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Brown, Ruth. *The Old Tree*. Illustrated by Ruth Brown. Candlewick Press, 2007. ISBN 9780763634612. \$16.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

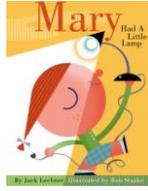
Genre: Toy and movable books;

Subject: Forest animals--Juvenile fiction; Toy and movable books--Specimens--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

The Pigeon Post is making its rounds. Pigeon is eager to give everyone their mail and to ask “Why do you have a big black X on your tree?” Each animal who is housed in the old tree is busy with life’s activities—Mrs. Rabbit is busy with a new baby; Mr. Woodpecker is making a new addition; Mr. Owl has a headache; Maggie Magpie is worried that the other animals think she is a thief; Mr. Badger is grumbling about his neighbor; Mr. Crow is watching out for everyone, from his vantage point at the top of the old tree. All the animals agree with one thing: they are unhappy with the rambunctious noisy pair of parakeets who are their new neighbors. Mr. Crow discovers, through looking through his telescope, that the X means that the woodsmen are planning on cutting down their tree. Instead of moving out and accepting their fate, the animals cooperate and come to a solution. They will still have a home in the old tree.

Readers, depending on their experience with woodland forest thinning, may or may not guess what the X means. They will also be listening and watching for the way the animals come up with their unique solution. The huge pop-up of the old tree on the last page will also capture readers’ attention. A great choice for group read-aloud. *The Old Tree* could also be adapted to a puppet show. The text carries the suspense of the solution up to the last.

Volume 28, no. 6 (July/August 2008)



Lechner, Jack. *Mary Had a Little Lamp*. Illustrated by Bob Staake. Bloomsbury U.S.A., 2008. ISBN 9781599901695. \$15.99. 29 p.

Reviewer: Lauren Bangerter

Reading Level: Preschool; Primary;

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Humorous Poetry;

Subject: Lamps—Juvenile fiction; Security (Psychology)—Juvenile fiction; Stories in Rhyme—Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

In this humorous spin on the traditional nursery rhyme, Lechner follows little Mary to school, the zoo, and various other places while she drags her beloved gooseneck lamp behind her. Eventually, when she finds a different friend at summer camp, Mary realizes she doesn't need her lamp with her all the time, but she still keeps a special place for it on her shelf.

Mary Had a Little Lamp is easy to read out loud to children and will keep them laughing and wondering what will happen next. The rhyme is perfectly paired with Staake's illustrations. Bright colors and geometric shapes make the pictures imaginative and appealing, while still being crisp and clean and bringing the story to life. A great addition to any children's library.

Volume 28, no. 6 (July/August 2008)

Llewellyn, Claire. *Ask Dr. K. Fisher about Creepy-Crawlies*. Illustrated by Sheppard, Kate. Kingfisher, 2008. ISBN 9780753461808. \$10.95. 32 p.

Reviewer: Larysa Bordner

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books; Picture books;

Subject: Entomology--Juvenile literature; Insects--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Dr. K. Fisher is a bird that knows all about insects and helps them learn more about their unique bodies in the book *Ask Dr. K. Fisher about Creepy-Crawlies*. He explains that insects' bodies work the way they do to serve individual purposes, and that makes each of them interesting and special.

This book is set up in a question and answer format; there are letters written from different insects asking specific questions about themselves, accompanied with the response from Dr. K. Fisher. Between the letters, there are also fact pages about body types, wings, colonies, and camouflaging. The book includes fun, labeled illustrations which correlate perfectly with the text. This is an entertaining guide for children to learn more about insects in an original way.

Volume 28, no. 6 (July/August 2008)

Forester, Victoria. *The Girl Who Could Fly*. Feiwel and Friends, 2008. ISBN 9780312374624.
\$16.95. 336 p.

Reviewer: Kate Reynolds

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Science fiction;

Subject: Ability--Juvenile fiction; Individuality--Juvenile fiction; Laboratories--Juvenile fiction;
Books--Reviews;

As an infant, Piper McCloud could float, and at the age of nine she taught herself how to fly. Her very practical parents kept her on the farm because people being able to fly "ain't the way of things." But when Piper demonstrates her ability in front of a large crowd the government shows up to take her to a school full of other extraordinary children. At the school, though, Piper eventually finds out that the head, Dr. Letitia Hellion, is far from encouraging her students' abilities and has only one goal in mind: to force the children into normal, unremarkable lives.

