. 85 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm.

Grades 11-12. Rating : 3.

This new series from Chelsea House, Gray Matter, provides a good resource for the high school student researching various aspects of the brain. Seven of the fourteen volumes in the series were reviewed. All included detailed bibliographies, useful glossaries, and extensive indices. The material is current, the illustrations are relevant to the text, and amazing facts about brain research are clearly presented. Overall, the clearest fact about the brain is that it is one of the least understood frontiers of science. This series, in its honest approach, may just be the motivation some high school student will need to plot a life course for medical school. For a library on a budget, it is not necessary to purchase all the volumes to get the majority of the information. Much of it is repeated in more than one volume.

Sleep and Dreaming is authored by Marvin Rosen. Citing it as an underfunded area of research, Rosen relates what is known about the physiology of sleep and dreaming. The rest of the text is filled with information about Freud and his contemporaries, as well as scenarios and hypotheses for students to think about. There's a fair amount of information overlap between sections, lending a feeling of redundancy.

Three books, *Cells of the Nervous System*, by Jennifer R. Morgan and Ona Bloom, *The Neurobiology of Addiction* by James D. Stoehr, and *Brain Disorders*, by Bryan Hains, have a great deal of overlap between them.

Understanding that the target age group for these books is the teen reader, each author has focused on what is pertinent to this age group. Thus, information about typical disorders (Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, Huntington's, Epilepsy, Migraine, Stroke, Tumors, Multiple Sclerosis) the students might encounter, as well as the dangers to the teen brain from drugs of abuse are clearly highlighted. All three are well done. The book by Stoehr has the most images of the effect of drugs on the brain. For students, a picture is worth 1000 words.

The last three books, *The Forebrain* by Elizabeth Tully, *The Midbrain* by Michael Morgan, and *The Hindbrain* by Carl Y. Saab are interesting road maps through the anatomy of the brain. The more complex scientific text is broken up by relevant sidebars. All three books contain clear illustrations which assist the reader in identifying the subject matter. *The Forebrain* includes a discussion of stem cells and in vitro embryos, with a brief mention that this is a controversial topic. In *The Midbrain*, the author discusses the "reward" centers and how those play into teen pregnancy. *The Hindbrain's* author mentions that the cerebellum has evolved over 450 million years from the earliest primitive neural cells. The transitions in this last book, and the majority focus on Purkinje cells make it less likely to be useful than other volumes in the series. The books on the forebrain and midbrain are the best value.

Kelley Westenhoff

Hook, line & seeker : a beginner's guide to fishing, boating, and watching water wildlife / Jim Arnosky ; with photographs and illustrations by the author. LCCN 2004052501. New York : Scholastic Nonfiction, 2005.

PAP, 0439455847, list price: \$12.95.

799.1. Aquatic animals—Juvenile literature; Boats and boating—Juvenile literature; Fishing—Juvenile literature. 192 p. : ill. (some col.) ; 23 cm.

Grades 5-8. Rating : 4.

Author, naturalist, and artist Jim Arnosky has divided the text of *Hook, Line & Seeker* into three sections: fishing, boating, and watching water wildlife. In the fishing segment he discusses freshwater lake, pond, and stream fishing as well saltwater surface and bottom fishing. The boating segment includes discussion about canoes, paddles, outboard motors, sailboats, and inflatable boats, as well as boating safety. In the last segment about watching water wildlife Arnosky puts his knowledge of boating and fishing together with observing an assortment of wildlife. The book is illustrated with Arnosky's photographs and illustrations. The appendix includes a listing of North American freshwater and saltwater fish by region. An index is included.

Remember Gary Paulsen and his love of the outdoors? Well, Paulsen, move over for a more gentrified nature lover, Jim Arnosky. Arnosky shares not only his love of more accessible outdoors, but also his artwork, colored photographs, and finished and rough sepia toned sketches. The reader can more easily follow Arnosky's nature path than he can Paulsen's arctic and wilderness path. Arnosky's text feels like a fishing buddy relating his experiences. His love of both nature and art is quite evident. This is a personal book with the author relating his experiences and expertise. For the picture book audience, *A Good Day's Fishing* by Prosek (Simon and Schuster, 2004) is a nice introduction to the fine art of fishing.

Marion Mueller

Atlas of the world / [cartography by Philip's]. LCCN 2006629106.

New York : Oxford University Press, 2005.

HBB, 0195220455, list price: \$150.00.

912. Atlases. 1 atlas (561 p.) : col. ill., col. maps ; 40 cm.

Grades 9-12 (Adult). Rating : 5.

Updating *Oxford Atlas of the World* each year since its introduction in 1992, Oxford's 2006 revision incorporates new maps of New Orleans after Katrina, maps of the Green Zone in Baghdad, latest name changes in South Africa, and new maps of Iraq, Israel, Southern Lebanon, and Afghanistan.

These 176 pages of world maps, 71 city maps charting major urban centers of the world, and an 80,000 name index make this 11x15" format resource easy to use in locating current profiles, cartography, and statistics relating to the world's geography. The valuable input from a panel of specialist geography consultants whose specialties range from cartography, urban and social geography, to biogeography and applied geomorphology affirms that this resource is a veritable encyclopedia of information.

Public libraries, small or large, seeking to offer a comprehensive current work with detailed topographical and political information about every nation on earth can add this atlas without reservation. Those libraries, public and school, having research needs from those in grades 9 to 12 and adult can recommend this tool. Those schools with tight funds can aim to add this atlas at least every two or three years. Stunning satellite images add an interesting dimension for young and old.

Dr. Leroy Hommerding



When the wall came down : the Berlin wall and the fall of Soviet

communism / Serge Schmemmann. 1st ed. LCCN 2005023892. Boston : Kingfisher, 2006.

HBB, 0753459949, list price: \$15.95.

943./1087. Berlin Wall, Berlin, Germany, 1961-1989—History; Germany (East)—Politics and government; Communism—Europe, Eastern—History—20th century; Germany—History—Unification, 1990. 127 p. : ill. (mostly col.) ; 25 cm.

Grades 8-12. Rating : *5.

The fall of the Berlin Wall was an exciting event, especially if you were in Berlin at the time. Author Serge Schmemmann was a *New York Times* correspondent working late on a story in West Berlin. He was a bit disturbed that his assistant knocked on his hotel room door, interrupting him. Then he realized that the man in his room was his East Berlin assistant who had never before been allowed entry into West Berlin. Schmemmann proceeds to tell the story of the events leading up to and following the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Schmemmann was there, and interviewed many others who were present as well, as he wrote his newspaper articles. He used that experience to give a first hand account of the fall of Communism. Throughout the book he references actual news stories which are included (in edited form) in the second part of the book.

Photographs, both colored and black and white, illustrate the text, showing historical events and giving the story a visual human side.

The first hand report, historical accuracy, newspaper articles, time line, source notes, and index make this an excellent resource for those studying the late 1900's, particularly the fall of Communism and the reunification of Germany.

Jane Mouttet

A brief history of India / Judith E.

Walsh. LCCN 2005001892. New York : Facts on File, 2005.

HBB, 0816056587, list price: \$45.00.

954. India—History. xix, 348 p. : ill., maps ; 24 cm.

Grades 8-12. Rating : 3.

Author Judith Walsh, professor in the Humanities and Languages Department at the State University of New York, Old Westbury, has more than twenty years' experience teaching courses on India and South Asia. She has a Ph.D. in modern South Asian history. In the introduction to *A Brief History of India*, Walsh claims "themes of particular importance to this history are the size and diversity of the subcontinent, the complex workings of the Indian caste system, the availability of Indian religiosity for political use and manipulation, and the very modern issue of how to define a national Indian identity." Black and white maps, photos, and charts abound. Boxed features of interest appear throughout the text. Four appendices provide basic facts, a chronology, a bibliography, and suggested reading. There is also an extensive index.

