Outstanding Books Reviewed in This Issue

*The Orphan’s Wish* by Melanie Dickerson.

*Until We Find Home* by Cathy Gohlke.

*Loving Isaac* by Heather Kaufman.

Plus: Q & As with Julie Klassen, Lynn H. Blackburn, Lynette Eason and Susan May Warren
Dear CLJ Readers:

Welcome to the newest issue of CLJ!

As you know from my earlier letters, 2018 was a time of transition for CLJ. In addition to the full retirement of the journal's founder and my mentor, Nancy Hesch, we have had several changes in our volunteer staff as well as some personal challenges on my part. As a result, we have fallen behind schedule.

These months have been a time of learning and adjustment for us. As a result, we have streamlined several of our processes so that I expect our future coverage will be more timely and our publication turnaround time shorter. You will see more reviews of more recent titles, coming out on a more regular basis.

I thank all of our readers for sticking with us through these changes and for your prayers. And I am especially thankful for our many wonderful reviewers who have stepped up and produced quality work in record time, despite delays on my end.

In this issue, please enjoy several inspiring and informative Q and A’s with some of the most talented Christian authors on the scene. Our coverage of the Christy Award winners and finalists—historically presented in the last issue of the year—will be appearing in our next issue.

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*.

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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

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What can you tell us about your new book, The Bride of Ivy Green?

This is book three in Tales from Ivy Hill, the eagerly anticipated conclusion to the series. In the novel, the three main characters face new challenges and romantic possibilities. Also, a secretive new dressmaker arrives in the village, but the women soon suspect she isn’t who she claims to be. Surprises lie in store . . . and wedding bells, too.

Did you have to do any new research to write this book?

Quite a lot, actually. I had to research dressmaking, British-Indian relations during the early nineteenth century, fairs and menageries, and Regency wedding traditions. Thankfully, I enjoy research.

How can readers learn more about all three books in the series?

Readers can learn more by “visiting” the village of Ivy Hill through a special website devoted to the series (TalesFromIvyHill.com). The site includes a colorful village map, character list, photos, excerpts, author videos, and more.

Is it difficult to say good-bye to these characters? Would you ever write more about them?

Yes and yes! In fact, I have agreed to write a Christmas novella set in Ivy Hill, so readers and I don’t have to say good-bye to them quite yet (tentative release: Fall 2020).

What are you writing now?

I am currently working on a stand-alone romantic mystery titled The Bridge to Belle Island (December 2019). Two of my previous books, The Tutor’s Daughter and The Secret of Pembrooke Park, have strong mystery elements, but this will be the most mysterious yet. I’m enjoying the challenge.

How can readers stay in touch with you?

I enjoy interacting with readers on Facebook (facebook.com/AuthorJulieKlassen). Readers are also welcome to email me at: julie@julieklassen.com. Thanks for asking!
**SPECIAL FEATURE**

**Q & A WITH**

**LYNN H. BLACKBURN**

**S P E C I A L  F E A T U R E**

**Can you please tell us about Beneath the Surface, book 1 in the new Dive Team Investigations series?**

_Beneath the Surface_ introduces us to the Carrington County Sheriff’s Office dive team—a team made up of volunteers from all areas of the sheriff’s office who are trained to perform underwater investigations.

Ryan Parker is a homicide investigator who is second-in-command on the dive team. While on a training exercise, he discovers the body of a businessman at the bottom of the lake. He has no way to know that when he asks to borrow the dock of Leigh Weston—a girl he’s known forever who recently returned to the area—that he’s dragging her straight into the crosshairs of a killer.

Leigh returned to Carrington to start over after being stalked by a patient. She’s been struggling to understand how God could have allowed all the horrible things she’s endured in the past few years, but she never imagined that the worst was yet to come.

The investigations into the murder of the businessman and the threats against Leigh draw in multiple members of the dive team, and they work together to uncover the truth—and stop a killer—before it’s too late.

**How did you become interested in underwater investigations?**

I attended the Writers Police Academy (WPA) in 2014 and went to a class taught by a local law enforcement dive team (Guilford County, NC). I was sitting beside a YMCA pool watching them demonstrate evidence recovery techniques and a few hours later I was telling my mentor about this idea I had for a series.

**What type of research was required to accurately write about a dive team?**

It started with that class at WPA, then moved to the internet. Then I got in touch with Mike Berry—a Master Underwater Criminal Investigator. His website and book were invaluable, and he also answered specific questions about the scenarios I had created for this story. I also talked to Sergeant Chris Hammett, a former homicide investigator and member of the law enforcement dive team in my community. Their input was critical to making the story as accurate as possible.
What do you hope readers can learn from Beneath the Surface?

I hope readers come away with renewed confidence that God is here for them and that he really is working things for their good and his glory, even when it doesn’t feel that way.

What was your inspiration for In Too Deep, book 2 in the series?

When I first developed this story, I knew I wanted it to have a human trafficking angle and I wanted Adam’s family to be mixed up in it. But it was a very vague idea and I didn’t know how it would come together. Then I heard about the labor trafficking happening in my own city and how the Carolinas have a high number of people living in slavery right in front of us and we don’t realize it. I can still remember the moment I knew this was the kind of trafficking the characters would be dealing with. It shook me in a way no other story I’ve written has.

What type of research was required for writing your book?

I interviewed a white-collar crimes investigator and a computer forensics expert, both of whom gave me valuable insights into Adam’s and Sabrina’s characters. We talked about what they love about their jobs, what’s challenging about their jobs, and what a day-in-the-life looks like for them. I’m also fortunate to have a homicide investigator who graciously answers my procedural questions and a master underwater criminal investigator who helps me get the diving scenes right. I also spent a lot of time researching human trafficking— specifically labor trafficking in the Carolinas. It was the most difficult research I’ve ever done.

What intrigued you most when writing about dive team investigations?

The thing that is both the most intriguing and the most terrifying to me is how often the divers have little to no visibility. They are floating just above the bottom of a lake and searching with their hands. It takes a very special person to have the courage to do something like that.

Do you have a favorite character in your book?

The hero and heroine always get my love and devotion, of course. But after that, I’m very partial to the EMTs who, unfortunately for the main characters, get a lot of action in this novel! I think Clark and Dorothy might each have an interesting story. And Adam’s parents, Art and Abby, were a lot of fun to get to know.

What do you hope readers gain from reading In Too Deep?

I always want my writing to encourage people in their faith—to help them remember that God is
faithful and good. But with In Too Deep, I also hope readers come away with a new understanding of the very real issue of human trafficking in our country and seek out ways they can help in their own communities.

**What's next on your writing to-do list?**

I’m writing the third book in the Dive Team Investigations series. Readers have been clamoring for Investigator Gabe Chavez to get his own story, and I can tell you that he has a good one!

**How can readers connect with you?**

The best place to connect with me is my website, www.LynnHBlackburn.com, where they can sign up for my newsletter. I also have an author page on Facebook, and I’m active on Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest—all @LynnHBlackburn.
Why did you decide to write a series based on a law enforcement family?

I’m a huge fan of Blue Bloods, so I suppose I thought it would be fun to come up with my own version of a law enforcement family. Fortunately, I have quite a few law enforcement friends who are willing to share their expertise.

Your series is set in Columbia, South Carolina. Why did you utilize this location for your series?

I went to school at the University of South Carolina and I liked the way they have their police regions set up. There are five regions—east, west, north, south, and Metro. I didn’t want to have dirty cops as a part of any of those real regions, so I made up my own . . . Midtown.

This is the third book about the St. John family. What makes the main character in Code of Valor, Detective Brady St. John, different from his family members?

Brady is a lot like his other family members, but he’s also very much his own person. He’s been hurt in the past, much like his siblings, but he’s determined not to let that interfere with finding true love—even while he immerses himself in work. When Emily Chastain comes along and needs his help, he’s more than willing to jump into the fray to save her life and catch a would-be killer.

What type of research was required for writing about underwater criminal investigations?

