**A Love Story Starring My Dead Best Friend** by Emily Horner  
Realistic Fiction/Sexual Orientation/Love  

Cass Meyer has always thought of herself as an ordinary, unpopular girl. However, she had one best friend whom she loved more than anyone else—Julia. Julia introduces Cass to the drama crowd, and Cass forms friendships with them through her. When Julia is killed in a car accident, Cass’s world is turned upside down. How would she make it without her?

In Julia’s memory, her friends decide to stage a top-secret play that she had been working on. Cass shifts back and forth from her memories of taking Julia’s ashes to California (where they had planned to go together) and the process of preparing the play in honor of their friend. Throughout the story, Cass works through what her true feelings for Julia may have been and what her feelings toward a former enemy are now. This is a story of loss and the importance of friendship.

Jessica Long  
Cincinnati, Ohio

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**Blindside** by Priscilla Cummings  
Fiction/Blindness  
ISBN: 978-0-525-42161-0

Natalie O’Reilly was born with a congenital eye disease. At the age of 14, her sight had deteriorated so much that she feared losing her vision. Until this point, she believed that there would be a cure, that she would get better.

At the start of her freshman year, Natalie’s parents send her to the Maryland School for the Blind. They were hoping that she would have time to learn Braille and other ways to survive if she truly did end up losing her sight. One November morning, Natalie awakens to find her sight gone completely. Her world becomes gray. She hasn’t spent enough time at the school to learn Braille yet. She is faced with deciding how she’s going to react to her new reality. She faces several crises where having her sight wouldn’t help her. Dealing with those crises helps her come to terms with the changes.

April Wulber  
Yorkshire, OH

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**Blink & Caution** by Tim Wynne-Jones  
Fiction/Runaways/Crime  
Candlewick, 2011, 342 pp., $16.99  

The paths of two teens on the run collide on Toronto’s streets. Blink survives on the street partly by dining on the leftovers from room service trays in ritzy hotels. But his breakfast is interrupted when he sees a kidnapping that isn’t really what it’s supposed to be. Through a careless mistake on the part of the culprits, Blink picks up the kidnapper’s executive’s cell phone. When the media report the kidnapping, Blink realizes that he has valuable information. Phone calls from the man’s daughter persuade Blink that he needs his help, and he agrees, dreaming of a monetary reward. Caution is also on the run, ostensibly from an abusive drug lord, but in reality from her own past, when a fluke accident changes her world completely. The fast-paced storyline forces readers to consider happenstance, fate, and probability, woven subtly but inexorably through the narrative.

Barbara A. Ward  
Pullman, WA

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**By the Time You Read This I’ll Be Dead** by Julie Anne Peters  
Suicide/Bullying/Identity  
Hyperion, 2010, pp. 198, $16.99  

Daelyn is a troubled teen who attends a private Catholic girls’ school—her parents’ misguided attempt to salvage her by switching schools. Daelyn cannot speak due to another thwarted suicide attempt, yet she writes her own painful story. This powerful, disturbing novel covers her ongoing efforts to kill herself as she follows the guidelines of Through-the-Light.com.

Daelyn has been victimized by taunting classmates, originally because she was fat. Now thin, she has become a “freak,” harassed and isolated as she has always been. Will she carry out her path of self-destruction despite hopeful alliances with Santana, the boy who battles Hodgkin’s lymphoma, or Emily, a fellow classmate whose size is setting her up for bullying? Peters writes important, challenging fiction for young adults, and this novel’s examination of bullycide offers uncomfortable insights into the world of those who feel like losers from birth and trust no one.

Judith A. Hayn  
Little Rock, AR
**Drizzle**

by Kathleen Van Cleve

Fantasy/Mystery/Identity


Polly Peabody is an unusual girl growing up in an extraordinary place—her family’s magical rhubarb farm. Although she’s at home with her best friend Harry, the chocolate rhubarb plant, and the other creatures on the farm, Polly feels like an outcast at school.

