



# The Review Crew

## What's New and Great for Our Youngest Readers?

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

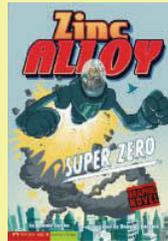
Volume 5 Number 4

December 2008

### Fiction

#### Super Zero

Written by: Donald Lemke  
Illustrated by: Douglas Holgate  
Stone Arch Books, 2009  
ISBN: 9781434207623



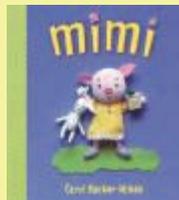
*Curriculum: Graphic novels; Heroes; Robots; Bullies; Science fiction*

Zach Allen loves to read comic books. But he isn't at all like his favorite super heroes. The bullies in his class are always picking on him, as well as other kids. On one particularly bad day, Zach builds a high tech robot suit. He has become a super-hero! He has become Zinc Alloy! Can he do something about those bullies?

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin  
Park Hill ECE-8

#### Mimi

By: Carol Baicker-McKee  
Bloomsbury, 2008  
ISBN: 1599900653



*Curriculum: Pets; Lost and found; Pigs*

Mimi and her bunny have lost their pet, a roly-poly named Frank. When Mimi goes to

feed her pet a smidgen of banana for breakfast she discovers him missing, but is forced to go on with her day anyway. This book is highly recommended for its unique pictures, but for its story that is certain to connect to young readers as well.

Reviewed by: Leah Jungers  
Pioneer Charter

#### De Colores Bright with Colors

Illustrated by David Diaz  
Marshall Cavendish Children, 2008  
ISBN: 9780761454311



*Curriculum: Poetry; Imagery; Spring; Singing*

Though this book does not tell an actual story at the end of the book you will feel uplifted and 'a bright love ...with peace all around'. The words of the song are in Spanish and English on opposite pages. David Diaz' illustrations are, as expected, rich with color and texture. The music for the entire song is on the last two pages of the book.

Reviewed by Megan McQuinn  
Howell K-8

### 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)

### The Dog who Saved Santa

Written and illustrated by: True Kelley

Holiday House, 2008

ISBN: 13978082342120

*Curriculum: Santa Claus; Dogs; Humor; Christmas; Problem-solving*

As Christmas draws closer Rodney, Santa's dog, realizes that if he doesn't take over the delivery of the gifts children worldwide would be disappointed. Though Rodney tries growling and chewing on Santa nothing seems to work. Finally Rodney turns off Santa's TV and teaches him how to be a real Santa. This is how Santa learned to be the 'hardworking spirit we know today'. Engaging story, though not very well written.

Reviewed by: Megan McQuinn  
Howell K-8



## Nonfiction

### Hamsters, Shells, and Spelling Bees

By: Lee Bennett Hopkins  
HarperCollins, 2008

ISBN:9780060741129

*Curriculum: Schools-poetry; Poetry*

This is a collection of poetry about school activities that is written for the developing reader. Eighteen authors have created spectacular po-



ems children will thoroughly enjoy. The vivid illustrations bring further delight. Good read-aloud poetry, as well as independent reading, for any time of the year and for many typical situations.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin  
Park Hill ECE-8

# Spanish!

### Hojas (Leaves)

By: Charlotte Guilain

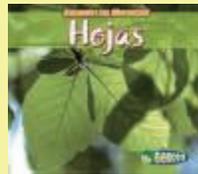
Heinemann, 2008

ISBN: 9781432917302

*Curriculum: Plants; Leaves; Contrasting plant leaves; Botany*

An easy chapter book that uses simple and repetitive text to introduce young readers to plants and their parts, before presenting their leaves in more detail. Leaves are described as to function, type, shape, size, and color. They are contrasted and illustrated with beautiful photographs of a diversity of plants. An activity calls for youngsters to spot differences in a couple of leaves. An illustrated glossary, index and notes to parents and teachers complete this very attractive and well organized book.

