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Book Reviews for 2009

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Green Wilma Frog in Space by Tedd Arnold

Reading Level: Ages 3 - 6

A frog has a wild adventure after she is mistaken for an alien child and taken onto a spaceship.

Reviewer: SH

How I Learned Geography by Uri Shulevitz

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

A young boy in a war-torn land is upset when his father brings home a map instead of food, but once he realizes that the map allows his imagination to take him to happier lands, he understands his father's decision.

Reviewer: SH

How to Heal a Broken Wing by Bob Graham

Reading Level: Ages 2 - 6

A pigeon crashes into a skyscraper, breaking its wing, and nobody notices, except Will who's parents let him bring it home to heal.

Reviewer: SH

Birds by Kevin Henkes; illustrated by Laura Dronzek

Reading Level: Ages 2 - 6

This book is a sweet little homage to wild birds and the color and joy they bring to our lives.

Reviewer: SH

The Pencil by Allan Ahlberg; illustrated by Bruce Ingman

Reading Level: Ages 4 - 8

A lonely pencil draws an entire family to keep himself company. When his creations demand changes to themselves, the pencil unleashes havoc by creating a mischievous eraser, who can wipe everyone out. Suspenseful and hilarious.

Reviewer: CH

Lunch Lady and the Cyborg Substitute by Jarrett Krosoczka

Reading Level: Ages 7 - 10

When the most popular teacher in the school is suddenly replaced by Mr. Pasteur, a strict substitute who hands out stacks of homework, Lunch Lady springs into action. Shadowing him on her supercharged motor scooter she tracks him to his lair and discovers..... If you are a fan of Captain Underpants or Babymouse and are hungry for other funny, school adventures try Lunch Lady.

Reviewer: SJS

Wild Girl by Patricia Reilly Giff

Reading Level: Grades 3 - 5

12-year-old Lidie last saw her father and beloved older brother five years ago when they left Brazil for the United States. When he father finally sends for her Lidie is determined to show him what a strong, capable person she has become. In a parallel story a free-spirited young filly is suddenly separated from her mother. Both of these "wild girls" struggle to adjust to their frightening new surroundings until they find comfort in each other.

Reviewer: SJS

A Birthday for Bear by Bonny Becker; illustrated by Kady MacDonald Denton

Reading Level: Grades 1 - 2

It is Bear's birthday and Bear DOES NOT LIKE BIRTHDAYS, but Mouse will not be deterred.

Reviewer: SH

Return to the Hundred Acre Wood: In Which Winnie-the-Pooh Enjoys Further Adventures with Christopher Robin and His Friends by David Benedictus

Reading Level: All Ages

“Looking over my shoulder, Pooh says, ‘Eighty is a good number really but it could just as well be eighty weeks or days or minutes as years,’ and I say: ‘Let’s call it eighty seconds, and then it will be as though no time has passed at all.’” It’s been eighty years since A. A. Milne warmed hearts across the globe with stories of Winnie the Pooh, Christopher Robin, and the whole Hundred Acre Wood gang. David Benedictus’ original continuation of tales about our very favorite Silly Old Bear is done with such skill that it feels as if only eighty seconds has passed. In these ten new stories, the Hundred Acre animals hold a Spelling Bee, meet a new slinky friend, decorate a tree for the bees, learn things at the Academy, and even play cricket. Can’t get enough of Winnie the Pooh? Try reading some of these lesser known A. A. Milne classics: When We Were Very Young, Now We are Six, or The Christopher Robin Book of Verse.

Reviewer: EHF

Solving Zoe by Barbara Dee

Reading Level: Grades 5 and up

Zoe isn't a math genius like her older brother, or a drama superstar like her older sister. Zoe doesn't really HAVE a passion. She just likes pizza. But Zoe goes to the Lorna Hubbard School, a progressive school where students study things like Robotics, or African Drumming, and everyone is on a first name basis with their teachers. Zoe is increasingly more worried that she doesn't have a passion and might not belong at Hubbard. When she finds the weird new kid Lucas' notebook, written entirely in secret codes, HE thinks her passion is cryptography, but Zoe doesn't want anything to do with it. When anonymous mean notes start appearing in students' lockers, Zoe is blamed. Her friends stop talking to her, and the only comfort she finds is with the lizards she babysits after school. Will Zoe be able to solve her way out of this social crisis?

Reviewer: EHF

The Witch's Guide to Cooking with Children by Keith McGowan

Reading Level: Grades 3 - 6

Shortly after the death of their mother, and their father’s remarriage, Sol and Connie move to Grand Creek. On their way to the park, they are welcomed to the neighborhood and invited to dinner by an old woman named Holaderry. Little do Sol and Connie know, Holaderry has invited them to dinner as her main course. That’s right – Holaderry is the very same witch that escaped after being shoved into the oven by Hansel and Gretel – and she was not deterred from gobbling up kids just because of those two brats! Fans of Lemony Snicket’s Series of Unfortunate Events will love McGowan’s dark writing style and wit.

