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Diana Mitchell

90 Recent Novels That Can Work in the Classroom

Codes used: 6-12 indicates the novel would be appropriate for students in sixth through twelfth grades; w= would work well as a whole class novel, s/i = would work as a novel read by small groups or by individuals in the class.

Avi. **Beyond the Western Sea—Book One: The Escape from Home.** Orchard Books, 1996. 295 pages.

Adventures occur throughout this story. First Maura and Patrick must get to the coast of Ireland to get a ship to Liverpool so they can sail to America and join their father. Scalawags who want to bilk them are there to meet the ship in Liverpool. Then their lives become intertwined with the life of a runaway son of a lord who thinks he must get to America.

We're on the streets of Liverpool in 1851 smelling the smells, hearing the noises, seeing the teeming masses of humanity and their filth. This novel has an interesting, amazing cast of characters, good plot line, and wonderful description, but I would have liked it to be a bit more compelling. This book would work well with studies of the causes of Irish and English immigration and the conditions in those countries which drove the poor to America. 7-11 s/i

Avi. **Beyond the Western Sea—Book Two: Lord Kirkle's Money.** Orchard Books, 1996. 380 pages.

This continuation begins with the dangerous ocean voyage in which Lord Kirkle's runaway son is a stow-away. Once the whole group lands in Massachusetts, things don't get much better. The O'Connells find their father has died, thugs abound, and anti-immigrant fever is racing through the area. This well-written novel thrusts us into the lives of the working poor and all the horrors they face. A fast-paced adventure that skillfully brings all the lives of the main characters on a collision course with each other. I liked it well enough that I wish Avi would write another sequel. 7-10 s/i.

Barron, T.A. **The Ancient One.** Tor Book, 1992. 339 pages.

When Kate travels to Oregon to visit her aunt, she has no idea that she will be thrust into the heart of the raging controversy about cutting down giant redwood trees which are thousands of years old. Loggers have found a way into the previously untouched crater area,

and so time is short if these trees are to be saved. In an effort to find a solution, Kate starts on a day's journey along an ancient trail into the crater and is shocked to find herself communicating with people who lived there 500 years earlier. This spellbinding story takes us back to a time when people could communicate with rocks and trees, and the forces of good and evil were easy to discern. A powerful, satisfying novel that makes us want to continue to ponder its meaning long after we have finished the book. 8-12 s/i

Barron, T.A. **Heartlight.** The Putnam & Grosset Book Group, 1990. 272 pages.

Although this novel about Kate and her astronomer grandfather starts out slowly, once the pace picks up it's easy to be carried away by the fascinating ideas in this galactic adventure. I like this book because of the new ways I was forced to think about commonplace things like the sun and stars, and I like it because I cared about Kate, her grandfather, and their relationship. This novel would make a good companion to scientific studies of galaxies and sources of energy. 8-12 s/i

Barron, T.A. **The Merlin Effect.** The Putnam & Grosset Book Group, 1994.

Kate, at thirteen, is happy to be with her father's expedition on the coast of Baja, California. She doesn't understand what a historian like him is doing searching for an ancient, sunken ship. When she is sucked into a whirlpool and finds the ancient ship and drinking horn her father is seeking to prove Merlin's existence, she begins to understand his part in the expedition. In this underwater world she witnesses the battle between Merlin and Nimue in this mysterious, mythical adventure. So many elements about science and whales and myth are woven together that the reader must keep reading to find out what the connection is. 7-12 s/i

Beals, Melba Pattillo. **Warriors Don't Cry**. Pocket Books, 1995. 226 pages.

This is the true story of the integration of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957 as told by one of the nine black students who integrated the school. Terrifying and unrelenting assaults, both verbal and physical, were the norm in the school lives of these teens. Troops had to be called in to protect the teens, but in the hallways and restrooms they were mainly on their own to meet the hostility in whatever ways they could. Readers of this novel will never forget the experience of seeing how the well-taught hatred of blacks exploded when these nine students "dared" to attend one of the best schools in Little Rock. 7-12 w

Block, Francesca Lia. **Baby Be-Bop**. HarperCollins, 1995. 110 pages.

This prequel to *Weetzie Bat* takes us into the life of Dirk before he met Weetzie. We see him struggle with knowing he is different and as a child knowing "that the main thing was to keep to himself and never to seem afraid." Grandma Fifi was a wonderfully accepting grandmother, but he didn't want to take a chance on losing her because of his difference. Then one night he was beat up outside a bar, and while drifting in and out of consciousness he hears the stories of his great grandmother and his mother and father as they all urge him to fight to live and to accept himself. This beautifully written, poetic-sounding novel reveals through metaphors and dreams and stories how Dirk came to accept his sexual orientation. 10-12 s/i

Block, Francesca Lia. **Girl Goddess #9**. HarperCollins, 1996. 181 pages.

This fantastic collection of nine short stories features girls of every shape, size, and disposition. Each story is well-crafted and interesting because the main characters are REAL girls who don't fit the molds and stereotypes of being female in our society. This collection very subtly questions the Barbie-doll mentality as these girls deal with such issues as the death of a mother. Superb. 9-12 s/i.

Bond, Nancy. **Truth to Tell**. Margaret K. McElderry Books, Macmillan, 1994. 325 pages.

Set in 1958 in New Zealand, this book is peopled with intriguing characters such as Len, Alice's stepfather, Miss Fairchild, the eccentric estate owner, and even the unusual gardener. Alice has been dragged halfway around the world by her mother who wants some adventure in her life. Alice is put into a new school, a new city, and a new country and struggles to accept all of this. But because of a careless comment by Miss Fairchild, she wonders what the true story of her parentage is and lets the issue consume her. This coming-of-age story, while not action packed, is engrossing, and I felt compelled by the mystery to finish it. 9-12. s/i

Brooks, Polly Schoyer. **Cleopatra**. HarperCollins, 1995. 135 pages.

If you think you really know the kind of person Cleopatra was, you should read this book anyway since you'll probably be enlightened. Through extensive re-

search the author turns the *femme fatale* myth on its head and allows us to see Cleopatra as a woman whose country was of the utmost importance to her. We are given wonderful glimpses of the kind of education she had as well as of her abilities to deal with people. A picture of a strong, dedicated woman emerges from this biography. 6-12 s/i

Bunting, Eve. **The In-Between Days**. Harper Trophy, 1994. 119 pages.

Eleven-year-old George likes his life on Dove Island with his dad and younger brother just the way it is even though he misses his mom who died many years ago. Into their lives comes Caroline, and everything changes for George. As Caroline and George's father spend more time together, George feels pushed aside. This gently told story makes George's fears, jealousies, and resentments very real to the reader. We desperately want George to talk about his feelings, instead of acting them out in his attempt to drive Caroline away. Dating parents as well as their children could learn much from reading this book. I also was fascinated by all I learned of how the islanders survive the winter once the ice freezes. For residents of Michigan, this novel, obviously set on Mackinac Island at the top of Michigan, is especially enjoyable because we learn about the building of the ice bridge to the mainland and the Christmas customs of the island. 4-9 s/i

Burgess, Barbara Hood. **The Fred Field**. Delacorte, 1994. 180 pages.

