Outstanding Books Reviewed in This Issue

Luther: The Life and Legacy of the German Reformer by Stephen McCaskell

Vanishing Point by Lisa Harris

An Inconvenient Beauty by Kristi Ann Hunter

Special Features

From Guest Contributor, Charles Martin: The Truth Behind the “Book of the Year”

Catherine Marshall's Christy Speaks to a New Generation

Plus: 2017 Christy Award titles
A Letter from the Publisher

Dear CLJ Readers:

Happy New Year! I love this time of year because it is an opportunity to think about new beginnings. Of course we have just celebrated the most wonderful new beginning in history that was heralded by Christ’s first coming. And the good news is that, for those come to Christ, any time can be the time for a new beginning. So, on a personal note, while I confess that I did join a gym and set goals for increasing my time in the Word, I know that if I fall short I can simply pick up again and continue in my journey of renewal in Christ.

CLJ is likewise undergoing a time of renewal, as we will be welcoming a number of new reviewers as well as new volunteer staff. I look forward to sharing developments with you as the year progresses.

In the meantime, please enjoy the two special features in this issue - an inspiring piece from Charles Martin, whose book *Long Way Gone* is the Christy Awards’ 2017 Book of the Year and who shares regarding his dependence on God, and a tribute to Catherine Marshall’s *Christy* on the occasion of its 50th anniversary. We are also providing our annual coverage of the Christy Award finalists and winners.

Enjoy and God bless!

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 Christian Library Journal.

Key to Reviews

SPECIAL FEATURES:
The Truth Behind the “Book of the Year”
by CHARLES MARTIN

Catherine Marshall’s Christy Speaks
to a New Generation

2017 Christy Awards
Children’s Titles
Teen Titles
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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

LCCN Library of Congress Cataloging Number
C Canadian Library Cataloging Number
ISBN International Standard Book Number
CDR CD-ROM
DVD Videodisc
VID Videocassette
The Truth Behind the
“Book of the Year”

by CHARLES MARTIN

www.charlesmartin.com

Halfway through the writing of *Long Way Gone*, I discovered I’d written myself into what looked like a dead end. Or a black hole. It’d happened years before so I tried to press in and listen for the story to bubble up. Crickets. I’ve heard it called writer’s block. It’s the second time in my career I’d come to a stand-still with no way around. The first time ended badly. That memory echoed.

In desperation, I got up out of my chair, grabbed my Bible and walked out onto the pool deck where I began circling, reading the Psalms out loud. When I tired of this, I set down my Bible, raised my hands and continued circling. Christy thought I was losing it. “Honey do you have a plan B?”

No, I’ve never had a plan B.

I don’t know how many times I walked around our pool but the words I kept repeating were, “Lord, Your word is true. More true than my circumstances. My circumstances don’t dictate my reality or Yours. Your Word reveals it. Help...Please help.”

This continued everyday. For three weeks...

On normal days, I write anywhere from 500-1,000 words. I used to set lofty goals of 2,500 but discovered I prefer quality over quantity so while I can write more, I’d rather write less better. Some-

where in my fourth week, with a worried wife inside, I had an idea. Just a glimmer. I thought, “What have I got to lose?” So, I walked inside sat down and started writing.

An hour in, I had to stop typing because I couldn’t see the screen. Tears make things blurry. The solution, the work-around, had been there all along. Hidden. It was as if The Lord had led me by the hand around a blind corner. “See?”

Ten thousand words later, I closed my laptop. It’s the most I’ve ever written in a single day. My fingers sounded like hummingbird wings.

Readers say a lot of praise-worthy stuff when it comes to my stories. Truth is, I probably sweat and pray my stories more than anything else. Somewhere in my many laps around the pool, I landed on Psalm 45. It was true then. It’s true now. I pray that my pen is used to tell His story and that I am somehow able to make His Great Name known to the nations — so that He might receive praise.

The Christy Awards graciously declared *Long Way Gone* their “2017 Book of the Year.” When my editor called to tell me, I scratched my head and I thought, “Look what God did.” I certainly did not. I had nothing. Saw no daylight. But then He pulled back a curtain and shared with me the beauty of the love of the father for the son and how, no matter what any of us do, no matter what sin and shame we wrap ourselves in, there is no place on planet earth where the Blood of Jesus can’t reach us. Nothing disqualifies us. No gone is too far gone. He’s still standing on the porch, eyes staring down the road. All we need do is turn around. Put one foot in front of the other. He’s already made a
way. And when he sees us, He comes flying off the porch as if shot out of a canon and smothers our face in kisses. That picture just shreds me. Every time. The God of the Universe kissing my face, the son of squalor, who betrayed Him, rejected Him and said, “You’re dead to me.” When I see this in my mind’s eye, I come undone.

After the soul-deep pain and doubt I’d experienced in writing *Long Way Gone*, I took a short break and then set about writing a story I’d been thinking of for some time. It’s the story of a Vietnam veteran with a 45-yr secret. Circumstances surface which bring him out of hiding and force him to wrestle with whether or not to reveal the truth. Problem is, if he does, somebody dies. And if he doesn’t, somebody dies. It’s a tough place.

I thought that writing it would be easier given the sweat-equity I’d earned in *Long Way Gone*. That maybe I’d pushed through the blockage. That the words would flow.

They did not.

What I experienced was twice as bad. Twice as dark. Twice as quiet. I had no words.

To make matters worse, we had moved into a new house — with no pool.

Then, the Lord led me to Psalm 84 and, “blessed is the man who’s strength is in You, who’s heart is set on pilgrimage.” So, I set down my computer and lifted my arms. “Lord my circumstances don’t dictate You, Your reality or Your love for me. Your Word reveals it. I got nothing. Help. Please help.”

Time passed.

Then He pulled back the curtain and I cried like a baby.

*Send Down the Rain* releases May of 2018.

Let me end with this — with pulling back my own curtain and allowing you to hear what really matters. My conversations with the Lord: *Lord, God in Heaven, I don’t know what you’ll do with me or my stories, but I’m available. Selfishly, I’d like to ask that the writing of the next not be as tough as the last two. I could use a little boost. Either way, I’ll still be here. Longing for You. Crying out to You. From strength to strength — I will appear before You in Zion. You tell us that if You are lifted up that You will draw all men to Yourself. I pray my stories lift You up. I pray You increase and I decrease. And I pray that somehow, through whatever way I am able to string words together, that I might make Your Great Name known to the nations — so that You alone might receive glory and honor. I ask this in the matchless and undefeated name of Jesus.*
Catherine Marshall's *Christy* Speaks to a New Generation

In celebration of its 50th anniversary, the family of author Catherine Marshall has re-released *Christy* (Gilead Publishing, ISBN 9781683701262), the iconic Christian novel for which the coveted Christy Award is named. The novel is now available as an e-book as well as in print. Based largely on the life of Marshall’s mother, *Christy* tells the story of the maturing of a bright young woman’s heart and spirit. As a recent Litfuse Publicity Group press release highlights, “the story of *Christy* is one of determination, devotion and commitment to making a difference in the world.” Litfuse Publicity Group. (2016) *Catherine Marshall’s Christy celebrates its 50th anniversary* [Press release].

Having been read already by an estimated 30 million people, *Christy* was ranked by *Christianity Today* as 36 out of 94 books (published after WWII) that, according to survey, most shaped the minds of evangelicals.

This beloved novel tells “a fictional tale based on the life of Leonora Wood who left her North Carolina family home to teach poverty-stricken children in the mountains of Tennessee. It is the story of a proud, fierce, and lyrical people tucked away in a remote section of the Smoky Mountains in the early 1900s...It is the story of a young woman who yearns to make a difference. And it is the timeless tale of how in the experience of giving to others, she finds herself the recipient of so much more. Challenges are met. Understanding comes. Faith is revealed. And, yes, lives are changed. Not just those she was eager to serve, but her own life as well” (pg. 13).

Quickly after arriving in Cutter Gap, Tennessee, Christy discovers that the locals’ Christianity “is one of fears, of taboos” (pg.72), and she sets out, in addition to educating children, “to show folks a God who wants to give them joy” (pg. 73).

But along the way, Christy encounters people who are suspicious and resistant to any change. As the Litfuse press release reports, Christy’s “faith is challenged by trial and tragedy, and her heart is torn between two strong men with conflicting views about how to care for the families of the Cove.” Eventually, she learns how to come alongside people and accept them for who and where they are. And that is when she begins to really make a difference.

“The story of Christy has endured because of its timeless themes. A young person, barely 19, is inspired to contribute her time and talents to make a difference,” states Nancy LeSourd, spokesperson for the Marshall-LeSourd family. “*Christy* is a tale of courage, determination and passion. Christy and other key characters in the novel have to learn how to take who they are, and what they have to give, and serve a community that challenges them in ways they cannot anticipate. Even though the story took place 100 years ago, these key characters’ approaches to making a difference is not unlike the Millennial generation today” (from Litfuse Publicity Group press release).

