Outstanding Books Reviewed in This Issue

The typewriter by Bill Thomson.

Lilliput by Sam Gayton; illustrated by Alice Ratterree.

Miriam by Mesu Andrews.

Plus: “How Prayers that Changed History, Changed Me” by Tricia Goyer
Dear CLJ Readers:

It is fall—time for a new school year, and then the start of another holiday season. While Thanksgiving is still weeks away, I find that it is never out of season to give thanks. And I want to start by giving thanks to God for bringing my family (as well as several in the CLJ family) through health and other personal challenges this year. I am also thankful for his provision for CLJ, for our new Publicity and Marketing Consultant Rebecca Schriner, for the gift of good books, and for our reviewers and readers.

I would like to especially thank Ms. Tricia Goyer for providing CLJ with her article “Prayers that Changed History, Changed Me” for our Special Feature this issue. Ms. Goyer’s wonderful book for intermediate readers, *Prayers that Changed History*, is covered in this issue, and the article describes how this book came to be and how the stories about the impact of prayer on personal lives—and ultimately history—changed Ms. Goyer’s own prayer life.

I pray that you experience a multitude of God’s blessings—not the least of which is the sanctuary of a good book.

In Christ,
Angela Walsh
Publisher and Editor
editor@christianlibraryj.org.
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 the *Christian Library Journal*.

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Taken from *Thomas Jefferson Grows a Nation* by Peggy Thomas.; illustrations by Stacy Innerst. Copyright © 2015 by Peggy Thomas. Used by permission of Calkins Creek.
Review Rating System

*5 Outstanding — a book which impacts someone's life or thinking
   5 Excellent — well written, among the best
   4 Very good — definitely worth reading
   3 Good — may be a good source for relaxation or to meet needs for information
   2 Fair — poor writing or editing; read only if very interested
   1 Poor — 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.

Value of the book:

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

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

With picture books, first be aware that these are written today for various age groups, so don’t assume little children. The rating includes those above for fiction and nonfiction, and also emphasizes the illustrations.

Commonly used abbreviations in CLJ reviews

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Prayers that Changed History, Changed Me

By Tricia Goyer

I've been a homeschooling mom for twenty-five years, and most days I'm learning right beside my kids. Over the years as we studied history I was amazed by how many important, history events involved prayer.

I started collecting these stories in 1999. Every time I came across a “prayer that changed history,” I filed it away. The file grew and there were soon too many stories to include in one book. I chose stories by picking a sampling of men and women throughout history. I didn’t want to focus too much on one era, but, instead, show how praying over generations have made an impact.

History is the study of past events. We often don’t get the full story from history books. The amazing thing about looking back at historical people and events with spiritual eyes is seeing how whispered prayers impacted the course of a person’s life—and beyond. There are times when ordinary people prayed and things happened, such as tens of thousands of orphans being cared for (in George Muller’s case), organizations being created (Catherine Booth), and a monumental missionary movement happening (David Livingston). Because of prayer, history is forever changed. I loved digging out moments when influential men and women turned to God in prayer.

One of my favorite stories is about Corrie ten Boom. As a writer of historical novels I’ve known about Corrie for a long time, but when I researched for this book I discovered an amazing story of prayer. Here’s an excerpt from the book:
Prayer came naturally to Corrie. Her parents made prayer an important part of her life. Her parents taught her to pray, and they lived an example of prayer. Corrie’s grandfather, Willem ten Boom, felt the need to pray for Jewish people after a moving worship service. In 1844, the ten Boom family, along with friends and neighbors, started a weekly prayer meeting for Jewish people. Every week they specifically prayed for the peace of Jerusalem as talked about in Psalm 122:6, “Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee” (KJV). These meetings took place every week for one hundred years. They stopped on February 28, 1944, when Nazi soldiers came to the house to take the family away.

I love that story! 100 years before Corrie was taken to a concentration camp for hiding and protecting Jewish people, her family started praying for them. Corrie’s life was changed and her testimony still continues through her books. It’s a reminder to me how prayer can impact generations.

My hope is that families will be impacted by this book, and they'll better understand the importance of prayer. It truly does make a difference in history! I know my family's prayer life has been changed because of this book … especially mine.
**PRIMARY FICTION**

**The sleepy songbird / by Suzanne Barton.**


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

E Rating: 4


One morning as Peep awakens in the forest, he hears the most beautiful song he has ever heard. Determined to find the ones responsible for such glorious singing, he flies high and low searching until he finally comes upon the Dawn Chorus. After learning that the Dawn Chorus sings together every morning, Peep asks the conductor if he might join their singing. The conductor instructs him to meet for an audition at dawn the next day. Peep practices all night but unfortunately sleeps through his important audition. He is given one more chance, but after staying up all night to ensure he would not be late, Peep is too tired to sing. He leaves his final audition in defeat, but that night a new friend helps him discover something wonderful about himself and his own gift of song.

In this sweet book, Suzanne Barton weaves a short tale of dreams, defeat, and discovery. Many young children will relate their own desires and disappointments to Peep’s, while being encouraged to discover other talents and different ways of using their own special abilities. The whimsical illustrations are depicted with rich, warm colors that delight the eye and serve to support the text. Overall, this tale sensitively presents a message of being different and fitting in.

*Justina McBride, CLJ*

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**Little big / by Jonathan Bentley.**


LCCN 2014048096 ISBN 9780802854629, hardcover, $16.00.

1 v. : col. ill. ; 26 cm. PS-Grade 1

E Rating: 4

Brothers--Fiction. Imagination--Fiction.

Being little is hard, especially when trying to be big in order to do what big people can do. In *Little Big*, one small boy bemoans the struggles of having little legs and hands that prevent him from doing big things like his older brother. As he considers the benefits of being big, such as having big legs like a giraffe or big hands like a gorilla, he simultaneously acknowledges the disadvantages of not being able to ride in his wagon or fit in his playhouse. In the end, he joyfully discovers he is just the perfect size.

In this charming book, Jonathan Bentley depicts a very common plight of most young children: the desire to be big. Using humor and childlike logic, the author convincingly leads young readers or listeners to the conclusion that being little is something to celebrate and enjoy. The text is minimal, with no more than one sentence appearing on a page, making the illustrations a central focus. The watercolor illustrations enhance the text with added detail and humor while providing visual delight. Each illustration is skillfully depicted from a little person’s perspective. Overall, this book is a treasure to add to the nursery library.

*Justina McBride, CLJ*
7 Days of Awesome: A Creation Tale / by Shawn Byous; illustrated by Colin Jack.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 x 27 cm.  PS-Grade 3  E  Rating: 5  Creation--Fiction.

7 Days of Awesome by Shawn Byous is a picture book telling of God’s creation of the world.

A boy and a girl travel with a zany character— in all manner of air, land, and sea vehicles—who explains that God made the whole world and everything in it! 3 Days of Awesome is imaginatively presented with clever rhyming verse and bright cartoon illustrations.

“It’s OUTTAA SIGHT!! God first made the light. And why would that be? ‘Cause there’s so much to see!” Shawn Byous’s well-crafted stanzas beg to be read aloud and are sure to delight young listeners. Artist Colin Jack delivers colorful sketches of the earth, sky, and sea as each day unfolds. Though the words and drawings are silly (think Dr. Seuss), the biblical message is filled with enthusiasm and sincerity.

7 Days of Awesome is a fun, albeit unconventional, telling of the creation story that keeps God and His world as the focus, and, as a bedtime book, it has the perfect conclusion: “On Day 7 God made what I like BEST! Do you know what He made...? That’s when God made REST!”

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

That’s (not) Mine / by Anna King; illustrated by Christopher Weyant.


The two furry buddies from Anna Kang and Christopher Weyant’s earlier You Are (Not) Small return for a lesson in (not) sharing and friendship in That’s (Not) Mine.