Reviewed by: Ethel Hammerly  
Spanish reviewer



### Todoterrenos/ Humvees

By: Matt Doeden  
Capstone, 2009

ISBN: 9781429623773

*Curriculum: Humvees; Vehicles; Technology; Social studies*

This bilingual easy chapter book for early readers describes Humvees, names their parts, what they can do, and how they are used. The simple text is supported with relevant photographs. There are a number of subject-specific new words introduced and repeated throughout. While these words are not in bold in the text, the glossary defines them. Internet sites and an index are included as well in this informative book. (A better rendition for Table of Contents is "Tabla de materias" or "Contenido.")

Reviewed by: Ethel Hammerly  
Spanish reviewer

[\(Continued on page 3\)](#)



I've traveled the world twice  
over,  
Met the famous; saints and sinners,  
Poets and artists, kings and queens,  
Old stars and hopeful beginners,  
I've been where no-one's been before,  
Learned secrets from writers and cooks  
All with one library ticket  
To the wonderful world of books.  
~ Unknown ~

# The Best for Upper Elementary Readers!

Many of these books will work in middle school,

## Fiction

### Dog Gone

By: Cynthia Chapman Willis

Feival and Friends, 2008

ISBN: 0312371233

*Curriculum: Grief; Dogs; Grandfathers; Farm life-Virginia*

This story deals with the tough issues of death, grieving, and the great accompanying sadness that lasts for many months or years. Dill, short for Dylan, is a twelve-year-old girl who refuses to acknowledge or deal with the recent death of her Mother due to cancer, the fact that her dog "Dead End" is at home one moment and missing the next (possibly running with a pack of wild dogs who are destroying local livestock), or that her beloved Grandfather has become so sick that he needs to go into the hospital (maybe never to return.)

Reviewed by: Irene Bell

Alumni

### Casey and Derek on the Ice

By: Marty Sederman

Illus. by: Zachary Pullen

Chronicle Books, 2008

ISBN: 9780811851329

*Curriculum: Hockey*

This story is the hockey version of "Casey at the Bat". The junior hockey teams, the Rockets and Titans are in the last minute of play.



The Rockets are one point behind. At the last second The Rockets get a penalty shot. The shot is made and scores a point to even the score. The game is won in overtime by the rockets. The story is superbly complimented by the oil illustrations. The illustrations provide a variety of perspectives, from the top and eye level to name a few. The characters faces with their oversized noses and jowls and frost coming out of their mouth depict emotions in the characters in larger than life fashion. I highly recommend this book.

Reviewed by: Dr. Lynne Lopez-Crowley Johnson Elem.

### Who Stole Uncle Sam?

By: Martha Freeman

Holiday House, 2008

ISBN: 9780823420919

*Curriculum: Mystery; Baseball; Missing persons*

Alex and Yasmeen are reluctantly back solving mysteries again. They promised themselves that they would not, but what can you do when the baseball coach ends up missing the essential Memorial Day game as well as leading the 5K run dressed up as Uncle Sam. And how is it that he is found in a porta-potty that has been moved from where it was supposed to be? How odd is that? It just begs to be investigated.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble Kepner M. S.



## Nonfiction

### Frogs

By: Nic Bishop

Illustrated by: Nic Bishop

Scholastic, 2008

ISBN: 9780439877555

*Curriculum: Frogs; Life cycles; Habitats*

From the pea-sized transparent glass frog to the giant Goliath frog, "as heavy as a newborn baby," these and other wonderfully varied species fairly leap off the pages of this ultimate frog book. Wondrous full page color photographs are paired with detailed informative text set on richly colored backgrounds of mahogany, periwinkle blue, fiery red or salmon pink making this offering a visual delight. This is a must-have frog book for any school library collection.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose

Trevista ECE-8

### Australia in Colors

By: Nathan Olson

Capstone, 2009

ISBN: 1429616970

*Curriculum: Australia; Colors*

Highly detailed and vivid photographs give a young reader short introduction to the ways of life in Australia through colors. Yellow introduces the kangaroo signs often seen along the road in the outback, and gray sheep tell the reader that there are more sheep than people in Australia.

