



# The Review Crew

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

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

Volume 5 Number 9  
May 2009

## Fiction

### The Beckoning Cat: Based on a Japanese Folktale

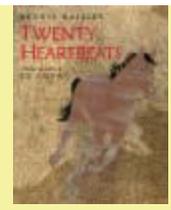
By: Koko Nishizuka  
Illus. by: Rosanne Litzinger  
Holiday House, 2009  
ISBN: 9780823420513



*Curriculum: Folklore; Japanese Folk-tale; Cats; Kindness; Generosity*  
Yohei takes care of his ill father by selling fish door-to-door. He barely ekes out a living. When a hungry white cat shows up at his door, he shares what little food he has. His father becomes worse, Yohei cannot leave his side and worries about getting medicine. People start to come to his house to buy fish, having been beckoned by the white cat. Yohei's father recovers, he opens his own shop, and the white cat with one raised paw becomes the symbol of good luck throughout Japan.  
Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier  
Stedman Elem.

### Twenty Heartbeats

By: Dennis Haseley  
Illus. by: Ed Young  
Roaring Brook Pres,  
2008



ISBN: 9781596432383

*Curriculum: Artists; Horses; Paintings; Perseverance*

A wealthy Chinese man commissions a portrait of his favorite horse and pays in advance. The man waits many years and still no portrait. He goes to the artist and demands his picture. The artist produces a masterpiece in a few strokes; it takes all of "twenty heartbeats." Enraged, the buyer turns to leave seeing into the artist's workroom and the thousands of paintings made in preparation for the masterpiece. At last the old man understands.

Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier  
Stedman Elem.

### Saving Shadow

Written by: Dara Dokas  
Illustrated by: Evelyne Duverne  
Picture Window Books, 2009

### 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.)

ISBN9781404852372

*Curriculum: Cats; Pets; Responsibility*

Taylor wants a cat. But Mom says, "No pets right now." One afternoon, Taylor hears a kitten outside. When she finds her, the kitten is injured. After Taylor and her mother take the kitten to the vet, Taylor desperately wants to keep her. Will her mother reward her responsible actions?

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin  
Park Hill ECE-8

### The Three Little Gators

By: Helen Kettelman



Illus. by: Will Terry

Albert Whitman & Company,  
2009

ISBN: 9780807578247

*Curriculum: Alligators; Three Little Pigs; folktale*

The Three Little Gators is an adaption of a folktale, which takes place in the swamps of East Texas. Each pig strikes out and builds a house to protect them from the Big-bottomed Boar. The boar 'wiggles his rump and smashes' the sand and stick houses, but can't budge the rock house. The silly illustrations, the smart gator wears the glasses, help to create the characters' personality. This is a good book to add to your fractured folktale collection.

Reviewed by: Megan McQuinn  
Howell ECE-8

**Spanish!**

### El cangrejo ermitaño

By: Roberto Aliaga

Illus. by: Daniel Jiménez

Combel, 2008

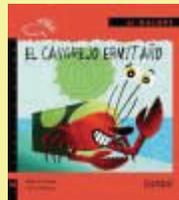
ISBN: 8498253322

*Curriculum: Helping others; Kindness; Golden rule*

Will the grumpy hermit crab get help from beach neighbors to find a larger house after he has repeatedly refused to help them in the past? Only when he is rebuffed he comes to his senses and realizes how mean and selfish he has been. Upon seeing his pain and tears his neighbors come to console him and a wave brings him a coral shell he can fit into which remains as an open house for them.

Youngsters will enjoy this nicely illustrated variation of an old story that increases their vocabulary and reinforces the ethical values of the golden rule and kindness to others.

Reviewed by Ethel Hammerly  
Spanish reviewer



## Nonfiction

### What Lincoln Said

By: Sarah L. Thomson

Illustrations by:  
James E. Ransome

Collins, 2008

ISBN: 9780060848194

*Curriculum: Lincoln, Abraham;*

Paid for rowing two men out to their steamboat, young Abe Lincoln remarked, "I could scarcely believe my eyes...By honest work I had earned a dollar." Such quotes are embedded throughout this picture book biography. Lush paintings incorporate humor and interesting perspectives to illustrate Lincoln's life. Notes from the author and illustrator point out complexities in Lincoln's character. This is an honest look at Honest Abe and a worthwhile addition to any elementary collection.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose  
Trevista ECE-8

