



The Review Crew

What's New and Great for Our Youngest Readers?

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

Volume 1, Issue 2

December 04/January 05

Who are we?

- ☺ More than a dozen library media specialists 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 303-405-8131 to order.)



Fiction

Duckie's Rainbow

Author/Illus.:

Frances Barry

Candlewick Press,
2004

ISBN: 0763620661

*Curriculum: Colors of the rainbow;
Prepositions*

In this cleverly designed book, Duckie hurries home through the red poppy field, under the orange bridge, etc. When the reader turns the last of the curved pages, each smaller than the last, a rainbow is revealed.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley
Beach Court



HarperCollins, 2004

ISBN: 0060089768

Curriculum: Friendship, I Can Read Book

Ruby wants to bake a cake but she doesn't know how. All her friends help her think up the ingredients. Then the cake is not good, but they make her feel better by telling her the good things about the cake.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin
Park Hill

Roger, the Jolly Pirate

By: Brett Helquist

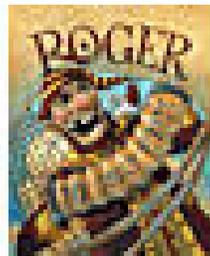
Illustrated by:
Brett Helquist

ISBN: 0066238064

*Curriculum: Pirate -
Fiction; Humor - Fiction*

Roger is awful pirate. Roger laughs too much and scowls too little earning the name, "Jolly Roger". But when a terrible battle eschews he saves the day in a fashion truly his own! This is a great story with wonderful illustrations!

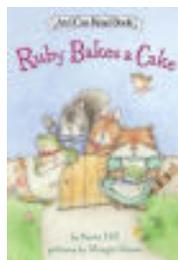
Reviewed by: Janet Damon
Oakland



Ruby Bakes a Cake

By: Susan Hill

Illustrated by: Margie
Moore



Continued on p. 3

Want to read more reviews? See the instructions on page 5.

The Best for Upper Elementary Readers!

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



Fiction

A Packet of Seeds

By: Deborah
Hopkinson

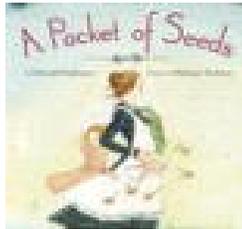
Illustrated by:
Bethanne An-
dersen

Greenwillow
Books, 2004

ISBN:0060090901

*Curriculum: Frontier and pioneer
life, homesickness*

Many students understand how it
feels to leave everything behind and
begin a new life in another city,
state, or even a new country. In "A



Packet of Seeds," pioneer women
and their families learn to enjoy the
simplest of luxuries, while enduring
the difficult journey to a new land.
Well written and illustrated, this
book does an excellent job of bring-
ing the pioneer times to life.

Reviewed by: Pat White
Ashley Elementary

ther, Bidy Malone loves to sing and
dance. What happens when she
stumbles upon the world of the
"little folk," and is asked to name
three wishes, makes for a great
story in the style of a classic Irish
folktale.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley
Beach Court

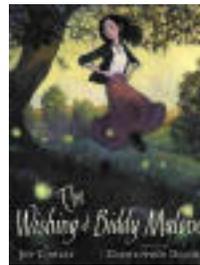
The Wishing of Bidy Malone

By: Joy Cowley

Illustrated by:
Christopher Denise
Philomel Books,
2004

ISBN:
0399234047

Curriculum: Faeries, fiction



Amelia's Show and Tell Fiesta

By: Mimi Chapra

Illustrated by: Martha Aviles
Katherine Tegin Books, 2004

ISBN: 006050225X

*Curriculum: Show and tell presen-
tations, new school, Cuban Ameri-
cans*

Although she's not very good at ei-

[Continued on p. 5](#)



Middle School Reader Gold Mine

You guessed it! Many of these books will work in high school, too!



Fiction

The Game of Sunken Places

By: M. T. Anderson

Scholastic Press, 2004
ISBN: 0-439-41660-4

*Curriculum: Fantasy Fiction,
Games, Trolls*

Brian and Gregory are
best friends and are
invited to spend the
week at odd Uncle
Max's house. They
come upon what looks
to be an ordinary board
game. They find them-
selves involved in a real
game along with trolls, warring kingdoms
and the Thusser Hordes. It suddenly be-
comes a much more serious game.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Hill Middle School



New Found Land

By: Alan Wolf

Publisher-year. Candlewick, 2004

ISBN: 0763621137

*Curriculum: History, Exploration, Lewis
and Clark Expedition*

Review: We follow along the journey of
Lewis and Clark as told through narra-
tives of various people impacted by the
expedition. The narrator or lead in this
book is Seaman or Oolum, Lewis' New-
foundland dog, and his descriptions of
the sights, smells and sounds of the

[Continued on p. 4](#)



Nonfiction

A Parade of Plants

By: Melissa Stewart
Compass Point Books, 2004
I SBN: 0756505925

Curriculum: botany, plant studies, parts of a plant, scientific process

A Parade of Plants by Melissa Stewart is a straightforward, simplified book that explains the scientific process through the study of plants. The most important part of being a scientist is making observations. The author directs young learners to look around and take notes on what they see. Students start with the basic observation of looking at plants, then looking at each part of the plant. Finally, step-by-step di-

rections are given for three different activities to help students understand how plants grow. The book is colorfully illustrated with photographs, giving the reader a sense of the "reality" of the scientific process.

