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Numeroff, Laura. *When Sheep Sleep*. Illustrated by David McPhail. Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2006. ISBN 0810954699. \$15.95. 32 pp.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Toddler

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Picture book; Poetry;

Subject: Bedtime--Juvenile fiction; Sleep--Juvenile fiction; Animals--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

It would be hard to go wrong with an author/illustrator combination like Numeroff (*If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, Laura Geringer, 1985) and McPhail (*Edward and the Pirates*, Little Brown, 1997). Together they have created a bedtime book that is so soporific that it ought to carry a warning label "Don't read before operating heavy equipment." In the rhyming story a child wonders what to count if all the sheep are asleep. As she goes from animal to animal, all are snuggled in dreamland. In the end she drifts off as well.

In each stanza of the sing-song poem Numeroff makes a rhyme with *sheep*. Most are quite good, but a couple are a little awkward like, "Their mom watches closely, / Their safety to keep." The repeated rhyme adds to the sleepy rhythm of the text. McPhail's watercolor and pastel illustrations reinforce the mood. They are done with muted lines in warm tones. All the animals portrayed look soft, gentle and blissfully asleep. This is a must-have for harried parents who want a sure-fire bedtime book and a great gift for new mothers.

Henkes, Kevin. *La primera luna llena de Gatita*. Illustrated by Kevin Henkes. Greenwillow Books, 2006. ISBN 0060872233. \$16.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Selma Alexandre

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Picture books;

Subject: Cats--Juvenile fiction; Animals--Infancy--Juvenile fiction; Moon--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

La primera luna llena de Gatita is the Spanish edition of author-illustrator Henkes' 2005 Caldecott award winner *Kitten's First Full Moon*. The delightful tale depicts Gatita wandering in the moonlight determined to reach the shining bowl of milk that lingers in the sky overhead but never seems to get any closer. Following a series of mishaps, Gatita returns home weary and defeated, only to find a delicious bowl of milk waiting for her on the porch.

This charmingly simple story, filled with suspense and enriched by engaging art, will invite young listeners to join in the naïve little kitten's night of misadventure. Readers will smile when Gatita is finally granted her own big bowl of milk. Henkes' rhythmic phrases and attractive black and white drawings with silvery tones capture the mood to make this a successful bedtime story.

Robberecht, Thierry. *Back into Mommy's Tummy*. Illustrated by Philippe Goossens. Clarion, 2005. ISBN 0618581065. \$15.00. [32 p.]

Reviewer: Rita Christensen

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Picture books;

Subject: Babies--Juvenile fiction; Pregnancy--Juvenile fiction; Jealousy--Juvenile fiction;

Mothers and daughters--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

A little girl has only one request for her fifth birthday--to go back into her mother's tummy. How appealing it would be to stay up late with mommy, to never have to get up for school, and to watch television through a belly button! Coincidentally, her mother is expecting a baby boy soon; perhaps going back into mommy's tummy would make her the center of her family's attention again. As the little girl's friends arrive for her birthday party, she realizes that being older has its advantages--such as opening presents and playing with friends. And maybe her baby brother will even recognize her voice after he is born.

Young children will relate to Robberecht's story, which is written in a childlike yet believable manner. Goossens's oil pastel illustrations are colorful and animated: they skillfully depict a child's imagination, fears, and joys. Though there are many children's books already written on the subjects of sibling rivalry and new babies, this is a fun addition to any collection.

Guy, Ginger Foglesong. *Siesta*. Illustrated by Rene King Moreno. Greenwillow, 2005. ISBN 0060560614. \$15.99. [32] p.

Reviewer: Selma Alexandre

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Picture books;

Subject: Naps (Sleep)--Juvenile fiction; Brothers and sisters--Juvenile fiction; Bilingual books--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

An afternoon nap, a simple part of the everyday world for most young children, is anything but ordinary in this cheerful, bilingual picture book by award-winner Ginger Guy. *Siesta* celebrates close sibling relationships along with the opportunity to experience alternating languages and learn color concepts.

The story unfolds as a brother and a sister make preparations for their backyard siesta. They gather colorful objects from around the house including a stuffed bear, a flute, and a blanket that has all the colors combined. Outside, the colored blanket over the clothesline serve as a tent where the children sing and play for their little bear before falling asleep. A bedtime serenade and a multicolored tent turn this backyard adventure into an exceptional childhood memory for two young children and their teddy.

Rene Moreno's art is varied and appealing with bright illustrations in pastels, watercolors, and pencils. The layout displays brief sentences in both Spanish and English, with the words for colors printed in their respective color. With its evident teaching value, *Siesta* is recommended for children ages four and beyond.

