**Act I, Act II, Act Normal** by Martha Weston  
Humor/Individuality/Acting  
Roaring Brook Press, 2003, 160 pp., $15.95  
ISBN: 0-763-1-779-1

After much disappointment that his best friend’s comic play is not selected to be the school play for this year, Christopher “Topher” Blakely ends up trying out for a part anyway, only because he promises his best friend, Kit, that he will. Unexpectedly, though, Topher lands the leading role to this year’s school play, a musical adaptation of the classic fairy tale “Rumpelstiltskin.” At first glance of the script and the music, Topher cannot believe he is stupid enough to participate in this childish musical, especially since everyone at school thinks plays are for geeks.

However, being the talented actor that he is, Topher takes on the role of the mean and grumpy old Rumpelstiltskin, and grows to love his part. There are a couple of rough times during the production, yet the show goes on and turns out to be a huge success. And when it is all over, Topher looks ahead, and dreams of his future as an actor. This humor-filled story of a boy who does what he enjoys most, acting, is a book that adolescents, especially young aspiring actors, will love.

Teresa Lin  
North Potomac, MD

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**Before the Greeks Ran Red** by Carolyn Reeder  
Civil War Youths  
ISBN: 0-06-623-615-0

Author Carolyn Reeder offers three tightly-focused snapshots of teen boys trying to understand the purposes of the impending Civil War, and their own individual beliefs about the Union and the Confederacy. The first story, set at Fort Moultrie and then Sumter, S.C., features orphan Timothy Donovan, a bugler, who matures through dangerous situations and both positive and negative treatment from adult soldiers.

The second account moves the reader to Baltimore and presents Joseph Schwartz, a poor student, on scholarship in an academy with boys from wealthy families. Joseph must come to terms with his loyalties through fights and mob scenes between the unionists and the rebels. Gregory Howard in the third story, unlike the other two previous boys, is of a privileged Virginia family. Still, he also grapples with local events and conflicts leading up to the war.

In a style bound to appealing to middle schoolers, Reeder creates her youthful characters in turmoil in ways that will reflect the lives of today’s youth, while accurately portraying a brief historical period not often addressed in depth in Civil War literature. The author’s unusual structure of this novel and her use of dialogue, interior monologue, sparse description, and authentic dialects will surely engage young readers.

Marjorie M. Kaise  
Louisville, KY

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**The Beast** by Walter Dean Myers  
Urban Life/Self Determination  
Scholastic Press, 2003, 170 pp., $16.95  

When Anthony “Spoon” Witherspoon comes home to Harlem from Wallingford Academy, he finds himself caught between two very different worlds, and he doesn’t really feel like he belongs in either. Things are different for him in Harlem. People seem to have changed, and their reaction to him has changed. His best friend has dropped out of school, and a prim and proper classmate from “the Ave,” Clara, is pregnant. His girlfriend, Gabi, is acting strangely. Her mother is sick, and her little brother, Rafe, is running with gang-bangers. Spoon doesn’t understand why she is keeping him at a distance until he catches her in a daze with a hypodermic needle at her bedside. On the other side of his dual existence, Spoon’s well-to-do friend from Wallingford Academy, Chanelle, makes it known that she wants to be more than just friends. Spoon struggles to find an identity that works in Harlem and at Wallingford.

The Beast is an excellent novel about difficult issues, including race, drugs, and the juxtaposition of poverty and affluence; however, Walter Dean Myers resists the temptation to preach or provide simple answers to complicated problems.

Ray Castle  
Phoenix, AZ

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**Blood War** by Russell Moon  
Modern Fantasy  
ISBN: 0-06-44079-7-0

Marcus Aurelius, Prince of the Witches, is ready for a showdown: if only he could find his enemies. The coven members have disappeared, taking Marcus’s mother with them. Confused and alone, Marcus has only one hope left; his father, the man who abandoned him years ago. Led only by his untamed power and new-found instincts, Marcus must prepare for the bloodiest battle in the history of magic.

In his final book in the Witch Boy trilogy, author Russell Moon continues to flavor his story with a very dark sense of humor. Violent, mystical, and passionate, this book is definitely intended for high school boys. In a world where safety is an illusion, sex is a weapon, and only the ruthless can survive, Moon offers searing insight on such issues as loyalty, revenge, and responsibility for one’s actions.

Stephen O’Rear  
Wheaton, IL

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**Clip & File YA Book Reviews**
Born Blue by Han Nolan  Dysfunctional Family

Harcourt Inc., 2003, 300 pp., $6.99

Dysfunctional Family

The story of Jane (whom she name to herself when she desert in the heat of Arizona), a girl with a Guatemalan mother and a Mexican father, who is one of the youngest child and only daughter in a non-typical family. She must go through various types of abuse: physical, emotional, and sexual. Her life is for her to her and, she may have no escape.

