

<p>Alligator Bayou by Donna Jo Napoli Wendy Lamb Books Random House, 2009, 281 pp., \$16.99 ISBN: 978-0-385-74654-0 Historical Fiction</p> <p>Fourteen-year-old Calogero lives in Tallulah, Louisiana, in 1899 with his hard-working Italian family. Providing produce for their neighbors, his self-reliant immigrant uncles struggle with the new language and encounter bigotry in surprising places. Having seen unexpected prejudice in New Orleans, they stick to themselves and try to earn a living. Nevertheless, there are neighbors who resent their self-sufficiency and their ignorance of the town's social mores regarding race mixing, and even their trust in one of the town's leading citizens proves misguided.</p> <p>Misunderstandings escalate into mob violence, and being innocent means nothing when the livelihood of others is threatened. The anger grows gradually, juxtaposed against Calogero's own dreams of the future and his budding affection for Patricia, a black girl who lives near town. Expanding readers' understandings of the causes and results of prejudices, the author describes effectively the earthy Louisiana bayous and the emotional tempests that sweep the small town.</p> <p>Barbara Ward Richland, WA</p>	<p>Art for Art's Sake: Meredith's Story by Barbara Clanton Art, Gay/Lesbian, Siblings Regal Crest Enterprises, LLC, 2009, 192 pp., \$15.95 ISBN: 978-1-935053-14-9</p> <p>This story of acceptance, discovery, and understanding introduces the reader to high school senior Meredith Bedford, a social outcast who can't wait to graduate. Meredith doesn't know what having friends is like and spends most of her time caring for her younger brother, Mikey, who has Down Syndrome. That quickly changes when Dani Lassiter, president of the senior class and captain of the lacrosse team, asks to work with Meredith on their history project. The girls investigate an old Victorian house and quickly befriend Esther and Millie, the older women who own the house, but no longer live there. As they grow closer, Dani models for Meredith's portfolio, which eventually gets her accepted to Syracuse, where Dani will play lacrosse.</p> <p>When Dani reveals to Meredith that she is gay, Meredith begins to question her feelings. Why does being with Dani make her feel warm, happy, and content?</p> <p>Sarah Nickow Nashville, TN</p>
<p>Bait by Alex Sanchez Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2009, 239 pp., \$16.99 Relationships, Family Problems, Sexuality ISBN: 978-1-4169-3772-2</p> <p>Diego MacMann gets good grades, takes care of his little brother, is fascinated by sharks, and even has a weekend job to save money for college. Everything, even down to his crush on Ariel, seems normal, but Diego is hiding secrets, too. After his stepdad commits suicide, his mom has to work two jobs and doesn't notice the changes with Diego. However, after he punches one guy at school for looking at him the wrong way and another guy at the mall for calling him gay, it's impossible for anyone to not see that something is wrong.</p> <p><i>Bait</i> is a story that exposes the internal turmoil some teens face in dealing with sexual abuse and the impact it has on their lives. The story shows how Diego confronts his problems by talking to someone who can help, but in the meantime reveals graphic content. This is for mature readers.</p> <p>Amanda Graham Manhattan, KS</p>	<p>Ball Peen Hammer by Adam Rapp and George O'Connor First Second, 2009, 144 pp., \$17.99 ISBN: 978-1-59643-300-7 Graphic Novel</p> <p><i>Ball Peen Hammer</i>, a graphic novel by Adam Rapp and illustrated by George O'Connor, depicts a gruesome, dying world. Not for the faint of heart, this story is unrelenting in its despair and loss. Welton hides in his basement room to avoid the plague that has killed or infected most of the world. He fears leaving the safe space, but that isolation causes its own damage to his life.</p> <p>The story, filled with the suffering of the characters, is not for readers with weak stomachs, as the visuals of devoured bodies, inhumane acts, and violence are heart-wrenching. The characters feel as if there is no hope in their dying world, and they sometimes participate in violent acts, often out of apathy.</p> <p>The graphic novel provides a gruesome view of a world where characters feel intensely their loss of hope. It is eerie in its storytelling and its vision.</p> <p>Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p>

