

# The Review Crew



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

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

Volume 10 Number 2

October 2013

## Fiction

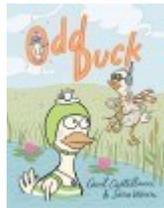
### Odd Duck

By: Cecil Castellucci

Illus. by: Sara Varon

First Second Books, 2013

ISBN: 9781596435575



*Curriculum: Self-image; Friendship; Ducks*

Theodora is an odd duck, indeed, gazing at the stars, adding mango salsa to her duck chow, and spending winters in her cozy home instead of migrating. Her life is challenged when messy, noisy Chad moves in next door. She hopes he will go south with the others, but no. Inviting her to look through his telescope, he initiates a friendship that survives some bumps in the road. Elementary students will enjoy the little details in the black line and pastel drawings, as well as the story of a tolerant friendship between two distinctly quirky characters.

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert

Waller K-8

### Matilda and Hans

Written and illus. by: Tokococo

Templar Books, 2012

ISBN: 9780763664343



*Curriculum: Disguises; Mistaken identity*

Matilda was a good little cat; Hans on the other hand was a naughty cat. This sly little story with a case of mistaken identity has a surprising twist in the end, sure to delight young readers

Reviewed by: Leah Rounds

Alumni

### Odd One Out: Big and Small

Written and illus. by: Guido Van Genechten

Clavis, 2013

ISBN: 9781605371498

*Curriculum: Opposites; Search and find; Animals*

Who is big and who is small? Who is dirty and who is clean? And who is going to a party? This is a good book to teach little ones about opposites, while also encouraging search and find interaction with the book.

Reviewed by: Leah Rounds

Alumni

### Ned and the Joybaloo

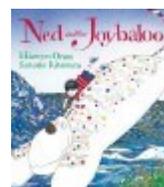
By: Hiawyn Oram

Illus. by: Satoshi Kitamura

Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2012

ISBN: 9781842706053

*Curriculum: Happiness; Friendship; Under-*



### 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.)

standing

Ned wants to meet a Joybaloo more than anything. And one day, when he least expects it, he does! It was a Friday night. They had the best time and promised to meet again the next Friday night. As time went on Ned wanted every night to be Joybaloo night. The Joybaloo said, "No" he had to sleep or he would get used up. Ned didn't care, he wanted his way and he got it until the day that there was nothing left of the Joybaloo. Everyone should have a Joybaloo to keep them company, once in a while. The illustrations are bright and wonderful. The story is a not too subtle reminder that we are all in charge of our own happiness.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
CEC Middle College

## Nonfiction

### An Australian 1, 2, 3 of Animals



Written and illus. by:  
Bronwyn Bancroft  
Little Hare, 2012

ISBN: 9781921894213

*Curriculum: Counting; Animals; Australia*

This board book for young children focuses on counting from 1 to 12 using various Australian animals. Bancroft is an award-winning indigenous artist. In this title she uses her aboriginal art to create eye-catching, vibrant, textured, beautifully illustrated animals that will engage young children. Some of the animals such as the koala and crocodile will be familiar to children, while others like the platypus and kookaburras may not. But all will be visually entertaining.

Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen

TJ H.S.

### Things That Float and Things That Don't

By: David A. Adler

Illus. by: Anna Raff

Holiday House, 2013

ISBN:

9780823428625

*Curriculum: Floating bodies; Hydrostatics; Hydrodynamics*

This delightful book explores the concepts of density and floatation in storybook form, introducing a variety of scenarios for the main characters that readers can easily understand. The playful tone encourages children to experiment on their own to test the concepts. Vocabulary unfamiliar to readers is highlighted (dissolve, displace, density) and colorful illustrations accompany the text to engage children and keep their interest.

Reviewed by: Jutta Gebauer

Green Valley Elem.



## The Best for Upper Elementary Readers!

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

## Fiction

### Elvis and the Underdogs

By: Jenny Lee

Illus. by: Kelly Light

Balzer + Bray, 2013

ISBN: 9780062235541

*Curriculum: Service dogs; Families; Friendship; Bullies*

Benji is a sickly 4<sup>th</sup> grader with no friends and a bully that torments him. He spends lots of time in the hospital and faints whenever stressed. After Benji's last fainting episode, his options are a hideous helmet or a therapy dog. Helmet eventually becomes dog, but the Newfoundland Benji receives is a snooty talking dog, Parker Elvis Pembroke IV, that swears he was trained for the President. Elvis, a terrific secondary character, protects Benji and encourages him, bossily, to find his own pack. Although the ending is not one kids may hope for,



Yesterday is  
history, tomorrow  
is a  
mystery, but today  
is a gift.  
That's why they  
call it the  
present.  
-Winnie the Pooh  
(aka A.A. Milne)

the message of accepting people for all that they are is strong.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas  
JFK H.S.

