

Blatantly Honest BOOK REVIEWS:

By Cindy Mitchell

And the Student Library Advisory Board

At South Jordan Middle School

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Welcome to my highly idiosyncratic book reviews. These reviews are more a blog of my daily reading as I choose books for my middle school library.

Key to reviews:

EL - Elementary aged - usually chapter books and slightly longer novels

MS - of interest for Middle School ages

HS - most appropriate High School age students.

ESSENTIAL - every library of the appropriate level should have this book on their shelves. First priority for purchasing no matter how small or large your budget is.

ADVISABLE - Second tier library books. I still like them, but only buy them after you have stocked up on ESSENTIALS and if your budget can handle them.

OPTIONAL - Last tier of books to buy. Get these if you have a large budget or if you can find them in paperback. Even use your Book Fair profits and get them for "free". Don't buy them if your budget is very small.

NO - Usually a book is here because it has described sex, excessive swearing, is poorly written, or for whatever reason I just don't feel like I can recommend it for a school library.

1 February 2007

Nix, Garth *Lady Friday* 320 p. Scholastic - Release: March 2007 - Arthur and Leaf must work separately in order to find the fifth Key to the Kingdom, the fifth part of the Will and defeat Lady Friday, before time runs out. This long-awaited installment in the Keys to the Kingdom series will not disappoint fans of Nix. Though the beginning is a little rough, once Arthur and Leaf head off on their adventures through the Middle House the action flows quickly and smoothly to a climatic finish. Nix is able to find new, exciting parts of the house, such as the river that runs uphill and paper wings that anyone can easily don and use. EL, MS - ESSENTIAL

Mitchell, Todd *The Traitor King* 368 p. Scholastic - Release Date: April 2007 - Darren's family always meets for the summer at the old family home, now owned by their eccentric Uncle Will. This year, however, he has only left behind a mysterious message and odd clues that only the children might be able to answer. Little do they know that the answers will lead them right out of this world and right into a very dangerous situation. A delightful addition to the body of fantasy literature. I can tell that Mr. Mitchell has more adventures ready for Darren and his family. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Yolen Jane and Adam Stemple *TrollBridge: A Rock and Roll Fairy Tale* 240 p. TOR/Forge - Eleven dairy princesses have disappeared off an old bridge along with their photographer, leaving Moira behind to solve the mystery. She finds an unlikely source of aid from three brothers who happen to be famous pop stars - and the quartet is transported into a realm of vicious trolls, where their lives are repeatedly in danger. A rompy read, a little gruesome, but a happy ending that is not necessarily predictable. MS, HS - ADVISABLE

Kehret, Peg *Trapped* 177 p. Penguin - First the pig falls off the truck and then Pete the cat is stolen. Alex, his family and his friends are right in the middle of another mystery that Pete will attempt to help them solve, but since he's a cat, his clues usually go unnoticed. Action and suspense, maybe, but the soliloquies by Pete are not my cup of tea. I am sure that younger students will find this cute. EL - OPTIONAL

McCormick Patricia *Sold* 263 p. Hyperion - Thinking that she will help her family by taking a job as a maid in the big city, thirteen-year-old Lakshmi finds herself instead in a brothel, saddle with a huge debt that she might never be able to pay off. She refuses to submit to the attentions of men, but is tricked and broken down and defeated. How can a destitute, used up little girl find the strength to walk out? The story is beautifully written prose that is quickly read and reread. Though Ms. McCormick skillfully writes the scenes in the brothel, they are too graphic for middle school, but I think that high schools will find this book powerful enough that they should carry the title. If you have concerns, email me and I will tell you specifically about the passages you should know about before you purchase. HS - ADVISABLE

Kladstrup, Kristin *The Book of Story Beginnings* 360 p. Candlewick - Lucy and her family are forced to move from the exciting city and out to the ancestral homestead - a farmhouse in Iowa. In the house, Lucy finds a book titled *The Book of Story Beginnings*, not knowing that she has now started a tale that must be played out to its end - including the appearance of her long-lost great uncle Oscar, who doesn't look a day older than when he disappeared. A cute fantasy book that will be enjoyed by younger readers. EL, MS - OPTIONAL

Nimmo, Jenny *The Chestnut Soldier* 203 p. Scholastic - When a mysterious "relative" shows up on the Lloyds' doorstep, the family and all of Gwyn Griffiths' quiet little town becomes a hotbed of contention. Gwyn suspects that a cursed wooden horse he lost recently is at the heart of the matter, but with every one of his friends reluctant to believe him, what can he do? This was the best book of the trilogy, in my opinion. The characters are believable and interesting, some new plot twists are introduced, and the storyline pulls you right into the book. One of the best books I have read for a while. MS - ESSENTIAL Student Reviewer: CG

Boniface, William *The Extraordinary Adventures of Ordinary Boy* 294 p. HarperCollins - Ordinary Boy is the only one in Superopolis that isn't super. However, when a new trading card series comes out featuring everyone's favorite hero (the Amazing Indestructo) Ordinary Boy and his friends are pulled into a complex plot involving money, insecure heroes, and enough trading cards to drown in. Literally. This book is imaginative, funny easy to read. The plot is interesting and fast, and reading each new hero's special power is simply hilarious. A most excellent read. EL, MS - ESSENTIAL Student Reviewer: CG

Glass, Linzi *The Year the Gypsies Came* 256 pages Henry Holt - This book is about a girl by the name of Emily Iris who has parents who fight a lot. However, when they have guests they don't fight. When they have guests come over things start to change. I did not like this book it was boring and I could not get into it. HS - NO Student Reviewer: RV

31 January 2007

Klein, Lisa *Ophelia* 328 p. Bloomsbury - Everyone thinks that they know the story of Ophelia, from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, but this beautifully written book takes everything you think you know and turns it on its head. Klein has written an engaging book that adds depth and dimension to the recent trend of rewriting Shakespeare. Even if you haven't read *Hamlet*, you will enjoy this book. A must read for anyone. MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Werlin, Nancy *The Rules of Survival* 259 p. Penguin - Since he was little, Matthew has tried to shield his sister's from their mother's eccentricities and abuse. Though their aunt lives downstairs and there is close by, neither of those adults seem to take any interest in what truly is happening to the children. Only persistence from Matthew and the intervention of a stranger start major changes for everyone. Without resorting to shock and awe, Werlin has written a brilliant book that teenagers will devour and then tell their friends about. MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Harrison, Mette Ivie *The Princess and the Hound Pages*: 410 HarperCollins - This is a very cute fantasy story. It started out fairly stereotypical, and I wasn't impressed at the beginning, but it got better. I wouldn't recommend it for being a brilliant, unique novel, but it was good in a cute sort of way. EL - ADVISABLE. MS - OPTIONAL Student Reviewer: JH

Schumacher, Julie *The Book of One Hundred Truths* Pages: 182 RandomHouse This book bored me to tears. I kid you not, I was asleep. Maybe it's because it was about a twelve-year old, but I would leave it in an elementary school library, if that. It might catch the attention of a fourth or fifth grader. NO Student Reviewer

Johnson, Maureen *Girl At Sea* 323 p. HarperCollins; Language: PG13, Sexuality: PG13,, Violence: PG - Clio has to spend her summer on a yacht with her father and his crew instead of at home working at her new job. She has no idea what is really going on, and has to deal with Aidan, not knowing what he is really thinking. *Girl at Sea* was a great book. I enjoyed reading it; it captured my attention with its twists and the hidden romance. MS, HS - ADVISABLE Student Reviewer: JN

Almond, David *Clay* 250 pgs RandomHouse - Language: R- too many pgs to count, Sexuality: PG, Violence: PG13 - Clay is about Davie, a Catholic boy, who meets the dark Stephen. Stephen recruits Davie to help him create a monster made of clay. This was an awful book. I would not recommend it to anyone; it wasn't written well at all and I soon lost interest in reading it, I couldn't even force myself to finish reading all of it! NO! Student Reviewer

Richards, Justin *The Death Collector* 320 p. Bloomsbury - Albert Wilkes dies two weeks ago and today he showed up for tea. And there begin the adventures of George, Liz, Eddie and Sir William as they try to decipher who someone is willing to kill for a small, burnt scrap of paper. MS-OPTIONAL

Mackall, Dandi Daley *Larger-Than-Life Lara* 151 p. Penguin - Laney's fourth grade class is stunned the day that Lara, the fattest girl they have ever seen, walks into their classroom. This girl is so fat, that she needs a special desk. Lara's parents have instilled her with a healthy sense of self-esteem, but she is hard pressed to keep her chin up against the unreasonable prejudice of her fellow students. This book will make you cry and it should be read to every child every single year. EL, MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Grimes, Nikki *The Road to Paris* 153 p. Penguin - Eight-year old Paris has been separated from her brother and is on her own in a new foster home. The last one was a disaster and she is not holding out hopes for anything better here. Very slowly, she has to learn to trust again. Usually when you read a book about foster homes and foster children, you only hear about the bad places, the bad families and the bad children. In this book, however, Paris is trying very hard to be good and her family is trying very hard to make her feel welcome. It is so different from the norm that it at first feels like an oddball or a non sequitur, but maybe, instead, it gives a view to the experience that we hope all foster children have. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Hirsch, Odo *Have Courage, Hazel Green* 256 p. Bloomsbury - Hazel Green heard an important man say terrible things to a poor Jewish man. She tries in her own way to right the wrong, but instead she just get into a lot of trouble. I haven't read the first two books in the series, so was a bit confused. But Hazel tackles huge questions about our behavior towards others, almost making the book too deep for young people to actually understand the point. The parent characters are extremely weak-willed and virtually void of personality. EL - OPTIONAL

Glatshetyn, Yankev *Emil and Karl* 194 p. Roaring Brook (Holtzbrinck) - Emil and Karl are best friends in the city of Vienna at the start of World War II. Through horrible circumstances, both young boys are left orphaned and without family to take them in. Their little eyes see many of the cruel atrocities carried out in the name of Christianity upon the bodies of Austria's Jews. This amazing thing about this book is that it was written in 1940, in Yiddish, so that the Jewish children of America could know what was really going on in Europe. I am amazed that it hadn't surfaced in English before now. MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Shreve, Susan *Kiss Me Tomorrow* 160 p. Scholastic - Alyssa "Blister" Reed is starting 7th grade and everything has changed around her. Her mother has a new boyfriend and they are moving to a new house together. Her best friend, Jonah, is following the popular boys around trying to break into the crowd. Then, Jonah gets arrested for stealing. Blister is sure that the older boys are using him and that the cool, cute boy across the street knows more than he is telling. A cute book for younger girls. EL, MS -OPTIONAL

28 January 2007

Ray, Deborah Kogan *To Go Singing Through the World* PICTURE BOOK FSG - Subtitle: The Childhood of Pablo Neruda. Pablo Neruda, called the "people's poet" of Latin America grew up in a tiny village in the shadow of a volcano in central Chile. Extraordinarily shy, his talent for words went undiscovered until Gabriela Mistral, also a gifted poet, came to town. This book

will need help finding it's audience. I could see a high school Language Arts class or an advanced Spanish class using this book as supplemental material, but I doubt the teachers will find it on their own. The writing on each page is extensive enough that I wouldn't recommend it for young children. HS - ADVISABLE.

Murphy, Claire Rudolf *Children of Alcatraz: Growing up on the Rock* 60 p. Walker and Company (Bloomsbury) - Through interviews and a whole lot of research, Ms. Murphy pieces together a history of the children who lived on Alcatraz Island. Each piece of history is a short vignette into this world, accompanied by photographs and documents, from its earliest history up through the present day. I could see children reading *Al Capone Does My Shirts* also reading this book to learn more about the island. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Cullen, Lynn *Moi and Marie Antoinette* PICTURE BOOK Bloomsbury - Through the eyes of her pug dog, we see young Maria Antoinette grow from a carefree child into the Queen of France, just before the French Revolution. The storybook illustrations give the subject kind of a Cinderella feel. The events of the French Revolution are mentioned in an afterword, but not dwelt upon. I don't know if this is a subject that elementary schools study, but the pretty pictures and the beautiful dresses will delight young girls. EL-ADVISEABLE

Valdes-Rodriguez, Alisa *Haters* 352 pgs Little, Brown - Language: R- over 50 pgs, Sexuality: R- 318-320, Violence: pg13 - Paski moves from New Mexico with her dad to his new job in California. She soon learns that life in the OC is very different; she meets hot Chris, trains for her mountain biking, and most importantly, she is introduced to the "Haters". I absolutely loved this book. Although it is not appropriate for a school library, because of the language and sexuality, I would recommend reading it because it was so easy to relate to. NO, unfortunately Student Reviewer: JN

Warner, Sally *Twilight Child* Pages: 211 pgs. Penguin - Eleni is a girl from Finland who was born at twilight, and given a special gift to see and talk to creatures normal humans can't. Leaving Finland Eleni makes new friends, goes through many hardships, and learns more about her gift. I had a lot of fun reading *Twilight Child*, and would gladly recommend it to anyone who asks for a good book to read. It educates the reader- including me- with some Finnish words slipped in here and there, as well as provides non-stop entertainment. I really enjoyed it! MS, HS - ESSENTIAL Student Reviewer: JH

Morrison, P.R. *Wind Tamer* 336 pages Bloomsbury - Archie is a young boy who has just turned ten. Suddenly, his Uncle Rufus shows up and give Archie a strange present before telling Archie a great family secret. The eldest male child in the Stringweed family is affected when they turn ten by a tornado named Huigor that causes them to lose their courage. Archie's overprotective parents don't want him to know about this curse, and have been in denial, but now that Archie knows, he wants to break the curse to recover his father's courage and save his own. I found this book to be poorly written with a weak storyline that could have been done much better. Also, there are certain details that seriously take away from the book. Particularly was Archie's age and naïveté. His goal in life is to learn how to whistle well, and when he goes missing, the first thing his mother worries about is not who or where he could possibly be, but if he is wearing his seat belt. Other such incidents occur throughout the book, causing me to consider within a lower tier of books. EL - OPTIONAL Student Reviewer: KR

Ha, Thu- *Huong Hail Caesar* Pages: 292 Language: R (there were only a few pages without swear words, F-bomb over three times.) Sexual Content: R, Violence: PG-13 (fights) - John's nickname is Caesar because everyone at school worships him, even though he doesn't care about any of them. Well, all except for one new girl who shows up and makes Caesar realize that it's not always about him. This book is the dirtiest book I have ever read! I put it down on page fifty, and there had already been over three F-bombs, and too much sexual content. I had read enough to write a report on it, and I would not read anymore, I had folded about every corner of each page because of swearing. Interest Level: I don't know why anyone would like this book; Buying Recommendation: NO Student Reviewer: JH

Baum, Loius *The Mouse Who Braved Bedtime* PICTURE BOOK Bloomsbury - A little Mouse hears terrible noises at bedtime, but neither his mother or father nor even his big brother can help his conquer his fears. This extremely cute book would be a great addition to the elementary library, but also a welcome character education book for middle school. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Desnoettes, Caroline *Look Closer: Art Masterpieces through the Ages* PICTURE BOOK Walker (Bloomsbury) - The author looks at 19 masterpieces, enlarging certain details, asking questions and short looks at each painting's subject, history and palette. This book would be useful at any age for a short or involved discussion about art, especially if you have a document camera hooked up to a projector. EL, MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

McCutcheon John *Christmas in the Trenches* PICTURE BOOK Peachtree - Christmas Day 1914, the two armies of World War I exit their trenches and meet in the middle to celebrate the day during a spontaneous truce. Although these actions did not stop the war, it left a feeling of hope in the hearts of each soldier who participated. Also included is a CD of the original song that McCutcheon also wrote. Having been to Flanders Fields myself, I call tell you that this is an important part of the WWI story. This subject should be fit into the curriculum anywhere it can - English, Geography, Music, Art - wherever. EL, MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

25 January 2007

Pierce, Tamora Beka Cooper: Terrier 563 p. RandomHouse - Beka Cooper has always wanted to be a Dog - a peacekeeper in the realm or Tortall. Now she is a Puppy, assigned to the two greatest Dogs in town, learning her trade in the mean streets that she grew up in. Only her persistence, ingenuity and ability to make unlikely friends will save the town from two terrible threats. Another exciting tale from Pierce's well-crafted world. The page count is high, but it is misleading, as the words are really big. When printed in paperback, I would be surprised if it topped 200 pages. MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Westerfeld, Scott The Last Days 286 p. Penguin - language- R; sexual content- PG 13 ; violence- PG - This book is a sequel to Peeps. This book is about a group of teens who want to start a band. They have trouble finding people for the band and when they finally get everyone their band is great. But Manhattan is not. Things are going weird with people all around town and in the band. I liked this book except for the sexual content where the characters are horny. I thought that this book was a lot better in content than the first book but it still had a lot of swearing. MS,HS OPTIONAL Student Reviewer: AN

Westerfeld , Scott Peeps 312 P. Penguin - language- R; sexual content- PG- 13; Violence- PG 13 - The book Peeps is about a guy named Cal Thompson. His life is going like a normal teenagers life would. Until he gets infested with a disease. And he has to find all of his former girlfriends that he infected. When they get this disease they become sort of vampires. Cal is only a carrier which is someone with out all of the symptoms but it makes his horny all the time. This book was a good book except for the horny and sicking parts. There was a lot of bad language in this book. I was almost disappointed with scott westerfeld with this book because I am a big fan of him. this book was okay except for the bad parts. MS, HS - OPTIONAL Student Reviewer: AN

Haarsma, P.J. Virus on Orbis 1 262 p. - Candlewick - When the perfect computer that is the planet Orbis 1 makes a series of dangerous mistakes, many associate it with the arrival of Johnny Turnbull—a softwire who can use computers without any physical contact. However, Turnbull knows it isn't him, so is the computer dying, or are more sinister forces at work? This was a good book, with some interesting ideas behind it. It is a little difficult to understand at the beginning, but it soon immerses you into a scientifically advanced, interesting world. Like I said, an interesting and good book. Student Reviewer: CG

Watson, Jude Star Wars: Legacy of the Jedi/Secrets of the Jedi Pages: 204 (Legacy)/ 227 (Secrets) - Obi-Wan Kenobi, Anakin Skywalker, Qui Gon Jin and other Jedi are placed in some of the most dangerous situations ever devised as they strive to bring justice back to the galaxy. However, their inner emotions may be the cause of their downfall as they struggle with love, hate, and many others forbidden by the Jedi code. Written as a two-books-in-one book, it's hard to write a definite plot for it, but rest assured, it's full of Jedi goodness. Just like any Star Wars book, this book has its fair share of assassination plots, lightsaber battles, spaceships shot down, etc. This would make the violence page longer than the review itself if I listed them all, but I did not believe it to be excessive or gory, so it is a G rating. Those who walk the path of the Jedi lead dangerous lives; may the Force be with them. MS - ADVISABLE Student Reviewer: CG

Nimmo, Jenny The Snow Spider 128 p. Scholastic - When Gwyn's sister Bethan goes missing in the middle of a ferocious storm, it is up to Gwyn to discover his special talent for magic and bring his sister back to them. But in his desperation, will he end up destroying everything that he loves by using a forbidden magic? This book was more simply written and shorter than some other books, and that is why I have rated it Elementary level interest. It was a good book, and anyone who has read Charlie Bone will enjoy the similarities in storyline and writing. A short, quick and enjoyable read. EL- ADVISABLE Student Reviewer: CG

Nimmo, Jenny Emlyn's Moon 152 p. Scholastic - Emlyn is a mysterious boy whose mother left with only two words to tell him where she went—the moon. However, a prolonged battle between the Griffiths' and Emlyn's family, an inquisitive girl, some extraterrestrial visitors, and some of Gwyn Griffiths' magic may help Emlyn to set his life back on track, mother and all. This was a very enjoyable book with a different hero than the last book, which gave it some fresh material. As book two of a trilogy, it did a good job of retaining its old characters while adding in new elements to the story. A very good book. EL - ADVISBLE Student Reviewer: CG

Laird, Elizabeth with Sonia Nimr A Little Piece of Ground 221 Pages - Language G Sexual Content G Violence PG - Karim lives in Pakistan, and has to live under curfew. When he gets trapped in a curfew will he escape or will the Jews find him first? I personally liked this book because it brought to life the conflict that I thought was so far away that I did not care about it. All in all it was a good book. I would totally buy this book with my own money. MS ADVISABLE Student Reviewer: AB

15 January 2007

Lauber, Patricia What You Never Knew About Beds, Bedrooms and Pajamas PICTURE BOOK Simon and Schuster - A new addition to the Around the House series. Bright and fun illustrations compliment a quirky fact-filled picture book about sleeping and its accessories through the ages and around the globe. Teachers of any age of student could use this book in their classroom. EL, MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Kurti, Jeff Disney Dossiers 159 p. Disney Editions - An awesome full-color soft cover book with details and gossip and behind scene information on the entire cast of Disney animated characters up through 2004's Home on the Range. I revisited original

friends that I hadn't thought about in years and met new characters from movies I haven't seen. The author's honesty is fresh and fun. I am a little worried about putting this book on the shelves, because I am sure it will be loved to death. EL, MS, HS - ADVISABLE.