Walsh has attempted a monumental task, for India's history is long (from 2600 B.C.), complex (many religions and the caste system), and intertwined with its neighbors and European occupiers. She clearly discusses the assortment of religions (Muslim, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.) and their role in forming the nation state. The final chapter about India at the turn of the current century uses the past to effectively explain the present.

Walsh presents a balanced view of the many problems the country has faced and is facing. The themes mentioned in the introduction resonate in the text. Perhaps in its brevity, the interesting human interest aspects needed to be omitted. The book is detailed, but often dry and "textbookish." And perhaps that

is the best use for the book, a textbook.

Marion Mueller

My childhood under fire : a Sarajevo diary / Nadja Halilbegovich. Toronto : Kids Can Press, 2006.

HBB, 1553377974, list price: \$14.95.

B or 949.74203. Halilbegović, Nadja, 1979-—Diaries—Juvenile literature; Halilbegović, Nadja, 1979-—Diaries; Yugoslav War, 1991-1995—Bosnia and Hercegovina—Sarajevo—Juvenile literature; Yugoslav War, 1991-1995—Personal narratives, Bosnian—Juvenile literature; Sarajevo (Bosnia and Hercegovina)—History—Juvenile literature; Sarajevo (Bosnia and Hercegovina)—History. 120 p. : ill. ; 21 cm.

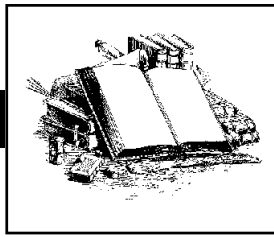
Grades 7-9. Rating : 5.

Nadja was twelve years of age when the war in Bosnia started. *My Childhood Under Fire* is her diary of the war years until she was able to escape to the United States.

Through her diary entries the reader will experience vicariously the horrors of falling bombs, injuries and death, lack of food, and the struggle to just survive. Nadja's voice was heard on the radio in Bosnia as she read her poetry and writings about her wartime experiences. She was also part of a choir which sang in hospitals and refugee camps throughout the war.

This first-hand account of the Bosnian war will be of interest to those studying recent history. The book will add to the reader's understanding of the conflict and of what it is like to be a child in a war-torn country. The diary format makes the book easy to read and allows the reader to read short sections, if needed, to absorb what this young lady had to endure as a young teenager. The book contains black and white photographs of the author and places mentioned in the text. Halilbegovich brings feeling to her writing, because she experienced what she wrote about.

Jane Mouttet



Arms of deliverance : a story of promise / by Tricia Goyer. LCCN 2006008109. Chicago : Moody Publishers, 2006.

PAP, 0802415563, list price: \$12.99.

Fic. Eugenics—Germany—History—20th century—Fiction; World War, 1939-1945—Belgium—Fiction; Jewish women—Fiction; Women journalists—Fiction. 318 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 5.

Arms of Deliverance by Tricia Goyer weaves the tales of two female journalists, a “Germanized” Jewish woman, a Nazi, and a group of heroic soldiers. Mary Kelley and socialite Lee O’Donnelly, rival journalists, accept an assignment to cover WWII from a female’s perspective. Lee and Mary are thrust into a world where the heroic deeds of soldiers dwarf their petty differences with each other. Katrine, a “Germanized” Jewish woman, has fallen in love with a Nazi, and finds herself in a desperate situation. As their lives converge, the characters find they each must make personal sacrifices and heroic decisions to overcome the evil that so prevalently surrounds them.

Arms of Deliverance draws the reader into the drama of WWII from both sides of the ocean. The witty and abundant dialogue, the apt but not overdone descriptions, and the scene changes move the plot along quickly. The character’s realistic personalities, struggles, and amazing achievements give vitality and round out the story. The personal growth exhibited by the characters has potential to inspire readers to look beyond themselves to help others. The WWII setting includes little-known information about the Nazi homes for breeding Aryan babies. As soldiers don’t return from battle, tensions mount and the setting becomes even more realistic. Goyer sensitively deals with tragedies of war and sin, but even in the midst of this intense story, humorous moments provide relief.

Pervading the whole story line, though, is a story of hope, or as the subtitle says, “A Story of Promise.”

Kristina Wolcott

Comes a horseman / Robert Liparulo. LCCN 2004026692. Nashville : Westbow Press, 2005.

HBB, 0785261761, list price: \$21.99.

Fic. Serial murders—Fiction; Americans—Jerusalem—Fiction; Government investigators—Fiction; Colorado—Fiction; Jerusalem—Fiction; Mystery fiction. 474 p. ; 24 cm.

Adult (Grades 11-12). Rating : 5.

Luco Scaramuzzi is the “antichrist-candidate” of the Watchers, an ancient and powerful secret-society seeking the Antichrist. Scaramuzzi engages a prophecy expert, a Vatican priest, to prove he is the Antichrist. Back in the States, terror surrounds the Pelletier serial-killings. FBI Agents, Brady Moore and Alicia Wagner, embark on a thrilling investigation to discover the murder-victims’ commonality before the killer strikes again. Their international search leads them to a researcher of near death experiences; to a Vatican priest suspected of stealing profiles of the murder victims; and to Jerusalem’s labyrinthine, one step ahead of the Pelletier murderer, for an encounter with the Antichrist.

In his debut suspense novel, *Comes A Horseman*, Robert Liparulo’s writing ability is evident in this densely developed and plausible treatment of the popular thriller genre inspired by Revelation’s Antichrist. Themes of bloodshed, death, and despair symbolized by the book’s title are reminiscent of Revelation, chapter six, “Then another horse came out, a fiery red one. Its rider was given power to take peace from the earth and to make men slay each other...” Characters are flawed and sin is portrayed, but not

celebrated. For example, Brady (in despair) turns to alcohol after his wife’s death. “He knew all too well the dangers of seeking respite at the bottom of a bottle. He splashed amber liquid into the glass with the fatalism of a junkie filling his veins with a narcotic he knew would someday kill him.” Growth is determined in the struggle to survive thematic trials. Evil is examined in several characters: a Satanist, Luco, and the Pelletier killer. The reader will enjoy the rollercoaster-ride, one hairpin turn ahead of destruction. Reader empathy, even with some evil characters, keeps the pages turning. *Comes A Horseman*, 2006 Christy Award Finalist.

Vicki Talley McCollum

Daughter of deliverance / Gilbert Morris. (Lions of Judah ; 6.) LCCN 2005028257. Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2006.

PAP, 0764229214, list price: \$12.99.

Fic. Rahab (biblical figure)—Fiction; Bible. O.T.—History of biblical events—Fiction; Jericho—History—Siege, ca. 1400 B.C.—Fiction; Religious fiction; Love stories. 316 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult. Rating : 5.

Rahab is forced by family circumstances into prostitution. She is instrumental in keeping the Israeli spies safe from discovery. The spies then rescue her and her family when Israel conquers the city of Jericho. Rahab and her family then live with the Israelites and she becomes an ancestor of Christ.

Morris has taken the biblical record and expanded it to tell the story of what Rahab’s life might have been like. He gives possible answers to the questions: Why was Rahab a prostitute? Who were

the spies who came to Jericho? How was Rahab treated after joining the Israelites? And who did she marry? *Daughter of Deliverance* is book six in the Lions of Judah series, but it is not necessary to have read all the other books in order to enjoy this title.

Morris based this book on scriptural records as well as knowledge of life at the time in Jericho. He used his own imagination to fill in details not known from scripture. The book is both believable and enjoyable and gives the reader a closer look at one of the people in the genealogy of Christ.

Jane Mouttet

Fire dancer / Colleen Coble.
(Smoke jumper series ; 1.) LCCN
2006023025. Nashville : WestBow
Press, 2006.

PAP, 159554139X, list price: \$14.99.

Fic. Arson—Fiction; Arizona—Fiction;
Christian fiction. 295 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult. Rating : 2.

