

ALAN v28n3 - Clip and File YA Book Reviews

Connect with us

COPYRIGHT IN SPECIAL
CIRCUMSTANCES

CONTACT SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION AT
VIRGINIA TECH

CHECK OUT RECENT PUBLICATIONS FROM VIRGINIA TECH
PUBLISHING



VIRAL NETWORKS

Connecting Digital Humanities
and Medical History

Edited by E. Thomas Ewing
and Katherine Randall

Girls will enjoy this exciting well-written story of Cordelia's escape to Seattle to find Squirrel, where, quite unexpectedly, Cordelia becomes part of a carnival act - because she learns that her odd appearance can turn a profit. There, the action becomes both hilarious and complex because Cordelia soon discovers - through the carnival grapewine - that there is a reward for her stepmother's capture. Rumor has it that her stepmother Babe has allegedly murdered her first husband. Feeling defensive, Cordelia will not betray who she believes is her innocent stepmother.

Populated with offbeat characters, this book moves rapidly with Cordelia eventually reuniting with her family, but not after enduring much pain and hardship. The book's real power, though, is the vivid description of early frontier life in Seattle.

Joyce Litton
Athens, Ohio

McKendree by Sandra Belton
Greenwillow, 2000, 260 pp., \$15.95

Coming of Age
ISBN 0-688-1590-8

"Tilara is too black..." are the words overheard during childhood by one African- American young girl, Tilara Hayes. As Tilara moves towards adolescence, she tries to accept herself and her skin, a tone she describes as "the color of a Hershey chocolate bar."

The summer before her first year of high school, Tilara Hayes arrives at her Aunt Cloelle's West Virginia home. This shy, young girl finds herself coerced into volunteering at McKendree, the local retirement home, or as the locals call it, the home for "colored people." There, Tilara makes new friends with some of the teenagers who are spending the summer helping out at McKendree. They call themselves the "MC's," short for the McKendree Crowd.

While working at McKendree, Tilara learns to face the vestiges of racial prejudice and age discrimination. She also recognizes, both directly and indirectly, that loving oneself is the first step towards becoming a real person.

Tracie M. Michalski
Orlando, Florida

A symphony of women's voices beckons the reader to the world of the Twentieth Century where female poets use the power of language to describe the "woman's world." The poems are arranged around the themes of birth, childhood, awareness, falling in love, homemaking, developing a sense of oneself, and growing old. Wellknown poets like Gwendolyn Brooks, Sandra Cisneros, Adrienne Rich weave their words with lesser-known voices of women from multicultures, including Nigeria, India, Africa, Japan, and China. Their poems speak of political repression, economic domesticity, inner strength, and power and control. No longer are women poets expected to write only about love, children, and nature. Rather, the poems in this collection form a melody where various themes underscore the freedom and power that women have earned over time. All the voices seem to be saying, "Take your power and fly."

Jeanne M. Gerlach
Arlington, Texas

Eggs in One Basket by Kathy Mackel

Humor/Fantasy

Harper Collins, 2000, 195 pp., \$15.95

ISBN: 0-380-97847-4

Eggs in One Basket, a sequel to *Can of Worms*, is about the weird things that keep happening to star quarterback Scott Schreiber.

Scott's life has not been the same since his best friend, Mike Pillsbury, made contact with aliens. In fact, during a football game, Scott has hallucinations and develops superhuman powers. Soon, Scott discovers a new talent for flying, which he can't control. Moreover, his flying leads him and his friends to the Lyra, a peaceful but powerful birdlike alien and her eggs.

Adventure soon ensues, as Scott and his friends struggle to protect a prized possession - Lyra's eggs - from the Shards, the cruelest life form in the galaxy. Together, Scott, his girlfriend Stacia, and Mike are joined in their heroic attempts to save the planet from the dangerous race of conquerors by a strange creature named, Ditka, a Sirian, who resembles a talking dog. In the end, this fearsome foursome - Scott, Stacia, Mike and their pet, Ditka, battle the evil Shards, save the Lyra's eggs, and prevent intergalactic battle.

This is a funny, fast-paced fantasy-filled read, perfect for middle schoolers.

