



The Review Crew

What's New and Great for Our Youngest Readers?

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

Volume 4 Number 28
April 2008

Fiction

Little Blue Truck
By: Alice Schertle
Illus. by: McElmurry, Jill
Harcourt, 2008
ISBN: 9780152056612



Curriculum: Story in rhyme; Friends; Trucks; Animals

Little Blue Truck/Came down the road/"Beep!" said Blue/To a big green toad. Little Blue has a "beep" for all of the animals as he cruises down the road, and all of the animals answer back to Blue. But then; "Honk!" yelled a dump truck./"Coming through!/I've big important/Things to do!" And the big dump truck roars down the road and straight into a deep mud puddle. No one comes to help push the dump truck except for Blue but what will happen when Blue gets stuck too?

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
Kepner M.S.

Hedgehog, Pig, and the Sweet Little Friend
By: Lena Anderson
Illus. by: Lena Anderson
R & S Books, 2007
ISBN: 9129667429

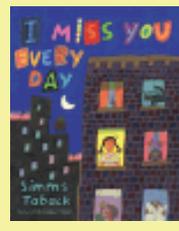


Curriculum: Hedgehogs; Pigs, Friendship

Hedgehog is having what seems like a typical evening when someone appears at her front gate but when she goes out to look, there's no one there. Later, when Pig comes for a visit, someone knocks on the door and they discover Fia, a little pig who's lost her way in the dark. They invite her in, give her soup and a place to sleep for the night. The next day they all go to town and Fia smells the yummy sweets her Mama bakes and knows she's found her home. The rhyming text in this picture book is beautifully enhanced by Anderson's pastel water-color illustrations.

Reviewed by: Brenda Earnest
Merrill M.S.

I Miss You Every Day
Written and Illus. by: Simms Taback
Viking, 2007
ISBN: 9780670061921



Curriculum: Postal service; Stories in rhyme

Taback's illustrations beautifully depict a young girl's story of missing someone special in her life. She misses them so much that she wraps herself up as a package to be sent through the mail. With careful treatment by the post office, hopefully her love-filled package will arrive safely

Who are we?

- ☺ We are DPS teacher librarians from elementary, middle and 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 720-423-8131 to order.)

(Continued on page 2)

into the hands of the receiver. Each page is filled with richly detailed illustrations that are almost a story within themselves. The ambiguity of who the person is that the girl is missing allows readers to relate the story more easily to themselves and a situation they might be facing.

Reviewed by: Karyn Pocernich
Ford Elem.

Playful Little Penguins

By: Tony Mitton

Illus. by: Guy Parker-Rees

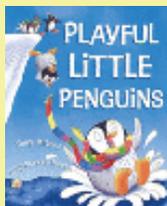
Walker & Company,
2007

ISBN: 0802797105

Curriculum: Penguins; Play; Stories in rhyme

Bright, playful illustrations invite young readers to follow the antics of a group of fledgling penguins as they play on the ice, in the snow, and in the water. Through bouncy rhymes, the penguins skim in the snow, slip on the ice, sled down the mounds, jump around together, leap into the sea, catch tasty fish, perform a silly dance and amuse a frightened seal pup who has lost its Mother. A perfect book for reading aloud.

Reviewed by: Irene Bell
Bryant Webster ECE-8



Little Night

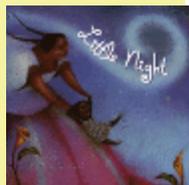
By: YuYi Morales

Roaring Brook Press,
2007

ISBN: 1596430885

Curriculum: Bedtime; Mothers and daughters; Night; Sky

Wonderfully evocative images fill this book; a bathtub filled with falling stars, a white dress crocheted from clouds, and a shining mustache left



behind from a Milky Way drink. The deeply colored, full-bleed illustrations that accompany the gentle evening ritual of Mother Sky sending Little Night off to play in the nighttime sky produce a quiet, calming effect. This makes an ideal bedtime read-aloud.

Reviewed by Gretchen Allgeier
Stedman Elem.

Nonfiction

Spanish!