The Bell kids of Detroit are ready for summer but still haunted by the death of Fred, Oren Bell's best friend who was killed in the drug house next door. After the house is demolished, they decide to do something for Fred by turning the lot into a memorial ball field for him. Next, they decide to find Fred's murderer themselves. Oren starts a group called The Friends of Fred, and this motley group won't rest until Fred's killer is brought to justice. This sequel to *Oren Bell* is equally as good as the first book. We again become part of the Bell family, watching as Brenda works on a large neighborhood art project and Latonya orchestrates her mother's wedding to Jack. Throughout the book we enjoy this family because they are down-to-earth (mostly), caring, enjoy life, and know what is important. I especially like the respect Burgess accords kids and their capacities to accomplish important things. I'm hoping for a third book that shows how the kids adapt to apartment living and their new stepfather. 6-9 w

Burks, Brian. **Runs With Horses**. Harcourt Brace, 1995. 116 pages.

Runs With Horses, an Apache boy training for manhood in the year 1886, is a member of the last small group of Apaches still resisting capture by the U.S. Army. He is ready for his tests which include running three miles up a mountain without swallowing or spitting out a mouthful of water. He is ready for whatever enemy he will meet. One thing he cannot be prepared for is Geronimo's edict that they will surrender. A poignant story that captures the sadness and unfairness in the ending of a way of life. 7-12 s/i

Cadnum, Michael. **Zero at the Bone**. Penguin, 1996. 218 pages.

Another chilling Cadnum story! When Cray's older sister doesn't come home from work, the family is worried. This worry then stretches over days, weeks, and months. We see Cray and his mother and father as they try to cope with the idea that they may never see Anita again. The horror of living with this kind of uncertainty is so well described that I felt my own stomach knotting up again and again. Powerful. 10-12 s/i

Campbell, Eric. **The Shark Callers**. Harcourt Brace, 1994. 230 pages.

Andy Thompson and his family live on their boat and are in New Guinea when they get news that the volcano which wiped out whole islands 50 years ago is going to erupt. On another island Kalehu, a teenage boy, is learning how to become a Shark Caller and hunt sharks for his people. The story is told by the boys in alternating chapters. Andy and Kalehu never meet but after the tidal wave hits, their destinies are linked and only one boy survives. This book is fast-paced and adventurous and lots can be learned about sharks and the effects of volcanoes. 9-12 s/i

Coman, Caroline. **Tell Me Everything**. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993. 156 pages.

Roz is having a hard time accepting the death of her mother a year earlier when she fell off of a mountain while attempting to rescue a lost boy. Roz now likes living with her mother's brother but still wants something more, wants to know more about how her mother died. And so she frequently calls the boy who was lost on the mountains, and when he answers she hangs up.

Through the flashbacks we get a picture of her mother which is not as perfect as the one Roz recalls, and we begin to understand why Roz has so much to sort out. This wonderfully written book lets us see Roz's confusion close up, and ultimately the beginnings of her understanding. 6-10 s/i

Coman, Caroline. **What Jamie Saw**. Front Street, 1995. 126 pages.

This Newbery Honor books begins with the night that Jamie saw his mother's boyfriend throw Jamie's baby sister across the room. Jamie is terrified of Van's anger and is relieved that his mother decides to move them all out that night. The novel mainly deals with how tough it is to get over being a witness to such abuse and to figure out how to cope with the accompanying fear. Through the support of a friend of Jamie's mom and Jamie's teacher, Jamie and his mom begin to pick up the pieces of their lives. This book vividly shows the devastating effects of violence on both a child and an adult. 5-9 s/i

Conly, Jane Leslie. **Crazy Lady**. Harper Trophy, 1993. 180 pages.

Vernon is still struggling with school and with his mom's death. For a while he hangs out with friends who think it's funny to taunt Maxine, the crazy lady, and her retarded son. Because Vernon is failing school and because he inadvertently does a favor for Maxine,

she offers to return the favor. He blurts out that he needs help with school work. And so she finds an elderly neighbor to tutor Vernon. Through this connection he gets to know and care about Maxine's son. This poignant story is heartwarming and engaging. Vernon gets to know and appreciate the boy who is retarded, and in turn, Vernon is appreciated for his efforts in befriending the boy and organizing a neighborhood carnival to raise money for the shoes he needs for Special Olympics. 6-9 s/i

Cooney, Caroline. **Out of Time**. Delacorte, 1996. 200 pages.

In this sequel to **Both Sides of Time**, Annie Lockwood and her brother are entangled in the mess of their parents' separation when a quick remembrance of moving through time invades Annie's brain and reminds her of her strong desire to return to the 19th century. Although she feels the pull to remain with her brother, she can't resist the tug to go back in time to see her beloved, Strat, and resolve her unanswered questions. Scenes quickly unfold—Strat being physically restrained in an insane asylum, his powerless sister Delonny being manipulated by a man of evil intentions, his fiancée, Harriet, wasting away from consumption in a cold sanitarium. Into these disastrous situations comes Annie, determined to help her beloved and his family. This fast-paced thriller has it all—characters we care about, a plot that twists and turns, and writing strong enough to keep the reader involved. 7-11 s/i.

Creech, Sharon. **Walk Two Moons**. HarperCollins, 1994. 280 pages.

In this Newbery winner, thirteen-year-old Salamanca and her grandparents are retracing the route her mother took when she went away promising she would return. Along the way Salamanca tells the story of Phoebe whose mother also disappeared. Beneath the story it is obvious she is trying to make sense of what has happened in her life. I was so caught up in the story that I, like Salamanca, couldn't believe her mother was really dead until she got to the crash site in Idaho. A touching, but often humorous story of a girl struggling to accept her mother's death. 6-10 s/i

Curtis, Christopher Paul. **The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963**. Delacorte, 1995. 210 pages.

Fourth-grader Kenny Watson tells the story of his family—his big brother Byron who picks on him, the little sister they all love, the ever supportive mom and dad—which is often hilarious as it plunges the reader into the realities of childhood. But because of Byron who thinks he is too cool for his own family, the parents decide to take the family down South and spend some time with no-nonsense Grandma Sands. There they experience life with Grandma Sands in the hot, hot South which does erupt with hate and violence. I wanted to hug Kenny and help him through the trauma he experienced by seeing the aftermath of the church bombing. This would be a wonderful book to read aloud to a class because of the humor, the well-developed characters, and the fast-paced plot. 6-9 w

Cushman, Karen. **Catherine Called Birdy**. Clarion, 1994. 164 pages.

