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| <p><i>Caught in the Act</i> by Peter Moore Viking Penguin, 2005, 256 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>When high school honors student Ethan Lederer begins to struggle with class and his family's high expectations, the new student, Lydia Krane, a semi-gothic and seductive sophomore, lends a helping hand. By causing Ethan to get dumped by his steady girlfriend first and then helping him blackmail a teacher who caught him cheating, Lydia has a twisted way of trying to reach her goals. Despite this, Ethan finds himself falling for Lydia, a fellow theater junkie, when they share the lead roles in the school play, a modern version of <i>Macbeth</i>. The book ends with a surprising and dark final scene of <i>Macbeth</i>.</p> <p><i>Caught in the Act</i> is a page-turning book with a strong message and stronger, deeper characters. I would give it my highest recommendation.</p> <p>Chris Goering Manhattan, KS</p> | <p><i>Day of Tears</i> by Julius Lester Hyperion Books for Children, 2005, 177 pp., \$15.99</p> <p><i>Day of Tears</i> is a most provocative novel. Written in dialogue, different characters are used to divulge to the reader the story of slaves' lives both past, present, and future. From the white master, his children, house slaves and field hands to the auctioneer, everyone speaks. Seen through these different perspectives, the reader experiences the auction block, the separation of families, and the dehumanizing slavery brought to both white and black people. The format the author uses makes the story real. The deluge of rain in the story symbolizes God's tears as He looks down on His creation. This is a compelling story.</p> <p>Joy Frerichs Chatsworth, GA</p> |
| <p><i>Defiance</i> by Valerie Hobbs Farrar Straus and Giroux, 2005, 116 pp., \$16.00</p> <p>Deceptively simple, <i>Defiance</i> is an exercise in growth. Toby finds another lump in his battle with cancer and befriends a cow and a crazy/sane woman all in the same summer. The title <i>Defiance</i> might come from any number of sources: the poetry the woman has Toby read, the cow's decision about death, Toby's changing relationship with his parents, and Toby's own decision concerning his mortality.</p> <p>This story ranks as a shining example of a gloriously powerful book that will be impossible to book talk to anyone, that will be hard to get in boys' hands, and that will be difficult to get out of girls' minds.</p> <p>Jennie Dutton Athens, OH</p> | <p><i>A Dog's Life: The Autobiography of a Stray</i> by Ann M. Martin Scholastic, 2005, 244 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>A dog named Squirrel and her brother Bone are followed from their birth until their separation. In portraying stray dogs, Newbery Honor winner Ann M. Martin also discusses and shows the various ways people treat strays, from ignoring them to trying to kill them to treating them well. Squirrel understands many things that a dog probably cannot, including human speech, so readers will have to suspend their disbelief in reading this book.</p> <p>Martin's writing is elegant and insightful. The story is realistic, though at times disheartening because of how we often treat stray animals. Squirrel stays away from feral dogs when she can, but she is injured and is lucky to have a family take her to a vet for surgery. Still, these people leave her behind. Eventually she finds a home with a woman who treats her as a companion.</p> <p>John Jacob Oak Park, IL</p> |

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| <p><i>Double Crossing: A Jewish Immigration Story for Young Adults</i> by Eve Tal Cinco Punto Press, 2005, 261pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Historical Fiction/Immigration ISBN: 0-938317-94-6</p> <p>It's 1905 in the rural Russian countryside, and Raizel Balaban loves helping her mother with her younger siblings and telling stories. The last thing she wants to do is go with her father to America. But the threat of pogroms and conscription into the Czar's army force her and her father Benjamin to undertake an arduous, risky journey across Europe and the Atlantic. They survive seasickness, near drowning, and hunger (as orthodox Jews, they will only eat kosher food) only to be turned away at Ellis Island because of Benjamin's poor health. Exceptionally and powerfully told, this story is historical fiction at its finest, treating important (though often neglected) issues of immigration and belonging, pride and faith.</p> <p>Melissa Moore Jackson, TN</p> | <p><i>The Dragon Throne</i> by Michael Cadnum Viking, 2005, 212 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Historical Fiction ISBN: 0-670-03631-5</p> <p><i>The Dragon Throne</i> is the final book in Cadnum's trilogy that takes its readers back to the Middle Ages and the turbulent era of the Crusades. This novel follows two squires, Edmund and Hubert, who rise to knighthood and are immediately thrust into perils accompanying their new titles. The pair of new knights, along with two seasoned knights, are ordered to escort a young lady of the Queen's court on a pilgrimage to Rome. Along the way, the story focuses on young Sir Edmund as he encounters danger in many forms and wrestles with the clash of morals being a man of war presents.</p> <p>Cadnum's novel takes an interesting perspective as it reveals the important role religion played in the daily lives of the people and juxtaposes it with the cruelty of life in a war-torn age. <i>The Dragon Throne</i> is full of historical detail that will delight those with interest in the Middle Ages, but contains advanced vocabulary that may frustrate some readers.</p> <p>Emily Pauly Hewitt, TX</p> |