This time the fuzzy pals argue over who gets to sit in a big yellow chair, each declaring, “It’s mine” and trying to outsmart the other. Just as their tug-of-war begins to get completely out of control, they find a solution: apologies and going off to play.

This sweet simple book has large vibrant pages and features minimal text in bold and varied fonts to grab a preschooler’s attention. Anna Kang writes witty dialog that is rhythmic and fun to read aloud. Ink and watercolor drawings by syndicated cartoonist Christopher Weyant stand out from a plain white background, drawing readers’ attention to the humorous facial expressions and wild gestures of the characters.

Any parent or teacher who has watched children squabble over a soon forgotten toy will relate. With a cute duo, lively illustrations, over-the-top silliness, and a relevant lesson about conflict, That’s (Not) Mine is likely to “own” a place among story time favorites.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ
I’ll never let you go / by Smriti Prasadam-Halls ; illustrated by Alison Brown.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 29 cm. PS-Grade 1
E Rating: 4
Love -- Fiction. Stories in rhyme.

Children thrive under the reassuring care and support of unwavering love. In I’ll Never Let You Go, Smriti Prasadam-Hall uses a variety of old and young animal pairs to show how the older animal consistently is there to share in the younger counterpart’s good and bad times. From celebrating in the joyous occasions to patiently enduring the difficult moments to comforting through the sadness, the book culminates with the reassuring message that the older one will always be there no matter the circumstance with the unconditional love, care, and support the younger one needs.

The tender, soothing message told in short rhyming verse and accompanied by full-length, double-page illustrations makes this an excellent bedtime story. Alison Brown’s charming illustrations support and enhance the text by depicting characters and situations that bring to life the emotions being described on each page. The book does not specify whether the older animal depicted is the younger animal’s parent, allowing the message to transcend to a variety of caregiver-type relationships. This book is also a great tool for teaching young ones about empathy, modeling such praise-worthy qualities as celebrating the joys of another.

Justina McBride, CLJ

Twenty yawns / by Jane Smiley ; illustrated by Lauren Castillo.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 27 cm. PS-Grade 2
E Rating: 5
Yawning--Juvenile fiction.

Pulitzer Prize winner Jane Smiley’s first picture book, Twenty Yawns, accentuates the fun of the beach and provides a setting children will relate to. Lucy and her parents spend a fun but exhausting day at the beach and at bedtime everyone seems asleep, including Lucy, as mom reads her bedtime story. Later, Lucy awakens in a dark, still room and begins searching for her toy bear and the stuffed animals—and even the moon seems to yawn before sleep settles in for her again.

Caldecott Honor illustrator Lauren Castillo captures the fun of sun-drenched beach activity as well as the moonlit room at night. These add to the story’s tone. The two-page spreads give the story extra pizzazz and enable the lyrical text to truly display the twenty yawns sprinkled in for children to discover and count.

The story makes an ideal read-along but is one children will also enjoy paging through on their own.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ
The typewriter / Bill Thomson.

1 v. (unpaged) : chiefly col. ill. ; 24 x 32 cm. PS-Grade 3
E  Rating: 5

Finding an old typewriter leads to a surprising escapade for three children on a winter day. Bill Thomson's The Typewriter is a nearly wordless picture book similar in format to his earlier Chalk and Fossil.

Typing their wishes transports the children to a warm sunny beach with a giant beach ball and an enormous vat of ice cream. Things soon get a bit out of hand, though a clever solution is just a few key strokes away.

Thomson's stunning artwork brings the children's fancies to life; his acrylic and colored pencil drawings are so clear and detailed that they resemble photographs. The lighting and use of shadows are particularly effective and realistic. Readers of all ages will be astonished and amused by the varied perspective and dimension, from overhead views to close-ups, blow-ups, multi-frame, and two-page scenes. The children are multi-ethnic with wondrously emotive expressions that help tell the story.

The audience can interpret The Typewriter as an imagined adventure or an actual magical journey. Either way, the book is rich with visual delights and a fun exploration for young minds.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

PRIMARY NONFICTION

Adventure Bible for early readers, NlrV. /

220.5 Rating: 4
Bible--Children's use--Juvenile literature.

See review under Intermediate Nonfiction.

Adventure Bible for toddlers / Catherine DeVries ; illustrations by Jim Madsen.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 19 cm. Toddler-PS
E  Rating: 4
Bible stories, English. Board books.

Adventure Bible storybook / written by Catherine DeVries ; illustrated by Jim Madsen.

284 p. : col. ill. ; 20 cm. PS-Grade 3
220.9 Rating: 4
Bible stories, English.

Adventure Bible for Toddlers and Adventure Bible Storybook present people and events from the Bible in an illustrated story format intended for young children. Writer Catherine DeVries and artist Jim Madsen combine talents for both of these Zonderkidz titles.

Adventure Bible for Toddlers is a chunky board book with four pages devoted to each of 10
biblical tales from “The Adventure Begins” (Genesis 1) to “The Adventure Continues” (the Gospels). Each significantly abridged story lays a foundation, introducing the main points and characters. Colorfully detailed pictures add visual appeal for the very young and the recurring theme of adventure conveys the excitement of God’s word. The small size and sturdy pages are perfect for little hands.

*Adventure Bible Storybook* retains the flavor of exploration and discovery in a more expansive collection (23 Old Testament and 28 New Testament stories) for a higher reading audience (ages 4-8). Context and Scripture are included as “Adventure Discovery” and “Words to Treasure” graphics. With a nice mix of close-ups and panoramic scenes, the engaging artwork captures the drama and emotion of the subject matter. The portraits of Jesus are especially effective. The simple language keeps each story concise. However, for children already familiar with the Bible the abbreviated versions may seem incomplete and the imagined details (such as dialog between Noah and his wife) unnecessary.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*

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**Snuggle Time Prayers / written by Glenys Nellist ; illustrated by Cee Biscoe.**

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 19 cm.   
E   Rating: 5  

*Snuggle Time Prayers* is a board book collection of 15 short prayers for preschoolers.

Each concise blessing references a line of Scripture and offers a soothing reflection on God’s love, protection, friendship, and gifts. Glenys Nellist’s gentle rhyming text has a calming and peaceful tone, just right for bedtime reading.

Soft illustrations by Cee Biscoe feature adorable animal characters in cozy bedroom scenes filled with familiar toys and comforts, as well as enjoying God’s glorious outside world (pasture, forest, beach, rainstorm, snowy night).

*Snuggle Time Prayers* is an ideal introduction to prayer for the very young and the perfect way to ease into naptime or nighttime!

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*

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**The plans I have for you / written by Amy Parker ; illustrated by Vanessa Brantley-Newton.**

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 x 29 cm.   
E   Rating: 5  

*The Plans I Have for You* is a rhyming picture book by Amy Parker that introduces the Scripture of Jeremiah 29:11. A diverse cast of children learn that God has given everyone unique talents and a purpose for each of them.

God Himself is the voice of the story, opening with, “Hey, YOU! I’ve got big plans for you!” With Amy Parker’s lighthearted verse, He motivates children to open their hearts, read the Bible, explore their passions, and discover His path for their lives. “You are my hands and my feet there on Earth,” He tells the children, with the comforting message that He has equipped us with all that we need to find our way in the world.

Lively illustrations and creative graphics by Vanessa Brantley-Newton show multi-ethnic
children engaged in all sorts of professions, suggesting a promise of fulfilling futures that await. The bright scenes are tender and engaging, with a touch of humor (a busy nurse has seven arms) and the constant reminder of a guiding presence. With its sing-song cadence, timeless message, and whimsical artwork, *The Plans I Have for You* is an entertaining read as well as a teaching tool. Just as the young characters on the cover float contentedly on colorful parachutes, this delightful story will make the heart soar.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*

**101 Bible stories : from Creation to Revelation / illustrated by Dan Andreasen.**

217 p. : col. ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 2-4
220.95 Rating: *5

**Bible stories.**

*101 Bible Stories from Creation to Revelation* is a collection of New and Old Testament events presented by Zondervan in a short story format intended for independent readers.