Frederick Douglass

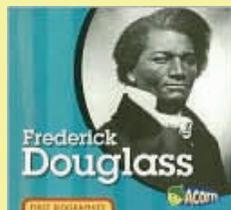
By: Cassie Mayer

Heinemann, 2008

ISBN: 9781432904449

Curriculum: Frederick Douglass, 1818-1895; African-American abolitionists--Biography; Abolitionists--United States--Biography

An interesting biography of an African-American who, although born in slavery, learns to read, escapes to the Northern states, and is exposed to the moving speech of an abolitionist. Deeply touched by it, he decides to work on his own oratorical skills. He succeeds as a great orator and abolitionist leader, writes a book about his experience as an American slave and later collaborates with President Lincoln. An illustrated glossary, timeline, and index are also included. Very well illustrated, this easy chapter book is informative as well as inspiring. ("No



estaba permitido" should be "No era permitido" or "No se permitía" on p. 10)

Reviewed by: Ethel Hammerly
Spanish Reviewer

Preocupación (Worry)

By: Sarah Medina

Illustrated by: Jo
Brooker

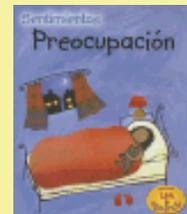
Heinemann, 2008

ISBN: 9781432906344

Curriculum: Worry; Feelings; Behavior

As one of the *Feelings* series in Spanish, this easy-chapter book introduces young readers to worry. It explores what happens when one experiences this feeling, why one may have it, whether it is acceptable to have it, how to deal with it, how long it may last, how it is shown by others, and whether it is possible to help others who are worried. There are four pictures for the reader to identify feelings portrayed in them. An illustrated glossary and index complete this well organized book. The text is clear, well organized and complemented with ethnically inclusive colorful drawings. This is a helpful guide for children to become aware of their feelings and how to deal with them in acceptable and constructive ways. ("Fijensen" on p. 24 on Note to Parents and Teachers should be "Fíjense.")

Reviewed by: Ethel Hammerly
Spanish reviewer

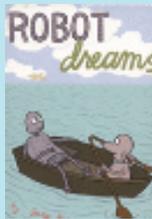


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The Best for Upper Elementary Readers!

Many of these books will work in middle school, too!

Fiction



Robot Dreams

By: Sara Varon

First Second, 2007

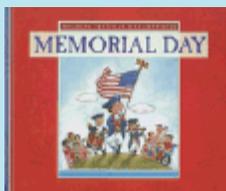
ISBN: 1596431083

Curriculum: Friendship

Friendships can be a delicate bond, ask Dog and Robot. In this virtually wordless, graphic novel, Dog builds a new friend, Robot. One day they set off for Dog Beach. Thus the relationship begins corroding. Dog has to leave Robot behind. He cannot move; salt water and metal, being a bad combination. Robot dreams of how it could have been, but remains lying on the beach. Dog meanwhile, missing Robot searches for a new friend but something always goes wrong. Robot continues to dream of friendship and salvation. In spite of his guilt, Dog builds a new friend and on their way home from the beach they encounter a sad but endearing occurrence.

Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier
Stedman Elem.

Nonfiction



Memorial Day

By: Trudi Strain
Trueit

Illus. by: Ronnie
Rooney

Child's World, 2007

ISBN: 1592968155

Curriculum: Social Studies; Holidays
Memorial Day in the Holidays, Festivals, & Celebrations series covers the history of the holiday, first called Decoration Day to honor fallen Civil War soldiers, and later changed to Memorial Day to honor all Americans who died in wartime from World War I to the present. Readers also see how Americans celebrate the holiday and read poems and songs about it. The chapters are short, usually 2 to 3 pages with colorful half and full page illustrations to enhance the text. Numerous sidebars give additional information and vocabulary words are in a different color text with a glossary at the end of the book.

Reviewed by: Brenda Earnest
Merrill M.S.

