

The Review Crew

Early Elementary Fiction

I Used to be Afraid

Written and illus. by: Laura Vaccaro Seeger

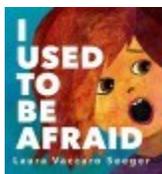
Roaring Book Press, 2015

ISBN: 9781596436312

Topics: Fear; Children; Overcoming obstacles

This little girl used to be afraid of everything! She was afraid of spiders, until she discovered the intricacy of its web. She was afraid of shadows, the dark and making mistakes. She was afraid of change when her family moved and of being alone. She found ways to overcome her fear so she could say, "but not anymore." This is a cleverly illustrated book with cutouts on certain pages. It covers common fears of many children and can be used to spark conversations with small groups or individuals.

Reviewed by: Karen Burns
Place Bridge Academy



Boats for Papa

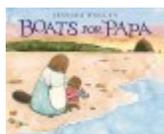
Written & Illus. by: Jessixa Bagley

Roaring Book Press, 2015

ISBN: 9781626720398

Topics: Grief; Families

In Bagley's first picture book she does nothing but impress. Buckley and Mama Beavers live in a small house by the beach. Buckley is like any other young otter--he loves going to the beach and collecting things. But, Buckley collects things in order to send off to Papa, specifically boats of driftwood with notes



sending his love. The reader is not sure where Papa is, but that allows them to play the story in their minds that matches with theirs. A great addition to any school or classroom library, allowing students to see themselves in books, and realize that their family is like others.

Reviewed by: Emily Rubin
Barnum Elem.

We're in the wrong book!

By: Richard Byrne
Henry Holt and Company, 2015

ISBN: 9781627794510

Topics: Reading; Types of books

Bella and Ben are two friends who are minding their own business when Bella's dog bumps them into another book. As they attempt to get back into their own book they adventure into more and more books. From counting books to non-fiction books, to puzzle books to fairy tales, and how-to books to activity books, this would be a great way to introduce the different books to primary students and a great addition to any school or classroom library. Richard Bryne does a great job of differentiating the different types of books through his illustrations, and ends the story on a funny note which will keep kids giggling.

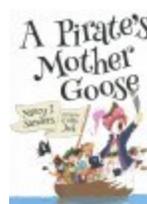
Reviewed by: Emily Rubin
Barnum Elem.

A Pirate's Mother Goose

By: Nancy Sanders
Illus. by: Colin Jack

Albert Whitman & Company, 2015

ISBN: 9780807565599



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the Denver Public
Schools Book
Review Committee.

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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 twelve 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.)

Topics Rhyming text; Poetry; Nursery Rhymes; Pirates

Classic Mother Goose rhymes re-written to include pirates! "London Bridge is Falling Down" is rewritten as "Ye Can Talk Like Pirates Talk". "Three Blind Mice" becomes "One Eye Patch". Important pirate vocabulary such as "hardtack" and "doubloons" are creatively explained. This is sure to be a read aloud winner, especially on Talk Like a Pirate Day, every September 19th.

Reviewed by: Denise Cushing
Carson Elem.

Everyone Loves Bacon

By: Kelly Dipucchio
Illus. by: Eric Wight
Farrar Straus Giroux,
2015



ISBN: 9780374400524

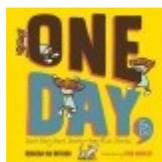
Topics: Friendship; Narcissism; Making Predictions

Everyone sure loves Bacon, including himself. What will happen to Bacon as he becomes more and more popular with the other foods and with people? Students will enjoy making predictions with this retro-styled picture book.

Reviewed by: Denise Cushing
Carson Elem.

One Day, The End

By: Rebecca Kai Dotlich



Illus. by: Fred Koehler
Boyd's Mills Press,
2015

ISBN: 9781620914519

Topics: Girls; Storytelling

A young girl decides to write a book filled with stories about her days. She declares that each story has a 'beginning and an end, but what happens in between makes all the difference'. She writes eight very short stories with some having as few as eleven words. The stories are written just as a young child would write

them, "One day I went to school. I came home. The End." But the brilliant illustrations tell the real story. Each story has humorous, adventurous details that young readers will love.

Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen
George Washington H.S.



En el parvulario

By: Ruth Redford
Illus. by: Maria Mad-docks
Combel, 2015



ISBN:
9788498258257

Topics: Early learning; First days of school

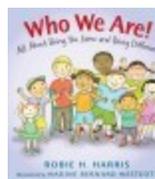
Part of the *Toca, toca* series, this Spanish board book is rich in text and pictures. In addition, there are paths to trace, flaps to open, and textures to feel—all introducing, exploring, or recalling experiences from a full day at preschool. Painting, dressing-up, slipping down the slide, messing about at the sand and water tables, planting in the garden, sharing lunch, shopping, making music, hearing a story, and getting ready to go home. Little ones will be fascinated and adults exhausted by the events of the day. Whatever happened to naptime?

Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley
Cheltenham Elem.

