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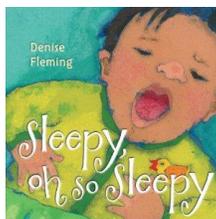
Children's Book Review

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Fleming, Denise. *Sleepy, oh so Sleepy*. Henry Holt, 2010. ISBN 9780805081268. \$16.99. 32 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Toddler

Rating: Outstanding

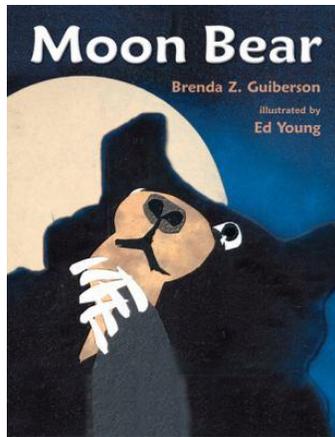
Genre: Picture book;

Subject: Bedtime--Juvenile fiction; Animals--Infancy--Juvenile fiction; Mother and child--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Double-page spreads depict a menagerie of baby animals falling asleep with their mothers nearby. As the sleepy babies are shown, the question "Where's my sleepy baby?" is continuously asked. The last two double-page spreads answer the question and show a sleepy child beginning to be tucked into bed with a sleepy sock monkey.

Quiet and repetitive words seem ready to lull baby to sleep. Fleming uses her trademark pulp poured illustrations to create a gentle bedtime story that will soothe both child and parent. The illustrations equal her award-winning *In a Small, Small Pond*.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Guiberson, Brenda Z. *Moon Bear*. Young, Ed. Henry Holt, 2010. ISBN 9780805089776.
\$16.99. 40 p.

Reviewer: Debbie Barr

Reading level: Toddler, Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

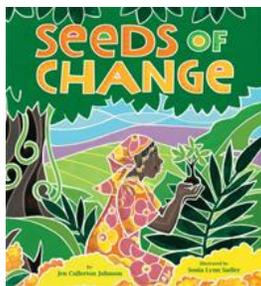
Genre: Informational, Picture book;

Subject: Asiatic black bear --Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Moon bear wakes up from her long winter sleep hungry and looking for food. She travels through the forests of the Himalayas finding honey, bamboo shoots, ants, and berries to eat. She marks her territory by clawing the trunks of rhododendrons, builds a nest in the trees, and avoids the humans that have come into her forest. After a long year she is chubby and ready for another long sleep. When she awakes the next spring, there's a surprise! She's now mama moon bear, with three baby moon bears to look after.

Author Guiberson's beautiful text is paired with Caldecott medal winning illustrator, Ed Young. Together they have created a truly remarkable book, told with poetic words and gorgeous collage work. *Moon Bear* is a simple, yet remarkable story, following the every-day activities of the endangered moon bear. Included in the back of the book are pictures of real moon bears in bear sanctuaries, as well as a link to a website where children and adults can learn more about this lovely species and how to help moon bears everywhere.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Johnson, Jen Cullerton. *Seeds of Change: Planting a Path to Peace*. Sonia Lynn Sadler. Lee & Low, 2010. ISBN 978-1600603679. \$18.95. 40 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

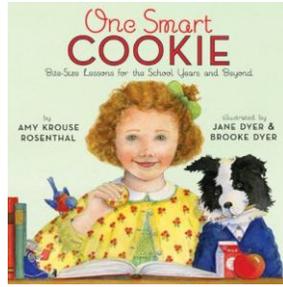
Genre: Biographies; Informational Books

Subject: Maathai, Wangari--Juvenile literature; Kenya--Environmental conditions--Juvenile literature; Women Nobel Prize winners--Biography--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Seeds of Change is the true story of Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan girl in the Kikuyu tribe. Wangari's mother taught her to love and protect all living things, especially the Mugumo tree that provides shelter and food for animals and humans. Despite the fact it was not the norm for girls to attend school, Wangari's parents made the arrangements so she could go. This early love of education eventually led to her attending graduate school and receiving a doctorate degree from the University of Nairobi. Upon returning to Kenya, she was appalled at the great swaths of land which had been cleared by foreign companies for coffee crops. She decided that she needed to do something to help: plant trees, one by one and village by village. Although some mocked her at first, others soon joined and helped her. Their efforts became known as the Green Belt Movement. From Wangari's small "seed of an idea" thirty million trees flourished and again provided shelter and food for animals her people. Wangari's relentless efforts, even after she was arrested, helped to preserve Kenyan's environment and to lift Kenyan women to greater opportunities. She is called Mama Miti or "Mother of Trees" and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004.

This inspiring story could be used by teachers and parents to launch a discussion on family legacies, application of learning, and the importance of commitment to a good cause. Sadler's illustrative technique of scratchboard and oil lends itself naturally to Wangari's story. Each shape is outlined in white and the illustrations appear brilliant off the page. Books like this one introduce young readers to people who are willing to apply their learning and who tackle hard environmental problems.

Volume 30, no.6 (July/August 2010)



Rosenthal, Amy Krouse. *One Smart Cookie: Bite-Size Lessons for the School Year and Beyond*. Illustrated by Jane Dyer and Brooke Dyer. HarperCollins, 2010. ISBN 9780061429705. \$12.99. 34 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

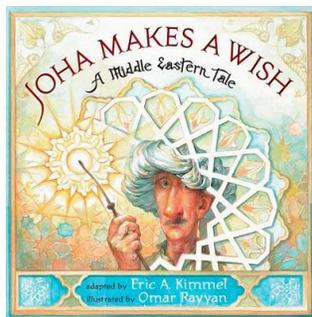
Genre: Picture Books

Subject: Cookies--Juvenile fiction; Conduct of life--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

For the fourth time Rosenthal uses a cookie-making setting to define and illustrate vocabulary words. This time the words relate to behaviors and feelings that promote or detract from success in school.