Wood, Nancy. *Mr. and Mrs. God in the Creation Kitchen*. Illustrated by Timothy Basil Ering. Candlewick Press, 2006. ISBN 0763612588. \$16.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Rita Christensen

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fiction; Folklore; Humorous stories;

Subject: Creation--Juvenile fiction; Animals--Juvenile fiction; Cookery--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews

Mr. and Mrs. God cook in an unusual kitchen. They own a massive oven that is big enough to roast a star. Their kitchen is stocked with mounds of clay and boxes of growls, roars, sharp teeth, bones, feet, eyes, and tails. The gods use their colossal bowls and pans to whip up the sun and earth and push them out to space. They mix, fry, and bake until all sort of creatures are created to color and embellish the earth.

Mr. and Mrs. God in the Creation Kitchen is a fanciful and playful look at the creation tale. Ering's illustrations are charged with energy through his skillful use of paint, pencil, and ink. Muted grays predominate with bursts of assorted colors added as necessary to indicate the godly creative process. Wood's story employs common folktale narratives of creation in which the earth and man are made out of clay. Children will identify with the telling as the kitchen is a magical place where their own wonderful creations are made.

Rosenthal, Amy Krouse. *Cookies: Bite-Size Life Lessons*. Illustrated by Jane Dyer. HarperCollins, 2006. ISBN 006058081X. \$12.99. 30 p.

Reviewer: Sarah Wanlass

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary, All

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Picture books; Informational books;

Subject: Conduct of life--Miscellanea--Juvenile literature; Cookies--Miscellanea--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews

Cookies: Bite-Size Life Lessons is a book of abstract terms defined with situations that involve cookies. For instance, "Modest means you don't run around telling everyone you make the best cookies, even if you know it to be true." Definitions like this one will help youngsters better understand difficult concept words such as patient, generous, fair, and trustworthy.

The book is as warm as its illustrations: cozy, nostalgic depictions of small girls and boys, cats and dogs, lambs and bunnies, and of course cookies. Young and old alike will enjoy reading this book. Young ones may need a little help because though the concepts are simply explained, some of the font is cursive. This book is a good vocabulary enhancer: great for classrooms and home libraries.

McKissack, Patricia C. *Away West*. Illustrated by Gordon C. James. Viking, 2006. 0670060127. \$14.99. 121 p.

Reviewer: Thomasania Leydsman

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: African Americans--Juvenile fiction; West (U.S.)--History--1860-1890--Juvenile fiction; Brothers--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

African-American history comes alive in this story as two of the three Webster brothers wrestle with their futures. Each brother has a different view of their respective destinies. Fourteen year old Everett is torn between leaving and remaining on the family farm, left to him and his older brothers by their late father. A farm owned by African-Americans was a precious thing after the Civil War, but already, the oldest brother Cole, has left to seek his fortunes in the Army, leaving the farming to Gus and Everett. Gus feels that they owe it to their father to make the farm a success, but Everett does not want the life of a farmer. He thinks his destiny lies in making it out West, so he runs away from home.

Away West is the second story in the Scrap of Times Series. McKissack's series exposes children to African-American history, through the exploits of one fictional family, the Websters. This is a story of family loyalties and how the family eventually works out their differences. McKissack's series will help the reader to learn about the African-American pioneers and the important events and experiences that encouraged former slaves to leave the South and go West. This series fills a gap in children's historical fiction about African-Americans. *Away West* will interest children, ages nine to twelve; it can be used to teach Westward Expansion in American history.

Goodman, Susan E. *All in Just One Cookie*. Illustrated by Timothy Bush. Greenwillow, 2006. ISBN 0060090928. \$16.99. [32] p.

Reviewer: Thomasania Leydsman

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Cookies--Juvenile literature; Baking--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

After reading *All in Just One Cookie*, readers will never think about chocolate chip cookies in the same way again! This book tells the story of the ingredients used in a chocolate chip recipe and their derivation. The characters who guide this culinary journey are a very modern Grandma, with her flipped hairdo, dangling earrings and cool, orange athletic shoes, and her pets, a dog and a cat.

When Grandma gets a phone call announcing guests are coming, she decides to make cookies. She sets out the ingredients and her very curious pets begin their investigation of each. The pets utilize all types of resource materials, Encyclopedias, the internet, and more, to gain their information. Readers are taken from the island of Madagascar, where vanilla is found, to a deep mine in Wyoming, where trona, the mineral that turns into baking soda, is mined.

