



2009

Full Issue

Children's Book Review

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr>

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Review, Children's Book (2009) "Full Issue," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 30 : Iss. 3 , Article 24.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol30/iss3/24>

This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Children's Book and Media Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.



Delacre, Lulu. *Arrorró, Mi Niño: Latino Lullabies and Gentle Games*. Illustrated by Delacre, Lulu. Lee & Low, 2004. ISBN 9781600604416. \$16.95. 32 p.

Reviewer: Alison Canar

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool

Rating: Outstanding

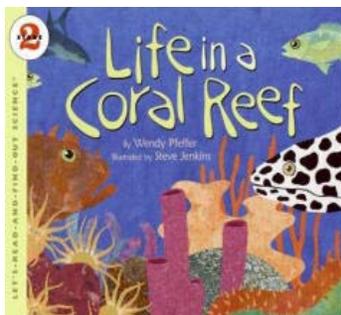
Genre: Picture books; Poetry;

Subject: Nursery rhymes, Spanish American; Lullabies, Spanish--Texts; Children's songs--Latin America--Texts; Books--Reviews;

Music can foster a special bond between mother and child. In this charming book, Delacre provides resources for caregivers to share traditional Spanish songs and musical games with their children. Oil wash illustrations accompany the lyrics to each of the fifteen songs, with the text presented in both the original Spanish and English translations. Additionally, the end of the book contains sheet music for the melodies.

This collection is ideal for immigrant or multi-cultural families who want to share a Latin American heritage with their little ones while raising them in the United States. Delacre gathered the tunes from fourteen Spanish-speaking countries, although the precise origins for each song are not specified. Her illustrations earned the book a Pura Belpré Honor Award in 2006.

Volume 30, no.3 (January/February 2010)



Pfeffer, Wendy. *Life in a Coral Reef*. Illustrated by Steve Jenkins. HarperCollins, 2009. ISBN 9780064452229. \$5.99. 40 p.

Reviewer: Meriam Bates

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool, Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

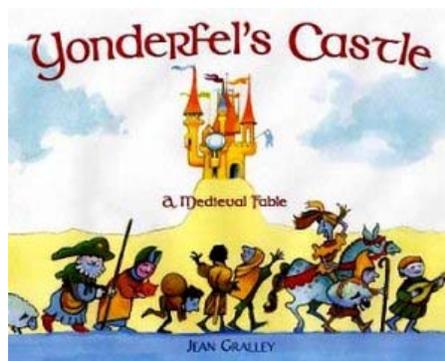
Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Coral reef animals--Juvenile literature; Coral reef ecology--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Coral reefs are built by tiny sea animals called coral polyps, individually no bigger than a grain of rice. Hard coral polyp colonies are the foundation, and soft coral polyp colonies provide the decoration. Coral reefs are home to more sea creatures—such as sea cucumbers, gobies, groupers, moray eels, anemones, ruffle-headed scorpion fish, decorator crabs, and sharks—than any other ocean habitat. Some of these animals benefit each other, while others are in a predator-prey relationship. Five hundred million people rely on coral reefs for food and jobs, but scientists project that seventy percent of the world's coral reefs will be destroyed by the year 2050 if the present rate of destruction continues.

This “Let's-Read-And-Find-Out Science” book is filled with enough accurate scientific information to satisfy even the most curious youngsters. The language is clear and easy to understand, making it easier to grasp the unfamiliar scientific terms. The paper cut-out illustrations by Steve Jenkins are equally engaging, bringing the coral reef alive with bright colors and interesting textures. Those who have enjoyed Jenkins' other works such as *Move!*, *How Many Ways Can You Catch a Fly?*, and the Caldecott Honor book, *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?*, will also appreciate *Life in a Coral Reef*.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Gralley, Jean. *Yonderfel's Castle*. Illustrated by Jean Gralley. Henry Holt, 2009. ISBN 9780805063295. \$16.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

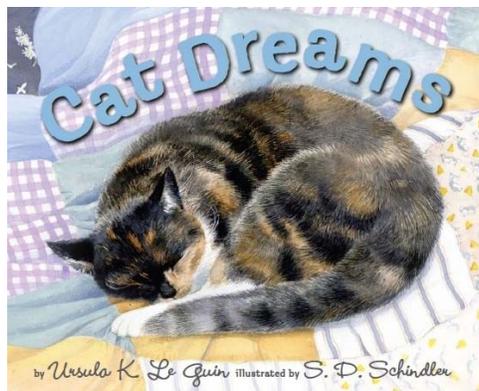
Genre: Picture books; Fables; Fairy tales;

