



2009

Full Issue

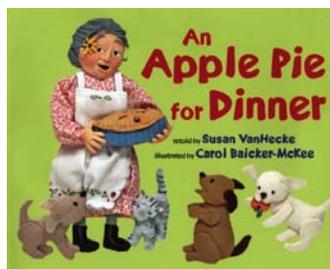
Children's Book Review

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. 4 , Article 30.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol30/iss4/30>

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.



VanHecke, Susan. *An Apple Pie For Dinner*. Illustrated by Carol Baicker-McKee. Marshall Cavendish, 2009. ISBN 9780761454526. \$17.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

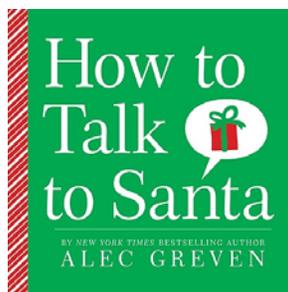
Genre: Picture books;

Subject: Grandmothers--Juvenile fiction; Sharing--Juvenile fiction; Baking--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Granny wakes one morning and wants to make an apple pie, but has a major problem. She has only plums, not apples! She confidently sets off down the lane with a basket of plums hoping to find some apples. Everyone Granny meets has a need, and she kindly gives away what she has to help them out. They in turn share what they have with her. She gives her plums so a woman can make plum jam, and she is given a bag of feathers. She gives the feathers to some children to stuff their pillow. She receives flowers, which she willingly gives to a prince who needs a gift for his "ladylove." The gold coin the prince gives her she happily gives to a mother who buys food for her hungry children. The mother gives Granny a cute puppy. The puppy is exactly what a lonely old man needs to keep him company. The grateful old man has an orchard full of apples, which he gladly shares with Granny. Granny invites her new friends to come home to prepare the apples for baking, and they celebrate together. "If you try and try...you can always have an apple pie for dinner!"

When my daughter recently came to visit with her two children, we discovered that we had both read *An Apple Pie for Dinner*. My grandson was happy to see that his Utah grandma had this cute story that he had been reading on the road trip to Grandma's. Lyn and I had both been attracted by the cover illustration, which showed the illustrator's skill at using varied textures and mediums. Baicker-McKee's colorful illustrations use clay, fabric, buttons, hooks, embroidery, trims, etc. Children will enjoy looking for a tiny ladybug on each page! This "Law of the Harvest" story emphasizes confidently sticking to a task and unselfishly sacrificing to meet others' needs. The apple pie recipe and directions are a bonus. Enjoy!

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Greven, Alec. *How to Talk to Santa*. Illustrated by Kei Acedera. HarperCollins, 2009. ISBN 9780061802072. \$9.99. 48 p.

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

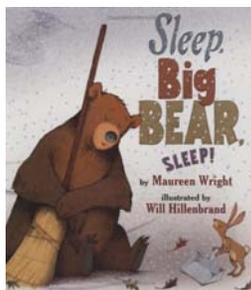
Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Santa Claus; Christmas; Books--Reviews;

The countdown of Christmas to a child means jingle bells, giant snow globes, and too many toy commercials. Kids should lay off pranks because Santa mysteriously sees everything. National Whiners' Day comes the day after Christmas, but beware. This is the risky time when parents will often take away presents. Santa will skip your house if you are not nice. Do what your parents ask and more, but try not to make it obvious. Making a wish list can be tricky; cut down so as to not appear selfish and greedy to the man in red. Leave out cookies for Santa and carrots for the reindeer. Parents are in a much better mood when you wake them up at around 7 a.m. instead of 4 a.m. Always say thank you for gifts received. "The real magic of Santa is not the presents. It is believing in the good everyone can do."

This child's guide to making it through the holidays is hilariously honest. New York Times Bestselling Author, Alec Greven, says it all with, "Christmas is not just about toys and wanting everything you see. It's about having fun and believing in magic, getting together and giving to others." His ten-year-old view on Christmas is helpful to other children on how to best survive the season happily.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Wright, Maureen. *Sleep, Big Bear, Sleep!*. Illustrated by Will Hillenbrand. Marshall Cavendish, 2009. ISBN 9780761455608. \$16.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

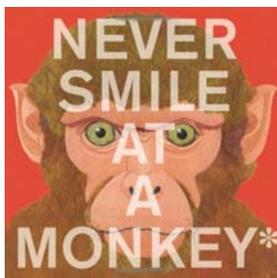
Genre: Picture book; Fiction;

Subject: Stories in rhyme--Juvenile fiction; Bears--Juvenile fiction; Winter--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Old Man Winter tries to tell Big Bear to prepare for his long sleep, but Big Bear does not hear very well. He mistakes the instructions as going for a drive in a jeep, sweeping, leaping, diving deep, and climbing a steep mountain. After this long journey of tasks, Father Winter loses his patience and yells "It's winter time, now go to bed!" A surprised Big Bear enters his cozy den and plans to not open his eyes until spring comes again.

Hillenbrand sets each drowsy scene with his colored pencil and mixed media illustrations. Big Bear's interactions with humans are sure to make children laugh as each new page shows the bear and his rabbit friend growing more and more tired. The rhyming text and mutedly colored illustrations are sure to lull any child to sleep.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Jenkins, Steve. *Never Smile at a Monkey*. Illustrated by Jenkins, Steve. Houghton Mifflin, 2009. ISBN 9780618966202. \$16.00. 32 p.

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Information books; Picture books;

Subject: Dangerous animals--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

"Everyone knows that tigers, crocodiles, sharks and other large predators are dangerous." *Never Smile at a Monkey* is about surprisingly lethal creatures and how to avoid their dangers. Jenkins divulges incredible information, such as never petting a platypus, the only poisonous mammal, because it might kick you with the venomous spurs on its hind legs. A cane toad has large sacs of venom on its neck that can squirt out a deadly poison. The spitting cobra can spit its venom at a target more than eight feet away. Lastly, if you smile at a rhesus monkey, it may think that showing your teeth is threatening and attack.

