Outstanding Books Reviewed in This Issue

Seven and a Half Tons of Steel by Janet Nolan; illustrated by Thomas Gonzalez.

Anchor in the Storm: a Novel by Sarah Sundin.

Reading the Sermon on the Mount with John Stott by John Stott, with Douglas Connelly.

Plus: ESV Reader’s Bible, Six-Volume Set: A “New” Old Bible
Dear CLJ Readers:

As the year draws to a close, I would like to take the opportunity to thank our reviewers and readers. Without you, we wouldn't be here! Thanks also go out to all the publicists who share their books with us. We are truly grateful for your support.

The year has presented some personal challenges for my family and I know for some of you as well. Through it all, God has been an ever-present comfort and help. The books covered in CLJ have also been a source of encouragement, as I have read stories that remind me of the many ways that God works in the lives of his people and explored reference works that direct me to delve into His Word. I hope that you have been similarly enriched.

In 2017, we plan to continue presenting the finest in Christian fiction and nonfiction, as well as books for younger readers in all genres. We also have some fantastic special features planned—including an interview with Joni Eareckson Tada.

In the words of C.S. Lewis, “Onward and upward!”

In Christ,
Angela Walsh
Publisher and Editor
ditor@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 *Christian Library Journal*.

Publisher & Editor
Angela Walsh

Mentor & Title Selector
Nancy Hesch

Editorial Assistant & Production Manager
Justina McBride

Special Features Writer
Valorie Cooper

Publicity and Marketing Consultant
Rebecca Schriner

Webmaster
Shawn Estes

Cover image taken from *On that Christmas Night* by Lois Rock; illustrated by Alison Jay. Copyright © 2015 by Lois Rock. Used by permission of Lion Books.
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LCCN</th>
<th>Library of Congress Cataloging Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Canadian Library Cataloging Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISBN</td>
<td>International Standard Book Number</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CDR</th>
<th>CD-ROM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DVD</td>
<td>Videodisc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VID</td>
<td>Videocassette</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prices in this issue are taken from Amazon.com.
ESV Reader's Bible, Six-Volume Set: A “New” Old Bible

By Mark L. Ward, Jr.

The ESV Reader’s Bible, Six-Volume Set, published by Crossway (cloth over board with cardboard slipcase, ISBN 978-1-4335-5347-9), is something old, something new, something different, and something blue green—if you get the beautiful cloth-over-board edition, which is what’s best for libraries. It’s old, because presenting text in a simple, beautiful, and typographically intelligible way is an old idea. It’s new, because hardly anyone has ever made a Bible so innovatively old. It’s different, because Bible design has been in a deep rut since longer than you can remember.

What is the ESV Reader’s Bible? Look:

No chapter numbers, no verse numbers, no double columns—this is a Bible with type set like a regular non-fiction book. You can’t see it in the image above, but the Bible also has uncommonly large type for easy reading and thick paper so text doesn’t show through as much as it does with normal (and very thin) Bible paper.

The ESV Reader’s Bible has come in a single-volume edition, with that thin Bible paper, for several years. What’s brand new—and exciting for those who care about the confluence of form and meaning in Bible typography—is the beautiful six-volume set. All Christian libraries should acquire it, not because of the hype currently surrounding Bible typography (yes, in a portion of the Christian world there is genuine hype over this topic), but because there is something of genuine substance being recovered by “reader’s” Bible editions.

That something—as detailed by writers like Glenn Paauw (Saving the Bible from Ourselves: Learning to Read and Live the Bible Well), Christopher R. Smith (After Chapters and Verses), J. Mark Bertrand (The Bible Design Blog), Andy Naselli (professor), and me, Mark Ward (presenter of Why Bible Typography Matters)—sounds something like this: divvying up the Bible into chapters and (especially) verses is not always conducive to healthy Bible reading practices. In particular, Christian people can tend to read verses out of context when each verse is treated (typographically) as a separate paragraph. A reader’s Bible, which is available in many translations besides the ESV (the NIV, TNIV, KJV, and [modified] ASV all have reader’s editions now), uses all of the typographical conventions skillful modern readers rely on for other
nonfiction books: single columns, paragraphs, poetic indents, and simple, beautiful typography. Gone are not only the verse divisions but the superscript numbers and letters and the cross references and the columns and the study notes—all the things that clutter up and sometimes positively obscure the Bible text on the page.

The ESV Reader’s Bible is not an attack on verse numbers. This reviewer works for a Bible software company (Faithlife, makers of Logos Bible Software), and without those numbers our work would fall apart. Commentaries, confessions, reference works, sermons, and countless other Christian resources rely on the verse reference system. It is helpful for many, many things—but not, ironically, for reading. Now that we all have Bible apps which can find any verse, why do we need verse divisions in our printed Bibles? Truth be known, most Western Christians already have multiple Bibles in their homes. We have not needed all of them to be feature-studded study editions (rather than reader’s editions) for a long time.

The six-volume ESV Reader’s Bible comes with a slipcase, cloth-over-board bindings, thicker and creamier paper, and an attention to design detail that clearly borrows from the design of the past and the present. It even arrives in a beautifully designed box. Some have suggested that it and other reader’s Bibles (particularly Bibliotheca, a massively successful Kickstarter campaign that the ESV Reader’s Bible beat to the public by a few months) are hipster ephemera like other bespoke throwbacks—making one’s own pickles, vinyl record stores, handlebar mustaches, etc. But the aesthetics of the unboxing can be viewed from another perspective: the value of place. There is a story to reader’s Bibles, an infused delight in the craft of printing and design, a return to typographical roots.

I am convinced, and have been for over a decade, that reader’s Bibles are not a gimmick. I therefore hope and pray that it will not be a mere fad. Christian librarians, whose lives are spent in the pages of books, would do well to read up on reader’s Bibles, capitalize (yes) on the hipsteria over them, and help Christians see the value of reading the Bible as story, prophecy, poetry, and epistle rather than as reference volume. Whether the ESV Reader’s Bible gets read as an artificial marketing gimmick or an authentically valuable way to encounter the Bible is up to readers and those who serve and educate them.

Mark L. Ward, Jr., CLJ
PRIMARY FICTION

The not-so-faraway adventure / written by Andrew Larsen ; illustrated by Irene Luxbacher.

ISBN 9781771380973, hardcover, $16.95.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 cm.     PS-Grade 2
E     Rating: 5

Grandfathers--Juvenile fiction.  Adventure stories.

Those parents, teachers, and adults familiar with The Imaginary Garden by the same author and illustrator will get a chance in Andrew Larsen’s The Not-So-Faraway Adventure to meet Theo and Poppa again. This time it’s about celebrating Poppa’s birthday. Poppa says he doesn’t need any gifts, but Theo comes up with a not-so-faraway adventure that is practical and fun. Theo locates Poppa’s chest and after rummaging through it, guesses that taking a trip to the beach would make Poppa happy. Their trip to the beach and then to a restaurant lets them have fun and adventure.

The mixed media collage-like art created by Irene Luxbach enables children ages 4 to 6 to sense the fun of adventure, and that one can do close to home. The vibrant colors offer their own sort of imagination and fun. The bigger illustrations are bold in color and enable children to enjoy the delight of the local fun, while the smaller designs let child and parent or child and teacher to look at the ins and outs of local fun.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

Baby wren and the great gift / Sally Lloyd-Jones ; illustrated by Jen Corace.

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 x 28 cm.     PS-Grade 1
E     Rating: 4


Baby Wren looks out at the world around her, full of the wonder of ring-tailed cats cartwheeling over the walls of tall rock ledges and brave eagles soaring high in a stormy sky. What could a little bird like her do to match the wonder around her? She has no tail, she cannot swim, and she is much too little to be brave like an eagle. As the baby wren continues to explore the beauty around her, will she despair over what she lacks or instead discover a special gift?