Subject: Fairy tales; Kings, queens, rulers, etc.--Juvenile fiction; Castles--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

King Yonderfel is a generous and selfless ruler. All day long he stands at his gate inviting anyone and everyone to come live off of his hospitality. One day the ogre that owns the mountain where Yonderfel's castle stands comes to demand more rent. King Yonderfel will not charge his people to stay, so he can only pay half of what the ogre asks. The ogre then starts up his tractor and tears away half the mountain. This makes the castle tip to the side, and all the people leave, ridiculing King Yonderfel and his tipsy castle. Travelers will no longer come to his castle, so the king begins knitting guest towels to pass the time. Years pass and a great storm comes to the valley. The people remember who never turns anyone away and paddle for Yonderfel's castle. Everyone is warm and dry because of all the guest towels. Then come the ogre's shouts for help. When the ogre is pulled inside, the castle topples off the divided mountain and falls into the waters, but towel sails carry the people to a better mountaintop. Even after the good king dies, his people are heard at the gates welcoming all who pass by.

This charming medieval fable shows the unflinching charity of a king. The illustrations are light and colorful, depicting humorous characters and scenery. Gralley has created a heartwarming story of a king who knows that no kindness is ever squandered.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Le Guin, Ursula K. *Cat Dreams*. Illustrated by S.D. Schindler. Scholastic, 2009. ISBN 9780545042161. \$16.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Laurien Clay

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction; Humorous stories; Picture books;

Subject: Stories in rhyme; Cats--Juvenile fiction; Dreams--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

After having a good bit of exercise, a cat decides to curl up on the couch for a refreshing nap. While asleep, it has dreams of a place not unlike a feline paradise—mice rain from the sky, dogs all run away, pools of cream and kibbles exist for the consuming, trees of catnip stand for the climbing, and to top it off, blue jays do a spot of serenading. However, this cat Elysium comes to a screeching halt as the cat falls from the catnip tree and out of its dream. It wakes up, realizing that naptime is incomplete without its human companion.

Le Guin's gift for words and Schindler's gift for depiction combine into an insightful delving into the feline brain. Schindler's illustrations transport both the reader and the adventurous cat into a magical dream world of pastel skies, vividly colored plants and animals, and a cat's wishful thinking. The warmth of affectionate love is felt throughout the book with Le Guin's cascading prose and Schindler's attention to detail and realism. An echo of her *Catwings* series, Le Guin creates a believable story that furthers a heartwarming message: the only true warmth is to be found in human companionship. Ursula K. Le Guin has been a finalist for The American Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize, and has won the National Book Award and the Margaret A. Edwards Award.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)

Surface, Mary Hall. *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. Anchorage Press, 1994. ISBN 0876023235. \$7 script; \$35/performance fee. 45 p.

Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Plays; Fantasy Plays; Occult Plays;

Subject: Children's plays; Magic--Drama; Drama--Reviews;

Theme: Asking questions is necessary to learning

Production Requirements: Light and sound effects. Can be minimalistic staging.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 1 hour

Characters: 6

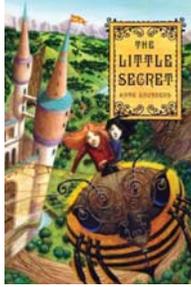
Cast: 6 actors, at least 2 male

Time Period: Middle ages

Klaus, a lazy young boy, is an apprentice to a sorcerer. He is made to clean up the workshop after each magical experiment and is not allowed to learn magic nor ask any questions. Klaus is lazy and his only desire for magic is help in doing his chores. The sorcerer's cat convinces Klaus that he should learn magic secretly so that he can stop the sorcerer who has turned to the evil side of magic and plans to destroy Klaus' village. With the cat's help, the apprentice secretly learns the magic spells in the sorcerer's magic books and is able to defeat the sorcerer in a time of distress. Klaus gains power over the repentant sorcerer and decides to use his magic for good to help the village.

This play offers an opportunity for extravagant staging with sound and visual effects but could also be produced with a scaled down, bare bones approach. This is made possible by the three actors cast as "magic" who help to perform the spells. The action in the script, along with the mystery behind the cat and sorcerer, will keep audiences involved and attentive. The dialogue reads true and flows easily. One drawback to the plot is the somewhat anti-climactic climax where the apprentice quickly and easily defeats the sorcerer who then quickly repents. This play would be suitable for 2nd grade through middle school and would also be a good touring option.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Saunders, Kate. *The Little Secret*. Illustrated by William Carman. Feiwel and Friends, 2009. ISBN 9780312369613. \$16.99. 231 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

