

# The Review Crew



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

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

Volume 8 Number 7

March 2012

## Fiction

### Petunia Goes Wild

Written and illus. by: Paul Schmid

Harper, 2012

ISBN: 9780061963346

*Curriculum: Imagination; Parents*

Petunia has had enough of being a human being so she goes through the week pretending to be a tiger and ships herself to Africa. Her mother's singing soon reminds her of all the things that make her happy to be a little girl in the end.

Reviewed by: Leah Rounds  
Alumni



### The Princess of Borscht

By: Leda Schubert

Illus. by: Bonnie Christensen

Roaring Book Press; 2011

ISBN: 9781596435155

*Curriculum: Cooking; Soups; Recipes; Grandmothers*

Grandma is in the hospital, she craves some homemade soup; "a person could starve to death here." So Ruthie heads home to make grandma borscht. All the neighbors stop by to give advice, argue about the best recipe, and finally leave. Ruthie struggles through



and delivers a great borscht to grandma, just like she makes herself.

Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier  
Edison Elem.

### Kite Day: A Bear and Mole Story

Written and illus. by: Will Hillenbrand

Holiday House Books, 2012

ISBN: 9700823416035

*Curriculum: Kites, Bears; Moles; Birds*

Finally, the perfect day arrives: sunny and windy. Bear and mole rush to build a kite: collecting all the materials, studying how to make it, and constructing it just so. They race out to the meadow and unfurl the string. Up, up, up it soars until dark clouds roll in with a rumble. The wind grows into a gust which snaps the kite's string and the kite plunges away. Chasing after the kite, the two realize they are not going to catch it before it snags and breaks in the trees. When they look up, they appreciate that their kite has become a shelter for three baby birds. If they can't use it to fly and run, at least it is saving lives.

Reviewed by: Irene Bell  
Alumni



## 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 ETLs, where DPS teachers can order baskets of books for their classrooms. (Call 720-423-8131 to order.)

### The Prince's New Pet

Written and Illus. by  
Brian Anderson

Roaring Brook Press, 2011

ISBN: 9781596433571

*Curriculum: Colors; loss of parent(s)*

Ever since Prince Viridian's mother died, the color has literally disappeared from his life and from the kingdom. In his grief, King Cerulean hired a royal color catcher to extinguish all but the ashy gray of depression from the kingdom. On his birthday however, an unknown entity drops a surprise package in on Prince Viridian's party; out pops a rainbow-hued Wooglepoo and a magical transformation begins.

Reviewed by: Cheryl Joseffy  
Henry W.S.



## The Best for Upper Elementary Readers!

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

# Fiction

### A Boy Called Dickens

By: Deborah Hopkinson

Illus. by: John Hendrix

Schwartz & Wade; 2012

ISBN: 9780375867323

*Curriculum: Charles Dickens; Authors; London*

Charles Dickens is 12 year old. He works in Warren's Blacking Factory, 10 hours a day, six days a week. On Sundays he visits the rest of his family who lives in debtors' prison. Young authors and kids with dreams will appreciate this fictional slice of Dickens' life.

Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier  
Edison Elem.



# Nonfiction

### Busy Bumblebees

By: Mary Elizabeth Salzmann

ABDO, 2012

ISBN: 9781617831898

*Curriculum: Bees; Insects*

This is a simple expository text on bumblebees, and would be a good introductory tool into insect facts and how to use the tools of a book to do research. Each page contains two simple sentences of facts with a related photograph, written specifically for transitional readers.

Reviewed by: Leah Rounds  
Alumni



### Princess of the Wild Swans

By: Diane Zahler

HarperCollins Children, 2012

ISBN:

9780062004925

*Curriculum: Fairytales; Brothers and sisters; Witches; Magic*

It is an unforgettable story filled with enchantment both good and evil: a wicked enchantress casts a spell on the King causing him to marry her; the King's five sons are turned into swans; Meriel (their sister) is suspicious and seeks the help of Riona and Liam; they consult their Mother who tells them there is only one way to reverse the curse (Meriel must gather stinging nettles, soak them, spin them into thread, weave the thread into cloth, make the cloth into five shirts and place the shirts onto the swans; all this without speaking one word); four shirts and most of the fifth are finished before the Queen is thoroughly suspicious; and much more.