| <p><i>Dread Locks</i> by Neal Shusterman Penguin Putnam, 2005, 176 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Coming of Age/Friendship ISBN: 0-525-47554-0</p> <p>A modern day telling of the medusa myth, this fantasy thriller is sure to engage readers and leave them with an unfamiliar, unforeseen ending.</p> <p>As the protagonist Parker Baer dredges through upper class suburban life, he meets a mysterious new neighbor—Tara—in his bedroom, uninvited, one afternoon. The two become fast friends, but something doesn't add up for Parker. Several people who have come in contact with Tara seem to be dying as noted by their pale, almost gray, complexions and physical rigidity. Parker begins a detective style search for the truth but is he too late?</p> <p>Readers from seventh grade and up will happily read this page-turning book and make connections to the medusa myth and common fairytales.</p> <p>Chris Goering Manhattan, KS</p> | <p><i>Far Traveler</i> by Rebecca Tingle G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2005, 228 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Self-discovery/Exploration/Historical Fiction ISBN: 0-399-23890-5</p> <p><i>Ælfwyn's</i> story is an educational and captivating foray into tenth-century Britain in the time of the West Saxon ruler, King Edward. When <i>Ælfwyn's</i> mother dies, the Mercian territory under her rule by King Edward refuses to relinquish all loyalty unto the King, and Wynn is thrown into politics though having always been more comfortable with books and poetry. When Wynn is faced with her uncle's ultimatum of either marrying one of his allies or becoming a nun, she takes the first risk of her sheltered life, fleeing under the guise of a boy. With her new identity as a traveling storyteller, she finds inner-courage using the Old English poetry she has loved all her life; <i>Far Traveler</i> includes literary references to such Old English works as <i>Beowulf</i> as sources for Wynn's self-discovery. King Wilfrid wants Wynn's help in a plot against her uncle; her budding courage must sustain her in a decision between what her heart wants and what her royal upbringing demands.</p> <p>Katherine Harder Manhattan, KS</p> |

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| <p>The Fashion Disaster that Changed My Life by Lauren Myracle Friendship Dutton Children's Books, 2005, 135 pp., \$15.99 ISBN: 0-525-47222-3</p> <p>Finally, Allie has made it to seventh grade—the year that will change her life for the better! A fresh start brings hopeful promises of increasing popularity, new boys to consider, and fresh gossip to chat about in the lunchroom. But somehow, Allie finds herself in sticky predicaments that cause her to question the real value behind popularity and what true friendship is.</p> <p>When Rachel, Mika, and Hadley invite Allie to join their elite friendship, Allie loses sight of her former friends, Kathy and Megan. Jealousy and deception surround the daily occurrences of Allie's life. Throughout her encounters with the popular crowd, Allie begins to discover her real identity and questions the significance of climbing the social ladder.</p> <p>Readers will be immediately drawn in by Allie's character. Her humor, honesty, and fresh wit will allow many teenage girls to relate to the drama she endures. Myracle's fresh style of writing will enchant middle school readers and force them to keep turning the pages.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Julie Zaderaka Elgin, IL</p> | <p>The Foretelling by Alice Hoffman Coming-of-Age/Adventure Little Brown, 2005, 176 pp., \$16.99 ISBN: 0316010189</p> <p>There comes a time when traditions must change. In Hoffman's newest novel for young adults, Rain is a young girl who is disturbed by her tribe's coda of violence toward men. She is chosen to succeed her mother, Queen Alina. But, her mother treats Rain as an outcast because she was born out of rape.</p> <p>As Rain becomes more involved in battles, she finds her conquests revolting instead of pleasing. She develops an alliance with Io, daughter of her mother's companion. Rain also finds comfort in the arms of a young boy. Her actions go against the rigid, Amazon-like regime of her people. But, none of those forbidden relationships can suffice for the yearning of affection from her mother.</p> <p>When her mother dies during childbirth, Rain is faced with a hard decision to make. Should she risk her life to save her baby brother or maintain her tribe's laws? Hoffman's writing style makes this an adventurous tale that will definitely engage adolescents.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Anjeanette Alexander-Smith Jacksonville, FL</p> |
