



# 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 6

February 2008

## Fiction

### Poor Puppy

By: Nick Bruel

Illustrated by: Nick Bruel

Roaring Brook Press

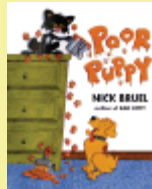
ISBN: 1596432705

*Curriculum: Alphabet; Dogs and cats*

Colorful, watercolor illustrations abound in this unusual alphabet-book. Zany illustrations draw the reader's attention into the pictures to find all the objects, "10 Jacks, 12 Liters of Finger-paints, 18 Robots, 22 Valentines, 26 Zoo Animals," and much more fun. Poor Puppy's best friend, Kitty, does not want to play with him so he plays with his 26 sets of toys and becomes so tired that he takes a nap. During his nap, he dreams of playing a new game with Kitty, "Egg Hunting on Easter Island, Ice Hockey in India, Netball in the Netherlands, Rugby in Rome," and many others. When Puppy wakes up, Kitty wants to play and the chase is on. Don't expect the house to be in one piece when they are through! A great new look at the alphabet.

Reviewed by: Irene Bell

Bryant Webster ECE - 8



### Please Is a Good Word to Say

Written by: Barbara Joosse

Illustrated by: Jennifer Plecas

Philomel, 2007

ISBN: 9780399242175

*Curriculum: Etiquette; Behavior*

Harriet and her toy rabbit are giving pointers to readers about words and expressions to use in conversation. Please is a polite word when it is only used once, not over and over and over. Harriet also suggests the use of words such as thank you, I'm sorry, excuse me, may I help you. She finds compliments are also very useful. A read-aloud that will reinforce those simple words of courtesy that children already know, but sometimes forget to use properly.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin

Park Hill ECE-8



### Tracks of a Panda

By: Nick Dowson

Illus. by: Yu Rong

Candlewick Press, 2007

ISBN: 9780763631468

*Curriculum: Animals; Endangered species; Giant panda*



## 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)

In a lilting, poetic text, a realistic year in the life a panda and her cub is told. High in the misty mountains a baby panda the size of a pine cone is born. The attentive mother teaches her cub the survival skills it needs to find bamboo, swim, and frighten off would-be attackers. Travel is difficult and dangerous; fresh new bamboo is the reward. Nearby loggers force mother and baby to higher ground and new bamboo fields. Traditional brush and watercolor illustrations give the feel of a bona fide visit with these lovely creatures in the mountains of China.

Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier  
Stedman Elem.

## Nonfiction

### Yum! iMmMm! iQue rico!: America's Sproutings

By: Pat Mora

Illustrated by: Rafael López

Lee & Low Books, Inc., 2007

ISBN: 9781584302711

*Curriculum: Fruit-America-poetry; Vegetables-America-poetry*

Through three means - informative text, brilliant drawings, and engaging haikus - a variety of fruits and vegetables native to the Americas are presented in this volume of poetry. Description is given about the uses of each, geographic origins, and varieties.

A sensual celebration of these great American treasures is produced in Mora's first book of haiku. Students will learn about a subject not typically of great interest, having been drawn in by this combination of artistic and



poetic talent. Mora and López have joined together to show that "the world's variety is amazing - and delicious."

Reviewed by: Karyn Pocernich  
Ford Elem.

## Spanish!

### Mercados (Markets)

By: Cassie Mayer

Heinemann, 2007

ISBN: 9781432904463

*Curriculum: Markets; Types of markets; Markets throughout the world*

Markets from diverse world areas are introduced as places where people can buy a variety of supplies to meet their needs and wants. From markets that specialize in one item to street markets, markets on boats, in commercial centers and supermarkets they are all illustrated with brightly colored photographs. Additionally, some vocabulary related to a market transaction is included. An illustrated glossary and index complete this appealing easy chapter book that provides basic information about markets in our global community.

