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

**In the Company of Others**, by Jan Karon. Published by Putnam Praise. Used by permission.

Published in the U.S.A. © 2011
Review Rating System

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

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

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

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

Commonly used abbreviations in CLJ reviews

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
Yes, more new book lists. With new and updated book selection resources now available, watch for Part 2 to follow.


PAP, 9781591280507, $19

011.62 275 p. : ill. ; 23 cm.
PROF Rating: 5

The second edition of The Book Tree, by the mother-daughter team of Elizabeth McCallum and Jane Scott, is an expanded and improved Christian resource for librarians, parents, teachers, and others interested in choosing quality books for children and teenagers. The authors have retained their preface to the first edition [CLJ 7, 2/3 (2003)], stating their rationale with their criteria for inclusion: well-written literature, reader-friendly literature, ethical standards, visual appeal, and accessibility. An added preface to the second edition cautions readers about certain unwholesome trends in many newer books for children and teenagers.

The 600 plus entries include more than 100 added titles, with very few titles from the earlier edition dropped for space or other reasons. Most of the added titles are appealing older books, some recently reprinted. Nine were published since 2000, and more than 20 in the 1990s. Within the graded sections (from preschool through high school fiction and biography) entries are arranged alphabetically by title, rather than by author as in the earlier edition, and include author, illustrator, and publisher. Additional bibliographical information, such as date of publication, is not included. (Biography titles are arranged alphabetically by subject.) Inviting descriptive annotations occasionally suggest other related titles. Original black and white illustrations taken from a few titles appear at the beginning of each section. In addition to title, author, and illustrator indexes, a subject index includes suggested grade levels for each title listed.

Elizabeth McCallum is an experienced teacher and author with a useful website. This annotated book list from a conservative perspective reflects the classical Christian educational philosophy served by the publisher. This new edition of The Book Tree is a valuable resource for either professional or personal users.


LIB 9780810861152

011.62 x, 207 p. ; 24 cm.
PROF Rating: 5

The Core Collection for Children and Young Adults, compiled by librarian Rachel Schwedt and English professor Janice DeLong at Liberty University, is a sequel to their earlier Core Collection for Small Libraries: an Annotated Bibliography of Books for Children and Young Adults, published in 1997 [CLJ, 9, 3 (2004)]. With no duplication of included titles, and most of the books listed in their earlier bibliography still in print, these two resources can profitably be used together as “volumes one and two.” Of
more than 350 titles in this more recent work, almost 40 per cent had been published prior to their earlier work. Chapters are arranged by genre: classic books, contemporary fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, nonfiction, picture books, poetry, and traditional literature. After brief introductory comments on the genre, entries in each chapter are arranged alphabetically by author and include standard bibliographical information and grade level. A paragraph length descriptive annotation concludes with a listing of awards received by the book, related subjects for classroom applications, and character themes. Following a combined title/author/illustrator/translator index are indexes for book awards, character themes terms, and related subject terms.

Titles in the earlier bibliography were based on “personal experience in the classroom and library...or professional reviews.” However, titles for this recent bibliography are specifically chosen from various national, state, or international award winners, with the exception of classic books that have remained in print for more than 50 years. This recent work includes very few titles from Christian publishers, but it reflects the conservative selection philosophy of the authors. They have deliberately “chosen to omit information about books or series of books that have already received copious publicity.” While neither of these very useful bibliographies offers a complete “core collection,” they make a valuable contribution to the selection process for Christian school, public school, or home school libraries. Highly recommended.
Squirrel’s New Year’s resolution / by Pat Miller ; illustrated by Kathi Ember. Chicago: Albert Whitman, 2010. LCCN 2009049305

HBB, 9780807575918, $16.99
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm.
PRI PS Rating: 4

Phrases such as “New Years Resolution” can be perplexing to young children when not properly explained. Pat Miller, author of Squirrel’s New Year’s Resolution, paves the way for explaining this difficult term through her use of forest animals.

It is January 1st and Squirrel is listening to the radio as she bustles about putting up her new calendar. The radio announcer challenges its listeners to make a resolution for the New Year. Just what IS a New Year’s resolution, wonders Squirrel? The best place to go for answers is the library so she hurries over to ask the librarian Bear. Bear tells her that “a resolution is a promise you make to yourself to be better or to help others.” Squirrel thanks Bear and decides to visit several friends on her way home to find out what their New Years resolutions are. Squirrel discovers ALL her friends have made a resolution. One friend has resolved to become a better reader, another is going to plant a garden, and a third has decided to be less grumpy. Squirrel delves right in to help her friends get started on their resolutions. Try as she may, Squirrel is unable to come up with a resolution of her own. She makes one last stop at the local diner before heading home, where Rabbit tells her that by showing kindness to friends and assisting them in beginning their resolutions, she HAS made one of her own. Squirrel decides her New Years Resolution will be to help someone every day.

This book encourages children to be kind to each other in easy, practical ways. Simple text and colorful illustrations make, Squirrel’s New Year’s Resolution, a delightful read. At last a fun picture book to help usher in the New Year!

Lisa Dirks


HBB, 9780152067151, $15.00
E 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 cm.
PRI PS Rating: 5

In Mr. Putter & Tabby Clear the Decks, the lazy, hot days of summer make Mr. Putter and his cat, Tabby, itchy with boredom. To solve their problem, Mr. Putter calls his adventurous friend and next-door neighbor, Mrs. Teaberry. Soon Mr. Putter and Tabby, along with Mrs. Teaberry and her dog, Zeke, climb aboard a sightseeing boat. The cruise is wonderful but when it ends, they have a problem—Zeke clamps his teeth onto the mast and refuses to leave! The captain, who understands seafaring dogs, comes to the rescue.

This is the twentieth book in the very popular Mr. Putter & Tabby series by Cynthia Rylant. Children will relate to the “itchy” boredom of summer and the need for adventure. As they tag along with the lovable characters on their cruise, they will laugh at the subtle humor.

The illustrations, created by Arthur Howard with pencil, watercolor, and gouche, are a perfect match for the story. He splashes the light pastel colors of summer across the pages to
express the carefree and sunshiny days of summer as well as the gentle pace of the story. Most of the humor and action in the story are expressed through the pictures—such as when Zeke licks Mrs. Teaberry’s orangesicle when she’s not looking.

Cynthia Rylant was raised by her mother’s parents, and her personal experience and affection for the elderly shine through in these books. Thus, the books in this series convey a sense of respect and appreciation for the elderly.

This early reader (RL 2.1, Follett Titlewave) is intended for ages 6-9 (back cover).

Carol Satta


   HBB, 9780152064204, $16

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

   PRI (PS) Rating: *5

Epossumondas Plays Possum tells of a rather silly but precocious possum in diapers. As Epossumondas sips sweet tea and chitchats with his human mama, he hears about the scary Louisiana swamp and the loup-garou. Later, being a forgetful possum, he heads off into the swamp all on his own. Soon he hears frightening sounds of various sorts, and plays dead through them all...until the vulture shows up! He likes dead meat! That vulture is bound for disappointment. Without ever meeting the loup-garou, Epossumondas finally gets back to his mama, who has come to rescue him.

Recently deceased, beloved and famous Louisiana storyteller extraordinaire Colleen Smalley was a visiting professor at several colleges and universities throughout the United States, and winner of many awards for academic accomplishment in her art. Colleen grew up hearing the rich, southern legends such as the Jack Tales and the now politically incorrect but still engaging story, Epaminondas. She is considered a state treasure by all Louisianans, no matter what their background. Her rich African story-telling style enhances all her tales. The hero of several of her books, Epossumondas is a combination of silly yet wise Jack, and always-one-direction behind Epaminondas. The narrative swings along with rhythm, humor, and joie de vivre. Prolific picture book author and illustrator Janet Stevens’ full page color and action filled graphics depict the story perfectly. Mama is, most fittingly, the mirror twin of author Colleen Smalley. Epossumondas is truly a possum, but also truly every child who enjoys this story. Epossumondas Plays Possum, along with the other three books in this series, is a fitting tribute to the gracious, larger-than-life, very entertaining storytelling legend named Colleen Smalley. Knowing the background of this American treasure, many will want a copy of this book, and other in the series. Children who do not know anything about its background will love Epaminondas because he is a happy reflection of them.

Donna Eggett

Seven little bunnies / by Julie Stiegemeyer ; pictures by Laura J. Bryant. Tarrytown, N.Y.: Marshall Cavendish Children, 2010. LCCN 2009006337

   HBB, 9780761456001, $15.99
Seven Little Bunnies is a frolicking fun read about getting a handful of bunnies to go to bed. The jubilant text of Julie Stiegemeyer reflects the bounciness of the bunnies as each one eventually succumbs to sleep, while the bright watercolor renderings of Laura Bryant round out the story. This is entertaining sing-song celebration of nightly routine.

Both the author and illustrator have captured the busyness of getting a young child to bed. Stiegemeyer proves that when rhymed text is done well it is infectious and fun and begs for numerous rereadings. The repeated chorus of “cozy, dozy, drowsy, drop” invites participation. Bryant’s detailed watercolor illustrations depict the energy of bedtime routine. While some bedtime books softly prepare children for bed Seven Little Bunnies is an exultant escort to dreamland. It’s hoped there will be further collaborations from this author and illustrator duo.

Pam Webb
Insect detective / Steve Voake ; illustrated by Charlotte Voake. Somerville, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 2010. LCCN 2009011152
HBB, 9780763644475, $16.99
595.7  28 p. : col. ill. ; 28 cm.
PRI Rating: 5
An introduction to the world of insects, Steve Voake piques the reader’s interest with overviews of a few of the most common, yet fascinating insects which can be found in a child’s backyard or neighboring park. Insect Detective takes us on a walk. First we listen at the fence for a scratching sound; it is a wasp collecting wood and making a nest out of paper. Next, we met the ants, who always live in groups, and follow them to their home. Each two page spread takes a new step into the life of another remarkable insect, looking at their homes, diet, special adaptations, etc.
Along our journey, the author sprinkles some concise, yet fascinating facts about insects—for example, the dynamics of a dragonfly’s wings, the care a female earwig takes to nurture her eggs, and the simple fact that all insects have three main body parts. The book concludes with an index and practical hints for finding insects—burying a jam jar, making a place for solitary bees to live, watching ants in hot, thundery weather, etc.
Charlotte Voake’s ink and watercolor illustrations focus the reader’s attention on the key idea expressed in the text, with illustrations which gently demonstrate detail of the insects, against a plain white background. Speaking directly to the reader with a refreshing voice and remarkable word choice, the author invites his readers to explore the extraordinary, hidden world of insects. Insect Detectives is not intended to be a thorough scientific explanation of insects, but rather a journey where we learn, and stand in awe of the hidden world of insects. A great read aloud, the book is also perfect for reading at home in the summer and then venturing out to investigate the insect world together.
Kristine Wildner

Dave the potter : artist, poet, slave / by Laban Carrick Hill ; illustrated by Bryan Collier. New York: Little, Brown, 2010. LCCN 2010006382
HBB, 9780316107310, $16.99
738.092  1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 x 29 cm.
PRI Rating: 4
Dave the Potter is an artistic picture book about an unusual slave in the 1800s who managed to learn both how to read and write and how to be a potter. Author Laban Carrick Hill fills the majority of the book with vivid sensory details about how Dave made pots and how he must have felt about them. The last few pages contain explanations of what we know about Dave and his poetry as well as what we don’t know. There is also a bibliography and three suggested websites for further study.
The realistic color paintings by illustrator Bryan Collier bring Dave to life for young readers. Each page contains a beautiful painting, showing Dave’s hands covered in clay, the pots being formed, or Dave’s facial expressions while working the clay.
The majority of the book has a poetic feel to it, which adds to the fact that Dave was a poet. I expected more of a typical nonfiction book describing Dave’s life, but this book...
comes closer to showing us Dave's life rather than explaining it. The description of his life and work at the end balances the book by giving readers more concrete information.

I believe this book would make a good read aloud for children in grades 1-3.

Amy Simon

Librarian on the roof: a true story / M.G. King ; illustrated by Stephen Gilpin. Chicago: Albert Whitman, 2010. LCCN 2009048126

HBB, 9780807545126, $16.99
027.4764/33 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm.

PRI (INT) Rating: 3

Based on true events, M. G. King presents a light-hearted story accompanied by Stephen Gilpin’s comical illustrations, showing how one woman can inspire a town into action.

