

Book Reviews for 2002

The Library Dragon by Carmen Agra Deedy, illustrated by Michael P. White

Reading Level: Age 4 and older

Strict doesnt even begin to describe fiery Sunrise Elementary School Librarian Miss Lotta Scales, who takes her job way too seriously! All efforts to make this dragon lady change her ways accomplish nothing until a nearsighted little girl, in a very surprising way, persuades Miss Scales mellower personality to emerge. Wild illustrations and humorous text cleverly teach proper care of library materials. All ages will find this a really fun book!

Reviewer: NB

Bad Dog, Dodger! by Barbara Abercrombie; illustrated by Adam Gustavson

Reading Level: Ages 3 9

Sam really wants a dog, and the whole family is thrilled with his new birthday puppy, Dodger, until the dog becomes older and the family forgets that pets need attention and training. Will Sam be able to keep his parents from carrying out their threat to give Dodger away to someone with more free time?

Reviewer: SH

Youre a Good Sport, Miss Malarkey by Judy Finchler and Kevin OMalley

Reading Level: Ages 4 9

When Miss Malarkey becomes the schools soccer coach she emphasizes having fun and trying hard, and, even though they aren't the best team, the children enjoy the game, until some parents become a bit too involved.

Reviewer: SH

Dear Mrs. Larue: Letters from Obedience School written and illustrated by Mark Teague

Reading Level: Ages 4 and older

Ike Larue has been a bad dog one too many times and is sent to Brotweiler Canine Academy to learn some obedience. In his letters home Ike describes the horrible conditions he is having to endure, but is he telling the truth, or only the truth as he sees it?

This book is almost as much fun as rolling in something really stinky! Merlin (the reviewers dog)

Reviewer: SH

The Bones of Fred McFee by Eve Bunting

Reading Level: Ages 5 10

This creepy verse tells the story of a plastic skeleton hung in a sycamore tree. You will never view your Halloween decorations the same way again.

Reviewer: SH

Allie, the Christmas Spider by Shirley Menendez, illustrated by Maggie Kneen

Reading Level: Ages 4 to 8

When Beth rabbit helps her mother clean the house on Christmas Eve, the little rabbit discovers Allie in her dustpan, and she lets the spider return to its hiding place in the house. Grateful Allie, knowing it will be a lean Christmas for the family, uses her special talents to give Beth and her parents a sparkling Christmas. A touching and heartwarming story showing that respect, thoughtfulness, and kindness are the most meaningful gifts.

Reviewer: NB

The Tale of Wagmore Gently by Linda Ashman, illustrated by John Bendall-Brunello

Reading Level: Ages 3-8

Wagmore is a happy dog whose uncontrollable wagging tail destroys everything in its path, causing great distress for his family. Determined to conquer his problem, this lovable canine comes up with some very creative mental exercises to help him try to tame the unruly tail. But an incident on a hiking trip shows everyone that his wild tail can be a good thing!

Reviewer: NB

Things That Sometimes Happen: Very Short Stories for Little Listeners by Avi; pictures by Marjorie Priceman

Reading Level: Preschool - grade 2

These nine very short, very fun, kinda strange stories for young readers are perfect for sharing.

Reviewer: PC

Mr. Wolf and the Three Bears by Jan Fearnley

Reading Level: Ages 4 and older

Mr. Wolf plans the perfect tea party for his friends, The Three Bears, but Goldilocks crashes the party and it looks like the day is ruined until Grandma Wolf comes up with a sly solution.

Reviewer: SH

Its Baby Bears birthday and Mr. Wolf, with Grandmas help, is hosting the perfect party for the Bear family. Everything goes smoothly until Goldilocks, the neighborhood brat, crashes the festivities. Will the party be ruined or will Goldilocks get her just desserts? A cleverly illustrated story starring some favorite fairy tale characters who are definitely out of character! Be sure to visit Mr. Wolfs web site.

Reviewer: NB

Just One More Story by Jennifer Brutschy; illustrated by Cat Bowman Smith

Reading Level: Preschool Grade 1

Together, Austin and his Mom and Dad are The Swamp Snakes, playing their music in a different town every day. But every night is the same, including the one story at bedtime rule. One night when the family stays with relatives in their two-story house, Austin understandably expects the rule to change to two stories a night. A warm, family story that will have you looking for another story as soon as this one is finished.

Reviewer: PC

Close Your Eyes by Kate Banks, pictures by Georg Hallensleben

Reading Level: Ages 2 - 5

In this beautifully illustrated story, little tiger, fearful of going to sleep, is reassured by his mother that magical things can happen in dreams and that she will always be there to comfort him. This delightful little tiger will absolutely melt your heart!

Reviewer: NB

My Big Brother by Valorie Fisher

Reading Level: Ages 4 7

This creative photo essay gives the reader a baby's eye view of a fascinating member of the family.

Reviewer: SH

Ping-Lis Kite by Sanne te Loo

Reading Level: preschool grade 2

When Ping-Li angers the emperor of the sky by flying his unpainted kite, he uses an old strategy to appease him.

Reviewer: PC

Busy Night by Ross Collins

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 7

Bens bedroom is anything but peaceful when the various nighttime fairies, spooks, and creatures all get their timing mixed up and end up trying to do their jobs at once.

Reviewer: SH

Epossumondas by Coleen Salley, illustrated by Janet Stevens

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 7

In this hilarious new twist on a Southern folktale, Epossumondas tries so hard to do things right, but somehow everything ends up all wrong especially when he visits Auntie. How can he get into trouble when he follows directions exactly? Youll adore this lovable possum and the personable characters he meets on his way home from Aunties house.

Reviewer: NB

I Stink! by Kate McMullan illustrated by Jim McMullan

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 6

A very proud garbage truck describes his job. This book includes a rotten alphabet.

Reviewer: SH

Little Flower by Gloria Rand; illustrated by R.W. Alley

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 7

Little Flower, a talented pig, has to find a way to rescue her owner, Miss Pearl, after she falls in her kitchen and breaks a hip.