Baby Wren and the Great Gift by Sally Lloyd-Jones is an inspiring story of the wonder and beauty of the natural world as seen through the eyes of a newborn bird, who longs to be a part of it all but sees herself as miniscule in light of the other marvelous creatures. Yet through one glorious sight, the baby wren discovers her gift, finding her special purpose in God’s wondrous world. The story is told in a narrative fashion, the baby wren an apparent observer of all the beauty around her; however, there is a clear shift in perspective in the final two pages as the baby wren is then included in the description of the sights and sounds of the canyon. This shift from observer to participant mirrors the wren’s discovery of her place and part in creation.

The rich, earth-toned color scheme of the illustrations brings warmth to the text and delights the eyes. Overall, this picture book is a story of self-discovery and belonging, which leads
to thankfulness and praise, and would pair well with *The Sleepy Songbird* by Suzanne Barton.

*Justina McBride, CLJ*

**Life without Nico / Andrea Maturana, Francisco Javier Olea**

36 unnumbered pages : col. ill. ; 24 cm.  PS-Grade 2
E  Rating: 4

Nico and Maia are dear friends. When Nico needs to leave with his father who is going to Australia for studies, Maia wonders how she will survive. After Nico leaves, Maia begins to fill the emptiness in her life with a pet cat, learning the piano, a new friend. When Nico returns, there are mixed emotions but through the experience Maia learns that “[t]here is always space in your heart for friendship.” This endearing story about love, loss, and friendship highlights the resilience of children as well as adapting to the change that is a natural part of growing up and welcoming new events and people into one’s life.

Andrea Maturana’s picture book, perfect for ages 4 to 6, is a poetic narrative that children will delight in reading on their own as well as a story for parent and child to share. The whimsical illustrations by Francisco Javier Olea offer a sense of magic as well as a better grasp on the meaning of goodbyes, loss and friendship. The design of each two-page spread conveys both powerful color and an invitation to explore these deeper emotions, an integral part of loss and recovery.

*Leroy Hommerding, CLJ*

**Golly’s folly : the prince who wanted it all / Eleazar Ruiz, Rebekah Ruiz ; [edited by] Rosanne Catalano.**

1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 23 cm.  PS-Grade 3
Fic  Rating: 5
Princes--Fiction.  Wisdom--Fiction.

*Golly’s Folly* is the work of two brothers and the wife of one of those brothers. It is an artful take on several biblical themes, coupled with richly colorful and imaginative illustrations.

Golly is the son of King Zhor, and because he envies his father’s glory he asks for his father’s crown. This is the prodigal son demanding his inheritance, the fool who thinks a crown brings glory instead of symbolizing it.

And at first it seems *Golly’s Folly* will take a standard route “modernizing” Jesus’ parable (though in this case “modern” would refer to some unstated point in the Middle Ages among excessively brawny Vikings). But the story quickly takes an unexpected turn by recourse to a different scriptural theme—that of the vanity of life even among the rich and successful. This is Solomon, the son of a great king who inherits unbelievable treasure, achieves incredible wisdom, and still must conclude that life is vanity under the sun.

Golly discovers that vanity, and humbly (and believably) discovers a solution to it by the end of the book. Instead of laying up his treasures on earth, Golly perceives the all-importance of love.

This reviewer wondered whether “Golly,” “Zhor,” and the name of their steward had any significance—no, the author said in a private conversation, they are simply fun words (and therefore, incidentally, Golly is not a “minced oath”).
The book is made with excellent quality and attention to detail under an imprint—Patrol Books—created by the authors. The illustrations are both contemporary and evocative of a textured, purposefully two-dimensional 1960s style that will interest children visually. It may possibly be read as an anodyne addition to the picture book genre by readers who do not grasp the biblical themes which underlie the story and give it its true depth. It is recommended, therefore, that teachers and parents discuss the story with any kids who happen to hear it.

Mark L. Ward, Jr., CLJ

My little picture Bible / by Juliet David; illustrated by Elina Ellis.
160 p. : col. ill. ; 17 cm.  PS-K
E  Rating: *5
Bible stories.

*My Little Picture Bible* is a collection of 56 New and Old Testament events retold by Juliet David in a simple format for the very young.

The familiar stories vary in length from one to ten pages and are accompanied by the gentle drawings of Elina Ellis. The book’s small sturdy size and bright illustrations are well suited to preschoolers, yet the content and presentation will appeal to older children as well. A list of contents will help early readers quickly find their favorites.

*My Little Picture Bible* would be a wonderful spiritual gift (and in fact has a page for inscribing). The stories are satisfyingly complete for such a small book and the sweet quality of the artwork makes the characters and events relatable to children.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

My Big Story Bible / by Josh Edwards; illustrated by Christine Tappin.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 25 cm.  PS-K
E  Rating: 4
Bible stories.

*My Big Story Bible* introduces familiar events from the Bible in brief illustrated vignettes intended for preschool-age listeners.

Each story (20 from the Old Testament and 15 from the New Testament) is concisely told in a single paragraph, with a simple concluding sentence or question that summarizes a message (“Even the wind and waves listened to Jesus”) or stimulates a child’s imagination (“Why do you think Jesus is like a good shepherd?”). A version of “The Lord’s Prayer” is adapted from *The Good News Bible* and may differ from what some children already know.

Lively illustrations by Christine Tappi have a gentle, flat, folk art quality. Lots of activity in the pictures will keep little ones focused on the stories and characters. The eye-catching cover offers a glimpse of some of the stories inside.

*My Big Story Bible* is fairly small in size for a picture book but packs in a lot of content and can inspire young readers in a big way!

Nina Ditmar, CLJ
On That Christmas Night by Lois Rock is a new picture book retelling of the nativity and the events which surrounded the birth of Jesus.

In addition to the familiar details of Mary and Joseph traveling to Bethlehem and taking shelter in the stable, On That Christmas Night explains the reason for the journey and the later threat of King Herod. Author Lois Rock imagines what the characters might have thought and said. Joseph is described as “busy in his workshop”, Mary “dreamed of the day when she would be Joseph’s bride”, and the townsfolk murmur, “Tut tut” and “Oh dear” when they learn that the unwed Mary will have a baby. The magi who later visit Jesus are inexplicably referred to simply as three strangers.

Soft oil paint illustrations by Alison Jay show an atypical portrait of biblical times: tidy cottages on rolling hills, windmills, and well-dressed villagers in colorful cloaks, stockings, and aprons. The pages are adorned with lovely tiny sketches of angels, flowers, and animals, evoking a feeling of life and joy with the birth of the savior.

Though both author and illustrator stray from a conventional presentation, there is a gentle tone of reverence and love throughout. A notation on the book jacket points to the gospels of Luke and Matthew for the biblical basis of the story. Suggested for ages 5-9, On That Christmas Night offers enough complexity in backstory and artwork to be of interest to older children as well.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

I Spy Bible is an interactive “seek and find” board book with scenes from 11 biblical events.

From Adam and Eve to the Resurrection, the colorful pages include brief text by Julia Stone and cute illustrations by Samantha Meredith. A “Can you spot” sidebar on each two-page spread shows six objects for readers to find in the picture.

This sturdy padded book with its very simplistic stories and fairly easy-to-spy challenges seems ideal for the very young. (A notation on the back cover deems it “not suitable for children under 12 months, but presumably the book can be safely managed with a caregiver!) I Spy Bible would be a fun way to introduce toddlers to Bible stories along with some expanded vocabulary words (“skittles”, “vulture”, “jackal”).

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

Seven and a Half Tons of Steel refers to a special navy ship, the USS New York. Following the events of September 11, 2001, the governor of New York...
gave the Navy a steel beam, weighing seven and a half tons, that was once inside one of the World Trade Towers. The beam was driven to a foundry in Louisiana where chippers, grinders, painters, and polishers worked on the beam. The construction metal workers toiled throughout Hurricane Katrina to turn it into the bow of the ship with the motto “Strength forged through sacrifice. Never forget.” Thus, the USS New York’s story reveals how something remarkable can emerge from devastating events like September 11 and the Hurricane. Facts and figures are presented after the main narrative.

Thomas Gonzalez’s full-page illustrations are powerful, with every page arrayed in bold palette colors. The tones convey moods and action—as for example, reds and yellows and orange move across the metalworking furnace, and black and gray clouds billow from the towers and streams of morning light radiate the hull of the ship.