Newbery Honor award winner Steve Jenkins composes another enthralling picture book. The cut and torn paper collages have texture, detail, and color fit for each exotic animal. The final pages give more facts about and pictures of these animals and their deadly traits. Children will be amazed by this informative picture book of dangerous creatures.

Volume 30, no.4 (March/April 2009)



Parish, Herman. *Amelia Bedelia's First Valentine*. Illustrated by Lynne Avril. Greenwillow, 2009. ISBN 9780061544583. \$16.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Primary

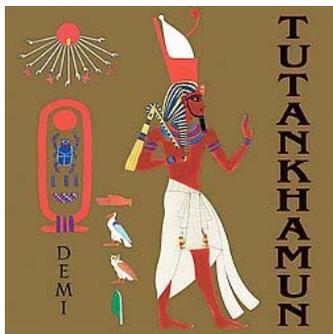
Rating: Dependable

Genre: Picture book; Humorous stories;

Subject: Valentine's Day--Juvenile fiction; Schools--Juvenile fiction; Humorous stories--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Ever wonder what Amelia Bedelia was like when she was a young girl? Herman Parish, nephew of Peggy Parish (author of the original Amelia Bedelia books) has written over a dozen books about young Amelia. This selection tells how Amelia prepares for and celebrates Valentine's Day. Amelia's mother, who likes to spend time playing cards with her friends, is not the run of the mill mother figure; but her scruffy-faced father seems personable and not that strange. Amelia? She takes literally everything her parents, teacher, and classmates say and everything she reads. She is frequently mixed up!

Valentine's Day is a great setting to share Amelia's funny interpretations: She puts a "bandage across the broken heart" and put "peanuts into the envelope with the squirrel." Arvil's colorful cartoon-like illustrations portray the cutest Amelia! She is innocent, thoughtful, and kind. This picture book story could be used to point out the meaning of catchy phrases, expressions, and puns.



Demi. *Tutankhamun*. Illustrated by Demi. Marshall Cavendish, 2009. ISBN 9780761455585. \$19.99. 56 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

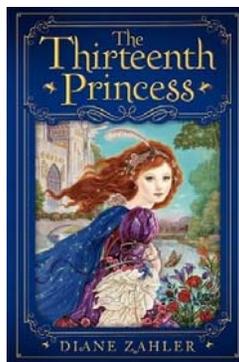
Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Tutankhamen, King of Egypt--Juvenile literature; Pharaohs--Biography--Juvenile literature; Egypt--History--Nineteenth dynasty, ca. 1320-1200 B.C.--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Several decades before Tutankhamun's birth, a religious change occurred in Egypt. Thutmose IV, Tutankhamun's great-grandfather, had a vision of the Sphinx asking him to give power to the sun god, Aten. Thutmose followed the vision and made his subjects worship Aten, although they were already worshipping the sun god Amun. When Tutankhamun's father, Akhenaten, became pharaoh, he banished all worship of any other god except Aten. Akhenaten's minor queen, Kiya, gave birth to Tutankhamun and gave him the name Tutankhaten to honor Aten. When Tutankhaten was nine-years-old, his father died, leaving Tutankhaten as pharaoh. The boy was too young to properly rule, so two men, Ay and Horemheb, were ruling in his place. They both tried to sway the young king to their beliefs. Horemheb didn't believe in worshipping Aten, so he made the king change his name to Tutankhamun to honor Amun. When he was older, Tutankhamun married his half-sister, Ankhesenpaaten. Their marriage was short because at nineteen, Tutankhamun died suddenly. His body was quietly laid to rest in his secret tomb. When Horemheb became pharaoh, he tried to find and destroy Tutankhamun's tomb. It wasn't until 1922 that Tutankhamun's tomb was discovered and found to be totally intact.

Demi gains inspiration from Egyptian drawings to create her illustrations. She uses Egyptian and Chinese inks and Asian brushes to mirror the similar style of Egyptian drawings. The borders around her illustrations are made from gold Egyptian designs.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April)



Zahler, Diane. *The Thirteenth Princess*. HarperCollins, 2010. ISBN 9780061824982. \$15.99. 243 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

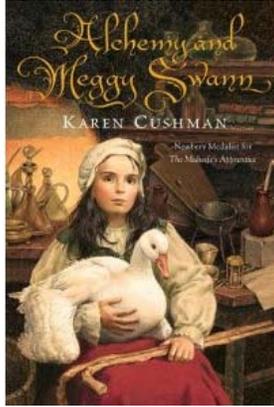
Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Princesses--Juvenile fiction; Household employees--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

As a young child, Zita thought she was just an orphan girl who grew up as a household servant to the king and his twelve daughters. But when Zita asks Cook who her mother was, a new life unfurls before her. She is the thirteenth child to the king. Unfortunately, her mother at her birth, and the king blamed Zita for his wife's death. In secret, the twelve sisters begin to develop a relationship with Zita. One day Zita's sisters become ill for no reason. After some investigating, Zita discovers that her sisters have been enchanted by the sorceress, Taika, to dance all night with imaginary princes in a mirage kingdom. Taika wants to slowly kill off all the girls so that she can have the king all to herself. Through the help of her friends Breckin and Milek, Zita stops the enchantment. Her father sacrifices himself to defeat Taika and keep all his daughters safe.

Zahler's take on the twelve dancing princesses' story is exciting, refreshing, and entertaining. This book, along with Jessica Day George's *Princess of the Midnight Ball*, can be compared together while doing a fairy tale unit. Teachers can use these and other fairy tale based novels to show students how to interpret the Grimm stories in different ways.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Cushman, Karen. *Alchemy and Meggy Swann*. Illustrated by Bagram Ibatoulline. Clarion, 2010. ISBN 9780547231846. \$16.00. 167 p.