Between the eye-catching hard covers, each story is concisely told in one page and accompanied by a rich full-page illustration by Dan Andreasen. The reading level is perfect for older children and enhanced by scriptural reference and a table of contents.

Wonderful artwork enlivens the settings, people, and emotions of familiar biblical accounts, each beautiful drawing so aptly capturing the characters and their stories. The lighting of the scenes is especially effective.

With its small format, inviting pictures, and smart readability, *101 Bible Stories from Creation to Revelation* has the feel of a devotional and would be an ideal spiritual gift for a child.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*

**The William Hoy story : how a deaf baseball player changed the game / Nancy Churnin ; pictures by Jez Tuya.**

[32] p. : col. ill. ; 26 cm. Grades K-4
B Rating: 5


William Ellsworth Hoy (1862-1961) refuses to let his small stature and deafness stand in the way of playing baseball. *The William Hoy Story: How a Deaf Baseball Player Changed the Game* by Nancy Churnin is a picture book account of Hoy’s successful major league career and contribution to the development of umpire hand signals.

When William has difficulty reading the umpires’ lips, he devises hand motions for the umpires to use when making calls. Based partly on American Sign Language, the gestures would ultimately become invaluable to the game.

Excluded and teased in his earlier years, Hoy perseveres to become a valued and popular player. *The William Hoy Story* honors the resilience and determination of this highly accomplished but generally unknown sports figure. An author’s note and timeline tell more about “Dummy” Hoy, including the explanation that this nickname was commonly used by deaf and mute people (and not intended to be unkind) during the 19th century.

Illustrations by Jez Tuya are a blend of folk art
and cartoon, capturing period clothing, hairstyles, and the modest look of baseball a century ago.

Though intended for a young audience, *The William Hoy Story* is an inspiring and educational story that would appeal to baseball fans of any age, anyone facing a challenge, and admirers of historical personalities—“game changers”—who quietly achieved greatness.

*Nina Ditmar, CLJ*

**INTERMEDIATE FICTION**

*Lilliput* / Sam Gayton ; illustrated by Alice Ratterree.


LCCN 2015002405 ISBN 9781561458066, hardcover, $16.95.

251 p. ; 21 cm. Grades K-3

E Rating: 5


Lily desperately desires to return home to the island of Lilliput after being kidnapped by Lemuel Gulliver in Sam Gayton’s book, Lilliput. Lily’s tiny size makes it nearly impossible to flee. She fits in a bird cage, can dangle from a spider’s web, and drinks from a thimble. However, her diminutive size doesn’t prevent her from attempting the impossible. Unfortunately, after 33 failed escape attempts, Lily starts to wonder if she’ll ever see her homeland again.

Sam Gayton’s delightful use of language alone makes this book a pleasure to read. He dips into the language of Lilliputian when Lily hurls insults at Gulliver, a “flustian mungle boff.” (p. 43) Other nonsense words as well as brief rhymes add humor and delight to the story. Alice Ratterree’s occasional illustrations enhance the story, giving faces to the characters and perfectly depicting the tale. In addition to entertaining language and wonderful illustrations, the characters are fun to get to know—each having something that drives them and pushes them forward in their cause. As Lily pushes forward in her quest to go home, she stretches and grows from a little girl afraid of pinchers on the beach to a young lady ready to soar. She prays to the Ender—hoping that the Ender will offer protection from the “giant,” and later on she tells Finn about how the Ender created the world and showed kindness to the first people. When sought, Lily finds it in her heart to forgive.

The simple plot marches along, building in intensity as Lily’s quest becomes increasingly dangerous. Thankfully, her friend Finn offers her the help she needs at just the right time. When Lily thinks returning home is impossible, Finn says, “You have to hope. Hope is how I found you.” (p. 115)

*Kristina Wolcott, CLJ*

*A plague of unicorns* / Jane Yolen.


186 p. ; 22 cm. Grades 3-7

Fic Rating: 5


Because golden apple cider gives the abbey their only source of income, the peaceful monks are forced into war when unicorns invade the orchard. Monks avoid violence, so they decide to capture the animals. Too bad only a girl can capture a unicorn, and females are not allowed in
the abbey. After trying to capture the unicorns themselves, the injured monks invite “heroes” to chase off the creatures. But soon, they all fail, too.

An intelligent and curious duke’s son, James, is sent to the abbey as a student. He is considered an outsider until he saves his horse from a unicorn stampede and becomes a hero. James writes home to summon a “hero” that he believes could be the solution to the unicorn problem. The “hero” comes, saves the abbey’s apples, and leads the unicorns far away. It is only later that the nature of James’s little deception is revealed.

A new “once upon a time” begins with this faith-filled fairytale—bringing unicorns and monks together. A Plague of Unicorns would be wonderful to read aloud as a family and learn details about Bible stories from a child’s perspective.

This book explores deep loneliness as James believes that his family sent him away because they thought he was annoying and that he caused his father’s disappearance. These ideas are combatted in the end with the truth of his father’s disappearance and his mother’s love. When the abbot discovers James’s deception, he does not seem unduly upset, perhaps conveying a message that sometimes it is acceptable to break rules for a greater good.

A famous writer of fantasy and science fiction and winner of multiple awards (including the Caldecott Medal and two Nebula awards), Jane Yolen presents in A Plague of Unicorns a great story with jokes for all ages. The fun and mythical language paints a comedic picture of a rag-tag group of men chasing unicorns. James’s character is hilariously accurate for a child: his questions never end and will leave readers giggling.

Rebecca A. Schriner, CLJ

INTERMEDIATE NONFICTION


- 220.5 Rating: 4
- Bible -- Juvenile literature.

Adventure Bible for early readers, NlrV. /

- 220.5 Rating: 4
- Bible--Children’s use--Juvenile literature.

The Adventure Bible NIV and Adventure Bible for Early Readers NIrV are complete Bibles from Zonderkidz, with numerous educational features and illustrations for children.

Both books offer the full text of the Bible (New International Version) along with teaching sidebars such as: “Words to Treasure”, “Did You Know?”, “Life in Bible Times”, “People in Bible Times”, and “Live It!”. A Subject Index, Dictionary/Concordance, and Maps offer added useful tools.

The Adventure Bible NIV is suggested for 9-12 year olds. Indented thumb tabs and a “How to Use This Bible” introduction will help young readers get started on their exploration of God’s word. The Adventure Bible for Early Readers NIrV is the New International Reader’s Version with slight modifications in the reading level to accommodate the intended audience of 6-10 year olds.
These handsome hardcover books are brightly illustrated with eye-catching drawings and graphics, and there are so many features to keep children engaged that either book is likely to be thoroughly perused and revisited. However, the pages are quite thin and will require careful handling by eager fingers.

As with any full Bible, in the context of Scripture there is frank mention of drunkenness, nudity, and sex that parents may not expect to see in a children’s edition, particularly the NIV.

_Nina Ditmar, CLJ_

**Prayers that changed history** : from Christopher Columbus to Helen Keller, how God used 25 people to change the world / Tricia Goyer.

Grand Rapids, Mi: Zonderkidz, 2015.
237 p. : ill. ; 20 cm. Grades 3-7
242.8 Rating: 5
Prayer--Christianity.

In *Prayers that Changed History*, Tricia Goyer introduces 25 historical figures and the significant role of prayer in their lives.

Each concise chapter presents a notable individual whose prayers for strength and guidance had far-reaching consequences. Arranged chronologically, the characters span a wide swath of history from the first century (Polycarp) to the twentieth (Dietrich Bonhoeffer) and include the familiar (Christopher Columbus, Florence Nightingale, Helen Keller) as well as the lesser-known (Robert Raikes, George Müller, Billy Sunday). The British people of WWII are recognized collectively.