Reviewed by: Ethel Hammerly

Spanish Reviewer

### Juegos (Games)

By: Lisa Easterling

Heinemann, 2007

ISBN: 9781432904456

*Curriculum: Games; Types of games; Games throughout the world; Hopscotch*

Games from diverse world areas are

presented as practices that people engage in to have fun. Games are different and played everywhere according to a set of rules. Some games are for playing alone and others for playing in groups. Some are table games and others to play outside in open spaces. Readers are asked to tell what games they play. Information about the popular game hopscotch and the rules for playing it are included. An illustrated glossary and index complete this appealing easy chapter book that provides basic information about the role of games throughout our global community.

Reviewed by: Ethel Hammerly

Spanish Reviewer

(Continued on page 3)

When I discovered libraries, it was like having Christmas every day.  
~ Jean Fritz ~



# The Best for Upper Elementary Readers!

## Fiction

### Underground

By: Jean Ferris

Farrar Straus, 2007

ISBN:0374372438

*Curriculum: Mammoth Cave; Caves; Slavery; Underground railroad*

In 1839 people flocked to Kentucky to explore the Mammoth Cave. Stephen Bishop, the chief explorer of this labyrinth of interlocking passageways, is a slave; a slave who feels free and powerful when he is underground leading groups. Charlotte, the new maid at the Mammoth Cave Hotel, involves Stephen in the transport of runaway slaves. Both must reconcile their feelings about jeopardizing their own freedom as they help others escape.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin

Park Hill ECE-8



### Being Bee

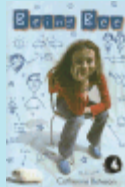
By: Catherine Bateson

Holiday House, 2006

ISBN: 082342104X

*Curriculum: Family life; Guinea pigs*

Bee is not happy as her father's relationship with his girlfriend, Jazzi, becomes more serious. Jazzi eventually moves in and seems to take over the household and change everything. Just as she starts to win Bee's trust and affection, Jazzi makes a terrible mistake that sets their tenuous relationship back a



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

notch or two.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley

South H.S.

## Nonfiction

### The Legend of Sleepy Hollow

By: Jeff Zornow

Illustrated by: Jeff Zornow

Magic Wagon, 2008

ISBN: 9781602700604

*Curriculum: Ghosts; Literature; Teachers; Horror stories*

Irving Washington's horror classic is introduced to young readers in a format that fits this tale like gloves on a blustery winter day. The ambiance congested arrangement allows for Ichabod's awkward frame and give this corner of New England it's appropriately fearful frame. Unlike many other graphic novels for youth, the text is laden with the properly preserved intention of the author, maintaining the humor of the story as well as fashioning gothic feel. This time-tested tale is an easy fit for the learner's library.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer

Grant Middle School

### Starfish

By: Deborah Coldiron

Abdo, 2008

ISBN: 1599288133



### *Curriculum: Starfish*

The starfish, which is technically **not** a true fish, has amazing characteristics and abilities which are explored in this volume of the *Underwater World* series. The 2,000 species of them come in many colors and patterns, with unique features such as: eye spots, two stomachs, the ability to brood millions of eggs, and regeneration.

Pictures showing many varieties of starfish and their relatives, fast facts, and captions all provide more information to young readers. Manageable text and a very intriguing subject will make this an attractive book to normally reluctant readers.

Reviewed by: Karyn Pocernich

Ford Elem.

When I get a little money, I buy books;  
and if any is left, I buy food and clothes.  
~ Desiderius Erasmus 1466-1536 ~

# Middle School Reader Gold Mine

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



(Continued from page 3)

## Fiction

### Mystery Isle

By: Judith St. George

Puffin Books, 2007

ISBN: 9780142408414

*Curriculum: Mystery; Islands; Family; Treasure*

The last thing that Kim wants to do is to spend her summer with her mother on an isolated island off the coast of Maine. This is where the family mansion is and where her great-grandpa lives. Someone is trying to get her great-grandpa to sell the house and island. There are bright unexplained lights, music and other events that make the old man think he is going crazy like his father. Kim, however, thinks there are explanations for what is going on and uses her detective skills to find out who or what is haunting the island. A good, light hearted mystery to read for a rainy afternoon.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns

Rishel M.S.