Reviewer: SH

Another story about a remarkable pig. In this one Little Flower must use his trick to get help for Miss Pearl.

Reviewer: PC

The Broken Cat by Lynne Rae Perkins

Reading Level: Ages 4 8

When Andys cat Frank is injured, he asks his mother to tell the story about the time she broke her arm. Well told and illustrated, this book will especially please animal lovers.

Reviewer: PC

A young boy, sitting in the vets waiting room, listens to his mother tell about how she broke her arm in second grade.

Reviewer: SH

Would You Rather by John Burningham

Reading Level: Preschool - grade 2

Choosing can be fun, but Burningham has wicked fun coming up with some very tough choices. Wonderfully illustrated, this book is sure to appeal to kids of all ages. Perfect for sharing, it will spark lots of discussion about which is better: supper in a castle, breakfast in a balloon, or tea on the river. (Pssst! This reviewer would go for the tea.)

Reviewer: PC

Four in All by Nina Payne; illustrated by Adam Payne

Reading Level: All Ages

A picture perfect picture book. The sparse text and amazing illustrations will delight children and adults alike.

Reviewer: PC

Angelo by David Macaulay

Reading Level: Grades K - 2

When Angelo begins restoring the church he finds an injured pigeon. He grows to enjoy the birds company, and when he finally finishes, he leaves a little something extra for his friend.

Reviewer: PC

Slow Loris by Alexis Deacon

Reading Level: Ages 3 6

Loris does everything so slowly that he bores the zoos visitors, but there is a reason for his slow daytime behavior.

Reviewer: SH

The Wolf Who Cried Boy by Bob Hartman, illustrated by Tim Raglin

Reading Level: Ages 4 8

Little Wolf is sick and tired of eating Three-Pig-Salad and Granny Smith Pie so, when his parents tell him to cry BOY! if he ever sees one and they will come catch it for dinner, Little Wolf thinks he has found a way to avoid his boring meals.

Reviewer: SH

Little Wolf likes nothing more than Boy for dinner, but with boys hard to come by, he has to be content with hamburgers, sloppy does, and chocolate moose. If only he could find a boy or at least pretend to. Parents and kids alike will love the goofy pictures and fun wordplay, as well as the perfect ending.

Reviewer: PC

Sailor Moo: Cow at Sea by Lisa Wheeler; illustrated by Ponder Goembel

Reading Level: Preschool Grade 1

Not content with waves of grain, Little Moo the cow sets off for the ocean. After joining a crew of cats on a fishing boat she is thrown into the drink will she survive to sail again? A fun story with funny pictures.

Reviewer: PC

Zat Cat! by Chesley McLaren

Reading Level: Ages 4-7

A streetwise stray cat living in Paris unwittingly starts a new fashion trend and--voila! He becomes *la Rage de Paree!* Zat Cat! is a delightful story with generous sprinkles of French phrases and charming illustrations.

Reviewer: NB

Sylvester: The Mouse with the Musical Ear by Adelaide Holl, illustrated by N.M. Bodecker

Reading Level: Ages 3-7

Sylvester loves his peaceful country meadow where he enjoys the sounds of the nearby woods, the cornfield, and the silver brook. But when builders destroy his home, Sylvester is forced to search for a new place to live. He chooses a very unique spot that suits his musical talents perfectly, and a new adventure begins. A deluxe edition of a heartwarming old favorite.

Reviewer: NB

Tatty Ratty by Helen Cooper

Reading Level: Ages 3-5

When Tatty Ratty, a beloved stuffed bunny, is left on a bus Molly misses him, but she and her parents talk about all the adventures he must be having as he tries to find his way back to them. This clever story is perfect for anyone who has lost a security object.

Reviewer: SH

Duck on a Bike by David Shannon

Reading Level: Ages 3 5

One day, duck decides that he could probably ride a bicycle, so he takes the boys bike out for a spin around the farm.

Reviewer: SH

Silent Night by Sandy Turner

Reading Level: Ages 3 9

Christmas Eve is anything but silent when a feisty little dog discovers a red-suited intruder in the house.

Reviewer: SH

A Taste of Honey by Nancy Elizabeth Wallace

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 8

Lily Bear asks her father a question that should have an easy answer, but, as Poppy finds out, the answer is not so simple. A delightful presentation of how one question leads to another. The story includes creatively presented, easy-to-understand information on the steps involved in making honey and brightly colored illustrations which have a three-dimensional effect. A really delicious book!

Reviewer: NB

Elsie Times Eight by Natalie Babbitt

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

Babbitt is at it again with this fresh, funny story about a fairy godmother who could not hear very well and helped a little too much.

Reviewer: PC

Big Jimmys Kum Kau Chinese Take Out by Ted Lewin

Reading Level: Ages 3 6

This story of a young boys Saturday, spent helping out at his familys restaurant, is illustrated with watercolor paintings based on Ted Lewins favorite Chinese take out in Brooklyn. Dont read this book on an empty stomach, but just in case you do there is a recipe for Buddhas Delight at the end.

Reviewer: SH

Russells Secret by Johanna Hurwitz; illustrated by Heather Maione

Reading Level: Ages 4 6

When Russell decides he doesnt want to go to school, but would rather stay home just like his baby sister, he thinks he is going to have a great time. He soon discovers, however, that being a baby isnt all he thought it would be. For longer, tales about Russell, check out Rip Roaring Russell, also by Hurwitz.

Reviewer: SH

Rocks in His Head by Carol Otis Hurst; illustrated by James Stevenson

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 9

This charming book tells the story of Carol Otis Hurst's father who loved rock collecting and managed, despite naysayers and the Great Depression, to make rocks his life's work.

Reviewer: SH

A Real American by Richard Easton

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 6

Eleven-year-old Nathan McClelland lives in a quiet Pennsylvania farming community in the 1890s. His life changes after the coal mining company drives most farmers from the land. Nathan hates the Italian stinking foreigners who have come to work in the mines until he meets a young immigrant boy, Arturo. You might also enjoy the Dear America series.