Forester's first novel, despite superhero powers, is pure vanilla. The plot and characters will soon be forgotten after reading and few readers will even care about the hints of questions to be answered in a sequel. However, as a fairly innocuous read, it may be worth a few hours' diversion for pre-teens with nothing else to do.

Volume, 28 no. 6 (July/August 2008)

Rubin, Susan Goldman. *Delicious: The Life & Art of Wayne Thiebaud*. Chronicle Books, 2007. ISBN 9780811851688. \$15.95. 102 p.

Reviewer: Lauren Bangerter

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Painters--United States--Biography--Juvenile literature; Thiebaud, Wayne--Juvenile literature; Desserts in art--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

This biography of painter Wayne Thiebaud engages the reader and gives a captivating overview of the painter's life. Rubin chronicles Theibaud's life; from his birth and childhood in the American West, to his first art exhibit in New York, to his retired-tennis-playing life in California. Rubin explains the different themes and phases of Thiebuad's paintings. Most of Theibaud's art reflects his childlike love for desserts and candies. Though he does experiment with landscapes and cityscapes, Theibaud always comes back to his original "delicious" subject. The different colors of the pages and text are bright, fun and refreshing, and they mirror the colors used in Thiebaud's paintings, which are interspersed throughout with insightful commentaries. The overall presentation of the book maintains the happy and energetic spirit of the text. Keeping a good balance between fact-giving and story-telling, Rubin presents the life of this All-American painter and cultural pop icon for young readers to enjoy.

Volume 28, no. 6 (July/August 2008)

Spinelli, Jerry. *Smiles to Go*. HarperCollins, 2008. ISBN 9780060281335. \$16.99. 248 p.

Reviewer: Larysa Bordner

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction; Humorous Stories;

Subject: Self-actualization (Psychology)-- Juvenile fiction; Brothers and sisters--Juvenile fiction;

Friendship--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Will Tupence is a very serious, cautious, and patient ninth grader, who thinks that he has the whole world figured out. When scientists discover that protons can die, Will begins to doubt what he knows about himself and the world around him. If protons decay, what else is possible? Along with his best friends, Mi-Su and BT, Will rides out the many changes that come his way in school, in his love life, and in his family. Through it all, he learns that even though he does not know everything, life has an unexpected way of working out.

Spinelli humorously portrays what it is like to be a freshman in high school. He allows the reader to understand Will and feel connected to each of the characters. The content is clean and engaging, so any reader from preteen to adult will enjoy following Will as he discovers what is really important in life.

Volume 28, no. 6 (July/August 2008)

Hahn, Daniel and Leonie Flynn. *The Ultimate Teen Book Guide*. Walker, 2008. ISBN 9780802797308. \$26.95. 431 p.

Reviewer: Kate Reynolds

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Young adult literature--Book reviews--Juvenile literature; Teenagers--Books and reading--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

This incredibly handy and concise guide includes reviews and recommendations for what to read next for over 700 titles. The titles included cover a wide variety of genres—both fiction and non-fiction—and is not limited to the most recent popular titles: *Anna Karenina* and *Great Expectations* are included right along with *Artemis Fowl* and *Twilight*. Each title has a blurb from an author, teacher, librarian or reader; an indication of the appropriate age group for the title; and a small "Next?" section which not only suggests other titles readers might enjoy but also indicates how it is similar to the title in question.

Interspersed throughout the book are longer discussions of genres and the results of various polls (character you would most like to be, books you would like made into films, and books that scared you most, to name a few). It is an invaluable source for teachers, parents and librarians helping teenagers. More willing and ambitious readers will pick this one up themselves to browse through, so make sure it is not hidden away among the reference books.

Volume 28, no. 6 (July/August 2008)

Shields, Charles J. *I am Scout*. Henry Holt and Company, 2008. ISBN 9780805083347. \$18.95.
246 p.

Reviewer: Lauren Bangerter

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational books; Biography;

Subject: Lee, Harper--Juvenile literature; Authors, American--20th Century--Biography--
Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Beginning in the small town of Monroeville, Shields reconstructs and narrates the quiet life of Pulitzer Prize winning author Harper Lee. Commenting on experiences Lee had in her home town, in college, and then as an author in New York, Shields expounds Lee's personality and motivation to write, highlighting similarities between Lee's life and her novel. Shields has done a superb job of combining the little information Lee has given about herself with interviews by Lee's friends and associates to create an intriguing and informative read. Shields speaks with a warm, small-town conversational tone characteristic of the South and of Lee's masterpiece *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Volume 28, no. 6 (July/August 2008)

McKinley, Robin. *Dragonhaven*. Putnam's, 2008. ISBN 9780399246753. \$17.99. 342 p.

