



# 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 5

January 2008

## Fiction

### Eliza's Kindergarten Surprise

Written by: Alice B. McGinty

Illustrated by: Nancy Speir

Marshall Cavendish, 2007

ISBN: 9780761453512

*Curriculum: First day of school; Mother and child*

On Eliza's first day of kindergarten, she is very apprehensive about leaving Mommy. Even though Mommy puts a kiss into Eliza's pocket, it isn't enough. She adds blue buttons, pebble, napkin, and piece of yarn, each of which reminds her of another aspect of Mommy. When she reaches home, she discovers Mommy has put something special in her own pocket - a picture of Eliza. A gentle, loving story dealing with the separation pain of the first day of school.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin  
Park Hill ECE-8



### Maggie and the Monster

By: Elizabeth Winthrop

Illus. Tomie dePaola

G. P. Putman's Sons, 2007



ISBN: 9780399247118

*Curriculum: Monsters; Bedtime*

Every night when Maggie goes to bed a monster barges in. She bangs the door, knocks things over, and bumps into things with her big hairy feet. She grumbles and sighs. Maggie yells at her to get out and turns over and goes to sleep. The monster can't read the "Monsters Keep Out" sign and returns. Maggie's mother suggests that Maggie ask the monster what she wants. Together, Maggie and monster solve the nightly visits. Tomie dePaola's simple, enchanting illustrations are the perfect accompaniment to this delightful tale.

Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier  
Stedman Elem.

## Nonfiction

### Saving Pocket

By: Elizabeth Bernays

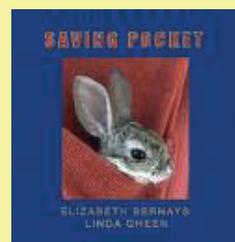
Illustrated by: Linda Gheen

www.lulu.com

ISBN:

9781604610246

*Curriculum: Desert cottontail rabbits;*



### 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.)

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*Animal rescue*

One day, while walking their dog near their home in the Arizona desert, Dr. Anna and Sam find a newborn, orphaned desert cottontail rabbit. The women research on the internet to find out how to best care for the bunny, and are worried when they read "that only one or two out of a hundred baby bunnies survive when people try to keep them." In spite of this, Dr. Anna and Sam have great success raising Pocket, as they call her. Eventually, with more on-line research, and lots of tender loving care, Pocket is ready to live a life of freedom in her native desert habitat!

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley  
South H.S.

**Spanish!**

**El arco iris (Rainbow)**

By: Dana Meachen Rau  
Marshall Cavendish, 2008  
ISBN: 9780761428077

*Curriculum: Rainbow; Colors; Nature*

As one of the *Wonders of Nature* series in Spanish, this book explains in clear text the elements needed to form a rainbow. It presents a variety of instances where a rainbow can be seen and the colors that are consistently part of it. These beautiful colors can also be produced through a prism when sunlight hits it. Illustrated with full page color photographs, complemented with a glossary and index, this is a very attractive

and appealing book.

Reviewed by: Ethel Hammerly  
Spanish reviewer

**Los bibliotecarios (Librarians)**

By: Dana Meachen Rau  
Marshall Cavendish, 2008  
ISBN: 9780761428022

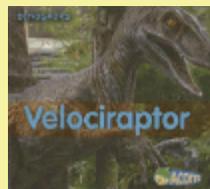
*Curriculum: Librarians; Libraries*

As one of the *Tools We Use* series in Spanish, this book attempts to acquaint young readers with the different pieces of equipment needed by librarians to do their work. Children get to learn from computers, scanners and library cards, to book carts, coding numbers on book spines and shelving, and where to return books. In addition to vocabulary, the helpful function of librarians is also presented. This book will make children feel confident about using the library as it is presented as a warm and welcoming environment where they can be involved in a variety of activities.

Reviewed by: Ethel Hammerly  
Spanish reviewer

**Velociraptor (Velociraptor)**

By: Daniel Nunn  
Heinemann, 2007  
ISBN: 9781432905279



*Curriculum: Velociraptors; Dinosaurs; Fossils; Animals*

This book has simple text and realistic illustrations to introduce young readers to the world of fossils. Among them a variety of dinosaur

that lived long ago, called velociraptor, has been reconstructed from fossilized bones found in rocks. By comparison to other dinosaurs the velociraptor is shown as being smaller, but fast moving and with sharp teeth and claws that permitted it to attack other dinosaurs. A couple of pictures for identifying the velociraptor and an illustrated glossary are also included. Children will be fascinated by this unusual reptile.