Author Tricia Goyer employs a narrative style with imagined dialogue that is likely to hold the interest and attention of independent readers. Her intent to show “prayer-at-work” is achieved through these compelling biographic profiles, biblical parallels, and referenced sources. “Something to Think About” and “Your Life” headings direct readers to reflect, discuss, and relate personally to the power of prayer.

Though suggested for a grade and middle school audience, *Prayers that Changed History* would be a compelling and enjoyable book for all ages, particularly history enthusiasts. Some of the chapters include more mature themes such as the suicide of Adolf Hitler, Nazi death camps, the “red light” district of Chicago, and the enslavement of young girls in India.

Small photos, graphics, and text boxes, use of varied font, and an easy-to-follow table of contents adds to the pleasant readability of this enlightening book.

_Nina Ditmar, CLJ_

*See Ms. Goyer’s article “Prayers that Changed History, Changed Me” in the Special Feature section of this issue.*

**Thomas Jefferson grows a nation** / Peggy Thomas, Illustrations by Stacy Innerst.

Honesdale, PA: Calkins Creek, 2015.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 26 cm. Grades 3-6
B Rating: 5

This picture book for grades 3 to 6 has more text than usual, but the careful storyline helps students to delve into the diverse person that was Jefferson. The text in *Thomas Jefferson Grows a
Nation is thoroughly researched with solid source notes for each quotation. Historical details and illustrations blend well together. Middle schoolers will learn vocabulary since many words are defined within the context of the sentences.

Author Peggy Thomas provides an introduction, chapters with full-page sidebars, historical photos, place to visit (Monticello), a bibliography, and timelines. Illustrator Stacy Innerst used a quill to hand letter the quotes that appear throughout the book and added a touch of Jefferson’s distinctive red hair color in the shades on most pages.

In addition to gaining an appreciation for the accomplishments of Jefferson, the reader will come to see that in his heart, Jefferson was a farmer, a fact not often available in the usual stories about him. Many of the phrases used throughout the story are ones from agriculture—growth, weeds, planting, nurture, uprooted—and confirm Jefferson was more than a president and a patriot.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ
MIDDLE SCHOOL FICTION

Freedom's price / Michaela MacColl, Rosemary Nichols. (Hidden histories)

Honesdale, PA: Calkins Creek, 2015.
LCCN 2015936507 ISBN 9781620916247, hardcover, $17.95.
223 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 6-8
Fic Rating: 4

Freedom's Price brings history to the fore in this imagining of the life of Eliza Scott, one of the daughters of Dred Scott, the slave at the heart of the landmark case in American history. This story finds the Scott family suing for their freedom. While not much is known of the real-life Eliza, middle-schoolers will find it easy to understand her situation for MacColl and Nichols create an Eliza who is brave, intelligent, and ready for challenges. The authors have Eliza making decisions that—in real life—would jeopardize her, her family, and her community, but serve to heighten drama in the context of this fictionalized account.

This is the second book in the Hidden Histories series, which looks at lesser known moments in American history. Based on actual people and events, the authors have done meticulous research. An author's note and bibliography makes it easy to understand the context and setting of the story. As historical fiction, this eye-opening perspective enables youth to grasp what it was like to be young, black, and on the road to freedom in the 1840s.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

Earlier Series Title Reviewed by CLJ: Rory’s Promise (September/October 2015).

Blue birds / Caroline Starr Rose.

393 p. : map ; 22 cm. Grades 4-7
Fic Rating: 4

In July of 1587, 12-year-old Alis arrives on the island of Roanoke with her family, instantly falling in love with the untouched beauty of this new land. The only thing missing is a friend. Being the lone girl her age in the English settlement, Alis is often called upon to watch the younger children and finds her solace by slipping off to explore the surrounding forest. There in the mysterious woods of Roanoke she meets Kimi, a girl from the local tribe who is full of hatred towards the English, those she views responsible for the death of her father and beloved sister. These two girls, from two very different worlds, form an unlikely friendship, overcoming language barriers as well as the superstition and mutual hatred existing between the English and Roanoke people. However, as their friendship grows, the unrest and distrust between their peoples continue to mount. When violence and cries of war break out, Alis is forced to make a choice that will alter her life forever.

In Blue Birds, Caroline Starr Rose weaves a fictional tale with her own unique spin of what might have happened to the people of the Lost Colony of Roanoke, rekindling a historical mystery that has fascinated people for centuries. The author acknowledges the liberties she takes with the historical facts in the Author’s Note, which helps separate fact from fiction while also
explaining how she came to develop the main character and plot. The story is told in stirring free verse from the alternating voices of the two main characters, Alis and Kimi. When the girls are together, their thoughts and words appear side by side, cleverly and artistically allowing the reader to experience both worlds at the same time and showing universal similarities that transcend cultural barriers and differences.

This novel is a beautiful story of friendship, sisterly love, and human emotions. The resolution stretches beyond the likeliness of a real-life outcome, yet it reasonably develops from the plot. The underlying message is a powerful one of love, self-sacrifice, and trust triumphing over fear and hate.

*Justina McBride, CLJ*

**HIGH SCHOOL FICTION**

**Season of fire / by Lisa T Bergren.**
*(Remnants; 2)*

Grand Rapids, MI: Blink, 2015.
383 p.; 22 cm. Grades 8-12 (Adult)
Fic Rating: 4

*Season of Fire* is book two in the Remnants series by Lisa Bergren. A struggle for the hearts and minds of the world continues between the Ailith, who seek to lead people to the Maker, and the emperor, Keallach—a rogue Ailith—and his dark forces who seek control over the people. Andriana, an empath, is caught in the middle as she uses the gifting the Maker gave her to help others—even Keallach—to seek the Maker. However, forces stronger than her own have the potential to undermine her gift unless she remembers to fully rely on the Maker.

With the exception of life and death battles, the struggles encountered by the Ailith mirror the struggles of teens today. Learning to lean on God when life doesn’t make sense, what to do with romantic feelings and actions when the time is not right, how to determine God’s leading in life, how to know what’s next, how to lead others to Jesus, and how to handle negative feelings are all a part of the Maker’s journey for the Ailith. As Andriana and Ronan encounter situations that they can’t control, they continue to learn to lean on the Maker. The plot moves along quickly with the Ailith as they find themselves in perilous situations in which they must fight or flee. The point of view switches back and forth between Ronan and Andriana, sprinkling additional tension throughout the book. Tumultuous circumstances cause Andriana to repeat variations of this theme: “No matter how it feels... you are never alone...Remember that.” (p. 379)

*Kristina Wolcott, CLJ*

**Earlier Series Title Reviewed by CLJ: Season of Wonder** (November/December 2014).

**Pulse / L.R. Burkard.**

ISBN 9780979215483, paperback, OP.
vi, 249 p.; 23 cm. Grade 10 and up
Fic Rating: 4
Families--Fiction.

L. R. Burkard, a new voice to young adult fiction, wrote a number of adult historical romances under the name Linore Rose Burkard. Her first
venture into YA fiction is *Pulse*, a suspenseful contemporary novel about a major disaster, told from the viewpoint of three teenage girls.

In *Pulse*, an electromagnetic pulse (EMP) hits the earth and life comes to a grinding halt. Andrea Patterson, Lexie Martin, and Sarah Weaver are friends with very different family situations: Andrea comes from a wealthy family, Lexie lives on a farm, and Sarah lives on the top floor of an apartment building. When the EMP hits, they must face their worst nightmare—the failure of the electric grid. Sarah’s family has been preparing for disaster, but not the others. What happens to family relationships, neighbors, and life in general when technology comes to a stop? Who will survive beyond a few days when food starts running out?

Burkard uses first-person narration by the three 16-year-old girls, similar to a journal format. The EMP disaster is a chilling possibility in our future. By using each girl’s experience, the author depicts realistically what could happen. *Pulse* is more than a young adult book—adults will find it a clean (no drugs, alcohol, or sex) book with minimal violence, a book that may cause them to think about how they would face the situation of the electric power grid failing. Ms. Burkard tackles an EMP from a young adult point of view in this book. Readers who read this book might consider the real possibility of an EMP and how to plan for that.

