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Book Reviews for 2008

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There's a Wolf at the Door by Zoe B. Alley; illustrated by R.W. Alley

Reading Level: Ages 6 - 8

In a similar vein to The True Story of the Three Little Pigs, these five funny stories tell details about the folk tales that you may not have known before. The Big Bad Wolf is featured in all five stories, each time just trying to get some dinner! There's a Wolf at the Door will make you AND your parents laugh!

Reviewer: EHF

The Pet Dragon: A Story about Adventure, Friendship, and Chinese Characters by Christoph Niemann

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 10

Niemann's story about Lin and her pet dragon is a wonderfully intuitive way to become familiar with Chinese characters, and a great story about a young girl and her pet dragon!

Reviewer: EHF

Louise, the Adventures of a Chicken by Kate DiCamillo; illustrated by Harry Bliss

Reading Level: Ages 5 - 7

Follow Louise, the audacious chicken, as she leaves her henhouse for three marvelous adventures! DiCamillo's first foray into picture books does not disappoint.

Reviewer: EHF

Houdini the Amazing Caterpillar by Janet Pedersen

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 6

Houdini is the star of the classroom, performing amazing tricks and wonderful feats for his beloved audience. But when his tricks are no longer the most exciting, Houdini realizes he must come up with something even more special than before.

Reviewer: EHF

Stacey Coolidge's Fancy-Smancy Cursive Handwriting by Barbara Esham; illustrated by Mike & Carl Gordon

Reading Level: Ages 7 - 9

Carolyn is very excited to be in second grade. Finally, she is old enough to play with the class guinea pig Frederick. But when Mrs. Thompson hands out red folders for cursive writing, Carolyn is sure she'll never be able to succeed. Her curves and slants aren't anywhere near as perfect as Stacey Coolidge's, no matter how hard she practices. Will Carolyn's hard work ever pay off?

Reviewer: EHF

Bat's Big Game by Margaret Read MacDonald; illustrated by Eugenia Nobati

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 9

In a ballgame between the animals and the birds Bat has to decide which team he is on. Unfortunately things don't work out quite as he planned when he chooses to be on the WINNING team.

Reviewer: SH

My Chincoteague Pony by Susan Jeffers

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

Julie wants a pony more than anything else in the whole world, and has a plan for how to get one. *My Chincoteague Pony* is a heartwarming book that will appeal to pony lovers of all ages.

Reviewer: EHF

Carl's Summer Vacation by Alexandra Day

Reading Level : Ages 2 - 5

Carl the Rottweiler and his little girl are back! Left out on the porch to nap so they will be wide awake for the fireworks that night Carl and his little girl wander off and have a grand summer adventure without the adults ever finding out what

happened.

Reviewer: SH

Go Home, Mrs. Beekman by Ann Redisch Stampler; illustrated by Marsha Gray Carrington

Reading Level: Ages 5 - 7

Emily does NOT want to leave her fort for the first day of school. No way. But when Mom says that she will stay at school with Emily, it seems like an alright idea. She is still nervous, but when she gets to school she sees how cool all the stuff there is! But Mom is still there and won't go home!!

Reviewer: EHF

The Black Book of Colors by Menena Cottin; illustrated by Rosana Faria

Reading Level: Ages 2 - 9

This fascinating Braille book of colors features regular type and Braille as well as raised line drawings rendered in shiny black on black pages so that sighted children can enjoy the book alongside visually challenged children.

Reviewer: SH

Stanley at Sea written by Linda Bailey; illustrated by Bill Slavin

Reading Level: Ages 3 – 8

Stanley the dog and his friends accidentally travel to the end of Outside.

Reviewer: SH

Thomas-saurus Rex by Reverend W. Awdry

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 5

Gordon and James both think they are too important and fine to pull THIS load: a treasure chest and a dinosaur fossil! But Thomas and Percy think it’s pretty cool! When Stepney needs some help with the heavy load, Thomas doesn’t want Gordon or James to make fun of him, but he also wants to help out!

Reviewer: EF

A Promise is a Promise by Florence Parry Heide; illustrated by Tony Auth

Reading Level: Ages 4 -7

George is a very lucky boy, but doesn't feel like it. He's the only kid in the whole world who doesn't have a pet. So he goes off in search of one that his parents say he can keep! After all, a promise is a promise!