<p><i>Beautiful Creatures</i> by Kami Garcia and Margaret Stohl</p> <p>Little, Brown, 2010, 628 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>When the niece of his small town's shut-in enrolls in school, Ethan Ware rejects the idea of ever being friends with her. Lena Duchannes, however, is more than Ethan bargained for—beautiful, different, and unexpectedly powerful. She is a caster—possessing the power to instantly transform her natural surroundings. Ethan discovers a strong attraction to Lena, sharing her dreams, seeing into her mind, and learning a secret about their family histories that connects them. But Lena's time in Gatlin, SC, is short: She has six months until her sixteenth birthday, where she'll learn her fate as a caster—to be dark or to be light, to be evil or to be good, to have Ethan or to lose him forever.</p> <p>The authors weave Southern history and charm with Gothic sensibilities throughout the story. Boasting a strong male narrator, <i>Beautiful Creatures</i> is a fresh, pleasantly enjoyable take on the YA thriller/romance.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Lacy Compton Austin, TX</p>	<p>Fantasy/Romance</p> <p>ISBN: 978-0-316-04267-3</p> <p><i>Bugboy</i> by Eric Luper</p> <p>Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009, 256 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>“Shabby?” Jack Walsh is only fifteen years old and has just hit the big time in horse racing. The Great Depression has hit everyone and everything except the ponies. People still flock to Saratoga to try and make a buck. Jack just wants to work with the best horses. He's already led a very hard childhood, what with being sent away from his family because they couldn't afford to feed him and his sister. Sleeping in the barns is much better for Jack anyway, he thinks. Bigger trials await Jack, though, when he's tempted to fix the biggest race of his life.</p> <p>Even at the very young age of 15, Jack leads a very adult life and has to make adult choices. He must decide what is more important in the horse business—winning the big race or winning at life.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Mary Schmutz Junction City, KS</p>
<p><i>Catching Fire</i> by Suzanne Collins</p> <p>Scholastic, 2009, 391 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>World-weary after her historic victory during the Hunger Games, Katniss Everdeen finds her life forever changed. She and her fellow District 12 tribute Peeta Mellark embark on the requisite Victory Tour, where there are hints of rebellion in several of the districts. Inspired by her earlier example of defiance, citizens have taken to wearing the mockingjay pin Katniss wears. There are twists, turns, and unexpected developments as Katniss faces possible betrayal at every turn.</p> <p>The action in this sequel to <i>Hunger Games</i> never lets up, with hints of things to come and wrongs to be righted. All of the secondary characters are fleshed out effectively. President Snow's palpable hatred for Katniss oozes throughout his plans for the Seventy-fifth Hunger Games. Readers will groan in frustration at the book's conclusion, since there are so many loose ends. The tantalizing hints of a possible District 13 guarantee more surprises for readers.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Barbara Ward Richland, WA</p>	<p>Fantasy/Dystopias</p> <p>ISBN: 978-0-439-02349-8</p> <p><i>Daniel X: Alien Hunter</i> by James Patterson and Leopoldo Gout</p> <p>Little Brown Books for Young Readers, 2008, 128 pp., \$9.99 ISBN: 978-0-316-00425-1</p> <p>Daniel X looks just like any other human being, eats like any other human being, sleeps like any other human being, except, well, he is not like any other human being; in fact, he is not even human. Daniel X is a humanoid from the planet Terra Firma, and he is an Alien Hunter. As a child, his parents were killed by THE Most Wanted Alien criminal of that time. Years later, Daniel goes back and finds the List, an artifact created to hold the knowledge of Terra Firma and each Alien Hunter before him. With the list, it is time to continue what his parents started.</p> <p><i>Alien Hunter</i> is the newest installment in the Daniel X series; Daniel is hunting Alien Number 7 on the list. Through some unexpected turns of events, Daniel becomes the hunted. The story carefully combines the narrative, dialogue, and illustrations.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Isaac Gabella Femey-Voltaire, France</p>