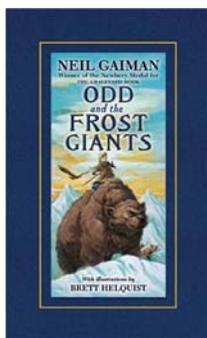
Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Friendship --Fiction; Kings, queens, rulers, etc. --Fiction; Elves --Fiction; Books--Reviews;

Jane does not know what to think of the new girl, Staffa, who has just joined her class. Yet Staffa instantly sees Jane as the best friend she has always wanted. As their relationship develops into a strong friendship, Jane becomes leery of Staffa's large, wealthy, and demanding mother, Lady Matilda. When school ends, Lady Matilda convinces Jane's parents to have Jane join her and Staffa's summer vacation. Once the vacation is underway, Jane sees that Lady Matilda and Staffa act strangely around a beautifully painted box they have with them. As they reach their destination, a lonely Scottish island, Jane, Staffa, and Lady Matilda are sucked into a miniature world inside the painted box. Inside this world, Lady Matilda is an oppressive elf-queen over the Eckers. Jane finds out that she was brought into the box world to marry the queen's son, Quarles, and stay there forever. However, Queen Matilda's children and subjects are tired of Matilda's rule and begin a revolution to dethrone her. The revolution succeeds, Quarles marries an Ecker, and he gives his people power to create a parliament. Jane is taken back to her world with the help of King Quarles. Once outside in her world, he asks Jane to destroy the painted box so no humans could enter that world again.

Saunders creates a unique fairy-tale kingdom where bugs are the means of transportation and food, and sugar is a valuable commodity. Jane is a strong central character that many readers can identify with.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Gaiman, Neil. *Odd and the Frost Giants*. Illustrated by Brett Helquist. HarperCollins, 2009. ISBN 9780061671738. \$14.99. 128 p.

Reviewer: Meriam Bates

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

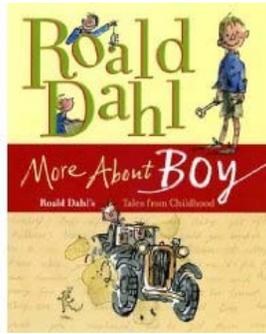
Genre: Adventure stories; Fantasy fiction; Fairy tales;

Subject: Mythology, Norse-- Juvenile fiction; Heroes--Juvenile fiction; Giants--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Ever since he was ten, Odd has been unlucky. His father was killed in a sea battle, Odd's leg was crushed by a falling tree, and his mother remarried into a stepfamily where Odd feels he does not belong. Two years after his father's death, Odd, who is sick of being trapped inside with his stepfamily for an unusually long winter, takes off over the ice and snow to his father's old woodcutting cabin. It is there that he meets a fox, eagle, and bear who turn out to be Norse Gods. Odd goes with them to Asgard and helps them defeat the Frost Giants using his wits and his irritating smile.

Told in Gaiman's straightforward fast-paced manner, the story follows traditional fairy-tales by keeping the action key and the character development and emotional involvement at a minimum. While the plot is loosely based around traditional Norse mythology, one does not need to be familiar with such tales to appreciate the story. There are however, some references that add humor and foreshadowing if one is familiar with the background mythology. Readers of Gaiman's body of work, including last year's Newbery winner, *The Graveyard Book*, will enjoy this fanciful story about family and adventure.

| Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Dahl, Roald. *More About Boy: Roald Dahl's Tales from Childhood*. Illustrated by Quentin Blake. Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2009. ISBN 9780374350550. \$24.99. 229 p.

Reviewer: Alison Canar

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

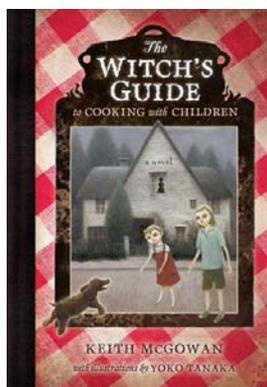
Genre: Informational books; Autobiographies;

Subject: Dahl, Roald--Childhood and youth--Juvenile literature; Authors, English--20th century--Biography--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Sometimes fact is even stranger than fiction. Many elements from Dahl's stories are scattered through his own childhood: creative candies and sweet shops, dead mice and practical jokes, and—of course—cruel headmasters. Dahl begins with an overview of his family life. His father died when he was only a boy, leaving his young mother to raise five children on her own with another on the way. Dahl's childhood was split between lonely terms at boarding school and blissful summers near the lake in his mother's native Norway. This book carries the reader through all of Dahl's adventures and misadventures until the time that he joins the Royal Air Force at the outset of World War II. Interested readers can find this story in a later book, *Going Solo*.