I did a lot of research. I talked to a fellow author friend of mine, Lynn H. Blackburn, who is a certified scuba diver, and she gave me some great tips. Since her series is about a dive team, she’d already done most of the “legwork” research, and I was able to ask her to pass on the info to moi. It worked out GREAT for me. In fact, I even used a few of her dive team members to help out when Brady was desperate to rescue Emily. So, don’t be surprised when you read Code of Valor and see a few familiar characters from Beneath the Surface.

Tell us about Detective Brady St. John’s love interest in your book.

Emily Chastain hasn’t had an easy life, but he’s an overcomer. A victim of sexual assault, her life fell apart and for a while she struggled to find a way to cope. With the help of a loving family member, Emily found God and a measure of peace. She’s worked hard and managed to build a life that she’s very comfortable with.
At least until someone kills her best friend, then comes after her.

**What do you hope readers gain from your book?**

I hope readers are, first and foremost, completely entertained with the story. It is my sincere desire to write a story that will leave the reader breathless in the end, but satisfied with the ending—yet sad at the same time that it’s all over. I also pray that any reader who’s been affected by violence or assault will see that healing and peace are possible and that while the journey may be a tough one, it’s not an impossible one. I also hope that the reader sees God at work in the lives of the characters and desire to see him work in their lives as well.

**What are you working on next?**

I’m working on Vow of Justice, the fourth book in the Blue Justice series.

**How can readers connect with you?**

I’m on Facebook at www.facebook.com/lynetteeason and twitter @lynetteeason. I'm also on Instagram: lynetteeason. My website is www.lynetteeason.com. Thank you so much!

(CLJ’s review of *Code of Valor* is coming in the next issue! Look for the review of book 2, *Called to Protect*, on pg. 24)
Q & A WITH
SUSAN MAY WARREN

Wait for Me is the final book in the successful Montana Rescue series. What have you loved the most about this series?

I love this team! All the characters have a place in my heart, with their quirks and flaws and winning personalities. I have loved watching the deepening relationships between the team members, how they’ve interacted with faith and grace and learned how to love each other and the people they rescue. Of course, I’ve loved the great adventures, from forest fires to climbing accidents to white-water rescues—even shipwrecks and tornados. I love diving into different rescue scenarios and putting my team through their paces! Okay, so I love everything about this fun series!

Is there one book in this series that you have really resonated with?

I think I resonate with each book at the time I write it—I’m always drawing from my own experiences and current faith questions so each character and I go on the journey together. That said, I really loved Troubled Waters, because I loved watching Ian and Sierra finally confront their feelings. And I resonated with the themes of Storm Front, and loved setting that book in my own Minnesotan backyard. But the finale . . . oh, seeing Pete finally get his story, and possibly his girl, was so much fun. The long-awaited adventure! I loved seeing the wrap-up of the series—it was better than I imagined!

Each book in the Montana Rescue series focuses on different members of the Peak Rescue team. Can you provide a brief description of the main characters and the overall plot for Wait for Me?

The main POV characters for Wait for Me are Pete Brooks and Jess Tagg, two long-suffering charac-
ters with an on-again, off-again romance who finally face the moment when they have to reach out for love . . . or forever let it go. Pete is a national SAR team leader, and Jess is an EMT and former NYC socialite who has left her past behind. The series also wraps up the long-awaited finale to the disappearance of Esme Shaw, something that began in book 1, with a kidnapping at the beginning of the book, a race to find and rescue the taken, and then the ultimate showdown with the villain of the series. An epic ending!

What type of research was required for writing your book?

I have travelled to Montana numerous times to dig into the setting of Mercy Falls, and for this book I had to add some medical rescue research as well as dust off my wildland firefighting, climbing, and standard suspense skills—with a villain on the page. I also pulled out my notes on Paris . . . but you’ll have to read the book to discover why!

Who is your favorite character in Wait for Me and why?

Heartbroken, steadfast, brave, hopeful Pete. He wears his heart on his sleeve for most of this book,
and I realized anew why Jess just couldn’t forget him!

**What do you hope readers gain from reading *Wait for Me*?**

My books are always about second chances and accepting the grace God wants to offer us. This book in particular really focuses on grace and the idea that we reject the grace that can be ours when we try to fix things ourselves.

**What’s next on your writing to-do list?**

Oh, I’m working on a brand-new series that I think readers will love about an international search and rescue team of ex-military operatives who will risk everything to bring home the lost and broken when they can’t save themselves. The first book is set in Alaska!

**How can readers connect with you?**

Hang out with me on my Facebook page: [https://www.facebook.com/SusanMayWarrenFiction](https://www.facebook.com/SusanMayWarrenFiction/) and at [www.susanmaywarren.com](http://www.susanmaywarren.com) where you can get a free book and join my newsletter list for updates and sneak peeks!
PRIMARY TITLES

Miguel's Brave Knight: Young Cervantes and His Dream of Don Quixote / by Margarita Engle; illustrated by Raul Colon.

ISBN 9781561458561
Grades 2-5    Rating: *5

Fairytales make us believe that dreams can and do come true. But it was Don Quixote who dared brave the dragons (that is, windmills and obstacles) that imprison the treasures and beauty of life, in order to set them free.

In Miguel's Brave Knight, the reader meets the boy Miguel de Cervantes. Born in 1547, and a contemporary of the English playwright William Shakespeare, Cervantes would become one of Spain and Latin America's most important literary figures. Today the world knows him best as the creator of the idealistic, and sometimes foolish, Don Quixote, the Man of La Mancha. His character's name has even become part of the English language: quixotic, which Webster's dictionary defines to mean foolishly impractical, especially in the pursuit of ideals.

Well-known for her strong and descriptive verses, Margarita Engle, winner of numerous awards, enchants the reader with a series of poems that reveal the personal sorrows, as well as the social and political events of the day, that shaped Miguel's life and formed his thoughts. "Hunger", "Waiting", "Daydreams", "Disaster", "Learning to Write", and "Imagination" are some of the poem titles that portray the young author in the making.

Full-page pen and ink watercolor illustrations by Raul Colon, an award-winning illustrator of more than thirty books for children, complement Engle's moving verses. The muted brown, grey, and blue tones create dream-like visions that help the reader experience Miguel's life.

The end pages include interesting author and illustrator notes, and important historical and biographical information.

A book that awakens dormant aspirations and provokes action, Miguel's Brave Knight is a timeless tale of the power of the imagination to create hope out of despair, turn dreams into reality, and bring into existence the light from within that dispels the darkness. In this way one can, as Miguel says, "right all the wrongs of this wonderful but terribly mixed-up world." (From the last line of Engle's poem, "Imagination").

Veronica Jorge, CLJ

Creation / written and illustrated by Cynthia Rylant.

Beach Lane Books, 2016.
ISBN 9781481470391
PS-Grade 3    Rating: 4

Creation by Cynthia Rylant is a picture book presentation of God’s creation of the world.

The first two chapters of the book of Genesis (King James version) are told across sparse scenes of varied color and texture. Rylant uses bold acrylic paint strokes to capture each day, as darkness and the light, the sea and the sky, grass and trees, and “every living creature that moved” come into being.

The visual simplicity of Creation leaves the focus on the biblical text, making the book a good choice for introducing young readers to the creation story. Fittingly, the seventh day of rest, with its accompanying scene of the night sky, transitions
Life / by Cynthia Rylant; illustrated by Brendan Wenzel.
Beach Lane Books, 2017.
ISBN 9781481451628
PS-Grade 3 Rating: *5
Life by Cynthia Rylant is a picture book view of many special facets of life and living.

Lovingly told across a series of marvelous pages, the story reminds readers that life begins small, and then grows—with stretches of wilderness, new roads to take, things to love and protect, and hope for each tomorrow. The author’s calming words are gentle and poetic, with some unexpected and lighthearted observations that will appeal to readers of all ages. “But the turtle loves life,” Rylant muses. “How could it not, with so much rain on its back?”

Brendan Wenzel’s illustrations are delightful. His wide-eyed animals have immediate personality and charm, and his scenes depict a beautiful world. The soft hues, varied perspective, and fine details in the artwork add a visual dimension that perfectly complements the heartwarming text. Even the weight and the texture of the pages are inviting.

