



The Review Crew

What's New and Great for Our Youngest Readers?

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

Volume 4 Number 1
September 2007

Fiction

Big Bug Surprise

Written and illus by:

Julia Gran

Scholastic, 2007

ISBN: 0439676096

Curriculum: Insects; Bees; Show-and-tell

Prunella loves bugs. It is finally her turn for show-and-tell and she has had a difficult time deciding which bug to take. Just as she begins her presentation, a queen bee, followed by an entire swarm, flies into the room. Everyone screams - except Prunella. She guides the swarm to a new home. Now she can show her favorite bug of the day - the dung beetle. Yuck! Gross!

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin

Park Hill ECE-8



Clancy the Courageous

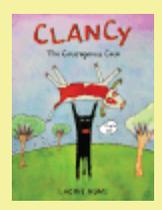
Cow

Written & Illus.

by Lachie Hume

Greenwillow, 2006

ISBN: 0061172499



Curriculum: Differences; Conflict resolution

Clancy the cow is born different. He is all black, missing the broad white belt that is the hallmark of the Belted Galloways. His parents are disappointed but loving, and his herd treats him like an outcast. However it is his very lack of a belt that, in the end, wins back the grazing rights to the best field from the Herefords who have grown large and strong from eating the best grass for so long. And it is what he has learned by being different that brings peace between the two herds at last. Humorous and expressive illustrations provide a perfect setting for this story and its message.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham

Little Mouse's Happy Birthday

By: Jeanne Modesitt

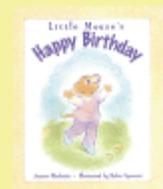
Illustrated by: Robin Spowart

Boyd's Mills Press, 2007

ISBN: 1590782720

Curriculum: Birthdays; Family life

Quietly evocative soft-colored illustrations of places, creatures and things



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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

Trapped

By: Peg Kehret
and Pete the Cat
Dutton Children's
Books



ISBN: 0525477284

Curriculum: Animal rights; Cats

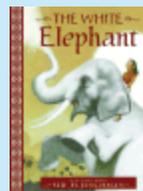
Alex and his friends help nurse a pig back to health after seeing it fall from the back of a truck. "Hogman" sees the kids on the local news and demands the return of his pig. Alex's cat, Pete, co-author of the book, gets involved, but can't get his human

friends to understand what he has discovered about Hogman. In a dangerous twist, Pete is trapped in the cab of Hogman's truck. Readers skeptical about a book co-written by a cat will suspend their disbelief as they rush toward the moving and suspenseful climax of this satisfying novel.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley
South H.S.

The White Elephant

By: Sid Fleischman
Illustrated by: Robert
McGuire

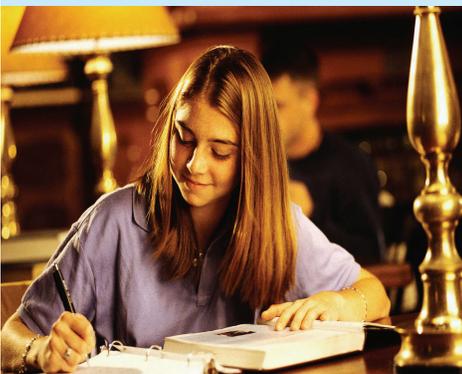


Greenwillow Books
ISBN: 0061131369

Curriculum: Elephants; Siam; Elephant trainers

When Run-Run's elephant, Walking Mountain, accidentally sprays water on Prince Noi the Idle, the prince curses the young mahout with the "gift" of a sacred white elephant. Sahib cannot be put to work to help earn his keep, and Run-Run hardly makes enough to feed himself and Walking Mountain as it is. Run-Run's clever solutions to this problem make for an amusing read. An exciting climax, involving the tiger that killed Run-Run's mother, paves the way to a promising future for our young hero.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley
South H.S.



Fiction

Wintersmith

By: Terry Pratchett
HarperTempest,
2006



ISBN: 0060890312

Curriculum: Fantasy,

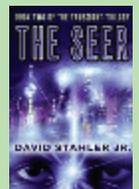
Winter, Witches, Fairies

When the Wintersmith falls in love with a 13 year old witch-in-training, Tiffany, things are bound to get interesting. Winter tries to become human so that he can once more dance with Tiffany so she will come to live with him. If that happens, however, winter will never end. It takes a group of Feegles, a hero, and an older witch to help Tiffany survive against winter so the spring may come.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Rishel M.S.

The Seer

By: David Stahler Jr.
HarperCollins, 2007
ISBN: 0060522887



*Curriculum: Science Fiction,
Blindness, Friendship*

The sequel to Truesight takes

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Jacob on a new adventure. After regaining his sight, he leaves Harmony to travel to the city he has heard so much about. He hopes to find Delaney, the girl who left before he did. He is helped by an unusual man, Xander, to find Delaney, who is now a popular performer. Things are not as they seem, as Jacob plans a daring rescue to save his friend.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Rishel M.S.