**Early Elementary
Nonfiction**

Who We Are

By: Robie H. Harris
Illus. by: Nadine Bernard Westcott
Candlewick, 2016
ISBN: 9780763669034



Topics Interpersonal relationships
Harris gives us a wonderful primary non-fiction book about the similarities and differences of the billions of people in the world. Throughout the trip to Funland, Nellie and Gus, two energetic children, see people that represent those from around the world. We see many races throughout the Funland trip, and the children highlighted are assumed to be biracial. There is a great mention of the different shades of skin colors we have, and how even in a family, they can be different. We learn about the similarities and differences of people, mostly focusing on their bodies and the fact that while we all generally have the same parts and pieces, they look and act different for everyone. A great addition for any school psychologist or social worker, the dialogue in this story may be more appropriate for younger students, while the wordier text for older students may connect more.

Reviewed by: Emily Rubin
Barnum Elem.

Scorpions

Series: Creepy
Crawlies
By: Kari Schuetz
Bellwether Media,
2016



ISBN: 9781626172265

Topics: Animals; Arachnids

This level one reader in the Blastoff! Readers series uses extreme close-up photography along with manageable sections featuring three to four sentences about scorpions. Facts in this book focus on appearance, prey, predators, and habitats. Nonfiction text features include a Table of Contents, Glossary, and Index. The "To Learn More" page is a nice addition and supplies both a print and electronic bibliography. This series would be a great tool for beginning the process of animal research.

Reviewed by: Denise Cushing
Carson Elem.

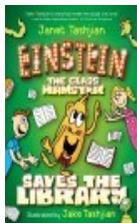
Upper Elementary Fiction

Einstein the Class Hamster Saves the Library

By: Janet Tashjian
Illus. by: Jake Tashjian
Henry Holt and Co.,
2015

ISBN: 9781627790611

*Topics: Hamsters;
School; Humor*



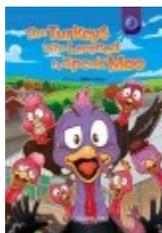
From the mother and son team that brought us the My Life as a... series comes the continuation of stories from Einstein the Class Hamster. In this story, Einstein must team up with the other class pets of Boerring Elementary, including his nemesis, the principal's snake Twinkles, in order to save the school library. Throughout the book are Tasty Tidbits, about everything from libraries to cotton candy to George Washington Carver. Will infomercials save the day? Perfect addition to any school or classroom library to assist young readers in the transition from picture books to chapter books, and the illustrations keep readers new to chapter books engaged without distracting. Reviewed by: Emily Rubin
Barnum Elem.

The Turkeys Who Learned to Speak Moo

By: Billie Huban
Illus. by: Jason Lim
Caramel Tree, 2014
ISBN:

9780993897207

Topics: Talking animals; Humor



A clever turkey named Samson notices his brethren are kept in pens and mysteriously disappear as they grow fat, while cows are bathed, massaged,

and allowed to roam free for life. Sensing it's no longer time to talk turkey, Samson teaches his fellow gobblers the lingua bovine. The now famous flock embraces a life of luxury—until turkeys all around Farm-land begin to moo, too. Not to fear—Samson soon teaches the group to woof. Goofy illustrations add to the fun.

Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley
Cheltenham Elem.

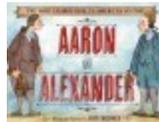
Upper Elementary Nonfiction

Aaron and Alexander

Written and Illus. by:
Don Brown
ISBN:

9781596439986

Topics: American history; Founding Fathers



Orphans Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton attended college, fought in the Revolution, practiced law, and entered early American politics. The pair feuded often, Hamilton's withering wit and prolific pen thwarting Burr's ambitions again and again. Don Brown writes about the pair with respect and affection, helping us feel their duel's tragic outcome. Hamilton dies, but the life Burr knew is over, too. Brown's deceptively simple watercolors complement his history. An afterward adds further detail to the story. Reviewed by: Nick Bleckley
Cheltenham Elem.



Middle School Fiction

The Last Place on Earth

By: Carol Snow
Henry Holt, 2016
ISBN: 162779039X

Topics: Survival; Relationships

Daisy's quirky friend Henry is missing from school, and although he often plays hooky, now there's evidence that he and his paranoid parents have really disappeared. When Daisy sneaks into his house and finds a note that says "Save me," she travels to the California wilderness where Henry's family and other survivalists are hiding from the threat of a real plague. They force her to stay, but conflict causes the group to fall apart, culminating in a forest fire that drives them back to civilization. Although there are some dire moments, Daisy's sassy comments and irreverent attitude keep the tone fairly light. Fast-paced, if not quite realistic, this is a good book for reluctant readers who enjoy some mystery, drama, and romance.

