**The Black Brothers** by Lisa Tetzner  
Survival/Friendship  
Front Street Publishing, 2004, 144 pp., $16.95  

Giorgio, a young boy, struggles valiantly to free himself from his master in *The Black Brothers*. A desperate situation results in Giorgio’s father selling him to a strange man for labor in a far off city. A struggle for freedom, acceptance, and bountiful meals awaits young Giorgio in his new home of Milan. A friendship develops that will be the only force to sustain Giorgio’s hope for a chance at a life other than chimney sweeping.

*The Black Brothers* is a phenomenally illustrated novel that entices the reader to turn the page again and again to follow the troubled life of Giorgio. The illustrations allow the reader to jump right into Giorgio’s terrifying experiences in the chimneys of Milan.

A book that will touch your heart, this novel reveals the importance of determination, acceptance, and friendship, as seen through the eyes of one young boy fighting for his freedom.

Jolie Darby  
Topeka, KS

---

**Blue Fingers** by Cheryl Aylward Whitesel  
Acceptance/Ninja Life  
Clarion Books, 2004, 252 pp., $15.00  

Taking a step into the past and a nation far across the seas, Cheryl Whitesel captivates her audience with a tale of ninja clans and samurai warriors. Koji, a Japanese twin, is desperately searching for belonging and acceptance in a place where twins are thought of as a sign of misfortune and disgrace. Through a strange twist of fate, a secret ninja clan captures Koji. Forced to endure ninja training, Koji must learn to accept this new ninja lifestyle and forget his family at home or die.

I was intrigued by the ninja history intertwined throughout the text. Whitesel combines fact with fiction, giving her readers a glimpse of what ninja life may have been like. My favorite element of the novel was the relationship of Koji’s family. The readers are able to examine sibling rivalry, as well as discover the importance of family and belonging.

Christina Hosler  
Waverly, KS

---

**Blue Moon** by Marilyn Halvorson  
Relationships/Responsibility/Romance  
Orca Book Publishers, 2004, 109 pp., $7.95  

Bobbie Jean has saved up enough money to buy a barrel racing horse. At the auction, she decides to buy a blue roan horse that has seen better days. Feeling foolish, she, nevertheless, takes the horse home.

Through good food, wise training, and the help of a friend, Bobbie Jean eventually gets Blue Moon into shape to compete in barrel racing. Attending a small rodeo, Bobbie Jean wins first prize, only to find that the horse has been stolen.

This fast-paced novel will certainly appeal to all—horse lovers, as well as those who root for the underdog.

Joy Frerichs  
Chatsworth, GA

---

**Cold Tom** by Sally Prue  
Fantasy  
Scholastic, 2004, 187 pp., $5.99  
ISBN: 0-439-48269-0

Tom lives in the common with the rest of his tribe, elf-like creatures with heightened senses and the ability to “call to the stars” and becoming invisible. He has no concept of family or friends, as he has been caring for himself since he was able to crawl. He fears humans as demons and believes they are an inferior race.

Tom’s only job was to warn others of approaching demons, but he has failed. In consequence, he faces death by Larn’s silver sword, so he flees to the city of demons, where he might be safe. Within the city, he finds shelter in Anna’s backyard shed. Tom’s original intention was simply to avoid death, but instead he learns lessons that do much more than save his life.

An intriguing interpretation of humanity, Prue’s fantasy grips the reader from the start. I found myself not only wondering about the plot line, but also about the portrayal of human behavior. The book, broken into 48 short chapters, is easily read, and I will definitely recommend it to many of my students.

Elaine Gruenbacher  
Clearwater, KS
**Clip & File**

**YA Book Reviews**

**Escape from Saigon**

by Helen Fox Science Fiction


In the twenty-first century, scientific study and technology have transformed human life. Humans co-exist in a world where robots are more than personal assistants. The new BDC4 robots, created by rich Technocrats, are programmed with the same intelligence as their human creators.