Reviewer: EHF

The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P Figg by Rodman Philbrick

Reading Level: Grades 5 – 8

When Homer's underage, honest and true brother Harold is wrongfully sold into the army, Homer knows Harold will never survive the war. Homer steals his uncle's old horse, Bob, and sets off toward the south to find his brother and rescue him

from the war. Along the way, of course, he has some adventures. And all of them are true. Mostly.

Reviewer: EHF

Anything but Typical by Nora Raleigh Baskin

Reading Level : Grades 4 - 7

Jason Blake, a twelve year old boy with autism, is not 'NT,' or neurotypical. He is a long-time member of an online writing site called Storyboard - a site where he regularly posts and no one knows he is not NT. Still, Jason doesn't have any real friends - until username PhoenixBird comments on one of his stories and they begin e-mailing back and forth. When Jason's parents give him the opportunity to attend the Storyboard convention, he can't imagine what it will be like to meet PhoenixBird face to face - and have her realize that he is autistic.

Reviewer: EHF

12-year-old Jason Blake is not a "neorutypical." The sounds, smells and movements of his environment assail him from all sides. His parents, teachers and fellow students rarely understand what he wants or why he does the things he does. Too often he is punished, bullied or ignored. The only place Jason is comfortable is in cyberspace writing on the Storyboard site. When his thoughtful stories attract the attention of PHOENIXBIRD Jason longs to meet her but when it seems they actually might, Jason closes down...maybe forever. For other stories of misunderstood different drummer kids try: Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key by Jack Gantos, Rules by Cynthia Lord or The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon

Reviewer: SJS

The Magician's Elephant by Kate DiCamillo

Reading Level : Grades 4 and up

Peter Duchene, orphan, is told by a fortuneteller that his sister is alive, and that an elephant will lead him to her. A magician, intending lilies, wrongly summons an elephant through the roof of the Bliffendorf Opera House, crushing Madam LaVaugn's legs. And so begins a chain of events Peter hopes will end in a reunion with his sister, Adele.

Reviewer: EHF

We Can't All Be Rattlesnakes by Patrick Jennings

Reading Level : Grades 3 - 6

Crusher is NOT a pet. She is not even a male snake, but Gunnar, her fleshy human captor, knows otherwise. She is determined that she will escape, but the more time she spends in Gunnar's terrarium prison, the less optimistic she feels. Will she have to become a PET in order to gain her freedom? And if she does, what will she do about her new friends? Can she leave them behind?

Reviewer: EHF

The Gecko & Sticky: Villain's Lair by Wendelin Van Draanen; illustrated by Stephen Gilpin

Reading Level: Grades 3 - 5

"It happened one afternoon when Dave was home alone. Sticky simply crawled onto his shoulder and said, 'Buenas tardes, senor!'
'What?' Dave said, looking at the gecko with wide eyes."
Thus begins Dave and Sticky the Gecko's wild and adventurous relationship. Sticky, on the run from the diabolical treasure hunter, Damien Black, outs himself as a talking gecko in the hopes that Dave will help him to get "that wicked ratero Damien Black"! Van Draanen's new series (a spin off of Shredderman: Meet the Gecko) is full of humor and adventure that will keep you turning the pages past lights out!

Reviewer: EHF

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11 Birthdays by Wendy Mass

Reading Level : Grades 4 - 6

When Leo and Amanda were born, an old woman named Angelina asked their parents to promise that the kids would always celebrate their birthdays together – and they have, until the disaster of their tenth birthday drives them apart. Now the friends are turning eleven, and are having separate parties for the first time in their lives. Amanda’s party is excruciating, and she can’t wait to wake up the next morning and move past it. But when she wakes up, it’s still the morning of her eleventh birthday. How many times will she have to relive turning eleven before she can move on?

Reviewer: EHF

Every Soul a Star by Wendy Mass

Reading Level: Grades 4 - 6

Ally lives at the Moon Shadow, an astrological campground, and has been waiting her entire life for this summer, when the solar eclipse will be best viewed from the Moon Shadow. Nothing can go wrong... until she finds out her parents have sold the campground and are planning to move back to Civilization. Bree is devoted to becoming a fashion model, and couldn't care less about the eclipse, or the stupid campground her parents have bought and are cruelly forcing her to move to. Jack, doomed to summer school because of a failed science class, is given the opportunity to visit the Moon Shadow as a scientific assistant in place of summer school. Told in alternating chapters, Every Soul a Star is a coming of age story about three wildly different teenagers who discover a few things about themselves, each other, and the sky above.

Reviewer: EHF

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: The Last Straw by Jeff Kinney

Reading Level : Grades 4 - 8

Beleaguered Greg Heffley's illustrated adventures are back! This time Greg struggles with a variety of weighty problems including the identity of the snack thief, attracting the attention of the Holly Hills, and whether it is possible to go entire year without washing his wardrobe.