When Grandmom dies, everything begins to unravel. Aunt Edith returns to manage the farm. Although the farm and family thrive for years, trouble erupts when Aunt Edith suddenly decides to sell the farm. ... wilt. Polly’s brother Freddy becomes deathly ill. It’s up to Polly and her organic friends to solve the mystery linking the unfortunate events and save her loved ones from disaster.

This fantasy tale combines faith, science, and magic as Polly discovers the farm’s secrets and her true identity.

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**Finding My Place**

by Traci L. Jones

Historical Fiction/Prejudices


ISBN: 978-0-374-33573-1

It is 1975 in the suburbs outside of Denver, Colorado. Tiphanie Jayne Baker is new, in the ninth grade, and the only Black girl at her high school. She has learned from her parents, members of the civil rights movement, how to carry herself above the fray and outperform her peers in order to represent her race. But it’s hard for her in the face of glaring eyes and some outspoken bigots in the hallways, especially when her friends from her old school accuse her of becoming “whitewashed” by her new surroundings.

When she finally meets Jackie Sue, Tiphanie knows she’s found a real friend, and one other girls her age can’t understand.

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**Entrapment**

by Michael Spooner

Relationships/Modern Communication


ISBN: 978-1-4424-0366-6

A disgruntled shrew (Annie) and a bored poet-mastermind (Johnson) team up to test the relationships of their friends in the high school they attend. Annie convinces her two best friends to tell their devoted boyfriends that they will be out of town for a few weeks and unable to communicate. Meanwhile, Johnson tricks the boys into joining a chat room where they will be welcoming two alluring foreign exchange students to their school (the two girls in the chat room). As the days go by, the two girls begin to set each other off. As their plans get higher and higher as the girls attempt to steal the hearts of the boys, all the while hoping they will be faithful.

Told entirely in chat and blogs, this modern romance is an enjoyable riff on Shakespearean comedy. Love is attacked with barbed words, cynical plotting, beautiful strangers, and staunch disbelief, but still manages triumph. This book would appeal most to students in grades 8 through 10.
**Freak Magnet** by Andrew Auseon

**Grief/Interpersonal Relationships/Family**

ISBN: 978-0-06-113926-0  

When “freak” Charlie Wyatt spies “magnet” Gloria Aboud in a coffee shop, he falls instantly in love and, despite warnings from a friend, does everything he can to meet her. Little does he realize they have more in common than a cup of coffee. Both suffer from incredible loss and grief—Charlie’s mother is bed-ridden with a debilitating illness, and Gloria’s brother was killed in Afghanistan. Charlie copes by feigning courage and wearing his Superman costume under his clothes, while Gloria does everything she can to annoy her mother. The two teens’ friendship is threatened by their families and Charlie’s impending internship.

Andrew Auseon tells this unique story from both characters’ point of view by alternating chapters, and he isn’t afraid to touch on timely, difficult topics. Teens will want to root for this unlikely couple to help each other through one of the most difficult times in their lives.

Anne Minton  
Fayetteville, AR

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**Gone** by Lisa McMann

**Drama/Fantasy**

ISBN: 978-1-4169-7918-0  

Janie faces her first year of college with an agonizing dilemma before her. This tough 18-year-old is a dreamcatcher: she can catch the dreams of nearby sleepers, who implore her to save them from their nightmares. She has learned to use her ability to help others, but at a terrible personal cost. A fellow dreamcatcher has revealed to Janie that if she continues to use her power, she will become blind and crippled in a matter of years. Her instinctive gardening skills to create lush surroundings for her solitary hut. Her long-absent father appears on the scene, making Janie’s choice more difficult than ever.

Gone is best enjoyed in conjunction with the other books in McMann’s Wake trilogy. A powerful story of a teen whose bravery eventually destroys evil. This haunting tale will appeal to teens with a bent for soul-searching.

Allison Matthews  
Columbia, SC

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**Green Witch** by Alice Hoffman

**Fantasy/Survival/Romance**

Scholastic, 2010, 144 pp., $17.99  
ISBN: 978-0-545-14195-6  

A horrific explosion has destroyed Green’s city, and she is left an orphan, grieving for what she misses. Her idyllic world is destroyed, but she gradually begins to employ her instinctive gardening skills to create lush surroundings for her solitary hut. Her belief in the future is challenged at every turn, but her spirit of survival triumphs in this lyrical tale of loss and redemption.