Reviewer: Gabi Kupitz

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

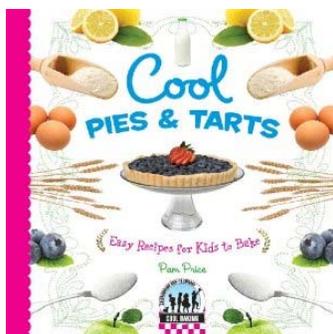
Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: People with disabilities--Juvenile fiction; Fathers and daughters--Juvenile fiction; Great Britain--History--Elizabeth, 1558-1603; Books--Reviews;

It is 1573—now that Granny has passed on, young Margret (Meggy) Swann's hard-hearted mother has uprooted her from the only life she has ever known in Millford village and sent her to live with a father in London she does not know. Meggy's only friend is Louise, a goose. London is full of noise and garbage and rude people who taunt and bully Meggy because of her crippled legs, a curse and surely a mark of the devil. Added to this mix is a distant father who is well-educated, but a poor alchemist who may be in league with murderers. Meggy is distraught, lonely, and always hungry. As Meggy painfully waddles with her walking sticks through the dank streets of the city in search of food and friendship, and to secure supplies for her father, London reveals itself to her. In contrast, Meggy reveals herself to London and some of its citizens. Meggy reaches out and does many good deeds because she was once loved by an adoring grandmother and because she has a sense of what is right. In the process, Meggy finds herself and saves her father and the object of his murderous associates.

A well-crafted historical novel that is engaging and informative. Meggy speaks to all ages of courage, determination, and kindness in the face of unspeakable odds. Cushman's descriptive language brings the smells of London to the reader. "Gobsmacked" may perhaps be a more modern British slang word, but it sounds very appropriate on page 111. Includes a map, an "Author's Note," and bibliographical references.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Price, Pam. *Cool Pies and Tarts: Easy Recipes for Kids to Bake*. ABDO, 2010. ISBN 9781604537789. \$25.65. 32 p.

Reviewer: Debbie Barr

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

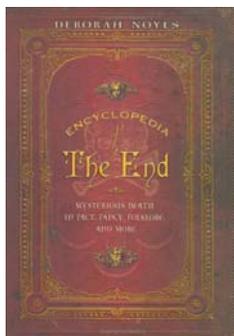
Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Pies--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Baking doesn't have to be complicated. Kids and adults alike can make the perfect pie crust or tart filling using these simple, clear recipes. This cookbook includes instructions for pie and tart basics, plus lots of bright, crisp pictures to help along the way. Integrated into each recipe are photos and descriptions of the tools and ingredients needed, as well as detailed pictures to help with each step of the baking process. Tips fill the margins in brightly colored boxes that show how to perform the techniques from the recipes. Included are step-by-step recipes for basic pie and tart shells, pecan pie, apple pie, French silk pie, fruit tart, and ginger pear tart.

Price gives easy instructions for desserts many people think are too complicated to make from scratch. Other books in the Cool Baking series include *Cool Cakes and Cupcakes* and *Cool Cookies and Bars*, all of which use the same simple, helpful format. *Cool Pies and Tarts* is a perfect cookbook for home use to help young bakers who are ready to begin making desserts on their own.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Noyes, Deborah. *Encyclopedia of The End: Mysterious Death in Fact, Fancy, Folklore, and More*. Houghton Mifflin Company, 2008. ISBN 9780618823628. \$25.00. 143 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational book;

Subject: Death --Social aspects; Funeral rites and ceremonies; Books--Reviews;

Death is something that all creatures on the earth have in common. But as a society we all fear what lies ahead after death because it is an unknown territory. Noyes's *Encyclopedia of The End* helps to enlighten readers about the history and fantasy involved in the subject of death.

Noyes writing is refreshing, well-informed, and witty. She addresses common myths and facts dealing with death in a way that is comfortable and informational. Her subjects are arranged in an alphabetic order starting with "amulet" and ending with "wreaths." Her research encompasses all parts of the world and the different religious beliefs on this subject. This book would be a great addition to any home, school, or public library.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/ April 2010)



Umansky, Kaye. *Clover Twig and the Magical Cottage*. Illustrated by Johanna Wright. Roaring Brook Press, 2009. ISBN 9781596435070. \$16.99. 297 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

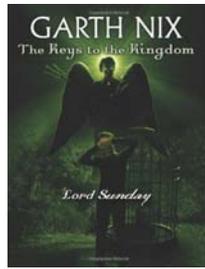
Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Witches--Juvenile fiction; Household employees--Juvenile fiction; Dwellings--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Clover Twig begins seeking employment to give financial help to her large, loud family. She finds a wanted ad on the village notice board from Mrs. Eckles. Mrs. Eckles, a well-known witch, needs a girl who can help clean up her old cottage. Clover answers the ad and Mrs. Eckles hires her. As she begins her job, Mrs. Eckles tells Clover about her evil sister, Mesmeranza, and how they have fought with each other for years. Meanwhile, Mesmeranza plots to take away Mrs. Eckles's cottage. She mainly wants the cottage because it can fly. While Mrs. Eckles is away, Mesmeranza fools her way into the cottage and flies away with Clover, Clover's friend Wilf, and Neville, the cat. Once they land, Mesmeranza imprisons the children. Neville finds a special potion that helps him to think clearly, and he helps the children escape with the flying cottage. Mesmeranza pursues the cottage back to its original location to find that Mrs. Eckles has returned home. Before the two begin to fight, their grandmother arrives to stop their bickering and restore the cottage and surrounding property to their original condition.