Each ingredient has a two page spread, with interesting facts about the ingredient, such as how it is made and its geographical point of origin. There is a lot of text and illustration on each page, but the information is presented in a way that is accessible to younger and older children. The muted watercolor illustrations are fun and enjoyable.

Ullman, Barb Bentler. *The Fairies of Nutfolk Wood*. HarperCollins, 2006. ISBN 0060736143.
\$15.99. 256 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fairy tales; Fantasy Fiction;

Subject: Divorce--Juvenile fiction; Fairies--Juvenile fiction; Friendship--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Willa Jane's parents have recently divorced, leaving her an emotional and physical wreck. She can't think of food without being queasy and can't think of her broken family without being sad. She and her mother move to the rural town of Plunkit, where Willa begins seeing small, sparkling people and tiny stick cottages. After hearing stories of a similar small people from her neighbor, Hazel Wicket, she enlists Hazel's handy man, 17-year-old Vincent Meeker, to settle the mystery of these little people. But a past tragedy in Vincent's family threatens the search, Willa, Hazel, and the peace of Nutfolk Wood.

The Fairies of Nutfolk Wood is a gentle story about pain, change, and healing. Readers should look elsewhere for a complex story, and the story drags while Hazel is describing the NutFolk, but Ullman's tale is a pleasant afternoon's read. Willa, her family, and her friends are endearing characters and the plot's conflict manages to be successful without a villainous antagonist. This story may appeal to fantasy lovers looking for a fresh take on fairies, but is more valuable for Willa's relationships with those around her.

Truss, Lynne. *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: Why, Commas Really Do Make a Difference!* Illustrated by Bonnie Timmons. Putnam's, 2006. ISBN 0399244913. \$15.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Kate Reynolds

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational Books;

Subject: English language--Punctuation--Juvenile literature; Comma--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Truss has produced a children's book that is just as educational and humorous as her adult book of the same name. In this book, however, she narrows her focus to, as she says, "the most used and misused" of punctuation marks--the comma. She chooses thirteen sentences that change drastically in meaning depending on where commas are, or are not, placed. Timmons' hilarious illustrations of what each sentence is saying add to the fun. At the end of the book, Truss has a more technical explanation of what each comma is doing in its sentence and how the meaning is changed.

Younger children will enjoy the amusing pictures and can begin to understand the use of the comma, while older children will be able to grasp various rules governing comma usage. This book is a must-have for elementary school classrooms--not to mention, many adults could do with the reminders presented as well.

Lewis, J. Patrick. *Once Upon a Tomb: Gravely Humorous Verses*. Illustrated by Simon Bartram. Candlewick Press, 2005. ISBN 0763618373. \$16.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Humorous poetry;

Subject: Death--Juvenile poetry; Humorous poetry, American; Children's poetry, American;

Books--Reviews;

Sometimes humor can be found in the most unexpected places: for example, a graveyard. Lewis explores the humor in death in his hilariously illustrated collection of epitaphs. Some are more sedate and even profound, like "Lighthouse Keeper" and others are what Lewis himself describes on the book's back flap as "one-liners," such as "Underwear Salesman" and "Mailman." A former economics professor, Lewis shows his old profession through his brief and carefully rhymed verses. Bartram's bright, goofy illustrations maintain the fun feeling of the poems and remind readers that, as in life, death has its silly moments.

Shinn, Sharon. *The Dream-Maker's Magic*. Viking, 2006. ISBN 0670060704. \$16.99. 272 p.

Reviewer: Kate Reynolds

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Mistaken identity--Juvenile fiction; Fantasy--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

The Dream-Maker's Magic is the third story set in Shinn's magical world first introduced in *The Safe-Keeper's Secret* and continued in *The Truth-Teller's Tale*. This story introduces readers to Kellen, a unique heroine whose mother insists on raising her as a boy. Due to her odd upbringing she is an outcast among both boys and girls her own age. She finds a friend in Gryffin, whose physical deformities set him apart from his peers as well. As the two grow, Kellen struggles to find a place she fits in. Everything changes when Gryffin becomes the kingdom's Dream-Maker, leaving Kellen wondering if she has lost him just as she starts contemplating more than friendship in their relationship.

Shinn's story is pleasant, but once again she relies on the same type of mistaken identity that she uses in the previous two novels. The ending is much too perfect and full of coincidences to retain any believability. Kellen's character is the biggest redeeming quality of this work: Shinn depicts her confusion and discovery of her own identity with respect and gentleness. As with the other two books, this one can stand alone.