<p><i>Death on the River</i> by John Wilson Orca Book Publishers, 2009, 224 pp., \$12.95</p> <p>Historical Fiction/ War/ Redemption ISBN: 978-1-55469-111-1</p> <p><i>Death on the River</i> is a story about a young Union soldier who is captured and placed in a Confederate prison camp at Andersonville. While there, he meets Billy Sharp, a man who teaches Jake how to survive the hardships of war life, but only at the cost of others. The end of the Civil War allows Jake to make his way home, only to discover more heartache and death. The imprisoned Union soldier is not a point-of-view typically encountered when reading about the Civil War.</p> <p><i>Death on the River</i> is a book that forces its readers to venture beyond the vacant facts of war toward the turmoil and guilt experienced by those who are “the one who lived.” Jake’s retelling of his final year as a soldier is both grotesque and heart-wrenching as the reader follows Jake in a world filled with starvation, death, violence, greed, and ghosts. Kimberly Coyle Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>Deep Down Popular</i> by Phoebe Stone Scholastic Paperbacks, 2008, 288 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Friendship/Popularity ISBN: 978-0-439-80245-1</p> <p>Conrad Parker Smith defines popularity at Cabanash County Elementary School, and Jessie Lou Ferguson has silently loved him since second grade. When Conrad shows up to school with a metal brace on his leg, Jessie’s teacher selects her to help make sure he gets home safely. This time together, combined with Conrad’s injury-induced decline in popularity, paves the way for an unexpected friendship filled with laughter and adventure. They discover abandoned houses, old barns, unknown machinery, and get involved in a plan to save the town hardware store.</p> <p>When Conrad decides to undergo surgery, Jessie fears that his recovery will mean the return of his popularity and the end of their friendship. As sixth-grade graduation approaches, Jessie tries to figure out how to fill the empty self-portrait hanging on the classroom wall. Phoebe Stone creates a loveable character with a kind heart and a poetic soul. Sarah Nickow Nashville, TN</p>
<p><i>Elf Realm: The Low Road</i> by Daniel Kirk Amulet Books, 2009, 544 pp., \$8.95</p> <p>Fantasy/Adventure ISBN: 978-0-8109-4084-0</p> <p>Fourteen-year-old Matt McCormack doesn’t know what he’s getting into when he convinces his sister to explore their father’s new real estate development. Trudging through the construction site, Matt cuts his foot on a tiny, silver shoe. What first appears to be a curious trinket left behind in the mud turns out to be a clue to another realm all around Matt and Becky. Matt inadvertently uncovers the elf realm, always present but rarely seen, and pulls his sister and himself into the middle of a battle between the magic worlds. Although <i>Elf Realm</i> offers a well-detailed imagining of an expansive fantasy world, its characters and storyline are far less developed. Matt seems at times as surly as the evil creatures he’s trying to outwit. The human relationships are cold, challenging the reader’s sympathy and attention.</p> <p>Catherine McTamane Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>Elf Realm: The High Road</i> by Daniel Kirk Amulet Books, 2009, 488 pp., \$18.95</p> <p>Fantasy/Adventure ISBN: 978-0-8109-4075-8</p> <p>Book Two of the Elf Realm trilogy, <i>The High Road</i> offers in complexity what it lacks in character, introducing multiple new characters and increasingly menacing threats to the realm. Matt and Becky are again trying to preserve the Cord, the connection between the elf realm and the human world. In this installment, their quests are separate, providing more adventure but, unfortunately, more opportunity for the story to go awry. Attentive readers will notice when the magical rules of the elf realm contradict each other. Although the complex, multiple plots require the concentration of an older reader, the simpler, more predictable characters are more appropriate for younger readers. Falling short of the coherence of well-crafted fantasy, <i>The High Road</i> is most appropriate for readers who prefer traditional battle books.</p> <p>Catherine McTamane Nashville, TN</p>