When RoseAleta was hired to head Dr. Eugene Clark Library, a dusty, outdated library in Lockhart, Texas, she made it her mission to change things. Attendance increases as she brings in computers, updates the collection, and addresses the needs of the Spanish-speaking community. She decides more funds are needed to revamp the children’s section. She packs a tent and stays on the roof until she raises $40,000, almost twice her original goal.

Librarian on the Roof is a tribute to hardworking librarians and a delightful tale of one woman’s determination to make a change in her community. The cartoon-style illustrations reinforce the text and enhance the drama of the story. It is well suited for a read-aloud and should appeal to a broad group of children. When RoseAleta goes up (and eventually down) from the roof, the illustration is a two-page spread horizontally, making the reader turn the book and giving him a larger-than-life experience of going up to the roof. This book will show young readers the difference that a single person can make when they are committed to helping others.

A brief author's note is included in the front of the book, providing some background information. However, readers might have enjoyed seeing a larger photo of RoseAleta, as well as knowing other facts, such as whether her tent really blew off during a rainstorm, as depicted in the book, and other practical aspects of her rooftop experience.

Recommended for public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer


HBB, 9780802853486, $17.50
222/.909505 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 28 cm.

PS PRI Rating: 3

The Story of Queen Esther by Jenny Koralek provides young readers a brief yet brilliantly illustrated version of the well-known bible story. When King Ahasureus selects a new queen he picks Esther from among the beautiful maidens in the land, not realizing she is Jewish. When the Jewish people are threatened with annihilation due to the prejudice of Haman, Ahasureus’s advisor, Esther must overcome her fears and protect her people.

The bold, rich pastels provided by Grizelda Holderness are the
centerpiece of this retelling. The soft renderings lend a fairy tale feel to the story, and even though some artistic liberties are taken such as Haman's wife brushing his boots, and Esther owning a pet cheetah, the illustrations are noteworthy. As for the story itself, Koralek's retelling is fairly homogenized in that it sidesteps how Queen Vasti was supplanted due to her disobedience to the king or that Ahasureus had a huge harem. There is also the omission of the incident of Haman fawning over Esther, thereby arousing Ahasureus's anger. However, the heart of the story still shines which is that Esther was willing to face the king’s wrath, and a possible death sentence, to save her people. Except for the noted changes to the story this is an agreeable introduction to young readers of this beautiful Old Testament tale.

Pam Webb
**BOOK REVIEWS**

**INTERMEDIATE FICTION**


HBB, 9780061119705, $15.99  
Fic 208 p.: ill. ; 22 cm.  
INT Rating: 3

Avi creates one last book in his series about two loveable characters, a mouse named Poppy and a porcupine named Ereth. Poppy and Ereth's friendship frays the day Poppy's husband dies. She asks to be left alone. Rejected, and alone, Ereth hides in his home until thirst forces him to find the river. The mucky riverbed captures Ereth, sucking him deeper with each movement and giving no means of escape. Poppy appears. Despite her small size she finds a way to save Ereth's life, but will her actions bring about her own death? This action-adventure story will carry the reader from a quiet wood to the cavernous dwelling of bats where the secret to the woodland creature's safety lies.

Floca's pencil drawings sprinkled throughout the book breathe life into the creatures. These masterful illustrations reveal pieces of the story without stifling the reader's imagination.

The text creeps through an exhaustive opening. But once the reader moves past this portion, action will propel him or her forward to the last page. This book could be used as a class read-aloud.

Mary Vee

**The secret garden / Frances Hodgson Burnett ; illustrated by Inga Moore. Cambridge, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 2008. LCCN 2006051838**

HBB, 9780763631611, $22.99  
Fic 278 p.: col. ill. ; 27 cm.  
INT Rating: 5

Frances Hodgson Burnett's classic children's novel, The Secret Garden, newly illustrated by Inga Moore, is a visual delight as Mary Lennox's incredible garden on the English moor comes to life with a vibrancy unsurpassed by previous editions. Just in time for its 100th anniversary, this timeless story of personal growth and childlike wonder has genuinely entertained children generation after generation.

Ten-year-old Mary is a spoiled child, raised by servants in India, who was recently orphaned and moves to England to live at her eccentric uncle's home Misselthwaite Manor. One early spring day, she explores the manor grounds and discovers a secret garden, locked and neglected for the past 10 years. Finding the key, Mary tends the garden and starts her own slow process of growth while befriendng a neighbor boy. Eventually, she discovers another child in the manor, her cousin, Colin. Even more spoiled than Mary, Colin is disagreeable boy who has been told he will either die young or grow up to be a hunchback like his father. In due time, Mary and Colin develop a friendship. Mary shares her secret garden with Colin, and the cousins become determined to make not only the garden, but also themselves strong and vibrant, as a surprise for Colin's father.

Although relatively slow paced by modern standards, The Secret Garden conveys themes of hope, good health, and selfless giving. Inga Moore's detailed color drawings create a magical reading experience, capturing not only the characters, visually depicting their growth, but also the lush greenery of the garden and
the animals. Most children’s libraries already have this title on the shelf; however, to attract another generation of readers to this treasure, libraries will be wise to update their collection with this newly illustrated edition.

Kristine Wildner

The other half of my heart / Sundee T. Frazier. New York: Delacorte Press, 2010. LCCN 2009013209

HBB, 9780385734400, $16.99
Fic 296 p.; 22 cm.
INT Rating: 4

Eleven-year-old twins Minerva and Keira King are opposites in almost every way. Minerva, who prefers to be called Minni, is reflective, a good student, and cares about the environment. Keira has trouble reading because of a learning disability, loves fashion, and is outgoing. But the girls’ most obvious difference is that they don’t look anything alike. Minni has their dad’s pale complexion and reddish-blonde hair. Keira takes after their curly-haired, cinnamon-brown mama. Author Sundee T. Frazier uses this unique premise to explore her chosen themes of skin color and unrecognized racism.

Though the girls don’t like their maternal grandmother, Keira is thrilled when she invites them to her Atlanta home to compete for the title of Miss Black Pearl Preteen of America. Though reluctant, Minni tags along. She worries about whether the other contestants will accept her and begins to understand that Keira sometimes feel similar doubts in their northwestern hometown with its mainly white population.

While staying with “Grandmother Johnson-in-the-Butt”, Minni eventually finds the courage to confront her grandmother’s obvious preference for Minni’s straight hair over Keira’s curly locks. Unfortunately, she never acknowledges her own prejudices. The twins play cruel tricks on their grandmother, including adding a gas-inducing (?) medication to her oatmeal. The girls never apologize or face any consequences for their meanness.

The girls’ negative view on Grandmother Johnson is based partly on the fact that she cares about her property and doesn’t want stray animals doing their business on her lawn. A neighbor whose lawn is untended is presented positively. The book is very well written and thought provoking, the characters are multi-dimensional, and its themes are important.

Johnnie Alexander Donley

Take me with you / Marsden, Carolyn. Somerville, Mass.: Candlewick Press, 2010. LCCN 2009038053

HBB, 9780763637392, $14.99
Fic 160 p.; 19 cm.
INT (MS) Rating: 4

Filled with faith and a yearning for family, Carolyn Marsden’s Take Me with You is the story of two eleven-year-old girls living in an Italian orphanage shortly after World War II. Pina, a beautiful blonde full of spunk and determination, often gets in trouble and realizes the nuns are discouraging potential adoptive families from meeting her. Susanna, whose heritage is half “negro” faces discrimination and recognizes her chances for adoption are slim. As the story progresses, Susanna is discovered by her father, an American sailor, and contemplates the possibility of
moving to the United States. Pina’s story is filled with more mystery as she must enlist the help of a postulate, Suor Vincenza, to sneak out and find the truth about her birth mother—and why her adoption is impossible.

Marsden immerses her readers within the culture and history of post World War II Italy. The Catholic Church is a tremendous influence in the girls’ lives, not only in their faith, but also their daily lives as they pray the rosary, participate in Italian Catholic traditions such as writing to LaBefana, attend Mass, and daily prayer. The nuns are portrayed as strict and inflexible, lacking the spiritual essence at the foundation of the church, but historically representative of the pre-Vatican II mindset of many. Weaving the beautiful Italian language throughout, Marsden tells Pina and Susanna’s stories through each girl’s unique perspective, elegantly wrapping their feelings into each step that brings them closer to finding a real family. Rather than tightly closing the girls’ stories with a traditional happy ending, the author leaves them with many issues resolved, and hope for the future is bright, but not certain.

Kristine Wildner
Rosa’s bus / Jo Kittinger ; illustrated by Steven Walker. Honesdale, Pa.: Calkins Creek, 2010. LCCN 2010005091

HBB, 9781590787229, $17.95
323.1196/073076147 1 v. (unpaged)
INT PRI Rating: 5

Rosa’s Bus chronicles bus #2857 from the assembly line, through its historic place in Rosa Park’s civil rights protest, to retirement at the Henry Ford Museum in Michigan. The book is primarily about the bus boycott of 1955-56, but author Jo Kittinger also uses it to teach about the beginnings of the Civil Rights movement in general. At the end, there is a page listing details about the bus, such as manufacturer, date, and serial number. Another page includes the author’s note which gives more details on the bus boycott and other events in the Civil Rights Movement. A page of sources lists books, web sites, and interviews, as well as books and web sites for further reading.

Illustrator Steven Walker fills the book with realistic color paintings that complement the story. He paints the people involved and the situations described.

This book is an excellent introduction to the Civil Rights movement for young students. It effectively communicates the way things were and what blacks did to see changes begin. It also serves as a practical way to teach young students about what a boycott is and how it can be used to initiate change.

Amy Simon


HBB, 9780547194875, $17.00
B or 621.3092 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 27 cm.
INT (PRI) Rating: 4

His teacher may have called him “addled,” but the world was changed forever because of Thomas Edison’s inventions. In A Wizard from the Start, Don Brown examines Thomas Edison’s childhood and young adult life. Edison was an insatiable reader who not only learned from the works of others, but tried out his own experiments in his laboratory. The son of a creative, yet struggling, businessman, Edison tried his hand at a number of different businesses—selling newspapers, writing his own paper, and working on the cutting edge of technology as a telegraph operator. His first patented invention, an electric vote recording machine, was a financial failure. At this turning point, he made a pledge to himself to find out what the world needed—and invent it. The author’s note at the end reveals a darker side of Edison—his ruthless business dealings with the motion picture industry and his conflict with Nikola Tesla over the AC vs. DC electric current.

The text and Brown’s unique ink sketch and watercolor illustrations depict Edison’s personality more than his accomplishments. The entire book is filled with action as each two-page spread depicts scenes in his early life—pouring chemicals in his basement, printing his newspaper, and gazing at the first electric light bulb. A Wizard from the Start leaves the reader feeling as if he/she has met the young Thomas Edison, learned his background and character, and understands his early
motivations. However, you will have to go elsewhere to study the rigor of his experiments and the immeasurable impact of his inventions. Thomas Edison’s life story will inspire young people to passionately pursue their education, follow their passions, and imagine the possibilities of the future.

Kristine Wildner

Big George: how a shy boy became President Washington / Anne Rockwell ; illustrated by Matt Phelan. Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt, 2009. LCCN 2002004984

HBB, 9780152165833, $17.00
B or 973.4/1/092 1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 30 cm.
INT (PRI) Rating: 4

A superbly illustrated picture book biography, Big George: How a Shy Boy Became President Washington, begins with Washington’s childhood and takes the reader through the important events of his life up to the point of his presidency. Illustrator Matt Phelan immediately grabs the reader’s attention with a striking drawing of a serious, adult Washington without his traditional white powdered wig. Rockwell takes the reader back to the time of the thirteen colonies, when George was just a boy living in rural Virginia. After the death of his father, Washington established a close relationship with his older brother. Washington also became an avid reader and focused on establishing good manners to hide his shyness. Washington’s life was changed when the king ordered him to fight in the French and Indian War. Although he preferred peace to war, Washington rose to the occasion again at the time of the Revolutionary War—becoming a successful general and tirelessly fighting alongside his soldiers.

Rockwell’s picture book provides an excellent, positive overview of Washington’s early life. Matt Phelan’s watercolor and pencil illustrations use light and color to bring the eye to the focal point of the illustrations and show the intense emotions surrounding this period of history. The author highlights many aspects of his life which today’s children can identify with—his shyness, love of the outdoors, participation in sports, etc. Big George is an outstanding choice to introduce the Revolutionary War to children. The narrative is concise and easily accessible, and covers many key events in Washington’s life and the Revolutionary War. A wonderful supplement to traditional elementary history textbooks, this book allows teachers to provide their students with a unique look into our first president’s life.

