



The Review Crew

What's New and Great for Our Youngest Readers?

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

Volume I Number 3

February 2005



Fiction

Mañana, Iguana

By: Ann Whitford Paul
Illustrated by: Ethan Long
Holiday House, 2004
ISBN: 0823418081

Curriculum: Desert animals, fiction

In this version of The Little Red Hen, with a Mexican twist, Iguana has to do all the work to prepare for her upcoming fiesta all by herself. When Conejo, Tortuga and Culebra show up for the fiesta, she won't let them in, and only makes up with them after they clean up the party's mess.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley
Beach Court



Nonfiction

Spending Money

By: Mary Firestone
Capstone Press, 2005
ISBN: 0736826416

Curriculum: Money; Consumer Education

This is a great introduction to responsible money management for those not yet ready for Heinemann Library's *Earning, Saving, Spending* series. Readers are introduced to comparison shopping, planning ahead, and choosing between wants and needs. Students will easily relate to the examples and the photographs that illustrate them.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham
Valdez Elementary

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- ☺ We know DPS students and the DPS curriculum.
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- ◆ Once you have a list of titles,

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The Best for Upper Elementary Readers!

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



Fiction

Sleeping Beauty

By: Adele Geras

Illustrated by: Christian Birmingham
Scholastic, 2003

ISBN: 043958180X

Curriculum: Fairy Tales

Adele Geras' uses delightfully descriptive prose to transport the reader into her version of this well-known tale. The large size, colorful text and Christian Birmingham's luminous, detailed illustrations make this a worthy addition to any elementary collection.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose
Smedley Elementary

A Pride of African Tales

By: Donna L. Washington

Illustrated by: James Ransome

Harper Collins Publishers, 2004

ISBN: 0060249323

Curriculum: African folktales

Washington's collection of African folktales clearly illustrates traditional African cultures. Each story is prefaced with a brief description of the type of folktale and a map of where the story is said to have originated in Africa. The breath-taking illustrations colorfully lead the reader through the folktales' action, magic and unexpected twists. The beautiful African backdrop and the traditional dress of each region immerse the reader in the rich African cultures.

Reviewed by: Robin Jones

Columbine Elementary School

What's the Hurry, Fox?

By: Joyce Carol Thomas

Illustrated by: Bryan Collier

Harper Collins Publishers, 2004

ISBN: 0060006447

Curriculum: Animal Tales, Folktales

What's the Hurry, Fox? is a collection of animal pourquoi tales, collected by the acclaimed African American author Zora Neale Hurston and adapted for children by Joyce Carol Thomas. Even though the stories have a traditional theme, they are each uniquely fresh. Each story has a clever, humorous or insightful ending. The

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Fiction

Airborn

By: Kenneth Oppel

Harper Collins Publishers, 2004

ISBN: 0060531819

Curriculum: Fantasy Fiction, Airships, Pirates

Matt works on an airship as did his father. When Kate boards to prove her dead

Middle School Reader Gold Mine

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

grandfather's claim about finding unusual creatures called "Cloud Cats." They are boarded by pirates, crash land on a deserted island and have many adventures. Good for middle school and high school readers.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns

Hill Middle School

Now You See It...

By: Vivian Vande Velde

Harcourt, Inc., 2005

ISBN: 0152053115

Curriculum: Fantasy Fiction, Family, Elves

When Wendy's glasses break, she finds a pair of odd sunglasses and now she's seeing things she never thought possible. They allow her to see elves, little blue men and a portal to another world. She is joined by others, including an unexpected ally to help rescue Julian, who is really an elfin prince. This is a great read with fun, adventure and unexpected happenings.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns

Hill Middle School

What is Goodbye?

By: Nikki Grimes

Illustrated by: Raul Colon

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Hyperion Books for Children, 2004
ISBN: 0786807784

Curriculum: Poetry; Grief; Feelings
Gerilyn and Jesse reflect their feelings and experiences about losing their older brother. The paired poems offer a window into how a family shattered by loss can deal with grief in different ways, ultimately moving towards healing. Reminiscent of Williams' *Amber Was Brave, Essie Was Smart*, but for an older audience and on a different issue, it could be used from upper elementary school through high school.

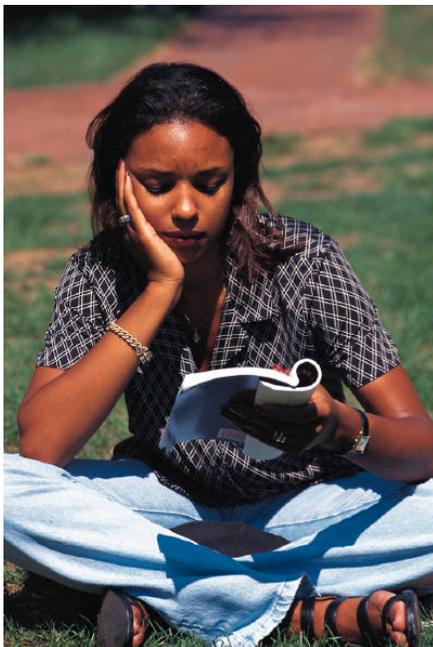
Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham
Valdez Elementary

