

# The Review Crew



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

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

Volume 9 Number 2

October 2012

## Fiction

### Following Grandfather

By: Rosemary Wells

Illus. by: Christopher Denise

Candlewick, 2012

ISBN: 9780763650698



*Curriculum: Grandfathers; Grief; Mice; Italian Americans; Boston (Mass.) History 20th century*

A young mouse and her grandfather share a special relationship in this tender tale. Beautifully written prose is supported by touching black and white illustrations transporting readers to early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Boston. Rosemary Wells delves into heartfelt territory in this story of love and loss. An appropriate read-aloud for younger children that will be appreciated by independent readers.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose

Alumni

### Sadie and Ratz

By: Sonya Hartnett

Illus. by: Ann James

Candlewick, 2012

ISBN: 9780763653156



*Curriculum: Hands; Imagination; Human behavior; Brothers and sisters*

Sometimes acting like wild beasts, Hannah's

hands "crush things up twist and scrunch scratch! scratch!" A frequent target of this mischief is Baby Boy, Hannah's annoying four-year-old brother, until he turns the tables. Expressive charcoal illustrations effectively portray action and emotion in this beginning chapter book. Readers with younger siblings will appreciate Hannah's feelings and her redemption.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose

Alumni

### Free to a Good Home

Written and illus. by: Colin Thompson

Random House, 2009

ISBN: 9781741663198



*Curriculum: Family life; Humorous stories*

The Smiths collect strange and unusual things. But when Sally and Peter collect an old lady they found at the mall, their parents are sure this may be a little too unusual. However, Granny, as the old lady likes to be called, decides to stay. As Sally and Peter have never had a granny, they find the old lady to be a wonderful addition to the family. This is a wonderfully quirky and humorous read-aloud.

Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen

TJ H.S.



### Who are we?

- ☺ We are DPS teacher librarians from elementary, middle and high school.
- ☺ We know DPS students and the DPS curriculum.

### What we do!

- ☺ Every month each member writes reviews of at least fifteen recently published books.
- ☺ This publication consists of the best books we review each month.
- ☺ 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 Beasties

By: Jenny Nimmo

Illus. by: Gwen Millward

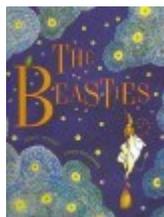
Egmont, 2010

ISBN:  
9781405243353

*Curriculum: Imagination; Loneliness, Stories, Friendship*

Terrified by the sounds she hears in her new room, Daisy can't sleep. But then she realizes that the noises coming from beneath her bed sound like a story. As Daisy listens, she is soon able to drift off to sleep. Each night she anxiously waits for a new tale of robbers, princesses, or shipwrecks to begin, until one night she finally has the courage to peek under her bed to discover the beastly storytellers.

Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen  
TJ H.S.



### The Scariest Thing of All

By: Debi Gliori

PointWalker & Company

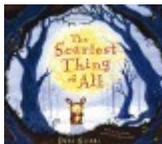
ISBN:  
9780802723918

*Curriculum: Read-Alouds; Overcoming fear; Bravery*

Pip the rabbit is the littlest in his family and he is afraid of everything. His list of things that frighten him is very very very very long and includes bubbles in the pond, tree stumps and pink clouds that look like... well, he's too afraid to finish that sentence.

When Pip wakes up alone in the woods one day, he must find his way home for dinner. On the way, Pip encounters the scariest thing of all and discovers he isn't afraid of anything any more.

Reviewed by: Sudi Stodola  
CEC Middle College



## Nonfiction

### Biggest, Baddest Book of Beasts

By: Anders Hansen and Elissa Mann  
Abdo, 2013

ISBN: 9781617834042

*Curriculum: Animals*

Each two-page spread highlights different types of animals. From "Colossal Creatures" featuring the African bush elephant and the Komodo dragon to "Faces Only a Mother Could Love" spotlighting the vulture and proboscis monkey, this slim title offers a brief introduction to a wide array of interesting creatures. While not detailed enough to be used for research, the titles in the *Biggest, Baddest Books for Boys* series will make great browsers for K-4<sup>th</sup> grade students. Despite the series title, girls will like these, too!

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas  
JFK H.S.