Kristine Wildner

HBB, 9780547076591, $16.00
Fic 233 p.; 21 cm.
MS (HS) Rating: 5

Margaret McMullan’s Sources of Light is one of the most thought-provoking civil rights novels written in 2010. The story revolves around fourteen-year-old Sam and her widowed mother, a new teacher of art history at the local college during the summer of 1962. While Sam is desperately trying to fit in at her new high school, her mother is struggling to make ends meet and to stand up for her strong beliefs in civil rights. Tensions run high in Jackson as civil rights protesters stand against the white majority for basic rights such as voting and being served at the lunch counter. Sam’s mother lectures at a nearby black college they receive threatening phone calls, their yard is trashed, and they find they’re on the watch list of Citizen’s Council, a white supremacist organization. Further complicating matters, Sam becomes involved with an older boy, Stone, whose father is a leader in the Citizen’s Council. As the story progresses and Sam begins to view her world as it really is, she cares less about fitting in and more about the values shared with her mother and Perry. As racial tensions escalate, the book comes to a realistic yet heart wrenching conclusion.

McMullan captures the turmoil of Sam’s life and the conflict many young people faced during that time period—between the values of their parents and the changing values of society. Skillfully weaving in historical events, Sam tells her story with an honest and innocent voice that matures as the story progresses. This story is a perfect complement to the study of the Civil Rights Movement, offering a personal perspective on people’s struggles during this tumultuous period of history.

Kristine Wildner

Lady Carliss and the waters of Moorue / Chuck Black. (The Knights of Arrethtrae, 4)

PAP, 9781601421272, $9.99
Fic 185 p.: map; 21 cm.
MS (HS) Rating: 5

Sir Quinlan and the swords of valor / Chuck Black. (The Knights of Arrethtrae, 5)

PAP, 9781601421289, $9.99
Fic 189 p.: map; 21 cm.
MS (HS) Rating: 4

Sir Rowan and the Camerian conquest / Chuck Black. (The Knights of Arrethtrae, 6)

PAP, 9781601421296, $9.99
Fic 175 p.: map; 21 cm.
MS (HS) Rating: 4

Chuck Black concludes his medieval allegory Knights of Arrethtrae series. Each book has an overall theme: Lady Carliss (escapism), Sir Quinlan (apathy), and Sir Rowan (pride). Black uses allegory to show believers what happens when one gives in to the temptation of these sins.
Lady Carliss and the Waters of Moorue features Lady Carliss, a master of the sword and bow, a fully trained Knight of the Prince. When her friend Sir Dalton is attacked by a poisonous creature, she is in a race against time to save him. But she uncovers a plot to overthrow the entire kingdom, while looking for the antidote. Lady Carliss faces an impossible choice: save Sir Dalton or fight those plotting against her Prince.

Sir Quinlan joins the Swords of Valor, an elite unit of knights, in *Sir Quinlan and the Swords of Valor*. After Quinlan is blamed for the death of their leader, the group disbands. Quinlan wanders the kingdom, trying to flee his past. A chance meeting with a former trainer offers Quinlan the opportunity to train as a secret warrior. He receives an impossible challenge from his Prince—one that forces Quinlan to face those who blame him and try to reunite them to stop the Dark Knight’s evil plot.

Sir Rowan is the most decorated knight in the Camerian tournaments, in *Sir Rowan and the Camerian Conquest*. When Rowan is left for dead following a vicious attack, his world falls apart. Mariah, faithful to the King, nurses him back to health and Rowan find new purpose in serving his King. Now a Knight of the Prince, Rowan must choose where he will fight—with his countrymen to take back their cities from the enemy, or far away from Cameria in an ancient city for an ancient cause.

Black’s writing has improved with these books, and this series should appeal to middle and high school teens, especially to reluctant readers. The Knights of Arrethtrae books are not too long (under 200 pages), and the plots are not too complex, and the spiritual tone is not overpowering. The books could be read independently as the introduction provides the basic background. Additional resources include a prologue, discussion questions and answers, an original song, and an author’s commentary.

Recommended for all middle and high school, as well as public libraries.

*Carol R. Gehringer*
The beautiful stories of life: six Greek myths, retold / Cynthia Rylant; illustrated by Carson Ellis. Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt, 2009. LCCN 2007034808

HBB, 9780152061845, $16.00
398.2/0938 71 p. : ill. ; 19 cm.
MS Rating: 4

The Beautiful Stories of Life is a retelling of six well-known Greek myths. Pandora is a mortal woman created by Zeus and given as a gift to Epimetheus. Persephone is a young maiden kidnapped by Hades. Orpheus's new bride is killed by a viper bite on their wedding day. Pygmalion is a sculptor and lonely for a wife. Narcissus angers the gods when he wants nothing to do with earthly love. Psyche is a mortal who falls in love with a god.

Cynthia Rylant gives her own interpretation of the lessons to be learned from each of the myths. Readers are shown how the characters' behavioral choices affect their lives. Literary devices such as similes and personification help children understand each myth.

The black-and-white drawings by Carson Ellis are reminiscent of stylized classical Greek art. Each story includes a full-page drawing, and there are a number of small drawings scattered throughout the book. The story of Pygmalion includes a drawing of an unclad statue of a woman.

The book is geared toward middle school readers, but is suitable for children in the upper elementary grades. The modern retelling of the myths in a short, easy-to-read format makes the book a good resource for introducing children to Greek mythology.

Dianne Woodman

The hive detectives: chronicle of a honey bee catastrophe / Loree Griffin Burns; with photographs by Ellen Harasimowicz. (Scientists in the field) Boston: Houghton Mifflin Books for Children, 2010. LCCN 2009045249

HBB, 9780547152318, $18.00
638/.13 66 p. : col. ill. ; 24 x 29 cm.
MS Rating: 5

In The Hive Detectives, Mary Duane is a hobbyist beekeeper. She inspects the honeybee hives in her backyard to make sure they are healthy. The inspection process is explained both through text and color photographs.

Dave Hackenberg is a commercial beekeeper. He manages three thousand honeybee hives and rents beehives to fruit and vegetable farmers. During an inspection, he discovers that twenty million honeybees have vanished. The disappearance of the bees is attributed to colony collapse disorder.

A group of scientists and beekeepers join forces to investigate the reasons for the honeybee colonies collapsing. The research methodology and the scientists' discoveries are discussed in great detail in the book.

Loree Griffin Burns describes the process of beekeeping in a clear, concise manner. The book is beautifully illustrated with captioned, color photographs taken by Ellen Harasimowicz. There is a nice balance between the photographs and the text.

The scrapbook-like format used in part of the book adds to the enjoyment of the interesting narrative about beekeeping. The appendix at the back of the book contains
useful information about honeybees. There is also a glossary of terms and a list of books for further reference.

The book is an excellent resource for teaching children in grades five through eight about honeybees and their importance to the nation’s food supply.

*Dianne Woodman*

**Lincoln’s Flying Spies:**

*Thaddeus Lowe & the Civil War Balloon Corp / Gail Jarrow. Honesdale, PA: Calkins Creek, 2011. LCCN 2010925627*

HBB, 9781590787199, $18.95
973.7/41 109 p. : ill., maps, diagr. ; 25 cm.
MS (INT) Rating: 4

Lincoln’s *Flying Spies* tells the story of the nation’s first air force: a corps of hot-air balloons that helped the Union army by taking to the sky to draw maps, spy on Confederate movements, direct artillery fire, and report all information via telegraph to Union generals on the ground and, ultimately, to the War Department and Abraham Lincoln in Washington.

The concept of a balloon corps was introduced by Thaddeus Lowe, a civilian whose exploits as an “aeronaut” in the mid-1800s made him famous throughout the United States. With the backing of Lincoln and several Union generals, Lowe successfully led the corps for two years, until government bureaucracy shut it down.

Gail Yarrow uses primary sources such as War Department records, Lowe’s writings, and letters of Union and Confederate soldiers to provide information on Lowe’s childhood and years as a balloonist entertainer and details on how he came to work for the Union army, including various objections he needed to overcome. The book’s many sidebars, maps, and photos contain copious information about the history of ballooning, prominent Civil War commanders, well-known artists and photographers like Alfred Waud and Matthew Brady, and weapons of the war. Back matter includes a timeline, endnotes, bibliography, sources for more information, an index, and a list of picture credits.

Most of the book describes what Lowe saw and accomplished as an aeronaut; actual battles and other historical detail are mentioned in passing. Also, while the ballooning exploits are fascinating, they can become repetitive. Still, this lively, well-written, and extensively-researched book provides a fine look at a seldom-acknowledged part of the Civil War and will whet a reader’s appetite for more information on all aspects of the war and its history.

*Rosemarie DiCristo*

**The Dust Bowl through the Lens:**


HBB, 9780802795472, $19.99
973.917022/2 96 p. : ill. (some col.), col. map ; 27 cm.
MS (HS) Rating: 5

To take an event as immense as the Dust Bowl and put it into context for children is a remarkable undertaking. Martin W. Sandler has brilliantly selected, from among millions of photographs, images which wholly depict the hardship of this time and place in a way which speaks to young readers, allowing them to
make connections to the most important part of history—the people. Given there are have been a number children’s books written about the Dust Bowl recently, *The Dust Bowl Through the Lens* rises to the top not only because of its photographs, but perhaps more importantly because of its organization and text. Each two page spread covers a specific topic, featuring a quotation, text, and inset photograph; opposite the narrative is a full page photograph highlighting the text and transporting the reader immediately into the time and place of the Great Depression.

Beginning with westward expansion and then moving to times of enormous prosperity, the story of the Dust Bowl begins with drought and erosion that created some of the most horrific environmental circumstances the United States has ever known. Sadler’s clear, concise narrative keeps the reader’s attention through the judicious use of quotes and by directly addressing each historical element. The author delves into the dust storms, migration, government programs, song and literature, and the role of photography in bringing the crisis to the attention of the entire world. Students’ understanding our country’s current economic hardships will make connections to today’s recession, and stand in awe of the much bleaker circumstances of the 1930’s. Concluding with a map, index, and resources for further research, this book is an important purchase for anyone who wants children to truly understand the Dust Bowl in the context of the Great Depression.

Kristine Wildner
*  
Hate List / Jennifer Brown.  
New York: Little, Brown, 2009. LCCN 2008050223  
HBB, 9780316041447, $16.99  
Fic 408 p.; 22 cm.  
HS Rating: *5  

Hate List explores the aftermath of a school shooting through the eyes of the shooter’s girlfriend. Four months ago, Valerie’s boyfriend Nick opened fire on a crowded school cafeteria. Valerie returns to school for her senior year and finds that some people consider her a hero because she tried to stop Nick, unintentionally saving another student’s life. Others consider her a villain because she and Nick kept a “Hate List” from which Nick ultimately chose his victims. Valerie herself isn’t sure what her role was. She was not aware of Nick’s plan, but fears she is to blame for both the shooting and family problems that have happened since then—as her parents’ separation. As the school year progresses, Valerie forms unlikely friendships with people who were once on her Hate List, and finds ways to cope, heal, and make amends for her part in the shooting.  

Hate List is a timely, compelling, and thought-provoking read. It explores the impact of bullying and school violence on the victims, their families, the school, and the community as a whole—and the role of the media in the healing process. In alternating chapters that detail events both before and after the shooting, the reader is given a clear understanding of Nick’s motivation and Valerie’s role. The reader also gets to know the victims of the shooting through the obituaries and newspaper articles that open each chapter. The depiction of the shooting is vivid, but not graphic. Valerie is a sympathetic heroine, her emotions are palpable, and her healing process is realistically portrayed. Mild profanity is used to provide atmosphere. Valerie’s father’s implied affair is a background conflict. The overall message is of forgiveness and healing, and the ending is hopeful. A first purchase for high school libraries.  

Elizabeth Norton  

Anything but normal : a novel / Melody Carlson.  
Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 2010. LCCN 2009025389  
PAP, 9780800732585, $9.99  
Fic 254 p.; 21 cm.  
HS (MS) Rating: 3  

Sophie Ramsay is seventeen and a senior, but is not looking forward to her last year of high school. It could have been a fabulous nine months of enjoying her friends, her great classes, her journalism interests, yet her nine months are spent living out the secret of last summer.  

Melody Carlson, a veteran YA writer, who specializes in teen girl perspective, covers the consequences of sexual pressure in Anything But Normal. Sophie, an active, committed Christian, strayed from her abstinence pledge and now faces the emotional, physical, spiritual dilemma of that decision. Presented with honesty and realism, teens will no doubt read with compassion how Sophie tries to deal with mistakes from the past and how they collide with her present.  

