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The Well-Stocked Bookshelf

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The Well-Stocked Bookshelf

BY ED SPICER

If one speaks of the elephant in the room, he is likely to make those in the room uncomfortable. Well, I have three elephants in the room scattered about, and none of them will do anything but delight. My previous set of reviews included *Grandpa Green*, which also features an elephant. The Chinese may have dubbed this the Year of the Rabbit, but the publishing world has obviously decided this is the year of the elephant. My first graders are delighted with the three Elephant and Piggie books (Mo Willems) out this year. In addition to these we have Jennifer Jacobson's *Small as an Elephant*, Tracie Vaughn Zimmer's *Cousins of Clouds*, Ann Downer's *Elephant Talk*, Donna M. Jackson's *Elephant Scientist* (one of the *Scientists in the Field* series that every library should carry), *Pomelo Begins to Grow* by Ramona Badescu, *Tweak Tweak* by Eve Bunting, and more. Scattered among the elephant book reviews are other books that should be hugely popular, significant, or unique. Enjoy!

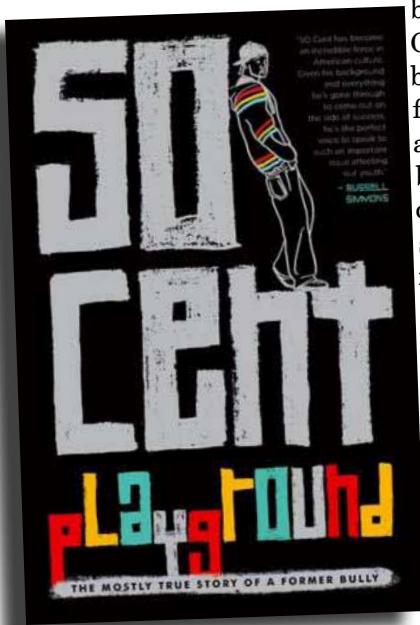
★*Note: A star before an entry indicates the book is receiving a "starred review" and is an especially outstanding, must-read book.*

50 Cent, & Moser, L. (2011). *Playground: The mostly true story of a former bully.* (Ill. by L. Akana). New York: Penguin Group/Razorbill. 314 pp. ISBN 978-1-59514-434-8. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

Student readers may not know Curtis Jackson III, which is why the cover of this book identifies him by his much more identifiable music moniker of 50 Cent. Co-written with Laura Moser, *Playground* tells a story of a bully, based in part by events from the life and experiences of 50 Cent. In this book, Butterball is forced to see a therapist after he brutally attacks another student. Butterball is a hefty young man who co-opts his nickname and adopts a swagger to hide his basic insecurity: "What, are you deaf or something? Didn't you hear me say don't call me that like ten times already? I go by Butterball, all right? Bu-tter-ball, I sounded it out. It's not that hard." (p. 4). Butterball or Burton, his real name, is living with his mom. While Butterball longs to live in the city with his father who gives him shoes and other gifts, readers easily understand that his mother is more responsible. However, even a good mother who is trying to pay rent, go to school, and raise a son faces challenges that most of us will never experience. Readers also understand that Burton is lonely and wants to fit in. Most of us question why someone who wants to fit in would then savagely beat someone, Maurice, with a sock filled with D batteries.

When I pulled my hand away from his face for the last time, I suddenly became aware of how the whole scene had gone completely silent all around us: how all of those kids just stood there staring at me like I was finally something. And I'd be lying if I said that it didn't feel pretty damn good. (p. 19)

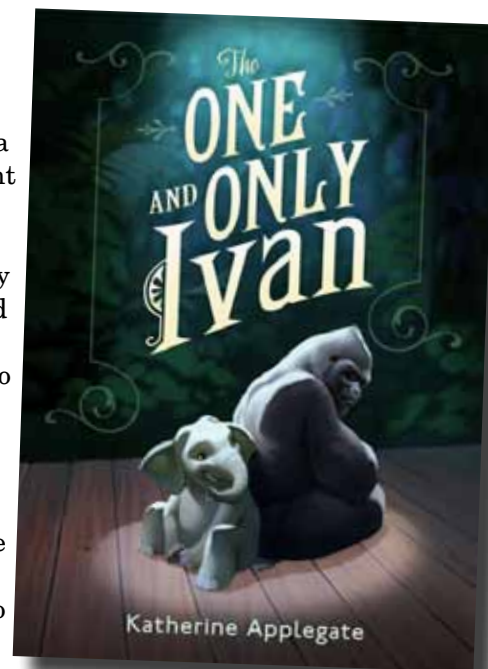
This honest look at the attraction of having folks who usually ignore you or make fun of you suddenly become aware of you is what makes this book effective. In this journey we see a father who only knows this same kind of ethic: hit first, hit harder, take what's your due. We dabble with peer pressure, body image, homophobia, poverty, and other contributing factors. The honest voice of Butterball, who eventually grows back into his name of Burton, makes this a book worth recommending. *Playground* also hints at the positive role that therapy can have in the lives of our students (well, in Michigan, we can dream of how this might help even if budgets make it much less likely). For any of its oversimplifications about ending bullying, this book is sure to spark conversations about how students become bullies and how students stop being bullies. Conversation



is the essential first step before change happens. *Playground* should be purchased for all middle school libraries, and high school students who know 50 Cent will read this one eagerly. For middle school readers, this one pairs well with *The Other Felix*.

Applegate, K. (2011). *The one and only Ivan*. New York: HarperCollins. 305 pp. ISBN 978-0-06-199225-4. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Our third elephant book features Ivan who is not an elephant, but a gorilla. Ivan, however, is a friend with Stella, the elephant. Stella has her four feet chained to the floor 23 hours a day to break her spirit enough that she will allow a dog to walk on her back. Ivan and Stella live in a shopping mall-arcade and their purpose is to bring in customers. In time, an elephant and a gorilla are not enough to draw a crowd. This is when Ruby, the baby elephant enters the story. She is a hit. Customers flock to see her, but Stella whose foot is badly infected dies because, in part, Mack the owner cannot afford to have her treated by a vet. Ivan promises Stella that he will take care of Ruby and make sure that she escapes the mall. To do this, however, Ivan will need to figure out how to use his artwork to free Ruby. Applegate's control of the pacing in this novel is superb. Ivan begins as a gorilla, somewhat oblivious to the life he should be living. He calls his cage a domain and cannot really see the truth of his circumstances, living in a mall-video arcade. Ruby vibrant personality and Kipling-like questions gradually ease Ivan into an understanding of what it means to be caged. Written in first person gorilla, this book is sure to be popular with readers who love animal stories and for those lovers of sad books, especially when readers come to understand that this book is based on a real shopping mall gorilla from Tacoma, Washington (who ended up in Zoo Atlanta). This poignant, uplifting story is a natural pair with *The Masterwork of a Painting Elephant* and will appeal to the same, broad audience.