<p><i>Emily the Strange: The Lost Days</i> by Rob Reger, Jessica Gruner, and Buzz Parker HarperCollins, 2009, 264 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Multigenre, Mystery, Magic, Fantasy ISBN: 978-0-06-145229-1</p> <p>What would you do if you found yourself in a tiny beige town with no memories and eleven pages missing from your diary? If your answer includes setting up shop in a refrigerator box and soliciting the help of four black cats and a brainless barista to uncover the mystery of your identity, then you might get along with Emily Strange.</p> <p>Fans of counterculture icon Emily's unique brand of clever snark will love the whimsical blend of magic, myth, and science fiction in <i>Emily the Strange: The Lost Days</i>, but you don't have to know Emily to love her in this off-kilter adventure story where the paranormal is totally normal. Anyone with a stubborn, independent, or alternative streak will appreciate this witty, self-sufficient girl genius who embodies her creator's motto: "Be yourself, think for yourself, do it yourself."</p> <p>Nicole Renner Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>Fell</i> by David Clement-Davies Amulet Books, 2009, 544 pp., \$8.95</p> <p>Supernatural, Fantasy, Adventure ISBN: 978-0-8109-7266-7</p> <p>Fell is a black wolf who has been shunned by his pack because of a wrongful accusation concerning the death of his stark white sister, and he now must travel alone, a "Kerl." Alina is a 15-year-old human girl who has been fated to save her people and nature itself. In the rugged and dark terrain of Transylvania, Fell and Alina team up to fulfill their combined destinies. They have both been gifted with the Sight, which enables them to communicate with each other and all animals. Fell and Alina must save their world against the evil Lord Vladeran and his arsenal of spirits, which includes Morgra, a devious wolf who exercises dark powers over Fell.</p> <p>This sequel to <i>The Sight</i>, <i>Fell</i> is an epic animal fantasy full of detailed wolf lore, action, intrigue, and enough back-story to allow the reader to jump right into the adventure.</p> <p>Stephanie Sefcik Nashville, TN</p>
<p><i>Finally</i> by Wendy Mass Scholastic Press, 2010, 304 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Growing Up/Humor ISBN: 978-0-545-05242-9</p> <p><i>Finally</i> introduces Rory, a spunky and clumsy preteen who finds herself in awkward social situations. Rory's story is sparked when she finally turns twelve, and can do all the things her parents promised that she could do at that age. On B-Day, Rory finally gets to work on her goals.</p> <p>Get her own house key. Check Shave her legs. Check Get a cell phone, wear makeup, and get a pet. Check, Check, and Check.</p> <p>If only accomplishing her list was so easy! Along the way, Rory gets into some scary situations and always seems to land in a less than graceful manner. Rory's family and friends keep her laughing and teach her that turning twelve means more than just checkmarks on a page.</p> <p>Mass's writing style is witty; she gets into the mind of a twelve-year-old girl spinning a humorous story that makes readers laugh out loud.</p> <p>Chantelle Pritchett Derby, KS</p>	<p><i>If I Stay</i> by Gayle Forman Dutton Books, 2009, 196 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Family/Choices/Relationships ISBN: 978-0-525-42103-0</p> <p>Seventeen-year-old Mia has a great life: she has a close-knit family, her band-playing boyfriend is loving and devoted to her, and her talent as a cellist has almost certainly earned her a place at Juilliard, her dream school. The only decision Mia really has to make is which path she wants to follow. At least, she <i>thought</i> that was the only decision she had to make. One ride with her family during a school snow day, however, changes everything.</p> <p>Suddenly, there's only one decision Mia has to make—a critical decision that she has to make as she watches the paramedics work on her body. It's the most important decision of all, and she has to make it all on her own: stay, or go?</p> <p>Christine Halkovic Ansonia, CT</p>