The images of destruction are shown respectfully but with flair. Author Janet Nolan’s narrative offers only a few sentences about September 11 and Hurricane Katrina so children may need more detail on both of these events to truly grasp the significance of the story.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

INTERMEDIATE FICTION

A chameleon, a boy, and a quest / J.A. Myhre. (The Rwendigo tales; 1)
Fic Rating: 4

A bird, a girl, and a rescue / J.A. Myhre; illustrated by Acacia Masso. (The Rwendigo tales; 2)
LCCN 2016007196 ISBN 9781942572695, paperback, $15.99. ix, 133 p. ; ill., map ; 22 cm. Grades 3-7
Fic Rating: 3

A Chameleon, a Boy, and a Quest tells the story of Mu, an orphaned school boy who is the laughingstock of his village because his uncle makes him do “girl’s work.” On his way to do a morning chore, he meets a talking chameleon. This creature tells Mu that his quest soon will begin and he will be free. When Mu is sold by his guardians, he must rely on his animal guide to lead him away from the dangers of the forest, animals, rebels, and himself. When the chameleon whispers truth in Mu’s ear, he must relinquish his plan to find the life he’s always dreamed about.

Kiisa grew up hearing the fantastic tale of her brother’s return to their family. In A Bird, a Girl, and a Rescue, Kiisa has her own animal-guided adventure. When she is sent to boarding school at a young age, her father hides a talking bird in her suitcase. The bird flies out of her suitcase and makes Kiisa the joke of the school. Kiisa tries to blend into the crowd, but when rebels come to the compound and kidnap a classmate, Kiisa believes she must charge into danger to save the girl who bullied her. Can she set aside her animosity, survive the jungle, and make it home to her family?

J. A. Myhre’s chapter books hold wonderful folklore-like adventures. Detailed plot sketches
and descriptions of the landscapes allow elementary readers’ imaginations to run wild through the African forests and plains. With natural and supernatural danger leaving cliff hangers at the end of every chapter, children will be flipping pages until the end.

Delve into African (Luwendigo) dialect, culture, and legends with these tales. Throughout these stories, readers also will see reflections of biblical stories, such as the prodigal son, Joseph’s coat of many colors, and Jesus’ sacrifice. Dark presences of violence, death, and sin weave into these stories, but the animal guides help characters and readers learn biblical and moral lessons in spite of the evil forces.

Rebecca Schriner, CLJ

INTERMEDIATE NONFICTION

The biggest story : how the snake crusher brings us back to the garden / Kevin DeYoung ; illustrated by Don Clark.

Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015.
129 p. : col. ill. ; 24 cm. Grades 3-6
220.95 Rating: 5
Bible stories, English.

Kevin DeYoung is a gifted popularizer: he takes the world of academic biblical studies and pastoral ministry and makes it understandable and engaging for people. In The Biggest Story, DeYoung applies his gifts to the most important truth there is—the story of the Bible—and makes it accessible to intermediate readers.

There is a movement in Western, Englishspeaking evangelical theology over the last 15 years or so which has sought to acquaint readers with the one big story the Bible tells, the overarching “metanarrative” that makes sense not just of Jonah and Noah and Jesus but of Napoleon and Trump and you. In this view, the Bible is a radically God-centered book in which God creates his image-bearers and then, after they disobey, works to rescue them and the creation he gave them.

The lynchpin of that story is the snake-crusher, Jesus. The ultimate end of that story is restoration of the creation to the way God intended it to be: a trip back to the area on the globe where life began. That area will be a place into which “the glory and honor of the nations” is brought. It will actually be a city, the New Jerusalem. It will represent the end goal of mankind’s call to subdue the earth and have dominion over it. (This represents the lone way in which DeYoung’s otherwise excellent book falls short: the trajectory of the Bible is from garden to city, not garden to garden.)

DeYoung’s prose shines: it’s elegant and playful but deeply substantive. There are depths everywhere that only parents will grasp, but children will not feel left out.

Don Clark’s illustrations are colorfully gorgeous. They evoke a 1960s style but still feel very fresh. They are at turns clever and iconic and symbol-laden and geometrical and maybe a bit whimsical. Their lavishness befits the biggest story there is.

DeYoung and Clark have produced a relatable, brilliant summary of the story of the Bible for children, one that is readable in several sittings or even just one.

Mark L. Ward, CLJ
The ology: ancient truths ever new / Marty Machowski ; illustrated by Andy McGuire.

xi, 257 p. : col. ill. ; 23 cm. Grades 1-6
248.8 Rating: 5
Theology, Doctrinal. Christian education of children.

Though geared toward and intended to be used by and with children grades 1 to 6, The Ology: Ancient Truths, Ever New is a beginner's theology book that will likely be treasured and used by parents, family members, and friends. Parts may also appeal to teens. The 8.5"x8.5," inch-thick picture book uses story and art to make scriptural truth understandable and digestible to children. A glossary highlights important Bible words, and each of the 71 topics is listed as a question with a brief scriptural reference to offer a quick setting.

The many beautiful drawings cover basic points of the Christian faith. With 71 topics covered, there is much to savor in multiple settings and to come back to again and again. One plus in the discussion is that the Christian faith comes across as one gift, not as something subject to division among the different Protestant denominations. When pages such as those concentrating on baptism mention that different denominations have different views on when baptism should occur, it notes that all agree that salvation is through Jesus. Each of the topics appears on two to four pages of text and illustrations. Another plus is that, incorporated within the illustration pages are multiple Scripture references as evidence and clarification for each point. The range of discussion covers the theology of God, of People, of Sin, of the Promise and the Law, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, of Adoption into God’s Family, of Change, of the Church, of the End Times and of God’s Word.

There is also a companion music CD to The Ology by SovereignGraceKids that offers worship music for the family. A helpful resource for older children would be Big Truths for Young Hearts by Bruce A. Ware.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ
MIDDLE SCHOOL NONFICTION

Abraham Lincoln, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Thirteenth Amendment / B.J. Best. (Primary sources of the abolitionist movement)

64 p. : ill. ; 24 cm. Grades 4-7
973.7 Rating: 5

Lincoln, Abraham--1809-1865--Juvenile literature.
United States--President (1861-1865 : Lincoln)--Emancipation Proclamation--Juvenile literature.
Slaves--Emancipation--United States--Juvenile literature.
United States--Politics and government--1861-1865--Juvenile literature.

In this discussion book for grades 4 to 7, author B.J. Best uses primary source documents to highlight the issues integral to the place of slavery in the United States. Though Abraham Lincoln, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Thirteenth Amendment looks at the process of officially ending slavery with the issuing of the Emancipation Proclamation, students get a feel for who Lincoln was as a leader and his role in ending slavery. Chapter Four, highlighting Lincoln’s legacy, gives positive momentum to consider how the nation needed to heal and rebuild after the Civil War and how this was accomplished through the Reconstruction.

A Chronology, Glossary, Further Information and Bibliography, and an Index provide outlines to help the reader grasp the significance of the fight for emancipation and the reaction of various parties relating to the meaning and progress of the abolition of slavery.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

William Bradford : Plymouth's rock / Janet & Geoff Benge. (Heroes of history)

200 p. : ill., maps ; 21 cm. Grades 5-9
B Rating: 5

Pilgrims (New Plymouth Colony)--Biography--Juvenile literature.
Separatists--Massachusetts--Biography--Juvenile literature.
Governors--Massachusetts--Biography--Juvenile literature.
Massachusetts--History--New Plymouth, 1620-1691--Juvenile literature.
Massachusetts--Biography--Juvenile literature.

John Flynn : into the never never / Janet & Geoff Benge. (Christian heroes: then & now)

203 p. ; 21 cm. Grades 5-9
B Rating: 5


Readers in grades 5 to 9 have a great opportunity in these titles, by husband and wife writing team Janet & Geoff Benge, to gain a close up-front introduction to William Bradford and John Flynn as real people who responded to the situation they found themselves in and what God was calling them to do. These touching chronicles are written as narratives so that youth will be able to understand the atmosphere and consequences of the situations and decisions that both William Bradford and John Flynn found themselves in and in which they grew by accepting the challenge of perseverance and leadership.

