
Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway
Reading Level: Toddler
Rating: Excellent
Genre: Informative; fiction;
Subject: Mothers and sons--Juvenile fiction; Love--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

A mother describes the things she loves about her toddler son--from his tousled bedhead, to the butterfly flutter of his heartbeat, to his runaway energy. Mom's words are sweetly sentimental and capture the delight many mothers find in their children.

Pham intersperses brief, elliptical text to describe everyday events. She uses her digitally-colored ink illustrations to visually expand the impish exploits of an active toddler. Similar in tone and style to Pham's *Big Sister, Little Sister* (2005), *All the Things I Love about You* will likely be a family favorite and a much-read bedtime story for little boys.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Debbie Barr  
Reading Level: Toddler, Preschool  
Rating: Excellent  
Genre: Informative; Picture Books;  
Subject: English language--Alphabet--Juvenile literature; Alphabet Books --Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Did you know you can find the whole alphabet with items and words in *Goodnight Moon*? From A for “Air” and Z for “Zzzz”, every letter is shared with a picture from one of the world’s most popular picture books.

For children who love *Goodnight Moon*, *Goodnight Moon ABC* will be a useful next step in their learning and reading. The book brings in familiar pictures and words from the original story, in the new format of an alphabet book. Some words are familiar, like “Red Balloon” and “Kittens” and “Clock,” other words come from the details of the pictures, like “Giraffe” and “Lamp.” Although it may not be a great fit for those who do not know *Goodnight Moon*, children who have begged for the original to be read to them again and again will be excited and surprised by this new format.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Laurien Clay  
Reading level: Toddler, Preschool, Primary  
Rating: Excellent  
Genre: Informative; Informational books;  
Subject: Bears--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Mother bears and their cubs around the world have fun doing what they do best: being bears. Pandas snap bamboo and Grizzlies fish with their claws while Sun Bears lick up sticky snacks of honey; Spectacled bears doze together in a nap, and Polar Bears dive into the deep.

Bob Barner presents another charming visual menagerie of animals in his newest book. Each colorful collage opens to the reader another view of what each bear's life is like. Moreover, facts on each species' habitats and cubs add further highlights to the book. This book would be great for early elementary school education in an animal unit and would be a wonderful addition to any home library. Barner is the author of many children's books, including *Stars! Stars! Stars!*

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)
Bees are disappearing. In a period of four years, approximately one third of the honeybees in the United States have vanished. When bees abandon their hives, it is called Colony Collapse Disorder. Why is this so important? Honeybees not only make honey but also pollinate flowering plants. Without pollinating honeybees, many foods such as tomatoes, watermelons, cantaloupes, peppers, and almonds would not grow. Honeybees also pollinate cotton plants, which people use to make fabric, and clover, that cows, sheep, and goats eat. Honeybees are the most important bees for agriculture because they pollinate more than ninety different kinds of crops. Research is underway to solve the mystery of the disappearing bees. Some theories as to why the bees are disappearing are: viruses, bacteria, fungi, stress, diet, or loss of habitat.

Rotner and Woodhull compose a noteworthy informational text. The Buzz on Bees: Why Are They Disappearing? is filled with photographs by Shelly Rotner. The straightforward text effectively gets the reader concerned with the environment. The back pages offer fun facts such as, “Bees have two pairs of wings that flap 250 times a second.” More resources about bees are also listed. Teachers, parents, and children will love this colorful, non-fiction picture book.
Nico and Lola: Kindness Shared Between a Boy and a Dog


Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown
Reading Level: Preschool, Primary
Rating: Excellent
Genre: Informative; Informational books;
Subject: Kindness--Juvenile literature; Dogs--Juvenile literature; Pet-sitting--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Nico’s Aunt Sue calls to ask if he would be so kind as to take care of her little pug Lola. When the day arrives Nico makes sure to take special care of the little dog. Nico runs and plays with Lola, but makes sure she does not get overheated. Nico even lets his neighbors play with Lola and teaches them to treat her kindly as they take her on a walk. Nico tells Lola all about his day and Lola listens. In the end, Aunt Sue comes back from her trip and is so grateful to find Lola happy and well taken care of.

Hill writes a story that dog lovers will enjoy. The color photographs taken by Graunke make the book all the more delightful. The theme of kindness is exemplified throughout the story as Nico cares for Lola. Children and grownups of all ages will enjoy this sweet example of sharing, love, and service.

Volume 31, no.2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Debbie Barr
Reading Level: Preschool, Primary
Rating: Outstanding
Genre: Informative; Picture books;
Subject: Imaginary playmates--Juvenile fiction; Teacher-student relationships--Juvenile fiction; High schools--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Ida has just started school, and of course she brings her imaginary friend, Dotty, with her. The other kids have all brought imaginary friends with them too. After the winter holidays, Ida brings Dotty to school again, as usual. Some of the other kids no longer have their friends though. Ida keeps bringing Dotty with her, but soon she is the only imaginary friend left. One day, another girl teases Ida about still having Dotty, and “Dotty” pushes the girl. Their teacher, Ms. Raymond, makes them write apology notes. Ms. Raymond asks Ida who Dotty is, and tells Ida that Dotty needs to behave better at school. Then she “accidentally” lets Ida know that she still brings her imaginary friend to school, too.

Erica S. Perl has written a simple story perfect for children with imaginary friends of their own. While she gives no description of the friends, Julia Denos does a fantastic job of bringing each child’s imaginary friend to life with whimsical watercolor and colored pencil illustrations. Each page has fun details that simply cannot be caught the first time through, making it a fun book to read over again. With a story about staying true to yourself, even when your friends are changing, *Dotty* would make a great gift for an imaginative child just starting Kindergarten.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Laurien Clay  
Reading Level: Preschool, Primary  
Rating: Outstanding  
Genre: Informative; Informational Books;  
Subject: Goats--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Did you know that a group of goats is called a trip? Goats are amiable animals that love to play, and eat things like; hay, brush, and grass. These horned mammals also climb rocks to keep their hooves groomed and like nothing more than to keep warm and dry.

