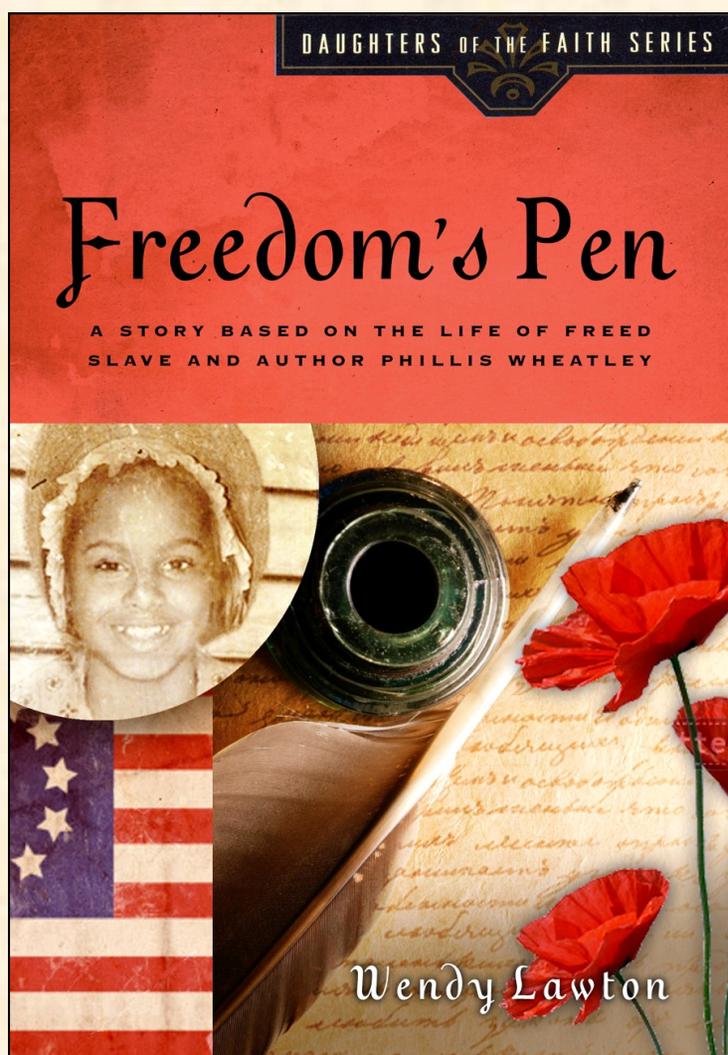
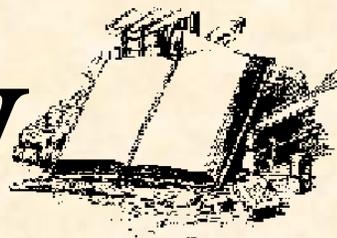


# Christian Library

J O U R N A L

Volume XIII, No. 1  
April 2009



## Resuming Publication

We are glad to be back in publication, and hope you find CLJ helpful in your library, homeschool, church, and home.

In this issue you will find reviews of award-winning titles, science titles for children and teens, and a variety of others. Enjoy.

And please support CLJ with your purchases in our store. You'll find it on our website.

Thanks,

Nancy Hesch & team



## *A Letter from the Editor*

Dear Readers,

As I sit here in Africa in the late afternoon of Good Friday, putting together the newest issue of the *Christian Library Journal*, I can't help but reflect on the one whom we worship, love, and give our lives to. I pray that you, as well as I, will be purposefully getting to know the holy one more and more, and that our efforts will be done in humility and commitment to Christ. May you find some books in this issue of CLJ which will draw you nearer to him.

Many of the titles reviewed in this issue were award winners of some type in 2008 or early 2009. We, of course, are interested in seeing what a Christian reviewer thought of these. You will find that some are not recommended, award notwithstanding.

We are also still working on finding the best books for the Christian school or home library. You will find reviews of science project titles rated highly by others, accompanied by purchase recommendations (or consider those recommendations to take with you to the library. Expect to see a variety of subjects covered in each new issue.

We are giving you CLJ for no charge, but if you purchase titles reviewed by clicking on the link for that title in the online version of this issue, Amazon will recognize our journal and pay us a small amount for each such purchase. If you find CLJ especially valuable, tell others about it.

May the Lord bless you and your reading!

In Christ's love,



*Nancy L. Hesch*

Nancy L. Hesch

Editor and Publisher



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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 titles for the Christian reader. Materials reviewed may reflect a broad range of Christian doctrinal positions and do not necessarily reflect the views of the team of *Christian Library Journal*.

Nancy L. Hesch  
Editor & Publisher

Cover: Freedom's Pen, by Wendy Lawton. Moody Publishers, c2009, used by permission

# Christian Library JOURNAL

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## What You See (Part 5) And How You View It

by  
Donna W. Bowling

"What you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing; it also depends on what sort of person you are." -- C.S. Lewis

In 2003 this series began with the recognition that godly, Bible-believing Christians frequently differ on issues relating to fantasy fiction. So, committed Christians should maintain a gracious attitude toward fellow believers in the spirit of Romans 14. I live and work among a community of missionaries who are translating the Bible into the many languages of unreached people groups. I often hear of difficulties in determining appropriate terms for communicating key concepts, especially when no clearly equivalent terms occur in a target language. (E.g., Is the Allah of the Arabic Bible, the same as the Allah of the Koran?) Some of the books in this review article attack the issue of the meanings of important terms. Varying definitions sometimes lead to varying conclusions.

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**From Homer to Harry Potter : a handbook on myth and fantasy / Matthew T. Dickerson & David O'Hara. LCCN 2005031195. Grand Rapids, Mich. : Brazos, 2006.**

PAP, 1587431335, 9781587431333, \$ 20.00.

809/.915

272 p. ; 23 cm.

Adult (HS)

Rating: \*5

In *From Homer to Harry Potter*, Dickerson and O'Hara begin with a discussion of the meanings of the terms *myth* and *fantasy*. In a literary sense, these terms are not related to truth or falsehood. Drawing from various writings of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, the authors place *myth* and *fantasy* along a continuum of *the Literature of Faërie*, which extends from *myth*, to *fantasy & heroic romance*, and then to *fairy tale*. These concepts differ in geographic scope from broad to

narrow, as well as in character and significance. The authors quote Tolkien on three faces of Faërie: "The Mystical toward the Supernatural, the Magical toward Nature, and the Mirror of scorn and pity toward Man." After two chapters on introduction and terms, they look at some historical roots for modern works of fantasy. While maintaining the historic truth of the Bible, they illustrate elements of Faërie and mythic significance in the biblical record. Other chapters in this section are "Homeric Myth (and the 'Epic' fantasy)," "Beowulf to Arthur: Medieval Legend and Romance," and "Nineteenth-Century Fairy Tale and Fantasy: The Brothers Grimm and George MacDonald." The last half of this book discusses some significant modern works of fantasy: "Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea* Trilogy and Balance as the Highest Good," "The Darkness of Philip Pullman's *Material*," "Grace across the Whole of Faërie: Walter Wangerin Jr. and *The Books of the Dun Cow*," "Harry Potter: Saint or Serpent?" and concludes with "Once upon a Time . . . The End."

Matthew Dickerson is a professor at Middlebury College in Vermont and author of *Following Gandalf: Epic Battles and Moral Victory in The Lord of the Rings*, (CLJ review forthcoming) and other titles. David O'Hara is a professor at Augustana College in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Although there are no specific chapters on the major fantasy works of Tolkien and Lewis, the views of those two authors pervade this book. A glance at the index gives many, many references to those fantasy works. In the discussions of the fantasy works of Le Guin and Pullman, Dickerson and O'Hara point some ways these well-known authors reflect the elements of Faërie, but also how they differ from the Christian views of Tolkien and Lewis. By contrast, Wangerin displays his Christian worldview in his illustration of *euclatrophe*, bringing grace and hope. The authors deliberately left consideration of Rowling's Harry Potter books to the end because they "have been so controversial." Here they discuss at length the issue of magic, its purpose--preservation or domination, and its source--internal (inherent in the individual) or external (inanimate nature, or powerful person or spirit). The inherent ability could be analogous to musical ability. The external source of inanimate nature could be analogous to use of technology or pharmaceutical products. Calling upon an external spirit in a context of domination or slavery would be an "occult" use of magic, and could lead to self-deception. (Submissive prayer to God would not be occult.) Most, if not all, of the magic used in Rowling's "wizards world" (her preferred term) by the "good characters" would not be

“occult” by this definition, although the “evil characters” feel free to use spells to kill or enslave. Spells used for self-protection would not be considered evil. Although the Harry Potter books clearly illustrate a fierce battle between good and evil, a few incidents allow for discussion of situational ethics. (This work was written before the final two books in the series, but the other books are consistent with this evaluation.) The concluding comments suggest a number of questions and other considerations a Christian should bring in evaluating works of fantasy. “We become like that which we admire, and it behooves us to choose our stories well. . . . Mythic and fantastic literature, perhaps more than any other literature, reminds us of the relevance of our moral decision making” (p. 260). An appendix includes suggestions for further reading, followed by an index. This scholarly, but readable, title is highly recommended for church libraries, professional libraries in Christian schools, and individuals interested in fantasy.

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**Hogwarts, Narnia, and Middle-Earth : places upon a time / Rob Smith. Huron, Ohio : Drinian Press, 2007.**

PAP: 0978516567, 9780978516567, \$10.95.

823.914

113 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult Rating: 4.

In *Hogwarts, Narnia, and Middle Earth*, author Rob Smith discusses time and certain events in the imaginary worlds of J.K. Rowling, C.S. Lewis, and J.R.R. Tolkien, and incorporates biblical themes along the way. Chapter headings indicate his perspective: “Time;” “It’s About the Story;” Point of View;” “Magic: Magic in the Bible, Narnian Magic, Magic in Middle Earth, Hogwarts School;” “Where Loyalty Lies;” True Humanity: Stewardship in Harry Potter, Stewardship in the Lord of the Rings, Stewardship in Narnia;” The Weapons of the Enemy;” “Healing All Hurts;” “Death and Immortality;” and “Postscript;” followed by “Works Cited.”

Dr. Rob Smith is an ordained minister who served 31 years in congregations before teaching religion and philosophy at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio. Since 2005 he has devoted his time to writing novels and a volume of poetry. In his chapter on Magic, he discusses passages in the Bible that condemn the practice of magic. Such “magic” was in a polytheistic context that did not trust in the true God. In the three imaginary worlds being discussed, we do not see any anti-God

magician “attempting to access some god or demigod to fight against a sacred ground of creation.” Most magic in these books is analogous to the use of technology. While some anti-heroes act for personal power and domination, that is not true of the heroes in this struggle between good and evil. Smith shows that at the end of the seventh and final Harry Potter book, Harry defeats the evil Lord Voldemort by walking unarmed to death. This short book includes useful insights into Rowling’s seven books and is recommended for libraries and interested individuals.

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**The culture-wise family / Ted Baehr, Pat Boone. Ventura, Calif. : Regal Books, 2007.**

HBB: 0830743057, 9780830743056, \$19.99.

261

269 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

Adult Rating: \*5.

