



# The Review Crew

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

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

Volume 1 Number 4

March 2005



### Fiction

#### The Trucker

By: Brenda Weatherby

Illustrated by: Mark Weatherby

Scholastic Press, 2004

ISBN: 0439398770

Curriculum: *Dreams, fiction*

"Early one morning, while Wesley was playing quietly in his room, something odd began to happen to his red semi-flatbed rig." Soon Wesley finds himself behind the wheel of a full-sized rig, driving a load of lumber. It all turns out to be a dream he's having in the sleeper of his father's rig, while accompanying him on a day of trucking.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley

Beach Court

#### Downhill Fun: A Counting Book About

#### Winter

By: Michael Dahl

Illustrated by: Todd Ouren

Ouren



Picture Window Books, 2004

ISBN:1404806075

Curriculum: *Science, Animals*

Here is a perfect counting book to share on a cold winter day! The luscious illustrations are reminiscent of Molly Bang, with Eric Carle's richly textured intense colors. They depict a variety of activities on a ski slope, from riding a chair lift to snowboarding. After eleven two-page horizontal spreads, the number twelve surprises the reader by making her turn the book sideways to see, "TWELVE stars silently shine high above the snowy slope."

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham

Valdez Elementary

[Continued on p. 3](#)

Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body.

Joseph Addison

#### Who are we?

- ☺ More than a dozen library media specialists 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 303-405-8131 to order.)

**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!

## The Librarian of Basra- A True Story from Iraq

By: Jeanette Winter

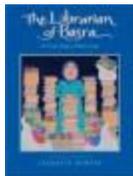
Illustrated by:  
Jeanette Winter

Harcourt, Inc., 2005

ISBN: 0152054456

*Curriculum: Librarians, War, Iraq War*

"The Librarian of Basra- A True Story from Iraq" brings a small glimpse of the struggles that face the people of Iraq, as they live with daily consequences of a violent war. In this topical book, the librarian tries to save her books, even going so far as to hide them in her own house. Controversial for its graphics and content that depict war, the book is effective for humanizing a



people that we as Americans don't really know.

Reviewed by: Pat White  
Ashley Elementary

## The Cats in Krasinski Square

By: Karen Hesse

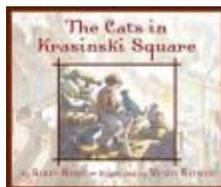
Illustrated by:  
Wendy Watson

Scholastic  
Press, 2004

ISBN:0439435404

*Curriculum: World War II, bravery, Cats*

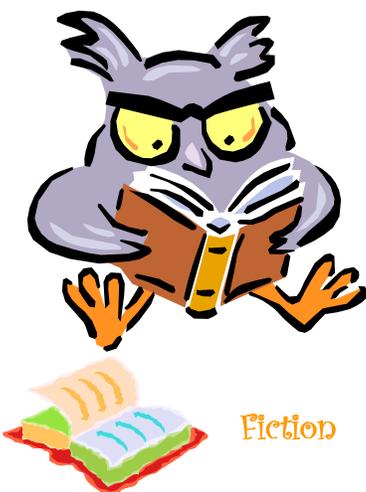
Just as the librarian of Basra helps to put a human face on the war in Iraq. "The Cats in Krasinski Square" find a gentle and fragile story set in the ghettos of Warsaw Poland during World War II. While the threat



of Nazi atrocities looms over their daily lives, a girl finds comfort in caring for stray cats. The excellent illustrations are done with a vibrant look and feel.

Reviewed by: Pat White  
Ashley Elementary

**Reviewer's Comment:** Both of these books do a good job in putting a human face on the stories of war. Readers should be forewarned that war is an integral part of these stories. While quite different in style both books are an effective way to open a discussion of war, conflicts, and the innocent people who are often caught in the middle.



Fiction

## Letters from Wolfie

By: Patti Sherlock

Viking, 2004

ISBN: 0670036943

*Curriculum: Dogs - War use - Fiction*

Thirteen-year-old Mark learns the true



meaning of "sacrifice, loyalty and patriotism" the hard way. After much soul searching, Mark decides to send Wolfie to Vietnam only to discover a huge void in his life and many misgivings. Mark begins a letter writing campaign, petitions, and a protest march to try to have Wolfie returned, but Wolfie has become "military equipment" and not returnable. A series of letters follows.