<p><i>In the Woods</i> by Robin Stevenson Orca Book Publishers, 2009, 124 pp., \$9.95</p> <p>Cameron's twin sister Katie is practically flawless. This straight-A student never gets into trouble, rarely makes a mistake, and wouldn't dare keep secrets from her friends and family. Or would she?</p> <p>When Cameron finds a baby alone in the woods, he realizes his sister may not be perfect after all. Could this newborn baby be Katie's or was it just a coincidence? If Katie did abandon her child in hopes that Cameron would find her, what will he do with this knowledge? What will he say to his sister?</p> <p>Cameron's discovery provokes a series of difficult decisions involving sibling trust, concern for others, and identity. This fast-paced story concludes with no decisive moral, leaving readers to reflect on these issues on their own. Much like adolescence itself, Robin Stevenson's <i>In the Woods</i> is wrought with moments of humility, satisfaction, and uncertainty.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Caroline McCoy Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>Intertwined</i> by Gena Showalter Harlequin Teen, 2009, 440 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Fantasy/Relationships/Supernatural ISBN: 978-0-373-21002-2</p> <p>At sixteen, Aden is different from other teens. Other teens have friends, but Aden has four souls living inside him. These four souls can do magical things—raise the dead, travel back and forth in time, predict the future, and possess another person. All Aden wants is to be left alone. Mary Ann is Aden's opposite. She's friendly, outgoing, has friends. The voices are also quiet when she is around. Their friendship is unexpected but provides Aden with a sense of peace.</p> <p>That sense of peace is threatened by a werewolf shape-shifter who is interested in Mary Ann and a vampire princess who is interested in Aden. The four of them get pulled into a dangerous situation that threatens their survival. This story combines vampires, werewolves, ghosts, and the paranormal.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Melanie Hundley Nashville, TN</p>
<p><i>Last Night I Sang to the Monster</i> by Benjamin Alire Saenz Cinco Puntos Press, 2009, 239 pp., \$16.95</p> <p>Zach is an alcoholic. He has many secrets that he keeps hidden in the confines of his sadness. Instead of attending his senior year of high school, Zach finds himself in a rehab facility having to face his monstrous memories of drugs, alcohol, abuse, and death. The only problem is Zach doesn't want to remember, because with remembering comes excruciating pain. Together with the help of his therapist and his fatherly roommate, Zach is able to face his monsters and break through the chaos of his internal world. Zach struggles through the labyrinth of addiction, ending up in a circle of hope and love.</p> <p>Saenz's novel artfully depicts the delicate world of the addict—the struggles, the setbacks, and the moments of light that create a path toward healing. This powerful and emotionally demanding story will resonate in teenage minds for a long time.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Kimberly Coyle Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>March toward the Thunder</i> by Joseph Bruchac Speak, an imprint of Penguin Group, 2009, 298 pp., \$8.99</p> <p>Civil War/ Irish Brigade/Native American ISBN: 978-0-14-241446-0</p> <p>Through the summer of 1864, Grant's Union army mounted a campaign that taxed Lee's Confederate troops to the limit. Lee's army inflicted severe casualties, but suffered from the inability to resupply and recruit more soldiers. Grant pushed forward, assured of a continued source of supplies and troops. In this context, fifteen-year-old Louis Noyette, an Abenaki Indian, accepts a payment bonus to join the Union army. This money allows his mother to buy and maintain land in New York. Louis is assigned to the Irish Brigade, one of the Union's most decorated units.</p> <p>Bruchac's historical novel depicts the tragedy of war in the midst of courage, brotherhood, sacrifice, racial strife, and death. Louis's first-person narrative of a boy in battle reminds us not only of the horror of war, but of the ever-present role that Native Americans have played in the unfolding story of American history.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Steve Bickmore Baton Rouge, LA</p>