When she was a child, Tess's parents and uncle were killed in a barn fire. Now a smoke jumper, Tess spends her days parachuting into dangerous hotspots, fighting forest fires in some instinctive attempt to atone for not saving her parents' lives. Having fled the family farm and all its painful history, Tess is forced to face her past when her sister, suffering from lupus, calls Tess home to her help keep the farm afloat financially.

Tess must also face Chase, the foster brother she hated with a passion for finding a place in her father's heart and usurping her role in the family. The two of them, united by the common goal of saving the farm, bury the hatchet long enough to uncover the source of the multiple fires set by a menacing arsonist targeting Tess's family—and in the process they discover love.

Fire Dancer, by Colleen Coble, is a mystery story that keeps readers guessing as the tale unfolds, presenting not only Tess's story, but also an anonymous first person view of the arsonist's story. The story deals with dark themes of child molestation, incest, and abuse. The arsonist finds his power in the twisted spirituality of becoming an Indian "skinwalker" by killing and eating a relative, thus becoming powerful enough to be transformed by the spirit of the wolf, though which he menaces Tess's family and commits his crimes.

Fire Dancer starts slowly because of intense scenes that lose their "punch" when they are summarized rather than fully developed. Characters' reactions to attempts on Tess' life (via a tampered-with parachute, and later, a bomb secreted in her back pack), and to other mysterious events (a pasture fire that starts for no reason, and Tess being chased on horseback by a huge wolf-like beast) seem strangely downplayed. *Fire Dancer* gains momentum as it moves along, but portrays the characters in such a way that it is somewhat like watching actors on a stage; a distance is created that makes it difficult for readers to empathize with them. The characters reference God on occasion, but it always comes as a surprise, as the characters do not seem to have any serious relationship with God. Although the characters grow and change by the end, the God-connection still seems weak, like a "tag-on."

Sherri Beeler

Guarded / Kirsten Lasinski.
LCCN 2004027352. Chicago :
Moody, 2005.

PAP, 0802455680, list price: \$11.99.

Fic. Mothers and daughters—Fiction; Divorced
women—Fiction; Adoptees—Fiction;
Colorado—Fiction; Christian fiction. 236 p. ;
22 cm.

Adult. Rating : 4.

When Emily Blyton begins to research her heritage for a town project, she discovers that she was adopted at birth. Suddenly, midlife crisis takes on a whole new meaning. All the years of her father's harsh rejections come back to taunt her. Memories of the warmth she seeks from romance leading to an unhappy marriage and abandoned, single motherhood, haunt her. Emily goes to New York in search of her roots, and she and her estranged daughter, Jericho, begin to patch their relationship. Unfortunately, Emily's birth research uncovers an unwedded mother and a father who never knew she existed. Jericho and Emily decide to return to Murray and spend some time together. Soon after their arrival home, Jericho discovers she is pregnant. When informed, the father of her child makes clear his desire to have nothing to do with them. Interwoven with the generational rejection of mother, daughter, and, now, grandchild, is the message of the Lord's loving call to freedom and acceptance, in Him.

Guarded by Kirsten Lasinski addresses two age-old enemies of children with human parents, rejection and abandonment. Lasinski skillfully redirects the focus to the only workable solution, a relationship with the Father who never fails. After a slow start, Lasinski warms to her tale and develops both characters and scenery like a true artist. Some of the dialogue is a bit stiff, but smoothes out as the story moves along. Writing style and language usage are reader-friendly. Recommended for both public libraries and Christian collections.

Kim Harris

Another point of view

Adult. Rating : 3.

At a young age, Emily realizes that she should guard her heart from men. Alone

and pregnant by age 18, she is forced to move back into her parent's home. With the father of her baby gone and her own father expressing his disregard for every choice she had made in her life, Emily decides she is through with men. Many years later when a secret about her life is revealed, Emily feels that being alone is worse now than ever. In the end can she give her guarded heart to Jesus, the one true Father?

Even though Kirsten Lasinski has well developed characters and a well developed town, the first half of the book is quite slow. The last half of the book was where it took off. It was then the secret was presented and Emily goes in search of answers. The relationships are well thought out and realistic such as: Emily's relationship with her daughter, her friendships within the town, and the pastor and his wife. Emily has real flaws but ultimately realizes she can not live her life with out Jesus Christ.

Jessica Anselmi

A hearth in Candlewood / Delia Parr. (Candlewood trilogy ; 1.) LCCN 2006013797. Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2006.

PAP, 0764200860, list price: \$12.99.

Fic. Boardinghouses—New York (State)—Fiction; Christian fiction. 317 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult. Rating : 5.

Emma Garrett is proprietress of Hill House, a charming boardinghouse located in the canal village of Candlewood, New York. She and her widowed mother-in-law provide a hospitable environment for a kindly, infirm pastor; his lovable dog, named for the butter he pilfers; two naïve housemaids; and a colorful cast of temporary boarders. When a nasty storm brings an elderly widow, escaping the wrath of her bickering sons, to

Emma's doorstep, Emma's tender-hearted interference places her in the middle of a domestic dispute. Cleverly fending off a shifty investor's proposal of marriage and an incessantly disapproving lawyer, Emma uses her spirited intuition and business sense to ensure the success of Hill House. When Hill House's ownership comes into question, because of the shady dealings of the previous manager, Emma must protect both staff and guests from the quandary she faces.

A Hearth in Candlewood by Delia Parr, a restful Christian historical fiction, is book one of the Candlewood Trilogy. Delightful imagery suitably reflects the simplicity and elegance of the Victorian Era and exhibits Parr's deep understanding and affection for the ambiance of the region. The slowly advancing plot picks up pace, as characters are developed, allowing the reader time to get acquainted with Emma's world. Dialogue is witty and enchanting, replete with playful interchanges between characters, and periodically injected with gentle humor. Writing style perceptively demonstrates both the authenticity of the era and the necessity to connect with modern readers. Highly recommended for public libraries.

Kim Harris



Hood / by Stephen R. Lawhead. (The King Raven trilogy ; 1.) LCCN 2006014183. Nashville : WestBow Press, 2006.

HBB, 1595540857, list price: \$24.99.

Fic. Fantasy fiction. 490 p. ; 24 cm.

Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : *5.

In Stephen Lawhead's new novel, *Hood*, the legend of Robin Hood is reborn into the history and setting of Wales. This is

historical fiction based on the legend of Robin Hood; Lawhead includes an effective Author's Note that explains how the legend very possibly originated in Wales.

Bran ap Brychan, heir to the throne of Elfael, finds himself fighting against all odds when his father is murdered and his kingdom is taken over by Ffreinc invaders. Bran flees for his life and finds shelter and hope amongst the ancient Welsh forest. Soon Bran faces the decision of whether to flee and save his own life or to return to his people and save them from the tyrants that have enslaved them. Along the way Bran crosses paths with an old prophethess who reveals to Bran that his life may have a greater purpose than he knows. Bran must embrace his destiny if he is to save his people.

Lawhead weaves an imaginative tale that is full of suspense, action, mystery, redemption, and hope. The transformation of Bran ap Brychan into the legendary Hood is fascinating. All the great elements of the Robin Hood legend are here: everything from bows and arrows to familiar characters Merian, Friar Tuck, and Little John. The forest scenes are especially entertaining and will have you gripping your chair.

This is the first book of a trilogy, and while there is a sense of closure in this novel, the reader will find they desperately long for more. The messages of hope and redemption are beautifully displayed here and this story will make your heart soar. Fans of historical fiction and fantasy will love this novel. This book is recommended for public and high school libraries.

Jake Chism



Levi's will : a novel / W. Dale

**Cramer. LCCN 2005004602.
Minneapolis : Bethany House,
2005.**

PAP, 0764229958, list price: \$13.99.

Fic. Amish—Fiction; Conflict of generations—Fiction; Inheritance and succession—Fiction; Christian fiction. 394 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : *5.