### Panorama: A Foldout Book

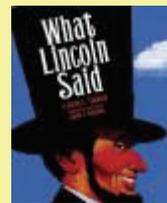
By: Fani Marceau

Illustrated by: Joelle Jolivet

Abrams Books, 2009

ISBN: 9780810983328

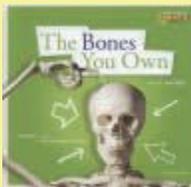
*Curriculum: Travel; Voyages around the world*



Welcomed to the savanna by the tiger, to frozen Antarctica by penguins and to the volcanoes of Ecuador, readers will travel the world experiencing the flora and fauna of many habitats. At day's end, they can return and experience it all again in the night. This amazing panorama of the natural world can be viewed as single pages or folded out across the room. Readers will enjoy the black and white woodcut illustrations depicting both day and night. It will receive many return visits from readers wanting to see or learn more about the world around them.

Reviewed by: Karyn Pocerlich  
Ford Elem.

**The Bones You Own: A Book About the Human Body**



By: Becky Baines

National Geographic, 2009

ISBN:9781426304101

*Curriculum: Skeleton; Bones*

When you were born, you had over 300 bones. Now you have 206 bones. What happened to the others? When you were born, some of your bones were soft and squishy. Now they are hard. Do you know why? Read this book to discover the answers.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin  
Park Hill ECE-8

**The Best for Upper Elementary Readers!**

**Fiction**

**The Adventurous Deeds of Deadwood Jones**



Written by: Helen Hemphill

Front Street, 2008

ISBN: 9781590786376

*Curriculum: Cattle drives, African Americans; Cowboys; Historical fiction*

Prometheus Jones was born free. Prometheus has never known his father who was born a slave and sold and his mother is dead. Now thirteen, Prometheus is given a lottery ticket in exchange for riding a horse. When the ticket wins the lottery for a horse the two boys who gave Prometheus the ticket claim that he stole it. The boys are trouble makers and Prometheus decides it is time to look for his father. He joins a cattle drive on its way to Deadwood. Inspired by the real cowboy Nat Love, Prometheus provides readers with adventures along the trail while at the same time giving a glimpse into the challenges of being an African American cowboy in the 1800s. This book received a starred review by Horn Book and is highly recommended.

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

Reviewed by: Dr. Lynne Lopez-Crowley  
Johnson Elem.

**Madame Pamplemousse and her Incredible Edibles**



By: Rupert Kingfisher

Illus. by: Sue Hellard

Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2008

ISBN: 9781599903064

*Curriculum: Cooking; Magic*

Madeline is forced to wash dishes in her Uncle's disgusting restaurant, but her luck changes when she meets an unusually woman and her cat. Introducing new and magical ingredients to her uncle's menu, Madeline soon is recognized as a master chef and her uncle is put out of business.

Reviewed by: Leah Jungers  
Pioneer Charter

**Spanish!**

**La guerra perdida**



Written and illus. by: Agustín Comotto

Thule, 2008

ISBN: 9788496473829

*Curriculum: War; Fights*

An ironic fable about a general riding his horse Bucephalus looking

for a lost war. As he is unable to find it on land he goes riding over the ocean waves and finds an admiral in his warship that is also looking for a lost war. As the war cannot be found, and two are needed to have a fight, they end up fighting each other and at the bottom of the sea, arguing with each other to be the winner, as they found the lost war.

An imaginative tale, well illustrated, depicting those who find the need to constantly have an enemy to confront.

Reviewed by Ethel Hammerly  
Spanish reviewer

## Nonfiction

### How to Talk to Girls

By: Alec Greven

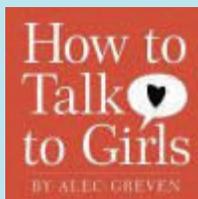
Illustrated by:  
Kei Acedera

Collins, 2008

ISBN: 9780061709999

*Curriculum: Relationships; Self-esteem; Conversation*

"If you are a boy who needs help getting girls, this book has all the answers!" So says the eight-year-old Colorado author who based these words of wisdom on his observations at Soaring Hawk Elementary School. The young counselor gives his fellows tips on how to woo and



win a maiden: *Comb your hair and don't wear sweats; Control your hyperness; Don't act desperate.* Good advice and a worthy addition to any elementary library collection.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose  
Trevista ECE-8