Reviewer: EF

Clinton Gregory's Secret by Bruce Whatley

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 6

Clinton Gregory has a secret. But I'm certainly not going to spoil it, or the seven other secrets Clinton has from last week.

Reviewer: EF

The Pout-Pout Fish by Deborah Diesen; illustrated by Dan Hanna

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

Mr. Fish felt that he was destined to a life of dreary-wearies having a face like his. His good friends try and try to cheer him up but no one seems to be able to. Travel with Mr. Fish to find out what it really takes to cheer him up because you never know what will make a friend happy! Friendly and colorful illustrations along with a rhyming text make this book a must for kids grumpy, happy or otherwise.

Reviewer: RR

Just Like You by Emma Dodd

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 5

Do you ever wonder what you want to be when you grow up? Young bear walks through the day telling his grown-up all of the different things he wants to be. Bright and simple illustrations make this a wonderful book for even the youngest of listeners.

Reviewer: RR

The Boy with Two Belly Buttons by Stephen J. Dubner; illustrated by Christoph Niemann

Reading Level: Ages 5 - 8

When Solomon’s baby sister Anya is born, he learns that it isn’t normal for a person to have two belly buttons. Solomon doesn’t like his second belly button and just wants to be normal, but can he ever be normal with two belly buttons?

Reviewer: EF

The Twelve Dancing Princesses by Rachel Isadora

Reading Level: Ages 5 - 8

The king is very perplexed. His twelve daughters go to sleep each night, their door locked, and yet when the morning comes, their shoes are worn through as if they had been dancing all night! The king can’t figure out where the princesses slip off to at night. One day, a soldier comes to the palace and says that he would like to try and discover the princesses’ secret.

Reviewer: EF

Skunkdog by Emily Jenkins; illustrated by Pierre Pratt

Reading Level: Ages 5 - 8

Dumpling seems like a dog anyone would want to have as their own. She is extremely obedient, enthusiastic, smart, and even speaks a little Spanish! But Dumpling doesn’t get why other dogs seem to smell things so much – she can’t smell anything! She has no dog friends, and so she’s very lonely. One summer day, Dumpling and her family move to a new house with a big backyard, and Dumpling meets a new friend! Her lack of smell turns out to be a great thing – can you guess who her new friend is?

Reviewer: EF

Really Truly Bingo by Laura McGee Kvasnosky

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 7

When Bea’s mother is too busy to play with her, Bea is thrilled to meet a talking dog named Bingo in her garden! However, Bingo wants to do things that Bea is not supposed to do, and she just can’t resist him!

Reviewer: EF

My Friend, the Starfinder by George Ella Lyon; illustrated by Stephen Gammell

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 5

A little girl sits down and listens to her old neighbor tell the story of how he once followed and caught a falling star. He

even lets her hold it! Stephen Gammell's (Song and Dance Man, Monster Mama) illustrations make this star-chaser's stories come to life.

Reviewer: EF

All Aboard! A Traveling Alphabet by Chris L. Demarest; Illustrated by Bill Mayer

Reading Level: Ages: 3 - 6

Can you think of a way of traveling for every letter of the alphabet? Try to find the letters of the alphabet in the classic-art styled pictures of Bill Mayer's creative book.

Reviewer: EF

Mama's Little Duckling by Marjorie Blain Parker; illustrated by Mike Wohnoutka

Reading Level: Ages 2 - 5

Little Duck wants to go exploring with his friends, but isn't so good at remembering to watch out for danger. Luckily his Mama Duck is watching from afar to let him know when something is wrong.

Reviewer: EF

Hello, Day! by Anita Lobel

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 5

Join all sorts of barnyard animals as they wake up and say good morning in their own ways.

Reviewer: EF

Half a World Away by Libby Gleeson; illustrated by Freya Blackwood

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

Moving away is always difficult especially when it is your best friend. Louie and Amy are best friends and love to play and imagine together until one day, Amy moves half way around the world. The two friends miss each other very much and think about each other every day. Although Louie's parents tell him his shouts won't be heard by Amy, Louie calls out to Amy as loud as he can to send his message to Amy half way around the world. Can best friends tell when they are thinking about each other? Read Half a World Away to learn about true friendship.