This easy-to-read romantic fantasy, with its themes of friendship and self-determination, will appeal to many young teenage girls, but more mature readers may see it as fluff.

Roy, Jennifer. *Yellow Star*. Marshall Cavendish, 2006. ISBN 076145277X. \$16.95. 227 p.

Reviewer: Thomasania Leydsman

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Jews--Persecutions--Poland--Lodz--Juvenile fiction; Holocaust (1939-1945)--Jewish--Juvenile fiction; Family life--Poland--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Yellow Star is a story of fear, terror, mayhem, and a child's attempt to understand the incomprehensible. It tells of a child's experience during the Holocaust and is brought to life by the incredible writing of Jennifer Roy.

This story is told through the eyes of a young girl, Sylvia Perlmutter, who speaks to us in a powerful first person narrative. Roy's phenomenal use of free verse, allows us to see, hear, and feel the Holocaust through a child's consciousness. She manages to slip into the mind of a child and to grow with her as she tries to make sense of and comprehend her world and its madness. Based on the story of Roy's own Aunt Sylvia, one of 200,000 Jews forced into a Polish ghetto during WWII, this book does for intermediate age children what Anne Frank's diary has done for older children.

Sylvia enters the ghetto in Lodz, Poland with her family in the year 1939 at age four and a half. She narrates the story of her family, the children, and others who attempt to survive the Nazi occupation. As family members and childhood friends disappear, Sylvia's voice allows the reader to share the horror in an incredible, real, and moving way. Six years later, at the end of the war, Sylvia is one of eight hundred survivors, which include only twelve children.

Though Roy writes a text that can be successfully read and comprehended by younger children, the easy readability in no way diminishes its powerful message. This book could be paired with *The Big Lie: A True Story*, by Leitner, Leitner, and Pedersen and *When the Soldiers Were Gone* by Propp, to create a commanding text set to study and better understand the Holocaust and WWII.

Smith, Sherwood. *Trouble Under Oz*. Illustrated by William Stout. HarperCollins, 2006. ISBN 0060296097. \$16.99. 239 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Sisters--Juvenile fiction; Family problems--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Dori and her sister Em are back in the second installment of Smith's Oz stories. The first book, *The Emerald Wand of Oz*, introduced readers to the two sisters, rumored descendents of Dorothy Gale. This time when Ozma calls for help their mother is gone at the hospital caring for their grandmother and their father is trying to get through a snow storm to care for them. The girls decide to split their duties--one sister stays in Kansas to hold down the fort and the other goes to answer Ozma's summons about Prince Rikiki of the Nome kingdom. Em struggles to keep her parents and their neighbor Mrs. Gupta from worrying (and from finding out that Dori isn't there), while Dori travels through the dangers of the underground kingdoms of Oz.

Smith's writing isn't overly-complex, but younger readers--and long-time Oz fans--will love her imaginative story. While it helps to be familiar with the original series by Baum, as Smith's book uses characters and situations from it, these new Oz stories can be enjoyed by newcomers as well. They may even serve as a starting place for new Oz enthusiasts. Young girls especially will enjoy Dori's spunkiness and Em's practical problem-solving.

Avi. *Crispin at the Edge of the World*. Hyperion, 2006. ISBN 078685152X. \$16.99. 240 pp.

Reviewer: Laura Wadley

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Historical fiction; Adventure stories;

Subject: Great Britain--History--Richard II, 1377-1399--Juvenile fiction; Middle Ages--Juvenile fiction; Voyages and travels--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

In this sequel to the Newbery-winning *Crispin and the Cross of Lead*, Bear, sick and exhausted, flees with Crispin from his former foes and from his new enemies, members of the rebel brotherhood who think he has betrayed them. They fall into the company of an aged healer, and her deformed young protégé, who treat them with the utmost kindness and care. After Avi has beat the reader about the head and shoulders with the remarkable notion that Christian folk can behave badly and pagans can behave nobly, he sends Bear, Crispin, and Troth, the young girl, on a sea voyage which lands them shipwrecked in France and at the mercy of a "free company" of soldiers, brutal in their demands, who pull Bear and his little family into great danger.

Although continuing the medieval practice and speech which characterized the first Crispin book, *Crispin at the Edge of the World* seems often no more than a thinly veiled political tract, with a rushed and unsatisfying ending. With its beautifully beguiling cover art, one might have hoped for more.