- **Eager**
  - A robot questioning the meaning of his feelings and whether he is alive.
  - Eager teams up with the protagonist to pursue the truth behind the BDC4s' behavior.
  - The BDC4s are considered the robots to own, but, as Gavin and Fleur discover, they are not as wonderful as everyone thinks.

- **Escape from Saigon**
  - A touching work chronicles the closing days of American involvement in Vietnam.
  - If the Communists BDC4s replace Grumps, their older model. Considered new, improved, and much like the Techno- robot to own, but, as Gavin and Fleur discover, they are not as wonderful as everyone thinks.

- **Clearwater**
  - A high school student who has a more realistic and accurate perspective.

- **PUSH**
  - A novel that Peart became a part of the family and finds the reasons for his existence.

- **Became An American Boy**
  - By Andrea Warren

- **The Story of Modern Teen Issues**

- **The Way**
  - Eager becomes a part of the family and finds the reasons for his existence.

- **Grandad**
  - By Terry Trueman New Realism

- **Kemp captures the essence of today’s teen life, incorporating experiences with alcohol, music, same-sex relationships, and many more to life than having a boyfriend. I highly enjoyed following Katie through her journey of self-discovery, recalling many of my own high school dating memories, especially basketball, provide Paul with an outlet to release his anxiety, still, he struggles even with the most common sense of today’s teen life, incorporating experiences with alcohol, music, same-sex relationships, and many more to life than having a boyfriend. I highly enjoyed following Katie through her journey of self-discovery, recalling many of my own high school dating memories, especially basketball, provide Paul with an outlet to release his anxiety, still, he struggles even with the most common

- **Pierce**
  - By Kristin Cashore

- **Clearwater**
  - A high school student who has a more realistic and accurate perspective.

- **PUSH**
  - A novel that Peart became a part of the family and finds the reasons for his existence.

- **Became An American Boy**
  - By Andrea Warren

- **The Story of Modern Teen Issues**

- **The Way**
  - Eager becomes a part of the family and finds the reasons for his existence.

- **Grandad**
  - By Terry Trueman New Realism

- **Kemp captures the essence of today’s teen life, incorporating experiences with alcohol, music, same-sex relationships, and many more to life than having a boyfriend. I highly enjoyed following Katie through her journey of self-discovery, recalling many of my own high school dating memories, especially basketball, provide Paul with an outlet to release his anxiety, still, he struggles even with the most common

- **Pierce**
  - By Kristin Cashore

- **Clearwater**
  - A high school student who has a more realistic and accurate perspective.

- **PUSH**
  - A novel that Peart became a part of the family and finds the reasons for his existence.

- **Became An American Boy**
  - By Andrea Warren

- **The Story of Modern Teen Issues**

- **The Way**
  - Eager becomes a part of the family and finds the reasons for his existence.