| <p>Guys Write for Guys Read edited by Jon Scieszka Adolescent Males Viking-Penguin Group, 2005, 272 pp., \$16.99 ISBN: 0670060070</p> <p>Scieszka's latest just might be the miracle cure for struggling adolescent male readers.</p> <p>The book is a compilation of entertaining memoirs, short stories, and novel excerpts from authors like Chris Crutcher, Walter Dean Meyers, Gary Paulsen, and Jerry Spinelli. Each selection is unique, entertaining, and aims to lead our boys to books.</p> <p>It is rare that such a variety of young adult literature is represented in a single work, and makes for a quick read—an excellent choice for guys who have yet to finish their first book. In addition, teachers and librarians will find each chapter a useful tool for getting students hooked on particular authors and novels.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Curtis Chandler Wamego, KS</p> | <p>Hook, Line, and Sinker by G.P. Guarente Coming of Age/Pets Penguin, 2005, 198 pp., \$7.99 ISBN: 1595140115</p> <p>Fiona has the busiest schedule this side of school. Besides her studies, she keeps an exotic fish tank. The fish are named for boyfriends who have rejected her in the past. She is secretary of Student Council and a tutor; most recently she has tried out for an off-campus production of the musical <i>Grease</i>, landing the role of Sandy against her current flame, who plays Danny. But he is romantically involved with another girl that Fiona doesn't like, despite the girl's nice personality. Of course lurking in the wings is the boy that Fiona really should be with. That only becomes clear to her in the last pages of the book.</p> <p>Each of the relationships portrayed by her fish is explained in flashbacks. Fiona is probably one of the highest energy characters in recent young adult fiction. She makes a great Sandy, especially when she dons her black leather for the finale.</p> <p><i>Hook, Line, and Sinker</i> is a page-turner, and Fiona is a great character.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">John Jacob Oak Park, IL</p> |

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| <p><i>The Hunter's Moon</i> by O.R. Melling Amulet Books, 2005, 284 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Friendships/Love/Discovery ISBN: 0-8109-5857-0</p> <p>This comical yet touching fantasy adventure will keep the reader engaged. The main character, Gwen, is always obsessed with food, which provides comic relief. Findabhair, Gwen's cousin, acts as a foil for Gwen, adding further humor. The relationship between the two cousins is heartfelt, especially the lengths Gwen goes to in trying to save Findabhair. Against the backdrop of Irish folktales and culture the adventure is played out. The characters undergo a transformation as they fight against the evil forces of the isle. Every Hunter's Moon a sacrifice is required of the mortals by this evil force. The faeries must offer up this sacrifice, until the heroines come along. Female readers will appreciate the fact that this book has a heroine who is fully human yet strong and adventurous. Hopefully a new addition to this series will be soon forthcoming, as the author is quite talented in her descriptive skills.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Kenan Metzger Muncie, IN</p> | <p><i>An Innocent Soldier</i> by Josef Holub; translated by Michael Hofmann Arthur A. Levine Books, 2005, 240 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Courage/Adventure/Historical Fiction ISBN: 0-439-62771-0</p> <p><i>An Innocent Soldier</i> tells the story of an unusual friendship between an aristocrat and a peasant in Napoleonic Europe. Forced to enlist under his master's son's name in Napoleon's <i>Grande Armée</i>, Adam Feuchter is instantly terrorized by the horrors of war and is desperate to escape until he witnesses the consequences of desertion. Adam's lot takes a turn for the better, however, when a young lieutenant requisitions him as his personal servant, and the surprising friendship that grows between them is ultimately what gets them through the terrible war alive. Adam's gratitude to Konrad Klara for taking him under his wing results in a great bond of loyalty, and his fear and insecurity evolve into great bravery and courage as the two of them fight to survive the Russian campaign. The war that introduces Adam to so many terrible things also rewards him with true friendship and the possibility of a happier life afterward.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Katherine Harder Manhattan, KS</p> |