Bradley, K.B. (2011). *Jefferson's sons*. New York: Penguin Group/Dial. 364 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8037-3499-9. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

Jefferson's Sons is a book that should be on the Newbery table. I see an author who has done extensive research and has used this research to tell a compelling and believable story about how Beverly, Harriet, Madison, and Eston, children most probably fathered by Thomas Jefferson, grew up. Since we have no record of what happened to Beverly or Harriet or their children later in life, since we have so little hard evidence to sift through germane to the children history forgets, I find her account, her fictional account, to be extremely entertaining as well as interesting. I also find it extremely important because we have ignored too many people too many times in the history we teach in schools. For me, the most important fact is that the book is fiction, historical fiction. I know going into the book that I cannot use it as biography. However, it does make sense of historical facts in a way that I find compelling, even if I can also imagine other scenarios (let someone else write those books). This novel of how Sally Hemmings raised her children and how those children grew up, moves me regardless of the absolute historical accuracy of specific character developments or specific word choices (even those few times a specific word may not have been the best). I read a book that *could* be true. Bradley tells a story that has not been told before. She takes risks filling in details that historical records cannot verify. I applaud her for doing something so brave, and I am hoping that the Newbery Committee gives *Jefferson's Sons* serious consideration. If I have been successful in this review, teachers at both middle school and high school levels will recognize that this is an essential book in their classrooms and libraries, both for any literary merit they may perceive and for the high probability of introducing students to a book that will make them think and argue and view history as something very important and very much alive.

Bray, L. (2011). *Beauty queens*. New York: Scholastic Press. 400 pp. ISBN: 978-0-439-89597-2. (Hardcover); \$18.99.

In *Going Bovine*, Bray cavorted and teased and journeyed along with Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. In *Beauty Queens*, Bray flirts with *Lord of the Flies*, but from the satirical perspective of a society that believes women should be valued for their ability to use their looks to sell products and create wealth for corporate executives. From the headless boobs and bullets cover (the "bullets" are really lipstick tubes), readers should be prepared for destruction. Indeed, we begin this story with the Miss Teen Dream beauty contestants' plane crashing on what appears to be a deserted island. Only nine beauty queens survive and one of them has a tray embedded in her forehead. Miss Texas, Taylor, immediately takes charge and insists that they continue preparing for the Miss Teen Dream contest—the dead bodies floating around will not distract them from what is important in life. The format of the book employs commercial footnotes, corporate interludes, mini character biographies, and enough hilarious one-line zingers to keep readers laughing through all 400 pages. Part feminist manifesto, part scathing media indictment, and part searing social commentary *Beauty Queens* is also an extremely funny rant about the way women are valued in our society. While Bray introduces about a thousand different issues (racism, homophobia, corporate greed, ecological destruction, assimilation) and reflects these through the lens of nine different queens (and a few other archetypal characters), what sustains this book is the snappy repartee and off-the-wall humor. The plot is a device for thinking about ideas and for setting up the humor, not something intended to neatly package all threads and characters and episodes. Use *Beauty Queens* for high school or adult book groups because it is sure to provoke passionate discussion on what we expect from teen girls in our society, and the priorities that should be paramount in a civilized group of people.

While this review is for the hardcover book, which I read, the audio version of this title, narrated by the author, is simply amazing. Bray does a fantastic job creating very distinct voices for each of the characters. This is one of those exceedingly rare books in which I am very tempted to direct interested folks to the audio version first.

Brimmer, L.D. (2011). *Black & white: The confrontation between Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth and Eugene "Bull" Connor*. Honesdale, PA: Boyds Mills Press/Calkins Creek. 112 pp. ISBN: 978-1-59078-766-3. (Hardcover); \$16.95.

Let's do our students a favor this year and introduce them to some important new characters of the Civil Rights Movement. We do not have to ignore Martin Luther King or Rosa Parks, especially if we use *Black & White* as one of our resources. This book features the vibrant and energetic Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth and the tenacious and loud Eugene "Bull" Connor. The action takes place in Birmingham, Alabama, which we are told was also called, Bombingham, due to the explosive racial tension that filled its streets. Readers will especially appreciate the nuanced look at the Black community, "Fred had found a regular preaching job at the First Baptist Church. This congregation was largely made up of conservative Negro professionals." (p. 16). "Black professionals quickly organized to negotiate with white business leaders over the park issue. They squeezed Fred out of those negotiations, using the pretext that he was no longer a Birmingham resident." (p. 70). "Many of Fred's ACMHR followers believed he was being slighted, and they resented it. Mostly poor or working class, his loyalists viewed the black professionals as newcomers to the struggle for equality because they had not challenged Jim Crow the way the ACMHR had." (p. 71). Connor was a public commissioner who could serve as the embodiment of Jim Crow. His base included all those who either actively supported the racial status quo as their God-given right or who feared the changes that racial integration might bring. Shuttlesworth was the energizer bunny of the Birmingham civil rights campaign. His house was bombed, he was beaten and hospitalized, he was jailed, and he lived under constant daily threats.

None of the assaults, threats, or arrests weakened Shuttlesworth's commitment to equality, which he preached from the pulpit and protested from the streets. These two men serve as icons of the Civil Rights Movement; this book will be a welcomed addition to both high school and middle school libraries.

Cuevas, M. (2011). *The masterwork of a painting elephant*. (Ill. by E. Young). New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux/Frances Foster Books. 136 pp. ISBN 978-0-374-34854-0. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Small page size, just 136 pages, ample illustrations (by Ed Young!), ample white space on the page and between the lines—one may conclude that this is a book for elementary students. And one would be correct, but only partially correct. Birch, the elephant, finds Pigeon Jones, the boy, in a leaf pile near a carwash. Birch takes this orphan as his own. Pigeon, who receives his name from a pigeon, lives on the back of this elephant, never leaving, even when attending school or traveling to Paris, France. Pigeon wants to go to Paris because Birch needs to paint; Birch eventually must part with Pigeon, because, well, Pigeon is a human and he needs to become self-sufficient. This artistic and philosophical book works on many levels, including the one that makes it appropriate for elementary school libraries. Young's simple line drawings add a poignant, nostalgic atmosphere to Cuevas's tale. Cuevas's book is so much more than an early reader; adults will find wisdom in this seemingly random and bizarre story. I suspect, too, that each reader will have a unique experience reacting to the zany wisdom of this tale of friendship and loss and the art of living. We have *not* read this story before!

★**Dixon, H.** (2011). *Entwined*. New York: HarperCollins/Greenwillow. 474 pp. ISBN: 978-0-06-200103-0. (Hardcover); \$17.99

This atmospheric, slightly gothic retelling of the *Twelve Dancing Princesses* is an intoxicating, moody fantasy that captures the spirit of the original but adds several fresh new twists. Azalea is both vulnerable and assertive. Her sisters all have distinct and real personalities. The Keeper is delightfully mysterious and increasingly creepy. He provides Azalea and her sisters the room in which they are able to dance, but all the while there is this undercurrent suggesting that the cost of this dancing will be much higher than Azalea expects. This mystery involving what the Keeper expects moves the narrative forward and keeps the reader eagerly turning pages. The relationship Azalea has with her father develops as the story moves forward; readers gradually understand that Azalea's portrayal may be somewhat ignorant of her father and the many years he has lived in this very strange castle. Certainly those familiar with the Grimm fairytale will not feel betrayed by Dixon's story. At its core, *Entwined* is a book about learning to embrace those things in life we love, whether they are dancing or family or a safe place to live. The writing is lush, blooming with detail. The romance is not the Disney contrived nonsense that we see in movies; it is very believable, which is something of which Dixon may be justifiably proud in this retelling of a classic fairy tale. Pair this one with *The Phoenix Dance* by Dia Calhoun. Purchase this one for both middle school and high school libraries.