Nelson, Blake *Paranoid Park* 180 p. Penguin - I was hoping I had found another great skater book that I could proudly hand to my boy readers as a great read. Instead, I got a vicious, descriptive attack and death within the first 25 pages and then another 155 pages of coverup and justification without any type of regret, confession or redemption. And not a single great skateboard scene on any page. NO

Bell, Hilari *Forging the Sword* 494 p. Simon and Schuster - The Hrum have only four months left to completely conquer the country of Farsala and the resistance fighters are well organized and getting even smarter. Soraya, Jiaan and Kavi all lead important groups that work together and apart to sabotage the Hrum and the Hrum leaders resort to breaking their own laws in a desperate attempt to defeat the country and its mysterious leader "Sorahb". The fitting finale of the Farsala trilogy that students will love and enjoy. Bell's original thinking is welcome after watching poorly written copy-cat novels become topsellers and blockbuster movies. Point your students towards this excellent series as an antidote! MS, HS -ESSENTIAL

Lackey, Mercedes *One Good Knight* 393 p. Luna - Princess Andromeda. "Andie", Is starting to earn a little respect from her mother, until Andie finds some disturbing information while she follows a line of research. All of those concerns are pushed to the back of her mind when a dragon appears to ravage the small country - and no one seems to be exempt from the virgin sacrifice lottery - even the heir to the throne. Dragons, a champion, a ragged resistance band and Godmother Elena round out the cast of characters. Though this is the second in the series, it is the first one that is appropriate for Utah schools. I am a huge Mercedes Lackey fan and try to bring in as much as possible. MS, HS - OPTIONAL

Timberlake, Amy *That Girl Lucy Moon* 294 p. Hyperion - As Lucy starts her sixth grade year at the local middle school, her photographer mother takes off on an extended trip in search of clouds. Her friends start growing and changing and Lucy feels left behind and out of the loop - especially when she receives unwarranted discipline after organizing a protest against the fencing of the town's favorite sledding spot. Winter causes Lucy's light to dim and she ceases to care whether her mother ever returns. A beautiful book in the tradition of *Stargirl*, with a new heroine who doesn't seem to think she needs to lie down and take it. And after reading snippets of Lucy's antics in elementary school, I kind of wish the author would also write a prequel. EL, MS-ESSENTIAL

Rayban, Chloe *My Life Starring Mum* 279 p. Bloomsbury - Holly's mum is the famous British singer Khandi. When a threat against Holly shows up, she is whisked away from her school and her friends to a high-security hotel where her mother alternately ignores her or tries to turn Holly into a younger version of herself. The story moves very quickly, keeping the reader's interest, until the very end, where it abruptly sputters and dies mid-stream. This has happened in so many books that I have read that I wonder if authors have lost the art of the denouement. There is absolutely no resolution, only a short, unsatisfying reunion scene, with a flippant end. Despite that, I think younger readers will enjoy Holly's life and adventure and are probably not knowledgeable enough to be frustrated by the ending. There are five clunky, unnecessary uses of swear words, though. EL, MS - OPTIONAL

Key, Watt *Alabama Moon* 294 p. FSG - Ten-year old Moon Blake has promised his Pa that he will stay away from civilization and head off to Alaska to find other people who live off the land and "off the grid" (my words, not the author's). But a young boy on his own will attract the attention of well-meaning adults and of the authorities, including a constable who takes an instant, intense dislike to the boy. Moon finds his own way to battle the system and a few allies in his struggle to find his place in the world. I don't have the swear word count on this book any more, but the police constable is mean and foul-mouthed, using many swear words whenever he addresses Moon, though not venturing over to "f". For that reason, many schools, and the young audience who would have enjoyed this book, will not be reading it. MS-OPTIONAL

Bondoux, Anne-Laure *The Princetta* 430 p. Bloomsbury - Malva, are ready discontented with her life as a princess, now finds that she is to wed a man many years older. With the help of her tutor and her maid, she escapes - only that her tutor has set her up to die. Thus begins a high seas adventure of self-discovery, taking the Princetta into danger many times over, but also helping her discover several loyal friends, and to discover where her heart and her duty lie. I especially liked that the ending was completely unexpected. The old-fashioned looking cover may not draw in many students on it's own, but a little marketing should help this book find its audience. Readers of Tamora Pierce will also enjoy this. MS- ADVISABLE

DeFelice, Cynthia *Bringing Ezra Back* 148 p. FSG - The Fowler family has recovered from the vicious attacks by "Weasel", though their mother passed away from a fever later. Now, a traveling peddler brings along a flyer that proclaims "See the White Injun, A man with no name and no tongue! Deaf and Dumb," and Nathan is sure that this "injun" is their old friend Ezra, who helped rescue them from Weasel. Nathan is determined to seek out this traveling show and rescue his friend, even if he has to learn to trust the world again. After the tense danger of "Weasel", this sequel comes off as a milder entry. Though it does

answer questions about Ezra, it only raises more at the end. I would prefer to have "Weasel" in hardcover and this one in paperback. EL, MS - OPTIONAL

6 January 2007

Cooney, Caroline B. *Enter Three Witches: A Story of Macbeth* 288 p. Scholastic - Lady Mary is the daughter of the Thane of Cawdor and the ward of Lord and Lady Macbeth. As Macbeth and Babquo return from the battle against Macdowald, she overhears the prophecies of the three witches and even the telling of her father's betrayal. Now, instead of being a wealthy heiress, she is now the daughter of a traitor and at the mercy of forces around her. Her story unfolds along with a different perspective on the events of Shakespeare's play. Though the writing is fairly simple, the author adds richness and depth to the events of the play that have been lacking. Students not ready for Shakespeare will this novelization. MS-ADVISABLE

Koss, Amy Goldman *Side Effects* 144 p. Roaring Book Press - The lumps that appeared on Izzy's throat have refused to disappear since her bout of the flu and now the doctors tell her she has lymphomic cancer that needs treatments over six months, will make her bald and puking up her guts. Izzy's not sure that dying wouldn't be the better option. A short, stark look at the life of a cancer patient without sugary sweetness or overwrought tragedy. Izzy is abrasive and sometimes naive; she tends to swear and only listen to you when she wants to. In other words, she acts like an angry, normal teenager. Even though there is swearing in the book (18 times), I prefer this author's look at the ordeal of cancer treatment much more than something like Brian's Song or other books that have covered the subject. MS-ADVISABLE

Resau, Laura *What the Moon Saw* 272 p. Random - Just when Clara is starting to feel restless and unconnected to her friends and family, she receives an invitation from her paternal grandparents to come visit them for the summer in Mexico. Instead of the resort like living she expects, she finds herself in a remote mountain village, in a shack of a home that uses hardly any electricity. At first she wonders "who am I without all these things that fill up my life", missing her electronic gadgets, but then as she connects with her grandparents and a boy from the village, she finds great depths within her. A very sweet book that may have trouble finding an audience, but is well worth reading. MS - ADVISABLE

Ehrenhaft, Daniel *The After Life* p. Penguin - After 18 years, Will finally meets his father and his twin step brother and sister at a drunken, drug-using party. And the next day Will finds out that his father is dead - OD'd. Will scraps together the money to fly to the funeral in Florida and then finds out that he can inherit two million dollars if he will just drive his father's car back to New York. One problem - Will can't drive. For reasons of their own, Will siblings decide to help him make the trip and I have spent way too much time summarizing a book that I didn't even like. Well, I like a few pages, but the rest of it is just a screen of drugs, alcohol and swearing and I have no idea why Will is such a messed up rebel in the first place. Run far and fast away from this title. NO

28 December 2006

Clements, Andrew *Things Hoped For* 167 p. Penguin - Gwen lives with her grandfather in New York so that she can pursue her violin dreams. The same day that she meets a interesting boy, her grandfather disappears. The two try to keep everything going normally, but Gwen is sure that something really bad has happened. A continuation of *Things Not Seen*, but you can understand this one okay without having read the previous novel. I especially loved how Robert dealt with another "vanished" person. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Barry, Dave and Ridley Pearson *Escape from the Carnivale*, 134 p Hyperion - Little Scallop is the most bored Mollusk maiden in Neverland. Together with her two mermaid friends, she sets out on adventure and immediately gets into hot water instead. Life-threatening danger. A perfect book for younger kids who enjoyed the Neverland Fairy books or who aren't quite ready for Peter and the StarCatchers. EL - ESSENTIAL

McKissack, Patricia *A Friendship for Today* 176 p. Scholastic - Rosemary and her friends are about to start a desegregated school, but this puts her in the same class as her most hated enemy, Grace - a white girl also from the neighborhood. After a rocky start, the girls slowly become allies and then good friends. A beautiful book about the roots of prejudice of all sorts. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Manning, Sarra *Let's Get Lost* 308 p. Penguin - Isabel has decided that being mean is the best way to be in control of her teenage years, and her so-called best friends and her school mates fall for it. Things get even uglier after her mother dies in a horrible car crash and Isabel sets herself on a path towards self-implosion, not caring who she immolates in the journey. Another angry teenaged girl who has what she believes in the secret to end all secrets. Done in the British style with a plethora of swear words including a hearty dose of "f". I don't; know if authors think they are being brave or cool or what using swear words so liberally, but I think it is stupid. And I think it is much more challenging to write a book that makes the point without devolving into the swear word crutch NO

Van Draanen, Wendelin *Runaway* 250 p. Random House - Several years in the foster system has landed a withdrawn Holly into an abusive foster home where she is locked into the laundry every day - all day long, except for when she is at school. This time when she runs away, she is determined to stay out of the hands of the authorities. Only 12, she records her thoughts in a journal that she was given by her latest English teacher. The ending is almost too good to be true, but that doesn't stop this from being a fascinating book to read. The flow is excellent and there isn't a single swear word to be found. Since Holly is so young, I am also recommending this for upper elementary. EL, MS - ESSENTIAL

Kidd, Rob *Jack Sparrow: The Coming Storm* 135 p. Hyperion - A teen Jack Sparrow takes command of his first ship and his first crew when he joins a bar maid from Tortuga and a runaway Brit in the search of the Sword of Cortes - a sword with legendary powers. A perfect book for younger or lower readers who loved the Pirates movies. The cover is cartoony, unfortunately, but that won't stop a determined fan. There are 6 books in the series now and they are in paper, so well worth buying. EL - ADVISABLE

Richardson, V.A. *The Moneylender's Daughter* 300 p. Bloomsbury - Sequel to *The House of Windjammer* - Adam Windjammer is on the high seas on a dangerous mission to discover the fate of his uncle's ruined shipping fleet. Jade van Helsen is determined to either get her father's attention or runaway from him for good. Both teens are unsure how they feel about each other. This title is much more interesting than the first, but still not of much interest. I liked it, but that's because I lived in the Netherlands for a while. I am reserving final judgment for the final book. Ms, HS - OPTIONAL

Beddor, Frank *Looking Glass Wars* 358 p. Penguin - In order to survive in the English world, Alyss Hart, must lose her identity as the heir of Wonderland and lose all of her memories of family and home. In the middle of her wedding to an English prince, Queen Redd's minions come to finish the job from years before of killing the true heir, catapulting Alyss back into the world she thought was a dream. Excellent version of the Wonderland mythos that takes the world from Disney silly into a beautiful, wonderful world. It will be best understood if you have at least seen the animated movie, if not read the original book. MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Lenhard, Elizabeth *Chicks with Sticks: Knit Two Together* 244 p. - Scottie is desperate to have a boyfriend, just like two of her best friends. And when she discovers that the quiet one in the group has had a boy filled summer, she is even more determined. Then a cute guy moves into her apartment building and even right onto her floor - and Scottie thinks that he is the one to take the plunge. Filled with knitty bits and terminology that knitters will love and non-knitters will find distracting, the book is actually a very astute story about Scottie and her relationships. The knitty bits, unfortunately ARE distracting and a bit surreal. MS-OPTIONAL

Manushkin, Fran *The Shivers in the Fridge* PICTURE BOOK Penguin - A family of five finds itself in a cold, dark place. As each family member goes off in search of a warm, brighter home, each disappears, snatched by a bright light and huge, ominous hand. A delightful look at perspective and young children and older children can enjoy. EL - ESSENTIAL

Kurti, Jeff and Bruce Gordon *The Art of Disneyland* 128 p. Hyperion - A history of Disneyland told through the concept art through the years of the different theme areas inside the park. It also includes biographies of a few of the principal artists whose talents shaped the face of Disney. Disney Park fans will pour over its pages, but older art students can learn much from its pages. MS, HS - ADVISABLE

Aidan, Pamela *These Three Remain* 437 p. Simon Schuster - Final novel of Fitzwilliam Darcy trilogy. Darcy and his cousin attend to their Great Aunt Catherine and there Darcy comes face to face with Elizabeth Bennet, whom he has just vowed to put from his mind and his heart. When Elizabeth rejects his marriage proposal, Darcy returns to London and does some soul-searching. I loved these novels, which add depth to the original *Pride and Prejudice*, showing the faults and cracks and humanity behind Fitzwilliam Darcy. Not so much for the school set, but lovers of Austen will not be disappointed with these.

Rappaport, Doreen *Freedom Ship* PICTURE BOOK Hyperion - Every day, Robert and his family can see beyond the harbor at Charleston and out to the Union ships, which beckon them to freedom. Then one night he and his family join the crew of the Planter in a desperate bid to live free. Based on a true story of the Civil War. A good, short book to illustrate the many ways that American slaves made bids for freedom; could easily be read out loud in part of an American history class. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Raven, Margot Theis *Night Boat to Freedom* PICTURE BOOK FSG - At his grandmother's urging, young John rows desperate slaves across the river to Ohio. On the night it is finally his turn to go, he insists that he will not leave without her too. Another good book about slaves and the Underground Railroad. Add this one and the one above to your stash and convince one of your history teachers to do a lesson based around them. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Bardoe, Cheryl Gregor Mendel: *The Friar who Grew Peas* PICTURE BOOK Abrams - A simple, well-written picture book that explains a little about Mendel's background and the protocol behind his early experiments with pea plants and genetics. This is a slightly long picture book that would be good supplemental or pictorial material for a beginning heredity unit. EL, MS - ESSENTIAL

Greene, Michele Dominguez, *Chasing the Jaguar* 240 p. Language G, Sexual Content G, Violence G - When Martika Galvez, a normal teenager, has her 13th birthday, she sees Tia Tellin. When she begins to have strange dreams, her mother takes her to her only close relative, Tia Tellin, the witch. Her dreams tell her of a girl who was kidnapped and needs help and Martika's mother worked for the girl's father as a maid. Martika must help find the girl and learn about her new powers. This was an interesting book. I'm not really into mystery books but this was a good one. MS - OPTIONAL Student Reviewer: KC

Manning, Sarra *Diary of a Crush: Kiss and Make Up* 264 p. - Language: R (many F's and a LOT of others in between), Sexual Content: R (four + sex scenes, not too graphic), Violence: G *There is also a scene where a girl is drugged that might be considered offensive to some. - In this sequel to French Kiss, Edie breaks up with Dylan and gets together with Carter. About halfway through the book, this changes. I liked this book a little more than the first, but the sex scenes and use of the F word made it inappropriate for younger grades and even older grades might find it offensive. The characters were more developed in this one and were easy to connect with. I would recommend it to people who don't mind the content and who are looking for a very real novel. HS, MS, NO Student Reviewer: JH

Manning, Sarra *Diary of a Crush: Sealed With a Kiss* 278 p. Language: R (many F's and a LOT of others in between), Sexual Content: PG-13 (a few sex scenes, not graphic), Violence: G - In the last book of this trilogy, the author did a very good job. Her characters were (finally) completely fleshed out, and the story line was pretty good too. Edie and Dylan save up and take a road trip through the States over a few months. There is some sex and even more language than the last one, but I would recommend it to people who don't mind and are looking for a perfect example of some of the complications of life. HS, NO. Student Reviewer: JH

Mooney, Bel *You Never Did Learn To Knock* 253 p. Language-PG, Sexual Content-G, Violence-G - This book is about 14 girls and their relationships with their moms. I thought it was kind of boring. Some of the stories were good. I picked it because I want to have a better relationship with my mom. The parts I thought were good are the parts that my mom and I can get a better relationship. MS - NO Student Reviewer: JR

Thompson, Kate *Only Human* 320 p. Language: PG, Sexual Content: G, Violence: PG - Only Human is a story of Christie and his family's search for the Missing Link. Bernard, the leader of this family returns from a long voyage with a mysterious picture of a pictograph which seems to depict aliens and Bigfoot. Christie and a few others accompany Bernard on a trip to the Himalayas, hoping to find a yeti of sorts. While I believe this story had a lot of potential, it was completely blown. Apart from some interesting views of mythical creatures there was no point of reading the book. Most of the characters were flat and the twists of the plot were completely unoriginal. Overall Only Human is on the borderline between Optional and No. I know others that would enjoy it, but definitely not something that should be rushed to the shelves anytime soon. EL - OPTIONAL Student Reviewer: KH

Reisfelf, Randi and H.B. *Gilmour Oh Baby!* 323 p. Language PG13, Sexual Content PG13, Violence G - Jamie and Abby are best friends. They need money to go to college so they decide to be nannies. They sign up and must move. Abby moves to New York and works for a famous writer. Jamie moves to Hollywood and works for a famous movie star. They both meet two boys who they fall in love with but have a ton of problems with. As they change they begin to grow apart, until they realize what they were missing. HS - NO Student Reviewer: KC

Keene, Carolyn *Once Upon A Crime* 184 p. Language-G, Sexual Content-G, Violence-G - Nancy Drew volunteers to do some service work for a good cause and to meet one of her favorite mystery novel writer. But, is someone planning to steal the charity money? Can Nancy stop them before the ball? I really liked this book, it was short and sweet. It didn't drag on at all. EL, MS - ADVISABLE Student Reviewer: LW

Baskin, Nora Raleigh *In the Company of Crazyies* 176 p. Language-PG, Sexual Content-G, Violence-G - In 5th and 6th grade Mia was a perfect student. Then her 7th grade year went way downhill. The death of a fellow student had a major affect on her and she took it a little too far. Her mother places her in an all boy boarding school to hopefully make her a better student. Even though this book is a younger level, I liked it a lot. It shows a wide variety of personalities and situations. I feel that I could relate to Mia easily because of the author's excellent descriptions. EL, MS - ADVISABLE Student Reviewer: KD

Ranulfo *Joker* 194 p. - Language-R (Lots of "f" and a dozen others), Sexual Content-PG-13, Violence-PG - This book is supposed to be a modernized version of Hamlet. Matt started out as the perfect guy. Then his best friend Ray dies and his mother leaves his father. After that Matt develops another personality he calls Joker. I really did not like this book. It's confusing and jumps

around a lot. It is also poorly written. The author often gets himself into a rut where he has to use the same word over and over again. The one good thing I can say about this book is that it shows you that every decision you make could end up changing your life. HS - NO Student Reviewer: JB

Voake, Steve *The Dream Walkers Child* 300 p. - Language-PG, Sexual Content-G, Violence-PG - One day when Sam was riding his bike when he got hit by a car. He passed out and when he woke up he was in a different world. A world of half human half dog guards. A world where people fly inside wasps, flies, mosquitoes, and dragonflies. In this world there is a group of people who want to kill everyone on earth. And Sam is supposedly the only one who can stop them. This was an okay book. It had an interesting plot. It was well written but not all that entertaining. I would not recommend it. It would only be good if you had nothing else. EL - OPTIONAL Student Reviewer: JB

Chambers, Aidan *This is all: The pillow book of Cordelia Kenn* 816 pages in all, I only read 200 pages before I had to stop- Language-PG, Violence-G, Sexual Content-R - Cordelia is sure that William is the boy for her. She tries to convince him of that. I couldn't read very far in this book because it was way inappropriate. I didn't feel comfortable. None of it is acceptable for middle school. HS- NO Student Reviewer: K

6 December 2006

In case anyone out there is wondering - the reason I haven't updated very quickly and with many titles, is because I am rereading an incredibly long and complicated fantasy series. If you love incredibly long and complicated fantasy books, you might be interested in these - Michelle West's Sun Sword series. There are six books and each book is about 850 pages long. I am half way through book five and then I will read two other books by Michelle that are kind of a prequel to this series and THEN I will be back to YA stuff. SO give me another week, please!

