



The Review Crew

What's New and Great for Our Youngest Readers?

Brought to you by the Denver Public Schools Book Review Committee.

Volume 2 Number 6

April 2006

Who are we?

- ☺ More than a dozen teacher librarians and literacy experts from elementary schools through high school.
- ☺ We know DPS students and the DPS curriculum.
- ☺ Every month each member writes reviews of at least fifteen recently published books.
- ☺ Our hard work earns thousands of dollars of free books for our school libraries and for the classroom library at ERS, where DPS teachers can order baskets of books for their classrooms. (Call 720-423-8120 to order.)

Fiction

Star of the Week

Written & illus. by: Barney Saltzberg
Candlewick Press, 2006
ISBN: 0763629146



Curriculum: School stories

When it's Stanley Birdbaum's turn as *Star of the Week* he is expected to share his favorite food, favorite toy and favorite thing to do. Tofu bologna sandwiches and a broken robot don't go over very well with Stanley's classmates, so when he says, "I like to draw," they are skeptical at best.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley
Beach Court

Scaredy Squirrel

Written & illus. by: Mélanie Watt
Kids Can Press, 2006
ISBN: 1553379594



Curriculum: Squirrels; Fear

Scaredy Squirrel never leaves his nut tree--all kinds of potential dangers may lurk out in the terrifying unknown, like killer bees, germs, and green Martians! But will the unknown be as scary as he imagines when he suddenly has to

flee his tree? A playful picture book about conquering one's fears.

Reviewed by: Jennifer Fakolt
Mitchell

Nonfiction

Mardi Gras

By: Ann Heinrichs
Illustrated by: Jan Bryant Hunt
Child's World, 2006
ISBN : 1592965784



Curriculum: Carnival; Mardi Gras

This little book packs a lot between its pastel pages. The origin and history of Mardi Gras, "un peu de francais", songs, recipes and crafts and charming illustrations are attractively packaged in Heinrich's new book. Much of the book focuses on New Orleans, but international vocabulary, festivals and culture are woven throughout. The book does not mention any of the current destruction in Louisiana, but older students may want to research the challenges now facing that part of the country. A book whose cover, interesting information, and "party pictures" invite all young

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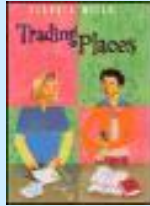
Want to read more reviews? See the instructions on page 4.

The Best for Upper Elementary Readers! Many of these books will work in middle school, too!

Fiction

Trading Places

By: Claudia Mills
Farrar, Straus and
Giroux, 2006
ISBN: 0374317984



Curriculum: School stories; Family issues

When a major school assignment adds pressure to twins Amy and Todd's already stress-filled life, things get worse before they get better. Will their dad find work after six months of unemployment? Will their parents stop fighting? Will their 14-year-old dog recover from his illness? And will Amy and Todd be able to get their

assignments done with all this on their minds?

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley
Beach Court

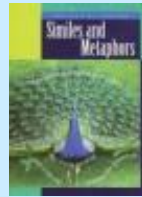
Nonfiction

Similes and Metaphors

By: Ann Heinrichs
Child's World, 2006
ISBN:1592964346

Curriculum: Figures of speech, Language

This is part of a series, The Magic of Language, whose purpose is to help children learn the mechanics of grammar. There are examples of usage and helpful hints which do help to untangle the rules of usage.



There are 14 books in this series.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin
Park Hill

How to be an Ancient Greek Athlete

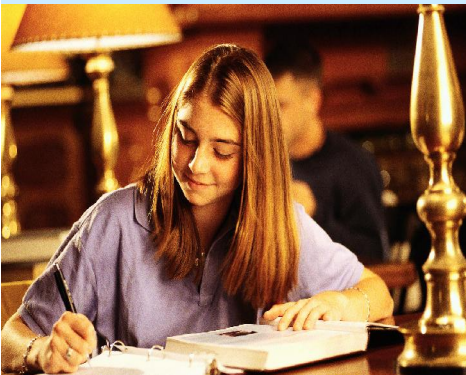
By: Jacqueline Morley
Illustrated by: David Antram
National Geographic, 2005



ISBN:0792274431
Curriculum: Olympics; Ancient Greece

Are you good at games? You might want to apply to represent Athens in Panathenaic games. You must be of freeborn parentage and obedient to the trainer in all matters. Do remember, all Greek sports festivals

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Fiction

Poison Ivy

By: Amy Koss
Roaring Brook Press, 2006.
ISBN: 1596431180

Curriculum: Bullies, School, Mock Trials

Ivy has almost completely withdrawn from



school and life at home also. Everyone knows that Amy, Bryce and Sophie have been bullying her unmercifully for years. Now Ms. Gold, the government teacher, has found out and decides to hold a mock trial to bring the three girls to justice. Will the trial finally bring peace to Ivy or will it be the final straw?