Graff, K. (2011). *The other Felix*. New York: Macmillan/Roaring Brook. 169 pp. ISBN 978-1-59643-655-8. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

While I introduced this set of reviews by talking about elephants, it would have been equally acceptable to talk about the books that feature monsters and dreams (see reviews for *A Monster Calls* and *Everybody Sees the Ants* for example). Felix is terrorized by nightmares of monsters with sharp claws and horrible breath. These nightmares paralyze Felix until he meets an identical Felix—same orange hair, same fair skin, same size, and even the same tuft of hair sticking up from the back of his head. This Felix knows how to fight the monsters, and maybe this Felix will teach him how to confront Chase, a real life monster—although in real life, we call them bullies. Just

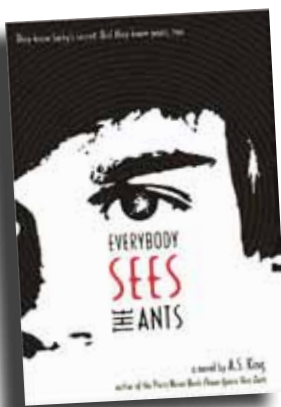
when Felix begins to understand how he might be successful in his real life, the other Felix begins turning somewhat monsterish himself. Graff provides young middle school readers with a foothold for understanding that bullying often is the result of ignorance and a lack of empathy. The story is all the richer because Graff has a good sense for the real priorities of many young boys. Purchase this one for both elementary and middle school libraries. *The Other Felix* is a good one to pair with *Playground*.

★**Hodkin, M.** (2011). *The unbecoming of Mara Dyer*. New York: Simon & Schuster. 456 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4424-2176-9. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Need some book candy for your teens? Need something for those Jacob/Edward lovelorn readers? This is the book! It features a HOTT boy, Noah (teens in my group stressed that this word needs all caps and two Ts). It is a paranormal romance, which has application papers pending in the New Genre Department of Young Adult Literature Central. Mara has just come out of a coma. Upon awakening, she learns that three of her friends are dead. Mara was in this same accident, but she doesn't have a scratch and is losing chunks of time. Readers also are surprised, along with Mara, when Mara's dead friends show up to speak with her. Turns out that the accident that killed her friends happened in an abandoned insane asylum. Gradually we realize that we may be dealing with a person who suffers from posttraumatic stress disorder. The structure of the novel includes cliffhanger endings at the end of each chapter, flashbacks, and a narrator that appears to be very unreliable. What is interesting about this book is the way it often plays with our knowledge and misconceptions of mental health. From the beginning accident inside of a collapsing icon of all that is feared about mental illness (the insane asylum), we are transported with the investigation of whether Mara really does suffer from a mental illness or whether she is some sort of criminally insane monster psychopath. Mara often produces a public face that is distinctly different from what she is really feeling inside. Mara's family considers putting her in an institution but decides, instead, to relocate to Miami and enroll Mara in a very privileged private high school that seems to grade students with dollar signs. This allows Hodkin to pull those strings that alternate between fear over what Mara may do and hope that Mara *will* do something wickedly appropriate for some of the jerks she meets, like Anna. And, of course, since we are in a high school, much of the teen appeal will be for the back and forth banter between Mara and Noah. Folks that need a book to have a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end will be disappointed with the ending of this book; my teen focus group, however, can't wait for the sequel. Purchase this for high school libraries.

King, A.S. (2011). *Everybody sees the ants*. New York: Little, Brown. 282 pp. ISBN 978-0-316-12928-2. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

According to www.miafacts.org, there are 1,689 Americans unaccounted for in Southeast Asia. There are no reliable numbers for students who are bullied in school. Viet Nam veterans who were prisoners of war often suffer from posttraumatic stress syndrome; so do some students who have been bullied. Now if this opening seems odd, it may be because you do not see the ants crawling just above the first sentence and just below the title information, or it may be related to the fact that we do not share King's wickedly weird imagination. This story revolves around Lucky Linderman's attempt to rescue his grandfather from a POW camp while dreaming; his depression, resulting from the bullying he endures at the hands of Nader McMillan; and his dysfunctional family's unwillingness to deal with the truth they see right before their own eyes (the ants). While the depiction of Nader and the school environment do not reflect the school reality that I know and that many teachers in Michigan know, the story still works very well because it is so unique (and Lucky is not attempting to be fair in his narration). The juxtaposition of the bullying and the POW dream descriptions ask readers to consider bullying more seriously. Ants are small creatures. Individually we may miss them, but it is hard to miss lots of them. A single act of bullying may be overlooked



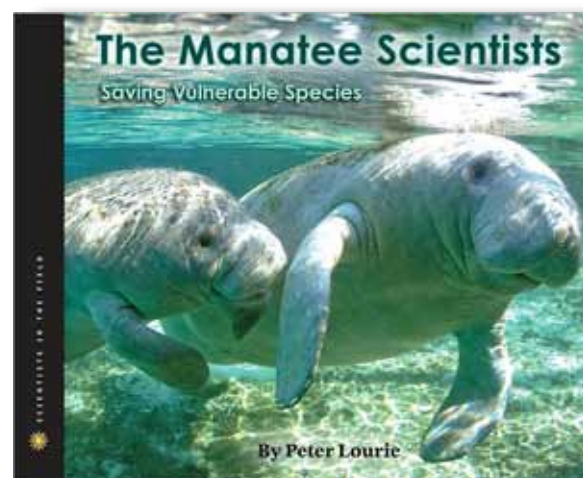
or dismissed on account of the social status and academic record of the student or the family. However, once we allow one ant through the door, more are sure to follow. This book works exceptionally well for the many ways it has readers exploring the details of the story and applying them either to our Viet Nam experience or to the details of our own personal lives. Along the way, Lucky begins to understand that victims are not at fault, and maybe this understanding will be enough to allow Lucky to make some healing changes in his own life. Purchase this one for high school libraries and make sure to bring it to the attention of social studies and history teachers (as well as your English department). This one is also one that I would not hesitate to place in the hands of mature middle school students.

Juster, N. (2011). *The annotated phantom tollbooth*. (Ill. by J. Feiffer). New York: Random House/Knopf. 284 pp. ISBN: 978-0-375-85715-7. (Hardcover); \$29.99.

To this day, one of the wittiest, most engaging, and thoroughly delightful books I have ever had the good fortune to read is Norton Juster's *Phantom Tollbooth*. While some may assume that this book is for elementary school students, I have always held that this is a book for all ages. Certainly Milo, a boy who doesn't know what to do with himself ("*not just sometimes, but always*" p.9), will resonate with younger readers. However, I still have that same problem today. Adults certainly will relate to that persistent child/student who continually asks questions that cannot be answered, at least not easily. And all of us have that subject, like math, that baffles us repeatedly. On just about every page of the *Phantom Tollbooth* there is a quote worth sharing: "Well, since you got here by not thinking, it seems reasonable to expect that, in order to get out, you must start thinking." (p. 31) Now we have this delicious annotated edition by the noted children's literature scholar, Leonard S. Marcus. We learn that this book owes its existence to a Ford Foundation grant to write a book about urban planning and design. We still have Feiffer's iconic illustrations (with annotations about sources or other influences). Marcus shares manuscript pages, critic reactions, science theories, and much, much more in this beautifully bound homage to one of the very best works of literature for children of all ages. Those that like to know an author's or illustrator's inspiration will delight in the copious annotations. Buy this book wherever you may be! Not interested in annotations? Random House also has available a deluxe 50th anniversary edition out this year. Whether or not you buy this book, please treat yourself and read or reread this enduring treasure.

Lourie, P. (2011). *The manatee scientists: Saving vulnerable species*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 80 pp. ISBN: 978-0-547-15254-7. (Hardcover); \$18.99.