The Dyers have created delightful ink and watercolor illustrations to add warmth and personality to the words. For those who enjoyed *Cookies*, *Christmas Cookies*, and *Sugar Cookies*, *One Smart Cookie* will be another sweet word exploration. Parents and teachers may read and discuss this book with their children at the beginning of the school year as a gentle reminder of what traits are needed for academic achievement.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Kimmel, Eric A. *Joha Makes a Wish: A Middle Eastern Tale*. Illustrated by Omar Rayyan. Marshall Cavendish, 2010. ISBN 9780761455998. \$17.99. 40 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Folklore; Humorous stories; Picture books;

Subject: Wishes--Juvenile fiction; Arabs--Juvenile fiction; Middle East--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Joha, a poor tired Arab on his way to Baghdad, rests in the shade of an old wall when suddenly the wall topples, revealing a sealed jar. Inside is a note wrapped around a stick--a magic wishing stick! Joha tries it out, but finds out that instead of what he wishes for, he gets the opposite! When he arrives in Baghdad, he tries to stay away from others so as not to cause them the problems he is having. However, when the Sultan comes by and the guards see that Joha is not shouting praise to him along with everyone else, Joha is brought before him. Although Joha tries to explain about the problem wishing stick, the Sultan asks Joha for just a "little" wish—to remove the wart from his nose. No sooner does Joha make the wish than the Sultan's small wart becomes a mass of purple warts! Joha is terrified and runs away. An old shopkeeper hides him and, after listening to Joha's wishing stick troubles, tells him the reason why the wish stick isn't operating correctly.

This is a "wishing" story with a different twist. Joha's response to his newfound wisdom is the opposite of the Golden Rule. In the end, Joha discovers, as most characters in wish stories, that he is content to be what he was before the wishing stick came on the scene. The clincher for this selection is the illustrations by the gifted Omar Rayyan! The watercolor illustrations are realistic, action-packed, expressive, and even hilarious. Examples include Joha glaring at the stick as he wishes, "You wicked stick! I wish you would disappear"; the confused expression on the donkey's face when Joha tries to carry him; the hopeful sultan when Joha wishes his warts away; and pensive Joha as he considers his options now that the stick is no longer in his hands. This fun story would be a great read-aloud! What would happen if all your wishes came true? How about the opposite? It's worth thinking about!

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)

Eugene, Jackson R. *The Wind in the Willows*. I. E. Clark, 2000. ISBN W4671 \$5.25 script; \$60-50/performance fee. 51 p.

Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Plays; Adventure plays; Humorous plays;

Subject: Talking animals--Juvenile drama; Cars--Juvenile drama; Classics--Juvenile drama; Drama--Reviews;

Theme: You cannot live to only please yourself.

Production Requirements: Set, furniture, several props, recorded or produced sound.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 70 minutes

Characters: 13+

Cast: 1 male, 1 female, 11 either

Time Period: Present day

Based on Kenneth Graham's 1908 novel of the same name, this play follows the adventures of Toad with his friends Rat, Mole and Badger. Toad is rich and friendly and is constantly in the pursuit of pleasure. His current obsession is fast cars and despite his friends' warnings and attempts to stop him, he eventually ruins several cars, gets several injuries, and has to pay many fines. When he steals a shiny red sports car, he is sentenced to a twenty year sentence in jail. While Toad is in jail, evil weasels take over his house. When his friends tell him this, he finds a way to break out of jail, and with the help of his friends they rescue his house and turn the weasels over to the sheriff, which wins Toad his freedom.

This skillful adaptation with a fast paced, exciting script and memorable characters will delight audiences. Animal characters (who speak and act like humans) and human characters exist together in a fun fantasy world. The writing is inventive and flows well with several fun jokes and comic sequences. Toad often says that he just wants to do "what I like when I like and as I like." Without preaching too much, Jackson skillfully weaves the story so that children will understand that this is not a good attitude to have. Although the show does require a large number of props, the flexibility of the large scenery would make it possible to tour this show.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)

Hutchins, Pat. *I'm the King of the Castle!* Oberon, 2004. ISBN 1840024860. Contact publisher regarding price. 51 p.

Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin

Reading Level: Preschool, Primary

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Plays; Humorous plays;

Subject: Children's plays; Royalty--Juvenile drama; Sharing--Juvenile drama; Drama--Reviews;

Theme: Working together is best.

Production Requirements: Sound, minimal staging, simple costumes.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 70 minutes

Characters: 10+

Cast: 6 male, 4 female

Time Period: Medieval

Twin brothers rule a kingdom together. This is accomplished by trading off who will be king each night at midnight. The brothers are not happy about this arrangement and spend their days as king torturing the other brother by listening to music, playing games, and eating food that the other despises. This is wreaking havoc on the court and the kingdom. The court jester cooks up a scheme involving an evil baron (played by himself) to help the kings see the error of their ways. They agree to rule in harmony.

This predictable script would possibly be enjoyable to very young children. Their parents will not enjoy it—especially the almost exact repetition of the first and second thirds of the play with the two different kings. The underdeveloped stock characters will bore actors and audience alike. The play becomes slightly more interesting with the introduction of the evil baron in the second act, but then once again follows a predictable plot line. This play would be easy to produce with simple costume ideas and minimalistic staging needs. Possibly a young elementary cast would enjoy presenting the show. One redeeming quality of the show is the definite lesson it teaches about sharing and cooperating.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Tieck, Sarah. *Emma Watson*. ABDO Publishing Company, 2010. ISBN 9781604539745. \$27.07. 32 p.

Reviewer: Laurien Clay

Reading level: Primary

Rating: Excellent

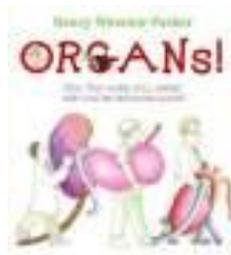
Genre: Biography; informational;

Subject: Watson, Emma, 1990--Juvenile literature; Actors--Great Britain--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

The young British actress, Emma Watson, was born in France, but lived and attended school in Oxford, England. While living in Oxford, she was discovered and asked to audition for the role of Hermione in the Harry Potter films. Even with her instant fame, she has not been deterred from her passion for an education at Brown University and other hobbies.