*Christy* is a quintessential classic, and its vivid characterizations and broad tones of historical fiction, mystery and romance will capture the hearts and imaginations of today’s readers just as surely as they did those of readers 50 years ago. If you read only one work of Christian fiction, it should be *Christy*.

Valorie Cooper, CLJ Special Features Writer
**Book of the Year 2017 Winner**

*Long way gone / Charles Martin.*


309 p.; 25 cm. Adult

Fic Rating: 5

How is it that the Father draws the prodigal back to Himself? Charles Martin explores this enduring question in *Long Way Gone*, a story that engages all of a reader’s emotions. As in his other novels, Martin takes the reader deeply into the character’s world—in this case, the musician’s world.

Cooper grows up as the son of a gifted evangelist and guitarist, who teaches Cooper all he knows about music. His dad’s gifts are from the Lord, he believes, and only through giving them away will his heart be satisfied. During a frightening, torrential rain that takes the canvas top off the revival tent, Cooper reveals even greater gifts than his father’s, and the very angels are present to listen. He plays the piano for the crowd, calming fears, but also drawing the attention of sharks who want to sign him to a record label. Misreading his father’s concern that he not be naively taken in for a desire to control him, Cooper steals all their money, his dad’s guitar, and their truck, and takes off for Nashville. Through treachery, he loses all—his success, his fiancée, the songs he wrote for her, his guitar, even his health.

The novel begins in the present time, when after 20 years of living without hope, Cooper is reunited with his love, and begins to consider the possibility of going home. Through flashbacks, the reader learns about his past, his plunge into despair, and how the Lord gradually lifted him up. This isn’t a book one can read without tears; Martin’s storytelling is impeccable, giving life to the prodigal’s story and hammering in the truth that one can always go home. Martin adds an epilogue that describes his intentions for the book and invites the reader, also, to come home to the Lord.

*Diane Carver Sekeres, CLJ*

**Contemporary Romance 2017 Winner**

*Her one and only : a novel / Becky Wade.*


390 p.; 22 cm. Adult

Fic Rating: 4

Award-winning author Becky Wade returns with the final novel in her Porter Family series, a contemporary romance set in Texas, this one featuring the only daughter in the family.

In *Her One and Only*, former Marine Dru Porter works as a bodyguard, and her newest client is Gray Fowler, a ruggedly handsome football player. Sparks fly as they get to know one another, even though Dru goes out of her way to avoid a romance with Gray. Determined to find Gray’s stalker, Dru digs into his relationships and his mysterious past for clues to the stalker’s identity.

Wade creates a family of siblings with flaws, genuine emotion, and growing faith. She already excels at character development, creating characters the reader can relate to and care about. Characters from the other Porter Family books continue their story (Meg and Bo Porter have
Winners + Finalists

The Christy Awards - 2017

Contemporary Romance
2017 Finalists

The Red Door Inn : a novel / Liz Johnson. (Prince Edward Island dreams; 1)
Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2016.
348 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

Author Liz Johnson writes a novel set on Prince Edward Island in a new contemporary romance series.

In The Red Door Inn, Marie Carrington flees to Prince Edward Island to hide out from her father’s business dealings. Marie begins working for a bed and breakfast undergoing a renovation. She is hired to decorate the inn while Seth Sloane, nephew of the owner, helps his uncle to restore the inn. Neither Seth nor Marie agree on much, except that the inn must open on time, in just two months. They must find a way to work together. In the process, they might find something they didn’t expect—love.

Johnson pens an endearing story about new beginnings on an island of dreams. Her descriptive detail lets the reader experience the beauty of the island. Seth and Marie are wounded adults. Life has dealt them some hard blows—Seth’s fiancée broke his heart, and Marie’s father wanted to use her to broker a business deal. Yet both of them manage to leave the past behind and find hope in a future on Prince Edward Island. The faith element is light-handed but apparent, as Seth and Marie discover the truth about God’s love and second chances.

Recommended for adult collections in public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Rescue me / Susan May Warren. (Montana rescue; 2)
323 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

See: Review previously published in CLJ (Jan/Feb/Mar 2017).

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ
First Novel 2017 Winner

Stars in the grass : a novel / Ann Marie Stewart.
305 pages ; 21 cm.  Adult
Fic  Rating: 5

Stars in the Grass is the account of one family's journey through tragedy, told in the voice of nine-year-old Abby McAndrews, whose eloquence leavens the weightiness of the subject with humor and the wonders of a child's perspective and resilience.

During the summer of 1970, the McAndrews family enjoys an idyllic vacation by the beach—until Abby's three-year-old brother Joel is killed in a car accident. The story follows the grief and pain experienced by each family member: Abby's father, a minister, who cannot return to his pulpit and withdraws even from his own family; her mother, who tries to hold everyone together but eventually reaches a crossroads; her brother, who responds by making poor choices. Abby herself has trouble returning to her former life at school, church and with friends. There is hope in the end, but this book does not gloss over the fact that healing requires the passage of time, the support of family and community, and turning to God even when the reasons He allows suffering are not clear.

Author Ann Marie Stewart gives Abby a poetic voice, and her writing conveys the depth of the characters' feelings, the nostalgia of an earlier time, and ultimately hope for those going through unspeakable loss.

Angela L. Walsh, CLJ

First Novel 2017 Finalists

Counted with the stars / Connilyn Cossette. (Out from Egypt; 1)
345 p. ; 22 cm.  Adult
Fic  Rating: 5

Women--Egypt--Social conditions--Fiction.


Like a river from its course / Kelli Stuart.
363 p. ; 22 cm.  Adult (YA)
Fic  Rating: 5

Life sometimes takes us to unexpected places that we did not plan, and that we might not be prepared for.

Like a River from Its Course, based on careful research and hundreds of interviews, fictionally recreates the lives of four unconnected people who are thrown off balance and swept away in Nazi-occupied Ukraine during World War II.

Kelli Stuart masterfully captures the voices of her characters to tell the story from each one's perspective. Ivan puts himself and his loved ones at risk in order to help a Jewish child and endures the consequences that follow. Maria, taken away from her family, tries to return to them, hoping also to find the child she once was, and whom she
believes still lives somewhere inside of her. Luda, a young girl, tries to conceal that she has fallen in love with someone she is supposed to hate. Frederick, a German soldier and the son of a highly respected commander, strives to please his father and serve his country, but his disillusion with Nazi ideology lead to a tragic decision.

*Like a River from Its Course* is a remarkable story of how war ravages a person in the core of their being, inflicting a pain that never leaves. “It always leaves a mark, a scar as a reminder that life and love aren’t free. Pain changes everything.” (pg. 27)

Every word matters in this must-read story because Stuart’s own characters, despite their sufferings, provide the answers to how one can go on living after a tragic ordeal. Pain and heartache, they realize, are not unique to any of us and life will go on. More importantly, when one believes, life has meaning and purpose outside of the hardship. The gem to take away from *Like a River from Its Course* is that no matter what happens, it is God who holds life together.

*Veronica Jorge, CLJ*

**General Fiction**

**2017 Winner**

*The promise of Jesse Woods / Chris Fabry.*


415 p.; 21 cm. Adult

Fic Rating: 5

Chris Fabry has created a compelling coming-of-age story, set both in 1972 and 1984.

When Matt Plumley hears of his childhood friend’s upcoming marriage, he is pulled back to his hometown of Dogwood, West Virginia, in an attempt to change her mind and thwart the wedding. Memories abound of his growing up there as a pastor’s kid and his two very unlikely friends, Jesse Woods and Dickie Darrel Lee Hancock. Although Matt has not seen Jesse in years, he feels he still loves her and that she is making a big mistake in marrying Earl Turley.

The author takes the reader back and forth between the two time periods, providing the backstory to the relationship between these three: the things they did together, the places they hung out, and the secrets they kept.

Matt ends up learning more about himself during his time home in Dogwood than he actually changes the course of history for his friends.

The book includes discussion questions and, as always, Fabry’s writing is superb. Readers will be caught up in the story almost as if it were their own. Matt’s Christian faith is evident in the story and a Christian worldview is apparent.

*Highly recommended.*

*Ceil Carey, CLJ*
General Fiction
2017 Finalists

Long way gone / Charles Martin.
309 p.; 25 cm.
Fic Rating: 5
See: Review under “Book of the Year” category above.

The undoing of Saint Silvanus / Beth Moore.
468 p.; 24 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5
Beth Moore, noted author of devotionals, has done a marvelous job on her attempt at writing fiction, even being nominated for the prestigious Christy Award.

Taking advantage of a free trip to New Orleans seems like a great idea to Jillian at the time of her estranged father’s death. She doesn’t really know why she agreed—they weren’t close, and in fact she didn’t even like him—but a change of scenery might be just what she needs. Adella Atwater explained all expenses would be paid and she could stay at her grandmother’s apartment house where Adella is the manager. Ha! Apartment house? Saint Silvanus is hardly a house at all and the disparate bunch of strangers who live there would give anyone pause.