If one looks at the picture on page 5 of this book, one may conclude that this is, indeed, another elephant book. We see on page 64 that manatees are distant relatives of elephants. The Manatee Scientist shows the work of scientists in three continents working to save the three species of manatees that exist in our world. What makes this another must-buy for all school libraries is the recognition that although the three areas of the world, West Africa, Brazil, and Florida, are totally different in many ways, the scientists involved in their preservation follow very similar procedures to save this mammal from extinction. Gathering accurate, verifiable information; understanding the total environment; collecting bone, blood, and DNA samples; and more are universal to study of any animal anywhere in the world. Lourie takes us on various kinds of water transport, through dense forests, into well traveled and populated resort areas, into the discharge zones of power plants, and into satellites to learn about these amazing, gentle mammals. And what student in Michigan will not be delighted to learn that the manatee regulates its position in the water by farting.



★**Lu, M.** (2011). *Legend*. New York: Penguin Group/Putnam. 308 pp. ISBN 978-0-399-25675-2. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

In a year filled with dystopias, *Legend* may easily be one of the most predictable and one of the better ones. The narration is from the point of view of the exceptionally handsome renegade male character from the wrong side of the tracks known as Day and from the exceptionally privileged, drop dead gorgeous, amazingly smart June. We know that these two characters will become lovers well before we learn that both of them are prodigies who achieved a perfect 1500 score on the Trial test. Star-crossed lovers in a dystopian novel are not a surprise. We also have the gritty Los Angeles setting, complete with run down Disneyland. We have a corrupt regime, hoarding things such as the antidote for the plague that is infecting the world, especially those poor folks from Day's side of the tracks, including his brother. In fact, Day's home has been quarantined, which keeps him from leaving the area even though this puts him at risk. We have a very rich girl who gets to wear an, "elaborate white gown, laced and corseted, with a silk overskirt and draped layers in black. A tiny white-gold brooch of the Republic seal is clipped on its bodice." (p. 60). Despite much in this book that is proven fodder for the dystopian mills, *Legend* works because it infuses this trope with much that is original and fun, preventing the story from slipping into cliché. Seems that Day has murdered June's much-beloved older brother Metias. Seems that June's superiors have been secretly infecting neighborhoods with various new strains of the plague, and then, when they have developed (and hoarded) the antidote, secretly curing the remaining, living population and moving on to a new neighborhood. Both June and Day (but especially June) have much to learn about how their world really works. Gradually and eventually together, they piece together the truth in all its ugliness. The details of the story are key; a plot summary will not convince anyone to pick up this book. June's devotion to her brother, the one person who understands her, convinces readers that she is real. Her intelligence reminds readers of a Sherlock Holmes type of character, who is able to see much more than we do by sheer force of mind. Day's love of his family and basic goodness helps us to accept his willingness to keep himself in danger. Commander Jameson's quick, clipped, and to-the-point speech convinces readers of her ruthlessness. Each character, from major to minor, is drawn to advance the story and to convince readers that this story is fresh, despite much that is familiar to readers of dystopian fiction. Purchase several copies of this one for your high school library; it is sure to fly off the shelves.

★**Mafi, T.** (2011). *Shatter me*. New York: HarperTeen. 345 pp. ISBN: 978-0-06-208548-1. (Hardcover) \$17.99.

We meet Juliette in her 264th day of solitary confinement. On this day a boy is introduced into her cell. He suggests that Juliette is afraid of him but both the boy and Juliette know that he is mistaken. It seems that Juliette is a weapon. She touches you—she kills you! Think X-Men's Rogue. The Reestablishment is trying to figure out a way to manipulate Juliette and use her as a weapon in their fight against a vague and amorphous resistance movement. The boy in her cell turns out to be the one person who tried to be nice to her when she was in school. For some reason, he is able to do something that not many others can. He can touch her. And the romance takes off, but first we have to introduce Warner, another person who is able to touch Juliette. Warner, however, is the bad boy leader of The Reestablishment. Filled with page after page of adventure, a sizzling romance, and several plot twists, *Shatter Me* will appeal to large numbers of teens, who may be more able to forgive the intrusive strike-through more easily than I can. This book ends with the clear implication that Juliette's gift (or curse) may indeed be unique, but that there are other individuals out there who have equally surprising gifts that will be explored as the war evolves in future books in this dystopian thriller series. Think X-Men. Purchase this for high school libraries.



★**Metcalf, D.** (2011). *Luminous*. New York: Penguin Group/Dutton. 371 pp. ISBN: 978-0-525-42247-1. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Consuela steps out of her skin and into a new one featuring butterflies and feathers and other elements, as the situation warrants. She can do this when she is in the Flow, a place with shifting rules and other people with very different supernatural abilities. In the Flow, Consuela realizes that it is her job to help save people—think George Bailey and Clarence but with a lot more sparkle. This Flow, which is an amorphous transitional phase somewhere between life and death, seems splendid, if a bit ambiguous, to Consuela. Saving people is noble and Consuela could get used to being able to shift into her new skins. However, the folk of the Flow are being killed, which threatens the entire fabric of existence. Consuela must figure out who is killing the Flow folk. The writing in this book is often very lyrical, and the concept is extremely creative. If the world-building is sometimes unclear, the tremendously diverse cast of characters compensates readers. Snaps to Metcalf for undertaking a book with a high degree of difficulty and mostly succeeding. It is a pleasure to be able to recommend a book featuring a Latina protagonist taking matters into her own hand. Purchase this one for high school and middle school students.

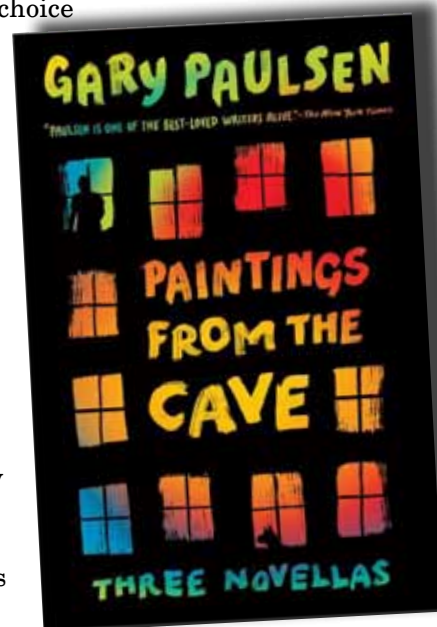
Morpurgo, M. (2011). *An elephant in the garden*. New York: Macmillan/Feiwel and Friends. 199 pp. ISBN: 978-0-312-59369-8. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Newspaper accounts in Belfast mention a woman who takes an elephant home with her during the war to live in her garden. Historians note that zookeepers in Dresden had orders to shoot all the larger zoo animals should the city come under attack, as did zookeepers in Belfast. Dresden was destroyed during World War II, bombed repeatedly until it was nothing but ruin. We also know that many German refugees marched west, toward the allies, thinking that was the safest course of action. From these historical facts, Morpurgo morphs together these elements to create a fictional story of an elephant in Dresden during the time of the bombings. Lizzie's mother is a zookeeper in charge of Marlene, a young elephant at the zoo. Lizzie and Karl, her brother, help tend to the elephant in their garden. When the bombs start dropping, they are forced to flee during the middle of a snowy and very bleak winter. Morpurgo, who is no stranger to World War fiction (read *Private Peaceful* for a brilliant account of World War I), crafts a story that does not shy away from the horror of war and bombing and, yet, still manages to convey a feeling of hopeful, loving, resolve. This book is an excellent choice for middle school libraries and the writing is strong enough to force high school readers to add it as well.