Melody Carlson knows how to present topics that apply to teens today, especially girls. It’s not difficult to guess that Sophie’s secret is being pregnant, and the book doesn’t offer too much in the way of originality. On the
positive side the book presents an honest, realistic portrayal of a “good” girl who made a bad decision and how that decision now affects her present and future. Unfortunately, the plotline gets bogged down at times with a moralizing tone. Sophie often laments how she only had sex twice and didn’t like it either time and doesn’t want to have sex again until she gets married. Sophie also chastises her friends for dressing like “sluts” considering they have made purity vows.

Overall, the book offers a frank expose of sorts about a young woman who desperately wants to avoid the truth of her situation. Most of the book centers on her trying to cope alone with her pregnancy and she doesn’t even reveal her situation to her parents until she is five months along. From there the book rushes towards her having the baby without much more exploration on how her pregnancy affects her life. The confrontation scene between the two families could have been developed more with a focus on Dylan, the baby’s father, and his reaction since he also broke his purity vow. His motivations are not explored nor are his feelings about the situation truly developed. A book to consider more for its frank approach to teen pregnancy than for its originality in plotline.


Pat Lowery Collins’ historical fiction novel Hidden Voices: The Orphan Musicians of Venice tells of three musically accomplished orphan’s search for love. In this coming of age story Rosalba, Anetta, and Luisa tell of their life and friendship in a Venetian orphanage dedicated to training instrumentalists and vocalists. Antonio Vivaldi, affectionately called Father, composed many of his pieces to enhance the student’s talents. Anetta’s accomplished violin performance rouses a marriage possibility from a nobleman. She turns down his proposal to show Luisa her devotion. Rosalba’s praiseworthy oboe work bores her. She sneaks out of her dorm at night to seek true love. Luisa nearly loses her angelic solo voice when a serious illness invades the orphanage. During her recovery time she falls in love with a simple country boy. Each desires love more than music. Together they support one another.

Collins uses first person to tell Anetta, Rosalba, and Luisa’s entwined story. Unless knowledge of musical terminology and Latin are known, a dictionary of sort is needed, context clues are lacking. Homosexuality, rape, and promiscuity dominate the story line, drawing away from lesser themes of Vivaldi’s music, orphans, and Venice. The writing style lacks a promised quality calling for at least one more edit.


Revenge is a dish best served
cold, as the saying goes. Yet one betrayed former BFF presents a hot desire for getting even in *Getting Revenge on Lauren Wood* by Eileen Cook. Lauren Wood betrays and humiliates best friend Helen to the extreme and fortunately Helen’s parents move shortly after the incident.

Years later, Helen returns to town transformed. New name, new looks, and a new agenda. No longer a victim, she is the campus’ hot topic and she has more than popularity on her mind. A funny thing happens on the way to the main event of ruining Lauren’s life though; she makes friends with Brenda, who becomes her conscience. She also strikes up a mutual interest with Christopher, the drama department mystery guy. Can she give up her well-planned course of revenge for true friendship and romance?

Often humorous, more often poignant, Cook makes a good point about revenge: it is often pointless. This is a mean girls novel with a twist—and those who long for snippy campus queens to get their comeuppance will no doubt relish the efforts of Helen to bring her nemesis down. While the ending could have taken a traditional, if not trite path, its surprising and realistic ending is quite satisfying.

*Pam Webb*

*Love will keep us together : a Miracle Girls novel / Anne Dayton and May Vanderbilt. (Miracle Girls novel ; 4) New York: FaithWords, 2010. LCCN 2009032802*

PAP, 9780446407588, $9.99

Fic 287 p.; 21 cm.

HS Rating: 4

Anne Dayton and May Vanderbilt present *Love Will Keep Us Together*, the finale to a contemporary fiction series about four high school girls. In the Miracle Girls series, Riley, Zoe, Ana, and Christine become friends after each of them miraculously survive a life-threatening event. *Love Will Keep Us Together* is told from Riley’s perspective, as the girls experience their senior year at Marina Vista.

Riley is a beautiful, smart student who could go to any college, but she faces several challenges. She has a brother with Asperger’s syndrome, who struggles in school, both socially and academically. She is reluctant to attend a specific college just because everyone else thinks Riley should go there. Riley’s parents want her to go to Harvard, while her friends want her to go to USC. But she really isn’t sure what she wants to study, let alone where to go. A former boyfriend, disliked by her friends, wants to re-establish their relationship while another boy wants to date her. Finally, she wonders how to deal with hypocritical Christians, even as she struggles with her faith.

This book is character-driven; the characters are realistic in depicting teen life. The girls struggle with facing decisions about their future, both individually and together; also about relationships with boys and families, struggles with school, and issues affecting their friends. Dayton and Vanderbilt do a good job of covering the previous stories. Even if one has not read the earlier books, it is obvious why Riley, Zoe, Ana and Christine value their friendship. Fans of Melody Carlson’s Carter House Girls will enjoy this series as well. Recommended for all high school and public libraries.
Carol R. Gehringer

PAP, 9780310721437, $9.99
Fic 261 p. ; 22 cm.
HS (Adult) Rating: 5
Loosely based on Sleeping Beauty, this debut historical romance by Melanie Dickerson is a delight for both teens and adults.
A woodcutter's daughter is apprenticed to the healer—but is uneasy at the sight of blood. Seventeen year old Rose is determined to overcome this or she must return home and marry an older man selected by her mother. One day a handsome nobleman is seriously injured and brought to the healer's house. Frau Gerusha is away and Rose must tend to his wound. Rose and Lord Hamlin are attracted to one another but fight their growing feelings because Lord Hamlin is already betrothed to the mysterious Lady Salomea, who has been in hiding for seventeen years. He has been hunting for the evil Moncore who threatened her.
Meanwhile, his younger brother Rupert pursues Rose, which flatters and confuses her. Rose wrestles with whether it is God's will for her to remain single, marry the younger brother, or hope for more. Will she have a fairy tale ending?
Both Rose and Lord Hamlin show character development in the book as they struggle with duty, virtue, and honor over personal interests. The details in this medieval Germanic setting are exquisite, making it an ideal context for a courtly romance. The other characters, especially Frau Gerusha, Rose's best friend Hildy, Moncore, and Rupert, add depth to the story.
Highly recommended for public libraries and high school libraries.
Carol R. Gehringer

PAP, 9780307458094, $6.99
Fic 403 p. : map ; 21 cm.
HS (MS) Rating: 5
Prolific author Angela Elwell Hunt presents a historical fiction series set in fifteenth century Prague and on a seventeenth century sailing vessel. Later books in this series take place in nineteenth century American Civil War and thirteenth century Ireland.
Kathleen O’Connor is doing research for a college project, when she discovers her connection to legend of Cahira O’Connor. Every two hundred years, one of Cahira’s heirs—the one bearing Cahira’s mark—leaves her traditional womanly role to fight for rights. As Kathleen continues her research, she will learn of her own destiny as the twentieth-first century heir.
The Silver Sword finds Anika O’Connor disguised as a boy and training as a knight of Chlum in order to escape the son of a nobleman who plans to use her for immoral purposes. Anika’s father was killed, leaving her without protection from Lord Laco’s
son. It forces her to flee and live a life as a knight in training. Lord John of Chlum discovers her disguise and allows her to continue as a boy until he needs her to spy as a woman among the nobles of another realm.

In *The Golden Cross*, Aidan O’Connor lives in a Dutch colony in Java where she had been raised among pickpockets and prostitutes. Her artistic ability is discovered by a world-famous cartographer who offers her a chance to leave her life behind. She is disguised as a boy and sails to the new world to draw flora and fauna. When the cartographer is killed, she faces new adventures to survive.

The series was originally published in 1997, no doubt due to the popularity of Ms. Hunt, whose name is synonymous with quality Christian fiction. Each book is well-written with careful attention to historical details. Each book lists sources used by the author. When originally published, *The Silver Sword* was nominated for RITA award and *The Golden Cross* received the Angel Award.

Highly recommended for all high school and public libraries.


LCCN 2009023855

HBB, 9780152055073, $17.00

Fic 215 p.; 22 cm.

HS Rating: 5

Jeanette Ingold weaves a threefold mystery in *Paper Daughter*, the story of Maggie Chen, daughter of a journalist who was recently killed in a hit-and-run accident. Maggie’s dream is to be a journalist like her father, and the day before she starts an internship at her local newspaper, she and her mother receive a letter from her father’s college stating that no record of him exists. Maggie wonders why he would have lied about what college he attended, and the mystery deepens when, cleaning up after a basement flood, Maggie finds notes alluding to a “family project.” While doing research for a story at her internship, Maggie discovers a possible link between her father and wrongdoing in the city government. Maggie’s search for answers leads her to a National Archives depository, a Chinese immigrant named Fai-yi Li, and ultimately, to the truth about both her father’s past and his death.

*Paper Daughter* will keep readers turning the pages. Interspersed with Maggie’s story in the present day are excerpts from the journal of Fai-yi Li, written in the 1930s, when he first came to the United States as a “paper son” during the Exclusion Era. At first, the parallel storylines seem unrelated, but they quickly coalesce.

Maggie’s voice and her emotions ring true. An extensive author’s note explains the exclusion laws that made immigration to the United States difficult for the Chinese, and elaborates on the so-called “paper son” schemes common during the Exclusion Era, wherein a Chinese immigrant already in the U.S. would claim other Chinese people as spouses or children to circumvent the laws. A bibliography suggests web sites, documents, and books for further reading. This book belongs in the hands of all mystery lovers and anyone who has ever undergone a search for identity.

*Elizabeth Norton*

PAP, 9781416996095, $9.99
Fic 400 p.; 21 cm.
HS Rating: 4

After Faith, Brie’s older sister, dies suddenly, Brie wonders if the accident was actually a suicide. That’s the terrible rumor that is floating around school. In Losing Faith, Denise Jaden’s debut novel, Brie must contend with the loss of not only her sister, but also all that she once knew. Brie’s mother can’t move on and becomes increasingly depressed, and Brie can’t depend on her father either. Her boyfriend and circle of friends have seemingly abandoned her. As for Brie, she can’t let go of the events of Faith’s final night. As her world falls apart, Brie finds an unlikely ally in Tessa, the school’s enigma, and begins an unlikely romance with Alis, a sweet and nerdy home school boy. The three of them begin to piece together the frayed unanswered questions about Faith’s death, which leads to the ultimate question: Was Faith involved in a cult? The answers point to the discovery that there is more to losing Faith than Brie had bargained for.

The book deals with grief, sorrow, and resolve, and touches on aspects of cultish activity. The topic of zeal versus spiritual discernment is explored with insight and thoughtfulness. Jaden provides a realistic portrait of how a family copes with unexpected loss and also presents an engaging story of how friendship can be found in unexpected places.

Pam Webb


PAP, 9781434799937, $14.99
Fic 303 p.; 21 cm.
HS (Adult) Rating: 4

Joy Jordan-Lake’s novel Blue Hole Back Home describes a rag-tag band of high school kids who live in an all-white Appalachian town, do landscape work in the heat of the summer, and then seek relief in the muddy waters of the inappropriately named Blue Hole. Their world is rocked when they reluctantly befriend a Sri Lankan girl and encounter persecution because of it. The kids’ parents choose to turn a blind eye and fail to stand up for what is right until they are forced into a horrific showdown with the Ku Klux Klan.

Blue Hole Back Home is a lyrically written bildungsroman with distinctive characters. Although this is a small element of the novel, readers should be aware that Shelby and her brother Emerson are confessed atheists who are embarrassed by their church-going mother and are grateful to have escaped religion in all forms. Interestingly, after the devastating events of their summer, Emerson finds solace in faith and the church, and Shelby, while still speaking dismissively of Christianity, longs for the peace and redemption that her brother has found.

Their best friend, Jimbo, is unashamed of his belief in God and is the one who always does the right thing. Whelp is an outcast who doesn’t know whether he should be part of Jimbo’s group, or a pawn of the KKK. He has an absentee father and essentially raises himself and cares for his mother—a known drunk and prostitute. This gives rise to some crude comments on a couple of occasions, and the
Lord’s name is used in vain a couple of times. In context, however, these things should not keep readers from appreciating the depth of the theme reflected in the song the kids frequently sing together: “Stand by Me.” And they do—courageously helping their Sri Lankan friend, Farsanna, face prejudice and violence against her family.

Sherri Beeler

The wolf of Tebron / by C. S. Lakin. (Gates of heaven series ; 1) Chattanooga, Tenn.: Living Ink Books, 2010. LCCN PAP, 9780899578880, $14.99

Joran, a blacksmith, lives in Tebron. He can hear the animals’ voices in his head, so Joran chooses a profession where he isn’t bothered by them. However, this comes in handy later.