Green undertakes a quest to tell the stories of the Enchanted, witches who live outside her village. She is soon challenged to seek those who are imprisoned on a lonely island; on the journey, however, she finds strength in herself by implementing magical assistance from the witches, along with her charms and advice. The power of women who persevere is foremost in this lyrical tale of loss and redemption.

Melanie Hundley  
Nashville, TN
T◆H◆E

ALAN REVIEW

Half Brother
by Kenneth Oppel
Fiction/Experimentation
Scholastic Press, 2010, 384 pp., $17.99
ISBN: 978-0-545-22925-8

On Ben's 12th birthday, his mom comes home with an eight-day-old chimp. Both of Ben's parents are scientists, and the chimp is their new project. Ben's father is clear that the chimp is to be used for science, but Ben's mother has a different twist, and she wants to really treat the chimp as a member of the family. Ben doesn't like Zan (the chimp) at first, but then he becomes attached to him as if he were his little brother. When Ben's father is away, Ben and Zan explore the world together. Zan learns language as well as he should, but when Ben's father returns, Zan begins to show signs of being a hybrid. Ben's father decides that Zan must be returned to the research facility. When Ben realizes that Zan is going to be sold for medical research, he steals him back. Eventually, Zan ends up in a sanctuary where he is safe from research and can live with other chimpanzees in an appropriate and protected environment.

Home Is with Our Family
by Joyce Hansen
Coming of Age/Abolition Movement
ISBN: 978-0-7868-5217-8

All that matters to Maria Peters is that she is about to turn 13—the age when she'll be considered grown up enough to vote. But Maria is driven by the message of Sojourner Truth and longs to be a part of the anti-slavery movement. Maria's life becomes complicated when the city threatens to tear down the safe haven for free blacks and escaped slaves. Maria discovers that turning 13 may signify much more than she imagined.

Illyria
by Elizabeth Hand
Teen Romance/Family
Viking, 2010, 135 pp., $15.99

The Tierney cousins live shrouded in darkness, held together by memories of a great grandmother. The two who keep the family alive are first cousins—and closest friends—Madeline and Rogan. When they are both cast in roles in the school production of Twelfth Night, their relationship begins to take a turn from friendship to forbidden love. Obsessed with each other, the two begin down a dangerous path.

Heart of a Samurai
by Margi Preus
Adventure/Coming of Age/International Travel
Amulet Books, 2010, 304 pp., $15.95
ISBN: 978-0-8109-8981-8

At 14, Manjiro is swept away from his homeland of Japan by a terrible storm. At first, survival is all he and his crew can think about. But as they navigate the dangerous waters, Manjiro begins to wonder about the possibilities of life beyond the shores of his village. He even becomes friends with the ship's captain, who eventually takes him to America as his adopted son. Life in America is full of opportunity and freedom, but not without a price.

Evelyn Baldwin
Fayetteville, AR

Illyria
by Elizabeth Hand
Teen Romance/Family
Viking, 2010, 135 pp., $15.99

From magical stages to attic hideaways, Hand traces the characters through their relationships, ultimately shaping a novel that does not simply detail obsession, but one that is unafraid to reveal its consequences as well.

Illyria is an excellent novel for any reader caught up in stories about forbidden teen love and romance.

Evelyn Baldwin
Fayetteville, AR

Home Is with Our Family
by Joyce Hansen
Coming of Age/Abolition Movement
ISBN: 978-0-7868-5217-8

Preus's fictional retelling of this true story will captivate readers of all ages. Including archival illustrations by Manjiro, this hero's tale is a fascinating look at the original bridges built between the American and Japanese peoples.