Paulsen, G. (2011). *Paintings from the cave: Three novellas*. New York: Random House/Wendy Lamb Books. 163 pp. ISBN: 978-0-385-74684-7. (Hardcover) \$15.99.

Gary Paulsen lived virtually alone from a very early age. Often out by himself in the woods or under the care of someone other than his parents, Paulsen knows what it is like to figure out how to survive, and he has many books (not just *Hatchett*) that prove this. *Paintings from the Cave* are three novellas that show three troubled youth, Jake, Jo, and Jamie, and what they do to scratch out a living and find value in who they are.

In “*Man of the Iron Heads*,” Jake or J, as he prefers to be called, knows that if he stops moving he is done. He roams the streets always moving, attempting to stay out of Blade's way. J meets a sculptor and is tempted with Bill's art. His friend, Layla, depends on him and his loyalty combined with his built-in paranoia to momentarily win the round. One day J stops and Blade gets him. Later he orders Petey to kill J's only friend. The story ends with J working for Blade, but will revenge or art triumph?



The second story, “*Jo-Jo the Dog-faced Girl*,” features Jo and a family that holds much in common with Paulsen’s own family—very cruel drunks. Jo really only trusts dogs. Jo has developed a workable routine with her dogs, Carter, Betty, and Mike. She has little in the way of resources, but the dogs make life bearable. One day she meets Rose. Maybe it is because Betty gives Rose a dog present or maybe it is because Jo also needs human friends, but Rose and Jo become friends. And then Jo discovers that Rose has leukemia.

In the third story, “*Erik’s Rules*,” Jamie lives with his older brother, Erik. Erik stole a car, and he and Jamie ran away from home. Erik has his rules, which revolve around never talking about their situation and never even thinking about it. They do this by keeping clean, keeping quiet, and keeping on the move (rule 2). Erik cannot always keep an eye on Jamie. When Jamie discovers that he may be able to earn some money with his artwork, Erik’s rules are in jeopardy.

One of the problems social workers face when attempting to help the homeless is the fact that many homeless folks crave a connection. When I was homeless, I wanted to feel like I could contribute ideas that could help you. Our society, however, is not eager to hire homeless daycare workers and often the sole emphasis on helping the homeless involves giving money or housing or clothing or other types of aid. We do not expect a contribution *from* homeless people and we often do nothing to provide any sort of creative outlet. Paulsen *gets* this. The first and the third story show the potential power art has of providing a creative outlet, a contribution. The second story, the weakest of the three, but also the most heartwarming, shows the wisdom of allowing and encouraging connections to animals—something Paulsen knows intimately from the hundreds of dogs he has owned over the years. This book works best in upper elementary and middle school libraries. [Note: I recorded an interview with Gary Paulsen when he was in Grand Haven: http://www.spicyreads.org/Author_Videos.html]

Pearson, M.E. (2011). *Fox inheritance*. New York: Macmillan/Henry Holt. 295 pp. ISBN 978-0-8050-8829-8. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

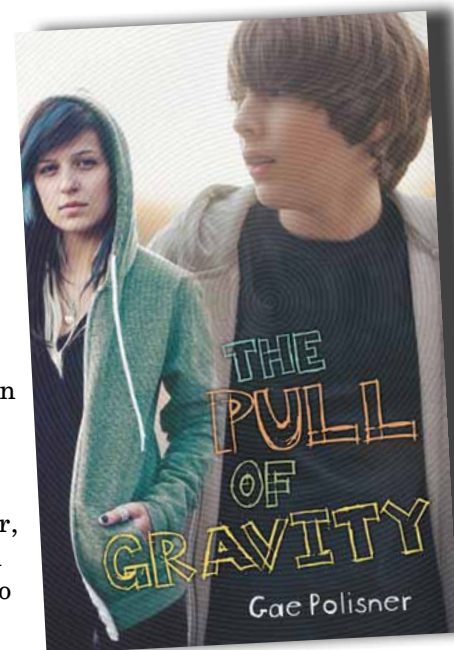
The Adoration of Jenna Fox is one of my favorite books of its year, which does not necessarily make a reviewer eager for a sequel. Will it live up to the first book? High school students in my book group think this book is even better. I think it is so very different and so very able to stand alone that I do not have to measure it against the first book, which makes me love it too!

Two hundred and sixty years have passed since the horrible accident that destroyed the bodies of Locke, Kara, and Jenna. Jenna’s family worked to save Jenna, and that is the subject of the first book. Locke and Kara, however, met a slightly different fate. Jenna’s family preserved the minds of Kara and Locke hoping that their families might wish to find bodies for them. Two hundred and sixty years later, Locke and Kara find themselves in the home of Dr. Gatsbro. Dr. Gatsbro is now beginning the process of reintroducing them into society. This world, however, is one in which all of their known family is gone. All of their friends are dead, except Jenna. All fashion, music, habits, schools, etc. are gone, gone, gone. The story is told from Locke’s more trusting point of view, but readers quickly learn that it is Kara who is driving the story. Kara realizes much more quickly than Locke that Dr. Gatsbro is using their constructed bodies—Locke is 2 inches taller, with nice sparkly green flecks in his eyes—as a moneymaking commercial venture. This realization is made all too chillingly clear when they run away and later confront Dr. Gatsbro. After 260 years, Kara and Locke have no one but Jenna to turn to. After 260 years in which Jenna seemingly made no effort to contact Locke or Kara, anger toward Jenna makes a reunion problematic at best, especially for Kara. Locke sees the difference between Kara and himself, but he cannot quite explain it—he just knows that Kara is wilder. They have bodies that are immune to much physical trauma, but 260 years induces Locke to space out on occasion, and their knowledge of

the way the world works is limited—just what can a bio bot like Dot manage to do? Dr. Gatsbro has the money and the knowledge to hurt them, and he is not going to let his substantial investment and moneymaking opportunity simply run away. What Pearson really gets right in this book is the blurring of what is human and what is technology. Any teen reader with a laptop, iPhone, iPad, etc. knows the lure of technology. This book takes that technology lust and extends it in a way that readers will recognize as the frightful truth. Readers will enjoy this humor- and terror-filled white-knuckle read that will also have readers thinking about what place technology has in our lives. Put this one in all high school libraries.

★**Polisner, G.** (2011). *The pull of gravity*. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux/Frances Foster Books. 202 pp. ISBN 978-0-374-37193-7. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

I love a great opening: “A fever was what started everything. That, and the water tower, and the cherry cola. Well, also, Dad and his condition, and Mom being in Philadelphia and all.” Nick knows how to spike a fever. Febrile seizures are no stranger. And Nick has it far better than his friend The Scoot who is dying of Hutchinson-Gilford progeria syndrome, a horrible disease that accelerates the aging process. The Scoot’s father left him when Scooter was a baby, yet The Scoot has a dying wish to communicate with him at least one last time. Nick can relate to this because his own seriously overweight father has set out on a walking tour to lose weight. Nick’s father is a former well-known news guy who instilled a love of words in Nick. Nick feels abandoned and refuses to read any of the correspondence. When the local television station comes over to interview Nick’s dad, Jaycee Amato comes with the team. Her father is the vapid on-air talent. She is obsessed with Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* and she is taken with The Scoot. She begins to usurp some of The Scoot’s attention and horn in on Nick’s life, much to Nick’s delightful dismay. However, when The Scoot dies, Jaycee and Nick set off to Rochester, New York in search of The Scoot’s father as a way of honoring The Scoot’s memory. When these two young high school kids reach Rochester, they find much more than they bargained for, both good and bad. Polisner has a nice mix of humor and sentiment in this book that is, at once, sad, funny, hopeful, and upbeat. Purchase this one for middle school libraries especially, with the understanding that it also belongs in high school libraries.