Reviewed by: Irene Bell  
Alumni



### Bad Kitty For President

Written and illus. by:  
Nick Bruel

Roaring Brook Press,  
2012

ISBN: 9781596436695

*Curriculum: Politics, practical; Elections; Cats*

When Bad Kitty tires of the stray cat problem in the neighborhood, she decides to take action - she runs for president! She learns how the whole process works - candidates, caucuses, delegates, campaigns and more. Although she doesn't win in the end, she



vows to run again. This newest adventure of Bad Kitty will be a funny and timely way to get readers interested in the upcoming elections. Bad Kitty's experience will give readers a chance to learn about elections in an entertaining, understandable, and non-threatening way.

Reviewed by: Karyn Pocernich  
CMS Community School

### Always Neverland

Written by: Zoe Barton

Harper, 2011

ISBN: 978-0-06-196325-4

Curriculum: *Fantasy; Peter Pan; Fairies*

Winter vacation has just begun and Ashley is already bored. Peter Pan and Tinkerbell show up on her windowsill to take her to Neverland to become their next "Wendy girl." When she arrives in Neverland, she discovers that the boys want her to become their next mother. Ashley would rather focus on adventures rather than motherly duties, and sets about changing the paradigms of the boys' views about "Wendy girls" from motherly figures to peers.

Reviewed by: Dr. Lynne Lopez-Crowley

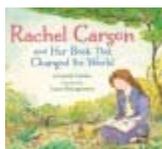
MSLA



## Nonfiction

### Rachel Carson and Her Book that Changed the World

By: Laurie Lawlor



Holiday House, 2012

ISBN: 9780823423705

Curriculum: *Rachel Carson; Women Scientists; Environmental Law*

Rachel Carson spent hours outside, photographing, writing and exploring everything around her with her mother as her guide. The first summer home from college, Rachel is shocked as she observes factories dominating the wilderness. Most surprising was how these factories were carelessly disposing of their waste. Rachel returns to school with a renewed focus on biology. Struggling to be taken seriously as a woman scientist, she became the single driving force in government regulated environmental laws.

Reviewed by: Cheri Hilton  
South H.S.

### Nic Bishop Lizards

By: Nic Bishop

Scholastic, 2010

ISBN: 9780545206341

Curriculum: *Science; Biology; Reptiles; Lizards*

From the venomous Komodo dragon of Indonesia to the tiny Caribbean dwarf gecko, lizards throughout the world come in all shapes and sizes. Interested readers will learn about their hatching, habitats, diet, enemies, traits, defenses and courting rituals and marvel at full-page color photos highlighting unique members of this fascinating group.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose

Trevista ECE-8



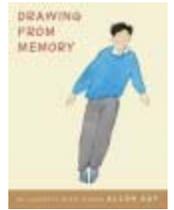
### Drawing From Memory

Written and Illus. By: Allen Say

Scholastic, 2011

ISBN: 9780545176866

Curriculum: *Say, Allen; Artists; Japanese Americans*



In this fascinating and visually rich autobiography, renowned author/illustrator Allen Say recalls his early years in Japan. Through sketches, photos and illustrations Say conjures memories of his family life, schooling, fellow cartoonists, famous cartoonist Noro Shinpei (his great teacher and the inspiration for this book), and how he got an opportunity to come to America.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose  
Trevista ECE-8

### Touch the Sky: Alice Coachman, Olympic High Jumper

By: Ann Malaspina

Illus. by: Eric Velasquez

Albert Whitman, 2012

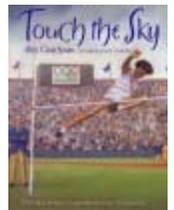
ISBN: 9780807580356

Curriculum: *Alice Coachman; Olympic Games*

Growing up impoverished in Georgia, Alice Coachman loved playing sports. Using rags and sticks for a crossbar and sucking on lemons to make her feel "feather-light", Alice learned to high jump, won a national championship, and brought home the only gold medal for the American women's track team at the 1948 Olympic Games. Perfect for Black History Month, this is a lyrical and inspiring story with exuberant paintings showing Alice flying through her life.