Softwire

By: P. J. Haarsma
Candlewick Press,
2006



Curriculum: Science fiction; Space travel

The seed ship Renaissance, sent into space to colonize another world, has met with adversity and now has only children left alive. The ship arrives at the Rings of Orbis; where surely they will be rescued and find homes. However, thirteen-year-old Johnny finds out he is a Softwire; his mind can enter any computer, he has powers greater than any other human. Who can trust him now?

Reviewed by: Marilyn Martin
Park Hill ECE-8

Dogboy

By: Christopher Russell
Greenwillow Books
ISBN: 0060841168



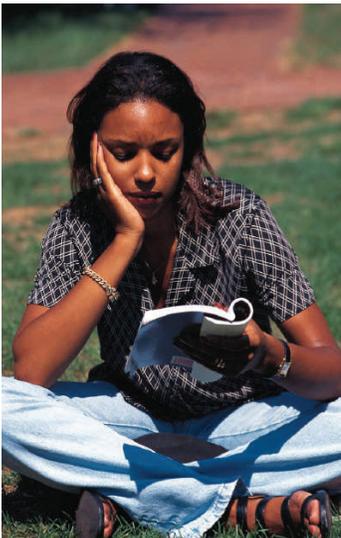
Curriculum: Hundred Years' War; Mastiffs; Orphans

Raised where he was found as a baby, in the kennels of Sir Edmund Dowe's estate, Brind's best friend is the alpha male mastiff, Glaive. When Sir Edmund is "summoned by [his] liege lord, the king," to fight in the conflict which historians will later call the Hundred Years' War, he takes along a rag-tag crew that includes Brind and the forty male mastiffs from the kennels. As with any good historical novel, readers will learn a bit about the events portrayed, all the while enjoying a great, if sometimes disturbing tale.

Reviewed by: Steve Bowley
South H.S.

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Young Adults Deserve the Best!



Fiction

Trigger

By: Susan Vaught
Bloomsbury, 2006
ISBN: 1582349207



Curriculum: Suicide, Rehabilitation, Brain damage, Gun shot wounds

Jersey Hatch is on a journey: a journey to remember why he might have put a gun to his head and

pulled the trigger. Jersey is pretty sure that he would never have done such a thing and everyone else must be wrong. Perhaps it was a car accident. After all, that is what happens to most boys his age. But the people around him, at least the ones who will still speak to him, assure him that he actually tried to

take his own life. He rolled up his rug and put on his ROTC uniform and put a gun to his head. At last he is convinced that he actually did this, but why?

Reviewed by Chris Coble
Kepner M. S.

7 Days at the Hot Corner

By: Terry Trueman
HarperTempest, 2007
ISBN: 006057495X



Curriculum: Baseball, Friendship, Homosexuality, School

Travis is Scott's best friend, has been since second grade. But Travis' parents have kicked him out of the house because he admitted that he was gay. They don't want his little brother to "catch it"

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make for an endearing story about a little mouse's thoughtfulness. It is Little Mouse's special day - her birthday. Members of her family ask how she would like to spend the day and she picks things the others like to do: build sand castles at the beach, have a picnic lunch by the river, and fly kites in the meadow. Her birthday is not only fun for herself but for the entire family.

Reviewed by: Irene Bell
Bryant Webster K-8

Nonfiction

Jennie Maizels

Things To Do Book

Written & Illus. by:

Jennie Maizel

Candlewick, 2007

ISBN: 0763633714

Curriculum: Creativity; Boredom

This sturdy lift-the-flap book is packed with short ideas for beating boredom through activities that are kid-directed. Most are suggested through one or two sentences in the lively illustrations. "We're using a roll of wallpaper to do a very long painting!" The book is organized by location, with sections like "In the Backyard," "At the Store," "In Bed," and more. This will be a sure hit with both kids and parents.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham
Swansea Elem.



(Continued from page 3)

A Small White Scar

By: K. A. Nuzum

Joanna Cotler Books

ISBN: 0060756390

Curriculum: Mentally handicapped; Brothers; 1940s Colorado history

In this tightly woven coming-of-age adventure, fifteen-year-old Will is ready to be a man. Unfortunately his father refuses to see him as anything other than a kid capable only of babysitting his mentally handicapped twin brother. Unable to stand up to his father, Will decides the only way to change things is to get away from the ranch. But getting away is easier said than done when Danny follows Will. Hardships mount when they cross paths with a rattlesnake and Danny nearly drowns. However, the real tension is the ongoing inner conflict of the main character- yearning to be a man but still loving and protecting his brother. The anger and resentment Will has will ring true to any preteen longing to be treated as an adult.

Reviewed by: Danette Baltzer
Grant M.S.