Thirteen-year-old Catherine is the spunky daughter of an English country knight who writes in her journal of what life is like for her in 1200. Her mother wants her to learn the womanly skills of a lady while her father only wants to marry her off. Much of her time is spent figuring out ways to appear unappealing to potential marriage partners. Her luck seems to run out when she is forced to accept bridal money from an older suitor so she can save a trained bear. Catherine is a heroine who won't easily be forgotten. 6-12 s/i

Cushman, Karen. **The Midwife's Apprentice**. Clarion, 1995. 122 pages.

Sometime in the early fourteenth century, Brat wakes up from her sleep in a dung heap to the steely eyes of a woman from whom she begs food. The woman will give no food without work and so Brat goes with her, gets food scraps, and begins to help Jane, the midwife. Brat, whom Jane calls Beetle, is afraid of almost everything since she has had to fend for herself for as long as she can remember. Working for Jane she grows in confidence, learns a trade, and is on her way to becoming the midwife, Alyce, in her own right. Readers will learn much about the living conditions of the fourteenth century, the social attitudes of the time, as well as what the lives of the people were like. s/i 7-10

Dickinson, Peter. **A Bone from a Dry Sea**. Bantam Doubleday Dell, 1992. 199 pages.

Wow! This novel thrusts us into the heart of the still largely unexplored sea-ape theory that holds that for a period of the evolution of humans, we lived in the sea. The story is told in alternating chapters by a girl in the present, working with her paleontologist father in Africa and by a girl who lived four million years ago. Through the ancient character, Li, Dickinson shows us how early thought may have begun as we become aware of the shape of Li's life living on the shore and in the sea. This fast-paced, fascinating book gives readers lots to think about. Because of the scientific nature of this material, it would go well in a science unit. 9-12 s/i

Dickinson, Peter. **Shadow of a Hero**. Delacorte Press, 1994. 290 pages.

This is the story of a people and a land in Europe ruled by its three neighbors even though they have their own language and history. Told in alternating chapters of the present and the past, we learn how the people came to feel they were a people, who their heroes are and why, and what happens to them once communism collapses. Told through characters who are in the bloodline of the legendary heroes, we come to mainly know Letta and her adored grandfather, the man the Varinians think can win sovereignty for them. Complex, layered, and steeped in history, this is a story to read and savor. Although not about the breakup of Yugoslavia and the re-emergence of Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia, this story helps us understand the kind of conflict that caused these situations. Because of the terrific characterization and the well-developed plot,

this book is engrossing and hard to put down. It would work well in a social studies class too. 10-12 s/i

Dorris, Michael. **Morning Girl**. Hyperion, 1992. 74 pages.

Dorris provides us with a glimpse into the lives of the pre-Columbian Taino Indians who lived in the Bahamas when Columbus arrived. The chapters are told alternately by Morning Girl and her younger brother Star Boy. Through their eyes we see what life is like on their island, and how they strive to coexist with the natural world, not dominate it. This tribe, since they are so open to people, expects visitors to be friends, not dangerous enemies. Thus we see through Morning Girl's eyes the arrival of Columbus's ship, and her reaction to the strange looking people. This short, gentle book, which ends with Columbus's arrival, gives readers much to think about and talk about in terms of which culture was more civilized and humane. 5-9 w

Farmer, Nancy. **The Ear, the Eye, and the Arm**. Orchard Books, 1994. 301 pages.

In this Newbery Honor book set in 2194 in Zimbabwe, the three children of an important general are kidnapped. They first are made to work beneath an old toxic waste dump, mining plastic for the She Elephant who intends to sell them. Three mutant detectives with special powers almost find the children, who after escaping from the She Elephant, end up at Resthaven, a protected area where the culture from earlier times flourishes, and in yet one more very strange place before they finally meet up with the detectives. A fascinating adventure inspired by Shonie mythology. Engrossing. 7-12 s/i

Farmer, Nancy. **A Girl Called Disaster**. Orchard Books, 1996. 293 pages.

Nhamo, at twelve, is promised to an older, cruel man who already has three wives. To escape, she undertakes a long, arduous journey to the land of her father's people in Zimbabwe. Along the way she faces drowning, starvation, a troop of baboons, and the spirit world of her people. Talking to her dead mother helps her gain the confidence she needs to live through the many trials of the trip. A well-researched, interesting book that shows a girl learning to live in primitive, modern, and animal societies. 7-10 s/i.

Fenner, Carol. **Yolanda's Genius**. Margaret K. McElderry Books, 1995. 208 pages.

Yolanda loves Chicago and can get along just fine there. But her mother decides it's getting too rough, and so she moves the family to a small Michigan town where few black people live. Now the challenges of getting along change, but Yolanda is up to the challenge as she makes sure other students know they can't mess with her. Yolanda's soft spot is for her little brother who she knows is a musical genius but who is put in special education classes because he can't read. Yolanda is determined to do something to help her brother and a visit back to Chicago and the jazz festival are her opportunity. What a kid! Everyone should have a big sister like this who believes in them and sticks up for them. A Newbery Honor book. 5-9 w

Fleishman, Paul. **Bull Run**. Harper Trophy, 1993. 102 pages.

This brilliantly conceived book is a series of monologues from the points-of-view of 16 different people who somehow were connected to the Battle of Bull Run. Northern and Southern generals, wives, mothers, sisters, an 11-year-old fife player, and several others who represent just about every viewpoint connected to the war. These voices all come together to give us a very complete picture of this battle. Works wonderfully to read this one aloud. 5-12 w

Furlong, Monica. **Juniper**. Random House, 1990. 198 pages.

This is a prequel to **Wise Child** written several years earlier. In this book we learn of the childhood of Juniper and her studies with her unusual godmother who teaches her about herbs, spells, and the healing arts. All of this education finally makes sense to Juniper when she realizes her skills and powers are needed to protect her unborn brother and her father's kingdom from her power-mad aunt. Engaging and thought provoking. 7-10 s/i

Furlong, Monica. **Wise Child**. Random House, 1987. 228 pages.

Wise Child is taken in by the unusual woman in her village, Juniper. She is loved, cared for, and taught how to do many things. Juniper is called on frequently by the villagers for help with illness and disease. But some fearful people could not accept this strong, self-sufficient, happy woman, and stories circulate that she is a witch. Wise Child finds it hard to believe that Juniper, who loves everything in the world and is kind, could finally be imprisoned and accused of being a witch. This book made me think about how we do or do not live in tune with nature, how we don't usually live in the present, and that we do, unlike Juniper, let fear grip our hearts. Very thought-provoking. 7-12 s/i

Gallo, Donald, ed. **Ultimate Sports**. Delacorte Press, 1995. 333 pages.

I have to admit it. I'm not a sports fan so I had to force myself to start this book. I was afraid these stories would glorify sports and skip over female athletes. I was wrong. Don Gallo has put together a superb group of short stories sometimes only tangentially related to sports. Once I started this collection I couldn't put the book down and read it in one day. Every story is well-written and interesting. This is one of the best collections of short stories I have ever read. 7-12 w

Garden, Nancy. **Good Moon Rising**. Farrar Straus Giroux, 1996. 230 pages.