Life appears to be a children’s book but is so much more. Readers of all ages and life stages could well appreciate its quieting and reassuring reflections and hopeful tone.

Nina Ditmar, CLJ

INTERMEDIATE TITLES

The Great Shelby Holmes Meets Her Match / by Elizabeth Eulberg.
Bloomsbury USA Children’s, 2017.
ISBN 9781681190549
Grades 3-7 Rating: 4
Shelby Holmes is back with her best friend, John Watson, in the sequel to The Great Shelby Holmes, the middle school adaptation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes. Young readers who love mysteries and mayhem will love Shelby’s story as she races into a new adventure that could change her life—and possibly end John’s.

When the caseload runs low in New York City, this pair of amateur sleuths is itching for a case to crack. Shelby, suspicious of the new teacher, is certain something is wrong—but John isn’t convinced. If Shelby’s hunch is right, though, Mr. Crosby could be in some serious trouble.

As a new case unfolds, Shelby seems to have a new nemesis who is always one step ahead. This anti-sleuth will do anything to beat Shelby, even create an unsolvable mystery. Can NYC’s greatest detective catch her nemesis at the scene of the crime?

While Shelby and John’s first adventure in The Great Shelby Holmes felt like a duplicate of the well-known Sherlock Holmes stories, Elizabeth Eulberg’s The Great Shelby Holmes Meets Her Match feels like a unique story. Eulberg further develops Shelby and John’s personalities separate from Doyle’s original Holmes characters. Eulberg’s school setting allows John to explore middle school issues, like friendship, while listening to what his new classmates say about Shelby. John’s diary-style monologues allow readers to better connect with his character.
Younger readers will also appreciate the variety of illustrations throughout the book that help tell the story.

The beginning pace of this second book is slower than the first book’s, which may deter some action-seeking readers. However, readers who can read until the new case surfaces will find all the action and mystery they could want.

Rebecca Schriner, CLJ

Earlier Title Reviewed by CLJ: The Great Shelby Holmes (Jan/Feb/Mar/Apr 2017).

The feelings of the book are, perhaps, a bit clearer than the message. (Who is the Moonman? What exactly did his words mean—”I, the divine being... am your divine becoming”? Why was the absentee father crying as he drove away from his house?) But the introduction by the author makes the message clearer, and discussion questions at the end fill in pieces of authorial intent that are not present in the narrative. Taken together, and with the help of a wise adult reader (a Christian single mother, a grandparent?), this book could be a help and a comfort to many, especially fatherless children at a vulnerable time of year.

Mark L. Ward, Jr., CLJ

Just Sayin’ / by Dandi Daley Mackall

Tyndale, 2017.
ISBN 9781496423160
Grades 4-7 Rating: 5

Cassie Callahan loves big words, making witty remarks, writing letters, and avoiding her mom’s phone calls in Just Sayin’. With the way her mom and almost step-dad broke up, and worse, left town—one to California and the other to Chicago—Cassie has a lot to write about, and she doesn’t mince words. Cassie’s pen-pals include her pastor, her almost step-brother Nick, her almost stepsister Julie, her mom, Jesus, and Johnathan Kirby the star of Cassie’s favorite show, The King of Insults. The letters Cassie reads give her insight into the lives of her loved ones, but with her pastor’s guidance, Cassie starts to read the best “letter” of all—the Bible. The only problem with reading the Bible is she starts to wonder if her insults are wholesome speech. Since Cassie has a plan to reunite her mom and Travis, and that plan relies on her well-honed ability to insult others, God’s timing is just not good at all.

Through letters, Dandi Daley Mackall reveals the idiosyncrasies, deepest thoughts, and growth of
her characters. Accessible writing for young readers doesn’t stop Mackall from including new vocabulary words and most of their definitions within the letters. The plot quickly develops as Cassie and Nick commiserate with each other about their disappointment in their respective parent’s decision to break up, and then move on to determining what they can do to change their situation—including entering an insult contest.

The first half of the book is filled with somewhat insulting and mildly disrespectful letters. While Cassie and Nick’s insults aren’t necessarily hurtful to each other, many parents may discourage this kind of speech in their children. Mackall handles the situation neatly as Cassie learns what the Bible has to say about speech. The theme comes sparkling through Cassie’s letter to Jesus, “Thanks for your letters and the other stuff in the Bible. I will never forget that one in Colossians, about letting my conversation be gracious so that I will have the right response for everyone.” (p. 178)

Kristina Wolcott, CLJ
TEEN / YOUNG ADULT TITLES

Songkeeper / by Gillian Bronte Adam. (The Songkeeper Chronicles; 2)
Enclave, 2016.
ISBN 9781621840695
Grades 6-8     Rating: 5

Song of Leira / by Gillian Bronte Adam. (The Songkeeper Chronicles; 3)
Enclave, 2018.
ISBN 9781683700869
Grades 6-8     Rating: 5

Gilliam Bronte Adams continues her young adult fantasy series featuring the requisite orphan heroine, grouchy adult figure, mythical creatures, and allegorical references to Christianity.

In Songkeeper, young Songkeeper Birdie and former street thief Ky are captives on a slave ship, and Amos manages to eventually rescue them. Ky leads his Underground friends to safety while Birdie goes on a journey to a mysterious spring that only the Songkeeper can unleash to defeat the final darkness. But Birdie faces doubts about her abilities and her role. Her capture by the Takhran causes her to face her greatest fear: she is powerless and the Song is silent. Will her friends—her protectors—be casualties in the battle with Takhran? What awaits them all?

In Song of Leira, Birdie retreats into the mountainside after her journey into the Pit and the battle that ensued. The casualty count was high, and she sang many to their final rest. This strengthens her resolve to fight evil, despite the cost, rebuilding hope in many. Ky enlists Birdie’s aid to free the captives from the slave camps, but Takhran has singers of his own leading his army. When all looks darkest, Birdie answers the final call.

Adams’ well-developed world includes colorful characters and incredible creatures. Her second book has several plot twists and ends on a cliffhanger. Unlike some trilogies, this middle book doesn’t suffer from being just a bridge between the first and third book—it is strongly written and darker than the first book, with appropriate violence. The third book is also tightly written, complete with a final battle. Birdie has grown tremendously since the first book, as has Adams’ writing. Birdie recognizes that the Master Singer has everything in control, even when things don’t make sense. Birdie and Ky respond by putting one foot in front of the other, continuing to do what they have been called to do—“fight the good fight.”


Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ: Orphan’s Song (Jul/Aug/Sep 2017).

Book Scavenger / by Jennifer Chamblis Bertman. (Book Scavenger; 1)
ISBN 9781627791151
Grades 5-8     Rating: 5

The Unbreakable Code / by Jennifer Chamblis Bertman. (Book Scavenger; 2)
ISBN 9781627791168
Grades 5-8     Rating: 5

Alcatraz Escape / by Jennifer Chamblis Bertman. (Book Scavenger; 3)
ISBN 9781627799638
Grades 5-8     Rating: 5
Jennifer Chamblis Bertman pens a middle grade series that will appeal to older elementary and middle school readers.

In *Book Scavenger*, Emily moves to San Francisco where Garrison Griswold, creator of the Book Scavenger game, lives. Unfortunately, Mr. Griswold lies in a coma after an attack just before his new game is announced. Emily and her friend James race against time to solve the new game before whoever attacked Griswold comes after them. Will Mr. Griswold recover from his injuries and launch his new game?

In *The Unbreakable Code*, Emily and James try to find out who is behind the recent arsons around the city, especially when clues appear to be placed in books hidden through the Book Scavenger game. As they dig deeper, they discover their teacher Mr. Quisling’s hunt for the Unbreakable Code and possible links to the arsons. Is he the arsonist? What role does a book by Mark Twain play?

In *The Alcatraz Escape*, Emily and James work on a challenging mystery set on Alcatraz Island. Will they be able to “Unlock the Rock”—the latest game from Garrison Griswold? Not only has literary game master Griswold created an escape room challenge at Alcatraz, but mystery writer Errol Roy has written the story behind the puzzle. Threatening notes make the pair wonder if someone is trying to prevent them from solving the escape room challenge. What is the secret behind Roy’s story?