Warner, Sally. *Twilight Child*. Viking, 2006. ISBN 0670060763. \$17.99. 304 pp.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Fairies--Juvenile fiction; Finland--History--18th century--Juvenile fiction; Scotland--History--18th century--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Eleni was born at twilight on the longest day of the year, and, according to Finland's ancient lore, this means she can see other in-between things: spirits and fairies, who recognize her as honorary kin. They guide her through her life and its many challenges: her father's disappearance after the war resistance, his sudden reappearance and her mother's death, and Eleni's subsequent kidnapping. Her father is taking her to Spain when she escapes his ship to the Scottish town of Tobermory. There she is cared for by Mrs. Dundonald and the girls who stay at her home. But the unwelcome attention of Col Hardie and the sudden appearance of her childhood friend Mathias, prove that Eleni's troubles--and travels--are far from over.

While imaginative, Warner's story seems to have many small conflicts rather than one main plot arc. The ending is pleasantly dramatic, but abrupt, and feels unfinished. Warner gives more information with some background research and historical facts at the end of the story, along with a pronunciation guide for Swedish, Finnish, Scottish, and other words used in the book. Readers will certainly enjoy Warner's inventive writing style, the insight into multiple cultures (and the frequent use of many languages in the text), and the strange creatures Eleni meets, but may be frustrated with the sudden ending.

Morrison, Taylor. *Wildfire*. Illustrated by Taylor Morrison. Houghton Mifflin, 2006. ISBN 0618509003. \$17.00. 48 p.

Reviewer: Sarah Wanlass

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Picture books; Informational books;

Subject: Wildfires--Juvenile literature; Forest fires--Juvenile literature; Wildfires--United States--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

"Killer Fires Must Be Stopped!" Headlines such as these encourage people to categorize wildfires as bad. They burn acre upon acre of forest and homes as well; they release smoke into the air; they are expensive in money and manpower to fight. However, *Wildfire* brings to light the advantages as well as the dangers of wildfires. It describes in detail how wildfires help the ecosystem in a forest. In it, Morrison points out that explosive fire is most likely when fire is kept from an area for too long. Forests need fire to clean up the dead brush and debris that make it difficult for healthy trees and plants to grow. If humans do not keep fire at bay unnecessarily, forest fires are more likely to contain themselves and burn out when they have fulfilled their purpose.

Morrison discusses in depth the hard job of a firefighter: the trenches they must dig, the protection they must wear, and the work they must do. He also describes prescribed fire, a recent attempt to undo some of the damage humans have caused by halting forest fires over the past century. Vivid illustrations by the author compliment the text. Some paintings are full-page; others are contained in small boxes to show different aspects or stages of the subject matter. Readers will find the bibliography and glossary, located at the end of the book, helpful as they deepen their understanding. The writing is not too verbose; it grabs and maintains interest.

Henry, April. *Shock Point*. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2006. ISBN 0399243852. \$16.99. 192 p.

Reviewer: Sarah Wanlass

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction; Adventure stories;

Subject: Psychological abuse--Juvenile fiction; Psychiatrists--Malpractice--Juvenile fiction;

Family problems--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Cassie Streng returns from a normal school day to find a strange white van in her driveway. She is thrown into the back of it and shipped off to Peaceful Cove, a harsh Mexican boarding school for troubled teens. Cassie's new stepfather, Rick, has convinced her mother that Cassie needs help, but Cassie knows the real reason he wants to get rid of her.

Rick is a child psychiatrist who has been prescribing an experimental drug, Socom, to many of his patients. What no one knows is that it appears that this drug has driven several teens to suicide. How will Cassie ever tell the world of her stepfather's deception and the abuse that goes on at Peaceful Cove, when she is stuck behind locked doors?

Shock Point is a gripping mystery with an intriguing storyline and excellent character development. Readers will find the portrayal of Cassie and her friends realistic and refreshing after novels that portray a stereotype of teens that are always involved in premarital sex, drugs, and alcohol.

Chapters alternate between Cassie's present troubles in Mexico and the chain of events that spurred her stepfather to send her away. Cassie struggles to maintain hope that she will be able to find a way home to Portland and expose Rick's fraud before the drug he is promoting is approved for wide distribution.

Skelton, Matthew. *Endymion Spring*. Delacorte, 2006. ISBN 0385733801. \$17.95. 400 p.

Reviewer: Laura Wadley

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Adventure stories; Historical fiction; Mystery and detective stories;

Subject: Books and reading--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; Gutenberg, Johann, 1397?-1468--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Endymion Spring, printer's devil to Johann Gutenberg, discovers and opens a book from Eden, bound in the skin of a leaf dragon, and opaque to all but the purest hearts and hands. In modern-day England, Blake Winters, visiting Oxford University with his scholar mother, is "chosen" by Endymion Spring's long-lost book to find its missing pages and create *The Last Book*, repository of all knowledge. A collection of ne'er-do-wells want the book as well, and Blake and his little sister Duck must evade the evil-intentioned and their own cranky mother to solve the mystery of the ages.