Jan has just returned from summer stock and is dreading seeing her childhood friend, Ted, who tried to kiss her the last time they saw each other. Getting through this awkwardness, she gets involved in trying out for the *Crucible*. To her surprise, she is not given a part but is asked by their beloved teacher/director to assist her in directing. First resentful, Jan gradually forms a close relationship with the girl who got the part she wanted. In a short time, the girls realize they feel a

lot for each other and eventually come to realize they are gay. Of course, some in their high school are unforgiving, and one boy, in particular, who resents the fact that Jan has taken over as director since their terminally ill teacher has left, mounts a vicious smear campaign against Jan and Kerry. A very satisfying ending in that the girls decide to take a stand and not pretend to be someone they are not. 10-12 s/i.

Garland, Sherry. **Cabin 102**. Harcourt Brace, 1995. 243 pages.

To the outside observer, 12-year-old Dusty seems very lucky. He spends summers at this dad's beachhouse, and now he has the chance to go on a cruise with his dad and step-family. But Dusty is terrified of water and has to spend so much of his energy finding excuses to stay out of the water that he can't enjoy himself. While on the cruise he hears the sobbing in the cabin next door. His response to this crying leads him into the world of a young Arawak Indian girl whose spirit can't rest until she finds her island home. As Dusty struggles with ways to secretly help her, she is able to help him too. A very satisfying mystery which very clearly illuminates the insecurities and self-doubts that Dusty has about himself and his place in his step-family. 6-10 s/i

Garland, Sherry. **Indio**. Harcourt Brace, 1992. 243 pages.

This engrossing novel, set four hundred years ago when large groups of "indios" lived along the Rio Grand River, tells of Ipa, a young girl torn from her people on her wedding day and forced into slavery. The horror of the lives of the Indians who must work the silver mines for the Spanish is graphically shown as Ipa watches her own younger brother almost destroyed by their harsh treatment. 7-12 s/i

Garland, Sherry. **Silent Storm**. Harcourt Brace, 1993. 275 pages.

Alyssa is 13 and has been mute since her mother drowned and her dad disappeared three years ago during a storm when they were in the boat together. She has chosen to live near the water with her grandfather and his horses instead of with her uncle and rather up-tight aunt who took her little brother in. Her grandfather is getting old, her aunt and uncle are coming to take her back to live with them, and a hurricane is approaching. How will Alyssa find her way through this? This moving story shows the depths of anguish experienced by this teen as she tries to block out the last moments of her parents' lives when they insisted she leave the boat and save herself. Well-written, engrossing, unforgettable. 7-12 s/i

Gilden, Mel. **The Pumpkins of Time**. Harcourt Brace, 1994. 209 pages.

This zany, fast-paced adventure involves Myron, Princess, aliens, and time travel. Myron has no idea of why the aliens are so interested in him, why they have come to get him, and what this giant pumpkin has to do with anything. Hilarious. 4-7 s/i

Grant, Cynthia D. **Mary Wolf**. Simon & Schuster, 1995. 166 pages.

Mary knows that her mother's shoplifting and stealing is wrong, but her parents tell her they will all go hungry if she refuses to help. Out of work for two years and drifting from place to place in the RV the family of six lives in, Mary's father is slipping farther and farther away from reality. He talks big in the campgrounds they live in and seems to believe his own stories. When he begins to become violent, Mary is appalled, but when he buys a gun, Mary is overwhelmed with worry. Can this 16-year-old protect her sisters and mother from this threat of violence? The novel superbly deals with out-of-touch parents and about being the real adult in the family at sixteen. The effects of drifting on the children are also explored. A compelling, frightening story. 7-12 s/i

Grant, Cynthia D. **Uncle Vampire**. Atheneum, 1993. 151 pages.

Carolyn is 16 and talks frequently about her twin sister, Honey, and her uncle who she says is a vampire. Tension builds slowly as the truth starts to dawn on the reader, and we realize Carolyn has created this alternate reality to deal with the sexual abuse in her home. A gripping, frightening story that reminds us that to cope with the shock and pain and betrayal of such abuse, people lock the memories behind a door. 7-11 s/i

Hansen, Joyce. **The Captive**. Scholastic, 1994. 195 pages.

Told from the point of view of Kofi, a 12-year-old African prince, this story begins with what is supposed to be a day of celebration but turns out to be a day of betrayal. In Kofi's time of being a fugitive, the readers see brief glimpses of several aspects of African cultures. When Kofi is sold to slavers, we endure the torturous journey across the sea with him; when he arrives in America we see the circumstances of his enslavement; and in his bid for freedom we share his terror and fears. With its excellent characterization and compelling plot this is a story that will not soon be forgotten. 6-10, s/i.

Hinojosa, Maria. **Crews**. Harcourt Brace, 1995. 162 pages.

This chillingly honest book is made up of interviews of gang members in New York City. From the stories the "crew" members tell, the loneliness and desire to be part of a "family" surfaces even as we hear their seemingly callous comments about beating up and robbing others. As Hinojosa tries to get at the causes of their violent acts, we are reminded of how tough it is to grow up and to feel safe. 9-12 w

Hobbs, Will. **Kokopelli's Flute**. Atheneum, 1995. 148 pages.

Tep loved to explore the old cliff dwellings not far from his home. One night he manages to scare away robbers who leave behind a flute he can't resist taking. This flute thrusts him into the world of magic and native lore. He undergoes transformations at night,

meets a strange visitor, and uncovers information that may prevent his mother from dying of a little understood infection. Terrific! I learned lots about Kokopelli and gained even more respect for Will Hobbs' creative powers. 7-11 s/i

Johnson, Angela. **Humming Whispers**. Orchard Books, 1995. 121 pages.

So much had already been taken away from Sophy when her parents were killed in a car accident, but she still had her sister Nikki and her Aunt Shirley. Then her sister started hearing "whispers" and slowly descends into the world of schizophrenia. Sophy tries to hang in there and be attuned to when her sister might have another "episode." But the stress of living with her sister takes its toll, and Sophy wonders if she too is going crazy. This beautifully written book is filled with characters who deeply care for Sophy and her sister but who can't live their lives for them. A gently told, thought-provoking novel. 9-12 s/i

Johnson, Angela. **Toning the Sweep**. Scholastic, 1994.

Emily and her mom go to the desert to help her grandmother Ola pack and move back North with them because she is terminally ill. Through flashbacks we see the racial hatred that killed Emily's grandfather and drove Ola out of the South. Ola is a marvelously strong African-American woman who finds joy in her current life. She surrounds herself with a rather outrageous group of older women who spend lots of time laughing. A beautifully written, sensitive book that serves to remind us that dealing with death is another facet of life. 9-12 s/i

Johnston, Norma. **Louisa May**. William Morrow Co., 1995.