<p><i>Monstrumologist</i> by Rick Yancey Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2009, 448 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Horror/Thriller ISBN: 978-1-4169-8448-1</p> <p>Twelve year-old-orphan William James Henry serves as an apprentice to Dr. Pellinore Warthrop—a monstrumologist. In this thrilling tale, Will assists Dr. Warthrop, who is an official monster hunter, track down a group of anthropophagi—those creatures of mythology and lore with no heads and shark-like mouths in their stomachs.</p> <p>Set in a small New England-type town in 1888, Dr. Warthrop and Henry travel to gruesome crime scenes, cemeteries, and an asylum in search of the answers behind the mysterious appearance of this pack of man-eaters. Just as mysterious are the circumstances behind Will's parents' deaths and his complex relationship with the doctor who relies on him so much.</p> <p>Yancey's novel, with shades of Sherlock Holmes and forensic thrillers, will excite those who appreciate horror novels with a medical twist and delight those interested in gothic gore. I look forward to Will's next adventure.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Jacqueline Bach Baton Rouge, LA</p>	<p><i>N.E.R.D.S.</i> by Michael Buckley Amulet Books, 2009, 306 pp., \$14.95</p> <p>Adventure/Spy/Friendship ISBN: 978-0-8109-4324-7</p> <p>Jackson Jones is the focal point of Nathan Hale Elementary; as a star athlete and the most popular kid in school. He is struck down by middle school superficiality when he gets braces and a head harness: he loses his friends and even has to give up sports. During this time, Jackson finds consolation in learning all he can about other people. His curiosity leads him to a group of five "nerds" who have something to hide. Upon further investigation, he discovers that they are here to save the world.</p> <p>Michael Buckley tries to challenge common social perceptions while entertaining his reader. Though there are some intriguing aspects and cool details, the writer fails to execute the idea that the primary job of a book is to immerse the reader into a world that, although a product of the writer's thoughts, still needs coherent rules, laws, and consistencies.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Isaac Gabella Ferne-y-Voltaire, France</p>
<p><i>Rapunzel's Revenge</i> by Shannon and Dean Hale Illus. Nathan Hale Bloomsbury, 2008, 144 pp., \$14.99</p> <p>Adventure/Growing Up/Self Discovery ISBN: 978-1-59990-070-4</p> <p>If you loved <i>The Goose Girl</i> and <i>Book of a Thousand Days</i>, you are in for another treat. In <i>Rapunzel's Revenge</i>, author Shannon Hale partners with Dean Hale and Nathan Hale to retell the Grimm's classic as a graphic novel.</p> <p>This is definitely not your grandmother's Rapunzel—the quietly submissive, long-suffering princess, waiting for the prince to rescue her. The Hales's updated teenager-in-a-tower has a big heart, strong braids, and a swashbuckling, high-energy, big-adventure story to tell. This Rapunzel is "WANTED DEAD OR ALIVE for horse thieving, kidnapping, jail breaking, and using her hair in a manner other than nature intended!"</p> <p>While <i>Rapunzel's Revenge</i> is definitely the stuff of high adventure and the old West, it is very much a story about growing up female, taking chances, negotiating potentially dangerous landscapes, confronting cruelty and loss, and re-finding the nurture and comfort that can be had in love.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Phyllis Thompson Johnson City, TN</p>	<p><i>Rebound</i> by Bob Krech Marshall Cavendish, 2006, 271 pp., \$6.99</p> <p>Adolescence, Sports, Racial Issues ISBN: 978-0-7614-5543-1</p> <p>Polish American kids from the Greenville working-class, rustbelt neighborhood don't play basketball; they wrestle. Ray Wisniewski doesn't want to buy into the idea that black kids play hoops and white kids wrestle. Ray is determined to overcome this.