Reviewer: Lauren Bangerter

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Science fiction;

Subject: Dragons--Juvenile fiction; Human-animal communications--Juvenile fiction; Animals, mythical--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Dragonhaven follows the experience of Jake Mendoza when he finds a baby dragon deep inside the Smokehill National Park—a park founded and built for the study and preservation of dragons. Dragons in general are a controversial subject and Smokehill has been suffering from little funding and bad publicity after Jake's mom, a renowned dragon scientist, disappeared and turned up dead several months later. The fact that Jake has now become surrogate mother to a baby dragon only adds to these pressures as United States legislature makes aiding dragons illegal. Jake and his dragonlet Lois learn and grow together as they cope with the loss of their mothers, find strength in each other and friends who sacrifice much to help them, and bridge the gap between human and dragon communication.

The story is told by Jake and takes the form of a stream-of-conscious-like memoir. *Dragonhaven* is suggested for an older audience in order to understand this rambling-like tone and serious situations, as well as some language. The story is compelling and Jake's candid voice keeps the reader turning pages, however, there are no battle scenes and intense action like other McKinley novels about dragons; Jake spends much of the novel sleeping, and even though there is some excitement and flying dragons, the story focuses more on the psychological and emotional side of those situations.

Volume 28, no. 6 (July/August 2008)

Palmer, Robin. *Cindy Ella*. Penguin Group, 2008. ISBN 9780142403921. \$7.99. 264 p.

Reviewer: Larysa Bordner

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Proms--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; Individuality--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Cindy Ella Gold is not like the other people who attend her high school. She may be rich and pretty, but she does not care about designer clothes, fancy cars, or having the perfect look. But the one thing that separates her from her peers the most is her disdain for prom. She believes the whole thing should be done away with because it is a superficial tradition, and she lets everyone know this when she writes a letter to the school paper. Her letter brings up a great deal of controversy, and in some unexpected ways, it goes to show Cindy that things are not always what they seem, and modern day fairy tales really do exist.

Palmer explores some of society's shallow traditions through the eyes of one teenage girl with a quirky sense of humor. She talks about issues dealing with weight, popularity, love, sexual orientation, and other aspects of being a teenager in today's society. *Cindy Ella* is dramatic, mainly because it is told from the perspective of a teenage girl, but it is entertaining and leaves the reader with warm fuzzies knowing that although things do not always end as planned, life and this story have an unexpected way of ending right.

Volume 28, no. 6 (July/August 2008)

Vaught, Susan. *Big Fat Manifesto*. Bloomsbury U.S.A., 2008. ISBN 9781599902067. \$16.95.
308 p.

Reviewer: Larysa Bordner

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction; Humorous Stories;

Subject: High schools--Juvenile fiction; Overweight persons--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Big Fat Manifesto is the life and story of Jamie Carcaterra, a senior in high school whose troubles with being overweight are just the beginning of what she is dealing with. She has the typical worries of a senior, such as passing the ACT and applying to college, but she is also worrying about her boyfriend undergoing gastric bypass surgery and her qualifying for a much needed scholarship. Jamie pours her thoughts and attitude about all of these issues into Fat Girl, her column in the school newspaper, as she strives to understand what her boyfriend is experiencing and what is happening with her college future, while facing what she truly feels about herself.

This book is written with a sarcastic attitude to fit the larger-than-life personalities of Jamie and her friends. The quick wit is both entertaining and exhausting, as Jamie uses it against everyone around her. The Fat Girl column is intermixed with the story to give another perspective of what is taking place. Overall, the story gives an interesting insight into what Jamie experiences as an overweight teenager. However, the blunt treatment of certain adult subjects and some crude language make this book inappropriate for younger audiences or others who may find this offensive.

Volume 28, no. 6 (July/August 2008)

Child, Lauren. *Clarice Bean: Don't Look Now*. Candlewick Press, 2007. ISBN 9780763635367. \$15.99. 254 p.

Reviewer: Lauren Bangerter

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fiction;

Subject: Bean, Clarice (Fictitious character)--Juvenile fiction; Children's stories; Books--Reviews;

Clarice Bean is an adventurous and fun-loving girl, but she has a lot of worries—ranging from “largish spiders” to “strange things happening to the environment.” To cope with these worries, Clarice writes them down in her “Worst Worries Notebook,” and consults her “Ruby Redfort Survival Handbook” for any suggestions, or discusses them with her best friend Betty Moody. When Betty moves away, one of Clarice’s worst worries is realized. Problems only increase as Clarice’s home goes through the renovation process and a new girl, Clem Hansson, moves in. Clarice stays up at nights thinking and worrying while she tries to work through troubles at home and the processes of making new friends and keeping old ones. Finally, when Clarice becomes the only one who can save Clem from the school bully, she is able to put her worries in perspective and not lose sleep over them.