But as is the case in life sometimes, Jillian finds herself drawn into the drama and lives of the residents (“the colorful collection of saints and sinners,” as the author calls them, again rather like life in general). Her father’s death is discovered to be a murder and Jillian becomes more entwined with the lives at Saint Sans as well as the police.

Many subjects, some considered taboo, arise in this book: abortion, tarot cards, drugs, use of God’s name in vain. The author has made it real for the reader and not pulled any punches while at the same time presenting Christianity.

The characters are intriguing, the story is compelling, and changes of heart allow one to see Christ at work in people and their relationships.

Ceil Carey, CLJ

Historical 2017 Winner

The mark of the king / Jocelyn Green.
406 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5
French midwife Julianne Chevalier is wrongly imprisoned and branded for murder in Mark of the King. While languishing in prison, Julianne hears reports of potential for exile with the John Law Company who is trying to populate Louisiana with French citizens. Julianne joins the company, seizing not only the opportunity for freedom, but also the chance to find her brother who moved to Louisiana four years earlier. However, she doesn’t realize the price for her freedom is forced marriage and enforced consummation of the
marriage. Upon arrival in Louisiana, a flicker of hope for the future ignites in Julianne, only to be snuffed out by multiple tragedies. Some days it seems God’s grace and peace will elude her forever.

Jocelyn Green’s writing well earns its Christy nomination. She masterfully crafts a novel around several true historical events. Staying faithful to history, Green’s book is far from an idealized account of history and includes sometimes gritty and perhaps even gruesome details, though she is not gratuitous in the presentation. The cast of characters is varied, but the main characters grow into their new lives as they accept the past, put it in God’s hands, and attempt to accept His grace as they move into the future. Of course, the opposite is true of the antagonists, who do all they can to thwart good.

The author includes some superb plot twists in a compelling story. The dialogue feels natural and plentiful. The lovely descriptions and Green’s lyrical writing help breathe life into this story of romance and intrigue. The very difficult nature of some of the historical events presented—including the enforced (and observed) sex of the newly married couples, murder, and attempted rape—makes this a book better suited for more mature readers. The theme is best summarized by the following passage: “God owes you nothing, and yet He made you His daughter. You are a child of the King; it is His image you bear. King Louis marked you with judgment, but the King of Kings covers you with grace.” (p. 382)

Kristina Wolcott, CLJ

### Historical 2017 Finalists

**Miriam / Mesu Andrews. (A treasures of the Nile novel)**

374 p.; 21 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: *5

*See: Review previously published in CLJ (July/Aug/Sep 2016).*

**Like a river from its course / Kelli Stuart.**

363 p.; 22 cm. Adult (YA)
Fic Rating: 5

*See: Review under First Novel category above.*

### Historical Romance 2017 Winners

**A note yet unsung / Tamera Alexander. (A Belmont Mansion novel)**

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

After ten years studying music in Austria, Rebekah Carrington returns to Nashville, Tennessee in 1871 in *A Note Yet Unsung*. Following the death of her grandmother,
Rebekah’s mother and stepfather claim they can no longer support Rebekah’s study overseas and order her to return. While Rebekah willingly returns to Nashville, she seeks employment and housing because home represents a danger she is unwilling to face. Though her heart’s desire is to play her violin, Maestro Whitcomb refuses to allow a woman in the orchestra. Thankfully Adelicia Cheatham hires Rebekah to tutor her daughter on violin, providing room and board in exchange for doing so. However, if Rebekah is ever to save any money, she needs another job.

Maestro Tate Whitcomb has two secrets he cannot afford to tell, and he desperately needs a friend. He also needs to complete his symphony. Both Rebekah and Tate will need help if they are ever to offer their music to the world.

Tamera Alexander’s third book in the Belmont Mansion series well deserves the 2017 Christy Award for historical romance. Flawed characters triumph as they deal with the blows of life including concerns about health, relationships, and work. The plot moves quickly with unexpected twists and pushes forward with increasing tension. The setting unfolds and completes the process of taking the reader on a journey as the characters walk the streets of 1871 Nashville or travel to the back hill country, as they ride the train or face the gender bias that refused women a place in orchestras, or as homeless orphans wander the streets selling papers or stealing money. As the book comes to a close, Rebekah realizes: “Never could she have orchestrated the events in her life in such a way that this would happen. Only God. The true Master Conductor.” (p. 422)

* Kristina Wolcott, CLJ

The lady and the lionheart: a novel / Joanne Bischof.
367 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: *5

Twenty-year-old Ella Beckley is a nurse in training, running from a past she wishes she could forget. Charlie Lionheart is a lion tamer in a circus, working to repay a debt he is bound by contract to fulfill. Though from worlds as opposite as night from day, each has scars they bear—hers on the inside, his on the outside—and each has experienced society’s harsh and unforgiving treatment because of those scars.

From the moment their paths cross, they are drawn to each other, Charlie needing her services for his sick baby girl and Ella being pulled by, yet fearful of, the quickening of life the two stir in her shattered heart. Together, can two broken people find healing, true love, and the freedom that comes through forgiveness and trust?

In The Lady and the Lionheart, Joanne Bischof authentically brings to life the dazzling sights and sounds of the circus and the alluring pull of the gypsy life. The circus scene provides such a unique backdrop for an equally unique and skillfully woven plot that captures readers with its powerful message, element of mystery, unforgettable characters, and gentle romance. The writing flows effortlessly with the grace and fluidity of an aerialist: each word, each line building together in one harmonious symphony. It is a story full of emotional depth, moving readers to tears of sorrow and joy.

Charlie Lionheart is the hero of every heart, the man whose selfless love and sacrifice paint a picture of God’s love for His children and Christ’s redeeming work for His bride, the church. Ella is
the perfect picture of so many who long for the healing that comes through forgiveness and unconditional love. This is a story for the outcasts, those that are different, those that have been looked down upon by society for reasons often beyond their control. Ultimately, this novel is a message to every broken heart best summed up in Charlie’s own words to Ella, “You are loved and you’ll not be forgotten” (p. 317).

Justina McBride, CLJ

**Historical Romance 2017 Finalist**

*From this moment* / Elizabeth Camden.

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

*See:* Review previously published in *CLJ* (Jan/Feb/Mar 2017).

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**Mystery / Suspense / Thriller 2017 Winner**

*When death draws near: a Gwen Marcey novel* / Carrie Stuart Parks. (Gwen Marcey; 3)

330 p.; 22 cm.
Fic Rating: 4

In *When Death Draws Near* Gwen Marcey, a forensic artist, has taken a job in Kentucky under the apathetic eye of Sheriff Clay. Gwen is determined not to focus on the possibility of her cancer returning, how she’ll pay for its treatment, or her daughter’s future education, so she plunges into the job. Regardless of the near hit-and-run or the snake placed in her bed, Gwen is resolved to unravel the thread that ties together a serial rapist, a promising presidential hopeful, mysterious deaths, vanishing witnesses, and an illegal serpent-handling church. Gwen’s faith in answered prayer will be repeatedly tested. Will she hear God’s answer?

Moving at a quick easy pace, Parks allows the reader to sink under a cloud of entertainment, implying a sense of escape while lost in the fictional tale. The coiled labyrinth of motives emerging from characters leaves the longed-for feeling of justice bestowed on the villain overshadowed by unmet expectations.

*Cicely K. Ben, CLJ*

**Earlier Series Title Reviewed:** *A Cry from the Dust* (Jan/Feb 2016); *The Bones Will Speak* (Jan/Feb/Mar 2017).
Mystery/Suspense/Thriller
2017 Finalists

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

Without warning / Joel C. Rosenberg. (J. B. Collins series; 3)
xiii, 453 p.; 24 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4
See: Review in this issue under Adult Fiction.

Visionary 2017 Winner

The long journey to Jake Palmer / James L. Rubart.
390 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

James Rubart, author of The Five Times I Met Myself, pens an inspirational contemporary

fantasy for adults.

In The Long Journey to Jake Palmer, Jake Palmer is a successful corporate trainer who coaches others to see their potential. Broken and unsure of life after an accident and recent divorce, Jake agrees to a vacation at Willow Lake with friends. There he meets an old man who tells him about a corridor leading to a place where hurts are healed and dreams come true. Can he find that place and its promises?

Rubart weaves a story with twists and turns, one that draws the reader into Jake’s journey as he explores the ways he thinks others see him. Jake is a broken man on a journey to rediscover his self-worth.

Rubart shows we all are flawed, buying into the labels we think others put on us (or we put on ourselves based on what we think they think about us). The Long Journey to Jake Palmer shows us that we can be free of those labels, and reveals Jake’s self-reflection in such a way that the reader clearly sees the themes of emotional healing and forgiveness. It is not a typical fantasy, filled with talking animals or mythical beings, yet it touches one’s heart by asking, what if there really is a place where my dreams can come true?