Reviewer: HG

Slaves of the Mastery by William Nicholson

Reading Level: Grades 6 - 9

The second book in The Wind on Fire trilogy opens with the destruction of Aramant and the enslavement of most of the population by a mysterious culture known as The Mastery. While most of the population settle for their fate twins Bowman and Kestral vow to bring about the destruction of the oppressors.

Another engrossing fantasy saga of resistance and oppression is the His Dark Materials trilogy by Philip Pullman.

Reviewer: SJS

Melonhead by Michael de Guzman

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 8

Both his name and unusual appearance doom Sydney Melonhead Mellon to constant teasing and unwanted attention. Neglected by his ineffectual divorced parents and bullied by an overbearing stepfather, Sydney decides to seek a better life. With no plan but to head east he boards a bus and begins an adventure of changing identities.

If you enjoy this book try: Ghost Boy by Iain Lawrence and Lizard by Dennis Covington.

Reviewer: SJS

The Princesses of Atlantis by Lisa Williams Kline

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 7

Twelve-year-old best friends Carly and Arlene are writing a book about twin princesses who lived on the continent of Atlantis. In real life Carly and Arlene face the problems of school, popularity, parents, and growing up. A rift develops when Carly gets a crush on Zack Wingo and finds a new popular friend. In Atlantis, the twins are to be sacrificed to the rain god, Dritz. Or will they die as Atlantis sinks under the sea? The chapters about the princesses sound like they were written by talented teens who bear striking similarities to their characters. Another good book about two intertwined times and places is Ravine by Janet Hickman.

Reviewer: HG

When Pirates Came to Brooklyn by Phyllis Shalant

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 6

Lee Bloom is a ten-year-old Jewish girl growing up in Brooklyn in 1960. After her best friend moves away, she meets Polly Burke who invites her in for shipwrecks, fighting pirates, flying lessons, and encounters with Peter Pan. Everything is great until their mothers bigotry threatens the friendship. Lee questions what it means to be Jewish and if Jews go to heaven or hell or maybe, Neverland. Add to the mix a wise black building super and a tough, raggedy boy who seems to follow Lee around. But its the girls who find within themselves what they really believe. You might also like Bat 6 by Virginia Wolff and Burning Up by Caroline B. Cooney.

Reviewer: HG

The Thief Lord by Cornelia Caroline Funke

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 7

When they find out their evil Aunt Esther plans to separate them after the death of their beloved mother, Prosper and his younger brother Bo flee to Venice. In Venice the brothers are taken in by the elusive Thief Lord who steals jewels and other treasures to feed his homeless band. When the Thief Lord agrees to a mysterious commission they find their lives changed in ways they never imagined.

Reviewer: SJS

A Week in the Woods by Andrew Clements

Reading Level: Grades 3 - 5

The tension between a withdrawn 11-year-old boy and his hostile science teacher comes to a head during the Week in the Woods program.

If you enjoy this book try the sensational 2000 Australian import Dont Pat the Wombat by Elizabeth Honey.

Reviewer: SJS

The Angel Factory By Terence Blacker

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 7

When Thomas Wisdom and his friend Gip begin investigating Thomas perfect family they uncover an unsettling secret that could change the world.
If you enjoy this chilling tale try: The Dark Side of Nowhere by Neal Shusterman.

Reviewer: SJS

12 Again by Sue Corbett

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 7

When Bernadette McBride accidentally drinks a magic potion on her 40th birthday, she wakes up as a 12-year-old in her deceased mothers home. In her mothers house it is 1972, but outside the house it is 2000 and she is in 7th grade with her son!
Other tales of adults thrust into back into childhood are: Freaky Friday by Mary Rodgers and the video Vice Versa.

Reviewer: SJS

Ravine by Janet Hickman

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 6

Jeremy lives in modern day American with his family and his dog Duchess. His favorite pastime is to stage battles with his miniature medieval warriors. Ulf is the wizards boy who serves the evil Queen Erlinda and longs to help the beautiful captive princess Gudrun. Geography and time separate these two until the dog they both love finds a slip in time that brings them face-to-face.

Reviewer: HG

Where the Ground Meets the Sky by Jacqueline Davies

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 8

It was 1944 and WW II was changing many lives. Hazel, an academically gifted 12-year-old, and her mother arrive in the New Mexico desert to join her physicist father. They join a community surrounded by barbed wire and guards, which is know only as The Hill. In many ways it seems like a normal town but the fathers work in a high security tech area on something known as the gadget. What is the gadget? What does her mother know that causes her to emotionally and physically withdraw? Has their forbidden short-wave radio uncovered spies? What is wrong with her friends cat? And are there absolute rights and wrongs? This is a suspenseful book that leaves the reader with a lot to think about. It chronicles a unique time and place as the atomic

bomb was being developed.

Reviewer: HG

Song Quest by Katherine Roberts

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 7

This dark fantasy is ideal for those who enjoy Harry Potters struggle against the nefarious powers of Voldemort. Two young novice singers, one meek and the other a rebellious outlaw, find themselves unwilling allies in the desperate fight save their world from a ruthless, sinister evil. After this book try Crystal Mask the second book in this Echorium Sequence by Katherine Roberts.

Reviewer: SJS

The Great Blue Yonder by Alex Shearer

Reading Level: Grades 4 and older

Harry and his sister get into a silly argument and Harry storms out of the house yelling, Youll be sorry when Im dead! His sister replies, No I wont. Ill be glad! Neither of them has any way of knowing that Harry would be hit by a truck, and they wouldnt be able to apologize to each other. After his death Harry finds himself wandering aimlessly on the Other Side unable to move on to the Great Blue Yonder until he finds a way to tell his sister he is sorry.

Reviewer: SH

Berta: A Remarkable Dog by Celia Barker Lottridge with illustrations by Elsa Myotte

Reading Level: Grades 3 4

When Berta, Marjorys dachshund, starts feeling motherly she gets in trouble for trying to adopt every baby animal she sees, until an abandoned lamb is brought into the house.