Child’s voice is profound, yet child-like. She handles these common, and sometimes humorous, worries with tact and consideration. The story is told in such a delightful and innocent manner that the text is engaging and entertaining. Readers learn that sometimes change is inevitable, but when faced with hard challenges, it is always best to have friends.

Volume 28, no. 6 (July/August 2008)

Nye, Naomi Shihab. *Honeybee: Poems & Short Prose*. Greenwillow Books, 2008. ISBN 9780060853914. \$16.99. 176 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Contemporary realistic poetry; Poetry;

Subject: Poetry--Juvenile literature; Children's poetry--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

In a linguistics course in college, author Nye chose to analyze the language of bees. This was before the widespread beehive failures and mysterious deaths of honeybees worldwide, and possibly before migratory beehive trucking to keep pollination and food yields high. No one quite knows the reason for the depleting honey bee population and while Nye doesn't provide the answers, she explores the interconnected world of humanity and bees, destruction and creation, peace and war.

In a combination of prose and poetry uncommon to juvenile literature, Nye weaves imagery and emotion together in *Honeybee*. The bee theme shows itself again and again in various pieces, sometimes only in one word and other times nearly the whole passage discusses bees. For all the sunny yellow of the cover, Nye discusses many painful topics—she returns to the wars in the Middle East frequently, as she often does in her work. Her lyricism is intoxicating and her imagery powerful—readers will find analyzing her poems time-consuming because of their density, but they are easy to read. This would be a welcome addition to any school library and would make a fascinating lesson aid, but it is recommended for young adult readers (one prose passage refers to a bakery in which erotic cakes are sometimes made).

Volume 28, no. 6 (July/August 2008)

Godbersen, Anna. *Rumors: A Luxe Novel*. HarperCollins, 2008. ISBN 9780061345692. \$17.99. 423 p.

Reviewer: Larysa Bordner

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Juvenile Fiction; Historical fiction;

Subject: Social classes--Juvenile fiction; Secrets--Juvenile fiction; Love--Juvenile fiction;

Books--Reviews;

The story of Elizabeth Holland continues in *Rumors*, the sequel to *The Luxe*. The stories of her sister Diana, her friend Penelope Hayes, and her former maid Lina (Carolina Broud) are also included, as their plots overlap and give greater insight into each other. The “death” of Elizabeth Holland sets many things into motion: Diana and Henry pursue their secret relationship, Penelope fights for Henry’s affections with every trick she knows, Lina climbs the social ladder of New York, and Elizabeth runs away to California to escape the path that has been chosen for her. Each girl has her secrets that she desperately tries to conceal from the others. When these secrets are revealed, everything will and does change for the girls who lives are so closely entwined.

Godbersen continues her writing style from *The Luxe* in *Rumors* by cleverly interweaving the stories within each other. Each story has is somewhat depressing as every person seems to continually find stumbling blocks placed in their way as they try to succeed in society. Even though this may be realistic to the way life can sometimes be, the story has a heartbreaking feel which worsens to the very last page. The book also contains many grown-up situations, including mortality, and is therefore intended to be read by older audiences. *Rumors* will leave readers aching for the characters and craving to know what will happen to them next.

Volume 28, no. 6 (Jul/Aug 2008)

Godbersen, Anna. *The Luxe*. HarperCollins, 2007. ISBN 9870061345331. \$17.99. 433 p.

Reviewer: Larysa Bordner

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Juvenile Fiction; Historical Fiction;

Subject: Love--Juvenile fiction; Social classes--Juvenile fiction; Conduct of life--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Elizabeth Holland is the envy of all around her—the beautiful girl with the perfect life, or so it seems. But things are not always what they seem. New York society is filled with the joyous celebration of parties and courting, and it appears to be at its best when Elizabeth Holland becomes engaged to Henry Schoonmaker, one of the most eligible bachelors around. However, away from the eyes of the general public there are desires and feelings that alter the landscape. The book begins with Elizabeth's funeral and then flashes back to a few weeks earlier to view what events in the lives of Elizabeth and her close associates may have brought this to pass.

