### Amelia Anne Is Dead and Gone

*by* Kat Rosenfield  
Thriller/Death/Bullying/Small Towns  
Dutton Juvenile, 2012, 304 pp., $17.99  

Two similar lives and paths intersect briefly but tellingly in this suspense thriller. Small-town girl Becca can’t wait to leave for college, but her attachment to her boyfriend James makes it unexpectedly hard for her to go. As his behavior becomes increasingly erratic, Becca procrastinates about her departure. Budding thespian Amelia Anne has been brutally murdered as the book opens, and the subsequent passages describe a woman preparing for a bright future after a romantic beach vacation with her boyfriend Luke. Readers will race through the book’s pages to uncover the two women’s commonalities, leading to one’s death and the other’s betrayal. As Becca’s suspicions about others, especially one neighbor, escalate, so does the anger of Amelia Anne’s boyfriend. Hints at characters’ motivation and omitting details, the author forces readers to draw their own conclusions. In the end, betrayals arise from unexpected places amid life’s winding roads and detours.

Barbara A. Ward  
Washington State University Pullman, WA

### Anything But Ordinary

*by* Lara Avery  
Fiction/Romance and Family Drama  

At 17, swimming champion Bryce Graham is one dive away from fulfilling her dream of competing in the Olympics. Instead, she plunges into a coma that steals five years of her life. When she finally wakes up, Bryce insists on returning home so that things can go back to normal—against the advice of her doctors. But is a “normal” life still possible? Her once close-knit family has been undone by their grief. Torn between the past and present, Bryce must find a way to make her second chance at life count.

Avery’s debut novel poses an interesting question: how does one let go of the past and move on with life after a tragedy? Although it contains some adult subjects—like drinking, sex, and suicide—that may be inappropriate for younger readers, Bryce’s story would resonate with older adolescents who enjoy reading poignant dramas about romance, friendship, and family.

Jessica S. Thomas  
Nashville, TN

### Blood Wounds

*by* Susan Beth Pfeffer  
Fiction/Family Drama  

Willa’s family seems normal and happy. Her mother married Jack when Willa was young, giving Willa a better life away from the repressive small town of “No-where” Texas. But, when Willa’s estranged biological father murders his wife and young daughters, this horrific crime churns up buried family secrets that make Willa question who she really is. She returns to the town her mother desperately tried to escape years ago to reopen the wounds of the past so that they can begin to heal.

Pfeffer deals with disturbing but pertinent topics—divorce, mental illness, child abuse, and cutting. While many of these topics—and the brutality of the murder—make this novel unsuitable for younger readers, *Blood Wounds* would be a compelling independent read for high school students and particularly young women who, like Willa, are coping with a painful life event and trying to establish a stronger sense of self.

Jessica S. Thomas  
Nashville, TN

### Breaking Point

*by* Lesley Choyce  
Fiction/Adventure  
Orca, 2012, 124 pp., $9.95  
ISBN: 978-1-4598-0128-8

Cameron has almost always been able to run away from consequences. After a previous stay at a traditional juvenile delinquent center, Cameron is given the opportunity to go Camp Mosher, located on the coast of Nova Scotia far from anything else. As he puts to use his previous delinquent center political knowledge, he quickly finds Brianna and falls for her. But Brianna is trouble.

Brianna influences Cameron to steal two kayaks and run away from Camp Mosher to begin their lives again. Despite his better judgment, they escape into the wilderness on the eve of an impending hurricane. As you follow Cameron’s fast-paced story, you experience him making choices that will affect the rest of his life, for better or worse.

Aubrey Kuppler  
Nashville, TN
YA Book Reviews

ALAN REVIEW

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ALAN

REVIEW

Code Name Verity
by Elizabeth Wein

Fiction/Historical/WWII
Hyperion, 2012, 327 pp., $10.98
ISBN: 978-1-4231-5219-4

After a plane crashes in France during World War II, two girls are separated. Queenie, a Scottish spy, is captured by the Gestapo and imprisoned at their headquarters. In order to live, Queenie must write a daily account of information she has gathered during her time as a spy that is then...day. The records they leave behind provide the plot for this novel and a new outlook on war and the bonds it creates.

Libby Byrnes
Alpharetta, GA

Double
by Jenny Valentine

Identity/Psychological Thriller

Chap, tired of shuffling from place to place, seizes the opportunity to assume the identity of the boy on the flyer. For the first time in years, he experiences the sensation of being wanted, but the lie he tells and the identity he assumes are only the beginning. It’s 1950, and the world of America is full of secrets. Some are more sinister than others. A mysterious stranger holds the key, and Chap’s true identity is closer than he imagines.