Amazing Reptiles and Amphibians

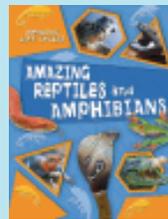
By: Brian Williams

Gareth Stevens,
2008

ISBN: 0836888987

Curriculum: Reptiles; Amphibians

The reptile and amphibian families are detailed in this volume of the *Amazing Life Cycles* series. General descriptions are given about characteristics, habitats, and their life cycles. This is followed by a variety of life cycles of specific amphibians and reptiles - the Komodo Dragon, Green Sea Turtle and Red Eyed Tree Frog, to name a few. Bright, intriguing photos (particularly of the axolotl!) along with manageable quantities of text, maps, graphic organizers, and some truly amazing



examples of these animals will all work together to draw in even reluctant readers.

Reviewed by: Karyn Pocernich
Ford Elem.

The Seldom-Ever -Shady Glade

Written & Illus.

by: Sue Van Was-
senhove

Wordsong, 2008

ISBN: 1590783528

*Curriculum: Children's Poetry-
American; Everglades (Fla.); Nature*
A suitably dramatic backdrop for the 17 poems featuring the wildlife (manatees, alligators, turtles, crocodiles, and birds) of the Florida Everglades is produced in breathtaking quilts. The magnificently panoramic designs encourage readers to play visual hide-and-seek among the pages. Creatures are hidden everywhere, including the borders. The poetry quietly evokes the feeling that if you have not visited the Everglades, you should.

Reviewed by: Irene Bell
Bryant Webster ECE-8

Bats

By: Sophie Lockwood

The Child's World,
2008

ISBN:
9781592969265

Curriculum: Bats; Mammals

In this wonderfully photographed book, the lives of several bat species are explored. Described are the habitat, family and social grouping, sur-



(Continued from page 3)

vival techniques, and the human impact on these nocturnal flyers. Each of the six titles reviewed in the series are appropriate for 3rd-5th grade research. Interesting fact and trivia boxes appear on nearly every double page spread. Key vocabulary is highlighted in the text and defined in the glossary. Students interested in learning more are given a list of books and websites.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas

JFK HS

Spanish!

Peces increíbles
(Incredible Fish)

By: John Townsend

Raintree, 2008

ISBN: 9781410930620

Curriculum: Fishes; Animals in nature

The marvelous and somewhat strange ways in which a wide diversity of fish live, feed, reproduce and defend themselves are presented in eight chapters supported with numerous photographs. While fish vary in size from the tiny sea horse to the electric eel and the whale shark, they all offer fascinating and unique characteristics that are highlighted in short blocked sections of each page. The facts presented will captivate nature loving readers and will make them aware about contamination and over fishing that places some of these creatures in the border of extinction. A bibliography, web site search hints to get more information, a diagram of world species, plus a glossary and index complete the book in this interesting series.

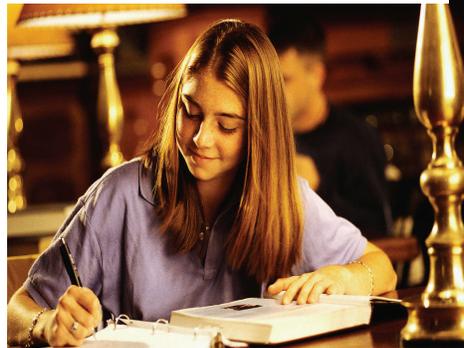
Reviewed by: Ethel Hammerly

Spanish Reviewer



Middle School Reader Gold Mine

Many of these books will
work in high school, too.!



Fiction

The Wild Girls

By: Pat Murphy

Viking, 2007

ISBN: 9780670062263

Curriculum: Friendship; Family Problems; Divorce; Writing

Joan was sure that moving to Northern California with her family was the worst thing that had ever happened to her. But right away she meets Fox (real name Sarah) who lives with her father, an author, in a run down house in the woods. Between them they write a story which wins a prize and brings them into the world of Verla Volante who teaches them the power of observing people and events around them, asking the right questions, and writing down the Story. This is a good book for young middle school readers who are good readers but not ready for the mature themes of some young adult books.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble

Kepner M.S.