Recommended for adult collections in public libraries and church libraries. The Long Journey to Jake Palmer is a winner in both the Visionary category in the 2017 Christy Awards and the Speculative category in the 2017 ACFW Carol Awards.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ
Visionary 2017 Finalists

The alliance: a novel / Jolina Petersheim. (Alliance; 1)  
xii, 371 p.; 22 cm.  YA (Adult) (Grades 7-10)  
Fic  Rating: 3

When an airplane crashes in the field near her house, Leora rushes out to help, hoping for survivors. Together with a few of the local men, they pull a lone pilot out of the wreckage and carry him into Leora’s house. When he comes to, Moses, the pilot, reveals that an EMP—an electromagnetic pulse—knocked his plane out of the sky. An EMP, he explains, is a special warhead that wipes out technology, taking out the power grid and everything that relies on a computer, such as supermarkets. Moses, an Englischer outsider, must persuade the peaceful community of Montana Mennonites to prepare to defend themselves from the looting and crime that a food shortage will surely bring.

Astounded by the scenario that Moses depicts, the elders stand frozen in unbelief and inactivity. They never carry weapons and would never harm anyone. If they have food, they must share it. But teenage Leora, the sole care-taker of her grandmother, younger brother, and mentally-challenged sister, quickly realizes that she must protect her family. But how far is she willing to go to accomplish that? And where, in a time of crisis, does falling in love fit in?

In The Alliance, a community’s standards and collective beliefs are put to the test, and hardship, hunger, and danger, unveil each person’s strengths and flaws. The story asks the reader to consider the consequences of our dependence on technology and to examine what the need for survival might bring out in each of us. Petersheim asks, “How does one keep faith and kindness alive while trying to preserve one’s own life?”

The Alliance suggests that we can only face our greatest fears and achieve peace when we surrender our lives to God. To discover whether or not Leora succeeds, the story continues in Petersheim’s next novel, The Divide.

Veronica Jorge, CLJ

A king’s folly / Jill Williamson. (Kinsman chronicles; 1)  
549 p.; 22 cm.  Adult  
Fic  Rating: 4


Young Adult 2017 Winner

Silent songbird / Melanie Dickerson.
296 p.; 22 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5
See: Review previously published in CLJ (Jan/Feb/Mar 2017).

Young Adult 2017 Finalists

Unblemished / Sara Ella. (Unblemished; 1)
369 p.; maps; 22 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5
See: Review in this issue under Young Adult Fiction.

If you’re gone / Brittany Goodwin.
212 p.; cm. Grades 7-10
Fic Rating: 3
Lillian never dreamed she’d ever go out with Brad, the boy who had always frightened and tormented her when they were younger. Yet she’s been his steady girlfriend for five months now and very much in love...until the day he disappears. She is terrified that something awful has happened to him, but given his shady past, the police are convinced he’s missing “by choice.”

Instead of spending her summer relaxing, preparing for her senior year of high school, and filling out college applications, Lillian embarks on an intense physical and emotional search for Brad. The town rallies to canvas the area. Lillian worries that if he’s hurt she has to find him quickly. But, she wonders, what if, like the cop said, he left because he wanted to? And if so, why didn’t he tell her?

If You’re Gone is a novel that reveals the capacity of young adults to love deeply despite their tender age, and to act with determination in times of deep emotional and spiritual crises. Brittany Goodwin uses the story of the missing teen to explore ideas of love, forgiveness, peer relationships, and community support (both religious and secular).

Lillian’s search for Brad, and the self-knowledge she develops, makes If You’re Gone an excellent choice for a classroom, youth group, or teen book club because it provides a point of engagement for profitable discussions. What are the actions of a true friend? Is there a difference between loving and being in love? Why is forgiveness important? How do you handle pain and/or loss so that you can go on living?

Lillian’s discovery is not what she expected, and the reader must decide whether or not Lillian makes the right choice.

Veronica Jorge, CLJ
Short Form 2017 Winner
(not reviewed)

Looking into you / Chris Fabry.
LCCN 2017035818 ISBN 9781414387765,
hardcover, $31.99.
352 p.; 21 cm.
Fic

Short Form 2017 Finalists
(not reviewed)

Restoring Christmas / Cynthia Ruchti.
LCCN 2016950176 ISBN 9781617957079,
hardcover, $15.99.
259 p.; 20 cm.
Fic

Mirror image / Michael Scott and Melanie Ruth Rose.
New York: Tor, 2016.
LCCN 2016285285 ISBN 9780765385222,
hardcover, $25.99.
349 p.; 25 cm.
Fic
PRINCIPAL FICTION

Little Francis falls asleep / Pip Craighead.
Patrol, 2017.
32 p. : col. ill. ; 11 cm. PS-Grade 2
E    Rating: 4

Little Francis Falls Asleep is a beautifully illustrated theological bedtime story.

Francis is a little boy who can’t seem to go to sleep. He wanders into the night looking for tips on how to do so, but all the suggestions he gets—from a tree, a bird, and the moon—fail him. He’s still awake. He can’t find rest.

It isn’t until he beholds God’s providential care and rule over all nature—until he sees the heavens declaring the glory of God and the sky above proclaiming his handiwork (Psalm 19:1)—that Francis can rest easy. A small page offering reflections for parents concludes the book.

Pip Craighead’s story is richly Christian and his illustrations are whimsical and skillful, with a distinctive visual style. Patrol publishes quality books with excellent attention to detail and solid craftsmanship.

Mark L. Ward, Jr., CLJ

Night of great joy! / Mary Engelbreit.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 24 x 29 cm. PS-Grade 2
E    Rating: 4

In A Night of Great Joy, Mary Engelbreit uses her distinct illustrative style combined with simple text to retell the Nativity story for a primary audience. The illustrations depict a children’s Christmas pageant, complete with wooden props, paper stars hanging from string, a red wagon, children dressed in animal costumes, a rocking horse, and stuffed animals. This provides an engaging backdrop for the story of Christ’s birth, one that may inspire its young reader audience to recreate.

From Mary and Joseph’s search for a place to stay to angels appearing to the shepherds and the wise men following a bright star, the complete story unfolds in color-rich scenes visually mirroring the text, capturing both eyes and ears. The text on each page ranges from one to five sentences, appearing in varying font size with some color to create interest; however, the text does not detract from the full-page illustrations.

A subtle humor is sparingly added as some of the illustrations portray the unscripted actions of a few of the child actors, such as fighting over a stuffed sheep or a young cow falling asleep on stage. Children will enjoy pointing these out, while adults will find this touch of authenticity endearing. Overall, this is a charming rendition of the Christmas story that brings the joy of that wondrous night to life.

Justina McBride, CLJ
PRIMARY NONFICTION

The story of Passover / written by Rabbi Francis Barry Silberg ; illustrated by Stephanie McFetridge Britt.

1 v. unpaged : col. ill. ; 16 cm. Grades 2-5
E Rating: 3

Writing for adults about important topics—like faith—can be challenging, and introducing children to important events and intangible ideas requires a wholly different set of skills. In The Story of Passover, Rabbi Francis Barry Silberg uses the simplicity of a board book to make a detailed and complex story comprehensible to both children and adults of all ages and beliefs.

Rabbi Silberg re-tells the story of the Exodus: a significant period in history where God demonstrates wonders and plagues in Egypt in order to force Pharaoh to release the Jewish people from slavery. With easy-to-understand vocabulary and short sentences, he holds the reader's attention in light suspense that keeps them asking, "What happens next?" Illustrations by Stephanie McFetridge Britt provide realistic artwork, though the soft pastels and light blues that predominate prevent the segment on the ten plagues from being frightening.

The Story of Passover assumes some prior knowledge of the biblical event, while vocabulary specific to the story (such as unleavened bread, worship, and children of Israel) may require adult explanation. While the story does not contain the usual sound patterns and rhymes common to many board books, it engages the child at a higher thinking level where each sentence leads naturally into the "why?" questions that help children to create meaning and that enhance deeper understanding.

Rabbi Silberg’s main skill lies in his ability to touch the inherent curiosity and imagination of a child in order to guide them into the realm of the unseen and of faith.

Veronica Jorge, CLJ

Where does love hide? / by Mary Manz Simon.

Tyndale House Pub, 2016.
1 v. (unpaged) : col. ill. ; 21 cm. PS-K
E Rating: 5

Where Does Love Hide? is a lift-the-flap board book by Mary Manz Simon that demonstrates simple ways to share God’s love.

Six colorful scenes show that love is not really hiding at all, but instead is all around us if we just know where to look! Readers unfold the flaps to reveal everyday examples: sharing toys, helping with a chore, making a new friend. Each flap also contains a short verse from Scripture pertaining to loving, respecting, and serving one other.

The enduring messages are sweet and relevant, making Where Does Love Hide? a wonderful way to introduce very young children to God’s word. Hannah Wood’s cheerful illustrations are like comfort food, filled with the gentle familiarity of cookies, teddy bears, building blocks, and sandcastles.