- **Grandad**
  - By Terry Trueman New Realism

- **Kemp captures the essence of today’s teen life, incorporating experiences with alcohol, music, same-sex relationships, and many more to life than having a boyfriend. I highly enjoyed following Katie through her journey of self-discovery, recalling many of my own high school dating memories, especially basketball, provide Paul with an outlet to release his anxiety, still, he struggles even with the most common
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exiled: Memoirs of a Camel by Kathleen Karr</td>
<td>Cultural Awareness/Adventure</td>
<td>Allah in his wisdom created the camel, Ali. Ali was born in the land of the Ancient Ones. Raised Muslim amid the pyramids and sand dunes of Egypt, Ali was captured and tamed by men-beasts; but in his heart, Ali never submitted. Sold to an American soldier in 1856, Ali and other camels journeyed by ship to Texas. Becoming acclimated to his new environment, one sees life through Ali’s eyes as he finds purpose, selects a mate, starts a family, and secures his freedom in the Mohave Desert. Based on actual events in the history of the United States, this fictional story from the point of view of a camel is a delightful tale that takes the reader into two very different worlds that also have many similarities. Joy Frerichs Chatsworth, GA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Crossing: Stories About Teen Immigrants by Donald R. Gallo</td>
<td>Short Stories/Immigration</td>
<td>Gallo’s latest collection of short fiction examines the immigration experience from the perspectives of teen-agers from ten cultural groups. First Crossing offers a variety of immigration stories. We have Ameen, a Palestinian working to gain the respect of his teammates necessary to play varsity quarterback. We have Marco, a Mexican boy making his first trip to America to work with his father. And we have Maya, a girl from Kazakhstan whose family’s immigration was sponsored by an aunt who married an American through an international dating magazine. Other stories feature protagonists from Venezuela, China, Romania, Sweden, Korea, Haiti, and Cambodia. Authors in this collection include Pam Munoz Ryan, Alden Carter, and Lensey Namioka. First Crossing is an invaluable resource for the contemporary middle school and high school classroom. The stories explore the challenges and possibilities faced by young people as their first cultures collide with the dominant American culture, and it offers a clear sense of empathy and shared humanity. This collection offers realistic situations and characters and should help contemporary adolescents better understand complex cultural dynamics. F. Todd Goodson Manhattan, KS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flux by Beth Goobie</td>
<td>Speculative Fiction</td>
<td>When her mother disappears, 12-year-old Nellie is left to manage on her own. She has a tough, lonely life on the streets, stealing money and food and evading a rough gang of boys called the Skulls. Nellie becomes aware of “flux,” the ability to alter her vibratory rate in the molecular field, and she learns to travel back and forth to different “levels” of reality. During her travels to parallel worlds, Nellie glimpses horrifying experiments on children and wonders about her own unremembered past. She eventually finds a friend in 14-year-old Deller, the leader of the Skulls. Together they search for Deller’s missing younger brother, who is trapped in another reality. I loved this book! The plot is imaginative; the characters are interesting and believable; the strange-yet-familiar setting is intriguing. Many of the mysteries of this story are left unanswered, leaving this reader happily anticipating a sequel. It’s highly recommended. Wendy Street Pella, IA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Heart Divided by Cherie Bennett and Jeff Gottesfeld</td>
<td>Romance/Historical Fiction</td>
<td>Kate Pride, at age ten, decides with passion her purpose in life, when her parents take her to see her first Broadway play in New York City. She wants to be a writer! Five years later, her parents enroll her in the appropriate classes for such a career, and Kate is chosen for an elite playwright club. So, when her father tells the family they are moving to Tennessee because of a job transfer, Kate feels her life is over. Although she finds their new home charming, and the townspeople extraordinarily friendly, the high school is a different story. She finds it filled with young adults of traditional views, a school divided between some white people who still want to raise the Confederate flag and some black people who view the flag as racism. Kate meets a boy named Jackson Redford. He and Kate fall in love and realize their hearts are not divided. When a family member is caught in the crossfire of a riot at a football game, Kate is able to write the play reminding the students of what they were fighting for. Vicki Boortfield Tempe, AZ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Heck Superhero by Martine Leavitt
Abandonment/Cartoons/Comics/Emotional Problems
Front Street, 2004, 144 pp., $16.95
ISBN: 1-886910-94-4

Heck’s mother, who suffers from depression, telephones Heck while he is at his best friend Spence’s house. She tells him they have been evicted from their apartment, to stay with Spence, and she will call soon. Not wanting to acknowledge his mother’s illness to others, Heck begins a search through the city to find his mother. While Heck lives on the street for five days, he does one good deed after another believing that his assistance will provide the way to find his mother before Social Services finds him. Within his mind, Heck is a superhero who needs to rescue his mother from hypertime—the time not connected to reality. Heck encounters many obstacles, but through his ability to draw, he finds comfort from his own reality.

Roger Caswell
Manhattan, KS
Honeysuckle House by Andrea Cheng
Friendship/Family Relationships/Multicultural
Front Street, 2004, 136 pp., $16.95

People are more alike than different. The reader is engaged through the use of two 10-year-old narrators, Sarah and Tiang, who relate the story in alternating chapters. Sarah, a Chinese American who does not speak any Chinese, is coping with the loss of her best friend, as well as her father’s job which requires him to be absent from home for extended periods of time. Her family is uprooted from the small Chinese American town where she was born, and her father’s efforts to get a green card are in limbo. Tiang, a Chinese girl, enters Sarah’s school and is upset with her new surroundings. The two girls strive to find mutual ground for understanding. They not only have to work through their problems, but they also must deal with the stereotyping by others. When they eventually open up to each other, they find that there is a basis for friendship.