### Magic's Child

By: Justine Larbalestier

Penguin Books Ltd., 2007

ISBN: 9781595140647

*Curriculum: Fantasy, Magic, Friendship*

This is the final book in the Magic or Madness trilogy. If one has not read the first two, do that before starting on this one. Reason, Tom and Jay-Tee return and must make decisions to either use their magic and die young, or not use it and eventually become mad. At the end of the last book, Reason becomes infused with a special magic that causes her to transform into a magical creature. She finds she can help her friends, and rescue her mother, if they can accept the sacrifice of their magic. In the end, Reason must decide if she wants to lose her humanity and keep her magic, or give it all up. Fantasy readers will enjoy this third and last story of this trilogy.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns

Rishel M.S.



### Nightmare Academy

By: Dean Lorey

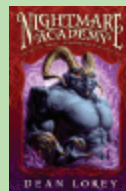
Illustrated by: Brandon Dorman

HarperCollins

ISBN: 0061340437

*Curriculum: Nightmares; Monsters; Fantasy*

Deliciously gruesome black-and-white illustrations add a sense of horror and dread as the reader begins each new section. You never know what Nether-creature to expect next! Charlie Benjamin is a thirteen-year-old with an over



active imagination: when he sleeps, monsters wake up. He is invited to a sleepover and accepts. All goes well until it is time for bed: Charlie opens a portal to the Netherland and a Class 3 Netherstalker walks through. The result is not a pretty sight.

Many perilous adventures ensue and readers should look forward to the next installment for more monsters and mayhem.

Reviewed by: Irene Bell

Bryant Webster ECE - 8

### Bullyville

By: Francine Prose

HarperTeen, 2007

ISBN: 9780060574987

*Curriculum: Bullies; High schools; September 11, 2001; Grief*

Bart's separated parents work in the Twin Towers. Bart is sick the day of 9/11/01 and his mom stays home with him. His dad is at work. Named "The Miracle Boy" by the media for saving his mom's life, Bart is thrown into the spotlight. He reluctantly accepts a scholarship offer to a local private school, Baileywell. He has heard the stories and its nickname, Bullyville. The school lives up to its unfortunate reputation. Bart's mentor becomes his tormentor. Also appropriate for high school students, bullying and its psychological effects are realistically portrayed in this novel set in the aftermath of tragedy.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas

JFK HS

### Escape from the Dark

By: Peter Lancett



(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

Illustrated by: Jan Pedroietta

Stone Arch Books, 2008

ISBN: 9781598898675

*Curriculum: Literacy; Healing by touch*

This entry in the *Dark Man* series deals with an ill, limping girl visiting Dark Man to bring him an important note. Their fingers touch as she hands him the note and when she leaves, she realizes he has healed her with his touch. The book is written in sparse, simple text with lots of half and full page illustrations. The reading level is 1.0 but the interest level is definitely middle school. This would make a great addition to any library searching for high interest, low level fiction books for middle school.

Reviewed by: Brenda Earnest  
Merrill MS

### How to Steal a Dog

By: Barbara O'Connor

Frances Foster Books  
(FSG), 2007

ISBN: 0374334978

*Curriculum: Homelessness; Dogs*

Not long after her father leaves, Georgina and her mama and brother are evicted from their apartment and forced to live in their car. In desperation Georgina devises a plan to steal a dog, collect the reward money that is sure to be offered, and help her mother pay for a new place to live. Tension builds as plans go awry in this heart wrenching story.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley  
South H.S.