**Frodo & Harry : understanding visual media and its impact on our lives / by Ted Baehr and Tom Snyder. Wheaton, Ill. : Crossway Books, 2003.**

PAP: 1581345593, \$12.99 OP.

823/.912

203 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult Rating: 3.

In *The Culture-Wise Family*, Dr. Theodore Baehr and his co-author Pat Boone focus primarily on the effect that the mass media are having western culture. They document the moral, social, and spiritual decline in recent decades, and point out the attitudes that pervade the culture of the Hollywood entertainment culture. They challenge parents to “1. Understand the influence of the media on your children ... 2. Ascertain your children’s susceptibility at each stage of cognitive development ... 3. Teach your children how the media communicates its message ... 4. Help your children know the fundamentals of Christian faith ... 5. Help your children learn how to ask the right questions.” At different stages--sensation stage, imagination stage, concrete operational stage, reflection or formal operations stage, and relationship stage--viewers respond differently to such visual elements as horror, violence, sex, etc. Brain function “that inhibits risky behavior is not fully formed until age 25,” affecting mature ability to make wise decisions and control emotions. The authors suggest sets of questions for evaluating the worldviews seen in media products--equally valuable for print as well as visual products. They also suggest a further list

of useful ascertainment, discernment, reflection, and general questions.

Dr. Theodore Baehr is chairman of the Christian Film and Television Commission and the publisher of Movieguide.org. His several books include *The Media-Wise Family* [CLJ 4, 2/3:90-91 (Win/Spr 1999)] and *Narnia Beckons* [CLJ 10, 3:4-5 (Sep. 2005)]. Pat Boone has authored several short sections in *The Culture-Wise Family*, and additional contributors bring further useful information. Among the media products discussed, the Harry Potter films, *The Lord of the Rings* [LOTR] films, and the first of the *Chronicles of Narnia* films receive special attention to illustrate the applications of their evaluation techniques in operation. Unlike the authors discussed above, these authors consider that all magic in the Harry Potter films is occult in nature and therefore evil, while the magic by the “good” characters in the Narnia and LOTR films is not. *Frodo & Harry* below elaborates at greater length on this theme. While some readers may disagree with Baehr on specific applications of their principles for evaluating non-print, as well as print, media products, the principles in *The Culture-Wise Family* are quite useful. While it repeats some of the content of the still excellent *The Media-Wise Family*, it updates and provides additional information. An appendix gives a *Movieguide* review of the film *Amazing Grace*. Includes endnotes, but no index. Definitely recommended for church libraries, professional libraries of Christian schools, and interested individuals.

In *Frodo & Harry*, Baehr is joined by co-author Dr. Ted Snyder, an editor for Movieguide.org, and another film scholar. Although other media products, and their impact on American culture and its reputation abroad, are discussed at some length, this book emphasizes a contrast between the Harry Potter and LOTR films. The authors commend the technical qualities of these productions. For the Harry Potter [HP] films though, they find that the episodic nature of a school year lacks plot smoothness. They make contrasts between the appropriateness of the choices of the young magical person in training, wizard Harry Potter, age 11 and up, with a non-magical middle-aged hobbit Frodo, age 50 and up, without acknowledging the difference in their maturity levels. The authors suggest that for the HP films (and books) “The premise is that the more powerful and more attractive wizard defeats the less powerful.” Here other viewers and readers may suggest an alternate premise: “The less experienced young wizard in training defeats the very powerful evil wizard because of the help of others and the great power of sacrificial love.” In spite of firm agreement on the basic

principles, varying definitions of key terms inevitably lead to varying conclusions. Readers that recognize the truth of C.S. Lewis’s observation in the epigraph above will receive much value from the discussion of plot, character, setting, style, rhythm, and tone in *Frodo & Harry*, as well as the wealth of other information contained. Notes and an index conclude the book. Recommended as an additional title.

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**Wizards, wardrobes and wookiees : navigating good and evil in Harry Potter, Narnia and Star Wars / Connie Neal. Downers Grove, Ill. : InterVarsity Press, 2007.**

PAP: 0830833668, 9780830833665, \$15.00.

261.5/7

229 p. ; 21 cm.

Adult

Rating: 4.

In *Wizards, Wardrobes and Wookies*, Connie Neal capitalizes on the recent popularity of the box office hit movies in the Harry Potter, Narnia, and *Star Wars* series (2005). Using the perspective of Tolkien and Lewis, discussed above by Dickerson and O’Hara, Neal recognizes the mythic truths in these fantasy series. At the same time, she also asserts the importance of teaching children the dangers of real world witchcraft. Using incidents in these three series, Neal discusses the progressive themes in these chapters: “The Hero’s Journey, Mythic Archetypes, and Biblical Insights;” “The Hero’ and Would-Be Heroes Among Us;” “The Call to Join the Battle Against Evil;” “Crossing the Threshold into the Extraordinary;” “Meeting with the Mentor;” “Sorting Out Allies from Enemies;” “Preparing for the Ordeal in Our Battle Against Evil;” “Tests, Trials, Tricksters and Threshold Guardians;” “Knowing the Villain and the Nature of Evil;” “Unveiling Shapeshifters in Our Fight Against Evil;” “Fighting the Ultimate Battles;” “Combating the Shadow of Our Own Dark Nature;” “Facing Death, the Final Enemy;” “Grand Rescues, Resurrection and Redemption;” “Beyond the Bounds of Time and Power of Prophecy;” “Rewards and Just Deserts;” followed by an “Epilogue: Return with the Elixir.”

Connie Neal is an author and a youth worker who has used elements of popular culture for evangelistic purposes. In a method somewhat similar to her *The Gospel according to Harry Potter* [CLJ 8, 2:3 (Apr. 2003)] Neal takes situations in each of these series and relates one or more biblical events that reflect the topic of the chapter. The characteristics of the classic hero begin with an imperfect individual whose choices and experiences lead to ultimate victory in battle against evil. One chart itemizes the characteristics of evil, related

Scripture warnings, behavior, resulting outcome, and examples from the three series. The encouragement to a consistent Christian life committed to a victory over sin leads to a challenge in the epilogue to share the learning from our journey with others in need. A few endnotes conclude the book. This useful book is recommended for church libraries and interested individuals.

-----  
Of the authors above, only Rob Smith was familiar with the complete seven-volume Harry Potter series. The others were unaware of elements in HP Book 7, and for some also those in HP Book 6.

**Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince / by J.K. Rowling ; illustrations by Mary GrandPré, 1st American ed. New York : Arthur A. Levine, 2005.**

HBB: 0439784549, 9780439784542, \$20.00;

PAP: 439785960, 9780439785969, \$12.99.

Fic.

x, 652 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

MS (HS, Adult) Rating: 5, w/caution.

**Harry Potter and the deathly hallows / by J.K. Rowling ; illustrations by Mary GrandPré. New York : Arthur A. Levine, 2007.**

HBB: 0545010225, 9780545010221, \$19.97;

PAP: 545139708, 9780545139700, \$14.99.

Fic.

759 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

MS (HS, Adult) Rating: 5, w/caution )

In *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, the evil Lord Voldemort has returned in full strength. Harry's classes and friendship with Ron and Hermione grow more intense. During that time, Professor Dumbledore also spends more time with Harry, as they seek information and artifacts to defeat Lord Voldemort. After one important outing with Harry, Dumbledore is killed, leaving the school Hogwarts in mourning and the evil forces in greater control.

At the beginning of *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, Hogwarts is firmly under the control of the Death Eaters. Having come of age, Harry decides not to return for his final year, but to continue with his search for the artifacts needed to defeat Voldemort. Joined by Ron and Hermione, and with the help of some items willed to them by Dumbledore, Harry and his friends eventually find the needed items to destroy much of the Dark Lord's power. In a final showdown with Voldemort, Harry walks unarmed to his death, to protect his friends. Harry's sacrificial love defeats Voldemort. The Dark Lord's own killing spell towards Harry

rebounds and kills him instead.

Author J.K. Rowling had foretold that the later books in the series would get darker, and they do. Battles become more intense. Curses with dark magic cannot be cured. Death and grief increase and are not reversible. Some commentary by Rowling herself on key ideas in the Harry Potter books can be found in comments and stories in the imaginary bequest to Hermione, *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*, recently published by Rowling.

In view of some commentators' inference about an absence of God in the series, a careful reader may be surprised to note a "thank God" exclamation in HP 6 and several times in HP 7. In the cemetery beside the church in Harry's hometown, there are scripture references on the gravestones of Harry's parents, and those of the Dumbledore family. There are more fortuitous happenstances that assist Harry and his friends at key times in their struggle against evil than can be explained by "Accidents!" I will not repeat all my extensive observations about HP Books 4 and 5 in the *Christian Library Journal* review article in 2003. Although the Harry Potter books do not teach or illustrate real-world witchcraft, readers need to be warned about its dangers in the real world. For well-taught readers with the personal liberty under Romans 14 to read them, this series has a great deal to offer. But because of the controversial nature of the subject, and the need to leave such decisions to parents, I do not recommend these books for Christian school libraries.

#### References:

Baehr, Ted. *The media-wise family*. Camarillo, Calif.: Media-Wise Publishing, 2005, c1998.

Bowling, Donna W. "What you see, pt. 3 : Harry Potter sees death" in *Christian Library Journal*, 8, 5:2-3 (Oct. 2003).

Lewis, C.S. *The complete Chronicles of Narnia*. New York: HarperCollins, 2000, p. 51.

Rowling, J.K. *The tales of Beedle the Bard*. New York: Arthur A. Levine, 2008.

Tolkien, J.R.R. "On fairy stories" in *The Tolkien reader*. New York: Ballantine Books, c1966.

## Review Rating System

- \*5 Outstanding** —a book which impacts someone’s life or thinking
- 5 Excellent**—well written, among the very best
- 4 Good**—definitely worth reading
- 3 Fair**—to be read for relaxation or to meet needs for information
- 2 Poor**—poor writing or editing; read only if very interested
- 1** —What can we say? Not much going for this title.

Recommended with caution (may be used with any of the above ratings)—Note reservations within the review.

Not recommended (may be used with any of the above ratings)—Note problems within the review.

With fiction, the rating includes the quality of plot development/pacing, characterization, sense of time and place, mood and atmosphere, dialogue, depth of perception, sensitivity of writing, use of humor. Be aware that some books are character driven, so character development is extremely important. Others are plot driven, so character development isn’t as critical; plot is.

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

Many of the CLJ ratings are fairly high, most ranging from 3 to 5. The reason for this is that all books are prescreened before being offered to reviewers. With a limited number of reviews,

### Commonly used abbreviations in *CLJ* reviews

**LCCN** Library of Congress  
Cataloging Number

**C** Canadian Library Cataloging  
Number

**ISBN** International Standard Book  
Number

**HBB** Hardbound book

**LGP** Large print book

**LIB** Library edition

**LLB** Loose-leaf binding

**PAP** Paperbound book

**PBB** Paper board book

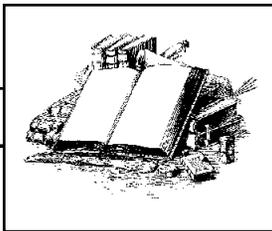
**SPR** Spiral bound book

**CAS** Audiocassette

**CDR** CD-ROM

**DVD** Videodisc

**VID** Videocassette



### PICTURE BOOKS

**My name is Yoon / Helen Recorvits ; pictures by Gabi Swiatkowska. 1st ed. New York : Frances Foster Books, 2003.**

HBB: 0374351147, 9780374351144, \$16.00.