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert

Waller K-8



### Dog Heroes

By: Mary Pope Osborne and Natalie Pope Boyce  
Scholastic, 2011  
ISBN:  
9780545384872



*Curriculum: Animal heroes; Working dogs; Dogs*

Dogs can be so much more than loving companions. They have served in war, in search and rescue efforts, in therapy, at hospitals, in schools, and in many other ways. This *Magic Tree House Fact Tracker* not only provides general information about dogs and on some of the ways they help people, but also many specific stories of amazing and courageous dogs. Yet dogs don't need to be saving a family from a fire to still be heroes to the people around them.

Reviewed by: Karyn Pocernich  
CMS Community School

### Dragons of Silk



## Middle School Reader Gold Mine

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

# Fiction

By: Yep, Laurence

Harper, 2011  
ISBN: 978006027518  
*Curriculum: Sisters; Silkworms; Family; China history*

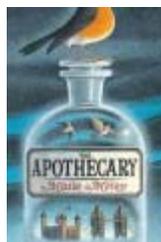


This story begins in 1835. Lily, her sister Swallow and her mother raise silk worms in a small country village in China. When her opium addicted father returns to the family, he only stays a short while before deserting them again and stealing all of their hard earned money. Knowing there is no other way to sustain their family, Swallow sells herself into slavery. The story continues over the next seventy-five years with Lily and her family. In each generation there is a woman that is faced with hardships that must be overcome.

Reviewed by: Dr. Lynne Lopez-Crowley  
MSLA

### The Apothecary

By: Maile Meloy  
G.P. Putnam's Sons,  
2011  
ISBN: 9780399256271



*Curriculum: Fantasy; Family; Cold War; London*

Janie and her parents moved unexpectedly to London in the early 50's. She was unhappy until she met Benjamin, the Apothecary's son. The Apothecary was the protector of a powerful book, the Pharmacopoeia. This book is wanted by Russian spies who would kill to get it. The two young people get more adventure than they planned on that involved kidnapping, nuclear bombs and seemingly magic potions. They must keep the book out of the hands of the spies and prevent a nuclear disaster.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns  
Place Bridge Academy

### Liar's Moon

By: Elizabeth C. Bunce  
Arthur A. Levine  
Books, 2011  
ISBN:  
9780545136082



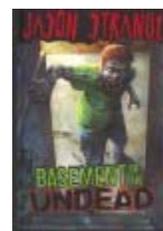
*Curriculum: Fantasy; Murder; Smuggling; Magic; Relationships*

Celyn, also known as "Digger" is a thief and a pickpocket. She finds herself in jail next to Lord Durrel Decath. He has been charged with killing his wife. Celyn believes his innocence and when she is released, vows to find the truth. Magic is forbidden here, but she finds traces. Durrel's late wife was found to be using her position in a smuggling scheme. True to her nickname, Digger eventually finds the truth, while falling in love with Durrell. This is book two, and the author leaves a cliffhanger ending.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns  
Place Bridge Academy

### Basement of the Undead

By: Jason Strange  
Stone Arch Books, 2012  
*Curriculum: Zombies; Middle schools; Horror stories*



ISBN: 1434234339 3.86

If you can accept the premise that a MS principal sent a student to the building basement to bring back the dreaded school bully who tagged his initials on the office door, then you can get sucked into a believable battle of middle school good vs. evil. Will the bully and the nerds team up to

defeat the zombies living in the basement? Give this one to reluctant, middle-school boys - they'll love the cover!

Reviewed by: Dr. Janice Pacheco  
Skinner M.S.

### Ten Miles Past Normal

By: Frances O'Roark  
Dowell

Atheneum, 2011

ISBN:  
9781416995852

*Curriculum: School; Bands; Farm life; Interpersonal relationships*

Years ago Janie suggested that her family raise goats and unlike her other suggestions, her parents loved this one. So now Janie lives on a goat farm, complete with goat milk, goat cheese and, yes, goat poop. Janie figures she will be eating lunch in the library, alone, for the duration of her high school years. But a couple quirky happenstances find her involved in the school jam band and hanging around with some of the most popular kids. When taking u-turns just isn't in the cards, maybe being ten miles past normal is okay.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
Kepner M.S.



cast in his home. All boys, when they reach the age of sixteen, are assigned to a brotherband and taught the art of sailing and fighting. This particular year there are a large number of boys joining brotherbands. Hal, along with six other misfits, form their own band. With the help of an old friend of Hal's dead father, they learn the lessons needed in order to best the two other bands of stronger, more popular boys.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
Kepner M.S.