Joy Frerichs
Chatsworth, GA
Hunger Moon by Sarah Lamstein
Family Problems/Coming of Age
Front Street Publishing, 2004, 112 pp., $15.95

Set in the 1950s, Hunger Moon follows the life of young Ruthie Tepper. Ruthie possesses the characteristics of the typical middle school student; she is interested in boys, popularity, stardom, and her best friend, Jeanie. However, Ruthie’s world suddenly changes when she enters the walls of her home. Her family only seems to communicate through yelling. Ruthie’s dysfunctional family leaves her the burden of taking care of her three younger brothers, one of whom is mentally disabled. Standing up for what she believes to be right leads Ruthie on a courageous journey. Ruthie’s vivacious character and exciting dreams capture the audience in Hunger Moon. Her passion for what she believes in will leave the reader inspired by her persistence but aching for her in the end. Ruthie Tepper will steal your heart and make it impossible to forget her. Hunger Moon is a story of compassion, survival, and hope for one little girl.

Jolie Darby
Topeka, KS
The Hippie House by Katherine Holubitsky
Impact of Violence/Coming of Age
ISBN: I-55143-316-8

In 1970 Emma is 14, living in a close-knit rural Canadian community and looking forward to a new high school. She is surrounded by loving family and friends, and everything seems safe and right with the world. But this all comes to an end when a local girl turns up missing and is discovered by Emma’s brother, raped and murdered, in a small outbuilding, the Hippie House, on their farm. The community suffers as residents try to deal with this violence. Life is no longer as good or safe. Girls are warned not to roam freely. Neighbors begin to distrust each other, false accusations become commonplace. Nerves, nightmares, depression, and anxieties are rampant. A shadow covers the daily lives of Emma’s family and her neighbors; no one can relax. Written in a somewhat homey, even flat, style, Holubitsky’s story keeps us reading to piece together the clues. Readers won’t be able to quit as they reach the climax and learn the identity of the murderer. Although dealing with a horrific event, Holubitsky celebrates the strength that comes from people bonding together to help each other in trying times.
The Insiders by J. Minter
Realistic Problems/Fiction
Bloomsbury Children’s Books, 2004, 249 pp., $8.95

Written by J. Minter, the author of "Ben’s Life" (a guy’s point-of-view column) in Seventeen magazine, The Insiders chronicles the misadventures of a group of middle- and upper-class friends who waste the days away popping prescription drugs, having casual sex, and emotionally abusing each other, while only occasionally showing up for school.

Mickey, Amo, David, Patch, and Jonathan are lifelong friends. Mickey is a pill-popping alcoholic, while Arno is only interested in the opposite sex. David is an emotional wreck, contributing occasional emotional outbursts. Patch appears in the last couple of pages to abuse, sexual abuse, and alternative high schools. But the tone is very matter-of-fact and never preachy or melodramatic. Bad language is minimal. Despite the grim subjects Minter paints ‘guy’ archetypes with a roller rather than a paintbrush, thereby missing any real detail and attempts to make up for this deficiency using glitzy backdrops. Minter moves the characters around New York. Rather than fully developing their characters, Minter painstakingly catalog their music, restaurants, clothing, vehicles and accessories. All of these characters know what’s cool in New York.

Eldridge Tsosie
Tempe, AZ

Kat’s Fall by Shelley Hrdlitschka
Self-Injury/Alternative Schools
Orca Book Publishers, 2004, 168 pp., $7.95
ISBN: 1551433125

Darcy has it all under control. His mom is in prison, his dad doesn’t care, and he has to take responsibility for his epileptic younger sister. But the 15-year-old is handling it all, except for that small problem he has with cutting himself. Then his mom is released from prison, and Darcy is accused of a terrible crime. His carefully ordered world spins wildly out of control.