Sarah Tieck is a well known author of children's biography books. Like her biography of J.K. Rowling, Tieck's informative prose combines well with the photos and other facts strewn throughout the book. This book targets early readers and provides information in a simple way along with word definitions, an index, and a link to websites for further information. This book is yet another wonderful way to learn about Emma Watson at school or at home.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Parker, Nancy Winslow. *Organs! How They Work, Fall Apart, and Can Be Replaced (Gasp!)*.
Nancy Winslow Parker. Greenwillow, 2009. ISBN 9780688151058. \$17.99. 48 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading level: Primary, Intermediate

Rating: Outstanding

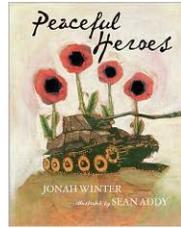
Genre: Informational

Subject: Organs (Anatomy)--Juvenile Literature; Books--Reviews;

Inspired by surgery and her own lack of knowledge about the human body, Parker, who has been writing and illustrating children's books for more than 35 years, has created a thoroughly engaging basic anatomy book. Using humor and facts, she takes young readers on an exploration of vital organs and systems of the body. The addition of simple stories about characters and their organs reinforce and personalize the particulars. With black pen, colored pencil, and watercolor, Parker creates bright, simple illustrations to add details to the text. Colorful sidebars insert yet more information.

Useful back material includes a list of websites, a glossary, and an index. Children who aspiring to be doctors and nurses will soak in this book and may venture into the recommended websites. *Organs!* is fun enough for family read-aloud time, a stellar choice for the elementary science classroom, and a must-purchase for school and public libraries.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Winter, Jonah. *Peaceful Heroes*. Illustrated by Sean Addy. Arthur A. Levine Books, 2009. ISBN 9780439623070. \$17.99. 60 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

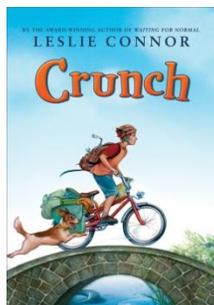
Genre: Biographies; Informational books;

Subject: Heroes--Biography--Juvenile literature; Peace--History--Juvenile literature; Books—Reviews;

Many people may remember William Feehan, the firefighter who lost his life while saving others on September 11, 2001, but fewer will recall Paul Rusesabagina, Aung San Suu Kyi, Ginetta Sagan, and Oscar Romero. These are just four of fourteen extraordinary people highlighted in this book. These people worked for peace through nonviolent means, turned the other cheek, protested violence by using words instead of guns or other weapons, showed courage in the face of opposition, concentrated on the power of love, sacrificed their own comfort to protect and save others, and promoted human rights and freedom for everyone, including the underprivileged. They lived in Afghanistan (Meena Keshwar Kamal); Burma (Aung San Suu Kyi); El Salvador (Oscar Romero); Germany (Corrie ten Boom); India (Mahatma Gandhi); Iraq (Marla Ruzicka); Israel (Jesus Christ); Italy (Ginetta Sagan); Pakistan (Abdul Ghaffar Khan); Rwanda (Paul Rusesabagina); and the United States (Martin Luther King, William Feehan, Clara Barton, and Sojourner Truth).

Each hero is presented in four pages. The text is succinctly written. Even Addy's oil, acrylic, and collage illustrations accented with mostly warm shades of brown, blue, and green add to its calm tenor. This book is suitable for all middle elementary ages and up. In schools, use as an introduction for a human rights unit or as a general unit on biography or world history. At home, it will increase the family's awareness of some of the many people who promote world peace. It is inspirational!

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Connor, Leslie. *Crunch*. Katherine Tegen Books, 2010. ISBN 9780061692291. \$16.99. 330 p.

Reviewer: Sandra L. Tidwell

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

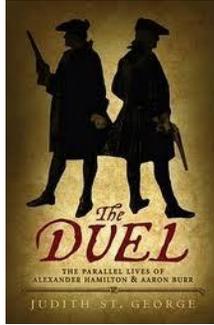
Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Bicycles and bicycling--Juvenile fiction; Business enterprises--Juvenile fiction; Energy conservation--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

When a national fuel shortage occurs, the Bike Barn, the Marriss family business, suddenly has a lot more customers. The five children, ages 5-18, are feeling the "crunch." Mom and Dad, who went north for a vacation in Dad's big trucking rig, are stranded waiting for fuel to return to their East Coast home of Rocky Shores. Their nightly phone calls rally the children for the next day. With the shutdown of almost all public and private transportation, the highway near the Marriss home becomes the thoroughfare for walkers and bicyclers. Sons Dewey and Vince are running the bike business using cheat sheets which explain the most common problems and the eight rules of bike repair. These helps prove to be the answer for getting everything ready for their parents return. Later, Dewey notices something mysterious: Bike parts have disappeared from the Bike Barn, even though it is locked up at night. Dewey wants to blame their sneaky neighbor Spive, but it doesn't "feel" right. When he encounters the thief trying to get away, Dewey's quick thinking insures the thief's quick apprehension.

Although not specifically set in a time period, the economic situation, which sets the backdrop of this family-centered story, feels plausible. Writing from the perspective of 14-year-old Dewey, Connor presents not only a family, but a community of believable characters. The parents clearly believe in active parenting, even though they are separated from their children. They have established a close-knit family and have taught their children to respect each other and work together. Their absence gives the children opportunities to show their resilience and creativity as they figure out how to positively interact with their grouchy neighbor, purchase groceries and bike parts, transport the twins to daily camp, doctor injuries from home accidents, and mediate with customers who are upset with having to pay high prices for bike parts and to wait for their bikes to be fixed. The storyline and the way Connor weaves in the mysterious robberies are enjoyable. Although there are only a couple of instances in the book, it is saddening to see some profanity, even in the voice of the main character. Those words could have easily have been left out to make a totally wonderful read-aloud selection.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



St. George, Judith. *The Duel : The Parallel Lives of Alexander Hamilton & Aaron Burr*. Viking/Penguin Group, 2009. ISBN 9780670011247 \$16.99. 97 p.