### The Year Comes Round: Haiku through the Seasons

By: Sid Farrar

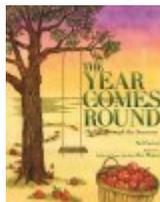
Illus. by: Ilse Plume

Albert Whitman, 2012

ISBN:  
9780807581292

*Curriculum: Haiku; Months; Seasons*

These thirteen haiku present a cheerful walk through the seasons of a year, illustrated by simple pencil and pastel drawings. Snowmen hope they are unnoticed by the sun, wily robins invite worms home, and clouds grumble at having to give up their



water. There's an explanation of the genre in the back, as well as a description of each season. This book could be very useful for units on weather and seasons, as well as poetry.

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert  
Waller K-8

### The Wing Wing Brothers Math Spectacular!

Written and illus. by:  
Ethan Long

Holiday House, 2012

ISBN: 9780823423200

*Curriculum: Addition; Subtraction; Equal to, greater than, less than; Basic math skills*

The Wing Wing Brothers really know how to put on a show, all the while teaching basic math skills. The brothers' hilarious acts of spinning plates, juggling pies, and going in and out of a magic box teach simple math concepts like equal to, greater than, less than, addition, and subtraction.

Reviewed by: Leah Rounds  
Alumni



Always read  
something  
that will  
make you  
look good if  
you die in the  
middle of it.  
P.J. O'Rourke



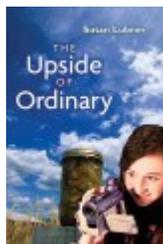
## The Best for Upper Elementary Readers!

Many of these books will work in middle school,

# Fiction

### The Upside of Ordinary

By: Susan Lubner  
Holiday House, 2012  
ISBN: 9780823424177



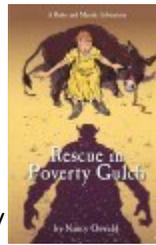
*Curriculum: Family; Fame; Reality television*

Jermaine, 11, wants to be famous and decides that filming her family and friends for a reality TV show is her ticket to stardom. As she contrives "real-life" situations to make up for the ordinariness of those around her, what actually transpires in true real life becomes far more interesting. This family-oriented upper elementary story is amusing while offering light cautions about the woes of fame and reality TV. Recommend this to 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grade girls.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas  
JFK H.S.

### Rescue in Poverty Gulch

By: Nancy Oswald  
Filter Press, 2011  
ISBN: 9780865411098



*Curriculum: Schools; Donkeys; Fathers and daughters; Historical fiction*

In the 1890s, Ruby and her best friend Maude (a donkey) live a free-wheeling life with Ruby's father traveling around Colorado. When a scoundrel makes off with their goods, dad decides to settle down in Cripple Creek. History comes to life through the exciting escapades of this independent young girl with Maude's high jinks providing comic relief.

Reviewed by: Cat DeRose  
Alumni

### Dangerous Waters

By: Gregory Mone  
Roaring Book Press, 2012  
ISBN: 9781596436732



*Curriculum: Titanic; Conduct of life; Robbers*

Twelve-year-old Patrick lies about his age to get a job aboard the Titanic with hopes of working alongside his brother in the engine rooms. He ends up working as a member of the wait staff. A passenger, who collects rare books, starts to tutor Patrick. Patrick discovers a plot to steal a valuable edition from his tutor, Widener. When the boat hits the iceberg Patrick must find his new friend and save him.

Reviewed by: Dr. Lynne Lopez-Crowley  
MSLA

# Nonfiction

### Awesome Snake Science! 40 Activities for Learning About Snakes

By: Cindy Blobaum  
Chicago Review Press, 2012



ISBN: 9781569768075

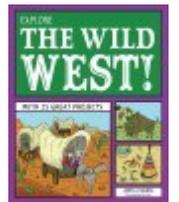
*Curriculum: Snakes; Snake experiments*

Easy-to-do experiments, art projects, and games teach the snake lover about the body basics and lifestyle of the animal. Researchers do not need live snakes to make foldable fangs, mimic the sound of a rattlesnake, or create their own "snake stink". Black and white photographs and line drawings carefully illustrate the background material and activities. Fascinating and fun!