--Cindy

24 November 2006

Stahler, David Jr. *The Seer*, 248 p. HarperCollins - RELEASE: April 2007. Jacob has left the colony of the Blinded only makes his way safely through Sighted society with the help of a gruff older man. The discover that Delaney is being held in a gilded cage by an unscrupulous man who wants to make money off her beautiful playing send the pair into danger. Jacob thought that leaving his home would be difficult, but his life as a Seer is just beginning to complicate matters. The novel has the feeling of a middle book that needs to set up the action for the third. Having waited this long for this sequel, I was a little disappointed and I can only hope that number three is worth the wait. MS - ADVSIABLE

Beck, Ian *The Secret History of Tom Trueheart*, 352 p. HarperCollins - The youngest of the adventuring Trueheart brothers, Tom sometimes feels weak and left behind. Then each of his brothers is caught in a trap when they set out to write new adventures, and only Tom is left to step up to the plate and save the fairy tale writing kingdom from disaster. Very cute and perfect for young children. It took me about an hour to read. EL - ESSENTIAL. MS - OPTIONAL

22 November 2006

Cross, Gillian *The Black Room*, 247 p. Penguin - Robert has returned to full size, but he still worries about the others who were left behind in the tiny cave. Then one day he finds a link to Lorn and finds that she is in a worse position than he ever was and he decides that he must rescue her at any cost. You can not pass up this series! MS - ESSENTIAL

Reinhardt, Dana *A Brief Chapter in My Impossible Life*, 228 p. Random House - Simone has always know she was adopted, but now her parents are telling her that her birth mother wants to contact her. Events start atheist Simone rethinking everything she ever knew about her life. A quiet, well-written book about dealing with tough issues at a tumultuous time of life. MS- OPTIONAL

Fletcher, Susan *Alphabet of Dreams*, 283 p. Simon Schuster - Mitra and her little brother Babak live in poverty in the caves outside a desert city. When a learned man discovers that Babak is able to read people's dreams, the two try to escape, but are found and taken on a journey to find a newborn King. Susan Fletcher writes beautiful books and I personally enjoyed this unique look at the nativity story; my only worry is that the subject will not excite many readers. I am confused as to the intended audience; I think it would be best marketed to adults or as a Christmas book. MS, HS _ OPTIONAL

Douglas, Lola *More Confessions of a Hollywood Starlet*, 217 p. Penguin - Morgan Carter, Hollywood starlet, has been exposed to the tabloids and is now trying to keep her quiet life in Indiana under control. Her new boyfriend, Eli, doesn't know how to

handle the pressure though and sends Morgan on an emotional roller coaster. Unfortunately, Morgan, while pretty funny, also has a potty mouth and uses 3 dozen swear words, including "f", which should keep this out of most Utah schools. NO

14 November 2006

Smith, Cynthia Leitch *Tantalize* 311 p. - Language: R (about 22 pgs have swearing); Sexuality: PG13; Violence: PG13 - *Tantalize* is about a girl who lives with her uncle and is helping to run her family restaurant. Of course there are problems when their old chef is murdered just before their re-opening, and have to find a new chef to take over the vampire-themed cuisine. Usually I'm not interested in restaurant themed books, but this one kept my attention. It was unique and I had fun reading it; I just wish didn't have so much swearing MS, HS - NO Student Reviewer: JN

Lake, A.J. *Coming of Dragons* (Darkest Age Book One), 240 p. - Language - G; Sexual Content - G; Violence - G - Edmund and Elspeth are two unlikely youth who are given a blessing and a curse-gifts powerful enough to drive back the dragons, the very epitome of evil. However, will they survive long enough to do away with the heart of the problem, or will their gifts (and arrogance) finish them off? This was an extremely fascinating and delightful book. There was a good deal of violence, but none of it was excessive or gory and it was all very much in context with the storyline. A definite winner, I can't wait for the next one! MS, ESSENTIAL Student Reviewer: CG

Woolfe, Angela *Avril Crump and Her Amazing Clones*, 209 p. - Language G; Sexual Content G; Violence PG - Avril Crump is a lonely and belittled scientist at Leviticus Laboratories, who has never known what its like to have a friend. But when she discovers the leftover equipment of the expelled scientist Gideon Blut, she suddenly finds herself in charge of the well being of three clones-clones Blut doesn't want around. I found this to be an interesting and likable book, with some very endearing characters. However, the plot seemed a little dark at times, and it was almost difficult to get into. However, still a very good book: long live Mr. Dog! MS - ADVISABLE Student Reviewer: CG

Karasyov, Carrie and Jill Kargman *Bittersweet Sixteen*, 208 p. - Language PG13 (They only swore when they were mad or upset, because this book is about a big cat fight); Sexual Content PG; Violence G - This book was one of my favorites. I can totally relate to Laura. Well I need to back up and slow down. This story is about a teen named Laura whose best friend Whitney is the school's queen bee. On their first day of school there's a new girl from LA named Sophie. Whitney and Sophie are total enemies until Laura brings them together, but what Laura doesn't know is that it will cause big drama. Whitney and Sophie become best friends and plan the biggest sweet sixteen birthday party, ever! While the planning the girls get into a big fight over; Jake, Laura, and who's the queen bee. Both the girls go against Laura and Laura has the worst time getting over it, but Jake talks to her and tells her that she still has a friend. Well I can't spoil the ending. You'll just have to read it to find out. Because of the swearing, this book belongs in the public library. NO Student Reviewer: KC

Turner, Megan Whalen *The King of Attolia*, 390 p. - Language- PG-13; Sexual Content- G; Violence- G - The thief of Eddis has won the heart of the queen of Attolia. As the new king, he has to earn the respect of his people, and most of all his guards and attendants, before they kill him! I didn't like this book that much. The beginning was really slow but through the end and the middle it picked up a little bit. MS- OPTIONAL Student Reviewer: LW

Captain Redbeard *Fundorado Island*, 224 p. - Language G; Sexual Content G; Violence G - Redbeard, a mighty pirate who sails the seven seas, gets himself into a new adventure. When his crew leaves him alone on his ship, Picaroon, with the blasted jelly beans he must find a way to get to land. A mermaid appears and tells him of a land of wonder and mystery he wants to find it himself. He runs off into the wild jungle and finds out there's more to life than sailing. This book is really funny and really gets you sucked into it. It is also a book for seven year olds. EL - OPTIONAL Student Reviewer: KC

Buffie, Margaret *Out of Focus*, 239 pages Language- PG-13, Too many pages to put, its all over the book; Sexual Content- G; Violence- G - Can Bernie get over her drunken mother, take care of her brother and sister and deal with her moms crazy boyfriends. I liked it, except it had a little too much swearing for my taste. It would be best in a public library. MS-NO Student Reviewer: LW

2 November 2006

Cassidy, Cathy *Scarlett*, 261 p. Penguin - Scarlett's mum has sent her off to live with her father in the far reaches of Ireland, because twelve-year old Scarlett has been kicked out of her 7th school since her parent's divorce. Scarlett doesn't want to see her father and the evil woman who stole his affections, but with fewer distractions, Scarlett finds what she really wants from her life AND a secretive, but lovely young man. For all of her toughness, Scarlett is also very naïve and young (what 12 year old isn't). Like Cassidy's other titles, the heroine is very likable and relatable. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Lupica, Mike *Miracle on 49th Street*, 246 p. Penguin - 12 years ago, Molly's mother walked out on Molly's father. Now Molly's mom is dead and Molly wants to meet the man who doesn't even know she exists - Josh Cameron, the Boston Celtic's leading player and the nicest guy in all of basketball. The meeting doesn't go so well and as time goes on, Molly is not sure that Josh has any time in his life for anything but basketball. For boys who pick this up for some basketball action, the book may initially be a disappointment, because the ball action is almost non-existent. But, the title is so well written and so interesting that almost everyone who reads it will love it. I wouldn't recommend it for elementary, because it does talk about unwed parents. MS - ESSENTIAL

Levine, Gail Carson *Fairest* 326 p. HarperCollins - Aza has the most beautiful singing voice in the entire kingdom, but she is also the ugliest person around. When she visits the castle for the King's second wedding, she comes to the attention to the new queen, who blackmails Aza into becoming the Queen's singing voice (of which the Queen has none), with Aza's unique talent of "illusing", or throwing her voice where she pleases and mimicking anyone. Aza discovers that Queen Ivi has a magic mirror, in order to make her beautiful and that constantly gives her bad advice. Based loosely on the story of Snow White, many details of that fairy tale are woven into this unique and compelling narrative. Not recommended for elementary. MS - ESSENTIAL, HS - ADVISABLE

Waldorf, Heather *Fighting the Current*, 224 p. Lobster - Ever since Theresa's father was badly injured in a drunk-driving accident, she has lived with her famous, mystery-writing aunt, trying to keep going with school and still visit her father in the rehabilitation home on the weekends. The new boy in school, Ethan, catches her attention and also helps her struggle through the many curves the life throws Theresa's way. There is enough material in this book for an entire series. In fact, it is divided into 5 part and each part could have been its own book with a bit more writing. Fast-paced action keeps coming at you and Theresa is a very sympathetic main character. There are a half dozen swear words, mostly in the scene where Theresa's dad has a bad reaction to his medication and swears at her (two f's) and one reference to sex. MS-ADVISABLE (but think about it), HS - ADVISABLE

Carroll, Lewis *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, illustrated by Alison Joy, 203 p. Penguin - A beautifully illustrated version of the classic tale. This particular illustrator specializes in crackle-varnished paintings that bring an antique feeling to the novel. If your library needs a new copy of the book, or if you are looking for a gift book, this version is a great choice, especially for elementary schools. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Urdale, Eleanor *Montmorency's Revenge* 304 p. Scholastic - Montmorency is on the hunt for the men who conspired to kill his best friend, George Fox-Selwyn. Doctor Farcett is sliding into insanity and needs help, and young Francis Fox-Selwyn takes on the most dangerous job of all. With the introduction of a larger cast of character in book number three, the series has become unwieldy and not as interesting. I quickly tired of Montmorency's and Francis's one-track minds. But, if you do manage to stay with it to the end, you'll discover on the very last page there is at least one more book to come. I hope it is the last. Don't buy this title unless the others in the series circulate well. MS-OPTIONAL

Charles, Veronika *The Birdman* PICTURE BOOK Tundra - A hard-working tailor in the dusty streets of Calcutta, India, Noor Nobi finds a small bit of relief from his grief by buying and releasing songbirds which have been captured and caged. Beautiful illustrations with an Indian feel and a postscript about the author's journey make this book. Young children especially will like the idea of releasing caged birds. (And I like that he does it legally instead of through sabotage). EL - ADVISABLE

Brennan, Herbie *Ruler of the Realm*, 423 p. , Language G PG PG13 R (On several pages it said hell or hael but they were mostly talking about the place, because of demons that were causing problems) Sexual Content PG13 (They didn't do it but they talked about it, because Henry and Blue were falling in love with each other. It's confusing) Violence PG (It's a book about a war that is starting so some people get stabbed and stuff. That's really all) - Blue the new Queen of the Light Faeries must cope with the death of her father and rule the Realm of Faerie. Henry the human gets stuck in between it all. Henry and Blue fall in love. Lord Hairstreak, Blue's uncle wants to take over the Realm for himself, but the demons from Hael come into the picture and ruin it all. This is a really good book but you must read the first two before you start this book like I did. MS, HS - ADVISABLE
Student Reviewer: KC

Moesta, Rebecca and Kevin J. Anderson *Crystal Doors*, 292 p. - Language-G, Sexual Content-G, Violence-PG - After Gwen's parents die she goes to live with her cousin Vic and his dad Cap. Everything seems to be going well, but after a killer whale almost kills Gwen Cap decides they should lie low for a while, except Vic and Gwen accidentally go through the crystal door without Cap. Now in Elantya they have to learn all they can about the crystal doors, look for Vic's mom, and try to find a way home. I really like this book. It is interesting from beginning to end. There is a lot of action. I can't wait for the next one to come out. MS - ESSENTIAL Student Reviewer: JB

Richardson, E.E. *The Intruders*, 278 p. - Rating: PG-13, Language: page 239, Sexual Content: G, Violence: 271, 235, 236, 237, 238, 275, 276, 277, 80, 81, (wow) - Joel and Cassie are resistant enough about moving in with their mother's boyfriend and his two sons, but now in their new house, they want to get away as far as possible! With supernatural things happening, and weird

hallucinations, Joel wants to run! This novel is a great book to read around a campfire to creep people out. It will hold you from the first page to the last with action, horror, and suspense. MS, HS - OPTIONAL Student Reviewer: LH

31 October 2006

Carlson, Melody *Blade Silver: Color Me Scarred* - Ruth's life is dominated by an emotionally and verbally abusive father and a completely cowed mother. The only way she is able to feel in control is when she cuts; the bright red blood gives her a sense of peace. Her false peace is shattered when her friends discover her addiction, and a kind school counselor takes major steps to get Ruth help. Another excellent True Colors addition. I especially liked the more realistic portrayal of school authority (tired of teachers always being the bad guys or inept). MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Hill, Stuart *Blade of Fire*, 640 p. Scholastic - Twenty years have passed since Icemark was invaded and now Scipio Bellorum is back to grind Icemark under his heel once and for all. Thirrin and Oskan and their allies are all older (expect the vampires), but still willing to risk it all for their beloved country. Unfortunately, while three of Thirrin's children are heroes and one is the country's savior, one of the brood may prove to be Icemark's greatest traitor. Fascinating, well-paced and sure to keep every reader's attention. The length will not daunt any lover of the first in the series. Release: Feb 2007 MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Johnston, Julie - *A Very Fine Line*, 198 p. Tundra Books - Rosalind has always been the odd one of the girls in her family and a startling revelation causes her to try to disguise herself as a boy, attempting to change her destiny. Instead, she has to come to terms with her gender and her gift of second sight. I was surprised, reading the reviews, because for me this reads as one of those books that adults may like, but honestly, kids are just going to go, huh? Rosalind comes across as stuck up and rather boring and when she dresses like a boy it's just weird. NO

Wiseman, Eva *Kanada*, 241 p. Tundra Books - Jutka, a Hungarian Jew, dreams of Kanada, which she learned about in a book from relatives who fled to that country, as she and her family transported to Auschwitz during WWII. Barely surviving the war, Jutka learns that surviving life can be even harder. She is months in a resettlement camp before she finally makes the choice of where to be. A good addition for libraries that need large Holocaust fiction collections. MS - ADVISABLE

Carlson, Melody *Burnt Orange: Color Me Wasted* - Amber has always been the good little preacher's daughter. Now a new friend has introduced Amber to alcohol and she has a new mission in life - to get wasted as often as possible. She knows that she shouldn't, but she kind of likes who she is when she drinks. Unfortunately, even with the love of good friends, it takes a near tragedy - the death of a best friend - to finally wake Amber up to the fact that she really does have a problem. Just buy the entire series - your students will eat them up. MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Lake, A.J. *Coming of Dragons* 250 p. Bloomsbury - Language G, Sexual Content G, Violence PG. An evil guy summons a dragon to fetch a special sword made out of crystal. Elspeth gets the sword stuck on her arm and can't get it off. Edmund and Cluaran go along on a quest to escape Orgrim, an evil sorcerer. I loved it! It was fun to have an easy read. It was comfortable and I didn't have to worry about any bad parts. The plot was very clever. Its suspenseful yet fun and easy. ES, MS, ADVISABLE Student Reviewer: AB

Bruchac, Joseph *Jim Thorpe: Original All-American*, 276 p. Penguin - Language G, Sexual Content G, Violence G. Jim Thorpe was a an book to read. Jim never gave up on any of his goals. He accomplished all of his dreams in a peaceful way, and without pushing to hard. I enjoyed every moment of this great book. ES, MS, ADVISABLE Student Reviewer: AB

Gilman, Laura Ann *The Camelot Spell* 292 p. HarperCollins - Language G, Sexual Content G, Violence PG. Gerald, a 14 year old squire; Newt, a simple stable boy; and Ailis, a young maid servant for the Queen, take on a terrifying quest. With the aid of only an enchanted map, a dagger, and one sword, they start their journey. A great tale of saving a king and all of his knights, of battling dragons, and even hand to hand combat with the king's evil half sister Morgain. This book was not some confusing fantasy book with weird lingo, but an easy to read tale of a classic. I loved reading this book. It was fun and easy. ES, MS, ADVISABLE Student Reviewer: AB

Morris, Gerald *The Quest of the Fair Unknown*, 262 p. Houghton - Language G, Sexual Content G, Violence PG. Imagine being in a forest all alone with only your mother to keep you company, not even have seen another human before. Well that's what happened to Beufil. He lived in a forest sheltered from the rest of the world for 17 years of his life. On her death bed his mother sent him on a Quest to find his father, a Knight of Camelot. With not even the name of his father he sets off on this Quest. He helped others on their Quests but forgot about his own Quest. It was a fun book, and yet again a fun, easy book. ES, MS, ESSENTIAL. Student Reviewer: AB

20 October 2006

Pfeffer, Wendy *We Gather Together*, PICTURE BOOK, Penguin - People from all over the world celebrate the harvest and planting seasons in their own ways. The book includes facts about causes of the seasons, activities for children and harvest related recipes. The bright, simple illustrations make this a shoo-in as read-aloud for younger children and savvy teachers of older students could use this to kick off more in-depth research. A medium length narrative. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Kurlansky, Mark *The Story of Salt*, 48 p. PICTURE BOOK Penguin - A well-ordered, detailed look at the history and importance of salt. Reading the entire book to a class would take most, if not all of a class period, but could be read in parts or facts could be extracted to show what the teacher needs of the book and the discussion of the importance of salt. Teachers at all levels, including geography, history and foods teachers, can find value in this book. EL, MS, HS - ADVISABLE

Seeger, Pete and Paul Dubois Jacobs *The Deaf Musicians*, PICTURE BOOK Penguin - A musician loses his hearing and his job, but rediscovers his love of music as he learns sign language and finds other musicians to share his new style. The bright, edgy drawings mimic the jazzy style of the music in this book. Younger students may enjoy discussing and practicing what deaf jazz musicians might look like. Short, quick read; would be very useful in older classes as an example of onomatopoeia. EL, MS - OPTIONAL

Michelson, Richard *Across the Alley* PICTURE BOOK Penguin - Abe and Willy live across the alley from each other, but miles apart, with Willy having to take violin lessons to learn songs for the Jewish temple and Abe practicing pitching for his father's Negro baseball team. Each boy learns the other's skill and when their elders discover their secret, they also find a way to bridge the gap. An excellent companion to Woodson's *The Other Side*. A medium length narrative. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Krensky, Stephen *Hanukkah at Valley Forge* PICTURE BOOK Penguin - General learns the meaning of Hanukkah from a cold, but valiant soldier at Valley Forge and draws in his mind parallels to his own struggle for independence. Includes are very simple, but good explanation of the origins of Hanukkah. Short, simple wording. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Why Did the Chicken Cross the Road? PICTURE BOOK Penguin - Fourteen popular children's illustrators come together, each with their own answers to that infamous questions. A delightful contrast of opinions and artistic styles that can be very amusing to students, besides being useful for English teachers and Art instructors. Very short, simple wording, but the pictures need time for exploration. EL, MS, HS - ADVISABLE

Yin *Brothers* PICTURE BOOK Penguin - Ming has come to San Francisco to help his brothers earn money to send home to their parents in China. While one brother is off working on the railroad, Ming watches the family's general store, while his oldest brother grows and harvest the fresh foods for the store. The store, in the city's new Chinatown district, does poorly, as the Chinese immigrants have very little money to spend. Then Ming makes a new friend who teaches him English, and his new skills help the store to grow. A sequel to *Coolies*. A simplistic, but good look at the slow path to acceptance that Chinese immigrants had to walk; it will be especially useful in the Northern California area. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Mason, Adrienne *Change it! Solids, liquids, gases and you* PICTURE BOOK Kids Can Press - A very basic look at the nature and process of changing states of matter. Very simple activities will be easy to do with children in the earliest grades. EL - OPTIONAL

Mason, Adrienne *Build it! Structures, systems and you* PICTURE BOOK Kids Can Press - An early elementary teacher will have a couple of days of science lessons planned quickly if she uses this simply written and illustrated book with her students. The basic activities described in the book are easy to do with few materials, and will help little students understand the subject. EL - OPTIONAL

Papineau, Lucie *Christmas Eve Magic* PICTURE BOOK Kids Can Press - Having lost his parents, Barton has also lost the magic of Christmas. A little mouse shows him his past, present and possible future in order to help Barton understand that he can still find love and happiness. Animal characters occupy the pages of this richly illustrated Christmas adaptation. The book will best fit into collections that have large holiday selections. EL - OPTIONAL

Cote, Genevieve *What Elephant?* PICTURE BOOK Kids Can Press - George's neighbors refused to acknowledge the elephant that has moved into George's house, even when the elephant starts to take over the neighborhood. Then the elephant's owner comes to town and wonders why no one was willing to notice the huge creature in their midst. I guess the author was inspired by the phrase "an elephant in the room", but the book doesn't really seem to do much to further discussion of the phrase. While the drawings are pretty cute, I can't find a use for the title in the secondary collection. Any ideas? EL-OPTIONAL

Winthrop, Elizabeth *Counting on Grace*, 221 p. RandomHouse - Grace is excited to go work with her mother and sister in the local textile mill, even though her teacher hates what the mill does to people. When she actually goes to work, however, she finds that the lure of extra money for the family may not be enough to make up for the hardships of mill life. Then her friend

Arthur decides to write a letter to people who might care about children working in those dangerous conditions, which brings a photographer out to the mill. Inspired by Lewis Hines' photographs of children for the National Child Labor Board, the book is good, but doesn't live up to the original, *Lyddie*. If you need to expand your historical fiction collection, it will be a good addition. MS- OPTIONAL

Fisher, Catherine *Corbenic*, 281 p. Harper - Language PG13 -R (14-h, 1-d, 1-b all were used not in a bad way except B), Sexual Content G, Violence PG. When Cal got off at the wrong stop and lands in a waste town named Corbenic, mysterious things start to happen to a point where he can't tell fact from fiction. Now he has to solve the mystery of the bleeding spear and the cup that only he saw. This book was really good. It grabbed my attention and you can almost feel what he is feeling. This is one book that I could not put down, because of the mystery and the great cliffhangers. I loved it but it had tons of swear words. Even with all of the swearing, it was such a good book that if you are mature enough you will be fine reading it. plus the writer only used them as a way to describe how Cal felt when something bad happened like getting off the wrong train station. MS- ADVISABLE Student Reviewer CJ

Masson, Sophie *Snow Fire Sword* 354 p. Random House - Language-G, Sexual Content-G, Violence-PG. Dewi and Adi always thought they were ordinary kids. That is, until both of their guardians were kidnapped. Now they must run all over Jayangan running into gods, jinns, and sorcerers, all the time trying to find Snow Fire Sword. The problem is they have no idea what Snow Fire Sword is, but they do know that without it their world is doomed. I would not say this book is one of my favorites, but I did like it. It was very interesting learning about Indonesian myths, culture, and religion. At times it can be a little boring but it always keeps you guessing. MS - Optional Student Reviewer: JB

Helgerson, Joseph *Horns & Wrinkles* 357 p. Houghton - Language G, Sexual Content G, Violence G - This book, *Horns & Wrinkles*, was a good book, but it is also for little kids. There are river trolls, rock trolls, and Blue Wing Fairies. Claire and her cousin, Duke, meet a little old lady and Duke grows a horn. He runs away and his parents end up turned to stone. Claire meets three river trolls that are trying to find their fathers. They go and find stars and takes them to Bodasious Deepthinker, a rock troll who has crickets that know where their fathers are. Duke was taken by Bo and he turned into a rhino. The three water trolls and Claire must save Duke before he becomes dinner. I liked this book but I would rather read it to my younger siblings. It's good but not really for Middle School. EL, MS - OPTIONAL Student Reviewer: KC

