Fiction

Umbrella Queen
Written by: Shirin Yim Bridges
Illustrated by: Taeeun Yoo
Greenwillow, 2008
ISBN: 9780060750404
Curriculum: Individuality; Umbrellas; Painting; Thailand
Noot lives in a village in Thailand where everyone makes umbrellas. They have been making umbrellas just like this for hundreds of years. Finally it is time for Noot to begin painting her own umbrellas. She quickly discovers that she will be allowed to paint flowers and butterflies, just like everyone else. Will she get in trouble for painting elephant designs on tiny umbrellas she makes at night?
Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin
Park Hill ECE-8

This is My Ball/Esta es mi pelota
By: Amanda Hudson
Weekly Reader, 2009 (First concepts)
ISBN: 9780836892567
Curriculum: Basic vocabulary; Colors
This is a basic introduction to vocabulary for colors in English and Spanish and a simple sentence structure that uses balls. In the last page a pug is shown to state that it is not a ball, and thus it introduces the negative sentence structure. The illustrations of smiling children are ethnically and gender inclusive as well as very colorful, which will make the book appealing to beginning readers.
Reviewed by: Ethel Hammerly
Spanish reviewer

(Continued on page 2)

Nonfiction

A Visit to Egypt
By: Peter and Connie Roop
Heinemann Library, 2008
ISBN: 9781432912659
Curriculum: Countries; Geography; Culture
This book, which is part of a series, is an excellent introduction to the land, homes, food, clothing, work, and culture of Egypt. The information, concise and clear, is accompanied by high impact photos. The nonfiction elements in this book are well laid out and would be a great teaching tool.
Reviewed by: Megan McQuinn
Howell K-8
The Best for Upper Elementary Readers! The Best for Upper Elementary Readers!

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

**Fiction**

**Wuv Bunnies from Outers Pace**
By: David Elliot
Illus. by: Ethan Long
Holiday House, 2008
ISBN: 9780823419029
Curriculum: Alien invaders; Bunnies; Humor

Ridiculous, pun ridden, but overall hilarious, this graphic novel tells the tale of two bunnies from Outerspace (not to be confused with Outer Space). They arrive in the backyard of Hercules and his dog Sheldon in their carrot shaped rocket to seek their help in saving the world from B3 (Big Bad Bunny).

Reviewed by: Leah Jungers
Pioneer Charter

**Free Climb**
By: Jake Maddox
Illus. by: Sean Tiffany
Stone Arch Books, 2009
ISBN: 9781434207845
Curriculum: Rock climbing

When Amir is caught climbing a wall in his neighborhood by Officer Roberts, it turns out to be the best thing that could have happened to him. Officer Roberts helps him learn how to climb safely, he makes friends, and he is able to help a friend in need. Free Climb gives the reader a glimpse into rock climbing - the equipment, the excitement, and the risks. (However,

**Nonfiction**

**Wangari’s Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa**
Written and illus. by: Jeanette Winter
Harcourt, 2008
ISBN: 9780152065454
Curriculum: Africa; Environmentalism; Women; Deforestation

From the author of The Librarian of Basra, the true story about a woman growing up in Kenya and facing the hardships of deforestation is told. The pictures are simple yet powerful, as traditional African scenes are depicted and the harshness of the environment can really be seen.

Reviewed by: Leah Jungers
Pioneer Charter

**What's Your Source: Questioning the News**
By: Stergios Botzakis
Capstone, 2008
ISBN: 9781429619929
Curriculum: Journalism; Objectivity

The media is a part of our daily lives. The news sources tell us about major events, sports, weather, and even entertainment. Since all of us are so influenced by the news, we need to question just exactly what we are watching or reading.

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin
Park Hill ECE-8

**Miley Cyrus, Hannah Montana**
By: Jennifer Magid
Gareth Stevens, 2009
ISBN: 9780836892369
Curriculum: Biography; Actresses

This is a brief overview of the life of Miley Cyrus and her rise to fame as Hannah Montana. This book is simply written and will surely be a hit with her fans. The reading level is low enough that even her third grade fans will have no difficulty. The easy layout and readability may help break down barriers of reluctant biography readers. The book includes; table of contents, thumbnail facts throughout the text, index, timeline, glossary, and books, DVDs, and websites for further research.

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

*Birds on a Wire*
By: J. Patrick Lewis
Illus. by: Gary Lippincott
Wordsong, 2008
ISBN: 9781590783832
Curriculum: Children’s poetry; Renga; Small towns

(Continued on page 3)
This is a delightful tale is told in Japanese verse related to haiku, called renga (linked verse). This form allows two poets to respond to each other, linking the response to the previous verse and sending the reader off in a different direction. On this stroll through a small town, the reader is taken on random turns through quaint neighborhoods. The illustrations and the text play off each other perfectly. The watercolors, like the poems are related to the previous one in some way. Small details make this a book to read and reread many times.

Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier
Stedman Elem.

### Carnes y proteínas
(\textit{Meat and Protein})

\textbf{By: Lola Schaefer}
Heinemann, 2008
\textbf{ISBN:} 9781432917937

\textit{Curriculum: Meat in human nutrition; Proteins in human nutrition; Food pyramid; Food}

As one of six in the \textit{Food Groups} series, this nicely illustrated chapter book introduces youngsters to healthful living in a practical way. This is achieved by eating every day from each of the six food groups in the food pyramid diagrammed there and by exercising and resting. Basic concepts about meats and proteins are presented, such as where they come from, why it is important to consume them, how to keep them fresh and use them in the various meals throughout the day. Some easy recipes to be prepared with adult help, along with a glossary, sources for more information and an index are included in this attractive book.

Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier
Stedman Elem.

### Outcast

\textbf{By: Michelle Paver}
HarperCollins, 2008
\textbf{ISBN:} 9780060728342

\textit{Curriculum: Adventure; Prehistoric tribes; Demons; Loyalty}

In the fourth book of the Chronicles of Ancient Darkness, Torak’s tribe has found out that he carries the mark of the Soul-Eaters. He is banished and must survive alone. With the help of his best friend, Renn and Wolf survives the soul-sickness and reclaims himself. He is tormented by the Hidden People and must win the battle with the evil Snake Mage in order to succeed. He saves the clans from the flood and is forgiven and accepted by the Raven Tribe once more. For the fans of this series, they won’t be disappointed with Torak’s continuing story.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Rishel M.S.

### The Facttracker

\textbf{By: Jason Carter Eaton}
HarperCollins, 2008
\textbf{ISBN:} 9780060564353

\textit{Curriculum: Orphans; Facts; Lies}

This is a fun and light-hearted story that explains to us that all facts come from the small town of Traäkerfaxx. When the Facttracker is deposed from his position by his brother Ersatz, things go from bad to worse. Ersatz convinces the town that lies are better than facts. It is up to the orphaned Just Small Enough Boy to find the truth and save the Facttracker and the town. Make sure you read the

\textit{Books are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind, which are delivered down from generation to generation as presents to the posterity of those who are yet unborn,} ~ Joseph Addison ~
chapter titles, they are as much fun as the story.
Reviewed by: Karen Burns Rishel M.S.

Suddenly Supernatural: School Spirit
By: Elizabeth Cody Kimmel
Little Brown and Co., 2008
ISBN: 9780316066839
Curriculum: School; Popularity; Self-acceptance; Individuality
Kat’s mother is a medium: the kind that sees and speaks to spirits. On Kat’s thirteenth birthday she starts seeing spirits also. Only Kat would rather not and she is certainly not ready to tell anyone else about this socially unacceptable phenomena. Jac is a new girl at school and with her sensational talent playing the cello; she is almost as far from socially acceptable as Kat is. But it will take each of their unique talents to help the spirit who haunts the school library to make her peace and cross over.
Reviewed by: Chris Coble Kepner M.S.

House of Many Ways
By: Diana Wynne Jones
Harper Collins, 2008
ISBN: 978-0-06-147795-9
Curriculum: Fantasy; Magic; Wizards
In this sequel to Howl’s Moving Castle, Charmain Baker is sent to mind to her Great-Uncle William’s house while he is ill but tending the home of the Royal Wizard is never easy. With the help of her uncle’s magical dog and a hapless apprentice Sophie finds herself in the middle of a royal mystery. When visiting wizards, Sophie and Howl, are called in to help, things get really exciting.
Reviewed By: Sudi Stodola TJ H. S.

Six Innings
By: James Preller
Feiwel and Friends, 2008
ISBN: 9780312367633
Curriculum: Little league baseball; Baseball; Cancer
Being sidelined from playing baseball due to having cancer does not keep Sam out of the game. As the championship game’s announcer, Sam provides detailed play-by-play of each inning. Occasionally his worries about his illness creep in, but his passion for the game helps him move on. Preller does a great job slowing the action of the game down and building the suspense in a game that is tough and tight from the first inning. Sam’s character gives readers a different look at the game as well as into the lives of young boys moving towards adolescence.
Reviewed by: Karyn Pocernich Ford Elem.

Troll Blood
By: Langrish, Katherine EOS, 2008
ISBN 9780061116742
Curriculum: Fantasy, Troll, Vikings, Micmac Indians
This is the last book in the Troll Trilogy. Peer and Hilde set sail with a group of Vikings heading toward Vineland. Once arriving in Vineland, Peer makes the discovery that two of his friends who had settled there from a previous voyage with the Viking captain have been murdered by the captain and his crew. Elements of fantasy is interspersed throughout the story. While it is a good read by itself, it is helpful to have read the first two books in this trilogy to provide background information on many of the characters. Middle School students reading on grade level will love this book.
Reviewed by: Dr. Lynne Lopez-Crowley Johnson Elementary

The Great Receiver
By: Elena Yates Eulo
Holiday House, 2008
ISBN: 9780823418886
Curriculum: Sports; Football; High school; Relationships
Returning to high school in the fall, brainy Joey Eastland, the football team’s water boy, is determined to reinvent himself by becoming a great receiver and a ‘chick magnet’. During (Continued on page 5)
the transition Joey learns about the importance of friends over popularity. The author creates a very real situation, but she does not overplay the story. It is a quick and easy read, with a very good message.