This short novel addresses a number of social issues: self-injury, dysfunctional families, substance abuse, sexual abuse, and alternative high schools. But the tone is very matter-of-fact and never preachy or melodramatic. Bad language is minimal.

Despite the grim subjects, it is not a painful book to read. There are strong themes about the transcendent power of hope, love, and forgiveness. There is also a terrific teacher who demonstrates the pivotal role a caring adult can play when she doesn’t give up on a surly, troubled teen.

The plot doesn’t contain any surprises and the ending is just a little too neat, but overall it’s a very enjoyable book.

Wendy Street
Tempe, AZ

Kissing The Rain by Kevin Brooks
Thriller
New York: Chicken House, 2004, 336 pp., $16.95
ISBN: 043957742X

Kissing The Rain thrills the reader by retelling a story told through the eyes of its protagonist, Michael “Moo” Nelson. From its opening lines, Moo’s narration leaps from the pages, grabs you by the collar, and dares you to finish the novel. Riddled with angst and inner turmoil, Moo shows the reader just how it feels to live in his world.

Michael earns the nickname “Moo” because he is overweight, and his peers ridicule him at every turn. The rain in this novel is not the meteorological kind, but rather the metaphorical variety. Moo calls the constant harassment and bullying that he receives from his classmates “the Rain.” Moo’s only refuge is his bridge—the footbridge overlooking the A12 bridge to be exact.

Moo’s sanctuary, however, quickly becomes his largest source of stress, as Moo witnesses an incident of road rage, which results in a man’s death. Moo gives his eyewitness account of the events and realizes he has stumbled into the middle of a conspiracy to frame a local gangster. Moo is forced to grapple with questions of truth while searching deep within himself for answers.

Jason Corbett
Tempe, AZ

Letters from Wolfie by Patti Sherlock
Historical Fiction

Thirteen-year-old Mark Cantrell’s decision to enlist his dog, Wolfie, as a scout for the Army is encouraged by a letter from his brother, Danny, serving in Vietnam, and his father, a former trumpet player with the First Calvary obsessed with duty and responsibility. Mark hopes Wolfie’s service to his country will quicken Danny’s return and get his family’s life back to normal, so he can deal with his girlfriend Clair, his best friend Rick’s weight, and his peer home life, and the strained relationship of his parents. Further complications arise when Mark learns of the Army’s policy of treating dogs as their equipment. Realizing the horrible fate awaiting Wolfie, Mark campaigns to bring Wolfie home along with the other service animals. Mark comes to understand that his father’s views on war and duty differ from his own and finds his brother comes home a complete stranger.

The Vietnam War serves as the catalyst and the crux of the changes in the Cantrell family’s life. Adolescent pet owners and non-owners will enjoy the bond between Mark and Wolfie, although some adult readers might be turned off by the anti-war sentiment that permeates work.

Eldridge Tsosie
Tempe, AZ

Clip & File YA Book Reviews
Harold Holzer explains the presidency and ultimate demise of one of the starkest icons in American history. He describes Lincoln as a man who, after a short career in the House of Representatives, was thrust back into politics when he learned of a piece of legislation that threatened to expand the role of slavery. Though unsuccessful at first, he finally won the nomination, and eventually presidency. Holzer makes a poor decision that could have lifelong implications. Now he must do the right thing, as hard as it is.

With its short chapter sections, easy-to-read dialogue, and a main character who faces a tough decision, this loveable, endearing characters, and clever plot twists are sure to delight a young audience.