Recommended for school and public libraries. Resilience, the second book in this series, was published in May 2016.

*Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com*

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**Curio / Evangeline Denmark.**

Grand Rapids, MI: Blink, 2015.
429 p.; 22 cm. Grades 8-12
Fic Rating: 4

In an evolved dystopian society, Chemists catch Grey alone after curfew with her male childhood friend—breaking multiple taboo laws. Because she is underage and he is not, his punishment is severe. Grey feels guilt and a rebellious power stirs inside her. To help her friend, she breaks another law, sharing her nourishment potion. Chemists catch her again, but her grandfather and father accept her punishment in her place. Despite the men’s sacrifice, the Chemists still seek to punish Grey. She runs into her grandfather’s shop where his assistant locks her in a wardrobe world with instructions to bring him back.

Lost in a new world among living dolls and clocks, Grey is trapped in the lord’s mansion. He knows that she is not porcelain and intends to make her his mistress. Political tensions between the dolls and the clocks become heated, and the leader of the clock-rebels saves Grey.

Grey discovers her hero is human, the *him* she needed to bring back to her world. Once they escape the doll world, they find the Chemists waiting to punish her. Grey uses the rebellious power of her ancestors to subdue the Chemists and begin a rebellion in her own world.

Evangeline Denmark immerses readers immediately into the steampunk, fantasy genre—explaining little, yet world-building perfectly. Mystery permeates every page as Grey and the Mad Tock fight liberation wars in two worlds. The plot is flows smoothly throughout the novel, and, despite the length of 400 pages, the book is hard to put down.
This novel, however, is not for young or queasy audiences. The kisses between Grey and her savior are intense, and one scene features a near-rape. Injuries, such as dislocating a shoulder and losing a hand, are described in gruesome detail.

The point of view switches a lot among characters in the two worlds, providing a sense of time displacement between the worlds. The perspectives are well-balanced and enjoyable. This novel is a thought-provoking read that delves into what it means to be human and worthy of salvation.

Rebecca A. Schriner, CLJ

A daring sacrifice / Jody Hedlund. (An uncertain choice; 2)

232 p. ; 21 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5

Historical fiction author Jody Hedlund writes her second young adult novel about a fourteenth-century young woman living an unconventional life.

In A Daring Sacrifice, Juliana Wessex is the rightful ruler of Wessex. But the current Lord Wessex (her uncle) believes she died three years ago when her father lost his life. Juliana hides in the forest and steals to provide a livelihood for the peasants on her land, impoverished by her uncle’s harsh rule. It is a life filled with risks and danger, and she struggles with the justification of her actions.

When she is forced to flee Wessex after escaping capture, Juliana makes the mistake of trying to rob Colin Goodrich, who recognizes Juliana by her red hair. Colin takes her to his castle after she is injured and introduces her as a distant cousin. But her uncle discovers her presence. To what lengths will her uncle go to keep Wessex for himself? Who makes the daring sacrifice?

Different text fonts indicate Juliana’s and Colin’s points of view. The spiritual element is evident but not heavy-handed; Colin and Juliana ask for God’s leading and try to live godly lives, which is especially hard for Juliana since she steals from the nobility.

Filled with descriptive narrative and endearing characters, A Daring Sacrifice is an entertaining read—except for the necessary violence in the fighting scenes. Its believable plot has enough twists in the last third of the book to keep the reader up late!

Fans of Lisa Bergren’s River of Time series, Dina Sleiman’s Valiant Hearts series, and Melanie Dickerson’s medieval young adult books will also enjoy Hedlund’s medieval trilogy. A third book is in the works.

Recommended for teen collections in public libraries and school libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Series Title Reviewed by CLJ: An Uncertain Choice (January/February/March/April 2015).
Oath of the Brotherhood: a novel / C. E. Laureano. (Song of Seare; 1)

435 p. : 1 map ; 21 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 4

Beneath the Forsaken City: a novel / C.E. Laureano. (Song of the Seare; 2)

407 p. : map ; 21 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 4

The Sword and the Song: a novel / by C.E. Laureano. (Song of the Seare; 3)

437 p. ; 21 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 4

In Oath of the Brotherhood, 17-year-old Conor Mac Nir, son of King Galbraith and prince of Tigh, returns home from his fosterage a trained scholar, rather than a skilled warrior, much to the outrage of his father. No sooner than he returns, Conor is sent to the king of Faolán as a hostage in a political scheme to gain a much needed ally. There Conor returns to his studies and further develops his musical gift, while learning about the forgotten Balian magic and finding a deep connection with Aine, the king’s sister and a young woman with a powerful gift. His peaceful existence is short-lived and, to protect those he loves, Conor flees to the city of the Firéin brotherhood. While there, Conor trains to be a Firéin warrior and seeks to understand his role in an ancient prophesy. Will Conor learn Comdiu’s plan for his life and, if so, have the strength to follow it no matter the cost?

Conor and Aine, having barely reunited, are once again torn apart in Beneath the Forsaken City. As they struggle to defeat the Red Druid and his evil forces, will faith and love be enough to sustain them?

Tensions are high in The Sword and the Song, as conflict grows between Conor and Eoghan, rooted in the disputed claim to the throne, their love for Aine, and the Red Druid’s growing power. Will they discover the power they need to defeat their enemy before all of Seare is lost? Will the sacrifice prove too great a cost?

In “The Song of Seare” series, C. E. Laureano brings new life to the age-old tale of good versus evil in this Christian fantasy and teen romance set against the backdrop of a medieval kingdom reminiscent of Ireland or Scotland. The places and kingdoms mentioned throughout the series can be somewhat confusing; however, a map is included at the beginning of each book, which provides a clearer understanding of the world Laureano brings to life.

Though given different names, the Balian deities Comdiu and his son Balus clearly represent God and Jesus, and the strong principles of the faith such as humility, compassion, and holiness also reflect biblical truths. Conor, Aine, and Eoghan are characters full of depth and conflicting emotions, making them very human. Their devotion to Comdiu and their struggles to resist temptation and evil are wonderful examples for a Christian to follow. The love story woven throughout the adventure tale is tender, moving, and passionate. Physical attraction, implied desire, and some
passionate kissing are included, but descriptions are kept to an appropriate level. Overall, this series is a page-turning adventure, with a powerful theme of surrender and ultimate sacrifice.

Justina McBride, CLJ

The sound of diamonds / Rachelle Rea. (Steadfast love; 1)
275 p.; 23 cm. Grades 8-12
Fic Rating: 4

The sound of silver / Rachelle Rea. (Steadfast love; 2)
279 p.; 23 cm. Grades 8-12
Fic Rating: 4

The sound of emeralds / Rachelle Rea. (Steadfast love; 3)
298 p.; 23 cm. Grades 8-12
Fic Rating: 4

Rachelle Rea makes her debut with a medieval young adult series about a Catholic maiden and a Protestant former rogue in the midst of the 16th century Protestant-Catholic conflict.

In The Sound of Silver, Gwyneth, an eighteen-year-old Catholic woman, hides in a Dutch convent after the murder of her parents in England. Suddenly one night, Dirk—the man she accused of their murder—breaks into her convent to abduct her. In truth, he is trying to rescue her from the imminent attacks on the Catholics in the area. Can she trust this Protestant rogue, even when he says he has reformed? Can she afford not to?

In The Sound of Silver, Dirk and Gwyneth discover her parents’ murderer and the reason behind their murders. Mindful of his ruined reputation and its impact on Gwyn’s reputation, Dirk leaves her in the care of his mother and rides away. Meanwhile, Gwyn enlists the aid of an old friend to try to clear Dirk’s name, but what is her friend’s motive for helping her? How will Gwyn and Dirk have a future together unless he is declared innocent and his honor is restored?