Reviewer: Pat Frade

Reading level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

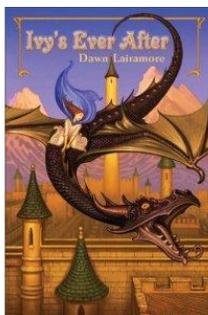
Genre: Biography; Historical fiction;

Subject: Hamilton, Alexander, 1757-1804--Juvenile literature; Burr, Aaron, 1756-1836--Juvenile literature; Burr-Hamilton Duel, Weehawken, N.J., 1804--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

The Duel tells the story of two of the Founding Fathers and how much their lives had in common. Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr grew up in totally different places, but they both lost parents at an early age. Education brought them to the same town as students in New Jersey. When the Revolutionary War began, both Hamilton and Burr served, with Hamilton becoming a general under George Washington and Burr becoming a colonel. After the war, both attended law school and were lawyers in New York, often trying the same case--sometimes together and sometimes in opposition. Their paths would cross time and time again as they became involved in politics. Because both men had very strong personalities and strong opinions, they were often competing against each other, culminating in a tragic duel.

St. George does a good job in paralleling the stories of these two men. The book is geared toward upper elementary/middle school in giving a reader a general introduction to Hamilton and Burr.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Lairamore, Dawn. *Ivy's Ever After*. Holiday House, 2010. ISBN 9780823422616. \$16.95. 311 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

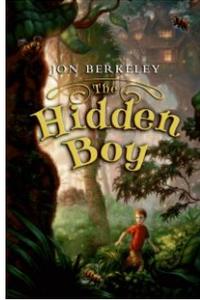
Genre: Fiction;

Subject: Princesses --Juvenile fiction; Dragons --Juvenile fiction; Fairy godmothers--Juvenile fiction; Fairy tales--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

At a young age, Princess Ivy learns that when she turns fourteen she will be locked away in a tower, guarded by a dragon, and rescued by a prince. This process was created when all the past royal families just bore girls. The treaty, known as the Dragon Treaty, was created to entice princes to rescue and wed the kingdom's princesses and rule over the land. When Ivy approaches the date for her "imprisonment," she meets Prince Romil. Ivy over hears Romil's plans to take over Ivy's kingdom and the neighboring countries. The king doesn't believe Romil's plans and makes Ivy go to the tower. Ivy decides to escape from the tower and is helped by the dragon, Elridge. They go in search of Ivy's fairy godmother, Drusilla, to gain help in overthrowing Romil and his men. Ivy and Elridge find Drusilla and take her to meet the Dragon Queen. They plan with the Queen to attack Ivy's castle and drive Romil and his men from the kingdom. Elridge helps Ivy secretly enter the castle, but she is captured by Romil. Romil duels against Elridge but Romil loses. The castle staff drive Romil's men out to the awaiting dragons. Romil and his men are banished from the kingdom and Ivy is free to marry whomever she wants.

Lairamore's story is an interesting twist of seeing "Prince Charming" as the villain and the evil dragon as a best friend. Lairamore's writing is witty and introspective. This debut novel for Lairamore is a great start to a fruitful future career.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Berkeley, Jon. *The Hidden Boy*. Jon Berkeley. HarperCollins, 2010. ISBN 9780061687587. \$16.99. 262 p. p.

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Dependable

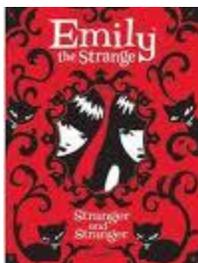
Genre: Fantasy fiction; Adventure stories;

Subject: Adventure and adventurers--Juvenile fiction; Missing children--Juvenile fiction; Brothers and sisters--Juvenile Fiction; Books--Reviews;

The Flint family has won a “Blue Moon Once-in-a-Lifetime-Adventure Holiday” to Bell Hoot. The three week vacation spot, however, turns out to be the residence of the magical Mumbo Jumbo people. On the journey over, seven-year-old Theo disappears off the bus before they arrive. Bea Flint is the only one that can hear her brother. The people of Bell Hoot are divided into clans due to past disagreements. Maize Ledbetter is the leader of the outside clan. She demands the return of the Hidden Boy who is prophesied to take charge once she passes away. Bea discovers while she searches for her brother in the jungle that she has a keen sensitivity to the bees of Bell Hoot. She can hear them from miles away and hum to command them. With her gift she is able to find Theo and defeat Maize Ledbetter. Theo takes over the clan and governs with the help of his people.

Berkeley weaves a fantastical mystery that readers will love to solve. When Bea loses her little brother she realizes her family is what matters most. She orchestrates her destiny by utilizing her talents and courage. Short chapters throughout make the story seem like a breeze to read. Unique plot, characters, and setting are vividly described driving the imagination. Some mysteries are vaguely explained, though. *The Hidden Boy* is, overall, a well written and entertaining book for grades second through fourth.

Volume 30, no.6 (July/August 2010)



Reger, Rob and Gruner, Jessica. *Emily the Strange: Stranger and Stranger*. Rob Reger and Buzz Parker. HarperTeen, 2010. ISBN 9780061452321. \$16.99. 266 p.

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

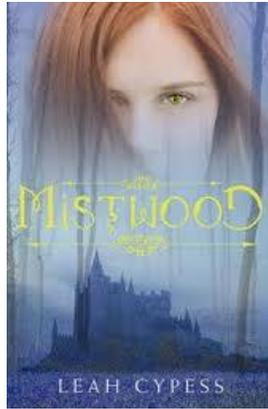
Genre: Fiction; Fantasy fiction

Subject: Goth culture (Subculture)--Fiction; Individuality--Fiction; Books--Reviews;

Emily moves to a new town sulking because she is unable to think up a legendary prank for her old place of residence. After re-setting up her laboratory, Emily accidentally steps onto her newest invention and creates a duplicate of herself. Life seems wonderful to Emily with two of her, that is until this OtherMe attempts to destroy her. Evil OtherMe crafts a dark film that turns all those who watch it into submissive zombies. After OtherMe frames Pattie, Emily's mother, for this heinous crime, Emily must reverse the effects and prove Pattie innocent. Catching OtherMe proves to be almost impossible because when she was created, she sucked out some of Emily's traits. Hence, Emily seeks training from her ex-spy next door neighbor. Once OtherMe has been booby trapped in an enormous birdcage, Emily broadcasts her antidote movie to the townspeople, and the normalized citizens are released from the asylums. With the help of her spirit Great-Aunt Millie, Emily is reunited with her other half and peace is restored.