| <p><i>The Last Domino</i> by Adam Meyer G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2005, 229 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Adolescent Violence/Isolation ISBN: 0-399-24332-1</p> <p>The school shootings that have made recent headlines have left many wondering what pushes these students to resort to such violent measures. Meyer's novel is an examination of the events that compound and eventually cause its main character, Travis Ellroy, to break and seek final revenge from those who have been nudging him closer to the edge for too long.</p> <p>Living in a family broken after his brother commits suicide, Travis searches for a place to feel significant and finally realizes a sense of worth through a friendship with Daniel—a new student at his high school. Unfortunately, this sense of worth and friendship urge Travis to make those who have hurt him pay, revealing truths about both boys and their friendship in the process.</p> <p>This dark, yet gripping novel, leaves its reader with much to think about as Travis' violence erupts on the pages. With its mature themes and language, care is suggested when recommending <i>The Last Domino</i>.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Emily Pauly Hewitt, TX</p> | <p><i>Learning the Game</i> by Kevin Waltman Scholastic, 2005, 224 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Basketball/Juvenile Crime ISBN: 0439731097</p> <p>Nate has been spending the summer working on his basketball game, often joined by friends and teammates from his high school's varsity team at a little park with decent hoops. One day the "enforcer" for his team, the guy who makes the dirty fouls and is not liked much, shows up. The scrimmage continues in spite of his dirty play.</p> <p>The enforcer, Branson, brings his van to the park one day and jimmies open the lock to a local fraternity. In a scene that stretches one's imagination, he convinces all team members—except one player who goes home—to steal the entire contents of the fraternity, which is empty for the summer. Team members stress their innocence when the coach calls them in, but eventually Nate gives in and confesses. That causes the entire team to be suspended for the season; they watch the one varsity player, substitutes, and freshmen fight through the season.</p> <p>This basketball book features a good guy who makes a bad choice and then rights it.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">John Jacob Oak Park, IL</p> |

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| <p><i>The Minister's Daughter</i> by Julie Hearn Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2005, 263 pp., \$16.95 ISBN: 0-689-87690-4</p> <p>Grace, a minister's daughter with high expectations to live up to, conceives a child out of wedlock and must hide her sin. Nell is a merrybegot, a child of nature, and has been raised with knowledge of herbal remedies and paganism to become the next healer of the village after her grandmother passes away. When a recognition-hungry "witch finder" moves into town to get to the bottom of the minister's daughter's secret, will the village people believe the witch finder as evidence against Nell piles up?</p> <p>Written in third person, <i>The Minister's Daughter</i> follows each major character's perspective as paths cross and conflict occurs. Julie Hearn has done her research well regarding the motives behind the Salem witch trials. Hearn also adds a unique fantasy element, Nell's healing ability, which may hold appeal or provide distraction for some readers. This fictional look at Salem is appropriate for the early high school audience.</p> <p>Kate Siscoe Elgin, IL</p> | <p><i>Naughts and Crosses</i> by Malorie Blackman Simon and Schuster, 2005, 386 pp., \$15.95 ISBN: 2004016564</p> <p>Callum and Sephy grew up together, though they had vastly different lives. Callum is a Naught, the disenfranchised white minority, while Sephy is the privileged class of Crosses, those of African American descent. The two classes are forbidden to mix, but expectedly Callum and Sephy fall for each other in this complicated tale of racism and romance.</p> <p>Flipping the sides of racism make for an interesting set of possibilities, and the parallels to modern racism and its ever-present power make this a great book for discussions with teenagers. With all of the complicated racial overtones, the love story between Callum and Sephy reminded me in many of ways of <i>Romiette and Julio</i> by Sharon Draper, though Blackman's novel is more appropriate for an older audience. This disturbing and powerful story reminds readers how hard growing up can be.</p> <p>Jennie Dutton Athens, OH</p> |