Reviewer: SJS

Paddington Here and Now by Michael Bond; illustrated by R.W. Alley

Reading Level : Grades 3 - 5

Paddington Bear is back and as mischievous as ever! Paddington faces down tow trucks, travel agents, and nosy reporters, as well as his old nemesis Mr. Curry in this new adventure written 50 years after A Bear Called Paddington.

Reviewer: SH

Touch by Francine Prose

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

Maisie's three best friends have always been Shakes, Chris and Kevin. It was never a big deal, or even a deal at all, to anyof them that Maisie was a girl and they weren't. They were just best friends. When Maisie's parents divorce, she moves away for a year. When she comes back, puberty has hit full force, and the friendship Maisie thought would never – could never – change, are completely different. Francine Prose's new novel about sexual harassment, the difficulty of telling the truth and change is gripping. For a similar read, try Safe by Susan Shaw or Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson.

Reviewer: EHF

Going Bovine by Libba Bray

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

At sixteen years old, Cameron Smith has his whole life ahead of him. That doesn't mean he knows what he's going to do with it, but he's happy enough smoking pot in the school bathroom, going to Eubie's record shop after school to pick up new Great Tremolo albums, and wishing he could sleep with Staci Johnson. But then Cameron is diagnosed with bovine spongiform encephalopathy – Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease – mad cow disease. To make a long story semi-short, Cameron, told he must save the world from wormholes, a guy called the Wizard of Reckoning, and find a dude named Dr. X (who has the cure for mad cow disease). So he, a hypochondriac dwarf named Gonzo, and eventually a Viking gnome named Balder set off across the country, following random signs, coincidences, and gut feelings. In this extreme departure from her debut trilogy, Libba Bray's new novel Going Bovine pays homage to Don Quixote in a magically realistic cross-country romp. Check out Libba Bray's website for cool sites relating to the book – The Great Tremolo, Copenhagen Interpretation, CESSNAB, and a few others.

Reviewer: EHF

After by Amy Efaw

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

Devon Davenport has everything she could want out of life. She is a star soccer player, an Olympic hopeful and she excels

in school. She doesn't have too many close friends, but she's alright with that. Then IT comes and turns her whole life upside down. Devon is charged with attempted murder, abandonment of a dependant, criminal mistreatment, and assault. She gave birth to a baby in her bathroom at home, then wrapped it in a garbage bag and threw it away. Devon says that she never knew she was pregnant… but something inside her is nagging, doubting. A young adult version of a Jodi Picoult novel, Amy Efaw's After forces its readers to question their own morals as well as Devon's.

Reviewer: EHF

Blood Promise by Richelle Mead

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

At the conclusion of the third Vampire Academy book, readers felt Rose's pain as her soulmate, mentor, and friend Vladimir was taken and turned by the Strigoi. Now, in Blood Promise, Richelle Mead's fourth gripping installment, Rose has left the Academy and begun her quest to find Vladimir, so that she can kill him. Leaving Lissa behind is not nearly as difficult a decision for Rose to make as was her decision to destroy the Strigoi that once was Vladimir, but Rose knows that she must do both, killing Dimitri to honor his memory. The fourth Vampire Academy book does not disappoint, despite the ending cliffhanger so typical of the series. For more vampire romance, try The Silver Kiss, Companions of the Night, Vampire Kisses, or Twilight.

Reviewer: EHF

Shine, Coconut Moon by Meesha Meminger

Reading Level: Grades 6 and up

Samar Ahluwahlia is Sikh-Punjabi-American, but she's never really taken the time to learn about any part of her history. Her mother has always hidden family information from her, and Sammy never questioned it or tried to find anything out on her own. But when her long-lost Uncle Sandeep (a relative she never knew she had) shows up on Sammy's doorstep wanting to rekindle his relationship with Sammy's mother, Samar decides that she wants to learn more about her Sikh-Punjab background. Uncle Sandeep's arrival comes just a few days after September 11th, and Sammy is astounded to see the racism that her uncle must face. When she and her uncle are attacked in their car, Sammy isn't sure what to do next. If you enjoy learning about other cultures and religions, Shine, Coconut Moon is the book for you. Neesha Meminger's first novel balances Sammy's story with information about Sikhism, Indian culture, and post-9/11 ignorance skillfully. You might also like: Does My Head Look Big In This?, Bifocal, or Ten Things I Hate About Me.

Reviewer: EHF

Homestretch by Paul Volponi

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

Gaston Giambanco, Jr's mother was killed when a police car pursuing an illegal Mexican immigrant blew through a stop

sign and collided with her. After her death, things started to change at home. Gas' father starts drinking more, and when his father begins to beat him, Gas knows it's time to leave. He ends up on a truck with a few Mexican immigrants – three brothers - all hitchhiking to greener pastures. The brothers offer to help Gas get a job at the racing stable they are going to. Gas doesn't want to accept charity from the same type that killed his mother, but he knows he doesn't have a choice.