Johnston begins this compelling biography with the lives of Louisa's parents so readers can see the effects of their actions and beliefs on Louisa. She starts with "There are some people who... should probably never be parents. Bronson Alcott was one of those people." We are forced to wonder why Bronson is described this way, and we dig right into the book in search of answers. The information on Louisa is fascinating, and I gained new respect for this woman who held her family together both economically and emotionally. A terrific biography. 7-12 s/i

Johnston, Norma. **Remember the Ladies**. Scholastic, 1995. 145 pages.

The focus of this book is on the major organizers of the Seneca Falls Convention. But this book does not merely recite facts, it immerses the reader into the attitudes of the times and the families of women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton. We can see through this book the conflict surrounding the fight for women's rights and the personal cost to the women who took bold steps to bring the issues of women into public debate. 7-12 s/i

Klass, David. **Danger Zone**. Scholastic, 1996. 232 pages.

Jimmy Doyle is a fantastic basketball player from Minneapolis who is surprised to be asked to play on

America's Teen Dream Team for a tournament in Europe. When he joins the mostly black team in California, they wonder if his basketball skills will measure up or if he's the token white player. Tension is high, especially since one player feels his cousin was cut from the team so this white boy could play. When they get to Italy they are forced to depend on each other because they're all they have. Then anti-American and anti-minority sentiments are made visible, and the team is threatened. The suspenseful, tension-filled ending is superb. 9-12 s/i

Klauser, Annette Curtis. **Blood and Chocolate.** Delacorte. 1997. 265 pages.

This book begins with a group of people/werewolves being burned out of their home because of recent violence in the area. The werewolf pack, which stays disguised, works hard at living in peace with their neighbors and has a very strict code that includes no violence towards humans. Against a backdrop of burgeoning violence and power struggles within the pack, Vivian, at fifteen, begins to fall in love with a non-werewolf. Because she loves the part of herself that "puts on the fur" during the full moon and runs free, she believes she can show her boyfriend that side of herself. But is the time right? Will he think she is the one responsible for the human deaths in the neighborhood? Will he still love her if he sees her in her wolf form? A beautiful, sensual novel that has everything to do with working to accept who we really are. I loved it because it was compelling, unusual, and thought provoking. 10-12. s/i.

Krisher, Trudy. **Spite Fences.** Delacorte Press, 1994. 229 pages.

Maggie wants to get away from her tension-ridden house where her Mama and Daddy seem to fight constantly about Daddy's inability to make any money, and her Mama blabbers about her little sister's beauty and Maggie's lack of it. Tension in the South is also at an all-time high with blacks demanding the use of whites-only parks and restaurants. Maggie, who mostly watches and listens, has friends of both races and one of them Zeke, a black peddler, finds her a job cleaning house. What Maggie's family doesn't know is that her employer is a prominent black man who is in town to help organize the blacks. This powerful book adeptly shows the thinking that is prevalent at this time as we come to know Maggie's family almost too well. This book is so well-written that we squirm with discomfort when we see Mama in action and when we are met face-to-face with hostile, white community members. A page turner if you can bear the tension. 9-12 s/i

Lane, Dakota. **Johnny Voodoo.** Delacorte, 1996. 201 pages.

Deidre's dad decides to move the family to Louisiana from New York following the death of Deidre's mother. Alone in a culture that is unfamiliar to her, she becomes friends with another outsider, a boy her age called Johnny Voodoo. Trying to cope with a new school and her father's dating behavior seems like enough to deal with. But then the big secret about her mother is

revealed, and Deidre doesn't know how they will ever become a real family again. Although Johnny is around only sporadically, through her relationship with him Deidre learns what love is and where it goes when the loved person is no longer around. 8-11 s/i.

LeMieux, A.C. **Do Angels Sing the Blues?** William Morrow, 1995. 215 pages.

Boog becomes best friends with Theo when they are kids, and their relationship gets tighter when they play in a band together in high school. Enter Carey, a girl who dresses very differently and who captures Theo's heart. Boog tries not to dislike her in spite of the fact that she has come between him and Theo. Then comes the tragic death, and the realization that Carey is a very troubled young woman. Can she and Boog pull together and grieve, or will he always blame her? A very sad, moving story with fantastic characterization. 9-12 s/i.

LeMieux, A.C. **The TV Guidance Counselor.** William Morrow, 1993. 239 pages.

This story opens with Michael in a hospital after his apparent suicide attempt. He isn't really sure that is why he jumped off the bridge, but as he replays what has happened to him since his parents' divorce, it becomes apparent to him how out-of-control his life had gotten. This well-written novel with excellent characterization takes us into the life of one teenager who is struggling to cope with all the changes in his life since his dad left. 9-12 s/i.

Lynch, Chris. **Mick** (Blue-Eyed Son #1). HarperCollins, 1996. 146 pages.

Mick lives in an Irish, blue-collar neighborhood of Boston which has always displayed an us-against-the-world attitude. Mick at 15 takes a new look at the alcohol his family consumes, the prejudices they display, and the cruelty of his older brother who enjoys terrorizing anyone who is not white. This novel sweeps us into the life that Mick has with his parents who are usually in an alcohol-induced haze and the outright cruelty of his brother, Terry, when Mick starts questioning the ways of the family and neighborhood. I could feel Mick's entrapment in his family and the terror of knowing his parents would do nothing to stop Terry's cruelty to him. Wow! Wow! Wow! This powerful book speaks volumes about alcoholism and prejudice. Some language. 9-12 s/i

Lynch, Chris. **Blood Relations** (Blue-Eyed Son #2). HarperCollins, 1996. 216 pages.

Mick is lying on the sidewalk bloodied after being beat up by his Irish comrades for mixing with people who weren't Irish or white and thus not part of the "family." It gets worse. His drunken brute of a brother, Terry, insists Mick be part of the drinking, partying scene, and he assaults Mick when he refuses. Because Mick can't face the thought of returning home after the last beastly party that his brother hosted and used as an occasion to abuse and humiliate him, Mick moves in with his best friend's family where he has stayed over the years when his parents forgot about him. His

friends Toy, Sully, and Evelyn continue to help him out in hopes that Mick can get his life together. Brutal but powerful. 9-12 s/i

Lynch, Chris. ***Dog Eat Dog*** (Blue-Eyed Son #3). HarperCollins, 1996. 136 pages.

On top of everything, now Mick has to deal with the fear he feels worrying that Toy will find out he slept with Toy's mother. Quickly he becomes entangled in family matters because he still can't believe no one in his family cares or will help him. This time his brother, Terry, is into finding dogs to fight other dogs to the death. In a shocking and brutal ending, Mick finds out what he needs to know about his family to be able to move on in his life. What an ending! This series makes me wonder if people like Terry could ever change and shows the hold that alcohol and clan-like approval can have on people's ability to remain mired in their narrow-mindedness. 10-12 s/i

Martinez, Victor. ***Parrot in the Oven***. HarperCollins, 1996. 216 pages.