Reviewer: RR

The Paper Princess by Elisa Kleven

Reading Level: Ages 6 - 9

When the little girl draws her best princess ever and is trying to decide on what is the best hair for her, the wind comes and takes her away. The little girl is very sad her best picture is gone, but the princess goes on her biggest adventure. She meets people who are friendly and those that are indifferent, but holds on to finding her way back to the little girl. Read The Paper Princess to find out about her adventure into the world in order to return back home.

Reviewer: RR

The Cow That Laid an Egg by Andy Cutbill; illustrated by Russell Ayto

Reading Level: Ages 2 - 8

Have you ever felt that there wasn't anything special about you? Well, Marjorie the cow didn't feel very special. When the chickens overheard that Marjorie was sad they came up with a plan to make her feel better. When Marjorie wakes up in the morning to find she has laid an egg, she is overwhelmed with joy. The other cows are very skeptical and everyone waits anxiously to find out if the baby inside the egg is Marjorie's. What do you think will happen?

Reviewer: RR

Engelbert Sneem and his Dream Vacuum Machine by Daniel Postgate

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 6

There are not many picture books that are so cleverly written and illustrated as Engelbert Sneem. Postgate sets the story telling us that there is nobody meaner than the scoundrel of the story Engelbert Sneem, with his dream vacuum cleaner, who tiptoes into kids' rooms at night and sucks up their nice dreams when they are sleeping, and puts them into a flagon – which is a bottle with a cork. Then he flies home driven by his giant dragons to his scary castle on top of a hill - a perfect fairy tale beginning! He puts the flagon in his vast and remarkable dungeon of dreams. Then whenever he wants, he opens up a flagon and savors the dream. Meanwhile the the children whose dreams he has robbed turn into miserable adults; a concept that kids would love. However, what happens in the story is that a little boy reads of the tale of Engelbert Sneem and dreams of him and Engelbert Sneem steals his dream and doesn't realize that it is "a tale of a greedy and pilfering thief, who left in his wake only sadness and grief." And when he uncorks the dream he realizes that he has uncorked a nightmare and the nightmare is himself! This is a great scary bedtime story with a happy ending that children will love and is perfect for reading aloud.

Reviewer: MG

Before You Were Mine by Maribeth Boelts; pictures by David Walker

Reading Level: Ages 3 – 8

A boy wonders what his dog's life was like before they adopted it from the animal shelter and why someone would give up such a good pet.

Reviewer: SH

Tupelo Rides the Rails by Melissa Sweet

Reading Level: Ages 3 – 6

Tupelo the dog is cruelly abandoned on the side of the road with only her favorite sock toy, Mr. Bones, and after wandering for days she stumbles across a pack of abandoned and lost dogs who have gathered to wish on Sirius, the Dog Star, for homes.

Reviewer: SH

Duck Soup by Jackie Urbanovic

Reading Level: Ages 3 – 6

Duck goes out to the garden to find the perfect ingredient for his soup, but when he isn't in the kitchen when his friends arrive they fear he has fallen into his own delicious creation.

Reviewer: SH

Ways to Live Forever by Sally Nicholls

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 7

11 year old Sam is dying of cancer, and he knows it. That's why he only has time for big questions, like why does God let kids get sick, and important tasks, like kissing a girl. The story's undercurrent of sadness doesn't diminish the satisfaction in seeing a likeable kid live his life well.

Reviewer: CH

Mogo: The Third Warthog by Donna Jo Napoli

Reading Level : Grades 3 - 5

Napoli gives "The Three Little Pigs" a new twist with her story of Mogo the third warthog brother. Mogo and his brothers have a wonderful life. During the day they graze with the family group. At night they cuddle safely in the family burrow. All changes the day their mother tells them, in no uncertain terms, that they must leave and fend for themselves.