Greta Williams-Hopper
Nashville, TN

Ditched: A Love Story
by Robin Mellom

Realistic Fiction/Romance

When 16-year-old Justina Griffith wakes up in a ditch on the side of the road, she realizes that she has been dumped by her prom date. Unfortunately, her prom date is her best friend, and the boy she is in love with. Justina has spent almost a year trying to overcome a reputation for being an airhead that has followed her since childhood. After several close calls, Javier must make decisions for himself to balance his complicated life.

Deanna Velazquez
Nashville, TN

Fighting for Dontae
by Mike Castan

Realistic Fiction/Identity
Holiday House, 2012, 150 pp., $16.95
ISBN: 978-0-8234-2348-4

Javier is a middle school adolescent torn between two worlds. He wants to help his mom at home and secretly loves to read. Yet, he finds himself involved in the neighborhood Mexican American gang, the neighborhood school, and the special ed classroom. After several close calls, Javier must make decisions for himself to balance his complicated life.
<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Freshman Year &amp; Other Unnatural Disasters</strong></th>
<th>Comedy/High School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISBN: 978-0-399-25423-9</td>
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<td>Kelsey Finkelstein knows that freshman year is important—no, absolutely crucial. In fact, she plans on upgrading her wardrobe, trying out for left wing on her school’s soccer team, and finally winning over her lifelong crush, Jordan Rothman. What she doesn’t plan for is fights with best friends, tyrannical soccer captains with scary eyebrows, and a mysterious newspaper photographer who always manages to capture her in seriously embarrassing situations. Although freshman year turns out to be slightly more disastrous than she had hoped for, Kelsey remains an optimist. Armed with an indomitable sense of humor and with a little help from her friends, she may just have her best year yet. Filled with witty dialogue and realistic situations, Meredith Zeitlin’s clever and heartfelt novel will have readers cheering for Kelsey Finkelstein as she navigates her way through the unnatural disaster that is freshman year.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diana Liu</td>
<td>Nashville, TN</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Haze</strong></th>
<th>Sports Fiction/Mystery</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>by Erin Thomas</td>
<td>Orca, 2012, 175 pp., $9.95</td>
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<td>ISBN: 978-1-4598-0070-0</td>
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<td>The swim team at Strathmore Academy has been keeping secrets from the authorities for three years after a hazing incident went horribly wrong, ending a swimmer’s life. Bram is trying out for the renowned swim team for the second year in a row, and he needs to make the team again in order to keep his scholarship to the prestigious school. Jeremy, who was there three years ago when the secret happened, wants to go public with the information and warn Bram not to go to this year’s party. Suddenly, Jeremy is hurt in a hit-and-run accident that results in a coma. Bram is trying to solve the mystery of what happened with Abby, Jeremy’s sister, and prove that his beloved coach is not responsible. Young reluctant readers are sure to enjoy this fast-paced book packed with mystery, cliff hangers, and lots of actions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aubrey Kuppler</td>
<td>Nashville, TN</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Ghosts of the Titanic</strong></th>
<th>Historical Fiction/Mystery/Supernatural</th>
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<tr>
<td>by Julie Lawson</td>
<td>Holiday House, 2012, 168 pp., $16.95</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISBN: 978-0-8234-2423-8</td>
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<td>The trauma of working on the recovery of bodies and belongings after the Titanic catastrophe costs Angus Seaton his future. The young man never shakes the guilt of mistakenly pocketing the small purse of a young woman while he fought off exhaustion during the recovery. A mysterious figure haunts Angus and eventually haunts young Kevin Messenger. It is up to Kevin to unravel a mystery, 100 years in the making, before he suffers the same fate as Angus. How can he get his parents to believe that the voice he hears is not the product of an overactive imagination? Lawson intertwines the time periods as she sheds interesting insights into the fascinating lore of the great sea tragedy. Readers will want to learn even more about the aftermath.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greta Williams-Hopper</td>
<td>Nashville, TN</td>
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<th><strong>Immortal City</strong></th>
<th>Fiction/Angels</th>
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<td>Maddy Montgomery is a regular 17-year-old girl living in a city where angels are paid to save people who can afford their protection. By chance, Maddy meets Jackson Godspeed, the most famous guardian angel, but she is unimpressed by his fame and fortune. Still, she finds herself attracted to him. Despite his title in society, Jackson falls for Maddy because she is the only person in the city who sees him for who he is aside from a famous guardian. When a dark force enters angel city, Jackson and Maddy not only fight for their relationship and their safety, but Maddy also discovers that she has family secrets of her own to reconcile.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Libby Byrnes</td>
<td>Alpharetta, GA</td>
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Losers in Space by John Barnes