This sturdy book should withstand many readings and its small size is perfect for taking along.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ
The story travelers Bible / created by Tracey Madder ; illustrated by Tim Crecelius.

LCCN 2016029011 ISBN 9781496409157,
hardcover, $16.99.
xiii, 354 p. : col. ill. ; 23 cm. K-Grade 4
221 Rating: 4

The Story Travelers Bible by Tracey Madder presents Bible stories in a narrative format as three students time travel to learn about God’s Word.

School friends Lana, Griffin, and Munch are transported aboard a mysterious bus to witness 85 events of the New and Old Testaments. The Story Travelers Bible takes the trio—and their readers—on an epic journey from Genesis through Revelation.

Each Bible story includes its scriptural reference as well as sidebars with related historical/geographic information and fun facts. Added features invite readers to “Build Your Faith!”, “Think About It!”, or “Park Here!” to read and memorize a verse (New Living Translation). Author Tracey Madder infuses every chapter with dialogue and vivid descriptions of the setting, action, and emotion. In parallel, the three modern-day travelers talk about and react to what they are seeing.

The Story Travelers Bible is a story-within-a-story that encourages children to know God by reading His Word. The framework of the time-traveling students is a quirky twist that may be entertaining to some readers but distracting to others.

Cartoon-style illustrations by Tim Crecelius fill the pages and enhance the presentation. This is a hefty (350+ pages!) book with a ton of content and reading but the storytelling voice and expressive drawings work well together. The many facets of the book should foster its appeal to both young and more mature readers.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

INTERMEDIATE FICTION

London art chase / by Natalie Grant ; with Naomi Kinsman : [illustrations by Cathy Mingus]. (Glimmer girls; 1)

205 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 3-6
Fic Rating: 4

A dolphin wish / by Natalie Grant ; with Naomi Kinsman. (Glimmer girls; 2)

200 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 3-6
Fic Rating: 4

Miracle in Music City / by Natalie Grant ; with Naomi Kinsman ; illustrations by Cathi Mingus. (Glimmer girls; 3)

205 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 3-6
Fic Rating: 4

Light up New York / by Natalie Grant with Naomi Kinsman. (Glimmer girls; 4)

203 p. : ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 3-6
Fic Rating: 4
Musician Natalie Grant pens her Glimmer Girls series for young girls, featuring the adventures of twins Mia and Maddie and their little sister Lulu.

In *London Art Chase*, the Glimmer girls travel to London to watch their singer mom, Gloria Glimmer, perform at a concert. During their sightseeing at the National Gallery, they stumble upon a mystery—a stolen painting. Maddie and her sisters track the clues throughout London to recover the stolen artwork.

In *A Dolphin Wish*, the Glimmer family is in San Diego. When they visit a nearby water park, the girls overhear animal workers discussing the problem of animals not staying in their habitats. The girls revisit the sea park to look for clues. Mia leads the adventure to keep the animals safe.

In *Miracle in Music City*, singer Gloria Glimmer wants her daughters to think of others' needs. She gets them involved in an annual benefit and auction. The girls are involved in more than just raising money—they have another mystery to solve!

In *Light Up New York*, the Glimmer family is sightseeing while in New York for a benefit concert. As usual, the girls stumble across another mystery, and deal with sibling rivalry and random acts of kindness.

Grant pens a delightful series for young readers with a family similar to her own (she has twins and a younger daughter). The faith element is very evident, yet it is not preachy. The family prays together and tries to treat one another with kindness. The family motto is: "Glimmer Girls, Sparkle & Shine, But most of all, Be kind." In each book, the girls investigate a mystery they stumble across. Together they learn lessons about being good friends, telling the truth, and following their instincts. The characters are appealing, the dialogue is genuine, and the storytelling is lively.

Recommended for school and church libraries.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

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**Rock star / by Kelly Starling Lyons; illustrated by Vanessa Brantley-Newton. (Jada Jones; 1)**

86 p. : col. ill. ; 20 cm. Grades 1-3
Fic Rating: 4

**Class act / by Kelly Starling Lyons; illustrated by Vanessa Brantley Newton. (Jada Jones; 2)**

96 p. : col. ill. ; 21 cm. Grades 1-3
Fic Rating: 4

Author Kelly Starling Lyons kicks off a new realistic fiction series for young readers, featuring fourth grader Jada Jones.

In *Rock Star*, Jada Jones misses her best friend Mari who moved away that summer. When her teacher assigns a group project on rocks and minerals, she is thrilled because rocks are her passion. But finding friends to work with who understand her can be a challenge. Will she rock the assignment and make new friends in the process?

In *Class Act*, Jada is back with another school story—this time she is running for student council! Being a candidate is challenging when others pressure her to make promises she can't keep. The last straw is a rumor spread about her fear of public speaking. Who can she trust? Will she lose friends as a result of the election?

Lyons creates a likeable character in Jada Jones.
She hits just the right note of spunk without being sassy to adults, and just the right note of vulnerability without being weak. Jada is an African-American fourth grader who appeals to young readers. She has her struggles but her stories promote good values such as believe in yourself, say no to drama, and try to fix your mistakes. Most of all, her stories show that to have a friend, one must be a friend.

Lyons’ books are delightfully illustrated by Vanessa Brantley Newton in these easy-to-read chapter books. Readers in first through third grades will enjoy meeting Jada and her friends!

Recommended for school and public libraries. Fans of “Katie Woo” and “Ivy and Bean” will welcome this new series.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com
YOUNG ADULT FICTION

Unblemished / Sara Ella. (Unblemished; 1)
369 p. : maps ; 22 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 5

Unraveling / by Sara Ella. (Unblemished; 2)
356 p. : maps ; 21 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 4

Sara Ella is a new voice in young adult fiction. She combines elements from fairy tales and fantasy to create young adult fiction that will captivate the reader.

In Unblemished, Eliyana Ember has a large facial birthmark. Joshua David, her closest friend, treats her as if the birthmark is normal, even a thing of beauty, leading her to finally believe she is worthy to be loved. She is just a few weeks short of her eighteenth birthday when tragedy strikes.

Her mother is presumed dead when she doesn’t come home one night. Joshua becomes her legal guardian, complicating their relationship. Things get strange quickly, from a hooded stalker, to travel to a parallel world, to being pursued by an evil man.

Soon she is faced with two possible suitors: her guardian Joshua, and Kyaphus. On top of this, Eliyana discovers her birthmark is a symbol of hope in this new world. How can she be the one to save others when she can’t even decide between them?

In Unraveling, Eliyana will be crowned queen soon. Joshua who was raised to be king, wants Kyaphus out of the picture because Eliyana is torn between her feelings for both of them. Those feelings have a devastating effect on those around them.

Eliyana’s dream life begins to unravel. Both Joshua and Kyaphus love her, but who does she really love—the man she fell in love with over the past three years or the one who knows her better but for a shorter time? Our princess faces two charming suitors who care for her differently—which one is her true love? And how will her choice affect those around her? What lengths will they go to, in order to win her hand forever?

Ella gives readers a strong heroine who overcomes adversity to take her place in the battle of good vs. evil. Callings (gifts) play a role in the story and are symbols for a life of faith. Ella gives us a tale of the not-so-beautiful-in-our-world princess who is beautiful in another world because of her blemish.

Unblemished was nominated for the INSPY Award (Literature for Young People), 2017 Christy award, and 2017 Carol award. Unbreakable (Book 3) is expected in May 2018.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Princess academy / Shannon Hale. (Princess academy; 1)
314 p. ; 21 cm. Grades 4-8
Fic Rating: 4
Princess academy: palace of stone / Shannon Hale. (Princess academy; 2)
321 p. ; 21 cm. Grades 4-8
Fic Rating: 4

Princess academy: the forgotten sisters / Shannon Hale. (Princess academy; 3)
326 p. ; 21 cm. Grades 4-8
Fic Rating: 4

Prolific author Shannon Hale pens a series about a teen girl who prepares for life in a palace—but this is not an ordinary fairy tale.

In The Princess Academy, Miri was selected from her mountain village to attend an academy that prepares girls for a life as the prince’s prospective bride. Girls from all over the country are sent to the academy, where they compete to be chosen as the next princess at the end of the year-long process. A harsh headmistress, combined with rigid rules and practices at the academy, push Mira into a leadership role among the girls. Will she be chosen as the next princess? Does she want to be if it means leaving her village behind?

In The Princess Academy: Palace of Stone, Miri returns to the capital for the prince’s wedding. While she is there, Miri attends the school at the Queen’s Castle where she meets new friends who are planning a revolution. She is torn between a new attraction and an old love, as well as her loyalty to the new princess and her belief in the ideas being promoted by her new friends. Miri is offered the choice to study at the university or return to the mountain, to be a lady to the princess or the betrothed of a stone carver. What will she decide?