Reviewer: SJS

It's Only Temporary by Sally Warner

Reading Level : Grades 4 - 6

Twelve-year-old Skye McPhee has a lot to deal with. Her reckless brother has become impaired from a car accident he caused and her parents are always fighting. Since her parents have to care for her brother, she has to move in with her grandma in Sierra Madre, California and leave her friends and family behind. How is Skye going to deal with all of these changes? Can she remain invisible in her new school and just keep to her art? This is a very enjoyable, well written novel dealing with family and school issues that is perfect for upper grade school and middle school.

Reviewer: RR

Boys Are Dogs by Leslie Margolis

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 6

Annabelle begins Middle School and discovers that her biggest problem is not teachers or school work but obnoxious boys. Things improve when she finds that many of the tips in "Good Dog Raise Your Puppy Right!" work not only on her puppy...but on obstreperous boys.

Reviewer: SJS

One Beastly Beast: Two Aliens, Three Inventors, Four Fantastic Tales by Garth Nix

Reading Level: Grades 3 - 5

In a clever play on “video piracy,” a boy has to fight a band of pirate rats who have stolen his rental DVDs. A princess, longing for adventure, finds it as she is eaten by a beastly beast. Bill, an orphan, meets a cacophony of potential adoptive parents. Serena, impossibly smart due to a laboratory accident, attempts to talk to a sea serpent who continually crashes into local ships.

Reviewer: EF

Honey Cake by Joan Betty Stuchner

Reading Level: Grades 2 - 4

For David, the son of a Jewish baker, the Nazi occupation is at first an inconvenience, but as the menace grows David comes to understand that his family is involved in a deadly game, one that may cost them their lives.

Reviewer: SJS

I Will Surprise my Friend! by Mo Willems

Reading Level: Grades 1 - 2

One of the most expressive Elephant and Piggie books so far, *I Will Surprise My Friend* tells the story of a great idea.

Reviewer: EHF

Jimmy's Stars by Mary Ann Rodman

Reading Level: Grades 4-6

Eleven-year-old Ellie McKelvey adores her older brother Jimmy and has a very special relationship with him. When Jimmy is drafted into the army during World War Two, Ellie waits for him to return. Families in neighborhood have wounded boys or receive the dreaded telegrams, but Jimmy has promised Ellie that he will return to her safe and sound.

Reviewer: HG

A Beginning, a Muddle and an End: The Right Way to Write Writing by Avi; illustrated by Tricia Tusa

Reading Level : grade 4 - 6

The sequel to The End of the Beginning: Being the Adventures of a Small Snail (and an Even Smaller Ant), Avon the snail really wants to become an author, but finds it isn't as easy as he thought. Supportive friend, Edward the ant, tries to offer advice, guidance and adventure in finding something to write about. Filled with double meanings and play on words, this quick novella is a great read for kids that love to play with language.

Reviewer: RR

Canned by Alex Shearer

Reading Level : Grades 5 - 7

Eccentric Fergal Banfield is a collector of unlabelled cans. To his peaked curiosity, he decides to open some of the lightest cans and finds some interesting and creepy treasures. Upon meeting fellow can collector, Charlotte, they find themselves investigating some unusual circumstances that land them in a dangerous investigation. Set in England, Canned is quirky, funny and mysterious all rolled into one!

Reviewer: RR

Gorilla City : The First Amazing, Astonishing, Incredible and True Adventures of Me! by Charlie Small

Reading Level: Grades 3 - 5

When Charlie set off on a homemade raft to explore the small creek behind his yard, he promised his mother he would be

home by tea but a torrential rainstorm, a crocodile and a trip over a towering waterfall plunge Charlie into a world from which he may never return.

Reviewer: SJS

Moving Day by Meg Cabot

Reading Level: Grades 3 - 4

Allie has always been good about knowing life's rules, just not always following them. Her life is filled with turmoil as her family announces their intention to move, something Allie is not excited about and which causes a huge fight between her and her best friend. Filled with Meg Cabot's typical humor and keen insight into life as a girl, this book is great for readers who enjoyed the movie of The Princess Diaries but aren't quite ready for the book.