Bertman excels at creating puzzles that will delight the reader, especially those who love a good mystery. While the literary allusions are reminiscent of the Mr. Lemoncello series (by Chris Grabenstein) and *The Westing Game* (by Ellen Raskin), the Book Scavenger series is not a copy of these books. “Book Scavenger” an actual game—a cross between geocaching and treasure hunting, making it a literary adventure for the reader. Readers will find the actual game being played on the author’s website (http://bookscavenger.com), and enjoy the adventure of solving the puzzles in each book.


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

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**Fawkes / by Nadine Brandes.**

ISBN 9780785217145
Grades 9-12 Rating: 4

Nadine Brandes returns with a new young adult novel that mixes historical fiction with fantasy and is set in 17th century England.

In *Fawkes*, Thomas Fawkes is slowly turning to stone, and the only cure for the stone plague appears to be participating in a dangerous plot. People wear masks infused with color power. They are divided into the Igniters and the Keepers, with each group blaming the other for the plague. All Thomas wants is to receive his color mask from his father, but he hasn’t seen his father for 13 years. He leaves school and travels to London to find and ask his father for his color mask. But his father—Guy Fawkes—wants something in return. His Keeper father involves him in the Gunpowder Plot to assassinate the Igniter King, which will in turn supposedly stop the plague from consuming Thomas. How can Thomas refuse? But at what cost? For it pits him against the girl he loves. Will the Gunpowder Plot succeed?

Brandes does an excellent job of combining fantasy and historical fiction elements. Told
through Thomas’ point of view, Fawkes makes one think of the struggles between Catholics and Protestants in England, with their opposing views and allegiances. Although the novel starts slowly, Thomas becomes more fascinating as the story unfolds, drawing in the reader as Thomas faces his dilemma: save his girl or stop the plague?

Brandes concludes her novel with a “what’s true/what’s not” section, as well as discussion questions. Kudos to Ms. Brandes for breaking out of the dystopian genre into historical fantasy. Look for her next young adult novel, Romanov, in May 2019.

Recommended for school and public libraries, especially for historical fiction and fantasy fans.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

The Orphan’s Wish / by Melanie Dickerson.

ISBN 9780718074838
Grades 9-12 Rating: 5

Award-winning author Melanie Dickerson continues her medieval retelling of fairy tales, this time using the folk tale Aladdin.

In The Orphan’s Wish, orphaned Aladdin travels from his Arab homeland to the German orphanage where he meets Lady Kirstyn, daughter of the Duke of Hagenheim. Kirstyn’s mother is the patroness of the orphanage where Aladdin lives. They become childhood friends in spite of the differences in their stations.

Aladdin works hard to secure a position serving the Duke. He loves Kirstyn but believes he cannot overcome his family background without a fortune. Aladdin leaves the Duke’s service to make his fortune, leaving her open to fortune hunters.

When she is kidnapped, he returns to rescue her. Will he be in time? Will they have a future together?

The Orphan’s Wish is told more from Aladdin’s point of view. Aladdin is hard-working and determined to prove himself in order to improve his chances for a future with Kirstyn. Both Aladdin and Kirstyn struggle with self-worth and self-acceptance, but through their love for one another, they manage to overcome. Kudos to Dickerson for creating an interracial relationship and promoting acceptance and love between all people, regardless of race, class, or fortune. Readers will be delighted to meet old friends from Dickerson’s earlier books in this series.

Dickerson’s tales feature wholesome relationships, making this a good choice for teen readers. Dickerson excels as a storyteller with a carefully crafted plot and characters who learn the meaning of sacrifice and nobility as they adjust to life’s difficult situations. As in her earlier books, the faith element is not preachy but clearly evident. Recommended for young adults and adults who are young at heart.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Unbreakable / by Sara Ella. (The Unblemished Trilogy; 3)
ISBN 9780718081058
Grades 9 and up     Rating: 5

Sara Ella returns with the thrilling conclusion to her Unblemished trilogy, a series that combines elements from fairy tales and fantasy to captivate the reader.

In Unbreakable, Eliyana Ember is the vessel of the Verity (the purest of souls)—only she can destroy the Void. But doing so will cost her everything she holds dear. The seven Reflections are now in danger, as are those dearest to her. She moves from one Reflection to another, seeking to destroy the Void. Both of her suitors—Kyaphus Rhyen and Joshua David, each with their own secrets—have not given up on their pursuit of Eliyana’s heart. She is torn between memories leading her in one direction and her heart leading her in another.

Ella masterfully creates a realistic fantasy world, a story with a nod to pop culture and literary references. The inner dialogue of the main characters—Eliyana, Ebony, Joshua, and Ky—can confuse the reader if one doesn’t note the character name at the beginning of the chapter. The maps of the Reflections are a nice touch as well as the family tree!

Her Unblemished trilogy shows that there is a chance for lightness and darkness in all of us. Her allegorical story is filled with excellent narratives, engaging characters, and truths—and plenty of plot twists! The relationships are clean, the faith element is a light touch, and the violence is neither graphic nor inappropriate.

Recommended for public and school libraries, for fans of fantasy and fairy tale retellings, for young adults and adults alike.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

A Loyal Heart / by Jody Hedlund. (Noble Knights; 4)
ISBN 9780692055236
Grades 9-12     Rating: 4

A Worthy Rebel / by Jody Hedlund. (Noble Knights; 5)
ISBN 9780692144190
Grades 9-12     Rating: 4

Best-selling author Jody Hedlund concludes her young adult series with these two medieval novels.

In A Loyal Heart, Lady Olivia is taken captive and held for ransom by Sir Aldric on Lord Pitt’s orders. Loyal to her family, Olivia will do whatever is necessary to make her father happy, whether it is being betrothed to a man he selects or trying to steal a special chalice rumored to have healing properties in Pitt’s possession. Threatened with execution after she is caught trying to steal the chalice, Aldric intervenes and becomes engaged to her. But what about her father’s choice? Will she marry Aldric, a man she is growing to admire but an enemy to her family? Or will her relationship with Aldric help her obtain the chalice?

In A Worthy Rebel, Lady Isabelle flees an arranged marriage, becoming lost in the countryside. She hides her identity as a noblewoman when she is rescued by Cole Warwick, a peasant. He is the leader of the peasants who are rebelling against the nobility. As she recovers from her injuries,
they develop strong feelings for each other, which are shaken by the revelation of Isabelle’s true identity. Will they be able to overcome the truth?

Hedlund excels at providing a clean romance suitable for teens and adults alike. Second chances, redemption, family loyalty, adventure, intrigue and more await the reader. Recommended for historical fiction fans, fans of courtly romance, and inspirational fiction fans.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

**Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ:**
*An Uncertain Choice* (Jan/Feb/Mar/Apr 2015); *A Daring Sacrifice* (Jul/Aug/Sep 2016); *For Love & Honor* (Apr/May/Jun 2017).
ADULT FICTION

Beneath the Surface / by Lynn H. Blackburn. (Dive Team Investigations; 1)  
Revell, 2018.  
ISBN 9780800729387  
Adult  Rating: 4

In Too Deep / by Lynn H. Blackburn.  
(Dive Team Investigations; 2)  
Revell, 2018.  
ISBN 9780800729295  
Adult  Rating: 4

Lynn H. Blackburn kicks off a contemporary romantic suspense series featuring an investigative dive team in North Carolina.

In Beneath the Surface, nurse Leigh Weston moves to the small town of Carrington, North Carolina, hoping to leave behind her recent troubles. Her brother Kyle asks dive team investigator Ryan Parker to keep an eye on Leigh while he is overseas, telling Ryan about her recent problems with a stalker. When someone tampers with Leigh’s brakes, is her stalker responsible? Meanwhile Ryan investigates a dismembered body in a nearby lake, uncovering a possible connection to Leigh. Will he catch the killer before Leigh becomes the next possible victim?