Reviewed by: Leah Jungers

Pioneer Charter



(Continued from page 3)

**How to Get Rich in the California Gold Rush**

By: Tod Olsen

Illus. by: Scott Allred

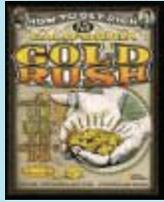
National Geographic, 2008

ISBN: 9781426303166

*Curriculum: California - gold discoveries; Frontier and pioneer life*

When gold fever struck Tom Hartley, no one's reasoning could keep him from heading west. He left with two friends, a little money, and high hopes of success. His account details the realities of life for prospectors - from the trip to California, gear needed, how to mine, the many hardships, the scam artists, striking it rich, and going home. This is an engaging, believable account of the 'fever' that struck many thousands of young men during the 1850s. A variety of additional information helps to create an even more vivid picture of the life of these gold seekers.

Reviewed by: Karyn Pocernich  
Ford Elem.



**Hannibal: Rome's worst nightmare**

By: Philip Brooks

Franklin Watts, 2009

ISBN: 0531185537

*Curriculum: Hannibal; Roman history (274-182 B.C.E.); Punic war*

One in a series of sixteen, the most recent title from Franklin Watt's *A Wicked History* series is an up close and personal of Hannibal Barca. Introducing the bio with a brief overview of the first Punic war, readers soon discover why Hannibal becomes a name so renowned that it becomes



synonymous with bloodletting. Colored font, well-planned layout and photographs of artist's renditions of events compliment the text. Spotlighting one of the most interesting characters of ancient history, this series will enlighten as well as entertain.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer  
Grant M.S.

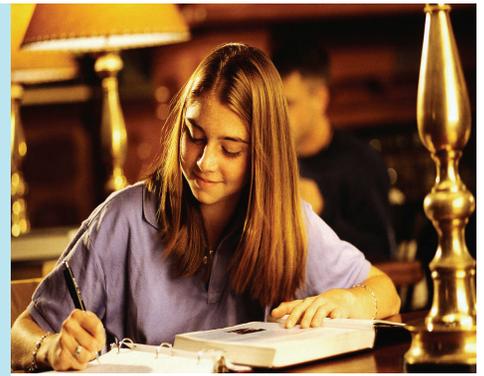
**Denver Public Schools  
Book Reviews now  
available on line**

Each month each member of the Review committee writes fifteen book reviews and publishes them online. This newsletter represents only a fraction of the reviews we write each month. If you would like to read more reviews there are two ways you can access them.

◇ First, access the LION review database at:  
<http://lion.dpsk12.org/screens/dpsbookreviews.html>

From this site you can search for books that have been reviewed by DPS librarians by title, author, subject or all of the above, or you can get a list of all the reviewed books.

◇ A second way to access DPS reviews is from the general LION catalogue. When you pull up a book or list of books any that have a review will have an icon that looks like this:



**Middle School  
Reader Gold Mine**

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

**Fiction**

**Genius Squad**

By: Catherine Jinks

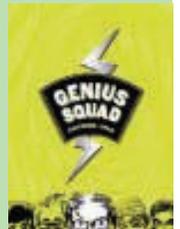
Harcourt, 2008

ISBN:

9780152059859

*Curriculum: Spying; Computers; Criminals; Identity; Loyalty*

In the second book Cadel Piggott returns, living in a foster home and under guard. They are afraid that the arch-villain, Prosper English will try to kidnap him. He is persuaded to move to a new foster home where he finds himself surrounded by other talented young people like himself. The Genius Squad is investigating Genome, a company with a suspicious background. Cadel learns who he can trust and who he really is. There is action, adventure, and the other characters are one of a kind.



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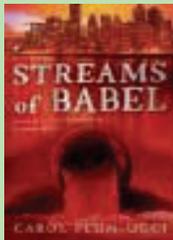
Reviewed by: Karen Burns  
Rishel M.S.

### Streams of Babel

By: Carol Plum-Ucci  
Harcourt, Inc.,  
2008

ISBN:  
9780152165567

*Curriculum: Terrorism; Espionage; Relationships; Survival*



This is a science fiction story that could be all too real. A terrorist group has infected one water line from a small town. After two unexplained deaths, and other illnesses, the teens involved start their own investigation. On the other side of the world, in Pakistan, a young computer genius uncovers the plot. Can he and the others find the answer before others die? This is told from the perspectives of the four teenagers and readers will not be able to put it down. Great for high school as well.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns  
Rishel M.S.