### Gone Fishing

By: David McLimans

Illus. by: David  
McLimans

Walker & Company, 2008

ISBN: 9780802797704

*Curriculum: Marine animals; Endangered species; Oceans*

From the African penguin to the Giant tube worm, twenty-two species endangered or in threatened habitats are rendered in black, white and deep aquamarine as numbers 1-10. Ocean facts, detailed paragraphs about each animal, websites, and suggested readings make this not only an eye-catching number book but appropriate for research as well. A beautiful, worthwhile addition to any elementary library collection.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose  
Trevista ECE-8

### What Bluebirds Do

By: Pamela F. Kirby

Boyd's Mills Press,  
2009

ISBN:  
9781590786147

*Curriculum: Science; Bluebirds; Life cycles*



With beautiful photographs and simple text, the author chronicles the lives of two Eastern Bluebirds from nest building through to their adult offspring. Supplemented with a glossary, more detailed information on other Bluebirds, Bluebird conservation, additional resources and websites this offering will be useful as a read-aloud for younger students as well as for research for fluent readers.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose  
Trevista ECE-8

### Living Sunlight: How Plants Bring the Earth to Life

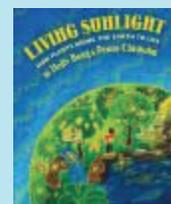
Written and illus.  
by: Molly Bang

The Blue Sky Press, 2009

ISBN: 9780545044226

*Curriculum: Photosynthesis; Scientific poetry*

Brilliant, colorful, dancing and luminous illustrations flow across the pages enhancing a free form verse that rolls from the tongue as it is read. "Without plants, you would have no oxygen./Without plants, you would have no food./Without plants, you could not live./Without plants, there would be no life on Earth." The scientific message is all about how life works: how the sun gives the Earth life through photosynthesis. In addition, it tells how photosynthesis connects all life: "how all life shares the same atoms, and how these atoms cycle on our planet." The information concerning photosynthesis is related in the first person: the story is told by the sun.



Reviewed by: Irene Bell

Alumni

**The Cuckoo's  
Haiku: and  
Other Birding  
Poems**

By: Michael J.  
Rosen

Illus. by: Stan Fellows

Candlewick Press, 2009

ISBN: 9780763630492

*Curriculum Connections: Poetry; Haiku; Birding Poems; Birds; Field Notes*

Arranged by season, this lovely book is a wonderful blend of haiku poems, stunning watercolors and delicately handwritten field notes. A five page appendix with *Notes for Birdwatchers and Haiku Lovers*, lists the 24 species of birds, explaining the individual characteristics and adding interesting notes. This book is a perfectly orchestrated combination of verse and images that produce a simply spectacular volume that will appeal to poetry, bird, and nature lovers of all ages.

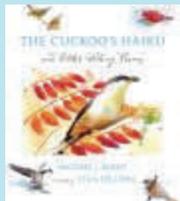
Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier

Stedman Elem.

**Grilled Pizza  
Sandwich and  
Other Vegetarian Recipes**

By: Kristi Johnson

Capstone Pres, 2009



ISBN: 9781429620185

*Curriculum: Vegetarian cookery; Cooking*

Full-color, illustrated vegetarian recipes including Easy Cheesy Potatoes, Bean Burrito Bake, and Raspberry Cream Pie are made with ingredients kids love. There is a star rating from easy to advanced recipes. Everything you need for each is listed including ingredient and tools. Sidebars give cooking, health, and tasty tips. This cooking series will appeal to young chefs as well as their parents.

Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier  
Stedman Elem.

**Alcatraz to Zanzibar: Famous Places from A to Z**

By: Colleen Dolphin

ABDO, 2009

ISBN: 9781604534924

*Curriculum: Famous Places; Geography*

One in a series of ABC books, this one takes the reader to famous places around the world, from Alcatraz in California, to the Kuala Lumpur towers in Malaysia, and Zanzibar in Tanzania. This is a good general ABC book, could easily be used in a country or culture study, and the format could be easily mimicked.

Reviewed by: Leah Jungers  
Pioneer Charter



## Review Crew Staff

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Megan McQuinn

Howell K—8

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Ford Elem.

