

Mississippi Trial, 1955 by Chris Crowe
Phyllis Fogelman Books, June, 2002

Historical Fiction;
Racial Discrimination and Civil Rights
ISBN: 0-8037-2745-3

"My dad hates hate." With this compelling opening line, Chris Crowe draws readers into his first novel for adolescents. It is the story of 16-year-old Hiram Hillburn, who lives with his family in Arizona, but who longs to visit Greenwood, Mississippi, and the grandfather who helped raise him. And it is also the story of the disappearance, torture, and murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till, a Black teen who was visiting Greenwood, Mississippi, from his Chicago home during the summer of 1955.

When Hiram convinces his parents to let him spend the summer in Greenwood, he finally begins to understand why his father had to leave; he begins to appreciate his father's stance against injustice and prejudice. The lessons require that he learn about the ugly side of his own grandfather's past, and the man's part in the murder of Hiram's young Black friend, Emmett Till.

Crowe never lets the story line lag for the sake of adding historical details. Instead, he expertly infuses fact with human feeling. He shows us how desperately Hiram wants to help when he sees Emmett Till tortured by White kids, who gut a fish and hold let the blood drip all over Emmett, a scene that foreshadows the torture and murder that a group of White men later commit. Crowe helps us feel the humidity and heat of the Mississippi courtroom when the men responsible for Emmett's death are found innocent. And he teaches us the power of a teen's strength, hope, understanding, and love, even in the face of the prejudice and hatred of adults around him.

The book is reminiscent of Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry* in Crowe's powerful treatment of a serious subject and his graceful, careful use of language.

Sissi Carroll

Green Slime and Jam by Lila Guzman,
Eakin Publications, 2001, 166 pp. \$11.95

Fantasy/Fiction
ISBN 1-57168-483-2

Three famed literary characters are plucked from the pages of books when an explosion of green slime splashes on their pictures inside the books. Their landing spot is a modern day school in Texas. The literary figures, Lazarillo de Tormes (a famous character from Spanish literature), Alice in Wonderland, and the Jabberwock, are now only inches tall in a modern day world of giants. Fortunately, The Spanish orphan Lazarillo finds a safe place to stay, and someone who is willing to help him get back into his own Spanish story. Lazarillo also faces the challenges of finding Alice so she can be safely returned to her book, *Alice in Wonderland*, with the Jabberwock.

Jason, the boy who caused the explosion, and his sister Courtney are determined to find a way to get Lazarillo, Alice, and the Jabberwock back into their books. When the solution is finally figured out, Lazarillo decides that he does not want to return to his book; instead, he wants to stay with his new friends in the real world.

This action adventure is an enjoyable read for young adolescents. Coupled with illustrations and characters students would already be familiar with, the book is an open door from which to begin to look at literary figures across time.

Casey Burgs
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

The White Horse Talisman, by Andrea Spalding
Orca Book Publishers, 2002, 185 pp., \$12.95

Fantasy
ISBN 1-55143-1874

Ages have passed. The Wise Ones of ancient Celtic Lore have awakened as the "stir of evil" enters the Milky Way Galaxy, slowly finding its way toward Gaia, the misty blue planet which hides the tools of power.

The Wise Ones attempt to warn the people of Gaia, but their star showers are seen by mere mortals only as a beautiful phenomenon. Clearly, the people of Gaia understand no warning. The Wise Ones realize that the people who once believed in them and their powers no longer exist, and these non-believers are all that's left. They recognize that the children of Gaia, the ones that still have the ability to dream and imagine, may be their last and only hope.

Andrea Spalding creates a world that is a layer above our own. Magical horses and dragons enter the dreams and realities of children, taking them on fantastical adventures on Earth and beyond. Suitable for classroom and/or individual reading, this book, the first of four in the series *The Summer of Magic Quartet*, will have children of all ages dreaming of magic, enchantments, and adventure.