Umansky's story is witty, spunky, and well written. Her characters are endearing and humorous. This book can be a great read-aloud book for any age group. The illustrations, however, are too primitive to the point that they do not match up well with Umansky's intelligent narrative.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Nix, Garth. *Lord Sunday*. Scholastic Press, 2010. ISBN 9780439700900. \$17.99. 320 p.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

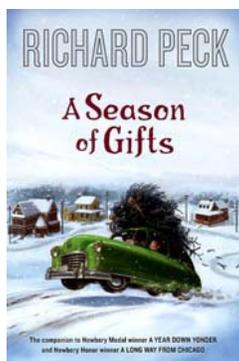
Genre: Fantasy fiction;

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

Arthur Penhaglion, also known as Lord Arthur, Heir to the Architect, has yet to claim the last Key from the mysterious Lord Sunday. His friends cannot find him, and the world Arthur comes from is in grave danger as the House of the Architect dissolves into Nothing. With war on all sides and his transformation into one of the strange immortal beings of the House nearly complete, Arthur must find the last fragment of the Architect's Will and free it before it is too late.

This is a quicker read than the earlier *Kingdom* series books, partly because there are no new characters to introduce, and there is a copious amount of fast action. While the pace is swift, and the twists and turns are unpredictable, Nix's text does not feel slap-dash or thrown together. The ending is unexpected, but feels like the only natural conclusion—a hard balance to strike. Arthur's strengths remain his compassion and his humanity, and he fights to maintain them in spite of the changes in and around him. While more upbeat than Nix's *Abhorsen* trilogy, the book does not give the customary "happily ever after" or neatly tied loose ends; the destruction, pain and loss are not glorified or dwelled on, but faced.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April)



Peck, Richard. *A Season of Gifts*. Illustrated by Brandon Dorman. Dial, 2009. ISBN 9780803730823. \$16.99. 164 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Humorous stories;

Subject: Neighbors--Juvenile fiction; Moving, Household--Juvenile fiction; Illinois--History--20th century--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Bob Barnhart is not too happy to be moving to a new town. He is the new kid, the preacher's son, and a small twelve-year-old. But one thing that counts towards him is his neighbor, Mrs. Dowdel. At first he is caught off-guard by the feisty and tremendously busy ninety-year-old woman. He and his family soon learn to appreciate her hard work and her secret charity. With her help, Bob gains confidence and begins to feel more accepted in the town.

Peck does it again, resurrecting the character of Mrs. Dowdel from *A Long Way from Chicago* and *A Year Down Yonder* for another amazing story about love, charity, care, and family. Peck's writing is well-crafted, humorous, up-lifting, and heart-warming. Like his other books about Mrs. Dowdel, this book is also worthy of a Newbery Honor or Award.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)

Saunders, Dudley. *Abe*. Anchorage Plays Press, 2008. ISBN 9780876024249. \$50. 61 p.

Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Plays; Historical Plays;

Subject: Lincoln, Abraham, 1809-1865--Juvenile drama; Children's plays; United States--History; Drama--Reviews;

Theme: Working hard and smart will get you where you want to be.

Production Requirements: Flexible, can be minimal, need log cabin and box swing.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 75 minutes

Characters: 17

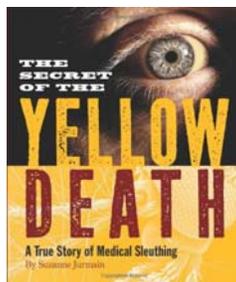
Cast: 2-6 female, 5-11 male

Time Period: Mid 1800s

Abe dramatizes the largely unknown period of Abraham Lincoln's life from the ages of eight to twenty-one. The play begins in Indiana with 21-year-old Abe practicing for his first political speech. The scene then shifts back to an eight-year-old Abe in Kentucky, busy learning to read and chopping wood. The play follows him through his life there and then his move to Indiana. Throughout this time period Abe loses his mother, his father remarries, and he loses his sister. The play is interspersed with scenes of runaway slaves and a bounty hunter. Abe always helps the slaves and often talks about how wrong slavery laws are and how he will do something to make it better someday. The play ends with the same opening scene of Abe practicing his first speech.

As the author states in his opening notes, there are few historical records concerning this era of Abraham Lincoln's life. Following closely the records that do exist, Saunders creates a plausible dramatization of what Abraham Lincoln's younger life could have been like. Although the bulk of the play consists of dialogue, some action scenes are included to help keep the audience's attention. Because of some serious subject matter and the general tone of the play, it would be suitable for a somewhat older young audience. Flexible staging requirements make this play easy to produce and possible to tour.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Jurmain, Suzanne. *The Secret of the Yellow Death: A Story of Medical Sleuthing*. Houghton Mifflin, 2009. ISBN 9780618965816. \$19.00. 104 p.

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Informational;

Subject: Yellow fever--Diagnosis--Cuba--Juvenile literature; Yellow fever--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

First comes a chill, then the skin turns yellow and the whites of the eyes look like lemons. Doctors did not know a cure, but they did know the signs of yellow fever. Between 1800 and 1900, yellow fever infected almost half a million U.S. citizens and killed roughly one million. On May, 24, 1900 the U.S. government sent four American army doctors to Cuba. Their mission was to find the cause of yellow fever. *The Secret of the Yellow Death* recounts the journey and findings of Jesse Lazear, Walter Reed, James Carroll, and Aristides Agramonte. After testing several theories, the doctors found that a local doctor, Carlos Finlay, had been right for decades. Mosquitoes carry the disease and infect the individuals they bite.

Jurmain gives a faithful narrative of the discovery of yellow fever's origin. The research is shown through the personal life of each doctor. Pictures of the people, places, and experiments add richness and clarity to the text. An appendix and index are available. This informational book leaves the reader wondering what will happen next.