| <p><i>Never Mind the Goldbergs</i> by Matthue Roth PUSH—Scholastic, 2005, 360 pp., \$7.99</p> <p>Hava Aaronson speaks her mind—"when you're a seventeen-year-old Orthodox Jewish girl with purple-and-burgundy-streaked hair . . . and death rock T-shirts—you don't look like you're holding back" (p. 1). During the summer before her senior year, Hava learns some of the ramifications of speaking her mind when she's cast in a network television sitcom and spends the summer in California. Hava must reflect on a relationship, the choice to be Orthodox, and her life in the limelight of temptation while filming. After several poor choices, Hava's pictures appear on television and her electronic diary has been quoted. Roth portrays the Jewish communities in New York and California with authenticity and respect. Readers can connect to Hava's struggles with her religion, parents, and peers while learning about the complexities of the Orthodox Jewish culture.</p> <p>Faith H. Wallace Kennesaw, GA</p> | <p><i>Pinned</i> by Alfred C. Martino Hartcourt, 2005, 272 pp., \$16.99 ISBN: 0-670-06007-0</p> <p>Martino's <i>Pinned</i> is a carefully crafted glance at the harsh realities imbedded in high school wrestling. The novel is a quick, engaging read for those interested in sports, but also anyone else struggling to survive the teenage years.</p> <p>Ivan Korske and Bobby Zane are protagonists whose dissimilar worlds will inevitably collide on the mat as each struggles to reach and win the New Jersey state finals. In addition to the rigor of training and making weight, each wrestler finds himself engulfed in a storm of personal demons. Themes include divorce, first romances, death of loved ones, and adolescent struggle for autonomy.</p> <p>Martino gives us a crescendo of action and teenage drama that builds from the first to final page and leaves us gasping for more. Touches of profanity and promiscuity make the novel a better choice for high school than middle school.</p> <p>Curtis Chandler Wamego, KS</p> |

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| <p><i>Sandpiper</i> by Ellen Wittlinger Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2005, 225 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Dating/Interpersonal Relations/Walking ISBN: 0-689-86680-2</p> <p>As the school year wraps up, Sandpiper Hollow Ragsdale is alone and confused. Facing a summer sweltering with change, she sneaks away on occasion and captures her thoughts and feelings in poetry. The pressure of her mother's wedding, new family members, and a biological father with wandering eyes are only the beginning.</p> <p>Upon ending her long streak of shallow relationships, Piper forms a peculiar bond with Walker, a complete stranger. How are they to know that in finding each other, they will find themselves? As the ex-boyfriend begins to threaten Piper and her family, the odd connection to Walker proves to be life saving.</p> <p>Ellen Wittlinger innovatively touches a variety of current issues through the eyes of Piper using a rare but necessary honesty. Piper's poetry grips the emotions and latches onto the reader. While young readers may be shocked by the occasional explicit detail, older readers will find themselves holding their breath, captivated by the authenticity of the characters and events.</p> <p>Wendi Brown Hoffman Estates, IL</p> | <p><i>The Secret Blog of Raisin Rodriguez</i> by Judy Goldschmidt Penguin/Razorbill, 2005, 202 pp., \$12.99</p> <p>Fiction/Coming of Age ISBN: 1-59514-018-2</p> <p>Raisin, uprooted first by divorce, her mother's sudden remarriage to a stranger, then a cross-country move from Berkeley to Philadelphia, finds herself beginning seventh grade without friends, except for the son of her stepfather's business associate and he "doesn't count." Sounds serious, but Raisin recounts her adventures in a blog to her two best friends back home in the witty manner (well beyond the range of the usual twelve-year-old) of a born raconteur. Her travails include (but are not limited to), the dog swallowing the padded bra she's been "borrowing" from her new stepsisiter, mistakenly assuming the most popular girls in school are singing happy birthday to her, starting her period in a public place, and having her secret blog published throughout the school which hurts the nice boy she's overlooked while seeking popularity. Raisin must make amends, and in doing so, learns the value of offbeat friends over those with star quality. The novel is funny and entertaining without being entirely believable.</p> <p>Myrna Dee Marler Laie, HI</p> |
| <p><i>Sleeping Freshmen Never Lie</i> by David Lubar Dutton Children's Books, 2005, 279 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Family-Friend Dynamics ISBN: 0-525-47311-4</p> <p>Scott Hudson's life is busy enough—avoiding lunch-money-stealing upperclassmen, finishing loads of homework on time, and impressing an old kindergarten pal turned hot; the last thing he has time to deal with is a baby. Unfortunately, there's not much he can do: his mother is expecting a child who will be fifteen years younger than Scott. How's a guy to deal?</p> <p>Scott takes the reader humorously through his freshman year of high school, recording his thoughts, fears, and wisdom in a "journal" he plans to give to his new sibling. Little does he know that in the process of trying to get by, he is learning what it means to be a friend, an honorable man, and a brother.