Reviewer: SH

By the Side of the Road by Jules Feiffer

Reading Level: Grade 1 and older

For anyone who has ever misbehaved in the back seat of the car, or yelled at someone for misbehaving in the back seat of the car - this is what happens when someone gets ejected to wait by the side of the road. Thoroughly entertaining.

Reviewer: PC

When Richard refuses to stop fooling around in the back of the car his father ends up carrying out his threat to leave him at the side of the road, and soon, what started as a battle of wills, becomes a unique way of life.

Reviewer: SH

Say Yes by Audrey Coulombis

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 6

Casey gets involved in dangerous doings when her stepmother runs away and leaves Casey to fend for herself.

Other survival stories about children on their own are: Alan and the Animal Kingdom by Isabelle Holland, When the Road Ends by Jean Thesman, and Where the Lilies Bloom by Vera Cleaver.

Reviewer: SJS

Lulus Hat by Susan Meddaugh

Reading Level: Grades 3 - 5

From the author of Martha Speaks, comes this short chapter book about a magic hat, a special dog, and a girl named Lulu.

Reviewer: PC

Artemis Fowl: The Arctic Incident by Eoin Colfer

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 6

This action packed sequel to Artemis Fowl thrusts readers into adventure. When her world is threatened by a goblin revolt Artemis is Captain Holly Shorts number one suspect. She kidnaps

Artemis only to discover he is innocent of THIS crime. With time running out they form a reluctant alliance to thwart the goblin revolt and save Artemis long lost father from the clutches of the Russian Mafia.

Reviewer: SJS

Ruby Holler by Sharon Creech

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 7

Dallas and Florida have been in the orphanage run by the villainous Trepids since they were babies. The twins have been in more foster homes than they care to remember each more miserable than the last. So when they are taken in by Tiller and Sairy, an older couple, and brought to their remote farm in Ruby Holler, Florida and Dallas expect the worst.

For other tales of downtrodden orphans read: Journey to the River Sea by Eva Ibbotson; Peppermints in the Parlor by Barbara Brooks Wallace; and The Bad Beginning by Lemony Snicket.

Reviewer: SJS

The Circlemaker by Maxine Rose Schur

Reading Level: Grades 3 - 7

It is a little known part of history that the Russian Czar Nicholas I decreed that Jewish boys from age twelve to eighteen were to be seized and forced into the army for a term of 25 years. In this gripping historical novel, Mendel, a twelve-year-old, vows to escape to Hungary or die in the attempt. Fate finds him paired with the village bully in their flight to freedom.

Reviewer: HG

Cold Fire by Tamora Pierce

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 7

The long awaited third book in The Circle Opens series has arrived! Daja, an exceptionally gifted young mage, needs all her power and stamina when she must take on the education of two emerging mages and battle a deadly arsonist.

Other series by Tamora Pierce include, "The Song of the Lioness, Protector of the Small and The Immortals.

Reviewer: SJS

Bennos Bear by N.F. Zucker

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 6

Benno is a pickpocket whose job is to steal while his father and their dancing bear distract the crowd. When Benno is caught, his father is imprisoned while Bennos beloved bear is sent to the zoo. Benno is spared a term in the reformatory when a kindly policeman and his wife take him in their home where, for the first time in his life, he receives food, kindness and comfort. But Benno cannot be happy until he finds a way to free his bear and keep him forever.

Two other stories about the bond between a boy and a bear are: Rescue Josh McGuire by Ben Mikaelson and Gentle Ben by Walt Morey.

Reviewer: SJS

Alien & Possum: Friends No Matter What by Tony Johnston; illustrated by Tony DiTerlizzi

Reading Level: Grades K - 2

While outdoors watching the stars one evening, Possum witnesses something most unusual, and then he meets Alien. Although these two delightful creatures find they differ from each other in many ways, they discover that they still can be friends. Watch for a sequel to this heartwarming story.

Reviewer: NB

Hush by Jacqueline Woodson

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 7

It was murder. The two white police officers shot the unarmed black teenager down. Officer Green witnessed it and did the right thing. He testified against them. Now his family is paying the price. They are forced to leave their names, home, possessions, friends, school, jobs and extended family behind forever when they are whisked away in the witness protection program. Another story of a family in hiding is Dont Look Behind You by Lois Duncan.

Reviewer: SJS

Chipper by James Lincoln Collier

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 6

Chipper, a twelve-year-old homeless orphan struggling to survive the New York City of 1890, must decide where his loyalties lay when a con man entangles him in a lucrative scam. Other historical tales about orphans adventures include: Nowhere to Call Home by Cynthia DeFelice; Dave at Night by Gail Carson Levine and Gib Rides Home by Zilpha Keatley Snyder.

Reviewer: SJS

Funny Frank by Dick King-Smith; illustrated by John Eastwood

Reading Level: Grades 3 5

When Frank, a chick, longs to swim with the ducklings, it is up to the humans on the farm to make his dream a reality.

Reviewer: SH

Half-Human compiled and edited by Bruce Coville; photo illustrations by Marc Tauss

Reading Level: Grades 5 and up

From centaurs to selkies this book contains nine short stories, and one poem, about young people who are half human (and half something else) coming to terms with their bodies, heritages, and identities.

Reviewer: SH

Lexi's Tale by Johanna Hurwitz

Reading Level: Grades 3 - 4

Lexington the squirrel has enough trouble helping his friend PeeWee, the guinea pig, survive in Central Park, but when PeeWee takes an interest in a homeless human, Lexi finds it difficult to resist helping, too. If you want find out how PeeWee wound up in Central Park, read PeeWee's Tale also by Johanna Hurwitz.

Reviewer: PC

The Transmogrification of Roscoe Wizzle by David Elliott

Reading Level: Grades 3 - 5

When Gussy's fast food restaurant finally comes to town, Roscoe starts eating there almost every night. But when he starts to turn into something less than human, he and his best friend decide it's time to investigate.