Reviewer: EHF

Ten Things I Hate About Me by Randa Abdel-Fattah

Reading Level: Grades 6 and up

Jamilah Towfeek leads two lives. At school, she's Jamie - Aussie, blonde haired, blue eyed, with a crush on the most popular hot guy, and talks about fashion with her best friends Amy and Liz. At home, she's Jamilah - Lebanse-Muslim, bilingual drummer in her Arabic band, lover of madrasa school, fashion, and makeup. No one at school has ever met Jamilah - and no one will, if Jamie has anything to say about it. But when she makes a new e-mail friend, is partnered with the social outcast, Timothy, for her science class, and learns that her Arabic band is to play at her high school's winter formal, Jamie and Jamilah learn that their lives are going to have to intersect at some point.

Reviewer: EHF

The Girl who Threw Butterflies by Mick Cochrane

Reading Level: Grades 5 and up

Molly dislikes being on the girls' softball team. For one thing, why call it girls' softball when baseball isn't called men's baseball? And what's with the kneepads, the pitching windup? The game seemed entirely different from what she and her father loved – baseball. When Molly decides to try out for the school baseball team, she wonders why she never thought to do it when her father was alive, so he could watch her play. She is happy on the field, her glove on her hand, the grass under her feet. But the other boys trying out aren't so pleased at the prospect of having a girl on their team, especially one who can pitch better than they can.

Reviewer: EHF

Far From You by Lisa Schroeder

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

Alice's mother passed away from cancer a few years ago, but Alice still hasn't gotten over it. Her father's remarriage and her step mother's subsequent pregnancy are not helping, either. All she has left in the world are her best friend Claire, and her boyfriend Blaze. When her father and stepmother drag her on a Thanksgiving trip to visit her step grandparents, Alice remains as gloomy as ever. Then a snowstorm hits, and Alice, her stepmother, and her newborn sister are stuck in the middle of nowhere. Written in verse, Far From You is an emotional tale of a girl trying to find love in a world where the loss of her mother is nearly all she can think of.

Reviewer: EHF

Funny How Things Change by Melissa Wyatt

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

Remy and his girlfriend, Lisa, have been together forever – and that's just how Remy likes it. His quiet, West Virginian life is simple, uneventful, and lacks big changes. But high school graduation is nearing, and Lisa wants Remy to go with her to Pennsylvania when she starts college. She knows Remy isn't planning on going to college, and tells him he can get a mechanic's job anywhere – so why not go with her? Of course, Remy wants to go with Lisa – he loves her. But when Dana, a traveling muralist and college student, comes to town, she starts to put ideas in Remy's head. Ideas that put Remy's dreams in front of Lisa's, that question Remy's blind love of Lisa. Now Remy has to choose between his old, comfortable life, and a new future.

Reviewer: EHF

Swim the Fly by Don Calame

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

Every summer, Matt and his two best friends make a goal. This summer, their goal is to see a real live naked girl. Matt knows just who he wants to see, too – Kelly West, the sexiest girl on the swim team. Before he knows it, Matt's signed up to swim the 100-meter butterfly in the swim championships… something that physically canNOT do, no matter what. But he wants to impress Kelly, so he'd better get practicing. Calame's novel is full of humor and wit. For more books about adolescent boys who just can't seem to do anything right, try Carter Finally Gets It, or 24 Girls in 7 Days.

Reviewer: EHF

The Red Blazer Girls: The Ring of Rocamadour by Michael D. Beil

Reading Level: Grades 5 and up

Four seventh grade Catholic school girls find themselves in the midst of both a mystery and a treasure hunt when aspiring writer Sophie St. Pierre lets out a blood-curdling scream in the middle of English class. (Who knew a seventh grader could find Great Expectations so exciting?) Soon the girls find themselves on a quest for a series of letters in the form of puzzles and clues. At the end of their paper trail waits a priceless antique ring. But no puzzle is without its tricks, no priceless trinket without it's' thieves, and no mystery without its red herring.

Reviewer: EHF

The Chosen One by Carol Lynch Williams

Reading Level : Grades 7 and up

Kyra has many secrets: the books she checks out each week from the Ironton Country Mobile Library, the kisses the gives to Joshua Johnson, her desire to kill the Prophet Childs. Kyra is thirteen years old. Her father has three wives, and she has twenty brothers and sisters. Her whole family is hoping that Kyra's father will be Chosen to become an Apostle, as her uncle Hyram had...but on the night that the Prophet Childs visits Kyra's family for dinner, he announces a disturbing vision. Kyra is to marry her Uncle Hyram, fifty years her senior. Kyra knows she cannot, will not marry Hyram. But can she run away and leave her family behind?