</p> <p>Krech's story of "teenager tries to make good" is another reminder that subdivisions, barriers, and bigotry can pollute a school. Ray learns a hard lesson when he couldn't make the basketball team under the white coach for two seasons. When a new black coach arrives his senior year, Ray is suddenly talented enough to make the 22-man squad. The only problem with making a varsity team is that it brings on unasked-for responsibilities and treatments . . . and makes those barriers even worse.</p> <p>What should Ray do when there are conflicts between his white friends and his new-found black friends? Or when some of his teammates see him as a detriment to the team?</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Cord McKeithen Baton Rouge, LA</p>

<p>Salt by Maurice Gee Orca Book Publishers, 2009, 272 pp., \$18.00</p> <p>Quest/ Fantasy/ Romance/ Revenge ISBN: 987-1-55469-209-5</p> <p>Hari's only goal is to rescue his father from the depths of Deep Salt, a terrible place from which no one returns. The beautiful Pearl hopes to escape her privileged world and her loveless, arranged marriage. In their separate worlds, Pearl and Hari are enemies, but when these two characters' lives collide, a whirlwind of an adventure unfolds.</p> <p><i>Salt</i>, the first in Maurice Gee's Salt Trilogy is a fantastical tale filled with magical abilities, a corrupt regime, and unspeakable terror hidden in a deadly cave. Pearl and Hari's whimsical quest begins in this exciting adventure that gives the reader a hunger for more. A warning to all: once you enter Gee's magical world, there is no turning back until the journey is complete.</p> <p>Kimberly Coyle Nashville, TN</p>	<p>Surviving the Angel of Death: The Story of a Mengele Twin in Auschwitz by Eva Mozes Kor and Lisa Rojany Buccieri Tanglewood, 2009, 129 pp., \$15.99</p> <p>Biography/Holocaust ISBN: 978-1-933718-28-6</p> <p>Eva Mozes Kor wanted her self-published memoir of her experiences as a survivor of Dr. Josef Mengele's twin experiments in Auschwitz to be adapted for young adult readers. Rojany Buccieri wrote a masterful, searing, and mind-numbing account of two sisters who, at age 10, entered the Nazi camp of horror and evil and emerged as survivors. Eva's only goal was to keep herself and her sister alive, but it is her first-person narrative voice that lends powerful credence to the power of the human spirit and the strength of the will to live despite incredible odds.</p> <p>Eva provides details of Mengele's experiments and camp conditions, while family pictures before and after the camp provide additional documentation. The text not only honors Eva and her courage, but also offers a compelling argument about forgiveness and tolerance. The reader will not want to stop reading until the last page.</p> <p>Judith A. Hayn Little Rock, AR</p>
<p>The Brothers Story by Katherine Sturtevant Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009, 275 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Historical Fiction/Family/Growing Up ISBN: 978-0-374-30992-3</p> <p>A young boy faces love, sadness, and coming to terms with his own sexuality. Kit's mother implores him to fill the "head of the house" duties after his father dies; these duties include providing the daily basic essentials during a difficult winter, which often requires him to fabricate, beg, and steal.</p> <p>Kit and his twin brother Christy, born into extreme poverty in an Essex village, are close, but Kit's love for his "simple" identical twin is often challenged. Is he his brother's keeper? Kit both involves Christy in schemes and ploys and protects him from others taunting his ignorance.</p> <p>Kit abandons his brother to find a new life in London, a place he believes is filled with jobs, money, and rich soil. He becomes an apprentice, but can he, in good conscience, continue to stay away from his codependent, suffering family?</p> <p>Montika Allen-Atkinson Junction City, KS</p>	<p>The Silver Blade by Sally Gardner Dial Books, an imprint of Penguin, 2009, 362 pp., \$17.99 ISBN: 978-0-8037-3377-0</p> <p><i>The Silver Blade</i>, the sequel to <i>The Red Necklace</i>, is historical fantasy set during the French Revolution. It centers on Yann, a young gypsy with the power to move objects and read people's minds, and Sido, the young daughter of an aristocrat.