



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 4

February 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 720-423-8131 to order.)

Fiction

This is the Matzah

By: Abby Levine

Illustrated by: Paige Billin-Frye

Albert Whitman, 2005

ISBN: 0807578851

Curriculum: Passover seder; Judaism; Religious customs

Using a delightful rhyming text that never seems forced, *This is the Matzah* gives young readers a good understanding of the Seder dinner celebrated during the first two nights of Passover. Told through the eyes of a Jewish boy named Max, the reader will feel the anticipation of the celebration, the pride in knowing all the names of the plagues, and the fun of hunting through the house for the hidden matzah.

Reviewed by: Laurie Bell
Brown International Elem.

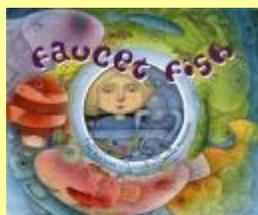
Faucet Fish

By: Fay Robinson

Illustrated by:

Wayne Anderson

Dutton, 2005



ISBN:0525471669

Curriculum: Fish; Parent and child

Elizabeth loves fish. She goes to the aquarium every Saturday. She reads books just about fish. But her parents have told her she can have just one fish, a guppy, until she is older. Then, one day, a trout plops out of the faucet. Every day after that another fish appears. Will there be room for all these fish?

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin
Park Hill

One Nosy Pup

By: Carol Wallace

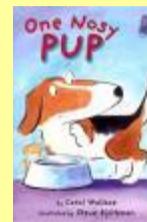
Illustrated by: Steve Bjorkman

Holiday House, 2005

ISBN: 0823419177

Curriculum: Easy reader; Pets; Friends

Poky the puppy discovers Charlie the stray hamster eating his snacks. At first he isn't too happy about it, but before long the hamster and puppy are working together to foil the human plans to trap Charlie. This is a delight-



Continued on p. 3

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

Alice: Through the Looking Glass

By: Lewis Carroll

Illustrated by:
Helen Oxenbury

Candlewick
Press, 2005

ISBN: 0763628921

Curriculum: Fiction, Alice, Fantasy,
Using Carroll's original text, Oxenbury illustrates the fantastical world behind the looking glass. Alice romps in a blue jumper with tights with Humpty Dumpty, Tweedledee and Tweedledum in water color illustrations that are comical and engag-



ing to readers that are new to the Looking-Glass House.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer
Grant Middle School

Nonfiction

One More Valley, One More Hill: The Story of Aunt Clara Brown

By: Linda Lowery
Random House, 2002

ISBN: 0375910921

Curriculum: Colorado history; Biography; Women; Black history

Linda Lowery has again written about this impressive woman, this time for older students. Besides providing a lively narrative of Clara



Brown's life, Lowery closes almost every chapter with background information about slavery, pioneer life, and Colorado and Denver history that is just as fascinating as the biography itself. Besides being a great independent read for good readers in grades five and up, excerpts and background information could be used by elementary teachers doing units on Denver and Colorado history.

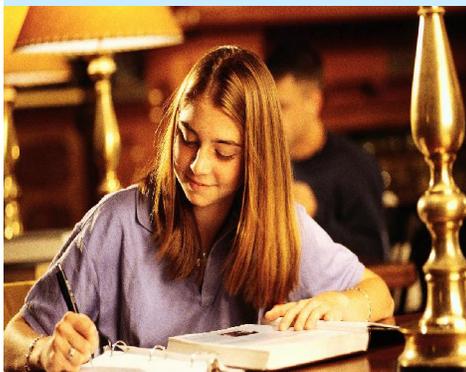
Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham
Valdez Elem.

Los Hermanos Wright/The Wright Brothers

By: Anna
Sproule
Blackbirch, 2005
ISBN:1410305015

Bilingual!

Continued on p. 4



Fiction

Shapeshifter's Quest

By: Dena Landon
Dutton Children's, 2005
ISBN: 0525473106

Curriculum: Fantasy fiction; Magic; Shapeshifters; Family



Syanthe was born a shapeshifter, and a twin hidden at birth. She is the only one of her people who can pass beyond a magical border. She must travel to the city and find medicine that could save both her people and the dying forest. This is the first time she has ever traveled anywhere. She discovers a caravan and Dell who will help her in her quest. Syanthe learns about herself and develops strength and courage she did not know she possessed.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Hill School of Arts and Sciences

Raven's Gate

By: Anthony Horowitz
Scholastic, 2005.
ISBN:0439679958

Curriculum: Fiction; Urban teens; Supernatural; Foster care

Matt has two choices; go to jail or become a part of the LEAF project, a program that provides juvenile offenders with a structured foster care. Matt agrees to the LEAF program and is sent to the small town of Lesser Malling to live with Mrs.