Volume 30, no.4 (March/April 2010)

St. John, Billy. *Taming the Wild, Wild West in a Dress, or, Let's Give the Villain the Slip*. Pioneer Drama Service, 2001. \$50. 64 p.

Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Plays; Adventure plays; Western plays;

Subject: Old West--Juvenile drama; Melodrama; Drama--Reviews;

Theme: Good conquers evil.

Production Requirements: Single interior set with some scenes done in front of main current. Needs lighting and a piano.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 90 minutes

Characters: 26+

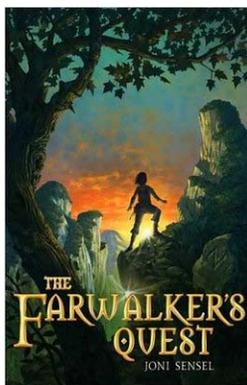
Cast: 11 male, 10 female

Time Period: Old West

This is a classic melodrama full of puns, gag humor, and stock characters. Clarence Rawlins and his traveling acting troupe are on their way to Nevada where his aunt, Iva Fortune, has just left him what he thinks is a saloon. Upon arrival they discover that he actually inherited the salon next door to the saloon. Since they have given up their acting careers, his troupe decides that they will all work at the salon. The two men decide that men can't fix hair, so they dress up as women to do it. The owner of the saloon next door, Colt, is a villain who wants to buy the salon so he can tunnel his way to the bank in order to rob it. When this plan doesn't work he kidnaps Clarence's love interest and also Clarence who is dressed up like a woman. Eventually everyone ends up down a mine shaft where they are about to be blown up by Colt with dynamite. More help arrives and they are able to capture Colt instead. Clarence and his troupe decide to buy the saloon and turn the salon and saloon into their own theatre. Almost every male and female in the play ends up with a love interest.

This play is a melodrama and that just about sums it up. The story is far-fetched, every character has a pun based name--Iva Fortune, Bobbie Pinz, Nell Clipper, Will Reader, etc.--and most of the lines are pun-based. That being said, the play could still be a success if the characters were energetic and committed to their characters. Since there are so many puns, it is more suited to an older audience.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Sensel, Joni. *The Farwalker's Quest*. Bloomsbury, 2009. ISBN 9781599902722. \$16.99. 372 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

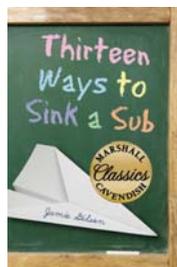
Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Adventure and adventurers--Juvenile fiction; Identity--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Ariel is not sure what occupation suits her, but she needs to decide before Naming day. Meanwhile, she and her friend Zeke find a valuable dart in Zeke's favorite tree. After the dart's discovery, two Finders named Elbert and Scarl come into town on a mission to locate the darts and destroy the receivers. The Finders don't believe that Ariel was the intended receiver so they kidnap her, murder her mother, and devastate the town. Zeke follows the Finders and rescues Ariel, but The Finders soon catch up to them on their escape. However, Scarl kills Elbert informs Ariel that the dart was sent to her because she is a Farwalker. The dart arrived to let her know about the Vault, a place housing the technologies and secrets of the past. Scarl and Ariel hope to find this place to help people survive in the present. After much searching, losing loved ones, and following clues, Zeke, Ariel, and Scarl find the Vault.

Sensel's writing is engaging, intuitive, and insightful. Her story is about the rebirth of the world after it is ravished by war. But her story's point is that there isn't a promise of a better life if we neglect the technologies that help people survive. For readers 12 and older.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Gilson, Jamie. *Thirteen Ways to Sink a Sub*. Illustrated by NA. Marshall Cavendish, 2009. ISBN 9780761455875. \$15.99. 103 p.

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Dependable

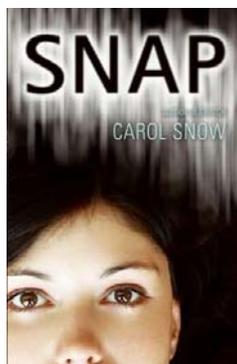
Genre: Fiction; Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Schools—Juvenile fiction; Substitute teachers—Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

After their teacher stumbles from the classroom to vomit, Hobie Hansen and his fourth grade classmates celebrate their freedom. The flu is going around the school, and there are many ignorant substitutes. The boys bet the girls that they can make their substitute cry--the losers have to retrieve the kick balls that land in the spit pit for the remainder of the year. The spit pit is a concrete staircase that is littered with rotting garbage and mucus. The boys make up duties for themselves to leave class while the girls all give Ms. Ivanovitch, the substitute, the wrong names when she calls roll. The girls throw snowballs at the sub and lead her around the whole school to find the music room. The boys skin her elbow after a male student tackles her in square dancing. Ms. Ivanovitch starts taking the fourth grade students more seriously, but by then, the situation is out of control. One boy clogs the sink and leaves the water running to flood the room. The sub leaves the classroom. While the students cleaning up the water with paper towels, one boy throws his wad of sticky towels to the ceiling. Ms. Ivanovitch comes back with mops to dry the floor only to have a soaking mass fall on her head. She starts laughing so much, she cries.

Thirteen Ways to Sink a Sub gives the authentic perspective of an eleven-year-old boy. The first person story of Hobie Hansen helps the reader to engage with the characters and plot. Gilson originally published *Thirteen Ways to Sink a Sub* in 1982. It was reprinted after being awarded as a Marshall Cavendish Classic in 2009. An entertaining, quick read for all ages.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Snow, Carol. *Snap*. HarperCollins, 2009. ISBN 9780061452116. \$16.99. 221 p.