In The Sound of Emeralds, the story of Dirk and Gwyneth continues in 16th century Europe where the tension between Catholics and Protestants blazes. What started as hatred between them eventually evolves into lasting love. But happy endings are not guaranteed. As Dirk struggles to clear his name before he faces deadly consequences, Gwyn finds out that he has kept secrets from her. Will a friend from her past be an ally or an enemy to clearing Dirk’s name?

Rea has a knack for penning a storyline that is as unique as the main characters she creates. How many heroines need glasses, especially in historical fiction? Her book is carefully researched and grabs the reader’s attention from the first page. The series is filled with plenty of plot twists.

Written in alternating first-person point-of-view, the reader feels right in the middle of the action. Gwyneth and Dirk develop a relationship as they depend on one another in trying circumstances. Faith elements are interwoven and integral to the plot. The Sound of Emeralds presents God’s peace, in the same way the earlier books had the themes of hope and truth. Rea carefully balances the
Catholic and Protestant faith without being overly critical of either. She creates flawed individuals in a troubled time in church history.

Recommended for teen collections in school and public libraries. Fans of Melanie Dickerson, Lisa Bergren, and Jody Hedlund (authors of young adult medieval fiction) will enjoy this new author's works.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

**Courageous / Dina L. Sleiman. (Valiant hearts; 3)**

360 p.; 22 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5

Dina Sleiman continues her young adult series with a story about a young woman who is inspired to join a crusade.

In Courageous, Rosalind of Ipsworth joins a crusade to free captives from a Tripoli prison. Haunted by a mistake in her past, Rosalind feels she is unworthy to even consider marriage and a family. She is joined by Sir Randel Penigree, who dreams of becoming a Templar knight, even though he flees humiliation at home. Together they train a group of older children and face political intrigue and an unknown enemy while on their journey to set prisoners free. Will they find redemption from their past? Will they be successful in their attempt to rescue the prisoners?

Both plot and character driven, Courageous is another novel set in the Middle Ages from Sleiman, with strong female characters. The author handles the crusades with sensitivity and detailed research. She also touches on the tenets of a different belief system as Rosalind befriends a Muslim woman, giving the reader some insight into her culture. Redemption and forgiveness are strong themes in this book. Faith elements are strong but not overpowering.

Her main characters (who were secondary characters from earlier books in the series) are realistic and flawed, carrying burdens of guilt from their past and struggling to accept forgiveness. The author provides enough backstory for the reader to understand past actions. The book's epilogue concludes the series with updates from the other books.

Recommended for public libraries and school libraries. Fans of medieval young adult books by Melanie Dickerson and Lisa Bergren will enjoy this series.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

**Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ: Dauntless (May/June 2015); Chivalrous (November/December 2015).**

**Siren's song / Mary Weber. (The storm siren trilogy; 3)**

371 p.; 22 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 4
Fantasy fiction.

Mary Weber concludes her fantasy series about a teen girl with special powers in a futuristic world.

In Siren’s Song, Nym is an Elemental (one who is able to summon and control storms) who is used
as a weapon by those in power for their own agenda. Each time it drains her, physically and emotionally. But as a slave, she has little control over her own life.

Her last battle with Draewulf left her barely alive. Now as he prepares for another battle, Nym realizes she must warn the other kingdoms before he strikes again. Is her power strong enough for the battle ahead? What about Nym’s role in the final prophecy?

Throughout this series, Weber’s storytelling engages the reader’s attention from the first page, holding it until the gripping final chapter. The third installment—like the earlier ones—is filled with imperfect characters and plot twists, making it both character- and plot-driven.

Sacrifice for the good of others is a strong theme in her series. The faith element is very light, but compassion and emotional strength are valued. The battle of good vs. evil is clear. For example, Nym’s Elemental power—the one she was born with—is considered good but the unnatural (dark) power is considered evil.

Fans of The Hunger Games and Divergent, stories with strong heroines battling for high stakes, as well as fantasy fans of Jill Williamson and Morgan Busse will want to read this series’ conclusion.

Recommended for teen collections in public libraries and school libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ: Storm Siren and Siren’s Fury (July/August 2015).
ADULT FICTION

Miriam / Mesu Andrews. (A treasures of the Nile novel)
    374 p.; 21 cm. Adult
    Fic Rating:*5

Miriam, by Mesu Andrews, is the story of the woman most commonly referred to as Moses’ sister, but who grew up to be many things, including prophetess of the Hebrew people.

With the leading of El Shaddai, Miriam has interpreted dreams, healed, and cared for her people. But times are changing. Miriam no longer hears El Shaddai’s voice like she once did, and God chooses Aaron and Moses—not Miriam—to lead His people out of slavery in Egypt. Not only that, but the Hebrew people face even more trials, such as plagues and increased demands from the Egyptians, and Miriam can’t tell them why. As new relationships are forged in the crucible of change, Miriam must determine if she can still trust El Shaddai enough to follow no matter what.

Mesu Andrews’ stunning depiction of Miriam, her family, the Hebrew people, pharaoh, and his family transform the account of Exodus 1-15 from Sunday school flannel graph into virtual reality. By combining biblical references of Miriam and the plagues with rich, historical details, Andrews paints the setting in vivid colors. The plot develops quickly and there are layers of subplots that add depth and interest to the book. The well-written dialogue unfolds the story and the personalities of the characters. The frustrations and hopes of Miriam and the rest of the Hebrews create the mood of the book while the theme drives the entire book “…Yahweh is good.” (p. 365)

Kristina Wolcott, CLJ

Earlier Series Title Reviewed by CLJ: The Pharaoh’s Daughter (July/August 2015).

If I run / Terri Blackstock.
    305 p.; 22 cm. Adult
    Fic Rating: 4
    Suspense fiction. Mystery fiction.

Casey Cox was traumatized at a young age. Thirteen years later, ramifications of her father’s death still cause ruin in her life. Accused of murder and forced to run from the police, Casey must stay alive long enough to prove her innocence. Fleeing from her hometown of Shreveport, she takes the first bus available with no idea what to do or where to go.

Dylan Roberts has recently been honorably discharged from the army with a diagnosis of severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. When he hears that his childhood friend, Brent Pace, has been murdered, he is eager to help find the killer. Brent’s parents hire him as a private investigator, and he gets busy searching for the mysterious girl the police believe to be the murderer.

In a new city with a new name, Casey befriends Miss Lucy and her daughter, Sandra. Sandra is still dealing with the fact that her 14-old daughter was kidnapped and never found. Casey wants to help. Is it possible for her to save the missing girl without getting herself caught in the process?

Dylan continues to dig into Brent’s murder. When he discovers startling information, he has no idea
whom he can trust. Is it crazy for him to trust Casey, the supposed murderer?

Terri Blackstock provides a riveting, suspenseful story within the pages of *If I Run* while keeping the writing clean. She skillfully includes well-crafted dialogue that aids in developing main characters with great depth and thoughtfulness. Miss Lucy proves to be the Christian influence Casey needs in her life. Through this relationship, Blackstock explores the themes of God’s love, forgiveness, and protection. *If I Run* is an entertaining story that leaves readers eager to read the sequel.

*Dani Seilhamer, CLJ*

**Bride of a distant isle : a novel / Sandra Byrd. (Daughters of Hampshire; 2)**

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

Historical fiction author Sandra Byrd pens a second novel in her series set in Victorian England. *Bride of a Distant Isle* tells of young Englishwoman at the mercy of her cousin who promises her hand in marriage to avoid financial ruin.

Annabel Ashton, teacher at a nearby day school, visits her family home, only to discover her cousin Edward plans to marry her off and sell their family home. As an orphaned illegitimate daughter of a Maltese man and mentally ill Englishwoman, Annabel has few options. Fighting to save her family home and her mother’s memory, she discovers old secrets and mysterious happenings. Is Annabel going mad like her mother? Could Annabel be legitimate and the true heir? Does the dashing but brooding Captain Marco Dell’Acqua from Malta have Annabel’s best interests at heart?