Relationships/Science Fiction/Technology/Fame

Viking Juvenile, 2012, 384 pp., $18.99

Sixteen-year-old Susan Tervaille, the daughter of a famous actor, craves fame about as much as anyone else living in 2129. Work has become passé, and Derlock, Susan’s new boyfriend, concocts a plan to gain the world’s attention by hijacking a spacecraft bound for Mars while supposedly doing some research. The ship ends up flying to a distant solar system, and the two end up stranded with a band of rebels on their ship. The realistic portrayal of a universe of self-deprecation and down-and-out anarchy is both amusing and thought-provoking. The relationships between the characters are believable, and the evolution of the characters during their space journey is interesting.

Barbara A. Ward
Pullman, WA

Me and Earl and the Dying Girl by Jesse Andrews

Relationships/Death/Art

Harry N. Abrams/Amulet Books, 2012, 304 pp., $16.95
ISBN: 978-1-41970-176-4

Until this year, Greg Gaines has managed to remain unnoticed, tolerated by the various cliques in his high school but really fitting nowhere. He and his friend Earl, a foul-mouthed teen with aspirations of becoming a successful writer, spend their time studying the human condition. In their book, Greg finds the truths that he’s pondering, such as the idea that life is as easy as it is unfair. The book’s art style is unique and captures the essence of the characters’ lives. The story is thought-provoking and will keep readers thinking long after they finish.

Barbara A. Ward
Pullman, WA

My Life in Black and White by Natasha Friend

Coping/Relationships/Self-Esteem

Viking Juvenile, 2012, 304 pp., $17.99
ISBN: 978-0-67001-303-6

Sophomore Lexi’s life is the envy of others. Not only does she have looks to die for, but she also has a great boyfriend in Ryan and a loyal best friend in Taylor. Everything changes during a disastrous plane crash in which her parents are killed. Lexi must learn to cope with the loss and find her own way in the world. The story is poignant and will resonate with teens who have experienced loss.

Barbara A. Ward
Pullman, WA

Master of Deceit: J. Edgar Hoover and America in the Age of Lies by Marc Aronson

Espionage/Politics/American History

ISBN: 978-0-76365-025-4

J. Edgar Hoover was arguably one of the most powerful men in the United States during his lifetime. This thoughtful, thoroughly researched biography provides insight into the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Hoover’s impact on American history. The book covers Hoover’s early life, career, and legacy, including his investigation of the Lindbergh baby kidnapping and his role in the Watergate scandal. The title is fitting, as Hoover was known for his manipulative tactics and deceitful nature.

Barbara A. Ward
Pullman, WA

Losing Andrew by John Barnes

Espionage/Sleuth Fiction/Teen/Horror

Roadhaven/9009-0-90-010-90-9

Andrew is a normal 12-year-old living in 2129. When he becomes exposed to the dark side of the world, he must use his wits and courage to survive. The story is action-packed and will keep readers on the edge of their seats. The author’s unique blend of horror and science fiction makes for an exciting read.
Rebel McKenzie by Candice Ransom
Fiction/Middle School
ISBN: 978-1-4231-4539-4
This summer, Rebel McKenzie wants to attend the Ice Age Kids’ Dig and Safari Camp; in fact, she is willing to run away from home in order to pursue her passion for the Pleistocene era. Unfortunately, a nosy convict and improper footwear foil her hitchhiking plans, and soon, Rebel finds herself on a bus bound for the boring mobile home community of Canadive Estates. Despite her less-than-ideal situation, Rebel begins to make friends. She befriends her new neighbors, who invite her to their annual backyard barbecue. Rebel is overjoyed to be part of a large family that offers her a sense of belonging. Even better, she finds a new best friend in the form of a little girl named Mia. Together, they explore the mysteries of the past and uncover secrets that challenge Rebel’s understanding of herself and the world around her.

Diana Liu
Nashville, TN

Small Damages by Beth Kephart
Pregnancy/Relationships/Travel Abroad
Philomel, 2012, 304 pp., $17.99
ISBN: 978-0-399-25748-3
After her father’s unexpected death, things fall apart for 18-year-old Kenzie Spitzer. While her mother moves on with a new catering business, Kenzie relies on her boyfriend Kevin to help her cope. But as their relationship becomes strained, Kenzie must confront the fact that Kevin is not the person she thought he was. She begins to see the signs of his true nature and realizes that she has been fooled by her own naivety. In a moment of truth, Kenzie tells Kevin that she is pregnant, and he, in turn, reveals a secret of his own. They must decide whether to continue their relationship or end it for good. Small Damages is a moving story about loss, resilience, and the power of love.