### The Invasion of Sandy Bay

By: Anita Sanchez  
Calkins Creek, 2008

ISBN:  
9781590785607

*Curriculum: Historical fiction; War of 1812*

After the death of his father, 12-year-old Lemuel and his mother move from their farm to a Massachusetts fishing village where she runs a tavern. Lemuel feels like an outsider in this new town and decides to learn how to fish. Bill Tarr,



a well known fisherman in the village takes Samuel out one night. The fog is settling in the bay when a British frigate pulls into the Sandy Bay. The British see Bill and Lemuel and order them to board the frigate. Based on true events Sanchez weaves fact and fiction into this story. One does not need to know about the War of 1812 to enjoy this story. At the end of the book Sanchez discusses her research and the novel's historical background. Resources for further study and a bibliography are included at the end of the book. Reviewed by: Dr. Lynne Lopez-Crowley Johnson Elem.

### The Last of the High Kings

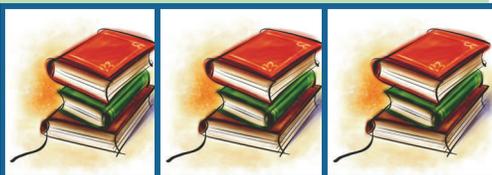
By: Kate Thompson  
Greenwillow Books, 2007

ISBN: 9780061175961

*Curriculum: Ghosts; Fairies; Families*

JJ Liddy and his wife Aisling have four children. The oldest is Hazel who agrees to an outrageous proposal because her father asks it of her. Next is Donal whose compassion for those around him leads him on a strange and dangerous mission. Jenny is a wild child of the hills who has taken to wandering in the mountains without her shoes and spending time with an old mountain goat. Last is the toddler Aiden who is most happy when he is hammering on things. It will take all of this interesting family to alter the fate of Mankind.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
Kepner M.S.



## Review Crew Staff

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### From ERS:

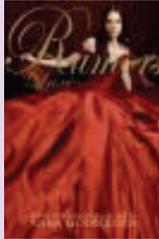
Jody Gehrig  
Karen Shannon  
Antonio Nicotera

# Young Adults Deserve the Best!

## Fiction

### Rumors

By: Anna Godbersen  
HarperCollins Publishers, 2008  
ISBN: 0061345692



*Curriculum: Life styles-Nineteenth century-New York City*

Readers who open the covers of the Luxe novels will open the door to a rare look at the waning months of the nineteenth century society season in New York City. True love, false friends, scandalous gossip, and whispers from the past all combine to make the second entry every bit as delicious as the first. Elizabeth Holland was engaged to marry the wealthy Henry Schoonmaker but is in love with Will Keller, the groom; Diana Holland was in love with Henry and he with her; Penelope Hayes was also in love with Henry and would do anything to marry him; and Carolina Broud, the ex-Holland maid, knows too many secrets and reveals too much. How will this all shake out?

Reviewed by: Irene Bell  
Alumni

### The Running Man

By: Michael Gerard Bauer  
Greenwillow Books  
ISBN: 9780061455087



*Curriculum: Artists; Recluses; Friendship; Gossip; Vietnam war; Silkworms*  
"Joseph fixed his eyes on the coffin and thought of silkworms." With this opening line, readers are propelled into the world of this withdrawn 14-year-old. Asked by his neighbor to draw her reclusive brother's portrait, Joseph is both intrigued and frightened by the prospect. Gradually, Vietnam veteran Tom Leyton, reveals the wounds that have so damaged him, and helps Joseph come to terms with some of his deepest fears.