Reviewer: LY

The Mysterious Edge of the Heroic World by E.L. Konigsburg

Reading Level: Grades 4 and up

In the vein of her 1996 Newberry winner, The View From Saturday, Konigsburg spins a complex web of characters of all ages and from all backgrounds. Amadeo, a boy who wants nothing more than to discover something that has been lost. William, who works with his mother in the liquidating business. Mrs. Zender, former diva who is being put into a home and has hired William's mother to liquidate her house. Peter, art director and curator of Once Forbidden, an exhibit of Degenerate Art from World War Two. Mrs. Vanderwaal, newly widowed, who has decided to travel in her Winnebago across the country. Their stories meld together effortlessly into a tale of mystery, friendship, trust, and forgiveness.

Reviewer: EF

The London Eye Mystery by Siobhan Dowd

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 6

Salim, visiting his cousins Ted and Kat for half-term holiday, is given a free ticket to ride the London Eye. Ted and Kat watch as Salim slowly goes up and around the enormous wheel, and wait for him to exit. But Salim never gets off the Eye. Kat and Ted attempt to solve the mystery by themselves, as the police don't seem to be getting very far. No one believes them that Salim disappeared somewhere while in the air – it's impossible. Or is it?

Reviewer: EF

Paintball Blast written by Jake Maddox; illustrated by Sean Tiffany

Reading Level: Grades 2 - 4

Max Hauser and his best friend, Tyler, are paintball partners and frequent their paintball field often, until one day a new player, Ryan, joins them and everything changes. Max cannot understand how a new player to the game, continually wins all of his matches. Max refuses to let this goes and decides to investigate and study how Ryan plays the game. Is this a case of beginners luck or is there something else going on? Will Max figure this out before the biggest tournament of the year? The pressure is on for Max and Tyler in Paintball Blast.

Reviewer: RR

Forever Changes by Brendan Halpin

Reading Level : Grades 8 and up

As she begins to lose her life long struggle with cystic fibrosis eighteen-year-old Brianna searches for life's meaning and wonders how she should live her last days.

Reviewer: SJS

Stolen by Vivian Vande Velde

Reading Level : Grades 5 - 8

She doesn't know her name, her parents' names or how she can to be running in the woods. All she does know is that she's 12 and has been treed by a pack of dogs. Who is "Isabelle"? An amnesiac, a transformed animal, Macy's long-lost daughter or something even stranger?

Reviewer: SJS

Sisters of the Sword by Maya Snow

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 8

When their beloved uncle treacherously murders their father and two brothers, Kimi and Hana disguise themselves as boys and take refuge in a dojo.

Reviewer: SJS

Graceling by Kristin Cashore

Reading Level: Grade 8

In a world where heterochromia, having eyes of two different colors, indicates an individual of special powers, "gracelings" have nowhere to hide. 18-year-old Katsa is a graceling with a dreadful gift, the power to kill and cause pain. Her uncle, King Randa, uses her as his enforcer and assassin. But Katsa has had enough of killing. She's determined to break with her uncle no matter the cost.

Reviewer: SJS

Nation by Terry Pratchett

Reading Level: Grades 6 and up

When a gaint tsunami devastates his south sea island home, 13-year-old Mau and Ermintrude, a stranded member of the "British" royal family, must cope with enormous language and culture barriers to survive. Poignant, frightening, hilarious and thought-provoking, this book is a gem.

Reviewer: SJS

Palace of Mirrors by Margaret Peterson Haddix

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 7

A well-constructed, unexpected story that turns the traditional hidden royal story on its head. Cecilia, a 14-year-old peasant girl raised as a hidden princess, and her childhood companion Harper journey to the capital to claim her birthright; but when they arrive they learn that the situation is more complicated and dangerous than they ever imagined.

Reviewer: SJS

Wings: A Fairytale by E.D. Baker

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 7

When goblins begin to shadow her, Tamisin discovers that her strange ears and compulsion to dance during a new moon are only the beginning of her problems.

Reviewer: SJS

Beneath My Mother's Feet by Amjed Qamar

Reading Level: Grades 7 - 9

14-year-old Nazia's life is not her own. As all good Pakistani girls know, "Your mother decides now, and when you get

married, your mother-in-law will take her place." Nazia never questioned this life truth until her father's injury forced her to leave school and work so the family can survive. With the life she had been raised for snatched from her Nazia begins to suspect that she, NOT her mother, might know what is best. If you enjoy this book try Shabanu Daughter of the Wind by Suzanne Staples.