Lyga, Barry *The Astonishing Adventures of Fanboy and Goth Girl*, 315 p. Houghton - Language: R (excessive swearing, no F; so many that I gave up counting), Sexual content: PG-13 (There wasn't any sex, just mention of it, talking about breasts, and Kyra flashes two people), Violence: G - This story is about a graphic novel fanatic who views himself as a nerd. Kyra comes along and helps him realize his potential and that "you are only a nerd if you think you are". I really liked this book because I could connect with the characters and the experiences they had. It was a very well written story of things that face teens today, and I would definitely advise a public library to have this book. MS, HS - NO Student Reviewer: JH

Manning, Sarra *Diary of a Crush: French Kiss*, 214 p. Penguin - Language: R (said F three times and other swears), Sexual content: PG-13, Violence: G - This book was about a girl, Edie, who lives in Europe, and is read through her diary. Her photography class is given the chance to go to France for five days, and over those five days she falls in love with Dylan, another art student. Although it was a good book, there are others I would recommend first. There were times I connected with Edie, but there were times when I didn't. I read it pretty quickly, but it didn't exactly capture my interest like other books have. I would suggest it for an easy read at a public library. MS- NO Student Reviewer: JH

5 October 2006

Owen, James A. *Here, There Be Dragons*, 324 p. - Language: G; Sexual Content G; Violence: PG (war) - This book, *Here, There Be Dragons*, is a very good book. There is a man named John that finds out that he is the Caretaker for the Imaginarium Geographica. He must save our world and the other. It is kind of hard to get into but once you get into it you can't stop.. MS - ADVISABLE Student Reviewer: KC

Bennett, Veronica *AngelMonster* Candlewick, 234 p. - When Mary meets Percy Shelley in her father's bookshop, she is instantly attracted; even when she learns he is married, her passion is undeterred. Together with her stepsister, the 16 year old runs away to Europe with Shelley and the trio struggles to find any kind of life. Placing Mary's writing of *Frankenstein* years after its actual publication, the author adds depth to the reasons such a young girl may have been able to imagine such a dark character. Though there are no particular words that are wrong in this book, the sheer number of adulteries and infidelities makes this book too salacious for the middle school. HS-ADVISABLE

Wolfson, Jill *Home and Other Big, Fat Lies* Henry Holt, 281 p. - Whitney finds herself packed off to another foster home, this time in the timber country of Northern California. This time she is not alone; because of an economic downturn, several town families have taken in fosters also. Whitney's ADHD makes it hard for her connect, usually, but something about the woods and

the kids calls to her - and her passion for the Mother Tree leads her to take a great risk when the permission to cut the forest again comes through. A cute mix of foster kid story and environmentalism. EL, MS - OPTIONAL

Hale, Marian *Dark Water Rising* Henry Holt, 221 p. - Seth and his family move to Galveston Texas just in time to get caught by the biggest storm disaster in Texas history. While Seth struggles to prove his worth as a carpenter to his father, he is also struggling to just stay alive. Heart-wrenching moments and slightly grisly descriptions of true events in Texas history. I am sure that every school in the state of Texas should own this book; other schools should buy this if their students are fans of Willo Roberts or Patricia Giff. It does start a little slow, but the disaster and its aftermath are well worth reading. MS- ADVISABLE

Colasanti, Susane *When It Happens* Penguin, 310 p. - Sara is convinced that she will never find true love, until jock Dave pursues her. Just as she starts realizing that maybe Dave is a little shallow, she sees love in the eyes of Tobey - the guitar player with the killer blue eyes. Full of a large variety of swear words, including a hefty dose of "f", rendering this unusable for school libraries. Even if all of the swear words were removed (which could be done without any harm to the story), this would still only be an optional purchase. NO

Selznick, Brian *The Invention of Hugo Cabret* Scholastic, 525 p. - Hugo Cabret has lived above the train station and cared for it's many clocks for some months now - since his uncle disappeared. He steals from the station food stand in order to survive, but from the toy maker to supply him with parts to fix the magnificent automaton that is his father's only remaining gift to him. Then one day he is caught by the toy man, which leads to many startling revelations and the reinvention of Hugo. I was a little skeptical, because I am not a fan of graphic novels, but my 7th grade daughter assures me that this is fantastic. It reads like a novel and a movie, with its large pages of illustrations (over 200 of them). EL, MS - ADVISABLE

4 October 2006

Wilce, Ysabeau *Flora Segunda* Harcourt, 448 p. - RELEASE: JAN 2007 Flora's ancestral home has fallen into disrepair, ever since her mother banished the family's magickal Butler. While taking an ill-advised shortcut, Flora discovers the missing Butler and gets way too involved in matters way beyond her strength, but she also discovers a few allies. The story also involves a dead sister, a crazy father, a mother with too many responsibilities, and infidelity of the heart. If the book hadn't touched on the parents' infidelities, I would have an easier time recommending this book. Flora is pretty likable, and I enjoyed her and her friends, but not so much her parents and their problems. EL, MS - OPTIONAL

McAllister, M.I. *Urchin and the Heartstone* Hyperion, 304 p. - The baddies have been banished and Mistmantle is preparing for the crowning of King Crispin. A mysterious ship arrives and spirits Urchin away to an island ruled by a mad king and populated by Mistmantle exiles who have plans to conquer Mistmantle. I like how this author uses the characteristics of the animals to make a difference how they act and think; I always thought that was missing from Jacques' books. A cute addition to the series. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

LeGuin, Ursula *Voices* Harcourt, 352 p. - Years earlier, Ansil was conquered by the Aids, a desert people who fear writing. Only a small, hidden library was protected and Memer and the Waylord are the only people who can enter. Then Orrec and Gry (from Gifts) come to town and startling events are set in motion, in which young Memer figures prominently. I found this title much more accessible than Gifts; the story flowed more smoothly and the plotting seemed more logical. Libraries with Le Guin's other titles will want to add this. MS, HS - ADVISABLE

Kaaberbol, Lene *The Shamer's War* Henry Holt, 356 p. - Dina, Nico, and Davin all have important parts to play in the final confrontation with the Dragonlord. They are the only one's who may finally have the strengths and talents to free the conquered Highlands. Dina must use her Shamer gifts and her Serpent powers before the battle is through. The beginning of this title was complicated enough that I got a little confused, but when I rediscovered my path nearer the end, the finish was well done. I think that fans of the series will have plenty to talk about as the series draws to a close. MS - ADVISABLE

Pearson, Ridley *Kingdom Keepers* Hyperion, 325 p. - Finn Whitman and four other teens were honored as the first holographic guides for Disney's Magic Kingdom, but now the kids find themselves waking up in the middle of the night at the park itself. Wayne, one of Walt's original crew, tells them of a mysterious mission that the teens must undertake, otherwise, evil forces within the park may get out of control and escape into the real world. I can only hope that there is a sequel to this incredibly awesome book, because Malificent, the main evil in this title, has some mysterious words about a greater evil than she. WHO COULD IT BE?!?!? Any Disney fan will enjoy the ride! EL, MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Love, D. *Anne Semiprecious* Simon and Schuster, 293 p. - While their father is away working on an oil rig, Opal and Garnet's mother decides to drop the girls at her sister's home and take off for Nashville, trying to break in to the country singing biz. Now the girls are stuck in a tiny town, in a house without a phone or a car. With an aunt they hardly know. It's hard to realize

that your own mother doesn't want you and to rebuild your life. This title feels like several books I have read before, but will be a great purchase in paperback. MS - OPTIONAL

Hautman, Pete *Rash* Simon Schuster, 249 p. - Bo has lost his temper one too many times and has been sentenced to work camp in the high arctic at a McDonald's Rehabilitation and Manufacturing plant. There, in a society that prides itself on orderliness and manners, he finds himself on an illegal football team. There Bo learns about himself and about his society, and his high school computer programming assignment which has become self aware and is trying to spring him from jail. Two swear words and a wickedly funny look at future society. Best at the High School, unless your middle school is fairly sophisticated. HS - ADVISABLE

Fiedler, Lisa *Romeo's Ex: Rosaline's Story* Henry Holt, 246 p. - Rosaline is too smart for Romeo and she recognizes that he is just a distraction. However, she has to standby and watch as her cousin Juliet falls head over heels in lust for the young man, and Rosaline herself finds that she actually has feelings for Benvolio. Both of them are powerless to stop the madness as two Verona families are headed towards tragedy. An awesome look at Romeo and Juliet from the outside! I especially love it when she calls the two lovers "...two beautiful, impetuous idiots..." MS - ESSENTIAL

2 October 2006

Hostetter, Joyce *Blue*, 195 p. - Quality of read- A; Language- G; Sexual content-G; Violence- G - This book was set in the year of 1944 the year North Carolina got infected with Polio and Hitler was on a war. A girl named Ann Fay Honeycutt tells all about that year and the Hickory, North Carolina miracle. - This book was amazing I could hardly put it down with polio, the war, and racism this book was full of tear jerking surprises. This book was one that will make you cry but it is a stunning book. I loved it! EL, MS - ESSENTIAL Student Reviewer, AN

Cirrone, Dorian *Dancing in Red Shoes will Kill you*, 213 p. - Quality of read- B-; Language- PG; Sexual content- R (it was really graphic about body parts); Violence- G - This book was about a girl named Kayla Callaway. She has danced in Ballet ever since she was small and when she auditions for the school production Cinderella she does not get a good part because she has big boobs. her sister likes to paint pictures of naked people and this hot new kid and her best friend tries to help her with her ballet problem. This book was really graphic I thought it was a good book besides the graphic parts. NO HS Student Reviewer, AN

Hughes, Carol *Dirty Magic*, 418 p. - Language-PG ; Sexual Content-G; Violence-PG13 - This is a story about a boy named Joe Brooks. He goes to the dimension between life and death thinking that his little sister Hannah is there. But there is a war going on. He has to get a guide, pass giant machines designed to kill, and meet with the man who is responsible for the entire war. I really liked this book. The first two chapters are a little slow. It gave me a lot of things to think about. I would recommend this book. EL - ADVISABLE Student Reviewer, JB

Beddor, Frank *The Looking Glass Wars*, 358 p. ; Language-G; Sexual Content-G; Violence-PG - Every one knows the story of Alice in Wonderland, but that story is a complete lie. Alice Liddel is really Alyss Heart, the heir to the Wonderland queendom. On Alyss' seventh birthday her Aunt Redd attacks, kills her parents, and tries to kill her. To survive Alyss must go through the lake of tears and into London. But over time she is told that Wonderland was just a figment of her imagination. Will she start to believe it? I absolutely hate the book Alice in Wonderland, but *The Looking Glass Wars* is now one of my favorite books. It has action and romance and is never boring. It is also a little more realistic. Everything is explained. It shows you just how everything works. I think any one would like this book. MS - ESSENTIAL Student Reviewer, JB

Boyce, Frank Cottrell *Framed*, 311 p. - Language- PG; Sexual Content- G; Violence- G - Dylan's Dad has to go away to get money for his family. Get Dylan and his sisters find a different way to make money and bring home his dad? I thought the book was boring until the end, then it got good. EL. MS - OPTIONAL Student Reviewer, LW

22 Aug 2006

Garden, Nancy *Endgame*, 304 p. Harcourt - Gray Walton is being interviewed by a lawyer who is trying to prepare a defense for the young man who was captured after a shooting spree at his school. Probably the best of the post-Columbine fiction that I have read. Minimal swear words, but 1 "f". MS-OPTIONAL, HS-ADVSIABLE

Sutherland, Tui *Avatars: So this is How it Ends*, 368 p. HarperCollins - Five teens from different backgrounds are brought together by mysterious forces in what seems to be a future world - and they are the only people under 70 anywhere. The book becomes more interesting the closer the teens draw together. Teens will enjoy it more if they have a rudimentary knowledge of the major religions of the world and their accompanying gods structures. This first book was all setup for what will probably be a very violent and rousing sequel. HS, MS - OPTIONAL

Moranville, Sharelle Byars *A Higher Geometry*, 212 p. Henry Holt - Anna Conway, a young lady of the 1950s is having a hard time convincing her parents that an advance education might be worthwhile for a girl. Her love and genius with goes a long way to helping her cause. She also has to deal with the possible stigma if she were to be discovered having sex with her boyfriend in age that birth control was basically unknown. Though I kind of enjoyed the math bits (and the scenes at math competitions may be useful for a math class), I realized at the end that I had pretty much been bored and that the book felt incomplete. Does involve undescribed teen sex. HS, MS-OPTIONAL

Sleator, William *Hell Phone*, 256 p. Abrams - Nick scraps together the money to buy a cheap cell phone, but it is directly wired to someone who is in hell. He tries not to listen to the voices on the other end, but ends up doing their bidding, the consequence being his girlfriend turns him in for murder and he is executed. But that's not the end. Besides the word "hell", there are no other swear words in this book. It will probably be a favorite for reluctant readers, just for the title, but I didn't think it was one of Sleator's better works. MS-OPTIONAL

Downer, Ann *The Dragon of Never-Was*, 320 p. Simon Schuster - Theodora would prefer to forget the events of last summer, but her burgeoning magic doesn't give her a chance. This time she and her father are summoned to England to examine something that looks like a dragon scale. She must solve a mystery from the past and from another dimension in order to save herself and her friends. Fans of Hatching Magic will enjoy this. If you have a large fantasy collection then feel free to add the series. EL, MS-OPTIONAL

Hughes, Monica *The Isis Trilogy*, 560 p. Tundra - Olwen Pendennis had lived her entire life as the Keeper of the Isis Light, a beacon to space-faring vessels. Now colonists have come to her planet and she learns in the cruelest manner that she was altered as a child so that she could survive the harsh environment. Two other books follow the fate of Olwen, *The Guardian* and her settlers of Isis. I have always enjoyed the first in the trilogy, but never even knew there were sequels. The only flaw I found was that the events follow each other too closely for the huge changes that happen in the community. Otherwise I enjoyed reading this look at the manipulation of an entire community. HS-ADVISABLE

Friend, Natasha *Lush*, 178 p. Scholastic - Samantha "Sam", is trying to figure out life in high school with a newly "lush" body and life with an alcoholic father, or "lush", so she sends an anonymous note to someone who she thinks would be able to mentor her. Someone else finds the note, but that person still has words that Sam needs to take control of her life. Two swear words and an excellent message. MS-ESSENTIAL

Duval, Alex *Vampire Beach: Bloodlust AND Initiation*, @185 p. Simon and Schuster - Jason and his family move the swankiest part of Malibu, the gated community of De Vere Heights. What he doesn't know is that his aunt had to pull some strings, because they are the only family behind the gates who aren't also vampires. With his friend Adam, he discovers the secret and then has to decide what to do with the information. Good, clean vampire fun. MS - ADVISABLE

Schreiber, Ellen *Vampireville*, 176 p. HarperCollins - Goth-girl Raven and her vampire boyfriend Alexander have managed to fool Jagger into thinking Alexander has turned Raven into a vampire, but they must still stop Jagger and his sister Luna from turning Travis, Raven's historic nemesis, into a vampire also. This series was published before Twilight, but may be overshadowed by the new series. I like that the Vampire Kisses point are short and sweet and to the point. I hope Ms. Schreiber keeps it going. MS-ESSENTIAL

Wooding, Chris *Storm Thief*, 320 p. Scholastic - Rail and Moa live in an enclosed city where unpredictable Probability storms sweep through sporadically and change life randomly. One day they meet a cyborg construct as the pair are fleeing a thief boss who wants an artifact that only Moa can use. The three have the unknowing power to upset the entire system. At interesting look at one version of a dystopian society, setup with humanity's best interests at heart (supposedly). There are so many good novels out there now dealing with these types of societies. A sampling of them would be an interesting area of study for a political science class. HS, MS-OPTIONAL

August 2006

Ransom, Candice *Finding Day's Bottom*, 171 p. Carolrhoda - Jane-Ery's father has died in a mine accident and her grandfather has come to live with her and her mother, to help them on their home in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia. Both mother and daughter are having a hard time making ends meet and finding a way to live on after the death. *Finding Day's Bottom* is one of those quiet, eloquent books - along the lines of *Missing May* or *A Hole in the World*. It will need help finding its audience. EL, MS-OPTIONAL

Plum-Ucci, Carol *The Night My Sister Went Missing*, 224 p. Harcourt - Kurt and his friends are hanging out in their usual place at the burnt out pier. Then a gun goes off and Kurt's younger sister disappears over the side. At the police station, Kurt finds a way to listen in as people are brought in and questioned. Everyone has their own agenda and everyone is hiding something.

Though it uses more than a dozen swear words (2 "f"), the words actually feel as though they belong where they are. The plot is well paced and will keep a reader's attention. This book will be passed around. MS-OPTIONAL, HS-ADVISABLE

Sniegowski, Tom *Sleeper Code*, 278 p. AND *Sleeper Agenda*, 300 p. Penguin - Tom Lovett has a severe form of narcolepsy - a disease that makes him fall asleep with no notice. Then he stops taking his medicine and sets forces in motion that reveal that his disease also covers up an implanted personality that commits murder for hire. His "creator" has become an enemy of the federal government which funded the original research. Only together can Tom and his alter ego prevail, but "Tyler Garrett" has plans of his own. Excellent spy novel stuff. Two books only, already out in paperback. Get them today! MS-ESSENTIAL

Buckley-Archer, Linda *Gideon the Cutpurse*, 400 p. Simon Schuster - The last time Peter saw his father he told him that he hated him. Now Peter has been flung back to England of 1763, along with Kate, whose father helped create the technology. Their rescuer, Gideon, was until recently a thief - and there is someone who would like to silence Gideon for good and also capture the teens from the future. The historical action is interspersed with small bits about the happenings in the present day. The teens have the ability to "blur" into their reality, but find themselves always back in 1763. Their blurring attracts the attention of those who can help them come home. First in the trilogy; I am looking forward to the second. EL, MS-ADVISABLE

Ferguson, Alane *The Christopher Killer*, 274 p. Penguin - Cameryn is determined to follow in her coroner father's footsteps. After he takes her on as his assistant, however, their second assignment leads her straight into a murder, and the victim is one of her best friends. A TV psychic claims to have predicted the murder and brings swarms of publicity into the little town of Silverton, CO. Cameryn may find herself to be the murderer's next victim. The forensic scenes (two bodies and an autopsy) are graphic without crossing into voyeuristic. I wouldn't put this in a 6,7,8 school, but it will probably fly in a 8,9 school. MS-ADVISABLE, HS-ESSENTIAL

Paratore, Coleen *The Wedding Planner's Daughter*, 193 p. Simon Schuster - Willa and her mother move further east fairly regularly, but now they are on Cape Cod - and there isn't much further to go. Willa would love to have her wedding planner mother fall in love and get married herself, but Willa herself is the one who almost crushes all of her dreams. A cute book about the perfect wedding and running from your problems. Out in paperback already. EL, MS-ADVISABLE

Augarde, Steve *Celandine*, 496 p. Random House - When Celandine was young, she is sure that she saw little people living in a overgrown forested area near her home. Now she older, and has great need to escape the terrible situation she is in at her boarding school, so she runs to find those small creatures. The "Various" as they call themselves take the girl in, but none of them know that danger from others like them is on its way. It has been 2 ½ years since I read *The Various*, but I think that this novel is actually a prequel to it. At least it feels like a prequel (I could be wrong). The sequence is not chronological, which may mess up some readers, but nothing is too complicated to impede enjoyment of the novel. The clear writing and young protagonist make this appropriate for lower grades, but the length means it can also be appreciated by older readers. The barebones cover style, unfortunately does not help sell the book. EL, MS, HS - ADVISABLE

McKay, Hilary *Caddy Ever After*, 218 p. Simon Schuster - In a very convoluted manner, Rose, Saffy, Indigo and Caddy each tell part of the circumstances of Caddy standing at the altar to marry someone who is not Darling Michael. As much as I enjoyed reading the first three books (I just found them for the first time this spring), this particular entry was too convoluted for me to enjoy. I kept losing the thread of who was talking and every tidbit to further the storyline had to be pried from the narrative. Not so charming. EL, MS-OPTIONAL (i.e., wait for the paperback)

Brian, Kate *Private*, 227 p. Simon Schuster - Reed Brennan has won a scholarship to an exclusive prep school, but is completely unprepared for the social scene and cut throat competition for grades. In order to prove a point, Reed sets her sights on joining the most exclusive clique on campus, no matter how she has to debase herself. I did not ever want to belong to a sorority (Billings is not actually a sorority, as this is a prep school, but it illustrates the point), so I can not be sympathetic with the mindset of someone who would do anything required to belong to this kind of elitist group. I am sick and tired of these brainless homages to the rich and powerful that seem to be so prevalent since *Mean Girls* came out! On the other hand, maybe just by reading it, a teen may also see the wrongness of it all and avoid the popularity trap. MS, HS-OPTIONAL

Gray, Dianne *Tomorrow, The River*, 256 p. Houghton Mifflin - Desperate to escape the drudgery of working for her pregnant sisters this summer, Megan wrangles an invitation to live with her older sister on a houseboat along the Mississippi River. Only fourteen, she takes on a woman's share of the work as the small family meets a cast of characters along the river, especially after Isaac re-injures his leg coming to Megan's rescue. Megan doesn't know it, but her travels are being chronicled in the small town papers along the route, leaving just enough clues for the handsome young man she met at the beginning of her journey to follow her. A charming look at life along the Mississippi at the end of the 19th century. If you have a teacher who does a historical fiction project, this would be a good addition. MS - ADVISABLE