Reger and Gruner create a hilarious series of events filled with suspense. The quirky plot consistently leaves readers wondering what will happen next. Black and red illustrations add humor to Emily's dark side. *Stranger and Stranger* is a highly entertaining book for readers of all ages.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Cypess, Leah. *Mistwood*. Greenwillow Books, 2010. ISBN 9780061956997.
\$16.99. 320 p.

Reviewer: Laurien Clay

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Dependable

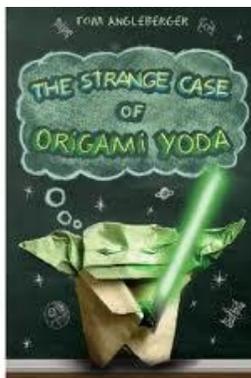
Genre: Fiction; Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Kings, queens, rulers, etc.--Juvenile fiction; Magic--Juvenile fiction; Loyalty--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Isabel remembers nothing before Prince Rokan claimed her from the Mistwood as his Shifter, a powerful and unearthly being always destined to protect the royal family. Rokan needs her help from the unseen forces and intrigues that work against his crown. Isabel struggles to protect him while dealing with returning memories, losing her powers, feeling unnaturally human, and worst of all--discovering the secret that will not only test her loyalty to the crown, but her heart.

Cypess, a first time author, deeply delves into what it means to know oneself and to be human in this tale of political intrigue, magic, and loyalty. The story is captivating and engrossing at its best, but incoherent at its worst. The reader is easily lost in all the courtly plotting and politics as the prose jumps from one thought to the next with no interim explanation. In spite of this, the reader is able to put together a compelling story of self-discovery based on what scraps of plot the prose does dole out.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Angleberger, Tom. *The Strange Case of Origami Yoda*. Angleberger, Tom. Abrams, 2010. ISBN 9780810984257. \$12.95. 141 p.

Reviewer: Debbie Barr

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Fiction;

Subject: Origami --Juvenile fiction; Yoda (Fictitious character : Lucas) --Juvenile fiction; Eccentrics and eccentricities --Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

McQuarrie Middle School is turned upside down when Dwight, a social outcast, starts foretelling the future--via an origami version of Yoda from Star Wars. Soon students are finding themselves avoiding disaster and doing better on tests due to Yoda's guidance. For Tommy, the compiler of the "The Strange Case of Origami Yoda," discovering if Dwight/Yoda's powers really work is imperative. It's the only way he will know if his crush likes him. Through a series of incidents told by different students, Tommy studies Yoda's past. By the end he realizes that, while he may never know if Dwight can tell the future, things have gone well for the followers of Yoda, and takes his advice to ask his crush to dance. She, of course, says yes.

The Strange Case of Origami Yoda is just the sort of light-hearted "boy book" that middle graders will be looking for after finishing the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* books. Much like Jeff Kinney, Angleberger adds goofy cartoons in the margins to contribute to the story. The layout is meant to imitate a journal, with crumpled pages indicating that it's been passed around, and different fonts are used for each point of view. Each story is fairly short, making it a great book for reluctant readers, because they can read it in small chunks at their own pace. For those interested, instructions are included to make your own origami Yoda. Although adults may not find the story as appealing to read, it seems to be just the kind of book to hit its target audience perfectly.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)

Zeder, Susan. *The Play Called Noah's Flood*. Anchorage Press, 1984. ISBN 0876022476. Contact publisher regarding price. 62 p.

Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Plays; Historical plays; Humorous plays;

Subject: Mystery plays; Medieval times--Juvenile drama; Religious festivals--Juvenile drama; Drama--Reviews;

Theme: The process of art production can be more rewarding than the end result.

Production Requirements: Large set, several props and movable set pieces, costume changes and sound.

Acts: 1

Run Time: 90 minutes

Characters: 18

Cast: 10 male, 8 female

Time Period: Late 1400s

This play takes place in a small medieval town in England where the citizens are getting ready to do a Mystery Play for a religious festival. The whole town is involved and excited about the play, especially John, the blacksmith who is heading up the play. John goes so far as to place the play's importance above his work and family. When the festival official arrives five days early to judge the play, chaos ensues. Eventually though, the town pulls together to put on the play, Noah's Flood, anyway. John's relationship with his family is somewhat healed through this process. Despite the official's criticisms, the townspeople are happy with the play, proving that creating art together is more rewarding than accolades and fame.

This play serves as an excellent introduction to Medieval Mystery Plays. It shows the process of how they were put together and performed and also includes an adaptation of one of the plays. The large cast of colorful characters (18+) makes it ideal for a high school or teenage acting group to perform. The play within the play creates opportunities for lots of creativity with costumes, set, and performance. The writing, largely based on actor improvisation, is organic and smooth, crafted by the playwright instead of just thrown on the page. Although the play ends happily, it does not tidily wrap up every plot point, which leaves room for thought and discussion following the play.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)

Zeder, Susan. *Mother Hicks*. Anchorage Press, 1984. ISBN 0876022638. Contact publisher regarding price. 68 p.

Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin

Reading Level: Intermedite, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Plays; Occult plays; Historical plays;

Subject: Depression era--Juvenile drama; Witches--Juvenile drama; Sign language--Juvenile drama; Drama--Reviews;

Theme: Don't judge those you don't know.

Production Requirements: Open stage with several suggested areas. Some set pieces and music.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 80-90 minutes

Characters: 8-9

Cast: 4-5 male, 4 female

Time Period: 1935

The play takes place in the small town of Ware, Illinois during the depression. The action centers around Tuc, a young deaf man who lives in the town; Girl, a 13 year old who was found as a baby in the town and whom the town has raised; and Mother Hicks, an old woman who lives alone on a hill. The town, looking for explanations to their problems, blames most negative occurrences on witches—namely Old Mother Hicks. When Girl is punished by her current guardian for going to the graveyard at night to spy on Mother Hicks, she decides to become a witch herself to get revenge. When she contracts pneumonia, Tuc secretly takes her to Mother Hicks to be healed. Girl learns more about herself, Tuc, and Mother Hicks while she recuperates there and develops a relationship with Mother Hicks. At the conclusion, Girl decides that she will stay with Mother Hicks for awhile.