### The Silver Six

By: A.J. Lieberman

Illus. by: Darren Rawlings

Scholastic, 2013

ISBN:

9780545370981

*Curriculum: Orphans; Science fiction; Graphic novels*

On an Earth destroyed by over-mining, orphaned Phoebe has escaped detection by social services for a year. When the owner of Craven Mining discovers she can ruin his empire, she is taken to an orphanage and finds allies in five other children whose parents died with hers. They locate a moon that, after an epic battle with their enemies, becomes the salvation of the Earth. There is plenty of action, emotion, and humor in this story told in colorful comic-book style. The themes of friendship and teamwork are ably intertwined with a lesson on sustainability for upper elementary readers.

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert

Waller K-8



Donovan, his brother Jack, and his dad along with the neighbor boy Eddie are trying to fix the sprinkler system in the front yard. When the hole is deep they discover a metal box. The mysterious box is only the beginning of the adventures. There are many more to come. The fact that Donovan has Down syndrome is only part of the story. His disability is dealt with in a realistic fashion but the mystery and adventures take center stage. This is a well-written book that could be used to help students understand Down syndrome as well as engage them in a fun story. Donovan's story could be used as a read-aloud or an independent read for upper elementary age students. This story is packed with positive character traits, very functional adults and a little bit of Texas history for good measure.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble

CEC Middle College

## Nonfiction

### Stink It Up: a Guide to the Gross, the Bad, and the Smelly

By: Megan McDonald

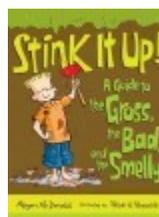
Illus. by: Peter H. Reynolds

Candlewick Press, 2013

ISBN: 9780763659424

*Curriculum: Curiosities and wonders*

Judy Moody's brother goes on a journey through some of the nastiest places, foods, and body functions in the world. Annual stink-o-fest days, such as the Odor-Eaters Rotten Sneaker Contest, restau-



rants that serve road kill, and the size of an elephant's booger are just a few of the topics examined. The simple cartoon illustrations are perfectly paired with the easy-to-read text. Quizzes and suggested activities to gross out friends and family make this a surefire hit for the elementary crowd.

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert

Waller K-8

### Crafts for Pampering Yourself

By: Susannah Blake

Enslow, 2012

ISBN: 9780766043145

*Curriculum: Handicrafts; Gifts; Recycling (waste)*



This how-to book is perfect for girls who enjoy crafting and sewing and are looking for funky new gift ideas. The colorful step-by-step illustrations are easy to understand and the book includes a helpful index, glossary, a list of websites, and a guide to basic sewing stitches as well. The projects highlighted are all eco-friendly since they use recycled and non-toxic materials which gives this book a new twist on traditional craft/how-to books. Young girls will love the final project which features a "pamper party"!

Reviewed by: Jutta Gebauer

Green Valley Elem.

Reading takes us  
away from home, but  
more important, it  
finds homes for us  
everywhere.

Hazel Rochman



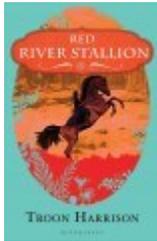
## Middle School Reader Gold Mine

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

# Fiction

### Red River Stallion

By: Troon Harrison  
Bloomsbury, 2013  
ISBN: 9781599908458



*Curriculum: Horses; Voyages and travels; Cree Indians; Racially mixed people*  
After her mother dies, thirteen-year-old Amelia must decide if she should remain with the Cree tribe she has grown up in or strike out on a 600 mile journey in search of her Scottish father. As with *The Horse Road* (2012), Harrison creates a refreshingly strong, independent, intelligent and brave young heroine who steadfastly pursues her goals.  
Reviewed by: Dr. Janice Pacheco Skinner M.S.