Levi's Will, a 2006 Christy fiction award winner, begins in June of 1943 when Will, who has impregnated his girlfriend, is fleeing the Old Order Amish community in which he grew up. This single act is like tipping over the first in a series of dominoes; it has repercussions that follow him through his entire life. First he is banished from his family and later, when he gets married, he spins a web of lies about his past which cause unnecessary anguish in his marriage. He also takes on some of the hard and distant ways of his father, making many mistakes with his own children including the daughter that he abandoned.

Slowly, Will works toward redemption and reconciliation with his family, especially his father, but it isn't easy. This brilliantly written novel delves deeply into the nature of intergenerational relationships. It demonstrates how the sins of the father are visited upon the son and how it takes a very strong person to reach out and stop such a vicious cycle. But Will doesn't do it alone. He has the help of strong friends and loving family to guide him. Most importantly, he comes to understand and seek God's grace in his life.

Levi's Will demonstrates the value of tradition, regimentation, restrictions, and hard work, while at the same time realizing that, in the end, what really matters most is love, even tough love, and forgiveness. This novel is a perfect choice for a book discussion group and an excellent addition to any library

collection.

Tinna Mills

**The longing season / Christine
Schaub. (Music of the heart.)
LCCN 2006013583.
Minneapolis : Bethany House,
2006.**

PAP, 0764200607, list price: \$12.99.

Fic. Newton, John, 1725-1807—Fiction; Hymn writers—Fiction; Hymns—Authorship—Fiction; Musical fiction. 248 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult. Rating : 4.

The Longing Season by Christine Schaub unfolds the story of John Newton, author of "Amazing Grace," and Mary Catlett, the girl who gave him her heart. John disappears after being forced into the service of the English navy. While Mary longs for his safe return, John lives a debauched life in Africa. Years pass with no sign of John, and another man begins to pursue Mary's affections. Mary gives up hope of seeing John again, and John finally learns that "without faith...his life would be black with unfathomable despair." (p. 211) In time, both John and Mary learn many of the facets of God's amazing grace.

The plot of *The Longing Season* moves quickly as Schaub introduces John Newton and Mary Catlett in the years of 1746-1748. Schaub develops John's and Mary's personalities with care, showing the depths of sin into which John sank and the depths of Mary's love for John as she waits for word from him. Historical allusions add authenticity to the setting. The naturally flowing dialogue imbues the characters with personality. Schaub deals honestly with John's sin, but only exposes enough to outline his utter wretchedness, allowing the reader new perspective on the words he penned, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me."

Kristina Wolcott

**Mountaintop Drive : a John
Smyth mystery / James R.
Coggins. (A John Smyth
mystery ; 3.) LCCN 2004028014.
Chicago : Moody, 2005.**

PAP, 0802417695, list price: \$11.99.

Fic. Periodical editors—Fiction; Mountain resorts—Fiction; British Columbia—Fiction; Mystery fiction. 263 p. ; 21 cm.

Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 4.

John Smyth is sent by his church to write an article covering the congregational convention in Abbotsford. He and his wife Ruby use the opportunity as a working vacation. Their host, Dr. John Robinson, an eccentric professor at the local college, lives in a quiet, wealthy neighborhood. When the wife of Robinson's next-door neighbor is murdered, and a drug house is discovered close by, the area becomes the focus of the local police force. Detectives assigned to the homicide trace a blood trail and the murder weapon to Dr. Robinson, but Smyth has other ideas about the true nature of the crime. Meanwhile, the two churches Smyth writes about appear vastly different. Mountaintop Grace Evangelical Church, a twelve million dollar facility, boasts a well-dressed pastor who gives dramatically entertaining Sunday sermons, and a congregation peopled by the region's elite. Shadow Valley Church, a renovated old factory, is active in prison ministries, Alcoholics Anonymous, soup kitchens, etc., and is geared to reaching the community's down and out. During his research, Smyth discovers a deep connection between both pastors, and many similarities between the congregations. In the tradition of the cozy mystery, *Mountaintop Drive* by James R. Coggins yields the proper amount of red herrings to keep the reader guessing and second guessing the outcome. Writing style is warm, with a dialogue that increases familiarity with

the realistic characters. Coggins combines humor, visuals, and character insights to facilitate the message that things aren't always what they seem. Recommended for school and public libraries.

Kim Harris

A pagan's nightmare : a novel / by Ray Blackston. LCCN 2006006838. New York : Warner Faith, 2006.

HBB, 0446579599, list price: \$22.99.

Fic. Christianity and culture—Fiction; Screenwriters—Fiction; Christian fiction; Humorous fiction. 241 p. ; 24 cm.

Adult. Rating : 4.

Ray Blackston, who writes books like no one else in today's Christian writers market, has produced *A Pagan's Nightmare*, guaranteed to tickle the funny-bone of readers who appreciate Blackston's quirky, outrageous brand of humor. *A Pagan's Nightmare* is a story within a story: Larry Hutch has written himself and his friends into a novel about Larry Hooch. Hooch finds himself in a world mysteriously taken over by the "zealots" (Christians). He is one of the few remaining pagans in a world where gas is twelve cents a gallon for the redeemed and over six dollars for the "unfortunates," where a secret code phrase of the redeemed is required for almost every transaction, where "King James" seems to be the language style of preference—and where everywhere Hooch turns he finds his face on a "wanted" poster for his conversion. While trying to evade capture and imprisonment in a "conversion camp," Hooch frantically tries to locate his girlfriend Miranda, who seems to have disappeared from the face of the earth.

A Pagan's Nightmare is a book that doesn't take itself too seriously, and should not be scrutinized too closely for realism. Although the novel gets off to a

bit of a slow start, the pace picks up about midway, with Blackston poking fun at all the quirks and foibles of Christianity along the way. Readers must read the book clear to the last chapter to fully appreciate the point Blackston is trying to make. The over-the-top humor, and the gently irreverent treatment of many things the Christian world holds dear lifts up a mirror before our eyes and causes us to see ourselves as we must often appear to non-believers—a rather unflattering portrait that we would rather not acknowledge as ours.

All our rituals, traditions, bad thinking, and bad theology are exposed, from the commercialization of Christianity and its bumper-sticker slogan simplicity, to the "Christianese" we tend to speak (which can be very puzzling for the uninitiated), the petty doctrinal differences that divide us, and the way we tend to "sanitize" anything secular. Once Hooch is captured, he complains, "All we see is your vinyl siding...You all seem satisfied to slather religious latex over everything...but who are you?" And that is the point. *A Pagan's Nightmare* reminds us that true Christianity is none of these superficial things. Hutch (and Hooch) and the reader are left with the inevitable conclusion that one of two things is true: either heaven and hell don't matter, or else Jesus is the only way. Readers may look forward to a sequel, tentatively titled *My Big Fat Orbiting Cheeseball*.

Sherri Beeler

Relentless / Robin Parrish. (The Dominion trilogy ; 1.) LCCN 2006011317. Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2006.

HBB, 0764202219, list price: \$19.99.

Fic. Supernatural—Fiction; Prophecies—Fiction; Conspiracies—Fiction; Psychic ability—Fiction; Doppelgangers—Fiction; Suspense fiction. 443 p. ; 24 cm.

Adult (Grades 9-12). Rating : 4.

Collin Boyd knows something is dreadfully wrong when he steps off a bus—and sees himself across the street. It isn't a man who just looks like him—it is him—and when Collin looks at his own reflection in a store window, he is absolutely flabbergasted. The body he now inhabits is not his own. Gone is his bald spot. Gone is his flabby midsection, and his glasses. He has been shifted. So opens Robin Parrish's book *Relentless*, which proceeds at a fierce pace as Collin—now newly identified as Grant Borrows—must discover who he is, what the mysterious, irremovable ring on his finger means, and how to control his suddenly acquired power to move objects with his mind.