In this tenderly-written coming-of-age story we meet Manny Hernandez and his family. By novel's end we know his family members well: his mother, the compulsive cleaner, his father, the compulsive drinker, and his older brother who only seems to care about his looks. Manny wants to be the best he can be, but he sometimes wonders if his family will help or hinder him. So vividly written, the words become a home movie right in front of your eyes. 7-12 s/i.

McCaffrey, Anne. ***Black Horses for the King***. Harcourt Brace, 1996. 220 pages.

This historical novel—McCaffrey's first—is set in the time of King Arthur. It is the story of Galwyn, son of a bankrupted aristocrat, whose knowledge of horses and languages makes him invaluable as Arthur's men go to the continent to try to secure the best horses available. Arthur wants swift horses that are large enough to carry his armed warriors. This tale centers around Galwyn, the training of the horses including the invention of the horseshoe, and the effect these huge, black horses have on Arthur's enemy. A great story that also teaches readers much about horses. 5-12 s/i

McKillip, Patricia. ***The Forgotten Beasts of Eld***. Harcourt Brace, 1996. 343 pages.

Sybil, the child of a wizard, grows up alone on Eld Mountain with only creatures, such as her fantastic dragons, for company. When she turns 16, a baby is brought to her to raise, and in this responsibility her whole life begins to change. She is thrust into the world of humans as she struggles to find what is important to her, what is at the depth of her being. Action and adventure abound in the last half of the book as Sybil must finally face herself. I liked this book not only because it was interesting and lulled me with its language but also because it made me look at myself. 7-12 s/i.

Meyer, Carolyn. ***Drummers of Jericho***. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1995. 308 pages.

Billy Harper's life changes the summer that Pazit Trujillo moves to town. Up until then he viewed himself as a rather ordinary teen in a rather ordinary town. But his town isn't ready for Pazit, a Jewish girl who moved from Denver to live with her father and stepmother. First off all, she dresses differently; secondly, she acts differently and doesn't seem to care what others think of her, and most of all she refuses to participate when the band plays hymns and marches in the formation of the cross. The hostility to her is widespread and intense, and Billy, a drummer in the marching band, surprises himself by standing up for her. Unfortunately, there are no happy endings, but this novel paints a vivid picture of a town which truly believed it is right to insist that everyone be the same, and if someone didn't like the way their town was, they could leave. A very powerful picture of prejudice. 8-12 s/i

Meyer, Carolyn. ***Gideon's People***. Harcourt Brace, 1996. 297 pages.

After the Jewish peddler's wagon accident, he finds that his son Isaac is injured and must stay at the farm of a kind Amish family. Although this story centers on the differences in the way the Amish family lives and believes, it is also about one son who questions his family's Amish customs. Isaac gets drawn into helping Annie, the younger sister, prevent Gideon from running away. A touching, well-written story in which we see two distinct life styles and belief systems. 7-11 s/i.

Neufeld, John. ***Almost a Hero***. Simon & Schuster, 1995. 147 pages.

Ben, living alone with his father, knows a dark secret surrounds the death of his mother and sister. When he begins doing a week of volunteer work at a day-care center for homeless children, he is very protective of the children. When he becomes convinced that one of the children in the center is being abused at home, he decides to take matters into his own hands and rescue the child. How can he know that death will come to a child he was not even concerned about? In the very moving funeral scene, it becomes apparent that he and his father are now beginning to come to terms with their own grief. 6-9 s/i.

Neufeld, John. ***Gaps in Stone Walls***. Simon & Schuster, 1996. 181 pages.

A wicked man is murdered on Martha's Vineyard in 1880, and only four people have no alibis. Twelve-year-old Merry is one of them. Rather than bring shame upon her family, she decides to flee before the investigation is completed. Will this deaf girl get off of the island undetected? A fascinating story in which the life of the islanders unfolds along with the fact that there is a high percentage of the deaf among them. It is interesting to see how everyone knows how to sign since deafness was such a common occurrence at the time. 7-11 s/i.

Neufeld, John. **A Small Civil War**. Simon & Schuster, 1996. 182 pages.

At thirteen, Georgia is feisty and action-oriented. When she hears of the proposed banning of *The Grapes of Wrath* from the school library, she dives in to fight off the censors. Imagine her surprise when she finds her own family is divided on the issue! She organizes her group, meets with adults, and meets with city council. This novel really shows both sides of the issue, and the interesting characters bring these positions to life. Although the ending will not make both sides happy, the one thing everyone can agree on is that Georgia is a memorable character who demonstrates that young people can make an impact. 6-12 s/i.

Paterson, Katherine. **Jip: His Story**. Lodestar Books, 1996. 180 pages.

Jip, a young boy who lives on the town poor farm in Vermont in the 1850s, works hard, loves to take care of the animals, and expects little from life. After all, what can a child who ended up at the poor farm after falling from a moving wagon and never being claimed expect? Then an old man who is called a lunatic is brought to the farm and caged. As Jip and the lunatic, Put, become fast friends, a stranger begins to lurk around the town asking questions about Jip's background. In a rush of events, Jip finds himself pursued and in danger, finds out about his background, and finds out how many people really care about him. This moving story with a boy who would be easy to love, is a tale of outcasts and acceptance and caring. I was moved by this book and wanted to think about it more when I was done with it. Readers of Paterson's *Lyddie* will be happy to know that she appears in this book as a character. 6-10 s/i.

Paulsen, Gary. **Brian's Winter**. Delacorte Press, 1996. 133 pages.

For readers of *Hatchet* who wondered what would happen if Brian had to survive the winter and had not been rescued—this book provides the answer. Paulsen continues the story showing what obstacles Brian had to face to live. Dealing with bears, figuring out how to make a bow and arrow strong enough to kill larger animals, and how to make clothing from animal skins are some of the skills Brian had to develop. Once again I was interested to read about the survival skills and what it took for Brian to learn them. It amazes me that a book with only one character can be so engaging, but Paulsen's genius seems to be presenting nature as the antagonist so well that it is a palpable presence or character. 5-12 s/i

Paulsen, Gary. **The Rifle**. Harcourt Brace, 1995. 105 pages.

A rifle is the centerpiece of this story, from the making of it two hundred years earlier to the tragic accident caused by it in the present. We learn about all of the rifle's owners, the good intentions of some gun owners, and that guns do kill people. 7-12 s/i

Petry, Ann. **Harriet Tubman**. Harper Trophy, 1983. (recently re-issued) 242 pages.

In this biography we see Harriet as the child, Minty, growing up a slave and being instructed in the ways of the woods by her father. Her irrepressible personality and her unwillingness to submit marked her early as a troublemaker. Still a teenager, she marries the man of her dreams, a freeman, and is happy for a time until she discovers he will not support her strong desire to escape slavery by fleeing to the North. Once Harriet makes her decision to leave, nothing can stop her, and she is served well by the knowledge she gained from her father. The frequent trips she took back into the South to secure freedom for her people are told in frightening detail. At book's end, we feel we understand the essence of Harriet and admire her even more. 6-12 s/i

Powell, Randy. **Dean Duffy**. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1995. 170 pages.