Julee Phillips
Nashville, TN

Heart of a Samurai
by Margi Preus
Adventure/Coming of Age/International Travel
Amulet Books, 2010, 304 pp., $15.95
ISBN: 978-0-8109-8981-8

Preus's fictional retelling of this true story will captivate readers of all ages. Including archival illustrations by Manjiro, this hero's tale is a fascinating look at the original bridges built between the American and Japanese peoples.
**Imaginalis** by J. M. DeMatteis  
ISBN: 978-0-06-173286-7

For most of Mehera’s friends, Imaginalis is nothing more than a fairy tale book series, a story they gave up a long time ago. But for Mehera, Imaginalis is something more—a reality she almost believes in. When publishers decide to cancel the series, she begins a one-girl quest to keep the storyline alive, a quest that leads her right into the drama of Imaginalis itself. As the lines of her world begin to blur, Mehera discovers that she may be the only person capable of saving Imaginalis and, in a dangerous twist, our own world as well.

With a story that brings together Narnian-like lions, Middle Earth-style magic, and wizardry that even Harry Potter would covet, *Imaginalis* is a perfect recommendation for lovers of fantasy writing. A fast-paced but well-developed read, DeMatteis’s book leaves readers wondering if the imaginary isn’t more real than we might believe.

Evelyn Baldwin  
Fayetteville, AR

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**Shine** by Lauren Myracle  
Fiction/Drug Abuse/Bullying  
Amulet/Abrams, 2011, 384 pp., $16.95  

While her former best friend Patrick lies in a coma, Cat investigates the hate crime that put him there, since local law enforcement officials seem reluctant to do so. Then, too, she feels guilt for having become withdrawn for years from everyone around her, including Patrick. Convinced that someone in their small town of Black Creek, North Carolina, is responsible for leaving Patrick brutally beaten with a gas nozzle taped to his mouth, she visits Patrick’s local haunts and interviews their mutual friends. During the investigation, Cat unearths secrets about her friends and the production, distribution, and use of meth that permeates their lives. Unrelentingly, she pursues the investigation to its surprising conclusion, discovering truths about herself and conjuring her own strength along the way. As she descends into the seamy underbelly of the place she calls home, she realizes that she must let her own light shine if she ever plans to help others.

Barbara Ward  
Pullman, WA

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**Misty Gordon and the Mystery of the Ghost Pirates** by Kim Kennedy  
Fantasy/Mystery/Humor  
Amulet Books: An imprint of Abrams, 2010, 240 pp., $ 15.95

Misty Gordon’s parents own the Dearly Departed Antiques Store, which they stock with items they purchase from the estates of recently deceased residents of Ashcrumb, a historic town on the Atlantic coast. Though Misty finds her parents’ occupation mortifying, her mundane life changes when she discovers a hidden diary tucked inside an old phone from one of these estates. And this is only the first secret she uncovers as she encounters ghosts, a killer mayonnaise addict, and a fur coat that stalks her as she and her best friend Yoshi try to uncover the secret history of Ashcrumb and save the town from approaching ghost pirates bent on taking over the world.

Part silly, part scary, and all adventurous, Kim Kennedy’s debut novel (she previously collaborated with her brother on the *Pirate Pete* books for early readers) is a page-turning mystery that will satisfy elementary and middle school readers.

Barbara Ward  
Pullman, WA

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**Sir Charlie Chaplin, the Funniest Man in the World** by Sid Fleischman  
Biography  
ISBN: 978-0-06-189640-8

How does a Cockney street urchin change his fortune to become one of the wealthiest and most revered comedians of movie history? Fleischman traces the dramatic rise of Chaplin from a boy performing slapstick on a London street corner to an iconic actor who came to forever alter the Hollywood film industry. Fleischman tells Chaplin’s tale with a clear fondness for “the Little Tramp,” making the reader feel like a privileged listener to the memories of a personal friend. Chaplin’s great heights of success and his devastating lows are narrated with carefully researched detail.

While the writing style is clear enough for early preteens to understand, Fleischman’s spinning of Chaplin’s roller-coaster fame will have readers of all ages cheering as Chaplinbucks the bloated studios to follow his own creative instincts and mourns the loss of close family members.