The Last Apprentice:
Night of the Soul
Stealer, Book 3

By: Joseph Delaney

Illustrated by: Patrick Arrasmith

Greenwillow, 2007

ISBN: 0060766252C

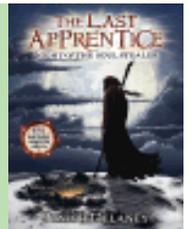
Curriculum: Supernatural; Apprentices; Witches

In this thriller, Thomas and the Spook spend the winter season on gloomy and forbidding Anglezarke Moor. While here, they encounter a powerful rogue Stone Chucker bent on eliminating all the families in the valley by bashing their heads in.

Usually a Stone Chucker does not kill, only causes mischief. With fistfuls of salt and iron filings thrown at it, the creature dissolves. More trouble comes when a dark mage resurrects an ancient evil from Viking times. An exciting tale that continues with another installment.

Reviewed by: Irene Bell

Bryant Webster ECE-8



The One Where the Kid
Nearly Jumps to His
Death and Lands in
California

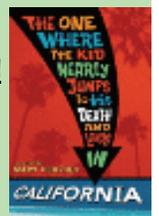
By: Mary Hershey

Razorbill (Penguin), 2007

ISBN: 9781595141507

Curriculum: Divorce; Coming of age; Amputees

When he was eight years old, Alastair fell from a ski lift and consequently had to have one leg amputated below the knee. Now thirteen, with his beloved mother off to alcohol rehab, Stump - as he calls him-



(Continued on page 5)

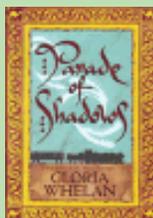
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self - is being sent to spend the summer with the father he had written off all those years before. At times painfully poignant or laugh-out-loud funny, this story takes many twists and turns along the way. Stump's father's new wife is a double amputee! Her niece is a soap opera star, who talks Stump into joining her charity triathlon team. And the crotchety old swim coach Stump hires to get him ready is quite a memorable character, to say the least.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley
South H.S.

Parade of Shadows

By: Gloria Whelan
Harper Collins, 2007
ISBN:
9780060890292



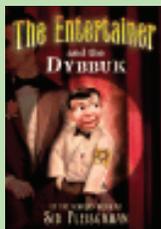
*Curriculum: Ottoman Empire;
Travel; Fathers and daughters*

Because her father is "assigned to the Arab Desk in England's Foreign Office," Julia is often left behind as he goes on expeditions to the (Pre WWI) Middle East. When he agrees to take her along on his latest trip, Julia is excited by the prospect of a romantic adventure. A tale of intrigue unfolds as little by little the ulterior motives of each member of their tour group, including Julia's father, is revealed.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley
South H.S.

The Entertainer and the Dybbuk

By: Sid Fleischman
Greenwillow Books,
2008



ISBN: 9780061344466

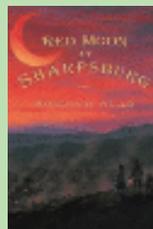
*Curriculum: World War II; Holocaust;
Spirits; Justice*

This is a look at the Holocaust and it's young victims from a different point of view. In this case, from a dybbuk, the spirit of a twelve year old boy that was killed by the Germans. He possesses the ventriloquist dummy of the Great Freddie. The ghost makes Freddie one of the most famous ventriloquists in Europe, while looking all the while for his murderer. When he finds him, the justice he invokes makes for an interesting ending.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Rishel M.S.

Red Moon at Sharpsburg

By: Rosemary Wells
Penguin Group, 2007
ISBN: 9780670036387



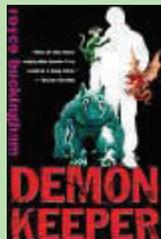
*Curriculum: Civil War; Family Life;
Women's Roles; Survival*

The story is set in the South during the Civil War. Through the eyes of 12 year old India, the reader experiences the horrors of war and how it affected the families. India, however, is not a typical girl of the times. Since the schools are closed due to the war, she is to be tutored in the art of womanhood and her Bible verses. She talks her tutor and friend into teaching her the sciences. Her goal is to get to the one college that accepts women to study. First, however, she has to survive the war.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Rishel M.S.