Reviewer: EHF

Positively by Courtney Sheinmel

Reading Level : Grades 5 and up

When Emerson Price was born, she contracted HIV from her mother. Neither she or her mother learned they had the disease until Emmy was 4 years old. Now, Emmy's mother has died, and Emmy knows life will never be the same. She can't imagine living in her father and stepmother's house, living without her mother, or going to school and acting like everything is normal. Without her mother, Emmy feels alone with her disease and thinks that no one could ever understand what it was like. When school ends, her father and stepmother announce that they are going to send Emmy to a summer camp for HIV positive girls. Emmy doesn't want to go, but in her weeks at Camp Positive she learns a few things about herself, and what it's like to live with HIV.

Reviewer: EHF

If the Witness Lied by Caroline B. Cooney

Reading Level : Grades 6 - 9

Tris Fountain has had the spotlight on him since before he was born. Three years old and in the limelight for killing both his parents, Tris doesn't really know what's going on. He knows he has two sisters that he never sees, and an older brother, Jack, that takes care of him, as well as Aunt Cheryl. When Jack discovers Aunt Cheryl has planned to sell Tris to the media in a sick celebration of the one year anniversary of his father's death, he knows he must do everything in his power to stop it. But he isn't ready for what he uncovers in the process. Fans of Caroline B. Cooney will love her latest dark mystery.

Reviewer: EHF

Wings by Aprilynne Pike

Reading Level: Grades 7 - 9

Home-schooled her entire life, fifteen year-old Laurel is happy to make a friend on her first day of school - even happier that the friend is a cute boy named David. She and David quickly become best friends, and when a beautiful, eerie flower

grows out of Laurel's spine, she knows she can tell him. Through science experiments with David, and a meeting with a strange, attractive man in a forest, Laurel learns that she is not human. She is the most highly evolved form of plant - a faerie - and her destiny is inextricably linked with the survival of the fae. Fans of Stephenie Meyer's Twilight series will love Aprilynne Pike's debut novel and hunger for the next in the planned four-book series.

Reviewer: EHF

The Spectacular Now by Tim Tharp

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

Sutter isn't really concerned with what his future holds. He's 100% seriously committed to not being serious. He is rarely without something to drink (whiskey and Seven), his beloved Mitsubishi, and a joke. Unlike other protagonists in novels about teenage alcoholism, Sutter is not interested in changing himself. He's "God's own drunk," and doesn't see any reason to change himself. When he meets Aimee, nothing really changes for him. He sees that Aimee needs some confidence in her life, and knows he's the man to give it to her. And since he would never date her, and there's no way she would ever fall in love with him, it's perfect. Aimee is great. She quickly becomes a pro at drinking, she's funny, she's cute in her own way, and she needs Sutter. Tharp's novel is a must-read. Sutter's charm and devotion to fun despite the consequences mask the dark themes of the novel in ways that leave you struggling to read faster.

Reviewer: EHF

Response by Paul Volponi

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

Noah hasn't made the best choices. He has a baby daughter, is in his fifth year of high school, and is going to the mostly-white suburb of Hillsboro to steal a Lexus. He's hoping that the money he and his friends make from selling it to a chop shop will make him look better in the eyes of his baby's momma and also her father. He doesn't think about the consequences of his actions - least of all that later that night he will be beaten and his skull will be fractured by a baseball bat at the hands of a white Hillsboro boy looking to show Noah his place is NOT in Hillsboro. A trial begins, and the question on everyone's mind is - was this a hate crime? Did Noah's attackers know that they were going to steal the Lexus and attack as an act of vigilantism or did they see a group of black kids in a white neighborhood, and attack as an act of racism?

Reviewer: EHF

Isabelle's Boyfriend by Caroline Hickey

Reading Level: Grades 6 - 9

While walking her dog, Camille, one winter afternoon, Taryn meets the boy of her dreams. His name is Epp, and he is absolutely perfect. Except for one thing. His girlfriend. Taryn knows she and Epp are destined to be together, so she and her

best friend Lila hatch a plan to win him away from the beautiful and also perfect Isabelle Graham. Want the dirty details? Okay. Just don't show this to Isabelle.

Reviewer: EHF

Wintergirls by Laurie Halse Anderson

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

'…body found in a motel room, alone…' Lia and Cassie call themselves wintergirls. When Cassie dies, the duo is split, despit yearlong gap in their friendship. Lia is left more alone than she has ever felt before. '…body found in a motel room, alone…' Alone like Cassie must have felt the night she died, after calling Lia thirty-three times. Leaving thirty-three messages. Lia never picked up. Lia never called back. After Cassie's death, Lia spirals down more and more obsessively into her eating disorder, into memories of Cassie, seeking answers, shedding pounds. Wintergirls is a novel of raw intensity and passion, written in lyrical prose.

Reviewer: EHF

Appetite for Detention by Sloane Tanen photographed by Stefan Hagen

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

A hilarious, highly irreverent view of high school composed of vignettes illustrated with toy chickens.

Reviewer: SH

Piggy by Mireille Geus

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

Lizzie, nicknamed Dizzy, lives in a world all of her own. She has a favorite lamp post to stand by, attends a special school, and has no friends until Margaret, a.k.a. Piggy, moves to town. Piggy is often on her own, claiming her father has a secret government job. Is that really the reason Piggy and her father move around often or is it a dark secret that Piggy is keeping to herself?