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert  
Waller K-8

### Explore: The Wild West!

By: Anita Yasuda  
Illus. by: Alex Kim  
Nomad Press, 2012



ISBN: 9781936749713

*Curriculum: Westward Expansion; Pioneers; Miners*

One in a series, *Explore*, this book introduces gold miners, pioneers, Native peoples, cowboys, and other pertinent information surrounding the Westward Expansion. Twenty-five related projects are included, and this would be a good resource to use during a Colorado history unit.

Reviewed by: Leah Rounds  
Alumni



## Middle School Reader Gold Mine

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

### The Year of the Beasts

By: Decil Castellucci

Illus. by: Nate Powell

Roaring Book Press,  
2012

ISBN: 9781596436862

Curriculum: *Friends; Sisters; Sibling  
rivalry; Loss of sibling*

During a carefree summer vacation, fifteen-year-old Tessa finds herself awash in jealousy as her younger sister, Lulu, unwittingly steals her secret crush and her best girlfriend as well. In an attempt to find a new place for herself, Tessa secretly begins to see Jasper - an outcast and loner. Everything changes when tragedy strikes and Tessa must come to terms with life without Lulu, and her feelings of grief and guilt. This hybrid book form relates the story in text format, while alternate chapters deal with Tessa's feelings and inner struggles in graphic novel style.

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



### Spirits of the Noh

By: Thomas Randall

Bloomsbury, 2011

ISBN: 9781599902517

Curriculum: *Supernatural; Japan; Private schools; Relationships*

In book two of *The Waking* series, Kara encounters another evil Japanese spirit. Kara is going to a private school where her father works in Japan. She is starting to fit in there and there is a possible boyfriend in the picture. When the evil spirit, "Hannya" possesses one of her teachers, students start to disappear and die. Only Kara and her friends know the true story and must work together to defeat this new threat.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns

Place Bridge Academy



### Fairest of All

By: Sarah Mlynowski

Scholastic Press, 2012

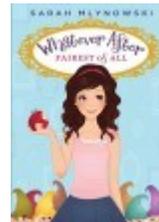
ISBN: 9780545403306

Curriculum: *Brothers and  
sisters; Fairytales*

Abby really hates her new life in a new town. Nothing is the same, not the way people make peanut butter and banana sandwiches and not the way people play tag on the playground. The creepy mirror in the basement that her brother Jonah finds is the final straw. In the middle of the night Jonah wakes her up because the mirror is humming and turning colors. When they tap on the mirror it sucks them into Snow White's fairytale. What will happen if they change the course of the tale forever? This lower-level read will attract reluctant middle school readers.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble

Kepner M.S.



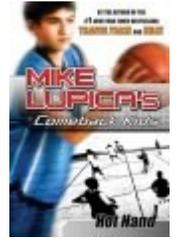
### Hot Hand

By: Mike Lupica

Philomel Books, 2013

ISBN: 9781599611754

Curriculum: *Basketball;  
Families; Bullies*



Billy has a lot on his mind at the moment. His dad has moved out on a trial separation, his mother is traveling all the time and the school bully has targeted his younger brother. Basketball is the only thing that gives him pleasure and time out from all his other problems. Billy knows he is the best shooter on the team, but his dad is the coach and he is on Billy's case about being a team player.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble

Kepner M.S.

### Struck

Written by: Jennifer  
Bosworth

Farrar Straus Giroux,  
2012

ISBN:  
9780374372835

Curriculum: *Survival; Cults; Lightning;  
Family*

Mia Price has survived many lightning strikes and has lived. She proclaims herself to be a lightning addict. Her family moved to Los Angeles, where lightning is rare, and encounters earthquakes instead. When the city is in ruins, life becomes a matter of survival. She needs to care for her brother and emotionally traumatized mother. Mia attracts the attention of two warring cults. They believe she has special powers given to her by the lightning. The city believes the end of the world is near, and that Mia has the answers.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns

Place Bridge Academy



# Nonfiction

## Hope and Tears: Ellis Island

### Voices

By: Gwenyth Swain  
Calkins Creek, 2012  
ISBN:  
9781590787656



*Curriculum: Ellis Island; Immigration*

This title outlines the history of Ellis Island through well-researched commentary, archived photographs, and brief fictionalized accounts from various immigrants and Ellis Island workers. Swain uses historical documentation creatively and effectively to paint a picture of what the experience was like for a variety of people from different backgrounds. This is a must read for any upper elementary-HS student interested in an historical perspective of immigration to America through Ellis Island. The photographs are terrific. Source notes and an extensive bibliography are included.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas  
JFK H.S.