Reviewer: SJS

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

After climatic cataclysms and a devastating war North America is reduced to twelve impoverished Districts controlled by the wealthy, powerful Capital. Once a year a lottery is held to pick one boy and one girl from each District to participate in the televised "Hunger Games," a survival game to the death. When her younger sister's name is pulled, Katmis volunteers in her place. Saving her sister was in Katmis's nature, but is cold-blooded killing? If you enjoy this gritty dystopia novel try The Declaration by G. R. Malley.

Reviewer: SJS

Ghost of Spirit Bear by Ben Mikaelsen

Reading Level: Grade 7 - 9

After spending a year in exile, 17-year-old Cole has come to terms with his devils. However, when he and Peter, his former victim, must return to their brutal city high school, both boys find themselves struggling for peace and safety.

Reviewer: SJS

Where People Like Us Live by Patricia Cumbie

Reading Level : Grades 7 and up

Libby has moved again. This time to Rubberville; population: boring. When Angie shows up on Libby's doorstep, she knows things will get better. Angie is everything Libby isn't; outgoing, mature and adventurous. Libby values their friendship so when she learns of a secret that Angie is keeping she realizes she needs to make a choice; protect their friendship and stay loyal to Angie or sacrifice their friendship and protect her friend. Read Patricia Cumbie's new novel and find out about Where People Like Us Live.

Reviewer: RR

Breaking Dawn by Stephenie Meyer

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

In one of the most satisfying series conclusions written in a while, Breaking Dawn takes the Twilight series to an astonishing new level of intense. Picking up where Eclipse left off, Bella and Edward prepare for their wedding – but no amount of preparation could possibly help them get ready for what happens while on their honeymoon.

Reviewer: EF

Once Upon a Time in the North by Philip Pullman

Reading Level: Grades 6 - 8

In another short novella, Philip Pullman brings readers back to the world of Lyra Belaqua, this time to Lee Scorseby's first meeting with the great armored bear Iorek Byrnison.

Reviewer: EF

Ever by Gail Carson Levine

Reading Level: Grades 5 and up

What does one do when the boy you love is immortal and your days on earth are numbered? In the newest novel by Gail Carson Levine, young mortal Kezi, meets Olus, the god of wind and loneliness. When Olus decides he wants to see what mortal life is like, he comes upon Kezi with whom he immediately falls in love. Unfortunately, Kezi's mother has fallen deathly ill and her father asks Admat to sacrifice the first person who congratulates her on her recovery as long as she is promised to live. When Kezi enters and becomes that sacrificial person, she is told she only has 30 days to live. Kezi, devastated and confused, meets Olus and falls in love with him as well. Together, Kezi and Olus decide to change Kezi's fate in order to be together. They find out, however, for Kezi to become immortal she and Olus will have to go through a series of adventures and challenges that will test their devotion to one another without a guarantee of Kezi's survival. Is Admat really Kezi's only god? Does Kezi's father really love her? Can Olus and Kezi stay devoted to one another throughout all they have to go through to save Kezi? Read Ever to explore the trials and adventures these two young loves have to go through in order to be together.
Note: Gail Carson Levine fans will love her newest instillation of fantasy writing.

Reviewer: RR

Gem X by Nicky Singer

Reading Level: Grades 6 - 8

Maxo, the perfect GemX child created through gene manipulation, and Gala, a natural child of Dreggies, live totally different lives until they are brought together by a government conspiracy.

Reviewer: SH

Night Road by A.M. Jenkins

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

Cole and Sander, old hemovores (the word "vampire" has so many negative stereotypes associated with it), take Sander's "accident", Gordon, on a road trip to teach him how to survive among the omnivores. Along the way Cole has to face past guilt from both his pioneer childhood and his one and only attempt to make a hemovore companion for himself.

Reviewer: SH

Cherry Heaven by L.J. Adlington

Reading Level: Grades 6 and up

This sequel to The Diary of Pelly D. continues the Holocaust theme in sci-fi form by telling the story of the horrors of the Atsumisi slave labor camps and the complacency of the local citizens who turned a blind eye on what was happening in their own backyards.