Operating in a world where police seem ineffective or uninterested in tracking down the cause of the murder and mayhem that follows in Grant's wake, readers must exercise a willing suspension of disbelief to enjoy this novel that reads like watching a PG-13 superhero action film. Some slang is employed, violence, torture, and murder occurs repeatedly, and it is not always clear who is a "good guy" and who is a "bad guy"—including Grant, who takes the law into his own hands many times. Moral issues often seem fuzzy until the end when Grant faces a horrific internal battle, and chooses rightly. *Relentless* is all about answering the question why, and takes the entire novel to do it. Even at the end the reader still has many unanswered questions—as does Grant. The book merely sets the stage for the following books in the Dominion trilogy, projected to be released in 2007 and 2008. Readers of Ted Dekker style books, or fans of Star Wars, Batman, and the like will enjoy this intriguing, high energy story.

Sherri Beeler

Return to Alastair : a novel / L. A. Kelly. (Sequel to: Than.) LCCN 2005024257. Grand Rapids : Fleming H. Revell, 2006.

PAP, 0800731166, list price: \$12.99.

Fic. Good and evil—Fiction; Middle Ages—Fiction; Historical fiction; Christian fiction. 363 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 4.

Tahn Dorn was once a feared assassin who lived by the sword, but since giving his heart to God, he has become a changed man. Tahn is ready to settle down peacefully with his ladylove, Netta Trilett, whose wealthy family he now helps protect as Captain of the Guard. However, before he can truly make peace with his past and move into the future, Tahn must figure out what the meaning is of the strange dreams that keep haunting him.

Against Baron Trilett's and Netta's advice, Tahn makes the decision to return to Alastair to try to understand his past. Upon his arrival there, the townspeople are fearful of him, thinking he has returned to exact revenge on them for their past deeds against his family. But what exactly did they do, and will Tahn live long enough to find out the truth behind his nightmares and what really happened to his parents?

Return to Alastair is the sequel to L. A. Kelly's *Tahn: A Novel* which introduced the character of Tahn Dorn to readers. The themes of forgiveness and redemption are strongly present in the book. *Return to Alastair* picks up directly after the ending of *Tahn: A Novel*, so it is highly suggested that readers read that novel first to avoid confusion, although the author does do a good job of filling readers in to some of Tahn's past. While the large cast of characters may be somewhat confusing at first, *Return to Alastair* is a good book with an even better message: It's the

inside of a person that is truly the important part, not what you see on the outside.

Sherri Myers

Storm / Bill Bright & Jack Cavanaugh. (The great awakenings, 1798-1800.) LCCN 2005058940. West Monroe, La. : Howard Publishing, 2006.

PAP, 1582294933, list price: \$12.99.

Fic. Yale College (1718-1887)—Fiction; Secret societies—Fiction; Historical fiction; Christian fiction. 342 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 4.

Americans have no idea that evil lurks, working toward the destruction of America in its 20th year. Neither does Asa Rush, a freshman at Yale College. Asa does know that upperclassmen, specifically Eli Cooper, haze him mercilessly. When Timothy Dwight, Yale's Christian president, asks Asa to witness to Eli, Asa's heart falls. However, when Asa finds out Eli has stolen his girlfriend, Asa's heart breaks. As he deals with the discovery of personal and political treachery, he learns that sometimes God says, "The task is hard. Do it anyway." p. 223

Bill Bright and Jack Cavanaugh paint 1798 America with shades of political and spiritual complexity. The well-developed characters Asa and Eli change through the storm of their personal struggles with the Lord and each other. The mood builds in intensity. A love triangle, abundant dialogue, and a hint of intrigue keep the plot moving quickly. Human blunders sprinkle humor throughout. The contemporary actions and mindsets of the characters occasionally seem out of place for this period; the writing convinces the reader that perhaps some things never change. The technique of writing an historical fiction book from a contemporary mindset is particularly effective in

communicating the idea that the revivals that produced the Great Awakening can happen again. "True revival is sparked by simple acts one person at a time." p. 105

Kristina Wolcott

Summer of the midnight sun / Tracie Peterson. (Alaskan quest ; 1.) LCCN 2005032029. Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2006.

PAP, 0764227734, list price: \$12.99.

Fic. Alaska—Fiction; Love stories; Christian fiction. 378 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 5.

Under the northern lights / Tracie Peterson. (Alaskan quest ; 2.) LCCN 2006008822. Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2006.

PAP, 0764227742, list price: \$13.99.

Fic. Frontier and pioneer life—Fiction; Kidnapping victims—Fiction; Alaska—Fiction. 379 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 5.

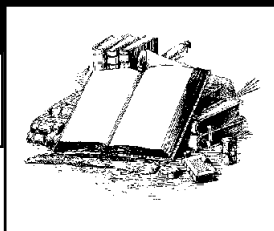
In *Summer of the Midnight Sun* by Tracie Peterson and book one of the Alaskan Quest series, Leah and Jacob, orphaned siblings, run a trading post in a tiny, isolated Alaskan village. Upon Jacob's return from a supply run, he is accompanied by Jayce Kincaid, the man who, ten years earlier, broke Leah's heart. Leah still loves Jayce, but cannot face another rejection. Jayce begins to acknowledge his love for Leah, but worries she will leave him for a warmer, more cultured climate. When Jayce becomes seriously injured, Jacob and Leah must transport him the hazardous distance to the town doctor. While in town, Helaina, a young widow from the East, shows interest in Jayce. Secretly a bounty hunter, Helaina is on a mission to catch an elusive killer, and believes Jayce to be him. Although Jacob suspects that Helaina is hiding

something, he comes to care for her.

In *Under the Northern Lights*, book two of the Alaskan Quest series, Helaina suspects that Chase, Jayce's identical twin brother, may be a criminal. When he kidnaps Helaina at gunpoint and masquerades as Jayce, so he can pilfer supplies from the villagers, Jayce, Leah, and Jacob realize they must rely on God's help to stop Chase from hurting anyone else.

Author of more than 60 novels, Tracie Peterson skillfully unfolds another exquisite, historical fiction adventure series. Set amid the milieu of a beautiful and dangerous Alaskan wilderness, Peterson expertly contrasts the diverse social atmospheres between populated World War I America and the isolated frozenness of the extreme north. She depicts credible characters whose private personalities come to life for the reader. Dialogue flows smoothly and is entertaining. Writing style is spontaneous, with a well planned plot that is historically sound. Highly recommended for public libraries.

Kim Harris



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Postmodernism 101 : a first course for the curious Christian / Heath White. .LCCN 2005032404. Grand Rapids : Brazos Press, 2006.

PAP, 158743153X, list price: \$17.99.
149/.9702427. Postmodernism—Religious aspects—Christianity. 176 p. ; 22 cm.
Adult. Rating : *5.

Postmodernism 101 is a great introduction to this sometimes intimidating subject. Heath White, philosophy professor at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, begins by placing postmodernism in its historical context. He describes briefly the premodern mind (summed up in one word, Authority) which eventually leads to the modern way of thinking (in a word, Reason). Modernism eventually morphs into postmodernism which abandons both Authority and Reason. For the rest of the book, White discusses postmodern perspectives on moral absolutes, the self, language, culture, and history. The last section deals with Christianity and postmodernism.

This book has accomplished an amazing feat. With clear, skillful writing, Heath White has tamed that curious animal called postmodernism. *Postmodernism 101* answered all the questions that I hoped it would. This book is the perfect place to start for anyone interested in the history, culture or philosophy of western civilization.

David Rainey

The stars speak : astronomy in the Bible / Stewart Custer. 2nd ed. .LCCN 2002010005. Greenville, S.C. : BJU Press, 2002.

PAP, 1579248187, list price: \$15.95.
220.8/52. Astronomy in the Bible. viii, 212 p. :

ill. (some col.) ; 23 cm.
Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 5.

In our early parenting years, our family studied the stars and recited Psalm 19:1-6. We hoped to teach our children about the faithfulness of the heavenly bodies and of their Creator. Now, from far flung places, our daughters and son gaze at the nighttime sky and remember their childhood. Therefore, I eagerly read *The Stars Speak: Astronomy in the Bible*, by Stewart Custer. The author presented these lessons at the Howell Memorial Planetarium at Bob Jones University.