Wiess, Laura *Such a Pretty Girl*, 224 p. Simon Schuster - Meredith has been safe for three years, but now her rapist - her own father - is getting out of jail early for good behavior and her mother insists that Meredith welcome him back with open arms. In the few dramatic days following his release, Meredith discovers some unexpected supporters and the strength within her self to survive. Very engrossing and a speedy read that will generate lots of word of mouth among students. The book does mention, of course, the rape, without describing it. Meredith also is pretty cozy with her older boyfriend, but again the descriptions are fairly limited. The "F" word is used once, and other swear words less than half a dozen times. MS, HS-ESSENTIAL

Page, Katherine Hall *Club Meds*, 166 p. Simon Schuster - Jack, Mary and Sam call themselves and other kids who troop to the nurse's office each day "Club Med", as they get the medication they need to survive another day of school. Now they are in high school and Jack's old tormentor has decided to use Jack as his personal supplier for his drug deals around campus - forcing Jack to turn over half of his medication for each day. Since Jack needs that medication to make it through each school day, he and his friends hit upon a plan to thwart Chuck and assert themselves against the school bullies. I have to wonder if someone told the author that the book would never sell unless she included some swearing, so she went back and add a swear word about every other page. I kid you not - that's just about how often they are. They add absolutely nothing to the narrative and instead feel like great big clunker in the middle of the story flow. It's too bad - the story is very good, but the sheer amount and variety of swear words, with no purpose, make this off limits for public schools. NO

Dowswell, Paul *Prison Ship*, 300 p. Bloomsbury - Sam Witchall survived the epic battle in Powder Monkey and has a new berth on a new ship. Unfortunately, He raises the ire and suspicion of the ship's purser and the purser's son, who frame him and his best friend Richard for cowardice in the midst of battle. The two are sent to Australia for punishment and continue to get themselves into trouble time after time, even though they have good people trying to help them. I really enjoyed the descriptions of ship life and colony life, but I got tired of watching the boys continually make horrible mistakes and be saved from their own follies in a *deus ex machina* fashion. I haven't read the first title, but if it is the same then I have a hard time being enthusiastic. MS-ADVISABLE

Lopez, Jack *In The Break*, 192 p. Little, Brown - Juan and his best friend Jamie spend the best part of their days catching waves at their favorite breaks up and down the shore. When Jamie's stepfather forces a confrontation, Jamie beats him until he is close to death. With Amber, Jamie's sister, the pair head to Mexico to find a place for Jamie to hide out. With the help of an old Mexican man, the friends head out to a sheltered island with gorgeous waves and pods of dolphins playing in the surf. Danger lurks right around the corner. Part of the blurb on the back of the book calls the author's writing "lyrical", and it might be, but its hard to tell through all of the swearing. Clunky and jarring, the large amount of swear words - totally without purpose - interrupt the reading and spoil the novel. NO

Umansky, Kaye *The Silver Spoon of Solomon Snow*, 304 p. Candlewick - One fateful day, Solomon Snow discovers that he truly is a foundling, left in the snow with only a napkin and a silver spoon as the keys to his origins. Along with Prudence, a girl too smart for the village, he ventures to Town in search of spoon, which his stepfather pawned more than a year earlier. Along the way they acquire a little girl, a rabbit and chimney sweep - all of whom are key to solving the mystery. Written after the author was inspired by Dickens, the parody of old Victorian novels. I know adults would appreciate the book, but I am not so sure about children. EL-OPTIONAL

DuPrau, Jeanne *Prophet of Yonwood*, 304 p. Random House - 11 year old Nickie has come to Yonwood with her Aunt Christine to sell her great-grandfather's house. The pair find the town under the grip of a woman in a coma, Althea Tower, who is being called The Prophet. Old Ms. Beeson has taken the role of interpreting the Prophet's mumblings into directives for the townfolk. Christine is torn between her desire to help forward the Prophet's vision and her feelings of loyalty to people who don't really believe in Ms. Beeson's orders. This book has almost nothing to do with the previous Ember books, except for a contrived relationship that means nothing. If you feel that your readers will be disappointed by that, then don't by this book. If you think your students will be interested in a tale of town in the grip of a cult-like experience, then you might buy this, but there are better books out there addressing the topic. Email me if you want some titles. EL, MS-OPTIONAL

Baker, E.D. *No Place for Magic*, 250 p. Bloombury - Emma and Eadric are ready to marry, but Emma insists that they receive his parents' blessing. In Eadric's country, however, witches and magic are not respected. When the pair arrive, they are immediately set with the task of rescuing Eadric's little brother from evil trolls - and Emma is going to try to accomplish this without depending on her magic. A nicely done addition to the Frog Princess series. EL, MS-ADVISABLE

Moore, Lilian *Beware, Take Care* PICTURE BOOK Henry Holt - A rambunctious ghost, a smiling monster, a misunderstood dragon are part of the poems and adorable illustrations in this short picture book. My favorite poem is The Teeny, Tiny Ghost. If you have a large Halloween collection, this would be a good addition. EL - OPTIONAL

Murphy, Jim *Desperate Journey*, 272 p. Scholastic - Maggie and her family live and work on the Erie Canal. If they don't get their current load to the city on time, they will probably loose their boat and their livelihood. Along their way, however, their

father and uncle are arrested on trumped up charges. Maggie, her mother and her brother must somehow get the boat there on time. While the writing and pacing are excellent, the subject matter will probably not draw students to the novel. If you have a teacher who requires an American Historical fiction read, then add this to your collection. Otherwise, you will need to sell this title. EL, MS-OPTIONAL

Truss, Lynne *Eats, Shoots, and Leaves: Why commas really do make a difference*, PICTURE BOOK Penguin - A panda walks into a diner, eats a bit, shoots a couple of arrows and then leaves. So begins several pages of misplaced and replaced commas and great illustrations for each convention. The importance of the lowly comma becomes very evident. This title was originally published as a non-fiction title that expounds at great length (yes, I have read it). This much shorter, and to the point adaptation, would be an excellent tool at every level of education. You will need an opaque projector or its modern equivalent in order to make the most of this title. EL, MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Cooper, Susan *Victory*, 208 p. Simon Schuster - Sam has been press ganged onto Vice-Admiral Horatio Nelson's flag ship before the battle of Trafalgar. Molly has moved with her mother and step family from her beloved London to Connecticut, bringing along a severe case of homesickness. The two young people's stories come together when Molly finds a piece of Admiral Nelson's history preserved by Sam between the pages of a book. Books about sailing ships and sea battles seem to be doing well in many libraries. If this is the case in your library, then this will be a good addition. EL, MS-ADVISABLE

Reeve, Philip *Infernal Devices*, 368 p. HarperCollins - 20 years after Hester and Tom took refuge on the tiny city of Anchorage, they must set out among the Hungry Cities again. This time they must rescue their daughter, Wren, who has been kidnapped and is in a situation more dangerous than she knows. Pennyroyal, Anita Fang, and Stalker Grike are back, each with an important part in this small family's destiny. Definitely exciting, but for a more mature audience. This title will work best in school's which already own the first two. I would not buy the series based on the strength of this title. MS, HS - ADVISABLE

Mackall, Dandi *Eva Underground*, 256 p. Harcourt - Eva's mother has died and her father has dragged her from her comfortable American life and into the extremely poor and anti-democracy environs of Communist Poland of the 1970's. While father tries to nurture a revolution, Eva tries to just survive the harsh, unfamiliar life that she has been thrust into. The events of this title are far removed from the students of today. This title might find a home in a large high school library, especially one where a faculty member actually discusses the events. It will need help finding its audience. MS, HS - OPTIONAL

Smith, Lane *John, Paul, George and Ben* PICTURE BOOK Hyperion - A fun, humorous look at the early lives of five (Tom, too) important men in American history. A great true/false section at the end of the narrative elevates this from mere entertainment, to a way to introduce these men to middle or high school students. EL, MS, HS - ADVISABLE

Sis, Peter *Tree of Life* PICTURE BOOK Farrar, Straus, Giroux - Peter Sis applies his unique illustration style to short, but in-depth look at the life of Charles Darwin. Tiny, detailed drawing, along with (tiny, detailed) writing make this book only appropriate for middle school or high school. If a teacher used an opaque projector, their class could enjoy this look at Darwin. MS, HS - OPTIONAL

Walton, Rick *Suddenly Alligator: an adverbial tale* PICTURE BOOK Gibbs Smith - A young boy walks through the swamp in quest of a new pair of socks. Along with other discoveries, he encounters an alligator intent on making the boy his next meal. The author places each adverb at the end of the sentence add emphasis, helping younger readers enjoy the lesson. Middle or high school grammar and writing teachers could use this book to show how using a wide variety of adverbs enhances writing MIGHTILY. EL, MS, HS - ADVISABLE

Kerr, P.B. *Cobra King of Kathmandu* 384 p. Scholastic - John, Philippa and their best friend Dybbuk travel to India on the hunt for a murderer - not knowing that they must also save their Uncle Nimrod and breakup the resurrection of an old snake cult, whose leader is bent on capturing djinn for his own nefarious purpose. A likable, well-written addition to the series. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

LeGuin, Ursula *Voices*, 352 p. Harcourt - Memer has lived in her city, under the rule of print-phobic usurpers, the Alds, for most of her life. Only she and the Waylord have access to, or even know about, the secret library that was saved from destruction. Now Gry and Orrec, who is a Maker, have arrives in search of this repository. Orrec is destined to stir things up. This title is much more accessible than its predecessor, but will be better enjoyed if read second. If you already carry LeGuin, your upper level students will enjoy her new series. MS, HS - ADVSIABLE

Abbott, Tony *Firegirl* 145 p. Little, Brown - Tom is normal sixth grader, with a best friend, a bit car crazy and a secret crush on the prettiest girl in his grade. Then Jennifer, the victim of a horrible fire, comes to his class while she is receiving burn treatments and skin grafts, changing everything Tom thought he knew about himself and his best friend. This is a short and powerful novel that should be read aloud to every elementary and middle school student across the nation, followed up by an

intense discussion about how to treat people with differences. The unembellished writing drives home the author's intentions and shows how it is as easy to befriend someone as it is to ridicule them. EL, MS-ESSENTIAL

Wooderson, Philip *The Plague: My side of the story*, 192 p. Houghton - Rachel and Robert's lives intersect in her father's shop, where Robert is the apprentice, just as the plague takes hold in 1665 London. Even as the plague devastates London and moves into the villages, someone is trying to ruin Rachel's father's cloth business. This book is written back to back, with the reader having to flip the book in order to finish. The hype on the inside would have you believe that both sides give different, and possibly conflicting, views of the same action. Instead, one is really only a continuation of the other - and I started reading the wrong one first and knew the end before I had even begun! It really is necessary to read Rachel's story first. Other than that quirk, the novel is a middle quality read that adds little to the drama around the Black Death. EL, MS-OPTIONAL

Feinstein, John *Vanishing Act: Mystery at the U.S. Open*, 256 p. Knopf - Stevie and Susan Carol are covering another major sports event as they pursue their dreams of becoming major sports reporters. This time they are at the U.S. Open of tennis, where a major star disappears as she is approaching the court for her first game. Never kids to turn down a great mystery, the two do their best to expose the truth behind the kidnapping. This novel is as engaging as the author's first, with loads of information about sports reporting, tennis professionals and the seedy world of athlete agents. The action is engaging enough that even if people recognize that there are major flaws in the background logic, they will be willing to forgive because the read was so much fun. MS-ADVISEABLE

Coombs, Kate *The Secret-keeper*, PICTURE BOOK Simon Schuster - Kalli has been hearing and keeping the villagers' secrets for years, but is made sick by the burden during one long winter. The villagers find a way to ease her heart and help her recover her spirit. Don't make the mistake of dismissing this picture book as a rip off of Sharon Shinn's *Safe-keeper's Secret*, though at the beginning the similarities are a bit irksome. Instead, enjoy this sweet little book that is so full of hope. Can anyone think of a way this would be useful in a secondary classroom? EL - ADVISABLE

Steele, J.M. *The Taker*, 350 p. Hyperion - Carly must get into Princeton, but she tanks the SAT and only has eight weeks to study for the final retake. Then she receives a text message from "The Taker", who promises to raise her score at least three hundred points, but she must study and act as if she is working hard on her own. For her tutor she enlists Ronald Gross - the nerdy guy who has lived across the street, and whom she has ignored, forever. Along the way Carly learns about lies and love, test-taking skills and life-skills. This is the second SAT fiction book I have read in the last six months and I enjoyed this one the best. A fun, quirky look at the too serious world of the SAT's that many high school seniors will relate to. MS, HS - ADVISABLE

Bulion, Leslie *Uncharted Waters*, 185 p. Peachtree - Jonah and his little sister Jaye are spending the summer with their beloved uncle in a cabin on a lake. Jonah, however, is hiding two secrets - that he will have to repeat seventh grade English if he doesn't finish his final writing project and that his encounter with a jellyfish has left him afraid to go in the water. Jaye has taken his place in the local summer swim program and Jonah has found a job working for a local dock owner, but his fear of the water will come back to haunt him when he takes a job helping a young marine biologist. EL-OPTIONAL

Strasser, Todd *Sidewayz Glory*, 197 p. Simon Schuster - Kennin wakes from his horrific crash and finds himself with a badly broken leg and in the hospital, having lost five days in unconsciousness. Even with his cast on, he finds himself pressured on all sides - from Tito, who wants to make up for causing the crash; from Derek, who wants him to race at Mr. Mercado's new drift track; from Jack, who wants sole control of Kennin's sister; from Mariel, who still trying to make her boyfriend jealous. On the track and in his life, Kennin is never sure if he will ever regain control of anything. Excellent end to the Drift X trilogy. Buy at least two copies of each title, because at least one will be stolen! MS, HS-ESSENTIAL

Muchamore, Robert *Maximum Security*, 287 p. Simon and Schuster - 13 year old James Adams is tapped for a highly dangerous mission - entering a maximum security prison for juvenile offenders as an inmate and cuddling up to the only son of a major weapons dealer. CHERUB can not protect James once he is inside - not from the factions within the inmate groups, and not from guards who might be out for revenge. A much grittier CHERUB novel than the previous two. References to make body parts, a very graphic body cavity search scene, and violent fights elevate the maturity of this novel. Think hard before you put it in the middle school. MS-OPTIONAL, HS-ADVISEABLE

Sorrells, Walter *The Silent Room*, 233 p. Oz' new stepfather pushes him and goads him into fighting until Oz' mother finally agrees to send him to a detention facility. Life on the facility's tiny island is harsh and unbearable and the other boys whisper about 'The Silent Room'. Oz' and the other boys in his dorm have discovered an old boat abandoned in the swamp and work desperately to get it in working order so that they can escape. Oz, befriendng the daughter of the camp director, learns that the director's wife and one of the benefactors are actually dangerous con artists, who have plans for the boys under their care. When I started reading this novel, I first thought I was experiencing dejavu, but then realized that I was mixing it up with Willo Davis Robert's "Blood on his Hands," because both novels use the evil stepfather setting up the stepson in order to get rid

of him as the major step up for the action. This is one of those books that will make you queasy with tension as you read, a feeling that middle school students love. MS-ESSENTIAL

Davidson, Ellen Dee *Stolen Voices* 188 p. Lobster Press - At 15, Miri is supposed to be looking forward to being Masked and Bonded to her age mates. Unfortunately, she has no Talent and feels like a failure. Unable to join her friends, she sneaks in and witnesses the ritual - and is caught by the Masker - who has other plans for Miri. With the help of a rebel servant, Miri escapes to the Secret Valley and finds her destiny. An excellent piece of science fiction from a small press out of Quebec. I hope you can get your hands on a copy. MS, HS-ESSENTIAL

L'Homme, Erik *Mystery of Lord Sha* AND *Face of the Shadow*, Scholastic - Second and final in the Quadehar trilogy. Robin and his friends have returned safely from the Uncertain Lands and are working on their chosen career paths. One evening Robin's mentor Quadehar returns to the Unknown Lands on a secret quest, leaving Robin once again in the monastery of Gifdu for protection. Instead, a mysterious figure cloaked in black breaches the security and hunts Robin down. Since these books are already in paperback, they would be worth adding to a large fantasy collection. EL, MS-OPTIONAL

Freyman-Wyer, Garret *Stay With Me*, 238 p. Houghton - 16 year old Leila is trying to cope with the suicide death of her much older half sister and her guilty feelings for not knowing her other family better. While trying to track down a mystery man she saw with her sister at a coffee house, Leila takes a waitressing job and ends up involved with 31 year old man. As I sit writing this review, I feel like the whole premise of the book is pretty weak. I actually enjoyed watching Leila and her extended family deal with their grief, but I could never get over my revulsion to the May-December romance which was so acceptable to Leila's entire family - including the sex. NO

Lasky, Kathryn *Born to Rule*, 160 p HarperCollins - Alicia, a princess of B----- is away for her first summer at princess camp. She has formed a bond of friendship with her roommates, but she is struggling with the challenge every princess must face - finding and training a songbird. To further complicate things, rumors of a ghost haunting Alicia's tower seem to have some truth, distracting Alicia with an enticing mystery. Fluffy and cute, perfect for middle elementary. EL-ADVSIABLE

Price, Charlie *Dead Connection*, 240 p. Roaring Book Press - Murray has been communing with the youngest residents of the local cemetery for some time now - to escape his home situation, to escape his school situation. After a very rough beginning, Murray forms a friendship with Pearl, the daughter of the cemetery's caretaker. She supports him when he hears a new voice - one that he thinks belongs to a girl who disappeared months earlier. While I enjoyed the unfolding of the mystery, a wide variety of swear words and a plot point involving a violent alcoholic left me cold. A book for the older crowd. HS-OPTIONAL

Winterson, Jeanette *Tanglewreck* 416 p. Bloomsbury - When Silver was 7, her parents and sister died in a car accident. Now, four years later, she is still living in her home, but under the care of an evil guardian who makes her life miserable. Events have been set in motion that will send Silver across the world, across time, across space, introducing her to friends to help her and villains who want to possess her - with everyone in pursuit of the Timekeeper. Books written about time and space have to be carefully plotted and/or written brilliantly so that even if you are confused occasionally, you love it so much you are willing to go back and figure out how you got lost. Michael Lawrence's *Small Eternities* is a good example of these two qualities. This particular title, however falls a bit below the mark in either of these traits. With an 11-year old protagonist, I don't see how it will appeal to someone who can actually follow the action. MS-OPTIONAL

Durrant, Lynda *My Last Skirt: The Story of Jennie Hodggers, Union Soldier*, 208 p. Clarion - As a girl in the hills of Scotland, Jennie masqueraded as a boy in order to help her family earn much needed coins. When she and her brother immigrate to America, she keeps up the charade, going as far as to join a Union regiment during the Civil War. Even after the war she maintains the fiction, until one day her lifelong secret is discovered. Full of fascinating details of battles as life as a soldier, but the human parts are rather stiff and sketchy. If you need a new Civil War novel to round out a collection, then buy in hardcover, otherwise wait for the paperback. EL, MS-OPTIONAL

Sage, Angie *My Haunted House* AND *The Sword in the Grotto* 144 p. each HarperCollins - Araminta Spookie lives contentedly with her Aunt Tabitha and Uncle Drac in a fantastically creepy house where she can't find a single ghost. One day Aunt Tabby announces that she is sick and tired of the broken down house and is determined to find a buyer. Minty knows that she must do something drastic in order to keep her home. In the second title, as Minty searches for the perfect birthday present for a 500-year old, she and her new best friend Wanda are in desperate danger in an undersea grotto which is quickly filling with water. Cute, creepy fiction for the younger crowd. EL-ADVSIABLE

Dines, Carol *The Queen's Soprano*, 336 p. Harcourt - Angelica lives in Rome during the time of Pope Innocent IX, who is determined to bring the entire city under papal rule, while keeping a firm grip on the lives of the women, too. Angelica's beautiful voice attracts negative attention and in order to escape the pope's influence and her domineering mother, she takes a position as soprano to the only remaining queen of one of Rome's last free quarters. Angelica is not ready for court life and

intrigue and danger to her reputation is always close at hand. A beautifully written book that will probably have a hard time finding an audience without some help. A good addition to a larger library with an active historical fiction collection. MS, HS - OPTIONAL

Fisher, Catherine *Day of the Scarab*, 400 p. HarperCollins - Final in the Oracle Prophecies. Mirany, Seth, Oblek, the Jackal and Alexos must fight not only against Argelin, but also against Argelin's mercenaries, Mantos the sorceress, the Emperor and factions within the Nine in this fast moving end to the Oracle trilogy. This is a much better book than the slow moving middle book, with all of the disparate plots and characters coming together for a nail-biting finish. MS, HS - ADVISABLE

Stanley, Diane *Bella at Midnight* 278 p. HarperCollins - At birth Bella's knight father gives her to a foster family to raise, far from his sight. In the small village, Bella also meets and becomes fast friends with one of the sons of her country's king. At 16, Bella is summarily called "home", where she meets a new stepmother and sisters, who find Bella well beneath them. Then she hears news that forces her to take bold steps that will change her future. This book is unfortunately terribly derivative (a step mother and two stepsisters!?), drawing together familiar elements of several familiar fairy tales, without creating something so new and fresh that you feel you are reading something brand new. Younger students, who are maybe not as familiar with their fairytales won't mind, but older students and adults will. EL-ADVISEABLE, MS-OPTIONAL

Haddix, Margaret *Among the Free*, 194 p. Simon and Schuster - Luke had been working in the stables at the Population Police headquarters for some time when he is taken on a patrol designed to issue new ID cards to the entire population simultaneously. When an old lady refuses to comply, Luke is ordered to shoot her; instead he makes a bold decision, leading to more decision which may change the course of his country's history forever. This is an excellent end to the Shadow Children series. Plain, unembellished language brings the series to a swiftly moving, engrossing end. EL, MS - ESSENTIAL

Westerfeld, Scott *Specials*, 372 p. Simon and Schuster - Tally has been turned into a Cutter - ceramic bones, super healing and extra icy. Along with her friend Shay and the other Cutters, Tally sets in motion world-changing events involving every important figure Tally has ever come in contact with. The end of Tally's story is filled with excitement, action, adventure and plenty of twists and turns. I did struggle with the feeling that Tally was just constantly being used by everyone around her, but with all of the excitement, plot sometimes takes a back burner. Tally's final decision, while I think it was inevitable, was made incredibly quickly, but I still enjoyed the ride. MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Zahn, Timothy *Dragon and Herdsman*, 299 p. Tom Doherty Associates - 4th in the Dragonback series. When one of Jack Morgan's schemes to get information about the K'da enemies fails, he is joined in flight by Alice Kayna from his mercenary days. The group flees to a planet where they discover primitive K'da, Phooka, which they must protect also they also try to escape their enemies. Ambushes, sneak attacks, stealthy moves and quick thinking help this book move along. As this is the fourth book in the series, I hope we are nearing the end, as only one major plot point was revealed and that one was a surprise for the last couple of pages of the book. Jack is resourceful enough and Dracos is smart enough that I could wish for a little more. Not the best of the series. In fact, the author has yet to top number one! MS, HS - ADVISABLE (but only if you already own the series)

Meyer, Stephanie *New Moon*, p. - Return to Forks and the romance between human Bella and vampire Edward. Stir in a few werewolves and some really ancient vampires from Italy to spice things up. I am going to give away absolutely zero plot points in this review. The novel is excellently written. Even though you know it is setting things up for further books (one book?), you will still keep reading straight through until the end. MS, HS-ESSENTIAL

Delaney, Joseph *The Last Apprentice: Curse of the Bane*, 462 p. HarperCollins - Tom Ward and his master, the Spook, must confront the Bane with the help of Alice, Tom's witchy friend, who is turning further to the dark side. Very dark and full of creepy ways to conquer evil. If your district tried to ban Harry Potter, you don't want to add these books. On the other hand, if you students can tell the difference between make believe and reality and like spooky stuff, then by all means get this. I do not recommend this series for elementary students at all. MS-ADVISEABLE

Barron, T.A. *The Eternal Flame*, 293 p. (and an extensive appendix) Penguin - Tamwyn, Elli, Brionna and Scree each have separate and essential parts to play during the final battle over the fate of Avalon. With the help of their many friends they may just find a way to defeat Rhita Gawr and his minions forever. I have been read several books with a lot of action lately and this one does not disappoint. I was worried that the author was handling too many points of view, but I should have had more faith. Elementary and middle school fantasy readers will enjoy this series. EL, MS - ADVISABLE

Barry, Dave and Ridley Pearson *Peter and the Shadow Thieves*, 541 p. Hyperion - Peter is settling happily onto the island and especially enjoys tormenting Captain Hook, as he now calls Black Stache. Then another enemy returns to the island, bringing greater danger as one of the Others comes seeking the chest of starstuff. In order to protect Molly and her family, Peter must make the long voyage to England. From the cover of the book, you may expect a retelling of Peter and Wendy's adventure.