After Joran and his wife Charis have a misunderstanding, he thinks she is en route to visit her family but she never reaches them. Joran seeks out the goose woman for advice. She tells Joran his anger has imprisoned her; he must loosen three keys to open the lock. First Joran goes to the house of the Moon, then to the palace of the Sun, and then to the South Wind. When he leaves, he receives gifts to be used later (a moon shell, a sunstone, and a silver circlet).

During his journey, he comes to the aid of several animals. Each time, the animal gives him his name, allowing Joran to call on him later for assistance. One of these is the wolf Ruyah, who guides him and becomes a trusted companion.

Joran faces challenges as he tries to find his wife and restore their marriage. He eventually learns that his wife’s disappearance means more than he thought; his rescue of her leads to the revelation of truth about their misunderstanding and his birth. His journey becomes a story for the rediscovery of love with plot twists and unforgettable characters thrown in. A wizard is mentioned towards the end, but he is the one who fights to overcome the evil.

Recommended for middle and high school teens, and adults who like fairy tales!

Carol R. Gehringer


Part one of Bamboo People, by Mitali Perkins, tells the story of Chiko, a Burmese boy who longs to be a teacher, but is captured by the military and forced to be a soldier. He makes friends with a street boy, Tai, who teaches him how to survive in the harsh training camp. Later, when Chiko is selected to go on a jungle mission, his leg is severely damaged in a mine blast.

Part two follows the story of Tu Reh, the Karenni “rebels” the Burmese are fighting against. Full of anger after witnessing his village burned by Burmese soldiers, Tu Reh is eager to kill a Burmese soldier on his first jungle mission. When they come across the injured Chiko, Tu Reh’s father makes him decide whether to leave him in the forest to be devoured by wild animals,
“mercy kill” him on the spot, or carry him to the nearby healer. “God will show you the way” his father says.

Although Chiko loses his leg, his life is saved, thanks to the decision Tu Reh makes to carry him to get help—even though it goes against everything in Tu Reh’s heart. Despite being enemies, these two young men find a connection with each other that neither expects.

_Bamboo People_ deals with the harsh reality of today’s ongoing war in Burma. If anything, it deals too gently with the issue, although this makes it more palatable for younger readers. The characters, while likeable, are relatively two-dimensional. The message is good and the story educates readers about conflict in an area of the world with which they may be relatively unfamiliar.

_Sherri Beeler_

**What world is left / Monique Polak. Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers, 2008. LCCN**

PAP, 9781551438474, $12.95
HS (Adult) Rating: 4

_What World is Left_ may remind the reader of _The Diary of Anne Frank_. While the setting is actually a concentration camp rather than a place of hiding, it is the story of a young girl whose carefree life has been taken away because she is a Jew during the time of Hitler. Anneke learns that survival in Theresienstadt, a “model” concentration camp, requires doing whatever it takes. She also learns that one can rebel while seeming to submit, and in the end she learns that her father has been doing just that. She and her family endure hunger, lice, loss of friends, and the brutality of guards.

This book reads like a true story, but in fact it is a novel based on the experience of the author’s mother in Theresienstadt. The story opens with a carefree day in Anneke’s life and progresses to show the effects World War II has on the Jews around her and eventually to her internment in a concentration camp. The account seems to be historically accurate. Polak’s writing evokes compassion for the Jews and hatred for the Nazis and gives the reader a feel for life in a concentration camp.

There are references to couples doing “animal things” in the cubbyholes and to a woman’s monthly cycle, accurate representations of life in the camp. _What World is Left_ is another option in the Holocaust literature for young adults.

_Jane Mouttet_


PAP, 9781589190917, $12.99
Fic 223 p.; 22 cm.


PAP, 9781434767776, $14.99
Fic 266 p.; 21 cm.


PAP, 9781434767769, $14.99
Fic 258 p.; 21 cm.

In _Saving Sailor, A.J. is ten and spending the summer with her family in Indian Lake, Idaho. She speaks with a fake Southern accent and is inseparable from her dog, Sailor. She becomes good friends with Danny and is_
instrumental in helping his
father rediscover Jesus.

In Taking Tuscany, A.J. is fourteen and living in
Tuscany, Italy. She has trouble fitting in at school and longs
to return to Indian Lake. She and Danny keep in contact by
writing letters. After an accident that almost kills her
brother, she thinks about

dedicating her life to God.

In Heading Home, A.J. is eighteen and returns to Indian
Lake to attend college. She is seriously considering
becoming a nun. Danny is disappointed. A.J. prays for
God’s guidance and comes to realize that her life’s calling is
serving God with Danny. A.J. and Danny get married.

Renee Riva intersperses her
writing with both humorous
and serious moments. The use
of similes and imagery is
enjoyable. Italicized words are
not overdone and enhances
the lighthearted feeling of the
writing style. The importance
of family and God is an
integral part of the plot.

The author skillfully expresses
the main character’s point of
view in each book. Saving
Sailor is geared more towards
younger readers because of
the shorter page count. But
the book is fun and provides
readers with a frame of reference for the positive and
negative reactions to the social and family situations
A.J. encounters.

The series will appeal to adolescent girls and illustrates
the importance of relying on
God, family, and humor for
coping with the stress of
growing up. Some aspects of
Renee Riva’s own life history
are woven into the books.
There is an interview with her
in Saving Sailor that provides
insight into her life as a writer
and the reasons she chose
writing as a profession.

Dianne Woodman

How to say goodbye in
Robot / Natalie
Standiford. New York:
LCCN 2009005256

HBB, 9780545107082, $17.99
Fic 276 p.; 22 cm.
HS Rating: 4 w/caution

In Natalie Standiford’s
contemporary fiction, How to
Say Goodbye in Robot, high
school senior Beatrice begins
the year as the new girl at a
small private school where
her classmates have known
each other since childhood.

She begins a deep, although
entirely platonic, friendship
with Jonah. Dubbed “Ghost
Boy” by his classmates in
seventh grade, Jonah has
remained an outsider since
the deaths of his mother and
mentally disabled twin.
Beatrice shields herself from
the emotional strain of a
lifetime of moving and
dysfunctional parents by
creating a coolly detached
personality that causes her
mother to label her a robot.

Beatrice and Jonah first bond
over their love of eccentric
late night radio call in shows.
Beatrice pursues a friendship
with Jonah despite her
classmates’ gossip and
negative views of him. Jonah
has found his first friend in
ten years in Beatrice. Their
bond continues to develop
over the course of the novel as
they delve in to the hidden
secrets of Jonah’s family.

The bright pink cover of this
book may create the incorrect
assumption that this novel is
another fluffy teen romance.
Instead, the story depicts a
strong platonic friendship that
does not fall into the
stereotypical plot of best
friends falling in love. The
friendship between Beatrice
and Jonah consists of extreme
highs and lows. But their complicated relationship demonstrates love, loyalty, and honesty as they navigate typical teenage situations as well as complex emotional challenges. The reader thoroughly understands Beatrice’s character as the novel is written in the first person from her perspective. The novel’s main characters are well developed and the difficult family situations are not overly embellished. The story is engaging with surprising plot twists that make *How to Say Goodbye in Robot* an emotional read.

Throughout the novel, Beatrice and Jonah drink alcohol at bars where minors are not carded and at house parties hosted by their classmates—where illegal drug use and fornication are mentioned but are not described in extensive detail. Teen drinking and partying are presented as common place occurrences without any feelings of guilt, concern for parental response, or negative repercussions. Profane terms and cursing appear sprinkled intermittently throughout the novel. There are also ethical dilemmas posed as the teens attempt to uncover Jonah’s family secrets. Brief mention of new age philosophies, ghosts, conspiracy theories, irrelevance for the sacred, and an extramarital affair occur without detail.

*Elissa Rizzo*

**Solitary : a novel / Travis Thrasher. (Solitary tales series ; 1) Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010. LCCN 2010928035**

PAP, 9781434764218, $14.99


HS Rating: 4

When you pick up *Solitary*, by Travis Thrasher, be prepared to read this book in one sitting. From cover to cover, Thrasher takes you on a bone chilling ride leaving you looking over your shoulder in fearful anticipation.

During his junior year, Chris Buckley finds himself uprooted from his ordinary Chicago life and plunked down in the back hills of North Carolina. His new high school consists of eclectic kids who are unwelcoming and secretive. His mother, recovering from a painful divorce, is emotionally unstable. The quaint cabin where Chris and his mother reside is anything but cozy after the unexplained disappearance of its owner shortly before their arrival.

Chris, not used to being an outcast, does his best to blend. He’s accepted into a small group of misfits, quickly becoming smitten with one of its members. Jocelyn, the most beautiful girl in school, is quiet, mysterious, and hard tofigure out. Her inconsistent manner often leaves Chris an emotional wreck.

An evil presence looms over the town, of Solitary, as Chris becomes entangled in a terrifying series of supernatural events. Not knowing who he can trust or turn to for help, Chris is driven to wild desperation. The only two things that Chris is sure of are his feelings for Jocelyn and the urgent sense that he must save her.

While not identified as Christian fiction, Thrasher does bring up God in a relevant, non-preachy way. He allows Chris to question the existence of God and grapple with his faith while providing hope there is more to life than the here and now.

Thrasher has proven his niche within young adult fiction. His riveting portrayal of the conflicting teenage mind is
raw and insightful. When considering high school fiction for your library collection, this book is a must!

Lisa Dirks
LIB, 9780761479109, $69.95
330 224 p.: ill., maps (chiefly col.); 30 cm.
HS (Adult) Rating: 5
Recession, business ethics, risk management, futures markets—all these terms and so much more make our world go around. Marshall Cavendish, well-known for their educational references, provides an excellent source of economic terms. Economic Literacy truly is a complete guide that explains those terms, ideas, and concepts that often make today's headlines. Students and adults in need of turning to a sourcebook which provides succinct yet complete definitions will find answers in this reference.

Amazingly enough this reference book manages to explain a multitude of complicated economic terms in a little over two hundred pages. Filled with charts, photographs, and a thorough index, the book provides the means to educate, illustrate, and explain concepts of a complicated subject. Students will gain much from the appealing presentation, which will be a complement to any economics, government, or history course. Adults searching for an easy-to-comprehend format will also appreciate this reference sourcebook.

Pam Webb

HBB, 9780547247670, $26.00
423 xxviii, 1636 p.: ill., maps; 25 cm.
HS (MS) Rating: 4

423 xxviii, 1636 p.
Adult (HS) Rating: 4

Newly-updated, the fourth edition of The American Heritage High School Dictionary claims to be the most up-to-date, comprehensive, and authoritative high school dictionary available today. The fourth edition of The American Heritage College Dictionary claims the same for its college edition. The high school edition is a hardcover bound volume, while the college edition is a fancier version with its dustcover over the hardbound volume and finger tabs for each letter of the alphabet. Each inexpensive dictionary features over 2,500 black and white illustrations, maps, and photographs.

Although this reviewer found the font to be quite small in both dictionaries, it is understandably so in order to prevent the volumes from being too heavy and cumbersome. With over 7,500 new words and definitions, each dictionary provides students with a choice of words pertinent to our changing times and use of language. Also present and updated in both dictionaries is biographical and geographical information for many entries, with pictures and maps to further add depth and insight to the information. Included with the college edition is a special passkey code that enables students to conveniently access Houghton Mifflin Harcourt’s eReference Suite directly on their computer, without having to carry a heavy additional book along to class. Other features in each dictionary include...
such things as a style guide which is helpful writing papers, a pronunciation key, and a guide to using the dictionary itself. In addition, there are ten charts and tables present including the Books of the Bible and the Periodic Table of the Elements. The American Heritage High School and College Dictionaries are an ideal resource for anyone seeking an up-to-date, high quality writing tools that simply can’t be outdone for its price and quality.

Sherri Myers

LIB, 9780761443629, $19.95
612.3 32 p. : col. ill. ; 23 cm.
HS MS (Hi-Lo) Rating: 3
Written by Donna Shryer and aimed at high school students, Body Fuel provides a basic introduction to nutrition, including how nutrients, vitamins, minerals, and water serve as fuel for the human body.

Body Fuel begins with an overview of nutrition as the means of supplying nutrients for one’s body to grow, prevent diseases, and heal itself. Further detail is then provided in the chapters on carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. The final chapters cover vitamins and minerals, as well as the importance of water to one’s body. The book emphasizes that “food is fuel for life,” and that “nutrition is a science as well as an art.”