### A Corner of White

By: Jaclyn Moriarty  
Levine Books, 2013  
ISBN: 9780545397360  
*Curriculum: Friendship; Magic; Alternate realities*



Madeline and her mother have moved to a grubby corner of Cambridge where they are struggling to survive. One day Madeline notices a corner of a white paper sticking out of a parking meter. It is a note from a boy named Elliot. She thinks the note is a charming joke and she writes back calling him on his strange portrait of life. Elliot finds the return letter in an odd sculpture his friend created. Slowly the two work through their misunderstandings, both with each other and with their friends and families. This is a heartening and heartwarming combination of fantasy and realistic fiction.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble  
CEC Middle College

### Unbreakable

By: Elizabeth Norris  
Balzer+Bray, 2013  
ISBN: 9780062103765



*Curriculum: Future; Relationships; End of the world*  
In book two of the *Unraveling* series. Janelle is trying to survive in a world in ruins. Her boyfriend has returned to his world and she is living with friends. There are few supplies and people that are disappearing for some unknown reason. She does the best she can until her best friend disappears. Agent Taylor Barclay reappears and wants Janelle's help in tracking down a human trafficking ring and to free her friend Ben and his family. It is very helpful to read the first book before tackling this one.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns  
Place Bridge Academy



### Elegy

By: Tara Hudson  
HarperTeen, 2013  
ISBN: 9780062026811  
*Curriculum: Ghosts; Relationships; After-life*



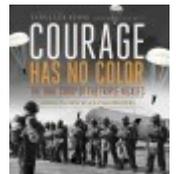
This is book three of the *Hereafter* trilogy. Amelia is a risen ghost with a human boyfriend. She has the ability to do certain things, like touch objects, smell and eat. She can no longer touch her boyfriend, Joshua. The demons who want Amelia's soul come back. They promise to kill one of her loved ones a week until she surrenders. Amelia must make a decision, to find a way to save her soul and her loved ones as well and not lose Joshua.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns  
Place Bridge Academy

# Nonfiction

### Courage has no color : the true story of the Triple Nickles : America's first black paratroopers

By: Tanya Lee Stone  
Candlewick, 2013  
ISBN: 9780763651176  
*Curriculum: African American soldiers; History-20<sup>th</sup> Century*



Using primary source photographs and interviews, Stone recounts the courageous and determined efforts of African-American military men to form the 555th Parachute Infantry Battalion in the face of intense societal and military discrimination. Beautiful design and achingly poignant text make this a fitting tribute to these soldiers, and a "must have" for middle school and above.  
Reviewed by: Dr. Janice Pacheco Skinner M.S.

## Review Crew Staff

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Antonio Nicotera

# Nonfiction

## Kennedy's Last Days: The Assassination That Defined a Generation

By: Bill O'Reilly

Henry Holt, 2013

ISBN: 9780805098020

*Curriculum: John F. Kennedy; Assassination; Presidency; Cuban Missile Crisis*



This fascinating title chronicles JFK's youth, PT-109 experience, political career, and personal life. Paralleling this are chapters about his presumed assassin, Lee Harvey Oswald. The reporting extends past JFK's assassination to the murder of Oswald and the Warren Commission's findings. As a YA adaptation from Bill O'Reilly's *Killing Kennedy*, this book exemplifies all that good research can produce. Documented primary and secondary source materials, including an ample number of photographs, and the clarity and flow of the chronological text make the significance of JFK's life and presidency accessible to MS/HS students. As we approach the 50 year marker of JFK's assassination in November of 2013, this title is a must have.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas

JFK H.S.

When you sell a man a book you don't sell him just 12 ounces of paper and ink and glue - you sell him a whole new life.  
Christopher Morley



## Young Adults Deserve the Best!

# Fiction

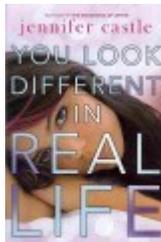
## You Look Different in Real Life

By: Jennifer Castle

HarperTeen, 2013

ISBN:  
9780061985812

*Curriculum: Documentaries; Interpersonal relationships; Celebrities; Identity*



With the intention of following up every five years, five kindergartners became the focus of a documentary. As six year olds, the children were the best of friends and life was simple. But at eleven the cameras caught moments of bullying, the disintegration of a close friendship, and the loss of a parent. At sixteen the five are no longer friends, their lives are more complicated, and they are not sure they want the intimate details of their lives exposed for all to see. This intriguing novel explores relationships as viewed through the uncompromising lens of a camera.

Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen

TJ H.S.