Instead, you getting a rollicking tale that sets you up for more adventures to come - adventures you will look for with impatience. EL, MS - ESSENTIAL

Spradlin, Michael P. *To Hawaii, With Love*, 198 p. HarperCollins - Book Two of the *Spy Goddess* series. Rachel is still not convinced that she is the goddess *Etherea* come to life, but *Simon Blankenship*, *Etherea's* immortal enemy reborn, is still trying to capture and use her. Rachel and her group discover another of *Mithra's* artifacts is hiding in Hawaii. When the kids are left behind, Rachel engineers the kids' means to follow - landing herself in a whole lot of trouble (many times) and endangering her friends' lives. Spradlin hits the spoiled rich girl tone of voice in Rachel dead on and creates a not-too-campy romp that very nicely mixes spy novels with fantasy. MS-ESSENTIAL

Gideon, Melanie Pucker, 273 p. Penguin Putnam - Thomas and his mother fled their world nine years earlier - after Thomas was badly burnt in a fire. Even without her *Seerskin*, Michael's mother has visions which help pay their way on Earth. Now, though, she will die without the skin - the visions are driving her insane. So Thomas undertakes the journey back to *Isaura*, knowing that he will be healed, but also that he must give up everything to return to save his mother. I was faked out by the title and the cover, but still enjoyed the reading. The book has a few swear words (but one of them is "F") and a couple of breast mentions (which TOTALLY could have been left out), which leaves this out of the middle school definitely - you high school people will have to choose for yourselves. Should be a big hit in the public library, though. MS-NO, MS-OPTIONAL

Copeland, Mark *The Bundle at Blackthorpe Heath*, 167 p. Houghton Mifflin - Art is the grandson of the ringmaster in the insect circus. Spying (by accident) with his shiny new telescope, he sees the fly who acts as their advanced agent embroiled in nefarious activities. Art and his friends try their best to uncover the plot, but even a stick beetle and friendly woodlice can't help until its almost too late. Kind of cute, though I wouldn't go so far as to call this book charming. Art and his friends really do nothing of importance to solve the mystery or stem the coming crisis, though they do have bug-related excitement and intrigue aplenty. My favorite part is actually the addendum which is a booklet from Art's grandfather, explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the various bugs in the circus. EL-PAPERBACK

Watts, Leander *Beautiful City of the Dead*, 254 p. Houghton Mifflin - On her first day at a new school, Zee is befriended by Relly - a young man with a rock band that needs a bass player and holds a very large secret. Zee happens to play the bass quite wickedly, plus she has a head for lyrics and is the catalyst the boys need to propel them towards actual gigs. Unfortunately, evil is willing to use Relly to get their hands on Zee - because they need her also. A great title and a catchy front cover will draw teens in, and they will not be disappointed by the contents. MS, HS-ADVISABLE

Hokenson, Terry *The Winter Road*, 175 p. - The morning Uncle Jordy is supposed to fly Willa's mother onto the next remote settlement in the far northern reaches of the Hudson Bay area, Willa finds him sleeping off a drunk instead. So Willa takes matters into her own hands and flies the plane herself - an unplanned first solo flight. A severe storm wrecks the plane and leaves Willa with a little food and a large store of homegrown survival knowledge. After she fails to grab the attention of the rescue planes overhead, she makes the life-changing decision to find her own way to safety. At first I was a little skeptical that this was just a blatant "Hatchet" ripoff. But the longer I read, the more I liked, and then fell in love with this excellent first effort. Descriptive, exciting writing, excellent survival skills (as if I would know! - city girl that I am!) and by the end I had tears in my eyes, because I couldn't stand the suspense any more!!! I can't wait for the author's next book. EL, MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

4 June 2006

Flinn, Alex *Diva*, 261 p. - RELEASE: OCTOBER. Caitlin has no desire to try out for the cheerleading squad like her friends want her to and she really wants to get away from her ex-boyfriend who beat her, so she secretly applies for the local Performing Arts High School with her beautiful voice tailored made for opera. Once she blackmails her mother into letting her attend, she has to find a new friends and a new path as she tries to fit in a place where everyone wants to stand out. SOOOO well done! I read so many books about subjects that I know nothing about - and sometimes I just don't get them. This time, though, even though I am not an opera fan, Ms. Flinn's writing helped me enjoy the subject despite my personal lack of interest in opera. Readers will be drawn to the title and they will not be disappointed by the experience! MS-ESSENTIAL

Wong Li Keng *Good Fortune: My Journey to Gold Mountain*, 127 p. - Li Keng has only met her father twice since she was born. Now, at the age of seven, her father decides that it is time to bring the entire family to America. Because of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the girls all have to pretend that their mother is their aunt in order to pass the tests and leave Angel Island. Once they make it to shore, life is not easy for the *Gee's*, but they persist and make a place for themselves in "Gold Mountain". Mrs. Wong memoir adds to the body of immigration literature. In communities where this particular immigrant experience is studied, this would be a good addition to the collection. EL, MS-OPTIONAL

Wallace, Rich *Dunk Under Pressure*, 119 p. - Cornell "Dunk" Duncan is not the greatest sixth grade basketball player, but he has practiced his freethrows enough to make it on a traveling team. He feels he has ruined his team's playoff chances when he

chokes under pressure, but understanding coaches and friends help him to bounce back. Wallace's *Winning Season* for younger and reluctant readers has another strong addition. I personally appreciate the up beat tone of the writing, compared against the many cut throat sports novels for teens I usually read. EL-ESSENTIAL, MS-ADVISABLE

3 June 2006

Goschke, Julia Langley *Longears*, PICTURE BOOK - Langley has much longer ears than any of his sibling dogs. So long, in fact, that he is often mistaken for a rabbit. When trouble strikes, however, it is Langley and his long ears that save the day. A cute picture book to talk about the differences that make us all unique and valuable. EL-ADVISABLE

Minor, Wendall *Yankee Doodle America: The Spirit of 1776 from A to Z*, PICTURE BOOK - A abecedarian of important persons, places, things and events from the years surrounding 1776. Illustrations are photos of paintings done in the style of old American tavern signs. Great for a quick overview of important parts of American history. In a middle school or high school each item could be assigned out to individuals or partners for more in depth research. EL, MS, HS-ADVISABLE

Katz, Karen *Can You Say PEACE?*, PICTURE BOOK - Brightly colored, lively illustrations for a book that has little children from around the world saying "peace" in their language. A nice change from the traditional "hello" or the "happy Holidays" that I have used in my class. 11 countries are illustrated and 11 others are included in the back of the book. Possible uses - research the word for peace in other languages; have students compile a glossary of important words from other countries; have the students map the country locations. EL-ADVISABLE

Rosenthal, Amy Krouse *One of Those Days*, PICTURE BOOK - A look at all of those different kinds of "bad days" with a hopeful note that each day ends with the coming of night and the start of a new day and a new chance. The childlike illustrations work well with this book, which is so apt in its account of the many little (and some bigger) things that can go wrong and make your whole day miserable. I would advise middle schools with Teacher Advisory programs to add this book to their stash of classroom read-alouds. EL MS - ADVISABLE

Barretta, Gene *Now and Ben: The Modern Inventions of Benjamin Franklin*, PICTURE BOOK - A good look at the role that Benjamin Franklin's inventions and ideas have played in the formation of our modern society. Bright illustrations are a little childish seeming for older students, but I think they will actually catch the eye of the middle school student. A class on American history, a science class or a Technology, Life Careers class could all use this book as a jumping off point to further studies. EL, MS - ESSENTIAL

Giblin, James Cross *The Boy who Saved Cleveland*, 64 p. - When Cleveland was just a small settlement of three families, a malaria epidemic struck every settler and it was up to Seth, a young boy, to keep the families alive long enough to recover, until he too succumbed to the illness. Though this book will probably be well received in the state of Ohio, it will fare better in other states as a read-aloud by the teacher as another illustration of the hardships faced by early settlers of the "west". EL-OPTIONAL

Fleischman, Sid *The White Elephant*, 95 p. - As retribution for spraying him with water, a local prince gifts a poor boy with a sacred white elephant - a beast which was never trained to do work and never expected to work - in order to break the boy's spirit. Instead, the boy and his faithful old elephant teach the young elephant some new tricks. The beginning of the book seemed a little stilted in style to me, but the cadence improved as the story went along. All I can figure is that the author was mimicking in writing, the storyteller's convention of getting his audience to picture things in their minds. Based on the origins of the phrase "white elephant gift", but tailored to appeal to a young audience. EL-ADVISABLE

Lisle, Janet Taylor *Black Duck*, 252 p. - Ruben was a teenager during Prohibition and no one in his small port town was immune to the influence and lure of the large amounts of money that mafia bosses had to offer for their silence and their cooperation. Now a young man has come around searching for a big story to prove his worth as a newspaper reporter and Ruben is finally ready to share his story and the town's history - the good and the ugly. The set up to the deadly excitement is slow and may discourage casual readers. It has more value as a historical novel for larger libraries which have a group of teacher requiring their reading. MS-OPTIONAL

24 May 2006

Cave, Patrick *Sharp North*, 512 p. - When Mira sees a woman murdered, it sets her off on a long journey of discovery - that she was created as a spare for someone else. A long, boring look at the effects of human cloning on society. Read *The House of Scorpions* instead. NO

Ritter, John H. *Under the Baseball Moon*, 282 p. - Andy skates and he plays trumpet - most of the time simultaneously. In his early childhood he was the minder of a wild girl next door who all of the kids in the neighborhood and all of the teachers at school lumped him with. Now she is back and his life is again entangled with hers - this time through baseball. Though I liked Mr. Ritter's first two novels, these last two (*The Boy Who Saved Baseball*, also) have left me and my students uninterested. I wish the author would just stick to great baseball books. MS-OPTIONAL

Dessen, Sarah *Just Listen*, 371 p. - Annabel is starting her sophomore year without a friend in the world. A dramatic fight with her best friend left her alone all summer and everyone has taken sides against Annabel. Except Owen - a young man with anger management issues and a very odd Sunday morning radio show. Annabel's problem is wrapped up in her sister Whitney's eating disorder and her mother's breakdown over her grandmother's death. Though this book feels like a direct rip off of *Speak*, its depth and crafting allows the reader to forgive the obvious parallels and enjoy it on its own. There are less than a dozen swear words, but two of those are "f". There is also a tense sexual scene that stops just at the edge of going too far in to the unnecessary description cliff. If you have ninth graders in your school, I say go for it. It will have a huge circulation like *Speak*. HS-ESSENTIAL, MS-ADVISABLE

Collins, Suzanne *Gregor and the Marks of Secret*, 341 p. - Gregor's mother is finally getting healthier and is almost ready to come back above ground. Bane, the cute little furball, is now a gigantic, paranoid monster. Then Luxa discovers that something sinister is happening to the 'nibblers', problems caused by the rats of Underland. The duo's reconnaissance and rescue mission ends up endangering many lives and only uncovers a larger threat. Book Four in the *Underland Chronicles*. A worthy successor to the series. EL-ESSENTIAL, MS-ADVISABLE

Robinson, Sharon *Safe at Home*, 150 p. - When Jumper's father died, his mother brought him from the Connecticut suburbs to his grandmother's home in Harlem. The summer basketball program was full, so instead Jumper is enrolled into the baseball program, along with a neighborhood rival, Marcus, who doesn't really even know him. There Jumper makes a few friends and, with the help of his coaches, works out his problems with Marcus. The author's first novel for young people and it shows in the jerkiness of the action. In some places the narrative doesn't flow logically, but the author (daughter of Jackie Robinson) does know her baseball. EL - OPTIONAL

Papademetriou, Lisa *The Wizard, the Witch and Two Girls from Jersey*, 273 p. - While Heather and Veronica argue over who is going to purchase the last available copy of the assigned class novel, the quarreling twosome is propelled into the land of the story. There they quickly manage to botch things up and kill off the tale's heroine, and Heather, the blond, shallow one, is forced to take on the Princess' role, while Veronica, the smart one, forges a new role for herself as a servant. The two encounter all of the main characters and situations of the book, but change many things during their adventures, managing to save the world in their own unique way. A campy, funny and totally derivative work that fantasy lovers will thoroughly enjoy. MS-ESSENTIAL

Carbone, Elisa *Blood on the River: Jamestown 1607*, 218 p. - Sam Collier is taken from an orphanage to be the servant of Captain John Smith during his voyage to the New World as part of the first Virginia Company. There he meets intrigue and danger - not just from the savages on shore, but from within the ranks of the very English gentlemen. The author has completed very thorough research into the facts behind the tale and includes extensive afterwords and source materials to back up her narrative. An excellent addition to an historical fiction collection - especially if you can talk a history teacher into reading to the class or adopting it as a classroom novel. A great way to dispel Disney-fied misconceptions of American history. MS-ESSENTIAL

Roberts, Judson *Viking Warrior*, 348 p. - Both of Halfdon's parents are royal, but his mother is his father's body slave, so Halfdon has also been raised as a slave. Then his father is mortally wounded and on his death bed acknowledges Halfdon as his son. Halfdon, with the help of his older half-brother and half-sister starts learning his role as a prince of the Danes, but betrayal by his father's step-son sets him on the path of a hero. There is nothing of fantasy in this book, but I find that fantasy readers are usually attracted to also to Viking sagas. If Michael Cadnum's novels do well in your library, then by all means add this to your collection. MS-ADVISABLE

18 May 2006

Kaaberbol, Lene *The Serpent's Gift*, 377 p. - At a local market one day Dina sees a strange man who she quickly discovers is actually her father, Sezuan - the man that her mother has been running away from since before Dina was born. In their frantic flight from Sezuan, the family unthinkingly takes refuge in a Draconis Foundation house, where they end up deeper in debt. When Nico and Davin are taken prisoner by the Prince's men, only Dina can save them by making a deal with her father. Only one more book to go in this quartet and it just gets better with more telling! MS-ESSENTIAL

16 May 2006

Korman, Gordon *Born to Rock*, 262 p. - Just before high school graduation, Leo Caraway loses his scholarship to Harvard, is kicked out of the school's Young Republican club and discovers that his father is the front man for the most notorious punk band in history. Leo decides to hit up "dad" for the money for college, but first agrees to follow "Purge" on their cross-country reunion tour. Very funny, very good. Add this to your collection right away! MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Chima, Cinda Williams *The Warrior Heir*, 426 p. - Jack has taken medication all of his life because of a heart condition when he was a baby. Now 16, he forgets one day and weird things start to happen - like being pursued by the criminal element, helping his aunt dig up an antique sword, and being able to do magic. Eventually Jack discovers that he is the central figure in an ancient power struggle, which includes a fight to the death. Excellent addition to the realm of fantasy. I hope that your students will latch onto it as much as they have the Pendragon series. I think its more along the lines of Tamora Pierce or Jane Yolen in quality! MS, HS - ESSENTIAL

Clements, Bruce *What Erika Wants*, 215p. - The judge in the family court has appointed Erika her own lawyer as her mother tries to wrest custody of her from her father, whom she has lived with for the past five years - ever since her mother took her older sister and left for Arizona. Erika is sure that she wants to live with her mother full time, but as the story unfolds, the real picture is much more complicated. An excellent look at the lies we tell ourselves in order to cope and the dynamics of a family in turmoil. Though the narrative seems disjointed and incomplete, it only adds to the piecemeal approach of Erika's own thoughts and feelings. MS-ESSENTIAL

Elliott, Patricia *Murkmere*, 344 p. - Aggie has accepted a position of companion to the ward of the local Lord. Raised in a world ruled by the Ministration and the Lord Protector, Aggie is shocked to learn the revolutionary leanings of her master and his ward. But Leah's secret and the other secrets run much deeper than a mere revolution. A little dark, a little weird, unfortunately not as enchanting as, say, Mercedes Lackey's Black Swan. MS- OPTIONAL

12 May 2006

Fisher, Catherine *Darkhenge*, 340 p. - Three months earlier Rob's younger sister was knocked off her horse and she fell into a coma. Now Rob sees a mysterious man be "born" straight from ground during the chanting of a bunch of New Age druids. The stranger, Vetch, promises Rob that he can rescue Chloe, who is being held prisoner in Annwyn. Together they must climb down the sacred tree and solve the riddles to find her. I really enjoyed this book a lot UNTIL I realized that Chloe is just a spoiled little girl who is pitching a fit about not getting enough attention - even though her brother has come to hell to save her. For that I am reducing my recommendation. EL, MS-PAPERBACK

Jaffe, Michele *Bad Kitty*, 268 p. - Jasmine is an accident prone amateur sleuth who must hid her activities from her loving, but status conscious father. While on vacation at the fabulous Venetian resort in Las Vegas, Jasmine is attacked by a cat and hurled headlong into a deadly mystery involving one of Hollywood's hottest stars. Her best friends leave LA to come to her rescue - from a murder and fashion disaster. I was ready to roll my eyes, but it turned out to really cute - and a really good mystery to boot. The true bad guy is not obvious and the forensics work is well done, while being very fashion forward. MS-ADVISABLE

8 May 2006

Stenhouse, Ted *Murder on the Ridge*, 240 p. - An anonymous letter arrives in Will and Arthur's hometown claiming that Wolfleg, a local Indian hero, was actually murdered during World War II, by someone from his own town. The boys turn to Will's grandfather, a traditional Blackfoot, to help them find a way to discover the truth. I have not read the first two books about Will and Arthur, so I can't say whether they also rely upon supernatural means to solve the mystery; I will have to go back and find out. The title will catch a student's eye and the book will not disappoint. EL, MS-ADVISABLE

Koss, Amy Goldman *Poison Ivy*, 166 p. - The American Government teacher's bright idea is to have a civil trial of a bullying victim against the three girls who have tortured her for years. Using the students from the class as lawyers, judge and jury members, the teacher hopes to prove a point. Told from the point of view of the many different class members involved, the book also points out a fatal flaw of the judicial system and the power of the lure of popularity in fixing the trial. The worst flaw in the book is the author's use of a crippling shy student as the lawyer for the prosecution. I think the point could have been made without such inept representation. Otherwise, the book is another compelling book about popularity and bullying. I was personally disappointed by the end, but not surprised that the author would choose that direction. Middle school girls will probably eat it up. MS-ESSENTIAL

Miller, Mary Beth *On the Head of a Pin*, 250 p. - In a freak accident, Helen is killed. When the boys involved try to cover it up, the situation just gets direr, until one of them takes desperate measures in order to silence the others. Everyone has other secrets and problems that add layers and dimensions to the crisis. Some swearing, sexual innuendo, push this book into the high school crowd. Well-constructed on many levels. HS-ADVISABLE

Pollack, Jenny *Klepto*, 271 p. - When Julie Prodsky meets Julie Braverman, she learns the art of shoplifting and the two hone it to a fine skill. It's all a game until they get banned from Bloomingdale's for life. Then Julie P. begins to have a crisis on conscience and seeks help. Unfortunately for me, Julie's moment of truth comes after watching the friends steal and steal and steal for two thirds of the book. With the swearing and the description of the almost sexual encounter, the shallowness of the book doesn't even need to figure in when you say NO!