Part of the Marshall Cavendish Food and Fitness series, Body Fuel includes an appendix, notes, glossary, bibliography, and index—as well as a list of references for further information. The bibliography and further references contain both print and online resources. Though a small book (only 139 pages), it starts each chapter by countering a myth with a fact in this colorful, well-designed book.

Color photos enhance the text, and colorful sidebars appear in a different text color to set them apart from the regular text. The people in the photos are teens of varying ethnicities. There are also a few illustrations such as the food pyramid and the digestive system. There is an occasional table or two, with most of the detailed tables in the appendix. All in all, this appears to be a well-documented book, not one that would be read for leisure but one that would be suitable for a high school research assignment.

Recommended for all high school and public libraries.
Carol R. Gehringer

The attack on Pearl Harbor / Laurie Collier Hillstrom. (Defining moments) Detroit: Omnigraphics, 2009. LCCN 2009004236
HBB, 9780780810693, $55
940.54/26693 xiv, 237 p. : ill. ; 25 cm.
HS Rating: 5
Part of an academically oriented history series, The Attack on Pearl Harbor is an excellent resource and supplement to the study of World War II. The book is divided into three sections—historical narrative, biographies, and primary sources. It concludes with a glossary of important people, places and terms; a chronology of events, sources for further study,
While the attack on Pearl Harbor is the focal point, Hillstrom stresses the impact of the event on world history. Beginning by setting the context for the attack, the narrative discusses the events leading up to World War II, America’s initial position of neutrality, and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Continuing with stories of heroism, the book moves on to the awakening of the “sleeping giant” as the U.S. garners all its civilian and military resources to achieve victory in the Pacific; and ends with the legacy of Pearl Harbor and its relationship to subsequent events including the Cold War and America’s involvement in Japanese reconstruction. The biography section includes a variety of Japanese and American officials as well as the first African-American Navy Cross Recipient.

Finally, the primary source section incorporates a diverse selection of documents including the Neutrality Act of 1937, the Tripartite Pact, the Japanese attack plan, key Roosevelt speeches, memoirs of a high school student, the official surrender of Japan, etc.

Accented by historical photos, informational sidebars, and appropriate subheadings, the book is exceptionally well-organized and can be read from cover to cover, or browsed for specific information. Hillstrom does not assume the reader has prior knowledge, and in clear, concise, and detailed language presents the history of this momentous event from a fair and balanced perspective, choosing biographies and primary sources which are not only relevant, but also directly connected to the narrative text. Highly recommended.

Kristine Wildner
HBB, 9781416556312, $24.00
Fic viii, 342 p.; 24 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 4
In the suspense novel Gold of Kings, Storm Syrrell is stunned when she’s fired by her beloved grandfather Sean, who dies the same afternoon. As she grapples with his apparent murder and her fall from favor, she realizes she has inherited the mystery he spent years investigating. He secretly leaves her the artifacts he has unearthed and two mentors to help her to outwit an assassin and discover the Second Temple treasure. Harry is a professional treasure hunter haunted by his past demons, and his friendship with Sean morphs into a fierce protectiveness for his granddaughter. Emma is a federal agent on the trail of money laundered through art houses to fund terrorism. The unlikely team follows a harrowing path to the treasure’s resting place. Now they must decide whether to get rich, or share their find with the international community and return it to its rightful owners.
Davis Bunn’s surprising and realistic characters range from an ill-tempered pastor in swanky Palm Beach to an Interpol officer of Muslim/Christian extraction. Mr. Bunn is a master of suspense and plants a twisting trail of clues that lead the adventurers around the globe and keep readers turning pages. A satisfying yet wholesome romance rounds out the plot. The writing and dialogue are vigorous, and the setting provides a glimpse into the fascinating world of art. Harry’s journey of self-discovery can help young adults or those at a crossroad in their own lives. None of the main characters are Christians, but Sean’s faith permeates the story.
Rebecca Velez

As young as we feel / Melody Carlson. (The four Lindas ; 2) Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010. LCCN 2010930102
PAP, 9781434764959, $14.99
Fic 326 p.; 21 cm.
Adult Rating: *5
At their 35th reunion, former childhood best friends Abby, Caroline, Janie, and Marley reconnect on different yet familiar ground. All four Linda’s share the same first name but go by their middle names and have sworn they will be best friends forever. Coming home for the class reunion has been a challenge for three of them. Divorce, death, difficult relationships, and forgotten dreams change all of them.
Janie, a busy NYC attorney, yearns for a simpler life after her husbands’ death. Marley, the group hippie, always had a passion for painting, but not so much since her divorce. Caroline found life in LA was not the fast track to ‘lights and action’ she thought it would be; waitressing is paying the bills. Abby, who stayed behind, is not as enchanted with the condition of her life. The reunion puts the childhood best friends back in the middle of each other’s lives. One by one the out-of-
town three find their way back home to the small town of Clifden. Childhood friendships quickly transform into adult relationships with adult issues. Caroline is trading her dream of Hollywood glamour to take care of her mother, dealing with the complexities of Alzheimer’s. Janie, while she has not put up her shingle yet, has found another source to keep her busy. Marley, the spark for painting that she could not ignite in Oregon, seems she just needed the right muse. Abby, with the three back in town, finds her life suddenly very busy and she has someone to talk with.

Finally, there are homes to decorate, businesses to start, and finally, some dreams that may really open up.

Carlson has been writing engaging prose for years; add these novels at the top of her game. These books, *As Young As We Feel* and *Hometown Ties*, are the perfect, 'put-your-feet-up-and-don’t-expect-to-get-up' novels. Each of her four characters are fully developed and you will recognize traits in either yourself or someone you know. Carlson shows each character’s weaknesses, strengths, and redemptive qualities that bring them full circle to their original promise to each other. “We will be best friends forever.” As the stories pull you in, you become the fifth Linda. Journey with these four Linda’s as they struggle with their lives and finally come to peace.

For women who ever thought about reinventing their own lives at any age, these Linda’s are in their 50’s and have tackled reinvention. If you are expecting a reflective read, you will not be disappointed. From beginning to end, each novel is an enjoyable stand-alone read.

_Debby Willett_

**The bride collector / Ted Dekker. New York: Center Street, 2010. LCCN 2009034272**

HBB, 9781599951966, $24.99

Fic 432 p.; 24 cm.

Adult (HS) Rating: 4

Ted Dekker delivers yet another suspense-filled novel. In *The Bride Collector* a serial killer is on the loose. He is on a mission to kill beautiful women and help them to become the bride of Christ. He is working his way up to number seven—the most beautiful bride—God’s favorite. He is not looking for someone that the world sees as beautiful on the outside. *The Bride Collector* looks on the outer appearance, but, like Christ, looks on the heart as well.

Part of what makes *The Bride Collector* an enjoyable read is the light humor brought on by four of the most unlikely and unexpected people who help solve the case. The FBI is struggling to solve it quickly, knowing that another woman is about to lose her life. They turn to four residents of a mental institute to help them solve the mystery. These four characters also help to move the plot along.

Dekker is a master storyteller. Just when the reader thinks she might have everything figured out, Dekker takes a couple of twists and turns that keeps the reader guessing. This is a good book for those who like suspense without a whole lot of gory details.

_Ruth O’Neil_

**Fatal judgment : a novel / Irene Hannon. (Guardians of justice ; 1) Grand Rapids, Mich.: Revell, 2011. LCCN 2010032355**
In her new suspense fiction series, Irene Hannon mixes crime fiction with romantic suspense to deliver a thrilling story that will keep readers wanting more.

US Marshal Jake Taylor is assigned to protect federal judge Liz Michaels, a woman he considers a cold-hearted workaholic who drove her husband—Jake's friend—to suicide. When her sister is killed at Liz's home, the police believe that Liz was the intended target. As Jake guards her, he discovers Liz is warm and caring, contrary to what his friend had told him. He also eventually learns that his friend battled personal demons and alcohol which contributed to his death. As his view of Liz changes, he must balance his growing attraction to her and her growing danger from an unseen enemy.

Jake is your typical rugged hero, a man who has seen plenty of action from years in the military. Liz is a smart, attractive widow who feels guilty for not being able to help her first husband. Both dealt with the death of a spouse differently: Jake turned from God when he was widowed, while Liz moved closer to God. Unraveling the identity of her enemy takes time, for the enemy appears to be a normal, law-abiding citizen.

Irene Hannon is a masterful storyteller: the romance is not too mushy, nor the murder too graphic, or the faith too preachy. Her characters are realistic as they deal with issues of faith, romance, and danger.

Highly recommended for all high school and public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer

*In the company of others/ by Jan Karon. (A Father Tim novel) New York: Viking, 2010. LCCN 2010024268

HBB, 9780670022120, $27.95
Fic 399 p.; 24 cn.
Adult (HS) Rating : 5*

In her contemporary novel, In the Company of Others, Jan Karon transports the reader to rain-soaked Ireland. Father Tim is finally taking his wife Cynthia on a birthday trip to a lodge on Lough Arrow in Sligo where he and his cousin visited ten years ago. A thief frightens Cynthia, resulting in injury to her ankle. With her limited mobility, she settles down to paint and experiences a break-through in her ability to paint portraits. Forced to postpone and even cancel much of their intended exploration of the countryside, the couple settles down to a much-needed rest.

One of their chief pleasures is reading a physician's diary from the 1860's. However, all is not peaceful in this bucolic setting. Father Tim's priestly collar has always invited the confidences of others, and his hosts share stories of pain and bitterness. He counsels and prays. In the end these characters face their pasts and share forgiveness.

Jan Karon superbly crafts her characters and their heart needs. Soon after the Kavanaghs arrive at the lodge, she captivates the reader with the mystery of two break-ins and the intertwining stories of the homeowners of lodge and manor. She artfully reveals the lodge's first owners through the diary, which also helps Father Tim and Cynthia solve one of the present-day mysteries. Ms. Karon uses the diary and the stories of other
vacationers at the lodge as interesting subplots. Their Irish brogue peppers the dialogue, which is meaningful, authentic, and occasionally humorous. Her themes provide hope for healing to those who have erred and a cautionary tale for those beginning life’s journey.

Rebecca Velez

The skin map / by Stephen R. Lawhead. (Bright empire series ; 1) Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson, 2010. LCCN 2010017750

HBB, 9781595548047, $24.99
Fic 403 p.; 25 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 3

The Skin Map, by Steven Lawhead, is a rousing adventure novel, full of humor and a lightness not found in many of his previous works. The novel puts one in mind of the swashbuckling adventures of The Three Musketeers, or Gulliver's Travels.

Kit lives a perfectly ordinary life in modern-day London—too ordinary, perhaps. Stuck in a mundane life with a girlfriend who has become more of a habit than an attraction, Kit's life takes a dramatic change when he turns a street corner and runs into his long-dead great grandfather Cosimo (who is, from all appearance, quite alive and well). Cosimo introduces Kit to the world of ley lines—invisible lines of telluric energy that criss-cross the landscape and allow those who are knowledgeable to travel to other universes and time-periods.

Thus begins Kit’s quest to help Cosimo beat the vicious Burley Men to the location of a human skin map holding tattooed symbols that unlock the secrets of many ley lines—and perhaps an even greater secret. Kit’s girlfriend, Wilhelmina, is unwittingly sent to another world on her own, where she proceeds to forge a new identity and life for herself by introducing the novelty of coffee to Austria.

Lawhead’s novel begins to introduce various world-views ranging from the fact that “there is only chaos, chance, and the immutable laws of nature,” to the thought that there is no coincidence under heaven—that “nothing happens that Providence cannot use for the benefit of all things.” Readers should not expect closure to Kit and Wilhelmina’s adventures, as this is clearly the first book in a series. Also, the novel employs the British slang word “bloody” throughout, and the Lord’s name is used in vain once.

Sherri Beeler

Fic 370 p.; 22 cm.
Adult Rating: 4

Debut author Kirk Outerbridge has crafted a series that combines a rugged (and reluctant) hero with counter-terrorism, bioelectronics, and medical ethics. The futuristic scenario is edgy—but it is an well-written adult science fiction read.

In Eternity Falls, Rick Macey is a former government agent,
specializing in religious counter-terrorism. He is asked to investigate the death of a movie star, who’s a spokesman for “the miracle treatment,” an anti-aging elixir. A beautiful executive is convinced it was not a natural death. Rick doesn’t want to take the case. He doesn’t agree with the treatment. He knows living beyond a normal lifespan has its problems. After all, he is a cyborg. When an important clue points to a former comrade, he finally takes the case. Sheila and Rick are attracted to each other despite their differences. This story takes place in a society obsessed with staying young—eternally.