In William Bradford: Plymouth’s Rock, one explores 17th century America, what the New World colonization involved, and who the Pilgrims at Plymouth were, gaining an overview of
Puritan history, all of which contributed to the cornerstone of a great nation. Through William Bradford’s steady leadership, the people of Plymouth Colony endured with their descendants, forming the boundaries of a great country.

In John Flynn: Into the Never Never, the reader gets a glimpse into the early decades of the 20th century and the settings of Australia and Oceania, and learns what the Gilded Age entailed and the role of missionaries and evangelists. While studying to be a minister, John Flynn wanted to use his training to help people in practical ways. In this search he discovered that his mission was to serve inside his own country—the vast outback or Never Never, where life-and-death decisions were a constant experience.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

HIGH SCHOOL FICTION

Season of glory / Lisa T. Bergren (Remnants; 3)

Grand Rapids, MI: Blink, 2016.
400 p.; 21 cm. Grades 9 and up
Fic Rating: 3

Season of Glory, book three in the Remnants series, finds the Ailith remnant together again following a narrow escape from Pacifica. As they progress across the land, the Ailith show more maturity in following the Maker and in using the gifts He has given them to serve. Increasingly people follow the Way, and hope for peace is on the horizon for the Ailith and all the land. It’s a good thing the Ailith have more support and wisdom, because the enemy seems stronger than ever. Keallach, emperor of Pacifica, is the one Ailith who never received his full gifting from the Maker because of the dark paths he has followed. When he attempts to join his brother, Andriana, and the other Ailith, proper wisdom and discernment of his motives could determine the success or failure of the mission.

Lisa T. Bergren’s writing opens doors into her characters’ world and thoughts. Told from three points of view, Season of Glory shows the progression of Keallach’s thinking and struggles throughout the book, without divulging whether or not his motives for following the other Ailith are pure. Ronan and Andriana also have their battles to face, but much of their personal growth occurred in the first two books of the Remnants series, making them perhaps less interesting in Season of Glory. The plot is well-paced, with high drama action scenes followed by reaction scenes filled with narrow escapes, followed by periods of rest or serving or learning. Romance continues to bloom in Season of Glory, but what seems secure may be undone by the forces of darkness.

The best part of all three books is the wisdom Lisa T. Bergren infuses into the story. As the Ailith prepare for their most dangerous battle, their leader Raniero gives this wise counsel, “Do not let your gift lead you—let the Maker lead you. Call upon him constantly. Put him first, not yourselves. We will stay together whatever comes, because together, we are strongest.” (p. 339)

Kristina Wolcott, CLJ

Earlier Series Title Reviewed by CLJ: Season of Wonder (November/December 2014); Season of Fire (July/August/September 2016).
Three wishes / Lisa T. Bergren. (River of time series : California; 1)

268 p. ; 21 cm. Grades 9 and up
Fic Rating: 4

Lisa Bergren kicks off her new young adult historical fiction series featuring a contemporary teen living an extraordinary adventure in the old California, 180 years in the past.

In Three Wishes, 17-year-old Zara Ruiz is reeling from her beloved abuela's death. Walking along the beach, she remembers their last conversation in which her grandmother, who raised her, asks Zara what she wants most from life. Zara makes three wishes, never expecting that those wishes (an adventurous life, true love, and family) might come true. Shortly after that, she is thrust 180 years into the past where she meets a handsome ranchero and his family. Will her wishes come true in that past, or will she return to her world? Will the secrets in Javier's family change her future?

Bergren is known for her detailed historical research, strong plot development, and excellent characterization. As in her earlier River of Time series, she writes strong female characters who are independent yet vulnerable, with men who are chivalrous and handsome. Three Wishes, the first of Bergren's new young adult historical time-travel series, is a clean romance (no more than heated kisses) with adventure and plot twists aplenty. Although self-published, Three Wishes is another addition to Bergren’s growing list of young adult fiction titles. Her series have a strong sense of faith (evident but not preachy), courtly love, and family.

Highly recommended for young adults, teens, and adult readers. Fans of young adult historical fiction will enjoy Bergren's new series. The next book in this series, Four Winds, will be published shortly.

Carol R. Gehring, worthy2read.wordpress.com

HIGH SCHOOL NONFICTION

The young adult's guide to stop bullying : understanding bullies and their actions / Rebekah Sack. (Young adult series)

Ocala, FL: Atlantic Publishing Group, 2016.
195 p. ; ill. ; 23 cm. Grades 9-12
302.343 Rating: 5
Bullying--Juvenile literature. Bullying--Prevention--Juvenile literature.

The Young Adult’s Guide to Stop Bullying is geared to junior and high school students and offers discussion to enable one to learn why bullying occurs and explore the root causes for bullying, why some students are victimized, and why others are vicious. The range of bullying covered includes cyberbullying, phone or note bullying, gang bullying, teacher bullying, and sports bullying.

The layout is appealing with photos, illustrations, and layout easy on the eye. Part I is titled “You’re Being Bullied,” Part II “You See Bullying,” and Part III “You’re a Bully.” The easy-to-follow and understanding discussion warrants The Young Adult’s Guide to Stop Bullying a place in every school and public library. One can concentrate on one part or chapter within a section and gain from that even if other parts or chapters are not considered in that setting or project.

Appendix A offers bullying statistics, Appendix B...
“A Checklist for Your School,” Appendix C “A Student’s Anti-Bullying Pledge,” and Appendix D “Bullying Laws.” There’s a section of helpful references, a glossary, and an index. A chapter in Part I is devoted to celebrity case studies, and Parts II and III each have a chapter on famous case studies.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

The handy anatomy answer book : includes physiology / Patricia Barnes-Svarney and Thomas E. Svarney. (Handy answer book series)

LCCN 2015029143 ISBN 9781578595426, paperback; $21.95.
xi, 370 p. : col. ill. ; 25 cm. Grades 9-12
612 Rating: 4

Human anatomy--Miscellanea. Physiology--Miscellanea.

Have you ever wondered how much skin the average person sheds in a year? Are you intrigued by bone growth and how the human body fits together? Did you know that the average human brain holds trillions of support cells, yet weighs only three pounds? The Handy Anatomy Answer Book, written by Patricia Barnes-Svarney and Thomas E. Svarney, is a general anatomy reference resource, including 1200 topics that range from the history of anatomy to human growth and abnormalities to comparisons between human and animal senses. Bodily systems are introduced in basic terms, utilizing a question and answer approach.

Examples of featured sections include human growth and development, describing ectodermal, mesodermal, and endodermal layers of the organ system, prenatal week-to-week fetal stage development, and hormonal changes that accompany puberty; the nervous system, comparing human and animal reactions to drug and toxin, sleep and dream patterns, and reasons behind the human “fight or flight” response; the lymphatic system, defining allergies, vaccines, and well-known disease, detailing effects on specific body systems, and comparing human and animal reactions to viruses; and the digestive system, highlighting various diseases, ways they can be transmitted, treated, and prevented, and offering holistic tips on nutrition and vitamins.

Science fiction writer and scientist Patricia Barnes-Svarney and co-author Thomas E. Svarney, also a scientist and natural world writer, pose answers to questions that follow a logical progression, from brief one- to two-paragraph answers to multiple pages. Illustrations include color and black-and-white photos, sketches, charts, graphs, tables, and sidebars. Although some topics (e.g., “iatromathematics,” or “medical astrology,” and dinosaurs, noted to have roamed the earth 230 million years ago) represent a scientific world view, rather than the Christian perspective, overall facts are well-supported.

Reference sections include “Further Readings,” web addresses for notable experts in the field of anatomy, a “Glossary” of terms, and a comprehensive subject index. Visible Ink Press’ Handy Answer Book series is widely known for its comprehensive research, inviting writing style, and subject-specific approach to learning that is both informative and entertaining.

Kim Harris, CLJ
ADULT FICTION

Storm: a novel / Bonnie S. Calhoun. (Stone braid chronicles; 3)

Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2016.
386 p.; 22 cm. Grades 8-12
Fic Rating: 4

Bonnie Calhoun continues her young adult dystopian series set in a world where life is very different 150 years from now. Most of the population lives in the ruins of American cities destroyed by a nuclear holocaust.