In In Too Deep, when the Carrington dive team is called to recover a body in a submerged car, they also find an encrypted laptop belonging to a dead accountant with ties to investigator Adam Campbell’s family. Adam turns to cybersecurity and computer forensics expert Dr. Sabrina Fleming for technical assistance in recovering the laptop’s files. As evidence mounts implicating his family members, it becomes clear someone doesn’t want the family secrets revealed. Will Adam and Sabrina be silenced before they can uncover the truth?

Blackburn nailed the romantic suspense elements: good storyline, strong likeable characters, light touch of faith, and clean romance. She creates characters and a location that readers will enjoy visiting through her books. Blackburn supplies plot twists to keep the reader engaged (and guessing!) from the first page to its spine-tingling conclusion. Watch for book 3 coming in fall 2019.

Recommended for adult collections in public libraries and fans of Dani Pettrey, Irene Hannon, Lynette Eason, and other inspirational suspense authors.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Darkwater Secrets / by Robin Caroll.  
(Darkwater Inn; 1)  
Gilead, 2018.  
ISBN 9781683700685  
Adult  Rating: 4

Award-winning author Robin Caroll returns with a new romantic suspense series set in the French Quarter in New Orleans.

In Darkwater Secrets, general manager Adelaide Fountaine keeps busy with the Darkwater Inn full of guests. She is shocked when a hotel guest is found stabbed with a kitchen knife, one with her fingerprints on it, as well as those of her coworker Dimitri Pampalon.

Detective Beau Savoie is assigned to the case—he’s known Adelaide since they were children and hidden his true feelings for her. During the investigation, he uncovers a secret from Adelaide’s past that ties her to the victim, but he is also hiding a secret from her. Will he be able to solve the case and rebuild his relationship with
Adelaide? Will Adelaide end up with Beau or Dimitri, since both of them care for her and have their own secrets?

Caroll is well-acquainted with New Orleans, capturing the unique culture of New Orleans in its music, voodoo, and Mardi Gras traditions. The voodoo element is handled well, not overly emphasized. While it is part of the life around them, the main characters don’t believe in it. Tough subjects (alcoholism, prostitution, and sexual assault) are woven into the story, in the secrets of the main characters’ pasts. The main characters—Beau, Dimitri, and Adelaide—are believable and realistic, facing their spiritual challenges and relationship strains. Told from three points of view, the plot twists keep the reader guessing on the identity of the murderer. It is more of a suspense novel, with a triangle between the main characters.

Recommended for adult collections in public libraries. Fans of inspirational romantic suspense and dark mysteries will enjoy this new series.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Lone Witness / by Rachel Dylan. (Atlanta Justice; 2)
ISBN 9780764219818
Adult Rating: 4

Rachel Dylan pens another legal thriller in her new contemporary romantic suspense series set in Atlanta, featuring female lawyers and challenging circumstances.

In Lone Witness, prosecutor Sophie Dawson is the only eyewitness to a double homicide which occurs when she is in the midst of a corporate fraud case. All of a sudden, Sophie’s customary threatening letters escalate to a drive-by shooting and intentional car accident, putting her life in danger.

Former Atlanta police officer Cooper Knight is hired by her father as Sophie’s bodyguard. Can he protect her as Sophie tries to find the truth in both cases? Who is behind the threats—the murder suspect who is also the brother of a gang leader, or the high-level executive trying to protect the company whose employee accused of fraud? Who will go to any length to prevent the truth from coming out?

Dylan returns with another legal thriller that will have the reader on an exhilarating ride as the plot twists and turns. Lone Witness has a solid and realistic faith element, clean romance, and a gripping storyline that will keep the reader guessing until the final plot twist. The relationship builds naturally between Sophie and Cooper, as the two cases Sophie is working on finally go to trial.

Readers will get an inside view of the legal profession, as characters from her first book return as secondary characters in this novel. Dylan creates strong characters who are willing to fight for justice, regardless of the cost to themselves. Her third book, Breach of Trust, will be available in 2019.

Recommended for public libraries, and fans of romantic suspense novels by Dani Pettrey, Irene Hannon, and Lynette Eason, and of legal thrillers by Cara Putman.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ: Deadly Proof (Jan/Feb/Mar 2018).
Called to Protect / by Lynette Eason. (Blue Justice; 2)  
Revell, 2018.  
ISBN 9780800727031  
Adult  Rating: 4

Award-winning author Lynette Eason adds another book to her romantic suspense series about a law enforcement family in South Carolina.

In Called to Protect, K9 Officer Chloe St. John is recovering from a broken engagement and concentrates all her energy into her job. Chloe’s mother is the chief of police, and her siblings are also in law enforcement. When her young cousin Penny goes missing and it appears there is a connection with human trafficking, she will need to stay focused on her investigation.

Meanwhile, US Marshall Blake MacCallum is on protection duty for a senator when Blake’s daughter Rachel is kidnapped. The kidnappers threaten to kill her if Blake doesn’t kill the senator. He races to rescue his kidnapped daughter Rachel before her kidnappers harm her. Chloe and her German shepherd partner Hank join the human trafficking taskforce with Blake. The two begin working together, investigating the ties between the missing girls and the human trafficking ring. Will they find the girls in time? Can they trust one another even in the midst of their mutual attraction? The more they uncover, the more danger they will face.

Called to Protect grabs the reader’s attention and holds it until the final page. Eason creates a fast-paced series with an ensemble of complex characters dealing with a variety of personal issues, and there is enough suspense to make the reader stay up all night, holding on for a roller-coaster ride of plot twists.


Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com
Earlier Series Title Reviewed by CLJ: Oath of Honor (Jan/Feb/Mar 2018).

Until We Find Home / by Cathy Gohlke.  
Tyndale, 2018.  
ISBN 9781496410962  
Adult  Rating: 5

Claire Stewart has no intention of shepherding Jewish-French refugee children to England in order to escape the ravages of WWII in Until We Find Home. She plans instead to rendezvous with her French boyfriend and continue their resistance and rescue work in France. However, when he doesn’t arrive at their meeting place on time, no choice remains but to accompany the children. Since her boyfriend is the one with the contact in England, Claire must come up with a plan for the children. The only person that comes to mind is Claire’s estranged aunt. When Claire meets her aunt for the first time, she finds her grieving her son. What do two, grieving American women have to give to children displaced from home and everyone they know and love? And what are they to do with the men who are complicating their emotions?

Cathy Gohlke brilliantly paints entire scenes with a few well-placed words. Her characterization pulses with authenticity, especially that of Claire. Claire seems completely human as she struggles through her faults and starts allowing God’s grace to work in her heart. A somber tone carries through the book as characters deal with the ugliness born of grief, war, separation, rejection, and prejudice. However, the story is far from dark, because David Campbell and Dr. MacDonald
share light, bringing both the love of God and love of their own to a place that desperately needs it. The children bring humor in the midst of their struggles. Tension in the tale comes mostly in the form of relational struggles as the plot gently unfolds, but moments of physical danger add momentum. Though rife with important, though non-preachy, lessons, the most important theme driving the characters and plot is discovered by Claire:

The great thing to remember is that, though our feelings come and go, His love for us does not. It is not wearied by our sins, or our indifference. God loves us because we are a self, because He is love and that love pours out onto us. (p. 388, in a letter from C. S. Lewis to Claire - may or may not be all C. S. Lewis’s words as per note on p. 411)

Kristina Wolcott, CLJ

The Cost of Betrayal / by Dee Henderson, Dani Pettrey, and Lynette Eason.
ISBN 9780764231735
Adult Rating: 4

Best-selling authors Dee Henderson, Dani Pettrey, and Lynette Eason lend their skills to this compilation of three contemporary romantic suspense novellas.

In Betrayed (by Dee Henderson), an innocent woman is freed after serving a portion of the time for a murder she didn’t commit—but the murderer is still at large, putting her in danger.

In Deadly Isle (by Dani Pettrey), a woman is trapped on her isolated, childhood island following a storm, with a murderer at large, one that killed her cousin and now threatens her life.

In Code of Ethics (by Lynette Eason), a trauma surgeon saves the life of an injured detective, only to have him attacked again in her hospital, leading them to be on the run from the killer.