E

32 p. : col. ill. ; 27 cm.

Pri Rating: 4

Helen Recorvits writes an enchanting yet realistic story about a little girl named Yoon who moves to America from Korea. In *My Name Is Yoon*, Yoon, whose name means "shining wisdom," does not like this new land. She longs to return to her home country.

Her father shows her how to write her name in English. But she thinks it looks so lonely. "Lines. Circles. Each standing alone. 'My name looks happy in Korean,' [Yoon] said. 'The symbols dance together.'"

Each day at school her teacher shows them how to write a new word, and then they must practice writing their name. However, Yoon writes the new words as her name. She writes BIRD. She imagines herself flying back to Korea. Finally, becoming friends with a girl who offers her a cupcake, changes her outlook. Yoon writes CUPCAKE on her paper and imagines herself as a flying cupcake because her classmates will be excited to see her.

Gabi Swiatkowska won the Ezra Jack Keats New Illustrator's Award 2004 for these beautifully painted illustrations. She captures the expressions and feelings of Yoon and the other characters with full-page pictures. Yoon's bleak house and school are contrasted with lovely, warm American landscapes looking out the windows. This book would be a wonderful read-aloud for an English-as-second-language

classroom or any elementary classroom to show students the feelings of immigrants. Recorvits mightily demonstrates how hard it is for children to learn a new language. Immigrant children learn that perseverance pays off in the end, and that one's attitude affects how you handle a new situation. This is the first in a three-book series.

*Tina Cho*

**First grade stinks! / by Mary Ann Rodman ; illustrated by Beth Spiegel. Atlanta, Ga. : Peachtree, 2006.**

HBB: 1561453773, 9781561453771, \$15.95;

PAP: 1561454621, 9781561454624, \$8.95.

E

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

Pri Rating: 4

Haley's excitement and sense of "grown-up-ness" fade when she realizes that first grade is much different from kindergarten, where she had lots of fun and loved her teacher. Her realistic inner thoughts describe her various reactions to the changes she encounters on the first day of first grade.

The portrayal of a typical day in first grade compared with the typical day in kindergarten is well thought out and fits the story line very well. Children will relate to Haley and her friends.

When Haley reaches the limit of her frustration, the ensuing action results in the development of relationship with her new teacher and helps Haley cope with and accept change appropriately. This hard lesson is handled with gentleness and kindness while still upholding the necessity of change, as portrayed by the teacher's patient reaction to Haley's frustration.

Haley's character is well-developed in individualizing her, portraying her feelings and her sense of justice, as

shown by her thoughts of "no-fair." Haley models self-control when she wants to throw her crayons and pinch her friend, but she doesn't do these things.

The colorful and distinct illustrations add dimension to the book by portraying Haley as a typical first grader, as well as showing other characters' reactions to Haley. Adults and children will enjoy the facial expressions and actions of the characters which enhance the storyline.

This book will help build a platform for discussion between grown-ups and children going into any new grade. In addition, the book will help the child see change from a different perspective and learn to evaluate change and cope with it in an appropriate manner.

*Jeanne Montgomery*

**How I learned geography / Uri Shulevitz. 1st ed. New York : Farrar Straus Giroux, 2007.**

HBB: 0374334994, 9780374334994, \$16.95.

E

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm.

Pri Rating: 5

There is an ominous beginning in Uri Shulevitz's semi-autobiographical story, *How I Learned Geography*. This children's book starts with the blitz of Poland in World War II, and the author, who was a young boy when his homeland was attacked, engages the reader by describing the frightening world in which he lived. Thankfully, while his story may begin with horrible circumstances, it doesn't dwell on them in detail, or end in tragedy. The author does describe his family's evacuation to a country of extreme seasonal changes (present-day Kazakhstan), their lack of any belongings or food, and their very dismal living conditions.

The story climaxes when Shulevitz's

father goes to market, and returns with a world map, instead of bread, and his young son is furious with him. What follows is a young boy's growing fascination with the map's many countries and their names that he copies himself, on any scrap of paper available, and how this unlikely choice by his father gives him hope and something positive on which to focus. The book's illustrations are at first somber and shadowy, reflecting the very dismal early years of the author, and become more vivid as his life regains hope. Vibrant watercolors and collages cover the pages, showing young Uri's imaginative adventures, as he mentally escapes the destitute life his family lives.

Readers will be fascinated with the depth of a simple children's book, and how the author used barely a dozen pages to share his perspective of a very difficult childhood, and the lessons he learned. The geography mentioned in the title is really not even the point, as his last sentence will admit. The author's note also gives the reader further details on Shulevitz's life, and is helpful in understanding where he lived after the story ends. A previous Caldecott winner, Shulevitz's latest book deserves recommendation not only for lovely illustrations, but also its moving story.

*Jennifer Vines*

**Wolfsnail : a backyard predator / Sarah C. Campbell ; photographs by Sarah C. Campbell and Richard P. Campbell. 1st ed. Honesdale, Pa. : Boyds Mills Press, 2008.**

HBB: 1590785541, 9781590785546, \$16.95.  
594/.38  
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 x 27 cm.  
Pri Rating: 5.

Both an eye-catching picture book and an intriguing natural history study,

*Wolfsnail* presents a day in the life of a carnivorous, cannibalistic snail common to Southern U.S.A. backyards, yet relatively unknown to many people. Photographs and narrative capture the reader's interest, raising questions which the closing scientific data helps answer, encouraging further research.

Husband and wife team Sarah and Richard Campbell have enhanced this engaging study of the wolfsnail with minutely detailed, brightly colored, large photos of this mollusk as it goes about its daily hunting life. Sarah Campbell's simple, accurate, and interesting narrative teams well with the photos. The closing scientific data briefly considers such topics as distribution, habitat, special characteristics, its hermaphroditic life, predators, invasive problems, and a brief glossary. While the phrasing of the story is aimed at the primary age group, the photos and closing data will attract students of all ages. *Wolfsnail* encourages readers to come back to it several times.

*Donna Eggett*

## FICTION

**Yuki and the one thousand carriers / Gloria Whelan ; illustrated by Yan Nascimbene. Tales of the world Chelsea, Mich. : Sleeping Bear Press, 2008.**

HBB: 1585363529, 9781585363520, \$17.95.  
Fic  
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29cm.  
INT (Pri) Rating: 5

Award-winning author Gloria Whelan crafts a rich historical tale in *Yuki and the One Thousand Carriers*. Lyrical prose vividly weaves details and customs of ancient Japan into a story of a young girl using observation and impressions to ease homesickness. Yan Nascimbene's watercolor illustrations

suffuse muted backgrounds with vibrant kimonos and foregrounds to evoke the time period. Yuki's mother instructs her to pack for a long journey. Yuki does not want to leave but does as she is told. Her teacher gives her lessons to complete on the journey. She must write one haiku each day. So in a basket she packs brushes, ink, and rice paper for her assignment.

They travel the historic Tokaido Road on their 300-mile journey between Kyoto, the city of the emperor and imperial court, and Edo (modern-day Tokyo), Japan's political center. Shouters head the long procession. They announce the passage of the governor, Yuki's father. Next come the samurai, then Father on his horse. Six men carry the palanquin sheltering Yuki, her little dog, and her mother. Lastly, one thousand men carry the family's possessions.

Yuki's haiku are sprinkled through the story and share her growing delight in the places and events she experiences.

We are a dragon  
Our one thousand carriers  
the dragon's long tale.

They stay at 53 inns, she sleeps using a wooden pillow, and learns "Fuji is a sacred mountain where spirits live."

Beneath the story lie several benefits to readers. The book is entertaining but also provides information on ancient Japan. Values of honoring parents, showing respect, and finding joy in present circumstances are reinforced through this story. A note from the author precedes the story, supplying background on the topic.

*Lisa A. Wroble*

**Bird / by Zetta Elliott ; illustrated by Shadra Strickland. New**

**York : Lee & Low Books Inc., 2008.**

HBB: 160060241X, 9781600602412, \$19.95.

Fic

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 25 cm.

INT Rating: 4.

Another story of an adolescent's descent into drugs and death might merit only a sad shake of the head, but in *Bird*, Zetta Elliott writes a book about choosing life and hope, and it is this hope that brings tears and lifts the heart.

The story is *Bird's*, though the "sickness" of his beloved older brother, Marcus, provides the impetus for *Bird's* telling. *Bird* tells us that Marcus is an artist, who teaches *Bird* how to improve his own drawing. Marcus spends his time in the park, a forbidden realm of junkies and addicts, though he makes sure *Bird* goes to school. The family locks Marcus out after they return from church one morning to a ransacked house, but *Bird* opens the door to him one last time and gives him his best drawing yet. A few bitter words is all we hear from Marcus, until his last words to *Bird* about homecoming.

The story is more poem than prose in its brevity of language and repetition of images. *Bird* draws pictures: to remember a bird on his window-ledge; to remember Marcus the way he was before he got sick; and to remember his grandfather and Marcus together in heaven. The illustrations by Shadra Strickland reinforce the sense of poetry.

The 42-page book is a study in mixed-media, with *Bird's* pencil sketches of buildings and family, Marcus' darker, powerful graffiti washed with color, the repeated patterns of Marcus' teal hat and *Bird's* blue shirt, and the ubiquitous birds. The gentleness of the illustrations and text create poignancy rather than distress over *Bird's* loss of brother and grandfather. This is a story about the

strength of hope even in such desolation of loss.

*Diane Sekeres*

## NONFICTION

**The American heritage children's science dictionary. Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 2003.**

HBB: 618354018, 9780618354016, \$17.95.

503

viii, 280 p. : col. ill. ; 26 cm.

INT Rating: 4 w/caution

*The American Heritage Children's Science Dictionary* is a colorful dictionary of science terms, covering all areas of science. It includes numerous photos and diagrams, brief biographies of scientists, as well as "Did you know?" sections that take certain subjects into more depth and discuss interesting points. It also includes cross references between related topics and boldfaced words that students can look up to get more information. Pronunciation guides help students with difficult words and there is a list of scientific abbreviations in the back, as well as a timeline of scientific discovery.

The photos and illustrations are all in color and large enough to be easily visible. They are placed adjacent to the corresponding definition, making them easy to find. Evolution is assumed to be true throughout the book and it is discussed in many different areas, such as in relation to dinosaurs and early humans. The earth is also assumed to be millions of years old. The authors also define human reproduction, but without any graphic details or illustrations.

Apart from the frequent mention of evolution, this science dictionary is valuable for its broad approach to science terms and people. The many colorful illustrations and diagrams will

attract young students to its pages.

*Amy Simon*

**24 games you can play on a checkerboard / Carol Lynch Williams ; illustrations by Jennifer Kalis., 1st ed. Layton, Utah : Gibbs Smith, 2007.**

PAP: 1423600118, 9781423600114, \$9.95.