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
Kepner Middle School

Spacer and Rat

By: Margaret Bechard
Roaring Brook Press, 2005.
ISBN: 1596430583

Curriculum: Science fiction; Robots, Outer space

Jack has lived his whole life in the black, on Freedom Station. Kit has newly arrived from Earth. She may not have figured out the rules for living in the black just yet, but she has something else that makes her the most sought after person on Freedom Station, and she doesn't dare be found.



Reviewed by: Chris Coble
Kepner Middle School

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are sacred and held to honor the gods.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin
Park Hill

Celia Cruz, Queen of Salsa

By: Veronica Chambers
Illustrated by: Julie Maren
Dial Books for Young Readers, 2005



ISBN: 0803729707

Curriculum: Biography; Music

"In the fabled land of Havana, where rhythm grows, sweet and juicy, like oranges in Florida, there lived a girl...." Thus begins this biography in picture book format, as luscious in language and color as Celia Cruz's music is in sound. With

a light touch, Chambers outlines the life of this Cuban exile, drawing the reader into Celia's mind and heart as she makes her life choices. Boulder artist Julie Maren has used rich tropical colors and bold shapes to provide illustrations easy to share in a group.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham
Valdez Elem.

Marvelous Mattie: How Margaret E. Knight Became an Inventor

Written and Illustrated by: Emily Arnold McCully

Farrar Straus Giroux, 2006

ISBN: 0374348103

Curriculum: Inventions; Women's studies

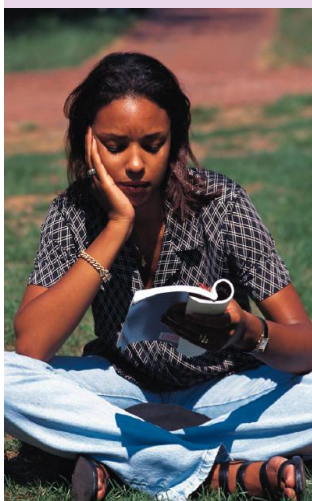
Imagine trying to put your groceries in a brown paper bag shaped like a manila envelope! The story of the square-bottomed gro-



cery bag is the story of an independent inventive young girl of the 1800s. Mattie simply had to invent the way a writer has to write or an artist has to draw. When Mattie heard that several inventors were trying to design a machine to make bags that would stand up by themselves, she set to work. Then a male inventor stole her idea from the machine shop that was making her prototype, filing the patent just before she did. But what chance did a young woman inventor of that time have in court? The watercolor illustrations, interspersed with schematic drawings of Mattie's inventions, bring the creative process and the time period to life.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham
Valdez Elem.

Young Adults Deserve the Best!



Fiction

Peeps

By: Scott Westerfeld
Razorbill, 2005
ISBN: 159514031



Curriculum: Vampires; Disease; Parasites

Peeps is surprisingly amusing, spooky and funny. It is also re-

freshing to read a novel that has broken away from the typical vampire genre model. The reader quickly bonds with Cal and wants him to succeed. As the mystery of the novel develops, the plot thickens, making the reader want to continue with the story. Also interesting are the even numbered chapters where Westerfeld inserts chapters on real parasites,

creating quite the ick factor for many readers.

Reviewed by: Carol Chapman
Morey Middle School

Grand & Humble

By: Brent Hartinger
HarperTempest, 2006
ISBN: 0060567287

Curriculum: Memory; Space and time; Alternative lives

Harlan and Manny attend the same high school, but are worlds apart. Harlan is the likable jock. Manny is the geeky "theater type" and floats under the radar. Yet Harlan is plagued by panic attacks and Manny has terrifying nightmares. Both also know that the intersection of Grand and Humble is significant, but they do not know why. Hartinger's novel is harrowing and suspenseful with a



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readers to be part of the celebration.

Reviewed by: Andrea Antico
Westerly Creek

Garden Wigglers: Earthworms in Your Backyard

By: Nancy Loewen
Illustrated by: Rick Peterson



Picture Window Books, 2006

Curriculum: Animals; Gardening

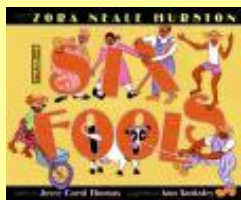
This is an excellent example of clearly written, interesting nonfiction on a subject that students see every day but probably know little about. How worms move, how they eat and reproduce, and how they contribute to healthy soil are all covered in clearly written paragraphs. Large colorful illustrations will attract student interest and provide text support.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham
Valdez Elem.