This play successfully captures the feel of a depression-era, small town through language and issues explored. The characters are well developed and the audience will immediately sympathize with many of them. The dialogue alternates from light and fun to deep and powerful, keeping the audience engaged. The staging is especially interesting with regards to Tuc, who signs all of his lines which are spoken by a chorus of other cast members. The playwright emphasizes the importance of finding a deaf actor to play this part if at all possible to truly capture the emotion and poetry of the sign language. The themes of acceptance and differences are especially applicable to young audiences. Because some of the plot points have occult undertones, this play would not be suitable for very young audiences. Although this play is the first in a trilogy, it can stand alone.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)

Zeder, Susan. *The Taste of Sunrise*. Anchorage Press, 1996. ISBN 0876024010. Contact publisher regarding price. 81 p.

Reviewer: Rebeca Wallin

Reading Level: Intermedite, Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Plays; Historical plays;

Subject: Sign language--Juvenile drama; Deaf schools--Juvenile drama; Scarlet fever--Juvenile drama; Drama--Reviews;

Theme: You must learn to be your true self before you can help others.

Production Requirements: Minimalistic set with platform and chairs, bright lighting.

Acts: 2

Run Time: 90 minutes

Characters: 9

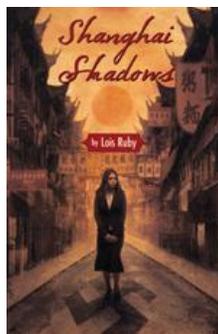
Cast: 5 F, 4 M (including 1 M Deaf actor-required & 1 M Deaf actor-strongly suggested) with doubling, or up to 21 + (6 F, 5 M, including 1 M Deaf actor-required, 1 M Deaf actor-strongly suggested, 10 + Either) with roles distributed

Time Period: 1920s-1930s

The story focuses on Tuc, a deaf man; Nell Hicks, a reclusive woman; and Maizie, a teenager. The play begins with Mother Hicks saving baby Tuc's life when he contracts Scarlet Fever. The fever causes Tuc to lose his hearing, and when he turns ten he is sent to a school for the deaf to learn to read lips and speak. While at the school, Tuc meets and becomes friends with Maizie, a hearing girl with deaf parents who works at the school. After attending school for several years, Tuc returns home to his dying Father. After his father's death, the orphaned Tuc stays with Mother Hicks for awhile. Later, through a misunderstanding, he ends up at the Illinois State Home. He is rescued by Maizie, who is also there and very pregnant. They escape together and return to Mother Hicks who helps Maizie deliver her baby. Maizie eventually leaves, leaving her baby with a family in town.

The prequel to Zeder's *Mother Hicks* and second in a trilogy of plays, this multilingual ASL and spoken English play presents challenges for production. However, if the challenges are taken on, it could be an extremely powerful piece of art. As all lines for the show are translated into either ASL or spoken English, all of the actors need to be able to sign. The author specifies that Tuc should always be played by a deaf actor. The powerful and poetic writing will engage audiences, and the strong characters will make it an enjoyable experience for actors. The production elements are extremely simple, with just some chairs and levels on the stage so that the world of the play can be created through strong staging and acting.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Ruby, Lois. *Shanghai Shadows*. Holiday House, Inc., 2006. ISBN 9780823419609. \$16.95. 284 p.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan.

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult

Rating: Significant shortcomings

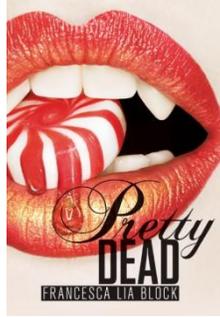
Genre: Fiction; Historical fiction;

Subject: Jews --China --Shanghai --Juvenile fiction; World War, 1939-1945 --China --Juvenile fiction; Family life --China --Fiction; Books--Reviews;

Ilse, Erich, and their Jewish parents arrive in Shanghai to escape Hitler's domination of Austria. The family wants to go to America, but with no visa the only country that would accept them is China. After their arrival, Ilse is surprised by the thousands of other European refugees living in Shanghai. At first life is bearable, but Japanese soldiers single out Jewish refugees by making them move into a ghetto. In response to their treatment, Erich and Ilse do work for an underground resistance group. Ilse's mother, who hid a past marriage to an American, is placed into an internment camp. Ilse becomes the mother and sole provider for her family. Erich is captured and imprisoned during a resistance mission. Their father sacrifices his beloved violin to get his son out of jail. In 1945 news arrives that Japan is defeated and their armies leave Shanghai. Ilse's mother returns with news that her American husband wants them to come to America to divorce her and give her family a new life after the war. Ilse and her family board a ship to go to America.

Ruby's book is beneficial to help readers learn about this forgotten piece of history. Yet the book has significant shortcomings in character development, story flow, and historical detail. Teachers and librarians can use this book to showcase what other events occurred during World War II, but there is little merit to Ruby's writing style.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Block, Francesca Lia. *Pretty Dead*. HarperCollins, 2009. ISBN 9780061547850. \$16.99. 208 p.