Reviewed by Megan McQuinn
Howell K-8

Vampires: and other Monstrous Creatures
By: Julius Pemberton-Smythe
HarperCollins, 2007
ISBN: 0061454127

Curriculum: Vampires; Mythology; Monsters

From the files of Dr. Cornelius Von Hesling comes this bantam encyclopedia of vampires. Chronicling the various names of the vampire in different cultures and the fables of fear they provoked, how to detect and deal with (a.k.a. kill) the blood sucking destroyers, then moves on to briefly include other mythical monsters... or maybe not so mythical. With antiqued pages and gruesome illustrations that could make their way into a nightmare or two, this terrifying tome is sure to clutch the main vein of any horror fan.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer
Grant M. S.

The Night Olympic Team
By: Carolyn Hatton
Boyd Mills Press, 2008

ISBN: 1590785669

Curriculum: Olympics; Drugs; Doping in sports

At the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City there was a team of individuals involved in a different aspect of the competition-- scientists who performed drug tests on athletes to prevent cheating. Opening with drama that befits one of the most coveted events in sports, Hatton unveils the hidden world of sports behind the television cameras and newspaper headlines. An excellent resource for student athletes who may be contemplating sports enhancing drugs as well as for those students who simply need to know more about drugs and making good decisions about drug use... can even be used as a situational example on making ethical decisions in life.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer
Grant M. S.

The Dalai Lama: Peace-maker from Tibet
By: Chris Gibb
Steck-Vaugh, 2003
ISBN: 0739855204

Curriculum: Dalai Lama; Tibet-China relations; Tibet

The historical context integrated into this biography makes the long and arduous history of Tibet and China accessible to middle school readers. Although this book has an older copyright (evident in its lack of websites for follow-up study or more recent protests), the open, spacious format invites exploration of the text and photos, rather than dissuading the reader. The details of the Dalai Lama’s early life are slight, but his contribution to world peace still notable.

Reviewed by: Gretchen Allgeier
Stedman Elem.
Young Adults Deserve the Best!

The Compound
By: S.A. Bodeen
Feiwel and Friends, 2008
ISBN: 9780312370152
Curriculum: Captivity; Mental illness; Survival; Nuclear war; Twins
When Eli is 9, his billionaire father hurries the family into a nuclear fallout shelter with every luxury to keep them for the 15 years Eli’s father believes they must stay to be safe. Eli’s twin and grandmother do not make it into the shelter. As six years pass, Eli begins to question his father’s honesty and sanity and the entire family’s safety. Selfish and closed off at 9, Eli matures as the tension mounts. The pace of this psychological thriller escalates throughout and keeps its intended HS audience held captive. It is also appropriate for MS.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas
JFK H.S.

Savvy Girl
By: Lynn Messina
Harcourt, 2008
ISBN: 9780152061616
Curriculum: Internships; Magazines; Coming of age; Responsibility; Friendship; Mentors
Interning with a popular women’s magazine leads Chrissy down the path of parties, drinking, and deadlines. Unfortunately, the pressures to fit in with this mature crowd affect her usually clear mind. Can she learn her lesson in time to save her relationship with her best friend? Will she avoid letting an amazing opportunity slip away? While the level of alcohol consumed in this book makes this book most appropriate for high school students, the message is one of growth and maturation. This fluffy, light, indulgent book should be popular with those looking for an escape.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas
JFK H.S.

Coraline
By: Neil Gaiman
Illus by: P. Craig Russell
Harper Collins, 2008
ISBN: 978-0-06-082543-0
Curriculum: Art; Horror; Supernatural
In this graphic adaptation of the popular novel, Coraline unlocks the door to a world that is a twisted mirror image of her own where the residents have buttons for eyes and long, talon-like fingernails. When Coraline finds that her real parents have been taken away into the mirror world it is up to her to rescue them.

Reviewed by: Sudi Stodola
TJ H.S.

The Denver Public Schools Book Review Committee in conjunction with other employees of the Denver Public Schools would like to honor Brenda Earnest for her many years of service to the children of Denver. We will be collecting donations in order to present Merrill Middle School with a park bench and plaque honoring Brenda. If you would like to make a donation to this cause, please send your donation to Chris Coble, Kepner Middle School. Any extra money will be donated to efforts to bring libraries to third world countries.