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Middle School Reader Gold Mine

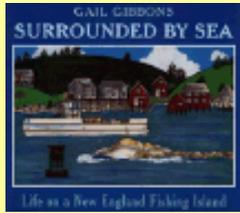
Many of these books will work in high school, too.!

Beginning Readers, continued from p. 1

ful story about turning enemies into friends.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham
Valdez Elem.

Surrounded by Sea: Life on a New England Fishing Island



Written & Illustrated by:
Gail Gibbons

Holiday House, 2005
ISBN: 082341941X

Curriculum: Island life, New England; Seasons

This reissue takes the reader through the four seasons on a remote island off the New England coast. Insight into the lives of year-round residents; attending a one-room school house, lobster fishing and traveling by ferry provides for a nostalgic look at a way

of life with which many Colorado students will not be familiar.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley
Beach Court Elem.



Spanish!

Comiendo Bien [Eating Well]

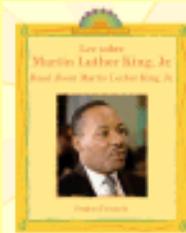
By: Elisa Trumbauer
Capstone Press, 2005
ISBN: 0736841598

Curriculum: Science; Nutrition

Enhanced by beautiful photographs, this high interest, low readability type of book; introduce the concept of good nutrition to young children in a very attractive way. The topic is well developed and explained in a developmentally appropriate way. The Spanish translation is accurate. This book belongs to the Umbrella Series

for Early Readers. Other books in the series present topics related to Math and Social Studies.

Reviewed by: Ana M. Silva
Valdez Elem.



Bilingual!

Lee sobre Martin Luther King, Jr./Read About Martin Luther King, Jr.

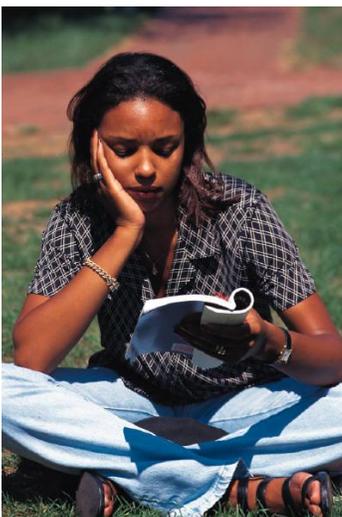
By: Stephen Feinstein
Enslow, 2006
ISBN: 0766027457

Curriculum: Social Studies; Biography

This book is a new biography about this great American leader. The author carefully tailored his work to young readers, so that the book would not have an overwhelming amount of information impossible

Continued on p. 4

Young Adults Deserve the Best!



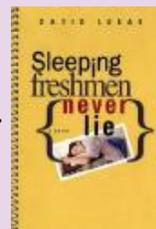
Fiction

Sleeping Freshman Never Lie

By: David Lubar
Dutton Books, 2005
ISBN: 0525473114

Curriculum: Self-confidence; Interpersonal relations; High School; Brothers and Family

Poor Scott Hudson! He has the entire football team angry with him, his best friends are drifting apart and the school



buddy has somehow made Scott his new best friend. And to think this is only the first semester of his freshman year! Lubar's writing style is quick paced and amusing. Anyone about to go into high school or survived high school will appreciate this story.

Reviewed by: Carol Chapman
Morey Middle School

All Rivers Flow to the Sea

By: Alison McGhee
Candlewick, 2005
ISBN: 0763625914

Curriculum: Sisters; Traffic



Continued on p. 5

Curriculum: Social Studies, Biographies

This book presents a recollection of the Wright brothers' life, focusing specifically in the process as well in the achievement of their goal: inventing a flying machine. With excellent vintage photographs, diagrams, paints and drawings, the book present the information in an appealing and interesting way to children. The narrative style, organizational structure (by chronological events), annotated comments, glossary, and a final summary of important events, support the reader to fully understand this text. This book is also a success because the content is well translated to Spanish in the same page that the English version is presented. Other titles in the series are: *Albert Einstein*, *Galileo Galilei*, *Marie Curie*, and *Sir Isaac Newton*.

Reviewed by: Ana M. Silva
Valdez Elem.

Snow Search Dogs

By: Maida Silverman
Bearport Publishing,
2005
ISBN: 1597160172



Curriculum: Animals;
Community helpers; Outdoor activities

Eye-popping layout, high-interest photographs, and informative text cover the history and training of these dogs and descriptions of real life rescues. The writing uses easy vocabulary and short sentences, but avoids sounding choppy through a variety of sentence structures, providing a good model for student writers.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham
Valdez Elem.