Although Mr. Skelton's premise is promising and pleasantly bookish, his characters are sketchily drawn and mostly unappealing. The narrative in the 1400s is much livelier than the contemporary one, but the whole story is unhappily overwritten, slowed and sometimes derailed by an overabundance of clunky similes and descriptions of Blake's heart stopping, skipping beats, and hammering against his ribs until a cardiologist seems in order. The story itself is gappy and confusing, but compelling, so it may be that children will like it in spite of its flaws.

Fradin, Dennis Brindell. *With a Little Luck: Surprising Stories of Amazing Discoveries*. Dutton, 2006. ISBN 0525471960. \$17.99. 183 p.

Reviewer: Kate Reynolds

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Discoveries in science--Juvenile Literature; Books--Reviews;

Fradin highlights eleven amazing discoveries that have changed human understanding of the world around us. Each chapter is concise and provides interesting, pertinent information, without getting bogged down in technical aspects. The book is accessible to intermediate readers without being patronizing. The writing style is chatty, the type set spacious--both make for a comfortable read.

Fradin describes how luck has played a part in human discoveries but that preparation, persistence and insight play even more important roles. He has chosen discoveries in a wide range of fields (astronomy, physics, medicine, paleontology, anthropology, and so on) that will spark the interest of most readers. He gives fair treatment of findings that are still in controversy: for instance, the chapter on anesthesia describes how four different doctors came to claim its discovery but leaves the final judgment up to the reader.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Fradin concludes with a “note to future discoverers” to encourage children to be curious and watchful, that they too may become discoverers.

McCaffrey, Laura Williams. *Water Shaper*. Clarion, 2006. ISBN 0618614893. \$16.00. 192 p.

Reviewer: Kate Reynolds

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Significant Shortcomings

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Magic--Juvenile fiction; Selkies--Juvenile fiction; Water--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Deeply dissatisfied with life in her father's kingdom, fifteen year old Princess Margot runs away under the protection of Orrin--king and holy man of one of the western lands--in an effort to find a place where she belongs. However, all is not perfect with Orrin either. She finds herself drawn to the sea and the isles from whence came her mother--whose only legacy to her daughter is a strange and magical book that smells like the ocean.

McCaffrey does an excellent job of creating three distinct kingdoms and peoples. The characters all have strengths and weaknesses that combine to create surprisingly complex relationships. The nebulous demon spirits that threaten the lands seem to be the villains at first, but *Water Shaper* is more a coming-of-age story than anything else. However, the resolution of the book is weak and abrupt. Margot certainly grows and changes in the story, but there is no clear path as to where she will end up, leaving the reader uneasy and unsatisfied.

Winterson, Jeanette. *Tanglewreck*. Bloomsbury, 2006. ISBN 1582349193. \$16.95. 416 p.

Reviewer: Laura Wadley

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Science fiction; Fantasy; Adventure;

Subject: Time--Juvenile fiction; Time travel--Juvenile fiction; Clocks and watches--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Strange things are happening in London: a school bus full of children is sucked off the road and into the eye of the Pharaoh's obelisk; a woolly mammoth is seen on the banks of the Thames. Time is seriously askew.

Silver Rivers lives with her cold and cranky Aunt Rokabye at the ancestral heap of Tanglewreck when she suddenly becomes a "person of interest" to Abel Blackwater, a frightening, ageless clockmaker, and Regalia Mason, also ageless and very scary--or maybe not. Silver is believed to know the whereabouts of the Timekeeper, a clock whose owner controls Time. She doesn't know where it is, but her enemies know that she will find it in spite of herself. Extraordinary adventures follow along the length and breadth of the time-space continuum, if it has recognizable dimension, which mostly it doesn't. Will Silver find the Timekeeper and save her friend Gabriel from the Black Hole? and the schoolchildren from the Deportation Station? and herself from even greater perils? Time will tell (ha ha).

Winterson, much-honored author of adult books, has turned her attention with marvelous effect to a time travel adventure for children, filled with science, religion, magic and a remarkable young girl around which events swirl. Plot-driven and character-driven, *Tanglewreck* should prove to be a book of lasting interest to both young people and adults.