More About Boy contains the full text of the previously published *Boy*, but it is updated with photos, stories, and letters from the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre's archives. The additions do much to add realism to the story and help the reader get an up-close look at Dahl's life. However, the best part of this story is still Dahl's charming wit, which shines through each reflection. Dahl has a few serious moments, such as when he speaks about his admiration for his mother. He also writes about the trial of his faith when he learned that a cruel, callous headmaster from his youth had risen to become the Archbishop of Canterbury. Readers young and old can relate to the experiences of this beloved author.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



McGowan, Keith. *The Witch's Guide to Cooking with Children*. Illustrated by Yoko Tanaka. Henry Holt, 2009. ISBN 9780805086683. \$15.99. 177 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Adventure stories; Fairy tales;

Subject: Brothers and sisters--Juvenile fiction; Witches--Juvenile fiction; Inventors--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Sol and Connie Blink have just moved to Grand Creek. While checking out the neighborhood on their first day, they meet Fay Holaderry and her dog, J. Swift. Sol notices a strange bone in Swift's mouth. After doing some research, Sol realizes the bone is a human femur. Both Connie and Sol decide to investigate Holaderry, and they find out that she is a real witch who eats children. Later, one of Holaderry's helpers kidnaps Connie. Sol realizes his sister has been captured and comes to her rescue, using his heat detection invention to figure out where Holaderry will cook Connie. Once Sol finds Connie, he too gets captured. But, with the help of Swift, the children are able to escape and push Holaderry into a fire pit. Sol and Connie leave Grand Creek to stay with their aunt. Holaderry survives the fire pit but has gained terrible scars to remind her of her encounter with the Blink children.

McGowan's debut novel is a modern take on the Brothers Grimm story of Hansel and Gretel. Some character explanations are too wordy and could confuse readers, but the book is still a suspenseful page-turner. This could be a good resource for teachers when doing a unit about fairy tales.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Moss, Marissa. *The Pharaoh's Secret*. Illustrated by Marissa Moss. Amulet Books, 2009. ISBN 9780810983786. \$15.95. 308 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Adventure stories; Detective and mystery stories;

Subject: Hatshepsut, Queen of Egypt --Juvenile fiction.; Egypt --History --Eighteenth dynasty, ca. 1570-1320 B.C. --Juvenile fiction.; Mystery and detective stories--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Talibah, her father, and her little brother, Adom, come to Egypt to explore ancient kingdoms and rulers. But when they arrive, strange people begin giving Talibah odd Egyptian gifts for no apparent reason. Through several visions, clues, and close calls while visiting several temple and burial sites, Talibah realizes that the "ka" or departed spirits of Hatshepsut, Senenmut, Thutmose III, and Neferure are calling for her to solve some ancient mysteries. However, an old family friend threatens to stop her quest and end her and Adom's life.

Moss creates an enthralling story where the present and the past come to life for readers. There are times when the story becomes repetitive, but the characters are endearing and believable. This mystical adventure could enrich teaching units on ancient Egypt.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Barry, Dave and Pearson, Ridley. *Peter and the Sword of Mercy*. Illustrated by Greg Call. Hyperion Books, 2009. ISBN 9781423121343. \$18.99. 515 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Adventure stories; Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Peter Pan (Fictitious character) -- Juvenile fiction; Magic -- Juvenile fiction.

London (England) -- Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

After an absence of twenty years, Peter Pan is called away again from Neverland to aid Molly and her daughter, Wendy, in stopping Lord Ombra from taking over the British throne. But while Peter is away, Ombra uses Captain Nerezza to steal the large amount of starstuff that was left in Neverland's water supply. Once Peter defeats Ombra, he returns to save his beloved Neverland again.

This is the final book in the Starcatchers series. Barry and Pearson have, again, woven a magical and suspenseful tale around the Peter Pan story. This book is a definite page-turner that will keep readers on the edge of their seats.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)

Myers, Anna. *Spy!* Walker & Co, 2008. ISBN 9780802797421. \$16.99. 224 p.

Reviewer: Pat Frade

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

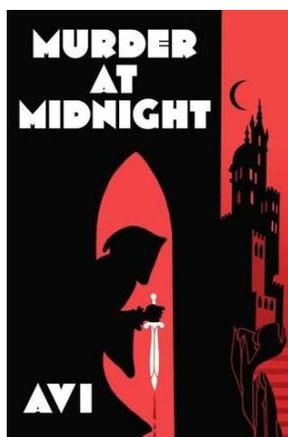
Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Hale, Nathan, 1755-1776--Juvenile fiction; United States--History--Revolution, 1775-1783--Juvenile fiction; Spies--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