Reviewed by: Irene W. Bell  
Bryant Webster ECE-8

## The Legend of Holly Claus

By: Brittney Ryan

HarperCollins Publishers

ISBN: 0060585145

*Curriculum: Christmas - Fiction or Fantasy*

One special Christmas season a young boy writes to Santa Claus, for the first time, with a message that would change the Land of the Immortals for all time. "I have never written before for I could never think of anything I needed or wanted for Christmas. But this year I had a different idea. What do you wish for Christmas, Santa?...Isn't there one thing in



Continued on p. 4

**Home**

By: Jeannie Baker

Illustrated by: Jeannie Baker

Greenwillow Books, 2005

ISBN:0066239354

*Curriculum: Neighborhood, Urban Renewal, Wordless*

This wordless book illustrates what can be done by a community effort as the neighborhood bands together to transform vacant lots and graffiti covered walls into a marvelous panorama of parks, gardens, and homes.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin  
Park Hill



**Nonfiction**

**Whose Food Is This? A Look at What Animals Eat**

By: Nancy Kelly Allen

Illustrated by: Derrick Alderman & Denise Shea

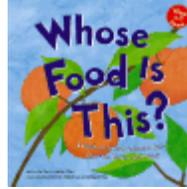
Picture Window Books, 2005

ISBN:1404806075

*Curriculum: Science, Animals*

Beautiful cut paper illustrations accompany questions and answers such as: "Whose food is this, deep inside a tube-shaped flower? This is a hummingbird's nectar." A brief description of the animal's eating habits follows. The pictures are bold enough to effectively share this guessing and discussion activity with a whole class.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham  
Valdez Elementary



**I Drive a Snowplow**

By: Sarah Bridges

Illustrated by: Derrick Alderman & Denise Shea

Picture Window Books, 2005

ISBN:1404806172

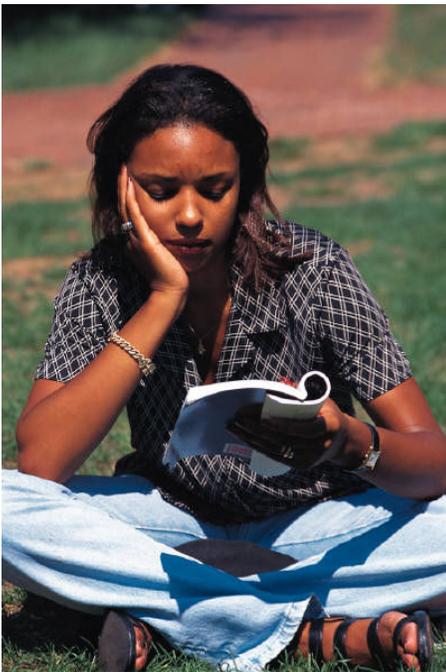
*Curriculum: Community Helpers; Transportation*

Big bold illustrations and text font help convey the strength of these powerful trucks. The text conveys plenty of interesting information about driver activities and machine details. Did you know that the driver moves the blade up and down and sideways using a joystick? Small fact boxes add even more details.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham  
Valdez Elementary



There are worse crimes than burning books. One of them is not reading them.  
Joseph Brodsky



# Young Adults Deserve the Best!

## So why is this box empty this month?

At every meeting we have a friendly free-for-all choosing books to read and review that month. We take books at a variety of levels, but until we read them we don't know which are going to be the stand-outs. Until those reviews arrive on the editor's desk the week of publication, she doesn't know where the gaps are. If she has a good one that fits, she will write it up, but some months that doesn't happen. We will make a special effort to make sure that doesn't happen to the same grade level two months in a row.

the world that you wish for but do not have?" From this piece of paper come the dream and reality of a child.

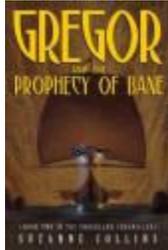
Reviewed by: Irene W. Bell  
Bryant Webster ECE-8

**Gregor and the Prophecy of Bane**

By: Suzanne Collins  
Scholastic Press,  
2004

ISBN:0439650755

*Curriculum: Fantasy,  
Friendship, Brothers  
and sisters*



Gregor returns to the Underworld below New York City to rescue his sister Boots. In the process of fulfilling the Prophecy of Bane, he demonstrates that compassion and caring can change the world as effectively as rage and death.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin  
Park Hill

**The Star of Kazan**

By: Eva Ibbotson  
Illustrated by: Kevin  
Hawkes



Dutton Children's Books, 2004  
ISBN: 0525473475

*Curriculum: Mystery fiction, Aus-  
tria, Family Relations*

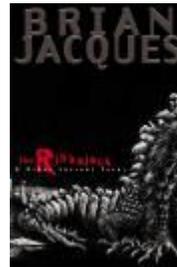
Annika is a foundling being happily raised by an unusual family in Vienna. When her "real" mother arrives to claim her, things just don't seem right. There is an adventure with a trunk full of clothes and jewels, a three-legged dog and a beautiful horse. Annika's friends in Vienna and her new friend, Zed, help to solve the puzzle and free Annika from a terrible fate.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns  
Hill Middle School

**The Ribbajack &  
Other Curious  
Yarns**

By: Brian Jacques  
Philomel Books  
ISBN: 0399242201

*Curriculum: Short  
Stories, Monsters,  
Scary Stories*



Jacques presents an interesting collection of six short stories. Each has an interesting, and unusual twist. From a monster that is conjured up in a young boy's mind

to a haunted schoolroom to a modern day Medusa. Each one has an unforgettable ending and will keep even reluctant readers reading to the end.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns  
Hill Middle School