In Storm, Selah Rishon is the novarium, someone who plays a major role in an unfolding prophecy. She rescues the rest of her family, and they are on the run. Selah must find the Third Protocol within the next nine months or she will die. Not everyone wants the Third Protocol discovered, and Selah is being hunted by others for their own evil purposes. Meanwhile they discover a black market for selling pills that give health (or healing) to the person taking the pill.

One should read the first book before reading this one; otherwise the reader will find it challenging to understand the backstory. Calhoun’s characters are believable and flawed, reinforcing the realism of the story. There is plenty of action and appropriate violence as Selah seeks the Third Protocol (think of the violence in Star Wars). There is no discernible faith element. The book covers for this series are dramatic, and each book in the series gets better in terms of the storyline.

Calhoun creates a credible futuristic world with a strong heroine, which should appeal to fans of Suzanne Collins’ The Hunger Games and Lisa Bergren’s Remnants series.

Recommended for public libraries and school libraries. This book is more appropriate for older teens and adults.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ:
Thunder (Jan/Feb/Mar/Apr 2015); Lightning (Jan/Feb 2016).

Murder simply brewed / Vannetta Chapman. (An Amish village mystery; 1)

ix, 358 p.; map ; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

Murder tightly knit / Vannetta Chapman. (An Amish village mystery; 2)

xi, 368 p.; map ; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

Murder freshly baked / Vannetta Chapman. (An Amish village mystery; 3)

xi, 340 p.; map ; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

The three books in this series are a lovely blend of mystery, a little romance, Amish life, and
Christian fiction. All three are set in the Amish Village where one can find a variety of shops and stores; thus one title refers to a coffee shop, one to a knitting store, and the last to the local bakery.

*Murder simply brewed* introduces us to our amateur sleuths, Amanda and Hannah, when a local store manager is found murdered. The police suspect a robbery gone bad but Amanda and Hannah see it otherwise.

In *Murder tightly knit*, an Amish man is killed with an arrow to the heart. But before his murder, Hannah suspects something is amiss with her friend Mary and determines to find out what is spooking her. Little does she know of the web that has woven her friends together in subterfuge.

And *Murder freshly baked* involves a local man dating three women at the same time–two of them Amish! Also, a bad poet is threatening poison in a variety of baked goods. Is there a connection when this Romeo is murdered?

Chapman weaves many touches into these books concerning Christian life and living for the Lord, whether living as an Englischer or in the Amish world. One of the best parts is the characterization, especially considering the Amish village is inhabited by both Amish and Englischers. This gives it a special dimension that is lacking in some Amish fiction.

This series will be a hit with those who enjoy Christian fiction as well as those who love a good mystery!

*Ceil Carey, CLJ*

---

**Anna’s crossing / Suzanne Woods Fisher.**  
(An Amish beginning novel)

328 p.; 22 cm.  
Fic Rating: 4


Nineteen-year-old Anna König leaves her homeland of Ixheim, Germany for the New World, full of doubt and fear, while simultaneously devising ways she might be able to return home. To ease the ache of leaving, Anna takes with her a single rosebush from her grandmother’s garden, which holds a link to her past and perhaps a promise for her future. Will the struggles that await her and her fellow Amish travelers aboard the *Charming Nancy* prove too much to bear? Will Anna find her way back home as she so desperately wishes or will she discover that God has a much different plan in store for her?

Bairn, the ship’s carpenter and third in command, is determined that nothing will detour him from pursuing wealth and power. However, when the Amish travelers board his ship, a sense of unease follows him. When he meets the lovely Anna, her gentle convictions and forgiving nature threaten to unearth old memories and feelings he fought to bury long ago. Will he be able to resist the pull on his emotions or will he open his heart to find something much greater than he could have imagined?

In *Anna’s Crossing*, Suzanne Woods Fisher brings to life through a fictional account the bravery, perseverance, and heart that must have beat within the daring immigrants who left all that was familiar to come to a new land by way of a journey fraught with hardships and losses. Full of adventure, suspense, an air of mystery, and sweet
romance, the plot holds all the elements of an engaging story. Themes of renewed faith, love, and new beginnings add an emotionally moving depth. Anna is a character who is easy to love and admire, with her servant-like heart and forgiving nature. Like many who struggle with saying goodbye to the past, Anna learns the valuable lesson that when one chapter closes another one is just beginning. Bairn’s character is a reminder that God’s love and care are never far from His own, even when circumstances seem to indicate otherwise. Overall, this book is an engaging read that will inspire and warm hearts.

Justina McBride, CLJ

Brentwood’s ward / Michelle Griep.
314 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

Bow Street Runner Nicholas Brentwood has a new assignment: guarding a wealthy businessman’s only daughter while he is away. The generous pay, seemingly high for such an easy task of protecting a little girl, will provide the means for Brentwood to better care for his ailing sister. However, upon meeting and catching the not-so-little, very attractive Miss Emily Payne attempting to sneak back into her home after disobeying her father, Brentwood quickly realizes this assignment may be more than he bargained for.

Emily takes an instant dislike to her new guardian, as he reprimands her childish behavior and insists on shadowing her every move, which poses some difficulty for her plans to catch the most sought after gentleman of the season. Yet despite Brentwood’s irritatingly know-it-all manner and brooding intensity, Emily finds herself begrudgingly attracted to the man. As sinister plots unfold around her and attempts are made on her life, it is clear her father has real enemies and Emily cannot help but appreciate the presence of her personal protector. Will Brentwood be able to unravel the mysteries behind these vengeful acts and fulfill his mission to keep Emily safe?

In Brentwood’s Ward, Michelle Griep weaves a tangled web of deception, greed, revenge, and murder creating an intriguing plot that will keep the pages turning. Unlike the more common regency romances full of the gaiety of drawing room conversations and glittering parties, this novel captures some of the darker sides of London with shady alley ways, assaults, death, and backroom business schemes gone wrong. However, the cutting banter between the two main characters and the less-than-subtle scheming of those in high society lend a lighter air to the plot. Emily Payne is a precocious character who shows both personal and spiritual growth as she faces losses and challenges while finding the love and acceptance she has always desired. Brentwood is a roguish gentleman with strong principles of loyalty, justice, and devotion. The romance depicts intense attraction without being too explicit. This novel will appeal to fans of historical romances and mysteries.

Justina McBride, CLJ
Tangled webs: a novel / Irene Hannon. (Men of valor; 3)

Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2016.
358 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Award-winning author Irene Hannon releases the next installment in her romantic suspense series featuring the former military McGregor brothers as they settle into civilian life.

In Tangled Webs, Finn McGregor is spending a month in a lakeside cabin, recovering from a dangerous mission that ended his career as an Army Ranger. He hears his neighbor Dana Lewis screaming and runs to her rescue—the first of several disrupting incidents in the cabin she recently inherited from her grandfather.

As these incidents escalate and become more disturbing, it becomes clear someone wants Dana to leave the cabin permanently. Finn tries to help her as danger threatens the quiet hideaway, and deceit is found in even some local authorities. Can Finn help this damsel in distress while nursing wounds of his own? Will they find a future together when they face the demons of their past?

Unexpected plot twists are a Hannon trademark as the villain’s identity and sinister motives are unveiled. Hannon writes edge-of-your-seat inspirational romantic suspense that will keep the reader engaged until the final page. Hannon’s books are filled with suspense, romance, appropriate violence, and clean language. The faith element is light, not heavy-handed. The romance is clean and her characters are admirable but flawed individuals.

Highly recommended for adult collections in public libraries. Fans of Dee Henderson, Dani Pettrey, and DiAnn Mills will clamor for this series!

Carol R. Gehring, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ: Buried Secrets (July/August 2015); Thin Ice (January/February 2016).

Vendetta: a novel / Lisa Harris. (The Nikki Boyd files; 1)

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

Lisa Harris has crafted two enthralling suspense novels in The Nikki Boyd Files series. This series follows Detective Nikki Boyd and the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation’s newly formed Missing Persons Task Force.