Amy Overman
Orlando, Florida

Just A Mom by Betty DeGeneres

Relationships/Homosexuality

Advocate Books, 2000, 188 pp., \$21.95

ISBN: 1-55583-613-5

This book is written for anyone who has trouble accepting a gay child, or any gay child who has difficulty wanting to come out to his or her parents. Betty DeGeneres, mother of famed comedian Ellen DeGeneres, chronicles the journey of a mother and daughter, marked first by disappointment and later by compassion, acceptance, and love.

DeGeneres weaves together a memoir that is insightful, supportive and practical. Reinforced by anecdotes, DeGeneres covers timely topics that any parent or supporter needs to eliminate longstanding myths and to embrace tolerance and understanding. She provides an especially helpful guide for such groups as Parents and Friends of Gays and Lesbians (PFLAG).

Above all, she shows that being gay is not about sex. With her co-author, Dr. Dina Bachelor Evans, she writes, "it is about the human spirit and a choice made to demonstrate that love is not limited by gender." In this moving account, both mother and daughter learn that the path to understanding begins with breaking human silence.

Katherine McFarland
Shippensburg, Pennsylvania

One Nation Under a Groove: Rap Music and Its Roots by James Haskins

Rap Music

Hyperion, 2000, 160 pp., \$15.99

ISBN: 0-786-80475-85

This book should be a must read for anyone who thinks the history of rap begins in the 1970s. In this book, Haskins covers a wide range of time showing that the roots of rap actually began an ocean away in Africa. Haskins chronicles how spirituals sung by slaves influenced the Blues, Ragtime and Jazz, and how the themes prevalent in these musical genres have followed through to rap.

Also discussed in vivid detail is the place of women in rap, and how rap has transcended its roots in urban African-American culture to become a worldwide phenomenon. For young people, you will find information on present day rappers such as Eminem, Tupac Shakur, and Queen Latifah.

Most teenagers think they know all there is to know about rap. Reading this book should show them so much more. The book will be of enormous benefit to engage young people about the innovations in today's music and its handy glossary will help even the most knowledgeable music lover.

Kendra Lacy
Merritt Island, Florida

Girl of Kosovo by Alice Mead

Warfare in Europe

Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2000, 128 pp., \$16.00

ISBN: 0-374-32620-7

Set in Kosovo during the Albanian-Serb battles of 1999, this realistic novel brings war up close and personal, with its devastating effects on those really unable to comprehend what it's all about - and why.

Eleven-year-old Zana, an Albanian whose best friend is a Serb, experiences graphically portrayed horrors she cannot understand: her father and two brothers are killed in a Serb-inspired explosion, one that shatters her leg; the neighborhood wise man is executed; bodies are burned; bombs explode. It's not an easy read, but it is an accurate one and a good one.

Author Mead has spent considerable time in Kosovo and bases much of this novel on events she has seen or heard about from those who endured them. A useful historical forward opens this book and provides some background information for young readers.

Ted Hipple
Knoxville, Tennessee

Say You Are My Sister by Laurel Stowe Brady

Growing Up/Family

HarperCollins, 2001, 208 pp., \$15.95

ISBN: 0-06-028307-6

Georgie, Mony, and baby Keely Faye Keddrington find themselves orphaned in Georgia during the early 1940s. Alone with no one to take care of them, sixteen-year-old Georgie and fourteen-year-old Mony set out to save the family and their land.

When faced with having no food left, Mony dreams of finding the Keddrington family fortune, which was hidden during the Civil War. However, until that time can come, Mony secretly accepts a job doing cooking and housekeeping for one Dr. Fellowes in hopes of saving the family from starvation. It is Dr. Fellowes who becomes the family's salvation by anonymously leaving food for the girls and hiding the Keddrington family fortune for Mony to find. Unexpectedly, though, it is while working at Dr. Fellowes's house that Mony comes across a medical file that states that Georgie is not a Keddrington, and to make matters worse - half-Negro. When confronted with the news, the girls prove the strength of family ties.

Through a series of life altering events, this story is a touching testament to the power of the human spirit and the importance of family.

Victoria E. Schram
Winter Park, Florida

When I Get Older, I'll Understand by Barbara Bailey

Coming-of-Age/Africa American

Sterling House Publisher, 2000, 184 pp., \$7.95

ISBN: 1-56315-211-8

Joan Williams, an African-American teenager growing up in Chicago in the 1960s, appears to have everything going for her. Her parents, both educators, decide to move to Hyde Park to provide her with greater opportunities for the "right" friends and a better education. Joan's mother tries her best to help Joan become popular, but nothing seems to work. Joan is still a social outcast at school for the simple reason she is brilliant.