Evelyn Baldwin  
Fayetteville, AR
### The Absolute Value of Negative One
**Fiction/Emotional Problems**

*by Steve Brezenoff*

Carolrhoda Lab, 2010, 290 pp., $16.95

ISBN: 978-0-7613-5417-8

Lily, Noah, and Simon are teenagers attending classes (when they aren’t skipping to smoke cigarettes) at a Long Island high school. When family issues and the pressures of becoming an adult complicate their once-simple friendships, each deals with the changes differently. Lily worries that her love of math will betray her slacker reputation, Noah retreats to his basement to avoid an abusive father, and Simon joins the track team to get healthy and pursue a “normal” girl.

The characters narrate the same events but from their own unique perspectives. As the story unfolds and the plotlines interweave, the profound and poignant realization comes to light: how deeply can you know another person—even a best friend? A series of misunderstandings, unspoken truths, and angry outbursts claw away at the trio. As they drift apart, they struggle to balance emotional wounds with the need to create their own identities.

Kevin Sawyer
Nashville, TN

### The Defense of Thaddeus A. Ledbetter
**Realistic Fiction**

*by John Gosselink*

Amulet Books, 2010, 240 pp., $14.95

ISBN: 978-0-8109-8977-1

If you are looking for the definition of a word, trying to remember the lyrics to a blues song, or wanting to rethink the layout of a school bus, then Thaddeus Ledbetter is the person to go to. In this story, Thaddeus Ledbetter sets out to defend his actions that have led to In-School Suspension for the rest of the year. Thaddeus finds ISS to be extremely boring but useful. He uses the time to take action to defend his purpose behind The True Emergency Drill, and create greater efficiency in the world.

John Gosselink uses a unique page layout to create the feeling of a student file and uses different fonts and illustrations to portray the tone and voice of various characters within the story. Mr. Cooper, Uncle Pete, and Allison have the most contact with Thaddeus and ultimately contribute to his defense strategies and confinement.

Kathryn Fry
Nashville, TN

### The Lighter Side of Life & Death
**Sex/Family/Relationships**

*by C. K. Kelly Martin*


Sixteen-year-old Mason thought his dreams had come true when he lost his virginity to his best friend Kat, because now they could finally be together. However, it soon becomes clear that Kat wants nothing more than to pretend that the night never happened. While he is trying to figure out what will happen to his relationship with Kat (and their mutual friends, who now seem to be torn between the two), he also meets Colette, a 23-year-old that he didn’t think he would ever have a chance with, until the first time she invites him to her apartment. Unfortunately, Colette is also his new step-mom’s sister’s best friend, so they must hide their relationship from everyone. A story about a boy juggling his new-found sexuality, changing relationships, and a new family all at once, this novel follows the journey that will change his life forever.

Jessica S. Joyner
Memphis, TN

### The Line
**Science Fiction/Family**

*by Teri Hall*


ISBN: 978-0-8037-3466-1

In the not so distant future, Rachel and her mother live on the Property, far from civilization and from the eyes of the oppressive Unites States government. They are dangerously close, however, to the Line, an impenetrable border between the Property and Away. The Line, part of the National Border Defense System, keeps citizens from leaving, but it also keeps the Others from getting in. Rachel and her mother work for Ms. Moore, who owns the Property, and they live a relatively quiet life. But then Rachel stumbles across a garbled recording asking for help—from the other side of the Line. Her attempts to solve this mystery lead her to uncover dangerous secrets.

This dystopian story about courage in the face of mortal risk presents a terrifying vision of the future; however, it rings in the end with a tentative but resounding note of hope.

Michael Ebling
Gainesville, FL
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>The Prince of Mist</strong> by Carlos Ruiz Zafon</th>
<th>Mystery/Foreshadowing</th>
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There is a war going on and Maximillian Carver, a watchmaker, decides to move his family. Eight years ago, he fell in love with a house on the beach, and he is finally moving his family there. When they arrive and strange things begin happening, Max (the son) chalks it all up to being shaken from the move. When Max and Alicia meet a local boy and go diving with him, there is a turning point in Max’s thinking. He hears local legends about the dead son of the previous owners.

When they discover that their younger sister, Irina, suffered an accident in their home on the beach, they know something is up. Perhaps the house really is haunted. While Max and Alicia’s parents are at the hospital with Irina, they are working with their friend Roland to solve the case.