Seventeen chapters begin with Bible verses and end with devotional-like thoughts. "The Design of the Universe" compares the movement in atoms to the planets of our solar system revolving around the sun. Other chapter titles include "The Seven Stars and Orion," "How Big is Outer Space," and "Color in the Sky." Generous illustrations range from simple drawings and sky maps to exquisite colored photographs. Five appendices highlight topics such as Scripture references, planetary facts, and a topical index. A bibliography lists Christian devotional works emphasizing stars, and standard references about astronomy. The publisher notes these secular works often contain "strong bias toward evolutionary theories."

Technical words are well-defined in the text. You'll learn the difference between a meteor, a meteoroid, and a meteorite. Terms such as spectrum, corona, and apogee appear. An appendix of these words would be useful. Star gazing, guided by Stewart's *The Stars Speak*, can help everyone realize the vastness of the solar system, and the gracious provision of salvation from their creator!

Roberta Lou Jones

Bible archaeology : an exploration of the history and culture of early civilizations /

Alfred Hoerth, John McRay. Grand Rapids : Baker Books, 2005.

HBB, 0801012872, list price: \$29.99.
220.93. Bible—Antiquities; Archaeology; Israel—Antiquities; Middle East—Antiquities; Mesopotamia—Antiquities; Egypt—Antiquities; Palestine—Antiquities; Persia—Antiquities; Anatolia—Antiquities; Greece—Antiquities; Italy—Antiquities. 288 p. : col. ill. ; 25 cm.

Adult (Grades 9-12). Rating : 4.

Bible Archaeology seeks to "provide information for the vast reading public who want to know what archaeology has to contribute to their understanding of, and confidence in, the Bible as the Word of God" (6). The book is divided into nine sections. The first section, Archaeology and the Bible, is an overview of archaeology and how it relates to the Bible. The remaining eight sections look at a geographic area as it relates to the Bible, or, as in the case of Palestine, the Old Testament and New Testament are divided. The geographic areas include: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Palestine, Persia, Anatolia, Greece, and Italy.

Hoerth and McRay do not seek to prove that the Bible is true using archeological evidence, rather that it is historically accurate. Some of the language used is academic, but most average readers will be able to glean useful knowledge from this volume. The book is illustrated with photographs, sketches, and maps which are explained in lengthy captions. A reference list and index make this a useful resource for pastors and lay people alike. Older students may also be able to use the book in their studies.

Jane Mouttet

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In the company of Jesus : finding unconventional wisdom and unexpected hope / Bill Donahue.

LCCN 2005018543. Downers Grove, Ill. : InterVarsity Press, 2005.

HBB, 0830832750, list price: \$17.00.

232. Jesus Christ—Person and offices. 232 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult. Rating : *5.

Designed to take readers “beyond the text” of Scripture and catalyze a deeper relationship with Christ, Bill Donahue’s *In the Company of Jesus* focuses on the attributes of Jesus’ personality that made him both a skilled leader and intimate companion. Using biblical illustrations and personal anecdotes, Donahue impressively emphasizes how understanding these facets of Christ’s nature is essential to the Christian’s ability to grow spiritually and properly relate to God. At times humorous and at others painfully incisive, Donahue’s writing displays the heart of one who has found authentic communion with Christ and desires to equip others for the same journey.

While more concerned with the experiential than the theological, Donahue employs a wealth of appropriate, relevant Scripture passages to support his work, allowing the reader to be certain his observations are rooted in the Word of God. *In the Company of Jesus* is written in forty concise parts, each concluded with an opportunity for personal response, guided prayer, and further Scripture reading. This structure would undoubtedly allow the book to serve as excellent devotional material for an individual or small group.

Donahue has succeeded overwhelmingly in writing a book equally grounded in emotional depth and spiritual truth. The material has uncovering, experiencing, and celebrating the person of Jesus at its heart and provides the background for readers to begin each of these endeavors.

Aarik Danielsen

Paul meets Muhammad : a Christian-Muslim debate on the Resurrection / Michael R. Licona ; [foreword by Lee Strobel]. LCCN 2005027486. Grand Rapids : Baker Books, 2006.

PAP, 0801066026, list price: \$13.99.

232/.5. Jesus Christ—Resurrection; Paul, the Apostle, Saint; Huammad, Prophet, d.632; Christianity and other religions—Islam; Islam—Relations—Christianity. 175 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult. Rating : 5.

In *Paul Meets Muhammad: A Christian-Muslim Debate on the Resurrection*, author Michael R. Licona creates an environment that allows two of history’s most prominent religious leaders—Paul and Muhammad—to meet in a futuristic face-to-face debate. Licona spends the first chapter developing a storyline about scientists developing hologram technology that can realistically recreate the two leaders. A debate on the validity of the Christian claim that Jesus was truly resurrected is scheduled in a stadium. Paul represents the Christian viewpoint and Muhammad challenges the claim.

Licona uses a traditional debate format. Both men are allowed opening statements and rebuttals, and then the moderator leads a question and discussion session before Muhammad and Paul give their closing arguments. Through the debate process, Licona is able to clearly explain the major views of both religions concerning the resurrection, which is the cornerstone of Christianity. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, then Christianity is false. If he did, then Islam is false.

The debate is an excellent forum for such an exchange of ideas, and Licona does an admirable job of presenting both sides fairly and evenly. It is an entertaining way of delivering important information to both Christians and

Muslims without being biased or offending either group.

This book provides insights that will strengthen the Christian’s belief in the resurrection while giving clear explanations on the basic concepts of Islam’s teaching on the subject. The format is easy to follow and provides information that might usually be found in a reference book in an easily digestible style. A helpful Notes section gives more detailed information on various points in each chapter. The book would be an excellent evangelistic tool to give to a Muslim friend.

Jeff Friend

Fifty reasons why Jesus came to die / John Piper. LCCN 2003026596. Wheaton, Ill. : Crossway Books, 2006.

PAP, 158134788X, list price: \$9.99.

232.96. Jesus Christ—Passion. 127 p. ; 21 cm.

Adult (Grade 12). Rating : 3.

“The central issue of Jesus’ death is not the cause but the purpose—the meaning,” writes John Piper in his book, *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die*, adding, “What did God achieve for sinners like us in sending his Son to die?” Piper, a pastor and author of over thirty books, goes on to list, and discuss in detail, fifty “purposes.” Some are expected: to absorb the wrath of God. Some are unexpected: to destroy the hostility between the races.

Although a slim book (127 pages long) with short, two-page chapters, *50 Reasons* contains a fairly complex vocabulary. Also, many of the topics discussed would be best understood by readers who already have strong church backgrounds—or who have access to someone able to explain the more difficult concepts. There is some repetition in the fifty reasons, or at least, some of the reasons are closely related

to each other (for the forgiveness of our sins; to take away our condemnation; to make us holy, perfect, and blameless). Yet Piper's work includes crystal clear clarifications of why Jesus had to live as a human, why he came to earth to die—and how mankind meant it for evil, but God meant it for good. The book also makes clear that the answer to the question "Who killed Jesus?" is that God did, and includes a ringing condemnation of Christians who have used Christ's death as an excuse for anti-Semitism.

Rosemarie DiCristo

A parent's guide to spiritual warfare : equipping your kids to win the battle / Leslie Montgomery. LCCN 2006006278. Wheaton, Ill. : Crossway Books, 2006.

PAP, 1581347715, list price: \$11.99.

235/.4085. Child rearing—Religious aspects—Christianity; Parenting—Religious aspects—Christianity; Spiritual warfare. 158 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult. Rating : 3.

A Parent's Guide to Spiritual Warfare is written to help parents recognize that spiritual warfare is real and to help them empower their children to fight and win the battle. The book is strong on practical advice, based in part on author Leslie Montgomery's experiences raising her own children. (Montgomery is staff writer for the American Association of Christian Counselors and author of two other books). This advice includes how to assess where a child stands spiritually; what a child needs to know about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; how to follow the 'road map' of God's word; how to deal with self-esteem issues, and how to recognize the attack tactics of Satan—and guard against them. There's a chapter dealing specifically with the single parent, and one fully describing how to put on and

use the armor of God.