Reviewer: RR

Recess at 20 Below by Cindy Lou Aillaud

Reading Level: Grades K - 3

What do you do for recess when you are a kid living in Alaska in the winter? Go outside and play of course! This fun book gives non-Alaskans a view of winter that they don't normally get. After reading this you won't complain about having to go out when the temperatures get below +30.

Reviewer: SH

This is Your Life Cycle by Heather Lynn Miller; illustrated by Michael Chesworth

Reading Level : Grades 2 - 4

The lifecycle of a dragonfly is humorously told in the "This is Your Life" television format, complete with a commercial for "Bird Be Gone".

Reviewer: SH

December 21, 2009

Almost Astronauts by Tanya Lee Stone

Reading Level: Grades 4 and up

You've probably heard of John Glenn, Alan Shepard, or even the "Mercury 9" – the first nine men to train to go into outer space. But have you ever heard about the "Mercury 13"? Did you know that in 1959, thirteen women trained harder and better than anyone ever thought they could, hoping that NASA would allow them to go into space?

If you've ever dreamed about being an astronaut, this is a great way to learn about what it takes as well as learn some interesting facts about NASA history, and women's history!

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Tanya Lee Stone.

Posted by Emily at 03:44 PM | Comments (0)

December 14, 2009

Bears on Chairs by Shirley Parenteau

illustrated by David Walker

Reading Level: Ages 2 - 4

Things are fine when there are four small chairs and four small bears, but then Big Brown Bear arrives and the bears must work together to figure out how everyone can have a seat.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Shirley Parenteau.

Other books illustrated by David Walker.

Posted by Susan at 04:59 PM | Comments (0)

December 10, 2009

The Encyclopedia of Immaturity Volume 2

Reading Level: Grades 3 and up

Need a good excuse for not doing your homework? Why not have your dog write it. Bored? Play indoor Frisbee golf. Have an empty juice box? Blast its straw out like a rocket. This book will explain how to do all these things and hundreds more, but don't blame us if you get in trouble after reading it!

Check availability of this book.

Posted by Susan at 05:18 PM | Comments (0)

December 09, 2009

Going Bovine by Libba Bray

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

At sixteen years old, Cameron Smith has his whole life ahead of him. That doesn't mean he knows what he's going to do with it, but he's happy enough smoking pot in the school bathroom, going to Eubie's record shop after school to pick up new Great Tremolo albums, and wishing he could sleep with Staci Johnson. But then Cameron is diagnosed with bovine spongiform encephalopathy – Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease – mad cow disease.

To make a long story semi-short, Cameron, told he must save the world from wormholes, a guy called the Wizard of Reckoning, and find a dude named Dr. X (who has the cure for mad cow disease). So he, a hypochondriac dwarf named Gonzo, and eventually a Viking gnome named Balder set off across the country, following random signs, coincidences, and gut feelings.

In this extreme departure from her debut trilogy, Libba Bray's new novel Going Bovine pays homage to Don Quixote in a magically realistic cross-country romp. Check out Libba Bray's website (www.libbabray.com) for cool sites relating to the book – The Great Tremolo, Copenhagen Interpretation, CESSNAB, and a few others.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Libba Bray.

Posted by Emily at 04:28 PM | Comments (1)

After by Amy Efaw

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

Devon Davenport has everything she could want out of life. She is a star soccer player, an Olympic hopeful and she excels

in school. She doesn't have too many close friends, but she's alright with that. Then IT comes and turns her whole life upside down.

Devon is charged with attempted murder, abandonment of a dependant, criminal mistreatment, and assault. She gave birth to a baby in her bathroom at home, then wrapped it in a garbage bag and threw it away. Devon says that she never knew she was pregnant… but something inside her is nagging, doubting.

A young adult version of a Jodi Picoult novel, Amy Efaw'sAfter forces its readers to question their own morals as well as Devon's.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Amy Efaw.

Posted by Emily at 04:25 PM | Comments (0)

Swim the Fly by Don Calame

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Calame's novel is full of humor and wit. For more books about adolescent boys who just can't seem to do anything right, try Carter Finally Gets It or 24 Girls in 7 Days.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Don Calame.

Posted by Emily at 04:09 PM | Comments (0)

Touch by Francine Prose

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

Maisie's three best friends have always been Shakes, Chris and Kevin. It was never a big deal, or even a deal at all, to anyof them that Maisie was a girl and they weren't. They were just best friends. When Maisie's parents divorce, she moves away for a year. When she comes back, puberty has hit full force, and the friendship Maisie thought would never – could never – change, are completely different.

Francine Prose's new novel about sexual harassment, the difficulty of telling the truth and change is gripping. For a similar read, try Safe by Susan Shaw or Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Francine Prose.