Deverill. By the time Matt realizes that he should have chosen jail, there is no escaping from Lesser Malling or from Mrs. Deverill.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
Kepner Middle School

Happy to be Girls

By: Sarah Davies and
Jenny Mattheson
G.P. Putnam's, 2005
ISBN: 0399239839



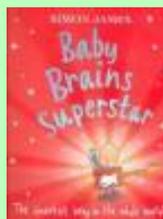
Curriculum: Girls;
Self-esteem; Self-perception; Rhyming

This colorful, playful rhyming book features a multicultural array of five high-spirited young girls. As the girl-powered crew engages in everything from crossing the desert on horseback to flying into outer space, the empowering tone comes across without any heavy handedness. These are "Bold girls, smart girls, icky, sticky art girls." This is a fine book to share with a girl needing a reminder about the wealth of options available as she makes her way through girlhood.

Reviewed by: Beth Kenny
CEC

Baby Brains Superstar

Written & illustrated
by: Simon James
ISBN: 0763628948
Curriculum: Gifted and talented; Babies; Rock music; Rock concert; Fame



Baby Brains is a musical prodigy, mastering four instruments in the first few pages. His favorite, however, is the electric guitar, which quickly lands him on the front page of the paper and the top of the music

Continued on p. 5

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for the young reader to comprehend. This book is full of insights and details about Martin Luther King, Jr.'s life. The author also added information about the struggles and unfairness that black people suffered because of the discrimination on the basis of their skin color. Colorful pictures enhance this book greatly.

Reviewed by: Ana M. Silva
Valdez Elem.

charts. The book's surprise ending pulls Baby Brains out of the rock-star stratosphere and back to the reality of babyhood. It's a very humorous book about a baby who is six months going on 30.

Reviewed by: Beth Kenny
CEC

Replay

By: Sharon Creech
Joann Cotler Books,
2005.

ISBN: 0060540206

Curriculum: Family life fiction, Fathers and Sons, Theater, Friends



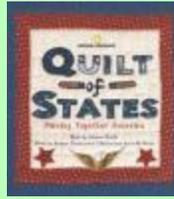
Replay is a humorous look at the life of a boy entering his preteens and his hilarious Italian family that never seem to hear anything said to them so that they say the same things over and over. Creech's prose is sparse, almost choppy, but the main character has an imagination and perspective that will keep readers turning the page to see what will happen next.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer
Grant Middle School

Nonfiction

**Quilt of States:
Piecing Together
America**

By: Adrienne Yorinks
and 50 Librarians
from Across the
Nation



Illustrated by: Adrienne Yorinks
National Geographic, 2005
ISBN: 0792272854

Curriculum: U.S. History, The 50 States; Quilts

The author has designed and sewn a quilt for each of the 50 United States. Included in each is an outline map, products and state flowers. Additional quilts show the growth of the nation (Louisiana Purchase, 1803; Secession, 1861, for example). Historical text for each state is provided by a librarian from the given state.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley

Where is
human
nature so weak
as in a book-
store?

Henry Ward Beecher

All quotes are from:
http://www.richmond.k12.va.us/reada_million/readingquotes.htm

accidents; Love; Grief; Adirondack Mountains

All Rivers Flow to the Sea, by Allison McGhee is a gripping lyrical story of Rose and her grief. The story begins one month after a traffic accident leaves her sister Ivy in a coma. Their mother is blind to Rose's pain and refuses to visit Ivy in the hospital. Instead, their mother spends her time folding paper cranes or making pot-holders. Rose, attempting to make herself feel anything, begins to engage in risky behavior. In the end, both her mother and Rose must come to terms with the loss.

Reviewed by: Carol Chapman
Morey MS

Nonfiction

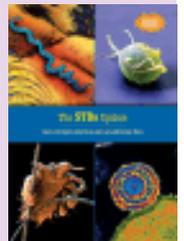
The STDs Update

By: Alvin and Virginia
Silverstein and Laura
Silverstein Nunn

Enslow, 2006.

ISBN: 0766024849

Curriculum: Science; Human body; Sexually transmitted disease; Urban teens;



This well-written, current book takes a scientific approach rather than moralistic one. It is illustrated with greatly magnified photos of a variety of virus, bacterium and protozoan. There is a section that answers frequently asked questions, a strong resource of places to go for help and books and websites to use for further information.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
Kepner Middle School