Although Joan is bright and inquisitive, she lacks self-confidence, but she eventually develops it through heartfelt conversations with her father, a boyfriend who nearly breaks her heart, and the realization that she doesn't have all the answers to life's questions.

Readers who find themselves at this difficult age, and who must make decisions about friendship, dating, and college, will appreciate Joan's struggle and ultimate conviction to be true one's self.

Susanne M. Miller
Youngstown, Ohio

Rundown by Michael Cadmun
Puffin Books, 1999, 168 pp., \$5.99

Honesty/Rape
ISBN: 0-14-1311087-1

As a game, sixteen-year-old Jennifer Thayer reports a crime that never happened, and claims that she is the victim. She pretends that she was attacked by a serial rapist and reports it to the police. She plans the crime to happen while she is out for a jog, falling into blackberry bushes, making sure to get scrapes and scratches from the bushes to make it look as if she were really attacked.

At first, this seems to be a great way to attract the attention she is craving from her family and takes their focus of her sister's wedding. The only problem is that things are going further than Jennifer had expected. Detectives are beginning to dig deeper and pry her for information on her alleged attacker. Jennifer is starting to realize that her plan is not perfect, and her one lie is turning into numerous lies. She may have other people convinced so far, but she knows the real truth and it is eating her up inside.

A gripping tale of a criminal investigation and the dark reality that telling a lie may fool others, but there is always one person who knows the truth.

Casie Champlin
Port Orange, Florida

Forgotten Fire by Adam Bagdasarian
DK Publishing, 2000, 273 pp., \$17.95

Nonfiction/Armenian Genocide
ISBN: 0-7894-2627-7

Vahan Kenderian, at the tender age of twelve, was used to a plush life as a member of one of the most influential Armenian families in Turkey. That is until a Turkish soldier appears on his doorstep, escorting his father away permanently. This event marks the beginning of a journey that will force Vahan to grow from a boy into a man in a few short years.

Vahan will feel the loss of home and his family. He will feel hunger and thirst. He will become a drifter, a slave, and an orphan. He will be free and then, a prisoner the rest of his life - all in the name of the Armenian Genocide of 1915.

This is a true story of a young boy who finds the survivor within himself, allowing him the ability to rise out of the ashes of hate. This amazing, descriptive and detailed tale makes it a must read for young adults.

Alison Bostick
Winter Park, Florida

The Year of Revolution: Love and Rebellion in the 1960s by Judith Ortiz Cofer
Puffin Books, 2000, 131 pp., \$5.99

Coming-of-Age
ISBN: 0-14-13097-1

In this collection of fictional anecdotes, journal writings, and poems, Judith Ortiz Cofer captures the inner psyche of a female teenager growing up in the tumultuous 1960s.

Mary Ellen, a Puerto Rican living in New Jersey, is the narrator who recounts the upheavals and joys of adolescence in this insightful book. She speaks of her growing awareness of her own sexuality, early sexual encounters, involvement in political uprisings, awareness of the effect of drugs, and memories of the pain of war and death. Mary Ellen reflects upon her passage into adulthood and her changing views of parents, their conflicting value systems, and the world around her.

Through Mary Ellen's narration, Cofer captures the depth and complexities of adolescent emotions, drawing upon common themes such as the struggle for peer acceptance, rebellion from adults, and the search for identity. This book lends itself to an interdisciplinary study of the 1960s, masterfully weaving different literary genres into a historical account of important events such as the assassination of President Kennedy and the perspectives of Cuban exiles in America. Educators can use this work to increase awareness of Latino cultures. Teachers should be cautioned about explicit sexual content.

Jennifer Good
Auburn, Alabama

Run If You Dare by Randy Powell
Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2001, 195 pp., \$16.00

Father-Son Relationships
ISBN: 0-374-39981-6

Gardner's father has spent his whole adult life not knowing what he wants to do, except play golf. Now, at 49, he's unemployed, unhappy that his life hasn't turned out the he envisioned it, and thinking of running away to start a new life. This revelation, expressed during an infrequent father-son talk, shocks 14 year-old Gardner, who has idolized his father, especially now that Gardner is trying to establish his own identity.