The book is written in a simple, conversational style. While Montgomery successfully avoids slipping into sensationalism—a possibility considering her topic—she also doesn't hold back on being hard hitting, stating, for instance, that some cities emanate a "blatant demonic presence" or that a rebellious child is rebelling against God—and is actually serving Satan.

A Parent's Guide should be especially helpful for parents wanting to hear how another parent handled spiritual warfare in her own family. The book is well researched and Montgomery extensively quotes from the Bible and other sources to back up her statements. There are two pages of endnotes. However, many statistics date from the 1990s or early 2000s rather than being more recent.

Rosemarie DiCristo

C.S. Lewis's case for Christ : insights from reason, imagination, and faith / Art Lindsley. LCCN 2005012105. Downers Grove, Ill. : InterVarsity Press, 2005.

PAP, 0830832858, list price: \$14.00.

239. Lewis, C. S. (Clive Staples), 1898-1963—Religion; Apologetics. 216 p. ; 21 cm.

Adult. Rating : 3, recommended with caution.

This book is primarily apologetic and it seeks to examine how C. S. Lewis engaged the difficulties that lie on the path to becoming a Christian. Among the many difficulties covered are the age of Christian ideas, the problem of evil, miracles, relativism, and other religions.

The author, Art Lindsley, has taken a non-evangelical and made him indistinguishable from today's evangelicals. This makes the book suitable for Christians and non-Christians alike. But this homogenization smoothes out Lewis's

own theological contours. Some rough edges of his theology are apparent in a quotation in chapter three where Lewis asserts (in contrast to an orthodox view of man's sinful nature) that unbelief is because of "nothing intrinsic" in people.

A serious warning is warranted for this book because the author takes an extremely dangerous position with regard to Lewis's inclusivism (the belief that people are saved by other means than faith in Christ). Lindsley states in chapter twelve, "though I hope he [Lewis] is right, I fear that he is mistaken." The author then relegates the belief that Christ is the only way of salvation to "speculation."

Another point which would be disagreeable to many Christian apologists is the end of chapter one where critics of Lewis are portrayed as atheists, less-than-confident Christians, or a "couple" of irrelevant detractors.

The popular nature of this book makes it unsuitable for a textbook. The end of the book includes a helpful suggested reading list on apologetics as well as endnotes and a topical index.

David H. Wenkel

What Jesus demands from the world / John Piper. LCCN 2006021810. Wheaton, Ill. : Crossway Books, 2006.

HBB, 9781581348453, list price: \$19.99.

241.5. Jesus Christ—Teachings; Bible. N.T. Gospels—Criticism, interpretation, etc. 400 p. ; 24 cm.

Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 5.

Readers familiar with John Piper's other devotional books will find a great deal of continuity in this book that focuses on the commands of Jesus from a conservative, evangelical perspective. They will feel at home with his short chapters and his combination of explanation and spiritual application.

But readers will also sense some unfamiliar territory when they pick this up. It is not only long but it has a slight academic tone not found in many books focused on spiritual growth.

The peculiarities of this book are addressed in the beginning chapters. Regarding length, there is a chapter on “how to read” it. The author indicates that each chapter can be read independently of the others, allowing the reader to skip around. The academic nature is also addressed. There are sporadic footnotes with academic information but the content is generally non-technical. Those with academic inclinations are given information about the author’s methodology and his study of the commands of Jesus as found only in the four New Testament Gospels. It is also significant that the author presupposes the unity of the New Testament and the Gospels. This allows the book to cover many of the significant commands of Jesus in a unified format.

The nature of this book makes it suitable primarily for personal spiritual reflection. Negatively, it lacks any group discussion guide or reflection questions. It would however, make an excellent textbook for high school level Christian education.

In addition to the sporadic footnotes, the end contains a helpful scripture index and a subject index. The table of contents lists each chapter numerically alongside a pithy summary of the command.

David H. Wenkel

Another look at the same book

Adult (Grades 9-12). Rating: 5.

John Piper has a gift for communication, and his church in Minneapolis, recognizing this gift, set him aside during 2006 to study and write in England. One of the works he produced

was *What Jesus Demands from the World*. He noted that Jesus in the Great Commission told the disciples, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them., teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Mt 28:19-20a ESV). Jesus told his disciples to instruct others not just to repeat his commands—a parrot could do that—but to observe them.

So Piper asked himself: What are Jesus’ commands? And how can I instruct others to keep them? What results are 50 chapters of no more than six or seven pages each (perfect for daily reading) which tackle, one-by-one, the commands of Jesus. Piper begins with the simplest and most important: “You must be born again,” “Repent,” “Come to Me,” “Believe in Me,” “Love Me,” “Listen to Me.” He proceeds to more specific commands later: “Humble yourself by making war on pride,” “Do the will of My Father in heaven: be justified by trusting Jesus.” Piper does with these commands what any good preacher of the Scriptures will do: he explains, illustrates, and applies them to contemporary Christians.

Piper has no thought, of course, that by somehow noting and seeking to keep Jesus’ commands a person can earn eternal life. Jesus commands that we trust him, not our own works. But Piper does note that Jesus is indeed demanding with authority that we obey Him.

Jesus’ words are very, very important. And Piper’s treatment of them is solid and refreshing. But if a library has room for just a few Piper books, his classics *The Pleasures of God* and *Desiring God* ought to come first.

Mark L. Ward, Jr.

The time of your life: finding God’s rest in your busy schedule / Susie Davis. LCCN 2005032175.

Wheaton, Ill. : Crossway Books, 2006.

PAP, 1581347529, list price: \$12.99.

248.4. Work—Religious aspects—Christianity; Employees—Religious life. 190 p. ; 21 cm.

Adult. Rating : 3.

Written specifically for women who are overworked, overstressed, and living a life out of balance as they “careen from item to item on (their) packed to-do list,” *The Time of Your Life: Finding God’s Rest in Your Busy Schedule*, offers advice on finding a godly solution to hectic schedules and the family concerns that often result from them. Susie Davis, who serves with Virtuous Reality Ministry and speaks to over 10,000 women annually, maintains that “though we spend time, we don’t really own it,” and points her readers to letting God claim his role as director in their lives.

The book is broken into four sections: Rethinking Your Hectic Life; Making Peace with How God Made You; Avoiding Unhealthy Schedule Choices; and Clearing the Way for Joy. Subchapters include such topics as Why God Commands Us to Rest; and Building Rest and Balance into Your Family’s Life.

Davis writes in an easy, conversational style with a strong “you can do it” tone. Each short chapter focuses on one aspect of her message, making *The Time of Your Life* somewhat reminiscent of a devotional, and Davis herself says she’s not trying to write a book on how to manage time as much as one on how to discover God’s desire for us and our schedules: who we are, what God made us to be, and how our fallen nature and modern culture take us away from all that. In that respect the book contains more theory than tips, although there’s a “Time Out” section at the end of each chapter listing bulleted ways the reader can put the chapter’s ideas into practice, and there are many practical solutions

offered on how to handle busyness.

Rosemarie DiCristo

Spiritual disciplines handbook : practices that transform us / Adele Ahlberg Calhoun. LCCN 2005018540. Downers Grove, Ill. : InterVarsity Press, 2005.

PAP, 0830833307, list price: \$16.00.

248.4. Spiritual life—Christianity. 292 p. ; 25 cm.

Adult. Rating : 4.

Adele Calhoun, a pastor of spiritual formation, draws on her experience of working in the ministry for over 30 years. That experience leads her to write this handbook of 62 spiritual disciplines to help others become closer to Christ. The book is designed so that readers can identify their desire and then locate the discipline to help meet it. For example, if one's desire is "to delight in and recognize the voice and will of God," the discipline would be "discernment."