Reviewer: Megan Harris

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

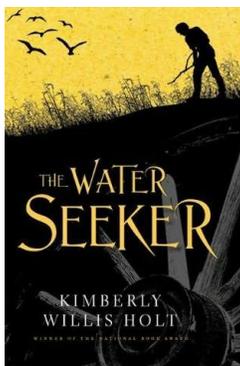
Genre: Occult fiction

Subject: Vampires--Juvenile fiction; Supernatural--Juvenile fiction; Death--Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

Charlotte has lived over one hundred years as a vampire with unlimited wealth, striking beauty and eternal youth. She befriends a local human teenager, Emily, and her boyfriend Jared. Despite attempting to keep her vampirism a secret from them, Charlotte can't seem to curb Emily's growing suspicion. When Emily dies, Jared rushes to Charlotte and asks her to change him into a vampire. Charlotte refuses, but drawn together by their mutual sadness at Emily's passing and strong attraction to one another, the two begin a love affair. Charlotte describes how the loss of her brother made her prey to the vampire William. She spent the century with him, until her recent escape. After hearing the story Jared still expresses interest in becoming a vampire. Meanwhile, William appears as a teacher at Charlotte and Jared's high school, and Charlotte begins to exhibit increasingly human characteristics; sweating, blushing, warmth, and injury. When Jared disappears, Charlotte finds him with William and Emily, who is now a vampire. Charlotte realizes that once William changed Emily, she herself would return to human form. Jared becomes disgusted with Emily's inhumane vampire behavior and returns to Charlotte, now human.

Block uses vampirism to describe experiences with sexuality. Refreshing, however, is the perspective from a female vampire's point of view, describing the female sexual experience, where most novels focus on male experiences. Block's heroine lives in a dark, somber world, described with a mature voice. Teenagers will appreciate the love triangle, and the rich descriptions of the events which shaped the last century. While the text can seem a little self-important, with almost no humor and constant heavy emotion, it presents a quick and enjoyable read, due to the detailed descriptions of characters and locations. Note: Mature sexual content and language.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Holt, Kimberly Willis. *The Water Seeker*. Henry Holt, 2010. ISBN 9780805080209. \$16.99. 309 p.

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Excellent

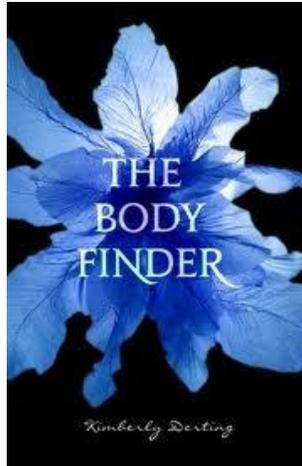
Genre: Fiction; Historical fiction;

Subject: Coming of age--Juvenile fiction; Fathers and sons--Juvenile fiction; Frontier and pioneer life--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Amos, whose mother dies in childbirth, is the son of a trapper and dowser. His father Jake cannot care for his infant son and takes Amos to live with his childless brother and sister-in-law, who delight in their young charge. Frontier life for Amos is filled with adversity, loss, adventure, friends, enemies, love, accidents, death, and courage. In addition, Amos must come to terms with his father, his inherited dowsing and artistic skills, and his own son.

The novel spans 26 years of Amos' life, embraces almost two dozen idiosyncratic characters, and incorporates the watchful presence of his dead mother. Secondary characters are deftly created, and the plot inspires page turning. The sense for pioneer hardship and determination pervades the narrative. Although epic in its story, some actions seem somewhat contrived and abbreviated, as in the drowning accident of the hard-hearted, prideful Mr. Winthrop, who abused his wife and child. Because Holt's writing is so readable, perhaps a series would have allowed readers to continue to enjoy Amos Kincaid's life.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Derting, Kimberly. *The Body Finder*. HarperCollins, 2010. ISBN 9780061779817. \$16.99. 336 p.

Reviewer: Rachel Wadham

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

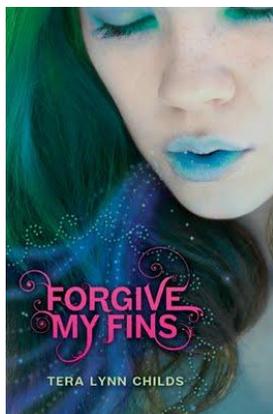
Genre: Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Psychic ability--Juvenile fiction; Serial murder--Juvenile fiction; Detective and mystery stories--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Sixteen-year-old Violet has learned to live with her ability to feel the echoes of the dead not only where they lie but also those that attach to anyone who may have killed such as police officers and hunters. Soon Violet's tranquility busts when she finds a body, and it becomes apparent that a serial killer is on the loose. Also dealing with her feelings for Jay her long time best friend for whom she now has romantic thoughts Violet is trying to stay one step ahead of the killer as well as all the girls vying for Jay's attention. That is until the killer finds out about her ability and Violet finds that it's not just her heart at stake but her life.

First time novelist Derting has created a novel which combines the best aspects of the thriller genre with a great deal of romance. Based on an interesting premise with just a few twists that lead you to one conclusion while the truth lies in another direction, Derting adds just the right amount of a creepy excitement to find out the truth by interspersing Violet's story with the thoughts of the killer. Unfortunately despite the fast pace, the elements of the mystery often feel overwhelmed by the characters intense romantic feelings. While there is not a lot of remarkable elements that make this book stand out, the overwhelming emotions of first love and fighting for your life are enough to draw in a variety of teen readers who enjoy straightforward genre fiction.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Childs, Tera Lynn. *Forgive My Fins*. HarperCollins, 2010. ISBN 9780061914652
\$16.99. 293 p.

Reviewer: Debbie Barr.

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Fiction; Fantasy fiction;

Subject: Mermaids--Juvenile fiction; Princesses--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; Books—Reviews;

Lily Sanderson is not your average, awkward teenager. She has other problems to deal with. Like the fact she's a mermaid: a mermaid princess. And she's got to kiss her crush by her eighteenth birthday or she loses her crown for good. One problem: she kisses the wrong boy, her annoying neighbor Quince, which magically bonds them together and begins the process of turning him into a merman. Lily is furious and takes him back home to Thalassinia, but learns she can't break the bond until they've gone through "counseling." After three tests on a desert island and a week back on land, Lily still claims that she can't stand Quince, the bond is broken. Once she's finally away from him, though, she realizes the things she felt from him were coming from herself, not the magical mermaid bond. In the end, Lily makes up with Quince and decides permanently stay on land with him.

Childs creates a memorable voice for Lily, charming and funny, which helps a romantic plot that could feel tired and old become fresh and full of life. Readers will find themselves thinking in silly undersea phrases such as "damselish" and "son of a swordfish" that help add to the mermaid fun. A perfect book for young adults that are looking for a more innocent paranormal romance and for any girls that secretly wished they could be mermaids when they were kids. *Forgive My Fins* will delight teen girls of all ages.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Griffin, Adele. *The Julian Game*. Putnam's, 2010. ISBN 9780399284604. \$16.99. 208 p.