April Wulber
Yorkshire, OH

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<th><strong>The River</strong> by Mary Jane Beaufrand</th>
<th>Murder Mystery</th>
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Veronica Severance was your typical pouty teen. Angry with her parents for uprooting her fabulous life in Portland for the dull rural countryside, Veronica believes her life is ruined. She is convinced that she will never feel connected to anything or anyone again. But her life begins to change the day she finds 7-year-old Karen Armstrong floating lifeless in the Santiam River.

Fixated on finding the child’s killer, Veronica begins to hear Karen in her dreams. But another, more urgent voice also finds its way into Veronica’s world. Haunted by Karen’s memory and the pulsing voice in her ears, Veronica is relentless in her quest for answers. As she searches, Veronica begins to discover pieces of not only her friends and family, but also of herself. Beaufrand’s story depicts the beauty of human triumph over the ugliness of human vice.

Leslie Ostrowski
Nashville, TN

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<tr>
<th><strong>The Steps across the Water</strong> by Adam Gopnik</th>
<th>Family/Fantasy</th>
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Rose lives in New York with her brother Oliver and her adoptive parents. One day in Central Park, Rose notices an arch of steps over the park’s water with small people walking on them. A friend from school introduces her to the magical city of U Nork that exists inside a snow globe and can be reached from New York by the steps across the water.

Rose is called upon to rescue the city from an Ice Queen who seeks its destruction. Using the magic tricks she learned from her brother and by thinking fast, Rose combats the Ice Queen and her minions and learns that her family history is closely connected to U Nork. She discovers that although she is small and U Nork is simply part of a snow globe, her mission and the lives of the U Norkers are important, too.

Jamie McGee
Nashville, TN

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<th><strong>The Total Tragedy of a Girl Named Hamlet</strong> by Erin Dionne</th>
<th>Romance/ Humor</th>
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Hamlet Kennedy doesn’t just know her Shakespeare, she lives it. Her parents, both Shakespearean scholars, and her genius 7-year-old sister, Desdemona, who will attend the same middle school, all threaten to make this the worst start to a semester ever. It doesn’t help that a secret admirer keeps giving her origami pigs and that her best friend, Tyler, might have a crush on her. In a semester filled with multiple embarrassing episodes, failed attempts to protect her sister from so-called friends who use her for their brain, and surreal art projects, will Hamlet eventually cheer “Huzzah” or keep throwing Shakespearean insults at her classmates?

Dionne crafts a sweet, often humorous, romance suitable for upper elementary and middle school readers. This novel also features a contemporary twist to Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*.

Jacqueline Bach
Baton Rouge, LA
They Called Themselves the KKK: Nonfiction/Civil Rights
The Birth of an American Terrorist Group
by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

Beginning in 1866 when six disgruntled Southerners began a club in Pulaski, Tennessee, Bartoletti traces the origins and rituals of the Ku Klux Klan. She carefully details the political climate in the post-Civil War South that laid the foundations for this vigilante group and explains how it spread across the South and into the North. Bartoletti uses primary sources, interviews, oral histories, and extensive research to tell the story of the group’s beginnings and end. The book is well-researched and includes a useful time line, source notes, and an index.

Whisper
Fantasy/Relationship
by Phoebe Kitanidis

Joy Stefani is a high schooler who has the ability to hear other people’s thoughts. This ability is both a blessing and a curse, as Joy must listen to the innermost thoughts of those around her. Joy’s life is complicated by the fact that her sister and mother also have the same ability. This novel is a thoughtful and well-written exploration of the themes of family, friendship, and the challenges of being different.

Three Quarters Dead
Fantasy
by Richard Peck

Kerry is a high school student who wants to join the popular crowd. Her friends begin inviting her to lunch and asking her to perform tasks. Kerry fails to realize that these tasks are harmful and that she is being used. This novel is a suspenseful and well-written exploration of the themes of popularity, friendship, and the dangers of fitting in.

Publishers who wish to submit a book for possible review should send one copy of the book to: Melanie Hundley
1021 Delmas Ave.
Nashville, TN 37216-3630

Contact Melanie Hundley at melanie.hundley@Vanderbilt.edu to become a reviewer or submit a review for possible publication.