Jennifer Bentz
Orlando, Florida

Young Adult Books In Review Recently Published Titles

Jeff Kaplan, Editor

3x5 inches to "Clip & File"

T • H • E
ALAN
REVIEW

<p><i>Sweep: Book of Shadows</i> by Cate Tiernan Puffin Books, 2001, 192 pp., \$4.99</p> <p>The search for identity is an issue all young adults seem to find themselves tangled in, and sixteen-year old Morgan Rowlands is no different.</p> <p>Young Morgan has noticed that she is not the prettiest girl, like her friend Bree, and she is definitely not among the smartest, like some of her other friends. In fact, Morgan is downright confused about where she belongs in her life, until she meets the one guy who ever really treated her like she mattered, Cal Blaire. The only problem is that Cal is involved in an ancient religion: Wicca.</p> <p>This revelation comes as exciting news to Morgan, until she finds herself in a Wiccan circle for the holiday of Mabon. It all seems like innocent fun until Morgan is swept off her feet by some uncontrollable power during the circle. All of a sudden, Morgan wonders, "Was this phenomena the result of the power of Wicca streaming inside her?" "And has Morgan finally found where she belongs, or will her families' Catholic background drive her away from this strange religion?"</p> <p>This novel is an intriguing read about a young, vulnerable teenager who finds herself drawn to a "strange phenomena," that raises more questions than it gives answers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Michael Cush Orlando, Florida</p>	<p><i>Girls Got Game: Stories and Poems</i> Edited by Sue Macy Henry Holt and Co., 2001, 152 pp., \$15.95</p> <p><i>Sports/Women Athletes</i> ISBN: 0-8050-6568-7</p> <p>The familiar taunts that echo back to those first days on the playground when little boys could be heard repeating over and over that common phrase, "You can't play, you're a girl!" are challenged in the terrific collection of eighteen stories and poems in the <i>Girls Got Game</i>. Girls show that they can play defense in a football game, pitch against a skillful batter, and make a shot that's all net; these are just some examples of the ways the girls in this collection prove those taunting little boys wrong. In <i>Girls Got Game</i>, numerous popular female writers celebrate the joy and passion of being involved in a variety of sports, while they create characters that face more than simply the challenge of the game but the challenge of life.</p> <p>Skillful characterization and vivid imagery flow from authors who know their sports to make this collection a must for any reader who appreciates the thrill of the game, and the ability of an athlete, man or woman. This good book is effective in providing examples of how gender barriers can be broken and stereotypes shattered. <i>Girls Got Game</i> proves that anyone can cheer for female athletes, making this compilation a slam-dunk.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Sean Fitzgibbons Orlando, Florida</p>
<p><i>The Letters</i> by Kazumi Yumoto Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2002, 176 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Dealing with Death/Coming of Age ISBN: 0-374+34383-7</p> <p>When Chiaki hears about the death of Mrs. Yanagi, her former landlady from childhood, she decides to go to the funeral. Now in her late twenties, Chiaki remembers her experiences with this woman and the significant role she played in her life. At six years old, as a result of her father's sudden and untimely death, she and her mother moved into one of Mrs. Yanagi's apartments at Popular House. There, she stayed with Mrs. Yangi and healed, while her mother worked.</p> <p>With Mrs. Yanagi's daily care, the two form a lasting and loving bond. More intriguingly, Chiaki also learns about this woman's personal mission of delivering letters to the dead from the loved ones that they have left behind. This inspires Chiaki to write letters to her own deceased father, asking Mrs. Yanagi to deliver them for her. Thus, through the art of contemplation and reflection, young Chiaki eventually begins to deal with her father's death by expressing her thoughts and feelings through her letter writing.</p> <p>This is a beautifully written, heartwarming story about hope, and overcoming the most difficult of tragedies, death. The author, Kazumi Yumoto, has crafted an incredible story that can be enjoyed by a wide audience, especially the lives of young people who are just coming to terms with the circle of life.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Melissa Fyfe Orlando, Florida</p>	<p><i>Hole in My Life</i> by Jack Gantos Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 2002, 200 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Autobiography ISBN: 0-374-19988-3</p> <p>In this bittersweet autobiography, the future author Jack Gantos is looking for a way off his homeland of St. Croix, an island full of racial turmoil and personal stagnation. He wants to go to the United States and try his hand at college so he can fulfill his dreams of becoming a writer. One day, the opportunity of a lifetime lands in his lap, and he finds that he cannot say "no." All he has to do is help smuggle 2,000 pounds of hash on a boat from St. Croix to New York. For this, he could receive ten thousand dollars, and his ticket to school. Desperate to leave, Gantos falls prey to this crime of convenience, and as fate would have it, he lands in prison.</p> <p>This surprising book recounts the popular YA author's late-teen life, his subsequent arrest and imprisonment. It is frank, harsh, and beautifully truthful at times – especially about life in prison. Above all, this is the story of a young writer trying to find inspiration for his work. Ultimately, he finds the greatest inspiration within himself.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Thomas Nigel Hames Orlando, Florida</p>