Six Fools

By: Joyce Carol Thomas

Illustrated by: Ann Tanksley
HarperCollins, 2005



ISBN : 0060006471

Curriculum: African Americans - folklore; Hurston, Zora Neale

Clever and intriguing oil monoprints are the background for a delightful tale about silly folks. Joyce Thomas masterfully reconstructs one of Zora Neale Hurston's 1930s stories into a modern day version for youngsters. They will be anxious to give advice to the young man who leaves his foolish fiancée and her family, vowing to return if he finds people as foolish as they are. Some students will want to discuss their foolish actions as they

laugh at the bizarre situations in this retro story. It is a story rich in oral tradition that deserves an E for excellence in enjoyment and entertainment.

Reviewed by: Andrea Antico
Westerly Creek

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Worlds Apart: Traveling with Fernie and Me

By: Gary Soto
Illustrated by: Greg Clarke

G.P Putnam's Sons, 2005

ISBN: 039924218X

Curriculum: Poetry; Imagination; Travel; American Poetry

This Soto book is a collection of humorous poems concerning the travels of Fernie and his best friend, the unnamed narrator from *Fearless Fernie*. The two best friends tour the world, and detail their adventures in Kenya riding the elephants, Vietnam and more. It is a goofy but delightful group of poems that will ring true to any boy with a sense of adventure and dreams to see the world.



Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer
Grant Middle School

Skybreaker

By: Kenneth Oppel
Harper Collins, 2006

ISBN: 0060532289

Curriculum: Science Fiction; Airships; Pirates; Friendship



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Want more?

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In this sequel to *Airborn*, Matt Cruse teams up once more with Kate de Vries. Their target is to go after the mysterious airship, Hyperion. It has been lost and is rumored to contain great treasures. However, they are not the only ones after the lost ship. This is a high altitude adventure that will keep everyone reading until the last page.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Hill School of Arts and Sciences

Avalon High

By: Meg Cabot
Harper Collins, 2006
ISBN: 0060755873

Curriculum: Teen Fiction; Relationships; King Arthur; Reincarnation



Ellie must start a new school at Avalon High. She immediately feels a connection with Will, the star athlete. He is dating Jennifer, but Jennifer likes Lance. Suddenly, Ellie sees parallels to the King Arthur legends. Could Will be the next King Arthur? Is she really the Lady of the Lake? This is a fun and legendary adventure to read.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Hill School of Arts and Sciences

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surprise twist at the end.

Reviewed by: Carol Chapman
Morey Middle School

Where I Want to Be

By: Adele Griffin
G.P. Putnam's Sons,
2005.
ISBN: 0399237836



Curriculum: Family life; Mental Illness; Sisters; Death

Lily is the popular girl-next-door while sister Jane struggles with mental illness. The world changes when Jane dies and both girls find themselves trapped in the past. This captivating and emotional novel explores the emotions of the living and dead as the two sisters work through sibling rivalry, teen angst and learning to let go of the past.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer
Grant Middle School

Nonfiction

Oceans: A Visual Guide

Stephen Hutchinson and Lawrence E. Hawkins

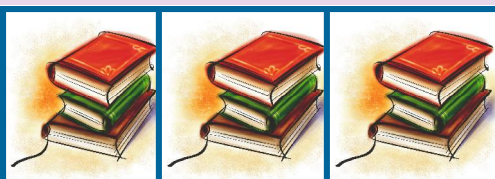
Firefly Books, 2005
ISBN: 1554070694

Curriculum: Oceans, oceanography



This book truly lives up to its name. Both authors are oceanographers and have created a comprehensive book covering all parts of the ocean from the history of oceanography to the animals and impact of human activity on the oceans. Stunning photos supplement the text and help the reader to understand the text. The text is written to give enough information for research but is informal enough for the casual browser. An excellent addition to any high school library.

Reviewed by: Carol Chapman
Morey Middle School



Cumulative INDEXES

Volumes 1 & 2

October 2004-April 2006

Subject Index begins on p. 8

Reviewer and Publisher Indexes are available as separate Word documents. For these or for PDF files of any *Review Crew* issues you are missing, e-mail the editor at

penny_cunningham@dpsk12.org

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