Dolphin is an author of many children’s nonfiction books, including *Playful Pigs* and *Casual Cows*. The simple and vivid prose of *Gleeful Goats* mixes well with its glossary, photographs, and facts, making learning about these amazing animals easy for young readers. Moreover, this influx of information comes with an engaging story in rhyme about a lost goat that is sure to charm any reader.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Laurien Clay
Reading level: Primary, intermediate
Rating: Dependable
Genre: Informative; Biographies;
Subject: Vlad III, Prince of Wallachia, 1430 or 31-1476 or 7--Juvenile literature;
Wallachia--Kings and rulers--Biography--Juvenile literature; Wallachia--History--15th century--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Vlad Dracula was the bloodthirsty prince of Wallachia who had a fetish for the impalement of any of his enemies--or anyone who displeased him. Having first been imprisoned by a Turkish sultan with his brother in his youth, he eventually became free and spent the rest of his life fighting to keep his throne---leaving not only a trail of bodies in his wake, but a legend that eventually immortalized him as the inspiration for Bram’s Count Dracula.

Michael Burgan, author of over 200 other nonfiction children’s books, along with Kim Jones more than vividly recreate Vlad Dracula’s world and acts of violence. The simple language, while it conveys the accuracy of its information, is more than made up for with the expectedly graphic nature of the computer-generations illustrations and real photographs. This blood-soaked tale, while well-told, however may be slightly confusing as it does not tell it chronologically. In spite of this, the book’s other features, such as a glossary, index, bibliography, and sources for further information make learning about Vlad more comprehensible, making it a useful history-teaching tool for parents in the home or teachers in the classroom, especially around the holiday of Halloween.

Volume, 31, no. 2 (November/December)

Reviewer: Debbie Barr
Reading level: Primary, Intermediate
Rating: Excellent
Genre: Informative; Informational books;
Subject: Money-making projects for children--Juvenile literature; Selling--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Making money doesn't always have to be difficult. *In Cool Jobs for Super Sales Kids*, young people can find ideas on what types of businesses to set up and tips on how to sell their items. Included are helpful charts for budgeting and scheduling, ideas about how to package the goods to sell, and how to advertise and bring in customers. Bright colors and helpful photos fill the pages, keeping the instructions simple and easy to read.

Scheunemann has created an easy-to-follow guide for young entrepreneurs who are looking to make some extra money. With tips on how to sell crafts, food, or used items, *Cool Jobs for Super Sales Kids* would be a nice addition for a school, public, or home library.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan  
Reading level: Primary, Intermediate  
Rating: Excellent  
Genre: Fiction; Adventure stories;  
Subject: Mason, Joseph, 1807-1883 --Childhood and youth --Juvenile fiction; Audubon, John James, 1785-1851 --Juvenile fiction; Mice --Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Celeste is a small mouse who lives under the floor boards of a Southern plantation. While making her way to the main floor to get food, a houseguest, Joseph, picks up Celeste before the house cat captures her. Joseph, who is an assistant to John James Audubon, is learning to paint plants for Audubon's backgrounds. Unfortunately, Joseph is having a hard time trying to please Audubon's perfective nature and submitting to Audubon's treatment of his animal subjects. But Joseph gains confidence with Celeste nestled inside his shirt pocket. While with Joseph, Celeste witnesses Audubon's artistic genius, creates two new friendships with a thrush and an osprey, and finds a new home in a little doll house up in the attic. But the cat isn't far behind. While trapped in the attic, Celeste sees Joseph and Audubon leave the plantation. Celeste feels alone in her doll house, but because of her friendship with the thrush, a wren comes to stay the winter with her.

Cole's book is not a quaint story; it's a serious piece of literature. Celeste's life is full of death and danger, which helps readers paint a somewhat realistic picture of a mouse's life. But it also paints a realistic picture of Audubon's macabre treatment of animals. The illustrations are breath-taking and the story is based on true events in Audubon's life. The structure of this book is very similar to *The Invention of Hugo Cabret*, while the story mimics themes found in *The Tale of Despereaux*.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Lauren Bangerter  
Reading level: Primary, intermediate  
Rating: Dependable  
Genre: Fiction; Detective and mystery stories;  
Subject: Brothers and sisters--Juvenile fiction; New York (N.Y.)-- Fiction; Books--Reviews;

After finding hidden messages behind the walls in their new Manhattan apartment, the Smithfork children embark on an adventure to find out what those messages mean. They are clues that lead to a treasure which was hidden by Mr. Post—who had lived in the apartment over eighty years ago. Although many had tried to find the treasure before them, the Smithforks were able to solve the mystery because they found a new clue. The first step in solving the mystery was to return an over-due library book and receive a package in return which put all the other clues in the correct order. Enlisting the help of their neighbor, Eloise Post, the Smithforks unravel the scavenger-hunt-like mystery that had generations of detectives before them. Along the way, they realize that the most important treasure is the relationship you develop with your own family. The treasure is found, along with Eloise’s long lost brother, and the stage is set for another hunt.

*Walls within Walls* is an intriguing read. The use of coded messages, patterns, and poetry makes it fun for the reader to unravel the mystery with the Smithforks, and Sherry displays an impressive knowledge of poetry and architecture. However, it does seem unbelievable that the Smithforks just happened to find out exactly how to decode the messages or that they happen to know random bits of information about New York architectural history. This would be a good choice for an elementary school aged child and would form an entertaining framework for learning about poetry and architecture.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Lauren McMullan  
Reading Level: Primary, Intermediate  
Rating: Outstanding  
Genre: Informative; Informational Books;  
Subject: Seahorses--Juvenile literature; Wildlife conservation--Juvenile literature; Philippines--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

What animal appears to be a combination of horse, crocodile, monkey, and kangaroo? The seahorse of course! This unique animal is in danger of extinction from overfishing, habitat destruction, and black market trade all over the world. One organization, Project Seahorse, is working to help correct the scare of permanent disappearance of this fascinating fish. Project Seahorse has seen success in the Philippines and this book follows the founders and community support systems that are working to keep Project Seahorse successful. Along the way there is much information about the habitat, life habits, and economical problems that are at work in this relationship between seahorse and man.