Reviewer: PC

A is for AARRGH! by William J. Brooke

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 7

In this funny, irreverent book, Mog, the youngest caveman in his tribe, invents language. The idea catches on and from there we see the beginnings of commerce (based on turtle shells), government, and wealth. Of course, corruption, greed, unfair labor practices, and jails follow.

Reviewer: HG

Amy by Mary Hooper

Reading Level: Grade 7 and up

When Amy finds herself friendless, she finds a new friend on the Internet. Zed sounds like a dream come true a boyfriend and best friend rolled into one good-looking (and older) package. But when Amy goes to meet him, their date doesn't go quite as well as she had hoped. It starts out ok, but then she falls asleep and when she wakes up she feels sick. It's only later that she starts to wonder what really happened on their date. This novel, set in Great Britain, will interest fans of Katie.com.

Reviewer: PC

Bloody Jack: Being an Account of the Curious Adventures of Mary Jacky Faber, Ships Boy by L.A. Meyer

Reading Level: Grades 6 - 8

When she is orphaned, 8-year-old Mary Farber is taken in by a band of young beggars. After the leader of the band is brutally murdered, 13-year-old Mary dons his clothes and enlists as a ship's boy aboard the pirate-hunting *HMS Dolphin*.

Another rousing tale of a girl on the high seas is *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* by Avi.

Reviewer: SJS

The House of the Scorpion by Nancy Farmer

Reading Level: Grades 6 - 9

To all appearances, Matt looks like a normal child. The only difference is a tattoo on his foot, the Property of the Alacran Estate which marks him as a clone. Vilified as a filthy animal, Matt is kept in a cage until El Patron, the ancient drug czar, hears of the treatment. None dare mistreat El Patron's clone again. Matt adores his powerful protector until he slowly begins to realize that the old man nurtures him for sinister reasons.

Other tales of cloning include: *Blueprint* by Charlotte Kerner, *Anna to the Infinite Power* by Mildred Ames, and *Amy, Number Seven* by Marilyn Kaye.

Reviewer: SJS

Dunk by David Lubar

Reading Level: Grades 7 - 12

15-year-old Chad lives near the sleazy, exciting boardwalk on the New Jersey shore. The summer is just beginning when he hears the new Bozo in the dunk tank hurling funny, cruel, insults at the marks passing by. Chad is mesmerized. He wants to shout at the world that thinks he's a loser like the father who ran out on him. But the summer has more in store. Chad's best friend becomes seriously ill, the girl he cares for picks another guy, and a strange man, whose life becomes intertwined with Chad's, rents the apartment upstairs. Chad learns the art of being a Bozo as he learns about himself and the positive power of humor. Also check out the books by Chris Crutcher.

Reviewer: HG

Before We Were Free by Julia Alvarez

Reading Level: Grade 6 and up

After most of her extended family leaves the Dominican Republic in 1960, Anita and her family must continue their fight for freedom against the dictator Trujillo and his secret police. Extremely well written, this novel clearly expresses twelve-year old Anitas feelings about her countrys struggles as well as her own difficulties trying to grow up under such circumstances. Alvarez, author of *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, brings the time and place alive for readers.

Reviewer: PC

All American Girl by Meg Cabot

Reading Level: Grades 6 - 9

In this light-hearted tale, by the author of *The Princess Diaries*, Samantha Madisons life is turned upside down when she thwarts an assassination attempt on the President of the United States.

Reviewer: SJS

Son of the Mob by Gordon Korman

Reading Level: Grades 8 - 10

17-year-old Vince faces a series of increasingly hilarious mishaps as he tries to remain the only honest member of the Luca crime family.

If you enjoy this broad spoof try: *Son of Interflux* also by Gordon Korman and *Burger Wuss* by Matthew T. Anderson.

Reviewer: SJS

Surviving the Applewhites by Stephanie S. Tolan

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 8

13-year-old delinquent Jake Semple meets his match when he is given one last chance to avoid reform school by attending the eccentric Applewhite family's Creative Academy.

Other tales of mad-cap families include: *Ordinary Jack* by Helen Cresswell and *Dolphin Luck* by Hilary McKay.

Reviewer: SJS

When the Emperor Was Divine by Julie Otsuka

Reading Level: Grade 7 through Adult

The bewildering hurt, fear, humiliation and grinding boredom of the Japanese internment is exquisitely told through the multiple view points of a Japanese-American family.

Reviewer: SJS

Comfort by Carolee Dean

Reading Level: Grades 7 - 10

14-year-old Kenny Wilson wants to get out of Comfort, Texas to escape his alcoholic jailbird daddy and his abusive, controlling mother. He doesn't figure on a life waiting tables in his mother's caf. Kenny hopes that competitions in writing and poetry interpretation will provide the means to leave. And he'd like to take Cindy Blackwell with him. This is a powerful story about survival and hope. Dean skillfully weaves recognized poets and poetry and original verse into the narrative in a way that it will be appreciated even by those who think they don't like poetry.

Reviewer: HG

Upstream by Molly Hoekstra

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

Kathryn's diary chronicles her difficult 16th summer when she was hospitalized with anorexia. Other stories about eating disorders include: Fat Chance by Lesla Newman and The Best Little Girl in the World by Steven Levenkron.

Reviewer: SJS

Dragon Bones by Patricia Briggs

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

When he was twelve, 18-year-old Ward was beaten and almost killed by his father, the Lord of Hurog. Ward has been hiding from his father ever since by pretending the beating damaged his mind. The ruse has protected Ward but new complications arise when his father suddenly dies and slow Ward is declared incompetent to rule. Narrowly escaping confinement Ward flees,

determined to reclaim his birthright no matter what the cost.

Reviewer: SJS

Straydog by Kathe Koja

Reading Level: Grades 7-10

Rachel is very bright and a talented writer, but shes alienated from her family and the kids at the high school. The only place shes happy is at the animal shelter where she volunteers. There she meets the feral collie she calls Grrl. Rachel and the new boy in school, Griffin, hope to save Grrl from the inevitable end if she isnt adoptable. The story is interspersed with Rachels entry for an essay contest in which she gives Grrl a voice. This is a powerful, riveting story packed into only one hundred pages.