Kladstrup, Kristin. *The Book of Story Beginnings*. Candlewick Press, 2006. ISBN 0763626090. \$15.99. 360 p.

Reviewer: Sarah Wanlass

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Adventure stories; Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Storytelling--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; Space and time--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Fourteen-year-old Oscar Martin has no intention of changing his destiny when he begins to write in *The Book of Story Beginnings*. But that's precisely what happens: the sea and the little rowboat of his imagination become reality and he is lost in a magical adventure.

Back at The Brick, the Martins' home, Oscar's disappearance remains a mystery for nearly a century. Then Oscar's great-niece, Lucy Martin, and her family move into the old Martin homestead. Lucy is intrigued by Oscar's puzzling departure. Led by clues left by Oscar's sister, Lucy investigates the matter as best she can. She comes across the enchanted *Book of Story Beginnings*, not realizing its power, and adds her own beginning to the collection. Oscar reappears while Lucy's father, chemist turned magician, meets mishap. Lucy and Oscar join forces in a journey to save her father. Family history, magic, and adventure continue to follow them as they search for a happy ending and learn that endings are not stopping points, but rather beginnings in their own right.

This fantastic story of travel and adventure takes many twists and turns, resulting in a gripping tale. Readers will be glued to its pages with *Harry Potter*-like intensity. Great for silent reading or for sharing aloud, this is a must have for home and classroom libraries alike.

Thimmesh, Catherine. *Team Moon: How 400,000 People Landed Apollo 11 on the Moon*. Houghton Mifflin, 2006. ISBN 0618507574. \$19.95. 80 p.

Reviewer: Kate Reynolds

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational Books;

Subject: Apollo 11 (Spacecraft)--Juvenile literature; Space flight to the moon--Juvenile literature; Project Apollo (U.S.)--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Thimmesh has put together an unusual, but enjoyable, historical look at the Apollo 11 mission. She focuses, not on the astronauts, but on the engineers and technicians who worked for years behind the scenes to bring about the first moon landing on July 20, 1969. From the three hundred people at Westinghouse Electric who designed the video camera taken on the craft, to the more than five hundred working for ILC Dover who created the space suits, she explains the dedication and hard work it took to overcome challenges that could have made the Apollo 11 a very different mission than the one we remember.

Thimmesh's chatty narrative is engrossing and will quickly absorb the reader, invoking laughter, surprise, pride, and awe at the grand accomplishment that the moon landing really was. Apt quotes from the people involved as well as period photographs enhance the informal prose. However, the text is printed white on black, which can be difficult to read after a time. An excellent and unique perspective on a momentous occasion, *Team Moon* is a testament to the ingenuity and determination of thousands of people who made the seemingly impossible happen.

Schmemmann, Serge. *When the Wall Came Down: The Berlin Wall and the Fall of Soviet Communism*. Houghton Mifflin, 2006. ISBN 0753459949. \$15.95. 128 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Berlin Wall, Berlin, Germany, 1961-1989--History--Juvenile literature; Communism--Europe, Eastern--History--20th century--Juvenile literature; Germany--History--Unification, 1990--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

This book is not only a complete overview of the Berlin Wall, its purpose, history and demise, but it is also an eye-witness account of the division of a nation. Schmemmann, as a foreign correspondent in Berlin, witnessed the division of the country--and the world. He was present at the Berlin Wall's momentous destruction and covered the re-unification of Germany. The communist politics of other countries, such as the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, are also discussed. At the end of the book, an appendix of articles from the period of the wall's construction, existence, and elimination are presented to help readers more fully understand the time period and events associated with the Berlin Wall and the concept of the Iron Curtain. A timeline, source notes, and further reading bibliographies are also provided. Color photographs and diagrams complete the text's snapshot of the era.

Readers will find this a fascinating look at a pivotal piece of recent history that is not often focused on in such detail.

Cabot, Meg. *Avalon High*. HarperCollins, 2006. ISBN 0060755873. \$17.89. 288 p.

Reviewer: Sarah Wanlass

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Folklore;

Subject: Arthur, King--Juvenile fiction; High schools--Juvenile fiction; Reincarnation--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

When her professor parents decide to move the family to Annapolis, Maryland for a yearlong sabbatical, Elaine "Ellie" Harrison is less than thrilled. The beginning of her junior year of high school does not seem the ideal time to be a thousand miles from her Minnesota home, just to be uprooted again at the end of the year. Her one solace is the backyard pool at her new home, where she spends many hours floating on a raft. Ellie's parents spend their time writing their books: her father's subject is an ancient sword, while her mother's is Elaine of Astolat, the Lady of Shalott from Tennyson's poem and Ellie's namesake.