**From ERS:**

Jody Gehrig

Karen Shannon

Antonio Nicotera

# Middle School Reader Gold Mine

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

## Fiction

### The Roar

By: Emma Clayton  
Chicken House,  
2009



ISBN:  
9780439925938

*Curriculum: Twins; Science fiction*

The fast-paced story has several gory incidents (borg sharks attacking); pulse pounding chase scenes (police pod fighters chasing innocent children); risky behavior (trying to injure with a mere glance); vivid descriptions of The Shadows, Barford North, and the Golden Turrets; hidden treasure (life outside The Wall); and plausible clues that ultimately lead to the real conflict (finding Ellie and saving the world from destruction.) Answer the Call of the Wild, read about a future world where millions of people live behind The Wall, in London, safe from a so-called "Animal Plague" found on the rest of the Planet. Fifty-years-ago, corporation CEO's and power-

ful government leaders decided the world was over-crowded and invented a plague to scare people into living behind Walls, giving up their freedom, eating processed mold, and practicing birth control for thirty years.

Reviewed by: Irene Bell  
Alumni

### Chasing the Secret

By: Maya Snow  
Harper Collins, 2009



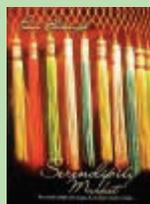
ISBN: 9780061243905  
*Curriculum: Japan; Samurai; Sisters; Honor*

In the second book, we find Kimi and her sister Hana still running for their lives. They receive information that their mother and little brother are still alive. Not knowing who to trust, except for their friend Tatsuya, they continue the search for their missing family. They inadvertently cause the capture of their mother and brother by trusting someone who betrayed them. The girls find Master Jin and his dojo. They work together to save their family, and to keep her little brother alive so that he can rule when the evil Jito is slain

Reviewed by: Karen Burns  
Rishel M.S.

### Serendipity Market

By: Penny Blubaugh  
HarperTeen, 2009  
ISBN: 9780061468759



*Curriculum: Magic; Story telling; Story tellers; Fairytales*

Mama Inez feels that the world is out

of sync. She invites nine storytellers to tell their tales at the Serendipity Market. Wrapped in the story of the Serendipity Market's magic, there are nine familiar or maybe not that familiar tales: Tam Lin, Cinderella, Shoemaker and the elves, Jack and the beanstalk, Pecos Bill and Slue-foot Sue, Wynken, Blynken and Nod, and several more, all told from a perspective outside the ordinary.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
Kepner M.S.

### The Dog Days of Charlotte Hayes

By: Marlane Kennedy  
Greenwillow Books, 2009  
ISBN: 9780061452413



*Curriculum: Dogs; Compassion; Money making*

Charlotte's dad loves a good bargain. Killer is a St. Bernard puppy who was an exceptionally good deal. The problem is that Charlotte's dad loses interest in taking care of him in about two months. This leaves Charlotte, not a dog person, to give him food and water and to feel sorry for him when it rains. Charlotte knows he needs a home where he will be taken care of and loved but finding a St. Bernard puppy a home like that is more of a challenge than she expects.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
Kepner M.S.

### Daughter of the Flames

By: Zoe Marriott  
Candlewick Press, 2009  
ISBN: 9780763637491



*Curriculum: Fantasy; Survival; Friendships*

In an ancient temple, Zira, who does not remember her past, trains to be a warrior priestess. When King Abheron, a tyrant, begins to take over the country and destroys the temple, Zira learns the truth. She is the last surviving member of the Sedorne people and the true queen. On her sixteenth birthday, she must become a leader to her people. She gets help and love from an unexpected source that causes her to question her quest. She does succeed in killing the evil king, and takes her place as queen to bring peace to the land.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns  
Rishel M.S.

## Nonfiction

### Every Human Has Rights

Edited By: Nancy Laties Feresten

Illustrations edited by: Lori Epstein

National Geographic, 2009

ISBN: 9781426305115

*Curriculum: Human rights*

Written in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights details the freedoms that are due to all people. From free expression, to an education, to



the right to be treated like a person, each of thirty rights is presented. The poetic words of young writers, striking photos from around the world, and informative captions all work together to give power to the description of each right. This book would be a fine starting point for many discussions about world situations and human rights. It has made this document come to life in images and words that young people will understand and further question.

Reviewed by: Karyn Pocerlich  
Ford Elem.