In The Princess Academy: The Forgotten Sisters, Miri is ordered by the king to start a princess academy for three royal cousins in a faraway place. When she gets there, she finds her students aren’t interested in learning about etiquette, and they know almost nothing about their ancestry. The more time she spends with them, the more she realizes they are a well-guarded secret no one knows about and that those who do know will go to great lengths to keep it that way.

Hale is an excellent storyteller—her characters are well-developed and the plot moves along nicely. This isn’t your typical fairy tale; the happily-ever-after is not guaranteed. Mira grows and matures through the books.

Recommended for school and public libraries. Princess Academy (book 1) was a Newbery Honor nominee, and the sequels are noteworthy as well.
Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

The evaporation of Sofi Snow / Mary Weber.
xi, 339 p. ; 22 cm. Grades 9-12
Fic Rating: 4

Mary Weber, author of the Storm Siren trilogy, pens a new science fiction series, incorporating video gaming, futuristic fantasy, adventure, and alien invasions.

In The Evaporation of Sofi Snow, 17-year-old Sofi Snow is an online gamer and hacker, working behind the scenes to protect her younger brother Shilo, a contestant in the Earth’s Fantasy Fight, where real and virtual blood sport mix. When a
bomb destroys the gaming arena, Sofi is certain Shilo is still alive, despite the evidence of his death. Sofi’s nightmares about him are so vivid that she is convinced he is on the Delonese ice-planet where only Earth’s ambassadors and the Delonese live. She convinces her friend Miguel to take her to the ice planet to find him. Will she find Shilo in time? What is really going on behind the scenes on Delon? Can she uncover the conspiracy before the mastermind behind it strikes again?

Weber creates a credible future world where cameras monitor one’s every move and no detail of one’s life is private. For 19-year-old Miguel, one of Earth’s ambassadors, that constant scrutiny makes him a blackmail target. Can Miguel help Sofi find Shilo without being exposed by his blackmailer? Alien invasions, interplanetary politics, and human trafficking are at play in this gripping novel by Weber.

*The Evaporation of Sofi Snow* is told in alternating first-person points of view (Sofi’s and Miguel’s), with the viewpoint indicated at the beginning of each chapter. Discussion questions are also included. The book ends on a cliffhanger with unanswered questions. Hopefully they will be answered in her forthcoming book, *Reclaiming Shilo Snow* in the March 2018.

Recommended for public libraries for adults and older teens.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

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**YOUNG ADULT NONFICTION**

**Luther : the life and legacy of the German reformer / Stephen McCaskell.**


98 p ; 31 x 11 cm. Grades 7-12

B Rating: 5

Luther is a beautifully and uniquely illustrated book containing edifying biographical teaching about the premier figure of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther. This is a useful book for parents to read to kids, but it is not a kid’s book *per se*. It is what may only be called a serious kid’s book.

Several factors contribute to the serious character of the book. First, there is a lot of text in this book. The amount on each page is limited, but it is a big book and it adds up. In this reviewer’s judgment, a child would have to be at least eight and a strong reader to listen patiently, let alone read on his or her own. Second, all of the illustrations are done in grayscale. The look is very striking and memorable—and it lends an overall gravity to the book’s contents. This is not a hagiography or a light treatment. Third, the book is divided into multiple parts, making it suitable for nightly reading in successive evenings. Finally, the book ends with something like an altar call, a homiletical application.

This reviewer has a serious desire to use the 500th anniversary of the Reformation to impress upon his children the importance of the Christian doctrines retrieved in that time period. The Luther book is a valuable tool for this weighty and joyful task.

The book is something of a companion to a
documentary on Luther which is also worth viewing; the illustrations in the book derive from those used in the film.

Mark L. Ward, Jr., CLJ
ADULT FICTION

The shattered vigil / Patrick W. Carr. (The darkwater saga; 2)  
457 p.; 22 cm.  Adult  
Fic  Rating: 4

Patrick W. Carr, author of The Staff and The Sword series, presents the next installment in his new epic fantasy for adult readers.

In The Shattered Vigil, Willet Dura and the rest of the Vigil discover that their enemy strikes at the heart of the Vigil: one of them is missing. The defense of the six kingdoms is threatened. As deadly unseen assassins target the Vigil, the church leaders and kingdom rulers want to put the Vigil members into protective custody.

Willet is imprisoned as the other men and women in the Vigil scatter to avoid being taken into custody. When Willet discovers the murder of a noblewoman—not a member of the Vigil—by an unseen assassin, he manages to escape from prison, intent on finding her killer. How does her death hold a key to the evil threatening them? How many members of the Vigil will be lost fighting the dark forces? What happens when they find a traitor in their midst?

Carr’s book is filled with strong characters and plenty of suspenseful plot twists. This series is intense, filled with more violence (though not too graphic). It appears there is little hope for overcoming this darker evil. This story makes the supernatural abilities of the Vigil—as well as the evil they face—even more evident, more of a spiritual battle.

Carr does an excellent job of creating the dark world, building tension as the story unfolds. While many questions are answered at the end of this book, there is a big plot twist that will leave the reader eager to read the next installment!

Recommended for adult collections in public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Earlier Series Title Reviewed: The Shock of Night (Jan/Feb 2016)

Dressed for death / Julianna Deering. (A Drew Farthing mystery; 4)  
309 p.; 22 cm.  Adult  
Fic  Rating: 5

Murder on the moor / Julianna Deering. (A Drew Farthing mystery; 5)  
321 p.; 22 cm.  Adult  
Fic  Rating: 5

In Dressed for Death, Drew Farthing and his bride of six months arrive at a Regency-era party at the home of old friends, looking forward to a relaxing and interesting week living in a different time period. Beginning with the host’s fiancée, Alice, one death follows another while the characters feel they are standing by and watching it happen without knowing what to do to stop it. Friendships are strained, relationships are broken, but our hero is Drew, always on the lookout, always finding the perpetrator although in this case plenty of guilt abounds. Why didn’t he realize the identity of the murderer before all the killing happened?—he torments himself with this
question.

*Murder on the Moor* takes place on the creepy, misty Yorkshire moors, a setting just perfect for murder and malice. Several incidents have caused great concern to Drew’s old friend Beaky Bloodworth and his new bride Sabrina. But the very worst is the recent killing of the local vicar followed in succession by the murder of a village spinster, a governess in the past. What had they seen or what did they know that their lives had to be taken? And who might be next if Drew cannot sort out the various characters and motives?

These books are very easy to read, with delightful main characters, including a godly couple. The books offer a Christian worldview without actually presenting the gospel.

*Ceil Carey, CLJ*

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**The mistress of Tall Acre : a novel / Laura Frantz.**


395 p. ; 22 cm. Adult

Fic Rating: 5

The American Revolution has finally ended, but for 28-year-old Sophie Menzies, the battle is far from won. Because her father was a Tory (though she is herself a loyal patriot), Sophie is in danger of losing her home at Three Chimneys. Alone—with her mother gone to Heaven, her father having escaped to Scotland, and no word from her brother whose loyalties are being questioned—how can Sophie save her home? The only solution to her problems may just rest in the hands of her widowed neighbor General Seamus Ogilvy, newly returned home an American hero with a young daughter to raise. She needs his financial support as well as his political influence to save her home, and he needs a mother for his daughter.

Will a marriage of convenience solve both their problems? Can two broken people find healing together? Just when it seems that happily ever after might be attained, a visitor from the past threatens to tear the new family apart.

Laura Frantz’s *The Mistress of Tall Acre* is a beautiful story of love and restoration that will sweep readers off their feet. The plot builds suspense with the intrigue of secrets and spies all culminating into a surprising twist. The main characters are full of depth and their own authentic charm. Sophie has a tender, compassionate heart and a giving nature; however, she is strong in her convictions and loyalty. Seamus has a hardened intensity about him, a result of his personal losses and years away at war. At times, his actions and words are insensitive if not hurtful, yet he is a protector by nature who learns to open his heart again. For both characters, their story is one of finding and coming home, with heartaches and joys along the way. The relationships in this story, both the developing romance between the main characters and their parental bonds with Lily Cate, possess a poignant sweetness and devotion. The final chapters paint a message that truth brings freedom and with it hope for the future.

*Justina McBride, CLJ*

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**Pursued / Lisa Harris. (The Nikki Boyd files; 3)**


312 p. ; 22 cm. Adult

Fic Rating: 5
Nikki Boyd just wants to quickly return home from her work trip so she can finally be reunited with her boyfriend, Tyler Grant, who has been overseas for three months. On her flight back to Nashville, Nikki meets Erika Hamilton. Minutes after introducing herself to her seatmate, Nikki’s flight crash lands outside of Nashville. That’s where the critical first 48 hours begin.

There’s no record of Erika Hamilton on that flight to Nashville. Nikki knows she was on the flight—she sat right next to Erika. Now she’s missing and Nikki is asked by the FBI to be a part of the missing persons task force determined to find Erika. Taking on that responsibility means no time to see her family or Tyler, which leaves her distracted. Will Nikki successfully locate Erika before it’s too late? What about all the mystery surrounding the identity of this woman? Shouldn’t it be easy to at least find out who she was before she disappeared?