**The Blue Roan  
Child**

By: Jamison  
Findlay  
Scholastic Inc.,  
2002

ISBN:  
0439627524



*Curriculum: Fantasy, Horses*

Syeira has a unique connection to a horse called Arwen, a prized horse in the king's stable. When Arwen's colts disappear, Arwen and Syeira enter a quest to save the colts. This is an intricately woven tale, reminiscent of the Narnia chronicles. Horse lovers and fantasy lovers will enjoy this adventure.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer  
Roland  
Grant Middle School

[Continued on p. 5](#)

For a longer review of each book and thousands other reviews written by DPS librarians with our students in mind, follow these directions:

- ◆ Go to LION, our online library catalog, at <http://lion.dpsk12.org>
- ◆ Click on "ERS Home" on the menu at the left side of the screen.
- ◆ Click on "Review Committee" on the menu at the left side of the screen.
- ◆ Under "Link to Review Database," click on "Review Database."
- ◆ Ignore the member log-in boxes. Click on "Advanced Search"
- ◆ You can search for words in the title, author, cur-

riculum connections, and more. (To see your choices, click on the blue down arrow at the end of the box that says "Title." Use as few as one search criterion or as many as four, one in each box.

- ◆ Once you have a list of titles, click on a title to see a full review.

Want more? Reviews from other sources such as School Library Journal and Horn Book are now available through LION, our online library catalog. Have you seen the new look? It's worth checking out!

- ◆ Go to LION, our online library catalog, at <http://lion.dpsk12.org>
- ◆ Search for a book by title, subject, or however you want.
- ◆ When you get to the book records, if there is a dark blue button called "More About This Book", click on it.



## Nonfiction

### War and Peace

By: Susan Glick

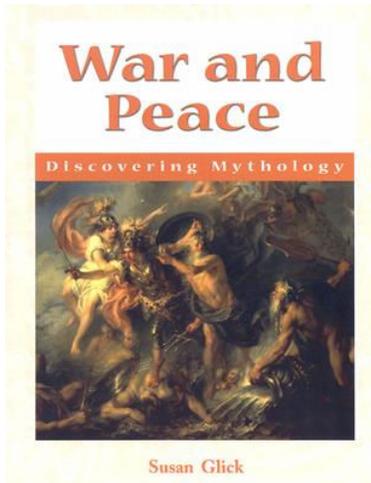
Lucent Books, 2004

ISBN: 0560069031

*Curriculum: War, Peace, Mythology*

Glick studies the war and peace mythologies of various cultures and how they affected daily life. This book also contains selected excerpts and photographs of ancient artifacts. This book is a well written study on mythology and how these stories reflected a culture's attitude toward war and peace.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer Roland  
Grant Middle School



### What Makes Me A Quaker:

By: Adam Woog

Thomson Gale, 2005.

ISBN: 073773082X

*Curriculum: Religions, Society of Friends*

Quakerism is a branch of Christianity, a religion that is based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. Quakers have strong religious feelings about social justice, human rights and peace. I enjoyed reading this informative, well-illustrated volume and am looking forward to placing others in my library collection.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
Kepner Middle School

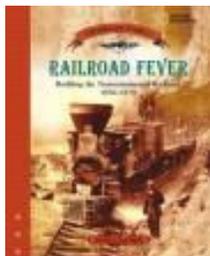
### Railroad Fever: Building the Transcontinental Railroad 1830 - 1870

By: Monica Halpern

National Geographic, 2004.

ISBN: 0792267672

*Curriculum: Social Studies, American History, Westward Expansion, Railroads*



This is part of a new series of books called *Crossroads America*. There are books on topics of importance to the founding of our nation: the anti-slavery movement, women's right to vote campaign and how the native people and the Europeans interacted on this new continent. They are well-illustrated and interesting to read.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
Kepner Middle School

### Once Upon a Poem

Foreward by Kevin Crossley-Holland

Illustrated by: Peter Bailey, Sian Bailey, Carol Lawson, Chris McEwan

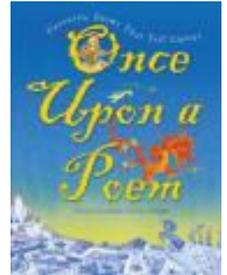
The Chicken House, 2004.

ISBN:0439651085

*Curriculum: Children's Poetry, Juvenile Non-Fiction*

This collection of poems touts itself as, "Favorite Poems That Tell Stories". And tell a story they do! We go from Paul Revere's Ride by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow to Goldilocks and the Three Bears by Roald Dahl, and to Wynken, Blynken and Nod by Eugene Field. Not to be outdone, we get the classic, "A Visit from St. Nicholas" by Clement Clarke Moore, and a rap poem by Tony Mitton called, "Brave Boy Rap." This is a classic collection of poems that should be in every library or young person's hands. A team of four talented and flexible illustrators richly illustrates it, and it spans various generations and genres. Hooray!

Reviewed by: Anthony LaCombe  
Baker Middle School



When we read a story, we inhabit it.  
The covers of the book are like a roof and four walls.

What is to happen next will take place within  
the four walls of the story.  
And this is possible because the story's voice  
makes everything its own.

John Berger