**Young Adults  
Deserve the Best!**

# Fiction

## After Eli

By: Rebecca Rupp  
Candlewick Press, 2012  
ISBN: 9780763658106



*Curriculum: Grief; Death; High school; Friendship*

After Danny's brother Eli is killed in Iraq, Danny tries to make sense of it by creating a Book of the Dead listing people, how they died, and why. His mom falls into a depression, and his dad's only conversation with him is about what he's going to do with his life. He finds solace and acceptance with Walter, an intelligent social outcast, and the beautiful but only-here-for-the-summer Isabelle. An excellent novel for 7<sup>th</sup>-HS students about grieving and healing, Rupp takes readers through the entire process with humor and compassion.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas  
JFK H.S.

## The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll & Mademoiselle Odile

By: James Reese  
Roaring Book Press,  
2012



ISBN:  
139781596436848

*Curriculum: Characters in literature; Witchcraft; Paris- History*

How did Dr. Jekyll discover the original potion that allowed him to transform into the nefarious Mr. Hyde? The answer, as narrated by sixteen-year-old female protagonist, Odile, is found in war-torn, 1870s Paris. Odile, in an effort to save Grel, her ailing younger

## Review Crew Staff

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brother, concocts a brew (from a recipe found in her dead mother's witchcraft book) in the laboratory of kindly Dr. Jekyll, an English expat who has given safe haven to the two orphans. Best intentions often lead to unintended consequences - as is the case in this gripping, gruesome thriller.

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

**Tessa Masterson will go to Prom**

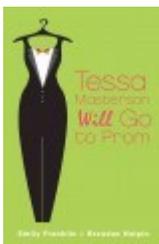
By: Emily Franklin Walker, 2012

ISBN: 9780802723451

Curriculum: Friends; Prom; Lesbians

Lucas and Tessa have been best friends for years. Lucas is devastated when he asks Tessa to the prom only to find out that she is gay and has a girlfriend she intends to take to prom. Lucas is hurt and betrays this knowledge to the school newspaper causing a maelstrom of backlash against Tessa and her family. The majority of the town and school are determined to keep Tessa from going to prom with her girlfriend. Lucas finally comes to his senses and fights to keep Tessa's right to go to prom.

Reviewed by: Dr. Lynne Lopez-Crowley  
MSLA

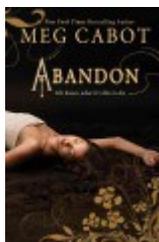


**Abandon**

By: Meg Cabot Point, 2011

ISBN: 9780545284103

Curriculum: Fantasy; Underworld; Persephone; Mystery; Adventure; Romance



Pierce is an NDE - Near Death Experience survivor. After drowning in the pool in her parents' back yard, Pierce's mother moved her to Isla Huesos, Florida. Of course, after what happened to Pierce's teacher, she's already notorious in the small town. It doesn't help that Pierce is being followed by a death deity whose idea of protecting her usually means someone will suffer greatly. This modern retelling of the Persephone myth will keep fans of paranormal romance enthralled.

Reviewed by: Sudi Stodola  
CEC Middle College

**Vicious Little Darlings**

By: Katherine Easer Bloomsbury, 2011

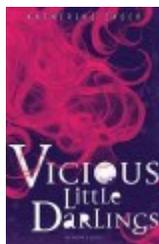
ISBN: 978159906287

Curriculum: Troubled teens; College;

Insanity;

When Sarah Weaver's Nana sends her off to Wetherly, an all-girls school, after catching her with a boy one too many times, Sarah expects that it will be a boring year. When she meets her stunning new roommate Maddy and Maddy's best friend, the prim, proper and filthy-rich Agnes, things get a lot more interesting. Sarah enters a world of sex, insanity, entitlement and blackmail she never imagined. This sensational stand-alone novel will keep readers guessing to the end.

Reviewed by: Sudi Stodola  
CEC Middle College



<http://printables.scholastic.com/printables/detail/?id=27400>

**NO BONES ABOUT IT!  
READING IS FUN!**



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