Reviewer: SH

Ringside 1925: Views from the Scopes Trial by Jen Bryant

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

More than just a historical novel about the Scopes trial, Ringside 1925 is also a wonderful commentary on the Monkey Trial. Told from twelve different perspectives and written in poems, Ringside 1925 creates enjoyable characters and is an entertaining as well as educating look into the famous trial.

Reviewer: EF

Absolute Brightness by James Lecesne

Reading Level: Grades 6 and up

When Phoebe learns that a cousin she has never met before is moving into her tiny house, she is not pleased. There's justnot any room for him. When Leonard shows up, Phoebe doesn't care that he's gay – but she does care that he dresses and acts like someone from Mars, and that he butts into her family affairs. But Leonard starts to change everyone around him, make them feel happier and want to better themselves, even Phoebe. Then suddenly, Leonard disappears.

Reviewer: EF

The Missing Girl by Norma Fox Mazer

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

Meet the five Herbert girls: Autumn, Fancy, Stevie, Mim, and Beauty. They walk to and from school each day, unknowing that a man is watching them, imagining what it would be to speak to them, to touch them. The girls, unaware of the voyeur, continue their daily lives as if nothing bad could ever happen to them. At least, nothing worse than their situation at home. Each chapter of this thrilling book is told from a different perspective, and readers will feel the chill of the man's eyes on their backs as they read.

Reviewer: EF

The Fold by An Na

Reading Level: Grades 5 - 10

Joyce has always lived in her sister Helen's shadow. Helen is beautiful, smart, an aspiring doctor – everything Joyce isn't. Joyce would do anything to be beautiful like Helen, especially so she can attract the attention of her crush, John Ford Kang. So when Joyce's aunt Gomo shows up with a once-in-a-lifetime offer, Joyce wants to jump at the opportunity. But Gomo's gift of plastic surgery sounds like it will hurt, something Joyce isn't good with at all. And Joyce just isn't sure whether or not she should get 'the fold' - the eyelid surgery that will make her look more American and less Korean. Could the surgery help even her ugly face to be more appealing to John Ford Kang? And if not, was it worth it?

Reviewer: EF

The Comeback Season by Jennifer E. Smith

Reading Level: 7 - 8

This year, Opening Day falls on the anniversary of Ryan's father's death. Ryan hasn't been back to Wrigley since her father's rafting accident, but on Opening Day she finds herself on the el going towards Addison. There, she meets Nick, the new kid in her grade, and the two bond over the Chicago Cubs as the game progresses. Ryan's relationship with Nick slowly moves forward as the two work together on a math project about the Cubs, and go to more and more games together. As the season progresses, the couple begins to think maybe this could be the Cubs' year, despite their own troubles. Many books compare baseball to life, but The Comeback Season weaves high school romance, the game of life, and above all the thought of "next year" into a fantastic story that will make you hope that a Cubs game is on TV when you put it down.

Reviewer: EF

The Boy Who Dared by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

Reading Level: Grades 6 - 8

This novel is based on the true story of Helmuth Hübener, a German teenager who saw through the lies of Hitler's regime and at great danger to himself decided to publish the truth. The story is told in flashbacks, as Helmuth is in prison awaiting the executioner. This is a story of incredible courage made even more amazing by the youth of the main character. Included are pictures of Helmuth and his friends.

Reviewer: HG

Sunrise Over Fallujah by Walter Dean Myers

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

This timely novel follows tells the story of Robin Perry, an African-American 18-year-old who chooses to enlist in the army in the aftermath of 9-11. The new soldier initially believes that he is fighting for his country and democracy in Operation Iraqi Freedom. As he experiences the realities of war, his starts to question the mission and the purpose of the war. Periodically, he writes about his true feelings and his doubts in letters to his uncle Richie, the protagonist of Meyer's classic novel, Fallen Angels.

Reviewer: HG

Parade of Shadows by Gloria Whelan

Reading Level: Grades 6 - 8

16-year–old Julia is a sheltered girl whose father is in the diplomatic corps in pre World War I England. In this fascinating mystery, Julia is allowed to accompany him to the Middle East where she meets an assortment of characters with secrets and agendas of their own. She finds love with a dashing young university student who involves her in his political intrigues. The story moves from a trip on the Orient Express to a camel caravan across the desert, as Julia learns about the lands and the people of the Levant and copes with betrayals and attempted murder.