"I'm a spy, Jonah, a spy for General George Washington." *Spy* is a fictional account of Nathan Hale, a young schoolmaster in Connecticut who plays a role in the Revolutionary War. He wants to make a difference in the lives of his young scholars, one of whom is the fictional Jonah Hawkins. Jonah is an orphan who was taken in by Nathan's cousin, Samuel Hale. Samuel is loyal to the King, while Nathan is unsure where his loyalties lie. As the tensions escalate between the British and the Americans, Nathan decides to support the Americans and enlists in the army. When George Washington asks for a volunteer to be a spy, Nathan accepts the assignment. Meanwhile, Samuel Hale takes his family to New York City to escape the patriots' persecutions. Nathan and Jonah happen to meet one day, and Nathan confides his assignment to Jonah. Jonah is disturbed by the news and tells Mr. Samuel. A few days later, Nathan is arrested and hung. Jonah watches the hanging, and decides to right the wrong by joining Washington's Army. This is the American Revolution told from two points of view--that of Nathan Hale, who loved teaching his students, and that of Jonah Hawkins, who learns how to make his own choices during a turbulent time in history.

This is a well-written novel about choices and loyalty. The story begins with the death of Nathan Hales, and then it goes back in time three years. This is a good book to supplement any study of the American Revolution.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Avi. *Murder at Midnight*. Scholastic, 2009. ISBN 9780545080903. \$17.99. 254 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

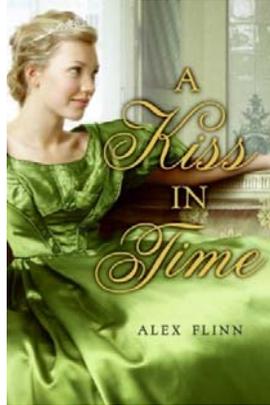
Genre: Fiction; Mystery and detective stories;

Subject: Magicians--Juvenile fiction; Orphans--Juvenile fiction; Renaissance--Italy--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Fabrizio has lived most of his life as an orphaned beggar in the kingdom of Pergamontio, Italy. He is given a second chance at life by becoming a servant to the famed Mangus the Magician. But news has reached Fabrizio that someone is plotting against the king, and Mangus is the main suspect. Soon after this news, Mangus is imprisoned and the man who accused Mangus is found murdered. It is up to Fabrizio to find the killer and save his master's life.

A prequel to Avi's *Midnight Magic*, this story explains what brought Mangus and Fabrizio together and how Mangus stopped practicing magic. This can be a great book to use in the classroom to show what life was like before the printing press and how people must have viewed it when it was introduced into society.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Finn, Alex. *A Kiss in Time*. HarperTeen, 2009. ISBN 9780060874209. \$16.99. 371 p.

Reviewer: Larysa Bordner

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

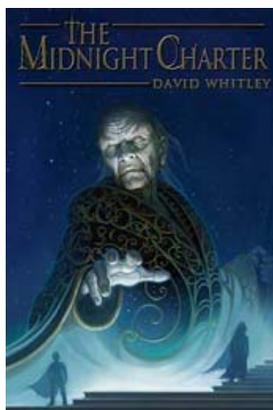
Genre: Fiction; Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Princesses--Juvenile fiction; Blessing and cursing--Juvenile fiction; Family life--Florida--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Most people are familiar with the fairy tale of Sleeping Beauty. However, the story normally ends with the kiss and a happily ever after. *A Kiss in Time* focuses on what happens beyond the archetypal storybook ending. An American boy named Jack is the one to wake beautiful princess Talia from her deep sleep. He is not looking for true love, though, and he wants to leave Talia's kingdom with no attachments. But when Talia comes back to the United States with him, Jack gets much more than he ever imagined. Not only does he learn what a caring and thoughtful person Talia is, but they also fight many obstacles together while falling in love and finding their own "happily ever after."

Although many assume that fairy tales are for women or girls, Finn brings a male's point of view to the story. *A Kiss in Time* is told from both Talia and Jack's point of view, but the male touch is laced throughout both characters' tales. The story is engaging and builds far beyond the well-known fairytale. This fun combination of past and present is a surefire way to keep readers glued to the pages. *A Kiss in Time* would be an excellent example of how to build onto a story and could be used to teach young writers about adding detail to their prose.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Whitley, David. *The Midnight Charter*. Roaring Brook Press, 2009. ISBN 9781596433816. \$16.99. 319 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

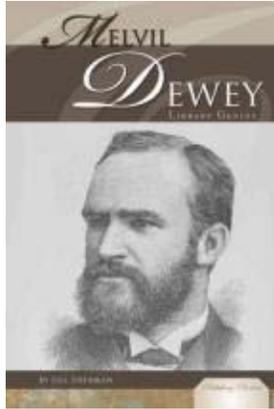
Genre: Fiction; Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Prophecy--Juvenile fiction; Imaginary places--Juvenile fiction; Conduct of life--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