While Powell's humor and Gardner's relationships with friends Sheeph and Annie lighten this depressing scenario, reading the novel is like watching a TV documentary of a nice family's internal struggles. As readers, we know the story won't end happily, because this isn't a Disney movie, even though we feel Gardner is going to be okay. Although *Run If You Dare* is one of the best novels about father-son relationships that you will ever read, I found it more disturbing than entertaining.

Don Gallo
Salon, Ohio

A Year Down Yonder by Richard Peck
Dial, 2000, 120 pp., \$16.99

Historical/Growing-Up/Family
ISBN: 0-8037-2518-3

This sequel to Newbery Honor book, *A Long Way from Chicago*, focuses on Mary Alice's junior year of high school and her deepening bond with her feisty Grandma Dowdel in rural Illinois. Mary Alice and her family are living in Chicago, where they are trying to get back on their feet after feeling the effects of the Great Depression. The most intriguing character is clearly the wise and very unconventional grandma, a Depression-era Robin Hood who continues to embarrass and outsmart locals most deserving of her tricks and to help those most needy without making them feel that she has done them a favor.

Several other adult characters and a handful of classmates round out this story, including Royce McNabb, another newcomer to the community who announces at the end of the school year that he'll write to Mary Alice from the University of Illinois. In an afterward, Mary Alice returns to Grandma Dowdel's house for her wedding to Royce, which occurs during World War II. She ends the story by telling the reader, "We lived happily ever after." An odd ending to an otherwise entertaining, light read about everyday life as managed by people who survived the Great Depression.

Sheila Gullickson
Moorhead, Minnesota

The Truth Out There by Celia Rees
DK Publishing, 2000, 240 pp., \$16.95

Autism/Mystery
ISBN: 0-789-42668-4

Staying at his sick grandmother's house was the last thing Joshua wanted to do for his summer vacation. Joshua knew that his mother needed to be there for his grandmother, but it meant a whole summer away from his friends in a boring town where he did not know anyone.

Soon after he arrives, however, Joshua discovers that there is a secret in his family, a secret that no one wants to talk about. In a dusty old room, he finds UFO magazines and paintings of alien ships that belonged to his Uncle Patrick. Uncle Patrick died at a very young age, but no one in the family ever talks about how he died and strangely enough, there is no known grave. As Joshua discovers the secrets of a summer long ago, he realizes that his computer game, Alien State 3, is actually the story of Uncle Patrick's life. The resulting story answers the question - what is the family secret behind Uncle Patrick's mysterious disappearance?

This novel - full of mystery and intrigue - is an easy read, aimed at young people who enjoy tales of fantasy and mystery. This engaging summer yarn is perfect for young reluctant readers.

Terri Reilly
Orlando, Florida

Shelly Shock by Donna Jo Napoli
Dutton Children's Book, 2000, 165 pp., \$15.99

Middle School Sports
ISBN: 0-525-46452-2

Adam (the protagonist in *Soccer Shock* (1991) and *Shark Shock* (1995)) is a busy middle school kid, and this book can barely keep up with all his misadventures. His math and soccer schedules are in conflict, and he suddenly has to cope when a young girl named Shelley who tries out for the soccer team and proves to be a better player than Adam. On top of that, it seems that Adam is always unintentionally hurting the feelings of Kim, his secret love.

As in previous adventures, Adam seeks advice from a most unusual yet typical middle school source - the freckles on his knees. In order to hear what they have to say, he has to receive a mild electric shock - so he exposes himself - foolishly - to the current in an electric fence.

Adam survives, and in the end, he learns that despite everything, the quality of a team is more important than whether it is made up boys or girls. He also learns to use his love of poetry, especially e. e. cummings, to express himself and his admiration for Shelley and Kim. Indeed, as his soccer coach tells him, Adam is a "real mensch," a Yiddish slang for "true gentleman." Well-drawn family members and friends help fill out this easy to read, often hilarious short novel of a few days in the life of a middle school boy. English teachers will enjoy using this book in conjunction with a creative writing unit.