## Young Adults Deserve the Best!

## Fiction

### The Outcasts

By: John Flanagan  
Philomel, 2011

ISBN:  
9780399256196

*Curriculum: Friendship; Overcoming adversity*

Hal is the son of a Skandian Warrior and an Araluen slave woman and because of his mother, he is an out-



### How to Save a Life

By: Sarah Zarr  
Little Brown, 2011

ISBN: 9780316036061

*Curriculum: Family; Adoption; Teen Pregnancy; Runaways; Grief*

When Jill's dad dies suddenly, she and



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her mother grieve separately. Then, one day, Jill's mother announces she is taking in the pregnant Mandy, 18, and adopting her baby when it's born. This does not sit well with Jill as she struggles to cope, even a year later, with her dad's death. Alternating chapters tell Jill's and Mandy's backgrounds, thoughts, struggles, and dreams. Showing how one can find family in the midst of chaos, this novel addresses grief and healing, acceptance and survival. Zarr has written another terrific story.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas  
JFK H.S.

### Stupid Fast

By: Geoff Herbach  
Sourcebooks Fire,  
2011  
ISBN:  
9781402256301



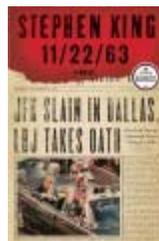
*Curriculum: Coming of age; Dysfunctional families; Football; High school*

During his 15<sup>th</sup> year, Felton grows at an incredible rate, sprouts hair everywhere, realizes he is incredibly fast and strong, and becomes, unbeknownst to him, the spitting image of his dead father. With his best friend gone for the summer, the newly large, hairy, and fast Felton is recruited by the jocks as the school's sports savior. The summer marks physical and mental transformations for Felton, but his mother and brother completely melt down. This fabulous coming-of-age book is funny, sad, and captivating. The characters are authentic and the story line engaging. With mild swearing, recommend this to 8<sup>th</sup> graders and up.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas  
JFK H.S.

### 11/22/63: A Novel

By: Stephen King  
Scribner, 2011  
ISBN: 9781451627282



*Curriculum: Time travel; John F. Kennedy; Lee Harvey Oswald; Butterfly effect*

Jake Epping promises a dying friend that he will use a discovered time portal to travel back in time and prevent the JFK assassination. Always dropped off in 1958, Jake must spend 5 years in the past with every action, both big and small, having an effect on the present. Although a daunting 849 pages, King weaves such an engaging story. Background knowledge about the JFK era would be helpful, and the size of the book will limit readership, but give this to HS King readers, history fans, or sci-fi buffs. They will not be disappointed.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas  
JFK H.S.

### Want to Go Private?

By: Sarah Littman  
Scholastic Press, 2012  
ISBN: 978054515467



*Curriculum: Internet Safety; Social Networking*

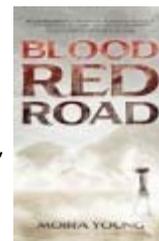
Abby begins high school with her best friend Faith who is thrilled about meeting new people and trying out for the school play. As Faith becomes more involved, Abby turns to a new guy, BlueSkyBoi, she has met on ChezTeen, the latest social network. BlueSkyBoi constantly ensures Abby that he loves her. Revealing more about himself, his requests for her to reciprocate are more than she bargained for and far more than she can comprehend.

Reviewed by: Cheri Hilton

South H.S.

### Blood Red Road

By: Moira Young  
Margaret K. McElderry,  
2011  
ISBN: 1442429984



*Curriculum: Coming of age; Twins; Dystopian society*

Saba and Lugh are eighteen-year-old twins in a barren, dystopian world. After her father is killed and Lugh is kidnapped, Saba sets off to find him, but is forced into a Mad Max-Thunderdome existence as a cage fighter. She escapes with the help of a group of rebels, is reunited with Lugh, and destroys the evil ruler. Written without quotation marks in a kind of dialect, there's plenty of action as selfish Saba begins to understand what is important in life.