Saving Jasey by Diane Tullson
Orca Book Publishers, 2002, 172 pp., \$6.95

Domestic Violence/Terminal Illness
ISBN: 1-55142-220-X

Living with a brother and father who abuses him physically and emotionally, Gavin finds compassion and love in his best friend Tristen McVeigh's family. In fact, the McVeigh family is the exact opposite of Gavin's, for they openly express their love and concern for one another.

This genuine caring and tenderness is put to the test when a tragic terminal illness suddenly befalls a member of the McVeigh family, and everyone is forced to deal with this serious issue. All of a sudden, a once happy and supportive family falls apart, and Trist now needs Gavin more than ever. To complicate matters Gavin falls in love with Tristen's older sister, Jasey, as he tries to help her deal with this tragic illness in her family. Even though Jasey appears to have everything together on the outside, she is breaking apart inside, and Gavin knows it. At the same time, Gavin still has his own dysfunctional and abusive family to deal with.

This is a good read for young teens interested in understanding the complicated world in which matters of life and death are never easy to resolve.

Ebony N. Jarrett
Orlando, Florida

Lorenzo's Secret by Lila and Rick Guzman
Pinata Books, 2001, 153 pp., \$9.95

Revolutionary War/Minorities
ISBN: 1-55885-341-3

This is a tale of the American Revolutionary War told from the unique perspective of a young Hispanic male named Lorenzo Bannister. Historically rich and accurate, this book provides interesting scenarios of life in New Orleans and Virginia at the time of the American Revolution. Real historical characters interact with our hero, Lorenzo, including none other than, General George Washington.

As the story begins, young, patriotic, and ambitious, fifteen-year-old Lorenzo dreams of becoming a soldier, but at present, he is studying to be a doctor. Suddenly, he is both. Beginning in New Orleans, the teen travels up the Mississippi River as a medic on a flatboat, delivering medicine and gunpowder to the American revolutionaries. A chance meeting with General Washington leads to his helping the American soldiers carry out their orders, and eventually, win their freedom from the British.

Told in an easy-to-read tone and filled with plenty of historical detail, this would be an excellent book to discuss this era of American history, with the appealing twist of perspective through the adolescent Hispanic narrator. This book is particularly good for learning about the contributions of the Spanish in fighting the British.

Shawn Keaton
DeLand, Florida

Dancing Naked by Shelley Hrdlitschka
Orca Book Publishers, 2001, 250 pp., \$6.95

Teenagers/Pregnancy
ISBN: 1-55143-10-2

Sixteen-year-old Kia thought she had found the right guy when she met Derek. He had something she couldn't explain – something that made her forget everything and everyone else. Once she got pregnant, however, her image of "perfect" Derek faded. Derek proves to be a non-supportive teen father, and suddenly, she is forced to make a decision that will change her life forever. The only fully supportive friend she has is youth group leader Justin, but she will find out, while she is grappling with her unplanned pregnancy, that Justin is hiding a secret of his very own.

This book chronicles the arduous journey of a young girl who has to stand up for what she believes in when everyone else is against her. Author Hrdlitschka gives us a real-life look at the fears, hopes, disappointments, and pain associated with teen pregnancy. This book is a good starting point to open up the communication in classrooms about pregnancy, birth control, and abortion, among other controversial issues. It shows how a child's life can change when they are forced to make very adult decisions.

Kristie Lehmen
Orlando, Florida

The Popsicle Journal by Don Trembath
Orca Book Publishers, 2002, 147 pp., \$6.95

Teen Issues/Alcoholism
ISBN: 1-55143-185-8

Harper Winslow is a high school student who has a unique after school job. He is working as a reporter for the local newspaper. His life is pretty quiet until one day he finds out his sister has a drinking problem. To compound his problems, his father is running for mayor, and refuses to have his son interview him for the paper. His turmoil is further exacerbated when his boss puts pressure on him to find a lead for a big story, and all his personal material — his sister's alcoholism and his father's candidacy — are forbidden discussion topics.