Henderson, Pettrey, and Eason expertly weave their stories with believeable characters, tightly-woven suspense, and faith elements. Although shorter than a full-length novel, they make for an edge-of-your seat reading thrill ride. In each story, faith in relationships is broken as they experience betrayal by those closest to them. Betrayal comes from friends and family, those closest to them—yet God can bring good out of the evil dealt to the injured parties.

Two of the novellas give the reader a chance to meet old friends (from previous books by the author). While each could be read alone, together they make a winning combination of mystery, action, and suspense. Comparing the three, Eason’s and Pettrey’s novellas are slightly better than Henderson’s, but Henderson’s novella is better than her last few full-length novels.

Recommended for public libraries and suspense fans.

Carol R. Gehring, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Where Two Hearts Meet : A Novel / by Liz Johnson. (Prince Edward Island Dreams; 2)
Revell, 2016.
ISBN 9780800724504
Adult Rating: 4

On Love’s Gentle Shore / by Liz Johnson. (Prince Edward Island Dreams; 3)
Revell, 2017.
ISBN 9780800724511
Adult Rating: 4
Liz Johnson continues her contemporary romance series, set at the Red Door Inn on Prince Edward Island (PEI).

In *Where Two Hearts Meet*, executive chef Caden Holt is self-confident until she is asked to show a handsome journalist around. Adam Jacobs, an international journalist on sabbatical, is mistaken for a travel writer writing an article that will save the Red Door Inn. Caden is more at home in the kitchen than spending time with the handsome journalist, especially since she is a little overweight. Adam is attracted to her and enjoys her company. Caden struggles with insecurity and self-esteem, while Adam is weighed down with mistakes from the past. Can they overcome these challenges to discover a future together?

In *On Love’s Gentle Shores*, Natalie O’Ryan returns unexpectedly to PEI years after leaving it abruptly. She buried her past so deep that she appears to everyone as calm and self-controlled. Even her fiancé Russell Jacobs doesn’t know of her abusive family background. He surprises her with a summer vacation and fall wedding on PEI. Then Russell leaves for weeks during their stay, and her childhood friend Justin helps her continue with wedding plans. Natalie faces her past when her alcoholic father reappears in her life. Will Natalie marry Russell in light of her hidden past? Will the truth set Natalie free?

Johnson writes endearing stories with such descriptive detail that the reader experiences the beauty of Prince Edward Island. Her main characters are imperfect and in need of second chances, healing, forgiveness, and love. The faith element is evident but light-handed, as they learn to face their pasts and accept themselves the way God sees them. Then they are open to loving and being loved by others, and who doesn’t love a happy ending?

Recommended for adult collections in public libraries. For readers who grew up with *Anne of Green Gables*, it is a welcome return to the island. For fans of Becky Wade, Courtney Walsh, and Denise Hunter.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

**Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ:** *Red Door Inn* (Oct/Nov/Dec 2017).

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**Fatal Trust / by Todd M. Johnson.**

ISBN 9780764212352
Adult Rating: 4

Ian Wells dreamed of a practice in criminal law. His ambitions quickly derailed with the death of his father and a request from his mother. Years later, still running Wells & Hoy Law Office, Ian has nothing to show for his work except mounting bills, a possible lawsuit against the firm, his mother who now has Alzheimer’s, not enough income to cover his pending needs, and dreams that wake him up drenched in sweat.

Then he meets Sean Callahan and is offered the chance to earn more than enough to pay the bills, settle the lawsuit, and take care of his mother, and finally start his criminal law practice. All Ian must do is dig up the past on three possible trust recipients. But as Ian begins to dig up their past he soon realizes that his past is somehow connected. What he discovers could destroy his entire future.

Todd M. Johnson introduces a mysterious web connecting the past, present, and future of his characters in a swiftly spiraling plot full of intrigue. *Fatal Trust* brings the once mundane legal world of wills and trusts alive with riveting mystery.

*Cicely K. Ben, CLJ*
The Crooked Path / by Irma Joubert.
ISBN 9780718098179
Adult    Rating: 3

The Crooked Path follows two converging life stories before, during, and after WWII.

Afrikaner Lettie Louw loved her best friend’s older brother for many years, but—even though he was nice to her—she “knew” that boys only fell in love with beautiful girls. After finding the boy she liked with her attractive best friend, Lettie turns her attention away from men and focuses on becoming doctor and inheriting her father’s practice.

Marco Romanelli, a Catholic Italian, fell in love with a Jewish woman at the beginning of WWII. Intending to avoid the German soldiers, she and Marco, along with her family, escaped the village and starved in the mountains—only to be kidnapped and taken away to the Jewish concentration camps years later. Losing his love and his health in the camps, Marco seeks out a warmer climate with his brother in South Africa to get back on his feet.

When Lettie becomes Marco’s doctor, she struggles with their professional-personal relationship. She must make her choice before Marco’s health deteriorates and she loses her chance at love.

By focusing on an overview of Marco and Lettie’s whole lives, The Crooked Path sacrifices depth and cohesiveness. With two introductions, plotlines, and conclusions, most of this novel’s pacing feels slow. The conclusions also feel unresolved and incomplete, as if there is more to the story. While the story seems to drag a little as the plot flips back and forth on one timeline, Irma Joubert’s writing is still beautifully engaging. It feels more like a literary, creative biography of these two characters instead of a fictional story. As readers follow these characters’ stories, they will catch a significant amount of historical, religious, and artistic details from WWII Europe and Africa that add even more realism to the story—appealing to historical and romantic fiction fans.

Rebecca Schriner, CLJ

Loving Isaac / by Heather Kaufman.
ISBN 9780758657893
Adult    Rating: 5

Hana is a single mom who desperately loves her young son, Isaac, and plans to protect him at all costs from his abusive father. Isaac has special needs and is often misunderstood by those who don’t know him, even within the church. But the pastor of her new church, Matt Schofield, is another matter completely. From the moment he meets Isaac and the boy grabs Matt’s bushy beard, they have a special bond. Matt’s life has been very predictable up until this point, but Hana and Isaac change all that. But how long can it last for all three of them?

This is a story of compassion that will touch the reader’s heart. The writing is eloquent with characters that become important to you as you become part of their lives.

Ceil Carey, CLJ

The Bride of Ivy Green / by Julie Klassen.
(Tales from Ivy Hill; 3)
ISBN 9780764218170
Adult    Rating: 4
Award-winning author Julie Klassen concludes her Regency series set in the English village of Ivy Hill.

In *The Bride of Ivy Green*, the ladies of Ivy Hill face changing circumstances in their lives. Mercy Grove resigns herself to a spinster’s life after her school closes. Jane Bell must decide whether to give up her inn to marry Gabriel Locke. Miss Brockwell is being pressured by her mother to marry a certain nobleman in an arranged marriage. But what happens when circumstances change, bringing about the possibility of cherished dreams being fulfilled?

Klassen has written a fitting conclusion to her series; each book continues the story of the friends and village life. She presents endearing characters in her inspirational Regency novels. While *The Bride of Ivy Green* could be read as a standalone, it is recommended that one reads all three books in order. The faith elements are light-handed, as the characters face their new challenges in their lives and learn to trust God in all situations. Readers will appreciate the nod to Jane Austen, as well as the depth of the historical details, as they return to Ivy Hill, where “friendship endures, romance triumphs, and mysteries are revealed (back cover).”

Recommended for public and high school libraries. Her novels appeal to adults and high school readers alike. Fans of Julie Klassen, Sarah E. Ladd, Carrie Turansky, and other historical fiction writers will be delighted to read this series.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

**Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ:** *The Innkeeper of Ivy Hill* (Jan/Feb/Mar 2017); *The Ladies of Ivy Cottage* (Jan/Feb/Mar 2018).

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**Winning Miss Winthrop / by Carolyn Miller. (Regency Brides: A Promise of Hope; 1)**

Kregel, 2018.

ISBN 9780825445330

Adult Rating: 4

Australian author Carolyn Miller begins another engaging Christian Regency series, sure to delight her fans and Regency fans alike.

