

The Review Crew



Early Elementary Fiction

Home

Written and illus. by: Carson Ellis

Candlewick Press, 2015

ISBN: 9780763665296

Curriculum: Communities; Homes; Way of life

From the illustrator of *The Composer is Dead* by Lemony Snicket, *Dillweed's Revenge* by Florence Parry Heide, and the *Wildwood* series by her husband, Colin Meloy, Carson Ellis created a fascinating picture book about the different types of homes throughout the world, literature, and mythology. Her detailed and artistic illustrations will spark students' curiosity about how others live. *Home* provides an excellent opportunity to spark student discussions about their homes and lives.

Reviewed by: Jonathan Almon
Steck Elem.



Soon

By: Timothy Knapman

Illus. by: Patrick Benson

Candlewick Press, 2015

ISBN: 9780763674786

Curriculum: Elephants; Adventure; Mother and child

Mother elephant takes her baby, Raju, on an adventure. No matter how quiet they try to be the predators always seem to hear them. Mother scares away crocodiles by making the ground quake, snakes with a mighty blow



through her trunk and the tiger with her great size. After each encounter Raju wants to know if they can go home and his mother answers "soon" each time. Of course when they get home Raju wants to know when they can go again and he gets the same answer from his mother. This is a great adventure for Raju and young readers alike. Gentle pictures bring the story to life.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
CEC Early College

Upper Elementary Nonfiction

Modern Art Adventures

By: Maja Pitamic and Jill Laidlaw

Chicago Review Press, 2014

ISBN: 9781613731772

Curriculum: Modern art; Art appreciation

This book details the important art movements of the twentieth century up to today and can be used by students of all ages. Each chapter gives a synopsis of the movement, presents a piece by a representative artist, and gives activities for exploring that genre. Full color reproductions of the pieces make for easy study and the activities have clear, illustrated instructions. "Think About" sidebars provide ideas for extensions. Readers will want to jump in and start creating.

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert
Alumni



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

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Who are we?

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- ☺ We know DPS students and the DPS curriculum.

What we do!

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- ☺ 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.)

Middle School Fiction

Lost In the Sun

By: Lisa Graff

Philomel Books, 2015

ISBN:9780399164064

Curriculum: Family Issues; Divorce; Friendship



Sixth grader Trent Zimmerman is having the worst year of his life. Faced with his parent's recent divorce and fellow classmate's unfortunate accident, Trent is dealing with major anger management issues. He can't seem to do anything right and is constantly in trouble with teachers, his parents, and his peers. One shining light is a developing relationship with fellow sixth grade outcast, Fallon Little. The relationship between Fallon and Trent grows slowly and the two help one another overcome the many obstacles and adversity in their lives. A great friendship read for middle schoolers looking for their place in the world.

Reviewed by: Sarah Martinez

North H.S.

Nimona

Written and Illustrated by: Noelle Stevenson

Harper Teen, 2015

ISBN:9780062278227

Curriculum: Right vs. Wrong; Friendship; Overcoming Adversity

Noelle Stevenson's popular web-comic turned-graphic-novel tells the story of Nimona, a young girl shape shifter and sidekick to the villain Lord Ballister Blackheart through amazing text



and illustrations. Once a hero in training, Blackheart suffers a serious injury that destroys his career with the all-powerful Institution of Law Enforcement and Heroics. Now he is on a mission of vengeance to prove that the Institution is up to no good. Nimona zealously plots alongside him with questionable verve. This good vs. evil graphic novel is full of adventure, fantasy, science and magic. This book includes some violence which may not be suitable for younger readers.

Reviewed by: Sarah Martinez

North H.S.