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert  
Waller K-8

### Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children

By: Ransom Riggs  
Quirk, 2011  
ISBN: 9781594744761



*Curriculum: Orphanages; Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder*

Witnessing the bizarre and untimely death of his grandfather leaves fifteen year-old, Jacob Portman unable to escape the recurring nightmares of monsters and unlikely stories shared about his grandfather's childhood in an orphanage for "peculiar" children on a remote Welsh island. Ultimately, Jacob's therapist is able to convince his parents that the only possible remedy is to visit Cairnholm and the orphanage to lay to rest any question about fact and/or fiction in Grandpa Portman's stories.

Reviewed by: Cheryl Joseffy

Henry W.S.

**Au Revoir, Crazy European Chick**

By: Joe Schreiber

Houghton Mifflin,  
2011

ISBN:

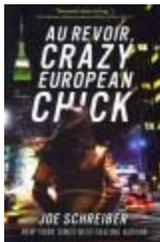
9780547577388

Curriculum: *Assassins; Foreign study; Family life; New York; Lithuanians; Adventure*

High school senior Perry Stormaire is less than thrilled when his parents force him to take their awkward, frumpy Lithuanian exchange student to the prom. He would rather be performing with his band for their first gig in New York City. What begins as an uncomfortable, disappointing evening soon morphs into a danger-filled thrill ride in a jaguar, when Perry discovers his date is really a gorgeous assassin bent on killing five people before the night is over.

Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen

TJ H.S.



combing the beach for colorful bits of sea glass. Now with their history all around them the painful memories and the answers begin to surface.

Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen

TJ H.S.

**The Fault in Our Stars**

By: John Green

Dutton Books, 2012

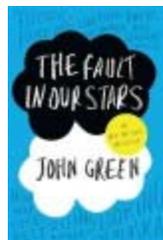
Curriculum: *Cancer patients; Interpersonal relations*

ISBN: 9780525478812

Hazel Grace Lancaster and Augustus "Gus" Waters are instantly attracted to each other when they meet at a support group for teens with cancer. They trade favorite books, discover much in common, and begin a poignant and bittersweet romance. YA readers will be drawn in by the serious nature of the topic, told with an abundance of teen humor, intelligence and hope. Highly recommended tour de force by *Looking for Alaska* author, John Green.

Reviewed by: Dr. Janice Pacheco

Skinner M.S.



**Moonglass**

By: Jessi Kirby

Simon & Schuster,  
2011

ISBN:

9781442416949

Curriculum: *Beaches; Fathers and daughters; Guilt; Suicide; California*

Moving is never easy, but for Anna moving to the beach town where her parents first met is especially difficult. It has been ten years since her mother walked into the ocean and never came back. Anna and her father have avoided talking about the 'accident'. Anna remembers very little of her mother, except stories of mermaids and



**Incarnate**

By: Jodi Meadows

Katherine Tegen Books,  
2012

ISBN: 9780062060754

Curriculum: *Fantasy; Reincarnation; Recovery from abuse*

In the city of Heart, there are one million people who have all lived and been reincarnated over and over for as long as anyone can remember. When Ana is born, however, she is a new soul; it is her first time on earth. When she turns 18, Ana escapes her mother's abusive control, but nearly dies in the attempt. Nursed back to health by the compassionate Sam, Ana learns her own value even as she faces danger from



residents who believe her existence is a bad omen.

Reviewed by: Sudi Stodola

CEC Middle College

# Nonfiction

**Diary of a Grammar Zombie**

By: Jennie

Wadsworth

Wiley, 2009

ISBN:

9780470408117

Curriculum: *Grammar handbook; zombies*

In this era of zombie popularity, this is a handbook that holds great appeal for teens. With striking black-and-white illustrations, fun zombie-themed exercises and journal entries, students will find this to be an entertaining text despite the fact that it's a grammar workbook.

Reviewed by: Sudi Stodola

CEC Middle College



“Wear the old coat and buy the new book.”

Austin Phelps