Jane's life is full of turmoil. Her mother is aь addicted to heroin, and her father is an alcoholic. Her older brother and sister are often absent, leaving her to take care of herself. She lives in a small, run-down house in a poor neighborhood, where she is often subjected to violence and neglect.

The book is divided into sections, each focusing on a different aspect of her life. The first section, "The Deal," follows her life as a teenager. The second section, "Samantha's Woods," explores her life as a young adult. The final section, "Buddha Boy," deals with her life as a mature woman.

Jane's journey is one of resilience and survival. She learns to rely on herself and her own strengths, and she discovers a love for music, which becomes her escape from the harsh realities of her life.

The book is a powerful and moving story of a girl who must overcome incredible odds to find a way to survive. It is a testament to the human spirit and the strength of the human will.

ISBN: 0-374-30249-4
### Crispin: The Cross of Lead by Avi
Hymion, 2002, 262 pp., $15.99
ISBN: 0-7868-0828-4

Living in the hopelessness of servitude to a cruel feudal lord in 14th century England seems bleak enough for any teenage boy, but Crispin, the protagonist of this historical novel, has even more to bear. Not only are his parents dead, the cruel steward, John Aycliffe, falsely accuses him of two crimes — stealing money from the manor and murdering a priest. He’s proclaimed a “wolf’s head,” a person who has committed so heinous a crime, that anyone may kill him for a reward, no trial needed. Escaping, Crispin starts a journey that eventually brings him face to face with the truth of his father’s identity, and his own as well. Along the way, he discovers a new “father” in the person of a wandering minstrel named Bear. He also discovers a world he never knew existed and develops a strong sense of self and an emotional independence he could never have developed had he simply accepted the fate he seemed to have dealt him.

Historically accurate in its references to the Peasant Revolt of 1381, Crispin provides an insightful look at life in medieval England for a teenage boy caught in the hopelessness of the feudal system. Students will identify with his sense of loss as he buries his mother and takes on the responsibilities of feeding and caring for himself. They’ll learn to love and appreciate Crispin’s surrogate father Bear’s rough mannerisms as they get to know him.

Wendy Kelkeher
Tempe, AZ

### Faerie Wars by Herbie Brennan
Bloomsbury, 2003, 370 pp., $17.95

Young Henry is experiencing major changes in his family. While doing some odd jobs for a neighbor, Mr. Fogarty, Henry meets Pyrgus who has crossed over from a parallel (fairely) world where he is prince of the Purple Kingdom. Henry first encounters Pyrgus as the prince passes through a portal into the Analog (real) world in his miniature, winged form only to be quickly nabbed by the cat. Together, Mr. Fogarty (an inventor), Henry and Pyrgus work to save the fairy realm from threats of war and return the prince safely home. Although it is a fantasy work with a note of humor, this book accomplishes more than just that as it deals with many modern issues, including divorce, homosexual parents, dysfunctional families and conspiracy theories. American readers will quickly get past the colloquial differences of an Irish writer and find the book an enthralling read.

Vinnie Bonnit
Phoenix, AZ

### Flight of the Fisherbird by Nora Martin
Bloomsbury USA Children’s Books, 2003, 150 pp., $15.95

Living in the 1800’s in the San Juan Islands off the coast of Washington, 13-year-old Clementine knows little of life on the mainland, but she does know her way around the islands in her dory, the Fisherbird. Soon, she is forced to make some hard decisions about loyalty to her family vs. saving Ton-Ling, an illegal Chinese immigrant tossed overboard from Clem’s Uncle Doran’s boat and left to drown.

The novel touches upon the anti-Chinese feelings of the time and shows the rugged life of those who chose to live on the islands and make their living from the sea. Clem learns much about the importance of family when Sara, who is about Clem’s age, is taken into Clem’s home, and about friendship from Jed, a boy who lives on a neighboring island. She also learns that people are not always what they seem. Readers age 10 and above will enjoy this story of intrigue, courage, and survival.

Charles R. Duke
Boone, NC

### Geography Club by Brent Hartinger
ISBN: 0-06-001-221-8

Robert L. Goodkind High School could be any small high school in any small town in America today. Even though it is a small town, there is a diverse group of students under the conformist façade. In the lunchroom everyone sticks to their cliques, the jocks, the smart kids, the political activists, and the “losers.” Russel Middlebrook is an average teen at Goodkind; he’s not super popular, not a loser, just average, but he does have a secret. He is gay, and no one, not even his best friends, know. Russel often searches online for other gay teens that he can talk to until one night when, to his surprise, he connects with a classmate in a chat room and they agree to meet. Russel discovers that he’s not the only gay kid at Goodkind, and things begin to happen pretty quickly.