Reviewer: HG

Hanging on to Max by Margaret Bechard

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

In an interesting role reversal, Sam Pettigrew is a smart high school senior who is raising his 11-month old son, Max, with almost no help. In this funny, tender story Sam juggles school, fatherhood, and an interest in Claire, a teenage mother. Can Sam have both Max and a life for himself?

Reviewer: HG

Things Not Seen by Andrew Clements

Reading Level: Grades 6 - 9

Bobbys life changes drastically when he discovers he no longer has a reflection. No, hes not a vampirehes invisible. His panicked parents confine him to the house and swear him to secrecy. Frustrated Bobby sets out, naked, to discover a cure.

Other tales of invisibility include: The Invisible Man by H.G. Wells, Fade by Robert Cormier and The Weird Disappearance of Jordan Hall by Judie Angell.

Reviewer: SJS

Free Radical by Claire Roudolf Murphy

Reading Level: Grades 6 - 8

15-year-old Luke's life is changed forever when his mother tells him her secret. The FBI has been hunting for her since she was 18 years old because she was part of a radical student group that bombed a ROTC office in the middle of the night. Someone was killed in the blast. Luke feels like an explosion has gone off in his life. His mother is going to turn herself in. How can life ever be good again?

Other stories of kids and parental secrets include: *Where It Stops, Nobody Knows* by Amy Ehrlich; *The Face on the Milk Carton* by Caroline Cooney; *Billy* by Laura Roybal; *Twice Taken* by Susan Pfeffer; and *Alias* by Mary E. Ryan.

Reviewer: SJS

The Last Grail Keeper by Pamela Smith Hill

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 8

This is a new book for you fantasy fans. 16-year-old Felicity and her mother, an Arthurian scholar, suspect that something really special has been found at an archaeological dig in England. Gradually, as the mystery unfolds, Felicity learns to believe in a world where magic, legend, and reality combine. Is she the last grail keeper and will she be able to save her world? The more you know about Camelot the more you will enjoy this book, but it's a good read for everyone.

Reviewer: HG

The Amazing Maurice and His Educated Rodents by Terry Pratchett

Reading Level: Grades 5 and older

A talking cat, a Clan of talking rats, and a stupid-looking kid have had a good life conning townspeople out of their money with a pied piper routine, until the rats want to retire to form a civilization of their own. Maurice, the cat, convinces everyone to do one more job in a town that should be easy pickings, but evil things are happening under the streets of Bad Blinz in this Discworld fractured fairytale.

Reviewer: SH

Hoot by Carl Hiaasen, read by Chad Lowe

Ages 7 13

After Roy Eberhardt moves to Florida he finds himself involved with a bully, the cops and an eco-terrorist.

Reviewer: SH

Seek by Paul Fleischman performed by a full cast

Ages 10 and older

Given a class assignment to write his autobiography, Rob Radkovitz tells of his childhood spent scanning the radio dial, searching for the voice of his DJ father whom he has never met. Read by a symphony of voices this audiobook resembles a radio play.

Reviewer: SH

The Thief Lord by Cornelia Funke; read by Simon Jones

Grades 3 6

When brothers, Prosper and Bo, learn that their aunt is planning to adopt Bo and send Prosper off to boarding school they run away to Venice where they join a gang of street kids. The kids live in an old theatre and are cared for by mysterious boy who calls himself "The Thief Lord," but, when the gang is hired to do a break-in, secrets are revealed about The Thief Lord.

Reviewer: SH

Music from Gilmore Girls: Our Little Corner of the World

Reading Level: Grade 7 and up

Like a mix tape from your best friend, this CD has an eclectic mix of good and goofy songs. Highlights include What a Wonderful World performed by Joey Ramone, Know Your Onion! by The Shins, and Car Song by Elastica. Plenty of retro, real and otherwise, in I Found Love, Where You Lead I Will Follow, Clear Spot, and God Only Knows.

Reviewer: PC

26 Fairmount Avenue Books 1 4 by Tomie DePaola; read by the author

Ages 4 and older

Tomie DePaola reads his four wonderfully funny short memoirs of his early life. Also included is an interview with Tomie DePaola.

Reviewer: SH

Crispin: The Cross of Lead by Avi; read by Ron Keith

Grade 5 - 9

When the overseer of the manor inexplicably accuses him of theft and declares his life forfeit, 13-year-old Crispin must elude his persistent pursuers and try to survive in the world outside his isolated medieval village.

Other audio tales of kids on the run include: *The Whipping Boy* by Sid Fleischman; read by Spike McClure and *Bud, Not Buddy* by Christopher Paul Curtis; read by James Avery.

Reviewer: SJS

The Seeing Stone by Kevin Crossley-Holland; read by the author

Grades 3 6

In 1199, the time of the crusades, Arthur de Caldicot is given a shiny black stone by his family's mysterious friend, Merlin. When he looks in the stone, he begins to see events in the life of a king he has never heard of, Uther Pendragon.

Reviewer: SH

Squashed by Joan Bauer; narrated by C. J. Critt

Ages 10 13

Ellie Morgan wants to grow the winning pumpkin for the Rock River Pumpkin Weigh-In, but first she must contend with pumpkin thieves, pumpkin-killing weather and nasty, four-time pumpkin champion, Cyril Pool.

Reviewer: SH

The Chicken Doesn't Skate by Gordon Korman; read by various narrators

Grades 4 and older

When Milo Neal plans his science fair project, The Complete Life Cycle of a Link in the Food Chain he knows he is guaranteed to make it to the national finals, that is until the entire school becomes enraptured with his specimen, a chicken, which is destined to become lunch for the science fair judges. If you enjoy listening to this book you will also enjoy reading No More Dead Dogs and The Twinkie Squad also by Gordon Korman.