During the gray plague outbreak in Agora, Mark is sold to Dr. Theophilus to pay for his father's debts. Mark becomes the doctor's apprentice, but Mark's new friend Lily decides to switch jobs with him. Lily was working for Count Stelli, the great Agorian astrologer. After the switch is made, their lives change completely. Mark is taken on to be an apprentice astrologer to Count Stelli, and Lily creates an almshouse to help the poor with Dr. Theophilus. While Mark rises in power and prestige, Lily is constantly fighting to defend her almshouse. When a mutual friend is murdered, Lily discovers that a secret society—known as the Midnight Charter—has been watching her and Mark to see if they are the prophesied ones who will change the future of Agora. When Lily tries to find the truth behind the Midnight Charter, she must decide whether to take her new knowledge back to Agora or to leave the city forever with Mark.

Whitley creates an intriguing and thought-provoking story with *The Midnight Charter*. The society Whitley creates is based on contracts between people for any job or promise and is void of any charity or selfless service. But when Lily creates her almshouse, she is fighting Agora's founding principles. It is a well-written book that young adult readers will enjoy. *The Midnight Charter* can be an excellent resource to use in the classroom for analyzing the make-up of different societies or imagining our world without charity.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Sherman, Jill. *Melvil Dewey: Library Genius*. ABDO, 2009. ISBN 9781604537611. \$32.79. 112 p.

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

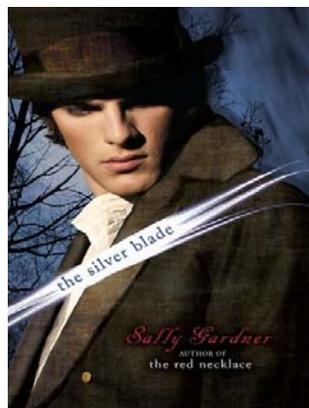
Genre: Informational books; Biographies;

Subject: Dewey, Melvil, 1851-1931--Juvenile literature; Librarians--United States--Biography--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

In the late eighteenth hundreds, libraries might have a book about horses next to one relating to business—until Melvil Dewey began researching several classification systems to come up with his own decimal system. His system allows for a wide range of subjects and for new subjects to be added later. Today's version of his system divides all knowledge into ten main categories with an assigned number, using more specific numbers or decimals for narrowed topics. The Dewey Decimal Classification System is now used in over 200,000 libraries worldwide. Dewey knew that libraries should be run effectively, so he established the first school for the education of librarians. He also started the conference of librarians that founded the American Library Association. Melvil Dewey is the perfect example of a man who sacrificed his life's work for the betterment of education.

Sherman paints the life of Melvil Dewey in the most direct light. Little known stories, such as young Dewey walking ten miles to the next town to buy a dictionary, make his personality come alive to the reader. Sherman tells the history in true form. Although Dewey experienced many embarrassments and failures, his intentions show through his many endeavors and constant attempts to improve education.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Gardner, Sally. *The Silver Blade*. Dial, 2009. ISBN 9780803733770. \$17.99. 362 p.

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fiction; Historical fiction;

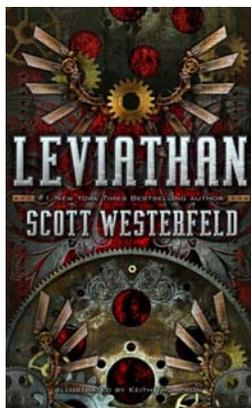
Subject: France--History--Revolution, 1789-1799--Juvenile fiction; Romanies--Juvenile fiction;

Magic--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Yann Margoza smuggles innocent victims, destined for the guillotine, out of France while the Reign of Terror rages. His false front to evade the revolutionaries is as a magician in the Circus of Follies. Yann inherits mind reading and the gift of light from his gypsy parents. After rescuing the daughter of a marquee, Sido, Yann falls in love. Sido's place in society drives Yann to become a hero in order to earn her family's approval. Yann's talents are sought after by the ruthless Count Kalliovski, who has risen from the dead after making a devilish pact. Yann must confront this man—his mother's murderer, his love's abductor, but worst of all, his father. The Count's dark deeds lead to his downfall. Yann and Sido marry, then escape to America to start life anew.