Reviewer: Anna Swenson

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Dependable

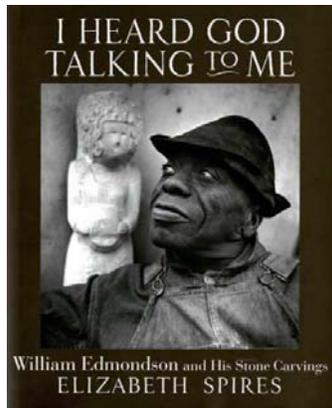
Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction; Detective and mystery stories;

Subject: Photography--Juvenile fiction; Supernatural--Juvenile fiction; Friendship--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Madison Sabatini had a near-perfect life, but in a flash, everything fell apart. Now she's stuck in Sandyland, living with her parents in a hotel. Instead of spending the summer with her friends at home, she's hanging out with Delilah, an artist, and Duncan, a skater boy who is definitely not her type. Madison throws herself into her passion for photography to make the best of this summer, but when strange figures start appearing in her pictures, she begins to question everything about who she is.

A fun read. Though it contains suspense and mystery, *Snap* is more of a coming-of-age novel than a ghost story. The novel revolves around Madison's transformation into a better, more caring person. At first, Madison's character is stuck-up and annoying, but as she grows as a person, she becomes more likable. The side characters are interesting and unique, though they lack slightly in development. The plot is interesting, if predictable, and the book is hard to put down once you start reading. Enjoyable as a nice, light read, though it lacks some depth--recommended for anyone looking for a short, fun book to read over a weekend.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Spires, Elizabeth. *I Heard God Talking To Me: William Edmondson and His Stone Carvings*. Illustrated by William Edmondson. Frances Foster Books/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009. ISBN 9780374335281. \$17.95. 56 p.

Reviewer: Gabi Kupitz

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

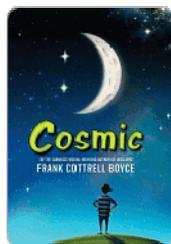
Genre: Children's poetry, American; American poetry;

Subject: Edmondson, William, 1882?-1951--Juvenile poetry; African American poets--Juvenile poetry; African American artists--Poetry; Books--Reviews;

The second child of freed slaves, William Edmondson worked as a field hand in his youth. Later, he worked at other jobs and for other employers, including the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway, and as a janitor and orderly at the Women's Hospital in Nashville, Tennessee. He never attended school nor did he learn to read and write. Rather, since early teenage years he had visions of which he said, "God, He just showed me how." The visions continued into his later years. When William was into his fifties, it was God who told him to cut figures out of stone and to make tombstones. Those two instructions set William on a course that would take him from Nashville to New York and the Museum of Modern Art. In 1937, William Edmondson became "the first black artist to have a solo show at that prestigious institution."

Using only crude tools, William transformed found and donated stone into tombstones and then, as he became more confident, into garden ornaments, birdbaths, animals, and finally, the human form. His art is now worth hundreds of thousands of dollars. William is a nation's treasure. He saw in stone something waiting to be released and used inspired determination to bring that about. God saw in William that same potential. William passed away in 1951. The poems that accompany the art have been crafted by Elizabeth Spires with the "four poems set in italics--"A Vision," "The Gift," "A Conversation," and "Wisdom"--..."composed of direct quotations from Edmondson, excerpted from interviews with him in the 1930s and 1940s." A fairly comprehensive author's note--"About William Edmondson"--and "Selected Bibliography" plus "Photo Credits and Acknowledgments" are found in this excellent and inspiring book.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Boyce, Frank Cottrell. *Cosmic*. Walden Pond Press, 2008. ISBN 9780061836831. \$16.99. 313 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Adventure stories;

Subject: Outer space --Exploration--Juvenile fiction; Stature, Tall--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews

Liam Digby is six-foot tall, has sprouting facial hair, and he is only twelve years old. Even though he tires of the constant tall jokes, Liam realizes that grown-ups are mistaking him for an adult. With the help of his friend Florida, the two children pretend to be a father-daughter couple and get into more adult situations, like test driving a car. After getting caught, Liam can only spend his time playing with the DraxWorld search program on his cell phone. One day he receives a call regarding his cell phone searches. The caller thinks he's his father and asks him strange questions about being a dad. But from that odd phone call, both Liam and Florida are taken on a strange adventure to China where a special space theme park is being created. Only the rides really do go out into space. Liam, Florida, and three other children are trained to take a trip out into space. What was supposed to be a ten hour site-seeing trip to space turns into a disastrous adventure. By working together, the children get back to Earth again. Liam still keeps his age and the space mission a secret.

Boyce's story is witty and has surprises on each page. Liam's predicament of being mistaken for an adult is believable. With Liam's character, Boyce is able to successfully put across Liam's mature and immature personality without turning readers off. This story would be a great read-a-loud book for the classroom or home. This book can be a useful tool when teaching a unit on space and space travel.

Volume 30, no. 4, (March/April 2010)



Beck, Ian. *Pastworld*. Bloomsbury, 2009. ISBN 9781599900407. \$16.99. 355 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Science fiction;

Subject: Amusement parks --Fiction; Genetic engineering --Fiction; Murder --Fiction; Books--Reviews;

Eve cannot remember her childhood. All she can remember is living with her blind guardian, Jack, in old Victorian London. One night Jack returns home with news that a dangerous man wants to take Eve away. Eve makes the choice to run away from Jack to keep them both safe. As she runs away, a ragged beggar chases her through the streets. A street performer, Jago, sees Eve's dilemma and rescues her. Eve joins Jago's traveling show and learns that Victorian London is just a huge amusement park, called Pastworld, that people from the current world visit to experience the past. After her disappearance, a group of men from the Outside go searching for her to keep her away from the mad killer known as the Fantom. The truth comes out that the creators of Pastworld genetically created Eve and Adam, the Fantom, to be tourist attractions to Pastworld. Adam would be a "Jack the Ripper" character and Eve would be his constant victim who would be resurrected after each killing. But her creators refused to carry out their orders for moral reasons. Eve was hidden away and Adam escaped to wreck havoc in the Pastworld. All come together in the end to face the consequences of their actions. Eve refuses to follow through with what she was created to do and saves those who have watched out for her.