Adolescent readers will find the themes of alcoholism, ethical behavior, integrity, peer pressure, and family loyalty to be of interest to them. This is an easy book, designed for the accessibility of eager, young readers. Young people will also envy the relative freedom of the central character, Harper Winslow, in his job as a budding ace reporter, and his constant battle to prove his self-worth to his editors.

Renee Olson
Altamonte Springs, Florida

<p><i>Objects in the Mirror</i> by Ronder Thomas Young Roaring Book Press, 2002, 168 pp., \$15.95</p> <p>High school sophomore Grace Morrison is having a tough time. Nothing seems to be going her way. In the middle of her school year, She is transferred to a new school, and has to leave her best friend Diana. In a more serious vein, Grace's dad has had a stroke, and her family business is going under. To complicate matters, Grace's sisters are total screw-ups, and have ruined any chances for Grace to have a normal life. Finally, to top it all off, her new school has messed up her schedule, resulting in untold confusion, and ending with old Mrs. Sayers threatening to have her kicked out of school.</p> <p>At seventeen, Grace is quickly learning that objects in the mirror are closer than they appear...and often they are distorted. What she thinks is true is often not, as she realizes when her new friendship with Allison Anderson, the rich bad girl, quickly spins into a web of lies. Can Grace get out of it?</p> <p>A coming-of-age novel suitable for readers who like stories where the plot keeps turning on itself, and although the ending could be stronger, the characters are well-developed, and fun to read about.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Amy Scarff Orlando, Florida</p>	<p><i>Making the Run</i> by Heather Henson Joanna Cotler of HarperCollins, May, 2002</p> <p>Friendship, Illusions ISBN: 0060297972</p> <p>In her first novel, Henson demonstrates her lyrical voice and her care for the thoughts and struggles of troubled teens. The narrator is Lu, a teenager who entertains herself and hides her feelings from others by taking photographs of her friends as they "get wild" with drugs and parties fast driving. Lu's alter ego is her best friend, Ginny. Teen readers will readily recognize that Ginny is unsure of herself and is self-destructive, despite her bravado. Ginny takes time to paint her fingernails with the freshest new colors, but plays "chicken" when driving, declaring, "I am invincible." She eventually suffers a fatal car crash while speeding through "Dead Man's Curve." The crash forces Lu and her dad, who thought Lu was in the car when Ginny crashed, to reexamine the relationship that exists between them. The connection between them has grown more and more strained since Lu became an adolescent, but it is especially crucial to her since her mother died when she was a child.</p> <p>Sensitive readers will enjoy the ways that Henson describes feelings with colors (and some may connect the use of colors with the effects of taking drugs). Many adult readers are likely to object to the attention she gives to the behind-the-scenes account of a "normal" group of teens, due to their drug use, drinking, and sex. In this case, however, the author's skill as an artist offers a strong rationale for making the book available to sophisticated teens who are interested in seeing life from the perspective of a female who hides feelings, trouble, pain from her family, friends, and herself.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Sissi Carroll</p>
<p><i>Motherland</i> by Vineeta Vijayaraghavan Soho, 2001, 232 pp., \$23.00</p> <p>Using details from her own live, Vijayaraghavan takes us high into the mountains of South India through the eyes of Maya, a fifteen-year-old girl from Southern Indain, who has lived in New York City since she was four years old.</p> <p>Now Maya is fifteen-years-old, and like many teenage girls, she does not get along with her mother. Maya feels like her mother has abandoned her for more important priorities. However, while visiting her grandmother Amamma, her aunt, and her uncle in India during summer vacation Maya learns valuable lessons about her Indian heritage, customs, and her role as a woman. Moreover, she also learns what it means to be loved by a family, regardless of their failings. With the sudden death of Grandma Amamma, Maya discovers an old family secret that dramatically changes her own relationship with her mother.</p> <p>Author Vijayaraghavan keeps the reader glued to the plot with her use of rich, sensory language, and her smart incorporation of Indian life and culture. Readers will delight in the adventures and discoveries of this American teenager of Indian descent, and will connect with the innate human values that underscore this good read.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Adrienne Schmittendorf Orlando, Florida</p>	<p><i>Crossing the Panther's Path</i> by Elizabeth Alder Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002, 272 pp., \$19.00</p> <p>Native American/Historical Fiction ISBN: 0-374-31662-7</p> <p>Students usually learn the name Tecumseh in American history class, but, this book asks the question, who really was "Tecumseh the man?"</p> <p>Historical fiction has the ability to breathe life and color into distant times, places, and people. In <i>Crossing the Panther's Path</i>, Alder reveals much about Native American customs, values, and the adventurous spirit and lifestyle of the early American frontier, as she weaves historical fact through her fictional narrative puts a face behind the name.</p> <p>This book tells the story of Billy Caldwell, a teenager who joins Tecumseh in the battle to regain the Native American homelands between the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers in our early American history. Sixteen-year-old Billy is the son of an Irish military man and a Mohawk Indian, and a bright student at a Jesuit boarding school where he is fluent in several languages – including many Indian tongues. When he learns that the Americans are planning to take more and more of the wild and beautiful frontier that the Native Americas call home, he cannot passively stand by. He must join the great Tecumseh in uniting the Indian tribes to fight for their homeland. Young readers will learn much about a fascinating period in history, and of an early Native American hero whose name means "The Panther Passing Across."</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Nichole Snyder Orlando, Florida</p>