Reviewed by: Peggy Obert
Alumni



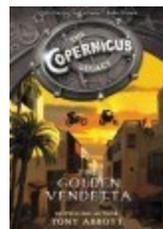
The Golden Vendetta

By: Tony Abbott
Katherine Tegen
Books, 2015
ISBN:

9780062194497

*Topics: Adventure;
Quest; Friendship;
Loyalty; Copernicus*

This book is the third in the Copernicus Legacy series. Wade, Darrell, Lily, and Becca must follow clues to



collect a set of relics before the evil Galina Krause does. To find the relics, they follow in the footsteps beginning in the days of Copernicus and those that followed after him. There is action, adventure, and using their knowledge of science, the cosmos and computers to help them solve the riddles. The four were hoping to get back to their regular family life after the last book, but that is not to be. This time there are clues originating from Leonardo da Vinci, so the chase continues. This is a good series for middle school readers. The four young people are fun to watch and see how they use science facts to follow the clues. It is fast paced and will keep the reader's interest. This is a series that must be read in order to understand the action.
 Reviewed by: Karen Burns
 Place Bridge Academy

Hour of the Bees

By: Lindsay Eager
 Candlewick Press, 2016
 ISBN:
 9780763679224

Topics: Bees; Drought; New Mexico; Families; Alzheimer's; Mexican American; Storytelling

It is the summer before the beginning of junior high and Carolina is stuck at her grandfather's desolate New Mexico sheep ranch for the summer. Her grandfather, a man she has never met, is suffering from dementia and Carolina's parents are preparing to place him in a home. Despite herself, Carolina begins to feel a connection to her grandfather and his wild fairytale-like stories about a lake, water-stealing bees, and a life-giving tree. This magical story focuses on the importance of knowing one's roots.
 Reviewed by: Michelle Jensen
 George Washington H.S.



High School Fiction

Burn Baby Burn

By: Meg Medina
 Candlewick Press, 2016
 ISBN: 9780763674670
Topics: Family relationships; New York City
 Nora Lopez is a New York City high school



senior in 1977 when the Son of Sam killings and other violence aggravate her complicated life. Her mother is trying to control her brother Hector, her father only has time for his new family, and Nora must decide her future. There's a new guy at work she wants to date, but she's afraid of her mother's opinion and the fact that the killings seem to be targeting couples. Things come to a head during the July blackout when Hector sets fire to a neighbor's business after ransacking it for drugs. Nora must confront the members of her family to do what is right, no matter how painful. Realistically drawn characters, frank dialogue, and gritty situations make this a compelling read for mature students.
 Reviewed by: Peggy Obert
 Alumni

Lizard Radio

By: Pat Schmatz
 Candlewick Press, 2015
 ISBN: 9780763676353
Topics: Dystopia; Gender identity; Acceptance; Coming of age



In a not too distant future, fifteen-year-old Kivali is sent to Crop-Camp, a transitional camp for teens as they prepare to enter adulthood as compliant members of society. If they fail, they are sent to hard work camps. Kivali doesn't know where she comes from, if she's really a she, or what the

future holds for her. All her life she's been raised by Sheila, a bohemian artist who rebels against society's norms and then suddenly she's thrust into the conforming camp. Kivali has a rich imagination, convinced that she's descended from a race of lizard-like aliens who speak to her in her times of need. This novel has its own unique vocabulary and grapples with tough themes such as fitting in, gender identity, and drug use.
 Reviewed by: Denise Cushing
 Carson Elem.

When We Collided

By: Emery Lord
 Bloomsbury, 2016
 ISBN:
 9781619638457
Topics: Romance; Mental illness; Family problems

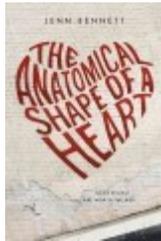


Jonah is trying to keep his family together after the death of their father. Their mother doesn't get out of bed anymore and is no help with the little ones. Vivi is bright and vivacious and artistic. Vivi brings fun and laughter to Jonah's little brothers and sister, but Vivi is fighting her own demons and her refusal to face her past and the diagnosis of bi-polar disorder is causing her more and more trouble. This is a powerful novel and thankfully the author tells her own story in a notes section at the end of the story. She also includes resource information for several organizations for mental illness.
 Reviewed by: Chris Coble
 CEC Early College



**The Anatomical
Shape of a Heart**

By: Jenn Bennett
Feiwei and Friends,
2015
ISBN:
9781250066459



Topics: Artists; Graffiti; Mental illness; Families
Bex, short for Beatrix, knows what she wants and that is to be an illustrator of anatomical books. She loves the minuscule details of veins and muscles. Jack is a graffiti artist. He revels in huge, single word, works wrought in gold paint, in highly visible places. In fact, the police are looking for him. One night Bex and Jack are thrown together on the night bus. This story provides a glimpse into mental illness and how it affects families. This is a great romance but be warned, it is not appropriate for any but high school students due to the sexual activities recounted here.

Reviewed by: Chris Coble
CEC Early College

**One must maintain a little
bit of summer, even in the
middle of winter.**

Henry David Thoreau



**"What good is the warmth
of summer, without the
cold of winter to give it
sweetness?"**

John Steinbeck



**"We know that in September,
we will wander through the
warm winds of summer's
wreckage. We will welcome
summer's ghost."**

Henry Rollins



**"When summer gathers up
her robes of glory, and, like
a dream, glides away."**

Sarah Helen Whitman



**"August rain: the best of the
summer gone, and the new
fall not yet born. The odd
uneven time."**

Sylvia Plath



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