Reviewer: HG

After Tupac and D Foster by Jacqueline Woodson

Reading Level: Grades 7 - 10

D lives with a foster mother, and has roamed all over the country. When she meets up with two other girls, they all discover their love of Tupac Shakur and his music, finding comfort and a connection to each other in his soulful words. But when D's birth mother comes back into her life, the threesome's friendship becomes threatened.

Reviewer: LB

Life is Fine by Allison Whittenberg

Reading Level: Grades 8 - 12

Samara's life isn't really fine. Her mother wishes she were grown and gone, her stepfather is unemployed and abusive, and the last thing she needs is a substitute teacher trying to "fix" her by introducing her to the world of poetry. In spite of herself, though, Samara is drawn to the words and poems Mr. Brook shows her, and before she has the time to reflect on her horrible home life she forges ahead in a multitude of new directions.

Reviewer: LB

Princess Mia by Meg Cabot

Reading Level: Grades 7 - 12

Who would believe that a princess could suffer from…depression? After mistakenly breaking up with the love of her life, Princess Mia refuses to change out of her Hello Kitty pajamas and holes up in her bedroom, unable to do anything except watch TV and write in her journal. But the discovery of an ancient relative's diary that could change the future of Genovia forever—and the not-so-subtle romantic intents of one of her best guy friends—just might help Mia to become her sparkling s once again!

Reviewer: LB

Good Enough by Paula Yoo

Reading Level: Grades 6 - 8

Second best is not good enough for Patti's Korean parents. Their daughter must go to HarvardYalePrinceton, but get acceptances to all the other Ivy League schools. SATs must not be below 2300. Her gift for the violin is just another resume booster, not a path to Julliard. And then she meets The Cute Trumpet Guy. This hilarious novel will ring true to anyone who has had to deal with parental expectations. Like real life, nothing in this book is predictable. That's what makes it so much fun!

Reviewer: HG

The Kayla Chronicles by Sherri Winston

Reading Level: Grades 8 - 12

What the heck is “girl power,” anyway? Kayla, high school journalist and proud feminist, has decided to expose her exclusive high school dance team’s unfair selection policy by attending the tryouts. But when she is actually chosen as a dancer, she finds herself sucked into their glamorous attitude and style. Soon enough she wonders who she really is deep down, and how she can possibly hold true to beliefs that seem completely opposite.

Reviewer: LB

Knucklehead: Tall Tales & Mostly True Stories About Growing Up Scieszka by Jon Scieszka

Reading Level: Grades 3 - 6

Jon Scieszka, author of The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales and The Time Warp Trio series, shares hilarious moments from his childhood as the second oldest of six rambunctious boys.

Reviewer: SJS

The Great Race The Amazing Round-The-World Auto Race of 1908 by Gary Blackwood

Reading Level : Grades 4 - 8

There is an old movie titled The Great Race about a New York to Paris auto race in the beginning of last century. Who knew that the slapstick film was based on an actual event! Although in automobile had just been invented about 20 years before, it was decided that traveling on practically nonexistent roads with machines that broke down regularly through some remote, dangerous locales was a good idea. France, Germany, Italy, and the U.S. all had cars entered so national rivalries were at a peak. A great quote from the book describes the whole event. "We had set out to perpetrate an act of splendid folly, not to open up a new way for men. We wished to be madmen, not pioneers." And they were!

Reviewer: HG

Three Little Words: A Memoir by Ashley Rhodes-Courter

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

The 22-year-old author triumphed despite spending nine years in a revolving door of foster homes, a placement with relatives, and an orphanage. One foster mother was sadistic. The author and her baby brother were taken by the State of Florida when she was only 31/2. Eventually, a kind couple wanted to adopt her. When asked if she wanted the adoption to proceed, Ashley answered in three words, “I guess so.” Another biography about the horrors of foster care is A Child Called “It”: One Child's Courage to Survive by David Pelzer.

Reviewer: HG

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