Nancy E. Zuwiya
Binghamton, New York

Adaline Falling Star by Mary Pope Osborne
Scholastic, 2000, 170 pp., \$16.95

Historical Fiction/Survival
ISBN: 0-439-05947-X

This historical novel tells the story of Kit Carson's daughter Adaline. Carson did have a daughter with an Arapaho woman, but little is known of her after she was sent to live with relatives in St. Louis. In Osborne's vision, she is an intelligent, strong, and determined young woman who refuses to accept her life as a little better than a slave. When she believes her father is not coming back, she runs away.

Adaline's struggle to survive along the river is realistic, but more appealing to readers is her struggle to resist the dog she finds in the woods. She accepts its company, even as she declares, "I ain't going to love him." Readers will feel her pain when she must leave the dog behind in order to get her work on a steamboat going upriver. Kit Carson's reappearance after the steamboat explodes is a trifle convenient, but overall this is a solid and artistic historical fiction.

Ellen A Greever
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

A Riddle of Roses by Caryl Cude Mullins
Second Story Press, 2000, 222 pp., \$6.95

Fantasy
ISBN: 1-896764-28-2

When recently orphaned thirteen-year-old Meryl is caught reading - without permission - the 'Great Bard's of Taliesin's Collection of Songs and Adventures,' she is suspended from training to be a bard, and sentenced to be the servant of the Mistress of Woodcraft for a year. Angry, bored, and disappointed, Meryl gains the Hall's permission to pursue an alternate route to hardship: fulfilling a quest, as did the bards of old.

In spite of being unsure of what she is supposed to do on this quest, Meryl sets out into the forest. When she meets wisecracking Halstaff, the forest oracle, who accuses of Taliesin of stealing his magical rose, Meryl becomes determined to discover why Taliesin stole the magical flower and, of course, to find this missing rose.

Believing the rose is in Avalon, where the magic cauldron of Ceridwen (anyone who sips from it becomes old) is located, Meryl and Halstaff begin a spellbinding, humorous adventure filled with amazing and unforgettable characters, continuous action, and a wonderful message: it is through hard work, not magic, that you attain your goal.

Bill Mollineux
Granby, Connecticut

The Time Bike by Jane Langton
HarperCollins, 2000, 176 pp., \$15.95

Fantasy/Time Travel
ISBN: 0-06-028437-4

The Time Bike, Newbery Honor author Jane Langton's sixth book about the extraordinary Hall family, is a magical account of the perils - and surprises - of travel in the fourth dimension.

It all begins when Eddy Hall receives an old-fashioned bicycle from his mysterious uncle, Prince Krishna. The bike possesses the ability to travel through time and both Eddy and his sister, Eleanor, take some fantastic time travel trips that have some surprising results - including, saving their family home which is being foreclosed by the bank.

Eddy pushes off for Julius Caesar's time, and ends up on a deserted beach after realizing that he has pedaled in the wrong direction, while Eleanor wheels back to 1938 in a vain effort to save the life of an ancient movie star, one Derek Alabaster. The two subplots seem to have nothing in common - until Eleanor and Eddy find clues in their respective travels to their life today.

Indeed, while trying to save the life of a famous movie star, Eleanor just happens to pick up a piece of paper from 1938; it turns out to be the missing deed to their house. Relieved, she returns home to her family, rescuing Eddy along the way, and saving the day.

Light and easy reading for middle school students, the characters are rich in their everyday goodness.

Linda Donley
Orlando, Florida

A Short Guide to a Happy Life by Anna Quindlan
Random House, 2000, 50 pp., \$12.95

Inspirational
ISBN: 0-375-50461-3

Excellent insight and advice is what columnist and novelist Anna Quindlan offers in this short and inspiring collection of essays. Saddened by her own mortality since the death of her mother, Anna Quindlan writes of love, marriage, parenthood, disappointment, and death. Her purpose is to explore these topics in their complexity and to underscore that life is a gift of God and not a mere existence.

For Anna Quindlan, life is a school where everywhere, there is a classroom. Lessons can be found in falling snowdrops; glistening daffodils; small children nestling on a couch; and quiet conversations with the homeless. Written in plainspoken language, Quindlan's work will resonate with adolescents, no matter what their religious or ethnic affiliation.