Barbara A. Ward
Pullman, WA

Splendors and Glooms by Laura Amy Schlitz
Fantasy/Adventure
ISBN 978-0-7636-5380-4
Cassandra, a dying witch in a secluded castle, possesses a precious opal. An evil Italian puppeteer, Gaspare Grisini, commandeers two orphans to perform a puppet show with him in the London streets of 1850. Clara, the daughter of a wealthy doctor and her wife, sees the performance and is entranced, as is the diabolical Grisini. He covets the gemstone, and he must steal it from Cassandra in order to get her destructive powers, which will also save her from a fiery death. The story is told in realistic detail as the story unfolds, and a complex, convoluted tale. The novel is worth the astute reader’s attention.

Judith A. Hayn
Little Rock, AR
YA Book Reviews

T◆H◆E◆ALAN◆REVIEW

Survive by Alex Morel
Survival Stories/Depression/Suicide/Romance
Razorbill, 2012, 259 pp., $17.99

Jane Solis has a foolproof suicide plan. Having played by the treatment center’s rules and convinced her doctors that she is healthy enough to fly home for Christmas, she prepares to swallow the pills that will kill her during the flight. But the plane crashes in a wilderness area, leaving her to struggle with thoughts of suicide. She meets a mountain lodge for ski therapy, challenging the voice of a deadly whisper. Will she survive and find her way home?

Barbara A. Ward
Pullman, WA

The Disenchantments by Nina LaCour
Fiction/Summer Road Trips
ISBN: 978-0-525-42219-8

As the summer after graduation kicks off, Colby is ready for the best year of his life. First, he will be touring the Pacific Northwest with his best friend Bev and her band, the Disenchantments. Afterwards, he will be moving in with his new girlfriend. But as the summer passes, Colby struggles not only with Bev’s growing distance, but with what to do with his suddenly uncertain future. In The Disenchantments, Nina LaCour weaves together a captivating story about music, art, and growing up that perfectly captures the feelings of a group of friends who are waiting for a new chapter of life to begin.

Diana Liu
Nashville, TN

The Fine Art of Truth or Dare by Melissa Jensen
Romance/High School
Speak, 2012, 380 pp., $8.99
ISBN: 978-0-14-242090-4

For Ella Marino and her friends Frankie and Sadie, Truth or Dare is a way of life. Not only does it keep their friendship in balance (truths keep Frankie from exaggerating too much), but it also keeps things interesting. When Ella is left behind by her friends, she suddenly all of the simple truths that she had once surrounded herself with become a lot more complicated. In The Fine Art of Truth or Dare, Melissa Jensen has created a lighthearted story about a girl who learns that she must take more dares in order to find out what she truly wants.

Diana Liu
Nashville, TN

The Infects by Sean Beaudoin
Zombies/Relationships/Science Fiction

An equally brainy blending of chilling and hilarious, this book imagines the coming zombie apocalypse and may prevent readers from ever eating chicken again. When prisoner Nick (Nero) Sole accidentally escapes the prison where he is being held, he makes his way to a small town where he hopes to find a cure for the virus. Meanwhile, his girlfriend, Taylor, is struggling to survive on her own. In The Infects, Sean Beaudoin has created a story that is as much a zombie travelogue as a romantic adventure, since Nero finds love, after a fashion.
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<tr>
<th>Book Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Pages</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>ISBN</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Knife and the Butterfly</td>
<td>Ashley Hope Perez</td>
<td>Loss/Mystery</td>
<td>Carolrhoda Books</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>$17.95</td>
<td>978-0-7613-6156-5</td>
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<td>After a violent confrontation with a rival gang, Azael wakes up in a juvenile detention center, an environment that he knows well. The familiarity of these surroundings, however, belies something much stranger and more profound than Azael could ever expect from this experience—he isn’t allowed to call anyone, hasn’t met with a lawyer, and is made to observe a fellow inmate, Lexi, through one-way glass for hours at a time. Azael’s caseworker, Gabe, cryptically insists that there isn’t much time left for Azael to accomplish what he is supposed to do. As Azael pieces Lexi’s life together, he is struck by how familiar they both are with loss—home, family, friends, safety, and stability. Perez gives the reader sympathetic yet critical insight into the world of gangs in Houston, Texas, and is careful to show the narratives of loss that drive so many young people to join them.</td>
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| Election to their Iowa high school homecoming court has always been the goal for popular Paige Sheridan and her best friends Nikki and Lacey, but after being involved in a drunk-driving accident at the end of junior year, Paige’s priorities change. A spot on the homecoming court loses its promised luster. As she examines her goals and identity, Paige recognizes almost insurmountable disparities between what she wants and her friends’ motivations. Along with Paige, teen readers realize that outer appearances have little to do with inner happiness. The author deftly and honestly describes the changes in this popular senior’s life, as well as how easily she has distanced herself from her own accountability. This is a thoughtful book about family dynamics, the price of popularity, and the need to take a stand for the things that really matter. The multifaceted characters are likely to remind readers of their own classmates. |