Byrd writes a first-person narrative filled with the best elements of a Gothic novel (mystery, romance, a Heathcliff-like hero, and plot twists!), where the intriguing story grabs the reader’s attention and keeps it until the spine-tingling conclusion. Annabel’s faith helps her in the midst of a very challenging situation, especially when Edward has her confined to an asylum. Byrd’s heroine is Catholic, so the teachings and practices of the Catholic faith in Victorian England are interwoven. The author also includes a note about the Christian faith during Victorian times, as well as poisoned honey and insanity.

Recommended for public libraries and school libraries, and fans of Bronte and Victoria Holt will especially enjoy this series. The final book in this series, *A Lady in Disguise*, will be released in 2017.

*Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com*


**The choosing / Rachelle Dekker. (A Seer novel; 1)**

xii, 434 p. : ill. ; 22 cm. Grades 8-12
Fic Rating: 4
Young women -- Fiction. Social classes -- Fiction. Dystopias -- Fiction.
The calling / Rachelle Dekker. (A Seer novel; 2)  
xviii, 441 p.; 21 cm. Grades 8-12  
Fic Rating: 3  

Carrington lost everything on the day she wasn’t chosen. Not being picked meant no family, no husband, and no rights. The Council said that the Father chose her instead. The Choosing follows Carrington as she is forced into a life of manual labor and shame. Women around her compound are dying, but the extra guards that should protect the women prey on them instead. A soldier, Remko, saves Carrington, and then a friend leads her to question what society has taught her. When Carrington is given a chance to recover all that she has lost, will she take it or will she choose to learn the truth about her world?

In The Calling, Carrington believes her family has been called to lead the city back to the Father. Remko, who is leading a group of freedom fighters, is uncertain. With more people dying under a new city leader’s rule, friends blame Remko. City police raid their camp, and Remko believes Carrington is captured. Will they be reunited, and will Remko find faith?

Both novels throw the reader right into the action. Carrington and Remko immediately connect to the readers because of their backstories. The second book is slower than the first, but both have balanced pacing. Both stories include a fair amount of torture. The first book touches on physical agony while the second shows brainwashing and brain distortion. Both pains are overcome by faith redeeming the character, though the pain doesn’t disappear.

Although both novels had good story arches and believable characters, the plot was predictable and preachy. The characters’ faith is clearly based on Christianity, though many faith practices have been distorted in the city. Deep topics—such as the meaning of freedom, gender roles, abandoning everything for the Father’s plan, and losing faith—are touched on these novels.

Rebecca A. Schriner, CLJ

The beautiful pretender : a medieval fairy tale / Melanie Dickerson. (Thornbeck; 2)  
314 p.; 22 cm. Adult  
Fic Rating: 5  

Historical fiction author Melanie Dickerson presents another medieval fairy tale specifically aimed at adult readers.

In The Beautiful Pretender, the king wants the Margrave of Thornbeck married to promote an alliance within his kingdom. The margrave invites 10 noblewomen to be his guests at Thornbeck Castle for two weeks. During that time, he will choose his bride after testing her character.

Unbeknownst to him, the Earl of Plimmwald sends Avelina, a maidservant as a substitute for his daughter Dorothea who is unable to attend. Avelina was told to make sure the margrave doesn’t select her and to keep her true identity a secret. But what happens when despite her efforts, the margrave falls in love with her, and they find themselves in the midst of a plot with deadly consequences?
Dickerson combines elements from two fairy tales to create a story that holds the reader’s interest to the final chapter. Her careful research captures the nuances of medieval Germany. The characters are engaging, and the plot is well-developed. Loosely based on The Princess and the Pea and The Beauty and the Beast, the reader will be captivated by Avelina’s story and delighted by its ending. Discussion questions are included in the back matter.

Recommended for public libraries and church libraries. Adult fans of Dickerson’s young adult novels will be thrilled with this new series, as will fans of fairy tales and the TV show Once Upon a Time.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Series Title Reviewed by CLJ: The Huntress of Thornbeck Forest (July/August 2015).

Without warning : a novel / Lynette Eason. (Elite guardians; 2)  
Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2016.  
352 p.; 22 cm. Adult  
Fic Rating: 4  
Bodyguards--Fiction. Restaurateurs--Fiction.  
Mystery fiction, Suspense fiction, Christian fiction.

Bestselling author Lynette Eason continues her romantic suspense series featuring a female-owned agency of female bodyguards.

In Without Warning, Katie Singleton teaches self-defense to Daniel Matthew’s teenage niece, Riley. When she is driving by a favorite restaurant, she notices police cars and stops to see what is happening. Arson is suspected, and then the murder of a former employee is discovered. Is the restaurant owner Daniel at fault or is someone framing him for the events happening at his restaurants? Riley hires Katie to investigate who is behind the threats and the attack on him. Who is behind the attacks and why? Can they figure it out before someone else is killed?

As always, Eason is a superb storyteller, weaving plot twists with her development of complex characters. The action is fast-paced, keeping the reader on the edge of their seat (and turning the pages!) until the very end. The clean romance develops at a realistic pace, and faith elements are present but not overpowering. Issues such as PTSD and questioning one’s faith are expressed. Violence in the story is appropriate and not too graphic. The identity and motive of the “villain” will surprise the reader. Every time one thinks it is figured out, Eason throws in another twist.

The Elite Guardian series varies slightly from other romantic suspense novels because the covers feature a woman carrying a gun. Although part of a series, each book can be read as a standalone novel; each book focuses on a different member of the Elite Guardians Protection Agency. Moving Target (book 7) is due January 2017.

Eason’s newest series will interest fans of DiAnn Mills, Dee Henderson, Dani Pettrey, and Irene Hannon. Recommended for adult collections in public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Series Title Reviewed by CLJ: Always Watching (March/April/May/June 2016).
Traces of guilt / Dee Henderson. (Evie Blackwell cold case novels; 1)

309 p. ; 23 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 3
Illinois State Police--Officials and employees--
Detective and mystery fiction. Thrillers (Fiction) Christian fiction.

Award-winning author Dee Henderson pens a new contemporary suspense series featuring a female police detective being considered for the governor's cold case task force.

In Traces of Guilt, Evie Blackwell begins with two cases in Carin County, Illinois: a missing six-year-old whose family was on vacation and a missing local deputy. On Evie's way into town, she hits a deer, and Sheriff Gabriel Thane comes to the accident scene. She joins forces with him to reopen the investigation for these cases. Evie and Gabriel also enlist his family's help, including his father who had been the sheriff during the time of both disappearances.

Henderson fans will be delighted to note the appearance of characters from an earlier novel (Paul and Ann Falcone, Full Disclosure). The novel is told from multiple points of view, with the text indicating which character's point of view follows (Evie, Gabriel, Ann, etc.).

Violence in the story is appropriate but not graphic. The story is sad as the two cold cases are solved, for the families left behind still have to deal with the aftermath of these crimes. The other members of the Thane family probably will appear in the future books in this series.

In Traces of Guilt, the faith element is light, and the book focuses more on the cold case investigations. Although tagged as romantic suspense, Traces of Guilt is more suspense than romance. Like some of her recent books, it is lighter on the romance between the main characters. Still, it is a good book that Henderson fans will enjoy reading.

Recommended for public libraries. Will appeal to fans of Irene Hannon, DiAnn Mills, and Lynette Eason.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Close to you : a novel / Kara Isaac.

373 p. ; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Kara Isaac makes her debut with this contemporary romance featuring a disgraced scholar and an entrepreneur on a tour of New Zealand.