Gilberto Davis
Ponce, Puerto Rico

Orca Book Publishers, 2000, 186 pp., \$6.95

ISBN: 1-55143-162-9

At the Vancouver School of the Arts, seventeen year-old Cassie studies dance. Back in Holden, Victoria's hometown, sixteen-year-old Holden paints alone, all day, in his studio attic. What do these two have in common? Years ago - as children on a field trip to the Victoria Seaquarium - they witnessed a fatal accident when a young woman trainer fell into the killer whale pool and was drowned by the whales. Forever, they are both haunted by images and dreams of this horrific event.

Offering no support, Cassie's psychologist father is too busy with patients to recognize her trauma, while Holden's dad deals with his wife's four-year desertion, her sudden return home, and her newly discovered case of full-blown AIDS. Holden deals with his pain by turning to painting and drinking, and Cassie turns to Holden for emotional and physical support.

With mutual support, but not without struggle, they are ultimately able to help each other and continue on with their lives. Although this is a busy novel, young adults will relate to the family struggles as well wrestle with the issue of holding whales in captivity.

Kay Haas
Ottawa, Kansas

No More Dead Dogs by Gordon Korman

Honesty/True to Life

Hyperion Books, 2000, 180 pp., \$15.99

ISBN: 0-7868-2462-X

This funny tale begins when a high school football player with the unlikely name of Wallace Wallace is asked by his eighth-grade English teacher to write a book review on *Old Shep, My Pal*. Humor results when Wallace Wallace, a boy reknown for his unbridled honesty, tells his teacher that this is "the most boring book that he has ever read" because he knew that *Old Shep*, the dog, was going to die before he even read page one. As Wallace Wallace says matter of factly to his teacher, "every book with a dog on its cover always dies."

His teacher, though, takes affront at Wallace Wallace's remarks. His teacher loves the book, and moreover, is directing the school play entitled - that's right - *Old Shep, My Pal*. The play becomes the source for his teacher's punishment for Wallace Wallace's blunt review, and soon, Wallace finds himself assigned to a part in the production. The teacher hopes to change his student's independent mind, but Wallace Wallace has different plans.

Wallace Wallace begins to ad-lib, and soon this touching story of a boy and his beloved dog becomes a rollicking "roller-blade, rock and roll" rendition of a classic tale of friendship and love. Young teens will enjoy this story of a young boy who could not tell even a tiny lie.

Selenia Rodriguez
Orlando, Florida

Carolina Crow Girl by Valerie Hobbs

Friendship/Animals

Puffin Books, 2000, 138 pp., \$5.99

ISBN: 0-14-130976-8

Eleven-year-old Carolina Lewis, her mother, Melanie, and her baby sister, Trinity, live in a school bus. The bus is hidden on the Crouch estate, behind a stand of eucalyptus trees near the ocean, not far from Santa Barbara, California. Melanie has driven the bus across the United States. They stop whenever there are opportunities for Melanie to find enough work to pay for food and other necessities. Now, they have taken up residence in a field above the Pacific Ocean.

Carolina meets wheel chair-bound Stefan Crouch III, whose father owns the field, and is 11 years old, like she is. They fast become buddies. In fact, when Carolina's mother decides to move to Oregon, Carolina chooses to stay behind and live with Stefan and his family. The resulting friendship is made stronger by the fact that Stefan had a sister who died; Carolina has come to replace this much beloved sibling.

Through their friendship, Carolina teaches a hurt family to love again, and models for a wheel chair-bound friend the power of animals to heal the soul. When Stefan's family returns her love, Carolina is able to accept herself as she is and to recognize and value her love for her own family.

MaryAnnelle Baker
Overland Park, Kansas

The World at Her Fingertips: The Story of Helen Keller by Joan Dash

Biography

Scholastic Press, 2001, 256 pp., \$15.95

ISBN: 0-590-90715-8

The author paints a comprehensive picture of Helen Keller with this fascinating biography. Readers will gain new perspective of the historical, political and cultural climate in which Ms. Keller lived and worked, along with an understanding of her relationships with those close to her.

Besides enjoying the wealth of new information unearthed by the author, young readers may take comfort in the typically familiar vignettes of Ms. Keller's life. Notes from her own autobiography and descriptions of movie scenes from *The Miracle Worker* are woven throughout the story.