Russel and his newly discovered gay (and bisexual) friends decide to start up a club where they can meet and talk about their lives, but they don’t want anyone else at school to notice them as a gay club, so they decide to call themselves the Geography Club.

This book is an eye-opening look into the life of a gay teen, and the difficulty of figuring out teen and gay identities simultaneously. This book does a great job of pointing out that gay teenagers are just like everyone else; they are the smart kids, the jocks, and the political activists. Most importantly, they go through the same identity crisis that all teens do.

Maria Hernandez
Snohomish, WA

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**Clip & File YA Book Reviews**
Getting Away with Murder: The True Story History/Nonfiction of the Emmett Till Case by Chris Walz

When rumors spread and Angel is accused of raping 69-year-old Mamie Till in the course of a lynching, a young girl is determined to defend her family. In the trial that follows, Angel's mother, a 14-year-old girl, stands up against a white jury and stands up for her family, her culture and her community. She also stands up for the truth, the truth of the Emmett Till murder, the truth of the racial violence that existed in the United States in the 1950s, and the truth of her own identity. The book is a powerful and moving account of the struggle for justice and equality in the face of overwhelming odds.

ISBN: 0-439-35806-x

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Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix by JK Rowling

Harry Potter, now a 17-year-old boy, returns to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry for his final year of study. While there, he discovers that the Ministry of Magic is after him because he has broken the laws of the wizarding world. Harry must now fight against the dark forces that threaten the wizarding world, including the evil Lord Voldemort. Along the way, he meets new friends and old enemies, and faces his own inner demons. The book is a thrilling adventure that will keep readers on the edge of their seats.

ISBN: 0-7475-8806-x

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Watching TV: How I Fell in Love and Learned to Shoot Free Throws by Jeanette Eichenwold

Jeanette's life is turned upside down when her family moves to a new city, and she must learn to navigate the challenges of a new school and new friends. However, when she discovers her love for basketball, she finds a way to overcome her struggles and realize her dreams. The book is a inspiring story of perseverance and the power of sports to bring people together.


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How Do I Know the Order of the Phoenix? by JK Rowling

Harry Potter, now a 17-year-old boy, returns to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry for his final year of study. While there, he discovers that the Ministry of Magic is after him because he has broken the laws of the wizarding world. Harry must now fight against the dark forces that threaten the wizarding world, including the evil Lord Voldemort. Along the way, he meets new friends and old enemies, and faces his own inner demons. The book is a thrilling adventure that will keep readers on the edge of their seats.

ISBN: 0-7475-8806-x
### Jackie's Wild Seattle by Will Hobbs  
ISBN: 0-688-17474-4

In another of Will Hobbs's engaging adventures, 14-year-old Shannon and her younger brother Cody spend summertime with their uncle Neal in Seattle while their parents travel with Doctors Without Borders. Neal drives an ambulance as a volunteer for an animal rescue center, called Jackie's Wild Seattle. When Neal gets hurt rescuing a hawk, Shannon begins to rescue animals on her own; although rescue attempts are sometimes unsuccessful, Shannon's experiences will help readers understand life and death and the relationship between animals and human beings. Romantic interests and family relationships are also of interest in this book.

All readers can enjoy this story, not just young outdoor fans. Readers will see, hear, taste, and even smell along with the characters. The scenes rescuing animals are exciting since these are so realistic and depicted in detail, the likely reason being that the author often writes based on real events and has a lot of experiences with wildlife.

Naomi Yamakawa  
Tempe, AZ

### Jennifer Government by Max Barry  
Doubleday, 2003, 321 pp., $19.95  
ISBN: 0-385-50759-3

In his book, Max Barry seems to be making the point that anarchy is not freedom. In a time when characters take the last name of the organization they work for and police forces contract killings, Barry creates a materialistic world where money can buy you everything, except justice. In his world, corporations rule and being unemployed is worse than murder. As corporations unite and take on the help of the police and NRA (yes, the NRA!), the government doesn't have the necessary budget to fight them. Barry begins the book with the events that set this in motion. When Jennifer Government, a government agent, is tipped off that a Nike advertising campaign will involve the murder of several people, she sets out to prevent these crimes (crime prevention is in her job description). Along the way she author caricatures the NRA, the police, giant corporations, privatized government agencies, and ineffectual protestors.

The sometimes graphic nature of the material in this book and the sophisticated subject matter make it a better read for more mature adults.