Rick faces new challenges in The Tenth Crusader following a political assassination. U.S.-Philippine relations are threatened, especially as the Philippines negotiates to join a new superpower, the Islamic Alliance of Oceania. To find the assassin, Macey must confront his past in a nation torn apart by religious fundamentalism from years of an Islamic civil war.

Outerbridge won the 2010 Carol Award for Speculative Fiction (formerly the American Christian Fiction Writers award) for Eternity Falls. The Tenth Crusader is equally well-written but a little edgier. Rick and the assassin had a past relationship that he regrets, especially since getting married to Sheila and regaining his faith. When they meet again, there is sexual tension and temptation. However, it is a tightly-woven story with unexpected twists and plenty of action in each book.

This series is both plot-driven and character-driven; Rick is changed as a result of his spiritual choices, both past and present. No doubt there will be future Cyberthriller books, as The Tenth Crusader ends with at least one loose thread hanging.

Carol R. Gehringer

Nightmare by Robin Parrish offers a fascinating look at questions surrounding our humanity and our souls. In a truly creepy tale that pushes the boundaries of Christian fiction, Parrish tackles ghosts, demons, and things that go thunk in the night, providing plenty of food for thought. The author does not offer definitive answers to the questions raised; she rather raises questions and thought provoking themes. This page-turner could easily be used to dialogue with non-believers about the afterlife and the nature of the soul as it avoids overtly Christian attitudes,
but it should not be construed as a treatise on the supernatural, nor is it intended to be.

An ideal choice for fans of ghost stories and suspense, but lacking in the gore.

Jaclyn S. Miller

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**Becoming Lucy** / Martha Rogers. (Winds across the prairie ; 1) Lake Mary, Fla.: Realms, 2010. LCCN 2009036100

PAP, 9781599799124, $10.99

**Morning for Dove** / Martha Rogers. (Winds across the prairie ; 2) Lake Mary, Fla.: Realms, 2010. LCCN 2010012075

PAP, 9781599799841, $10.99

**Finding Becky** / Martha Rogers. (Winds across the prairie ; 3) Lake Mary, Fla.: Realms, 2010. LCCN 2010024996

PAP, 9781616380243, $12.99

At age seventeen Lucinda Bishop finds herself an orphan and an heiress to a large amount of money when she turns eighteen. Lucinda's aunt and uncle take her into their home in Oklahoma. Lucinda is unsure of life on a ranch, as it is different from everything she has ever known in Boston. There she meets Jake, for whom she develops feelings—although she knows that she can never marry him because he is an unbeliever. When a couple of harmful incidents occur on the ranch, Lucinda's uncle wonders whether a jealous family member after the inheritance is trying to sabotage Lucinda. Jake wonders if the incidents have anything to do with his past.

This second book in the series is about forgiveness. Dove Morris, a half Indian, falls in love with Luke Anderson. The relationship can go no further until Luke's mother can get over her hatred of Indians, who killed Mrs. Anderson's family when she was a little girl—every time she looks at Dove, her memories rise to the surface. While Dove and Luke set up secret meetings, they also pray for a change of heart in Mrs. Anderson.

Rebecca Haynes, introduced in the first two books of the series as a little girl, is now all grown up. She has returned home after four years away at college with new ideas about suffrage. She wants to pass along these ideas to other women. Rebecca dreams about having a profession life instead of becoming a wife and mother. On the train home she meets Geoff Kensington, who listens to everything she has to say. Rebecca feels that he can promise her excitement, but is he really who he says he is? When she arrives home, an old beau is waiting for her. Rebecca and Rob Frankston had dreams of marriage at one time, but Rebecca is not sure her life has time for him or for God now.

All three books are an enjoyable read. Although the romance is a bit formulaic, there are a lot of other subplots that keep the story moving and the reader guessing. Martha Rogers weaves tales about the whole town, which is what makes you wonder what is going to happen to characters in subsequent books. While not preachy, these books give a clear Gospel message and answer questions many people have about God.

Ruth O'Neill

**Deeper water** / Robert Whitlow. (Tides of truth
series ; 1) Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2008. LCCN 2008007907
   PAP, 9781595541321, $14.99
   Fic 390 p.; 22 cm.

   PAP, 9781595544490, $14.99
   Fic 418 p.; 22 cm.

   PAP, 9781595544506, $14.99
   Fic 390 p.; 22 cm.

Robert Whitlow, a southerner born and educated in Georgia, and practicing attorney and father in North Carolina, began writing in 1996. This series is set in the South, as are almost all of his novels, includes both legal suspense and interesting characterization. He wants to write stories that reveal some of the ways God interacts with people in everyday life.

The stories are easy to read, and don’t be surprised at all if you find yourself wanting to linger beyond a hundred or two-hundred pages in a setting. The central character Tami is a genuine woman but her struggles and thoughts are ones many of us can relate to. There’s enough in the story to bring a smile or two as well as character development that brings one to route for some of the characters.

The series handles spiritual issues without excuse or protracted development. There are no passionate scenes or detailed dialogue about passion. The insights become issues developed in the plotlines.

Deeper Hope gives the reader a chance to meet Tami Taylor, home-schooled, comfortable with her family faith, and off to spend a summer in a Georgia law firm. The base she is about to try is questionable as is the integrity of one or more of the co-owners of this law firm. What role does her faith play and does she stand up for the right?

Higher Hope gives the reader a chance to know Tami Taylor. She has strong religious beliefs and does not let living in an urban environment keep her from following her beliefs. Tami struggles with moving away from her family, caring for an elderly woman, and facing the love of two men, but

through it all she keeps her vision clear.

Tami is still struggling to find answers and guidance from friends, family, and God as Greater Love opens. Tami here is assigned to defend Jessie, a teen runaway arrested for stealing a bag of doughnuts from a local bakery. The blend of compelling and real situations and characters makes this last in the series a story that keeps one involved.

Leroy Hommerding

Healer / Linda Windsor. (The brides of Alba ; 1) Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2010. LCCN 2010921502
   PAP, 9781434764782, $14.99
   Fic 351 pl.; map; 21 cm.

Adult Rating: 4

Healer opens in 6th century Alba (Scotland). Tarlach O’Byrne determines to take revenge on Joanna and Llas, queen and king of the neighboring clan of Gowrys and formerly his intended and best friend. Instead, Joanna and Llas end up dead, their baby missing, and Tarlach O’Byrne’s tormented rage carries on. 20 years later, the O’Byrne’s clan continues a yearly hunt for Joanna and...
Llas’s daughter, Brenna. When Tarlach’s son, Ronan, is ambushed on the hunt, Brenna and her wolf, Faol, rescue him. Though Brenna lives as a recluse in a cave for her own safety, her loving heart and training as a healer require her to care for this man whom she does not know. As love blooms, Brenna and Ronan must decide whether they can risk their safety to divulge the truth about secrets they’d rather not tell.

Linda Windsor expertly unfolds medieval Scotland with its Arthurian legends and clan rivalries. A collision of natural verses supernatural elements create tension and mystery throughout. While one of the antagonists seeks help from demonic sources, Brenna most definitely relies on God for help in every situation—from healing Ronan to casting out demons. Since Brenna is an unmarried young lady, caring fully for the unconscious Ronan creates some awkward moments, and she finds that she must turn to God for help in keeping her straying thoughts in check. In addition to the tension created by supernatural and natural occurrences, Windsor’s writing shifts between Ronan’s slow recovery in Brenna’s secluded cave to the rapid ascension of his brother Caden to the place of highest authority in the O’Byrne clan.

The dialogue showcases Brenna’s wit and articulation and pulls the story forward. Also, the dialogue provides roots for the Scottish setting as Windsor sprinkles Celtic dialect throughout. As Brenna cares for Ronan in his recovery period, she does administer an herb that makes him impotent through which she protects herself from potential harm. Brenna’s one flaw is her inability to hold her tongue, and this leads her to make a suggestive comment. Brenna’s abilities and desire to heal echo the theme of the book, that true healing only comes from God, and He desires all to come to a healing faith in Him.

Kristi Wolcott
248.4 238 p. ; 21 cm.
Adult Rating: 4

In Too Soon to Quit, Warren Wiersbe uses his decades of ministry experience show why fifteen prominent biblical characters persevered. It is God’s love that sustained Jacob. Constantly growing, rather than stagnating, helped Moses and Paul. Joseph held onto his God-given dreams rather than surrendering to his unjust circumstances. Ruth determined to follow her mother-in-law and adopt her God and people, in stark contrast to her sister-in-law who returned to Moab. David survived by focusing on God’s goodness, no matter his circumstances. The weeping prophet Jeremiah persevered in a discouraging ministry because he knew God had called him. Jesus persevered, even to the point of crucifixion, because of the Father’s encouragement and “the joy set before him.” Wiersbe also draws lessons from the lives of Abraham, Job, Habakkuk, Nehemiah, Peter, Timothy, and Titus.

Each chapter title is followed by a short summary of a truth learned from the biblical character’s life. For example, “Job, the Questioner” learned “we live on promises, not explanations.” These truths are also listed in the table of contents for easy reference. Each chapter is divided into short segments by headings like “The God Who Shuts Our Mouths” (in the chapter about Job). Wiersbe also shares personal experiences. When he feels like giving up, he naps, prays, searches Scripture, and evaluates whether God has called him elsewhere. His wife reminds him, “It’s always too soon to quit.”

This book will benefit both new and mature Christians. Wiersbe is thorough with his explanation of the characters’ stories, but provides plenty of references for further study. In a day when many embrace Christ briefly and then fall away, encouragement to persevere is sorely needed.

Becky Velez

HBB, 9780670021260, $45
Adult (HS) Rating: *5

270 6 videodiscs (ca. 360 min.) : sd., col. ; 4 3/4 in.
Adult (HS) Rating: *5 w/ caution when using DVD #6 w/ teens

Where does Christianity begin? Many would quickly answer this question with Jesus being born in Bethlehem. Yet historian Diarmaid MacCulloch challenges that answer by claiming that Christianity begins one thousand years before Christ in Greece. And so begins this fascinating book about the foundation of Christianity. Using scholarly
Not only does MacCulloch paint a history of Christianity, he also sheds light on what it means to be a Christian today. I would strongly recommend this book to anyone who has an interest in discovering the powerful, redeeming work of Jesus Christ throughout the ages and how Christ and His people are still creating history today.

In addition to the book, MacCulloch, with the help of the British Broadcasting Corporation, has produced a six series DVD supplement to the book. Filmed in high-definition, the series dramatically reveals the ancient landmarks where Christianity has trod. Viewers follow Christianity's development through Jerusalem, Baghdad, Rome, and even parts of China. MacCulloch also pays special attention to the rise of Catholicism, Reformation, and Protestantism.

One word of caution concerns part six of the DVD series. In this episode, MacCulloch delves into some of the most controversial issues of 21st Christianity, including gender and sexual issues, and the topic of war. Some of the views expressed by priests and scholars will go against a conservative Christian's views and must therefore be handled appropriately.

Even though the ending of the DVD series is disappointing, one must still be impressed with the scope and beauty of this series. Anyone who watches these videos will be amazed by the breathtaking scenery and will appreciate the breadth of information that is contained in these episodes.

Chris Carroll


PAP, 9781578592173, $21.95
349.73 xv, 413 p. : ill. ; 24 cm.

Adult (HS) Rating: 4

One of more than a dozen books in the Visible Ink Press "Handy" series, The Handy Law Answer Book by David L. Hudson Jr. surveys legal history in the United States and summarizes six prominent practice areas of the law: constitutional, criminal, bankruptcy, employment, family, and personal injury. The book provides a practical overview
of these areas, including leading principles, seminal court rulings, and numerous “LegalSpeak” sidebars with specific examples and helpful explanations. Also useful are the glossary of more than 150 terms, the extensive index, and three appendices explaining how to cite cases and statutes, the complete text of the U.S. Constitution, and ten pages of online resources. The author is well-qualified to address the subject and follows the question-and-answer format of the “Handy” series.

The book’s two principle shortcomings are those you might expect from the enormity of the undertaking. The book claims to be an exhaustive overview of U.S. law without touching on areas such as property, immigration, business entities, or intellectual property. Professor Hudson simplifies the issues, but sometimes struggles to be both legally precise and intelligible to laypersons. Consider this sentence on page 21: “It is essential to just construction that many words which import something excessive should be understood in a more mitigated sense—in the sense which common usage justifies.” This sentence may be understandable to lawyers, but would surely puzzle the average person. The section on “sequestered juries” never defines “sequester,” and the glossary also omits the term. Additional editing could improve text readability.

