



# The Review Crew

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

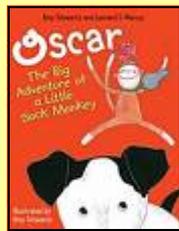
Brought to you by the Denver Public Schools Book Review Committee.

Volume 3 Number 2  
November 2006

### Fiction

#### Oscar: The Big Adventure of a Little Sock Monkey

By: Amy Schwartz and Leonard S. Marcus  
Illustrated by: Amy Schwartz  
Katherine Tegan Books, 2006  
ISBN: 0060726229

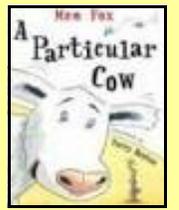


*Curriculum: Toys; Pet shows; Schools; Friendship*  
When young Susie leaves for the school pet show without the key to her rabbit cage, her friend Oscar, a cheerful sock monkey, sets out to save the day. Warm, brightly-colored illustrations emphasize Oscar's tiny, yet dauntless size as he merrily navigates the big city and overcomes numerous obstacles to help his friend in this delightful tale.

Reviewed by: Jennifer Fakolt  
Mitchell Elem.

#### A Particular Cow

By: Mem Fox  
Illustrated by: Terry Denton  
Harcourt, 2006  
ISBN: 0152002502



*Curriculum: Cows*  
On "one particular Saturday" a particular cow stumbles into a clothesline and gets a pair of bloomers stuck on her head. What follows

changes the cow's normal Saturday walk, from one where usually nothing in particular happens, to a silly chain of events that disrupt delivery of the mail, a wedding and a sailboat outing.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley  
South HS

#### The Farm Team

By: Linda Bailey  
Illustrated by: Bill Slavin  
Kids Can Press, 2006  
ISBN: 1553378504



*Curriculum: Hockey; Farm animals; Cooperation*  
The animals on the Stolski farm love hockey and the Farm Team is determined to win the coveted Stolski cup this year. Their competition is the Bush League Bandits, a mean group of grizzly bears, porcupines and skunks. Can the Farm Team finally bring home the cup? This lovely book is a solid choice for a winter read-aloud.

Reviewed by: Laurie Bell  
Brown Elem.

- Who are we?**
- ☺ We are DPS teacher librarians and literacy experts 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 720-423-8131 to order.)



Want to read more reviews? See the instructions on page 5.

# The Best for Upper Elementary Readers! Many of these books will work in middle school, too!

## Fiction

### Drooling and Dangerous: The Riot Brothers Return!

By: Mary Amato  
Illustrated by: Ethan Long  
Holiday House, 2006  
ISBN: 082341986X



*Curriculum: Brothers; Schools: School principals*

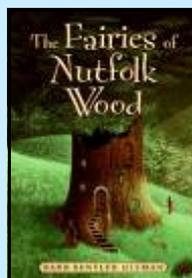
Fifth-grader Wilbur Riot and his younger brother Orville have made up a lot of rules, but they work hard at the most important one: "Make something exciting happen every day." From becoming spies, to finding new uses for dirty socks, these resourceful cut-ups keep their long-suffering mother on her

toes. Fans of *Captain Underpants* will eat this up.

Reviewed by: Jennifer Fakolt  
Mitchell Elem.

### The Fairies of Nutfolk Wood

By: Barb Bentler Ullman  
Katherine Tegen Books, 2006



ISBN: 100060736143

*Curriculum: Fairies; Divorce*

Following her parents divorce, Willa and her mom settle in the country near the little town of Plunkit. The similarities between the stories of a family of fairies, told to Wil by her "older-than-old" neighbor, Hazel Wicket, and the sparkly

visions she has been having, seem to be more than coincidental.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley  
South HS