The title of this collection of closely related stories refers to both Norman Tuttle on the Last Frontier: Coming of Age/Short Stories by Tom Bodett and Holiday House, 2004, 154 pp., $16.95 ISBN: 0-8234-1815-4

Norman Tuttle on the Last Frontier: Coming of Age/Short Stories

Overdrive by Eric Walters Peer Pressure/Integrity


The President is Shot! The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln by Harold Holzer


Sixteen-year-old Jake is lucky: he's got his driver's license. However, this freedom comes with a price—due to poor academic performance, he is repeating the ninth grade. Jake struggles to clear his head, thinking to the future that he has survived. Unfortunately, this fairy godmother hasn't quite mastered her trade. One miscast spell follows another and soon Morgan finds herself with Gretta Fleetwing, a fellow freshman. When his older brother, Mickey, a fellow American history boy, loudly proclaims to the night that he has survived, Morgan is ready to send Gretta home, but she needs her help to set things straight. While the plot is a clever blend of historical fiction and fantasy, the characters are well-developed and the pacing is fast. This funny, fast-paced book'
**Pulling Princes** by Tyne O’Connell  
Coming of Age/Relationships  
Bloomsbury, 2004, 221 pp., $16.95  

O’Connell has crafted a tale that appeals to many adolescent girls. Calypso, the main character, attends an elite boarding school in England while her parents live in Hollywood. As an American attending the school, Calypso has a difficult time fitting in. When Calypso returns for another year of schooling, she finds out she is rooming with Star, her best friend, and Georgina, one of the popular girls who befriends Calypso on a regular basis.

In a fencing match against Eades, the male counterpart to the girls’ school, Calypso is up against Prince Freddie, next in line to the throne of England. After the match Freddie and Calypso talk, and Freddie becomes romantically interested in Calypso. As Freddie and Calypso’s relationship progresses, Calypso’s life at school becomes increasingly more difficult.

Girls of all ages can relate to Calypso as she ventures out of the sheltered world she has created for herself and begins her first real relationship, dealing with the difficulties involved in remaining true to herself, and recognizes the complexity of relationships and the strains relationships can create.

Elle Wolterbeek  
Tempe, AZ

---

**Remember: The Journey to School Integration**  
Integration/Civil Rights  
by Toni Morrison  
Houghton Mifflin Co., 2004, 78 pp., $18.00  

Judging this book by its cover—and its use of a simple classroom photograph, it’s obvious well-known author Toni Morrison will provide a gripping look at the road toward integration. She keeps her words to a powerful minimum, accompanying the stark, black and white archival photographs. The words and photos combine to provide an emotional simplicity to the history-shaping events of the Civil Rights movement.

Morrison’s writing offers a fictional account of individuals’ questions, thoughts, and dialogue to accompany the photographs, which provide an intense connection for the reader. While the written text may be limited, Morrison’s book clearly illustrates the country’s emotional upheaval of the time, and yet it demonstrates to young people the impact that period has on contemporary times. Morrison provides a lesson in history that all of us should know.

Lori Atkins Goodson  
Wamego, KS

---

**The Silent Boy** by Lois Lowry  
Historical Fiction/Mental Retardation  
Houghton Mifflin Co., 2003, 178 pp., $15.00  
ISBN: 0-618-28231-9

Deeply reminiscent of Harper Lee’s classic *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Lois Lowry’s *The Silent Boy* is a touching story of a series of tragic events in a small town in the years immediately preceding World War I. In the book’s prologue we meet our narrator, Katy Thatcher, now an elderly woman and a retired physician. The rest of the book is her recollection of her friendship with and growing understanding of Jacob Stoltz, a mentally retarded boy who rarely speaks, loves animals, and possesses the capacity for tragedy and heroism.

As in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Silent Boy* describes the beauty and the ugliness of rural life through the eyes of a young girl, the only character in the story who understands Jacob’s actions and his heroism.

The text is enriched with antique photographs interspersed throughout, and Lowry inserts historical events (e.g. the San Francisco earthquake, the first automobiles) into the narrative to provide a rich historical context. *The Silent Boy* is a gentle, bittersweet, and well-crafted novel.

F. Todd Goodson  
Manhattan, KS

---

**Taylor Five** by Ann Halam  
Realistic/Cloning  
Wendy Lamb Books, 2004, 197 pp., $15.95  

Lifeforce is a revolutionary company that has unlocked the secrets of preventing disease and aging. They have also created five clones who have grown up to be teenagers. Taylor is clone number five.

Taylor hasn’t always known her origins; that her DNA perfectly matches with someone else. Her parents loved her and only told her as much as she was ready to hear. Then, when she is 14, the cloning news goes public, and Taylor becomes international news.