794

64 p. : ill. ; 21 cm.

INT (Pri)

Rating: 3

The latest in the Every Kid Needs activity series book, *24 Games You Can Play on a Checker Board* gives illustrated instructions of different games that can be played on an ordinary checkerboard. Some games use regular checkers, 12 red, 12 black, and others use fewer. There are diagrams that show the starting positions of each game.

The pastel colored pages have colored numbers for each step of the instructions. There is a section saying The Goal: and the Winner is: so that children understand the mission of the game and who wins. The graphics are bold and colorful, contain cartoon characters, and have silly text as they describe the games step by step. Most of the games are for two people, a few are for solo play.

My seven and ten year-olds needed assistance to understand the directions and play the games. The writing is too complex for the intended audience, six and up. That age group will enjoy playing the games and they can copy the diagrams to set the games up but will need someone older to interpret the rest and tell them how to play.

Good for a game room, children's center, after school program or library, *24 Games You Can Play on a Checker Board* succeeds in its goal of keeping

kids away from electronic media.

Anita Horning

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**We are the ship : the story of Negro League baseball / words and paintings by Kadir Nelson ; forward by Hank Aaron. New York : Jump at the Sun/Hyperion Books for Children, 2008.**

HBB: 0786808322, 9780786808328, \$18.99.

796.357/640973

88 p. : col. ill. ; 29 cm.

INT (All Ages) Rating: \*5.

Kadir Nelson, whose artwork may be familiar from the award winning title *Henry's Freedom Box*, brings alive a time when the options for Negro ballplayers were extremely limited. By the 1880's it became clear that Negroes were not being accepted into the major and minor baseball leagues, so they formed their own professional teams. Nelson's book title, *We Are the Ship*, comes from Rube Foster, the founder of the Negro National League, whose words also became the league's motto: "We are the ship; all else the sea." Motivated by their love for the game, these gifted athletes and determined owners created a vessel that allowed them to pursue their passion and sail independently forward despite the harsh conditions of racial discrimination. The leagues flourished during the 1920's but disappeared after Jackie Robinson crossed over to the majors in 1947 and opened the door to acceptance for his fellow players.

Nelson said he spent eight years on this project and his effort shines beautifully in a book that is as strong visually as it is verbally. Through the voice of an elderly ballplayer who sounds like he's telling a story to a grandchild, Nelson draws the reader in with an easy

conversational style. But it is the illustrations that will linger in the minds of those both young and old who pick this book up and flip through its nine "innings." His players seem larger than life and the realism of the many double-page spreads cause one to stop and reflect upon what it must have been like to be a member of the Negro League. The book also includes a foreword by Hank Aaron, an Extra Innings section identifying Hall-of-Fame Negro Leaguers, a bibliography, endnotes, and an index.

Lillian Heytvelt

**Camp out! : the ultimate kids' guide, from the backyard to the backwoods / Lynn Brunelle ; illustrations by Brian Biggs ; technical illustrations by Elara Tanguy. New York : Workman Pub., 2007**

PAP: 0761141227, 9780761141228, \$11.95.

796.54

viii, 376 p. : ill. ; 21 cm.

INT Rating: 5

*Camp Out!* is a complete guide to camping for kids, as the full title suggests. Author Lynn Brunelle covers topics such as planning and packing, setting up a camp site, starting a campfire, cooking, predicting the weather, recognizing constellations, using a compass, map reading, and knot tying. She also includes rainy day games, travel games, and educational guides to what animals are found in different natural environments.

There are sidebars throughout the book with historical information and factual snippets. There are sample menus, including what to prepare ahead of time. "Kick the can ice cream" and the "pizza box solar oven" seem especially creative.

There is a short discussion of the Big Bang theory and a description of the different zodiac signs at the beginning of the astronomy section. Nature is also referred to as "Mother Nature" a few times.

This book is a great "one stop shop" to find information on all types of camping. Students will learn about nature, outdoor skills, and even history without realizing it. The information is presented in a humorous and organized way that both kids and parents will benefit from.

Amy Simon

# Science Fun for Young Children

by Mary Vee

Young children have a natural attraction to scientific questions. Magnetized to questions like: Where do the animals in my neighborhood live, Why do objects fall when I let go, Can I make a rocket that works, What holds up a parachute, and hundreds of other questions, kids search for answers in their homes, neighborhoods, and classrooms. Armed with resources, adult helpers can guide these young investigators into scientific research. Four books are reviewed for primary age children here: *Kids' Easy to Create Wildlife Habitats: for Small Spaces in City, Suburbs & Countryside* provides projects that will encourage wildlife to make their home in the neighborhood. *Gizmos & Gadgets: Creating Contraptions that Work (and Knowing Why)* uses materials found in the home to make exciting projects like balloon rockets to teach Newton's third law of motion, *The Magic School Bus and the Science Fair Expedition* includes information about select famous scientist and how they used the scientific method, and *Big Book of Play and Find out Science Projects* provides an array of information complimented with insightful drawings to compel little ones to explore their world around them.

**Kids' easy-to-create wildlife habitats : for small spaces in the city, suburbs & countryside / Emily Stetson ; illustrations by J. Susan Cole Stone. New York : Williamson Pub., 2007.**

PAP: 9780787989286, \$12.95.

507.8

ix, 213 p. : ill. ; 22 x 28 cm.

PRI Rating: 3

*Kids' Easy-to-Create Wildlife Habitats: for Small Spaces in City, Suburbs & Countryside*, by Emily Stetson is a wildlife guide for young children and their families designed to promote awareness of creatures residing in local neighborhoods. From birds to bugs, and rabbits to worms, children will sense the author's compassionate care giving tone. Boys and girls can learn how to observe and assist in the lifestyle of creatures in their neighborhood. Little ones will giggle when birds visit their created bird feeders made from clear instructions provided.

A colorful, kid-friendly cover encourages young readers to explore this book. Illustrations are blue ink hand drawings

on white paper. Text colors are blue and green. The green font is light and difficult to read. Each page has simple, attractive borders and partitioned text for ease in locating small portions of text. Wildlife, habitat, environmental action, migration, and plants resources are provided along with their websites. The book's dimensions are convenient for little ones to use with an adult helper.

Stetson encourages little ones to explore their immediate world to help the survival of creatures. Appropriate safety warnings are provided to protect the curious mind.

**Gizmos & gadgets : creating science contraptions that work (& knowing why) / by Jill Frankel Hauser ; illustrations by Michael Kline. Charlotte, Va. : Williamson Pub., 1999.**

Pap: 1885593260, \$12.95.

507.8

144 p. : ill. ; 22 cm.

PRI Rating: 4

*Gizmos & Gadgets: Creating Science Contraptions that Work (& Knowing Why)* by Jill Hauser provides a unique quality over other science books for young children. Every material listed for projects and experiments actually contains items that are found in a typical home. There is no need for that quick dash to the store. Cereal boxes, toilet paper rolls, soda and water bottles, pencils, and paper clips top the list of ingredients. Hauser finds intriguing ways to communicate upper elementary level concepts to younger children. Complimentary experiments are simple enough to allow the curious young mind to complete projects with little or no assistance from an adult. Balloon rockets and milk carton paddleboats illustrate Newton's Third Law of Motion, a plastic bowl and soda bottle hovercraft illustrate friction; a pencil, soda bottle, and marshmallow catapult illustrate potential and kinetic energy, to name a few of the fascinating concepts addressed in this book.

The black and white text is arranged in easy to understand snippets and is enhanced with comic style illustrated drawings. A colorful cover reflects fun gadgets explored in the book. The text is friendly with vibrant portions of trivia, which can lead a child to say, "Did you know..." to a friend or adult.

Hauser's *Gizmos and Gadgets* book engages a reader to springboard into deeper research of friction, gravity, energy, and Newton's laws.

**The Magic School Bus and the science fair expedition / by Joanna Cole ; illustrated by Bruce Degen. New York : Scholastic Press, 2006.**

HBB: 0590108247, 9780590108249, \$15.99.

509

45 p. : col. ill. ; 22 x 27 cm.

PRI Rating: 3

*The Magic School Bus and the Science Fair Expedition* by Joanna Cole introduces basic concepts in conducting science fair projects. This 48 page, full colored book briefly acquaints the reader with a few well-known scientists of the past, a scientific question they explored, and their results. Primary to this resource is the incorporation of the scientific method, an essential to any science fair project.

Comic style drawings that illustrate students on a field trip with their teacher, Miss Frizzle, enhance a typical classroom dialogue, thus helping the young reader to feel comfortable with the information. While this text serves as a catalyst for science fair project ideas, it also conveys that such projects can be done in a few days. Interested elementary students will need more time to adequately perform the scientific method for their science fair project. As a result, this book is only recommended for providing a basic explanation of the scientific method, and the intriguing basic presentation of select scientists.

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**Janice VanCleave's big book of play and find out science projects / Janice VanCleave. New York : Williamson Pub., 2007.**

PAP: 0787989282, 9780787989286, \$19.95.

507.8

ix, 213 p. : ill. ; 28 cm.

PRI (PS) Rating: 5

Primary children will delight in *Janice VanCleave's Big Book of Play and Find Out Science Projects*. Insightful childlike drawings illustrate questions that puzzle young minds, attracting little ones to innovative experiments. Each experiment contains simple instructions, common materials, and information explaining results, followed by a second experiment designed to deepen the adventure. Appendix A provides additional summary information for each section to assist an adult helper. Appendix B provides sample teacher lesson plans, tips for safety and use for materials, tips for parent involvement, and cross curriculum applications. A glossary concludes the myriad of sources aimed at providing an exciting adventure in science for boys and girls.

This 213-page book contains two-colored ink on white paper. Friendly text, drawings, and patterns, along with easy to understand steps for successful scientific exploration is sure to bring "aha" moments, questions, and giggles. One tiny issue, in the taste testing experiment, a spoon might be substituted for the cotton swab.

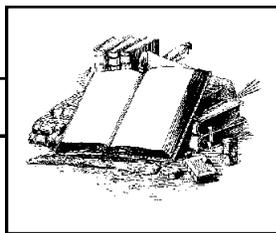
This book is highly recommended as a resource to guide young minds deeper into scientific principles through hands-on exploration.

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*Janice VanCleave's big Book of Play and Find out Science Projects* is the most exhaustive of the books reviewed here. Not only is the presentation of the material inviting and innovative, supplemental information and ideas are found in the appendixes, thus enabling the adult helper to feel comfortable with having information for the child's extended questions. *Gizmos & Gadgets, Creating Science Contraptions that Work (& Knowing Why)* is a close second as it correlates items from home with big ideas like Newton's laws. *Kids' Easy-to-Create Wildlife Habitats for Small Spaces in City, Suburbs & Countryside* encourages little ones to investigate wildlife in their neighborhoods by making bird feeders and other necessities that encourage wildlife to visit. It promotes an environmental agenda. *The Magic School Bus and the Science Fair Expedition's* presentation of the scientific method and snippets of select scientists is exciting like other books in the Magic School Bus series; however the book indicates that science fair experiments can be done in a few days. Perhaps a discussion could be led as to how the last minute exhibits might be expanded?