Rivals in the City

By: Y.S. Lee

Candlewick Press, 2015

ISBN: 978076365941

Curriculum: Victorian England; Detectives; Mystery; Relationships



Mary Quinn returns to solve some new mysteries. She is engaged to her love, James Easton, who gets drawn into her cases. She is asked by The Agency to solve one more case before she opens her own agency with her fiancé. A convicted criminal is in prison, and she is watching for the return of his wife, who is a criminal in her own right. James gets pulled into another mystery by accepting a commission for some architectural work. There are family secrets involved as well for both of them that may affect their future. Set in the Victorian era, where women had few rights, Mary works within the system to solve these crimes. The detail of Victorian England adds to the suspense. Mary is bold and fun to follow. This is book four in an ongoing series.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns

Place Bridge Academy

The Cemetery Boys

By: Heather Brewer

Harper, 2015

ISBN:

9780062307880

Curriculum: Peer Pressure; Supernatural fiction

Stephen's mother is in a mental institution in Denver, so he and his dad have moved back to live with his grandmother in a small town in Michigan. It doesn't seem like there is much there in the way of excitement until he meets twins Devon and Cara and is strangely attracted to both of them. He finds a journal Devon has written alluding to the Winged Ones, and it isn't until he gets bound up in Devon's gang that he realizes his mother's illness is tied to these monsters. A shocking ending will amaze middle schoolers who like supernatural fiction.

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert

Alumni

Middle School Nonfiction

Chernobyl's Wild Kingdom: Life in the Dead Zone

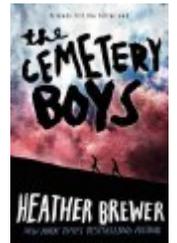
By: Rebecca L. Johnson

Twenty-First Century Books, 2015

ISBN: 9781467711548

Curriculum: Chernobyl; Radiation; Nuclear disasters

Beginning with the history of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear reactor explosion, this title then explains the evacuations of Pripjat and surrounding areas. Still a radiation hot zone, people are not allowed in, but miraculously, plants and animals have re-



turned. Scientists (in biohazard gear) study the effects that radiation has had on this region and the living things that have managed to survive in its toxic realm. The Fukushima disaster of 2011 and the future of nuclear energy are also examined. MS students and older will find this a very useful launching point for research.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas
JFK H.S.

High School Fiction

The Scar Boys

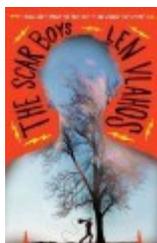
By: Len Vlahos
Egmont Publishing,
2015

ISBN:
9781606845660

*Curriculum: Coming-of-age;
Musicians; Empathy*

When asked to describe himself and his life for his college application essay, Harbinger Jones begins with the incident that changed his life forever. After a severe and brutal bullying incident, Harry almost dies and is left with burn scars across most of his body. He struggles in school both academically and socially, until he meets Johnny. They quickly realize their shared love of music, especially punk rock. They decide to start a band, and it will change both of their lives forever. High school students who love music will appreciate the emotional journey of Harbinger and The Scar Boys.

Reviewed by: Jonathan Almon
Steck Elem.



Dreams of Gods & Monsters

By: Laini Taylor
Little Brown and Company, 2014

ISBN: 9780316285285

Curriculum: Angels; Chimera; Good and evil; Mythology; Demonology

Karou and Akiva have been reunited. But there is little time for reconciliation or romance as they prepare for war. The wicked angel emperor is bent on the annihilation of the chimera and plans on using humans to achieve his objective. Karou and Akiva lead a joint army of chimera and rebel angels, but the alliance is tentative at best. Violence could erupt at anytime and a revelation shakes Akiva's faith. Forging a lasting peace seems nearly impossible. This final installment in the Daughter of Smoke & Bone Trilogy does not disappoint. Fans of the series will love this edgy romance with its circuitous plot and poetic prose.

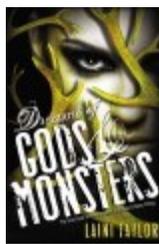
Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen
Thomas Jefferson H.S.