Katrina Nelson  
Phoenix, AZ

### Keesh's House by Helen Frost  
Frances Foster Books, 2003, 128 pp., $16.00  
ISBN: 0-374-34064-1

Stephie is pregnant; Jason is the father and an all-star on the basketball court. Don'ty's parents live in prison while he remains in foster care, and Carmen waits to be released from juvenile detention. Harris finds himself abandoned after telling his father he is gay. Katie leaves home to escape an abusive stepfather. And Keesh, after leaving her drug-abusing father in search of safety, has found a place of refuge the others turn to in times of need.

These seven individuals take turns sharing their thoughts and the issues weighing on their hearts with every turn of the page. Frost uses the sestina and the sonnet forms of poetry to speak to readers through each characters' voice. The rhythmic quality and easy flow of the poetic forms allow the reader to feel the life in these characters in a powerful way.

In Keesh's House, Frost uncovers hard, deep struggles facing teenagers today with an encouraged sense of hope and a desire for a better tomorrow.

Kristine Johnson  
Cary, IL

### Mates, Dates, and Inflatable Bras by Kathy Hopkins  
ISBN: 0-689-5544-3

Mates, Dates, and Inflatable Bras is the first book in the series that follows the trials and tribulations of three friends: Izzie, Nesta, and Lucy. The book focuses on Lucy, a typically insecure 14-year-old. Of course, she is insecure due to normal teenage worries, such as fear of losing her best friend, wondering what to do with her future, and constant teasing about her height (she is often called a "midget"). She also develops her first crush on a “mystery boy,” whose identity is kept a secret until the end of the book.

Hopkins' book is a cute story that humorously conveys the insecurities girls face during adolescence. Hopkins does a good job of including characters who would appeal to many different girls, although some are a little stereotypical. Readers who enjoy this book but want something a little more complex should also enjoy Louise Rennison books (Angus, Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging).

Janesse Perrotte  
Phoenix, AZ

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**Clip & File YA Book Reviews**
The Monster in Me by Mette Ivie Harrison

Foster Care
Holiday House, 2003, 156 pp., $17.00

Kim Grozek
Tempe, AZ

REVIEW

Foster Care will be an eye-opening experience for parents and their child. The book's protagonist, Mary, is a young girl who has been placed in foster care after being abandoned by her mother. The story follows her as she navigates the challenges of life in a foster home, dealing with the loss of her mother and the struggles of growing up without a stable family structure.

Mary's foster parents, John and Beth, are kind and loving, but they struggle to connect with her. Mary's biological family, including her mother and younger sister, Amy, make frequent visits to the foster home, causing Mary to feel torn between the two families. The book explores themes of identity, belonging, and the importance of family bonds.

The Monster in Me is a touching story that will resonate with anyone who has experienced the challenges of growing up in a foster care system. It is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the power of love to overcome adversity.


My Mother's Daughter: Four Greek Goddesses Speak

Doris Orudis

Physical Education

Lauren B. Scudder, editor

Doris Orudis

Special Needs

You need to plan for your child's special needs. This will involve working closely with educational and health professionals to ensure that your child receives the support they need. This may include adapting classroom activities, providing extra help with homework, or arranging for specialized equipment or technology.

In this first chapter, we will explore the importance of planning and how to get started. We'll discuss the key considerations when planning for special needs, including identifying your child's strengths and weaknesses, understanding the options available, and developing a clear plan that addresses all aspects of your child's needs.


My Mother's Daughter: Four Greek Goddesses Speak

Doris Orudis

Greek Mythology

Check, Please!

My Mothers Daughter: Four Greek Goddesses Speak

Doris Orudis

Greek Mythology

Check, Please!
### The Second Summer of the Sisterhood

**by Ann Brashares**  
Friendship/Coming of Age  
Delacorte Press, 2003, 373 pp., $15.95  
ISBN: 0-439-22935-0

The highest compliment one can pay an author is to eagerly await a sequel (to *The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants*) and rush out to get it as soon as it comes out. As soon as *The Second Summer of the Sisterhood* was available, I stayed up almost all night reading it; I was so excited to see what happened next to the members of the sisterhood. As with Brashares's first book, this one would be appropriate for seventh grade and up. The romance this time around is a little more racy, so there is more potentially objectionable material, but it is very tasteful and not at all gratuitous.

As the book opens, the girls are approaching another summer, and they have all that they learned the previous summer to build on. Unfortunately, and as in real life, they continue to make the same mistakes and are in constant need of help from their friends to press on and continue to try in spite of disappointments and heartbreak for all of them. They all come to new revelations. Tibby discovers that she loves her family, Carmen learns to deal with her anger, Bridget discovers herself and is able to move beyond her mother's suicide, and Lena allows herself vulnerability.