From beginning to end, this story is packed with action. Within the first few pages, readers are captivated by the characters and the mysterious elements of the plane crash and missing persons case. In true Lisa Harris fashion, Pursued is chock-full of drama and suspense as the story progresses and the plot grows more complex. This is a great read for mystery/thriller lovers. It is a continuation of The Nikki Boyd Files so it is recommended that readers start with the first two books in the series before delving into Pursued.

Dani Seilhamer, CLJ


A love so true / Melissa Jagears. (Teaville Moral Society; 2)
359 p.; 21 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

Award-winning author Melissa Jagears continues her historical fiction series set in Kansas during the early 1900s.

In A Love So True, Evelyn Wisely works at the Teaville mansion that rescues children from the red-light district, but her heart is for the women who live there as well. She wants to help them escape poverty and prostitution. To do that, she needs the support of local businessmen to fund her work. David Kingsman comes to Teaville to rebuild his father’s faltering factory business. His intent was to stay only as long as needed to put the business on solid footing again, and then he would return to Kansas City. However, he is attracted to Evelyn. He shows interest in Evelyn’s work and wants to lend support, but complications arise.

Evelyn is compassionate and fiercely independent, holding others at arm’s length because of a secret she hides. When her secret is finally revealed, it causes a rift that threatens her budding relationship with David and any possible future together. The conclusion is a nice surprise twist.

Like Jagears’ other novels, A Love So True has solid character development, a clear faith element (without being preachy), and excellent historical detail. Characters from A Heart Most Certain (book 1) appear as secondary characters, continuing their storyline. It is refreshing to read a novel set in a time period and in circumstances not as familiar to readers. Jagears’ books are not just historical romance–these books deal with
Christian charity, adoption, responsibility, compassion, and redemption in the community around them.

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

This road we traveled / Jane Kirkpatrick.

Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2016.

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

When her family decides to head west at the prompting of her adult son, Tabby Brown decides nothing will stop her from going—not her physical disability, her advancing age, or her children who believe she is too frail to make the long, treacherous journey to Oregon. She has survived many hardships in life and she is ready to face this new chapter with the same courage, determined spirit, and faith in God that has always carried her.

Pherne Pringle, Tabby’s daughter, feels her heart is being torn in two as her husband insists on going west, leaving behind all that is familiar and safe, as well as the resting place of their youngest son. Will she learn to find peace in letting go while walking this uncertain road?

At age 17, the trip to Oregon is full of promise and a small measure of uncertainty for Virgilia Pringle, a blend of her independent grandmother and her cautious mother. Together will these three women have what it takes to survive the journey that lies before them, and if so, the fortitude to start a new life in an untamed land?

In This Road We Traveled, Jane Kirkpatrick uses the liberty and entertainment of fiction combined with true events and real people to capture the very essence of the pioneering spirit that drove men and women to carve out new roads and new lives to settle the West. Kirkpatrick’s thorough research and vivid descriptions allow readers to see the sights of the wild prairie and hear the creaking wagons and playful voices of children making their way across the Oregon Trail. Full of suspense, romance, and danger, the plot holds everything necessary for a grand adventure. However, it is the main characters, their growth, and wisdom that leave a lasting impression about the journey of life, which is always full of goodbyes and new beginnings, joys and sorrows, and holding on and letting go. The overarching theme is that life is constantly moving; one can either run from this reality or embrace it in faith and live fully.

Justina McBride, CLJ

A stranger at Fellsworth / Sarah E. Ladd.

(A treasures of Surrey novel; 3)


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

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

In A Stranger at Fellsworth, Annabelle Thorley is at the mercy of her brother when she is abandoned by her fiancé and must set aside her life in high society because of her deceased father’s debts. She runs away to Fellsworth, where her uncle serves as the superintendent. But a life of ease does not await her, for she must work for a living now.
She meets Owen Locke, widowed gamekeeper at Fellsworth. His goal is to keep poachers at bay and earn enough money to purchase land of his own for him and his young daughter. But mysterious strangers, poachers, and other forces threaten his plan and the budding relationship with Annabelle. Will they uncover the person behind the poaching and find a life together?

Ladd writes descriptive narrative with hints of mystery and suspense woven into the plot. As in her earlier novels in this series, the historical details enrich the plot, and the story is plot-driven with plenty of twists. The faith element has a light touch; the relationship between Annabelle and her suitor develops appropriately to the storyline. Each book includes discussion questions for reading groups.

Recommended for adult collections in public libraries. Older teen readers will find it a clean read. It will appeal to Julie Klassen and Jane Austen fans.

Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ

Earlier Series Titles Reviewed: The Curiosity Keeper (Mar/Apr/May/Jun 2016); Dawn at Emberwilde (Oct/Nov/Dec 2016).

Dark deception / Nancy Mehl. (Defenders of justice; 2)

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

Nancy Mehl continues her new romantic suspense series featuring US marshals.

In Dark Deception, Kate O’Brien lives in witness protection in a small Arkansas town. Four years earlier, the O’Brien sisters were attacked by a serial killer, but only Kate survived.

However, Kate’s new life is not as safe as she thinks, especially when new evidence arises that might lead to a convicted man’s freedom. Kate is required to testify in a new trial, putting her life at risk. She agrees to return to St. Louis if the original deputy marshal who protected her during the first trial, US Deputy Marshall Tony DeLuca, will again provide protection. Both of them are unaware that she is being stalked by a killer, putting their lives in danger. Will they make it there alive? Is it the serial killer or is there a copycat killer at the center of the danger?

Mehl has written a plot-driven novel with a strong female character and an honorable male character. The faith element is evident but not heavy-handed. Readers will encounter good and bad cops, serial killers, obsessions, and fractured lives. The violence is appropriate for the story. The plot twists, especially concerning the identity of the mastermind behind Kate’s stalker, will keep the reader turning the pages until the book’s conclusion. All the loose ends are not tied up neatly at the end, leaving the reader wondering what will happen in the next book in this series.

Recommended for public and high school libraries. Fans of DiAnn Mills, Irene Hannon, and Dani Pettrey will appreciate this series.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Series Title Reviewed by CLJ: Fatal Frost (Jan/Feb/Mar 2017).
The elusive Miss Ellison / Carolyn Miller.  (Regency brides : a legacy of grace; 1)  
303 p.; 22 cm.  Adult  
Fic  Rating: 4  
Carolyn Miller writes the first inspirational Regency novel in her new trilogy.  
In *The Elusive Miss Ellison*, the entire village—except for Miss Lavinia Ellison—eagerly anticipates the arrival of the new Earl of Hawkesbury. She believes him to have the same reputation as brother: reckless and arrogant. Lavinia is the unmarried bluestocking daughter of the local minister. Nicholas, the new Earl, is a former war hero and reluctant Duke, unprepared for the problems his brother left unsolved and the other obligations he faces. When Nicholas is challenged by feisty Lavinia to move beyond his wounded pride, it may provide too many obstacles for them. A family secret adds to the complications they face.  
Like the hero in Jane Austen’s original *Pride and Prejudice*, wealthy Nicholas suffers from too much pride and is a snob! Feisty Lavinia suffers from too much prejudice towards his family and their effect on others around them. Both of them come to an appreciation of God’s forgiveness as they move past their own histories.  
Miller does an excellent job in portraying Regency England with its historical details and solid characterization. Like anyone, her characters face real problems in terms of finances, others’ expectations, and finding one’s place, allowing the reader to identify with them as they struggle to become better people. While the storyline is somewhat predictable, it follows the pattern of a good Regency novel; the faith element is light, the romance is clean, and it is a cozy read!  
Fans of Julie Klassen, Jane Austen, and Regency romances will welcome this new author!  
Recommended for high school and public libraries.  
Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

The raven / Mike Nappa. (Coffey & Hill; 2)  
Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 2016.  
LCCN 0  ISBN 9780800726454, paperback,  
$14.99.  
429 p.; 22 cm.  Adult  
Fic  Rating: 4  
Coffey and Hill are back at it again in the second of the Coffey & Hill series, *The Raven*. Although divorced, Trudi Coffey and Samuel Hill still share an amount of love and attraction between them which gives a type of sweetness to the story. That sweetness helps to balance out the violence to some extent.  
The Raven is a magician—no, change that to master of deception, but really just a young man trying to make his mark on the world who is crazy about Trudi Coffey. His life seems harmless enough until he pickpockets the wallet of an important councilman, and, finding compromising information, decides to blackmail him. What ensues does not look good for this boy wonder and his appendages. He finds himself mired in a plot called Nevermore with the Eastern European mafia with no way out except for an old woman who calls herself Mama Bliss and the help of Coffey and Hill.  
Mike Nappa’s *The Raven* is not a cozy mystery. As mentioned before, the book contains a serious amount of violence (though not gratuitous). There is a Christian worldview with some sharing of Scripture. Recommended for mystery buffs and those that enjoyed the first in the series.
Ceil Carey, CLJ

Earlier Series Title Reviewed by CLJ: Annabel Lee (Jul/Aug/Sep 2017).