*Project Seahorse* is a well-researched and beautifully formatted informational book with an earth-friendly message that never comes across as preachy or overbearing. The photographs are stunning and children will no doubt find amusement and fascination in looking at the plentiful pictures of the bug-eyed, intricate, and beautiful, coral reef-dwelling seahorse. This book would be a wonderful choice for a unit on wildlife conservation and a delightful educational adventure for an at home read. *Project Seahorse* also contains some wonderful conservation foundation and general ocean specific knowledge websites in the back of the book. The story also gives an interesting and brief overview of daily life in a Filipino village.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Debbie Barr  
Reading level: Primary, Intermediate, Young adult  
Rating: Outstanding  
Genre: Informational books; Biographies;  
Subject: Schulz, Charles M. (Charles Monroe), 1922-2000--Juvenile nonfiction; Cartoonists--United States--Biography--Juvenile nonfiction; Books--Reviews;  

Charles Schulz has charmed the hearts of Americans through fifty years of "Peanuts" comic strips. Not everyone knows the life of the man behind the comics. Raised in Minnesota, Schultz was nicknamed "Sparky" as a child and began drawing at an early age. His childhood was filled with the teasing, friends, and comics that later influenced his work. As he grew older he pursued art as a career, learning through correspondence school and submitting his drawings to magazines and papers. Eventually his strip, published as "Peanuts" (although he was not too fond of the title), produced a daily comic that became his career for over fifty years. Even when his health prevented him from working, "Peanuts" continued—and still continues—to be a source of humor, wisdom, and nostalgia for its readers.

*Sparky: The Life and Art of Charles Schulz* is the perfect tribute to the great comic strip artist. The pages are brightly colored, with many of photographs, drawings, and strips of "Peanuts" added into the mix. It is a slim volume, but does an excellent job of representing Shulz's life, especially the stories and aspects that affected the tales of Charlie Brown, Snoopy, and their friends. Readers will enjoy seeing the progression from "Lil' Folks" (the original name for the strip), into the comic that is so familiar and well-known today. Fans of Schulz, both young and old, will enjoy this fun and enlightening biography.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown  
Reading Level: Intermediate  
Rating: Outstanding  
Genre: Fiction;  
Subject: Friendship --Juvenile fiction; Old age --Juvenile fiction.; Family life --Australia --Juvenile fiction.; Books--Reviews;

Layla fits right into the Silk family although they are very different from her own. She and Griffin, her best friend, play and explore at the Kingdom of Silk. Layla misses her Nana terribly now that she is gone, and Layla does not have anyone to bring to Senior Citizens Day at her school. Nell, Griffin’s grandmother, suggests a Miss Amelie for the job. When they all go to meet her, Miss Amelie writes their names down on a sticky note and puts it on her wall. Layla realizes Miss Amelie has a hard time remembering current things. She wants her to come to her school for Senior Citizen Day very badly, but she knows to be patient. As Layla comes to know Miss Amelie more, she learns that Miss Amelie waits for her beau John William by her gate. He never came home from war, but Miss Amelie cannot remember. Layla finally asks Miss Amelie if she will come to her school and Miss Amelie agrees. Senior Citizen Day arrives. Layla, Griffin, and Nell go early to Miss Amelie’s house. They find her outside by the gate waiting for John William. They rush her inside to warm up in blankets. After the doctor pronounces Miss Amelie fit to attend school, Layla shouts “It's a miracle!” Layla and Miss Amelie had a wonderful time making footprint paintings. Miss Amelie painted a watercolor of a girl in a heart patterned dress to help her remember the special day.

Millard writes simple but true words. *Layla, Queen of Hearts* is a book written for children dealing with struggling parent relationships, friends, and death. The characterization develops on the first page. Patrice Barton helps the reader imagine characters with soft black and white watercolors. This work would be a great recommendation for any child, but especially one who has had a death in his or her family.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Marsha D. Broadway
Reading Level: Intermediate
Rating: Outstanding
Genre: Informative;
Subject: Pirates--biography--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

After a decade, the duo of Krull and Hewitt return with a new title in the kid-dubbed “Big Head” series. This time they tackle the ruthless, swashbuckling exploits of twenty pirates including seven women. Fifth century Princess Alvilda, who ran away from her suitor, Prince Alf, to become a pirate. When Prince Alf captures her ship, she finally marries him. Other pirates the book discusses are the Greek brothers Ajur and Khair. Pirating was a family business for them, and they both became known as Barbarosse, or Red Beard, as they enslaved people along the Barbary Coast. When she wasn't hosting nobles, Lady Mary Killigrew, yet another pirate, joined her husband in raiding ships along the coast of Cornwall and then neatly organized the booty. The book also discusses Madame Cheng who likewise joined her husband in piracy, and after he was washed overboard, she took command of six pirate fleets and eventually 2,000 ships, married her adopted son, and terrorized European and Chinese merchant ships for three years only to be granted amnesty and pardon for 17,000 of her men. Robert Louis Stevenson's Long John Silver even gets a life sketch.

Krull acknowledges that most pirates were private and little information exists about their lives. Public records, except for execution dates, are scarce. But she did her research and found some captivating stories. In her characteristic conversational narrative, she indicates when information may be less than reliable. Hewitt's colorful caricatures give visual hints as to the personalities and penchants of the pirates. For those who enjoyed Krull and Hewitt's *Lives of the Musicians, —Writers, —Artists, —Athletes, and —Presidents, Lives of the Pirates* will be a rollicking, good read.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Debbie Barr  
Reading level: Intermediate  
Rating: Dependable  
Genre: Fiction; Historical fiction  
Subject: Blessing and cursing--Juvenile fiction; Monasteries--Juvenile fiction; Great Britain--History--14th century--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

William lives at Crowfield Abbey. He is an orphan and little more than a servant there, but at least he is being taken care of. Everything changes the day when he realizes he has “The Sight,” an ability to see magical things. Will learns that an angel is buried in a wood near Crowfield and that something dark is lurking outside of the Abbey. A wealthy leper named Jacobus and his servant, Shadlock, are looking for the angel and have come to stay at the Abbey. The two men are from the fey court, and the evil Dark King is after them. They force Will to help them in their search for the angel. After some close calls, they find it. William then removes the arrow from its body, restoring it to life. The angel gives the immortal Jacobus what he wants most: death, and Shadlock is bonded to Will.