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If a library could choose only one of these titles reviewed above we recommend *Janice VanCleave's Big Book of Play and Find out Science Projects* because of the valuable supplemental information in the appendixes, insightful drawings, and innovative experiments. If a library could purchase two titles from these reviewed we recommend adding *Gizmos & Gadgets, Creating Science Contraptions that Work (& Knowing Why)* for excellence in user friendly approach. Every ingredient needed to explore Newton's laws of motions, friction, gravity and others using the exciting experiments in this book can be found in a typical home. If after purchasing the above titles a library was interested in purchasing additional titles, we recommend pursuing different titles that perhaps focused on a single idea, i.e. machines, flowers, etc. to broaden this young science section.

**FICTION**

**Runaway / Dandi Daley Mackall.  
(Starlight Animal Rescue ; 1)  
Carol Stream, Ill. : Tyndale  
House, 2008.**

PAP: 1414312687, 9781414312682, \$5.99.

Fic

206 p. ; 18 cm.

MS (Int, HS) Rating: 5

The first book in Mackall's new Starlight Animal Rescue fiction series, *Runaway* brings together a rebellious orphan, a maltreated horse, and an accepting Christian farm home which majors in rescuing both neglected youth and animals. Forlorn, drifting sixteen year old Dakota's main talent is running away from the foster homes in which she is placed. Battered and frightened, Blackfire the horse is ready to run away from everyone and everything. They both find haven at Starlight Animal Rescue, where all are encouraged to find their own sphere of living. But Dakota's old life comes back to haunt her and tragedy looms for the animals and people of this farm.

Horses and author Dandi Daley Mackall have been together since Mackall learned to ride at the age of three. As a prolific writer of children's and youth books and a mother of three children, Mackall understands young people and their needs. *Runaway* benefits from this knowledge. Excitement and adventure abounds from the first as Dakota plans to escape. Brimming with reality, fitting into today's scene, the characters bring the well-knit plot to life. Dakota narrates this story as it is happening, drawing the reader into the actions and conversations. By turns angry, sad, humorous, truthful, *Runaway* keeps the audience attentive with its straightforward and exhilarating narrative. Based firmly on Christianity,

several ideas worth thinking about are inculcated into this book: happy family life reaching out to others; the problems faced by foster children; the growth of Christian belief in a non-Christian mind; care for animals; choosing between right and wrong; and several more. *Runaway* will be enjoyed by a wide range of readers including animal lovers, older elementary through high school age readers, girls and boys; and will be useful for a discussion group on neglected youth and/or animals.

*Donna Eggett*

**Freedom's pen : a story based on  
the life of freed slave and author  
Phillis Wheatley / Wendy Lawton.  
(Daughters of the faith series)  
Chicago : Moody Publishers,  
2009.**

PAP: 0802476392, 9780802476395, \$6.99.

Fic

135 p. ; 19 cm.

MS Rating: 5

A tragic beginning, an unlikely intervention, and a life of hope and love... in the hands of a master storyteller. Award-winning author, Wendy Lawton, does it again in her most recent installment of The Daughters of the Faith series. *Freedom's Pen* is an historical fiction stand-alone billed for eight to twelve-year-old girls, but a book even the most sophisticated reader will enjoy.

Phillis Wheatley was kidnapped into slavery, sold on an auction block, and transplanted into pre-revolutionary war-brewing Boston. She lived during a time when slave children remained uneducated, women were rarely published and most didn't believe a slave could learn to read much less become a celebrated writer. Despite all odds, she became a popular poet, the

first African-American to publish a book, and one of the first writers to earn a living from her work. Maker of literary and American history Phillis Wheatley lived a life of humility and grace.

Lawton retells Phillis's early years with captivating scintillation. She flawlessly knits known facts and fictional details into a riveting story of loss, hope, and triumph. The reader is transported to Africa, the horrors of a slave ship, and then to the affluent Wheatley home in a way that is historically accurate, but without so much detail as to overwhelm young readers. Lawton handles heavy themes with an eye toward age-appropriateness.

The characters are riveting, real, and complex: from the cruelty of the slave traders, to the generosity and caring of the slave-owning Wheatleys, to Phillis with her heart-wrenching loss, struggle, and ultimate victory. Affluent visitors and resentful slaves in the Wheatley household add additional tension. Faith and prevalent Christian themes are explored and lived out without being preachy.

The ending comes quickly but leaves the reader satisfied. A back-of-book glossary and non-fiction notes add fullness and closure to the reading experience. Highly recommended for anyone with a bent toward history, humanity, or hope.

*Cheri Williams*

**Sunrise over Fallujah / Walter Dean Myers. New York : Scholastic Press, 2008.**

HBB: 0439916240, 9780439916240, \$17.99;  
LIB: 1439594937, 9781439594933, \$16.99.

Fic

290 p. : map ; 22 cm.

MS Rating: 4

Robin Perry, a young African-American male from Harlem, enlists in the Civil Affairs Battalion of the United States Army in 2003 in order to “do his part” in the war against Iraq. Robin enters the war an idealistic soldier with visions of defeating Saddam, winning democracy for Iraq, and going home within six months. As he sees the reality of war first-hand, he begins to understand that the war is more complicated and will be much more lengthy than he had believed. Robin goes through changes as he comes into contact with death in various forms, from seeing body bags on the side of the road to watching friends die. He must face his fears, re-evaluate his life, and come to an acceptance of all his experiences in Iraq.

In his book *Sunrise over Fallujah*, Walter Dean Myers tackles the issues surrounding the beginnings of United States’ war with Iraq, “Operation Freedom.” Told in first person by one of the soldiers in the Civil Affairs Battalion, Myers uses narration and letters the soldier has written to his family to describe his and his fellow soldiers’ initial experiences and, later, their culminating ones. Myers makes a decent attempt at creating an unbiased story that is based on an historical event that involves a wide range of real, controversial issues. Each character sensitively shares with the reader his or her reasons for enlisting, viewpoints on the war in general, and their own awakenings to the reality of war. Middle school students will learn much about the various reasons people had for

wanting to enter the war, the day-to-day routine of soldiers in a foreign country, and will gain a better understand of the difficulty and hardships of war experiences. Myers does use some mild language and a few sexual innuendos, while staying away from adult dialogue of real-war time experience. He also includes characters from a variety of backgrounds.

*Deborah D. Smith*

**The absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian / by Sherman Alexie, illustrated by Ellen Forney. New York : Little, Brown, 2007.**

HBB: 0316013684, 9780316013680, \$16.99;  
LIB: 0, 9781428764507, \$18.99.

Fic

229 p. : ill. ; 22 cm.

MS HS Rating: 3, not recommended

Arthur Spirit is different from his peers on the reservation. He has a variety of medical problems and is picked on by everyone except his best friend. Arthur is also smart. When he receives the same geometry book that his mother had had in school, he throws the book and hits the teacher. He is suspended for that, but good does come out of it. His teacher visits him and encourages him to attend a high school off the reservation where his abilities will be challenged. Arthur makes that decision and struggles for some time with acceptance by his white peers. Many times Arthur portrays his life through cartoons which share his feelings. Ellen Forney provides those cartoons for the reader.

Sherman Alexie accurately captures the life of a rez kid both on and off the reservation. Unfortunately he wasn’t able to do it without profanity, vulgarities, and language which borders

on blasphemy. There are also many instances of references to sex, masturbation, and pornography. While the book is a National Book Award winner, I would caution adults to read the book for themselves before sharing it with children.

*Jane Mouttet*

**Nation / Terry Pratchett. New York : HarperCollins, 2008.**

HBB: 61433012, 9780061433016, \$16.99;  
PAP: 0061433039, 9780061433016, \$7.99.

Fic

367 p. ; 24 cm.

HS (Adult) Rating: 4, w/caution

In his young adult novel *Nation*, British fantasy author Terry Pratchett explores coming of age when laws and social structures cease to exist. A Tsunami in the fictional Pelagic Ocean strands a native boy, Mau, and shipwrecks on the same island a girl named Ermintrude from someplace akin to Mid-Victorian England. Surrounded by death and destruction, Mau and Ermintrude overcome their fear and distrust of each other and work together to save themselves and other survivors and misfits who arrive on the island in the wake of the great wave.

Mau assumes the position of chief, not through force or manipulation, but purely through service. He sacrifices his own well-being for the good of the weakest individuals within the group and courageously defends his new tiny Nation against pirates and cannibals. Ermintrude changes her name to Daphne and begins to appreciate the nobility of those she once dismissed as “uncivilized” and recognizes the savagery of some supposedly civilized people.

The novel is rich with allusions and a humor that appeals to teens and adults

alike. There are some mystical/fantasy elements and an occasional scene with mild profanity or nearly profane slang. The book begins with the native creation myth of Mau's people, including an introduction to the ancestral gods of life and death. Through the myth, the reader gains exceptional insight into Mau's thoughts and motives and the gift of examining traditional western values and ideas from a different point of view.

The first chapter feels slightly confusing until the worlds of Ermintrude and Mau converge on the island. From that point forward, *Nation* builds momentum by blending high-seas adventure with thoughtful contemplation. Overall, Pratchett offers an enchanting tale of self discovery and triumph of the human spirit.

Laurie A. Gray

**The astonishing life of Octavian Nothing, traitor to the nation / v. 1 / The Pox party / taken from accounts by his own hand and other sundry sources ; collected by Mr. M.T. Anderson of Boston. Cambridge, Mass. : Candlewick Press, 2006.**

HBB: 0763624020, 9780763624026, \$17.99;  
LIB: 0, 9781435244948, \$19.99.

Fic

351 p. ; 24 cm.

HS (Adult) Rating: 2, not recommended

*The Pox Party* is the first book in a two part series. The hero of the story is Octavian, a black boy living in the 18th century. He lives with his African princess mother at The Novanglian College of Lucidity where he is raised by a mysterious group of intellectuals so devoted to rational thinking that they go by numbers instead of names. He is treated as a prince, carefully educated, elegantly dressed and fed, and never allowed access to the public. He leads a

happy life until one day he opens a forbidden door and discovers that his whole lifestyle is simply an experiment performed by the college to study a Negro's mental capabilities. That knowledge leads to a tragedy which changes Octavian forever.

Octavian is a well-rounded character with a strong voice. The plot is captivating, albeit slow. M.T. Anderson writes the book in 18th century language, including misspelled words, grammatical errors, and arcane vocabulary. The writing is lofty and complicated.

Almost every character in the story claims to be Christian, and quite a lot of Scripture references are used. However, a slave man that Octavian loves and respects is not a Christian and has Demas read from erotic novels, resulting in a sexually explicit conversation. Demas' mother is asked to become a mistress, and when she refuses she is attacked. There are many gratuitous scenes of violence, especially one that details a man being tarred and feathered.

There are some good scenes of life in 1775. The injustice of the colonials fighting for freedom while they enslaved blacks is a powerful concept, especially when seen through Octavian's eyes.

Ellie Soderstrom

### NONFICTION

**For young men only : a guy's guide to the alien gender / Jeff Feldhahn and Eric Rice. Colorado Springs : Multnomah Books, 2008.**

PAP: 9781601420206, \$13.99.

248.8/32

x, 178 p. : ill. ; 19 cm.