Three Clams and an Oyster by Randy Powell
Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2001, 216 pp., \$16.00

Friendship/Young Males
ISBN: 0-374-37526-7

High school juniors Flint, Beaterson, Deshutsis, and Cade have been best friends since grade school. They have grown into a life of familiarity and routine, one without risks and trying new things. Yet, as they enter another season of four-on-four football, they encounter something new: they are repeatedly let down by their fourth member, Cade, who would rather party than practice.

In order to move forward in their flag football success, this team of friends is forced to make a decision between staying in their comfort zone of old friends, and opening a door to someone new. Should they go with guys who are talented that they do not like, or should they pick someone who is natural athlete, but who happens to be a girl? Eventually, they decide on the girl and with this, they learn to test the mettle of their true convictions. On their road to coping with the challenges of their friendship, they discover the power that their friendship truly has.

With a keen sense of style and use of realistic young adult language, *Three Clams and an Oyster* is a glimpse into the life of a group of long-time young friends who are faced with realizing that change is inevitable. And on their road to coping with the challenges of their friendship, they discover the power that their friendship truly has.

Kelly Strecker
Orlando, Florida

Moonpie and Ivy by Barbara O'Connor
Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2001, 160 pp., \$ 16.00

Abandonment/Family Relationships
ISBN: 0-374-35059-0

Living in a single parent home, and not having the ideal relationship with her mother, twelve-year old Pearl must contend with a whole host of adult issues at a very early age. One day, her mother decides to leave her during the summer with her Aunt Ivy in rural Georgia, who to make matters worse, is a complete and total stranger to young Pearl. Suddenly, Pearl must learn to adjust to this new person, and above all, cope with the feelings that her life, as she knows it, is over. Nevertheless, Pearl puts her best foot forward, and challenges herself to overcome her most difficult and trying circumstances.

As the sweltering summer progresses, Pearl grows to appreciate Aunt Ivy and her odd-looking neighbor, eleven-year-old Moonpie. And through them both, she learns stories about her mother's past and her southern roots.

Being abandoned by a parent, and not knowing where you belong in society are issues Pearl shares with many young adolescents today. Using creative language and a richly written narrative, author Barbara O'Connor makes this a most pleasant and worthwhile read for youngsters coping with their own family problems and concerns. This is excellent book to discuss the dynamics of interpersonal relationships.

Cyndi Atkinson
Orlando, Florida

Labyrinth by John Herman
Philomel Books, 2001, 188 pp.,

Historical/Mythological Fiction/Horror
ISBN: 0-399-23571-X

Labyrinth is the story of young Gregory Levi, who is having difficulty in coming-to-terms with his father's suicide. Desperate and crazed, Gregory escapes into delirium and denial, which pushes him to become a roguish and rebellious teen, struggling to comprehend the meaning of life, death, and forgiveness.