Posted by Emily at 04:08 PM | Comments (0)

Funny How Things Change by Melissa Wyatt

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

Remy and his girlfriend, Lisa, have been together forever – and that's just how Remy likes it. His quiet, West Virginian life is simple, uneventful, and lacks big changes. But high school graduation is nearing, and Lisa wants Remy to go with her to Pennsylvania when she starts college. She knows Remy isn't planning on going to college, and tells him he can get a mechanic's job anywhere – so why not go with her? Of course, Remy wants to go with Lisa – he loves her.

But when Dana, a traveling muralist and college student, comes to town, she starts to put ideas in Remy's head. Ideas that put Remy's dreams in front of Lisa's, that question Remy's blind love of Lisa. Now Remy has to choose between his old, comfortable life, and a new future.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Melissa Wyatt.

Posted by Emily at 04:04 PM | Comments (0)

Far From You by Lisa Schroeder

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

Alice's mother passed away from cancer a few years ago, but Alice still hasn't gotten over it. Her father's remarriage and her step mother's subsequent pregnancy are not helping, either. All she has left in the world are her best friend Claire, and her boyfriend Blaze. When her father and stepmother drag her on a Thanksgiving trip to visit her step grandparents, Alice remains as gloomy as ever. Then a snowstorm hits, and Alice, her stepmother, and her newborn sister are stuck in the middle of nowhere.

Written in verse, Far From You is an emotional tale of a girl trying to find love in a world where the loss of her mother is nearly all she can think of.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Lisa Schroeder.

Posted by Emily at 04:01 PM | Comments (0)

The Witch's Guide to Cooking with Children by Keith McGowan

Reading Level: Grades 4-6

Shortly after the death of their mother, and their father's remarriage, Sol and Connie move to Grand Creek. On their way to the park, they are welcomed to the neighborhood and invited to dinner by an old woman named Holaderry. Little do Sol and Connie know, Holaderry has invited them to dinner as her main course. That's right – Holaderry is the very same witch that escaped after being shoved into the oven by Hansel and Gretel – and she was not deterred from gobbling up kids just because of those two brats!

Fans of Lemony Snicket's Series of Unfortunate Events will love McGowan's dark writing style and wit.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Keith McGowan.

Posted by Emily at 03:52 PM | Comments (0)

Return to the Hundred Acre Wood by David Benedictus

Reading Level: All ages.

“Looking over my shoulder, Pooh says, ‘Eighty is a good number really but it could just as well be eighty weeks or days or minutes as years,’ and I say: ‘Let’s call it eighty seconds, and then it will be as though no time has passed at all.’”

It’s been eighty years since A. A. Milne warmed hearts across the globe with stories of Winnie the Pooh, ChristopherRobin, and the whole Hundred Acre Wood gang. David Benedictus’ original continuation of tales about our very favorite Silly Old Bear is done with such skill that it feels as if only eighty seconds has passed.

In these ten new stories, the Hundred Acre animals hold a Spelling Bee, meet a new slinky friend, decorate a tree for the bees, learn things at the Academy, and even play cricket.

Can’t get enough of Winnie the Pooh? Try reading some of these lesser known A. A. Milne classics: When We Were Very Young, Now We are Six, The Christopher Robin Book of Verse.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by David Benedictus.
Other books by A. A. Milne.

Posted by Emily at 03:46 PM | Comments (0)

Blood Promise by Richelle Mead

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

At the conclusion of the third Vampire Academy book, readers felt Rose's pain as her soulmate, mentor, and friend Vladimir was taken and turned by the Strigoi. Now, in Blood Promise, Richelle Mead’s fourth gripping installment, Rose has left the Academy and begun her quest to find Vladimir, so that she can kill him. Leaving Lissa behind is not nearly as difficult a decision for Rose to make as was her decision to destroy the Strigoi that once was Vladimir, but Rose knows that she must do both, killing Dimitri to honor his memory.

The fourth Vampire Academy book does not disappoint, despite the ending cliffhanger so typical of the series. For more vampire romance, try The Silver Kiss, Companions of the Night, Vampire Kisses, Twilight, Peeps, or Sweetblood.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Richelle Mead.

Posted by Emily at 03:33 PM | Comments (0)

Ten Things I Hate About Me by Randa Abdel-Fattah

Reading Level: Grades 6 and up

Jamilah Towfeek leads two lives. At school, she's Jamie - Aussie, blonde haired, blue eyed, with a crush on the most popular hot guy, and talks about fashion with her best friends Amy and Liz. At home, she's Jamilah - Lebanse-Muslim, bilingual drummer in her Arabic band, lover of madrasa school, fashion, and makeup. No one at school has ever met Jamilah - and no one will, if Jamie has anything to say about it.

But when she makes a new e-mail friend, is partnered with the social outcast, Timothy, for her science class, and learns that her Arabic band is to play at her high school's winter formal, Jamie and Jamilah learn that their lives are going to have to intersect at some point.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Randa Abdel-Fattah.