Gardner tells a mystic tale of hard times during one of the many revolutions of France. The theme of light overcoming darkness leaves the reader with a feeling of hope. Yann's ability to control others with the light that exists in each soul is original and refreshing. The characters are complex and stimulating, but there are too many. Gardner gives the precise feeling of fear and cruelty reverberating from a time where shouts egged on the slice of a killing machine.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Westerfeld, Scott. *Leviathan*. Illustrated by Keith Thompson. Simon Pulse, 2009. ISBN 9781416971733. \$19.99. 440 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

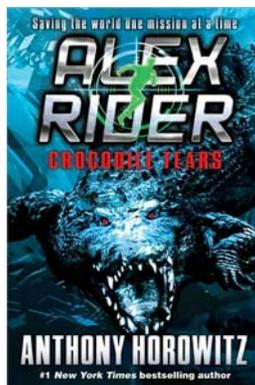
Genre: Science fiction;

Subject: Science fiction; War--Juvenile fiction; Genetic engineering--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Deryn and Alek must both make the choice of running away into the unknown after their parents have died. Alek's parents, the archduke of Austria and his wife, are killed by Germans to start World War I. Alek is swiftly taken away from his home so that the Germans will not kill him as well. Deryn must pretend to be a boy so that she can join the Royal Air Service of England, since there is nothing left for her at home. Deryn becomes a soldier on the great living ship, the Leviathan. While completing a secret mission towards the Ottoman Empire, the Leviathan is shot down in Switzerland, right where Alek and his men are hiding. The two groups join forces to fight the attacking Germans and to help get the Leviathan back into the sky.

Westerfeld creates a wonderful alternate reality where truth and science fiction mesh well together. Thompson's beautifully detailed illustrations also help to support Westerfeld's well-written story. A second book about Alek and Deryn going into the Ottoman Empire will soon follow.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Horowitz, Anthony. *Crocodile Tears*. Philomel, 2009. ISBN 9780399250569. \$17.99. 388 p.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

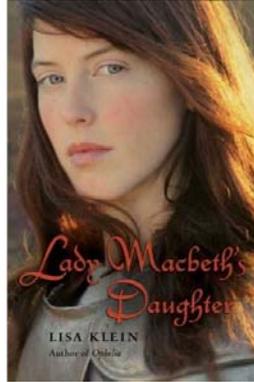
Genre: Adventure stories; Detective and mystery stories;

Subject: Spies--Juvenile fiction; Action adventure--Juvenile fiction; Genetic engineering--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Horowitz fans will welcome this eighth Alex Rider adventure. It has all the elements Alex Rider fans have come to expect: nonstop action, daring escapes, evil villains, cool gadgets, and exotic settings. Alex is kidnapped, almost drowned, drugged, and escapes eminent death no less than five times. In this installment, Alex, a teenage secret agent for the British MI6, stumbles upon a plan to use genetically engineered plants to cause an environmental disaster in Kenya.

Horowitz has done his homework and the science behind the plot is interesting. Unfortunately, Horowitz does not allow Alex to figure out what is going on by himself. Instead, the whole plan is revealed in a lengthy and very stereotypical villain monolog. As in past Alex Rider books, all the characters except Alex are two dimensional, and there is very little character development throughout the story. Unlike earlier books, this book does little to advance the larger over-reaching plot of the series. This is, perhaps, because many of the long standing issues were resolved in the previous book, *Snakehead*. Despite these shortcomings, Horowitz's brilliant action writing will carry even reluctant reader tween and teen boys clear to the end of the book and leave them eager for the next in the series.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Klein, Lisa. *Lady Macbeth's Daughter*. Bloomsbury, 2009. ISBN 9781599903477. \$16.99. 304 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

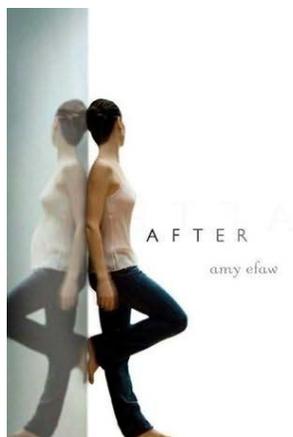
Genre: Occult fiction;

Subject: Macbeth, King of Scotland, 11th cent.--Juvenile fiction; Gruoch, Queen, consort of Macbeth, King of Scotland--Juvenile fiction; People with disabilities--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Macbeth has seen the soothsaying sisters and they have foretold that Macbeth and his wife, Grelach, will have many sons. However, when Grelach bears a crippled girl, Macbeth wants to leave the newborn to be eaten by wolves. Grelach's lady-in-waiting, Rhuven, takes the baby girl to her soothsaying sisters Helwain and Geillis. They call the girl Albia and raise her as their own. When Albia grows up, she is sent away to live with Macbeth's general, Banquo and his family. Soon she hears that Macbeth has suddenly become king of Scotland. When the news that Geillis is dying reaches Albia, she returns to the sisters to discover her true heritage and that her father is a murderer and her mother was an accomplice. Soon the death toll begins to rise as Macbeth kills all who threaten his path. Albia swears to revenge all those she loved whom Macbeth has killed. She faces Macbeth in combat, but she can not kill him. He is killed by the thane Macduff, and Lady Macbeth escapes to find her long-lost daughter. They meet and Albia forgives Grelach for what she has done.