Walsh has created an impeccably researched book, with fascinating details on the life of monks in the 1300s. However, the plot itself is a little lacking, with a character forced into the events, rather than searching them out naturally. The pacing is also on the slow side, especially for a middle grade fantasy, which may be frustrating to readers. Still, *The Crowfield Curse* would be a good choice for someone looking for a medieval historical fiction with a twist of magic.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown
Reading level: Intermediate
Rating: Outstanding
Genre: Fiction;
Subject: Best friends--Juvenile fiction; Friendship--Juvenile fiction; Popularity--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Sarah promises Majorie that they will be best friends forever, but they are only five years old. When Sarah starts her choral class and Majorie begins her film class, their interests and time veer them toward different paths. After hearing that she is a loser because of hanging out with Majorie, Sarah begins to wish her friend would blend in with everyone else. After making another friend named Lizzie, Sarah sees less and less of Majorie. Their friendship is strained when Sarah cannot play the alien in Majorie’s film due to extra choir practice. Sarah battles with the decision of staying Majorie best friend. After some time apart, Sarah and Majorie both realize that they are different. They can still be friends, but it will never be the same.

*The Hard Kind of Promise* is a touching story of change. Leaving behind childhood brings many choices. Gina Willner-Pardo expertly explores the waters of adolescence by showing it through the voice of a loyal twelve-year-old girl. Readers are left with a sad, yet understanding feeling that nothing ever stays the same.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan  
Reading level: Young adult  
Rating: Excellent  
Genre: Fiction; Fantasy fiction;  
Subject: Mythology, Greek--Juvenile fiction; Artemis (Greek deity)--Juvenile fiction; Animals, Mythical--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

After their adventure in the *Sea of Monsters*, Percy, Annabeth, Grover, and Thalia try to rescue two demigod children. One of Kronos' monsters, a manticore, captures Percy's group and tells them that Kronos is going to raise a powerful monster to overthrow Olympus with the help of the General. Artemis and her Hunters rescue Percy and his friends, but Annabeth is captured. Artemis goes off to search for the foretold monster and is also captured. Percy, Grover, Thalia, and two Hunters go on a quest to search for Artemis and Annabeth. On their way they meet a cow-fish that follows Percy around. Their journey ends on Mount Tamalpais in San Francisco. Before going to the mountain, Percy realizes that the cow-fish is the powerful monster Kronos wants, so Grover escapes with it. On the mountain top, Artemis has taken the spot of Atlas, the General, in holding up the sky. Percy fights Atlas and tricks him into holding the sky again. The rest of the group escapes and returns to Camp Half-Blood, but Kronos' monsters are there. Nico, one of the demigod children, destroys all of the monsters, and Percy realizes Nico is Hades' child.

Riordan succeeds in creating another action-packed and expertly written story in the Percy Jackson series. This third book, like *Sea of Monsters*, has a cliff-hanger ending. The next book is *The Battle of the Labyrinth*.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Laurien Clay  
Reading level: Intermediate, Young adult  
Rating: Dependable  
Genre: Informational books;  
Subject: Safety education--Juvenile literature; Accidents--Prevention--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

What is the likelihood of a person dying from sinking into quicksand or getting gored and stamped by a Cape Buffalo? While there is the likelihood of death, all it takes is knowing the facts about what to do in particularly hairy situations like these to survive.

Turner, author the bestselling 101 THINGS series, presents nearly every possible life threatening situation known (and unknown) to man with a worst-case scenario, facts, and tips on avoiding and dealing with said situation, with all situations being categorized by similarities. While every bit of Turner's information is extremely educational, the same format for every situation makes for monotonous reading. However, Hasler's illustrations help dispel the tedium as occasional doses of grounded comic relief. This book would be useful in the home or the classroom to dispel survival myths and learn useful survival techniques.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Debbie Barr
Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult
Rating: Excellent
Genre: Informative; Informational Books;
Subject: Fiction --Authorship --Handbooks, manuals, etc.--Juvenile literature; Authorship --Handbooks, manuals, etc.--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Many young readers today also want to be writers. They devour a good story and want to create their own. But where should they start? How do real writers do it? Anne Mazer and Ellen Potter, who both write for children, have the answers. *Spilling Ink* contains the compilation of years of experience from these two authors and incorporate the questions they get asked the most from their readers, as well as helpful tips for budding writers. Mazer and Potter cover how to start a story, how to develop characters, how to create a plot, how to revise, how to work with writing partners, and how to know when a story is done.

*Spilling Ink* does a fantastic job of breaking down the writing process in an easy way to understand. Each chapter is divided into bite-sized essays on a variety of writing topics, full of examples, anecdotes, and pictures to make the reading more interesting. Incorporated throughout are "I Dare You" challenges, writing prompts daring the reader to try out new techniques in his or her own writing. *Spilling Ink* would make a nice addition to an elementary or middle school writing unit, and would also work well in the home of a young writer.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Meriam Bates  
Reading level: Intermediate, Young adult  
Rating: Outstanding  
Genre: Fiction; Contemporary realistic fiction;  
Subject: Coming of age--Juvenile fiction; Grandmothers--Juvenile fiction; Down syndrome--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Lucy Crandall’s summer is promising to be fantastic. She and her best friend Megan are determined to be ready for anything 7th grade can throw at them, and both spend their time compiling a list of “Ten Top Tips for How to Be Popular.” Lucy is also looking forward to spending the normal last two weeks of summer with Grams at her cabin in California where she can talk to Grams about anything. This seems extra important this summer as Lucy struggles both with Megan’s popularity obsession and the friendship of Eddie, a boy with Down syndrome. But things seem to start falling apart as Lucy struggles with Gram’s increasing forgetfulness, as well as a surprise visit from Eddie. Lucy finds that nobody has all the answers, but through Grams’ example, Lucy finds the courage from her last summer alone with Grams to tackle her problems and come out on top.