Beck's book is an intriguing and spell-binding read. The story mirrors such authors as Wilkie Collins and Agathe Christie but with a science-fiction twist. This book is intended for older young adult readers because of the graphic descriptions of murder scenes.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Golding, Julia. *Dragonfly*. Marshall Cavendish, 2009. ISBN 9780761455820. \$17.99. 390 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Duty--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; Princesses--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Tashi is one of the four Crown Princesses for the Blue Crescent Islands. When she begins to feel more comfortable in her position, news arrives that the invader, Fergox Spearthrower, has been taking over most of the lands in the Known World. One of the free countries, Gerfal, needs military help and has asked the four Crown Princesses that a marriage alliance be made between their two countries to seal their loyalty. Tashi is chosen to wed Gerfal's prince, Ramil, but once she arrives, Ramil tries to make her feel unwanted. Later Ramil realizes that he must go through with the alliance or the Blue Crescent Islands will make war on Gerfal. When Ramil takes Tashi out riding, a circus group captures the two of them and takes them to Fergox. Fergox tries to sway Ramil to join him, and he tries to make Tashi convert to his bloody religion. Ramil, Tashi, and the loyal giant, Gordoc, escape Fergox and meet up with a resistance group. Tashi realizes that she can help win the war by getting the Blue Crescent armies to join forces with those who oppose Fergox. Tashi, Ramil, Gordoc, and two other resistance members head off on her mission, but Tashi is separated from them. The others are taken to Fergox's main capital, Tigral. Ramil starts a slave rebellion in Tigral to draw Fergox away from invading Gerfal. Tashi returns home and helps to send out the islands' armies. But Tashi's return is not welcome because her fellow princesses see that she has become too much like the Easterners. Tashi is sentenced to live like a nun for the rest of her life. After overthrowing Fergox, Ramil arrives at the islands requesting Tashi's hand to seal the past marriage alliance and rescue her from her "imprisonment."

Golding's book is cleverly written and a definite page-turner. Golding's background as a diplomat and lobbyist show through in creating believable cultures in this fantasy world. *Dragonfly* could be a good book for teaching about merging cultures together and the importance of respecting other cultures for their differences.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Prinz, Yvonne. *The Vinyl Princess*. HarperCollins, 2010. ISBN 9780061715839. \$16.99. 313 p.

Reviewer: Alison Canar

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

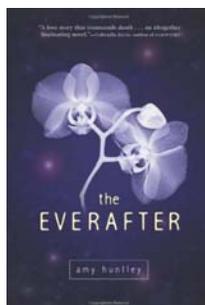
Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Sound recordings--Juvenile fiction; Music--Juvenile fiction; Blogs--Juvenile fiction;

Books--Reviews;

In a downloading generation, Allie remains part of a dying breed. The self-proclaimed "Vinyl Princess" spends most of her summer working full-time at Bob & Bob records. In her spare time she publishes an anonymous blog highlighting some of her favorite LPs. Like most high school girls, Allie and her best friend Kit also spend time looking for love. Allie becomes infatuated with a particular customer, whom she nicknames "M." She is thrilled when her mysterious crush finally asks her out for coffee. Unfortunately, her dream relationship ends abruptly when the two armed robbers who have been burglarizing Telegraph Avenue strike Bob & Bob records. Allie recognizes the voice of one of the robbers--her date. In spite of her humiliation, everything works out when Allie finally realizes she has a true secret admirer who can challenge her for the title of the ultimate vinyl junkie.

Although the plot gets off to a slow start, the narrator's snarky attitude makes for a fun read. The interaction between Allie and her friend Kit feels authentic and should appeal to young adults. In addition to Allie and Kit's relationship issues, Allie's mother tries to find her way in the dating world as well, adding more complexity to the story. Excellent characterization adds to the quirky narrative voice and style. Many of the music references are obscure, but readers can find connections to the text whether or not they share in Allie's fanaticism.



Huntley, Amy. *The Everafter*. HarperCollins, 2009. ISBN 9780061776809. \$16.99. 244 pp.

Reviewer: Anna Swenson

Reading Level: Young Adult

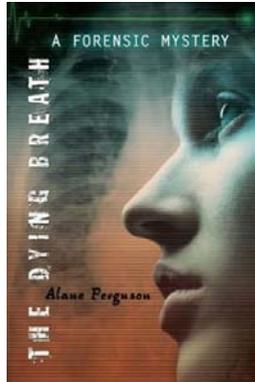
Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction;

Subject: Death--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; Books-Reviews;

Madison Stanton is dead. Trapped in a vast expanse of nothingness, she has no memory of anything from her past life. However, in this world, "Is," there are objects once lost in her past life. When Madison touches a sweater, she is sent back to the moment in her life when she lost it. By reliving these moments of her past, Madison discovers much about life, death, and what comes after.

The Everafter is an imaginative, passionate, and mysterious novel. The writing is captivating, and the plot never gets stale. The characters are unique and interesting. The story has romance, mystery, horror, and drama. Huntley is able to bring great depth to the book, as she explores life and death. The connections Madison makes to Emily Dickinson are fantastic and add so much more to the story. This book is suitable for mature adolescents.