</p> <p>After rescuing Sido from the evil Count Kalliovski, who wished to capture Sido for his own bride, Yann flees to England, making secret journeys back to France to smuggle out refugees. He and Sido fall in love, but she is again kidnapped. He needs all his courage and skill to rescue her a second time. Even then, the young lovers are not safe, for our hero learns his true identity. With this knowledge, how can Sido marry him? The horrors of the French Revolution make a dazzlingly vivid setting for a tale of high adventure that is also a touching love story.</p> <p>June Newman-Graham Baton Rouge, LA</p>

<p><i>The Poison Eaters & Other Stories</i> by Holly Black Big Mouth House, 2009, 256 pp., \$17.99</p> <p>Fantasy/Short Story ISBN: 978-1-931520-63-8</p> <p>Holly Black's <i>The Poison Eaters & Other Stories</i> takes readers on an entertainingly outlandish journey replete with vampire and werewolf infiltration, souls sold to the Devil, faeries and unicorns striking up deals with humans, and young girls bred to have poisonous skin. In the world Black creates, magic itself is not fantastical or otherworldly; it is organic, natural, never out of place. This collection of short stories takes elements of a dark world, often decried as “humanity’s underbelly,” and thrusts them all too convincingly into a position of normalcy. Neither people nor stories are constrained by what is routine or plausible.</p> <p>Readers must shuck off reality, like clothes before a shower, because inside the stories, “magical things seemed like they could be ordinary and ordinary things were almost magical” (108). Recommended for a mature adolescent and imaginative audience, <i>The Poison Eaters</i> will not fail to entertain.</p> <p>Whitney Hewell Nashville, TN</p>	<p><i>Tiger Moon</i> by Antonia Michaelis, translated by Anthea Bell Amulet Books, 2009, 480 pp., \$8.95</p> <p>In early twentieth-century India, a wealthy merchant named Ahmed Mudhi is on a journey when he sees a young girl daydreaming under a tree. Captivated by her beauty, he immediately finds the girl’s family and arranges to marry her that evening. Thus Safia becomes the eighth wife of a man she has never met. Safia knows it is only a matter of time before her husband finds out her secret, a secret that will surely mean her death. As she awaits her fate, Safia tells the story of Farhad, a clever thief turned hero on a quest to save a beautiful princess from marriage to the demon king.</p> <p>Like a Hindu Scheherazade, Safia weaves her tale of magic, adventure, and romance in an attempt to save herself. As the two stories intertwine, Safia and Farhad learn about courage, love, and what it means to be a hero.</p> <p>Lindsey Bollinger Nashville, TN</p>
<p><i>Touch</i> by Francine Prose HarperTeen, 2009, 262 pp., \$16.99</p> <p>Friendship/Truth/Divorce ISBN: 978-0-06-137517-0</p> <p>High school freshman Maisie Willard has been through plenty already—her parents’ divorce, trying to adjust to new stepparents, and moving between households to decide where she feels most welcome.</p> <p>When she returns to her father’s home, she’s reunited with her three best friends—three boys who’ve been best buddies with her as long as she can remember. But something’s changed. And soon, a touching incident with the boys in the back of a school bus becomes a communitywide issue, further shattering Maisie’s world. But, as the “truth” comes out, stories change, and even Maisie’s not sure what really went on.</p> <p>Students will be able to identify with the ambiguity of perceptions—and defining what truth really is. Prose provides a realistic portrayal of a teen’s life made uneasy following her parents’ divorce, only to be escalated when rumors build about the incident on the bus.</p> <p>Lori Atkins Goodson Manhattan, KS</p>	<p><i>Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review should send a copy of the book to:</i></p> <p>Melanie Hundley 1021 Delmas Ave. Nashville, TN 37216-3630</p> <p>To submit a review for possible publication or to become a reviewer, contact Melanie Hundley at melanie.hundley@vanderbilt.edu.</p>