★**Ray, M.** (2011). *Falling for Hamlet*. New York: Little, Brown and Company/Poppy. 358 pp. ISBN: 978-0-316-10162-2. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

Hamlet is one of those iconic works of literature that has become embedded in our culture and, indeed, in many countries around the world. Millions of words of criticism have been written and spoken about this Shakespeare play, and many students have been forced to listen to entirely too many of them. What Ray has done with this book is to use it as a way to analyze *Hamlet* with a sociological/feminist lens and recast the story as if it were a modern reality MTV television show. Ophelia lives in the spotlight and in the shadow cast by the handsome and Royal Prince of Denmark. When Hamlet’s father dies, the intense scrutiny threatens to drive everyone crazy. Ophelia must learn how to deal with fame, with deadly rumors, with an overbearing royal family, with sensationalistic media hounds, and, perhaps most importantly, herself. *Hamlet* isn’t really meant to be read; it is intended to be seen and heard on a stage, which makes me believe in the paparazzi and the very cinematic style of this debut novel. Told from the perspective of Ophelia, a much more ordinary character than the royal Hamlet, readers are privy to her doubts and insecurities. They also see her backbone and her willingness to do what she believes is proper even if her actions get under the skin of people like the Queen. Readers familiar with *Hamlet* will love what she has done with the character of, say, Horatio. Filled with modern technology, like iPods and cell phones,

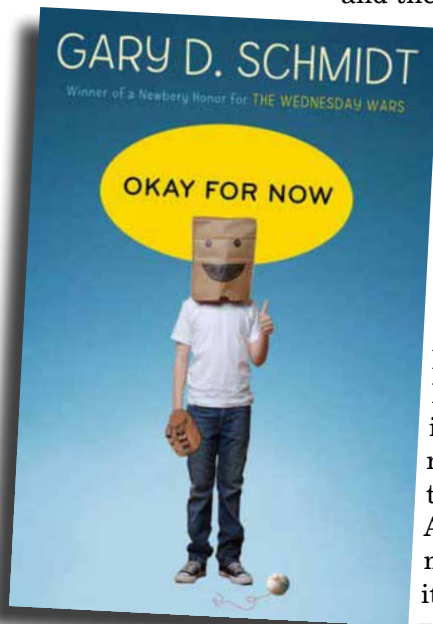
Falling for Hamlet captures some of the essence of this famous play and attempts to get readers to think about how this very old classic piece of literature still has truth for the social media generation alive today. Ray is to be commended for a very bold attempt to share Shakespeare with teen readers. What I especially appreciate about this book is that I believe it will encourage readers to seek out the original play, maybe to discover whether Ophelia dies in it. *Falling for Hamlet* will fit very nicely in English classrooms and high school libraries.

Schmidt, G. (2011). *Okay for now*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin/Clarion. 360 pp. ISBN: 978-0-547-15260-8. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

Doug Swietek has a lot going on in his life. He is the new kid. He has no friends. He doesn't feel like he fits. His brother is off fighting in a war that has lots of folks yelling. His other brother at home is beating him, stealing his stuff, and making his life miserable. His dad is someone to be feared and someone to avoid. He tends to talk with his fists. At school Doug discovers the art of Audubon. Doug wants to be an artist, and the pictures in this book captivate him. He discovers, however, that his town is selling off prints from the book to stay financially solvent. Doug resolves to get the prints back and make the book whole. His quests put him in the path of the Spicer family (and rumor has it that a certain Michigan reviewer's last name was borrowed here). Lil shows him the correct way to drink a cold coke, encourages his artwork, and gets him involved in the New York theater world. The Audubon prints are reproduced before each chapter and serve as a visual epigraph. Schmidt uses these prints to frame the story, and the details in the artwork are masterfully integrated into the details of Doug's life. The language often reinforces and reflects Doug's love of these prints. Bird images fly around the pages even when Doug is not talking about Audubon. We also have Joe Pepitone and baseball, Apollo 11 surprises, cancer lurking around the corner, his brother's return from Viet Nam without limbs, and Doug's dad's boss teaching him how to play horseshoes. I am skeptical of an ending that has Doug's dad making a 180-degree character turn (but maybe this is just a phase—intended to provide extra meaning to an “Okay for Now” title, with emphasis on the *now*). And maybe there are too many major events warring with one another for this to make the Newbery list (although the buzz has it as the title to beat). However, it certainly is one of the better books published this year. The way Schmidt deals with the Audubon artwork and the way these pictures serve as encapsulations of the chapters is brilliant. The story is sweet and filled with humor, which one would not necessarily expect in a book dealing with abuse and cancer. This book is a perfect fit for middle school students and has enough literary chops to use with high school students.

★**Schwab, V.** (2011). *The near witch*. New York: Hyperion. 284 pp. ISBN: 978-1-4231-3787-0. (Hardcover); \$16.99.

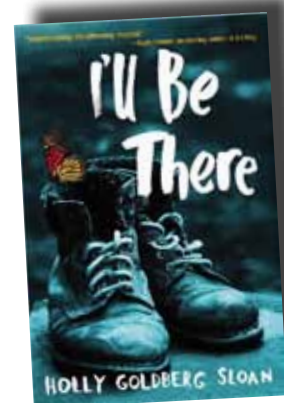
The wind is lonely and always looking for company. When the wind speaks, you must not listen. In the town of Near, there are no strangers. Everyone knows everybody. When a stranger shows up and children begin to disappear, clearly this is the work of the outsider. Lexi, however, has serious doubts and begins working with the stranger to find the children. She is also forced to protect the stranger when the town becomes too panic-stricken to think clearly. In my community there is a restaurant and bar that advertises that it has a ghost. Most communities have their skeletons and lore. Probably, if one were to examine a community's oral history, one would find that we begin with a story that is told over and over and over. The details begin to degrade, new “facts” are added, and the new hybrid story is told over and over and over. The story handed down, like the proverbial “telephone” game, may not bear any resemblance at all to actual truth. What is so intriguing about *The Near Witch* is that it is



about attempting to discern the truth buried under established tradition, as well as the truth that led to the formation of the myth in the first place. In doing this, Schwab has written her own fairytale that is part folklore, part paranormal, part romance, and even a bit ghostly horror. This is a moody, dreamy, eerie book that does an excellent job creating a setting that reinforces the creepiness of the community that is just a bit too set in its ways. Lexi has heard the folklore of her town over and over. Gradually she begins to understand that finding the missing children is directly connected to these odd stories about the wind and witches. But what she begins to learn about the witches does not match what she feels in her gut. Finding the truth will involve visiting witches, standing firm against the leaders of her community (some of whom are relatives), trusting herself, and being persistent in the face of the emotional avalanche caused by the disappearing children, including her sister. Lexi is a shoeless, calloused, independent thinker who has not lost her ability to care about the wellbeing of her town and do what must be done to save the children, even if the leaders are too dumb to recognize her wisdom. This book works best for high school students but will find fans in the middle school, which should also have copies available.