**Rebekah Crutchfield**  
Queen Creek, AZ

### The Speed of Light

**by Ron Carlson**  
Sports/Coming of Age  
ISBN: 0-380-97837-7

Twelve-year-old Larry can't wait for school to be over for the summer so that he can spend his days playing every possible kind of baseball with his friends Witt and Rafferty. It's the 1950s, and for this soon-to-be-teenager, nothing could be better than a summer of endless days playing and exploring. Baseball is the game he and his friends obsess about, but his best friend, scientifically minded Witt, finds the world fascinating and wants to explore it all. Under Witt's tutelage, the summer becomes just as much about trying to revive dead crocodiles, shaving cats, and trying to speed up the aging process through gravity as it is about America's pastime. It's a memorable summer of delicious days and endless nights out under the stars for Larry. All is not idyllic, however, and after this summer, nothing will ever be quite as innocent, or quite the same, again. As the three boys move out of childhood, some difficult truths come into focus, including abuse and family dysfunction.

This novel will appeal to readers of all ages although some elements of the book will be more accessible to older readers. Young male readers, especially those in early high school or junior high, will relate to Larry as he deals with the onset of puberty, when girls, who have fallen well behind baseball on the list of interesting things, suddenly become interested. The characterizations of each of the boys is razor sharp and powerful. Witt, who sublimates his anger over abuse into scientific study, is especially well drawn.

**William Kongsgberg**  
Tempe, AZ

### A Time to Love: Stories from the Old Testament

**by Walter Dean Myers**  
Religious/Short Story  
Scholastic Press, 2003, 127 pp., $19.95  

A fictionalized retelling of six Old Testament stories focusing on love, including Sampson and Delilah, Ruben and Joseph, Ruth and Naomi, Abraham and Isaac, Zillah and Lot, Aser and Camiel. Each story is told from the perspective of a secondary character. For instance, the story of Abraham and Isaac, as it is recorded in the Bible, focuses a reader's attention on Abraham, whereas, this fictionalized account reads through the eyes and understanding of Isaac as he follows his father into the land of Moriah to make a sacrifice. He knows his father is a holy man, he is old, he loves God and seeks His will. Isaac knows they have not brought a sacrifice and begins to understand that his father intends him to be the sacrifice. Abraham takes the more difficult route only to test his old life and give Providence the chance to eliminate the command to slay his son. Isaac sees his father’s incredible devotion to God and imagines his father’s pain at the impending command. The other stories range from highly to barely rewritten. “Sampson and Delilah” is by Delilah. “Reuben and Joseph” is told from Reuben's point of view. “Ruth and Naomi” is about love, loyalty, and shared fate. “Zillah and Lot” is about comfort turned to fear. “Aser and Camiel,” told from the point of view of two boys, one Egyptian and one Hebrew, during the Israelites’ time in slavery.

The collection of stories makes for an interesting commentary on love. Love is illustrated as a perfect emotion, employed by imperfect people.

**April Anderson**  
Tempe, AZ

### The Twists and Turns

**by Janet McDonald**  
Friendship/Urban Life  
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2003, 135 pp., $16.00  
ISBN: 0-374-39955-7

Keeba and Teesha Washington have just graduated high school and have dreams of being successful, but what can they do? They live in the "projects," and their only interests seem to be eating and partying. They do, however, have one skill they hadn't considered until their librarian friend Skye helps them realize that they can market that skill, braiding hair, hence the novel's title. Skye helps Keeba and Teesha with a business plan and supports them as they put their business into operation. They obtain funding from a friend who has made it big by doing commercials, and a friend who is getting a computer technology degree builds a website for their business. After renting a storefront, the two protagonists have a hugely successful grand opening, and settle into drumming up clientele. Of course, they also face challenges: past enemies who, out of jealousy, don't want them to succeed, and a landlord who sees their apparent wealth (They have TV stars at the opening and have a professional website, so they are bound to be rolling in the dough.) and decides to take advantage of them.

This book is set in an inner city area where conditions are not good but are manageable. The girls learn not to give up when the going gets tough, but instead, to depend on themselves, family, and friends.

**Karen Conner**  
Mesa, AZ
New Haven, Maine

Doreen Rappaport

Victory or Death!: Stories of the American Revolution

ISBN: 0-06-000496-7

Sports/Mental Health

Warrior Angel by Robert Lipsyte

ISBN: 0-06-000496-7

The Way of a Door

Hope Anita Smith


Hate, Fear, Divorce

ISBN: 0-06-000496-7

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