With flowing narrative, the author offers insight into Helen Keller's determination to bridge the gap between two worlds. A couple of awkward moments, with which younger students may need transitioning help, almost disappear as the author skillfully personalizes Helen Keller's inspiring, productive life. Readers will come away with an appreciation of her childhood and of her adult role as a champion of human and civil rights.

Kristen Sternberg
Deland, Florida

The Princess Diaries by Meg Cabot

Fathers and Daughters/Identity

HarperCollins, 2000, 238 pp., \$15.95

ISBN: 0-380-97848-2

The Princess Diaries is the diary of Mia Thermopolis, who is living a confused and hard to believe life. She is the not most popular girl in school, but is in love with the most popular boy. She lives in New York City with her artist mom, who is divorced and is dating her algebra teacher - a class Mia is failing.

One day, her father arrives and upsets her troubled life. He tells her that he has cancer, and then, to her disbelief, that she is the Princess of Genovia. That's right! As it turns out, her father is not just the European politician he's always led to her believe, but actually the prince of a small country. Before long, the New York paparazzi arrive at her school and front door, eager to take pictures of real live princess.

Offbeat Mia will win the hearts of teenage girls dying to fit in without too much fanfare, and Meg Cabot's writing is silly and entertaining enough to capture the fancy of young readers who are looking for a fun story about ordinary people caught in extraordinary circumstances. With tons of pop culture references, this book will make today's teens feel right at home.

Michelle Rich
Oviedo, Florida

The Colors of My World by Lynn Joseph

Poetry/Dominican Republic

HarperCollins, 2000. 138 pp., \$14.95

ISBN 0-06-0282320

Ana Rosa is about to turn 13. Born and raised in the Dominican Republic, she now dreams of becoming a writer. Yet Ana knows how unusual this wish is since the only person she knows who writes books in her country is the nation's leader, President Baluaguer. Moreover, Ana's mother fears for her daughter's safety if she writes. As her mother says, those brave enough "to hurl words at the government," have died.

Much to her mother's dismay, though, Ana does write. Encouraged by her older brother, Guario, Ana begins writing her thoughts on her brother's notepad, but soon, Ana's words become deadly. When the government evicts the residents in her town to make room for foreign investors, Ana Rosa writes an article for the local newspaper, quoting her older brother's anger, and as a result, Guario is brutally shot down.

Sadness ensues, but Ana does not lose her desire to write. Soon, as a gift, Ana receives a typewriter and hundreds of sheets of paper. Enthused, she begins typing furiously her brother's story. Ana's dream is that the world will know of her brother's short but heroic life.

With every chapter beginning with a poem, readers of all ages will relate to this moving story of the triumph of the human will.

Dena R. Wheeler
Orlando, Florida

Run the Blockade by G. Clifton Wisler

Harper Collins, 2000, 122 pp., \$15.95

Fourteen-year-old Irish lad Henry Serven finds adventure as a ship's boy and lookout aboard the Banshee, a British ship that carries goods between The Confederate states and Britain during America's Civil War.

Historical Fiction
ISBN: 0-688-16538-9

Henry is lured by the spirit of his father to follow the sea, despite the objections of his mother. But the reality of the poverty that surrounds the Serven's after the death of her husband forces the widow to leave Ireland, and reluctantly, to allow Henry to follow in his father's footsteps. With the help of his cousin Robert, Henry finds work in Britain at a shipping company and eventually, he is promoted to ship's boy aboard the Banshee.

Danger looms ahead, though. An American "Yankee" ship discovers the Banshee as it delivers goods to America's Confederate army and fires upon the vessel. Swinging into action, young Henry risks his life and limb to save his new found home from ever-present disaster.

Based on actual events, this retelling of a little known Civil War adventure will delight readers who enjoy being aboard the high seas.

Pat Incantalupo
Apopka, Florida

I Believe in Water: Twelve Brushes with Religion Edited by Marilyn Singer

Harper Collins, 2000, 280 pp., \$15.95

If you have deep faith, or did and lost it, or never experienced the meaning of faith, there is at least one story in this short story collection that mirrors your personal experience. Each story revolves around a different religion, making it an excellent choice for a course exploring various religions of the world. The varied impact religion has in different cultures is explored as well as its significant relevance to the particulars of each story.