In his dreams, Gregory confronts his demons with a mythological Minotaur, but during his waking hours, Gregory skips school, breaks into houses, and turns to a life of crime. As the novel progresses, Gregory's nightmares and waking life begin to mesh, and soon he splinters into a thousand self-reflecting pieces.

The intriguing qualities of *Labyrinth* are the blend of ancient history with myth, and the modernization of these two important elements of storytelling for the young, contemporary reader. Moreover, the author sprinkles these elements with a pinch of horror and suspense to make a veritable nail-biting story come alive with dread and death. The horrific, bloody scenes in this story add the perfect gory flavor that will mucilage the young reader's interests until the very end. Also, the story abounds in sassy sarcasm, and raw vernacular that are not gratuitous, but necessary for making believable situations, and plausible characters.

Robert C. Vickery
Orlando, Florida

Wild Man Island by Will Hobbs
HarperCollins, 2002, 184 pp., \$15.95

Adventure/Survival
ISBN 0-688017473-6

Fourteen-year-old Andy Galloway is with his mother on a sea kayak off the coast of Alaska. But Andy is on a mission. He leaves by himself on a personal pilgrimage to the site of his archeologist father's death. His planned escape, though, falls apart, when disaster strikes, and Andy finds himself marooned on Admiralty Island. He soon discovers that he is not alone, but is being observed by a "wild man" living on the island, hoping to avoid detection. This adventure is driven by secrets only the wild man – who befriends Andy – knows, and others that Andy discovers about the origin of the first Americans and when they arrived.

Consistent with Hobbs' other Alaska and Northwest Territory stories, readers ages 10 and up will find this novel exciting to read, and educational due to the true historical background that provides the context for the fictional narrative. I highly recommend it.