Reviewed by: Ethel Hammerly  
Spanish reviewer

**¡Zumba abeja, zumba! (Buzz, Bee, Buzz!)**

By: Dana Meachen Rau  
Marshall Cavendish, 2008



ISBN: 9780761428138

*Curriculum: Bees; Insects; Animals*

As one of the *Go, Critters, Go!* series, this bilingual book for beginners presents basic information about the physical characteristics and activities of bees. Pages on the left side have one short sentence in both English and Spanish, while the pages facing them on the right have a full page color photograph of bees in different activities. An illustrated glossary and an index complete this well presented and organized book. It should help children to learn about insects in their surroundings.

Reviewed by: Ethel Hammerly  
Spanish reviewer

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## The Best for Upper Elementary Readers!

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



### Fiction

#### Running the Dogs

By: Thomas Cochran  
Farrar Straus Giroux,  
2007

ISBN: 0374363609

*Curriculum: Louisiana; Family Life*

The only thing Tal Cotton wants for Christmas is permission to run the hunting dogs in the woods, at night, alone - something he usually does with his Daddy and grandfather, Papa. When a freak snowstorm hits Louisiana just before the holiday, Tal lets the dogs out of their pen for a little exercise and they disappear into the woods. To complicate matters, Papa is in poor health, Daddy might not get back from his job in the Gulf, and Tal is forbidden from going off on his own to look for the dogs. It's not shaping up to be a good Christmas in the Cotton household.



Reviewed by: Steve Bowley  
South H.S.

#### Isabel and the Miracle Baby

By: Emily Smith Pearce  
Front Street, 2007  
ISBN: 1932425446

*Curriculum: Cancer; Family life; Babies*

Isabel hates her baby sister. It seems Rebekah gets all of Mama's love and attention. She's also tired of the cancer support group Mama hosts in their house on a regular basis, and is terrified that Mama's cancer will come back. When Isabel's mama forbids her from seeing her only friend, Tara, and insists that she make friends with Ben, whose mother has cancer, Isabel explodes. Because of Ben, Isabel is at risk of losing the new friends she is making at school. Isa's parents finally see the light, and work hard to remedy the situation.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley  
South H.S.

#### The White Giraffe

By: Lauren St. John  
Dial Books for Young  
Readers, 2006  
ISBN: 9780803732117

*Curriculum: Giraffes;  
South Africa*

After her parents die in a fire, Martine is sent to live with her grandmother on a game reserve in South Africa. There she befriends a mythical white giraffe while struggling in relationships with friends and



her grandmother. The white giraffe leads her to greater confidence and courage as well as the incredible beauty of South Africa. *The White Giraffe* gives the reader a glimpse into life and the wildlife of South Africa. The author's use of her own childhood experiences in Zimbabwe provides credibility to the almost fantastic description of this distant land.

Reviewed by: Karyn Pocernich  
Ford Elem.

#### Lenny's Space

By: Kate Banks  
Farrar, Straus, and Giroux,  
2007

ISBN: 0374345759

*Curriculum: Friendship;  
Leukemia; Single-parent families*

Lenny is a unique nine-year-old boy who rarely fits in with other kids or at school. When he begins working with Muriel, a counselor at school, and meets Van, his first friend ever, things begin to change. Through these relationships, Lenny learns a great deal about himself and gains a sense of belonging that he has never known. However, Van battles leukemia throughout the story and eventually loses that battle. The serious subject of leukemia and a friend's death may not be for all readers, but it is handled in a sensitive, age-appropriate manner.

Reviewed by: Karyn Pocernich  
Ford Elem.



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### The Bad Luck Chair

By: Sue Wilkowski

Illustrated by: CB Decker

Dutton Children's Books,  
2007

ISBN: 0525477945



*Curriculum: School; Relationships*

This rollicking, zany, humorous, mad-cap yarn will delight the younger readers. Combining suspense, playfulness and witty repartee, the story is just good fun from start to finish. There is a chair at Brookside Elementary that has an ominous reputation: anyone who is unfortunate enough to sit in it is cursed forever with bad luck. Now Addison Darby has to sit in the chair since no others are available. Almost immediately her bad luck begins - real or imagined?