### Mother Poems

By: Hope Anita Smith  
Henry Holt and Company, 2009

ISBN: 9780805082319

*Curriculum: Mothers; Poetry; Death; Relationships*

This amazing book of poetry is eloquent and breathtaking. The poems tell the chronological story of a mother and daughter relationship. As a young girl her mother "is always there just where I need her to be". Yet as time goes on, the girl struggles with the death of her mother. In the end the young woman learns to build 'memory trees' to help her keep her mother alive. Guaranteed to make you cry!

Reviewed by: Megan McQuinn  
Howell ECE-8



## Young Adults Deserve the Best!

## Fiction

### Jumped

By: Rita Williams-Garcia

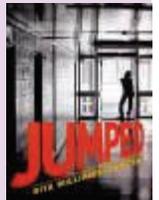
Amistad/HarperTeen, 2009

ISBN: 9780060760915

*Curriculum: Violence in schools; High school life; Bullies; Conduct of life*

Dominique (the angry jock), Trina (the self-absorbed flirt), and Leticia (the girl in the wrong place at the right time...or in the right place at the wrong time?) become unknowingly intertwined. Leticia overhears Dominique's plans to beat up the oblivious Trina at the end of the day and must decide if she will intervene. This interesting but disturbing look at girl violence in schools has chapters alternating with the three girls narrating their thoughts throughout the day. Mature language and content make this appropriate for HS students.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas  
JFK H.S.



# Nonfiction

## Somebody

By: Nancy Springer  
Holiday House, 2009



ISBN: 9780823420995

*Curriculum: Parental kidnapping; Self-esteem; Identity; Families; Friendship*

Sherica (rhymes with America), her brother, and her father have moved many times over the last decade and have had at least 10 different names. At 15, Sherica grows suspicious of the horrible stories her dad tells about her mom. With the help of her new friend Mason, she uncovers a terrible family secret and must make a life-changing decision. This title is a quick read with mounting tension. Readers are kept on edge as Sherica's crisis comes to its conclusion. Mature content makes this best for HS students.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas  
JFK H.S.

## Skeleton Creek

By: Patrick Carman  
Scholastic Press,  
2009



ISBN: 978-0-54-507566-1

*Curriculum: Mystery fiction, ghosts, Alchemy, Hauntings fiction*

In this page-turner, Ryan and his friend Sara have discovered that the old dredge in

the woods is haunted, but Ryan nearly died finding this out. Forbidden to see each other, Sara sends Ryan secret video messages online that the reader can view using a password. The first thing we see is a ghostly pair of feet passing in front of the camera the night Ryan fell. Soon the pair find themselves in the middle of a spooky mystery involving death, gold, and family secrets. The multimedia component has a huge appeal for YA readers. Part Two is due out soon and I can't wait!

Reviewed by: Sudi Stodola  
TJ High School

## Bloodline

By: Katy Moran  
Harper Collins, 2009



ISBN: 978-0-06-157537-2

*Curriculum: Historical fiction, Celts, war, Ancient Britain*

In pre Christian Britain, Essa and his father travel visiting the villages of warring tribes trading songs for food, but one morning, Essa awakes to find his father gone. Essa grows older in the tribe of the wolf clan, promising his allegiance. When King Penda of Mercia threatens war, Essa must journey throughout the country seeking allies and finding dark secrets about his ancestry. Can Essa save his clan from destruction? Will the girl he loves survive?

Reviewed by: Sudi Stodola  
TJ High School

## The Year We Disappeared: A Father-Daughter Memoir



Written by: Cylin Busby  
and John Busby  
Bloomsbury, 2008

ISBN: 9781599901411

*Curriculum: Victims of crimes; Police*

John Busby is a police officer in the small town of Falmouth on Cape Cod. Just after he started his job, his training officer briefed him about the small town in which he would be working, local untouchables, local politicians, and local bad guys. "Some hornets' nests are better left undisturbed, but you do what you want." John felt that he was a cop and it was his duty to do his job. Little did he realize that just doing his job, would lead him to be ambushed and shot in the jaw. This book written by John and his daughter provides perspective from two different viewpoints. This story is not sugar coated. Readers will feel the anger and frustration that John felt. Young adult readers will devour this book especially knowing that it really happened. Publishers Weekly gave it a starred review and it is highly recommended. Reviewed by: Dr. Lynne Lopez-Crowley  
Johnson Elem.