This book will be a help for those who are seeking help in transforming their relationship with Christ. There is a scriptural basis for every discipline as well as a brief discussion on each discipline. The spiritual exercises accompanying each discipline are doable and sensible. Each reaches beyond the usual activities or reading and journaling to include a variety of practices that engage all readers.

The book is organized with the tables, reflection questions, exercises, and resources section contributing greatly to its usability. The depth and breadth of the disciplines will meet the needs and preferences of many different readers. Readers, who have been disappointed in other handbooks for spiritual growth, will find much to savor in the *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*.

Shirley Copeland

Battle cry for a generation : the fight to save America's youth / Ron Luce. Colorado Springs : NexGen, 2005.

HBB, 0781442672, list price: \$19.99.

259/.23. Youth—Conduct of life; Youth—Religious life—United States; Church work with youth—United States. 213 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

Adult (Grades 10-12). Rating : 5.

Adolescent advocacy is Ron Luce's calling card in the world of Christian publishing. As father, and author of 19 other books on this topic, he has produced a guide that calls out conglomerates and corporations seeking to seduce young people into divesting their souls of "real relationships." Whether it is movies, music, or the Internet, the addictive nature of the media "raises, glazes and hazes" our children; this book challenges readers to wake up to the real war, recognize the crisis, and develop a battle plan. Part II of the book provides a step-by-step counter invasion in a culture war, and Part III, Luce helps leaders find a foothold with assessment and survey questions for effective outreach.

The battle cry outlined is for youth leaders to become more vision driven than activity driven. Vision generates provisions, helps reprioritize, delegates to new leaders, cuts back on competitiveness and busyness. Drastic measures make a difference in love, prayer, hospitality, generosity, and mentoring through youth ministry. Each chapter has a discussion guide. Loaded with resources, practical information, insightful testimonies from young people, and scriptural annotations that make this a well rounded resource. Recommended for libraries, teachers, and all youth ministry leaders.

Rebecca Cress-Ingebo

Science & grace: God's reign in the natural sciences / Tim Morris,

Don Petcher. LCCN 2005023917. Wheaton, Ill. : Crossway Books, 2006.

PAP, 1581345496, list price: \$14.99.

261.5/5. Religion and science. xvi. 352 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult. Rating : 3.

Tim Morris, Dean of Science at Covenant College, and Don Petcher, Physics Department Chair at Covenant, have written *Science & Grace: God's Reign in the Natural Sciences* to help readers better understand—and respond to—the modern "war" between science and Christianity. The book is a study of the various forces that have led to the rise of pre-modern, modern, and post-modern thought, and how Christian views of science are or aren't compatible.

Although the writing suffers a bit from wordiness (chapters are lengthy, the reading can be difficult, the book is stronger on theory than on tangibles), Morris and Petcher, who have a deep knowledge of their subject, write thoroughly on how modernist influences have shaped the way Christians think about science and how these influences can be related to a science rooted in an evangelical, and specifically Reformed, perspective. Among the questions raised: How does a person's worldview affect his or her science? What roles do the doctrines of sin and redemption play? Is God primarily spiritual—or is He also involved in the mechanics of the universe? Can a Christian avoid scientific "idols of thought" and instead find science in the power of God's grace?

The authors make liberal use of direct quotations from primary sources, both in the text and in the endnotes. The points and conclusions of each chapter are neatly summed up at the end of the chapter. There are twenty-four pages of endnotes, a six page bibliography, and

an index. Although general audiences can find Science and Grace of interest, it's geared mainly to a college student audience or perhaps the authors' fellow professors.

Rosemarie DiCristo

2 Corinthians : power in weakness / R. Kent Hughes. (Preaching the Word.) LCCN 2005023918. Wheaton, Ill. : Crossway Books, 2006.

HBB, 1581347634, list price: \$24.99.
277.307. Bible. N.T. Corinthians, 2nd—
Commentaries. 271 p. ; 24 cm.
Adult. Rating : 3.

2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness is part of Crossway's Preaching the Word series, which will eventually include studies of every book in the Bible. This volume is a line by line study of Paul's letter, examining Paul's intent in writing it, and what it should mean to believers today. Among the topics discussed: the full meaning of the phrase "jars of clay," what "do not be unequally yoked" refers to, why affliction is essential in the Christian life, why suffering must be embraced, and the reason why believers won't be crushed by life's turmoil.

Pastor R. Kent Hughes compares ancient Corinth to modern society, concluding that there's a special message for today's readers in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, one that is countercultural in general, and one that will also counter much of the "happy" messages of modern Christianity. The vocabulary used and concepts discussed are fairly complex and sometimes seem geared more to pastors than to a lay audience. But Hughes tackles some fascinating, meaty topics, and usually repeats key ideas in succeeding chapters so that important points are nicely emphasized. Also helpful: the book contains a Scripture index and an index of sermon illustrations as well as its general index.

Rosemarie DiCristo

Ships of Mercy : the remarkable fleet bringing hope to the world's forgotten poor / Don Stephens with Lynda R. Stephenson. LCCN 2005000010. Nashville : Nelson Books, 2005.

HBB, 078521156X, list price: \$19.99.
362.11. Mercy Ships; Charities, Medical; Hospital ships. vii, 219 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.
Adult (Grades 8-12). Rating : 4.

Ships of Mercy provides an interesting account of the growth of the internationally noted and valued Mercy Ships organization. The birth of a handicapped son became the unusual blessing that goaded Don and Deyon Stephens into putting feet to their dream of serving their Lord by helping the poorest of the poor worldwide. In the late 1970s, backed by a cadre of interested helpers and some savvy businessmen, project Hope was launched with the purchase of an outdated luxury liner. *Ships of Mercy* tells of the years and volunteers it took to turn this liner into a hospital ship, and later a hospital ship fleet, with qualified volunteers who pay for the honor of working. The narrative then branches out into the widely varied work being done among the destitute sick, injured, and handicapped of many nations.

Founder of Mercy Ships, international speaker, and winner of several humanitarian awards, Don Stephens' testimony about this adventure captures and challenges the reader. Descriptions of the heart-rending victims and the free medical care, complex operations, and loving attention they receive from highly trained volunteers prolifically illustrate this report. Called of the Lord to do this work, Stephens has based this organization on doing rather than preaching. He accepts all qualified, genuinely interested workers. Christian

love and morals stand out in this book. A small section of photographs add interest. A final chapter concerning financial logistics of this group encourages further study. A capable commentary on this important charity, *Ships of Mercy*, will be useful to all schools and libraries. It will be of special interest to those looking towards medical and other supportive careers.

Donna Eggett

Growing your own turtleneck— : and other benefits of aging / Martha Bolton. LCCN 2005008947. Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2005.

PAP, 0764200038, list price: \$12.99.
814/.54. Aging—Humor. 188 p. ; 22 cm.
Adult. Rating : 5.

Is there really anything funny about growing older? Veteran comedy writer Martha Bolton proves there is plenty to laugh about as she writes about musical tastes, dangerous fashions, plastic surgery, and a wide variety of topics as seen through the eyes of a 'mature' woman. Although the chapters are short (one is only 28 words long), Bolton's observations about life after 40 range from purely silly to challenging readers to think about their life's purpose.

Bolton honed her skills as a writer for comedians such as Bob Hope and Phyllis Diller, so she is adept at quickly getting into the story, making her point, and then moving on. Sometimes the stories are simply meant to evoke a chuckle or two, such as the Top 20 Countdown for Middle-Agers and Beyond which includes "Blue Suede Sensible Shoes" and "Harper Valley AARP." But Bolton also includes chapters urging readers to pursue their dreams, reduce their stress, and welcome new challenges. The final chapter provides powerful assurance that each

life is significant and we all have impacted other people in ways we may never know.

The book is easy reading and entertaining, and its over-40 target audience will be able to relate to the content and Bolton's folksy style. Sometimes it's refreshing just to sit back and enjoy a light-hearted look at life.

Jeff Friend

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