Short Stories/Religion
ISBN: 0-06-028397-1

For example, author Virginia Euwer Wolff shows us three different girls confronting unwanted pregnancies, praying in the context of Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam. Novelist Jacqueline Woodson shares a glimpse of her own childhood as a Jehovah's Witness, while young adult novelist Joyce Carol Thomas takes us into the shivery practice of religious snake handling.

The characters in these short stories are varied, ranging from young children to those at the end of their long life. Adolescent characters play a prominent role throughout the collection. The contemporary settings, smart dialogue, and eternal themes make this an excellent choice for adolescents coming to terms with their own religious feelings.

Marcyana Mead
Deltona, Florida

Tree Girl by T. A. Barron

Philomel, October, 2001, 138 pp., \$14.99

Like watching a child play happily in the sun, reading this book is a simple and rich pleasure. Young Rowanna, called Anna, has a special connection with nature; she expects the natural world to be kind to her, and it is. Anna has conversations with "Old Master Burl," the mighty fir tree that she climbs and jokes with; she adopts a weak sparrow that she names Eagle, and the two become inseparable; she romps with Sash, who appears first as a bear cub, then-when Anna badly wants a human playmate, transforms into the form of a boy-and who finally explains that he is actually a tree spirit, and that it is not he, but her perception, that has transformed him from bear cub into boy.

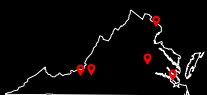
Identity/Belonging
ISBN: 0-399-23425-x

There is only one dark spot in Anna's life: Master Mellwyn, who has raised her since he found her when she was an abandoned infant, has warned her against traveling into the deep forest. When Mellwyn finds her at The High Willow, he drags her home with him; when in the forest, instead of playful spirits, he sees only fiendish ghouls. Later, when Mellwyn is badly hurt in an accident, Anna chooses to stay with him; her loyalty inspires Mellwyn to reveal the truth to her: she, like Sash, is a tree spirit, and her mother is The High Willow. She chooses to return to the ridge of High Willow to live as a tree spirit, and encourages Mellwyn to visit her there.

This modern legend suggests that, in many ways, our lenses determine how we see the world. I have read few books that address the idea so gently and beautifully.

Sissi Carroll
Tallahassee, Florida

Reference Citation: Kaplan, Jeff (2001) "Clip & File YA Book Reviews" *The ALAN Review*, Volume 28, Number 3, p. 27.



GET DIRECTIONS



SEE ALL LOCATIONS



[Contact Virginia Tech](#)
[Privacy Policy](#)
[Acceptable Use](#)
[We Remember](#)
[University Libraries](#)
[Accessibility](#)
[Consumer Information](#)
[Stop Abuse](#)
[Policies](#)
[Equal Opportunity](#)
[WVTF](#)
[University Bookstore](#)
[Jobs at Virginia Tech](#)

© 2018 Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. All rights reserved.



The Knife and the Butterfly is a young adult novel by Ashley Hope Pérez, published in 2011 by Carolrhoda Books. The novel, which explores the lives of two teenage gang members in Houston, a Hispanic boy named Azael and a White girl named Lexi, is based on a 2006 gang-related death in that city. The novel, set in Houston, is about a 15-year old Salvadoran American MS-13 gang member named Martín "Azael" Arevalo. He wakes up in a prison cell and observes 17-year old White American Alexis "Lexi" Allen YA Book Reviews. Collection by Whispering Stories Blog | Blog & Books · Last updated 4 weeks ago. 135. Ya Books Good Books Reading Books Children's Book Awards Sci Fi Novels Black Authors Young Adult Fiction Best Children Books Latest Books. Voyages in the Underworld of Orpheus Black by Marcus and Julian Sedgwick - Book Review - Whispering Stories. Voyages in the Underworld of Orpheus Black. A lyrical and dreamlike story of two brothers in conflict amidst the devastation of WWII London. I not only book blog, but I also write a review column for SDE Magazine to further promote exceptional authors. I love YA, MG, clean romances of any genre, minus erotica, mysteries and thrillers. PG to PG-13 ratings please. I prefer mobi and pdf formats. My favorite genres are mystery, middle grade YA, realistic fiction, education and parenting. You can submit your file to my email at lisakallenbach@gmail.com. Put in the subject line "KBR Review Request".