</p> <p>Through an uplifting story, David Lubar shares a true teenager's perspective. The familiarity and honesty of the characters allows the narrative to unfold with startling realism. <i>Sleeping Freshmen Never Lie</i> is a recommended read for those searching for laughs and a genuine voice in young adult literature.</p> <p>Rebecca Aicher Algonquin, IL</p> | <p><i>Stonewolf</i> by Brenda Seabrooke Holiday House, 2005, 231 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Mystery ISBN: 0-8234-1848-0</p> <p>Seven-year-old Nicholas was thrilled to leave his unhappy orphanage life, but soon realizes his new guardians are holding him captive to unlock secrets from his past. Nicholas must be shrewd in keeping his returning memory, much of it information gleaned from his scientist parents, hidden from his captors, as well as his escape plans.</p> <p>The number of characters is burdensome, but one eventually becomes engrossed in the mystery of Nicholas' hidden knowledge. As he tries to escape his captors and takes increasingly dangerous and daring chances, his predicaments push the boundaries of imagination. It is implied that Nicholas is related to Nikola Tesla, the Serbian-American scientist. The ending leaves numerous unanswered questions and the reader must imagine what Nicholas', fourteen at the novel's end, future holds. This will be enjoyed most by middle level science buffs, with perhaps some teacher assistance.</p> <p>Susan Capp Vermillion, SD</p> |

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| <p>Summer's End by Audrey Couloumbis G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2005, 182 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Grace can't stand the fighting. Since her brother burned his draft card, there's been nothing but fighting at home. Having to cancel her first boy/girl birthday party is the last straw. Looking for an escape, Grace sneaks a ride in the bed of Uncle Milford's pickup, hoping to find comfort in the routine chores of her grandma's farm; instead, she finds that even her cousins are fighting—about <i>their</i> brothers' involvement in the war.</p> <p>As days pass, Grace and her parents come to an understanding—about her brother, the war, and birthday parties. After a tragic accident, Grace's challenge of finding safety and the importance of family rise to a whole new level.</p> <p>Couloumbis' uses vivid dialogue, and the down-to-earth, yet intricate narrative offers an excellent glimpse into the mind of a thirteen-year-old girl struggling to find her place in a changing world. Young adults are sure to connect to Grace as they walk with her through <i>Summer's End</i>.</p> <p>Rachel Lance Elgin, IL</p> | <p>Surprising Cecilia by Susan Gonzales Abraham and Denise Gonzales Abraham Cinco Punto Press, 2005, 230 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Cecilia Gonzales has big dreams of leaving her family's farm, going to the big city after graduating from high school, and getting an office job. The sequel to the award-winning <i>Cecilia's Year</i>, this tale continues Cecilia's adventures as she embarks on her freshman year at the modern (for the 1930s) high school. Her mother still disapproves of Cecilia's dreams, so the 15-year-old goes out of her way to help out at home. The year holds many surprises, including a new baby at home and a love interest. The book chronicles the journey of discovery as Cecilia makes important decisions about family and responsibility.</p> <p>Hispanic phrases and proverbs are sprinkled throughout, lending authenticity. Cecilia is likeable, and her struggle toward independence is heartfelt. While not as strong as <i>Cecilia's Year</i>, nor as inspiring as <i>Esperanza Rising</i>, this quiet story will find an audience with readers who have outgrown the <i>Little House</i> books.</p> <p>Melissa Moore Jackson, TN</p> |
| <p>The Telling Pool by David Clement-Davies Amulet Books, 2005, 362 pp., \$19.95</p> <p>Experience magic, deceit, trust, love, and friendship as Rhodri seeks his destiny to save King Richard and his land from a long-ago curse that was cast by an evil enchantress, Homeria, when Guinevere and Sir Lancelot betrayed King Arthur. Homeria ensnares both Rhodri and his father in her own quest to possess Excalibur, Arthur's fabled sword.</p> <p>Rhodri encounters Wiccan ideas and pagan practices that challenge his beliefs about Christianity, but is strengthened through visions and messages received by gazing into a magical pool. Readers will be swept up by the adventures that lead to Rhodri's discovery of his identity. Characters are well developed, especially Rhodri, and readers will relate to the many emotions portrayed. Some sections, especially those involving Rhodri's daily life, seem over-long and distracting. While there are many Arthurian novels available, this one incorporates interesting and unusual approaches to the legend, making it an enjoyable read for mature genre fans.