### Key Lardo

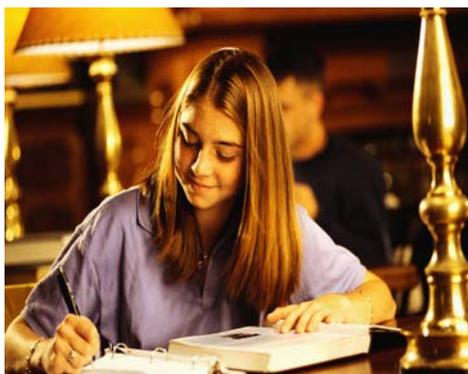
Written & Illustrated by: Bruce Hale  
Harcourt, Inc. 2006  
ISBN: 0152050744



*Curriculum: Jealousy; Geckos*

Fans who have followed young Chet Gecko (Emerson Hicky Elementary's own private eye) through his many adventures will enjoy tracking with him while he combines suspense, playfulness, and witty repartee in yet another escapade. "Hold on to your Fedoras, Chet and

(Continued on page 3)



## Fiction

### Summer of the War

By: Gloria Whelan  
HarperCollins, 2006  
ISBN: 0060080728



*Curriculum: World War II; Family life; Conduct of life; Cousins*

Mirabelle, Emily, Tommy and Nancy have always looked forward to their summers

on the island with Grandma and Grandpa. But this summer things are different. Mom and Dad are not coming because they are needed for the war effort. And then they find out that their cousin Caroline will be coming to the island also.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
Kepner MS

### Day of the Scarab

By: Catherine Fisher  
Greenwillow Books, 2006



ISBN: 0060571632

*Curriculum: Fantasy*

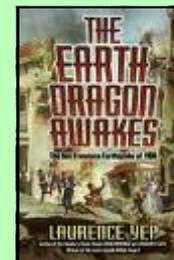
The awesome conclusion to *The Oracle Prophecies* is filled with magic, imagination, thrilling battles between the forces of good and evil, and a large cast of characters (some

from Earth and some from the hereafter). Mirany, a young priestess, works to return peace to the Two Lands but must travel through the Gates of the Underworld to do so. She can lead the main protagonists to the Underworld and through some of the Nine Gates, but can she bring them back alive?

Reviewed by: Irene Bell,  
Bryant Webster K-8

### The Earth Dragon Awakes

By: Laurence Yep  
Harper Collins, 2006  
ISBN: 0060275243



*Curriculum: Historical fiction; San Francisco Earthquake; Family; Survival*

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 2)

Natalie have at last met their sleuthing match: "His name is Bland. James Bland." A humorous story that should be enjoyed by all.

Reviewed by: Irene Bell,  
Bryant Webster K-8

**15 Minutes**

By: Steve Young  
HarperCollins, 2006  
ISBN: 0060725087  
*Curriculum: Decision making; Time travel; Bullies*



A book in which middle schools are named after Dav Pilkey, Jon Scieszka, and Lemony Snicket, is bound to be entertaining. Casey Little discovers that his grandfather's old watch is actually a time machine. It only goes back fifteen minutes, but imagine the possibilities! Eating the same pizza ten times, making a touchdown because you know

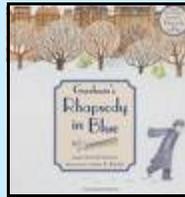
exactly where the ball will be thrown, and getting to go back and fix every embarrassing blunder you make. But keeping track of movable time is confusing and deciding the best way to use the Go-back isn't as easy as it seems. A funny, satisfying read-aloud or bait for reluctant readers.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham  
Valdez Elem.

# Nonfiction

**Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue**

By: Anna Harwell Celenza  
Illustrated by: JoAnn E. Kitchel  
Charlesbridge, 2006  
ISBN: 1570915563  
*Curriculum: George Gershwin; Composers; American music*

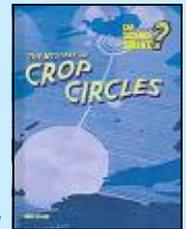


Gershwin discovers he is to compose a concerto in five weeks! He has trouble sparking "his creative energy." He's inspired by the "clappety, clappety, tap" while on a train; it reminds him of Klezmer, ragtime, foxtrot, and blues. Gershwin then incorporates all these rhythms and styles. Watercolor-and-ink drawings depict the frustration, genius, and delight with the final concerto.

Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier  
Stedman Elem.

**The Mystery of Crop Circles**

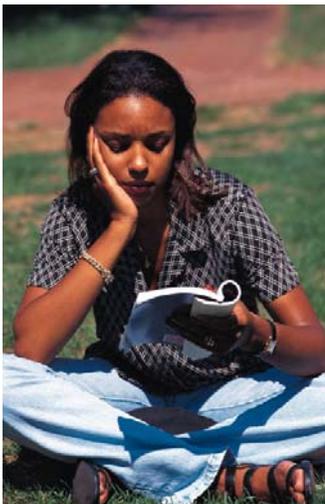
By: Chris Oxlade  
Heinemann, 2006  
ISBN: 1403483353  
*Curriculum: Science; Mysterious happenings*



The mystery of crop circles has puzzled people for years. Are these messages from alien beings? Have space ships landed? Or are all crop circles a hoax?

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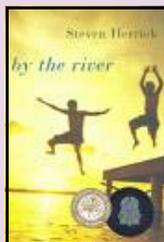
## Young Adults Deserve the Best!



# Fiction

**By The River**

By: Steven Herrick  
Front Street, 2006  
ISBN: 1932425721  
*Curriculum: Australia; Brothers; Death; Father-son relationships; Fathers and sons; single-parent families*



In this coming-of-age story written in free-form poetry, 14 year old Harry Hodby describes life in a small, rural Australian town. Harry speaks with poignant sadness about the loss of his mother and drowning of his best friend Linda, and relishes the simple pleasures of his life and family

Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier  
Stedman Elem.

**Voices**

By: Ursula Le Guin  
Harcourt, 2006  
ISBN: 0152056785  
*Curriculum: Fantasy; Censorship; Book banning*



The once grand city of Ansul has been overrun by the desert-dwelling Alds who have destroyed the city's great university and library and banned any form of reading. Only Memer and her protector, the crippled Waylord, know that a few books are preserved in a secret room protected by magic—a room that holds more secrets than those in writing. Orrec and Gry reappear from *Gifts*, the first book in this series, and become a catalyst for change both for Memer and for her city.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham  
Valdez Elem.

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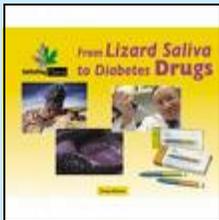
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Eyewitness accounts and photographs allow the reader to decide if these can be explained through science and logic or are truly mystifying with no explanation.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin  
Park Hill K-8

**From Lizard Saliva to Diabetes Drugs**

By: Toney Allman  
Kidhaven Press,  
2006  
ISBN:  
0737734876



*Curriculum: Diabetes; Gila Monster; Medical treatment; Medical inventions*  
The gila monster eats up to one-third of its weight, then does not eat again for months. It is able to do this because of an unusual substance in its saliva. Scientists have discovered how to use this hormone to help people with diabetes stabilize their high blood glucose levels within 24 hours.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin  
Park Hill K-8

**Elephant vs. Rhinoceros**

By: Isabel Thomas  
Raintree, 2006  
ISBN: 1410923932



*Curriculum: Science; Elephants; Rhinoceros*

Have you ever wondered what would happen if a rhinoceros and an elephant went head to head in a battle? This book explores the possibilities. It weights size and strength as well as intelligence, endurance and aggression. As the animals progress through the rounds, the reader can see how they stack up against each other.

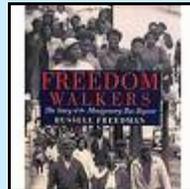
Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
Kepner MS

**Freedom Walker**

By: Russell Freedman  
Holiday House, 2006.  
ISBN: 0823420310

*Curriculum: African American Civil Rights Movement; Biography; American history*

Freedman provides this riveting account of the civil rights movement starting from before it actually was a movement. The author begins with a colorful description of Jo Ann Robinson as she speaks of the humiliation she experiences on a bus in Montgomery six years before Rosa Parks' historic challenge to bussing segregation. At Martin Luther King Jr.'s entrance the reader will want to cheer as he rallies the small groups of resistance and forms a movement that will change history.



Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer  
Grant Middle School

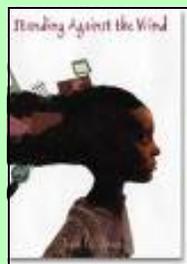
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The story is set during the time of the 1906 San Francisco Earthquake. We experience this event through the eyes of two boys, Henry and his best friend Chin. From the fires to the destruction and the survival of families of different cultures, the reader is involved. The boys find out that anyone can be a hero, even their fathers.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns  
Hill School of Arts and Sciences

**Standing Against the Wind**

By: Traci L. Jones  
Farrar, Straus and  
Giroux, 2006  
ISBN: 0374371741



*Curriculum: Self-confidence; Family problems*

Patrice is having a hard time living in the inner city of Chicago. When an opportunity for a scholarship to a prestigious African American boarding school comes to her attention, she is anxious to apply. Her

mother's imprisonment is just one stumbling block Patrice must get over to realize her dream.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley  
South HS

**Kat's Promise**

By: Bonnie Shimko  
Harcourt, Inc. 2006  
ISBN: 0152054731



*Curriculum: Family Relationships, Survival, Aunts, Orphans*

Kat has a lot to deal with. When her mother dies, she must move in with her uncaring aunt. Kat blames her aunt for her mother's death and promises to make her aunt pay. The only person that seems to care is the housekeeper, who turns out to be Kat's grandmother. She must make new friends and find a new support system. There are many twists, turns and surprises in this story and should be enjoyed by most middle school readers.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns  
Hill School of Arts and Sciences

# Nonfiction

**Science Detectives: How Scientists Solved Six Real-Life Mysteries**

By the editors of *Yes! Magazine*

Illustrated by: Rose Cowles

Kids Can Press, 2006  
ISBN: 1553379942



*Curriculum: Scientists; Curiosity; Commitment*

Young readers will love this fascinating exploration of six real-life stories of mysteries solved by the ingenuity and fastidiousness of scientists around the

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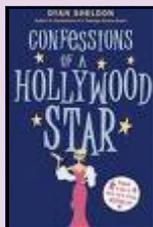
globe. The stories of Typhoid Mary, Otzi (a 4000-year-old mummy trapped in ice) and the discovery of the original "hobbits" (a new species of human discovered in 2003), are told in an entertaining, kid-friendly voice and are paired with wonderful illustrations and real photographs from the scientists' field work.

Reviewed by: Laurie Bell  
Brown Elem.

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### Confessions of a Hollywood Star

By: Dyan Sheldon  
Candlewick Press, 2006.  
ISBN: 0763630756  
*Curriculum: Actors, Movie making, Interpersonal relationships.*



This sequel to the popular novel *Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen* is the witty first person account of Lola and her aspirations to be a world renowned ACTRESS. When a movie begins filming in her hometown, Lola sees it as her chance to burst onto the Hollywood scene. A delightful teenage girl story that adds intelligence to the gossip girl novel genre.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer  
Grant Middle School

## Want more?

To read longer reviews of these books and hundreds of others:

- ◆ The searchable Review Database is currently under construction. Instructions will appear here as soon as the new interface is ready.
- ◆ Meanwhile there are thousands of our reviews attached to our library catalog. After you look up a book on LION (*your librarian can show you how*) click on the "Other Resources" button. If "DPS Book Reviews" is on the list, click on it. You will see a full length review of the book by a current or former member of this committee.

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Mitchell K-8

Marilyn Martin

Park Hill K-8

*When I look back, I am so impressed again with the life-giving power of literature. If I were a young person today, trying to gain a sense of myself in the world, I would do that again by reading, just as I did when I was young.*

*Maya Angelou*