Fueled by the ten-year-old mystery of her little sister’s abduction, Nikki diligently works to solve every case that comes her team’s way. In Vendetta, the first book in the series, Nikki’s day of rock climbing with her friend, Tyler, is interrupted when a 16-year-old girl vanishes
while on vacation at a cabin in the woods with her brother and two friends. The next 48 hours have law enforcement scrambling through the Smokey Mountain National Park in search of the missing child. When evidence points to the abductor suspected of kidnapping Nikki’s sister, the case quickly becomes personal for Nikki despite the distance she tries to create. With a girl’s life on the line, Nikki has to push through her pain to help her team. Can they solve the case in time?

As readers learn more about Nikki and Tyler’s friendship, the romantic suspense begins to build and nearly explode by the end of Vendetta. This suspense is explored and built upon throughout the second book in the series, Missing.

In Missing, Nikki’s team takes on an unusual case when homicide detectives call them in to find a missing could who have disappeared after two men are found dead in their home. Are they guilty, or running for safety? That’s up to Nikki’s team to find out. When the search leads to Tyler’s boat, Nikki is desperate to prove her friend’s innocence. In just 48 hours, the investigation takes Nikki’s team deep into the pharmaceutical industry. Will the answers they seek ever be found?

The Nikki Boyd Files series takes readers on exciting, suspenseful journeys from start to finish of each book. The plots are wonderfully developed in both books, and Nikki’s backstory is revealed slowly, drawing readers in. The secondary characters are less well-drawn, leaving the readers wondering about details, which hopefully may be revealed in future books. Overall, with well-paced and exciting plots, Missing and Vendetta are entertaining, suspenseful must-reads.

Dani Seilhamer, CLJ

Forever safe / Jody Hedlund. (Beacons of hope; 4)
335 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Jody Hedlund pens the fourth installment in her historical fiction series, this one set in coastal Massachusetts during the mid-1870s.

In Forever Safe, wealthy heiress Victoria Cole has run away from her earlier weddings, leaving two other grooms at the altar. Days away from her upcoming wedding to Nathaniel Winthrop, she is unaware that she is the target of a kidnapping plan. Her father hires Tom Cushman as her new bodyguard when it becomes clear that she is still in danger.

The wedding to Nathaniel is canceled, and Victoria is hidden away in an isolated lighthouse. Tom is appointed as assistant light keeper while Victoria poses as his wife. While she learns about living without luxuries, Victoria also learns to face her fears and her growing feelings for Tom. Will they find her attacker so she can stop running? Will Victoria discover why she runs from her weddings? Will Victoria finally get married—and to whom?

Hedlund excels in character development and historical details. While this book stands alone, readers might find it helpful to read the earlier books in order to understand the significance of the driftwood cross. These books are a blend of romance and mystery with well-researched historical detail.

The faith element is light, with the main characters facing their fears and broken pasts to
find their ultimate security in God, not in their circumstances. Tom faces his own haunted past to embrace a new future. He is an honorable but troubled man who is the perfect match for the gently-bred young Victoria who learns to value others above herself.

Recommended for public and church libraries, and fans of her earlier books.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ: Love Unexpected and Hearts Made Whole (Sept/Oct 2015); Undaunted Hope (Mar/Apr/May/June 2016).

A heart most certain / Melissa Jagears. (Teaville Moral Society; 1)

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

Award-winning author Melissa Jagears pens another historical fiction novel, this one set in Kansas during the early 1900s.

In A Heart Most Certain, Lydia King finds herself courted by Sebastian Little, an inspiring politician in Teaville. Lydia’s mother is getting sicker by the week, and her father’s debts are piling up. Marriage to Sebastian will secure her future, setting her dying mother’s mind at ease.

However, when Sebastian’s mother asks her to obtain a donation for the Teaville Moral Society from Nicholas Lowe—the wealthiest man in town—things begin to fall apart. At first Nicholas refuses, and then he agrees, as long as Lydia will agree to his own conditions. As they work together, they uncover Little family secrets that require them to expose the Littles’ involvement in corruption. Can they stand firm in their beliefs, even when it costs them that which they hold dear?

Jagears’ novel has excellent character development, a clear faith element (without being preachy), and solid historical detail. The relationship between Lydia and Nicholas builds slowly, as each grapples with their response to God’s leading them to confront the corruption of local politicians. The book’s focus is on rescuing those caught in the net of prostitution and helping them to build a new life in Christ. The reactions of the townspeople as Nicholas and Lydia try to help the former prostitutes mirror how the reader might react to anyone upsetting one’s comfortable setting, whether in church or elsewhere. Confronting evil and taking a stand takes courage, the kind that Lydia and Nicholas display.

Recommended for adults and high school students in school and public libraries. Fans of Regina Jennings and Jen Turano will enjoy this series.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Come rain or come shine / Jan Karon. (A Mitford novel; 13)

LCCN 2015017803 ISBN 9780399167454, hardcover, $27.95.
287 p.; col. ill.; 24 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

Author Jan Karon offers another winning story in Come Rain or Come Shine, the latest in her much-beloved Mitford series. In this touching novel, readers finally experience the long-awaited wedding of Dooley Kavanagh and Lace Harper. As
expected, the ceremony is filled with simple beauty and deep emotion, along with a few down-to-earth surprises. Many favorite characters attend the wedding, which is a celebration of all that is good in life.

As always, Father Tim is the central, grounding figure in the story and other beloved characters continue being who they are and doing what they do best as well. As in the other Mitford novels, there is an underlying peace amidst a cast of characters who are simple and real and deal with all the trials and troubles life brings to all. No matter the challenge, Mitford’s characters survive and thrive by engaging their unique mix of humor and faith. And they always love their neighbors.

Central to this novel, which ties up several loose ends while leaving open the possibility of a continuing storyline, is the theme of love. As Lace Harper prepares for her wedding, she wonders aloud in her diary about the definition of cherish: “Fr Tim says he feels cherish is linked to ~ or perhaps best defined by the admonition in Romans 12:10: Outdo one another in showing honor.” (p. 92) As always in the Mitford series, the characters in Come Rain or Come Shine show what it means to honor both each other and God. And those characters who fall short find their way to some form of redemption. Readers who come to Mitford to find a place where neighbors are what neighbors should be and families overcome challenges to be what families should be, will be more than satisfied.

Valorie Cooper, CLJ

Earlier Series Title Reviewed by CLJ: Somewhere Safe with Somebody Good (Jan/Feb/Mar/Apr 2015).

Dawn at Emberwilde: A Treasures of Surrey Novel / Sarah E. Ladd. (A Treasures of Surrey novel; 2)  
343 p.; 22 cm. Adult  
Fic Rating: 4  

Sarah Ladd pens the second novel in her 19th century historical series set in the English countryside.

In Dawn at Emberwilde, orphaned Isabel Creston plans to be a teacher at an English school when news of previously unknown relatives upsets her plans. Isabel and her younger sister Lizzie move to Emberwilde, a family estate on the edge of a large forest. Whispers of mysterious happenings and rumors surround the Emberwilde Forest.

When two gentlemen vie for her attention, Isabel must learn the truth of her past to determine her future. How do the activities of those around her affect her present and her future? Are the handsome suitors worthy of her consideration? What about the circumstances surrounding her parents’ deaths?

Ladd writes descriptive narrative with hints of mystery and suspense woven into the plot. The faith element has a light touch; the relationship between Isabel and her suitors develops appropriately to the storyline. Like her earlier novel in this series, the historical details enrich the plot, and Dawn at Emberwilde has a gothic feel to it—smugglers, missing heiress, etc. Her book is plot-driven with plenty of twists. Why is her aunt pushing her towards a marriage with Mr. Bradford? What about Mr. Galloway, her other suitor, who wants to help her discover the truth behind her relatives’ motives for inviting her to
Emberwilde?

Recommended for adult collections in public libraries. Older teen readers will find it a clean read. This new series will appeal to fans of Regency fiction, Julie Klassen, and Jane Austen. Each book includes discussion questions for reading groups. Her next book in this series, A Stranger at Fellsworth, is due in Spring 2017.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Deadly encounter / DiAnn Mills. (FBI task force; 1)

ix, 390 p.; 21 cm. Adult (HS)
Fic Rating: 5

Award-winning author DiAnn Mills kicks off a new contemporary romantic suspense series featuring FBI agents in the Houston area.