Come Juneteenth

By: Ann Rinaldi

Harcourt, Inc., 2007

ISBN: 0152059477

Curriculum: Family life-Texas; Slavery-Texas



Readers who open the Covers of Come Juneteenth will open the door to a well-crafted story set in the Civil War Era. It is history brought to life by storytelling that gives the reader a clear insight as to why Texas slave owners decided to keep the news of the Emancipation Proclamation a secret for two years. Fourteen-year-old Luli and her family face painful tragedy when they too fail to inform their slaves....The true meaning of freedom and the creation of Juneteenth is explored.

Reviewed by: Irene Bell
Bryant Webster K-8

Jimmy Coates:

Target

By: Joe Craig

HarperCollins, 2007

ISBN: 0060772662

Curriculum: Genetic engineering; Adventures and adventurers

The fast-paced story has several gory incidents, along with pulse-pounding chase scenes, risky behavior, vivid descriptions, and plausible clues that ultimately lead to the end conflict. NJ7, a British Secret Intelligence Agency, has created an eleven-year-old super-assassin programmed to kill. At

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present, he is still 38% human, but when he turns eighteen he will become a full-fledged assassin....If readers like the Alex Rider series by Anthony Horowitz, they will also find this series compelling.

Reviewed by: Irene Bell
Bryant Webster K-8

Hitler's Canary

By: Sandi Toksvig
Roaring Brook Press,
2005



ISBNL 1-59643-247
-0

Curriculum: WWII; Historical Fiction; Theater; Prejudice

Toksvig tells the story of the Nazi occupation of Denmark through the experiences of a theatrical family in Copenhagen that is based on her own father's memories. Relationships are complex and the choice between right and wrong is rarely clear. The story builds to a satisfying climax as the family participates in the national act of courage and solidarity that saved all but 2% of the Jewish population of Denmark. The book also unobtrusively deals with prejudice against homosexuality.

Reviewed by Penny Cunningham
Swansea Elem School

I've traveled the world
twice over, Met the famous;
saints and sinners,
Poets and artists, kings
and queens,
Old stars and hopeful
beginners,
I've been where no-
one's been before,
Learned secrets from
writers and cooks
All with one library
ticket

To the wonderful world
of books.

- Anonymous

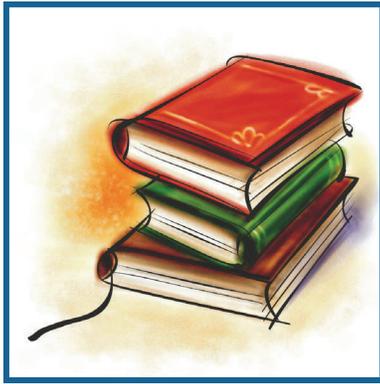


The man who doesn't
read good books
has no advantage over
the man who can't read
them.

-Mark Twain

This newsletter contains only a few of the reviews we write each month. To read them all:

- ♦ Go to LION, our online library catalog, at <http://lion.dpsk12.org>
- ♦ Click on "DPS Book Reviews" on the right side under "Other Resources" for an alphabetical list of reviewed books by title and click on a title that interests you **or** search for a book by title, author, or subject.
- ♦ When you get to the book records, look for the button called "Other Resources" and click on it.
- ♦ You will see a list of available features for that book. If there is a "DPS Book Reviews" link, it will open the review written by a member of this committee. This review is often more detailed than the short review published in this newsletter.



**Live always in the
best company when
you read!**

-Sydney Smith

**A library is a hospi-
tal for the mind.**

-Anonymous

**Reading is a basic
tool in the living of
a good life.**

-Mortimer J. Adler

**My home is where
my books are.**

-Ellen Thompson

(Continued from page 3)

from him. So now he is staying with Scott and Scott's dad. Suddenly Scott is remembering a day at the batting cages when Travis got hit in the face with a ball and Scott got Travis' blood all over him. Does he have HIV, or AIDS? He decides that he must go and get a test in order to concentrate on his last semester of school and their winning baseball season. When he gets the test he finds out that he must wait seven days for the results. How long can seven days be and how many things can he do wrong? And how many things can he learn about himself?

Reviewed by Chris Coble
Kepner M.S.

Anything but Ordinary

By: Valerie Hobbs
Frances Foster Books, 2007
ISBN: 0374303746



Curriculum: Relationships; Self discovery; Change

From the beginning of their friendship Bernie and Winnifred, both middle school outcasts, make it a point to avoid anything that might be considered ordinary. Through the years their friendship develops into unconsummated romance. (Having sex would be just too ordinary.) They compete with each other to be the top of their class, and plan to go to college together. Then Bernie's mother dies and he loses his way, barely graduating, spending his days content (sort of) to work in his father's tire store. Winnifred goes off to college and loses her own way with the help of three shallow but fascinating roommates. Not until each is climbing out of the depths towards true self discovery are they able to find a new friendship and romance.

Reviewed by: Penny Cunningham
Swansea Elem.

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