The Demon Keeper

By: Royce Buckingham
Putnam, 2007
ISBN: 0399246495



(Continued on page 6)

Review Crew Staff

Committee Chair:

Steve Bowley
South High School

Secretary:

Danette Baltzer
Grant Middle School

Editor:

Chris Coble
Kepner Middle School

Reviewers:

Gretchen Allgeier
Stedman Elementary

Irene Bell
Bryant-Webster K-8

Karen Burns
Rishel Middle School

Brenda Earnest
Merrill Middle School

Ethel Hammerly
Spanish Reviewer

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JFK High School

Marilyn Martin
Park Hill K-8

Karyn Pocernich
Ford Elementary

From ERS:

Jody Gehrig
Karen Shannon
Antonio Nicotera

(Continued from page 5)

Curriculum: Demons; Responsibility; Friendship

Demons are all around us, but most of them are harmless. Nat is the new demon keeper. He is responsible to keep his demons from bothering people, and keeping the "Beast" from eating people. When the Beast is accidentally set free, Nat finds some new friends to help him. He must hurry to catch him before the evil Thin Man does. He wants control of all Nat's demons. This book is scary, funny and full of action that will attract reluctant readers.

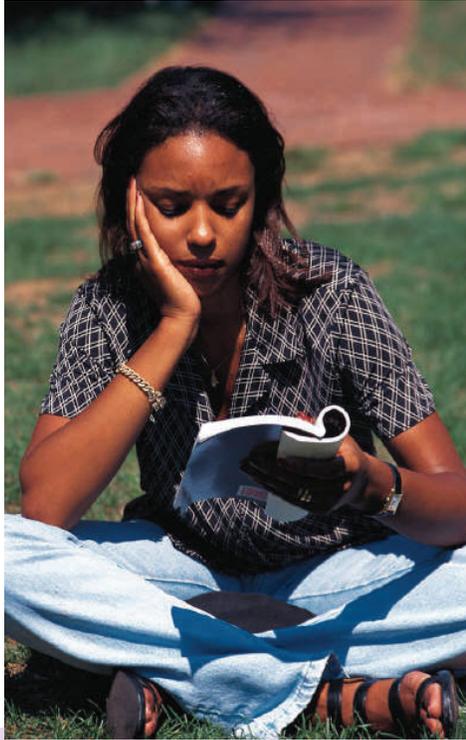
Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Rishel M.S.

There should be a little voice in your head like the storyteller is saying it. And if there's not, then you're just lookin' at the words.

~LaKeisha~

(9th Grader in San Francisco)

Young Adults Deserve the Best!



Fiction

True Love, The Sphinx, and Other Unsolvable Riddles: A Comedy in Four Voices

By: Tyne O'Connell
Bloomsbury, U.S.A., c2007
ISBN: 9781599900506

Curriculum: Egypt; Relationships; Field trips; Friendship

On a private school field trip to Egypt, American high school friends Sam and Salah and British best friends Octavia and Rosie find themselves, in the name of friendship and lack of clear communication, entangled in a comical love rectangle. This light and whimsical read



will appeal to middle school and high school girls looking for an escapist beach-read type of book.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas
JFK HS

Another Kind of Cowboy

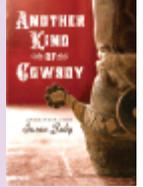
By: Susan Juby
HarperTeen, 2007
ISBN: 9780060765187

Curriculum: Horses; Dressage; Teen life; Homosexuality; Family relationships

Alex loves to ride and his teachers are always impressed by his natural way with horses. His father would like nothing better than for Alex to be a cowboy. Alex, on the other hand, is interested in cowboys, but not in being one, but his father better never find that out. Cleo has been sent to a private girl's equestrienne school on Vancouver Island because of her bad behavior at home in Hollywood. Alex and Cleo meet at the stable where they are learning the art of dressage riding. The two manage to become friends against all odds and in the process of being a friend to each other succeed in finding themselves along the way.

The issues surrounding being gay, coming out, and maintaining family relationships are all dealt with gently and with humor. Cleo's issues with drinking, drugs, partying and bad choices in boyfriends are also managed with humor though not very gently.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
Kepner M.S.



A book is like a garden carried in the pocket.

~ Chinese proverb ~