Klein has created another intriguing story that mirrors her other Shakespeare inspired story, *Ophelia*. This story gives more of a background to why Macbeth wanted to become king and to the madness that drove him to his destruction. This would be a useful book to use in the classroom while reading *Macbeth* and then to compare the two.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Efaw, Amy. *After*. Viking, 2009. ISBN 9780670011834. \$17.99. 350 p.

Reviewer: Anna Swenson

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

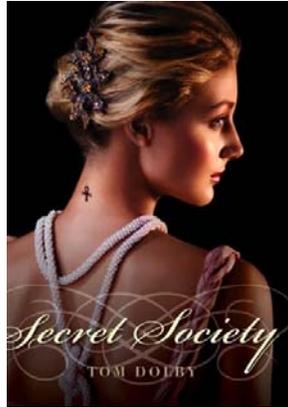
Genre: Fiction; Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Pregnancy--Juvenile fiction; Infanticide--Juvenile fiction; Denial (Psychology)--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Devon is a mature, straight-A student with a dream of playing soccer in the Olympics. So why would she leave her own baby in the trash to die? *After* allows the reader to follow Devon as she deals with the consequences of her actions. Readers come to their own conclusions about Devon as a human being as she goes through the processes of denial, realization, and redemption. Efaw carefully explores the psychological aspects leading up to the event and takes the reader through the legal and moral consequences of attempted murder. Devon slowly comes to terms with her actions, and it is almost impossible to not feel compassion for this poor girl.

After is thought provoking and delves into heavy material, like the "dumpster baby" phenomenon, that most books shy away from. This book turns preconceptions on their head and brings a new perspective to the situation. Efaw does not say Devon should not be punished for making this mistake, but she does not condemn her either, which is the true triumph of *After*. Efaw's writing style is wonderful, and although Devon can be empathetic, she is a real character that the reader can truly connect with. *After* is a wonderful, unique, and intense story, recommended for any young adult.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)



Dolby, Tom. *Secret Society*. Katherine Tegen Books, 2009. ISBN 9780061721625. \$16.99. 341 p.

Reviewer: Anna Swenson

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction; Detective and mystery stories;

Subject: Secret societies--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; Wealth--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

When Phoebe, Lauren, and Nick receive a mysterious text message promising success and fame if they join the Society, it's more than they could ever imagine. Everything starts falling in place for them. Amazing opportunities are given to them, and all they have to do in return is obey the calls to meetings and keep the Society secret. After the dead body of a pledge turns up, however, they realize something is seriously wrong. The teenagers question how far they would go for this Society that they know nothing about, but the Society is bigger than they know, and once you're in, you never leave.

Secret Society is a great take on the darker side of the glamorous New York lifestyle. It is full of suspense and interesting to read. The book is told from the point of view of Phoebe, Lauren, Nick, and their friend Patch. Although the pace is slow in the middle, the ending is excellent and will leave you dying for the next book. The characters are tough to connect with as they are not explained in depth, but they are certainly interesting. Dolby knows how to build up suspense, and it is nearly impossible to put down the book once it reaches its climax. Dolby's book has its flaws, but it is a fresh take on the high life and will certainly be a good read for anyone who enjoys Melissa de la Cruz.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)

Finn, Mary. *Anila's journey*. Candlewick Press, 2008. ISBN 9780763639167. \$16.99. 320 p.

Reviewer: Pat Frade

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Self-reliance--Juvenile fiction; India--History--British occupation, 1765-1947--Juvenile fiction; Missing persons--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

In late eighteenth-century India, Anila Tandy's mother dies, leaving her alone. Her Irish father has been missing for many years, but Anila dreams of finding him. Anila has a talent for drawing and finds employment as an artist on a Ganges River birding expedition. Along the journey, she arrives at her mother's childhood village and finds a clue to her father. Anila travels back to Calcutta and is determined to go find her father in Madras until unexpected news arrives.

This is a well-written historical fiction novel of Indian culture. At times the book is dry and readers may find it difficult to keep interest. Overall, for a first book, the author did a great job at telling a story and describing Indian characters and the surroundings.

Volume 30, no. 3 (January/February 2010)