Reviewer: SH

Bad Boy by Walter Dean Myers; read by Joe Morton

Grades 6 and up

In this engaging memoir Walter Dean Myers tells about his early life growing up in Harlem in the 1940's and 50's, and his efforts to get away from the "bad boy" label that haunted him from first grade on.

Reviewer: SH

Stormbreaker by Anthony Horowitz; read by Nathaniel Parker

Grades 5 - 8

After fourteen-year-old Alex's uncle dies in an accident Alex finds himself an unwilling member of the British secret service. Supplied with corrosive zit cream and exploding Game Boy cartridges, Alex is sent undercover to discover what the creator of the Stormbreaker computer is really up to.

Reviewer: SH

6-321 by Michael Laser

Grades 4 - 6

Based on events from the author's childhood, and well read by Jerry O'Connell, this short novel recounts Marc Chaiken's year in sixth grade. It's a year of changes and discoveries -- and the constant fear of getting beaten to a pulp. If you would rather read the book (only 131 pages!) [click here](#).

Reviewer: PC

The Stones are Hatching by Geraldine McCaughrean; read by Christian Rodska

Grades 4 - 7

After his mother's death and his father's disappearance, Phelim Green lives a sad, lonely life with his hateful sister, until the old creatures of legend begin to awaken and Phelim finds himself trying to save the world from the dreaded Stoor Worm and its evil brood. If you would rather read the book (and discover the final five pages that are not included in the audiotape version), [click here](#).

Reviewer: SH

The Skull Alphabet Book by Jerry Pallotta ; illustrated by Ralph Masiello

Reading Level: Ages 4 11

A is for...well this book isn't going to tell you outright, but the fabulous illustrations of animal skulls and the descriptions of the animals' traits should help the reader figure out what each letter is for. Don't forget to look for pictures of presidents and hints of Georgia O'Keefe's artwork.

Reviewer: SH

Scranimals by Jack Prelutsky; illustrated by Peter Sis

Reading Level: Ages 3 and up

Jack Prelutsky and Peter Sis, two award-winners, team up to take readers to Scranimal Island where birds, beasts, vegetables and flowers have been mysteriously scrambled together to create phantasmagoric landscapes and animals. A girl and a boy on a scooter fly around the island examining such creatures as the spinachickens, hippopotamushrooms, and the gentle, shy padaffodil. Siss detailed, draftsman-like drawings emphasize the fantastic, and Prelutsky sprinkles his rhymes with playful puns and vigorous vocabulary. This is a fun book of poems for all ages who love wordplay and pictures that stretch the imagination.

Reviewer: LW

I Pledge Allegiance by Bill Martin, Jr. and Michael Sampson, illustrated by Chris Raschka

Reading Level: Grades K - 3

Striking illustrations and bold text make The Pledge of Allegiance come to life! The complicated verbiage of the Pledge is explained phrase by phrase in kid-friendly language, helping children understand the meaning of these patriotic words they recite in school. Includes tidbits of historical information about the Pledge and Old Glory.

Reviewer: NB

Travels with Tarra by Carol Buckley

Reading Level: Grade 3 and older

This charming book, illustrated with family photos, tells the story of Carol Buckley, her elephant, Tarra, and their 28 year relationship. If you like this story you would also like Kokos Story by Francine Patterson.

Reviewer: SH

A Fruit is a Suitcase for Seeds by Jean Richards, illustrated by Anca Hariton

Reading Level: Ages 4-8

This book presents a colorful and clear explanation of how seeds travel and how different fruits carry their seeds. Some fruits (or are they vegetables?) and their seeds will surprise you! Includes some interesting questions and answers about seeds.

Reviewer: NB

Slumber Parties: Things to Make and Do by Jennifer Traig

Reading Level: Grade 4 and up

Part of the Crafty Girl series, this fab book will turn your next slumber party into an unforgettable all-nighter! Other books in the series include:

Accessories: Things to Make and Do

Beauty: Things to Make and Do

Cool stuff: Things to Make and Do

Reviewer: PC

The 5,000-Year-Old Puzzle: Solving a Mystery of Ancient Egypt by Claudia Logan; illustrated by Melissa Sweet

Reading Level: Grade K - 3

When Will goes on an Egyptian adventure, he keeps a journal and sends postcards home to Sam. There is plenty to write about as he helps out on an archeological dig that includes a mystery. This informative book is fun to read, includes a great story, and is loaded with illustrations.

Reviewer: PC

Mercedes and the Chocolate Pilot by Margot Theis Raven, illustrated by Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen

Reading Level: Grades K - 3

A truly heartwarming story of a seven-year-old girl living in postwar West Berlin and an American pilot assigned to the Berlin Airlift rescue mission organized to fly in food and supplies to the people of the bombed-out and blockaded city. The pilot, Lt. Gail Halvorsen, has a special interest in the children of the city and takes it upon himself to bring sweet treats to them, delivering his cargo in a very special way. The epilogue is just as fascinating as the story!

Reviewer: NB

Weird Friends: Unlikely Allies in the Animal Kingdom by Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey

Reading Level: Grades K - 3

You'll meet a few familiar animals and some you probably never heard of in this fascinating and beautifully illustrated book which describes many surprising combinations of animal "friendship" and how each creature helps his special "friend" to survive in the wild. Includes a page showing the geographic location of each animal.

Reviewer: NB

Left for Dead: A Young Man's Search for Justice for the USS *Indianapolis* by Peter Nelson

Reading Level: Grades 5 and older

When Hunter Scott chose to do his sixth-grade history assignment on the sinking of the *Indianapolis* at the end of World War II he didn't know that he would end up uncovering a naval scandal, fighting to clear the name of the *Indianapolis* captain, and rewriting a chapter in history. This book will fascinate history buffs and anyone who has ever wondered WHY he had to do those research assignments in school.

Reviewer: SH

Becoming Joe DiMaggio by Maria Testa

Reading Level: Grade 4 - 6

A bittersweet story told in verse, this book brings baseball and the Italian immigrants experience to life. Similar to *Amber Was Brave, Essie Was Smart* by Vera Williams, but told from a young boy's point of view, it contains equal parts of hope and sadness.