Taylor grew up with her family on the island of Borneo. Her parents ran an orangutan reserve and were deeply involved with orangutans as they are with people. But their lives are changed forever when a rebel group attacks the reserve. The only adult they can turn to for help is Uncle, an orangutan whose intelligence makes him seem almost human.

As Taylor struggles to survive, she also searches to know what it means to be a copy of someone else and what it means to be human. She finds her answers in unexpected places.

Hollie Keel  
Mesa, AZ

---

**Clip & File YA Book Reviews**
Under the Sun
by Arthur Dorros
Amulet Books, 2004, 216 pp., $16.95
ISBN: 0-8109-4933-4

Based loosely on the story of the “children’s village,” a community in Croatia rebuilt by a mixed group of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims, many of whom were orphans of the war, Under the Sun traces the story of Ehmet, a thirteen-year-old who, with his mother, is displaced from Sarajevo and forced to wander across the countryside searching for sanctuary and missing family members.

Dorros’ novel provides younger adolescents with a vivid description of the Bosnian conflict through a sympathetic and compelling character. Ehmet’s story demonstrates the futility and destruction caused by greed and ancient conflicts, but the novel also offers a vision of hope based on tolerance and compassion. Of particular interest is a diverse collection of compelling characters Ehmet meets on his journey in search of sanctuary.

Under the Sun is a memorable story set against an important and tragic series of events. It is not a particularly enjoyable book, but it is an important book.

F. Todd Goodson
Manhattan, KS

Zee’s Way
by Kristin Butcher
Orca Book, 2004, 104 pp., $7.95

Loiterers, punks—these are the names hurled at the 15-year-old boys in Zee’s gang by the merchants of Fairhaven Shopping Center. Unfair, discriminatory—retaliate the boys. A “war” is on, and Zee thinks he has the way to get the upper hand—paint graffiti on the wall of Feniuk’s Hardware. Graffiti is Zee’s statement of protest, to make the merchants aware they can’t push the boys around. They want to enjoy the shopping center too. This was their place to roller blade and hang out before the strip mall was built.

Zee’s plan backfires. When Feniuk paints over the graffiti but keeps the picture Zee drew, he loses control of his art. Then when Feniuk catches him and makes him work to pay off his debt for the vandalism, Zee finds himself wanting to prove he is a real artist. In the process both sides begin to understand and respect each other.

This novel, an easy-read for middle-grade students, explores the intergenerational conflict that often plagues relations between younger and older adults. In the end, both sides get beyond stereotypes and gain a bit of understanding—an important lesson in our conflict-ridden world.

Jeanne M. McGlinn
Asheville, NC

Yankee Girl
by Mary Ann Rodman
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004, 216 pp., $17.00
ISBN: 0-374-38661-7

Jackson, Mississippi, in the summer of 1964, seems like another country to new resident and former Chicago denizen Alice Ann Moxley. Alice learns that, among other things, she is a “Yankee girl.” Alice finds out that making friends is more difficult than in any other place she’s ever lived, especially since her father is an FBI agent assigned to Mississippi to protect the rights of blacks.

Alice experiences alienation and fear for herself and her family, all the while keeping a personal journal including the daily headlines. Mary Ann Rodman draws on her own life experiences for this book. She was the 10-year-old daughter of an FBI agent in 1964 who moved to Jackson.

Yankee Girl is rich with emotional detail interwoven through actual events and occurrences from the summer of 1964 to the summer of 1965. Rodman opens each chapter with a newspaper headline that might have been seen on the front page of the Jackson paper during that era. This book would be a terrific read for junior high school students when taking them through the complex issues of the 1950s and 1960s, especially those collection of compelling characters and events that make this novel a memorable read.

Cortney Milanovich
Tempe, AZ

Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review and/or a copy of the book should send a copy to:

Lori Goodson
409 Cherry Circle
Manhattan, KS 66503

To submit a review for possible publication or to become a reviewer, contact Lori Goodson at lagoodson@cox.net