In Deadly Encounter, volunteer airport ranger Stacy Broussard stumbles across a murder victim, an injured dog, and an armed drone as she rides around the perimeter of Houston’s airport. FBI Special Agent Alex LeBlanc thinks it is an act of terrorism, but is suspicious of Stacy’s discovery.

Stacy, a veterinarian, cares for the injured dog. Meanwhile, Alex investigates the murdered man and the drone. When a health emergency affects the lives of people living in Stacy’s neighborhood, he wonders if Stacy is the target instead of just a witness. Can they find the mastermind behind the incidents before it is too late?

As always, Mills does an excellent job of plot and character development. The faith element and the romance are evident but light—the main characters are attracted to each other but keep the relationship as a friendship until the case is solved. Themes of forgiveness and reliance on God are interwoven in the text.

Plot twists abound as this unpredictable story unfolds. The characters are flawed but realistic, and the tension builds until the end of the book is reached. The mastermind’s plan is torn from today’s headlines, and the plot elements are all-too-real—domestic terrorism, biological weapons, revenge, child abuse, and even bullying.

Deadly Encounter will appeal to readers who like light romance and carefully-researched details with their suspense. Fans of Dee Henderson and Irene Hannon will enjoy this new series. The book includes an author note and discussion questions.

Highly recommended for public and high school libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Like a flower in bloom / Siri Mitchell.

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

Twenty-two-year-old Charlotte Withersby has spent the past eight years assisting her widowed father in his botanist work. She has also been making her own contributions to the field, but doing so primarily in her father’s name. Society believing women have no business in the science.
of botany beyond that of a pastime. Unfortunately, her uncle the Admiral shares such sentiments and tries to convince Charlotte’s father that her time would be better spent in the pursuit of a husband. To Charlotte’s utter horror, her father finally concedes, going so far as to secure her replacement as his assistant with his botanist correspondent Mr. Edward Trimble, a young New Zealand sheep farmer. Charlotte refuses to give up her love of plant life but decides to play along with her launch into grand society, firmly believing that the incompetent Mr. Trimble will soon be on his way, leaving her father begging for her assistance once more. Thrust into a society lacking the sensible order of the floral world, Charlotte finds herself adrift in turbulent waters, while the infuriating Mr. Trimble continues to prove his efficiency. Will Charlotte be forced to leave her passion behind to fit society’s mold?

Siri Mitchell’s *Like a Flower in Bloom* is a delightful read, full of dry wit that is sure to bring many smiles. It is clear the author has done her research on botany—effortlessly woven throughout the plot, humor, and dialogue—and on 19th century England society, brought to life with its rigid structure and faux pas. Charlotte and Edward are refreshing main characters with their eccentric natures and frankness, which combine to form sparring verbal exchanges and pleasant surprises. The love story is equally unique, hidden in the undertones of the plot and not fully acknowledged until the end. Charlotte is like a lone wild flower amid a plethora of hothouse blossoms, a unique beauty that might easily be missed, underscoring a sweet lesson of learning to see the beauty that is, rather than trying to conform that beauty to society’s expectations.

Readers of historical romance fiction will enjoy this lighthearted tale.

*Justina McBride, CLJ*

**Brightest and best / Olivia Newport. (Amish turns of time; 3)**

*Uhrichsville, Ohio: Shiloh Run Press, 2015.*
*547 p.; 22 cm. Adult Fic Rating: 5*

The Amish Turns of Time series tells the stories of struggling Amish communities trying to overcome and understand the divide between the settlements.

In *Brightest and Best*, Ella Hilty dreams of marrying Gideon Wittmer. She loves his three children and wonders why he hasn’t proposed yet. Unfortunately, outside elements are forcing Gideon to focus on other matters in the community. The English authorities enforce rules that the Amish children must attend the public schools, but the parents do not agree with this because they fear that the English do not know how to teach their children the Amish way of life. Some parents who do not abide by these new rules face being arrested and having their children taken away from them.

Margaret Simpson is an English schoolteacher who tries to listen to the concerns of the Amish parents. Because she doesn’t feel the English authorities are being fair, she works alongside the parents to help them convince the authorities to reconsider. The catch is that they must have a qualified teacher for the Amish children. So Miss Simpson tutors Ella to ensure that she is ready to take the teaching test.
The Amish families in this book are faced with problems they didn't expect from the English. They can't understand why the way they educate their children is being questioned. They have to enlist help from a lawyer which goes against their way of living. Even faced with ultimate consequences, they remain strong in their faith and continue to follow God’s will. Olivia Newport introduces the reader to the struggles that these faithful families face. Even though this is a series, each of the titles can be read as a stand-alone story. This third book is very well-written. Ms. Newport expresses the characters' strong personalities by showing their devotion to their children’s education and willingness to endure ridicule from the authorities and community members.

Recommended for public and school libraries.

Trina Chase, CLJ

A fool and his Monet / Sandra Orchard. (Serena Jones mysteries; 1)

Grand Rapids, Mi: Revell, 2016.
334 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Award-winning Canadian author Sandra Orchard pens a new contemporary mystery series featuring a female FBI agent/art detective.

In A Fool and His Monet, Serena Jones finishes an undercover assignment for the FBI Art Crime Team. Her friend Zoe, the acting head of security at a local art museum, asks her help in recovering a stolen Monet. The big problem is that the museum board doesn't want any publicity about the theft. Can she catch the mastermind behind the theft? Can she recover the missing artwork before the theft becomes public?

In Another Day, Another Dali, Serena is asked by her grandmother to help track down a friend’s stolen Dali painting. Serena and her grandmother have a strained relationship, and Serena sees this as an opportunity to change that. But what seems like a straightforward investigation turns into a tangled web involving forgery, an art theft ring, corrupt cops, and possibly the unsolved murder of Serena’s grandfather. Will Serena solve the case before someone stops her? What will her grandmother's friend say when the thief is found to be someone close to her? And what does the secret that Serena has kept from her family have to do with her grandmother?

Orchard does an excellent job in her character development. Serena is a confident single woman; she’s not looking for romance, even though she is tripping over eligible bachelors like Tanner, her FBI partner, and Nate, her landlord. Her opinionated Aunt Martha fancies herself a detective too and has a mobster friend who comes to Serena’s rescue.

Unlike some romantic suspense novels, this is a mystery series with a very light romance and humor on the side. The faith element is also very light. The next book, Over Maya Dead Body, is due
Anchor in the storm : a novel / Sarah Sundin. (Waves of freedom; 2)

Anchor in the Storm finds the United States involved in WWII. Lillian Avery leaves her Illinois home to accept a job as a pharmacist in Boston, Massachusetts, where her brother and his best friend Arch Vandenberg are stationed. Though Arch has expressed interest in Lillian, Lillian doesn't seem to return his feelings. However, when both Lillian and Arch need answers about some questionable prescriptions, they find themselves working together to solve a mystery. In the process, danger threatens their lives, and the only way they can survive is by learning the truth of Hebrews 6:18-19, “...We might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast...” (p.66)

Sarah Sundin's second book in the Waves of Freedom series is just as intriguing as the first. The plot moves quickly, part romance and part mystery. Arch and Lillian are well-developed, three-dimensional characters, learning to grow through their brokenness. Lillian's determined mindset and plucky spirit set an intense mood as the story unfolds. Sundin's portrayal of the places Arch and Lillian live and work as well as the activities in which they engage recreate a little slice of Boston during WWII. The theme is best summed up by Lillian's father, “Jesus is your anchor, your hope in any storm, your sure refuge.” (p. 28)

Kristina Wolcott, CLJ

Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ:

Wild Montana skies / Susan May Warren. (Montana rescue; 1)

Susan May Warren kicks off her new contemporary romance series, set in Montana and featuring park rescue professionals living in a close-knit community.