Sloan, H.G. (2011). *I'll be there*. New York: Little, Brown. 392 pp. ISBN 978-0-316-12279-5. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

When your father is a murderer who lives from place to place attempting to avoid capture, it is not likely that he will take the time to get your asthma diagnosed or to encourage any budding romances. Sam, who is 17, has not been to school since he was 2. He would love to leave his father, but if he does, 12-year-old Riddle, his brother with asthma (undiagnosed), could easily die. His father, with his truck filled with different stolen license plates (new identities), knows how to disappear quickly. He is also scary enough to keep you from making friends. When Sam hears a young girl (Emily) singing *I'll Be There* in a church one day, he *knows* that she is singing the song to him. This song and this girl stay fixed in his mind. Soon they are eating dinner at Emily's house. Riddle gets an inhaler and is able to breathe freely for the first time in his life. But just how does one broach the subject of a mentally unstable, psychopathic father to such a nice family? And what will happen when their father, Clarence, finds out about Emily and her family? Sloan does an exceptional job of blending both horror and love story, fear and friendship, into this fairytale of a story that will have both students and adults singing its praises. Details are released at the right moment to maintain the suspense. The characters are compelling and real. The horror hits us in the gut; the hope, richly rewarded at the end, keeps us eagerly turning the pages. Readers will come back to this one again and again. This is a book that is most at home in middle schools but that doesn't mean that high school readers will be in any way disappointed with this story.



Stiefvater, M. (2011). *Scorpio races*. New York: Scholastic Press. 409 pp. ISBN: 978-0-545-22490-1. (Hardcover) \$17.99.

Carnivorous, human-eating horses! Be careful when you race these horses because they just may reach back and snap your hand off, knock you onto the ground, trample you, and then gobble you up for breakfast. The Scorpio Races are the biggest event on the island. Win this race and your financial troubles are over, or at least greatly relieved. Our story features Sean and Puck and is told in alternating sections. Sean Kendrick is the returning champion and will be riding one of the wild horses, the capaill uisce, that killed his parents. He rides a red stallion, Corr, that he has taken care of since Corr was captured from the sea, habitat of all the wild capaill uisce. Sean works for the wealthy horse trader, Malvern, and it is his job to take care of all the water horses and to make sure their horses don't kill Malvern's lazy, arrogant, bully of a son. Sean dreams of owning Corr and being free to live on this wild, dangerous island. Puck to her friends and Kate to everyone else, scrapes by selling painted teapots. However, she

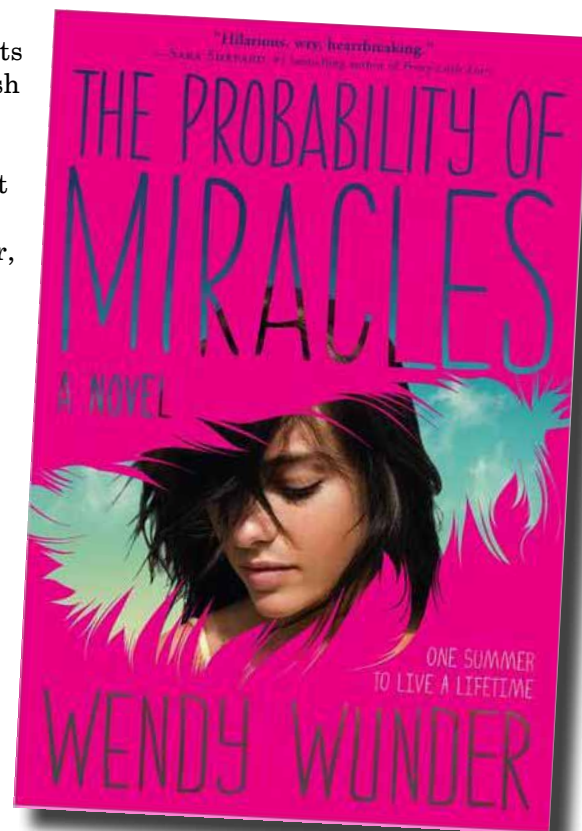
and her brothers, Finn and Gabe, are about to lose their home. Her brother Gabe is intending to leave the island. Desperate to save her home, Puck decides to race her own beloved horse, Dove, in the Scorpio Race. Dove is not a capall uisce. Dove is not as tall or as fast as those horses. She does, however, run straight, and Dove is not lured by the call of the sea (or by eating other horses or people). Dove (and Puck) may also become a meal for either the tamed capall uisce or the wild ones that sometimes venture out of the sea in search of a meal. Despite the seeming futility of racing Dove, Puck needs to be in the race to hang onto her brother Gabe long enough for her to figure out a way to save her home and family. Sean and Puck's story gradually collide. Stiefvater combines romance, adventure, and horror with consummate skill. Readers will have a difficult time putting this book down because they will want to know whether Sean figures out a way to keep Corr, whether Puck figures out how to save her home, and whether all of the characters can avoid the jaws of the capall uisce. This is a unique story that will delight both strong readers and pull in those readers who are much more reluctant. This is *not* the horse book for those folks who love *My Little Pony*. Place multiple copies of this one in high school libraries. Middle school students will enjoy this one as well and deserve their own copies. While waiting for the sequel, steer your teens toward the *Fox Inheritance* and *The Adoration of Jenna Fox* by Mary Pearson.

Wolf, A. (2011). *The watch that ends the night*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. 467 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7636-3703-3. (Hardcover); \$21.99

On April 14, 1912, the Titanic sunk. We all know this. Some of us even know, as mentioned in the RMS Titanic Miscellany (p. 453), that it takes longer to watch the movie, Titanic, than it took for the actual ship to sink (3 hours vs. 2 hours and 40 minutes). The 25 voices that tell this story in verse attempt to place the reader on deck of the Titanic—not as witnesses of history, but as witnesses of the very different lives, people, who through various circumstances, find themselves on this ill-fated shape. Among the voices we have: Thomas Andrews, the Shipbuilder who marvels at the efficiency of bees; E.J. Smith, the Captain; Olaus Abelseth, the Immigrant who is leaving his beloved Marie; John Snow, the Undertaker who fished hundreds of dead bodies out of the water; and even a ship rat and the Iceberg. The book is divided into the seven watch duties that seamen would observe (and a prelude to introduce the voices). Each watch of about four hours shows a cross section of people concerned with very different matters. John Astor is concerned with how he and his 18-year-old wife will avoid scandal upon reaching New York. The Postman is concerned with sorting the mail. Eventually all voices are directed toward the Iceberg that enjoys its anonymity. Since this historical verse novel tells a story with a very clear and very tragic ending, the book begins with the voice of the Undertaker. “My name is John Snow. / You could say that my living is death. / I am the undertaker. / I have come for the bodies.” The last human voice is also the Undertaker with his inventory of bodies. And the very last voice we hear is of the ship rat, which also survives. While the focus of the book is on the people and the events of their lives, we learn much about the operation of the ship (including the fact that passengers were warned about gamblers). The poetry in this book relies on the readers’ understanding of the basic fact that the ship sank and many people died. It avoids any hint of being maudlin or mawkish by grounding the verse so effectively in the well-researched lives of the characters. The Character Notes at the end are especially interesting. This mix of very believable human concerns and factual details (including a very effective and chilling insertion of the “Marconi-gram” telegrams) will help readers see not merely history, but *human* history, in this excellent novel that should be purchased by all middle school and high school libraries.

★**Wunder, W.** (2011). *The probability of miracles*. New York: Penguin Group/Razorbill. 314 pp. ISBN 978-1-59514-368-6. (Hardcover); \$17.99.