Ferguson, Alane. *The Dying Breath: A Forensic Mystery*. Penguin, 2009. ISBN 9780670063147. \$16.99. 234 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Detective and mystery stories;

Subject: Stalking--Juvenile fiction; Forensic sciences--Juvenile fiction; Coroners--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Kyle O'Neil is back in town and this time he plans on killing Cameryn Mahoney. Kyle had mysteriously disappeared into the Colorado mountains after killing a teacher and sparing Cameryn's life. In his psychopathic mind he believes that his relationship to Cameryn can be eternally bound by their death. Before Kyle returned, Cameryn had gotten closer to death by becoming an assistant coroner and learning forensic science from Dr. Moore. One day Cameryn is called away from high school to view the autopsy of two dead bodies. When Kyle contacts her, she knows he is responsible for these and other murders. The sheriff's deputy, Justin, promises to protect Cameryn until Kyle is caught, and in the process Justin and Cameryn fall in love. While the police are supposedly tracking down Kyle, Kyle kidnaps Cameryn and stabs Justin. Kyle plans on driving his car over a cliff to seal his fate and love with Cameryn, but Cameryn distracts him and escapes. Kyle will not be captured and jumps off the cliff to his death. After Cameryn escapes, she visits Justin at the hospital while he is recovering.

This compelling, gripping, and shocking story is the fourth book in Ferguson's Forensic Mystery series. Any reader interested in pursuing a career in forensic science will enjoy this series. On the other hand, this book is just for young adult readers because of the graphic descriptions of dead bodies in the autopsy room, the crime scenes, and the morgue.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Spillebeen, Geert. *Age 14*. Houghton Mifflin, 2009. ISBN 9780547053424. \$16.00. 216 p.

Reviewer: Alison Canar

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Child soldiers--Ireland--Juvenile fiction; World War, 1914-1918--Participation, Juvenile--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

May 1915, John Condon receives a disturbing telegram: He is missing in action and presumed dead. In truth, John knows that this missing soldier is actually his younger brother Patrick, who used John's name and birth date to sneak into the military. Patrick's story begins with the end of his school career. Just ten years old, Patrick spends his days in menial labor to provide income for his family. Patrick secretly saves his pocket change and finally leaves his hometown at age 12 to join the militia. Thanks to his large stature, he manages to pass for 17 and starts training. Patrick maintains an idealized vision of warfare, even when he arrives at the front lines in France. However, his harrowing experiences with snipers and chlorine gas make him understand the severity of war. Unfortunately, this revelation comes too late to prevent his untimely death.

Blending fact and fiction, Spillebeen creates a grim depiction of European life during the World War I era. Even before Patrick encounters the violence of the battlefield, excerpts from his life are generally depressing. Posing as an older boy also forces Patrick to encounter other mature issues such as alcoholism and sexuality. The early glimpses of Patrick's troubled family life do allow the reader to see why the military would appeal to him and other young boys. As a translated text, the language occasionally feels awkward and—in addition to the third-person narration—may generate a disconnection between the reader and Patrick's story.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)



Nadol, Jen. *The Mark*. Bloomsbury, 2010. ISBN 9781599904313. \$16.99. 228 p.

Reviewer: Anna Swenson

Reading Level: Young Adult

Rating: Excellent

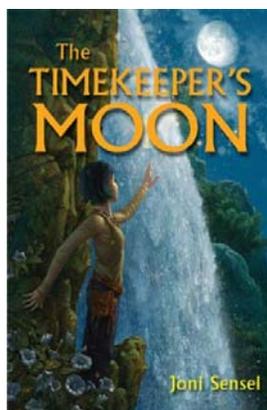
Genre: Contemporary Realistic Fiction; Occult Fiction;

Subject: Psychic ability--Juvenile Fiction; Death--Juvenile Fiction; Philosophers--Juvenile Fiction; Books--reviews;

Cassie Renfield has the ability to see the mark, an aura surrounding someone indicating their impending death. When Cassie sees it around her grandmother, she is haunted by the fact that she cannot do anything to save her. After her relocation to Kansas to live with her estranged aunt, Cassie begins to search for answers with the help of her new college boyfriend Lucas. She struggles to answer this great philosophical question: if you know today is someone's last, should you tell them?

Nadol's *The Mark* is a compelling, thought-provoking novel filled with grief, heartache, and isolation. It's unique and the author does an excellent job of showcasing the ambiguity surrounding fate. Cassie is an immediately likable character, although the secondary characters were somewhat lacking in depth. Some parts of the story, however, fall a little flat. The relationship between Lucas and Cassie is not particularly intriguing, or interesting to read about, and the ending is somewhat anti-climatic. Overall, *The Mark* is a great read and should appeal to young adults with an interest in psychic phenomena.

Volume 30, no.4 (March/April 2010)



Sensel, Joni. *The Timekeeper's Moon*. Bloomsbury, 2010. ISBN 9781599904573. \$16.99. 340 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Adventure and adventurers--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Ariel Farwalker finds an odd map inside the Vault. Soon after the map's discovery, Ariel begins to hear the moon calling to her with threatening messages. When she asks the trees what is wrong, they counsel her to leave Tree-Singer Abbey and find the person who sent the telling dart to her. Ariel and her guardian Scarl set out on a quest, and two more companions join them. Each person in the company uses his or her skills to help Ariel reach her destination. Ariel discovers that a place outside of time holds the telling darts. Ariel enters this limbo-like world, finds the original telling darts, and then releases them into her world. Afterwards, Ariel realizes that she was the person who sent out the darts in the first place.

This story is the companion book to *The Farwalker's Quest*. Sensel starts out great, but the story's momentum and pacing slow down to the point that it's a chore to continue reading. When Ariel actually reaches her destination, the story has lost all sense of plot and character development. Many occurrences are not explained and leave readers guessing. Also, readers may be confused about Ariel's world because in some cases there is actual magic, but in other cases it is only technologies of the past that seem like magic. It is not clear if Sensel is basing her story on our world or if this is a parallel planet to Earth.

Volume 30, no. 4 (March/April 2010)