In Wild Montana Skies, Kacey Fairing moves to Mercy Falls, Montana to rebuild her life after her recent tour in Afghanistan. She is hired as the PEAK Rescue pilot for Glacier National Park. She also wants to spend time with her teenage daughter who has been cared for by her parents while she was deployed.

Country music star Ben King comes home after his father is injured. He is there to manage PEAK Rescue during his father’s recovery. Ben and Kacey were teenage sweethearts until Ben moved to Nashville to pursue his dream. Ben doesn’t
know Kacey’s secret: Ben has a daughter he has never met. Now they have to work together to save lives. Will they find a happy ending in spite of old secrets and hurts they uncover?

Warren writes character-driven, contemporary books that are a blend of action and romance, as well as emotional and spiritual challenges. The faith element is evident but not preachy. More than romances, these are stories of flawed individuals with very messy lives and life-changing mistakes. God teaches them about forgiveness of others and themselves. Warren uses these imperfect lives to teach the reader about God’s gift of grace, and the strength it takes to live a life of faith and accept the second chance He offers. Readers can follow the characters introduced in *Wild Montana Skies* in subsequent books. *Rescue Me* (Book 2) is due in late January 2017.

Recommended for public libraries and church libraries.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

---

**Can’t help falling : a novel / Kara Isaac.**

384 p. ; 22 cm. Adult (HS)
Fic Rating: 5

Kara Isaac returns with another contemporary romantic comedy, this one featuring an injured British athlete and an American journalist with a shared love of Narnia.

In *Can’t Help Falling*, Emelia Mason leaves behind her past as a “journalist” at an American tabloid magazine. Determined to make a fresh start, she flees to Oxford, England to reinvent herself, and possibly make atonement for the damage she caused in others’ lives. She accepts a position as a fundraising coordinator at a local charity.

Peter Carlisle is a British rower, one of the best—or he was until he was injured. Now Peter is determined to risk everything to get back on top and to continue chasing his Olympic dreams. Peter and Emelia cross paths and find a shared interest in Narnia (C. S. Lewis). As their relationship develops, the secrets they hide may tear them apart. Will their shared love of Narnia help them overcome the secrets of their past?

Isaac pens a Christian romantic comedy with endearing characters. It is refreshing to find a novel paying homage to English writer, C. S. Lewis. In fact, Peter and Emelia meet in an antique shop with a wardrobe, and Peter’s first question to her is, “Are you a Susan or a Lucy?” Only a Narnia fan would know the difference between the two! The answer to Peter’s question is significant in Emelia’s life, and a turning point for her. The themes of second chances (love and redemption) run throughout the novel. The faith element is light but very present.

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*
ADULT NONFICTION

Reading the Sermon on the Mount with John Stott : with questions for groups or individuals / John Stott, with Douglas Connelly. (Reading the Bible with John Stott)

LCCN 2016010696     ISBN 9780830831937, paperback, $12.
119 p.; 17 cm. Adult
226.9     Rating: 5
Sermon on the mount.

John Stott (1921-2011) was a leader among evangelicals and is known for his preaching and communicating of Scripture. Reading the Sermon on the Mount with John Stott offers excerpts from Stott’s The Message of the Sermon on the Mount in brief readings, concise enough for daily digestion. The readings avoid technicalities and scholarly debate, with each reading emphasizing the substance, significance, and application of the text. Following each set of six readings is a discussion guide for use by individuals or study groups.

Stott makes clear that the Sermon on the Mount is Jesus holding up standards as principles of kingdom living. He also notes the goals of the Sermon are only attainable by those who have experienced the new birth and who have access to the Holy Spirit’s enabling power. The easy-to-hold size (5”x7”) and short readings make it practical to really use as a daily tool.

Leroy Hommerding, CLJ

Saving my assassin : a memoir / by Virginia Prodan.

xviii, 310 p.; 22 cm. Adult
B     Rating: 4


It’s hard to believe that an 87- pound woman, just under five feet tall, could stand up to those intent on murdering her, but with God that is just what happened! As the author herself states, “I should be dead. Buried in an unmarked grave in Romania. Obviously, I am not. God had other plans.”

Saving My Assassin is Prodan’s memoir of her life in Romania from early childhood through her time as an attorney, fighting for truth and defying the “powers that be” in their evil regime. When she became a Christian as a young woman, she felt the calling to defend other believers and churches in direct disobedience to the government. She sought the truth in following her Lord. This was treason in the eyes of this regime under the rule of Ceausescu, and for her disobedience she was kidnapped, tortured, and beaten as well as placed under house arrest with her two young daughters.

Prodan’s writing is very simple yet profound as she shares her life experiences and the many ways that God answered prayer and kept her and her family safe. She also tells of a less-than-ideal childhood and of those who helped her escape and become a lawyer.

American Christians particularly should read this unforgettable account of Virgina Prodan’s life and God’s continued protection.

Ceil Carey, CLJ
Abraham Lincoln, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the Thirteenth Amendment 14
An Amish beginning novel 19
Amish turns of time; 3 26
An Amish village mystery; 1-3 18
Anchor in the storm : a novel 28
Anna's crossing 19
Another day, another Dali 27
Baby wren and the great gift 7
Barnes-Svarney, Patricia 17
Beacons of hope; 4 22
Benge, Janet 14
Bergren, Lisa T. 15
Bergren, Lisa Tawn 16
Best, B. J. 14
The biggest story : how the snake crusher brings us back to the garden 12
A bird, a girl, and a rescue 11
Brentwood's ward 20
Brightest and best 26
Calhoun, Bonnie 18
Can't help falling : a novel 29
A chameleon, a boy, and a quest 11
Chapman, Vanetta 18
Christian heroes: then & now 14
Come rain or come shine 23
David, Juliet 9
Dawn at Emberwilde : a Treasures of Surrey novel 24
De Young, Kevin 12
Deadly encounter 25
Edwards, Josh 9
FBI task force; 1 25
Fisher, Suzanne Woods 19
A fool and his Monet 27
Forever safe 22
Golly's folly : the prince who wanted it all 8
Griep, Michelle 20
The handy anatomy answer book : includes physiology 17
Handy answer book series 17
Hannon, Irene 21
Harris, Lisa 21
A heart most certain 23
Hedlund, Jody 22
Heroes of history 14
I spy Bible 10
Issac, Kara 29
Jagears, Melissa 23
John Flynn : into the never never 14
Karon, Jan 23
Ladd, Sarah E. 24
Larsen, Andrew 7
Life without Nico 8
Like a flower in bloom 25
Lloyd-Jones, Sally 7
Machowski, Marty 13
Maturana, Andrea 8
Men of valor; 3 21
Mills, Diann 25
Missing : a novel 21
Mitchell, Siri 25
A Mitford novel; 13 23
Montana rescue; 1 28
Murder freshly baked 18
Murder simply brewed 18
Murder tightly knit 18
My big story Bible 9
My little picture Bible 9
Myhre, J. A. 11
Newport, Olivia 26
The Nikki Boyd files; 1-2 21
Nolan, Janet 10
The not-so-faraway adventure 7
The ology : ancient truths ever new 13
On that Christmas night 10
Orchard, Sandra 27
Primary sources of the abolitionist movement 14
Prodan, Virginia 30
Reading the Bible with John Stott 30
Reading the Sermon on the Mount with John Stott : with questions for groups or individuals 30
Remnants; 3 15
River of time series : California; 1 16
Rock, Lois 10
Ruiz, Eleazar 8
The Rwendigo tales; 1-2 11
Sack, Rebekah 16
Saving my assassin : a memoir 30
Season of glory 15
Sevna Jones mysteries; 1-2 27
Seven and a half tons of steel 10
Stone braide chronicles; 3 18
Stone, Julia 10
Storm : a novel 18
Stott, John with Connelly, Douglas 30
Sundin, Sarah 28
Tangled webs : a novel 21
Teaville Moral Society; 1 23
Three wishes 16
A treasures of Surrey novel; 2 24
Vendetta : a novel 21
Warren, Susan May 28
Waves of freedom; 2 28
Wild Montana skies 28
William Bradford : Plymouth's rock 14
Youg adult series 16
The young adult's guide to stop bullying : understanding bullies and their actions 16