Reviewer: PC

I Am a Skater by Jane Feldman

Reading Level: Grades 2 - 4

If you liked watching Sarah Hughes at the Winter Olympics, you'll love this book about her younger sister Emily. Part of a series, including *I Am a Dancer* and *I Am a Gymnast*.

Reviewer: PC

Rescued Images: Memories of a Childhood in Hiding by Ruth Jacobsen

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 8

Ruth Jacobsen spent much of her childhood in Holland during World War II, hiding out in the open. Because of her age and blue eyes she went unnoticed by the Germans, but her parents were not so lucky. Their hiding was more literal and their experiences changed them and Ruth, so that after the war they could never pick up where they had left off. The spareness of Jacobsens story confirms just how much she missed out on in her years of hiding.

Reviewer: PC

Shakespeares Storybook: Folk Tales That Inspired the Bard retold by Patrick Ryan; illustrated by James Mayhew

Reading Level: Grades 4 and older

Did you know that Romeo and Juliet was inspired by a French poem or that Hamlet was an adaptation of a Viking saga? Readers will enjoy discovering the history of these, and five other, Shakespearian plays and then reading the original tales upon which the works were based.

Reviewer: SH

Efran of the Sonoran Desert: A Lizards Life Among the Seri Indians by Amalia Astorga, as told to Gary Paul Nabhan, illustrated by Janet K. Miller

Reading Level: Grades 2 - 4

A story within a story, this amazing book has relevance in science, art, and history, among other things. The story of Efran the lizard introduces the reader to the Seri people and the Sonoran desert. When you are done reading this one, you will probably want to go to Mexico and visit the Seri!

Reviewer: PC

Imaginative Inventions: The Who, What, Where, When, and Why of Roller Skates, Potato Chips, Marbles, and Pie by Charise Mericle Harper

Reading Level: Grades K and up

How is a king connected with the invention of high-heeled shoes? You'll learn this and much, much more in this interesting and creative presentation of the origins of many useful, tasty, and fun things. From animal cookies to the wheelbarrow, the story of each invention is cleverly told in rhyme and is accompanied by related trivia. The lively and colorful illustrations add to the fun!

Reviewer: NB

Edgar Degas: Paintings That Dance by Maryann Cocca-Leffler

Reading Level: preschool - grade 2

A wonderful short study of Degas and dance. His paintings and sculptures, together with the author's illustrations and photos, bring this artist to life for young children.

Reviewer: PC

Feed the Children First: Irish Memories of the Great Hunger edited by Mary E. Lyons

Reading Level: Grades 2 - 5

In the mid-1840s, the Irish struggled to survive, fighting disease and famine that seemed to worsen every year. Lyons succeeds in telling their story, with anecdotes and artwork of the period.

Reviewer: PC

Dinosaur Encyclopedia by David Lambert and Darren Naish

Reading Level: Grades K and older

This fantastically illustrated encyclopedia of prehistoric life covers everything from the invertebrates to Homo sapiens. Small inset boxes give basic information, such as diet and habitat, as well as an illustration showing each creature's size as compared to a modern human.

Reviewer: SH

The Chimpanzees I Love: Saving Their World and Ours by Jane Goodall

Reading Level: Grades 4 and up

Dr. Goodall is famous for her research work with the chimpanzees of Gombe National Park in Tanzania. In her newest autobiography, she explains how her childhood love of animals would lead her, at age 22, to make a trip to Africa which would change her life as well as change forever the way we think about animal behavior. She tells fascinating stories of chimpanzee families, of their love and compassion for each other as well as their capacity for aggression and violence. Illustrated with many striking photographs, this is a portrait of a remarkable woman.

Reviewer: LW

The Ultimate X-Men by Peter Sanderson

Reading Level: Grades 4 and up

Packed with history, character biographies, and tons of illustrations this guide to the X-Men and their universe is a must read for comic fans.

Reviewer: SH

New Spanish and Bilingual Books

The Perfect Piata / La piata perfecta by / por Kelli Kyle Dominguez; illustrated by / ilustrado por Diane Paterson

Reading Level: nivel K - 2

Marisa va a cumplir seis años con una fiesta, y por supuesto la piata perfecta es muy importante. Cuando se la encuentra, ella la quiere mucho, tanto que cuando llega la fiesta ella no quiere romperla.

Reading Level: Grade K - 2

Marisa is going to celebrate her sixth birthday with a party, and of course the perfect piata is very important. When she finds one, she likes it so much that she finds it hard to break when the time comes.

Reviewer: PC

Huevos Rancheros por Stefan Czernecki

Reading Level: preescolar - nivel 2

El cuento de una gallina lista y simpática, que viaja de la ciudad de México al pueblo de Coyotepec. Allí faltan gallinas por causa de un coyote, pero la gallina sí sabe cómo resolver este problema.

The story of a hen, both smart and friendly, who travels from Mexico City to the town of Coyotepec. There are no other chickens there because of a coyote, but the clever hen knows how to solve this problem.

Reviewer: PC

Tengo Sentimientos! by/por Jana Novotny Hunter; illustrated by/ilustrado por Sue Porter

Reading Level: preescolar y mayor/preschool and up

Hecho para compartir, este libro habla de los sentimientos desde el punto de vista de un niño. Muy similar a Me Gusto como soy! por Nancy Carlson.

Perfect for sharing, this book talks about feelings from a young child's point of view. It's similar to I Like Me by Nancy Carlson.

Reviewer: PC

Primer Diccionario por/by Brenda Apsley

Reading Level: preescolar y mayor/preschool and up

Este diccionario es muy divertido porque uno se puede copiar las ilustraciones en la portada para colorear. Hay dos más en la serie: Primeras Formas, y Primeros Números.

This picture dictionary is great fun, because you can copy the pictures on the cover and color them. There are two more books in the series: Primeras Formas and Primeros Números.

Reviewer: PC

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