Posted by Emily at 03:30 PM | Comments (0)

Homestretch by Paul Volponi

Reading Level: Grades 7 and up

Gaston Giambanco, Jr's mother was killed when a police car pursuing an illegal Mexican immigrant blew through a stop sign and collided with her. After her death, things started to change at home. Gas' father starts drinking more, and when his father begins to beat him, Gas knows it's time to leave. He ends up on a truck with a few Mexican immigrants – three brothers - all hitchhiking to greener pastures. The brothers offer to help Gas get a job at the racing stable they are going to. Gas doesn't want to accept charity from the same type that killed his mother, but he knows he doesn't have a choice.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Paul Volponi

Posted by Emily at 03:29 PM | Comments (0)

Shine Coconut Moon by Neesha Meminger

Reading Level: Grades 6 and up

Samar Ahluwahlia is Sikh-Punjabi-American, but she's never really taken the time to learn about any part of her history. Her mother has always hidden family information from her, and Sammy never questioned it or tried to find anything out on her own. But when her long-lost Uncle Sandeep (a relative she never knew she had) shows up on Sammy's doorstep wanting to rekindle his relationship with Sammy's mother, Samar decides that she wants to learn more about her Sikh-Punjab background. Uncle Sandeep's arrival comes just a few days after September 11th, and Sammy is astounded to see the racism that her uncle must face. When she and her uncle are attacked in their car, Sammy isn't sure what to do next.

If you enjoy learning about other cultures and religions, Shine, Coconut Moon is the book for you. Neesha Meminger's first novel balances Sammy's story with information about Sikhism, Indian culture, and post-9/11 ignorance skillfully.

You might also like: Does My Head Look Big In This?, or Bifocal.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Neesha Meminger.

Posted by Emily at 03:26 PM | Comments (0)

Solving Zoe by Barbara Dee

Reading Level: Grades 5 and up

Zoe isn't a math genius like her older brother, or a drama superstar like her older sister. Zoe doesn't really HAVE a passion. She just likes pizza. But Zoe goes to the Lorna Hubbard School, a progressive school where students study things like Robotics, or African Drumming, and everyone is on a first name basis with their teachers.

Zoe is increasingly more worried that she doesn't have a passion and might not belong at Hubbard. When she finds the weird new kid Lucas' notebook, written entirely in secret codes, HE thinks her passion is cryptography, but Zoe doesn't want anything to do with it.

When anonymous mean notes start appearing in students' lockers, Zoe is blamed. Her friends stop talking to her, and the only comfort she finds is with the lizards she babysits after school. Will Zoe be able to solve her way out of this social crisis?

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Barbara Dee

Posted by Emily at 03:17 PM | Comments (0)

The Mostly True Adventures of Homer P. Figg by Rodman Philbrick

Reading Level: Grades 5-8

When Homer's underage, honest and true brother Harold is wrongfully sold into the army, Homer knows Harold will never survive the war.

Homer steals his uncle's old horse, Bob, and sets off toward the south to find his brother and rescue him from the war. Along the way, of course, he has some adventures. And all of them are true. Mostly.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Rodman Philbrick

Posted by Emily at 03:12 PM | Comments (0)

December 03, 2009

Wintergirls by Laurie Halse Anderson

Reading Level: Grades 8 and up

'…body found in a motel room, alone…'

Lia and Cassie are wintergirls. When Cassie dies, the duo is permanently split. Lia is left more alone than she has ever felt before.

Alone like Cassie must have felt the night she died, after calling Lia thirty-three times. Leaving thirty-three messages. Lia never picked up. Lia never called back.

After Cassie's death, Lia spirals down more and more obsessively into her eating disorder, into memories of Cassie, seeking answers, shedding pounds.

Wintergirls is a novel of raw intensity and passion, written in lyrical prose. For other books about mental illness, try The Best Little Girl in the World, Cut, Stop Pretending, or Perfect

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Laurie Halse Anderson

Posted by Emily at 03:51 PM | Comments (0)

Anything but Typical by Nora Raleigh Baskin

Reading Level: Grades 4-7

Jason Blake, a twelve year old boy with autism, is not 'NT,' or neurotypical. He is a long-time member of an online writing site called Storyboard - a site where he regularly posts and no one knows he is not NT. Still, Jason doesn't have any real friends - until username PhoenixBird comments on one of his stories and they begin e-mailing back and forth. When Jason's parents give him the opportunity to attend the Storyboard convention, he can't imagine what it will be like to meet PhoenixBird face to face - and have her realize that he is autistic.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by Nora Raleigh Baskin

Posted by Emily at 03:28 PM | Comments (0)

Felicity Floo Visits the Zoo by E. S. Redmond

Reading Level: Ages 2 - 9

Felicity Floo does not feel well, and, since she uses her hand instead of a tissue to wipe her nose, all the animals she pets at the zoo soon don't feel well either.

Check availability of this book.

Other books by E.S. Redmond

Posted by Susan at 10:25 AM | Comments (0)

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