*The Last Best Days of Summer* tackles some of the most difficult problems that normal teenagers face as they leave the world of childhood behind. Lucy struggles with the difficulty of befriending a boy with Down syndrome, moving in a different direction from a childhood friend, and learning of her grandmother’s descent into dementia. The writing is straightforward without unnecessary description or detail, allowing the reader to concentrate on the storyline and grow with Lucy as she finds how to deal with life. This heartfelt story will appeal to any teenager, especially girls, as they make the same journey.
Jackson is about to turn 14 and his father has summer plans for him—working at the scrap yard with the owner’s son Skeeter, who is the school’s bully. Before they could talk to the scrap yard’s owner, however, Jackson’s next door neighbor, Mrs. Nelson, approaches him with another option—taking care of her neglected, over-grown, three hundred year-old apple orchard. Jackson does not want to spend his summer next to Skeeter, so he opts for the apple orchard. Jackson has done projects for Mrs. Nelson before, always thinking that she would pay him, which she never did. So this time Jackson asks Mrs. Nelson if they could get a legal contract. Mrs. Nelson agrees and they pay a visit to her lawyer. The agreement states that if Jackson gives Mrs. Nelson the first $8000 of proceeds, she would give him the deed to the orchard. Jackson has his work cut out for him. He asks his sisters and his cousins if they would be willing to work with him in the orchard with the promise of money at the end of the season. None of them know what they are in for— the pruning and weeding, the fertilizing, the irrigating, not to mention the harvesting. The children spend many long days working in the orchard. They have to work faster when it is time to harvest the apples, and sell them at a homemade stand on the road.

This delightful story teaches many lessons to young adults—hard work, enduring to the end, challenges, and team work.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Laurien Clay  
Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult, All  
Rating: Outstanding  
Genre: Fiction; Historical Fiction;  
Subject: Human-plant relationships--Juvenile fiction; Poisons--Juvenile fiction; Medical care--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

What is more powerful than poison? Jessamine Luxton, the daughter of a well-respected and studious apothecary with an obsession for anything poisonous, knows plants—that is, until a beautiful young man named Weed is dumped on her front doorstep. Intrigued by Weed from the outset, Jessamine notes his abnormal sensitivity to growing things. He appears to know everything about anything with leaves—from the smallest daisy in the field to the fatal beauty of the belladonna behind the locked gate of Mr. Luxton’s poison garden. However, both Jessamine and her father suspect that Weed is more than what he seems, and in the end, it may require love—as well as a knowledge of poison—to reveal all and to save her life.

In this well-written beginning to what appears to be a promising trilogy, Maryrose Wood and The Duchess of Northumberland spellbind readers with delicate traces of romance, deception, and poison. An artful blend of suspense and darkness that heralds back to Hawthorne’s “Rappaccini’s Daughter,” *The Poison Diaries* is a tale of surprising psychological and spiritual depth that leaves no heart untouched, no corner of the soul un-awakened, and no bibliophile satisfied with just a single toxic dose.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Debbie Barr  
Reading level: Young adult  
Rating: Outstanding  
Genre: Fiction; Fantasy fiction;  
Subject: Supernatural--Juvenile fiction; Identity--Juvenile fiction; Shapeshifting--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Sixteen year old Evie desperately wants to be normal. Unfortunately, she works for the International Paranormal Containment Agency, making being normal difficult. Evie's the only person who can see through a paranormal creature's glamour, making her a valuable commodity to an organization that captures werewolves, vampires, and hags. Then, something starts killing paranormals, a teenage shape shifter breaks into IPCA, and her faerie ex-boyfriend keeps trying to kidnap her. As Evie works to understand what's happening, she realizes that she's not alone in her abilities—she has a sister, who turns out to be the one behind the killings. Evie and her sister, being actually created by faeries, both have the ability to capture and harness the power of paranormals’ souls. With a group of anti-IPCA paranormals—including the cute shape shifter—Evie is able to take down her sister and release the captured souls.

With a charming and memorable voice, Kiersten White has created a character teens will love to read about and a story that will keep readers on the edge of their seats. Although this is her debut novel, the prose is clean and the plot well paced. Both fans and skeptics of the paranormal genre will enjoy this tongue-in-cheek take on a paranormal story with adventure and an adorable romance. Although White will be writing two more sequels, the story feels complete, and readers will certainly be clamoring for more Evie once they are through.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Laurien Clay  
Reading level: Young Adult  
Rating: Dependable  
Genre: Fiction; Historical Fiction;  
Subject: Sex role--Juvenile fiction; Schools--Juvenile fiction; Social classes--Juvenile fiction;  
Books--Reviews;

Bet Smith wants an education. Will Gardner does not. So what better an idea than for Bet to switch places with Will and go to school in his stead—as a boy. However, in Victorian England there are more than a few complications since Bet is a girl and the companion of Will’s beloved Uncle. Nonetheless, Will secretly heads off to join the military, and Bet—as Will—goes off to school in pursuit of knowledge, only to find that she may be in over her head and that she may also have lost her heart.