Behind You

By: Jacqueline Woodson
G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2004
ISBN: 039923988X

Curriculum: Death, Grief, Interpersonal Relationships

This is the story of Miah who is coming home through the park one



night and is shot by the police who mistake him for someone else. Here Ellie, his girlfriend, his parents and grandparents and some of his friends try to make sense of his death and to deal with the grief.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
Kepner Middle School

Chu Ju's House

By: Gloria Whelan
HarperCollins, 2004
ISBN: 006050725X

Curriculum: China, History, Sex Roles, Running Away
Chu Ju's mother is pregnant with the second child. Families in China can only have two children. If this child is a girl they will sell her to an orphanage in order to try to have a male child. Chu Ju decides to run away in order to save her young sister from being sold.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
Kepner Middle School

The Kids Guide to Money and Cents

By: Keltie Thomas
Illustrated by: Stephen MacEachern
Kids Can Press, 2004
ISBN: 155337398

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Young Adults Deserve the Best!



Fiction

In The Shadow of the Ark

By: Anne Provoost
A.A. Levine Books, 2004
ISBN: 0439442346

Curriculum: Biblical Fiction, Courage

Provoost provides a clever retelling of the story of Noah and the ark with her character, Re Jana a young girl who falls in love with Ham, Noah's son. A beautifully written story that pulls the reader into the ancient lands from a completely different perspective. Adult readers will enjoy it as well as high schoolers!

forward credits Zora Neale Hurston for leaving us "a library of everyday humor from everyday people." The illustrations, collage, are intriguing, combining traditional themes with modern day familiarity.

Reviewed by: Robin Jones
Columbine Elementary



Nonfiction

Myths and Monsters: Secrets Revealed

By: Katie Edwards
Illustrated by: Simon Mendez
Charlesbridge, 2004
ISBN: 1570915814

Curriculum: Mythical Animals

The mermaid and manatee; the unicorn and Arabian oryx; the phoenix and heron; and the yeti and langur monkey—these are among the ten mythical creatures and their probable realistic counterparts juxtaposed in this fascinating offering. Wonderful illustrations combined with an informative mix of fantasy and fact will make this a hit with students.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose
Smedley Elementary

Following the Coast

Author/Illus: Jim Arnosky
Harper Collins, 2004
ISBN: 0688171184

Curriculum: Salt marsh animal life

Travel along with Jim Arnosky and his wife, Deanna, as they make their way up the Atlantic

Coast, stopping to observe animal life in the various salt marshes along the way. The beautiful drawings and conversational narration make the Arnoskys' love of nature more than apparent.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley
Beach Court

Groundhog Day Book of Facts and Fun

By: Wendie C. Old
Illustrated by: Paige Billin-Frye
Albert Whitman and Company, 2004
ISBN: 0807530662

Curriculum: Groundhog Day

Everything you ever wanted to know about groundhogs and Groundhog's Day is found in this brightly illustrated book for the intermediate reader.

Fast facts, groundhog jokes and riddles, and how-to-have a Groundhog's Day party including invitations, games, crafts and food are part of this forty page book. The reasons for the seasons, how Groundhog's Day came to be, as well as interesting facts about what a groundhog is, where it lives and what it eats are all explained. "The Groundhog Day Book of Facts and Fun" is an excellent mixture of science and fiction, explaining all you need to know about the groundhog and its special day.

Reviewed by: Pat White
Ashley Elementary

Scary Creatures Bats

By: Daniel Gilpin
Illustrated by: Bob Hersey
The Salariya Book Company, 2004
ISBN: 0531123758

Curriculum: Bats, Science

Scary Creatures Bats provides the intermediate reader with probably more facts and trivia about bats than they would ever need. This book even includes a few facts about Dracula.

With a special x-ray vision feature, this book allows readers to see the bat's skeleton by holding the pages up to the light. Many creepy and scary-looking illustrations and realistic photos, as well as the x-ray vision feature of this book will make it a favorite with the non-fiction reader.

Reviewed by: Pat White
Ashley Elementary

Curriculum: Finance, Money

Teaching kids about money can be a complicated task, but Thomas has effectively written a book that will keep middle school students interested and make them think about how they want to make money, save money and spend money. A good addition to any school library.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer Roland
Grant Middle School

Water Science Fair Projects

By: Madeline Goodstein
Illustrated by: Tom LaBuff
Enslow Publishers Inc, 2004
ISBN: 0766021246

Curriculum: Science, Water, Chemistry

Water is elastic, has surface tension, adhesion, cohesion, and many other properties. The author meant for this book to be a title that contained science fair projects focusing on these different properties of water, but what she ended up with is much more. The experiments she provides plus additional activities all using toys and ordinary household items make the understanding of the properties fun and real. Bravo to this book!

Reviewed by: Anthony LaCombe,
Baker Middle School