Stahler, David Jr. *Doppelganger*, 258 p. - After living in a remote mountain cabin for his sixteen years, his mother kicks him out into the world to find his own destiny. As a doppelganger, he is compelled to kill and take on the form of a human being. When he is attacked by a brutal teenage boy, the choice is easy. But now he must take up the boy's life, including the intricacies of high school and a girlfriend. Along the way he discovers love, or the possibility of love and tries hard to make a change for the better. Though the idea of doppelgangers is creepy, Stahler approaches the thought from a more introspective point of view, which raises this book above a horror novel. It does mention, but does not describe a sexual encounter. I want to try this book out on a middle school boy, because I wonder if they will be disappointed by the turn the narrative takes - thoughtful rather than slasher. We'll have to see. MS-PAPERBACK

Perkins, Lynne Rae *Criss Cross*, 337 p. - Debbie, Hector and Lenny's lives intersect and diverge and cross and recross in mostly simple ways of the lives of the young. YAWN. This seems to be one of those books that adults think kids will like. It kind of reads like an episode of Seinfeld, but it has no wit nor passion to involve a student's attention. MS-PAPERBACK

Riordan, Rick *The Sea of Monsters*, 279 p. - Percy has made it safely through another school year - until the near fatal dodge ball game against a team of giants. When he and his friends flee to Camp Half-Blood, they find that camp is in deep trouble and that Chiron has been replaced by a constantly sarcastic Tantalus. Percy and Annabeth take themselves off on a voyage to discover an antidote for the concoction used to poison the camp guardian, facing down many monsters and their former friend Luke along the way. A worthy successor to the first in the series. EL, MS - ESSENTIAL

Antieau, Kim *Mercy, Unbound*, 164 p. - Because she is becoming an angel, Mercy has stopped eating - angels don't need to eat. In desperation, Mercy's parents admit her to an eating disorder facility, where she is adopted by a group of girls determined to buck the system and keep to their starving ways. Mercy, because she is an angel, not a human girl starving herself, feels somewhat disconnected from the girls, but still watches and listens as the girls plot. Then a major shock causes Mercy to run and blackout. When she comes to she has no idea who or where she is, but is taken in by kind strangers and starts on her road to healing. A large amount of swear words (majority of them the "F" word) will keep this out of most, if not all schools; which is too bad, because teenaged girls need honest books about eating disorders and treatment. Write this one down and give it to the school counselor, keep it on file for that girl who may be reaching out for help. NO

Singleton, Linda Joy *Last Dance*, 242 p. - Sabine is searching for a cure for her grandmother's illness. In order to save her, she must try to reunite four branches of the family that were separated four generations earlier. Off chasing a lead, Sabine finds herself drawn to the death of a woman, Chloe, 30 years earlier, who comes back each year to haunt the small town she grew up in. Because Sabine has the power to see the future, she may be able to help this ghost with the mysterious past. Second in the Seer series. A good addition to a fantasy collection that includes titles set in modern days. MS - ADVISABLE

Jones, Patrick *Nailed*, 216 p. - Bret doesn't fit in at his high school and he doesn't fit in at home. He has his band with his two best friends and he has a girlfriend who sticks out as much as he does, but they can't protect him from a bully at school. Then the band and the girl disappear and Bret tries to find his own way through the landmined zone of life. And does something desperate to give the situation the attention it needs. Mr. Jones again portrays high school life with accuracy. The large amount of swear words and the quantity of sexual innuendo will keep it out of most schools. Let the public libraries carry this one. NO

Golds, Cassandra *Clair de Lune*, 197 p. - Clair dances beautifully and can not talk. With the help of a dancing, talking mouse, she finds a mysterious monastery within her own building with a dark man who might have the keys to Clair's voice. And maybe Clair can dance the dance of a lifetime without giving up her life as her mother did. I have to say that the cutest part of this whole book is the mouse and his dreams of a mouse ballet corps. Had he been the focus, I might recommend this book more wholeheartedly. EL-PAPERBACK

Lavender, William *Aftershocks*, 344 p. - The front cover of this book says "Scandal and romance amid the 1906 San Francisco earthquake", so you would expect it to be about the earthquake. Instead, there is a very long lead up, a short bit about the earthquake and then a long denouement. The aftershocks in the title are in the life of the main character as she yearns to be a doctor in a time when young women of good families were kept under wraps, away from the vagaries of life. And the shock is in the reality of her father's betrayal of her mother. The earthquake is just a plot device that spends very little time in the story. Those looking for a rousing historical fiction piece about the earthquake will find a very different book indeed. Not a bad one, just a different one. MS, HS - ADVISABLE

Sorrrells, Walter *Club Dread*, 266 p. - Chass and her mother have fled to San Francisco and established new identities. Then one day Chass is witness to a murder and then gets sucked into a glittery underworld with a twisted plot. As Chass gets sucked in, she doesn't know that Kyle Van Epps is about to reappear in her life in a very big way. Far fetched and fantastic in many ways. Whereas the first book in the series was pretty believable, this one is full of unbelievable characters and situations. Fans of the first will read it, but be aware that it is just a big set-up for book number three, doing absolutely nothing to further the bigger plot. MS-PAPERBACK

Sheth, Kashmira *Koyal Dark, Mango Sweet*, 243 p. - Jeeta is a member of a traditional Indian family, working to arrange marriages for the two oldest daughters in modern India. Jeeta's new friend Sarina belongs to a less-traditional family, and Jeeta begins to see that there may be more choices available in her life than she previously thought and that everything traditional is not bad. A good new look at Indian culture. Will be a great addition to a cultural fiction collection. MS-ESSENTIAL

De La Cruz, Melissa *Blue Bloods*, 302 p. - Out at a night club, a girl is murdered - some say that all of the blood was drained from her body. Then Schuyler Van Allen discovers that she is a "Blue Blood" - an ancient race of vampires. The murdered girl was also a vampire - but only a "Silver Blood" can kill a Blue Blood and no one will even acknowledge the Silvers' existence. With lots of suspects and plenty of detail and intrigue, the series has lots of promise to intrigue teens fascinated with vampires. Unfortunately, two overly descriptive sex scenes will relegate this book to at least high school shelves, if not only public libraries or book stores. I can't carry it here in my middle school - SIGH! NO

28 April 2006

Lee, Milly *Earthquake!*, 32 p. - PICTURE BOOK The true story of Ms. Lee's own mother and her family as they fled to safety during the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906. While the drawings are very simple, the text brings up some interesting cultural questions that children could explore further. EL, MS-ADVISABLE FSG

Lee, Milly *Landed*, 36 p. - PICTURE BOOK Based on the true story of Ms. Lee's father-in-law as he joined his family in America. Sun is held at Angel Island until he can prove that he truly is the son of the man he says he is. There he meets "paper sons" - boys who have paid for answers to memorize in order to be allowed into the US. Simple, but effective pictures and a well-written narrative. EL, MS-ADVISABLE FSG

McCully, Emily Arnold *Marvelous Mattie*, 30 p. - PICTURE BOOK Mattie has invented things since she was old enough to pick up a pencil. When she creates an award-winning design for a paper bag folder (still used today), an unscrupulous gentleman tries to steal her idea by claiming that a woman is not smart enough to invent such a complicated machine. Based on the true story of Margaret E. Knight. A good book about the changing roles of women during the Industrial Revolution. Could be used in many different classrooms. EL, MS-ADVISABLE

Van Maarsen, Jacqueline *A Friend Called Anne*, 158 p. - Jacque became friends with Anne Frank in the fall of 1941, when they both started attending the Jewish Lyceum. The girls saw each other and played together almost every day until the fateful morning that the Frank's disappeared. Throughout the rest of the war Jacqueline held out hope that the Frank's were safely in Switzerland, and only learned the truth after the war, when Otto Frank himself gave Jacque the news. This is a very plainly told tale of the girls' lives and friendship. You can tell that Jacqueline tried to avoid the limelight as long as possible. A good addition to a collection that needs a large body of work about Anne and her family. EL, MS-OPTIONAL

27 April 2006

Shull, Megan *Amazing Grace*, 247 p. - The night before the start of the U.S. Open, "Ace" calls her mother and says, "I want out." With those three words, Grace Kincaid disappears from public view - whisked off to a small Alaskan town to live with Ava Grady and to try to live, if just for a short time, as a normal human being, finding friends and love along the way. Ms. Shull pulls off a very well written book that does not resort to sappiness or snippiness. Though the potential existed to hate Grace for her looks, talent, and riches, instead she is a very sympathetic character, who grows up very nicely. MS-ESSENTIAL

Shusterman, Neal *Duckling Ugly*, 211 p. - Cara DeFideo is uglier than a human being should ever be. Ostracized at her high school, she one day receives a mysterious message telling her to "Find the Answers." Cara resists, until she is humiliated at her prom. She runs away and discovers a community where she may find a place to belong. But when she goes back to her hometown to say goodbye, she sets in motion a chain reaction that may leave her with no place in the world. Nicely done! I am really enjoying this entire series (Dark Fusion). Well written, Mr. Shusterman! MS-ESSENTIAL

Standiford, Natalie *Elle Woods: Blonde and Heart*, 233 p. - Elle Woods has been a mousy, unfashionable wallflower for 16 years. Then she falls in love with the captain of the Beverly Hills High basketball team and changes come into her life as she makes over the cheerleaders, the basketball team, the band and eventually the entire school. If you can just swallow the sheer

unbelievability of the whole thing, the book is pretty dang cute. Girls who love the Legally Blonde movies will also enjoy this straight to paperback novel. EL, MS-ADVISABLE

Carter, Ally *I'd Tell you I Love you, But Then I'd have to Kill You*, 284 p. - Cammie has lived at the Gallagher Academy for Girls with her mother ever since her father died. The locals think that Gallagher is for rich girls, but really it is a super secret spy academy. The girls may know everything about anything and in seven different languages, but when Cammie catches the eye of a town boy, she realizes that she knows nothing about being a girl in love. Okay - since these girls do see the "real" world every year during spring break, I did have a hard time believing their naivete. BUT, the book is so adorable and fun, that I really tried not to care. This is by no means Alex Ryder for girls, but many girls will enjoy the ride. EL, MS-ADVISABLE

24 April 2006

Strasser, Todd *Slide or Die*, 198 p. - Angelina creates street racing cars from scratch and is interested in the quiet and handsome new boy in school, Kennin. Then one night at an illegal drift race, Kennin proves that he has the skills and attracts more attention than he wanted.

Battle Drift, 201 p. - In book 2, Kennin is committed to play a part in the drift racing race-off, but he has caught the eye of not only the hottest girl in town, but also a sleazy recruiter for night clubs who is dating Kennin's sister and his own boss, who is the owner of a Vegas casino. Everyone seems to want a piece of Kennin - even his incarcerated father.

Gearheads will enjoy these fast-paced, easy to read novels full of tension, glory and racing. An easy pick for reluctant readers, with the added bonus of being free of swearing and sex. MS-ESSENTIAL

Rodowsky, Colby *That Fernhill Summer*, 170 p. - One day Kiara picks up the phone and discovers that there are actual people on her mother's side of the family - a whole set of people she has never known. Her mother is being called back to the family homestead because the matriarch is lying near death in the hospital. When the cantankerous Zenobia recovers enough to come home, Kiara and the two other girls cousins her age volunteer to entertain their grandmother for the summer. The girls quickly find out that there may be no pleasing their constantly criticizing grandmother, but there may be a small way to connect with her and they can build an important relationship with each other. The cover shows a family divided by race, which really has nothing to do with Zenobia's ire. Extremely well done and a delight to read. MS-ESSENTIAL

Naidoo, Beverly *Web of Lies*, 242 p. - Femi and his sister are waiting for England's refugee services to process their father's request for asylum. Meanwhile the children are going to school and trying to keep things together throughout the long ordeal. Then one day Femi attracts the attention of a gang leader and slowly he gets drawn in to that world, telling his family more and more lies, endangering their lives and endangering their chances of staying in the UK. Ms. Naidoo does a great job of building the tension in this sequel to *The Other Side of Truth*. A worthy, if not superior, successor. MS-ESSENTIAL

D'Lacey, Chris *Icerefire*, 421 p. - David has always been amused by the adorable dragon statues that his landlord, Liz, creates. Then one day he makes a wish on a dragon crafted by Lucy, Liz's daughter and strange things start happening. As David tries to prove the existence of dragons as the topic of his paper for one of his professors, he also finds himself involved with the class' goth-girl and dreaming about polar bears. When Liz's Aunt Gwyneth arrives, the whole situation just gets more twisted. Gwyneth takes control of the house and control of the people in it, creating the conditions for her to ultimately claim the frozen dragon's tear and enhance her powers for her own ends. Not a first tier purchase of fantasy, but a good runner up. Just the thought of dragons will catch many kids' attention. EL, MS-ADVISABLE

Belton, Sandra *Store-bought Baby*, 245. Leah's adopted older brother has died in a terrible car crash which he caused. Now Leah, her parents and her grandmother are trying to pick up the pieces of their lives. Leah become obsessed with searching for Luce's birthmother. Luce's girlfriend and Leah's best friend agree to help her, if only to help her keep perspective. A poignant story of a family after the death of an essential member. Their grief is well portrayed without being melodramatic. MS, HS-ADVISABLE

Gantos, Jack *The Love Curse of the Rumbaughs*, 185 p. - Ivy is the daughter of a single mother in a small town. After school she is watched by a set of identical twins - old men who quietly go about running their pharmacy, while indulging Ivy. Then one day Ivy sees something in the store's basement which spooks her. Okay, why am I trying to explain the plot of this book in a nice way. It really is a freaky story about two sons with a talent for taxidermy, who have an Oedipal complex and then preserve their mother's body after she dies. Ivy is the daughter of one of the men, but not even her mother knows which one. Ivy seems to have inherited the Oedipal curse and hones her own taxidermy skills against the day that her mother passes away. A perfunctory sex scene just adds to the fact that I can wholeheartedly tell you to stay far away from this title. Analyzing my feelings for this book, I predict that it will be a strong contender for next year's Printz Award. NO!

Chapman, Linda *The Magic Spell*, 112 p. - When Lauren goes with her mother to buy a pony, she finds a quiet, scraggly, and sweet gray one named Twilight. During a trip to a local bookstore, Lauren happens upon a book which leads her to believe that her pony might actually be a unicorn in disguise - if only she can find the magic words. A very quaint beginning to series meant for only the very young. I don't think anyone older than third grade would read this. EI-OPTIONAL

13 April 2006

Kidd, Ronald *Monkey Town*, 259 p. - A young high school teacher agrees to go on trial for teaching the theory of evolution. Even though it started out as a way to get publicity for the dying town, it instead turns into a media circus that almost tears Frances and her family apart. Before this book, I only knew the little snippet that most other educated students know about the Scope's Monkey Trial. I thoroughly enjoyed reading the book and think it would be a good addition to a historical fiction library, and could be promoted for use in an American History class or a Civics class. MS, HS-ESSENTIAL

Korman, Gordon *The Abduction*, p. - (First in the Kidnapped series) Meg and Aidan Falconer are trying and failing to get their lives back together after finally proving their parents' innocence just a few months earlier (see *Chasing the Falconers* series). Then one day Meg is kidnapped right in front of her brother as they arrive home from school. The Falconers have to let the dreaded FBI Agent Harris back into their lives. A great beginning to another action-packed series by Korman.

Lynn, Tracy *Rx*, 262 p. - Even though Thyme is on the edge of the "smart kids" group, she doesn't really feel that she belongs. Then she starts a complicated pill dealing system for the many different cliques in her high school and finds that suddenly everyone is her friend. From the sound of the book, every student in every high school uses pills to help them in one way or another. Though the exaggeration is meant to catch your attention,

Vrettos, Adrienne *Skin*, 227 p. - Between his parents arguments, his sister's eating disorder and the snubbing by his former best friends, Donnie just wants to disappear, fade, become invisible. But he also keeps trying to fix things, even when there is absolutely no way things will ever get better. Yes, the author uses the "f" word more than a dozen times, but all of them seem to fit exactly where they are. It is painful to watch the progression of the family's breakup, Karen's disease and Donnie's extremely painful adolescence. As powerful as *Speak*, *Cut* or even *Emily's Secret*. I don't think many middle school's will carry it because of the large number of "f"s, but high schools should give it careful consideration. HS-ESSENTIAL

Blake, Emily *Little Secrets: Playing with Fire*, 149 p. - Zoey's "perfect" life is destroyed when her famous homemaker mother is arrested for tax evasion and multiple other monetary infractions. At the same time, Zoey finally realizes that her best friend, her cousin Kelly, is just looking for new ways to manipulate and hurt Zoey - like stealing her boyfriend Chad and turning everyone at school against her. I kept waiting to be turned off by the cattiness and sheer evilness of the characters and storylines, but the author actually did a good job of keeping my attention without overly disgusting me. The book is pretty short, though, being the first book in a series, and I just hope that the author can keep walking that fine line and doesn't make the series too long. MS-PAPERBACK

12 April 2006

Fredricks, Mariah *Crunch Time*, 317 p. - Four unlikely high school juniors get together to form a study group for the SATs. After the test, word gets out that someone cheated on the test. Now all anyone talks about is the cheater's identity. The closer you are to the age of taking the SATs, the more you can relate to this book. It does have a nicely done love triangle included and the voice is very realistic when it comes to the thoughts, feelings and actions of middle and upper class high school students. One swear word and a single thought of wanting to touch a girl's "chest", but the rest is good and clean and well-worth reading. MS-ADVISABLE, HS-ESSENTIAL

7 April 2006

Russon, Penni *Undine*, 326 p. - Undine wakes up one morning with an odd feeling - almost as if where she is now is not where she belongs. As much as she loves her mother, the two of them begin to fight. As much as she adores her best friend Trout, he is not the boy who sets her blood on fire. And in the back of her mind she keeps hearing it's time to come home... The magic is probably the weakest story line in this book. Undine's relationship struggles with her mother and with Trout are crafted well and make up for the weaknesses in the mystical plot line. MS-ADVISABLE

Cheripko, Jan *sun moon stars rain*, 160 p. - Danny's father died years earlier after saving a dog caught in a roaring river. Now, Danny is back in his home town after quitting his prestigious music school. His friendships with the local, eccentric, real estate baron and the town drunk stir up old issues that will not only hurt feelings, but could also be very dangerous. A dozen swear words (one "f" and a half dozen "sob") may cause you to pause when considering this as a purchase, but the book is an excellent read that many students will enjoy. MS, HS - ADVISABLE

Rushton, Rosie *The Dashwood Sisters' Secrets of Love*, 325 p. - When a tragedy occurs, the Dashwood sisters and their mother find themselves kicked out of their ancestral home and moved to a small village, far away from friends and all things known. Over the course of the next year, the three sisters learn many things about love and true friendship. From the sound of what I just wrote, you might think that this is a period novel, but actually it is set in modern Britain. It's definitely a feel-good book that many teenaged girls will enjoy. MS - ADVISABLE

Dokey, Cameron *Golden*, 179 p. - When Rapunzel is born without hair, her mother rejects her and the local sorceress takes her into her home and heart. When Rapunzel turns 16, she and the sorceress Melisande must flee their home as people in the countryside become suspicious of magic users. And the pair flees with the help of friends to the sorceress' old home, which is now a magical tower where the Melisande's daughter has been imprisoned for many years. Rapunzel is their only hope for breaking the spell and freeing the maiden. Another well done retold fairy tale. I just love this entire series! MS-ESSENTIAL

31 March 2006

Myracle, Lauren *Rhymes with Witches*, 209 p. - Any book that contains a group of high school girls who calls themselves "The Bitches" and presume that they "rule the school", should be avoided at all costs. Besides the use of the "club name" over and over again in the book, I have yet to find a book that is any better than Mean Girls, or, to back a little further, Heathers. NO

Dokey, Cameron *Sunlight and Shadow*, 184 p. - Mina, the daughter of the Queen of the Night and Lord Sarastro, Lord of the Day has been raised by her mother. The night before she is supposed to go to live with her father, he arrives by surprise and takes her away by force in order to bend her will to his and compel her to marry the man of his choice. Mina has a mind of her own, however, and takes matters into her own hands, with a little help from a man with a magic flute. Based, of course, on the opera and extremely well done. MS, HS - ADVISABLE Simon

Brian, Kate *Sweet 16*, 258 p. - Fashion and image obsessed Teagan is about to throw her sweet 16 bash - the biggest and best bash of the social season. Fixated on making every detail perfect, she doesn't care who she walks on to get what she wants. Teagan ends up being knocked out cold and taken on a "Christmas Carol"-like journey to show her what she is like, what her so-called friends really think of her and what her life may be like in the future. Filled with references to the current fashion trends in everything, this book will probably feel dated pretty quickly. Teagan does have a bit of a potty mouth (MANY uses of G-) and she is thinking about having sex with her boyfriend for the first time after the party. It will probably be really popular, but it is so fluffy. Can you hold out until it is out in paper? MS-OPTIONAL

Bondoux, Anne-Laure *The Killer's Tears*, 162 p. - Angel makes his way to the farthest most point at the tip of Chile and kills the farmer and his wife, but spares their young son. Living as father and son, they are relatively peaceful until a rich man fleeing his family shows up and forces the man and the boy onto a path that will expose them to the world. A sophisticated book that has a great title to catch a student's eye. I don't think it really works for middle school, though. HS-OPTIONAL

Nilsson, Per *You and You and You*, 301 p. - I will say right off that I did not read all of this book. In fact I read less than 100 pages and then started skipping around to see if I could make any sense of why I should even finish this book. Nope, no sense, nothing that compels me to try again. Instead I found more swearing (three "f" on one page and a whole lot more of a wide variety) and a whole lot of blatant sexual crudeness that I couldn't connect to a need for the narrative. NO

Morton-Shaw, Christine *The Riddles of Epsilon*, 375 p. - Jess' family has moved to a new house and she is caught up in communication with a mysteriously being that has a puzzle that he needs Jess to solve. I don't mind a book that is built around a riddle. What I do mind is a book that has a purposeless riddle, a book that spends all of its time just being mysterious. And when the answer to the riddle is finally revealed, it just doesn't seem that important or interesting. It's just another good vs evil thing that isn't very compelling. I don't like the protagonist either. NO, not even optional. Save your money.