Lauren Baratz-Logsted, author of *Crazy Beautiful, Angel’s Choice*, and *Secrets of My Suburban Life*, comes out with another piece of historical fiction relaying yet another coming of age and self-discovery story. A blatant spin-off of a Shakespearian comedy of errors and mistaken identities, *The Education of Bet* presents a somewhat halting and jumbled series of episodes (in obviously modern language) that are both likely and far-fetched. While most of its historicity is verifiable, there are other problems, including both what appears to be “forced” writing and inconsistencies in Bet’s actual character. In spite of this, readers may find a brief respite from real life between its pages.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan  
Reading level: Young Adult  
Rating: Outstanding  
Genre: Fiction; Fantasy Fiction;  
Subject: Machiavelli, Niccolo, 1469-1527 --Juvenile fiction; Supernatural --Juvenile fiction; Brothers and sisters --Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Scatty, Nicholas, and the twins Josh and Sophie, escape Dee by traveling on a ley line that takes them to Paris, France. Dee informs an immortal working in Paris, Niccolo Machiavelli, to capture Flamel and the twins. The group meets up with Flamel’s friend Comte de Saint-Germain and Comte’s wife, Joan of Arc. Machiavelli knows they will retreat to Saint-Germain’s home and he has it watched until Dee arrives. Dee uses the services of the Valkyries to take out Scatty so Nicholas and the twins will be unprotected. During this time Perenelle Flamel is being held prisoner on Alcatraz Island. With her natural gift of talking with the dead, she is able to escape her sphinx guard and recharge her magical powers. Back in Paris, the Valkyries release the monster, Nidhogg, and fight against Scatty, Sophie, and Joan. With the help of Excalibur’s twin sword Clarent, Josh is able to destroy Nidhogg, but Scatty is still lost in the depths of the Seine. Dee and Machiavelli take Josh to get Josh’s powers Awakened by the Dark Elder, Mars. With Josh’s Awakening and the combined powers of Josh and Sophie, Dee witnesses that these two are the twins foretold in the Codex prophecy. Flamel and the twins escape Paris for London to seek out King Gilgamesh to continue the twins’ magical training.

Scott’s second book in *The Alchemyst* series gives more explanations about why certain humans are given the gift of immortality. The story is well-paced and suspenseful. It is enjoyable to see which famous figures in the world’s history Scott will include in his series.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan  
Reading level: Young adult  
Rating: Dependable  
Genre: Fiction; Fairy tales;  
Subject: Princesses--Juvenile fiction; Princes--Juvenile fiction; Witches--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;  

For three years the princesses of Westfalin have been trying to mend relations with the other countries in Ionia. Ever since their dancing curse caused the death of several princes, tempers have run high against their small kingdom. By letting the princesses participate in an "exchange program," they hope to fix their curse's damages. Poppy, now sixteen, is chosen to go to Breton. While staying with her cousins, she begins to see signs of a magical curse on a young maid named Eleanora. Eleanora's life has not been easy since her parents' death and the total loss of her wealth. She has become bitter about her situation and dreams of a wealthy life. Her dreams come true when she meets her magical godmother, the Corley. The Corley, though, has other plans for Eleanora. She uses the girl to entrap Prince Christian, prince of Danelaw, into marriage revenge for the Corley's true goddaughter. Poppy and her friends enter the Corley's glass kingdom and break her curse.

George's story is an interesting and unique twist on the Cinderella fairy tale. Her story makes the godmother a vengeful creature and "Cinderella" a bitter and disappointed girl. Only the parts dealing with the Corley's past and breaking the curse seem rushed and unexplained. Otherwise, it’s a great read for those who enjoy twisted fairy tales. This is a sequel to George's book *Princess of the Midnight Ball*.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Debbie Barr  
Reading level: Young adult  
Rating: Excellent  
Genre: Fiction; Historical fiction;  
Subject: New York (N.Y.)--History--1898-1951--Juvenile fiction; Conduct of life--Juvenile fiction; Social classes--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

It's the roaring 20s, and two young girls from Ohio--Cordelia and Letty--have decided to run away to New York City. Cordelia is looking for her father, the famous bootlegger Darius Grey, while Letty is hoping to become a popular actress. Once in New York the girls fight and separate ways. Cordelia finds her father, but quickly falls in love with Thom Hale, the son of her father’s greatest enemy. She also befriends Astrid, a high class girl (courted by Cordelia’s brother), who shows her the ropes of wealthy living. Letty works in a speakeasy, but finds that becoming an actress isn’t as easy as she thought. In the end Cordelia’s father is killed and she blames Thom, losing her father and her beau in one night. She and Letty are reunited at the end, each with a new sense of loss and gratitude for friendship.

*Bright Young Things* is the first book in a new series by Anna Godbersen, author of the popular *Luxe* books. Just as she did in the *Luxe* books, Godbersen writes luscious descriptions of dresses, parties, and all else that encompasses the high life. Filled with intrigue and hidden identities, *Bright Young Things* will keep readers on their toes and eager for the next book in the series. Though there is, perhaps, not a lot of substance to the book, the prose is impeccable, making it an enjoyable, well-written read. Adult situations and relationships make this book appropriate for older teens.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Debbie Barr  
Reading level: Young adult  
Rating: Excellent  
Genre: Fiction; Science fiction;  
Subject: Identity--Juvenile fiction; Schools--Juvenile fiction; Corporate sponsorship--Juvenile fiction.; Books--Reviews;

In the not-too-distant future Katey (or Kid) is playing the Game. Once the government could no longer pay for public school, corporate sponsors took over and established a new kind of school, one where trending, popularity, and style aren’t just part of the social sphere—they’re everything. When Kid witnesses what looks to be an act of rebellion against the system, she finds herself dragged into a conspiracy started by the Unidentified and getting “branded” by some major sponsors, sending her to the top of the popularity list. As things escalate, Kid and her friends are threatened by rebels and sponsors alike as they try to figure out what’s going on. In the end they discover that the Unidentified stunt was just another gimmick by a corporation. But what started as a PR move turned into an awakening for Game players, one that might someday take down the Game for good.