Reviewer: Rachel Wadham

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Dependable

Genre: Fiction; Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Bullies--Juvenile fiction; Online identities--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

When Raye and her friend Natalya create an online profile for fictitious Elizabeth, they only hoped to chat with some popular boys. But when Raye reveals the profile to popular Ella at a tutoring session, Ella decides that Elizabeth is just who she needs to get revenge on gorgeous Julian who recently shunned her at a party. Soon Raye realizes that Ella's plans are devious and hurtful, and she confesses the whole scheme to Julian. As Julian begins to show interest in Raye, something Raye has been dreaming of, Ella turns her venom on her new betrayer and enacts another vile scheme against Raye by posting revealing pictures and snarky comments online. Dealing with the bullying, Raye must decide if she can stand up for what she believes in, all the while trying to find the boyfriend she deserves.

Although this is a familiar mean girl story, Griffin goes outside the typical structure by creating a main character who follows her conscience and does not fall to the pressures of the popular crowd. The supporting cast also includes a unique best friend who stands by Raye, despite her subterfuge. These features make the emotional development of all the characters feel authentic and help the standard theme of staying true to oneself come through clearly. Even with its simple plot and unremarkable setting, this novel provides just the right twist to make it stand out in its own niche for those looking for a less hardcore novel on the topic of bullying.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Smith, Sherri L. *Flygirl*. Putnam's, 2008. ISBN 9780399247095. \$16.99. 275 p.

Reviewer: Pat Frade

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Outstanding

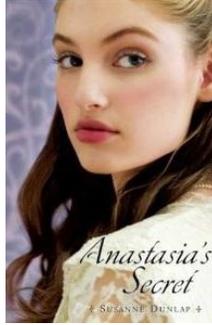
Genre: Fiction; Historical fiction;

Subject: Women Airforce Service Pilots (U.S.)--Juvenile fiction; World War, 1939-1945--Participation, Female--Juvenile fiction; Air pilots--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Ida Mae Jones is a fair-skinned African American living in Louisiana during WWII. Her crop-dusting father taught her to fly, which she absolutely loves. But because she is "half-black," she can't even get a pilot license. While her brother is serving his country in the South Pacific, she is cleaning houses. One day her younger brother shows her an ad in the newspaper for women pilots. Ida Mae decides to take a chance, passes the entrance test, and heads for Sweetwater, Texas, for training in the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) program. Ida Mae and her fellow women pilots go through months of rigorous training so that they can assume responsibility for military flight tasks on the homefront. Ida Mae has to "pretend" to be white by not curling her hair too much and watching what she says. She has to deal with conflicting emotions regarding her black family and friends in Louisiana and her new white friends in Sweetwater.

Smith has done excellent research and accurately depicts the beginnings of the WASP program and the lives of those first women pilots. Ida Mae is a character that readers will like from the very beginning—a patriotic, gusty, strong black woman, who must figure out who she really is.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Dunlap, Susanne. *Anastasia's Secret*. Bloomsbury, 2010. ISBN 9781599904207. \$16.99. 352 p.

Reviewer: Laurien Clay

Reading Level: Young Adult, All

Rating: Excellent

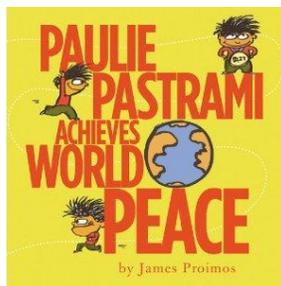
Genre: Historical fiction;

Subject: Anastasia Nikolaevna, Grand Duchess, daughter of Nicholas II, Emperor of Russia, 1901-1918--Juvenile fiction; Princesses--Juvenile fiction; Interpersonal relations--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

For Anastasia Romanova, life as the youngest daughter of Tsar Nicholas II of Russia is not as easy as it seems. Tired of being ignorant about her surroundings, she befriends a young guard named Sasha. He not only opens her eyes to real life and the calamitous events of a revolution, but also to the possibility of love. When the monarchy falls and the Bolsheviks rise to power, not only is their relationship tested, but so is Anastasia's love and loyalty for her family.

With themes of disillusionment, love, loyalty, and regret, Dunlap reveals the coming-of-age story of one of history's most famous royals through the perspective of a struggling adolescent. Anastasia's life is portrayed in vivid yet concise prose that draws in and enthralls the reader. However, because this novel presents a love story, there are somewhat adult situations. Beyond this, *Anastasia's Secret* is as excellently written and well-researched piece of historical fiction, as is Dunlap's *The Musician's Daughter*.

Volume 30, no. 6 (July/August 2010)



Proimos, James. *Paulie Pastrami Achieves World Peace*. Illustrated by James Proimos. Little, Brown, 2009. ISBN 9780316032926. \$15.99. 40 p.

Reviewer: Gabi Kupitz

Reading Level: All

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Humorous stories

Subject: Conduct of life--Juvenile fiction; Peace--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

At age seven, Paulie Pastrami achieved world peace. How did he perform such a feat? Paulie is someone most kids and adults can identify with: he was often chosen last for team play, couldn't find matching socks, exaggerated, and did other things that made him special, but ordinary. Then one day, Paulie decided to start being nice. He was nice to small animals and then he was nice to his sister and other people. Next, he decided to be kind at school, to his principal, his teacher, and especially his fellow students. Excited to be elected "best person on the planet" by his now peaceful classmates, Paulie set his sights on world peace--something he wanted to achieve in one evening. He talked to his parents and his Dad suggested "a world tour." So, off they went. By bedtime, the mission was accomplished. You'll have to read this picture book to find out how they did it.

Short text and simple but vivid illustrations give life to this amazing young hero. A great read-aloud that begs for cupcakes, cheering, and doing something about our little corner of the world. Adults will appreciate the humor that may escape younger children, but all ages will delight in Paulie Pastrami's energy.

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