The one belief Cam Cooper does not doubt is that she will die of the cancer that is consuming her. Consequently, Cam and Lily come up with the private “Flamingo List” that charts a course of living for Cam of things she must accomplish before she dies—like “Lose my virginity at a keg party,” “Go cow-tipping,” and “Kill my sister’s dreams.” Cam and Lily make fun of any attempts at self-help, and Cam has especially sharp words for the Make-a-Wish folks. So, then, what is this mostly agnostic (at best) young woman doing moving to Promise, Maine, with its mythical claims of miracle healing? However, when Cam arrives, things happen that she cannot explain. Birds come back to her despite the thousand-plus miles she has traveled. Flowers grow in odd colors. And she meets a boy, Asher, whom she begins to love despite her realistic assessment of her own lifespan. She even takes a trip sponsored by the Make-A-Wish folks to Disney World. Wunder does a great job of balancing the anger and fear. When Cam and Lily part for what turns out to be forever because Lily dies before they can reconcile, readers wince. Readers understand that these girls need each other. Readers also understand that Cam is behaving so poorly that no one would want to be around her. Cam is sarcastic and horrible and very loveable, often all at the same time. For all of her doubt, Wunder paints a portrait of a young, smart girl who learns to understand that sometimes it is okay to hope. The relationship of Cam to her mother is especially poignant. Mom most definitely *does* believe in miracles—or at least she believes in anything that holds out hope that her daughter will not die. Her mom refuses to compromise when the life of her daughter is on the line. *Probability of Miracles* is an excellent and honest look at the underlying emotions of those who deal with cancer. Purchase this one for high school libraries and share with the counseling staff.



Ed Spicer teaches first-grade students at North Ward Elementary School in Allegan, Michigan. He has served on numerous American Library Association committees including the Michael L. Printz Committee and the Caldecott Committee. Spicer gives presentations on books to schools, universities, libraries, and other organizations. In 2010, he was a featured speaker for the Texas Library Association, discussing his life as a homeless teen and the role libraries played and continue to play in his life. Currently, Spicer is a member of the William C. Morris Award Committee. His website address is: www.spicyreads.org. Send email to: info@spicyreads.org.



2011-2012 Great Lakes Great Books Award Winners

Kindergarten and First Grade Winner

We Are in a Book! by Mo Willems.....Hyperion Books for Children, 2010

~Honor Books~

Looking Closely in the Rain Forest by Frank Serafini.....Kids Can Press, 2010

City Dog Country Frog by Mo Willems.....Hyperion Books for Children, 2010

Second and Third Grade Winner

Here Comes the Garbage Barge by Jonah Winter.....Schwartz & Wade Books, 2010

~Honor Books~

Flight of the Phoenix by R.L. LaFevers.....Houghton Mifflin, 2009

The Junkyard Wonders by Patricia Polacco.....Philomel Books, 2010

Fourth and Fifth Grade Winner

Ragtag by Karl Wolf-Morganlander.....Clarion Books, 2009

~Honor Books~

I Feel Better With a Frog in My Throat by Carlyn Beccia.....Houghton Mifflin, 2010

Out of My Mind by Sharon Draper.....Athenum Books for Young Readers, 2010

Sixth, Seventh and Eighth Grade Winner

The Strange Case of Origami Yoda by Tom Angleberger.....Amulet Books, 2010

~Honor Books~

One Crazy Summer by Rita Williams-GarciaAmistad, 2010

Reckless by Cornelia Funke.....Little, Brown & Company, 2010

Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Grade Winner

Shipbreaker by Paolo Bacigalupe.....Little, Brown & Company, 2010

~Honor Books~

The Carbon Diaries 2015 by Saci Lloyd.....Holiday House, 2009

Destroy All Cars by Blake Nelson.....Scholastic Press, 2009

For more on Great Lakes Great Books, go to www.michiganreading.org.

MICHIGAN READING JOURNAL



OFFICIAL BALLOT for the 2012-2013 GREAT LAKES GREAT BOOKS AWARD

Have your class vote in the 2012 election!

Students should read, or have read to them, as many books from their grade level as possible. To participate in the election, each student votes for his or her favorite book. (Be sure to include the total vote count for each book from your grade level.)

Completed ballots must be received by

January 25, 2013, and should be mailed to:

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Great Lakes Great Books
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<u>Votes</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Author</u>	<u>Publisher/Copyright</u>
	Grades K - 1st		
	Anna Hibiscus' Song	Atinuke	Kane Miller, 2011
	I Had a Favorite Dress	Boni Ashburn	Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2011
	The Voyage of Turtle Rex	Kurt Cyrus	Harcourt Children's Books, 2011
	Clink	Kelly DiPucchio	HarperCollins Childrens Books, 2011
	How Rocket Learned to Read	Tad Hills	Schwartz & Wade Books, 2010
	Neville	Norton Juster	Schwartz & Wade Books, 2011
	All the Water in the World	George Ella Lyon	Athenum Books for Young Readers, 2011
	Me...Jane	Patrick McDonnell	Little, Brown and Company, 2011
	Grades 2nd - 3rd		
	Bink & Gollie	Kate DiCamillo/Alison McGhee	Candlewick Press, 2010
	Energy Island	Allan Drummond	Frances Foster Books, 2011
	These Hands	Margaret Mason	Houghton Mifflin Books, 2010
	Over and Under the Snow	Kate Messner	Chronicle Books, 2011
	More Bears	Kenn Nesbitt	Sourcebooks Jabberwocky, 2010
	Balloons Over Broadway	Melissa Sweet	Houghton Mifflin Books, 2011
	Migrant	Maxine Trottier	Groundwood Books, 2011
	Spinster Goose	Lisa Wheeler	Athenum Books for Young Readers, 2011
	Grades 4th - 5th		
	The Unforgotten Coat	Frank Cottrell Boyce	Candlewick Press, 2011
	The Adventures of Mark Twain by Huckleberry Finn	Robert Burleigh	Athenum Books for Young Readers, 2011
	What's for Dinner?	Katherine B. Hauth	Charlesbridge, 2011
	Inside Out & Back Again	Thanhha Lai	HarperCollins Childrens Books, 2011
	Nurse, Soldier, Spy	Marissa Moss	Abrams Books for Young Readers, 2011
	Bird in a Box	Andrea Davis Pinkney	Little, Brown & Company, 2011
	Wonderstruck	Brian Selznick	Scholastic Press, 2011
	Breaking Stalin's Nose	Eugene Yelchin	Henry Holt & company, 2011
	Grades 6th - 8th		
	The Other Half of My Heart	Sundee T. Frazier	Delacorte Press, 2010
	Belly Up	Stuart Gibbs	Simon & Schuster, 2010
	Wildwood	Colin Meloy	HarperCollins Childrens Books, 2011
	The Apothecary	Maile Meloy	G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2011
	Trash	Andy Mulligan	David Fickling Books, 2010
	A Monster Calls	Patrick Ness	Candlewick Press, 2011
	Okay for Now	Gary D. Schmidt	Clarion Books, 2011
	Shooting Kabul	N.H. Senzai	Simon & Schuster, 2010
	Grades 9th - 12th		
	iBoy	Kevin Brooks	Scholastic, Inc., 2011
	Revolution	Jennifer Donnelly	Delacorte Press, 2010
	Hold Me Closer, Necromancer	Lish McBride	Henry Holt & Company, 2010
	There is No Long Distance Now	Naomi Shihab Nye	Greenwillow Books, 2011
	Dirty Little Secrets	C.J. Omololu	Walker & Company, 2010
	The Queen of Water	Laura Resau	Delacorte Press, 2011
	Between Shades of Gray	Ruta Sepethys	Philomel Books, 2011
	Blink & Caution	Tim Wynne-Jones	Candlewick Press, 2011

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