Overall, The Handy Law Answer Book does a nice job of introducing readers to the rules that govern our society and the practice of law. It is probably most useful as a general reference tool for those with a strong interest in history, government, politics, or legal studies.

Laurie A. Gray

Sacred waiting : waiting on God in a world that waits for nothing / David Timms. Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2009. LCCN 2009025131

PAP, 9780764206788, $14.99

248.4/6 176 p.; 22 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 4

Psalm 40:1 says “I waited patiently for the Lord; he turned to me and heard my cry.” According to David Timms, “we live in a world that waits for nothing.” Filled with increasing demands of our time, we are constantly pushing through life to arrive at the next meeting, finish the next project, and prepare for the next event. Yet noted author and professor David Timms encourages individuals to relearn the beauty of waiting on God. Using engaging stories from the Bible and encouraging stories from real life, the author illustrates how sacred waiting brings peace and joy to one’s life.

In the first section of his book, Timms shares with us how the heroes of the faith discovered the beauty of sacred waiting. In each chapter, Timms makes history come to life as he recounts how five individuals discovered “life altering lessons” as they waited on God. Through the accounts of Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Jesus, individuals are reminded that waiting on God produces endurance, trust, education, worship, and obedience.

In the second section of his book, Timms shares with his readers that sacred waiting is not intended just for individuals, but “is a foundational element within each of the major liturgical seasons on the church calendar.” The author discusses how the church can use the major church seasons of Advent, Lent, Easter, and
Pentecost to draw closer to Christ individually and corporately.

I would heartily recommend this book to anyone that is trying to experience the presence of God in a noisy busy world. Take a moment to read this book and discover the beauty that comes from sacred waiting. What is so important about sacred waiting? According to Timms, “Every covenant God made came at the end of a season of waiting. God’s rewards wait for you when you learn to practice the Sacred Waiting.” For what are you waiting? Read this book and begin living out a life of waiting on God.

Chris Carroll

The fight of your life: why your teen is at risk & what only you can do about it / by Jeffrey Dean. Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books, 2009. LCCN 2008039623

PAP, 9781601421104, $13.99
248.8/45 viii, 212 p.: 21 cm.
Adult Rating: 5

Every teen, including those who attend church and appear to be Christian, needs his parents to dig under the surface and see the battles he daily encounters. This is the main idea Jeffrey Dean presents in The Fight of Your Life. The fight is both the one teens fight against ungodly desires, consumerism, lust, addictive habits, and control of ones mind, as well as the fight parents should be waging on behalf of their besieged adolescents. Dean addresses fathers and mothers individually in separate chapters, then lays out the issues parents must honestly face with their kids: pornography, dating, drinking, friends, the Internet and other media. The author offers questions, clues, and tips on how to assess where one's teen is on a specific topic, and how to communicate effectively with the child. Anecdotes add authenticity and helpful examples.

Anyone who’s worked with teenagers can validate much of Jeffery dean’s claims in The Fight of Your Life. Even Christian parents who believe they know their kids might be speechless if they could see inside their teens’ minds and the unseen spiritual battles. While this book might cause fear and anxiety in some parents, it brings a blunt dose of reality that might stimulate more meaningful and maybe life changing interaction between teens and parents. Dean has the experience and expertise of a youth.

Karen Schmidt


PAP, 9781601422217, $14.99
261/10973 230 p.; 21 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 4

Pastor and author David Platt is simply radical, and he should be. In Radical: Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream, Platt, a young megachurch pastor in suburban Birmingham, Alabama, with ministry experience among persecuted Christians in Asia, challenges American Christians to relinquish cultural preferences that interfere with authentic Christian discipleship. Focused on the spiritual life modeled by Jesus himself, Platt explores the meaning for Christian faith of radical abandonment to God.

Through a blend of “sanctified reverse psychology” (p. 9) and biblically-grounded wisdom, Platt asserts that devotion to God requires a level of sacrifice most would consider
extreme or unnecessary, but which is actually integral to the Christian calling. Embracing classical evangelical theological positions, individual chapters discuss the simplicity and beauty of the gospel, the sufficiency of God’s provision, God’s global purpose, the nature of Christian community, American consumer culture amid world poverty, the urgency of Christian missions, and the risks and rewards of utter spiritual commitment. He concludes by calling readers to conduct the “Radical Experiment” in their own lives, a year-long pursuit of authentic Christian discipleship meant to transform the popular American Christian lifestyle into the sacrificial mode of Christian life.

Frequent citation and discussion of biblical passages help to unfold Platt’s points, and endnotes reinforce the citations and provide additional insight. Response pages provide readers space to articulate specific commitments pertaining to prayer, Bible reading, sacrificial giving, and ministry within the Church and the world at large. A companion booklet and group study materials are available separately to reinforce Platt’s message.

Platt’s passionate and illustrative style of exhortation and dynamic activism will captivate adult readers. Young adults may benefit from his example as they develop. Mature readers of any age will find in Radical a refreshing perspective on the pursuit of authentic Christian discipleship.

Bradley A. Poteat

PAP, 9780310318873, $14.99
269/.2 233 p.; 21 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 4

How can evangelical Christians have spiritually meaningfully conversations with non-believers without offending them? Husband and wife authors Dale and Jonalyn Fincher, who convey their culturally savvy insights through speaking, writing, and their soulation.org website, describe a contemporary mindset in Coffee Shop Conversations. The Finchers encourage ordinary, friendly conversations that include real life talk about Jesus. Their book is loaded with ways to develop meaningful “small talk” with others about life and how faith intersects. The Finchers ask the reader to consider what it means to be human and how to develop conversation skills that link our human experiences with those of another: a stranger in a coffee shop, the grocery cashier, a co-worker or a neighbor. Looking at faith from an “I’m human, you’re human” viewpoint, the authors encourage a new approach to reading Scripture, seeing how Jesus interacted, and cultivating an attitude of tolerance that opens up conversations. They also point out words, attitudes, and behaviors that freeze a faith-directed conversation and advise on how to navigate conversational mine fields that inevitably appear.

Coffee Shop Conversations is both intriguing and intimidating—a reader’s take on the book will depend on his personality and conversational confidence. Teen and young adult readers could likely find the content strongly relevant, while older readers might feel uncomfortable with the
explaining the proper usage of each. It includes definitions of each word or phrase, its proper pronunciation, its part of speech, its etymology, and examples of how the word is used—usually in quotations from classic authors like Jane Austen, Charles Darwin, and C.S. Lewis or more modern writers like Judy Blume and Stephen King. The last page contains a list of all 100 words. The book is written in a friendly style and spends at least one page per word defined. Detailed explanations of why certain words are confused include subtle differences in meaning and whether a certain usage is uncommon. The font is large, and the page layout makes good use of bold, italics, and line spacing, so it never looks “reference book like” but rather inviting and easy on the eye. In many ways it’s as helpful as Strunk & White’s *Elements of Style*, though more limited in scope. Even so, *100 Words* will be best for readers who have some knowledge of grammar and word usage. Often, the differences between mixed-up words either aren’t completely explained or are explained confusingly. Also, since the words are presented alphabetically, some of the mixed-up words are defined pages apart, which may cause additional confusion as to which word is the ‘other’ word. *100 Words* is meant to help its readers become better writers and speakers, confident of choosing the correct word so as to avoid embarrassment. Although it won’t clear up every misunderstanding, it goes a long way towards helping readers to get a better grip on the difference between those 100 words.

*Rosemarie DiCristo*

*The Imam’s Daughter*, by the editors of *The American Heritage Dictionaries*, identifies word or phrase pairings that people routinely confuse (for example, near homonyms like mitigate and militate, or near synonyms like restive and restless) while premise or how to implement it. In any case, the plentiful examples of how to talk “humanely” with a spiritual purpose provide helpful models. Any Christian who wants to introduce others to Jesus will find useful tips and thought-provoking questions. The Finchers clearly bring a fresh take at how to make friends with the purpose of introducing them to Christ. This book would be an interesting small group resource as well as personal reading.

*Karen Schmidt*

*100 Words Almost Everyone Mixes Up or Mangles*, by the editors of *The American Heritage Dictionaries*. (The 100 words) Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2010. LCCN 2010019039

PAP, 9780547395838, $5.95
421/1 ix, 118 p.; 21 cm.
Adult (HS) Rating: 4


HBB, 9780310325758, $19.99
B or 248.2/46092 281 p.; 22 cm.
Adult Rating: 4

*The Imam’s Daughter* is a true story more horrifying than any thriller novel. Although the author retains a veil over the most graphic details, this account of sexual, physical, and psychological abuse is not for the fainthearted.

The Imam’s cruelty, hatred, violence, and paranoia overshadow Hannan’s
memories from earliest childhood. The alleged holy man’s destructive temper erupts at the slightest provocation. He beats his wife, and when five-year-old Hannan attempts to intervene, his aggression turns on her. The rapes and imprisonments begin shortly thereafter and continue until she escapes. Neither her mother nor her older brothers ever intervene on her behalf.

The Pakistani family lives off the British welfare system and school is a welcome escape. Hannan learns that other people have a different lifestyle and the basics of Christianity are part of the school she attends. Although she’s an outsider, she makes friends while coming to terms with prejudice.

Hannah Shah’s story is riveting as she gives us an inside look at the rigid requirements of her household. From the demands of memorizing the Qu’ran to the expectation of an arranged marriage in Pakistan, the reader is introduced to modern Muslim culture. Her gradual thought transformation is a gentle revelation of God’s love in contrast to the harshness of the Islamic faith.

Hannah’s desperate determination is amazing, but the courage to publicize the plight of twenty-first century Muslim girls is even more remarkable. For her the stakes are still high. If her identity is exposed, she risks death and losing the happiness she has found with her husband.

This thought-provoking book reads like a novel. It is both enlightening and shocking. Glossaries provide definitions for Islam-related religious terms and Punjabi, Urdu, and Arabic words.

Deborah H. Rabern


PAP, 9781601422804, $13.99

B or 277.3/083092 xx, 178 p. : ill. ; 21 cm.

Adult (HS) Rating: 4

Blind Hope by Kim Meeder and Laurie Sacher, is a woman’s journey into self-awareness and a deeper, more trusting relationship with God. Without Mia, Laurie’s bruised and battered Australian Shepherd, this journey could not have been possible.

The story, told from Kim’s point of view, gets off to a slow start with a short history of the Crystal Peaks Youth Ranch. Kim tells how a facility intended to house needy horses, evolves into a safe haven for broken and needy children.

Hired to work at the ranch, Laurie becomes Kim’s friend and confesses to Kim that she has been on a quest to prove that she is a good, selfless, and generous person. To prove this, she adopts Mia, who daily gives her insight into her willful rebellion and her flight from a loving God.

When Laurie finds Mia, she questions her decision to adopt an unattractive, foul-smelling, and sickly dog. Among Mia’s ailments are canine diabetes, rotting teeth, and blindness. However, Laurie has given her word and makes good on her promise to take care of Mia. In the process, Laurie is surprised by Mia’s unconditional love and boundless joy. As Mia learns to trust Laurie, respond to her voice, and to remain in close proximity during a storm, Laurie realizes how much she needs to trust God, respond to his voice, and dwell in his presence.

Blind Hope is beautifully
written. The inclusion of photos and textboxes with key passages add to the reader's appreciation. Sometimes the dialogue between the two women seems staged. However, this is an inspiring story of love and commitment, full of spiritual insights that will help readers reflect on their own personal relationship with a loving God. I highly recommend it.

*Carmen Redding*

PAP, 9781555705640, $59.95
809/.89282  xv, 311 p.: ill.; 23 cm.

PROF Rating: 5

Authors Kathy Latrobe and Judy Drury recognize the impact literature has on teens. They have provided a resource that is a combination of textbook, classroom lesson plan guide, and bibliographic reference for young adult literature. The research-based material aids in selecting books for teens, which is not always an easy matter. Critical Approaches to Young Adult Literature is a top contender in providing exceptional input in YA literature selection—be it for programs, libraries, or curriculum.

The selected recommendations have a theoretical base drawing from experts such as Piaget, Kohlberg, and Erikson, among others. The eight areas covered in the book are: New Criticism/Formal Criticism; Psychological Criticism; Sociological Criticism: Relationships in Context; Historical Criticism; Gender Criticism: Opposite Sexes or Neighboring Sexes; Archetypal/Mythological Criticism; Popular Culture and Criticism; and Reader-Response: A Unique Literary Event.

The book provides lesson plans and examples, suggested books for various genres, and a thorough index. For those striving to enrich their young adult literature collections and programming this book is one to seek out, as it is an excellent resource for teachers, librarians, and those interested in promoting young adult literature.

Pam Webb
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