HS Rating: 3

*For Young Men Only: A Guy's Guide to the Alien Gender* promises "the inside scoop on girls from girls themselves." Using data gathered from interviews with over 1,000 girls, Jeff Feldhahn, a lawyer, and Eric Rice, a film producer, describe how girls think, what they want, and how teen guys can talk to them "without feeling like an idiot."

The survey results are divided into chapters discussing why girls seem to prefer bad boys, that they actually prefer average boys, why they sometimes make no sense, reasons they have for dumping guys, how guys can listen to girls, and what girls really think about sex.

The book is short and sweet, written in language appealing to teens, but there are problems. The research pool isn't as "nationally representative" as claimed but mostly girls in and around Atlanta, supplemented by girls interviewed by the authors' wives on their speaking tours, and a sampling of 400 girls sponsored by a firm called Decision Analyst. Also, the girls' revelations aren't particularly earth-shattering, and some questions are so loaded as to have only one answer.

More distressing: despite the book's claim to teach boys to honor women, it's totally focused on physical appearance. Nearly every page mentions "beautiful and amazing" or "attractive, high-quality" girls who are "the hardest to get" and "out of (a guy's) league," with the assurance that these girls will flock to the book's readers if they follow its rules. The most egregious example insists "homely, pudding-brained girls who never leave the house" did not answer the survey, then directs guys to the book's website to see the photos for themselves. All this gears the book more toward convincing guys they can win a "hot" girl than toward teaching them to respect girls.

Includes a 12-page discussion guide.

*S. Katherine Lopez*

*Rosemarie DiCristo*

**The wall : growing up behind the Iron Curtain / Peter Sís. New York : Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.**

HBB: 374347018, 9780374347017, \$18.00.

943.704092 or B

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill., maps ; 32 cm.

MS INT                      Rating: 5

A thought provoking work of nonfiction, *The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*, tells the story of a boy and country among communist rule. Providing a piece of world history through a combination of diary and picture book, Sís historically chronologies the harsh realities of a nation's loss of freedom. With well over 100 drawings and few words he depicts startling details of socialistic Czechoslovakian life from 1948 through the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. The map provided on the inside cover provides readers with a visual reference.

Though only 56 pages, this book conveys much information along with emotion to the reader. Sís tells of a life of control and dictatorship where children are taught to be suspicious of neighbors and even their parents, of compulsory displays of public loyalty, and where people are imprisoned or disappear for their opinions or disloyalty to country. Sís tells of "news from the West" slipping though the Iron Curtain, Elvis and the Beatles, long hair, and blue jeans, life that holds more color than his own. Sís shows the resistance of a nation of people toward free choice. A book that won the Caldecott honor and The Robert F. Sibert Medal although aimed at nine to twelve year olds, I would recommend to anyone over age ten as an innovative teaching historical tool.

# Science Projects for Middle Schoolers

by Kim Ford

**Planet Earth science fair projects : using the moon, stars, beach balls, frisbees, and other far-out stuff / Robert Gardner. (Earth science! best science projects) Berkeley Heights, N.J. : Enslow Publishers, 2004.**

LIB: 0766023621, 9780766023628, \$26.60.

507.8

128 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

MS Rating: 4

Understanding and caring for our planet has never been more important. Robert Gardner combines these two ideas in his book *Planet Earth Science Fair Projects*, and he encourages students to explore everything from air pressure and altitude to aquifers and composting. He even includes a fascinating chapter on mapping that will have students looking at things from an entirely new angle! Earth Science is presented in an easy-to-follow format of progressive experiments that will serve as an abundant source of science project ideas!

Several experiments in this book require the student to use sunlight to determine direction or the earth's location in relation to another object. Because of this, Gardner is consistent in warning students not to look directly into the sun. There are several outdoor projects included in this volume, some of which include traveling to a higher elevation, so parents will have to take an active role in the projects to ensure the accuracy and safety of the experiments. There are also a couple of references to the earth's age in millions of years.

*Planet Earth Science Fair Projects* is certain to be a favorite resource for students because of the nature and variety of experiments. I was particularly fascinated with the chapter on mapping! I think students will have fun with these project ideas and will be challenged to be more aware of the world around them.

**Rocket science : 50 flying, floating, flipping, spinning gadgets kids create themselves / Jim Wiese. New York : Wiley. 2006.**

PAP: 0471113573, 9780471113577, \$12.95.

507.8

x, 115 p. : ill. ; 25 cm.

MS Rating: 4

Jim Wiese's *Rocket Science* offers ideas for fun and straightforward experiments that explore basic principles such as levers, air/water pressure, simple circuits, sound and

chemistry. These experiments utilize basic household items and are geared to add an element of fun to science knowledge. Each chapter deals with a specific scientific principle, and is divided into a list of materials, numbered procedures to follow and a brief explanation of the principle itself. The chapter also includes a section entitled "More Fun Stuff to Do" that offers ways to expand the project by making simple adjustments. There are open-ended observation questions throughout the chapter that moves each experiment forward.

*Rocket Science* is a book that is designed to catch the eye with its colorful cover, and the layout is structured so that the reader won't feel overwhelmed or intimidated. The diagrams are easily understood, and parents and teachers will appreciate the cautions included when a project requires safety goggles, adult help, or supervision. I think a little color within the book itself might be helpful to divide the chapter sections or set off the ideas for expanding the experiment, but overall I think the book will appeal to both students and instructors because of its straightforward layout. Wiese's book will certainly help to pique the student's interest into further scientific study!

**Light, sound, and waves science fair projects : using sunglasses, guitars, CDs, and other stuff / Robert Gardner. (Physics! best science projects) Berkeley Heights, N.J. : Enslow Publishers, 2005.**

LIB: 0766021262, 9780766021266, \$26.60.

507.8

128 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

MS (HS) Rating: 4

Robert Gardner's book *Light, Sound and Waves Science Fair Projects* is designed to teach the basic physics of sound and light and how they travel through time and space. Primarily utilizing household objects and a few inexpensive general supplies, students can explore things like sound waves, shadows and light intensity, mirrors, and prisms. The chapters include sketch-like diagrams to help clarify directions for each project, and the author also provides additional suggestions for further reading and research. The primary goal of each experiment is to serve as a launching point for students to create their own unique science fair project.

Each chapter contains three to eight individual experiments that are preceded by an explanation of the scientific principle to be examined and concludes with ideas for students to explore as science fair projects. Some of the concepts are

mildly complex, and thus I would use this with older middle school students. I also feel that the projects are structured for students with a solid grasp of the scientific method and who are comfortable exploring abstract ideas. I think it would be ideal for the parent or teacher to be actively involved in these types of projects, because it is important that the directions be followed precisely in order for the results to be accurate. This book makes a good introduction to a complex scientific idea.

**Plastics and polymers science fair projects : using hair gel, soda bottles, and slimy stuff / Madeline Goodstein. (Chemistry! best science projects) Berkeley Heights, N.J. : Enslow Publishers, 2004.**

LIB: 0766021238, 9780766021235, \$26.60.

507.8

128 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

MS HS Rating: 5

Plastic makes up much of our world today, and polymers are the chains of atoms that form the chemicals used to make plastic. Madeline Goodstein's book *Plastics and Polymers Science Fair Projects* encourages the student to explore the world of plastic and its many polymer combinations in a way that turns chemistry into an exciting part of their everyday world. Using hair gel, soda bottles, and "slimy stuff", Goodstein's book is filled with a multitude of project ideas that will keep students occupied for quite some time!

Goodstein begins with a thorough but basic explanation of polymers and the scientific process that allows students to explore the concept. Because the experiments are chemical in nature, she includes a safety checklist in the opening chapter as well as a reminder that all science fair projects must be monitored by an adult. Each experiment builds upon the other to create a solid understanding of how polymers form both naturally and synthetically. Each activity divides the chapter into easily managed volumes of information to ensure that the student isn't overwhelmed or confused.

Following each experiment is an extensive list of project ideas for students to use to perform their own polymer exploration. Because of the chemistry involved, there is a glossary of terms at the back of the book to help students learn new concepts. These projects are geared toward older teens, so the author has also included a list of books for further reading and a list of internet sites for additional learning help.

*Plastics and Polymers Science Fair Projects* develops plastic into a fascinating topic, and the author's enthusiasm for students to develop a love for chemistry is evident! Parents and teachers will appreciate her ability to make abstract concepts easy to understand. This is an outstanding introduction to chemistry!

**Science project ideas in the house, rev. ed. / Robert Gardner. (Science project ideas) Springfield, N.J. : Enslow Publishers, 2002.**

LIB: 0766017052, 9780766017054, \$26.60.

507.8

128 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

MS Rating: 4

The premise behind *Science Project Ideas in the House* is to introduce students to the concept that the world around them—specifically their home—is an environment rich with opportunities to explore scientific principles. Each chapter is designed to build the student's interest in a particular principle such as balance, gravity, or motion, and then have them conduct their own investigation of the topic. Gardner encourages students to conduct their work neatly and to always give consideration to others who share their home "laboratory." Science project ideas abound in this revised edition of Robert Gardner's book!

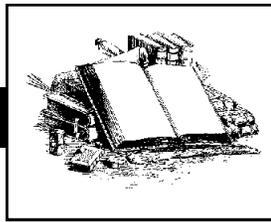
Students utilizing Gardner's book need to read carefully in order to cover all of the project material. Each passage is rich in both instruction and questions that guide the student through a progressive series of experiments. Most of the materials needed are commonly found in the home, but there is a list of items needed conveniently listed at the beginning of each section to ensure the proper tools are on hand. Each section contains easily understood illustrations, charts, and diagrams to show the student how to properly conduct the experiment.

For students seeking ideas for an intriguing science project, Gardner's *Science Project Ideas in the House* is a great resource! In addition to the ideas, he also provides a list of books for further reading as well as a list of internet sites for students choosing to extend their research options. Parents and teachers will appreciate the practical, inexpensive ideas, and students will begin to understand that the world around them is just one big science laboratory! In the true nature of science, this book begs the student to ask "why?" about everything!

If a library could choose only one of the titles reviewed

above, we recommend *Plastics and Polymers Science Fair Projects* by Madelein Goodstein. Her explanations of basic scientific principles are easy to understand, but more importantly, they convey enthusiasm about the subject matter. Expressing passion about the subject is vital when teaching middle school students.

Should a library decide to choose an additional title, we'd suggest *Science Project Ideas in the House* by Robert Gardner. The use of everyday household items as a basis for scientific exploration allows the student to see scientific principles at work all around them, and it peaks their interest as they begin to understand how exciting and fun science can be. Each of the above titles is part of a series, and each one would serve as a terrific introduction for more great science project titles!



## FICTION

### Daisy chain / Mary E. DeMuth., . Defiance Texas trilogy ; 1 Grand Rapids, Mich. : Zondervan, 2009.

PAP: 310278368, 9780310278368, \$14.99.

Fic

361 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult (HS) Rating: 5

*Daisy Chain* is the first book of the Defiance Texas Trilogy. When fourteen year old Jed's best friend and soul mate disappears, he swelters with guilt. Not only does he believe he could have prevented a tragedy, but he chafes under the weight of his family's secrets.