Rae Mariz has written a surprising debut, perfect for the new generation of always-connected teens. Conversations between characters take place not only in real life, but on the “network” (much like Twitter), as well as through texting. The dialogue felt fresh and real, perfect for a future where social media and gaming seem to have replaced normal education. Though not everything is perfectly resolved at the end, there is hope for the characters’ futures, making it a satisfying read. *The Unidentified* would be a great fit for fans of other technology-heavy dystopias, such as Scott Westerfield’s *Uglies*.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan  
Reading level: Young adult  
Rating: Outstanding  
Genre: Fiction; Fantasy fiction;  
Subject: Flamel, Nicolas, d. 1418 --Juvenile fiction; Dee, John, 1527-1608 --Juvenile fiction; Magic --Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Twins, Josh and Sophie, find summer jobs at a bookstore and coffee shop in San Francisco. Josh’s employer, Nick Fleming, seems like a nice, ordinary man. But one day Josh and Sophie witness Nick fighting a man known as Dr. John Dee with magic. Dee came to Nick’s store to steal Nick’s book, the Codex, and to capture Nick’s wife, Perenelle. Dee is able to steal the book, except two crucial pages were torn out by Josh in the scuffle. After the fight is over, Nick, whose real name is Nicholas Flamel, explains that he is an immortal alchemist who protected the Codex. Nicholas takes the twins away to join up with Scathach, another immortal who is a legendary warrior. Nicholas explains that the world was created by the extremely magical Elder Race. Many Elders wanted to destroy humans, while other Elders wanted to support humans. A split was created and the Dark Elders were formed. Their intent is to destroy humans and rule the world again. Nicholas and other good Elders have been working to stop the Dark Elders’ efforts. A prophecy in the Codex tells of twins who could either help or destroy the Dark Elders. Nicholas believes Josh and Sophie are those twins. His mission is to train the twins in all magical arts to fight the Dark Elders.

Scott’s story is an exciting and engaging read. This series, like the Harry Potter and Percy Jackson series, is another well crafted and original story based on magic and history. Scott uses true events and real people to help support and bring more depth to his magical world. This is the beginning of a six book series. The next book is called *The Magician*.

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan  
Reading Level: Young Adult  
Rating: Excellent  
Genre: Fiction; Fantasy Fiction;  
Subject: Alchemists --Juvenile fiction; Brothers and sisters --Juvenile fiction; London (England) --Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

The twins, Josh and Sophie, have returned home, but their homecoming is ruined when Sophie is kidnapped by Aoife, the identical twin of Sophie’s friend Scatty. Aoife has come searching for the twins because she wants to know where Scatty is located. Scatty had disappeared in the last book with Joan of Arc in an attempt to save Nicholas Flamel’s wife, Perenelle. The Flamels (having been reunited despite Scatty and Joan’s disappearance) and Josh find Aoife, rescue Sophie, and try to convince Aoife to fight against the Dark Elders. Afterward, Josh is taken to Prometheus to learn the magic of fire. Meanwhile, the evil Dr. John Dee has obtained all the magical swords, and he believes the swords, not Josh and Sophie, are the answer to the Codex prophecy. But instead of helping the Dark Elders, Dee plans to overthrow them by using the swords to rule the world himself. Virginia Dare, another immortal, decides to help Dee complete his plans. Dee and Dare return to San Francisco to retrieve the Codex and to kidnap Josh. They enchant Josh and use him as their pawn. The Flamels, Sophie, and Aoife run to Josh’s rescue, but because he is enchanted, Josh turns away from his sister to follow Dee.

Scott takes a lot of risks with creating this large of a story. He is continually adding new characters and new worlds. At times it can get a little confusing to keep up with the story and the characters. But his character development is complex and realistic. Again, the story is pleasantly unexpected and action packed. The next book is *The Warlock*.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Tessa McMillan  
Reading level: Young Adult  
Rating: Excellent  
Genre: Fantasy fiction;  
Subject: Flamel, Nicolas, d. 1418 --Juvenile fiction; Machiavelli, Niccolo?, 1469-1527 --Juvenile fiction; Dee, John, 1527-1608 --Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;  

After leaving Paris behind, Nicholas, Josh, and Sophie head to London, the place where Dr. John Dee is most powerful. Nicholas is searching for Gilgamesh, the oldest immortal on earth, to teach the twins the Magic of Water. To hide from Dee, Nicholas takes the twins to two immortals, Palamedes and William Shakespeare. With Shakespeare’s help, Nicholas is able to contact Perenelle on Alcatraz Island. While they are talking with her, she is attacked. Nicholas decides that when the twins learn the Magic of Water he will take them to the leygate at Stonehenge and head back to California. Dee finds Flamel’s hideout and tries to stop the group with an Archon, the race that existed before the Elders. With Sophie’s powers and Josh’s sword they are able to defeat the Archon and escape Dee. Meanwhile, Perenelle is able to escape off of Alcatraz with the help of the Elder, Old Spider, and the Crow Goddess’s internal sisters. After the fight with Dee, Flamel, Palamedes, and the twins find Gilgamesh. In an obscure barn near Stonehenge the twins are given the gift of water. But Dee and the Archon interrupt their plans again. They all flee towards Stonehenge and the twins open the leygate to San Francisco with their new magic.

Another fast-paced and exciting read created by Michael Scott. The story is pleasantly unpredictable with lots of historical data added to support the fiction. A great addition to the series.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Meriam Bates  
Reading level: Young adult  
Rating: Outstanding  
Genre: Fiction; Adventure Stories;  
Subject: Witchcraft --Juvenile fiction; Human-animal relationships --Juvenile fiction; Orphans --Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Plain Kate, the woodcarver’s daughter, has lived alone in her small village since her father died of witch’s fever. With only her cat, Taggle, for company, she is generally left alone and is able to earn just enough through her skill as a woodcarver to survive. All is well until a traveler named Linay uses his own witchcraft to turn the townsfolk against her. Unaware of Linay’s trickery, Kate trades her shadow in exchange for his help to escape and to give Taggle the gift of speech. Kate joins a band of gypsies and they become her family until a terrible new fever strikes the countryside and Kate is blamed. She and Taggle set out for the great city of Lov to find out what is happening. They are captured by Linay and discover that he is using Kate’s shadow to call the plague in revenge for his sister’s death. They eventually discover a way to stop Linay’s plot and Kate is truly accepted into the gypsy band.