Although Dean Duffy graduates from high school with no real plans, his mentor in baseball arranged an opportunity for Dean to have a one-term baseball scholarship at a small college starting with winter semester. Since Dean's last year in high school was abysmal, Dean drifts through the fall trying to decide whether or not to put himself on the line by accepting the scholarship and risk finding out whether he really is a failure. In his quest to make his decision, he finds out about himself as he interacts with his high school friend, formally a loser, a new girl, and his longtime enemy in baseball. Sometimes hilarious, always thoughtful, this book has enough meat in it to provide food for thought for adults as well as teens. Powell helps us think deeply about the place of competition and gets us to look closely at what our own goals are as well as what we avoid in life. A good coming-of-age book. 10-12 s/i.

Powell, Randy. **Is Kissing a Girl Who Smokes Like Licking an Ashtray?** Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1992. 199 pages.

Biff is sure he is in love with a classmate. Then he meets a rather unusual girl who is visiting a family friend of his while she is suspended from school. This very unlikely pair, he on the serious side and a bit of an outsider at school, she a loud-mouthed, chain-smoking rebel, are thrown together and develop a relationship. They work their way around land mines to do so, especially since she is so determined not to like Biff. This tender, funny story is about the circuitous route they take around each other before they will finally let the other see the "real" part of themselves. I loved it. 9-12 s/i.

Powell, Randy. **My Underrated Year**. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1988. 182 pages.

Roger is great at tennis and very good at football. He hopes to be the star of his school's tennis team AND make the varsity in football. He has a very good chance at both until the Mountain twins move to town and dash his sports dreams. One very complicating factor is that he also has a crush on the female twin. This very touching and humorous book focuses on how Roger

makes it through the year and what he learns about himself. 8-11 s/i.

Powell, Randy. **The Whistling Toilets**. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1996. 243 pages.

Stan and Ginny have always been close friends. Then she went off and became a top-seeded tennis player. Now at fifteen she's in a slump and coming home. Her parents hope Stan will coach her and figure out why she's in a slump. He does. Although the story line seems simple, this is a very satisfying book because Powell lets us into the lives of his characters and shows us how "heavy" the so-called ordinary issues of growing up really are. Humor and introspective are also two of his trademarks which are both present in this book. 9-12 s/i.

Pullman, Philip. **The Golden Compass**. Knopf, 1995. 399 pages.

This book is a masterpiece. The tightly woven plot centers around Lyca, a supposed orphan being raised by scholars of a British college, who stumbles onto a plot to kidnap other children for scientists to perform experiments on. This fantasy-like novel is set in a world very like ours but peopled with daemons (familiars), witches, armored bears, and gypsy-like people. The forces of good and evil are sometimes difficult to tell apart since institutions like the church and government have a stake in the success of the experiments. High adventure is a major part of the story since Lyca is continuously chased after by an evil woman she later finds is her mother. The reader finishes this novel ready for the next book, ready to learn more about the mysterious "thread" that has been labeled as evil, and ready to learn whether Lyca's father is on the side of good or evil. The characterization is so superb that we deeply care about many of the main characters, even the armored bear. Teens who like to read would love this fast-paced book with its many complicated layers and levels of meaning. This novel is destined to become a "classic" and already the crossover to adult audiences is evident. 8-12 s/i

Pullman, Philip. **The Tin Princess**. Random House, 1994. 290 pages.

Adelaide, a Cockney commoner, is married to a prince of a tiny country in Europe. Becky starts out as her tutor in German, but she is soon drawn into the web of intrigue as it becomes obvious that the prince is in danger. She is accompanied by Jim, a detective, as they journey to Razkavia with Adelaide to continue her schooling when the prince becomes the king. Shortly thereafter, the king is assassinated, and the three young people begin the serious task of ruling the country. Then danger strikes again, and the three are fighting for both their lives and the country's continuation. Suspenseful, adventurous, fascinating! 7-12 s/i.

Rinaldi, Ann. **A Stitch in Time**. Scholastic, 1994. 301 pages.

Another Rinaldi spellbinder. It's just after the Revolutionary War and Hannah, the oldest daughter at

16, is struggling to hold her family together in spite of her cold, arrogant father's inattention, her sister running off with a sea captain, and two more siblings going out West. Rinaldi weaves secrets and mysteries into this wonderful story as she makes us care about her characters. I can't wait to get the next one in this trilogy. This novel would work well in a social studies class studying this time period and the urge to move West. 8-12 s/i

Rostowski, Margaret. **Moon Dancer**. Harcourt Brace, 1995. 180 pages.

Miranda and her sister Jenny go camping in a Utah canyon with her cousin Emily and her friend Max. Miranda at 15 is very into nature and into backpacking much more than her older sister who is often annoyed at the inconveniences of camping. Miranda is fascinated by the Indian paintings in the canyons and learns much from the women who obviously painted them. She and Max have many common interests, and their relationship deepens partially because he is as moved by the history in evidence in the canyon as she is. I liked the story and the information I learned about the Indians who once lived in this area. 8-12 s/i

Santiago, Esmeralda. **When I was Puerto Rican**. Vantage Books, 1993. 270 pages.

Negi tells her story of what it's like to live in the hills of Puerto Rico. We see the living conditions, the relationships, the way families spend their time. Living in dire poverty seemed to her to be the way almost everyone lived. The bright spot in her life is school where she excels. When Mami leaves Papi, they move to the city and life changes. Through these chronicles of Negi's childhood and teen years, the reader can see how poverty affects people, how hard it is to have high expectations for oneself, and once they moved to New York, how difficult it is to live between two cultures. Marvelously written. 9-12 s/i

Talbert, Marc. **Heart of a Jaguar**. Simon & Schuster, 1995. 190 pages.

This novel, set in the year 1200, places the reader squarely in the middle of the Mayan culture and puts flesh on all those facts we've read about Mayan civilization. Told through the eyes of a young Mayan boy, Balam, we learn about his family life, his spiritual life, and his view of the world that eventually allows him to embrace the decision of the elders that he must be sacrificed. An amazing novel in that I have never read fiction about the Mayan culture which takes us inside it and makes us privy to the way they think. This would be a wonderful addition to non-fiction books on this culture because it all comes alive for us in an integrated way so that we are not just looking at pieces of the culture—we see it all in relationship to the whole. 7-12 s/i

Talbert, Marc. **A Sunburned Prayer**. Simon & Schuster, 1995. 109 pages.

Eleven-year-old Eloy desperately wants to go on the seventeen-mile pilgrimage to Santauria de Chimayo on Good Friday and ask God to perform the miracle of

letting his cancer-ridden grandmother live. But at the last minute, his mom can't go with him and forbids him to make the journey alone. Eloy adores his grandmother, who he feels really understands him, and so he decides to disobey his parents and go alone. Throughout the story, which is mainly about his journey, Eloy learns much about himself, his relationship with God, and how difficult it is to accept the impending death of his grandmother. 5-9 s/i

Temple, Frances. **The Ramsey Scallop**. Harper Trophy, 1994. 310 pages.