Any shred of confidence Jed conjures up is squelched by his erratic, abusive father, a pastor and icon of respectability. Jed longs to protect his little sister, Sissy, and his mother from violence, but he cowers before his father's rages.

Emotional turmoil keeps Jed off-balance, unable to discern the truth about the people around him. Suspicion clouds his friendship with Hixon, who may have had something to do with Daisy's disappearance. Muriel remains a mystery.

Danger threatens Jed and Sissy when the kidnapper seems poised to take another victim. His father rises to the occasion to protect his children, but reverts to his old habits in short order, although rescue arises from an unexpected source.

This remarkable narrative makes the reader feel the heat and taste the dust of this small Texas town. It portrays the healing power of love that keeps a spark of faith alive in a boy who struggles against giving in to justifiable fury toward his abusive father.

Although the story doesn't sugarcoat the reality of abuse, neither does it exploit

violence. The topic is handled with balance, delicacy, and sensitivity. Mary DeMuth allows her characters to be three-dimensional beings with conflicts between their public images and private selves. Her writing gives the story a tone of authenticity leaving the reader with the impression that these people do exist, maybe under other names, somewhere in Texas.

Real questions of faith are explored with honesty. A satisfying conclusion is reached with enough tantalizing bits left to whet one's appetite for the next book.

*Deborah H. Rabern*

### The cure / Athol Dickson. Minneapolis : Bethany House, 2007.

PAP: 0764201638, 9780764201639, \$13.99.

Fic

334 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult (HS) Rating: 5

A homeless man looks forward to the drink that will bring him bliss. A small town mayor struggles to figure out how to combat a wave of unwanted visitors. A woman tries to help others but is secretly hiding her own past. A mysterious powder is found that will bring hope to millions that have been suffering. These elements are all brought together in Athol Dickson's Christy Award winning novel *The Cure*.

Riley Keep is a former pastor and served as missionary to a native tribe in Brazil. However, while down there, something happened to cause him to abandon his faith, his family, and his morals. Years have passed and he has become a homeless drunk, almost unrecognizable to anyone who knew him from the past. He finds himself at a homeless shelter in Dublin, Maine, where he seeks to take refuge from the outside world. Dublin also happens to be the town where

Riley's estranged wife is the mayor. While in Dublin, Riley comes across a package that contains a substance that could cure millions, and that many will fight and pay dearly to acquire.

The setting of the novel, which takes place in a small Maine town, becomes another character in the story. Dickson uses the local usage of "Ayuh" to distinguish the townsfolk from their counterparts. This is a thought provoking novel that will leave the reader pondering long after finishing it. The whole story gives the reader the opportunity to think about what they would do in each situation and how a character might have had a totally different life if they had just changed one event. There are several instances where characters are faced with choices that may seem like a good idea at the time, but then are regretted later with painful side effects.

The story starts off a little slowly. However, once Riley finds the bag with the cure, the story takes off and the reader becomes hooked (no pun intended). The suspense begins to build up and moves at an alarmingly fast rate. The reader sees how alcoholism can have a negative effect on everyone and how even someone like a pastor is not immune to it. The storyline comes off very realistic as it is possible to see an event taking place like this in the near future. By the time the conclusion is reached, there is a self awakening that happens for both the characters in the story and the reader. This does not come from a sunny, happy, fairy tale story, but instead with a grim, dark, and bitter reminder of how harsh life can sometimes be.

*The Cure* deserves its Christy Award for suspense, as Dickson weaves a story that leaves the reader hanging on every word.

Deborah Khuanghlawn

**The shape of mercy : a novel / Susan Meissner. Colorado Springs, Colo. : Waterbrook Press, 2008**

PAP: 1400074568, 9781400074563, \$13.99.

Fic

307 p. ; 20 cm.

Adult (HS) Rating: 5

*The Shape of Mercy*, contemporary fiction by Susan Meissner, weaves together the lives of three women and their relationships with the people around them. Born into affluence, Lauren Dorough chooses to break away from her family's trappings of wealth by attending a state college as opposed to a private college and by living in a dorm. As a sophomore, Lauren decides to accept a job working for the wealthy Abigail Boyles. Abigail inherited a Salem Witch Trial era diary which belonged to Mercy Hayworth, and Lauren's job is to transcribe the diary into accessible English. The more Lauren learns about Mercy and the people of 1692 Salem, the more she learns about her own tendencies to judge others based on her own biased observations.

Meissner's characters might as well breathe. Their discoveries, interactions, and flaws create endearing, believable people worth understanding. The use of first person allows the reader to take in more of Lauren's thought processes, and the humor present in this book usually comes in the form of Lauren's misperceptions about others. The contemporary setting incorporates a layer of history through Mercy's diary, and the use of the diary creates a smooth flow between present and past. Though the characters drive this book, the plot moves quickly as it incorporates a veil of mystery surrounding the truth of the

diary, the integrity of Abigail, and Lauren's budding romance. The dialogue is consistent with the characters speaking. Clarissa, Lauren's non-Christian roommate, uses God's name in vain one time. Without being preachy, the story shows the inadequacy of humans to judge each other. "We each think we understand the other. We don't. We understand what we want to understand. That's how it is. How it's always been."

Kristina Wolcott

**Finding Nouf / Zoë Ferraris. Boston : Houghton Mifflin, 2008.**

HBB: 0618873880, 9780618873883, \$24.00.

Fic

305 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult Rating: 4, w/caution.

In her debut novel, *Finding Nouf*, Zoë Ferraris gives readers a look at life inside Saudi Arabia and explores the complex relations of men and women there. When the daughter of a prominent Saudi Arabian family goes missing, they ask Nayir ash-Sharqui, a Palestinian guide with traditional beliefs, to find her. Nouf's body is soon discovered in the desert, but Nayir's investigation takes a complicated twist when the coroner's office concludes that Nouf died of drowning, not dehydration, and her family seems strangely unconcerned at this bizarre finding. Nayir must overcome his initial revulsion to the idea of women showing their faces and holding jobs in public when he recognizes that the only way to find out what happened to Nouf is to join Katya Hijazi, a lab worker at the coroner's office, in her independent search for the truth behind Nouf's death.

Zoë Ferraris' novel takes an unsparing look at the consequences of sexual desire in a deeply traditional country. Premarital sex, what looks like incest, and an explicit scene of a woman flashing Nayir at a bazaar all further the plot's exploration of how Saudi Arabia's new generation struggle to merge the forces of modernization with long-established customs and Muslim beliefs. Solving the mystery of how Nouf died will keep readers turning the pages, but it is watching Nayir and Katya navigate the constraints of their society to build a relationship of trust and friendship that is most compelling.

Lillian Heytvelt

**NONFICTION**

**Who should we then read? : authors of good books for children and young adults / Jan Bloom., Rev. ed. Cokato, Minn. : BooksBloom, 2001.**

[Order direct:](#)

PAP: 970962819, \$19.95.

028.16

340 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult (All ages) Rating: 5

**Who should we then read? : authors of good books for children and young adults, v.2 / Jan Bloom. Cokato, Minn. : BooksBloom, 2003.**

[Order direct](#)

PAP: 970962835, 9780970962836, \$19.95.

028.16

312 p. ; 22 cm.

Adult (All ages) Rating: 5.

*Who Should We Then Read?* is a great way to meet new authors and learn more about the authors you already know and love. Volume one has 152 entries and Volume two has 155 different entries. Each entry includes a brief, charming

biography of an author and a list of titles by that writer. In one section of each volume, Jan Bloom groups these authors by age/reading level and by genre (adventure/mystery, animals stories, historical fiction, etc.). Authors of fiction, nonfiction, and picture books are included. Emphasis is on writers from earlier generations. Volume one has a very helpful series section where Bloom lists all the titles published for more than 30 different series. Some examples include Landmark books, Childhood of Famous Americans, and Step-Up books. There is even a listing of popular school readers from the 1940s, 50s and early 60s.

*Who Should We Then Read?* is packed with valuable information. Volume two is just as high quality as volume one. Bloom has selected a list of authors who wrote "living books," the kind of books celebrated by Charlotte Mason and Susan Schaeffer Macaulay. It is a whole reference collection in two handy volumes—the author consulted and compiled information from over 70 reference sources. These books are very useful for parents, homeschoolers, and book lovers in general. They are a delightful guide for discovery because Bloom includes many authors who were well-known in their own day but are mostly forgotten in our time. Perhaps you have heard of Edward Eager (author of *Half Magic*), Donald Sobol (*Encyclopedia Brown*), and Eleanor Estes (*Ginger Pye*); they are included here. But have you met Elbridge Brooks, Gerald Johnson, and Madeleine Pollard? There is much to explore in these interesting books.

David Rainey

**The grandmother's Bible. Grand Rapids, Mich. : Zondervan, 2008.**

HBB: 310938015, 9780310938019, \$34.99.

220.52

xix, 1829 p. : ill. ; 23 cm.

Adult Rating: NR

*The Grandmother's Bible* is an attractively formatted 1856-page Bible that contains the complete New International Version (NIV) as well as many special features designed to encourage and guide today's active grandmothers. Interspersed throughout the text are 365 inspirational devotionals and numerous articles, written by 60 well-known women, many of whom are grandmothers—Karen Kingsbury, Ruth Graham, Corrie ten-Boom, Elisa Morgan, and many others. Weekend devotionals include activities to do with grandchildren near and far. Articles and devotionals equip grandmothers to grow in their faith. Special features encourage grandmothers to establish focused, daily prayer for grandchildren. A Stories to Share feature provides discussion questions for 150 key biblical passages and a Talking Points feature highlights relevant topics grandmothers may want address when they share their values and faith with grandchildren.

Other features include a topical index and a special pocket for photos.

*The Grandmother's Bible* is a practical Bible for today's grandmothers. It contains many useful and inspirational features. Informative articles and devotions touch on topics of interest to grandmothers. Prayer focus and discussion questions will inspire today's busy grandmothers to grow closer to God and be intentional in building a rich spiritual legacy with future generations. The prayer focus and discussion sections alone make this a Bible worth having that can inspire grandmothers to be involved with and love their grandchildren in

practical and life-changing ways.

I would have liked a listing of the non-dated devotionals to use as a checklist. However, the linked devotional format makes it easy to begin at any point in the year or from any place in the Bible.

This Bible would make a helpful addition to a church library or a thoughtful gift for birthdays, Mother's Day, or other special occasions.

Connie Brown

**Dictionary of the Old Testament : wisdom, poetry & writings / editors, Tremper Longman III, Peter Enns. Downers Grove, Ill. : InterVarsity Press, 2008.**

HBB: 830817832, 9780830817832, \$60.00.

221.3

xxiv, 967 p. : ill. ; 26 cm.

Adult Rating: 5

The IVP series of black dictionaries has already made significant contributions to both Old and New Testament biblical studies with titles such as *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (1992) and *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (1995). This present volume, *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings* moves toward completing this series.

This volume is distinct from the other volumes that focus on historical books or the Pentateuch. However, these dictionaries are complementary to some degree. For example, a study of the creation narratives in Genesis will find relevant articles in the *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* as well as the present volume on Hebrew poetry.