The Luxe is a fast-paced novel with many twists in its plot. The story is told from a variety of views including Elizabeth, her sister Diana, her friend Penelope, and the servant girl Lina, which allows the readers to see every angle of what is taking place. Godbersen, does an excellent job of intertwining the stories without confusing the reader. Within the plot, there are many seductive situations and, although there is not a great deal of detail included, it may make the content of the book inappropriate or uncomfortable for younger audiences. But overall, *The Luxe* is a highly entertaining young adult novel that will keep readers guessing up to the last page as they follow the ever-changing lives of the characters.

Volume 28, no. 6 (Jul/Aug 2008)

Clercq Zubli, Rita la Fontaine de. *Disguised: A Wartime Memoir*. Candlewick Press, 2007. ISBN 9780763633295. \$17.99. 366 p.

Reviewer: Larysa Bordner

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Autobiography; Biography; Informational Book;

Subject: Clercq Zubli, Rita la Fontaine de, 1929---Juvenile literature; World War, 1939--1945--Children--Indonesia--Biography--Juvenile literature; Teenage girls--Indonesia--Biography--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Rick's life in World War II is unique compared to many of his other fellow prisoners. He is praised for his language abilities and hard work, so he spends most of his time in an office helping the commandant of the camp keep things operating smoothly. All of the information that comes in and out the camp goes through Rick. This is not only unusual because of Rick's young age, but also because of his secret—Rick is a girl. At the outbreak of the war, Rita's family decided that the best way to protect her from what teenage girls usually suffer at the hands of soldiers was to have her pretend to be a boy, so Rita became Rick. Throughout the war, Rita/Rick must carry out her many duties, protect her family, and deal with devastating trials while protecting her identity.

Disguised is the autobiography of Clercq Zubli; she tells the story of what she went through during World War II, while simultaneously giving a less detailed biography of her family. The author does a tasteful job of describing her experiences in a way that allows the reader to understand what she went through without being overwhelmed with sickening details. She handles complicated adult situations in a delicate way, but because of the mature content, *Disguised* is more appropriate for young adults or older audiences.

Volume 28, no. 6 (July/August 2008)

Na, An. *The Fold*. The Penguin Group, 2008. ISBN 9780399242762. \$16.99. 280 p.

Reviewer: Larysa Bordner

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction;

Subject: Beauty, personal--Juvenile fiction; Self confidence--Juvenile fiction; Korean Americans--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

John Ford Kang is the guy of Joyce Park's dreams, and all she wants is a chance to stare into his beautiful eyes without feeling embarrassed. But there is one problem: John Ford Kang has no idea who Joyce is. This harsh realization leaves Joyce feeling heartbroken and desperate to find a way to stand out in the crowd. Over the summer, Joyce's aunt gives her the opportunity to get expensive plastic surgery. The offer both thrills and terrifies Joyce as she weighs her options of whether or not the pain and sacrifice are worth the chance to permanently change the way she looks—and maybe the chance for her dream guy to finally notice her.

The Fold addresses the tender issues of appearance and how important it is for people, especially teenagers, to feel like they are attractive and accepted. Na approaches the discussion of plastic surgery and beauty from a realistic angle; showing the pros and cons of the choices Joyce must make. Interwoven with the basic plot of discovering beauty, are subplots showing how Joyce deals with family, friends, and life decisions. *The Fold* has some mild swearing and mature situations, but it can be recommended to anyone who has ever felt the need to change something in order to feel accepted by their peers.

Volume 28 no. 6 (July/August 2008)



Thomas, Garen. *Yes We Can: A Biography of Barack Obama*. Feiwel and Friends, 2008. ISBN 9780312537098. \$6.99. 206 p.

Reviewer: Lauren Bangerter

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Informational; Biography;

Subject: Obama, Barack—Juvenile literature; African American legislators—Biography—Juvenile literature; United States Congress Senate—Biography—Juvenile literature; Books—Reviews;

Yes We Can presents the life story of Illinois Senator Barack Obama from his birth in Hawaii and childhood in Indonesia, to his law school days at Harvard and current running in the 2008 presidential election.

While Thomas does a great job of explaining the different political terms, issues, and events so younger readers can understand them, *Yes We Can* is not an overview of presidential candidates or different political positions, nor does it expound on Obama's political platform. Rather, it offers a glimpse into Obama's life and focuses on Obama's search for identity in the midst of family situations and different racial and political issues. Obama's heritage—with roots in both America and Kenya—and the role his extended and immediate family played in his life are frequently discussed.

Tactfully explaining why Obama made certain life decisions, Thomas keeps the narrative positive, light-hearted, and conversational. With simple sentence structures and succinct descriptions, *Yes We Can* is an informative, quick read that acts as a good springboard book into learning more about this 2008 presidential candidate.

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