Edgar H. Thompson
Emory, Virginia

<p><i>Hush</i> by Jacqueline Woodson G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2002, 180 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Family/Cultural Differences ISBN: 0-399-23144-5</p> <p>When thirteen-year-old Toswiah Green's father testifies against two police officers who murdered an innocent African-American teenager, her life is completely changed. Along with her family, Toswiah must seek refuge in the federal witness protection program. As a result, they must leave behind extended family, friends, and their own identities.</p> <p>As Toswiah struggles with accepting life as her new identity, she watches her father deteriorate mentally, her mother become absorbed in religion, and her sister plot to desert the family. Adolescent Toswiah, now Evie, copes as best as she can, taking up track and field in school, and trying to fathom who she is, and who she is becoming. By the end of the novel, Toswiah manages to move forward with her life as her newly formed identity, Evie Thomas, and leave her past behind her. Once again, Woodson, one of the best creators of characters in YA fiction, tackles difficult issues like racial profiling, police brutality and racism with sheer-eyed clarity and intensity.</p> <p>KaaVonia Hinton-Johnson Columbus, Ohio</p>	<p><i>Deep Doo-Doo and the Mysterious E-Mail</i> by Michael Delaney Dutton, 2001, 148 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Mystery/Young Readers ISBN: 0-525-46530-8</p> <p>Sixth-grade inventor Pete, and his writer friend eleven-year-old gadget guru Bennett return in this follow-up to the adventures of <i>Deep Doo-Doo</i>. A pumpkin is discovered on top of the flagpole in front of the town hall, and the boys post this late-breaking news story on their Web site. The questions remain, though: Who put it there, and why?</p> <p>The young detectives Pete and Bennett investigate, thinking they have their culprit, but are scooped by Elizabeth, the editor of the school newspaper. Meanwhile, Bennett receives mysterious bad poetry in his e-mail. Eventually, the boys learn that all these strange comings and goings are linked to a hotly contested mayoral race, and find themselves in the midst of a storm of political chicanery.</p> <p>This is an enjoyable, but mostly predictable, easy reader mystery. Young adolescents will enjoy the fast-paced cyber-sleuthing plot. This is a good story, particularly for reluctant readers, but teachers should be cautioned – the young age of the protagonists Pete and Bennett, will probably limit the audience to middle school youngsters.</p> <p>Ed Sullivan Oak Ridge, Tennessee</p>
<p><i>Finn, A Novel</i> by Matthew Olshan Bancroft Press, 2001, 188 pp., \$11.59</p> <p>Child Abuse/Family Relationships ISBN: 1-890-862- 142</p> <p>With the help of her grandparents, teenager Chloe has left her violent childhood behind and gotten a new start. But when her stepfather and abusive mother reappear, Chloe decides to run away for good—accompanied by her Silvia, her grandparents' pregnant Hispanic maid. Traveling through slums and suburbs, Chloe encounters a host of people from all walks of life, who reveal to her that people, places, and experiences are not always what they appear.</p> <p>This story is a clever, affectionate homage to Mark Twain. Like Huckleberry Finn, Chloe is awakened to injustice and hypocrisy, but also finds hope in good-hearted people, and their ability to connect with others. Students familiar with <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> will appreciate the many parallels this novel has to the classic. One disappointing drawback, though, is Olshan's tendency to rely upon ethnic, racial, and religious stereotypes in depicting some of the characters Chloe encounters. Nonetheless, the spirited, resourceful, observant, and witty Chloe is a heroine who will keep readers engaged and interested.</p> <p>Ed Sullivan Oak Ridge, Tennessee</p>	<p><i>Echo</i> by Francesca Lia Block HarperCollins, 2001, 215 pp., \$14.00</p> <p>Searching for Identity ISBN: 0-06-028127-8</p> <p>Young Echo wants to be noticed, to be appreciated, to be touched, and unconditionally accepted. Above all, she wants to find her place in the world. In Francesa Lia Block's latest novel, <i>Echo</i>, human longings are expressed as the essence of adolescence, and like the title character, they echo throughout the book.</p> <p>Each chapter of this compelling tale of Echo's search for herself is a story in and of itself. It is told either through Echo's own eyes, or the eyes of those who deeply affect her. Infused with a magical quality that blurs the line between reality and fantasy, Block's writing delivers detailed sensory descriptions that propel the reader on Echo's journey toward discovering who she really is. Often, though, that journey is muddled because the story line jumps back and forth in time, place, and setting, leaving the reader to figure out who is talking about what and when.</p> <p>Still, readers who enjoy Block's fantastical journeys through time and space, will enjoy this life affirming tale of hope, love and belief in oneself.</p> <p>Julie Perdue Columbus, Ohio</p>

Journey to the River Sea by Eva Ibbotson
Dutton Children's Book, 2001, 336 pp., \$ 17.99

Adventure/Orphans
ISBN: 0-525-46739-4

Journey to the River Sea is similar to the Harry Potter series, but without the sorcery. There is an "every girl" orphan treated poorly by her relatives, a hero's quest, a case of mistaken identity, sly British humor, and a wild journey down the Amazon.

It is 1910, and young Maia has been living in a British boarding school in London ever since her parents' accidental death on an archeological dig. Although she is fairly happy at school, Maia longs for adventure. Unexpectedly, adventure arrives when distant relatives of young Maia request her presence on their rubber plantation in Brazil. Accompanied by a governess, Maia ventures forth to live with her Brazilian relatives, but along the way, discovers that her relatives are more interested in Maia's inherited fortune than in Maia herself.

As it turns out, Maia is able to escape the wrath of her greedy relatives through the help of new found friends, and her strongest ally, her governess. Together, they outwit the relatives, and live another day to embark on still more journeys to see the world. This is a wonderful adventure tale with the added advantage of a female protagonist.

Cindi Carey
Lacey, Washington

It's Love We Don't Understand by Bart Moeyear
Front Street, 2002, 127 pp., \$15.95

Family Relationships
ISBN: 1-886910-71-5

It's Love We Don't Understand is the bittersweet story of an unconventional family and its inherent struggles. In three separate scenes of their family life, a fifteen-year-old girl describes the sad, crazed and troubled relationships between herself and her siblings, and their self-absorbed, neglectful and often absent mother. Alternating between love and hate, these three stories tell pieces of the young girl's life in a single day, depicting the myriad of difficult family problems that engulf her, and how despite all, she manages to overcome life's obstacles with humor, grace, and resignation.