The breadth of material, articles and contributors makes it difficult to easily summarize this volume without painting in broad strokes. A review of the list of the contributors will indicate that they

are composed of a mix of doctoral students and seasoned scholars. This volume on wisdom, poetry, and writings covers over 100 topics like acrostic poetry, Old Testament ethics, Psalms of lament, Messiah, retribution, rhetorical criticism, and worship. The reader will likely make use of the Scripture, subject, and article indices in the back.

The reader should be aware that one of the editors, Peter Enns, was removed from his teaching position at Westminster Theological Seminary due to his aberrant position on the evangelical doctrine of Scripture. Due to the large number of contributors this will not likely affect the content. Nevertheless, the reader should be aware and conscious of this matter.

The articles are scholarly but accessible and unimposing. The nature of the Hebrew language and the foreignness of the Ancient Near East often make Old Testament studies intimidating. Both pastors and laymen will be able to profit from this dictionary without having to know or read Hebrew.

David Wenkel

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**The quotable Oswald Chambers / compiled and edited by David McCasland. Grand Rapids, Mich. : Discovery House, 2008.**

HBB: 1572931949, 9781572931947, \$19.99.

344 p. ; 24 cm. + 1 CD-ROM (4 3/4 in.).

Adult (HS) Rating: \*5

A multi-use book—reference, devotional, morsels for spare moment reading—*The Quotable Oswald Chambers* offers a wide variety of Christian based quotes; all garnered from Chambers' sermons and writings. Arranged alphabetically, many subjects are encompassed; for example: abiding

in Christ; calamity; discipleship; faith; Holy Spirit; independence; morning; prosperity; self; usefulness; value of persons; permissive will of God. A bibliography of Oswald's works and several indices amplify this volume. Also included is a CD which downloads the Libronex program containing this book and the KJV Bible, and capacity for downloading other Christian books from the Internet.

A famous early twentieth century Scottish pastor and teacher, founder and principal of the Bible Training College in London, and a Chaplain to the troops during WWI, Oswald Chambers may be best known as the author of the still popular book of devotions *My Utmost for His Highest*. The compiler of this book, a noted author of Christian volumes, David McCasland is the leading authority on Chambers' works. These two men have reached across the generations to give us timeless, thought stimulating information which will be a valuable and welcome addition to all libraries and individuals. One of Chambers' quotes sums up how this book helps: The books and the men who help us most are not those who teach us, but those who can express for us what we feel inarticulate about (pg. 32). Secular readers will appreciate the philosophy and advice. Christian readers will savor these quotes, recognizing the scripture which generated them. Valued by both lay people and scholars, *The Quotable Oswald Chambers* will also make an effective tool for any high school interested in Christianity.

Donna Eggett

**The Holy Bible : English Standard Version : the ESV Study Bible . Wheaton, Ill. :**

**Crossway Bibles, 2008.**

HBB: 1433502410, 9781433502415, \$49.99;

HBB, black letter: [1581348088](#),

9781581348088, \$49.99.

220.5/208

2750 p., 15 p. of plates : ill., maps ; 25 cm.

Adult (All ages)

Rating: 5

*The ESV Study Bible* is an important resource collecting the contributions of nearly 100 conservative Bible scholars, many of whom have written whole exegetical commentaries on the Bible books for which they provided notes.

This Bible uses the English Standard Version text, which was released in 2001 under the general editorship of J. I. Packer and now stands fifth in sales behind the NIV, NKJV, NLT and KJV, respectively.

*The ESV Study Bible's* contributors—like the ESV's translation committee—include many well-known conservative evangelical scholars. Wayne Grudem was general editor, while J. I. Packer was theological editor. C. John Collins edited the Old Testament notes and Thomas Schreiner the New Testament notes. Dr. Leen Ritmeyer provided extensive archaeological consultation.

The Bible also includes over 40 special articles on Bible interpretation and the Christian life, written by yet another range of conservative evangelical scholars and pastor-scholars, from Darrel Bock and Daniel B. Wallace to John Piper and Mark Dever.

The massive Bible used a relatively new printing process to fill its pages with full-color illustrations, maps, and text features. But the Bible retains a classic, uncluttered look, paying careful attention to typography (the text is single-column in paragraph format).

Criticism of the volume has focused on its Reformed bent, its somewhat non-committal treatment of the creation/

evolution issue, and a few concessions to higher critical views. But overall the resource would serve as an excellent whole-Bible commentary set for a beginning disciple or even as a handy reference for a scholar.

*Mark L. Ward, Jr.*

**Twelve ordinary men : how the Master shaped his disciples for greatness, and what He wants to do with you / John MacArthur. Nashville : W Publishing Group, 2002.**

HBB: 849917735, 9780849917738, \$22.99.

226/.0922 or B

xviii, 200 p. ; 25 cm.

Adult (HS) Rating: 4

Many view Jesus' disciples as larger than life—extraordinary men chosen to do extraordinary things. However, in *Twelve Ordinary Men*, John MacArthur reveals them as anything but the cream of the biblical crop. He takes us on a biographical journey revealing how God indeed uses the weak to shame the strong, the foolish things to shame the wise.

The disciples we find, though removed from us by time, were just like twenty first century man. They read the scriptures, listened to Jesus' teachings. Yet their faith proved weak when tried.

"The Twelve could be amazingly thick headed," MacArthur laments.

MacArthur looks at each disciple's personality, birthplace, how they were chosen and interacted with Jesus and with one another. Interestingly, the twelve disciples, as they are listed several times in scripture, are grouped in three distinct clusters of four. The three group leaders then appear to have been Peter, Philip and James.

*Twelve Ordinary Men* is an effective

writing, helping the reader understand that although these men were used at a momentous time in history for extraordinary purposes, they were flawed and sinful, much like modern man.

MacArthur writes in an expository fashion and at first, one might think this another biblical history book, full of sterile facts. MacArthur does indeed cite scripture references throughout and it is clear his research is extensive. However, throughout its pages, the reader cannot help looking at these twelve men in a fresh and reassuringly human way. Readers are likely to search their own hearts in light of the commonness of the disciples and gain perspective on their own ability to do mighty things through Christ. In this, readers are given an opportunity to measure their own frailties, not for self abasement but for what God can do in spite of them.

*Alicea Jones*

**Spectacular sins : and their global purpose in the glory of Christ / John Piper. Wheaton, Ill. : Crossway Books, 2008.**

HBB: 1433502755, 9781433502750, \$15.99.

241/.3

121 p. ; 20 cm.

Adult Rating: 5

John Piper's *Spectacular Sins: and Their Global Purpose in the Glory of Christ* shines a spotlight on one truth of Scripture, a truth best capsulated by Joseph when he told his brothers in Genesis 50:20, "You planned evil against me, but God planned it for good."

Piper's impetus for writing his book is his concern that Christians be ready for the persecution that Jesus and Paul

both promised was coming (John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12; etc.). Only a rock-solid confidence in God's sovereign rule, Piper argues, will keep believers strong when such persecution arrives.

Piper chooses to mine one difficult biblical theme in order to promote that strength: God's sovereignty over human sin. Piper expounds several stories of Scripture in which this theme is stated prominently. One is the story of Joseph. Others are those of Adam and Eve, Babel, and Judas. In each case the Bible specifically states that human sin happened according to God's plan—and advanced that plan. For example, Peter says in his Pentecost sermon in Acts 2 that the wicked murder of Jesus happened "according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God."

"The aim of this book," Piper says, is "to show that over and over in the history of the world, the epoch-making sins that changed the course of history never nullified but only fulfilled the global purposes of God to glorify his Son and save his people."

Piper writes from a Reformed perspective which not all will accept, but he makes a distinct effort to focus on explicit statements of Scripture rather than those of theologians. The purpose of his little book is not interaction with other scholars but exposition of Scripture.

*Mark L. Ward, Jr.*

**Multiple blessings : surviving to thriving with twins and sextuplets / Jon and Kate Gosselin and Beth Carson. Grand Rapids, Mich. : Zondervan, 2008.**

HBB: 310289025, 9780310289029, \$19.99; 306.874/3092.

201 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

Adult Rating: 4

When Jon Gosselin met his future wife, Kate, neither of them imagined the extraordinary adventure they were beginning. *Multiple Blessings: Surviving to Thriving with Twins and Sextuplets* is the story of that adventure. Told from Kate's point of view, the book spans the time between 1998 and 2007, when the sextuplets celebrated their 3rd birthday.

The book is an honest account of very different, distinct people committed to faith, each other, and their children. Through difficult physical and emotional circumstances as well as during times of great joy, it conveys a positive picture of faith, reliance on God's purpose, and trust in His plan. Scripture is included throughout the book as chapter headings and as Kate uses verses to illustrate her thoughts. Over and over, Kate attributes feelings, frustrations, and victories to their growing relationship to God. She shares an inspiring picture of a godly marriage by telling readers that everything she and Jon experience, good and bad, draws them closer to each other rather than further apart.

There are some serious issues addressed in the book. Kate shares openly about her struggles with infertility and infertility treatments. There is also a time when they consider adopting the biracial child of an unwed mother. Financial issues are included when Jon loses his job and health insurance. Finally, the book includes their experiences with ethical decisions regarding selective reduction and her high risk pregnancy. These issues are not belabored or sensationalized in any way and the book wouldn't be complete without their inclusion. They are further demonstration of their faith and constant trust in God.

Any reader would enjoy this book because of its positive tone. Certainly, raising twins and sextuplets is a unique

experience. It is not without difficulty. The faith, determination, and trust in God that the Gosselins experience can be applied to circumstances other Christians face.

*Rachel Langston*

**The total money makeover : a proven plan for financial fitness / Dave Ramsey.**  
Nashville : Nelson Books, 2007.

HBB: 785289089, 9780785289081, \$24.99.

332.024/02

xxi, 223 p. : ill., forms ; 25 cm.

Adult Rating: 4

Dave Ramsey has proven himself in the area of home finance help. His Financial Peace series and other book offerings are bestsellers, his radio show is popular and his financial advice is timely. *The Total Money Makeover* originally came out in 2003 and this revised issue was published in 2007. A lot has happened in the world of finances between 2003 and 2007, and even more so since the revised edition has been released. In each edition Ramsey offers both advice and specific plans on how to overcome financial debt. The books are liberally dosed with testimonials which offer encouragement and enlightenment.

Overall, there isn't much difference between the 2003 version of *The Total Money Makeover* and the 2007 version, except for new testimonials. Yet to Ramsey's credit, how would he have known how much would change in the economy when his revised book went to press? However, despite some of the woefully inaccurate interest rates, Ramsey's advice is still pertinent, and is needed more than ever. Ramsey comes from the "been there, done that" school of experience. Having been a millionaire, having lost it all, and having regained financial

footing, he is one who can offer readers suffering from financial catastrophes real advice on how to achieve financial success.

His easy-going, almost folksy style of writing, mixed with his straight-forward, uncomplicated financial counsel makes the book easy to read and understand. The quantity of testimonials fortifies his system, and the reader comes away with a feeling of motivation and encouragement. The worksheets and other financial planning appendices allow the reader to start planning his or her financial makeover immediately.

If a library needs to save money, wait until a revision of the revision comes out.

*Pam Webb*

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