



# 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 3

November 2008

## Fiction

### **Umbrella Queen**

Written by: Shirin Yim Bridges

Illustrated by: Taeun 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

*phy; 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 non-fiction elements in this book are well laid out and would be a great teaching tool.

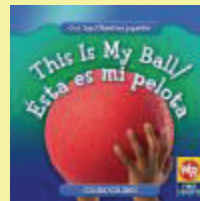
Reviewed by Megan McQuinn  
Howell K-8

# Spanish!

### **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

## 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.)

## Nonfiction

### **A Visit to Egypt**

By: Peter and Connie Roop  
Heinemann Library, 2008

ISBN: 9781432912659

*Curriculum: Countries; Geogra-*



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# 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 Outers Pace (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

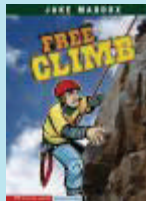
Illus. by: Sean Tiffany

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,



there is a focus on safety and concerned adult characters that are good to see.) With believable characters, engaging illustrations, and short chapters, this book will be an enjoyable and successful choice for many readers.

Reviewed by:

Karyn Pocernich

Ford Elem.

## Nonfiction

### Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa

Written and illus. by: Jeanette Winter

Harcourt, 2008

ISBN: 9780152065454

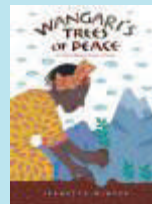
*Curriculum: Africa; Environmentalism; Women; Deforestation*

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

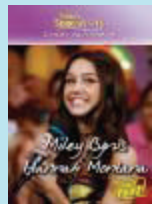
Gareth Stevens, 2009

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.

**Spanish!**

**Carnes y proteínas**  
**(Meat and Protein)**

By: Lola Schaefer  
Heinemann, 2008

ISBN:  
9781432917937

*Curriculum: Meat in human nutrition; Proteins in human nutrition; Food pyramid; Food*

As one of six in the *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: Ethel Hammerly  
Spanish reviewer

**Middle School  
Reader Gold Mine**

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



Books are the legacies that  
a great genius leaves to  
mankind, which are deliv-  
ered down from generation  
to  
generation as presents to  
the posterity of those who  
are yet unborn,  
~ Joseph Addison ~

**Fiction**

**Outcast**

By: Michelle Paver  
HarperCollins, 2008  
ISBN: 9780060728342

*Curriculum: Adventure; Pre-historic 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**

By: Jason Carter Eaton  
HarperCollins, 2008  
ISBN: 9780060564353

*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



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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

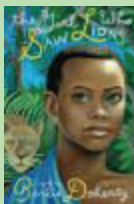
*Curriculum: School; Popularity; Self-acceptance; Individuality*

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.

**The Girl Who Saw Lions**

By: Berlie Doherty  
Roaring Brook Press,  
2007



ISBN: 9781596433779

*Curriculum: Grief; Adoption; Families; Africa; AIDS*

Rosa's story and Abela's story couldn't be much different. Their two tales are woven together in alternating chapters. Rosa lives in London with a

wonderful mother. Abela lives in Africa where she has watched her entire family die of AIDS and now her uncle wants to sell her as a child slave.

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

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the transition Joey learns about the importance of friends over popularity. The author creates a very real situation, but she does not over play the story. It is a quick and easy read, with a very good message.

Reviewed by Megan McQuinn  
Howell K-8

## Nonfiction

### 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 mythological monsters... or maybe not so mythological. With antiqued pages and gruesome illustrations that could make their way into a nightmare or two, this terrorizing 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 benefits 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

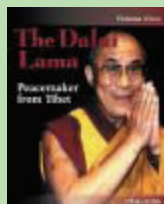
Steck-Vaugh, 2003

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.



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## Review Crew Staff

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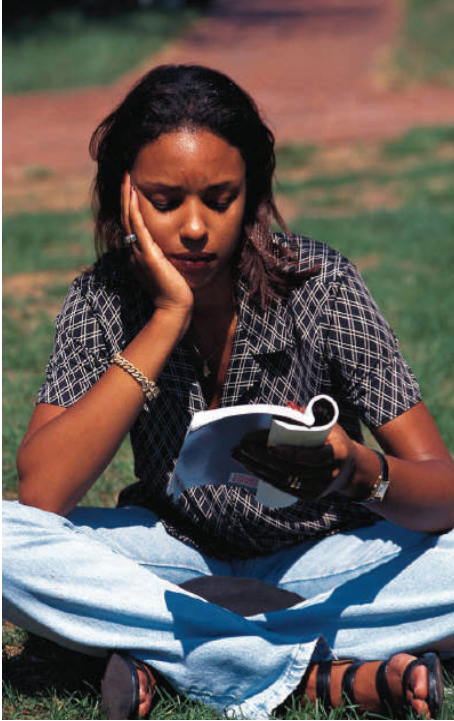
From ERS:

Jody Gehrig

Karen Shannon

Antonio Nicotera

# Young Adults Deserve the Best!



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

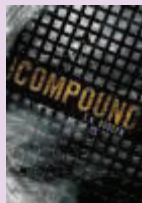
the mirror world it is up to her to rescue them.

Reviewed by: Sudi Stodola  
TJ H.S.

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## 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.

*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.*