Reviewed by: Irene Bell  
Bryant Webster ECE - 8

### Fire up with Reading!

By: Toni Buzzeo

Illustrations by Sachiko Yoshikawa

Upstart Books, 2007

ISBN: 1932146911

*Curriculum: School; Fourth grade; School libraries; Librarians*

Who will be the top 4<sup>th</sup> grade reader at Liberty School where the librarian, Mrs. Skorupski, is challenging all students to a reading contest? The first class to paste up 5,000 scales, each representing 30 minutes of reading, on their dragon will win fire-breathing status. The teacher will be declared the Dragon-headed Teacher, and one student from each class will march in the Read Across America Day parade. Everything counts; reading, listening to others read, reading to

someone else, and audio books. Patty even reads in the bathtub, but can she possibly beat Carmen?

Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier  
Stedman Elem.

## Nonfiction

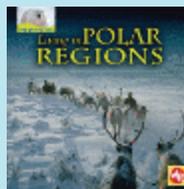
### Living in the Polar Regions

By: Tea Benduhn

Weekly Reader Books,  
2008

ISBN: 0836883438

*Curriculum: Science; Social Studies*



*Living in the Polar Regions* gives young readers an overview of the areas around the North and South Poles. Chapters cover the location and environment of these areas, the native peoples who live in the Arctic regions and research scientists in Antarctica. The last chapter deals with the negative effects of mining and drilling for oil and gas as well as the impact of global warming. There's a great deal of information packed in this 24 page book with lots of color photos to enhance the text.

Reviewed by: Brenda Earnest  
Merrill Middle School



## Middle School Reader Gold Mine

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

## Fiction

### Epic

By: Conor Kostick

Viking, 2007

ISBN: 9780670061792

*Curriculum: Fantasy, Computer Games, Role Playing, Family*

Violence has been banned on New Earth. All conflicts and requests are taken care of in the computer game, Epic. The Committee is in charge and is all powerful. Erik and his young friends are upset that the Committee has banished some people from their small community, including Erik's father. They decide to take on the masters of the game and rescue those in exile. If they lose the game, they may lose their lives.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns  
Rishel M.S.



### Avatars: So This Is How It Ends

By: Tui T. Sutherland

Eos, 2006

ISBN: 0060750243

*Curriculum: Fantasy, End of the World, Survival, Friendship*

Five teenagers in various parts of the world, seem to survive catastro-

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phic events. Kali wakes up in an empty subway car in New York. Venus and Gus survive an earthquake, and Tigre finds himself in a jungle of Chile. Everyone they know is gone and they find themselves in a violent world. Can these survivors find each other and use their special skills to survive? This book will keep you interested until the last page and twist at the end.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns  
Rishel M.S.

**The Secret Life of Sparrow Delany**

By: Suzanne Harper  
GreenWillow Books,  
2007

ISBN: 006113158X

*Curriculum: Ghosts; Spiritualists; Family life; School; Friendship*

Sparrow is the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter. Her six older sisters all speak with the spirits or communicate in some fashion with them, her mother does, her grandmother does and it is assumed that Sparrow will also. But Sparrow doesn't want to. So since the time she was five years old she has been keeping her spirit helpers a secret. But now there is a persistent, though very cute, ghost who is demanding her help in order to move on. The town of Lily Dale, where this story takes place, is a Spiritualist's community in New York founded in 1879.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
Kepner M. S.

**Pretty is**

By: Elizabeth Ann  
Holmes



Dutton Children's books, 2007

ISBN: 1428746501

*Curriculum: Peer pressure; Sisters; Friendship; Families; School*

Erin is going to middle school next year. The problem is that her dorky older sister Monica is already there. Erin is afraid that everyone will think she is just like her sister. One night Erin, urged on by her friend Hannah, does something that there is no going back from. How Erin handles this event and the fact that she IS going to school with Monica and that Monica is just Monica makes a compelling novel.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
Kepner M. S.

**Princess and the Hound**

By: Mette Ivie Harrison  
HarperCollins, 2007

ISBN: 9780061131882

*Curriculum: Princes; Human-animal communication; Magic; Fairy tales*

Prince George cannot remember ever seeing his father without the crown upon his head. George strives to follow exactly in his father's footsteps, never showing any emotion. Deep inside he knows he cannot become this dispassionate. An exciting fairy tale romance that at times has a plot which becomes terrifying!