</p> <p>Susan Gapp Vermillion, SD</p> | <p>Ulysses Moore #1: The Door to Time by Edizioni Piemme Scholastic, 2004/2006 (trans.), 240 pp., \$12.99</p> <p>Argo Manor, an old, mysterious mansion on the coast of England, sits atop a cliff and offers the perfect place for exploration. With their parents returning to London for the weekend to finalize the purchase of the manor, the twins, Jason and Julia, are left under the watch of the old caretaker, Nestor. He seems to know more about the mysteries of the old house than he lets his young charges know. Along with their new school friend, Rick, the twins find clues that lead them on a scavenger hunt as they try to uncover the findings of the previous owner, Ulysses Moore. The children discover another world that exists within the reality of Argo Manor.</p> <p>With a well-crafted plot line and believable characters, <i>The Door to Time</i> proves to be an infectious beginning of a series. I recommend this novel to young readers (ages 9-12) who enjoy a quick-paced read that takes them through secret doors and hidden passageways.</p> <p>Roger Caswell Wamego, KS</p> |

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| <p><i>Under a Stand Still Moon</i> by Ann Howard Creel Coming of Age/Anasazi Indians Brown Barn Books, 2005, 192 pp., \$8.95 ISBN: 978-0-9746481-8-3</p> <p>Echo, an Anasazi Indian girl, grows up during the dissolution of the Anasazi civilization. She lives a carefree life until she is 12, when she catches a baby falling from a cliff—considered a miracle. One of the High Priests takes her for a wife and agrees to teach her the secrets of the stars and planets.</p> <p>Echo lives with the old man in a high cliff. Then problems start to occur: Vandals raid the village several times and kill tribe members. The sun seems to be eaten by the clouds; this bad sign forces the Indians to ask the High Priests to intervene, but they cannot. Eclipses are known only to the High Priest married to Echo, and only as a myth. Then there is a drought. They have overused their land, but she cannot get anyone to stop, and the Indians start to leave in great numbers.</p> <p>Echo learns about their religion and becomes the only girl who can hunt game; there is hope some Indians will return to join Echo in raising crops and hunting.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">John Jacob Oak Park, IL</p> | <p><i>Where I Want to Be</i> by Adele Griffin Putnam, 2005, 150 pp., \$15.99 Fiction/Mental Illness ISBN: 0-399-23783-6</p> <p>Two narrative voices tell this story: Lily, a pretty, popular teenage girl, and Jane, her slightly older, schizophrenic sister. The telling is non-linear, and at first, the two story lines don't seem to converge, which might be off-putting to teen readers demanding a strong story line. Eventually, it becomes clear that Jane is dead, perhaps a suicide, and Lily is guilt-ridden, hiding from her friends, and depending too much on her boyfriend Caleb. Jane must resolve her jealousy and bitterness. Lily must resolve her guilt at being the normal one and let Caleb go. The writing is imagistic, evocative, and appropriately haunting. The excitement in the story comes more from figuring out how the pieces of the narrative puzzle fit together than from large plot developments. The front cover announces that the novel is a National Book Award Finalist, which suggests the story will be valued more by mature and thoughtful readers than reluctant ones.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Myrna Dee Marler Laie, HI</p> |
| <p><i>Worlds Apart</i> by Lindsay Lee Johnson Mental Health/Parent/Child Relationships Front Street, 2005, 164 pp., \$16.95 ISBN: 1-932425-28-4</p> <p>Winnie May is suddenly uprooted from her shallow-but-real-life in Chicago to move to rural Minnesota, where her father has taken a position as a doctor in residence at a state mental health facility. Winnie tries to adjust, but she's the new kid in school, and her only friend is Justice Goodwater, who lives on the reservation. Complicating matters is her mother's spiral into depression.</p> <p>Winnie relates more easily to the residents than most 14-year-olds would, but her acceptance of, and affection for, them is believable. The friction caused by her friendship with Justice is palpable and relevant and adds complexity to the story. Set in 1959, this novel explores Winnie's evolving maturity and changing relationship with her parents. Johnson may be trying to accomplish too much in this slim volume, and consequently some issues are only hinted at, but the story strangely does not suffer. Instead, it serves as a window on Winnie's life, with the realization her story will continue.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Melissa Moore Jackson, TN</p> | <p><i>Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review should send a copy of the book to:</i> Lori Goodson 409 Cherry Circle Manhattan, KS 66503</p> <p><i>To submit a review for possible publication or to become a reviewer, contact Lori Goodson at lagoodson@cox.net</i></p> |