| The Obsidian Blade               | Pete Hautman            | Science Fiction/Coming of Age | Candlewick Press      | 308   | $16.99 | 978-0-7636-5403-0 |
| Thirteen-year-old Tucker’s life changes the day his father, Reverend Feye, is fixing a shingle on the roof and disappears. An hour later, he returns, looking worn and older, with a young girl. Then his father loses his faith and his mother descends into depression, making life intolerable for Tucker. After both parents mysteriously vanish, Tucker moves in with his estranged Uncle Kosh. Tucker begins to think that these bizarre happenings might somehow be related to floating disks that glow and fade, often over the house. He even wonders if these disks teleport captives to different periods in history and the future? Tucker enters one in hopes of finding his parents. Hautman creates a complex, spellbinding plot along with a charming, compelling hero. The genre fan will end up with more questions than answers in this first volume of a trilogy; those who devour science fiction and time travel will await the next adventure impatiently. |

| Jane McAllister has been the responsible one in the family ever since her older brother Ethan left for college. She reconciles the bills, cleans the house, and makes excuses for her mother’s alcoholism. Leaving one type of disaster-in-the-making at home, she spends the summer chasing a natural kind of disaster, tornadoes, across the Midwest with her brother and a crew who collect data and take photographs. Ethan’s crew tries to get as close as they can to the twisters without being injured. The author effectively portrays the lives of the siblings, chasing after one form of destruction while avoiding the chaos at home. The descriptions clearly show just how powerful twisters can be, prompting Jane to realize that her mother’s own self-destructive choices spell ruin for anyone in her path. Despite being perched on the edge of disaster, Jane chooses a possibly brighter future for herself, no longer enabling her mother. |

Jesse Gray
Nashville, TN

Barbara A. Ward
Pullman, WA

Judith A. Hayn
Little Rock, AR
**The White Zone**

by Carolyn Marsden

Realistic Fiction/Ethnicity

Lerner, 2012, 192 pp., $17.95

ISBN: 978-0761373834

Nouri, a Shiite Muslim, and Talib, a half-Sunni/half-Shiite, are cousins who have spent their childhoods together. But as war rages in Baghdad, divisions between the Shiites and Sunnis grow stronger. When Nouri's uncle is murdered in a Sunni attack, Nouri begins to resent all Sunnis, including his cousin Talib. In a shocking moment that the two opposing religious sects are able to agree on one thing—the incredible beauty of the falling snow.

Marsden's work is highly pertinent to today's society in which people are quick to overgeneralize others based on their race or religion. The alternating points of view in this story allow the reader to see both sides of a current social and religious struggle.

Marlowe Brant
Nashville, TN

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**What's Left of Me**

by Kat Zhang

Dystopian/Identity


ISBN: 978-0-06-211487-7

Eva and Addie began their lives the way they were supposed to—two souls working together in one body. One soul was supposed to become dominant, but Eva is still there in Addie's thoughts, even though she can no longer control her body. That changes when Addie is enrolled in a high school, and suddenly she can no longer control her body. That changes when Addie meets a girl who tries to help Eva regain control, a risk that could cost them their lives.

Eva and Addie's story will be loved by readers who enjoy thinking about the "what if?" and issues of identity. Their story offers a compelling start to The Hybrid Chronicles, Zhang's first work.

Marlowe Brant
Nashville, TN

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**Trafficked**

by Kim Purcell

Fiction/Trafficking

Penguin Group, 2012, 384 pp., $11.98


After both of her parents are killed in a tragic bombing accident, Hannah is presented with an opportunity to leave her home in Moldova to start a new life in the United States of America. She envisions a bright future—a high school education, new friends, and hopes of starting her own business. But when she arrives in the United States, she is tricked into a life of slavery at the hands of a ruthless trafficker.

Libby Byrnes
Alpharetta, GA