Reviewed by: Carol Chapman
Morey Middle School

Farm Animals

By: Jennifer Blizin Gillis
Compass Point Books, 2005
I SBN: 0756506700

Curriculum: Farms, Animals

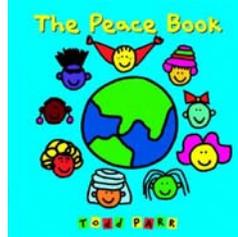
This entry in a fine series about farms tells about the care and uses of a variety of farm animals. The photographs are sharp and interesting, and the text packs a great deal of information into short paragraphs and easy sentences.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham
Valdez

The Peace Book

By: Todd Parr
I llustrated by: Todd Parr
Little, Brown and Company, 2004
I SBN:0316835315

Curriculum: Peace



Todd Parr uses his simple text, bright colors, and bold, happy drawings to define peace

for early readers. This easy-to-read book defines peace as taking a nap, helping your neighbor, and even having enough pizza to share with everyone. Students relate positively to this book, the concepts are simple, but the book never talks down to them.

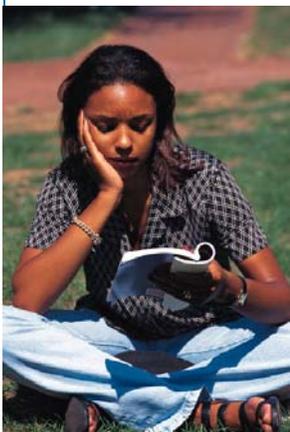
Reviewed by: Pat White
Ashley Elementary

Young Adults Deserve the Best!

Antarctica: Journeys to the South Pole

By: Walter Dean Myers
Scholastic Press, 2004
I SBN: 0439220017

Myers brings his superb storytelling skills to the history of human exploration of this remote continent. These tales are packed with high drama. Some of the explorers were men you would follow anywhere, others were harsh or foolish. Students who saw the IMAX film about Shackleton's expedition at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science will already have a connection to this book.



Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham
Valdez

**So do our teachers!
Professional Reading**

Consider the Source

By: Paige Taylor and Jerri Lejeune
UpstartBooks, 2004
I SBN: 1579500951

Curriculum: Library research, web site evaluation

Review: Paige Taylor, a career counselor, and Jerri Lejeune, a middle school teacher, has created a very simple "how-to" book about finding reliable information on the Internet. The target audience is 4-6 grades; however, some of the lessons could be adjusted to meet the needs for 7th or 8th grade students.

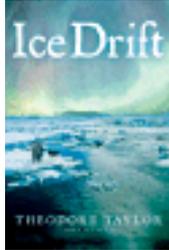
Reviewed by: Carol Chapman
Morey Middle School

expedition are well researched. The multiple perspectives make this a great resource for use in history discussions.

Reviewed by: Anthony LaCombe
Baker Middle School

Ice Drift

By: Theodore Taylor
Harcourt, 2004
ISBN: 0152050817



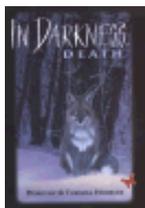
Curriculum: Survival, Arctic, Brothers

Fourteen-year-old Alika and his younger brother are ice-hunting for seals when they feel the ice floe break free from the main land. This is the story of their struggle for survival for six months through the darkest part of the winter.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin
Park Hill

In Darkness, Death

By: Tomas and Dorothy Hoobler
Philomel Books, 2004
ISBN: 0-399-23767-4



Curriculum: Mystery, Japan, Samurai Warriors, Ninjas

Set in Japan during the time of the Shoguns and Ninjas, a Samurai Lord is murdered. Judge Ooka and his apprentice set out to solve the crime. Their travels through ancient Japan to meet the people and encountering the traditions that existed make this an unusual murder mystery.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Hill Middle School

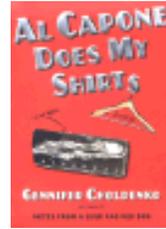
Al Capone Does My Shirts

By: Gennifer Choldenko
G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2004

ISBN: 0-399-23861-1

Curriculum: Family Relations, Alcatraz Island, Autism

Moose and his family, including his Autistic sister, Natalie move to Alcatraz Island. His father is working as a guard and his sister was to go to a special school. When the school doesn't work out, Moose along with his new friends help to take care of Natalie. They have interesting adventures, thanks to the warden's daughter, Piper. Will they even meet Al Capone?



Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Hill Middle School

Heartbeat

By: Sharon Creech
HarperCollins, 2004



ISBN: 0-06-054023-0
Curriculum: Friendship, First person narrative

Newbery award winner Sharon Creech (*Walk Two Moons*) uses verse to mirror the cadence of Annie's running as she examines her life--reflecting on school, reactions to a coach pressuring her to join the track team, worries about a new baby coming into the family, her grandfather's fading memory and her moody best friend, Max. These themes will resonate with middle school readers in this quick, satisfying read.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose
Smedley Elementary



Nonfiction

Leaping Beauty: and other animal fairy tales

By: Gregory Maguire
Illustrated by: Chris L. Demarest
HarperCollins, 2004
ISBN: 0-06-0564180

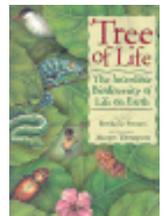
Curriculum: Fairy tales

Readers are in for some unusual retellings of familiar tales including "Rumplesnakeskin," "Cinder-Elephant," and "Little Red Robin Hood," along with the title story "Leaping Beauty." Indeed--these tales are beyond fractured, they're flat-out farcical. For more sophisticated students familiar with the original stories, these adaptations will prove amusing and, perhaps, inspiring for young writers.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose
Smedley Elementary

Tree of Life: The Incredible Biodiversity of Life on Earth

By: Rochelle Strauss
Illustrated by: Margot Thompson
Kids Can Press, 2004
ISBN: 1553376692



Curriculum: Science, Biology, Classification

This is a beautifully illustrated look at the diversity of life on earth. The book names the five kingdoms of life on earth and gives examples of each. The book gives the numbers of species in each kingdom. There is a picture of a great tree with the portion of each kingdom highlighted.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
Kepner Middle School

Middle School continued from p. 4

Fantastic Feats and Failures

By: The editors of YES Magazine

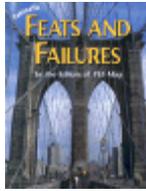
Kids Can Press, 2004

ISBN: 1553376331

Curriculum: Science, Engineering, Structures

This is a look at some of the structural wonders of the world – some successful, some not. This is a fascinating book, great pictures, good reading whether you are into engineering structures or not.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
Kepner Middle School



Upper Elementary continued from p. 2

As new student from a foreign country, Amelia finds the whole concept of “Show and Tell” a little confusing.

While the other students bring trinkets that can be passed around, Amelia wears a beautiful party dress from her native island.

Written in both English and Spanish, Amelia's Show and Tell Fiesta is an engaging and brightly illustrated picture book that all can enjoy. This would be a good book start the school year.

Reviewed by: Pat White
Ashley Elementary



Nonfiction

Jim Thorpe's Bright Path

By: Joseph Bruchac

Illustrated by: S.D. Nelson

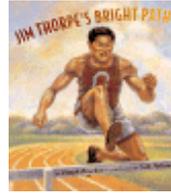
Lee&Low Books, 2004

ISBN:158430166X

Curriculum: Jim Thorpe, Athletics, Native Americans

Young readers may not be familiar with the amazing accomplishments of Olympian Jim Thorpe, but Joseph Bruchac's excellent biography of this Native American athlete should help them have a better understanding of his life and times. The book describes his life at an Indian Boarding school, his days as a student athlete, and his rise as a world champion and as a professional baseball and football player. History may never see another athlete of Jim Thorpe's wide-reaching abilities, fortunately “Jim Thorpe's Bright Path” will help young readers know this amazing hero.

Reviewed by: Pat White
Ashley Elementary



The Roman Army

By: Dylan Blacklock

Illustrated by: David Kennett

Walker & Company, 2004

ISBN: 0802788963

Curriculum: Roman army, history of military, military art and science

Review: Dyan Blacklock's book The Roman Army explains how the Roman army was a contributing factor to Rome's strength. The main focus of the book is on the army's composition, organization, training methods, weapons and campaigns. The text is informative and the book is colorfully illustrated. The book has the look and feel of a graphic novel, with one or two sentences in boxes near pictures. Some pictures will take up a whole page, with smaller, detailed pictures to grab the reader's attention.

Reviewed by: Carol Chapman
Morey Middle School

Spinning Toys

By: Dana Meachen Rau

Compass Point Books, 2005

ISBN: 075650676X

Curriculum: Games, Functional Reading, Multicultural

Tops and flying disks have been around for thousands of years. Young readers learn a bit of history, techniques for spinning and tossing the toys, and can follow instructions for making a top and how to play three different games. This is one of a series, Games Around the World .

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham
Valdez



Books in this section are not recommended. Read the full reviews for more details.

Rodents Rule!

By: Meredith Phillips

Compass Point Books, 2005

ISBN 0756507014

This is a flawed entry in an otherwise good series, Pet's Point of View. It contains some misleading and inconsistent facts. Meet the needs of young guinea pig, hamster, gerbil, mice, and chinchilla owners with books from other series.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham
Valdez

To see full reviews:

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