Langrish, Katherine *Troll Mill*, 276 p. - Peer has lived happily with his friend Hilde's family for a while now, until one night when his neighbor's wife thrusts her baby into his arms and throws herself into the sea. Rumors abound that the wife was a silkie, held captive by her husband. Besides that, though, Peer decides to clean up his uncles' old mill to make a living and impress Hilde. But the trolls are on the move and Granny Green-teeth has her own plans for the silkie baby. More complicated than Troll Fell and not quite as satisfying, though the uncles do meet a fitting end. EL, MS-ADVISEABLE Harpercollins

Carman, Patrick *The Tenth City*, 186 p. - RELEASE: May 2006 Alexa and her friends have set off in an attempt to reach the Tenth City, in order to find a way to save their friend Vipes and keep the last Jocasta out of the hands of Victor Grindall, the servant of Abaddon. I know many of you will have to buy this book because it is the third and (I hope) final book in the series. For me, though, the book is a poor attempt at creating a religious allegory. I enjoyed the first book so much, the second book almost as much, but this one not at all. I could not let me self go to enjoy it. Instead, I could only see its shortcomings. OPTIONAL Scholastic

Shaw, Tucker *The Hookup Artist*, 197 p. - Lucas is excellent at hooking up couples all over his school. Then he finds the perfect guy for his best friend Cate, but starts wondering if Mr. Perfect isn't maybe the right guy for Lucas himself instead. Fluffy beach time reading best bought in paperback and left on the public library shelves. NO

McKay, Hilary *Indigo's Star*, 266 p. - Indigo has been home recovering from a serious bout of mononucleosis, sprouting up several inches and getting a reprieve from the incessant bullying at school. Back at school, Indigo isn't unhappy when the gang finds a new target - the new boy, but later finds himself becoming friends with him. Meanwhile at home, Rose is desperate to make her father return to the family fold from his more permanent base of London. She tries all the gimmicks she can to get his attention, but it seems to be an impossible task. I have not read either Saffy's Angel nor Permanent Rose, which preceded this book, but I enjoyed this title anyway. My favorite part is the author's convention of not using the gang members' names until they start acting and thinking for themselves. EL, MS-ADVISABLE

Crutcher, Chris *The Sledding Hill*, 230 p. - Eddie's father has died and then less than a month later his best friend Billy is killed in a freak drywall accident. Billy is still around though, trying to get Eddie to listen to him; Eddie has stopped talking all together. It isn't until the local preacher/English teacher works behind the scenes to ban the required reading in the Really Modern Literature class Eddie is taking that Eddie starts listening carefully - to Billy, to the people around him - and starts hearing what his father had always tried to teach him. Though I have to say that I wasn't too thrilled with Chris Crutcher writing a book about a Chris Crutcher book, I still liked what the real novel had to say. I am trying to get my 9th grade English teachers to adopt it as a novel, because it covers all of those hot button censorship issues without actually giving anyone something that they could point at and say "This is BAD". MS, HS-ESSENTIAL Harper

Baccalario, Pierdomenico *The Long Lost Map*, 261 p. - RELEASE: July 2006 When Julia, Rick and Jason run from a dangerous situation, Julia finds herself back in Argo Manor, leaving the boys behind in Ancient Egypt. While the boys befriend an Egyptian girl and follow Ulysses Moore's clues, Julia and Nestor try to fend off Oblivia's henchman, who is trying to break into the mansion. Very exciting and elementary students will love it. I however, still feel like I am being cheated and that there should be more of a feeling of completion at the end of the story. Instead you know that you are going to have to buy another book, because the action is really left hanging. Don't get me wrong - I like series fiction - I read LOTS of series, but these books just don't deliver a good single read -I feel trapped into reading the next book. Enough ranting. Buy the book. EL, MS-ADVISABLE Scholastic

Wong, Joyce Lee *Seeing Emily*, 268 p. - Emily Wu has always tried to be a good student and a good daughter, but gorgeous Nick, a new student, catches her eye and her feelings and she starts rebelling against her good girl status. After the couple share their first intimate night, however, Emily feels dissatisfied and goes off to visit her relatives in China for summer like her parents want her to. I don't care that this book was written s pseudo poetry, even though it would be just as well in regular novel form. In fact, there are only a couple brilliant places where the poetic form really means something. I really just dislike this book because it really has nothing to say. Try Finding My Voice by Marie Lee instead. NO

Moloney, James *Black Taxi*, 264 p. - When her grandfather lets Rosie take charge of his black taxi while his behind bars, she finds herself in the middle of a dangerous jewelry heist, complete with threatening phone calls. Boring! NO

Carlson, Melody *Torch Red*, 207 p. - Zoe is tired of being the only virgin left in her group of friends, so she makes up a conquest from the summer to make them stop talking. Then she meets ultra-jock Justin, who gets her involved in some sticky situations and Zoe isn't sure that losing her virginity to him is what she really wants to do. Meanwhile, during rehearsals for the school musical, Zoe catches the new girl Shawna first making out with and then having sex with her best friend's boyfriend. Nothing is described, but many things are hinted at. This book definitely belongs in high school. HS-ADVISABLE NavPress (www.thlnkbooks.com)

Horowitz, Anthony *Evil Star*, 317 p. - RELEASE: June 2006. Matt just really wants a normal life. The boys at his exclusive school won't accept him and the powerful people of the Nexus won't leave him alone. When he goes to meet a secretive man with a dangerous book, Matt is almost killed and then is sucked back into the gate mystery - this time headed off to Peru, where he meets the second gatekeeper and a larger group also trying to save the world. Even better than the first. Lots of great folklore and better action. MS, HS-ESSENTIAL

Batson, Wayne Thomas *The Door Within*, 310 p. - Aidan finds the text of an ancient book that draws him into a parallel universe where kingdoms are in peril from an evil Lord who wants to control an entire world. Though the premise itself is a well-worn theme, Batson a does a great job of breathing life into it and giving it a fresh look. Schools that love MacHale's work and Nimmo's will also like this. I almost gave up on it, but my 14 year old took it from me and told me he really liked it. EL, MS-ESSENTIAL (www.tommynelson.com)

Knox, Elizabeth *Dreamhunter*, 365 p. - Laura and her cousin Rose are almost old enough to make their try at crossing the border into the Place, where dreams are caught that can be shared with others. Laura succeeds, but Rose does not and the two of them find themselves working against a nefarious plot by the Secretary of the Interior, a man who is not content with a secondary role in their world's governance. An extremely rich book that reads beautifully. I am going to read it again so that I can find those other dimensions that I don't always appreciate in a first reading. Perfect for fans of Tamora Pierce and Patricia Wrede. MS, HS-ESSENTIAL

17 March 2006

Lorbiecki, Marybeth *Jackie's Bat* 32 p. - Through the eyes and initial prejudice of the new bat boy for the Brooklyn Dodgers, we see Jackie Robinson's first season in professional baseball during a time of extreme racism in the US. A great picture book to introduce baseball, racism and the Civil Rights Movement. The illustrations are perfect for the time period and tone of the book. The afterword adds just a touch of history that would then let older readers explore other books about Jackie. EL,MS-ADVISABLE Simon and Schuster

Cunnane, Kelly *For You are a Kenyan Child*, 31 p. - A Kenyan boy is supposed to be watching his grandfather's cattle, but gets caught up in visiting friends and seeing sites all over his small village. A good book for a quick introduction to life in Kenya in a small village. By the end of the reading, your students will know at least two words in the language. I really like the quality of the illustrations. EL, MS-ADVISABLE Simon and Schuster

Adlington, L.J. *The Diary of Pelly D.*, 282 p. - Toni V is part of a crew digging up a wrecked plaza when he discovers an battered water can filled with the pages of a diary. The diary is from a girl named Pelly, who lived the life of a rich girl until her city was divided by aggressive racism, ending in the removal of an entire genetic family, including Pelly. It's hard to gauge the time difference between the end of Pelly's world and Toni's discovering her diary. It just doesn't seem long enough that Toni wouldn't know and understand the circumstances Pelly went through. And enough background details are missing from Pelly's diary that I spent too much of my time feeling puzzled and out of the loop. HS-OPTIONAL HarperCollins

Roberts, Willo Davis *The One Left Behind*, 139 p. - Mandy's parents and all of her brothers have left for the weekend - leaving her home alone. No one meant to do it; she let them all think that she was going with someone else. It's been a year since her twin sister died in a sad accident and Mandy wants some alone time. Instead she gets mysterious happenings at night and she discovers a boy not much older than she, who has kidnapped his own little brother to keep him out of the hands of real kidnapers. Published posthumously, the book feels unfinished to me - as if Ms. Roberts hopefully had at least another 50 pages to write to flesh the story out. The end comes to a very dramatic but very rushed flurry of action. But, younger readers will still enjoy this as another of the author's thrillers. EL-ADVISABLE, MS-OPTIONAL Simon

Johnson, Kathleen Jeffrie *Dumb Love*, 163 p. - Carlotta is obsessed with local hunk Pete and is sure that he is destined to be hers. Walter, on the other hand is Carlotta's sworn enemy. Carlotta wants to get Walter out of her life and Pete into it, but life has other ideas. The fly leaf of this book bills it as a lighthearted teen romance. I, however, think that the title makes a more apt statement. I have no need to read anything more about Carlotta and her crew - including the local self-proclaimed slut - and will not recommend this to anyone to read. Carlotta does nothing for me. NO Roaring Book

Friedman, D. Dina *Escaping into the Night*, 195 p. - Halina survived in Polish ghetto, but now has to make a desperate escape through a sewer tunnel. Accompanied by her best friend Batya, the two try to make a place for themselves in the bands of refugees hiding in the forest. While much has been written about people in concentration camps, this is a look into the grim forest life during WWII. An excellent addition to a collection of Holocaust fiction. Especially pair it with Run Boy Run by Orlev. MS-ADVISABLE Simon

Jones, Patrick *Things Change*, 216 p.- Perfect student Johanna is swept away when her major crush, Paul, starts paying attention to her. As they become intimate, she finds out that it is very important to keep Paul happy, because otherwise he will hurt her. She tries once to break up with him, but he sweet talks his way back into her life, where she opens herself up for more physical pain. It isn't until she talks to one of Paul's ex-girlfriends that she finally has the guts to cut it off for good. A small amount of swear words and the mention of sex a couple of times without descriptions. This is a very valuable book for a high school library - ready to put in the hands of those girls who suddenly have that wary look in their eyes and take to wearing long sleeve shirts even in the lovely spring days. Well done. HS-ESSENTIAL Walker and Company

Ly, Many *Home is East*, 294 p. - Amy's mother has left her and her father behind as she goes to find something more exciting for her life. Amy's dad decides to relocate the two of them to San Diego, leaving behind their thigh-knit Cambodian community. Even though her dad is slipping into depression, Amy seems to be doing well, finding a few new friends. Then comes the awful day when Amy sees her mother with her new family - and realizes that her mother never wants her again. While all of that

sounds like it could be really good, unfortunately it only comes off as boring. My 15 year old son tried to read it too, but gave up for the same reason I did. NO

Random House

Lubar, David *Sleeping Freshmen Never Lie*, 270 p. - In pursuit of the love of his life (the girl next door who morphed into a hottie over the summer), freshman Scott finds himself joining the newspaper, running for student council and joining the stage crew of the school's spring play - and Julia doesn't even end up on any of these activities. As he tries to keep up with his homework and still get up the nerve to even say "hi", Scott also meets Lee, the local eccentric goth girl and has to deal with his mom having a new baby. Filled with Scott's personal lists, advice for his unborn sibling and snippets of his of his articles for the paper. Lubar does an excellent job and I really can't say enough in its praises. Two thumbs up from my kids, too. MS, HS-ESSENTIAL

14 March 2006

Vande Velde, Vivian *Now You See It...*, 275 p. - When Wendy puts on a cool new pair of shades, she suddenly starts seeing things that no one else can see. She finds herself caught up in a struggle to save an elven prince, who used to be the nerdy guy in the back row. And her unlikely ally is the head cheerleader, who in reality is an ancient looking crone. Light fantasy that the younger crowd will love. EL, MS-ADVISABLE

Carlson, Melody *Dark Blue: Color Me Lonely*, 204 p. - When her best friend since kindergarten makes the cheerleading squad, Kara finds herself cast adrift. Her whole life was wrapped up in making Jordan shine and now she is afraid she has no identity. When she is ready to pull herself out of her depression, she finds a loose-knit group of lunch buddies and one of them introduces her to the one being who is always there to fill your life with love. I thought I might be put off by a evangelical toned book, but I actually loved it. I even have given the first two books to my own daughter to read. I think any religious person would be interested in these. And someone who is not religious can still find a lot of truth in the pages. MS, HS-ADVISABLE

Carlson, Melody *Deep Green: Color Me Jealous*, 199 p. - Jordan has alienated the other members of the cheer squad by latching onto one of their former boyfriends - right after the breakup. Now the jealous ex is doing her best to make Jordan look like an idiot and manipulator. She tries to get her old friend Kara to be her fall back friend, but Kara has someone else she would like Jordan to meet. Just as good as the first. The author portrays the essential problem without devolving the coarseness or vulgarity. MS, HS-ADVISABLE

Cabot, Meg *Avalon High*, - When Elaine's family moves to a new town, she is intrigued by a hot-looking senior, who also is very kind and helpful. As she gets to know him better, she finds herself playing a part in what seems to be a modern King Arthur/Guinevere/Lancelot love triangle. But Ellie refuses to play her part - that of the tragic Lady of Shallot - and changes the course of destiny. Teen girls will love the romance. I am not sure whether they will care about the Arthurian parallels. But there is nothing wrong with a good romance. MS-ADVISABLE

13 March 2006

Butler, Dori Hillestad *Do You Know the Monkey Man?* 193 p. - When Samantha was three, her twin sister drown in a boating accident. Ten years later, a psychic tells her that her sister is very much alive. Now Samantha wants to track down the father she hasn't heard from for so long and clear up this mystery. The only things this book is lacking is a better title and cover. Help students see past those and they will pass it around amongst themselves. Feels like Cooney's *Whatever Happened to Janie* - and you know that students are always looking for a new Cooney. I hope that Ms. Butler has more novels like this one in her! MS-ESSENTIAL

Haworth-Attard, Barbara *Theories of Relativity*, 230 p. - Dylan's mother kicked him out onto the streets so that she could make a better impression with her new boyfriend. Now he is trying to survive life on the streets without succumbing to drugs or prostitution. He is wary of the few adults that cross his path and try to help, and he also knows that no one on the street is really your friend. This book is such an excellent look at a kid on the streets; it shows pimps and prostitutes and strong arms and the mentally disturbed. Unfortunately, one of the characters can't open her mouth without using the "f-word". And that character isn't even the one the author calls Swear Lady. Because of the sheer volume of this word (A LOT), I can't recommend this for school libraries. But pick it up from the public library and read it!! NO

Cohn, Rachel *Two Steps Forward*, 227 p. - Its been 18 months since Annabel has seen her Australian crush Ben. Now, Annabel is going to LA with her Mom to see all of the steps who have moved there from Australia. Even stepbro Wheaties will visiting - and Ben will be coming for a visit too! As much as Annabel loves all of the new steps in her life, misunderstandings will happen, tempers will flare and the kids will need to kiss and makeup. An extremely cute sequel. EL, MS-ESSENTIAL

Wait, Lea *Wintering Well*, 181 p. - Will loses a leg in a farming accident and must find a new place for himself in the world. Set in the 1820's, Will's father makes him feel like a burden to be suffered. It is only when he moves to town with to live with his older sister's family that Will finds that his options are only as limited as he lets them be. Paperback imprint of the 2004 novel. Buy it in paper. EL, MS-ADVISABLE

Ursu, Anne *The Shadow Thieves*, 420 p. - When Charlotte's cousin Zee comes from England to live with her family, more than Charlotte's unpopularity is about to change. When Charlotte's few friends and a large number of other schoolmates starts falling gravely ill, Zee and Charlotte discover that they are the ones who must save the world. Another excellent novel loosely based on Greek Mythology. Its billed as the 1st in a series. EL, MS-ESSENTIAL

6 March 2006

Czech, Jan M. *Grace Happens*, 153 p - Grace has spent her life traveling from set to set with her movie star mother. She hasn't minded, except for the fact that she has always been curious about her father. Then one summer, Grace's mother takes the pair to her home town of Martha's Vineyard and all of her mother's secrets are revealed. Cute book - the secret is not dire - in fact its pretty fun and fantastical. Girls will love it. EL, MS-ADVISBLE

Flanagan, John *Ruins of Gorlan*, 249 p. - An orphan of the keep, Will is taken by the local ranger as his apprentice, even though his heart is set on being a warrior. As he learns the ranger skills, Will discovers that brut strength is not the only way to save a country. Great stuff! A perfect boy book. Much more intrigue and excitement than magic, so it strikes a happy medium. I am definitely looking forward to the next installment. EL, MS-ESSENTIAL

Molloy, Michael *Peter Raven Under Fire*, 480 p. - Peter Raven has always wanted to go to sea. On his first voyage he meets a mysterious commodore and benevolent captain. Then his ship is hijacked by a mad man who kills almost everyone on board; Peter barely escapes. Meeting up with Commodore Beaumont, they make plans to get revenge and foil Napoleon's plans for America. An exciting nautical adventure. A great stepping stone into the Hornblower series and a good companion for the many other sea-going adventures that have come out in recent months. I think it is too bloody for elementary schools, though. MS, HS-ESSENTIAL

Les Becquets, Diane Love, *Cajun Style*, 293 p. - Lucy's summer is pretty hot and lazy until a big city artist and his teenaged son roll into town. The artist paints beautiful pictures of naked women, using ladies from the town and Lucy is afraid that her mother is looking somewhere besides at her father. I wasn't really impressed. The first scene n the book is of the girls skinny-dipping in the middle of the day at the local levee. It describes their bodies and then how the have to bicycle home naked when someone steals their clothes. Beyond the problems I have with language, the book itself doesn't interest me. NO

Clarke, Judith *Kalpana's Dream*, 164 p. - Neema's great-grandmother has come from India to visit her American family. The two have a hard time communicating, as her Nani only speaks Hindi and Neema refused to take lessons. I am not going to waste any more of my time describing this book, as I really didn't like it. If it had left out references to Dracula and not ended with a car driving up into the sky, it might have had a fighting chance. But, even a great portrayal of the students struggling with their latest essay and new boy at school who seems so familiar don't bring this novel back around for me. I loved *Starry Night* so much, but I will give this novel a pass. MS-OPTIONAL

Frank, Lucy *Lucky Stars*, 295 p. - When Kira goes to live with her father, she finds herself singing in the subways with him and her two young half-brothers. When Kira puts her foot down about the subway, she goes to a regular school and meets Jake, whose severe stutter makes it difficult to communicate, and his wisecracking friend Eugene. The three join the magnet's school chorus and Kira tries to hold things together as life with her father becomes a struggle. Perfectly safe to read and younger girls may find it interesting. I did love the descriptions of the chorus class, but that alone wasn't enough to make me love it. MS-OPTIONAL

Murphy, Rita *Looking for Lucy Buick*, 164 p. - Ever since she was discovered in the backseat of a Buick won in a card game, Lucy has been raised by the maiden aunts of the Sandoni clan. After her last "aunt" passes away, Lucy takes a chance and runs away. She finds herself in a small Midwest town, where she starts her search for her "real" people, the "Buicks". A mid-quality story about the well-known fact that family isn't always the people who birthed you or the people who raised you, but the people who hold your heart. MS-OPTIONAL

Stahler, Davis Jr. *A Gathering of Shades*, 289 p. - After his father dies, Aidan and his mother come to live on his grandmother's farm. When Aidan discovers that she has the power to see and talk with ghosts, Aidan sets off in pursuit of his father. Though the depiction of Aidan's and his mother's grief is powerful, you have to wade through dozens of swear words to get there. I just don't know people who talk like this. NO

Pratchett, Terry *Johnny and the Dead*, 213 p. - Johnny Maxwell has already saved an alien race. Now he finds that he can see and hear the dead and must find a way to save a cemetery. A reprint of the original 1993 novel, which is still well worth reading. I love watching the ghosts as they find new powers and Johnny's part of the story is equally enjoyable. MS-ADVISABLE

Burnham, Niki *Scary Beautiful*, 26 p. - When Chloe's long-time boyfriend dumps her just before he moves far away, she finds herself cast adrift, in competition with her best friends, and smack dab in the middle of a huge misunderstanding created by someone out for revenge. Latest in the line of "teeny-trashy" romance novels. It does use the word ass quite often. HS-OPTIONAL

Hughes, Pat *Open Ice*, 271 p. - When Nick receives his second major concussion in less than a year, his parents decide to take him off the ice for good. Nick's anger threatens to overwhelm any good judgment, especially as hockey is his life. But he has to deal with the changes in his health and the changes in his friends. As much as I would love to recommend this novel, I was totally put off by the descriptions of Nick's hands constantly up his girlfriend's shirt and his open desire to have her in his bed, but if she won't do that, he'll settle for something else. Spare me. Without all of that, the novel would still have been compelling and well-worth reading. I don't understand why authors feel this is so necessary. NO