The central theme of all three short stories is how the subtle thread of love intertwines itself through a young girl's life, involving every detail of her being, and helping to shape her character, and ultimately, her destiny. The author's first language is Flemish, and all three of his books, *Bare Hands* (1998), *Hornet's Nest* (2000), and now, *It's Love We Don't Understand* (2002) have all been translated into English. Teenagers struggling with their own growing pains and boorish, unresponsive adults will relish a look into this unfortunate, yet revealing story of family dynamics.

Jeffrey Kaplan
Orlando, Florida

What My Mother Doesn't Know by Sonya Sones
Simon and Schuster, 2001, 259 pp., \$17.00

Romance/Poetry
ISBN: 0-689-84114-0

What My Mother Doesn't Know is a novel written in verse that reads like a journal. Sophie is a typical 15-year-old girl. She worries about school and likes to hang out with her friends, and much of her energy is devoted to boys. As the story begins, she has broken up with Lou, and is about to go out with Dylan. Then, she meets Chaz while chatting on-line, but quickly becomes disgusted with his perverted remarks. At a Halloween dance, Sophie is swept off her feet by a masked stranger never reveals his true identity. To be sure, Sophie is confused.

But Sophie is not as confused as her mother is. Sophie's mom is a stay-at-home mother who cooks, cleans, and watches soap operas. The trouble is that she is moody, and when her feelings are hurt, she retreats to the basement for days on end. Unfortunately, Sophie's dad is away on frequent business trips, leaving Sophie to cope with the mother whom she cannot reach. Restless, she longs for a stable relationship with someone she can completely trust. By chance, at an art museum in her hometown of Boston, Sophie meets just such a boy, Murphy, who proves to be her soulmate in love and conversation.

What Sophie's "mother doesn't know" is what Sophie learns on her own in this quirky, yet endearing teen romance: that good, lasting, important relationships must be built on mutual understandings.

Cindy Carey
Lacey, Washington

Attaching in Adoption: Practical Tools for Today's Parents
by Deborah Gra
Perspective Press, 2002, 392 pp., \$24.95

Adoption
ISBN: 0-944934-293

As a psychologist who works with parents of adoptive children, I found this non-fiction book on the sum and substance behind the rule and regulations of today's adoption process to be particularly affective. And often in adoption, the toughest issue is "proper attachment," – or the matching of a child with adoptive parents.

Along with smart explanations of such challenges as self-esteem, childhood, grief, and limit-testing, this good book contains an abundant of resources on attachment-related situations. Included are personal vignettes of children and their adoptive families, guaranteed to convince kids of all backgrounds that their stories of coming into new adoptive families are not new or unique.

Attaching in Adoption zeroes in on children of special needs, adoptive foster families, adopting older parents, and children and parents of many cultures. This book is straightforward, easy to read, and perfect for youngsters and counselors wanting reaffirmation that their lives are similar to many others.

Paula Kaplan-Reiss
East Brunswick, New Jersey

Tourette Syndrome (Twenty-First Century Medical Library)
by Marlene Targ Brill
Twenty First Century Books, 2002, 112 pp., \$24.90.

Tourette
ISBN: 0-76132-1012

Tourette Syndrome is a disease that few know about yet from which many suffer. This volume, one of a series of excellent books published by the nonfiction house, Twenty First Century Books, is an excellent introduction for both lay and expert readers about this often misunderstood, yet common physical condition.

Scientists say that 1 in 2,000 people are often inflicted with this compelling physical phenomena which results in uncontrollable range motor ticks ranging from the simple (intermittent eye and finger movements) to the complex (persistent involuntary leg, arm, and head twitching). Solid facts and captivating vignettes fill this slim, accessible volume of information about this disease that can often make life miserable for its unsuspecting victims. Moreover, proper medical, behavioral, and dietary treatment (all aimed at management, not cure), are thoroughly reviewed with the hope of helping those in need.

Young people who have this syndrome will find comfort in the case studies that depict lives, that are undoubtedly, similar to their own. A valuable resource for all interested.

Mary Little
Daytona Beach, Florida

Please see the Note from the Editor, Page 3, for information on how pre-service and in-service teachers and media specialists in your college or university program can become guest reviewers in an issue of the Clip and File section of *The ALAN Review*!