A story with a clever and entertaining plot, *Plain Kate* is about family, loyalty, and perseverance. The characterizations of two unique characters— a talking cat and the villain— are two of the best in the book. Taggle adds humor and wisdom while being an overall loveable character yet keeps his catlike qualities. Linay on the other hand is a more complex figure. Though he is clearly the villain, he is also a family member, and his winsome personality makes it even more difficult to defeat him. This is a book that will be loved by fans of both fantasy and historical fiction for both its plot and its thought provoking questions about the definition of family and acceptance.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Debbie Barr
Reading Level: Young Adult
Rating: Excellent
Genre: Fiction; Fantasy Fiction;
Subject: Religion--Juvenile fiction; Kings, queens, rulers, etc.--Juvenile fiction; Robbers and outlaws--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Digger is a thief looking for a new job. Her last adventure nearly got her killed, so when some nobles offer to help her, she figures she had found some easy prey. Working as a maid to Meri, the daughter of a nobleman, Digger moves with the nobleman’s family to a snowy fortress and get trapped there for the winter with a number of guests. Daul, a friend of Meri’s father, discover’s Digger’s secret, and blackmails her into discovering the secrets of Meri’s family. As Digger works, she makes many discoveries: there is a conspiracy against the current king; the nobleman’s guests all practice a forbidden religion of magic; and the nobleman’s family has been hiding the lost prince under the castle. Everything culminates with a climax that pits Digger against not only the King’s High Inquisitor but also her past. Although Meri, her family, and the rest of the nobles get off alright for the moment, there are many loose ends left for the next book in the series.

Elizabeth C. Bunce has created a compelling world full of rebellion and secrets, perfect for a theiving main character. The book starts off rather slowly—the first fifty pages relate to events that won’t be addressed until later books. However, once the plot gets going, it will be hard for readers to put it down. Fans of Megan Whelan Turner and Robin McKinley will enjoy this rich fantasy full of magic, adventure, and secrets.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Lauren McMullan
Reading Level: Young Adult
Rating: Dependable
Genre: Fiction; Science Fiction;
Subject: Survival--Juvenile literature; Family Life--Juvenile literature; Diaries--Juvenile literature; Books--Reviews;

Imagine ash so thick that it has blotted out the sun for over a year. Sixteen-year-old Miranda Evans lives under that ash. Ever since a meteor collided with the moon—knocking it closer to the earth and causing an Armageddon of sorts—ash and cold and fear are all Miranda, her two brothers, and her mother know. They spend their days trying to survive in a vastly forsaken world. Life is one terrifying uncertain day after the next and becomes even more so when Miranda’s father and step-mother, with infant and three strangers in-tow, appear on the Evans’ doorstep. As the family finds answers to the new and pressing survival questions created by the new arrivals, Miranda finds herself falling in love with one of them—a boy her age named Alex.

This drama, told in diary format, and the third installment in Pfeffer’s Last Survivors series, is a post-apocalyptic tale from a coming-of-age perspective. The reader finishes *This World We Live In* as the Evans family is forced to search out a life elsewhere. This development feels like it is a long time coming and could have served the book better if it had been more towards the middle of the book. Despite this, Pfeffer has put together an intriguing story of love, loss, and the power of familial devotion. *This World We Live In* is a valid choice for the middle school reader interested in a morbid twist on the coming-of-age love story.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Ruth-Anne Brown  
Reading Level: Young Adult  
Rating: Excellent  
Genre: Fiction; Fiction;  
Subject: Chinese Americans--Juvenile fiction; Identity--Juvenile fiction; Mystery and detective stories--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Margaret Wynn Chen (Maggie) is about to find out all she thought she knew about her father was a lie. After her father is killed in a hit and run car accident life is hard for Maggie and her mom as they try to adjust to life alone. Maggie works hard at her journalism internship to honor him. She comes across some notes of a story her father, Steven, had been investigating before he died. Maggie follows the trail to discover her father had lied about his past. He had been an orphan and had never attended the Ivy League school he pretended to. Simultaneously Maggie follows a story at the *Chronicle* for her internship. She discovers suspicion has fallen on her father involving a blackmailing scandal. Her boss pulls her from the story fearing its personal nature to Maggie if the accusations prove true about her father. However, following researched clues and gut instincts, Maggie proves her father’s innocence and finds the family she never knew existed.

Ingold weaves the modern tale of Maggie Chen with the 1930s tale of Chinese immigrants who can only live in the Gold Mountain if they pretended to have bonds with immigrants who were already citizens of the US. They had to pretend because of The Chinese Exclusion Act which was passed after no more Chinese immigrants were needed to build the railroads or for other manual labor. Desperate people often feigned bonds with those already citizens of the United States in order to immigrate. *Paper Daughter* combines today’s prejudices with history’s past injustices, and readers will want to know more about the historical elements of the story after reading this realistic tale.

Volume 31, no. 2 (November/December 2010)

Reviewer: Carla Kupitz
Reading level: All
Rating: Outstanding
Genre: Picture books;
Subject: Moving, Household--Juvenile fiction; Individuality--Juvenile fiction; Families--Canada--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

A little girl lives with her family in a remote area of Canada while her father works on a dam. The dam is almost finished and the family will move to Toronto. The little girl does not know Toronto--she only knows here. Here is a group of trailers surrounded by wilderness and wild animals. Here is where the little girl attends school in a trailer with eight other students. Here is where the grocery truck stops and where her friends run home from school for lunch. Here is what the little girl will draw. She will show her picture to her school teacher and then the little girl will fold up her drawing and take it with her to Toronto.

Winner of the 2010 Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, the text is sparse and the illustrations are naive--echoing the pureness of a child and the wilderness she knows--simple, yet complex. This is a book that wants to be read and examined again and again.

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