In Close to You, Allison Shire is running from her past when she meets Jackson Gregory on a tour of Tolkien movie sites in New Zealand. Allison decides she is done with love--she recently discovered her husband was married to someone else while she was married to him! Meanwhile, Jackson's girlfriend stole his company secrets and jilted him. Accompanying his great-uncle on the three-week Tolkien tour, he pretends to be a Tolkien fan, trying to convince his great-uncle to invest in his next scheme. Drawn to each other despite their initial dislike of one another, can they get past their past hurts and find true love?

Isaac pens a humorous Christian romance with endearing characters. One reads so many books with Austen themes that it is refreshing to find an
author who uses another great English writer—J. R. R. Tolkien. Even if one is not a *Lord of the Rings* fan, the descriptive narration, the beautiful setting in New Zealand, and the plausible plot make this novel an enjoyable read.

The themes of second chances (hope and love) underpin the story. The premise of two flawed main characters who are trying to move on after betrayals is noteworthy. Isaac weaves in enough backstory for non-Tolkien fans to follow as they go on the tour with Jackson and Allison. The faith element is light but present. Overall, *Close to You* is an excellent novel by a promising new author. Her second novel *Can’t Help Falling* is due in Fall 2016.

Recommended for adult collections in public libraries and school libraries, it is a clean read for adults and older teen readers, as well as for Tolkien fans.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

The midwife / Jolina Petersheim.

xiv, 383 p.; 21 cm. Adult 
Fic Rating: 5 

In *The Midwife*, Beth Winslow agreed to be a surrogate when she was in college but fled town to hide at Hopen Haus, a home for unwed mothers, when the parents wanted her to terminate the pregnancy. She knew that the baby wasn’t biologically hers, but she couldn’t help the love she had for the baby. Rhoda Mummau, the current head midwife at Hopen Haus with a secret from her past, lives in fear that her secret will be found out. She lives with her own heartbreak, but has dedicated her life to helping these young, unwed mothers.

Rhoda feels that she doesn’t deserve happiness because of decisions she made when she was younger and acts as if she’s destined to be unhappy. She has accepted the Mennonite ways of living, but people from her past eventually find a way to become part of her life. Beth is constantly plagued by fears that someone will discover what she’s done and take the baby away from her. As both women are forced to reconcile the past with the present, heartbeat and healing follow.

Jolina Petersheim has woven a tale from the past and present lives of Beth and Rhoda. While plots that shift between the past and present can be difficult to follow, this story is so well-written that it flows easily until the women’s stories converge. These characters exhibit bold personalities as a result of Petersheim’s gift of storytelling. A twist and surprise are revealed when these two lives collide.

Recommended for public and school libraries.

Trina Chase, CLJ

A king’s folly / Jill Williamson. (Kinsman chronicles; 1)

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

Award-winning author Jill Williamson kicks off a new epic fantasy series for adults, with political and spiritual intrigue, as well as a dangerous quest by a hero.
In *King’s Folly*, the king of Armania is convinced the gods are angry. That’s why earthquakes are occurring and volcanoes are erupting. He sends his son, Prince Wilek, to investigate a report of a city being swallowed up. What Wilek discovers is even more disastrous than he thought. Can he save his people before everything crumbles beneath him?

The land is covered in spiritual darkness—people are worshipping multiple gods, living in superstition, and making human and animal sacrifices. The king’s sons battle for the right to be named heir while disasters abound, which many believe are the fulfillment of the prophecies.

Although lengthy (549 pages), Williamson manages to produce another well-written epic fantasy with interesting characters and plot twists. Inspired by the corrupt kings of Israel, Williamson’s Kinsman Chronicles features court politics, mysteries, sexuality (not graphic) and more, making this a book more appropriate for adults and teens over sixteen.

Williamson does an excellent job of world building in this new epic offering, with mostly believable characters. The book includes a list of the key players, a map, and a note from the author, in which Williamson indicates there are discussion questions on her website, as along with a larger version of the map, a genealogy and other supplemental materials for this series.

Recommended for high school libraries, as well as adult fiction collections in public libraries. The second book, *King’s Blood*, will be available in 2017.

*Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com*

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**The sea keeper’s daughters / Lisa Wingate.**


xii, 432 p.; 22 cm.    Adult
Fic    Rating: 5

Restaurateurs--North Carolina--Fiction.

Award-winning author Lisa Wingate returns with the third installment in the Carolina series.

In *The Sea Keeper’s Daughter*, restaurant owner Whitney Monroe tries to save her Michigan restaurant from the “good old boys” trying to drive her out of town by blocking her renovations. At the same time, she is trying to deal with an aging hotel on North Carolina’s Outer Banks that she inherited, as well as dealing with the welfare of her estranged stepfather.

Whitney still resents her stepfather Clyde’s marriage to her now-deceased mother. Sharing the hotel with him and hoping to find some sources of cash as she sorts through family heirlooms, Whitney uncovers an old necklace, a Depression-era love story, and a mystery that will change everything.

*The Sea Keeper’s Daughter*, a 2016 Christy Award Winner (contemporary), is filled with memorable characters and descriptive settings in North Carolina (Blue Ridge Mountains and the Outer Banks). Wingate continues her trademark of telling two stories at the same time—one from the past, one from the present—tied together by the main character. Wingate blends two stories masterfully into a dark family history filled with drama and plot twists. The first is revealed in old letters Whitney finds, where she discovers a tie between her grandmother and Roosevelt’s WPA folklore writers. The second story features
Whitney's restaurant troubles and what she plans to do with the hotel she inherited.

Faith is an integral element in this multilayered story within a story, as are the details of the history of the Appalachian Mountains and its peoples. Wingate does an excellent job in character development.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ: The Prayer Box (October/November 2013); The Story Keeper (January/February 2016).

ADVANCED INTEREST

Gospel-centered counseling: how Christ changes lives / Robert W. Kellemen; foreword by Deepak Reju. (Equipping biblical counselors)

Grand Rapids, Mi: Zondervan, 2014.
312 p.; 24 cm. Adult
253.5 Rating *5
Bible--Psychology. Counseling--Religious aspects
--Christianity.

Gospel-Centered Counseling: How Christ Changes Lives, written by Robert W. Kellemen, is the first volume in a two-part series initially designed to sensitize Christians to their own personal relationships with Christ, and then to encourage them to combine biblical insight with compassionate Christian care, as they spread the gospel through counseling. Kellemen urges fellow Christians, both those formally trained and those untrained as counselors, to follow the steps presented in this textbook-style training manual to become more effective healers in a hurting world. He admonishes that Scripture is not a one-size-fits-all prescription and encourages those counseling to maintain a personal relationship with Christ, listen deeply, and prayerfully pinpoint unique earthly perspectives within the bigger picture the Bible offers believers. Illustrations are founded on the Apostle Paul’s letters ministering to believers who faced daily challenges to their faith. Modern, real-life vignettes incorporate physical, emotional, and spiritual facets of the human condition, providing for a more holistic approach to the distinctive individual. The foundational biblical narrative for counseling, Creation-Fall-Redemption, is expanded to remind believers that God knew us even before creation and has plans for us that do not end with time, but instead extend throughout eternity.

Gospel-Centered Counseling is divided into 54- to 15-page chapters that are further separated into short half- to two-page sections, patterned for today’s busy lifestyle. Chapters introduce life questions, counseling questions, authentic examples, Scripture-supported responses, and a “Where We’ve Been and Where We’re Headed” section that briefly summarizes the chapter, connects to previous chapters, and invites interest in upcoming chapters. Included are discussion questions, comprehensive reference section, and a Scripture index. Scripture references are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version (NIV) 2011 by Biblica, Inc.

Pastor and author of more than a dozen gospel-focused self-help books, Robert W. Kellemen, ThM, PhD. is the executive director of the Biblical Counseling Coalition, founder and CEO of RPM Ministries, and Vice President of Institutional Development and Chair of the Biblical Counseling Department at Crossroads Bible College (Indiana).

Kimberley D. Harris, CLJ
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