Blind spot / Dani Pettrey. (Chesapeake valor; 3)
331 p.; 22 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 5

Award-winning author Dani Pettrey continues her romantic suspense series set in coastal Maryland, about childhood friends with careers in law enforcement.

In Blind Spot, FBI Agent Declan Grey is chasing down leads to an imminent terrorist attack on US soil. When his investigation takes him to an immigrant community, he calls on Tanner Shaw for assistance. Tanner works with immigrants and refugees, and recently joined the FBI as a crisis counselor. They find themselves fighting the clock to neutralize the threat, even as they recognize the growing attraction between them. Can they stop the terrorists in time?

Pettrey's series features strong personalities with real problems. Declan, Tanner, and their friends are people with flaws, problems in their past, and consequences in their future caused by the choices they made. The faith element is evident but not preachy; for example, Declan prays for his relationship with Tanner. Their relationship is clean (appropriate for high school readers). Pettrey excels at creating an ensemble of characters the reader cares about. Characters from earlier novels reappear, to the reader's delight.

In addition to character development, Pettrey also excels in plot development. The plausible plot takes the reader on a thrilling roller-coaster ride until the end with a final plot twist! Blind Spot answers some but not all of the questions—which no doubt will be answered in Dead Drift (book 4), scheduled for July 2018.

Recommended for public libraries. Fans of DiAnn Mills and Irene Hannon will especially enjoy this series. Suspense, romance, and action add up to a thrilling read!

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ: Cold Shot (Mar/Apr/May/Jun 2016) and Still Life (Jan/Feb/Mar 2017).

The third target / Joel C. Rosenberg. (J. B. Collins novel; 1)
x, 433 p.; 24 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

The first hostage : a J. B. Collins novel / Joel C. Rosenberg. (J. B. Collins novel; 2)
xvi, 430 p.; 24 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

Without warning / Joel C. Rosenberg. (J. B. Collins series; 3)
xiii, 453 p.; 24 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4
Joel C. Rosenberg holds the reader captive as the story of J.B. Collins, a foreign correspondent for the New York Times, unfolds. His storytelling builds anticipation and suspense, all while delivering the clear messages of salvation through faith, true sacrifice, and redemption.

The reader is first introduced to J.B. Collins in *The Third Target*. J.B. doesn’t make time for anything else but his stories and the truth until he interviews Abu Khalif, the head of the Muslim terrorist group ISIS. During the interview, J.B.’s suspicions are confirmed: ISIS has possession of chemical weapons and they intend to use them. After Khalif’s escape from prison, J.B. wants nothing more than to warn the world of the dangers that are sure to come, but now his own life is in danger. Will he disobey the orders of the U.S. government? With the President of the United States about to oversee a peace agreement days from being signed by both Israel and Palestine, there is no time to lose.

*The First Hostage* picks up where *The Third Target* ends. Abu Khalif and ISIS will do whatever it takes to establish the global reign of their Islamic messiah, even kidnap the President of the United States and demand the allegiance of the entire nation to the radical Islamic Sharia law. J.B. joins the multinationally-led hunt for the president before time runs out. In so doing, he and his family become targets of the jihadist.

In *Without Warning*, J.B. realizes that despite his best efforts thousands of lives are lost or put in harm’s way, including those of his family and friends. He joins a classified Mossad Israeli team to find and eliminate Abu Khalif and put an end to the terrorist reign. The independent correspondent has never thought of sacrifice, death, or what happens after, but as he draws closer to eliminating Abu Khalif, J.B. begins to question whether or not he is ready for the end of this life and what sacrifices it will take to save the lives of those he loves.

Rosenberg’s knowledge of current political and geographical regions melds seamlessly with his fictional creations. Although one may question J.B. Collins’ unexpected ability to fight alongside elite trained soldiers from multiple countries, it is quickly set aside for the fast-paced plot and detailed vivid action. The series is recommended with caution, as there are many deaths that take place, from both chemical and military grade weapons. The descriptions, though not in depth, do describe the events in such a way a picture is painted in the mind of the reader.

*Cicely K. Ben, CLJ*

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When tides turn / Sarah Sundin. (Waves of freedom; 3)  
391 p. ; 22 cm. Adults (YA)  
Fic Rating: 5

In *When Tides Turn*, Quintessa Beaumont tires of being known for her beauty and fun personality, desiring instead to be useful. She dumps her “princess” name for “Tess” and joins the Navy’s WAVES, Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service. In so doing, she will be useful—and she can finally give up the idea of a relationship with Dan Avery, since WAVES are not allowed to marry Navy men under any circumstances, not that Dan is interested in her. In addition to new duties, Tess notices something mysterious going on with her friend Yvette and determines to find out what it is.

Though he would prefer to be at sea, Dan Avery is stuck in Boston doing a desk job. Dan continually tries to focus on his naval career advancement
and getting back out to sea, but thoughts of Tess tend to distract him. When he gets a chance to serve at sea again, he takes it, happy to serve under his mentor, Admiral Howard. He learns some hard lessons from the Admiral that change the way he thinks when he returns to Boston. When the Navy lifts the restriction against dating WAVES, Dan wonders if Tess could possibly ever be interested in a bore like him.

Once again, Sarah Sundin combines an intriguing mystery with a budding romance and a splash of character transformation to create another compelling WWII-era novel. The war weighs heavily on the characters, lending a serious tenor to the story. Tess and Dan undergo some serious transformation and soul-searching throughout the book. Moments when Tess, Dan, and their friends are together lighten the mood, and also provide insights into America during the 40’s. All too quickly this story concludes, wrapping up the Waves of Freedom series.

Kristina Wolcott, CLJ


Hometown girl / Courtney Walsh.

ISBN 9781542045636, paperback, $12.95.
365 p.; 21 cm. Adult
Fic Rating: 4

Courtney Walsh pens a contemporary romance with a mystery set in a small Midwestern hometown.

In Hometown Girl, Beth Whitaker dreamed of leaving her hometown behind and doing big things in the big city. A mistake in judgement caused her to return home. There she made another mistake that may have contributed her father’s recent death. Beth doesn’t know what to do with her life anymore. Her sister Molly impulsively buys the fallen-down Fairwind Farm, and now Beth feels trapped.

Meanwhile Drew Barlow spent years trying to forget a tragedy that happened at the Farm when he was a young boy. When the farm’s owner dies and the sisters purchase the Farm, Drew decides to make peace with his past there. Can Drew and Beth restore the farm and make it a viable business? Can they solve an old mystery surrounding the tragedy Drew witnessed?

Walsh excels at her character development, creating individuals the reader can sympathize with and cheer on in their endeavors. Beth and Drew get caught up in Molly’s renovation plans for Fairwind. God gives both of them a second chance at letting go of past mistakes, finding healing and forgiveness. Hometown Girl is a story of redemption, second chances, and finding love and one’s life work, even in the face of repeated failures. Walsh does a good job of weaving the mystery and unraveling it, layer by layer, as the story unfolds.

Recommended for readers who want more than just a romance, the mystery element is handled well and is revealed slowly.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com
NKJV unapologetic study Bible: confidence for such a time as this.
1568 p.; 25 cm.  Adult
220  Rating: 3

The NKJV Unapologetic Study Bible: Confidence for Such a Time as This is a fruit of the ministry of the Kairos Journal, a conservative evangelical publication dedicated to making timely application of the Bible to the cultural season in which we find ourselves in the Western world.

This edition features over 200 page-long article inserts drawn from Kairos on multiple topics, all of which are related somehow to the passages of Scripture near which they are inserted. The article inserts are well written and generally careful, though their connections to surrounding passages are not always equally obvious. The articles are not generally expositional: their purpose is not, like many (most?) study Bibles, to explicate the biblical text but to apply it to current issues. Quotations from prominent Christians (both historical and contemporary) also dot the text, including Ambrose of Milan, Frederica Mathewes-Green, John Adams, and Tertullian. Profiles of other prominent Christians are also included, including brief articles on Nell Bridges, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Justin Martyr and Jim Elliot.

The selection of current issues is indeed timely: “Family: Homosexuality and Transgenderism,” “Sanctity of Life: Euthanasia and Suicide,” “Government: Peace and War,” and “Education: Evolution and Intelligent Design” (though readers may wonder how much the Bible has to say specifically about “Economics: Taxation”—and explanatory notes in this study Bible acknowledge that indeed they are looking for principles more than explicit statements).

Brief introductions are provided for Bible books; red letters are provided for Jesus’ speech; a table of monies, weights and measures is provided in the back; a helpful index of all study material is also given.

Mark L. Ward, Jr., CLJ
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