Avalon High, her new high school, appears fairly normal. At the head of the in-crowd are Will, senior class president and quarterback, Jennifer, his popular cheerleader girlfriend, and Lance, his best friend and a major jock. Other students fall into various groups and cliques as they do in any average high school, the teachers and classes are typical. But all is not as it seems. Ellie soon finds herself entwined in a reenactment of the famous Camelot saga in which her new friends are the players.

Told from Ellie's point of view, Cabot's *Avalon High* is a terrific blend of modern American life and the legend of King Arthur that will quickly engage teen readers.

November, Sharyn (editor). *Firebirds Rising*. Firebird, 2006. ISBN 0142405493. \$19.99. 544 p.

Reviewer: Kate Reynolds

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fantasy fiction; Science fiction; Short stories;

Subject: Short stories--Juvenile fiction; Anthologies--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Firebirds Rising is a well-balanced, delightful anthology of science fiction and fantasy short stories. Edited by November, it brings together several well-known authors (de Lint, Jones), and at least one new comer (Klages). Shinn and Goodman both write in worlds they have previously published novels about, while Pierce steps out of her fantasy worlds and into New York City. Some of the stories will leave readers wanting more ("Little (Grrl) Lost" and "Cousins"). Others are satisfying and sweet ("Unwrapping" and "The House on the Planet"). Readers should be aware that there is some profanity in this collection. The quality of the stories varies, and while none are bad, there are a few in particular that stand out as great. "In the House of Seven Librarians" is any book lover's dream story, and "Hives" is a chilling sci-fi story, all the more so because it doesn't seem too far-fetched. There is a story in this anthology for everyone.

Freymann-Weyr, Garret. *Stay with Me*. Houghton Mifflin, 2006. ISBN 0618605711. \$16.00. 320 p.

Reviewer: Sarah Wanlass

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Shortcomings

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Sisters--Juvenile fiction; Suicide--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Leila Abranel, the central character in *Stay with Me*, is a sixteen-year-old girl trying to sort out her feelings about life, love, and family. Her beloved half-sister Rebecca commits suicide, and Leila yearns to discover why she took her own life. Leila's parents leave the country to spend a year working at a hospital in Poland as a way to avoid grief. Leila is left with her other half-sister, Clare, a successful business woman with a difficult love life.

Leila's story is a series of episodes and experiences told from her present tense point of view. She reflects on her family: her sister's eating disorders and emotional problems, her workaholic parents, the "great loves" she has seen and heard about. She explores her feelings regarding her former boyfriend Ben and her growing interest in her new friend Eamon, who, though much older than herself, seems to understand her and returns her interest. All the while Leila experiences the struggles of work and school, where dyslexia hinders her achievement.

Though it is admirable that Freymann-Weyr is not afraid to tackle difficult subjects, at times, the story seems contrived. Blending the issues of suicide, forbidden love, family problems, eating disorders, emotional disorders, and learning disabilities, all at once, is a bit overambitious.

Calhoun, Dia. *Avielle of Rhia*. Marshall Cavendish, 2006. ISBN 0761453202. \$16.99. 398 p.

Reviewer: Kate Reynolds

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Prejudices--Juvenile fiction; Princesses--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction;

Books--Reviews;

Avielle is a princess, but because she resembles her Dredonian great-great grandmother who placed a curse on the kingdom of Rhia, she is shunned and hated, even by members of her own family. Her only consolation to herself is that she has no magic; therefore, she cannot become evil like her ancestor. However, she is terrified when she discovers that in fact she does have magic--magic that evidences itself in her weaving abilities. When the leading cult in Dredonia attacks and slaughters the royal family, only Avielle survives. She goes into hiding as an apprentice weaver and learns that not everyone hates her. As she comes to care about those around her and finds the relationships reciprocated, she becomes stronger. But her newfound strength and determination are put to the test when she is faced with the decision to come forward to claim the crown and defend her kingdom from the Black Cloaks.

Avielle is a wonderfully complex and believable character. Unfortunately, very few other characters are as well developed: they seem to be stereotypes and caricatures rather than real people. The princess' transformation from a scared, reclusive girl to a courageous, determined young woman is well thought out and well paced. The story is an engrossing read; readers will find themselves urging Avielle along her path of self-discovery and self-acceptance. However, it is evident that Calhoun is also using this book to convey political messages about racism, terrorism and religious fanaticism. The messages may be timely and pertinent, but they are paraded too obviously in front of the reader's face.