This compelling story addresses important themes around childhood fears, hidden tragedies, gossip, forgiveness and reconciliation. The complexity of the psychological issues involved make this work most appropriate for upper grade students- an excellent choice for any high school library.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose  
Trevista ECE-8

### Skulduggery Pleasant: Playing with Fire

By Derek landy  
HarperCollins,2008  
ISBN:978-0-06-124088-1



*Curriculum: Horror; Supernatural; Action; Adventure; Magic; Mystery*

In this, the second book of Skulduggery Pleasant, the witty, back-from-the-dead skeleton detective and his 13-year-old companion, are off on another nonstop action adventure to save the world. This novel is non-stop action in every sense of the phrase. The action is broken up by deadpan one-liners that work well to create a campy, yet addictively fearsome adventure.

Reviewed by: Sudi Stodola  
TJ H.S.

### Zombie Blondes

By Brian James  
Feiwei and Friends: 2008  
ISBN: 978-0-31-237298-9



*Curriculum: Cheerleaders; Moving; Family*

Hannah Sanders and her father have moved often enough for her to know that there's something *not right* in Maplecrest, where there's a *For Sale* sign on every other lawn. Despite her friend Lukas's warnings that it will change her forever, she tries out for the cheerleading squad. The initiation rites are pretty intense though, and Lukas may not be so crazy after all.

Reviewed by: Sudi Stodola  
TJ H.S.

### The Compound

By: S.A. Bodeen  
Feiwei and Friends,  
c2008  
ISBN: 9780312370152



*Curriculum: Captivity; Mental illness; Survival; Nuclear war; Twins*

When Eli is 9, his billionaire father hurries the family into a nuclear fallout shelter with every luxury to keep them for the 15 years Eli's father believes they must stay to be safe. Eli's twin and grandmother do not make it into the shelter. As six years pass, Eli begins to question his father's honesty and sanity and the entire family's safety. Selfish and closed off at 9, Eli matures as the tension mounts. The pace of this psychological thriller escalates throughout and keeps its intended HS audience held captive. It is also appropriate for MS.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas  
JFK HS

### Savvy Girl

By: Lynn Messina

Harcourt, 2008

ISBN: 9780152061616

*Curriculum: Internships; Magazines; Coming of age; Responsibility; Friendship; Mentors*

Interning with a popular women's magazine leads Chrissy down the path of parties, drinking, and deadlines. Unfortunately, the pressures to fit in with this mature crowd affect her usually clear mind. Can she learn her lesson in time to save her relationship with her best friend? Will she avoid letting an amazing opportunity slip away? While the level of alcohol consumed in this book makes this book most appropriate for high school students, the message is one of growth and maturation. This fluffy, light, indulgent book should be popular with those looking for an escape.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas

JFK HS



band or you have one you're ready to take to the next level, this snarky, irreverent guide offers real down-to-earth advice from choosing band mates and booking gigs to keeping it together when you go on the road.

Reviewed by: Sudi Stodola

TJ H.S.

### The Freedom Business

By: Marilyn Nelson

Illus. by: Deborah Dancy

Wordsong, 2008

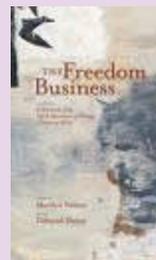
ISBN: 1932425574

*Curriculum: Smith, Venture; Slavery; African Americans*

Presenting readers to a rare piece of American history, narrative and poetry blend to introduce readers to the former prince of Dukandarra, Guinea, Broteer Furro. Furro's long archived and journaled observances are displayed on one side of the page allowing his own stilted English to describe his early life in Africa, and then moves on, limning the journalist's capture, journey to America where his name was changed to Venture Smith and three decades worth of enslavement. On the opposing page, Nelson's poetry enhances the narrative, adding texture and depth to the simple chronicling. Dancy's delicate sweep of the brush with dusky blues, smokey grays, and sundry browns give each page a uniqueness and deepen the page without distraction.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer

Grant M.S.



"And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice cold in the snow, stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so? It came without ribbons. It came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. And he puzzled and puzzled 'till his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more."-

Dr. Seuss

## Nonfiction

### Punk Rock Etiquette: The Ultimate How-to Guide for DIY, Punk, Indie, and Underground Bands

By Travis Nichols

Roaring Brook Press: 2008

ISBN: 978-1-59643-415-8

*Curriculum: Music; Rock bands*

Whether you want to start a garage