If You're Reading This

By: Trent Reedy
Arthur A. Levine Books, 2014
ISBN: 9780545433426

Curriculum: Family life; High school; Letters; Soldiers; Football; Afghan war; Grief and loss

Mike's father was killed seven years ago in Afghanistan. So Mike is stunned when at the beginning of his sophomore year he suddenly



begins receiving letters from him. The letters talk about daily life, but also challenge Mike to try new things. For Mike the letters serve as a guide as he tries to sort through everyday high school drama and each gives Mike the opportunity to get to know a father he lost years before. A powerful story that will appeal to readers from military families, but also speaks to the conflicts many teens face as they move toward adulthood.

Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen
Thomas Jefferson H.S.

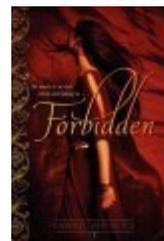
Forbidden

By: Kimberley Little
HarperCollins, 2014
ISBN: 9786294978

Curriculum: Tribal Life; Mesopotamia; Expectations; Honor; Love

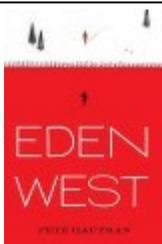
This historical romance revolves around tribes and traditions in the Mesopotamian desert. Jayden is betrothed to Horeb, the boy she does not love, but who will be the head of their tribe after his father dies. When the time comes, their tribes must move to another section of the desert to survive. Her family falls on hard times. Her mother dies from child birth, her father and sisters must move on. They find a wounded traveler from the Southern lands, and take him in. During the journey, Jayden finds herself falling in love with Kadash, the stranger they saved. Horeb turns increasingly violent, wanting his father's power. Jayden decides if she is to survive, she must escape her own tribe with the help of Kadash.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Place Bridge Academy



Eden West

By: Pete Hautman
Candlewick Press, 2015
ISBN:
9780763674182



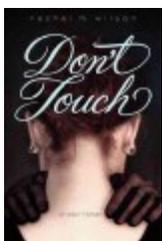
Curriculum: Faith; Cults

Jacob lives in Nodd; twelve square miles of Montana surrounded by an eight foot tall fence. Nodd is the place where the "Grace" live and work to await the end days. Jacob is firm in his faith and content until a wolf starts to kill the sheep, a boy who does not want to be in Nodd comes with his family and a girl who lives on the other side of the fence require him to examine his faith and his life within the boundaries. This is a powerful look at how compelling cults can be as well as personal faith and how damaging living without questioning can be.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
CEC Early College

Don't Touch

By: Rachel M. Wilson
HarperTeen, 2014
ISBN:
9780062220936



Curriculum: Obsessive-compulsive disorder; Acting; Anxiety

Caddie uses magical thinking to control her life. She believes that if she doesn't touch anyone else's skin, her dad will come back home. Caddie enrolls in an arts academy where the fact that she wears long evening gloves can, in the beginning, be passed off as some quirky, arty thing. Caddie wins the lead role in the play Hamlet where she plays Ophelia opposite the enchanting Peter who is Hamlet. Caddy becomes more and more conflicted by her OCD and the desire to be able to kiss Peter. This

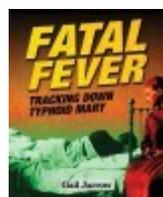
is a tightly written novel that is both funny and very darkly intense. The author provides information about OCD as well as places to go for help and more information at the end of the book. Very welcome information after the tensions of the book.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
CEC Early College

High School Nonfiction

Fatal Fever: Tracking Down Typhoid Mary

By: Gail Jarrow
Calkins Creek, 2015
ISBN: 9781620915974



Curriculum: Typhoid Mary; Epidemics; Sanitation

Mary Mallon, quite healthy herself, unknowingly left a trail of illness and death everywhere she went. Health investigators had to find her. The investigators finally took Mary into custody but they were unable to rid her body of typhoid and she continued to be a carrier. With a promise that she would not cook for others anymore she was released, but new outbreaks alerted officials that Typhoid Mary was still cooking. Captured again, she was quarantined for the rest of her life. Read this exciting true tale to discover how Mary was tracked and the amazing efforts to discover the causes and treatments of typhoid. Great photos, an extensive bibliography, and source notes included.

Reviewed by: Nancy Lucas
JFK H.S.



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