In 1299, Elenor dreads the return of her betrothed, whom she barely knows, from the Crusades. Thomas finds the idea of marriage to this 14-year-old equally repugnant after returning from the Crusades completely disillusioned. Luckily, Friar Greg hits upon a plan to postpone the inevitable and let Elenor and Thomas get to know each other by insisting they travel together to Spain to lay a record of the villagers' sins on the altar and pray for their forgiveness. This long, arduous journey allows Elenor and Thomas to see each other in many different situations, and they begin to appreciate each other's strengths as they interact with people along the way and get involved in their adventures. I enjoyed this book because it gave me a look at another time period and at the beliefs and thinking of the people. 7-12 s/i

Thomas, Rob. **Rats Saw God**. Simon & Schuster, 1996. 202 pages.

As a senior, Steve York gets high frequently and skips school until a no-nonsense counselor makes it clear to Steve that unless he writes a one-hundred page paper to make up for a failed English class, he will not graduate. Through the paper, Steve figures out why he went from being an honor student to an almost dropout. In this many-layered story, we see the multitudes of issues in Steve's life and come to realize how complex it is. The author brings his characters to life and describes their circumstances and feelings so well that we all remember how difficult it was to be a teen. Teens reacting to divorce is a big issue in this book. 9-12 s/i.

Vick, Helen Hughes. **Walker of Time**. Harbinger House, 1993. 203 pages.

This story begins in the present at a deserted cliff dwelling but takes two of its characters back to the year 1250 in a Hopi village. There Walker discovers the startling news that he is the son of the chief and was sent forward in time to escape a long period of tribal illness. This well written, well-researched book totally engrossed me as I learned much about the ancient Hopi and why they left their cliff dwellings. Because of the humor provided by the friend who accompanied him to the past and because the details of living are so fascinating and the plot is so well developed, this would make a good whole class book, perhaps in conjunction with social studies. 7-12 w

Vick, Helen Hughes. **Walker's Journey Home**, 1995. 182 pages.

In this sequel, Walker realizes his mission is to lead his people to surroundings where they can survive. As they travel to different mesas and meet up with different tribes, Walker becomes aware that the man who pursues the girl Walker loves, Flute Maiden, is filled with evil. Fear flourishes in the desert, nurtured by tales of ghosts and killings. Can Walker see through to what is really happening and help his people find a new home? That is the major question that this book explores. A terrific sequel. I would love to see a third in the series so I can see if Walker ever returns to the present. 7-12 s/i

Voigt, Cynthia. **The Wings of a Falcon**. Scholastic, 1993. 467 pages.

This is the third book in a loosely connected series that began with **Jackaroo** and continued in **On Fortune's Wheel**. This story starts on Damall's Island where a cruel man trains kidnapped boys to obey and to work hard so that later he can sell them as seasoned slaves. In this harsh setting Griff and Oriel meet, bond, and eventually escape together to see if the land of the kingdom beyond the mountains is a myth or reality. Action-packed adventure permeates this story as these two young men forge ahead together to seek their destiny. Absorbing. 7-12 s/i.

Whelan, Gloria. **Once on This Island**. HarperCollins, 1995. 184 pages.

The War of 1812 becomes a reality for the residents of Mackinac Island in Michigan when the British take over control of the island and require oaths of loyalty from the inhabitants. Mary's father will not sign. He considers himself American and hates the British whom he blames for driving him out of Ireland. Twelve-year-old Mary, who narrates the story, and Angelique and Jacques are left to tend the farm while their father goes to Detroit to sign up to fight. Through their interactions with the British, the war comes to life for us, and we see what the islanders had to do to survive. British pranks, tales of battles, and the development of matters of the heart all keep this story interesting. 6-10 s/i

Williams-Garcia, Rita. **Fast Talk on a Slow Track**. Penguin Books, 1991. 182 pages.

Denzel thinks he is hot stuff. He's got good grades, he can talk the talk, and he's been admitted to Princeton. Attending the summer program on campus to acclimate minority freshman, Denzel finds how much out of his element he is, and he does dismally. Instead of listening to instructors as they tell him he must interact with material, not just regurgitate it, he fights them, refusing to believe they have anything of value to give him. After the program, to prove he still can be a winner, he pits himself against a street kid in selling candy door-to-door. The weeks he spends on this job teach him more about himself than he wanted to learn. A fast-paced, engrossing novel. I loved it. 10-12 w

Williams-Garcia, Rita. ***Like Sisters on the Homefront***. Lodestar Books, 1995. 165 pages.

Mama has had it when street-wise, fourteen-year-old Gayle, already with one baby, gets in trouble again. Mama demands she have an abortion and then sends her down South to live with her very proper aunt and her minister uncle. Gayle doesn't think she can stand the confinement of the house or the small town atmosphere or her nearly perfect cousin. Once she starts interacting with Great, the family matriarch, Gayle at least has someone to talk to. Through living with these relatives Gayle comes to understand the importance of family and the African-American oral tradition as well as what her place might be in the larger picture. Rough and honest language, especially about sex, lets us get into the mind of Gayle to see how she views the world. This is a powerful book, one of the best I've read this year. Williams-Garcia is one of those authors to keep an eye on because her work is so outstanding. 7-11 s/i

Wyss, Thelma Hatch. ***A Stranger Here***. Harper Trophy, 1993. 132 pages.

Because her aunt is sick and her uncle needs help feeding the farm hands and keeping the house clean, Jada doesn't have much choice about accepting the summer job they offer. As she wanders through the big old farm house, she comes upon a Victrola in the ballroom on the top floor. After she tries old clothes on and puts a record on, a young man appears. Jada figures out it must be her cousin's beau who was killed in the Pacific during the war. That is only the beginning of his appearances. Through this unusual relationship, Jada learns about love and about herself. 7-12 s/i

Yep, Laurence, ed. ***American Dragons***. HarperCollins, 1993. 236 pages.

This collection of short stories, essays, poems, and plays shows clearly that there is no such thing as one Asian American experience—there are many. Pieces range from a short story about a teen trying to adjust to the fact that she has outgrown her "Chinese Shirley Temple" label and is no longer in demand by Hollywood, to poignant stories and poems that focus on the time of the Japanese internment camps. 7-12 w

Zindel, Paul. ***David and Della***. HarperCollins, 1993. 167 pages.

David is lonely because his parents' jobs take them out of New York and into exotic cities, often leaving him alone. His last girlfriend tried to commit suicide, and any good friends he makes move away because of parent transfers or divorces. Enter Della. David is overwhelmed by her and her energy, even though he's aware she's an alcoholic who has deep-seated problems. This sometimes zany book is quick to read but not always satisfying because David is so willing to change for Della that we don't care enough about him. 9-12 s/i

About the Author

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