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin  
Park Hill ECE-8

**The Cat Master**

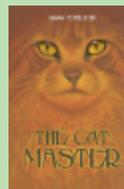
By: Bonnie Pemberton  
Marshall Cavendish, 2007

ISBN: 0761453406

*Curriculum: Cats; Fantasy*

A spellbinding tale has been woven pitting good (Buddy) against evil (Jett) in a

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# Review Crew Staff

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**Steve Bowley**

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**Karyn Pocernich**

**Ford Elementary**

**From ERS:**

**Jody Gehrig**

**Karen Shannon**

**Antonio Nicotera**

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battle for the world of Ferals vs. Indoors. It is a tale of discovery as well as one of exploration of friendships, the lure of evil and the knowledge that peace does not come without a price and/or sacrifice. In the end good triumphs over evil and Buddy becomes the Chosen at the Gathering. The story is told through the woofs, meows, chirps, squeaks and snuffles of 5 cats, 2 dogs, a mockingbird, lizard and possum.

Reviewed by: Irene Bell  
Bryant Webster ECE - 8

### Freak

By: Marcella Pixley  
Melanie Kroupa Books  
ISBN: 0374324537



*Curriculum: Middle schools; Identity; Sisters; Peer Pressure.*

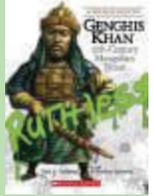
With prose that pirouettes off the page and onto the tongue, and a narrative that leaves the reader breathless, Pixley has crafted reality fiction that soap-operacizes the latest in the genre. Twelve-year-old Mirium is an intelligent poet who also manages to be an obnoxious, nosy, know-it-all, "individual." She finds herself within radar range of the popular crowd's mortars. Teased and harassed beyond the point of self-control, Mirium decides she needs a change. But the disastrous "change" only emphasizes her differences and leads to a confrontation with the most popular girl in school. Having brought her protagonist to the brink, with the young Shakespeare humiliated, degraded and mortified, Pixley then skillfully weaves an ending that is neither trite nor condescending.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer  
Grant Middle School

# Nonfiction

### Genghis Khan : 13th-century Mongolian tyrant

By: Enid A. Goldberg & Norman Itzkowitz  
Franklin Watts, 2008.



ISBN: 0531125960

*Curriculum: Genghis Khan; Mongolian history; Mongol kings.*

In this intriguing entry into the hair-raising *A Wicked History* series, Genghis Khan was what he was born to be: a ruthless dictator. With the first attention-grabbing tale of the siege and capture of the ancient Mongolian city Tirmiz, this gory introduction to history will snatch the reader's attention and keep it hostage for the duration. A "web" of Khan's allies and family helps to clarify the complicated unions of Khan's political gambit while a 'Timeline of Terror' places the text in context. A smattering of Chinese illustrations illuminate the saga and provide ambience that might otherwise be missed in this exotic epic.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer  
Grant Middle School

### Freak Show

By: James St. James  
Dutton Children's Books, 2007  
ISBN: 0525477993



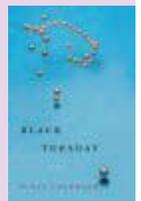
*Curriculum: Cross-dressing, Homosexuality, High schools, Acceptance*

Billy Bloom is in a new high school and is a self-proclaimed homosexual drag queen. His new classmates are merciless in their taunts and actions, but Billy has an even bigger surprise for them. He intends to run for homecoming queen. Will the one friend he has made stand by him? James St. James offers a fresh and unique voice in YA literature touching the hearts of readers struggling for acceptance in the cruel micro-world of high school. This novel is touching, funny, sorrowful, at times irreverent, and all due to Billy who stays true to himself.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas  
JFK H.S.

### Black Tuesday

By: Susan Coleman  
Dutton Children's Books, 2007  
ISBN: 0525477667



*Curriculum: Traffic accidents, High school, Relationships, Self-discovery, Family*

In her junior year, Jayne's on track to be valedictorian and is preparing for Harvard. Academically, everything is perfect until Jayne causes a car accident which results in the death of one of her classmate's sisters. Jayne avoids her friends, her family and her studies as the reader is propelled forward to see if she can find her way out of her downward spiral while losing her license, being put on probation and performing community service. This satisfying book reminds all that life is a precarious venture with no guarantees and that, in an instant, everything can change.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas  
JFK H.S.

## Young Adults Deserve the Best!