In *Winning Miss Winthrop*, Catherine Winthrop loses her home and social standing following the death of her father and the discovery of his gambling debts. When the new Lord Winthrop turns out to be Jonathan Carlew, her new impoverished life is even more challenging. Both Jonathan and Catherine believe their hearts were broken by the other person. Will the misunderstandings between them ever be resolved? Will they find their way past their shared rejection and painful memories, and back to one another?

Miller writes Regency novels with historical detail, excellent characterization, and clean romance, suitable for adults and older teens. Her characters face financial problems, others’ expectations, and faith issues, allowing the reader to more easily identify with them. The tension in the relationship between Jonathan and Catherine is reminiscent of books by Georgette Heyer and Jane Austen (*e.g.*, *Persuasion*). Will Jonathan and Catherine find healing, forgiveness, and redemption? Will they find a future together?

Recommended for high school and public libraries. Fans of Julie Klassen, Jane Austen, Sarah E. Ladd, and Regency romances will enjoy this new series. Miller’s fans will enjoy the reappearance of some characters from her first series, *Regency Brides: A Legacy of Grace.*

*Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com*
**High Treason / by DiAnn Mills. (FBI Task Force; 3)**

*Tyndale House Publishers, 2018.*

ISBN 9781496410993

**Adult Rating:** 4

Award-winning author DiAnn Mills returns with another contemporary suspense novel in her FBI Task Force series, this time highlighting the interaction between a FBI and CIA agent as they provide protection for a visiting Saudi dignitary and his family.

In *High Treason*, FBI Special Agent Kord Davidson’s personal ties with Saudi Prince Omar bin Talal make him the perfect person to take the lead position on the protective detail for the prince. He is joined by CIA operative Monica Alden to protect the prince, his sisters, and his mother who is in the US to seek cancer treatment. Monica and Kord must set aside differences between them in order to work together in protecting the prince’s family from the assassin who seems to be privy to the prince’s every move, including some that are decided at the last minute. Could that would-be assassin be a part of the prince’s trusted inner circle who doesn’t want to see the prince succeed in his plan to promote stronger ties with the US and more westernization in his homeland?

Mills creates a believable scenario with high stakes, plenty of action, and strong characters. The edge-of-your-seat plot will have the reader riveted until its spine-tingling conclusion. The relationship between the Saudi and American characters and the Saudi culture are handled respectfully. The faith element is integrated almost seamlessly: Monica is a believer while Kord is an agnostic who wants to believe but hasn’t been able to do so.

Recommended for high school and public libraries, especially for fans of Irene Hannon, Dani Pettrey, and Dee Henderson, as well as fans of Mills’ earlier works in this series, *Deep Extraction* and *Deadly Encounter*.

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

**Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ:** *Deadly Encounter* (Oct/Nov/Dec 2016); *Deep Extraction* (Apr/May/Jun 2017).

**Dead Drift / by Dani Pettrey. (Chesapeake Valor; 4)**

*Bethany House, 2018.*

ISBN 9780764212970

**Adult Rating:** 5

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

In *Dead Drift*, when Luke Gallagher vanished seven years ago, leaving behind the woman he loved, private investigator Kate Maxwell, with no answers–only questions. Now he is back to help capture a terrorist and rekindle his relationship with Kate. Can they stop the terrorist’s plot before it is too late? Is there a future for them after they catch the terrorist?

Meanwhile, Griffin and Finley continue to investigate his sister Jenna’s murder, uncovering a string of cases with similarities in several states. Can they catch the killer behind his sister’s murder and finally put the case to rest when others haven’t been successful?

Pettrey pens characters with strong personalities and real flaws, making it easier for readers care about them. As always, the faith element is evident, not preachy, and relationships are clean (appropriate for high school readers). Pettrey excels at creating an ensemble of characters
readers enjoy, and when these characters from earlier novels reappear, the reader is delighted to catch up and continue their storyline. The violence is appropriate to the story, much like crime dramas one views on TV. As always, the plausible plot is action-packed romantic suspense at its finest. The reader will be satisfied at how the series ends and the questions are answered.


Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Series Titles Reviewed by CLJ: Cold Shot (Mar/Apr/May-Jun 2016), Still Life (Jan-Feb/Mar 2017), and Blind Spot (Oct/Nov/Dec 2017).

The Space Between Words / by Michele Phoenix.

ISBN 9780718086442
Adult Rating: 4

Jessica is a victim of a mass shooting in Paris, France, and when she regains consciousness is confused and disoriented. Her friend Patrick seems to continue to be the rock he has always been for her, but is he really? Staying at a rural French B&B, her new friends help her regain some semblance of normalcy as well as assisting in her research to translate some very old documents she finds in a beautiful antique sewing box. Could these stories of Huguenot Protestants and their persecution help her to understand her own search for trust in a loving God?

The Huguenot accounts are inspiring and bring about a spiritual change in Jessica who is questioning why God would allow this type of massacre to happen.

The story is beautifully told with a rather unusual plot, but this reviewer did have some trouble keeping track of the Huguenot characters in their writings. The author could have made that a little easier to follow.

Ceil Carey, CLJ

Lady Jane Disappears / by Joanna Davidson Politano.

Revell, 2017.
ISBN 9780800728755
Adult Rating: 5

Aurelie Harcourt searches for answers in a house filled with secrets in Lady Jayne Disappears.

Upon her father’s death, Aurelie’s Aunt Eudora takes her in. To adjust to her new home at Lynhurst Manor, Aurelie tries to learn the rules of polite society. After all, being raised in a debtor’s prison doesn’t prepare one for life among gentry. But behaving well in public doesn’t stop her from searching for the truth behind her mother’s disappearance, nor does it stop her from writing. Layer by layer Aurelie delves into the secrets surrounding her mother, but even her wild imagination could not prepare her for the truth.

Joanna Davidson Politano weaves a spell-binding tale of mystery and love as she tells the story of Aurelie Harcourt. Mystery shrouds the well-paced plot. The loveable characters discover their flaws as they unpack what it means to love each other. The manor setting and the debtor’s prison both serve as an essential part of the story as they shape the characters and the plot. Politano’s writing is poetic without excessive wordiness, and it breathes life into the characters and setting and adds tension to the plot. Though not at all
“preachy,” readers may learn some important lessons along with Aurelie and the rest of her family, one of the most important of which is, “What will be fixed must first be broken.” (p. 376)

Kristina Wolcott, CLJ

Just Let Go : A Novel / by Courtney Walsh. (Harbor Pointe; 2)
Tyndale House, 2018.
ISBN 9781496421524
Adult     Rating: 4

Author Courtney Walsh shares another contemporary romance set in Harbor Pointe, Michigan—a lakeside community where people really get to know and care for one another.

In Just Let Go, Quinn Collins buys the local flower shop to fulfill a childhood dream—to show her estranged mother she is capable of running the shop once owned by her. Her mother left town (and Quinn) over 20 years ago. Quinn also wants to win the floral design competition where her mother serves as head judge. Can Quinn let go of her hurt and forgive her mother for leaving?

Meanwhile short-tempered Olympic skier Grady Benson comes to town. After a heated confrontation resulting in property damage, Grady finds himself doing community service at Quinn’s shop. He is inspired by her hard work and determination to reach her goals, which in turn re-ignites his pursuit of Olympic fame. After a tense moment with his family, Grady pushes everyone away, including Quinn. Can Grady forgive himself and move forward?

Walsh pens a sweet small-town romance with main characters who annoy one another without realizing how alike they are. Both want to prove themselves to someone: Quinn to her mother, and Grady to his family. Just Let Go is the story of facing one’s past and finding joy even in the midst of disappointments. Filled with a clean relationship between Grady and Quinn, a very light faith element, and themes of forgiveness and letting go of the past, this story will remind the reader why Harbor Pointe is a place that readers like to visit again and again.

Recommended for public libraries and for high school readers. Fans of Beth Vogt, Liz Johnson, and Denise Hunter will welcome this new book!

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Storm Front / by Susan May Warren. (Montana Rescue; 5)
Revell, 2018.
ISBN 9780800727475
Adult     Rating: 5

Award-winning author Susan May Warren returns with the latest volume in her high-stakes adventure, contemporary romance Montana Rescue series.