### My Mother the Cheerleader

By: Robert Sharenow

Laura Geringer Books, 2007

ISBN: 0061148970

*Curriculum: Racism; School integration*

Louise Collins' mother is a cheerleader. She is one of a group of white parents who show up outside of William Frantz Elementary School every morning to throw trash and vile words at six year old Ruby Bridges who is integrating the formerly all white school. Louise is no longer allowed to go to school. Louise is pretty sure that nothing in her life is going to change. She will read her favorite books over and over and clean up after the guests in the boarding house. The year is 1960 and there is so much hatred and bigotry it is almost beyond belief. And here it is, in all of its raw ugliness but beautifully dealt with and sensitively told in this most amazing story. Everyone should read this book.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
Kepner M.S.



### Ten Ways to make My Sister Disappear

By: Norma Fox Mazer

Arthur A. Levine Books,  
2007

ISBN: 0439839831

*Curriculum: Sisters; Friendship; Family; School*

Sprig is not having a good year. She hates that her father has been far away in Washington D.C. for so long and now he is going to Afghanistan. And even though he is going to build schools and hospitals, she still is afraid for him being in that dangerous place. Her sister, Dakota, seems to do everything better than Sprig does. Nothing is fair!



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# Review Crew Staff

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**Park Hill K-8**

**Karyn Pocernich**

**Ford Elementary**

**From ERS:**

**Jody Gehrig**

**Karen Shannon**

**Antonio Nicotera**

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This story may offer some insight into how many students may be feeling now with parents far away in dangerous places.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
Kepner M.S.

**Agnes parker - - Keeping Cool in Middle School**

By: Kathleen O'Dell  
Dial Books for Young Readers, 2007

ISBN: 0803730786

*Curriculum: Middle school; Self-confidence; Friendship*

Agnes Parker would like to be invisible in her seventh grade year in middle school. But suddenly her best friend Prejean wants to run for class president and she wants Agnes to be her campaign manager. Nothing invisible about that! Art class is her refuge and Aram another refugee in the art room could be her friend if only he didn't make her feel so strange. Maybe invisible just isn't going to work for Agnes this time around. This is the third book about Agnes Parker. There are some things about middle school that are universal and Kathleen O'Dell seems to have captured a good many of them. This is a great book for middle school girls.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
Kepner M.S.

# Nonfiction

**Sophisticated Ladies: The Great Women of Jazz**

By: Leslie Gourse  
Illus. by: Martin French  
Dutton Children's Books, 2007

ISBN: 9780525471981

*Curriculum: Women jazz singers*

Fourteen sultry singing ladies of jazz, from Bessie Smith to Diana Krall, are presented in succinct three page biographies. Each singer is introduced with a paragraph that truly evokes the feel and appeal of these women of jazz. Each biography is introduced with an evocative, vividly colorful portrait by Martin French, which truly encapsulate each personality. A more delightful introduction to some of the most influential women of jazz would be hard to find.

Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier  
Stedman Elem.



# Young Adults Deserve the Best!

# Fiction

**Looking for JJ**

By: Anne Cassidy  
Harcourt, 2007



ISBN: 0152061908

*Curriculum: Murder; Child neglect; Identity*

Alice is not her real name and she lives with the horrific memory of her past actions. She murdered another girl and was incarcerated for 6 years. At 18, finally free, Alice Tully is leading a normal life. She goes to school, works, and has a boyfriend, but the media is persistently looking for JJ, the girl she used to be. What will happen if Alice is found? Will her past and self-centered, neglectful mother haunt her forever? This exciting novel with an intriguing premise has one rooting for the protagonist despite (and perhaps because of) her past. This is a page-turning, stay-up-all-night read.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas  
JFK HS

**Rat Life**

By: Tedd Arnold  
Sleuth (Dial), 2007

ISBN: 9780803730205

*Curriculum: Mysteries; Vietnam War Veterans*

While developing his skills as a writer and working for free in his parents' motel, Todd becomes interested in the mysterious body that washes up along the banks of the river he passes each day on his way to school. Then he meets Rat, a Vietnam vet, who offers him a job at the local drive-in theatre. Rat doesn't seem much older than Todd, in spite of having been to Vietnam, and the boys become friends. All clues in the murder mystery seem to point toward Rat, and as Todd starts to have his doubts, the reader will as well.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley  
South H.S.