In Storm Front, Ty Remington is determined to find his mentor Chet King as well as several students, all of whom are missing after a deadly tornado strikes. Not even the reappearance of his lost love—Brette Arnold—can sway him from his mission. Brette, a photojournalist attached to a storm chaser team, isn’t expecting to land in the small town at the same time Ty is in town, especially after she ran away from him over a year ago. Will facing their personal storms bring them together? Will they rediscover their future together before the summer of storms is over?

Warren creates realistic characters as she builds an action-packed adventure to tell the story. Meanwhile, characters from earlier books reappear and continue their storyline as Storm Front unfolds. Like her earlier works, Storm Front features Warren’s hallmarks of clean romance, edge-of-your-seat action, a faith
element that’s not preachy, and relatable characters.

Warren’s characters in *Storm Front* face a summer of storms—storms of nature, spiritual, physical, and relational storms in their lives. Why did Brette run away a year ago? What is Ty running from? What will be learned from facing the storms? Warren’s fans will enjoy this latest addition to her Montana Rescue series. Readers will devour this new novel and eagerly look forward to the final book, *Wait for Me* (also reviewed in this issue).

Recommended for public libraries and church libraries.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*


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**Wait For Me / by Susan May Warren. (Montana Rescue; 6)**

Revell, 2018.

ISBN 9780800727482

Adult Rating: 4

Best-selling author Susan May Warren concludes her Montana Rescue series by portraying the turbulent relationship of Peter Brooks and Jess Tagg—and solving the mystery behind Esme Shaw’s disappearance.

In *Wait for Me*, Pete Brooks has been waiting almost a year for Jess Tagg to return to Montana—and to him. Has Pete finally learned to stop trying to be in control and let God be in control? Now he finally is ready to move on, and she returns to Montana, but is it too late now?

Meanwhile someone discovers Esme Shaw is witness to a long-forgotten crime. Jess and Esme are injured in an automobile accident in the isolated wilderness. Then they’re taken captive by that same person who wants to silence the only witness to his crime. Will they be rescued in time by Pete and the PEAK Rescue Team—or will a vengeful man’s actions cost Pete the life of a woman he still loves?

Warren takes her readers on an edge-of-your-seat-adventure as she tells Jess and Pete’s story. Characters from earlier books make an appearance, continuing their storylines. As always, the romance is clean, the faith is light but evident, with the tension building until its gripping conclusion. *Wait for Me* is filled with backstory which could be confusing because there is so much of it. However, it fills in the gaps if a reader hasn’t read the earlier books. Grace and forgiveness are interwoven through the storylines in this book. This is an action-filled romantic suspense the reader will not forget, and a fitting conclusion to this series.

Recommended for adult collections in public libraries.

*Carol R. Gehringer, CLJ*

King's War / by Jill Williamson. (The Kinsman Chronicles; 3)
ISBN 9780764218323
Adult Rating: 4
Award-winning author Jill Williamson concludes her epic fantasy series for adult readers, with another volume filled with political and spiritual intrigue.

In King's War, the growing battle between the Kinsman remnant governed by King Trevn of Armania and their enemies led by Barthel Rogedoth leads to a final conflict between good and evil, in Er'Rets and in the Veil (a shadow realm). The final battle is more dangerous than any can imagine, and allies change sides frequently. As new gifts and powers are discovered, new alliances are made and broken. Will the gifts of Arman be able to defeat the armies of enemies? How will the final prophecy be fulfilled?

Williamson produces another well-written volume with complex characters and plot twists. Although it is a lengthy tome (even longer than the previous two volumes!), the multiple points of view are identified by the character's name at the beginning of each chapter. Originally published as three shorter ebooks—The Reluctant King, A Deliverer Comes, and Warriors of the Veil—King's War concludes this epic fantasy satisfactorily.

Inspired by the corrupt kings of Israel, Williamson's series is more appropriate for adults and young adults. Each volume includes a list of the key players, a map, and an author's note; discussion questions and other supplemental material are available on her website. The Kinsman Chronicles series serves as a prequel to Williamson's The Blood of Kings trilogy, set 500 years later.

Recommended for high school libraries, as well as adult fiction collections in public libraries.

Carol R. Gehringer, worthy2read.wordpress.com

Earlier Series Titles and Related Titles Reviewed by CLJ: King's Folly (Jul/Aug/Sep 2016) and King's Blood (Apr/May/Jun 2017; from the Blood of Kings trilogy—By Darkness Hid (October 2010), To Darkness Fled (October 2010), and From Darkness Won (November 2011).
ADULT NONFICTION / ADVANCED INTEREST

The Lost World of the Flood: Mythology, Theology, and the Deluge Debate / by Tremper Longman III & John H. Walton

ISBN 9780830852000

Adult Rating: 4

The Lost World of the Flood provides an academic approach to the narrative of the flood found in Genesis chapters 1-11, presenting it as an ancient document influenced by the Ancient Near East (ANE) culture to which it belonged and focusing on the historical/literary context of this genre of writing. The authors, Tremper Longman and John Walton, who are noted Old Testament scholars, posit that it is the interpretation the events recounted in these biblical texts, and not the events themselves, that are inspired by God. The scope of the book focuses on explaining their method of interpretation, giving background using other ANE texts, providing their conclusions about how to understand the text, and discussing the scientific and literary evidence for the flood. This book is the fifth book in the Lost World series.

Even though the genre of this title is clearly academic, the reading style is easy to understand and the concepts are carefully built upon one another. The authors support their findings with extensive research. The topic is controversial though. While the authors affirm the inerrancy of Scripture, they do interpret the text in a way that may differ from views held by many evangelical Christians. Thus, they assert that the flood recorded in Genesis was an actual event but not a world-wide flood (such a global flood not being supported by geological evidence according to an included “guest” chapter written by a geologist), and that it was instead described using cataclysmic language (meant to be hyperbolic) which was common in ANE literature. They explain that the narrative was intended to convey a theological message, rather than an historical or scientific one.

The book does give some very important insight on ANE culture and will provoke thoughtful reflection, which makes it a valuable resource even if the reader does not agree with the authors’ conclusions.

Tatyana Claytor, CLJ

What Are We Doing Here? Essays / by Marilynne Robinson.

ISBN 9780374282219

Adult Rating: 4

Marilynne Robinson is a set of self-described identities that are not generally found together: biblicist, Calvinist, mainline Protestant, theological (and all-around) liberal. Her essay collections, including the new What Are We Doing Here?, reflect these interests and proclivities—and likewise build up to something unique: an intellectual who writes about Christianity and the Bible with genuine knowledge of each and with a distinct voice.

Robinson is the author of the Pulitzer-prize-winning Housekeeping as well as several successor novels known for their theological themes, their classic American setting, and their excellent prose. Her essay collections bear all the same features. It was an odd experience for this reviewer to find himself more proud of the good ol’ U.S. of A. after reading certain essays: Robinson is something of a conservative liberal who refuses to
throw under the utopian bus the traditions and institutions which made her who she was. Born in a no-name Idaho town during the thick of WWII, she was nonetheless given an education which, quite clearly, rivals that of any wealthy prep school elite.

Given her paradoxical self-descriptions, it is no surprise that some of Robinson’s viewpoints are less persuasive than others. She explicitly affirms “the authority” of the Bible, interprets it carefully and often, and yet feels free to go her own way on several key issues of contemporary import (e.g., she supports gay marriage). From the perspective of Christian theology, this is a weakness in Robinson’s ad hoc essay collection.

But Robinson’s strengths are so strong that, even when the reader does not agree, the reader profits. Her prose style is clear but demanding—in a way that confers respect upon those lucky enough to have the skill, time, and opportunity to read Robinson.

To evangelical Christians this reviewer says: do read Robinson. Read her for her critiques of scientism and Darwinism and materialism; read her for her rich understanding of the tradition of the Puritans both English and American. Read her for her careful insights into Scripture, despite and because of their unexpected source. Stick around for her critiques of various political ideologies. And then just enjoy the sheer pleasure of reading someone who knows how to write.

*Mark L. Ward, Jr., CLJ*
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